Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party (BNP)

NEWSLETTER

20th Edition | January 2024 Roundup

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MESSAGE FROM FOUNDER

Dear Bengalurigas,

As I write this message, the Karnataka Government is in the process of approving a ₹1,200 crore plan for white-topping a number of arterial roads in Bengaluru. This is in addition to the thousands of crores already spent on white-topping some other arterial roads in the city earlier.

So, what exactly is white-topping and is it really required for our roads?

Before I answer that question, I would ask you to undertake this simple exercise the next time you step out of your home. All you need to do is visually survey the quality of different roads on which you travel. You will find that the arterial or main roads are much better compared to the smaller roads, which are generally in bad shape, with quite a few potholes. Bear this in mind as this is a very important point!

Coming back to the question, white-topping is simply the concretization of the roads which are already black-topped with tar. The purported reason is that white-topped roads last longer and are more durable. Interestingly, one pre-condition that a BBMP Official mentioned for white-topping is that the existing black-topped road must be in good condition! Here is the irony or the conundrum - if a black-topped road is already in good condition, why does it need to be white-topped?

Bengaluru has thousands of kilometres of roads in a horrible state of disrepair and a few arterial roads in reasonably good condition. And all that successive Congress, BJP & JD(S) Governments can think of is spending thousands of crores to re-lay already good roads, while other neglected roads are crying for attention.

The primary reason why thousands of crores are allocated for white-topping of existing good roads is that big projects mean big money! When Congress undertakes white-topping, BJP alleges corruption and when BJP undertakes white-topping, Congress alleges corruption! Isn't the irony stark?

Let us all raise our voices collectively against these completely needless and allegedly money-making rackets in which politicians from different mainstream parties engage. Let taxpayer money be used in a responsible way for fixing roads that are in bad shape rather than being diverted for re-laying existing good roads!

As always, I am happy to receive inputs and feedback from you at srikanth.narasimhan1975@gmail.com

SRIKANTH NARASIMHAN, Founder
Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party (BNP)

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BNP SOLUTION FOR STREAMLINING ELECTORAL ROLLS

BNP has offered a technology-driven solution to the Election Commission to update, rectify and streamline the city's Electoral Rolls. In this connection, Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party (BNP) Founder & General Secretary, Srikanth Narasimhan and BNP Governing Council Members, Lalithamba B V and Poongothai Paramasivam have been interacting with various Election Commission (EC) officials over the last 2 months. Meetings were held with the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sri. Manoj Kumar Meena on 5th January 2024 and with IT Head for EC, Sri. Surya Sen on 6th January 2024. The BNP Team presented its technology-enabled process and solution for maintaining and managing the rolls in a transparent way with the involvement of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Officials and Resident Welfare Association (RWA) Representatives. Both officials appreciated and accepted BNP's solution which would reduce Booth Level Officers (BLOs) work, ensure a more accurate voter list, and weed out deceased, duplicate and invalid voters more efficiently and effectively. The EC Team has agreed to take up a trial run in one assembly constituency towards the end of January. BNP's recommendations include: creating/updating booth boundary maps for all booths on Google Maps; getting the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)/Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO) to assign voter application to the right BLO/Booth based on the booth map; and migrating voters from different booths to the right booth with RWA involvement. BNP's solution will be a huge step forward in ensuring accurate and updated Electoral Rolls for Bengaluru in future.

OFFICIAL INTERACTIONS ON PROPERTY TAX

On 5th January 2024, BNP Governing Council Members and Zonal Leaders Lalithamba B V and Poongothai Paramasivam, met Revenue Department Officer Sri. Santhosh. He explained that the team was still working to finalise the points mentioned in Government Order (GO) regarding the Property Tax Zone misclassification issue, for implementation in the software. The BNP team urged the officials to implement the GO soon.

Further to this, Lalithamba B V and Poongothai Paramasivam met Sri. Munish Moudgil, Special Commissioner Revenue on 29th January. They discussed the implementation of the GO. The Special Commissioner revealed that the GO has been sent for the Administrator's approval. Once approved, the software would be amended suitably. He added that the Revenue Department is working to update the payment portal before the end of March 2024. It was also clarified that the Revenue Department is not working on any other demand notice sent to residents other than the Zone misclassification GO.

BNP SUBMITS OFFICIAL REQUESTS

As a follow up measure to other ongoing campaigns, Lalithamba B V and Poongothai Paramasivam continued their regular engagement with BBMP officials. They followed up on their visit to the BBMP offices on 5th January 2024, with another visit on 29th January.

In their meeting with Sri. Munish Moudgil, who is also the Special Commissioner IT, the BNP team submitted a letter requesting inclusion of an option to reopen an issue if the problem persists or, if citizens believed that the resolution was inadequate. A few other modifications in the Sahaaya app were also suggested to make the application more user-friendly. They also submitted a letter to BBMP Chief Commissioner Sri. Tushar Girinath, requesting publication of detailed Annual Reports of BBMP, with information at Level 2 or 3, on the new BBMP website.

A letter was also submitted to Sri. Manjuntha, Deputy Commissioner (Admin), requesting regular updating of Zonal Level Officers contact details on the BBMP Website and Sahaaya 2.0.

At the Forest Department, the BNP team met Sri. B.L.G. Swamy, Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF), and urged him to simplify the process and issue clear instructions regarding tree trimming/cutting.

BNP representatives also met the BBMP Anti-Tobacco Team to discuss ways to control tobacco abuse, especially by youngsters. They urged officials to take suitable measures against unchecked sale of cigarettes near school premises by limiting the shops selling cigarettes in such sensitive areas.

Finally, the BNP representatives met the BBMP Lakes team and discussed their concerns about some of the city lakes.

Shraddha Prabhu Kumar, BNP Governing Council Member and Head of Content Team, met the Directorate of Land Transport (DULT) Commissioner Smt. M. Deepa Cholan on 29th January and submitted a letter on behalf of the BNP regarding the implementation of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA).

WHITE TOPPING WORKS UNDER SCRUTINY

BBMP has proposed ₹1200 crores worth of white topping projects in Bengaluru. This has stirred public concern and controversy. The BNP has questioned the allocation of substantial funds for white topping while overlooking the deplorable state of many existing roads that demand immediate rectification. Earmarking funds for white topping, which is obviously not

Pic Courtesy: The Hindu

an immediate need, suggests that priorities are misplaced. BNP members have now embarked on a campaign to inspect and photograph roads in their localities that have undergone or are slated to undergo white topping. In many cases, good roads have been selected for white topping, which seems an illogical decision. Ideally, financial resources should be spent on essential infrastructure rather than on projects without lasting public benefits. The BNP has urged civic authorities to review the allocation of white topping funds and ensure complete transparency and accountability in their utilisation.

OUTREACH ON PROPERTY TAX ISSUES

Property Tax in Bengaluru has become a vexing issue, given the confusion over parameters like Zonal classification, built-up area etc. With many citizens reaching out for help, the BNP decided to hold an online discussion on Property Tax Notices on 19th January 2024. The meeting underlined the importance of addressing public concerns regarding Property Tax notices. The BNP has received numerous requests for assistance in cases where penalty and interest have been imposed for reasons such as: wrong zone classification; errors in built-up area; non-payment of Property Tax for a few years; and incorrect declaration, among others. The meeting helped to get an overview of various types of tax notices received by citizens. The serious discussion during the meeting focused on understanding these underlying issues and working towards possible solutions.

AREA SABHA ACTIVITIES (Local civic issues addressed by BNP)

Animal Husbandry

Early in December 2023, Civic warrior Dr. Chandramouly M raised an alarm over fifty furious dogs on 19th and 20th Main Roads of HSR Layout, near New Central RTO. After calls to the BBMP Animal Husbandry Department, they visited the area in January, neutered a few dogs and also vaccinated them. They asked the BNP to report any further issues.

A similar issue was raised in Ibluru. BNP Volunteer and Civic Warrior Divya requested help in dealing with the stray dog menace in the layout near Sobha Jasmine. "There are too many (dogs), and too aggressive... 3 maids and children from our building have been bitten by them in the last 2 months while walking outside." BNP Team took it up with the BBMP Animal Husbandry Team. Here too, the BBMP team came, vaccinated the dogs and neutered some of them. They requested citizens to raise a BBMP Sahaaya ticket in case of any dog bite issues.

Street Lights

In Iblur, someone had removed a switch from a street light and left it to be switched on with live wire. When the BNP team brought this danger to the attention of the BBMP Street Lights Team, they replaced the missing switch and resolved the issue.

Before — After
Street light with live wire — Street light with switch
Ibluru

Trees/Branches

A tree outside the Narayana Nagara Play Ground in Konanakunte had deteriorated and collapsed onto the playground fence, resulting in minor damage. Realising the risk of more

Vasanthapura
Before — After

extensive damage to the fence without prompt action, Poongothai Paramasivam immediately registered a complaint on the Sahaaya app and notified the relevant officials from the BBMP Forest Department. Thanks to their swift response, the tree was cut down within two days of the complaint. BNP is also thankful to Sindhu, a local resident, who actively coordinated on the ground to facilitate successful completion of the tree removal process.

Other than these civic issues, 16 other complaints raised by several Civic Warriors in various Wards were resolved. These included issues relating to Cable Wires, Debris Removal/Construction Material, Flex/Banners, Garbage and Drainage/Sewage. Thanks to all our Civic Warriors for making their neighbourhoods and our city a better place.

See the article on **'Area Sabha Meetings'** to know more about how citizens come together to resolve local issues and how you too can be a part of the solution!

- continued...

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS (Pick of Special BNP Activities)

SURVEY ON PUBLIC AMENITIES LAUNCHED

After bringing many Ward-specific civic issues to the fore, the BNP media team is now highlighting yet another issue with a city-wide focus. As the standard of public amenities is a key measure of a world-class city, the team is trying to assess how well maintained these common amenities are, across Bengaluru. Through a pilot survey, the BNP is focusing on the current status of parks and Primary Health Care (PHC) centres. **Survey forms** have been circulated to BNP members seeking information on the number of parks and PHCs in each Ward, the equipment they have and how well-maintained they are. Any grievances regarding missing or malfunctioning equipment are also noted. With the reliable data expected from this survey, BNP hopes to launch a robust campaign to improve the standard and functioning of such public facilities.

Do your bit towards a better Bengaluru. Fill in **THIS FORM** with details of the public amenities in your area.

RECOGNITION FOR A 'SEVA RATNA'

Several BNP Leaders and Governing Council Members have distinguished themselves in various fields of service and been recognized for their valuable contributions to society. BNP takes great pride in their dedication and achievements. Most recently, BNP Governing Council Member & Zonal Leader Indira Belde was honoured by Max Life Insurance Co., as a "Seva Ratna" for her outstanding community development services. Over the last three years alone, Indira's contributions have covered areas such as lake revival, road repair, storm water drains, Government schools and skill development programmes, such as tailoring classes for underprivileged women. Our hearty congratulations to Indira for the well-deserved recognition. We wish her success in all her future endeavours.

We invite each BNP Leader or Member who receives any award or special recognition OR is engaged in any special project or community initiative, to inform the BNP Newsletter Team.

BNP GROUND REPORT (Round-up of BNP's Regular Work)

Vote4Bengaluru (Voter ID Drives)

In November 2023, BNP had embarked on the campaign to register Graduate voters to elect a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) for the Bengaluru Voter constituency. Further to this, Poongothai Paramasivam conducted two Graduate Voter ID Drives in the Gottigere Ward. One in South Avenue Layout and the other in MBM Green Woods Apartment. On 19th Jan, 2024, she submitted the 15 applications received for MLC Graduate Enrolment.

> <u>**Note:**</u> You can still choose to register as a new Voter. Please refer to Voter Portal User Guide on our website **HERE**
>
> If you stay in a layout or apartment complex and want to arrange a voter registration camp,
> simply give a missed call to BNP on **080-47190000** OR send an email to **voters@nammabnp.org**
> **Let's Vote for Bengaluru!**

Area Sabha Meetings (Local Level Community Meetings)

A BNP Area Sabha Meeting was held at Ibluru Ward on 13th January 2024.
The attendees discussed the importance of Area Sabhas. BNP Leaders shared how residents could share civic issues on the BNP Community Whatsapp Groups and how the BNP is handling such issues.

Join the BNP Community Group in your area now! Send a Whatsapp message to +91 80951 30000 to know more.

1. What is the definition of Grassroots Governance?

It means governing from the bottom up, by enabling a citizen's most urgent needs to be fulfilled via readily accessible mechanisms.

2. What are the institutions of Grassroots Governance in the Indian context?

In the Indian scenario, Municipalities and Panchayats are the main institutions of Grassroots Governance.

3. From BNP's perspective, what does 'Good Grassroots Governance' entail? What are its essential features?

From BNP's perspective, good grassroots governance rests on the following pillars:

- an alert and active citizenry
- avenues for citizens' participation, such as Area Sabhas
- accountability by the Government
- transparency in operations

4. What are the signs or indicators of poor Grassroots Governance?

Poor Grassroots Governance can be recognised by the following aspects:

- low voter turnout in municipal elections
- absence of Area Sabhas and Ward Committee engagements
- crumbling infrastructure
- poor delivery of services to citizens
- media expose of shortcomings in Governance

5. How can corruption be minimised, if not eradicated, from local Governance?

Corruption can be minimised and eventually eradicated by encouraging full transparency and enforcing Government accountability.

6. How important is transparency to achieve Good Grassroots Governance?

Transparency in operations raises the right expectations among citizens. Information-sharing, in turn, builds trust in citizens. Only citizens who trust the process will participate enthusiastically in governance.

7. Does e-governance promote transparency? Why has it not become widely prevalent in India? What are the challenges?

E-governance will indeed promote transparency but some serious challenges remain:

- poor penetration among the illiterate sections
- poor penetration among some literate sections, particularly Senior Citizens, who are apprehensive of technology
- technical challenges in wireless connectivity for all regions of the country

8. Does outsourcing of services and direct delivery to Grassroot beneficiaries promote efficiency?

Yes and No. Outsourcing improves efficiency only if backed up by strict monitoring mechanisms. Outsourcing can easily become a source of favouritism and corruption if the selection process is opaque.

9. How significant is accountability to ensure Good Grassroots Governance? How can accountability be integrated into local Governance?

Accountability is critical in ensuring value for taxpayers' money. Reports of projects undertaken and services delivered must be made available to citizens. Performance indicators (PIs) should be widely publicised for all to know and track.

10. Can downsizing of bureaucracy and cutting of red tape improve Good Grassroots Governance?

Yes. Brainstorming sessions in the bureaucracy can develop simple mechanisms for single-window clearances, greatly saving time for both the Government and citizens.

11. Is decentralization/devolution of authority a hallmark of Good Grassroots Governance?

Yes. Because, concentration of powers can allow corrupting influences to set in. Centralization will also lead to queueing, resulting in inordinate delays in project clearances and work assignments.

12. How can result-oriented appraisal systems be made a part of local Governance?

Officials of the Municipal administration should be made to attend Ward Committee Meetings and Area Sabhas regularly. Fast closure of issues should be given favourable publicity, while delays should be discouraged and publicly reprimanded.

13. What is the role of citizens in ensuring Good Governance? Can there be Good Grassroots Governance without citizens' participation?

An active citizenry is the key catalyst for Good Grassroots Governance. Apathy from citizens will lead to lack of accountability and transparency in the administrative machinery.

14. Currently, how is Grassroots Governance rated in Bengaluru? What are the positive and negative aspects of local Governance in the city?

Currently, the rating would be a 5/10. On the positive side, Bengaluru is one of the few cities to acknowledge the constitutional amendment that led to the establishment of Ward Committees. However, the BBMP's administrative machinery is frustratingly lax in resolving issues. The prolonged absence of an elected Corporation Council has obviously worsened the situation.

15. How does BNP intend to address these shortcomings and achieve Good Grassroots Governance in Bengaluru?

When elected to the Corporation Council, BNP proposes to take a multi-pronged approach to ensure Good Grassroots Governance:

- promote citizen participation through Area Sabhas and Ward Committees.
- continuously involve administrative officials in Ward Committee Meetings
- revamp grievance redressal mechanisms to give effective relief to citizens
- ensure full transparency by disclosing records on project approvals and execution

MEDIA CONNECT (BNP's interactions with the media)

Press Releases

BNP's Press Releases (PRs) bring public attention to civic issues that plague Bengaluru. The idea is to encourage prompt action to resolve the highlighted issue and other similar issues around the city.

The **first PR for 2024, dated 15th January**, referred to the fact that after the new Government came to power, several development works in the city have witnessed a halt. In particular, this PR highlights the sudden pause in ongoing conservation efforts at Hulimavu Lake. This discontinuation has created a void in the lake's management turning it into a garbage dump. Some of the garbage has been lying around for months. As Martha, a resident of Hulimavu, says "...It's disheartening to witness how changes in government can affect the maintenance of the city's water bodies, despite it being the responsibility of every government, regardless of who is in power."

No action has been taken yet on waste burning at Gayatri Farms, Bellandur. In fact, two other waste burning issues have now come to light — one near Pragnya Homes and Rainbow Residency in Halanayakanahalli, Bellandur and the other at Devarachikkana Halli. Ironically, the last site is adjacent to the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Unit. BNP issued a related **PR on 22nd January**, setting forth the consequences of such garbage disposal — the release of toxic pollutants into the air and the increasing incidence of respiratory problems among area residents. The PR also pointed out that the involvement of BBMP workers in burning garbage only serves to compound the problem. BNP stressed the need for stringent measures and consequences for those who flout waste disposal norms, and urged the BBMP to establish a streamlined and efficient mechanism to receive and address complaints promptly.

You can access all the BNP Press Releases on our Namma BNP website **HERE**

BNP in the News

Please click **HERE** to see how different Media organisations have supported BNP by publishing articles on our endeavours to resolve civic issues in Bengaluru.

BENGALURU BULLETIN (Important Civic News in Bengaluru)

FINAL VOTER LIST RELEASED

The much-awaited final Karnataka voter list for 2024 has been released. Chief Electoral Officer (Karnataka), Sri. Manoj Kumar Meena revealed at a press conference on 22nd January 2024, that there are 5.37 crore voters including 17,937 centenarians. General voters have increased to 5,37,85,815, which includes 2,69,33,750 male voters, 2,68,47,145 female voters and 4,920 other voters. Voter ID cards have also been 100 per cent distributed. Among the 224 assembly constituencies, Bangalore South has the largest number, with 7,17,201 voters. Sringeri assembly constituency has the least, with 1,67,556 voters. In the Parliamentary segment, there are over 31 lakh voters in Bengaluru North and only 15 lakh voters in Chikkamagaluru. Voters should verify and confirm their names in the electoral roll without delay. Eligible voters, whose names are missing, must register immediately via the Voter Helpline app or submit applications through the **https://voterportal.eci.gov.in/**.

WANTED: A WATER SUPPLY STRATEGY

Bengaluru is highly vulnerable in terms of water supply needs and level of dependence. The recent drought has heightened public concerns over the city's dire water situation. Since Cauvery water remains the main supply source, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has requested the Cauvery Neeravari Nigam to reserve 1.6 tmcft of water every month till March 2024, and 2.42 tmcft from April to meet Bengaluru's needs. With water utilisation from Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) remaining low and lake water also being untapped, many apartments and commercial establishments, especially in the outskirts, are forced to purchase tanker water on a daily basis. Environment officials warn that with increasing climate change impact, the Government needs to formulate a Plan B to ensure alternative water sources for Bengaluru.

BSWML PLANS COMMAND CENTRE

Solid Waste Management (SWM) has always posed a massive challenge for civic authorities in Bengaluru. Current plans by Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) to establish an integrated command and control centre raises hopes for more effective SWM operations. The Command Centre will be equipped to send alerts, use SWM applications and GPS devices for tracking all SWM primary and secondary transport vehicles and street sweeping machines. Detailed data on waste collected, loads sent to treatment plants, attendance of pourakarmikas and BBMP marshalls, location of black spots and penalty collection amounts will be recorded on the platform, which will generate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) daily. Officials can access all such data on their dashboard and the KPIs will promote efficient waste management to improve the city's Swachh Survekshan ranking.

REGISTRATION FOR BULK WASTE GENERATORS

To assess the total waste generated by different bulk waste generators, all residential, commercial and institutional units, generating over 100 kg of solid waste daily or spread over a plot area of 5,000 square metres, have been directed to register with the BBMP in 30 days. A BBMP press release indicated that the bulk waste generators must download the e-stamp paper (₹100) from its official website, feed the details and submit the application by attaching the notarised certificate or affidavit. Officials said the new rule would indicate the cumulative waste produced by bulk generators and the location to which such waste is sent, to gauge whether it gets mixed with the waste collected by ward-level service providers.

COURT PUSHES FOR PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Inadequate and poorly maintained public conveniences in Bengaluru became a cause for judicial concern when the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by NGO Letzkit Foundation came up for hearing in the Karnataka High Court. A court-ordered survey, conducted by the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority found many public toilets dirty, unusable and not maintained properly. Dissatisfied with the BBMP's Action Taken Report, the court imposed a fine of ₹5 lakh for failure to respond to specific directions. Stung by the judicial criticism, BBMP is planning a 50% increase in the public convenience infrastructure. It is tendering for 375 new public toilets, bringing the total to 1160. Additionally, the BBMP has tendered for the renovation of 160 existing toilets and for the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of 229 e-toilets.

SLUM DWELLERS FACE EVICTION

The threat of eviction is hanging over 400 families, who have been residing in a section of Gangashetty Lake in eastern Bengaluru for 30 years. The BBMP has directed the Karnataka Slum Development Board to rehabilitate the slum dwellers who have "encroached upon" three acres of lake land in KR Puram. The 14 encroachers also include the Revenue Department, which despite being the custodian of government property, has built the Tahsildar's office right inside the lake land. KR Puram MLA Byrathi Basavaraj has raised an objection that the alternative one acre land earmarked in Medahalli was only sufficient for the rehabilitation of 200 families and urged the Government to provide another two acres to facilitate lake revival without causing any hardships for the slum dwellers.

That's it for now! Look out for more such newsletters every month!

Thank you once again for your unwavering support which is helping BNP to go from strength to strength!

Not yet a member of the BNP? Click HERE to volunteer and join hands with the

BNP – India's first and only city party!

Stay updated on BNP's activities. Follow us on