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## Students caught up in dilemma as bus pass validity ends

**Madhu Mitha S**

**BENGALURU:** Hundreds of students staged a protest at Freedom Park demanding the extension of their BMTC and KSRTC bus passes on Saturday. While the academic year will continue till the end of September, the bus passes of the students expired on August 1, leaving them concerned about their transportation. However, BMTC has allowed the extension of bus passes only for final-year students, and KSRTC has asked them to take a new pass.

Mahantesh, the State Secretariat of the All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO), said, "KSRTC is asking students to get new passes after the extension, but BMTC has not even sent a circular on extending the pass period. The question arises whether the students should prepare and appear for exams or travel to get the work done. We demand the government take full responsibility to solve this problem immediately."

"Until the exams are done the pass should be extended and allow students to travel with their existing passes. BMTC and other district transportation should also immediately issue a circular regarding extension of the pass at no extra charge," he added.

Ravikiran, State Secretariat member of AIDSO, presided over the protest. State committee members, many activists, and students were part of the protest.

## 'Har Ghar Tiranga' for everyone except the women at the Sabarmati Women's Jail

**Pavana J**

**BENGALURU:** "I know what Gauri would be thinking if she was with us today. She would have been extremely worried about the last 70 days that I was violently detained in the Sabarmati Women's Jail, and she would have wanted to speak to me about the conditions of women living in jails, what the access to justice, how fair is the treatment, what does 'institutionalisation' mean to women," said Teesta Setalvad, an Indian civil rights activist, while addressing the gathering

at the Gauri Lankesh Memorial meeting.

The Gauri Lankesh Trust organised a talk in Bengaluru, on Monday, to pay respects to her on the 5th anniversary of her death. Eminent personalities like Arundhati Roy, Prakash Raj, and Ganesh N Devi were present at the talk. Gauri was assassinated outside her house on the 5th of September, 2017.

Setalvad, who had been in jail since June 2022 virtually addressed the gathering, said, "My experience in the

Sabarmati Women's Jail was extremely worrying... I saw the impact the entire Covid paralysis had on access to justice," she recollected.

Setalvad urged that all citizens of civil society as political beings should look at what institutionalisation does to women under trial and women prisoners. She said that it is important for everyone to understand the political economy of the prisons. "The Sabarmati Jail is run by 20 female convicts who do all the manual labour and slavery work, from cooking for us

to cleaning to running the gates, but they are paid mittens for this," she added.

"On the 75th anniversary of India's independence, all the women were expecting the jail to have a hoisting ceremony, especially with the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, but there was nothing for them at the Sabarmati Jail," she lamented. Referring to the 17 female convicts, who had served more than 14 years in prison and were still behind bars anxiously awaiting the outcome of their remission mercy petitions, she drew a parallel with that of the 11

convicts of the Bilkis Bano mass rape and murder case.

"We have their names, we are going to run a campaign for them because we believe they should have been let out on the 15 of August," she said, referring to Gauri's idea of 'justice for all'.

"Unfortunately, justice in our country is lopsided. It's perverted, it's inside-out sometimes, and on the 5th anniversary of Gauri Lankesh's ruthless assassination, it is time for us to seriously begin a campaign for prison reforms," she asserted.

## Gujarat pogrom is slowing being brushed under the rugs, opines Arundathi Roy

**Trupti Khillare**

**BENGALURU:** We have laws for everyone but they depend on one's caste, religion, and gender, said Arundhati Roy, renowned Booker Prize-winning author, at the Gauri Memorial Lecture organised by the Gauri Memorial Trust.

Today, we live in a country where people get electoral advantage from massacres, both fresh and old, said Roy. "When the Gujarat massacre happened, we knew the urgency with which the BJP was calling for elections. What was that



"There's a little bit of Gauri in all of us"

**Pavana J**

urgency for?" she questioned.

Referring to the Bilkis Bano case, she said, "The point is that the people who released them, did it on a legal process that might have been misused. We know among the people on the committee there were members of the BJP. So, what

we are witnessing is an attempt for rational reasons to erase the legal trace of the Gujarat issue. So what we are seeing in India today is the future between the government, state, and political party.

These are all becoming inseparable from each other.

They say we want to have an opposition-free democracy which is not possible. This is the signal of where we are heading. So are we a democracy?"

Roy stated that we are back to being colonised.

"We have to fight for it. we have to start from sub-zero now... do not think that we are defeated but think of every form of victory, and move from there because the system is broken but it will end and we will win."

## 'Low-lying areas get flooded, residents complain about the lax attitude of posh complexes'

**Varsha, Shriangana**

Several complaints have been filed with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) authorities regarding the areas affected by the incessant rains in Bengaluru for the past few weeks. The flooding has impacted thousands of working-class families, submerging their homes.

"Many working class areas in Bengaluru have been inundated in rain water owing to encroachment of lakes and rajakaluves (storm water drains), thanks to illegal construction, lack of urban planning, and STPs and apartments pumping out water from their premises into these nearby working-class areas. Neither the BBMP, nor the State Government authorities have paid any heed to the dire circumstances of these working-class residents," stated the press statement released by the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation.

The Mahadevapur zones of BBMP such as Bellandur, Munnekolalu, Brookfield, and Doddanekundi have been affected the most. The workers living in these areas are predominantly engaged in solid waste management. They include auto rickshaw drivers and rag pickers who make substantial contributions to keeping the city clean.

The lax attitude of the nearby complexes pumping out water also contributed to the submergence of these areas.

Complaints have been filed demanding that the State Government organise temporary shelters with provisions, and compensation for the loss sustained. Additional care for pregnant women and senior citizens, and health services in the relief shelters were among other demands.

## Hard times for sincere critics and activists in India: Aakar Patel

**Sharon Anna James**

**BENGALURU:** While speaking at a panel discussion on 'Criminalisation of Activism' on Saturday, journalist and activist Aakar Patel said that the state doesn't recognise rights under Article 19.

The panel discussion was organised jointly by the All-India Lawyers' Association for Justice (AILAJ), the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), and the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR). Patel said that today the state has stopped recognizing the fundamental rights of ordinary citizens.

Speaking to The Beacon about the intersection of data privacy and activist rights, he said, "I wish we had better regulation of what the state



Aakar Patel

**The Hindu**

can do. We don't. There was an RTI that The Indian Express filed in 2011 where the state said the Union Home Secretary approved 10,000 phone taps a year, which is 300 every calendar day. And there is no accountability for that material."

He further said, "Umar Khalid is in jail because he was a member of a WhatsApp group. There is no accusation that he actually contributed to those groups; somebody just added him and said something. Even the stuff that

he said is not inflammatory; it was just assumed by the state."

Patel also mentioned how the government has restricted the use of social media and added new restrictions every six months to make it more challenging for people to exercise their right to freedom of speech and expression.

It has become difficult to write genuine criticism, he says.

## Phone App to detect COVID -19 raises concerns: Expert

**Niharika Bajaj**

As researchers continue to build an ecosystem to combat Covid-19, a recent report published on Monday at the European Respiratory Society International Congress in Barcelona, Spain claims a phone app can accurately detect Covid-19 infection.

Dr Amruta Basu who works at Sonoscan Healthcare, West Bengal, said, "This can be a breakthrough in the field of medical research, especially for the underdeveloped countries where RTPCR testing is still very expensive." However, she expressed her concern about the gaps in the study. "For infectious diseases like Covid-19, whether the app can differentiate between

Covid-19 voice and voice due to common cold virus, influenza needs to be monitored carefully," she added.

A comparative analysis of all such voice samples will be needed to assess the accuracy of such an app. All viruses which cause respiratory tract infections can change voice quality. The app uses artificial intelligence (AI) to detect if a person is affected, and claims to be 89 per cent accurate.

A sample of 893 participants was studied to check the efficiency and accuracy of the app. It has been developed by researchers at the Institute of Data Science, Maastricht University, Netherlands.