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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Times of India

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 11/10/2020

K'taka suspends Vidyagama amid Covid-19 spread fears

Over 45 Lakh Students Will Be Affected

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Bengaluru: Vidyagama, the Karnataka government's continuous learning programme for students of government schools, was temporarily discontinued on Saturday amid fears that it was spreading Covid-19 among students and teachers.

The programme, introduced two months ago to ensure that over 45 lakh students from under-privileged back-

FROM START TO PAUSE IN 2 MONTHS

> Vidyagama began in the first week of August in **43,000 govt schools** to ensure students with poor or no internet connectivity did not **lose out**

> Private schools alleged govt schools were being allowed to hold classes without ensuring Covid protocol. It also led to students **moving from pvt schools to govt ones**



> **Backlash in Belagavi** after 23 students test positive; 15 teachers also said to have tested positive in the district

ground in rural and urban centres without access to on-line infrastructure are not deprived of education, was much talked about with ma-

ny accusing the government of putting children's lives at risk. The issue took a political turn with some elected representatives taking objec-

'Learning gap will hit poor kids worst'

The state government's decision to suspend Vidyagama received mixed responses from teachers and parents. Educationists and activists, however, said the move would affect poor and marginalised children the most. If schools can reopen, why can't classes be held, some asked. Many feared it would lead to a rise in child labour and child marriage. **P 2**

tion to the programme despite the government clarifying there was no spread of Covid.

► **Relevant analysis, P 5**

'Programme stopped till relevant analysis'

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On Saturday, primary and secondary education minister S Suresh announced: "I have noticed the opinions expressed in some sections regarding the Vidyagama programme... The principal secretary (education department) has been directed to temporarily stop the Vidyagama programme until the department completes the relevant analysis."

Though some were against the programme since the beginning, reports of flouting of social distancing norms at classes and probable infections and public outrage led to the decision.

On Friday, 23 students tested positive for Covid in Ramdurg, Belagavi district, and parents reportedly did not allow teachers to even enter the village as they blamed the latter for exposing children to Covid. According to reports, 15 teachers contracted Covid in the district in the past two months. In Kalaburagi district, four children tested positive two weeks ago.

Launch of Vidyagama

When Vidyagama was kick-started in 43,000 government schools in August first week, it was hailed as a boon for most students with no internet connectivity. The programme took shape on the recommendations of an expert committee. Under Vidyagama, every school formed a virtual class with 20-25 students with a mentor (teacher). Children were to be grouped from classes 1-5, 6-8 and 8-10 based on geographical area and in different categories like those without any type of technology-based gadgets, those with mobiles but no internet access and those with gadgets with internet access.

Mentors visited homes of children in their neighbourhood as many times as possible in a week to monitor their progress. The meetings were held in community centres, religious places, under the shade of a big tree with social distancing norms in place. The government also introduced Samveda, a TV-based learning programme as part of the Vidyagama, which had lessons relayed on DD Chandana.

Full report: [toi.in](#)