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Corporate community helps stray dogs

Anamica Vinod

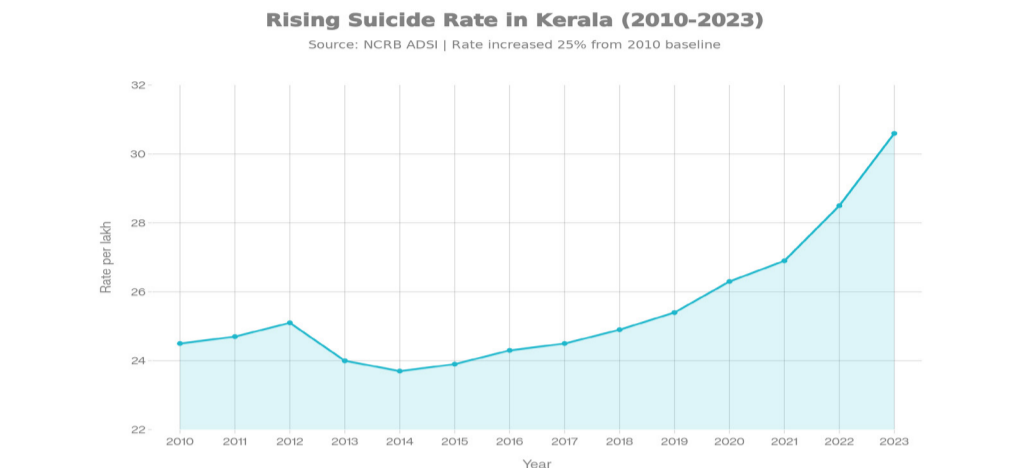
BENGALURU: A city-based animal welfare organization, *ASHA Tails of Hope*, has engaged corporate workers in practical efforts to assist stray animals on December 9. "Beds of Hope," is a campaign to create gunny-bag beds for street dogs. A collaborative participation from Cisco's corporate social responsibility team has brought together volunteers and participants to construct beds crafted from sturdy gunny bags for stray dogs. Run by the Sarjapur-based *ASHA Tails of Hope*, the initiative shows how small organisations have operated with a small volunteer base, managing tasks ranging from feeding and medication to trauma rescues and sterilisation of stray animals. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Rashmi Nath Sinha, founder of *ASHA Tails of Hope*, said, "the beds are designed to withstand road wear-and-tear while providing basic comfort to animals, which is overlooked in urban areas, especially during the winter. She added, "These beds are more useful to the dogs than one might think, as they protect them from the cold and give them a safe place to rest." The event marked one of the NGO's largest collaborations, as corporate employees joined into support animal welfare work. A representative said their team had previously supported causes such as education and poverty relief but wanted a practical activity that addressed the needs of community animals.

Kerala records one of nation's highest suicide rates

Ancy James

Kerala continues to report one of the highest suicide rates in India, with mental-health experts warning that rising stress and untreated depression are causing this trend. Many people fail to recognise early signs of depression, often mistaken as emotional distress for everyday stress.

According to the latest National Crime Record Bureau data, India recorded 1,71,418 suicides in 2023, while Kerala reported 10,972 deaths, one of the highest rates in the country. The national suicide rate stood at 12.3 per 1 lakh compared with Kerala's 30.6 per 1 lakh, more than double the national average. Over the past decade, suicides in India increased by about 27%, from roughly 1,35,000 in 2013 to 1,71,000 in 2023. Kerala



Graph of Kerala's rising suicide rate from 2010 to 2023.

Ancy James

showed a similar trend, rising from 8,646 in 2013 to nearly 11,000 in 2023, with a sharp increase after 2021.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Dr S Mohan Sundaram, senior consultant psychiatrist at Manohar Hospital, Kozhikode said, "Depression remains the main factor behind suicidality and is often misinterpreted as normal stress". He added, "many individuals first

consult general practitioners, which delays diagnosis and treatment. Men are particularly vulnerable due to loan burdens, high living costs, financial pressures, while alcohol misuse continues to contribute significantly."

The stress and pressure is more visible by the young people compared to the other aged groups. Dr M D Ajitha, joint director at suicide-

prevention centre Sanjeevaani working with Befrienders Initiative and Befrienders world wide, told *The Beacon* that the organisation receives more than 200 calls a month, mostly from individuals aged 15 to 25. "Relationship problems, emotional instability, and low self-esteem are common issues," she said. "Families often delay psychiatric consultation,

sometimes traditional or spiritual healers first."

Students in Kerala also face mounting pressure. A psychology student studying in Delhi said, "Academic pressure and competitive exams add to stress, with many students misreading early signs of depression as routine academic tension. Stigma remains a major barrier even in urban areas, discouraging students from seeking professional help."

Further, she added, "anxiety and depression are the most common mental health struggles among her peers." She noted that academic pressure, competitive exams, and financial stress contribute heavily, while stigma and limited access to therapies make early intervention difficult for many students. "It's important to seek help as soon as you notice stress building up," she added.

Citizens experience traffic policing

Diana Saldehna S

Bengaluru: The ongoing initiative *Cop for a Day* by the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has reshaped the way citizens perceive road safety by allowing them to experience the responsibility of traffic rule enforcement. Through firsthand exposure of traffic management, citizens realise the importance of traffic rules and norms. Highlighting the impact of awareness, Police Inspector T. S. Radha Krishna at J.P. Nagar Traffic Police Station said, "when people learn about real accident statistics and the advanced technology used to detect violations, they understand



Traffic police guiding the participant

Diana Saldehna S

the seriousness of enforcement." Since the public rarely gets to witness the difficulties involved in road management, this initiative aims to: "allow citizens to stand beside officers and manage road movement", mentioned Inspector Krishna when speaking to *The Beacon*. BTP placed participants at busy junctions to witness

daily traffic management, their responsibilities including stopping speeding vehicles and dealing with unpredictable public behaviour. Inspector Krishna also explained that the idea emerged from feedback given by citizens who wanted to understand ground-level realities. Constable Hanamant Kukanoor,

who guides participants during their shifts at the junctions, said "smooth traffic depends on cooperation." He noted how drivers often follow rules only when police are present, and pointed out that consistent discipline is essential for road safety. Participants also recalled key learning moments. Abhishek SG, who joined on November 26, said halting a speeding vehicle reshaped his earlier assumptions. Naveen S, a journalism student, said witnessing minor accidents during the experience changed his attitude toward rule-breaking.

Winter AQI alarms Jammu

Samya Sharma

Jammu, once known for its clean air, is slipping into an air-quality crisis this winter as official data shows not a single day this year has met the World Health Organisation's safe air Quality standards. The city's Air Quality Index (AQI) now poses an extreme health risk, raising concern among medical professionals who are witnessing a steady rise in pollution-related illnesses. Speaking to *The Beacon*, a physician, Dr. Pushpendra Sharma said, "there has been an increase in respiratory cases this winter compared with previous years." He noted that winter smog, dust and pollution have intensified throat and breathing problems, particularly among older patients and children, who are more vulnerable to the changing of air conditions. The worsening AQI can no longer be ignored. Anil Chadha, a resident, described the situation as a "wake-up call", warning that Jammu could face a crisis similar to Delhi within the next decade if effective pollution-controlled measures are not implemented.

Art beyond aesthetic beauty

Jessica Maria

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath is hosting a solo exhibition titled "Beauty Isn't the Point" by Chennai based non-objective artist R B Murari from December 8 to 14. The exhibition showcases a collection of abstract works that explores emotion and inner expression through colourful and vivid strokes. The gallery will remain open to the public throughout the week from 10 am to 7 pm. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Murari said, "the exhibition challenges the conventional



RK Murari at the exhibition

Jessica Maria Joseph

idea that art must be visually pleasing. "When it comes to art, it's not just about aesthetics aren't important, but they're not the core reason someone creates," he explained, reflecting on the inspiration behind the theme. Murari aims to step away from the narrative driven art

form focusing on colours and emotions as vehicles to connect to the audience. Visitors resonated with this approach. "If we look closely, we can connect with these paintings," said art enthusiast Reshma Paul, stating that the paintings allow viewers to engage with them on a personal level.

Illegal dumping damages farmlands

Sanjana Shaji

Farmers in Parechaal village in Kerala's Kottayam district are struggling with repeated incidents of sewage waste being dumped on farmlands prepared for cultivation every morning. The dumping reported over the past several weeks has not only contaminated the soil but also delayed planting, resulting in significant economic losses. According to the cultivators, fields that are cleared and levelled are repeatedly spoiled, forcing them to spend additional money

on restoration. "Each time we prepare the land for planting, we find it spoiled again overnight. How are we expected to make a living like this?" said Rajeevan Babu, a local farmer from the village. Speaking to *The Beacon*, C.G. Renjith, the Parechaal ward member said, "Night time surveillance has started, but they haven't been effective. We need to strictly monitor the situation," he highlighted the farmers' demand for the installation of CCTV cameras due to concerns over crop losses.