



Society and Economy of Karnataka in News

VOL: 1

September 2023

NO: 2

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

'Raitharondige Navu' programme to help farmers of drought-hit Tumakuru district

Nagesh Prabhu
BENGALURU

To ensure "ease of doing farming" in drought-hit Tumakuru, over half a dozen government departments have joined hands by roping in NGOs and launched a novel programme called "Raitharondige Navu" (we are with farmers) for providing services, including counselling, to mitigate risks faced by small and marginal farmers.

Nine out of 10 taluks have been declared drought-hit in Tumakuru district: Chikkanayakanahalli, Gubbi, Koratagere, Kunigal, Madhugiri, Pavagada, Shira, Tiptur, and Thuruvekere.

One-stop solution

Launched at the hobli level, the objective of the "Raitharondige Navu" programme is to provide information



Farmers attending a 'Raitharondige Navu' programme at C.S. Pura hobli in Gubbi taluk of Tumakuru district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

on all activities of farming, horticulture, floriculture, sericulture, veterinary and marketing, insurance, bank loans, availability of subsidies under various schemes, soil health, fertilizer and pesticides to farmers at a one-stop-shop on the day of the weekly market (shandy day).

It has been made mandatory for hobli-level officials of the Revenue and the Agriculture Departments and its allied departments, such as the Animal Husbandry, the Horticulture, the Agricultural Marketing, the Fisheries, and the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, and the Panchayat Development

Officers (PDOs) to attend the programme.

The Halappa Foundation, headed by Muralidhara Halappa, and Sarvodaya Mandali have joined hands and successfully conducted programmes in five hoblis so far.

The programme that was initially mooted by Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar and being implemented with the initiative of Mr. Halappa, has helped department officials understand the difficulties faced by farmers and helped small farmers in many ways, said Shivaraj Kuchanji, who owns a two-acre plot in Tumakuru rural.

While bank officials provide information on the types of documents to be produced by farmers for availing themselves of loans, the Agriculture De-

partment officials provide tips about the necessity of taking insurance for crops to mitigate the climate-related risk.

Many farmers got information about diseases to cattle and crops through the programme, said farmer C.N. Ramesh, who met officials at the function held at C.S. Pura hobli in Gubbi taluk.

Advance notice

"In advance, we communicate the day of the programme to farmers of each hobli. We start the programme at noon and continue till 4 p.m. to ensure that all farmers attending the meeting get the opportunity to talk to officials," Mr. Halappa said.

The programme is organised at Santhe Maidan, Honnudiike, Gubbi taluk in Tumakuru taluk on Sunday.

Source: The Hindu, p.6, sept. 24, 2023



Monsoon rain on downward trend in K'taka: Study

Observes rise in extreme rainfall events in last 6 decades

R KRISHNAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Monsoon rain has been on a downward trend in Karnataka during the last six decades, a new study that analysed the pattern in the state over 120 years has found, while also noting the rise of extreme rainfall events (EREs) during this period.

The study by researchers at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's Fourth Paradigm Institute (CSIR-4PI) in Bengaluru could offer insights in tackling

regional climate change and aid forecasting models for the state.

Krushna Chandra Gouda, Senior Principal Scientist at CSIR-4PI, said the findings presented a case for greater understanding of regional climate change, indicated as a major contributor to these variabilities.

The researchers studied the India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s daily rainfall data between June and September, for a total analysis period, from 1901 to 2020; this was further divided into two periods—1901 to 1959 and 1960 to 2020.

While data from the 120-year timeline revealed an increase of 1.15 mm/year in precipitation, analysis of the two halves of the period threw up a significant variability. A precipitation increase—+1.59 mm/year—was observed in the 1901-1959 period. The latter half, between 1960 and 2020, clocked only +0.67 mm/year.



■ Researchers studied IMD's daily rainfall data between June and Sept from 1901 to 2020; this was further divided into two periods—1901 to 1959 and 1960 to 2020.

■ A decrease in extreme rainfall events (EREs) was noted during the first half of the analysis period; the second half recorded a positive trend

■ Major portions of the west coastline and parts of the north consistently reported monsoon EREs

■ Study could offer insights in tackling regional climate change and aid forecasting models

Analysis of the two halves showed a precipitation increase—+1.59 mm/year—in the 1901-1959 period. The latter half, between 1960 and 2020, clocked only +0.67 mm/year

Gouda underlined extreme events that tend to get lost in larger, long-term assessments.

"Take the number of rainy days during two monsoon seasons. Over 120 days, one records 87 rainy days and the other, 62 days. In the overall analysis, both could end up being assessed as normal monsoons but what we could miss, in the second case, is extreme rainfall bursts that last for three to four days," he said.

The researchers said the findings could complement future research on monsoon variations in the context of Karnataka's diverse geographic markers—from the Western Ghats to the Cauvery; from its coastline to its forest cover to its expanding towns and cities.

► Monsoon rain, Page 5

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1, Sept. 23, 2023

Monsoon rain on downward trend in Karnataka: Study

Monsoon rain, from Page 1

The paper by Gouda, Nikhila-suma P, and Mahendra Benke — both from CSIR-4PI — and Geeta Agnihotri from the Meteorological Centre, IMD Bengaluru, has been selected for publication in the journal Natural Hazards Research.

Extreme heavy rainfall (more than 64.5 mm/day) events were tracked across the decades. A decrease in the number of EREs was noted during the first half of the analysis period; the second half recorded a positive trend.

Major portions of the west coastline and parts of the north consistently reported monsoon EREs. The paper traced this trend to changes in land use which set off regional climate change (rise in temperatures).

The west coast region recorded the highest rainfall across the three periods: more than 900 mm. It also saw the highest variation (excess or deficit) — between 280 mm and 300 mm — due to the combined dynamical and physical effects of the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, the study concluded.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.5, Sept. 23, 2023

Cup of miseries brims over for farmers in state's 'sugar bowl'

Crops wither due to poor rains, river inflow; trigger exodus

SHRINIDHI R
DHARWAD, DHNS

**State of
Drought**



The stunted growth of tur crop in Bagalkot district, owing to scanty rains. DH PHOTO

The undivided Vijayapura and Belagavi districts which boast of having five rivers — Krishna, Bheema, Doni, Ghataprabha and Malaprabha — flowing through them are in the clutches of a severe drought this season.

Of the total 40 taluks in Vijayapura, Bagalkot and Belagavi districts, 34 have been declared severely drought-hit by the government.

Scanty rainfall during the kharif season coupled with faulty water and power supply systems have compounded the farmers' problems.

Farmers who had borrowed money from banks and private moneylenders incurred massive losses as crops started to wither during the germination and flowering stage.

In Vijayapura district, which is known for its major crops tur and sugarcane, sowing was completed on 6.1 lakh hectares against the target of 7.1 lakh hectares.

No rain in Aug

This season, sowing com-

menced in July as the district did not receive any rain in June. Anticipating good rain in August and September first week, farmers took up sowing. However, the district did not receive any rain in August.

The crops have started to wither and agriculture officials estimate that there will be a 50% crop loss.

All the nine taluks in Bagalkot district have been listed as drought-hit. The district has a deficit of 34% rainfall and it has affected sunflower, tur, chilli and sugarcane cultivation.

Since the district gets the backwaters of Almatti dam built across River Krishna, farmers in the district depend mainly on Ghataprabha and Malaprabha rivers for the water needs of their crops.

50% less water

Both these rivers have 50% less water due to insufficient rains in the catchment area and the sugarcane growers are feeling the pinch.

Ramappa Bandiwad of

Shirol village in Mudhol taluk said that the sugarcane growers, after being ignored by sugar factories last crushing season, are in for trouble again as the sugarcane output is likely to be poor and the juice content in the produce is likely to be less.

With agricultural activities coming to a standstill, farm labourers from Hungund, Ilkal and Badami, which are drylands, are migrating to Mangaluru, Udupi and Goa in search of jobs.

This is not a new phenomenon as every year, farm labourers leave their villages in search of employment soon after the festival season is over. This time it is a little early, said Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha leader Shivaraj Patil.

Hope fading

He said farmers are incurring almost 60% crop loss during the kharif season and if the situation continues, their

hope of getting a good harvest during rabi will be dashed. The situation is no different in the Belagavi district. As many as 13 of the 18 taluks in the district figure in the list of severely drought-hit.

Important crops namely green gram, black gram, maize, paddy and sugarcane are bearing the brunt of the failure of monsoon.

The scanty monsoon has made life difficult for sugarcane growers in the region, known as the 'sugar bowl' of Karnataka.

Inflow into the Malaprabha and Ghataprabha rivers from Maharashtra is poor this year.

While the Malaprabha has 21 tmcft of water against its capacity of 37 tmcft, Ghataprabha has only 42 tmcft against a capacity of 51 tmcft.

Tough guidelines

Tough guidelines by the Centre for deciding areas hit by drought have deprived sev-

eral taluks of the drought-hit tag.

The central teams are likely to tour the state to assess the situation and submit a report to the Centre.

Based on the report, the Centre announces compensation as per National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) norms.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda recently said that the compensation will be according to NDRF norms, which means farmers will get a meagre amount.

Onus on govt

"The state government has its task cut out to rescue farmers from the jaws of drought. Meagre compensation as per NDRF norms will not help in anyway. The state government should walk the extra mile to compensate farmers by paying them a reasonable amount in addition to what they get under NDRF norms," said Basangouda Malipatil, a farmer.

Drinking water

The only saving grace is that the region is facing no shortage of drinking water as water from the Almatti reservoir has been released to fill tanks in the area. If any town or village is facing a shortage of drinking water, it is due to a faulty supply system.

Erratic power supply is blamed for drinking water woes in Vijayapura city and other towns.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.4, Sept. 25, 2023

Rs 200 to Rs 10: Tomato farmers' hopes crash



Fruit shock

- Officials blame the arrival of a large quantity of tomatoes and fall in demand from other states for the price crash
- Kolar APMC received 4.21 lakh quintals of tomatoes in Sept. In the same period last year, the APMC received 2.31 lakh quintals
- A box of 15 kg of tomatoes that was sold at Rs 2,300 in July and August is now being sold at Rs 45 to Rs 120
- A farmer in Koppal blamed the horticulture department, saying the latter sold tomato seedlings and farmers bought them hoping for better returns

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Two extremes in a span of two months have brought tomato farmers face-to-face with the cruel reality of market forces.

In July, the kitchen staple hit an eye-popping Rs 200/kg in the retail market, prompting scores of farmers to switch to the crop while hotels and households shunned it. Currently, the fruit is being sold for Rs 10/kg, almost the cost of a tea, a see-sawing of fortunes that has left farmers shaking their heads in disbelief.

The price crash is being attributed by officials from the Horticultural Department and the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) to the arrival of a large quantity of tomatoes and fall in demand from other states.

This month alone, the Kolar APMC,

Asia's second-largest tomato market, received 4.21 lakh quintals of tomatoes. In the same period last year, the APMC received 2.31 lakh quintals and it received 3.82 lakh quintals in September 2021.

This has had a cascading effect on the prices: a box of 15 kg of tomatoes that was sold at Rs 2,300 in July and August is now being sold at Rs 45 to Rs 120.

Farmers in Koppal, Chikkaballapur, Mandya, Tumakuru, Chitradurga, Haveri had taken up large-scale cultivation of tomatoes when prices went through the roof.

According to sources in the Horticulture Department, till Sept 1, the fruit had been sown on nearly 32,323 ha of land. But many farmers in Kolar and surrounding areas have decided not to harvest the yield as the labour cost of harvesting is higher than the returns.

► **Tomato, Page 5**

Centre lowers stock limit of pulses, P12

Rs 200 to Rs 10: Tomato farmers' hopes crash

Tomato, from Page 1

"By harvesting tomatoes on my 10 acres of land, I am only going to add to my losses," Satish Hotur, a farmer from Chinthamani in Chikkaballapur. "I can harvest 20 to 28 boxes of tomatoes per day. The traders are quoting Rs 150 per box (max he can earn Rs 4,200), whereas the labour charges itself would come to Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500. And then there are transport charges, traders commission and others. So, I have decided not to harvest the yield."

This is apart from the cultivation costs.

Krishna Matapathi, a farmer in Koppal, blames the horticulture department for not warning them in advance. "The department sold a large number of tomato seedlings in August. And many farmers, who earlier used to grow cotton or chilli, hoping for better yield shifted to tomatoes. Now, we are not even getting the returns on investment," he said.

Koppal doubled its tomato cultivation area from 500

acres in April to 1,000 acres in July-August. Horticulture department officials claim they sold nearly two crore tomato seedlings in this period.

But Siddalingeshwara, Senior Additional Director of Horticulture, informed *DH* that several teams were formed at taluk levels to caution farmers against expanding the cultivation area.

He said poor demand from other states has crashed prices, while there is excess supply in the local market.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Source: Deccan Herald, p.1 &12, Sept. 26, 2023

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Karnataka's unfulfilled promise

The state moved early to devolve power to the Panchayat level, but much still remains to be done to realise it on ground

T R RAGHUNANDAN

In 2000, shortly after the S M Krishna-led Congress government assumed office, the then Rural Development Minister M Y Ghorpade organised a Round Table to take stock of Karnataka's achievements in democratic decentralisation. There, a discussion paper authored by a World Bank researcher, Keith Maclean, titled *Overview of Rural Decentralisation in India* concluded that in Karnataka, despite several governmental and civil society attempts, Panchayats had not emerged as people's institutions. Instead, distortions of higher-level political systems had been replicated at decentralised levels and new elites and power centres had emerged within the Panchayati system.

Maclean observed that decisions were not transparent and decision-making criteria were unclear, especially with respect to officials' transfers and postings and entrustment of works for implementation. Despite Karnataka's claim to have achieved 'big bang' decentralisation, the report said that power relations among Panchayats, the bureaucracy, MLAs and MPs had remained unchanged. There was poor definition and considerable overlap in the roles of Panchayat levels and Gram Sabhas had failed to ensure accountability to the people. There was a universal tendency to divide funds equally among elected representatives for their constituencies, which limited the size, scale, reach and effectiveness of projects. Finally, it stated that over 428 schemes were implemented through Panchayats with virtually no local discretion.

Though Maclean's paper annoyed those extolling the Karnataka model, Ghorpade took it seriously and commenced low-profile reforms, braving scepticism and opposition from his party colleagues. Landmark amendments, including constituting a two-tier system of peoples' participation through Ward and Gram Sabhas, were undertaken. The gradual centralisation of departmental schemes back from the Zilla Panchayats to Bengaluru-based line departments was reversed by Siddaramaiah, then Finance Minister in the Dharam Singh government.

Karnataka's reform efforts have since

continued, despite a spate of coalition governments and burgeoning corruption. Despite strong political polarisation, enduring decentralisation champions from every political party have collaborated to push Karnataka's agenda forward. Amendments piloted by H K Patil, the Rural Development Minister in the earlier Siddaramaiah government, have made Karnataka's Gram Swaraj Act, 2016, express arguably the strongest mandate for Panchayati Raj in the country by embedding provisions for strong Gram Sabhas, local approval of beneficiary identification and prioritisation, oversight of Gram Panchayat-level works, and reformed local tax provisions.



Paradoxically, these progressive developments do not erase the relevance of Maclean's two-decade-old trenchant observations. Karnataka still faces the challenge of improving the quality of practice of its strong legal mandate for democratic decentralisation. It has the law; it has to walk the talk on implementation.

That is easier said than done.

Fiscal decentralisation the key

Ramakrishna Hegde and Nazeer Saab's stellar reforms of 1987 comprised of constituting a two-tier system comprising of strong Zilla Parishads and aggregating the 22,000 tiny Gram Panchayats into 3,300 Mandal Panchayats, which were scaleable levels for service delivery. This institutional rejig was backed by effective fiscal decentralisation, achieved by cleaving out a District Sector from the state budget comprising of departmental schemes and programmes that were devolved for planning and implementation to the Zilla Parishads.

This meaningful exercise in devolution was disliked by bureaucrats who perceived a loss of command and control. Over the years, devolved programmes were spirited back into de-

partmental coffers. A research study of the Centre for Policy Research – the *Paisa for Panchayats* – report revealed that the extent of re-centralisation was so significant that the District and Taluk Panchayats had become, from a financial perspective, mere junction boxes for salary funds; ATMs dispensing salary to departmental staff deputed to them nominally, without any control over meaningful schemes and programmes.

Ironically, the passage of salary funds through the Zilla and Taluk Panchayats enables the state to boast that they devolve considerable sums of money to the Panchayats, even though such salary transfers are meaningless without autonomous control over how schemes and programmes are implemented.

The result of these fiscal distortions showed that while at the grassroots level, considerable funds were spent by the government, only an eighth of it was within the knowledge of Gram Panchayats; the remainder was spent by departments without any consultation with the panchayats and no oversight by the Grama Sabhas, who were thus ineffective despite their strong legal mandate for oversight. The Centre for Policy Research's 2021 report, *Paisa for Municipalities*, revealed the same malaise in municipalities.

Simply put, there is no way that a Karnataka resident can find out how much money is being spent by the government in his or her Panchayat, ward or municipality, or sector of interest, given the multiplicity of institutions crowding out each other and spending money for the same things from different accounting sources. We have in place a classic recipe for corruption and leakage, in the name of decentralisation.

The Karnataka government organised this week a two-day Round Table of experts and leaders cutting across party lines to discuss how democratic decentralisation can be re-energised and given a new direction. In parallel, the Fifth Finance Commission of the state is being constituted to make recommendations on how the divisible pool of finances may be divided between the state and local governments.

Will the magic happen again, of a group of committed politicians and bureaucrats implementing the powerful law, keeping in mind the larger interest of the state's people? Or will the Round Table deteriorate into another repetition of the same old self-praise that has been the bane of Karnataka's discourse on democratic decentralisation?

One waits and watches. One lives on hope.

(The writer is a former Secretary, Rural Development, Govt of Karnataka, and Trustee, CIVIC)

Source: Deccan Herald, p. 6, sept. 2023

'Oil price a concern but no alarm yet'

Tur imports to cool pulses prices, some other food prices are easing already, Finance Ministry emphasises in monthly review of economy; flags monsoon deficit's likely impact on kharif, rabi crops as another key risk to economic outlook

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The recent run-up in global crude oil prices is a concern for the Indian economy but doesn't yet warrant alarm, and prices of some food items that had spurred inflation above 7% in July are "on the retreat" while those of others like tur dal will ease once imports hit the market, the Finance Ministry said.

Apart from "steadily climbing" oil prices, the ministry identified the monsoon deficit, which could impact both kharif and rabi crops, as another risk to the economic out-

Oil watch

Finance Ministry admits the 'steadily climbing' global crude oil prices pose a risk to the economic outlook

- Terms a likely stock market dip 'in the wake of an overdue global stock market correction' an 'ever-present' risk

- Economic outlook on track for a 'baseline estimate' of 6.5% real GDP growth this fiscal

- Ministry says it sees incipient signs of a new private sector formation cycle



look, and termed a likely stock market dip "in the wake of an overdue global stock market correction" as an "ever-present" risk.

The economic outlook remained bright and on track for a "baseline esti-

mate" of 6.5% real GDP growth this year, the ministry said in its economic review for August. It stressed that the "momentum of economic activity" from the first quarter, when GDP grew 7.8%, has "been

carried forward" into the second quarter and there are "incipient signs of a new private sector formation cycle".

The ministry cited high frequency indicators such as record e-way bills and electronic toll collections as signs of healthy economic activity. It pointed to a 4.2% uptick in capital goods imports in the first quarter to suggest higher public capital spending had begun to crowd in private investment.

"Private sector is in good health as data on advance tax payments... confirm," the ministry noted, asserting that businesses were 'investing'.

"The U.S. 10-year bond yield has crossed 4.3%, and the S&P 500 index is not too far from its all-time high. The risks of a stock market correction and geopolitical developments could potentially hurt investment sentiment in the second half... But, the impact of these developments on underlying economic activity in India should be relatively contained," it averred.

While the ministry acknowledged the August monsoon deficit could impact both kharif and rabi crops, it termed September's rains "heartening" as it had erased a part of the overall deficit.

Source: The Hindu, p.20, sept. 23, 2023

Dept. asked to freshly calculate minimum wages for 10 scheduled employments

Cost of food, clothes, and shelter has to be factored into the calculations for revision of minimum wages, say labour unions

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

In what is being seen as a positive signal in fixing minimum wages on scientific basis in the current revision cycle, the State government has sent back a proposal by the Labour Department to enhance minimum wages for 10 scheduled employments and asked the wages to be revised on a more rational basis.

While the minimum wages for 38 scheduled employments have already been notified in 2022-2023, the revised minimum wages for 10 scheduled employment is pending before the new Congress government for notification. Labour Minister Santosh Lad confirmed the development and said that he had asked for a scientific revision of wages. "Labour cannot be cheap. I have asked the department officials to come up with fresh calculations," he told *The Hindu*.

In Karnataka, to the already existing 83 scheduled employments, 22



In Karnataka, to the already existing 83 scheduled employments, 22 were added in 2019, taking the total to 105 that covers close to about 2 crore workers. SPECIALARRANGEMENT

were added in 2019, taking the total to 105 that covers close to about 2 crore workers.

The minimum wages were fixed in 2017-2018 to 83 scheduled employments in Karnataka, and as per law these are to be revised at least once in five years.

Labour unions' stand

The revision of minimum wages to 38 of the scheduled employments in 2022-23, however, had been criticised by trade un-

ions. While the 2017-2018 fixation of minimum wages was based on a ground-level survey at 16 centres across Karnataka, the State notified 5% to 10% hike on the wages, including the variable dearness allowance, without such a survey to assess inflation-related price rise in 2022-23.

The unions had opposed the calculations and sought the revision based on the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in the Reptakos Brett case.

Landmark SC judgment

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court laid down the calculation for minimum wages in the Reptakos Brett case in 1992. The calculation is

based on - one earner for three consumption units; a minimum food requirement based on 2,700 calories per average adult; 72 yards of clothing per year; rent corresponding to the government industrial area housing scheme; 20%

of minimum wages to consider for fuel, lighting and miscellaneous; 25% of the minimum wages towards children's education, medical expenses, minimum recreation such as festivals/ ceremonies, provision for old age, marriage, etc.

The officials pointed out that the ground survey had not been possible owing to the pandemic and also in anticipation of the Labour Code coming into effect.

The department officials had argued that during the revision of the minimum wages in 2017-2018, the government followed the court guidelines in the Reptakos Brett case to bring uniformity in minimum wages.

Since the 2022-2023 process is to only revise the wages, there was no need to follow the guidelines again, the officials had argued.

After the government notified the revision of mi-

nimum wages in 38 scheduled employment, the unions approached the High Court for relief.

"The cost of food, clothes, and shelter has to be factored in the calculations for revision of minimum wages. The Reptakos Brett case should form the basis for calculations. Surveys should be conducted to ascertain ground realities. The government-notified minimum wages for 38 scheduled employments was arbitrary," All-India Trade Union Congress Karnataka secretary M. Satyanand said.

Cost of meat

He welcomed the govern-

ment's decision of asking the department to rework the wage calculations, in the case of the 10 scheduled employments yet to be notified.

"Meat that is part of the diet of a large number of households has not been considered for calculating minimum wages. This should be considered in this revision."

Meanwhile, in a recent reply to a RTI query, the Labour Department has said that it will be following the guidelines fixed by the court in the Reptakos Brett case while fixing minimum wages to the 22 new employments added to the schedule since 2019.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, sept. 25, 2023

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EDUCATION

Classes 9 and 11 to have board exams from this academic year

Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board will set uniform question papers

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) will conduct board exams for classes 9 and 11 from the 2023-24 academic year. Around 15 lakh students from these two classes will be taking the exam this year in the State.

The board currently conducts annual examinations for classes 10 and 12 and assessment examinations for classes 5 and 8. Learning can be strengthened and learning levels better monitored if the board holds Summative Assessment (SA)-2 for class 9 students and annual examinations for class 11 students as well, believes the



Currently, annual examinations are conducted for classes 10 and 12 and assessment examinations for classes 5 and 8. FILE PHOTO

Department of School Education and Literacy. Now the board will conduct the SA-2 examination at the school level for class 9 and the annual examination at college level for class 11.

Centrally set papers

The board will prepare the

question papers at the state level, and question papers for class 9 will be sent to a secure online account of the Block Education Officer concerned. For class 11, question papers will be sent to the login of the Deputy Director of Pre-University concerned.

They will download the question papers on examination day, print the papers according to the number of students and send them to the schools, maintaining confidentiality.

The evaluation of class 9 will be conducted at the taluk level, and class 11 in the respective colleges. The results will be uploaded on the Students Achievement Tracking System (SATS) portal by the Head Masters and Principals.

However, there is no detention of any student of class 9, while supplementary examinations are conducted for students who fail in class 11.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Gopalakrishna. H.N., Director (Exams) KSEAB, said, "Earlier, there was no uniformity in the question paper. It was not known

whether the teachers had completed the syllabus. It affected the learning process. Therefore, the government has asked us to conduct the exams for classes 9 and 11. In a few days model question papers will be released and also published on the board website. The board will also announce the schedule of examination soon."

He said it was part of the government's effort to improve the quality of education.

"The board will verify the data of results uploaded on SATS by the Head Masters and Principals. Then it will also check which schools, taluks and districts are lagging behind, and a report will be submitted to the government on how standards can be improved," he said.

Source: The Hindu, p.3, sept. 24, 2023

Govt. forms new committees to revise school textbooks in time for next academic year

Panels to have M.G. Hegde as convener; educationists say the exercise may become questionable

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government has set up five committees, comprising 37 members, led by professor M.G. Hegde to revise school textbooks in time for the next academic year.

The previous BJP regime had formed a committee led by Hindutva activist Rohith Chakratirtha to revise textbooks drafted by a committee led by writer Baragur Ramachandrappa. This exercise included lessons written by several Hindutva icons, including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh founder K.B. Hegde-war, among other changes, that turned controversial.

Once the Congress came to power, with little time to completely revise textbooks for this academic year, it re-revised them to make some “corrections, additions, and deletions” under the guidance of Mr. Ramachandrappa again, promising to bring revised textbooks for the next academic year. Now, the five committees – with Mr. Hegde, a retired professor at Rani Chennamma University, Belagavi, as their convener – will revise the textbooks again for the next academic year. Separate committees have been formed to revise first- and second-language Kannada



Separate committees have been formed to revise first and second-language Kannada textbooks for classes I to X, and third-language Kannada textbooks for classes IX and X, and social science textbooks for classes VI to X. FILE PHOTO

textbooks for classes I to X, and third-language Kannada books for classes IX and X, and social science textbooks for classes VI to X.

Ritesh Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary of the Department of School Education and Literacy, said this was a “short exercise to revise the textbooks to make corrections” and the committees would submit their report in the next three months.

Several objections

The order forming these five new committees says the revision has to be done as per the guidelines of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and not the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE-2023) currently in force. Many

educationists have argued that this will render the exercise “null and void”.

Development educationist Niranjana Aradhya V.P. said that unless the State government declares they have rejected the NCFSE-2023 like it has announced the decision to scrap the NEP-2020, the 2023 framework would apply to textbooks.

“We could have developed a State Curriculum Framework, on the lines of the proposed Karnataka State Education Policy (KSEP), before initiating the process of revising textbooks,” he said. Educationist Sripada Bhat, who was a member of NCF-2005, concurred with Mr. Aradhya and said the new textbooks had to be as per NCFSE-2023 guidelines.

However, Mr. Singh said that since the State government had rejected NEP-2020 and decided to bring KSEP, NCFSE-2023 would not be applicable.

Mr. Bhat also argued that given that the present textbooks were over a decade old already, there was no point in revising them further for the fourth time now. “It would have been better to draft new textbooks as revising these textbooks has now become meaningless,” he said, adding that the State government had not only not followed social justice while forming these committees, but the latest committee formed now, also includes several members who were part of both Baragur Ramachandrappa and Rohith Chakratirtha committees.

Source: The Hindu, p.10, sept. 27, 2023

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Health

Dharwad hospital tops in linking highest number of health records

The State also is on top with 46,917 verified health facilities registered in its Health Facility Registry

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Even as Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) completes two years of its existence, the Dharwad District Hospital in Karnataka, has been recognised as the facility for linking the highest number of health records of patients to their Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHAs) in the country in the last one year (from October 2022 to September 2023).

Karnataka, which has so far linked personal health records of over 91.87 lakh patients with their ABHAs, has so far created 2.52 crore ABHAs.

With this, Karnataka is now in the seventh position in terms of ABHAs created in the country. Of the total 45.96 crore ABHAs created in the country, Uttar Pradesh is the highest contributor with 4.83 crore as of Wednesday.

The State also continues to top the country with 46,917 verified health facilities registered in its Health Facility Registry (HFR). Likewise, with



Karnataka Health Commissioner Randeep D. receiving 'Ayushman Utkrishtata' awards at Arogya Manthan held in New Delhi.

40,374 verified healthcare professionals in its Health Professionals Registry (HPR), the State is in the second position after Uttar Pradesh that has 42,829 verified health professionals in its HPR, according to the ABDM dashboard launched by the National Health Authority (NHA).

Scan and Share

Karnataka is also in the second position in the country in the 'Scan and Share'

category, wherein a QR code-based Fast Track Queue System for patient registration is being followed.

This facility, which is being used in 241 hospitals - including 27 private facilities across the State - has so far benefitted nearly 18 lakh patients coming to the Out Patient Department (OPD) to share their demographic and personal details with the hospital just by scanning the code.

This has helped reduce long queues.

Of the total 92.23 lakh tokens issued in the country, Uttar Pradesh is the highest contributor with 34.4 lakh. Karnataka follows with 17.66 lakh tokens issued.

Although the system was first introduced in C.V. Raman General hospital in the State, K.C. General hospital is now topping the list for issuing the highest number of tokens (93,377)

so far. In November last year, C.V. Raman General hospital was the second government hospital in India, after the Centre-run Lady Harding Medical College (LHMC) in Delhi to introduce the system.

While Jayanagar General hospital follows K.C. General with 88,777 tokens issued under the 'Scan and Share' facility, C.V. Raman is in the third position with 74,762 tokens issued to date.

Ayushman Utkrishtata

In recognition of its performance, Karnataka ABDM has bagged "Ayushman Utkrishtata" awards presented during the two-day Arogya Manthan in New Delhi on September 25.

State Health Commissioner Randeep, who is also the State Mission Director for ABDM, said the awards celebrate excellence in healthcare and Karnataka's achievements in two significant categories.

"This reflects the State's unwavering commitment to improving healthcare accessibility and quality," he said.

Source: The Hindu, p.8, sept. 28, 2023

STs trail non-STs in 81 health measures: 2021 study

The study evaluated 129 health indicators to compare the performance of Scheduled Tribes and non-Scheduled Tribes

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In a recent study published in 'The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia', researchers provide a detailed analysis of the health, nutrition, and population trends of Scheduled Tribes (STs) from 2016 to 2021. Drawing from the National Family Health Surveys from 2016 and 2021, the authors contend that even though there is a noticeable improvement in the health and welfare metrics of STs, there are persistent disparities between the metrics of ST and non-ST populations, which demand urgent and consistent policy efforts.

The 2011 Census recorded over 104 million STs spread across 705 recognised ethnic groups. Even with targeted policies in place, STs, who make up 8.6% of India's population, face health and socioeconomic challenges. The study offers an overview of the performance metrics for STs, non-STs, and the overall population based on 129 parameters in 2021. It also highlights the contrast in the performance metrics of STs between 2016 and 2021, spotlighting areas of both progress and decline.

In 2021, the non-ST population outperformed the ST population in 81 out of 129 indicators. STs continued to face challenges, particularly concerning women's status and major public health issues such as child malnutrition, anaemia, insufficient vaccination coverage, and disparities in fertility and mortality rates. The 48 indicators on which STs surpassed non-STs include overall gender balance, gender balance at birth, use of family planning methods, consistent treatment during pregnancy, and adherence to recommended breastfeeding practices. Moreover, STs showed a reduced occurrence of diabetes and hypertension compared to non-STs.

The research divided the 129 in-

dicators into 21 themes to evaluate the comparative performance of STs and non-STs in 2021. The chart shows the number of indicators on which the STs outperformed the non-STs or vice versa. The circles labelled as 'yes' in the chart are indicators where STs outperformed non-STs and those labelled 'no' indicate the opposite.

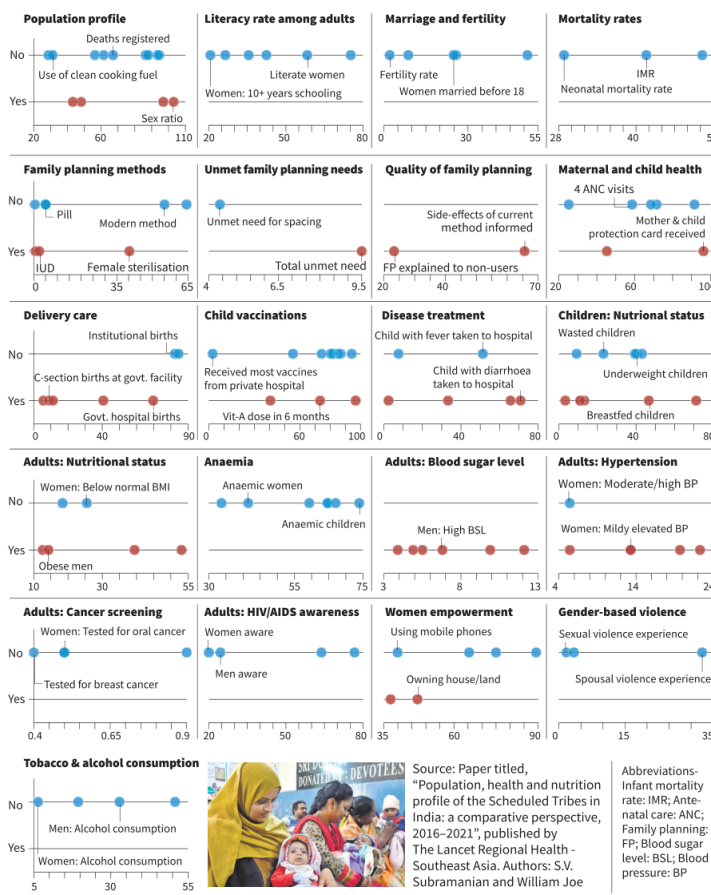
Aside from the indicators focused on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in adults, STs are at a disadvantage in almost all categories. The study says that the areas where they face greater vulnerability need dedicated policy efforts. The mortality rate for children under five in the ST community was alarmingly high, with 50 out of every 1,000 children not reaching their fifth birthday. Additionally, child malnutrition was a pressing issue, as more than 40% of ST children under five were stunted, with a similar percentage being underweight. The study also highlights new challenges for STs. For instance, from 2016 to 2021, there was a significant rise in high blood pressure levels among ST men and women aged 15-49, with increases of 7.5% and 8.9%, respectively.

Between 2016 and 2021, the ST population registered improvements in 83 of the selected 129 indicators (not visualised in the chart). During these years, STs experienced major improvements in access to improved sanitation facilities (an increase of 30.4 percentage points between 2015-2016 and 2019-2021). Similarly, more births were being attended to by skilled health personnel (an increase of 13 points) and full vaccination coverage among children aged 12-23 months (an increase of 18.6 points). The civil registration of births among STs also increased from 76% in 2016 to 88% in 2021.

The study contends that India's progress on various policy metrics concerning population, health, and nutrition hinges on the ability of its marginalised groups, with the STs being a significant segment.

Comparing health metrics

Under each indicator, the circles labelled as 'yes' in the chart are indicators where STs outperformed non-STs and those labelled 'no' indicate the opposite. All figures are in percentage



Source: The Hindu, p.11, sept. 28, 2023

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Environment



Rural landscape biodiversity at risk as panel proposes leasing encroached land

Panel seeks amendment to Section 79 (2) of Land Revenue Act 1964

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The recommendation of a cabinet sub-committee to lease the illegally cultivated gomala land in state as a shortcut to regularisation, has brought to the fore concerns over the biodiversity of rural commons, with the Revenue department seeking a legal opinion on the issue.

Open fields in villages of the state have been classified variously as Gomala, Gayarana, Hullabanni, Soppinabetta, Jamma, and Bane, among other names. The Karnataka Land Revenue Act protects such lands against encroachment by barring the government from regularising unauthorised cultivation.

Documents obtained by *DH* under the Right to Information Act show that the sub-committee set up during the BJP government and headed by the then Revenue Minister Ashoka had recommended a set of measures to relax the current provisions to protect rural commons.

The issue goes back to 2017 when the then Congress gov-



Open fields in villages of the state have been classified variously as Gomala, Gayarana, Hullabanni, Soppinabetta, Jamma, Bane among other names. The Karnataka Land Revenue Act protects such lands against encroachment by barring the government from regularising unauthorised cultivation.

ernment had amended the Act to relax a key provision that reserved at least 12 hectares per 100 head count of cattle. The amendment allowed the deputy commissioner one-time permission to reduce the reserved land when the area is larger than required.

The sub-committee set up during the BJP took it to the next step, recommending leasing of such land to bypass the rules barring grant of such land, except for Jamma and Bane in Kodagu, that enjoy additional protection against such dilutions.

As per the proceedings of the committee accessed by *DH*, the sub-committee seeks

amendment to Section 79 (2) of Karnataka Land Revenue Act 1964.

"Steps should be taken to bring an amendment so that (unauthorised) cultivators can be leased up to 5 acres for 30 years in addition to their own land," the committee decided on January 24, 2023.

Sources in the department said the decision to lease the land for a fee was taken after it was pointed out that such lands cannot be granted. "The law recognises such lands as rural commons with special privileges given to farmers to collect fodder and fire wood. Granting it to one individual was seen as a violation of

the rights of the community. Meanwhile, the Forest department opined that granting such lands through regularisation requires prior permission of the Union government as they enjoy protection under the Supreme Court's verdict in the Godavarman case," a senior official said.

A senior official in the Forest department said such "privileged lands" usually form the buffer zones in the Western Ghats districts. "In places like Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga and Uttara Kan- nada the lands are not only rich in biodiversity but play a key role in protecting the forests while providing the resources to the villagers," he said, refusing to comment on the committee's decision.

An official from the Revenue department, however, acknowledged the complications that will arise from indirect regularisation like lease of the land. "Leasing might fuel a fresh cycle of encroachment, more applications for regularisation and legal complications that can be avoided. In fact, we already have applications for regularising encroachment on 10 lakh acres of land," he said.

A senior official in the department said they have forwarded the proceedings of the meeting to the Law department for an opinion. "Considering the problems that may arise in future, legal opinion has been sought," she said.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.3, Sept 27, 2023

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Governance & Gender

Onus of ensuring inclusion of all citizens in welfare schemes on govts., say experts

At the Trustworthy digital identity international conference, experts highlighted the need for inclusion being the northstar while designing a universal digital ID system

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

About two weeks ago, in a report prepared for G20 prior to the Leaders' Summit, the World Bank praised the way India harnessed the power of digital public infrastructure such as Aadhaar and UPI to improve financial inclusion and delivery of public goods and services.

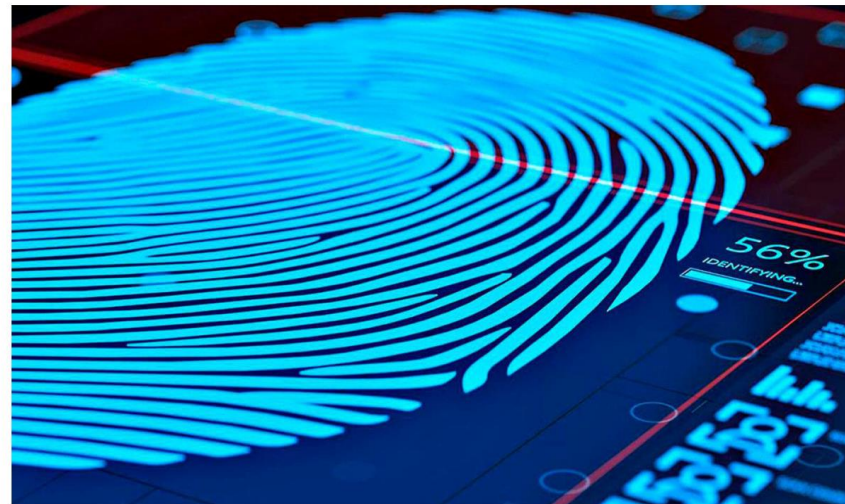
The report which was part of G20's financial inclusion action plan for 2024-2026 shaped under India's presidency also mentioned other digital ID systems such as Singapore's Singpass, Philippines' PhilSys, and UAE's UAE-Pass.

With more than 1.3 billion registered users, Aadhaar is the largest national biometric digital identification programme in the world. Modular Open-Source Identity Platform (MOSIP), a digital identity platform developed by the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIITB) has been working on a project to provide digital identities similar to Aadhaar in nine countries including the Philippines, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Ethiopia, Republic of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and Togolese Republic.

Not entirely foolproof

While India's digital transformation has achieved huge strides in financial inclusion, the system is not entirely foolproof yet. The twin aims of Aadhaar have been eliminating corruption from the system and inclusion of the underprivileged and weakest sections of society through proof of identity for every citizen.

However, cases of people being excluded from welfare schemes due to failure of authentication or lack of documents like



Cases of people being excluded from welfare schemes due to failure of authentication or lack of documents like Aadhaar still continue. The onus of fixing it always falls on the citizens, and experts have been pointing out how problematic it is. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Aadhaar still continue. The onus of fixing it always falls on the citizens, and experts have been pointing out how problematic it is.

"A person's unique ID is the coming together of their history, the history of a larger administrative system, and various other aspects.

That's why people's vulnerabilities around IDs are also very unique," said Dr. Janaki Srinivasan, Associate Professor, IIIT-B. She was part of a panel on 'Digital divides and inclusion' at the Trustworthy digital identity international conference by IIITB and The Alan Turing Institute.

"The story we often hear is that when people have multiple IDs it is to make wrong use of the available benefits."

"But what we found in our research was that in some cases it was simply a way of coping," said Dr. Janaki, citing the example of women who had to move



The panellists discussing digital identity and data security.

from their native place after marriage.

She noted that it was similar in the case of several migrant workers too. A migrant who has moved to a big city may need an ID to do transactions in his native and another ID for his transactions in the city.

Given the multiple needs and the phase of life

in which people are, they may have completely legitimate reasons for having multiple IDs, Dr. Janaki noted.

"Most of the groups we identify as vulnerable have stitched their life together with so many fragile threads. When a new system comes in it's not so much about the specifics

of that system being bad in any sense, it's just that the system upends what they already know. They are generally not in a position to spend a lot of effort and resources to understand how the new system works. They may find ways around it. But it definitely increases the labour they have to put in to relearn the system, reconfiguring their networks and so on and so forth," she said.

Humane grievance

BBMP relaunched the 'Fix My Street' app earlier this year allowing citizens to report potholes. Within 15 days of launch, the app saw more than 2,500 complaints being registered. The last few years have seen several central and state government departments rolling out similar apps for grievance redressal.

While apps for grievance redressal may sound excellent in theory, they

get more complicated in real according to experts. Citing a field study done in three states, Sarayu noted that grievance redressal in India has mostly been mediated.

According to Sasikumar Ganesan, Head of Engineering at MOSIP, digital systems have the inherent problem of not being humans. He remembered how his father, whenever faced with a problem regarding his property transactions, would walk up to one of the department staff, tell them his situation, convince them, and get them involved to find a solution.

"The moment it moved online, things changed. Now his only option was to depend on me to fill things out online. Grievance has to be humane, and it is going to be a tough exercise," he said.

Dr. Srinivasan echoed similar sentiments and noted that the state was le-

gally bound to take upon the onus of people being excluded and carry out grievance redressal.

"Fixing where that accountability is and how you take that accountability forward is a very critical priority. It may get better with time. But we cannot totally expect to learn it on the field," she said.

Inclusion vs security

In June, COVID-19 vaccination data of several Indians was reportedly leaked on a Telegram bot.

The data leaked from the government-funded CoWIN portal included name, gender, birth details, Aadhaar numbers, PAN cards, passport numbers, voter IDs and vaccination centre details as per reports.

Data breaches make citizens extremely vulnerable to scams, manipulation, and exploitation. Reports suggest that Aadhaar related scams have been on the rise in the country.

"There's a huge difference between building an inclusive technology and a technology that prevents fraud and ensures security privacy. Sometimes they are on opposite sides," said Mr. Ganesan, adding that inclusivity has to be the basic principle on which the system works.

He also pointed out how using biometrics for verification can be inclusive and exclusive.

"My father can't remember passwords and asks the security person's help to type in the PIN and withdraw money from the ATM. But when it comes to fingerprint authentication, he is perfectly okay. But I have also seen people standing in queue unable to get their fingerprints authenticated. It's not their fault, yet they are being denied service," he said.

In June, the Odisha High

Court, while hearing a writ petition on the plight of malnourished children from villages in the Jajpur district, had ruled that failure of Aadhaar card, mobile phone, or identity papers of a particular kind were no grounds to exclude people from welfare schemes.

"It is important to keep improving your security layers keeping the north star as inclusion and not the other way around. The day you start doing it the other way around and try to prevent more people from fraud, you are going to exclude more people from this system," Mr. Ganesan said.

Host of factors

Panelists also pointed out that within the idea of the universality of IDs, the question of whether it was framed as a policy or a right deserved significant consideration, and the question of inclusion had to be framed accordingly.

In the case of women particularly many factors mediated the securing and usage of an ID, said Sarayu Natarajan, founder of Aapti Institute.

"How women get out, the cost of taking time off to get an ID - a whole range of such factors determine whether a woman can get out or not in the first place... Thinking through what this identification means conceptually and in what ways you would be viewed by the state and to some extent private entities are also significant questions that mediate the identity," she said.

She also noted that while inclusion into the system was often perceived as a one-time thing, in reality it is a constantly negotiated process.

"Technological shifts and social practices can end up including and excluding people. It is a complex journey," she said.

Source: The Hindu, Page9., Sept. 22, 2023.

Karnataka's share of women representation in Assembly lowest among Southern States

In figures

Year	Contestants	Winners	Year	No. of women voters	No. of women who voted	Female polling percentage
2023	185	10	2023	2,63,99,574	1,91,91,137	72.69
2018	219	10	2018	2,49,10,888	1,78,18,310	71.5
2013	176	7	2013	2,13,67,912	1,50,57,361	70.47
2008	104	3	2008	1,98,12,639	1,25,01,931	63.10
2004	101	6	2004	1,89,84,380	1,19,45,017	62.9
1999	62	6	1999	1,68,36,520	1,08,72,538	64.58
1994	117	7	1994	1,51,23,835	99,62,033	65.87
1989	78	10	1989	1,39,85,552	89,60,070	64.07
1985	108	8	1985	1,08,90,046	68,72,429	63.11
1983	34	1	1983	1,00,78,883	61,13,904	60.66
1978	30	8	1978	88,08,540	59,80,287	67.89
1972	20	No winners	1972	73,55,741	41,84,091	56.88
1967	9	5	1967	62,16,001	36,19,414	58.23
1962	30	18	1962	55,13,993	29,11,216	52.80
1957	24	13	1957	Not available		

(Source: Election Commission of India)

Afshan Yasmeen

BENGALURU

While the Women's Reservation Bill has been passed in Parliament, a look at the representation of women in the Karnataka Assembly over the years shows a bleak picture.

At 4.5% of the total strength of Assembly, Karnataka's share of women representation is the sixth lowest in the country. In fact, it is the lowest among the Southern States' share of MLAs in their Legislative Assemblies. While Andhra Pradesh has 8%, Kerala follows with 7.9%.

The share of Tamil Nadu and Telangana is almost the same at 5.1% and 5%, respectively, according to data.

Far better

Women representation appeared to have been far better in the first two elections in 1957 and 1962, with 13 and 18 elected, respectively. Women representation remained in the single digit since 1967, except in 1989, 2018, and 2023 when 10 women were elected each.

Currently, of the 10 in the Assembly, three are from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), four from Congress, two from the JD(S), and one fought as an Independent.

Rise in women voters

However, the number of women voters has gone up

Currently, of the 10 women in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, three are from the BJP, four from the Congress, two from the JD(S), and one is an Independent

significantly. From 55.13 lakh in 1962, the number of women voters touched 2.63 crore this year. The total number of women voters have outnumbered men voters in at least 17 electoral divisions out of the 34 in the State this year.

Too few winners

On the other hand, while a total of 1,297 women have contested polls from 1967 till 2023, a mere 110 (8.48%) have won. Of these, 74 are from the Congress (the highest), 19 are from Janata Parivar (Janata party, Janata Dal, Janata Dal (Secular), and JD-U), and 13 from the BJP.

Although the number of women contestants has been on the rise over the years, former women elected representatives said the number of candidates fielded by various parties is still not in proportion to the rise in the number of women voters.

From major parties

In 2018, of the 219 women contestants only 36 were from major political par-

ties (the Congress had fielded 15 women while the BJP and the Janata Dal (Secular) had given seats to five and six women, respectively). The remaining were from smaller parties and Independents. This time, 12 were from the BJP, Congress nominated 11, and the JD(S) 13.

The highest number of women (17) were nominated by the Aam Aadmi Party, even though they failed to make any mark in the Assembly elections. The rest were Independents.

'Have goal, clarity'

Laxmi Hebbalkar, the lone woman in the State Cabinet this time, attributed the poor representation to hesitation and lack of confidence among women, apart from other reasons.

"Most of the time, women feel they cannot take up politics as a career as they have other responsibilities. The perception in society is also that women cannot devote as much time towards politics as men. Although the Women's Reservation Bill is a welcome move, I feel women should not contest just because the seat is reserved for them. Women should be grounded, have a goal, clarity, and vision in politics. All these years, we only demanded reservation but we did not become inevitable on the ground. We should prove our leadership," Ms. Hebbalkar said.

Source: The Hindu, Page6., Sept. 22, 2023.

Aadhaar unreliable in 'hot, humid' India: rating agency

Amid India's digital infra push, Moody's says the world's largest digital ID programme often denies service to users; it questions reliability of biometric technology, warns of privacy and security risks

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Global rating major Moody's Investors Service has flagged concerns about security and privacy vulnerabilities in centralised identification systems such as India's Aadhaar programme. The unique ID system often results in "service denials", and using biometric technologies in humid conditions is unreliable, it noted.

The Aadhaar system enables access to public and private services, with verification through fingerprint or iris scans and alternatives such as one-time passcodes (OTPs). However, it "faces hurdles, including the burden of establishing authorization and concerns about biometric reliability", Moody's said.

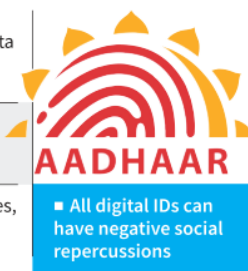
Low rating

Moody's Investors Service has cautioned against centralised digital ID systems such as Aadhaar as they pose security and privacy vulnerabilities. Here are a few warnings from the firm which offers credit ratings, research, and risk analysis:

- A single entity controlling users' ID credentials can dispose of user data for internal or third-party profiling purposes

- Aadhaar system faces hurdles, including the burden of establishing authorisation

- Reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual labourers, in hot, humid climates is questionable



- All digital IDs can have negative social repercussions

"The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) administers Aadhaar, aiming to integrate marginalized groups and expand welfare benefits access... The system often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for ma-

nual laborers in hot, humid climates, is questionable," it stressed.

The rating agency's remarks assume significance in view of the government's adoption of Aadhaar for routing direct benefit transfers to beneficiaries of official wel-

fare schemes, and in particular, the diktat to mandate Aadhaar-based payments for labourers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Last month, the government extended its deadline for switching to a Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) for MGNREGS beneficiaries for the fifth time, pushing it to December 31 this year.

In a report on "Decentralized finance and digital assets" issued on Saturday, Moody's acknowledged Aadhaar as "the world's largest digital ID program" that assigns unique numbers to over 1.2 billion Indian residents.

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Source: The Hindu, Page1., Sept. 25, 2023.

‘Aadhaar unreliable in hot, humid India’

The rating agency termed Aadhaar, and a new crypto-based digital identity token called Worldline, as two digital ID systems in the world that stand out due to their scale and extent of innovation. However, Moody's also said that they have "drawn scrutiny, especially concerning privacy and security". Stressing that ID systems like Aadhaar lead to the concentration of sensitive information with specific entities and increase the risks of data breaches, Moody's made a pitch for decentralised ID (DID) systems such as digital wallets, based on blockchain capabilities that give users more control of their private data and can reduce online fraud.

Decentralised systems

"In recent years, the spotlight has shifted toward DID as a strategic response to the security and privacy vulnerabilities posed by centralized ID systems like Aadhaar," the agency noted, citing successful programs in Catalonia, Azerbaijan and Estonia that have used blockchain-based systems to issue digital identities.

"Estonia, known for its fully digitalized public services, has embraced SSI [Self-Sovereign Identity] to grant citizens complete control over their digital identities," it pointed out.

"In a centralized system, a single entity such as a bank, social media platform or government electoral roll controls and manages a user's identifying credentials and their access to online resources. That entity can dispose of the user's identity data – name, address and Social Security number, for example – for internal or third-party profiling purposes," the report averred, stating that such systems offer the least personal data control to users.

Source: The Hindu, Page12., Sept. 25, 2023.

'Namma BMTC' app launched with safety features; 5,000 buses can be tracked

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The much awaited 'Namma BMTC' mobile app was launched by the BMTC on Monday as part of its silver jubilee celebrations. Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy launched it and said BMTC received funds from the Centre under Nirbhaya Scheme for implementing the BMTC mobile app with women safety feature, in-bus surveillance system in city buses, and Passenger Information System at bus stops/stations.

BMTC officials said this

initiative brings in an advanced mobile application that women commuters can use to seek remote assistance in case of an emergency, and track movements of women passengers when support is sought by them.

"For 5,000 buses, on-board devices, vehicle tracking devices to know the location of the buses installed, 5,000 panic buttons, 10,000 CCTV cameras, and a surveillance system has been installed and 500 Passenger Information System Boards for displaying estimated time of arrival and

Key features of Namma BMTC app

- Locate nearby bus stops (geo-location and text-based search)
- Estimated time of arrival (ETA) of the bus at the bus stop, ETA at the destination
- Route planner and timetable
- Safety SOS button
- Sharing location with contacts
- Marking passengers' favourite routes, bus stops
- Utilities like ATM, restaurant, hospital, police station, etc., around the bus stop
- Feedback

departure at a bus stand and stations have been installed," Sathyavathi G., Managing Director of BMTC said.

The Namma BMTC Mobile App is now available in Android platform and iOS platform developed by M/s MCT Cards and Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

"The initiative will be only 75% of the total fleet strength. In this regard, of the total 6500 plus buses, 5000 buses will only be tracked in real time. However, action will be taken to track the remaining buses in near future," a release stated.

Source: The Hindu, Page2., Sept. 26, 2023.



Consolidate Bengaluru's position as an epicentre of global innovation

T V MOHANDAS PAI AND NISHA HOLLA

Bengaluru's innovation ecosystem ranks among the Top 5 globally, with robust systems for technology development across multiple sectors, research and development, and human capital. The city has nurtured a thriving community of frontier technologists and engineers and has played a pivotal role in India's evolution into the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. Bengaluru indisputably stands as India's IT capital, science capital, biotechnology capital, avionics capital, space capital, startup capital, and, essentially, India's high-tech and innovation capital.

As a global IT hub, Bengaluru houses some of the world's largest software services companies, with five out of the top ten and three out of the top five companies globally being Indian and mostly centred here. The IT boom has paved the way for Bengaluru to accommodate a disproportionate share of tech-enabled startups, with over 4,500 in Bengaluru utilising artificial intelligence and machine learning

to build indigenous platforms.

Additionally, Bengaluru is home to over 450 research laboratories, and over 400 of the world's Fortune 500 companies have a presence in the city. While these may have started with outsourcing, many have recognised the value of establishing core technology centres here. The city also boasts an impressive pool of over 100,000 PhDs, drawn by the research and specialisation opportunities.

With over 300 companies employing more than 300,000 chip designers, testers, and embedded software engineers, Bengaluru possesses a unique concentration of human capital for India's semiconductor initiative like no other Indian region or city. Additionally, the city is home to over 30,000 automotive software engineers and 15,000 aeronautical engineers.

Having built the technology development capacity and human capital base, Bengaluru is at an inflection point in consolidating its position globally and is unique among Indian cities.

Rising prosperity has brought forth sev-

eral infrastructure challenges. Bengaluru, due to its high-income job opportunities, has witnessed significant immigration. The population is now 12 million—the fourth largest in the country. Inadequate public transportation has resulted in a high concentration of 11 million private vehicles—6.5 million two-wheelers and 2.5 million four-wheelers. Infrastructure development has not kept pace with the population explosion and increased prosperity, severely hampering the productivity of the average Bangalorean and stunting the city's potential as a global high-tech hub.

Ironically, the city is India's most prosperous. Karnataka's GDP is expected to reach 25.7 lakh crore in FY24 (\$320 billion+), and Bengaluru reportedly contributes 60% of the state GDP (\$192 billion), amounting to a staggering per-capita income of around \$16,000 per year! It is a strange case, as it leads India in per-capita income and innovation but lags 15 years in infrastructure development. Successful state governments seem to have mastered the art of managing poverty by liberally

distributing taxpayer money without any desire to prepare for prosperity. This attitude continues to hurt the productivity in Bengaluru.

To improve productivity, the government must focus on upgrading Bengaluru's infrastructure:

- Improve the existing road network.
- Introduce a fleet of 10,000 electric buses for public transportation.
- Develop 120 km of elevated roads to alleviate traffic congestion.
- Build 100 km of peripheral ring roads.
- Expand the Metro to cover a total of 500 km to increase the capacity to 30 lakh commuters daily.
- Establish a robust suburban rail network to complement existing public transportation.
- Expand the KIAL airport to handle larger passenger and cargo volumes.
- Create a global MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) complex near the airport to attract more visitors.

The city's governance system can be improved by dividing the city into five separate corporations. This move will ensure better service delivery, eliminate corruption, and improve quality of life.

Infrastructure investments will pay off a thousand times when the productivity of Bengaluru's workforce accelerates. It will signal the city's seriousness in consolidating its position as a technology hub and attract more domestic and foreign investments and human capital. With this, Bengaluru can produce 15 lakh high-quality jobs over the next five years, increase its software exports to \$120 billion by 2027, and overtake Silicon Valley as the world's largest pool of software talent, among other specializations.

Additionally, Bengaluru needs sustained resources and forward-looking policy frameworks to continue leading India's technology efforts. A 1,000 crore fund will be a strong start and can be utilised to build more research facilities, install state-of-the-art equipment, and incentivize technologists and scientists to develop

cutting-edge technologies in the city. For a state that is spending 80,000 crore on providing freebies to keep election promises, 1,000 crore is a pitiful sum to invest in the future. Other states, even countries, wish they had the competitive advantage a city like Bengaluru provides, while Karnataka already has it. It's time the state machinery put serious capital behind maintaining and enhancing this advantage.

Bengaluru is the jewel in the crown of Karnataka, and indeed India as well, but sadly, it does not get its due from either the state or the Union Government. As India grows into the world's third-largest economy by 2027, Bengaluru can continue to lead the nation's innovation efforts and become a more attractive destination for the world's capital and talent pools, provided governments at the central and state levels invest in creating the necessary infrastructure and future-forward technology development facilities.

(Pai is the chairman of Zomato Capital and Holla is Technology Fellow, C-CAMP)

Source: Deccan Herald, Page9., Sept. 27, 2023.

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Social Issues

Drinking water crisis: Govt. says no worries till summer

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As Bengaluru is likely to partially shut down due to the bandh called on Tuesday to protest against the government releasing Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu, there is a dark shadow of a drinking water crisis looming over the city.

A bad monsoon has led to drying up of borewells, especially in outer zones which have been looking forward to getting Cauvery water supply from January 2024, which seems unlikely now. The prices of tanker water have shot up and it is only September and the city is dependent on the fast-depleting Cauvery river water till next monsoon in June 2024.

Rakesh Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Department and Water Resources Department, said there was sufficient water for the drinking water needs till the next summer and it won't be a problem.

But concerns remain. A delegation of the opposition BJP on Monday petitioned the BWSSB, demanding that the Board write to the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) appealing to them to clear the decks for the Mekedatu balancing reservoir, which they argued would also help the city.

In fact, BWSSB Chairman N. Jayaram had recently written to Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd., urging them to prioritise and

reserve water for the city's drinking needs till the next monsoon. Presently, Bengaluru draws 1,450 MLD water every day from Shiva reservoir at Malavalli for its drinking water needs, which will increase by another 700 MLD from January 2024 once the Cauvery V Stage is inaugurated and water supply begins for 110 villages. "To ensure adequate drinking water supply to Bengaluru, with a population of 12.8 million, BWSSB needs 1.6 tmcft of water every month till December 2023.

Sources said given the water crisis in the Cauvery basin, additional water supply to 110 villages was unlikely from January 2024 and these villages may have to wait longer.

Source: The Hindu, Page3., Sept. 26, 2023.

Drought likely to force 110 villages to wait longer for Cauvery water

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The city's 110 villages will have to continue their long wait for Cauvery water, thanks to the ongoing drought situation gripping the state.

The Cauvery Stage V project, which aims to bring an additional 775 MLD water to the city, has been delayed by over a year after the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) hit multiple roadblocks.

With the board expecting to complete the project by January 2024, sources admitted that poor monsoon is playing spoilsport and is likely to push water supply to the area beyond the next monsoon season.

Although senior BWSSB officials said they would wait and watch how the rain situation would play out, board sources told *DH* that serving water to the 110 villages is getting increasingly difficult as scheduled in January 2024, especially if the drought situation continues.

"Since the state is heading towards a severe drought, in a few months, it may be difficult to ensure that Bengaluru



continues to get 1,450 million litres per day (MLD) that is being supplied now. When such is the situation, we doubt if the additional 775 MLD will be provided," a senior BWSSB official said.

Anticipating the severe water crises in the city, the BWSSB recently wrote to the Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Limited with a request to reserve at least 1.6 TMC of water every month for the city's needs. The letter also mentioned that an additional 8.82 TMC water may be required to serve the 110 villages from January 2024.

While residents of these villages are managing their water needs with a combination of borewells and water tankers, depleting water levels has been the chief source

of concern for them.

"Over the last two years, there have been good rains, and this helped us. This year, the situation is bad since many borewells have dried up and private tankers also refuse to serve. If the BWSSB had stuck to the deadline and provided water supply, we would not have to face such a dire situation," said Abhay K, a resident of Mahadevapura.

A resident of Horamavu said many in their locality have already paid for the BWSSB Cauvery connection and have been waiting for two years.

"They asked us to get the connections even before they could supply water. We agreed. The roads were in a poor state for nearly two years owing to the pipeline laying works. We endured it hoping to receive Cauvery water. But, the BWSSB has been dragging its feet," he said.

BWSSB officials blamed the delay on the pandemic and a few administrative issues. "The pandemic resulted in a labour crunch and lack of industrial oxygen to continue work. Also, we had to wait for the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to complete a few works," a senior BWSSB official said.

Source: Deccan Herald, Page 3., Sept. 23, 2023.

SAGA OF STAGNATION

24/7 water still a pipe dream for most urban wards in state

Women, kids worst hit as irregular supply throws daily routine off track

SHRUTHI H M SASTRY
BENGALURU, DHNS

Pavithra (30) (name changed), a resident of Bapujinagar in west Bengaluru is a mother of four children who works as a domestic help.

With her neighbourhood receiving drinking water only on alternate days and at no fixed time, storing drinking water often comes at the cost of not being able to cook breakfast for her children and getting delayed to work.

Speaking to *DH*, Pavithra says drinking water is usually supplied during her work hours, owing to which many in her locality are delayed to work on such days.

"We cannot afford to miss that window as we have to wait for two days again," she narrates.

Irregular supply of drinking water is not restricted to Bengaluru, but is a statewide issue.

Only 32% wards lucky

According to recent data of the Urban Development Department, of the total 7,199 wards in the state, only 2,338 wards get daily drinking water supply, while 2,538 get it on alternate days, 1,053 once in three days and 1,270 wards once in anywhere between three and five days.

In several districts, less than 50% of the urban wards have daily water supply.

In Chikkaballapur, for instance, of the total 158 wards, water supply is provided once in anywhere between three and five days, in 90 wards. Only nine wards in the district get daily water supply. Another case in point is



It's an endless struggle to fill pots with water from a public tap in Kalaburagi. The social cost of irregular water supply is borne by women and children, say experts. *DH FILE PHOTO*

Sloppy Supply

Some of the districts where less than 50% urban wards have daily drinking water supply

District	Total wards	Wards with daily water supply
Bengaluru Rural	158	13
Chikkaballapur	158	09
Chitradurga	168	22
Kolar	195	16
Belagavi	833	158
Dharwad	182	62
Vijayapura	288	75

(DATA: URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT)

Bengaluru Rural, where of the 158 wards, 82 wards get drinking water once in three days and beyond. Only 13 wards get water every day.

The social cost of irregular water supply is borne by women and children, points out Kathyayini Chamaraj, executive trustee of CIVIC, Bengaluru.

Delayed to work, school

"It comes at the cost of them either being delayed to work or missing it. Children also get delayed to school. If it is supplied at night, they lose sleep.

Overall, they lose productive time," she says, adding that stagnant water stored in drums poses health risks.

Irregular water supply is a combination of lack of water resources and faulty pipes.

Way back in 2004, the state launched 'Karnataka Urban Water Sector Improvement Project,' an initiative for 24/7 water supply in pockets of Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi and Kalaburagi, with help from World Bank.

However, the state was unable to scale it up, observes water activist S

Vishwanath.

Lack of water source is not always the reason, he says, citing the instance of Mysuru where source is not an issue.

Leaky pipes

Yet, the city does not have 24/7 supply. One of the reasons for intermittent water supply is leaky pipes, which can be fixed to deliver 24/7 water, he adds.

Intermittent supply also places a huge cost on households for storage and pumping of water.

Hence, the government's target must be 24/7 supply, not just daily supply, he emphasises.

Better-placed dists

Shivamogga, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, Mysuru, Udipi, Bidar, Kalaburagi and Uttara Kannada are some of the districts where there is daily water supply to more than 50% of the households.

Often, water accessibility is also linked to social affluence. Slums are hit the worst, Chamaraj says.

She proposes that the government create a common sump, pump and overhead tank for every 100 houses in informal settlements, with a tap in all houses.

Drought woes

Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh told *DH* that the prevalent drought in Karnataka had aggravated the problem. As part of the larger measures, the government is calling for tenders worth Rs 8,600 crore under AMRUT 2.0 scheme, which will ensure drinking water for 288 towns. The works for this will begin in three months, he says.

That apart, for places such as Kolar and Chikkaballapur, the government is speeding up Yettinahole project.

"Wherever possible, we are identifying water sources to resolve the issue. We are drawing water from as far as 40-50 km," the minister explains.

Source: Deccan Herald, p.8, Sept. 24, 2023

CWRC directs Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs of water to T.N. till Oct. 15

T. Ramakrishnan

CHENNAI

The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), at its meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday, decided that Karnataka should release water at the rate of 3,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to Tamil Nadu from September 28 to October 15.

The 15-day spell of 5,000 cusecs, determined by the CWRC during its meeting on September 12, is coming to an end on Wednesday. As in the past, the revised quantity of 3,000 cusecs has to be realised at Billigundulu on the inter-State border. The meeting of the CWRC, the assisting body for the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), lasted nearly two hours and members of the panel, especially those from the



A file photo of the Krishnaraja Sagar across the Cauvery.

States of the Cauvery basin, took part virtually.

On the CWRC's decision, Saumitra Kumar Haldar, CWMA chairman, told *The Hindu* from New Delhi on Tuesday that the date of October 15 had been chosen as it would generally mark the end of the southwest monsoon and the commencement of the northeast monsoon. To a query on whether the authority would meet in the intervening period, he

said, "We will be meeting shortly."

Karnataka's stand

At the meeting, Karnataka pleaded its inability to continue the release of water while Tamil Nadu wanted at least 12,500 cusecs to be released for the coming weeks.

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Source: The Hindu, Page1., Sept. 27, 2023.

State govt. sees CWRC recommendation as a relief, but farmers, Oppn. still upset

Tamil Nadu had demanded 12,500 cusecs a day, but the CWRC has recommended the release of 3,000 cusecs daily till October 15: Shivakumar

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU/MYSURU

Though the Opposition parties and farmers have expressed dissatisfaction at the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) recommendation on Tuesday to release water at the rate of 3,000 cusecs to Tamil Nadu from September 28 to October 15, the Karnataka government is seeing this as a relief for the State as the quantum of water to be released has been reduced from the present 5,000 cusecs to 3,000 cusecs a day.

This was evident when Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar, who also holds Water Resources portfolio, said he is happy that the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) has decided to reject the Tamil Nadu government's petition seeking release of



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah interacting with farmers protesting at Muguru village on the Cauvery river water sharing issue, on his way to Chamarajanagar on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

water at the rate of 12,000 cusecs a day from Karnataka. "Tamil Nadu has demanded 12,500 cusecs of water a day. But the CWRC has recommended the release of 3,000 cusecs daily till October 15," he told mediapersons in Bengaluru.

However, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was measured in his response as he said that he will consult Karnataka's legal team with regard to the fresh directive from the CWRC.

Replying to queries by mediapersons, Mr. Shivaku-

mar maintained that generally, close to 2,000 cusecs of outflow would be there in the river on a daily basis. "Now, about 1,000 cusecs would have to be released daily (in addition to this). The inflow is good following rains in Kanakapura

and Bengaluru in the last few days," he said.

He said the Karnataka officials had effectively defended the State's interest by flagging the drought situation in the Cauvery basin. Mr. Shivakumar said the implementation of the proposed Mekedatu project, a balancing reservoir across Cauvery river near Kanakapura, is the only solution to mitigate the water crisis between the two states. "We will convince the necessity of the Mekedatu project to both committees (CWMA and CWRC) of the Cauvery water. Our MPs also will put pressure on the Union Minister for Jal Shakti," he said.

Sources said that the new quantum will not be difficult to meet as the 3,000 cusecs also includes the mandatory release to the river for environmental purpose.

Karnataka had argued

before the CWRC that the cumulative inflows to its four reservoirs upto September 25 was only 53.04% of the total capacity, and it was not in a position to release any water from its reservoirs. As per data available with KSNDMC, the total inflow into KRS and Kabini reservoirs on Tuesday was 9,718 cusecs while the total outflow into the river that will flow to Tamil Nadu was 6,337 cusecs.

Meanwhile, the Opposition BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) have expressed concern over the recommendation of CWRC to further release water and termed the current situation as a result of government's negligence. Expressing anger over the CWRC's recommendation, farmers in Mandya even blocked a stretch on the Bengaluru-Mysuru old highway and also burnt a handwritten copy of the CWRC's order.

Source: The Hindu, Page 12., Sept. 27, 2023.

State to challenge CWRC direction in Supreme Court

Shivakumar says not a drop of water will be released from the KRS to Tamil Nadu; challenges BJP and JD(S) leaders to protest in New Delhi demanding implementation of Mekedatu project

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU/BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the Cauvery Water Regulatory Committee's (CWRC) direction to Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu from September 28 to October 15 will be challenged before the Supreme Court.

Speaking to reporters in M.M. Hills in Chamarajanager on Wednesday, Mr. Siddaramaiah said he had discussed the CWRC's direction issued on September 26 with the legal experts. Based on their opinion, Karnataka will be challenging the CWRC's direction in the Supreme court. "We are challenging the orders of the Regulatory Committee before the Supreme Court," he said. Karnataka does not have water at all to release to Tamil Nadu, Mr Siddaramaiah added.



Siddaramaiah

maiah added.

To a question, Mr. Siddaramaiah said a total of 195 taluks in the State were reeling under drought due to failure of rains this year.

With regard to the call for Karnataka bandh on the Cauvery issue on September 29, Mr Siddaramaiah said protests were permitted in democracy. However, he referred to the Supreme Court order against bandhs and said the State Government will keep the Apex court's direction in mind. With re-



D.K. Shivakumar

gard to the protests by Opposition leaders, Mr. Siddaramaiah said BJP and JD(S) were playing politics in the name of Cauvery.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who also holds the Water Resources portfolio, said that not a drop of water would be released from the KRS dam of the State to Tamil Nadu.

Alternative arrangements

Generally, close to 2,000 cusecs flow daily in the

Cauvery basin. "Alternative arrangements will be made to release 1,000 cusecs. The inflow is good following rains in Kanakapura and Bengaluru in the last few days," Mr. Shivakumar said and ruled out any compromise on safeguarding the interest of the State.

Mr. Shivakumar dared the BJP and JD (S) leaders to stage a protest in Delhi seeking implementation of the Mekedatu project across river Cauvery in Kanakapura. "There is no use in staging protests in the State," he said. He also questioned the necessity of holding Karnataka bandh on Friday when the CWRC has reduced the Tamil Nadu government's demand for water from 12,500 cusecs to 3,000 cusecs daily till October 15. The bandh would cause business loss and inconvenience to school and college students, the KPCC chief said.

Source: The Hindu, Page10., Sept. 28, 2023.

Gross storage at KRS second lowest since 2011

The Hindu Bureau

MYSURU

The gross storage at the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) across the Cauvery was 20.54 thousand million cubic ft (tmcft) on September 27, 2023, as against the gross capacity of 49.45 tmc ft. This is the second lowest level of gross storage in the dam since 2011. The previous lowest was in 2016, when the gross storage on the same day had dipped to 14.84 tmcft owing to monsoon failure.

Details of quantum of water in the reservoir on the same day since 2011 indicates that the storage was comfortable and above 43 tmc ft in most years barring in 2015 and 2016 while it was 35.35 tmc ft in 2021. In 2015, the gross storage was 25.13 tmc ft on September 27 but heavy rains in the post-monsoon season helped shore up the storage to nearly 33 tmc ft by November giving a breather to the State.

As per the statistics available from the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), the situation was similar in

2017 when the gross storage was 28.58 tmc ft on September 27 but unseasonal rains in October augmented the storage to almost 34 tmc ft by the last week of November. Whether the Cauvery catchment area in the State will benefit from post-monsoon rains in this year of drought remains to be seen. But there was no such relief in 2016. Meanwhile, the water level in the reservoir was down to 97 feet as against the full reservoir level (FRL) of 124.80 feet. The water level on the same day last year was 123.92 ft and the gross storage was 48.22 tmc ft.

Other dams

The cumulative storage in major reservoirs across the Cauvery basin in the State has been dipping and neared 50% of the installed capacity as on Wednesday. The gross storage capacity of the four major dams is 114.57 tmc ft while the actual storage as on September 27 was 59.43 tmc ft which is 52% of the actual capacity. The cumulative storage across the four dams on the same day last year was 111.86 tmc ft.

Source: The Hindu, Page10., Sept. 28, 2023

Karnataka's monumental challenge

Lesser-known cultural properties need to be protected and conserved

STATE OF PLAY

R. Krishna Kumar

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The Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somanathapur in Karnataka were recently declared as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This has brought to the fore the rich repository of architectural and cultural properties in the State as well as the challenges involved in their conservation.

In Karnataka, 609 monuments are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and 848 monuments, including temples, mosques, churches, tombs, forts, citadels and stepwells, are protected by the Department of Archaeology Museums and Heritage (DAMH) of the State government. In addition, there are about 20,000 historically important temples and sites under the Muzurai or Endowment Department; these have a semblance of protection. But there are also many monuments that are outside the ambit of any legal protection. While Karnataka boasts of harbouring the second highest number of centrally protected monuments in the country after Uttar Pradesh, and the highest number of State-protected monuments, it also faces the challenge of ensuring protection to lesser-known cultural properties. Without such protection, these properties could be encroached on or lost.

However, identifying heritage sites and monuments for protection calls first for their documentation. To its credit, the DAMH has already launched such an exercise. The process of mapping monuments across all taluks to update the inventory list began three years ago. But consider-



ing the funding pattern for the project, no more than 15 to 20 taluks are taken up every year. Given that Karnataka has 227 taluks, the exercise is bound to take not less than a decade, and that too only if funding is consistent.

By the time documentation across all the taluks is completed, and monuments are notified as protected, many may disappear due to developmental pressures and the forces of modernisation. The challenge in their conservation also stems from the fact that a majority of them are not standalone monuments. Local communities have lived alongside them for decades. The conventional approach of barricading the monuments as a protection measure will not work and calls for a via-media approach. The monuments at Srirangapatana, Vijayapura, and Kalburagi are examples of such continuity.

Given the fact that a sizeable number of historically important monuments are religious in nature, the DAMH floated the PPP model of conservation. This entails funding by the private sector, the release of matching grants by the government, and a nominal contribution from the local community to give them a sense of ownership and make them partners in conservation. In a little more than a decade since the project was launched, more than 150 monuments have been conserved

under the PPP model but almost all of them were taken up by one group. The challenge before the DAMH is to get more such interested groups on board.

The PPP model and the involvement of the public is also imperative given that the DAMH has only 12 engineers to look after the 848 monuments under its ambit. Besides, the annual budget for the department is approximately ₹28 crore of which about 50% goes towards salaries for the staff. This leaves very little for actual conservation. The fund crunch is such that the DAMH has also taken the MGNREGA route to get the precincts of monuments overrun by vegetation cleaned up through Zilla Panchayats.

In another bid to overcome the paucity of funds, the government has launched the 'Adopt a Monument' scheme under the tag line 'Namma Smaraka (Our Monument)'. About 280 monuments have been listed as eligible for adoption, which entails maintenance and creating facilities for tourists. While conservation work, if any, will be under the supervision of the DAMH and as per ASI guidelines.

This is expected to broaden the scope for public and institutional involvement, make them stakeholders in the conservation of monuments, and strengthen heritage consciousness. But experiences from elsewhere in the country in seeking corporate involvement or promoting adoption of monuments indicate that only the more popular sites or Grade A monuments, which attract tourists, receive importance under the scheme. The greater challenge is to secure funding for lesser-known monuments and turn the conservation exercise into a tool for socioeconomic development of the local community.

Source: The Hindu, Page17., Sept. 27, 2023.

Compensation scheme for lynching victims kicks in

Move comes five years after SC direction

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Congress government has formulated a new compensation scheme under which Rs 5 to 10 lakh will be paid to the kin of every person who is lynched to death or killed in riots.

The separate compensation scheme covering deaths or injuries caused due to lynching by mob comes five years after the Supreme Court, in the Tehseen Poonawala case, direct-

ed all state governments to do so.

Poonawala, a social activist, had moved the top court seeking action against violence by cow vigilantes. In its judgement dated July 17, 2018, the apex court had called out the "sweeping phenomenon" of mob violence. The state governments were asked to prepare a lynching/mob violence compensation scheme within one month.

Prior to the new scheme, the state had a general Karnataka Victim Compensation

Lynching/mob violence compensation scheme		
Category	Minimum compensation	Maximum compensation
Loss of life	Rs 5 lakh	Rs 10 lakh
Permanent injury or other Mental damage/disorder	Rs 1 lakh	Rs 2 lakh
80% disability of limbs or other body parts	Rs 2 lakh	Rs 5 lakh
40-80% disability of limbs or other body parts	Rs 2 lakh	Rs 4 lakh
20-40% disability of limbs or other body parts	Rs 1 lakh	Rs 3 lakh
20% disability of limbs or other body parts	Rs 1 lakh	Rs 2 lakh

Scheme that was introduced in 2011.

"...although the Karnataka Victim Compensation Scheme, 2011, has already been framed by the state government, it is felt that there is a need to issue a separate order to provide compensation to the dependents of the victims of lynching/mob riots,"

an order issued by the Home Department stated.

The order also pointed out that "opportunities under which victims/dependents of mob killings/mob riots can seek compensation under the Karnataka Victim Compensation Scheme 2011 are not clearly covered". The order also cites the Supreme Court's

2018 judgement.

As per the order, Karnataka will provide to the affected families Rs 1-2 lakh for permanent injury or other mental damage and bodily disability ranging from 20% to 80%.

Compensation under the new scheme will be paid from funds earmarked under the Karnataka Victim Compensation Scheme 2011, the order stated.

In April this year, Idrees Pasha, a goods vehicle driver, was found dead in Sathanur after being attacked by cow vigilantes.

In 2018, Karnataka saw mob attacks in Bidar and Bengaluru that were fueled by rumours about child-lifters. In Bidar, Mohammed Azam, a techie, was killed after a mob mistook him for a child kidnapper.

Source: Deccan Herald, Page4., Sept. 29, 2023

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