

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (02.08.2022)

1. No breach in Aadhaar data vault till now, must be cautious: Centre in Rajya Sabha ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Aug 01, 2022

There has been no breach of Unique Identification Authority of India's (UIDAI) Aadhaar data vault, Union minister of electronics and information technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said in Rajya Sabha on Monday. The minister also said that Aadhaar holders must be cautious while sharing their details.

“Aadhaar has a 256-key encryption followed and there has not been a data breach recorded yet. This is contrary to concerns raised by several security experts in the past,” he said.

The Union minister was responding to questions raised by Communist Party of India (CPI) MP Binoy Viswam on whether the Centre has considered the recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) that questioned the encryption method and procedure of Aadhaar data vault.

Referring to the CAG recommendations, the ministry said the Information Security (IS) Audit of Authentication User Agencies (AUA) for 2020-21 has not been completed by independent auditors. “For the year 2020-21, IS Audit (including ADV) of 156 out of 164 AUAs has been done. Further, for the year 2021-22, so far UIDAI has received IS audit reports of 133 out of 169 AUAs,” it said.

The ministry further said that Aadhaar number holders can use partially-masked Aadhaar as a precautionary measure. “UIDAI also provides the facility of Aadhaar locking and biometric locking to residents which ensure greater security and privacy of Aadhaar number,” it added.

The recent CAG report titled ‘Functioning of Unique Identification Authority of India’ has found that the bodies involved in the Aadhaar authentication system failed to conduct annual audits of their operations either by UIDAI or certified Information System Auditors.

“UIDAI was neither able to derive required assurance that the entities involved in the authentication ecosystem had maintained their information systems which were compliant with the prescribed standards nor did it ensure compliance of Information Systems Audit by the appointed entities,” the report said.

A total of 1,22,454 duplicate Aadhaars have been cancelled since 2019 and Andhra Pradesh tops the list with 20,696 cancellations, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 13,083 and Karnataka with 12,552 cancellations.

The CAG report said that over 4.75 lakh Aadhaar with similar biometric data were issued by UIDAI since 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/no-breach-in-aadhaar-data-vault-till-now-must-be-cautious-centre-in-rajya-sabha-101659363002175-amp.html>

2. Aadhaar still blocking school attendance, expected block for pregnancy welfare (biometricupdate.com) Aug 01, 2022

Despite Aadhaar, India's national digital identity scheme, not being a requirement to attend school, many children are being denied access across the country. Investigations also reveal that further Aadhaar links are expected for welfare for pregnant women and poor children up to six, reports the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters.

In 2014, India's Supreme Court ruled that Aadhaar could not be the only option to verify oneself for welfare. In 2018 the Court ruled that children cannot be excluded from school attendance for not having an Aadhaar number.

While the law is clear in that no Aadhaar is needed, school- and local authority-level implementation of Aadhaar requirements is blocking attendance. The Thomson Reuters Foundation report covers families that have moved and then their children are unable to attend schools in their new area, while children in other families have been blocked from moving up into the next grade.

The report states there are tens of millions of poor children at risk of exclusion from benefits or school as they do not have Aadhaar cards. Only 23 percent of under-fives have Aadhaar ID.

Biometrics are also not captured of children five and under, causing something of a conundrum for the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

“UIDAI may explore alternate ways to capture uniqueness of biometric identity for minor children below five years since uniqueness of identity is the most distinctive feature of Aadhaar established through biometrics of the individual,” stated the ‘Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Functioning of Unique Identification Authority of India’ published in April 2022.

At article by The Reporters' Collective cited by Thomson Reuters reveals that the central government is violating the Supreme Court ruling that no subsidy or service can be denied because of a lack of Aadhaar number with a new decision. The Reporters' Collective finds that the government is cutting funding to states that do not ensure that children and mothers receiving free food have an Aadhaar account, and must in fact present a physical Aadhaar card.

The nutrition welfare program, a legal entitlement, covers pregnant and breastfeeding women and 79 million children from six months to six years. As fewer than a quarter of children under five have an Aadhaar profile, this could mean tens of millions of children lose food rations and cooked meals from anganwadi welfare centers which have to track all services given to recipients. States wanting to still provide nutrition to children without ID will have to fund it themselves.

Anganwadi centers may even have to biometrically verify Aadhaar card holders in order to dispense welfare.

Benefits dispensed via the broader Public Distribution System also increasingly require Aadhaar, despite the Supreme Court Ruling. These have even led to genuine Aadhaar accounts being deleted in huge numbers, while the link has reportedly not improved corruption in the system.

The UIDAI recently added face biometrics as a new modality for de-duplication of Aadhaar. <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202208/aadhaar-still-blocking-school-attendance-expected-block-for-pregnancy-welfare>

3. No question of recession or stagflation in India, says FM Sitharaman ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Aug 01, 2022

India is nowhere near a recession or stagflation and the government is making all efforts to bring down retail inflation below 7 per cent, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday.

Replying to a debate on price rise in the Lok Sabha on the demand of opposition parties, Sitharaman said the government has taken several measures to make raw material prices cheaper and reduce inflation of food items.

“There is no question of India getting into recession or stagflation even though the US may have entered into an unofficial recession. Even as international agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have downgraded growth rates of economies, each time India has remained as the fastest-growing economy,” Sitharaman said.

“A Bloomberg survey also recently said there is zero probability of India slipping into a recession. Our people have gone through the pandemic, global value chains have hit us, but in spite of that, because of the various steps taken by the government and also by the Reserve Bank of India, we remain much better than most countries,” she added.

Sitharaman said while 4,000 Chinese banks are reportedly on the verge of bankruptcy, gross non-performing assets of Indian commercial banks have declined to a six-year low of 5.9 per cent for FY22. “While many major economies have triple-digit debt-to-GDP ratios, the central government’s debt-to-GDP ratio declined to 56.29 per cent of GDP in FY22 from the revised estimate of 59.9 per cent for the same year. According to the IMF, India’s general government (centre+states) debt stood at 86.9 per cent of GDP in FY22,” she said.

Holding that India’s economy is showing very positive signs and the economy’s fundamentals remain strong, Sitharaman said GST collection in July was the second-highest ever at Rs 1.49 trillion, remaining above Rs 1.4 trillion for the fifth consecutive month.

“PMI manufacturing is at an eight-month high at 56.4 with strengthening of output and new orders, remaining above 50 (threshold for expansion) for the 13th consecutive month,” she added.

Comparing the economic situation during the 2013 taper tantrum when India was considered one of the fragile five economies, Sitharaman said the NDA government has kept inflation under control. “We are trying to bring down inflation below 7 per cent,” she added.

On GST compensation cess, Sitharaman said all compensation cess to states had been paid till May 2022. “Our budgetary provision of Rs 1.2 trillion for FY23, Rs 87,000 crore has already been paid to states while Rs 14,000 crore is being paid for back-to-back loans. GST compensation is pending only for June because we have not received certificates from the Accountant General of some states. We will clear it as soon as we receive those certificates,” she added.

On oil bonds issued during the Congress-led UPA government, Sitharaman said it was in principle wrong and a burden on future generations. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-nowhere-close-to-recession-or-stagflation-says-fm-sitharaman-122080101618_1.html

4. कई स्मार्ट शहरों में 5 सालों में भी नहीं बन पाए साइकिल ट्रैक, वापसी पर लग रहा ब्रेक (hindi.mongabay.com) Aug 02, 2022

बढ़ता तापमान, ट्रैफिक जाम, वाहनों से निकलने वाला धुआं और बीमारियों के चंगुल में फंसते शहर अब राहत भरी सांस के लिए तरस रहे हैं। सड़क पर वाहनों की भीड़ में कोई साइकिल सवार जान हथेली पर लेकर अपनी मंज़िल की ओर बढ़ता दिखाई दे जाता है। साइकिल सवारों का काफिला सड़क पर बढ़ाने के लिए गैर-मोटर चालित बुनियादी ढांचा (non motorized infrastructure, NMT) तैयार करने की जरूरत है। लेकिन देशभर के स्मार्ट शहरों में एनएमटी पर काम छोटे स्तर पर हो रहा है, जबकि जरूरत इससे कहीं ज्यादा है।

शहरों को बेहतर जीवनशैली के लिए डिजाइन करने के उद्देश्य से आवास और शहरी कार्य मंत्रालय वर्ष 2015 से देशभर में 2,05,018 करोड़ रुपए की लागत से 100 स्मार्ट शहर बना रहा है। इसका मकसद आर्थिक तरक्की के साथ लोगों को बेहतर जीवन और बेहतर परिवहन सुविधा देना है। साथ ही शहरों को जलवायु परिवर्तन की चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए तैयार करना है। साइकिल चलाने और पैदल चलने वालों के लिए स्मार्ट सिटी में फुटपाथ और साइकिल ट्रैक बनाना अनिवार्य है। काउंसिल ऑफ एनर्जी, एनवायरमेंट एंड वाटर के मुताबिक पैदल चलने और साइकिल को बढ़ावा देकर 2032 तक परिवहन क्षेत्र में तकरीबन 37% कार्बन डाई ऑक्साइड का उत्सर्जन कम किया जा सकता है।

क्या स्मार्ट शहरों में की जा सकती हैं साइकिल यात्राएं?

उदाहरण के तौर पर देहरादून को लेते हैं। यहां वर्ष 2017 में स्मार्ट सिटी प्रोजेक्ट शुरू हुआ। प्रोजेक्ट के पांचवें वर्ष में भी शहर की सड़कें साइकिल सवारों के लिए सुरक्षित नज़र नहीं आतीं। स्मार्ट सिटी देहरादून के स्वतंत्र निदेशक लोकेश ओहरी कहते हैं, “स्मार्ट सिटी पर होने वाली बैठकों में साइकिल इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर को लेकर मैं सवाल उठाता रहता हूं। लेकिन नेताओं और अधिकारियों को लगता है कि शहर सिर्फ गाड़ियों के लिए होना चाहिए। शुरुआत में सड़क बनाने की योजना में साइकिल ट्रैक पर चर्चा भी हुई थी। लेकिन इस दिशा में कोई खास काम नहीं हुआ।”

अट्ठारह लाख से अधिक की आबादी वाले देहरादून में सुबह-दोपहर स्कूल के समय पूरा शहर ट्रैफिक जाम में फंस जाता है। अगर इन्हीं बच्चों को पैदल या साइकिल से स्कूल जाने की सुविधा मिले तो जाम और प्रदूषण से मुक्ति मिल सकती है।

वहीं देहरादून स्मार्ट सिटी की जनसंपर्क अधिकारी प्रेरणा ध्यानी बताती हैं, “स्मार्ट सिटी के तहत शहर में पब्लिक इलेक्ट्रिक साइकिल शेयरिंग सिस्टम पर काम शुरू किया जा रहा है। इसके लिए यस बैंक के साथ आठ जुलाई को करार हुआ है। इस योजना में शहर के 10 स्थानों पर 100 ई-साइकिल 10 रुपए प्रति घंटा शुल्क पर उपलब्ध कराई जाएंगी। हमने परेड ग्राउंड के अंदर साइक्लिंग ट्रैक बनाया है। चाइल्ड फ्रेंडली प्रोजेक्ट में स्कूल के आसपास बच्चों की सुरक्षित आवाजाही के लिए फुटपाथ तैयार किया जाएगा। इन सब पर जल्द काम शुरू होगा।”

प्रेरणा शहर के एक बड़े मैदान में बने साइकिल ट्रैक की बात कर रही हैं, जहां भीड़-भरे रास्तों को पार कर लोग साइकिल चलाने आ सकते हैं। लेकिन रोज़मर्रा के कामों के लिए देहरादून स्मार्ट सिटी में साइकिल ट्रैक नहीं हैं।

यह साइकिल ट्रैक इंटर-लॉकिंग टाइल्स से बनाई गई है जिसके बीच में लोहे की जालियां लगी हैं। जबकि साइकिल ट्रैक की सतह चिकनी होनी चाहिए ताकि साइकिल सवार को सहूलियत हो, वहां से गुजरते हुए एक साइकिल सवार ने कहा।

पंजाब का भी यही हाल

साल 2016 में लुधियाना स्मार्ट सिटी के लिए चुने गए शीर्ष 20 शहरों में से एक था। लुधियाना के बाद अमृतसर और जालंधर भी इसमें जुड़े। पंजाब सरकार के ट्रैफिक सलाहकार डॉ नवदीप असीजा कहते हैं, “ये शहर सांस्कृतिक तौर पर साइकिल से चलने वालों का हुआ करता था। लेकिन अब लुधियाना की सड़कें साइकिल सवारों के लिए सुरक्षित नहीं हैं।”

इन तीनों स्मार्ट शहरों में फुटपाथ-साइकिल ट्रैक तैयार करने के लिए कोई उल्लेखनीय काम नहीं हुआ है। पंजाब के शहरी निकायों को लेकर जारी कैंग ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि लुधियाना, अमृतसर और जालंधर में स्मार्ट सिटी मिशन के तहत प्रस्तावित 124 में से महज 15 प्रोजेक्ट ही अक्टूबर-2020 तक पूरे हो सके थे। यानी महज 12 फीसदी से कुछ अधिक। 76 प्रोजेक्ट पर काम शुरू ही नहीं हुआ। बाकी पर काम जारी है। जबकि जून 2020 तक इन्हें पूरा करना था।

नवदीप कहते हैं कि लुधियाना में इस समय 10 मीटर की साइकिल ट्रैक भी नहीं बनाई जा सकी है। जबकि स्मार्ट शहरों में एनएमटी ढांचा बनाना अनिवार्य है। राज्य सरकारों को बजट इसी शर्त के साथ जारी किया जाता है।

वहीं पंजाब के अन्य शहरों के उलट चंडीगढ़ इस मामले में आगे दिखता है। वह खुद को 200 किमी साइकिल ट्रैक बनाने वाले अकेले शहर के रूप में पेश करता है।

असीजा कहते हैं, “चंडीगढ़ स्मार्ट सिटी में साइकिल ट्रैक तैयार हैं लेकिन साइकिल सवारों का इंतज़ार है। यहां के 1951 के मास्टर प्लान में ही साइकिल ट्रैक बनाना शामिल था। लेकिन इस पर कोई काम नहीं किया गया। 1990 से शुरू हुए आर्थिक सुधारों के बाद 2015 तक हमने साइकिल और सार्वजनिक वाहनों पर बिलकुल ध्यान नहीं दिया और सड़कों पर निजी वाहनों की संख्या बढ़ती चली गई। फुटपाथ और साइकिलें पीछे छूटती चली गईं। अब साइकिल ट्रैक बनाई जाएंगी तो लोग भी इन पर अपनी साइकिलें लेकर वापस आएंगे। इस बदलाव को आने में वक़्त लगेगा।”

नवनीत कहते हैं कि केंद्रशासित स्मार्ट शहरों में अपेक्षाकृत बेहतर काम हो रहा है। भुवनेश्वर जैसे एक-दो स्मार्ट शहरों को छोड़ दें, तो हमारे पास अब तक स्मार्ट सिटी का कोई अच्छा उदाहरण नहीं है।

महानगरों समेत अन्य शहरों का हाल

वहीं देश की राजधानी दिल्ली में कर्नाट प्लेस के दो वर्ग किलोमीटर के दायरे को स्मार्ट सिटी के तौर पर विकसित किया जा रहा है। ऑब्जर्वर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन में सीनियर फेलो रूमी ऐजाज़ ने इस पर शोध किया। वह कहते हैं कि नई दिल्ली नगर पालिका परिषद ने स्मार्ट सिटी के तहत कर्नाट प्लेस क्षेत्र में खुले में साइकिल स्टैंड बनाए। आवाजाही के लिए किराए पर साइकिल उपलब्ध कराई। लेकिन यहां की सड़कों पर अलग से साइकिल ट्रैक नहीं है। जबकि दिल्ली स्मार्ट सिटी के प्रस्ताव में ऐप आधारित साइकिल ट्रैक बनाना शामिल है। स्मार्ट सिटी मिशन के तहत दिल्ली में साइकिलों को तेज रफ्तार वाहनों के बीच से ही गुजरना होता है।

मुंबई स्मार्ट सिटी में परिवहन बेहतर करने के लिए सड़क चौड़ी करने, मेट्रो से आवाजाही, स्मार्ट पार्किंग, फुटपाथ बनाने का प्रस्ताव शामिल था। लेकिन साइकिल से चलने की कोई योजना नहीं बनाई गई। जबकि चेन्नई स्मार्ट सिटी में 17 किमी की साइकिल ट्रैक जून 2018 में बनकर तैयार हो गया।

एजाज़ ने स्मार्ट सिटी मिशन के तहत 2015-2021 तक किए कामों पर भी शोध किया। वह बताते हैं कि तेलंगाना की स्मार्ट सिटी ग्रेटर वारंगल में सड़क के साथ 40 किमी साइकिल और पैदल चलने की सुविधा उपलब्ध कराई जा रही है। कोलकाता के न्यूटाउन स्मार्ट सिटी में तीन किमी बाधा रहित साइकिल ट्रैक बनाई जा रही है। सूरत स्मार्ट सिटी के बाइसिकल प्रोजेक्ट में 1160 साइकिल के साथ 42 बाइक स्टेशन बन रहे हैं। मिशन के छह साल पूरे होने पर आवास और शहरी विकास मंत्रालय ने जानकारी दी कि गैर-मोटरचालित शहरी परिवहन से जुड़े 180 प्रोजेक्ट पूरे किए जा चुके हैं।

साइकिल सवारों का सड़कों पर दावा

कोरोना के बाद साइकिल की ओर लोगों को रुझान बढ़ा है। देहरादून के साइकिल सवार अब शहर की सड़कों पर अपना दावा कर रहे हैं। शहर में 20 से अधिक साइकिलिंग क्लब-ग्रुप बने हुए हैं। देहरादून साइकिलिंग क्लब इनमें से एक है। क्लब के सदस्य हरिसिमरन सिंह कहते हैं, “हम शनिवार-इतवार को साइकिल यात्राएं आयोजित करते हैं। इसके लिए शहर के बाहरी हिस्सों को चुनते हैं क्योंकि वहां ट्रैफिक का दबाव कम होता है। हमें पूरे शहर में साइकिल ट्रैक चाहिए ताकि लोग कम दूरी वाला सफ़र साइकिल से सुरक्षित तय कर सकें।”

सड़कों पर साइकिल सवारों के दावे को मज़बूत बनाने के लिए पर्यावरणविद् पद्मश्री अनिल जोशी ने 5 जून को देहरादून की सड़कों पर साइकिल चलाई। वह कहते हैं, “देहरादून जैसे शहर में सिर्फ परेड ग्राउंड के भीतर साइकिल ट्रैक बनाने से कुछ नहीं होगा। देहरादून की सड़कों पर वाहनों का बढ़ता दबाव देखते हुए सड़कें चौड़ी की जा रही हैं। इसके लिए हज़ारों की संख्या में पेड़ काटे जा रहे हैं। चौड़ी की जा रही इन सड़कों पर साइकिल ट्रैक होनी ही चाहिए। छोटी दूरियां तय करने के लिए साइकिल की वापसी अहम है।”

बढ़ते तापमान से जहां शहरी क्षेत्र प्रभावित हो रहे हैं, वहीं वे इसके लिए ज़िम्मेदार भी हैं। पूरी दुनिया की तकरीबन आधी आबादी शहरों में रहती है। वैश्विक ग्रीन हाउस गैसों के तीन-चौथाई उत्सर्जन के लिए शहरों को ज़िम्मेदार माना जाता है। अनुमान है कि 2030 तक शहरों में कुल आबादी का दो-तिहाई लोग रहेंगे।

आईपीसीसी की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक वाहनों से निकलने वाले धुएं को कम करना बड़ी चुनौती है। परिवहन क्षेत्र ने वर्ष 2010 में 7 गीगाटन (7.0 Gt CO₂eq) ग्रीन हाउस गैसों का सीधे तौर पर उत्सर्जन किया। ये

ऊर्जा से संबंधित कुल CO2 उत्सर्जन का लगभग एक-चौथाई (6.7 GtCO2) था। इसलिए राष्ट्रीय शहरी परिवहन नीति-2006 भी सुरक्षित साइक्लिंग इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर तैयार करने और गैर-मोटर चालित मोड को प्राथमिकता देने की बात कही गई है।

नेशनल फैमिली हेल्थ सर्वे-5 के मुताबिक भारत में मात्र आठ फीसदी लोग यानी 12 में से एक घर में कार है। 54% के पास दो-पहिया वाहन हैं, जबकि 55% लोगों के पास साइकिल है।

साइक्लिंग फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया के सेक्रेटरी जनरल मनिंदर पाल सिंह कहते हैं, “हिंदुस्तान में हर व्यक्ति ने अपने जीवन में कभी न कभी साइकिल जरूर चलाई है। इसके बावजूद हमारी सरकारों ने 55% लोगों की सुरक्षित साइकिल यात्रा के लिए कोई नियम-कायदा नहीं बनाया। जबकि आठ फीसदी लोगों के लिए नियम-कायदे, सड़कें, फ्लाइओवर सब बनाए जा रहे हैं। हमें साइकिल से चलने वालों को अलग ट्रैक देना होगा। वाहनों के लिए नियम बनाने होंगे ताकि साइकिल सवार सुरक्षित रहें।”

देहरादून की साइक्लिंग मेयर के खिताब से नवाज़ी गई विश्व धीमान 68 वर्ष की हैं। 2016 से उन्होंने साइकिल चलाना शुरू किया। साइकिल से वह गंगोत्री, वैष्णो देवी, लद्दाख, राजस्थान, नेपाल की लंबी यात्राएं कर चुकी हैं। देहरादून में साइकिल चलाने के दौरान कई बार सड़क दुर्घटनाओं की शिकार भी हुईं। वह कहती हैं, “हम ये इंतज़ार नहीं कर सकते कि साइकिल ट्रैक आए फिर हम साइकिल चलाएं। जब हम सड़कों पर सुरक्षा के साथ साइकिल चलाना शुरू कर देंगे तो सरकारों को भी साइकिल ट्रैक बनाने के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ेगा।”

साइकिल की वापसी की जरूरत केंद्र सरकार भी महसूस कर रही है। कोरोना काल में केंद्र सरकार ने साइकिल यात्राओं को बढ़ावा देने के लिए शहरों को ‘साइकिल फॉर चेंज’ चुनौती दी थी। जिसमें शहरों को साइकिल के लिहाज से सड़कों में बदलाव लाने के लिए प्रेरित किया जा रहा है।

<https://hindi.mongabay.com/2022/08/02/many-smart-cities-fails-to-build-cycle-track/>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

5. Odisha forest dept planted most trees along roads, not in degraded forests: CAG ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Aug 01, 2022

CAG’s performance audit picked holes in Odisha forest department’s tree plantation drive, saying the targets were fixed without having access to the requisite data points

Bhubaneswar: Odisha forest department’s tree plantation activities did not lead to an improvement of degraded forest area or forest cover to its full potential due to the lack of a database of degraded forest and non-forest land, according to the department’s performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

“(The) maximum number of trees were planted along roads while the degraded patches inside the forest area which was inaccessible, were not taken for plantation activity. Due to a lack of coordination with district administration, information on degraded forest land and non-forest land was not available with the department. The planning procedure was limited to only instant data provided by field staff in a piece-meal manner. Annual targets on plantations were not

compiled at the range and division level. The targets were set by the PCCF and communicated to respective divisions. This indicated a lack of coordinated planning by the ranges, divisions and forest headquarters,” the CAG report said.

The auditors concluded that the forest department fell short of its targets ranging between 12% and 50% between 2013-14 and 2017-18 under various types of plantation while the shortfall in achieving the targets in centrally sponsored schemes such as plantation programmes carried out under MGNREGS ranging from 23% to 68%.

According to the Forest Survey of India report, Odisha’s forest cover stands at 52,155.95sqkm, 33.5% of the state’s total geographical area. According to this report, Odisha’s forest area rose by 537.44sqkm between 2019 and 2020.

The audit report also listed several reasons for the department failing to meet its target. Firstly, it pointed out that range officers did not carry out inspections though each plantation is supposed to be visited by the range officer three times a year for three consecutive years to check on the condition of the plantation. “The year-wise growth and survival percentages could not be confirmed, which is the sole factor for assessing the success of the plantations. This indicated deficiency in monitoring and evaluation of plantations,” the audit report said.

Secondly, though forest plantation programmes are primarily meant to cover the area with trees, without significantly affecting the originality of the vegetation in the landscape, the department preferred teak, acacia and eucalyptus trees to sal trees, the principal species of Odisha. This not just significantly reduced biodiversity but also brought down the average survival of plantations to 37%. The choice of species and the pre-planting analysis of required parameters of soil, rainfall, temperature, and drainage system was improper, the audit said.

Thirdly, the audit suggested that one reason for the department missing its targets by a wide margin could be due to unrealistic targets fixed without the requisite data.

Fourthly, the audit report also contended that there was no concurrent evaluation of plantation schemes and undue delay in third-party evaluation. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/odisha-forest-dept-planted-most-trees-along-roads-not-in-degraded-forests-cag-101659369420892.html>

6. CAG: 24 PSUs made profits, 7 incurred losses in '2019-20 (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Aug 02, 2022

BHUBANESWAR: As many as 24 state public sector enterprises (SPSE) reported a profit of Rs 1,686 crore, while seven such units incurred a loss of Rs 304.52 crore during in 2019-20, according to the comptroller and auditor general (CAG) report tabled in the assembly on Monday.

The profit made by 22 government companies was Rs 1,174 crore in 2018-19, the CAG report said.

The return on equity (ROE), which is a gauge of the profitability of a corporation and how efficiently it generates the profit, of the 24 SPSEs was 12.51% in 2019-20 compared to 9.77% of 22 SPSEs in 2018-19, said the report.

Odisha has 82 SPSEs as on March 31, 2020, consisting of 63 government companies, three statutory corporations and 16 other government controlled companies. Of these, the financial performance of 46 SPSEs was covered in the report. The 46 SPSEs registered a turnover of Rs 24,850 crore in 2019-20.

Till March 31, 2020, 11 SPSEs had accumulated losses of Rs 5,778 crore. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/cag-24-psus-made-profits-7-incurred-losses-in-19-20/articleshow/93286661.cms>

7. Odisha failed to achieve plantation targets: CAG (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Aug 02, 2022

BHUBANESWAR: The comptroller and auditor general (CAG) said the state has failed to achieve its plantation targets over the last few years. In its performance audit report on assessment of plantation activities tabled in the assembly on Monday, the CAG pointed out a shortfall of 11.98% to 50.89% in achievement of plantation targets from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The CAG said targets could not be achieved due to lack of coordinated planning among ranges, divisions and forest headquarters leading to financial loss of nearly Rs 80 crore. It suggested the state government to formulate its own state forest policy in line with the national one by considering local geo-climatic conditions as the absence of such a policy resulted in inadequate planning in increasing the green cover.

The forest divisions were also working without approved working plans. According to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR)-2021, the forest cover is assessed as 52,155.95 sq km, comprising 33.5% of the total geographical area of the state. It was 51,619 sq km (33.15% of total area), according to ISFR2019 report. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/state-failed-to-achieve-plantation-targets-cag/articleshow/93286656.cms>

8. Odisha State's plantation drives fall short: CAG (newindianexpress.com) 02 August 2022

BHUBANESWAR: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has exposed massive financial mismanagement and wasteful expenditure of the Forest department in its plantation programme. The CAG noticed a shortfall in the achievement of plantation targets during 2013-14 to 2017-18 from 11.98 per cent to 50.89 per cent under different plantation programmes.

“Achievement of plantation targets during the period ended with the unreasonable shortfall, which indicated unrealistic fixation of targets. Due to the non-availability of data regarding degraded forest land and vacant revenue land, the planning procedure for plantation was limited to only instant data provided by field staff on a piece-meal manner,” the performance audit of the year that ended March 2020 said.

The audit report tabled in the Assembly on the concluding day of the monsoon session on Monday said the department incurred unfruitful expenditure worth `13.17 crore as 191 out of 485 plantations were not successful. The reasons of failure were an improper selection of plantation sites and a delay in the submission of plantation project proposals by divisional forest officers (DFOs).

The department had set a target to take up plantation on over 8.8 lakh hectare while the achievement was only 4.32 lakh hectare, a shortfall of 50.89 per cent. “Although planting of seedlings was actually not taken up in the aided natural regeneration (ANR) without gap plantation but the cost norm provided for watch and ward during the entire regeneration period of four years. This inappropriate provision led to avoidable expenditure of `63.19 crore,” it noted.

Conducting the audit in 13 out of 49 forest divisions where plantation programmes were carried out, the report said the audit team and forest officers physically verified 41 plantations and found 20 failed plantations and seven partially successful plantations with an unfruitful expenditure of `2.67 crore.

Even as various components of plantation works of block plantations and urban plantations were similar, the provision of man-days for urban plantations was fixed unreasonably higher, which led to an avoidable extra expenditure of `39.80 crore.

Lack of a State Forest Policy (SFP) in line with National Forest Policy by considering local geo-climatic conditions has resulted in inadequate planning in the enhancement of green cover in the State “Forest divisions were working without approved working plans. There was no coordination at the level of divisional forest officers (DFOs) and district rural development agencies (DRDAs) in planning the plantation projects executed under MGNREGS in a division,” the report said. It further said that neither the DFOs nor the department had information on total job card holders available in a division which affected the plantation execution. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bhubaneswar/2022/aug/02/odisha-states-plantation-drives-fall-short-cag-2483200.html>

9. Odisha fails to carry out plantation activities in 50% of the targeted area ([thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)) UPDATED: AUGUST 02, 2022

Odisha misses degraded patches, thus plantation target missed, says CAG

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has found concentration of plantation activities in easily accessible areas like land along the pathways, leaving the degraded patches in the middle of dense forest unplanted in Odisha — one of reasons cited for missing plantation target in the State.

The CAG came down heavily on the State government indicating that plantation undertaken by in the State did not result in improvement of degraded forest area and increase in forest cover to its full potential. Besides, the apex audit agency pointed out that the State did not have any data base on degraded land.

Odisha’s forest cover in the State is assessed as 51,619 sq. km, which is 33.15% of State’s geographical area as per India State of Forest Report 2019.

The performance audit of CAG says the shortfall in achievement of plantation targets during the period 2013-14 to 2017-18 ranged from 11.98% to 50.89% under various types of plantations. During the period, the government had fixed a plantation target of 8,80,705 ha of area whereas it managed to carry out plantation only on 4,32,543 ha areas – shortfall by 50.89%.

“The acute shortfall in achievement of plantation targets during the period indicated fixation of unrealistic targets. Due to non-availability of data regarding degraded forest land and vacant revenue land, the planning procedure for plantations was limited to only instant data provided by field staff on a piece-meal manner,” it said.

“Aerial survey of the plantation sites using unmanned aerial vehicles revealed concentration of plantation activities in easily accessible areas like land along the pathways, leaving the degraded patches in the middle of dense forest unplanted,” the CAG says.

The audit agency further said as the database of degraded forest and non-forest land was not available with the department, target for compensatory afforestation programmes under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) was not achieved within the stipulated period of three years and hence, could not compensate the forest cover against the diversion of forest land.

Stating that the plantation programmes carried out under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Energy Guarantee Scheme remained unfruitful and failed due to improper selection of plantation sites in dense forest, the CAG blamed it to lack of coordination at the level of office Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) and District Rural Development Agencies in planning the plantation projects in a division. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/odisha-fails-to-carry-out-plantation-activities-in-50-of-the-targeted-area/article65712244.ece>

10. CAG unearths massive irregularities in Odisha Forest department's plantation activities (odishatv.in) Aug 1, 2022

The audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (Performance and Compliance Audit) for the year ended March 2020, Government of Odisha revealed massive irregularities in “Assessment of Plantation Activities” covering the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The report revealed shortfall in achievement of plantation targets ranging from 11.98 per cent to 50.89 per cent during the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18 indicating fixation of unrealistic targets.

Not only that, the Forest department has also incurred unfruitful expenditure worth Rs 13.17 crore as 191 out of 485 plantations were not successful.

A joint physical verification including representative team from forest division was conducted to confirm the existence and to assess survival of the bamboo plantation at Baghdangar Protected Reserve Forest (PRF). The officials of the forest division could not identify even a single planted bamboo to audit and the site was a failed plantation.

Although planting of seedlings was actually not taken up in the Aided Natural Regeneration (ANR) without gap plantation but the cost norm provided for watch and ward during the entire regeneration period of four years. This inappropriate provision led to avoidable expenditure of Rs 63.19 crore.

Though the various components of plantation works of Block plantations and Urban plantations were similar, the provision of man days for urban plantations was fixed unreasonably higher which led to avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 39.80 crore.

Irregular allotment of funds for fencing and 3rd year maintenance under Urban Tree Plantation led to irregular expenditure of Rs 14.82 crore.

Contrary to the Finance Department order, the Forest department allowed 15 per cent supervision charges of Rs 42.15 crore on the value of a work against the admissible rate of 10 per cent (Rs 23.58 crore) which led to excess payment liability of Rs 18.57 crore.

Moreover, as per the CAG, 191 plantation projects out of the 475 are complete failures. <https://odishatv.in/news/miscellaneous/cag-unearts-massive-irregularities-in-odisha-forest-department-s-plantation-activities-182112>

11. CAG Comes Down Heavily On Odisha Forest Dept: ‘Unsuccessful Plantations, Wasteful Expenditure’ (odishabytes.com) Aug 2, 2022

Bhubaneswar: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has come down heavily on Odisha’s Forest Department over unsuccessful plantations resulting in wasteful expenditure.

In its audit report placed in the Assembly on the concluding day of the Monsoon Session on Monday, the CAG said the Forest Department fell short of plantation targets that ranged from 11.98% to 50.89% between 2013-14 and 2017-18. The shortfall under centrally sponsored schemes such as MGNREGS ranged from 23% to 68%.

The Forest Department incurred wasteful expenditure worth Rs 13.17 crore as 191 out of 485 plantations were not successful due to poor selection of sites and delay in submission of proposals by Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), the report said.

Against a target to take up plantation on over 8.8 lakh hectares, plantation was actually carried out on only 4.32 lakh hectares, a shortfall of 50.89%, the report said.

The CAG conducted the audit in 13 out of 49 forest divisions. Forest officers and CAG officials physically verified 41 plantations, of which 20 were unsuccessful and seven partially successful, resulting in wasteful expenditure of Rs 2.67 crore, the report said.

The provision of man days for urban plantations was fixed unreasonably higher, which led to avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 39.8 crore, it said.

Further, according to the CAG, the Forest Department’s plantation activities did not replenish degraded forest areas fully due to lack of database on degraded forest and non-forest land.

“Maximum number of trees were planted along roads while the degraded patches inside the forest area, which were inaccessible, were not taken up for plantation activity. Due to a lack of coordination with district administrations, information on degraded forest land and non-forest land was not available with the department. The planning procedure was limited to only instant data provided by field staff in a piecemeal manner. Annual targets on plantations were not compiled at the range and division level. The targets were set by the PCCF and communicated to respective divisions. This indicated a lack of coordinated planning by the ranges, divisions and forest headquarters,” a report in Hindustan Times, quoting from the CAG report, said. <https://odishabytes.com/cag-comes-down-heavily-on-odisha-forest-dept-unsuccessful-plantations-wasteful-expenditure/>

12. Rs 61 Cr Loss: CAG Raps Odisha Mining Corporation For Faulty Estimate Of Bauxite Floor Price (odishabytes.com) Aug 2, 2022

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) sustained a loss of Rs 61 crore, having estimated cost of production of bauxite from Kodingamali block in Koraput and Rayagada districts on the lower side, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report tabled in the Assembly said.

It further said that the state PSU, in violation of provisions of the gratuity act, paid excess wages of Rs 5.31 crore in lieu of gratuity and leave salary towards engagement of security agencies.

According to the report, the Odisha government had allotted mining lease of bauxite blocks of 428.075 hectares at Kodingamali in the districts of Koraput and Rayagada to the OMC for a period of 50 years. The Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) approved the mining plan for the lease area holding approximately 611 lakh tonnes of bauxite reserves. It is also approved for mining over a period of 21 years, with 15 lakh tonnes for the first year and 30 lakh tonnes per annum for the balance period, said the CAG.

The OMC awarded the work for excavation and raising of bauxite to a contractor in September 2017. The agreement between OMC and the contractor stated that the raising contractor would be paid 61 per cent of the escalated/deescalated rate per cubic metre of backfilling of the mined-out area.

It also included 10 per cent of capital employed in the cost estimates for raising iron ore towards interest on capital employed and the cost of Sustainable Development Framework, which was 10 per cent of royalty in the third tender.

In such a cost-plus scenario, the estimate for the cost of production must have included all the elements of cost – cost of backfilling of the mined out area, interest on capital employed, SDF among others – for raising and sale of bauxite to the aluminium industries, the report added.

According to the government notification, OMC determined the floor price of bauxite for the two e-auctions held on April 4 and October 3 in 2018 and the third on April 3, 2019, at Rs 462, Rs 547.50 and Rs 672.65 per tonne taking the lift of the mining block to 50 years instead of 21 years. The price finalised after these three e-auctions were Rs 465, Rs 553 and Rs 673 per tonne respectively and the company sold 31,86,277 tonne of bauxite from April 2018 to July 2019.

The audit observed that OMC failed to work out its cost properly and safeguard its financial interests. The state PSU lost Rs 61.07 crore and consequently failed to make the supply of bauxite sustainable as envisaged by the government due to inappropriate costing and downward fixation of the floor price of bauxite. <https://odishabytes.com/rs-61-cr-loss-cag-raps-odisha-mining-corporation-for-faulty-estimate-of-bauxite-floor-price/>

13. CAG Report Tabled In Odisha Assembly; Here Are Highlights (sambadenglish.com) Aug 1, 2022

Bhubaneswar: The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) was tabled in the Odisha Legislative Assembly, today.

The report features performance and compliance audit for the year ended March 2020. The important audit findings are listed below.

* The expenditure of the Departments of Government of Odisha under Economic Sector in 2019-20 was Rs 25,693.84 crore and constituted 22.44 per cent of the total expenditure of Rs 1,14,491 crore incurred during the year.

* The State of Odisha is mandated to manage, conserve and protect forest and wildlife resources in the State through afforestation and regeneration of degraded forest lands. The forest cover in the State is assessed as 51,619 sq. km, which is 33.15 per cent of State's geographical area as per India State of Forest Report 2019.

This Performance Audit on "Assessment of Plantation Activities" covering the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18 revealed the following:

-Shortfall in achievement of plantation targets ranging from 11.98 per cent to 50.89 per cent during the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18 indicated fixation of unrealistic targets. Data required for the planning procedure in respect of degraded forest land and vacant revenue land were neither maintained at Government nor at Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) level.

-Forest Divisions were working without approved Working Plans/ Working Schemes due to failure to evolve State Forest Policy (SFP) in line with National Forest Policy.

-Sal species is the principal indigenous species of Odisha but Teak was planted as major species, thereby affecting the originality of the vegetation and biodiversity.

-There was no coordination at the level of Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) and District Rural Development Authorities in planning the plantation projects executed under MGNREGS in a division.

-The department incurred unfruitful expenditure worth `13.17 crore as 191 out of 485 plantations were not successful.

-Target for Compensatory afforestation programmes under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority was not achieved within the stipulated period of three years and hence, could not compensate the forest cover against the diversion of forest land.

Aerial survey of the plantation sites using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) revealed concentration of plantation activities in easily accessible areas like land along the pathways, leaving the degraded patches in the middle of dense forest unplanted.

-A Joint Physical Verification including representative team from forest division was conducted to confirm the existence and to assess survival of the bamboo plantation at Baghdangar Protected Reserve Forest (PRF). The officials of the division could not identify even a single planted bamboo to Audit and the site was a failed plantation.

-Although planting of seedlings was actually not taken up in the Aided Natural Regeneration (ANR) without gap plantation but the cost norm provided for watch and ward during the entire

regeneration period of four years. This inappropriate provision led to avoidable expenditure of Rs 63.19 crore.

-Though the various components of plantation works of Block plantations and Urban plantations were similar, the provision of man days for urban plantations was fixed unreasonably higher which led to avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 39.80 crore.

-Irregular allotment of funds for fencing and 3rd year maintenance under Urban Tree Plantation led to irregular expenditure of Rs 14.82 crore.

* In a work of raising and strengthening of embankment without construction of sluice over Sapuanallah left with a gap between the embankments deprived seven villages of protection from ingress of flood water and crop damage. This rendered the expenditure of Rs 17.40 crore unfruitful.

* The Honorable High Court of Odisha quashed the price variation/ escalation orders for payment/ adjustment of escalation charge on materials, labour and Petrol, Oil and Lubricant. In violation to the above orders, two Executive Engineers paid Rs 90.12 crore towards price variation to contractors.

* Contrary to the Finance Department order, the department allowed 15 per cent supervision charges of Rs 42.15 crore on the value of a work against the admissible rate of 10 per cent (Rs 23.58 crore) which led to excess payment liability of Rs 18.57 crore.

* The Executive Engineer did not ensure the availability of land during preparation of Detailed Project Report for construction of embankment. The work was abandoned midway and the flood protection to the nearby villages could not be ensured despite incurring an expenditure of Rs 9.87 crore.

* Adoption of higher capacity of crane of 80 tons instead of the actual requirement of 35 tons capacity crane for lifting of armoury stone boulders of not less than one MT inflated the estimated cost of 10 works resulting in undue benefit to the contractors of Rs 7.72 crore.

* Adoption of higher vehicle damage factor than prescribed in Indian Roads Congress (IRC) specifications increased the provision of unwarranted excess pavement layers on the road surface. This resulted in an avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 8.11 crore.

* Despite availability and economical costs of slag, the EE did not consider slag for sub-base in the estimates and instead opted for GSB material (stone product) for three road works. This resulted in extra expenditure of Rs 2.12 crore.

* Odisha Mining Corporation Limited estimated cost of production of bauxite on lower side for which the company sustained loss of revenue of Rs 61.07 crore.

* Odisha Mining Corporation Limited in violation of provisions of gratuity act paid excess wages of Rs 5.31 crore in lieu of gratuity and leave salary towards engagement of security agencies.

* Odisha Construction Corporation Limited under estimated the annual income for advance income tax payment which resulted in avoidable payment of penal interest of Rs 3.57 crore.

* Undue favour to the Contractor by reimbursement of Rs 2.45 crore towards fictitious supply of cement by Odisha Construction Corporation Limited. <https://sambadenglish.com/cag-report-tabled-in-odisha-assembly-here-are-highlights/>

14. ओडिशा वन विभाग ने सड़कों के किनारे लगाए अधिकांश पेड़, खराब जंगलों में नहीं: कैग (careermotions.com) 1 August, 2022

भुवनेश्वर: नियंत्रक और लेखा परीक्षक द्वारा विभाग के प्रदर्शन लेखा परीक्षा के अनुसार, ओडिशा वन विभाग की वृक्षारोपण गतिविधियों ने अपमानित वन और गैर-वन भूमि के डेटाबेस की कमी के कारण अपमानित वन क्षेत्र या वन कवर में अपनी पूरी क्षमता में सुधार नहीं किया है। भारत के जनरल (CAG)।

“(द) अधिकतम संख्या में पेड़ सड़कों के किनारे लगाए गए थे, जबकि वन क्षेत्र के अंदर खराब हुए पैच जो दुर्गम थे, उन्हें वृक्षारोपण गतिविधि के लिए नहीं लिया गया था। जिला प्रशासन से समन्वय के अभाव में विभाग के पास निम्नीकृत वन भूमि एवं गैर वन भूमि की जानकारी उपलब्ध नहीं थी। नियोजन प्रक्रिया केवल फील्ड स्टाफ द्वारा एक टुकड़ा-भोजन तरीके से प्रदान किए गए तत्काल डेटा तक सीमित थी। वृक्षारोपण पर वार्षिक लक्ष्य रेंज और डिवीजन स्तर पर संकलित नहीं किए गए थे। पीसीसीएफ द्वारा लक्ष्य निर्धारित किए गए थे और संबंधित डिवीजनों को सूचित किया गया था। इसने रेंज, डिवीजनों और वन मुख्यालयों द्वारा समन्वित योजना की कमी का संकेत दिया, ”कैग की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है।

लेखा परीक्षकों ने निष्कर्ष निकाला कि वन विभाग विभिन्न प्रकार के वृक्षारोपण के तहत 2013-14 और 2017-18 के बीच अपने लक्ष्य से 12% और 50% के बीच कम हो गया, जबकि केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाओं जैसे कि वृक्षारोपण कार्यक्रमों में लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करने में कमी आई। 23% से 68% तक MGNREGS।

भारतीय वन सर्वेक्षण की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, ओडिशा का वन क्षेत्र 52,155.95 वर्ग किमी है, जो राज्य के कुल भौगोलिक क्षेत्र का 33.5% है। इस रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, 2019 और 2020 के बीच ओडिशा के वन क्षेत्र में 537.44 वर्ग किमी की वृद्धि हुई है।

ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में विभाग के अपने लक्ष्य को पूरा करने में विफल रहने के कई कारण भी सूचीबद्ध हैं। सबसे पहले, यह बताया गया कि रेंज अधिकारियों ने निरीक्षण नहीं किया था, हालांकि वृक्षारोपण की स्थिति की जांच करने के लिए प्रत्येक वृक्षारोपण को वर्ष में तीन बार लगातार तीन वर्षों तक रेंज अधिकारी द्वारा दौरा किया जाना चाहिए। “वर्ष-वार वृद्धि और उत्तरजीविता प्रतिशत की पुष्टि नहीं की जा सकती, जो वृक्षारोपण की सफलता का आकलन करने का एकमात्र कारक है। यह वृक्षारोपण की निगरानी और मूल्यांकन में कमी को दर्शाता है, ”ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है।

दूसरे, हालांकि वन वृक्षारोपण कार्यक्रम मुख्य रूप से पेड़ों के साथ क्षेत्र को कवर करने के लिए होते हैं, बिना परिदृश्य में वनस्पति की मौलिकता को प्रभावित किए, विभाग ने सागौन, बबूल और नीलगिरी के पेड़ों को साल के पेड़ों, ओडिशा की प्रमुख प्रजातियों को प्राथमिकता दी। इसने न केवल जैव विविधता को काफी कम कर दिया बल्कि वृक्षारोपण के औसत अस्तित्व को भी 37% तक कम कर दिया। ऑडिट में कहा गया है

कि प्रजातियों का चुनाव और मिट्टी, वर्षा, तापमान और जल निकासी प्रणाली के आवश्यक मापदंडों का पूर्व-रोपण विश्लेषण अनुचित था।

तीसरा, लेखापरीक्षा ने सुझाव दिया कि विभाग द्वारा अपने लक्ष्यों को व्यापक अंतर से चूकने का एक कारण अपेक्षित डेटा के बिना निर्धारित अवास्तविक लक्ष्य हो सकता है।

चौथा, लेखापरीक्षा रिपोर्ट में यह भी तर्क दिया गया कि वृक्षारोपण योजनाओं का कोई समवर्ती मूल्यांकन नहीं था और तीसरे पक्ष के मूल्यांकन में अनुचित देरी हुई थी। <https://careermotions.com/%E0%A4%93%E0%A4%A1%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B6%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%A8-%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AD%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%97-%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%87-%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%A1%E0%A4%BC%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%82-%E0%A4%95/>

15. From 6,342 buses to 3,910 in 12 yrs, Delhi commuters suffer with old fleet, depleting further (*theprint.in*) 2 August, 2022

For those in the national capital who rely on buses for daily commute, the road ahead seems far from smooth. According to government records, 83 per cent of the buses that make up Delhi Transport Corporation's (DTC) existing fleet will be phased out by 2025, upon completion of their operational life of 15 years.

The DTC — after inducting 150 new electric buses in May, the first such expansion of its fleet in 11 years — now has a total strength of 3,910 buses.

Of the remaining 3,760 buses, as many as 3,246 (83 per cent) will be phased out by September 2025. These numbers, sources told ThePrint, were discussed in the DTC's previous board meeting on 6 June.

What will be left of the DTC's fleet after September 2025? "Roughly some 2,314 buses or so," said a senior official.

Giving a breakdown of numbers, the official said: "According to current estimates, 514 low-floor buses should sustain till 2025-end, 150 electric buses that were recently pressed into service and as many that are scheduled to become operational in a few months, and another 1,500 electric buses for which work order has been issued recently."

"DTC is also supposed to get some 1,500 more buses under a central government scheme in the time to come, but the deadline, in terms of when those buses will hit the roads, is still uncertain," the official added.

Covering a total distance of 6.41 lakh km with over 450 bus routes, DTC buses cater to around 33 lakh commuters on an average each day.

How many buses does Delhi need

According to a 2018 affidavit filed by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the Delhi High Court, a copy of which ThePrint has seen, the capital — given its present quantum of daily bus commuters — needs at least 11,000 buses of which 5,500 should ideally be owned by the DTC.

It effectively means that in September 2025, with 2,314 buses, DTC is likely to have only 42 per cent of its requisite fleet size.

“...based on past experience, it seems difficult for the transport body which took 11 years to induct new buses in its fleet,” the official said.

With 3,910 buses, DTC is currently operating with 71 per cent of its ideal fleet size.

Improving the condition of the DTC remains one of the few areas where the AAP government has found itself struggling ever since it came to power in 2015.

The AAP government, however, says that reviving DTC remains one of its priorities and more buses will be inducted to its fleet over the next few years.

“Reviving the DTC has been a priority of the AAP government since it came to power in 2015. DTC is now getting 300 electric buses in its fleet,” Delhi Transport minister Kailash Gahlot told ThePrint.

“Over and above that, a work order for 1,500 more electric buses has been issued to Tata Motors. Delivery of those buses too, should start by January 2023. And in the coming time, the government plans to procure more buses,” he added.

The operational life of low-floor CNG buses used to be 12 years or 7,50,000 km, whichever comes later. But in September 2021, considering DTC’s precarious position, the Delhi government increased the duration to 15 years, said a senior officer in the Corporation.

‘Overaged buses’, high maintenance costs

With a reduction in the size of its fleet, the number of DTC routes has also gone down. This has resulted in large parts of Delhi, which is expanding both in size and in population, being deprived of DTC coverage.

According to government records, DTC bus routes have dipped from 556 in 2010-11 to 450 in 2018-19, and continue to decline.

With the sole exception of the new 150 electric buses, the remaining 3,760 buses, were officially declared “overaged” in 2021 — as many as 3,072 buses were aged between 10-12 years and 656 were found to be more than 12 years old.

The result is that maintenance costs have gone up by more than 98 per cent from Rs 412.33 crore in 2010-11 to Rs 817.27 crore in 2019-20, adding to year-on-year losses incurred by the DTC.

The DTC’s net worth was found to be in the red in a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) tabled in the Delhi Assembly on 5 July.

According to the report, DTC accounted for a staggering 99.7 per cent of the total loss of Rs 5,294.16 crore incurred collectively by Delhi government's seven loss-incurring state public sector enterprises (SPSE) in 2019-20.

“As on 31 March 2020, net worth of Delhi Power Company Limited and Delhi Transport Corporation was (-) Rs 37,124.89 crore which was completely eroded by accumulated loss of these SPSEs,” the report said.

In this context, it is pertinent to note that the cash-strapped DTC's fares were last revised in 2009. For four years now, the DTC board — chaired by the transport minister — has been mulling fare revision but a decision is still awaited.

“Fare is the main source of revenue. So, to revive (itself), DTC has to go for fare revision, keeping all politics aside, and fine-tune some of its expenses,” said P.K. Sarkar, a former professor of the transport planning department at Delhi-based School of Planning and Architecture.

“While the DTC incurs a cost of some Rs 50 per km, its revenues have dropped from Rs 42 per km to Rs 12 per km in the last 12 years. It also has to be more flexible with annual maintenance contracts. They cannot afford to induct no buses in their fleet for such long gaps. It is otherwise a body that is virtually dying,” he added.

Tracking DTC's decline

In 2010-11, the DTC fleet comprised 6,342 buses. This number dropped to 3,760 in 2021-22. It was only after the induction of 150 electric buses this year that the fleet size rose to 3,910, government records show.

According to the records, the previous purchase of new buses was undertaken in 2008. The last bus part of that order was inducted in 2011. Between 2011 and 2022, no buses were added to the DTC fleet.

The Blueline private buses were completely phased out in 2010. And orange cluster buses – privately-owned but engaged by the government under a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model – hit Delhi's roads.

Since then, new buses have only been inducted to the Corporation's orange cluster service, which now has some 3,240 buses.

Overall, the total number of public buses plying on Delhi's roads, including both DTC (3,910) and private clusters (3,240), stands at 7,150 against the requisite number of 11,000.

As trends clearly suggest, the number of DTC buses is dropping with hardly any fresh inductions and more old buses are being phased out each year. On the other hand, an annual increase is being seen in the size of the cluster service fleet.

Cluster buses, which are smaller in size than DTC's, cater to some 18 lakh commuters every day, as per government estimates.

Why is Delhi govt struggling with DTC

“It is not that the government has not floated tenders. But most of them failed to yield an outcome,” a senior Delhi government official told The Print.

According to government records, between 2013 and 2019, the Delhi government floated six specific tenders for bulk purchase of buses but none materialised.

According to Supreme Court orders, the senior official said, the Delhi government can procure only CNG-propelled low-floor buses that have facilities such as ramps for convenience of persons with disabilities.

“So, such buses often have to be manufactured against specific orders. The same models are not purchased by other states. So, in terms of options, there are not more than 2-3 manufacturers available at any given point of time,” the official said.

However, that is not the only reason for the decline in DTC’s fleet, another senior official pointed out. “Several tenders failed to find bidders because the terms of the annual maintenance contract were found to be unreasonable by manufacturers.”

It was only in 2020 that a tender for 1,000 air-conditioned low-floor CNG buses was finalised with two bidders getting the contract in 70:30 ratio.

But the process was eventually put on hold after the then lieutenant governor Anil Baijal set up an inquiry into the deal after a complaint from a BJP legislator who alleged irregularities in the process.

In 2020, the Delhi government also floated another tender for 300 electric buses, of which 150 are already operational.

“For several years, new inductions could not happen because of several technical factors,” said Gahlot. “If the BJP had not levelled baseless allegations, the government’s plan to buy 1,000 more buses for the DTC would have yielded favourable results and buses would have been arriving by now. However, as a government, we are still confident about reviving the DTC,” he added. <https://theprint.in/india/from-6342-buses-to-3910-in-12-yrs-delhi-commuters-suffer-with-old-fleet-depleting-further/1064702/>

16. Haryana Vigilance Bureau arrests assistant account officer, data entry operator while accepting bribe (tribuneindia.com) Aug 02, 2022

Karnal: A team of the Haryana Vigilance Bureau in Karnal arrested an assistant account officer and a data entry operator allegedly while accepting Rs 1 lakh and a cheque of Rs 2.5 lakh on Monday.

Parmod, 33, an assistant account officer in the office of Accountant General, Sector 33, Chandigarh, and Deepak, 39, a data entry operator at a treasury office in Gharaunda, had allegedly demanded Rs 4 lakh to release the retirement benefits including pension, gratuity and others of a retired police inspector, who died after retirement.

The late inspector’s son informed the Bureau that the accused had already taken Rs 40 thousand from him.

The Bureau laid a trap and arrested both the accused red-handed while accepting the cash and cheque, said inspector Sachin.

Deepak was arrested from Jundla village, who disclosed that majority of the money was to be given to Parmod.

Parmod was later arrested from Jind on late Monday evening, he said.

A case has been registered at the state Vigilance Bureau in Karnal, the inspector added. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/haryana-vigilance-bureau-arrests-assistant-account-officer-data-entry-operator-while-accepting-bribe-418100>

17. महालेखाकार विभाग के दो कर्मी रिश्वत लेने के आरोप में काबू (amarujala.com)

02 Aug 2022

करनाल। विजिलेंस की टीम ने सोमवार को महालेखाकार विभाग के दो कर्मचारियों को रिश्वत लेने के आरोप में गिरफ्तार किया है। इनमें एक घरौंडा में तैनात डाटा एंट्री ऑपरेटर तो दूसरा असिस्टेंट एकाउंट अफसर है। आरोप है कि इन दोनों ने रिटायर्ड पुलिस अधिकारी के परिजनों से 13.50 लाख रुपये का पेंशन ऋण दिलाने के नाम पर चार लाख रुपये की रिश्वत मांगी थी। सोमवार को चिड़ाव मोड़ पर शिकायतकर्ता को 2.50 लाख रुपये चेक व एक लाख रुपये नगद लेकर बुलाया गया था। यहीं पर रिश्वत लेते आरोपी को गिरफ्तार किया गया। इसके बाद दूसरे को जींद से गिरफ्तार किया गया है।

करनाल निवासी पुलिस इंस्पेक्टर की मृत्यु होने के बाद उनकी पेंशन उनके परिजनों को मिल रही थी। परिजन विकास को धन की आवश्यकता पड़ी तो उन्होंने ग्रेजुएटी व कम्युटेड वैल्यू ऑफ पेंशन (ऋण) के तहत 13.50 लाख रुपये का ऋण लेने के लिए आवेदन किया। स्टेट विजिलेंस ब्यूरो करनाल के इंस्पेक्टर सचिन कुमार ने बताया कि उनके पास शिकायत आई कि शिकायतकर्ता ने 13.50 लाख रुपये के कम्युटेड वैल्यू ऑफ पेंशन के तहत ऋण लेने के लिए आवेदन किया, लेकिन महालेखाकार विभाग के घरौंडा में डीसी रेट पर तैनात डाटा इंट्री ऑपरेटर दीपक कुमार ने उससे चार लाख रुपये की रिश्वत मांगी।

40 हजार रुपये तत्काल ले लिए। सोमवार को 2.50 लाख रुपये के चेक व एक लाख रुपये नकद लेकर बुलाया है। इस शिकायत पर टीम का गठन करके सारी प्रक्रिया पूरी की गई और इयूटी मजिस्ट्रेट के साथ बताए गए समय पर चिड़ाव मोड़ पर रंगेहाथों रिश्वत लेते दीपक कुमार को गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। उसने बताया कि ये रिश्वत के रुपये महालेखाकार विभाग में असिस्टेंट एकाउंट अफसर प्रमोद कुमार ने मांगे हैं, वह इस समय जींद में है। इस पर जींद जाकर प्रमोद कुमार को भी गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया है। दोनों के खिलाफ मामला दर्ज कर जांच शुरू कर दी गई है। दोनों से पूछताछ की जा रही है। <https://www.amarujala.com/haryana/karnal/two-employees-of-accountant-general-department-arrested-for-taking-bribe-karnal-news-knl116555839>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

18. Will the govt be fifth-time lucky in bailing out discoms? ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Updated: August 2, 2022

PM Modi announced a Rs 3 trillion package for reforms in the power distribution sector, while blaming 'freebies culture' for their mounting dues. Will the package address problems of the power sector?

Launching the 3-trillion-rupee Revamped Distributor Sector Scheme last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged states to clear their unpaid dues, estimated to be a staggering 2.5 trillion rupees, to distribution and generating companies.

He said clearing these bills was not a case of politics but nation-building. According to Power Ministry data, states and union territories together owed more than 1.1 trillion rupees to generating companies while the total money owed to the discoms stood at 1.4 trillion.

The vast majority of consumers in India, nearly 90%, are still served by state-owned utilities. But discoms continue to be the weakest link in the supply chain of the power sector, with most of them making losses as a result of expensive long-term power purchase agreements, poor infrastructure, and inefficient operations, among others.

The losses prevent them from making the required investments to modernise the distribution infrastructure and improve the quality of power supply. The discoms' inability to pay gencos, in turn, endangers the financial health of the generators and their lenders, causing a negative domino effect on the economy.

Discom bailout packages

The Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme is the fifth discom bailout scheme from the Centre in the past two decades and the third by the PM Modi-led government alone.

The scheme will offer discoms financial assistance for infrastructure creation, including pre-paid smart metering and feeder separation, upgradation of systems etc., based on pre-qualifying criteria.

The overall aim is to reduce pan-Indian aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses to 12-15% from the current 21.73% and the gap between the average cost of supply and average revenue realised to zero by FY25 from the current 0.39 rupees per Kwh.

38 discoms have received funding approval to the tune of 1.9 trillion rupees after meeting the qualification criteria.

The schemes implemented so far have not been able to ensure a sustainable turnaround of both finances and operations of the discoms.

In May, the government notified a scheme to liquidate overdues that discoms owe gencos, by enabling them to pay their dues in 48 installments.

According to CRISIL, the success of the scheme will depend on how discoms are able to enhance their revenues and an enforcement mechanism that ensures timely payment to gencos.

Many states provide subsidised and sometimes free electricity for agriculture.

The total of annual power subsidy schemes and financial assistance across a sample of five highly-indebted states like Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan adds up to Rs 42,155 crore.

Further, theft of electricity continues to be rampant in many parts of the country.

Tamil Nadu's discom TANGEDCO owes Rs 25,760 crore to gencos

For instance, the Tamil Nadu government has proposed an electricity tariff hike after a gap of eight years, though experts say the quantum of hike is not enough to overcome the state discom's financial crisis.

The latest scheme focuses on capex and a certain portion of the outlay under it will be in the form of grants. The availability of these grants will be subject to the concerned state discoms meeting certain performance milestones, which will be monitored by the concerned nodal agency over the next 5 years. So, there is clearly an attempt to make the scheme result-oriented. However, the distribution segment is a state subject. Thus, strong political will and support is required across state governments for the scheme to succeed. https://www.business-standard.com/podcast/economy-policy/will-the-govt-be-fifth-time-lucky-in-bailing-out-discoms-122080200105_1.html

19. Lacking feasibility? (millenniumpost.in) 1 Aug 2022

The Union Ministry of Jal Shakti (water resources), under the 'National Perspective Plan', had called for proposals to transfer water from water-surplus basins to water-deficit basins.

Accordingly, the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) had identified 30 links in the country that included 16 peninsular rivers. There were two sensitive proposals among the six Karnataka proposals.

These were the Bedti-Dharma-Varada and Aghanashini-Varada River links. These proposals are about the diversion of water from west-flowing rivers located in the highly ecologically sensitive Western Ghats zone of Yellapur, Sirsi and Siddapur taluks of Uttara Kannada district to Varada, a tributary of the Tungabhadra in the eastern plains.

The structurally controlled Bedti and Aghanashini River drainage systems, known to contain rare species of flora and fauna, drain into the Arabian Sea.

They flow through narrow gorges, valleys with rapids, cascades and deep waterfalls in the evergreen dense, forest-clad mountainous picturesque zone of the Western Ghats.

The climatological, geographical, geomorphological, geological and geohydrological set up of the terrain is unique. The Aghanashini basin has not been tampered with till now.

The Western Ghats zone influences the monsoon pattern by intercepting the rain-laden southwest monsoon winds. The dense forests contribute to the precipitation by releasing much of the moisture back into air as transpiration.

The forest hydrology of the area has a unique role in the hydrological cycle. Interference in the forest management practices alters evapo-transpiration, soil infiltration capacity, run-off, base-flow, etc.

The pre-feasibility report of the 'Bedti-Varada link proposal', was submitted by NWDA in August 2021.

It envisaged the diversion of 242 million cubic metre (mcm) from the Bedti Basin to the water-scarce Tungabhadra sub-basin to irrigate 60,200 hectares (ha) in the Tungabhadra Project command Area of Raichur district.

The headworks proposed are to construct two weirs across Pattanada Halla and Shalmala Halla and interlinking systems between these two reservoirs.

About 1,005 ha of area in Uttara Kannada district would be submerged if this proposal is implemented. Some 787 ha of the 1,005 ha is forest land, 130 ha is cultivable land and 88 ha is under non-agricultural use. There is also a village with a population of 967.

The draft detailed project report (DPR) of the Bedti-Dharma-Varada link and the drawings submitted by NWDA to the Government of Karnataka in February 2022, cover parts of the Bedti-Conservation Reserve and Shalmala Riparian Conservation Reserve.

These are in the Western Ghats, which is eco-sensitive and a biodiversity hotspot.

It is ironic that the draft DPR talks about conducting topographical surveys, geological and geotechnical investigations, bore hole drilling on the weir / barrage sites, seismo-tectonic studies, etc, after getting approval.

Wrecking the environment

If the project is implemented:

- * The livelihood of the people in the downstream areas will be adversely impacted and the flora and fauna at the estuary will be affected.
- * Forest loss shall impair the hydrological cycle, monsoon pattern and climatological conditions in the donor as well in the recipient basins.
- * There will be threats to endangered species.
- * When the free annual flow of water in the river system is prevented, there will be on-land transgression of marine water in the coastal zone. This will cause impairment of the interface between fresh and marine water, resulting in an acute shortage of drinking water.
- * Changes in land use will aggravate natural hazards like landslides, lead to loss of forest wealth, disturb wildlife and human life.

- * The additional storage of 524 mcm of water, to be diverted from the proposed project into the heavily silted Tungabhadra reservoir, does not sound technically possible.
- * It will aggravate further the problem of water logging and soil salinity in the area already under irrigation from the Tungabhadra Project.
- * The surface and groundwater resources of the donor basin will be severely affected (both) for irrigation and even drinking needs during lean season.

The Government of Karnataka, through a gazette notification dated May 22, 2012 had notified the Bedti Conservation Reserve and Shalmala Riparian Ecosystem Conservation Reserve under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and WildLife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The Shalmala Riparian Ecosystem Conservation Reserve consists of riparian forest of 100 metres width on either side of the Shalmala River.

The Supreme Court recently directed that a one km wide area be maintained as an 'eco-sensitive zone' (ESZ) from the boundary of protected forests. The top court also directed that no new permanent structure shall be permitted for whatsoever purpose within the ESZ.

There has been strong opposition by the local people against the implementation of the proposed Bedti-Dharma-Varada and Pattanada Halla-Shalmala Halla link projects. Also, the local Gram and Taluk Panchayats have passed a resolution against the project implementation.

The adverse effects that will be caused by the interlinking of rivers and diversions from the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats terrain, are not to be overlooked.

Providing an additional volume of 524 MCM of water by diverting it from the west-flowing rivers into the left bank canal command area of the Tungabhadra Project does not make any sense.

This is because the brackish groundwater there has attained the critical depth of less than 1.5 m from the surface and acute soil salinity has developed, due to extensive irrigation facilities already provided.

Measures to deplete the water table need to be taken in such areas and waterlogging should never be allowed. Otherwise, there will be additional conversion of fertile and potential agricultural land into perpetually non-productive, water-logged, saline insipid barren land.

Advocates of interlinking of rivers should have a clear perception of such damages that may be caused to a very agricultural economy. Hence, the diversion of the west-flowing river water to the east is uncalled for.

There is a total lack of information provided in the DPR about geological, geophysical and geo-tectonic features related to the conditions of the terrain, the magnitude of catastrophic damages to the environment, ecology, forest wealth, climate, aquatic lives, etc.

The DPR under such a condition has to be virtually negated and rejected. After all, man cannot go against nature. <http://www.millenniumpost.in/opinion/lacking-feasibility-488028?infinitemscroll=1>

20. Indian Navy's Multi-Billion Programme To Buy 6 More Boeing P8I Reconnaissance Aircraft Stalls ([businessworld.in](https://www.businessworld.in)) 1 August 2022

The Indian Navy programme to acquire 6 more P8I Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) aircraft from the US under a multi-billion-dollar Government-to-Government deal has stalled after the expiry of the price offer by the US Government on July 31.

Official sources confirmed to Businessworld that the US declined an Indian request for another extension of the price offer beyond July 31, reasoning that there's "finite longevity" to a price offer.

It is learnt that the offer had already been extended multiple times for over a year beyond the original deadline for the signing the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LoA) or the contract under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) format. The offer was made after intense price negotiations between the two sides. The last remaining stage was the signing of the LoA after approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

Under India's Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), any revision of price by the seller forces a military procurement programme back on the drawing board, with the requisitioning Service (in this case, the Indian Navy) being compelled to make a fresh case and seek ab initio approval in the form of an Acceptance of Necessity by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC). This effectively moves the case back to Stage 1 of the long-winded Acquisition Process.

The US Government, too, would need to notify the US Congress of the revised price band under which the deal would be negotiated afresh with the Government of India, should the latter pursue the acquisition. This potentially sets the process back by years.

Military observers view this as a setback to the Indian Navy's capability programme, and more specifically, a blow to its plan to base more Boeing P8Is on the Western Seaboard. The Indian Navy operates 12 P8Is, of which 8 are based at INS Rajali in Arakonam on the Eastern Seaboard and 4 at INS Hansa in Goa on the West. "This clearly means that the Indian Navy's basing plans for LRMR capability will not crystallise," sources inferred.

The induction of the P8I since 2013 has often been hailed as a gamechanger for the Indian Navy's long-range reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, giving it a clear edge over adversaries in the Indian Ocean Region.

A big takeaway is the high availability rate of the P8I for missions, which is reported to be an impressive 85 per cent. This enables intense and sustained reconnaissance operations. "In the 9 years since 2013, the Indian Navy has done more flying on the P8I than it did on the Soviet-origin Tupolev-142 and Ilyushin-38 fleets combined for four decades," informed sources revealed. The Soviet-origin Tu-142 and the Il-38 were the backbone of the Indian Navy maritime reconnaissance operations before the induction of the American P8I.

"The Indian Navy needs this capability and there's no indigenous or imported alternative on the horizon," sources said, confirming the setback to naval plans.

Observers also expressed surprise over the current impasse. In the past, the US kept extending the price offer for the Chinook and Apache helicopters for the Indian Air Force for years, finally clinching the landmark contracts in 2015. Both these iconic aircraft are also from the Boeing

stable. <https://www.businessworld.in/article/Indian-Navy-s-Multi-billion-Programme-To-Buy-6-More-Boeing-P8I-Reconnaissance-Aircraft-Stalls/01-08-2022-439930/>

21. India's population conundrum! (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 02 August 2022

India's population growth is a concerning issue. The current population growth rate being 1%, implies India will be adding over 13 million people in the current year. The life expectancy is 69.42 years, and the death rate is 7.3 per thousand.

Although the fertility rate has been falling in India, yet the birth rate is much higher than the death rate compared to other countries.

India's current population estimated to be 1.412 billion people being almost 17.7% of the world's population. We are nearing China whose population is 1.426 billion and has 18.47% of the global population. "India is expected to surpass China as the world's most populous nation by 2024 and is expected to reach a total population of 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050 way ahead of China's 1.317 billion people by the middle of the century. Currently, both countries account for nearly 40% of the global population.", the UN said.

The UN's World Population Prospects, 2022 report revealed, the world's two most populous regions in 2022 are Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, with 2.3 billion people, representing 29% of the global population, and Central and Southern Asia, with 2.1 billion, representing 26% of the total world population. The report also added that it is estimated that ten countries experienced a net outflow of more than 1 million migrants between 2010 and 2021. In many of these countries, these outflows were due to temporary labour movements, such as for Pakistan (net outflow of -16.5 million during 2010-2021), India (-3.5 million), Bangladesh (-2.9 million), Nepal (-1.6 million) and Sri Lanka (-1 million).

For India, it's more challenging with a large population, prevalent job crisis and climate change directly affecting its limited resources. Poor livelihood has encouraged the country's poor and illiterate population reproducing at a higher rate than their middle- and high-income counterparts, to have more earning hands until they realise it backfires in the long run. Simultaneously, due to climate change resulting in weather extremes, around the globe, there is an increase in Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs). Naturally, the term climate refugees has gained traction.

India home to 18% of the global population has only 4 percent of its water resources. According to an IMF research, India had nearly eradicated extreme poverty by 2020-21 when food subsidies are considered in. However, the per capita nutrition supply in India is among the lowest in the world. India has more than halved its number of severely poor individuals, according to a World Bank working paper issued in the month of April 2022. The Union government has initiated many schemes over the past few years to alleviate poverty, food crisis, joblessness and these schemes have been successful to some extent in mitigating many societal, economic, and agricultural issues. Yet, the upward pace of population growth continues to counterbalance initiatives employed to achieve these sustainable development goals. Moreover, in case of an adverse dependency ratio between older generations and young people meaning having fewer young people and more older people, along with less social and financial security in India especially for the aged, will lead to new problems. Further, if the young people are jobless and if their skills are not developed, it will lead to a demographic disaster.

Large population will further burden the natural resources. GDP of the poor which is an estimate of forest, water, soil, and other natural resources etc. being the main source of sustenance for the poor, is depreciating because of overuse. The outbreak of pandemic in early 2020 elevated the poverty levels in India. It is estimated that 150-199 million additional people will fall into poverty by the end of 2022. According to a CMIE report, around 7 million jobs were lost in a year. The demand and supply dynamics changed, with reduction in consumption expenses to control financial outflows. The Indian economy also has one of the largest rates of child poverty. According to Niti Aayog, 25% of the Population in India are poor. In the Global MPI 2021 ranking, India is at 66 out of 109 other countries.

However, India is no longer the country with the most extreme poverty, states the Brookings report. In the global poverty ranking, India is sliding down. Indian government's spending on rural welfare schemes contributed greatly to reduce national poverty. By 2030, the government aims to eradicate extreme poverty across the country, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day. In the early post-Independence years, family planning was the main thrust of India's domestic policy being the first country in the world to have a government family planning programme. However, with time the Indian government's approach from encouraging contraceptive measures changed towards enhancing reproductive health and empowering women and families. Well, this initiative was only suitable for educated families who understand why this was necessary.

Education levels contribute significantly in implementing the right mindset; southern states where literacy levels were good, the population remained stable, on the contrary the "Bimaru" northern states with their low educational levels witnessed their populations rising exponentially.

Moreover, India does not have a national child policy today.

CM Yogi Adityanath has taken an initiative in this regard by unveiling a new population policy for Uttar Pradesh, which, with more than 166 million people, qualifies of being India's most populous state. If any state needs a population policy, it is UP and Bihar, the most populous and backward states. The proposal promotes a two-child policy and aims to increase the accessibility of contraceptive measures. People who violate it will be restricted from contesting in local body elections, applying for government jobs or receiving government subsidies. Measures for digital tracking of new-borns, adolescents and senior citizens shall be employed. Improved care of the elderly, along with providing quality education, health and nutrition are promised by the government. But how far these promises will be made successful is yet to be seen. Providing quality education and increasing the marriage age will help limit the number of children in a family. The southern states have set the example. Six states – UP, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh -have roughly 40% of India's population and fertility rates higher than the replacement level of 2.1. However, as wisdom is not immediately appreciated, as such the states successful in stabilizing their population will be rewarded with fewer parliament seats.

India needs some serious measures to control the population. Though there is reduction in the no. of children than before, the growth curve has yet to flatten. Incentives, disincentives, education and awareness are the best ways to control the population. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/adi-bytes/indias-population-conundrum/>

22. Liquor policy: Delhi govt admits to 'Revenue loss' ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) 02 August 2022

The Arvind Kejriwal government has admitted that the new Excise Policy 2021-22 resulted in a “revenue loss” to the state exchequer, “windfall gains” to select liquor traders, and a “reduced number of liquor shops” in the state.

The state government’s cabinet note on the withdrawal of the new excise policy admits to almost all the lapses pointed out by this newspaper in a series of articles over the last two months. Underlining the “revenue shortfall” under the new policy, the cabinet note says: “During the Q-1 of the current fiscal (2022-23), Rs 1,485 was realised which is 37.51% below the budget estimates for the current fiscal i.e. Rs 2,375 for Q-1. Even this includes Rs 980 crores of refundable security deposit.”

Another reason given by the cabinet in its note was “windfall gains to license holders”. Explaining this, the note says: “Further, 09 Zonal Retail Licensees have not availed extension during the extension period from April 2022 and 03 more Zonal Retail Licensees have conveyed their intent to not avail the extension beyond July 2022. Out of the 14 wholesale licensees, 04 wholesale license holders have so far opted to discontinue their licenses. The revenue decline on account of surrendered zones is estimated to be around Rs 193.95 crores per month.”

The note further says, “It is pertinent to note that while the exchequer is losing significant revenue due to vacation of zones, there has been no decline in the sale of liquor and the slack has only been picked up by the remaining license holders, which amounts to windfall gain to them. The data from excise department shows that the sale of liquor in first quarter of current liquor in the first quarter of the current fiscal 2022-23 has increased by 59.46% in case of whisky and to 87.25% in case of wine as compared to the corresponding period of FY 2019-20, but the same could not be captured as an enhancement to the government revenue.”

With zonal licensees pulling down shutters by refusing to seek extension of their licenses, “the total number of shops that are operational at present has been reduced to 468 as against the targeted number of 849, which is leading to a number of unserved areas and defeating one of the main objectives of Excise Policy 2021-22. This naturally amounts to windfall gains for existing license holders...”

The note concludes by saying “it can be reasonably concluded that continuation of the Excise Policy 2021-22 any further can be expected to have adverse revenue implications apart from perpetual windfall gain to certain license holders...”

Booze shops to stay open till Aug 31

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday approved the AAP government’s move to extend excise licenses of private liquor vendors as well as hotels and bars by a month till August 31. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2022/aug/02/liquor-policy-delhi-govt-admits-to-revenue-loss-2483265.html>