

In brief

BBMP blamed over encroachment

» The Five Year Law Graduate Association president S Umesh has blamed the BBMP of letting go the high and mighty involved in the encroachment of stormwater drains. Based on Umesh's PIL in 2008, the Karnataka High Court passed an order in 2011 to raze all the structures on the drains. However, the progress made so far to remove encroachment has not impressed him. In a press release, he gave a list of buildings, including a religious shrine, still intact on the stormwater drain. "The BBMP did not act on my previous list of structures on SWD. Now I have another list of some huge structures on these drains," he said.

Politician accused of kidnap

» A 78-year-old man approached the Electronics City police on August 4 claiming to have been kidnapped by the local politician and his men. Police said the complainant Ramaiah, a resident of Bettadasapura, claimed that he was kidnapped by Prabhakar Reddy, a local politician and a real estate businessman, and his men and was forced to sign a few property-related documents. On August 4, around 2 pm, Ramaiah's relative approached the police and stated that Ramaiah had not come home since morning and was suspected to be missing. A kidnap case was registered later in the evening. Ramaiah came to the police station and claimed that he was kidnapped by Reddy and his men, who took him to the sub-registrar's office and forced him to sign a few documents, the police added.

Archbishop's 75th birthday celebrated

» Dr Bernard Moras, Archbishop of Bengaluru and President of the Karnataka Region Catholic Bishops' Council (KRCBC) and President of All Karnataka United Christian Forum for Human Rights celebrated his 75th birthday in the city on Wednesday. Moras has been a priest for over 40 years, Bishop of Belgaum for seven years and Archbishop of Bangalore for 12 years. The Archdiocese of Bangalore arranged a spiritual mass at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Bengaluru, followed by a felicitation function. Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio - The Papal Nuncio and the Karnataka Regional Bishops took part in the programme.

US-bound youth falls to death

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 21-year-old youth succumbed to injuries after he fell from a building at BEML Layout in Rajarajeshwari Nagar on Wednesday noon. He was to leave for USA at night for higher studies.



According to the police, Naveen Kumar (in pic) had completed BTech recently and was residing on the fifth floor of the five-storey SV Apartment with his parents. Around 4.15 pm, he went to the terrace and was talking on his mobile phone near the railings. He lost balance and fell down. The neighbours, who heard the sound, came out and checked and found him lying in a pool of blood. They shifted him to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead, said the police.

A senior police officer said, "The family members claimed that he was talking over the mobile phone and lost balance and fell down. But it is yet to be ascertained if he committed suicide or accidentally fell. It is also learnt that he was about to leave to USA for further studies on Wednesday night. More information is yet to be collected, as the parents are not in a condition to talk." A case has been registered in Banashankari police station and investigation is being carried out.

BMTF had sought surveyors to identify SWDs, but to no avail

'Construction, demolition of bldgs could have been avoided'

BENGALURU: The Bangalore Metropolitan Task Force (BMTF) had written to the state government four years ago, urging it to provide surveyors to secure stormwater drains (SWDs) from encroachment, but the government chose to consign those missives to the dustbin.

Sources in the BMTF said the trigger for seeking surveyors were the toilets built by the BBMP on a stormwater drain at Cambridge Layout near Halasuru, paving the way for others to encroach upon it. The BMTF had booked a case against a BBMP engineer under various sections of the IPC and the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964.

There was a High Court order, based on a public interest litigation filed by advocate S Umesh, against the rampant encroachment of SWDs. The court had directed the BBMP to demolish all the structures on the drains. The BMTF used the High Court order to book the BBMP engineer.

Further, the BMTF officials wrote to the government about the rampant encroachment of stormwater drains and canals across Bengaluru and insisted that measures should be taken immediately to save the city from possible flooding as had happened in 2008. The BMTF



ACTION ON THE GROUND: BBMP workers demolish a house at Doddabommasandra on Wednesday. DH PHOTO

had asked for 10 surveyors initially, but following cold response from the government, it insisted on at least two surveyors. The government kept mum.

"Had the government acted upon our request immediately,

the situation would not have worsened as we see today. The construction and demolition of many houses would have been prevented," said a senior police officer.

In 2014, BMTF booked a case against a prominent hotel

on Vittal Mallya Road for encroaching on the SWD and using the space as basement for parking vehicles.

"We were flooded with complaints about the encroachment of the SWD. A majority of such complaints were

Guv enquires about demolition

Governor Vajubhai Vala on Wednesday enquired BBMP commissioner K Manjunath Prasad about the ongoing demolition drive against properties that have come up on stormwater drains (SWDs). Vala sought the details, when Prasad along with V Shankar, the Bengaluru Urban deputy commissioner, called on him to invite him for the Independence Day function. Sources said during the meeting with the two officers, Vala recalled his days as mayor of Rajkot, Gujarat. He is said to have advised the officials to give more time for meeting the public than entertaining councilors.

against the top builders and politicians. In the absence of surveyors, we could not proceed further," said the officer. He added that at least 55 cases were registered by the BMTF between 2011 and 2014. **DH News Service**

Experts want govt data in public domain to solve urban woes

BENGALURU, DHNS: Is it not possible to publish government data in the public domain? How can Bengaluru, being the home of research and technology, solve its urban issues? What kind of urbanisation strategies are needed to accelerate smart city solutions?

These were among the many questions that were discussed at the Bangalore Regional Dialogue on 'Urbanisation, Innovation and Climate Resilience'. The event was hosted by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) here, ahead of the World Sustainable Development Summit that is scheduled to be held in New Delhi. During the discussion, urbanist V Ravichandrar dwelled upon the need for open government data in the light of the recent floods and the ongoing demolition drive.

"People want the exact location of feeder canals (rajakaluve) networks and buffer zones of lakes in the public domain, particularly on a GIS



Wrong policies have resulted in a situation where people have had to get their dream homes demolished. DH PHOTO

platform. But the administration is not giving it. It requires a change in the mindset for being more open with data," he said and added that there is a vested interest.

"The BBMP cannot depend on the old village survey map to identify encroachments. The current Comprehensive Development Plan does not have the

data. The administration, however, must incorporate it in the master plan for 2031, which might be ready in another 10 months," Ravichandrar later told *Deccan Herald*.

Ravichandrar said about 30% of the BBMP limits would be affected if the government implements the National Green Tribunal order on buffer zones.

He pushed for public transport and pedestrian friendly projects, instead of flyovers.

At the inaugural session, Dr A Ravindra, former chief secretary, appreciated the government's move to clear encroachments in the city. He said, "There is lack of competency in the administrative level and those who are efficient get into the private sector. Hence, there is a need for active citizen participation in governance," he added. Jaya Dhindaw of EM-BARQ India, WRI, said there was lack of coordination among government agencies and the planning framework was messy and hidden.

Hariprasad Hegde, senior vice-president, Wipro, said job creation would not be on a par with the pace of urbanisation and many people might become unemployed. Prof S L Rao, fellow emeritus, TERI, said Bengaluru was the home of research and technology, which should be channelised to solve its urban issues.

Determined BBMP pulls down 50 more structures

Demolition, from Page 1

"By daybreak they arrived to the spot with the machines. We have spent several lakhs to construct our buildings. If they ask us to evacuate overnight, what are we expected to do for a living?" Shoba said.

The situation turned tense with several residents arguing with Mayor N Manjunath Reddy, who was present to oversee the demolition drive.

'Previous survey different'

"The previous survey is different from the present one. The new sketch will lead to the demolition of my house and shop," said Manjesh, a resident of Subbanna Layout. However, officials defended their actions, saying the drive is based on the old survey. A BBMP official said the demolition drive will be completed by Thursday. **DH News Service**

10K marathon to awaken conservation consciousness in Sarjapur

RWA undertakes spadework to revive rajakaluves that feed lakes

Meghana Choukkar

BENGALURU: Concerned about the future of lakes in their area, members of the Sarjapur Resident Welfare Association (RWA) are organising a 10K marathon on August 21 to raise awareness among local residents.

Scarcity of water in this year's harsh summer forced people in several apartment complexes to shell out more money to purchase the precious resource. Thinking about how bad the situation could get in the next few years, the residents made it their mission to learn about the lakes in their neighbourhood and take steps to protect them. A survey revealed that within a radius of seven kilometres of the Sarjapur Circle, there were 26 lakes — large, medium and small — covering a total area of about 600 acres. The two biggest lakes are Bidaraguppe, spread over an area of 240 acres and Sarjapur lake sprawling over 204 acres.

"I have been living here for several years now and I have never seen water in the lakes during the summer months," said Joy V R, secretary of the



SAVING WATER BODIES Dumping of construction debris and garbage near the Sarjapur (left) and Sompura lakes has raised concerns about the future of these water bodies. DH PHOTOS

RWA. "Each lake here has its own identity. One is a dumping ground for garbage, another is for dumping construction debris and some have been dug up in parts," Joy added.

"We want to make sure that the lakes have proper boundaries." After the flash floods that inundated several parts of the city, the residents want to ensure that rajakaluves here are maintained well to avoid such incidents in this area.

"Earlier, if we drilled 500 feet into the ground, we struck water. Now, even digging 1,500 feet does not yield anything," said Jagadish Kotturshettar, a software engineer and president of the RWA. The residents believe that channelising the rajakaluves into lakes will replenish the water table.

Marathon on Aug 21

The first step, however, is to raise awareness among resi-



dents about the existence of the lakes. "We are organising the marathon to get people talking about it, after which the next step would be to involve elected representatives and authorities," Kotturshettar said. The RWA has even made a promotional video for the marathon and uploaded it on Youtube.

'Sarjapur Marathon to Save Lakes' already had 200 registrations and they are expecting at least 500 more. Besides hav-

ing a 10K run, there will be a 3K 'maja event' in which families can cycle, skip or dance the distance. At the Yamere grounds where the event is being held, photographs and maps of all 26 lakes will be displayed for public viewing.

The RWA has invited local MLA Shivanna B, former MLA Narayanaswamy, and Zilla Panchayat member Muni Raju for the event. **DH News Service**

Officer for online processing of forms for plan approvals

Carry revenue sketches, GPS info for field visits, he suggests

BENGALURU: Additional chief secretary Mahendra Jain has recommended systemic improvement, transparency and online processing of applications for building plan approvals in his report to the state government.

Based on Jain's recommendations, the government suspended 13 serving officers, while ordering booking of criminal cases against 20 people, including seven retired officers. These officers colluded with builders and realtors, which resulted in the disappearance of stormwater drains and deluge in parts of Bengaluru in the recent downpour.

"The onus to make the report public is on the government. I have made certain recommendations to make the plan-sanctioning procedure more transparent," said Jain.

He said online processing of files in order to minimise delay in giving approvals and global-positioning system (GPS)-based coordinates along with revenue sketches (village maps, tippani and RTC) should be a must for field visits before approving any residential and commercial project.

"These measures are essential to check the presence of nalas (drains), tanks etc.," said the additional chief secretary.

The enquiry against the officials will continue, said Jain, adding that he had submitted a preliminary enquiry report, based on file inspection.

"We don't want innocent people to suffer alone. Those responsible for diluting the rules and regulations should also face the music," said Jain.

Regarding compensation to

Cases booked against 7 retd officials: CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said criminal cases have been booked against seven government officials who had retired from service for their involvement in encroachment of stormwater drains in Bengaluru. Speaking to reporters, Siddaramaiah said of the 20 officials against whom action has been ordered, seven had retired from service. "Criminal cases have been registered against these seven officials as the government can no longer suspend them. Those in service will also have to face the music. They have been suspended and disciplinary action as per law will be initiated against them," he said.

the property losers in the ongoing demolition drive, Jain said the civic agencies which gave approvals will have to deal with it. Jain denied charges that only soft targets are falling prey to the ongoing drive and not the high and mighty.

"We have to make a beginning somewhere. There is no question of sparing anybody. Chief Minister (Siddaramaiah) has given an unequivocal direction to raze all structures that are built on stormwater drains," said Jain. **DH News Service**



The STP facility that was inaugurated at the Electronics City on Wednesday.

STP to recycle waste water from small industries

BENGALURU: To help small and tiny industries treat and recycle waste water generated on their campus, a common 300 KLD sewage treatment plant (STP), set up by the Electronics City Industrial Township Authority (ELCITA), was inaugurated at the Electronics City.

Built at a cost of Rs 1.24 crore, the STP will recycle the waste water collected from the small hotels and the educational institutions in the locality. Once treated, the water can be used for construction, watering trees and other purposes.

"Larger industries have set up their waste water treatment plants on their campus while small and tiny industries face glitches in setting up and maintaining an STP. To help such industries, the project was proposed in 2013," said an ELCITA

staffer. CEO, ELCITA, Rama N S said the Electronics City generates 6,000 kilolitres of waste water every day.

At least 52% of the waste water is being currently treated and reused.

"We plan to set up two more STPs in the area, provided we get the land. The main purpose of our project is to ensure that waste water did not end up in lakes, drains and other places," she added.

ELCITA's jurisdiction covers an area of 903 acres and 11 gun-tas with more than 200 companies coming under its ambit.

The STP will be followed by an interactive session on the safe disposal of used cooking oil and generation of bio fuels, by experts from Eco Green Fuels and Hasiru Dala. **DH News Service**

Cabinet approves formation of Kempegowda Authority

BENGALURU: The Cabinet on Wednesday approved the formation of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Development Authority to preserve and develop monuments and heritage buildings relating to founder of Bengaluru, Kempegowda.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Law Minister T B Jayachandrar said initially, a Rs 5-crore grant has been earmarked for the authority. Sources in the government said the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Development Authority Bill is being drafted and will be tabled before the legislature for consideration. The authority will comprise a 15-member committee headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The authority will have jurisdiction over four districts -

Tumakuru, Ramanagaram, Bengaluru Rural and Bengaluru Urban, the sources said. Besides the four towers to mark the outer-most boundaries of Bengaluru, the 16th century leader has built several monuments including the Nandi temple (bull temple in Basavanagudi) and Bengaluru fort.

The authority will function on the lines similar to those constituted for the development of Kittur and Kaginele, the sources said.

The authority will function under the aegis of the Revenue department. Minister of State for Tourism Priyank Kharge said his department was interested in starting the 'Kempegowda legend circuit' for tourists to visit places of interest related to Kempegowda. **DH News Service**