

# THE BEACON

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## AI and traffic policing

Aaryan Raj Pradhan

A Bengaluru-based techie, Pankaj Tanwar, has gone viral after claiming to have modified his helmet into an artificial intelligence-powered device that detects traffic violations in real time and forwards the footage to the police. Shared on social media platform X, the innovation has sparked debate around citizen-led enforcement, privacy, and the growing role of AI in policing. Speaking to The Beacon, Bengaluru-based software engineer Aaron Saw said the idea reflects both innovation and concern. He noted that the technology used to detect violations, such as riding without a helmet or signal jumping, already exists and is widely used in various applications. However, he warned that the performance of such cameras on Indian roads is far from reliable. "Indian roads are extremely chaotic. Lighting changes, vehicles overlap, cameras shake, and all such things in real traffic, there will definitely be errors," Saw said, pointing to the risk of false identifications and misread number plates. Beyond technical limitations, the helmet has also raised questions about privacy and accountability. While recording in public spaces is legally allowed, Saw noted that continuous and automated monitoring changes its impact. He argued that such tools should not directly influence penalties or policing outcomes. "It's okay as a concept if it's just providing information or tips. But it shouldn't be treated as direct evidence. There has to be human verification," he said.

## U.S. quits climate pact as ice melts, heat soars

Kishan SG

President Donald Trump on 7 January ordered the withdrawal of the United States from the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), the 1992 treaty underpinning global climate talks. The Paris Agreement (an International treaty aimed at combating climate change), which helps with the unprecedented environmental degradation, has ignited fierce backlash as polar ice melts and temperatures soar. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the UNFCCC "anti-American" exit from 66 organisations, but scientists warn this severs from Miami to Mumbai as the U.S. voice as the planet hurtles toward tipping points. Between 1992 and 2025, NASA's GISTEMP (Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) Surface Temperature Analysis) v4 records show

global temperatures surging by +1.13°C—from +0.15°C (1992) to +1.32°C (2024 record)—with the last decade averaging +1.10°C above pre-industrial levels. Greenland ice loss increased from -100 Gt/yr (Gigatonnes per year) to -340 Gt/yr (GRACE/GRACE-FO + IMBIE, twin satellites), while Antarctica's ice loss accelerated from -20 to -365 Gt/yr, raising sea levels by ~2 mm annually. Arctic sea ice minimum extent crashed 47% (7.45 to 3.95 million km<sup>2</sup>, NSIDC {National Snow and Ice Data Centre}), amplifying warming via albedo loss. Melting ice caps will doom coastal cities from Miami to Mumbai as 240+ Gt Greenland melt and West Antarctic collapse accelerate past tipping points, with satellite data confirming 3.4× faster disintegration since UNFCCC's birth. The United States'

withdrawal from the UNFCCC, the first-ever for a treaty ratified unanimously by the Senate, blocks U.S. participation in COP summits and the IPCC, complicating the Paris treaty's re-entry for future administrations. EU leaders decried it as "profoundly damaging," while John Kerry called it a "gift to polluters." Amid U.S. wildfires that have doubled in frequency since the 1990s, Midwest droughts, and Miami flooding, critics argue that federal disengagement ignores the \$ 100 billion-plus annual domestic climate costs. Trump allies prioritise "energy independence," but data show that climate crises, post-2005, are accelerating across various indicators. States and cities pledge subnational action, yet experts fear slowed global progress as emissions must peak now to avert 2°C warming.

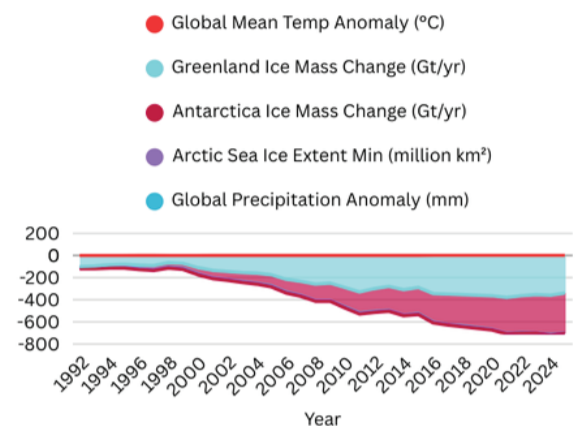


Chart 1: Synchronized acceleration: Global temperature, Greenland ice loss, loss in precipitation and Arctic Sea ice decline 1992-2025.

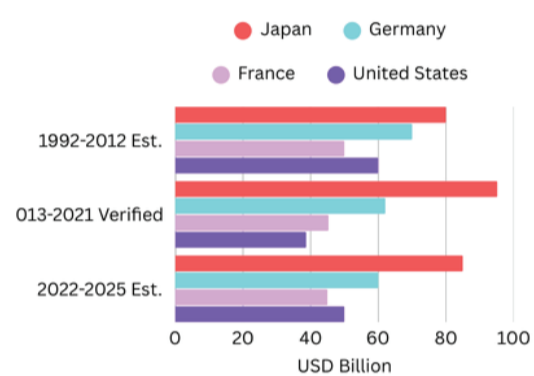


Chart 2: Top 4 donors' USD 260B+ cumulative climate finance, showing USAs value as donor

## Rising AQI compromises immunity against H3N2

Timeus Christian Sunder

The spike in the air quality index (AQI) has made people more susceptible to the H3N2 virus, a subtype of the influenza A virus, which primarily causes seasonal flu and affects the respiratory system, ultimately damaging the immune system. With Bangalore's AQI worsening by 22 per cent in 2025, this has resulted in more frequent illnesses and longer recovery times among residents. Dr M. S. Gopalakrishnan Madhavan Sasidharan, professor at Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Puducherry, said,



Smog chokes Bengaluru streets

Source: Deccan Herald

"PM2.5 particles, the most dangerous component of air pollution, penetrate deep into the lungs. Just like a smoker's lung is vulnerable to pathogens, a person living in high air pollution areas is more susceptible to viral and bacterial infections." He also warned that air

pollution increases the risk of stroke, heart attacks and cognitive slowing. Explaining how it affects the immune system, Dr Isaac C.B, campus doctor at St. Joseph's University, said that a person's immune system is already compromised by the lifestyle they lead,

and the AQI surge only worsens this, and insisted that people strengthen their immune system with a good diet, exercise and sleep. Dr Sasidharan and Dr Isaac both emphasised the importance of wearing a mask, preferably an N95 mask, especially if you live in a metropolitan city. Joshua Mahima, an asthmatic patient, also expressed that he has to take more precautionary measures, where simply walking to class or playing basketball becomes a "chore," requiring multiple inhaler doses to get through the day.

## High Court to examine GBA

Tanvi Harbola

BENGALURU: The Karnataka High Court will hear challenges to the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act (GBA) from March 11 to 13, 2026, to decide whether the law violates the Constitution by centralising control of Bengaluru's civic governance. According to the petitioners, the GBA shifts city governance to an unelected body under the Chief Minister, weakening elected mayors and thereby violates the 74th Constitutional Amendment. The law also keeps 16-20 separate government agencies instead of combining them and removes neighbourhood planning groups that allowed citizen participation. "This bill does the exact opposite of what it claims," said urban governance activist Anirudhan, speaking to The Beacon. "They say they are copying models like London and New York, but here mayors have no real power. Everything remains controlled by the state government." The court's ruling could have wider implications for urban governance across India, where similar patterns of centralisation exist.

## 49th Chennai book fair welcomes readers with free entry

Sruthi A Lakshna

This year, entry to the Chennai Book Fair is free for all visitors, making accessibility its central highlight. The 49th Chennai Book Fair, one of Asia's largest book exhibitions, inaugurated by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and has drawn visitors from across Tamil Nadu and other states. The fair is being held at the Nandanam YMCA Grounds from January 8 to 21, between 11:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. The 2026 edition will feature around 1,000 stalls, one hall exclusively for children, with publishers from different parts

of the world offering books in languages Tamil, English and other Indian languages, covering various genres and also providing discounts for school and college students. Guru, an event organiser from the Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India (BAPASI), said, "This time we have introduced QR codes that can be scanned at the entrance near each lane for a layout of all the stalls and the types of books they sell, making purchase easier." In addition, the fair also hosts

book launches, discussions with authors, and cultural programs. Speaking to The Beacon, Shanmugapriya, a visitor, said, "For first-generation graduates like me, book fairs like this are where we can buy affordable books from. I purchase books that help me clear my exams." Another visitor, Yogeshwari, stated that she prioritises reading from books at a time when AI is often seen as a substitute for knowledge. "Books not only help me retain my attention span but also make me enjoy the process of flipping through pages," she added.

## Purified water still unsafe

Nanasu Raghuram

Doctors suggest boiling water before drinking to ensure safety, as water contamination cases are rising with latest cases reported from Indore, Madhya Pradesh and the sewage leak at Lingarajapuram, Bangalore. Dr Anand Mamdapur, Director of Critical Care Services at Sakra World Hospital, emphasised that water purifiers make dirty water appear clean and screen some microbes, but many germs don't die without boiling. "You must subject this purified water to a second level of screening—meaning you must boil it," he suggested. Individuals at the extremes

of age and those with weakened immunity are more susceptible to infections. Major symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, exhaustion, low BP, low sugar, loss of electrolytes, and kidney dysfunctions, eventually leading to multiple organ failure. Since infections caused by contaminated water often have no specific treatment, serious damage may occur before the source of the contamination is identified. He warned people not to overlook symptoms and self-medicate. "Those medications could turn out to be dangerous and sometimes lethal in some patients," he warned.