

# THE BEACON

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## J&K enforces flood guidelines

Samya Sharma

The technical guidelines banning high-risk activities and creating no-build zones have been implemented in the aftermath of recent flash floods in Jammu and Kashmir, while the union territory still struggles to prevent natural disasters. The floods, which claimed several lives, destroyed homes across Kathua and Kishtwar districts, have exposed how vulnerable the region is to such calamities, questioning the government's preparedness.

While locals struggle to restore normalcy, officials say that Floodplain zoning could be the long-term solution to mitigate the impact. The Central Water Commission (CWC), part of the Ministry of Jal Shakti, has issued guidelines banning high-risk activities, including construction and living near the river banks, which encourages the states to adopt non-structural ways to reduce flood-related damage. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Chief Engineer, Irrigation and Flood Department, Manoj Gupta said that floods occur without warning, which makes it harder to predict. "Since forecasting is a challenge, we do not have any mechanism yet," he noted. He added that the government has designed projects about handling rivers that create havoc during heavy rainfall. "We always keep on preparing project reports for strengthening our vulnerable spots," said Gupta, emphasising the aim of protecting both the lives and the infrastructure.

## From bicycles to moon: India's space vision

Jessica Maria and Meinar Nahak

**BENGALURU:** Celebrating the diamond jubilee year, the Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum (VITM) inaugurated a new exhibition open all over India at all Science Centres/Museums of NCSM, Department of Culture, Government of India, "From Ancient Skies to Modern Horizon," marking the National Space Day on August, 23. The exhibition showcases India's space heritage over time, from ancient observatories to current advancements.

The event commemorates the historic success of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander, which made India the first country to land near the Moon's south pole on August 23, 2023. Following this milestone, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared the date as National Space Day and christened the landing site "Shiv Shakti Point."

This year's celebration featured an exhibition, showcasing India's astronomical heritage alongside the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO)



Dr. T. Subramanya Ganesh addressing the gathering at VITM, Bengaluru

Jessica Maria Joseph

technological advancements. The exhibit is part of a nationwide effort by the National Council of Science Museums to bring space science closer to students.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr T Subramanya Ganesh, Deputy Director of ISRO's Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), traced the evolution of India's space programme—from its humble beginnings in Thumba, Kerala, where scientists worked out of a church, to ISRO's current capabilities in planetary ex-

ploration and satellite navigation.

Currently, the global Space market share is 350 billion and India contributes around 2% to it, but by 2040 it aims to contribute at least 10% of the global Space market share, believing that if young minds contribute to it we are not far from achieving the set goal. He insisted on becoming a space entrepreneur creating opportunities by building Space Starts up rather than just looking for a job in the field.

Addressing the gathering, Ganesh stated, "Don't just accumu-

late knowledge, become an active intelligence. With Google and ChatGPT, information is at your fingertips. What matters is perception and depth." He highlighted that young minds must cultivate active intelligence, which involves keen observation of surroundings and a consistent curiosity to learn and on being good at what one does.

The talk also addressed practical aspects of space technology, such as satellite communications, disaster management, agriculture monitoring, and urban planning. "The

only difference between a Nobel laureate and a scientist is attention to detail," he said, encouraging students to stay curious and hands-on.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Jyoti Mehra, curator and head of education at VITM, said the museum aims to spark scientific curiosity through exhibitions and activities. "We want children to see space research not just as exploration but as a driver of innovation in agriculture, communication, and disaster management," she said.

India's space ambitions are expanding rapidly, with Bengaluru emerging as a hub for innovation. For many students who attended the event, it was more than a celebration, it was a glimpse of a future where they could play a role in shaping the nation's journey among the stars.

The event drew participation from over a dozen schools across Bengaluru, with students engaging in a lively Q&A session that covered topics ranging from re-entry technology to careers in aerospace engineering.

## Bengaluru police hosts public interaction meet

Diana Saldehna

**BENGALURU:** The citizens raised concerns over drugs, traffic congestion, stray dogs and public safety at Masika Janasamparka and Sanchara Samparka, the public and the police interaction organised by the Bengaluru City Police (BCP) and Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP), South Division on Saturday, held at the RV Dental College auditorium in JP Nagar. The event was attended by Commissioner of Police Seemant Kumar Singh, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy, and senior officers, who engaged in dialogue



Public interaction with Police Senior officers

Diana Saldehna

with residents on law and order and traffic issues. During the session, the public raised concerns, including stray dog menace, drug abuse in public spaces, two-sided parking, street vending, abandoned vehicles, night thefts,

garbage disposal, traffic congestion, and potholes. They also demanded controls on the sale of cigarettes and vapes near schools. The citizens asked for the enhancement of police staff, CCTV cameras, police chowkis, and arrangements

before Ganesha Chaturthi. The public appreciated the response of the Namma 112 helpline for the timely action during emergencies. "Drugs are a serious concern. As responsible citizens, you must share information with us so that timely action can be taken," the Commissioner said, stressing the need for collective responsibility in tackling the menace. He pointed to initiatives such as the KSP App, Safety Islands, the Namma 112 emergency response system, and Hoysala patrols, assuring citizens of regular monitoring and swift action.

## Kerala tops digital literacy

Ancy James

**K**erala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, on August 21, declared the state the first in India to achieve 100% digital literacy, calling it a 'proud milestone' for the state. The announcement was made at a public event in Thiruvananthapuram and was later followed by an official post on X. The declaration marks the successful completion of the first phase of the Digi Kerala project launched in 2023. According to the Government officials, people were trained in digital skills. The programme was implemented with the support of Akshaya e-Governance Centres and local self-help groups, covering over 1.5 crore individuals. However, despite CM's claim of full digital literacy, doubts remain about whether the target has been achieved completely. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Ahammad Ali, operator of Akshaya Centre, said, "It's a good project, but cannot be said to be 100%." He also added that significant sections of the state still depend on Akshaya for essential services.

## Experts urge return of Indian artefacts

Anamica Vinod

**BENGALURU:** With institutions like the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) offering world-class conservation, India now has the capacity to safeguard returned artefacts and reframe how the past is remembered, opined journalist Shyam Bhatia at the Bangalore International Centre on August 20 during his talk "Tipu's Tiger and the Empire's Trophy Room".

Bhatia examined the removal of Indian treasures during the colonial conquest, including prized possessions of the emperor Tipu Sultan, like his Tiger Automaton (a wooden figure) and his library.



Ahlad in conversation with Bhatia

Anamica Vinod

He commented on how restoring artefacts was also about restoring dignity, pointing to the visit of leaders of the Naga community, earlier this year, to view their ancestral remains still held in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

In conversation with Bhatia, Amika Ahldag, Director of

Exhibitions and Curation at MAP, spoke about the value of objects that matter to communities.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, she said, "Usually it's governments that decide what is of value, and that is often about prestige. But objects tied to communities may hold much deeper meaning."

## Thuruthy stretch to be rebuilt

Sanjana Shaji

**A**fter years of delay, the much-anticipated reconstruction of the Thuruthy to Mulaykkamthuruthy road in Kottayam is finally set to begin under the Rebuild Kerala Initiative. The project has now been allocated Rs 132 crore, a significant increase from its earlier budget, and work is expected to commence later this year. The construction was initially undertaken under the Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP), which had an estimated cost of 120 crore. The project was on hold after the former contractor

argued that the funds were insufficient and subsequently withdrew from the project. "Preliminary processes are complete and the roadwork is set to begin soon with the contract being handed over to SPL Infrastructure Ltd," said Mulaykkamthuruthy Ward Member Sasikumar. Despite the official announcements, residents remain sceptical. Speaking to *The Beacon*, resident Sanoop said, "We have heard promises before, but nothing has changed. Unless the work actually begins, these crores mean nothing to us."