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Ballari attack sparks concerns

Aaryan Raj Pradhan

A recent incident in Ballari, where a Class 9 student allegedly attacked hostel mates with a rod, has raised serious concerns regarding teenage aggression and the impact of media violence on adolescents.

While police are still investigating the incident, it highlights a growing gap in media literacy for vulnerable young people. Mental health experts warn that many adolescents today are exposed to large amounts of unfiltered media without the necessary guidance to process it.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Kamala (name changed), a counsellor at Banjara Academy, Bengaluru, stated that adolescents are much more vulnerable to outside influences. "Teenagers are in a stage where they get influenced very quickly and are still figuring out what is right or wrong," noting that young people often imitate what they observe on screen without a solid moral compass.

According to her, the challenge is not only exposure to media but also the lack of adult guidance. She argues that schools and parents need to play a more engaging role in discussing media narratives with students. "They should explain the role media plays in our lives and how much importance is given to it," she added.

She also advises adults to watch for warning signs such as social withdrawal, sudden anger, or a loss of interest in daily activities, which may indicate emotional distress among teenagers.

SC expands Article 21 to uphold dignity in death

Kishan SG

Doctors say caretakers suffer the most in comatose cases; while being legally shielded from jail for following protocols, psychiatrists opine that they cannot escape the moral weight of pulling the plug.

The Supreme Court of India upheld the right to die with dignity for Harish Rana, a 32-year-old Ghaziabad man who remained in a vegetative state for 13 years following a catastrophic accident. The ruling marks a significant judicial milestone, invoking Article 21 of the Indian Constitution to grant a family's plea to withdraw life support.

"Death with dignity and life with dignity is what matters," said Dr Lahari Ravikumar, senior resident at BGS Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru, who had been closely following the case. She also noted that Rana's prolonged survival had ceased

to serve him medically, becoming a liability for his family with endless hospital bills.

For physicians performing court-sanctioned withdrawal of life support, the law provides protection, but only under defined conditions. Swarnith S. Prasad, an advocate at the Karnataka High Court, explained that doctors gain immunity from charges of culpable homicide under IPC Sections 299 and 304 when they secure dual medical board confirmations of futility and court approval before proceeding.

While the ruling provides a path to closure, legal experts warn of the hidden pressures on India's healthcare system. "Guidelines counter socio-economic euthanasia by requiring hospital and external government boards to verify irreversibility, affidavits excluding financial motives, and palliative care alternatives," noted Prasad. He explained

that, with over 65% of India's healthcare funded out of pocket, these rigorous institutional checks are designed to prioritise medical necessity over economic pressure.

However, Prasad cautioned that the legal framework still faces a significant gap in addressing the financial realities of the poor. "The lack of built-in economic audits or subsidised care makes low-income families vulnerable to indirect coercion, calling for laws to set clear affordability limits," he said.

Passive euthanasia (the withdrawal of life support) has been legal in India since 2018 under strict, court-monitored conditions. Dr Ravikumar backed the existing legal framework but insisted on institutional safeguards. "It should be the decision of a few doctors and the family... Every hospital should have a board with someone like a retired judge

who agrees. It should not be a single person's call," she said.

Prasad weighed in on the ethical dimensions: "Passive euthanasia proves humane in extended vegetative states like Harish Rana's 13-year ordeal, upholding ethics of non-harm and dignity over pointless life extension. Still, global misdiagnosis risks and vague 'best interest' tests demand tighter protocols to avoid abuse against the defenceless."

The case also highlights the friction between medical consensus and family beliefs. Dr Ravikumar recalled a separate case where a family refused a lifesaving blood transfusion on religious grounds. "They don't take blood transfusions... So, what is this belief? Where is this decision coming from?" she asked, calling for mental health review boards to guard against "hatred or delusions or wrong belief" influencing such decisions.

Yet legal immunity does not erase moral conflict. Dr Ravikumar drew a firm distinction between passive euthanasia and active measures such as administering lethal drugs or physician-assisted euthanasia legal in some European countries, calling the latter a clear moral boundary. "This raises moral and professional dilemmas for doctors," she said. For her, passive euthanasia is defensible only when it means withdrawing life support that prolongs a comatose existence after years of exhausted effort, not as a first resort.

For the Ghaziabad family at the heart of this case, the Supreme Court's order brings a painful chapter to a close, after severe financial detriment. For the many families who sit by unresponsive loved ones in ICU wards across the country, this landmark ruling may mark the beginning of a path toward closure.

GHADC election eligibility triggers debate

Nancy Lalengmawii

A dispute over who is eligible to contest the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections in Meghalaya has sparked debate about tribal representation in the region, with some residents arguing that councils meant to safeguard tribal interests should be led by tribal members.

The controversy escalated earlier this week after violent confrontations left two people dead and several others injured, prompting the Meghalaya government to postpone the GHADC elections originally scheduled for April 10. High security has been deployed in

several parts of West Garo Hills following reports of arson, vandalism, protests and stone-pelting incidents.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, a resident, John Lalchhanchuaha, said the unrest began when members of the Garo Students' Union (GSU) gathered outside the district council office in Tura on Tuesday to protest the nomination of a candidate they believed was ineligible to contest the election. According to him, the candidate had arrived early in the morning to submit his nomination before protesters reached the site. When the crowd realised he was already inside the complex, tensions

escalated, and he was allegedly attacked, triggering wider clashes in the area.

The orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) were issued, restricting gatherings to fewer than five people. "As a result of this, we are unable to step outside and have relied on videos circulating on social media to understand what is actually happening", he added.

At the centre of the controversy is a notice from the GHADC requiring candidates filing nominations to possess a Scheduled Tribe certificate, effectively preventing non-tribal residents from contesting the elections.

M Kharkrang, a retired IPS officer, said, "District councils were set up to safeguard tribal land and culture and allowing non-tribals to join would go against that mandate". However, he also noted that the council's executive order could face challenges if proper procedures are not followed. Kharkrang urged the government to engage with community leaders, including religious representatives and civil groups, to restore calm in the region.

Authorities said fresh election dates will be announced only after the security situation improves and normalcy returns to the Garo Hills.

Two-wheeler riders' safety under threat

Farhana Abdul Rahim

The Bengaluru traffic management centre asserts that blind spots for heavy vehicles, where two-wheelers are not visible to truck drivers, and traffic rule violations are the leading causes of road accidents in the city. The latest accident was reported on March 12, outside Rajarajeswari Medical College and Hospital, Kengeri, when a tipper truck collided with a two-wheeler, resulting in the death of a medical student. "Two wheelers are more vulnerable due to their smaller size and lack of physical protection, which increases the risk during collisions with heavy vehicles," said Munavar Pasha, assistant sub-inspector at the traffic management centre, Bengaluru and further recommended a few basic rules for pillion riders, such as wearing helmets, protective clothing and avoiding sitting sideways, which reduces balance and stability. He continued that the police department has implemented measures such as traffic regulations near campuses, awareness campaigns for students and "time-based movement restrictions" for heavy vehicles on several roads and sensitive zones to reduce congestion, protect students, pedestrians and young commuters from fatal accidents.

Empty feminist tropes fail *The Bride*

Timeus Christian Sunder

Maggie Gyllenhaal's second feature film, *The Bride!* sets out to show a strong, independent female protagonist, but utterly fails, falling flat on empty feminist tropes and artificial conflict.

The plot follows a reimagination of *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), loosely based on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as she journeys through 1930s Chicago with an over-100-year-old 'Frank' (Frankenstein's monster).

Gyllenhaal tries to go meta by having the author herself as a character in the film, played by Jessie Buckley, who also



A still from the film

Source: Time

plays both Shelley and The Bride. This attempt falls flat as the character lacks any real purpose or imagination, existing solely for the sake of forced plot progression. Even visually, the production felt stale; the costume design and cinematography were dull and lacked the gothic atmosphere of its source

material, resulting in a shallow aesthetic. To compensate, the film relies on over-the-top performances and irrelevant set pieces. The film lacks any real strengths aside from a stellar cast that tries their best to salvage anything of substance from a lacklustre script.

Kairos builds culture of gratitude

A. Sruthi Lakshna

Having completed nearly 20 sessions out of 48, the organisers of *Kairos*, a gratitude and reflection programme said that they are receiving positive feedback from students and faculty observing changes in mode of behaviour.

Kairos, conducted by St. Joseph's University, Bengaluru, is an ongoing programme for final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students, running from March 6 to April 6 at St. Xavier's Hall.

Organised by the Centre for Human Excellence, the programme brings students together in batches of 80 to 100 for two-hour sessions held

throughout the day. Speaking to *The Beacon*, about *Kairos*, Dr Caroline Maria, the Centre's coordinator, said, "This is a program to show us how grateful we are to our society, to our parents, to our teachers and to our fellow mates."

Each session unfolds across five segments in a dimly lit hall designed to encourage introspection. Activities include an inter-religious prayer, peer appreciation through handwritten notes, reflections on parental gratitude, the preparation of gratitude boards for faculty, and a closing segment on social responsibility.