

THE personal touch of the family doctor, crucial for the overall well-being of a patient, now belongs to another era. The advent of corporate, multi-brand hospitals have led to the slow demise of neighbourhood nursing homes, and more importantly, the General Physician.

While the government is promoting Public Health Centres (PHCs) and Namma Clinics on the lines of mohalla clinics to improve medical care, it has been able to do little to control the closure of nursing homes. Doctors blame the lengthy and costly legal establishment procedures, lack of trained nurses and availability of space as the main reasons.

Doctors also state that in family setups, the younger generation does not want to continue with parents' clinics, but work with big brands for better recognition and professional success. Rising competition and the corporate setup of large hospitals is leading to the death of clinics, they add.

This is the era where treatment has become investigation. Nowadays, patients are not content if the doctor does not prescribe a blood test or CT scan, nor are doctors happy to prescribe simple medicines and give a word of good advice, admitted Dr Vivek Dorai, Deputy Director (medical-2), Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (KPME).

According to KPME, there are 30,000 private medical establishments in the state, across 18 categories, apart from large corporate and super specialty hospitals. A senior health department official admitted: "There is no ready availability of data of how many have shut down in the past five years. It is unfortunate but true, that corporate hospitals have become the trend."

Dr Kanchi Pralhad V, Vice-

President, Karnataka Medical Council, recollected that he had set up his clinic with Rs 6,000, around 30 years ago. But now, after investing lakhs of rupees, even if a doctor gets 20 patients a day, it is not viable. Despite the growth in large hospitals, patients still trust neighbourhood doctors.

UDUPI: End of a relationship

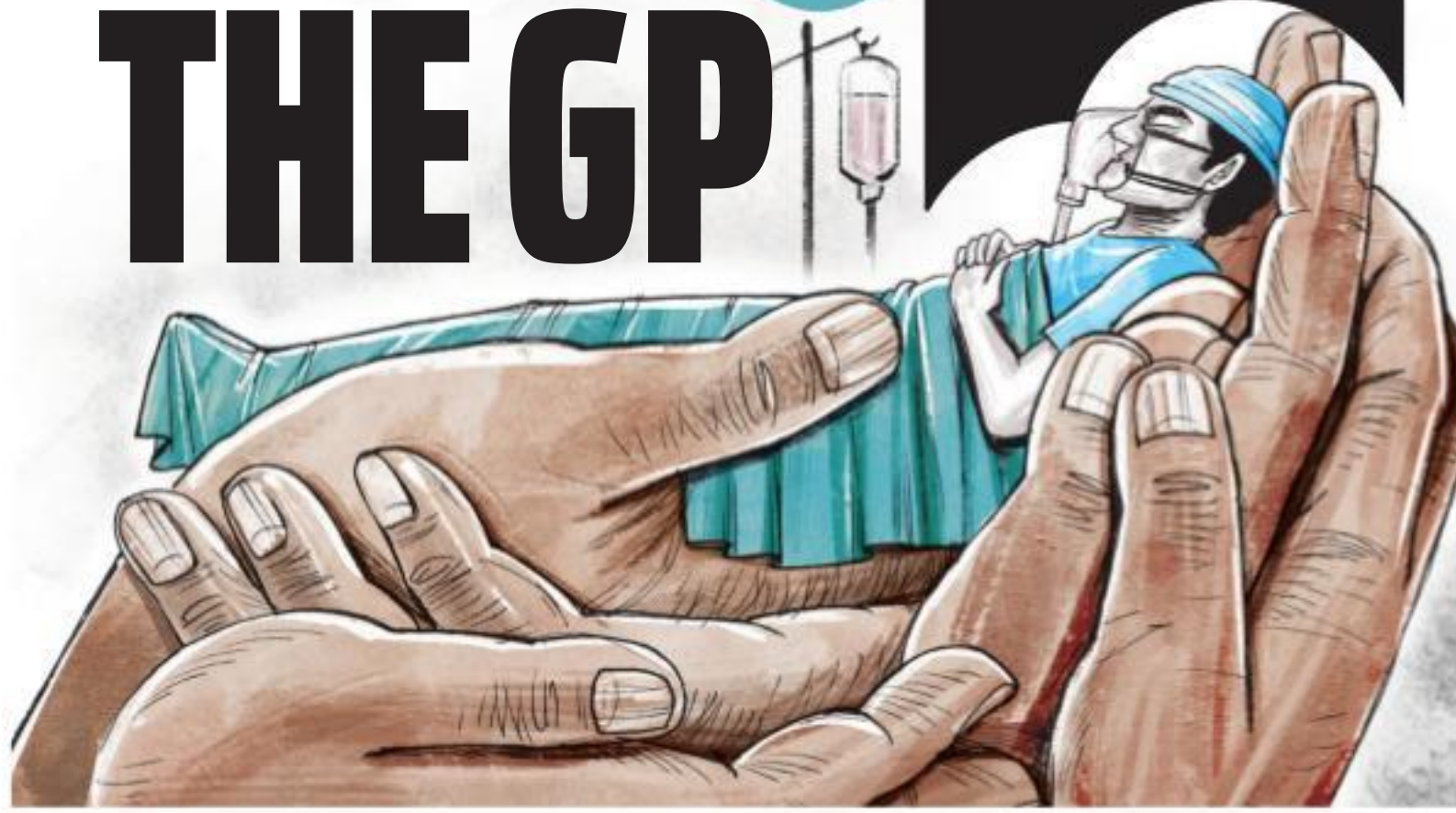
The emergence of the corporate model of hospitals in the last decade has significantly changed the doctor-patient relationship, noted Dr M V Holla, a family physician practicing in Manuru-Kota. With some corporate hospitals opening rural franchises and treatment covered by insurance policies, patients too have adjusted to the new model, but this model has negatively impacted the traditional relationship, he said. "Everything seems to be business, and unhealthy competition has put the interest of patients on the back seat," he added. General practitioners have been reduced to counselors, with patients availing of treatment at big hospitals, he said.

GADAG: Small clinics preferred

In Gadag, the situation is very different. Here, Bachelors of Surgery (BAMS) doctors are attracting more footfall as people prefer small clinics after the pandemic. MBBS and MD qualified professionals are also successful. Some private doctors recently urged the Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences to shift the Women and Children Hospital 8km away from the city, as it was affecting their business.

Pediatricians, neonatologists, ophthalmologists and others are running their own hospitals, besides working as consultants at some hospitals. Residents say that doctors in private hospital charge hefty

CORPORATE MODEL VS THE GP



With corporate hospitals taking over the health sector, the family doctor is a thing of the past

KALABURAGI: Where GPs thrive

There is no threat to neighbourhood nursing homes and general practitioners in Kalyana Karnataka region, with at least one GP at every kilometre in Kalaburagi city. The main problem exists in rural areas, where doctors hesitate to open clinics. People still depend on GPs for common diseases, and if the matter turns serious, they refer patients to corporate hospitals.

A district surgeon of Gulbarga Government Hospital denies that the number of patients opting for treatment in government hospitals has declined due to corporate hospitals. District Surgeon Dr A M Rudrawadi said after the Ayushman Bharat Scheme came into existence, the number of patients in government hospitals has increased.

CHITRADURGA/DAVANAGERE: Few clinics here

There are few neighbourhood clinics, barring a few old medical practitioners who are Registered Medical Practitioners, in Chitradurga and Davangere. Dr Kantharaj, an octogenarian practitioner in Chitradurga, said abolition of the Medical Council of India and formation of the National Medical Commission led to these problems. "Corporatisation of healthcare has led to closure of small clinics. The KPME has become draconian for small-time practitioners. They have to follow biomedical waste management, set up bathrooms, provide spacious rooms and other facilities which are not available in small clinics. The government is also giving support to corporates," he said.

MANGALURU: Future in corporate hospitals

Since the 90s, following privatisation of healthcare and higher education, everything has changed. The quality of medical education has nosedived,

graduates are not interested in returning to mofussil areas, and postgraduation has become the norm. There is a hype about super-specialty treatment and corporatisation of healthcare. Corporate hospitals are getting many facilities. The future of health seems to be in corporate hospitals engaging AYUSH trainees to manage villages through telemedicine, said Dr Srinivas Kakkilaya, a senior physician.

Nursing homes have not aligned to the changing times, nor do outreach work to support the community. The nursing home model is dying due to changed times, said Dr Edmond Fernandes, Director, Edward & Cynthia Institute of Public Health, Mangaluru.

DHARWAD: Giant hospitals fashionable

The concept and projects of the government are only for gaining popularity. These days, it has become a trend for young doctors to construct giant hospitals. This has impacted clinics in small areas, which catered to people for many years. Large hospitals hire doctors catering to small areas to manage the rush. Patients who would get treatment at local hospitals at minimum cost now have to pay huge amounts at nursing homes. The popularity, advertisements and other activities force hospital authorities to charge more to level their expenses. While there is no notable decline in clinics, doctors frequently change as they get better offers from private hospitals.

(Inputs from Bosky Khanna, Namrata Sindhwani/Bengaluru, Prakash Samaga/Udupi, Raghu Koppar/Gadag, Udaya Kumar/Hassan, Velayudham/Kolar, Marx Tejaswi/Shivamogga, Ramkrishna Badeshi/Kalaburagi, G Subash Chandra/Chitradurga/Davangere, Divya Cutinho/Mangaluru, Mallikarjun Hiremath/Dharwad)

fees. Last month, the health department also issued a notice on this.

HASSAN: Healthcare hub

Hassan city has become a medical hub with 15 private hospitals running in different areas, and doctors are constantly searching for land to construct nursing homes.

Apart from a super specialty hospital coming up at the premises of Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences, six general practitioners closed their clinics due to lack of patients in the past five years. At least nine physicians stopped practice and joined private hospitals in the last decade.

In the changed scenario, patients want hi-tech facilities and treatment at prominent private hospitals. Siddaraju, who was admitted to a private hospital for stomachache and

discharged recently, said doctors recommended different types of tests after admission, which is a burden for patients.

KOLAR: Docs looking for big salary

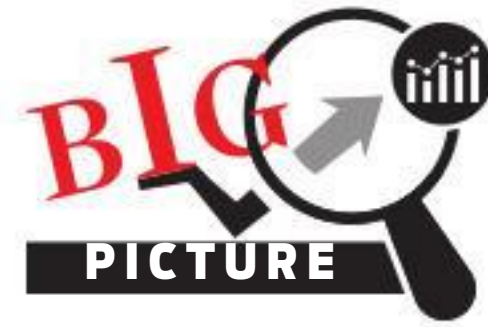
Senior physician Dr Dias said people expect good service and demand more facilities, but at a low cost. Nowadays, those who complete MBBS choose MD and MS, or any specialised course by paying a big fee, and have no alternative but to work in corporate hospitals for a substantial salary, said Dr Dias, who has 30 years of experience. In

the evenings, they prefer to practice in hospitals as consultants, which is why corporate hospitals are popular.

Earlier, family physicians would visit patients' house on request, now the system has changed, said K Jayaraman, a businessman.

SHIVAMOGGA: Status quo

The district has not seen any significant number in the increase or decrease of nursing homes in the past five years. District Health Officer Dr Rajesh Suragihalli said the number of private and small clinics has increased. "The clinics include allopathy and ayurveda. It is also a fact that small nursing homes and clinics do not have the capital to compete with corporate hospitals," he said. The public feels that medical costs have increased.



ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH

SL Navy arrests six Indian fishermen

RAMESWARAM: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested six Indian fishermen hailing from Rameswaram and seized their boats for allegedly trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line. Condemning the arrests, all fishermen associations in Rameswaram staged a protest urging the Indian government to take steps for the release of those arrested. "Around 465 boats from Rameswaram ventured into the sea on Saturday. One boat, consisting of six fishermen, was seized," said an fisheries department official. **ENS**

Govindan is Kerala CPM secretary

T'PURAM: The CPM in Kerala on Sunday effected a smooth change of guard at its helm electing Excise and Local Self Government Minister M V Govindan as the party state secretary in place of an ailing Kodiyeri Balakrishnan. The CPM state committee named the 69-year-old Govindan, a party central committee member known for his firm stance and ideological commitment, as its new state chief after taking into consideration the opinion of Kodiyeri, who stepped down due to ill health. With Govindan's ascent, the second Pinarayi Vijayan cabinet is set to go for an overhaul. The cabinet reshuffle will be effected after the ongoing assembly session. He is known as the 'soft and firm face' of the party. Govindan, a state committee member since 1992, had served as Kannur district secretary of the CPM. **ENS**

KCR plans to open offices for farmers across country

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Hyderabad

TRS supremo and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, who is trying to garner the support of farmers across the country, has decided to establish farmers' offices at several places in all states, including Hyderabad and Delhi, for a better link between the south and the north. Rao, who is eyeing a key role in the national politics, as part of its efforts to unify the country's farmers, held a meeting with around 100 farmers from 26 States for the second consecutive day at Pragathi Bhavan here on Sunday.

While the attendees urged Rao to unite and lead the farmers, the meeting resolved to create a common platform — Farmers Ikya Vedka. The participants agreed to meet again to finalise the formalities for the proposed Vedika.

Several farmers from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal said that they would follow the suggestions of Rao and continue their agitation against what they called the anti-farmer policies of the Union Government. The meeting opposed the Centre's proposal to fix meters to agriculture motors, its import policy and corporatisation of agriculture among others.

While opposing the agriculture policies of the Narendra Modi government, participants from Tamil Nadu urged Rao to take the initiative in mobilising the farmers. "The entire country is inviting you. Please save the Indian farmers," they urged Rao.

Creating new India

Leaders of South India Farmers' Union too said the rebuilding of a new India was possible

only under the leadership of Rao. Raghavendra Kumar, an SC farmer from Uttar Pradesh, said that Dalit Bandhu was a revolutionary scheme and it should be implemented across the country.

Addressing the farmers, Rao said that the aim should be make 'avval darja kisan' (top rank farmer). "Those who opposed separate Telangana too gave 'Jai Telangana' slogan later. On the same lines, those who were acting against the interests of farmers should give 'Jai Kisan' slogan. For to happen, all the farmer from across the country should work unitedly," the CM added.

"Farmers movement and politics should go hand in hand," he added. He also revealed his plans to hold a meeting with agriculture scientists, economists and intellectuals at the earliest to protect the agriculture sector.



Leaders of farmer unions greet Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao in Hyderabad on Sunday

No one can destroy AIADMK, says EPS

ENS @ Chennai

Almost 15 months have passed by since the DMK-led government came to power, yet Tamil Nadu has witnessed no remarkable developments so far, said former CM Edappadi K Palaniswami here on Sunday. Palaniswami said the state is being lauded for its progress because of the efforts of former CMs J Jayalalithaa and MG Ramachandran to make Tamil Nadu prosperous. Lashing out at former CM O Panneerselvam without taking



his name, he said whoever tries to break the party would be taught a lesson by its cadre and added that such a person's dream to destroy the party would never come true. "The very people who claim to be the Jayalalithaa's followers led the mob that destroyed the party of fice. Now they wish to join hands with me," he further remarked. "When a leader who should be protecting the party is involved in disrespecting it, how could he be a good leader?" Palaniswami asked.

I only want to reunite party cadres, says OPS

ENS @ Theni

REFUTING several AIADMK functionaries' claims that he was hungry for power, party leader O Panneerselvam said he has no aim to become the chief minister or the party chief. "All I want to do is to reunite the party cadre," he told media persons at his residence in Periyakulam.



Addressing media persons, the former CM said, "MG Ramachandran created AIADMK with a view to serve the common people. Following his

footsteps, former CM J Jayalalithaa ruled Tamil Nadu and led the party effectively. This same party is going through a crisis now due to Edappadi K Palaniswami. I was Jayalalithaa's most trusted person and she never told me to step down from any post." Recalling the party's split following MGR's demise, Panneerselvam said the leaders had then managed to reunite the cadre and achieved success for a long time. "So, our past experiences have taught us many lessons.

Do not charge excess fare, private bus operators told

ENS @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Transport Minister B Sriramulu has warned private bus operators against collecting excess fare ahead of Gowri-Ganesha festival.

"It has come to my notice that some private bus operators have been collecting excess fare. I have instructed operators that they should collect fare as prescribed by the Transport Department. Penal action will be taken against those bus owners who are collecting excess fare," he added. The minister appealed to private bus operators not to exploit customers. "If anyone exploits helpless customers, they should be prepared to face action," he warned. KSRTC had recently announced operating 500 additional buses ahead of the festivities.

INJURED A DISCUS THROWER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"FORTUNATELY, no injuries occurred to his brain," the sources added. Indresh is a discus thrower and was about to take part in the event when the incident occurred.

As the hobli-level sports meet was in progress, the students were practising and the authorities at the stadium were unaware of students picking up javelins and throwing them. Some years ago, a college student had sustained a severe injury as the discus had hit his head.

With the javelin getting more popular among the students following the ascent of Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, the safety and supervision has become a matter of concern for school authorities.

A new worry: After lights out, solar panel waste can be hazardous

NAMRATA SINDHWANI @Bengaluru

WHILE the Karnataka State Government is promoting green energy, little or no thought has been given on handling the solar panel waste.

Now, used solar panels are dumped in landfills and are treated as regular waste. Recyclers too hesitate to recycle the panels, with the production cost of new panels coming down drastically over the last few years. Environmentalists point out that the solar module waste is not covered under the

current solid waste management rules policies, which may lead to big environmental concerns later.

"Bengaluru does not have a separate centre to recycle or dispose of solar waste," said Vinod, owner of V1 Energy, a solar energy equipment supplier. If there is less waste, it is usually dumped with regular waste, if there the numbers are big, they are sent to scrap centres. Vinod said he does not prefer recycling because it is expensive and manufacturing new panels is way cheaper. The

draft Karnataka Renewable Energy Policy for the next five years, brought out by the Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Limited (KREDL), does not have any mention of disposing of solar panel waste. What is worrying is that this waste could mount to enormous levels, because Karnataka is among the leading states in the renewable energy (RE) sector. "The panels installed in the early 2000s are on the verge of expiry



and will be discarded in a few years. This will generate large amounts of waste, and if the country does not come up with a waste management policy at the earliest, we will not be able to handle the waste at the eleventh hour," said Ayush Shukla, manager, National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI). An environment officer from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board admitted that there is a need for a policy that should be

chalked out by the Centre. Best practices from other countries should be adopted while formulating the policy, he added.

A report by the Bridge To India (BTI), a renewable energy consulting firm, stated that the volume of photovoltaic (PV) panel waste in the country is estimated to grow to 2,00,000 tonnes by 2030 and to around 1.8 million tonnes by 2050.

Most solar recycling plants only remove silver and copper from the cells. They burn the glass and plastic casings in cement ovens to recycle them. In-

cineration releases toxins and greenhouse gases into the environment. "Since the process is expensive and time-consuming, companies find it better to dispose of the dead panels in landfills or export them to third-world countries," said Poorna Khanna, an environmentalist.

Studies have shown that heavy metals in solar panels, including lead and cadmium, can contaminate groundwater and affect plant life. Records also show that these metals can cause harm to human health, she said.