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Intersection of art and activism

Unnati Mishra

BENGALURU: 'Where are you from?' is a complex question to which sometimes there might not be any answer at all. Where is our home and what entails a sense of belonging when borders and boundaries of nations and states are violently redrawn, and homes and families are torn asunder? This was the subject of intense contemplation and debate by the panellists of the film festival sharing their stories about the partition of their lands and parting from their communities in various countries of the subcontinent.

'South Asian Stories: Bridging Boundaries of Nation and Gender', a film festival hosted by St Joseph's College of Commerce, from Feb 13 to 15, highlighted the work of women film directors and their narratives and stories across borders.

"All three days we saw films from all parts and across genres, crafted by women-from movies like 'Face Cover' which mirrored the complex social forces in a girl's life, to something like 'Flames of a Continuous Field of Time', which documents incidents of sexual violence against Dalit women, and 'Taangh' where a daughter narrates unknown stories about India's hockey gold medal in the 1948 London Olympics," said Evangeline Jessica, event coordinator.

The screening followed a panel discussion on the closing day where filmmakers like Bani Singh, Madhulika Jalali, Priyanka Chhabra, Ashfaq AM, and Deepa Dhanraj shared their personal and political experiences.

Ruling party failed Puducherry says former CM

Ishika S

The ruling party had promised to develop the Union Territory Puducherry by addressing issues like unemployment, women's safety, corruption, and alcoholism and drug addiction among minors. However, not delivering this is causing the support to swell in favour of the Congress rule in Puducherry, said V Narayanswamy, former chief minister of Puducherry.

In a conversation with The Beacon, V Narayanswamy criticised the current government All India N R Congress for their failure to develop the union territory.

"We have been highlighting to the people of the state on various forums



V Narayanswamy, former CM of Puducherry

Ishika S

through agitation, interviews, and public interaction. The people are also basically fed up with this government on major issues and unemployment. The corruption has seeped into

the entire Council of Ministers. There is no safety for the women in public. The children are being addicted to weed and other drugs under the name of development of the state," he said.

He further added that he had been trying to get Puducherry to become a full-fledged state but the proposal did not get approval during his tenure. The ruling party despite promising

the statehood, has defaulted on its assurance, he said. The reduction in grants to the UT has affected the development of the infrastructure, health sector, and education in the region.

He also mentioned the projects introduced during his tenure have been put on hold. "Smart City Project that focussed on beautifying Puducherry by introducing electric buses, proper roads, modern toilets, gyms, and proper drainage systems has been put on hold owing to a reduction in grants."

He stressed the need for awareness among the people and the role of the government in creating public awareness about the environmental crisis threatening the UT.

Citizens demand flyover project halt

Afiya Amreen

BENGALURU: Environmentalists and concerned citizens are opposed to the proposal for the construction of a six-lane flyover over the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) in Bengaluru. The construction project is anticipated to last for several years, posing significant challenges to citizens and the environment, they say.

The plan, aimed at easing traffic congestion, entails cutting down 1288 trees spread over 19.09 hectares of forest land affecting the park's ecosystem and wildlife. The flyover planned as part of the ring road project by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was approved by the National Board of Wild-



Representational Image

X

life. The project is part of the satellite township ring road (STRR) by NHAI and will upgrade a 3.85 km of current road between Bannerghatta and Jigani. However, the citizens and activists argue that the construction of the flyover will disturb the habitat of many wild animals residing in BNP. Dr Sanjay Gubbi, a conser-

vation biologist, highlighted on X the threat posed to elephant habitats and the increase in human-wildlife conflicts due to this project. "The corridor alignment cuts through Elephant habitat. It will reduce the habitat available for elephants and increase the conflict in the long run as there are nearly hundreds of elephants that use the

landscape. Besides, BNP has two tigers. Thus Bengaluru is the only city in the country with tigers, a substantial population of elephants, leopards, dholes, and gaur all right at its edge."

The tweet said many environmental activists are urging authorities to reconsider the project and acknowledge the park's eco-sensitive nature. They emphasised the need to preserve the park's unique ecosystem and biodiversity and warned against irreversible damage and further environmental degradation.

"Halt this project and construction immediately and save the lungs of the city for the survival of human-animal lives," tweeted a citizen who opposed the project.

Dry days dampen liquor sales

Kiranmai Basavaraj

BENGALURU: The prohibition of liquor sales from Feb 14 to 17 has raised concerns among shop owners in Bangalore. The ban is placed ahead of the Legislative Council's byelection for the Bangalore Teacher's Constituency scheduled on February 16.

Many restaurants serve both food and alcohol together. Due to the liquor ban the hotel industry will incur a loss of nearly Rs 150 to 200 crores," said P.C. Rao, president of Bruhat Bengaluru Hoteliers Association.

"Huge losses are incurred by businesses and a 23% hike in liquor prices shoots the retail price which decreases our sales as most people are not able to afford liquor at that time. A day before the dry day, the footfall of customers differs. Since the prices have hiked currently, there might not be a lot of customers," explained Anand Menon (name changed) Manager of Tonique Liquor Store. "Observing a dry day is not new for us. This happens during every election but hasn't affected our business much. Tomorrow till 5 pm we are keeping the store open and the footfall of customers will decide the sales. Fewer sales are expected due to the hike in prices" said Menon.

Students resolve to democratise campus

Utsav Pradhan

Students at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Sikkim protested on Feb 13 against the alleged mismanagement and apathy of the authorities of the institution. Feeling stressed and unheard, students claimed that their college feels more like a jail than a place of learning. They expressed their disappointment towards favouritism, unqualified teachers, and terrible dorm conditions. They're camping out in the cold, refusing to back down until their concerns are addressed.

According to students, they don't have a student union. Dawa Sherpa, a student at the University, explained, "We don't have a student union to represent our interests or advocate for our rights. It's challenging because we don't have a formal platform to voice our concerns or negotiate with the administration on issues that affect us directly."

Students feel powerless because they can't speak up about unfair treatment, lack of classes, or even just having a decent place to live.

They expect a system that listens to them and protects their rights, they said.

"A student union would provide a formal platform for students to express their views, negotiate with the administration, and work towards solutions that benefit everyone. It would also create a sense of unity and solidarity among students, strengthening our collective voice and ability to bring about positive change," said Sherpa. So far, the college has not addressed the concerns and protests are continuing.

BBMP upgrades to FRP drains

Aatreya Bose

BENGALURU: The traffic engineering cell of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's Road Infrastructure (BBMP's RI) division has spearheaded the initiative to install fibre-reinforced polymer (FRP) silt trap chambers for new shoulder drains. Grating structures covering the drain will prevent external waste from entering and allow pedestrians to walk across it.

On Feb 12, BBMP announced the project featuring composite chambers to trap accumulated silt and keep the drains clean in an attempt to improve the city's

infrastructure. The tender issued for upgrading the shoulder drains entailed an estimated cost of Rs 6.05 crore.

Speaking to the Beacon, BBMP engineer Jagdeesh T (name changed), said, "We have around 470 roads spread across the entire Bengaluru city. So we are planning to implement this on all the roads."

Heavy rainfalls accompanied by flooding have been an enduring issue, which often brings the city to a standstill. FRP upgrade would address the waterlogging, similar to the approach adopted for TenderSure roads, he added.