



Society and Economy of Karnataka in News

VOL: 1

October 2023

NO: 5

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

CONTENTS

[Agriculture](#)

[Economy](#)

[Education](#)

[Health](#)

[Urban Affairs](#)

[Environment](#)

[Decentralisation](#)

[Governance](#)

[Gender](#)

[Social Issues](#)

AGRICULTURE

After kharif crop failure, undivided Dharwad district staring at rabi loss

Farmers can go for winter crops only if it rains by October-end: experts

MANJUNATH HEGDE
BOMNALLI
HUBBALLI, DHNS

After scanty rainfall caused extensive damage to kharif crops, farmers now fear the drought situation will affect rabi cultivation more severely in Dharwad, Gadag and Haveri districts, where most farmlands are rain-fed areas.

A large number of farmers are anxious about the rabi season which has already started, as rains required for maintaining moisture in the soil for the second crop seem unlikely.

Green gram and maize form the major chunk of kharif crops in the undivided Dharwad district, along with cotton and soy-

State of Drought

bean. Drought has forced several farmers to clear withered green gram plants and maize plants with green leaves but no yield. Though farmers are hoping for some rain to help the sowing of Bengal gram, wheat, jowar, safflower and other rabi crops in a few weeks, the situation seems to be worsening, casting a shadow on the rabi season too.

"I planted green gram on 10 acres of land in the first half of June. I had to destroy the plants now, as they are totally dried up. I had spent over Rs 15,000 per acre. Rains came in July, but a dry August spoiled everything," says Gangadhar Badnikai, a farmer at Kusulgi village in Dharwad district. He now intends to borrow money to sow crops for the rabi season.

Farmers are destroying their green gram plants in Gajendragad taluk of Gadag district, maize plants in Laxmeshwar taluk of Gadag dis-



A farmer destroys maize saplings on his land in Kadur village of Rattihalli taluk in Haveri district. DH PHOTO

trict, as well as Shiggaon and Rattihalli taluks of Haveri district. "We were in tears while destroying the maize plants we had grown," says Gadigeppa Harijan of Suranagi village in Laxmeshwar taluk.

Crops like onion and chilli were also damaged. Only a small percentage of farmers who could get water from nearby rivers or sources like borewells were able to save their crops.

According to Dharwad-based University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) Agromet Department Head R H Patil, the scattered rains being seen this month are not

helpful for rabi sowing, as the soil's moisture level is still not up to par. "As the situation is uncertain, rabi sowing now is risky. There will be some respite in rabi season only if very good rains come in before October end," he adds.

Drought-hit tags

Among the 23 taluks of Dharwad, Gadag and Haveri districts, 16 taluks were declared by the state government as severely drought-hit last month. Inter-ministerial central team also visited some places to study the drought situation.

In the second round, the government has now declared the

remaining seven taluks in these districts as severely drought-hit. With this, all taluks in these districts now officially have the tag of severely drought-hit.

The overall deficit of rainfall this monsoon has been not much in these three districts mainly due to heavy rains in the month of July. However, the deficit in rainfall was more than 60% in both June and August, causing crop damage.

Sowing of different agricultural crops during this kharif season was targeted on 2.56 lakh hectares of land in Dharwad district, 3.09 lakh hectares in Gadag district and 3.30 lakh hectares in Haveri district. But actual sowing was much lower due to the delayed monsoon. For instance, Gadag saw only 64% sowing against the target.

Agriculture Department Joint Director for Gadag district Taramani G H says that sowing of Bengal gram and other rabi crops would definitely be affected if the rain falls short. She said crop loss during kharif was also severe.

DOUBLE WHAMMY: A below par monsoon, energy crisis leave agrarian society



K J George

Govt in talks with other states to purchase power: George

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Karnataka Energy Minister K J George said here on Friday that the state government is speaking to other states to purchase electricity to meet the shortage of power.

He said the state recorded a peak demand of 16,950 MW on August 25, compared with just 11,268 MW in August 2022.

This "extraordinary situation

Now, erratic power supply hits drought-stricken farmers

Ryots protest over disruption in 3-phase supply to pump sets

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Farmers across the state, especially those dependent on pump sets for irrigating their fields, are up in arms against the government and power distribution companies. Power disruption has come as a blow to them who have already been facing problems due to uneven rainfall.

Farmers across the state

complain that for the last 15 days, the duration of three-phase power supply has come down from the regular seven hours to three hours and in some places even half an hour.

A majority of farmers say that the government, through erratic supply of three-phase power for pump sets and borewells, is snatching away their only chance of saving the standing crops.

Farmers of Dharwad, Bagalkot, Belagavi, Vijayanagara, Ballari, Gadag, Haveri, Charamarajanagar have been staging a protest against the power distribution companies for the last several days as their last efforts to save crops such as jowar, green gram, maize, and others.

Kallu Biradar, a farmer from Hipparagi village in Bagalkot district complained that in spite of the Krishna river flowing just a few meters away from his land, he is unable to save marigold on his eight acres of land. He charged that though the government had assured of seven hours of continuous power supply for pump sets,

he has been receiving only half an hour or one hour of power supply daily.

"I shifted to marigold keeping in mind the festive season, after groundnut completely failed due to poor monsoon. However, now I am worried as even the marigold plants that are on the verge of flowering are withering. What is hurting us the most is though there is water in the river, we are unable to pump it to our fields without power supply," he said.

He has taken a loan of Rs 4 lakh from banks and has no means to repay them.

Similar is the situation of Yerriswamy, a paddy cultivator in Kampli's Shaliganoor village of Ballari, who has

almost given up the hope of harvesting yield this season.

"There is no fixed timing to supply power to the pumpsets. For the last 15 days, we have received electricity for more than three hours only on three days. The crops have almost dried up," he said.

"Agriculture officials and electricity supply companies officials ask us not to worry as they will get compensation for the crop loss. The compensation amount is not even 35% to 50% of the total investment by the farmer. Is it possible for the farmers to suffer such a loss and still continue with farming?" asked J Karthik, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha & Hasiru Sene Vijayanagar working president.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Oct. 14, 2023

Supply power to farmers continuously for five hours in three shifts every day: CM

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid protests by farmers over inadequate supply of power and attack by the Opposition, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday held a review of the Energy Department and gave instructions to the MDs of electricity supply companies (Escoms) that electricity should be supplied to farmers continuously for five hours in three shifts every day and precautions should be taken to avoid load shedding.

The demand for power has increased significantly due to a severe drought situation in Karnataka, while electricity generation has reduced. But the government is trying to meet the increasing demand by purchasing power from both inside and outside the State, said the Chief Minister. An order has been issued asking those generating power in the State to supply it to the government.

"The consumption demand now is 15,000 MW to 16,000 MW as against 9,000 MW to 10,000 MW during the corresponding period last year, so this has led to power shortage," Mr. Siddaramaiah said. "We is-



sued an order recently that those generating power in the State should supply it to the government. We will purchase power and try to address the issue," he said.

From other States

Officials who attended to the review meeting informed that 300 MW electricity from Uttar Pradesh and 600 MW from Punjab would be obtained from November. Action will be taken to purchase short-term 1,500 MW electricity taking the approval of the KERC. They explained that Section 11 of the Electricity Act has been invoked under national disaster management to procure electricity from power generators in the State and the power shortage would be overcome.

JD(S) leader and former



The consumption demand now is 15,000 MW to 16,000 MW as against 9,000 MW to 10,000 MW during the corresponding period last year, so this has led to power shortage.

SIDDARAMAIAH,
Chief Minister

Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy has been blaming the Congress government for its failure to handle the power situation in the State. The JD(S) leader has hit out at the government, saying frequent power cuts were adding to the rural distress caused by shortage of rainfall.

On the criticism over frequent power cuts, the Chief Minister said, "Are they aware of the ground reality? There is drought and this has led to the problem, but we are still supplying electricity. However, we are unable to provide three-phase power for seven hours."

Energy Minister K.J. George met Union Power Minister R.K. Singh, a couple of days ago, and apprised him of the energy situation in Karnataka.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 14, 2023

State identifies additional 21 taluks as 'drought-hit'

BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government has identified an additional 21 taluks as drought-hit, of which as many as seventeen taluks have severe drought, according to a government order in this regard.

This brings the total number of drought-hit taluks in the state to 216. Earlier, the government had declared drought in 195 taluks, based on scanty rainfall and crop loss this monsoon. In the meantime, of the 195 taluks declared as drought-hit, the government took up a second round of ground-truthing assessment in 22 taluks (of the 34 taluks that had moderate drought), as a result of continued adverse climatic conditions here. Of these, the government has now identified 11 as severely drought-hit and the rest as moderate drought. Survey was also taken up in an additional 21 taluks.

In all, the government has now declared drought in 216 of the total 236 taluks in the state. Of these, 189 taluks have severe drought and 27

have moderate drought.

The government will submit a memorandum to the Centre on Monday seeking drought relief for the additional taluks, Revenue minister Krishna Byre Gowda said on Saturday.

The government had sent a first memorandum in September seeking compensation for 195 drought-hit taluks. The Centre responded to it and sent a team of officials to the state to survey the ground reality.

The government will also seek an appointment with the union home and agriculture minister once again, as the Centre has not responded to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's previous request in this regard, the minister said.

Meanwhile, in a review meeting of the revenue department on Friday, the minister lamented that the Centre did not have accurate data about small and marginal farmers in the state, owing to which the state was unable to get the right amount of compensation for drought.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Oct. 14, 2023

B'loru's egg consumption twice nat'l avg: Expert

Suchith.Kidiyoor
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: On an average, Bengaluru consumes close to 200 eggs per head annually, which is double the national average, according to Prof G Devegowda, president of the Institution of Veterinarians of Poultry Industry.

Speaking at a World Egg Day event on Friday, Prof Devegowda said the city consumes 75 to 80 lakh eggs per day.

WORLD EGG DAY

The event was organised by the Karnataka Co-operative Poultry Federation Limited and department of animal husbandry and veterinary services at Veterinary College, Hebbal, on Friday.

He said factors such as population size, awareness on the benefits of egg consumption, purchasing po-



HEALTHY CHOICE: Eggs provide vital nutrients like protein, choline, iodine and selenium

wer and easy availability contribute towards higher egg consumption. In Karnataka, consumption of eggs is more in the southern parts than the northern areas, he added. "In mega cities such as Bengaluru, egg consumption is higher, compared to rural areas," he further said.

DCM says poultry farm was his first business

Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar said on Friday a poultry farm was his first business venture.

Shivakumar, considered one of the richest politicians in the country, said: "While I was studying in PU, I spent 15 days on the campus of Veterinary College, Hebbal, during my holidays to undergo a training in poultry farming. After the training, I started poultry farming at

Sunkadakatte. It was my first business venture. However, I discontinued with it after I incurred losses. Later, my parents ran a poultry farm."

The minister further said three-four years ago, he had given up meat and eggs owing to some religious belief. Reacting to the plight of poultry farmers, he assured that the government was aware of their difficulties and would address their grievances.

in development and more," he explained.

K'taka produces 2.5 crore eggs per day

Giridhar Kothawar, the business head of National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), said post-pandemic, there has been a surge in egg

consumption in the country.

"Post-pandemic, there has been an increased awareness on maintaining good health. Egg is an affordable food source that helps provide the nutrients required," he added.

He said 33-35 crore eggs are produced in the country daily, with the southern states accounting for a larger share of that production figure, adding that Karnataka's production for 2023 touched 2.5 crore.

Layered poultry farming is taken up on a large scale on the outskirts of Bengaluru and its neighbouring districts Koppal, Hospet, Mysuru, Challakere, Davanagere and others.

Devegowda said farmers who are into layered poultry farming are facing difficulties in running their businesses, but those who are running bigger farms are witnessing growth.

Source: The Times of India, p.2, Oct. 14, 2023

Walmart invests \$39 mn in farmer livelihood enhancement in India

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Walmart Foundation said that since 2018, through its market access program it has invested more than \$39 million in India to reach 500 Farmer Producer Organisations/Farmer Producer Groups targeting 8,00,000 farmers, of which more than half are women.

NGOs like PRADAN, ACCESS, Mercy Corps and Srijan are working with the Walmart Foundation's Market Access Program to provide on-ground impact.

Walmart Foundation, through its Market Access Program, said it is support-



Reaching farmers: In March, Walmart Foundation announced a strategy to reach 1 million smallholder farmers. REUTERS

ing agrarian communities in a total of nine states across India – Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, and Maharashtra.

In March 2023, to improve farmer livelihoods in India, the Foundation had announced a new five-year strategy to reach 1 million smallholder farmers by 2028, with at least 50% of them being women.

"We are witnessing the emergence of women leaders within Farmer Producer Organisations breaking barriers, and spearheading change," said Julie Gehrki, vice president and chief operating officer at Walmart Foundation in a statement.

"With organisations like ACCESS, Mercy Corps, PRADAN and Srijan by our side, we are forging a path toward greater gender equality, economic empowerment, and sustainable rural development. Together, we are nurturing a brighter future for rural women farmers and their communities," Ms. Gehrki further added.

Source: The Hindu, p.16, Oct. 15, 2023



Sugar production may reduce by about 15 lakh tonnes

Minister for Sugar Shivanand Patil on Tuesday said all sugar factories in Karnataka will commence crushing of sugarcane from October 25 and production of sugar is estimated at 34.51 lakh tonnes in 2023-24 as against 59.81 lakh tonnes during 2022-23.

The area under sugarcane has reduced from 7.5 lakh hectares in 2022-23 to 6.5 lakh hectares in 2023-24, largely owing to drought in the State. There is likelihood of shortage of sugar owing to shortfall in the cane production as erratic rainfall hit sugarcane yields in the country, the Minister said.

The recovery of sugar would also reduce from 9.91% to 8% and the crushing season would begin early this year as sugarcane would get dried up, the Minister said. Earlier, the crushing season used to start from November 1.

The sugarcane crushing season would produce 1800 MW of power and 40,000 liters of methanol during 2023-24. Noting that the department has received 65 applications seeking permission to start new factories, the Minister said the permission would be granted to set up a factory at a distance of 25 km from another unit.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 18, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Crafting Karnataka's fiscal pitch to the Finance Commission

ANANTHA RAMU M R

The Sixteenth Finance Commission is due to be constituted this year. As reported in many periodicals, the Union government is preparing to set it up early so that the Finance Commission gets sufficient time to deal with the issues and suggest recommendations.

Article 280 of the Constitution refers to the formation, role and responsibility of the Finance Commission. As per this Article, the President shall, within two years from the commencement of this Constitution, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary, by order, constitute a Finance Commission that shall consist of a chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President.

The commission shall submit its recommendations for: (i) the distribution between the Union and the states of the net proceeds of taxes that are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between the states of the respective shares of such proceeds; (ii) measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of

the panchayats and municipalities and (iii) any other matters referred by the President in the interest of sound finance.

Basically, the Finance Commission recommendations are to ensure the vertical and horizontal balance (or reduce imbalance) between the Centre and state finances. The vertical balance refers to the share of financial resources between the Union government and state governments and the horizontal balance refers to the distribution of the share between states.

The Finance Commission recommends the share of states in the divisible pool. The divisible pool consists of all taxes, except surcharges and cess levied for a specific purpose, and net of collection charges. Previously many of the states argued to include cesses in the divisible pool so that they get more resources. The Fourteenth Finance Commission recommended raising the share of states in the divisible pool to 42%, which was 32% during the Thirteenth Finance Commission period. The Fifteenth Finance Commission (FFC) recommended a 41% share to states from the divisible pool.

Earlier, the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the FFC raised many debates. Many of

the states, particularly the southern states, opposed the ToR for considering the 2011 census population in place of the 1971 census population by the FFC. Because these states have achieved a replacement level of fertility, if the 2011 census population is considered, their share will be reduced. Notably, it did affect their share.

Karnataka faced a severe decline in its share in the divisible pool from 4.713% during the Fourteenth Finance Commission to 3.65% in the FFC period. Budget 2023-24 (July 2023) of Karnataka highlighted that the state incurred a loss of Rs 26,140 crore in the past three years and Rs 10,858 crore in 2023-24 itself.

The impact of Covid-19 on the state's own revenue, the discontinuation of GST compensation since July 2022, increased committed expenditure etc have further worsened the fiscal situation of Karnataka. Fulfilling the poll promise of providing the five guarantees is also adding to the fiscal stress. Given these circumstances, the government has to pause or extend the ceilings set under the Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2002.

Once the next Finance Commission is set up, all state governments shall submit

their memorandums highlighting the current fiscal situation as well as resource requirements. The Karnataka government may consider the following points while preparing its memorandum.

First, Karnataka should argue for considering the 1971 population or giving more weightage for achieving a replacement level of fertility and other demographic achievements. The state should highlight all the policy measures undertaken to progress in the demographic indicators.

Second, Karnataka is known for fiscal discipline. It is the first state in India to enact a rule-based fiscal correction mechanism and adhere to it. Except for a few years owing to the financial crisis during 2008 and the Covid-19 effect from 2020-21 to 2022-23, Karnataka was on the right path of fiscal consolidation.

The state is also performing well in terms of tax efforts and tax buoyancy. Consideration of fiscal discipline as an indicator by the Finance Commission shall benefit the state and it will serve as an incentive not only for Karnataka but also to other states, which are following the fiscal consolidation roadmap.

Third, the state should also highlight its

contribution toward GST collections and key initiatives, particularly the e-initiatives taken by the Karnataka government, to increase tax mobilisation. The revenue gap arising out of discontinuing the GST compensation cess should be underlined. Fourth, the committed expenditure of the state has increased over the years and crossed 100% of revenue receipts. The state is having post-devolution revenue deficits and should demand for grants to fill this gap.

Fifth, the agriculture sector in Karnataka is mainly dependent on the monsoon. To maintain sustainable employment and agricultural output generation, more investments are needed to provide irrigation facilities.

Sixth, urban agglomeration is becoming a major challenge in India and, particularly, in Karnataka. Cities in Karnataka are growing at a much faster rate. Financing the needs of Bengaluru itself is a big challenge for the government.

Providing basic facilities requires continuous attention and resources. Reports of Bengaluru's flooded roads during the rainy season, traffic congestion, solid waste management, increasing pollution levels

and others are almost regular these days.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 6 (clean water and sanitation) and number 11 (sustainable cities and communities) are the priority SDGs for Karnataka, where it is ranked lower. These challenges and financial requirements to tackle these problems should be emphasised.

Finally, financing SDGs is a challenge to all states, including Karnataka. The Karnataka government has come up with the 'Aspirational Taluks Programme' and is prioritising the development of the Kalyana Karnataka region so that it enables faster achievement of SDGs by 2030. The memorandum should accentuate the achievements so far and the financial requirements to attain the SDGs by 2030.

Let us hope that Karnataka's fiscal discipline, barring a few years, its tax efforts and financing needs are considered and rewarded by the upcoming Finance Commission.

(The writer is an assistant professor at the School of Social Sciences, Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, Bengaluru.)

Source: Deccan Herald, p.7, Oct. 16, 2023

New investments slowed again in Q2 of 2023-24: survey

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Fresh investment announcements in the July-to-September quarter, the second quarter of 2023-24, have dropped to ₹6.9 lakh crore, 13% lower than in the first quarter, and 21.5% down from a year ago, driven by a sharp dip in proposed outlays by the Union government and foreign investors, and a broad-based contraction across the manufacturing, mining, infrastructure, and electricity sectors. The decline in investment commitments during Q2 comes on the back of a 45.8% sequential decline recorded in the first quarter, as per Projects Today's latest investment survey. A total of 2,238 new projects with an aggregate investment intention of ₹6.88 lakh crore were announced in Q2, as against 2,745 new projects worth ₹7.91 lakh crore in Q1, with the projects' tally

Investment slump

Fresh investments in Q2 were 13% lower than in Q1 with the highest dip in foreign and Union government projects

Ownership	Q-o-Q (%)
Government	-25.6
Union govt.	-47.4
State govt.	-4.7
Private	-0.2
Private (Indian)	17.8
Foreign	-66.5
TOTAL	-13.0

Source: Projects Today

contracting 18.5%.

Private investment plans shrank for the second quarter in a row, albeit at a slower pace of 0.24% compared to the 62.5% contraction in Q1.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 10**

Continued...

Fresh investments slowed again: survey

Within the ₹3.93 lakh crore of private investment projects in Q2, announcements from foreign investors shrank 66.5% from Q1 levels to around ₹28,000 crore. Though domestic private players announced 17.8% larger outlays in Q2, the number of new projects fell to 844 from 1,180 in Q1.

While public capital expenditure has been driving the investment cycle in recent times, government investments also seem to have lost steam in the first two quarters. Fresh investment intentions sequentially declined 25.6% in Q2 to about ₹2.96 lakh crore from ₹3.97 lakh crore in Q1, which marked a 3.2% fall from the previous quarter. Within the government sector, new projects from Union government agencies dropped 47.4% in Q2 following a 20.6% contraction in Q1, bringing proposed outlays between July and September to ₹1.02 lakh crore from over ₹2.44 lakh crore in the January-to-March 2023 period.

States' investment plans recorded a milder 4.7% shrinkage in Q2 vis-à-vis Q1, when they had crossed ₹2.03 lakh crore. The irrigation sector, which is usually driven by smaller-ticket investments initiated by States, was the only segment to clock a sequential uptick in Q2, with project outlays more than doubling to ₹12,000 crore from under ₹5,000 crore in Q1.

With several State assembly elections looming and geopolitical risks to the global economy getting exacerbated amid weak demand conditions, the outlook for the second half of the year is mixed on the investment front, said Projects Today's director and CEO Shashikant Hegde. Any hope for an uptick in Q3 and Q4 would depend on higher project announcements from the Union government ahead of next year's general election.

Source: The Hindu, p. 1 & 10 Oct. 16, 2023

Power cuts will hit MSMEs' domestic and export delivery commitments: Trade bodies

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

The business outlook of around 6 lakh medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) in Karnataka looks bleak as interruptions in power supply by way of scheduled/unscheduled power cuts and load-shedding are only likely to continue as the State stares at a drought situation with monsoon failing this year.

According to trade body captains, one of the major concerns is MSMEs' inability to deliver their commitments to their domestic as well as international customers in time and this is likely to lead to conflicts and long-term business losses. Constant supply of power is critical for manufacturing and power cuts are likely to adversely impact the State economy in general, as per them.

Yet to recover

"This year seems to be challenging for all businesses, more for MSMEs. Power interruptions are taking place at a time when the small businesses are yet to fully recover after



Constant supply of power is critical for manufacturing and power cuts are likely to adversely impact the State economy in general. FILE PHOTO

the pandemic effects," noted S. Devarajan, president, Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

Frequent unscheduled power outages would certainly disturb the production plans of MSMEs, causing yield losses and even leading to conflicts with their customers. "The decline in production is the direct result in case of loss of power for smaller MSMEs. This will also lead to significant increase in cost of production," added Mr. Devarajan.

Echoing similar sentiments and expressing his

concerns, Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, the newly elected president of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), said industries in the MSME sector were a worried lot as monsoon failed in the State and constant power availability was a tough challenge.

The power cuts have impacted MSMEs in multiple ways. First, disruption in power supply will affect production and secondly, higher fuel charges (cost of running generators) and other cost adjustments'

burden would come on the MSME sector, Mr. Lahoti felt. To handle this scenario, trade bodies have already asked for subsidies on diesel for MSMEs on a par with subsidies given to farmers to do agriculture.

Buy power

Karnataka Small Scale Industries Association (KASSIA) demanded that ES-COMs in the State should buy additional power at the earliest to keep the MSME sector running without power cuts.

"We KASSIA strongly demand and request ES-

COMs to buy power at the earliest and support the industries on top priority. The loss to industries is also a loss of revenue for the government," said C.A. Shashidhara Shetty, president, KASSIA.

Coming down heavily on the administration, he said, "We feel the government would have read the situation well in advance to protect the interest of the industry in particular and also to ensure that the State exchequer is not losing any revenue." Even though there was a steep increase in tariff the MSMEs have accepted it, but uninterrupted power supply was critical for industries, he added.

Contingency plan

Businesses need to have a contingency plan to lessen the burden on main power grids. "It would be good if we focus on available alternate sources of energy like renewable energy (solar, wind) and the government promotes their usage removing the minimum threshold limit for procurement," said Mr. Devarajan.

Source: The Hindu, p. 4, Oct. 16, 2023

Energy dept focusing on harnessing solar power

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Energy department is focusing on harnessing solar energy to the hilt in the wake of power crisis in the state. The department has expedited the solarisation of irrigation pump sets (IP sets).

Energy Minister KJ George, who chaired a review meeting with senior officials from the escoms on Monday, said that the solarisation of IP sets is the way ahead to meet the demand of the farmers.

"Effective implementation of KUSUM-B and KUSUM-C projects for solarisation of IP

sets is the best way to meet the power demands of the farmers. For this purpose, solar parks will be set up close to every substation in the state. We have already identified 400 such substations and called tenders to set up solar parks at 230 of them," he said.

He added that the government has also increased the subsidy provided under the KUSUM-B scheme. "Earlier, a 30% subsidy was provided by the state and another 30% came from the Centre. Now, we have increased the state's subsidy to 50%," he said.

"The government will also expand the Pavagada solar park to increase the capacity by at least 2,000 MW, he added. "Nearly 10,000 acres will be added to the Pavagada solar park. We are also working to expand the solar power generation in Gadag and Kalaburagi," George said.

Following the instruction by the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the escoms have started chalking out feeder-wise power supply timings to ensure every farmer gets at least five hours of uninterrupted power supply, George said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Oct. 17, 2023

Energy crisis: Escoms to get 1,100 MW of power from private power generators

Energy Minister conducts review session with Escom heads to assess the current situation; govt. is actively procuring additional power from the grid to cope with surging demand, he says

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amidst shortage of power in the face of poor monsoon in the State, Electricity Supply Companies (Escoms) in Karnataka will receive an extra 1,100 MW of power from private power generators. The State government has invoked Section 11 of the Electricity Act under national disaster management to procure electricity from power generators in the State, which is currently facing a shortage of 1,500 MW.

On Monday, Energy Minister K.J. George conducted a review session with the heads of the Escoms to assess the current situation. Addressing the media, Mr. George said that the government was actively procuring additional power from the grid to cope with the surging demand.

Supply to farmers

"Despite a 40% increase in production from last year, there remains a deficit of 1,500 MW. Consequently, farmers will receive three-phase power supply for five hours daily. The supply will be distributed in a staggered manner on a rotational basis. This measure has been necessitated by the fact that irrigation pumpsets (IP sets) are the largest consumers of power in the State," he said.

"The Union government



The government has invoked Section 11 of the Electricity Act under national disaster management to procure electricity from power generators in the State. FILE PHOTO

has agreed to augment Karnataka's share in the central grid, effective from December 1. To address immediate power generation needs, Section 11 has been invoked with the objective of securing an immediate power supply of 1,000-1,100 MW," he added.

Stating that the power deficit was not a Karnataka specific phenomenon this year, he said, "The deficit (in Karnataka) is attributed to natural calamities, including drought, a shortfall in wind energy, and cloud cover. Nevertheless, we have effectively managed this situation by procuring power from the grid. We have taken significant steps, by identifying 400 substations, out of which 230 are in progress. We are on track to procure power from KUDAGI by December 1, and we have also established a barter system

with Punjab and U.P.," he added. Mr. George noted that in the same period last year, the demand ranged from 8,000-8,500 MW during August-September, but this year, the demand has surged dramatically to 15,000-16,000 MW. "Currently, the State's generation from thermal and hydro sources stands at 1,100-1,300 MW. Between April 23 and October 15, 2023, the State incurred an expenditure of ₹1,102 crore to purchase 1,627 MU of power from external sources through power exchange. During this timeframe, the State earned ₹265 crore by selling 636 MU through the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX)."

The State government has also made the decision to solarise irrigation pumpsets (IP sets), a move expected to benefit farmers. "With 3.5 lakh farmers in the State, the plan in-

cludes the establishment of 400 substations generating 3,000 MW of power. The decision stipulates that any substation located within 500 metres from the grid must be transformed into a solar substation. We are working on expanding the solar power park in Pavagada from its current capacity of 2,300 MW to adding another 2,000 MW in 10,000 acres. Solar power parks will also be set up in Gadag and Kalaburagi," he added.

Apart from this, the government has chosen to blend 10% imported coal with domestically sourced coal to tackle quality issues. Mr. George stated, "The government is also actively engaged in establishing pumped storage facilities in Sharavathi, collaborating under the PPP model with several companies, including Jindal," he added.

Source: The Hindu, p. 6, Oct. 17, 2023

State seeks pending dues from Centre under MGNREGA to help mitigate drought situation

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As 216 taluks in Karnataka are reeling under drought, the Congress government led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has requested the Centre to release the pending Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme wage component at the earliest, for ensuring effective implementation of the job scheme.

Letter to the Centre

Karnataka Chief Secretary Vandita Sharma has written to Shailesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), and said that wage release to Karnataka is due from MoRD since August 29, 2023,



The last wage grant released to the State was on September 24 for ₹1.55 crore for August and September. FILE PHOTO

which amounts to ₹478.46 crore. The last wage grant released to the State government was on September 24 for ₹1.55 crore for August and September.

The State government's Rural Development Commissionerate has submitted Utilisation Certificates

and Annual Audited accounts to the MoRD for the current and previous year, the Chief Secretary said in the letter.

Dependence on scheme

“Because of the drought situation, rural labourers are highly dependent on MGNREGA jobs for their livelihood,” Ms. Sharma said. She added that the main objective of the scheme is to reduce the number of migrants moving from rural to urban areas and to provide job opportunities for them at their residences. Because of delays in the payment of wages, labourers are unable to meet their daily needs and have started migrating from rural to urban areas seeking jobs, she pointed out.

Source: The Hindu, p. 6, Oct. 18, 2023

Two Indias

There is a slim window of opportunity to ensure that the “suffering India” in the North converges with the “shining India” in the South

EJAZ GHANI

India's economic mass remains concentrated in the coastal region, largely in the southern India. The South has made India into the fastest growing large economy in the world. It has a large and growing middle class, which is much more dynamic and enterprising than Europe and the US. It is well endowed with physical and human infrastructure and globally connected. This is the “shining India” that has a bright future ahead.

India's poverty mass is concentrated in the hinterland, largely in northern India. It has the largest concentration of poor people on the planet. Its poverty mass is greater than many Sub-Saharan African countries. This is the “suffering India” that seems to be trapped in poverty.

The spatial divide between “shining India” and “suffering India” has only widened in the last two decades. South India has always outperformed North India in terms of GDP growth, poverty reduction, and physical and human development indicators. The five southern states – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala – contribute the most to India's economic growth. Tamil Nadu's per capita income is almost double the national average. Their rise in per capita income has been associated with positive outcomes, such as better health, more education, and a higher standard of living.

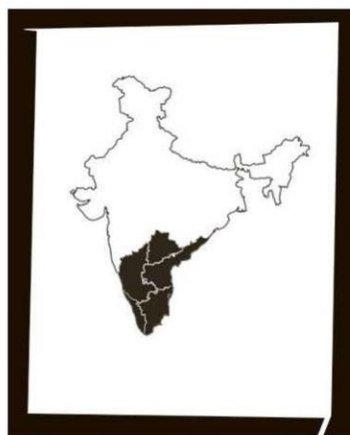
Spatial indicators on poverty show a clear divergence between shining and suffering India. The proportionate reduction in poverty rate and unemployment rate has been much slower in the North compared to the South. Similarly, per capita incomes have diverged between North and South. The spatial disparities between North and South India are much deeper compared to regional disparities observed in China, Europe, the US, as well as in the developing world.

Why have the two Indias failed to converge? India has made a lot of effort to integrate North and South by scaling up the physical infrastructure connectivity, especially highways. But its spatial development has been lopsided. A good example of this is the Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) highway launched

by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The GQ is the longest road project in India and the fifth-longest highway in the world, connecting four major cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.

Did the GQ highway integrate shining and suffering India? A detailed examination of all the districts along the GQ highway has shown that the more developed parts of South India benefitted more from it, compared to the suffering India. The overall impact of the investments made in highways was shaped by the local financial conditions.

New enterprises came up more in the South, near the highways, as they had greater access to finance. The districts



in shining India along or near the GQ highway benefitted from higher levels of financial development and the GQ. The benefit of GQ was not in the North, as it did not have a well-developed financial sector. Physical infrastructure investments promote economic growth when enterprises can access capital and the financial sector is developed along with the physical infrastructure. The disconnect between the financial sector and physical infrastructure investments was a key reason for further widening spatial disparities in income and poverty indicators between North and South India.

India has the largest youth bulge in the world, and their higher mobility rates should have reduced the spatial disparities between North and South. Poor people tend to move from poorer to richer regions in search of jobs. Unfortunately, internal migration rates within India, between North and South, remain low, compared to internal migration rates in the rest of the world. India's internal migration rate for unskilled workers is even lower, and much lower compared to more educated and skilled workers.

Most poor and unskilled people

in Bihar (I was born in Bihar) and Uttar Pradesh tend to be more risk-averse. They work part-time in cities, and to reduce their exposure to risks, they keep a foot in agriculture to avoid being too dependent on their non-agricultural jobs. By spreading their risk between rural and urban areas, they choose not to specialise or develop their skills.

This has resulted in low migration rates for unskilled people and constrained the migration between the two Indias. There are also other difficulties such as social and language disparities.

Low internal labour migration rates have worsened the job problem in India. India adds nearly 10 million new workers to the labour force every year, and most of them come from the North. But the pace at which new jobs are being created in the North is too slow to absorb new workers joining the labour force, and internal migration rates between North and South too low to achieve more efficient allocation of labour within India.

The impact of global connectivity on spatial development is still evolving. So far, it has largely benefitted the South that has better physical and human infrastructure and stronger connectivity to the global markets. It has long been recognised that external trade has a limited impact on spatial development. For example, infrastructure and financial markets are more likely to be associated with bigger changes in the spatial allocation of activity within a country, while external trade can only shift the overall sizes of sectors.

At a crossroads

India's spatial development is still evolving, as the manufacturing sector migrates from cities to rural areas, and enterprises move from the coastal regions to the hinterland. Reviving growth in the hinterland will not be easy, given inadequate physical and human infrastructure. Poverty will continue to persist, as poverty is known to have strong spatial characteristics.

India suffers from large poverty traps. Economic growth will lift all boats and so more policy focus is needed to directly reduce poverty itself. This will yield a double dividend, and reducing human misery could spark growth. The escape from poverty and human misery need not be a slow process. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Poverty is the worst form of violence”.

(The writer is a senior fellow at the Pune International Development Centre. He has formerly worked with the United Nations and World Bank)

Source: Deccan Herald, p.6, Oct. 19, 2023

Are southern States being punished for their success?

PARLEY

A week ago, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu accused the Union government of showing a "step-motherly attitude" towards the State over devolution of funds. Around at the same time, at a media conclave, Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor spoke about the potential danger of political disenfranchisement in the south when the delimitation freeze ends in 2026. These statements have brought the tussle over the distribution of Central taxes as well as the delimitation of constituencies to the fore. Is the south being punished for its success? Thomas Isaac and Balveer Arora discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Jasmin Nihalani**. Edited excerpts:

In the recent past, several south Indian leaders have been vocal about the share that the southern States get from Central tax kitty. Where does this view that 'the southern States are being punished for their success' stem from?

Thomas Isaac: The Finance Commission decides not only on how much should be devolved from the Centre to the States, but also on distribution of these proceeds among the States. These are based on certain criteria, which work against the south. Inter-State distribution is based on two factors. One, the State's share in the total population; and two, the income distance ratio, that is, how far the State's per capita income is higher or lower than the national average. On both these counts, the south loses out. So, you have a situation where there has been a drastic decline in the share of resources distributed to the south. For example, in the case of Kerala, it was 3.8% during the 10th Finance Commission; now, it is 1.9%. This decline has been accelerating over time.

I accept that in any federal system, inter-State transfers would have to have a component of equity. The richer States and regions will have to contribute to the development of the States which are backward because every citizen has a right to certain minimum uniform services. But the redistributive transfers must be within certain limits. So, far the higher resource transfers to the backward States have not produced the expected improvement, either in the economy or in social welfare. This means that there is something else that you have to do in those States which are backward.

Balveer Arora: The equity principle has to be kept in the calculation in the sense that there is a certain amount of cross transfers and redistribution across the federal polity. That is



A market in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, SANDEEP SAXENA

part of the price that one pays for being in a union; you share some of the burden.

I think we need a more proactive attitude. We need to identify the points where intervention is required so that the union does not veer towards an unbalanced and disastrous course of development or move in a direction which could lead to fragmentation. The terms of reference of the 16th Finance Commission are due soon. It is time that a voice is raised for involving the States. There should be a strong effort to ensure that the next Finance Commission has terms of reference which take cognisance of the problems that the federal policy is facing. For example, if the population basis is being shifted from 1971 to a new figure, the weightage of the population can be adjusted. It is not written in stone that it has to remain the same.

The weightage given to the population in determining the share of States has come down from 27.5% in the 14th Finance Commission to 15% in the 15th Finance Commission. The 15th Finance Commission also rewarded the progress that States made in reducing their population. So, why do southern States feel they are losing their share in the pie due to population criteria?

TI: This was the outcome of a vigorous campaign in which many States participated. In fact, the initial meeting was dubbed a meeting of the southern States. As a result, though the shift in the population base year did take place, as a compromise, the weightage for the population was reduced and a neutralising criterion in terms of demographic performance was brought in. As Professor Govinda Rao has argued in a recent paper, the overall impact of shift in the population base year on inter se distribution has been minimum. But there is a high correlation between the decline in population growth and the growth rate of the economy. That the weightage of population has come down doesn't make the outcome different because of this close relationship. Therefore, Kerala saw a drastic



Redistributive transfers must be within certain limits. So, far the higher resource transfers to the backward States have not produced the expected improvement, either in the economy or in social welfare.

THOMAS ISAAC

reduction and so did Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The final outcome has been negating for the south. And this would continue to be the case in future also because the south is doing better. Yet, I will not argue for freezing inter se redistribution. But I would argue that it be kept within certain limits. Recently, Kerala's Finance Minister stated in the Assembly that the State gets ₹35 paise for every one rupee that is contributed, while Uttar Pradesh gets ₹1.6 for every rupee collected from the State.

BA: Yes, there have been some efforts to offset the imbalance. The poorer States are the more populated States and therefore the disadvantage accrues to those States which have taken the question of family planning seriously. I think it's also linked to the delimitation. After all, the political power balance within the federal polity will also shift. So, I would insist that the States must get a space and voice in the decision-making of federal finance.

The rationale provided by the Finance Commission for the distribution of taxes within the States is that these transfers provide a level-playing field for the States. They are needed to enable all the States to provide comparable levels of public services. What are your thoughts on this?

TI: No, that is not happening. The income distance between the States has widened since 1991. In fact, the range has been widening. This raises questions regarding the development policies that are being pursued in the States. During COVID, the government relaxed borrowing limits for States, but we had a strange spectacle of unspent cash balances lying around. You have internalised this Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act logic so much that even when permitted, States don't want to spend money on revenue expenditure. Even before COVID, the unspent cash balances were ₹1.5 lakh crore and poorer States were the biggest depositories of these funds. So, I wonder what prevents this money from being used to build schools and hospitals.

Article 81 of the Constitution says that each State should have seats in proportion to the population and that constituencies should

roughly have the same population. We are using the decades-old Census to determine seat share in the Lok Sabha and there is an imbalance in the number of constituents that an MP has in Tamil Nadu compared to a State like U.P. But at the same time, southern States argue that they will be penalised when the delimitation freeze ends by 2026. The Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh are likely go up to 143, but Kerala may remain unchanged at 20. So, what is the way forward?

TI: The southern States have complied with population norms and schemes that have been promoted by the Central government. Their success has resulted in their population share going down. The delimitation of constituencies would lead to a decline in their representation in Parliament. The States which have successfully implemented the national policies cannot be penalised for their success. There is no compulsion to change the ratio of representation in Parliament. This is a serious issue and it can have devastating consequences, marginalising the southern States in the political sphere because they have done better.

Even within the existing Constitution, there is nothing to prevent the Rajya Sabha seats from remaining in the same ratio or to prevent giving an additional weightage to States whose population is going down. I would still argue that the 1971 population should be used. So far, we have continued with that. It will not be unconstitutional if it is continued for another decade or two.

BA: The logic of one person, one vote is inescapable. A reasonable solution would be to freeze the seats of the Rajya Sabha at the level at which they are, rather than adjusting them in terms of population. There is nothing written in the Constitution about what should be the basis for the distribution of seats in the Rajya Sabha. And there is no reason to follow blindly the figures that emerge from the delimitation of the Lok Sabha to redistribute the seats in the Rajya Sabha. After the proposed delimitation you will have hugely populous constituencies and sparsely populated constituencies because of the demographic disparities, which are inherent in our polity. But the important thing is how effective the representation is of all the vital forces of society. After all, your objective is to build a better economy, a better polity, and a better society. So, if your formula punishes those that are contributing in this direction, then obviously there's something wrong with it.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Source: The Hindu, p. 15, Oct. 20, 2023

Centre says measures in place to check price rise

Govt. has extended export restrictions on sugar, wheat and rice to ensure adequate supply in domestic market; moreover, 50 lakh tonnes of wheat will be offloaded, says Union Food Secretary

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said here on Thursday that the Centre had taken adequate measures, including extension of restrictions on exports of sugar, wheat, and rice, to ensure that the prices of these essential items did not increase further and remained stable during the festival season.

Mr. Chopra said the 20% export duty on parboiled rice would remain till March 31, 2024, to maintain adequate availability in the domestic market. He said the measure had led to a decline in export of parboiled rice by 65% in quantity terms and 56% in value terms. The export of broken rice was prohibited and an export duty of 20% was imposed on non-basmati white rice in September last year. Subsequently, export of non-basmati white rice was prohibited in July this year. "The pur-



Grain of the matter: Harvested paddy being dried outside a mill in Palakkad on Thursday. K.K. MUSTAFAH

pose of extending the duty regime on parboiled rice is to keep a check on price rise of this crucial staple and maintain adequate availability in the domestic market," Mr. Chopra said.

25 lakh tonne offloaded
On wheat, he said the Centre had decided to offload 50 lakh tonnes under the Open Market Sale Scheme (domestic) through e-auction.

The Food Corporation of India sells two lakh

tonnes of wheat every week and so far 25.6 lakh tonne has been offloaded. Cooperative agencies NAFED and NCCF as well as Kendriya Bhandar is selling *atta* in the open market at ₹ 27.50 a kg, he said. "These measures have led to increased availability of wheat in the domestic market and moderated retail and wholesale prices in wheat in the country," he said.

The retail inflation in wheat is about 3.6% in one

year, the Centre said. Mr. Chopra was confident that edible oil prices would also be stable. "Prices are expected to remain stable during the festival season. We are not anticipating any manner of hike in the festival season. It's hoped that prices should rule stable in the next couple of months," Mr. Chopra said. The government had also decided to extend the restriction on export of raw, white, refined and organic sugar indefinitely.

Source: The Hindu, p. 18, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

DECCAN HERALD

Seats go unfilled year after year in 'lengthy' BArch course

Students prefer four-year design engineering course

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The demand for architecture (B.Arch) courses is decreasing in the state every year with 62% of the seats remaining unfilled this time.

As per details available from the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA), this year, of the 1,197 available seats, 747 are left unfilled. The trend of vacant seats has been there for the last few years.

According to experts, supply being more than demand is one of the main reasons for the declining demand for the course.

Vidyashankar S, vice chancellor of Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU), said, "When supply is more than demand, seats remain unfilled."

Some experts pointed to the length of the course. As the duration of the architecture course is one year more than regular engineering courses, some students and parents prefer regular engineering courses over architecture, they said.

Om Prakash Bawane, principal of RV College of Architecture, Bengaluru, said, "There are four-year design courses which are attracting students because of the duration."

Students who are really pas-



The duration of the architecture course is one year more than regular engineering courses.

Sheen wearing out

Year	Total seats	Vacant seats
2023-24	1,197	747
2022-23	1,043	614
2021-22	1,086	651

sionate about architecture are joining the five-year course, he said.

Confusion over NATA (en-

trance exam for admission to architecture course), its schedule and pattern is also a contributing factor for seats going

abegging. Experts stressed the need for more publicity for the test.

"Even now, many students and parents are not aware about NATA being mandatory for joining the course. There is a need for greater accessibility to NATA centres across the country, specially in smaller towns," Bawane said.

Experts also blamed delayed counselling for architecture courses and the increase in the number of colleges in the state.

There are over 40 colleges offering the course in the state.

Performance of the construction sector affects admissions too. "During placements, we realise that the construction industry is not doing good and this is one of the reasons for the course not being in demand this year," said M N Guruvenkatesh, senior vice president, placements & skill development at Dayananda Sagar Institutions.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.7, Oct. 15, 2023

Higher education at a cross roads

K'taka must fill vacancies, improve governance and foster academic excellence

H A RANGANATH

The state of higher education in Karnataka is being debated in academic circles. Let me begin my analysis of it with a quote from Charles Darwin: To kill an error is as good a service and sometimes even better than establishing a new truth or fact. This should be the guiding principle for any administration aiming to rejuvenate societal systems in general and higher education (HE) in particular. Instead of getting bogged down by politically charged statements and counter-statements, let us take remedial measures to address the issues. In this task, we should follow the recommendations of vision groups and policymakers. While new policies are conceived in committee/board rooms, it is ultimately academic institutions that must translate these recommendations into reality. Until this is understood, recommendations remain a pipe dream. With the hope that the state of higher education in Karnataka will move towards a qualitative trajectory, I offer a few suggestions.

Within the State, policymakers need to delve deep into the ecosystem to understand the ground realities. Allow me to highlight a few issues affecting state public universities. Firstly, the Karnataka State University Act of 2000 needs a comprehensive overhaul to address contemporary issues in higher education. While the 'jurisdiction of universities' can be limited to affiliation and examination purposes, student admissions to different programmes should be open across jurisdictional barriers to facilitate student mobility, including provisions for credit transfers among institutions and faculty mobility across universities and interinstitutional collaborations for both teaching and research. To avoid in-charge VCs, the Act should stipulate that the procedures for the appointment of new vice chancellors commence three months ahead of the retirement of the present incumbent, allowing outgoing and incoming VCs to exchange notes.

The Act may also specify criteria for the appointment of statutory officers, such as registrar administration, registrar evaluation, and finance officer. With these guidelines, the VC should have the freedom to select the members of his 'team' with the due approval of the Syndicate. Another issue of serious concern is the composition of the statutory

bodies of the university, such as the Syndicate, Academic Council, Finance Committee, etc. Men and women of experience and expertise from academia should be nominated or appointed to such bodies. The Act has to lay down in unambiguous terms the prerequisites for such memberships.

Qualified faculty is the backbone of an academic institution. But sadly, the backbone is not in a position to bear the weight of teaching and research. With nearly 60% to 70% of faculty positions vacant, the victims are the students and teaching and research programmes. Due to the sustained contributions of many senior faculty over decades, some departments in some universities have attained the status of advanced research centres, but even they are unable to sustain it as many of the senior faculty have retired. Therefore, the Act should stipulate a definite time line for filling up of vacancies and also minimise the ad-hoc appointments of guest lecturers.

The State universities have been in existence for different lengths of time. The range may be from century-old universities to just-born ones with or without facilities. Each of these has inherited and is confronted with different institutional problems. The Act should suggest that instead of 'one size fits all policies', institution-specific and/or issue-specific remedial measures be articulated.

Regarding the Karnataka State Higher Education Council, its existing mandate deserves review, along with an evaluation of the council's performance, which is perceived as an extension of the higher education department. To strengthen its functioning, the Council Act needs amendments. Some of the suggestions include:

1. The Council should be an autonomous body with a well-known academician as chairman, vice chairman, and executive secretary.
2. These positions should be filled through a transparent process of selection and not by nomination by the government.
3. The Council should have a well-defined organisational structure with defined positions to act as an interface between universities/colleges and the government.
4. The Council can also act as a 'Policy Centre for Higher Education,' serving as an 'Advisory Body' to the government. Parallely, each of the 26 private universities in the state has an independent Act.

How the government can facilitate the functioning of these institutions is a topic for another article.

(The writer is a former director of NAAC and a former VC of Bangalore University)

Source: Deccan Herald, p.6, Oct. 18, 2023

Govt contemplates axing unpopular engineering courses

Higher edu dept will write to AICTE to discontinue such courses

BENGALURU, DHNS

At least 10 engineering streams that have had little or no demand for the last few years may be removed from the pool of seats available for students to choose from.

In alignment with the ongoing trend of low demand for certain streams, the Depart-

ment of Higher Education is planning to write to the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to discontinue such streams.

The streams that are under such consideration for low admissions are Aeronautics, Polymer Technology, Environmental Engineering, Construction Technology, Ceramics, and Textiles Engineering.

According to data from the Department of Technical Education, 60 colleges have not enrolled more than three students in some courses, with some colleges even witnessing only one admission in core streams like Civil Engineering.

M C Sudhakar, the Minister for Higher Education, said, "We are collecting college-wise details about low admissions and streams that had no admissions. We will communicate this information to the AICTE."

This year, courses such as Energy Engineering have enrolled only three students, while Ceramics and Cement Technology have four, Infor-

mation Security four, Internet-of-Things four, Design Engineering five, Environmental Engineering five and Smart Agritech six.

"This trend has persisted for several years. Some streams have high demand, with more applicants than available seats, while others have seen no admissions at all," said an official from KEA. Officials from the department emphasise that keeping such unpopular courses in the pool results in a significant number of vacant seats every year.

"At least 10% of the seats unfilled comprises such streams and unless we take them off the pool, the number of seats

remaining vacant will not come down," the official said.

AICTE has extended deadline for admission to engineering courses to October 30.

Following this extension, the government has requested private engineering college managements to provide details about the seats that were returned to them by the government. Once the colleges share this information, the KEA will issue a revised calendar for seat allotment.

Confirming this, Sudhakar said, "We have received communication from AICTE and have requested private college managements to provide details of the available seats."

Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Oct. 19, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Health

K'taka's disease surveillance platform can be a model for others: Rockefeller Foundation

In September, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao launched the Platform for Research, Integrated Surveillance and Management of Health (PRISM-H) for disease surveillance in Karnataka.

The platform, developed by IISc's AI & Robotics Technology Park (ARTPARK), with support from US-based philanthropic organisation Rockefeller Foundation, amplifies the state's dengue surveillance through an AI-based predictive model.

In an interview with Navya P K of DH, Elizabeth Yee, executive VP, programs, and Dr Naveen Rao, senior VP, health, at Rockefeller Foundation, discuss the way forward. Excerpts:

Are you seeing results from the platform?

Yes. Instead of sending ASHAs and community workers everywhere for dengue surveillance, the health department is now able to deploy them in areas where cases are predicted to increase and manage the environment (source reduction) there.

For example, today the dashboard showed a locality where cases are expected to increase in the next four weeks. This sub-district is at a completely different location from the sub-districts that currently have cases. So, it allows anticipating and putting resources in a place that has significant risk.

If you wait for a case to be detected, you are probably already too late, because people will get

diagnosed at a health centre only if they have access and can afford it.

How did the project materialise?

Over the past three years, our focus in India under public health has been to expand data-driven disease surveillance and decision-making under the stewardship of the principal scientific advisor for the government of India and department of biotechnology.

At the tail-end of Covid pandemic, we asked how the capacity built then could be used going forward. That's when we started working with ARTPARK as part of a research agenda with institutions around Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Delhi.

Our board recently approved a five-year climate strategy in the context of climate change increasing the vulnerability of already-vulnerable populations. Climate-related health threats require us to create a new paradigm of administration, and our work with ARTPARK showcases what that can look like, with dengue as a starting use case. Dengue is a climate-sensitive infectious disease, and it's going to escalate as weather patterns change.

This platform can help the administration with early warning, prediction and detection of infectious, vector-borne and non-communicable diseases that are exacerbated by climate change.

What will be the focus areas in the next few years?

We are focusing mostly on urban areas now, because we know what the administration needs and what the systems look like. However, our state-level engagement tends to touch upon rural areas.

In Karnataka, we started with a workshop to draw priorities from various officials in the government and then brought together a unique team from the government and private sectors. We will do similar workshops in other areas to understand their requirements, because they will have other diseases that they feel are more critical. But this model will work there.

Why pick Karnataka first?

We felt there was a chance of proving the concept here, along with political will. The common theme in our work globally is to use data to make better decisions.

We are exploring possibilities of bringing some partners, from Brazil especially, to visit Bengaluru and learn from the model.

The predictive model requires multiple layers of data on rainfall, mobility, etc. How do you deal with gaps in government data?

The more people understand the value and insights they get from data, the more they are willing to share it. We are in a much better position now than when we started.

Besides, globally there is a lack of funding for health, so the data also enables you to stimulate financing for health, because if you can't measure, you can't finance it.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.5A, Oct. 15, 2023

AI-based lung cancer screening in 19 district hospitals to aid over 1.4 lakh patients

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Starting next week, the State Health Department will start Artificial Intelligence (AI) based lung cancer screening for patients in 19 district hospitals in Karnataka. The screening technology, that will be first deployed in K.C. General Hospital in Bengaluru, is set to benefit 1.4 lakh patients across Karnataka annually.

With most lung cancer cases detected at the last

stage in the absence of specific common testing techniques for the disease, early intervention has become a challenge. In this context, the Karnataka health department has tied up with AstraZeneca to deploy AI-based lung cancer screening technology in its hospitals.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Health Mission and the pharma company in the presence of Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao

on October 12.

For 29 lung diseases

The AI-based lung cancer screening technology will screen a patient for 29 lung diseases in one chest X-ray. Developed by Qure.ai, this AI-powered chest X-ray system will help the government detect lung nodules, often precursors to lung cancer, overcoming a major early detection challenge.

"Cancer can be treated with curative intent if detected early. We are bring-

ing this technology in all our district hospitals across Karnataka, and we strongly believe that this will emerge as the most beneficial way of detecting lung cancer early, and bringing down the financial and emotional burden of healthcare on patients, especially who cannot afford even primary care," said the Minister.

Incidence of cancer in Karnataka

In Karnataka, the incidence of cancer is increas-

ing by about 1% each year in both men and women. According to a study by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), cancer cases in Karnataka are expected to increase by 90,000 by 2025. In Bengaluru, the most common cancers in men are lung, stomach, esophagus, and prostate while breast, cervix, ovary, and corpus uteri are most common in women. State Health Commissioner Randeep D. said patients are referred for chest X-ray by doctors

for various ailments in district hospitals. "By scanning through these X-ray images, using this AI software, doctors will be trained to detect signs of development of tuberculosis (TB), lung cancer and other lung disorders early. Further SOPs would be developed and doctors will be trained to ensure that all suspected cases are further investigated. They will also ensure the required treatment is provided at the district hospitals or, if required, the patients

are referred to tertiary care facilities," the Commissioner said.

Screening at no cost to patient

"All this would be done at no cost to the patient, and to our hospitals. This initiative has been rolled out with installation of AI software and training of doctors in K.C. General Hospital in Bengaluru on October 13. Based on the utility and gains, it will be expanded to other high footfall taluk hospitals of

Karnataka," he said.

Sanjeev Panchal, Managing Director and country president, AstraZeneca India, said, "The company is grateful to the government of Karnataka for this opportunity to partner and cater to the needs of patients at the community level. This will help incidental detection of nodules earlier, thereby improving early cancer diagnosis to a large extent as we integrate AI-based chest X-ray and low-dose CT at the ground level."

Source: The Hindu, p. 4, Oct. 14, 2023

Two new contraceptives launched in Karnataka

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Monday launched two new contraceptives -- SubDermal Single Rod contraceptive Implants and SC- MPA Injectable contraceptive -- which are regarded as effective spacing options.

The contraceptives were launched at State Family Planning Summit - "New Choices, New Horizons" - in Bengaluru on Monday. Four districts from Karnataka -- Bengaluru, Bidar, Mysuru, and Yadgir -- are among the 40 districts in 10 States in the country where the new options will be introduced on a pilot basis. The State Health Department has identified the healthcare facilities in the four districts where the new contraceptive methods will be introduced.

"The country still has significant need for modern contraception. As many as 47.7% of births in India are poorly spaced and in Karnataka 56.2% of births are poorly spaced, impacting the maternal and infant morbidity. Therefore, ensuring healthy birth spacing remains a priority for the state," said a release

Source: The Hindu, p. 6, Oct. 17, 2023

No dengue epicentre so far in 2023; cases spread across India

Chhattisgarh recorded a disproportionately high death rate though it formed the lowest share of dengue cases in recent years

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese
& Vignesh Radhakrishnan

This year, close to 95,000 dengue cases have been recorded in India until September 17, leading to over 90 deaths. The fact that the case burden is spread out across many regions is unusual. In general, dengue follows a pattern in India where one region bears a disproportionately high case burden one year, followed by another region the next year. This year, Kerala and Karnataka in the south have recorded the highest number of cases (over 9,000 each) followed by Maharashtra in the west (8,496 cases), Odisha in the east (6,563), Uttar Pradesh in the north (5,742), and Assam in the north-east (5,604).

Case burden

Table 1A shows the dengue case burden each year, that is, a State's share in India's cases between 2008 and 2023. For instance, in 2008, close to 55% of India's cases were recorded in the northern States of Punjab, Delhi, and Haryana. In 2009, close to 50% of the cases were recorded in the western and central States of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. In 2015, the northern States were again more disproportionately impacted. In 2017, over 60% of the cases were recorded in the south. In 2022, the eastern State of West Bengal was impacted the most with 29% of the cases. Till September 17 this year, no such region-specific pattern has emerged.

Table 1B shows the State-wise dengue case burden in the 15-year period between 2008 and 2022. West Bengal recorded the highest share of cases – 11% of India's total – followed by Punjab (8.9%) and Uttar Pradesh (7.1%). **Tables 1A and 1B** do not list the States which contributed to a smaller share of India's case burden.

For instance, Goa's share in total cases never crossed the 2% mark during any year. **Table 1B** lists the total number of dengue-related deaths in the period. Maharashtra recorded the most deaths in the period (460) followed by Punjab (286) and Kerala (273).

Table 1B also lists the deaths recorded per one lakh dengue cases during this period. This metric adjusts the fatality figures to allow for a fair comparison across the States. As can be observed from the table, Chhattisgarh recorded a disproportionately high death rate for a State which formed the lowest share of dengue cases. While the State's share in dengue cases was just 0.7% between 2008 and 2022, dengue deaths per one lakh cases peaked at 557, the highest among all the States. This data points to the poor management of the disease in the State.

A similar analysis of all the States shows that along with Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh also recorded a disproportionately high death rate though their share in case burden was relatively low. Both the case burden and death rate were higher than the average in Punjab and Maharashtra. West Bengal, Karnataka, and Gujarat managed the disease better with lower death rates though their case burden is high. In the rest of the States, both the case burden and the death rates were relatively low.

Note of caution

The above analysis should be read with a note of caution as only about 22% of the registered deaths in India were medically certified. There were also wide inter-State variations in this metric. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, 43% of the deaths were medically certified in 2020, while in Uttar Pradesh only 12.6% deaths were certified and in Bihar only 3.4% deaths. So, Tamil Nadu's dengue death figures are more accurate than the figures in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Dengue hotspots

The data for the tables were sourced from the National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control. In 2023, the case burden is spread out across many regions



Table 2 | The table shows the State-wise dengue case burden, dengue-related absolute deaths and deaths recorded per one lakh dengue cases between 2008 and 2022

	Case %	Deaths	Death rate	Rajasthan	6.4	226	276.8
Delhi	6.3	141	176.0	Maharashtra	6.9	460	522.8
U.P.	7.1	198	219.2	Gujarat	6.3	108	134.6
Utt.	1.5	26	133.4	M.P.	3.1	78	196.5
H.P.	0.7	13	139.2	Chhattisgarh	0.7	50	557.1
Punjab	8.9	286	252.5	Telangana	3.5	16	36.0
Haryana	3.4	87	199.9	T.N.	5.8	165	221.7
Bihar	2.4	44	140.9	Andhra	3.0	34	88.9
Odisha	4.3	86	156.8	Karnataka	6.7	113	132.7
W.B.	10.7	138	101.1	Kerala	5.6	273	380.2

Utt. = Uttarakhand

Table 1 | The table shows the dengue case burden each year, that is, a State's share in India's cases between 2008 and 2023. All figures in the table are in %

Affected States	2008	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23
North																
Delhi	10.4	7.4	22.1	6.0	4.2	7.4	2.5	15.9	3.4	5.8	7.1	3.2	2.8	6.8	4.4	5.5
U.P.	0.4	1.1	3.4	0.8	0.7	1.9	0.5	2.9	11.6	1.9	3.8	6.7	8.3	15.4	8.5	6.1
Uttarakhand	0.2	0.0	0.6	2.4	0.2	0.1	0.3	1.7	1.7	0.4	0.7	6.8	0.2	0.4	1.0	1.7
H.P.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	4.6	0.2	0.0	0.2	1.4	0.6
Punjab	34.6	1.6	14.2	20.8	1.5	5.4	1.2	14.1	8.1	3.4	14.8	6.5	18.9	12.1	4.7	4.5
Haryana	9.1	0.8	3.1	1.4	1.5	2.4	0.5	9.9	1.9	0.8	1.9	0.8	3.1	6.1	3.9	3.1
East																
Bihar	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.1	1.7	1.6	0.7	1.8	1.5	0.8	2.1	4.3	1.1	0.3	6.0	2.7
Odisha	0.0	0.0	0.1	9.6	4.5	9.4	15.9	2.5	6.5	2.9	5.1	2.4	1.1	3.9	3.0	7.0
W.B.	8.3	2.6	2.8	2.7	12.9	7.8	9.7	8.5	17.7	6.8	NA	NA	11.6	4.3	28.8	NA
West & Central																
Rajasthan	5.4	8.9	6.4	5.7	2.6	5.8	3.1	4.0	4.1	1.0	9.5	8.7	4.5	10.7	5.8	5.4
Maharashtra	5.9	14.5	5.3	6.0	5.8	7.4	21.1	4.9	5.3	3.7	10.9	9.5	7.5	6.6	3.7	9.0
Gujarat	8.5	15.8	9.1	9.0	6.1	8.3	5.7	5.6	6.2	2.7	7.5	11.6	3.5	5.7	2.9	3.5
M.P.	0.0	9.4	0.6	0.3	0.5	1.7	5.3	2.1	2.4	0.9	4.5	2.7	1.8	8.1	1.4	1.6
Chhattisgarh	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.7	0.1	0.1	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.1	2.6	0.5	0.1	0.6	1.1	0.8
South																
Telangana	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1.7	1.8	3.1	2.1	4.5	8.5	4.9	3.7	3.8	5.5
Tamil Nadu	4.2	6.9	7.2	13.3	25.5	8.1	6.9	4.5	2.0	14.7	4.4	5.4	5.4	3.1	2.8	4.4
Andhra	2.5	7.7	2.7	6.4	4.6	1.2	3.1	3.2	2.6	3.0	4.0	3.4	2.1	2.5	2.7	4.2
Karnataka	2.7	11.4	8.1	2.1	7.8	8.5	8.3	5.1	4.7	16.5	4.4	10.8	8.6	3.8	4.2	9.8
Kerala	5.8	9.2	9.2	6.9	8.3	10.5	6.3	4.1	5.8	23.8	4.0	3.0	9.9	1.7	1.9	10.4

vignesh.r@thehindu.co.in; rebecca.varghese@thehindu.co.in

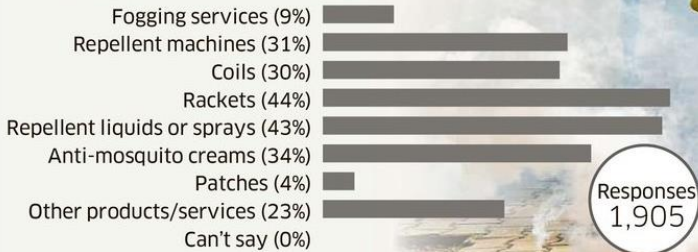
Source: The Hindu, p. 11, Oct. 17, 2023

Participants' responses

How much was spent monthly on mosquito control



Products, services used for mosquito control



Civic bodies failed at mosquito control, say 72% people in survey

Many resort to their own protective measures by spending large sums

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Amid rising dengue cases, a survey by community social media platform LocalCircles has shown that nearly 72% of the 1,752 participants thought the state's municipal corporations and panchayats have done little to

prevent the mosquito menace.

While 72% of the participants said that there has been no fogging or anti-mosquito spraying in their area in the last 45 days, close to 71% said that this has been the case every monsoon.

Though the survey results point to a need for better surveillance and stronger preventive measures, senior Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) officials said that they have been putting measures in place to ensure the mosquito menace is in control.

"Over the last 20 days, we have conducted a door-to-door larval survey of close to three lakh households.

While fogging and spraying do help, source reduction is the immediate requirement," BBMP Special Commissioner (Health) Dr Trilok Chandra said. He added that the civic body is also conducting Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities to spread awareness among people.

While there might have been some activities in Bengaluru, health department sources said that lack of manpower might have affected the activities in districts and cities outside Bengaluru.

The survey further revealed that the respondents who thought the municipalities

were not doing much were resorting to various other means to keep the mosquito menace under check. The use of mosquito rackets, repellents and sprays, and coils were among the most used measures. Only 9% of the participants had opted for private fogging services.

Asked how much they were spending on such measures, close to 33% of the participants said that they spent anywhere between Rs 200 and Rs 500 monthly.

Similarly, at least 30% spent up to Rs 200. Surprisingly, 1% of the participants spent as much as Rs 5,000 every month and 2% were in the Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 bracket.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.II, Oct. 19, 2023

Rural service for doctors not to be compulsory

Govt to promulgate an ordinance

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Cabinet on Thursday decided to promulgate an ordinance that makes rural service for graduating doctors no longer compulsory.

At present, under the Karnataka Compulsory Service by Candidates Completed Medical Courses Act, all MBBS, postgraduate and super specialty graduates must serve one year compulsorily in government healthcare institutions in rural areas.

Briefing reporters, Law & Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said rural service will not be compulsory for MBBS and PG medical students once the ordinance is promulgated. Rural service will be confined to the number of vacant posts in the government.

Patil explained that the decision was taken as the number of applicants for rural service far exceeded vacancies in government hospitals. "With this move, the government is reducing the financial burden while also rationalising human resources," he said.

Under the compulsory rural service, MBBS students are paid a monthly salary of Rs 62,666,

MD/MS students get around Rs 70,000 and super specialty students receive Rs 72,800.

At present, medical students who do not take up compulsory rural service are fined Rs 15-30 lakh.

There are 6,766 MBBS and PG medical students who have registered for rural service in the 2023-24 academic year. Accommodating all of them would cost the exchequer Rs 290.4 crore.

According to government data, in 2023-24, as many as 3,251 MBBS students have registered for rural service whereas there are 1,897 posts vacant. To accommodate the rest, the government has to create an additional 1,354 posts, causing a financial burden of Rs 101.82 crore.

Also, for the 2023-24 academic year, 3,515 PG students have registered against 1,270 vacant posts. This will require creating an additional 2,245 posts at a cost of Rs 188.58 crore.

Henceforth, the government will appoint candidates for rural service based on merit, Patil specified. The government also plans to fill all the vacancies in government hospitals over the next two months, he added.

DH had reported on October 7 that the government was planning to amend the law restricting compulsory rural service to existing vacancies based on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's meeting with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.5, Oct. 20, 2023

DENGUE CASES SURGE

K'taka reports 8,600 cases in just 3 months

The state is currently facing a severe dengue outbreak, with over 8,600 cases reported from July to October. The data reveals that the total number of dengue cases in the state is 11,576 as of 19 October 2023, as per 'Dengue, Chikungunya & H1N1 - Daily report' by the Commissionerate of Health and Family Welfare Services.

THANMAYA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The outbreak in Karnataka is part of a broader national trend. India has been grappling with escalating dengue cases over the past years, with a total of 2.3 lakh cases reported in 2022. West Bengal reported the highest number of cases, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan subsequently. In 2022, Karnataka reported 9,889 dengue cases.

However, this year the state has reported 11,576 cases so far. On July 19, 2023, the state had recorded 2,966 cases.

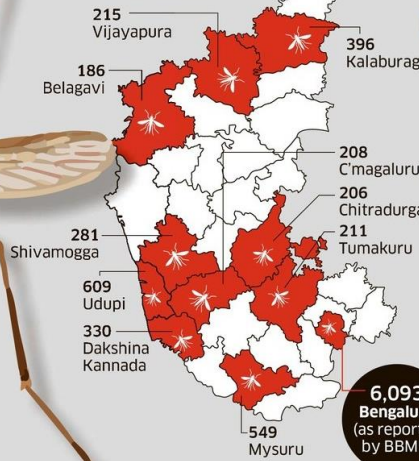
Compared to the same period in October 2022, there has been a sharp and significant rise of 62% in dengue cases.

Bengaluru bears the brunt of the outbreak, reporting 6,093 cases, the highest among all cities in Karnataka. This is followed by Udupi with 609 cases and Mysuru with 549 cases.

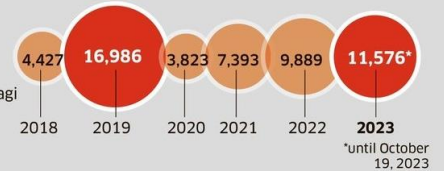
Source: 'Dengue, Chikungunya & H1N1 - Daily report' by the Commissionerate of Health and Family Welfare Services, National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control

Aedes aegypti mosquito

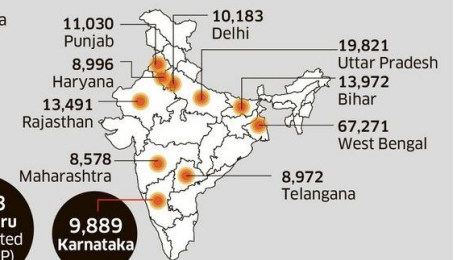
10 districts with the highest dengue cases as of Oct 19, 2023



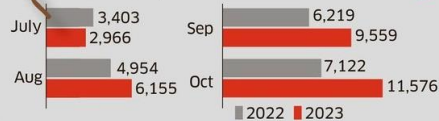
Dengue cases in K'taka between 2018 & 2023



States with highest cases in 2022



Dengue cases in the last four months compared to 2022



All necessary efforts are taken to prevent large-scale dengue transmission, with a special focus on 'source reduction' activities, carried out by health staff & ASHA volunteers this year. These activities are intensified during the main infection transmission season, between May and October.

D Randeep
Commissioner of Commissionerate Health and Family Welfare

COMPILED BY: THANMAYA PRAKASH DH GRAPHIC: SAGAR M S

Source: Deccan Herald, p.6, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Urban Affairs

'Many will choose public transit if bus, metro are available'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science's Centre for Infrastructure, Sustainable Transportation, and Urban

Planning has revealed that nearly 60% of commuters in Bengaluru would opt for public transport if both buses and the metro were readily available.

The research was conducted with the objective

of improving the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation's planning and operations.

The study also found that bus routes with high overlap with metro lines lose riders to the metro.

"Our models can be used to determine the extent of beneficial overlap for different levels of demand and supply," says the research.

DETAILS ON
» PAGE 4

Nearly 60% of commuters would pick public transit if bus, metro modes are available: IISc

The study also found that bus routes with high overlap with metro lines lose riders to the metro

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A key finding from research conducted by the Indian Institute of Science's Centre for Infrastructure, Sustainable Transportation and Urban Planning (CiSTUP) to improve the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation's planning and operations has revealed that if buses and metro are made available, nearly 60% of commuters would choose public transit.

A key finding in a research booklet that was released recently on the topic of ridership and revenue forecasting models for bus transit agencies states, "Our survey data indicates that at least 30% of current metro travellers use bus (in combination w/ metro) on their trips. An additional

15% of metro travellers use other non-walking modes to reach metro stations. On the other hand, the vast majority (95%) of current bus travellers reach bus stops by walk."

It further added that if bus and metro modes are made available to all surveyed individuals within distances of up to 1 km and 4 km, respectively, its simulations indicate that nearly 60% of them would choose public transit (bus, bus + metro, or metro).

"Reducing travel costs by ride-hailing to transit stations would not help attract many transit riders. The key is in making transit stops/stations more accessible to travel origins and destinations," the finding states.

Ridership and revenue
On another topic of rider-



A file photo of commuters boarding a BMTC bus at the Mysuru Road metro station.

ship and revenue forecasting, a key finding is that on medium-to-high-frequency routes, BMTC will gain more ridership and passenger kilometres by decreasing headway variance (i.e., increasing service reliability) than increasing service frequency.

It also found that bus

routes with high overlap with metro lines lose riders to the metro. However, feeder services and routes with some overlap with metro lines can help both BMTC and metro.

"Our models can be used to determine the extent of beneficial overlap for different levels of de-

mand and supply," the findings state.

Bus priority lanes

On the topic of bus priority lanes in Bengaluru, a study on its effectiveness and driver stress, CiSTUP, has found that there is a significant improvement in travel times after the introduction of the lanes.

"For the worst 10% of the travel times, we find an improvement between 4% and 28%. Drivers are generally more stressed during the morning peak hours and during the southward trips on the lane," the study says. In total, CiSTUP faculty presented 10 different BMTC-centric research projects, which included topics like bus operations optimisation such as bus bunching control, electric bus fleet planning and heavy vehicle simulator-based sa-

fety research.

A workshop was held on October 11 to discuss the research conducted by CiSTUP faculty and their partners to improve BMTC planning and operations.

Collaborative effort

Abdul Pinjari, Chair, CiSTUP, said, "Research and impact reinforce each other, and CiSTUP faculty take this as a guiding principle. Their projects have resulted in important findings and decision-support tools that can potentially be used to aid BMTC's planning and operations. Our faculty are looking forward to taking their research to the field in collaboration with BMTC."

BMTC MD G. Sathyavathi said the transport corporation is eager to collaborate with CiSTUP faculty to translate their research into implementable solutions.

Source: The Hindu, p.1 & 4, Oct. 14, 2023

Waste parks away from city: Remedy or risk?

Shifting waste processing to the outskirts is an admission of the BBMP's inability to treat waste scientifically; it can cost the city dear

SNEHA RAMESH & SHREE D N

When the Bangalore Development Authority formed the Banashankari 6th stage layout in 2001, little did the buyers know that one day, a part of the layout would have to bear the garbage burden of growing Bengaluru.

The layout with 14 blocks and over 21,000 sites also had a Common Amenity (CA) site. In 2015, this CA site was identified for establishing composting plants as part of Bengaluru's plan to decentralise waste processing. The operations started in 2016. Since then, the residents have been living with unbearable stench. Today, many sites in the 4th and 6th blocks remain unbuild.

T S Mahesha, BSK 6th Stage Residents Welfare Association president, says the plant started without proper approval from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and has no buffer zone.

"The plant has no leachate treatment facility. It is directly discharged into a stormwater drain, which finally goes and fills Sompura Lake in the neighbourhood," he adds.

The citizens cannot even approach the officials to express their problems. BBMP marshals stop them from getting inside the plant while officials remain invisible. "When about 100 of us protested, police complaints were filed against us," Mahesha explains.

The same problems exist in six other waste composting plants in Bengaluru. Faced with opposition from locals, some remained defunct, while some did not function to their full capacity, according to data shared by officials.

In a recent



Leachate from the waste processing centre at Lingadeeranahalli. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

interaction, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar listened to the woes of BSK 6th stage residents. As a follow-up, he announced the building of four integrated solid waste management parks around Bengaluru by identifying forest lands of 100 acres each.

Stirring a hornet's nest

The announcement has sparked a debate among citizens, activists, and experts. While the residents around the waste processing plants welcome the move, the activists working in the sector feel that the relocation might only be a temporary solution and that the government should look beyond it.

"In 1975, when the Karnataka Compost Development Corporation (KCDC) plant was set up, the area was said to be on the outskirts. Similar is the case with the Mavallipura landfill near Yelahanka and Mandur near Mahadevapura. But as the city grew, these areas developed and have become a part of the

city. Bengaluru and the surrounding areas are growing rapidly. This shifting will hence be only a temporary solution, and we might end up in the same situation a few years from now," says Sandya Narayanan, a member of the Solid Waste Management Round Table (SWMRT).

A few others opined that this could send the wrong message to the citizens, indirectly implying that waste processing is a dirty job and must be done outside the city.

The debate also hovers around centralisation vs decentralisation of waste processing. While the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has been stressing over decentralisation over the last few years, the move to relocate the plants by identifying land in four corners of the city would only mean that the government is shifting back to a centralised processing system.

Sandya says the move should not promote the 'not in my backyard' idea. "There are technological advancements that could help bring down the stench. If numerous industries that produce odour can operate, BBMP can also leverage such modern technology to make the process stench-free. This way, processing plants can be operated in a decentralised manner," she said.

Shifting garbage processing to a faraway land is akin to admitting to BBMP's inability to find scientific, non-polluting methods to process garbage locally, says an environmentalist who prefers anonymity.

"Too early to oppose" Senior BBMP officials opine that it is too early to oppose the proposal, as the government has not announced the finer details.

"We need to see how the project is planned and then oppose it. It might work if the government can identify huge parcels of land and mark buffer zones to prevent development in the surrounding area. Previously, though the plants were set up in the outskirts, the government had failed to

mark buffer zones and regulate growth around them. As a result, people started living around the plants, and then the opposition started. If we can mark the buffer zone and regulate growth, this might work," a senior BBMP official said.

Experts also point out the unsustainability of the cost of transporting waste to faraway places and the over-heads.

"The quantity of waste produced in the city is growing by the day. The logistics is something we must consider. The number of transfer stations, the vehicles, and the manpower required to transport waste to the outskirts daily will be huge," says an expert, preferring anonymity.

Countering this argument, an official said that the government will prioritise people's well-being over the expenses.

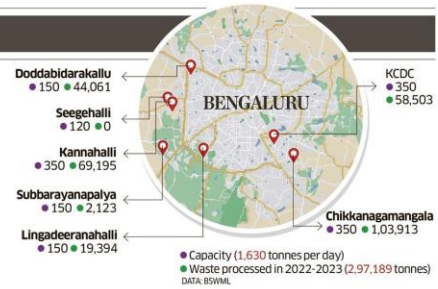
"Now, people have complained that they are suffering, and if the government can provide a solution that will incur an additional cost, the government will opt for it. Also, the BBMP and Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) are entitled to levy a user fee, and if that plan materialises, it would not be a tough task to fund the additional costs," the official said.

Need for a futuristic plan

While all governments that ruled over the last decade proposed their own solution for the garbage problem, there have been no efforts to look at the possible growth in waste generation and how it has to be tackled.

"We have been busy catching up," says Sandya. "No government body has so far come forward to prepare a blueprint or a vision document for the future," she adds.

"Managing waste in Bengaluru is a Herculean task given the quantum of waste generated daily, and shifting waste processing units with a futuristic approach of circular economy of reduction, recycling, and reuse is the need of the hour. The existing SWM units are either defunct or inefficient; therefore, waste processing and landfill units need to be shifted outside Bengaluru with modern disposal and recycling methods,"



TENDER REMAINS A NON-STARTER

The city's inability to segregate waste forms the core problem that haunts solid waste management. The mandate for garbage contractors so far was to collect wet waste from every household daily. In contrast, dry waste was collected by other vendors who were mandated to collect it twice a week. This led to garbage being strewn on roads as people also stopped segregating as waste was not collected daily, explains a solid waste management vendor who prefers anonymity.

The Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML), the parastatal tasked with managing Bengaluru's waste, is yet to implement the new garbage tender floated in January. The reason: The packages were prepared for 243 wards, but the city now has 225 wards after final delimitation, and the packages must be re-organised again. Officials concerned refused to commit to a timeline to finalise the tenders.

The tender aims to follow the No Garbage on Ground (NGoG) principle and allows garbage contractors to collect all types of waste, including construction and demolition waste up to 350kg/house.

S N Balasubramanian, president of the BBMP Contractors' Association, explains

that earlier, seven types of collections, including door-to-door collection, dry waste, sanitary waste, animal waste, construction and demolition (C&D) waste, bulk waste, etc. were handled by various contractors. In this system, pinpointing who threw the garbage on the ground and penalising the vendor was difficult.

In the new tender, the selected contractor will be responsible for the primary and secondary collection and transportation of wet waste, dry waste, sanitary waste, street sweeping waste, C&D waste and other waste generated in the area assigned to him.

"Since one person is responsible, it is easy to fix accountability," he explains. He says the new tender will introduce 680 new compactors and 8000 CNG autos that adhere to Euro-VI emission norms.

The tender conditions also state that the "Waste stays segregated through the secondary transportation sent to the designated processing facilities". This is crucial for many ongoing and upcoming plans of BBMP, including processing waste into compost and refuse-derived fuel pellets that will feed the WTE plants. Though the tender issue is now under court monitoring, Balasubramanian hopes it will be finalised soon.

says Krishna Raj, a professor at the Institute for Social and Economic Change.

"However, establishing landfills and waste processing units close to forests is not a good idea. It threatens biodiversity and the environment. Minimising waste, segregation and recycling degradable waste at source is more cost-effective. The existing units need complete revamping along with new landfills and processing units from the context of economies of scale," he adds.

Ramprasad V, a solid waste management expert advising the BBMP on Swachh Sarvekshan, feels the plants should be shifted to industrial areas rather than the forest area.

"The solution is to treat waste processing as an industry rather than a responsibility. If waste is treated as raw material and the processing plants are operated like an industry, they can be shifted to industrial areas. The government should provide them the benefits and the advantages that the industries get, and in turn, the plants should operate at industry standards," he says.

He adds that the government must also take up a feasibility study, socio-economic survey, and cost-benefit analysis. "The study reports could help determine the direction in which the project should be spearheaded."

However, sources in the waste management sector feel that the dilly-dallying attitude of politicians and trials and errors on waste management front are leading to policy paralysis, putting the city in peril for future generations.



Adhoc management of waste without a futuristic plan can turn waste processing centres into landfills. DH FILE PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Feedback: pointblank@deccanherald.co.in

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 2, Oct. 14, 2023

The city and the slum

Looking at slums not as problems to be erased but as dynamic sources of vibrancy can redefine Bengaluru's urban fabric

SHREYA PILLAI

Last week, John Turner, an architect and urban planner known for his work on informal self-help housing and neighbourhood building, passed away in England. While ostensibly he means nothing to Bengaluru, his contributions to the field of urban planning, if engaged with, have manifold potential for affordable housing in Bengaluru.

Bengaluru is currently bursting at the seams. New migrants enter the city every day and struggle to find housing. While the affluent fight over the limited supply of housing and exorbitant rents, the poorer find themselves confined to numerous urban villages. While recent migrants, predominantly employed in the construction sector, inhabit makeshift structures on the city's outskirts, the long-standing poorer communities, residing in areas like Lalbagh for over 90 years, are engaged in sectors like rag picking. As both peripheral villages and inner-city communities experience exponential growth, they gradually evolve into what can be defined as slums. Currently, Bengaluru has around 600 slums.

In response to the housing crisis, the state government launched the Karnataka Affordable Housing Policy (KAHP) in 2016, targeting the improvement of existing housing for LIG/BPL/EWS households and the construction of new homes. While it identified 20.35 lakh people, a recent audit revealed only 13.72 lakh prospective beneficiaries, with approval for 5.17 lakh houses and a mere 88,395 houses completed by March 2021. Interestingly, many poor communities resist moving to government-built housing or allowing their slums to be redeveloped, highlighting a significant gap between government policy and the reality of people's lives.

John Turner addressed the housing challenges confronted by rural migrants seeking a better life in urban areas. Inspired by his experience in Peru, where he witnessed the resourcefulness of poorer people in creating their own housing developments, Turner viewed squatter settlements not as a problem but as a resource. He argued that informal or unplanned settlements improved gradually as their residents became integrated into the urban economy, enabling self-financed urban development. Turner's ideas influenced generations of architects, planners, and other professionals and inspired a wide range of projects and

in-situ upgrading programmes like Aranya low-cost housing in Indore by BV Doshi, Belapur Housing in Navi Mumbai by Charles Correa, and Chengalchoola Housing by Laurie Baker in Thiruvananthapuram.

Turner, himself, was influenced by the ideas of Patrick Geddes (much of whose ideas of understanding cities in terms of their people, history, and context were developed in Chennai, Mysore, and Mumbai) and Lewis Mumford. Turner and his colleagues built the case for incremental development based on the fact that, given adequate access to land, basic resources, and the freedom to control key local development decisions, people and their local organisations can and often do build and maintain attractive places, regardless of how limited their resources are. Communities needed to be actively engaged from beginning to end if urban areas were to be socially inclusive. He advocated "bottom-up" and participatory housing for people. His work to understand local processes has influenced a number of projects by the World Bank and UN, but he has also been criticised for being too romantic.

Regardless, as Bengaluru faces challenges akin to those of Rio and Mumbai, it may be time to engage with the ideas of Turner. Instead of eradicating entire slum neighbourhoods and replacing them with monofunctional housing blocks, the state should view slums more positively and embrace the vibrancy of the typically mixed-use, low-rise, high-density, and pedestrian blend of businesses and residences. The efforts of residents and local builders should be supported. New houses and additions built by local masons and residents add to the local economy. People involved in building homes may bring back their know-how from the village or from their work environment. Working within the existing fabric with local actors is the only way urbanists, architects, engineers, and policymakers can contribute meaningfully to ongoing user-led improvement in home-grown neighbourhoods.

While participatory schemes proliferate globally, government-led participation planning often restricts the agency of end-users to the selection of a series of pre-selected options. Instead of treating them as voters and consumers, users should be seen as intelligent agents and producers of forms. Locally developed neighbourhoods differ fundamentally from mass-produced high-rise housing alternatives that are presented as the solution to informality in more ways than one. One has to move away from the view of the slum as a miserable, filthy, and dangerous space and instead engage with the urban dynamics and the morphology of the locally developed neighbourhood.

(The writer is an urban planner based in Bengaluru)

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 6, Oct. 14, 2023

In tech city, many areas remain 'out of reach'

Policies, official delays among hurdles to cellular infrastructure

NINA C GEORGE &
SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Though Bengaluru is known as the IT hub, it is still plagued by mobile network connectivity issues. People often complain of poor connectivity, especially in densely populated areas, indoors and areas surrounding defence establishments. While connectivity issues point to a need for better infrastructure, government policies and other issues have been hurdles in the way of infrastructure providers.

According to data accessed by *DH*, in the last 10 years, close to 45% of the Right of Way (RoW) applications in the Bengaluru Urban district have been rejected. While 34% of them have been accepted, the rest are pending. RoW is the basic permission required to roll out any digital infrastructure (including mobile towers and OFC cables).

A senior official from the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) told *DH* on condition of anonymity that a portion of the applications that were shown as rejected were moved to the rejected bin since they could not be brought under the deemed permission system that was introduced a month back. "Till recently, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and their counterparts responsible were not disposing of the applications on time, and hence, a new deemed permission system was introduced to ensure applications are processed within 60 days. Since a few pending applications could not be brought under the system, they had to be marked rejected," the official

What are the constraints?

- Large parcels of defence land with restricted access to lay and maintain towers
- Delay in processing of RoW applications
- Government policies like restrictions on locations, non-uniform fees, high charges to lay OFC cables
- High population density



RoW application status in B'lu Urban District between 2013 and 2023

2,230
Pending and under processing



3,694
Approved
4,890
Rejected

TRAI, DoT monitoring service quality

TRAI and DoT officials said they are monitoring the quality of service in areas where there is coverage. "However, we cannot force them to set up infrastructure if it is not financially viable," a senior DoT official said. Officials added that it was difficult to ensure service in thickly populated areas and indoors owing to the rapid growth of the city. "In such cases, we suggest that consumers use in-building solutions for better connectivity," the official said.

explained.

While the delay in providing permissions is one problem, a few other applications were also rejected owing to the state government policies, the official explained. For instance, according to a notification by the Urban Development

Department, mobile towers cannot be erected in the bed of water bodies, within a 100 m radius of protected monuments, and a 50 m radius of schools, hospitals, and religious structures. This could make the process of identifying suitable locations a challenge.

Infrastructure providers also pointed out that the charges levied by the state government and the lack of facilities were hindering the process of establishing better digital infrastructure for the city. "Non-uniform charges, high underground optical fibre laying costs, and the lack of a common duct facility in Bengaluru complicate the infrastructure deployment process," T R Dua, Director-General, Digital Infrastructure Providers Association (DIPA), told *DH*.

Dua added that Bengaluru also faces unique challenges in providing telecommunications connectivity due to high population density, interference from buildings and trees, weather conditions, cable cutting and opposition from local communities.

Network, Page PJ2

Continued...

Make city infra friendlier to children

Childhood obesity
from Page 1

Earlier this year, NAPI, in coordination with Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI), released a report on the realities of the consumption of ultra-processed food in India. The report provides a glimpse into marketing of junk food and its impact on child health. "Aggressive marketing promotes products high in fat, sugar and salt foods or ultra-processed foods. This contributes to poor dietary behaviour in children that continues later in life. Increasing junk food consumption makes our diets unhealthy, thus contributing to diet-related non-communicable diseases," the report states.

For this report, NAPI conducted a qualitative study of 43 pre-packaged food products and their advertisements across various media platforms. "It was found that total sugars were high in 31 products, total fat was high in 29 products, and sodium was high in 19 products. Additionally, eight products exceeded the thresholds for all three nutrients of concern," the report says. In July this year, the World Health Organisation released a set of recommendations to protect children from harmful marketing of such products. Among its recommendations, the organisation has urged countries to implement policies to restrict marketing of foods high in saturated fatty acids, trans-fatty acids, free sugars and salt. It also recommended that the government put in place a nutrient profile model to classify foods that should be restricted from marketing.

Causes and consequences

While persuasive advertising is one aspect, childhood obesity can be caused due to a number of reasons. Public health expert Dr Sylvia Karpagam explains that the reasons behind obesity could start from infancy. Formula foods and baby drinks can cause weight gain and these have not been adequately studied or regulated. "Formula foods are pushed even by paediatricians claiming that mothers do not have 'enough' breast milk. It is known that children fed on formula tend to be larger than breastfed babies. It is important to ascertain what percent of children are being given formula foods as also ultra-processed foods with high levels of trans fats, salts, sugars and additives," she observes.

Later, hectic school schedules leave children with little energy for physical activity after school, points out Shrikanth. Even in gyms, "ensuring children's regularity is a challenge as they are sapped of all energy by the time they reach the gym," he says. That, coupled with parents' concerns about children's safety, further pushes them to a sedentary life inside their homes, he adds.

An unpublished study on elite schools in Bengaluru by Dr Asha Benakappa, paediatrician and former director of Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, as part of which 1,577 children were screened for cardio metabolic risks, finds that 17.6% of the children were obese while 28.9% were overweight. Obese children are likely to develop insulin resistance. "It takes eleven years to build insulin resistance and another equal number of years for diseases like hypertension, pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes and cancer to develop," she says.

Many schools have identified obesity as a growing concern and are undertaking efforts to ensure that healthy foods are available in their canteens.

"The menu is overhauled from time to time after consultation with students of all age groups. Snacks sold as breakfast are varied daily and the lunch on the menu is healthy. Junk food like chips and aerated drinks are not available in the canteen and are not encouraged on campus," says the principal of an unaided school in Bengaluru.

Design of cities

However, childhood obesity is not limited to food consumption alone. Dr Rebecca Kuriyan Raj, Professor and Head, Division of Nutrition, St John's Research Institute identifies that child environment, including school, home and neighbourhood, are equally influential factors for weight gain. Dr Rebecca was the corresponding author of a research paper on the walkability index of cities and its association with childhood obesity which elaborates this phenomenon.

In Bengaluru, 13% of schoolgoing children were overweight, while 5% were obese, according to this paper.

"Neighborhood walkability, the capability to support walking for multiple purposes such as availing transport, shopping, recreation for children, and commuting to school has shown to promote physical activity and prevent obesity. Increased walkability characteristics have been associated with lower body mass index (BMI) score in children and in adults," the report says, stressing the need for structured urban planning.

Undernutrition and obesity

As data from the Women and Child Development Ministry shows, obesity is no longer an "elite problem" and has pervaded all strata of society. While anganwadis in Bengaluru Urban have 4% obese children, those in lesser-developed districts such as Chamarajanagar and Yadgir have 6% and 7% of obese children respectively.

The general assumption is that the children in anganwadis are underweight. Hence, this data might seem strange at the outset.

Jyotsna Sripada, Research Associate, Centre for Child and the Law, National Law School of India University offers insight

Obesity still means that the child is not receiving adequate nutrition or is receiving the wrong kinds of food. There has to be qualitative data on food consumption by children, failing which, the response by policymakers will be that 'children are becoming obese so there is no need for social schemes or other nutritional interventions'.

Dr Sylvia Karpagam,
public health expert

into this curious trend by pointing out that "malnutrition" includes both under-nutrition (conditions such as underweight, stunting, wasting and severe wasting) and overnutrition (overweight and obesity). "As part of the current policy landscape, anganwadis are designed to address under-nutrition. The take home ration for children below three and supplementary nutrition provided for children between three and six years contribute to only a small portion of the recommended daily allowance for children," she explains.

Further, children belonging to vulnerable and marginalised sections are often trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition and disease as access to nutrition and health related services is grossly impeded by factors such as geographical location, socio-economic and cultural determinants, household dynamics and gender, she adds.

Obesity is also not merely related to weight and even thin children could be obese. Dr Rebecca points out. Measuring obesity by body weight alone is a myopic view of the issue. Even thin children could have accumulated more body fat and have abnormal blood biomarkers.

Policy

For instance, the Comprehensive National Nutritional Survey states that abdominal

Health at risk

17.5% of India's children will be overweight.

By 2030

1 in 10 obese children will be from India.

India will have more than 27 million obese children.

India will contribute approximately 11% of the global burden of child obesity.

Obesity across age groups

2.4% Infants
3.7% Boys aged 5 to 9
2.6% Girls aged 5 to 9

1.9% Boys aged 10 to 19
1.1% Girls aged 10 to 19

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

69.6% adolescent boys have insufficient physical activity

71.6% adolescent girls have insufficient physical activity

Passengers inconvenienced as Purple Line trains are crowded

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

It has been a week that Namma Metro's Purple Line commenced operations connecting the eastern and western parts of Bengaluru. While this has brought relief to passengers, six-coach trains are overcrowded now, leading to long queues and inconvenience to passengers.

"Since the entire stretch is now open, there has been a surge in commuters. Trains are consistently packed," said Raghu Nair, a commuter from Baiyappanahalli who takes the metro to MG Road daily. "The frequency of trains is low. The waiting time is increasing. Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) should increase frequency of trains or increase the number of coaches."

Metro train service frequency on the Whitefield (Kadugodi) - Pattandur Agrahara section is 10 minutes, and on the Pattandur Agrahara - Mysuru Road section is 5 minutes. During morning peak hours, the frequency on the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Station-Majestic - M.G. Road section is three minutes, and between My-

suru Road and Challaghatta is 10 minutes.

Nadaprabhu Kempegowda interchange station-Majestic, Indiranagar, Baiyappanahalli, and M.G. Road metro stations on the Purple Line are experiencing a surge in commuters.

Tulasi Gowda, a regular commuter, said, "The chaotic situation at Majestic interchange station during peak hours is a matter of concern. BMRCL is unprepared for the magnitude of the crowd, and lacks effective strategies, like increasing train frequency or implementing crowd control measures."

BMRCL officials said that this problem will persist until they acquire new coaches. Currently, BMRCL operates 57 trains, with 33 designated for the Purple Line and 24 for the Green Line, with the total network stretching 73 km.

An official said, "The frequency will be increased based on demand, and effective crowd management strategies will be implemented at the stations. In terms of new train coaches, China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) is set to deliver 216 coaches. The first two will arrive in Bengaluru from China within a month."

After winning a ₹1,578-crore contract in 2019, CRRC faced delays due to its failure to establish a manufacturing plant in India.

BMRCL had issued multiple notices to CRRC, warning of encashing its ₹372 crore bank guarantee. The firm has now partnered with Kolkata-based Titagarh Wagons to supply the remaining coaches.

An official said, "The CRRC has entered into an MoU with an Indian company to manufacture the coaches. We are expecting to receive these new coaches soon. These coaches will be operated on the Purple Line, and also on the R.V. Road - Bommasandra Yellow Line."

Officials said that the delay occurred because the Chinese company had difficulty meeting the requirement of manufacturing 75% of the coaches in India, as mandated by the Make in India initiative.

Finding a suitable local manufacturer was challenging, and the pandemic further disrupted the manufacturing process. These challenges prompted CRRC to collaborate with Kolkata-based Titagarh Wagons for the manufacture and supply of coaches.

Source: The Hindu, p.2, Oct. 17, 2023

Now, city's waste to be dumped in Ramanagara

Ramanagara DC has started work to find a 100-acre land to set up an integrated solid waste management park and so have his counterparts in Bengaluru Rural and Urban districts

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

At a time when citizens and experts in Bengaluru have been demanding the closure of waste processing plants and landfills, the State government has decided to carry the heaps of refuse to Ramanagara, besides Bengaluru Urban and Bengaluru Rural districts.

Sources in Ramanagara say a park will likely be set up at Bidadi, located about 32 km from Bengaluru.

This comes even as there has been fierce opposition from the locals to the existing landfills and waste processing plants.

100-acre land

Ramanagara Deputy Commissioner Avinash Menon Rajendran confirmed to *The Hindu* that there are lands available in the district, and the district admin-



Four integrated solid waste management plants will be set up on lands given to them by the Revenue Department. FILE PHOTO

istration has started looking for 100 acres of land.

Bengaluru Urban DC Dayananda K.A. said he had directed officials to find land, while the office of the Bengaluru Rural DC said they are doing the same.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar, in a meeting held on October 10, announced that all waste processing units and landfills would be shifted out of the city as people living in the vicinity of these landfills were find-

ing it hard to live there.

He directed DCs of Ramanagara, Bengaluru Urban, and Bengaluru Rural to find 100-acre parcels of land for the purpose.

On his directions, the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited will set up four integrated solid waste management plants on lands that are given to them by the Revenue Department.

The integrated plants will have composting units, dry waste aggregation centres, landfills for rejects, generation of refuse-

derived fuel and waste-to-energy plants.

Wrong move

However, Sandhya Narayan, a solid waste management expert, said this was a wrong move.

"Bengaluru's waste should be processed within the city, and there are advanced technologies. The contractors may love this new idea as it involves transportation to Ramanagara and other places on the outskirts," she said.

"Ideally, at every ward, there should be small processing plants, and waste should not go out of the city. However, at present, there are plants in the city, and BSWML has to work to stop the odour emanating from the plant. Waste processing should decentralised. With the fresh move, it will again become centralised," Ms. Narayan added.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 14, 2023

'Govt. should withdraw proposed plan to form local committees to maintain parks'

Activist Vinay Srinivas says proposal is a wrong move by the government and the keys of the parks will again go into the hands of a few walkers

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

It is feared that the State government's proposal to constitute ward-level local committees to maintain parks, operated by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), would keep the poor away from the city's open spaces.

About a year ago, although the parks were maintained by the civic body, there were instances of walker groups controlling them by keeping the keys to themselves.

During that time, daily wage labourers, gig workers, and others were barred from entering. The walkers used to close the park at 10 a.m., only to



In July 2022, the BBMP issued an order mandating that all parks should be kept open between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m., with a small window for maintenance. FILE PHOTO

open again at 5 p.m. in time for the evening stroll.

Taking note of this, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath, in July 2022, issued an order mandating the Parks Depart-

ment to keep the gates open between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m.

However, the park would be closed for maintenance between 11 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.

The aim of this order was to allow the poor, the daily wage earners, the gig workers etc. to rest or have food.

A few days ago, during the Brand Bengaluru

event, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar said, "I am planning to form a non-political committee composed of walkers and local residents to maintain parks in the city. The committee can also collect corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to carry out development activities."

Vinay Srinivas, an activist working for the urban poor, said that this was a wrong move by the government and the keys of the parks would again go into the hands of a few walkers.

"Now, many food delivery persons use parks to rest and eat, and the parks also give shade for daily wage labourers. Many see these people as a deter-

rent to the maintenance of parks. The BBMP should continue the same system that exists now and Mr. Shivakumar should withdraw this plan," he said.

Mr. Srinivas called it "privatisation of parks" and he said the BBMP can give this to ward committees which is a statutory body instead.

Madhuri, a food delivery partner, said she has been using a park in Jayanagar to rest and eat.

"Not just me, many delivery partners use this space. I am surprised as to why Mr. Shivakumar wants to hand over parks to some local committee. This space is for all the public and not just walkers or small groups of people," she said.

Source: The Hindu, p.2, Oct. 16, 2023

Bengaluru won't be able to meet freshwater demand with existing resources, says report

K.C. Deepika
BENGALURU

As a deficit southwest monsoon has left many parts of Karnataka parched, and concern over the water situation in capital city Bengaluru hit the headlines amidst the Cauvery water sharing row, a new report on Bengaluru's water balance shows that the total demand for freshwater is 2,632 MLD, a high quantum compared to the city's current claims over various sources.

The report, 'How water flows through Bengaluru: Urban water balance report,' by the WELL (Water, Environment, Land and Livelihoods) Labs, looks at Bengaluru's contrasting water problems: how borewells and lakes dry up and

Water balance report

■ Total demand for freshwater in Bengaluru: 2,632 MLD	■ Main consumers: residents (72%), commercial and institutional establishments (8%), industrial sector (17%), construction sector (2%)
■ 24% of wastewater goes untreated	■ Total wastewater produced: 1,940 MLD
■ Run-off in wet season (June-Dec) is 73% higher than that in dry season (Jan-May)	■ Groundwater caters to nearly 50% of city's water demand; rest from Cauvery

Source: How water flows through Bengaluru: Urban water balance report

water tankers ferry water from elsewhere to quench the thirst of neighbourhoods during peak summer, while during monsoon, large parts of the city face severe flooding.

The authors of the report - Rashmi Kulranjan, Shashank Palur and Muhil Nesi, argue that these problems are interconnected.

"With population

growth, the city will not be able to meet its water needs with existing resources. Groundwater caters to nearly 50% of Bengaluru's water demand. In addition to 1,460 MLD of Cauvery water, Bengaluru currently consumes an estimated 1,372 MLD of groundwater. This is worrying because groundwater recharge rates remain

significantly lower than extraction rates. Natural groundwater recharge through green spaces and waterbodies is as low as 148 MLD," said the report, adding that it is critical to maintain lakes and green spaces to recharge shallow aquifers with rainwater during the wet season.

The report also speaks about run off, the big seasonal difference and the problem of flooding in Bengaluru. "The total rainfall in wet and dry seasons amounts to 2,149 MLD and 1,322 MLD, respectively. However, utilisable run-offs from the total rainfall is 982 MLD in the wet season and 568 MLD in the dry season," says report.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 2

Continued...

From Page One

City won't be able to meet freshwater demand with existing resources: Report

“Cities can be planned to ‘make room for the rain’ and allow fallow spaces to become temporary thriving wetlands or even green recreational spaces that can hold excess flood water, while contributing to other benefits such as boosting overall livability and acting as carbon sinks,” said the report.

It also emphasised the importance of the city's lakes: “Lakes receive and store both rainwater and wastewater and store groundwater. The cascading lake systems of Bengaluru play an important role in draining water from the city, especially in the Hebbal and Koramangala-Challaghatta valleys, due to greater undulations in their terrain. Inlets, outlets, and stormwater drains that did exist were either broken or encroached upon by other structures. With the loss of these connections, we found that many lakes have become isolated from the system, causing them to dry out. Flooding is another problem in many parts here since there is no path for the water to flow and reach the next lake.”

Source: The Hindu, p.1&2, Oct. 17, 2023

'B'luru has highest number of decentralised STPs in the world'

Need better govt policies to improve use of treated water: Residents

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

With close to 2,644 decentralized Sewage Treatment Plants (STP), Bengaluru is one of the top cities that has the highest number of decentralized STPs in the world and the city could stand as a role model to the world in the use of treated water, experts suggested.

"While San Francisco has only close to 50 such STPs, New York has only 30 of them. Though Beijing has merely 2,000 decentralized STPs, none of the cities have been able to reuse wastewater to a large extent. Bengaluru has the highest number of STPs and a huge opportunity to set an example to the world," said Christian Binz, a group leader in the cluster Sustainable Transitions and Business Innovations (CI-RUS) at the Department of Environmental Social Sciences, Eawag.

However, he added that there were a few challenges ahead and the stakeholders should work together on handling them.

"There are six main factors that have to be addressed for Bengaluru to succeed in making the best use of wastewater through decentralized STPs. They are: planning an industry



Experts say that reuse can be promoted only when the economics are planned well. REPRESENTATION IMAGE

and market structure; financial arrangement; knowledge, skill, and capacity building; legal and regulatory framework; legitimacy—acceptance from users; sustainable and equitable plan," Binz said.

Speaking at the 'Building Water Security in Bengaluru: Conference on Urban Water Planning and Wastewater Reuse' organized by Water, Environment, Land, and Livelihoods (WELL) Labs, the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (EAWAG), and the Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF), researchers and stakeholders called out for policy interventions from the government.

"Bengaluru does have a good opportunity to reuse wastewater and is moving in that direction. However, the regulatory framework is weak, the state pollution control board, stating poor manpower does not monitor these STPs regularly," said Professor V Srinivas Chary, Director of the Centre for Urban Governance, Environment, Energy, and Infra-

structure Development at the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI).

He suggested that the government shift the responsibility to BWSSB instead.

Representatives from the Bangalore Apartments' Federation also pointed out a need for better guidance and government policies to help apartments make better use of treated water. "The general population will not know about the technology available and how the wastewater can be reused. The government should intervene and provide guidance to people," said Vikram Rai, General Secretary of the Bangalore Apartments' Federation.

He added that reuse can be promoted only when the economics are planned well. "At the end of the day, people are worried about the money they have to spend on treatment. If there is a market and the government clearly lays out a policy for selling the treated water, even the apartment associations will be confident," he said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 3, Oct. 18, 2023

BDA to soon start digitising all records

This is with an aim to make the office more people-friendly

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

With an aim to make the office more people-friendly, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will soon start the digitisation of all records. It will digitise land acquisition records, civic amenity (CA) sites, allotment of sites, khatas, land records, and other documents.

BDA Commissioner N. Jayaram, who has directed officials to start the work, told *The Hindu* that documents will be scanned and uploaded to the system. This will help the public, especially the allottees of BDA sites.

At present, those people whose sites were acquired for other projects under the BDA are struggling to get alternative sites. For instance, if a person comes to the office requesting details about an alternative site, the officer in charge has to search for the file from the shelves. This is a tedious and time-consuming task. If the files are digitised, they can be found in minutes. In addition, people usually go to the BDA for securing or transfer of khata, and this too is taking time to process. While the digitisation process is yet to start, Mr. Jayaram has directed officials to issue khata in three days and transfer khata in 24 hours.

Another issue plaguing the BDA is sale deeds. The sale deed is usually granted 10 years af-



BDA Commissioner N. Jayaram, who has directed officials to start the work, said that documents will be scanned and uploaded to the system. FILE PHOTO

ter the plot is allotted, provided he/she has constructed a house. In some cases, people fail to build houses within the stipulated time, and they have to pay a penalty to get a fresh sale deed.

Digitisation will help such cases. In totality, this will fast-track the system in the BDA. "Essentially, all the documents in the BDA will be made available online," informed Mr. Jayaram.

BBMP issues work orders to digitise documents

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

While the Karnataka High Court has directed the BBMP to digitise its records, the civic body has already issued work orders to scan the documents and put them online.

BBMP Chief Commis-

sioner Tushar Giri Nath, talking to *The Hindu*, said: "We have already begun the process of digitisation and the same will be informed to the court. On the other hand, under the Namma Swattu programme, property documents will be delivered to the owners on their mobile phones."

Source: The Hindu, p.3, Oct. 19, 2023

Why better wastewater management could help solve Bengaluru's water crisis

'The solutions are available, but change at the individual, family and community level needs to happen'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

If the thought of using sewage water to garden your plants or flush your toilet makes you shudder, you are probably not alone. "There is a term called the yuck factor, and the term is there globally," says Dr. Veena Srinivasan, the executive director of WELL Labs, a Bengaluru-based research and innovation centre for water management.

And yet, getting over this yuck factor is an important aspect of creating more sustainable water systems, as the recently concluded conference titled *Building Water-Resilient Cities: Strategies for Wastewater Reuse in Urban India* reiterated.

"There's a psychological block," agrees B.P. Ravi, IFS, Principal Secretary, Forests and Ecology, Government of Karnataka, who delivered the welcome address at this conference, a collaboration between WELL Labs, Swiss Federal



Shreya Nath, Aditya Rao, Mahesh T., Inayathulla M., M. Selvarasu, and Shubha Avinash at a panel discussion focusing on various facets of effective wastewater management. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (EAWAG) and Bangalore Apartments Federation.

But he also indicated that we may soon have no other choice. "We are pumping water every day. About 1,500 million litres of water per, using energy against gravity," says Mr. Ravi, adding that this is simply unsustainable in

the long run. "The solutions are available, (but) change at the individual, family and community level needs to happen."

Contradictions

"Bengaluru's water problems may be contradictory," states the executive summary of a report titled *How Water*

Flows Through Bengaluru: Urban Water Balance Report, which was released at the conference. While this fast-expanding city, prone to drought and flooding, is getting increasingly dependent on groundwater, a fast-depleting resource, "the amount of wastewater treated by centralised infrastructure

'The amount of wastewater treated by centralised infrastructure remains low'

remains low". A decentralised wastewater treatment policy could be the way forward, going by Dr. Srinivasan's comment at the launch of this report.

"Bangalore is unique for having a decentralised policy. If we're able to make this a success, the city can show the rest of the world how to establish a circular water economy," she states, adding that the point of the report was this: to think about the city's water in an integrated fashion.

Panel discussions

The release of the report was followed by a series of panel discussions focusing on various facets of effective wastewater management.

From a session on planning and implementing effective wastewater strategy to others focusing on its economics, the standards

and regulations around it, and potential business models, the conference drew on the knowledge of a number of eminent Indian and international experts.

A few of them were Eli Cohen, the CEO of Ayala Water and Ecology; Anant Kodavasal, the founder and director of Ecotech Engineering; Mr. V. Ramprasad, the founder of Friends of Lakes, Bengaluru; Mahesh T., the chief environmental officer at the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, and Dr. Christian Binz who is associated with Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology.

What was clear by the end of the conference – which also delved into the problems posed by non-functioning STPS, the need for wholehearted community participation, accountability, and the role of government agencies, policy and law – was this. "None of these things can be solved by incremental change," as Dr. Srinivasan points out. "You need an entire system."

Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 19, 2023

Policy for city gas distribution network gets Cabinet nod

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday cleared the implementation of the State Policy for the Development of City Gas Distribution Network to ensure safe and uninterrupted supply of natural gas.

The policy will cover se-

ven aspects of the city gas distribution (CGD) network, including promotion of adoption of natural gas, faster implementation of CGD, and rationalisation of price for domestic, industrial, and commercial purposes. The policy is an adaptation of the Central law with some tweaks relevant to the State, said Law

and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil.

Briefing about the Cabinet decisions, he said while the piped gas supply project is already being implemented in certain parts of the State, there was a need for a comprehensive policy for it to ensure safe and uninterrupted supply. The policy will promote and en-

courage the use of clean energy and CNG in transport vehicles.

Among other decisions, the Cabinet gave its nod to establish 110 faecal sludge treatment plants in urban local bodies with less than 30,000 population at a cost of ₹400.24 crore. It also provided administrative approval for 161 cesspool veh-

icles to carry faecal waste from septic tanks.

The Cabinet has decided to continue crediting money equivalent to 5 kg of rice into accounts of beneficiaries under the Anna Bhagya, until arrangements are made for additional supply of rice. It also gave post-facto approval to include transgenders in the Gruha-

lakshmi scheme and cleared a proposal for strengthening 11 police training schools in the State at a cost of ₹20 crore.

The Cabinet has authorised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to decide on the schedule for the Winter Session to be held in Bengaluru either in November or December.

Source: The Hindu, p.5, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Environment

Centre unveils tradeable Green Credit

Special scheme to allow individual or entity to earn Green Credit, trade it on a dedicated exchange. Green Credit refers to a unit of an incentive provided for specified activities that deliver a positive impact on the environment; to obtain credits, one needs to register the activity via a website

Shishir Sinha
NEW DELHI

The government has introduced a special programme allowing an individual or entity to earn Green Credit and trade it on a dedicated exchange.

Green Credit refers to a unit of an incentive provided for specified activities that deliver a positive impact on the environment. "A Green Credit programme is being launched at the national level to leverage a competitive market-based approach for incentivising environmental actions of various stakehol-

Trading green

The programme will cover 8 types of activities, including tree plantation, water management and sustainable agriculture



- Applicant shall register activity via web site
- Activity will then be verified by a designated agency
- Based on its report, administrator shall grant credit certificate

ders," the Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Ministry said in a notification. This programme is a follow-up action of the 'LiFE' (Lifestyle for Environment) campaign. The

notification added that the new programme is a voluntary one.

This programme will cover eight types of activities – tree plantation, water management, sustaina-

ble agriculture, waste management, air pollution reduction, and mangrove conservation and restoration. To get the Green Credit, one needs to register the activity with the administrator through a website. The activity will then be verified by a designated agency and based on its report, the administrator shall grant the applicant a certificate of Green Credit.

Trading platform

"The calculation of Green Credit shall be based on equivalence of resource requirement, parity of scale, scope, size, and other relevant parameters to achieve

the desired environmental outcome," the notification said. A Green Credit Registry will also be included. The administrator will establish and maintain a trading platform.

The notification said the programme would incentivise environmentally-positive actions via a market-based mechanism and generate Green Credit, which shall be made available for trading on a domestic market platform.

The initiative aims to encourage industries, companies, and other entities meet their obligations under any law that is in force for the time being. However,

the Green Credit generated or procured to fulfil any obligation, in compliance with any law, shall not be tradeable.

The notification clarified that the Green Credit programme is independent of the carbon credit provided under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, 2023 under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001. "An environmental activity generating Green Credit may have climate co-benefits, such as reduction or removal of carbon emissions... and may get carbon credit," it said.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Source: The Hindu, p.16, Oct. 15, 2023

Govt sitting on rules to check groundwater overexploitation

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

More than three years after the Union government issued directions to regulate non-agriculture use of groundwater, Karnataka is yet to notify the rules even as experts have flagged concerns about the overexploitation of the resource and monsoon deficiency has led to fears of water scarcity.

In September 2022, the Central Ground Water Authority of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti notified the guidelines mandating that non-agriculture users of groundwater should obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC) by paying a nominal fee.

The Karnataka Ground Water Authority in February 2021 issued a public notice directing industrial, infrastructure, mining and entertainment projects to obtain NOC before utilising the groundwater. The KGWA set a deadline of two months for all users to submit applications on its portal.

The KGWA also sent a proposal to the state government seeking notification of the rules issued by the Union government in order to get statutory backing for the rules mandating NOC. However, with the elections round the corner, the BJP government



The Karnataka Ground Water Authority in February 2021 issued a public notice directing industrial, infrastructure, mining and entertainment projects to obtain NOC before utilising the groundwater. DH FILE PHOTO

had kept the rules on the back-burner.

However, nearly three years after the public notice, only 581 applications were processed for NOC in the entire state. Of them, 351 NOCs were

issued for usage below 25 kilolitres per day (KLD) and 226 in the category of above 25 KLD.

"Most of those who apply for NOCs are in the industry category, for which NOC is required to get the necessary

clearances from the environment and other authorities. We hardly had applications from apartments and other bulk users who cannot sustain without groundwater," sources in the KGWA told DH.

While the BWSSB estimates that less than half of the over 70,000 apartments in Bengaluru get Cauvery water, there is no clarity on the water sources of the remaining dwellings. Officials estimate that many apartments rely on borewells and tankers for water supply. As for the rest of the state, including the tier 2 cities, officials in the KGWA said there was no data on the water source and usage of underground water.

Over the last few years, scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and

even CGWA have established through studies the contamination of groundwater caused by overexploitation as well as unscientific management of waste. Officials believe that monitoring exploitation in the urban areas was necessary as unlike agriculture, the dependency on borewells in cities was for drinking water. However, delays in notification and lack of power to enforce the rules have limited the KGWA's functions with the authority stopping at spreading awareness.

To a question, officials in the KGWA Director's office said the file has been submitted before the state government.

"We are aware of the situation. The decision has to be taken by the government," the official said.

M.S. RAMAIAH CHARITIES TRUST

Gokula House, Dr. M.S. Ramaiah Road, Bengaluru - 560054
Ph: 080-23450183, Email: msr.charitytrust@gmail.com

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS OF BALIJA COMMUNITY IN KARNATAKA

Studying in First year Courses, Both Post-Graduate and Under-Graduate and those doing Ph.D Courses in Educational Institutions in Karnataka

M.S. Ramaiah Charities Trust has several social service Schemes to its credit through FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE to meritorious and deserving students of BALIJA COMMUNITY



MAHARANI CLUSTER UNIVERSITY

Palace Road, Bengaluru - 560 001. INDIA
Tel: +91-80-29555666 E-mail: mcublrc@gmail.com

No: MCU/EXS(2023-24)047

Date: 11.10.2023

NOTIFICATION

First Annual Convocation of Maharani Cluster University

Pursuant to the approval of His Excellency, the Governor of Karnataka and the Chancellor of the University, the **First Annual Convocation of Maharani Cluster University will be held on 02nd November 2023, Thursday, from 11:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Jnana Jyothi Auditorium, Central College Campus, Bengaluru City University, Palace Road, Bengaluru-560 001.**

Note: For further details visit University website (<https://mcu.karnataka.gov.in>)

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 7, Oct. 15, 2023

KSPCB, CPCB in spot over failure to monitor hazardous waste plant

BENGALURU, DHNS

Two years after a joint committee report highlighted several violations in the functioning of a hazardous waste treatment company in Harohalli, the Centre and state environment authorities have failed to take any action, prompting the NGT to issue directions for the scientific closure of the landfill.

Hearing an interlocutory application in a case dating back to 2020, the National Green Tribunal's southern zone bench directed the Central and state pollution control boards (CPCB and KSPCB) to prepare a detailed financial estimate for the closure.

A bench of Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana and expert member Satyagopal Korlapati noted that the owner/operator has to prepare detailed financial estimates for the cost of hiring a third party to conduct post-closure care for 30 years.

When the company said that it had already written to the CPCB in this regard, the bench said: "The CPCB is directed to reply to the same and give the financial estimate in this regard to the project proponent," adding that the KSPCB and CPCB must submit detailed financial estimates by October 18.

The company, Mother Earth Environment Private Limited (MEEPL), landed in the spot after a joint committee report flagged several violations in its facility at Harohalli industrial area, Phase 2. The company got environment clearance in 2015 for its treatment, storage and disposal facility (TSDF) with a total capacity of 95,000 tonnes, which was further expanded to 1.51 lakh tonnes in 2019.

In July 2020, the NGT took up a petition by Rajesh Ghantayath alleging multiple violations in awarding clearance to the company as well as violations by the company in disposing of the waste. The tribunal also took note of a CPCB report flagging several violations, including dumping of waste, receiving waste from non-authorised industries and leachate found in the landfill with no system to monitor the volatile organic compounds and hydrocarbons.

Alleging that the KSPCB was hand in glove with the company in covering up blatant violations, the petitioner sought action against officials and the company.

The tribunal had ordered an inspection by a joint committee which submitted a report

highlighting several violations. It found illegal extraction of groundwater and contamination of the groundwater near the landfill site of the company. It also found higher concentrations of total dissolved solids in two lakes (Hodakekere and Soothakatte) downstream.

Noting that the company failed to provide the design and layout of the facility, the committee said: "This indicates (the company) has established the TSDF and commissioned its operation in the year 2016 prior to obtaining approval of the design parameters and layout from the KSPCB, violating Rule 16 (2) and 16 (3) of the Hazardous Waste Rules, 2016," it said.

The committee report said the company failed to comply with the directions issued by the CPCB and continued to operate during which time about 87,565 tonnes of waste was treated. "Since inception, (the company) is operating with violation of siting criteria, buffer area/green belt development, leachate and surface water management, compound wall, housekeeping, environmental monitoring, record keeping, notification of site & layout and discharge of surface runoff to agriculture land," it said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. II, Oct. 15, 2023

Forest department to reboot working plan to address new challenges

To look at long-term requirements, adopt area-specific plans

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Forest Department is rebooting its working plan to address challenges in conservation by incorporating long-term requirements and adopting an exhaustive and area-specific plans.

Working plan is a document that brings a scientific approach towards management of forests. Each of the forest divisions have a working plan that guides the conservation activities. The Centre released the National Working Plan Code - 2023 (NWPC-2023), ahead of the preparation of plans for the 2023-2033 cycle.

Senior officials in the Forest Department said the new working plans under development will involve new approaches grounded in science and incorporate geographic information systems (GIS) for area-specific approaches that will ensure better monitoring and evaluation.

Activists have long been expressing concern over the “mechanical approach” to forest management and sought changes in the working plan to incorporate works that seek to address challenges posed by climate change. Those in the Western Ghats have urged the department to prepare plans for protection of vulnerable areas.

To a question, an official said the new

working plans will address such concerns. “Some of the concerns we have heard are about monoculture plantations, especially of species like acacia. However, the department has already reduced them save for timber requirements. The new working plans will give high priority to conservation of endemic species. Rapidly growing species like acacia will be limited to areas where the edaphic factors do not allow growth of any other species. They help in preventing encroachment,” the official explained.

During a consultation meeting held for the adoption of the NWPC 2023, Vrukshalaksha Andolana’s Anant Hegde Ashisar raised the issues pertinent to Western Ghats. He said working plans till now had focussed only on afforestation and feeling activities.

“We have urged the department to take into consideration the findings of various studies on endangered species, areas vulnerable to landslides and to put an end to the monoculture plantation, especially in the Western Ghats. Also, the working plan should include the endemic species, especially those that are endangered,” he said.

To a question, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Working Plan) Biswajit Mishra said ecological approach was embedded in the working plans underwork.

“The working plans will not only be area specific but exhaustive, taking into consideration all the local factors. We will identify areas vulnerable to forest fire, landslides and other factors that will make the document a ready reckoner for an official. Further, GIS information will be used for monitoring and evaluation,” he added.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 2, Oct. 15, 2023

'Proposed new landfills will trigger man-animal conflicts'

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government's move to seek 100 acres of land in each of the four directions on the outskirts of Bengaluru for landfills will fuel man-animal conflicts, retired forest officers and activists warned.

On October 4, the government wrote to Revenue and Forest departments asking officials to identify and divert land on Bengaluru's outskirts for shifting waste processing plants and landfills.

A week later, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar explained the plans to move out the five waste process-

ing plants in Yeshwantpur, Byatarayanapura, Mahadevapura, Dasarahalli and Anekal.

However, foresters warned that any processing of waste, let alone dumping, even close to forests will set off a chain reaction that will lead to a spurt in man-animal conflicts.

Former principal chief conservator of forests (head of forest force) B K Singh said Bengaluru has already lost most of its green cover (70% loss compared with 1973) and whatever is left of the wildlife has been pushed to small pockets on the outskirts.

► Landfills, Page 8

Landfills on B'luru outskirts...

Landfills, From Page 1

"This is especially true of leopards. Processing waste anywhere close to the buffer zone will boost the stray dog population which will in turn attract leopards. Moreover, we will transfer diseases from humans to animals which have relatively remained safe till now," he said.

Residents in apartments on the outskirts in south Bengaluru have been sighting leopards for long. The big cats have been regularly caught on CCTV cameras. "Essentially, we will set off a chain reaction because we are unable to ensure segregation of waste," he said.

A senior official in the department cited a study in Sri Lanka where elephants were found feeding in 54 waste dump sites with researchers finding plastic bags in elephant dung. "In 2018-19, the government had selected land in Mahanthalingapura in Kagalipura range to establish a dumpsite. The department explained the fragile situation of the elephant corridor in south Bengaluru and its importance in keeping the elephants away from the city and convinced

them to shift the site," the official said. Former secretary of forest department A N Yellappa Reddy said placing landfills near buffer zones of forests will also lead to spread of disease in the wildlife. "Be it elephants, leopards or wild boar, every animal will be affected by the processing of waste. Landfills produce highly flammable gas like methane besides noxious gases like ammonia, sulphides and carbon dioxide. If it affects humans, it will affect animals as

well," he added. Six years after the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules were issued, Bengaluru is far away from achieving 100% segregation of waste, which has led to the creation of more landfills. On Monday, DH asked Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre about the proposal for landfills on the outskirts. The minister acknowledged the issues but said he would go through the proposal before commenting on the matter.



KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED

(BALLARI THERMAL POWER STATION)

CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919



No. KPCL/2023-24/SE0011/CALL-5

Dated: 13.10.2023

SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through e-procurement only) (TWO COVER SYSTEM)

Tender is invited through GoK e-procurement portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>, from eligible bidders who have adequate financial resources with sufficient past proven experience in any government or semi-government or private organization, in the work of "Maintaining and Running of Main Canteen at BTPS, KPCL for a period of one year" Kudathini-583152, Ballari Tq & Dist. EMD Amount: Rs. 1,67,000/-. Last date and time for submission of tender: 27.10.2023, 17.00 Hrs. Further details can be had from the office of Superintending Engineer (Operation)/BTPS, KPCL, Kudithini-583152, Ballari Dist., Mobile No : 9448290784

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 1 & 8, Oct. 18, 2023

The shape of climate justice in a warming India

The G-20 summit that was held in Delhi (September 9-10) agreed on tripling renewable energy capacity and a voluntary doubling of the rate of energy efficiency improvement by 2030. However, this Delhi Declaration on the climate question did not find consensus on the most contentious issue, which is the root cause of the climate crisis – of the phasing out of fossil fuels. Any energy transition initiative must embrace two normative ideals: first, internalising cost requires those who emit greenhouse gases to pay the social and environmental costs. Second, climate justice requires compensation for those who are harmed. Often, those who contribute to climate change are not the ones who are affected by it. Therefore, any mitigation effort must invert this carbon injustice by making the richer countries or richer classes within a country pay for the energy transition.

While these two principles are articulated at the international level, how such policies and politics affect the domestic front do not get debated. India's stance on the matter has largely been framed through the lens of foreign policy and its approach to common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) in international negotiations, which allows developing countries in the global south to prioritise economic growth and development over climate mitigation. Given the country's historically lower emissions, focusing on economic growth has naturally taken precedence over climate concerns. Such an approach evades concerns of climate justice within India, particularly its effect on inequality across levels class, caste and region.

Inequality matrix

It is now well documented across the world that climate change and energy transition disproportionately affect the poor. The climate-induced problems and droughts have compounded the agrarian crisis and allied economic activities. Variations in rainfall, temperature and extreme climate events directly impact agricultural productivity, compounding farmers' income loss. Rising temperature in the ocean ecosystem has already begun squeezing fish stocks in parts of the country, hurting fishing communities.

While the relationship between inequality and carbon emissions is complex, it is clear that addressing both environmental and socio-economic inequalities simultaneously is essential for sustainable and equitable



Kalaiyaran A.

is Assistant Professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, and Visiting Research Fellow, King's College London



Santosh Kumar Sahu

is Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Technology – Madras

Given India's historically lower emissions, economic growth has taken precedence over climate concerns, but such an approach evades concerns of climate justice such as its effect on inequality

development. It is now evident that less equitable societies tend to have higher emission outputs per unit of economic activity. Given its highly unequal economic structure, India is falling in that trap. Global experience suggests that societal responses which are necessary to address climate change (such as public action and state capacity), are impeded in more unequal settings. The cost of carbon emissions, in terms of societal impact, becomes significantly higher in such contexts. Recognising and mitigating the barriers that these inequality matrices pose to effective climate action is a critical step toward a more sustainable and just future.

Greening development

If climate change compounds existing inequalities, India's energy transition policies, though crucial, will affect the livelihoods of the poor and exacerbate existing class, caste, and regional disparities. India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) aim to ensure that 40% of the total installed power generation capacity is clean energy. The country has pledged to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070. Such an ambitious target necessitates careful study of its implications. As of 2021, coal was the major contributor to the total energy supply in India (accounting for 56.1%), followed by crude oil (it accounts for 33.4%).

Similarly, the industrial sector was the largest consumer of energy, using more than half, i.e., 51% of the total final energy consumption, followed by transport (11%), residential (10%), and agriculture (3.6%) sectors. Data show that manufacturing is far more energy- and carbon-intensive than agriculture and services. Consequently, any increase in energy price is likely to lead to a contraction of manufacturing, which India cannot afford given its already low manufacturing level. Thus, a just transition entails a holistic approach that considers economic, social, and regional inequalities. While renewable energy adoption is crucial, this shift should not exacerbate existing disparities. For instance, regions that are heavily reliant on coal production face a unique set of challenges. These regions often struggle with pollution, poverty, and low-quality employment.

Transitioning to renewables requires a deliberate focus on protecting livelihoods, offering alternative job opportunities, and ensuring that vulnerable communities are not adversely impacted. The emphasis in the Paris Agreement (2015) is: "taking into account the

imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs per nationally defined development priorities". The skill sets required and the jobs generated per unit of output in renewable vastly differ from fossil fuel industries. Many fossil fuel firms are in the public sector and act as a critical avenue for creating job opportunities for Dalits and the lower castes in India. A shift to renewable energy can potentially halt this generational mobility achieved by these disadvantaged groups. To ensure an equitable and sustainable transition, strategies must target inequality reduction and green investment simultaneously.

Greening federalism

Similarly, regions heavily reliant on coal production may lose revenues and livelihoods. This regional divide in economic inequality correlates with the energy source divide in India. Coal, the cheapest source of energy, is located in the poorer regions in eastern and central India while renewable energy hubs, powered by wind and solar photovoltaics (PV) technologies, are located in the relatively wealthy southern and western India.

Despite the pollution it causes, the coal sector, owned by the public sector miners (85%), is the main source of revenue via taxes, royalties, and mining fees and employment for the State governments in Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. India's energy transition strategy must pay attention to these regional inequalities, transfer funds to States dependent on coal, and carve out State-specific programmes for reskilling development and local rehabilitation needs.

Thus, the Green Deal needs to have a federal deal. India's federal governance structure implies that sub-national governments play a significant role in addressing climate concerns. However, their priorities can differ significantly from those of the Union government. Examining sub-national responses reveals how State entities are vital in tackling the challenge of climate inequality mitigation. State governments have been found to implement policies, including those related to climate justice, climate adaptation, and disaster management laid out by the Union government, that are often at odds with the development aspirations of the States. We must delve into the intricate interactions between fiscal federalism and climate mitigation to understand how policy alignment and cooperation can be achieved across the levels of government.

Source: The Hindu, p.14, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Decentralisation

B'lore, K'taka One centres to soon offer banking services

Sandeep.Moudgal
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: When they were rolled out, Grama One, Karnataka One, and Bangalore One centres were touted as one-stop shops for government-related services. Now, the state plans to add banking services to the bouquet.

The 7,500 integrated citizen service centres across the state currently offer more than 800 government-related services, but the government believes banking solutions will be a gamechanger.

"Discussions are on with many banks and financial institutions," said Dileesh Sasi, director, Electronic Delivery Citizen Services (EDCS). "Some 2,000 franchises already have banking facilitators. The aim is to convert them into proper banking correspondents." He said the remaining centres will be added in a phased manner.

At present, EDCS has engaged India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) as its principal banking services partner. Officials say the government is also in talks with several other major nationalised and private banks, including Canara and Axis Bank.

"We are also in the process of engaging with SBI Mutual Fund to encourage investments and to have an asset-building and financial-inclusion service," said Sasi, an IAS officer. He said the process of rolling out these ser-



INDIAN TOUCH:

Speaker UT Khader and council chairman Basavaraj Horatti apply vibhuti on a bust of social reformer Basaveshwara in London on Tuesday

vices is being fast-tracked and they will be available soon.

The long-term aim is to turn existing personnel at these centres into financial advisors who drive mutual fund investments, especially among the rural population.

So, what banking services will these centres provide? Just about anything one can do in a normal bank, officials say. They include opening and maintaining a

savings account, merchant account, recurring deposits, cash withdrawals and deposits, transfer of funds (AEPS), health insurance, accidental insurance, maintaining a public provident fund, and handling Sukanya Samrudhi Yojana deposits.

The centres will also help people take out loans, including housing, auto, tractor, and commercial loans. These will be provided by the principal bankers. As part of its outreach programme, EDCS intends to hold camps in villages to promote financial inclusion.

"In a year, we expect all franchises to have a B.C., (banking correspondence). We are not worried about market cap now," said Sasi.

But sources in the government say the speed at which conversions are taking place is slow. "We are seeing extremely slow turnaround times. The government will have to put in huge efforts to ensure these centres become a viable banking front," said a DPAR official.

TIMES VIEW

The government's move to provide primary banking services at Bengaluru, Grama, and Karnataka One centres will save time and reduce inconvenience for people. Basic services such as opening a bank account, depositing and withdrawing cash, money transfers and bill payments will particularly help senior citizens and the physically disabled in rural areas. It is said the government is not eyeing banking services alone, but also including certain insurance and currency services under its ambit.

Source: The Times of India, p.4, Oct. 18, 2023

Finance panel to focus on new revenue sources for local bodies

BENGALURU, DHNS

CNarayanaswamy, chairperson of the fifth state finance commission, said on Wednesday that the commission would focus on creating new revenue generation sources for local bodies.

After a meeting with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah here, Narayanaswamy told *DH* that local bodies, especially gram panchayats, need to look at generating income from lakes

and ponds by building fish farms.

Solid waste management can be another area where GPs can look to earn more money.

Citing his own example, Narayanaswamy said while he was serving as president of Bengaluru Rural ZP in 1987-92, the ZP had become revenue surplus by adopting measures like fish farming.

With the additional funds, the ZP was able to appoint guest teachers to schools that reported a shortage.

“This experience has bolstered my conviction that improving revenue streams in all local bodies will make them self-sufficient,” he said.

Narayanaswamy said the local bodies will have to strengthen the tax recovery system too.

“The government has appointed bill collectors in almost all GPs, but they are not working to the best of their abilities. There is a need to strengthen the recovery system,” he said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 4, Oct. 19, 2023

MONEY TALKS Not Regularising Illegal Property, Only Collecting Tax,

B khatas in tier-2 cities: Govt eyes ₹2k cr revenue mop up

BV.Shivashankar
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Facing a funds crunch and with an eye on opening new avenues of collecting revenue, the government is planning to issue B khatas to owners of illegal properties in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The move is expected to fetch the government Rs 2,000 crore.

A cabinet sub-committee headed by forest minister Eshwar Khandre, which is exploring ways to up revenue of local bodies, is set to recommend issuing temporary certificates to owners of illegal properties. The move is not unprecedented as BBMP, the civic agency in Bengaluru, already issues B khatas and collects property tax. “The hitch, however, is that people think their properties have been regularised once the government levies tax on them,” said a senior BBMP official.

The Khandre-led committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday and Khandre said they will submit a report to the government soon. “It is important to ensure a reliable source of revenue for cash-strapped urban local



FESTIVE CHEER: Madhu Bangarappa launched ‘Makkala Dasara’ in Mysuru on Wednesday and later visited an exhibition

bodies (ULBs) in cities outside Bengaluru,” said Khandre. “A potential revenue source is levying property tax on unauthorised buildings and vacant land.”

He said a survey is being conducted to list such illegal properties and some estimates put it at 55 lakh. Taxing illegal properties is seen as plucking ‘low-hanging fruit’ but is welcome for a government that is scrambling to mobilise resources to fund both guarantee schemes and development projects.

In August, the cabinet authorised CM Siddaramaiah to

constitute a sub-committee to study the issue and propose recommendations. Siddaramaiah chose Khandre to head the panel considering his experience between 2013 and 2018 as municipal administration minister.

In a similar situation in 2017, BBMP decided to list authorised and unauthorised properties separately and opened two registers. Legal properties — those which have all acquired all approvals — were listed in the first register called A khata. Others that for instance flouted building bylaws, or en-

croached on public land etc., were included in the second register named B khata.

But the BBMP official pointed out that the issue, while politically sensitive, is also fraught with other risks. “In the case of Bengaluru, successive governments have come under pressure to meet the demands of citizens to convert B khatas to A,” said the senior BBMP official. “But the government cannot do it as a case is pending in the Supreme Court.”

However, Khandre said the government only aims to collect tax. “It has nothing to do with regularising properties, and the government will clearly convey this to owners. Regardless of whether they are legal or illegal, all property owners enjoy services and amenities provided by local bodies. So it stands to reason that they all pay for them. Regularising properties is an altogether different issue. B khatas is only a temporary measure.”

To ensure parity, he said the committee is examining a proposal to levy double the quantum of tax on illegal properties than what legal owners pay.

Source: The Times of India, p.4, Oct. 19, 2023

K'taka mulls ways to tax illegal buildings

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Six years after the Supreme Court put the brakes on the state government's Akrama Sakrama scheme, a Cabinet sub-committee on Thursday directed officials to prepare a proposal for collecting taxes and cess from over 34 lakh unauthorised properties in urban local body (ULB) limits other than BBMP.

A Cabinet sub-committee, headed by Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre, looked into the viability of extending to municipal corporations and other ULBs the provisions of the BBMP Act 2020 that allow levying of tax on illegal buildings and layouts by issuing "B'Khata.

Khandre says ULBs incur costs on amenities to illegal properties but get no tax revenue in return.

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 1 , Oct. 20, 2023

Govt. to promulgate Ordinance to scrap mandatory rural service for medicos

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State Cabinet on Thursday decided to promulgate an Ordinance to scrap the mandatory one-year service in rural areas for students graduating from medical colleges in Karnataka.

A Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah decided to amend the Karnataka Compulsory Service by Candidates Completed Medical Courses Act, 2012, under which so far all MBBS, postgraduate, and super-speciality graduates were to serve one year compulsorily in government healthcare institutions in rural areas as junior residents.

Briefing the Cabinet decisions, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said the Ordinance would be promulgated and later a Bill would be tabled in the winter session of the legislature to replace it.

Mr. Patil said rural service would no longer be mandatory for both UG and PG medical students as the number of applicants for rural service far exceeded the vacancies in government hospitals.

'Waste of resources'

He termed as a "waste of human resources" posting outgoing MBBS and postgraduate medical students for one-year rural service. It was also a bur-



Under the proposed amended law, the government will appoint candidates to rural hospitals based on merit.

The govt decided to amend the law because the number of applicants for rural service far exceeds vacancies in govt. hospitals, says H.K. Patil

den on the government, he said.

However, under the amended law, the government would restrict the rural service to the existing vacancies. The Minister said the government would appoint candidates to rural hospitals based on merit.

The proposed amendments would also tweak the clause that imposes a penalty of ₹15 lakh to ₹30 lakh on medical graduates who refuse to work in rural areas. A couple of months ago, Mr. Siddaramaiah had chaired a meeting with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and senior officials and discussed the issue.

100 Grama Nyayalayas to be set up in State

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State Cabinet on Thursday approved setting up of 100 Grama Nyayalayas in the limits of gram panchayats or clusters of gram panchayats for delivery of justice on the doorstep of people in rural areas.

The Grama Nyayalayas or rural courts will be set up as per the provisions of the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008, introduced by the UPA-II government at the Centre.

Briefing on the Cabinet decisions, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said these courts would cover either a cluster of panchayats or a single panchayat. The government has estimated an annual cost of ₹25 crore for

these courts. The courts would take up both civil and criminal cases. Once established, people in villages would no longer have to travel to towns and cities to get their cases heard, he said.

The courts would be set up in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka to ensure the availability of judges to hear cases, he said. The Centre would also give a one-time grant of ₹18 lakh per court and an additional ₹3.5 lakh for recurring expenditure.

Huge pendency of cases from lower courts to the Supreme Court was one of the reasons for the establishment of Grama Nyayalayas. Establishment of these courts would reduce the pendency to some extent, the Law Minister claimed.

According to government data, in 2023-24, as many as 3,251 MBBS students have registered for rural service, whereas only 1,897 posts are vacant.

"If the government were to create an additional 1,354 posts, it would impose a financial burden of ₹101.82 crore," according to an internal note from the Health and Family Welfare Department.

In addition, in the 2023-

24 academic year, 3,515 PG students have registered as against vacancies of 1,270 posts. Creating an additional 2,245 posts would impose a burden of ₹188.58 crore, the note said. The government pays a monthly salary of about ₹62,000 per doctor.

The government plans to fill all the vacancies in government hospitals over the next two months, Mr. Patil said.

Source: The Hindu, p.10, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Governance

State govt. welfare measures to benefit 34,000 archakas

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government on Friday announced welfare measures to benefit over 34,000 archakas working in 'C' category temples across the State, including insurance and education grants to the family members.

"We have decided to provide annual education grants from ₹5,000 to ₹50,000, depending on the courses that the children of archakas working in 'B' and 'C' category temples. A one-time grant of ₹1 lakh will be given to those pursuing education abroad," Transport and Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy told presspersons here after chairing the first meeting of the newly formed Karnataka State Dharmika Parishath. Besides providing identity cards, Ayushman Bharath cards would be given to all the archakas and employees working in temples coming under the Muzrai Department, he added.

Demand

The announcement comes amid the demand by archakas to increase the annual *tastik* amount given to 'C' category temples from the current ₹60,000 to ₹1.2 lakh annually and an honorarium of ₹10,000 a month to archakas in 'C' category



Ramalinga Reddy

temples. Mr. Reddy, however, said that since it involved cost, the decision had to be made by the Chief Minister.

Further, the Minister said that 1,200 archakas from 'B' and 'C' category temples would be sent to Kashi and Gaya trip annually. "The parishath also decided to send a proposal to the Energy Department to supply power free of cost to the 'C' category temples. The family of archakas and employees working in the notified temple would also receive a compensation of ₹2 lakh in case of death of archakas/employees."

The Minister also said that feeding rooms were being established in all the major temples, and the parishath on Friday approved setting up of a call centre to assist in reservation of rooms, booking for seva, and information on darshan timings, among others.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 14, 2023

Registration of properties: Govt. urged to consider guidance value as on date of sale deed

Thousands of homebuyers are worried now as the State government increased the guidance value in the city by an average of 30% to 40% from October 1

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

Shankar Roy has been in the process of buying a flat of his own for two years now. He entered into a sale agreement with a builder on the southeast outskirts of the city, and the flat is expected to be handed over to him in the next three months, when the property will be registered in his name. However, he has now run into an unforeseen problem.

The guidance value of his flat has shot up by nearly 50%, with effect from October 1. Now the stamp duty and registration charges for his flat - 6.65% of the guidance value of the flat - has also shot up severely. He is now likely to have to shell out an additional ₹2.5 lakh for registering his flat.

He's not alone. Thou-



Property buyers have to shell out 4% stamp duty for properties worth less than ₹45 lakh and 6% for those above, apart from 1% registration charges and 0.65% cess and surcharge. FILE PHOTO

sands of homebuyers across the city are facing the same problem, as the State government hiked the guidance value in the city by an average of 30% to 40%, from October 1, almost five years since the last revision. In some cases, especially on the city's outskirts where most apartments and gated communities are coming up, even up to 80-100%.

Property buyers have to shell out 4% stamp duty for

properties worth less than ₹45 lakh and 6% for those above the value, apart from 1% registration charges and 0.65% cess and surcharge.

The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India - Karnataka and the Forum for People's Collective Action (FPCE), a forum fighting for homebuyers' interests, have now appealed to the State government to consider the guidance value as on the date of the homebuyer entering into a sale agreement with the developer for registration, and not as on the date of registration of the property.

"The cost of registration has suddenly gone up by several notches. Already stressed homebuyers, especially those who have taken loans and are struggling to make ends meet, are again hassled. Some may now be forced to take loans again," said Santosh Patil, a founding member

of FPCE. Suresh Hari, secretary, CREDAI - Karnataka, said while this hike in guidance value doesn't matter to those in the luxury homes sector, it had put considerable pressure on the mid- and lower-income group housing projects.

Property consultant K.R. Ramesh said the hike in guidance value also presented several tax complications as the difference in the guidance value is considered an income.

"The only solution for this is to give a six-month window before the new guidance value comes into force, so that all the pending sale agreements will go through and properties registered. This time, the window given, before the new revised guidance value came into force, was only 15 days. So thousands of homebuyers are currently facing this conundrum," he said.

Mamatha Gowda, inspector-general of Registration and Commissioner of Stamps, said that the law, as it stands today, was clear that stamp duty has to be levied on a transaction as per the guidance value of the date of presentation of the documents for registration.

"This has been the practice for many years now," she said.

Only the State government can take a call on the request, sources said.

 IIM Mumbai INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT MUMBAI (Ministry of Education, Govt. of India) 	
ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR 2024	
MBA	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
MBA-OSCM	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (Operations & Supply Chain Management)
MBA-SM	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (Sustainability Management)
For further details, please visit:	

Source: The Hindu, p.3, Oct. 15, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Gender

Closing the gender pay gap in the workforce

When women were missing from the labour force, that was because they were home caring for children; when they were paid less than men, that was because they had lower education than men. Or so said the economic orthodoxy, including theories popularised by the 1992 Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker. A few feminist economists and sociologists protested, but their voices were drowned out until Claudia Goldin stood on the podium as the President of the American Economic Association in 2013-14 and argued that the answer to the solution of missing and underpaid women did not lie at home but rather, in the market.

A name and a voice

When Betty Friedan wrote in 1963 about college-educated women who were frustrated stay-at-home mothers, she noted that their problem has “no name.” Claudia Goldin, the 2023 Economics Nobel Prize winner, has spent half a century giving a name and voice to their problems. She has chronicled the evolution of the American economy from agriculture to manufacturing to services and noted that as economic production moved from home to factories, women were excluded from market activities. It was not until offices, schools, and hospitals began to offer more jobs than factories that women found jobs. However, even when they entered the workforce in droves, overtook men in educational attainment, did not congregate in “female jobs,” and did not drop out from the labour force to have children, women continued to earn less than men.

Professor Goldin argued that this disadvantage is due to their inability to take on jobs that involve all-consuming responsibilities. Parental responsibilities make it difficult for women to take on jobs requiring long hours and irregular work schedules. The private equity partner who saw the deal through



Sonalde Desai

is a Professor at the National Council of Applied Economic Research and University of Maryland. Views are personal

Gender ideologies often prompt couples to assign women to take over extra family duties while men remain free to concentrate on their careers

and stayed for late-night dinners and meetings had the chance of getting a fat bonus and promotion. These demands are incompatible with raising children, and one partner of a couple often chooses to go on a slower and safer track, the track dubbed the “mommy track,” even at the cost of a high-profile career. While women need not be the ones choosing this slow track, gender ideologies often prompt couples to assign women to take over extra family duties while men remain free to concentrate on their careers.

Professor Goldin blamed this inequality on “greedy work” that demands extraordinary efforts from workers rewarded with high salaries, big bonuses, stock options, and fast promotions. Rising income inequality leads couples to forgo gender equity within the household and concentrate on increasing family income via specialisation. Her solution to this dilemma is restructuring a workplace that does not rely on heroic efforts, has moderate work hours, and predictable schedules.

In some ways, Professor Goldin’s work dovetails with that of Juliet Schor, who argued in her book *The Overworked American* that it was far more beneficial to companies to hire two workers who worked long hours than three workers who worked regular hours since it reduced costs such as health insurance, office space,

and personnel services. I suspect that Indian workers in Bengaluru struggling to keep up with Zoom calls at 9:30 p.m. to confer with their American counterparts arriving in the office at 9 a.m. while helping their children with their Algebra homework will relate to this.

Although women’s employment rates in India remain low, secular changes suggest that there is no reason why this must continue. Building on Professor Goldin’s observations, the growth of the service sector should offer jobs for women that are not offered by the manufacturing sector; rising education should increase their employability; and declining fertility should free up women’s time. But how can we take advantage of these fortuitous circumstances?

Reshaping the environment

While increased male participation in household work and childcare would help, we must also find ways of reshaping both the work and social environment so that they are conducive to developing a work-life balance for both men and women. This means having work structures that are respectful of workers’ time and do not emphasise very long work hours. This makes both social and economic sense. Stanford economist John Pencavel has shown that longer working hours do not mean more productivity and, in some jobs, lead to increased mistakes and injuries.

But if we need to rein in the greedy workplace, we also need to rein in a variety of institutions that demand more and more of our time. This includes schools that rely on parents to supervise homework and urban developments that place homes far from workplaces. Until we can create these supportive institutions, it will be hard to write the last chapter for the grand gender convergence in labour market outcomes that Claudia Goldin advocates for so fiercely.



GETTY IMAGES

Source: The Hindu, p.9, Oct. 16, 2023

'City's start-up ecosystem has had an impact on rural Karnataka's entrepreneurial aspirations'

The low women's labour force participation has been slowing India's economic growth, but the future looks positive, says Anand Sri Ganesh

INTERVIEW

Anand Sri Ganesh

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

India has been riding the start-up and entrepreneurship wave for a while now, however, the share of women entrepreneurs has been significantly low. While NTTF Aayog figures from 2022 peg the number of women entrepreneurs running micro, medium, and small enterprises at around 20 per cent, other reports note that the share of women entrepreneurs in India have been hovering around 14 per cent.

NSRCEL, the incubation arm of IIM Bangalore, in collaboration with the Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (KSRLPS), recently launched the Swavalambane programme designed to scale and support women-owned non-farm businesses in rural Karnataka. The programme provides scaling opportunities to 150 women entrepreneurs.

Anand Sri Ganesh, CEO of NSRCEL at IIM Bangalore, spoke to *The Hindu* about the programme, the need for more women entrepreneurs, and the trickle-down impacts of Bengaluru's start-up ecosystem.

Tell us a bit about the Swavalambane programme and what it aims to achieve

The Swavalambane programme stems from the realisations of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) that entrepreneurship could play a great role in improving the quality of life in rural regions or hinterlands. The NRLM team reached out to us almost a year back to co-develop a programme for the same.



Women entrepreneurs at Swavalambane programme.

The idea of incubating nano entrepreneurs was a new concept. At NSRCEL, our idea of entrepreneurship has been very innovation- and technology-driven. However, they wanted to partner and create a product design that might help rural women entrepreneurs to create and scale great beautiful businesses. They wanted to pilot it and scale it nationwide later. It was an opportunity we couldn't say no to.

We decided to focus on non-farm product ideas for the first pilot. So, that defined the boundaries of the programme - an incubation programme that would help women entrepreneurs with non-farm products to scale their businesses.

That also meant we would look at businesses with some revenue traction. While we considered an annual revenue of ₹15 lakhs initially, we realised it was not practical when we went into the field. So, we divided it into three segments with thresholds of less than ₹5 lakhs, ₹5-15 lakhs, and above ₹15 lakhs.

We went to all 31 districts of Karnataka to understand the nature of entrepreneurship in those



A woman entrepreneur at the Swavalambane programme.

places and worked very closely with the state livelihood mission. We got a sense of the bottlenecks and opportunities and that helped us create a programme design and structure. When we rolled it out we received an overwhelming number of around 40,000 applications. We funneled it down to 150.

The product categories range across apparel, silk textiles, toys, jewelry, home décor, food products, and so on.

How would the programme help the entrepreneurs?

One is through financial support in the form of grants and loans.

The programme also offers strong capability build-

ing in terms of creating an entrepreneurial mindset. There is also a large social context as women entrepreneurs have to work with their communities as well as their families.

Capability building focuses on building entrepreneurial mindsets and on venture capability building.

The third dimension is mentorship and personal capability building. We are working with partners to engage grassroots mentors who can work with the founders every week on very contextual problems.

In addition to that we are buddying every founder with another NSRCEL alumni.

It's a 12-month programme. We hope for at least a 15 per cent increase in revenue



Anand Sri Ganesh

within the 12 months itself.

Which regions of Karnataka are the women entrepreneurs from?

They are from across the state. There were a high number of applicants from Tumkur, Davangere, Bangalore rural and Ramnagara this time. It could be different next time.

Do the ventures run by the women have cultural linkages to where they are from?

At least 70 per cent of the businesses have deep local roots. You'll see artisanship, craftsmanship, manufacturing techniques and so on.

The second aspect is that, so far, the market of

these products would have been within, say, a 10-km radius. So, while they are deeply rooted in local cultures, the market has also been local in nature. If we can unlock it further, there could be a much larger opportunity.

Reports suggest that the share of women entrepreneurs in India is as low as around 14 per cent. What are your views in this?

Depending on what report you read, women's labor force participation could vary from 13 to 26 per cent. This is not necessarily a societal challenge. Our challenge is an economic challenge.

If less than half the population of the country is not coming to economic parity, then how do we grow from being a lower-middle-income country?

Our per capita income is \$2,600. In the US it is \$71,000; in China \$12,800; in Bangladesh \$4,500. We could be a 5-trillion economy because of population, but a per capita income of \$2,600 is just not okay.

However, from a macroeconomics perspective I think it is also an opportunity. If we look at the progress over the last

five to seven years, it has been incredible both from an innovation side and at the grassroots levels.

Of course, Karnataka, compared to other states, is a relatively higher-income state. But, the inequity between large economic clusters and rural hinterland is still very stark. The model of encouraging rural women entrepreneurs has to hit a national scale. And there will be, I'm sure, a tipping point. Other countries like Vietnam and Mexico have done it. They were on a similar journey and the moment the labor force participation tipped over, the entire economy tipped over. Now they're in a different per capita income growth trajectory.

Has Bengaluru being the start-up hub and Silicon Valley of India had any impact on the rural regions of Karnataka?

Massive. Aspiration levels are extremely high. If you talk to the children of the women entrepreneurs who are part of the programme you'd see that they know companies like Infosys.

They know how an Indian company has made it.

So, role models have been created and along with that, the sense of confidence that other people who look like us and talk like us have done it, so we also can. That is a cultural barrier break. While the Bengaluru entrepreneurship environment is strongly technology and innovation-driven it has had definitely a trickle down effect.

Do you think the number of women entrepreneurs have been rising?

For sure. Over the last five to seven years it has definitely been rising. There are quite a few factors contributing to it.

Sometimes timing makes a difference. Entrepreneurship culture is being more respected lately.

The second factor is that probably some of our societal norms are getting unlocked. Today, if I'm a woman entrepreneur, I can tell my family that I'm setting up a silk embroidery business and it is quite likely that, at least in many pockets, you will get a very positive response. Today if you go to a bank - I'm not saying it's so well penetrated - but there are opportunities like the MUDRA scheme, the Standup India scheme, and so on. I don't want to say it's completely hunky-dory, but at least windows are opening up if not doors.

India as a market for India is really opening up. So many of us are appreciative and desirous of products and services made by Indian for Indians and it doesn't have to be a government rhetoric.

So cultural nuances, markets opening up, government initiatives and of course the larger startup environment in the country have together created a good perfect storm. You have long way to go, but it is creating a very positive momentum.

Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 17, 2023

Women auto drivers beat odds to rise in numbers

Despite safety concerns and hostility from male counterparts, they are choosing the profession for better earnings

ASRA MAVAD
TEAM METROLIFE

The number of women auto drivers in Bengaluru has been increasing since the Covid-19 outbreak. The job has helped them become financially stable, they tell *Metrolife*.

Adarsh Auto Drivers' Union has 14,000 members, of which, only 18 are women. "It may seem like a small number but it is a start. Most of them joined our union only about a year ago. The numbers are increasing. Currently, we're training 30 more women drivers," says C Sampath, general secretary of the city-based auto union.

Covid-induced job losses and the advent of electric vehicles have a part to play. Sampath says, "The electric auto has been a boon to women auto drivers. They are easier to drive, because you don't have to worry about the clutch and gear. We have noticed that women are more comfortable with electric autos."

Higher income

Auto Rickshaw Drivers Union (ARDU) is another prominent auto drivers' union in the city. But it has only one female member. Her name is Nagalakshmi S P. She took to this profession four years ago.

"As a single mother, I'm constantly thinking of ways to provide for my children. Before I started driving an auto, I had tried multiple other jobs. But at the end of the day, my salary wouldn't be



Adarsh Auto Drivers' Union currently has 14,000 members, of which only 18 are women. PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

more than Rs 500 per day. That wasn't enough to run a house. But as an auto driver, I can make between Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000 per day," says the 41-year-old, adding that the higher income is encouraging more women to join the male-dominated field.

"Post-Covid, the cost of living has become more expensive. Many women I know have part-time jobs and they also drive autos to make ends meet," she adds.

K Asharani, also a single parent, has been making a living as an auto driver for the past six years. She has trained two women to join the field since the pandemic. "I met these women as customers. They were surprised to see a female auto driver. After I shared my experience with them, they asked if I could teach them and I was more than happy to do that. Now both of them are professional auto drivers," says the 33-year-old who lives in Uttarahalli.

Night driving

Most of these women end their shifts around 8-9 pm. Unlike their male counterparts, they don't feel confident driving their auto at night.



K Asharani



Nagalakshmi S P

"We don't have the luxury of accepting rides at night like our male colleagues. Our safety is obviously an issue but we also need to return home to tend to our families and take care of our children," Nagarathna, an auto driver from Guttahalli, reasons. The 41-year-old joined the profession during the pandemic.

Regardless of the safety concerns, Nagarathna likes her job. "It has helped me become independent. Plus, it is rewarding to see the smiles on my customers' face, especially women. Those are priceless. Many people compliment us for our courage. I hope I'm able to encourage more women like me, who don't have enough educational qualifications, to be independent," she shares.

Hostile colleagues

However, women drivers don't always receive the same appreciation from their male colleagues. "They get defensive. They think we're here to take away their jobs. Some of them are rude and have also been violent towards me. At the end of the day, we are here to earn a livelihood like them. The discord is unnecessary," says Asharani.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.3A, Oct.20, 2023

Free ride, free spirit

Shakti, which allows women to travel free on non-luxury public transport buses, has meant different things to women coming from different regions and strata of society. **Jahnvi T.R., Kumar Buradikatti, Sathish G.T., and Raviprasad Kamila** record voices on what a zero-fare ride has meant to women

Clutching a copy of her Aadhaar card, Parvathamma was waiting for the conductor to issue her a free ticket on a Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) bus in Shivamogga town in south Karnataka. She was travelling to Holalkere in Chitradurga district in central Karnataka.

"The journey would have cost me ₹70. Now I travel free," said a visibly elated Parvathamma, in her 70s. With the money saved, "I spend on some betel leaves and snacks for the journey."

At Bengaluru, Kausar and her group of 10 women, all from the same family, were at the KSRTC bus terminal in Majestic, waiting for their change-over bus to Mysuru. They had just returned from their first women-only trip to Murugamall Dargah in Chintamani in Kolar district. She said the group saved ₹2,000-₹3,000 on the trip as they did not have to spend on tickets. They plan to go on more such trips.

Over 78 crore and counting

Over 78 crore women passengers have availed themselves of the Siddaramaiah-led government's flagship Shakti scheme, which provides free bus travel to women of Karnataka domicile on non-luxury buses of the State-run Road Transport Corporation. Four months since the implementation of the scheme, beneficiaries talk about their experiences.

Kamalabai, a 50-year-old Lambani woman from South Puru



Tanda, travels around 50 km daily to reach Kalaburagi in the Kalyana Karnataka region in search of work, just like hundreds of people from her hamlet. Since there is no direct bus facility, she takes a shared three-wheeler to reach Kamalapur, which is around 16 km from her settlement, paying ₹30. From Kamalapur, she takes a public transport bus operated by the State-owned Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) to reach Kalaburagi, which would have cost her ₹30 more if not for Shakti.

"I travel daily. I normally get work for 20 days in a month. Before the introduction of the Shakti scheme, I spent ₹120 daily on travel. It is a big amount for a person who gets just ₹450 daily. It was worse when I didn't get work on a particular day as I had to spend the travel expenses from my pocket," said Kamalabai. She said the number of people who travelled searching for work has increased since the introduction of Shakti.

One scheme, different meanings

The scheme means different things to different women. For the majority, Shakti is a means to save small amounts of money; for some, it is a gateway to travel and exploration across the State; for others, it is an expression of freedom. However, a small number of people are sceptical.

Sitting on a bus bound for the Davangere district from Bengaluru with her husband was Shwetha, a middle-aged woman. "I do not travel



Before festivals, we catch a BMTC bus, which directly goes to K.R. Market. We buy flowers and fruits from there at a cheaper price. We were not doing that earlier as the money we saved during the purchases would be spent on travel. Also, we do not have to depend on our husbands to go shopping now.

NEELAMMA



Well received: Shakti, which was introduced by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government as part of the party's election promise, has proved to be very popular among women. RAVICHANDRAN N.

much except for a monthly trip to Bengaluru," she said. She saved around ₹120 on her ticket. "The money I save here I spend on my husband's medicines," Shwetha said.

Even in the State capital, women, especially on the outskirts, who used to find it difficult to travel to the central parts of the city without spending hundreds of rupees, can now take these trips whenever they want. Neelamma, a domestic worker from Nagenahalli near Doddaballapur Road, spoke of how a few women in her neighbourhood have formed a festival shopping group.

"Before festivals, we catch a Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) bus, which directly goes to K.R. Market. We buy flowers and fruits from there at a cheaper price. We were not doing that earlier as the money we saved during the purchases would be spent on travel. Also, we do not have to depend on our husbands to go shopping now," Neelamma said.

Amidst the rising costs of all other goods and commodities, some women feel that the savings from Shakti barely amount to anything. Gowri, from Bengaluru, was travelling to Chitradurga to her mother's house. She said she saved around ₹600 on a round trip. "It is not a big amount if you consider the current prices of everything in the market. I do not feel I have saved any money as I do not travel regularly."

Connectivity first, free tickets next

Marakka, who hails from a remote village in Chitradurga district, shared a similar opinion. She had been to Murudeshwara in Uttara Kannada along with her family to work at a road construction site. "We keep travelling to Challakere often on this route. As travel is part of our lives, we keep some of our earnings aside. The amount saved due to a free ticket under the Shakti scheme is not a big thing," she said. Instead of free travel, the government should have given us more free grain. "Considering the prevailing prices of essential commodities like cooking oil, rice, and vegetables, it is difficult to manage expenses," she said.

However, women in regions poorly served by KSRTC buses are disappointed. In districts like Shivamogga and Dakshina Kannada, private buses offer far better connectivity compared to government buses, rendering Shakti barely of consequence.

In Coastal Karnataka, KSRTC buses operate only on highways while other government-run



Tourism boost: Devotees at the Bahubali statue at Dharmasthala. The number of women tourists has gone up after the introduction of Shakti. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

buses only provide skeletal services, passengers said. Synthia Fernandes, who taught at a pre-university college at Modankapu, in Dakshina Kannada, said she travelled daily between Siddakatte (on B.C. road-Moodbidri road) and Modankapu in private buses by spending ₹60 as travel fare a day. Had there been government bus services, she could have saved the amount. At the other end of the State, in Lambani tandas in Kalaburagi, too, women flag the issue of an inadequate network of government-run buses.

When Transport Minister of Karnataka, Ramalinga Reddy, was asked about this problem, he pointed out that private buses in some places have been operational for a long time, leading to a monopoly. "Women in such regions and private bus operators have been asking us to extend the scheme to those buses as well, but that is a decision for the Chief Minister to make," Reddy said.

Need for more buses

Even in areas served well by public transport buses, the fleet strength has to be increased to cope with the large number of women who are now travelling. Shashikala was waiting at the Ramana-nagara bus stop with her daughter in the hope of finding a less crowded bus to get back to Bengaluru in the evening. She had to wait for another 45 minutes for the crowd to clear and get a bus that had vacant seats. "I am not very happy with Shakti. All the government buses are crowded, especially on weekends. It's difficult to travel especially with children," she remarked.

Acknowledging the problem, the Transport Minister said there is a shortfall of around 11,000 buses. "While we need 35,000 buses for our population, we only have 24,000 now, just as it was 10 years ago. However, in the next three to four months, 5,000 new buses will be added. Also, 6,800 members have been cleared for recruitment in the first phase," he said.

Reddy, however, argued that the scheme is a success going by the sheer number of women who are now travelling – to their favourite tourist spots, temples or homes of their relatives and friends – making use of the Shakti scheme.

Cost of free tickets

A section of women said that they enjoyed the benefits of Shakti, but were worried about the toll the scheme would take on the exchequer. Savithramma, an elderly flower seller who travels from Mysuru Road Satellite Bus Stand in Bengaluru to M.M. Hills in Mysuru district, said, "I am happy that this scheme has provided an opportunity for poor women like me to travel freely. However, I am also sad as this will burden the government hugely. Even the government exchequer is like our household budget, isn't it?"

Kalpna, part of a 12-member group travelling to the tourist town of Halebidu in Hassan from Shivamogga, shared the same concern. "It is beneficial to me as a passenger. But I am worried if it will make the State financially weak."

According to the data provided by the Transport Department, the cost of the tickets issued to more than 78 crore women under Shakti is over ₹1,800 crore. Compared to the ticket value of June (between June 11 and June 30), which was ₹248 crore (over 10 crore women passengers), it has increased by around eight times. The State Budget presented by Siddaramaiah earmarked ₹2,800 crore for the implementation of this scheme this financial year.

Not all believe that such welfare measures are a burden on the exchequer. Shaheen Shasa from Bus Pryanikara Vedithe, a forum of bus commuters, pointed out that ₹2,800 crore is a small percentage when the State's entire Budget (₹3,27,747 crore) is considered. She said providing free travel to women is similar to setting up public schools or public health centres, as it means the welfare of a larger group of people. "It is not a tax burden. It is our tax money and a question of how the government prioritises the expenditure. Transport infrastructure is essential as it provides opportunities for education, health, and even political participation. The scheme enables a better lifestyle, and hence, it should be considered a positive investment," Shasa said.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Karnataka rock art find throws light on ancient civilisation

SHRUTHI HM SASTRY
BENGALURU, DHNS

A research scholar from the Department of Epigraphy at Kannada University, Hampi, has discovered a rare stone painting dating back 2,500 years from the Megalithic period, at a village in Kudligi, Vijayanagara.

Kudligi is known to have been home to some of the most ancient civilisations of the country. Sidegallu village, where this painting was found, is surrounded by hills and this art work is inscribed on a 10-ft high and 12-ft wide boulder.

Research scholar D Veeresh told *DH* Sidegallu is surrounded by a hill

range and this boulder is part of a hill known to locals as 'Bommadevara Matha'. The painting has been done on a boulder which is secluded from rain and scorching heat, explaining why it has remained in good condition all these years, he said.

The local community has been worshipping this painting for several generations, as they believe it is auspicious, he added.

The painting depicts three groups with seven people each, holding hands and dancing.

It also shows individuals and couples. That apart, a man riding a horse, a cheetah, parrot and an eagle are part of the painting along with some stone tools.



The rock painting. PHOTO: D VEERESH

The figures are coloured red and white. According to Veeresh, the painter has depicted a real-life incident in this work. He also believes that the sketches in white could have been added later.

Terming this a "rare and special discovery", Kannada University vice-chancellor D V Paramashivamurthy told *DH* that Ballari-Vijayanagara region was known for archaeological finds, while Kudligi has been home to some of the most ancient civilisations of India.

"Several stone paintings depicting individuals have been found but something resembling a group picture is rare.

► Epigraphy, Page 10

EPIGRAPHY, FROM PAGE 1

A similar painting exists in Hirebenakal in Koppal but that painting does not show a large group of people. Also, this painting depicts an incident and it is not random," he said, emphasising that such works of art are a window to our ancient civilizations.

While not all such discoveries are recorded by the Archaeological Survey of India, scholars publish their findings in research journals, placing it on record. Local communities associate such paintings and inscriptions with their ancestors and believe them to be auspicious. Hence, these records are safe in their hands, added Amaresh Yatagal, chairperson of the Department of Epigraphy, Kannada University.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1&10, Oct.17, 2023

Poor families in debt trap as liquor flows freely in villages

VITTAL SHASTRI
KALABURAGI, DHNS

The illegal sale of liquor through general provision stores, hotels, pan shops and houses has become rampant in rural areas of North Karnataka region, with cheap liquor being sold at higher prices to villagers, especially daily-wage labourers.

The easy availability is tempting labourers to consume alcohol before they go to work in the morning.

"We can't wait till liquor shops are open at 10 am. So we get it from a house by paying Rs 20-30 extra in the early morning before going for construction work," said Bheemasha Vaijapure of Nalwar in Chittapur.

As a result, labourers spend nearly half of their daily earnings on liquor.

Kalaburagi Superintendent of Excise Gladson Sanjaykumar said there

BOOZE BAIT

■ Illicit liquor sale rampant in Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Yadgir, Raichur and Gadag

■ Hotels, grocery stores, pan shops engage in illegal sale of alcohol

Raids fail to deter violators

Labourers and youths addicted as alcohol available round the clock



is a 30% rise in cases and raids compared to the same period last year. Illicit liquor menace is rampant in Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Yadgir, Raichur and Gadag.

Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan Kalaburagi district convenor Ashwini Madankar claimed that the members of several women self-help groups have fallen into debt trap as their fam-

ily members, including children, are addicted to alcohol, which is available round the clock. She said alcohol addiction is one of the reasons why poor families are migrating from the region. They are forced to take up work as bonded labourers in lieu of loans taken.

"Hotels and grocery shops in our village are earning revenue from the sale of liquor. Excise department

officials have failed act despite several pleas. Therefore, we have decided to constitute a team of women to combat illicit liquor sale," Madankar told *DH*.

"Despite raids, villagers are not afraid to sell liquor. The officials are hand in glove with these unlicensed shops," Afzalpur resident Mahesh Talawar said.

Aland Congress MLA BR Patil claimed that fake liquor is being supplied to the region from other states and is being sold by local shops under different brands. "Police and excise department officials are aware of illicit liquor sale in shops and houses. The sellers manage to secure bail after every raid," Patil told *DH*.

Superintendent of Excise Gladson Sanjaykumar said the department has conducted 587 raids on unlicensed liquor shops and lodged 246 cases from July to September.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1, Oct.20, 2023

[Back to Contents](#)