

# THE BEACON

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## Losses mount, hike mooted

**Prajwal SK**  
**BENGALURU:** Amid the mounting financial pressure within the transport sector, the Karnataka government is deliberating on a significant hike in government bus fares across the state.

In a meeting held on July 16 to address the price hike concern, SR Shrinivas, Chairman of the Karnataka Transport Department, highlighted the challenges caused by rising diesel prices. The price surge is from ₹60 to ₹90 per litre from 2019 to 2024.

"Maintenance costs, especially for the fleet's high mileage Volvo buses, have also risen sharply, adding pressure to a strained budget. We have approved and submitted the proposal to increase bus fares to the chief minister," he said.

The decision to propose a 15 to 20% fair increase resulted from reported losses amounting to Rs 295 crore over the past three months.

The fare hike, if implemented, would be the second since 2019. However, there are concerns over passenger affordability even as the government balances financial sustainability with ensuring affordable public transport services in Karnataka.

Srinivas also stated that there has been no salary revisions for KSRTC since 2020. "In order to run more buses alternately, we need to purchase 200 more buses in the upcoming days," he added.

## Raghavan discusses Indira's 'Garibi Hatao' impact

**Ishika S**

**BENGALURU:** On July 16, at The Bangalore International Centre, Author and Professor Srinath Raghavan discussed Indira Gandhi's unforgettable slogan in the 1971 general election, "Garibi Hatao," and the introduction of a new framework for thinking about poverty and policy approaches to tackle it.

According to Raghavan, the current technology mirrors the efforts of Indian states to address poverty. This approach began in the late 1960s and early 1970s with a new paradigm for tackling poverty. Raghavan highlighted the nationalisation of banks, explaining that the primary reason for this move was to find resources to tackle poverty. Later, it became a crucial source for the country's development. However, he noted that this was also a strategic move by then Prime Minister Indira



Srinath Raghavan giving a speech on "Garibi Hatao"

Rhea Sundar Raju

Gandhi to gain political benefits and secure a clean sweep in elections.

Raghavan also reflected on the developmental planning introduced in India 50 years ago, specifically the five-year plans to tackle unemployment and poverty. The second and third five-year plans focused on making agriculture more

productive while shifting people to industrial work to create employment opportunities, broad-based growth, and high income. Despite its ambitious goals, this approach failed to achieve the desired outcomes in the 1950s.

He elaborated on the issue of poverty because of the unequal income distribution, regardless

of the actual income levels. The planning commission had two conceptions: first, poverty and formulated policies are correlated, focusing on economic growth, raising incomes, and reducing deprivation to weed out inequalities over time. The second view is that poverty is an absolute condition, not caused

by a specific factor, which leads to categorising individuals as poor. This alternative conception led to the creation of the poverty line, a concept that did not exist before.

"The fact that it has survived or continues not just to remain in existence but grow after 50 years is perhaps, in its way, an even deeper indictment of the developmental failures of the Indian state," Raghavan said. "People can be told that they are beneficiaries of various programs, but unfortunately, for those in power in a democracy, the poor simply cannot wish away. So, the problem of poverty continues to haunt the Indian vertical landscape, and the framework within which much of the politics is organised traces back to this period." The discussion emphasised that while policies and frameworks have evolved, the challenge of poverty remains deeply entrenched, reflecting ongoing developmental shortcomings in India.

## Battle against persistent illegal layout

**Anu Priya**

**BENGALURU:** The residents of Pattandur Agrahara are concerned as illegal layout formations continue to plague the area despite repeated government efforts to enforce compliance and uphold legal standards. Recently, residents have taken to social media platform X to highlight new tactics adopted by illegal developers involving construction work conducted during the early morning hours and on public holidays when government officials are off duty.

Unauthorised layouts have persisted since December 2023, leading to the Revenue Minister ordering the demolition of illegal



Representational Image

Sandeep

buildings constructed in the area.

On March 25, 2024, BDA officers observed the resumption of illicit layout activities despite previous warnings and notices.

BDA engineers issued strong warnings and temporarily halted these actions, but developers continued their activities. On

April 3, a Special Task Force (STF) took over the illegal layout case and successfully stopped the unauthorised layout formation.

On April 13, the police began evicting workers and confiscating equipment related to the unlawful activities.

The BDA issued a public

notice cautioning against unauthorised layout creation to prevent further violations. However, the notice mysteriously disappeared the following day, coinciding with illegal activities resuming on public holidays. "The notice's disappearance raised serious concerns about interference and disregard for legal directives," a resident stated.

A resident told The Beacon that these developers needed to present the necessary paperwork to the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA). "The BDA has issued a clear warning regarding the unauthorised resumption of construction without the necessary approvals," a resident added.

## Probe into fake disability

**Navya Y**

**F**ake Disability certification has become a menace after a probationary IAS officer, Puja Khedkar's training, was put on hold amidst the allegations of misuse of power. She is accused of manipulating disability and OBC certificates to enter the civil services.

Khedkar was transferred from Washim to Pune and was recalled by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA). An investigation is underway into the validity of Puja Khedkar's disability certificates, allegedly manipulated for civil service purposes.

"There are many levels in claiming disability, levels one to five. With increasing numbers, one gets a better privilege; now, officer Khedkar has a level five, greatly decreasing the cutoff. But the fact is that since she was on probation, she cannot claim any benefits until she becomes an official officer," opined Kalesh (name changed), Assistant Commissioner of Revenue department, Latur. UPSC must consider the issue of corruption, which is prevalent at the grassroots level. As a result, candidates feel frustrated with the Department of Personnel and the UPSC's irregularities, he added.

## Protests against privatisation of agri-education

**Srishti R Jois**

**Bengaluru:** Tejas, leader of the student union of the University of Agricultural Sciences, expressed his concerns over the decision taken by the university to permit the set up of new agricultural colleges by private institutions. He stated this was 'unfair' to the students studying at the government agricultural colleges of the state; the students protested in the Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra campus on July 16.

Tejas, speaking to The Beacon, said, "The future of the university students is put at stake by this decision

taken by the university. It has been almost seven years since the Agriculture Department has called for recruitment, resulting in no recruitment for government college students in the last seven years. Establishing a new private college at this time will only harm the students of government colleges."

Recalling a similar incident in 2016, Tejas added that "Three private institutions were permitted to start new colleges in the state, due to which agricultural students held a statewide protest. As

a result of which, the then government withdrew the bill of establishment of a private college in the Legislative Assembly, 2018."

He warned that the strike might escalate if the present government doesn't address this situation adequately as the previous government did in 2018.

If the government aims to increase the number of agricultural graduates, they can establish a new sub-campus under the government university itself, Tejas suggested.

## Land acquisition delays PRR

**Prajwal SK**

**BENGALURU:** The Bengaluru Development Authority has taken a significant step towards constructing the Peripheral Ring Road (PRR) by issuing a public notice to owners of 71 acres of land.

The BDA issued a public notice to the owners of 258 properties on Tuesday, July 16, to submit the documents and directed them to submit any objections. The initial notification was issued in April 2022 to construct cloverleaf interchanges at critical junctions, including Tumkur, Bellary Road, Old Madras Road and Hosur Road.

A BDA spokesperson stated, "This project is made to enhance connectivity around Bengaluru. It is stretched to 73 km with eight lanes to control the traffic. The department has implemented strict regulations to streamline the process and fasten the progress towards the PRR project."

The farmers still await a solution despite the final land acquisition notification issued 17 years ago for 1810 acres of land. The government intends to spend ₹27,000 crore on the PRR project but faces challenges in resolving land acquisition issues.