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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Covid-19 (RTI)

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Deccan Herald ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE 21/10/20

Covid care: MLAs make hefty bill claims for selves, kin

10 legislators
submitted bills,
show RTI queries

21/10/20

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BENGALURU, DHNS

Covid-19 treatment is indeed an expensive affair, if the money that several legislators have been claiming is anything to go by.

Information furnished by the Assembly secretariat under RTI reveals that elected legislators - most of them crorepatis - were entitled to all amenities at public cost, even in the face of an unprecedented economic crisis due to

the pandemic.

While many MLAs were yet to apply for medical reimbursements, information under RTI showed 10 MLAs cutting across party lines have sought Rs 35 lakh as reimbursement for Covid-19 treatment for them and their family members.

The highest reimbursement for Covid treatment, as of October 6, was claimed by Belgaum Uttar BJP MLA Anil Benake, totalling Rs 8.5 lakh - the expenses of treating him and five other family members.

RTI data showed that while bills for his treatment came to around Rs 1.92 lakh, treating his wife and two daughters cost Rs 1.35 lakh each, while the treatment cost of his father and mother was Rs 1.27 lakh and Rs

1.29 lakh, respectively.

According to his affidavit in 2018, Benake had movable and immovable properties worth around Rs 4.2 crore.

Gurmitkal JD(S) MLA Nangangouda Kandakura and his wife Kanthamma's treatment cost, according to the bills submitted to the Assembly Secretariat, was Rs 5.49 lakh. Of the amount, Rs 3.29 lakh was the treatment cost of the MLA.

Bhadravathi Congress MLA B K Sangameshwar and his wife Nikita Kavya spent Rs 5.1 lakh for Covid treatment.

"We will receive more reimbursement claims in the days to come as even ministers were hospitalised for Covid," sources said.

'Provide health insurance'
Activist H M Venkatesh, who

filed the RTI plea on Covid-19 treatment expenses of legislators, said, "Rather than medical reimbursement, all MLAs and MLAs should be provided health insurance."

He said the MLAs have declared assets in crores of rupees. "They may have a provision for such benefits, but should consider the financial condition of the state before claiming," he said.

When contacted, Anil Benake said that he had applied for the benefits after the Assembly session, when they were made aware of the benefits.

"All my family members were infected by the virus," he said, adding that they recuperated at private hospitals.