

Coronavirus: Karnataka shuts down schools, malls, theatres for a week

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- **IT firms and other Companies have been advised to encourage employees to work from home.**
- **Universities and colleges will also remain closed for a week in addition to the holidays declared for pre-primary, primary and high school students.**

BENGALURU: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday said that malls, universities and colleges, movie theatres, night clubs, marriages and conferences and other public areas with high footfall will be closed or cancelled for a week, as a precautionary measure amid the growing scare of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The directives come a day after Karnataka reported the first death due to COVID-19 in the country. A 76-year old Mohammed Hussain Siddiq from Kalaburagi district, about 575 km from Bengaluru, died on Tuesday and has since been confirmed to have tested positive for COVID-19.

"From tomorrow, for one week, all malls, cinema theatres, pubs and nightclubs, exhibitions, summer camps, swimming classes, sporting events like cricket and football, marriages and conferences will be closed across the state," Yediyurappa said.

Universities and colleges will also remain closed for a week in addition to the holidays declared for pre-primary, primary and high school students.

The chief minister said that these were precautionary measures in the wake of new cases being detected from the state. So far, six people in Karnataka have tested positive that includes one death of a 76 year old with a travel history to Saudi Arabia.

Even Information Technology (IT) firms and other companies have been advised to ask its **employees to work from home**. Any workplace that has air conditioning spaces can take this suggestion as a precautionary measure.

Three out of the **six COVID-19 positive patients work in IT companies**. The wife and daughter of one of the three IT company professionals also contracted the virus.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP, the city's civic body) issued a circular on the restrictions in the city that includes closure of places of mass gatherings, marriage halls, among other places. It added that **IT/BT companies are advised to allow their employees to work from home and avoid international travel**.

Making Corporate India Comply

Online retailer **Flipkart and Infosys Ltd** among others have advised its employees to work from home.

"In light of the current updates on the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and keeping in mind the well-being of our employees, we have decided to extend work from home for our employees till the end of next week," Walmart-owned Flipkart said on Friday.

"**Stay home, stay safe,**" the chief minister said was the mantra to promote precautionary measures in combating COVID-19, which has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"All private hospitals should compulsorily report to the health department if they come across any person they suspect to be infected with Coronavirus," the Chief Ministers office said in a statement post the press conference. The death of the 76-year old has raised questions on the coordination between private and government health authorities and the conflicting version of events that transpired from when the patient got admitted to his travel to Hyderabad for treatment or his return to Kalaburagi.

All travelers who have returned from foreign trips are mandated to report their travel history to health department officials and, if instructed, are compulsorily remain in home isolation for 14 days.

"Social distancing to be maintained and a minimum of 6 ft. distance between persons to be kept," the CMO's statement said.

Karnataka, like other states in the country, has been scrambling to set up facilities to treat the growing number of suspected COVID-19 patients.

A total of 1345 persons have enrolled for observation and 302 people so far have completed the 28 day observation period. A total of 1012 people are in home quarantine and 32 in total are currently in health facilities, according to state government data.

The government said that additional laboratories will be established for detection of Coronavirus and a committee will be formed for coordination with private hospitals.

Yediyurappa said that people should be mindful about inviting large numbers of people to weddings and should opt for a simple gathering instead.