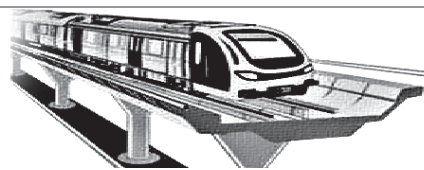


Two more cases of the Omicron variant were detected under the NMMC area and one under the Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) on Wednesday. So far, a total of four cases of the variant have been reported under the NMMC

and six under the PMC jurisdiction. NMMC chief Abhijit Bangar said both patients had travel histories of African countries; one of them had returned from South Africa and another from Nigeria. Amit Srivastava



# BMC's plan B: CCC2 in every ward

## Each CCC2 will have 500 to 1,000 beds for asymptomatic patients

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The BMC has directed all ward officers to activate the city's Covid Care Centres 2 (CCC2) in their respective areas by January 10 to tackle the increasing number of patients. Each CCC2 should have 500 to 1,000 beds for asymptomatic patients. The civic body has also asked all assistant municipal commissioners to ensure each CCC2 has house-keeping, food, doctors and nursing services for patients and ambulances for shifting them to hospitals, if needed.

Civic officials said in the view of the current surge all these precautionary measures are being taken, though 90 per cent Covid beds are lying vacant across all the Covid hospitals and jumbo Covid centres.

Additional municipal commissioner (health) Suresh Kakani said though 7-10 per cent of Covid-19 patients in the city require hospitalisation, about 90 per cent of patients have mild symptoms. Most patients with severe symptoms are senior citizens and need oxygen support along with traditional

treatment, he said. Moreover, oxygen requirement currently is minimal; some patients need only two litre per minute, he said.

He said all asymptomatic patients from slums and slum-like areas will be admitted to CCC2, and will be shifted to hospitals only if they develop symptoms.

Dr Mohan Joshi, the dean of Sion Hospital, said they will ensure that nearly 800 medical interns will be posted to work in ward war rooms to monitor the patients from January 1 to February 2, and this time will be counted in their internship.

Moreover, the civic body has asked all civic-run hospitals to check oxygen capacity at hospitals and Covid jumbo centres. The private hospital oxygen supply will also soon be reviewed. Kakani said, "All assistant municipal commissioners need to call for an online meeting of private hospitals, especially those that don't have oxygen plants. Moreover, a fool proof plan of demand and supply with detailed names of tanker suppliers of every hospital needs to be in place."

### CASES REPORTED ON DECEMBER 29

MUMBAI	Cases	Deaths	Recovered
	2,510	01	251
Total cases	7,75,808	Total deaths	16,375
		Total recovered	7,48,788



### MAHARASHTRA

	Cases	Deaths	Recovered
	3,900	20	1,306
Total cases	66,65,386	Total deaths	1,41,496
		Total recovered	65,06,137

### VACCINATED ON DECEMBER 29

Total vaccinated	Civic centres	State centres	Private centres
48,144	43,316	1,462	3,366

### OVERALL VACCINATED TILL DATE

Total	1st dose	2nd dose
1,78,90,595	99,33,946	79,566,49

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

## Crowding at Gateway of India, Marine Lines prohibited

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The state government on Wednesday issued guidelines for low-key New Year celebrations and asked Mumbaikars to not gather at popular visitor spots like Gateway of India, Marine Lines, Girgaon Chowpatty, and Juhu Chowpatty, among others. Citizens have also been asked to avoid large gatherings at beaches, gardens and on the roads on New Year's eve.

The government has called upon citizens to instead celebrate at home, reminding that gatherings of more than five people are prohibited and there is a curfew between 9 pm and 6 am. The advisory for senior citizens and children under 10 years is to stay home.

Also banned are religious, cultural programmes and processions. The government has also asked people not to bust firecrackers and strictly follow pollution control norms.

## Priest gets life term for sodomising teen in 2015

### A fine of Rs 13,000 was imposed on the religious leader

STAFF REPORTER  
Mumbai

A special court, designated under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, on Wednesday sentenced a 53-year-old priest of a Govandi church to life imprisonment for repeatedly sodomising a 13-year-old child of his parish in 2015.

Recently, the court had enhanced the charges against the man - who has been a priest for 15 years prior to his arrest - and added one which dealt with repeated sexual assault on a child when one is in the management of an educational or religious institution. It is under this charge that the man was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Special judge Seema Jadhav also imposed a fine of Rs 13,000 on the priest and recommended the case for compensation from the District Legal Services Authority. He has been in custody at the Arthur Road Jail since his arrest, with the four bail pleas he made over the years rejected.

Apart from the testimony of the victim, another important witness who testified was a church musician in whom the man had confessed about his behaviour, advocate Charmaine Bocarro who assisted prosecutor Veena Shelar on behalf of the victim, said. The prosecution examined a total of

**The court imposed a fine of Rs 13,000 on the priest and recommended the case for compensation from the District Legal Services Authority**

nine witnesses, said Shelar. As per the police complaint filed by the boy's father in November 2015, the family would go to the church near their Shivaji Nagar home thrice a week and the priest knew them well. The first incident of sexual assault in which the boy was sodomised took place in August that year, his complaint said. However, his son did not reveal anything to them out of

fear. The son, who was then studying in Class VII, had fallen ill and had to be admitted to two different hospitals, each time for a couple of days. The father had also noticed that his behaviour had changed. The boy had started looking frightened and became quiet.

On November 27, 2015, the family had insisted he accompany them to church and he went along. That day, as per the father's complaint, the priest had asked the boy and his younger brother to wait after a program to remove the decorations used. He had then sent the younger boy out and asked the 13-year-old to take a box to his office. The priest followed the child to his office where he sexually assaulted and threatened him when he protested. The father said he had noticed his son was annoyed when he came home. He was also found to be running a temperature. The boy then revealed his ordeal to his mother after she took him in confidence, following which the family approached the police.

## BJP alleges corruption under Covid garb

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The BJP has alleged corruption under the garb of Covid expenditure. The party has sought detailed explanation over a proposal tabled by the BMC administration in the

standing committee meeting on Wednesday. The proposal has sought approval for Rs 3 crore to conduct antigen tests in B-ward.

BJP group leader Prabhakar Shinde, while addressing the meeting said, "This is a clear example of corrup-

**The proposal has sought approval for Rs 3 crore to conduct antigen tests in B-ward**

tion under the garb of Covid emergency. Rs 11 lakh was spent in the first week of August to conduct antigen tests. Thereafter, Rs 10 lakh was spent in the second week. The same kind of weekly expenditure has been seen till October 13." He said there are no written notes or details on how many people

took the test in the said ward. Further, BJP corporator Bhalchandra Shiras asked if the BMC hasn't conducted any tests after October 13. He also asked why the contract was given only to one contractor and tenders weren't invited.

## No reason to panic: Aaditya, after meeting BMC

KALPESH MHAMUNKAR  
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Environment and Guardian Minister of Suburbs Aaditya Thackeray had an hour-long meeting with the civic chief, Iqbal Singh Chahal, at the BMC headquarters. After the meeting, Thackeray told the media that the number of Covid patients had reached 2,000 and it could be a sign of the third wave. He also said that there would be a ban on parties and big celebrations at public places on December 31.

"It is true that the number of Covid cases are increasing but there is no need to panic. Most of the patients are asymptomatic and the number of hospitalisations

is less, yet the BMC has kept 54,000 beds ready. Buildings will be sealed if more than 10 patients are found in a building," said Aaditya Thackeray.

Speaking on the severity of Omicron, Aaditya said, "Don't believe in WhatsApp messages. Let the doctor decide whether Omicron is severe or not but we must take precautions and use a mask."

On the subject of December 31 and New Year celebrations, Aaditya said, "Night curfew has already been imposed. There are also restrictions on parties and celebrations at public places. Our flying squads will also keep a watch on restaurants and establishments and will not allow

anyone to break rules. We also seek CCTV footage from the restaurant and if any establishment violates

**There are also restrictions on parties and celebrations at public places on Dec 31**

rules it will be sealed for one or two months.

"If the public is celebrating new year in their house, I would request them to follow all rules and curtail the spread of corona," Aaditya added.

Aaditya also said that at this stage, the state government and the BMC had not decided on shutting down schools.

## Covid among winning issues at RedInk journalism awards

SHERINE RAJ  
Mumbai

The RedInk Awards for Excellence in Journalism, organised by the Press Club (Mumbai), were presented on Wednesday by the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana as the chief guest at the virtual event.

Danish Siddiqui was named the 'Journalist of the Year' and his award was received by his wife Rike. Prem Shankar Jha was awarded with the lifetime achievement award. He said, "It is a great honour to receive this award because it is not just from the read-

ers, but from my peers, my fellow journalists. One thing that I always followed in my journalism career was that I never overruled my consciousness to protect my career. In this age of digitisation everyone can be tracked all the time; we journalists should be careful and fight for the truth."

Varsha Torgalkar won the award for her story, "The Child Labour Behind The Jeans You Wear" in Business and Economy category for print, while Mrityunjay Singh of ABP News Network won it for his ground report on Corona lockdown for TV. The Caravan jour-



nalist Sagar won the award for his report "Statements of 33 inmates belie the CBI's claim of no murders

in Muzaffarpur shelter-home case", in crime (print).

Down to Earth journalists

Ishan Kukreti, Kundan Pandey, Soundaram Ramathan and Sugandha Arora won the award in Environment category for print, while Media One TV's Sofia Bind won it for her Kerala floods reportage. The Wire's Priyanka Pulla won the award for her report on undercounting of Covid-19 deaths in the health and Wellness category for print, while Freemedia Interactive's Faye D'souza and Arun Rengaswamy won it for their report "Inside KEM Hospital - COVID Frontline" for TV.

For other winners, go to [freepressjournal.in](http://freepressjournal.in)

## Curbs on farm houses, resorts for New Year in Panvel

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The Navi Mumbai police held a meeting with farmhouses owners, hotels, restaurants and resorts in the Panvel region and asked to keep New Year celebration a low key affair owing to resurgence in Covid.

Though there is no restriction to celebrating inside the farm houses and resorts, they owners need to first take police permission and cannot advertise the December 31 entertainment programme or play loud music. They will also be fully responsible for their visitors, with activities like gambling and consumption of drugs and alcohol attracting legal action. The owners have also been directed to follow the state government guidelines re-

garding the 9 pm-6 am curfew.

Senior police inspector Ravindra Daundkar from Panvel taluka police station said they will keep a watch on public places and ensure not more than five people gather. The police also warned against venturing into swimming pools at resorts and farmhouses to enjoy the New Year's eve; in case of an incident, the owner of the premises will be held responsible.

Danudkar said, "If permission isn't sought and an accident occurs at the event, the owner of the premises will be held responsible and legal action will be taken." He added that considering the fresh outbreak of coronavirus, it is the responsibility of the owners and organisers to ensure strict adherence to safety rules.

## Mask fine collection goes up, Zone 4 leads in violations

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Until December 28, the BMC has collected over Rs 83 crore as fine from people for not wearing masks in public places. The same day last month, the amount collected was Rs 79 crore. The fine amount is inclusive of the amount collected by the Mumbai Police and the railways.

Last month, while the BMC had collected Rs 65,13,27,400, the Mumbai police had collected Rs 13,57,85,400 as fine amount from people who were found without masks in public places; violators on the railway lines, meanwhile, had paid Rs 50,39,200.

Within a month, the BMC collection has increased by more than Rs 2 crore. Its collection as on December 28 was Rs 67,27,85,571.

## Arthur Road inmates get in-jail dental check-up

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A special dental camp for inmates housed at the Mumbai Central Jail (Arthur Road) started on Tuesday, with 441 inmates getting checked so far.

Jail authorities claimed they were receiving regular complaints from inmates with dental problems. Usually, any inmate with a dental problem is sent to either the St George or J J Hospital. "But during the lockdown there were restrictions on taking inmates out over fear of the virus spreading. This was possible after the lockdown but the local arms unit which provides an escort neglected our requests many times," said an officer from the prison department.

Superintendent of the jail N B Vayachal said they then approached the NGO Project Mumbai to organise a camp.

The camp was held under the guidance of Atul Kulkarni - Additional Director General of Police, Prisons. The CEO and founder of Project Mumbai, Shishir Joshi said, "The camp has been organised with help and support of doctors from Nair Hospital. Along with a dental van, a team of 13 doctors and staff was sent to the premises to check inmates. On December 28, around 238 inmates were checked, with around 203 being checked the following day. Further check-ups will be carried out as per requirements of the inmates."

"At present, there are around 3,500 inmates in the jail. In the first phase we checked around 441 inmates. We will continue this as a weekly service to check inmates so that every one of them receives treatment for their dental problems soon," he added.

## MBMC's active cases cross 100 after 53 days

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In a major cause of worry for citizens and the health department of the Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC), the number of active Covid-19 cases has again crossed the 100-mark after a gap of more than 53 days.

The twin-city reported 32 fresh cases on Tuesday. With this, the number of active cases in the twin-city now stands at 127.

On November 5, the twin-city had 109 active cases and then the figure remained below 100 till December 27.

As per MBMC data, the cities reported 98 new cases in the first fortnight of December. However, in the next 13 days, 175 people tested positive from December 15-28; 32 fresh detections, including 25 new infections and seven of their contacts, were reported on Tuesday.

Although the latest additions have catapulted the total number of cumulative positive patients to 54,759, the MBMC's health department data also shows that a total of 53,253 patients have recovered so far.

While the recovery rate hovers a little above 97 per cent, two more casualties this month took the total death count to 1,379.

Meanwhile, 6,44,882 eligible beneficiaries have taken their first dose and 5,44,827 people have been fully vaccinated till December 28, the officials said.

## Cops don delivery boy, security guard uniforms to nab thief

Cops from the V B Nagar police station adopted a unique approach, dressing up delivery boys and security guards to nab a wanted chain snatcher.

According to the police, around 7.20 am on December 20, Sunanda Gutekar, 49, was crossing the road near N M Kale Marg in Kurla west when two unknown persons on a bike snatched her gold chain weighing 10 grams. Gutekar approached the V B Nagar police and a case was registered under sections 392 (punishment for robbery) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian penal code. A team of detection officers was formed to trace the accused.

While scanning CCTV footage the team noticed the accused took different lanes to flee and it would be difficult to trace them. "The team then checked

the official footage from Ghatkopar police station. They saw the accused take the Vidyavihar road. On probing further, they found footage of a society CCTV camera that had captured the accused parking the motorcycle and leaving the spot in an auto-rickshaw. He then later parked the vehicle at LBS Marg. The team picked up the motorcycle and found it was from Ambvili in Kalyan," said a police officer.

"After finding the bike parked near a housing society, officers from the team dressed up as security guards to keep a watch on the bike movement. Meanwhile, a few policemen dressed up like 'Zomato' food delivery boys to visit the Irani Basti in Ghatkopar, without arousing suspicion," added the police officer.

-Staff Reporter

## Large stock of bear claws, teeth seized

The police seized 645 bear claws and teeth during a raid at a food outlet in Thane on Wednesday. Following a tip-off, the central crime unit raided the premises in Ulhasnagar and seized the animal body parts, senior police inspector Suresh Salvi said. An offence was registered against the owner under the Wildlife Protection Act, but no arrests so far.

## Residential property available for sale

Residential Flat measuring 362.37 Sq. Ft. situated at 01, Ground Floor, A Wing, Karimi Apartment CHS, Oshivara Garden Road, Jogeshwari (West), Mumbai - 400 060.

All the details of property and terms and conditions for sale are available on our official Website [www.sicomindia.com](http://www.sicomindia.com)

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Tender No. NfV/PUR/BMA200939K, Dt. 29.12.2021, GeM Custom Bid No. GEM/2021/B/1801743, Online bidding is invited on GeM in Two Part Bid System for "Supply of Complete Ammonia Refrigeration Compressor" Part-I Bid Opening Date: 28.01.2022. Contact No. 07544-273050, 273691, Fax No. 07544-273089. For further details kindly visit website [www.nationalfertilizers.com](http://www.nationalfertilizers.com) or <https://gem.gov.in>. Any amendment/corrigendum to the above NIT will be displayed on aforesaid websites only. Tender documents can also be downloaded from above website.

## As cases rise, revisiting the Dharavi Model

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The Covid surge has yet again brought the slum sprawl of Dharavi at the centre of discussions and planning. Dharavi, which became a model for the world for its Covid containment strategy, recorded 17 new cases on Wednesday, the highest since May 18, 2021. The total cumulative case count here since April 2020 is 7,219.

One of the deadliest hotspots during the first wave, the slum managed to get a grip on the outbreak



The total cumulative case count here since April 2020 is 7,219 and reported cases in single digits and even zero for months. However, according

to BMC officials, the area has been showing signs of cases rising steadily. Active cases

have increased four-fold within nine days from just 10 cases on December 20, to 43 as of December 29.

Dharavi reported zero cases 14 times in the month of December and continuously for six days from December 15-20, according to BMC data.

The slum's floating population is nearly 8.5 lakh. Due to the looming threat of a third wave, the BMC has now started conducting random tests and said that 57 per cent of the eligible population (4.6 lakh) was vaccinated until December 21.

Besides, since the first case

of Omicron from Dharavi, civic authorities have geared up to reintroduce the 'Dharavi Model' aggressively to keep a check on any rise in daily cases.

Kiran Dighavkar, assistant municipal commissioner of G-North ward, said, "We never relaxed any of our containment strategies even when the number of cases declined across the ward. The rise of cases in Dharavi and other parts of the ward is part and parcel of what is happening across Mumbai and not individual rise in cases."