



Fitness was the leitmotif on happy street as citizens pulled on sportswear and pumped it with yoga, dance and games. Vehicle-free Commercial Street turned into a free zone as young and old frolicked, unmindful of a blazing sun

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On this special Sunday morning, everyone on Commercial Street wore a broad smile. With no motor vehicles honking and snapping at their heels, hundreds hit the city's busy shopping avenue with gay abandon.

With Happy Streets, supported by The Times of India, Bangalore Traffic Police and Bangalore Commercial Street Association, ending the tyranny of motor vehicles from 7am to 2pm, city folk ambled up and down, some pedalled and others skated merrily. There were as many slipping in and out of shops as those who enjoyed playing rubbernecks.

"We are hardly able to walk freely on Commercial Street. I had no idea it would make so much of a difference when there are no vehicles. But now I can literally feel the freshness in the air," said Padma Priya, accompanied by her friend to get a feel of the no-vehicle street event.

Bengalureans revived themselves with some refreshing Latin moves, danced to the tunes of Wanitha Ashok, fitness queen and global Fitfluential ambassador, followed by peppy Bollywood grooves with Jasmine Savla's Bolly Dazz training. Box-jumps, tyre flips, zumba and rope activities arranged by Socio Fitness engaged all fitness freaks.

The fun was tempered with many messages, though. Swachagraha educated citizens about waste segregation and composting of kitchen waste at source, while affirming it is necessary to possess at least two bins (for dry and wet waste) and a bag (for bio waste) at home.

The Bangalore Commercial Street Association roped in shopkeepers to promote its Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) campaign, to get all shoppers to swap plastic bags for cloth or jute bags.

Scores of Bengalureans also found a perfect opportunity to try out their dream of cycling unhindered on the free cycles provided. Aditya Suresh, 8, said cycling was the best part of the day. "I didn't get off my cycle for even a moment. It was a free space and my dad was right behind me so I just kept cycling back and forth on the same road," he said.

A bunch of kids from Kumara Park skated around as their instructors Zinku Jain and Pooja S kept close watch. "We thought it would be a great experience for these kids to get out of their locality and skate in a place like Commercial Street. No one gets to do it these days but we wanted them to enjoy today as much as possible," said Zinku.

"I'm happy to be able to roam about so freely, and I feel this street needed a break as well. This initiative must continue so we can bring the old Commercial Street back," gushed retired bank official KV Shenoy, 67.

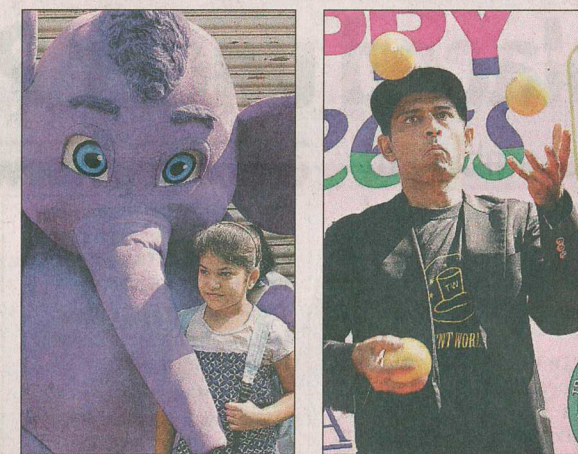
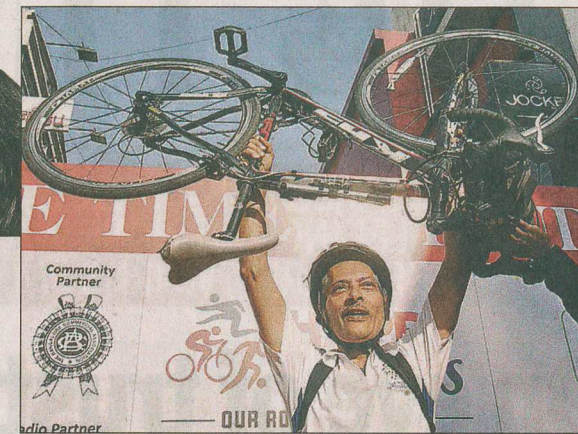
Bala Malladi, CEO, ACT group, sponsor of Happy Streets event, said, "Happy Streets makes citizens free of traffic and enjoy the spirit of freedom on these busy streets of Bengaluru. This is the key reason for ACT to participate in this event."

A free health camp screened people for blood sugar, blood pressure and body mass index by Columbia Asia, associate sponsor of the event. "It is very heartwarming to see people so conscious of their health and lifestyle, and eager to lead a fitness regime. For this, regular health checks are a must," said Vinay Kaul, vice-president, sales and marketing, Columbia Asia.

HAPPY HOLIDAY ONCE AGAIN



MOVE IT: Bengalureans home in on Commercial Street on Sunday morning and participate in a host of activities with the focus on health and fitness; an enthusiast holds up a bicycle, another juggles,



Pics: K Sunil Prasad

MASALA MIX

■ **Total Yoga** conducted a session with citizens (7.30am and 9.30am) – a refreshing yoga session where instructors Purnima Prasi and Jagdeep Dosanj taught pranayama exercises to introduce yoga into modern living

■ **Wanitha Ashok**, body transformation expert, conducted the warm-up with Latin moves and fun fitness exercises, grooving to Latin numbers and engaging all in fun activities throughout the session

■ **Bolly Dazz Fitness**, represented by co-founder Jasmine Savla, got citizens moving to catchy Bollywood numbers while burning calories. Bolly Dazz is headquartered in Mumbai and is Bollywood's hottest fitness programme

■ **Masala Bhangra** – Citizens worked out to Bhangra style as Soujanya Sriram taught them how fit they can be if Bhangra is made part of their fitness regime

■ **Socio Fitness** – From box jumps, ropes and tyre flips to grooving Zumba steps and high energy dances, Socio Fitness kept the crowd engaged right from the entrance of Commercial Street to its exit

■ **Bangalore Bicycling Club** joined in the celebrations, encouraging more and more Bengalureans to adopt cycling as part of their lifestyle

■ **Jugglers, stilt walkers, magicians and tattoo artists** were a delight for young ones, between the exciting shows put up

■ **Decathlon** provided free cycles to hundreds of cyclists, as the Activity Partner for Happy Streets

FIT AND FINE

The event turned out to be an excellent one and I was very happy with the turnout of Bengalureans who came to Commercial Street to enjoy themselves. There is a greater need for awareness among citizens regarding fitness and well-being, which we tried to achieve to a large extent this time. We will definitely strive for many more Happy Streets with greater vigour and enthusiasm.

AJAI MOTWANI | VICE-PRESIDENT, BANGALORE COMMERCIAL STREET ASSOCIATION

I have grown up playing on the streets and I know how important it is to have free spaces to roam around.

From a fitness perspective, it is crucial to have more events like Happy Streets for the kind of lifestyle we have. From the fitness point of view, we need to educate youngsters about its growing need.

ugglers, stilt-walkers and tattoo artists gave Happy Commercial Street an eye-catching and mela-esque atmosphere on Sunday. The show-stopper, though, was the performance of the modern variant of Huli Vesha -- a Tulu art form--performed by Mahesh S and his teammates. The variant was provided by a palegara (chieftain) trying to shoo away the tigers.

A lemon in his mouth, Mahesh as the palegara was coated in red vermillion and brandished his sword to provide the perfect foil to his cast in yellow and black stripes. The troupe had the viewers in thrall, garnering applause from young and old alike.

Mahesh inherited the Palegara legacy from his forefathers, who served during the era of the Mysore Rajas. For the past 14 years, Mahesh and his troupe have been performing their version of Huli Vesha folklore at all available fora. A resident of RT Nagar, Mahesh has been trained by his father V Srinivas Palegara, who also trains the other 10 members of Mahesh's troupe.

Comprising three male dancers dressed as tigers and others as drummers trying to attract tigers into a populated area, Mahesh and his team-mates believe in putting up extremely realistic visualizations before their audience by showcasing the killing of tigers as well as capturing them.

"The Mysore Rajas had appointed Palegaras in order to keep tigers from entering the city and harming the people. This has now become a legacy I need to uphold and the only way I can do it is by showing it as an art form," said Mahesh.



TIGER DANCE: Mahesh S performs as the palegara for the Huli Vesha folk dance

STREET-HAPPY CITIZENS HOP ON TO FREE WHEELS, PEDAL AND SKATE



FOR ONCE, WE CYCLED FREELY

Cycling is my favourite activity and in a place as busy as Commercial Street, we would never get to do it. But today when I heard about this event, my wife and I immediately got ready to come over and enjoy cycling on the vehicle-free road.

Lalith Siyal | BUSINESSMAN

CAPTURING THE SPECTACLE

I wanted to take pictures of a street filled with only people and no vehicles. I think it's a one-of-a-kind initiative and seeing people walk so

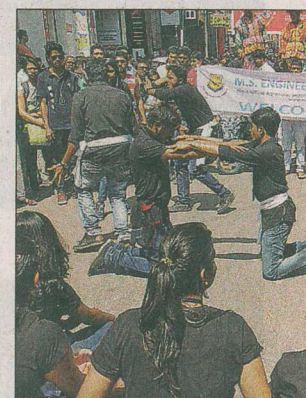
freely, enjoying themselves, is a spectacle in itself.

Sujatha Bhagath | HOMEMAKER AND HOBBY PHOTOGRAPHER

WE NEED A CONGESTION BREAK

We need Happy Streets at least once a week. People need a break from traffic congestion and pollution. Even kids need a day out in the open because they have no idea what it is to play outside.

Sharada Kotur | HOMEMAKER, RESIDENT OF VIJAYANAGAR



TRAFFIC KEPT OUT

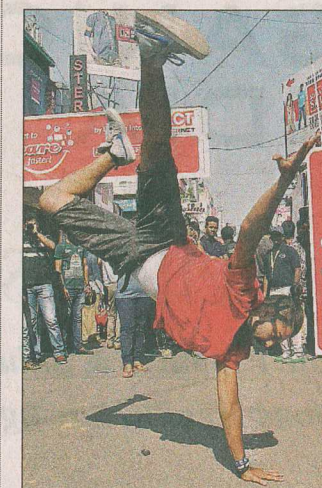
The traffic police has done quite a lot to ensure Commercial Street has no vehicles. It makes a lot of difference to pedestrians too, and feels less crowded without vehicles.

Girish N | OFFICIAL, COMMERCIAL STREET POLICE STATION

WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

I came here to shop two days ago and there was such a crowd I could barely move. But today I was surprised when I entered Commercial Street to see no vehicles and just people. I think it's a great initiative for the people of the city.

Jennifer Robbins | TOURIST FROM BOSTON



ROAD SHOW

8,000 people turned up for Happy Streets

500 metre stretch was vehicle-free

7 hrs (7 am to 2 pm) Duration of event

20 Students put up flash mob show

20 Bicycles available

100s pedalled

WANITHA ASHOK | BODY TRANSFORMATION EXPERT

In Mumbai, I see a lot of these events happening and I have to admit it is necessary for people who are unfit due to stress and lifestyle, to come out into the open and enjoy events like Happy Streets. Streets without any pollution can be healthy for citizens, and that is why Happy Streets is regarded as an important part of culture in cities these days.

JASMINE SAVLA | CO-FOUNDER, BOLLY DAZZ FITNESS

Happy Streets, as a concept, is brilliant. I believe there need to be localities which are pedestrian-friendly and wherein we Bengalureans can do what we used to about 20 years ago -- play to our hearts' content. Even for children, it is necessary to understand the value of being outdoors. The combination of this and yoga can lead to a contented lifestyle.

MANISH POLE | CO-FOUNDER, TOTAL YOGA

Just grab some Vit D, say revellers

Times News Network

Bengaluru: The sun beat relentlessly down on Commercial Street, but not a single soul frolicking on the city's premier shopping avenue was complaining about the maximum temperature hovering around 33 degree Celsius, though it was just 10am. Umbrellas and caps were in by forenoon, but there was no let-up in citizens' inclination to continue with the range of fitness activities, including dancing to Zumba tunes.

A flash mob from MS Engineering College put up an enthralling show to promote their college fest.

With vendors serving ice-cold golas, lassi, buttermilk and ice-cream cones, Bengalureans on Commercial Street had all reason to completely disregard the high temperatures and enjoy the street event. Relief from smoke-emitting

vehicles appeared to have taken the sizzle out of the sun.

"When there is pollution, the heat is felt more. While there aren't any vehicles around, the heat isn't so overbearing, though the temperature is abnormally high," said Mukesh Srinivas, a bank official.

Cycling in all the way from CV Raman Nagar, IT professional Manoj Kumar, 30, said, "When the energy in a place is so amazing, heat hardly matters. Despite the sun, I'm enjoying myself thoroughly because there is so much positivity and happiness all around. No one would want to

complain in such a situation."

"The heat is definitely sharp, but it's just one Sunday that we get to explore how peaceful our fast-paced city is. To experience this, we should just open the doors of our homes and step out," said Malini Mukund, a homemaker accompanied by her husband and kid.

For Komal Changeria, 18, who dropped in at Happy Streets all the way from Mumbai, heat made no difference as Zumba kept her occupied.

"There's heat everywhere because of summer. But the key is to keep yourself hydrated and just go about doing what you want to. You can't stop enjoying an event like this just because it's hot," she said.



WHEEL POWER: A mother helps her son cycle down vehicle-free Commercial Street; (left) a young girl rides a hoverboard