

15 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

MAKING SCHOOLING EASIER

In Rajasthan, integrated books make school bags lighter, students happier

Baste ka Bojh Kam project, being piloted in one govt school of each district, has reduced weights to a third

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, DECEMBER 1

"BILKUL KUM ho gaya hai (yes, the weight has reduced drastically)," says Naina, a Class 3 student at the Government Senior Secondary School Vatika of Jaipur as she talks about her school bag.

"I walk to school, which is about 25 minutes from home. Earlier, I carried four books, but now I carry just one," she says. She is not the only one enjoying the relief. Her classmate Neeraj says, "Earlier we used to carry Hindi, English, Mathematics and Environment textbooks, now we carry just one. Dev, who is in Class 2, says his home is about 20 minutes walk away and his three books have now been replaced by just one.

The weight of Dev's textbooks has reduced from 0.95 kg to 0.30 kg. For Naina and Neeraj, it has decreased from 1.35 kg to 0.5 kg. The changes are across the board (*see box*)

Naina, Neeraj, Dev and 60 other students between Classes 1 and 3 at this government school on the outskirts of Jaipur are part of a state-wide pilot project in Rajasthan — one school in each of the state's 33 districts — where the government has implemented Baste Ka Bojh Kam (BKBK) project to make the school bags weigh less. "The psychological pressure has reduced since they have to face just one book now, and the new books are more colourful and interactive too," says Dr Bhawna Nehla, the Principal.

It was from this school that Rajasthan's Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education (Independent Charge), Govind Singh Dotasra, had launched the project in September. While it was initially announced for Classes 1 to 5, the pilot project was eventually restricted to Classes 1 to 3.

"It is a pilot project, the outcomes can be gauged from studying Classes 1 to 3 as well," says Pradeep Kumar Borar, Commissioner, Rajasthan School Shiksha Parishad.

Srivashist Sekar, Program Manager, Piramal Foundation for Education Leadership, says that "All books reached the target schools by the first week of November. Next, we will scale up the project to include Classes 4 and 5".

The books these children hold now were rebid trimester-wise, instead of being subject-wise. For example, a Class 1 student will carry 1 book in a trimester, and this book has all the topics to be covered from Hindi, English, Maths for that trimester, instead of 3 books — one each per subject. Thus, rather than taking 3-4 books of the individual subject, the students are taking just one book to school.

The project comes in the backdrop of the

FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER

TAMIL NADU Blockchain, AI to help governance

The state government is working on a policy that will enable the government to make use of two emerging technology streams — Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain — towards improving the governance in Tamil Nadu and the broader public policy. To be sure, there will be two separate policies — one each for AI and Blockchain — clarified Santosh Mishra, the Chief Executive Officer of the Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency or TNEGA.

HIMACHAL PRADESH Aiming to become an education hub

The state chief minister, Jai Ram Thakur, has announced that his government is working on unveiling a new education policy that will make Himachal Pradesh an education hub in the country. He said that the state government is committed to providing quality education and to this end the government will strengthen the existing infrastructure. The state's education minister, Suresh Bhardwaj, has highlighted that the budget for the HP University has been increased to Rs 130 crore. He said that the new education policy which is in the works at present will benefit not just the state but also help India regain its old glory as a "Vishwa" (Global) guru.

KERALA Towards 100% internet connectivity

The Left Democratic Front government in the state has set itself the task of ensuring that each household in the state has internet connectivity by December 2020. The state finance minister, Thomas Isaac, has announced that having an internet connection will be a basic citizen right in the state.



Students enjoying their new interactive books at a govt school in Jaipur. *Express*

WHY INTEGRATED BOOKS WERE THE BEST OPTION TO LIGHTEN SCHOOL BAGS				MUCH LIGHTER NOW	
SOLUTION AVAILABLE	LIKELY COST	SCALABILITY	TIME REQUIRED	Class 1	Class 2
Locker facility	High	Low	appx 10 years	0.90 kg to 0.40 kg	0.95 kg to 0.30 kg
Tablets	Very high	Low	appx 5 years	1.35 kg to 0.50 kg	1.45 kg to 0.50 kg
No books at all	Low	High	Training teachers	1.45 kg to 0.50 kg	1.25 kg to 0.50 kg
Reduce Curriculum	Quality cost	N/A	Govt-level decision		
Teach 1-2 subjects/day	Avg cost training teachers	High	1-2 years to train all		
INTEGRATED BOOKS	ZERO	VERY HIGH	NA		

Ministry of Human Resource Development asking all states and Union Territories last year to fix the weight of school bags. Following the directions, the Rajasthan government partnered with Piramal Foundation and started the BKBK project to implement a pilot project and study the scalability of the concept.

Following several meetings with experts, the available solutions (*see box*) were studied and the government zeroed in on term-wise rebidding of textbooks.

The idea of such books was first thought of by Commissioner Borar. In 2003-04, as director of Lok Jumbish Parishad, a primary education project, he had prepared drafts of such textbooks. The books also drew inspiration from comics and converted chapters with conversations into comic strips. The idea, however, was rejected. "They found small mistakes and magnified them," says Borar. Back then, he had

called those books "Aao Khelein (Let's play)". Fifteen years on, the new textbooks are also called "Aao Khelein".

The new books were drafted and went through a three-stage review process, starting from Deputy Director to Deputy Commissioner and then the Commissioner.

While it was ensured that the existing syllabus remains untouched, the experts proposed and incorporated the concept of "divider pages" — these are pages between individual subjects within a book. During their field visits, experts had observed that students were playing certain games on their own. Hence, subject-specific and age-appropriate games were designed to enhance and create "joyful" learning.

Class 2 textbook, for example, has a simple "join the dots and colour" for a camel and a cartoon as well as a "identify objects and match them with their names" exercise, among others.

EXPLAINED

E.

How lighter school bags help

WHEN RAJASTHAN did a study, 73% of the students asked, said they were bothered by the weight of their school bags. About 42%, in fact, saw the weight saw it as a hindrance to schooling. About 40% of the parents agreed. When integrated books — one book for multiple subjects — were introduced, teachers overwhelmingly approved of them.

As part of the study, feedback was sought from as many as 531 students, 172 parents, 92 teachers, 18 principals and 12 officials. A total of 72.9% students said that they were bothered about heavy bags, and a good 42 per cent said that heavy bag acts as a hindrance for them from going to school. Among parents, too, 40.70 per cent felt that the heavy weight of bags was one of the reasons for their child's unwillingness to go to school. However, after the distribution of the new book, 69 per cent students said that they feel "lighter," both physically and mentally.

Every single teacher who was interviewed said that the initiative was able to bring a "huge difference" in students, with the weight of the new books being just one of the reasons. As many as 91.3% teachers also said that the project should be implemented in the entire state.

"We are the first state ... I appeal to other states and private schools to adopt this initiative," Education Minister Dotasra said.

With electric buses, West Bengal makes an ambitious push for curbing city pollution

SWEETY KUMARI AND ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 1

AIMING TO bring down the air pollution caused by buses operated in the city, the West Bengal government has introduced around 80 electric buses; in the next 10 years, it plans to introduce more than five thousand such buses. As a result, the state government has already bagged the C40 Cities Bloomberg Philanthropies Award in the "Green Mobility" category.

"In the next few months, nearly 150 electric buses will be in use. While 80 buses are being used in and around Kolkata, the remaining 70 buses will be distributed in Haldia, Asansol and Siliguri," a senior transport official told *The Indian Express*.

The government also plans to increase the number of charging stations in and around the city. If things go as per plan, the transport department would convert its entire bus fleet to electric models in a few years from now.



Electric buses have been introduced in Kolkata. *Partha Paul*

"Electric buses have many advantages. Their running costs are 60 per cent lower than the diesel buses," said Narayan Swarup Nigam, Transport Secretary, Government of West Bengal. Moreover, according to an official of the state pollution control board, "an analysis of different sources of air pollution in Kolkata has revealed that motor

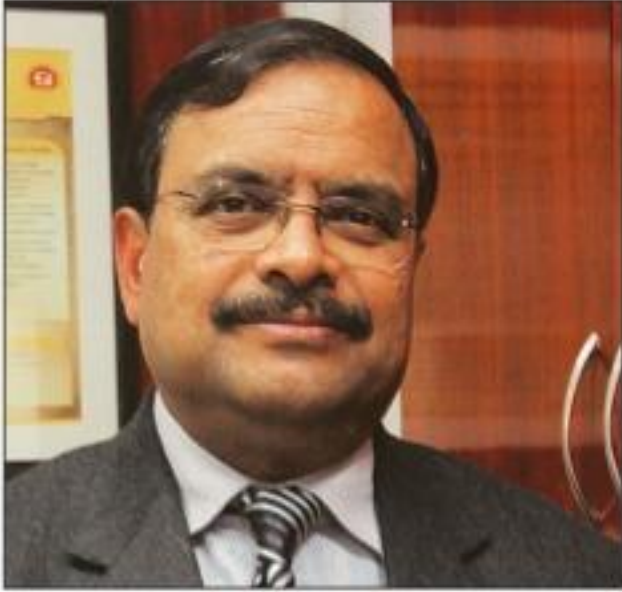
vehicles are the leading contributor to air pollution nearly 51.4 per cent, which is followed by industry at 24.5 per cent and dust particles at 21.1 per cent". Transport department officials claim that switching to cleaner fuel would reduce emission burden of the city drastically.

As per officials, the state's transport department is purchasing these buses with the help of the central government. Officials said the central government would shoulder half the expense. The state has already disbursed Rs 60 crore for electric buses and these buses are already plying in areas like New Town, Kamalgaazi, Airport, Belghoria, Joka etc.

There have been other steps to control emissions from automobile exhausts. The state has Auto Emission Testing Centres (AETCs). The AETCs have upgraded their testing facilities with opacity meter (for smoke density testing of diesel-driven vehicles), gas analysers (for testing of exhaust emission of petrol-driven vehicles), web camera and compatible software.

‘India to achieve its emissions and renewable energy targets before time’

THE 25th annual climate change meeting is opening in the Spanish capital of Madrid today. India, being the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, is crucial to the global plans to fight climate change. Ahead of the meeting, Environment Secretary CK Mishra spoke to AMITABH SINHA on the actions that India had taken to combat climate change.



THE POLICY INTERVIEW

C K MISHRA

Environment Secretary, Government of India

Somehow there is an expectation from the global community that India needs to do more on the climate front

We are already doing much more than what we should be doing if we look at the historical responsibilities of countries in creating this problem. We are definitely doing better than most of the other countries. There have been some recent assessments from independent international organisations which show that India is among a handful of countries, barely four or five, whose actions are compliant to the target of keeping the global rise in temperatures below 2 degree Celsius. India is the only large country in that list, the only one among the top emitters.

By 2030, India has promised to reduce its emissions intensity (emissions per unit of Gross Domestic Product) by 33 to 35 per cent over 2005 levels, to ensure at least 40 per cent mix of non-fossil fuel sources in power generation by 2030, and to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes. Where are we on our specific targets?

There is absolutely no doubt that we will not just achieve these targets but will over-achieve them. On emission intensity target, we had been hoping to reach 25 per cent reduction by 2020 and 33 per cent by 2030. Our latest estimate is that by next year, we would touch 30 per cent reduction. On the second target, about the renewable mix in electricity generation, we will achieve 37 per cent by next year. The 40 per cent target will be achieved in another couple of years. So we will actually be ahead of our schedule. The only doubt that has been expressed is about the forestry target, the creation of carbon sink, but that also will be achieved.

But why is there a question mark on the forestry target?

There isn't a question mark. There is a point of view that only the activities that happen inside a notified forest area should be counted towards this target. But there are lots of trees and plantations outside the forest areas, which also add to the carbon sink. And

other countries account for that.

Additionally, there is a huge contribution from the agriculture sector which we are not factoring in. At some places, change in agricultural practices have led to the creation of additional carbon sink. Degraded forest land when used for agriculture also create new carbon sink. Then there is a question of baseline. All our other targets are benchmarked to the 2005 baseline. Somehow, the forestry target was assumed by some to have a 2015 baseline when we submitted our targets. If we take the 2005 baseline, we would have already achieved the targets. But we want to do more.

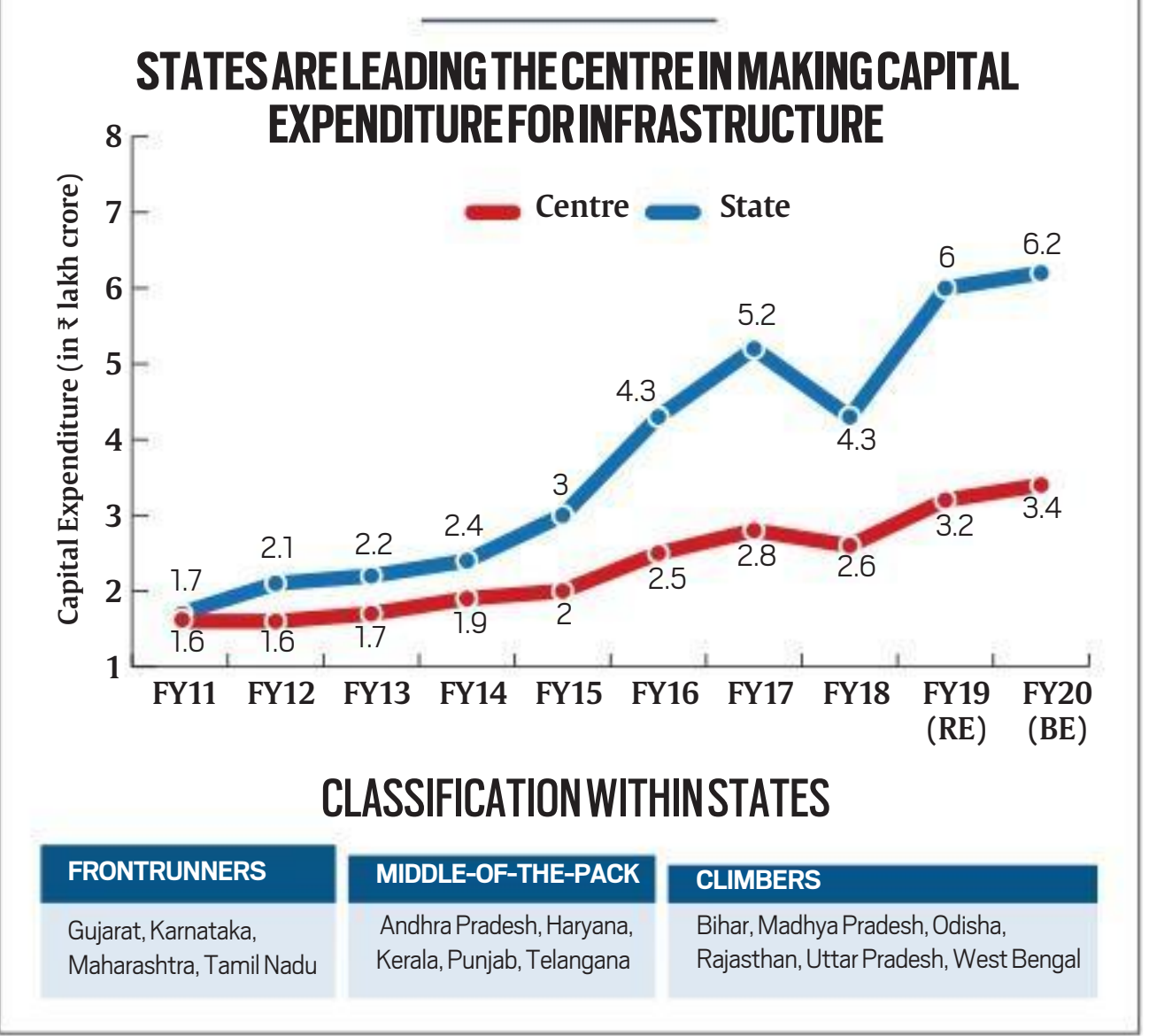
The results of the latest forest survey will be known by December. Initial indications are that our carbon sink has been growing at the rate of about 75 to 80 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

What about our adaptation efforts? We do not even have a very credible threat assessment for the country.

You are right. A comprehensive threat assessment for the country has not been done yet. Many sectoral assessments have been made and are ongoing as well. But we do need a composite and comprehensive threat assessment because the impacts of climate change are already visible. And we need to take pre-emptive adaptation measures. Some of it is happening. For a country like India, adaptation is extremely important. That is why we keep stressing on that even at international negotiations.

Full interview on indianexpress.com

IN NUMBERS



CHHATTISGARH/ HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

A single healthcare scheme to raise efficacy, accountability

DIPANKAR GHOSE
RAIPUR, DECEMBER 1

THE CHHATTISGARH government recently announced that it was shifting from an "insurance model" to a "trust model" in the field of healthcare and that as many as six insurance schemes run by the state government and the centre would now be subsumed in a single new healthcare scheme, which would be run by the state government. The idea, the state government said, was to fix accountability on the state health infrastructure itself, and to lessen the amount of public money that was going to the private sector under the insurance model.

On November 15, after a meeting of the state cabinet, a press statement stated that the state was entering a "new phase of healthcare". Accordingly, a new scheme — Dr Khubchand Baghel Swasth Sahayata Yojana — will provide coverage up to of Rs 5,00,000 per

year to not only Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Yojana families but also to Pradhmitika & Antodaya Ration cardholders. The new scheme will increase the beneficiary family count from 42 lakhs to 56 lakhs families. "The scheme will be implemented in Trust mode (assurance)," the cabinet release said.

Health Minister TS Singhdeo told *The Indian Express* that the primary aim is to fix accountability on the healthcare system itself and to increase the financial efficacy of the department. "The job of the minister must be to increase delivery through the pyramid structure which has mitanins (who are the ground-level health workers) at the base and medical college doctors at the top... We took this up as a challenge on several fronts. One could be the financial aspect. Second is the better use of public funds. And the third is (the) deliverables," he said. Singhdeo explained that the state had as many as six overlapping schemes where the services were being delivered. "What was being provided by one scheme was also being



A health camp in Surguja, Chhattisgarh. *Express*

provided by two-three schemes," he said, claiming that this has been streamlined.

The minister also said that under the existing "insurance model" there were suspicions of misuse of funds. "In our system, we are fixing accountability on ourselves," he said.

On the financial benefits the new scheme will accrue, Singhdeo said. "We have not asked for a paisa more than the Rs 845 crore that is the budget for the insurance schemes as well as Rs 277 crore from the Centre. This amount of money, where is it going? As we saw it, straight away 15 per cent of public money was going into the administrative expenses of the insurance company. This was around Rs 100 crore. We want to minimise that. So within the same budget, we make a saving. Take on the responsibility to deliver and have the funds for strengthening your public infrastructure. Part of the 15 per cent will go to the government's administrative costs but it will not be more than half, so half you will be saving."