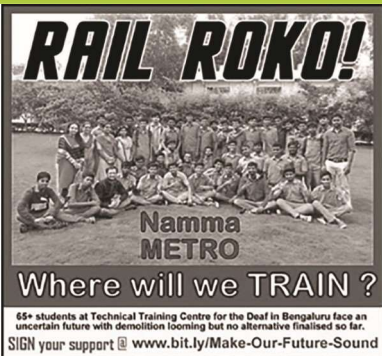


EIB-AIIB financed BMRP (Line R6) crushes the dreams of 43 Students of the Technical Training Centre for the Deaf

BANGALORE METRO RAIL LINE PROJECT



Bangalore Metro, also known as Namma Metro, is a rapid transit system aiming to serve the mass transportation needs for the city of Bengaluru, India. Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is responsible for implementation of the Bangalore Metro Rail Project (BMRP). The stated objective of the BMRP is to help decongest the crowded road corridors and offer more environment friendly mass transportation to the people of Bengaluru. The project has two phases. Phase I includes the East-west and North-south corridors and Phase II consists of extensions of the Phase I and two additional lines. One of these additional lines is the Line R6 that runs North-South connecting Gottigere to Nagavara.

BMRP Line R6, currently being implemented by BMRCL, is co-financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The project also includes financing by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The estimated cost of the project is USD 1,785 million, of which USD 583 million is from EIB and USD 335 million is from AIIB. The line is also partly funded by the Central and State Governments. This line covers 21.275 km with 6 elevated and 12 underground stations. To implement this phase, the BMRCL has acquired about 65.29 acres of land. Of this, 13-94 acres belong to the State Government, 50.43 acres to private owners and 0.91 acres to other entities. A total of 1,098 families have been affected by this alignment. It has also hampered 754 commercial establishments, including hawkers and small shopkeepers. Besides, it has affected several residents who access public amenities that are being acquired for the construction of the Reach 6 alignment.

The Cantonment Metro Station and the TTCD, One of the 12 underground stations of R6 is the Cantonment Metro station in the Bamboo Bazar area of Shivajinagar. It is being constructed on 2.4 acres of land acquired by the BMRCL from the Bangalore City Corporation, also called the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). The land consisted of a public playground used by adjoining schools and the local community, a few small buildings and an institution for speech and hearing impaired students. The institution, called the Technical Training Centre for the Deaf (TTCD), was among the buildings which were demolished to make way for the Metro station.

The TTCD and its Deaf Students, TTCD was established by the Association of the Deaf Bangalore (AoDB) in 1979 on about 0.5 acres of land, on Haines Road in Shivajinagar, Bangalore. This land was leased out to the Archdiocese of Bangalore and the AoDB by the BBMP. The TTCD had three units namely (i) The technical training unit, (ii) main offices and auditorium, and (iii) hostel block for 40 deaf students. It was affiliated with the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) of the Indian Government as a private Training

A Narrative by
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Institute (ITI). At the time of establishment, it had 80 deaf students, hailing from all the different southern states of India. After two years of education, students were eligible for a National Trade Certificate and placement for an apprenticeship, and later, in permanent government or private sector employment. To bear the costs of the teaching staff, the TTCD received a Grant in Aid (GIA) regularly from the Directorate of Employment and Training (DET) of the State Government.

to the DET asking them to shift the institute and continue the grant.



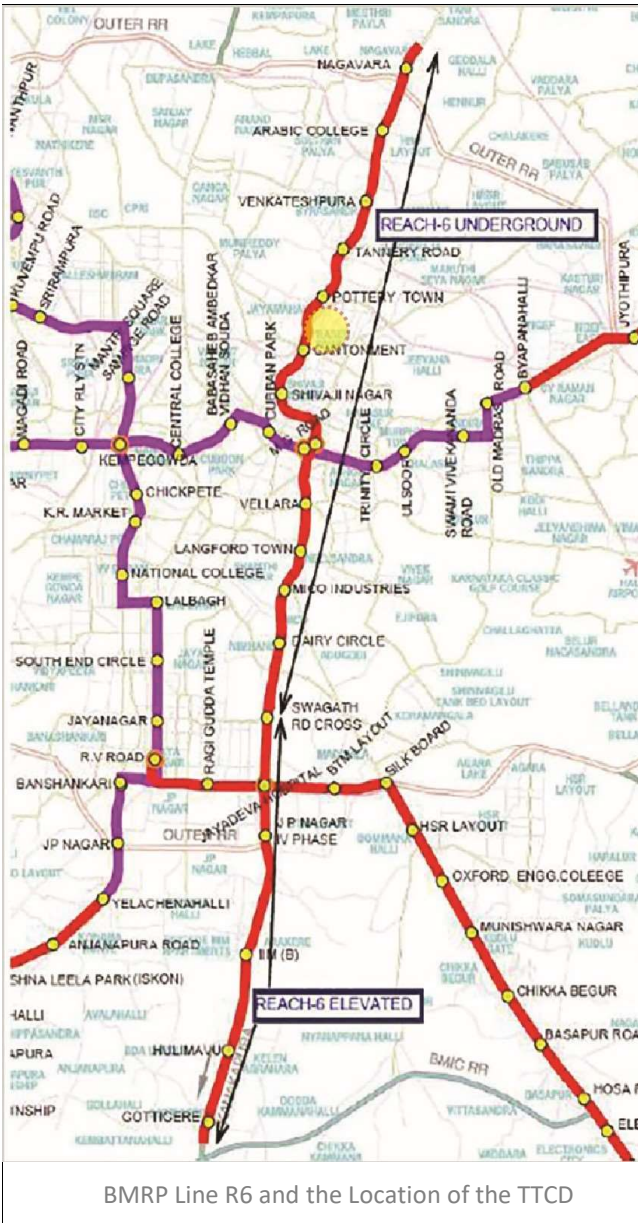
Citizen volunteers train the students for the exams

On 19th September 2018 the BMRL communicated a compensation package of INR 5-72 crore (USD 0.77 million) indicating they now wanted to acquire the property permanently, even before TTCD had decided on moving their facilities. The compensation awarded included 100% solatium for market value of building and 12% on structural value of the building for 164 days, but no shifting allowance. No prior notice was served on the students, their parents or the TTCD staff and teachers.

On 15 April 2019, the BMRL sent a letter to AoDB stating that they had procured permission for Metro civil works from BBMP, and that the deaf school building was to be vacated by 30 April 2019. The compensation due has not been paid to anyone till date, as there was a dispute between the TTCD management, the teachers, and the Archbishop on who would be the rightful recipient of the money, and the matter was taken to court. In June 2017 itself, the Archbishop had paid the rent of land to BBMP for 3 years (2017-2020) which is an indication of the validity of the lease till 2020 and BMRL was not yet entitled to acquire the property.

In this rope war, DET blocked TTCD from their website and formally suspended the GIA, leaving the existing students without any teaching support. After a few months, the TTCD staff and teachers filed a High Court petition seeking payment of their salaries. In July 2019, the COURT ordered TTCD management to pay the due salaries within 2 weeks. But DET informed TTCD that the GIA couldn't be reinstated unless they identified a building and shifted there.

An online petition highlighted the plight of the students and noted that "for about 40 years, the TTCD has been a lifeline for poor deaf students in rural Karnataka as well as other parts of South India. Asking them to leave with no alternative in sight was grossly unfair..." YouTube videos in sign language attempted to garner support. Many well-known disability rights activists, including the State Disabilities Commissioner, backed the Change.org petition and it led to a memorandum with over 15,000 signatures being submitted to the BMRL. In response to the memorandum, the BMRL stated that it would start its work only after TTCD was shifted to the new premises.



BMRP Line R6 and the Location of the TTCD

Demolition of TTCD and Dreams of the Students

In December 2017, the BMRL wrote to AoDB to hand over the land of the TTCD for construction of the underground metro station. BMRL proposed to provide interim facilities in a nearby unused ESI Hospital building for the duration of the construction activity.

Subsequently, for the next few months, the TTCD management held discussions with the BMRL and the DET on alternate locations for shifting the students and their equipment. Meanwhile, the TTCD teachers stopped receiving their GIA salary. On 10 August 2018, they wrote

Meanwhile, the students who were yet to answer their 2nd year exams, got no lessons as the teachers were absent due to the ensuing confusion and the suspension of their salary. Before the TTCD building was demolished, the teachers approached the High Court with an interlocutory application to shift TTCD to the proposed ESI hospital building. At this time, basic amenities of electricity and water supply were stopped on the premises. The students in the hostels had to use torches to cook their evening meal. They fetched water from the sump using buckets. Many relied on local friends for food and supplies. Also, BMRCL made no teaching and living arrangements for the students before the building was demolished, as promised earlier. Nor did the DET come to their rescue.

Ignoring the distress of the students, BMRCL took possession of the land by paying INR 9.80 crore (USD 1.32 million) to BBMP in August 2019. A notice was then put UP on the wall of the deaf school indicating that the building would be demolished. Meanwhile the TTCD continued to attract more deaf students from Karnataka and other Southern states and at least 18 newly admitted students were waiting for the approval of DET until October 2019. On 24th October 2019 the DET ordered TTCD management to transfer the trainees to Ghousia Industrial Training Institute (Ghousia ITI) which is about 10 kms away from the TTCD.



Construction status of Cantonment Metro Station as of end July 2021. BMRCL took possession of land incl. TTCD area on 30 August 2019

The TTCD building was demolished on 27 November 2019. Out of 61, 43 students and 3 teachers were transferred to Ghousia ITI on 30 November 2019, and their equipment was donated to the institute. Accommodation was provided in the Boys Hostel of Nettur Technical Training Foundation (NTT F) which is about 16 kms away. Being unfamiliar with the city, the commute was challenging. Most students, especially the female students, felt unsafe to live in a new location. So, many opted to return home and commute about 25—30 kms to the institute.

At the Ghousia ITI, the new teachers and management did not know sign language. No special classes were held for the 43 deaf students and their workshop equipment was not well maintained. As a result, the students were not graded in internal practical exams. During the lockdown from March to August 2020, the Ghousia ITI arranged a few online classes for the subject of Electronics only. Rest of the students were left without training and support.

The students returned in November 2020 to answer their 2nd year exams. The exam fees for all 43 students had been paid, but their exam hall tickets were not generated merely due to administrative complications between the TTCD and the DET. The distraught students sat in protest in front of the DET after they were not allowed to write the examination. The Commissioner of DET explained that the TTCD management who had access to the required log-in password had failed to upload the details of the students on the MIS portal. Hence the 43 students lost a chance to complete their COURse and those with backlog subjects were unable to catch UP. They were told they would have a second opportunity to answer their finals in January 2021.

The students had already lost one year due to the negligence of all responsible. For no fault of theirs, they cannot complete their course or get placed in any employment. It is clear that had BMRCL not acquired the TTCD building, none of this would have happened.

With no other options before them, the students returned in January 2021 to try and finish the requirements of their course to procure their Diploma. The outstation students had no accommodation nor access to their belongings left in their erstwhile hostel rooms. In addition to this, all students were very unprepared for the exams. They had to rely on Volunteers team to step in to help with theory and practical training, retrieving their luggage from the hostel, making arrangements and payments for accommodation, coordination with the TTCD management and exam authorities for hall tickets, answering questions from worried parents, and providing general moral support.



The students, happy to finally have exam hall tickets in hand

After much back and forth with authorities in the State and central government, the volunteers team finally managed the online filing and payment of fees so all the students got their hall tickets, albeit just a day before the 2nd year exam. Some of the students found it difficult to crack the exams having had virtually no training for 2 years. Today, students who had failed their first and/or second year exams are on a hamsters' wheel, anxiously trying to check and register online, pay fees, answer the supplementary exams. They have only 3 consecutive chances so they cannot afford to miss the next test if they still hope to receive their diploma.



Students try out the equipment and raw materials that some of them and Growthwatch volunteers had dashed from exam centre to Ghousia ITI to the market to organize during the 2nd year exams in February 2021



Demands

Observations

In addition to being subject to the uncertainties of the lock down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 43 deaf students have been abandoned without any support and communication from the TTCD management, the DET and the BMRCL.

The students, who should have completed their second year of training by now, have lost one year as the TTCD management failed to provide them with exam hall tickets in 2020, owing to conflicts that arose related to the land acquisition and demolition of their building by the BMRCL. Administrative records are not accessible, and they have not received their first year marks sheet.

Being unprepared, and lacking the required training, students were unable to fare well in the exams. Many have not passed and are dejected by the situation. Students who had to retake their first year exams due to failure, were not given hall tickets in 2021, despite extensive effort. Now they are going through this permanent hoop to take exams because giving UP Would mean they would be disqualified and if once considered drop outs they stand no chance of receiving their Diploma. None of them are hopeful of being placed in an apprenticeship and finally getting a well-paid job of dignity anymore. This has put a lot of stress on the parents (many from economically weak backgrounds), who had dreamed that their children's future would be secure with the Diploma and job placement they would receive from the TTCD.

The right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the Project Affected Persons has been violated. Concerns of teachers, non-teaching staff, students, and their parents as PAPs, have been ignored, resulting in an unfortunate and unjust situation. The speech and hearing impaired students are the victims most adversely affected by the project and they have no voice, literally, to fight the system and demand their rights.

Two full years after BMRCL took control of the land, the underground metro station construction where the TTCD stood has not progressed significantly. This, despite metro work carrying on unrestricted during the pandemic lockdowns. What necessitated permanent acquisition of the training centre and the land that housed it, and the hurried bringing down of the school and hostel buildings before rehabilitation and resettlement was never explained.

- Assign dedicated official to ensure proper training for the students and to assist in negotiating the complications of appearing for the remaining exams, ensure their previous exam and SSI-C records are given back to them, and to communicate with the parents, respond to all queries regarding the training process and future placement, to their satisfaction.
- Provide students with a compensation amount for accommodation and sustaining themselves during the training and exam period, including commute and food.
- Hand-hold the students, and provide them with counselling to encourage them to complete their studies and be confident about the future.
- Conduct special training sessions by recruiting teachers trained in the subject matter and sign language. This should continue until each student gets a Diploma certificate and gets placed in a permanent job, however long it takes.
- Provide students with placement in an apprenticeship, and after that, a permanent job.
- Provide land and adequate financial resources for building a training centre on a permanent basis and running it. Alternatively, restart the ITI Courses at another well-established and well-endowed institution that could cater to training of speech and hearing impaired students in the future.
- Ensure grants for hiring well-qualified teachers (with sign-language skills) to teach at the newly built training centre.



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