

# THE BEACON

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## Early detection key to paediatric cancer treatment

Niranjana Jayan

Early diagnosis is crucial for cancer among children, but most cases are diagnosed late because symptoms often align with common illnesses, said Dr Vinod Krishnan, Paediatrician at KG Hospital, Thrissur. Data provided by the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bengaluru suggests that the growing number of paediatric cancer, with almost 590 new cases registered in 2025 alone. Last year's hospital data also shows that 4.4 per cent of the total 13,228 cancer cases were among children and adolescents, with boys more affected than girls. The overall cases included 6,205 males and 7,023 females. The hospital also handled 12,612 outpatient visits, reflecting the growing demand for specialised paediatric cancer care. Oncology experts say the rise in reporting shows both a real increase in cases and better access to specialised care, but early detection is important for better survival outcomes.

"Cancer in children is treatable and can be cured, but that depends on early diagnosis, timely referral to an accurate centre, and trust in current evidence-based therapies," said Dr Krishnan.

He noted that early signs such as persistent fever, unexplained fatigue, sudden weight loss or bone pain could look benign in the beginning but are often attributed to infections or nutritional issues leading parents to delay seeking advanced medical attention. Dr Krishnan also stressed that any minor physical or behavioural changes will need quick medical care.

## Gig workers face payment delays

Ameya Krishnakumar

BENGALURU: Despite the introduction of a one per cent levy on gig workers employed through aggregator platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato, workers continue to face challenges under performance-based incentive systems. Many report issues, including multiple delayed or incomplete payments and limited access to benefits such as insurance and medical coverage.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Santhosh. E, a full-time delivery partner working with Swiggy for five years from Shantinagar, emphasised the need for structural reforms rather than temporary welfare

## Industry experts stress skilfulness for career in PR

V Nayonika

BENGALURU: Public relations (PR) professionals at a recent workshop laid emphasis on academic qualifications as an inadequacy among recent graduates, arguing that hands-on skills now outweigh educational degrees in entry-level hiring decisions. Industry PR professionals said that candidates who rely solely on formal education often overlook the importance of communication ability, skills, adaptability, discipline, and punctuality.

St Joseph's University hosted its 3rd annual Bengaluru Academia Conclave 2026 on February 18. The School of Communication and Media Studies (SCMS), in collaboration with the Public Relations Consultants Association of India (PRCAI), brought together PR leaders with industry knowledge spanning across corporate communications, mental



Panelists at the Academia Conclave

V Nayonika

health, and global partnerships.

The conclave was structured around the core theme of the future of PR. Industry experts with decades of experience shared experiences drawn from real campaigns, crises, boardroom strategy, and international communication practices.

"Freshers tend to put enormous weight on their academic qualifications, but they often miss highlighting

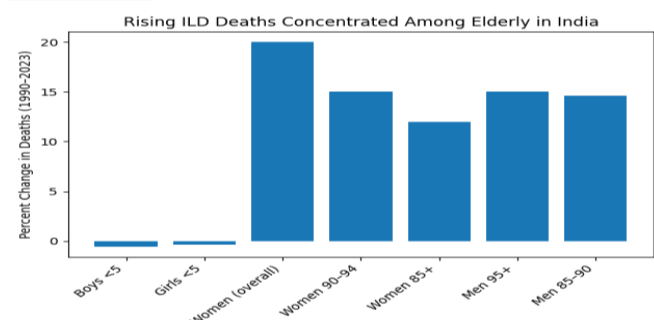
skills they actually bring to the table," said Sangita Gopinath, director of Growth & Business Initiative and PR Pundit. "If you do not come from a PR background but you have done meaningful internships, you are attentive, disciplined, and have strong communication, we will consider you. The field is looking for fresh blood," she said, while talking about the decisions that freshers often make while applying for jobs.

Addressing a question on the gap between classroom teaching and expectations and industry expectations, Girish Balachandran, founder of On Purpose, said, "Your degree gives you a foundation, but what distinguishes you is what you do beyond it," he said. "Take additional courses, follow industry developments, and volunteer for projects. Those efforts reflect seriousness."

Speaking to *The Beacon*,

## India's elderly face rising ILD mortality rate

Disha Banthia



Data Infographic

AI Generated

Interstitial Lung Disease (ILD) is emerging as a growing public health concern in India with deaths rising the fastest among the country's geriatric population, according to long-term mortality data by the Global Burden of

Disease from Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation, Washington.

ILD refers to a collection of chronic lung-related disorders that produce inflammation and scarring of the lung tissue. Lung scarring results in stiffened

lung tissue and reduced lung function for oxygen transfer to blood, leading to symptoms such as shortness of breath and fatigue.

"Pulmonary rehabilitation cannot reverse the scarring in ILD, but it helps enhance patients' quality of life," said Dr Juliet Saji, Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain Hospital, Bengaluru.

Death trends between 1990 to 2023 shows the sharpest increase is concentrated among people aged 85 and above. In contrast, children and adolescents have seen a decline in mortality rates. Deaths among boys under the age of five fell by 0.6 per

cent, while deaths among girls in the same age group declined by 0.4 per cent.

Women are among the most affected with deaths rising by nearly 20 per cent over the 33 year period, marking it as the steepest rise across all groups. Women aged 90-94 years of age recorded an increase of more than 15 per cent, while those aged 85 and above noted a 12 per cent increase. Men however recorded a slightly lower increase as compared to women. Deaths among ages 95 and above rose about 15 per cent and those aged between 85 to 90 years increased by 14.6 per cent.

Shakambari Thakur, senior director, Walmart Global Tech, India, said that credibility in the field is built over time. "It's not that people start trusting you from day one," she said. "You will always have to face the heat. You just have to be clear on what you do." Explaining a crisis she experienced at her workplace, she added that transparency helped her navigate the situation with utmost confidence.

The discussion concluded with industry experts encouraging students to enter the profession with clarity, integrity, and a commitment to continuous learning. They also highlighted the dynamic and unpredictable nature of public relations. "There is no typical day in PR," said Ms Gopinath. "You could be handling a crisis one day and advising leadership on a strategic announcement the next. It demands agility and emotional intelligence," she added.

## Parents support Police action on underage riders

Allen George Easo

BENGALURU: Parents welcome Bengaluru Traffic Police's (BTP) initiative against underage driving, expressing that safety matters the most, and that fines and vehicle seizure are effective ways in changing parental behaviour because until something is imposed, no one cares to follow..

BTP has launched a special drive against underage driving after a rise in fatal accidents involving minors. The police will penalise minor drivers and book parents and vehicle owners. Authorities can seize vehicles and produce parents before the court for allowing children to drive. The BTP has urged school and college administrations to step up efforts in educating students about road safety.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Kavya Krishnan, a resident parent from Whitefield, says that wearing helmets should become part of their routine or muscle memory if children are driving in case of an emergency. "Lighter and affordable helmets will also help make wearing helmets less of an excuse and more of a precautionary measure."

## The downfall of single screen theatres

Harivalagan E

BENGALURU: Single-screen theatres played a significant role in fostering collective cinema viewing experiences that cut across social divisions, before the emergence of multiplexes.

The Bangalore International Centre (BIC) hosted a screening of the documentary Cinema Pe Cinema: The Theatres, The Movies, And Us, on February 18. The 62-minute documentary portrays the fall of India's single-screen cinema culture and its effect on community identity.

"Single-screen cinema theatres paved the way to a shared



Discussion on India's single-screen history

Harivalagan E

experience regardless of caste, creed, and gender, before the rise of modern multiplex theatres," said Vani Subramanian, the director of the documentary.

The documentary followed the complex relationships between cinema halls, the movies they screened, and the communities they served, through the memories of people who worked there. It depicted India's small

cinemas as a social and cultural hub. It showed how people felt nostalgic when asked to share their experiences, remembering the times they spent in these theatres. The documentary also portrayed how these single-screens are slowly shutting down as multiplex theatres are on the rise today.

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