# Metro

## Congress, BJP trade charges over demonetisation at BBMP meet

**BENGALURU:** Corporators from the ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP were at loggerheads over the demonetisation issue, at the monthly meeting of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council on Friday.

It all started with Congress corporator Sampath Raj expressing disappointment over the demonetisation decision of the BJP-led Union government. He said pourakarmikas are struggling even to get one meal a day, due to cash shortage.

BJP members took objection to his statement saying the Palike council meeting was scheduled to discuss water crisis in the city and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board Chairman Tushar Girinath had been invited for the meeting.

Opposition leader Padmanabha Reddy and BJP councillors protested when Sampath Raj continued to speak on demonetisation. They demanded an apology from the Congress councillor. Adding fuel to the fire, Jakkasandra councillor Saraswathamma (BJP) said the Congress has been looting the country for over 60 years.

Mayor G Padmavathi hit back saying, "The whole country knows who is into looting."

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### In brief

#### BBMP gets richer by Rs 71 crore

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has earned Rs 71.5 crore by way of betterment charges collected from property owners whose layouts are awaiting various civic amenities.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike began collecting betterment charges after the High Court lifted a stay on its collection. The collection began from November 8 and intensified from November 14. In seven days, the Palike became rich by Rs 71.5 crore. The Palike is expecting at least Rs 250 crore by way of betterment charges.

#### 45-day training in soft skills

Dr Reddy's foundation, a social service organisation, is offering training in computer skills, MS Office and soft skills, spoken English and interview skills for 45 days.

The organisation, founded in 1996, has helped over 3,80,000 youths by providing quality life training skills. Enrolment is open till November 20.

#### Limb donation at Jain Hospital

Bangalore Round Table 7 and Bangalore Ladies Circle 19, in association with Round Table India and Ladies Circle India, held the 36th Annual Limb Donation at Mahaveer Jain Hospital.

Over 250 limb donations (Rs 2.5 lakh) were handed over to the federation through the annual 'Help Someone Walk' campaign. The annual project, 'Help Someone Walk' is a donation drive which aims to provide options for limb transplant to the needy. In the past five years, close to 2,500 limb donations have been made possible through this initiative.

#### Vegetarian cooking course

As part of Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations, Anjali cooking school is organising vegetarian cooking courses in Karnataka, Punjabi and Sindhi cuisines from November 18.

This is part of their objective to promote Ahimsa and vegetarianism throughout the world.

For course details, contact chairman Kanital Tated on 080 2665 8765 / 94489 25759.

## Postal a/c holders struggle as ATM at GPO remains dry since Nov 13

### Their debit cards don't work at bank ATMs; forced to queue up at post offices

Seema Prasad

**BENGALURU: The scrapping of 500- and 1,000-rupee notes has posed a unique problem to post office savings bank account holders: the ATM at the General Post Office (GPO) has not been refilled for the past five days. These account holders cannot use their debit cards at bank ATMs.**

Post office savings bank account holders in Bengaluru had flocked to the ATM, located at the entrance of the GPO, following demonetisation. Each person was able to withdraw Rs 2,000, but the cash ran out at 8 pm on November 13. The closing balance in the ATM was Rs 1,800. "Due to technical glitches, cash has not been deposited again. We have tied up with AGS Transact Technologies Ltd (a multinational that provides end-to-end payment solutions). But right now, we are unsure of when the ATM will be refilled," said a staffer at the GPO.

The GPO has around 25,000 savings bank accounts. The Department of Posts has more than 960 ATMs across the country, including 76 in Karnataka. Thimmoji Rao, assistant superintendent, GPO, under the Postal Directorate, under the Ministry of Communications, had accepted a proposal to enable post office account holders to use bank ATMs, but that would take time. "The project is being processed and can possibly be introduced in the next financial year, though nothing has been finalised," he added.

The directorate has conducted workshops in the city to educate postal staff about the change. "The department is currently speeding up the accounting work of all the transactions taking place at its ATMs," said the GPO staffer quoted earlier.

As a result, account holders have to queue up at the eight counters set up at the GPO to swap and deposit notes and withdraw the new ones.

In the first four days after demonetisation, at least 1,000 people had turned up at the GPO every day. Srinath, who has been an employee at the GPO for the last 15 years, said he had to queue up in the last two days.

"Had the government released 500-rupee notes at the same time, it would have been much easier. The situation is frustrating," he said.

#### Indelible ink

The use of indelible ink to prevent multiple exchanges of old notes is seeing mixed results. While the number of visitors has come down at some banks as well as the GPO in the last two days, crowds persist at others.

Canara Bank's Cantonment branch on MG Road exchanged just Rs 8-10 lakh worth of old notes on November 17 and 18. This is in stark contrast with about Rs 20 lakh worth of old notes exchanged on each previous day. Jayalakshmi M, the branch manager, said the use of indelible ink was a "positive move" that helped the bank staff work more efficiently. "Now, people hesitate to come to swap notes twice. Earlier, I had to enter the name in the computer to make sure that the customer was exchanging the notes for the first time. The use of ink has definitely regularised the system," she said. At 4 pm on Friday, only a handful of people were seen at the bank.

But the State Bank of India's branch on Hesaraghatta Road saw a crowd of 500 even after the use of ink was made mandatory. The number of people swapping the old notes is still high. Nonetheless, a bank staffer hailed the move.

Meanwhile, crowds are coming down at the RBI office on Nrupathunga Road. Unlike the previous days when the queue spilled over onto the road, the situation is now more organised. Vigilant guards at the gate ensure that only people with valid documents stand in the queue. At 1 pm on Friday, there were just 20 people outside the gate.

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Crowds persist at General Post Office as the post office ATM has not been refilled for the last five days. DH PHOTOS/B H SHIVAKUMAR

#### 'Centre should have been better prepared'

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said his government was not against demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes but that it has only objected to the Centre not making necessary preparations.

"We are not against it (demonetisation). We support any measure aimed at curbing black money...And demonetisation was done in the past also. It is not the first time," he told reporters at his home office Krishna.

People, especially farmers, are put to a lot of inconvenience due to lack of preparation. The Centre should have released new Rs 500 currency notes first instead of the Rs 2,000 ones. The common man is struggling to get change for Rs 2,000. Besides, farmers are unable to conduct banking transactions, he said, adding that he has already written two letters to Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley highlighting these problems.

## Small traders seek 'change' in their fortunes

**BENGALURU: Business across the city continued to be hit with ATMs not dispensing cash and people struggling to exchange old currency notes at banks and post offices.**

KR Market, that normally teems with buyers and traders, wore a deserted look on Friday with a handful of vendors, traders and customers.

Seetha Lakshmi, a vegetable vendor at the market said: "A few customers hand us a Rs 2,000 note for a Rs 100 or Rs 200 transaction. We do not have notes of smaller denomination and hence turn them away."

Lakshman K, a resident of Shivajinagar who visited KR Market to buy vegetables and fruits on Friday, returned empty handed. Reason: he had a Rs 2,000 note and no trader had change.

He told DH: "At the banks, we can just withdraw a Rs 2,000 note."

Besides shops and markets, pharmacies too are suffering as they are running short of Rs 100 notes. Sridhar R, who runs a pharmacy in Indiranagar, said he has loaned Rs 2,000 to a few customers since they faced a dire emergency.

He said: "While I accept Rs 500 notes, I am unable to change Rs 2,000 notes since I am running short of Rs 100 notes. My business has dipped by 30% since the Union government's move."

Ramesh Jain, another pharmacist at Hebbal said: "I hope ATMs start dispensing new Rs 500 notes at the earliest as traders are at the receiving end."

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The scrapping of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes and the shortage of low-denomination notes have had a telling effect on businesses at KR Market for the past week.

## Fighting evil

## Now, Indian superheroes are here to save the day

Meghana Choukkar

**BENGALURU:** An ordinary NGO worker who fights crime in the city on the side — this is Bengaluru's very own superhero named 'Karma'.

Created by Rajeev Tamhankar, Karma, or Abhay as he is otherwise known, is inspired by the sessions he attends on the Bhagavad Gita. When dangerous villains try to incriminate his NGO in a drug-peddling scandal, Abhay puts on a mask and fights them.

Part one of the book was launched last week, making it part of the universe of superheroes Tamhankar is working to create. "USA has DC Comics and Marvel Comics with popular characters like Superman, Batman and so on. India does not have many superheroes, though there is a lot of potential," he said. 'Karma' has been illustrated by Subhajit Das, a freelance designer from Kolkata.

In the past four months, his Bengaluru-based comic start-up TBS Planet has published several books with characters based in Delhi and Mumbai, among others. All of them are truly Indian, often having a basis in tales from Indian mythology. For instance, superhero Varun fights sea creatures who were formed after Dwarka got submerged.

TBS Planet also created comic books for Bollywood movies 'A Flying Jatt' and Ajay Devgn's 'Shivaay.'

Another comic based in Bengaluru, '13 Days' was launched along with 'Karma.' This horror story is about a group of friends whose trip to the Bandipur forest turns tragic when they enter a restricted area and encounter supernatural forces. True to the IT city, the lead character Kanan is a start-up founder and he uses technology to save his sister from the spirits. The books have been illustrated by Satyajit Mondal, a student from Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath. Part two and three are set to come out in December and January respectively.

A graduate of IIT-Roorkee, Tamhankar grew up reading comics, but never considered pursuing it as a profession.

When a book he wrote titled 'Get Corporated Before You Get Fired' got great responses and people asked him to turn it into a comic series, he decided to give it a try.

Tamhankar has many more characters planned like Dhwani, a female hero who harnesses the power of sound and Yug, a character living in 2000 BC.

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(Left) 'Karma', Bengaluru's superhero. (Centre) Horror story '13 Days'. (Right) Rajeev Tamhankar

## BMTC to use tech to improve operational efficiency

**BENGALURU:** In less than six months since the launch of the Intelligent Transport System (ITS), the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has been able to keep track of buses on a real-time basis and trace any deviations from the designated routes. Armed with a back-end system, the BMTC will use technology to improve its efficiency.

During the programme 'Bus Karo', a campaign run by WRI India to promote sustainable urban mobility initiatives, Bishwajit Mishra, director (IT), BMTC, revealed an bizarre incident.

Mishra said: "A GPS-enabled BMTC bus (attached to the Indiranagar depot) was found deviating from the designated route and skipping many bus stops. When we checked in the ITS control room, we learnt that the driver was using the bus to run charter services without the knowledge of the depot managers."

Later, another BMTC official added that the driver used the bus to ferry passengers to a community hall in Benson Town, skipping a few schedules.

"As we confronted him with proof, the driver admitted to his mistake. The incident also alerted other employees attached to different bus depots. This will help us plug revenue leaks," he explained.

Under the ITS project, Mishra said BMTC has procured 10,000 electronic ticketing machines (ETMs) and installed GPS in all buses, besides adopting several technology-driven programmes. "We can now monitor over speeding of buses, skipping of bus stops and stationary buses from our control room. At first, we will sensitise our staff instead of holding them responsible," he told the audience comprising experts and representatives from different state transport undertakings.

Mishra added that the ITS project is helping BMTC cut down on operational costs. "We will soon adopt a two-tier system of administration instead of a three-tier system, which KSRTC follows. With this, we can scrap the divisional control office, making the depot managers directly accountable to the head office," he said.

The officer also said the next cycle of bus passes would be issued in the form of open-loop smart cards, which will be launched next January. These cards could be used for transit and non-transit purposes, he noted.

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Bishwajit Mishra, director (IT wing), BMTC, speaks at a meeting of delegates from various state transport corporations in Bengaluru on Friday. DH PHOTO

## Now, BDA offers bigger flats on popular demand; notification to be out soon

**BENGALURU:** After allotting sites in the Kempegowda Layout, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will soon notify 3,512 two and three-bedroom-hall-kitchen (BHK) flats of bigger dimensions. The authority will also soon notify 104 villas in Alur.

A senior BDA official, on condition of anonymity, said that the size of a two-BHK flat has been increased to 900 sqft, which was the size of a three-BHK flat earlier. The size of a three-BHK flat has been increased to a carpet area of 1,200 sqft. "These flats will be notified by the end of November second week or in the beginning of November third week. The size of the flats has been increased on popular demand," the official said.

The villas were completed in August 2016, but they were not notified as the BDA board had not finalised the cost. The two BHK BDA villas of 1,060 sqft and 1,400 sqft have been tentatively priced at Rs 32 lakh and Rs 40 lakh respectively while the three BHK villas measuring 1,700 sqft would cost around Rs 50 lakh.

An official said that it was noticed that applicants for flats mostly belonged to the middle and high income groups and that there was also a need to compete with private developers. The flats of bigger dimensions will be immediately available at Kanminike Phase IV and Valagerahalli Phase V.

Bigger and smaller dimension flats are also coming up in Alur, Malagala, Kommaghatta, Doddabanahalli, Valagerahalli and Kanminike. "The cost per square foot will not increase but the total flat cost will increase because of an increase in dimensions. There are no more pending applications from the previous flat allotments and we are expecting a higher rush this time as the flats are bigger," the official said.

The 600, 800 and 900 sqft flats would cost Rs 25 lakh, Rs 32 lakh and Rs 40 lakh, respectively. The three BHK flats of 1,200 sq ft would cost Rs 45 lakh. The one BHK flats will cost Rs 11 lakh for the general public and Rs 8.5 lakh for the economically weaker sections.

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### In city today

### City weather

**FORECAST:** Partly cloudy sky. Fog/Mist very likely in some areas during morning hours.

**TEMPERATURES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Maximum | 29.7 C |
| Minimum | 19.1 C |
| Rainfall | nil |
| Humidity | 41 pc |
| Sunrise | 6.20 am |
| Sunset | 5.50 pm |
| Moonrise | 10.47 pm |
| Moonset | 10.51 am |

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm.)
Source: IMD