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ONLY IN NAMMA METRO!

Glitches grab headlines, but city's metro runs equally on humour, hustle & human stories.

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STILL TURNING PAGES

For more than a century, one MG Road landmark has quietly outlived empires, wars and the digital revolution.

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HILL YEAH!

The city's party circuit found a dazzling new address as ZERO DEGREE On The Hill made a glittering debut in Rajarajeshwari Nagar.

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CRUSHED ALIVE

Eight migrant workers died after a massive boulder crashed onto a city quarry, triggering safety and accountability questions

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A fan of puzzles and crosswords? Hop on the train and treat yourself to some brainstorming.

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by BINDU GOPAL RAO

Alone together

Why success, loneliness & burnout are colliding in the lives of Bangalore's young professionals

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Bindu Gopal Rao

GLITCHES GRAB HEADLINES, BUT CITY'S METRO RUNS EQUALLY ON HUMOUR, HUSTLE & HUMAN STORIES

Namma Metro cannot catch a break in the headlines these days. First, it was a growth versus emissions debate, then a mechanical hiccup on the purple line, and just when it seemed like this city's favourite metal snake was down for the count, out popped a golden kitty story to save the day. Welcome to the many moods of Namma Metro.

Let's start with the bad news, because tabloids love a scandal. IISc transportation expert Prof Ashish Verma has thrown a technical curveball at the authorities, warning that stitching elevated roads into Metro Phase-3 could nudge commuters back into their cars, dent ridership, spike emissions, and burn an extra nearly Rs 2864 crore of project costs. Ouch.

As if that were not enough, last week saw the purple line stumble when a current collector device decided to call it quits mid-shift, throwing commuters into a tizzy of delays and disruptions.

But before you swear off the metro forever, here is the plot twist: not all news is negative.

Take Anil Pai, a city-based AI engineer and entrepreneur, who turned a routine metro ride into the ultimate elevator pitch, minus the elevator. He snapped a selfie with BJP MP Tejasvi Surya mid commute and used the opportunity to pitch his startup. Talk about hustle culture.

Pai is not the only one finding gold on the green, purple and yellow lines. Media professional Nidhi D has clocked a full cast of recurring metro characters worthy of their own sitcom. Her favourite is the busy auntie, who boards after work and immediately dials her best friend for a full download.

"There is everything from what her Yajmaandru said this week, to protein laddu recipes, to some prime auntie on auntie commentary on kids these days," she adds. Nidhi calls it her accidental daily dose of tea, and honestly, who needs a soap opera?

Then there is the metro's artsy side, because commuting and culture are apparently not mutually exclusive here. The MG Road metro station houses the Rangoli Art Centre, while Peenya station flexes 19 permanent art installations done in collaboration with the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

Over at Cubbon Park metro station, the Art in Transit project has painted a sprawling mural celebrating the city's water story,

METRO TIDBITS

- This is the first metro in South India
- The logo is inspired by a traditional rangoli
- It has one of the highest fares in India
- It is the first metro network in the world designed to incorporate rainwater harvesting across its elevated tracks and stations
- Kempegowda Majestic Metro Station is one of India's largest interchange stations
- The trains use regenerative braking to save energy
- BMRCL expects to earn ₹25 crore annually from train wrap ads
- It was among the first to launch WhatsApp QR ticketing
- Sir M. Visvesvaraya is the only statesman who has a metro station named after him in both the Bangalore and Delhi Metro network.

honouring the well diggers who keep city's groundwater alive. In a nice touch, the mural itself was painted using mud from the 65 recharge wells being dug in the park.

Not to be outdone, artist Harshvardhan Kadam, better known as Inkbrushnme, has splashed a three-storey mural of children

across the MG Road Metro Station on the Church Street side, warming hearts one brushstroke at a time.

Meanwhile, the pier walls of Namma Metro have been transformed into a canvas of Channapatna dolls depicting Yakshagana performers, pourakarmikas, plumbers, tailors and engineers, part of a public art project you can catch on the yellow line between Hebbagodi and Huskur Gate.

Beyond the art and the ambition, the metro is basically a crash course in human behaviour. IT employee Ashok Kumar, freshly returned to Bangalore, learnt this the hard way at Majestic while switching trains to reach Whitefield.

"As I had to go to Whitefield, I would change trains at Majestic. For the first few days, I had to stand in a very crowded train. After a week, I started observing a group of people who had never climbed the train. Curious, I also waited and soon found that another train entered the platform in three minutes; it was empty as it started from Majestic," he says.

Not everyone plays it patient, though. Nidhi has choice words for what she calls the gundas of the women's coach, the commuters boarding at Vidhan Soudha towards Challaghatta during rush hour. "They do not board; they breach. They will compress themselves, compress you, compress the air molecules around you if that's what it takes to get in," she adds.

On a gentler note, she also flags the unofficial mascot of Indiranagar metro station, a golden kitty who naps near the escalators in a perfect shrimp pose, blissfully unbothered by the chaos, and generous enough to let commuters pet it. Word is, passengers regularly leave food and water for their furry friend.

"He is in total peace with the chaos around him. You can even pet him, and he barely reacts!" she says.

Daily commuter Shyamala James rounds off the picture with two trends she simply cannot unsee, passengers hauling oversized suitcases and boxes into already packed compartments.

"It is turning peak hours into a bit of an obstacle course," she says.

And women being subjected to long, uncomfortable stares from male co-passengers, a quiet discomfort most have simply learnt to brace for without saying much. "I can't unsee is how often women end up being stared at," she adds.

Yet, as she puts it, the metro remains that strange, functioning chaos where students and executives share the same pole and the same unspoken rules, efficient, occasionally exhausting, and somehow still making room for everyone.

Glitches, gossip, murals and one very chill kitty. That, dear reader, is Namma Metro in all its unfiltered, only-in-Bangalore glory. So, when are you hopping in?