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BMTC unfazed by suburban rail growth

Ashutosh Ranjan

BENGALURU: BMTC bus drivers show no concern about the claim of 40,000 buses will be taken off the roads after the construction of the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project. The Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project is an initiative to construct new suburban rail networks, which would integrate with existing railway stations, metro stations, and bus depots. The Indian Rail Infrastructure Development Company, K-RIDE, has taken the initiative to construct. The project aims to reduce congestion on roads and eliminate the public's dependence on road transport for commuting, benefiting around 19 lakh commuters per day.

According to the Managing Director of K-RIDE, Lakshman Singh, the completion of the project could result in the disoperation of several buses that function specifically in the city areas. Speaking to *The Beacon*, Rajesh M, a bus conductor, stated, "Several people are habituated to use public buses for commuting since several decades now, so there would not be much negative impact on us". He emphasised the affordability of using the suburban rail by stating, "Its pricing depends because there was a price hike for the metro, which made people switch back to the public buses... so, if they do the same with the suburban rail, people would again prefer travelling in public buses." Sartaj Singh, a daily commuter, stated, "I would prefer using buses for little short-distance travel... Also, buses are very affordable, and I have the student bus pass facility for my convenience."

Global instability keeps India on guard

Aakanksha Singh

With tensions rising in neighbouring countries, India cannot afford to look away. The growing conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan is now being described by many observers as an "open war." While India is not directly involved, the effects of such instability rarely remain confined within borders. In South Asia, events in one country often echo across the region in ways that are slow, subtle, and sometimes difficult to predict.

For India's security forces, this is not a moment for dramatic moves or public statements. It is a time for careful observation, quiet preparation, and steady nerves. The concern in New Delhi is not about sending troops or stepping into the conflict. Instead, it is about understanding what instability can bring with it. History has shown that

when turmoil grips parts of the region, extremist groups sometimes try to take advantage of the chaos. Illegal weapon networks can become active, militant organisations may attempt to regroup, and old tensions can resurface in new forms.

While speaking to *The Beacon*, a senior Indian Army officer, Brig PK Singh (name change), explained the situation: "Whenever there is instability in our neighbourhood, we stay alert," he said. "While India is not directly involved, we closely monitor the situation to ensure our national security is not affected." That sense of alertness, he made clear, is not something that begins only when headlines turn alarming. Preparedness is part of daily military life. "Preparedness is a continuous process for us not something we begin only after a crisis starts," he said. Surveillance systems remain active, intelligence

inputs are constantly reviewed, and coordination between different security agencies continues quietly behind the scenes. Much of this work never makes it to the public eye, but it forms the backbone of national security. One of the key concerns is whether militant groups operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region could attempt to shift their focus toward India. The officer did not dismiss the possibility. "Whenever tensions rise in that region, there is always a possibility that certain extremist groups may try to take advantage of the chaos," he noted. "However, our intelligence agencies and armed forces are constantly tracking such threats. We prepare for the worst but work hard to prevent it from happening."

India's borders, especially along the Line of Control, remain sensitive areas. During periods of regional conflict, vigilance

naturally increases. Patrols are intensified, technological surveillance is enhanced, and communication between agencies is further streamlined. "Our borders are always under strict watch," the officer said. "In times of regional tension, we enhance vigilance further through patrols, technology, and coordination with other security agencies."

Beyond immediate security risks, prolonged instability in South Asia carries broader implications. Trade routes can be disrupted. Diplomatic relationships may face strain. The overall balance of power in the region can shift in subtle but important ways. For India, the long-term approach is centred on stability. "In the long term, regional instability can affect trade routes, diplomatic relations, and overall security dynamics in South Asia," the officer explained. "As a responsible nation,

India focuses on maintaining stability, peace, and readiness while protecting its national interests."

For ordinary citizens across India, daily life continues as usual. There is no visible panic, no sudden changes in routine. Markets remain open, schools function normally, and cities move at their regular pace. Yet behind this normalcy lies a constant layer of vigilance. Security forces remain alert, watching developments, assessing risks, and preparing for different scenarios. In a region where history has repeatedly shown how quickly tensions can spread, India's response remains steady and measured. It is not about loud reactions or dramatic gestures. It is about staying informed, staying prepared, and ensuring that the country's security remains strong, no matter what unfolds beyond its borders.

Karnataka preschool clause faces pushback

Jencilin Elisabeth J

BENGALURU: The new preschool regulations proposed by the Karnataka government have raised concerns among small private preschool operators, who say the new requirements do not align with Bengaluru's rental market.

Under the proposed norms, preschools must meet stricter building size standards, secure long-term lease agreements, and ensure the land is approved for educational use. Even though the rules are yet to be enforced, several operators fear that complying with certain



Preschool students in classroom

Flickr

clauses could be challenging for smaller centers. Mahesh (name changed), a center head at one of the Bachpan Preschool branches, said commercial lease agreements in the city usually run between five to ten years. "Even a

ten-year agreement requires negotiations. No landlord is willing to commit to 30 years," he said, emphasising that such long-term commitments limit landlords' flexibility to revise rents or sell property in the future.

Mahesh clarified that already-licensed preschools may not be affected immediately, but new entrepreneurs might struggle to start preschools under the new norms. While he supports the government's effort to prevent centres from operating in small, cramped spaces, he believes the 30-year lease clause could discourage small, women-led ventures.

Operators say strict enforcement may also affect teachers' and support staff's jobs, reducing access to affordable preschool options in residential areas.

Premium housing gains in Bengaluru

Rochelle Mary Marshall

BENGALURU: Industry experts say Bengaluru's housing market continues to focus on the mid-income dominated market, although 2025-26 has witnessed significant growth in premium and luxury demand.

Bengaluru continues to see large housing demand, with nearly 8.7 lakh residential units covering about 70 crore sq ft of homes under development. Currently, the state ranks fourth nationally in terms of residential units across 4,452 projects, according to projects registered with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA).

Strongest demand is concentrated in the Rs 70 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore segment. "The bulk of it is coming from salaried IT professionals working in Whitefield, Outer Ring Road, and Sarjapur," said Carmen Jyothsna Xavier, head of CRM and sales executive at Royal Infra Realtors. She added that buyers are opting for larger homes, reflecting hybrid work preferences.

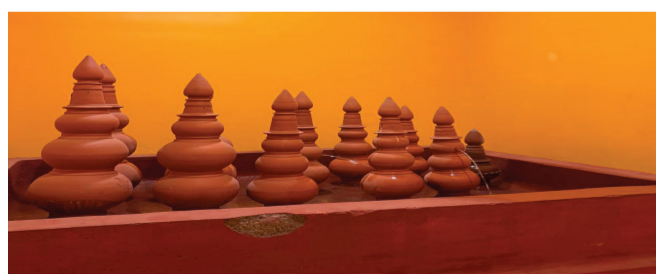
Premium housing is attracting startup founders, while NRIs are largely active in high-value projects. East Bengaluru continues to lead sales, with North Bengaluru gaining on airport-linked infrastructure growth.

Kochi-Muziris Biennale: Art in the Moment

Ann Rose George

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2026 invites audiences to pause for a moment and feel the presence at a time when headlines are filled with war and violence.

The sixth edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale is curated by Nikhil Chopra in collaboration with HH Art Spaces, Goa. The theme for this edition is "for the time being". It symbolises coexistence within our ecosystem and explores ideas of being present in the moment, artistic labour, and creative journeys. This exhibition conveys artistic



Terracotta art installation

Ann Rose George

expression about process, friendship, and presence.

The audience is excited to witness works in progress and engage with live performances, conversations with artists, and community-led programs. Kochi-Muziris

Biennale '26 invites people to slow down and connect to the art. Major venues include Aspinwall and Pepper House, alongside several locations across Fort Kochi and Mattanchery.

Staff shortage fuels waste crisis

Karan Siddharth

BENGALURU: Sanitation workers in Bengaluru opine that no revised scheduling will fix the real crisis of chronic understaffing. Auto tipper crews and pourakarmikas argue that no timetable can work when too few people and vehicles are deployed across ever-growing routes.

This debate reignited on February 26 when BBMP Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao admitted to timing issues during a public interaction, responding to widespread citizen anger over erratic auto tipper schedules that create neighbourhood blackspots.

Under BBMP norms, one auto tipper with a driver and cleaner is allotted to about 750

households, yet past audits found over thousand registered vehicles not collecting waste. "On paper, there are 20 workers in our ward. But in reality, only 12 of us are here... We are expected to cover three times the area we used to," Meena, a Pourakarmika, said. She added that when autos don't arrive, pourakarmikas are forced to drag waste to compactors themselves, stretching already punishing shifts.

Until vacant posts are filled, wages are regularised, and contracted vehicles are put back on the road, workers warn, Bengaluru's new revised schedules will only move the mess around and not clean it.