

**BEFORE THE HON'BLE KARNATAKA HIGH COURT  
AT BENGALURU**

**Interlocutory Application No. \_\_\_\_\_ of 2021**

**in**

**Writ Petition No. 6435 of 2020 (PIL) and Connected Petitions**

**Between:**

Mohammed Arif Jameel & Anr.

... Petitioners

**And:**

Union of India & Ors.

... Respondents

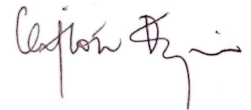
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Place: Bangalore

Date: 04.05.2021



Advocate for AICCTU

Clifton D' Rozario

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**INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATION FILED BY AICCTU UNDER ARTICLE 226 OF  
THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA SEEKING DIRECTIONS**

It is respectfully submitted on behalf of AICCTU as follows:

1. The instant application is being filed by All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), seeking for directions from this Hon'ble Court in regard to the lack of availability of oxygen and the untimely demise of persons due to the same.
2. It is submitted that the over the last 24 hours,

<b>Place</b>	<b>Number of persons and details</b>	<b>Newsreport</b>
Kolar	4 person died in Kolar	Article dated 01.05.2021 titled " <i>Karnataka: Even tier-2 cities and towns reel under oxygen shortage</i> " published in the Times of India, placed as <b>Annexure – A.</b>
Mysuru	4 person died in Mysuru	Article dated 01.05.2021 titled " <i>Karnataka: Even tier-2 cities and towns reel under oxygen shortage</i> " published in the Times of India
Other districts	4 person died in other districts	Article dated 01.05.2021 titled " <i>Karnataka: Even tier-2 cities and towns reel under oxygen shortage</i> " published in the Times of India

Chamarajanagar	24 persons death of patients at Chamarajanagar Institute of Medical Sciences on 03.05.2021	Article appearing in Deccan Herald dated 03.05.2021, placed as <b>Annexure – B.</b>
Kalaburgi	2 persons allegedly died of oxygen shortage at Anand Hospital, Kalaburagi on 03.05.2021	Article appearing in Deccan Herald dated 03.05.2021, placed as <b>Annexure – C.</b>
Bengaluru	2 patients died in Bengaluru's Arka Hospital in the wee hours of 04.05.2021 due to lack of oxygen	Newsminute dated 04.05.2021 " <i>Bengaluru hospital runs out of medical oxygen, two patients die</i> ", placed as <b>Annexure – D.</b>

3. It is submitted that several hospitals across Bengaluru have reported that they have oxygen shortage:
- a. Medax hospital, RT Nagar
  - b. Rajarajeshwari Medical Hospital
  - c. Arka Hospital
  - d. Supra Multispeciality Hospital in J.P. Nagar
  - e. Chaitanya Medical Centre in Yelahanka New Town. Newsreports appearing in the Hindu dated 04.05.2021 "Oxygen shortage: Many hospitals in Bengaluru stop admitting COVID-19 patients" is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – E.**
  - f. Rajmahal Vilas Hospital, Sanjaynagar. A letter issued by Rajmahal Vilas Hospital, Sanjaynagar seeking for the provision of oxygen dated 03.05.2021 is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – F.**
  - g. Mathru Hospital in Kengeri. A tweet put up on twitter by Petlee Peter is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – G.**
  - h. Venkateshwara hospital. A tweet with video put up on twitter by Times Now is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – H.**
  - i. Akshaya Hospital. A tweet with video put up on twitter by Times Now is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – J.**
  - j. Railway Hospital, Bengaluru had stated that they were running short of oxygen. Newsreport appearing Times of India dated 30.04.2021 is placed herewith and marked as **Annexure – K.**
4. It is submitted that 9 Districts depend on neighbouring districts for the provision of oxygen, in the absence of an oxygen bottling plant. These are Gadag,

Chikkaballapur, CHitradurga, Bidar, Yadgir, Chamarajangar, Kodago, Manya and Udupi. A newsrept "*Lack of oxygen bottling units leaves nine dists gasping for breath*" appearing in the Deccan Herald dated 04.05.2021 is placed herewith and produced as **Annexure – L.**

5. It is submitted that a very serious consequence of the oxygen shortage has also arisen. Reportedly, an internal document from the Chief Secretary to DCs across the state has cautioned against increase of COVID facilities that would require higher oxygen supplies. The stage of full utilization of available quantity has been reached on 27/28.04.2021, and the quantity available for utilization is 665 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen. As per the news report, before increasing facilities, clearance from the Additional Chief Secretary should be sought. Whereas there is a requirement of more beds and facilities, districts have been told to refrain from increasing facilities in view of oxygen shortage. A true and correct copy of the article dated 03.05.2021 titled "*Oxygen crisis, keep status quo on infra: Order*" is produced herewith and marked as **Annexure – M.**
6. It is submitted that this Hon'ble Court in order dated 17.04.2021 directed as follows:

*"10. The written submissions record that there is no shortage of oxygen throughout the State. But, the State Government must consistently monitor the availability of adequate oxygen supply on an hourly basis."*
7. It is submitted that the Hon'ble Supreme Court has repeatedly reiterated the rights of those whose fundamental rights have been violated by the State to compensation.
8. It is submitted that hence this application is being filed seeking for appropriate remedies.

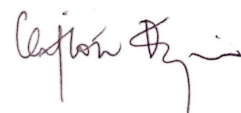
### **PRAYERS**

In the facts and circumstances of the matter, the Applicant most respectfully prays that the Hon'ble Court may be pleased to direct the respondents to:

- A. Direct the respondent to ensure the regular oxygen supply to all Covid hospitals across the State as per their needs.
- B. Direct the respondents to ensure the provision of compensation to the legal heirs of those persons who suffered an untimely demise due to the lack of oxygen
- C. Direct the respondent to monitor the availability of adequate oxygen supply on an hourly basis

Place: Bangalore

Date: 04.05.2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clifton D' Rozario'.

Advocate for AICCTU

Clifton D' Rozario

Annex - A  
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Printed from

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

## Karnataka: Even tier-2 cities and towns reel under oxygen shortage

TNN | May 1, 2021, 09:06 AM IST



**BENGALURU:** Not just Bengaluru, but several smaller cities and towns have also been hit by oxygen shortage amid the surge in Covid-19 cases.

At least a dozen deaths have been reported — four in Kolar, four in Mysuru and four in three other districts — allegedly due to oxygen scarcity.

According to health department officials, till recently most districts were self-sufficient when it comes to oxygen, but with cases spiking by the day, hospitals, especially private ones, are under stress.

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"If cases continue to rise at this rate, the situation may just go out of hand like it is in Bengaluru, and there may be more deaths in districts too," said a worried health officer monitoring oxygen supply.

6

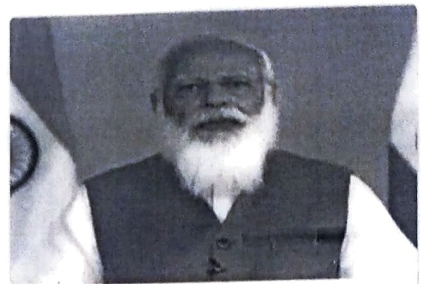
## ELECTION BRIEFS

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### **Bengal saved India today: Mamata Banerjee on landslide victory**

"It is the victory of the people of Bengal, the victory of democracy. Bengal has saved India



### **PM Modi congratulates Mamata, Vijayan, Stalin for poll win**

PM Modi on Sunday congratulated West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on her party's win in the

After the pandemic outbreak last year, districts like Mysuru, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwad, Mandya and Shivamogga had ramped up oxygen supply infrastructure to face any eventuality, but some districts failed to follow suit due to lack of funds. The technical advisory committee had last November suggested the government increase the number of oxygenated beds in the districts ahead of the second wave in April-May, but it took half-hearted measures. "Except Dharwad, all other districts ignored the suggestion and they are now paying the price," official sources said.

The government is focusing on supply of oxygen to major government hospitals, but a large number of patients are admitted in taluk and private hospitals of several cities where the oxygen crisis is deeper, health department officials said.



2

Private hospital managements are finding it very difficult to handle the situation. With each critically ill hospitalised patient needing up to 10 jumbo cylinders a day, hospitals have a daunting task at hand. "We used to have supplies for six days, now they are only able to maintain 3-4 days of stock. It creates a panic situation if your oxygen stock is about to get over and the supply hasn't reached you," said a senior doctor from a reputed hospital in Mysuru.

The government expects oxygen supply to improve "very soon" as the Centre has allocated some 800 million tonnes. "From 750 tonnes of oxygen a day in March to 2,000 tonnes now, the demand has gone up phenomenally, putting a lot of stress on our supply chain logistics," said a health official.

"It's not only about shortage of oxygen. Required medicines are also not being supplied. We will be forced to close hospitals if medicine and oxygen supply don't meet our requirements," said a representative of private hospitals.

Despite a government cap on the cost of cylinders, price has increased from about Rs 350-400 to Rs 1,500-3,000 a cylinder. At a review meeting on Thursday, chief minister BS Yediyurappa directed deputy commissioners of all districts to carry out an oxygen audit in all district hospitals, underlining the need to reduce oxygen wastage.

Annex -

3

...e / Oxygen shortage claims 24 lives in Chamarajanagar

8

## Oxygen shortage claims 24 lives at Chamarajanagar hospitals

While 23 deaths were reported from the District Covid Hospital, one patient died at a private hospital at Kamagere in Hanur taluk



DHNS, Chamarajanagar, MAY 04 2021, 01:05 IST | UPDATED: MAY 04 2021, 03:19 IST





Bodies being shifted in ambulances at the District Covid Hospital in Chamarajanagar on Monday. DH Photo

In yet another hospital tragedy in the second wave of the pandemic, 24 patients died at two hospitals in Chamarajanagar district allegedly due to oxygen shortage. While 23 deaths were reported from the District Covid Hospital, one patient died at a private hospital at Kamagere in Hanur taluk.

The district administration and the state government denied this and claimed that 24 people died over a period of 24 hours due to Covid-19 and other comorbidities. "Not all deaths were because of oxygen shortage," officials said.

Health Minister K Sudhakar, who reached Chamarajanagar after the incident, said according to primary reports by the district administration, health department and hospital, only three deaths were due to oxygen shortage.

### **Read | Wasn't informed about oxygen shortage, says Chamarajanagar MP**

The Covid hospital has 24 ventilators, 53 ICU beds and 55 oxygenated beds. All the beds were occupied, sources said. The 6,000-litre oxygen plant that was installed on the premises a few days ago can sustain the needs of the hospital for one and a half days. Liquid oxygen is supplied from Ballari.

After the supplies ran dry on Sunday night, cylinders were being used for the patients. Cylinders from Mysuru were supposed to reach Chamarajanagar by 9 pm. The delay is said to be the reason

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of the deceased held a protest outside the hospital, seeking compensation. Following, District Judge S S Puri visited the hospital and held discussions with Deputy Commissioner M R Ravi.



Officials in Mysuru denied charges that the administration failed to supply oxygen to the neighbouring Chamarajanagar district. They claimed 250 cylinders were sent to Chamarajanagar till Sunday midnight.

**Assembly Elections 2021 | Catch all the news updates here**

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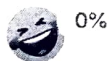
Karnataka

COVID-19

Coronavirus

Chamarajanagar

What is your reaction?



Annex - C  
①①

# 2 patients die of oxygen shortage in Kalaburagi

**KALABURAGI, DHNS:** Two Covid-19 patients allegedly died of oxygen shortage at a private hospital here on Monday.

Anand Hospital manager Anand said a man and a woman breathed their last as they could not get the required oxygen on time.

A total of 32 Covid patients are undergoing treatment in the hospital.

12

Become a Member

Arka - 1

# Bengaluru hospital runs out of medical oxygen, two patients die

The hospital had put out a request and had received help around 4 am, but two people had lost their lives by then.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE/PTI

NEWS COVID-19 | TUESDAY, MAY 04, 2021 - 09:01

Soumya Chatterjee Follow @CSoumya21



Lack of medical oxygen resulted in the death of two coronavirus patients in Bengaluru's Arka Hospital in the wee hours of May 4. Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) Yelahanka health officer Dr Bhagyalakshmi confirmed the development to TNM. Further details are awaited. A total of 45 patients were said to be admitted in the hospital, while the number of patients needing medical oxygen is yet to be known.

According to preliminary information, the hospital had put out an SOS request on May 3 evening and the situation turned critical by 8 pm. By the time adequate help arrived at 4 am, it was too late. The deaths at Arka Hospital in Yelahanka come as at least three hospitals in the city sounded distress calls in need of urgent oxygen supply. In those three instances, hospital authorities said that they got help from government and private players before the situation turned fatal.

Read: Just hours of oxygen left: Two Bengaluru hospitals sound SOS

In a large scale tragedy due to the same issue, 24 patients on ventilators succumbed due to lack of oxygen supply at the Chamarajanagar Institute of Medical Sciences (CIMS) on May 3, which is less than 200 km away from Bengaluru.

Also read: Karnataka: 24 COVID-19 patients die due to shortage of oxygen in govt hospital

13

Become a Member

Manufacturers. "At a meeting with six leading oxygen manufacturers, the Chief Minister told them to ensure uninterrupted and timely supply of allocated quantities of the gas to hospitals," a statement by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

The six companies – JSW Industrial Gases Ltd, Boruka Gases Ltd, Praxair India Ltd, Universal Air Products Ltd, Air Water India Ltd and Inox Belloxy Bellary – were told to reduce time taken to refill their tankers. Yeddiyurappa also told the manufacturers to use nitrogen and argon tankers to transport oxygen, and utilise services of LPG tanker drivers in case of emergency.

"The Chief Minister also instructed the concerned authorities, including police to provide a green corridor for faster movement of oxygen tankers to hospitals across the state," said the statement.

Officials manning toll gates within the state and at inter-state borders have been directed to clear movement of tankers without delay. The six manufacturers across the state have a combined capacity to produce 825 tonnes of medical oxygen per day.

The Union government has allocated the state 675 tonnes of oxygen per day, the statement said. In connection with this, the government has passed a circular to audit oxygen usage and asked all Deputy Commissioners and BBMP Commissioner to appoint camp officers in each oxygen refilling facility. They have been asked to keep a track of their daily receipt, oxygen balance stock on a daily basis.

Demand for oxygen has increased as Bengaluru being the epicenter of the caseload in the state had recorded 10 times the number of positive cases in April at 3.38 lakh compared to 31,886 cases in March.

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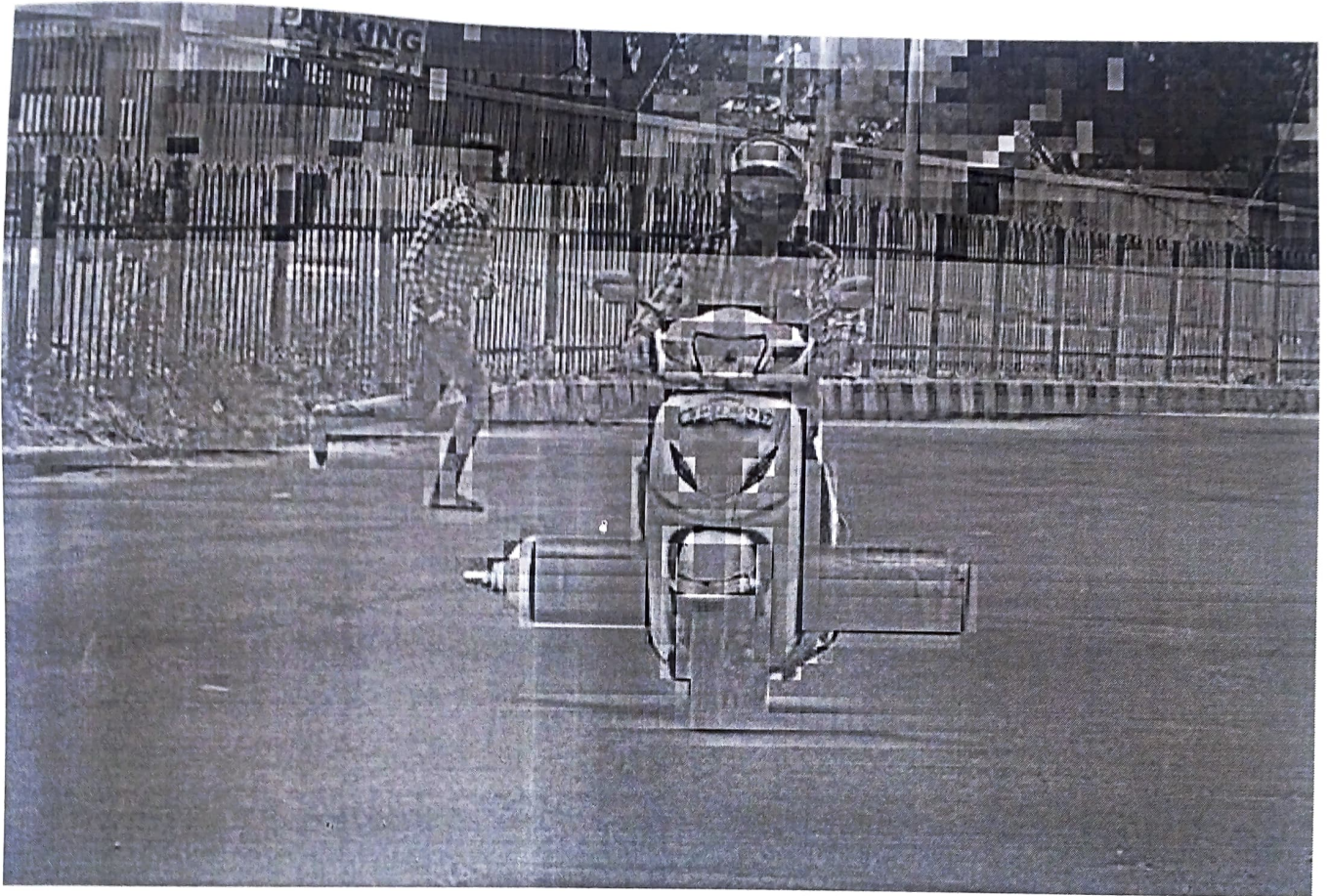
BENGALURU

# Oxygen shortage: Many hospitals in Bengaluru stop admitting COVID-19 patients

Afshan Yasmeen

BENGALURU, MAY 04, 2021 01:53 IST

UPDATED: MAY 04, 2021 10:27 IST



Oxygen shortage, which has been a major issue ever since the second wave of COVID-19 set in, continued to hit patients in the city with several hospitals asking them to shift to other facilities as they ran out of stock.

Many hospitals, except the corporate chain facilities, said they had stopped admitting COVID-19 patients even if they had beds as they do not have oxygen supply.

On Monday, at least 30 patients at Medax Hospital in Sultanpalya were asked to shift out as the hospital ran out of oxygen. The hospital's medical director, Srihari R. Shapur, gave in writing to the relatives of the 30 patients, seven of whom were in the ICU, to arrange for beds in other hospitals as the oxygen stock there was just enough to last till 5 p.m. on the day.

There was chaos near the hospital with the patients' relatives scrambling to ensure their dear ones got life support. Dr. Shapur told *The Hindu*, "We discharged five of the patients,



PLATINIUM

(13)

cluding two from the ICU, after they made arrangements elsewhere. We are still waiting for stocks. It is a horrible situation."

Soon after the shocking news of the Chamarajanagar deaths started pouring in, several hospitals in Bengaluru flagged the oxygen shortage issue with the government. Rajarajeshwari Medical College hospital on Mysuru Road, which had 200 patients on oxygen, said the hospital is running out of oxygen by 5 p.m. on Monday. The issue was resolved only by 8 p.m. when oxygen on the way to another hospital was diverted there.

Doctors at Supra Multispeciality Hospital in J.P. Nagar, which is also facing a similar situation, said the hospital had only three cylinders left for 35 patients. "Although we had been assured of supply in the afternoon itself, we are still waiting for stocks. We did not admit new COVID-19 patients on Monday and will continue to do so till we have enough stocks," said Vinay B.G., who runs the hospital. It was a similar situation at Chaitanya Medical Centre in Yelahanka New Town and several other such smaller facilities.

Prasanna H.M., president of the Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes' Association, attributed the problem to logistical issues in the supply chain. "Quantity is not an issue, but the problem lies in the supply chain. With very few supply tankers, the vendors are unable to visit the hospitals two or three times a day for refilling," he said.

"If the available quantity is utilised properly and the supply chain upgraded, the problem can be resolved. What we need now is uninterrupted supply of liquid oxygen to the suppliers and from them to the hospitals," Dr. Prasanna added.

Health Commissioner K.V. Trilok Chandra said most of the smaller hospitals run on cylinders that require frequent refilling. "The vendors are finding it difficult to visit the hospitals for refilling several times a day. We are trying to address the issue."

**Rajmahal Vilas Hos**

(Unit of Anjan Nursing Home Pvt. Ltd.)  
ISO 9001:2008 Certificate #Q1771/15)  
#13B AECs Layout, Sanjaynagar, BENGALURU

Hospital Front Desk 080 4266 4366, 9686 66 61 29  
Diagnostic Center 080 4266 4377, 9686 66 61 30  
Email info@rmvhospital.com  
CIN UB5110KA19B7PTC008138

(16)

ANH/BBMP/ 01

03/05/2021

To

Dr. Vedavathy  
BBMP East Zone  
Bengaluru

**Sub: Oxygen supply to RMV Hospital, Sanjaynagar, BLR-94**


Dear Madam,

This is in continuation with the telephonic talk Mr.Karthik , Co-Ordinator, Rajmahal Vilas Hospital had with you on 28 April and follow up calls made thereafter in connection with Oxygen supply to RMV Hospital, Sanjaynagar, BLR-94.

Universal air products is our vendor and despite our repeated request has not supplied liquid oxygen and we are personally going to the factory to get bulk type cylinder and B type cylinder filled up and even this is taking couple of days to get delivery. In this scenario managing 30 plus Covid patients (Both BBMP & Private patients) is becoming a challenge. We need your immediate intervention and assistance to tide over the situation.

Request you to escalate and help us in getting the Oxygen supply to RMV Hospital, Sanjaynagar.

Regards

  
Manager

RAJMAHAL VILAS HOSPITAL

# 13B, AECs Layout,

Sanjaynagar, Bengaluru-560 094

Ph:080-42664366, Fax:080-2341633

PLATINUM  
MED PAPER

17



**Petlee Peter**  
@petleepeter

### #SOS FOR OXYGEN

Mathru Hospital in Kengeri running out of oxygen soon. Home doctor pleads for urgent oxygen support for 6 six patients on ventilator who are at risk @TOIBengaluru @prajwalmanipal @mohitmrao @CMofKarnataka @mla\_sudhakar @BBMPCOMM @DHFwKA



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11:04 AM · May 4, 2021 · Twitter for Android

Annex - H  
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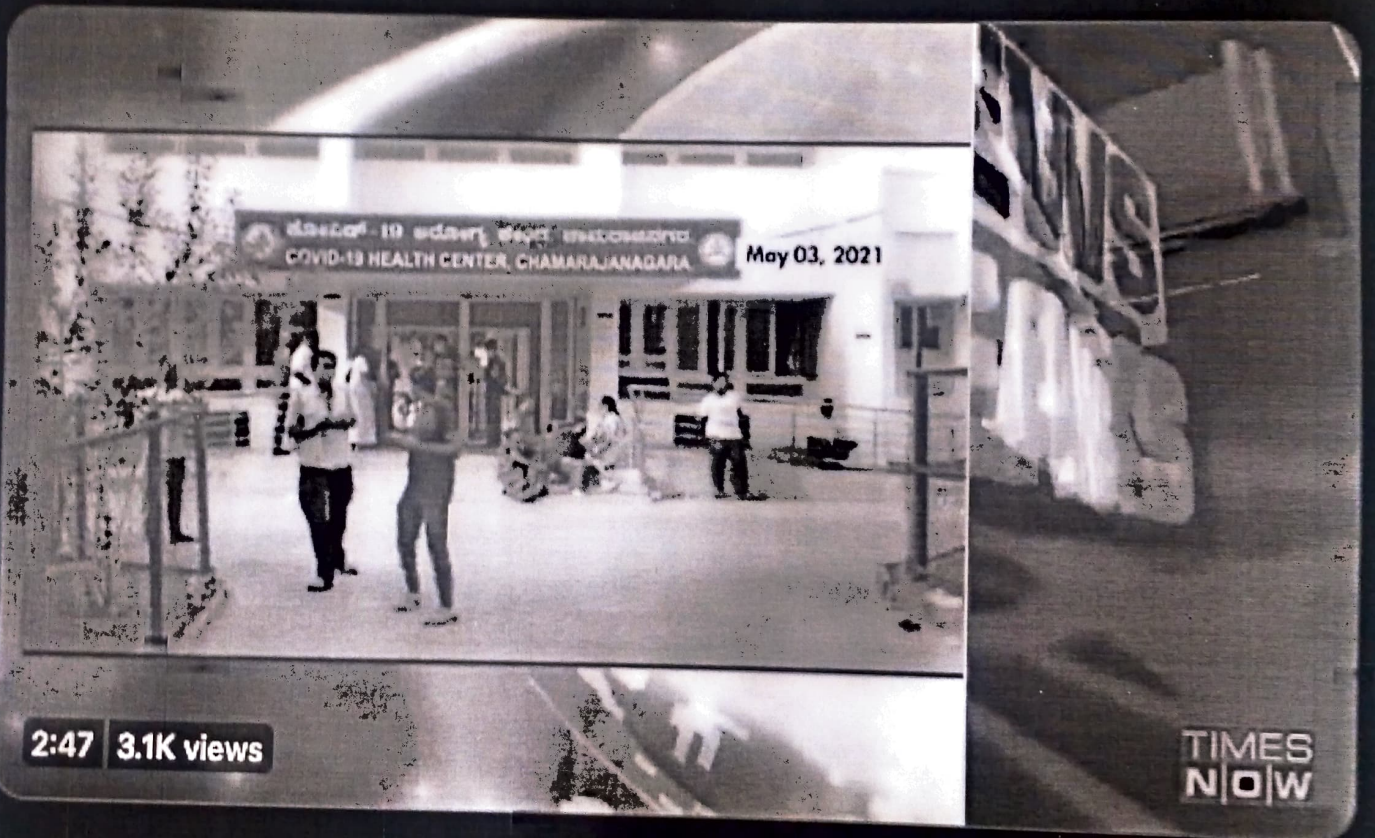
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**TIMES NOW** ✓  
@TimesNow

**#NewsAlert | 5 hospitals in Bengaluru send out SOS over shortage of oxygen supply.**

**Details by Deepak Bopanna. | #JantaMangeJawaab**



7:18 AM · May 4, 2021 · Twitter Media Studio - LiveCut

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Annex - J

19

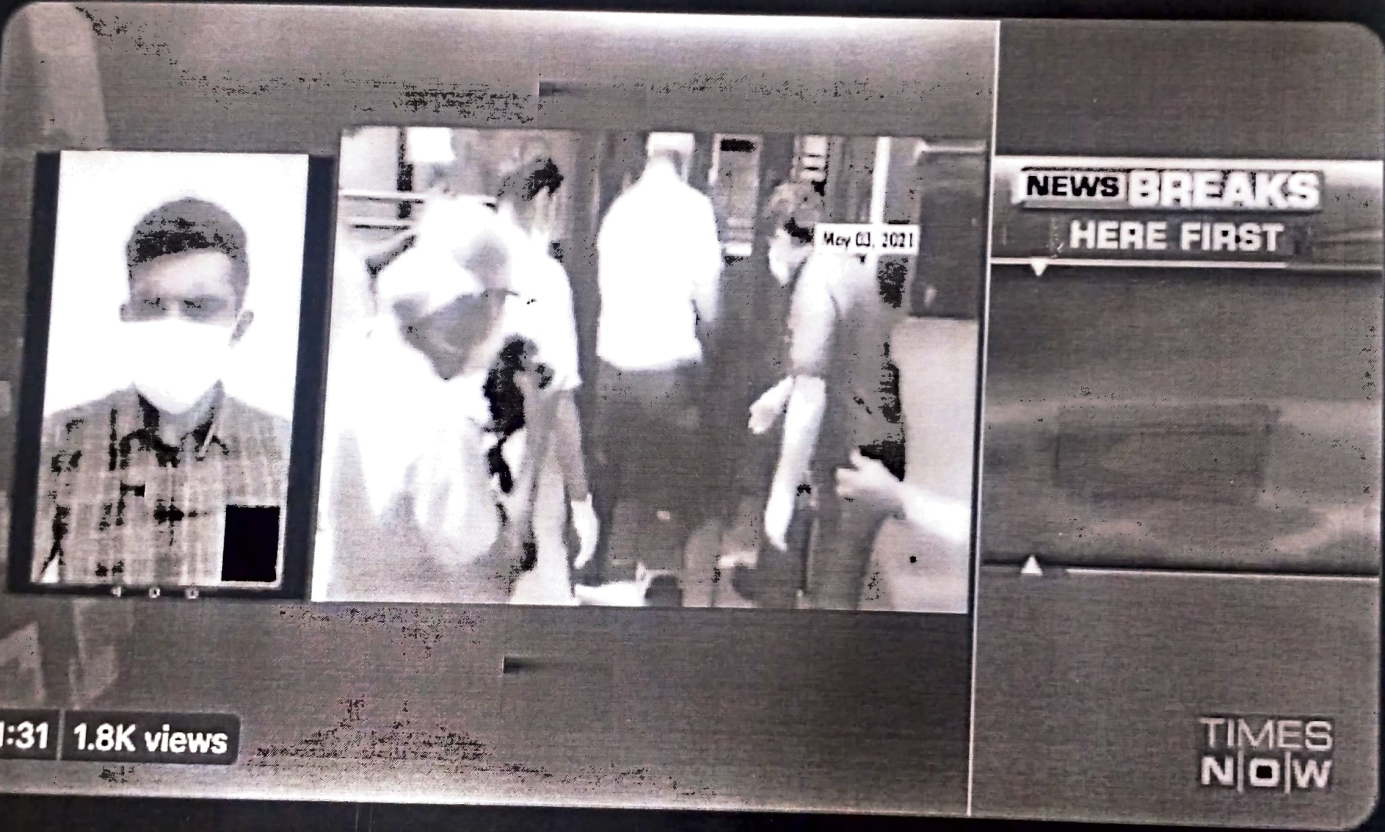
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#Newsalert | Akshaya Hospital in Bengaluru sends out SOS alarm over reported shortage of oxygen.

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Anax - k

(20)

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**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

## Bengaluru: Railway hospital sends out SOS for oxygen

TNN | Apr 30, 2021, 10:49 AM IST



BENGALURU: Faced with an acute shortage of oxygen at railway hospital in Bengaluru, the South Western Railway (SWR) sent an SOS to the Karnataka government on Thursday.

Sources said the SWR approached the state government as stock of medical oxygen was getting fastly depleted and 13 patients were on ventilators at the hospital.

Chief PRO of the SWR Aneesh Hegde confirmed it.

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"There was a delay from the oxygen supplier due to the high demand. But we are expected to resolve this by Thursday night itself. But the situation is not alarming" he said.

21

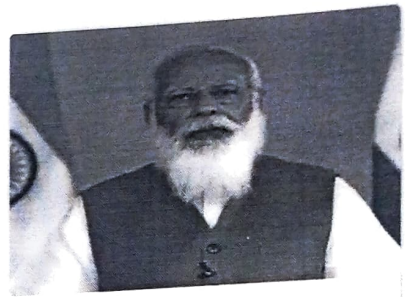
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## ELECTION BRIEFS



### **Bengal saved India today: Mamata Banerjee on landslide victory**

"It is the victory of the people of Bengal, the victory of democracy. Bengal has saved India



### **PM Modi congratulates Mamata, Vijayan, Stalin for poll win**

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Asked about the reports of 300 beds (with oxygen) of railways being underutilised, a senior SWR official said: "We are not getting even a single bed for our critical patients. We have about 800 positive cases in railways at Bengaluru division alone. Our own patients are waiting for days to get a bed".

Meanwhile, Bengaluru Central MP P C Mohan on Wednesday met Bengaluru divisional railway manager Ashok Kumar Verma and requested SWR to convert coaches into isolation centres.

22

"The SWR has already modified 68 coaches to accommodate 16 patients in each coach and 1,088 people in total," said Mohan.

"Bengaluru division is treating about 800 positive cases in-house without burdening the state government. These are isolation coaches and will be used by the state government if all the beds available in the Covid care centres are exhausted. Patients will be routed only through state government," said Verma.



Ann

23

## STATE

# Lack of oxygen bottling units leaves nine dists gasping for breath

## Yadgir gets its supply from Chennai; Mandya relies on Mysuru

SURAKSHA P  
BENGALURU, DHNS

A startling fact that emerged out of the Chamarajanagar tragedy is the absence of an oxygen bottling plant in several districts. As many as nine districts of Karnataka - Gadag, Chikballapur, Chitradurga, Bidar, Yadgir, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, Mandya and Udupi - rely on neighbouring districts for oxygen in the absence of a dedicated plant.

This increased dependency on neighbouring districts has led to uncertainty in supply as logistical issues like distance, time, condition of oxygen tankers and breakdowns have affected the timely delivery of oxygen.

Chitradurga, for example, relies on oxygen supply on Davangere. Chitradurga DHO Dr Palaksha C L, told DH, "We have a storage ca-

capacity of 6,200 litres at the district hospital. Even then we need oxygen refilling every alternate day from Southern Gases in Davangere. We've got 60 jumbo cylinders and another 90 donated by NGOs."

Surprisingly, Yadgir district hospital gets 2,500 litres of oxygen all the way from Chennai. The oxygen is transported from Praxair company in Chennai to Ballari and then to Yadgir, said district health officer Dr Indumati Kamshetty. "The entire district needs 5,000 litres per day. While private hospitals get it from the Kalaburagi district, we get it twice a week from Chennai via Ballari. We do not have the luxury of waiting till some hours of oxygen is left so we get a refill when there's a buffer stock of two to three days as it takes days to travel and reach here," she said.

Mandya District Health Officer Dr Manche Gowda



The body of a Covid victim is being shifted out of the district hospital in Chamarajanagar on Monday. DH PHOTO

refill three to four times a day if there's a requirement. While the government hospitals alone require 350 jumbo cylinders, we need 500 per day," Gowda said.

Karnataka's oxygen allocation has been increased from 802 metric tonnes per day to 865 metric tonnes per day. But the state requires 1,471 tonnes of oxygen. A total of 675 metric tonnes of oxygen out of 815 produced in the state go to the consumers in the state, the rest

## Where does Karnataka get O<sub>2</sub> from?

On April 30, Director of National Health Mission Dr Sanjay Roy, in a letter, detailed the sources from which Karnataka would get its oxygen.

Andhra Pradesh-based RINL Visakhapatnam Steel Plant would supply the entire 30 tonnes it produces, Kerala based-Inox Kanjikode would supply 20 tonnes out of 170 tonnes

it produces, Odisha-based Linde Kalinganagar would supply 50 tonnes of the 185 it produces, and Tata-BSL Angul, also in Odisha, would supply 30 out of 70 it produces.

The rest would be procured from five Karnataka-based companies: JSW Industrial Gases (80 tonnes out of 130 tonnes it produces), Universal Air

Products (45 out of 45), Bhuruka Gases (65 out of 75), Air Water (105 out of 115), Linde Belloxy (15 out of 30), Linde Bellary-1 (100 out of 125), Linde Bellary-2 (115 out of 115), and Linde Hospet (150 out of 150).

This apart, air separator units in micro, small and medium enterprises, would generate 60 tonnes in Karnataka.

said they rely on Mysuru for the supply. While Mandya Medical College has a 13 kilolitre capacity, Adichunchan-

agiri Institute of Medical Sciences has another 13 kilolitre, Sanjo Hospital has two kilolitre storage. "We get a

140 tonnes are sent to other states. Karnataka also procures 130 tonnes from other states.

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# Oxygen crisis, keep status quo on infra: Order

Chief secy's internal document to DCs says no further hike in supplies possible as on April 27 or 28

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Hospital workers load empty oxygen cylinders on to a vehicle to be transported to a refilling centre in Bengaluru | AFP

BENGALURU: Any further ramping up of Covid facilities that require supplies of medical oxygen in districts would put pressure on the available Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in districts and the state, cautioned an internal document sent out by Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar to all deputy commissioners.

The present supplies cannot meet any additional demand. Districts should seek clearance from the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Health, before adding new facilities and they should match the oxygen supply and bed capacity. Any crisis arising out of adding new capacities and inability to match the supply of LMO should be avoided. The issue of oxygen supply should be first resolved in consultation with the ACS, Health, before creating additional capacity, the document stated.

Confirming that the letter has been sent by the Chief Secretary, the deputy commissioner of a district, on condition of anonymity, said the districts are caught in a tight spot with patients demanding additional beds and oxygen and the chief secretary issuing orders not to increase the capacity because of shortage of oxygen.

“We have to strike a balance and cannot keep increasing beds and adding new hospitals as the oxygen supply is limited. This situation will put districts under a lot of pressure. If we have to increase beds, we need to map out the oxygen source. During such critical times, some action has to be taken. Oxygen demand is also rising in existing hospitals for serious patients, so there is no place for new hospitals,” the DC said.

The document revealed that last-minute emergencies requiring LMO are extremely difficult to cater to. Of the 665 tonne of LMO available in the state, up to 600 tonne is being supplied from Ballari / Koppal, while the rest is from Bengaluru. “So, we have a huge lead time that is needed to cater to your needs. For this, LMO HelpDesk has been continuously keeping in touch with Deputy Commissioners and their teams to work out requirements 24-48 hours ahead and schedule supplies to your districts.

We have been modifying dispatch plans on occasions to include your emergent requirements, sometimes with 6-8 hour notice also, with last-minute diversions. This is creating a huge strain on the logistics management for LMO HelpDesk," an excerpt of the document stated, instructing active action by districts to furnish actual quantities of LMO supply, balance available and realistic needs based on consumption, projections in advance, so the helpdesk can schedule it in a timely manner.

It stated that the rationed supply model, to every destination in Karnataka, to ensure equitable and continuous availability of oxygen, will continue till the load of Covid cases comes down or additional supplies are tied up. Certain districts have no refillers who can supply medical oxygen cylinders and are dependent on oxygen cylinder suppliers located in another district. For example, Yadgir, Bidar, Mandya, Chamarajanagar and Kodagu have no refillers.

Any overzealous action by districts hosting the refillers to meet their own demands first and not allowing dispatches to other districts can have catastrophic consequences for patient's health and Covid fight. These districts should act collaboratively, looking out for each other, the document read. It also confirmed that the state has reached full utilisation of the available oxygen and no further increase in supplies is possible to any unit than what is being done as on April 27 or 28. The State Government is actively pursuing to increase the availability of oxygen with the support of Central Government, the document added.

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