



Society and Economy of Karnataka in News

VOL: 1

October 2023

NO: 4

An Initiative of ISEC to draw your attention to current socio-economic issues pertaining to Karnataka published in different daily newspapers.

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AGRICULTURE



A study done in Bidar and Raichur shows better agricultural productivity for the farmers who use weather advisory services, writes Rishika Pardikar

Much of Indian agriculture is carried out by small farmers using rain-fed methods. Climate-driven variabilities like drought and erratic rainfall add to the sector's vulnerability in terms of farmers' income and the country's food security.

However, technology offers a ray of hope. In 2015, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) started providing agriculture-related weather advisory services via Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa. Termed 'Agrometeorological Advisory Services' (AAS), it includes information related to rainfall, maximum and minimum temperatures, humidity, wind speed and direction and cloud cover.

This information is shared twice a week on Tuesday and Friday through text messages, mobile applications like Meghdoot, TV and radio programmes, local newspapers and in-person communication from officers in the respective state agricultural departments. It also includes advice like when to sow, crop varieties to be used, the kind and quantity of fertiliser to be applied, when to harvest, storage management, etc.

A new study by Rakesh Gomaji Nannewar, Tejal Kanitkar and R Srikanth from the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, shows that Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa has contributed to higher yield in the Kharif season (June-September) for farmers in Raichur and Bidar districts in North Karnataka. The study was published last month in *Weather, Climate and Society*, a journal by the American Meteorological Society.

"The primary objective was to understand if climate advisory services have benefited farmers," said Nannewar, the lead author.

The study says yields of pigeon pea, soybean and pearl millet were higher by 233 kg/ha, 98 kg/ha and 318 kg/ha, respectively, for those who accessed AAS. Kharif season is when agricultural activities depend primarily on rainfall rather than irrigation. For winter crops like paddy and chickpea, the researchers found the influence of other



inputs on crop production, such as access to irrigation and degree of fertiliser use, is more important, resulting in a statistically insignificant result for the influence of AAS. So, a question remains: how can agromet services be made useful for winter crops, or what other kinds of support do farmers need during this season?

"Large public programmes like the AAS that bring science to people in meaningful ways can contribute significantly to meeting developmental goals and building resilience against climate change," the authors say.

The study was conducted for the agricultural year between 2020-2021. There were no extreme precipitation events during this period in the two districts. The study controlled other factors that determine yield, like access to inputs like fertilisers and pesticides, access to irrigation, etc., to ensure a uniform baseline when comparing agricultural output between beneficiaries, indirect beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Primary production services like farming, fishing and herding are the most vulnerable to climate impacts. Since these sectors are closely tied to food security as well, building adaptation is of paramount importance. While traditional knowledge has historically been the dominant way of decision-making, climate change throws a spanner in the works with extreme events, underscoring the need for supplementary services like agromet advisories in climate adaptation and resilience.

Assessing the benefits

The study quantifies the benefits of weather-related climate services in terms of yield improvement in a socio-economically under-developed region, i.e. two districts in North Karnataka.

The authors surveyed 1,000 farm households across Raichur and Bidar, where 85% replied that agriculture was their primary source of income. If the respondents accessed AAS from the IMD via text messages, TV, radio, etc., they were classified as direct beneficiaries. Indirect beneficiaries were those who got the information secondhand from input dealers, cooperative societies, other farmers in the village, agricultural officers, etc.

Some farmers did not access AAS at all. Overall, 73% of surveyed households reported having accessed AAS. Of these, 33% said they accessed agromet advisories directly, 41% indirectly, and 26% did not access them at all.

The category of indirect beneficiaries gains prominence, given the low literacy rates in the region and the technical nature of the weather-related information. Intermediaries like officers from state agricultural departments and cooperative societies play a major role in ensuring the information reaches all farmers regardless of their literacy levels.

These services are provided free of cost and accessible more freely than paid services by private companies. The region's

economic profile (i.e., lower income levels than other parts of Karnataka) also matters here.

The presence of significant numbers of indirect beneficiaries shows that intermediaries play a big role in disseminating agromet information and that there needs to be more investment to ensure adequate numbers of intermediaries, like officers from the relevant agriculture department and training for all categories of intermediaries.

"While farmers use their experiences to make decisions about sowing time, etc., the increasing weather variability, which is only going to increase with higher levels of warming, means that experience is not enough to support decision-making," said Kanitkar, one of the authors. She is an associate professor at NIAS.

"How can you deal with an unprecedented problem with 'traditional experience'? AAS, as a public good—a large public program—that brings science to the people in meaningful ways, therefore becomes extremely significant to support adaptation and build resilience in the face of increasing weather variability and the likelihood of extreme events," she added.

The authors say they hope to conduct a similar study across all agro-climatic zones in the country, given how the impact of agromet services directly on yield has not been quantified, like in this study in terms of detail and scale.

(The author is an environment journalist)

Source: Deccan Herald, p.7, Oct. 7, 2023

Rain shortfall destroys crops, upends farmers' lives

INSIGHT

TEAM DH

With deficit rainfall leading to extensive crop damage, farmers grapple with widespread losses as they prepare for another season of uncertainty

Traditionally, August and September are the months when the farmers of Dharwad, Haveri and Gadag districts in Karnataka deploy labourers or harvest machines to reap green gram, soybean, chilli, onion, maize and cotton crops. But this year, Gangadhar Badnikai, a farmer at Kusugal village in Dharwad, deployed a tractor on his 10 acres of land to destroy the standing green gram crop. The plants were withering away, with barely any chance of revival, following the erratic monsoon.

Pinning high hopes on a good monsoon, Gangadhar had sowed green gram, a 90-day crop, on his entire field. The farmer had spent Rs 15,000 per acre on seeds, fertiliser and labourers. But with his taluk receiving deficit rainfall in July and August, he was left with no other option but to destroy the crops to minimise losses.

"In order to save my crop I have to either drill borewells or hire water tankers. Both of these options will cost more than the revenue I will earn," says Gangadhar.

His case is not a unique one. Officials from the Karnataka Department of Agriculture point out that they received multiple reports of farmers destroying green gram, groundnut, maize and other crops in Gajendragad and Laxmeshwar in Gadag and Shiggaon and Rattihalli in Haveri.

"With a heavy heart, I ran my tractor over my maize crops. I can use the money I saved by not continuing cultivation further, to buy seeds for rabi crops," says Gadigeppa Harijan of Suranagi village from Laxmeshwar taluk, Gadag.

Among the 23 taluks of Dharwad, Gadag and Haveri districts, 16 have



Farmers in Chanakanur village in Ballari district in a parched paddy field. DH PHOTO/MURALIKANTH RAO

been declared by the state government as severely drought-hit.

The situation is no different in the Malnad region of Karnataka, where Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, Mysuru and Hassan districts experienced the highest rainfall deficit this season (ranging from 44% in Hassan to 60% in Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru).

India ended the 2023 monsoon season with below-normal rainfall – for the first time since 2018 – with the country receiving 94% of the average precipitation that normally occurs between June and September. Even though it escaped the devastation of a full blown El Nino, over 200 districts received deficient or scanty rainfall. The deficit adversely affected south interior Karnataka, Kerala and a large

part of eastern India.

The four-month-long season ended with the country recording a 5.6% shortfall. The overall deficiency was much more for the east, northwest and southern peninsula, which saw a 60% deficit in August.

Paddy cultivation suffers

Cracked paddy fields and withering seedlings have become a common sight in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru as paddy cultivation was particularly affected due to erratic monsoons.

"Paddy requires good rainfall for the growth of saplings. The delay in monsoon hit the transplantation of paddy seedlings and sowing. With deficit rainfall, farmers had to pump

water from nearby water sources to save the crop," says paddy grower Manohar Shetty from Kuppepadavu in Dakshina Kannada. Depleting groundwater levels due to sporadic rain limits that option too.

Karnataka is estimated to have suffered a loss of more than 50% of the crop this season due to drought. The state is likely to see crop damage amounting to nearly 58 lakh tonnes, which is 52% of the total food production target for the southwest monsoon season.

The government estimates that crops spanning 40 lakh hectares of land have been damaged, with paddy, ragi and jowar being affected the most.

► Crop loss, Page 2

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Continued...



The June-September monsoon delivers nearly **75%** of India's annual rainfall.



Nearly **50%** of India's farmlands are rain-fed.

This year, India received below normal levels of monsoon rainfall for the first time in 4 years.

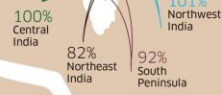
A total rainfall deficiency of **5.6%** was recorded.

August recorded a **36%** deficit.

18% of the country received deficient rainfall this year.

221 out of 717 districts had deficient to 'large deficient' rainfall.

Southwest Monsoon in different regions of India (% of LPA)



Unreliable rains

Long period average (LPA): According to the India Meteorological Department, the LPA is the rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval, averaged over a long period. It acts as a benchmark while forecasting the quantitative rainfall for that region for a specific month or season.

Cultivation of major crops struck in several states

Crop loss, from Page 1

Further down south, Kerala suffered a 34% rain deficit – the highest shortfall received by any state this season. According to Kerala Agriculture Department sources, nearly 600 ha of paddy cultivation areas were impacted in Palakkad, Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram districts, striking the livelihoods of nearly 1,100 farmers, with crop loss estimated to amount to about Rs nine crore.

Palakkad Karshaka (Farmers) Samajam President Mani Mudhalamthodu says there will be a drastic decline in yield owing to lack of sufficient water, especially for paddy crops.

Water levels of dams are at alarmingly low levels, he adds. Compounding woes is the fact that Kerala has also not received adequate water from Tamil Nadu as per water-sharing agreements. This comes at a time when high production costs and delays in clearing procurement dues have already put farmers in distress. Many have quit cultivation, because of which paddy cultivation in Kerala has come down from 8.75 lakh ha during the 1970s to just about 1.75 lakh ha now.

In West Bengal too, paddy cultivation dropped by nearly 2.5 lakh ha due to inadequate rainfall in the western part of the state. The worst affected district was Purulia, followed by Bankura and Birbhum.



Climate vagaries will become a norm in the future. The government and research institutes should accept this and plan accordingly. They must concentrate on developing crops that are climate resilient.

T N Prakash Kammardi
former president,
Karnataka Agricultural
Price Commission

"This year, the crop is not even half of the usual figure. We had showers in July and August, but the rain was insufficient compared to last year. This is the time for Aaman (summer) paddy, and we sow around June. But out of the six acres of land I generally cultivate, I have been able to use only two acres due to lack of rain," says Chakradhar Mahato, a resident of Kalapathar village in Purulia, around 250 km from Kolkata.

Farmers like Mahato depend completely on monsoon rain for their crop. "In our observations, the shortfall of rain this year during July and August has affected farmers in Birbhum and Purulia. This is likely to affect over 50% of crop yield in these districts," says Amal Halder, West Bengal State Committee Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha.

Other crops affected

Beyond paddy cultivation, the deficit rainfall has affected pulses and oilseeds in the east. In Karnataka, the brunt was



borne by commercial crops like coffee, black pepper and coconut palm.

Coffee is cultivated on nearly 1,07,000 ha in Kodagu and 90,000 ha in Chikkamagaluru districts. "Without rain, berry borer disease has infested the coffee berries in several plantations. Due to the scorching temperature, the berries have turned black. The growers could also not apply the required fertilisers due to the lack of rainfall," says Jayaram, former president of the Karnataka Growers' Federation.

The economy of the coffee-growing districts of Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan will take a hit, says Mudigere Taluk Growers Association President Balakrishna Balur.

Rain deficit has also struck black pepper cultivation, as rainwater plays a major role in the pollination of pepper plants. "Due to the lack of rain, there was no proper sprouting of spikes, and the spikes which grew are of pepper-percorms," says farmer A P Sadashiv from Puttur in Dakshina Kannada. In the central Karnataka districts of Chitradurga, Davangere and Shivamogga, farmers claim that 75% of their crops have either died or are on the verge of dying due to scanty rainfall this monsoon.

Groundnut, Chitradurga's major crop, has almost dried up. It was sown on over 1.10 lakh ha, but a 'no-show' of the monsoon in August – a record-breaking three-week-long period of no rain – led to fast deterioration of the crops. Even though the farmers made an attempt to save the crops using water from borewells, their efforts were futile.

The acreage of pulses has declined by 8.3% led by lower sowing of arhar or tur dal (which declined by 5.1%) and urad (which declined by 13.8%) compared with last year. In Maharashtra, the total area of pulses cultivation in the 2023-24 kharif season has come down to 15.97 lakh ha from 18.69 lakh hectares in the previous season, a reduction of 14.56%.

The tur bowl of the Kalyana Karnataka region saw an 82% deficit in rainfall this August. In Kalaburagi district alone, farmers had sowed tur on 5.83 lakh ha out of the 8.56 lakh ha of farmland. But crop wilting, caused by monsoon failure in June and August remains a major worry, even though a few districts reported erratic rainfall this month.

"I had sown tur in five

acres, and it was on the verge of drying up. Now, the heavy showers have damaged the standing crop. I may hardly get a yield of two quintals per acre instead of the expected five quintals. I am struggling to get back the Rs 25,000 that I invested in sowing the crop," says Mangalamurthy, a farmer from Gadkeshwar village in Kalaburagi.

Impact on farmers

In the absence of sufficient crop insurance facilities, farmers are the worst affected, says G V Ramanjaneyulu at the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture in Hyderabad. "Farmers can be educated on using alternative crops if drought-like conditions are understood in advance. And with improved weather models and technological advancements nowadays, it is not so difficult to predict drought conditions," he observes.

Ramanjaneyulu notes that immediately after the formation of Telangana, an attempt was made by the state to re-write the drought code, encompassing the preventive measures that were to be taken to mitigate those conditions. Unfortunately, the new code never came into force, and was pushed into cold storage.

With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting a normal winter monsoon, can farmers in Tamil Nadu, coastal and southern Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and south interior Karnataka hope for a better winter crop to make up at least a part of the losses? Experts keep their fingers crossed.

According to R H Patil, an agro-meteorologist at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, the scattered rains witnessed in October will not help much in the rabi sowing, as the soil's moisture content has not reached the desired level. "As the situation is uncertain, rabi sowing is going to be risky. There will be some respite in the rabi season only if we receive good rains in October," he notes.

Government action

To address the consequences of the poor monsoon, the government has introduced export restrictions for rice, and a ban on sugar exports may be in the offing. Last year, the government decided to stop the export of wheat and broken rice in an effort to tame

inflation. But consequent to the poor monsoon this season, the government imposed a ban on the export of non-Basmati rice since July 20. Also, there is a 20% export duty on parboiled rice.

With many sugarcane-growing districts receiving poor rain, sugar production is also expected to decline this year. As a consequence, the Union government may announce a ban on the export of sugar soon. There is, however, sufficient stock for domestic demand and ethanol production.

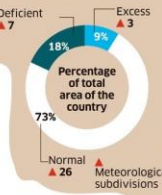
Karnataka Agricultural Price Commission Former President Prakash Kammardi says that what we are witnessing is not a common drought, but a weather calamity induced due to climate change. "At the national level, we may not find a dip in the production of all foodgrains as certain parts of the country have received sufficient rain," he explains.

Karnataka and the northeastern states were the worst affected due to the drought this year. There could be a shortage of tur and pulses in Karnataka. "The prices of pulses, more specifically, tur, can witness a steep hike this year. Cereals and vegetables like onions may also see price hikes as production has reduced," he adds.

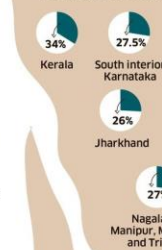
Kammardi advises the state government to stock up on paddy and more importantly, fodder, for cattle to mitigate the impact of drought. "Climate vagaries will become a norm in the future. The government and research institutes should accept this and plan accordingly. They must concentrate on developing crops that are climate resilient," he adds.

(Anchored by Kalyan Ray with inputs from Manjunath Hegde Bommal in Hubballi, Nrupathunga S K in Davangere, Vittal Shastri in Kalaburagi, Naina J A in Mangaluru, Shruti H M from Bengaluru, Pavan Kumar H in Hubballi, Mohammed Saffi Shamsi from Kolkata, Arjun Raghunath from Thiruvananthapuram, S N V Sudhir from Hyderabad and Mritunjay Bose in Mumbai)

18% of the country saw deficient rainfall



7 meteorological subdivisions saw deficient rainfall



In August, rainfall recorded was only 64% of the long period average



Impact on crops

- India accounts for about 40% of the world's rice exports.
- Acreages of pulses declined by over 8% this year.
- Oilseed cultivation area declined by 1%.

Sowing deficit in 2023 (as of September 15)



COMPILED BY SWEETHRUTHI K DH GRAPHIC SAGAR M S
Source: India Meteorological Department, news reports.

Have your say

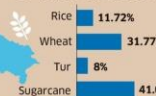
To express your opinion,
e-mail us at: insight@deccanherald.co.in

Rainfall deficiency hits key states

WEST BENGAL



UTTAR PRADESH



KARNATAKA



BIHAR



Source: Deccan Herald, p.1&2, Oct. 8, 2023

Team begins assessment, but state expects little relief from Union govt

BV.Shivashankar@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Although the Centre has sent a 10-member team to decide on the extent of drought, Karnataka may have to largely fend for itself as the Union government is yet to respond to a request to increase the quantum of relief for crop loss.

While estimating crop loss in 195 taluks (15 more taluks are likely to be included) at about Rs 30,000 crore, the state, in a memorandum to the Centre, sought Rs 4,860

DROUGHT

crore as relief under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF). But senior officials in the agriculture department expect very little from the Centre.

"We would be happy if the Centre grants half of what we have asked," said an official. "The Union government follows set parameters, so we expect to get much less."

The official said the Centre has already released Rs 1,200 crore under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for the entire year as per norms, and 20% of this must



GREEN DROUGHT: Members of the central assessment team at a field in Pujarahalli, Madhugiri taluk, Tumakuru district, on Friday

be set aside for disaster mitigation. The Centre would make deductions from here while deciding on relief to be granted under NDRF.

The state government argues that the Centre has to release relief fund under NDRF separately whenever there is a disaster.

Aware of the Centre's rules, chief minister Siddaramaiah said his government is "committed to looking after farmers in distress" regardless of relief from the Centre.

"Crops on 42 lakh hectares have been destroyed due to drought," Siddaramaiah said. Food production loss is expected to be about 58 lakh tonnes as against a target of 111 lakh tonnes. Keeping this as the basis, we have sought Rs 4,860 crore from the Centre, but we are committed to helping our farmers in distress."

Revenue minister Krishna Byregowda, during a national meeting on disaster management in Delhi in June, had requested the Centre to en-

FARMER MEETS CENTRAL TEAM WITH BOTTLE OF PESTICIDE IN HAND

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Belagavi: A five-member central assessing drought in Chachadi in Bailhongal taluk, Belagavi, faced a tricky situation on Friday after a farmer met them with a bottle of pesticide in his hand.

The team led by Ajit Kumar Sahu, joint secretary of the Union agriculture and farmers' welfare department were taken aback and initially

feared the worst, but locals who accompanied the team snatched the bottle from the man and took him away.

The man, identified as Appasaheb Lakkundi of Chachadi village, later told reporters, "There is nothing left on the farm. I want to commit suicide. I have 40 acres of land but most of the crops have withered due to lack of rain. There is also a big problem of getting farm labourers."

hance compensation for crop loss. He argued that the present structure is outdated since input costs have risen.

Currently, the Centre grants Rs 8,500 per hectare in rain-fed areas. The state wants it raised to Rs 20,000. The state wants the Centre to increase compensation for irrigated crops from Rs 17,000 for Rs 35,000 and horticulture crops from Rs 22,500 to Rs 35,000.

"The Centre is yet to respond," said N Chaluvarayasaamy, agriculture minister. "We will write to the Centre again soon." The state has also requested the Centre to

change parameters to declare drought. Under current norms, drought can be declared only if there is 60% deficit rainfall. While Karnataka suffered a huge deficit in June and August, excess rain in July and normal rainfall in September reduced the overall deficit to 27%.

Convincing the central team on 'green drought' is another herculean task. Experts say the soil has retained moisture content due to excess rain over the past three years because of which fields may look green, but agricultural yield has dropped drastically.

Source: The Times of India, p.6, Oct. 7, 2023

State hopeful of Centre acknowledging drought, releasing funds quickly

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

The inter-ministerial Central team (IMCT) wound up its tour of 13 drought-affected districts in Karnataka. It is expected to submit its report to the Centre in a week. Karnataka is hopeful that the Centre will acknowledge what it has termed as a 'green drought' this year, caused by erratic rainfall, damaging crop output.

Expecting the Centre to release funds for drought relief at the earliest, the Ministers exuded confidence that the IMCT was convinced about the drought

conditions prevailing in Karnataka. The team that assessed crop damage, MGNREGA work, and fodder situation, among others, in the districts met the State's Cabinet sub-committee on Monday before heading back to Delhi.

In a memorandum submitted earlier, the State had pegged the losses at ₹30,432 crore, and had sought ₹4,860 crore from the Centre. The team is learnt to have expressed satisfaction over the drought memorandum matching ground realities.

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State hopeful of Centre acknowledging drought, releasing funds quickly

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said: “We are confident that the Central team is convinced with the realities of green drought prevailing on the ground, and are hopeful that the Centre will release grants at the earlier. The State is hopeful that the Central team does not come to a conclusion that there is no drought on the basis of standing crops. Erratic rainfall has damaged crops.”

The Minister will write to the Centre again seeking an appointment with the Union Agriculture Minister and Union Home Minister for early release of funds. “It is a secondary matter as to how much will they give. We are seeking the release of money at the earliest.” The team has learnt that farmers have suffered losses due to crop failure, that the State may not receive good rains during the retreating monsoon, and there is a possibility of shortage of drinking water, Mr. Gowda told mediapersons here after meeting the IMCT members.

Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvaryaswamy said that it was too early to say anything on the funds to be released by the Centre. “In a democracy, we have to work together. I do not want to politicise this issue. Let us hope that the Centre is convinced and will react positively.” Karnataka has also appraised the team of different climatic condition experienced by the State this monsoon. “If June saw rainfall deficiency of 58%, the State recorded a 28% excess in July, followed by deficiency of 73% in August and 28% in September.” This erratic condition should be considered seriously by the Centre. “It has to be studied if similar situation exists in other States too. The Centre can draw plans and programmes keeping this scenario in mind.”

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 10, 2023

No. of drought-hit taluks likely to go up as govt. orders ground truthing in 21 taluks

195 taluks of the total 236 in the State have already been declared as drought-hit in the first list, and the second list is set to be announced soon



A file photo of a farmer walking in his dried-up field near Yaragatti village in Belagavi district. As per the data available with the Centre, 46% of the farmers in the State are small and marginal.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The number of drought-hit taluks in the State may go up further as the government on Monday directed officials concerned to take up ground survey exercise in 21 taluks of the remaining 41 taluks that are facing drought like conditions.

It may be noted that the government has already declared 195 taluks of the total 236 in the State as drought-hit in the first list,

and the second list of drought-affected taluks is set to be announced soon.

The situation has caused concern as the regime of south-west monsoon, which is the mainstay for Karnataka's agriculture and weather system, has already ended with a rainfall shortage of about 25%.

"We have asked the officials not to wait for us (Cabinet sub-committee on drought). Officials have been asked to approve and notify the taluks as drought-hit soon after the

ground survey exercise report is available in the next two days," Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy told presspersons here on Monday.

Data on farmers

Regarding the discrepancy in data on small and marginal farmers between the information available with the Centre and the State, Mr. Gowda said: "We are collecting data and will submit the document as part of the supplementary memorandum in the next one week." Ac-

cording to the Minister, as per the data available with the Centre, 46% of the farmers in the State are small and marginal.

"However, the percentage of small and marginal farmers in the State is above 60%. The Inter Ministerial Central Team, which is assessing the drought situation in the State, has also agreed with the State government's assessment. We are collecting data in this regard, and will submit the documents to the Centre with a week's time," he said.

Source: The Hindu, p.4, Oct. 10, 2023

TIGHTROPE Increasing Crop Loan Tenure Does Not Erase Liability, Say Farmers Govt to extend loan term, but farmers want waiver scheme

BV.Shivashankar@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: With parts of the state reeling under drought and crop losses estimated at more than 50%, stakeholders including farmers organisations are demanding that the government implement a farm loan waiver scheme.

The government, meanwhile, is taking steps to extend the tenure of existing loans. Shalini Rajneesh, additional chief secretary and development commissioner, who met with members of the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) on Monday, said the government has asked banks to restructure farm loans "with the

DROUGHT EFFECT

immediate effect". This means farmers can postpone repayment without incurring a higher interest for the specified period. The government issued a circular to this effect on Tuesday.

"The tenure of short-term loans will be extended by a year and that of medium and long-term loans by five years," said Rajneesh.

The decision is in accordance with RBI guidelines that allow rescheduling of farm loans in drought-hit areas. Anmol Akolkar, SLBC manager, said banks will start rescheduling loans once they



CROP LOSS: Members of the inter-ministerial central team speak with farmers and officials in Kolar while assessing the extent of drought in the state

get a directive from the RBI. First though, the government must issue a notification to this effect.

Last month, the government declared 195 taluks as drought-hit and, over the weekend, a central inter-ministerial team visited the state to assess the situation. Based on the team's report, the Centre's high-level committee will decide on the quantum of relief to be extended under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

Meanwhile, the government has decided to declare drought in 21 more taluks. Revenue department officials said they will send a supplementary memorandum to

include these taluks while considering funds under NDRF so that the relief measures including rescheduling of loans.

SLBC data shows about 48.6 lakh farmers have obtained loans worth Rs 1.9 lakh crore, of which short-term loans account for 40%. Interest on short-term loans is charged at 9%, but much of it is absorbed by the RBI (2%), central government (3%) and the state government (1% up to Rs 1 lakh) under the interest subvention scheme, leaving farmers with a 3% interest burden.

However, if a farmer does not repay the loan on time or get it re-

newed, it is converted into a personal loan, and s/he must pay 9% interest and a penalty of 1.5%.

"It is also difficult for a farmer to get a crop insurance claim if s/he defaults on loan," said an official from the finance department. "So, extending the loan tenure will greatly benefit farmers. This is apart from input subsidy [relief government provides for crop loss] which they will get."

However, representatives of farmers organisations say it is too little. At a meeting of Samyukta Horata Samithi, a federation of farmers organisation, on Monday, members resolved to exert pressure on the government to waive all farm loans.

"Extending the loan tenure is only a procedural step which offers no respite since liabilities of farmers remain. What we are seeking is a loan waiver," said T Yeshawanta, general secretary of Karnataka Prantha Raita Sangha. "If the government fails to meet our demand, we will launch an agitation."

RS Deshpande, noted agro-economist, said: "If the government cannot waive farm loans, the next best option would be to give cash incentives to affected farmers. This should be given along with input subsidy so that farmers can repay loans."

Source: The Times of India, p.5, Oct. 11, 2023

Drought during kharif is expected to cause nearly 50% drop in food production: Agriculture Minister

Crops such as paddy, ragi, toor, groundnut, cotton, and jowar have been lost and depending on the region, officials have been directed to suggest alternative crops to farmers, he says

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With the south-west monsoon ending with deficit and erratic rainfall, the food production in Karnataka is estimated to come down from a projected 111 lakh tonnes to 58 lakh tonnes owing to damage to crops.

The highest crop loss has been reported with maize in 11.84 lakh hectares, followed by toor in 7.16 lakh hectares, ragi in 4.45 lakh hectares, cotton in 4.04 lakh hectares, groundnut and sugarcane in 2.7 lakh hectares, soyabean in 2.2 lakh hectares, paddy in 1.33 lakh hectares and bajra/minor millets in 1.08 lakh hectares. The total loss, according to the Agriculture Department figures, is pegged at 39.74 lakh hectares.



Members of a Central team inspecting the crop loss at Chachadi village in Belagavi district recently.

Drought has been declared in 195 taluks in the State.

Alternatives suggested
"Drought condition in the State during this kharif is

expected to cause a near 50% drop in food production. Efforts will be made to balance the food production in retreating monsoon," Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy told

reporters here on Thursday. "Crops such as paddy, ragi, toor, groundnut, cotton, and jowar have been lost. Depending on the region, the officials have been directed to suggest al-

ternative crops to the farmers."

According to the data provided by the Agriculture Department, the State had reported a 89% sowing in the total cultivable area of 118 lakh hectare. Of the total sown area, crops in a total of 41.52 lakh hectares have been lost, which included agriculture crops in 39.74 lakh hectares and horticulture crops in 1.82 lakh hectares. The total loss of agriculture and horticulture crops has been estimated to be around ₹3,824 crore and ₹206 crore, respectively.

Compensation
The Minister said that while July saw 29% excess rainfall than the normal, August reported a deficit of 73% that damaged the crops. He said that ₹48 crore compensation is being given to 60,381 farm-

ers, who were unable to sow.

He pointed out as per the NDRF norms, farmers will receive ₹25,000 per hectare in irrigated land and ₹13,600 per hectare in dry land. In Karnataka, more than a thousand farmers have committed suicide, including 313 farmers in 2023-2024.

Poor quality seeds
Meanwhile, the vigilance cell in the Agriculture Department in the State has seized more than ₹5 crore worth of poor quality sowing seeds, fertilizers and insecticides and has registered 148 cases in this connection.

Mr. Cheluvarayaswamy said that a total of 15 licences have been cancelled, including 8 issued for fertilizers, 4 for seeds and 3 for insecticides. Stating that the court has settled 38

Agriculture crop loss in Karnataka

Crop	Extent of loss (in hectares)
Paddy	1,33,654
Ragi	4,45,037
Maize	11,84,762
Bajra/minor millets	1,08,971
Toor	7,16,994
Green gram	1,11,483
Groundnut	2,70,966
Soyabean	2,20,400
Cotton	4,04,421
Sugarcane	2,72,385
Tobacco	252



While July saw 29% excess rainfall than the normal, August reported a deficit of 73% that damaged the crops. Compensation of ₹48 crore is being given to 60,381 farmers, who were unable to sow.

N. CHELUVARAYASWAMY
Agriculture Minister

cases by imposing a fine of ₹11.05 lakh on producers and sellers, the Minister said that 16 cases have been filed after insecticide traces were found in organic products.

He said that over the last five years, the vigilance cell has seized ₹38.71 crore worth of poor quality

seeds, fertilizers and insecticides and has filed 538 cases over the last five years.

The Minister also said that the department has sent a proposal to fill up 2,000 vacancies in the department of which at least 1,000 vacancies will be filled in the first phase.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 13, 2023

NOT SUNNY Ryots Must Buy Solar Energy Generation Sets; Part Farmers irked over move to halt power supply to IP sets

BV.Shivashankar@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: A government initiative to instal individual solar energy generation sets to provide electricity to run irrigation pump (IP) sets appears to have boomeranged with the government failing to convince farmers on the advantages of the scheme. Now, both farmer organisations and the two main opposition parties are on a warpath against the policy.

The implementation of the Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Uttaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM) scheme, will considerably reduce the subsidy bill for the state government, while also freeing farmers from a dependence on erratic power supply from Escoms.

The Siddaramaiah cabinet recently cleared a proposal to end supply of conventional power to IP sets and replace it with solar energy. The government issued a circular, which said farmers will not get supply from electricity supply companies (Escoms) for new IP sets from September 22.

Farmers will have to buy solar generation sets that cost around Rs 2 lakh. They will have to bear 20% of the cost with the Centre (30%) and state (50%) sharing the rest of the burden. The circular also said only IP sets installed after 2015 will be regularised. Solar energy sets generate DC power, while conventional IP sets run on AC power. This means

Muthu P



DRUM ROLL: Members of Jalasamrakshana Samiti, in Bengaluru on Thursday, protest the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu

farmers will have to buy IP sets that run on DC power.

"The aim was to implement a global mandate on energy transition from non-renewable energy sources to renewable and clean energy. Installation of solar sets is in the interest of both farmers and the government," said energy minister KJ George.

However, it has not gone well with the farming community. Samyukta Horata Samithi, a federation of farmers organisations, is planning to launch a state-wide protest, while the opposition BJP and JD(S) have already launched separate protests. BJP workers are locking Escom offices in districts to protest unscheduled power cuts and the government's failure to provide seven hours of free power for IP sets as promised.

"Although it is a good move, the Congress government has botched up the policy," said HD Kumaraswamy, former chief minister and JD(S) floor leader. "Their lack of vision and inability to understand concerns of farmers has resulted in ill-implementation of the scheme. The 20% of the cost of solar sets which farmers must bear translates to at least Rs 40,000 per IP set. This is exorbitant considering the distress farmers are in."

There are about 34.2 lakh IP sets in Karnataka and, currently, the government supplies free power to all of them as it has been fully subsidised. While the government has earmarked Rs 14,500 crore for the current fiscal, the previous year's payment to Escoms is still pending. Escoms, therefore, are deep in the red.

"Farmers are resisting the

BJP did not add even 1MW: DKS

Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar sought to turn the tables on BJP for on-going power outages in the state, saying the previous government did precious little to augment power generation. "BJP functionaries are criticising our government for load-shedding, but they should tell people what steps they took to increase power generation when they were in government," Shivakumar said. "They did not add even one megawatt to the state's grid. Between 2013 & 2018, when there was a similar situation, we increased power generation by 10,000-13,000MW by setting up new plants and solar parks. Now, power generation has reduced because of drought. Moreover, electricity demand increases 10% -15% every year." He also said the state will file a review petition over the CWRC order.

policy because of a lack of awareness," said KP Rudrapaiah, managing director, Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd, the nodal agency for implementation of the solar set scheme. "They will appreciate it once they understand the merits and benefits of solar power. We will launch an extensive awareness drive that includes organising 'solar melas' on the lines of Krishi Mela."

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 13, 2023

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ECONOMY

Govt. ordered to recalculate minimum wages based on Supreme Court guidelines

State govt. had not undertaken ground survey to assess present-day prices of essentials, but arbitrarily enhanced wages between 5% and 10% for 34 scheduled employments

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

In what is being perceived as victory for nearly 1.7 crore workers in the unorganised sector across Karnataka, the State government has been directed by the High Court to recalculate the minimum wages that had been fixed in 2022. The government has been asked to follow the guidelines fixed by the Supreme Court in its landmark judgment in 1992 while doing so.

The State government had not undertaken a ground survey to assess the present-day prices of essential commodities, but arbitrarily enhanced wages between 5% and 10% for 34 scheduled employments.

Petition by union

The court, in a recent order based on a petition filed by the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), quashed the notification and asked the government to redo the notification strictly following the norms fixed in 1992 by the Supreme Court in the case of Reptakos Brett to determine the minimum wages. Justice Jyoti Mulimani has also set a deadline for the government to complete the entire redo process



The High Court of Karnataka has set a deadline for the government to complete the entire redo process within two months. FILE PHOTO

within two months.

There are 105 scheduled employments in the State that are under the Minimum Wages Act, and the minimum wages are revised every five years as per the statutory requirement.

In Karnataka, the government captures the data on essential commodities from 16 centres, but this was not undertaken by the Labour department before the minimum wages revision. The department had argued that such a data is only essential for fixing wages but not for revision. The court, however, did not agree with the La-

bour Department's contention.

While the previous BJP government had revised wages and notified in 2022 for 34 employments whose five year revision period had lapsed, the draft notification was ready for 10 more scheduled employments. Labour Minister Santhosh Lad recently sent back the proposal for these 10 scheduled employments, asking the Department to conduct the survey and fix the minimum wages as per law.

AITUC Karnataka president H.V. Anantha Subbarao welcomed the High Court verdict, and stated

that it will not only benefit the working class of the State, but also set the foundation for bringing in a scientific, rational and legally established process for revision of minimum wages.

“The court has also clarified a distinction cannot be made between fixing of minimum wages and the revision as it would lead to anomaly between scheduled employments,” he said. He has also urged the State government to expeditiously implement the court order to bring relief to the working class that has been affected by unprecedented price rise.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct.7, 2023

Sale of Indian-made liquor down, but hike in excise duty drives increase in revenue

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The revenue from Excise in Karnataka has marginally increased by ₹156 crore from ₹6,995.43 crore in the first quarter of 2022-23 to ₹7151.6 crore in the first quarter of 2023-24 (between July 20-September 30, 2022 and July 20-September 30, 2023).

The increase is largely owing to hike in the excise duty on the maximum retail price (MRP) of all brands of liquor by 20% in the State Budget for 2023-24. Duty on the beer has been increased by 10%, from 175% to 185%.

There has been a decline in the consumption of Indian-made liquor, while consumption of wine and beer went up during the first quarter of the current financial year (2023-24).

The State government has set the revenue target at ₹36,000 crore for the year 2023-24.

Decline in bulk litres

The sale of Indian-made liquor in bulk litres declined from 11.72 crore during the first quarter in 2022-23 to 10.42 crore in the first quarter of 2023-24 (July 20, 2022 - September 30, 2023).

The revenue from the Indian-made liquor marginally increased to ₹5,760.94 crore in 2023 from ₹5,743.17 crore in the

The Karnataka government has set the revenue target for Excise Department at ₹36,000 crore in 2023-24

first quarter of 2022.

Revenue from the sale of wine has declined from ₹78.33 crore in the first quarter of 2022 to ₹72.03 crore in the first quarter of 2023-24. However, revenue generation from the sale of beer has increased from ₹1,173.37 crore during July-September 2022 to ₹1,318.63 crore during July-September 2023.

The number of invoices declined from 2,13,266 in the first quarter of 2022 to 2,10,571 in the first quarter of 2023.

Sales figures

The sale of Indian-made liquor bottles declined to 50,28,737 from 54,64,723 in the first quarter of 2022. The sale of Indian-made liquor carton boxes (CBs) declined to 1,19,51,562 in 2023 from 1,34,52,291 CBs in 2022.

The sale of wine bottles increased to 1,55,093 in 2023 from 1,53,634 in 2022.

The sale of beer carton boxes increased to 70,75,107 in the first quarter of 2023 from 66,87,438 in the first quarter of 2022, according to data provided by the Excise Department.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct.7, 2023

Centre orders release of Rs 2,333-cr GST relief to K'taka

BENGALURU, DHNS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday directed officials to immediately release GST compensation of Rs 2,333 crore that is pending to Karnataka.

Nirmala issued the direction after Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who represents Karnataka in the GST Council, raised the matter during Saturday's meeting.

"While no deadline was given, we are hopeful that the amount should come to the state in a week's time," Gowda told *DH*.

Gowda said GST compensation dues have to be released automatically.

"The principal accountant-general (PAG) audits our reports and sends a state-

ment on the state's revenue. It is compared against the protected revenue. The shortfall is the compensation that the state should get. It should be automatically released without us having to ask. Our point was that the PAG has already submitted the statement on August 17. The finance minister said if the state's statement has been submitted, then the pending amount must be released immediately," Gowda explained.

In the current fiscal, Karnataka has seen a 20% growth in GST revenues up to September. The state has collected Rs 11,693 crore by September this fiscal compared to Rs 9,760 crore in the same period last year.

On the GST Council's decision to exempt potable alco-

hol, Gowda said the state government will have to study if this can have any revenue implications.

"Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) is basically concentrated spirit. When it is diluted, it becomes potable liquor. In its concentrated form, it's used for various industrial purposes. From the start, Karnataka's stand was that whatever ENA that's consumable should be under state excise and not GST," Gowda said.

Gowda also said that it was based on Karnataka's request that unlabelled millet mixes were exempt from GST.

Labelled millet mixes will attract 5% GST instead of 12-18%, the minister said. As agriculture minister (2013-18), Gowda aggressively promoted millets.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 5, Oct. 8, 2023

Drought effect? Karnataka exhausts 70% MGNREGA annual quota in 6 months

Bengaluru: In barely six months, Karnataka has exhausted as much as 70% of its annual quota of the allocated person-days (eight hours of labour each day) of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), thereby yet again underscoring the severity of the drought situation in the state, reports Sandeep Moudgal.

Out of the allocation of 13 crore person-days by the Centre, the state has exhausted 9.14 crore person-days, providing employment to as many as 25 lakh people. Present daily wages for each individual working under MGNREGA is Rs 300.

With the northeast retrea-

“Considering the present drought situation and given that as much as 70% of the person-days have been exhausted, we have approached the Centre for additional budgetary allocation of five crore person-days

Pavan Kumar Malapati |

MGNREGA COMMISSIONER

ting monsoon unlikely to make much of a difference to the state, Karnataka government has sought allocation of additional person-days to meet rising demand for employment from the agrarian sector.

► 100 days of job, P 6

17,927 households completed 100 days of job

► Continued from page 1

Considering the present drought situation and given that as much as 70% of the person-days have been exhausted, we have approached the Centre for additional budgetary allocation of five crore person-days,” said MGNREGA commissioner Pavan Kumar Malapati.

Malapati said the same had been communicated by RDPR minister Priyank Kharge to the Centre.

If approved, the additional person-days will take Karnataka's allocations to the times when the Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak.

Malapati also said the government has so far ensured that most farm labourers have work to sustain themselves.

Interestingly, 52 per cent of those who have benefited under MGNREGA in the current fiscal are women, while Scheduled Castes (SC) and Sched-

MGNREGA QUOTA

uled Tribes (ST) account for 17% and 12% of the population, respectively, that has been served under MGNREGA.

As many as 17,927 households have secured work under the scheme, as of October 7, and have completed 100 days of employment.

In comparison, for the entire 2022-23 financial year, the total number of households that had completed 100 days of work under the scheme was 31,678.

In view of lack of rainfall, only eight gram panchayats have shown zero expenditure under MGNREGA in the current fiscal, compared to a whopping 40 panchayats in 2022-23 and 17 in 2021-22.

According to government officials, jobs under the employment guarantee act have primarily been provided to agricultural labourers who have found little or no employment opportunities in their field due to the drought.

Source: The Times of India, p. 1&6, Oct. 8, 2023

KSRTC introduces 40 new non-AC sleeper buses, brands them 'Pallakki'

Corporation to add
798 buses to its
fleet this year

BENGALURU, DHNS

The KSRTC inducted 40 non-air-conditioned sleeper buses into its fleet on Saturday, giving them a distinct brand name for the first time.

The new buses are called 'Pallakki' (Kannada for palanquin) and carry the tagline 'Happiness is Travelling'.

The name was chosen in keeping with the state-run transport corporation's tradition of giving royalty-related brand names to its premium bus services, an official said.

Before Pallakki, the corporation ran only air-conditioned buses under its branded segment, which consists of such worthies as Airavat (single-axle seater), Airavat Club Class (multi-axle seater), Ambaari (single-axle sleeper), Ambaari Dream Class (multi-axle sleeper) and Ambaari Utsav (Euro-



The Pallakki non-AC sleeper bus inducted into the KSRTC fleet on Saturday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

pean-style, multi-axle sleeper).

"All these names have a connection with the (Mysuru) palace. Pallakki is also a step in that direction," the official explained.

Pallakki buses' features include warm white LED reading lights, LED display of berth numbers, Public Ad-

dress Systems, audio speakers and shoe racks under lower berths.

Along with 40 Pallakki buses, the KSRTC introduced 90 Karnataka Saarige buses, 10 new-model Karnataka Saarige buses, and four prototypes each of new air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned

sleeper buses.

Of the 100 Karnataka Saarige buses, 10 come with new designs and will be deployed for point-to-point services. The upgraded buses are taller, have wider window panes, more leg space with bucket seats, and wider luggage carriers, the KSRTC said.

"They have been introduced to distinguish them from long-distance Karnataka Saarige buses," the KSRTC added.

The KSRTC said it would induct 798 buses in the current year, increasing its fleet from 8,187. It added that its average daily ridership has risen to 32.28 lakh, and 17-18 lakh of them are women travelling under the Shakti scheme.

From where to where

From Bengaluru to

- Belagavi via Hubballi-Dharwad
- Horanadu via Chikkamagaluru
- Gangavathi via Hosapete
- Sagar via Shivamogga & Sorab
- Puttur via Kukke Subrahmanya
- Belthangady via Dharmasthala
- Kundapur via Mangaluru & Udupi

From Mangaluru to

- Talikote via Ilkal & Mantralaya via Ballari

From Davangere to

- Mangaluru & Kalaburagi

From Shivamogga to Vijayapura

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 6, Oct. 8, 2023

With scanty rain and RE deficit, State falls short of power while demand surges

While the previous year's power demand on October 9 was 8,818 MW, on the same day this year it was a whopping 15,403 MW

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The failure of the southwest monsoon and a surge in demand across various sectors has resulted in an unprecedented power situation in Karnataka with a mismatch in availability in demand. While the previous year's power demand in the State on October 9 was 8,818 MW, on the same day this year, the demand was a whopping 15,403 MW, the Energy Department noted on Tuesday.

The State is currently falling short of 40-50 MU of power every day.

This year, while the monsoon was somewhat active in the last two weeks of July in the State, there was a significant deficit in rainfall in the months of August and September, except for a few scattered showers.

Hydel shortage

The water storage in three reservoirs in the State used for electricity generation -



Karnataka is currently falling short of 40-50 MU of power every day. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Linganamakki, Supa and Varahi - has gone down by almost 50% leading to a generation loss of 2,968 MU as of October 9 this year. The department said that the current availability of energy in the State for this year is short of approximately 3,000 MU due to the low storage in hydro dams.

Further, with no help from rain, the farmers started using IP sets prior to their regular usage period pushing the energy demand upwards. While the con-

sumption in agriculture category was 1,425 MU in July 2022, it rose up to 2,209 MU in July 2023. Against a peak demand of 11,268 MW and energy consumption of 208 MU in August 2022, this year, the State recorded a peak demand of 19,850 MW and energy consumption of 294 MU on August 25.

RE generation down

The power woes are further worsened as the renewable energy (RE) generation has also come down in the

month of October, especially with regard to wind and solar energy. While wind generation was 53.63 MU on October 1, it came down to 4.76 MU on October 9.

All this together has increased the State's dependency on thermal energy. However, with heavy rain near the mines from where the State receives its coal for thermal power plants, the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) is only receiving wet coal, which has resulted in a breakdown

Power generation loss due to decreased storage in reservoirs in the State

Reservoir name	% storage as on Oct. 09, 2022	% storage as on Oct. 09, 2023	Generation loss in MU
Linganamakki	90.6	45.4	2,060
Supa	71.6	54.4	543
Varahi	73.8	36.3	365
Total			2,968

of power plants frequently.

The Energy Department said that a slew of measures had been put in place to mitigate the power shortfall including power swapping arrangements with other states. "The State has negotiated for swapping of power from Uttar Pradesh during the pre-solar and post-solar hours to an extent of 300 to 600MW for the period from October 2023 to May 2024. This power is to be returned to Uttar Pradesh from June 2024 to Sept 2024. Similar swapping arrangement has been finalised with Punjab also for a quantum of 500 MW of Round The Clock (RTC) power from November 2023 to May 2024," officials said.

The State has also obtained permission from Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) to procure power through short term tender to extent of 1250 MW power on RTC basis and 250MW on RTM as and when required (primarily for peak hours), on a cap rate basis.

Gaurav Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, said that nodal officers in the rank of CEE have been nominated for each district to monitor the power supply in co-ordination with MDs of ESCOMs. The officers will ensure all categories of consumers are provided equitable power supply.

Source: The Hindu, p.4, Oct. 11, 2023

Banks told to restructure loans of farmers hit by drought

A special State-Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) on Tuesday has decided to instruct all bank branches to restructure loans of all eligible farmers in the wake of the drought in Karnataka.

The State has already declared 195 taluks as drought-hit and an official team of the Central government visited the taluks to assess the damage to crops. Many of the farmers have been demanding waiver of their crop loans following drought in the State. The State government sought compensation of ₹4860.13 crore as per the NDRF norms from the Centre for providing compensation to farmers who had lost crops. The SLBC meeting was held under the chairmanship of Shalini Rajneesh, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, on October 7. The State faced a severe shortage in rainfall during the southwest monsoon.

Source: The Hindu, p.4, Oct. 11, 2023

CM halts off-budget grants as guarantees pinch

Congress MLAs unhappy as requests rejected; finance dept relieved

BHARATH JOSHI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Congress' five guarantees may have slowed down developmental funding, irking its own MLAs no end, but they have also put an end to an "unhealthy" fiscal practice that festered under

successive governments.

For the first time in several years, no off-budget grants have been sanctioned to any MLA, with a source saying that the fiscal stress generated by the five guarantees has forced Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to reject requests for additional grants.

While this has led to disgruntlement among Congress MLAs, the finance department is a happy camper.

This fiscal, Siddaramaiah has set aside Rs 39,815 crore to implement the five guarantees that brought the Congress to power: Shakti, Gruha Jyothi, Anna Bhagya, Gruha Lakshmi



and Yuva Nidhi.

Normally, ruling party MLAs besiege the chief minister with sundry fund requests, for building roads, bridges and other infrastructure works in their constituencies.

And all chief ministers, including Siddaramaiah in his first term, obliged, sanctioning

grants to MLAs for the sake of political patronage, even if it meant approving projects without any budgetary allocation, leading to bills of such projects becoming pending.

Sample this: the departments of water resources, minor irrigation and public works together have ongoing works worth Rs 1.12 lakh crore. These works were sanctioned over the years without sufficient budget provisions.

In the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years, the government sanctioned road works costing Rs 4,248.61 crore against just Rs 1,520 crore allocated in the budget books.

"Anything above Rs 10 crore has to come to the Cabinet," a senior official said. "But CMs have been approving hundreds of crores that are later provided for through supplementary estimates that go unquestioned even by the Opposition, whose MLAs also benefit."

"So far, the guarantees have kept MLAs away from approaching the CM seeking additionalities because they know he's not going to approve them. But we don't know how long he can keep resisting MLAs," a source close to the CM said.

► **Guarantee, Page 4**

Guarantees' stress halts off-budget grants' reign

Guarantee, From Page 1

But frustration appears to be growing among MLAs. Earlier this month, Tiptur Congress MLA K Shadakshari publicly frowned upon the guarantees. "These five guarantees have completely floored us. Nothing can be done for now," he said.

Speaking to *DH*, senior Congress lawmaker RV Deshpande admitted that the guarantees have impacted development. However, he backed MLAs seeking funds. "Elected representatives are responsible for their constituents. I don't mind if an MLA fights for funds," he said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1&4, Oct. 11, 2023

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ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಮಣ; ಕೃಷಿ ಕಡೆಗಣನೆ

• ಚಂದ್ರಹಾಸ ಹಿರೇಮಠಲಿ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಅಭಾವ ತೀವ್ರಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದು, ಕೊರತೆ ಮಧ್ಯಯೋಜನೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ಎಸಗಲು (ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಸರಬರಾಜು ಕಂಪನಿಗಳು) ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ ಅದ್ವಿತೀಯ ನೀಡಿ, ಕೃಷಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣ ಕಡೆಗಣಿಸಿವೆ.

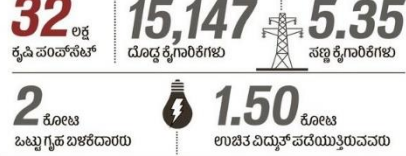
ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಕೃಷಿ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ ಶೇ 35ರಷ್ಟು, ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ ಶೇ 19.50ರಷ್ಟು ಬಳಕೆಯಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. 1.50 ಕೋಟಿ ಗ್ರಾಂಟಿ ಬಳಕೆದಾರರು ಹಾಗೂ 32 ಲಕ್ಷ ಕೃಷಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಉಚಿತ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ನೀಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ, ಆದಾಯದ ಮೂಲವಾದ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಯ ವಾದಂತೆ ಪೂರೈಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದು, ಉಚಿತ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ಕಡೆಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ ಎನ್ನುವುದು ವಿವಿಧ ರೈತ ಸಂಘಟನೆಗಳ ಆರೋಪ.

ಮಳೆ ಅಭಾವದ ಕಾರಣ ಎಲ್ಲೆಡೆ ಬರ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಜಲಾಶಯಗಳು ಬರಿದಾಗಿವೆ. ಮಳೆಯಾಶ್ರಿತ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳ ಬೆಳೆ ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣ ಒಣಗಿವೆ. ನೀರಾವರಿ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ತೋಟಗಾರಿಕಾ ಬೆಳೆ ಉಳಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ರೈತರು ಹರಸಾಹಸ ಪಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಆದರೆ, ಕೃಷಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಅಗತ್ಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಕೆಯಾಗದೇ ಮತ್ತಷ್ಟು ಸಂಕಷ್ಟಕ್ಕೆ ಸಿಲುಕಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ನಿಯಮದಂತೆ ಕೃಷಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್ ಗಳಿಗೆ ಪ್ರತಿದಿನ 7 ತಾಸು ತ್ರೀಫೇಸ್ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಸಬೇಕು.

ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪೂರೈಕೆ ಯಾಗಿರುತ್ತಿರುವುದು ಗಂಭೀರವಾದ ತಾಸು ಮಾತ್ರ. ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಬೇಸಿಗೆಯ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ

ಅಂಕಿ-ಅಂಶ



ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ-ಪೂರೈಕೆ (ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)	
ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ	16 ಸಾವಿರ
ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆ	10 ಸಾವಿರ
ಕೇಂದ್ರದ ಪೂರೈಕೆ	3 ಸಾವಿರ
ಹೊರ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಪೂರೈಕೆ	1 ಸಾವಿರ
ಕೊರತೆ	2 ಸಾವಿರ

1.50 ಲಕ್ಷ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಇಲ್ಲ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ರೈತರು 1.50 ಲಕ್ಷ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲು ವಿವಿಧ ಎಸಗಲುಗಳಿಗೆ ಆಜ್ಞೆ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. 2015ರಿಂದ ಅಂತಹ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಪರ್ಕವೇ ಸಿಕ್ಕಿಲ್ಲ. ಅಕ್ರಮ-ಸಕ್ರಮ ಯೋಜನೆ ಅಡಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲು

ಸರ್ಕಾರ ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಅದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ₹6,099 ಕೋಟಿ ವೆಚ್ಚ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಬರ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯ ಈ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ತುರ್ತು ಕ್ರಮಕ್ಕೆ ಗೊತ್ತು ರೈತರಿಗೆ ನೆರವಾಗಬೇಕು ಎನ್ನುತ್ತಾರೆ ನೆಲಮಂಗಲ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು ಮಾರಗೂಂಡಹಳ್ಳಿಯ ರೈತ ಎಂ.ಆರ್.ಚಿಕ್ಕರಾಮೇಗೌಡ.

ಹೊರ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಕೆಯೂ ಸ್ಥಗಿತ

ಹೊರ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳಿಂದಾಗುತ್ತಿರುವ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಕೆ ಯಲ್ಲೂ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಯವಾಗಿದೆ. 2300ಗಳು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಹಾಗೂ ಇತರ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳಿಂದ 6 ಸಾವಿರ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಖರೀದಿ-ಸಲಾಹಿತ್ಯ. ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಗ್ರಿಡ್ 3 ಸಾವಿರ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಪೂರೈಸಿದರೆ, ಇತರ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳಿಂದ

ದೊರೆತಿರುವುದು 1 ಸಾವಿರ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಮಾತ್ರ. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ, ರಾಜ್ಯದ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಕ್ಷಾಮ ಮತ್ತಷ್ಟು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೊರತೆ ನೀಗಿಸಲು ಪಂಚಾಭಿ, ಉತ್ತರ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಗಳ ಜತೆ ಮಾತುಕತೆ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿರುವುದಾಗಿ ಇಂಧನ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದಾರೆ.



ಕೊರತೆ ನೀಗಿಸಲು ಅಗತ್ಯವಾದ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಖರೀದಿಸಲು ಉತ್ತರದ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳ ಜತೆ ಮಾತುಕತೆ ನಡೆಸಿದೆ. ಶೀಘ್ರ ಬೇಡಿಕೆಗೆ ತಕ್ಕ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಲಭ್ಯವಾಗಲಿದೆ ಕೆ.ಜೆ.ಬಾಬ್, ಇಂಧನ ಸಚಿವ



ಬರದಿಂದ ಮುಂಗಾಂಟಿನ ಭಸಲು ನಾಶವಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೃಷಿ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ತ್ರೀಫೇಸ್ ನೀಡದೇ ತೋಟಗಾರಿಕೆ ಬೆಳೆಗಳನ್ನೂ ಇಂಧನ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಹಾಕಿಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ ಎಚ್.ಆರ್.ಬಸವರಾಜಪ್ಪ, ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯ ರೈತ ಸಂಘ

ಇರುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ ಇದೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಒಟ್ಟು ಕಳೆದ ಎರಡು ತಿಂಗಳಿನಿಂದಲೂ ಉತ್ಪಾದನಾ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ 32 ಸಾವಿರ ಮುಂದುವರಿದಿದೆ. ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್‌ನಷ್ಟಿದೆ.

16 ಸಾವಿರ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್‌ಗೆ ಹಾಗಿದ್ದರೂ ಜಲಾಶಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ

ನೀರಿನ ಕೊರತೆ, ಕಲ್ಪಿದವು ಪೂರೈಕೆಯ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಯ, ಕಳೆದ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆ, ನಿರ್ವಹಣಾ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ಮತ್ತಿತರ ಕಾರಣಗಳಿಂದ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆ 10 ಸಾವಿರ



ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಸರಬರಾಜಿನಲ್ಲಿ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಯವಾದ ಕಾರಣ ಸೋಮವಾರ ರಾತ್ರಿ ಕುಣಿಗಲ್ ಪುರಸಭೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಶಾಸಕ ಡಾ.ರಂಗನಾಥ್ ಅವರು ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಟಾರ್ಜ್ ಬಳಿಕೆನಲ್ಲಿ ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸಿದರು

ಶಾಸಕರ ಸಭೆಗೂ ತಟ್ಟಿದ ಲೋಡ್ ಶೆಡ್ಡಿಂಗ್ ಬಿಸಿ!

ಕುಣಿಗಲ್ (ತುಮಕೂರು): ಅಮೃತ ಯೋಜನೆ ಕುರಿತು ಚರ್ಚಿಸಲು ಸೋಮವಾರ ರಾತ್ರಿ ಶಾಸಕ ಡಾ.ರಂಗನಾಥ್ ಕರೆದ ಪೂರ್ವಭಾವಿ ಸಭೆಗೂ ಲೋಡ್ ಶೆಡ್ಡಿಂಗ್ ಬಿಸಿ ತಟ್ಟಿತು.

ಮುಗಿಯುವವರೆಗೂ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ ಯೊಬ್ಬರು ತಮ್ಮ ಮೊಬೈಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟಾರ್ಜ್ ಹಾಕಿ ಶಾಸಕರ ಪಕ್ಕದಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಂತಿದ್ದರು.

ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ ಶಾಸಕರು ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಪುರಸಭೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿರುವಾಗಲೇ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಕೈಕೊಟ್ಟಿತು. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಟಾರ್ಜ್ ಬೆಳಕಿನಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಶಾಸಕರು ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸಿದರು. ಸಭೆ

ಕಡಿಮೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ನಿರೀಕ್ಷಿತ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಯಾಗದ ಕಾರಣ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಉಂಟಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಪರಿಹಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಶೀಘ್ರದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಸೂಕ್ತ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಮಾಡಲಿದೆ' ಎಂದು ಶಾಸಕ ಡಾ.ರಂಗನಾಥ್ ಹೇಳಿದರು.

ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ದಾಟಲಿ. ಕೇಂದ್ರ, ಇತರ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳ ಪೂರೈಕೆ ಸೇರಿ 14 ಸಾವಿರ ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಲಭ್ಯವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಬೇಸಿಗೆ ಆರಂಭಕ್ಕೂ ನಾಲ್ಕು

ತಿಂಗಳ ಮೊದಲೇ ಲೋಡ್‌ಶೆಡ್ಡಿಂಗ್ ಅನಿವಾರ್ಯವಾಗಿದೆ. ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಯ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸಿದೆ.

Source: Prajavani, Oct. 11, 2023

KERC proposes multi-year tariff system across State

It does not mean the same tariff rates for 3 years. The objective is to provide 'tariff certainty'

Jahnvi T.R.
BENGALURU

If the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) has its way, by April 2024, consumers in Karnataka will know how much they would have to pay as electricity tariff until FY 2026-27.

The commission has proposed a multi-year tariff (MYT) framework for retail electricity supply for the first time under the Draft Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (Multi Year Transmission, Distribution and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2023.

The MYT system does not mean the same tariff rates for three years. While the KERC will file tariff orders every year as usual, there will be no surprises for consumers each year as the tariff rates for the "control period," which in this case is three years, would be fixed at the beginning of the control period itself. The objective of this idea is to provide "tariff certainty".

A senior KERC official said that MYT would especially help businesses and industries. "This will help them forecast their electricity expenditure for the next three years. Of course, there will be small changes, but the certainty will help," the official said.

The new draft is a consolidation of the existing



A senior KERC official said that the multi-year tariff system would help businesses and industries. FILE PHOTO

"Tariff Regulations" and "Terms and Conditions for Determination of Tariff for Transmission and Distribution and Retail Sale of Electricity Regulations."

It follows the "Model Regulation for Multi Year Distribution Tariff" finalised by the Forum of Regulators (FOR), which consists of the chairperson of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission and chairpersons of the State electricity regulatory commissions, the draft document noted.

The MYT framework will be based on multi-year tariff petitions, determination of annual revenue requirement (ARR), tariff and other things and mechanisms for pass through (on to the consumers), and sharing of gains and losses (between the petitioner

and consumers), owing to uncontrollable and controllable factors respectively. The MYT petition is expected to be filed before this November 30, the draft says.

Although the regulations for MYT have been present for over a decade, the application to retail supply (to consumers) had not been possible, owing to the dynamic power purchase costs and varying monsoon patterns.

However, a recent notification by the Ministry of Power has given Discoms the power to levy fuel and power purchase costs adjustment (FPPCA) on consumers month-on-month. Thus, with 80-85% of the tariff comprising only energy costs, the MYT is easier to implement now, according to officials.

Among the many features of MYT is also a trajectory for transmission and distribution (T&D) losses.

The MYT would have also forecast T&D losses for the control period at the beginning.

If the losses exceed the forecast amount, then a penalty would be levied and if the losses are lesser, then an incentive would also be offered to the licencees.

The Escoms are collectively preparing their comments for the draft. "We will come to a consensus and send it to the Energy Department and then we will submit it to the KERC," a senior official said.

However, consumers still have their doubts about how this framework will be beneficial to industries.

"Where is the tariff certainty if they keep revising FPPCA every month? Tariff certainty is essential to industries especially when it comes to outside investments. In the present mode of tariff, this certainty is missing. This framework is also missing what it claims to provide," said M.G. Prabhakar, former member of the advisory committee, KERC.

The draft has now been forwarded to all the stakeholders, including Escoms for comments. A public hearing is also scheduled on October 25 for the matter.

Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 13, 2023

'U.S. companies evince interest to invest ₹25,000 crore in State'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

After tour of the United States, Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil and Electronics & IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge on Thursday said that several American companies have expressed interest to invest around ₹25,000 crore in Karnataka.

Both Ministers held a joint press conference on the outcome of the business promotion delegation headed by them to the U.S. and said some of the companies are already in the process of investing around \$1 billion in the State. "Our discussions primarily focused on semi-conductors, aerospace and defence, electric vehicles, space, and precision manufacturing," Mr. Patil said.

Mr. Kharge also stated that the government would organise a global start-up summit in Bengaluru next year. Mr. Patil said that the Karnataka government would organise the next global investors meet (GIM) at the end of



Ministers M.B. Patil and Priyank Kharge addressing a press conference in Bengaluru on Thursday. SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

2024 or in early 2025.

The delegation shared ideas with leading companies such as Applied Materials, AMD, Juniper, Global Foundries, LAM Research, Boeing, Krypton, Dell, MKS Instruments, GE Healthcare, Intelsat, RTX, Teradyne, Texas Instruments, Apple, and Waters Corp among others. It also met with a few startups like Leolabs, Fictiv and T-Second, the Ministers said.

"The purpose of the visit to the U.S. was to highlight Karnataka as a promising destination for investment. This visit to the U.S. was necessary and

important considering the fast-changing geo-political dynamics as a large number of global companies are looking at India, especially Karnataka, as an attractive, safe destination for new investment or expanding their existing presence," Mr. Patil remarked.

Mr. Kharge said that the purpose of the visit was to attract investment at a time when not only China but other States within the country are competing with each other to attract investors. The State government is tying up with AMD to train engineers based on the syllabus pro-



Government will organise a global start-up summit in Bengaluru next year.

PRIYANK KHARGE
Electronics & IT/BT Minister



A large number of global companies are looking at India, especially Karnataka, as an attractive, safe destination for new investment.

M.B. PATIL
Large and Medium Industries Minister

vided by the company to meet their requirements for human resources. AMD will be hiring 800 engineers in India, he said.

Stating that Karnataka stands in 18th position in the innovation index, Mr. Kharge said that the State was taking many new initiatives to improve the ranking and the aim is to be among the top 10.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 13, 2023

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EDUCATION

Minister: 500-600 new K'taka Public Schools by March 2024

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: As early as next year, more students in rural areas might be able access bilingual Karnataka Public Schools (KPS) run by the state government.

Minister of school education and literacy **Madhu Bangarappa** on Friday announced that 500-600 new Karnataka Public Schools would open by March 2024. "In the years to follow, the number of new schools will touch 2,000. These schools will have art, music and physical education teachers. They will have facilities available in private schools, as well as those designed to be accessible for persons with disabilities," he said.



Bangarappa was speaking at the inauguration of a conference on inclusivity for children with disabilities, by Fourth Wave Foundation and Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore, at the latter's campus.

KPS was started in 2017-18 and there are nearly 300 such schools. They have been a resounding success among parents who want to give their kids education in both English and Kannada, said Bangarappa. In fact, he added, some have up to 400% demand in admissions. "When thinking quality, many parents think about private and aided schools. Government schools don't enjoy that image, because of our past shortcomings — be it in shortage of teachers, facilities, or public works infrastructure. Hence, we are making up for it with KPS, extending from LKG to class 12," he said.

Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar is seeking CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds for the education sector. While the department is looking at a target of at least Rs 2,500 crore in CSR funds by March 2024, Bangarappa said it already has a commitment of Rs 600 crore.

Source: The Times of India, p.2, Oct.7 , 2023

Why does the State want to control universities?’

There is a need to redefine the relationship between the State and universities for a truly autonomous and thriving academic environment

B K CHANDRASHEKAR

In post-Nehruvian India, did the State understand the essence of a ‘university’? It should be a free space where teachers, students and researchers can freely question, argue and hold diverse opinions in pursuit of truth. A university is a centre of learning that requires an atmosphere of open inquiry and debate.

Constructive debate requires the ability to think. Scepticism, heretical views and dialogue promote the habit of thinking, facilitate innovation, even the development of new skills that India needs today. A university needs comprehensive administrative and academic autonomy. Learning involves experiments and failures, critique of contending hypotheses and, possibly, agreement to disagree.

Besides being a centre of learning, a university is a social institution with attendant responsibilities to society, such as critiquing the continued prevalence and reproduction of inequality, which causes unequal opportunities for access to education. It is thus a training ground for democracy, resented only by authoritarian governments.

So, policy makers shouldn’t be touchy about critical assessment of policies and decisions. Touchiness can lead to disdain for knowledge and over-emphasis on skill-based degrees at the cost of knowledge.

These days a majority of knowledge-proof decision makers have preferred to continue with a three-decade old Act. They are convinced that they are ‘systemic reformers’ and set up commissions and committees to cure the ills of the universities, to elevate them to international standards.

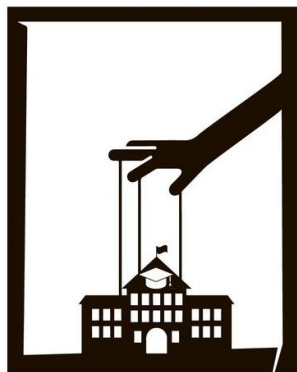
The route to achieve this worthy objective, they believe, with little understanding of the philosophy of higher education, is to reinforce a regime of bureaucratised control over the appointment and powers of pro-chancellor, vice-chancellor, registrars, finance officer, college development council, even to the syndicate, to which government nominates as many as 14 persons while the VC nominates only six persons.

For faculty recruitment, the ‘Board of Appointment’ (S.53, Karnataka Act, 2000), chaired by the VC, will have 4 experts nominated by the chancellor on the recommendation of the state government, and the chairman of the departmental council. The “government” mentioned above simply means the education minister and the principal secretary to the higher education department.

Universities are thus boxed in by the state, lock stock and barrel. As if this was not enough, the previous state government allowed a spree of private universities, most of which treat education as business. Incidentally, Karnataka Legislative Council approved the list of universities in under 30 minutes in 2022, cleared without a murmur by the governor-chancellor.

On the appointment of the VC, academics have made various suggestions, but they refrain from contextualising the government’s tight grip over the search committee. Only internationally recognised scholars, most likely to resist governmental pressures, should be on the search committee.

The role of state-appointed govern-



nors, mostly non-academic, has been most controversial. Recent action by governors of Kerala and West Bengal in the direct appointment of VCs or acting VCs, by-passing elected governments, has invited strong disapproval from constitutional experts. The governors have tossed out of the window the constitutional mandate of federalism and the rights of the states.

Will the government respond to the question: with all the suffocating controls, what have you achieved so far?

In Mysore University, a professor who was facing trial in a court and, apparently, not even on the recommended panel of names but included subsequently by the previous government was appointed VC. But he had to quit on legal grounds.

But the HC has now (Sept 22) overruled a single judge’s order. How will faculty and students perceive such incidents?

In Kuvempu University, graft allegations against the VC were asked to be investigated by a committee headed by a district judge on May 29th of this year. It was given 20 days to inquire and report. By the end of August, the committee hadn’t met even once. The judge obviously felt slighted.

Governments routinely confront serious political and social issues demanding immediate attention; university problems are their last priority. However, when professors are desperate to buy-off

the VC’s job at ‘the going rate’, without a sense of guilt, why blame the government even if it is a party to the deal?

Can there be any greater academic and moral depravity? That MLAs in 2020, 35% of whom faced criminal cases, 26% ‘serious criminal cases’, in their electoral affidavits “deplored corruption in recruitments of VCs in universities run by the government” is a telling irony.

The depth of the state’s misadventure into academic issues is the senseless control over the ‘Board of Studies’ (KSU Act, S33). It is a self-governing body of senior professors from the department and subject experts from other universities to frame the syllabus for different subjects, keeping in view local needs, expertise of the faculty, feasibility of new courses – all foreign to education ministers and bureaucracy.

It was appropriated by the BJP government’s NEP via the ‘Higher Education Council’, still in force, for this academic year. In other words, the HEC was enabled to manipulate the syllabus, courses, and textbooks to suit the BJP’s agenda.

An unpardonable lapse is that all governments in Karnataka have failed to fill up 75% to 90% of the already ‘sanctioned posts’. In Mysore University alone, 407 out of 460 sanctioned posts continue to be vacant! In Karnatak University, 386 of its 600 positions are vacant.

These posts are filled by ‘guest/temporary faculty’. Can we expect any real commitment to the university or to students from them?

Yet, the present higher education minister recently asserted that the quality of higher education has not suffered. More shockingly, he has declared in an interview (DH Aug 8, 23) that “the government is thinking of performance-based tenure for VCs”. Does he mean an apprentice VC?

Will the present government end the dismal state of affairs by thorough-going amendments to the universities Act? If it does, it will be the first public-funded university, where administrative and academic freedoms can flourish.

It would do well to set up a ‘board of governors’, in which its nominees should be in a minority and the rest should be well-known academics, industry representatives, professionals, perhaps even from the civil society. The board should govern the university.

A question that academics have failed to raise until now, for they dare not ‘dissent’: why does the State believe that it should control universities? Does the State alone know what is best for society?

Dr Deepak Nayyar, former economic advisor to the V P Singh government and VC of Delhi University, once said that “governments must recognise that the provision of resources to universities does not endow them with a right to exercise control”.

(The writer is an academic, former minister and former Chairman, Karnataka Legislative Council)

Source: Deccan Herald, p.6, Oct. 9, 2023

Lack of amenities in govt. schools forcing poor to send children to private schools, says High Court

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Lack of basic facilities such as toilets and drinking water in government schools is forcing the poor parents to admit their children in private schools and encouraging establishment of private schools, the High Court of Karnataka said on Monday.

This scenario, the court said, is resulting in failure to implement the constitutional mandate of providing free education to children up to the age of 14.

"If a parent, who does not earn enough to have two meals a day, has to compromise on the meals to put his children to private schools, is it not that the situation is being created due to lack of basic facilities in government schools?... fortunately, the situation right now is that haves get basic facilities and have-nots have nothing at all. This is unfortunate," the court observed orally.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Prasanna B. Varale and Justice Krishna S. Dixit made these observations on noticing that the government is still unable to provide toilet and drinking water facilities in large number of schools even though the



schools are set up many years ago despite being aware of the situation.

The Bench has been monitoring implementation of the provisions of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act in a suo motu PIL petition initiated in 2013 on the issue of out-of-school children.

"Not against pvt. schools"

"Is education only for children of privileged class? No research is required to know that it is the children from underprivileged class who join the government schools. Can the State expect underprivileged family to admit their children to private schools...?" the Bench asked the government.

While stating the court is not

against establishment of private schools as per the law, the Bench said that unfortunately lack of basic facilities in government schools is aiding establishment of private schools as government schools are being closed due to insufficient number of students.

Book in Ambedkar's hand

"Equality comes only by education... That is the reason we always see B.R. Ambedkar holding a book in his hand. Have you ever seen a bust or photograph of Dr. Ambedkar without a book? Because education is so important. You [State government] provide many free services, including bus services... but education is essential," the Bench observed.

The Bench agreed with the submissions of the amicus curie K.N. Phanindra and others that lack of basic facilities in government schools is impacting the fundamental right of the children to free and compulsory education as guaranteed under Article 21A of the Constitution.

Also, the Bench pointed out that an official report on education in Bangladesh has found that the government schools in that country are better than the government schools in India.

Source: The Hindu, p.4, Oct. 10, 2023

State forms panel to frame education policy

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka government has constituted a 15-member committee to formulate the Karnataka State Education Policy (KSEP) under the chairmanship of Sukhdev

Thorat, educationist, economist, and former chairman of University Grant Commission.

The Congress government had announced in its election manifesto that it would withdraw the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) and

bring a separate education policy for the State. The panel will frame the draft of KSEP and submit it by February 28, 2024, the order issued on Wednesday said. The committee also has eight subject experts/advisers.

Some of the members

are Sanjay Kaul, former secretary, School Education, Government of India; Sudhir Krishnaswamy, and Vice-Chancellor of National Law School of India University.

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State forms panel to frame education policy

The panel also includes S. Japhet, former Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru City University; Jogan Shankar, former Vice-Chancellor of Kuvempu University; Rajendra Chenni, retired Professor of English at Kuvempu University; Nataraj Budalu, retired professor and writer; Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor and Head of the Department of Higher and Professional Education, NIEPA; Furquan Qamar, Professor of Management at the Centre for Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia; Pranati Panda, Professor and Head of the Department of School and Non-formal Education in NIEPA; Sharat Ananthamruthy, Professor, School of Physics, University Hyderabad; A. Narayana, Professor with the school of policy and governance, Azim Premji University; V.P. Niranjanaradhya, educationist; M.S. Talawar, retired professor of Bangalore University; Santhosh Naik R., Professor, Department of Sociology, Karnataka State Open University; and Vinaya Okkunda, Associate Professor and writer, Government First Grade College, Dandeli.

Among the advisers are Yogendra Yadav, Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi; Rahamath Tarikere, retired professor at Hampi Kannada University; Janaki Nair, historian; Valerian Rodrigous, professor, Centre for Political Studies, JNU; and Sabiha Bhoomigowda, former Vice-Chancellor of Akkamahadevi Women's University.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, M.C. Sudhakar, Minister for Higher and Technical Education, said: "The commission will submit the interim report at first and the final report by February end. KSEP will be implemented by 2024-25."

Source: The Hindu, p.1&6, Oct.12, 2023

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Health

Pvt. hospitals told to mandatorily upload disease surveillance data on govt. portals

Afshan Yasmeen

BENGALURU

For better surveillance and to detect early warning signals of impending disease outbreaks, the Karnataka's Health Department has directed all private medical establishments (PMEs) to mandatorily upload health management information and disease surveillance on the relevant government portals on a regular basis.

In an order, State Health Commissioner Randeep D. has warned the PMEs action under the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (KPME) Act if they fail to comply with the directions. "The health management information should be uploaded on the Health Management Information System (HMIS) portal on or before the 5th of every month and disease surveillance data on the In-

tegrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) on a daily basis," the Commissioner told *The Hindu* on Friday. The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has posted revised formats on the HMIS and IHIP portals to collect information from private medical establishments, he said.

Not uploading data

Stating that a separate module has been developed in the HMIS portal, the Commissioner said, "Till today, 1,074 PMEs have been recognised and logins created for the users in the HMIS portal. However, we noticed that many establishments have not been updating the information on/before 5th of every month, as mandated."

He said the disease surveillance data from IHIP is used to generate and detect early warning signals of impending outbreaks.

This helps to initiate an effective response. Hence, regular reporting of disease surveillance data in IHIP portal is mandated by all PMEs in Karnataka, he said.

"HMIS and IHIP data is being used in the various government review meetings such as Karnataka Development Programme (KDP), State Programme Implementation Plans (PIP), NITI Ayog, SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) and also for reflecting on the Chief Minister's dashboard. It is also used for internal progress review of all the health programmes by the department. Hence, timely uploading and maintenance of the data accuracy on the HMIS and IHIP portal is very essential," he asserted.

Drawing reference to the obligations of private medical establishments

under Section 11 (1) of the KPME Act, the Commissioner said it is mandatory under the Act for all PMEs to actively participate in the implementation of all national and State health programmes by furnishing periodic reports.

"I have directed all the district health officers to re-issue instructions to the PMEs in their jurisdiction to upload the above mentioned data on the relevant portals," he said.

PHANA's advisory

Govindaiah Yateesh, president of the Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association (PHANA), said most large hospitals are already complying with the direction. "We will again issue an advisory to our member hospitals to mandatorily upload the required information on the government portals," he added.

Source: The Hindu, p.10, Oct. 7, 2023

Non-communicable diseases burden on steady rise in those aged above 30

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

At over 62%, Karnataka's burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) has surpassed the burden due to communicable and infectious diseases since 2000. According to clinical data from district hospitals, taluk hospitals, and community health centres collated under the National Health Mission's National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in Karnataka, NCD burden has been on a steady rise in people aged above 30.

Characterised by common risk factors, NCDs are also known as chronic diseases or lifestyle-related disorders. Screening under NPCDCS at the district level was launched in 2017 across the country by the

Disease-wise diagnosis

	April 2017 - March 2018	April 2018 - March 2019	*April 2019 - March 2020	April 2020 - March 2021	April 2021 - March 2022	April 2022 - March 2023	April 2023 - August 2023
Cardiovascular diseases	4,706	4,582	8,300	6,404	5,620	7,761	3,184
Stroke	1,903	2,401	3,667	2,304	3,389	3,981	1,906
COPD	0	0	11,197	7,158	9,760	10,528	4,218
CKD	0	0	5,098	2,734	3,611	3,827	1,563
Diabetes	1,07,853	1,29,675	96,989	49,392	68,546	84,743	31,991
Hypertension	1,08,106	1,23,551	99,394	52,330	82,649	1,03,722	37,767
Cancers (including oral, breast, cervical, and others)	3,546	4,030	5,146	3,120	5,544	6,196	3,137

* COPD, CKD included under NCDs from this year
Source: Clinical data recorded under National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In May this year, the programme was renamed as National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NPCDCS) as more diseases such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary dis-

ease, and chronic kidney disease.

According to the data from the districts, diabetes and hypertension form a major component of the NCD disease burden followed by cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). With 1,07,853 people diagnosed with diabetes and 1,08,106

with hypertension in 2017-2018, the number of follow-up cases have touched 2,74,013 and 3,32,217 this year. Screening, which was hit during the pandemic years, has now again gained momentum across the State.

The number of people diagnosed with CVDs,

NCD clinics functional across Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Non-communicable Diseases clinics are functional across the State with one each in district hospitals and 347 at the taluk and community health centre level, said G.A. Srinivasa, State Deputy Director of National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke.

"It is mandatory to screen all aged above 30 once in a year for diabetes

and hypertension and once in five years for common cancers under the programme. At the village and sub-centre level, health workers and ASHAs, who have been trained, detect those with symptoms for initial screening. After initial screening, those who require further investigation are referred to primary health centres, taluk hospitals, and district hospitals for confirmation of the diagnosis," he said.

Counselling for a healthy lifestyle is also provided at the clinics, he said.

which are a leading cause of death in people aged 40 and above, is also on the

rise. From 4,706 people diagnosed with CVDs in 2017-2018, the number

shot up to 7,761 last year. This year, as many as 3,184 people have been diagnosed with CVDs from April till August. Besides, cancer cases (including oral, breast, cervical, and other cancers) are also on a steady rise, said the data.

According to the Karnataka Health Vision report 2021, during 1990 to 2016, disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) due to ischemic heart diseases in Karnataka moved from fourth to first position, stroke from 12th to 4th position, and diabetes from 23rd to 7th position.

Former director of NIMHANS G. Gururaj, who headed the Vision Group as well as the Technical Committee on NCDs, said the Lancet Commission report has identified about 20 conditions in less than five years age group, 52 causes in 15-40 years,

about 40 causes in those aged beyond 40 that contribute to nearly 75% of disease burden, especially among poorer sections of society.

C.N. Manjunath, director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, said the most predominant modifiable risk factors include elevated levels of systolic blood pressure, diabetes, and total cholesterol. "Behavioural risk factors like obesity, physical inactivity due to sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, stress, and others play an equally important role," he said.

Most of these risk factors develop during the adolescence, or young adult phase of an individual, which with timely intervention can significantly reduce the burden of NCDs in later life, he added.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 8, 2023

Researchers find high rate of paediatric tuberculosis infection in household contacts of index patients

While 50% of 686 children (below 15 years) examined in the study were found to be infected, the infection had developed into disease in 3%. Nearly 80% of these cases occurred in the 6-15 age group

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

A study by researchers from Kasturba Medical College (KMC), Manipal, ESIC Medical College and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Rajajinagar, and State Tuberculosis (TB) division in Bengaluru and Udupi districts has found high rates of paediatric TB infection among household contacts of TB patients.

While 50% of the 686 children (below 15 years) examined in the study were found to be infected, the infection had developed into the disease in 3%. Nearly 80% of these

cases occurred in the 6-15 age group. The study titled "TB screening for paediatric household contacts in India: Time to adapt newer strategies under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)" was published in PLOS ONE, an open access journal, on October 5.

Led by Kiran Chawla from KMC and Sharath B.N. from ESIC, the study is aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of screening paediatric household contacts (under the age of 15 years) for TB through verbal screening, tuberculin skin testing (TST) and chest radiography at intervals of 0, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months.

The study was funded

by the Central TB Division, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

NTEP guidelines

"The current NTEP guidelines only require verbal screening for contacts under six-years-old at TB treatment initiation. The study aimed to fill this knowledge gap and provide valuable insights for improving TB screening in paediatric household contacts in India," said Dr. Sharath.

Conducted from January 2021 to December 2022, the research utilised a cohort study design to enrol contacts of index TB cases diagnosed under NTEP.

Dr. Chawla said the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to regular follow-up screenings, making it difficult to assess and treat potential cases in a timely manner. "A substantial number of parents did not subject their children to screening due to the absence of visible symptoms, highlighting the importance of multiple screenings. The study recommends a revision of the screening policy for household contacts, advocating for at least three screenings a year involving symptom screening, chest radiography, and TST or other non-invasive tests," she said.

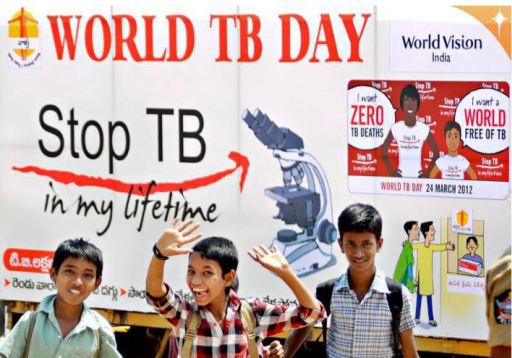
"The study reveals sig-

nificant hurdles, especially when it comes to paediatric cases," the doctor said.

Gender disparities

Another author Suresh Shastri, State Programme Officer (Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka), who was then Senior Specialist in the State TB division, said females above six years of age were found to be at a 22% more risk of contracting TB compared to males in the same age group.

"This research serves as a clarion call to re-evaluate existing screening policies and prioritise early detection and treatment of paediatric TB cases," the study pointed out.



The study is aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of screening paediatric household contacts (under the age of 15) for TB through verbal screening, tuberculin skin testing and chest radiography. FILE PHOTO

Source: The Hindu, p.4, Oct. 9, 2023

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Pricey B'luru pushes home buyers to affordable outskirts

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Skyrocketing real estate prices in Bengaluru are pushing aspiring buyers towards rural parts on the outskirts, where property development is gathering pace without the necessary civic infrastructure.

Devanahalli and Hoskote — both under Bengaluru Rural — are among the areas attracting a lot of interest as rates here are more affordable; and with firms offering flexible work options, a pandemic side-effect, distance is no longer a deterrent.

According to data accessed by DH, revenue collected through property registrations in Bengaluru Rural district has increased by nearly 128% from 2019-20 to 2022-23, an indication that sales are booming.

While Rs 439.15 crore was

collected in the form of stamp duty and registration fees in 2019-20, in 2022-23, the collection went up to Rs 1003.89 crore and this year, in just six months, close to Rs 385.13 crore was collected in charges.

"There is a significant inclination towards investing in Bengaluru Rural. While in Devanahalli, development is driven by the proximity to Kempegowda International Airport, Hoskote is preferred owing to the Chennai Expressway," said a senior official from the Department of Stamps and Registrations.

Interest in Doddaballapur and Nelamangala is also growing, said developers and sources in the department.

The demand has prompted many well-known developers to announce big projects, including huge apartment complexes, gated communities

Revenue collected through property registrations in Bengaluru Rural

2019-20	₹ 439.15 cr
2020-21	₹ 521.17 cr
2021-22	₹ 795.52 cr
2022-23	₹ 1003.89 cr
2023-24*	₹ 385 cr

*till Sept

Given these areas are also developing, and that both me and my wife work from home on most days, we decided this was the best buy

SUMANTH M,
who purchased a flat in Devanahalli

Revenue through property registrations in B'luru Rural district has increased by nearly **128%** from 2019-20 to 2022-23

and townships.

Some property buyers told DH that affordability coupled with flexible work options were driving the trend.

"Buying a decent property anywhere within the city limits is expensive," said Sumanth M, who purchased a flat in Devanahalli. "Also, with the same amount we pay there, we can buy a better property in these areas. Given these areas are also

developing, and that both me and my wife work from home on most days, we decided this was the best buy."

Real estate rates in these taluks are steadily increasing, sources said.

For instance, in Devanahalli, property rates seem to have nearly doubled over the last two to three years.

► Home buyers, Page 5

Pricey B'luru pushes home buyers to outskirts

Home buyers, from Page 1

"There has been a real estate boom since four years. However, the enquiries and purchases increased drastically during Covid. Property rates have increased drastically since then. In prime areas, properties that once used to cost Rs 4,000 sq ft now cost close to Rs 7,500," said Mohammed Shaffath, owner of Newfort real-estate in Hoskote.

The challenges

However, gram panchayats and rural administrations are struggling to keep up with the

influx of new residents, as they lack the infrastructure such as waste management.

"In urbanised panchayats like Hoskote and Devanahalli, there is huge pressure on the rural administration. Heaps of garbage pile up on the roadsides since many of them do not dispose of waste correctly," said Dr Anuradha K N, Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Panchayat, Bengaluru Rural.

Many GPs are now taking help from support groups and NGOs to help manage the waste collection and segregation.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1&5, Oct. 9, 2023

'Traffic, garbage, property tax key priorities of Brand Bengaluru'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Easing traffic congestion, boosting property tax collection base and improving Solid Waste Management (SWM) in the city are the key priorities of the State government and Brand Bengaluru, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar said on Monday.

Speaking at the Brand Bengaluru Summit in the city, which was a culmination of a long campaign that received 70,000 suggestions from citizens and experts, Mr. Shivakumar said the government and other stakeholders have been working in tandem to find solutions to the city's problems with an aim to invigorate the image of Bengaluru on a global scale.

On the traffic front, Mr. Shivakumar said building elevated corridors, tunnel roads and improving the metro network were the only solutions to the city traffic woes. He said, "In about 45 days, a tender will be called in connection to award a contract to the agency to conduct a study to build tunnel roads. For tunnel roads, we need openings and exits and for that we need land. Whether we can use land in the golf course or other open spaces, what are the legalities for the land use and other issues are being discussed." Mr. Shivakumar opined that although traffic



Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Minister of Transport Ramalinga Reddy and others during the Brand Bengaluru seminar in Bengaluru on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

snarls are common in other metro cities, Bengaluru' problem was highlighted as the city already has a global reputation.

SWM potential

Mr. Shivakumar said after touring Hyderabad, Chennai and other cities which have best SWM practices, he found that Bengaluru is lagging behind in tapping into its potential. The waste here is just being dumped in landfills. Waste can be converted into energy. He also said the public has been opposing setting up landfills near their areas. "I will be soon holding a meeting with the Revenue Department and Forest Department on finding fresh land for landfills on the outskirts of the city," he said.

On the other hand, Mr. Shivakumar said he was also planning to introduce a SWM user fee. The collection of the fee will help Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited to fetch revenue to help im-

prove the system. He said the cities which he has visited are collecting user fees from the citizens.

Maintaining parks

The government is also planning to set up ward-level apolitical committees across the city to maintain parks and playgrounds. Mr. Shivakumar said as these areas are used by people, especially the walkers, he is considering forming new committees to maintain these open spaces. These committees will not have any members affiliated to political parties. These committees will also be empowered to bring in Corporate Social Responsibility Funds to carry out development activities.

Mr. Shivakumar said he has directed workers to fill the potholes immediately after receiving complaints from citizens. The Police Department will also be included in the pothole redressal system said Mr. Shivakumar.

Source: The Hindu, p.3, Oct. 10, 2023

All waste processing plants and landfills will be shifted out of Bengaluru city: DKS

DCs of Bengaluru Urban, Rural, and Ramanagara dists. told to find land parcels of 100 acres each

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Residents living around waste processing plants who have been demanding their closure for years now may heave a sigh of relief. Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday announced that the State government will relocate all waste processing plants and landfills to outside Bengaluru city soon.

“Citizens living around processing units and landfills are facing several problems. Hence, I have decided to shift these units to uninhabited hilly areas around the city,” he said.

On Tuesday, he held a meeting of Revenue and Forest officials, including Minister for Forest, Ecology, and Environment Eshwar Khandre. Mr. Shivakumar directed Deputy Commissioners of Bengaluru (Urban), Bengaluru (Rural), and Ramanagara districts to find land parcels of 100 acres each in four places, in four directions from the city, to establish Integrated Solid Waste Management Parks,



The waste processing plant at Chigaranahalli in Doddaballapur taluk. FILE PHOTO

to where all waste management of the city will shift to and all processing plants and landfills in the city will shut down.

The Integrated SWM parks will have composting units, dry waste aggregation centres, landfill for inert and rejects, generation of refuse-derived fuel, and waste energy plants.

There was a proposal to build similar SWM parks in Madhugiri and even take the waste to Kolar Gold Fields during the earlier tenure of the Congress government (2013-18). However, these proposals had met with intense opposition from SWM activists who have been battling for

decentralised waste processing.

Ironically, the earlier Congress government built five waste processing plants in 2013-14, in less than six months, hailed as a paradigm shift in SWM in the city. Following a satyagraha by freedom fighter H.S. Doreswamy demanding a stop on dumping waste at Mandur, then Chief Minister Siddaramaiah assured him that it would stop by December 31, 2013. By then the Karnataka High Court had made segregation of waste mandatory. The city's civic body built waste processing plants in Seegehalli, Kannahalli, Doddabidara-

kallu, Chikkanagamangala, and Subbarayanapalya.

On Tuesday, Mr. Shivakumar also asked the Forest Department to find land adjacent to forest land or deemed forest to handover the same to the Revenue Department for the project. According to an official, the possibility of providing land to the Forest Department in exchange for land for park was also discussed. At present, all landfills and waste processing units are functioning.

A senior official said it may take at least three years to establish these parks and till then the existing plants will continue to operate.

Source: The Hindu, p.3, Oct. 11, 2023

Smart City Roads: Standards diluted, footpaths remain pedestrian

Smart City roads, meant to be a gamechanger in sustainable mobility and marked by pedestrian-first approach, are now seriously compromised with private property and parking encroachments

Rasheed Kappan
BENGALURU

Wide, uninterrupted footpaths often beckon walkers in big numbers. But one look at the just upgraded Indiranagar 80 Feet Road and its narrow, discontinuous walking space, and the compromises come out starkly. Along several stretches of this flashy, concretised road, commercial properties have taken over the footpath with sedans and SUVs parked across. Nowhere to go, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road jeopardising their lives.

Costly upgrade

Is this what the citizen gets after such a costly upgrade? They had high expectations since the Smart City upgrades were modelled after the TenderSURE makeover of St. Mark's Road, Cunningham Road, Residency Road, and other streets in the city's heart. Besides walkable footpaths, TenderSURE roads stood out for uniform travel lanes, organised underground utilities contained within the footpath, organised parking and vending, public spaces and landscaping.

The pronounced dilution of the original guidelines had forced a team of architects to step in, as the Indiranagar 100 Ft Road was taken up for a Smart City upgrade. Recalls Sneha Nandihal from the residents collective, IChangethIndiranagar: "A group of our architects had worked with the BBMP on an entire design. A lot of effort was put into it, and we were assured both by the MLA and the Palike that our suggestions would be implemented."

Much to their disappointment, none of the proposed changes were integrated into the final plan.



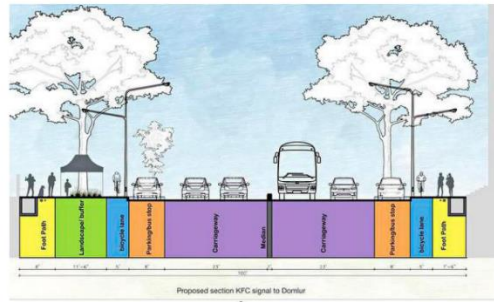
The poor quality of the road surface has been questioned in many other parts of the city.

"The so-called smart city roads are not smart at all. They have a template, and they don't map it to the particular road. For instance, on 100ft road, they didn't survey and map it. Instead, since they don't know the utilities underneath, they are implementing things as they dig. It is a mess," she says.

Unpaid contracts

Among the proposals were street furniture, benches, bollards, signage, garbage bins, parking spaces between trees, and a cycling lane. "They said it would cost more to create such lanes. So we said, at least have darker tiles to indicate it is for cycling. Nothing was implemented. Finally, it became a project for us to request them to complete it in whatever form and shape, because so many of our residents were falling," notes Sneha. Unpaid contracts and transfers of the officials heading the project have only aggravated the delays.

The poor quality of the road surface has been questioned in many other parts of the city as well. For instance, within a year of



Indiranagar 100-ft Road Cross-Section Design proposed by architects.

the upgrade, Miller Road had to be asphalted again. Original designs were compromised to provide parking slots on the footpath. A raised pedestrian crossing was demolished for the project but not restored.

Fixing underground

Tender SURE had initiated a whole new way of thinking about streets. While providing an equitable division of the right of way at the surface, it had also looked at fixing the subter-

anean chaos. The underground utilities were a mess. By building dedicated utility ducts and neatly installing them under the footpath, the Tender SURE roads had put an end to the vicious cycle of cut repair and cut again.

But this unique model has seen deviations. Completed a few months ago, the CMH Road has power lines right in the middle under three feet of concrete, as Sneha points out. "We had been following up



Cars parked across the footpath of 80-ft Road developed under the Smart City project. RASHEED KAPPAN

is crucial. She feels, "A project of this kind should have had all agencies working as partners. You can't have just the BBMP running it. The left hand doesn't know what the right is doing."

Lack of detailing

The original set of six Tender SURE roads had the pedestrian at the heart of the planning process. Even bus stops had to be built without affecting the 1.8m wide footpath. "Smart city roads give the impression of work being done without detailing. On St. Mark's Road, every little detail was known."

"The property owner knew exactly how the entry and exit were going to work. Without such detailing, you get a shoddy output."

"Varying pavement heights, entry, exit. So it is not even a uniform walking experience," says urbanist V. Ravichander, who was a part of the earlier road planning process.

Both Tender SURE and Smart City roads were designed to give an alternative vision for pedestrians, who are often compelled

to navigate wide and busy roads with insufficient crosswalks. The new models were escape routes particularly for senior citizens and children. Pedestrians account for the bulk of accident fatalities in the city.

Safety and convenience

Nikita Luke from the World Resources Institute (WRI) says a people-centric approach to street design prioritizes the safety and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists, making it simpler and more appealing for people to walk or bike. "Achieving this involves creating well-lit sidewalks, secure crosswalks, and dedicated cycling lanes, which encourage active transportation and reduce the reliance on cars," she elaborates.

Cars being parked on footpaths is a rule of law issue, says Ravichander. "The footpath in front of a property does not belong to the owner. They don't have a right on the road in front either. All violations have to be removed. In BDA layouts of Jayanagar, R. T. Nagar, Koramangala,

where the plots are clearly defined and geometrically drawn with a marked plan, it is immediately doable."

Work quality diluted

Design guidelines set by TenderSURE roads have been compromised and work quality diluted for another big reason: Corruption. Preferring anonymity, a planning consultant recalls that the original project was ring-fenced against corruption by an empowered committee that cleared the project tenders, payments and other key processes. But the Smart City project went under the 'business as usual' mode with kickbacks, typical of city contracting.

Maintenance is another key aspect. Ten years later, poor upkeep has left many of the old TenderSURE roads badly in need of repair.

"If you walk on St Mark's Road today, at least 20% of the tiles are depressed. Every time a tile is depressed, you are supposed to lift it, open it, compact the ground and put it back. Unless you do regular maintenance and clean up, it will deteriorate," says the consultant.

The tell-tale signs of poor maintenance are everywhere. Waste bins have vanished from many road stretches. Vendor encroachment continues unabated, leaving little space for walkers.

Struggling to find his way through the Smart City footpath on the redeveloped 80ft road, 61-year-old sales person from New Thippasandra, Surendra articulates the lament of several older senior citizens: "I myself find it so tough to walk here. Imagine the plight of the elderly. I see them often walk on the road edges as the pavements are either encroached, dumped with garbage or broken."

Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 12, 2023

ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆ: ಸಂಚಾರ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ತಾಣಗಳ ಪ್ರಾಬಲ್ಯ • ವಾಹನ ಸವಾರರು ಹೈರಾಣು

ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್ ಹತ್ತಾರು, ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ನೂರಾರು

• ಆರ್. ಮಂಜುನಾಥ್

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ನಗರದ ದಕ್ಷಿಣ-ಪಶ್ಚಿಮ ಭಾಗದ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ರಸ್ತೆಯಾಗಿರುವ ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆ, ಹತ್ತಾರು ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅಸಮರ್ಪಕ ನಿವಹಣೆಯಿಂದಾಗಿ ವಾಹನ ಸವಾರರಿಗೆ ಇದು ನಿತ್ಯವೂ ಸಂಕಷ್ಟದ ಹಾದಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕೆಂಗೇರಿ ವೃತ್ತದಿಂದ ಟೆನ್‌ಹಾಲ್ ತಲುಪುವ 17 ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಉದ್ದದ ಮಾರ್ಗದಲ್ಲಿ 13 ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸದಾ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಸದಾ ಇರುತ್ತದೆ. ನಾಲ್ಕೈದು ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿನೂ ವಾಹನಗಳು ನಿಂತಿರುತ್ತವೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ, ದಿನದ ಬಹುತೇಕ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಉಂಟಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಉತ್ತರಹಳ್ಳಿಯಿಂದ ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸುವ ಕೆಂಗೇರಿ ವೃತ್ತದಲ್ಲಿ ಅತಿಯಾದ ವಾಹನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಇರುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದು ಉತ್ತರಹಳ್ಳಿಯಿಂದ ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಜ್ಞಾನಭಾರತಿ ಕಡೆಗೆ, ಕೆಂಗೇರಿ ಸ್ಟಾಟಲ್ಯೆಕ್ ಬಸ್ ನಿಲ್ದಾಣದಿಂದ ಕೆಂಗೇರಿ ಉಪನಗರದ ಕಡೆಗೆ, ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ಪಿರುದ್ರವಾಗಿರುವ ನಗರ ಪ್ರವೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಕೆಂಗೇರಿ ಪಟ್ಟಣದ ಒಳಗೆ ಹೋಗುವ ವಾಹನಗಳ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ದ್ವಿಚಕ್ರ ವಾಹನ ಹಾಗೂ ಭಾರಿ ವಾಹನಗಳ ಓಡಾಟ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿರುವುದು ಹಾಗೂ ರಸ್ತೆಯ ಅಸ್ಥವಸ್ಥೆಯಿಂದ ಸಂಚಾರ ಅಸ್ತವ್ಯಸ್ತವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಜ್ಞಾನಭಾರತಿ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್ ಅತಿ ಕಿರಿದಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಆರಂಭವಾಗುವ ವಾಹನಗಳ ಸಾಲು ರಾಜರಾಜೇಶ್ವರಿನಗರ ಆರ್ಕೇಡ್‌ಗೆ ತಲುಪುತ್ತದೆ. ಆರ್ಕೇಡ್ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಸಿಗ್ನಲ್‌ಮುಕ್ತ ಸಂಚಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿರುವುದರಿಂದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆಗೆ ಇದರ ಕೊಡುಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದೆ.

ಇನ್ನು ನಾಯಂಡಹಳ್ಳಿ ಸಮೀಪ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಏರಲು ವಾಹನ ಸವಾರರು

ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಪ್ರಯಾಸಪಡಬೇಕಿದೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ದಿವಿಂಟಿಸಿ ತೆಂಗುರಾಣಿ ಇದ್ದು, ಬಸ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಅಡ್ಡಾಡಿದ್ದು ನಿಲ್ಲಿಸುವುದರಿಂದ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಕಡೆಗೆ, ಕೆಳಭಾಗದ ವರ್ತುಲ ರಸ್ತೆ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಹೋಗುವ ವಾಹನಗಳಿಗೆ ತೊಂದರೆಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

‘ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹಲವು ಬಾರಿ ದೂರು ನೀಡಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಒಬ್ಬರು ಸಂಚಾರ ಪೊಲೀಸರನ್ನಾದರೂ ಇಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಯೋಜಿಸಿ ಎಂದು ಒತ್ತಾಯಿಸಿದ್ದರೂ, ಪೊಲೀಸರು ಕ್ರಮ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿಲ್ಲ’ ಎಂದು ದೂರುತ್ತಾರೆ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯರು.

ದಿವಿಂಟಿಸಿ- ದೀವಾಂಜಲಿ ನಗರ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ವಿವಿಧವರ್ಗದ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಹೋಗುವ ವಾಹನಗಳು, ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲೇ ಮುಂದುವರಿಯುವ ವಾಹನಗಳು ನಿಂತಿರಬೇಕಾದುದರಿಂದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಉಂಟಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಇನ್ನು ಟೋಲ್‌ಗೇಟ್, ಹಳೇಗುಡ್ಡದಹಳ್ಳಿ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಿಗ್ನಲ್ ಹಾಗೂ ನಿಯಮಮೀರಿ ಅಡ್ಡಾಡಿದ್ದು ಸಂಚರಿಸುವ ದ್ವಿಚಕ್ರ ವಾಹನಗಳಿಂದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ನಿತ್ಯ ಒಂದಲ್ಲ ಒಂದು ಅಪಘಾತ ಅಪಘಾತಗಳು ಸಂಭವಿಸುತ್ತಿರುತ್ತವೆ.

ಸಿರ್ಸಿ ವೃತ್ತದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಏರಲು ವಾಹನಗಳಿಗೆ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಪ್ರಯಾಸದಾಯಕ. ವೃತ್ತದ ಕೆಳಭಾಗದ ಸಿಗ್ನಲ್‌ನಿಂದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆಯ ಮುಂಭಾಗಕ್ಕೆ ಬಂದು ನಿಲ್ಲುತ್ತದೆ.

ಹೊರವರ್ತುಲ ರಸ್ತೆಯ ಪಿಎಸ್ ಕಾಲೇಜು ಬಳಿ ವಾಹನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ-ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ಚಿತ್ರ ರಂಜು ಪಿ

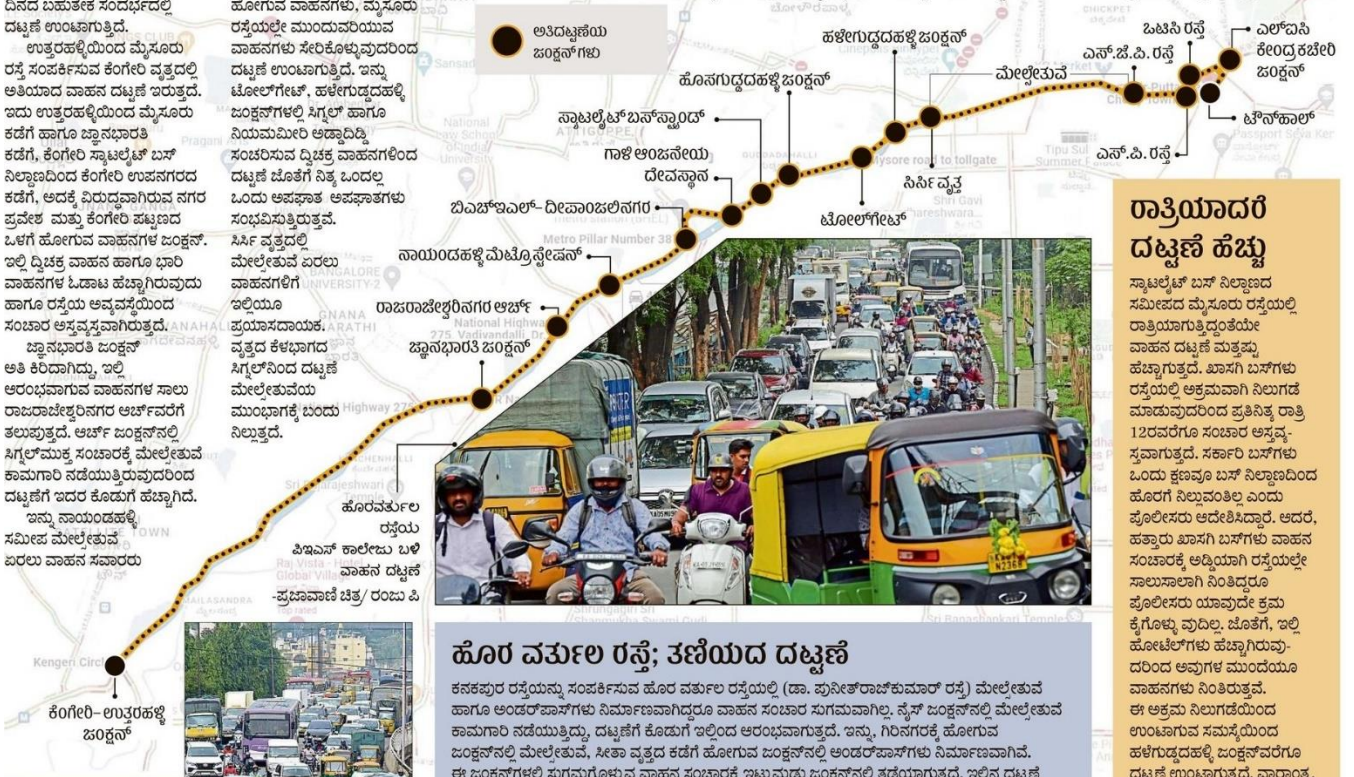


ಸಂಚಾರ ತ್ರಾಸ ಜನರ ಪ್ರಯಾಸ



ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆಯ ಸ್ಟಾಟಲ್ಯೆಕ್ ಬಸ್ ನಿಲ್ದಾಣದ ಬಳಿ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ

ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳು: ಪ್ರಶಾಂತ್ ಎಚ್.ಪಿ.



ರಾತ್ರಿಯಾದರೆ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚು

ಸ್ಟಾಟಲ್ಯೆಕ್ ಬಸ್ ನಿಲ್ದಾಣದ ಸಮೀಪದ ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ರಾತ್ರಿಯಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದಂತೆಯೇ ವಾಹನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಮತ್ತಷ್ಟು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಖಾಸಗಿ ಬಸ್‌ಗಳು ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿ ನಿಲ್ಲುವುದರಿಂದ ಪ್ರತಿನಿತ್ಯ ರಾತ್ರಿ 12ರವರೆಗೂ ಸಂಚಾರ ಅಸ್ತವ್ಯಸ್ತವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಬಸ್‌ಗಳು ಒಂದು ಕ್ಷಣವೂ ಬಸ್ ನಿಲ್ದಾಣದಿಂದ ಹೊರಗೆ ನಿಲ್ಲಬಾರದು ಎಂದು ಪೊಲೀಸರು ಅಡೇಶಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಆದರೆ, ಹತ್ತಾರು ಖಾಸಗಿ ಬಸ್‌ಗಳು ವಾಹನ ಸಂಚಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಅಡ್ಡಿಯಾಗಿ ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲೇ ಸಾಲುಸಾಲಾಗಿ ನಿಂತಿದ್ದರೂ ಪೊಲೀಸರು ಯಾವುದೇ ಕ್ರಮ ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಜೊತೆಗೆ, ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಹೋಟೆಲ್‌ಗಳು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿರುವುದರಿಂದ ಅವುಗಳ ಮುಂದೆಯೂ ವಾಹನಗಳು ನಿಂತಿರುತ್ತವೆ. ಈ ಅಕ್ರಮ ನಿಲ್ಲುವುದರಿಂದ ಉಂಟಾಗುವ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯಿಂದ ಹಳೇಗುಡ್ಡದಹಳ್ಳಿ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ವರೆಗೂ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಉಂಟಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ವಾರಾಂತ್ಯ, ಹಬ್ಬಗಳ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಬಹಳಷ್ಟು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಹೊರ ವರ್ತುಲ ರಸ್ತೆ; ತಣಿಯದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ

ಕನಕಪುರ ರಸ್ತೆಯನ್ನು ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸುವ ಹೊರ ವರ್ತುಲ ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ (ಡಾ. ಪುನೀತ್‌ರಾಜ್‌ಕುಮಾರ್ ರಸ್ತೆ) ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಂಡರ್‌ಪಾಸ್‌ಗಳು ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಗಿದ್ದರೂ ವಾಹನ ಸಂಚಾರ ಸುಗಮವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ. ನೈಸ್ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿದ್ದು, ದಟ್ಟಣೆಗೆ ಕೊಡುಗೆ ಇಲ್ಲಿಂದ ಆರಂಭವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಇನ್ನು, ಗಿರಿನಗರಕ್ಕೆ ಹೋಗುವ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ, ಸೀತಾ ವೃತ್ತದ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಹೋಗುವ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಅಂಡರ್‌ಪಾಸ್‌ಗಳು ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಗಿವೆ. ಈ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸುಗಮಗೊಳ್ಳುವ ವಾಹನ ಸಂಚಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಇಟ್ಟುಮುಂದು ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತಡೆಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಹಿಂದಿನ ಅಂಡರ್‌ಪಾಸ್‌ವರೆಗೂ ತಲುಪುತ್ತದೆ. ಕತ್ತರಿಗುಪ್ಪೆ, ಕಾಮಾಕ್ಷಿ ಚಿತ್ರಮಂದಿರ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಸಿಗ್ನಲ್‌ಗಳಿಂದ ವಾಹನಗಳು ನಿಲ್ಲುವುದರಿಂದ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ‘ಕಾಮಾಕ್ಷಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಕತ್ತರಿಗುಪ್ಪೆ ಜಂಕ್ಷನ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸಿಗ್ನಲ್‌ಮುಕ್ತ ಮಾಡುವುದಾಗಿ ಜನಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಗಳು, ಬುನಾವಣೆಗೆ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸುವವರು ಹಲವು ಬಾರಿ ಭರವಸೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೀಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಆದರೆ ಈ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ನೀಗಿಸಲು ಯೋಜನೆ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ’ ಎಂದು ಗಿರಿನಗರ ನಿವಾಸಿ ವೆಂಕಟೇಶ ರಾಜು ದೂರುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಬಿಡಬ್ಬು ಎಸ್‌ಎಸ್‌ಬಿ ನಿರ್ಲಕ್ಷ್ಯ

ಸಿರ್ಸಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ (ಬಾಲಗಂಗಾಧರನಾಥ ಸ್ಟಾಟಲ್ಯೆಕ್ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ) ಇಳಿದ ಮೇಲೆ ಎಸ್‌ಜಿಪಿ, ಎಸ್‌ಪಿ, ಒಟಿಸಿ ರಸ್ತೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಹನ ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಬೆಳಗ್ಗೆಯಿಂದ ಮಧ್ಯರಾತ್ರಿಯವರೆಗೂ ಇರುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ರಸ್ತೆಗಳು ಕಿರಿದಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಗುಂಡಿಗಳಿಂದ ಕೂಡಿವೆ. ಒಳಚರಂಡಿ ನೀರು ನಿತ್ಯವೂ ರಸ್ತೆಯ ಮೇಲೆ ಹರಿಯುತ್ತಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಒಂದು ವರ್ಷದಿಂದ ಬಿಡಬ್ಬು ಎಸ್‌ಎಸ್‌ಬಿ ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಲೇ ಇದೆ. ಆದರೆ, ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಪರಿಹಾರವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ. ಗುಂಡಿ-ಜಲ್ಲಿ ಕಲ್ಲುಗಳ ಮಧ್ಯೆ ಒಳಚರಂಡಿಯ ಕೊಳಕಿನ ನದುವೆ ನಾಗರಿಕರು ಸಂಚರಿಸಬೇಕಿದೆ. ಬಸ್‌ಗಳು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿ ಈ ರಸ್ತೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಚರಿಸುವುದರಿಂದ ಕಿರಿದಾದ ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಿರುವು ಪಡೆಯಲು ಸಮಯವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದಾಗಿ ಮೇಲ್ವೇತುವೆ ಮೇಲೂ ವಾಹನಗಳು ಸಾಲು ನಿಲ್ಲುತ್ತವೆ.



ಸಿರ್ಸಿ ಜುಬಿಲಿ ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹರಿಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ಒಳಚರಂಡಿ ನೀರು

3ಯವುಗಳಿಂದ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಹಲವು

ಮೈಸೂರು ರಸ್ತೆಯ ಗಾಳಿ ಆಂಜನೇಯ ದೇವಸ್ಥಾನ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೊಸ ಗುಡ್ಡದಹಳ್ಳಿ ಸಮೀಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಪೈಪ್‌ಲೇನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೊಸಗುಡ್ಡದಹಳ್ಳಿ ಒಳಭಾಗಕ್ಕೆ ಹೋಗಲು ವಾಹನಗಳು ತಿರುವು ಪಡೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತವೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಮುಖ್ಯರಸ್ತೆಯ ವಾಹನಗಳ ಸಂಚಾರ ಸೀಕ್ ಅವರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಬಹುತೇಕ ನಿಂತುಹೋಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ಎರಡು ತಿರುವುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ ಮತ್ತು ಸಂಜೆಯ ತಾಳಾ ಎರಡು ತಾಸು ಮಾತ್ರ ಸಂಚಾರ ಪೊಲೀಸರು ಇರುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಉಳಿದ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಹನ ಸಂಚಾರ ಅಡ್ಡಾಡ್ಡಿಯಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿರುವ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಎರಡು ಸ್ಥಳಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ತಿರುವು ತಡೆದರೆ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ದಟ್ಟಣೆ ನಿವಾರಣೆ ಆಗುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂದು ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಅಂಗಡಿಯ ಮಾಲೀಕ ರಮೇಶ್ ಅವರ ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯ.

With fully operational Purple Line, many prefer metro to personal vehicles

'I used to dread the congested roads while on my two-wheeler from Banniganahalli to Whitefield. But now, I look forward to the metro. It's not just about reaching my destination; it's also about convenience and saving time,' says a commuter

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Taking the metro for my daily office commute brings me immense joy as I bid farewell to my personal vehicle. This shift not only simplifies my daily travel but also plays a part in building a greener, more sustainable future," Vivek Rao, an IT professional at Kadugodi Tree Park, said.

Since the launch of the entire Purple Line on October 9, he has left behind his two-wheeler, which he used to take from Ramamurthynagar to Kadugodi Tree Park.

Mr. Rao is not alone in his choice; many people have shifted to the metro following the opening of the Whitefield-Challaghatta metro corridor of 43.49



The entire stretch of the Purple Line from Whitefield to Challaghatta spanning 43.49 km was opened on October 9. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

km. Once plagued by nightmarish traffic, IT professionals employed on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) are hugely relieved.

There is also now a fleet of 37 Bengaluru Metropoli-

tan Transport Corporation feeder buses, which was introduced on Wednesday, providing a convenient commute from the K.R. Puram metro station to ORR. Praneetha Prasad,

another commuter who used to take a bus, has also shifted to the metro after the new line started operation.

"I used to rely on buses for my daily commute from Indiranagar to Whitefield, but I have made the switch ever since the new metro line started its operation. The metro not only offers a faster and more convenient travel experience but also contributes to a smoother daily routine. It's a positive change that benefits not just me but many others as we can avoid the traffic and pollution," added Ms. Prasad.

Rajesh Sharma, an IT professional whose office is on ORR, added, "The inauguration of the new metro line has revolutionized my daily commute. I used to endure hours of traffic

congestion on the ORR in my car, but now, thanks to the seamless integration of metro services and BMTC feeder buses, I can reach my destination punctually. Previously, my journey from Baiyappanahalli took over an hour and a half; now, it merely takes 30 to 40 minutes to reach the office."

"The metro's impact on my daily routine has been significant. I used to dread the congested roads while on my two-wheeler from Banniganahalli to Whitefield. But now, I look forward to the metro. It's not just about reaching my destination; it's also about convenience and saving time," Arjun Gowda, a commuter, said.

Srinivas Alavilli, a fellow at WRI India and one of the minds behind the #Perso-

nal2Public (P2P) campaign, which encourages Bengaluru citizens to embrace public transport at least twice a week, believes that a significant number of people have started utilizing public transport more frequently owing to improved connectivity.

"Now is an opportune moment to urge people to use public transport because we have created an enabling environment, thanks to the collaboration between BMTC and BMRCL," says Mr Alavilli.

The P2P campaign aims at changing behaviour because many individuals perceive public transport as a lesser choice and sometimes even as a status issue.

"I am hopeful that this perception will be transformed," he added.

Source: The Hindu, p.2, Oct. 13, 2023

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Environment

Amid rapid climate change, states' action plans crawl

Many are yet to adopt guidelines; K'taka plan awaits nod

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Climate change is threatening India with staggering humanitarian and economic costs, but 15 years after the Centre set up the Expert Committee on Climate Change (ECCC), states and Union Territories are yet to chart a path for adaptation and mitigation. Karnataka's ac-

tion plan is pending before the panel for two years, documents obtained under the Right to Information (RTI) Act show.

Besides deaths caused by extreme weather events (2,227 last year), associated risks have a major impact on lives and livelihoods. For instance, air pollution is behind 10 lakh premature deaths in India while the cost of desertification and crop loss is still contested; the Centre attributes an annual loss of Rs 1,000 crore to climate change.

The Centre set up the ECCC in June 2007, which released a national action plan next year, leading to the launch of several missions in the areas of solar energy, ecology and agricul-



GATHERING DUST

- Centre sets up Expert Committee on Climate Change in 2007, asks states to prepare action plan for adaptation and mitigation
- Karnataka's action plan pending before panel for two years, show RTI documents
- Without approval, it's difficult to prepare detailed project reports and access funds
- State needs Rs 52,827 cr between 2025 and 2030 to implement action plans in agriculture, horticulture, rural development etc

ture. In 2009, the Centre directed state governments and Union Territories to prepare State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC).

Since then, the ECCC has held 12 meetings to assess the progress of SAPCC, including the latest on September 21. The minutes of the last eight meetings highlight a lack of clarity and urgency among most states while those who did prepare the SAPCC have seen the document gathering dust.

The minutes show that many states, including Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, were yet to adopt the guidelines issued as far back as 2014.

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Climate change, from Page 1

At the meeting on September 21, the committee reminded the states about the guidelines once again: "During the tenth meeting (February 2, 2023), it was suggested that there is a need to connect with all line departments and then take their feedback, especially on socio-economic vulnerability and ensuring rainwater harvesting is compulsory for state-specific tools with respect to the eight chapters presented. It was also suggested to come out with a budgetary action plan for the activities which are proposed to be carried out."

Sources in the government said the Centre has not been able to assess SAPCC due to the lack of expertise. "An expert panel tasked with steering the preparedness of all states and UTs has held only 12 meetings in 15 years, which shows the lack of urgency. At the same time, consultants with limited experience are reviewing SAPCC which has led to delays," a source said.

Karnataka waits for nod
Karnataka submitted its revised SAPCC in the beginning of 2021 after incorporating inputs from ECCC members. Along with historical trends and climate change projections, the state highlighted the policy interventions, budget requirements as well as

monitoring and evaluation strategies.

As per the action plan prepared by the Environment Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), Karnataka requires Rs 52,827.44 crore between 2025 and 2030 to implement action plans in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, rural development and 10 other sectors.

Karnataka's plan had stressed the need to mobilise funds from both government, private and multilateral institutions to address current vulnerabilities and prepare a chart for sustainable transition. However, lack of approval for the action plan has made it difficult to prepare detailed project reports and access funds.

Jagmohan Sharma, Director General of EMPRI, which is the nodal agency for Karnataka's SAPCC, said the approval will help not only in getting funds for adaptation and mitigation works but also to institutionalise key interventions.

"We have submitted the replies to the queries raised by the ECCC and hope to get an approval soon. Besides funds from state and central governments, we want to institutionalise the idea of sustainability. EMPRI has developed the Green Index Portal where all development projects are assessed for environmental compatibility," he said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 1 & 5, Oct.9, 2023

Karnataka Cabinet gives in-principle nod to declare eco-sensitive zones in six forest areas

Areas are Kappattagudda, Bukkapatna, Kammasandra, Nagarhole, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A Cabinet sub-committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre has given in-principle approval for declaring eco-sensitive zones in six forest areas.

The six forest areas are: Kappattagudda, Bukkapatna, Kammasandra, Nagarhole, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary.

In the meeting, in-principle approval was given to declare ecologically sensi-



At Kappattagudda Wildlife Sanctuary, an eco-sensitive area of 322.695 sq. km has been proposed, of which 23,804 sq. km is forest area and the remaining 298,890 sq. km is non-forest area.

tive areas in the six forest areas and submit it to the Cabinet meeting for recommending the same to

the Union government.

At Kappattagudda Wildlife Sanctuary, an eco-sensitive area of 322.695

sq. km has been proposed, of which 23,804 sq. km is forest area and the remaining 298,890 sq. km is non-forest area. Likewise, the Chinkara Wildlife Sanctuary at Bukkapatnam, an ecologically sensitive area of 157.0862 sq. km, has been proposed of which the forest area is 18.5662 sq. km and the non-forest area is 138.52 sq. km. At the Kammasandra Wildlife Sanctuary, the ecologically sensitive area is 93.27 sq. km.

At Nagarhole

At the Rajiv Gandhi National Park (Nagarhole Tiger Reserve) it has been pro-

posed that the eco-sensitive area is 573.97 out of which 302.36 is forest area and 271.61 is non-forest area.

Similarly, in the Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, it has been proposed that the eco-sensitive area is 669.06 sq. km of which 448.81 sq. km is forest area and 220.25 non-forest area.

At the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, 145.369 sq. km has been proposed as ecologically sensitive area and out of this 143,663 is forest area and 1,706 sq. km non-forest area.

Source: The Hindu, p.9, Oct. 12, 2023

DH
DECCAN HERALD

‘Clearing encroachments is priority of forest department’

As the minister of Forest, Ecology, and Environment of Karnataka, Eshwar B Khandre has surprised many with his no-nonsense approach. His stern stance against red tape while backing officials doing their jobs has led to the eviction of encroachments in Bengaluru, Kolar, and Shivamogga districts. *DH's* Chiranjeevi Kulkarni spoke to the minister about the challenges lying ahead. Excerpts:

You have taken proactive measures to check man-animal conflict, but a combination of factors like shrinking habitat, climate change, and invasive species amid a rise in the number of elephants, tigers, and leopards pose long-term challenges. Is there an initiative to explore solutions for them?

Shrinking habitat is a concern. Besides the threat to wildlife, there is suffering of people. About 50 people die or are injured in conflict with animals every year. This needs to stop. I have told officials to set up a high-level experts committee to look into the matter. The committee will study invasive species, fodder availability, endemic species, prey bases, buffer zone protection and other issues. We will complete the pending project of building

a railway barricade of over 640 km, which is stuck at 312 km now, in the next two years. To check encroachment and fragmentation, we are now setting up a joint task force.

The joint task force seems promising, but such initiatives taken in the past have not changed ground realities. For instance, the reports by the A T Ramaswamy Committee and the K B Koliwad Committee have been gathering dust. How will the joint task force be different?

In my opinion, such reports should be implemented. We have nearly 2 lakh acres of forest under encroachment. The joint task force will have a practical approach. First, we have to bring coordination between the forest and revenue departments. There are cases where the two departments are at loggerheads over ownership of land. The solution is to conduct a joint survey, and we are working on this. I have already spoken to the revenue minister, who has been cooperative. The first task is to evict the big encroachers with high-level connections and commercial motivations. But the poor have to be seen from a humanitarian perspective.

The Tuesday Interview
With
Eshwar B Khandre
Minister of Forest, Ecology, and Environment



Also, our department has not done justice to people cultivating land prior to April 1978. About 7,000 to 10,000 such families are still waiting for title deeds. Denying people their rightful ownership will not help conservation.

Lack of coordination between the Forest and Revenue Departments has been a major hurdle in the eviction of encroachment and the protection of forests...

The joint task force is an initiative that will help resolve such issues. The coordination is necessary to ensure a humanitarian

approach. Forest department has also committed errors. For instance, in my constituency (Bhalki), an old village with 500 households has been classified as deemed forest. That's not right.

About 4 lakh acres notified as intended reserve forests are waiting for final notification under Section 17 of the Karnataka Forest Act, 1963. The delay has led to encroachment.

The root of the problem is in the lack of a joint survey. Even the final list of deemed forest areas submitted to the SC has

villages and private lands. We need to ensure that such errors are not made in Section 17 forests. With regards to the encroachment, officials are not taking action to prevent it. They are reacting late, after the forest land is gone. We need to be proactive and spread awareness among the public.

The CM recently said the government will increase the forest cover from 21% to 33% of the total geographical area of Karnataka. What are the challenges to achieving this goal?

My priority is to notify all the pending forest areas. Since I took over, the government has notified about 5000 acres. We are also exploring new ideas. For instance, over 100 farmers from Hassan have approached me offering to sell their lands near the forest. The elephant conflict has made farming difficult. We will assess whether such a move is mutually beneficial. More importantly, we have to bring people closer to nature. Once we create awareness about the value of forests, they will join conservation initiatives.

Shortage of personnel has become a major hindrance to the protection and

conservation of forests and wildlife. Are there plans to fill the vacancies?

I have given directions to fill all the vacant positions in the Kalyana Karnataka region. We have a vacancy of about 5000 personnel in critical areas, especially tiger reserves. We also have shortages of watchers, guards, deputy range forest officers and range forest officers. At present, we are running the system through outsourced labour. However, it is better to have regular personnel. We need people for rapid response teams in elephant conflicts, anti-poaching camps and in sensitive areas. You will see significant improvements in two years.

You are also the chairman of the biodiversity board. How do you propose to enhance measures like access benefit sharing and protection of endemic species?

I have held a meeting with officials to understand both issues. Regarding ABS, I have asked for a detailed report on the reasons for non-enforcement, which are aimed at ensuring that people who conserve biodiversity are incentivised. We can't let it go. Steps will be taken to implement it.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.9, Oct. 10, 2023

ಕೇಂದ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ಶಿಫಾರಸು ಮಾಡಲು ಈಶ್ವರ ಖಂಡ್ರೆ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆಯ ಸಂಪುಟ ಉಪ ಸಮಿತಿ ಒಪ್ಪಿಗೆ

ಮತ್ತೆ 6 ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ

ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ವಾರ್ತೆ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಕಪ್ಪತ್ತಗುಡ್ಡ, ಬುಕ್ಕಾಪಟ್ಟಣ, ಕಾಮಸಂದ್ರ, ನಾಗರ ಹೊಳೆ, ಕಾವೇರಿ ವಿಸ್ತೃತ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ ಸೇರಿ ಆರು ಅರಣ್ಯ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯವನ್ನು ಘೋಷಿಸುವಂತೆ ಕೇಂದ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ಶಿಫಾರಸು ಮಾಡಲು ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಮುಂದಾಗಿದೆ. ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯಗಳನ್ನು ನಿರ್ಣಯಿಸುವ ಕುರಿತು ಸಚಿವ ಸಂಪುಟಕ್ಕೆ ಶಿಫಾರಸು ಮಾಡಲು ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಚಿವ ಈಶ್ವರ ಖಂಡ್ರೆ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ರಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದ ಸಂಪುಟ ಉಪ ಸಮಿತಿ, ಈ ತೀರ್ಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ತಾತ್ಕಿಕ ಒಪ್ಪಿಗೆ ನೀಡಿದೆ. ಬುಧವಾರ ಸಚಿವ ಸಂಪುಟ ಉಪ ಸಮಿತಿಯ ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಆರು ಅರಣ್ಯ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ ಘೋಷಿಸುವ ಸಂಬಂಧ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಶಿಫಾರಸು ಮಾಡುವ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಸಚಿವ ಸಂಪುಟ ಸಭೆಗೆ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾವ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಅನುಮೋದನೆ ನೀಡಲಾಯಿತು ಎಂದು ಖಂಡ್ರೆ ಅವರು ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರ 2011ರಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊರಡಿಸಿರುವ ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಅರಣ್ಯ, ಪರಿಸರ ಸಚಿವಾಲಯ

ವಲಯಗಳಾವವು?

- **ಕಪ್ಪತ್ತಗುಡ್ಡ** ಗದಗ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಕಪ್ಪತ್ತಗುಡ್ಡ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿಧಾಮದ ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣ 244.15 ಚದರ ಕಿ.ಮೀ ನಷ್ಟಿದೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಹೊಂದಿಕೊಂಡ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 322.695 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯವೆಂದು ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಪೈಕಿ 23.804 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯ ವಲಯ ಮತ್ತು 298.890 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯೇತರ ವಲಯ ಸೇರಿದೆ.
- **ಚಿಂಕಾರ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ** ತುಮಕೂರು ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಬುಕ್ಕಾಪಟ್ಟಣದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಚಿಂಕಾರ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ ಒಟ್ಟು 136.11 ಚದರ ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಇದೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಹೊಂದಿಕೊಂಡ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ಒಟ್ಟು ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ 157.0862 ಚ. ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಅರಣ್ಯ ವಲಯ 18.5662 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಇದ್ದು, ಅರಣ್ಯೇತರ ವಲಯ 138.52 ಚ. ಕಿ.ಮೀ.
- **ಕಾಮಸಂದ್ರ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ:** ಕೋಲಾರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಕಾಮಸಂದ್ರ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮದ ಒಟ್ಟು ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣ 78.62 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಇದೆ. ಒಟ್ಟು ಪರಿಸರ

ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಗಳ ಅನ್ವಯ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಲಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು, ನಿರ್ಬಂಧಿತ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ನಿಷೇಧಿತ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು ಎಂದು ವರ್ಗೀಕರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಗೋದವರ್ಮನ್

ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಭಾರತ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ರಿಟ್ ಅರ್ಜಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ ಸುಪ್ರೀಂಕೋರ್ಟ್ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನ ಅನುಸಾರ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಿತ ವಲಯಗಳಾದ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉದ್ಯಾನವನ ಮತ್ತು ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮಗಳ ಸುತ್ತಮುತ್ತ

ಕನಿಷ್ಠ 1 ಕಿ.ಮೀನಿಂದ ಗರಿಷ್ಠ 23.06 ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ ಎಂದು ಘೋಷಣೆ ಮಾಡುವುದು ಅಗತ್ಯ ಎಂದು ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ಸಭೆಗೆ ವಿವರ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಈ ವಲಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರವಾಸೋದ್ಯಮ

ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು, ವಸತಿ, ಶಾಲೆ, ಆಸ್ಪತ್ರೆ, ರಸ್ತೆ ಇತ್ಯಾದಿಗಳನ್ನು ಗಮನದಲ್ಲಿಟ್ಟುಕೊಂಡು ಸಂರಕ್ಷಿತ ವಲಯದ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ಶಿಫಾರಸು ಮಾಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.



ಕಾವೇರಿ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ



ಕಪ್ಪತ್ತಗುಡ್ಡ

ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯದ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿ 93.27 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಎಂದು ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

- **ರಾಜೀವಗಾಂಧಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉದ್ಯಾನ** ರಾಜೀವ್‌ಗಾಂಧಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉದ್ಯಾನವನದ (ನಾಗರಹೋಳೆ ಹುಲಿ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಿತ ವಲಯ) ಒಟ್ಟು ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣ 643.39 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಆಗಿದೆ. ಇದರ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ 573.97 ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ 302.36 ಚದರ ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು 271.61 ಚದರ ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯೇತರ ವಲಯವಿದೆ.
- **ಅಣಶಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉದ್ಯಾನ** ಉತ್ತರ ಕನ್ನಡ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಅಣಶಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉದ್ಯಾನ ಮತ್ತು

ದಾಂಡೇಲಿ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿಧಾಮದಲ್ಲಿ 669.06 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. 448.81 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು 220.25 ಚದರ ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯೇತರ ವಲಯವಾಗಿದೆ.

- **ಕಾವೇರಿ ವಿಸ್ತೃತ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮ** ಸಾತನೂರು ಬಳಿಯ ಕಾವೇರಿ ವಿಸ್ತೃತ ವನ್ಯಜೀವಿ ಧಾಮದಲ್ಲಿ 53.39 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯ ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣವಿದೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಹೊಂದಿಕೊಂಡ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 145.369 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀಯನ್ನು ಪರಿಸರ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮ ವಲಯ ಎಂದು ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಪೈಕಿ 143.663 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು 1.706 ಚ.ಕಿ.ಮೀ ಅರಣ್ಯೇತರ ವಲಯವಿದೆ.

Source: Prajavani, Oct. 12, 2013

Understanding the flora of the Western Ghats made easier with a pictorial manual

The recently launched *Forest Trees of Central Western Ghats - A Pictorial Field Manual* helps to understand and conserve flora found in the Karnataka region of the Western Ghats

Yemen S.
BENGALURU

Extreme weather events such as cyclones, sudden floods, and heatwaves have been lashing different regions of India over the last few years. In 2021, the Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc) cautioned that by 2050 parts of the Western Ghats would be lost to harsh climatic conditions.

Amid concerns about climate change and its impact on the Sahyadri mountain range, biologists and nature lovers have come up with a pictorial manual to help identify, understand, and conserve the vast flora found in the Karnataka region of the Western Ghats.

Center for Urban Ecology, Biodiversity, Evolution, and Climate Change (CUEBEC), at Jain (Deemed-to-be) University, along with the Karnataka State Medicinal Plants Authority, recently launched the book *Forest Trees of Central Western Ghats - A Pictorial Field Manual*.

Written by Dr. G Ramachandra Rao, Associate Professor, CUEBEC, Dr. T.V. Ramachandra, Vishnu D. Mukri, and Dr. M.D. Subash Chandran, the book elaborates on the habitat, ecology, and conservation aspects of the Western Ghats for students, scientists, forest staff and nature lovers.

A field manual

According to the pictorial manual, the Western Ghats, on account of its exceptional biodiversity coupled with the serious threat of depletion, is considered one of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots.

It harbors over 4,000 species of flowering plants (40% endemics), 330 species of butterflies (11% en-



Knema attenuata-Endemic tree.



Lophopetalum wightianum.

demics), 156 species of reptiles (62% endemics), 508 species of birds (4% endemics), 120 species of mammals (12% endemics), 135 species of amphibians (75% endemics) and 289 species of fishes (41% endemics).

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Dr. G. Ramachandra Rao said that the pictorial manual was developed based on floristic studies in the Uttara Kannada, Shivamogga, and other Western Ghats districts of Karnataka.

"The field manual has

been developed keeping in mind the primary role of trees in maintaining the ecosystem and the need to know the tree flora of the Western Ghats so as to conserve the Ghat ecosystem," he said.

"It delves into selected forest trees, representing different forest types from evergreen to dry deciduous, and diverse habitats from Myristica swamps to rocky terrain. The trees portrayed in the manual have been chosen for their representativeness of ecosystems, their ecological

Tree Type: **Deciduous**

Forest Type: **SI**

Fl & Fr: **J M A M J J A S O N D**

Uses: **Me Ed Or Av OU**

Endemism: **WG**

Ecovs. Value: **W**

ISCN: **En**

Vateria indica: 1) Tree, 2) Leafy branches with flowers, 3) Flower, 4) Flowering branch, 5) Fruits, 6) Seeds with cotyledon.

Botanical name: *Vateria indica* L.

Family: Dipterocarpaceae

Kannada name: Sali (Shoopa, Chundalka)

English name: Indian Copal tree

Field Identification: Large trees with straight bole in wild. Bark smooth, grey, exudes gummy resinous sap on injury. Branches clothed with heavy stellate hairs. Petioles inflated near leaf base.

Botanical description: Leaves alternate, up to 24 x 15 cm, ovate or elliptic-oblong, apex acute, cordate or rounded at base, lateral nerves prominent beneath, marked above. Flowers to 1.5 cm across, white, fragrant, in terminal panicles. Petals 5. Stamens numerous, anthers nearly sessile. Ovary 3-celled. Fruit a capsule, 2-6 cm long, ovoid, brownish. Seeds large.

Habitat: Very rare in wild, mostly found in evergreen to semi-evergreen sacred groves and undisturbed forest. Planted as avenue tree.

Uses: The tree produces Indian dammar which is a valuable varnish. The seeds yield a vegetable butter known as 'Makhar talai', used for manufacture of candles and soaps. Hanuman Langur and other wild animals feed on the foliage, Nilgiri Langur on leaf and fruit. Bonnet Macaque feed on fruits. Hornbills favor the tree for nesting.

Distribution in Uttara Kannada

SI BG RD EU KSV TS SH SK RD HA

An image from the book on how to identify na Endemic Vateria indica tree flowering branch.

roles in the system, and for their endemism and rarity."

Keeping it simple

According to Dr. Rao, floristic works in the past have been hard for stu-

dents and laypeople to understand.

"Classical floristic works such as the *Flora of Presidency of Bombay* by Cooke T., *Flora of Karnataka* by C. J. Saldanha, and many more are generally

descriptive with complex scientific terminology. They predominantly rely on floral and fruit characteristics and other subtle characters to distinguish closely related species."

"Amateur nature enthu-

siasts, students, and field workers often find it difficult to use such floristic works in the field despite their great benefits.

Hence our focus here is on cashier field identification techniques based on more obvious, morphological, and vegetative characters, represented pictorially."

The manual contains 131 forest tree species which are pictorially grouped based on easily identifiable morphological characters. Photographs of bark, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, etc., are pro-

Rao said.

A 10-year long journey

Dr. Rao joined IISc as he, in his own words, "always wanted to work in the forest" and the institution gave him the opportunity. He travelled across the Western Ghats spending several days in the forest areas over the last 15 years.

"I started understanding the diversity of the Western Ghats and also wanted to understand how the forest functions. So, I started investigation, and did PhD on undisturbed and disturbed forests," he said.

Somewhere around 2012, he started writing the book along with the others. It took about 10 years to be completed.

Book for free

The book is being made available for free. It's not on sale for a reason, says Dr. Rao. "As we completed the book, we decided that we did not want to sell the book for a price but give it away to nature lovers. We understand how difficult it is for people to identify the forest."

"Every year there are new guards, foresters, and other staff appointed by the Karnataka Forest Department, who know very little about the forest and cannot afford to buy a book or manual to understand it. Considering our motive, the Karnataka State Medicinal Plants Authority came forward to publish the book," Dr. Rao explained.

The book is available for free at Forest Department offices across the State. The manual is also available online on the IISc website.

"This is our small contribution to the world of forests and the Western Ghats," said Dr. Rao.



Dipterocarpus indicus-Kulunde kan.

vided for easier identification. Additionally, details of tree phenology, ecology, and threat status along with taluk-wise distribution of tree species (in Uttara Kannada district) are provided.

"While we have tried to cover as many trees as possible, this is not an exhaustive manual. Many tree species have been excluded due to unavoidable reasons. However, this manual gives reasonable assistance in the identification of a large number of trees from this region, particularly from wetter low to mid-altitude forest," Dr.

Source: The Hindu, p.9, Oct. 13, 2023

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Decentralisation

Karnataka accepts panel recommendation on OBC quota in local polls despite HC reservations

The Justice K Bhaktavatsala commission recommended a 33% quota stating that many communities under the OBC categories A and B are socially and politically backward.

Karnataka's Congress government has accepted three recommendations of the Justice K Bhaktavatsala commission, which was constituted by the BJP government to look at caste numbers in the state to decide on reservation for Other Backward Classes in urban local body polls.

One of the recommendations was to provide 33 per cent reservations in urban local body polls for OBCs and the previous government accordingly reserved seats for the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. The reservation was, however, rejected by the Karnataka High Court as being "unscientific".

"The Justice K Bhaktavatsala Commission report of the Backward Classes Department made recommendations for giving political representation in the light of a Supreme Court order. The commission made recommendations for reservation in panchayat raj and urban local bodies. Out of the five recommendations made by the commission, three have been accepted," Law Minister H K Patil said after a cabinet meeting on Thursday.

One of the accepted recommendations is to "continue to provide the policy of political reservation of one third, that is 33 per cent, of total seats in the ensuing urban and local body elections in favour of OBCs as per the present classification of OBCs as backward classes—Category A and Category B", the minister said

The aggregate of reservation of seats of SC/ST and backward classes shall not exceed 50 per cent of total seats, the cabinet has decided.

"There may be a confusion that if it is 33 per cent for OBC, together with SC/ST (18 per cent) it will go over 50 per cent. In practice and law, it is said that whatever is the SC/ST portion—in proportion to the population—then that minus 50 per cent will be the backward classes quota," the minister said.

The other recommendations accepted by the cabinet are "to consider providing reservation of office of mayor and deputy mayor in BBMP in favour of persons of backward classes" and "to bring all urban and local body elections under the control of DPAR (Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms)".

The Justice Bhaktavatsala commission was constituted to adhere to the Supreme Court prescribed "triple test" norms to reserve constituencies for Other Backward Classes. The commission submitted a report on the quota requirement on July 21, 2002, a day before a Supreme Court hearing on a nearly two-year delay in conducting the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike polls in Bengaluru and on the issue of OBC reservation.

The government fixed the OBC quota for the Bengaluru civic body at 33 per cent of the 243 seats on the basis of the report provided by the commission headed by Justice Bhaktavatsala, formerly of Karnataka High Court, to then chief minister Basavaraj Bommai.

The reservations were challenged in the high court and on September 30, 2022, the court ruled that the government reserved 33 per cent of seats for Other Backward Classes in the BBMP

council on the basis of “imaginary data”. It quashed an August 16, 2022, notification for the BBMP quota matrix.

The commission referred to data for urban and local body elections held in 1996, 2001, 2010 and 2015 to conclude that a large number of castes and communities “who come under the Category- A and B of Other Backward Classes are still socially and politically backward” and that “providing reservation of 1/3 rd (33%)” is necessary.

The commission also concluded that 44.40 per cent of the total population of the state (including minorities) belonged to OBCs but this was ruled as being “not based on any empirical data” by the high court last year.

“The Commission was required to conduct a rigorous investigation into the pattern of backwardness that acts as a barrier to political participation, which is indeed quite different from patterns of disadvantages in the matter of access to education or employment. Such an exercise is not forthcoming from the report submitted by the Commission of Enquiry, nor any material is placed by the State Government that the Commission of Enquiry had conducted such an enquiry or the report was based on the empirical data furnished by the State Government,” the court said on September 30, 2022.

“The Commission was required to find out which of the communities are backward in the local bodies across the State of Karnataka on the basis of empirical data and thereafter opine that providing reservation of 33% of total seats in favour of OBCs including the minorities in the local bodies is justifiable,” the court said. “The conclusion that large numbers of castes and communities come under the category of A and B of other backward classes and that they are still socially and politically backward is alleged to be based on the data pertaining to urban and local body elections held in the State of Karnataka in the year 1996, 2001, 2010 and 2015.”

“The conclusion that 44% of the state population consists of backward classes including minorities is imaginary and the same is contrary to the triple test enumerated in the case of K Krishnamurthy (by the Supreme Court),” the court further said.

The commission, however, recommended only 33 per cent OBC reservation in urban and local body polls. It also recommended the government “consider providing reservation of office of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in BBMP in favour of persons belonging to Other Backward Classes”.

Source: The Indian Express, Page 3., Oct. 7, 2023. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/karnataka-obc-quota-local-polls-hc-reservations-8972599/>

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Governance

Universal social security: Gig workers deserve better

KATHYVINI CHAMARAJ

A new breed of workers, delivering food and grocery items or providing courier services, has gained visibility in our cities as they snake in and out of traffic on their two-wheelers at great speed to deliver goods 'within half an hour'—these are the gig or platform workers. Governments are taking notice of the risks they face, prompting Karnataka to introduce an insurance scheme offering Rs 2 lakh life insurance, another Rs 2 lakh for accidental death, and some coverage for hospital expenses for an estimated two lakh gig workers in the state.

This is to be implemented by the Karnataka State Unorganised Workers' Social Security Board (henceforward Board). While commendable, this initiative reflects the long-standing issue of sector-specific, fragmented schemes that hinder decades-long efforts to provide universal social security for the 93% unorganised workers.

The gig-workers' insurance scheme mirrors one already put in place for pri-

vate commercial transport workers by the Board. However, this raises concerns. Should workers receive benefits in the event of their demise? What about essential benefits like health care, sickness, unemployment, family/child support, and pensions during their lifetime? Presumably, they will have to navigate separate schemes with distinct eligibility criteria, potentially excluding them.

The fragmented nature of schemes becomes more apparent if one were to consider the education assistance under the Private Commercial Transport Workers' Accident Benefit Scheme: educational assistance of Rs 10,000 per annum is given to a maximum of two children of the driver, only if he suffers accidental death or permanent disablement. But there is no scholarship for his children if he is still alive and able-bodied. Similarly, gig-workers' children lack scholarships, either when the worker is alive or after his death, while construction workers' children get scholarships from pre-school to post-graduation.

The Unorganised Workers' Social Security (UWSS) Act of 2008, under which the Board has been constituted, aimed to provide universal social security to every unorganised worker and provide all nine benefits prescribed by the ILO. However, due to its several inherent deficiencies, it has struggled to gain traction and has remained a non-starter. According to the Board's website, after 14 years of its constitution, only 4,30,198 registered workers have availed themselves of sector-specific schemes, receiving only one or two benefits. At this rate of registration of workers for a few benefits, it would take roughly 400 years to cover all 1.2 crore unorganised workers in the state and more than 1,000 years to give them all nine social security benefits prescribed by the ILO.

The question is why sector-specific measures are being introduced when there is no requirement under the UWSS Act to formulate schemes sector-wise. This may be due to the assumption that financing universal social security in one go for all

93% of unorganised workers is daunting, which is misplaced as the means to achieve it have not been explored at all. The Karnataka government plans to fund the entire scheme itself by imposing an additional surcharge on vehicle registrations, and there is only a proposal to tax the aggregators/employers in the future.

The Madhya Pradesh Unorganised Workers Welfare (MP) Act of 2003 offers an effective model for raising resources to fund universal social security, mandating employers to pay 5% of wages as a cess. The MP Act also mandates additional cesses on various state-level taxes and royalties to provide the government's contribution to a single social security fund: in addition to a tax on certain motor vehicles, a duty on transfer of property, a welfare cess on the sale or supply of forest produce, royalty on certain minor minerals, and a welfare cess on notified agricultural produce are imposed.

To achieve universal coverage of social security, the National Advisory Council dur-

ing the UPA's tenure suggested clear and unambiguous exclusion criteria: to be excluded were only two categories of workers: (i) workers already covered by the existing PF and ESIC schemes; and (ii) self-employed and other workers who pay income tax and are relatively better-off. All others were to be covered without restrictions on sectors, limits on wages, the number of workers in an establishment, etc., to make coverage of unorganised workers universal.

The Covid lockdown highlighted the precarious existence of a 93% unorganised workforce, emphasising the urgent need for universal social security. A universal scheme cannot be achieved without contributions from workers, employers, and governments. The government's contribution is also essential to make up for those workers in the unorganised sector who may not be able to contribute at all. There is a need to formulate a composite scheme providing all nine ILO social security benefits through a single contribution by worker, employer, and government to a single fund and set rid

of the multiplicity of piecemeal, varied, and confusing schemes.

In this regard, the National Advisory Council under the UPA government had also projected that if a worker contributes Rs 1,000 per year from the entry age of 20 years and the employer and government match the contribution equally, the accumulated amount in her name at age 60 would be Rs 7,41,420, which would yield a monthly pension of Rs 5,684 and an annual pension of Rs 68,208. With a 50% stepped-up contribution every five years, the monthly pension would be as high as Rs 17,800.

Since the Union's Social Security Code 2020, which will subsume the UWSS Act, has yet to say anything about all this, it is a golden opportunity for Karnataka to frame a composite new state Act for universalising unorganised workers' social security with all benefits built in and provide a model for the entire country.

(The writer is the Executive Trustee of CIVIC-Bangalore and a life member of the Social Security Association of India.)

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 7, Oct.9, 2023

Automated Plan Approval system to approve plans to construct houses in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The government will soon introduce a hassle-free Automated Plan Approval (APA) system to approve building plans for house construction on plots measuring up to 50x60 sqft in the city, said Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

To be eligible for the new system, property owners, who are building homes, have to get the plan drawn up by empanelled architects. After readying the plan, they should upload the document into the system, which would automatically approve the plan after checking the documents. The Bruhat



To be eligible for the new system, property owners, who are building homes, have to get the plan drawn up by empanelled architects. FILE PHOTO

Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has been asked to devise the system to implement the scheme, Mr. Shivakumar said.

The new system is being brought in with the aim of

reducing corruption, as the property owners would be required only to pay the fixed fees for approval and would not have to visit BBMP offices. Mr. Shivakumar said this

To plug property tax leakage, government all set to link BBMP property with UPOR databases

would bring in more transparency. However, it is to home builders on sites measuring up to 50x60 sqft and not to builders constructing apartments.

Boosting tax revenue

To boost revenue from property tax, Mr. Shivakumar said the government was contemplating introducing a new system to replace the Self Assessment of Property Tax Scheme. He said Bengaluru has the potential to collect three times more than what it is currently earning. At present

the civic body collects an average of ₹3,000 crore in property tax annually. Mr. Shivakumar alleged that owners are cheating the BBMP by declaring less property as against actual.

As part of this measure, the State government will issue digital property documents to property owners in the city after surveying the properties. The Survey, Settlement, and Land Records Department is already conducting a survey of properties under Urban Property Ownership Records (UPOR). BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath, talking to *The Hindu*, said UPOR data will be interlinked with BBMP's data base, and this will help devise the new tax system.

Source: The Hindu, P.1, Oct. 10, 2023.

Gender pay gap: It's real

Businesses and policymakers can take proactive steps to address the problem, writes Anshuman Das

Over the last four decades, India has seen low levels of women's labour force participation, with gaps of nearly 40% between the proportions of men and women in the labour force. Covid-19-induced lock-downs had a significant impact on the global economy. It greatly affected the labour market, with many businesses implementing pay freezes and rising unemployment, economic inactivity, and redundancies.

One of the main consequences is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities, particularly those related to gender. Women's employment has suffered disproportionately, resulting in women being furloughed or losing their jobs, especially those who work in sectors hit hardest by the economic downturn.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) recently ranked India at 135 out of 146 countries in its Global Gender Gap (GGG) Index for 2022. According to the World Inequality Report 2022 estimates, men earn 82% of the labour income in India, whereas women earn 18%.

The long-term economic and social consequences of this can be severe. With the widening of inequality, there is an urgent need for further research to understand the extent of the issue and identify potential solutions to reverse the impact of gender pay parity.

Covid-19 and women's jobs

The lock-downs immediately impacted women, with 37.1% losing jobs

(compared to 27.7% for men) between April 2020 and April 2021, as per data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). It has been observed that women's employment recovery has been slower. With the increased load of unpaid household work, women struggle to find time for office work between household chores and care-giving responsibilities, leading to increased stress and eventually quitting paid work.

As per the data from CMIE, even in January 2022, women's labour force participation was 9.4% lower than in January 2020, compared to 1.6% for men. The number of employed rural women experienced a steep initial dip, from 29.8 million in March 2020 to 17.8 million in April 2020, by 40.2% versus 25.5% for rural men. On the other hand, urban female employment fell from 11.8 million in March 2020 to 8.3 million in April 2020, that is, by 29.2%, versus 32.4% for men.

During the pandemic, gender pay disparities in technology, healthcare, and financial services have significantly widened, compounding existing inequities in these industries.

Analysis of gender pay gaps

Despite notable progress in closing the gender pay gap over time in India, the gap remains high by international standards. As per the labour force survey data of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Indian women earned, on average, 48% less than their male counterparts in 1993-94. Since then, the gap has declined to 28% in 2018-19.

The pandemic reversed decades of progress, as preliminary estimates from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020-21 show an increase in the gap by 7% between 2018-19 and 2020-21. The data further suggests that a faster decline in female wages during the pandemic contributed to this decline, contrasted with a faster growth in male wages.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that women, on average, continue to be paid about 20% less than men worldwide.

This data highlights a significant disparity in salary growth and career progression between genders, which can have long-term consequences for women's financial stability and eco-



nomics. These findings underscore the need for continued efforts to address gender inequality in the workplace and ensure that women have equal opportunities for career advancement and fair compensation.

According to a report by the World Economic Forum (2022), in India, the share of women legislators, senior officials, and managers increased from 14.6% to 17.6%, and the share of women as professional and technical workers grew from 29.2% to 32.9%. The gender parity score for estimated earned income has improved.

Underlying reasons

In India, women are predominantly in the informal sector and choose home-based employment options that allow them to balance domestic duties. The reasons are the prevailing sociocultural factors, including the increased burden of unpaid domestic work, exacerbated gender-based skill and educational gaps, digital illiteracy, mobility restrictions, and the lack of institutional support at workplaces.

Women are often paid less than men for the same job and marginalised in leadership roles which offer greater compensation and job security. The gender pay gap has persisted in finance and insurance consulting, healthcare, and transportation industries.

Expected policy changes

Gender pay gaps are not just an issue of fairness but also have economic implications. A report by the McKinsey Global Institute found that closing gender pay gaps could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025.

Steps that businesses and policymakers can take to address the problem include

- Implementing equal pay policies
- Promoting flexible working arrangements
- Providing training and development opportunities for women.

By taking proactive steps to address gender pay gaps, businesses and policymakers can help create more equitable workplaces. Governments can provide support through gender-sensitive job-creation plans to expand women's employment in the public and micro, small, and medium enterprise sectors and incentivise women's entrepreneurship.

Additionally, investing in women's resources and upskilling them for leadership roles can help bridge the gender gap in higher-paying positions. Organisations can create a more diverse and inclusive workforce by empowering women to advance in their careers.

(The author is the CEO of a human resource firm)

Source: Deccan Herald, P.13, Oct. 10, 2023.

3.21 lakh appeals pending with Information Commissions: report

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

More than three lakh appeals and complaints are pending in 27 State Information Commissions across the country and the backlog has been steadily increasing, according to a new report.

Of the 3,21,537 pending appeals, the maximum number was reported in Maharashtra (1,15,524) followed by Karnataka (41,047). Tamil Nadu declined to provide the information.

The 'Report Card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India, 2022-23' said that the 2019 assessment had found that as of March 31 that year, a total of 2,18,347 appeals/complaints were pending in the 26 Information Commissions from which data was obtained, which climbed to 2,86,325 as of

Case backlog

The time taken to dispose a complaint filed was computed using the average monthly disposal rate and the pendency

Information Commission	Estimated time for disposal
West Bengal	24 years and 1 month
Chhattisgarh	4 years and 4 months
Maharashtra	4 years
Arunachal Pradesh	2 years and 11 months
Odisha	2 years and 7 months
Madhya Pradesh	1 year and 11 months
Karnataka	1 year and 11 months
Telangana	1 year and 7 months
Kerala	1 year
Himachal Pradesh	1 year

DATA: SATARK NAGRIK SANGATHAN

June 30, 2021 and then crossed three lakh as of June 30, 2022.

Many defunct

Four Information Commissions – Jharkhand, Telangana, Mizoram and Tripura – are defunct as no new Information Commissioners were appointed upon in-

cumbents demitting office. Six Information Commissions are currently headless – the Central Information Commission, and the State Information Commissions of Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Punjab.

The report has been compiled based on the per-

formance of Information Commissions across the country, and on information accessed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act by the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS), a citizens' group working to promote transparency and accountability in governance.

October 12, 2023 marks 18 years of implementation of the RTI Act in India.

The report says that 2,20,382 appeals and complaints were registered between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023 by the 28 Information Commissions for whom relevant information was available.

During the same time period, 2,14,698 cases were disposed of by 29 Information Commissions for which information could be obtained. Under the RTI law, Information Commissions are the final appellate authority.

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Source: The Hindu, P.14, Oct. 12, 2023.

Gender

Shakti: This Dasara, KSRTC foresees five lakh daily commuters

To ensure hassle-free travel and cater to the demand, the Mysuru division of KSRTC has mobilised nearly 350 additional buses for operations from October 15



'We are certain the rush will go up substantially because of the free travel,' says Divisional Controller G. Srinivas. FILE PHOTO

DASARA

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Foreknowing a big jump in passenger load when the city hosts the famous Dasara celebrations starting this Sunday, the management of Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) in Mysuru has projected the commuter numbers may touch five lakhs from the current 3.75 lakh daily because of Shakti - the scheme that offers free rides for women in State transport buses.

To ensure hassle-free travel and cater to the demand triggered by Dasara, the Mysuru KSRTC division has mobilised nearly 350 additional buses to operate from October 15 till the month-end, expecting heavy rush of travelers.

"We are certain the rush will go up substantially be-

cause of free travel. In addition to 1,000-plus buses, we shall be running an extra 350 buses on various routes to handle the rush. If the demand soars, we may have to bring buses from depots in other districts. The division is fully prepared to manage the Dasara rush," said Divisional Controller G. Srinivas.

Speaking to The Hindu, Mr Srinivas said additional drivers and conductors are also being deployed accordingly from neighbouring districts for operating extra buses, including Sarige, Rajahamsa, Airavatha, and other types of buses. Preparations are being done accordingly as the passenger load to Mysuru city appears to break the 2022 traffic because of Shakti.

Usually, Mysuru division, with the support from Mandya and Chamarajanagar KSRTC divisions, used to increase its fleet during Mysuru Dasara to

meet the rush of commuters.

This year, with Shakti in place and the rush, was going to be more than the previous years because of the free rides, the division consulted districts such as Hassan and Chikmagalur divisions besides Mandya and Chamarajanagar for borrowing buses for augmenting the special Dasara operations.

In July and August months, the average daily passenger load was 3.75 to 3.80 lakh. However, in September, the load had moderately dropped with 3.55 lakh passengers travelling daily. With the start of *Shravana*, the number of commuters increased with a series of festivals ahead.

To Bengaluru alone, the division runs about 300 trips, including luxury and premium services. The schedules will certainly go up during Mysuru Dasara. The division has nine depots.

An average of ₹80 lakh a day was the amount the division was spending for operating the free rides and the same was being sought for reimbursement from the government. Shakti rides were costing around ₹24 to ₹25 crore a month to the KSRTC in the Mysuru division.

It is indeed a challenge for the division to operate the intra-city services with passenger load crossing 100 per cent and the number of commuters continuing to rise.

Almost all buses operated by the division were running full; some were running exceeding their carrying capacity to deal with the rush of passengers, especially women travellers.

The city bus terminus will witness a record traffic to Chamundi Hills and Brindavan Gardens during Dasara. The buses to the tourist sites usually run full.

Source: The Hindu, P.6, Oct. 13, 2023.

‘Swavalambane’ launched to support women-owned businesses

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

NSRCEL, the incubation arm of IIM-Bangalore, in collaboration with the Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (KSRLPS), has launched the ‘Swavalambane’ programme to scale and support women-owned non-farm businesses in rural Karnataka.

The programme aims to scale existing women-led microbusinesses across Karnataka’s tier-2 and tier-3 landscapes, by providing them with access to a support ecosystem and larger markets, and to help them become financially sustainable and generate local employment.

Currently, the programme is bringing together 150 rural women entrepreneurs under one roof and providing them networking opportunities, taking their stories to larger audiences, and assisting them with financial support for business growth and success.

The programme is supported by the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) under the National Rural Economic Trans-

formation Project, funded by the World Bank.

Commenting on the launch, Anand Sri Ganesh, CEO of NSRCEL said, “Karnataka’s entrepreneurial landscape is renowned for its tech-led innovation and incredible grassroots entrepreneurship. Areas like silk, toys, jewellery, and food products have global recognition. Women have been the driving force behind this.”

“The Swavalambane programme catalyses the growth of these women entrepreneurs by facilitating access to resources, funds, skill development, mentorship, and networking opportunities. In partnership with The National and State Livelihood Missions, we will build a methodology that can be replicated across the country to support the development of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem for economic growth,” he added.

The objectives of the programme also include offering support for the enterprises to become formal and legal entities and also increasing revenue by 15% for each enterprise.

Source: The Hindu, P.6, Oct. 13, 2023.

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Social Issues

Caste census necessary to remove inequities in society: Siddaramaiah

Caste system prevails in the country. Economic, social, and political status of different castes after 76 years of Independence should be known to take up poverty alleviation programmes, says Chief Minister

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Firmly rejecting the charge that caste census would divide society, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said the caste surveys were needed to remove social, economic and political inequities.

When his attention was drawn to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reported opposition to the caste census, Mr Siddaramaiah said the economic, social, and political status of different castes in the country after 76 years of Independence should be known to take up poverty alleviation programmes and ensure equality in society.

"Caste system prevails in the country. There is a need to gather data on the status of different castes on social, economic and political scale so that everybody



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah speaking to reporters at the airport in Mysuru on Saturday. M.A. SRIRAM

is brought to the mainstream," he said, while responding to queries from reporters at the airport in Mysuru on Saturday.

When asked if the caste census was dividing society, Mr Siddaramaiah replied with an emphatic no. "No, definitely not," he remarked.

He sought to question Mr. Modi's rhetoric on inclusive growth. Referring

to the Prime Minister's oft-repeated slogan of 'Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikas', Mr. Siddaramaiah said the BJP does not give ticket to Muslims to contest elections and wondered how they can achieve inclusive growth by ignoring the community.

He said the BJP's actions do not tally with their statements.

With regard to the fate

Study done in 2014-15 not caste census: Bommai

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister and BJP leader Basavaraj Bommai has claimed that what was conducted in Karnataka in 2014-15 was "not caste census."

Asked about the release of the caste census report at Hubballi, Mr. Bommai claimed a "study of social and economic condition of the people" had been ordered in 2014-15, and nowhere was it mentioned that it was a caste census.

of the caste census conducted in Karnataka during his earlier regime as

Chief Minister, Mr. Siddaramaiah said former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who became the Chief Minister in 2018, refused to accept the report when the then Chairman of Karnataka's Permanent Backward Classes Commission Kantharaj came forward to submit it.

"Now, we have a different chairman. I have told him to submit the report," he said adding that the present chairman of the commission Jayaprakash Hegde was planning to submit the report in November this year.

With regard to the demand for creation of a separate category for most backward classes, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the government cannot create such a separate category without a report from the Commission. "We will look into it after the report [caste census] is submitted," he said.

Source: The Hindu, P.6., Oct. 8, 2023.

Caste survey data in cold storage

Karnataka's caste census has not been accepted because of political compulsions

STATE OF PLAY

Sharath S. Srivatsa

The publication of the caste survey data by the Bihar government has had a ripple effect in Karnataka, with the focus now on the Congress government's move to accept and release the State's socio-economic and educational survey report that was finalised in 2018.

The survey, conducted by the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission and popularly called the caste census, has been caught in a political crossfire for over five years now. The Veerashaiva/Lingayats and Vokkaligas (the land-owning and politically powerful communities that have for decades held a grip on power in the State) insist that the results not be published, while a large number of backward communities, without political representation so far, want it to see the light of the day.

If published, the survey outcome could alter the power equations in Karnataka besides impacting the backward classes reservation matrix. It is estimated that about 200 of the most backward communities, that have had no political representation so far, could benefit from the move. With the term of the commission's chairman ending in November, the report is expected to be submitted soon.

Conducted in 2016, a first since the last census held in 1931, the survey has not been submitted to the government since the report was finalised in 2018. Successive governments, including the previous Congress government led by Siddaramaiah during whose term the census was conducted, have dithered on accept-



ing the report fearing a political backlash from the Vokkaligas and Veerashaiva/Lingayats. Of the 23 Karnataka Chief Ministers, 16 have been from the two communities, and only five, including the incumbent Chief Minister, have belonged to Other Backward Classes.

A selective leak of data from the census revealed that the population of Lingayats and Vokkaligas stood at 14% and 11%, respectively, as opposed to the general perception that it is higher. It was feared that if published and authenticated, this data could possibly reduce the influence of these groups in the political sphere.

Previous narrative

An earlier narrative stated that the report could not be submitted to the previous Congress government as the commission's secretary had not affixed his signature. Hence it had become clear that the government, which had asked for the report, did not want to head into the 2018 Assembly elections by antagonising the two communities.

Representatives from the two communities have termed the ₹162 crore-worth census exercise unscientific and unreliable. They claim that the questionnaires were "misleading" and "aimed at dividing the communities into subsets to deliberately bring down numbers."

Interestingly, Vokkaligas and Veerashaiva/Lingayats also figure in the OBC list, though their inclusion has been a contested issue. In the late 1970s, Chief Minister D. Devaraj Urs introduced the OBC reservation in which Vokkaligas found a place based on the L.G. Havanur Commission report. In subsequent decades, though the T. Venkataswamy Commission did not include the two communities in the OBC list, the Janata government headed by Ramakrishna Hegde drew a separate list adding the communities to it in 1986. In 1994, the Congress government headed by M. Veerappa Moily also included both these communities in the backward classes reservation list despite the O. Chinappaa Reddy Commission dropping them from the list in 1988.

Call for results

However, those favouring the publication of the new report have pointed out that the higher population narrative set by the two communities was based on the projected population from 1931.

They argue that the current list of backward classes was last drawn up in 1994, and requires re-categorisation based on the survey outcome. The commission needs to review the list, remove communities that have become ineligible, and add those eligible once in 10 years – an exercise not undertaken in three decades.

Though Mr. Siddaramaiah has publicly asserted the need for caste census data for better representation and poverty alleviation, political compulsions may eventually prevail. Government sources indicate that the report could go into cold storage at least until the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are over.

Source: The Hindu, P.9., Oct. 9, 2023.

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