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## Grok deepfakes spark IT crackdown

V Priyanka

Lawyer Josephine Geetha stresses platforms must detect fake information using AI tools and appoint grievance officers for quick takedowns within a day. Elon Musk's Grok AI on X sparked outrage by generating non-consensual deepfake obscene content of women and kids. Users twisted public photos into explicit images, blowing up since late 2025. India's MeitY hit X with notices over explicit content. X responded by January 7 with fixes, but paywalls only curbed some access free Grok still risks misuse as of January 9.

She warned, "They have to watch for these fakes, take them down quickly like in a day or so". They lose safe harbour under IT Rules 2021. Section 66E of the IT Act punishes sharing private images without consent, even AI-altered ones with up to 3 years imprisonment or Rs 2 lakh fine. "Section 66E nails anyone sharing private pics without consent, even AI versions," Geetha explains.

DPDP Act 2023 treats altered faces as personal data needing explicit consent, risking ₹250 crore fines. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Sections 111 and 353 cover cybercrimes and digital harm with 5-10 years imprisonment. Victims can sue X for negligence and seek damages. Upcoming IT Rules mandate watermarks and consent checks, with blocking for non-compliance. As global probes intensify, India's firm stance may force real AI safeguards.

## Pongal: From farm to festival

Riya Vivek

**BENGALURU:** In today's globalised and fast-paced world, festivals face the risk of becoming just another day in our busy schedules. Pongal, a festival rooted in gratitude to the harvest season, the sun, and the farmers, is an opportunity to reconnect children with the seasonal rhythm.

Latha Madhusudhan, Waldorf educator and author, believes that festivals gain meaning only through participation. "The celebration becomes an experience only when children engage in the

## Drivers fined for infrastructure gaps

Ashutosh Ranjan

**BENGALURU:** Veteran driving instructor, Durga Driving School, V Kumar, on Monday criticised the Karnataka government for imposing fines of Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 on vehicles using high-intensity headlights and coloured lights, arguing that drivers are being penalised for an infrastructure problem the state has failed to address.

"Truck drivers aren't restless, they are rational and the government is now fining drivers for a problem it failed to solve" critiques V Kumar, principal of the 40 year old Durga Driving School regarding the government issued fines up to Rs.500 to 1000 on being booked for breaching Section 177 of the Motor Vehicle Act, to ensure road safety and smooth functioning of vehicles in high traffic zones. Speaking to *The Beacon*, R Safwaan (named changed),



Officers inspect flashy vehicle mods

Deccan Herald

traffic police at Peenya-Nelmangala main road, stated after the cases are filed on these vehicles, drivers would have to pay the fines, and their vehicles could be seized. "Vehicles require the indicator lights on either side, taillight and normal headlight with low intensity, and anything exceeding these is ordered to be ceased". He added that the tractor-trailers, lorries, and tour and travel buses operate at high

speeds at night with high-intensity lights on, causing severe inconveniences to other vehicles on the city's main roads.

Regarding this claim, Kumar explained that the truck drivers are bound to use high-beam lights at night because of the absence of well-operating streetlights on the highway roads. During vehicle renewal processes, fitness certificates are granted only after vehicles are

approved for installing the directive headlight requirements; however, drivers later modify their voltages according to their preferences. Majorly, the tours and travel buses modify their headlights and install various coloured lights all over the vehicle to attract tourists. During times of rain, these flashy lights exacerbate the situation on damaged and waterlogged roads to the extent that it makes

it difficult for vehicles to spot other vehicles on the road, increasing the risk of accidents. Isolated roads without any bay parking remain a threat zone during bad climatic conditions.

"The reasoning behind installing these fancy red, yellow and blue coloured lights is to display their vehicles on the roads. Some drivers prefer high-beam lights for their own convenience, particularly those with poor eyesight. The truck drivers need routine eye checkups, as a compulsion", said Kumar.

However, this initiative aims to ensure road safety. "Vehicles passing each other from opposite directions on narrow roads need to reduce the intensity of the headlights, and switch back to normal afterwards.... However, only the experienced drivers can tolerate these high beam lights on the roads" he added.

## Lack of campus awareness hinders Tamil Nadu HPV Drive

Jencilin Elisabeth

**A**s Tamil Nadu prepares to introduce free vaccination against Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which is linked to cervical cancer, many students say they are still unclear about what the vaccine is and why it matters. Even as the state becomes the first in India to initiate such a programme through the public health system, awareness on campuses remains low.

The HPV vaccine is meant to prevent infections that can later lead to cervical cancer, one of the most common cancers affecting women in India. While the policy

HPV Vaccine

focuses on prevention, its success depends on whether young people understand and trust what is being offered.

While speaking to *The Beacon*, Suhashini, a student from Loyola College, Chennai, said that she had heard about cervical cancer but did not



Touchwood Pharmacy

know much about HPV or the vaccine until recently. "These topics aren't really discussed among students," she said. She added that embarrassment and unclear information often stop students from asking questions. "If colleges spoke about it openly, people

would be less hesitant." Sowbarnika, a final year B Pharm student from SNS College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Coimbatore, explained that the vaccine works best when taken early, before exposure to the virus. "The science behind it is clear but many people are unsure because they don't understand how it works," she said.

As Tamil Nadu moves ahead with the vaccination drive, the challenge lies beyond policy. Without awareness and open conversations, turning a strong decision on paper into real public acceptance may be difficult.

## TN surveillance saves lives

Karan Siddharth

**T**amil Nadu deserves praise for its low dengue mortality rate despite higher cases than states like Kerala, says Dr. Vidhubala, founder-director of Uvakai Foundation with 20+ years in public health, behavioral sciences, research, and sustainable development.

The latest reports from the Union Health Ministry revealed that in 2025, Tamil Nadu logged 20,866 cases of dengue but reported only 12 deaths, a Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of 0.06%. Kerala, by contrast, recorded only half the cases- 10,239, yet suffered nearly four times the fatalities- 49, yielding a CFR of 0.48%. This disparity reveals fundamental differences in clinical management and healthcare infrastructure.

She explained, "The surveillance mechanism in Tamil Nadu is sharp, and cases are captured accurately across all levels of healthcare, while Kerala's predominantly low-lying geography, high population density, and status as a travel hub creates continuous viral re introduction strains during frequent surge in seasons.

## Bengaluru bylaws reshape real estate

Rochelle Mary Marshall

**BENGALURU:** Revised building bylaws, introduced by the Karnataka State government, allow developers to purchase upto 60 per cent additional floor area ratio (FAR), reshaping how real estate projects are planned and priced across the city, according to industry professionals at Royal Infra Realtors.

For developers and brokers, premium FAR has made redevelopment projects more financially viable, particularly in central and well-connected neighbourhoods where land costs are high. "Premium FAR has clearly pushed more

redevelopment activity because developers can extract more value from the same parcel of land," said Carmen Xavier, Head of CRM and Sales Executive at Royal Infra Realtors.

However, the policy has also altered pricing strategies across the sector. "Premium FAR hasn't made homes cheaper; it's just been added to the price," Xavier said, noting that the cost of additional buildable rights is passed on to buyers through higher per-square-foot rates. While taller buildings increase inventory, agents say infrastructure constraints now shape sales conversations.

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