

# THE BEACON

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## GBA's draft on pet policy questioned

**Nanasu Raghuram**

Activists have raised concerns over the balance and consistency between animal and public welfare in the Greater Bengaluru Authority's (GBA) proposed policy draft to regulate pet dog ownership. GBA proposed capping the number of pet dogs per household, allowing up to three in independent houses. While the proposal is legitimate and necessary to encourage responsible pet ownership, it cannot be based on anecdotal outrage but must rely on ground realities said Prapthi Mahendranath, a public policy consultant and welfare activist, while speaking to *The Beacon*. She also questioned how the policy could apply equally to single and multi-storeyed buildings, as accommodation varies enormously. "It's sort of infringing upon people's liberties... It can't be an arbitrary headcount imposed like a blanket," she said. She flagged pet abandonment as a major concern, calling the condition of government-run animal shelters "pathetic and inhumane". She criticised grey areas in pet licensing, compulsory sterilisation and breed restrictions describing them as arbitrary. Dr Harshitha GM, a veterinarian, said that a dog's behaviour depends on environmental exposure. "By constantly keeping them indoors, the fear of what someone might do to them can manifest as aggression," she said. Adding the policy could lead to increased abandonment, resulting in overcrowded and unhygienic shelters, exposing dogs to fatal diseases such as rat fever, parvovirus, distemper and flea-bite dermatitis.

## Seminar calls for preservation of languages and multilingualism

**Kishan SG**

The extinction of 254 Indian languages over 40 years has raised concern among linguistic experts, as they call for the preservation of languages through government policies to protect vanishing heritage.

In a seminar named "Multilingualism in Karnataka," Dr Purushothama Bilimale, Chairperson of the Kannada Development Authority, addressed the existential decay of regional languages and the declining social status of Kannada, organised by Bahutva Karnataka on February 14 at St. Joseph's Law College, Bengaluru.

Dr Bilimale noted that according to the 2011 census, there were 19,569 languages in India, but only 22 languages are officially recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. "Neither the Dr Manmohan Singh govern-



Linguistic experts debate with the audience on possible solutions

**Kishan SG**

ment in 2004, nor the Modi government that came in 2014, have the strength to include these many languages in the Eighth Schedule. They don't know how to protect these languages," Dr Bilimale stated. "There are 145 additional languages currently fighting for official recognition in the Eighth Schedule," he added. Dr Bilimale raised concerns about governments

not having a language policy in a country as diverse as India. Criticising the three-language formula proposed by the Kothari Commission in 1968, he suggested a Kannada-English or English-Kannada model in schools to preserve the regional language. He further added that the student should be given the option of a third language, whether their mother tongue or

another language they are curious about. Prof. Divya Komala highlighted, "Kannada is being shaped as a subaltern language now. We naturally speak English; it is the naturalised language in public spaces."

Dr Kumaraswamy Bejjihalli, assistant professor at St. Joseph's University, stated that there is a rapid increase in language growth. Examining its implications

for language evolution in the context of abbreviations on social media, he said, "There is a language change in the age of social media which has generated new linguistic practices. But since there has been no survey for 13 years, we cannot properly build theories and repeat the old methods of teaching languages without a choice."

Dr Bilimale advocated for multilingualism and the protection of freedom of speech and expression by allowing people to learn marginalised languages, and for the protection of languages, even if they have only one speaker. Using the analogy of language being a rangoli, he suggests that the more colours it contains, the more beautiful the rangoli is, arguing that language is essential to human creativity, especially in philosophy.

## Art exhibitions tackle women's STEM underrepresentation

**Tanvi Harbola**

Amid global movements for equity in science, women continue to remain underrepresented in advanced science and mathematics despite rising enrolment in Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) courses. In response, Science Gallery Bengaluru (SGB) have launched two concurrent exhibitions CALORIE and Women of Mathematics from Around the World, which place women artists, scientists, farmers, and mathematicians at the centre of STEM academia and storytelling.

The exhibitions bring together science, art, agriculture, and social inquiry to examine food systems, knowledge production, and gender equity. Presented

with the support of the German Consulate Bengaluru, the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS), and the Raman Research Institute (RRI), the exhibition confronts stark realities. In India, women account for nearly 43% of STEM students but hold only about 14% of mathematics PhD scholars, highlighting the low participation of women at advanced research levels according to Ruchita Sud of SGB.

Jahnvi Phalkey, Director of SGB, said the exhibition aims to encourage young women to "fearlessly think of mathematics as their own." Curator Sylvie Paycha described Women of Mathematics from Around the World as a space of connec-

tion, visibility, and networking that allows women scientists to recognise themselves in a field that often erases them. "I don't remember seeing women mathematicians in my textbooks," said Lavika, a former SGB mediator. "Initiatives like this make women visible in spaces where they've long existed... Visibility changes narratives, and narratives shape who feels they belong." Running alongside this is CALORIE, an exhibition that explores humanity's fraught yet intimate relationship with food. Through interactive and interdisciplinary installations, it examines hunger, nutrition, agriculture, caste, climate change, and consumption.

CALORIE reminds us of India's ongoing food crisis, highlighting that nearly 194 million people remain undernourished, while women constitute close to 75% of the agricultural workforce yet continue to face systemic inequalities in land ownership, wages, health, and nutrition. Malvika Sudhir, SGB Learning Associate, explains that CALORIE connects natural and social sciences, so visitors encounter science as a "lived experience rather than abstract theory."

The gallery hopes to spark conversation and shift perspectives across the scientific community. The exhibition remains open till March 15 and has conducive timings, including designated silent hours.

## AI-integrated entrance coaching for students

**Farhana Abdul Rahim**

Parents wholeheartedly welcome the 'Key to Education' initiative, rolled out by the Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE), a government-aided organisation established to promote and modernise the education system with technology. The program includes an AI-integrated system which provides personalised free academic coaching and preparatory training to students. Faseera Sajeed, an ex-government teacher and a parent of a 12th standard student, said, "There are hundreds of students who cannot afford the expensive fee of entrance coaching and struggle in competing with those from other education boards... this program can help them prepare for competitive exams and increase their chance at scoring good rank," she said. The newly implemented program aims at increasing the success rate of Higher Secondary and Vocational Higher Secondary students not just in board exams but also in various university entrance examinations like NEET, CUET, KEAM being a few of many.

## Short film highlights suppressed Kashmiri grief

**Timeus and Zia**

The short film "An Orphanage of Memories" was screened at Bangalore International Centre on Sunday, February 15, followed by a discussion with director Rayit Qazi. The film explored themes of grief with the central character having lost her husband under "mysterious circumstances", a phrase Qazi noted is a euphemism for state-sponsored killings in the region. The setting of Kashmir was deliberately presented in contrast to what we ex-



A still from An Orphanage of Memories

pect, instead reflecting the protagonist's bleak emotions. Qazi also wanted to focus on the normalisation of tragedy where citizens are surrounded by troops, and casualty counts are just

numbers on a page. "We barely spend time understanding the gravitas of that one death or that one life that was lost," Qazi said, stating that the purpose of this film was to show how the life of one person can be affected by just one number on a page. He highlighted the importance of expressing grief, especially in the Kashmir context, where women are expected to undergo grief in a certain manner, which suppresses their real emotions.

## Ukhrul violence disrupts daily life

**Nancy Lalengmawii**

A fresh firing was reported on Saturday in the Litan Sareikhong area of Manipur's Ukhrul district. The police had stepped up patrols and urged calm. However, doubt remained among communities despite the temporary calm. The violence first erupted when a Tangkhul Naga man was allegedly assaulted by a group of Kuki-Zo individuals, reigniting the ongoing conflict in the area, with nearly 30 houses from both communities set on fire. Speaking to *The Beacon*, a local resident, Ningreishang, said the crisis was no longer just about territory

or identity. It was about children missing school, shops shutting early, and communities living in constant uncertainty, and urged the government to act responsibly and strengthen its efforts to restore lasting peace. As a precautionary measure, authorities suspended internet services in Ukhrul for five days. Meanwhile, the continuing tension in Litan Sareikhong had disrupted vehicular traffic, including public transport services, along the Imphal-Ukhrul road since last week.