



# Society and Economy of Karnataka in News

VOL: 1

October 2023

NO: 6

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

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## AGRICULTURE

# Between spells of drought and untimely rainfall, pulses taking a hit in State

'The September harvest of green gram was already down by 80%. Standing toor crop that is coming for harvest in Dec. is likely to be down by 60%'

Kumar Buradikatti

Mini Tejaswi

KALABURAGI/BENGALURU

The prevailing drought situation in Karnataka, coupled with erratic spells of untimely rainfall, has hit pulses production, with the September harvest of green gram already down by 80%, while the standing red gram (toor), that is coming for harvest in December, likely to be down by 60%. Chana and chickpeas yield may also be very poor due to a failed monsoon, as per information *The Hindu* gathered from multiple sources.

In the current crop year, the pulse production in the whole country is estimated to be 14.5 lakh tonnes, below the annual consumption of 17.45 lakh tonnes.

### Sad plight of farmers

Veerendra, a farmer at Indrapad Hosalli in Chincholi taluk of Kalaburagi district, had cultivated green gram (moong) on eight acres,



The destroyed red gram crop at Indrapad Hosalli in Chincholi taluk of Kalaburagi district.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

black gram (urad) on four acres and red gram (toor) on 18 acres. He is devastated as all crops are destroyed, by excessive rains in June-July and dry spell that followed.

Samad Patel, Joint Director of Agriculture, said the red gram crop was cultivated on 5,95,240 hectares of which the crop on 1,94,969

(32.75%) hectares was destroyed in drought in Kalaburagi, a major pulses-producing district in the State. Black gram was sown in 20,072 hectares of which the crop on 5,854 (29.16%) hectares was destroyed.

However, farmers say that this is a conservative estimate. As per Sharanasappa Mamshetty, district

president of Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha, over 80% of the green gram sown in the district is destroyed. Most pulse farmers *The Hindu* spoke to in the Kalaburagi region had similar stories to tell.

In June, Kalaburagi district received deficit -43% of the average rainfall. In July, it received +93% rain.

In August, it received, -82% and in September it received +10%. In October, till date, the district received -83% rainfall. This kind of fluctuation is not good for any crop, said Mr. Patel.

"I have taken ₹ 80,000 hand loans from the local money lender to cultivate green gram and black gram. The entire crops is destroyed. I cultivated red gram by taking additional loans. Now it is withering when it is supposed to be flowing/blossoming," Mr. Veerendra lamented. He wants to remove the dying crop and sow Bengal gram (chickpea) or jowar, but has no money for it.

Yeshwanth Ari, a farmer from Ratkal village who had sown green gram on seven acres and black gram on three acres and lost all of it, said, "There was rain when I sowed the seeds. But, drought hit the crops at the crucial flowering and pod formation stages. I got only one bag of green gram yield and half a

bag of black gram, against the usual 30 bags and 18 bags respectively," rued Mr. Ari. With over ₹1.5 lakh loan, Mr. Ari said he cannot afford to sow Bengal gram now.

### Supply-demand mismatch

Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), formerly secretary of Bangalore Wholesale Pulses and Food Grains Merchants' Association, told *The Hindu* that the State may see a huge supply-demand mismatch. "We are now going to be totally dependent on imports to fill this gap and we have to change this situation and become sufficient in pulses," Mr. Lahoti said.

Karnataka is the third largest producer of toor in the country after Gujarat and Maharashtra. The State accounts for 20% of the country's total production of toor, moong, chana, jowar and maize.

**Source: The Hindu, p.8, Oct. 21, 2023**



# No festive cheer for tomato growers; virus attack adds to farmers' problems

The current price of a box of the produce (15 kg) is just ₹50 to ₹120 at the Kolar APMC. Even in Bengaluru markets, tomato costs ₹15 to ₹25 per kg depending on the size

**Jahnavi T.R.**  
BENGALURU

**A**fter experiencing record highs, even the beginning of festivities has not brought any relief for tomato growers as the current price for a box of tomato is just ₹50 to ₹120 at the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APMC).

Earlier around July, the price of tomato hit a record high of over ₹2,300 for a box (of 15 kg) at the APMC in Kolar. At markets in Bengaluru, the selling price was anywhere between ₹100 and ₹150 per kg for many weeks. However, despite the ongoing festive season, even in Bengaluru markets, tomato costs ₹15 to ₹25 per kg depending on the size of the produce.

"During Dasara, the price of tomato should have been at least ₹40 to 50 per kg. But the supply is so rich that on some days, we cannot empty the stocks," said Ramamurthy, a vendor in Yelahanka.

With an increased flow of tomato to the market, the prices have failed to rise in the last few weeks.

"There are a lot of tomatoes in the market, mostly coming from Andhra Pradesh and other States. Their quality is better when compared to ours and they are selling at a box for more than ₹120 to ₹150. However, here on an average, the selling price is ₹60 to ₹90. After losing ₹20 lakh in the previous years, I had made ₹8 lakh this year with tomato. But now, it looks like a loss again," said Venkat Reddy, a tomato farmer from Chintamani



People shop on the eve of Dasara and Ayudha Puja in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

taluk in Kolar district.

Several other farmers also flagged similar issues. According to them, the selling price for this season should have been anywhere between ₹400 and ₹500 per box. However, they also believe that the prices will go up again due to the attack of leaf curl disease in the major vegetable growing district of Kolar.

"From the last 20 to 25 days, the attack of leaf curl disease (bingi roga) has caused many tomato crops to wither away. We are not getting much help from the scientists to tackle this problem. If this trend continues, after November 15, the price will rise again," said Manjunath, another tomato farmer from Srin-

vaspura taluk in Kolar district.

Amidst the highs and lows of the prices, the biggest worry of farmers seems to be the diseases which have afflicted the crop.

"In the last five years, the tomato crops in Kolar have been affected by Anthracnose, late blight, and potassium deficiency and now, leaf curl disease. The Horticulture Department officials, after seeking expert advice from Bagalkot, have concluded that the diseases are a result of weather changes. However, they have not guided the farmers about the management of diseases," said Nalini Gowda A., a farmers' leader from Kolar.

"If these diseases continue, in the next two years, no one will be able to cultivate tomatoes in Kolar," she added.

However, the officials of the Horticulture Department said that farmers are being guided about the steps they need to take.

"Our officials there have issued advisories regarding the disease. As for the price fluctuation, despite our repeated warnings to not immediately switch crops, farmers chose to grow tomatoes in higher quantities due to the increased price this year. Hence, they are not able to get good prices now," said Ramesh D.S, Director, Horticulture Department.

## Prices of lemon and ash gourd skyrocket

**Vishal V.P.**  
BENGALURU

Higher demand for lemons, ash gourds, and flowers ahead of Mahanavami and Vijayadashami has led to the prices of these festival essentials, along with a few other fruits, skyrocket in Bengaluru.

Most vendors pointed out that a low supply owing to weather-induced reasons and an increased demand have become a pattern this festive season.

Shiv Kumar, a vendor in Kodihalli, said: "Due to an increase in demand for lemons and ash gourds which are used for puja, their prices have gone up from ₹80 per dozen to ₹150 to ₹200 per dozen and ₹40 per kg to ₹50 to ₹60 per kg respectively. Banana plants now cost between ₹55 and ₹60 per piece, up from about ₹30 to ₹35 previously. We purchase these things at exorbitant costs, which occasionally affects our profit margins."

Lokesh Reddy, owner of a flower and vegetable shop in Koramangala, said: "Popular flowers like rose, jasmine, kanakambra, marigold, and sevanti (chrysanthemums) previously cost between ₹60 and ₹90 per kg and now they are selling for ₹200 and ₹300. We frequently find ourselves with little time to negotiate because of the flood of customers at this time".

Some vendors, like Shanta in Halasuru market, complained that the increased prices have kept customers from purchasing higher quantities. "Upon realising the higher prices, people frequently buy less than normal, even though they still make purchases. For many stores, this year has been really slow," she noted.

**Source: The Hindu, p.5, Oct. 23, 2023**







# Sensitive ecosystem in Cauvery's birthplace cries for attention amidst 42% deficit in southwest monsoon

Commercialisation and decline in rainfed cultivation of paddy in Kodagu are adding to Cauvery's woes as paddy fields were acting like micro reservoirs with water being impounded for 3 to 4 months

B.S. Satish Kumar  
KODAGU

The dwindling storage in Karnataka's Cauvery basin reservoirs owing to drought prevailing in the State has caused concerns in the downstream areas, besides typically escalating the legal tussle over inter-State sharing of the river water. But the plight of the sensitive ecosystem of Kodagu, which is the main catchment area as well as place of origin of the river, is yet to get due attention.

This tiny hilly district located in the pristine Western Ghats region should receive good rains if the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir, located in the downstream, has to get adequate inflow to take care of irrigation requirement of farmers in command areas and drinking water needs of towns and cities in the basin, including Bengaluru. Also, the State's experience has shown that the inter-State sharing of Cauvery water does not get complicated when there are good rains in Kodagu.

**Rainfall pattern**  
This year, Kodagu district has reported a cumulative rainfall deficit of 42% during southwest monsoon



Partly abandoned rainfed paddy cultivation fields at Nallur, near Gonikoppa, in Kodagu district, which is part of a micro reservoir system that sustains the ecosystem of Kodagu and Cauvery river. K. MURALI KUMAR

that ended on September 30 as against the State's average deficit of 25%. In fact, the deficit was as high as 80% in June and 82% in August in this district.

This deficit could not just impact the ecosystem of the district, but the flow of river in the entire Cauvery basin that transcends State boundaries.

While legal experts are

worried about dwindling storage in KRS, naturalists well-versed with the Kodagu landscape are concerned about decline in rain-fed paddy cultivation in Kodagu which they say is a micro reservoir system that sustains the ecosystem of Kodagu and the Cauvery river.

"We have an age-old practice of cultivating

paddy in the valleys with the help of rainwater. These paddy fields act like small ponds as we impound rainwater in them for three to four months. These paddy fields will feed streams and rivulets which in turn strengthen tributaries of Cauvery. But the cause of concern now is that cultivation of paddy has reduced by nearly

50%," says C.G. Kushalappa, scientist and retired dean of College of Forestry in Ponnampet, who has studied the ecosystem of Kodagu for over 35 years.

According to him, farmers are shunning paddy mainly because it is not remunerative. The high labour cost and man-animal conflict near the Nagarahole National Park are also



A rainfall measuring instrument at a coffee plantation in Kodagu district. (Below) Scientist C.G. Kushalappa. K. MURALI KUMAR



forcing them to shun paddy cultivation.

Another major reason for shunning the paddy cultivation is rapid commercialisation which is making farmers to either sell off or take up construction activities on paddy fields which are more suited for construction than the slopes, he observes.

Expressing concern that

shunning paddy cultivation is affecting particularly the summer flow of Cauvery river as well as the Kodagu ecosystem, he suggests that the government revive rain-fed paddy cultivation by providing an incentive of ₹10,000 an acre. The government, NGOs and corporates should join hands in this endeavor, he suggests.

Pointing out that farmers near the national park have completely shunned paddy cultivation due to man-animal conflict, he suggests building community fences for the entire villages. He has also mooted the idea of bringing a law to impose checks and balances on selling away the paddy lands for commercial purposes.

"If the government wants continued flow of Cauvery even during summer, then the need of the hour is to demonstrate sustainable development model involving paddy cultivation backed by incentive in a couple of villages so that others too would get attracted," says Dr. Kushalappa.

He particularly opposes indiscriminate commercialisation in this hot tourist destination and refers to previous year's episode of landslides in the areas that witnessed in-

tense commercialisation and construction activities.

Former member of Coffee Board of India and an expert on coffee industry as well as Kodagu ecosystem, Bose Mandanna too expresses concern over rapid commercialisation that is affecting the ecosystem in sensitive zones of Kodagu. "People from outside invest in land here for commercial purposes. This has resulted in huge constructions coming up on ecologically sensitive areas. We saw its impact in 2019 when landslides were witnessed in several sensitive zones of Kodagu when it rained 40 inches in a single day," he recalls.

"It is okay to allow conversion of agricultural land for construction for residential purposes. But conversion of agricultural land for large constructions like big resorts should not be allowed. It is not wise to allow such huge constructions atop hills," he says.

Kodagu unit president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Manu Somaiah, says "Kodagu being a tourist destination, outsiders show a lot of interest in buying land here for commercial purposes. Politicians too are buying lands here in their names (benami ownership)."

**Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 23, 2023**

ವಿಜಯವಾಣಿ

## ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಮೂಲ ಸವಲತ್ತಿಗೆ ಕುತ್ತು

ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಸೃಜನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಗ್ಗರಿಸಿದ ಸರ್ಕಾರ | ನಿರ್ಲಕ್ಷ್ಯ ಧೋರಣೆಗೆ ತಜ್ಞರಿಂದ ಆತಂಕ ವ್ಯಕ್ತ

■ ಮೃತ್ಯುಂಜಯ ಕರ್ನಾಡ್ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಗುರುತಿಸಿ ಕೃಷಿ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದ ಉತ್ಪಾದಕ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸಲು ನೀರಾವರಿ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಸೃಜನೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಮೂಲ ಸೌಕರ್ಯ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗಳೇ ಸೇರಿದ್ದು, ಇವೆರಡರಲ್ಲಿ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷಿತ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಸಾಧಿಸುವಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಮುಗ್ಗರಿಸಿದೆ.

ಕಳೆದ ಸಾಲುಷ್ವರ ತಿಂಗಳ ಇಲಾಖಾವಾರು ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿಯು ಮುಂದಣಿ ಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವುದು, ಇನ್ನು ಅರು ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಿಟ್ಟದ್ದು ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ಪಂದಿಸುವ ಸವಾಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಮುಂದಿದೆ. ಸಾರ್ವತ್ರಿಕ ಮೂಲ ಆದಾಯದ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆಯು ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು ದುರ್ಬಲವಾಗಿ, ಬದಲಾಗಿ, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲಗಳ ಸಮಾನ

» **ತೆವಳುತ್ತಿವೆ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣಗಳಿಗೆ ಅನುದಾನ ಹೊಂದಿಸುವ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು**

ಹಂಚಿಕೆಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶ ಕೊಡುತ್ತವೆ. ಆದರೆ, ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣಗಳಿಗೆ ಹಣಕಾಸಿನ ಬಲ ನೀಡಲು ಶಕ್ತವಾದ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು ತೆವಳುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ವರ್ಷದ ಪ್ರಕಾರ 2023-24ರ ಬಜೆಟ್ ಅರ್ಧ ವರ್ಷ ಕಳೆದಿದೆ.

ಆದರೆ ಸಿಎಂ ಸಿದ್ಧರಾಮಯ್ಯ ಬುಲೆನ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 2023-24ರ ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಬಜೆಟ್ ಮಂಡಿಸಿದ್ದು, 2024ರ ಮಾರ್ಚ್‌ಗೆ 31.43 ಅಂಶಕ್ಕೆ ಏಳುತ್ತದೆ. **ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಶೇ.31.43 ಸಾಧನೆ:** ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ವರದಿ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಬಜೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಅನುದಾನ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ, ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಬಳಕೆ ಒಳಗೊಂಡು ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಶೇ.31.43 ಸಾಧನೆ ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಿದೆ. ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರಿ ಹೊತ್ತ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಒಟ್ಟು 2,96,853.63 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಪೈಕಿ ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್‌ವರೆಗೆ 1,11,854.48 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದರೆ, 93,304.81 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವಿನಿಯೋಗವಾಗಿದೆ. ಅರ್ಥಿಕ, ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ, ಆಡಳಿತಾತ್ಮಕ ಕಾರಣಗಳಿಗೆ ವೇಗ ತಗ್ಗಿಸಬೇಕೆಂಬ ಪರೋಕ್ಷ ಸೂಚನೆಗಳು ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳಿಗೆ ರವಾನೆಯಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಮೂಲಗಳು ತಿಳಿಸಿವೆ.

ಜಲ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ, ಮೂಲಭೂತ ಸೌಕರ್ಯ,



6 **ನಾಲ್ಕು ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಸಿಂಹಪಾಲು ಅನುದಾನ ಒದಗಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ನಡುವೆ ಬರ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸಿರುವ ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿ ವೆಚ್ಚ ಸರಿದೂಗಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಸವಾಲು ಇದೆ. ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ತೊಂದರೆಗೆ ಸಿಲುಕಿದರೂ ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿ ಜನರೇ ಬಾಧಿತರು.**

! **ಪ್ರೊ. ಬಿ.ಎಂ.ಕುಮಾರಸ್ವಾಮಿ** ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ತಜ್ಞ

ಆರಾಧಿಪೀಠ, ಮಹಿಳಾ ಮತ್ತು ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳ ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಶೇ.15 ರಿಂದ 20ಕ್ಕೆ ಸೀಮಿತ ಎಂಬುದು ಗಮನಾರ್ಹ. ಕೃಷಿ, ಸಹಕಾರ, ತೋಟಗಾರಿಕೆ, ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ, ಯುವ ಸಬಲೀಕರಣ, ಕನ್ನಡ ಮತ್ತು ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಆಹಾರ ಮತ್ತು ನಾಗರಿಕ ಸರಬರಾಜು ಮತ್ತು ಕುಂದುಕೊರತೆ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳ ವೆಚ್ಚ ಹೇಳಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವಂತಿಲ್ಲ. **ಸ್ವಲ್ಪಮಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಸಮಾಧಾನ:** ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ, ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ, ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಕುಟುಂಬ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ, ಸಣ್ಣ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಮತ್ತು ಇಂಧನ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳು ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಶೇ.35 ರಿಂದ 43 ಇರುವುದು ಸಮಾಧಾನಕರ ಸಂಗತಿ. ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಬಜೆಟ್ ವೆಚ್ಚ ಶೇ.31.43 ಆಗಿದ್ದರೆ, ಕಳೆದ ವರ್ಷ ಇದೇ ಅವಧಿಗೆ ಶೇ.27 ಇತ್ತು. ಈ ತುಲನಾತ್ಮಕ ಅಂಕಿ-ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಮುಂದಿಟ್ಟು ಸರ್ಕಾರ

### ಪರಿಣತರು ಗುರುತಿಸಿದಂತೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಸಂಕಟಗಳು

- ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು ಹುಲಿಮೇಲೆ ಸವಾರಿ
- ಬರಗಾಲ, ಮಿಡ್‌ತ್ ಆಫ್ ಅನಿರೀಕ್ಷಿತ ವೆಚ್ಚಗಳು
- ಕಾಸರ ಅನುದಾನ, ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಬೇಡಿಕೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಕತ್ತರ
- ಬಾಕಿ ಬಿಲ್ ಪಾವತಿ, ಜಾಲಿ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಬಜೆಟ್
- ತೆರಿಗೆ ತರುವ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಮೇಲೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಅವಲಂಬನೆ
- ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿ ವೆಚ್ಚ ಸರಿದೂಗಿಸಲು ಪರೋಕ್ಷ ಭಾರ
- ನೀರು ಬಳಕೆ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಕ್ಕಟ್ಟು

ಮುಂದಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಸಮರ್ಥನೆ ನೀಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಆದರೆ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಮಾದಿರ ವೆಚ್ಚವೂ ಇದ್ದರಲ್ಲೇ ಅಡಕವಾಗಿದೆ. ಯೋಜನೆವಾರು ಹಂಚಿಕೆಯಾದ ಹಣದಲ್ಲಿ ವಿನಿಯೋಗ, ಬಂಡವಾಳ ವೆಚ್ಚವೇ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗೆ ಮಾನದಂಡವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ತಜ್ಞರು ಹೇಳುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಮೂಲಭೂತ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಒಳನಾಡು ಜಲಸಾರಿಗೆಗೆ 1048.47 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆ, 306 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ, ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್‌ವರೆಗೆ 70 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಳಕೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಸಹಕಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ 2,276 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದು, 850.66 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. 509 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚವಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೃಷಿಗೆ 4,120 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದು, 1,651 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದರಲ್ಲಿ 1,016 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. (ಶೇ.22) ವಿನಿಯೋಗವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ ಹಂಚಿಕೆಯಾದ ಅನುದಾನ 4,433 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ., ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ 2,419 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ., ವೆಚ್ಚ 1,893 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳಾಗಿದೆ. ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ 32,374 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಅನುದಾನ ಹಂಚಿದ್ದರೆ

16,460 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆಯಾಗಿದೆ, 12,570 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವ್ಯಯವಾಗಿದೆ. ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ 11,337 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದು, ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಯಾಗಿದ್ದು 4,184 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 4,007 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವಿನಿಯೋಗವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಅಂಕಿ-ಅಂಶಗಳು ತಿಳಿಸಿವೆ. **ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆಗೆ ತಜ್ಞರ ಆತಂಕ:** ಲೋಕೇಶ್‌ವರಯ್ಯ, ಜಲಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ, ಕೃಷಿ ಮುಂತಾದ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳ ದೊರಗಾಮಿ ಪ್ರಯೋಜನ ನೀಡುವಂತಹ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಮೀಸಲಿಟ್ಟಿರುವ ಹಣ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಎಂಬ ಅಪಸ್ವರವಿದೆ.ಇದು, ಸಾಲದೇಂಬಂತೆ ಅರ್ಥಿಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಂದೆ ಬಿದ್ದರೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗೆ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆ ಉಂಟಾಗಲಿದೆ ಎನ್ನುವುದು ತಜ್ಞರ ಆತಂಕವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಲೋಕೇಶ್‌ವರಯ್ಯ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ 9,645 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹಂಚಿಕೆ, 3,174 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದು, 2,617 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚವಾಗಿದೆ. ಹಾಗೆಯೇ ಜಲ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ ಇಲಾಖೆಗೆ 18,013 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಅನುದಾನ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್‌ವರೆಗೆ ಬಿಡುಗಡೆಯಾದ 4,507 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳಿಗೆ ಎದುರಾಗಿ 4,817 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚವಾಗಿದೆ. ಎರಡೂ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳ ಬಾಕಿ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ಮೊತ್ತವೇ 20 ಸಾವಿರ ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳಷ್ಟಿದೆ. ಜಾಲಿ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಳಿಸಲು ದುಪ್ಪಟ್ಟು ಮೊತ್ತ ಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೃಷ್ಣಾ ಎರಡನೇ ನ್ಯಾಯಾಧಿಕರಣ ರಾಜ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡಿದ ನೀರಿನ ಬಳಕೆ ಉದ್ದೇಶಿತ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ 1.25 ಲಕ್ಷ ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ., ಕಳಗಾಲಂಡೂರಿ, ಮೇಕೆದಾಟು ಯೋಜನೆ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಕ್ಕೆ ತರಬೇತಾದ ಒತ್ತಡವಿದೆ. ಕೃಷ್ಣಾ ಎರಡನೇ ನ್ಯಾಯಾಧಿಕರಣದ ಐತಿಹಾಸಿಕ ಅಧಿವೇಶನ ಪ್ರೇಟವಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದಂತೆ ಉದ್ದೇಶಿತ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಚಾಲನೆ ನೀಡಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ಪಾಲಿನ ನೀರು ಬಳಕೆಗೊಳ್ಳದಿದ್ದರೆ ಭವಿಷ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ದೊಡ್ಡ ಅಕಾಯ ಎದುರಿಸಬೇಕಾಗುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂದು ನೀರಾವರಿ ತಜ್ಞರು ಎಚ್ಚರಿಕೆ ದ್ದಾರೆ. ಲೋಕೇಶ್‌ವರಯ್ಯ ದೂರದರ್ಶನ ಪರಾಮರ್ಶೆ, ಲಿಂಗದರ್ಶನ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ಹೆಸರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಕಡತಗಳನ್ನು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಕಚೇರಿಗೆ ರವಾನೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಯಶಸ್ವಿ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಯೋಜನೆ ಗಳು ಸ್ಥಗಿತ ಕ್ಷಿತಿಯಾಗುವ ಎಂದು ಮೂಲಗಳು ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನೀಡಿವೆ.

**Source: Prajavani, Oct. 22, 2023**



# Centre bars states from buying rice from FCI stock

**New Delhi:** The Centre will continue to not allow state governments to buy rice from its buffer stock held by the Food Corporation of India under the open market sale scheme, even as fresh procurement has started. Less than 1% of the rice it offered in the market was sold in the past four months.

Till the first week of October, FCI has sold only 1,210 tonnes of rice out of the nearly 9.34 lakh tonnes offered by it since June 28 as a market intervention measure to check prices. A senior food ministry official said they don't expect any fresh sale as new crop has started arriving in mandis and prices have been tamed.

Responding to a query on why the government is not allowing states to buy rice and wheat from FCI stock when the agency did not find enough takers, the official said the decision was taken keeping in mind the "interest of all 140 crore Indians". TNN

**Source: The Times of India, p.13, Oct. 25, 2023**



# 56% storage at 14 major dams, Karnataka stares at water crisis

## Situation In State Serious, But Not Critical: Officials

Sandeep.Moudgal  
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**Bengaluru:** With the south-west monsoon failing and no relief coming in yet from the retreating monsoon, water

► **Inflow drops: Other bk, P 2**

level in all 14 major dams of Karnataka has hit a low, plunging the state into the throes of a water crisis.

As per the October 26 data, the overall water capacity in the 14 major dams was 56% of its capacity, with only 502tmcft of water left till the next monsoon season in June

### KRISHNA BASIN SAFE; CAUVERY INFLOW HIT

► **Karnataka is left with only 502tmcft of water** in 14 major dams till the next monsoon season in June 2024

► **Krishna basin is on the safer side with 63% storage** but the **Cauvery basin is under stress** due to zero inflows and release of 8,117 cusecs water daily



► Despite a total storage capacity of 114.6tmcft, **reservoirs of Harangi, Hemavathi, Kabini and KRS left with only 61.6tmcft of water**

► **Three hydel power plants are also under stress**, with Linganamakki, Supa and Varahi reporting only 152.5tmcft of water as opposed to the combined capacity of 328tmcft

ne 2024. This means that the same reserve of water needs to be managed for agriculture, domestic purposes, and industrial use for the next eight months. Government officials classified the situation as "serious", not "critical" at the moment, with the stress on the infrastructure

likely to increase in the next two to three months.

While the Krishna basin is relatively on the safer side with 63% storage and will cater to the demands of the population in North Karnataka districts, the Cauvery basin is coming under increasing stress due to zero

inflows and 8,117 cusecs of release of water every day.

Despite having a capacity of 114.6tmcft of water, the reservoirs of Harangi, Hemavathi, Kabini and KRS have reported a storage of only 61.6tmcft of water. Of this, as much as 34tmcft of water is required for domestic and industrial purposes, and the rest has to be calculated as "contingency" if the monsoons fail yet again in the next cycle, thereby giving little or no respite to farmers and the agriculture sector.

On the other end, the weather predictions have not offered much optimism, with a 65% deviation in the northeast monsoon rains in the past 25 days.

► **Water situation, P 4**

## Water situation in north districts manageable, says min

► **Continued from page 1**

**W**e are being told by IMD that there may be chances of better rainfall post October 30," said one government official.

Revenue minister Krishna Byregowda said, "While there is a depletion of water level in our reservoirs, we still are on the safer side. We expect the severity to come at the end of the crop season. But an advisory has been issued to all officials in revenue, water resources and agriculture departments

to not dip their hands into the drinking water allocations. Each reservoir has got its own thresholds of drinking water levels with the highest being in Cauvery basin followed by Tungabhadra and Almatti based on the requirements for drinking water."

The RDPR department has started monitoring the water situation for rural water supply every two weeks, and instructions have been given to zilla panchayat CEOs to start sourcing water locally in major drought-hit districts to meet



drinking water demands. "Our priority has been ensuring drinking water demands are met, and we have sought Rs 554 crore towards rural and urban water supply," said RDPR minister Priyank Kharge.

According to Kharge, water situation in the northern dis-

tricts of the state is "manageable", with water still being released from dams for agriculture purposes as well. "We expect the strain on our infrastructure to increase in the next three months when water levels continue to recede and the depth of the groundwater levels increases," he said.

Three hydel power plants are also under stress, with Linganamakki, Supa, and Varahi having only 152.5tmcft of water as opposed to the combined capacity of 328tmcft, which is 46% of the total storage levels.

**Source: The Times of India, p.1&4, Oct. 27, 2023**



# State govt seeks Rs 17,901 crore drought relief from Centre

NEW DELHI, DHNS

**T**he Karnataka government on Wednesday demanded Rs 17,901.73 crore from the Union government to compensate farmers affected by the drought in the kharif season this year.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Agriculture Minister N Chaluvarayaswamy and Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge met Union Agriculture Secretary Manoj Kumar Ahuja and Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla separately and briefed them of the drought situation in Karnataka.

Emerging from the meeting, Krishna Byre Gowda said, "We have sought a total drought relief of Rs 17,901.73 crore as per the NDRF norms. We have requested the Central government to clear the funds at the

## Coal to be purchased from foreign countries: Patil

**VIJAYAPURA, DHNS:** Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil said on Wednesday that two lakh tonnes of coal will be purchased from foreign countries as thermal power generation has been stopped due to lack of quality coal.

Speaking to reporters

after a meeting at the DC's office here, he said the tender process for the procurement of the coal is in process. Patil said the state needs 16,000 MW of power against the normal demand of 10,000 MW. An amount of Rs 3 crore has been provided to Hescom to purchase power, he said.

earliest." Out of Rs 17,901 crore estimated drought relief funds, the minister said the state government, for the first time, has demanded Rs 12,577 crore as gratuitous relief to families, whose livelihood has been seriously affected due to drought for 90 days.

As of September 22, the state

as a whole recorded 26 per cent deficit rainfall that led to an estimated agriculture and horticulture crop loss in about 45.55 lakh hectares during the kharif season, he said.

The state has so far declared drought in 216 taluks and will examine the possibility of declaring more taluks as drought-

hit in the first week of November, he said.

The state has also demanded Rs 4,414.29 crore for agriculture and horticulture crop loss during the kharif season (July-June) this year, while Rs 355 crore towards animal feed and Rs 554 crore for providing drinking water assistance in drought-affected taluks, he added.

The Karnataka government has estimated a total loss due to the crop damage in the state at Rs 33,770.10 crore. It has sought assistance of Rs 17,901.73 crore under the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

Minister Kharge said he requested the Centre to release the pending Rs 600 crore MGNREGA funds to the state in a separate meeting with the Union Rural Development Secretary here.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.5, Oct. 26, 2023**

# Onion prices up in Bengaluru as drought hits harvest

## Farmers also reluctant to reinvest after crop loss in Maha

**UDBHAVI BALAKRISHNA**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

**O**nion prices in Bengaluru are slowly inching upwards as erratic rains and drought have hit this year's onion harvest in the state.

Prices are up by over 50% in many stores in the city, with sellers scrambling to find adequate stock to meet the demand for the essential kitchen staple.

At the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Yard in Yeshwantpur, Bengaluru, wholesale prices of onion stood at Rs 65

per kg as of Thursday, after consistently hovering between Rs 35 and Rs 40 over the past couple of weeks.

Ravishankar B, Secretary, Bengaluru Potato and Onion Merchants Association, said that prices have been rising since the beginning of this week.

"Although the supply has been falling over the past couple of years, this season has been quite bad," Ravishankar told *DH*. "The wholesale onion market here is seeing only 100 truckloads or roughly 1,000 tonnes of fresh onion from districts every day compared to between 500 and



1,000 truckloads that used to come in every day in September-October a few years ago."

The shortage of fresh produce has led to old stocks being sold, for which many sellers are dependent on imports from Maharashtra, he added.

"By now, we should have got fresh stocks from Gadag, Hubballi and Belagavi after getting the produce from Chitradurga and Davangere in August-September. Unfortunately, the overall growth of the crop has been very less,"

Ravishankar said.

Another reason for the sharp fall in supply, Ravishankar said, is because many farmers were reluctant to reinvest in the crop after several of them, especially in Maharashtra, suffered major crop loss earlier this year.

Amid the supply crunch, several supermarkets in the city have raised their prices to anywhere between Rs 55 and Rs 80 per kg.

"Two days ago, the price per kg was Rs 50, but we

are also struggling with low supply and higher wholesale prices. Now, it is Rs 60 per kg, but I believe it might increase in the next few days," said a vegetable seller in Shanthinagar.

An organic store in Girinagar has been selling a kilo of onion for Rs 80 for the past two days. "Because our products are organic, the prices are double the usual rates. It might even go up to Rs 90 per kg by this weekend," said the owner.

### AT A GLANCE

Wholesale onion prices in APMC, Yeshwantpur, at Rs 65 per kg; it was Rs 35/Rs 40 for the past couple of weeks.

APMC seeing only 100 truckloads of fresh onion from districts every day compared to between 500 and 1,000 truckloads a few years ago.

Many farmers reluctant to reinvest in the crop after several of them, especially in Maharashtra, suffered major crop loss earlier this year.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.2, Oct. 27, 2023**

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# Decentralisation

## A TAXING MATTER

### BBMP Budget outlay (2023-24)

Rs 11,158 Cr

### Property tax revenue

Rs 4,412 Cr

### Non-tax revenue

Rs 1,331 Cr

### Central govt grant

Rs 461 Cr

### State govt grant

Rs 3,632 Cr

### Others

Rs 1,320 Cr

**T**he Property Tax collection procedure in BBMP needs to be completely revamped. It is proposed to take up all self-assessment declarations by all major commercial buildings for a detailed verification during 2023-24. These SAS returns will be compared with corresponding documents of other state agencies by using the required software. This is expected to lead to a substantial increase in property tax collection.

Thus reads the BBMP Budget 2023-24. The BBMP collected Rs 3,033 crore in 2021-22. It increased to Rs 3,758 crore in 2022-23. This time, the target is higher, at Rs 4,790 crore. "Excluding cesses which need to be transferred to other institutions, the property tax collection target has been set at Rs 4,412 crore. This target is 27% more than the amount proposed to be collected in the revised budget for 2022-23," says the budget.

In its previous budget, BBMP estimated a revenue of Rs 1,000 crore from the B-Khata to A-Khata Regularisation Scheme, hoping to bring more properties under the tax net. Thus, every year, the BBMP keeps ambitious targets and ideas to increase the property tax revenue. But, at the end of the year, the actual tax collected falls short of expectations.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D K Shivakumar is keen on increasing the tax revenue. He spoke about how people declare less built-up areas for their properties while self-assessing the value, citing his own example. This is, in fact, well-known ever since the self-assessment scheme (SAS) came into existence in 2008.

#### Need for a re-look

"There was a scope to do 10% (initially 5%) random checks per year under the SAS scheme. This was never done. If they had done it, all properties would have been checked by now," say sources in the know. The last budget speech indicated that such verification will be done this year.

"Physical verification is essential," says D R Prakash, president of Osborne Layout Residents Welfare Association. He recalls an online system where people could flag properties paying low or no taxes, which now does not exist. "This was withdrawn citing security purposes, probably due to too many skeletons tumbling out," he says.

The BBMP, in 2016, divided the city into six zones and fixed property taxes based on the built-up area, type of building, zone and other factors. However, this ruffled the feathers of property owners as some had to pay more than 100% more in taxes. Later, the BBMP passed a resolution in the council limiting the hike. Now, the tax is

fixed at 20% more than the pre-2016 value if it exceeds it in the zonal structure.

BBMP had tax arrears of more than Rs 2,265 crore in 2018, which could have only gone up now despite Palike trying to waive penalties and interest and encouraging people and entities to pay taxes.

Another problem is commercial properties getting under-taxed. "BBMP needs to look at the commercial properties. Progressively, they should start looking at how the assessment is done and bring a differential method to fix taxes. In Western countries, the tax on a stadium is not the same as the tax on a shop. The tax is a percentage of the revenue generated," says Namita Aggarwal, Head of Municipal Revenues - Janaagraha, advocating the same system for Bengaluru.

#### B Khata properties

The problem is also with more than 110 villages, seven city municipalities and one town municipality added to Bengaluru in 2007, which need proper khata and legal recognition.

To bring owners of such properties into the tax net, the BBMP keeps conducting Khata melas, where people will pay betterment charges and get the properties converted. Khata melas are also undertaken for apartments that do not have khata bifurcated yet pay property taxes under the B register using the SAS number.

However, many beneficiaries say this process is marred with bribes, and it takes a lot of willpower to overcome it. Prabhu Patil, the ex-president of Rohan Vasantha apartment in Marathahalli, says such melas are helpful. In their case, there were occupancy certificates for the flats, but the khata was not bifurcated. Initially, in 2020-21, people had to pay bribe. However, later, they used the Sakala scheme and online facilities and approached the joint commissioner of the Mahadevapura zone when the BBMP officials rejected their application without a valid reason. In two months, they got the khata and are now a part of the formal A Khata property tax net.

#### 'Work is on'

Revenue department officials are working to fix the loopholes. Munish Moudgil, Special Commissioner for Revenue, BBMP, told *DH* that digitisation of BBMP property records is underway, and the department wants to hand it over to people smoothly. "It is a positive approach. We also aim to automate the change of name in online khata documents when the property transfer happens," he adds.

"We are doing everything to mop up the property tax revenue. Property tax is in the city's interest. I request people to pay taxes promptly," he adds.

Property taxes are a major source of revenue for the BBMP, but it struggles to collect taxes on time. The problem is a mix of inefficiency, corruption and citizen apathy

## Fixing issues needs political will

V RAVICHANDAR

Over the last two decades, particularly when financial resources are crunched, one gets a sense of déjà vu when the leadership makes statements of how the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) property tax collections are way below potential and how we need to do something about it.

Recently, the Bengaluru Development Minister felt property tax of Rs 3,000 crores (including arrears) annually was low. He advocated an inspection and enforcement drive to get property owners to pay their dues share.

Over eight years ago, the Government of India Economic Survey indicated that Bengaluru collects only a fifth of its potential. It does seem we are leaving something between Rs 3,000-9,000 crores uncollected, depending on whom you listen to.

A problem in the BBMP's structural set-up is that the person (or office) indicating the property tax target for the year is the person who is also in charge of ensuring collections. Consequently, considerable perverse incentives exist to understate the potential while looking good in terms of a high percentage collected vis-à-vis targets.

Unless different departments handle these two roles, and they are measured by proving the potential exists and collection efficiency, respectively, the bane of lower property tax collection will be perpetual. And the city will be the loser.

#### How tax slips through cracks

Firstly, all properties are not in the tax net. Many existing buildings on the ground do not appear in BBMP records. Even where properties (including large campuses) are listed, the built-up square feet area shown for taxation is often way below the actual reality.

The property GIS database is way off the mark, with no proper geocoordinates for each property. No system for transferring newly cleared plans or occupancy certificates into the property database exists. One wonders if there are cosy arrangements between the field officials and the owners since it is common knowledge that BBMP officials are aware of every construction activity in the city. And if such arrangements do exist, how can the same people fix the problem? The two areas where there

is considerable misreporting are owner-occupied/rental status and whether residential/commercial. The taxes in the latter cases are twice the former's rates. The rental status can easily be fixed if BBMP can get the courts to request for property tax payment classification before admitting any tenancy dispute cases—few owners will risk their inability to go to court against the tenant for the savings a false declaration offers.

The commercial usage shown as residential can be tackled by sharing the databases between Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and BBMP. For this, there is a need for a unique property ID to link the databases, and all agencies must follow a unique property ID not linked to the ward number. Thus far, there has been zero interest in getting this done.

#### Capital value vs presumed value

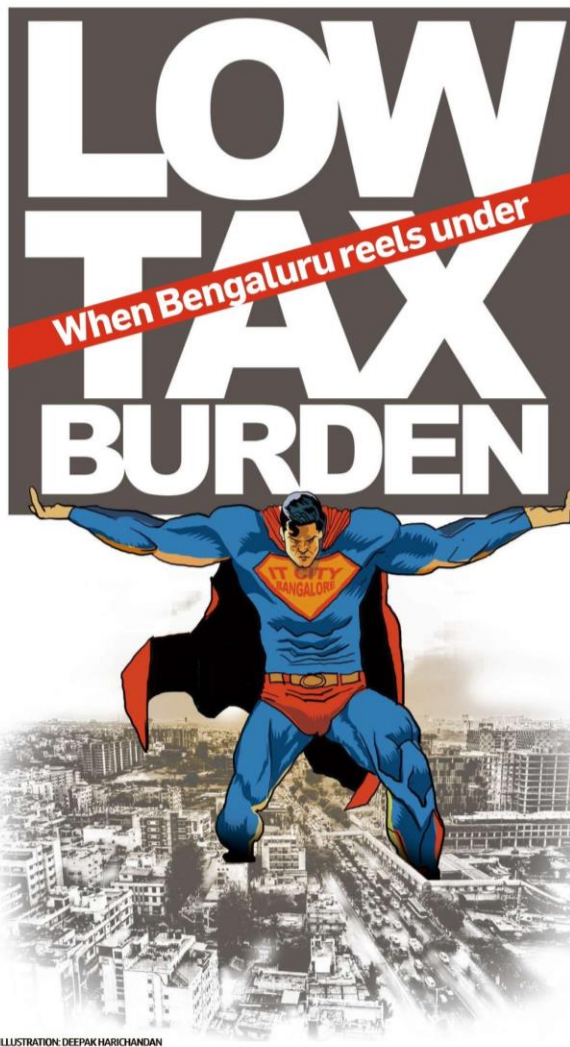
One standard solution to increase property tax collection is to shift to the Capital Value System, where the tax is levied as a percentage of the property's market value. We do not have a transparent property pricing discovery system. The nearest proxy is guidance values that get revised upwards occasionally.

Our current self-assessment scheme (SAS) process can rezone the areas based on the new guidance value bands. But it is equally important from a citizen-friendly outlook to have the online property tax records reflect the new zoning for a property. The online system must be more user-friendly and intuitive and allow for changes to property with an appropriate verification process.

BBMP's property tax collection can reach its true potential if we have the necessary political will, administrative commitment and law-abiding citizenry to work in tandem. The essence of the SAS was to trust the owner to tell the truth over expecting a revenue officer to uncover a lie.

It will help if the citizens see the money they pay as taxes being used wisely for better city infrastructure. If that does not happen, the existing trust deficit between citizens and the government will continue to widen.

(The author advocated SAS in 2000 at a Bangalore Agenda Task Force summit, which was later adopted by the BMD and BBMP)



DR ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

Feedback: pointblank@deccanherald.co.in

Source: Deccan Herald, p.3A, Oct. 21, 2023



# BBMP gets Rs 291-cr central grant, plans 21 civic works

## Projects include water supply, sanitation, waste management

NAVEEN MENEZES  
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has finalised 21 new works related to water supply, sanitation, and solid waste management at a cost of Rs 291 crore.

The action plan was prepared based on the second tranche of grants provided by the 15th Finance Commission as part of the devolution of taxes.

Some of the prominent works include drilling new borewells and recharge pits to harvest rainwater, construction of 150- to 200-tonne capacity garbage transfer stations in five assembly constituencies, a sewage treatment plant (STP) near Rachenahalli Lake, and a ground level reservoir in Pulakeshinagar.

While the Bangalore Water

Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will be responsible for works amounting to Rs 133 crore, the BBMP will directly handle works worth Rs 50 crore, which is entirely earmarked for lakes.

A sum of Rs 108 crore is given to the newly formed Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML).

The Rs 50-crore grant has been distributed across 22 lakes, including Banaswadi, where the civic body plans to create a forest and a public park to stop further encroachment of the waterbody.

Barring Halasuru, which has got Rs 10 crore for enhancing storage capacity by de-silting, a majority of the lakes identified in the new action plan fall on the outskirts of the city.

The BSWML has set aside Rs 3 crore to set up 'Kalika Kendras' at various locations with an aim to popularise composting

of waste locally. The Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd (KPCL), which is setting up a waste-to-energy plant in Bidadi, will be given Rs 30 crore.

### Previous grants

In July 2021, the centre sanctioned a grant of Rs 279 crore for 27 works across the three streams mentioned above. Almost all works are currently in progress.

Last week, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath reviewed the progress of all these works and directed the officers to complete them at the earliest to avoid delays in receiving the fresh grants.

The 27 works included the development of eight lakes (Rs 41.85 crore), augmentation of water supply through borewells (Rs 97.65 crore), and solid waste management (SWM) for works like upgrading dry waste collection centres, installation of automatic waste segregation machine, scientific closure of landfill sites (Rs 130 crore), etc.

The borewell works had come under the Enforcement Directorate (ED) scanner as the civic body was accused of inflating the project cost.



The BBMP has roped in agencies to clear debris dumped in public places. Blackspots continue to exist due to lack of enforcement against violators. DH FILE PHOTO

### Prominent works

Creation of recharge pits to harvest rainwater  
**Rs 30 cr**

STP inside Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Energy Development near Rachenahalli  
**Rs 30 cr**

Ground-level reservoir and pump house in Pulakeshinagar  
**Rs 30 cr**

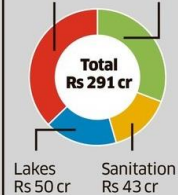
Scientific closure of Bagalur landfill  
**Rs 10 cr**

Five transfer stations  
**Rs 65 cr**

### Money matters

Solid waste management  
Rs 108 cr

Water supply  
Rs 90 cr



**Source: Deccan Herald, p.2, Oct. 23, 2023**

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## ECONOMY

# K'taka govt constitutes nine industrial vision groups

Industry leaders  
have been brought  
to give heft to these  
think tanks

BENGALURU ,DHNS

**T**he Karnataka government has constituted nine sector-specific vision groups comprising industry leaders to aid the state's aim of becoming the number one destination for "future-tech manufacturing" in Asia.

"These vision groups would provide guidance and strategic insights," Industries Minister MB Patil said in a statement.

The vision groups cover the following sectors: aerospace & defence, machine tools, ESDM, pharmaceuticals, core manufacturing, auto/electric vehicles, Industry 5.0, textiles and green energy. All vision groups are chaired by Patil with the industries secretary as the vice-chairperson.

Members of the aerospace & defence vision group are: Apparao Venkata Mallavarapu, MD & Chairman, Centum Electronics; Udayant Malhoutra, CEO & MD, Dynamic Technologies; HG Chandrashekar, Founder & MD, SASMOS; Ashwani Bhargava, Senior Director, Boeing; Kritivas Mukherjee, Director - Govt Affairs, Airbus; Samit Ray, Head - Public Affairs, Raytheon; CB Anathakrish-



**Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil.**

nan, Chairman & MD, HAL.

The ESDM vision group has: Jitendra Chaddah, Country Head, Global Foundries; Santhosh Kumar, Managing Director, Texas Instruments; Ramesh Kunhikannan, Board Member, Kaynes Technology; Vinay Shenoy, MD, Infineon; Venu Nuguri, MD & CEO, Hitachi Energy; SK Murthy, Director of IP, Intel Technology India Pvt Ltd; Charan Gurumurthy, MD, Tata Semiconductors Assembly and Testing Pvt Ltd.

The auto/EV vision group has: Guruprasad Mudlapur, JMD & CTO, Bosch; Arun Mittal, Director, Exide Automotive; Sudeep Dalvi, Senior VP & Director, Toyota; Kamal Bali, President & MD, Volvo; Sushant Naik, Global Head - Govt & Public Affairs, Tata Motors.

Vision group on machine tools has: Sanjay Koul, MD, Timken; Harish B, CEO, ACE; Lakshmikanthan Krishnan, Director, TaeguTec; A Venkata Krishnan, CEO, Yuken; Tarang V Parikh, MD, YG-I.

The pharma vision group has: GV Prasad, Co-Chairman and MD, Dr Reddy's Laboratories; Siddharth Mittal, CEO & MD, Biocon; Sameer Khetarpal, CEO & MD, Jubilant Lifesciences; Vishnukant Bhutada, MD, Shilpa; Umang Vohra, MD & CEO, Cipla; Dilip Surana, Chairman & MD, Micro Labs.

The core manufacturing vision group has: Vinod Noval, CEO, JSW; KC Jhanwar, MD, Ultratech; Rahul Kumar, Joint MD, Baldota; Bahirji A Ghorpade, MD, SMIORE; RBM Tripathi, President Operations, JK Cement.

The vision group on Industry 5.0 has: Akshay Singhal, CEO & Founder, Log9; Mallikarjun Santhanakrishnan, CEO, GS Global Ventures; Rohan M Ganapathy, CEO, Bellatrix; Awais Ahmed, CEO, Pixxel; Souvik Sengupta, CEO & Co-founder, InfraMarket; Gadhadar Reddy, CEO & Founder, Nopo Nanotechnologies.

The textiles vision group has: Pankaj Narula, CEO, Shahi Exports Pvt Ltd; Gautam Chakravarti, CEO, Gokaldas Exports; Vishak Kumar, CEO, Aditya Birla Madura F&L; VS Ganesh, CEO, Page Industries; Punit Lalbhai, Vice Chairman and ED, Arvind Mills.

The green energy vision group has: Kishore Nair, CEO & Director, Avaada Energy; Vivek Singla, President and Green H2 Head, Renew Power; Krishna Revankar, CEO, Emmvee Solar Systems; Sharad Pungalia, CEO & MD, Amplus Solar; Ashish Khanna, CEO & MD, Tata Power Solar.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.14, Oct. 21, 2023**



# Deficient monsoon hits power generation at hydel plants

Water in three major hydel reservoirs enough to generate 3,997 MU; KPCL to conserve water for generation in summer

Sathish G.T.  
SHIVAMOGGA

A weak southwest monsoon has led to low water levels in reservoirs this year, in turn impacting power generation in hydel dams.

The cumulative water storage in three major hydel dams is only 43.75% of their capacity, forcing Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) to go for thermal energy and conserve the available water for the coming summer. In 2022, the State received good rains. During the corresponding period last year, the three major hydel reservoirs recorded a cumulative storage of 77.88%.

## Storage

Linganamakki, Supa, and Mani are the three major hydel reservoirs for power production in Karnataka. As on October 21, the total storage available was sufficient to generate 3,997 MU (million units) of power. On this day last year, there



Data on major hydel power dams in Karnataka (2022 figures in brackets)

	Linganamakki	Supa	Mani
Full reservoir level	1,819 ft	564 m	594.36 m
Present level	1,786.75 ft (1,814ft)	545.05 m (553.85 m)	580.96 m (589.56 m)
Gross capacity	156 tmcft	147.53 tmcft	33.96 tmcft
Present capacity	66.84 tmcft/44.02% (135.34 tmcft/89.19%)	75.93 tmcft/52.25% (104.99 tmcft/72.25%)	10.89 tmcft/34.98% (22.48 tmcft/72.22%)
Energy content	2,006 million units (4,065 MU)	1,651 MU (2,283 MU)	340 MU (703 MU)



A file photo of Supa dam in Joida taluk of Uttara Kannada district.

was enough water to generate 7,050 MU. There have been complaints of frequent power cuts across Karnataka. Farmers have hit the streets demanding power supply, as they are finding it difficult to safeguard standing crops due to scanty rainfall. Due to the drought, the demand for power has increased.

At the same time, power generation has suffered. As of now, the demand is around 15,000 MW to 16,000 MW, up from 9,000 MW to 10,000 MW last year. The Sharavathi Valley Project, which has four power-generating stations with a total capacity

of 1,469 MW, is one of the major sources of electricity for Karnataka. As on October 21, the water in the dam was only 66.8 tmcft, which is 44.02% of the total capacity. With the available storage, 2,006 MU can be generated.

## Outlook for 150 days

"We can generate power approximately for next 150 days with the available storage," said Uday Nayak, Chief Engineer (Operation and Maintenance), KPCL.

Last year on this day, there was sufficient storage to generate 4,065 MU. The water level in the dam reached its maximum level four times last year.

The previous occasion it was full was in 2019-20.

The water storage in Supa reservoir (Kali Valley Project) and Mani reservoir (Varahi Valley Project) has also come down.

With the available storage, only 1,651 MU can be generated in Supa dam. Last year, the reservoir was filled to 72.25% of capacity, and the storage was sufficient to generate 2,283 MU.

In Mani, the water level is only 34.98% of the reservoir's capacity. The present storage is sufficient to generate 340 MU. Last year, this time, the water level was 72.22% of the capacity, and 703 MU could

be generated with the available storage.

## Conserving water

The KPCL has decided to conserve water in the reservoirs for generation in summer.

M.C. Divakar, Director (Technical) of the KPCL, told *The Hindu*, "Considering the water level in the reservoirs, the generation was being managed, keeping in mind demand in the coming days. We are going for thermal energy rather than hydel, as of now. We are conserving water for the coming summer, which is the time when students face examinations."

**Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 22, 2023**

## Karnataka should take a leaf out of Haryana's book to tackle power crisis

M G DEVASAHAYAM

Karnataka, which recently saw a change in regime that implemented the 'Gruha Jyoti Scheme' of providing free electricity for up to 200 units to every residential household, is in the throes of a deep power crisis.

The state is seeing an unexpected demand of more than 16,000 MW in October 2023. Energy Minister K J George said the state recorded a peak demand of 16,950 MW on August 25, compared with just 11,268 MW in August 2022.

According to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, this near 50% increase in power consumption is due to drought, since farmers are using more electricity for their pumpsets in the absence of adequate rains this year. The 'Gruha Jyoti Scheme' could also be a factor responsible for this huge spurt in demand.

The state government has chalked out an action plan to mitigate the shortfall in power situation with these components:

a) Power purchases through the day-ahead market (DAM) and real-time market (RTM).

b) Swapping of power from UP and Punjab during the pre-solar and post-solar hours and round-the-clock (RTC) power.

c) Procuring power through short-term tenders  
d) Imposing Section II of the Electricity Act 2003 to draw power from generators in the state through open access.

These are costly options for a state already overburdened with several 'welfare guarantee' schemes.

For farming, the government is committed to providing 5 hours of power supply during either daytime or night time on a rotation basis in three shifts. For industries, the Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) has assured "uninterrupted power supply".

At present, industries are suffering from frequent power cuts, outages and voltage surges/dips. There is also uncertainty because they do not know when the power will come or go and therefore cannot schedule production.

All these palliative measures and assurances are reactive, supply-based, on-demand solutions that cannot resolve the vexing problem, which is likely to persist. A better alternative would be proactive, need-based energy management (NBEM).

In the power sector, there is a distinct difference between demand and need. While the former is inflated and exaggerated, the latter is actual and realistic. And if

the need is properly identified and satisfied, the problem could get resolved.

## Categories of Consumers

Power consumers are in five broad categories: industry, agriculture, commercial/office establishments, domestic and essential services. Only a small percentage of industries are in the continuous process category, needing power for 24 hours. Another small percentage would be doing two or three shifts. The vast majority are single-shift who would be satisfied with an industry load of 8-10 hours a day.

In farming, crops need only limited (5/6 hours per day) but good quality and uninterrupted power supply. Agro-based industries like sugar and cotton ginning are seasonal and require full power only for part of the year. Cold storage need 12 to 14 hours of power supply, preferably split into two or three parts. The load of majority domestic consumers and commercial establishments is essentially for lighting.

What is important is that the supply should be transparent, assured and reliable. The first thing to do in NBEM is to categorise the consumers as per their consumption profile—shift-based industries; continuous process industries and industries having independent feeders in

rigation tube wells; peak load requirement; commercial/domestic connections and essential and emergency services.

The next step is to design a delivery mechanism and streamline distribution system. Regulatory measures should be in accordance with the delivery mechanism and should be strictly enforced through a combination of public relations (PR), vigilance and technical supervision. PR is to make the consumers aware of the measures, vigilance to put the fear of severe penalty into field officers and wayward consumers and technical supervision so that no one acts smart.

If properly designed, structured and implemented, NBEM would bring in enormous benefits to consumers, the grid, DISCOMS/ESCOMS and the government. System losses would be substantially reduced since line and equipment do not get overloaded for the full day. Quality, including voltage profile and power factor at all levels, will improve leading to better industrial and agricultural health and productivity.

Several years ago, in a crisis situation akin to that of Karnataka, NBEM was designed and implemented by the Haryana State Electricity Board (HSEB), and it yielded very good results.

The HSEB was resorting to abstract power regulatory measures, as is being done in Karnataka now. A quick study of the measures revealed several defects and loopholes. Available power was flowing in all the feeders simultaneously and bulk consumers often resorted to theft and panic overloading.

Farmers kept their electric pumps switched on to water their fields at whatever time power came, invariably leading to wastage. There were no separate feeders for supplying power to distinct categories as per need. Even to cater to the needs of essential services such as hospitals, water supply and sewerage, the entire urban/rural feeders had to be switched on, facilitating unauthorised drawing by consumers connected to such feeders. The result was near-total chaos.

It was under these circumstances the NBEM system was quickly put together and enforced, starting with categorisation of consumers. After allocating 6 hours for peak load requirement, day/night was divided into three parts of six hours each. The state was also grouped into regions, each having a number of 220 KV substations.

After the peak hours, power feeders in one group would be switched off from the 220 KV substation itself in rotation for

six hours. For essential services, domestic consumption and independent feeder industries, amperage/units were fixed and power released accordingly round the clock. In addition, for special needs such as water supply, timings were fixed and power made available outside the group timings.

About six months after its introduction, an evaluation was made by a specially constituted group of senior engineers and the report was very positive. Some of the direct benefits identified were: assured supply and equitable distribution of power, system discipline, improvement in quality of power, reduction in system losses, streamlined control of power distribution, impact on the performance of regional grid, higher consumer satisfaction and economic efficiency and improved generation due to disciplined distribution system.

This was achieved manually, with current technology, results could be much better. NBEM, if refined and reworked to suit Karnataka's requirements and effectively implemented, could resolve the current crisis without putting unnecessary burden on the state exchequer.

(The author is a former IAS officer and chairman of the erstwhile Haryana State Electricity Board.)

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.9, Oct. 23, 2023**



# Ridership up 15% since Shakti scheme began, RTCs to buy 5,675 buses: CM

**6,500 drivers and 300 technical staff to be hired for four RTCs**

BENGALURU, DHNS

Road transport corporations (RTCs) in Karnataka will purchase 5,675 buses in view of the huge response to the Shakti scheme, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced on Saturday.

Speaking at a review meeting of the Transport Department, he stated that RTCs had recorded a

15% increase in ridership since the launch of the scheme. RTCs have deployed more buses and are running additional schedules (services) to meet the demand, he said, according to a statement released by his office.

Stating that the government had sanctioned Rs 500 crore in the budget to purchase new buses, the chief minister instructed the officials to complete the process as early as possible.

As per records available with RTCs, 81 crore women have travelled under the free bus service

scheme since its launch on June 11 this year, costing the exchequer Rs 1,902 crore. Daily ridership for the state's four RTCs has



Daily ridership for the state's four RTCs has been around 1.1 crore, as against 82 lakh before the launch of Shakti scheme.

DH FILE PHOTO

been around 1.1 crore, as against 82 lakh during the pre-scheme period. The meeting also discussed the revenue target for the Transport Department and the finances of the RTCs. The department has earned Rs 83 crore in fines from vehicle inspections.

## Staff recruitment

The government has approved the recruitment of 6,500 drivers and 300 technical staff in the four RTCs.

This will be the first recruitment in the corporations since 2016, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) said in a statement.

With 13,669 vacancies, the RTCs had sought the govern-

ment's approval to recruit 13,000 driving and technical staff. The government gave approval for recruiting 6,500 staff in the first phase.

The KSRTC will recruit 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors and 300 technical staff, the NWKRTC 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors, the BMTC 2,500 conductors and the KKRTC 300 conductors.

The KKRTC, which serves the districts of Kalyana Karnataka, will also recruit 1,619 staff and is conducting driving tests. The process will be completed by January 2024.

After the recruitments, the four RTCs will still have 8,719 driving and technical staff.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.7, Oct. 22, 2023**

## No. of private vehicles in B'luru to cross 1-cr mark; over 75L are 2-wheelers

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**Bengaluru:** The number of private vehicles registered in Bengaluru is set to touch the one-crore mark by the end of the Dasara-Diwali festive season.

Currently, the city has 99.8 lakh such vehicles, which are registered as non-transport vehicles in RTOs. Of them, 75.6 lakh are two-wheelers and 23.1 lakh cars registered as personal vehicles. In September this year, 1,300 new bikes and scooters and 409 cars hit the road every day, on average.

As of September 30 this year, Bengaluru has a total of 1.1 crore vehicles.

Festive months of October and November usually see a surge in registration of new vehicles. Transport officials said the number of private (or, non-transport) vehicles would

## ROADS FACE BURDEN

► Bengaluru's total vehicular population doubled from 55.2L in 2012-13 to 1.1 crore in Sept 2023

► This Sept, 1,300 new bikes and scooters and 409 cars hit the road every day, on average

► Namma Metro train covers 74km and ferries seven lakh passengers a day; BMTC carries 43 lakh passengers daily

► Experts in the city say increase in personal vehicles will put more pressure on the already-stressed road network

cross the one-crore mark in Bengaluru soon. Despite many modes of public transport, including an expansive Metro network, and ride-sharing apps, a significant section of Bangaloreans still use private vehicles for daily commute.

► 3cr vehicles in K'taka, P 3

**Continued....**



# K'taka home to over 3cr vehicles

► Continued from page 1

The city's vehicular population has doubled from 55.2 lakh in 2012-13 to 1.1 crore on September 30 this year. Metro and BMTC are the major public transport operators in Bengaluru. Metro covers 74km of route and ferries 7 lakh passengers a day. BMTC carries 43 lakh passengers daily. Reliance on private vehicles will reduce only when Namma Metro further expands its network into more office hubs and BMTC increases its fleet size, mobility experts said.

According to them, any increase in personal cars would put more pressure on the already-stressed road network, which has not seen any expansion in the past decade. In fact, the tech corridor saw a massive jam in the last week of September when a majority of working professionals took personal vehicles to office. Many motorists took 2-3 hours to cover a 10km stretch in peak traffic in that particular week.

From 2012-13 to September



## BURGEONING NUMBERS

Year	Vehicle count in B'luru (in lakh)	In Karnataka (in crore)
2012-13	55.26	1.49
2013-14	60.22	1.63
2014-15	65.75	1.79
2015-16	71.61	1.95
2016-17	77.85	2.12
2017-18	83.65	2.28
2018-19	90.27	2.45
2019-20	96.38	2.61
2020-21	1 crore	2.72
2021-22	1.04 crore	2.84
2022-23	1.09 crore	2.98
Sept 23	1.12 crore	3.06

Source: Transport dept

2023, the number of vehicles registered across Karnataka has more than doubled from nearly 1.5 crore to more than 3 crore. There are 2.2 crore two-wheelers and 45 lakh four-wheelers registered in the state. Transport commissioner Yogesh AM said, "After the Covid pandemic, there was a surge in the number of people using private vehicles. That period saw registration of new vehicles and purchase of used private vehicles. With au-

tomobile makers coming in with new variants and added features, more and more people are upgrading to improved versions."

The Congress government has set Rs 11,500 crore as revenue target for the transport department. A transport official said the department has generated revenues of Rs 5,226 crore from the registration of new vehicles during 2023-24 and other sources this financial year.

**Source: The Times of India, p.1 & 3, Oct. 23, 2023**



# State RTCs to fill 8,719 vacancies after years of staff shortage

Over the past eight years, no new driver, conductor, or mechanic has been recruited by the road transport corporations

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

**K**arnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and other State transport corporations plan to hire 8,719 employees following the retirement of 13,669 employees, according to Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy.

State-run road transport corporations (RTCs) – KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC, and KKRTC – have not recruited any driver, conductor, or mechanic in the past eight years.

Mr Reddy told *The Hindu*, “Since 2016, 13,669 staff members have retired, causing a shortage in our workforce. The lack of drivers has prevented us from utilising our fleet to its full capacity. To address this, we plan to recruit 8,719 individuals across all four corporations, and also add new buses. The State government has approved recruitment of 6,500 drivers and 300 mechanical staff in the first phase.”

## Post pandemic

After the COVID-19 pandemic, financially-strained corporations were instructed by the then government to halt

## Recruitment drive

- **KSRTC** 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors and 300 technical staff
- **NWKRTC** 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors
- **BMTC** 2,500 conductors
- **KKRTC** 300 conductors

\*Source: Transport department

regular hiring as a cost-cutting measure.

In February 2023, the KSRTC took measures to tackle the driver shortage by outsourcing drivers to various divisions. This decision was made since the KSRTC had a shortage of 2,000 drivers. Currently, the total staff strength of the KSRTC is 35,000, out of which a majority are drivers and conductors.

“If we encounter a shortage of administrative staff, we can cope through digitisation. However, shortage of drivers and mechanical staff will directly impact our services. Hence, we have commenced the recruitment process for drivers and conductors,” Mr. Reddy explained.

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), similar to the KSRTC, is currently experiencing a deficit of 5,000 drivers.

After the State government gave the green signal, KSRTC plans to hire 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors, and 300 technical staff. The NWKRTC plans to recruit 2,000 drivers-cum-conductors, the BMTC 2,500 conductors, and the KKRTC plans to hire 300 conductors.

The KKRTC, which is responsible for serving the Kalyana Karnataka region, is in the process of recruiting 1,619 staff members, and is conducting driving tests. The Transport Minister has stated that this process will be completed by January 2024.

## Shakti scheme

Following the success of the Shakti scheme, providing free travel to women passengers in non-premium RTC services, the government intends to acquire 5,675 new buses. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recently held a review meeting with Transport Department officials. He directed them to utilise the ₹500 crore allocated in the Budget to purchase new buses.

Since its introduction on June 11 this year, the Shakti scheme in RTCs has facilitated free bus service for 82 crore women, incurring a total cost of ₹1,933,40,02,184 to the exchequer.

**Source: The Hindu, p.3, Oct. 25, 2023**



# Regional imbalance grouse spreads to coastal region

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** Once a long-standing grouse of north Karnataka, simmering discontent over regional imbalances now appears to be a huge peeve of the seven districts of Malnad and coastal Karnataka.

Flagging widespread regional inequality in health, education and employment sectors and burgeoning confusion over the Forest Rights Act and Kasturirangan Report, thousands of people from Udupi, Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan and Uttara Kannada districts besides 36 MLAs have organised a mega consultation meeting in Bengaluru on October 31.

Under the banner 'Malenadu-Karavali Janapara Okkuta', locals from these regions who live in Bengaluru have been brainstorming over what they call "developmental disparity".

Sudhir Kumar Murolli, convener of the Okkuta and an advocate from Koppa said, "The seven districts have contributed immensely to the state's economy besides ensuring food and water security. Despite an abundance of natural resources, these districts have been deprived of development and infrastructure in several sectors."

Referring to regional drawbacks, Murolli said, "Barring Mangaluru, there isn't a single superspecialty hospital in any of the districts. Despite



the outbreak of endemic diseases such as KFD, Handigodu and others, people must either go to Manipal or Mangaluru which is 300km to 400km away. There is a high court bench in Dharwad and Kalaburagi. But this region has no representation despite people travelling the same distance from North Karnataka to Bengaluru for litigation. Every year the region tops in board results, yet we do not have an IIT or any professional college run by the government."

Anil Hosakoppa, a member of the federation, said, "All developmental issues are linked to the forest Act. Due to the Forest Rights Act and declaration of ESZ, several farmers are being driven out of their villages. Native people have so far protected flora and fauna, but today they have been projected as a threat to conservation. We want to draw the government's attention to these issues."

The meeting will be held at Adichunchanagiri Mutt in Vijayanagara.

**Source: The Times of India, p.4, Oct. 25, 2023**



# Special investment zones inch closer to reality

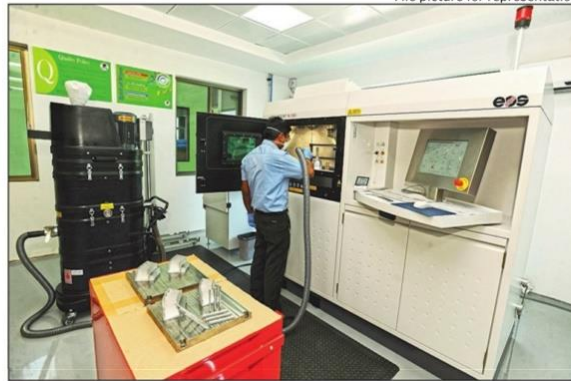
Sandeep.Moudgal  
@timesgroup.com

**Bengaluru:** In a decision that could have a far-reaching impact on the industry sector, the government's draft rules for the new Karnataka special investment region suggests industries themselves will govern the area — from collecting taxes and ensuring proper roads to managing water resources and processing waste.

Industries department officials say the decision was taken keeping the Electronics City Industrial Township Association (ELCITA) model in mind. This saves industries the trouble of coordinating with local panchayats, urban local bodies, municipalities, and corporations over providing basic infrastructure. The government has given people 30 days (from October 16) to file objections or suggestions.

As per the draft, regional development authorities will have a chairperson, a chief executive officer, a general manager, and members for a limited period of three years only. 'Non-official' members of the bureaucracy will also be nominated to the RDA panel.

The government has laid down stringent rules on who can be a candidate for these posts.



File picture for representation

**HUGE PLANS:** Draft rules suggest industries themselves will govern these regions, including managing solid waste and collecting taxes

For instance, the chairperson of the RDA must be a degree-holder with at least 10 years of administrative experience in industrial development or must be a managing director, director, partner, or proprietor of a large manufacturing industry or enterprise that has run for at least five years in the notified special investment region.

The RDA will also have a dispute settlement mechanism with either a retired principal district and sessions judge or a retired secretary to the government as chairperson, along with retired district and session

judges, retired senior officials from the government, or anyone who possesses a LLB degree with a minimum of 10 years of legal practice or service in the government.

The same rate of tax collected by panchayats, ULB, municipality, or corporation from which it has been carved out will apply, unless stipulated otherwise by the government.

S Selvakumar, principal secretary, commerce and industries said the decision to abolish the ELCITA system on tax was taken to provide "better infrastructure". "There is a cap on

## The ELCITA model

ELCITA was established in 1977 along the Bengaluru-Hosur IT corridor. The authority was recognised as an industrial township in 2013. Spread over 903 acres, ELCITA houses top IT-BT companies and maintains basic infrastructure, including roads, SWM, streetlights, etc. Taxes are collected from companies and residents — some 312 taxpayers in all — within the township. It holds elections to township posts every three years.

how many acres of land can be considered as an RDA and the population. Based on this, taxes will be collected and shared with the local bodies from which they have been carved out," said Selvakumar.

The RDA will have to draw up an annual budget — which must be approved by the government — besides a programme of work, a note on its history, and a description of each scheme, including expenditures incurred and progress of work.

The industries department said no decision has been taken on where these special investment region authorities will be set up. "Based on objections and suggestions, we will take the next decision," he said.

**Source: The Times of India, p.4, Oct. 25, 2023**



# State attracted ₹7.6L cr projects in 5 yrs: Study

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, Karnataka attracted new investment project proposals worth Rs 7.6 lakh crore, with the highest jump being registered in 2022-23 when the state drew projects worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore.

This was revealed in a study on 'Investment, growth and development in Karnataka between 2018-19 & 2022-23', released on Thursday by MSME Export Promotion Council along with Confederation of Organic Food Producers and Marketing Agencies.



**K'TAKA, AN INVESTMENT HAVEN**

According to data from Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy, Karnataka received new investment proposals worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore in 2022-23, marking a substantial increase compared to the previous four financial years: Rs 79,816.4 crore in 2021-22, Rs 74,967.7 crore in 2020-21, Rs 94,361.8 crore in 2019-20, and Rs 59,273.8 crore in 2018-19.

The study also highlights that Karnataka completed projects that were worth Rs 39,664 crore in 2022-23, Rs 21,336.2 crore in 2021-22, and Rs. 11,415.5 crore in 2020-21.

Notably, in 2022-23, the total outstanding projects amounted to Rs 16.4 lakh crore and projects under implementation stood at Rs 8.2 lakh crore. The study projects that once the outstanding projects are completed, they will generate more than 5 lakh direct and indirect jobs in the state.

The study recommends establishment of a monitoring committee under the chairmanship of the chief minister or deputy CM. It also calls for increased support to startups and ancillaries to ensure inclusive sustainable development.

**Source: The Times of India, p.3, Oct. 27, 2023**

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## EDUCATION

# Midday meals: Dieticians panel to decide on revising menu

**'Vegetable price rise should not deprive kids of nutrition'**

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Department of School Education & Literacy has decided to constitute a committee, comprising dieticians, to ensure quality food is served to children under the mid-day meal scheme.

Following an increase in complaints that vegetables and pulses are not being used properly while cooking food under the scheme, the department has taken this decision.

According to School Ed-

ucation & Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa, the department will consult the dieticians committee and send the revised food chart for schools across the state.

Speaking to *DH*, Madhu said, "We are discussing whether to increase the quality of pulses or the rice, which vegetable should be used,... because whenever there is a price hike of vegetables, the kids are deprived of nutrition. For example, during the recent hike in tomato price, I don't think



**The dieticians will also decide and suggest alternative vegetables in case of price rise, according to Minister Madhu Bangarappa. DH FILE PHOTO**

the schools used tomato. For this, we need to find an alternative."

Madhu further stated that the dieticians will also decide and suggest alternative vege-

tables in case of price rise. "No one should cheat on children just because of the price hike and we should ensure quality and nutritious food for them," he added.

The minister is of the opinion that unpolished rice is better than the polished ones. But, he says, parents and kids prefer polished rice. "When we are spending so much on mid-day meal, how can we compromise on the quality of food served," he questions.

Currently the department is serving cooked mid-day meal with 450 calories and 12 gm of protein to every child at primary level, and 700 calories and 20 gm of protein at higher primary level. This energy and protein requirement for a primary child comes from cooking 100 gm of rice/flour, 20 gm pulses and 50 gm vegetables and 5 gm oil, and for a higher primary child it comes from 150 gm of rice/flour, 30 gm of pulses and 75 gm of vegetables and 7.5 gm of oil.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.3B, Oct. 21, 2023**

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# Environment

## Pollution control boards are the weak link

Effective and strict implementation is the Achilles heel in India's battle against air pollution

SHAILENDRA YASHWANT

The ridiculous smog tower at Connaught Place, New Delhi, has finally been dumped. Built at the cost of Rs 22.9 crore, the 24-metre-tall structure was supposed to purify 1,000 cubic metres of air per second within a radius of around one kilometre. It did nothing of that kind; the smog tower was a giant exhaust fan that dispersed air in a 50-metre radius, a colossal waste of public funds and an insult to one's common sense. Instead of dismantling the smog tower, the Delhi government should preserve it as a monument to false solutions, a memorial to the many failures of its pollution control measures.

Meanwhile, last week, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, and Ahmedabad reported air quality worse than Delhi as a thick blanket of filthy smog engulfed the majority of Indian cities beyond the Indian capital, nine of which fall on the 'list of the world's top 15 most polluted cities'. Agra, Lucknow, Varanasi, Patna, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Srinagar, Faridabad, and, of course, Kanpur, which tops the list. Even Tier-2 cities like Karnataka's Davangere, Kalaburagi, and Hubballi-Dharwad are staring at a nearly 40% increase in air pollution by 2030, according to a study by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology, and Policy (CSSTEP).

Nowhere is safe. According to the World Health Organisation, more than 90% of the global population is breathing in high levels of pollutants. It is estimated that 4.5 million people died prematurely as a result of outdoor air pollution in 2019, 300,000 more than in 2015, and 1.6 million more than in 2000. One recent study published by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago warned that the lives of residents in India's capital are being cut short by up to 11.9 years compared to if air pollution were reduced to levels recommended by the WHO.

But before you order an expensive but mostly useless air purifier, let's look at why cities in most high-income countries have relatively low levels of local air pollution. This, we know, hasn't always been the case. London, for instance, was notorious for its pollution during much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1952, the infamous Great Smog covered London with a thick toxic layer of pollution, killing nearly 12,000 people and bringing the city almost to a standstill for days—not

unlike the situation in Delhi recently.

In fact, Delhi's air pollution levels have followed and continue to follow a similar pathway to that of London in the 19th century. However, last week, London's air quality was almost 10 times better than Delhi's, thanks to almost two decades of ambitious policies, from taxing emissions to innovative approaches like the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ), and most importantly, effective and strict implementation of the policies overseen by successive city councils.

Effective and strict implementation is the Achilles heel in India's battle against air pollution, and the pollution control boards are its weakest link. India's perennially short-staffed, underfunded, and toothless state pollution control boards (SPCBs) and their counterparts in union territories, the pollution control committees (PCCs), have failed miserably to effectively deliver on their mandate of curbing air pollution. Things are so bad that despite declining air quality and rising health concerns in the national capital, air pollution was not even on the agenda of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) board meeting this week. The PCBs across India are in a state of shambles. Originally set up under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974 (the Water Act), over time their mandate has expanded significantly beyond water-related issues. They are responsible for regulating air and noise pollution, waste management (including municipal, biomedical, electronic, and hazardous wastes), and regulating the use of plastic, among other tasks.

A working paper from the Centre for Policy Research, a Delhi-based think tank, has revealed that the SPCBs do not have the resources and capacity to perform the functions assigned to them under various laws due to inadequate sanctioned strength of personnel, high numbers of vacancies, especially in technical positions, absence of proper training, lack of pollution monitoring and abatement equipment, absence of technically competent leadership, protracted enforcement mechanisms, insufficient funds, and ineffectual spending. These problems have persisted for many years, yet they remain unresolved.

Strong and effective pollution control boards and committees are central to India's battle against air pollution. India has set ambitious targets for improvement in air quality through the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), but without competent regulators with sufficient capacity and financial autonomy, they may well just remain on paper.

*(The writer is a senior adviser to Climate Action Network South Asia)*

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.6, Oct. 25, 2023**

ಮಲೆನಾಡಿನ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲೂ ಮೈಕೊರೆಯುವ ಚಳಿ ಇಲ್ಲ

# ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಚಳಿ ಕಡಿಮೆ

• ಅದಿತ್ಯ ಕೆ.ಎ.

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ವಾತಾವರಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಉಂಟಾಗಿರುವ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಯಿಂದ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಚಳಿಗಾಲ ಅರಂಭ ಸ್ವಲ್ಪ ವಿಳಂಬವಾಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯಿದೆ. ಜತೆಗೆ, ಚಳಿಗಾಲದ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮೈಕೊರೆಯುವ ಚಳಿ ಇರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ; ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಚಳಿಯಷ್ಟೇ ಇರುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯಿದೆ.

ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಲಾ ನಿನಾ (ಸಾಗರ ಮತ್ತು ವಾತಾವರಣದ ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನ) ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಕೊನೆಗೊಂಡು, ಎಲ್ ನಿನ್ಯೊ ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನ ಮರು-ಕಳಿಸಿದ್ದರಿಂದ ಮುಂಗಾರು ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಮಳೆಯಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಮಳೆಗಾಲದ ಬಹುತೇಕ ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಿಸಿಲ ವಾತಾವರಣ ಕಂಡುಬಂದಿತ್ತು. ಚಳಿಗಾಲದ ಮೇಲೂ ಇರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಚಳಿಗಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಉಷ್ಣಾಂಶ

## 4 ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಮಳೆ

'ಮುಂಗಾರು ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕೈಕೊಟ್ಟಿದ್ದ ಮಳೆ ಅ.1ರಿಂದ 18ರ ತನಕ ನಾಲ್ಕು ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿ ಸುರಿದಿದೆ. ಹಾಸನ, ಕೊಡಗು, ಮೈಸೂರು, ಮಂಡ್ಯ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 18 ದಿನಗಳ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗಿಂತ ಶೇ 20ರಷ್ಟು ಅಧಿಕ ಮಳೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಕಾವೇರಿ ಜಲಾನಯನ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಜಲಾಶಯಗಳಿಗೆ ನೀರು ಹರಿದುಬಂದಿದೆ. ಬೆಳೆಗಳಿಗೂ ಅನುಕೂಲವಾಗಿದೆ' ಎಂದು ಎ. ಪ್ರಸಾದ್ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನೀಡಿದರು.



ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ  
ವಿಶೇಷ

ಅದರ ಪರಿಣಾಮ ಉಂಟಾಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯಿದ್ದು ಚಳಿ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಇರಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಹವಾಮಾನ ತಜ್ಞರು ಅಂದಾಜಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಎಲ್ ನಿನ್ಯೊ ಪ್ರಭಾವವು ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ ಅಥವಾ ಮಾರ್ಚ್ 15ರವರೆಗೆ

ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಮಟ್ಟಕ್ಕೆ ಕುಸಿಯುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆ ತೀರ ಕಡಿಮೆ. ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಜನವರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮಲೆನಾಡು ಭಾಗದ ಕೊಡಗು, ಚಿಕ್ಕಮಗಳೂರು, ಹಾಸನ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಚಳಿಯು ಪ್ರಭಾವ ಸ್ವಲ್ಪ ತೀವ್ರತೆ ಪಡೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳಲಿದೆ. ಆದರೆ, ಉಷ್ಣಾಂಶ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಮಟ್ಟಕ್ಕೆ ಕುಸಿಯುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಉತ್ತರ ಒಳನಾಡು, ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ಒಳನಾಡಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಇದೇ

ವಾತಾವರಣ ಇರಲಿದೆ. ಇದೇ ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕೆಲವು ದಿನ ಶೀತಗಾಳಿ ಬೀಸಲಿದೆ. ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 15ರ ನಂತರ ಉಷ್ಣಾಂಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತೆ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆಗಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ತಜ್ಞರು ಮುನ್ಸೂಚನೆ ನೀಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಸದ್ಯ ಬಂಗಾಳ ಕೊಲ್ಲಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಯುಭಾರ ಕುಸಿಯುವುದಕ್ಕೆ ಪೂರಕ ವಾತಾವರಣ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಗಿದೆ. ಇನ್ನೆರಡು ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅದರ ಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಇನ್ನಷ್ಟು ನಿಚ್ಚಳವಾಗಲಿದೆ. ವಾಯುಭಾರ ಕುಸಿತವಾದರೆ ಅದು ಅಂದ್ರಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಉತ್ತರ ಭಾಗ ಅಥವಾ ಒಡಿಶಾದ ಕರಾವಳಿ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಚಲಿಸಲಿದೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಅಲ್ಲಲ್ಲಿ ಧಾರಾಕಾರ ಮಳೆಯಾಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯಿದೆ. ಜತೆಗೆ, ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಮಳೆ ಅವಧಿಯೂ ಸ್ವಲ್ಪ ದೀರ್ಘವಾಗಿ ರಲಿದ್ದು, ಚಳಿಗಾಲ ಅರಂಭ ಸ್ವಲ್ಪ ತಡವಾಗಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಭಾರತೀಯ ಹವಾಮಾನ ಇಲಾಖೆ ತಜ್ಞರು ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನೀಡಿದರು.

ನೀಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಸಹ ದುರ್ಬಲ ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ನೈರುತ್ಯ ಮುಂಗಾರು ಕೊನೆಗೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಮಳೆ ಅವಧಿ ಅರಂಭವಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಸಹ ದುರ್ಬಲ ವಾಗಿರಲಿದೆ. ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಮಿಳುನಾಡು ಕರಾವಳಿ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ವ್ಯಾಪಕ ಮಳೆಯಾಗಬೇಕು. ಮುಂದಿನ ಒಂದು ವಾರದವರೆಗೂ ಅಂತಹ ವಾತಾವರಣವಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂದು ಹವಾಮಾನ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಿ ಎ. ಪ್ರಸಾದ್ 'ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ'ಗೆ ತಿಳಿಸಿದರು.

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನಲ್ಲಿ 1883ರ ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಉಷ್ಣಾಂಶ 8.9 ಡಿಗ್ರಿ ಸೆಲ್ಸಿಯಸ್ ದಾಖಲಾಗಿತ್ತು. 1974ರ ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್ 31ರಂದು ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಉಷ್ಣಾಂಶ 13 ಡಿಗ್ರಿ ಸೆಲ್ಸಿಯಸ್ ದಾಖಲಾಗಿತ್ತು ಎಂದು ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನೀಡಿದರು.

Source: Prajavani, p.6, Oct. 21, 2023

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## Health

# COVID-19 fatality numbers swell by 25,000 after verification by panel

**Afshan Yasmeen**  
BENGALURU

Although the State Health Department's official COVID-19 death toll stands at 40,317, as many as 65,317 families have been paid COVID death compensation by the Directorate of Social Security and Pensions (DSSP), under the Revenue Department, till March this year.

While the directorate received 67,635 applications from families of those who died due to COVID, including 33,186 APL families, the Deputy Commissioners and Joint Commissioners in the districts and BBMP officials in Bengaluru approved 67,463 applications for compensation.

According to final data from DSSP accessed by *The Hindu*, compensation has been paid to 65,317 families. While 1,484 applications have been kept in abeyance as the details furnished could not be mapped with the National Payment Corporation of

### COVID-19 toll, claims, and relief

Health Department's official COVID-19 death toll: <b>40,317</b>	Total number of families of COVID victims paid compensation by Directorate of Social Security and Pensions: <b>65,317</b>	Total claims for death compensation received: <b>67,635</b> , including <b>33,186</b> from APL families
Total claims approved after verification: <b>67,463</b>		
Families not traceable during verification: <b>1,009</b>	Families that refused compensation: <b>851</b>	Claims that could be mapped with National Payment Corporation of India: <b>1,484</b>

India (NPCI), 1,009 families were not traceable during verification.

Besides, 851 families have refused compensation, data revealed.

After the Supreme Court orders on compensation for COVID-19 victims, the Centre amended provisions for assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), enabling States to pay compensation of ₹50,000 to the next of kin of those who died in the pandemic. While the Centre fixed ₹50,000 per death regardless of the economic back-

ground, the Karnataka government announced ₹1 lakh per family for those below the poverty line.

Subsequently, district-wise committees were set up headed by Additional Deputy Commissioners/Joint Commissioners. These committees entered 67,463 claim applications by families on the COVID compensation portal. Of these, COVID death compensation of ₹50,000 each has been paid to 65,317 families till March 30 this year after final approval, a top official from DSSP said. Besides, 14,218 BPL fami-

lies of the total 65,317 approved claims also got the ₹1 lakh compensation fixed by the State government, the official said.

### Highest in BBMP area

The highest number of claims are from BBMP limits where 15,902 applications were raised. Of these, 15,824 were approved by the official committee. And ₹50,000 compensation has been paid to families of 14,924 COVID victims. This also includes 2,812 BPL families who got the State government's ₹1 lakh compensation. The highest number of families who refused compensation (464) are also from BBMP. While Belagavi and Mysuru follow with 4,662 and 3,846 claims respectively, 3,060 claims have been raised from Tumakuru and 2,127 from Dharwad. The least number of claims are from Yadgir (435), Kodagu (632), Gadag (675), Koppal (869).

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Out of the official 40,317 deaths recorded by the Health Department, compensation has been paid to 30,157 families. The remaining families are either not traceable, do not have legal heirs or are from outside the State, the official added.

Officials said they had recorded only those deaths that were entered in the department's reporting systems after death audits. Although data reconciliation with the additional number of deaths had been proposed during the previous government's regime, it is yet to be done, according to a top official.

DSSP officials said as per the Centre's amended rules for payment of compensation, even those COVID patients who died at home after discharge from hospitals were eligible to claim.

"Many had COVID-like symptoms with acute respiratory distress syndrome but did not test positive. Several such patients have died after discharge from hospitals," the officials added.

**Source: The Hindu, p.1&3, Oct. 21, 2023**

# New immunology study highlights importance of COVID vaccination of those who have been exposed to virus

The multi-centric study led by researchers from St. John's Research Institute was published in *npj Vaccines*, a *Nature* journal on September 14

**Afshan Yasmeen**  
BENGALURU

A study of COVID-19 vaccine immunity highlights the importance of vaccination in those who have already been exposed to the virus.

The study has found that both COVISHIELD and COVAXIN significantly enhance immune responses in subjects with varying levels of basal immunity to SARS CoV-2 developed through natural exposure. The multi-centric study led by researchers from St. John's Research Institute was published in *npj Vaccines*, a *Nature* journal on September 14.

COVISHIELD, manufactured by Serum Institute of India and COVAXIN, indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech Ltd were the first two vaccines authorized for COVID-19 vaccination in India. Even though India had a highly successful vaccination campaign, a majority of the population remained unvaccinated till end of 2021. A major question raised and unknown at

that time was whether COVID vaccines available in India in 2021 were even capable of inducing immune responses over and above immunity that may have been acquired through natural exposure to the virus during the ancestral and Delta waves.

## Study participants

"We addressed this issue in 700 adults (aged 18-44 years) who received their primary series of vaccination between November 2021 and January 2022. The samples were collected till May 2023 following which the analysis was done," said Annapurna Vyakarnam, whose Human Immunology Laboratory is based at St John's Research Institute (SJRI).

The study participants, who were recruited from four clinical sites and five research institutes in Bengaluru, Pune and Vellore, received either two doses of COVAXIN at 28 days apart or two doses of COVISHIELD at three months apart as per Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)



A file photo of a health worker administering COVID vaccine in Bengaluru.

guidelines. The peak responses to both these vaccines were measured at two weeks (14 days) post the second dose (day 42 for COVAXIN and day 98 for COVISHIELD).

Professor Vyakarnam, who is the lead immunologist of the study, said circulating neutralising antibodies and cellular T-cell responses are cornerstone immune parameters. "This study probed magnitude, breadth and quality of these immune parameters using advanced immunological techniques and

demonstrated all three parameters to be enhanced at two weeks after subjects received their first two doses of either of the COVID-19 vaccines," said the researcher, who is also affiliated to King's College London.

## Immune response

In addition, first round data from this group showed evidence of persistent anti-COVID-19 immunity, up to one year post COVISHIELD vaccination, but less so with COVAXIN, she said. Srabanti Rakshit,

Project Scientist at the Division of Infectious Diseases in SJRI, who is the lead author of the study, said, "This is not surprising as COVISHIELD vaccine was engineered to enhance immunogenicity, whereas COVAXIN is an inactivated rapidly generated and highly deployable first response efficacious virus vaccine".

"We hope that the unequivocal nature of scientific evidence showing COVID-19 vaccines to broaden and enhance anti-COVID immunity in subjects with pre-existing SARS-CoV-2

immunity, will spur future in-depth analysis of what constitutes persistent immunity to circulating SARS CoV-2 strains," said the researchers.

"Importantly, we hope this will mitigate vaccine hesitancy arguments to current and future national COVID-19 booster vaccination recommendations," they said.

## Study sites

Funded by CSR support from Hindustan Unilever, the study was done involving four clinical sites - Bangalore Baptist Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital Research Center, Symbiosis University Hospital and Research Center and St. John's Medical College Hospital and five research institutes: National Centre for Biological Sciences, Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine, St. John's Research Institute, National Chemical Laboratory and Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Pune.

**Source: The Hindu, p.7, Oct. 23, 2023**



# Many schoolchildren in State suffer from refractive errors: Report

Excessive use of mobile phones has affected eyes of schoolchildren, say doctors

**Jayanth R.**  
BENGALURU

**A**s many as 1.73 lakh children in Karnataka were found to be suffering from refractive errors, possibly owing to excessive use of mobile phones and TV.

According to the 'School Children Eye Screening' report for the 2022-23 academic year, which was the outcome of a survey by the Department of Health and Family Welfare in March 2023, of the total screened children (62,08,779), 1,73,099 children were suffering from refractive errors. The highest number of such cases were in Belagavi district (39,997).

Under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), the Department of Health and Family Welfare conducted the screening, for eyes, anaemia, malnutrition, and worms, for children of government, aided and private schools across Karnataka. In the academic year 2022-23, the department had a target of 64,48,793 students for eye screening. The department screened 62,08,779 children. The screening revealed that 39,997 children

## Schoolchildren eye screening report

Districts	Children screened	Detected with refractive errors	Provided free glasses
Belagavi	6,74,939	39,997	15,313
Vijayapura	3,60,533	13,170	2,572
BBMP	3,11,237	10,193	2,555
Davangere	1,41,931	6,348	2,231
Ballari	2,34,661	6,333	3,090
Bidar	1,88,220	5,677	2,787
Total screened children		62,08,779	
		Total detected with refractive errors	1,73,099
		Total free glasses provided	88,210



in Belagavi district suffer from refractive errors. The number for Vijayapura is 13,170, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits has 10,193 cases, Davangere 6,348, Shivamogga 5,837, and Bidar has 5,677 such cases. The department has distributed 88,210 free glasses to children suffering from refractive errors. Experts say that excessive use of mobile phones and TV screens is the main reason for this.

### 'Addiction on the rise'

Dr. Shyama Sundar, Joint Director, National Programme for Control of Blindness, Department of Health, told *The Hindu*, "In recent days, mobile addiction among children has increased on account of

virtual classes, need to share information and notes through mobile phones. Children are addicted to their mobile phones and social media. Instead of engaging in extracurricular activities, they prefer to spend their time in front of either the phone or TV screens. During the COVID-19 pandemic and post pandemic, the usage of mobile phone was excessive among children. Looking at a screen continuously for a long time will hurt and tire the eyes. This is the main reason for school children suffering from refractive errors."

"Children should not be glued to the phone and TV screens for a long time. They should get sufficient sleep – at least 8 hours a

day. They should consume nutritious food, like fruits and vegetables, which have highest amount of vitamin A. Children suffering from refractive errors must wear glasses. Our department is creating awareness among children and parents about this problem," he added.

### Circular issued

The Department of School Education and Literacy has ordered the Deputy Directors of Public Instruction to create awareness among the students and parents.

Samagra Shikshana Karnataka has issued a circular in this regard, and said that excessive use of mobile phones and mobile addiction has led to visual impairment among children.

**Source: The Hindu, p.6, Oct. 21, 2023**

# Doc seeks ICMR dietary protocol for Type 2 diabetes

**'Concept of reversal not widespread in India'**

**UDBHAVI BALAKRISHNA**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

A Bengaluru-based doctor treating diabetics is pushing for the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to develop a scientific dietary management protocol for Type 2 diabetes.

Earlier this month, Dr Vasu H V, allopathic doctor and founder of the Active Health Diabetes Centre, wrote to the ICMR and the Department of Health, Government of Karnataka, about issuing a clarification regarding diabetes reversal and remission in patients with Type 2 diabetes.

He wrote in the context of studies and his observations of patients that dietary changes like reducing carbohydrates can lead to the remission of newly detected diabetes and prediabetes.

Dr Vasu noted: "The National Health Service, UK, sponsored a study in 2014 on subjects who are diabetic for six years or less. It was the first such study that gave robust evidence that dietary changes can help in the remission of diabetes in a significant number of patients with Type 2 diabetes."

"The concept of reversal is not widespread in India.

**DR VASU HV**



Pre-  
scribing  
a low calorie,  
low carbohydrate diet for

patients led to a 'significant' reduction in their medication, and about 95% of patients with Type 2 diabetes could also stop insulin in three months following this regime.

Many people practise different things; most doctors give medication or prescribe different diets. Therefore, the ICMR must come out with a standard protocol backed by science and clarify whether diabetes can be treated by diet only, is reversible or not, and if medication can be reduced or not," Dr Vasu told *DH*.

Since no protocol or diet regimen exists in India, confusion prevails among patients about what system works, resulting in companies peddling 100% reversal as a possibility for all patients with no regulation or guidelines.

He said prescribing a low calorie, low carbohydrate diet for his patients led to a 'significant' reduction in their medication and about 95% of patients with Type 2 diabetes could also stop insulin in three months following this regime.

He urged the ICMR to conduct independent research and take data from practitioners such as himself to issue a standard protocol for dietary management.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.3B, Oct. 21, 2023**



# Medical Supplies Corpn to adopt automation software to boost healthcare

**SNEHA RAMESH**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (KSMSCL) will soon adopt a new software solution to automate the equipment maintenance and management of medical equipment in health facilities across the state.

According to senior officials from the health department, the software will create a database of the medical equipment available at the various health facilities and thereby help in purchase planning.

“A need-based purchase can be made by matching the available inventory with the expected caseload,” the official said.

The software is also expected to assist the department in monitoring the performance of the equipment and assess its quality by keeping track of the lifecycle of the equipment right from the procurement stage.

“The software will enable tracking of the purchase from the day the supply order is issued till the installation and

inspection of the equipment. To enable better coordination with the suppliers, the health department officials will also be given the option to update site readin

“It is also integrated with a call centre and the Interactive Voice Recorded System (IVRS) based systems for equipment maintenance activities.”

Officials cited multiple examples of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Assam where the software is doing excellent.

Sources from the State Health Department said that the move was one of the first few steps in streamlining the operations at KSMSCL. “There are multiple complaints that the corporation has not been able to procure and supply medicines and equipment as per the demands of the health department. Many have also cited that the delay was affecting the operations. There is a dire need to streamline the

operations there for effective management,” a senior official said. The KSMSCL has been granted a 4(G) exemption under the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Act, 1999 to procure the software.



**Source: Deccan Herald, p.3B, Oct. 21, 2023**

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## Gender

# Govt officials in Uttara Kannada adopt pregnant women

District officials adopt pregnant women to provide them with regular health check-ups and nutritious food.

Belagavi: Parvati Naik, a resident of Joida town in Uttara Kannada district, has been receiving regular health check-ups, nutritious food and medicine, courtesy a noble initiative undertaken by the district administration, as she awaits the birth of her first child. She is among the 358 women who have been adopted by district officials as part of the initiative to provide highest care to expectant mother and their newborns.

“After I have got adopted, I am being examined regularly, getting nutritious food grain, milk, eggs, prescribed medicine etc. through ASHA workers,” Naik told HT, expressing her gratitude towards the officials for their initiative, which helps in reducing the financial burden of poor families.

According to the district’s women and child welfare department, the state’s first-of-its-kind initiative is aimed at reducing the death rate of women during and post-pregnancy, as well as that of the newborn. As part of the initiative, higher-rank officials of the Uttara Kannada district administration adopt one pregnant woman each who are registered under the national health mission scheme, officials said.

“Officials of various departments have, on their own, adopted one pregnant woman each to take care of them until post-childbirth. The district has 358 such registered women,” Uttara Kannada deputy commissioner Gangubai Mankar said. “I’m very glad that every officer, without any force or compulsion, has adopted a pregnant woman after I briefed them about my concept at a meeting. I hope it finds success in the district and is extended to the entire state.”



Under the adoption scheme, officials not only take complete care of pregnant women till the time of childbirth, but also extend the care to the newborns by remaining in regular touch with doctors and health workers like ASHA, officials said.

Compared to a few other districts in severely drought-hit Kalyana-Karnataka region, the malnutrition rate among children is quite low in Uttara Kannada,

“In a district which falls under the Western ghats in the coastal region, adjoining Belagavi district, we aim to eradicate malnutrition among the newborns and the mothers by supplying solid food, egg, milk, calcium tablets among other things,” Mankar said. “Apart from the adopted women, officials will keep record of the latest health status of the newborns’ weight, giving them the regular vaccination.”

The deputy commissioner also praised the contributions of anganwadi and ASHA workers in the initiative.

“Right from the early pregnancy period, anaganwadi and ASHA workers visit the on regular intervals, take them to the hospitals, provide Tayi Card [mother card that record every health-related matter until delivery], supply prescribed medicine and recommended food grain until the women return to their routine life post the childbirth,” she added.

Gangubai Mankar, who has also adopted a poor woman from Mallapur village, said officials are being in touch with the women, their families and also the consultant doctors.

**Source: Hindustan Times, Oct. 25, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/govt-officials-in-uttara-kannada-adopt-pregnant-women-101698174704031.html>**

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## Governance

# 400 files pile up at KSPCB without approval

**NAVEEN MENEZES**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

Nearly 400 files remain unattended at the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) due to pending approvals, creating significant challenges for both the real estate sector and various industries.

A crucial meeting at the KSPCB to clear files on large industries under the red category on Wednesday was reportedly postponed due to uncertainty over an interim order of the Karnataka High Court.

On September 8, the high court issued a conditional interim order allowing Shanth A Thimmaiah to oversee day-to-day administrative activities as the KSPCB chairman, directing him not to make policy decisions until further directives.

Thimmaiah, who contested the notification that limited his tenure, informed *DH* that the matter is scheduled for a hearing on November 6. "It is a matter of just 10 days," he said.

Thimmaiah said that no consent meetings were held because he was unsure if they fell

within the purview of the day-to-day activities mentioned by the court.

The red category contains more than 87 types of industries, and approvals for files related to these sectors require the consent of the Enforcement Committee, chaired by the KSPCB chairman and consisting of nearly 15 members.

"Barring these industries, all other files are being cleared, both at the regional and zonal offices. The requests related to orange and green categories of industries do not come to the head office for approval," Thimmaiah told *DH*.

### **'Delays hurt industries'**

The persistent delays in clearing files, especially those related to the real estate sector, have been hurting the industries, several industrialists and developers told *DH*.

"We had submitted the application more than three months ago. Before us, at least 200 files were pending for clearance," a builder said.

Apart from industries, construction projects spanning over 50,000 square feet, including apartments, require

KSPCB's consent before builders start the spadework.

"The real estate sector is badly affected due to the delays," Kishore Jain, chairman of CREDAI, Bengaluru told *DH*.

"Time is a ticking bomb and more valuable than money. Any delay will hurt us. Post-elections, there were no approvals on a consistent basis."

Some members of the Federation of Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) reportedly met Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre to resolve the issues hurting the industry.

A senior KSPCB official clarified that the high court's order curtails the chairman's powers, but not those of the board itself.

"The KSPCB was constituted as per the Water Act and the chairman's powers were delegated by the 17 members of the board. Until the court completes the hearing, the KSPCB can call a board meeting and delegate the powers to the member secretary. By doing this, the government can ensure the industries are not hurt," he said.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Oct. 27, 2023**



# Budget: CM under pressure to look beyond guarantees

## A section of Congress MLAs disgruntled over funds crunch

SHRUTHI H M SASTRY  
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government has kicked off preparations for the state budget 2024-25, by issuing guidelines to all the departments to prepare estimates of revenue receipts and expenditure, even as there is an increasing pressure on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, to look beyond the five guarantee schemes and invest in other development projects.

The drought in state this

year, the pending bills of contractors in the state tuning up to an estimated Rs 20,000 crore and the government's commitment to fill vacant posts across departments, add to the pressure.

These estimates, part of the annual standard operating procedure, will allow the government to assess the financial situation of the state and draft the budget. "There is definitely pressure on the government to look beyond the guarantees. We will get a clearer picture by

December on how funds can be mobilised," a Finance department official told *DH*.

A section of its own MLAs are disgruntled with the Congress government over fund crunch. The opposition legislators have alleged that the government has cut funds to their constituencies. Recently, RR Nagar MLA Munirathna staged a protest and even fell on the feet of Deputy CM D K Shivakumar, seeking funds for his constituency.

Political analyst and economist Narendra Pani pointed out that by standardising five guarantee schemes, the emphasis is on the Congress party and not on individual MLAs. With this, the MLAs lose power at the local level. The ruling party has the challenge of managing this political conflict.

The government needs to ensure availability of Rs 52,000 crore next year for implementation of the guarantees alone. "There is a minimum of a 15 per cent growth in the budget every year. The GDP is seeing an encouraging growth. This, coupled with measures such as revision of guidance value and giving out mining leases, will help shore up revenues. We are optimistic that we can give additional funds next year," sources in the chief minister's office said.

In addition, the government is likely to look at the centrally sponsored schemes to take up projects outside the guarantees, sources added.

Madhusudhan B V Rao, Lead, Public Finance and Decentralisation at the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, also

shared an optimistic view. "The growth of own tax revenues is at a healthy growth rate of over 15% over the last year (up to August 2023). The borrowings have been kept to minimum in the last six months (Rs 871 crore till August) which gives good elbow room to optimise the spending closer to end of financial year," he observed.

In addition, the increase in GSDP and tax revenue would help in getting increased share of taxes from the Centre, and give a higher elbow room for borrowings. Overall, Siddaramaiah, who is also the finance minister, seems to be gauging the expenses very closely and has a greater task at hand especially in the wake of coming general elections which is closer to the state budget, Rao added.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.5, Oct. 27, 2023**

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## Social Issues

# Ten days with the dolls

Dasara is a tradition that unites art and craft, nature, and history

S NARENDRA PRASAD

Growing up in a traditional household, my childhood memories are filled with images from Navaratri, or Dasara, celebrated over ten days. While the elders marked the occasion with ritualistic fervor, as children, we relished the holiday season of Dasara. This was in Hassan, during the late 1960s. The most captivating aspect of the festival was the preparation for the *bombe habba* (festival of dolls), which involved elaborate preparations, starting with creating the surface area for arranging the dolls.

We fetched black soil from a nearby agricultural field where potatoes were cultivated, using a steel bucket to spread it on the floor. We then sprinkled ragi and water on it. It was a delight to watch the ragi sprout after three or four days. The goal was to recreate a forest,

complete with Chamundi hills. Crafting the pathways posed another challenge because the floor space was limited. We used empty matchboxes, and cartons of toothpaste and detergents to make small houses.

As the festival drew closer, we spent more time selecting the *bombes*: brass dolls of kings, queens, and courtiers, with a jester adding a playful touch. Colourful Channapattana dolls, including elephants, horses, camels, and even cows, were arranged one after another, resembling a procession on Vijayadashami, the final day of Dasara. The collection also featured dolls of dancers, drummers, and those carrying *nagari*, *naubath*, and the royal insignia. Most importantly, there was a figure carrying the “Gandabherunda,” the royal emblem of the Wadiyar dynasty.

Illuminating the miniature dwellings and the grand house, which was presumed to be the palace, was another task, albeit a risky one. Without disturbing the structure, we would light up the place using zero-candle bulbs and strings of serial lights. We used colourful papers of various sizes to decorate,

especially focusing on the miniature palace and the arches created from bent bamboo sticks.

On the first day, visitors, including my schoolmates from nearby Salagame Road and Rangoli Hall, came to see the *bombe*. Many households had children like me who took a keen interest in arranging the dolls. Anyone who came to admire the dolls was offered *Charpu*, usually *Kadlekalu* or *Hesarukalu Guggari*, or at the very least, Parle-G biscuits or Parry's chocolates.

Dasara also coincided with Saraswathi Pooja. We would place our textbooks and notebooks, along with rubber and pencils, in front of the goddess. Our parents insisted that we include a dictionary and a grammar book, hoping that Saraswathi, the goddess of knowledge, would shower her blessings upon us in the years to come. On the last day, we would savour *Obbattu* and *Obbattina Saru*, with the latter relished for a few more days after the festival.

I wish these traditions continue, as arranging dolls taught us about tradition, the environment, and a touch of history.

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**Source: Deccan Herald, p.8, Oct. 21, 2023**



# Archaeology Dept. recommends notifying 181 monuments across State as protected

**R. Krishna Kumar**  
MYSURU

The State's inventory of monuments protected by the Karnataka Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1961, is set to witness an upward revision for the first time in decades.

The Department of Archaeology Museums and Heritage (DAMH) has recommended to the government to notify 181 monuments across the State as protected under the KAMASR Act, 1961.

At present, there are 848 monuments across Karnataka which have been declared and notified as protected under the law and receives priority in conservation and maintenance. Once approved the number of State protected monuments in Karnataka will go up to 1,029.

"There could be more monuments that will make it to the list but the 181 monuments that have been identified are from



Nalknad Aramane, near Napoklu, in Kodagu district is among those recommended for inclusion as a protected site under State archaeological laws. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

those for which 3D laser scanning was completed under a different project," said to A. Devaraj, Commissioner, DAMH.

The 3D laser mapping was taken up under the Karnataka Digital Heritage project and was entrusted to the Karnataka State Council for Science and Technology which completed the exercise and submitted a report to the government.

The Archaeology De-

partment has already written to the Revenue Department in different districts to furnish any records pertaining to the monuments to ascertain their current legal status.

Some of the monuments that will be declared as State protected include Panchalingeshwara temple complex, Kalleshwara temple, and Neelkanteshwara temple at Belligave in Shikaripur taluk of Shivamogga district; Mallikarjuna

temple, Neelakaneshwara temple, Someshwara temple, Chandramouleshwara temple, and Lakshminarayana temple at Lakkundi in Gadag district; Raja's tomb at Hudikeri in Madikeri taluk, Nalkunadu Aramane at Napoklu, also in Madikeri taluk, and the Jain basadi at Anjanageri-Bettageri in Somwarpet taluk of Kodagu district to name a few.

Mr. Devaraj said some of the monuments in the list may already have been declared as protected but the notification giving effect to it were missing or had to be traced.

## In various divisions

Of the 848 protected monuments in the State, 105 are under Bengaluru division, 365 under Belagavi division, 249 under Kalaburagi division, and 120 under Mysuru division.

In addition to State-protected monuments, Karnataka is also home to 609 monuments protected by the Archeological Survey of India of the Centre.

**Source: The Hindu, p.1, Oct. 21, 2023**

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## Urban Affairs

# Inadequate public transport a major issue for 85% of commuters: Survey

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** About 85% of people who took part in a nationwide survey recognise the lack of sufficient public transport infrastructure as a substantial issue because it hinders accessibility, increases traffic congestion, and exacerbates environmental issues in urban areas.

The survey by TummoC, a public transit app, covered more than 50,000 people in over 21 cities. About 58% of the respondents expressed concerns

about the absence of digital integration in public transport; 61% recognised the value of data collection and analysis in enhancing public transport services and travel choices.

Overcrowding, unreliable timings, poor maintenance, limited accessibility, lack of information about routes, schedules, and fares, long queues and difficulty in purchasing tickets, and accessibility of cashless payment options were among other issues.

**Source: Deccan Herald, p.2, Oct. 21, 2023**



# Tunnel roads for Bengaluru

When a project involves Rs 50,000-crore kind of money, and it involves a lot of digging, Bengaluru's citizens cannot but be apprehensive

VINOD VYASULU

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

The Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: I don't much care where.

The Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn't much matter which way you go.

Alice: ...So long as I get somewhere.

The Cheshire Cat: Oh, you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough.

■ Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

The Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, D K Shivakumar, has proposed the building of tunnel roads under the city as a solution to the traffic snarl Bengaluru has experienced in recent years. This Rs 50,000-crore proposal has been welcomed in some quarters (businesses) and opposed by others (civil society). Without going into this argument, I propose to look at some of the potential benefits of this proposal. This should anyway precede any position one takes regarding its desirability.

Some routes that this tunnel road system will cover have been spoken of in the newspapers. We do not have many details of the proposed ways in which it can be used. Harohalli-Hebbal? Kengeri-Sarjapura? JP Nagar-Cooke Town? Will there be intersections and traffic signals underground? Will we get potholed tunnels? Let us hope that unlike the roads of Bengaluru, these tunnels will not get waterlogged after rains.

Tunnel roads have played important roles in several cities. I am sure the government is familiar with the experiences of Guadalajara in Mexico, Boston in the US, as well as others elsewhere. The circumstances in which they were constructed, when and so on, are obviously relevant. It is also possible that these experiences do not have much relevance for Bengaluru.

I assume that the design of the tunnel

system will be well integrated with the surface transport system that is quite chaotic today. This will include the co-operation of various agencies, extensive citizen consultation, not just at the city level but at the level of each ward committee. It is important to stress this since citizen experience with 'consultations' has been far from satisfactory so far. When a sum like Rs 50,000-crore is involved, citizens should be convinced that it is a good use of the taxes they pay. It will also help in getting citizens to put up with the huge inconvenience that they are sure to experience during the construction period.



The open consultations with all kinds of users -- elected representatives of the local bodies, resident welfare associations, slum dwellers, unions, civil society, government servants, etc., will provide clarity on issues involved, from fare structure to location of bus stops, BRT routes, free transport for women/senior citizens, cross-subsidies, and so on. This cannot be a mere government bureaucracy-consultant exercise.

Let us dream about the possibilities while waiting for these details.

■ Dream 1: This system of tunnel roads will be built on the principle that they are meant to facilitate the movement of people in the city. This can be best done by reserving these tunnel roads for public transport -- with the obvious exception of ambulances and emergency duty vehicles. A Bus Rapid Transport network, based on citizen feedback and origin-destination studies, can be designed that would reduce travel time for distances above 10 kilo-

metres. The design of the tunnel road system will include escalator entrances and exits at busy points of the city in the same way as in underground metro stations -- except that these would be tiny in comparison as they would simply be bus shelters. The fares will be kept low. Travel will be free for senior citizens.

■ Dream 2: This tunnel system will serve many purposes. Apart from simple transport, it would also house cables of various sorts -- optical fibre, electrical, water supply, and sensors of all kinds to warn the authorities of any out-of-the-routine event. The tunnels would be open to BRT buses as well as private cars, and the latter would pay a toll for the right to use these tunnels. This toll would be so set as to subsidise, at least partially, the BRT. Fee collected from the users of the tunnel for optic fibre cable, etc., would be another source of revenue.

Other dreams are possible. The public consultations will provide clarity on all this, along with an understanding of how and why decisions are made, and an acceptance of any suggestion that is not built into the project. In all such big projects, compromises are necessary to serve what we call 'public interest'.

Along with these dreams, I had nightmares.

■ Nightmare 1: The project will begin with inaugurations, celebrations and fanfare. Roads will be dug up, there will be dust in the air, potholes will proliferate, and surface transport will be badly affected. Travel time per kilometre will go up to half-an-hour. Then, an election takes place, and the new government forgets about the project, says such a waste of money cannot be permitted.

■ Nightmare 2: The tunnel road system will be reserved for private cars and expensive taxis, as these transport 'important people' to critical meetings and they cannot afford to waste their valuable time in traffic jams. The ordinary citizens will have to be satisfied with any improvements that may or may not result on the surface road system when the tunnel road system gets implements for the 'important people'.

I woke up.

*(The writer is a senior citizen living in Bengaluru. He is also founder and president of the governing board of Centre for Budget and Policy Studies)*

Source: Deccan Herald, p.10, Oct. 21, 2023



# State-of-the-art traffic signal technology likely to be launched in city by Dec.

'Adaptive signal control technology aims to alleviate congestion, optimise waiting time at junctions'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

**I**t has been months since the adaptive traffic signal control system that uses Japan's MODERATO (Management of Origin-Destination-Related Adaptation for Traffic Optimization) technology was installed at several signals in the city but it is yet to be inaugurated even as the signal lights continue to be covered up.

The initiative to install these signals was first made in 2014, but the work began only in July 2021. Although the project was intended to be completed by October 2022, it faced numerous delays, missing several deadlines along the way. Now finally, the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) is working on an inauguration date in December.

The new traffic signals installed in the central business district (CBD) area are expected to alleviate congestion on major roads by incorporating pedes-



A new traffic signal that uses Japan's MODERATO technology being installed on M.G. Road in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

trian crossings. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-funded project is implemented by the DULT.

An official from the DULT said this project serves as a pilot demonstration of the Area Traffic Control System (ATCS) utilising the MODERATO application, supported by a grant-in-aid from the Go-

vernment of Japan. "The signal system is expected to become operational by December. We are taking up final work; the ATCS will then be handed over to the Bengaluru traffic police for operations and maintenance," the official said.

"The adaptive signal control technology aims to alleviate congestion and optimise waiting time at in-

tersections. Initially planned for 29 junctions, the project has been revised to cover 28 junctions, with one junction excluded due to ongoing Namma Metro construction. Key components of the ATCS include signal arms and aspects for both motorists and pedestrians, an automatic traffic counter and classifier for measuring vehicle movement, and a queue-length measurement system at critical junctions to monitor queue build-up. A central control software, MODERATO, will be utilised for real-time optimisation of signal phasing and timings across all junctions, explained an official.

Earlier, the city traffic police had plans to raise the number of signals in and around the city from 363 to 500 within the next three years. They aimed to implement an adaptive traffic-controlling system in phases, focusing on evidence-based, contactless interventions rooted in Artificial Intelligence (AI).

**Source: The Hindu, p.2, Oct. 26, 2023**



# The issues in navigating Bengaluru

The new Metro line has helped, but more needs to be done to decongest the city

## STATE OF PLAY

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**T**welve years after it first began operations, the Bengaluru Metro achieved a significant milestone this year by successfully connecting the city's eastern and western sectors by throwing open the full length of the Purple Line. This has brought immense relief to the passengers, marking a crucial moment in the city's public transportation history.

Metro commuters, particularly those employed in the IT sectors who had patiently awaited this moment for years, were thrilled to experience a seamless journey between Challaghatta and Whitefield, the city's IT hub. Covering a distance of 43.49 km with 37 stations in between, the commute takes only about 80 minutes, for an end-to-end fare of ₹60. The line became operational on October 9 and was officially inaugurated by the Prime Minister virtually on October 20.

Following the introduction of the Purple Line, Namma Metro has experienced a notable increase of 80,000 passengers in its daily ridership, as reported by the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL). This is testimony to the crying need for good public transport. The Bengaluru Metro network now spans 73.81 km with 66 Metro stations. It is now the second-largest Metro system in India after Delhi (350.2 km in length).

According to traffic police, there has been a noticeable reduction of 12%-14% in traffic volume, particularly along the Old Madras Road, one of the crucial Metro corridors and one of the busiest roads in the



city, since the introduction of the Purple Line.

But while the Purple Line has succeeded in persuading thousands to choose the Metro as their mode of commute, last-mile connectivity issues within the city still persist. Public transport experts emphasise that addressing this issue is crucial if the city intends to encourage more people to transition to the Metro. Prioritising solutions for the last-mile challenge is essential to making Metro travel a more viable and convenient option.

The Bangalore Political Action Committee in collaboration with the World Resources Institute initiated the #Personal2Public campaign to promote reduced personal vehicle usage. As part of this effort, the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) recently introduced feeder bus services connecting multiple metro stations to the prominent tech corridor-Outer Ring Road. But this is only a drop in the ocean.

Besides, although the Metro extension has provided some relief to passengers, the six-coach trains have become excessively crowded. Despite trains running every three minutes during peak hours, passengers have expressed concerns about BMRCL struggling to cope with the overwhelming demand. BMRCL officials have been saying that this issue will continue until they ac-

quire new coaches. Presently, BMRCL operates 57 trains, with 33 allocated to the Purple Line and 24 to the Green Line.

Having secured a ₹1,578-crore contract in 2019 to supply extra Metro coaches, China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) encountered delays which were attributed to its inability to establish a manufacturing plant in India. BMRCL issued several notices to CRRC, indicating the possibility of encashing its ₹372 crore bank guarantee. Subsequently, the Chinese company has collaborated with Kolkata-based Titagarh Wagons to fulfil the contract by supplying the remaining coaches, crucial for under-construction stretches.

Over the years, BMRCL has gained notoriety for its persistent delays and unmet deadlines, causing considerable inconvenience to the public. This situation is particularly challenging in a city that is already grappling with congestion issues, exacerbated by ongoing Metro construction projects. However, BMRCL has been saying that challenges related to land acquisitions and public interest litigations have been the primary obstacles. Delays in Metro construction have been caused by complications in acquiring land from private individuals, the Forest Department, and other relevant authorities, according to BMRCL.

In Bengaluru, though the Purple Line is now fully operational, other crucial stretches that can play an important role in decongesting the city are set to only open in phases in April 2024, March 2025 and by the end of 2026. Given that the Metro has not exactly covered itself in glory in keeping deadlines, the people of Bengaluru have their fingers crossed.

**Source: The Hindu, p.9, Oct. 26, 2023**

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