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NEWS BULLETIN FROM ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

WE DEMAND

- Free Vaccine for all people
- Adequate hospital beds and oxygen for all patients
- Nationalise vaccine manufacture
- Restrict banking services and working hours

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Supreme Court to government: Why different prices of Covid-19 vaccine for states and Centre?

TIMES OF INDIA

Apr 30, 2021, NEW DELHI:

In the suo moto proceedings on the Covid-19 crisis, the Supreme Court on Friday asked a string of questions to the Centre about its plans on implementing a lockdown, oxygen distribution to states, vaccine prices and availability of medicines.

Last week, the apex court took cognizance of the issues related to the oxygen supply, drug supply, and various other government policies and measures in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench of Justice DY Chandrachud, LN Rao and SR Bhat said that the court has received some petitions which raise entire local issues of grave importance.

The Supreme Court on Friday said that the differential pricing of vaccine for the Centre, states and private hospitals is "very very disturbing". The SC asked Centre to explain why the Covid-19 vaccine has been priced differently for the states, the private sector and the Centre.

"Why cannot the government buy all vaccines and proceed on the lines of the national immunisation programme," asked the court.

SC said the government must consider National Immunisation Programme for various vaccines and must think of providing free of cost vaccination to all citizens. The court said that the private manufacturers cannot be left to decide which State should get how much quantity vaccines.

The court also asked how will the central and state government enable vaccine registration for illiterates or those who don't have access to the internet. "Will one State get priority access over another in getting the vaccines," asked the court adding how will the manufacturers ensure equity in the distribution of vaccines.

The government has said that it will submit the exact population of India in the age group of 18 to 45. Will there be a lockdown? The Supreme Court asked the Centre if it will announce a lockdown to curb Covid-19 spread, during the suo moto proceedings on the Covid-19 crisis in the country.

Don't take action against distress calls on social media

The apex court directed states, the Centre and all DGPs not to take any action against anyone posting a shortage of oxygen, beds or doctors as spreading the rumour.

"If any action is taken against such posts by citizens in distress, we will haul the police for contempt," said the court.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said he cannot agree more with the SC on this issue. The bench said that through a free flow of information on the deficiencies and needs during this humanitarian crisis on social media platforms, "we will be in a better position to tackle the problem".

Bypass patent regime on Remdesivir

The court said that under the existing legal regime, India can bypass the patent rules for Remdesivir by importing the drug from Bangladesh. The court suggested that India take a licence from Bangladesh manufacturer to produce Remdesivir in India

How is oxygen being distributed? On Friday, resuming the proceedings, the SC asked the Centre what was the rationale behind the allocation of oxygen to states.

"What measures have been taken to make sure the supply of tankers and cylinders reach the people in need, "asked Justice Chandrachud.

The court further inquired about the expected supply of oxygen. The SC asked the Centre whether oxygen availability is adequate in India given the average demand of 8,500 MT per day. The Solicitor General said 10,000 MT oxygen is available on a daily basis.

"There is no shortage of oxygen. But availability in some areas may be deficient because of inadequate lifting by states." The SC said there appears to be no shortage from the affidavit of the Centre.

"How do we resolve this when there is the availability of oxygen but an apparent deficiency in Delhi and other areas of some states," asked the court. Pay more to doctors and nurses

The Supreme Court said that doctors and nurses who are working tirelessly to combat the pandemic, "are reaching breaking point and must be paid more whether they are in public or private hospitals." Justice Rao said around 25,000 MBBS graduates and 2 lakh nurses are ready to pass out of colleges. "Why not utilise their services? Otherwise, the healthcare system will break down," he said.

The court also asked if the government can display the availability of beds in hospitals and if the government has provided any grants and aid to the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech, the two leading manufacturers of Covid-19 vaccines in the country.

Among other questions, the Supreme Court asked the Centre if there is a national policy on admitting patients to get admitted to a hospital. It also asked what research is being conducted on the news that a new variant of Coronavirus is not detected by the RT-PCR test. The court inquired about what is being done to increase Covid-19 testing facilities and reducing the reporting time of the Covid test results.

Only 1.97% Indians fully vaccinated so far, UP worst performer despite largest stock

Only 9.24% people have received at least one dose of the Covid vaccines so far. Gujarat, Rajasthan, Ladakh are among top performers; Bihar and UP have fared worst.

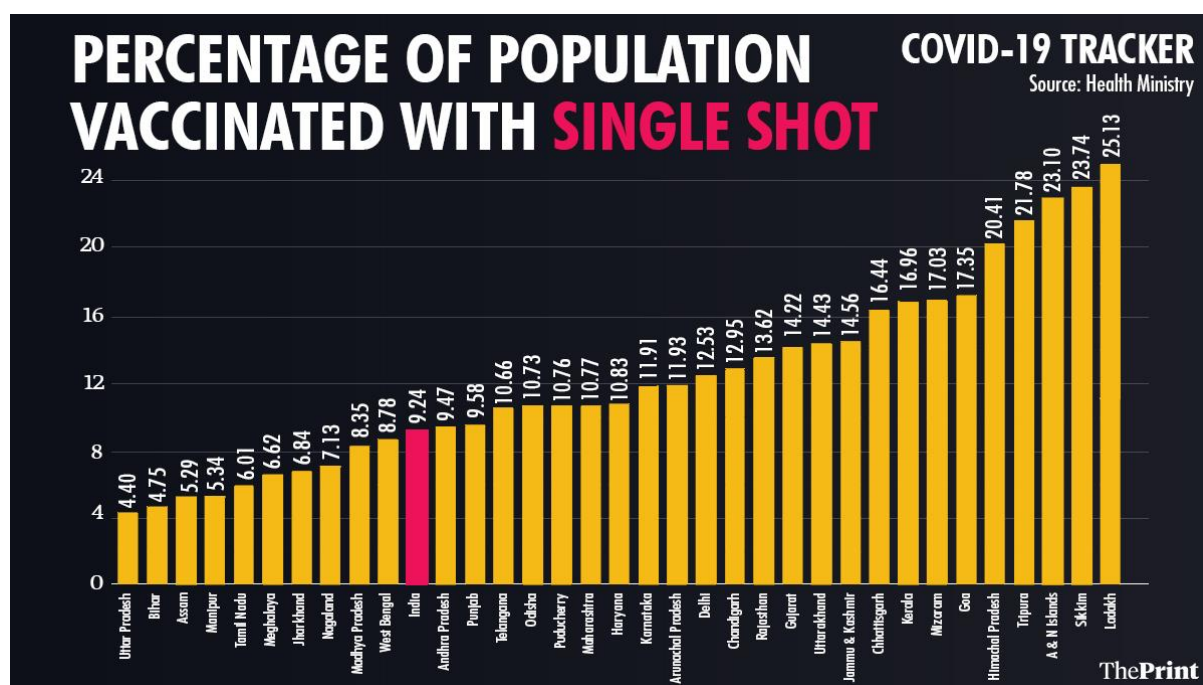
A total of 15,22,45,179 doses of the Covid vaccines have been administered in India so far. As many as 12,54,86,929 people have got the first dose of the vaccine, while 2,67,58,250 people have received both doses.

Overall, the smaller states and UTs have fared much better in their vaccination drive, with Ladakh being the top performer. The union territory has fully vaccinated 11 per cent of its population, while over a quarter of the population has received at least one dose.

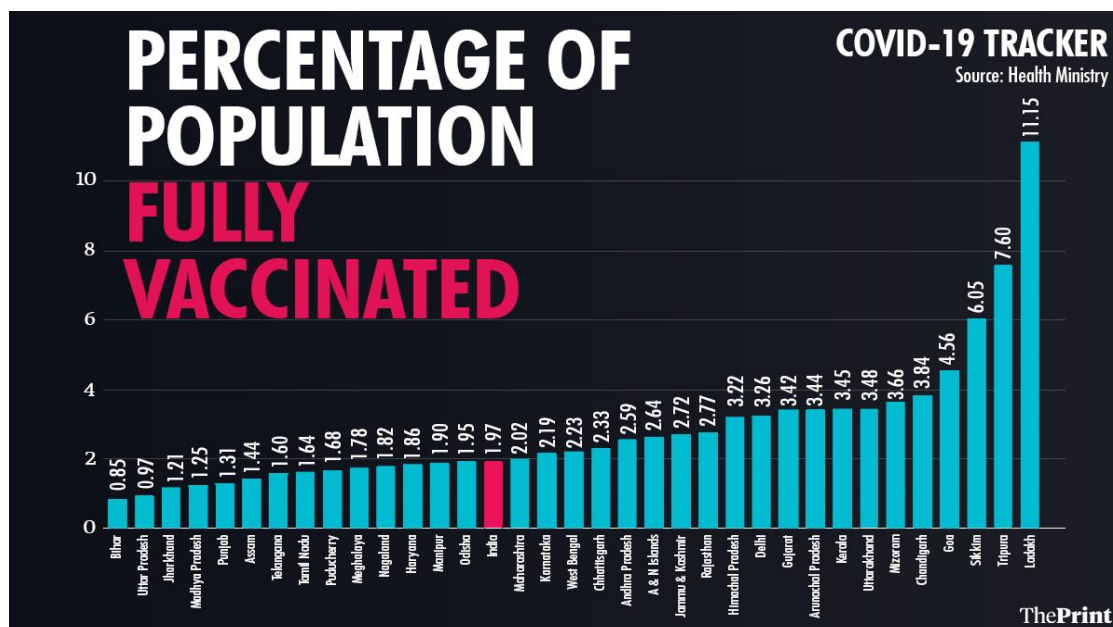
Among the states with the highest populations, Gujarat and Rajasthan are the top performers.

Gujarat has managed to fully vaccinate 3.42 per cent of the population, while 14.2 per cent have received at least one shot of the vaccine.

Similarly, in Rajasthan, 13.6 per cent of the population has received at least the first shot. Over 2.77 per cent of the population have received both shots.



Apart from Ladakh, Sikkim and Tripura, all other states have less than 20 per cent of the population vaccinated with at least one dose, while less than 5 per cent have received both doses.

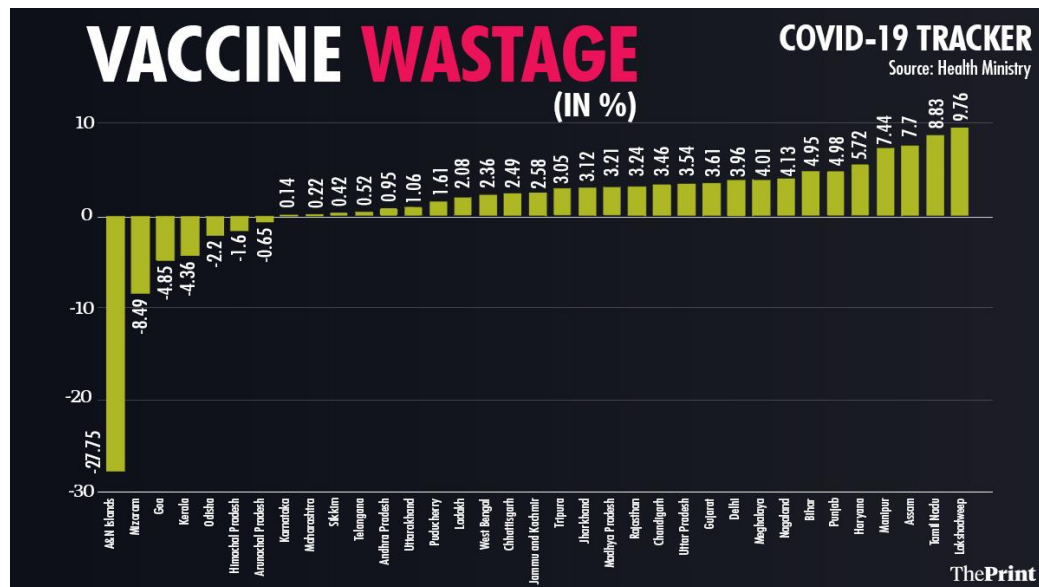


Nationally, 1.97 per cent of the people are fully vaccinated, while 9.24 have received at least one dose.

Vaccine wastage

Lakshadweep and Tamil Nadu are the states with the highest vaccine wastage. While Lakshadweep wasted 9.76 per cent of its doses, Tamil Nadu wasted 8.83 per cent of its vaccines.

To put this in context, 8.83 per cent wastage in Tamil Nadu translates to as much as 5,16,191 wasted shots — enough to fully vaccinate the entire population of a small region such as Ladakh.

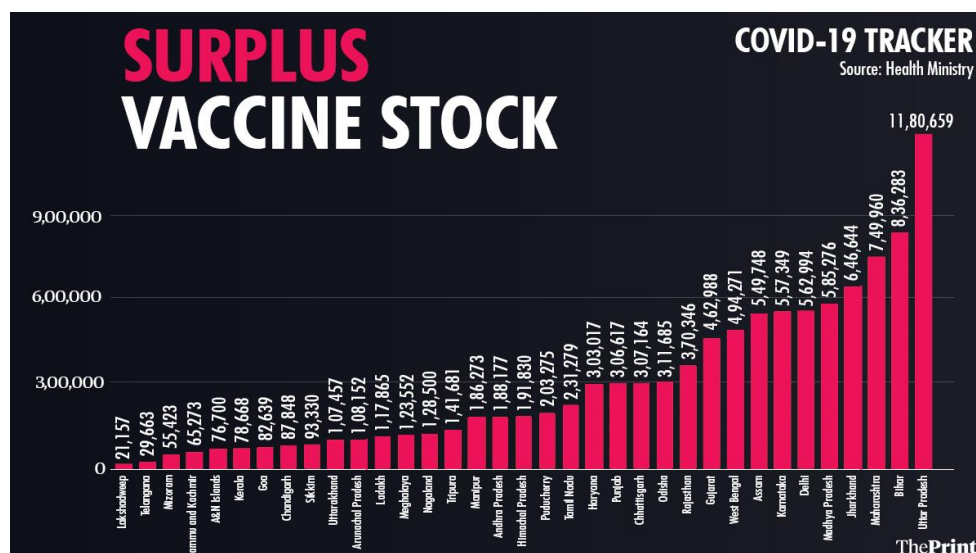


On the other side are states that reported negative vaccine wastage. This means that healthcare workers in these states were able to judiciously use the vaccine vials, managing to vaccinate 11 people from some vials instead of the standard 10.

States like Kerala and Odisha are some examples where negative vaccine wastage was reported.

Vaccine surplus

According to the health ministry, India still has a stock of 1,06,08,207 doses lying with different states.



Uttar Pradesh has the largest stock of 11,80,659 vaccines, followed by Bihar (8,36,283).

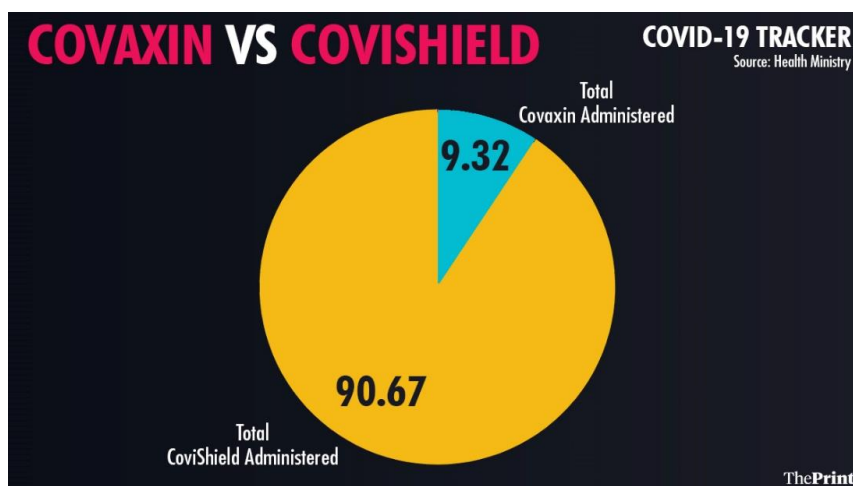
Both these states are among the worst performers in vaccination drive.

First dose vs second dose rollout

Since the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine needs to be administered 28-56 days after the first dose, the graph for the second shot should run parallel to the first.

However, the increasing gap between the two plots indicates that many people are delaying their second shot. This could be because of unavailability of vaccines or reluctance to visit hospitals due to the spike in cases.

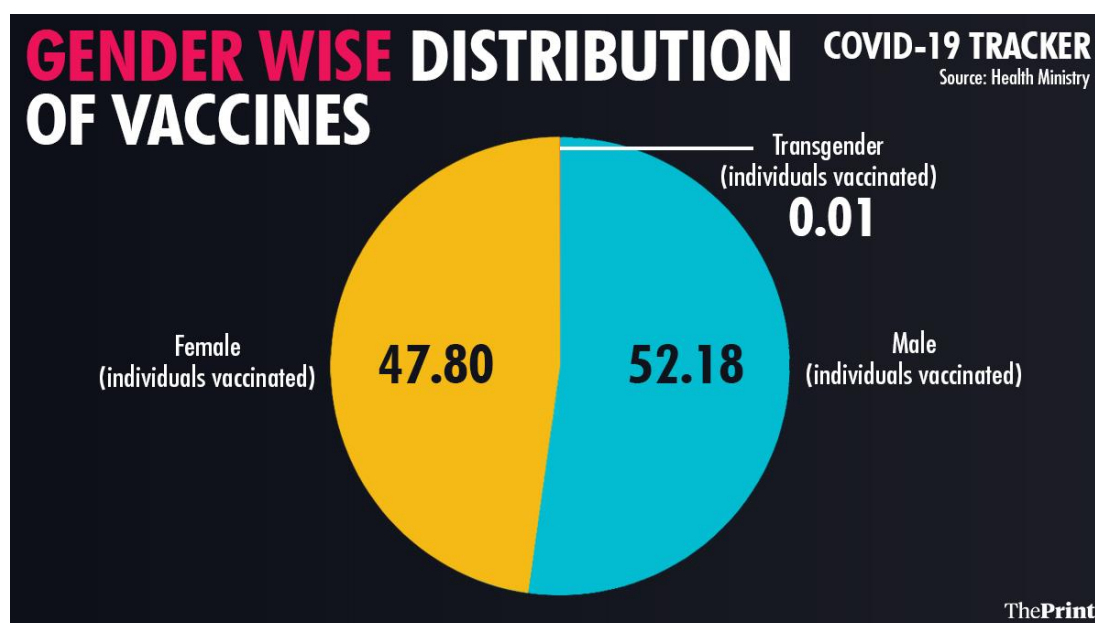
Covishield vs Covaxin



India is currently administering two vaccines — Covishield and Covaxin — developed by the Serum Institute of India, and ICMR and Bharat Biotech, respectively.

Just over nine per cent of the total vaccines administered so far have been Covaxin. More than 90 per cent of the Indians so far have received the Covishield vaccine.

Gender-wise distribution



So far, 52.18 per cent of those vaccinated are men, while 47.8 per cent are women. About 0.01 per cent of the vaccines have been administered to transpersons.

Modi era: Private banks grow; PSBs don't

By Manojit Saha, April 28, 2021

Business Standard

Since 2014, the public sector banks' branch network in rural and semi urban has grown by a mere 4,000 while for private sector banks, it doubled from 9,673 to 18,437.



At a time when the government's initiative to privatise public sector banks has drawn flak from several quarters as these lenders are seen to be at the forefront of lending to the rural areas, Reserve Bank of India's data tells a different story.

In the last four years (since September 2017), public sector banks have cut down on their overall branch strength sharply while the presence in rural and semi-urban areas also declined.

Private banks, on the other hand, expanded their overall branch network rapidly and their semi-urban and rural presence has grown commensurately.

Public sector banks had 91,994 branches as on September 2017, which fell to 88,854 by September 2020.

Their branch network in rural and semi-urban areas reduced by around 1,200 in these four years.

Private banks, which had 28,397 branches in September 2017, grew to 36,124 in the next four years while their presence in semi-urban and rural areas increased from 14,842 to 18,437 during the period.

Between 2014 and 2020, private banks almost doubled their branch presence in rural and semi-urban areas.

According to norms prescribed by Reserve Bank of India, a bank needs to operate at least 25% of the total number of branches opened in a financial year in unbanked rural areas.

Data for the last seven years since the Narendra Modi government came into power clearly shows 2017 marks as a break from the earlier trend, as public sector banks started contracting their branch network since then.

Since 2014, public sector banks' branch network in rural and semi urban has grown by a mere 4,000 - - from 49,859 in 2014 to 53,467 while for private sector banks, it doubled from 9,673 to 18,437.

Overall, public sector branch network grew from 84,530 to 88,554 in these seven years, while that of private sector banks jumped from 19,176 to 36,124.

Prompt corrective Action

One of the key reasons why public sector bank's branch expansion was restricted was because these 11 of these banks were put under the Prompt Corrective Action framework of RBI.

Restrictions were imposed as these lenders' financial parameters deteriorated and capital depleted.

IDBI Bank, for example, which came out of the prompt corrective action a few weeks ago, had 408 rural branches and 586 semi urban branches as on March 31, 2017 -- just before the bank was put under PCA in May 2017.

As on December 31, 2020, the number remained the same: 409 in rural areas and 585 in semi urban areas.

The bank had cut down its urban branches -- from 473 to 427 and metro branches from 453 to 427.

IDBI Bank, which was government-owned earlier, was categorized as a 'Private Sector Bank' for regulatory purposes by the RBI with effect from January 21, 2019 after the Life Insurance Corporation of India acquired 51% stake in the bank.

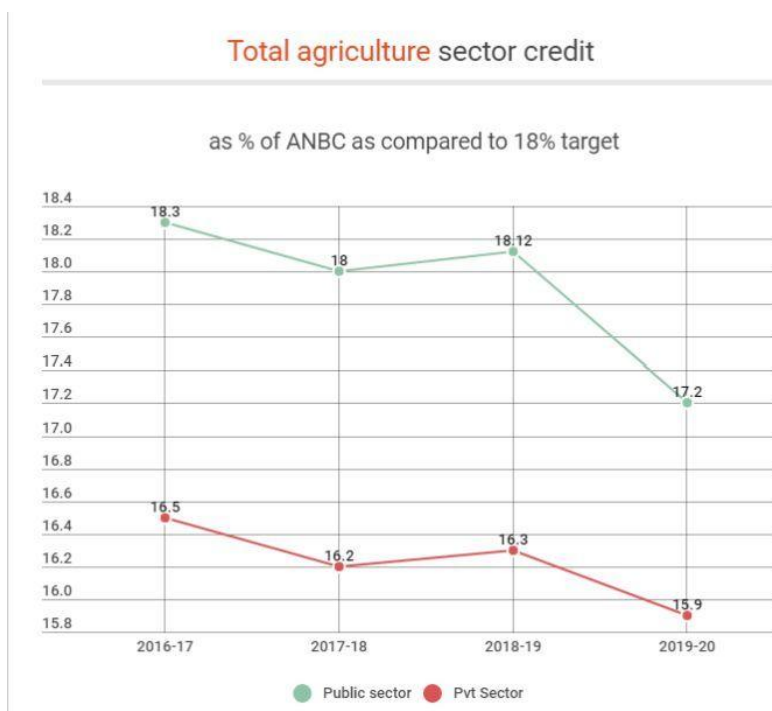
Farm credit

As far as agriculture credit is concerned, the public sector banks missed the target of 18% of adjusted net bank credit for the financial year 2019-2020, after achieving the target in the previous three years.

'During 2019-20, although all the bank-groups managed to achieve the overall priority sector lending (PSL), several sub-targets like those for agriculture, micro enterprises, small and marginal farmers (SMF) and non-corporate individual farmers were not achieved by some of them,' the RBI's Trend and Progress report for FY20 observed.

Private sector banks, on the other hand missed their target for agriculture lending in all four years.

The banking regulator observed that priority sector credit decelerated across constituent categories as well as across bank groups during 2019-20 while the deceleration in agricultural credit was led by Kisan Credit Card loans.



Merger

Another reason is the merger among the public sector banks.

In the last two years, 13 public sector banks have been merged into 5.

Since many of branches of merger bound had branches in close vicinity of each other so some degree of rationalisation may have taken place.

Fresh branch by the merged banks were almost stalled.

Losing market share

The decline in rural penetration also comes at a time when an internal working group (IGW) of the RBI recommended granting of bank licences to corporate houses, which is currently not allowed.

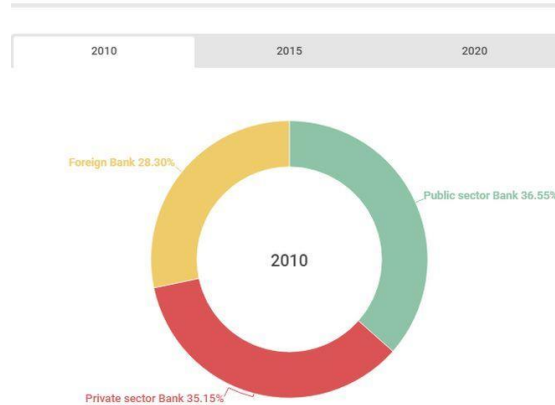
The 2016 on-tap guidelines had the condition that if promoting entity or the group has total assets of Rs 5,000 crore (Rs 50 billion) or more, the non-financial business of the group should not account for 40 per cent or more in terms of total assets or gross income, to be eligible for having a bank licence.

In its report, the IWG cited data to show that public sector banks have lost market share to private banks more rapidly than ever in the five-year period, 2015-2020.

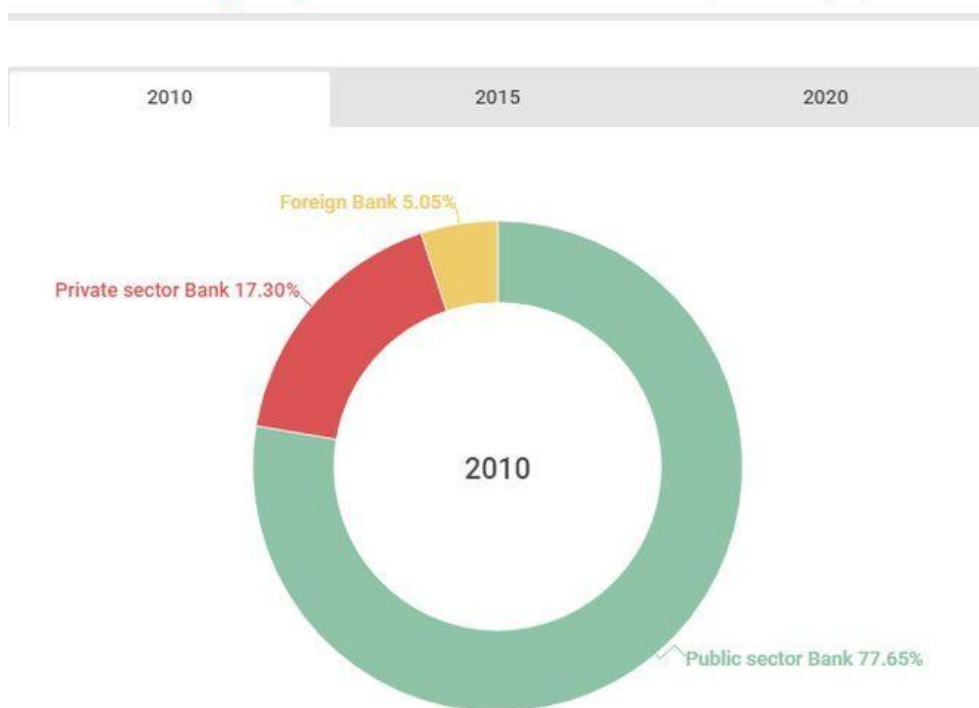
During these period, public sector banks' fell from 74.28% to 59.8% while their deposit share dropped from 76.26% to 64.75%.

Private sector banks' gain in market share was commensurate with the fall of public sector counterparts.

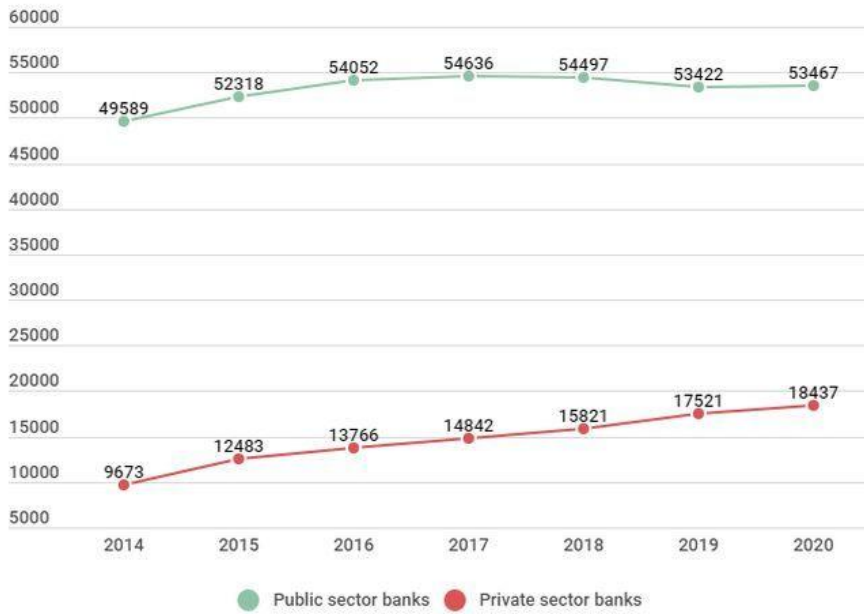
Bank groupwise market share in advances in (%)



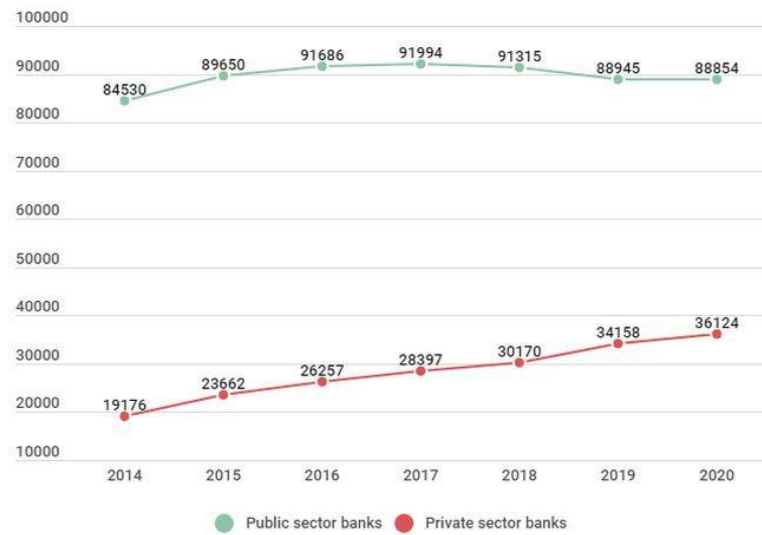
Bank groupwise market share in deposits (%)



No of branches in rural and semi urban areas



Total Number of branches



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