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## More places to be identified for last rites

'Bodies from the surrounding villages brought to city to be burnt'

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

As the wait for giving the dead a dignified farewell is getting as much attention as the struggle to find beds, Revenue Minister R. Ashoka has announced that more places will be allotted for the last rites.

Speaking at a press conference with Health Minister K. Sudhakar and Tejasvi Surya, MP, on Wednesday, Mr. Ashoka said bodies from surrounding villages are being brought to the city to be burnt, which is adding another 40 to 50 bodies to the city's already overburdened infrastructure.

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Tejasvi Surya, MP, flanked by Ministers K. Sudhakar and R. Ashok at a press conference in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

"Four acres have been identified in Tavarekere for open burning and it will be arranged for immediately. Five to six places in Bengaluru have been identified. All DCs have also been told to identify government lands and gomalas one kilometre away from villages to be utilised for the purpose. We will arrange for whatever infrastructure is necessary for the

last rites in two to three days," he said.

Dr. Sudhakar said the government has already allotted 49 hire vans and there may not be need for more. "If somebody is exploiting the situation, we will take action," said Mr. Ashoka and Dr. Sudhakar, responding to allegations of such ambulances charging exorbitant amounts to transport COVID

19 fatalities. The Minister acknowledged the need to augment ICU beds and said the government is considering adding another 2,000.

Speaking at the press conference, Mr. Surya said to enforce the 50% beds that private hospitals are required to give for COVID-19 patients, he and other officials and Ministers will start inspecting every hospital with over 30 beds.

To prevent the long queues outside crematoria, the BBMP has decided to open all 12 crematoria for victims of COVID-19 as well as other reasons. Earlier, only seven of the 12 were designated to handle COVID-19 deaths.

The government also said that people will now be allowed to cremate or bury on their lands following the COVID-19 protocols.