

## Footboard travellers tread on the wrong side of law

SNEHA JHA

Bangalore, Oct 24—Passengers travel on the footboards of Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) buses, risking their lives and violating the Motor Vehicle Act says that footboard traveling is prohibited.

Footboard traveling in BMTC buses is a familiar sight. This is particularly true of buses that carry too many passengers and ply on the outskirts of the city. For instance, BMTC bus (No 228D) which was boarded by women and schoolgirls of the villages of kumalgudu. It was so overcrowded that they had to travel on the footboard. Manju, a schoolgirl said that the bus is overcrowded so they have no other option. This is one of the few buses that ply on this route.

There have been cases in the past when footboard traveling has caused accidents and deaths. Narayan Gowda, driver of a BMTC bus said, "When we apply brakes

suddenly, footboard travelers can fall, get caught under the wheels of the bus and get crushed to death. In case of an accident their chances of suffering serious injuries are maximum." A conductor, Dharmaraj said that he tries to highlight the risk of footboard

traveling to the commuters and discourage this malpractice. He makes it a point to warn them.

Gopalswamy, a commuter said, "Most of the times it is an act of desperation. If I am getting late and the buses are not frequent. I have no



Passengers travelling on the footboard of a BMTC bus

Pic by author

other choice. The demand for public transport bus service far exceeds its supply."

K Jagadeesh, Assistant Traffic manager, BMTC did not agree, "The problem is not of the demand outweighing the supply. BMTC at

present has 4,710 vehicles that cover 11 lakh kilometers per day making 66,657 trips per day out of 29 depots. It has 4,574 schedules. The city has grown enormously in the past few years. The increasing vehicular traffic has added to the traffic jams. Even if a bus is supposed to make 12 trips to an area, heavy traffic causes delay making only seven trips

possible. This reduces the frequency of buses." He said that BMTC has taken steps to check the violation.

"The most prominent among them is the introduction of automatic doors in all the new

vehicles. The drivers and conductors are also taught traffic rules and road discipline is instilled in them so that they can ensure the observance of rules. If they fail to do so they are fined and disciplinary action is taken against them. There are seven Saarthis in and around the city."

The Regional Transport Officer (Indiranagar) said that he helps to check the violation by conducting surprise raids with the help of traffic constables.

Dastagir Sharieff, Chief Traffic Manager (Operations) said that BMTC was the first public transport service in the country to introduce automatic doors to check footboard travel. "We are trying to use media to generate awareness. Bus stands have slogans and newspapers also carry educative messages on the issue. We are also trying to increase our services to prevent people from resorting to such measures," he said.

## Conductors bypass issuing tickets for short routes

RITIKA KUMAR

Bangalore, Oct 24—The bus conductors in Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation's (BMTC) buses charge less than the actual fare and do not give tickets. That money is pocketed by the conductors.

The bus conductors are making a lot of money other than their salaries and the authority is not bothered about it. M.S. Mallikarjuna, Account officer, BMTC said, "We don't keep any records of pilferage by the conductors". Suman, Assistant Account Officer, BMTC said that it is difficult to keep track of these pilferages (petty thefts). "We have very less man power, and if we use more people to find out, the money spent will be more than that

recovered. So what is the use?", he replied in a rhetoric tone

"We have kept conductors so that the commuters do not cheat by traveling ticketless, but if conductors only do so, we simply can't help."

Natraj, Accountant superintendent, BMTC said, "BMTC is the second most profitable transport entity in the world, and this revenue loss is just 2 to 3 per cent." It is very difficult to catch such dishonest conductors, he added.

Regarding actions taken by the BMTC to stop this money making by the conductors, Mallikarjuna said, "we have mobile squads to check them, but it's very difficult to catch them."

Natraj said that the only way to

prevent such pilferage is that commuters ask for tickets, and if they don't get they can very well take another bus.

"I cannot fight a conductor for a small amount of money. Besides I have to pay less so it's fine with me," said Priyanka Choudhury, a student. Rajshri Chandra, a commuter said, "it's already so difficult to get a bus, and after that who cares if the conductor doesn't give me the ticket. My priority is to reach in time, not to have hassles." The passengers do not bother to ask for a ticket in most cases. Conductors take advantage of this. This blatant pilferage of loose change demands action from the officials concerned because of its severe impact on the exchequer of BMTC.

## Shops at bus station flouting MRP laws

SHILPA KRISHNAN

Bangalore, Oct 24—Charging over the maximum retail price (MRP) is a criminal offense on the part of the sellers but is common practice in Kempegowda Bus Station.

At Swati Deluxe Food Center near platform six, one has to pay Rs.6 for a roll of Polo priced at Rs.5. A bottle of mineral water with an MRP of Rs.12 is sold at Rs.14. Similar is the case in Aishwarya Food Center near platform 14 where a pack of Good Day biscuits with an MRP of Rs.12 is sold at Rs.13.

According to the Standard of Weights and Measures (Enforcement) Act, 1985, charging over the MRP is a criminal offense. The punishment is a fine of Rs 5,000 and if the vendor were

caught repeating the offence, the matter would be taken to court.

Srikant Udupa, Assistant Traffic Manager at Kempegowda Bus Station said, "The buyers must take initiative and file a complaint with us by giving us complete details. We will then look into the matter and serve notice to the license of the storeowner. But we have not received any complaints from the buyers and so we have not done anything about it so far."

The storeowners were silent when asked about it. They avoided the question and turned their attention to the other customers. The man at the counter of Swati Deluxe Food Center was heard complaining about how people make fuss over paying rupee when they spend on fancy items.

## Stretch of stench on Kamaraj Road also a potential hazard

AYESHA ALEEM

Bangalore, Oct 24—The sewage drain on Kamaraj Road has been dug up and lain open for close to a month, which poses a danger for pedestrians and motorists. No barricade cordones it off from the main road. Piles of rock are the only dangerous barrier between the road and the murky waters of the drain.

The contractor in charge, Satish said, "Everyone only thinks about the people. No one thinks about us. We're the ones who have to clean this up", said the contractor pointing to the stagnant grey water in the drain. "This is not good water, it is stagnant water."

Talking about the blockade that separates the open drain and the construction debris from the main road, the contractor said, "We put up tape every night. Red tape. But the paper pickers come and take it away. They even take away the metal barricades. We had 20 of them to be used here, but they carry it away and sell it. Since no



An open drain at Kamraj Road

Pic by Akanskha Pradeep

one is here at night, no one can stop them. They don't even leave construction material, sand, jelly, everything."

Several shops line the stretch that has been dug up. The only way customers can reach them is by walking on a granite planks that have been precariously placed, some balancing on

nothing more than narrow bits of rock, joining the road and what once used to be a pavement.

As a result, the work is affecting the business of these shops. Mr. Srinivas of Om Shakthi Mobiles says, "This work has been going on for about 15-20 days. We are a new shop. Since we have come, this is a problem that we have to

deal with. Business is definitely affected. Customers find it very difficult to come to the shop, especially since this road doesn't even allow parking."

He further said, "I even asked the construction men to put a slab in front of my shop that will connect it with the road, but they did nothing. They just went away.

when I was even willing to pay them for the work."

A sweet shop is also situated on this stretch. Patrons that visit is are forced to encounter swarms of flies and open dustbins that overlook the open drain. The setting is extremely unhygienic and repulsive.

The work is proposed to continue for another month. Until then, the drain continue to lie open. The stench of sewage pollutes the surrounding area and poses health hazards to the residents. The timing of the project - during the rains - has posed an additional problem of keeping the dug up rubble dry and thereby neat. It tends to get wet often, making the place very slushy and muddy.

No accidents have occurred till now, says Deepak, an employee at Raj Estates, an STD and photocopy shop on this stretch. Until the work is completed, all of us will have to hope that it stays that way.