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Citizenship "check" alarms migrants

Joswin Pereira

Bengaluru: Migrant workers in Bengaluru fear harassment as vigilante groups target suspected illegal immigrants, forcing many innocent labourers to prove citizenship.

"When people see those videos of men asking, Are you Indian or Bangladeshi? it creates tension for every migrant worker living here," said James Xalxo, a migrant labourer from Jharkhand, who has worked in Bengaluru for several years. "Nobody would dare to go into someone's house and ask for Aadhaar cards without political support."

On January 16, when police arrested Puneeth Kerehalli, a 34-year-old Hindu activist, for harassing migrant workers, and deliberately communalising and instilling hatred against Muslims by branding them as illegal migrants in Bannerghatta. Kerehalli and his supporters entered private residences, demanded citizenship documents, and filmed residents displaying legally obtained Aadhaar cards, then posted videos online with inflammatory captions.

Released on conditional bail within hours, Kerehalli vowed his campaign would continue. His rapid release has alarmed human rights activists and migrants. "Checking who is Indian and who is not is the job of the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) and police, not private citizens with cameras," said Tanveer Ahmed, a Bengaluru-based activist. "If anyone has an issue, they should file a proper complaint," he added.

Campus democracy between hope and hesitation

Angel & Dimple

After over three decades of imposing a ban on student elections in the state, the Congress government's move to reconsider them has created mixed reactions in campuses. The nine-member high-level Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) was appointed in December 2025 tasked with the study of reintroduction of elections and has sought public opinion, which is set to be reviewed on January 22.

Over this long time period, campuses have evolved and adopted alternative methods of representation. However, these systems often seem to prioritise merit and administrative approval over popular support or genuine representation. "In our college, elections are not really conducted... anybody who is interested or if your



Representational Image

Getty Images

teachers think you're good enough... they will put up your name," commented a student council member from Mount Carmel College, Bangalore, while speaking to *The Beacon*. She added that the student council is mostly just an extension of your merit, with its power limited to organising events. TS Vijaya Kumar, Karnataka State Secretary of the Students' Federation of India (SFI), backed this

view. "There is no option for the students. They cannot select their leaders". He also expressed his concerns about how students have less courage to speak as their education might be at stake. "Now, the administration is in control and if there is an election, the students will be in control," Kumar added. While the possibility of reform through the reintroduction of elections has generated considerable

enthusiasm among students, it has also raised serious concerns. "I do support the idea of bringing back student elections and unions, but I am still concerned about how the process will play out", commented Sana (name changed), a student from Kristu Jayanti University, Bangalore. Students are concerned about the chances of outside politics and violence entering

campuses, which was the major reason why elections were banned in campuses initially. "If elections are reintroduced, it should happen in a streamlined manner... in a way that classes or academics are not affected," she added.

Addressing concerns about implementation, Kumar proposed adopting the Lyngdoh Committee recommendations and argued for an electoral framework that prioritises candidates over ideologies. He also emphasised the importance of elections as a training ground for community development and socially-conscious leadership. Amid a mix of concerns and apprehensions, the future of campus elections will depend on the KPCC report and how its recommendations are implemented.

India's best quantum tech hits funding wall

Sneha Loitongbam

In a breakthrough for India's digital world, scientists at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune, have developed a technology called PhotonSync that could make the nation's internet virtually unhackable. However, despite being praised as one of the world's most advanced quantum fibre solutions, the project has suddenly stalled due to a lack of funding and exclusion from the government's National Quantum Mission (NQM).

"I am not a part of NQM and did not receive any funding ... I am unable to

scale up due to unavailability of resources," says Prof Subhadeep De, Principal Investigator of the Precision and Quantum Measurement Laboratory (PQM-lab) and an Associate Professor at IUCAA. While India has committed over Rs 6,000 crore to the NQM, the very scientists who built the core technology for its success find themselves sidelined without official support, he added.

Head of Physics and Material Science at Jaypee Institute of Information Technology (JIIT) Noida, Prof Anirban Pathak, confirms PhotonSync acts like a high-

tech "noise-cancelling" system for internet cables. Normally, tiny vibrations and temperature changes shake the light signal, disrupting its "phase" and destroying the quantum code before it reaches the destination.

Due to this shaking, the current system requires "trusted nodes", a middle station every 100 km. The code is stopped, decoded, and sent again from these stations to keep it intact. But a copy of the code is stored in these stations, causing a major security risk. PhotonSync neutralises the "noise" and vibrations in standard internet cables by a

staggering 47.5 decibels. It keeps signals steady, allowing secure codes to travel over 1,000 km without stopping. It turns India's existing 42 lakh km BharatNet fibre network secure for military and banking data without the need for expensive new infrastructure.

While lab tests showed 73 times fewer errors than existing methods, the transition from lab to real life is stalled. Prof Pathak notes that while India now possesses an indigenous technology that no foreign entity can block, the final implementation is beyond the scientists' control.

Activists raise concern over school waste

Sheza C

Bengaluru: Even as Bengaluru is regarded as having one of the best Solid Waste Management (SWM) policies, environmentalists and citizen activists have raised their concerns over inadequate decentralisation in the waste management system. On Friday, Mansoor Ahmed, a government school headmaster, said garbage trucks were being parked outside the Telugu Government High School in Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, causing inconvenience to students and staff members, due to persistent odour and foul smell from the waste.

Sandeep Anirudhan, founder of Citizens Agenda, shared his concerns over the absence of waste segregation at the ward level. "The problem is, the policies were made in the 2000s. It has already been 25 years, and it is still not implemented," he added. He also pointed out that there could be several hazards, particularly for students, stating, "There are so many ways this is wrong. How will those children concentrate on their studies when there is a foul smell around them?"

Parasakthi: A political period film

Shanmitha S J

Parasakthi (2026), directed by Sudha Kongara, is a political drama that strongly speaks against language imposition in Tamil Nadu. Set during the anti-Hindi imposition protests of the 1950s and 60s, the film connects past struggles with issues that persist to this day. Visually, the film has a warm, old-photograph tone, with occasional costumes, hairstyles, and locations.

The story follows Chezhiyan, a former student activist drawn back into protest when student unions rise against



A scene from the film *The News Minutes*

imposed language. The film highlights how student movements, driven by anger and unity, brought change to public spaces. A powerful scene captures the film's core idea when Chezhiyan asks,

"Is Delhi the only India?" It states that the protest is against the imposition of Hindi, not Hindi or Hindi-speaking people. Print, media and radio are shown as key tools in spreading awareness.

While the film is politically strong, romantic songs and softer moments slow the pace. Despite addressing intense themes, it feels more informative than emotionally moving at times. Still, Parasakthi stands as a relevant film about protest, language and identity.

Environmental art unveiled

Vedasmriti P R

Bengaluru: Kala Hubba, the visual arts programme held at Freedom park, Bengaluru with the unveiling of site-responsive eco art installation titled as Mapping Discomfort, aims the public to reflect on incarceration, injustice and resilience in both historical and present context. The work has been created by eco-art practitioner Mahima Verma and commissioned by the Zinnov foundations.

The Barrack F of Freedom Park once functioned as part of the Central jail housed around 100 prisoners during the colonial

period. Using charred logs, found materials and naturally growing weeds, the installation reflects the physical and emotional suffering of inmates while symbolising survival and hope. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Mahima said the work responds directly to the sites history and draws parallels between freedom fighters imprisoned during the independence movement and contemporary political detainees. The artist noted that weeds are often dismissed as unwanted, serving as a metaphor for marginalised voices that sustained society.