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Govt budgets under students' pressure

Abhirami Nair

Bengaluru: Welcoming the budget document of the Karnataka State Government, the All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO) state secretary Ajay Kamath stated that the announcements had been made according to the demands of the student community of the state.

AIDSO has welcomed the announcements made in the state budget and said it was the outcome of the student movements to strengthen the public education system going on from the past year. Announcements in the budget like free education for PU and degree students of government colleges, renovation of government schools, allocation of a free bus pass for all girl students in the state, and construction of toilets in all government schools. The government had introduced the idea of upgrading five government engineering colleges to the level of KIT (Karnataka Institute of Technology). But if these colleges are made self-financing then it will affect the poor students, Kamath opined. AIDSO wants the government to ensure that these announcements are made with the start of the following academic year in mind.

However, some requirements like the construction of government engineering colleges in every district of Karnataka, and free bus passes for all the students irrespective of gender are not looked into yet. The government still needs to look into the allocation of funds for free laptops for students and the distribution of free tabs for higher education students studying in government colleges, he said.

'Electricity is a service, not a commodity for profit'

Kavya S & Meghana S

Bengaluru: As per the Indian constitution, the generation and distribution of electricity come under a concurrent list wherein both the central and state governments may invest, and govern rate-setting for electricity. However, privatisation of the electricity sector impacts the consumers as they have to pay more, said KV Bhat, state president of Karnataka Rajya Akshara Dasoha Naukarara Sangha.

The Indian government introduced the Electricity Amendment Bill in August 2022, purportedly to end the monopoly in power distribution by providing consumers with the choice to select power providers.

Today, electricity is one of the most crucial services. After independence, governments began using public funds to generate electricity and create a national grid network. The nation's electricity boards



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The Financial Express

were established as public sector organisations with the mandate to operate on a "no profit, no loss" basis because electricity was viewed as a necessary utility, said a press release.

"With the introduction of the Electricity Amendment Bill, the government suggests privatising power distribution

to make all components of power generation and distribution profitable. The infrastructure that was constructed with public funds will be made available to private companies. By 2025, pre-paid meters will be placed across the nation which functions similarly to current prepaid mobile

phone recharge systems. The consumers will now need to make a payment before using the electricity," he said.

With the privatisation and instalment of prepaid meter charges, the power supply has become more profit-oriented, he said. "The power they are supplying is an essential commodity and shouldn't be

profit oriented. It means that if no one is there at your home for a month, you will still have to pay 200 rupees for meter charges, and it will become profit-oriented. So the state government should consider this as a social service and not as a commodity for making a profit," said Bhat.

Privatisation began in the early 1990s with the implementation of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation by the Central Government then led by the Congress. Later, the BJP-led NDA government followed pace by continuing and vigorously enforcing these same policies, he said. The Electricity Act 2003, which resulted in the transfer of power generation to private companies, was enacted by the BJP-led NDA government. Currently, private businesses produce more than 50% of the energy.

'Budget is just a promise, does not fulfill commitment'

Joyce Rodrigues

The allocation of funds to education under the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs saw a drop of 32% in the Union Budget 2023-2024, the highest among all the components under the ministry. This year, the allotment for the pre-matric scholarship is reduced to 992 crore rupees. Consequently, the students of first to eighth standard were denied the scholarship. Whereas for post matric, it is increased to 550 crore rupees. There are no funds allotted to support students appearing for prelims conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC),



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Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and so on. This change in the allotment of funds for education empowerment impacted the scholarship given to minority students. Speaking to The Beacon, Aratrika, a member of the All

India Students Association (AISA), said that the minority community requires assistance in terms of income due to the standard of living they have, and it is important for the state to take care of these minorities. "The compensation through

scholarship is not sufficient to cover the amount for hostel fees and education fees," she said. Abhaya, Bengaluru district president of the All India Democratic Student Organisation (AIDSO), said, "The pre-matric scholarship of 1000 rupees per month was important for the government school students. They could use it to purchase school accessories." She added that this year's Union Budget's allotment for education was raised by 8.3%. "It is not a good decision to reduce schemes for minority students. The budget is just a promise, but does not seem to fulfil the commitment."

Adenovirus wreak havoc in Kolkata

Anjela Patrick

The rise in Adenovirus cases in West Bengal has raised concerns, as two children have died of respiratory illness while several others remain infected. In response to the upsurge, the State Health Department has issued certain advisories for health professionals, particularly paediatricians, to be more vigilant about flu-like symptoms in children to identify and treat potential adenovirus cases as soon as possible. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adenoviruses are a type of virus that can cause severe infections, including respiratory, gastrointestinal, and eye problems. Medical colleges across the state, as well as the chief medical officers of all districts, have been directed to assess readiness and keep track of the stock of equipment and infrastructure including oxygen supplies and pediatric ventilators.. Adarsh Kumar, a paediatrician at AIIMS, Delhi, said, "People's symptoms vary depending on the strain. Adenovirus 7 was the most lethal of the more than 100 adenovirus strains studied, including about 50 strains that infect humans. Adults can also be affected by the virus."

A fuel to ignite love for coffee

Meghana S

Bengaluru: Benki Coffee's goal is to provide exceptional Kerbside and takeout speciality coffee that is affordable, said Sonice Mandal, the customer relationship manager of the enterprise.

Located in J P Nagar, Bengaluru, Benki Coffee and Benki Brewing tool is a cafe opened by Vimoksha Beverage Solutions Pvt. Ltd. The founder, Suhas Dwarkanath focuses on good quality food and beverages which are easily available to

people.

Speaking to The Beacon, Mandal said that through word-of-mouth and ultimately, social media, where enthusiasts and professionals can interact and exchange ideas, the Indian coffee scene has developed and grown. "Following this trend, social media platforms are in the centre and forefront of our promotion strategy as the young enthusiastic coffee lovers can relate and reach out easily to build our community," said Mandal.

Dissecting the training they

offer, Mandal said, "Anyone and everyone who has interest or curiosity about coffee and what can be done in the coffee space is welcome to attend training and workshops. Post completion, the candidates are always encouraged to reach out and stay connected to us so that we can foster and strengthen the community."

"We do plan to expand our cafe, but the core goal of it being a training and speciality coffee experience, kiosk will remain as quality is at the heart of our mission," said Mandal.

Tuning into the world of radio

Anirudh J

Bengaluru: Radios are a window to the world that served generations with news, entertainment and knowledge, and it holds a sentimental value, says Uday Kalburgi while speaking about the amazing 'Short Wave Radio Museum' that he opened. This place is dedicated to vintage tube radios which have over 150 sets. For Kalburgi, the museum is not just a showcase of his collection but a tribute to the glory days of radios. "In the past, the radio was the only form of entertainment at home

and many people bought them with their hard-earned money. Each radio in the collection has a story to tell, and I hope to preserve these stories for future generations," Kalburgi said. Speaking about his passion for radios, Kalburgi said, "My love for radios deepened as I learned to make crystal radios in my childhood and from then I consider radio as my best friend. Over the years, I started collecting unique vintage radios from Sunday markets and scrap dealers. The only reward that I get is by restoring the radio sets to their original state."