NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (02.06.2022)

1. Aadhaar पर UIDAI का U-Turn, डेटा सुरक्षा में सेंध पर क्या कहते हैं एक्सपर्ट? *(hindi.thequint.com)* 01 June 2022

भारतीय विशिष्ट पहचान प्राधिकरण (UIDAI) ने शुक्रवार, 27 मई को कहा कि "अपने आधार (Aadhaar) की फोटोकॉपी किसी भी आर्गेनाईजेशन के साथ शेयर न करें क्योंकि इसका दुरुपयोग किया जा सकता है. इसकी जगह, कृपया एक मास्क्ड आधार का प्रयोग करें जिसमें आपके आधार का केवल अंतिम चार नंबर दिखता है". हालांकि इस चेतावनी को "गलत व्याख्या की संभावना को देखते हुए" दो दिनों के अंदर ही इसे वापस ले लिया गया.

UIDAI ने अब कहा है कि "सामान्य विवेक" ही पर्याप्त है और आधार का मौजूदा तंत्र में "आधार रखने वाले की पहचान और उसकी गोपनीयता की सुरक्षा के लिए पर्याप्त फीचर मौजूद हैं".

इसके बाद विशेषज्ञों ने UIDAI के इन बयानों पर सवाल उठाए हैं.

Aadhaar तंत्र में कमजोरी नई बात नहीं, फिर अभी क्यों है मामला गर्म?

UIDAI ने अपने दूसरे सर्कुलर में स्पष्ट किया कि पहली चेतावनी आधार कार्ड का फोटोशॉप करके उसके दुरुपयोग के प्रयास के संबंध में जारी किया गया था.

द इकोनॉमिक टाइम्स ने सरकारी सूत्रों के हवाले से रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित की कि UIDAI के बेंगलुरु ऑफिस को यह शिकायत मिली थी कि आधार नम्बरों और कार्डहोडर्स के पते जैसे संवेदनशील जानकारियों को फोटोशॉप किया जा रहा है और उनका दुरुपयोग किया जा रहा है.

हालांकि ऐसा नहीं है कि आधार की कमजोरियां पहली बार सामने आईं हैं. The Dialogue के डायरेक्टर काजिम रिजवी कहते हैं कि

"हो सकता है (फोटोशॉपिंग) अभी सर्कुलर जारी करने का कारण हो सकता है, लेकिन आधार के इकोसिस्टम में कमजोरी कोई नयी बात नहीं है, क्योंकि देश भर में आधार डेटा में कई सेंध और आधार डेटाबेस के दुरुपयोग की घटनाओं की सूचना मिली है"

काजिम रिजवी ने उन रिपोर्ट्स की ओर भी इशारा किया जिसके अनुसार लोगों के आधार डिटेल्स केवल 5 रूपये में भी बिकते हैं- जिसमें उनके नाम, पते और मोबाइल नंबर शामिल होते हैं. यही नहीं वोटरों के प्रोफाइल के लिए कंपनियां यूजर्स डेटा भी स्टोर करती हैं.

Aadhaar के ढाल में सेंध

रिजवी ने समझाया कि आधार सिस्टम में तीन लेयर्स हैं: बुनियादी ढांचा (इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर), डेटा-लिंकिंग और एप्लिकेशन.

उन्होंने बताया कि "जहां डेटा-लिंकिंग का लेयर एन्क्रिप्टेड है, वहीं अन्य दो लेयर प्राइवेसी और सुरक्षा उपायों पर जोर दिए बिना थर्ड पार्टी (यूजर और UIDAI के अलावा) के स्वामित्व में हैं और प्रयोग होता है. इससे पता चलता है कि आधार का

सिस्टम प्राइवेसी और सुरक्षा जोखिमों के प्रति संवेदनशील है, जो आधार डेटा के पूरे जीवनचक्र में फैला हुआ है "

"डेटा कलेक्ट करने के स्टेज के दौरान, सामान्य सेवा केंद्र जैसी मध्यस्थ एजेंसियों और एजेंटों का आधार इकोसिस्टम में भागीदारी के कारण एजेंट फ्रॉड, जासूसी, पहचान की चोरी (आइडेंटिटी थेफ्ट), आधार का दुरुपयोग आदि की संभावना बढ़ जाती है"
उदाहरण के तौर पर उन्होंने द ट्रिब्यून में एक रिपोर्ट की ओर इशारा किया, जिसके अनुसार एक पत्रकार एक एजेंट को केवल 500 रुपये देकर लगभग दस लाख व्यक्तियों का आधार डेटा लेने में सक्षम था.

UIDAI: आधार का रेगुलेट और प्रमोटर दोनों
स्वतंत्र शोधकर्ता श्रीनिवास कोडाली का कहना है कि सरकारी सेवाओं के सक्रिय डिजिटलीकरण के कारण आधार संबंधित फ्रॉड में तेजी के अलावा,
UIDAI की आलोचना करने वाली हालिया CAG रिपोर्ट- UIDAI के इस बयान के पीछे का कारण हो सकती है.

दूसरी बातों के साथ भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने पाया कि बायोमेट्रिक डेटा की गुणवत्ता सामान्य स्तर से नीचे की थी और UIDAI के डेटाबेस में सभी आधार नंबर के साथ उसके डॉक्यूमेंट नहीं थे, जिससे डेटा की "शुद्धता और पूर्णता" (correctness and completeness) पर शक है.

श्रीनिवास कोडाली का दावा है कि UIDAI ने 2017 में 13 करोड़ आधार नंबर लीक होने की खबर सामने आने के बाद 'मास्क्ड आधार' का विकल्प लाया था.

श्रीनिवास कोडाली ने क्विंट को बताया कि "कोई भी आसानी से फोटोशॉप करके आधार में बदलाव ला सकता है, शायद ही कभी आधार कार्ड पर दिए डिटेल्स को वेरीफाई किया जाता है. यह एक ऐसा मुद्दा है जिस पर अरबों आधार कार्ड बांटने से पहले UIDAI को काम करना चाहिए था."

"UIDAI आधार का नियामक (रेगुलेटर) और प्रवर्तक (प्रमोटर) दोनों है, इसके कारण ही इसने दो विरोधी बयान जारी किए हैं. रेगुलेटर का प्रमोटर बनने का यह विचार किसी भी इंडस्ट्री के लिए बुरा है"

'सामान्य विवेक ' का क्या मतलब समझें?
अपने शुरुआती सर्कुलर को वापस लेने के बाद UIDAI ने कहा कि आधार कार्ड होल्डर्स को "UIDAI आधार नंबरों का उपयोग करने और किसी के साथ शेयर करने में केवल अपने सामान्य विवेक का प्रयोग करने की सलाह दी जाती है"

इसमें यह भी कहा गया कि आधार का मौजूदा तंत्र में "आधार रखने वाले की पहचान और उसकी गोपनीयता की सुरक्षा के लिए पर्याप्त फीचर मौजूद हैं".

हालांकि, UIDAI का इस तरह का बयान गैर-जिम्मेदाराना प्रतीत होता है क्योंकि ऐसी फ्रॉड की घटनाओं पर पहले ही रिपोर्ट की जा चुकी है.

काजिम रिजवी के अनुसार सरकार कहती है कि आधार के सुरक्षित उपयोग के लिए 'सामान्य विवेक पर्याप्त' है, लेकिन यह बहुत अस्पष्ट है और जिसे सामान्य विवेक किसे माना जाए, उसके संबंध में कम स्पष्टता है.

"इसके अलावा भारत जैसे देश में, जहां शिक्षा और जागरूकता के स्तर में भारी अंतर है, लोगों से सामान्य विवेक का प्रयोग करने की अपेक्षा करना व्यावहारिक नहीं है" -काजिम रिजवी

श्रीनिवास कोडाली ने कहा कि भारत सरकार आधार से जुड़े फ्रॉड को स्वीकार नहीं करना चाहती है. उन्हों ने कहा कि "सरकार केवल यथास्थिति चाहती है, जहां वह केवल कुछ बड़ा होने पर प्रतिक्रिया करती है. व ह आधार से जुड़े फ्रॉड के शिकार लोगों को जवाब देने में अनिच्छुक है." https://hindi.thequint.com/news/india/aadhaar-uidai-identity-privacy-safeguard-mechanisms-fraud-expert-question-govt-advisory#read-more

2. The unrefined truth about India's crude output decline *(livemint.com)* 02 June 2022

The burden of producing the bulk of India's crude output falls on the shoulders of ONGC. Over the years, ONGC has become a less efficient explorer and developer of hydrocarbons and more cash cow guided to make acquisitions, not all of which make economic sense

India's crude oil output was at a 28-year low, at 28.4 million tonnes in the financial year 2021-22, reported Business Standard. Crude output has been falling continuously, month after month, for the past four years, with just one month registering a marginal increase. At the same time, India's demand has been growing robustly, resulting in a steady rise in imports, which touched 212 million tonnes in FY22. India is the world's third-largest importer of crude, behind only China and the US. The question is, can India increase its own domestic output, or will it be dependent on imported energy, like Japan?

Whether India has significant hydrocarbon reserves to exploit is open to question. India is supposed to have less than 600 million tonnes of reserves, spread out across its vast landmass and offshore, within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone. Bombay High remains the biggest find and still the largest source of crude. Brahmaputra Valley, where oil was first struck in colonial times, and Rajasthan's Barmer are major onshore sites. The Cauvery and Godavari basins, as well as the area off the coast of Gujarat, are estimated to have decent deposits. But the point is to find them and pump the oil and gas out.

Since oil and gas are abundant in the geographic book-ends of the Indian sub-continent, the Persian Gulf in the West and Southeast Asia in the East, it stands to reason that India also contains large deposits that wait to be discovered. Geologists have been looking to the geography of continental drift to identify potential reserves in locations that once were adjacent to sites of proven, active reserves, such as Guyana and Equatorial Guinea. The point is to locate India's reserves and pump oil and gas out of them.

This has not proved easy. The burden of producing the bulk of India's crude output falls on the shoulders of ONGC. Over the years, ONGC has become a less efficient explorer and developer of hydrocarbons and more cash cow guided to make acquisitions, not all of which make economic sense. Its track record of finding oil and gas has been less than spectacular since the discovery of Bombay High. When ONGC announced last month its plan to spend ₹31,000 core on new finds, its share price tanked.

The last major find was by Cairn in Rajasthan, the field now called Mangala and owned by Vedanta. Otherwise, India has been trying hard to get foreign expertise and money into new hydrocarbon discoveries. In the latest round of open acreage auctions, three state-owned companies (ONGC, Oil India Ltd and GAIL) and a newbie private company Sun Petro took part. India has consistently failed to attract large global players into exploration and development.

India now offers reasonably attractive terms for new investors in the oil and gas sectors. It offers open acreage, meaning companies can identify and bid for blocks of their choice in a designated expanse, instead of bidding for blocks identified by the government. The country also offers revenue sharing, instead of production sharing after recovery of cost, as the method of remunerating developers. Cost recovery is open to charges of cost-padding, disputes by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the spilling of oil company revenues into the political domain. Revenue sharing is most suited for countries such as in the Persian Gulf where the likelihood of finding oil/gas is high. However, given the political economy of cost recovery, India can settle for revenue sharing, even if this could depress revenues — companies would bid low revenue shares to be handed over to the government, given the likelihood of having to spend lots on exploration before a decent deposit is located. The royalty companies have to pay has been lowered. In spite of all the prettying up of this particular bride, there are very few eligible suitors in the ring.

It is not inconceivable that the shoddy treatment meted out to Cairn has a role to play in deterring external players. Cairn, a specialist hydrocarbon discovery company, discovered oil and gas where other companies, including ONGC, had failed to find any. This includes the Barmer field as well. Yet, an internal reorganization of assorted subsidiaries to consolidate them into one single company, without any change in beneficial ownership, prior to an initial public offering, led to a retrospective demand for capital gains tax. The company disputed the demand. The government responded by seizing dividends, selling shares and withholding tax refunds. Cairn won an international arbitration award against this highhandedness. The government refused to honour the award. The company identified Indian assets abroad to be seized, and foreign courts started granting permission to seize the assets. The government, after the initial bluster, changed its posture on retrospective taxation and settled with Cairn.

This has left a bitter taste in the mouth of would-be investors in India. The experience of assorted companies with regard to India's readiness to abide by international arbitral awards, ranging from Devas to Amazon in its dispute with Future, acting as a proxy for Reliance Industries Ltd, does not generate enthusiasm about the ease of doing business in India for foreign companies.

The arbitrary use of central enforcement agencies against political opponents might serve to cow minor leaders of the Opposition but has a chilling effect on external perception of fair play at the hands of the Indian state. India has dipped on a range of globally accepted indicators of quality of governance, ranging from press freedom, democratic integrity, hunger and malnutrition to religious freedom. These do not directly map on to crude production in the country but serve as disincentives for the deployment of serious capital and expertise in India with a longish period of lock-in, as in the case of investment in hydrocarbon exploration and development.

Till India changes its performance on such parameters, ONGC will have to learn the tricks it seems to have forgotten since the heady days of discovering and developing Bombay High. It would help if the government were to see ONGC as an oil major rather than as a financial investor who could take over companies and hand over cash to the government. https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/the-unrefined-truth-about-india-s-crude-output-decline-11654076157350.html

3. How the Bulk of Assam's Sanitiser Orders Went to Firm Linked with CM at Much Higher Rate *(thewire.in)* 02 June 2022

The Assam government paid Rs 25 (Rs 37 with GST) to a firm for each 200-ml bottle of sanitiser it ordered. To another, with links to Himanta Biswa Sarma, it paid Rs 231 for every 500-ml bottle and Rs 100.30 for every 100-ml bottle – Rs 137 and Rs 81 more per bottle respectively if the former firm's rates were to be applied.

Guwahati: As the nation dealt with the unprecedented emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, it is clear that it became an opportunity for the health department of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Assam government to hand over 'urgent' medical supply orders to companies owned by the then health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife and his immediate family's business associates.

For instance, the Assam government paid Rs 25 (Rs 37 with GST) to a firm for each 200-ml bottle of sanitiser it ordered. To another, with links to Himanta Biswa Sarma, it paid Rs 231 for every 500-ml bottle and Rs 100.30 for every 100-ml bottle – Rs 137 and Rs 81 more per bottle respectively if the former firm's rates were to be applied.

The Wire, on June 1, reported on a bunch of Right to Information responses that revealed that the state's health ministry in the then Sarbananda Sonowal-led government placed 'instant' and 'urgent' medical supply orders in the days leading up to the national lockdown on March 24, 2020.

Among the most significant beneficiaries of such 'urgent' work orders – along with JCB Industries, owned by Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma – were GRD Pharmaceuticals and Meditime Healthcare, both owned by Guwahati-based Ghanshyam Dhanuka.

Interestingly, Sarma's son Nandil Biswa Sarma is currently a majority stakeholder in Vasistha Realtors (formerly RBS Realtors), a firm where Ghanshyam's father, Ashok Dhanuka, is a full-time director.

The RTI responses have revealed that GRD Pharmaceuticals, owned by Dhanuka, bagged major contracts for supplying hand sanitisers to the state government during the pandemic. Crucially, the state government bought the hand sanitisers from Dhanuka's company at a price that was substantially above the available market rates. The health ministry helmed by Sarma also appears to have bent over backwards to accommodate conditions put forward by Dhanuka's companies to procure the medical paraphernalia – for instance, PPE kits were delivered at the Assam Bhavan in New Delhi, instead of Guwahati.

The health department's documents provided to The Cross Current through an RTI reply show that one such 'urgent' supply order to GRD Pharmaceuticals was approved at a much higher rate than the price quoted by at least one another company. The March 26, 2020 contract to Dhanuka's firm was extraordinary as the health department could by then secure suppliers for the disinfectant at a much lower price and within the state itself.

So far, there is no public record to show that these supply orders to Dhanuka's firm were issued by the Sarma-held health ministry by following a tendering or quotation process. Rather, the RTI responses indicated that the contract to the firm may have been approved on the basis of nomination.

The RTI replies to The Cross Current by the state chapter of the National Health Mission (NHM), which were parsed by The Wire, have revealed that between March 11, 2020, and May 29, 2020, GRD Pharmaceuticals was issued seven orders for delivering 500-ml and 100-ml bottles of sanitisers. This made it one of the biggest suppliers of the product to the state health department during the pandemic.

The NHM, in annexures attached with the RTI responses, mentioned the work orders for hand sanitisers to GRD Pharmaceuticals with details of the dates on which goods were delivered and the receipt of the quantity procured by the agency.

Though the NHM didn't provide us any of the hand sanitiser related work orders issued to GRD Pharmaceuticals prior to the lockdown, The Wire and The Cross Current can confirm that at least one such order issued by the health department to the firm – prior to the lockdown announcement – was an 'urgent' order. An 'urgent' order could mean that the tendering or quotation process might have been skipped in favour of the nomination process.

These inferences were drawn on the basis of documents accessed by these correspondents at the NHM's Inventory Management System (IMS) which is in the public domain. The IMS documents an 'urgent supply order' for hand sanitisers issued to GRD Pharmaceuticals along with the price on March 18, 2020. The government's order, that can be seen below, didn't mention any quotation bid by the firm.

In contrast, according to the information shared by the NHM, at least one other company – among those which got 14 other pandemic-related work orders during the national lockdown – had bagged a contract to supply medical kits only after its "quotation" was approved by the NHM.

The curious case of Dhanuka's hand sanitiser

As per the March 18, 2020, order accessed in IMS, each 500-ml bottle of Dhanuka's firm's sanitiser, Handrub, was to be supplied to the state health government at Rs 231.87 including GST, while the 100-ml bottles were priced at Rs 100.30 per piece including GST.

The GRD Pharmaceuticals website mentions that its Handrub sanitiser is "the first alcohol-based Handrub to be manufactured in the entire North East way back in 2012." This indicates that the company may well have a monopoly on the product in the region for some years, which may explain its apparent capacity to demand a particular asking rate from the government.

But what is to be underlined here is that on March 24, 2020 – hours before the sudden lockdown was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi – the NHM could successfully place an 'urgent work order' to another Assam-based firm, Surma Distillery Private Limited, to supply 1,30,000 hand sanitisers of 200 ml each. However, this was at a rate much lower than what NHM had agreed to pay GRD Pharmaceuticals.

The price set for Surma Distillery's sanitisers was Rs 25 (without GST) and Rs 37 (with GST) for every 200 ml bottle.

RTI replies received by The Cross Current showed that the Silchar-based Surma Distillery supplied the entire lot of 1,30,000 bottles of 200-ml sanitisers to NHM at that rate.

If one takes into account hand sanitisers supplied by Surma Distillery, then the 500-ml and 100-ml bottles of the product supplied by GRD Pharmaceuticals should be only Rs 94.40 and Rs 18.88 respectively – as against its rates of Rs 231 for each 500-ml bottle and Rs 100.30 for every 100-ml bottle.

When contacted, Surma Distillery director Arindam Hore told The Wire, "We are happy that on a short notice, we could fulfil the demand made by the state government to meet a public health crisis. Our main product is country liquor but we were told by the authorities that due to coronavirus, the distillery would soon be closed, so we should supply hand sanitisers instead to meet the emergency as one of the ingredients needed for it, ethanol, is already available with us. So, we followed the World Health Organization's formula to produce hand sanitisers to meet the emergency and supplied them to the health department in bottles that we could procure back then."

On being asked whether the government had approached it for more hand sanitisers after the order was fulfilled, Hore told The Wire, "No it didn't, most likely because by then, better looking and better packaged hand sanitisers began to hit the market even from outside the state."

He added, "We also didn't pursue the matter because we wanted to get back to our core business. Producing hand sanitisers as a regular product would mean going through a long process of procuring licenses from the government, etc."

However, a close look at the supply list for hand sanitisers provided by NHM to The Cross Current – from March 18, 2020 to January 1, 2021 – showed no supplier for the product from outside the state. It indicates that the state's health ministry might not have gone seeking competitive rates for the product outside of the state but instead settled firmly for a company which seems to have a monopoly in the region and at a rate demanded by it.

Additionally, the information provided in the NHM annexures revealed that yet another distillery, North Guwahati-based Mangalam Distillery, was also issued a work order for 70 lakh 200-ml bottles of hand sanitisers worth Rs 20,65,00,000 (Rs 20 crore 65 lakhs) on the very day when Surma Distillery bagged its order. Although, Mangalam Distillery failed to deliver the goods, the price at which the NHM approved its order for each 200-ml bottle is only Rs 29.50 – again, much lower than the rate approved for GRD Pharmaceuticals.

The documents point at NHM receiving hand sanitisers from at least seven other Assam-based firms on April 2, 2020. The RTI replies cited the name of the firms, the date of delivery of the hand sanitisers to the NHM, and the quantity of bottles received, but do not mention the rate at which those sanitisers were procured by the health department, nor the quantity delivered in those bottles.

What the annexures confirm is that GRD Pharmaceuticals carried out the largest supply of hand sanitisers to the health department. Between March 11 and May 29, 2020, the company supplied 36,600 bottles of 500-ml hand sanitiser bottles and another 500 of the 100-ml packs.

While the rate of the March 18, 2020, ‘urgent’ order and the March 26, 2020 ‘urgent’ order for Handrub sanitisers to GRD Pharmaceuticals were approved at Rs 231.87 for a 500-ml bottle, the price for the rest at which the deliveries were made by the company – between March 11 and 18, 2020 and on May 29, 2020 – could not be ascertained as NHM did not provide those specific work orders to us.

However, in total, the RTI replies have shown that Dhanuka’s firm supplied 36,600 Handrub bottles to the state NHM and at least from two of the seven orders it can be confirmed to have received a high rate as part of the ‘urgent supply order’.

Accusations of misappropriation of funds

Dhanuka’s firms have been at the centre of controversies during the course of the pandemic. Accusations against his firms for allegedly misappropriating funds in procurement of essentials to meet the COVID-19 challenge had surfaced in Assam in mid-2020. On June 24, 2020, the Assamese daily with one of the largest circulations in the state, Asamiya Pratidin, had flashed a front page article accusing Dhanuka and some other Guwahati-based businessmen of “running a syndicate” to provide COVID-related emergency supplies to the health department at an exorbitant rate.

Two Guwahati-based civil society organisations – Assam Public Works (APW) and Durniti Virodhi Yuva Shakti (DVYS) – also pursued the matter. APW, on July 23, 2020, in an open letter to the then Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, demanded a probe into supply of six emergency items – N95 masks, three-layered masks, PPE kits, disposable gloves, hand sanitisers and melathin – by the two firms owned by Dhanuka along with some other local suppliers. APW accused them of running “a mafia” in the state health department “without the knowledge of the health minister”.

APW’s letter, published on July 20, 2020 on the front page of Asamiya Pratidin had particularly claimed that as many as 295 bidders had applied to the state government seeking the contract worth Rs 71 crore to supply those items. “Companies of international repute like Mafatlal and Apollo International had bid for those contracts to supply the items. However, violating the CVC (central vigilance commission) guidelines and GFR (general financial rules) guidelines, the state unit of NHM didn’t disclose who won the bid and didn’t upload the information on its site,” the letter reportedly said.

“Because of the, the common man in Assam remained in the dark as to who supplied those items. Non-disclosure of the name of the supplier is a clear violation of the rules of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on procurement of public goods,” the report read, quoting the letter.

In a press statement on July 24, 2020, DVYS had stated that while a 100-ml bottle of Handrub sanitiser produced by GRD Pharmaceuticals is sold by the company at a wholesale rate of Rs 29.46, it supplied 500-ml bottles of the same sanitiser to NHM at a whopping Rs 231.87 – Rs 84.57 more than what the price should have been.

The rate quoted then by DVYS for the 500-ml bottle of Handrub matches the government record shared through RTI replies with The Cross Current.

In response to those accusations attracting public scrutiny, former business associate of Sarma's wife, Rajib Bora, who was also one of the suppliers of the 'urgent work orders' issued during the national lockdown by the health department, filed a case at the court of the civil judge Rajeev Kumar Deka, Kamrup (Metro), on July 24, 2020. The case was against APW founder Abjijit Sarma and the editor of a local channel, Pratibimba Live. Bora, who supplied PPE kits to the NHM, accused them of defamation and demanded compensation for it.

The court continued to hear the case but clamped a temporary injunction, directing the defendants to "restrain from making any further alleged defamatory statement concerning the purchase of PPE kits and also to restrain opposite party 2 (Pratibimba Live) from broadcasting any defamatory news in respect of subject matter of the suit via any media as on July 23, 200 till next".

The last hearing of the case was on May 20, 2022.

When contacted, Abhijit Sarma told The Wire, "I can't go into the details of the case with media anymore as there is now an injunction on the matter and the case is being heard at the court."

Meanwhile, days after Sarma occupied the chief minister's chair after the 2021 assembly elections, Ghanshyam Dhanuka and his father Ashok Dhanuka donated Rs 12 lakh to the CM's Relief Fund for COVID-19 vaccination. During the first wave of the pandemic, the Dhanukas donated Rs 50 lakh to the state's COVID-related fund, as per news reports.

The Sarma regime has recently extended Assam Police security to Ghanshyam Dhanuka, a rare facility to a state-based businessman. https://thewire.in/government/assam-himanta-biswa-sarma-grd-pharmaceuticals

4. मामले की जांच करेगी सीएजी, IFS अधिकारी किशन चंद की बढ़ी मुश्किलें *(jantaserishta.com)* 01 June 2022

देहरादून: उत्तराखंड वन विभाग में बीते दिनों चर्चाओं में आए निलंबित आईएफएस अधिकारी किशन चंद की मुश्किल और बढ़ सकती है. सरकार ने उन्हें तमाम अनियमितताओं और जांच के बाद निलंबित किया था. जिसके बाद उत्तराखंड वन प्रमुख विनोद कुमार सिंघल ने भी विभागीय जांच करवाई. जिसके बाद इस पूरे मामले की जांच के लिए सीएजी को पत्र भी लिखा गया. इस पूरे मामले की अपने स्तर से जांच करवाने के लिए भी वन प्रमुख ने कहा. मामले की गंभीरता को देखते हुए सीएजी ने भी इस पूरे मामले को हाथों हाथ लिया है. अब विनोद कुमार सिंघल सहित विभाग से इस मामले के तमाम कागजात मांगे हैं.

उत्तराखंड वन विभाग में बीते दिनों कॉर्बेट टाइगर रिजर्व के कालागढ़ और लैंसडाउन प्रभागों में कथित तौर पर भारी अनियमितताएं पाई गई थी. जिसके बाद विभाग ने इसकी जांच करवाई तो पाया गया कि किशन चंद सहित कुछ और कर्मचारी सरकारी पैसे का दुरुपयोग कर रहे हैं. विभागीय जांच में यह भी सामने आया था कि जो पैसा विभाग में अन्य कार्यों के लिए सरकार से स्वीकृत हुआ था उन पैसों को किशन चंद सहित कुछ कर्मचारियों ने सही मद में नहीं लगाया.

इस पैसे से फ्रिज, एसी और दूसरे ऐशोआराम के संसाधन खरीदे गये. यह रकम लगभग 1.43 करोड़ रुपए थी. जब इस मामले का जवाब किशनचंद से मांगा गया और पत्राचार हुआ तो बताया जाता है कि विभाग को वह सही से जानकारी नहीं दे पाए. जिसके बाद वन विभाग ने इस पूरे मामले की जांच करवाई. तब इ समें भारी अनियमितताएं मिलने के बाद उन्हें सरकार ने तत्काल प्रभाव से निलंबित भी कर दिया था.

वन प्रमुख विनोद कुमार सिंघल को लगता है कि अनियमितताएं सिर्फ यहीं तक सीमित नहीं थी. लिहाजा उ न्होंने अपनी तरफ से कोशिश करते हुए इस पूरे मामले की एक लिखित शिकायत सीएजी से भी की. अब इस मामले से जुड़े तमाम कागजात सीएजी ने विभाग से मांगे हैं.

विनोद कुमार सिंघल ने कहा वह अभी फिलहाल बाहर हैं, लेकिन यह बात सही है कि उन्होंने अपनी तरफ से एक पत्र सीएजी को लिखा था. जिसमें इस पूरे मामले की जांच करवाने की बात कही गई है. विनोद कुमार सिंह को लगता है कि अगर इसकी और सही से जांच होगी तो कई और कर्मचारी और अधिकारी इ समें शामिल हो सकते हैं. विनोद कुमार सिंघल का कहना है कि विभाग किसी भी कीमत पर इस तरह की गतिविधियों और अनियमितताओं को बर्दाश्त नहीं करेगा. प्रयाग से लौटाए जा रहे श्रद्धालुबता दें किशनचंद पर पहले भी राष्ट्रीय बाघ संरक्षण प्राधिकरण के द्वारा जांच चल रही है. इसके साथ ही कालागढ़ में अन्य मा मलों की जांच भी उनके ऊपर चल रही थी. कई मामलों का संज्ञान लेकर उत्तराखंड हाईकोर्ट ने भी इस मामले की जांच के आदेश दिए थे. अब किशनचंद से जुड़ा पूरा मामला सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहुंच गया है. इस मा मले में तत्कालीन रेंजर ब्रिज बिहारी शर्मा, डीएफओ किशनचंद और मुख्य वन्यजीव वार्डन जेएस सुहाग निलं बित चल रहे हैं. https://jantaserishta.com/local/uttarakhand/uttarakhand-news-cag-will-investigate-the-matter-ifs-officer-kishan-chands-problems-increase-1276282

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

5. Government revenues were buoyant last year, will likely remain so this year, providing fiscal headroom *(indianexpress.com)* Updated: June 2, 2022

Data released by the Controller General of Accounts on Tuesday indicated that government finances fared better than expected in the just ended financial year (2021-22). Sharp increases were observed in both tax as well as non-tax revenues as compared to the revised budget estimates presented a few months ago. Further, with total government spending last year being only marginally higher than what was pegged in the revised estimates, the fiscal deficit for 2021-22 has moderated further, coming in at 6.7 per cent of the GDP, lower than the 6.9 per cent projected in the revised estimates.

At the aggregate level, the Centre's gross tax collections stood at Rs 27.08 lakh crore in 2021-22, almost Rs 2 lakh crore higher than the revised estimates, which were themselves higher than the earlier budget estimates. The healthier than expected tax revenue was driven by robust direct and indirect tax collections. Direct tax collections stood at Rs 13.85 lakh crore, around Rs 1.35 lakh crore higher than the revised estimates (with both corporate and income tax collections growing at a heartening pace), while indirect tax collections were higher by around Rs 57,000 crore. A similar increase was also observed in non-tax revenues driven, in part, by higher dividends from PSUs. The latest data also indicates that the central government has considerable fiscal headroom in the coming financial year. The Union budget for 2022-23 had pegged the Centre's gross tax revenues at Rs 27.57 lakh crore — this is now only 1.8 per cent higher than its gross tax revenues in 2021-22. Considering that the recent Economic Survey had pegged the economy to grow at 8-8.5 per cent in 2022-23 — even though this forecast was made before the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and growth is now expected to be lower — as nominal growth is likely to remain high, actual tax collections may well come in significantly higher than budgeted targets.

At the same time, there are several headwinds. On the revenue side, the recent cuts in excise duties, and the lower than expected transfer from the central bank are likely to act as a drag on receipts. On the expenditure side, spending on food, fertiliser and LPG subsidies will weigh heavily on the exchequer. And though the higher than expected revenues, aided by higher than previously anticipated nominal GDP growth, will help offset some of this, the pressure on the fisc is likely to remain. https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/non-tax-revenue-fiscal-deficit-india-gdp-7948184/

6. A modest, uneven economic recovery *(indianexpress.com)* Updated: June 2, 2022

At 8.7 per cent, the National Statistical Office's latest estimate for GDP growth in 2021-22, while marginally lower than the 8.95 per cent projected in late February, is quite good given the headwinds the economy faced. The slower growth in 2021-22 was due to a downward revision of the estimates in the first two quarters of the year. However, these numbers need to be interpreted carefully, given the base effects of a 6.6 per cent contraction in 2020-21. The quarterly growth numbers in the first three quarters of 2021-22 are a mirror image of the contraction in the first two quarters of 2020-21, followed by a recovery in the third and fourth quarters. Inflation-adjusted GDP in absolute terms in the fourth quarter of 2021-22 was 107 per cent of the pre-pandemic level (2019-20) and 91 per cent in the first quarter.

At a broad sectoral level, agriculture grew at 3 per cent in 2021-22, industry at 9.8 per cent, and services at 8.8 per cent. The two sectors that contributed noticeably towards the fourth-quarter growth moderation were manufacturing (which contracted by 0.2 per cent) and construction (which grew at 2 per cent). Even factoring in the base effects of high growth rates in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21, the weakness is visible. The almost flat manufacturing growth is a bit puzzling, given the 22 per cent growth of merchandise exports in the quarter, and perhaps points to weakness in domestic demand.

A likely explanation is the weakness in informal sector output, which is proxied by the index of industrial production, which grew by 1.2 per cent in the quarter. Equally concerning is the weakness in the construction segment, particularly real estate, where many projects have reportedly been delayed due to rising input costs.

On the other hand, some of the services segments showed relatively strong growth. The most striking is public administration and other services — this segment grew almost 8 per cent and contributed around a fourth of the aggregate 4.1 per cent growth in the value-added. This includes the universe of micro and small local services in education, health, recreation, etc, suggesting a strong recovery in contact services post the opening up of economic activity.

The demand side of GDP, however, indicates some inconsistencies. Government consumption expenditure grew by 4.8 per cent and matches the public administration segment. Private consumption, however, decelerated, with the fourth quarter growth dropping sharply to 1.8 per cent from 7 per cent in the third quarter — this is at odds with the MSME recovery. Fixed capital investment, on the other hand, remained stable, if not robust, growing at 5 per cent, up from 2 per cent in the previous quarter. This was probably dominated by a massive 76 per cent rise in the Centre's capital expenditure (and to a smaller extent by states' capex spending). This is puzzling given the weakness in the construction sector. One possible explanation is that perhaps private sector capex had moderated sharply.

So why has the growth narrative become so important now? In the aftermath of an economic shock as large as the pandemic, quarter-on-quarter GDP estimates are important indicators of the momentum of economic activity and will be critical inputs for policymakers. But the growth path for 2022-23 has become muddied by a host of economic, commercial, financial and now geo-economic events, which are likely to persist.

In the near term, leading indicators of economic activity suggest that momentum in April and May, although having moderated compared to March, has remained surprisingly strong, even in the aftermath of the economic shocks emanating from the Ukraine crisis.

Our forecast for GDP growth is 7.1 per cent (very similar to the RBI's earlier forecast of 7.2 per cent). But the risks are now clearly tilted towards slower growth. First, input costs for manufacturers remain very high, and have not been fully passed on to the end consumers. Diminishing commercial viability has forced many companies to scale down, or even shut, operations — the MSME segment has reportedly been the most affected.

Second, these supply shocks, accelerating with the onset of Covid and then sharply aggravated by the energy and commodity disruptions from Ukraine and the economic sanctions imposed on Russia, have fed into prices across the world. Inflation in most of the developed countries is at multi-decade highs (aided by large fiscal stimulus packages in some countries). Most of the large global central banks have already started aggressively tightening monetary policy. These actions have increased financial market volatility, which has had spillover effects on emerging economies, including India. Consequently, India's external environment is likely to be less benign than before.

Even before this tightening, global growth and trade had already been forecasted to start slowing in 2022. Merchandise exports from India has been one of the main engines of growth through late 2020-21 and in 2021-22, and this is likely to moderate. In addition, RBI has shifted its priority from promoting durable and sustained growth to taming inflation, by hiking the policy repo rate and starting to drain the surplus funds injected during the pandemic. Lending rates have already increased for many borrowers, particularly MSMEs and home loans, and steep increases in borrowing costs might exert some stress on the repayment ability of weaker borrowers.

In nominal terms, GDP growth in 2021-22 was almost 20 per cent (versus 8.7 per cent real growth), driven by high WPI and CPI inflation. This large divergence might further widen the gap in the distribution of discretionary incomes and consumption among household income classes. While this will moderate over the next couple of years with inflation cooling, this has implications for the redistributive actions of economic, particularly fiscal, policy.

To conclude, while economic activity is recovering at a modest pace, many sectors and segments still seem to be constrained by a weakness in demand and will require continued policy support. A coordinated policy response — fiscal, monetary, trade, industry — will be required for balancing the multiple macroeconomic policy objectives. https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/a-modest-recovery-national-statistical-office-india-gdp-7948186/

7. India's GDP growth: The devil is in the details *(livemint.com)* Updated: 02 Jun 2022

-India's FY22 GDP growth at 8.7%, looks pale when compared with pre-pandemic levels

-Private consumption, which forms more than half of the Indian GDP, was a key pain point

Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the year ended 31 March came in at 8.7%. GDP is a measure of the size of an economy during a particular period. After adjusting for inflation, a growth of 8.7% sounds pretty good until we consider that GDP had contracted by 6.6% in the previous year.

Hence, to make a fair comparison, we need to compare FY22 GDP with that of the pre-pandemic year of FY20. The GDP in FY22 was at ₹147.4 trillion, which is just 1.5% more than the ₹145.2 trillion achieved in FY20.

In that sense, we have barely managed to come out of the negative economic impact of the covid-pandemic. This can be clearly seen in the private consumption expenditure, which accounts for more than half of India's GDP. Private consumption is the money you and I spend on buying things.

Private consumption expenditure in FY22 stood at ₹83.8 trillion, which was barely 1.4% higher than the ₹82.60 trillion recorded in FY20.

Even the 1.4% growth is on account of the increase in population over the past two years. Once we adjust for that, the per capita private consumption expenditure has fallen by 0.6% to ₹61,215 over the two-year period.

Clearly, the Indian economy is going to take time to come out of the negative economic impact of the pandemic. Also, the GDP data for FY22 barely factors in the negative effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which started on 24 February. This attack has sent global commodity prices soaring higher. Russia is a big exporter of commodities like crude oil, natural gas, fertilizers, sunflower oil and coal. India imports a huge amount of these commodities.

The negative impact of this can be seen in the GDP growth of 4.1% in the March quarter. The interesting thing is that the GDP growth has slowed steadily through FY22. In the three months ended 30 June 2021, growth soared 20.1%. It slowed to 8.4% in the September quarter and then cooled further to 5.4% in the three months ended 31 December.

A major reason for this is inflation, which hit private consumption. In fact, private consumption in the quarter ended 31 March 2022 was just 1.7% higher than a year earlier. This was when retail inflation between January and March averaged 6.3%. It was at a much higher 7.8% in April, only suggesting that things are unlikely to improve on the growth front.

In fact, retail inflation has been in single digits despite wholesale inflation being in double digits since April 2021. The difference between the two inflation rates has narrowed over the months. It peaked at around 10% in November and narrowed to 7.3% in March. This implies that more businesses are now passing on the increase in raw material expenses and the cost of doing business to consumers by raising the prices of products and services.

This inflation is already hitting consumers badly. As Hindustan Unilever, one of India's biggest household goods maker, recently said: "Due to unprecedented inflation, FMCG market… has significantly slowed down, and volumes are declining in high single-digit. The impact is more pronounced in rural [markets]... Consumers are tightening volumes, and essentials are being prioritized over discretionary categories." Volumes declining refers to consumers not buying as many units of different products as they did in the past. https://www.livemint.com/market/mark-to-market/reviving-india-s-gdp-growth-a-tall-task-11654104059792.html

8. India's fiscal glide path will need a whack down *(livemint.com)* 2 June, 2022

Fiscal stability is the first casualty of an economic upheaval anywhere. If covid revealed anything new, it was how weakly everyone was wedded to the idea of a balanced budget. Like many other economies, India let fiscal spending rip in response to the pandemic crisis. The Centre's gap between inflows and outflows was meant to be 3.5% of overall output but ended up at 9.3% in 2020-21, when its revenues shrank on a shrunken economy's base; and this week's data pegged last year's fiscal deficit at 6.7%, a tad lower than 6.9% estimated earlier, thanks mostly to a recovery that meant more tax money off a swollen pie of nominal national income. 'Thanks' is relevant here because an over-loose fiscal policy not only poses macro-level risks, like inflation, it's barred by a 2003 law (whose escape hatch came in handy). As a rein-back of that overrun, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had set a glide path for our fiscal gap some two covid waves ago. The Centre's aim, she said in early 2021, was to get it down to 4.5% by 2025-26. With a price flare-up now playing spoiler, however, we must reduce it much sooner. And faster. In fact, the fiscal path may need a thwack down—and a Nadalesque one at that.

Arguably, inspiration for a revised fiscal path could be drawn from tennis, specifically from Rafael Nadal's legendary top-spin shot that duly held viewers agog in his victory over top-ranked Novak Djokovic at this year's French Open. Done with the aid of an arc taken by the racquet, this stroke sends the ball spinning forth against the air for it to curve sharply down across the net. The efficacy of top-spin at top speed on a clay court was on full display in Nadal's fury. It's not easy to pull off, but India's fisc would need to take a similar trajectory, given the price instability that caught the Reserve Bank of India off-guard. Monetary policy was tightened last month, but RBI's main lending rate remains negative in real terms. While further hikes are clearly needed, tighter money by itself is unlikely to suffice. Recall that India's big splurge on projects aimed at multiplying incomes began after the economy emerged from its covid crevice. The plan is to keep this pump actively primed to push more money out. As infrastructure is at the core of this fiscal thrust and everything takes time to build, extra money in play would likely have fed inflation with some lag.

If prices must cool, mega spending without revenues to pay for it cannot carry on for long. This year's deficit target was set at 6.4% by the Budget unveiled in February. The impact of an external shock since then has spelt enlarged outlays on welfare, subsidies, etc, apart from some relief on fuel taxes. As the latest tax cuts were part of a well-publicized effort to dampen retail prices, it signalled an intent not to inflate our huge pile of public debt away. That's a good sign. With tax buoyancy in flux (as seen in GST collections), even as dismal conditions persist and threaten to worsen (witness the EU's Russian oil embargo), a smaller fisc than planned would not be feasible. Also, to the extent our economy still needs support, the Centre would be justified in going by its extant plan. Its stance has been that the state would withdraw once private investors start investing enough to sustain the economy's expansion. Sadly, signs of this have turned flickery again. All said, we face tricky times ahead. If inflation doesn't drop by year-end, our fiscal glide path would have to take a sharp dive. https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/indias-fiscal-glide-path-will-need-a-whack-down-11654100019643.html

9. Is the Indian economy out of the woods? *(business-standard.com)* 2 June, 2022

The central govt mopped up Rs 1.41 tr as GST collection in May, way above the FY22 average of Rs 1.23 tr. Auto sector also reported improved sales. Do these reflect a revival in Indian economy?

India's fourth-quarter GDP data released Monday showed that economic growth has not come roaring back after the pandemic. It slowed down for the third consecutive quarter, growing 4.1% in the January-March period.

For the full fiscal, growth came in at 8.7% provisionally after the pandemic-related contraction of 6.6% in 2020-21.

While the real GDP in 2021-22 is just 1.5% higher than the level in the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20, indicating that the bounce-back following the pandemic has only been sufficient to make up for the contraction in the previous year.

Contact-intensive industries were affected by the Omicron wave in January. Trade, hotels, transport and services related to broadcasting is the only sector that is yet to recover fully. It is still 11% below FY20 level.

What emerged as another cause for concern was the 0.2% contraction in manufacturing activities in the fourth-quarter from the previous year. Experts attributed the contraction to high commodity prices and supply disruptions.

Private spending saw a tepid growth of 1.8% in Q4. India's FMCG market grew 6% in the January-March quarter over last year led by double-digit price growth, according to Nielsen IQ.

However, the sector's volume declined by 4.1%. The drop in consumption was more prominent in rural markets, which saw a 5.3% dip -- the highest consumption slowdown in the last three quarters.

HDFC Bank's Principal Economist Sakshi Gupta said the consumption recovery remains under a cloud of uncertainty for the ongoing financial year with rising inflationary pressures.

However, there are several bright spots too. India's factory activity expanded at a better-than-expected pace last month as overall demand remained resilient despite persistently high inflation, according to S&P Global's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index.

The PMI came in at 54.6 in May, slightly lower than April's 54.7, but above the 50-level separating growth from contraction for an eleventh month, the private survey showed.

RBI data showed robust credit off take in April. Banks' non-food credit grew at 11.3% while loans to agriculture and allied activities expanded by 10.6%. Personal loans segment continued to perform well, registering acceleration in growth to 14.7% in April, primarily driven by housing and ‘vehicle loans segments.

GST collection too has remained buoyant. The collection in May, for the month of April, grew 44% year-on-year, to nearly Rs 1.41 trillion. It is down 16% from the record high collection of Rs 1.68 trillion in April but one must note that collections in May have always been lesser than in April, which pertains to the returns for March, the closing of the financial year.

Higher GST collections, to an extent, have been driven by high inflation which has pushed nominal GDP growth to 19.5% in FY22.

Meanwhile, in the automobile sector, global supply-side disruptions in semiconductor chips had led to declining production and increased delivery timings, impacting registrations adversely. Passenger car sales, tractor sales and two-wheeler sales have been falling for past several quarters.

However, auto sales improved in May compared with April as supply

bottlenecks eased. The country's biggest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, reported a 7.1% rise in factory dispatches while Tata Motors’ sales, including passenger and commercial vehicles, rose 3.1%. Ashok Leyland’s sales spiked 12% while Escorts’ tractor sales rose marginally at 1.15% over the previous month.

Bajaj Auto’s domestic two-wheeler sales registered a 3% increase month-on-month.

Speaking to Business Standard, Sujan Hajra, Chief Economist, Anand Rathi Securities said GDP growth slowed mainly due to negative net export. We are on a growth path but number are not as yet impressive, he said adding that consumption is not doing well but urban situation is relatively better. Public capex has started picking up and govt is attempting investment-led recovery. Major high-frequency indicators suggest growth will gain further momentum going forward, he said.

An eight-year-old high inflation, soaring energy and commodity prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war are threatening to squeeze the economy. Amid all this, the forecast of a good monsoon has come as a respite. Rains will not only help the agriculture sector but also cool off the soaring inflation -- which is clouding the economy’s near term prospects. A good monsoon will also boost rural demand, which in turn will help the economy recover. https://www.business-standard.com/podcast/economy-policy/is-the-indian-economy-out-of-the-woods-122060200075_1.html

10. Aadhaar a 'bedrock' for govt welfare schemes, saved over Rs 2 trn: NITI *(business-standard.com)* 2 June, 2022

NITI Aayog Chief Executive Officer Amitabh Kant on Wednesday said that Aadhaar has become the "bedrock" for the government's welfare schemes and has saved over Rs 2 lakh crore to the government by "eliminating fake and duplicate identities".

Taking part in a workshop on 'Recent Initiatives for Simplifying Aadhaar usage' in the national capital, Kant said, "Aadhaar has become the bedrock for government welfare schemes, ensured faster benefit transfers without any intervention or intermediaries and saved a vast amount of money."

He also called Aadhaar one of the "most successful" biometric-based identity programs in the world, which has prompted deliberations and discussions with international multilateral agencies, like the World Bank and United Nations, to explore how the Aadhar architecture may be adopted in other countries.

"It is commendable to know that 315 Central Schemes and 500 state schemes are leveraging Aadhaar to ensure effective delivery of services...Aadhaar has now become the bedrock for government welfare schemes, ensuring faster benefit transfers without any interruption or intermediaries, saving Rs 2.22 lakh crore rupees to the government by eliminating fake and duplicate identities," Kant said.

Aadhaar number is a 12-digit random number issued by the UIDAI ("Authority") to the residents of India after satisfying the verification process laid down by the Authority. Any individual, irrespective of age and gender, who is a resident of India, may voluntarily enrol to obtain Aadhaar number.

The person willing to enroll has to provide minimal demographic and biometric information during the enrolment process which is totally free of cost. An individual needs to enrol for Aadhaar only once and after de-duplication only one Aadhaar shall be generated, as the uniqueness is achieved through the process of demographic and biometric de-duplication.

Aadhaar number is verifiable in an online, cost-effective way. It is unique and robust enough to eliminate duplicates and fake identities and may be used as a basis/primary identifier to roll out several Government welfare schemes and programmes for effective service delivery thereby promoting transparency and good governance. This is the only program of its kind globally, wherein a state-of-the-art digital and online Id is being provided free of cost at such a large scale to people, and has the potential to change the way service delivery functions in the country. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/aadhaar-a-bedrock-for-govt-welfare-schemes-saved-over-rs-2-trn-niti-122060200097_1.html

11. Fossil fuel subsidy 9 times higher than for clean energy, says study on India's net-zero goal *(theprint.in)* 2 June, 2022

India has to do a lot more to meet its net-zero emission target as fossil fuel subsidies are nine times higher than those for clean energy, despite a 72 per cent fall in the former since 2014, says a study by the think tanks International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

The energy sector received over Rs 5,40,000 crore in support from the government in 2021 with Rs 2,17,737 crore in subsidies, according to the report, titled 'Mapping India's Energy Policy 2022: Aligning Support and Revenues with a Net-Zero Future' and released 31 May.

Subsidies to renewable energy dropped 59 per cent to settle at Rs 6,767 crore after a high of Rs 16,312 crore in 2017, the study finds, attributing it to "falling year-on-year installations and benchmark costs, as well as gradual declines in accelerated depreciation benefits as assets age."

The study reviews India's energy policies to see how they align with the country's target of net-zero emissions by 2070, an announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the COP26 summit in November last year. Net-zero emissions refer to achieving an overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and removed from the atmosphere.

Support from Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and Public Financial Institutions (PFIs) to enact India's energy transition is weak, the study says.

The government, it adds, should move public support away from fossil fuels, and to clean energy, in a socially responsible way.

"PSUs, PFIs, and the ministries should prepare roadmaps and scenarios on net-zero, identifying short-term actions to contribute to energy transition, including strategies on stranded asset risk, compliance with emerging environmental, social, and governance norms, phasing out finance for fossil fuels, and increasing investment and lending for clean energy to crowd in private investments," it says.

'PSUs, PFIs need to step up engagement'

Renewable Energy (RE) makes up 23 per cent of India's energy capacity. While India has pledged to increase its non-fossil-energy capacity to 500 gigawatts (GW) and meet half of its energy requirements through renewables by 2030, it crossed the 100-GW-mark in August last year.

"A 2030 target of 280 GW and 140 GW, respectively, implies average annual deployment of 25 GW of solar PV and 11 GW of wind per year — a steep change in pace and requiring storage," the study notes, adding that this may require an investment of Rs 1.5 lakh crore to 2 lakh crore per year.

Apart from subsidies, PSUs and PFIs can do more to enable India's energy transition. PSUs "account for over 50 per cent of power generation, 90 per cent of electricity distribution, 90 per cent of coal mining, 57 per cent of crude oil refining, and almost 100 per cent of the distribution of petroleum products", but the seven Maharatna PSUs "invested 11 times more in fossil projects than RE", says the study.

"Consultations with PSU officials suggest that it is challenging for PSUs to make a bold transition to clean energy business models without a clear mandate from the ministries that manage them. This suggests that ministries should explicitly direct PSUs to support clean energy targets," it adds.

Similarly, public financial institutions invested three times more in fossil fuels than in clean energy, the study says. "No PFIs have established plans on phasing out finance for fossil fuels despite risks of large-scale asset stranding," the study adds.

Earlier this year, an analysis of the investments of 34 public and private banks by think tank Climate Change Horizons found that most of them were unprepared for climate-related risks.

'Shift in policies must'

With fossil fuels accounting for 17.5 per cent (Rs 6,99,565 crore) of India's energy-related revenue, the margin is way higher than countries like China (4.2 per cent) and Brazil and South Africa (6.8 per cent).

The study finds that earnings from fossil fuels are likely to go up at least in the next few years, but the range of earnings varies.

"We estimate fossil energy revenue could grow by an additional Rs 30,000 to Rs 3,40,000 crore by 2030. The large range reflects the uncertainty in the pace of policy shifts to clean energy and how much progress is made toward India's net-zero target. Beyond 2030, as fossil fuel use begins to peak and decline, revenues will ultimately fall significantly," it says.

Although subsidies for electric vehicles have tripled to Rs 849 crore from 2017, they constitute just 0.4 per cent of the mix.

Among other measures suggested for course correction, the study recommends the establishment of "a body to coordinate actions across support, taxation, and pricing for energy, with relevant ministries, departments, and expert agencies to bring policy coherence".

At the same time, it has called for setting aside higher revenue on fossil fuels for special cases. This, the study suggests, can be used to improve social protection and public services to reduce living costs, as well as to improve security and reduce volatility in the medium term. https://theprint.in/environment/fossil-fuel-subsidy-9-times-higher-than-for-clean-energy-says-study-on-indias-net-zero-goal/979457/

12. Government to replace 58,000-MU thermal power with 30-GW RE by FY26 *(thehindubusinessline.com)* Jun 02, 2022

Expected to save 34.7 MT of coal and reduce carbon emissions by 60.2 MT

The government has floated a scheme for replacing around 58,000 million units (MU) of thermal power with 30,000 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy (RE) by FY26. The move is aimed at speeding up the utilisation of RE power in the country's energy mix to meet COP 26 commitments.

The exercise is expected to save 34.7 million tonnes (MT) of coal and reduce carbon emissions by 60.2 MT.

There is a scope for replacement of thermal power with RE power in the country. The existing regulations of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) define a technical minimum of 55 per cent up to which thermal power plants (TPPs) in the country can be operated. Reduction in generation from TPPs is feasible to lower levels of technical minimum of 40 per cent in two-three years, Power Ministry said.

The ministry carried out an exercise to assess the amount of energy from TPPs that can be replaced. The TPPs in future shall operate up to the technical minimum to accommodate cheaper RE when it is available. Thermal energy from those TPPs with high tariffs is proposed to be replaced to optimise the costs of power delivered to the consumer.

"Based on the exercise, it was found that about 58,000 MU of thermal generation in central, state and private sector can be substituted with RE generation. A RE capacity of about 30,000 MW at 22 per cent capacity utilisation factor (CUF) would be required for the purpose," it said.

Replacing thermal with RE
As per the plan, 20 per cent of the targeted thermal capacity will be replaced with RE power in FY24, followed by 35 per cent in FY25 and 45 per cent in FY26.

On the rationale behind the move, the ministry explained that replacing thermal with RE power will reduce coal consumption, thereby cutting down on carbon emissions. Besides, it will also alleviate the concerns of coal crisis. The implementation of the scheme is estimated to conserve 34.7 MT of coal and reduce carbon emissions by 60.2 MT.

Flexible scheme

Even though the station-wise targets have been worked out, a thermal generating station can substitute larger amounts of thermal power with RE power over and above the targets fixed here. The targets fixed for thermal power stations are the lowest minimum that can be achieved. However, any higher capacity can be installed/procured by them. Besides, any thermal plant which is not in the list are also eligible to replace their thermal capacity with RE.

Hydro-power generating stations are also allowed to bundle RE power. Hydro plants can explore opportunities for bundling RE power with their existing power and participate in the scheme.

All the gencos and the States have been directed to implement the scheme to reduce their tariffs, meet RPO commitments, increase utilisation of transmission lines and reduce emissions. The gencos are also encouraged to enhance their targets for replacing thermal with RE power. State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) may also like to oversee the implementation in the interest of consumers as a reduction in power purchase costs is expected.

Revised scheme

In April 2018, the ministry issued a detailed mechanism for allowing flexibility in the generation and scheduling of thermal power stations. The flexibility was provided to gencos to increase RE generation, reduce emissions, enable compliance with Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs) and enhance RE capacity. In April 2022, the ministry issued a revised scheme for flexibility in generation and scheduling of thermal/hydro power stations through bundling with RE and storage power.

Accordingly, in order to increase the uptake of RE utilisation under the scheme and in furtherance of the national goal of achieving 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil fuel-based capacity by 2030, a target of about 58,000 MU is fixed at national level for achievement by end of the year 2025-26. The Central, State and private sector generating stations as per the list are required to replace thermal power with RE in accordance with the year-wise trajectory. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/government-to-replace-58000-mu-thermal-power-with-30-gw-re-by-fy26/article65484463.ece

13. India to see the largest increase in energy demand worldwide over the next 20 years: Report *(timesnownews.com)* JUNE 02, 2022

India is the third-largest producer and the third-largest consumer of electricity in the world. With the increasing population, electricity demand is rising at a fast clip and India has improved its power generation capacity over the years. India has added more than 500 billion units until FY22 from FY10.

India faces the twin dilemma of co-existence of shortage and abundance in several parts of its energy system. While the provision of electricity has increased significantly over the years, weak institutions and utility governance hamper the power sector’s financial performance with issues of accountability, operational efficiency, customer service, and transmission to state-level transmission institutions.

The sector takes a huge and grossly unacceptable hit due to extensive losses, leakages and pilferages, and the cost recovery from tariffs.These are some major findings of a report titled "Power Sector in India: New Emerging Opportunities and Challenges" released by Infomerics Valuation and Rating.

The report explores the opportunities and challenges ahead for India as it seeks to ensure reliable, affordable and sustainable energy for a growing population.

During FY20 and FY19, the growth of electricity generation was lower than in the previous financial years because of the impact of COVID-19. The report quotes the International Energy Agency (IEA) stating that during FY21 recovery in electricity demand from the COVID-19 pandemic was faster and stronger in India than in EU countries.

India is the third-largest producer and the third-largest consumer of electricity in the world. With the increasing population, electricity demand is rising at a fast clip and India has improved its power generation capacity over the years. India has added more than 500 billion units until FY22 from FY10. The power generation capacity rose from 808.498 billion units (BU) in 2009-10 to 1,381.827 BU in 2019-20.

The power sector in India has 395 GW (Giga Watt) installed generation capacity, 203 GW peak power requirement, 11 per cent installed capacity CAGR (2011-2020) and 67 per cent required hydropower capacity. The private sector with 48.50 per cent has the largest installed generation capacity followed by the Central sector (24.90 per cent) and the State sector (26.70 per cent).

Fossil fuel has still higher installation, generating 2,35,929 Mega Watt (MW) of electricity, constituting nearly 60 per cent of the total installed generation capacity.

The report takes note of the current power crisis caused by the paucity of coal. It states that the continued heatwave has led to a rapid rise in the energy demand in states such as Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh. The northern states are witnessing power cuts amid low coal stocks. Over 150 thermal power plants have a coal shortage problem and the coal stock position of 173 powers plant stood at the sub-optimal level of 21.93 million tonnes (MT), which is less than the regulatory requirement of 66.32 MT as of April 21, 2022. But the power demand rose rapidly from 106.6 BU in 2019 to 124.2 BU in 2021 and further to 132 BU in 2022.

The electricity demand far outstripping the supply despite Coal India recording coal production of 622 million tonnes in FY 22 vis-à-vis 607 million tonnes in FY 21. India’s current daily power deficit rose sharply from the average of 0.3 per cent to 1 per cent with the dreaded possibility of rising even further. Given the paucity of options, most States, including Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Bihar, were forced to resort to power cuts, ranging from two hours to eight hours to meet the widening demand-supply chasm.

The gravity of the situation, the Infomerics study says, is starkly reflected in the Central Electricity Authority’s (CEA’s) report on coal stock on May 5, 2022. This Report underscored that out of 173 thermal power plants, 107 plants had a critically low stock of coal. Should this scenario of severe coal-stock shortages persist, the possibility of stagflation in India in the not-too-distant future cannot be ruled out.

The Infomerics report states that India is the third-largest global emitter of CO_2, despite low per capita CO_2 emissions. The carbon intensity of its power sector exceeds the global average. Further, particulate matter emissions are a major contributor to air pollution, which has emerged as one of India's most sensitive social and environmental issues. This is going to be a big challenge for the policymakers making it necessary to shift their focus to the most efficient and sustainable energy sources. Strategic measures include improving the efficiency of supply and consumption of energy, expanding the proportion of natural gas, and hydropower in the fuel mix, and reducing energy intensity in the transport sector.

Natural gas and modern renewable sources of energy have become increasingly important and were least affected by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The rise of solar PV has been spectacular; the resource potential is huge, and policy support and technology cost reductions have quickly made it the cheapest option for new power generation.

India is purposefully moving towards the achievement of the goal set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report states that India's non-fossil fuel-based capacity met the 40 per cent target under its nationally determined contribution (NDC) at COP 21. Solar energy capacity is up from 2.63 GW to 49 GW in the last 7 years.

The report states that India needs a much higher storage capacity for Discoms. But there has to be undivided attention on the pursuit of large-scale grid storage to achieve the avowed objective of creating 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity, including 450 GW of renewable energy sources. This is not easy, but certainly doable, it states. https://www.timesnownews.com/business-economy/economy/india-to-see-the-largest-increase-in-energy-demand-worldwide-over-the-next-20-years-report-article-91959601

14. Niti Aayog bats for lower 5G spectrum price *(financialexpress.com)* JUNE 02, 2022

Telecom operators may be able to get 5G spectrum at a lower price if Niti Aayog's recommendation is accepted by the government. The organisation, which acts as a think tank for the government, has suggested that operators be given spectrum for a 30-year period but the reserve price should be what the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has calculated for a 20-year period. This way, the reduction in the reserve price works out to be 36% compared to what the regulator had recommended in 2018.

The recommendation assumes significance because Niti Aayog's CEO is also a member of the Digital Communications Commission, which is the highest policy-making body on matters related to the telecom sector. The DCC is an inter-ministerial body, which apart from senior officials of the department of telecommunications, also has representatives from the finance ministry as well as the department for promotion of industry and internal trade.

Telecom sector analysts said that Niti Aayog's recommendation makes sense and the government should accept it. The 36% reduction in reserve price works out for a 20-year period, but Trai has added a rider that if the spectrum is given for a 30-year period, then the price charged should be 1.5 times of the 20-year period.

Since the government had decided last year in September to give spectrum for a 30-year period, Niti Aayog believes there's no rationale behind calculating a price for 20 years and then adding multiples to it.

Further, by adding the multiple there's no reduction in prices compared to 2018. For instance, operators need to fork out Rs 37,292 crore for the minimum quantum of spectrum for a 5G network as per the reserve price worked out by Trai for a 20-year period. If they are charged 1.5 times of this for a 30-year period, this goes up to Rs 55,938 crore. This price is no reduction compared to the price given by the regulator in 2018 when it worked out to be around Rs 50,000 crore to buy the same quantum of spectrum.

So, effectively what Niti Aayog is saying is that the reduction in the reserve price gets nullified by adding the multiple.

To resolve the issue, a DoT committee has suggested that operators be given a choice to buy spectrum for either 20 or 30 years. Analysts say that this option is just a compromise and goes against a policy decision earlier taken by the government that in future spectrum should be auctioned for a 30-year period.

It could not be ascertained what the other members of the DCC have stated on this issue. A final decision would be taken by the Union Cabinet when it takes up the matter, probably next week, but analysts said that the suggestion put forward by Niti Aayog is a pragmatic one.

On their part, the operators have sought a reduction in prices by around 90-95%, which certainly is not feasible, analysts added. https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/niti-aayog-bats-for-lower-5g-spectrum-price/2545736/

15. Localisation of production is no panacea *(moneycontrol.com)* JUNE 01, 2022

After the pandemic disrupted global supply chains and created shortages in markets far removed from the site of infections, localisation and nearshoring became the mantra of management gurus. Opponents of globalisation counted their proposition as self-evident. An ongoing severe shortage of baby formula in the US offers a counterpoint.

US' Defense Production Act is a law that empowers the US President to order companies to cease production of whatever they have been manufacturing and put their production capacity to churn out what the US government deems a national priority at the moment. President Franklin D Roosevelt used his powers under the Act to ask, after the outbreak of World War II, General Motors to start producing battle tanks and Ford Motors to produce bomber aircraft. Right now, President Joe Biden has invoked the Act to increase the supply of not arms, but of baby formula, a synthetic substitute for breastmilk.

Now, according to the Wall Street Journal, about 98 percent of the baby formula sold in the US is made in the US. The US might not be entirely 'atmanirbhar' when it comes to the number of babies born, who would, within three decades, grow into highly-qualified talent that would power its knowledge economy. But when it comes to baby formula, the country is self-reliant. Further, just two companies, Abbott Labs and Reckitt Benckiser account for 80 percent of the market.

Pandemic disruptions had created shortages of everything, from toilet rolls to packed meat, on account of which workers at meat packers were labelled essential workers, without any choice on turning out to work, regardless of the risk of contracting COVID-19. This disruption had reached baby formula as well, but not to any debilitating extent.

The crisis came in February, when four infants on formula fell ill with a rare bacterial infection, and two of them died. The formula had been produced at a factory owned by Abbott in Michigan. It produced not just ordinary formula, but also specialised versions for children with allergies and other conditions that ruled out just any old breastmilk substitute.

The plant produced enough to supply 20 percent of the market. When that was taken out of the market, people began to hoard. The shortage grew to some 40 percent of the demand. According to the Wall Street Journal, about half the number of stores in half of America's towns experienced shortage of baby formula.

So, why have other plants not kicked in to make good the shortage caused by the Michigan plant's shutdown? There are exacting regulations by the FDA, and standards for baby formula, which companies struggle to meet. When the problem became acute on social media, teeming with frazzled parents, wailing babies, and hoarders, as well as Good Samaritans, hawking their stocks, the White House could no longer afford to let the market sort out supply and demand.

The US government invoked the Defense Production Act. It flew in planeloads of formula from Germany on special military aircraft.

As the drama plays out, with angry mothers, frustrated fathers, smug Republican critics of Biden's incompetence and presidential pivots from Ukraine and geopolitics to American babies in distress all cast as major characters, many have failed to notice that the much-touted localisation solution to shortage arising from global supply chain disruptions has proved to be a total dud. Localisation has actually proved to be a bane in the present context, and relying on global sourcing is the only thing that has offered some respite.

Clearly, the anti-globalisation rhetoric that gained strength in the wake of the supply chain disruptions during the worst days of the pandemic was devoid of merit. Self-reliance can be a vulnerability, if local production takes a hit for whatever reason.

That is not all. It is not just where things are produced that counts. The structure of the market also matters. The baby formula market in the US was not just a near duopoly, but also further complicated by State distribution.

A substantial part of the baby formula consumed in the US is distributed by government agencies that help the poor. Often, these aid agencies place single agent contracts to supply an entire state. When that agency failed to procure enough volumes to meet its obligations, on account of the shortage, the beneficiary babies of the entire state suffered.

It may be recalled that India's distribution of anti-tuberculosis drugs faces a similar problem. The Union government procures the drugs and allocates them to the states, which make no provision in their own health budgets for these medicines. TB drugs have to be taken continuously for an extended period of time for not just the disease to be cured, but also to prevent developing drug-resistant variants of the tuberculosis bacterium.

In 2013, India faced a stock-out of TB drugs, with many states running out of drugs to let TB patients complete their course of treatment. Officials of the Union health ministry, spooked by the Vinod Rai indictment of causing loss to the exchequer on the flimsiest of grounds in the case of telecom, chose to retire without renewing the contract for the government to procure

TB drugs. The contract lapsed, no orders were placed for these essential drugs, and several states faced stock-outs.

The lessons are clear. Globalised sourcing is a strength, rather than a vulnerability, so long as the sources are reasonably diversified. The domestic market structure must be competitive. Monopolies and duopolies represent vulnerability. Government contracting of supplies must take care of contingencies, in which the main winner of the supply contract is unable to make good on their delivery commitment. Unfortunately, this insight is straight out of the mouths of crying babes. https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/localisation-of-production-is-no-panacea-8620551.html

16. देसी अस्त्र एमके 1 के सौदे पर मुहर लगी, अगली पीढ़ी की मिसाइल का भारत 'इस महीने' करेगा परीक्षण *(hindi.theprint.in)* 02 June 2022

रूसी और फ्रांसीसी एयर टू एयर मिसाइलों (एएएम) पर दशकों से भारतीय निर्भरता को खत्म करने के उद्देश्य से भारतीय रक्षा और सुरक्षा प्रतिष्ठान,
160 किलोमीटर की स्वदेशी अस्त्र एमके 2 मिसाइल के पहले परीक्षण के लिए तैयार है. दिप्रिंट को यह जानकारी मिली है.

मंगलवार को रक्षा मंत्रालय ने अस्त्र एमके1 बियॉन्ड विजुअल रेंज (बीवीआर) एएएम और संबंधित उपकरणों के लिए 2971 करोड़ रुपए के सौदे पर हस्ताक्षर करने की घोषणा की. इन मिसाइलों को भारतीय वायु सेना और नौसेना को दिया जाना है. उपकरण की आपूर्ति के लिए रक्षा मंत्रालय ने भारत डायनामिक्स लिमिटेड (बीडीएल) के साथ करार किया है.

अभी तक इस प्रकार की मिसाइल को स्वदेशी तरीके से तैयार करने के लिए तकनीक उपलब्ध नहीं थी. भारतीय सशस्त्र बल हमेशा रूसी (मुख्य रूप से आर 73 और आर 77) और फ्रांस की (मीका और उल्का) हवा से हवा में मार करने वाली मिसाइलों पर निर्भर रहा है.

हालांकि रक्षा प्रतिष्ठान मिसाइलों की सही संख्या पर चुप्पी साधे हुए हैं. सूत्रों ने बताया कि यह संख्या 200 से ज्यादा है. इसे भारतीय वायुसेना के सुखोई एसयू-30 एमकेआई और भारतीय नौसेना के मिग - 29 के साथ जोड़ा जाएगा.

योजना चरणबद्ध तरीके से मिसाइल को भारतीय वायुसेना के मिग-29 और हल्के लड़ाकू विमान 'तेजस' में एकीकृत करने की है.

अस्त्र एमके1 की रेंज लगभग 110 किलोमीटर है. सूत्रों ने कहा कि असली गेम-चेंजर अगली पीढ़ी का संस्करण होगा, जिसकी लंबी रेंज लगभग 160 किलोमीटर होगी.

अस्त्र एमके1 मिसाइल की लागत लगभग 7-8 करोड़ रुपये है और इसे रक्षा अनुसंधान और विकास संगठन (डीआरडीओ) द्वारा विकसित किया गया है. इसकी अधिकतम गति मच (Mach) 4.5 (5,500 किमी प्रति घंटे से अधिक) है.

सूत्रों ने संकेत दिया कि एयर टू एयर मारक क्षमता में भारत को पाकिस्तान पर बढ़त दिलाने वाले अस्त्र एमके 2 के लिए परीक्षण जल्द ही या इस महीने के भीतर हो जाएगा. अस्त्र एमके 2 की रेंज बढ़ाने के लिए डीआरडीओ ने एक डुअल-पल्स रॉकेट मोटर विकसित की है.

रेंज का विस्तार

दिप्रिंट ने दिसंबर 2020 में बताया था कि डीआरडीओ अस्त्र मिसाइल के लंबी दूरी के संस्करण पर काम कर रहा है और साल 2022 के बीच में इसका परीक्षण कर सकता है.

1999 में कारगिल युद्ध के दौरान भारतीय वायु सेना ने पाकिस्तान पर अपनी पकड़ मजबूत की थी लेकिन जब पाकिस्तान ने 2010 में लंबी दूरी की अमेरिकी AMRAAM को तैनात किया तो उसने अपने समकक्ष के प्रति बढ़त बना ली.

तत्कालीन वायुसेना प्रमुख एयर चीफ मार्शल आर.के.एस. भदौरिया ने 28 फरवरी 2020 को कहा था कि सैन्य बल एयर-टू-एयर मिसाइल क्षमता में मजबूत स्थिति हासिल करने की कोशिश कर रहा है जिसमें भारत मिसाइल को शामिल किए जाने की 15 साल तक लंबी प्रक्रिया के कारण पिछड़ गया था.

IAF प्रमुख यूरोपीय निर्मित उल्का मिसाइलों का जिक्र कर रहे थे जिनकी रेंज लगभग 150 किमी है. ये मिसाइल अब राफेल लड़ाकू विमानों पर सवार हैं.

लेकिन बाद में उन्हें अन्य लड़ाकू विमानों के साथ एकीकृत करने की योजना को टाल देना पड़ा क्योंकि इसकी लागत बहुत अधिक थी. प्रत्येक मिसाइल की कीमत लगभग 25 करोड़ रुपए थी.

मिसाइल के यूरोपीय निर्माता एमबीडीए ने इंडियन एयर फोर्स को बताया कि फ्रांसीसी निर्मित मिराज 2000 और रूसी सुखोई एसयू-30 एमकेआई इस मिसाइल के लिए उपयुक्त नहीं हैं क्योंकि इन विमानों के राडार इसकी क्षमता के साथ न्याय नहीं कर पाएंगे.

एमबीडीए ने कहा कि तेजस विमान के लिए मिसाइल को तभी एकीकृत किया जा सकता है जब विमान शुरू में इस्तेमाल की जाने वाली इजरायल के बजाय स्वदेशी एईएसए रडार से लैस हो.

इसके बाद,

IAF ने उल्का मिसाइल को राफेल तक सीमित रखने का फैसला किया और अपनी मुख्य मारक क्षमता के लिए अस्त्र और इजरायली आई-डर्बी के बेहतर संस्करणों पर भरोसा किया. https://hindi.theprint.in/defence/india-will-test-the-next-generation-missile-this-month-the-deal-for-indigenous-astra-mk-1-has-been-sealed/334284/