BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
BANGALORE

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PM's visit spurs roadworks in parts of city

BDA, BBMP, and BMRCL are working on a war footing to redo bad stretches in Kengeri-Kommaghatta

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Residents of Kengeri-Kommaghatta had been putting up with pothole-filled bad stretches of road for several months now. Appeals to redo the stretch fell on deaf ears. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kommaghatta, to lay foundation stone for the suburban rail project on Monday, has come as a blessing in disguise for the residents of the area.

Multiple agencies – Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), and Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL) – are working on a war footing to redo road stretches in the area.

The roadworks in the area have been so intense that several schools in the vicinity have sent out emails to parents saying there may be a delay in the pickup and drop

Works being carried out on a footpath on Kengeri-Kommaghatta road; and (right) a newly laid road in front of BDA grounds at Kommaghatta in Bengaluru. ▪ K. MURALI KUMAR

of children due to ongoing roadworks in the area.

"The residents of the area had been running pillar to post to get these stretches fixed, but to no avail. Now that the Prime Minister is coming here, there is a sudden spurt of activity with hundreds of labourers working day and night everyday. We hope the common citizens who use the roads eve-ryday are also given the same priority," said R. Sampath Kumar, a resident of Kengeri.

Not only are the bad stretches of roads being redone, agencies are putting up streetlights, installing roadside grills and painting pavements. While BDA has taken up asphalting of a 5.5 km stretch of road from Shrike Apartments to Kommaghatta, BMRCL has sped up redoing Mysuru Road from Jnananbharathi to Kengeri.

BMRCL and BBMP recently received flak over potholes on Mysuru Road. When quizzed on the sudden priority for the works, BDA Commissioner M.B. Rajesh Gowda maintained they were part of routine works taken up in Visvesvaraya Layout, Anjanapura and Banashankari VI Stage in preparation to hand them over to the civic body. Similar works are underway on International Airport Road where the Prime Minister will land in Bengaluru at Yelahanka Air Force Base and proceed further towards Kengeri. The stretch of road he will use has been asphalted, medians painted and new plants planted on the medians.

No nod for events at Idgah Maidan

Dispute on its ownership continues

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

As the impasse over the dispute of ownership of Idgah Maidan in Chamarajpet continues, no events will be allowed to be held on the grounds.

"Since there is a dispute on the ownership of the land and our claims are being contested by another government body, we are not in a position to give any official permission for any event on the ground," said Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath.

Hindutva organisations revoking a dispute that seemed settled till recently, have sought permission from the civic body to hold an event for International Yoga Day on June 21 and a week-long Independence Day event in August.

Meanwhile, responding to a notice served by the civic body to submit relevant documents to support their claim of ownership of the land, the Karnataka State Board of Auqaf has refused to submit documents. N.K. Muhammad Shafi Sa-adi, Chairman, Karnataka State Board of Auqaf, said while the Board would respond to the notice making the claim for the land, the Board, an autonomous body, need not submit relevant documents

The Idgah Maidan at Chamarajpet in Bengaluru.
■ K. MURALI KUMAR

to the civic body which is a claimant for the same property. "If need be, we will submit relevant documents to either the State government or the court," he said.

However, Mr. Giri Nath said since the civic records showed khata in the name of BBMP since 1974 and the Karnataka State Board of Auqaf had made counter claims with relevant documents, they were only asking the Board to get a khata in their name.

"The Board has till date not cared to get a khata for the land in their name. BBMP khata only reflects the status of ownership record and doesn't create ownership. We are only requesting the Karnataka State Board of Auqaf to submit relevant documents before the civic body and get a khata in their name to resolve the dispute," he said.

Owners will have to register properties with e-Aasthi soon

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

The city's civic body will ask property owners in East Zone to register their properties with the e-Aasthi software at Bangalore One Centres soon.

The new software being tested on a pilot basis in East Zone will make all khata operations, issue of new khata, amalgamation, division and all other related activities online. The new software has an exhaustive database with 42 datasets about the properties, while the old one had only eight.

"The new database will include geotagged photos of the property, photos of the owner among several other data points. These details need to be further spot verified by revenue officials. Hence, populating this database is a time consuming cumbersome process," said Deepak R.L., Special Commissioner (Revenue), Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).

Crowdsource

The BBMP has now decided to crowdsource this database, asking property owners to register their properties at Bangalore One Centres for a fee, following which revenue officials would verify these details submitted on the ground. "Presently, issue of khata is taking a long time of two to three weeks. This will be reduced once the database is populated," he said.

Based on the success of e-Aasthi software in East Zone, the project will be expanded to South and West Zones, covering the entire core city. "Outer zones have been lagging in computerisation. First we need to speed up computerisation in these zones following which we can implement e-Aasthi," Dr. Deepak said.

"The goal of e-Aasthi is for citizens to be able to get their khata in their digilocker after they make an application. But that is a long way ahead and we will eventually get there," he added.

■ The new software is being tested on a pilot basis in East Zone

Focus on sewage surveillance to detect emerging variants

This will provide early warning on impending local surge of COVID-19

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With some samples of sewage surveillance in Bengaluru having shown the presence of "possible" BA.4 and BA.5 sub-lineages of Omicron, there is an increased focus on it now. While top health officials in the State confirmed the presence of these variants in waste water samples, they said it is yet to be correlated through genome sequencing.

Sewage surveillance is known to help in early identification of any impending wave of COVID-19 and notifying the emergence of new variants of SARS-CoV 2, if any, to initiate local public health actions. Six agencies are involved in sewage surveillance in Karnataka for the last one year. Last month, the Infectious Disease Research Foundation (IDRF) was granted permission to take up sewage surveillance in select sites in Bengaluru city, Bengaluru international airport and Mangaluru airport.

Following a recommenda-

Samples are collected from sewage treatment plants and open drains at select sites in Bengaluru city for waste water surveillance. ▪ FILE PHOTO

tion by the State's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the State Health Department on June 7 set up an eight-member sewage surveillance appraisal committee headed by the TAC chairman. The committee has been asked to submit biweekly reports to the TAC.

State Health Commissioner Randeep D. said areas with a high case load detected in sewage surveillance are being prioritised for COVID testing. "Waste water analysis is an early detection tool to assess the spread of new

sub-lineages and variants in a hotspot area of increased positivity. Some samples have shown the presence of possible BA.4 and BA.5 sub-lineages of Omicron in the city. However, the final certification of such detections would be only after confirmation by Indian SARS-CoV -2 Genomics Consortium (IN-SACOG)," the Commissioner told The Hindu.

TAC chairman M.K. Sudarshan said after the third wave, many people are not coming forward to get tested. Pointing out that the first

SSAC meeting was held on June 11, he said the committee has representation of all the organisations involved in waste water surveillance. The IDRF is preparing to start sewage surveillance in the third week of June, he said.

C.N. Manjunath, member of the State's Clinical Experts Committee, said several studies have demonstrated that increase in SARS-CoV-2 RNA can be detected in environmental samples several days before detection of COVID-19 through clinical surveillance.

In Mahadevapura

Bhaskar Rajakumar, who is part of TAC and heads the COVID war room at BBMP, said sewage surveillance has shown a slight surge in positivity rate in Mahadevapura. "Waste water surveillance has shown a jump from 33% positivity rate in the last week of May to 75% in the first week of June. The current rise in number of cases in Mahadevapura is also indicating the same," he said.

A study on spread of COVID-19 during short conversations

Risk of infection higher when one acts as a passive listener

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

When a person sneezes or coughs, they can potentially transmit droplets carrying viruses like SARS-CoV-2 to others in their vicinity. Does talking to an infected person also carry an increased risk of infection? How do speech droplets or "aerosols" move in the air space between the people interacting?

As the emphasis on the importance of wearing masks returns amidst rising number of COVID-19 cases, a research team carried out computer simulations to analyse the movement of the speech aerosols.

The team included researchers from the Department of Aerospace Engineering, Indian Institute of Science (IISc.), along with collaborators from the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (NORDITA) in Stockholm and the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS) in Bengaluru.

According to an IISc. release, the team visualised scenarios in which two mask-less people are standing two, four or six feet apart and talking to each other for about a minute, and then estimated the rate and extent of spread of the speech aerosols from one to another.

In the study, published in the journal *Flow,* their simulations showed that the risk of getting infected was higher when one person acted as a passive listener and did not engage in a two-way conversation. Factors like the height difference between the people talking and the quantity of aerosols released from their mouths also appear to play an important role in viral transmission.

"Speaking is a complex activity, and when people speak, they're not really conscious of whether this can constitute a means of virus transmission," Sourabh Diwan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering, and one of the corresponding authors, was quoted as saying. He added that in the early days of the pandemic, experts believed that the virus mostly spread symptomatically through coughing or sneezing, and soon it became clear that asymptomatic transmission also leads to the spread of COVID-19.

However, very few studies have looked at aerosol transport by speech as a possible mode of asymptomatic transmission, he said.

Analysis of speech flows

To analyse speech flows, the team modified a computer code they had originally developed to study the movement and behaviour of cumulus clouds that are usually seen on a sunny day, the release explained. The analysis carried out on speech flows incorporated the possibility of viral entry through the eyes and mouth in determining the risk of infection, as most previous studies had only considered the nose as the point of entry, it added.

"In the simulations, when the speakers were either of the same height, or of drastically different heights (one tall and another short), the risk of infection was found to be much lower than when the height difference was moderate - the variation looked like a bell curve," explained the release.

Suggestions

Based on their results, the team suggests that just turning their heads away by about nine degrees from each other while still maintaining eye contact can reduce the risk for the speakers considerably.

Moving forward, the team plans to focus on simulating differences in the loudness of the speakers' voices and the presence of ventilation sources in their vicinity to see what effect they can have on viral transmission, but add that whatever precautions we can take while we come back to normalcy in our daily interactions with other people would go a long way in minimising the spread of infection.

State reports 634 new cases, two deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka on Friday saw 634 new infections taking the total number of cases to 39,59,458.

With this, the day's Test Positivity Rate (TPR) rose to 2.8% and the weekly TPR touched 2.7%.

Of the new cases, 610 have been reported from Bengaluru Urban alone.

With two deaths, the State's toll rose to 40,070. Besides, 42 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons have also been recorded.

As many as 503 persons were discharged on Friday taking the total recoveries to 39,14,846. Active cases rose to 4,500.

As many as 22,586 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 16,000 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total number of tests rose to 6,67,09,449.
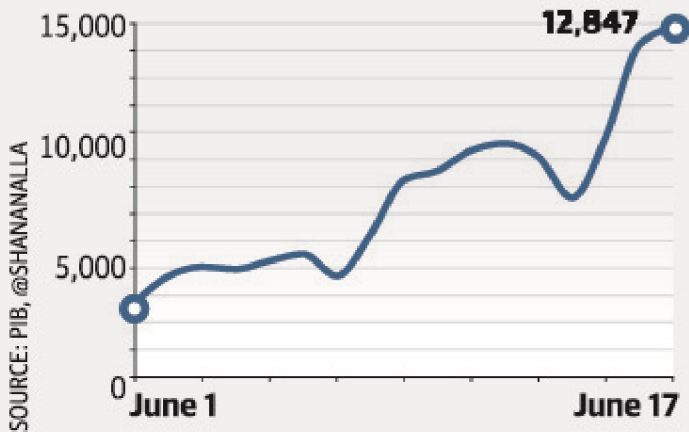
THE ❀ HINDU
e-Paper

Rising worry | With **12,847 COVID-19 infections** being reported in India on Friday, the case count stayed above the 12,000 mark for the second day in a row. With this, the number of active cases has increased to **63,063**, while 14 fresh fatalities were also reported, according to the Union Health Ministry data. **Maharashtra (20,631)** has the highest number of active cases followed by **Kerala (19,809)**
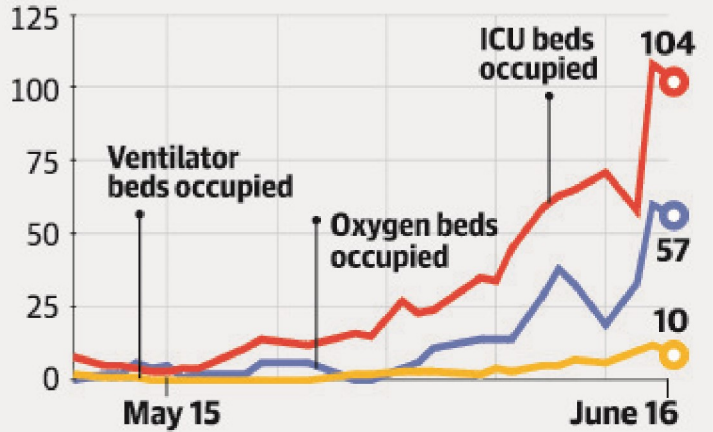
Cautious approach: Street vendor selling face masks outside of a hospital in Lucknow. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

The chart shows the cases recorded in the 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. every day from June 1 to June 17, 2022

SOURCE: PIB, @SHANANALLA

15,000

10,000

5,000

0

12,847

June 1   June 17

The chart shows the number of hospital beds earmarked for COVID-19 patients that were occupied in Mumbai

125

100

75

50

25

0

ICU beds occupied   104

Ventilator beds occupied

Oxygen beds occupied   57

10

May 15   June 16

Covaxin shows robust safety in 2-18 age group: Bharat Biotech

'374 adverse events were reported and most of them were mild in nature'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL), on Friday, announced that COVID-vaccine Covaxin (BBV152) has proven to be safe, well-tolerated, and highly immunogenic in paediatric subjects in phase II/III study. The study, according to the company, has been accepted and published in *Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

The company, in its press release, said that Bharat Biotech had conducted phase II/III, open-label, and multi-centre study to evaluate the safety, reactogenicity, and immunogenicity of Covaxin in healthy children in 2-18 years of age group.

"The clinical trial conducted in the paediatric population between June 2021

Bharat Biotech has a stockpile of over 50 million Covaxin doses ready to be distributed. ▪ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and September 2021 has shown safety, less reactogenic, and robust immunogenicity. The data was submitted to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) during October 2021, and received a nod for emergency use in children aged 6-18 years," said the release.

Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Biotech, said, "Safety of the vaccine is critical for children. Covaxin has now proven data for safety and immunogenicity in children. We have now achieved our goal of developing a safe and efficacious COVID-19 vaccine for adults and children, for

primary immunisation and booster doses, making Covaxin a universal vaccine. It has proven to be a highly safe vaccine based on data from more than 50 million doses administered to children in India. Vaccines are a great preventive tool; the power of vaccines can only be harnessed if used prophylactically."

He added that in the study, no serious adverse event was reported. A total of 374 adverse events were reported, and the majority of adverse events were mild in nature and resolved within a day.

The release also stated that Bharat Biotech has a stockpile of more than 50 million doses of Covaxin ready to be distributed as required.

DH
DECCAN HERALD

Only one bid for 'kasa' project

BENGALURU, DHNS: A single agency has participated in the bid to set up 76 manned kiosks where citizens can deposit dry waste, both non-recyclable and recyclable. The bidder, Abbu Sambasiva Reddy, has quoted Rs 3.29 crore, which is 1.03% less than the BBMP's estimate.

According to the BBMP's proposal, the manned 'kasa' kiosk project will be set up at major garbage vulnerable points, including lorry points and semi-underground bins, to receive segregated waste from the public. It does not plan to receive mixed or wet waste. It will accept only dry waste as the BBMP collects dry waste only twice a week.

Earlier, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath sent the proposal to the Urban Development Department, seeking its approval for the tenders. The project is funded by the Shubra Bengaluru programme.

Shocking: Newly built BU hostel given for Covid care returned in messy state

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The brand new hostel building of Bangalore University (BU), handed over to the BBMP for use as a Covid Care Centre two years ago, has been returned in a messy condition.

When they took back possession of the northeastern students' hostel at the Jnanabharathi campus, officials were shocked to find the building poorly maintained. The newly constructed hostel building was meant for girl students from the northeastern states.

The varsity gave the building to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on the civic body's request to use it as a Covid Care Centre in June 2020.

As the pandemic situation eased and physical classes began, the varsity sent repeated requests to the BBMP to hand the hostel back to them.

The civic body eventually

The neglected condition of the hostel at BU's Jnanabharathi campus. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

handed back control of the building on June 11. BU received a letter from the BBMP about returning the hostel.

"They have not even cleaned the rooms while giving back the hostel. Several things were damaged," a senior BU official

said. The rooms were cluttered with medicines, beds, cots, waste material, and all remnants of a Covid ward, said officials.

"We gave them a new building inaugurated by the Prime Minister," an official remind-

ed, shocked by the condition in which the civic body returned the facility.

"We have to need repaint and repair the facility in order to accommodate our students," the official added.

The civic body retained

control of a few rooms and has told the varsity to give back the building's control whenever required.

Sprawled across 5.5 acres, the hostel can accommodate 2,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The hostel was built in collaboration with the North Eastern Council, which bore a large share of the building expense.

While 75% of the admission is reserved for northeast students, 25% has been provided for other students.

The 2014 attack on Arunachal Pradesh students in New Delhi gave rise to the idea of a separate hostel for students from the northeastern states. Since Bengaluru has a sizable student population from the northeast, the North Eastern Council approached the BU for land to construct the hostel inside the Jnanabharathi campus.

BBMP officials were unavailable for comment.

Verifying Bescom power bills, BBMP finds Rs 1.47 cr property tax evasion

Civic authority vows to extend the exercise to the entire city

▼

BENGALURU, DHNS

The novel exercise to cross-verify property tax from details obtained via Bescom electricity bill payments has revealed tax evasion to the tune of Rs 1.47 crore.

The pilot run had covered just 46 properties in two wards — Jakkasandra and HSR Layout. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), armed with Bescom data, plans to extend the exercise to all wards in the city.

During the cross-verification exercise, the BBMP found buildings on properties that were declared as a 'vacant site' by the owners in order to pay lesser tax. In some cases, the property tax was paid for the residential unit, but owners were using the building for commercial purposes.

These discrepancies, hidden with the help of "corrupt" revenue officers or inspectors, has come to the fore after the civic body signed an agreement with Bescom to access data pertaining to 67 lakh connections. The BBMP has also designated a KAS-cadre officer to liaison with the electricity board and

create ward-wise data.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Deepak B L, Special Commissioner at the BBMP's revenue department, said properties that evaded tax will be fined. "The pilot run in two wards is successful. We have started issuing notices to the property owners after undertaking physical verification of the properties," he said.

So far, the BBMP has collected Rs 2,099 crore as property tax. During the corresponding period last year, the property tax collection was just Rs 1,399 crore. The civic body has set a

target of collecting Rs 5,500 crore from property tax this year.

This year, the BBMP has also undertaken aerial survey by using drones to measure properties. The survey covered 100 properties located on both sides of Ballari Road between Cauvery junction and Mekhri Circle.

"We found 30% differences in the actual measurement of the properties as against the assessment submitted to us. We will issue a notice after verifying these properties physically," the top revenue officer said.

DH
DECCAN HERALD

Cop sets up toilet-on-wheels raising Rs 2 lakh through crowdfunding

SUNIDHI ARAKERE
BENGALURU, DHNS

The challenges faced by his mother to access a toilet inspired a police sub-inspector (PSI) to set up a toilet-on-wheels at Goraguntepalya.

Functioning with 12 stalls—five each for men and women and two for gender-neutral people—the toilet-on-wheels moves around in the area for a few kilometres as per the requirement.

"The issue of toilets in our country is something that has always been on my mind," PSI Shanthappa Jademmanavar at the Vidhana Soudha police station said.

"A few months ago, when I travelled with my mother to Ballari, I saw how difficult it was for her to access a toilet. This is not an issue unique to her. All our mothers, sisters and daughters suffer the same way, and it spurred me to do something," Jademmanavar added.

He started a Twitter campaign that reached its 100th day on June 14. He did not receive a response although

The mobile toilet at Goraguntepalya built by PSI Shanthappa Jademmanavar. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

the Twitter handles had been otherwise active, he said.

Joining hands with like-minded people, he started a crowdfunding campaign and raised Rs 2 lakh to contract the mobile toilet for six months. Jademmanavar also took permission from the Bengaluru Traffic Police saying the mobile toilet would not disrupt traffic.

Unlike many public toilets in the city, the mobile toilet is not pay-and-use. "We will maintain it through voluntary funding as long as we can. I don't think we should charge a fee for something that is a matter of human rights," he said.

'Dirty and lowly'

He faced opposition from those who thought the project was dirty and lowly. "This stigma is what forces people, especially women, to stay quiet about this basic need. Most women are not comfortable asking openly for space to attend to nature's call, and when the facilities are not available, they suffer," he said.

Jademmanavar said the toilet is also meant to draw the attention of authorities responsible for sanitation and public service. "This cannot be a permanent solution after all, and it is the authorities who must take appropriate steps."

Wastewater survey to detect Covid-19 completes one year

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru's Precision Health initiative, a wastewater surveillance programme to catch early signs of a disease outbreak, has completed a year.

The programme was launched on May 27, 2021, and had been successful in detecting early symptoms of the third wave of the Covid pandemic.

Detect other diseases

Speaking at the event organised in the city to celebrate the one year of surveillance, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath emphasised the importance of keeping the surveillance system up and running not just for Covid-19 but for other diseases as well.

"If we analyse the pathogens in the sewage, we will be able to predict what could go wrong. These are important tools for us to detect the spread of new diseases," Girinath said.

Dr Bhaskar Rajakumar, a public health consultant who works with the BBMP Covid war room, said that the surveillance had given the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) an opportunity to start making preparations for the third wave.

Bribe-for-promotion case: Plot thickens at UDD

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Months after a senior Urban Development Department official was suspended over receiving bribes to promote BBMP officials, another complaint of irregularities in promotions has reached the chief secretary.

The UDD set up a departmental promotion committee (DPC) in November 2020 to promote 'A' group employees in the BBMP. Later, Karnataka Rashtra Samiti (KRS) wrote to the Chief Minister that the UDD officials demanded Rs 2 crore from the BBMP engineers to recommend for promotions.

"Following the complaint, Elisha Andrews, a KAS senior-scale officer in the post of deputy secretary, was recommended for suspension by UDD Additional Chief Secretary Rakesh Singh.

However, when looked into the matter, it has been found that the file in question was not signed by Andrews," the KRS said in a fresh complaint, alleging interference by under-secretary N K Lakshmisagar.

The November 2020 order states that only officials in the joint/additional secretary level can be made member secretary of DPC.

KRS alleged that Lakshmisagar signed proceedings of a DPC meeting held to promote assistant engineers to assistant executive engineers.

"The then deputy secretary Elisha Andrews was shown as 'officer on outside duty' (OOD) on that day though he was present in another DPC

Untenable posting

The complaint said deputing Lakshmisagar, tahsildar-grade officer to the post of undersecretary, as Urban Development Department (UDD) undersecretary was untenable. As per the cadre and recruitment rules, only KAS junior scale (assistant commissioner grade) officials are eligible for the post. Even otherwise, a deputy officer continuing in a post beyond three years was against the rules, the KRS said.

UDD Additional Chief Secretary Rakesh Singh said he was not aware of the letter. "I wasn't in the department when (Lakshmisagar) was deputed," he said, promising action.

meeting of the UDD," KRS deputy chairman Lingegowda S H stated.

The outfit demanded action against Lakshmisagar for making "false" entries and for conniving to ensure that the deputy secretary was at work and on OOD on the same day.

Documents available with *DH* show that Lakshmisagar signed the proceedings of a DPC meeting held on May 24, 2022, to promote assistant executive engineer to executive engineer.

This June may well be among the wettest

BENGALURU, DHNS: This June may well turn out to be one of the wettest for Bengaluru as the city received monsoon showers for the second straight day after a brief lull.

Many parts of eastern, western, central and northern Bengaluru received moderate to heavy rainfall on Friday night. There were, however, no rain-related complaints, according to the BBMP control room.

While the amount of rainfall that the city received on Friday night is not yet known, India Meteorological Department (IMD) data showed the city received 38.9 mm of rain in the 24-hour period ending 8.30 am on Friday. The city has received 139 mm of rain since June 1 — 74 mm more than normal. Friday night's rain will only add to this number. Bengaluru's wettest-ever June was in 1996 when it received 228.2 mm of rain.

The IMD has forecast a generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers for the next four days.

A flooded stretch in Yeshwantpur on Friday.

Cases on rise but genome sequencing reveals no new variants

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Amid rising Covid numbers in the state, recent genomic sequencing data from the laboratory in Victoria Hospital has revealed that no new virus strains have been seen and the Omicron BA.2 strain, which was dominant during the third wave, is still the most prevalent one.

According to sources in Victoria Hospital, a total of 45 samples for the test were collected in mid-May.

"We collected samples over 25 days. All the samples had a CT value of less than 25 and were eligible for sequencing. Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) started 10 days ago and no new variants have been found," said one of the researchers.

However, the results will now be shared with the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune before publication. In the absence of a new virus strain, experts opined that the upsurge in the number of cases could be due to the reduction in antibodies among the population.

"There could be multiple factors which could be causing the rise. The antibody levels could be going down since a majority of the population is yet to avail the booster dose. Also, since we are returning to normalcy and all public places, schools, and colleges are now open, the transmission rate would naturally go up," explained Dr Giridhar Babu, epidemiologist and member of Karnataka State Covid Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Virologist Dr Jacob John opined that the focus needs to be on better enforcement of Covid-appropriate behaviour (CAB). "The virus is not changing, instead, we are allowing it to spread. We have thrown all precautionary measures in the wind. There is a need to be cautious," he said.

Experts also suggested that improved vaccine coverage could help keep the numbers in check. "Though the numbers are increasing, there is no need to panic. Providing booster doses on priority is the best intervention possible now. Also, we will have to constantly monitor the hospitalisations and continue genomic sequencing," Dr Babu said.

Talking can spread Covid as much as coughing, finds IISc study

BENGALURU, DHNS

When a person sneezes or coughs, can they potentially transmit droplets carrying viruses like SARS-CoV-2 to others in their vicinity? Does talking to an infected person also carry an increased risk of infection? How do speech droplets or "aerosols" move in the air space between the people interacting?

Answering all these questions is a research team which has carried out computer simulations to analyse the movement of the speech aerosols.

The team includes researchers from the Department of Aerospace Engineering, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), along with collaborators from the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (NORDITA) in Stockholm and the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS) in Bengaluru.

The team visualised scenarios in which two maskless people are standing two, four or six feet apart and talking to each other for about a minute, and then estimated the rate and extent of spread of the speech aerosols from one to another. Their simulations showed that the risk of getting infected was higher when one person acted as a passive listener and didn't engage in a two-way conversation. Factors like the height difference between the people talking and the quantity of aerosols released from their mouths also appear to play an important role in viral transmission.

"Speaking is a complex activity ... and when people speak, they're not really conscious of whether this can constitute a means of virus transmission," says Sourabh Diwan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering, and one of the corresponding authors.

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, experts believed that the virus mostly spread symptomatically through coughing or sneezing. Soon, it became clear that asymptomatic transmission also leads to the spread of Covid-19. However, very few studies have looked at aerosol transport by speech as a possible mode of asymptomatic transmission, according to Diwan.

Interactions of speech jets during short conversations between two people separated by a distance of four feet, visualised by an iso-surface of the aerosol concentration. Three different height differences are shown. The blue and red colours represent the simulated speech jets emanating from the mouths of the two people. In the simulations, when the speakers were either of the same height, or of drastically different heights (one tall and another short), the risk of infection was found to be much lower than when the height difference was moderate – the variation looked like a bell curve.

Based on their results, the team suggests that just turning their heads away by about nine degrees from each other while still maintaining eye contact can reduce the risk for the speakers considerably.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike

N.R. Square, Bengaluru - 560 002.

Precautionary Measures to Prevent
Acute Gastroenteritis/ Cholera

Acute Gastroenteritis/Cholera cases are reported every year and may increase during summer. Recently, due to heavy rains, chances of drinking water contamination could be there. The Public are hereby requested to take the below mentioned precautionary measures (Do's & Don'ts) to avoid spreading of the disease to other areas.

✓ Things to be done

- Always drink Boiled & Cooled Water
- Public Taps and Places to be kept clean
- Fresh Food to be consumed
- Before eating, hands to be washed cleanly by soap & water
- Clean your Hands with soap after using the toilet
- The Food prepared needs to be covered always so that the ants, insects do not sit on it
- Keep your Home and surrounding Environment clean
- Every 15 days clean your drinking water storage tanks with Bleaching Powder

✗ Things to be avoided

- Do not drink water from dirty taps
- Avoid consumption of road side unhygienic eatables / cut fruits
- The Food items which have been exposed to dust, flies, insects need to be avoided
- Waste should not be thrown on road side, foot path and drainages as it attracts the insects and may lead to Acute Gastroenteritis

If there are symptoms of Vomiting, Loose motion, please contact your nearest Health Centre.

For More Information Contact the following Phone No's:

Health Officer (East) 080 22975852 | Health Officer (South) 080 22975750 | Health Officer (West) 080 22975650
Health Officer (Mahadevapura) 080 28512301 | Health Officer (Bommanahalli) 080 25732447 | Health Officer (Rajarajeshwarinagar) 080 28600208
Health Officer (Yelahanka) 080 22975936 | Health Officer (Dasarahalli) 080 28396833 | Control Room: 080-22660000, 22221188.

TOLL FREE No.: 1533

"To try and achieve the Progress in all Personal and Collective activities it is the duty of each & every Indian Citizen to abide as per the Indian Constitutional Basic Rights"

Rakesh Singh, I.A.S.,
Administrator, BBMP

Tushar Giri Nath, I.A.S.,
Chief Commissioner, BBMP

BBMP's quick fix for 4ft hole provides no solace to residents

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A road that is the lifeline for thousands of Ramamurthy Nagar residents caved in last week, causing serious safety concerns.

Though Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has filled up the hole with gravel, locals believe it is a quick fix and the hole can reappear anytime, catching motorists unawares.

POTHOLE WATCH

"It is such a hazard," said Abilash Nair, a social activist living a few metres from the hole on Ramamurthy Nagar Main Road in east Bengaluru. Nair volunteers in the neighbourhood and keeps a watch on those dumping trash on empty plots and corners. During his 'night duty' last week, he noticed the hole and, with the help of other volunteers, measured the depth of the cavity. "We used sticks and checked how deep the hole was. It turned out to be more than 4ft and we were alarmed," he said.

The matter was escalated

A shopkeeper close to the spot said the workers sent by BBMP filled up the hole with gravel on June 16

to Ramamurthy Nagar Resident Welfare Trust, which alerted BBMP officials.

Nagajyothi KS, general secretary of the trust, told **TOI** the main road is already riddled with potholes and the footpaths encroached by vendors and bikers.

A shopkeeper close to the spot said the workers sent by BBMP filled the hole with gravel stones on June 16. However, Nagajyothi expressed dissatisfaction with the "hasty and impractical" solution.

"There is a technicality to building and maintaining roads. One cannot fill a cavity on a busy road with stones and then assume the problem has been solved," she said.

Nair and his volunteers' group also said the gravel stones seem like an ornamental quick fix and it was not even clear the entire hole was securely closed. "From what we can observe, it seems to be closed at the surface. There is a dent around the hole even now and the road has curved inside. We are scared it will collapse and someone may get badly hurt," he said.

'BWSSB's responsibility'

A BBMP assistant engineer, who is in charge of road infrastructure for the area, said the cavity appeared because of leakage in the sanitary pipe underground. "We have informed BWSSB and they need to come and fix the pipe. For now, BBMP has sorted out the issue and commuters are not in danger. Water leakage caused the soil to erode under the road and that is why it caved in. Nevertheless, citizens need not worry."

50% wage hike proposed for domestic, apartment workers

Last Revision Happened In 2016-17

Niranjan.Kaggere
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Monthly expenditure of households, resident welfare associations (RWAs), apartment owner societies, paying guest facilities and hostels, among others, is likely to see a sharp rise if all goes as per the latest draft notification issued by the labour department. The notification has proposed to revise the monthly salaries of various workers catering to these sectors.

As per officials in the labour department, the last revision under Minimum Wages Act, 1948 was in 2016-17.

"In the last five years, many changes have happened and the cost of living has increased considerably. There have been demands from labour unions to revise minimum wages. Based on several factors, we have notified the proposed revision of salaries of labourers from various sectors," explained a senior official from the department.

Going by the draft notification, a copy of which is available with **TOI**, the department has proposed to raise by 30-50% the monthly salaries of domestic workers, including maids, nannies, cooks/kitchen assistants, car drivers, apartment supervisors/managerial staff, gardeners, lift operators and watchmen.

The department has given two months' time for stakeholders to file objections, if any, to the proposal. The quantum of revision varies with the category of jurisdictional municipal bodies. The hike in salaries will be the most in Bengaluru and city corporation limits; it will be minimal in smaller towns.

"The highest revision of salary, 45-50%, is for domestic maids and cooks, followed by other unskilled labourers like assistants or gardeners," a senior labour commissioner explained.

The draft notification has for the first time considered all genders on a par. "Regardless of the gender, male, female or others, all employees shall be treated equally in wages," it said.

Officials said a working day comprises eight hours. "Anyone working beyond will be eligible for overtime. This apart, employers have to revise dearness allowance on an yearly basis, keeping in mind the average of the consumer price index. Also, if anyone is at work on his or her weekly off or during festive holidays, they should be given twice the day's salary," they pointed out.

Trade unions have hailed the initiative. Geeta Menon, joint secretary of Domestic Workers' Rights Union, said: "The proposed revision looks good. But when it comes to enforcement, we hardly see any effective implementation. But this revision establishes that all these professions are recognised by the government. We also demand that the government set up a grievance-redressal cell for domestic helps."

A member of the PG Associations of Bengaluru said, "It will be easier for us to comply with any revision only if we do business to that extent. Post-Covid, students have chosen to vacate PGs and due to remote work arrangement, working professionals too have left. When business itself has collapsed, how can we give them a 40 to 50 per cent hike?"

The Bangalore Apartment Federation (BAF) supported the revision, while acknowledging that this would eventually be transferred to individual households' monthly maintenance bill. Vikram Rai, general secretary, BAF said: "As labourers, they are all integral to our lives and need a better working environment. At the same time, it is also equally important to know about the parameters on which the labour department revised the salaries. None of us was consulted during the process."

WHAT REVISED PAY PACK MAY LOOK LIKE

Category	2016-17 (₹ per month)	2022-23 (₹ per month)	Percentage of revision
Cook+kitchen assistants (RWAs)	11,830	17,293.9	46.1
Maids+baby-sitting	10,300	15,390.6	49.4
Only maids (laundry, utensils, mopping)	10,030	15,044.5	49.9
Gardener	10,010	15,802.3	57.5
Manager/supervisor	13,286	17,238	29.7
Asst manager/supervisor	12,844	16,649.7	29.6
Lift operator/watchman	10,010	14,365.7	43.5
Receptionist/telephone operator	11,908	15,576.9	30.8
Car drivers	12,142	15,576	28.2

Source: Karnataka labour department

Photo for representation

The labour department has given two months' time for stakeholders to file objections, if any, to the proposal. The quantum of revision varies with the category of jurisdictional municipal bodies

❝ We should have done this revision two years ago. But we couldn't as almost all sectors were severely hit by the pandemic. Our intention was to take everybody together and wait until normalcy returned. As all sectors have resumed work and business is thriving, we cannot afford to ignore this unorganised sector

A Shivaram Hebbar |
LABOUR MINISTER

TIMES VIEW

These are not happy times for middle-class households which will be affected most by this wage revision. There is no arguing that labourers are entitled to better pay. It's just that it has come at a time when, on the one hand, the cost of living has risen manifold, on the other, incomes have declined due to the pandemic. It does not bode well. For example, there is the frightening prospect of apartment dwellers being forced to delay maintenance work because of lack of funds. The state could do without more unsafe buildings.
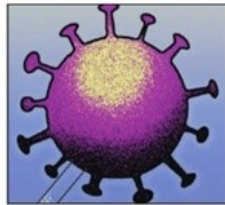
Study: When maskless people interact, passive listener more prone to infection

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: New computer simulations by IISc researchers and their collaborators on how speech droplets or aerosols move in the air space between people who're interacting show the risk of getting infected is higher when one person acts as a passive listener and doesn't engage in a two-way conversation.

"Factors like height difference between people talking and quantity of aerosols released from their mouths also appear to play an important role in viral transmission," said the researchers from IISc's department of aerospace engineering (DAE) and collaborators from Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (NORDITA), Stockholm, and International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS), Bengaluru.

Having understood when people sneeze/cough, they can potentially transmit droplets with viruses like SARS-CoV-2

Stating that while in the early days of Covid-19, experts believed the virus mostly spread via coughing or sneezing, the researchers said soon it became clear asymptomatic transmission also leads to it

to others, the questions they wanted to answer were: Does talking to an infected person carry increased risk of infection? How do speech droplets move in the air space between people interacting? Stating while in the early days of Covid-19, experts believed the virus mostly spread via coughing or sneezing, the researchers said soon it became clear that asymptomatic transmission also leads to the spread.

However, very few studies have looked at aerosol transport by speech as a possible mode of asymptomatic transmission, which prompted them to carry out the new study, which has now been published in the journal Flow.

The team visualised sce-

narios in which two maskless people are standing two, four or six feet apart and talking for about a minute, and estimated the rate and extent of spread of speech aerosols from one to another, IISc said. It added: "Their simulations showed the risk of getting infected was higher when one person acted as a passive listener."

When speakers were either of the same height or drastically different heights, the risk was found to be much lower than when the difference was moderate. The team said just turning their heads away by about nine degrees from each other while still maintaining eye contact can reduce the risk considerably. Sourabh Diwan, assistant professor, DAE, and

one of the corresponding authors, said: "When people speak, they're not really conscious of whether it can constitute a means of virus transmission."

To analyse speech flows, Diwan and his team modified a computer code they had originally developed to study the movement of cumulus clouds. "The code (called Megha-5) was written by S Ravichandran from NORDITA, the other corresponding author, and was used for studying particle-flow interaction in Rama Govindarajan's group at ICTS. The analysis carried out by the team incorporated the possibility of viral entry through the eyes and mouth in determining infection risk — most previous studies had only considered nose as the point of entry," IISc said.

Rohit Singhal, the first author and PhD student at DAE, said it is hard to numerically simulate the flow of speech aerosols because of the highly-fluctuating — "turbulent" — nature of the flow.

Rising viral fever cases worry parents; docs say don't panic

Farheen.Hussain@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Divya (name changed) was happy when schools finally reopened in May and Covid cases reduced.

But she got worried when her 9-year-old son developed fever. "We took him to a doctor immediately and it turned out that he was Covid-negative. The doctor said it was viral fever. Soon, six of his classmates also fell ill the following week. I didn't know whether I should send my son to school even after he recovered," said the Banashankari resident.

Like Divya, several parents are concerned as cases of viral fever are rising among young children, who have started attending offline classes after almost two years. Many of them are sharing their worries on social media platforms.

"My child has been suffering from stomach pain, cold, cough, throat pain, etc. Even her classmates have been experiencing similar symptoms. Are other parents also noticing this trend since schools reopened," a parent asked on a social media platform. Several others responded saying how they were also observing the same. "Everyone has been behaving as if Covid-19 has vanished. We must still follow guidelines, keep our children healthy and not send them to school if they show any such symp-

'RESPONSE IN KIDS SIGN OF STRONG IMMUNE SYSTEM'

Dr Rajath Athreya, senior consultant and HOD, paediatrics and neonatology, Sakra World Hospital, said kids' immune system responds to new viruses with a short-lived episode of fever and other symptoms, and this is a sign of a robust immune system, not a weakened one. "We advise Covid test if we see children with fever, runny nose, cough etc, especially if more than one member of the family is unwell. A small proportion of those tested are turning positive and recovering well," he said.

Dr Athreya, however, stressed there is no cause for panic. "Parents should ensure kids wear masks in crowded spaces, clean their hands frequently with alcohol gel and eat well-cooked food. If a child has fever and other symptoms, he/she should stay home, and further tests can be done after consulting a paediatrician," said Dr Athreya, adding: "I would encourage all eligible adults to take the precautionary dose of Covid vaccine and vaccination for all children who are eligible."

Photo for representation

NOT OVER: Sharing their concerns, parents said they should not lower their guard against Covid-19

TIMES VIEW

As campuses are teeming with kids once again, parents' concerns are not completely unfounded. However, after being closetted for two years, face-to-face interactions with peers are imperative for children's mental well-being, which is as important as physical health. Coming out of their cocoon hasn't been easy for many and further disruptions will make the transition tougher. There should be no room for laxity with both Covid cases and other viral infections on an upward trajectory. While parents should follow doctors' advice, schools must ensure compliance with Covid-appropriate behaviour. With more watchfulness and less panic, this too shall pass.

toms," another parent said.

A parent suggested they should not lower their guard against Covid, but let children experience school days, falling ill, recovering etc. "We should ensure children are eating healthy, exercising enough and enjoying their school days."

D Shashi Kumar, general secretary, Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools (KAMS), told **TOI** they have also noticed these symptoms among children and advised parents to not

send them to school at such times. "Instead of just giving children medicine and sending them to school, we ask parents to let them rest for two to three days. If the fever doesn't subside, they must get them checked," said Kumar, adding that parents must not panic.

Doctors, who are seeing several such cases, have also asked parents to stay calm. Dr Yogesh Kumar Gupta, consultant, paediatrics, Fortis Hospital, Bannerghatta Road, said he has been getting 50 to 60 kids

with symptoms like cold, cough and headache and some with gastroenteritis or loose stools and vomiting. He said it could be due to weather change, sudden crowding in schools and exposure to microbes after staying indoors for long.

Dr Sharil Hegde, consultant paediatrician, Manipal Hospitals, Hebbal, said though these infections at this time of the year are common, they are witnessing more children with viral symptoms this time.

Present Covid surge a ripple, not a wave, say IIT-K experts

Shailvee.Sharda@timesgroup.com

Lucknow: Even as fresh and active cases have doubled in Uttar Pradesh in the past week, experts at IIT Kanpur monitoring the Covid-19 situation through their mathematical models stated that there was no reason to panic unless new variants come into play.

"The rise in cases is primarily because of decline in the natural immunity against the pandemic. There may be re-infections but there is no need to worry. Prevention, however, is advised for all," said IIT-K's Prof Manindra Agarwal. "It is better to call the recent rise as a ripple rather than a wave," he said.

Rajesh Ranjan, IIT-K assistant professor, said that Omicron and its subtypes were causing the disease these days. Predicting that the present wave will be smaller than the third wave, he said: "There was no reason to panic unless a new variant surfaces."

Vendors' earnings washed away in rain

Heavy rain caused huge losses to those running stalls by the road in KR Market

Shreyashi Mukherjee
shreyashi.m@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMirror

As heavy rains lashed the city, vendors of KR Market saw a steep decline in their business. Goods being sold by them also incurred damage. Raju Krishnan, a shopkeeper selling clothes in a makeshift shop on the footpaths of KR Market, spoke of the plight the winds and rain brought upon his job.

"When it started raining lightly, I still kept the shop open hoping that the rain would stop, but then it got heavier and windy. Half the things in my shop flew off. The clothes I was selling got damaged," he said.

Krishnan said he makes around Rs 2,000-3,000 a day, but because of the downpour he could barely make Rs 1,000. The problems of shopkeepers in the market did not end with the rain, as the remnant water and mud still had a role to play.

> **We gave the fruits at minimal prices to people just so we could earn something at least. We were running in complete loss yesterday**
>
> —A fruit seller who sets up her stall on the side of the road

Many vendors who have only tarpaulin to shield them are at the mercy of rain gods at KR Market

Chinnu, a flower seller, said that all her flowers were destroyed because of the water.

She said, "Ever since covid, we are not getting proper business. On top of that, these rains are damaging all my flowers. Because of the rain all my flowers got damaged, and I had to throw them away. I could not have good business yesterday at all. Instead, I had more losses."

Among the fruit sellers who usually set up their stall by the road, one said, "The fruits were damaged and some of them even fell in the muddy water and got crushed by the people who were hurrying to get under some kind of shelter. We gave the fruits at minimal prices to people just so we could earn something at least. We were running in complete loss yesterday. My child also got drenched."

The people who were in KR Market said they could not do any shopping because of the weather.

Nimisha Gowda, a shopper, said, "I had gone to buy a few things, but it started raining so much that I could not buy even a single thing. I got stuck there for a while. After that, I came back empty handed."

BBMP officials said that they would make arrangements to prevent the area from getting flooded every time it rains.

Praying for a miracle at Varthur's eroded road

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-maheswara.reddy
@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Residents of Varthur's Idgah Road have been suffering a lot due to the apathy of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) authorities for more than six months. They said Idgah Road and other cross roads were dug up for laying down underground drainage and water pipes, but the authorities concerned did not restore the areas after work was completed.

The residents reported that they have been complaining to the authorities and elected representatives about the poor condition of the road, but in vain.

"It has become a habit for contractors and BBMP engineers to dig up roads in Varthur and forget about those roads. For example, Idgah Road was dug up six months ago for laying underground drainage pipes and water pipes. They do not take residents into confidence while taking

A gaping hole has appeared on the Idgah Road in Varthur

up developmental works," said a resident.

They said moderate rainfall is all it takes to convert the road into a slushy zone, making it tough for

> **We have to pray to god before going to bed daily to keep the road usable the next morning. We are not sure if we will reach offices or workplaces on time due to the slush**
> —Resident of the area

pedestrians as well as motorists to traverse.

"We have to pray to god before going to bed daily to keep the road usable the next morning. We are not sure whether we will reach offices or workplaces on time due to the slush," said another resident.

Vasudev P, a resident, said that BBMP has completed asphalting 60 per cent of roads but has failed to asphalt the remaining 40 per cent in and around Varthur.

"A portion of Kote Beedi, especially in front of a retired postmas-

ter's house, has become slushy. Residents are struggling to go to nearby shops to buy groceries and vegetables. I demand the BBMP authorities to complete asphalting of the remaining roads for the benefit of residents," he said.

Coming down heavily on the BBMP authorities for neglecting the road infrastructure in and around Varthur, Jagadeesh Reddy of Varthur Rising has blamed the ruling party leaders for threatening their own supporters and citizens if such issues are posted on social media.

"This is how we are living in the cyber capital of India's Mahadevapura. I appeal to the Prime Minister and Mahadevapura MLA Arvind Limbavali to help us," said Reddy.

Meanwhile, BBMP executive engineer Muni Reddy has said that he has taken measures to commence asphalting of Idgah and other roads within one or two days.

"I am confident of fixing this problem within a few days. Asphalting of Idgah and other roads will begin tomorrow," he assured.

Picture that's not so perfect for Palike

BBMP to now go after those whose images are printed on hoardings to crack down on illegal banners

Sridhar.Vivan
@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

The issue of illegal hoardings and flex boards in Bengaluru is a sore spot for the BBMP as time and again, they have sprung up on city roads. Palike has now opted for a new way to get rid of such hoardings by penalising the person whose picture is printed on the banners.

A senior BBMP official said, "It is very difficult to find who is behind the banners or posters. It is mostly done at night and catching them red-handed is quite difficult."

Adding to this, BBMP's Special Commissioner (Revenue) Deepak said, "Earlier, we would impose a penalty and there is a provision of imprisonment for those violating the rule. However, the whole process of catching the people behind this is a time-consuming one. So, we are

Earlier, the civic body has conducted drives against illegal flexes (file)

planning to collect a penalty from the person whose picture has been printed on it."

According to him, hoardings and

banners are not permitted in public places. However, there is no stopping them if the banners are put up by the government.

However, many question whether the BBMP has teeth to take action against prominent personalities. During a recent programme attended by dignitaries including Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, a minister openly admitted, "Many of my personnel were putting up banners; but, we will reduce the number of banners in the city."

Recently, BBMP administrator Rakesh Singh had asked his officials to remove the dangling cables and flex banners. Singh said, "Flex banners and hoardings put up in the city should be removed. Illegal OFC cables should be removed."

BBMP has also sought police support in this issue. Despite a ban on flex banners, the last few months has seen too many flex banners all over Bengaluru.

"Illegal flex banners and bunting should be removed with the help of police and BBMP Marshalls. BBMP's tractor vehicles, Prahari vehicles and other ve-

> **We plan to collect a penalty from the person whose picture has been printed on it**
> —Deepak, BBMP's Special Commissioner (Revenue)

hicles, along with additional personnel should be deployed for the drive, several residents said to the BBMP.

Recently, a senior BBMP official had told personnel that FIR should be lodged against the persons displaying such illegal flex banners and bunting.

Displaying flex, banners, flags, posters and bunting in the city is a punishable offense under the BBMP Act 2020 and Section 3 of Karnataka Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act 1981, although, many continue to openly defy them.
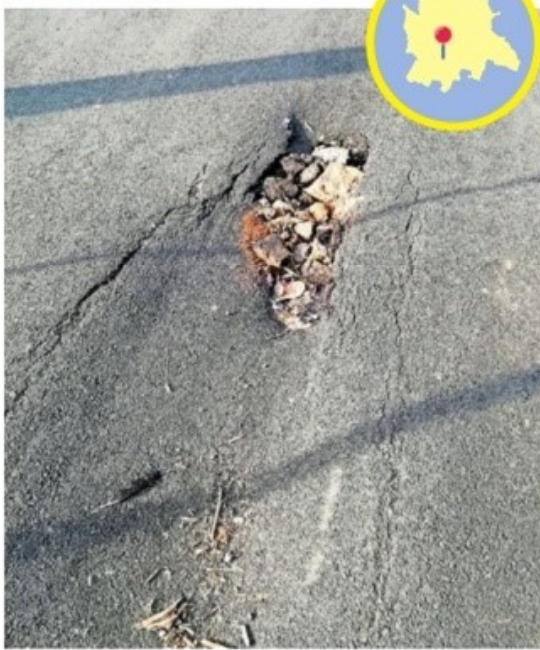
Sinkholes need fixing

Kothanur

Sinkholes in the newly laid road at Kempegowda Layout, Kothanur need attention.

Ghost car

Basaweshwaranagar

Car abandoned for months is causing inconvenience for the general public on 8th Main Road, Basaweshwaranagar.

The light's back!

Sadashivanagar

Thanks to Bangalore Mirror, the BBMP has fixed the high mast light at Sadashivanagar. We had earlier posted about it in this column.

Schools hurry to get all on campus vaxxed

Some are requesting BBMP to conduct on-campus vaccination drives ASAP

❚ Garima Prasher
c-garima.prasher@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

As the number of covid cases goes up, schools are scrambling to get the unvaccinated population on their campuses jabbed. They are reaching out to BBMP and requesting an on-campus drive as soon as possible. Some are also going for rapid antigen tests done on the students in their bid to arrest the spread of the virus early.

"We are conducting the drive today. We expedited the process as the number of COVID cases is on the rise. While around 90% of our students eligible for the vaccine were already jabbed, we have conducted the drive for the rest 10% of them. With this drive, we now have all the children above 12 years on our campus vaccinated," said MN Natesh Kumar, principal of Gurukul International School.

With many campuses reporting children with mild fever and other flu-like symptoms, there is a demand for rapid antigen tests too.

"We are getting around three to four students every day that are being diagnosed with a slight temperature, cough and cold. While they are being isolated and sent back home, we do not want to take any chances. Although this can be due to the monsoon season, we would like to rule out covid and thus have requested BBMP to conduct the rapid antigen test too," said the principal of a city-based school.

The school management says that the test was done during the third wave as well and it helped ar-

Kids aged 12 to 14 years were getting Corbevax vaccine dose

rest the spread of the virus then.

"We got it done during the third wave as well and had identified four students. Required measures were taken immediately and the spread was arrested in time. We do not want to take any chances this time around as well," said the principal.

Schools are also collecting data on parents' vaccination and calling those not vaccinated yet to motivate them to get the vaccine as soon as possible.

"We are trying to expedite the on-campus drive with the help of BBMP. The surge in the number of covid cases has coincided with the onset of monsoon. Thus, while there are many children with flu-like symptoms, it is difficult to understand the root cause unless tested. Although their recovery rate is fast, we want to ensure that the children are safe on campus. There is no resistance from the parents so we are putting in the request," said Kiran Prasad, principal, Vidya Vaibhav Public School.

However, some city schools say they are still struggling to get children vaccinated due to shot-shy parents.

"We recently conducted an on-campus vaccination drive for 12–18-year-olds in association with BBMP. But some students did not turn. There are still some parents who do not want to get their children vaccinated. We have asked our in-house doctors to call these parents and convince them," said Anita Bijesh, principal, Delhi Public School, Bangalore South.

> ❝ **We are getting around three to four students every day that are being diagnosed with a slight temperature, cough and cold**
>
> —Principal of city-based school

DID YOU KNOW?

The Kempegowda Museum was established in the year 2011 and is dedicated to Yelahanka chieftain Kempegowda (1513–1569) who was the founder of Bangalore . The museum is located on the first floor of Mayo Hall. The museum has Kempegowda's statue as well as posters and pictures of forts, temples, reservoirs and inscriptions from his time. The building has been painted in the Cantonment colours of red and white. An interesting experience of the museum is the floor. Visitors to the museum will actually be walking on a magnified heritage map of 19th century Bangalore. The map is spread across the wooden floor and laminated with a glass slab. The map has been procured from the Mythic Society and is drawn by the British.

Road to perdition

Road in Gayatri Nagar was dug to lay underground pipes but never repaired; residents fume at authority's irresponsibility

The stretch is unpaved, making it unsafe for walking and driving

Shreyashi Mukherjee
mybangaloremirror
@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

In Gayatri Nagar, stepping outside has become a constant ordeal for residents, thanks to the road that was dug up for laying underground pipes but never repaired.

Residents say that simply commuting or walking in the neighbourhood is a stressful activity and vehicles constantly break down due to the jagged surface. Authorities are simply not bothered, they complain.

The residents say that the road conditions are so poor that it becomes difficult to commute by vehicles. A staff person working at Varalakshmi Nursing Home and Veena Medical Centre, said, "For the last two months, the road has been like this. The contractors said that they were digging it for laying pipes; but after that, they did not bother to refill the holes. It is causing a lot of problems for us."

He added that because of the gaping spaces, ambulances cannot enter their nursing home. Staff of the institute were also unable to park or take out their vehicles. Ashok M, another resident of the neighbourhood added that the road has become so poor that commuting has become a difficult task.

"My bike broke down twice. There is no effort taken by authorities concerned." The residents say that while they have no issues with development work; however, they want a proper timeline for such activities and they also want the work to be finished within the timeline.

Nitesh Chandra Shekhar, another resident, said, "We all will support development work, but it needs to be completed on time also. We have been waiting for this road to be done soon but nothing has happened.

There is so much traffic because of the bad road. People get stuck here for hours."

The residents also say that they have tried to complain to the authorities, but they did not get any response from them.

> **My bike broke down twice. There is just no effort by the authorities concerned**
>
> – Ashok M, a resident

Covid clusters jump to 18 in Bengaluru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE number of Covid-19 clusters in Bengaluru has increased to 18, with 12 being reported from Mahadevapura zone and two from Yelahanka zone. Except for two schools in Dasarahalli, the remaining clusters in both these zones are found in apartments and villas. While 11 clusters in Mahadevapura have less than five cases, one cluster in a Mahadevapura apartment complex and one in a school in Dasarahalli have five to 14 cases each.

On Friday, the number of cases reported from across Karnataka was 634, down from 833 on Thursday. The number of deaths was two. On Thursday, the city's day positivity rate touched 4.3 per cent, with 791 cases, the highest in the past 21 days. The lowest positivity rate in the past 21 days was 1.1 per cent, with just 158 cases on May 31.

WHO'LL BELL THE CAT OVER CLEANING DOG POOP?

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

DESPITE efforts to enforce the 'scoop the poop' initiative in which the dog excreta must be cleaned from public parks by dog owners who must carry biodegradable bags, the direction has remained on paper.

Although some apartment owners have suggested that pourakarmikas be deployed to keep the parks clean as even stray dogs excrete there, the BBMP has dumped the suggestions.

Talking to TNIE, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath said that the pourakarmikas are not here to clean the excreta of irresponsible dog owners and stressed that manual scavenging is a crime.

He said that stray dogs mark their territory but the pet owners must show some responsibility. "We would intensify information, education and communication among the city dwellers who take their dogs to public parks to get them relieved," Girinath said.

Welcoming his suggestions, Vidya Goggi, governing council member, Bengaluru apartment federation said that some apartments have provisioned additional poop bins, while in other places, dedicated space is marke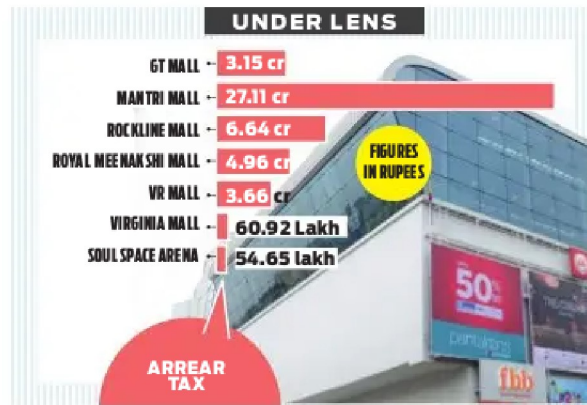d for pet excretion, after which housekeeping staff clears the poop. "It was suggested that posters be put up in and around parks and other neighbourhoods to educate citizens. In fact, many ward committee, citizen groups on WhatsApp have used this network to spread the message. Now the department has to step up to create such communication and engage in educating the citizens. That leaves management of stray dogs' poops. For this, dog lovers who feed stray dogs can take this responsibility. This will lower the burden of pourakarmikas, and ensure parks are clean," said Goggi.

> Despite the direction in this regard, many pet owners come to Cubbon Park and leave without cleaning the poop left behind on the park premises. I have dogs at home, but If I get any time, I will clear the poop and put it in a bin or in remote areas. It is common sense — S Umesh, president, Cubbon Park Walkers Association

UNDER LENS

GT MALL	3.15 cr
MANTRI MALL	27.11 cr
ROCKLINE MALL	6.64 cr
ROYAL MEENAKSHI MALL	4.96 cr
VR MALL	3.66 cr
VIRGINIA MALL	60.92 Lakh
SOUL SPACE ARENA	54.65 lakh

FIGURES IN RUPEES

ARREAR TAX

7 malls default on property tax payment

Dues amount to ₹46.7cr; Revenue officials given tax target for this fiscal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

BRUHAT Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has so far collected Rs 2,093 crore in property tax, though seven malls among 44 are yet to pay Rs 46.70 crore in taxes, said RL Deepak, Special Commissioner, BBMP (Revenue). In 2020-21, tax collected was ₹1,614 crore, while in 2021-22, it touched Rs 1,395 crore, he said.

Deepak told reporters that GT World Mall, Mantri Mall in Malleswaram, Rockline Mall, Royal Meenakshi Mall, Virginia Mall, Soul Space Arena and VR Mall are the defaulters. "We are enforcing collection of tax on the defaulters, but some are involved in litigation. We had managed to close Mantri Mall a couple of times, but they approached court to seek time," he said.

"Revenue officials were asked to work towards the property tax target for this fiscal. This time, we have given targets to teams to collect current/ due tax by property owners and a performance audit will be conducted soon by the BBMP Chief Commissioner. There was a training session for 800 revenue officers on how to reach targets and handle situations," Deepak added.

Drone survey on defaulters

To improve property tax collection, the Palike hit on the idea of using drones for survey, with reports of owners deviating from the building plan and submitting false documents to escape the tax net. "The Palike will try to achieve the target set by the Revenue department and also verify the properties submitted by owners," said Deepak, adding that the drone survey may uncover false details submitted by owners.

Penalty for flexes, banners
The Commissioner also came down heavily on mushrooming flexes and banners in Bengaluru, despite High Court orders against such defacement. He said the Palike will take serious action against banners placed in public places, especially welcome banners to political leaders. He warned that those found wishing people via banners will have to pay a penalty. The issue was discussed as many city leaders have put up banners, in anticipation of PM Modi's visit.

Only government advertising is allowed in particular areas, he said. "At a few places, banners have come up only with permission from the Chief Commissioner."

DURATION OF PANDEMIC	CASES REPORTED	DEATHS	DISCHARGES	B'luru Urban: 610	Chamarajanagar: 0	Dharwad: 1	Kolara: 0	Shivamogga: 1
2 YEARS, 101 DAYS	■ 634 ◄ 833	■ 2 | ◄ 1 POSITIVITY RATE ■ 5.93% | ◄ 5.93%	■ 503 | ◄ 458 MORTALITY RATE ■ 1.01% | ◄ 1.01%	B'luru Rural: 2	Chikkaballapur: 0	Gadag: 0	Koppal: 0	Tumakuru: 1
	TALLY		RECOVERY RATE	Bagalkot: 0	Chikkamagaluru: 0	Hassan: 1	Mandya: 0	Udupi: 3
■ TODAY ◄ YESTERDAY	■ 39,59,458 ◄ 39,58,824	ACTIVE CASES ■ 4,500 ◄ 4,371	■ 98.87% ◄ 98.88%	Ballari: 2	Chitradurga: 0	Haveri: 0	Mysuru: 5	U Kannada: 3
				Belagavi: 1	D Kannada: 7	Kalaburagi: 1	Raichur: 0	Vijayapura: 0
				Bidar: 0	Davanagere: 0	Kodagu: 0	Ramanagara: 0	Yadgir: 0

BBMP may turn to sewer samples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WITH Covid cases surging in Bengaluru city, BBMP may intensify its 'Environmental Survey' wherein sewer samples will be sent to labs to detect the viral load of Covid-19 from a particular area.

Special Commissioner Health, BBMP, Dr Trilok Chandra told TNIE that in the study that began last year, correlates with more cases are being reported from Mahadevapura zone.

"Sewage water samples have confirmed more viral load from areas, and hence, it becomes easy to focus and plan on blunting the spread. Patients staying in these areas may have passed on the virus through waste water, and the survey helps in better Covid management," said the officer. He also informed that the survey is not limited to only one aspect, that is Covid but also dengue, waterborne diseases and other infections which are primarily pertaining to communicable disease.

The consortium of companies is involved in the survey. Doctors were present at the function to mark the first year anniversary of the survey.

Listeners at high risk of catching Covid virus

IISc researchers find threat of infection low for people with moderate height

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN an interesting study, IISc researchers have found that the risk of getting infected with SARS-CoV-2 was higher when one person acted as a passive listener and didn't engage in a two-way conversation. They also showed that factors like height difference between the people talking and the quantity of aerosol released from their mouths also plays an important role in viral transmission. Interestingly, they found that the risk of infection was low with moderate height.

The team of researchers is from the Department of Aerospace Engineering, IISc, along with collaborators from the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (NORDITA) in Stockholm and the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS) in Bengaluru. Their study was published in the journal Flow.

They used new computer simulations on how speech droplets or aerosols move in the air space between interacting people.

According to a release by IISc, the team visualised scenarios in which two maskless people are standing two, four or six feet apart, and talking to each other for about a minute, and then estimated the rate and extent of spread of the speech aerosols from one to another. Their simulations showed that the risk of getting infected was higher when one person only listened and didn't participate in the conversation.

Sourabh Diwan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering, and one of the corresponding authors, explains that "very few studies have looked at aerosol transport by speech as a possible mode of asymptomatic transmission".

To analyse speech flow, he and his team modified a computer code they had originally developed to study the movement and behaviour of cumulus clouds – puffy cotton-like clouds that are usually seen on a sunny day. The code, called Megha-5, was written by S Ravichandran from NORDITA, the corresponding author on the paper. The analysis incorporated the possibility of viral entry through the eyes and mouth in determining the risk of infection.

Post this finding, the team plans to focus on simulating differences in the loudness of speakers' voices and presence of ventilation sources in their vicinity, to see what effect they can have on viral transmission.

More time to file application for Covid compensation

Bengaluru: The state government has extended the deadline for filing applications by legal custodians seeking compensation for Covid deaths. For Covid deaths before March 20, 2022, the application deadline has been extended from 60 days from the date of death to June 30. Following directions from the Supreme Court, Revenue Department (disaster management) deputy secretary M Sathyavathi issued the order. In the order, she also clarified that if the name of any Covid victim gets left out from the compensation list provided by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, they can approach the grievance committee chaired by the additional commissioner of their respective district, or the BBMP joint commissioner in Bengaluru. ENS

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike

N.R. Square, Bengaluru - 560 002.

Precautionary Measures to Prevent
Acute Gastroenteritis/ Cholera

Acute Gastroenteritis/Cholera cases are reported every year and may increase during summer. Recently, due to heavy rains, chances of drinking water contamination could be there. The Public are hereby requested to take the below mentioned precautionary measures (Do's & Don'ts) to avoid spreading of the disease to other areas.

✓ Things to be done

- Always drink Boiled & Cooled Water
- Public Taps and Places to be kept clean
- Fresh Food to be consumed
- Before eating, hands to be washed cleanly by soap & water
- Clean your Hands with soap after using the toilet
- The Food prepared needs to be covered always so that the ants, insects do not sit on it
- Keep your Home and surrounding Environment clean
- Every 15 days clean your drinking water storage tanks with Bleaching Powder

✗ Things to be avoided

- Do not drink water from dirty taps
- Avoid consumption of road side unhygienic eatables / cut fruits
- The Food items which have been exposed to dust, flies, insects need to be avoided
- Waste should not be thrown on road side, foot path and drainages as it attracts the insects and may lead to Acute Gastroenteritis

If there are symptoms of Vomiting, Loose motion, please contact your nearest Health Centre.

For More Information Contact the following Phone No's:

Health Officer (East) 080 22975852 | Health Officer (South) 080 22975750 | Health Officer (West) 080 22975650
Health Officer (Mahadevapura) 080 28512301 | Health Officer (Bommanahalli) 080 25732447 | Health Officer (Rajarajeshwarinagar) 080 28600208
Health Officer (Yelahanka) 080 22975936 | Health Officer (Dasarahalli) 080 28396833 | Control Room: 080-22660000, 22221188.

TOLL FREE No.: 1533

"To try and achieve the Progress in all Personal and Collective activities it is the duty of each & every Indian Citizen to abide as per the Indian Constitutional Basic Rights"

Rakesh Singh, I.A.S.,
Administrator, BBMP

Tushar Giri Nath, I.A.S.,
Chief Commissioner, BBMP

'Covaxin Safe for Kids Aged 2-18, Found as Effective as in Adults'

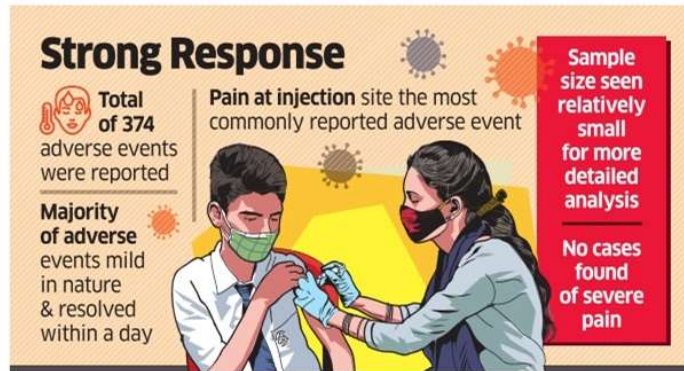## No serious adverse event reported during study, results published in Lancet show

Teena.Thacker
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Biotech's Bharat Biotech's locally developed Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin, has proven to be safe, well-tolerated and highly immunogenic in children aged 2-18 years in phase 2/3 trials, according to the results of the study published in the Lancet medical journal. The clinical trials were conducted between June 2021 and September 2021 and showed "safety, less reactogenic, and robust immunogenicity", it said.

The report said neutralising antibody responses were at least similar to those observed in adults in whom the vaccine had been proven to be efficacious against symptomatic and asymptomatic Covid-19.

The data were submitted to India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation in October 2021 and the vaccine has received its approval for emergency use in children aged 6-18 years.

"Safety of the vaccine is critical for children and we are glad to share that Covaxin has now proven data for safety and immunogenicity in children," Bharat Biotech chairman Krishna Ella said in a statement.

"We have now achieved our goal of developing a safe and efficacious Covid-19 vaccine for adults and children, for primary immunisation and booster doses, making Covaxin a universal vaccine. It has proven to be a highly safe vaccine based on data from more than 50 million doses administered to children in India," Ella said.

No serious adverse events were reported during the study, according to the Lancet report.

A total of 374 adverse events were reported, and a majority of these were mild in nature and resolved within a day. Pain at the injection site was the most commonly reported adverse event, it said.

The study had enrolled 526 children in three groups. The sample size is considered relatively small

Strong Response

Total of 374 adverse events were reported

Majority of adverse events mild in nature & resolved within a day

Pain at injection site the most commonly reported adverse event

Sample size seen relatively small for more detailed analysis

No cases found of severe pain

FDA Clears Vax for Kids 5 yrs & Under

NEW YORK: The US Food and Drug Administration on Friday authorised two Covid-19 vaccines for children aged 5 and under, opening the door for vaccinating millions of the youngest American children.

The agency authorised Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine for children aged 6 months to 4 years, and Moderna's shot for those 6 months to 17 years. The Pfizer vaccine is already authorised for use in children and teens over the age of 5. **—Reuters**

for more detailed analysis.

"Vaccination was well tolerated, with no differences in reactogenicity between the three age groups, and no serious adverse events, deaths, or withdrawals due to an adverse event," the report said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

'Long Covid Risk Less with Omicron than Delta Variant'

PTI

London: The Omicron variant of Covid-19 is less likely to cause long Covid risk than the Delta variant, new research in the UK has found.

Analysis by researchers from King's College London of data from the ZOE Covid Symptom study app published on Thursday in a letter to The Lancet journal found the odds of experiencing long Covid were between 20-50% less during the Omicron period versus the Delta period, depending on age and time since vaccination.

Long Covid is defined by the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines as having new or ongoing Covid symptoms four weeks or more after the start of disease. "The Omicron variant appears substantially less likely to cause long Covid than previous variants, but still one in 23 people who catch Covid-19 go on to have symptoms for more than four weeks," said lead author of the study, Claire Steves from King's College London. "Given the numbers of people affected it's important that we continue to support them at work, at home and within the NHS [National Health Service]," she said.

CORONA METER

CASES ON FRIDAY	6,010^

ACTIVE CASES
66,192 (+2,078)°

Recovered 42.69 m (+3,928)	Deaths 524,833 (+4)

TOTAL CASES	43,279,343

Source: State bulletins, PTI; ^14 states/UTs (excl. Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka, UP, Rajasthan & Punjab) as of 7:32 PM; °net of recoveries/deaths (Change since 12am, 17 Jun)

4 Main Metros	CASES ON FRI	ACTIVE CASES
Mumbai	2255	13304
Delhi*	1323	3948
B'luru Urban*	791	4199
Chennai	286	1311

Source: State bulletins; *Thu

VACCINE DOSES ADMINISTERED IN INDIA
1960.21 M (+1.41 m)

1st dose...	2nd dose
1014.52 m (93.58%)	904.72 m (83.45%)

(% 12yr+ population)

BOOSTER DOSES
TOTAL **40.97 m**

Source: Dashboard.cowin.gov.in, 07:32 PM

GLOBAL COUNT

Total Cases 543.23 M	Vaccine Doses Administered 12014.80 Million (204 countries/areas)
Deaths 6,338,396	
Recovered 518.43 M	

Source: worldometers.info, 07:32 PM

NEW INFECTIONS IN 5 WORST-HIT COUNTRIES*

Germany	89,151
US	76,023
Taiwan	63,182
France	53,081
Italy	36,573

*as of Thu