

THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

DUMMY’S GUIDE TO TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Short-staffed police try out a model solution on the streets of Bengaluru

Commissioner says the police mannequins will subsequently have cameras, become part of an AI-run traffic law enforcement system

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 29

ONE of the schools of thought for controlling crimes in high crime zones in urban areas around the world is to create the impression of an ubiquitous police force — or, in other words, tricking criminals into believing that the police are all around and there is no getting away.

In Bengaluru where road traffic problems are a cause of bigger concern than high crime rates, the city’s understaffed police force has hit upon an idea to create the impression of the traffic policeman being an ubiquitous presence on the streets by using traffic police mannequins.

Over the past few weeks, some 30 traffic police mannequins have been deployed during the day at heavy traffic junctions in the city by the Bengaluru police to put the fear of the police in the hearts of traffic law violators.

At junctions where traffic jams occur every day, a real traffic policeman now controls traffic, while mannequins create an impression of the presence of many traffic policemen.

The deployment of traffic police mannequins — dressed in the uniform of the Bengaluru traffic police — has been described by the city’s Police Commissioner as the first step in deploying high technology for policing the streets, but the regular traffic policeman thinks it is just a scarecrow.

According to official records, the Bengaluru traffic police have a sanctioned strength of 5,262 personnel to regulate traffic across 44,000 intersections, but they are 600 short of the sanctioned strength. “It is just a strategy to prevent traffic offences — like triple riding on two wheelers,



Some 30 mannequins dressed in the uniform of the traffic police have appeared across the city. Police hope they will warn off potential traffic violators. *Express*

riding without helmets or driving without seat belts, or using cell phones while riding or driving — even when there are no policemen at the traffic signals,” a police constable manning a traffic junction in the central business district of Bengaluru said, regarding a mannequin planted on the traffic island in the area.

“These are just dummies — in the end they do not perform any roles, and a policeman still needs to control the traffic,” the traffic constable said.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Bhaskar Rao, however, said that the police mannequins are part of a plan to bring in robotic technologies into policing the traffic in the IT capital of the country.

“The mannequins are the first or a crude form of promoting technology. They will later have cameras fitted for the eyes — for both day vision and night vision. The mannequins will be connected to an artificial intelligence based software system to record and recall what is being seen on the streets, and provide alerts to officers. Later on, there

will be robotics incorporated in the system, which will change the structure of the mannequin itself,” the Police Commissioner said.

“We have several plans to leverage the kind of technologies available in Bangalore itself. This is just a first step,” according to Rao.

Since taking over as the Bengaluru Police Commissioner in August this year, Rao has attempted multiple innovations — from employing masseurs at some police stations to ease the pains of traffic policemen, to deploying the “pedal police”, or police on bicycles, in areas like the central Cubbon Park, as well as creating crèches and play areas for children at police stations to reduce the negativity attached to the image of the police force in general.

In police stations with large areas — where the properties belong to the police department itself — like the Koramangala police station in the south east of Bengaluru, the police have created a colourful play area-cum-crèche for kids, with walls painted with images of popular cartoon characters.

“There are many young mothers in the police department who don’t have a support sys-

EXPLAINED An attempt at image-building

THE TRAFFIC police mannequins are part of several measures introduced by Bengaluru Police Commissioner Bhaskar Rao, which include employing masseurs at some police stations to ease the aches of personnel who are on their feet for long hours, and creating play areas for children at police stations to counter the negativity attached with these buildings. There are creches to help young policewomen who have to work long hours, and have no support system for their children.

tem to take care of children when they work long or unpredictable hours. The department does not shut shop at 5 pm and go home, and staff have to work irregular hours. If the child is at the police station itself, then she gets to see the child while doing her work even if it is late. More and more women are being recruited in the police and this will give them a sense of comfort,” Commissioner Rao said.

According to local police officers at the Koramangala police station where a play area has been created on the premises, the kids’ zone is also an attempt to soften the image of the police among school children who are sometimes brought from surrounding schools.

“There is a sense of fear of the police, and people are often reluctant to go to police stations to report cases as a consequence. A fear-some image of the police is also created among children since people try to discipline them using images of the scary policeman. We are hoping that when they visit our station and spend time in the kids’ area some of their fears will go away,” a police officer said.

‘Said two services only if you have two separate exams... that’s the caveat’

BIBEK DEBROY, Chairman, Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council, led the committee that in 2015 recommended major reform in the Railways. His report is being cited by the government and all stakeholders to argue both in favour of and against the recent controversial move to unify all eight Group A services into one Indian Railways Management Service. In an interview with AVISHEK G DASTIDAR, Debroy explained what the report meant and what he thinks about the move.



THE POLICY INTERVIEW BIBEK DEBROY

Chairman,
Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council

In your report, why didn’t you prescribe merger of all services into one?
We said that we would not get into the merger with retrospective treatment because we have no particular expertise in that. We did not say anything on that because we said the Railways should do that, and remember there will be legal cases and things like that.

Did you foresee that it will end up being a messy affair?

Right, it is messy... We did not have a complete picture of the age profile the Railway employee. We had a sense that recruitment is not always linear over time... there was a bunching together... I mean we knew that the hump would be crossed at around 24 years of age but then there is the General category and the SC and ST category etc... so as far as that is concerned, we left it to the wisdom of Railways.

Why did you recommend two services, one technical and one logistics, instead of just one service?

In the final report, there is an important sentence where we have recommended two services. We said that if there are two separate (recruitment) exams then you need to have two services. That is the important caveat... Today, on the one side you have the Civil Services Exam and on the other, the Engineering Services Exam. In that case, you have two services.

Why is that?

In the report we had an interesting graph that showed that as you climbed up the ladder, the less important the functional specialisation becomes, and you go more and more towards management. Someone who enters the technical side is an engineer. The person is entering the service when he or she is about 22 years old. On the other side, the person entering the service is may be 25 years old or thereabouts. So there is a disadvantage in terms of vertical mobility. Now if you unified the exams, this difference would go.

How would you ensure multi-disciplinary efficiency in that case?

Because the core functioning of the Railways is of running trains, so most of them would be engineers. But there would also be the Personnel Service, Accounts Service and Traffic Service. So you recruit them also, and then obviously you’re not going to get the person who has a History background to run the trains. So, what we had contemplated was that after you join, maybe 13, 14 years down the line, you get a choice — do you want to switch, regardless of your background? Like if you are an engineer, do you now want to switch to the management side, in which case you aspire to become, eventually, a Member of the Railway Board, even Chairman. Or do you want to continue with running trains, then you aspire to become GM and then the rank of a GM is equalised with the rank of a Railway Board Member.

When you studied departmental

rivalries in Railways, did you see it prevailing between the Engineering services or did you see it between civil services and the engineers?
It was across the board.

How did you seek to find a solution?

As a committee, we had wide consultations. I don’t think any other committee has had as wide a consultation process and, if I recall correctly, most of the ideas that we have had came from the people from the Railways themselves. We just put them in a structure. In the course of this we had discussions with the employees associations, like the Federation of Railway Officers’ Association (FROA). We said this in the Interim report and final report also, FROA strongly recommended one service. The Prakash Tandon Committee (1994) recommended one service.

Why didn’t you recommend it then?

We had this dilemma. We thought that a lot of things go in favour of one single service, but the problem was the entry-age differential, and the problems that the two sides would face thereafter... That is the reason we put that caveat. So all the messages on social media are missing this point, which is that if you have two entry exams, then please have two services.

But now the demand is: Why can’t the reform be about two services, considering there are about 8,000 serving officers involved?

To the extent that I have been able to track social media is that one issue is, “What happens to us?”. I have read reports that the Chairman, Railway Board made a statement that your position and seniority will be preserved, just wait for the alternate mechanism to do its work. This is one issue. The other issue which they (protesting officers) are not mentioning on social media that much is what happens to their vertical growth? Because departmentalism encadres posts. Now that is being brought down, so if I am X then I am not just worried about my seniority being protected, I am now also worried about my vertical mobility. That, they are not voicing very strongly, but I think in the heart of their hearts the main issue is that. I think the actual reservation is about the fact that my vertical mobility will be affected because posts reserved for certain cadres are going to end. And suddenly, the total number of posts is also being pruned. And then there is also the threat of lateral entry, which also we have mentioned in our report.

In Goa school curriculum, lessons from ground on sanitation, waste management, traffic sense

SMITA NAIR
PANAJI, DECEMBER 29

A PILOT project from 2018 — training children on civic sense — will be integrated into the school curriculum this year in Goa. Of the core categories under civic sense, traffic is seen as a crucial “life saving” module, say experts with Goa Traffic Police who have been roped in to provide “educational feed” straight from their experiences.

Chairman of the Goa Education Development Corporation (GEDC), established under Goa Education Development Corporation Act, 2003, Kanta Patnekar said, “The review showed the need for these subjects. The response from students and teachers was encouraging.”

In 2017-18, the pilot was conducted following a discussion between then Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar and educationists in the state. Three subjects were introduced under umbrella topics: sanitation including personal sanitation, waste management, and traffic sense.

Goa, a tourist state with the local population facing the burden of floating tourists — through exceeding levels of garbage and also number of two-wheeler accidents, teachers say the subjects were “the need of the state”.

GEDC undertook 80 per cent of the research behind the project, as its inception mandate is to “develop competitive, flexible and value-based education system to meet the individual, institution and socio cultural development needs of the people of Goa”, says Patnekar.

The pilot was introduced in 108 schools as “separate subjects” in three different phases divided between primary and secondary schools. According to teachers, menstrual health was also a topic discussed in Goan schools for the first time under this sanitation module.

Once the topics were decided initially by academics and officials approved them, the next step was to look for experts in each field. Experts were roped in to create content in Goa and elsewhere. The content was then vetted by the State Council of Educational Research and Training.

According to a teacher, under the waste management module, children were taught the importance of segregation instead of burning waste — a practice otherwise prevalent in village pockets of Goa. “They were not just told, but informed through researched content by experts who work in those fields. Detailed literature was prepared, which included exercises for them to conduct back home,” an official with SCERT said.

“Three books were then published with detailed topics for three stages — first for Class III and Class IV students. The second stage was between Class V and Class VIII, and the final stage was for Classes VIII-IX,” said Patnekar. The coverage was limited to government schools. Before the subjects were introduced in schools, teachers from each taluka were trained by experts by giving them detailed examples from case studies in villages across Goa.

Traffic Deputy SP Dharmesh Angle who was roped in for the traffic module, said the training has already shown results. “While there are many reasons for lower fatalities this year, one reason is that children are walk-

ing back following the lessons they learn from these chapters on civic sense. Traffic sense is directly related to societal behaviour. These chapters were designed by the traffic department with the educationists and starts with the do’s and don’ts and with real life case studies,” said Angle. The traffic department now wants the SCERT and GEDC to include the importance of wearing helmets in the new curriculum with case studies and number of lives saved.

According to teachers, children have also started sensitising their parents on the lessons they learnt in school — an input which GEDC says helps.

GEDC is now in the process of finalising the content for the academic year 2020-2021. “We are now integrating the subjects in the curriculum, and all the learnings will now be part of existing subjects and will also be given as optional papers. Traffic sense will be part of Physical Education and the remaining two subjects will be part of the science and social science textbooks. These will include Goa case studies and will be implemented by the next academic cycle,” said Patnekar.

STATE WOMEN’S COMMISSION INITIATIVE

Women break free in rural Maharashtra, get appsolutely phone-smart

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 29

IN RURAL Maharashtra’s Daregaon village, a 16-year-old girl last month used her phone to register an online complaint on the Tejaswini application against a local boy who was sexually harassing her.

In the nearby Ramnagar village, Neeta Nene learnt how to upload all identification documents on Digilocker.

Neeta’s neighbour Radha Kishore now uses Google Assistant to read recipes.

And Sangeeta Satpute spends most of her spare time searching about the online dairy market, and how to sell her cattle produce in Jalna.

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women has started giving digital training to rural and tribal women to make them self-sufficient in using the Internet to pay utility bills, access government schemes, and register complaints online.

All that they need is a smartphone. Since November, 50 workshops for 1,000 women have been held across Maharashtra. The Commission plans to finally organise 450 workshops for 1 lakh women.

In Wada, a town in the tribal Palghar district some 90 km from Mumbai, Akshata More (39) was ready with a notebook and pen to take copious notes in a panchayat hall with 200 other women during one such workshop.

Several women had brought their husbands’ phones for the day.

More has a basic smartphone, and only knows how to dial a number. She does not understand what the Internet is, but plans to teach her three daughters, the eldest aged 18, its use for online education material.

As the session begins, trainer Komal Jadhav starts with explaining the difference between smartphones and ordinary ones, and teaches the basics of using a smartphone — taking pictures, connecting to WiFi, setting up wallpaper.

Jadhav then moves on to a more complex operation: how to download a mobile app. As she gives step-by-step instructions, the women are glued to their mobile screens, asking each other about which icon to select. Some without a phone make notes to later try it at home.

“I want to learn more about farming and how to sell our produce online. There are so many fertilizers to choose from. I thought I can



In Palghar, a training session has over 200 women from nearby villages. *Express*

learn how to use the Internet, and teach my husband,” said Archana Sambre (34), a villager in Wada.

Her neighbour Kanchan Palekar (24) is more digital savvy, she knows how to use

WhatsApp. “But I want to learn more, all these apps that we can use for payments,” she said.

These women are being taught six mobile applications — Tejaswini, Bhim, Aaple

Sarkar, Umang, NaMo, and Digilocker — apart from using Google Assistant. “One villager has started using Google Assistant to even set alarms,” said Gracy Cardozao, project incharge at the women’s Commission. The Commission has trained 50 women to give digital training, and each is paid Rs 3,000 per session.

After every workshop, spanning over four hours, the women are added on a WhatsApp group, and given daily exercises. Says trainer Usha Shinde, from Jalna, “There is excitement in middle-aged women to learn more. Every day we ask them to try something new on phone, make a digital payment or scan and upload documents. Those who face problems are given step-wise assistance.”

39-year-old Manasi Sawant, a villager in Palghar, said: “My son knows how to use a smartphone, but never had time to teach me. I want to learn how to make calls, chat on WhatsApp, so that I don’t need to rely on my children for help.”

Kamini Waghat (23), who came along with her newborn baby, said learning how to use the Internet will help her family in farming. “There are new techniques on the Internet about farming. We can now use it to improve produce without relying on the lo-

cal administration,” she said.

While the Umang app provides information on 440 government schemes, the Bhim app is useful in making digital payments. Maharashtra’s Aaple Sarkar provides a portal to register complaints against government officials.

“On the Tejaswini app, women can register complaints of sexual or domestic violence, or workplace harassment. Several women fear reaching out to the village panchayat,” said Vijaya Rahatkar, Chairperson of the women’s Commission.

For trainer Usha Shinde, the best outcome of digital training has been the motivation it has provided to two schoolgirls, aged 15 and 16, in her village Daregaon.

“Both registered sexual harassment complaint on that app. A few boys in school were sexually harassing them. They could not dare to approach police. But after I taught them these apps, they quietly registered a complaint on the Tejaswini app,” Shinde said.

The only hiccup in these sessions has been with the NaMo app — the first app that these women are taught to remain updated with news about Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is 50 MB in size, and takes up 30-45 minutes to download in poor network regions.