



Lilavati Hosp starts foetal surgery dept

SWAPNIL MISHRA / MUMBAI

As per latest available data, five out of 5,000 births require specialised care. Lilavati Hospital, in association with the Spina Bifida Foundation, has partnered with Poland's Medical University of Silesia, to inaugurate a foetal surgery department, aiming to repair birth defects and foetal conditions before birth.

Spina bifida, a congenital birth defect, occurs at the foetal stage, when the spinal cord holes or tissue covering called meninges don't grow properly. It can happen anywhere along the spine and is usually seen as a hole at birth.

This collaboration seeks to offer foetal surgery as a primary clinical option for intrauterine correction, significantly enhancing the prospects for affected infants. However, some conditions like spina bifida, large neck masses, lower urinary tract obstructions, and certain tumours can adversely affect foetal development, necessitating timely intervention to prevent further harm.

Dr Santosh Karmkar, a senior consultant and paediatric surgeon at Lilavati Hospital, emphasised that foetal surgery represents a significant advancement in prenatal healthcare to prevent long-term complications for unborn infants.

He also pointed out that approximately 70% of the patients are not getting the required treatment due to lack of awareness or financial constraints. These patients also lack proper and timely guidance and medical care, forcing them to seek for themselves.

In this regard, a conference was also held to raise awareness about the importance of foetal surgery in India. It served as a forum for leading experts, practitioners, and researchers from around the world to converge and discuss various aspects of the surgery.

The Maharastra government's health ministry has issued a circular for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The state government has therefore requested the Election Commission of India to give a green signal so that it can be accessed by lakhs of beneficiaries.

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Bandra Worli Sea Link toll hiked by 18% from April 1

The new toll rates on the sea link, which opened for traffic in 2009, will be applicable until March 31, 2027; daily & monthly passes to cost more too

FPI NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

The toll charges on Bandra Worli Sea Link will increase by about 18% from April 1, officials from the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) said on Friday.

The new toll rates for one-way journeys for cars and jeeps will be Rs100, while minibuses, tempo and other similar vehicles will have to pay Rs160. Two-axle trucks will be charged Rs210 for a one-way trip on the cable-stayed bridge.

The new toll rates on the sea link, which opened for traffic in 2009, will be applicable until March 31, 2027.

On advance purchase of booklets containing 50 and 100 toll coupons, there will be a rebate of 10% and 20%, respectively. The rates of return journey pass and daily pass, valid till midnight, will be 1.5 times and 2.5



times their respective one-way toll charges. The cost of monthly passes will be 50 times their respective one-way travel rates.

Currently, motorists using the eight-lane overpass now pay Rs85 for cars and jeeps, Rs130 for minibuses, tempo and light commercial vehicles, and Rs175 for two-axle trucks and buses. These rates have been in force since April 1, 2021. Every day, scores of motorists use the sea link, connecting Worli in the island city and Bandra in the western suburbs for south-and-north-bound travel, avoiding traffic snarls in Mahim, Dadar, Prabhadevi and Worli.

The authorities have planned to connect the sea link with the coastal road at both ends of the sea link, the traffic on the coastal road is expected to increase.

Four held for theft from closed textile unit in Palghar

Palghar: Four persons have been arrested for allegedly stealing items from a closed textile unit in Boisar MIDC in Palghar district. The theft of circuit boards worth Rs1.76 crore took place between June and April last year and a case was filed on the

complaint of the company on October 7, Superintendent of Police Balasaheb Patil said. "One person identified as Mohammad Hussain Karimashan Chowdhary was held on Wednesday. Three of his associates were arrested soon after," he added.



Trash to Treasure: Family helms clean-up crusade

What began as a personal initiative has turned into a mass movement; over 12,000 volunteers have joined the cause

DHAIRYA GAJARA / MUMBAI

A family of four has taken on the task of ridding the beaches near Vasai of plastic. What began as a personal initiative to provide cleaner shores for their own children has blossomed into a mass movement, drawing over 12,000 volunteers.

With the collective effort of the family and their supporters, Surbhi, Bena, Rangaon and Bhagwan beaches in Vasai have been successfully cleared of plastic waste.

"A lot of people have been joining us from Vasai as well as from other countries like Germany, France, Hungary, Portugal and Denmark. Some people don't participate in the activity but they have stopped littering the beach and have seen an enormous decrease in the waste in the last few months," said Ferrao.

In addition to beach cleaning, the family has expanded their initiatives to include the removal of smaller plastic items like wrappers, which often go unnoticed during regular clean-ups. They have also begun cleaning the ponds in Vasai to preserve vital water sources for both wildlife and the community.

Since 2019, Ferrao and Salda have embarked on tree planting campaigns along the coastal areas, contributing over 2,500 palm trees to the landscape. Every Sunday, they organise waste collection drives aimed at recycling plastic and upcycling clothes for donation to orphanges.

Their commitment to environmental conservation has earned them support from organisations such as the mangrove foundation, the forest department, and Eyeset, enabling them to expand their activities and reach more people.

"We have started collecting these small plastic articles and sending them for recycling as we do with the bigger sized waste. We tried turning these plastic items into paper blocks but people are still sceptical about using it," said Ferrao.

Model code of conduct stalls ₹5L insurance

SWAPNIL MISHRA / MUMBAI

MJPJAY launched July 2, 2012

54L
Patients have benefited
Expenditure
₹10,550 crore
1,356
Diseases covered

"The MJPJAY scheme covers nearly 1,336 diseases and help patients who cannot afford high treatment costs, said Dr. Anil Patel, head of the hikes from Rs1.5 lakh to Rs5 lakh was announced in July last year, with an addition of 340 diseases. Close to 1,000 hospitals can be accessed by ration card holders and people with domicile certificates."

A senior official from the state health department said that treatment costs are peaking beyond the means of mid-

dle class families. As a result, the state issued a government resolution (GO) on July 27, 2023, wanting hospitals about stemmer that if they fail to implement the new scheme.

Another official said, "The premium paid to the state health insurance society is Re55 per family with the government contributing Rs1,770 crore annually to this company. According to the state health inspection report, 2,22 crore beneficiaries have been selected for this scheme," the official said.

Despite initial challenges and a lack of support from the community, the family persisted. Their dedication garnered attention on social media, inspiring others to join them in their weekly

clean-up drives. Over time, their grassroots movement gained momentum, with thousands of volunteers rallying to their cause every Sunday.

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