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Drivers concerned over e-bus breakdowns

Akhil Raj

Drivers of Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTc) electric buses claim daily operations have become increasingly stressful, with abrupt power failures and battery alerts leaving them stranded in traffic and facing commuter rage. The drivers' concerns come as Bengaluru moves ahead with plans to add 4,500 electric buses under the PM e-Drive Scheme, a major expansion of the city's electric fleet. The push follows repeated operational issues in the existing fleet, including an electric bus that broke down during peak hours on 11 Dec, disrupting traffic and bus services on a busy route. Speaking to *The Beacon* BMTc e-bus driver Basava, said "breakdowns are no longer rare, sometimes the bus just stops in the middle of traffic, and passengers get angry at us, but we can't do anything" another BMTc bus driver, who wished to be anonymous stated breakdowns are common on longer routes, with buses losing power without warning and battery performance falling short of expectations, such failures often force drivers to terminate trips mid-way, throwing schedules off track. Bus operators say they critically need clearer training and much quicker technical support when electric buses break down on the road. BMTc, however, maintains that the rollout already includes improved maintenance systems and charging facilities, and that these will continue to expand as more electric buses are added to the fleet.

Art goes beyond commercial value

Ameva Krishnakumar

For many emerging artists, art events are driven not only by sales but also by the need for recognition, offering spaces where creativity is encouraged, and the labour behind the work is acknowledged, said Deepa Jayaprakash, artist at JP Art Gallery on Tuesday at the Indian Art Festival, held from December 12 - 14 at Palace Grounds. The three-day festival brought together 300 artists and 20 galleries from across the country, showcasing 3,000 artworks, including paintings, sculptures, and ceramics, all of which

Armed forces integrate AI for joint operations

Disha Banthia

India's military is transforming joint operations by integrating advanced technology which includes the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), powered sensors, automatic drones, precision guided strikes and real time intelligence fusion systems to make tri-service operations faster and lethal while reducing collateral damage taking lessons from 1971 war, said Cdr. of the Indian Navy, as the nation prepares to celebrate Vijay Divas. Vijay Divas is celebrated on December 16, to honour one of India's most decisive military victories, the Indo-Pak war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh. On this day in 1971, around 93000 Pakistani troops surrendered to the Indian Armed Forces in Dhaka, which led to the birth of Bangladesh as an independent, sovereign nation, marking one of the



Hawk Mk 132 jet

Disha Banthia

largest military surrenders since World War two. The technological evolution from the deployment of rapid helicopters in 1971 to today's autonomous systems helps us understand how foundational joint military operation principles continue to shape India's military abilities even after five long decades. Strategic lessons from the historic victory continue to shape military principles today.

The 1971 war remains important to military education institutes like the National Defence College (NDC). "We drill it hard in training at NDC, explicitly focusing on how we prepped forces, timed ops with weather, and synced Army, Air Force, Navy without theatre commands back then," said Cdr. S Guruprasad, Indian Navy, highlighting the use of meticulous force preparation to avoid impulsive, unprepared

actions with the help of case studies from 1971, planning of bold manoeuvres and complete synchronisation amongst the defence forces. Across India, military units pay homage to Vijay Divas with wreath-laying ceremonies, parades and remembrance events in the cantonments across the country, honouring the sacrifices which led to victory. Veterans of the war will join the celebrations alongside serving

personnel. Around this special day, armed forces conduct veteran welfare initiatives which include meetings, family visits and distribution of commemorative mementoes. The Ministry of Defence is advancing reforms with improvements in the System for Pension Administration Raksha (SPARSH) administration portal through smart card implementation. Additional programs offer job training and placement schemes to help veterans find work that is suitable after service. This also includes discounts on everyday goods from the canteen stores department, free legal help from the National Legal Services Authority and various other schemes for housing, savings and insurance. These measures help in promoting financial security, respect and a dignified life in retirement.

Informal expectations challenge disconnect bill

Niranjana Jayan

While the proposed right to disconnect bill offers legal support for employees to ignore work-related communication post office hours, corporate employees say informal expectations of constant availability may continue to shape their daily work life, raising doubts over whether legislation alone can alter workplace culture. The Right to Disconnect Bill 2025 was introduced as a private member's bill by MP Supriya Sule, which seeks to give employees the legal right to disconnect from employment-related calls, messages and emails after official work hours.



Representational Image

Newsfirst prime

The bill also mandates overtime pay if employees decide to work beyond scheduled hours. Neha, a corporate communications professional, stated that availability often originates from self-imposed pressure. Early-career employees feel obligated to respond after work hours out of

fear of creating discrepancies, and constant access through messaging channels can haze boundaries. Workplace culture plays a definitive role in deciding whether employees can realistically disconnect, she added. Azoon C, a creative associate worker in advertising, said that

while after-hours responses are hardly mandatory, the burden of remaining aware and alert still exists. "The obligation is never stated instantly; however, there is always the thought that if I don't respond, someone else's work will get delayed," said Azoon. Swanith, a corporate lawyer, adds that the bill may legally protect the after-hour disconnect, but he warns that negotiated "out of hour" agreements could merely formalise existing pressure. He calls for clearer drafting, inclusion in labour laws, coverage for gig workers, and stronger enforcement to make this right practical and legally effective.

Liquor spread sparks statewide campaign in Kerala

Anaina Kasim

The Kerala Madhya Nirodhana Samithi has initiated a statewide campaign against the Left Democratic Front (LDF) party, accusing the state government of promoting liquor outlets. The campaign highlights the drawbacks of the government's relaxed alcohol policy. Samithi leaders claim the government has failed to fulfill its 2016 commitment to limit liquor access, and yet the number of bars rose from 29 to 945. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Advocate Manoj highlighted that, during the elections, political parties purchase alcohol in bulk and distribute it in housing colonies to influence votes. Alcohol is cited as a primary cause of domestic violence and marital breakdown. "Husbands with alcoholic tendencies often arrive home late, use abusive language and physically assault their wives," he said. Samithi president Eyachery Kunhikrishnan mentions that the government is deliberately downplaying the dangers of alcohol. He also warns that the state has turned bars into "symbols of development" at the expense of family peace.

Passengers reconsider air travel options

Allen George Easo

Increases in airfares are driving citizens to plan trips far in advance, rethink tour destinations, or skip air travel altogether to save money. Recent spikes in ticket prices have reshaped travel habits, especially among students and middle-class travellers. Even after the government announced a temporary cap on prices, the relief on the ground appears poor. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Minni, a ticketing agent at Riya - The Travel Expert, said,

"We haven't seen much difference in prices even a week after the cap was implemented." She added that families are postponing vacations and choosing alternative destinations or transportation due to high prices. The impact is stronger on budget travellers. Dhiraj Kumar Hansda, a student from Jharkhand studying in Bengaluru, said he books tickets nearly two months in advance. "Air travel feels like a luxury for people like me. If I don't plan early, I'm forced to take longer routes home," he said.



Art works displayed at the Indian Art Festival

Ameva Krishnakumar

connected to India's history and heritage. The festival exhibited diverse artistic installations, paving the way for millions of independent artists. Art enthusiasts and the audience attended in large numbers, viewing and purchasing art pieces, thereby providing the recognition that artists seek.

Jayaprakash emphasised that such events are very worthy and useful for every upcoming artist or art lover who has compassion for art and in displaying their artistic talents, not for the sake of money, but for mental peace and satisfaction, for the acknowledgement of their hard work and labour.