


Metrolife on the move

Vicky Kaushal to work in a movie based on Mahabharatha P4 

English medium debate rages

For the first time ever, 1,000 government schools in Karnataka will switch to English as medium of instruction. Here's what people are saying

Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy recently announced the introduction of English medium in 1,000 government schools. Many Kannada activists are against English as a medium of instruction (from Class 1 level), although they are not objecting to it as one of the languages in the curriculum. *Metrolife* spoke to the head of Karnataka Abhivruddhi Pradhikara (Karnataka Development Authority) and others to understand their points of view.

S G SIDDARAMAIAH
Chairman, Kannada Development Authority
I am against this move. It might result in the erasure of our language. We have nothing against English as a subject. It is necessary. But, it shouldn't become the

medium of instruction. If English becomes the medium, a day might come when Kannada will be forgotten completely. The government can introduce English as a medium of instruction from Class 7, but from class 1, Kannada has to be the medium. A UNESCO study says children who get primary level education in their native language have higher IQ than those studying in a foreign language. A government school in Sira (near Tumkur), which had just three or four children, now has 800 because of the special interest taken by a headmaster. If a teacher can turn things around, why can't the government?

ANIL SHETTY
President of Nav Bharat Democratic Party
Children must be given a choice to choose between both the mediums. The government is not following the state education policy recommended by



Teachers in government schools have been instructed to promote English medium of instruction. (Above) Students from Government Higher Primary School, Venkatagiri Kotte, Devanahalli. DH PHOTO BY B H SHIVAKUMAR



Anil Shetty

the Karnataka Knowledge Commission. They should do it. It says, "Build an equitable, inclusive and futuristic education system which will bring balanced and high-quality education uniformly across the state and spur higher education in a big way."

VASU
English lecturer
I am in charge of a government school in KR Pete. How can some random officer who sits in an AC room decide what's good for us? How does that even work? I am here at the

ground level and I know the problems. The government must provide uniforms, notebooks, and washrooms, and then think about introducing a new medium. Who is going to teach in English medium? The same teachers? How is that going to make any difference? If a Kannada-language teacher is given an English textbook and asked to teach, how is he going to do it? The quality will go down. One teacher per school has been assigned for training. Once they come back, there is no one to certify whether they are fit to teach in English.

VASANT SHETTY
Founder, Munnota Book Store (only bookstore dedicated to federalism)

V If we question ourselves as to which model of government suits us, the answer is federalism. India is a diverse country and a diverse group of people sitting

in Delhi can't implement laws, hoping for our betterment. The implementation of RTE (Right To Education) act by the central government has resulted in closing down of many government schools in Karnataka. Our city doesn't have good schools now. Even if we want our kids to go to a Kannada medium school, we do not have an option. Studies have shown that children will grasp things faster if taught in the language they converse in; their cognitive abilities and conceptual thinking will also improve if they learn in their mother tongue. Countries like Germany, China and the USA administer their respective languages as the medium of instruction.

VEERANNA MADIWALARA
Teacher, Govt Primary School
Introduction of English medium was unnecessary. If you look at the budget, a lot of money is

allocated for textbooks. If all the money were used properly, we would have got first class textbooks. There is all the money going? Schools lack proper classrooms and clean washrooms. The government is providing shoes and socks when children don't even have notebooks.

RAGHAVENDRA POOJARI
Programme co-ordinator, B.PAC
I studied in a Kannada-medium government school. I faced difficulty overcoming my inferiority complex as not being able to speak good English. The knowledge we possess has no value unless we are able to express it in good English. It is good that government school children finally have access to English-medium education. This should have been done long ago. Government schools are seen as being meant for underprivileged children. To face global competition, English-medium education is necessary. Parents want to see their kids converse in English. That is why they don't send them to Kannada-medium schools.

Rakshitha M N

Urban Commons: Salvaging our precious third quarter

Commons aren't just physical spaces. They nurture progressive ideas, safety for instance

Back when the Occupy movement raged, a disturbing trend emerged. Urban spaces for public gathering and protest were rapidly shrinking the world over. In Bengaluru, the story is no different at the moment. Urban commons, city-scapes shared by all, binds the collective, weaving in all social classes in the so-called third quarter, after home and work. Citizens meet and engage in meaningful interactions here. Now, private players, in the garb of enhancing social mobility, are gobbling up the commons, restricting access. "Cities must be redesigned around lakes, parks and wetlands kept as urban commons to ensure that citizens derive benefits. Falsely 'protected' by private entities, the voiceless and disadvantaged — children, elders, differently-abled, migrant workers, dhobis and grazers — are often excluded," notes ecologist Harini Nagendra. Commons aren't just physical spaces. They



Gulmohurs in bloom line a road in the IISc campus. Understanding the city itself as an urban common is crucial for Bengaluru. DH PHOTO BY B H SHIVAKUMAR

environment as per article 21 of the Constitution. Voting percentage in the April 18 LS poll reminds us of the apathy of the majority. If this continues, the city will be unlivable," says professor T V Ramachandra of the IISc. So, why are we at this seemingly irreversible juncture? "Irresponsible waste disposal, encroachments and de-notifying ecologically vital heritage spots by irrational decision makers speak volumes of environmental illiteracy. Alter-



Safety in the city, vibrant street culture and friendly neighbourhoods are dividends of communing the urban landscape. Citizens have to connect with their urban commons in Bengaluru. Fallen leaves at Cubbon Park. DH PHOTO BY S K DINESH

Cities must be redesigned around lakes, parks and wetlands kept as urban commons to ensure that citizens derive

robust city building. "Media could play a role. More writing on evolving urban culture is welcome. People don't care about public spaces. Mindsets need transformation. Rich and poor alike trash our streets and waterbodies," says KSPCB chairman C Jayaram. As all is not lost yet, it is quite clear that Bengaluru cannot afford to continue unabashed. "Still there are biota-rich islands. We need to make an inventory and adopt stringent measures. Nevertheless, haphazard urbanisation along with water, land and waste mafias are a threat. If concretisation continues, by 2025, 95% landscape will be devoid of biotic elements," professor Ramachandra warns. Small but definitive steps are needed at a time when citizens shrink into islands in a multitude of what could have been a bustling metropolis with a uniquely rich culture mix. Most of the 'commoning' now end up in privately-owned exclusive entities. "Why are BBMP parks shut from 10 am to 5 pm? This is denying access," says Naresh Narasimhan, urban designer. According to professor Ramachandra, only 3.5% Bengalureans are environmentally literate as per an IISc survey of 2008-2010. "We must sensitise ourselves through appropriate curriculum revisions," he suggests. We do not lack concerned voices. A concerted campaign must emerge from

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(Compiled by Surupasree Sarmmah)