

Milk supply disrupted in city as vehicle owners go on strike

Around 150 trucks attached to Bamul stayed off the roads

CHETAN B C
BENGALURU, DHNS

Milk supply to many parts of Bengaluru was disrupted on Sunday as hundreds of vehicles transporting the daily essential to local distributors stayed off the roads.

Owners of at least 150 of the 250 milk vehicles attached to Bangalore Milk Union Limited (Bamul) went on a flash strike, demanding higher transportation charges and facilities.

The 250 vehicles make approximately 375 trips each day, cover-

ing approximately 40 kilometres each. Each vehicle is paid Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 depending on how many kilometres it covers and the amount of milk it transports.

Bamul represents the milk producers' cooperatives of Bengaluru Urban, Rural and Ramanagar districts. It supplies 13 lakh litres per day, or 70% of the city's milk requirements. Bengaluru also gets milk supplies from the KMF Mother Dairy, Yelahanka, said Govindappa A, president of an association that represents contractors responsible for milk distribution.



Milk supply vans line up in front of Bamul at Dairy Circle during a strike demanding higher transportation charges. DH PHOTO/S K DINESH

According to Govindappa, Bamul supplies milk on 250 routes. Of these, 150 routes have been stopped.

The association has sought a 30% hike in transportation charges, citing high fuel prices, maintenance charges and other expenses. Bamul announced a 10% hike but stopped it after two

months, he told *DH*.

The previous contract to transport milk expired a year ago. Bamul called three more tenders but no contractor submitted bids in view of the low transportation charges, Govindappa said.

Ramesh, a truck owner, said: "Bamul's board of directors abuses us as if we are their slaves. They

use curse words and behave rudely while speaking to us."

He also spoke about problems related to parking and other facilities at Dairy Circle.

Bamul chairman Narasimha Murthy rejected the allegations. "They should participate in the tender and quote the price they want. We will negotiate and fix the rate. However, they aren't doing that because their vehicles don't meet government standards. They shouldn't be complaining about the charges without taking part in the tender. If they are not willing, we will call the tender and hire private agencies," he said.

On the allegation that vehicle owners have to pay the price of 10 packets for every packet damaged during transit, he said the fine was for lost packets, not the leaking ones, which are taken back.

The strike hit milk supplies in many parts of the city.