Crackdown on Meat Processing Plants

Why in news?

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UP ruling party's election manifesto has promised to **shut down all illegal slaughterhouses and place curbs on all mechanical abattoirs** in the state.

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What does it mean?

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- There is no confusion in the first part. All things illegal, by definition, have to be shut down.
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- But, the ambiguity lies in the part concerning mechanical, presumably legal slaughterhouses.
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- While there can be no plausible objection to the regulation of any industry, whether that is the stated intention here cannot be said for sure.
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How valid is the claim about declining livestock population?

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- The Sankalp Patra only makes a claim about UP's livestock wealth **suffering depletion**, while linking this to illegal smuggling and slaughtering of animals.
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- But, data from successive Livestock Censuses show a consistent increase in UP's total buffalo population: from 189.96 lakh in 1997 to 306.25 lakh in 2012.
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- On the other hand, the state's cattle numbers have fallen from 200.16 lakh

in 1997 to 195.57 lakh in 2012.
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- What is interesting, however, is a significant jump in the female cattle population.
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What can we infer?

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- First, there’s little evidence of a reduction in UP’s livestock wealth.
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- It has to do with buffalo milk fetching a better price due to its **higher fat content.**
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- Secondly, among both cattle and buffaloes, there is a particularly sharp increase in female animals.
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- The increased female bovine population also explains why **UP’s milk production has not suffered despite the boom in buffalo meat exports.**
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- The state’s milk output has gone up too, according to the Union Agriculture Ministry.
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- Finally, the existence of slaughterhouses and meat processing plants, means farmers find it easier to dispose of unproductive and old buffaloes, as opposed to cattle.
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- Either way, it is the farmer, not the slaughterhouse owners or buffalo meat exporters, who should be held responsible for the perceived loss of cattle wealth in UP.
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- If farmers have no mechanism to replace old animals, they may not find livestock rearing and milk production viable in the first place.
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Source: The Indian Express

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