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## Farmers protest for fair prices

Joswin Pereira

Farmers staged a protest in Belagavi, on December 10 demanding that the government implement minimum support price (MSP) for sugarcane and comprehensive market reforms to address decades of agricultural neglect.

Veteran activist and a farmer Shankar Anbali from Belgavi condemned the "hidden agenda" and mutual relationship between Congress and BJP, in view of active participation of BJP at the farmers' protest.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, he said that their public display of animosity should not come at the expense of farmers' welfare. "The government should comprehensively call everyone for discussion and address our demands," Anbali said. "Addressing only one problem from 100 demands is simply not acceptable."

Another farmer and activist Siddanagauda Modagli, arrested alongside 39 farmers at Hubballi station; for organising a similar protest in Dharwad, outlined key demands while speaking to *The Beacon*: competitive market prices, MSP guarantees, commission fraud, improved irrigation systems, crop insurance reforms, and a 10,000-crore annual revolving fund for drought relief. "We grow crops, but never get returns for our fields," Modagli said. "We have to give at loss rates."

Both activists attributed government inaction to political infighting, warning that farmers remain vulnerable to market exploitation while political leaders prioritise power consolidation over agricultural reforms.

## Swasthya'25 spreads awareness on mental health

Sheza C & Dimple M

BENGALURU : Bengaluru, being one of the cities with the highest number of suicide cases, has seen an increase in mental health issues, which can only be addressed through timely intervention, said Dr (Fr) Melwyn S. Pinto SJ, the secretary of Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission and Dean of the School of Communication and Media Studies at St Joseph's University. He was speaking at the inauguration of *Swasthya* 2025, a two-day seminar on mental well-being at St Joseph's College of Commerce on Thursday.

Dr Pinto was surprised to discover during the Bogota Conference that, "...20% of higher education students had depression, 50% of them



Inaugural ceremony of Swasthya'25 at SJCC

SJCC Media

had symptoms of it, 15% had suicidal thoughts, and about 2% to 3% had attempted suicide." He said that these are startling numbers, hence it is important to prioritise mental and spiritual health of the students globally.

He also noted that, "...just like the body has certain ailments and illnesses, the mind can also have illnesses and ailments due to the times we live in."

The aim of the seminar was to bring together students, counsellors, and educators across the country to indulge in activities that explore the "therapeutic powers of creative expressions". The event is co-organised by St Joseph's College of Commerce (Autonomous), the Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission, St Joseph's University and St Aloysius

(Deemed to be University), Mangalore, reflecting a shared allegiance towards advancing mental health awareness, education, and dialogue across communities. The first day of the event witnessed the inauguration, sessions like hands-on art therapy and pottery, Zumba activities, and panel discussions. Around 200 participants benefited from the

workshop on the first day. "This year's theme for *Animum* '25 is from silence to strength and stories of healing," said Sneha Menon, coordinator of the workshop. *Animum* is an annual film screening organised by the same institutions and has been held for the past four years. Melwin D'Souza, another coordinator of the event, said that events like these are likely to happen in the coming years as well.

The first session offered hands-on art therapy, guided by Br Mani Karott, an art therapist, and Aneesha Rego, a counselling psychologist. The participants used art as a means to explore emotions, reduce stress, and build self-understanding qualities. It was followed by Zumba activities, pottery, and panel discussions.

## Dialogue key to inter-religious harmony: Fr Hrudayaraj

N Rishika

BENGALURU: Dr (Fr) Bala Kiran Kumar Hrudayaraj, assistant professor of Economics, observed that inter-religious harmony was once considered self-evident, but has now become "fragile, contested, and questioned", during the inter-religious harmony session on Wednesday at St Joseph's University, Bengaluru. He urged students to be critical and ask questions, encouraging dialogue and debate, which has become a necessity today.

Placing the discussion within India's contemporary political context, Dr (Fr) Hrudayaraj spoke about



Fr Hrudayaraj addressing students at SJU

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polarisation and the dangers of fear-based politics. He urged students to remember three key ideas: *Namaste*, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, and *Tat Tvam Asi*, which emphasise respect, shared humanity, and ethical responsibility across traditions.

Through interactive discussion, students debated whether religion causes

violence or whether it is exploited for political power. Many participants argued that religion is often politicised, and if religion does not exist, we will find other methods to impose violence on people. The speaker observed that "religion is instrumentalised, and human violence precedes religion." He suggested that India is moving

towards an authoritarian regime, and there is no point in blaming religion alone. The organisers highlighted that the event celebrated "our shared humanity and the beautiful diversity of faiths that enrich our society," reminding participants that they had come together "not as representatives of different religions, but as members of one human family." The session concluded with a call for students to move beyond tolerance toward empathy, dialogue, and courage, reinforcing the idea that inter-religious harmony is essential to sustaining democracy and social unity.

## Concerns raised over AI data access

Sneha Loitongbam

BENGALURU: Hemanth Kumar, founder and creative director of Noisyfoxes, an AI creative studio, warns that India's proposed "one nation, one license, one payment" AI copyright policy could inadvertently create a divide between big tech companies, small creators, and startups.

While the policy ensures creators are paid for their works by making it mandatory for AI developers to pay royalties for data access, it places a premium price tag on quality.

Kumar explains that students and startups will be forced to rely on generic open data if the high-quality data is locked with high license fees, which only tech giants can afford. Kumar states, "Data is money," noting that as models grow, creators are forced into large investments. "The proposal creates a central agency to collect data fees but offers no exceptions for research, leading students from accessing high-quality data unless they pay," he said.

Mr Kumar added that clear guidelines and affordable access were needed so that the policy could support innovation without creating barriers.

## Booklet on Dharmasthala case released

Shanmitha SJ

BENGALURU: On Humans Rights Day, womens rights activists, at the 'My Sign My Voice' on Wednesday, realised a feminist documentation booklet on the dharmasthala case and demanded for a full investigation by the special investigation team (SIT) at Gandhi Bhavan.

The event saw the release of the booklet documenting the violence against women in dharmasthala region from a feminist perspective by the 'who killed women in dharmasthala' movement. Activist champaviti said the booklet brings together nearly 20 years of



Women activists gathered at Gandhi Bhavan

Shanmitha SJ

cases involving violence, harassment and deaths of women, and questions the delay in justice and investigation.

Filmmaker Kavita Lankesh said women face attacks for speaking out "when women rise their voice, there are tolls and abuse still women counties to fight" she said

If one women fights, it

becomes struggle. If all women fight together, it becomes revolution. This fight is not only for women it is for humanity," said Kannada state Women's Commission Chairperson Nagalakshmi Chaudhary. Activists also continued their signature campaign demanding a wider special investigation team.

## Cyber scam: recovery rate remains poor

Yashaswini J

Karnataka has recorded rising cyber fraud cases in the last three years, with victims losing more than ₹5,474 crore, while police have recovered only about ₹127 crore. Delays in filing FIRs, jurisdictional hurdles for out-of-state and international investigations, and the need for high-level and Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) approvals have created serious enforcement gaps.

Cyber fraud money becomes unrecoverable within minutes as criminals route it through multiple bank accounts and

withdraw it as cash before victims reach the police, said Rekha, head of the cybercrime department at the Konanakunte Cross police station.

Fraudsters often withdraw money quickly through ATMs and cheques, leaving little time for authorities to freeze bank accounts. "Bengaluru is seeing a slight dip in cyber fraud cases due to awareness campaigns, but scammers are shifting to job ads, loan links and fake bank calls," remarked Rekha while talking to *The Beacon*. Police are working to trace these scams and recover victims' money, she added.