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Bike taxis' return face backlash

Harivalagan E

Auto and taxi drivers have threatened to switch their number plates to white, indicating private registration, if bike taxi services continue operating in Karnataka.

The complaint to halt bike taxi operations was filed by the Peace Auto and Taxi Drivers Association, the Bharatha Transport Association Group, and the Karnataka Chalakara Okkuta. A large crowd of auto and taxi drivers gathered in front of the Transport Department in Shantinagar.

Bike taxi services were initially banned on June 16, 2025, by the High Court, which ruled it as an unlawful mode of transport since they use noncommercial two-wheelers for paid rides without proper permits or policy. However, a Division Bench later issued a critique in support of bike taxis, paving the way for their return.

Narayanaswamy, president of the Karnataka Chalakara Okkuta, voiced his frustration, saying, "Even after two weeks, the Transport Department has not taken any action, and illegal bike taxis are still running, violating the court order."

Joint Transport Commissioner M.P. Omkareshwari formally received the complaint and assured drivers the department would act to end bike taxi operations. With this assurance, the crowd dispersed, hoping for fairness. Driver associations warned that if no results follow, a larger protest could critically damage the reputations of companies like Rapido, Ola and Uber.

Debate grows over online gaming bill, raises concerns

V Nayonika & Disha B

India's ban on real-money online games has drawn criticism from both legal and political aspects, with experts urging regulation under Article 19's trade freedoms and opposition voices suggesting that only state-run lotteries should be permitted.

The Lok Sabha passed the Prohibition and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill on Aug 20, 2025, by voice vote, successfully banning online games that include involvement of money or stakes in expectation of monetary gains. A gaming company, A23 opposed this bill by taking it up to the Karnataka High Court (HC) on grounds of unemployment and risked livelihood.

Upon asking if the ban raises a question of



Betting apps banned

Deccan Herald

freedom of trade as per the constitution, Swarnith Prasad, Advocate, Karnataka HC said, "Trade means investing with certainty of return with reasonable restriction as prescribed by law, whereas banning betting apps is not the solution, regulation by improvising laws related to betting by the parliament is towards progressiveness of society."

He pointed out that by banning such online betting

apps, we are moving a step back in terms of progression. "A ban is not the solution, but proper regulations must be enforced in order to deal with this issue," Prasad added. In contrast to Prasad's view, Anish Gawande, spokesperson for the National Congress Party opposed the idea of permitting such online games. "The only form of online gaming that should be permitted is a lottery,

similar to the National Lottery in the UK," he said, acknowledging support for alternative protective measures, while speaking to *The Beacon*. The legislation will have a significant effect on how gaming companies operate after the elimination of advertising real money contests. "A noticeable amount of money will also be lost by the government in revenue generated from the online gaming

sector," stated gaming law specialist Sowmiya Narayan. Dhruv (name changed) a regular user of online betting apps like Stake and Dream11 shared his experience of winning rupees 53,000 in profit and losing around 25,000 rupees over two years. He also mentioned that a regulated platform with limits on betting and profit amounts should be implemented, acknowledging the risks involved with it. The Karnataka High Court, while hearing the petition, declined to stay the implementation of the law but urged the Central government to respond by September 8th, 2025. The outcome of this case will decide whether the ban remains firm or if Parliament will be pushed to reconsider its actions.

Transparency essential in big cat conservation

Disha Banthia

Nepal officially joins the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) aiming to protect species like snow leopards, leopards and tigers across borders from poaching activities and human encroachment.

Conservation experts warn that the success of transnational wildlife protection efforts will depend on overcoming funding transparency issues, the impact of tourism and understanding animal behaviour. Nepal joined the IBCA for the protection of seven big cats, including tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, cheetahs, puma and jaguars, on August 24, 2025.



Tiger at Ranthambore National Park

Disha Banthia

The alliance was launched on April 9, 2023 making it the first global alliance for big cat conservation. The alliance includes major countries like India, Nepal and Cambodia to name a few. "Big cats do not recognize political boundaries," said Suyash Keshari, wildlife

conservationist and founder of Ameliya Safaris, emphasizing that the alliance's strength lies in knowledge sharing across member countries to save time and resources to accelerate conservation gains across the globe, while speaking to *The Beacon*. Priya James, project

manager at A Rocha wildlife conservation NGO, highlights the increase in over 100 unregulated NGOs across the country leading to duplicated efforts and competing for resources instead of working together in a systematic manner. Keshari identifies three major steps: (a) ensuring transparent funding that reaches the ground, (b) investing in training frontline forest staff who are the backbone of conservation, and (c) maintaining and restoring habitat connectivity so populations remain viable long term for effective implementation of conservation by the alliance.

Hiked Metro fares agonise citizens

Niranjana Jayan

BENGALURU: Delhi Metro's recent modest fare revision sparks criticism over the steep hikes of Namma Metro. The commuters question the disparity between fares, whilst Delhi with a vast metro network has only raised the fares nominally, while Bengaluru with just 96km institutes higher fares. Metro being Bengaluru's fastest and convenient commute, still worries the commuters because of the rising fares which can possibly omit low-income riders and students.

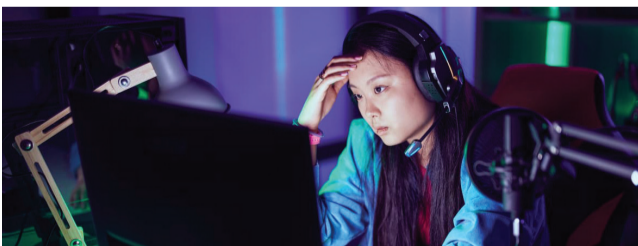
Activist Rajesh Bhat of the Bengaluru Metro commuters Association accused that the fare hike is directed towards privatization, where the government would eventually give up on the public metro transportation and make it extremely luxurious for the common commuters. "Metro is still the fastest and safest transportation but for students and daily commuters it is very costly," said Vindhya, a tech worker who commutes daily. Commuters acknowledged the metro's advantages and efficiency but also warned that without a price relaxation and subsidies the commuters might turn away from Namma metro.

Game over, players struggle beyond the screen

V Nayonika

The recent restrictions on online gaming and gambling could trigger a wave of stress, frustration and withdrawal symptoms among regular users, warn experts. The Online Gaming Regulation and Protection Bill, passed on August 20, was a way to cut down online gaming and betting. However, experts argue legislation alone cannot address underlying addiction issues.

Assistant Professor of psychology, Suha Chand, at St. Clare College, said that banning platforms limits access but does not end addictive behavior. With studies showing



Addiction takes toll

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around 10 percent of the world's total population being severely addicted to online gaming, there is a significant concern. "Addiction is less about the game itself and more about the psychological mechanisms behind it, reward anticipation, escapism and poor stress management," she explained. Users may experience withdrawal-

like symptoms such as irritability, restlessness or loneliness, added Chand, elucidating on people dependent on gaming for income, the loss can feel like job displacement, carrying financial stress and even identity loss. Casual gamers, by contrast, are more likely to replace it with alternative hobbies.

Mining threatens Nirthadi forest

Ameya Krishnakumar

Environmentalists raise concerns about the consequences of loss of biodiversity due to deforestation in the Nirthadi reserve forest of Holalkere taluk in Chitradurga following the Forest Department's decision to permit Kundremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd (KIOCL) to carry out exploration of iron and manganese ores.

The permission clears diversion of 27.2 hectares of virgin forest area for mineral exploration. According to KIOCL's application, the

exploration will involve the felling of 700-1,000 trees. Speaking to *The Beacon*, environmental activist Sandeep Anirudhan says, "This forest is home to many species, and mass deforestation leads to the rivers drying up, which leads to the loss of many animals and birds. These forests are vital to maintaining the ecological balance in Karnataka, as all the species and tribals depend on them for water, food, and security. We should be restoring more forest land, creating more ecosystems, and stopping the mining operation indefinitely."