

# HARYANA'S MISPLACED PRIORITIES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency & Accountability including Right to Information and Citizen Charter

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Haryana's performance towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is disappointing. The NITI Aayog's latest report on SDGs has put Haryana among the top three States in terms of unemployment and crime, with a dismal show in the fields of health and education and in industrial and economic growth as well. The results are the outcome of the current dispensation's misplaced priorities. The report ranks Haryana 14th among all States with 67 composite points, just a notch above Tripura. Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, its neighbouring States, have done pretty well.

However, Haryana could have done much better as the Congress government led by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda had handed over a robust State to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014. As per the NITI Aayog report, at 11.16%, there is no change since 2019 in the number of people living below the poverty line (BPL) in the State. Clearly, the government has failed to lift people from the vicious circle of poverty. Similarly, there is no change in the proportion of the children below five who continue to be underweight (28.80%) and stunted (34.90%). As many as 55% of pregnant women in the age group of 15-49 years continue to be anaemic. Crimes against women were 88.7 per one lakh female population in 2019, which went up to 108.5 in 2020. The State reported 3.90 murders per one lakh population in 2020 as compared to 3.74 in 2019.

Instead of living in an ivory tower, the government must focus on adding resilience to education, which has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the claims around 'Digital Haryana', the State failed to ensure seamless online classes for all students. The current State government had also promised to build a medical college in every district.

Before 2005, there were only eight universities in the State, but the number went up to 43 during the Congress tenure from 2005 to 2014. Many technical education institutes, ITIs and new government colleges were opened during the Congress regime, but in the past seven years, only two universities have been set up.

Bigger challenges such as improving gross enrolment ratio, checking dropouts, addressing poor student-teacher ratio and introducing enabling interventions for providing skill training in schools and colleges have taken a backseat. The government has not been able to implement a zero vacancy policy, due to which a large number of teaching posts are vacant. In schools, 31,232 posts of teachers were lying vacant as of last year.

Compromised education has a direct relation to employability. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19) data pegged Haryana's unemployment rate at 9.2%, which was significantly higher than the all-India figure of 5.8%. In February, data from the Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy revealed a 26.4% unemployment rate, the highest among States; in 2012-13, the Department of Economics and Statistical Analysis had put the unemployment rate in Haryana at just 3%. But instead of providing jobs, the current regime's focus is on ill-thought steps like providing reservation in private jobs.

Similarly, Haryana has failed to enhance the quality of health infrastructure. It was the first State in the country to give free medicines to OPD patients in government hospitals. Free referral

transport service for expecting mothers for delivery, patients of BPL families, accident victims and freedom fighters, had attracted the attention of other States. The Congress had laid significant emphasis on the health sector. One State health university and four medical colleges were set up at Karnal, Faridabad, and Nuh in Mewat, including one for women in the rural area of Sonapat district. Also, AIIMS-II and the National Cancer Institute were set up at Badshah village in Jhajjar district.

The State's financial health, which is worsening due to mounting debt, huge funds deployed on various boards and corporations, and interest payments on borrowings, is also disturbing. Infrastructural development has come to a standstill — in the last seven years, not even a single new metro station was added, while during 2005-2014, four towns were linked to metro services through new lines. The fiscal situation is equally concerning. As per the Budget Estimate for 2021-22, the debt liability of the State is likely to go up to 2.30 lakh crore as of March 2022. It was 70,369 crore in 2013-14.

Haryana is suffering on all counts due to the misplaced priorities of the current government. The State used to be one of the top performers in areas like per capita income, investment and agricultural productivity, but it has now slipped to the 14th position on the SDG index. The indicators suggest that governance has gone for a toss.

*The author is a Rajya Sabha MP from the Congress*

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To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

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