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Bengaluru chokes on construction dust

Aakanksha Singh

Rapid construction activities continue to affect the health of residents of Bengaluru, largely due to constant exposure to dust. Residents claim that the problem is serious. Doctors have mandated wearing air-filter masks for months now. According to a report in Deccan Herald, doctors are reporting an increase in patients suffering from cough, breathing difficulties, allergies and skin rashes. Problems become acute due to construction processes near their residents.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Dr Vamika Sharma, a general physician at Felix Hospital, Greater Noida stated that dust produced during construction processes enters deep into the lungs, complicating life of those with asthma, and can lead to long-term lung issues and skin infections. Children, elderly people and those with asthma or allergy issues remain under constant risk.

"The dust is everywhere. We clean constantly, but it settles back within hours. These issues began only after construction picked up next to our building," said Riddhima Singh, a resident of Shantinagar, Bengaluru, who has been suffering from frequent coughing and skin itching, stating it a daily-life-struggle.

However, doctors advise residents living beside these sites to take precautions by keeping windows closed and washing exposed skin. Residents insist that builders and authorities take minimal responsibility, like covering the site and sprinkling water regularly, stated Riddhima. Increasing construction projects could worsen scenarios with time and cause more diseases in the future.

Akka Pade yet to reach students in Bengaluru

Karan Siddharth

BENGALURU: The Karnataka government has rolled out the "Akka Pade" scheme already for a week, but the students the scheme is designed to protect do not know about it.

Karnataka's state cabinet approved the "Akka Pade" (Elder Sister Force) scheme on January 8 to protect women and children in public spaces. Teams of five trained women home guards are being deployed across 31 districts, with dedicated vehicles operating in two shifts (7 a.m.-2 p.m. and 2 p.m.-8 p.m.). This initiative focuses on keeping a vigil at schools, colleges, hostels, public transport, markets, and tourist spots.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Parkavi Mahalingam, Principal of Indian School of Science and Management, Bengaluru, criticised an institutional blindspot. "The scheme was implemented without any formal briefing to educational



Akka Pade squad

Bangalore Mirror

institutions on how to communicate it to students. We received no posters, no awareness material, and no implementation guidelines. It's a top-down policy without any ground-level coordination. Students need to know this scheme exists and how to access it but right now, it's invisible to them."

Interviews with college

students across Bangalore revealed that none of them were aware of the initiative. The scheme promises faster response than the standard 112 emergency system, and the government has announced it, but has failed to reach college campuses. "Akka Pade? No, I haven't heard of it," says Varshini, a 22 year old psychology student from

Christ University, when asked about the scheme explicitly designed to protect women like her. Similar responses came from students across Mount Carmel College, St Joseph's University, and other major Bangalore institutions. "We get alerts about exams and fees through email and WhatsApp, but nothing about this," she added.

This communication gap represents a huge failure in the implementation itself. Deputy Commissioner of Udupi district, Swaroopa TK called Akka Pade, "The most ambitious initiative for women's safety". Yet college authorities have not received formal communication, implementation guidelines, or awareness materials to brief students about the scheme.

Mrs Mahalingam outlined concrete steps when asked how colleges could address this awareness gap. "Colleges need official posters in hostels, a dedicated helpline number for campuses, orientation sessions during admissions, and regular campus visits with student interaction. Right now, there's no ecosystem for awareness." She emphasised that this gap should be bridged immediately for the sake of the safety of women and children.

Stray puppy's brutal killing sparks cruelty debate

V Priyankaa

Growing reports of animal cruelty have left India disturbed, raising questions about how safe stray animals really are and how effectively laws are enforced. A disturbing incident reported in Bengaluru this month has brought these concerns back into the spotlight.

On January 13, Bengaluru Police registered a First Information Report (FIR) regarding a case of animal abuse involving puppies in JP Nagar 7th Phase under the jurisdiction of Puttenahalli Police Station. The incident reportedly occurred on January 9 at around 1:28 a.m. near the Brahma bus stop. During the



A stray dog starving in the streets

mscpa.org

investigation, the CCTV footage revealed a man brutally assaulting a puppy by slamming it against a wall, strangling it, trampling on its body, and eventually setting it on fire. The accused was later identified as a valet parking agent working at the Truffles restaurant chain in JP Nagar. According to latest data

provided by the Animal Welfare Board of India, there were 189 registered animal cruelty cases in the year 2020-21, and in 2024-25 the number of registered cases went up to 806, indicating growing violence as well as increased reporting.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Pooja G, co-founder of South Bengaluru

Cares, said that many cases, especially in rural areas, often go unnoticed. "Cruelty may be higher in places where there is less awareness and where municipalities have not properly implemented animal birth control (ABC) measures," she said.

Animal rights activist Vidya Lakshmi from Hyderabad stressed the need for stronger enforcement. "Strict ABC laws, protection for animal feeders, and proper rehabilitation of neutered animals are essential," she said. Pooja added that identifying severe cruelty as cognisable and non-bailable offence could help prevent abuse and reinforce compassion towards animals within India's legal system.

Bengaluru undergoes food price hike

Rochelle Mary Marshall

BENGALURU: Restaurant owners say steep increases in operating costs and delivery app commissions are forcing price hikes, as complaints against rising food prices increase in the city.

Muskan Banthia, long time owner of Snuzzles Cafe, Jayanagar, said food prices have been raised over the past one to two years due to continued increase in expenses. "The steady rise in operational and input costs has significantly impacted our overall expenses," she said.

According to Banthia, rising prices of raw materials such as vegetables, cooking oil, grains and other essentials have eroded an already thin profit margins. Delivery platforms have added to the financial strain. Banthia said that food delivery apps charged commission of around 30 percent per order, often forcing restaurants to either absorb losses or pass costs on to consumers.

Customers online accuse restaurants and delivery apps of exploiting inflation, as food becomes increasingly unaffordable for Bengaluru's middle class, prompting calls for intervention and government action.

Exploring Sidi musical heritage at BIC

Riya Vivek

BENGALURU: Bangalore International Centre hosted an event exploring the African-Indian Sidi community's culture on Wednesday, January 14.

The event featured a screening of the documentary 'The Sidi Malunga Project: Rejuvenating the African Musical Bow in India', which was then followed by a discussion between University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) ethnomusicologist Dr Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy and journalist Gordon J Whiting.

The documentary captures a revival of the Malunga, a musical bow connected with Sidi community's roots of migration. Dr Catlin-Jairazbhoy and her late husband, Professor Nazir Ali



A Sidi man playing the Malunga BIC

Jairazbhoy, documented a 2002 camp where Sidi elders taught youth to play the instrument which was on the verge of disappearance at the time and measured the camp's impact by returning a year later to film the rest of the documentary.

The screening introduced the Sidis as Sufi Muslims of the Riga'i tariqa that follow

the 14th-century saint Bava Gor. The Malunga serves as a sacred symbol of the Sidi's history, inheritance and spiritual lineage. Dr Jairazbhoy spoke on using research to sustain minority communities' traditions and improve human existence. The conversation with Gordon J. Whiting examined the community's diverse presence across Gujarat and Karnataka.

The discussion was then opened to the audience, who asked questions regarding the challenges of preserving the Sidi heritage and the efforts of the newly founded Sidi Culture and Heritage Trust. The event provided a rare insight into the resilience of the Sidi community.

10-minute delivery: No respite for Gig workers

Ann Rose George

E-commerce platforms (Blinkit and Swiggy Instamart) are delaying coordination with their delivery partners regarding incentive structure after the removal of the 10-minute delivery scheme.

Recently, Blinkit's decision to drop its 10-minute delivery has created confusion among delivery partners.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Faizal Khan (25), a delivery partner with Swiggy Instamart, stated, "They still haven't told us anything about the incentive policy, but the pressure to deliver fast hasn't gone away."

Despite the common

assumption that fast deliveries increase earnings, gig workers claimed the previous 10-minute delivery schemes only raised safety concerns and not an additional pay-rise.

"Our earnings depend on completing more orders, not on delivering faster," said Khan, emphasising that incentives are not linked to speed deliveries, rather they depend on the number of successful deliveries.

Khan claimed the removal of the 10-minute delivery was a relief. "We have to deliver on time...for that we tend to drive rashly, possibly increasing the chances of accidents," he added.