

# Tender voices protest decision to privatise Bal Bhavan

DIELLE D'SOUZA

Bangalore—Cubbon Road hosted a number of children and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) protesting against the Government's decision of privatizing Bal Bhavan.

At least 300 voices chanting "Nammadu, Nammadu, Bal Bhavan nammadu" (It's ours, it's ours, Bal Bhavan is ours") echoed outside Cubbon Park. The protest brewed up against a tender notice (dated October 8, 2007) served by the government of Karnataka for privatizing Bal Bhavan to make it an amusement park. The government wishes to implement the "Singapore model of Children's amusement park" not only for Jawahar Bal Bhavan in Cubbon Park, but also for those in Rajajinagar, Coles Park, Jeevan Bheema Nagar and Jayanagar.

Jawahar Bal Bhavan started 47 years ago with the motto of development of children through recreation, education and extra-curricular activities. It has provided shelter and a place of recreation to thousands of street children and street families.

On Tuesday morning, street children from all over Bangalore



People protesting government's move to privatise Bal Bhavan - Pic by author

assembled, protesting for their rights. They were entreating the Governor not to privatize Bal Bhavan. In this commercial world, Bal Bhavan was the only place where they could have fun for free. Now this too would have an entry fee.

Aided by several NGOs such as

Ashadeep, Deeds, Echo, Outreach, Grace, etc, the street children braved the scorching heat to save their recreation center from the clutches of corporate behemoths. Doreswamy, a freedom fighter, presided over the event. He said, "Along with other Bal Bhavans in the city and state, the government

is planning to privatize even Jawahar Bal Bhavan. Bal Bhavans are meant for children. It is mandatory for the government to provide recreational facilities to the children. In the case of Bal Bhavans, the government is trying to shirk from its responsibilities. It only wants to enjoy power. In the

process, the children turn into prey for the private players who only look at making profits. We are requesting the governor to take back the tender. The state government and the education department in particular must take control of these Bal Bhavans and create more facilities."

The authorities meanwhile, are clueless about the situation. Smitha, the Technical Assistant at the horticulture department of Cubbon Park said, "We are not aware of the situation at the Bal Bhavan."

Rohini and Hema, street children, regular visitors at Bal Bhavan, said, "We might be too young to understand the meaning of privatization. But, it is not right for the government to sell away the land that we play in. We come from poor families and the only time we have fun during the day is when we come to Bal Bhavan with our friends."

But now, the government is selling away Bal Bhavan to Singapore. Once foreigners take over, they'll start charging us a lot of money. We don't have money to even pay for our education. How can we pay to play?"

## A healing touch of yoga therapy for treating schizophrenia

RATUL SUR

Bangalore—Yoga therapy as a supplement to medication can help treat schizophrenia says the Department of Psychiatry of National Institute of Mental Health And Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS). NIMHANS started yoga as an add-on treatment for schizophrenia along with its usual treatment.

This course started as a research project three years ago with a team of three doctors of the Department-Dr. G.Duraiswamy, Dr. J. Thirthalli, Dr. B. N. Gangadhar who introduced 31 moderately ill schizophrenia patients to yoga. They were assessed at base-line and four months after the start of this therapy 21 were found to have less psychopathology. Since then this course started.

"Schizophrenia is a disease that is managed rather than cured," told Dr. B.N. Gangadhar, the Head of the Department of Psychiatry. He said that both the disease and its long-term treatment have been traumatic to the patients. Due to long medication process the patients found it really hard to come out of the cobweb of medication. Since schizophrenia mainly arises out of the context of social, or occupational dysfunction, many patients are found to be working in any company or any offices and taking long course of treatment becomes hard for them. Sometimes medication can continue life long, he added.

Schizophrenia further bifurcates into two types of diseases- positive and negative symptoms. So the assessment is based on a scale called Positive And Negative Syndrome Scales (PANSS). All the assessments are done twice before selection and after

treatment. After baseline assessment, subjects are randomly assigned using computer generated random number table. up to September 2007, the number of successfully treated patients by Yoga Therapy (YT) is 31.

"The patients are to be selected for YT are judged by using a yard stick of four criteria," says Dr. B. N. Gangadhar. "These are social and occupational functioning scale (SOFS) of the individual. Using the SOFS, Simpson Angus Scale for Extrapyramidal Symptoms and quality of life the individual used to live by using the WHO Quality Of Life BREF version," he added.

He said that by using this therapy they have been successful to treat diseases like decompensated myocardial disorder, co-morbid substance dependence or seizure disorder. He said that though yoga takes some more time to have effect, its effect is long lasting.

But this therapy so far has not been able to touch all the spheres of schizophrenia. For example the prodromal phase, which is the detected early stage of schizophrenia, is presently not been detected by using yoga. "We still do it by medication," told Dr. Gangadhar. Not only those two more diseases 'Bipolar Disorder' and 'Borderline Disorder' are yet to be addressed."

Though Sudarshan Kriya has been effective in treating different depressions, this two remains untouched," told Arati, the yoga trainer. Schizophreniform disorder, which is a short-lived schizophrenia as Dr. Gangadhar said is also yet to be touched. Presently the department is treating fifty one patients who are giving a pretty good response.

## Relish fish at the expense of your health

RITIKA KUMAR

Bangalore—Illegal fish and meat shops are selling their wares in the city in unhygienic condition and the authorities are not taking up their responsibility.

The meat shops at the footpath on Mysore road opposite Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) put slices of meat outside the shop

over the meat he said, "we always cover the meat." However clearly there was no cover on the meat then. Later he added that that day he had forgotten to bring the covers.

Police sub inspector (SI), Byatarayanapur Police Station (the nearest police station to that area) M. Manjunatha said, "It is not our

diseases are due to consumption of contaminated meat."

He explained, "This Animal Husbandry department is newly formed. We are formulating plans to authorize these sellers or close them down. But you cannot expect results soon. It will take around one or two month." Till then BBMP health officers are going on



Fish being stored in unhygienic conditions - Pic by author

to attract customers; however they attract more flies. Moreover fish sellers place their fishes on the footpath outside the BHEL building. It has become a common sight on footpath, that people urinating with filth and garbage all around.

Shiv Kumar, the fish seller said that they are under Karnataka Fishery Federation, but blindly refused when asked about the license. "We pay Rs 10 to police officers every night", he added. Manjunath, meat seller said, "we keep our meat out so that people can see, other wise how will they come to know about it." Regarding the flies, which were sitting all

responsibility to check these sellers. It is the BBMP's (Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike) job to give them licenses, and hence we do not interfere. This is true that they are illegal, but our job is not to let them encroach the footpath, which would cause problem to the public."

The Deputy Director, Animal Husbandry, Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, Dr. Prakash Reddy said, "It is true that these sellers do not have any trading licenses. Whether they are under the Fishery federation or any other organization they have to have license to sell." Dr Reddy added, "50 per cent of the food-related

checks, he said. However the Chief Health Officer, L.T. Gayathri said, "This is not under our jurisdiction. You should contact animal husbandry Department".

In a situation where the authorities are pointing at each other, the public seems least bothered. Ganesh, a customer said, "I buy from here every week. Why will they give me bad fish?" Another customer Nagmani said, "We get meat at such cheap prices and it is so near my place. I would not go to big shops, which are far and expensive. Regarding the hygiene, I haven't been sick till now, so I don't really have much of a problem."