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## Credible Chhattisgarh

Ajit Kumar Jha July 8, 2018 UPDATED: July 8, 2018 08:47 IST

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Aerial view of the new Chhattisgarh capital, Naya Raipur (Photo by Chandradeep Kumar)

Chhattisgarh is a poignant paradox, a young state with an ancient, rich historical heritage, bounteous in minerals and a mining and industrial powerhouse but with a low human development index. While the central plains in the Raipur-Bhilai-Durg belt are industrialised, urbanised and prosperous, the southern tip is mired in penury; while Naya Raipur is an urban marvel, the state altogether has one of the lowest rates of urbanisation; and with almost 45 per cent forest cover, the state has a serene green environment but with threats from a violent red corridor. Standing at the threshold of a structural transformation, Chhattisgarh can become one of India's most developed

states provided it balances the pulls from different directions and turns the 'paradox' into an opportunity for growth and equitable development.

Formed in 2000 as a state carved out of Madhya Pradesh, the state's ancestry can be traced to the legendary Dakshina Kosala (South Kosala named after Rama's mother Kaushalya) kingdom of the Ramayana. The Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, according to historians, was Dandakaranya where Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent 14 years in exile from the kingdom of Ayodhya. The town of Sirpur/Shripur (etymologically, the city of wealth) in Mahasamund district, on the banks of the river Mahanadi, was the glorious capital of the South Kosala kingdom. The Buddhist sites in Sirpur architecturally rival those of the ancient Nalanda university in Bihar (5th century BC to 12th century AD). Chinese traveller Xuanzang writes that there were 100 monasteries and 10,000 monks when he visited Sirpur during the 7th century.

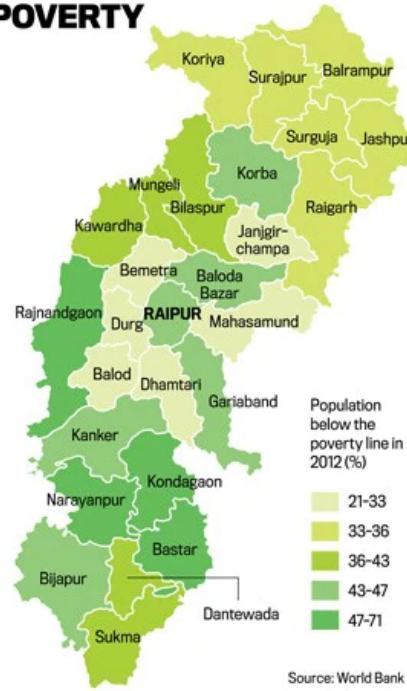


As for geography, shaped like a seahorse, Chhattisgarh is a verdant state with thick forestry and a perfect melange of waterfalls, dense forests, gorgeous rivers, limestone caves, serene Hindu temples and Buddhist and Jain monasteries, awesome forts, palaces and much more. The majestic Mahanadi river with its various tributaries cuts right across the state. The Teerathgarh and Chitrakote cataracts on the Kanger and Indravati rivers in Bastar district are major attractions for pilgrims. The Satkhandi caves, the Karanga ghat, the Bastar fort, the Chaiturgarh fort on the hills make Chhattisgarh a tourist paradise that is still not well publicised.

Chhattisgarh is among the richest Indian states in terms of mineral wealth, but ironically, some three-fourths of its population is also rural. The distribution is uneven, however, with the far south of the state sparsely populated compared to the north. The urban population is concentrated mainly in Raipur and Bilaspur in the state's midsection and near Raigarh in the east. However, massive public sector investment in mining has helped spur growth around

Durg and Bhilai Nagar to the west of Raipur, Kora in the north-central region, and Angulikapur in the northern part of the state. Raipur, Durg-Bhilai Nagar and Bilaspur have become major urban agglomerations, each with a good industrial base.

## DISTRICT-LEVEL PROSPERITY AND POVERTY



Source: World Bank

### Rice bowl of India

Half of Chhattisgarh's landmass is farmland. The remainder is either under forest cover or else non-arable land. About 75 per cent of the farmland is under cultivation. Popularly called the country's 'rice bowl', the central lowland plains supply grain to hundreds of rice mills. Maize and millet dominate the highlands. Cotton and oilseeds are the important commercial crops in the state. Manual methods of agriculture still prevail since most farmers are yet to adopt mechanised agriculture.

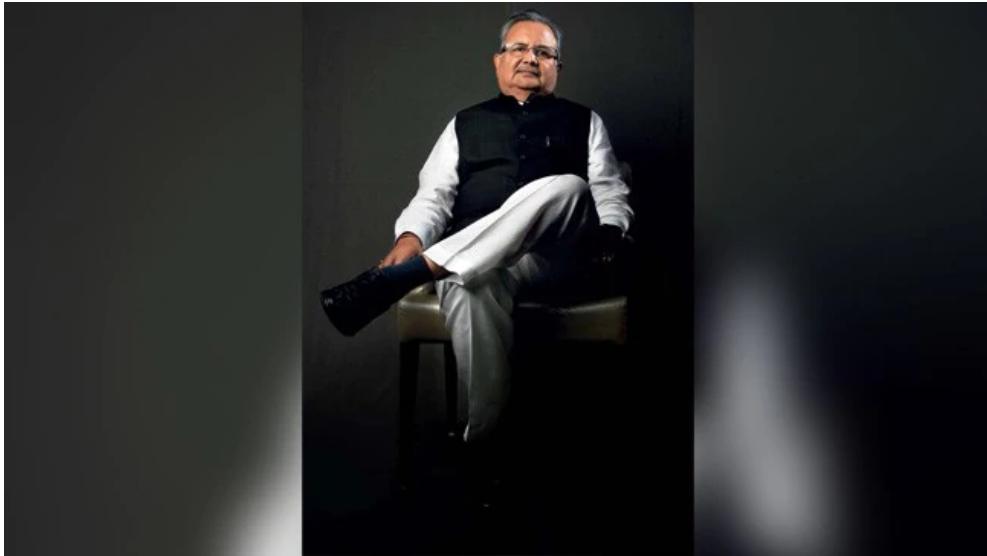
Chhattisgarh produces 23,350 varieties of rice. Nearly 80 per cent of the population is dependent on farming. Of the 47.4 lakh hectares of farmland, rice is grown on about 37 lakh hectares. Between 2011-2012 and 2016-17, the absolute contribution of agriculture in the state's GSVA (Gross State Value Added) grew at a CAGR of 12.6 per cent. Despite being a small state, it is in the top six rice-producing states with rice production for the year 2014-15 at 6.32 million tonnes. The state received the Krishi Karman Award twice for producing the highest quantity of rice, in 2011 and 2013. But productivity is still low (even below national average), given the very low levels of irrigation and poor technology.

In 2014-15, given the diversification of crops as the new mantra in agriculture, Chhattisgarh received the Krishi Karman award for achieving the highest increase in production of pulses. Other grains produced in the state are wheat, coarse cereals, maize, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, raw jute and mesta.

### Mining hub and industrial powerhouse

It is among the richest Indian states in terms of mineral wealth, with large deposits of 28 major minerals, ranging from iron ore, tin, coal, limestone, quartzite, bauxite and diamonds. Iron ore from Bailadila mines is considered to be

among the best in the world. So is the quality of coal. Chhattisgarh ranked fourth in terms of value of major mineral production in India, as of November 2017. Coal production reached 86.5 million tonnes in April-November 2017. The state is also the sole producer of tin concentrates (10,847 kg in 2017) in the country, and accounts for 35.4 per cent of the tin ore reserves in India.



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh (Photo by Chandradeep Kumar)

The rich natural resources, policy incentives and infrastructure support investments in the iron and steel, cement and power sectors. Chhattisgarh is also power surplus, a rare state which exports electricity to neighbouring ones. As a result, major industrial players, including the Steel Authority of India (SAIL) and Associated Cement Company, have thrived. About 58 large and medium-scale industries, including big players such as Monnet Ispat, Century Cement, Lafarge and Ambuja Cement, have invested heavily in the state.

The sprawling capital, Naya Raipur, is considered India's fourth planned city, spread over 8,000 hectares, with 40 sectors (21 residential) and world-class amenities. It is the first 21st century city in India. The city has been selected as a demonstration city under the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and World Bank-assisted Sustainable Urban Transport Project (SUTP). Under the central Smart City scheme, Raipur, Bilaspur and Korba are to be upgraded.

### Manufacturing-led growth

As the 'Industry-Spurred Growth' table reveals, the Chhattisgarh economy is mainly based on the secondary sector (industrial) with a sectoral share of 39 per cent of GSVA (Gross State Value Added) in 2016-17 (at 2011-12 base prices). The tertiary sector (services) contributed a high 36 per cent of GSVA the same year. The primary sector (agriculture) is limited, with sectoral contribution being 25 per cent in GSVA.

Within the secondary sector, the manufacturing sub-sector is the single largest contributor to GSVA with the sectoral share being 22.6 per cent during 2016-17. This is followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing, a part of the primary sector, which together contributed 15.2 per cent in the GSVA during 2016-17. Mining activities contributed 9.8 per cent to the GSVA during 2016-17. Chhattisgarh recorded the third highest per capita income in 2016-17, measured as per capita NSDP (Net State Domestic Product) at 2011-12 base prices, among the eight 'BIMAROU' states (Bihar, MP, Rajasthan, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh and the new carved out Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand). The per capita income of Uttarakhand remained almost twice as high as that of Chhattisgarh.

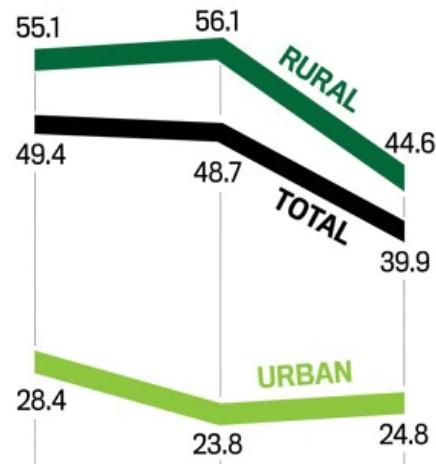
### Intra-state variations

The physiography of Chhattisgarh is a complex amalgam of hilly areas, plateaus, uplands and patlands (mesas), which remain intertwined with the river basins. The three-tier natural division of the state adopted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) consists of northern Chhattisgarh, Mahanadi basin and southern Chhattisgarh, which is roughly superimposed over the three agroclimatic zones—the northern hills, Chhattisgarh plains and Bastar plateau.

The northern Chhattisgarh region is part of the Baghelkhand plateau and roughly covers the northern hilly region of the state dominated by the Changbhakhar-Deogarh hills. This region comprises the Surguja, Surajpur and Balrampur districts. The forested, hilly district of Surguja is rich in bauxite deposits along with some patches of Gondwana coal. While 45 per cent of Surguja is covered by forests, Koriya district has about 62 per cent forest cover, as per the 2017 assessment of India State of Forest Report.

The Chhattisgarh plains, situated in the heart of the state, is covered mostly by the Mahanadi basin and comprises the Durg-Raipur plain and Bilaspur-Raigarh plain. This heartland has the major industrial regions—Durg-Bhilai, Raipur, Korba and Bilaspur. The Durg-Bhilai region has rich reserves of iron ore, limestone and quartzite. It houses the Bhilai Steel Plant, awarded the prime minister's trophy for the best integrated steel plant, and is India's sole supplier of world-class rails for the Indian Railway along with being a major producer of heavy steel plates and structural steel. It is also home to the Borai Industrial Growth Centre, a flourishing industrial region under the ambit of the Chhattisgarh State Industrial Development Corporation.

The Raipur region has rich deposits of limestone and is a leading industrial centre. Naya Raipur city, the administrative capital of the state, is part of it. The Korba region has opulent reserves of coal and bauxite, so it is a concentration of mining-based industries, apart from power generation and aluminium plants. With major thermal power plants, including NTPC's Korba Super Thermal Power Plant in the region, it has been branded India's 'power capital'.



2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
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\*Note: Rural and Urban Combined; Based on Mixed Recall Period Consumption (Computed as per Tendulkar methodology); source: RBI's Handbook of Statistics on Indian States, 2016-17

The Bilaspur region hosts a number of ancillary industrial units, thanks to the presence of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL). The Sirgitti Industrial Growth Centre is also located here. Bilaspur is also the zonal headquarters of the South East Central Railway Zone, one of India's most profitable, contributing about 17 per cent of the revenues of Indian Railway. The three urban centres of Durg, Bhilai and Raipur, situated in close geographical proximity, form the main industrial corridor of Chhattisgarh. It has steel and cement plants and together forms the Raipur-Bhilai-Durg Tri City Metro area.

Southern Chhattisgarh encompasses the Bastar plateau along with the Abujhmar hills and Bastar plains. This region geographically coincides with the Dandakaranya region, described in Hindu mythology as the land of demons or land of the exiled. The densely forested tracts of the Abujhmar hills are home to the indigenous tribes of Gonds and Abuj Marias who live in isolation and occupy the secluded enclaves of the Bastar region.

The Bastar region comprises the erstwhile districts of Bastar, Dantewada and Kanker, which now stands divided into seven districts. The Bailadila range in Dantewada is the highest point of the Bastar plateau and the Bailadila mines in this range abound in high-grade hematite iron ore. The densely forested and largely inaccessible tracts of the Bastar region are part of the 'Red Corridor', notorious for being a violent Naxalite-affected region.

### **Chhattisgarh's challenges**

Increasing inequality mixed with rising economic growth is a major challenge. A UNICEF report cites wide disparities in terms of gender, geographical location, civil strife and a rural-urban divide and availability of human resources. According to recent health statistics, the infant mortality rate is 46 deaths per 1,000 live births, the maternal mortality rate is 269, and the total fertility rate is 2.7. There is a need to scale up efforts to achieve development goals in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A). Malnutrition is a concern-recent NFHS-3 data shows prevalence of stunting (53 per cent), underweight (48 per cent) and wasting (24 per cent).

Although literacy and education have spread a great deal, especially via the private sector, the quality of education is a concern. The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) data for 2014 reveals that performance of children in both language and mathematics is the lowest in the country. Low enrolment and school completion in children from disadvantaged groups are particularly alarming. There's not enough effort being made towards multilingual education either. According to the District Information System for Education (DISE) data analysis by UNICEF for 2012-13, there is high Gender Parity Index (GPI) at the primary level (0.96), and (0.97) at the upper primary level (GPI equal to 1 indicates parity between males and females).

The growth of education is equally paradoxical: Chhattisgarh's all-India early development index (EDI) rank at the primary level is an impressive eighth, but at the upper primary level the state ranks a low 25th. Significant challenges also exist in the civil strife-affected districts of Bijapur, Narayanpur, Dantewada, Bastar and Kanker, which account for about 9 per cent of the total population and where outreach and provision of social services is extremely difficult. Communities in most regions still need to be informed about social programmes, and services have to be made more accessible. The lack of avenues for the families to express concerns related to essential services, communities

and livelihoods-especially in hard-to-reach areas-is daunting.

### Comparison with BIMAROU states

Chhattisgarh has the highest proportion of population living below the poverty line compared to other BIMAROU states. About 40 per cent, both rural and urban combined, remained under in 2011-12, as computed by the Tendulkar methodology based on mixed recall period consumption (other than money required for a minimum calorie intake, the Tendulkar committee shifted poverty estimate to a wider definition, including spending on food, education, health, electricity, clothing and footwear). While poverty rates in Chhattisgarh were comparable to its counterpart state of Jharkhand (37 per cent), the national average remained way below at 22 per cent during the 2011-12 assessment.



An IPL match at the Chhattisgarh International Cricket Stadium in Raipur (Photo by Arjun Panwar -IPL-SPORTZPICS)

The percentage of population below the poverty line was 49.4 per cent during 2004-05, which came down to about 40 per cent during 2011-12. While there has been a significant decline of 9.5 percentage points in poverty rates from 2004-05 to 2011-12, the decline in case of other BIMAROU states has been much higher during the same period. Due to this, Chhattisgarh's rank infamously reached the top position during 2011-12 among the BIMAROU states.

Chhattisgarh also reported the second lowest decline in poverty rates, next only to Jharkhand. This is when the average decline in poverty rates for the country remained at about 15 percentage points.

Chhattisgarh also reported the highest proportion of rural population living below the poverty line among the BIMAROU states in 2011-12, about 45 per cent. That said, rapid economic growth, especially since 2004-05, has led to a major dent in poverty rates. The trends in urban, rural and total poverty rates till 2011-12 depict a steady decline during this period. The rate of decline in rural poverty rates especially has been impressive, at about 11 percentage points. The decline has been noticeably sharp between 2009-10 and 2011-12. The urban poverty rates declined more sharply in the boom period, between 2004-05 and 2009-10, from 28.4 per cent to 23.8 per cent, only to rise gradually to 24.8 per cent in 2011-12, when the slowdown began, marking an overall decline of about 4 percentage points between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

### Literacy rate growth slows

During Census 2001, the total literacy rate in Chhattisgarh was 64.7 per cent, which was slightly below the national average of 64.8 per cent. Chhattisgarh ranked second among the BIMAROU states in total literacy attainment during

2001, after Uttarakhand where the literacy rates were about 72 per cent, well above the national average. However, during Census 2011, Chhattisgarh recorded the total literacy rate of 70.3 per cent, which was three notches below the national average. Among the BIMAROU states, its rank slipped to third position after Uttarakhand and Odisha. Although, Chhattisgarh marked an improvement of about 5.6 percentage points in total literacy rates during 2001 to 2011, this has been the lowest rate of improvement among the eight BIMAROU states. Chhattisgarh, along with MP, marked the least improvement in literacy attainment.

### Low life expectancy and high infant mortality

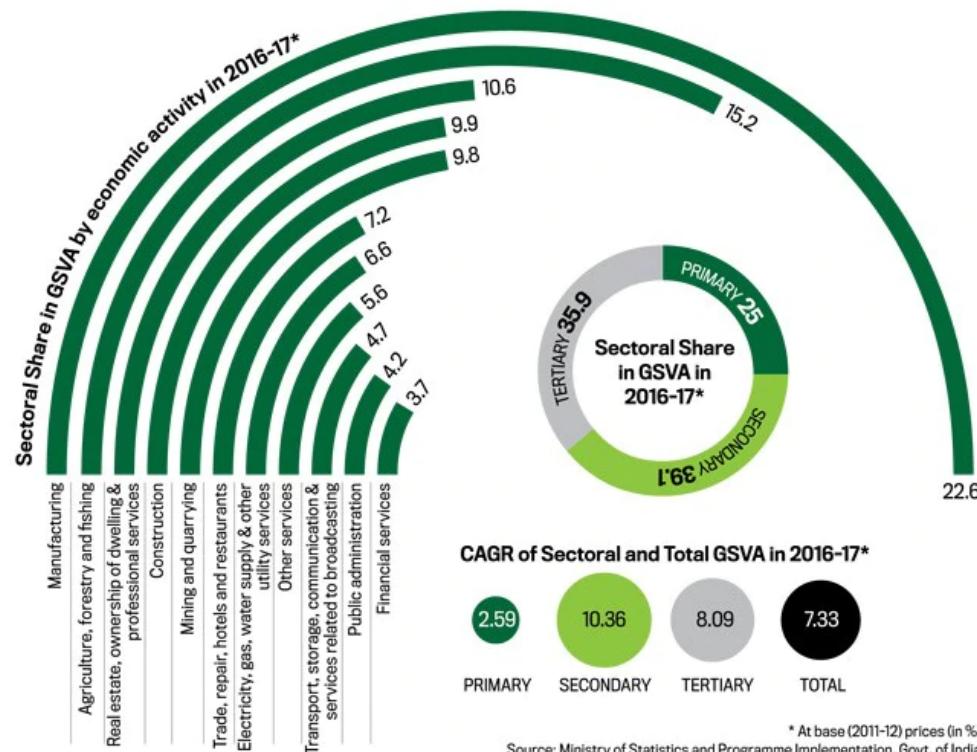
Chhattisgarh ranked among the bottom three of the BIMAROU states in life expectancy at birth, which was 65.2 years during the 2011-2015 quinquennial survey of the Sample Registration System. The average life expectancy at birth in the country was 68.3 per cent during this period. Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were the others with life expectancy less than 65 years.

In infant mortality rate (IMR) too, the performance has been dismal. All the BIMAROU states, except Jharkhand, had higher rates of infant mortality as compared to the national average during 2016 (as recorded by the Sample Registration System). Chhattisgarh ranked fourth among the eight BIMAROU states with IMR at 39 deaths per thousand live births of children under one year, which remained comparable to the rates in Bihar and Uttarakhand. The national average is 34 deaths per thousand live births.

That said, the rate of decline in IMR in Chhattisgarh between 2000 and 2016 has been rather impressive, even compared to the national average. While IMR declined from 68 to 34 deaths per thousand live births between 2000 and 2016 at the national level (a decline rate of 50 per cent), in Chhattisgarh, the IMR declined from 79 to 39 deaths in the same period, a decline rate of 50.6 per cent. Chhattisgarh ranked third among the BIMAROU states in terms of rate of decline between 2000 and 2016. The performance of Jharkhand and Odisha has been more impressive, with 59 and 54 per cent decline in IMR during the same period.

## INDUSTRY-SPURRED GROWTH

Manufacturing leads in the Gross State Value Added, agriculture and forestry are next



Graphic by Tanmoy Chakraborty

## Highest social sector expenditure

Chhattisgarh marked the highest expenditure on the social sector-about 57 per cent-as a percentage of total expenditure among the eight BIMAROU states, as per the budget estimates of 2015-16. This was way above the national average of about 43 per cent. All the BIMAROU states, except for UP, recorded a higher proportion of expenditure on the social sector as compared to the national average.

Chhattisgarh also recorded an increasing trend in percentage of expenditure on the social sector between 2011-12 and 2015-16. The proportion of expenditure increased from 51.6 per cent in 2011-12 to 56.8 in 2015-16, an increase of 5.2 percentage points. This remains higher than the national average, which marked an increase by 4.2 percentage points in the same period.

## Surge in per capita power availability

In the age of digitisation, access to electricity can be regarded as a basic amenity. The extent of access to electricity in rural areas and the quantum provided is a gauge of the level of development of physical infrastructure in an area.

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana, the central scheme for rural electrification, was designed to provide continuous power supply to rural areas. The status of rural electrification in Chhattisgarh, as on April 30, 2018, under this scheme, reported that 19,567 villages were electrified; 97 per cent of the target villages were covered providing access to rural households and 87 per cent of target BPL households were electrified. The achievements include 67 per cent intensive electrification of target villages as on April 30, 2018. The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana 'Saubhagya' scheme reported that of the state's total households, 86 per cent of rural households and 97.7 per cent of urban homes were electrified as on October 10, 2017.

According to NITI Aayog, Chhattisgarh recorded the second highest percentage of rural households electrified among the BIMAROU states-86 per cent-as on April 30, 2017, much higher than the national average of about 75 per cent. Uttarakhand fared marginally better, with 87 per cent rural households electrified, to secure the top rank among the eight BIMAROU states.

The per capita availability of power in Chhattisgarh was 928 kWh, which remained comparable to the national average of 938 kWh during 2016-17. Chhattisgarh ranked third among the BIMAROU states, next to Uttarakhand and Rajasthan, with respect to per capita availability of power. The state has also recorded faster growth in increasing quantum of power available per head to its populace. While the national average of per capita availability improved from 766 kWh in 2010-11 to 938 kWh in 2016-17, Chhattisgarh improved from a dismal 488 kWh to 928 kWh during the same period. The year 2015-16 recorded a massive 991 kWh per capita availability of power in Chhattisgarh, as compared to the national average of 901 kWh. Chhattisgarh has also recorded the highest percentage increase in per capita availability of power among the BIMAROU states -90.2 per cent-during 2010-11 to 2016-17.





Pandvani singer Teejan Bai performing at an event

## Access to safe drinking water higher than national average

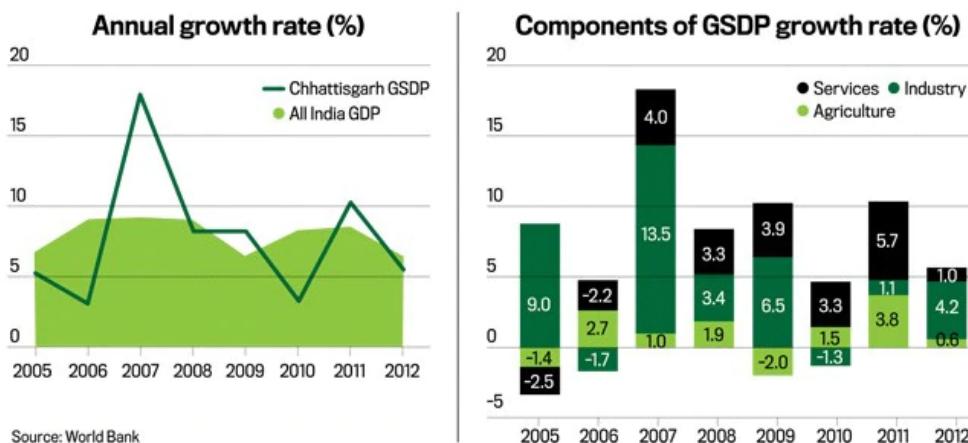
Chhattisgarh marked a high access to 'safe water', which is defined as water from safe sources such as tap water, hand pump and tube well. According to Census of India, 2011, about 86 per cent of the total households in Chhattisgarh had access to safe drinking water, marginally higher than the national average of 85.5 per cent. It also recorded the second highest percentage increase in the proportion of households with access to safe drinking water, after Jharkhand, among the BIMAROU states, comparing the 2001 and 2011 censuses. Chhattisgarh marked a 22.4 per cent increase in the proportion of households with access to safe water, which was way above the national average of 9.8 per cent. Jharkhand, however, performed better with 41.1 per cent increase in such households. The scenario was quite similar in the case of rural households.

## The way forward

The Chhattisgarh story is unique in many ways. The state's economic growth is powered by industrial growth. Comparing Chhattisgarh with Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, the three small states born in the year 2000, the former is conspicuous in terms of growth led by industrialisation, particularly mining and manufacturing. Second, political stability under the leadership of Chief Minister Raman Singh-who took the baton from the Congress party's Ajit Jogi (now leader of the Janta Congress Chhattisgarh) in 2003-makes Chhattisgarh stand out compared to the other two states.

### CREST AND TROUGH

Growth in Chhattisgarh is volatile due to uneven performance of industry



From a human development perspective, the state continues to portray the typical characteristics of the BIMAROU states in certain parameters such as high poverty rates, high infant mortality and low life expectancy but has made remarkable improvements in terms of access to basic amenities such as electricity and safe water. With a higher proportion of expenditure on the social sector, Chhattisgarh has achieved significant decline in its infant mortality rates. The state's progress has been impressive across various socioeconomic parameters, but a lot more needs to be done to reduce the poverty rates, check the growing slum population in the urban districts and improve social

parameters to shed its BIMAROU tag.

Most news from Chhattisgarh is negative: violence and threats from left-wing extremism, low life expectancy and decline in infant mortality. "This is partly understandable but is also a partly jaundiced view," says economist and NITI Aayog member Bibek Debroy in his book *Footprints: The Story of Chhattisgarh*. Debroy adds that there is plenty of positive news emerging from the state now, about growth, development and good governance that incorporates people's needs and aspirations. Even violence-racked districts like Sukma and Dantewada are no longer what they were a few years ago. The change is evident and palpable, writes Debroy. "This isn't about incremental change in Chhattisgarh. This is about taking Chhattisgarh to a completely different development trajectory, the fruits of which will be visible 20 years from now, not today," he concludes. However, industrialisation in the next two decades needs to move from the steel and mining industry to IT and the knowledge sector, which will require a qualitative leap. Only such hope and a positive vision can help the 18-year-old Chhattisgarh state deal with the poignant paradoxes of development.

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