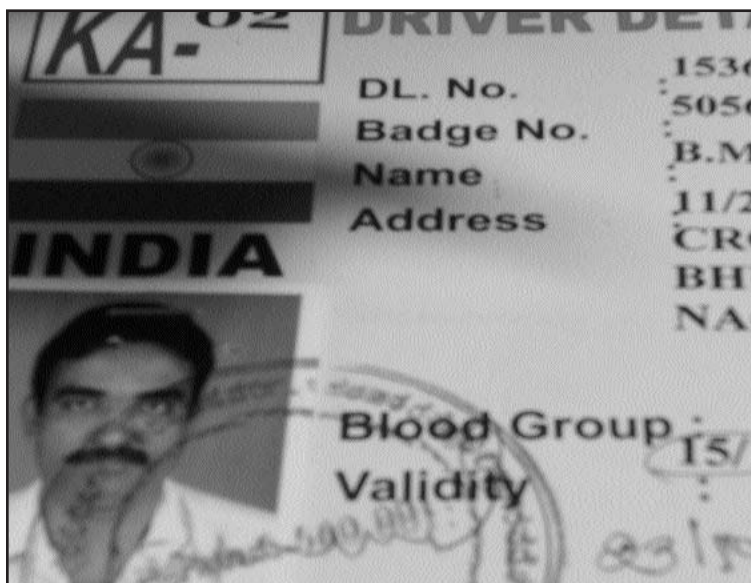


Incomplete auto licences go unchecked

ADITI SONI

Bangalore, October 24—The blood group column in the auto driver's license is not filled in most of the

"When I asked the people issuing me this sheet about the blood group column, they were rude and said that they know their job well. Rather according to them, the



Empty blood group column in an auto driver's licence.

Pic by Aditi Soni

autos. Blood group is an important piece of information, which should be filled, so that blood can be donated by or to the driver in case of any accident or major injury.

"I've written to the Regional Transport Authority to ask the drivers to mandatorily fill in blood group as well," said Deepa Mohan, one of the daily passengers.

Drivers though tried asking the authorities to do their blood test, but they are most of the time asked to not question the authorities.

entire fault was mine, since I didn't know my blood group"; said Mohan, an auto driver.

"I never knew that this column is not being filled. But now, I think we will surely see to it that the test is being done and this column is being filled"; said DCP of Traffic Police Mr. Bawa. Though from past one year no step has been taken to insure that these columns are being filled properly, but now the officials have ensured that they will surely start acting on it soon.

Ticket vending machines not user-friendly

Lack of proper technology renders the railway platform ticket machines useless

GEETHA JAYARAMAN

Bangalore, October 24—The platform ticket vending machines at the Bangalore City railway station are not user-friendly. The instructions on the machine are not clear for people to understand. The machine just says that the cost of the ticket is Rs.3 and that the people have to use Rs.1 coins to get the tickets. The people get very confused about the mechanism.

Umesh, working in a pharmaceutical company, came to see off his relatives on a train scheduled at 5.15 p.m. After struggling with the machine for about 15 minutes he had to give up and go to the counter to purchase his platform ticket as he was getting late.

"This is not our responsibility to teach everyone. We follow 'each one, teach one' method", said Vijayaraju, Chief Booking Supervisor of the city railway station. He said that the authorities have installed the machines for peoples' convenience. They can only provide basic information rest is for the people who to take initiative and learn themselves. We have put the machine there so that people can learn by themselves. We can't appoint a person over there to teach, as it will create more chaos," he said.

The machine was installed three years ago and for one week there were people assigned to guide the users. Vijayaraju said that the

income from the machine has been increasing steadily. He said that it's not possible to put a written guidance on the machine, as many people don't know how to read English. He added that, if the railway authority writes in any regional language then there are complaints from the people from other states who won't be able to understand. So nowadays the railways uses the pictorial method of educating people about various things in the Railways. But it's not possible as "Indians learn only practically, they don't understand theory," he said. Educated people use the machine properly but it's the illiterate people who find it

difficult, he added. However when the machine was tried, it was very confusing to operate. Every time a coin was inserted into the machine it fell out before any command could be given. Sheena Salwan, a visitor said, "When educated people like us get confused, then one can very well imagine the plight of the illiterates. So what is the use of these machine.", She asked.

When told about the problem faced, Vijayaraju said that he has not received any complaints about the confusion. He added that the railways do not have any plans to educate the passengers in future as well.



A confused commuter trying hard to get a platform ticket.

Pic by Geetha Jayaraman

Khadi back on the ramp...

Despite tough competition from new brands Khadi retains its demand

ANUYA ULPE

Bangalore, October 24—'Khadi', an agro-based industry, has managed to maintain its niche and also attract more customers specially "youngsters who want to go back to nature", says Mr. R. Rameshappa, Chief Executive officer (CEO) of Karnataka State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Bangalore.

Even consumers are pretty satisfied about Khadi products specially, garments. Aakanksha Tavag says, "Its comfortable and I like it. All my kurtas are Khadi and they look good too. They've come out with much better stuff of late". Mr. Rameshappa says Khadi is not competing with other brands as it still a smaller industry as compared to them. He adds, "Those who have inclination towards Gandhian movement make most of our customers".

Commenting on the quality of Khadi over the years the CEO said that recently they introduced the 'Poly-vastra' line that has 10 percent chemical and 90 percent pure Khadi.

Otherwise, Khadi has followed the age-old process of production on charkhas. And now,

"Because of advancement of technology the research department in Mumbai has come

up with eight-spindled charkhas and is in the process of researching on 10-spindled charkhas that will increase production", says the CEO.

The board also introduced readymade garments that are 100 percent mill-made. For this 100 students at National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) were mass trained in 2002 to give Khadi a new look.

This agro-based industry gives more importance to increase employment opportunities rather than quality or attracting more customers. But as far as their production sales are concerned, "Its 100 percent every year

and we are in position in to meet demand as more people are moving towards Khadi. There is no dearth of customers". Mr. Rameshappa cited an example of Kerala where the government made it compulsory for school children to wear Khadi uniform at least twice a week and the Khadi board could not meet 20 percent of the demand. He quotes Gandhi and says, "We

are not looking at generating more products but more manpower".

But he said that they are not



Khadi is the buzzword of latest fashion

Pic by Google

planning on opening more Gramudyog Sangha in Karnataka due to various reasons. The reasons being unavailability of skilled salesman to sell Khadi products, untimely action, from the government, disinterest and inhospitality of salesmen towards the customers. "They do not want to get up and smile at the customers even...they are more happy if no

customer comes as long as they are getting their salary at the end of the month", says Mr. Rameshappa.

Thus the Sangha is not serving its purpose.

As far as the marketing strategies of khadi are concerned the only one regularly applied is quite successful. The Karnataka Gramudyog Sangha and Karnataka State Khadi and Village Industries Board conduct national level exhibitions in Bangalore twice a year and district level exhibition once in two years at the least. This government-financed exhibition attracts more customers every year and they are expecting sales to touch Rs. 8 crores in January 2008.

But the root problem of this thinning industry is the fact that the workers based in villages are part-time and work on daily-wage basis. And due to the technology, "one

man can spin eight times and can alone produce more so we do not need many workers...besides due to the low wage it is not a very attractive field", adds Mr. Rameshappa.

Mr. Shantanu Garg of Khadi Bhandar at Dispensary Road says, "Its in good demand as it is suitable for every season. And we keep simple designs, nothing fancy". They get 100 customers a day on an average and since, "Its an old shop and due to the advertisements they give out once in a while, they don't adopt any marketing strategy". And he disagrees that popularity of Khadi is going down. There is an NGO called Desi run by Mr. Prasanna, a theatre personality sells kurtas and fabrics produced by villagers in a town called Sagar in the Western Ghat

Khadi outlets in bangalore

- 1: Janata Khadi Bhandar at KR road. Tel: 080-26702937.
- 2: Khadi Kutir Airport Road, Murugeshpalya, Tel: 080-5281816
- 3: Khadi Bhandar, No. 142, Dispensary Road, Tel: 080-5598911.
- 4: Khadi Gramudyog Bhavan # 97/98, S J P Road, Tel: 080-2223146.