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Truckers withdraw as govt assures consultation

Fiona Vaz

A new law that is said to be passed which could minimise the number of road accidents has drawn flak nationwide and protests have erupted. "The said law will be applicable for all types of vehicles including two-wheelers, three-wheelers, cars, trucks, tankers, and buses," tweeted a BJP representative.

In a nationwide protest against the recent 'hit and run' provision, initiated by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), goods transporters across India struck, hindering the flow of transportation in different regions. Their objection was related to Section 106(2) of BNS which states that deaths caused by rash driving will lead to a punishment of ten years in jail, along with a Rs 7 lakh fine. This provision was made applicable to both public and private vehicle owners.

The law states that those drivers who fulfil their responsibilities by acting immediately towards the injured and informing authorities will fall under Section 106(1), bailable, and drivers who escape from the unforeseen scene under Section 106(2) will be non-bailable. The approach of this provision was aimed towards reducing the number of hit-and-run cases across the nation.

According to Hindustan Times, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), depicts the data of total hit-and-run cases of the year 2022, where the occurrence of road accidents was 14.6 per cent and deaths were 18.1 per cent.

After the two-day-long protest by transporters across the nation, the government clarified that all the stakeholders would be consulted before making it a law.

CM flays BJP's support to 'criminals' in Huballi case

Navya Y

BENGALURU: Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah lashed out on Wednesday at the opposition party over its protest against the arrest of a Hindu activist Srikanth Poojary.

The CM while addressing the media on Wednesday criticised the BJP for identifying the accused by their caste and religion. "Labelling criminals with caste and religion is extremely dangerous for a national-level party," he said.

The Congress government in the state reopened the case against the Hindu activist Srikanth Poojary, a 'kar sevak', who allegedly was involved in the case of rioting during the Ram Temple agitation in 1992 in Hubballi.

Addressing the issue at the press conference the spokesperson of the



Congress leaders addressing the press meet in KPCC office

Navya Y

party Ramesh Babu, said "The Hubballi case is a huge conspiracy and the director behind this conspiracy is the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs of India, Pralhad Joshi. On December 12 1992, a complaint was lodged against Srikanth Poojary. The FIR was later registered for demolishing buildings and private properties in the

city. Later on July 8, 2017, after he absconded the rowdy-sheeter case against Srikanth Poojary was reopened in the Hubballi station which was closed in June 2023."

"The question is why are criminals who create unrest in society associated with BJP leaders? Why does the accused claim that he is a strong supporter

and follower of Pralhad Joshi and is in close contact with him? The issue is that defending and justifying a criminal's act is an act of conspiracy," he added.

V S Ugrappa questioned, whether the conduct of the BJP party was in line with the ideals of Ram, claiming that Congress was the first party to allow the conduction of Ram-Lalla rituals.

It is a shameful thing for the BJP to justify the acts of thugs who set the photograph of Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on fire at Ayodhya. It is a crime to do politics in the name of God and religion, he added.

Earlier, CM Siddaramaiah also stated that the crime rates in the country have spiked and attributed it to the identity politics of the BJP.

Pitching Hindus against the Congress and Siddaramaiah is one-of-a-kind petty politics that BJP is indulging in and hence they need to understand the lessons learned in 2023 during the assembly elections, he said.

Later, BJP called CM Siddaramaiah as an 'anti-hindu' because he refused to enter the temple, on the grounds of his image being 'burned' in Ayodhya temple.

A peek into the 2023 legislations that impinged on privacy

Aatreyi Bose

India recently saw the enactment of two acts and the introduction of a bill during the 2023 parliamentary sessions, that raise concern about the fundamental rights related to data privacy, and freedom of speech and expression. Legal experts and digital activists are engaged in a heated debate with varying opinions regarding data breaches and surveillance issues.

The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 received Presidential assent on August 11. It outlines legal processing of personal data with individual consent. However, exemptions exist for cases of

voluntary data sharing and state-related issues like permits, licenses, and benefits. The DPDP Act mandates all data fiduciaries of Indians to secure and delete data once the reasons are resolved.

The Telecommunications Act, 2023 passed on December 24 instructs the central government to authorise, establish and operate telecommunications networks, provide services and possess radio equipment as per this act. Here, privacy concerns arise over communications being monitored for state security or crime prevention purposes. The act also provides guidelines to lay telecom infrastructure for public and private properties, and obtains

prior consent for user protection. The Post Office Bill, 2023, passed in the Lok Sabha on December 18, seeks to repeal the Post Office Act of 1898.

The director general of postal services assumes leadership responsibilities, setting tariff rules and service charges. But the government may check data sent through India Post without consent, on grounds of state security, raising questions about the accountability of India Post for its services. Speaking to the Beacon, Piyush Rao, a legal intern at the Supreme Court of India, said, "The breach of data protection in India has recently

raised significant concerns about the security of personal information. It underscores the importance of strengthening data protection laws, enforcing stricter regulations, and promoting cybersecurity awareness to prevent such incidents." He further reflected upon the lack of Telecommunication Act's clear definition, leading to its misuse, and the potential confusion caused over one's fundamental rights.

The Post Office Bill, 2023 retains its authoritative nature from the colonial times and the India Post provides no accountability, making us question its constitutional responsibility, he added.

Activists demand Kannada signboard in Bengaluru

Kiranmai Basavaraj

BENGALURU: Of late the city is high on temper over the usage of the English language on signboards leading to dissent and protests by Kannada activists. Many business establishments in Bengaluru are mostly using English sign boards instead of the regional language. Kannada Rakshana Vedike, a pro-Kannada activist group, staged a protest in Bengaluru demanding all the outlets to mandatorily use Kannada on their signboards. "The heart of Karnataka's culture lies in its language, and the visibility of Kannada on sign boards is considered as a crucial aspect of regional pride and identity". said the activists. However, the pro-Kannada activists were not in the mood to allow that time and wanted adherence to the rule right away. Protesters also targeted the Phoenix Mall the largest mall in Asia. Simultaneously, the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry urged the state government to refrain from taking action until February 28. Earlier on Tuesday, Tushar Girinath, Chief Commissioner of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, said that establishments that do not change or update their signboards to 60 per cent Kannada language written by February 28, will be penalised.

Namma Whitefield boycotts Janasamparka Sabha

Unnati Mishra

BENGALURU: Namma Whitefield RWA (resident welfare association) Federation withdraws participation from Janasamparka Sabha in Mahadevapura Zone.

Citing numerous flaws in the governance of the city leading to a lack of planning, and poor governance as the reason for their boycotting the meeting, the federation shot a letter to Deputy CM DK Shivakumar and CM Siddaramaiah,

"Bengaluru is now an International poster child for 'misgovernance'. The

problems of Bengaluru are so pronounced, that Bengaluru has become an international reference for 'how to ruin a city'. It is touted as a ruined city in front-page articles in magazines; and in January 2023, the Supreme Court of India itself declared that Bengaluru's governance is a template for Urban Ruin. It asked other cities to learn from its mistakes and not to repeat them. However, our city continues to repeat the same mistakes, and there is no course correction by our government. The main

reason the city suffers from a 'paralysis of governance' is that it does not have a robust framework for planning and governance, and it stems mainly from the violation of the constitution."

Taking to 'X' the Federation tweeted about the dysfunctionality of the state government and made critical remarks. The authorities have encouraged residents of the area to participate in the meeting and have posted and promoted the event on their social media, but continue to refrain, the federation said.

New variant raises alarm in India

Ishika S

Various State and Central governments are gearing up to counter the threat posed by the new variant of Omicron, JN.1. The strain is said to fall under the "variant of interest" and is highly infectious besides proving to be fatal for people with comorbidities. The people suffering from any pre-existing medical condition are at a greater risk stated the World Health Organization (WHO).

With the sudden spike in the number of cases in the country since last month, originating from Kerala, some states are put under high alert and the

State governments are taking the precautionary measures to prevent it. There have also been new cases recorded in various parts of the country.

The symptoms for the new variant are similar to that of Omicron. Patients with acute respiratory infection, or having persistent fever and cough in the last 10 days are advised to undergo a swab test. "WHO continues to monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants, including descendent lineages of volatile organic compounds (VOC), to track changes in prevalence and viral characteristics," stated WHO.