A Citizens' Review of Karnataka Government 2023-25

Sectoral Report

By CIVIC Bangalore

CIVIC BANGALORE CITIZENS VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE FOR THE CITY

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Concept Note

In 2017, the Karnataka High Court warned as part of an order against illegal constructions, “We cannot let this city turn into Patna”. There was still hope for Bengaluru, from turning into an example. However, in 2023, the Supreme Court, in an order on converting single residential units into apartments in Chandigarh, cited an article published in the weekly, “India Today”, dated 24th October 2022, titled, “Bengaluru – How to Ruin India’s Best City”, and said, “The warning flagged by the city of Bengaluru needs to be given due attention by the legislature, executive, and policymakers”. These judicial remarks reflect a troubling truth - Bengaluru, once a model metropolis, is now a cautionary tale in urban misgovernance.

This crisis is not an exception, but a symptom of a larger crisis that afflicts governance and politics in Karnataka.

At the root of this crisis there is a lack of consistent, citizen-led accountability. While India is a democracy, elections alone are a poor guarantor of accountability, without well-informed citizens. Research suggests that *well-informed voters make very different choices* and *voting based on actual performance rather than noise improves incentives for elected officials to perform*.

In this context, CIVIC Bangalore, as an NGO, decided to undertake periodic reviews, and provide unbiased, impactful information that can consistently inform voters and help them cut through the noise to focus on the government’s performance. In consequence, CIVIC released a 1 Year Report Card of Karnataka State Government in 2024 and Bengaluru MP & MLA Report Cards in June 2025. To access these report cards, please check: https://civicspace.in/citizens-report-cards/

This month, CIVIC is reviewing the incumbent state government's performance over the last 2 years on multiple fronts, in continuation of its previous exercises. In addition to the manifesto review which CIVIC executed last year, the team has additionally gathered inputs from experts in key domains such as administration, urban governance, land issues, education, health, environment, labor, finance and other sectors to understand the nature and consequences of the actions taken by the government, besides progress on the manifesto.

All major actions and policy decisions taken by the government in the above sectors have been classified based on the following parameters:

Assessment Parameters:

1. ***COMMENDABLE*** - *Relates to work that is EXCELLENT, above expectation, indicates abilities to cater to citizen's needs; pro-active, engaged.*
2. ***NOTE-WORTHY*** - *contributes to DEMOCRATIC decision-making; ; has POTENTIAL to address challenges; aligns with manifesto.*
3. ***WORK IN PROGRESS*** - *Initiation of any major legislation; committee; commission, mission, review; new institute, regulation etc. which are attempts to CATER to people's needs, reflects ENGAGEMENT with governance issues.*
4. ***QUESTIONABLE*** - *Policies that are UNCLEAR; ARBITRARY; seem like they are catering to vested interests or to populist appeasement; have ulterior political intentions.*
5. ***PROBLEMATIC*** - *AGAINST THE INTEREST of citizens; indicates vested interests for profits and gains to political parties or individuals; links to crony capitalist interests; bypasses needs of people; failure to address serious concerns of people and state; erodes well-being of people*
6. ***DANGEROUS*** - *HARMFUL to people, region, state; against secularism and issues of equity and justice; against democratic norms and ideas; indicates shift to authoritarianism*

There are also dedicated reports on Administration & the 5 Guarantee schemes, which don't adhere to the above format and have been structured specially

Agriculture

COMMENDABLE

- The Karnataka government has made some pro-active and tangible progress with regard to its manifesto promise – 'Prakriti Vikopa Nidhi of Rs. 5,000 crores'

- Despite a severe drought, Karnataka faced a significant delay in receiving central disaster relief funds. Karnataka sought Rs. 18,171 crore from the NDRF for crop losses but, following a Supreme Court case, the Centre released only Rs.3,454 crore in April 2024, an amount far less than requested. **The State government spent Rs.4,047 crore on drought relief in 2023-24 to compensate over 38.78 lakh farmers,** utilizing its own funds and SDRF before the central NDRF amount was released.

NOTE-WORTHY

- **New and under progress Schemes -Agriculture and Allied Activities**: Karnataka Raitha Samruddhi Yojane, Namma Millet Yojane, Comprehensive Horticulture Development Scheme-2.0, Kissan Malls, International Floriculture Market in Bengaluru, Amruta Swabhimani Kurigahi Yojane, **Digital** Agriculture Services Centre / Knowledge Cell, Seed Bank for Indigenous /GI / Local Crop are some of the new programs that were announced.

- A new project announced to use **satellite data & AI for mapping, monitoring & managing lakes, tanks, groundwater in 41 taluks** – as first phase. Additionally, in July 2025, the CM announced Rs.32.25 crore for dam renovation & modernization, plus proposals for drip irrigation and canal modernisation around Kabini. In the 2023–24 and 2024–25 budget speeches, the Chief Minister announced inter-state river schemes (Mekedatu, Kalasa–Banduri, Upper Krishna, Upper Bhadra,Yettinahole), balancing reservoirs, silt management, lift irrigation, smaller water infrastructure works, and tank-filling projects, which are continued initiatives from previous governments with renewed emphasis and budgetary support.

- According to Dr. Chethan Kumar C.'s 2025–26 budget analysis, Karnataka's irrigation allocation (5.8%) exceeds the national average.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- The government's planned MSP Guarantee scheme aims to provide farmers with a guaranteed fair price at the outset, improving the structural efficiency of procurement beyond direct subsidies. This year, 14 kharif crops and 11 rabi crops are covered, with toor dal MSP raised by Rs 450 to Rs 7,550 per quintal, totaling Rs 138 crore.
- Supporting Reforms: Funds are being released for agricultural start-ups and technology-driven innovations to boost production, value addition, and long-term sector viability

- In the 2024–25 budget, the CM announced an **Agriculture Development Authority** for policy and coordination, and a **Food Processing Directorate** under the Agriculture Department.

PROBLEMATIC

- Intensifying the process of land acquisition (over 1,700 acres) by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) in the Devanahalli-Chanrayapatna area for an aeropark and allied industries. This move caters to corporate/industrial interests and real estate lobbies at the expense of fertile agricultural land and established farmer livelihoods.

- The GoK has not reversed the previous government's amendments (especially Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 2020) that permitted non-farmers (including corporate entities) to purchase agricultural land and removed the cap on land sales. The partial concessions offered (excluding some villages) as a "divide-and-rule" strategy, indicating a lack of clarity or consensus in the final plan.

School Education

COMMENDABLE

- Extending egg/peanut chikki/banana to cover students studying in classes 9 and 10.
- The decision to provide the eggs / bananas to all children six days a week to mitigate malnutrition amongst school children with the support of the Azim Premji Foundation. However, the long-term sustainability of this programme needs to be planned
- Government decision to provide free water and electricity to all government schools.
- Decision to reject National Education Policy 2020 and appointing the State Education Policy Commission to formulate State Education Policy.

NOTE-WORTHY

- Though not very substantial but small allocation in the budget since the beginning for construction of new classrooms, toilet complex, renovation of old dilapidated rain damage school buildings, school maintenance grant, providing technology support and programmes to address learning loss and deficiencies in all the three budgets; 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- 12329 GPT teachers were given appointment letter after completing the counselling process. However, the appointment process was initiated by the previous BJP government
- An innovative program called 'Sasya to plant 50 lakh saplings in and around schools in collaboration with the Education and Forest Department.
- Navu Manujaru, an interactive two-hour class involving discussion to promote ideas of social harmony, scientific temper and coexistence.

QUESTIONABLE

- Manifesto promised to fill up all the vacancies of teachers and staff in Government and aided Schools/Colleges within one year. As on this date we have total 62,650 teacher vacancies in which Primary is 50388 and secondary is 12262.

- Manifesto promised to establish Karnataka State Educational Financial Corporation with a seed money ofRs.2000 Crores for the purpose of bringing all State Scholarships in respect of all the categories under one umbrella for speedy and quick disbursement. Yet to start.
- Functioning of the education department to announce policy decisions such as Introducing Moral Education, Opening English Medium Schools, adopting NCERT books in toto from class 1 and implementing the NEP 2020 in disguise is questionable.
- The decision of the department to constitute a committee at the block level under the chairpersonship of MLA to make a decision to merge smaller schools where the number of children is less than 10 without waiting for the SEP recommendation is questionable.
- The failure of the government to prepare a roadmap for effectively implementing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The irony is that the historic legislation to operationalise Fundamental Right to Education was enacted by the UPA government in 2009.
- Non implementation of the RTE Act in the state

PROBLEMATIC

- Manifesto promised that the BJP government has distorted the textbooks by insulting the great souls of Karnataka like Vishwa Guru Basavanna, Rastrakavi Kuvempu. The congress will restore the true values of Bharath and Karnataka and Scientific Temper in the textbooks to make the students evolved and complete. The entire exercise was problematic since it was a kneejerk reaction. We could have planned to produce new textbooks instead of mere revision since it was more than 10 years.
- The governance and arbitrary decision-making process of the school education department without involving the primary stakeholders; SDMCs, Parents, Teachers, Students and GPs results in imposition from top disrespect to stakeholders.

DANGEROUS

- Manifesto promised to regulate the fees in the schools and to reduce the fees of BPL Students. Nothing much has been done to regulate the private unaided schools in the state. The exponential growth of privatisation and commercialisation of education is dangerous.
- State government decision not to provide subject wise teachers in the pre-university colleges where the student strength is less than 40. It adversely affects the education of rural students especially the girl students in the rural area.
- Opening english medium schools in the name of bilingual medium right from pre-primary and primary is against the idea of mother tongue education in the early years of schooling which helps creativity and cognitive development
- Too much dependency on CSR funds to strengthen public education is not sustainable in the long run. Moreover, going to corporates for CSR with begging bowl affects the dignity and self-esteem of children learning in public schools.
- The decision of the government to implement a facial recognition system (FRS) from the 2025-26 academic year is a dangerous initiative. Government and aided schools in the state are required to have a mobile-based Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Facial Recognition Attendance System, linked to the Students Achievement Tracking System (SATS). FRS have been banned in many geographies for their enormous dangers to people in terms of misuse of the data collected. A major risk from the use of facial recognition in educational institutions is due to a leaky data environment, data outages and even data theft is inevitable. In the context of children, their vulnerability to abuse is much higher, given that they are not emotionally/mentally developed to negotiate crises. Given that image morphing can convert any images of young girls and boys into potential crime-enabling items, any system that captures images of children must be allowed only in exceptional situations, where the need is very clear/strong, and where safeguards can be ensured. Routinely taking photos of children in school settings can cause huge vulnerabilities and harms. This is a real risk because classrooms are not 'public spaces' and are seen as 'protected spaces' where children are free to express themselves, and there will be cases where acts of children (caught on camera, without their understanding) can be used to blackmail them.

Higher Education

QUESTIONABLE

Karnataka Higher Education Under Siddaramaiah Government: Persistent Issues with LMS in Degree Courses

Overview (As of October 23, 2025): The Karnataka government has continued to promote and integrate the Learning Management System (LMS) in higher education, particularly in degree courses across government colleges and universities. Launched as a flagship initiative in 2021 under the previous administration, the LMS—accessible via platforms like karnatakalms.com—aims to deliver digital content, video lectures, quizzes, and assessments to students. Despite the shift to the Congress-led Siddaramaiah government in 2023, there has been no move to discontinue or overhaul this system. Instead, it remains embedded in policies, including recent skilling programs partnered with Microsoft, where students complete self-paced coursework via LMS. This continuation aligns with broader digital learning efforts in technical and degree education but has drawn criticism for exacerbating inequalities.

While the State Education Policy (SEP) report, submitted on August 9, 2025, proposes reforms like bilingual teaching and job-linked curricula, it does not explicitly address or reject LMS dependency. As a result, LMS persists amid ongoing chaos in higher education—no public SEP discussions, no assembly tabling, and unaddressed issues like staff shortages in 41 government universities and outdated pedagogy in 420 first-grade colleges.

Explaining the LMS Continuation: A Deeper Dive

The government's persistence with LMS in degree courses is part of a "digital learning" push, described as a "novel initiative" to revolutionize education through online platforms. However, critics argue this approach is flawed—potentially "corrupt" in the sense of being inefficient, unaccountable, and biased toward urban, tech-savvy students—while undermining traditional classroom education and widening the digital divide. Below, I break this down further:

1. **What is LMS in Karnataka's Context?**

- LMS refers to a centralized digital platform (e.g., Karnataka LMS) for delivering course materials, assignments, and evaluations in degree programs, including arts, science, commerce, and technical courses.
- It's integrated into government colleges since 2020-2021, with features like video lectures and quizzes, and extended to skilling initiatives in 2024-2025.
- Under the current government, it's used in over 2,500 smart classrooms and supported by investments like ₹4.04 crore for LMS development (from earlier budgets, but no reversal). No new policies under Siddaramaiah have phased it out, despite manifesto promises for education reform.

2. **Why It's Seen as Denying Classroom Education:**
   - LMS shifts focus from in-person interactions to self-paced online modules, reducing the role of traditional lectures and discussions. This can "deny" classroom education by making physical attendance optional or secondary, especially in hybrid models.
   - In low-tech environments, students report struggling with the transition, leading to disengagement from interactive learning. Teachers face barriers too, with low competency in online tools hindering effective pedagogy.
   - Result: A one-size-fits-all digital approach that overlooks the benefits of face-to-face mentoring, group activities, and real-time feedback, potentially lowering learning outcomes in degree courses.

3. **How It Promotes the Digital Divide:**
   - **Access Issues:** Many students, especially in rural areas, lack reliable internet, compatible devices, or even basic digital literacy. Studies show poor connectivity and device incompatibility as major hurdles, widening gaps between urban and rural learners.
   - **Equity Concerns:** While the government has attempted bridges like tablet distribution (e.g., in 2021), these efforts are

insufficient amid ongoing divides. Low-income families often can't afford data or gadgets, leading to exclusion from LMS-based courses.

- **Broader Impacts:** This creates unemployment risks, as underprepared graduates enter the job market. It also contradicts SEP's equity focus, like free education expansions, yet the government hasn't addressed LMS-specific divides.

Key Implications and Recommendations

Aspect	Current Status with LMS	Potential Fixes (Unaddressed)
Classroom Denial	Over-reliance on digital modules reduces in-person teaching.	Mandate hybrid models with mandatory attendance.
Digital Divide	Excludes rural/low-income students due to access gaps.	Universal device/internet subsidies; offline alternatives.
Overall Chaos	Compounds SEP delays, funding shortages, and job misalignment.	Integrate LMS critiques into SEP implementation.
Government Inaction	No policy reversal; tied to skilling initiatives.	Public audits and stakeholder consultations on LMS.

This LMS persistence exemplifies the "total chaos" in Karnataka's higher education—no bold reforms, just status quo maintenance. To resolve, the government must prioritize equitable access, blend digital with classroom methods, and finally advance the SEP for holistic change. Without action, it risks further unemployment and inequality among graduates.

● *DANGEROUS*

A Critique of the Karnataka Government's Approach to Higher Education

- The current Karnataka government has made no significant strides in higher education that could be deemed excellent. It has neither outright rejected the National Education Policy (NEP) in principle nor fully adopted the State Education Policy (SEP), leaving the sector in a state of ambiguity and inaction.
- Public funding for higher education has not seen any improvement under this administration. Instead, the government's intentions appear to be shifting away from direct public investment. The education minister frequently emphasizes utilizing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for development. However, this raises critical questions: How will this be implemented? What mechanisms are in place to ensure effective utilization? In practice, corporate, capitalists independently decide how to allocate their CSR funds, not the government. More importantly, no government should rely on corporate funding to sustain its public institutions, as this undermines accountability, equity, and long-term stability.
- Regarding equality and equity present government failed miserably. Marginalized communities still suffering from this
- There is also a glaring absence of a blueprint for empowering the 410 plus government first-grade colleges. These institutions remain conventional in structure, limited to traditional streams like arts, science, and commerce. Meanwhile, global higher education is evolving toward liberal arts and multidisciplinary systems. The current Higher Education Department shows little concern for this shift. Furthermore, undergraduate and postgraduate courses are not aligned with job market demands, resulting in widespread unemployment among graduates.
- On the front of pedagogy, the government demonstrates a complete lack of vision or initiative. It appears unconcerned with teaching methodologies, with no efforts to introduce new curricula or innovative ideas to enhance learning outcomes.
- Finally, the 41 government universities are plagued by severe deficiencies, including shortages of teaching staff, inadequate funding, poor basic infrastructure, substandard libraries, and a lack of quality study materials. This has led to a state of total anarchy, where systemic issues remain unaddressed, hampering the overall quality and accessibility of higher education in the state.

Health

COMMENDABLE

- **Access to Health Care**
  Gruha Arogya Yojana Scheme - House delivery of medicines
  The Karnataka government has announced the statewide expansion of the Gruha Arogya Yojane health scheme, which aims to deliver healthcare services directly to people's homes for early detection and management of non-communicable diseases (NCD) among people in rural areas. The programme, piloted in Kolar district, will now be scaled up across the state to make primary healthcare more accessible to the population which is a positive move. Dedicated health teams conducted door-to-door screening for major NCDs including diabetes, hypertension, and three common cancers — oral, breast, and cervical in individuals aged 30 and above. ASHAs will conduct door-to-door visits to raise awareness about NCDs and facilitate health check-ups for individuals above 30 at Ayushman Health and Wellness Centres. Community Health Officers (CHOs) will conduct screenings for 14 NCDs and record the data on the NCD portal. Free medication and regular follow-up care will be provided at the nearest Ayushman Health and Wellness Centre to those diagnosed. However, it is incumbent upon the government to improve the overall access to free medicines, such as in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Rajasthan.
- **Nutrition**
  'Anna Bhagya' offers 10 kgs of rice to every member of a BPL family per month
  Recent move by the government to replace 5 Kgs of rice under the 'Anna Bhagya' scheme with 'Indira kit' - a diversified food basket of Toor dal, Moong dal, Sugar, Salt and Cooking oil rather than only carbohydrate is welcome. Even though driven partially by cost considerations (given that the kit is going to cost the state annually 300 crores less), it is a move in the right direction for nutritious food provision. The scheme is expected to benefit approximately 4.48 crore people in the state.

- Expansion of eggs/banana to school children from 2 to 6 days per week extending egg distribution to six days a week for students in classes 1 through 10 in government and aided schools, and also to pre-primary students in government schools, as of June 2025. This expansion, supported by partners like the Azim Premji Foundation, aims to combat malnutrition and increase student attendance.
- **Maternal Health**
  The Karnataka government launched a ₹320-crore mission to end preventable maternal deaths with measures like strengthening obstetric care, digital tools to prevent postpartum haemorrhage, nutrition kits, and posting specialists in taluk hospitals.
- **Non-Communicable Disease Care (not an exhaustive list)**
  Cancer treatment
  The Karnataka government will launch daycare chemotherapy centres across 16 districts to make cancer treatment more accessible and reduce the burden on large hospitals. Under a hub-and-spoke model, tertiary hospitals will act as hubs for complex procedures, while district-level centres (spokes) provide outpatient chemotherapy, palliative care, counselling, and basic lab services. This is expected to cut travel time and out-of-pocket costs for patients (by about 40 %), improve adherence, and decongest tertiary centres. The centres will be staffed by visiting oncologists and trained support personnel, and drugs will follow standard procurement protocols. However - critical issues such as staffing, free and affordable treatment and integration with insurance schemes will affect the quality of these centres.
- Karnataka government will set up a residential school for children suffering from cancer near Kidwai Cancer Hospital, Bangalore. School Education & Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa stated that over 3,500 school-going children suffering from cancer have been identified in the state. Over 1500 children will be enrolled in the residential school at a time. The officials have been instructed to identify 3 acres of land belonging to the department near the Kidwai Hospital. He said that free food and accommodation will be provided to the parents/ relatives who come to take care of them.

- **Karnataka Brain Health Initiative**
  33 brain health clinics were launched, including three in Bengaluru Urban, offering treatment for common neurological problems such as stroke, epilepsy, dementia and headaches. Each brain health clinic will be staffed with a multidisciplinary care team comprising a physician, physiotherapist, speech therapist, psychologist, nurse, and district coordinator. The initiative is being launched with technical support from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans). Both APL and BPL individuals can access these clinics. While BPL patients will be receiving free treatment, APL patients will be required to pay a nominal hospital service charge ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 50. Medicines will be procured and provided by the clinics.
- Broad push to improve rural and taluk-level health infrastructure across Karnataka
- Approximately 280 Crores allocated to build seven 100 bed taluk hospitals (with assistance from NABARD)
- All taluk hospitals will be upgraded to Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (CEmONC) centres. Forty-one CHCs with an average of 30 or more monthly deliveries will retain specialists, while around 230 underperforming CHCs will lose them.
- 108 Ambulance services and 104 Arogya Sahayavani (Helpline) to be managed by Karnataka Government
- The Karnataka government will revoke the memorandum of understanding signed with EMRI Green Health Services to handle the command control centre of '108' ambulance services. This move is expected to significantly enhance the efficiency of the “108” ambulance service while saving nearly Rs 250 crore for the state exchequer. For this, the department must submit a proposal to obtain more manpower to operationalise this project, sign an MoU with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) Thiruvananthapuram, to manage both the 108 Arogya Kavacha and 104 Arogya Sahayavani (helpline) through the central command and control centre for a period of five years, and file a

separate proposal for exemption from the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 1999.

NOTE-WORTHY

- **Food and Nutrition in government hospitals to improve in-patient care**
  Food for patients in government hospitals in Bangalore: about 70gms of protein per day (less for dialysis patients), soya chunks instead of eggs, extra quantity for pregnant and lactating women. There is some criticism for involving ISKCON and excluding eggs but overall its promising and noteworthy for nutrition for government hospital patients who are mostly poor.
- **Much required increase in honorariums ASHAs and AWWs**
  ASHAs and AWWs are the backbone of the community level health care and maternal and child welfare. The budget has increased 16K Cr to 17Cr. ASHAs monthly honorarium has increased from 5K to 6K, and AWWs increase by Rs 1000/mo, AW Helpers increase of Rs 750/mo

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **Access to free medicines and diagnostics for patients in government facilities** - Despite a policy commitment, Karnataka state has consistently failed to make progress in this area. Many issues plague the access to free medicines effort, resulting in huge Out-of-Pocket expenditures (OOPE). The Karnataka Medical Services Corporation limited (KSMSCL) tasked with ensuring procurement and distribution of medicines is found wanting on many counts. Some of the issues plaguing the free medicines scheme are a) Inadequate budgets b) lack of proper quality testing procedures. c) improper supply chain management d) Inadequate use of information technology to have real time data regarding consumption and stock positions of medicines e) medical staff in the public facilities not trained on generic medicines and hence not convinced about the medicines supplied by the government resulting in writing prescriptions of branded medicines to patients.
- Members of Sarvatrika Arogya Andolana Karnataka undertook a rapid study in 11 districts of Karnataka in 2024. Exit interviews of nearly

600 people were done leaving a private pharmacy/diagnostic facility in the vicinity of a government facility in a 30 minute time span. In total, the patients/families interviewed spent Rs 5,00,000 on medicines and diagnostics !! Irrespective of the type of facility and the geography, prescriptions are being written and people are having to purchase the medicines out-of-pocket.

- Due to consistent efforts and advocacy with the health minister, recently some positive movements have happened even though availability of medicines at the facilities is still not visible on the ground. One of the major issues with KSMSCL has been having a KAS officer (unlike Tamil Nadu) as deputy director resulting in a lack of autonomy. Recently, an IAS officer has been appointed (in line with Tamil Nadu) which should increase autonomy and thus address some of the weaknesses in KSMSCL.
- There is an increase in the budgetary allocation with more medicines added. The director has gone on record stating that new tender processes have started and the medicines availability should improve. Recently, the director has also mentioned that KSMSCL has now taken steps to put in place a software for capturing real time data regarding medicines stock in various facilities. Another significant step was the removal of Jan Aushadi stores from government facilities because lower cost generic Jan Aushadi stores were preventing the government from fulfilling the mandate for free medicines in government facilities. Unfortunately, due to inadequate communication and awareness by the government, it was held captive by vested interests and this move has now been stayed by the High court of Karnataka.
- **First steps taken for Right to Health bill**
  The state government has taken the first tentative steps towards enacting a Right to Health or Health Care act in the state (the conceptual basis of the act is to be decided). While this is welcome and overdue (e.g., a poorer state like Rajasthan passed Right to Health legislation in 2022), a new act cannot be created in a vacuum. It has to be built along with developing an ecosystem of other changes such as access to free medicines and diagnostics, free treatment of medical conditions with no user fees, adequate staff in place and stronger regulation of the private sector. None of these are

currently in place and hence what shape that the Right to Health / Health Care legislation will take is to yet to be seen.

PROBLEMATIC

- Karnataka State health facilities continue to be plagued by significant staff vacancies in various facilities.

Facility	Staff Position	Sanctioned	Filled	Vacancies	Percentages
PHC	Medical Officer	2392	2052	340	14%
CHCs	Specialists	451 (728)	273	178	39%
PHC/CHC	Pharmacist	2273 (2314)	1504	769	33.8%
PHC/CHC	Nurses	5249	5617	-	-
CHC	Surgeons	45(182)	16	29	64%

- Please note that the numbers in the brackets mentioned in the sanctioned columns are the posts that need to be there according to the norms. If one were to consider the vacancies according to the norms, the percentage vacancies would be that much higher. With these levels of chronic staff vacancies the facilities are in no position to deliver the services to the people (Source: Health Dynamics of India, Infrastructure and Human Resources, 2024).

DANGEROUS

- **Inadequate budgets for health**
  Karnataka state governments continue to commit lesser resources for health. While the National Health Policy of 2017 asserts that state governments must spend at least 8% of their state budgetary expenditure by 2020, in the 2025-26 budget, Karnataka government has just committed 4% of its budgetary expenditure. There is a modest increase in the allocation for health but taking inflation into consideration, the budgetary provision is negative year-on-year. If

there is lesser expenditure on health then components such as filling up of vacancies, capital expenditure on medical colleges and so on suffer. Karnataka government must increase the budgetary provision to 8% of its total budgetary outlay immediately.

- News reports suggest that the Upper Krishna Project estimated at 75K Cr is likely to be funded by fund cuts as resource mobilisation seems unviable. This would affect health and education budgets.
- **PPP - 11 district hospitals to enter PPP model for medical colleges**
  Medical education department has publicly announced that 11 new district medical colleges in the state would be started in public-private partnership (PPP) mode handing over district hospitals in these districts to the private concessionaires. Subsequently it is now 9 since Chitradurga and Ramanagara district medical colleges have been approved to remain public medical colleges. This is by far the most dangerous move by the state government which seriously compromises access to health care services for the poor and the marginalised. There is absolutely no evidence of PPPs working for the benefit of the people and government's own commissioned studies have repeatedly shown that PPP models have not worked. Some obvious examples are the failed Rajiv Gandhi Super speciality hospital in Raichur, Mother and child hospital in Udupi, Arogya Bandhu scheme etc. The honorable chief minister in his budget document has formally committed to start Kolar district medical college in PPP mode this year. Despite popular opposition to the proposed move the medical education department is insistent on going ahead with the PPP model citing lack of resources and also telling that PPP does not mean privatisation of the medical colleges.
- **Ayushman Bharat - Arogya Karnataka (AB-Ark)**
  Globally, there is very little evidence about insurance-based health care models providing equitable access to health care. There are many studies which highlight problems with the publicly funded health insurance (PFHI) schemes such as Ayushman Bharat - Arogya Karnataka in the country. Studies have highlighted that the main objective of reduction in OOPE has not happened despite the PFHI schemes and on the contrary, OOPE has increased for people who availed the PFHI schemes. The PFHI schemes are skewed towards

tertiary health care while it is globally acknowledged that more emphasis has to be on the primary health care needs of the people. There is evidence from some states in the country where the expenditure on the PFHI scheme has overtaken the primary health care expenditures. The fee-for-service nature of the PFHI schemes also make it ripe for ‘supplier induced demand’ and as a result of which there has been rampant increase in irrational and unethical treatments such as unnecessary hysterectomies and unwanted cesarean section deliveries. Despite these shortcomings recently an announcement was made by the union government that the PFHI scheme will be expanded to senior citizens older than 70 years. There was lack of clarity in the operationalisation of the scheme and even commitment of funds from both the union and the state governments. The announcement preceded the implementation and which created a lot of confusion resulting in a suicide by an elderly person in Karnataka after being denied treatment. Members of Sarvatrika Arogya Andolana Karnataka (SAAK) did a study of the AB-Ark in Karnataka and collected 105 case studies from various districts of Karnataka. Unsurprisingly, it was found that 102 out of 105 people interviewed incurred substantial out of pocket expenditure irrespective of card-holding status in all types of facilities both public and private.

COMMENTARY ON THE Health Sector

While there are some disease-related, hospital based initiatives taken by the government, the initiatives show a piecemeal approach without a sense of direction and vision. The government is still taking a schemes-based approach to health. There is no overall structural and systemic direction by the government towards improving the health of the people. For instance, there is no policy direction for moving towards Universal Health systems and the most touted pathway towards universal system is the PFHI scheme which is beset with enough problems. There is inadequate overall vision with visionary benchmarks. Full spectrum care is not available to lower and middle economic class segments of the population.

Larger structural changes to integrate care models with actual availability of facilities that will drive us closer to continuity of care (CoC) with integrated referral systems is missing.

Care is best provided when health governance is fully devolved and nearest to the people. But health governance in Karnataka suffers from incomplete devolution of health governance to panchayats and urban local bodies (ULBs). There is absolutely no mention by the political administrators about providing complete devolution of health governance to the panchayats. This is all the more pronounced when one sees the case of urban health governance with multiple actors - state, municipal, private (both profit and non-profit) dotting the landscape. With incomplete devolution, the ULBs are eternally dependent on the state department for both technical and financial capacities and the power differential.

There is a lack of policy direction towards guiding the complete system on the path of better quality of care including putting in place a stronger regulatory regime. So neither the quality of care nor the costs of care are regulated leaving the patients at the mercy of the exploitative facilities. The last amendment to KPME was in 2018 which remains a weak and ineffective regulation doing very little to check the rising costs of private care.

1. Cost of care
2. Nutritional status of all populations is poor - esp women and young children (stunting has shown little decline, anemia among women is around 50%)
3. NCDs prevalence very high among the poor
4. Weak regulation of overprocessed foods which have flooded the market and affecting the poor. In addition, the quality of food in PDS is low and needs to change to local, whole grain and whole food types. For example, highly polished white rice is distributed in the PDS and vegetables and fruits are not included.
5. Prevention and health promotion have had little to no focus and are key to improving population health. Health education is absent. However, some of the recent schemes aim to improve access to

screening and it remains to be seen if they are able to scale high quality, free and low-cost care.

6. GBGA deserves specific mention for the fundamental changes which will ensue in urban local governance in Bengaluru. In the area of health services, it is unclear as to whether there will be improved coordination among the 3 tiers of government and various departments that run health services in the Bengaluru urban areas. This might further exacerbate the jurisdictional issues and the plurality of governance actors in the urban health system. It has been reported that to ensure that services of Primary Health Centers under the National Urban Health Mission and the Namma Clinics (Government of Karnataka) continue uninterrupted with new five corporations, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has proposed setting up an Executive Committee (EC) for each of the five corporations. There are nearly 4,000 health staff deployed through National Health Mission (NHM) to provide healthcare for the urban poor, and their allocation to each corporation is crucial to ensure the health system runs smoothly.

Speaking to TNIE, Suralkar Vikas Kishor, Special Commissioner, Health and Education, GBA, said that the GBA cannot set up a uniform law regarding the health system as it will become difficult for each individual corporation to follow it up. GBA is now a supervising body, and it cannot control the corporations, and has asked the government to appoint an EC.

Earlier, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner was chairing the EC. The same system was being followed at the rural and urban level where an EC was heading the District Health Society and responsible for the day-to-day administration. The Deputy Commissioner (DC) or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the chair of the EC at the urban and rural levels.

“We have sent a letter to the government stating that the BBMP has been dissolved and the corporation is divided. The Corporations have two choices. They can either create the Executive Committee or they can write to the government to go under the umbrella of the District Health Society, which will be monitored by the DC or the CEO for health administration in the five corporations,” (Suralkar Vikas Kishor, Special

Commissioner, Health and Education, GBA). Whether GBA will lead to better coordination between urban health facilities resulting in greater continuity of care, rational care, and lower costs remain important questions.

Environment & Forest

NOTEWORTHY

In 2025, the **Bengaluru Cantonment Railway Colony**, home to hundreds of old and diverse trees, became the center of a major conflict over a proposal by the Railway Land Development Authority (RLDA) to fell 368 mature heritage trees for a commercial development project. The Karnataka Forest Minister visited the site, and in September 2025, the Biodiversity Board ultimately declared the 8.61-acre green zone a Biodiversity Heritage Site.3

QUESTIONABLE

Bengaluru Climate Action Plan: The government formally accepted and launched the Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan (BCAP) in 2023. However, its effectiveness is questionable because the plan is not statutory, and budgetary support has been very limited, relying mainly on private and CSR funds. As a result, actual implementation remains uncertain. Moreover, several actions recommended in the plan contradict the recent KTCDA amendment and the reduction of Raja Kaluve (drain) buffers in the Bengaluru Metropolitan Area. As reported by Deccan Herald, a proposed carbon credit policy to incentivise agroforestry also relies heavily on the private sector.

PROBLEMATIC

- **Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project (2000 MW):** The State Board for Wildlife, chaired by the Chief Minister, has given wildlife clearance to the 2000 MW Sharavathi PSP project inside the Sharavathi Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the landslide-prone central Western Ghats. The project requires 353 acres of sanctuary habitat.
- **Varahi Pumped Storage Project (1500 MW):** On 7 October 2024, the State Board for Wildlife recommended a proposal for survey and investigation over 259.858 hectares within the Mookambika and Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuaries.

- **Yettinahole Project:** The Yettinahole Integrated Drinking Water Supply Project envisages the diversion of west-flowing river water to meet the drinking water needs of seven parched districts in South Karnataka. Large-scale work on the Yettinahole project has proceeded in reserved forest areas without the legally required permissions. These illegal diversions mean compensatory afforestation requirements remain unfulfilled.
- **Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary De-Notification:** The State Board for Wildlife, chaired by the Chief Minister, has approved the de-notification of over 400 sq. km of the Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary. This move is illegal under the Wildlife Protection Act and is currently being heard by the Central Empowered Committee (set up by the Supreme Court) following a petition we filed.
- **Doubling of Railway Line inside Kali Tiger Reserve:** The State Board for Wildlife approved the doubling of the railway line between Castle Rock in Karnataka and Molem in Goa. This line passes through the Kali Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. The main purpose of the doubling is to facilitate the easy transport of coal from Goa's ports to the hinterland of Karnataka.
- **Honnavar Port Project:** In December 2024, the Karnataka State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) granted a fresh environmental clearance for the revived Honnavar Port project, controversially reusing the old 2012 public hearing rather than conducting a new one. This exception was justified under a narrow legal reading, although only about 5% of physical work had begun—far short of the 50% threshold normally required to exempt new hearings. Significant concerns about impacts on turtle nesting sites, coastal erosion, and local livelihoods remain unaddressed.
- **Keni Port Project:** The Keni Port project is expected to cause irreversible environmental harm to a pristine coastal and estuarine ecosystem, endanger threatened species, undermine local livelihoods, and has proceeded without rigorous scientific scrutiny. There is widespread local opposition.
- **Forest Diversion:** As reported by The New Indian Express, between March 2023 and April 2025, the Forest Department diverted 32,699.59 hectares of forest land for non-forestry purposes.
- **Lake/Drain Buffer Dilution:** The 2025 KTCDA Amendment and drain buffer reduction notification dismantle safeguards for lakes, rivers, and waterbodies — the opposite of the government's stated commitment to protect water commons.

- **Kalasa Bandura Project (Malaprabha/Mahadei):** The last two years have seen Karnataka intensifying efforts to secure project clearances for the Kalasa Banduri project, especially from the National Board for Wildlife, due to its location within tiger corridors and the Bhimgad and Mahadei Wildlife Sanctuaries. Permanent damage to Mahadei forest's freshwater ecosystem is anticipated, including changes to water flow, depletion of underground sources, and impact on flora and fauna in this Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot.
- **Bellary Mining**: The state government stepped up efforts to grant mining leases overruling forest departments objections. It granted mining to The National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) on 392.92 acres of forest in Swamimalai forests of Sandur for diversion of 992 acres of forest for another mining proposal by Kudremukh Iron Ore Mining Company Limited. The National Green Tribunal has registered a suo motu case on this.
- **Nuclear:** Karnataka's cabinet rejected three proposed sites for a new nuclear power plant in Koppal, Raichur, and Vijayapura, largely because of local opposition and environmental concerns. While the state agreed in principle on the need for a nuclear plant, it directed the NTPC to conduct a fresh statewide study to identify a more suitable location. NTPC is currently undertaking this comprehensive site assessment as directed by the cabinet.
- **Solar parks:** The Madhugiri Solar Park in Tumkur is indeed being developed in partnership with Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Limited (THDCIL). While solar energy is essential and expands Karnataka's renewable portfolio, environmental and water footprint concerns—such as land use change, biodiversity impacts, and high water consumption for cleaning panels—remain largely unaddressed in both planning and implementation for this and other large solar projects in the state. Moreover, the Karnataka government is actively considering and promoting floating solar projects on lakes and reservoirs as part of its renewable energy strategy. This comes at the time, when these lakes are already under severe hydrological and ecological stress due to factors like over-extraction, pollution, siltation, and encroachment, which heightens the risks associated with further interventions. Again this shows that development is not balanced with reducing the env risks.
- **Mineral Exploration**: The Department of Mines and Geology has already granted the company a composite licence for exploration in Chikkamagalur. Forest department is considering granting

permission for exploration inside the thick evergreen forest of Chikkamagalur some of which is part of Bhadra Wild Life Sanctuary. News reports that state government is considering proposal for exploration of Bauxite in Honnavar forest division which can potentially be inside or close to Sharavathi LTM Wild Life Sanctuary and Apsarkonda-Mugali marine sanctuary

Labour

COMMENDABLE

- **26 Sept 2023 – Minimum Wage notification as per Reptakos Brett judgement of SC:** A single bench of the High Court set aside a minimum wage notification for 34 scheduled employments, dated July 28, 2022 on the ground that the State govt. had not undertaken ground survey to assess present-day prices of essentials, but arbitrarily enhanced wages between 5% and 10% for 34 scheduled employments. The State government was directed by the Karnataka High Court to re-calculate the minimum wages that had been fixed in 2022 based on Supreme Court guidelines in the Reptakos Brett case. Challenging the order, the Karnataka Employers' Association filed a batch of writ appeals, contending that they were not heard by the single bench. On 25th Dec 2024, a division bench of the High Court remitted back to the single bench the issue pertaining to minimum wages, holding that the Karnataka Employers' Association needs to be heard in the matter.
- After taking cost of living into consideration, the Labour Department, applying guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in the Reptakos Brett case, had notified the draft minimum wages in April, 2025 in the range of ₹19,319 per month for an unskilled labourer to ₹34,225 for highly skilled labourers for 84 scheduled industries. In order to ensure equal minimum wages for all categories of workers, a uniform notification has been issued instead of the practice of issuing separate notifications for each scheduled industry.

- On 29th Aug 2025, at a meeting of the Minimum Wages Advisory Board, **employees and employers failed to arrive at a consensus.** A decision on fixing minimum wages for 84 scheduled industries now rests with the Karnataka government. The final notification in accordance with the Reptakos Brett judgment is before the Labour Secretariat. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/karnataka-govt-ordered-to-re-calculate-minimum-wages-based-on-sc-guidelines/article67388263.ece https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/hear-employers-on-min-wages-in-foundries-hc-tells-single-bench/articleshow/116661586.cms https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/minimum-wage-ball-in-govts-court-after-employers-and-employees-fail-to-arrive-at-consensus/article69985671.ece
- **25th Oct 2023 – Committee to frame State Labour Policy established:** A GO was issued on 25.10.2023, setting up an experts' committee consisting of officials, employers' associations, labour unions, academicians and civil society members to draw up a State Labour Policy. The Committee held eight meetings until March 2025. A final version of the Policy Document has been circulated to all members on 21st October 2025 to be released soon. Karnataka is one of the few States after Tamil Nadu to prepare a State Policy on Labour.

NOTE-WORTHY

- **29th June 2024 - A Karnataka Motor Transport and Other Allied Workers Social Security and Welfare Act 2024 (Karnataka Act 13 of 2024) passed.** The Act writes into the law almost all benefits as per ILO convention 102 and the quantum of benefits. But the quantum of cess to be collected from employers and the government's contribution, if any, have not been stated in the law. https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/karnataka/2024/Act13of2024KA.pdf
- **3rd Dec 2024 - Unorganised Workers' Social Security Rules amended:** In the Unorganised Workers' Social Security (Karnataka) Rules 2009 a new Rule 13 has been inserted namely:- An annual

report on the working of the Board **and registration details for unorganised workers** during preceding year ending on 31 March shall be laid before each House of the State Legislature, along with audited copies of accounts and the auditor's report, **strengthening board reporting and transparency requirements.** This allows one to monitor how well the Board is functioning.
https://www.legalitysimplified.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Workers-Social-Security-Karnataka.pdf?utm

- **22nd Dec 2024 - Karnataka CM launched 100 mobile medical units for construction workers.** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the launch of 100 mobile medical units (MMUs) statewide for construction workers and their families, with the first 30 MMUs to be operational in Hubballi by December 2024. Each unit will be equipped with 25 medical equipment pieces (body impedance analyser, BP monitor, ECG device, digital stethoscope, urine analyser, health pod) and can conduct 32 medical tests. MBBS doctors will staff each MMU, providing on-site preventive healthcare at construction sites, eliminating wage loss from hospital visits. The ₹127 crore scheme will create an electronic health ecosystem documenting all patient parameters. Scheme expected to benefit 8 lakh registered construction workers and their dependents across Karnataka.
https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/cm-to-launch-mobile-medical-units-for-construction-workers-soon-3328874
- **10th January 2025** - **Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Act, 2024 notified.** Government of Karnataka notified the Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Act, 2024, effective from January 10, 2025, significantly increasing contribution rates for employees (from ₹20 to ₹50), employers (from ₹40 to ₹100), and state government (from ₹20 to ₹50). The amendments aim to strengthen the welfare fund to better support workers across Karnataka through enhanced health benefits, housing, and educational assistance schemes. The revised contributions apply to the 2025 calendar year with payments due in January 2026.
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/saga-legal_karnataka-labour-welfare-fund-amendment-activity-7284557579110793216-IadW

- **5th May 2025 - Mobile health scheme screens 25,000 construction workers in Mysuru.** Labour Department launched mobile clinics providing free preventive healthcare to construction workers at work sites. Services include BP checks, diabetes testing, basic medicines; workers avoid wage loss from hospital visits. Plans to expand statewide. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mysuru/healthcare-scheme-benefits-25k-construction-workers-in-3-months-in-mysuru/articleshow/120907220.cms
- **16th July 2025 - Karnataka Amends BOCW Rules, Hikes Benefits in 2025: The** State government amended **Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Karnataka (Amendment) Rules, 2025, effective 16th July 2025,** raising welfare ceilings and increasing compensation for worker deaths (e.g., higher accidental death compensation), and targeted benefit expansions for construction workers and their families.

Key Amendments Introduced in 2025:

- Welfare Ceiling Raised (Rule 44 Amendment) from Previous Limit: ₹71,000 to new Limit: ₹1,46,000, representing a more than 100% increase.
- Death Compensation Clarified and Increased (Rule 47 Amendment): The registered construction worker who meets with an accident resulting in his or her death at the workplace, the nominee of such registered construction worker *shall be entitled to ₹8,00,000 (Rupees Eight Lakhs) from the Board."*
- Higher Ceiling = More Support: Registered workers can now avail increased financial benefits for medical aid, maternity assistance, educational support, and other welfare provisions.
- Karnataka's move strengthens the safety net for workers in one of the most hazardous sectors—the construction industry. The amendments aim to bring financial dignity to those who build the state's infrastructure, especially in times of crisis.
  https://www.legalitysimplified.com/karnataka-amends-bocw-rules-hikes-benefits-in-2025/?utm

- **18th July 2025 - Karnataka government invokes Essential Services Maintenance Act:** Govt invoked ESMA to prohibit strikes by road transport corporation employees, citing essential public service. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/karnataka-government-invokes-essential-services-maintenance-act-prohibits-strike-by-transport-staff/articleshow/122771038.cms?utm
- **29 July 2025 - Karnataka drops plan to extend IT work hours -** In 2023, the Karnataka Government sought to increase working hours to 12 hours a day subject to a 48-hour weekly limit by introducing a bill to amend the Factories Act. This bill was passed by both the legislative assembly and legislative council in the State. But the Bill has been placed in cold storage now given protests by workers' unions. https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/bengaluru-news/no-12-hour-shifts-karnataka-drops-plan-to-extend-it-work-hours-after-protests-from-unions-101753800178877.html#google_vignette
- **29th July 2025**- **Shramika housing complexes inaugurated in Hubballi.** Labour Minister inaugurated three temporary housing complexes for unorganised workers providing subsidized accommodation at ₹10-15/day and distributed smart cards for health insurance, accident coverage, and pension access. Registration drive enrolled 8,500 workers. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hubballi/minister-santosh-lad-inaugurates-three-housing-complexes-for-unorganised-sector-workers/articleshow/122957788.cms
- **19th August 2025 - Platform-Based Gig Workers' Social Security and Welfare Bill, 2025 passed - The Karnataka Assembly passed t**he Platform-Based Gig Workers' Social Security and Welfare Bill, 2025. The law introduces a broad regulatory framework for gig and platform-based work in the state, covering issues such as social security, working conditions, payout fairness, and platform accountability. For the first time in Karnataka, the law brings algorithmic systems into the conversation on gig workers' access to work and income. The bill also includes clauses on automated decision-making, transparency, discrimination, and account deactivation but gaps remain. Karnataka Labour Department's preventive healthcare scheme for registered construction workers

achieved 25,000 screenings over three months in Mysuru district through weekly health check-ups covering 21 health conditions. https://www.medianama.com/2025/08/223-karnataka-gig-worker-law-algorithmic-transparency-gaps/?utm

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **2025.10.17 - Karnataka Domestic Workers (Social Security & Welfare) Bill, 2025.** Karnataka published a draft Domestic Workers Bill proposing written agreements, registration of domestic workers, minimum wages, access to social security/pension, grievance mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance. Stakeholders welcomed formalisation but flagged implementation, cost and monitoring challenges.
  https://www.indialaw.in/blog/labour/karnataka-domestic-workers-bill-2025

QUESTIONABLE

- **26th Dec 2023 - Yuva Nidhi drop in beneficiaries.** Yuva Nidhi (monthly stipends to graduates/diploma holders) showed declining enrolments/impact as the two-year stipend period neared completion; uptake of complementary skilling initiatives was limited. The government spent significant sums, but employment outcomes remain unclear. "Under Yuva Nidhi Plus, we have been trying to train and upskill to make them industry-ready. However, the response has been quite lacklustre for the programme. only 1,200 participants have been trained so far.
  The skill development department estimates 1.6 lakh of 2.55 lakh beneficiaries will exit the scheme over the next eight months after completing the two-year stipend period. Degree holders received Rs 3,000 per month, while diploma holders got Rs 1,500. The scheme's basic objective—to help unemployed youth find work has gone unfulfilled.
- Yuva Nidhi in Numbers: Launched on December 26, 2023, Total number of beneficiaries 2,55,033; Total amount spent towards stipend Rs 622 crore.

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/124278702.cms?utm&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

- **4th January 2025 - Karnataka State Factories Self Certification Scheme-2024 launched.** Government of Karnataka introduced the Karnataka State Factories Self Certification Scheme-2024 to streamline enforcement procedures under the Factories Act, 1948, Payment of Wages Act, 1936, and Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. The voluntary scheme allows factory owners to self-certify compliance by submitting Form-I with ₹10,000 registration fee and ₹50,000 security deposit. Certificates are valid for 5 years, with annual reporting requirements. Factories with less than 250 workers and no hazardous processes are eligible. The scheme aims to reduce multiple inspections while maintaining worker welfare and safety standards, promoting cooperative environment between workers, management and government. Such measures are being introduced for "ease of conducting business". But given that massive violations of labour laws occur due to the poor bargaining power of workers, especially in the smaller enterprises where unorganised workers are employed, this will lead to further exploitation of workers, also due to weakened inspections by labour inspectors.

  https://www.legalitysimplified.com/latest-karnataka-state-factories-self-certification-scheme-2024/

● *PROBLEMATIC*

- **01.04.2024 - Low minimum wages for garment workers:** For 2024-2025, the minimum wage for the garment industry in Karnataka (basic plus VDA) was raised to ₹470.12 per day for unskilled workers and ₹480.42 for semi-skilled workers in Zone 1. At ₹12,223 and ₹12,490 per month (unskilled and semi-skilled workers), a majority of whom are women, it is less than the minimum wage in other sectors. For Zone 1 (notified areas of the BBMP), the minimum wage (basic plus VDA) for skilled workers is ₹17,539 and for unskilled workers, it is ₹15,106 per month. This is the minimum wage rate for employment not covered under any scheduled employments. Whereas in the garment industry, even for skilled and highly skilled workers, the minimum wage (basic plus VDA) in 2024-2025 stands at ₹490.69 and ₹503.52 per day (and ₹12,758 and ₹13,091 per month) in Zone 1.

- That such low wages prevail in a sector benefiting largely from exports to other countries where profits are considerable, this shows gross exploitation of the largely female workforce who are not in a position to protest. That the government is succumbing to the pressure of employers in this sector does not speak well of its commitment to empower and improve working conditions for women.
  https://cividep.org/proposed-revision-of-minimum-wage-in-karnataka-time-to-implement-a-need-based-minimum-wage/
- **20.08.2025 - Irregular expenditure by Construction Workers' Welfare Board.** Comptroller & Auditor General pulled up the Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board for unauthorised/irregular expenditure, raising governance and financial management concerns. The CAG pulled up the Board's "irregular expenditure" of Rs 258.80 crore with "several lapses" towards preventive health training and checkup for 8.49 lakh workers. Of the 42.5 lakh registered workers, a survey of 399 applicants who registered through the Seva Sindhu portal, included tailors, clerks, weavers from unrelated professions. The CAG recommended to the Board to devise a mechanism to weed out ineligible beneficiaries.
- The Board released Rs 433.89 crore to the Karnataka Slum Development Board and Rs 8.74 crore to the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Ltd for housing scheme without obtaining the beneficiary list or details. The CAG further pointed out that the Board did not have an internal audit wing to ensure compliance with rules and proper maintenance of registers.
- No doubt, this was during 2021 to 2022 during the BJP's rule and cannot be attributed to the current government. But it points to the fallacy of creating sector-specific legislation for unorganised workers which do not create common social security benefits for all unorganised workers and do not allow portability of benefits

from one sector to another given that unorganised workers shift sectors.

https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/irregular-expenditure-cag-finds-lapses-in-karnataka-construction-workers-board-2-3689886

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/123415840.cms?utm&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Summary of initiatives in the Labour sector: The Labour Department has taken several laudable initiatives especially in adhering to the directive of the HC to adhere to the criteria for fixing minimum wages as per the judgement of the SC in the Reptakos Brett case. If the final notification conforms to the HC directive, it will mean a huge increase in the purchasing power of the almost 45% wage workers among the unorganised workers of the State and enable a dignified life to them. This will provide a big boost to the economy of the State.

- The initiative to develop a State Labour Policy is also highly commendable which, when implemented, should improve the regulation of working conditions, occupational health and safety provisions, the freedom of association and collective bargaining and social security of the 93% unorganised workers.
- While the initiatives to pass laws on social security and welfare for the motor transport workers, gig workers and domestic workers are well-intentioned, it should be recognised that these lead to piecemeal legislations and piecemeal benefits under each separate sector-specific law each of which cover a few lakh workers only, moving to a distant period the goal of universalising social security to all the unorganised workers. These further prevent portability of benefits when workers shift sectors. This also gives rise to all workers trying to enrol themselves under a sector where maximum benefits are available and they being disqualified as bogus beneficiaries when their ineligibility is discovered as is happening under the Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board. The effort should rather be to universalise social security benefits by having a single fund with minimum common benefits to

all unorganised workers, which can be extended in a phased manner to cover all nine ILO benefits.

Bengaluru

QUESTIONABLE

- **Premium FAR** - BBMP has launched the Premium FAR scheme in Bengaluru, allowing developers to buy extra floor space. Under the new scheme, eligible properties located in designated zones will be permitted to avail additional FAR by paying a premium to the government. And this eligibility is decided ONLY BASED ON ROAD WIDTH - While this is expected to increase revenue, this will increase the pressure on all resources including, water, sewage, waste, roads etc. Without any scientific planning on the impact of these FAR and measures to deal with the same, this will only decrease the quality of life of people who will stay in these expensive apartments. And in the current scheme of things, there is no guarantee that the premium will be used to improve infrastructure.

- **No OC Requirement -** This October, Cabinet decided to exempt from obtaining Occupancy Certificate (OCC) for buildings up to 1,200 sq ft in area constructed with the approval of the Government on plots up to 1,200 sq ft in area under the authority of the Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964, the cabinet noted: *"Keeping in mind the convenience of the public, it is appropriate to exempt buildings of this scale from the requirement of obtaining an Occupancy Certificate,"* the cabinet noted. – This is expected to ease up bureaucratic hurdles that house owners and builders have to go through. However, it is a poor excuse for permitting open lawlessness in construction, especially in the context of rampant PG development, build plan deviations. 2 & 3 floor apartments need to comply with building plans, have bare-minimum fire safety measures. This move encourages lawlessness and compensates lack of capacity with absence of regulation & violation of Supreme Court's December 2024 order.

- **Converting B-KHATA TO A-KHATA -** The scheme applies to vacant plots and plots with a single-unit building (single ownership) for now. It does not benefit individual flat owners who hold a 'B' khata or those residing in multi-storied apartment units. The scheme is expected to benefit over 7.5 lakh properties and **generate nearly Rs 10,000 crore in revenue to the government**. This move however is effectively *akrama-sakrama* and incentivizes illegality with zero accountability.

- The Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) has awarded all contracts related to the collection and transportation of the city's construction and demolition (C&D) waste to a single private firm, raising concerns about favouritism. Read more at: https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/1-firm-5-contracts-questions-over-rs-2-2k-cr-waste-deal-3556922

PROBLEMATIC

- **Delay in starting Master Plan -** CM approved the master plan preparation on 10th October, after 2 and half years of government. BDA meanwhile invited global tenders for RMP - 2041 IN ONLY AUGUST 2025. Bengaluru has been without a plan for over 10 years now and even the RMP 2015 was controversial and ill-planned.
- **Delay in conducting Elections to Municipal Corporation -** The fact that the GBA is up and running, without any elected mayors and corporators, has taken significant decisions with respect to the city's mega projects shows the irreverence of the state government towards elections and elected corporators.
- **Failure to dismantle stage carriage monopoly:** While the Govt has been showing undue haste in legislating amendments in all areas that are unwelcome, where it is extremely necessary and required, it is not showing any interest. Ensure monopoly of BMTC with respect to stage carriage is an outdated idea, and prevents any real innovation in dealing with the mobility innovations in Benglauru, especially public transport, and last mile connectivity, leading to the congestion problems that predominantly plague Bengaluru. The current Stage Carriage permit system reserves per-seat, pick-up/drop-off shared transport services almost entirely for BMTC, while private operators are restricted to Contract Carriage permits that require hiring vehicles as a whole and prohibit en-route passenger sharing. This blocks shuttles, shared autos, on-demand

minibuses, and app-based pooling—even though these services are essential for first/last-mile and neighbourhood connectivity. To improve mobility, the city should introduce a new Urban Shared Mobility Permit, empower BMLTA to regulate and integrate services, and allow BMTC to act as a system coordinator rather than sole operator, enabling safe, regulated private micro-transit that complements public transport and reduces congestion.

- **Failure of law enforcement against illegal layouts, construction** & buildings by respective authorities, leading to a crisis of concrete slums in Bengaluru. Commercial hostel operators are exploiting this laxity in enforcement to farm out PG SLUMS in every part of town, which has disproportionately increased populations.
- **Integrated Solid Waste Management model -**
  This approach of ISWM is a violation of the 2012 High Court order in response to ESG's PIL, which mandated ward level segregation and wet waste processing stations. With the creation of yet another parastatal in BSWML and large contracts for such operations over extended years to private firms, the government is setting up the stage for poor accountability and poor waste management practices.

High Court 2012 judgement

- All municipal waste in Bengaluru will be segregated at source (at the household level).
- BBMP and state government to ensure that "Segregation and Wet Waste Processing Stations shall be located and made operational in the 28 Assembly Constituencies within two months" from the date of the order.
- Every ward should have at least three segregation and wet waste processing stations
- The Court observed: "Landfills are only a temporary solution and that long term measures have to be initiated by all concerned Authorities as a permanent solution".
- Trucks to carry waste in segregated form.
- BBMP may seek the assistance of NGOs or other private agencies for segregation of waste and disposal of dry waste while wet waste has to be transported to composting sites identified by the civic body.

Information courtesy: Environment Support Group

DANGEROUS

- **Planning Process :** CM approved the master plan preparation on 10th October, after 2 and half years of government, AS PART OF THE GBA's first meeting. As per the constitution however, it is the Metropolitan Planning Committee that should prepare the draft-development plan, in coordination with the city and panchayats in the city outskirts. This is constitutionally mandated but also the

sound approach towards planning for an ever-growing city with implications for surrounding villages. Remarkably, the 74th Amendment was initiated and passed by the Congress-led government in 1992.
Despite this, The Metropolitan Planning Committee, a key feature of the Amendment's planning structure, doesn't even feature in the **list of definitions of the GBGA.** Any attempt to build a masterplan that doesn't consider the voices of its own citizens & those

To add to this, the continued presence of BMRDA and other planning authorities sets up any Masterplan being initiated for eventual disaster, as any such plan can be struck down by the courts! Plus, there is nothing in the GBGA that talk about citizen participation and ward-level led planning process, which is the fundamental spirit of the 74th Amendment. This planning process started with the GBA at its center is **undemocratic, unconstitutional and set up for failure**.

- **Unconstitutional GBGA -** Despite multiple petitions, protests by citizens, the Government of Karnataka has gone ahead with the GBGA. This Act aims to legalize/formalize the presence of state ministers in the city's planning and development. With the presence of unelected officials and state ministers and MLAs in this body, it effectively diminishes the power of elated mayors and municipal corporators. Despite claims of decentralization through the creation of 5 separate municipal corporations, the Act DOES NOT EMPOWER these corporations. Fundamentally the governance structure becomes more centralized. It is directly violative of the spirit of the 74th Amendment.

- **Elevated Corridor & Tunnel Roads (Brand Bengaluru Projects - add the rest)** - B-SMILE has prepared drafts of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for 13 elevated corridors spanning 126 km, estimated to cost the government ₹18,000 crore - about ₹142 crore a km. Similarly, the Tunnel Roads are expected to cost around 17-18000 Crores. In a city that is grappling with extreme

level of construction, construction debris and dust, and increasing traffic, building so many flyovers HAS NO COMMON SENSE. The proposing of these projects by B-SMILE, in the absence of any larger Transit-oriented development plan/mobility plan for the city, is setting up the city for disaster at a great cost to the exchequer. The government's insistence to proceed with the project, despite public protest and disapproval is an indication of it's focus on CONCRETE, CONSTRUCTION AND COMMISSION and rampant AD-HOCism.
For more: https://citizenmatters.in/gaps-in-bengalurus-proposed-tunnel-road-project/

- **BMLTA remains on paper -** The Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) was created to function as a unified mobility planning body, but because it remains largely inactive on the ground—with no real authority, staffing, or budgeting power—Bengaluru continues to suffer from fragmented and uncoordinated transport planning. Multiple agencies like BMTC, BMRCL, BBMP, Traffic Police, and PWD continue to plan and act in silos, leading to duplication of projects, wasted public funds, poor integration of bus and metro networks, badly designed junctions, and an over-reliance on private vehicles. As a result, the city has not been able to evolve a coherent mobility strategy, causing persistent congestion, inefficient public transport usage, and declining liveability.

- **Public Transport Delayed -** Suburban Rail, which is essential to solving Bengaluru's Traffic problems, is currently DELAYED and IS NOT RECEIVING ATTENTION.

  L&T Exit - Even nine months after the LoA, only 2.1 km of the work front, or 8.28% of the total length, was made available, it said. "Evidently, all of KRIDE's representations were false, made with the sole intention of inducing and deceiving our client to execute the contract," the notice reads. L&T said it suffered "massive losses" as its resources remained "idle", and terminated its contract to build Mallige Line on July 28. It has also demanded

500 crores in damages.
Read more at:
https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/fresh-tenders-to-bring-149-km-long-bengaluru-suburban-rail-project-back-on-track-3754945

Only 18.5% of work done on Suburban Rail project in Bengaluru. The BSRP was to be completed by October 2026 as per the sanction letter; however, on June 20, 2022, PM Narendra Modi had said the project would be completed in 40 months. Meanwhile, Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan said Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project has seen only 22% progress since 2020. L&T exited Corridors 2 & 4 after just 8.28% land handover in 2 years, escalating costs from Rs 1,498cr to Rs 7,000cr. The state must hand over the project to the Railways for timely completion.
Read more at:
https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/lt-terminates-bengaluru-suburban-rail-contract-demands-rs-505-cr-3662113

No Full Time K-RIDE Commissioner - K-RIDE still doesn’t have a full-time commissioner. Currently headed by Govinda Reddy, a joint secretary holding in concurrent charge alongside a full role as currently serving as Joint Secretary in the Infrastructure Development, Ports and Inland Water Transport Department

Karnataka State Government holds 51% stake in K-RIDE and railways has repeatedly suggested appointing a technocrat commissioner, considering its technical nature.

Buses, Metro & Walkability -

- While experts indicate that Bengaluru requires anywhere close to 20,000 buses, the number of buses operated by the monopoly service BMTC has been stagnating between 5 to 6 thousand buses for decades, in the same period the population has more than tripled.
- Lack of creativity, a lack of rationalisation of bus routes, and lack of last mile connect options.

- The true potential of Metro has been compromised due to lack of planning and integration with a larger city masterplan. This has led to poor integration and inefficient route planning, and lack of last mile connectivity as well.
- Walkability is also extremely low, with poor availability of safe, walkable footpaths - leading to one of the highest numbers of pedestrian deaths in the country.

- **KTCDA & UDD Circular - The environmental situation is on a precipice of disaster** -

  KTCDA 2025 - Makes lake buffer zones subject to size of the lake. The earlier 30 metre buffer zone is not being eroded, under the proposed Act, to a minimum of ZERO, completely eliminating buffer zones in some cases! Buffer zones are a buffer between civilization and nature. They act as a flood sink, percolation layer, habitat for flora and fauna. This is direct contravention of the Right to Life(Article 21) and goes against citizens' demands to expand buffer zones. It not only impacts green and blue cover, but reduces the city's capacity to deal with floods. This move promotes illegality **-** Link.

  UDD Circular - reduces the buffer zones of **Rajakaluves** (stormwater drains). The existing standards -- 50 metres for primary, 35 metres for secondary and 25 metres for tertiary drains -- will be cut down to 15, 10 and 5 metres, respectively. Bengaluru alone has nearly 1,000 km of rajakaluves, and the change could endanger around 85 lakh trees, increase flooding risks, pollute water, and severely affect food security.
  "This directly contradicts a 2012 Karnataka High Court order based on the Justice N K Patel Committee recommendations, which had mandated strict protection of buffer zones, prevention of sewage inflow, fencing and measurement of lakes, and community-led conservation," said Bhargavi S Rao, environmental researcher.

These moves are in the face of the **World Bank led $426 million** [Karnataka Water Security and Resilience Program]() to help revive the city's 183 lakes which act as natural sponges during heavy rainfall. How these lakes and rajakaluves are expected to act as "natural sponges" without sufficient catchment and buffer is unclear.

The Threat to Lalbagh - 6 acres of the iconic Lalbagh is expected to be acquired and used for construction of the proposed Tunnel Roads. The DPR also stated that the creation of vents for the tunnel road passes through Lalbagh, and will also need land.

Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

COMMENDABLE

- **Karnataka ranking 1st in Devolution Index 2023-24:** In the Devolution Index 2023–24 by IIPA, New Delhi (Ministry of Panchayati Raj), Karnataka secured overall 1st rank, topping specifically in financial devolution.

NOTE-WORTHY

- **Launched "E-swathu to Doorsteps"** which aims to issue e-Khatas for 97 lakh rural properties through the Panchatantra 2.0 platform, digitising property records to help residents prove land ownership for accessing government benefits and to enhance Gram Panchayat revenue through fair property taxation.
- **Nanna Guruthu'** is a pilot for digitising SC/ST vital documents, securely storing 13 key Records in two GPs, with plans to expand to 1,137 GPs in Kalyana Karnataka.

- **Rural Roads:** In 2023-24, Rs.440 crore was released for the *Mukhya Mantri Gramina Raste Abhivruddi Yojane*. For 2024-25, the Chief Minister announced the following two major road development schemes:
- **Kalyan Path Scheme**: Will develop 1,150 km of roads in 38 rural constituencies of the Kalyan Karnataka region at a cost of Rs.1,000 crore.
- **Pragati Path Scheme**: Aims to develop a 9,450 km rural road network (50 km in each of 189 constituencies) with external assistance, costing Rs.5,190 crore.
- **Drinking Water and Sanitation**: Between April 2023 and September 2026, Karnataka allocated Rs.36,908 crore for rural water supply and sanitation—79% from the State and only 21% from the Centre. A Rs.1,010-crore drinking water project for Puttur (covering 28 Sullia villages) is underway with Rs.400 crore released. Yet, a study by the Karnataka Supervisory and Evaluation Authority found that over 50% of the population still faces water scarcity.
- **Upgradation of rural libraries and community amenities; women's employment & creches:** The RDPR has upgraded 5,770 rural libraries to digital status. Started 3,888 "Koosina Mane" (creches) for children of young mothers; over 53,711 children enrolled. Also employed 3,469 women as drivers of garbage-collection vehicles at GP level and raised daily wage from Rs.349 to Rs.370 for certain tasks of local bodies – as part of Grama Swaraj & Women Empowerment focus.
- A 100-day audit resolution campaign for Gram Panchayats has been launched to address audit objections and recovery notices flagged in the audit reports of Gram Panchayats.
- Fast tracking of previous Government's initiative of digital land reforms, title deeds, conversion of hamlets to revenue villages. Steps to issue digital title deeds for undocumented settlements like Tandas, Hattis, Hamlets), convert them into *revenue villages*.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- The draft Karnataka Gram Swaraj & Panchayat Raj (Gram Panchayat Taxes, Rates and Fees) Rules, 2025 have been notified. The goal is to survey all rural properties and utilize the 'capital value system' for taxation to increase the tax base of Gram Panchayats, as current collection is significantly below potential.
- In January 2025, Karnataka RDPR Minister met with the Union Rural Development Minister and submitted suggestions for *relaxations in MGNREGA guidelines* – especially to increase the person-day limit from 100 to 150 days. Yet to receive response.

QUESTIONABLE

- The CAG reported that the state's soaring debt and deficit (due to funding welfare schemes) forced a cut of over Rs. 5,000 crore in Capital Expenditure. This action is detrimental to the state's long-term interests because it sacrifices future growth and development (infrastructure, rural assets, NREGA works) for immediate spending (welfare schemes), making the state's finances unsustainable. The government must clearly inform the public whether the guarantee programmes are being implemented at the expense of other development initiatives.

PROBLEMATIC

- The government's promise of high-speed WiFi in every Gram Panchayat remains unfulfilled. Though BharatNet Phase-I made 6,084 Panchayats service-ready with 3,213 hotspots (July 2025), poor maintenance and slow connectivity disrupt all development programs, especially MNREGA operations, delaying attendance, e-Muster updates, and worker payments.
- Over 3000 outsourced employees in the RDPR department have not been paid for six months.
- CAG reports that certain bodies (eg. Industrial Boards, housing authorities) failed to transfer funds legally due to GP; property taxes, licensing fees etc were not remitted hence weakening ability to function.

● *DANGEROUS*

- Despite three decades of constitutional support, the system continues to face significant structural and operational challenges that limit its effectiveness in promoting rural development and self-governance. The reforms, policies, and programmes initiated by the current government have not effectively addressed these issues, which need radical steps to resolve them
- **NREGA:** The delayed central funding hindering progress in rural development programs. For eg: The Karnataka RDPR Minister stated that in 2023–24, the State released more than its committed share towards drinking water and sanitation. Chronic delay in central fund release leads to months-long backlogs in wages and bills, causing severe financial hardship for workers. Widespread irregularities (fudged records, mechanisation) are found in audits, but the recovery of misappropriated funds is extremely low.
- Delays of local body elections have led to freezing of grants (especially for Zilla and Taluk Panchayats), putting at risk large amounts (to the tune of almost Rs.18,948 crore).
- The CAG report notes that key departments and agencies like KIADB and the Housing Board failed to remit due taxes and funds to Gram Panchayats, weakening their financial capacity and functioning.
- Gram Panchayats have little power to generate or freely spend revenue, as most funds are tied or require higher-level approval. Even untied funds cannot be used without bureaucratic clearance, delaying local projects like road repairs, sanitation drives, or emergency water and drainage works, reducing their responsiveness to community needs.

5 GUARANTEES SCHEMES

This document is a compilation of key news items, information from surveys and documents released by the government and its institutions, about the 5 Guarantee Schemes, as announced by the Karnataka Government. This analysis is broken down in the following structure:

1. **Stated objectives of each of the 5 Guarantees.**
2. **Are the guarantees meeting those objectives? - What are the surveys saying?**
3. **Delivery & implementation challenges - What are the surveys saying, what is the news saying?**
4. **At what cost? - Is the government borrowing to pay for these schemes?**
5. **CIVIC Remarks**

Key Data Sources:

- IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES, engaged by Fiscal Policy Institute – All survey attributions are from this survey, unless stated otherwise.
- News Articles from major print media publications.
- Fiscal Policy Institute's(FPI) Studies on Gruha Jyoti, Gruha Lakshmi and Shakti.

ANNABHAGYA:

1. **Stated Objective:**

The main objective of the Anna Bhagya scheme is to provide food security to Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya families by ensuring they receive 10 kg of free rice per person per month.

2. **Is the Anna Bhagya Scheme meeting this objective?**

Beneficiaries:
There are 35,23,662 Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries and 4,09,00,258 Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries who are each entitled to receive 5 kilograms of additional rice under the Anna Bhagya scheme – In Response to CIVIC's RTI

Improving Calories:

Almost 90% of the families surveyed are getting more calories now:

• 42% said they and their families eat more meals now

• 24% said that their family eats more meals now

• 22% said that the number of meals is the same, but the quantity is more

3. **Delivery & implementation challenges:**

From the CSDS Survey:

Eligibility barriers:

Only 3% of those surveyed were ineligible.

- Among those 3% ineligible, 78% don't have BPL or Antyodaya cards.
- 5% lack documents, among other reasons.

Grievance Redressal:

40% did not know whom to contact if they face problems in availing Anna Bhagya scheme.

Other News on the Anna Bhagya scheme:

- 20% funds misused by men for drinking and smoking, based on an evaluation by a team of researchers, including Dr.Ramesh Chand, NITI Aayog.
- Discontinuation of monthly cash allowance of 170/per person in Feb 2025.
- News of diversion & smuggling of rice that was released under the scheme.
- Indira Food Kit - announced by the government, which replaces the 5 kg rice with 2 pulses(moon & toor) along with sugar, cooking oil and salt.

4. At What Cost?

Anna Bhagya is budgeted to cost 6400 Crores in 2025-26. This is down from about 8000 Crores in 2024-25.

This is the 3rd Most Expensive Guarantee Scheme among the 5 schemes in Karnataka.

5. CIVIC Remarks

Indira Food Kit – This appears to be a good move towards diet diversification. More on this. in the note on Public Health.

GRUHA LAKSHMI

1. Stated Objective (as per the Fiscal Policy Institute):

- Empowering Women: By providing financial assistance directly to women, the scheme promotes their empowerment and strengthens their role as decision-makers within their households.
- Poverty Reduction: The scheme focuses on reducing poverty among economically weaker sections by offering monetary support to eligible women belonging to poor families.
- Gender Equality: By recognizing the significant contributions of women in households, the scheme aims to promote gender equality and challenge societal stereotypes.
- Socioeconomic Development: Through financial support, the scheme uplifts the socioeconomic status of families, leading to overall development within the state of Karnataka.

2. Is the Scheme meeting this objective?

From the CSDS Survey:

Is the scheme improving the economic independence of women

Table 6.9: Impact of Gruha Lakshmi scheme on women's spending-related decisions in family

Which of these situations best describes the spending-related decisions in your family regarding the scheme?	(%)
I along with my family/husband decide	61
I decide on my own	26
I have no say	3
I have greater say now after Gruha Lakshmi	8

Note: Rest did not respond.
Question asked: Thinking about the money received from Gruha Lakshmi scheme, which of these situations best describes the spending-related decisions in your family?

Source: IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES

Table 6.13: Impact of Gruha Lakshmi scheme on women's decision-making within family

Extent to which Gruha Lakshmi scheme helped in improving women's decision-making within family	(%)
A lot	45
Somewhat	43
Not much	8
Not at all	3

Note: Rest did not respond.
Question asked: To what extent has the Gruha Lakshmi scheme helped you in improving your decision-making capacity within the family? Would you say it helped a lot, somewhat, not much, or not at all?

Source: IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES

Based on these results, it appears that **women have a considerable say in deciding how money received** from the Gruha Lakshmi scheme is spent. Table 6.13, suggests **improvements in household decision making as well**.

How is this money being spent? Is it spent on any priorities of women? How are women leveraging this independence?

Table 6.10: Usage of money received/saved from Gruha Lakshmi scheme

Usage of money received/saved from the scheme	Yes (%)
Buying more food items	94
Covering medical expenses (visiting doctors/hospitals/buying medicines)	89
Educational purposes	52
Investing in a business	38
Repaying loans or debts	37

Note: Rest either said 'no' or did not respond. All the items were asked separately.
Question asked: Thinking of Gruha Lakshmi scheme, how have you used the money that you received/saved from it?

Source: IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES

Based on these results, it appears that **this money is being spent in many ways, including relieving sources of stress, such as health expenses.** Considering that more than a 3rd of the respondents is using the money to repay loans, timely provision of these funds is necessary for well-being.

Poverty Reduction:

Impact of Gruha Lakshmi scheme on people's financial upliftment

- 65% said it has helped a lot
- 30% said it has helped somewhat
- 5% said it did not help as much

3. **Delivery & implementation challenges:**

From the CSDS Survey:

Scheme onboarding:

- Delivery time: 68% received benefits within 2 months. But 32% waited 2 months or more.
- Registration Process: 88% had to visit a government office to apply for the scheme

Other News on the Gruha Lakshmi scheme:

- Three-month delay in fund disbursement
- Gender & Tech divide makes it difficult for women to apply for the scheme, read receipt-messages on the phone, go to the bank to withdraw money, and women continue to rely on men for all these activities.

4. **At What Cost?**

   Gruha Lakshmi is the most expensive among the 5 guarantees, costing about 28,000 Crores in 2024-25 and budget to cost the same in 2025-26.

5. **Some Insights on Fiscal implications of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, based on Fiscal Policy Institute's Technical Report:**

   Gruha Lakshmi is **evidently most generous women centric cash transfer scheme in India**, albeit targeted to BPL, APL and Antyodaya ration card holders.

Table 2: Benefits under cash transfer schemes for women across states

State	Scheme Name	Benefit per month (in rupees)	Allocation 2024-25 BE (Rs crore)
Assam	Orunodoi	1,250	3,800
Chhattisgarh	Mahtari Vandan Yojana	1,000	3,000
Delhi	Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana	1,000	2,000
Karnataka	Gruhalakshmi	2,000	28,608
Maharashtra	Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana	1,500	10,000 (scheme to cost Rs 46,000 crore annually)
Madhya Pradesh	Mukhyamantri Ladli Behna Yojana	1,250	18,984
Odisha	Subhadra Yojana	833	10,000
Tamil Nadu	Magalir Urimai Thogai	1,000	13,720
West Bengal	Lakshmir Bhandar	1,000-1,200	14,400

Sources: Respective scheme websites; State Budget Documents; PRS.

Source: PRS State of States 2024-25.

Some key datapoints:

- Revenue Effects of Gruha Lakshmi in Aug 2023- Jul 24 : **74,122 Crores (18% of total GST)**
- % Share of Scheme in Budget in 2024-25 : **7.7%**
- % Share of Scheme in Revenue Expenditure in 2024-25 : **9.84 %**
- Share of Gruha Lakshmi in Amount spent on 5 guarantees is around **55%** in 2024-25.
- Budget Allocation for GL in 2023-24 : **17500 Cr**
- Budget Allocation for GL in 2024-25 : **28608 Cr**

Contribution to Revenue & Fiscal Deficit

The scheme alone is valued **at 33% of our total borrowing in 2025-26**.

Link to Technical Report:
https://fpibengaluru.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Technical%20Reports/RAReport-AnupamaGhiradimata.pdf

6. CIVIC Remarks

- UNCONDITIONAL TRANSFERS are indeed great for short-term relief and provide some degree of financial security and improvement in quality of life through purchase of small personal assets/relief from loans.

- However, they do not ENSURE any long-term impact, in terms of asset creation for society or capacity building for members of the family, considering the heavy impact on fiscal structure of the state.
- CONDITIONAL TRANSFERS are a good idea when it comes to tying these funds to long-term outcomes. For example, Andhra Pradesh's Amma Vodi/Thalliki Vandanam scheme ties transfer it to EDUCATION, and there is news of significant reduction in dropouts.
- These funds could have been tied to some outputs or work, like the NREGA, with focus on the care economy, including child and elderly care, which is a matter of concern across the state. In the context of low salaries currently given to ASHAs and Anganwadi workers, whose work is so important in context of health and child-care, while providing such large transfer for no contribution at all to society, may be a contradiction.

GRUHA JYOTHI SCHEME

1. **Stated Objective (as per the Fiscal Policy Institute)** : Provides free electricity of up to 200 units per month for households in the state, aiming to reduce the financial burden on residents and promote energy conservation.
2. **Is the Scheme meeting this objective?** Is the scheme reducing financial burden and prompting energy conservation?

Number of Beneficiaries (from CIVIC's RTI):

YEAR	REGISTRATIONS	BENEFICIARIES
2023-24	ranged from 1,08,48,006 in the first installment up to 1,23,95,327 by the eighth installment	ranged from 1,06,09,155 to 1,20,04,970
2024-25	registrations rose from 1,23,95,327 in the first installment to 1,26,97,316 by the tenth installment	1,20,19,577 to 1,22,42,835
2025-26	Third installment shows registrations rising to 1,28,24,433	1,24,12,543

From the CSDS Survey:

1. Financial Upliftment

- **55% said the scheme helped a lot**
- **37% said it helped somewhat**
- 7% said it did not help much

2. Money Saved

- **74% cumulatively saved up to ₹500.**
- **13 % saved between ₹500 and ₹1,000**

3. Quality of Life Improvements:

Increased consumption of various appliances

- 82% started using Lights more
- 79% started using TV more
- 27% started using Heaters more
- 21% started using Refrigerators more

Survey shows consumers' increasing electricity use - *Consumption of electrical appliances*

- 30% reported increased consumption
- 9% saw a decrease in consumption
- 60% reported no change

4. Promoting Energy Conservations - No direct data on this.

3. Delivery & implementation challenges:

From the CSDS Survey:

- 78% reported either themselves or a family member went to an office to apply

- 37% reported daily issues with their lights : Districts that faced most issues with flickering lights: Chikkamagaluru (64%), Bengaluru Rural (59%), Dakshin Kannada (55%)
- 24% reported issues with their fans not running at full speed : Districts that faced most issues with fans operating at full speed: Chikkamagaluru (58%), Bengaluru Urban (40), Kolar (37%)
- Only a small number of people (16%) knew whom to contact if they faced any problem in availing the scheme. 64% of people did not know whom to contact if they faced problems

Other News on the Gruha Lakshmi scheme:

- Early registration launch was marred by Seva Sindhu portal glitches and Aadhaar/OTP failures.

- Delays in meter reading causing consumption to go past 200 units.

- No news on reassessment of beneficiaries - those who have shifted and set up new meters & those who have reduced their consumption to under 200 units.

4. At what cost?

- Gruha Jyothi is the second most expensive guarantee scheme after Gruhalakshmi.
- 10,000 Cr budgeted to be spent in 2025-26.
- GST contribution by GruhaJyoti scheme varies between 4.43% to 5.38%
- Fiscal Impact of GruhaJyoti scheme :

% share of Fiscal deficit	12.66	12.67	12.74
% share of revenue deficit	64.51	64.51	64.51
% share of Liabilities	1.55	1.55	1.55

Source: Author's calculations based on Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement, 2024-2028.

Source: https://fpibengaluru.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Technical%20Reports/RFreport-Anushasangodimata.pdf

5. CIVIC Remarks

- 200 units is too much and can be reduced to only cater to the needy.
- The design of the scheme ensures that the poor cannot raise their consumption beyond 10% of their annual consumption.

Considerable improvement in quality of lives may be possible through increasing this band or even removing it altogether.

- Reassessment of beneficiaries is too slow and reflects poorly on the state’s capacity.
- If the beneficiaries are not regularly updated, there is no incentive for the slightly better-off/middle class families to cut down on consumption. Reduction in overall household power consumption could be a great outcome of this scheme, if the system of onboarding is made more efficient.
- Currently this scheme rewards the middle class and even rich families to continue to consume just under 200 units while keeping the poorer families tied down to within 10% of their existing consumption.

SHAKTHI SCHEME

1. **Stated Objective (FPI)** : The main aim of the scheme is to empower women and transgenders by offering free mobility. The scheme is expected to benefit 42 lakh women and transgenders who use state-run public transport services
2. **Is the Scheme meeting this objective?** : Is this free mobility empowering them to make different and better choices?

   Beneficiaries (from CIVIC’s RTI):

   Between 2023-24 and July 2025, a total of ₹9,982.08 lakh was reimbursed under the "Shakti" scheme across four Karnataka state transport corporations:

   - for 2023-24, ₹3,199.75 lakh.
   - for 2024-25, ₹5,015.00 lakh; and
   - for 2025-26 (till July), ₹1,767.33 lakh.

From the CSDS Study:

Impact on savings

- 52% saved up to ₹500, while 31% saved between ₹500 and ₹1,000
- 43% reported staying in the same job, while 10% and 9% women, respectively, moved to a better job or took up a new job, after availing the Shakti scheme.

Impact on other indicators

- 83% of women said that their family relationships improved
- 83% said they could access better healthcare facilities
- 72% reported feeling more empowered and confident.
- 61% reported that they could now travel for leisure
- 59% reported developing stronger friendships with other women

Impact of Shakti on mobility related freedom

- 14% women started travelling out of their homes “a lot”
- 51% women started travelling out of their homes “somewhat”

JustJobs Network Survey

A study by JustJobs Network in association with the Fiscal Policy Institute reveals that the scheme has resulted in savings per month of Rs. 600/- to Rs.1362/- for women. The women are using free bus services for various purposes like payment of utility bills, for visiting pilgrimage sites, leisurely travelling, and visiting family members. The study also reveals that 10% of the female passengers have used the free bus services for leisurely travelling. These leisurely visits will also improve tourism.

Insights from Fiscal Policy Institute's Technical Report on Shakthi Scheme

Figure 5.7: Trends of change in Female Labour Force Participation Rate in Karnataka and Kerala

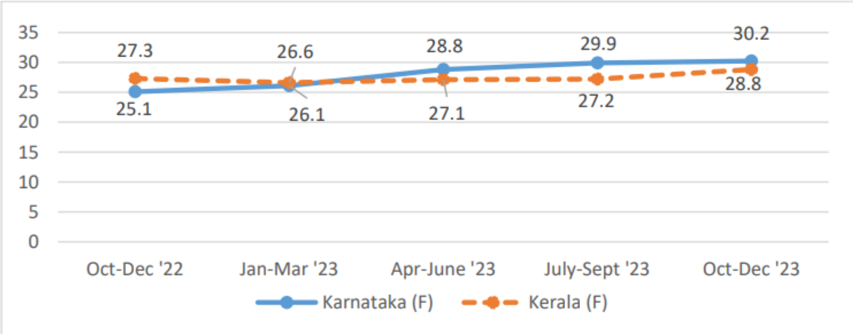
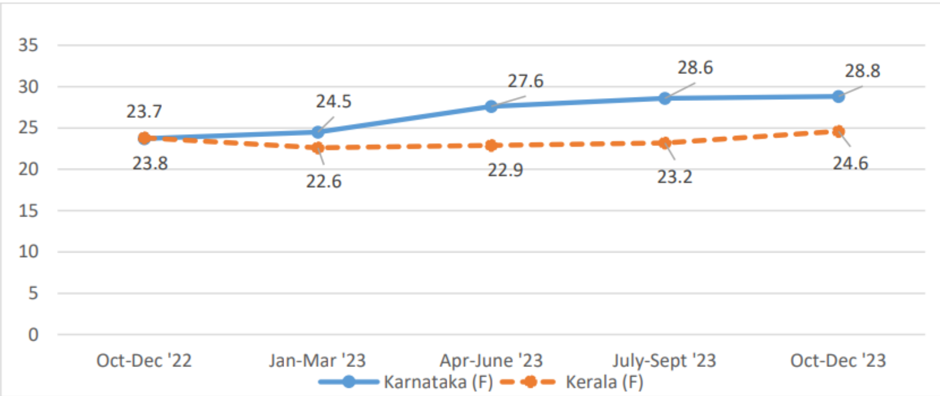


Figure 5.8: Trends of change in Female Worker Population Rate in Karnataka and Kerala



Source: PLFS Quarterly Bulletin October- December 2023

These charts indicate a correlation between the launching of the 5 guarantee schemes and increased FWPR and LFPR. **While the causation is unclear, if the impact is there, then it is great news.**

Source: *https://fpibengaluru.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Technical%20Reports/FinalcopyofFiscaleffectsofShaktiScheme_04072024.pdf*

3. Delivery & implementation challenges:

From the CSDS Study:

79% women experienced delays in catching buses due to overcrowding.

Other News on Shakti Scheme

- Induction of more buses to deal with increased demand
- No impact on BMTC - losses continue at the same level as before
- Private operators impacted.

4. At what cost?

5000 Crores BE in 2025-26 - **ranks 4th among the 5 Guarantees** on costs incurred to the government, up from 3200 crores in 2023-24.

5. CIVIC Remarks

- Overall , this scheme appears useful scheme in turning public transport & public places(bus stops, streets, markets/destinations) into safer spaces for women.
- Evidence from the survey clear shows, greater agency among women in terms of travel and even improvements in employment, contributing to overall empowerment.
- Bus facilities, shed and related infrastructure, quality and frequency of buses must be improved to support the gains from this scheme.

YUVA NIDHI

1. **Stated Objective**: Yuva Nidhi scheme to provide financial assistance to educated but unemployed individuals to help them during their job search.

2. **Is the Scheme meeting this objective?**

BENEFICIARIES (CIVIC's RTI)

As of August 11, 2025, a total of 2,98,197 candidates had registered under the "Yuvanidhi" scheme, with 2,92,690 degree holders and 5,507 diploma holders; among them, 2,55,033 have been recognized as beneficiaries, including 2,50,869 degree holders and 4,164 diploma holders.

From the CSDS Study:

Table 8.14: Impact of Yuva Nidhi scheme on people's financial upliftment

Extent to which Yuva Nidhi scheme helped in people's financial upliftment	(%)
A lot	33
Somewhat	26
Not much	11
Very little	8
Not at all	6

Note: Rest either did not respond or did not receive the scheme.
Question asked: Please tell me how much Yuva Nidhi scheme helped in your financial upliftment?

Source: IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES

Table 8.11: Various purposes for which people use Yuva Nidhi allowance

Purposes for which people use Yuva Nidhi allowance	(%)
Gaining skills	28
Financial stability during job search	20
I save the money that I get	12
Expenses during job search (resume, travel for interviews, placement, etc.)	8
Paying fees etc.	6

Note: Rest did not respond.
Question asked: For what purpose do you mainly use the money that you receive from Yuva Nidhi scheme?

Source: IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FIVE GUARANTEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA - by TARA KRISHNASWAMY with CSDS & INDUS ACTION, INITIATIVES

3. **Delivery & implementation challenges:**

News on Yuva Nidhi Scheme

Untimely delivery of funds - June to Aug 2024

4. **At what cost?** The least expensive of the 5 guarantee schemes, costing about 600 crores in 2025-26(BE), rising from 410 Cr in 2024-25(RE).

5. **CIVIC Remarks**

The Scheme has not had the reach it could have. The scheme's basic objective—to help unemployed youth find work has gone unfulfilled.

Social Impact & Financial Impact Comparison Across Schemes

Survey Questions/ Schemes	**Anna Bhagya**	**Gruha Lakshmi**	**Gruha Jyoti**	**Shakti**	**Yuva Nidhi**
Improved Family Relations	93%	93%	89%	83%	NA
Improved Neighborhood Standing	71%	73%	68%	NA	NA
Improved Decision-making capacity within the Family	87%	88%	86%	NA	NA

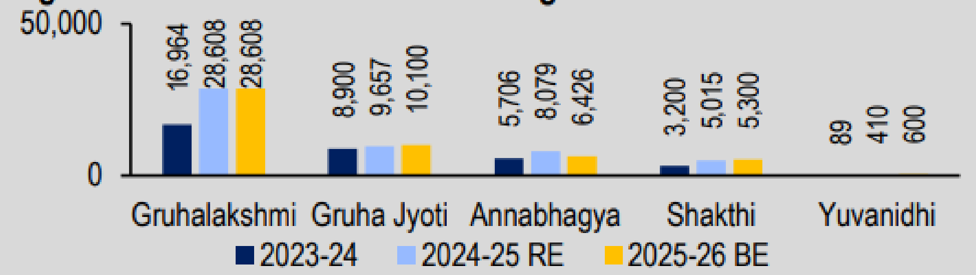
Overall Financial Impact of the 5 Guarantees

2025-26 Budget Impact Breakdown:

- Total Budgeted Expenditure : ~4L Crores

- Total 5G expenditure: 51,034 Crores
- 5G expenditure as share of:
    a) *state's revenue receipts* - **17.44%**
    b) *revenue expenditure* - **16.37%**
- Fiscal Deficit(Total Borrowing this Year) : 90,00 Crores
- 5 Guarantees as a % of Fiscal Deficit : 55%
- Revenue Deficit : ~19,000 Crores
- Karnataka observed a revenue surplus of 0.1% of GSDP in 2022-23. From 2023-24, when these guarantee schemes were launched, the state observed a revenue deficit.
- News of SC/ST Fund Diversion to meet obligations: https://frontline.thehindu.com/news/karnataka-budget-controversy-congress-vs-bjp-sc-st-dalit-tribal-funds-diversion/article69294835.ece

Figure 2: Allocation towards the five guarantee schemes



Sources: Overview of Budget, Karnataka Budget documents 2025-26; PRS.

A SUMMARY OF THE FISCAL IMPACT OF THE 5 GUARANTEES:

The state government has entered a phase of revenue deficit since the beginning of the guarantee scheme, with revenue deficit budgeted at 19,262 Crores & fiscal deficit at estimated at ₹90,428(2.95% of GSDP). Given the revenue deficit already exceeds FRBM limits and the fiscal deficit is just touching the limit of 3%, the state’s finances currently do not support large social welfare schemes.

ADMINISTRATION & GOVERNANCE

GENERAL COMMENTARY

This is a broad review of key issues related to overall administration and governance in the state for the period May 2023 to Oct 15th 2025. The details are culled from government circulars, assembly debates, RTI responses, online government reports, and from newspaper and online media reports and analyses. The review was conducted by assessing the government's orientation to upholding democratic norms and processes, catering to the needs of citizens, and safe-guarding the secular fabric of the state.. As a report developed by members of civil society organisations, our objectives are to enhance the accountability of our elected representatives so that the overall democratic functioning of the state and its institutions improve. We hope that such a report will enable the government to undertake course correction and address some of the serious lacunae in its orientation, functioning and impact on citizens.

I: KEY LEGISLATIONS

The 18th Karnataka Legislative Assembly has up to date (October 2025) passed a total of 91 Bills and Acts. Of these only 26 Acts; 5 in 2023, 13 in 2024, and 8 in 2025 have been passed.

Some of the important Bills and Acts passed by this Legislative Assembly and which seek to serve broader public and citizens' concerns include the following:

- **Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2025**: This comprehensive bill seeks to eliminate the Devadasi system, provide legal recognition, and offer support for rehabilitation.

- **Karnataka Conduct of Government Litigation (Amendment) Act, 2025**: This amendment to the 2023 Act establishes a "Designated Officer" to supervise the compliance of court orders.

- **Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025**: This bill proposes a unique ID for gig workers and establishes a Social Security and Welfare Fund to provide social security schemes.
- **Karnataka Crowd Control (Management of Crowds at Events and Places of Assembly) Bill, 2025**: This bill, if passed, will impose strict penalties for unpermitted events, with potential jail time for organizers.
- **The Karnataka Micro Loan and Small Loan (Prevention of Coercive Actions) Act, 2025:** This legislation is the most recent and was passed to replace an ordinance issued in early 2025. The Act specifically protects economically vulnerable groups, including farmers, women, and women's self-help groups, from coercive recovery tactics and exorbitant interest rates imposed by unregulated lenders.
- **Karnataka Domestic Workers Bill**: After years of discussion and initiatives at both the state and central levels, the GoK has in 2025 worked on details of this Bill to ensure better working conditions and terms for domestic workers. The Bill needs to be expedited to be made into an Act and then implemented. This will have tremendous significance for urban domestic workers and can become a model Act for the rest of the country.

FAILURE TO RECALL PREVIOUS ANTI-CITIZEN ACTS:
However, what has been most disappointing is the failure of the Congress government to retract the three key Acts that the previous BJP government had passed. These are:

- **The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022**, also known as the anti-conversion law. This was passed by the previous State government but was repealed by the current Congress government in June 2023. The repealed law prohibited forced religious conversions through coercion, fraud, or allurement, and required those converting to inform the District Magistrate. The repeal was met with legal challenges and the government decided to reverse the controversial legislation. The government failed to rise up to the challenge of upholding a fundamental right of citizens, that is, freedom of religion.

- **The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020** (later enacted as the 2021 Protection of Cow Act was also flagged as one of the Acts which would be repealed. But, up to now, the repeal has not been initiated.
- **The Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020**, was promulgated on July 13, 2020. It amends the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961. The Congress had assured voters, especially farmers, that this would be reviewed and repealed. Not only has this not been done, but new Acts conducted in haste, and facilitating quick transactions for industries, such as enabling farmers to sell up to 2 acres for industries, have been passed. [See details under Agriculture].

II. COMMISSIONS AND BOARDS

POSITIVE DECISIONS:

- The government set up a Commission to evolve a State Education Policy (SEP). While the initiative is welcome, there has been prolonged delay in submitting the report and the final report (2025) submitted in August 2025 has not been placed in the public domain for wider debate and discussions.
- Setting up a Commission, under the chairmanship of Prof. Govinda Rao in 2024, to review the Nanjundappa Commission's Report and to develop indices for addressing regional imbalance is also welcome. The final report is expected to be submitted to the government in November 2025.
- The Karnataka State Commission for Women has been pro-active and engaged with people's issues. It has raised issues related to violence against working women, reviewed factors leading to child marriage and POCSO cases, supported the setting up of a SIT to probe the disappearance and deaths of women in Dharmasthala, called for enquiries into sexual exploitation in the film industry, and

requested a probe against a MLC's rude words against a woman minister.

- The Karnataka State Planning and Policy Commission was not active until recently. The appointment of B.R. Patil (June 2025) is a positive move but the Commission needs to be active on various issues to enhance democratic policy making.
- The Administrative Reforms Committee (KAR-2) chaired by R. V. Deshpande has called for the closure of 7 boards and corporations and for the merger of nine others (October 16th, 2025). This indicates the need for a substantial overhaul of the constitution, structure, and functioning of various state commissions and boards. Commissions and Boards cannot be treated as parking lots for party supporters and elected persons.

NEGATIVE:

- Only on September 25th, 2025 were appointments made to 39 key Boards of the State. Until then, many were not functional. Appointments of the chairpersons to these boards has been controversial as many have been allocated to close Congress allies and not to persons with expertise or experience in the domain knowledge/arena of these boards.
- The Congress government has failed to reconstitute the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Right where the appointment of the chairperson and members was done on a political basis. One of the district presidents of BJP was appointed a chair in the previous government. All other members except one or two were closely associated with BJP and RSS. This continued even after Congress assumed power in the state. In mid-August 2025, the government has, via a circular, withdrawn the powers of the Karnataka Child Rights Protection Committee. This has limited the abilities of all the members of the Committee to act in the interests of children who are in distress.

III. LAW AND ORDER

- The Congress government's role and handling of the stampede on 4th June, 2025, at Chinnaswamy stadium, where 11 people were killed and 56 injured, is a case of arbitrary superseding of rule of law. It indicates multiple failures on the part of the government:

- failure to distance itself from a private commercial sports activity.
- failure to have heeded the advice of senior police officials to not organize the mass victory rally;
- failure to ensure adequate crowd control and safety measures related to disaster management.
- the failure to own up to moral responsibility for this severe lapse.
- The government's lackadaisical attitude has led to complicating the Dharmasthala murder cases and to continued insecurity and contestations in the region. A delay in instituting the SIT investigation, failure to provide clear and focused mandates for the investigations, inability to assure protection to witnesses and provide assurances to victims' families etc have led to polarizing the public over the issue while victims and their families await justice.

IV. DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS, CONSTITUTIONAL GOALS, CIVIL LIBERTIES

The State has initiated Constitution-reading and celebration of the Constitution ideals across the state. However, the spirit and morality of the Constitution have often not been upheld. Some of these administrative oversights and political negligence include the following:

- **Delays and Failure to Conduct Elections to Decentralised Democratic Bodies:** Despite assurances that elections to the various decentralized governance/civic bodies (taluk and zilla panchayat, urban municipalities and corporations) would be held, these have not been conducted. Instead, much time and effort have gone into consolidating and establishing a Greater Bengaluru Authority, which while assuring decentralized administration, has been formulated without adequate inputs from citizens and civil society organisations. Details of fund allocations to each of the Corporations have not been worked out.
- **Failure to Uphold Rights to Protest:** Despite assuring voters that the right to protest would be upheld, the Congress government continues to restrict protests in Bengaluru to the Freedom Park. Similarly, the rights of citizens to protest against international issues such as the genocide and war in Palestine and to protest

against Israel have been severally curtailed. Holding the Palestinian flag has also been deemed illegal and protesters have been arrested.

V. CORRUPTION

For a political party that came to power on the basis of assuring a corruption free government, the Congress' record to date is very disappointing. A long list of complaints and trends in overall administration point to rampant and increased corruption at many levels. The continuous allegations of misappropriation of funds, accumulation beyond legitimate sources, and other forms of violations by elected representatives are not documented here. Focusing on state administrative and department level corruption, the following are only some of the key key complaints:

A: CAG Reports and Advisory and Lokayukta Action:

- The CAG has repeatedly cautioned against misuse and misallocation of funds for several projects. [No updated reports including annual reports of the CAG are available on its website; which was down from October 1st to 26th, 2025]
- LOKAYUKTA; No annual reports are available for the Lokayukta on its website. A summary of work completed for the years January 2023 to July 31st, 2025 indicate the following:
- The Lokayukta has initiated enquiries in 218 cases related to disproportionate assets held by government officials. Of these only four (4) cases have been completed and a total of 82 officials have been suspended. Most cases (101) are faced with legal challenges; 67 cases have been stayed by the high court; and 34 have been quashed. Most of the cases of disproportionate assets are from the following departments: Urban Development Dept (39); Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (36); Revenue (20); Energy (17) and PWD (12).

B: Failure to Pay for Public Works:

- The Karnataka State Contractors' Association has alleged that Rs thirty-three thousand crores are due to them from the government.

They also allege that MLAs from all the parties expect commissions for sanctioning work.

C: Appointments and Transfers:

- The Congress government lifted the suspension of four officers, including DySP Shantakumar, accused in the PSI scam of taking bribes and tampering with OMR sheets. They were reinstated to non-functional posts pending investigation.
- R. M. Manjunatha Gowda, arrested for a ₹62.77 crore Shivamogga DCC Bank fraud, still heads the Malnad Area Development Board, raising corruption concerns. Despite court directives, the state government has taken no action to remove him.
- The Congress government has again proposed appointing Prof. H.S. Bhojanaik to the KPSC, despite serious allegations against him, including illegal tree felling. Earlier dropped after opposition, his name resurfaced in June 2024 following pressure on CM Siddaramaiah, sparking debate and doubts over the move.

D: Delays in Payment of Salaries and Dues

- Government employees of a few departments in some districts, including Zilla and Taluk Panchayat, Health, Education , Women and Child Welfare and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, have not been receiving salaries on time. In many cases, it is delayed by days, in many others by months. This issue has been continuing over several years.
- The government-sanctioned posts are 7.7 lakh, of which around 5.4 lakh posts are filled. The shortage has resulted in the government depending on a large number of contract employees, especially guest lecturers, pourakarmikas and others, who too are not getting salaries on time.

E: Questionable Payments for Events/Services:

- A complaint alleges that officials misused government funds for the 86th and 87th Kannada Sahitya Sammelanas, buying goods and services above market rates and bypassing KTPP rules. Inflated shamiana and food costs suggest possible public money misuse.

- A complaint alleges that the former MD of Karnataka Irrigation Corporation illegally paid Rs 1,250 crore of contractor EMD and FSD deposits to favored companies without proper audits. The funds, collected as security and monitoring deposits, were fully used to pay work bills, leaving no balance for contractor refunds.

F: Diversion of Funds from Caste Development Corporations:

- An FIR has been filed over the ₹19.34 crore illegal transfer in the Karnataka State Cooperative Society Mahamandal, naming six accused including former CEO Ashalatha, who allegedly diverted fixed deposits to private accounts using forged documents.
- Rs 14.75 crore was misappropriated in two years at the Karnataka Irrigation Corporation, part of a total Rs 28.35 crore over six years. Investigations revealed fake documents, frozen bank accounts of 26 officers and employees, and criminal cases against 8 officers, 2 contractors.
- The Enforcement Directorate found that ₹89.62 crore was illegally transferred from the Valmiki Development Corporation, allegedly masterminded by former minister B. Nagendra. Funds meant for welfare schemes were diverted through fake accounts, with parts reportedly used for election expenses and personal use. A case has been filed.

G: Allocation and Appropriation of Funds for Congress or Congress-linked Trusts/Use:

- The Congress Bhavan Trust is seeking panchayat land, including a 1,077.17 sq m plot in Jhanjarakoppa, Mudhol taluk, on a 30-year lease to build a Congress office. Proposals have been submitted despite the Trust not providing registration documents. Critics note that existing BJP-era guidelines allow leasing only for institutions like schools, hostels, raising questions about the proposal's validity.

VI. COMMUNALISM

The Congress has come to power on the assurance that the deeply communalized social fabric and administrative structures of the state would be addressed. However, the record and trends are of concern. These include:

- The initiation and three days' training for new legislators in 2023 at Nelamangala included the Ashirvachana which was to have spiritual and stress management sessions led by persons close to the RSS and BJP (Veerendra. Hegde; G.Karjagi; and Shri Shri Ravi Shankar).
- The periodic statements and actions by the Dy.CM which endorse and legitimize majoritarian and communal sentiments. Initiating the 'Kaveri Aarti' which is an imitation of the "Ganga Aarti' (despite objections by environmentalists and citizens); attending and publicizing his visit to the Kumbh Mela.
- Failure to take action against the hate speeches made by Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat.
- Over-looking the deep communalization of the Education Dept. which permitted the passage of a circular (Sept 2nd, 2025) from the Samagra Shikshana - Karnataka endorsing NCERT and the Ministry of Culture's note to have all school children learn about 'partition horrors'. Public dissent, especially by educationists, led to the withdrawal of this circular.

POSITIVE

- The Congress government must be appreciated for nominating Smt. Banu Mushtaq to inaugurate the Mysuru Dasara. Despite vociferous criticisms by the opposition parties and the erstwhile Mysuru royal family, the government went ahead with the plans. This was a singular and important measure by the government to assert both the recognition of the contributions of Muslims and the secular nature of the Dasara festival in Mysuru.
- Setting up the Special Action Force or the Anti-Communal Force to address and handle communal tensions and flare-ups in the districts of Shivamogga, South Kanara and Udupi was a positive step.

VII. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Internal Reservations for SCs:

- The long-overdue resolution of internal reservation for SCs and STs has been addressed via the establishment of the Justice Nagmohan Das commission and the acceptance of the 6 +6+5 percent reservation for various SCs and STs. However, there was significant delay in addressing the issue of internal reservations for nomadic tribes. The failure to recognize and provide the one percent internal reservation to untouchable nomadic communities (despite the recommendation in the Justice Nagmohan Das report), has meant an oversight of social justice to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Karnataka.

Caste Census:

- The much-delayed and required caste census has become subject to manipulation and distortions by the dominant castes. Instead of endorsing and drawing upon the existing Kantharaj Commission Report (considered missing ??), the government has opened a pandora's box of caste (and religion; in the case of Lingayats and Veerashaivas) claims and counter claims. The caste census or the Socio-Education Survey has been deployed without adequate training of enumerators and without fine-tuning the technology and has created confusion on the ground. Lack of planning is indicated in the extension of the survey and the subsequent extension of school holidays. Lack of proper advisory to the public has resulted in harassment of enumerators in some places.

ST Recognition to Kurubas:

- Discussions and attempts to provide ST status to Kurubas has created tensions amidst other ST groups who fear dilution and loss of benefits.

Restoration of Reservation to Muslims:

- The restoration of four percent reservations for Muslims, which the previous government had removed, has also not been undertaken.
- Diversion of Funds from SCSP/TSP Development Corporations towards the Guarantee Schemes: It is alleged that funds meant for these caste development corporations have been diverted towards the Guarantees programmes. Limited funds in the SC/ST corporations have scaled down availability of funds for SC and ST programmes.

VIII. GENDER JUSTICE

POSITIVE

- The Congress government must be appreciated for initiating a one-day per month paid leave for menstruation. While details are to be worked out, the assurance goes a long way in recognizing women's health and well-being.
- Setting up a special women's protection force, 'Rani Abbakka Pade', in Dakshina Kannada district to address is a positive move and may address issues of extant violence against women in the district.

NEGATIVE:

- The failure to recognize the gravity of violence in the Dharmasthala murder cases indicates the limited concern for women's safety and well-being. After much delay and submitting to public pressure the government has constituted a SIT to investigate the issues.
- Members of the government have made misogynist statements against women: For example, the state home minister dismissed the gravity of a woman's murder by stating that "such things are normal". R.V. Deshpande has criticized the Bhagyalakshi scheme by asserting that "women are getting all the benefits. Nothing for men".
- Although the Ugrappa Committee Report (Prevention of Sexual Violence against Women and Children) was submitted in 2018, it is yet to be fully endorsed and its recommendations institutionalized. Women's groups and representatives have periodically urged the government to implement the key recommendations.

IX. PUBLICITY EXPENSES

This government has utilized enormous amounts of public funds for both publicity and public events. Periodic advertisements (print, radio, TV and other ads) about the government's programmes, including a focus on the success and impact of the Five Guarantee programmes, and two large scale public events (Sankalpa) have incurred an expenditure of approximately Rs. 1076.27 crores between the periods of April 2023 to September 2025.

X. ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES

The Opposition Parties (BJP and JDS) have not played pro-active roles. They have largely been disruptive and have not upheld norms of Constitutional and democratic governance. Failing to support farmers in their agitation against forced land acquisition, they have indicated their anti-farmer biases. Instead of helping resolve the Dharmasthala murders, they have rallied to conduct public show of support to the establishment. In protesting against the selection of Smt. Banu Mushtaq to inaugurate the Mysuru Dasara, they have furthered the communalization of Karnataka's society. They have not placed pressure on the Centre to allocate funds due to the state.

Summary Assessment

The Congress government seems to be caught between two contradictory pulses. On the one hand, to gain and retain a popular mandate, it has promulgated and is straining to sustain the five guarantees. On the other hand, it is extending itself to an intensification of the neo-liberal agenda in which it supports speculative and extractive policies that enable it to accrue funds. Its soft Hindutva stances belie its claims to ensure the secularization of the state and society. More particularly, its lofty promulgations of Bills, Acts and policies are not supported by adequate and appropriate administrative reforms. News of continuous tensions within the party further erode the government's ability to send out an assuring signal to the public. As a result, the overwhelming picture that emerges is of a government that fails to provide an administration that is democratic and accountable to the people and which has the good of its citizens in mind.

SOURCES:

News reports were accessed from the online versions of the following papers and media sources: Deccan Herald, The Hindustan Times, Times of India, The HansIndia.com, New Indian Express, The File. In.

To view additional details about the overall project, including the manifesto report card, concept note and other details, check out:
bit.ly/nammasarkara