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## **BHU-SURAKSHA – REVENUE DOCUMENTS E-LIBRARY: DIGITAL SOLUTIONS TO SECURE LAND RECORDS IN THE STATE OF KARNATAKA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The State of Karnataka is divided into 31 districts and has approximately 236 taluks (or subdivisions). These districts are further organized into four administrative divisions: Belagavi, Bengaluru, Gulbarga, and Mysore. The state of Karnataka has long relied on physical documentation for land records, a method that posed several challenges. With thousands of files and registers stored across various record rooms, retrieving land-related information manually is time-consuming, prone to errors, and vulnerable to physical deterioration. In response to these challenges, the **ABHILEKHAYA Project** was launched by National Informatics Centre in 2011 to help organize and index records. While the software made it easier for officials to track and manage records, it didn't include scanning or securing the documents themselves. This limitation led to the need for a more comprehensive solution, eventually giving rise to the **Bhu-Suraksha Project**.

**Key Words:** Property Records, Bhu-Suraksha, Computerised property records management, e-Governance, transparency, Abhilekhalya Project, Digital land records, Index of Land.

## 1. Introduction:

Karnataka has been among the front ranking states in adopting e-Governance and has implemented several projects for improving the internal efficiency of the Government and delivering better services to the citizens. Many initiatives of Government of Karnataka have been unique in the country and have set the agenda for national initiatives by Government of India. Initiatives launched by e-Governance Department of Government of Karnataka have brought about profound changes in the working of the Government by increasing transparency and accountability in administration; which has led to better delivery of services to the citizens by bringing about reduction in transaction costs and by providing convenient access to citizens services under one roof. The ongoing digitalization of revenue records under the program called Bhu-Suraksha is expected to bring more transparency in the management of the property records by storing the modern digital records in a secured environment and deliver them to the citizens.

## 2. Manual System

In the past, under the manual system, property records were maintained by thousands of revenue officials, each serving a cluster of 3-4 Wards. Citizens had to approach Revenue Offices to get a copy of the property records, revenue courts judgements, survey records and Tax assessment document, which was needed for various purpose by the citizens for the purpose of obtaining hypothecation of property, obtaining building sanction permission, property bifurcation, property amalgamation, tracing back the property titles etc. There was no transparency and no easy access to the property records in the manual system. It used to take several days to a few weeks to get a certified copy of the property ownership records. To speed up the process of getting the certified copy the property record, the owners had to approach the agents and to pay the bribe in order to get such certified copies of the property certificate.

In the manual system, there were chances of manipulating the property records, especially the property owned by the Government. The property grabbers used to manipulate the Government owned property records and alienate them to the third parties by cuddling with the revenue officers. The Government also lost lot of valuable property to the land encroachers, who were instrumental in producing the forged / fabricated documents to the revenue authorities and thus causing the Government a crore of rupees in losses.

### **3. Bhu-Suraksha Project**

Turning Land Records into digital forts.

The **Bhu-Suraksha Project** was launched in 2024 by the Land Monitoring Cell of the Karnataka Revenue Department with the goal of digitizing and securing land records across the state. The scope of the digitalization is targeting village panchayats record rooms, taluk record rooms, Office of the Assistant commissioner, Office of the District Commissioner and Regional Commissioner, Office of the Survey records. The project has also expanded to include the Revenue Secretariat and Principal Secretary's Office, ensuring comprehensive coverage.

By using cutting-edge technology, the project aims to:

- i) Modernization of property files and registers.
- ii) Index digital documents
- iii) Ensure data security and easy retrieval.
- iv) Protect records from physical damage or loss.

Here are some of the key questions that arises out of the land security (Bhu Suraksha project) project and the corresponding answers/benefits.

#### **I. What is the Land Security Scheme?**

The Land Security Scheme is an ambitious initiative of the Karnataka Revenue Department. It is designed to digitize, preserve and ensure accessibility of pre- and post-independence land-related records.

#### **II. When was this scheme launched?**

This scheme was launched on a pilot basis in February 2024 in one taluk each of the 31 districts of Karnataka.

#### **III. Which records are being digitized?**

Records of Land Revenue, Land Survey and Sub-Registration Offices, including Katha records.

**IV. What is the progress of the project so far?**

About 35% of the total 110 crore pages have been scanned. The effort to complete the scanning of the remaining pages is in progress.

**V. What is Bhu Suraksha Software?**

It is a specialized software developed by the Land Monitoring Cell of the Revenue Department. It is hosted at the Karnataka State Data Centre. It has web-based and Windows-based versions.

**VI. What are the key features of the land security software?**

Data entry and scanning in PDF format (up to 5 MB). Merge multiple PDFs. Easy data entry and retrieval through integration with ABHILEKHALAYA system.

**4. The Key Benefits of the Bhu-Suraksha Project**

There are a lot of advantages of the project. Here are some of the key advantages

**i) Preservation and Longevity of Records**

Digitizing records prevents paper deterioration, safeguarding valuable land information from disasters, theft, and degradation.

**ii) Efficiency in Document Retrieval**

Switching from manual to digital record-keeping speeds up access to land-related info, boosting efficiency for the public and Government staff.

**iii) Reducing Public Grievances**

Easy and instant access to records helps minimize legal disputes, RTI appeals, and farmer-related grievances, creating a more transparent and accessible environment for citizens.

#### iv) Enhanced Security and Audit Trail

Digital records in the Bhu-Suraksha Project are more secure, tamper-resistant, and track all access and changes for accountability.

#### v) Convenience for the Public

Digitized land records cut down on Government Office visits, letting citizens access documents online for better service and convenience.

#### vi) Foundation for Future Integrations

The Bhu-Suraksha Project integrates land records with Government platforms, streamlining processes and improving data-driven decision-making.

### 5. Bhu-Suraksha Software: How It Works

The core of the **Bhu-Suraksha Project** is the specialized software developed by the Bhoomi Monitoring Cell of the Revenue Department. The software is hosted at the Karnataka State Data Centre. There are two versions of the software: web-based and Windows-based.

#### Key Features of the Software

- **Data Entry & Scanning:** Records are digitized by scanning files and uploading them in PDF format. The software supports file sizes of up to 5 MB, and multiple PDFs can be merged for unified viewing.
- **Integration with ABHILEKHALAYA:** The software seamlessly integrates with the **ABHILEKHALAYA** system to pull relevant file and register details, ensuring smooth data entry and retrieval.

#### Streamlined Workflow

Each office involved in the project follows a detailed verification process to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the uploaded documents.

- **Taluk Office:** Data entry is performed by DEOs or Assistants, with 100% of the documents reviewed by the Shirastedar and 5% of those further checked by the

Tahsildar.

- **RC, DC and AC Offices:** Similar processes apply, ensuring that all records are verified for accuracy at different levels.
- **Revenue Secretariat (PRS) Office:** Here, the verification process includes multiple levels of review by Section Officers, Under Secretaries, and Deputy Secretaries, enhancing accuracy.

### **Indexing of Land Records:**

Indexing of land records is the process of organizing information in land records so that it can be easily searched and identified, often by creating an alphabetical or geographic compilation of data like owner names, property titles, and parcel details. This process, whether physical or through digital digitization, helps to expedite searches, verify ownership, and provide a history of transactions, which is crucial for land management and reducing disputes.

### **Purpose of Indexing**

**Facilitate Search:** Indexes act as a map or table of contents for land records, allowing for quick retrieval of information.

**Verify Ownership:** By indexing owner names, potential buyers can easily check for any liens or encumbrances on a property.

**Streamline Transactions:** Organized and digital records help in making land transactions smoother and more efficient.

**Enhance Transparency:** A well-indexed system increases transparency in land-related dealings.

### **Methods of Indexing**

**Alphabetical Indexing (Name Index):** This method lists the names of parties involved in land transactions, such as buyers and sellers, and directs users to the specific record.

**Geographic Indexing (Tract Index):** Records are organized by the description of the land or parcel, often using a spatial or GIS-integrated approach.

**Digitization and Computerization:** Governments are increasingly converting physical records into digital formats to improve management and access, as seen in India's Digital India program.

## How It Works

**Data Collection:** Land transaction documents, like deeds and mortgages, are gathered.

**Classification:** Documents are then categorized and tagged with searchable terms based on their content (e.g., name of the owner, Survey number).

**Compilation:** This information is compiled into a structured format, creating a "land index" or an "Index 2" (a common term in Karnataka for a specific type of property index).

**Access:** Users can then search this index, either online or at the relevant registry office, to find details about properties and their transaction histories.

## 6. The Future of Land Record Management in Karnataka

With the **Bhu-Suraksha Project** already making significant strides in land records digitization, the future looks promising. This project not only improves Government efficiency but also enhances transparency, security, and public service delivery. As the digitization process continues across Karnataka, there are plans to expand the project to include more offices, further strengthening the foundation for digital governance in the state.

## A Digital Future for Land Records

The **Bhu-Suraksha Project** is an excellent example of how technology can be harnessed to improve Government operations and enhance public service delivery. By ensuring that land records are safely digitized, accessible, and secure, the Karnataka Government is paving the way for a more efficient, transparent, and resilient future.

This digital revolution in land record management not only preserves Karnataka's history but also supports the state's ongoing e-governance initiatives, making it easier for citizens and officials alike to access and manage critical information.

In today's technological era, Government Departments are turning to digital solutions to streamline operations and improve service delivery. An example of this is the Revenue Department's innovative initiative, the Bhoo-Suraksha Yojana. It aims to digitize and protect important land-related records. These include records of the Land Revenue, Land Survey and Registration departments. The main goal is to preserve these records for a long time, make them easily accessible and reduce the risk of fraud or loss of records.

### **Background of the land records security project**

The Bhu-Suraksha Yojana was launched in February 2024 on a pilot basis in one taluk each of the 31 districts of Karnataka to address the challenges faced by citizens in obtaining property records by digitizing land records. The work of modernizing the most important pre- and post-independence old land records by digitalizing the physical records in various taluk offices of Karnataka was launched last year. In the first phase, 14.87 lakh files of 7.95 crore pages have been digitized. Old records in the Tahsildar office, Survey office and Sub-Registration offices will be digitized. Now, the second phase has been launched.

### **What is a land security plan?**

The Land Security Scheme is an ambitious scheme undertaken by the state Revenue Department in the state of Karnataka. This is a scheme to digitize important old documents in the taluk offices. That is, all the old land records available before and after independence will be digitized and protected through this. The pre-independence period records are being computerized by indexing, cataloging, scanning and uploading. Thus, farmers do not have to go to the office to get land records. People can directly obtain them in digital form. The state Government has informed that under the Land Security Scheme, all the original files in the Tahsildar offices will be scanned and digitized phase by phase manner.

### **What are the objectives of the land security plan?**

The Land Security Project has been undertaken with the aim of digitizing all the records of the Land Revenue Department. The objectives of the project are as follows.

- Preventing loss or alteration of old files and land records
- Ensuring that old land records do not go missing in taluk offices

- Increasing transparency, efficiency and easy access to land records
- Allowing online viewing and obtaining of certified copies of documents
- Saving time in file management for the public and officials.
- Searching for documents by keywords

### **Why digitize old land records?**

- The main objective of this project is to preserve old records. In addition, the objective behind this project is to prevent the creation of fake land records. These original records will be made available to the public online through the Revenue Department's land software and digital service centers.
- Documents have a longer shelf life if they are in digital form. When needed urgently, documents can be retrieved in an instant, rather than having to rush to the office.
- Easily accessible to the public. Reduces legal litigation and RTI requests.
- No one can tamper or change the records. The risk of copying land records is reduced. The security of records is increased.
- People will avoid having to come to taluk offices for documents. This will save people travel money and time.
- The experience of this project will also help with digitalization in other sectors in the future.
- Ensures the safety of documents in the event of a natural disaster.

### **How is the project implemented?**

The Bhu Suraksha Yojana is funded by the central and state Governments. Training has also been provided to officers and staff in this regard. The scheme was launched in one taluk of each district in the first phase in January last year. The Bhu Suraksha Yojana has been implemented to permanently preserve old dilapidated records in digital form, prevent the creation of duplicate records and make them available to citizens online. Each office involved in the

scheme follows a detailed verification process to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the uploaded documents.

- **Taluk Office:** Data entry is handled by District Education Officers (DEOs) or Assistants. 100% of the documents are verified by the Shirastedar and 5% of the documents are verified by the Tahsildar.
- **RC, DC and AC offices:** Similar processes apply, ensuring that all documents are checked for accuracy at various stages, which includes the Regional Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner offices.
- **Ministry of Revenue (PRS) Office:** Here, the verification process involves multi-stage verification by division officers, undersecretaries and deputy secretaries, enhancing accuracy.

### **Progress so far in the project**

So far, the department has scanned about 15.5 crore pages of documents stored in the Tahsildar offices. But this process is not yet complete. That means about 110 crore pages need to be scanned by the respective offices of the revenue department. After scanning, the documents are checked and approved by the Shirastedars (record officers). Once approved, they are uploaded online with digital signatures. The department plans to launch an online platform within the next two months, which will allow citizens to directly access these digital documents. Under this scheme, only A-Khata documents (permanent) and B-Khata (to be preserved for 30 years) are being scanned. With the Bhu-Suraksha Yojana, the Karnataka Revenue Department is working to digitize land records across the state. In this regard, Bhu-Suraksha software has been developed.

### **How does geo-security software work?**

The core component of the Land Security Scheme is a special software developed by the Land Monitoring Cell of the Revenue Department. This software is hosted at the Karnataka State Data Centre. There are two versions of this software: a web-based and a Windows-based version. The salient features of the software are as follows:

- **Data Entry and Scanning:** Documents are digitized by scanning files and uploading them in PDF format. The software supports file sizes up to 5 MB and can merge multiple PDFs for a unified view.
- **Integration with the Registry:** The software seamlessly integrates with the ABHILEKHALAYA system to retrieve relevant files and register details, ensuring smooth data entry and retrieval.

### Features of a Bhu-Suraksha from security perspective

Characteristics	Details
Project name	Land security plan
Purpose	Digitizing and protecting land-related records, preventing loss, ensuring accessibility, increasing transparency and reducing fraud.
Documents	All land records including land revenue, land survey and sub-registration office records, pre-independence and post-independence records
Progress	First phase: Total scanned: 15.5 crore pages. The subsequent phases of the digitization effort is in progress. At the time of publishing this article, about 35 crore pages have been scanned. Target by end of 2025 is to scan the remaining 75 crore pages to be scanned across the state.
Benefits for citizens	Availability of digital documents without visiting offices. SMS notification for document changes linked to Aadhaar. Protection against illegal ownership change. Identification of farmers eligible for crop damage compensation, Index of Land.
Scope of documents	Khata (Permanent)
Future plan	Digitization of all taluk office records and expansion of online platform by the end of 2025.

### 7. Conclusion:

The Bhu-Suraksha system has several benefits, which are as follows:

#### 1. Details of land records will be available through SMS

Under the “Bhu Suraksha” scheme, most of the farmers in the state have already linked their

Aadhaar cards to their land records/UTAR/RTCs. If there are any changes in the land records of their land through SMS from time to time, an SMS will be sent to the mobile number linked to the Aadhaar card immediately.

Therefore, land owners should be alert and if any illegal activities are found in the change of ownership, they can immediately visit your nearest Revenue Department office and inquire about it.

## **2. By collecting the documents of cooperative**

The land owners to obtain the data in digital format to get crop damage compensation, this scheme will also help in identifying eligible farmers and depositing crop damage compensation through direct cash transfer when the crops of farmers are damaged due to heavy rains and other reasons, it is mentioned on the official website of the department.

## **3. The original records of the land are secure**

Since the original records of the farmers' land are collected in digital format, they can be quickly retrieved at any time. There is no situation of losing the original records of the land. It will be possible to quickly locate the original documents during any landownership change. The land owners can easily obtain their land documents online. Private and Government land can be kept safe, which means that fraudsters can be stopped by creating fake ownership documents.

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