

## Trees facing the axe in Bellary Road

SNIGDHA POONAM

The Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BBMP) felled more than 50 trees at Bellary Road near UAS Campus, to widen the road in October and is still continuing with the process. Though the BBMP assured the translocation of the trees, it has time and again, failed to keep its promises.

One resident at the UAS Campus, Arpita Mohan said, "The rate at which the green cover is receding in the city in the name of road expansion drive, we will soon be left with no lung space." She said that it was not even required in this case and that the expansion of the Bellary road wouldn't solve traffic congestion, as it would only make the drive upto the bus stop comfortable. Since the flyover is a two-lane road, a three-lane approach road would only pose a blockage to the entrance of the flyover, she explained.

The two Environmental organizations Hasiru Usiru and Environmental Support Group (ESG) launched a campaign against the felling. Leo Saldanha of ESG said, "We want to know if the BBMP has considered any other measures, such as regulation of traffic, rather than the widening of roads, which might not solve the problem for more than a few years." Anush Shetty of Hasiru

Usiru, who protested the tree felling, said that BBMP's proposed course of action in widening the roads by cutting trees went against the Preservation of Trees act, Sec 41 C and D. He said that no traffic study had been done before such a decision was reached, and the decision to cut trees and widen the roads had not been properly publicized.



Trees felled for widening of Bellary Road.

by author

BBMP Officials showed a positive attitude by saying that they too would not be in favour of cutting down trees unnecessarily. S Shekhar, Deputy Conservator of Forest, BBMP said, "The official position was that, since the traffic in central Bangalore had become so congested, 85 roads were

selected, 45 of which, were notified in March 2, 2005 for widening." He said that ten of these roads, including Bellary Road, were on an urgent footing and about 300 trees would have to be cut.

He cited several bottlenecks that had to be overcome to transplant the trees. He said that it was a very cumbersome task and involved expensive equipments, technical finesse and continuous monitoring until the trees were established in their new location. He added that their recent experiments with transplanting the trees at Indira Nagar showed little promise because on an average, only 1-2 out of every 10 trees survive transplanting. Moreover the trees had to be in excellent health to be considered for transplanting which complicates the process.

M R Suresh, Assistant Conservator of Forest, BBMP said, "Its baffling to reconcile the traffic improvement schemes and retain green cover. We have to face the flak with every new policy." He said that BBMP alone should not be blamed for disregarding tree conservation. A holistic approach has to be conceived to rid the city of traffic congestion without sacrificing trees. Otherwise they will be compelled to fell trees.

## Banerghatta National Park no longer a plastic free zone

AKANSHA PRADEEP

Bannerghatta national park (BNP) authorities violate laws set by themselves.

The park has a board stating that it is a no plastic zone but the canteen inside the park sells eatables in polythene bags.

The visitors litter the park since the authorities do not care to take any strict measures to ensure that the

park remains clean. The visitors keep throwing plastic bottles and other kinds of waste in the park. The canteen in the park uses polythene bags in spite of it being a no plastic zone as mentioned on the board near it. The authorities don't even bother to check and spot fine people who litter the park.

Debolina Sengupta, a visitor in the park said that the people do not bother to use the dustbins; they throw garbage wherever they like.

Markandaya, Deputy Conservator Forest, Banerghatta national park said that they have taken measures to ensure that people do not carry plastic bags inside the park because of which all the plastic bags are exchanged for paper bags at the entrance of the park. He seemed to be unaware about the

fact that the canteen inside the park was using plastic bags to sell eatables. He said that there are

dustbins inside the park so that the people do not litter the park. There is also a spot fine of Rs500 if anyone is caught littering the park or violating other rules. Though the security officers are present, people sometimes get away with these

offences. He added that the 'no plastic drive' is not only restricted to the park premises, they have made an effort to carry it even outside the park. They have arranged for people who collect and dispose most of the plastic. He said that inside the park plastic is not a major concern as they have regular cleaning drives. "It's all the matter of educating people, about the hazards that polythene or plastic poses for the environment."

The officer in charge of the park said that people aren't allowed to take plastic bags inside the park. But inside the park, no one is bothered about ensuring whether this condition is being put into action or relevant measures are taken to check littering. So it goes unchecked largely.



Plastics strewn inside the park

by author

## No complaint boxes for kids to register grievances in schools

KAREN SOLOMON

Many schools are not following the circular released by Public education department of Karnataka instructing the schools to install a complaint box. Delhi high court in a ruling with effect from December 1, 2000 made it mandatory for schools to have complaint boxes, to make sure that the schoolchildren are not subjected to corporal punishment or sexual abuse. It was done to ensure that children don't drop out of school because of unfriendly atmosphere. The contents of this complaint box are supposed to be reviewed weekly.

Shivananad, the Head Master (HM) of the Cubbonpet Girls High School of Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BMP), at Bannappa Park road, said that they did not get any circular. In case of any complaints, there is only a direct or oral approach. He informed they wouldn't be installing any complaint boxes because it wasn't necessary.

Fr. Scottus Fernandes, the Principal, Middle School, of St. Joseph's Indian High School, said, "we don't have such formal ways to receive complaints. We have done away with these methods. It is too artificial for us in such an Institution."

If parents had complaints, they could approach the Principal or class teachers. Instead of these complaint boxes, there were counselors to attend to the students

in need. Fr. Fernanades said they used to have corporal punishment about two years ago, however, it had been banned by the management itself. He confirmed that they wouldn't be installing any complaint boxes either. He said, "It is presupposing that we aren't treating the children well." He also said that Regular Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings were held to discuss complaints.

Chetan, one high school student also confirmed that they did not have any complaint boxes and they were treated well. However, if any problems occurred, the Principal and the teachers were easily approachable.

Palakshaiah, Deputy Director for Public Instruction for Primary Schools at the Centre for Public Instruction (CPI) said that they sent Circulars to the district blocks that then distributed it to the respective schools. He said no school followed the modus operandi of the Circular. He said that the complaint boxes established no personal relation, while students could now directly complain to the teachers personally. He said if Circulars weren't working, then they would introduce new ones.

The Circular says that every complaint, including anonymous complaints should be considered. A student of Clarence School however said that they were not allowed to post anonymous complaints in the complaint box.

## Underage kids used for beggary

Kids below 14 are made to dance, do dangerous stunts etc on streets to earn alms which is not in keeping with the law

CHITRA PHALGUNI

The Karnataka Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1975 includes singing, dancing and performing tricks to earn money under beggary. Yet, one can find several performing troupes on the streets of Bangalore.

As against the given law, the troupes try to attract pedestrians into giving alms. In addition, some of them have children as their prime attraction. The law specifies that the term 'beggar' in such cases is not applicable to a child, who is below 14 years of age. The children, however, can be found spending the whole day, moving on the streets and attracting money.

On Kempegowda Road, the reporter saw a three- and- a-half- year old girl, Sapna, walking on the tight- rope. On Brigade Road, there have been cases of children performing acrobatics by sliding into hoops. They even try somersaulting, in tune with music provided by a senior member of the troupe.

B J Komarappa, the Assistant Sub- Inspector (ASI) at the Upparpet Police Station, said the troupes are taken to the beggars' relief home. The Central Relief Committee would then be in

charge of managing the children, too.

Shivaraju, the Sub Inspector (SI) of Ashoknagar Police Station, Crime Department said that they too took the troupes as one unit to the beggars' relief home at Sunkadakatte. He said that this would be so if the children

entirely the responsibility of the police, not of the Corporation.

Ruth, a student of Jyoti Nivas College, said that she found such acts of getting children to perform on the streets to earn money wrong. "They can show talents in other ways," she said.

Prahlad, a marketing expert, said, "I am dead against this. All this is exploitation of children. And I am against it."

Vijay, also a marketer, agreed and said he too was very much against such troupes having children performing. He added that he was against children being sent to beg for alms at parking lots, traffic signals, et cetera.

Sonia, an official at Child Relief and You, said that they are concerned only with the rights of children, and take no specific action against such performing troupes that use children. They try to find the root cause for such activities, like the income of the parents.

The man beating the drum on Kempegowda Road, even as the girl Sapna performed, expressed his helplessness. He said that They had no other means of earning their livelihood, since even they have to fill their stomachs.



A three-year-old girl walkin the rope on Kempegowda Road

by author

performed under the care of their parents. In case they were in foreign hands, the police would file a case against the people using the children, under the Karnataka Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1975.

Khangre, the Deputy Public Relations Officer of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) said that handling of beggars of any nature and age was