

North Karnataka's Sectarian Call

What is the issue?

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- Thirteen districts of north Karnataka recently raised a fresh cry for a separate State as the recent state budget was largely in favour of southern states.

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- Notably, north Karnataka is underdeveloped by a big degree in comparison to the southern districts.

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What is the state of divide within Karnataka?

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- North Karnataka region (Bombay-Karnataka) is considerably backward due to the historic neglect in the pre-independence era.

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- Further, apathy for the north after unification of Karnataka is said to have exacerbated this regional divide.

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- This divide is exemplified in the contrast between the ways in which projects on the rivers Cauvery and Krishna are handled.

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- People of north Karnataka have always argued that Krishna River never gets the attention that the Cauvery in south Karnataka does.

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- In recent times, the delay in solving the long-pending inter-State Mahadayi river row has been cited as another pointer to the apathy towards north.

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What have been some government initiatives?

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- The Constitution was amended to give special status to the Hyderabad Karnataka region under Article 371(J), to facilitate its faster development.
 - In 2000, the S.M. Krishna-led Congress government constituted a high-powered committee (under Nanjundappa) for redress of regional imbalances.
 - The committee, in its report in 2003, listed 39 taluks as the “most backward” of which most of them were from the North Karnataka.
 - The committee recommended a special developmental plan of Rs. 16,000 crores across 8 years, for the backward regions to bridge the development gap.
 - Further, the committee pleaded for an optimal 60:40 ratio in favour of the northern region as a basis for additional resource allocation.
 - However, despite acknowledging the implementation of these recommendations, successive governments have not implemented them fully.
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What is the context within North Karnataka?

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- Northern Karnataka is constituted of two main regions namely - Hyderabad Karnataka and Bombay Karnataka.
 - Among these, developmental lag is more severe in Hyderabad Karnataka, which was under the Hyderabad Nizams until 1947.
 - Notably, two of the districts of the region - “Bidar and Kalaburagi”, were identified as the poorest districts in the country by 2005 NSSO survey.
 - However, the Hyderabad-Karnataka grouping has discouraged employees from other regions to work there, and many government positions lie vacant.
 - Development projects, particularly related to infrastructure and irrigation, often find lower or little allocation in comparison to other regions.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Lack of political will is often cited as the biggest reason for backwardness, though the region has sent five Chief Ministers so far.

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- But some researchers point out that this regional imbalance is the product of plans, because plan makers have concentrated on overall development.

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- Notably, in the holistic context, the focus is on the overall GDP and job growth rather than the equitable optimum growth of all regions.

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- In this context, the report of the Nanjundappa committee in 2000 needs to be revived and taken forward with conviction.

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Source: The Hindu

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