

# THE BEACON

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## Malls and civic body lock horns

**Unnati Mishra**

**BENGALURU:**The Bengaluru city police, on December 30, 2023, directed the management of Phoenix Mall of Asia to stop all operations from December 31 to January 15. The main grounds for Bengaluru police serving notices to the new mall are inadequate parking and public disturbance which causes severe hindrances to the public.

As mentioned by Hindustan Times (HT), the police commissioner B Dayananda, in a letter to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), requested that the partial occupancy certificate (OC) issued to the mall should be withdrawn or cancelled owing to the existing issues. Adding to this, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has also reportedly said that the noise pollution is much higher than the prescribed limits and the mall has been repeatedly warned to stop noise pollution.

Following this, a petition was filed in the High Court by Sparkle One Mall Developers Pvt Ltd, Mumbai, which owns the newly opened mall situated on the service road in Byatarayanapura on Bellari Road, leading to the international airport.

As per HT report, the High Court of Karnataka on a special hearing on December 31 under Justice MGS Kamal stated that "No precipitative action shall be taken till the matter is resolved amicably or further order January 15".

Malls in Malleshwaram and Whitefield were also recently shut down for similar reasons. The root cause of the issue lies in the lack of coordination and cooperation among authorities that obstruct or refrain from the day-to-day activities of these businesses, say the experts.

## Protests break out against Puducherry pre-paid meters

**Ishika S**

The pre-paid meters scheme of the government has drawn flak from various quarters and protests have erupted across the Union Territory (UT). This experimental scheme would have repercussions on the lower and middle-income groups, said V Vaithilingam, Member of Parliament and Congress Party Head of Pondicherry.

Vaithilingam and his party cadres staged a two-day protest on Dec 26 & 27 in 19 constituencies of Pondicherry against the implementation of pre-paid meters in the Union Territory. Speaking to the Beacon, he said, "Talking about how this will impact the people, the ones who use high units of electricity, won't be affected by the scheme but the ones who minimise the use of electricity, will



V. Vaithilingam, Member of Parliament and Congress Party Head of Pondicherry.

Ishika S

be affected heavily as they try to use very less amount of current and will have to pay fines even though they didn't use much of electric power, which had angered the public."

The scheme is said to replace all types of electricity meters of around 4.7 lakh consumers of the UT and will cost Rs 250 crores for the exchequer. This

scheme has been pegged as a step towards privatisation by various political parties. This scheme is been also criticised in the backdrop of various government departments backlog of electricity bills running into crores of rupees.

"The government's job is to give the people what they ask for but the pre-paid metre is something

that they didn't ask for; the domestic consumers have been paying every bill on time and have been honest, so why is the government trying to exploit them? This is why I call it an anti-people policy and have influenced people to protest against it. By installing this meter, they are trying to make the domestic consumers debtors."

The meter is said to be at a stage of being supplied in the Union Territory. It will act as a loan component which is around 380 crores which will be paid by the Pondicherry Electricity Department with interest in 7 years to the Power Finance Corporation that will install the meters.

"The BJP government is experimenting with Pondicherry and fooling its people which is not the right thing to do. The authorities have announced the introduction of meters even in the agricultural sector, my question is why does the agriculture sector need a meter? While they are giving a pre-paid option to their domestic users, a post-paid option is given to malls. This policy is just like in telephones but one can live without a phone but how can they survive without electricity," he said.

## Houthi rebels attack halt world trade at Suez Canal

**Srishti R Jois**

The Red Sea, one of the busiest maritime routes in the world, is enmeshed in troubles as Houthi rebels continue to attack commercial ships navigating through the Suez Canal, one of the prominent sea routes that connects Europe and Asia.

The latest in the face-off is the Houthi rebels' attack on the Singapore-flagged Maersk container, prompting the US military to sink three Houthi ships. The US Central Command posted on X, that they received a distress call on Sunday at 6:30 am from the Maersk Hangzhou — the second from the same vessel in less than 24

hours reporting that "four small Houthi" boats from Yemen got to within 20 metres of the ship and attempted to board it. Helicopters from the USS Eisenhower and USS Gravelly reciprocated with an action by attacking the three boats that later sank.

Around 12% of global trade passes through the Suez Canal, representing 30% of all global container traffic, and over \$1 trillion worth of goods per annum. Hence, disruption in the trade route has spiked specific global trade challenges like freight charges to Yemen have surged from \$850 to \$2,400 per container which has now developed consequences in

the domestic market, affecting basmati exports and causing price fluctuations in commodities such as sunflower oil. The possible solution that trade companies found was taking an alternative route. Trade giants are opting for an alternative route around the Cape of Good Hope. This may increase shipping time by 10-12 days alongside the freight rates that are also likely to go up. Major shipping companies, including container giants Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd (HLA.G.DE), have rerouted to this alternative route. Oil industry giant BP Plc has decided to pause all oil tanker shipments through the Red

Sea as the Houthis escalate their attacks against merchant shipping vessels. "In light of the deteriorating security situation for shipping in the Red Sea, BP has decided to pause all transits through the Red Sea temporarily," the company said in a statement.

Every year around \$200 billion worth of Indian exports flows through the crucial marine route through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Due to disruptions in the Suez Canal, India's exports of manufactured goods including automotive parts, agricultural products, chemicals, textile and readymade garments, and pharmaceutical products are likely to be affected.

## Suburbs prefer K-ride over metro

**Aatreya Bose**

**BENGALURU:**The city transit system experts opine to carefully weigh the options of balancing between the metro and K-RIDE as a succour to the persisting traffic-related challenges of satellite towns and Bengaluru suburbs.

This comes close on the heels of the BMRCL-proposed feasibility study to expand Namma Metro to suburbs by 129 km, under a Phase 4 plan on January 1. Concerns are being raised about the scheme going against the government-sanctioned Comprehensive Mobility Plan and also insufficient intercity metro connectivity.

The Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company (K-RIDE) is bestowed with the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project jointly with the Union and Karnataka State governments. K-RIDE Railway Project Engineer Dinesh Y (name changed) said, "First, they should analyse if there's any location or route overlap with K-RIDE's Suburban Rail Project. It consists of at-grade lines, on-ground lines and elevated lines. At different points, they'll go parallel to metro lines. The route alignment is about 150 km. Out of two lines, one is under construction and another has been awarded."

## BWSSB acclaimed for CC efforts

**Afiya Amreen**

**BENGALURU:**The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) earned the prestigious 'Climate Smart Utilities Award 2023' from the International Water Association (IWA), acknowledging its noteworthy efforts in combating climate change (CC).

In conversation with 'The Beacon' Naveen B (name changed) a BWSSB official said, "The award highlights BWSSB's commendable actions in climate change

mitigation, assessed by a panel of water industry experts appointed by the High-Level International Committee of IWA. The global nominations process thoroughly evaluated the board's initiatives, emphasising its dedication to environmentally sustainable practices in water and sanitation."

In addition to praising BWSSB's accomplishments, the initiative aims to commend innovative utilities in low- and middle-income nations for their pioneering efforts in adapting to and

mitigating climate change effects. By showcasing such initiatives, the award seeks to inspire a global shift toward a low-carbon water and sanitation sector, he said.

"The 'Climate Smart Utilities Award 2023' stands as a testament to BWSSB's proactive measures in confronting climate change challenges, contributing to the broader narrative of fostering sustainability and resilience in the water and sanitation sector, particularly in economically constrained regions," he said.

## Pres for SKUAST convocation

**Utsav Pradhan**

The vice president of India is looking forward to showcase the academic excellence and potential growth, knowledge and strength of students and future industry professionals in Jammu and Kashmir. He has been invited as the chief guest for the two events.

Jagdeep Dhankhar will be gracing the 8th Convocation of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST). On his one-day tour,

the first visit will entail his address to the graduated students who have completed their degrees during the years of 2022 and 2023.

Adding to the itinerary of January 4, Kathua awaits his second visit for inaugurating the Biotech Startup Expo in the union territory.

The inauguration of the Biotech Startup Expo is an aimed effort towards emphasizing the importance and necessity to encourage the nation's innovations in the field of biotechnology.