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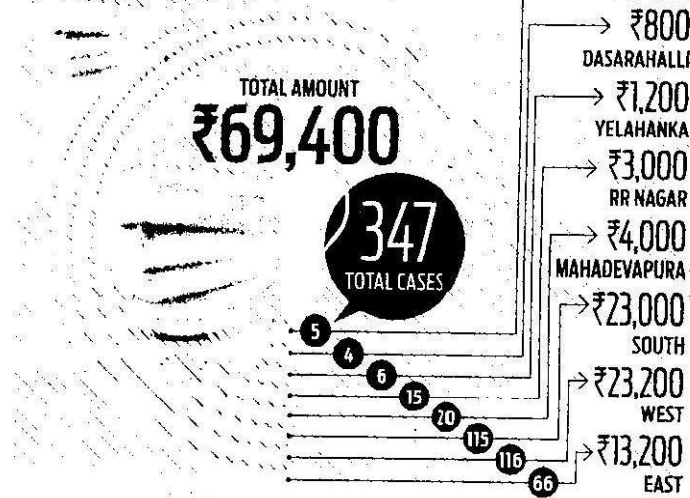
Fine for no mask, says BBMP; Not fine, say docs

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

WHILE the state government has made it mandatory for everyone to wear masks, and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and the police are penalising those seen without them, doctors say it is not necessary unless one is in a public space. In fact, several instances of people driving without masks and being fined are being reported in the city.

Doctors are posting messages on social media to bust the myth that one needs to wear masks round-the-clock, and educating the masses on the hazards of being covered up all day. They say that wearing a mask for long can lead to a drop in oxygen levels in the blood, and can even cause heart attacks. While they admit that there have been no studies to prove this, they say many patients have complained of uneasiness from wearing masks for long hours.

Fine collected for not wearing masks as on June 10



Dr Manish Mattoo, zonal director, Fortis Hospitals, said wearing a mask is debatable. "A lot about the subject is un-

known because this is a new territory. Masks only minimise the risk of catching an infection. People are advised

to wear masks when they are in public, but those who are facing discomfort should not wear them, and should not venture out," he said.

Talking about how "no logic" has been used by the government in penalising those without masks, Dr Ravi Mehta, a well-known physician, said, "No one should wear N-95 masks. Homemade cloth masks should be used as they can be re-used and do not cause breathing difficulty. The government has made it mandatory for everyone to wear them, but those penalising people have not understood when people should wear masks and when they shouldn't. There is a need to sensitise officials and citizens."

District Health Officer Dr Srinivas told *TNIE* that talks are being held with other departments to not penalise those who are alone and without masks, as it is not required. He says officials will be made aware of this.