

# THE BEACON

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## 'Ladakh climate fast' urges statehood

Pratham Basu

Two weeks have passed since the commencement of the Ladakh Climate Fast, which started on March 6. According to Sonam Wangchuk, a renowned innovator and activist, the 21-day fast until death is an attempt by the locals to urge the Central government to look into the issues of environmental endangerment and restore statehood to Ladakh.

The abrogation of Article 370 turned Ladakh into a Union Territory, administered by a Lieutenant Governor appointed from Delhi. However, there is now a pressing demand from the people to implement Schedule 6 of the Indian Constitution. This provision would grant tribal status to residents, enabling them to elect representatives dedicated to safeguarding the fragile ecosystem of the region. Despite repeated promises made by the Central government to address these issues in past election manifestos, on March 4, it refrained from delivering the promise, Wangchuk said on X formerly Twitter.

Speaking to The Beacon, Sonam Angmo, a resident of Photoksar village, has expressed concerns regarding the impact of unregulated industrialisation and the rapid influx of tourists on the Himalayan glaciers. Angmo said that while Ladakhi people have historically lived sustainably, the surge in tourism poses a significant threat, endangering both glaciers and local animal species. "Deterioration of Himalayan glaciers will have nationwide repercussions, as the rivers originating from the Himalayas will dry if the situation is allowed to proceed unchecked," she added.

## Derailments: A major cause of train accidents

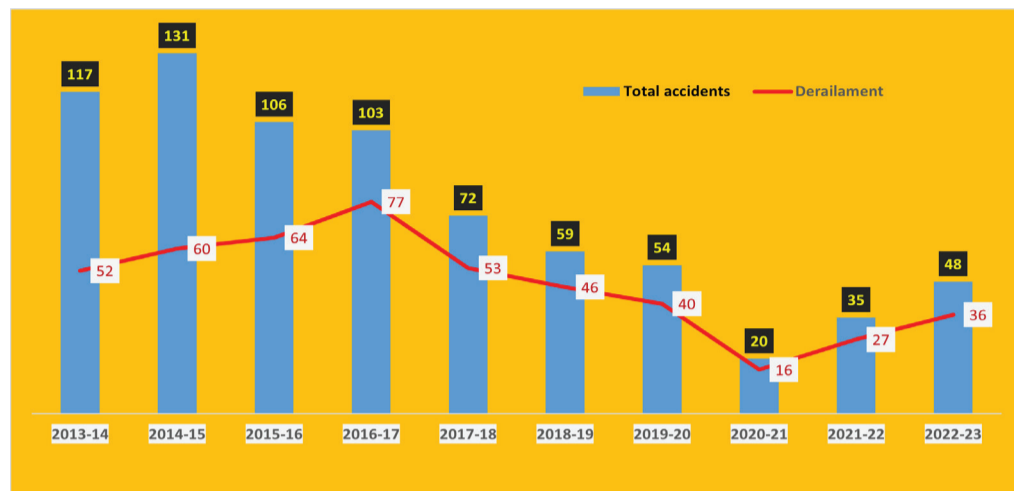
Kushal Varma J V

Derailment from tracks has consistently been the most recurrent cause of Indian Railway accidents. Despite a downward trend in the total number of accidents, the proportion of derailments has only increased. It has become a major threat to travel safety on trains.

On March 18, the Sabarmati-Agra Cantt Superfast Express derailed at Madar, near Ajmer. Passengers suffered injuries, however there was no loss of life. This is one of several instances of derailments in the past decade.

Statistics from the Indian Railways Year Books of the past decade reveal that there's been a downward trend in the total number of accidents occurring each year.

In 2013, the total number of accidents amounted to 117, followed by 131 in 2014, which was the highest



Derailments have consistently been the major cause for train accidents

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number of accidents in the past decade. Ever since then, there's been a gradual decrease with 2023 recording a total of 48 accidents.

However, the proportion of derailments continued to increase. In 2013, derailments constituted about 44 per cent of the total accidents, which had gradually increased to 75 per cent in 2023. Contrasting it with other

causes of accidents reveals that level-crossing-related accidents have drastically reduced over the past decade (from 51 in 2013 to 1 in 2023). However, other causes including, fire on trains, collisions and other miscellaneous causes have fluctuated over the years.

Nonetheless, since 2015, every year over 50 per cent of railway accidents have occurred due to derailments.

Furthermore, a total of 745 railway accidents have occurred in the past decade, out of which 471 were caused due to it.

This points to a problem in the railway line infrastructure more specifically the condition of the tracks.

Whilst there has been an increase in the FY 2024 budget allocation to the Union Ministry of Railways,

importance was given to the construction of new lines (36,000 Cr), doubling of lines (30,000 Cr), customer amenities (16,352 Cr) and various other investments and expenditures.

The budget allocated for track renewals was 17,150 Cr with other such safety measures receiving much less.

Out of the Rs 2.55 lakh crore allocated to the Ministry, Rs 42,539 crore was allocated to ensure safety measures.

Despite the increase of 4.9 per cent from the previous year's budget, safety-related works saw only a 3.5 per cent increase from FY 2023's budget.

Additionally, when compared to the previous year, the proportion of budget allocation for expenditure on safety remains nearly the same: 16.8 per cent (FY 2023) and 16.6 per cent (FY 2024).

## BBMP unveils 'Tax-First, Khata-Later' property scheme

Sinchan Saha

**BENGALURU:** Months after mooted the idea, the BBMP announced the launch of the "tax-first, Khata-later" scheme to simplify the property tax system for the people of Karnataka.

The BBMP on March 11, Monday, launched a new scheme that would allow property tax collection even from irregular or unauthorised properties, given that they are not on government-owned land.

The new property tax laws, which were introduced as Section 144 under the BBMP Act, will rise from 6.7%

Category	Property Tax as %age of Guidance Value in New System	Average Property Tax as per Old System (in Rs)	Expected Average Property Tax in New System (in Rs)	%age Increase in PT
Residential	0.075% & 0.15%	4,942	5,274	6.7%
Commercial	0.37%	69,525	74,040	6.5%
Industrial	0.15%	80,550	84,817	5.3%
Star Hotel	0.75%	1,21,60,791	1,29,63,392	6.6%
Vacant Land	0.025%	1,460	1,580	8.2%
<b>OVERALL IMPACT OF NEW SYSTEM</b>				<b>6.5%</b>

New property system 'dry-run' results

to 8.2%. In particular, they will be increased to 6.7% for residential properties, 6.5% for commercial, 5.3% for industrial, 6.6% for star hotels, and 8.2% for unoccupied land.

The press release said that a dry run was conducted on

land (Rs 1,460). Under the new scheme, the tax would be - residential (Rs 5274), commercial (Rs 74,040), industrial (Rs 84,817), star hotels (Rs 1,29,63,392) and vacant land (Rs 1,580). Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar cited complexity in the 2008 Unit Area Value Property Tax System as the motivation for change. With 18 overlapping property categories and six tax zones, citizens struggle with seven forms for Self-Assessment Returns, leading to errors and penalties. The new system will be implemented on April 1, 2024.

## Water crisis to affect Holi festival

Sadhika Dasgupta

**BENGALURU:** In light of the water crisis in Bengaluru, the upcoming Holi celebration on 25 March, has become a cause for concern. Restobar and club owners are trying not to worsen the issue by opting for a 'dry Holi' instead. The celebration will not use water, said the General Manager of Ottoman Restobar.

In some areas of Bengaluru, people are struggling to get water for their daily needs while hotels and resorts, are preparing to host pool parties on the occasion of Holi. They have started selling tickets for pool parties. On the other hand some will celebrate only with organic and chemical-free dry colours.

"We won't use water as there's a water crisis in Bengaluru and the government has provided new rules and regulations that we will have to follow," said the General Manager.

A member of the marketing team at White Lotus Club stated, "It will be a dry Holi celebration, we will use Neon paint instead of water-based colours."

## Murder Mubarak: A burlesque comedy

Dattatraya Dutta

**M**urder Mubarak, director Homi Adjana's new addition to his cinematic collection, dazzles brightly but fails to enthrall for most of its runtime.

Released on Netflix, on March 15, Murder Mubarak is an adaptation of Anuja Chauhan's novel: 'Club You to Death'. The movie boasts an enviable ensemble cast of Pankaj Tripathi, Karishma Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan, Vijay Varma, and several others who hit all the right notes in

The movie is based around a murder investigation that unfolds several dark secrets of members of the elite Royal Delhi Club. The elites are represented as caricatures, parodying their demeanour, which is juxtaposed with the non-frivolous attitude of the servant workers in the club.

The disparity between the two classes is further portrayed through the resentment held by servants against the members. The movie delves into the themes of class disparity and elitist culture. Director Adjana

places several sub-scenes to elicit this theme. Although the narrative is set around a murder investigation, it sets up a humorous tone with a burlesque portrayal of the characters instead of resorting to the typical Bollywood 'masala film' trope of incorporating slapstick comedy. By doing so, the director retains the essence of the original novel.

However, all is not sunshine and rainbows for this dramedy flick, as the plot feels rather predictable and, at times, fails to engage

## Microminds 1.0: Beyond academics

Anu Priya & Sinchan Saha

**CAMPUS:** Crossing the bounds of academia and stepping into microbiology's inter-transdisciplinary field was an encouragement that gave students a new perspective and this is why Dr Santanu Dutta's Bugworks Inc., a pharmaceutical startup, became a prominent addition to Microminds, said Shristi Chatterjee, co-organiser of Microminds, Microbiology Department.

On March 18, Monday, Microminds, a talk dedicated to exploring scientific research and broadening perspectives in microbiology and its allied

fields, was organised by the Microbiology Department of SJU's School of Life Sciences.

"The decision to include an entrepreneur in the talk series aimed to broaden the student's understanding of the sector beyond just the research domain, as they often focus primarily on that area," said Chatterjee.

It featured speakers from both academia and industry, allowing students to explore diverse career paths and establish valuable connections for internships and job opportunities in the future, she added.