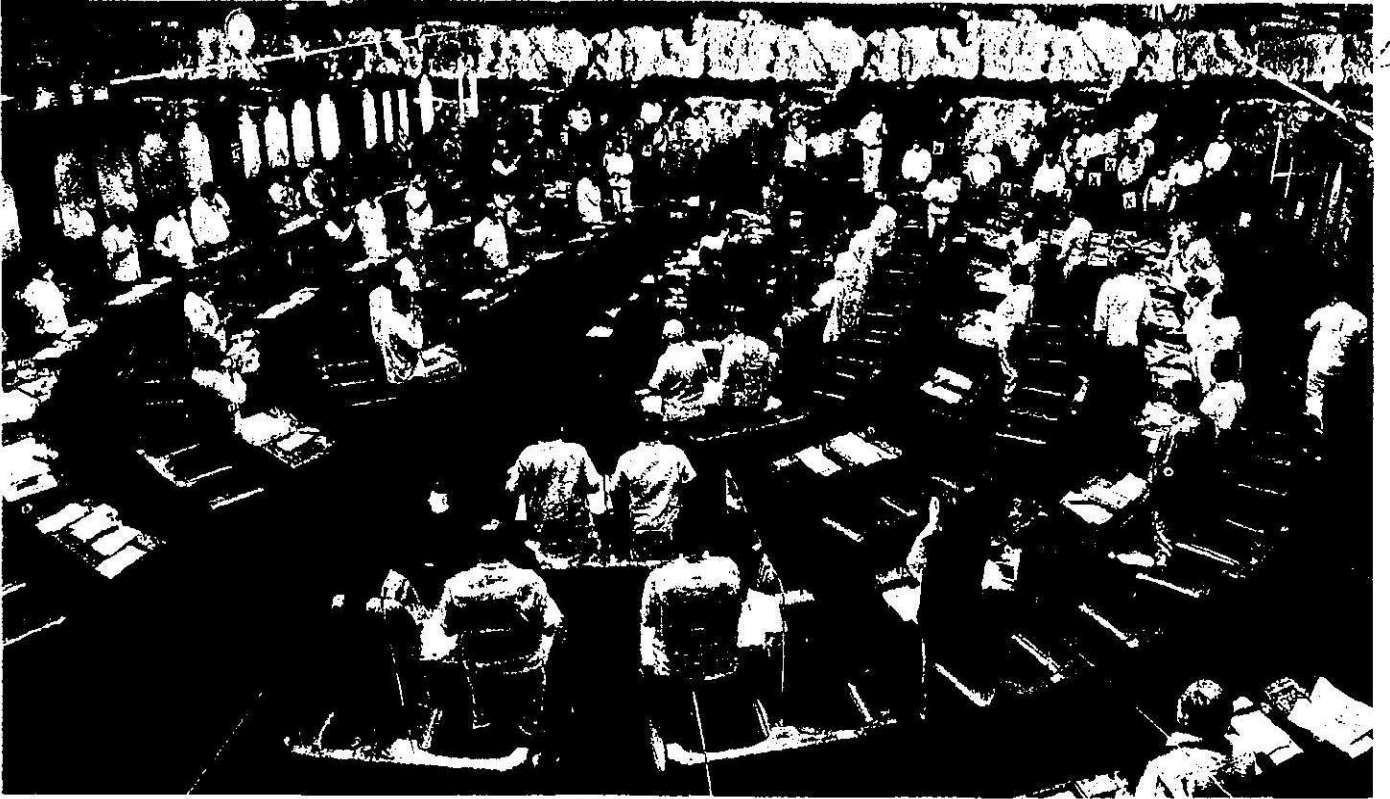


ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Karnataka Legislative Assembly Session

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Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri greets legislators before commencing the monsoon session at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Monday | VINOD KUMAR T

# Virus haunts monsoon session

Day One sees thin attendance and safety measures at every step

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VIDHANA Soudha, which houses the legislature, wore a sombre look on Monday. The usual buzz and bonhomie were missing. Everything pointed to the fact that the monsoon session of the Karnataka Legislature was being held under the Covid-19 shadow. Karnataka has recorded over 5 lakh positive cases.

On Day One, the session was marked by thin attendance due to the pandemic and unprecedented safety measures and restrictions. Several ministers who had tested positive and as many as 32 MLAs were absent. However, those who recovered did attend the session.

Earlier in the day, the CM expressed concern over fewer legislators attending the session due to Covid.

As many as 92 people who underwent Covid tests on Friday and Saturday have tested positive. This includes legislators, media and staff from both the Houses. Those who tested negative were allowed only after the staff checked their negative certificate message. Legislators, officers and the media personnel were checked at a separate point before being allowed into the House.

Many restrictions were in place for entry into both the Houses at the Vidhana Soudha. Checking the temperature at multi points and keeping sanitiser bottles at various locations were part of the safety measures. Social distancing was main-

tained in both the Houses and the seats of the members were separated by transparent shields.

The assembly met at 11 am and paid obituary references to leaders and prominent personalities including former President Pranab Mukherjee, poet Nissar Ahmed, Sir MJA P Sathyanarayana and newly elected Rajyotsaha member Anok Bisti who died in the past six months. Speaker Vishweshwara Hegde Kageri, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Opposition party leader Siddaramaiah, KPCC president DK Shivakumar were among those who paid tribute to them. They also paid homage to Covid warriors — doctors, ASHA

health workers and police — who lost their lives fighting against the pandemic.

During the first part of the session, members expressed concern over the stigma attached to the pandemic. Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah, who has recovered from Covid, said when a person tests positive, it is like a social boycott. When I was in hospital, neither my wife nor son was allowed to meet me. The pandemic as of now has no medicine, we can only take precautionary measures. I appeal to all to follow safety measures," he urged.

Theerthahalli MLA Araga Jnanendra said it is heart-breaking that in the case of death due to Covid, family members are not able to attend the funeral. "I witnessed this recently when former MLA Appaji Gowda died due to Covid," he said.



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