

Official Land Holding of the Government

What is the issue?

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- The Centre does not know exactly how much property it owns.

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- This has created various problems with the economy and the land use pattern of the urban areas.

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What is the official status?

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- The information provided by the Government Land Information System (GLIS) is incomplete.

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- Various Central Ministries admit to owning only about 13,50,500 hectares of land.

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- But disparate official sources suggest that the correct figure is several times more.

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- Also a large proportion of government land lies unused.

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- The Ministries of Railways and Defence, respectively, have 43,000 hectares and 32,780 hectares of land lying vacant.

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- According to reports of the CAG, the 13 major port trusts have 14,728 hectares of land lying idle.

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	Total Land holding claimed in the GLIS	Total Land Holding#	Surplus Land#	Encroached area#
Railways	2,92,960	4,23,000	43,000	2,240
Defence	38,362	7,11,032.67	32,780	4,856.23
Port Trusts (13 Major)		31,238.15	14,566.83	161.18
Airport Authority of India (AAI)		55,037.25		422.82

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What is the problem of unused land?

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- **High Value** - A large part of the unused land is high-value property in prime areas in major cities.
- Land hoarding by government agencies has created artificial scarcity.
- It is one of the main reasons for skyrocketing urban real estate prices.
- Middle and lower-income households find adequate housing unaffordable.
- High land prices also reduce competitiveness by increasing the cost of industrial and development projects.
- The allocation of unused land is rife with corruption.

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- **Urban planning** - To maintain efficiency amidst increasing population and economic growth, the Floor space index (FSI) should also increase.

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- However, most Indian cities defy these basic tenets of urban planning due to the large areas of unused or underutilised government land with an irresponsibly low FSI.

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- The FSI in Shanghai is four times of that of Delhi and Mumbai.

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- **Economic growth** - Solving the problem of wastage could generate employment and pull masses out of poverty.

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- Another report by the CAG on SEZs shows that 53% of the total land acquired by the government for these zones remains unused.

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What should be done?

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- The need of the hour is a comprehensive inventory of land resources and usage patterns for all government branches.

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- It should include information on the location of each property, its dimensions, the legal title, current and planned use, and any applicable land use restrictions.

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- The government should also agree to disclose its land use and release of excess land, the use of which it cannot justify.

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Quick Facts

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Floor space index (FSI)

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- Floor space index (FSI) is the total floor area built per square metre of land.

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- If a single-storey building occupies 50% of a plot, the FSI would be 1/2.

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- If the building is expanded vertically to have four stories, the FSI will go up

to two (4 times $1/2$), as the effective floor area has quadrupled.

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Source: The Hindu

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