



Buildings may have to be demolished if the BMP's proposal to widen roads goes through

BMP's proposal may affect age-old buildings

By KATHERINE GEORGE

Buildings that are more than 50 years old and shops that have been passed down through generations are under threat of being pulled down, by the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP).

BMP is on a road widening spree in order to improve the city's infrastructure by widening 45 roads.

Ramegowda, engineer-in-chief, BMP, said, "The cost for this proposed project has not been estimated as yet since the survey work is in the process, but within a month some figures will be available." He added, "We have not decided as yet, which side of the 45 roads will be widened." It was still undecided as to which buildings would be demolished to make way for road widening.

When questioned if places of worship would be pulled down in the process of widening a road, Ramegowda said that they would try their best to avoid demolishing them, since it will "affect the sentiments of people". But if it is impossible to avoid such places then they will be left with no option, he added.

Shri Prasanna Ganapathi temple, on K.R. Road, is 600 years old. It's seventh priest R.L. Deekshith said: "There is no way we are going to let the BMP touch this temple. This temple

belongs to the public and has been handed down to me by my father A. Rama Deekshith who had served here from 1915 to 2003." He believes the public will react strongly by protesting if the BMP even thinks of touching the temple.

Giving assurance about protecting buildings that have heritage value, Ramegowda said if heritage buildings get in the way then they (BMP) will try to find a way out to preserve them.

The road from Siddalingaiah Circle to Queens Statue Circle is rich with heritage buildings. Ramegowda said that heritage building such as, Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technological Museum, Venkatappa Art Gallery and Karnataka Government Museum would be spared, but residential places that are over 80 to 90 years old will have to be handed over in the interest of developing the city.

S.S. Topigi, joint director, otown planning, BMP said, "We have identified 45 roads based on heavy flow of traffic and the congestion that causes inconvenience to the people."

But K. Rajshekar, convener, Avenue Road Traders Association, reacted to this saying, "Simply breaking down buildings and disrupting daily life of traders and residents of Avenue Road is not a solution for solving traffic problems." He suggested the BMP should improve parking facilities and

clear up the street hawker menace on Avenue Road." But some owners support the BMP's decision. M. Natraj, president of Karnataka State License Electrical Contractors Association (KSLECA) said, "Traffic on Avenue Road is unbearable, and I have been facing problems with my tenants, for example the owner of Coffee House who is simply not willing to give up the property, which I have wanted to demolish and rebuild," he added. The building that M. Natraj owns is 82 years old, but he does not mind demolishing it and rebuilding it to keep up with the "IT hub that is rapidly developing".

Avenue Road will be widened from K.R. Market to K.G. Road (SBM Circle) and the proposed width is 24 meters.

Temples and churches embed Avenue Road, but pastors and poojaris are not aware of the threat that faces their age-old buildings, and when asked if they would protest they simply said it would be useless and there is nothing that they can do.

Olvin Prabhakar, pastor of Rice Memorial Church, Avenue Road, said, "This church is 80 years old and about 300 Protestants gather here every Sunday." He added with a weary smile, "If the government decides something they make it quite clear that we cannot get in the way."

Pollution stops birds' migration to the lakes

Human activities around lakes, in the city, making birds look for other stop-overs

By BHARGAVI KERUR

A number of bird species and aquatic life have disappeared from the Uttarahalli Moggekere Lake, according to a study conducted by the Lake Development Authority (LDA) of Bangalore. The survey attributes the disaster to pollution in the lake. The pollution is due to seeping of waste dumped in the lake by the residents living in its vicinity and the construction work going on the periphery of the lake.

The critically endangered species, Siberian cranes, were regular visitors to the lake ten years ago, says Umesh D S, assistant executive engineer, LDA. Apart from the Siberian cranes, 17 other bird and aquatic species are listed as missing from that area. The list includes Kingfisher, paddy bird, Egret and fish species like Govankar, Kamankar, Rasarth, Rahu, Mrugal and Chilopia.

The other endangered lakes in the list are Puttanahalli Lake in Yelahanka, Nagavara Lake, Hebbal Lake, and Alal Lake, which will see less and less of the migratory birds, if

the conservation of the lakes doesn't take place quickly, said Noor Rehman, junior executive engineer. The LDA has sent the study findings to the National Lake Conservation Directorate, New Delhi, as a report and is awaiting approval to make it public.



Siberian cranes no longer to be seen around its usual haunt

Eyes and ears of the Lake Development Authority

The Lake Development Authority appointed four lake wardens in the four zones that is: North, East, West and South Zones of Bangalore on March 14. The lake warden for North Zone is Kiran Kumar. H K, East Zone- S K Raju, West Zone- Sharath Babu R. and South Zone is Anu Chengappa.

The duties of the lake wardens are to keep the Lake

Development Authority, Forests, Minor Irrigation Departments and Zilla Panchayat informed on the problems of the lakes. They act as a checking body regarding polluting the lakes to tackle the pollution problems. The tenure of the warden will be one year form appointed date.

The BMP is running short of hearses

As against 29 hearses, the BMP has ten hearses to cater to the needs of the city's hospitals

By AMIT JHA

Labourer Vinayaka Pattu is worried about how he will transport his brother's dead body from Victoria Hospital to his house. "I can't afford a private ambulance," he says anxiously, "and I approached the BMP for a hearse, but they told me I must wait for three hours." The Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP) is running short of hearses, and this lack of transport for the dead is affecting government hospitals like Victoria, and Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital.

Srinivasamurthy B.T a member of the BMP's Public Works Standing Committee, admits that though the BMP is supposed to have 29 hearses for Bangalore's 18 government hospitals, they have only ten.

According to the chairman of the Public Works Standing Committee, A. Kariappa, the BMP has had a shortage of hearses for the past four months. Until last year, the BMP had 25 hearses. Fifteen of them are no longer in working condition. Srinivasamurthy explains that at Rs. four lakh per vehicle, the BMP is in no position to buy more anymore hearses. He attributed the shortage of funds to the delay in release of money by the state government.

So, does the BMP have any alternative plan to deal with the problem? Srinivasamurthy said BMP has been planning to hire private vehicles for the past one-month but none have been hired so far.

A TWO reporter witnessed the effects of this hearse shortage during a visit to the emergency wards of Victoria and Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital. The already crowded emergency wards have now become possible health hazards. Narayan Balu, whose son is in the emergency ward of the Victoria Hospital, said that he covers his nose and mouth each time he enters the ward.

Many relatives of the deceased have resorted to hiring vehicles to transport the bodies of loved ones. Many of the cities poor, however, cannot afford this option. Ramchandra Reddy, Victoria Hospital's medical superintendent said that for sanitary reasons unclaimed bodies are kept in the morgue. "But the problem with keeping a body in the morgue," Reddy explained, "is that it can't be kept for long because the morgue has a capacity of only 15 bodies."

P. Ganapathy, general physician, Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital, said that sometimes dead bodies have to be kept in the morgue of the hospital for three to four days, as there are no hearses to take the bodies.

"I approached the BMP for a hearse, but they told me I must wait for three hours"

Autos fail to meet the deadline and continue to use LPG cylinders

High costs of LPG kits, keep auto drivers from buying them.

By SRIPARNA CHAKRABORTHY

As some of the auto rickshaw drivers in the city go berserk in getting Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) permanent kits for their vehicles, others are unaware of the decision taken by the state government in April 2004.

The LPG permanent kits have the advantage of switching to petrol usage in case they are out of gas, unlike the LPG cylinders, where an additional cylinder has to be carried.

The auto rickshaws in the city were to be fitted with permanent kits and the drivers were prohibited from using the LPG cylinders from March 18, as directed by the state government. Soma Shekhar, president, Bangalore Auto rickshaw and Taxi drivers Association says there are only five LPG dispensing stations within the city limits - at Koramangala, Rajajinagar, Residency Road, Mysore Road (near BHEL) and Tumkur Road. With just a handful of such stations drivers have to stand in



Autorickshaw drivers wait in line at a Residency Road LPG bunk

queues for hours to get their kits filled. It is necessary to increase the number of bunks as drivers says Shekhar. "The proposal to increase the dispensing bunks (LPG stations) still lies with the State Transport Ministry," he added.

These kits can be obtained only

The proposal to increase the dispensing bunks (LPG stations) still lies with the State Transport Ministry

through the Regional Transport Office (RTO), main office, Indiranagar. A permanent kit costs between Rs.12,000 - Rs.14,000, which is an expensive deal for drivers. Shahid Khan, auto rickshaw

driver, could buy a kit with the help rendered by his family and friends. K. Krishnaswamy, another auto rickshaw owner was unaware of the RTO's decision and has been using LPG cylinders. But Afzal Ahmed Khan, Regional Transport Officer, Indiranagar said the auto driver association was informed about the permanent kits.

Ahmed Khan adds, "Now we will start taking action against drivers who don't have the permanent kit." The RTO will cancel their permit to drive and carry passengers and file a charge sheet against them.

The RTO began checking the auto rickshaws for the permanent kits from March 22 with ten inspectors and have 20 auto rickshaw drivers so far.

There are other auto rickshaw drivers, who don't know that they are required to make the shift from the LPG cylinders to permanent kits. The prospect of spending 14,000 for a kit is way too costly for them.