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Insurgent threats reflect safety failure

Sneha Loitongbam

The civil society organisation, Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), which organised the peaceful protest against the Sangai Festival, supported the state government in initiating action against groups issuing threats to civilians. However, the convener of COCOMI, Athouba Khuraijam, simultaneously criticised the state's failure to ensure safety for the people, saying that such threats only show how deep the long-standing "security vacuum" is.

The participants of the festival were asked to offer a public apology by the banned Meitei insurgent group, as their attendance was labelled as a "betrayal" to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Khuraijam stated, "COCOMI upholds the fundamental principle that no individual or group outside the framework of the law has the authority to impose decree..." but he also stressed that "... the ground realities show minimal improvement in civilian safety, particularly for IDPs."

Khuraijam critiques that the government's warnings remain "symbolic rather than functional". He highlights that extortion and intimidation are still widespread, and the anti-extortion cell is hindered by "fear of retaliation". He emphasised that the state is yet to demonstrate political will to secure all citizens effectively.

Khuraijam also says that enforcing the law against armed groups remains the exclusive responsibility of the state, and the protection of civilians needs decisive action on the ground.

Residents react as AI camera installation halts

Sheza & Rishika

BENGALURU: The delay in the government's AI camera project aimed at identifying potholes, roadside garbage, illegal hoardings, and construction debris has triggered public debate on privacy. This technological experiment in the form of installing AI cameras meant to be fitted on corporation vehicles has been delayed as the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) officials raised privacy concerns, stating that the cameras could also track the routes they take.

Although the initiative was given the green light by the Chief Secretary earlier this year and has already distributed 30 cameras to five new city corporations, the installation has yet to begin.

The delay has drawn responses from several



Potholes and debris on Hombegowda Nagar main road

Deccan Herald

citizen activists, who pointed out a lack of transparency in the decision-making process. Sandeep Anirudhan, founder of Citizens Agenda and Aikyam Community for Sustainable Living, expressed concern over the sudden halt, stating that it is not a matter of privacy, but the government's "lack of transparent public consultation" that has led to this setback. He said

the public should have been informed before the decision was made. He also commented that the initiative was a good step towards identifying the complaints of the public, which were previously recorded manually.

Several activists echoed similar concerns, especially over how the decision was conveyed to the public. When asked whether they support

the use of AI cameras for civic monitoring, residents expressed mixed reactions, largely based on the conditions of city roads and the number of accidents caused by potholes. "I support this plan because AI cameras not only detect these potholes... but also reduce the chance of accidents in our city," says Santhosh, a commuter who travels daily by road. He also

mentioned that Bangalore is filled with heavy traffic and roads are not maintained properly, making it essential for the state to fix these problems.

Tarshana, another citizen, pointed out that although the scheme's stated purpose is a valid reason, she has privacy concerns, stating, "I have concerns regarding data collection, potential misuse of the footage, and the continuous monitoring of the general public by government surveillance." She further added that if the data is strictly used to bring rapid improvement in infrastructure and safety, it would be beneficial to the public. For now, many residents are waiting to see if the project will move forward in any form as the debate between privacy and public safety remains unresolved.

SJU launches Centre for Religion and Culture

Joswin Pereira

BENGALURU: St. Joseph's University inaugurated the Centre for Religion and Culture (CRC) on December 8 to document and archive the historical and cultural contributions of Christian missionaries, scholars, and social activists in Karnataka. Archbishop Peter Machado of Bengaluru and Prof. S. Japhet, Chairperson of the Karnataka Christian Development Corporation, officiated the launch.

Calling the initiative a milestone, Prof. Japhet said that India's development in education, healthcare, and social reform cannot be understood without recognising Christian contributions. Archbishop



Book release at the CSC inauguration

Jeffran

Machado, who envisioned the centre three years ago, stressed the urgency of preserving historical records "in an age when things are being wiped out".

Founding director Dr Balakiran Kumar said that the CRC will host five lecture series over six months and will publish research

articles in Kannada and English by May 2026. It plans to develop regional nodes in Mangaluru, Mysuru, Hubballi, Belagavi, Raichur, and Kalaburagi in collaboration with partner institutions such as St. Aloysius (Deemed to be University) and Kittel College, Dharwad.

The centre will also establish a Karnataka Christian Women Writers and Scholars Forum and a Christian Artist Forum to highlight women's and artistic contributions. A national conference on "Christian Contribution to Nation Building" is scheduled for July 2026. International partners include Sophia University Tokyo, the University of Vienna, Fordham University, and Harvard Divinity School. Vice Chancellor Dr Victor Lobo proposed developing a School of Comparative Religion, while historian Alan Machado Prabhu delivered the keynote on "The Evolution of Christianity in Karnataka."

India's PMGC-2025 dream comes to an end

Angel Hannah George

India's much-anticipated return to the PUBG Mobile Global Championship (PMGC) ended in disappointment, leaving e-sports enthusiasts across the country dissatisfied.

India fielded two teams - Oranguattan and True Rippers at the PMGC 2025 held in Thailand from 28 November. Both teams were eliminated ahead of the grand finale scheduled for December 12 to 14.

A former e-sports athlete identified as Sixless told *The Beacon*, "The competitive gap caused due to the ban on the game had a heavy impact on India's performance". Several players, coaches and other analysts have expressed their dissatisfaction through various social media platforms. In an analysis video on YouTube, TalkEsport, an esports analysis channel, observed that Indian teams went in with high hopes, but the infrastructure and match pressure exposed glaring weaknesses.

Many within the community believe that Indian squads couldn't match the consistency of top global teams, and stronger investment by the government can help rebuild India's image in a sport that has a global limelight.

Concern over AQI drop

Dimple Maria

A week into Kochi's sudden dip in air quality, experts warn that the city's smog problem is no longer a one-off incident but a growing pattern.

Over the past several days, residents across Kochi, especially in areas near Eloor and Manjummel, say that the air has felt heavier, dustier and visibly hazy. Many reported throat irritations, breathing trouble and an overall discomfort while stepping outside. Environmental expert Sandeep Anirudhan told *The Beacon* that the

worsening air is mainly due to industrial emissions, construction dust and rising traffic. He explained that trucks often move without covering their loads, tyres are not cleaned, and construction sites rarely follow dust-control rules. "We have a lot of good laws... but it is all in the book," he said. According to him, shrinking green cover and weak governance are making the situation worse, arguing that the city's growth is happening through "unplanned development" rather than proper planning. Doctors are beginning to notice the shift, too.

Dr Vinod Krishnan, a paediatrician, indicated that there has been a clear rise in cases of cough, throat irritation and breathing issues over the past week. He warned that if the air quality continues to stay low, these short-term problems can slowly turn into chronic lung conditions.

Archa Gopan, a Kochi resident, claimed that the amount of dust felt noticeably higher recently and that there was little to no guidance from the government on what the necessary precautions to be taken.

Marks incentive eases teachers

Yashaswini J

BENGALURU: A change in the SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate) system has brought big relief to many teachers in Karnataka, as the passing marks have now been fixed at 33, claims Rashmi, a mathematics teacher in a government school. With less pressure to push every student toward the edge of passing, it has allowed them to organise their teaching in a more structured and practical way.

This change gained more importance after Karnataka's education minister, Madhu Bangarappa, announced that teachers will receive incentives if government

school students improve their SSLC results this year.

Speaking to *The Beacon*, Rashmi explains how she groups the students according to their potential or performance, and conducts separate classes for slow learners, average, and high scorers. Model papers and targeted practice help weaker students aim for at least 30 marks, while the high scorers can train with more advanced problems. She stated that AI-based demonstrations, especially for science experiments, have made lessons more engaging with real-time simulations.