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Cervical cancer drop misleading

N Rishika

When Karnataka reported a drop in cervical cancer cases to nearly 3%, it appeared to be a public health victory. Yet, doctors on the ground warn that the number may reflect an absence of diagnosis rather than an absence of disease.

Cervical cancer is caused primarily by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a near universal sexually transmitted infection (STI) affecting both men and women. However, for decades it has been framed as a women's disease, delaying comprehensive prevention. Timely vaccinations and screening have played a critical role in reducing late-stage diagnosis.

Dr Chethana, gynaecologist working at Cloudnine hospital Bengaluru, emphasised that vaccination alone is not enough. "Even vaccinated women require regular screening as the vaccine does not cover all cancer-causing strains," she added. By vaccinating primary men, the virus reservoir can be significantly reduced. This vaccination interrupts transmission, protects unvaccinated women, and declines HPV related cancers. Global models suggest that high vaccination coverage in both sexes could prevent millions of cervical cancer cases by the end of the century.

In Karnataka, growing awareness among parents and doctors have improved drastically, particularly in urban areas, but the persistent focus on superficial concerns have created a social barrier in confronting real issues.

Murder, motives and gaps in documentation

Angel Hannah George

While the state is moving forward with laws to prevent honour-based violence, official records continue to mask the far worse ground realities. The new proposed law, which came in the aftermath of the murder of a pregnant woman in Hubballi, aims to strengthen legislation against honour killings, particularly in cases involving inter-caste marriages.

Although the law appears to be a positive addition to the legal framework, activists argue that it will remain ineffective unless existing legislation is implemented properly. Human Rights activist Dr Isabella Xavier pointed out, "At least nine to ten honour killings happen every year in Karnataka." In contrast, National



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Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data records only one case of murder with honour as the motive in Karnataka between 2020 and 2023, after which the data is unavailable. This discrepancy in official documentation, according to activists, happens because there is no particular law for honour killing, and the motive for murder is often documented differently

while registering the case. "Police are not trained to document these cases properly... Even courts don't pull up officers who document cases wrongly," commented Brinda Agide, a social activist, while talking to *The Beacon*. Apart from misclassification, a significant number of cases also go unregistered. According to Agide, "For every ten honour

killings that happen, only one gets reported." She further added that registering a case becomes impossible as the dominant caste groups are powerful, influential, and politically protected. Families of victims often do not approach authorities out of fear of further violence. Dr Xavier explained that many families see the police station as a place of horror. In her experience, families

often say, "They killed my son, and now they will rape my daughter." She further noted that even though the state could file a suo motu case, this rarely happens.

Activists fear that new legislation will not bring any meaningful change as long as systematic flaws persist. Agide argues that the problem with the state is not the absence of laws or legislation, but the failure to implement them. "The bill itself is secondary, if police and judicial reforms have not happened," she added.

Honour killing is a grave crime that reflects the society as a whole. According to Dr Xavier, "Untouchability is in our thinking... we are not ready to accept equality." Until there is a collective effort from both the civil society and the state, honour-based violence is likely to persist.

FAC 2026 maps India's future in astrophysics

Vedasmriti & Sneha

BENGALURU: The two-day premier national conference of Frontiers of Astrophysics and Cosmology (FAC 2026), held at St Joseph's University, concluded on 20th January. Organised by the Physics Department, the event offered a platform for collaboration of experts to explore the latest breakthroughs that transformed the field of astrophysics and cosmology.

The conference gathered speakers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, IIT Gandhinagar, the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), and



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the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS). Discussion covered various topics of astrophysics, like gravitational waves, black holes, dark energy, dark matter, as well as astrobiology on the moon, which is the study of the moon's potential to support life. Dr Madhu Kashyap, the

convenor of the event, noted India's progress in building its own domestic scientific facilities, transitioning from relying on foreign space data to independent research methods.

He also assured that, unlike many other fields, students entering the field of astrophysics wouldn't

have to face AI takeover in their jobs. He highlighted the importance of "understanding our place in the cosmos," as well as keeping the planetary defence system safe, as humans aim to become a multi-planetary species for their long-term survival.

Dr Parul Goel, head of the Physics Department, explained that FAC 2026 was designed for deep learning by giving experts a full hour to present. With a vast topic in discussion, the students can fully grasp the complex ideas when the speakers have plenty of time to explain, she stated.

Environmental concerns over skate park

Yashaswini J

BENGALURU: As Bengaluru is facing a major depletion in its greenery during the last few decades, environmentalists are alarmed over the establishment of the new skating rink in Cubbon Park. These issues were flagged as a result of the Karnataka government's proposal to build a Rs 1.5 crore rink for the same. Recently, the plan faced a backlash from the Cubbon Park Walkers' Association (CPWA), which pointed out that it was "unnecessary".

Sandeep Anirudhan, a citizen activist, said, "Bengaluru has lost nearly 97% of its green cover in the last five decades, shrinking from about 70% to just 2-3%." He expressed his disapproval of the project by stating, "What little greenery we have left must be protected with zero tolerance." Additionally, the activist noted that the government should acquire land in other parts of the city to create new green spaces and upgrade existing stadiums to promote sports, rather than using public parks.

Forgotten Basel Mission legacy

Joswin Pereira

BENGALURU: The lecture titled, The legacy of the Basel Mission in Karnataka, emphasised the underrepresentation of Christian literary and industrial contributions in public discourse. This underrepresentation became the focus of the lecture delivered by Dr Peter Wilson Prabhakar, a historian and scholar of the Basel Mission, on January 20, in St Joseph's University (SJU). Prabhakar introduced a "compelling" concept to explain this phenomenon, the "mission compound culture", a tendency of Christian organisations to confine their narratives within institutional walls rather than sharing achievements to the broader public.



Dr Prabhakar addressing at SJU

Joswin Pereira

"We should always try to take the achievements of Christian institutions and organisations to the people," Prabhakar emphasised, arguing that self-imposed isolation has fostered public indifference. Since 1834, the Basel Mission (a Swiss Protestant missionary society) has transformed coastal Karnataka through groundbreaking work, including establishing the first Anglo-vernacular (English-

Kannada) school in 1837, pioneering Kannada and Tulu literature, and inventing khaki in 1852, which became the global standard for military uniforms. They also established Mangalore Tiles, an internationally recognised brand. Despite their lasting impact, many of these contributions remain largely invisible to those who have benefited the most from them.

Bus accidents raise concerns

Dimple Maria

BENGALURU: Traffic congestion, work pressure, and peak-hour overcrowding have continued to raise safety concerns in Bengaluru's public transport, with recent accident reports focusing attention on the working conditions of bus staff and passenger safety.

Data from the past five years show that road accidents involving Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) buses peaked in 2023-2024 and have remained high since.

Stress while operating in heavy traffic is a major risk

factor, noted Sidlingappa, a BMTC bus conductor. "The most common reason for accidents is tension," he said, adding that bus staff must remain alert at all times due to pedestrians, two-wheelers, and traffic signals while also adhering to scheduled timings.

Greeta Gladwin, a frequent commuter, said buses are generally safe but raised concerns over crowding. "Overcrowding is a major issue, especially during morning hours," she said, noting that rash driving by other road users often disrupts bus movement and passenger safety.