

## Illegal hawkers haunt subway

NAMITHA VISWANATHAN

The Kempe Gowda bus station underpass is proliferating with illegal hawkers. The hawkers are only a nuisance to the people using the subway. They sell things ranging from fashion accessories to flower garlands, mobile covers to balloons, and books to garments. The police come for regular checks throughout the day, but the hawkers manage to run away at their arrival and return as soon as the khaki clad men fades away.

Sumathi, a resident of Bangalore for 10 years says that she often misses the bus because of the crowd created in the subway due to these hawkers. But then she doesn't mind buying cheap things from them sometimes.

Nihaal and Akbar from Kerala are annoyed by the amount of pick pocketing that happens as the crowd increases. They believe that the hawkers may also be some of the culprits. The screaming for advertising wares and the soliciting happening in the subways can be really irritating to anyone. "There is no peace," says Sumathi.

The hawkers have their own side to the story too. Suresh, who sells magazines and books at the entrance of the subway across the bus station, says that this is their way of being self-employed, as the government wants them to be. "The government talks a lot about self-employment, but it gives us no option." He says that people sell their wares in such roadside areas out of helplessness. They have no means to set up their own stalls, and so they resort to illegal



Flowers sellers on subway stairs

by author

hawking. In his opinion many of these hawkers, and even pickpockets and chain-snatchers are educated people who couldn't acquire jobs. The police do not often target his wares because they are books. Chandrashekhar, a handicap selling balloons says that he is often unable to run away from the scene in time to avoid the police and gets beaten up sometimes.

Anitha, who sells charts says, "The police treat us very badly. There is no one to raise a voice for us. This is the only means of survival we have. What else do we do?"

D. Raju, a police constable, said that a case is filed against these hawkers under Karnataka Police Act (1963) Section 92 F (2) and G for illegal selling. The Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) at Upparpet police station says, "We charge a case against them and take them to

the magistrate. They are fined about 50 to 100 rupees and set free. But they come back again." He says that they return because they have no other employment by which they can earn a living. The Upparpet police station registers show the number of cases at 1,071 as of October 17, 2007. The ASI says that apart from the regular checks in these subways, the police can do nothing. "We have provisions only to charge a case," he says. It is the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) who has to ensure that these hawkers do not come again by auctioning the wares of these hawkers.

Kadoor, the Revenue Officer at the West Zonal office, in Malleshwaram, says that Engineering department of the BBMP handles the complaints. At present there are 138 illegal hawkers in the West Zone including the Majestic area.

## Security lapse at City Railway Station

SNIGDHA POONAM

At the Bangalore City Railway Station, there is no regular checking of platform tickets. This is the main railway station in the city and an important one in the Southern Railways network. Now, the railway station operates 71 trains. Above 1.5 lakh passengers bustle through the station premises each day.

The railway station has a group of security personnel posted at the gates, but most are scattered across the station, rendering the place understaffed. During arrivals and departures of trains, scores of people move across the gates, mostly those who aren't checked for platform tickets due inadequate number of security guards.

M P Kuppuswamy, a guard at the exit casually said, "Do I have to check you for platform ticket? I can tell by looking at people if they have taken the ticket."

M R Balamurugadas, Station

Manger at first denied the possibility of such an oversight but when given exact incidences, explained, "There is some slackness but they usually check for tickets regularly. They mostly ignore checking when the person is not carrying baggage. Also there are people from the railway quarters who use the foot overbridge and the subway on the platforms as a short cut to go to the main road increasing the volume of people moving across the gates."

Geeta Kaur, Deputy Chief Ticket Inspector said that the guards don't check for tickets if they don't notice anything fishy.

Nimish Adani, a commuter said, "I travel regularly between Bangalore and Hyderabad and I have noticed that the inspection for platform tickets is mostly lax here. Considering that the trains are still the most popular and economic mode of transport, a security lapse like this sets a vast multitude of lives vulnerable to security threat."

## No footpath at Church Street

ITIKA SHARMA

The footpaths on Church Street are in a bad state. The footpath on one side of the road is damaged in many places, while the other side is used to park vehicles.

There are gaping holes in many where the concrete slabs covering the drain are missing, thus posing a danger for the pedestrians. The Church Street, being a busy road, leads to traffic jams when pedestrians use the road instead of the pavement, especially during rush hour.

A group of college students were spotted walking in the middle of the road. Despite constant honking from the vehicles behind them, they moved away only after some time. They said that because the footpaths on both the sides of the road were packed with vehicles, and so they were forced to walk on the road.

Jayaprasad, Technical Advisor, Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar



Missing slabs expose drain

by Chitra Phalguni

Palike said, "the footpath was redone some months back, adding, "I refuse to believe that the entire footpath is broken. There are only few places that are bad and we will repair it soon."

One of the pedestrians said, "A well maintained footpath at least on one side of the road will not only make the road pedestrian-friendly but will also help manage the traffic better."

## Stampede at Mysore Dasara Parade

GAYATHRI VAIDYANATHAN

Unruly crowds during the Mysore Dasara parade broke down security barriers and caused near-stampedes. The police struggled to maintain order despite unprecedented security.

Huge crowds gathered to watch the annual Mysore Dasara parade on Sunday, 21 October 2007. The event lasted around four hours. But increasing attendance saw a deteriorating security situation. People climbed onto trees and electric poles for better view. Once the parade started, the crowd pushed through the barriers despite the presence of several police constables and NCC (National Cadet Corps) cadets. Several people were hurt or badly shaken.

Akansha Pradeep, a student who attended the festival without a ticket or a pass, said: "The event was highly unorganized and there was no security for the common man." While another student Anil Das, who was inside the palace disagreed, "Security was tight. Everyone was checked thrice before being let into the palace."

About the security situation outside the palace, he said, "The police were there just to ensure [the crowd doesn't] spill over. They were there to ensure smooth flow of traffic."

Commissioner of Police, Mysore,



Mysore dasara attracts visitors from far and wide

by author

Mr. Bhaskar Rao said this year had an unprecedented number of police personnel assigned, but "more security means more inconvenience".

He added: "The security scenario in the whole country has changed. In less than 3 months there has been a bomb blast in Hyderabad, in Ajmer and in so many other places...We had a task of keeping things as safe as possible."

Towards this end, they had 25 emergency exits leading out of the palace and an evacuation team ready for disaster. Such precautions are necessary when VIPs are present, he said.

These exits are not accessible

during the parade itself though, essentially locking in spectators for the duration of the event. Mr. Rao said this was necessary since people would otherwise enter and exit freely using these points.

On the condition of the people on the footpaths with unreserved seats, he said: "I'm not much bothered about them," indicating the people climbing on the trees nearby.

"People should have some responsibility; we cannot do micro-policing".

He refused to comment on the breaking down of barriers by the crowd since he did not observe this himself.

## Computers help recruit bus drivers

KOMAL CHAUDHARY

Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC) has introduced a computerized track system to recruit drivers developed by Varsha Bytes.

Mechanical engineers used to travel with candidates in the bus and test their skills. This involved biases and bribes.

This system, introduced two years ago, needs no manual interference. The selection is based on the merit list while results are printed out on the same day.

The assistant manager supervising the test assigns a number to the applications received from the administration.. He stands on the field and feeds the number of the candidate into a

machine and calls the control room at the start of the test. Every time a bus hits a barricade with sensors, the signal is traced on the tracks by the computers. The test is repeated and marks are allotted. The marks are deducted whenever a barricade is hit.

The system has been implemented in four bus depots and is yet to be implemented in other depots in Karnataka.

Ramchandra, Kengeri depot manager, said, "The new system is introduced in the country for the first time. BMTTC is the first transport authority in the state to implement it."

One candidate said that the new system was good and that there would be fair selections with the help of advanced technology.