

THE BEACON

PRACTICE NEWS BULLETIN OF THE PG STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Saturday, 13 December 2025 / St Joseph's University / Vol:18 Issue: 50 / www.sjcdeptcomm.wordpress.com

New restrictions reshape teen life

Jessica Maria Joseph

The world's first social media ban for users under the age of 16 by Australia has triggered widespread debate among parents and mental health experts, raising curiosity and concerns about its potential impact. Australia has begun blocking any new and existing underage social media accounts from December 10, a move supporters say will protect children from harmful content, addictive behaviour and online harassment, making child safety central to the country's digital-wellbeing strategy. Parents have expressed open support. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Sarah Thomas, a resident of Australia and mother of a 14-year-old Instagram user, said that the ban has made her daughter's internet access safer. She added that the child showed "no real reaction, maybe some anxiety." Despite this, Sarah remained sure of the policy's goals. However, some mental health experts fear that removing social media abruptly may leave teens feeling isolated. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Dr Swapna Cherian, a child psychologist, noted that "It would be difficult for young people to cope with the transition." She added, "Parents and educators should handle the situation carefully by empathising with and encouraging teens to spend quality time with friends and pursue other hobbies," while they navigate a digital landscape without social media access.

Swasthya promotes holistic youth mental wellness

Anamica and Meinar

BENGALURU: Discourse on mental well-being and spirituality among youth deepened as St. Joseph's College of Commerce (SJCC) hosted a national-level workshop, Swasthya, which aims to destigmatise the taboo around mental health, according to organisers. It was held over two days, on December 11 and 12. The workshop, a collaborative effort between the Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission, St Joseph's University, St. Aloysius (Deemed To Be University), and SJCC, drew participants from diverse academic backgrounds. "The workshop offers experiential and approachable forms of healing," said convenor and student counsellor Sneha Menon, emphasising the impact of the stigma around therapy on mental health. The schedule included



Dance movement session at Swasthya

Meinar Efel Nahak

guided meditation, mindful body movement, sessions on coping strategies, screening of short films and discussions on how spirituality, irrespective of religion, can serve as a resource for grounding and healing. The workshop also featured interactive activities that allowed students to voice their experiences, learn from peers across institutions, and develop emotional literacy tools they

can apply in their daily lives. Mental health is for all, said Menon while addressing the importance of pausing and unwinding in today's hustling work culture. She noted that many psychological concerns arise from a lack of movement and physical fitness, which is why Swasthya included movement-based sessions that help participants release pent-up emotions and reduce stress. The workshop also

introduced a session on sound-healing, a trending method which is traditionally drawn from practices like those involving Tibetan sound bowls, making it accessible to the participants as they are usually an expensive affair, held in five-star hotels catering only to a certain niche of people, opined Menon. "The short film festival ANIMUM integrated narratives of resilience, offering a platform for

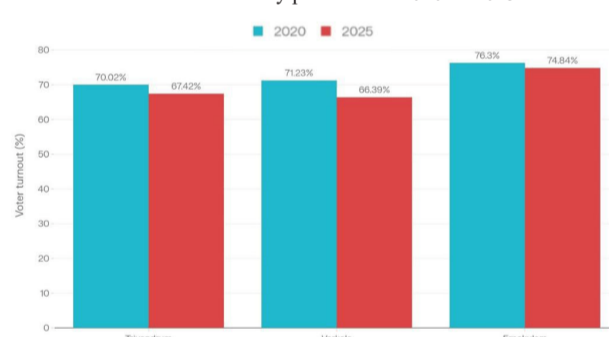
students, filmmakers, and the public to portray stories of healing and explore themes that are often invisible in everyday life," said Menon. Participants of the workshop found the programmes not only offered new perspectives on mental health but also created a space to socialise and meet like-minded people. "It provided me with a lot of opportunities to make new friends and to try something new," commented Ananya Nair, a student participant. The two-day workshop reaffirmed the growing need for spaces where young people can explore mental wellbeing without fear or stigma. Organisers also reflected on the importance of prioritising an all-rounded approach to mental wellbeing with this workshop, rather than the focus being only on an academic context within educational spaces.

Public voices concern over election turnout

Ancy James

Voter turnout fell across several parts of Kerala in the recent local body elections held from December 9 to 11, with early figures showing fewer people at polling stations than in previous years. The decline has raised concerns about voter interest, particularly among younger groups who were less visible on polling day. According to the State Election Commission, Thiruvananthapuram recorded 67.42 per cent turnout, down from 70.02 per cent in the last local body polls. Varkala reported 66.39 per cent, while Ernakulam recorded 75 per

Kerala local body poll turnout 2020 vs 2025



Ancy James

cent, one of the highest turnout rates this year. Officials said these figures point to uneven participation across districts. Speaking to *The Beacon*, first-time voter Angel Hannah George from Kollam, who

now lives in Bengaluru, said, "Most of my friends were actually quite surprised that I came back just to cast my vote." She pointed out that many in her age group usually ignore elections entirely and

added that her decision to vote was mainly because family members were contesting. Regular voter James Babu from Thiruvananthapuram said, there were fewer voters at his booth as many felt recent government projects benefited wealthier groups, while programmes for the welfare of other people had decreased. He added that better employment opportunities could boost youth interest in future elections. K M Aiyappan, Public Relations Officer at the State Election Commission, said that the Commission would review turnout trends and look for ways to increase participation.

Delay disrupts daily commuters

Sanjana Shaji

Months after demolition, the Thirunakkara bus stand in Kottayam, Kerala, remains abandoned, leaving commuters and shop owners to struggle with uncertainty. The stalled project has raised questions about why work has not resumed and how long the public must continue to endure the struggle. Students, elderly passengers, and women wait in harsh weather and chaotic traffic in the abandoned Thirunakkara bus stand, as there is no temporary shelter setup. Speaking to *The Beacon*, a daily passenger, Anita Joseph said, "Every day we stand in the heat and rain. It feels unsafe, especially for women." The absence of a proper waiting area has also intensified safety concerns, as passengers are forced to crowd narrow footpaths and board buses in the middle of moving vehicles. Local vendors report a decline in footfall, further straining their livelihoods. A Ward Councillor, Manoj S, acknowledged the problem, stating, "Residents are suffering, and the municipality must speed up the work. I have raised this issue repeatedly."

Crafts culture thrives at mela

Vaishnavi Savant

BENGALURU: The Bangalore Art and Craft Mela, organised by Occasion Makers under the Grand Flea Market banner, opened in JP Nagar on December 4 and will run until December 13, bringing artisans all over India together with Bengaluru's young shoppers who are increasingly seeking handmade alternatives to fast fashion. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Naveen Hegde, Manager of Occasion Makers, said that "We only do retail exhibitions. We don't sell through online because handcrafted products need to be seen and felt in



Handmade leather bags on display

Vaishnavi Savant

person; that's where their real value comes through." Sellers said that once people attend these exhibitions, many begin to prefer them over other conventional shopping spaces. In a city dominated by fast fashion stores and online shopping platforms, the mela

offers a slower and more soulful experience. Sonia Shiv Kumar, a young buyer, said, "The crafted items have a uniqueness, quality, and emotional value, so I prefer them over malls." For many visitors, the mela is more than a market; it is a way to reconnect with craft and culture.

Jammu's rising security concerns

Samya Sharma

Jammu has been on high alert in recent weeks, with growing public concern following anti-terror network arrests and a series of search operations. This comes after the arrest of a 19-year-old for alleged terror activities, which has created a high alert atmosphere, disrupting daily routines and heightening fear among residents. Residents say these issues have raised concerns about public safety. "The atmosphere suddenly has become tense, and it

is uncertain and full of anxiety. People are always worried about their safety," a resident told *The Beacon*. Amidst the rising fear, local leaders say they are working to address concerns and prevent panic by coordinating with the authorities. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Kanav Sharma, a local leader, said, "The police are holding social meetings with local residents, and we, as leaders, are working collectively with them to reduce these activities and ensure safety for all," adding that measures are taken.