



## Ushering in rural development, empowering Panchayat Raj

Karnataka is considered a model state in the country as regards decentralisation of powers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Capitalising on this foundation, the BS Yediyurappa government has taken the necessary steps to usher in rural development.

Over the past one year, the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) department headed by KS Eshwarappa has focused on rural infrastructure, drinking water, cleanliness and employment.

The government has fully embraced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), considered a key intervention to prevent migration by providing employment to unskilled workers in villages.

When unprecedented floods affected a large part of the state in August 2019, the government used the MGNREGS as a timely intervention to help those who were affected. In the 103 flood-affected taluks, the government generated 3.68 crore person-days of job to provide employment to 10.25 lakh families at a cost of Rs 1,577.70 crore. During this period, the government also decided to increase employment under the scheme to 150 days from 100 days.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government doubled down on the rural employment scheme to ensure those who migrated back to villages from cities were provided with jobs. Anticipating the surge in demand, the government fixed a target of generating 13 crore person-days of employment in 2020-21.

In order to help the scheme find more takers during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government has come out with a mobile app by name Kayaka Mitra with which those seeking MGNREGS jobs can apply. Also, owing to the Covid-19 crisis, the wages under the scheme per worker have been increased to Rs 275 per day. As many as 5.50 lakh people from 2.20 lakh households have applied for job cards under the scheme in the last two months. In contrast only 7.28 lakh people from 3.22 lakh families had applied for them in the 12 months of 2019-20.

The Yediyurappa government has left no stone unturned to provide rural Karnataka with drinking water. In 2019-20, the government earmarked Rs 2,795.58 crore for drinking water schemes. The government completed 22 multi-village water supply schemes covering a population of 14.07 lakh.

To tackle drought, a perennial problem for the state, the government earmarked Rs 50 crore to take



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Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister K S Eshwarappa arrive at Vidhana Soudha for a meeting of state disaster management authority.

up cloud seeding operations in the parched districts of Kolar, Ramana-gara, Tumakuru, Bengaluru Urban, Mandya, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Kalaburagi, Koppal, Yadgir and Chamarajnagar.

But the government's most ambitious project is Jaladhare, a Rs 53,000-crore project that aims to provide piped water supply to all rural households over a 7-year period, covering over 4 crore people.

Water for this will be drawn from perennial rivers, reservoirs and canals. With this project, the government is looking to shift from groundwater-based supply to surface water-based supply. To begin with, the

project will be taken up in Vijayapura and Mandya at a cost of Rs 700 crore. Authorities have identified the Almat and Narayanpura reservoirs as the source in Vijayapura and the KRS in Mandya.

The Yediyurappa government has committed to provide potable drinking water to all rural people. The government has announced that water connection will be provided to each house through a scheme named "Mane Manege Gange" that will be implemented under the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission. This year, the government has made a provision of Rs 1,100 crore, half of which will come from the Centre.

### PROGRESS PATH

- Wages under MGNREGS increased to Rs 275 per day
- Work on 22 multivillage water supply schemes completed
- "Jaladhare" project launched for providing piped water supply to all rural households
- 1,786.23 km of roads developed under "Namma Grama Namma Raste" project
- Panchayat Raj Commissionerate set up for strengthening Panchayat Raj system

Recognising the importance of groundwater recharge, the government has inked an agreement with the Sri Sri Ravi Shankar-led Art of Living to rejuvenate water sources in nine districts. The project proposes to take up works in Shivamogga, Udipi, Uttara Kannada, Chitradurga, Ballari, Kolar, Yadgir, Kodagu and Tumakuru districts.

Having given much focus on rural toilets, the Yediyurappa government has approved the Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Sanitation & Liquid Waste Management) Model Bye-laws, 2019. Under this, door-to-door collection of garbage will be implemented in villages, the onus of which is on the 6,024 gram panchayats in the state.

On the rural connectivity and infrastructure front, the government has big plans. A new "Grammeena Sumarg Yojane" will be implemented to develop 20,000 km of rural roads over the next five years, for which Rs 780 crore has been earmarked.

Under the "Namma Grama, Namma Raste" scheme, 1,786.23 km of roads have been developed at a cost of Rs 225.57 crore. The government is also in the process of taking up road works on 5,216 km under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-3. Rural administrative reforms have been taken up to ensure good governance. In order to further de-centralise and strengthen the Panchayat Raj system, a new Panchayath Raj Commissionerate has been established.

Also, in order to achieve coordination between rural and urban water supply and to provide potable water, a comprehensive policy will be framed and related departments and organizations will be brought under a single ministry.



### REACHING OUT TO FARMERS

- Additional assistance to farmers during North Karnataka floods
- Kisan Credit Card scheme to reduce influence of money lenders
- Watershed development projects to increase cultivable area
- Relief exceeding Rs 700 cr during Covid for affected farmers
- Research to validate Zero Budget Natural Farming

## Budget boost for agriculture, welfare of farmers

### Support extended to farmers during drought, flood and pandemic

The farming community over the years have faced several problems, largely due to fluctuations in rainfall causing floods in one part of the state and droughts in other. Floods have been a relatively rare occurrence compared to the recurring drought suffered by several taluks of interior Karnataka region.

Keeping in mind the hardships of agriculturists, the BS Yediyurappa government has initiated several measures for the benefit of farming community. Despite the challenges faced by the government in its year-long tenure, ranging from the losses suffered during the unprecedented floods in River Krishna and its tributaries in North Karnataka to the difficulties forced by the global pandemic, the government has extended support for farmers.

Yediyurappa is seen as a farmers leader and has shown his commitment towards the community. Symbolically, the green shawl he wore during his swearing-in is testimony to this. He even took oath in the name of farmers.

In the budget speech for the 2020-21 fiscal, Yediyurappa had highlighted that the budget aims to end uncertainties faced by farmers. "As per the wishes of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a 16-point agenda has been announced by the Central Government in the budget for nurturing the agriculture sector with an ambition to double the income of farmers and to formulate a five trillion dollar economy.... I am happy to state that this budget has been envisioned as per this agenda only," Yediyurappa said.

### Flood of worries

The budget announced a slew of measures for the farmers who bore the brunt of floods in North Karnataka during August last year, which damaged 4.59 lakh hectares of farm land and resulted in the deaths of thousands of cattle. The government provided Rs 10,000 more per hectare as relief over the amount applicable under National Disaster Relief Guidelines to aid the distressed farmers.

The government announced an additional assistance of Rs 4,000 to the Rs 6,000 to small and marginal farmers under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Scheme, for which the government set aside Rs 2,600 crore. It initiated the unique process of providing Kisan Credit Cards to prevent farmers from falling to an informal debt trap. Karnataka also extended the scheme of providing Rs 10,000 per hectare for farmers cultivating millets, to those growing teff, chia and quinoa.

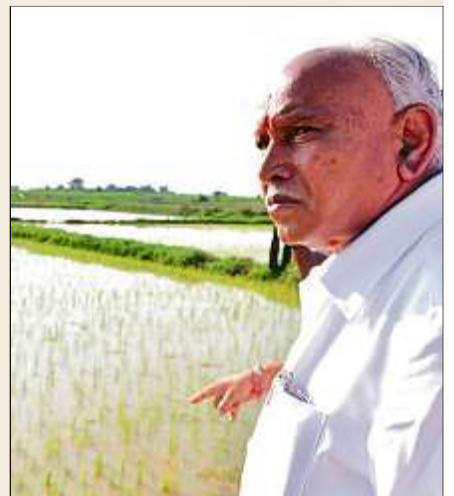
Mobile agricultural health clinics, which will visit villages to conduct soil/water testing and provide technical information on pesticides and diseases faced by crops, were also envisioned by the Yediyurappa administration. As many as 40 demonstration centres were also proposed to help farmers learn better agricultural practices, new technologies

and post-harvest management. Karnataka has also initiated several watershed area development projects. One of the World Bank sponsored schemes will assist rain-dependent watershed area of 10 lakh hectares and watershed improvement of over one lakh hectares in the next six months. The proposed implementation of Mahadayi project will also help thousands of farmers in districts of Mumbai-Karnataka region.

### Covid relief

Yediyurappa and Agriculture Minister B C Patil also initiated several measures as the agriculture sector also bore the brunt of the lockdown. In April, vast tracts of land cultivating paddy bore the brunt of a hailstorm in Koppal, Raichur and Yadgir districts. The government stepped in and granted relief of Rs 45 crore to the farmers.

The government also assisted farmers who grew flowers but suffered losses due to lack of demand during the lockdown, identified the distressed fruit and vegetable farmers for relief and compensated 10 lakh maize farmers. According to a booklet by B C Patil highlighting his 100-days in office, Rs 500 cr was released as compensation for maize farmers, Rs 45 cr for paddy crop loss in April and Rs 27 cr for floriculturists and Rs 137 cr for vegetable and fruit growers - with each farmer eligible for a maximum compensation of Rs 15,000.



Despite the challenging times, the government has several projects on the anvil for the agriculture sector. Apart from strengthening e-trading measures to reduce middlemen menace, the Agriculture department is mulling to strengthen cold storage units under the Public Private Partnership model. The government is also pushing to implement food processing units on a large scale, so that expenses of farmers - especially in transporting the goods to the market - are reduced.

The government has also taken up research on Zero Budget Natural Farming to scientifically validate its applicability in various climate zones of the state.



Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Agriculture Minister B C Patil (extreme left) at a meeting with farmers in Vidhana Soudha.

## Renewed emphasis on irrigation projects

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down works, the BS Yediyurappa government has not let this be a setback to its vision and for planning of the various projects outlined in the state budget 2020.

Water Resources minister Ramesh Jarkiholi who has been proactive in taking forward the government proposals, has extensively toured all the districts in the state studying issues at the ground-level.

Recently, the minister visited New Delhi to appeal to the Centre to clear the government proposal for construction of Mekedatu dam at the earliest. Mekedatu is

ernment to issue the notification for implementation of Upper Krishna project which will help in irrigation of lands in Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Raichur, Vijayapura and Bagalkot districts. Further, he made a request to Union Minister for Jalshakti, Gajendra Singh Shekawat, to declare Upper Bhadra as a national project. Upper Bhadra Project is a major lift irrigation scheme under implementation in the central region of Karnataka State. As per the proposal, 29.9 TMC water from River Bhadra will be made available for irrigation in Chikkamagaluru, Chitradurga, Davangere and Tumakuru districts, apart from

rejuvenating 367 lakes. Recently on a pilot basis, the government released up to 500 cusec water through the upper canals of Bhadra river to Vani Vilas Sagar dam in Hiriyur taluk of Chitradurga district. Even as the Union Ministry of Environment

and Forests (MOEF) has asked the state government to submit a fresh proposal for forest clearance under the Mahadayi drinking water project, the government is committed to submit it at the earliest.

The Mahadayi project seeks to build dams across Kalasa and Banduri, the two tributaries of Mahadayi river in Belagavi district and then divert the water to Malaprabha river. This will cater to drinking water for Belagavi, Hubballi-Dharwad and

located near Kanakapura, at the confluence of Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers. The project has been proposed with an aim to provide drinking water to Bengaluru.

In the meeting which was held in the presence of Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi and Railway Minister Suresh Angadi, the minister requested them to clear the project which would help provide 4.75 TMC water for drinking water needs of Bengaluru. He also asked the union gov-



Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, Mahesh Kumathalli with Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa.

### Fund flow

The chief minister announced an allocation of Rs 627 crore for micro irrigation and Rs 5,000 crore for lift irrigation projects, in his budget speech this year. According to officials in the water resources department, there is a total of 11.5 lakh hectares' potential land for irrigation in the state. This year, the department has targeted one lakh hectares. A comprehensive plan for drip irrigation is also in the pipeline.