

Metro is the best gift that Bangalore will get in 2011

TO THE POINT

H S BALRAM

Bangalore is eagerly looking forward to Year 2011. For, Reach I of the much-delayed and much-debated Metro Rail (Namma Metro), between M G Road and Byappanahalli, is all set to take off. The third city in the country after Kolkata and Delhi, to get the Metro. With increasing population, roads chock-a-block with traffic, grindingly slow and inadequate public transport and soaring air/noise pollution, the IT capital badly needed a mass rapid transit rail system.

Had the political class not wasted precious time, almost two decades, debating whether the city needed the Metro and whether it was feasible, Bangaloreans would have by now been zooming across the city on fast tracks. And the cost wouldn't have escalated manifold. Still, better late than never. The Metro envisages a 33km elevated and underground rail network with 32 stations for Phase I. Reach I is one small part of Phase I, and is elevated. Work is on in full swing and the phase is scheduled to be completed by 2012, if not hit by further delays. A further extension of 9km with eight more stations will be done later. This will be followed by a 51-km second phase.

Cynics have surfaced again. Metro won't solve traffic problems, they say. Yes, we know that. Bangalore needs



various modes of transport, fast and efficient. The entire traffic cannot move into the Metro. Buses, taxis and private vehicles will have to supplement it. Even a monorail system is welcome. Most two/three-wheeler users and bus commuters are certain to switch to the Metro. Private cars owners will gradually follow. The congestion on roads is bound to reduce. Commuting in Metro will be fast, clean, convenient and safe.

Bangalore has a lot to learn from Delhi. Work on Metro there has been fast. Not only is the city well covered, but surrounding areas like Gurgaon and Noida are also networked. More extensions are being planned. May be, Commonwealth Games necessitated fast work and a bigger network. Still, the effi-

ciency with which the deadlines were met is commendable. In fact, the project report for Bangalore was prepared by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. When Delhi can do it, why not Bangalore? There is need for political will, efficient time management and timely availability of funds.

Authorities must expedite work on connecting the international airport, big railway stations and bus-stands with Metro. This will help faster movement in and out of the city. It will also reduce dependence on taxis and autos. Pressure on roads will also ease. Bangalore has been groaning under the weight of traffic congestion for long. A well-connected Metro will help take away much of that burden. Abroad, we've seen how Metro is the lifeline of

big cities. Why should Bangalore lag behind?

With the coming of Metro, Bangaloreans will have to put in their best behaviour. No spitting, no littering like they've been doing on the roads. Delhiites have had a bitter experience. Offenders caught on CCTVs have been asked to pay hefty fines and clean up the mess that they created. Before entering Metro stations, commuters were seen discarding paan and paan masala packets, and throwing waste. Bangaloreans will have to take care and avoid such humiliation in public.

Amid land scams, corruption and political instability, Metro appears to be the only silver lining for Bangaloreans. The city won't be the same again. From a sleepy township to a fast track metropolis, it has, indeed, has come a long way.

PARTING SHOT

Public cause

Lokayukta Santosh Hegde has a grouse. He says, "I find only the media talking about scams? What about the common man? Is he/she not affected by all this? People must get proactive against corruption and maladministration in all forms and at all levels." He's right. Shouldn't this be every citizen's new year resolution?

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METRO DIGEST

Green campaign on Jan 1

Clean and Green Bengaluru, an awareness campaign aimed at making individuals contribute for a beautiful Bangalore, will be held on January 1, between 4 and 5pm. The drive will be led by Justice Saldanha, national award-winning director P Sheshadri, Beesu Suresh, artiste Anirudh, music directors Mano Murthy, Ricky Kej, Raghu Dixit, Praveen D Rao, Neel, playback singers Vani Harikrishna among others. Corporate houses will also join.

Drawing competition: Sree Chakrapani Fine Arts and Educational Trust will organize South zone level drawing competition for students. The drawings should be submitted on Sunday, 0824-2439279, www.chakrapanifinearts.org.

ALMANAC (26.12.2010)

Dhanurmasa 10- Sri Vikriti Nama Samvat-sara - Dakshinayana - Hemanth Ritu - Tithi: Margasira Krishna Sashti Hr: 25-06 Nak: Magha Hr: 9-03 Yoga: Priti Hr: 13-55. 19 Muharram, Kali Day 1867091 **Rahu Kalam 4.30 pm to 6 pm**

— Daivajna K N Somayaji

Deo canisters catch fire in Mysore, 4 die

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



Thirteen people were inside the scrapyard when canisters exploded

including the canisters. The explosion was followed by smaller blasts. Firefighters extinguished the flames that leapt into the sky and burnt down part of a roadside tree.

Police commissioner Sunil Agarwal has ordered a survey of scrapyards. The district administration has announced a compensation of Rs 1 lakh for the families of the dead, and Rs 25,000 for injured.

Mysore: Four people were charred to death and eight sustained burns when a scrapyard in densely populated Mandi Mohalla of Mysore caught fire on Saturday. The condition of two of the injured is critical.

A box of expired body-spray canisters had been brought to the yard to be disposed of. Akram Pasha, one of the injured, told police the fire started when canisters of body spray and air fresheners were being smashed while a gas cutter was in use. The canisters ignited and exploded.

Three of the dead have been identified as Syed Abdul Wajid, Iqbal and Salim, and the fourth person is yet to be identified. It is suspected he had come to the scrapyard for business. Scrapyard owner Zaheer Pasha was among the injured.

The scrapyard is located on Omar Khayyam Road. Around 2pm, a goods carrier drove in and unloaded scrap,

Day to remember tsunami victims

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: Christmas cheer filled the air, but for many it was a day to remember the thousands of tsunami victims who died in the mammoth natural disaster six years ago.

A group gathered on M G Road on Saturday evening and created a candle formation of the word 'tsunami'. Volunteers of Sankalp India Foundation



A candlelight vigil was held on the eve of tsunami anniversary on MG Road on Saturday

held a silent vigil after beginning with the national song. Holding up posters urging passers-by to 'Remember the tsunami', they welcomed them to join the group in their effort to spread awareness on disaster management.

Many volunteers who aided rescue projects at Nagapatnam in 2004 were present to talk to people about their experiences. Rajat Kumar Agar-

wal, an active member of the foundation, recalled painful episodes during the tsunami: "There were heaps of bodies and crying families looking for their children. There was lack of volunteers and the few who were present were unable to deal with the trauma. The most important thing is to educate and train people to deal with these disasters effectively and without delay."

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