

THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

PROVIDING CLEAN LAND TITLES TO SLUM DWELLERS

How Odisha’s slum rehabilitation project is transforming lives, winning awards

World Habitat Mission recognised the state government’s Jaga Mission that used drones to survey slums

SAMPAD PATNAIK
BHUBANESWAR, DECEMBER 15

PK TATILU, 36, runs a tailoring shop out of his one-room asbestos house in Nolia Sahi, which is one of the oldest slums in Puri’s temple town of Konark. Father to two young daughters, Tatilu claims his family had lived in the slums for three generations, albeit without any legal rights. But that changed earlier this year when he saw a drone hovering over his house.

The drone was the harbinger of a new initiative by the Odisha government — called the Jaga (Land) Mission — which is the world’s largest slum land title project. It involves the government surveying and awarding slum dwellers like Tatilu a legal land title. Last week, the Odisha government became the first in the country to bag an award from the World Habitat Mission for this particular project.

Tatilu, who claims to belong to a “backward caste”, could not be happier. “The fact that I now have a certificate to the land where I have lived — without any rights — for 35 years is transformational. I can now think of building a proper house because the investment is on the soil that has been legally given to me by the government”.

Under the Mission, Odisha’s Housing and Urban Development Department, in collaboration with Tata Trusts, is “transforming slums into liveable habitat with all necessary civic infrastructure and services at par with the better off areas within the same urban local body (ULB)”.

Outlining the vision for the Mission, its head and Principal Secretary Housing and Urban Development, G Mathi Vathanan, told *The Indian Express*, “Odisha enacted a Land Rights for Slum Dwellers Act in 2017. This is not just a statute, but a lifeline for slum dwellers, who have been historically considered as encroachers. Slum dwellers have been considered lawbreakers and treated as culprits (by the state and the society)”.

“This attitude has led to conspicuous differences between slum and non-slum localities in urban spaces. Slums are characterised by their lack of hygiene and a general air of being a un-liveable environment. In Bhubaneswar, 30 per cent of the area is covered by slums and inhabited by 25 per cent of the population. This cannot be successful urban governance”, he added, explaining the rationale of the Mission.

FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER

RAJASTHAN

ARs 1000 cr special fund for farmers

TO MARK the completion of its first year in office, Rajasthan government led by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his cabinet have decided to unveil a new welfare fund for farmers. The government has allocated Rs 1,000 crore for this fund and it will be formally launched on December 17. On the very same day, a state-level “Kisan Sammelan” will also be organised at the Vidyadhar Nagar Stadium. The government will also release the Rajasthan Agricultural Processing, Agriculture Policy and Agricultural Export Policy, 2019 on December 17.

UTTAR PRADESH

All primary schools to have libraries

THE UTTAR Pradesh government has announced setting up libraries in all the 1.58 lakh government primary and upper primary schools in the state by March 2020. Vijay Kiran Anand, Special Secretary in the Basic Education Department, said that the libraries will be set up in the schools by the start of the new academic session in the state. He said that every government school library will be equipped with about 500-1000 books for which there has been a tie-up with the National Book Trust and the NCERT.

MADHYA PRADESH

Dams to be auctioned for sand mining

THE STATE may soon become the first state that allows the auction of dams for sand mining. The concerned committee of secretaries has given its nod for the proposal and now a cabinet approval is awaited. Earlier, Maharashtra had tried to do this but held back at the last moment. The Madhya Pradesh government has proposed sand mining contracts in Bargi Dam, Tawa Dam, Indira Sagar Dam and Bansagar Dam.



Formal land rights have had a transformational impact says Tatilu. *Express*

WHAT IS THE JAGA (OR LAND) MISSION

■ Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act 2017 enables it

■ Slum refers to a compact settlement of at least 20 households with poorly built temporary tenements, crowded, unsanitary and usually on state govt land in an urban area

■ Land right to slum dwellers is heritable but not transferable and may be mortgaged to raise housing loan

■ The Act applies to municipalities and Notified Area Councils (NACs) but not Municipal Corporations

■ Land titles cannot exceed 45 sq ms in municipalities and 60 sq mt in NACs

■ For EWS, land to be settled free of cost up to 30 sq mt

So far, Odisha has surveyed 109 ULBs in 30 districts — in the process, surveying over one lakh households. Of these, around 30,000 households have received land rights certificates (LRCs) in Puri and Ganjam districts.

The process of handing LRCs to slum dwellers began with drone surveys of those settlements as well as another round of door-to-door household surveys. Drones mapping slums drastically cut down the time consumed in the mapping exercise, which the Jaga Mission team members say would have taken 12 years if done by traditional methods, thanks to a lack adequate number of revenue inspectors.

Shishir Ranjan Dash, who works on Jaga Mission from Tata Trusts, said that the exercise also involved community mobilisation to get the slum dwellers to agree on the entire exercise. “We had to also convince slum dwellers, who lived on rented accommodation, that the land they were paying for did not belong to the so-called landlords or local goons. Continuous communication and persuasion also helped achieve the consent of the slum dwellers towards this project”.

“For the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), the first 30 sq mt are free of cost, and thereafter a person has to pay 25 per cent of

EXPLAINED Why land rights for slums matter

MORE OFTEN than not, slums are seen as encroachments and slum dwellers, even if they stay in slums for decades, are not provided with any legal rights over the land. This illegality further condemns slums — which are an urban reality in Indian cities — to unsanitary conditions. Formal recognition of land rights allows for cleaner cities and better living conditions for slum dwellers.

the benchmarked value which has been set based on nearby land transactions in recent years”, Dash stated.

Vathanan talks about the economic importance of slums. “One cannot just remove them. (If we do that) there will be no one (left) to work as domestic staff or in garbage disposal and road constructions — their most common occupations that also happen to be the lifeline of the city. Slums are the pillars of the urban (city) economy. Especially in India, the formal economy runs on the engine of the informal economy”.

“We must also understand that slums do not exist because of the fault of the dwellers”, he continues. “Wages, for the kind of work slum dwellers do, are very low in India compared to European countries, where we do not see slums. Our minimum wages are not applicable to domestic and unorganised workers. The answer is to not ignore the problem but to recognise systemic inequities and manage it”, he said.

Jaga Mission is, however, only one component of providing land rights, said Dash. After LRC distribution, the focus will shift to individual and public toilets, household tap water supply, LED street lighting, and skill improvement etc.

mulling to change our approach towards development. When the state government wanted local bodies to take up projects to tackle climate change, we took the initiative to make the village carbon-neutral”.

The panchayat roped in the expertise of several institutions — such as M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Thanal (an NGO), IISc (Bengaluru), IIT-Delhi and the Government Engineering College (Kannur) — to analyse the greenhouse gas emissions and evolve steps to reduce them.

An emission audit conducted by Thanal, based in Thiruvananthapuram, found carbon equivalent of 14,500 tonnes (including carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane) had to be balanced in Meenangadi. As carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, expert agencies designed strategies for the local civic body.

A major step was to increase the green cover in the region. Planting and upkeep of the new trees was paid out of MGNREGA funds.

‘A one-time interest waiver more efficient than farm loan waiver’

IN AN attempt to give relief to the debt-ridden farmers in the state, the Haryana government has launched a one-time settlement scheme for the borrowers of cooperative banks. This scheme offers a waiver of most of the interest as well as the penal interest on the crop loans taken from cooperative banks. The scheme is seen as a counter to the demand of farm loan waiver. Haryana’s Additional Chief Secretary SANJEEV KAUSHAL tells SUKHBIR SIWACH about the scheme, its objective and the response from the farmers.

What’s the one-time settlement scheme for farmers who borrowed from cooperative banks?

It’s one of the progressive decisions by the government to ensure that farmers in distress are able to handle delayed payment. A couple of months back, the government had approved a similar scheme for the Haryana state Agriculture Marketing Board — it was for people who had purchased shops from the market committees but were not able to pay back the installments on time.

What prompted the government to introduce this scheme?

The government of Haryana is taking all progressive decisions in the interest of the farmers. In the country, Haryana was the first state not only to approve but also enlisted 3.98 lakh small and marginal farmers for Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY), under which pension is given to farmers.

Is it to counter the demand for a farm loan waiver?

They (the one-time settlement scheme and the farm loan waiver) are very different issues. In Haryana, the farmers did not have to pay any interest in case of timely repayment of loans taken from cooperative banks. And this benefit has been extended to the farmers from 2013 onwards. It means that the farmers who were repaying the crop loans in time for the past six years, they were not required to pay any interest at all. This is much more than the Government of India’s scheme of (interest) subvention because we (the Haryana government) have waived off the interest of 4 per cent as well (under the scheme)...So crop loan waiver doesn’t matter. That’s not an issue. In Haryana, you wouldn’t have really heard it as standard issue like in the state of Maharashtra or other places.

What has been the reaction of the cooperative banks with regard to this scheme?

They are in support of the scheme. In fact, (it was) the banks (who) have proposed the scheme. It is not that the government has forced it on them. Considering the require-



THE POLICY INTERVIEW

SANJEEV KAUSHAL

Additional Chief Secretary, Haryana

ments of the situation at the ground level, the (cooperative) banks have proposed the scheme so that the defaulters repay the loans under the scheme.

What is the response of the farmers to the scheme?

Well, you see, we have extended it up to the end of the month (December). The response was encouraging that’s why additional time has been given. We expect most of the farmers (to) utilise the benefits given by the government.

The total amount of short-term loan of Haryana State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd (HARCO Bank) is about Rs 3,091.55 crore and there are about 6,99,804 borrowers. Out of the total amount, Rs 962 crore has been recovered from about 2,10,840 borrowers till December 7, 2019 and a loan amount of Rs 2,128.79 crore is (still) pending.

Similarly, there are 92,258 borrowers of the Land Mortgage Bank and the total loan amount is Rs 1,577.75 crore, out of which an amount of Rs 185.43 crore has been recovered from 7,169 borrowers till December 7, 2019.

Will the farmers be allowed to take loans from the cooperative banks again?

Why not, if the loans are cleared? If a farmer is not a defaulter and everything has been wiped out by him, why would he not be given a loan? He would be eligible for the loan as a normal farmer once the dues are cleared.

IN NUMBERS

STATES THAT ACCOUNT FOR MOST OF THE UNPAID DUES (RS 63,500 CR) TO POWER GENERATING COMPANIES

STATE	AMOUNT DUE TO GENCOS (in Rs crore)
Rajasthan	20856
Tamil Nadu	12968
Uttar Pradesh	7658
Karnataka	5258
Telangana	4943
Andhra Pradesh	3091
J & K	2840
Madhya Pradesh	1154

Source: PRAAPTI (as of September 2019)

UTTARAKHAND/ IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Virtual classrooms plugging education gaps in remote areas

LALMANI VERMA
DEHRADUN, DECEMBER 15

PICTURE THIS: It is 2 pm and students of class 9 in Government Inter College Gaurihat in the hills of Pithoragarh district are seated in front of an LED TV in their school and learning “Simple Present Tense” from their teacher, Kavita Rawat. But there is a twist. Rawat is not in the classroom. Instead, she is in front of a camera inside a studio situated almost 500 km away from the classroom. Rawat is the ICT Virtual Classroom set up in the campus of Rajeev Gandhi Navodaya Vidyalaya in Dehradun. Earlier in the day, students of class 10 from various schools across the state were getting clarification about “amorphous oxides” through similar method from a science teacher stationed in the same studio in Dehradun.

This is an example of virtual classrooms that have been launched in Uttarakhand recently and the state government claims to be the first state to have this facility for school education. The studios and the classrooms are connected through a satellite.

Under this project, around 300 state gov-



A teacher in a Dehradun studio teaching students via virtual classrooms. *Express*

ernment schools have been connected to four central studios set up in the campus of Rajiv Gandhi Navodaya Vidyalaya. Each Studio has two cameras, a wall paper, a smart TV for output, two computers to manage technical snags and keep an eye on the virtual classroom set up in the schools in the remote areas. There are two microphones as well in

each studio. Each day, topics for the class are written on the wallpaper while the concerned teacher elucidates the matters and she appears on the smart TV screen.

In the classroom of these connected schools, a camera with a microphone and a speaker is provided along with an LED screen. The students watch the screen and are able

to listen to whatever the teacher writes on her screen in the studio.

The state government has a target of connecting over 500 schools in remote locations with such virtual classrooms. Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurated the project recently in Dehradun. Schools with connected virtual classrooms are now available in all 13 districts across the state.

The Centre pays for 90 per cent of the project cost while the state government manages the remaining 10 per cent. The government claims that nearly 1.90 lakh students studying in classes 6 to 12 in government-run secondary schools will be benefitted by these virtual classroom facilities. According to officials, the number of schools selected for being connected to virtual classrooms include 82 in Pauri district, 61 in Nainital district, 52 each in Almora and Tehri, 46 in Dehradun, 45 in Chamoli, 40 in Pithoragarh, 21 in Rudraprayag, 15 in Champawat and 10 each in Bageshwar and Haridwar districts.

Dr Mukul Kumar Sati, Additional State Project Director in the Education Department, said, “An MoU has been signed with Centre’s Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) to setup four studios in Dehradun”.

As virtual classrooms became operational in middle of the current academic year, the Education Department has decided to start formal classes according to the syllabus from next session. “In the current session, teachers in the studio have been directed to interact with the students and remove any confusions students may have about the topics covered in the syllabus for the annual examinations. Students are asking their queries and teachers in the studio are replying,” Sati said.

According to officials, the virtual classroom project will be helpful for those schools where expert teacher of any particular subject like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and English are not available. Students enrolled in these schools will get classes from expert teachers through virtual classes.

Manish Joshi, Assistant Manager, technical operations in virtual classroom campus, said that more than 300 schools have been connected so far. “We have four teachers presently and interviews are being conducted to hire more,” he said.

Officials said that from December 23, classes will be run to help students prepare for medical and engineering entrance exams.