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Protocols tighten as Covid spikes in Kochi

Nandita Narayanan

KOCHI: The huge surge in Covid cases pushed civic authorities to urge malls and shopping centres in Kochi to impose strict safety protocols that are to be followed by shoppers on account of the festive season.

"Our store makes sure not to allow more than 20 customers inside, while remaining are to wait outside in a queue," said Anandhu Krishnan, department manager of H&M. He added that apart from their temperature check, contact information is also recorded as well.

However, a particular set of people have become immune to these measures. "The hypermarket I visit provides disposable plastic gloves and sanitizers for the customers," said Sivasankari

Shyam, who is an architect. but many people find gloves to be uncomfortable. On the other hand, Sameeha Shroff, a student, usually finds it safer to shop online. "Since I live with my grandparents, I choose not to shop at a store to avoid contacting the virus," she said. She explains how many online shopping portals constantly have offers and sales going on which is a huge plus point since its the festive season.

Diwali amidst Covid: Curse or Blessing?

Riya Joseph

KERALA: Diwali this year seems to be a mixed bag of emotions and events likewise. While for some, it has turned into a simple and sombre affair with social distancing measures and containment zones amidst the third wave of Covid, those usually away from home on the occasion are rejoicing because they can finally spend time at home with their family.

Frolina Basumatary a student from Bengaluru is finally returned to her home in Assam for the festival due to the closure of universities and colleges nations wide "We plan on having some family time and decorating the house. We will be



Brightly lit streets for Diwali

Riya Joseph

celebrating with the neighbors this year and distributing sweets in the colony." Alka Anson an engineering student who is

also studying away from home says "Last Diwali I was in my hostel. We ordered Diwali sweets and shared it to our neighboring rooms. This year I'm planning to make sweets at home with cousins." Shitanshu Diwedi a student from Bengaluru does not find much difference in

the way Diwali is celebrated this year compared to last year. "The only difference we see is for puja pandals. The government has issued guidelines where public gathering is prohibited near pandals," he said

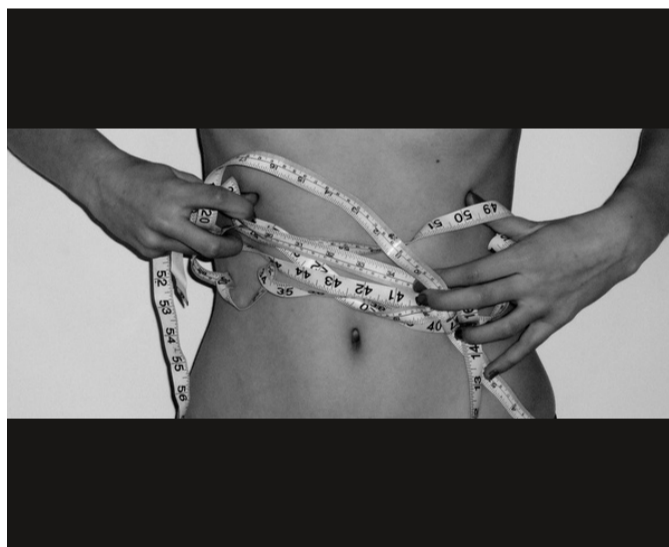
On a side note, many people have also found a welcome relief in the government's decision to ban the bursting of crackers in various states. "There will be more of diyas and candles this time and less noise and sound pollution as most of the cities have banned the sale and bursting of crackers," says Aprajita Jaya a student from Bengaluru. Priyank Goswami also echoes the same sentiments saying, "All in all, it's for the best. I am all in support for a fire crackers free Diwali."

Body Image: A rising concern among teens

Abhimanyu Sharma

KOTA: Body image issues usually stem from the bullying we face in our childhood but it's effects are usually seen in teenage. With the current world that we live in where social media promotes unrealistic beauty standards it has become even more imperative and necessary that teach children about body positivity

Sahaj Marwah, a BSc student in Kota says, "I have been overweight my entire life but so is my family



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which me a lot in building my confidence I lived with people who looked like me, yes there were name calling in school but that didn't affect me" stating how important of a role parents play in helping their child build confidence.

Gaurav Verma, a B.Tech student from Jaipur said, "I actually blame our schools as well, standing height wise everyday in assembly made me feel very complex about my height especially when teachers kept calling me short." A perhaps more

overlooked part of our schooling system is how it promotes categorisation based on your height which for a child could seem scary.

Dr Mamta Jain added, "It's all related to your social environment, people as they reach adulthood usually manage to overcome this but its crucial to give affirmation to a child especially in early ages." Childhood being an impressionable stage of our lives sometimes results in suppressed trauma which could have its effects in later stages of life.

Commercial activity ruins Bakala River in Nagaland

Worinphi Ronra Shimray

NAGALAND: The magical river Bakala Nadi of Dimapur, Nagaland is now the reason for the floods as the council member of Diphupar village has been digging the river for sand.

Melodin, a daily wage worker said, "during rainy season my house gets flooded but I cannot say or do anything as I don't have the power." Valaswa, a farmer who stays at the bank of the river added that the deepened river washes away the fertile soil and destroys

the crop. Another person mentioned, "due to no income of the village the council member extract the sand for the development of the village by using those sand to make the roads. I don't want to be against the council, I understand them but for the safety of the village it's better if they don't extract the sand."

Since the extraction of the sand has caused many problems to the people, the DC of Dimapur have called for a ban on such activity in order to prevent the harmful effects on environment.

Travel industry revamps in times of pandemic

Suhas S Kashyap

BENGALURU: With the New Year around the corner, travel agencies are stating that they are seeing an uptick in business despite the pandemic, but customers demanding hygienic measures. "People demand for the Covid test report of the driver, travellers rather than booking bus tickets are preferring cars or mini buses for travel. They are worried to travel with public transport and the demand for private hired cabs and buses are increasing," says, Manjunath, owner of Manjunatha Tours and Travel.



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Shivu owner of Koteshwara Boat services told The Beacon that, "the booking for

boat private boat parties have increased and the demand is higher than the previous year.

People are demanding for the boat to have fogging devices for disinfection and to be sanitized in their presence to make sure it's done well." He added that all his boats are booked till the year end. Bookings of transport are increasing as people have started to gear up for the new year parties keeping the safety measures in mind. With the ongoing pandemic, people stuck for months at residences are planning to travel and party at various destinations. They are aware to take safety measures and have been demanding the same from the service providers.