

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (10.09.2022)

1. Vanishing lakes and a tale of two cities (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Sep 10, 2022

Incessant rain earlier this week turned India's IT capital into a "city of lakes", throwing life out of gear and forcing people to leave their apartment buildings, luxury villas and high-end cars and take refuge in hotels and other safer places.

The misery and helplessness of the Bangaloreans were akin to those living in Guwahati, which along with the rest of Assam battles the flood fury every year. And it's not just clogged drains or poor drainage networks that trigger floods and waterlogging in cities. Vanishing wetlands due to encroachment and rapid urbanisation are also contributing to these woes.

The Deepor Beel, a freshwater lake and a Ramsar site in Assam's capital city, has been facing encroachment for several years, shrinking from over 4,000 hectares in its heyday to 500 hectares currently. Similarly, the Silsako wetland is severely encroached upon. It has shrunk from 340 hectares in 2001 to 133 hectares in 2012.

Last year, a TOI report highlighted how wetlands in Guwahati were choking and had lost the capacity to hold water, thereby triggering massive waterlogging during the monsoon season.

Wetlands in the Brahmaputra floodplain – numbering over 3,000 – help in flood attenuation by acting as a natural flood reservoir. But as many as 87 wetlands are facing various forms of "disturbance", according to a study quoted by this writer in a previous article.

The situation is similar in the Karnataka capital. A report titled 'Performance Audit of Management of Storm Water in Bengaluru Urban Area' released by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in September 2021 sounded a wake-up alarm for civic authorities.

It flagged large-scale encroachment of lakes and waterbodies. "The changes in land use such as decrease in vegetation cover and open spaces and increase in built up area resulted in loss of inter-connectivity between water bodies impacting effective recharge of ground water and increase in runoff of storm water," according to the report.

Citing a study by the Indian Institute of Science, the CAG report said that Bengaluru (covering an area of 741 sq km) had 1,452 water bodies with a total storage capacity of 35 TMC in the early 1800s. By 2016, the number of water bodies in the same area reduced to 194 with a storage capacity of 5 TMC.

It claimed the city municipal corporation, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), was yet to remove 714 encroachments out of the identified 2,626 near water bodies in various zones.

About 41 and 51 water bodies, which existed in Koramangala and Vrishabhavathi valleys, respectively, were reduced to 8 and 13 by the year 2008 indicating the severity of lake conversion.

So what's the way out? Revival and conservation of wetlands, anti-encroachment drive near natural water bodies and eco-friendly urban planning could help mitigate the problem of flooding and waterlogging to some extent.

Mizoram gets ready for key boundary meeting

Ahead of a chief minister-level meeting between Assam and Mizoram this month, the latter's boundary committee on Friday put its stamp of approval on an "approach paper" reflecting the state's standpoint.

The Mizoram State Boundary Committee headed by deputy chief minister Tawnluia finalised the paper after consultations with representatives of political parties and NGOs. However, there was a minor hiccup after the opposition Congress and People's Conference pulled out of the panel citing dissatisfaction with the way it is functioning.

The "approach paper" will be presented during a meeting between Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga in Delhi this month, according to a PTI report.

The panel also decided to conduct a joint verification of disputed areas along with representatives from Assam. The two NE states share a 164.6-km inter-state boundary with Assam.

For the past few months, Assam has been simultaneously engaging with multiple neighbours to solve land boundary rows, which date back to the colonial era. It has already signed what is called 'Namsai Declaration' with Arunachal Pradesh and an agreement with Meghalaya.

The state has concluded ministerial-level talks with Mizoram and is getting ready for the key meeting in Delhi. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/northeast-diary-vanishing-lakes-and-a-tale-of-two-cities/articleshow/94113331.cms>

2. Bengaluru Rains: Did IT capital ignore warnings that could have avoided rain mess? (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) SEPTEMBER 09, 2022

Heavy rainfall paralysed the IT city, Bengaluru in the past few days. Posh residences, luxurious cars were all under water and the owners were evacuated in tractors. The CAG had warned the authorities but no one paid heed to it. The CAG talked about a report of IISc in which it stressed on two key points- shrinking lakes and drains and on land use.

Video Link: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/toi-original/bengaluru-rains-did-it-capital-ignore-warnings-that-could-have-avoided-rain-mess/videoshow/94105143.cms>

3. Bengaluru may need new canals to handle heavy rains ([deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com)) SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

From financial indiscipline, shoddy mapping of major drains, failing to clear encroachments to making unfruitful expenditure on sewage diversion and 'misplacing' documents related to various projects, the recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the BBMP's stormwater drain (SWD) department exposed all that's wrong with the system.

While the performance audit report by a premier organisation has been gathering dust with no seriousness to implement the recommendations, a large part of Bengaluru, particularly the IT corridor, has been bearing the brunt of the BBMP's insensitive and lackadaisical attitude.

The CAG's 2021 report found that the SWD department neither had a robust policy governing stormwater management nor prepared a manual specifying the design, construction and maintenance of SWD infrastructure of the city. "It failed to factor in reasons for high-intensity rainfall due to rapid urbanisation... Groundwater recharge structures were not taken up due to the flow of sewage in SWDs. Water bodies and drains were not inter-connected and linkage between different drains was absent," the report states.

During the audit, records such as 'completion plans', 'built drawings' and 'works history registers', which are vital for subsequent planning, were absent.

The CAG also exposed the BBMP's claim of reducing the drain encroachments to 714 from 2,626. During the joint inspection, the auditors found community halls existed on either side of the drain and were connected with a concrete platform linking the two buildings while the information furnished by the BBMP to the audit team said the encroachment was removed in August 2016.

The BBMP's carelessness from a position of power has not only caused a huge economic loss to companies that are providing large-scale employment but the floods have destroyed the life and belongings of over 30,000 residents, including the economically-weaker section of society.

Experts hope the authorities use the adverse situation to ensure Bengaluru is flood-proof in the future. They warn the monsoon in the years to come could be much worse than what the city has witnessed in the last week. Besides clearing encroachments in the existing network, some suggested the creation of new canals in the low-lying areas to handle heavy rains.

Raj Bhagat P, senior manager at WRI India (Sustainable Cities), said the BBMP must come up with an SWD master plan for the city with state-of-the-art simulations and discharge calculations. "Based on the plan, new canals and drains need to be created particularly for the areas that have been constructed in valleys," he said.

Bhagat also advised the authorities to publish the data on stormwater drains in the public domain. "We need to create open-access highly granular datasets on topography, flood risk and stormwater drains. Open data would help the public and

experts to better understand the situation and provide insights and solutions to the government which could be cheaper and would consume lesser time,” he said.

Clement Jayakumar, a member of the Mahadevapura Task Force headed by MLA Aravind Limbavali, is of the view that the BBMP should merge the lake and SWD for better coordination. He also said the BBMP’s approach to remodelling drains from upstream has been the cause of flooding. “Drains should be developed from the downstream or the BBMP should ensure they are in a reasonably good shape to carry water in case the funds are not available,” he said.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath said the civic body would re-verify the condition of all stormwater drains to assess their capacity to handle heavy rains. “We are also open to building an entirely new drain by acquiring properties,” he said.

Urbanist Ashwin Mahesh said the BBMP must respect the city’s topography. “There is no point blaming previous governments. What must be done is to stop the construction of new buildings on stormwater drains from now. The integrity of the drain has to be maintained. Permission should not be given regardless of who owns the property,” he said.

On the same point, Bhagat suggested land pooling schemes in developing areas so that the economic aspirations of people who own land in valleys are not affected when the land uses are restricted. <https://www.deccanherald.com/city/top-bengaluru-stories/bengaluru-may-need-new-canals-to-handle-heavy-rains-1144054.html>

4. A tale of many megacities as climate extremes expose infra planning gaps ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

A tale of many megacities as climate extremes expose infra planning gaps

PRATIGYA YADAV & SHREYA JAI
New Delhi, 11 September

Bengaluru, India’s Silicon Valley, was once a shining example of rapid urbanisation, job generation, and the growth of new-age businesses. But everything came crashing down with the city having had to battle urban flooding the past few weeks. Overnight rain — the heaviest for September in 75 years — submerged large parts of the city, causing an estimated loss of ₹225 crore.

But Bengaluru is not a standalone case. States and cities face a breakdown in infrastructure every year owing to extreme weather events. Climate change is causing unseasonal phenomena and exacerbating the impact of natural disasters on infrastructure in most cities, including metro towns.

Cloud of uncertainty

The South East Arabian Sea, which is warming at a higher rate thanks to rapid climate change, has become a hotspot for convective clouds and severe rain, said Abhilash S, associate professor, Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the Cochin University of Science and Technology.

“Cities are not built to contain these short intense spells. The drainage system can hold 20 cm of rain if it is distributed throughout the day but it cannot hold 15 cm rain in three-four hours,” he said.

Scientists say these short bursts of heavy rain will only increase in the future, especially in coastal India, and it is high time infrastructure and policy planning took climate change into account.

Turn to Page 6



An ambulance wades through waterlogged area in Bengaluru. (Photo: PTI)

HEAVY TOLL

Year	Extreme floods	Lives lost	Economic loss (₹ cr)
2005	Mumbai floods	1,094	550
2013	Uttarakhand flash floods	6,054	12,000
2015	Chennai floods	> 400	50,000
2017	West Bengal floods	50	14,000
2019	Patna floods	130	875
2022	Assam floods	173	10,000
2022	Hyderabad floods	15	1,400
2022	Ahmedabad floods	NA	12,000
2022	Bengaluru floods	NA	225

Source: Assocham, PHDCCI, ORRCA, GCO & media reports

Climate ...

This year, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad, along with Mumbai, like every year, faced heavy rain-induced urban flooding, leading to a collapse of infrastructure and services. During the past 65 years, floods took 109,412 lives and damaged over 258 million hectares of crops, amounting to losses of about ₹4.69 trillion, according to the Central Water Commission. Experts are of the view that urban India is now facing the twin challenges of infrastructure redevelopment and climate adaptation, both of which are out of the purview of the sparsely financed municipal corporations.

Different cities, similar crises

"India is experiencing one of the biggest urban growth spurts in history. However, this is happening when 75 per cent of India's 2050 infrastructure is yet to be built. It is also happening in the most unplanned way, infringing upon environmentally sensitive areas at a time

when cities are most vulnerable to climate-change impacts," said Jaya Dhindaw, program director, Integrated Urban Development, Planning and Resilience, World Resources Institute (WRI).

The 74th constitutional amendment in 1992 provided for the establishment and empowerment of urban local bodies as local self-governing institutions. Dhindaw said enforcing the amendment in its entirety still eluded several cities. Across states, the situation of public works in the cities, especially that relating to drainage and rain water disposal, is dismal. Last October, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report found irregularities in storm water drain connectivity in the city and delays by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in removing lake encroachments. The BBMP has removed barely 25 per cent encroachments near water bodies in various zones, it said.

Mumbai got its first "Storm Water Disposal System" project in 1985 but the work commenced after the 2005 floods. The project was to cost ₹616.30 crore in 1991 and conclude by 2003. But as of April 2021, a sum of ₹2,439.35 crore had been spent on it and an additional investment of ₹2,700 crore was still required, according to the Environment Status Report by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation on this project.

Delhi's first "Drainage Master Plan" was prepared in 1976 and the city is still running on that plan. The Public Works Department (PWD) was supposed to engage with consultants for redevelopment, but as

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/climate-extremes-expose-gaps-in-infra-planning-of-india-s-mega-cities-122091100510_1.html

5. Mining the River Pamba for Flood Prevention- Novel ideas for evading Regulations: Case Study of Thottappally in Alapuzha, Kerala, India (countercurrents.org) SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

The Vemband Wetland in Kerala is a Ramsar Site, and also a Critically Vulnerable Coastal Area (CVCA). One of the three meeting points of the lake's waters and the Lakshadweep Sea is at Thottappally in Purakkad Panchayat of Alapuzha. It is a Marma Point. About 600,000 cubic meters of mineral sand has been dredged out from the River Pamba since 2020. As the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification- 2011 prohibits mining in this No-Development Zone, this is packaged as a flood prevention project invoking the District Collector's emergency powers under the Disaster Management Act 2005. The organisers invented a fake theory that floods are caused by the obstacles like the sandbar at Pozhy and the silt in the leading. The Government claims that Dr MS Swaminathan and the IIT Madras studied the 2018 Kuttanad floods and they recommended removing the obstacles for prevention of floods. This is a lie. MSSRF and IIT-M did not do any study in Kuttanad after 2018; nor did they recommend the dredging for flood prevention. On the contrary, the post-2018 flood study by the Central Water Commission and the Dutch team concluded that the flood was a one-in-a-hundred-year's heavy rainfall during August 2018, and the human-made structures like dams and regulators had no role in it. The mining began with police protection in May 2020, in spite of the peoples' resistance and the local government's objections. Cost-Benefits. The outrage in the River Pamba may have consequences on the water balance of the Vembanad Lake. A preliminary estimate shows that the Thottappally Enterprise yielded a million tons of ilmenite and 85,000 tons of rutile, worth Rs 2000 crores during the past three years. The miners paid about Rs 11 crores as price of the sand. A writ petition against the illegal mining in Thottappally was dismissed by Hon'ble High Court of Kerala on 17 Nov 21. Another petition has been pending with a Division Bench of Kerala HC since 5 Oct 2021. The respondents in that petition may now wish to file fresh submissions, as their original submissions were fictitious.

A lie has its own shelf-life. This lie has survived for 1221 days, undetected during the exchanges in the Kerala High Court, in the National Green Tribunal and in the Kerala Assembly. The sages say that the "face of truth is hidden by a golden leaf". It is painful to see faces of sages being used to hide the lies.

Mining the River Pamba for Flood Prevention- Novel ideas for evading Regulations: Case Study of Thottappally in Alapuzha, Kerala, India

VT Padmanabhan

Introduction – Location of the Mining Block

Vembanad is one of the six wetlands in India, crowned as Ramsar sites. It is also critically vulnerable coastal area (CVCA), which is to be "managed with the involvement of coastal communities including fisherfolk". The Lake located in Ernakulam, Alapuzha and Kottayam districts of Kerala has an area of 2033 square kilometres, maximum length of 96 km, and maximum width of 14 km. A narrow barrier island separates it from the Lakshadweep Sea. During the past century, the lake has been heavily reclaimed reducing the water spread area. The lake receives drainage

of 10 rivers and accounts for 40% of the area of Kerala. Its annual surface runoff accounts for almost 30% of the total surface water resource of the state. Over 1.6 million people live on its banks. The lake has three meetings points with the Lakshadweep Sea; Thottappally Pozhy in the South is the most important one. This is a “Marma point”. Hitting this may have consequences for the entire lake system.

The Newest Coastal Sand Mining Hub

The Thottappally beach in Purakkad Panchayat, Alapuzha district in Kerala, India is poised to become a mining hub for beach sand minerals. The site is in the River Pamba, her last 800 meters path between the Thottappally Spillway and the Pozhy. The mining spots are (a) a 360 m long, 15 m wide sandbar at the Pozhy, (b) 800x360 m area of the River Pamba (also known as leading channel of TSW system), between the spillway bridge and the sea mouth. Mining at Pozhi started in 2020, and it still continues. The mine site is in the No-Development Zone of the CRZ.



Fig. 1: This is from CRZ Map (KL-19 ALP Thottappally-Trikunnappuzha) as in 2015. The inverted bottle is the River Pamba. Thottappally spillway (TSW) bridge on NH 66 is its base. The white +blue dot areas, (CRZ 1-B) inside and on the North coast represents recent accretion. The white-blue -dots area inside the bottle on the Northern side is where the casuarinas were planted in 2005 for tsunami-cyclone mitigation.

Fig. 2: Satellite imagery of Dec 2015.

Fig. 3: Imagery in Jan 2022. Mining is transforming the bottle into a perfect rectangle. Area of the stolen land can be estimated from the map)

Fig. 1: CRZ Map of the Study Area- in 2015 Map Explained



History of Beach sand mining at Thottappally

The Government of Kerala (GoK) and two beach sand mining companies – The Kerala Minerals and Metals Limited (KMML) and the IREL- Limited had set their eyes on the mineral sand in Thottappally soon after the 2018 floods. On 21 Oct 2018, a high level meeting of the Ministry of Water Resource Development (WRD) decided to de-silt the Thottappally Spill Way (TSW) leading channel for efficient evacuation of Kuttanad's floodwaters. The GoK reported that the Department of Geology and the National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS) did not provide the data on the concentration of heavy minerals in the sand.

Meanwhile, on 6 May 2019 the Alapuzha District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) held a meeting to discuss the flood preparedness plans for the district. (Incidentally, the District Disaster Management Programme drafted in 2015 has not been updated after the 2018 flood.) The District Panchayat President, who is the Vice-Chairman of the DDMA, or any other elected official, was not present in the meeting. The District Collector, who is the ex-officio Chairman of the DDMA, ordered the chief engineer of the WRD to remove the obstacles in the leading channel of TSW before the Monsoon, under section 30 of DMA 2005. The chief engineer referred the order to the State Government for further action. It appears that the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) was not notified about this flood prevention project. The Ministry of Water Resources Development (WRD) issued a Government Order (GO) on 31 May 2019, authorising KMML to collect the sand @ Rs 455 per m³. The first paragraph of the GO reads:

“The accumulation of sand in the Thottappally Spillway in Alappuzha District has affected the free flow of flood water to the sea, risking the Kuttanad area by flooding during the impending Monsoon season. 2018 witnessed severe flooding’ in the area. The MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) & the IIT, Madras upon consultation have recommended clearance of sand bar at the mouth of spillway and deepening and widening of the leading channel for further de-risking the flood problem in Kuttanad.” Emphasis added. (GoK, Water Resources (Ir) Department G.O.(Rt)No.38 S1 2019/WRD Dated 31/05/2019)

The collector's order of 06 May 2019 and the GoK's wish to “move forward to avoid the loss of sand during the impending monsoon” were not implemented till May 2020. A meeting of DDMA on 19 May 2020 decided to “restore the efforts to remove the obstacles from the leading channel and sea mouth... under section 26(2) and 34 (a) & (j) of DMA-2005. (The order of 2019 was under section 30). Three days after the DDMA meeting, in the wee hours of 22 May 2020, 1300 policemen trekked to Thottappally to cheer the 100 odd warriors who axed 550 casuarina trees, standing on the beach since 2005. From the next day on, the excavators started scavenging the sandbar. From the month of June 2020, six dredgers hired by the KMML started mining the river, three shifts a day.

In the Kerala High Court and in the NGT

Writ petitions were filed the in the High Court of Kerala by M H Vijayan on 04 June 2020 and S. Seethilal on 04 Oct 2021. The Kerala SDMA is not a respondent in these petitions. The second petition is pending before the Division Bench of Honourable

Chief Justice Mr.S.Manikumar and Justice Shaji P.Chaly. The first petition was dismissed by Hon'ble Justice N Nagaresh on 17 Nov 21. The Chennai Bench of NGT also dismissed two original applications on 08 Jul 2022.

Experts from HC Kerala Judgement dated 17 Nov 21

Few paragraphs from the Kerala High Court judgement are reproduced below:

“54. After 2018 Floods, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and IIT Madras recommended clearance of the Sand Bar at Thottappally Pozhi... It was on the basis of reports of such expert bodies that the authorities under the Act, 2005 decided to de-silt downstream Thottappally and remove the existing sand bar at Pozhi. This is a flood prevention activity and therefore protected by the special provisions in the Disaster Management Act.”

44. In the case on hand, the removal of sand bar is intended to obviate impending disaster. Removal of sand bar from downstream of Thottappally Spillway pursuant to the orders passed in exercise of powers under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 would not amount to “mining operations” as defined under Section 3(d) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 for the reason that winning of minerals is not the primary or secondary intent, purport or priority behind the removal of sand bar.

45..... The steps taken in this case are intended to avert any possible disaster in Pampa, Meenachil, Achankovil, Kuttanad and other areas. Therefore, the orders of the DDMA cannot be said to be ultra vires Section 34 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. (Emphasis added)

46. Ordinarily, laws are framed and are meant to regulate and govern times of peace. The laws meant to govern the times of peace may become insufficient and even hurdles to tackle situations in extra ordinary times like war, calamities, catastrophes, pandemics and disasters. A democratic State should have the power to make such laws which would help to overcome such disasters with least hardship and loss of life and property of its citizens. Section 72 of the Act, 2005 gives overriding effect to the provisions of the Act notwithstanding anything inconsistent there with contained in any other law or in any instrument having effect by virtue of any law other than the Act, 2005.

MS Swaminathan's name appears five times in the judgement.

The science and engineering backup behind this 'disaster prevention' work is summed up below:

- a) Kuttanad Floods are caused by the obstacles like the sandbar at Pozhy mouth and silts in the leading channel between the spill-way bridge and the Pozhy at Thottappally.
- b) After the 2018 flood, MS Swaminathan and IIT-Madras authored a report on flood control measure to be implemented at Thottappally.

c) Expert bodies “strongly recommend” the periodic removal of these obstacles as the only way to prevent floods in Kuttanad and the flood-plains of the River Pamba.

d) The district collector has special power to get these works done under the Disaster Management Act, by-passing any other Act and Rules.

e) Such orders can be challenged only in a High Court or the Supreme Court.

Diagnostics of 2018 flood

According to the reports of the Central Water Commission and the Joint Report of the GoK- Dutch Disaster Reduction team, the 2018 flood was caused due to the extreme rainfall events in August, which was a one-in-hundred years’ event. The Thottappally Spillway (TSW) was designed during the 1940’s to evacuate about one-third of the maximum flood waters of the River Pamba from Vembanad Lake to the Lakshadweep Sea. It could not achieve its design flow rate of 1820 m³/second, as the 300 m wide leading channel from Thottappally to Veeyapuram (for about 11 km) was not constructed. The maximum evacuation during 1960’s was 600 m³/s. The Dutch scientists Paul van Meel, and Simon Warmerdam reported that the “drainage channel system, including the main drain into which the four main rivers drain into the Kuttanad wetlands, have poor maintenance and have to some extent silted up, thus reducing their drainage discharge capacities towards the TSW, which itself has a limited capacity of reportedly 380 m³/s”. The consensus opinion is that the Thottappally SW spillway could only evacuate about 10% of floodwaters, because of the bottlenecks upstream Thottappally. The Dutch team, which worked together with the experts from WRD, did not recommend dredging and excavation downstream the spillway. They even had doubt as to whether the removal of the sandbar is necessary, as they recommended:

“to increase considerably the discharge to the outlet by adjusting the channel that connects the Pamba river to the Thottappally outlet (channel alignment, adjustment of depth, removal of obstacles). It is possible that in this case it is no longer necessary to dredge the sandbar, because the natural stream power is enough to flush away the bar. Kerala IWRM Action Plan Kuttanad Basin, (Page 46) 25 March 2019.

In short, the 2018 flood of Kuttanad was not caused due to the bottlenecks downstream the TSW.

A Non-Existent Study

Did MSSRF and IIT conducted a study during or after 2018 Kuttanad flood?. The answer is No.

Then, how and why their names appear in a Gov order, affidavits of the respondents and in the judgement?

In response to the Vijayan’s petition in the High Court, the IREL submitted an exhibit - “the relevant pages of the report by MS. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) dated 13/02/2007”. The list of exhibits filed in the writ petition does not have any report from IIT-M.

MSSRF published their report of agrarian distress in Kuttanad in August 2007, not on 13 Feb 2007. It is this study which is referred to as the study after 2018 floods. MSSRF recommended modernisation of TSW, and a new technical study of the Spillway. In 2011 Jayakumar KV from the Centre for Water Resource Development Management (CWRDM), Kozhikode and Prof B S Murty from the IIT Madras published their report on TSW. Even though the TSW was flagged off in both the reports, the interventions they recommended were upstream the spillway. Modernisation of TSW was implemented in the Kuttanad package before 2018. The main recommendation of increasing the river width from 80-100 m to 300 m from Veeyapuram to Thottappally has not been implemented.

In short, dredging the River Pamba at her confluence with the Sea was not recommended by MSSRF and IIT even in their reports before the 2018 flood.

The Estimated Extraction and the Volume of Business

Full details of the sand extracted in R Pamba at Thottappally since May 2020 are not available in the public domain. The website of WRD shows the data for 192 days from 16 May to 23 Nov 2021. According to a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, during 20 May- 15 Jul 2020 (56 days), 242,831 cub meter of sand was dredged from the River Pamba. Onmanorama.com reported that the mining in Thottappally was “completed in four months (May thru August) in three shifts each day” in 2020.

The volume of minerals reportedly gained in 2020 and 2021 is 479,841 m³. This volume will contain 978,876 tons of heavy minerals. M. Sundararajan and colleagues from the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Kerala, and the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), Thiruvananthapuram have reported the concentration of mineral in beach sands of Kollam and Alapuzha coast. The estimation of minerals gained is based on the above report.

The heavy minerals constitute about 51% of the raw sand. As per the contract, the non-mineral fraction of the sand was to be disposed of locally. The contract between the GoK and the KMML stipulates separating the minerals from the raw sand at Thottappally and disposal of non-mineral fraction locally. The KMML is transporting away the entire raw sand as they did not install the spirals for separating the minerals at Thottappally. (There are other breaches of contracts which will be discussed later on.) I presume that the volumes reported are for the raw sand.

479,841 m³ of raw sand mined during 2020 and 2021, contains 241650 m³ or 978,876 tons of heavy minerals. This includes 56,506 tons of rutile and 641,402 tons of ilmenite. Estimate of the price of the minerals is based on the sale price of ilmenite and rutile in 2020 at the IREL's Chavara site, published in The Indian Minerals Yearbook-2020. The sale prices in 2020 per ton of these minerals are Rs 92,138 and Rs 14,618 respectively. The collections during 2020 and 2021 were worth Rs 1,458 crores. If the yield in 2022 is similar to the previous years, this business is worth Rs 2,100 crores.

The price of the mud paid to the treasury by the mining company in two years is Rs 11 crores. If the operation were named as mining, the State could have received a royalty of Rs 210 crores + Rs 21 crores as contribution towards the District Mineral Fund.

The Social and Environmental Cost of a Unique Disaster Prevention Project

The operation began in May 2020, when the State was experiencing the pandemic disruptions. The inaugural of the operation was really majestic with the deployment of 1300 police personnel cheering a hundred odd wood cutters who axed 540 casuarinas in the wee hours of the morning on 20 May 2020. Denying the rights of the village Panchayat and the local fishing community, dredging of the Pozhi and the River started on the next day. The police unleashed extreme brutality against people who were protesting against the transportation of minerals. The Secretary of the Panchayat was transferred within 24 hours for asking questions to the miners. Incidentally, the casuarinas garden was raised under the social forestry program for mitigation of tsunami and other disasters from the Sea. During its 14 years of existence, the plantation did not cause any flood. This also was a picnic and selfy spot of the neighbourhood people.

Thottappally beach was a nesting ground of Olive Ridley turtles. They have not been visiting the beach since the takeover by the KMML.

Kerala experienced the worst flood of a century causing 498 deaths and displacement of 1.4 million people in 2018. The area, depth and duration of inundation were higher in Kuttanad than in other Taluk in the State. Majority of the people who became homeless have not been rehabilitated.

This is the first “flood control project in India” initiated by invoking the emergency powers vested in the District Collector under the Disaster Management Act of 2005. It survived the trials in the High Court and the NGT on the strength of an invented theory of flood, and attribution of its authorship to Dr MS Swaminathan and the IIT-Madras. These invented lies have been immortalised in a Gov Order, CAG’s Audit report, counter affidavits filed by the respondents and in the judgements of High Court and the NGT. Each lie has its own shelf-life. This one survived for 1221 days.

To Sum up:

The respondents – the GoK and the mining companies lied to the High Court of Kerala and the National Green Tribunal about non-existent studies.

There is no expert body recommendation for the present sand mining work in Thottappally portion of the River Pamba,

These activities will not improve the efficiency of spillage of floodwaters.

The activities did not and will not mitigate or reduce the flood hazards in Kuttanad.

The emergency powers of the District Collectors are limited to rescue and relief operations, which are done during a disaster, in which even a few minutes of delay may have disastrous consequences. The work started some 380 days after the

promulgation. This delay did not cause any harm to anyone. And therefore, the collector's activities at Pozhy and downstream

The district collector's order for preventing flood and saving lives, under the emergency powers in the Disaster Management Act 2005, has caused a bigger disaster in the governance, in the academics and in the judiciary. Digging a tank, depth up to -10 m MSL, may adversely impact the entire water body of the Vembanad Lake.

VT Padmanabhan is a researcher working on health effects of ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, nuclear safety, coastal zone management, corona-virus pandemic etc. He has published his findings in Counter Currents, peer-reviewed journals. Most of his papers are available at the www.researchgate.net. <https://countercurrents.org/2022/09/mining-the-river-pamba-for-flood-prevention-novel-ideas-for-evading-regulations-case-study-of-thottappally-in-alapuzha-kerala-india/>

6. TNERC tariff order silent on metering of farm connections (thehindu.com) SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

Of about 23 lakh free power agricultural connections in the State, around 3.5 lakh have been provided with meters

The Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC)'s latest tariff order is silent on the contentious issue of metering of agricultural connections, numbering nearly 20 lakhs, despite the Commission identifying agriculture as the largest consumer of power, only next to domestic consumers for the next four years.

Of about 23 lakh free power agricultural connections in the State, around 3.5 lakh have been provided with meters. This year alone (2022-23), the farm sector, falling under the low tension (LT) category, is projected to account for 16,780 million units of energy sold, of a total of 86,166 MU.

The domestic sector is likely to consume 32,158 MU. In 2026-27, while the total amount of energy sold will be 1,02,342 MU, the domestic and farm sectors are expected to consume 38,363 MU and 20,097 MU respectively, according to the panel's workings mentioned in the tariff order.

At least, in the previous tariff orders, including the first order of March 2003, there were directions from the TNERC with regard to metering. In the first order, the Commission had asked the now-defunct Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) to complete hundred percent metering within three years, as committed by the power utility. This deadline got extended regularly.

"The fact remains that the directives of the TNERC to complete the metering process by September 2012 was overdue by nine years," the office of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) observed in its recent appraisal of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation's (Tangedco) performance in the implementation of the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), a report of which was placed in the Assembly in May this year.

Besides, the Union government made the proportion of metered electricity consumption in the total energy consumption including agricultural connections, one of the parameters to be evaluated before allowing States for additional borrowing.

When approached for comment, the TNERC chief M. Chandrasekar said the section of the tariff order, dealing with directions of the Commission, had certain references to agriculture. "Of course, we favour installing meter for every connection," he said.

The Commission has directed the Tangedco to ensure that all agricultural pump sets were provided with capacitors for effective reduction of aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses and optimum utilisation of available equipment. It has "requested" agriculturists to shift the usage of pump sets to "solar hours" or daytime instead of evening peak hours (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.), which the Commission has called as, "non-solar" hours. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tnerc-tariff-order-silent-on-metering-of-farm-connections/article65875514.ece>

7. Punjab's urban local bodies cry foul as babus set to have more say in day-to-day functioning (tribuneindia.com) SEPTEMBER 12, 2022

In a move that appears to undermine the spirit of the decentralisation of powers, as per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, the state bureaucracy will have more say in the day-to-day functioning of the urban local bodies (ULBs), under the Department of Local Government, if the recent orders are any indication.

The Punjab Government has delegated the work of the Municipal Councils, Nagar Panchayats and Municipal Corporations in 17 districts to the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) and ADC (Urban Development), including in the Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Bathinda and SAS Nagar civic bodies.

Powers vested with ADCs

- ADCs to act as field officers to implement govt policies
- All resolutions of Class I MCs/Improvement Trusts to be routed via ADCs to Director, Local Govt
- To exercise powers under 3 (iii) of the Delimitation of Wards of Municipal Rules, 1972
- Inspection of municipalities
- To take cognisance directly on matters/complaints against officers of the respective ULB as ex-officio Chief Vigilance Officer

"It is against the very spirit of empowering the ULBs to be independent entities. The six posts of Deputy Director were abolished to make way for the ADC (Urban Development). Now the government says that the workload of the ADC (Urban Development) was less and the work has been handed over to the ADCs (General), who are already looking after the responsibilities of the respective districts under the Deputy Commissioner. It would further complicate the functioning of the Local Government," said an officer of the department, preferring anonymity.

Sanjeev Bittu, Patiala Mayor, said the government needs to clarify whether the powers were vested with an elected Mayor, elected head of the Municipal Council or Nagar Panchayat, or the bureaucracy. "The bureaucracy needs to be made accountable. The

powers to write an ACR of the Municipal Commissioner or transfer the employees have been taken away from the Mayors,” he added.

Even the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), in its recent report, pointed out that though the state government made necessary amendments to the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act and Punjab Municipal Act to comply with the provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, these were not supported by firm actions in terms of empowerment of the ULBs to discharge their functions freely and effectively.

The state government has overriding powers over the ULBs in matters like framing of rules, and cancelling or suspending a resolution, besides other functions.

Manjeet Sethi, former Deputy Mayor of the Mohali MC, said, “Empowering the bureaucrats increases harassment of the common man. The elected representatives need to be empowered in the day-to-day functioning of the ULBs. Many powers of the Director, Local Government, have been given to the ADCs. Then where is the need of the Local Government?”

In a notification issued on September 6, the ADCs (Urban Development) and ADCs (General) in 17 districts have been given regulatory powers under the Punjab Municipal Act 1911, Punjab Improvement Trust 1922 and rule/bylaws made in respect of the ULBs. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/ulbs-cry-foul-as-babus-set-to-have-more-say-in-day-to-day-functioning-430738>

8. Bihar Dalit Woman Critical after Removal of Kidneys at Private Clinic ([newsclick.in](https://www.newsclick.in)) SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

Patna: A poor Dalit woman in her early 30s is battling for life after both her kidneys were allegedly removed at a private nursing home in Muzaffarpur district on September 3 amid Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav warning all primary health centres, district hospitals and medical colleges to improve their services or face action.

Sunita Devi, a mother of two from Mathurapur village, under Sakra block, was rushed to Subhakant Clinic early this month following stomach pain. After examining her and conducting ultrasound, doctors asked the family to immediately admit her for a uterus removal operation.

However, Sunita’s body swelled and she complained of uneasiness and extreme weakness after the operation on September 3. Sensing trouble, a doctor at the clinic advised her husband Aklu Ram to take her to Patna for better treatment.

“A day after the operation, her body swelled and she developed other health problems. A doctor advised us to rush her to Patna for better treatment. She was shifted to a private hospital in Patna in a vehicle arranged by the clinic,” Ram told Newsclick from Muzaffarpur.

However, the family was in a shock 24 hours later when they admitted Sunita to Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) after the private hospital “refused to treat” her and asked them to “consult a government hospital”. “We took her to Patna Medical

College and Hospital, where doctors performed some tests and ultrasound and informed us that both her kidneys were missing. We were shocked,” Ram added.

According to Ram, PMCH doctors asked him to take Sunita to a kidney hospital for treatment. Subsequently, he returned to his village and consulted Muzaffarpur-based SKMCH and Sadar hospital but of no help.

Ram, a landless farm labourer, said that Sunita’s condition is deteriorating fast. “Her body has swollen and she is unable to digest food. Her condition is critical.”

Mentioning the expenses he had to incur for the treatment, Ram said, “First, I deposited Rs 30,000 at the clinic for the operation and later Rs 20,000 at private hospital in Patna for treatment. I took loan from a moneylender on high interest to save the life of my wife.”

Sunita’s mother Terri Devi has lodged an FIR against the clinic’s doctors, including owner Pawan Kumar, at Bariyarpur Police Station. Station house officer Rajesh Kumar told Newsclick that the FIR was lodged under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The complaint was forwarded to Sakra Police Station for further action.

Muzaffarpur civil surgeon UC Sharma said that he has directed the Sakra health officer-in-charge to probe into the allegation and verify the clinic’s registration and degrees of the doctors involved in the operation.

According to Kumar, the clinic neither has its registration number nor the degrees of its doctors displayed on a board. Locals alleged that the clinic is run by self-proclaimed doctors. The doctors are absconding and the clinic is shut, the police said.

Sunita’s horrible experience has exposed the ground reality of basic health care in rural Bihar. Contrary to the state government’s claims, the health infrastructure remains poor with thousands of patients, primarily poor and marginalised, visit OPDs and return without treatment due to unavailability of doctors and defunct ultrasound and X-Ray machines, etc.

As per local dailies, in the last one month since the new Mahagathbandhan government was formed, hundreds of patients who queued up for hours at Sadar hospitals in different districts had to return without even basic check-up as doctors were absent. Similarly, several seriously ill patients could not be hospitalised due to either unavailability of medical staff or lack of equipment.

Most primary or community health centres are non-functional and even district hospitals are facing shortage of doctors and basic medicines.

The fact was highlighted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report presented in the Assembly in March, which said that government hospitals, mainly in districts, have lack of resources and workforce. The number of doctors, nurses and other paramedic staff is also significantly less.

The CAG report also exposed the state's unpreparedness during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020. "There was a persistent shortage of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and technicians in Bihar from 2014 till 2020 but the department did not publish the vacancies to get them filled," the report said.

As per the report, there is a shortfall of beds at hospitals ranging from 52% to 92%. The number of beds was not raised to the sanctioned level even after a decade has passed.

A CAG audit of hospitals in the districts of Biharsharif, Hajipur, Jehanabad, Madhepura and Patna from 2014-15 to 2019-20 showed that they hardly provide patients with basic health facilities. Much to its shock, the audit team found street dogs, pigs and open drains on premises of the hospitals. <https://www.newsclick.in/bihar-dalit-woman-critical-removal-kidneys-private-clinic>

9. घोटाले पर घोटाला: 4 जिलों के लिए भेजा गया 3 करोड़ का यूरिया गायब , सरकार ने बैठायी जांच (hindi.news18.com) SEPTEMBER 09, 2022

जबलपुर. एमपी में पोषण आहार के बाद अब यूरिया का बड़ा घोटाला सामने आता दिख रहा है. करोड़ों का यूरिया खाना तो हुआ लेकिन मौके पर नाममात्र का पहुंचा बाकी गायब हो गया. ये माल प्रदेश के 4 जिलों में पहुंचाया जाना था. कैग रिपोर्ट में मध्यप्रदेश के पोषण आहार घोटाले का मामला अभी शांत नहीं हुआ था कि यूरिया घोटाले की आशंका ने एक बार फिर सूबे की सियासत को हिला दिया है.

खबर जबलपुर जिले से सामने आई है जो बताती है कि 25 अगस्त को रैक के माध्यम से जबलपुर पहुंचा 2666 मीट्रिक टन यूरिया 4 जिलों की सहकारी समितियों तक तो पहुंचा लेकिन 80 प्रतिशत माल रास्ते से ही गायब हो गया. गायब हुए यूरिया की कीमत 3 करोड़ से अधिक की आंकी जा रही है. अब इस पर जबलपुर से लेकर भोपाल तक हड़कंप मच गया है.

कहां गया यूरिया

कैग रिपोर्ट ने मासूमों के निवाले का पोषण आहार उकारने का खुलासा कर मध्यप्रदेश के सिस्टम की जहां नींद उड़ा रखी है, वहीं करोड़ों का यूरिया गायब होने से शासन प्रशासन की बेचैनी औ बढ़ गई है. खबर मध्य प्रदेश के शहर जबलपुर जिले से सामने आई है. यहां 4 जिलों के लिए 2666 मीट्रिक टन यूरिया आया था. इसमें से करोड़ों का माल गायब हो गया. जबलपुर सहित मंडला, डिंडोरी, दमोह और सिवनी के लिए ये माल भेजा जाना था. रैक में से सिर्फ 15 से 25 फ्रीसदी यूरिया ही 4 जिलों की सहकारी समितियों तक पहुंच सका. जबकि सैकड़ों टन यूरिया गायब हो गया है.

जांच टीम गठित

पूरे मामले को लेकर कृषि विकास विभाग के संयुक्त संचालक ने 4 जिलों के लिए अलग-अलग जांच टीम का गठन कर दिया है. यह पता लगाया जा रहा है कि आखिर करोड़ों का यूरिया कहां चला गया. आंकड़ों पर अगर गौर करें तो 25 अगस्त को रैक के जरिए जबलपुर में 2667 मीट्रिक टन यूरिया पहुंचा. नियम के तहत सप्लायर को 70 फ्रीसदी स्टॉक सरकारी आपूर्ति के लिए देना होता है. 1853 मीट्रिक टन यूरिया 4 दिन के लिए आवंटित हुआ. इस यूरिया को कृषि विभाग ने अलग-अलग जिलों में खपत के अनुपात में बांटते हुए उसका अलॉटमेंट जारी किया. लेकिन जिन भी जिलों में यूरि

या पहुंचा उसका आंकड़ा 10 से 25 प्रतिशत ही रहा. यानी एक हजार मीट्रिक टन से ज्यादा यूरिया फिलहाल गायब है या यूं कहें भ्रष्टाचार की भेंट चढ़ गया है.

विधानसभा में उठेगा मामला

कांग्रेस विधायक विनय सक्सेना का कहना है मध्यप्रदेश में रोजाना नए नए भ्रष्टाचार का खुलासा हो रहा है. पोषण आहार के बाद यूरिया घोटाले ने भी सरकार के चेहरे को उजागर किया है. बिचौलियों और सरकार के नेता ही यूरिया लेकर घोटाले में शामिल हैं. अब वो विधानसभा में ये मसला उठाएंगे. इसके भाजपा ने इस पूरे मामले पर विपक्ष के आरोपों को दरकिनार किया है. भाजपा विधायक इंदु तिवारी का कहना है जो भी इस मामले में दोषी होगा उस पर सख्त कार्रवाई होगी. 3 दिन के अंदर ही पूरे मामले का पर्दाफाश कर दिया जाएगा. <https://hindi.news18.com/news/madhya-pradesh/jabalpur-cag-report-urea-worth-3-crores-missing-sent-to-4-districts-government-set-up-inquiry-mpsg-4568613.html>

10. पोषण आहार:टेक होम राशन के 150 करोड़, होम फूड के 100 करोड़ रोकें; कैग रिपोर्ट पर जवाब देने की तैयारी में सरकार (bhaskar.com) 12 Sep 2022

मद्र में पोषण आहार व्यवस्था पर महालेखाकार यानी कैग की रिपोर्ट आने के बाद से सियासी हंगामा मचा हुआ है। इसी हंगामे को थामने और रिपोर्ट पर जवाब देने की तैयारी सरकार ने कर ली है। इस बीच खबर है कि महिला बाल विकास विभाग ने शहरी और ग्रामीण दोनों आंगनवाड़ियों में बंटने वाले पोषण आहार का 250 करोड़ रु. का भुगतान फिलहाल रोक रखा है। हालांकि विभाग के अधिकारियों का तर्क है कि भुगतान के लिए बजट नहीं है। बाद में करेंगे।

इसमें 150 करोड़ रु. टेक होम राशन के हैं, जबकि 100 करोड़ रु. हॉट कुक फूड का है। इन्हें सप्लाय करने वाले महिला स्व सहायता समूह और निजी संस्थाएं पेमेंट मांग रहे हैं। बता दें कि दोनों इलाकों की आंगनवाड़ियों में दो तरीकों से पोषण आहार दिया जाता है। शहरों में हॉट कुक फूड बांटा जाता है। ये काम निजी ठेकेदार व कुछ समूह करते हैं। इसका दो महीने का भुगतान अटका है। भुगतान न होने से सप्लाय पर असर पड़ रहा है। जबकि ग्रामीण आंगनवाड़ियों के लिए 7 ऑटोमेटिव प्लांट में पोषण आहार बनता है। इन प्लांट को स्व सहायता समूह चलाते हैं।

पोषण मिशन में 3 साल से नियुक्ति नहीं

केंद्रीय महिला एवं बाल विकास मंत्रालय ने राज्य की कड़ी आपत्ति में हेल्प डेस्क की नियुक्ति नहीं होने पर एतराज जताया है। केंद्र की गाइडलाइन के मुताबिक पोषण मिशन के लिए डेस्क पर 1 हजार लोगों की नियुक्ति की जानी है। कांग्रेस सरकार में नियुक्तियों को लेकर गड़बड़ी सामने आने पर शासन ने निरस्त कर दी थी। इसके बाद तीन साल में विभागीय अफसर नियुक्ति नहीं कर पाए है। इसके टेंडर 5 बार निरस्त हो चुके हैं।

कमियां यहां भी... तीन महीने से मानदेय नहीं दिया, पाउडर भी नहीं मिल रहा, 5 करोड़ बकाया

आंगनवाड़ी कार्यकर्ताओं को तीन माह से मानदेय नहीं मिला है। इन्हें एक किश्त के साढ़े 5 हजार रुपए ही दिए जा रहे हैं, जबकि हर महीने साढ़े चार हजार बाकी हैं।

सांची दूध डेयरी से आंगनवाड़ी के बच्चों को दूध पाउडर मिलता था। इस पावडर के लगभग 5 करोड़ रुप ए बकाया होने से सप्लाई रोक दी गई।

केंद्र सरकार ने पत्र में मोबाइल बिड पर आपत्ति ली है। विभाग ने केवल 17 जिलों को छोड़कर बाकी जिलों में खरीदी पर सफाई दी है। हकीकत में 15 जिलों में पायलट प्रोजेक्ट के तहत तीन साल पहले खरीदी हुई थी। आंगनवाड़ी वर्कर्स ने मोबाइल फटने की शिकायत की थी, जिसके बाद विभाग ने कंपनी को ब्लैक लिस्टेड कर दिया था। हकीकत में 5 जिलों में मोबाइल खरीदी के आदेश हुए हैं, जो वर्कर्स को मिले नहीं हैं। ऐसे 16 जिले हैं, जिन्हें मोबाइल जनवरी से जुलाई महीने के बीच मिल पाए हं। <https://www.bhaskar.com/local/mp/bhopal/news/150-crores-of-take-home-ration-100-crores-of-home-food-withheld-government-preparing-to-respond-to-cag-report-130305643.html>

11. कथित राशन घोटाला: CAG की रिपोर्ट कितनी सच? पंजाब केसरी की पड़ताल आपकी सोच बदल देगी (mp.punjabkesari.in) Updated: 09 Sep, 2022

मध्यप्रदेश (madhya pradesh) में इन दिनों मौसम जहां एक ओर सामान्य है तो वही सीएजी (report of CAG) की आई रिपोर्ट ने सियासी पारा बढ़ा रखा है। बीते दिनों पहले आई सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में सरकार (state government) पर उठे सवाल को लेकर पंजाब केसरी (punjab kesari) ने रिपोर्ट्स की सभी आपत्तियों की पड़ताल की। वहीं पड़ताल के दौरान निकलकर आने वाले तथ्य चौंका देने वाले है।

CAG की पहली आपत्ति:

इस कड़ी में टेक होम राशन (THR) की सप्लाई को लेकर ऑडिट की पहली आपत्ति में ये कहा गया है कि महिला एवं बाल विकास ने बेस लाइन सर्वे नहीं किया। उन्होंने ऐसी बालिकाएं, जो स्कूल में पढाई नहीं कर रही थीं, उनकी संख्या 36 लाख बताई, जबकि स्कूल शिक्षा विभाग ने यह संख्या 9 इजार बताई है। इस आपत्ति को लेकर ऐसी जानकारी मिली है की महिला एवं बाल विकास के द्वारा किए गए सर्वे में ऐसा पाया है कि 2 लाख 52 हजार बालिकाएं ऐसी हैं, जो स्कूलों में नहीं जा रही हैं। यह आंकड़ा भारत सरकार को भी सितम्बर 2018 में भेजा गया है। इन्हीं बालिकाओं को पोषण आहार दिया गया। गौर करने वाली बात ये है की स्कूल शिक्षा विभाग की संख्या में वो बालिकाएं भी शामिल हैं, जो प्रदेश के किसी स्कूल में दर्ज नहीं है। इसके साथ ही महिला बाल विकास के सर्वे में वो भी बालिकाएं शामिल हैं, जो स्कूल नहीं जाती हैं।

CAG की दूसरी आपत्ति:

रॉ मैटेरियल को खरीदने में किए गए खर्च और उपयोग की गई बिजली को देखते हुए ऐसा लगता है कि प्लांट से ज्यादा उत्पादन रिकॉर्ड में दिखाया गया है। वहीं इस आपत्ति को लेकर किए गए पड़ताल में ये निकलकर सामने आ रहा है की सभी आपत्ति वाले प्लांटों में अलग अलग प्रक्रियाओं के तरह अलग-अलग प्रक्रियाओं से पोषण आहार तैयार किये जाते हैं। पोषण आहार में खिचड़ी, बर्फी, हल्वा, लड्डू आदि अन्य सामग्री बनाने में जो विद्युत के उपभोग की औसत प्रतिशत के तहत आपत्ति जताई गई है दरअसल बिजली की खपत का औसत तय कर पाना मुश्किल है क्योंकि कभी भी पैकेजिंग और तमाम चीजों के लिए जब मशीनें चलाई जाती हैं उनका कोई तय समय सीमा नहीं होता है और हर दिन एक साथ विद्युत का उपभोग

सामान हो यह भी संभव नहीं हैं। यदि अधिक उत्पादन बताया गया है, तो उसके लिए अधिक मात्रा रॉ मटेरियल की खरीददारी भी बताई जाती, लेकिन CAG की रिपोर्ट में एक रुपये की भी कच्ची सामग्री की खरीदारी नहीं दर्शाई गई।

CAG की तीसरी आपत्ति:

पोषण आहार की मशीनों में FSSAI

(फूड सेफ्टी एण्ड स्टैंडर्ड अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया) की तरफ से दिए गए लायसेंस में मशीनों की उत्पादन क्षमता से अधिक उत्पादन करने का आंकड़ा सामने आया है। वहीं पड़ताल में निकलकर ये सामने आ रहा है की फूड सेफ्टी एंड स्टैंडर्ड अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया के लाइसेंस में कुछ दिनों पहले ही मशीन की क्षमता को लेकर के विभाग ने रेनवाल करवाया था ऐसे में सीएजी ने पुरानी क्षमता के आधार पर मशीनों की क्षमता को लेकर आपत्ति जताई है। दरअसल ऑडिट में रायसेन के बाड़ी बरेली पोषण आहार संयंत्र के संबंध में ये जताया गया है कि इस प्लांट में बनाई जाने वाली खिचड़ी की उत्पादन क्षमता 4 मी.टन प्रतिदिन है। जबकि जानकारी ये मिल रही है की FSSAI के द्वारा जारी लायसेंस में कुल उत्पादन क्षमता 140 मी.टन प्रतिदिन है। इसके साथ ही गृहमंत्री नरोत्तम मिश्रा ने FSSAI के लाइसेंस की प्रति संलग्न करने की बात भी कही है।

CAG की चौथी आपत्ति: पोषण आहार को ऐसे वाहनों से पहुंचाया गया है, जिनके नंबर वास्तव में कार, स्कूटर अथवा ट्रैक्टर के हैं अथवा वह नंबर पोर्टल पर उपलब्ध ही नहीं है यानि वह किसी रजिस्टर्ड वाहन के नंबर नहीं हैं। पड़ताल में निकलकर सामने आ रहा है, कि ऑडिट की इस रिपोर्ट में मानवीय गलती है जब कि आहार बकायदा पहुंचाया गया है और उसी ट्रक से पहुंचाया गया है। दरअसल प्लांट में तीन स्थानों पर ट्रक का नंबर लिखा जाता है। सबसे पहले सिव्योरिटी पर फिर तौल कांटे पर इसके बाद डिस्पैच कक्ष में सभी जानकारी दर्ज की जाती है ऐसे में किसी एक जगह गलती हो भी जाए तो दूसरी ओर तीसरी जगह पर गुंजाइश बिल्कुल जीरो है। जैसे उदाहरण के तौर पर 11 जुलाई 2020 को चालान नंबर 42484 में जिस व्हीकल नंबर को डाला गया है। उसका नंबर है MP 04 HA 0225 अब ऐसे में जब उसकी जांच की जा रही है तो वह नंबर किसी कार का निकल रहा है मगर उस दिन ट्रक आया है।

दरअसल ट्रक का नंबर नोट करने वाले ने ये गलती की है। चालान को नोट करते वक्त जहां ट्रक का नंबर था। एमपी 40 HA 0225 है तो वही गलती से MP 04 लिखा गया। इस प्रकार की कई बार गलतियां हुई हैं और इन गलतियों की वजह से ही ऐसे आंकड़े सामने आए हैं। वही इस मानवीय चूक की वजह से यह मामला और ज्यादा बड़ा हो गया है। ऐसे ही कुछ अन्य आपत्तियों में भी रिपोर्ट से अलग तथ्य निकलकर सामने आए हैं। आपको बता दें, कि पिछले तीन सालों में पोषण आहार का परिवहन लगभग 15 हजार चालान के माध्यम से किया गया है। जिसमें सिर्फ 60 बार मानवीय भूल की वजह से गलत वाहन संख्या की एंट्री हुई है और सही वाहन संख्या का साक्ष्य रजिस्ट्रेशन, सार्टिफिकेट गेट पास, टोल काटा रसीद इत्यादि से स्पष्ट हो रहा है।

इस रिपोर्ट को लेकर मध्य प्रदेश सरकार से नहीं की गई कोई चर्चा

बीते दिनों से लगातार बवाल मचा रही इस रिपोर्ट को लेकर के सीएजी ने किसी भी प्रकार की कोई चर्चा मध्य प्रदेश सरकार से नहीं की और सबसे बड़ी बात यह है कि सीएजी ने सिर्फ अपनी रिपोर्ट पेश की है यह आपत्ति है। वहीं मध्य प्रदेश सरकार पूरी ताकत से इस रिपोर्ट का प्रतिउत्तर देने में लगी हुई है। नाम

न बताने की शर्त पर पंजाब केसरी से बातचीत करते हुए संबंधित विभाग के एक अधिकारी ने यह बताया कीसीएजी की जितनी भी आपत्तियां है उन सभी के उत्तर के रूप में विभाग के पास प्रमाण के रूप में स भी जरूरी कागजात हैं। यही नहीं उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि अगर सीएजी इन सब मामलों को लेकर विभाग से बातचीत करती तो यह रिपोर्ट तैयार ही नहीं हो पाता। <https://mp.punjabkesari.in/madhya-pradesh/news/release-report-of-cag-on-ration-scam-in-madhya-pradesh-1672320>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

12. Atmanirbhar Bharat: Indian weapons set to rule the roost ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) Updated: September 12, 2022

Defence production for the Indian Armed Forces under the 'Make in India' initiative provides state-of-the-art equipment, which matches the world's best in many cases. It exceeds the specifications of the corresponding world platforms. This is amply demonstrated by other nations seeking many such weapons and equipment.

Indian innovation empowering the world

For the first time, the Indian defence industry is participating in the global supply chain in a significant way. It is supplying to leading Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) worldwide, which is a testament to Indian products' quality and workmanship. This is evident from the fact that nearly 50 percent of the Indian defence exports from the Indian defence industry are going to leading OEMs in the USA. The US Sealift Command, which has started sending naval ships to Indian shipyards, has found the capability of Indian shipyards to meet the highest standards in the world.

Not only in defence production, the innovation ecosystem developed under the iDEX programme, as well as Make-2 and DRDO programmes, is attracting interest from leading countries worldwide, including the USA, UK and Australia, apart from several others in Asia and Africa. India is developing defence technologies that are on the cutting edge for the first time, sometimes exceeding the best the world has seen so far.

For instance, the non-hackable quantum channel created by a start-up with a hop of 150 km on a terrestrial optical fibre infrastructure bests the 90 km of similar hop achieved worldwide. India is also working towards greater innovation and manufacturing prowess when it comes to drones. The focus is on creating some global firsts in this field as well.

Why is indigenisation important?

With indigenous weapons and platforms, a new dimension is added to their capabilities. They have an advantage over the adversary since indigenously developed niche capabilities can remain unknown to the enemy- something that is not possible with imported off-the-shelf equipment.

Such capabilities have been achieved due to proactive initiatives taken by all three services in the last two years. The latest addition to the indigenisation efforts was the aircraft carrier commissioned last week. Designed by the Indian Navy, it was

manufactured by Cochin Shipyard, catapulting India into the league of a small group of nations who have the capability to design and build aircraft carriers.

The rapid success achieved in development of military equipment is also in part to the credit of public-private partnership (PPP). Nagpur-based Economic Explosives (EEL) serves as a prime example. EEL's Dr Manjit Singh, Director R&D told the Financial Express Online that the company has created Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher System in collaboration with DRDO; state-of-the art Multi-Mode Hand Grenades with a reliability of 99.82; HE/I ammunition for AK 630 gun, the main CRAA gun of the Indian Navy.

He further highlighted that "The Company has established itself as the only alternative to import of chaff payload. Today, the nation can decide on customising its payload depending upon the threat that its armed forces anticipate, a capability hitherto not available. We have also innovated solutions to develop bombs (MK-80 series bombs) that can be used both on the Eastern and Western Origin aircraft. This is one of a kind achievement that has no parallels."

The company also claims that it has the world's largest known state of the art production plant at Nagpur to manufacture HMX and HMX based compositions. "We are regularly exporting HMX and its compositions world over to countries like the USA, France, Ukraine, Israel," said Dr Manjit Singh.

Indigenisation boosting services' firepower

The three positive indigenisation lists issued by the Department of Military Affairs during the last two years are examples of the Armed Forces' conviction in the capability of the domestic industrial ecosystem. These lists prescribe the 310 platforms and equipment services they have chosen to procure from the Indian industry as part of a roadmap that meets their requirements. Moreover, contracts worth Rs 2.2 lakh crores and projects worth Rs 5.07 lakh crores are in different stages of procurement by the three services.

There are several instances where the equipment manufactured by an Indian vendor has exceeded in quality compared to the global version of the same equipment. A case in point is K9 Vajra, which provides several value-added services like predictive maintenance using IoT, which provides higher availability of the platform, a feature which was not available in earlier versions of the same equipment.

All three services have led the effort to enhance the use of artificial intelligence in their weaponry. The developed solutions would not have been available from foreign vendors or would have resulted in the compromise of sensitive data. By developing those technologies in India, services have a large number of capabilities that would not have been possible otherwise.

Future-Ready through self-reliance

The focus is not on weapons and defence hardware alone. The Atma Nirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives are also covering niche, upcoming fields. The achievements of QNu labs are a prime example. The CEO of QNu Labs, Sunil Gupta says that his company is "working to solve the challenges of protecting the integrity and confidentiality of data and information by offering quantum-safe cybersecurity. The

product and solutions from QNu Labs can help mitigate data security risks across verticals such as defence, government, healthcare, financial institutions, and telecommunications to name a few.”

The company, incubated at IIT-Madras Research Park in 2016, is a testament to swift indigenous innovation that is presently burgeoning in the Indian military-industrial complex.

The government and services have provided extensive impetus for such solutions, and to such firms. Defence minister Rajnath Singh recently launched 75 artificial intelligence applications. The Indian Navy has recently decided to launch 75 challenges under iDEX for developing new and emerging capabilities- some of which are not offered by any country to India.

This programme has changed the landscape of innovation in the country. The confidence shown by the services in the domestic defence ecosystem is a result of the fast pace at which innovations are happening in the country. This is undoubtedly a result of policy initiatives taken by the government. Recently, the services decided to acquire 14 sets of new innovative technologies which Indian start-ups have developed in a very short period.

HAL breaking the vertical limit

State owned Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) has already established facilities for a rated production of 12 LCA per annum, with the help of private participation. It “is augmenting the current facilities to increase the capacity to 16 aircraft per annum from next year, 2023-24 onwards,” HAL official sources have confirmed. It is in a position to further enhance the rate of production up to 30 aircraft per annum for any additional operational requirements. It is also gearing up to manufacture for the international market as there is demand from many countries. The current pace of LCA production is as per the IAF’s roadmap for the aircraft. As and when required, the capacity could be enhanced further.

The company has designed and developed the Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) as a replacement helicopter for Cheetah/Chetak helicopters. The Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) was issued in February 2021 by the IAF and Army. Production of LUH has commenced, and the first of these was already produced in August 2022. The strength of HAL in helicopters is reflected by more than 200 IPs (patents, designs, etc.), which HAL has filed in the process of designing and developing these helicopters. The flexibility available with design means that HAL can meet users’ customised needs.

Noted Indian aerospace and defence analyst Girish Linganna highlighted that “yet another one of HAL’s famous fighters- the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas- has also been showing a stellar performance. Fitted with the indigenous Uttam AESA radar, it is giving strong competition to South Korea’s FA-50 fighter jet in the Royal Malaysian Air Force’s tender for acquiring LCA.

The superiority of Tejas is visible not just in its sophisticated radar (compared to FA-50’s mechanical radar) and ability to integrate the lethal BrahMos Air-to-Air missiles which its competitor cannot, but also in the strong backing provided by the Indian

industry and government.” He opined that this is a critical example of the strides Make in India initiative has made in the defence sector.

The new Make in India initiative in defence as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign is particularly strong in design. In fact, because of the indigenous technology development efforts, more than 2500 patent applications have been in the last few years, compared to previous years. In continuation of these efforts, it has now been decided to enhance industry-led design and development with 25 percent of the Defence R&D budget allocated to them.

While the Indian armed forces are now sourcing their requirements heavily from domestic sources, wherever the domestic capability does not exist, an effort is made to get the global OEM to manufacture the platform/equipment in India. An example is a recent decision to manufacture C-295 planes in India, collaborating with Airbus and Tata. Moreover, if economic viability for such production does not exist, the government also considers importing essential equipment from foreign OEMs. However, due to the growing defence industry ecosystem, such a situation has shown a progressively downward trend. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/atmanirbhar-bharat-indian-weapons-set-to-rule-the-roost/2662527/>

13. Indian Railways revenue up 38% to Rs 95,486.58 crore till August-end ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) September 11, 2022

The overall revenue of Indian Railways at the end of August 2022 was Rs 95,486.58 crore, showing an increase of Rs 26,271.29 crore or 38 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, an official statement said on Sunday.

The revenue from passenger traffic was Rs 25,276.54 crore, an increase of Rs 13,574.44 crore (116 per cent) year-on-year.

Passenger traffic also increased compared to last year in both the segments -- reserved and unreserved. The growth from the long distance reserved mail express trains has been sharper than the same in passenger and suburban trains, the Railways said.

The other coaching revenue stood at Rs 2,437.42 crore, higher by Rs 811.82 crore (50 per cent) over the corresponding period of last year.

This is being fuelled by robust growth in the parcel segment of Indian Railways, the statement added.

Goods revenue climbed by Rs 10,780.03 crore (or 20 per cent) to Rs 65,505.02 crore till August-end this year.

This has been achieved through incremental loading of more than 58 MT and 18 per cent growth in the net tonne-kilometers (NTKMs) during the period. Food grains, fertiliser, cement, mineral oil, container traffic and balance other goods segments have been important contributors in this growth, in addition to the coal transportation.

The sundry revenue was Rs 2,267.60 crore, showing an increase of Rs 1105 crore or 95 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, it added.

Railways' total revenue during the entire last fiscal (2021-22) stood at Rs 1,91,278.29 crore. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-railways-revenue-up-38-to-rs-95-486-58-crore-till-august-end-122091100739_1.html

14. Direct tax mop-up jumps 35.5% to Rs 6.48 trillion in FY23: Govt ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) September 9, 2022

The provisional gross direct tax collections for FY23 till September 8 stood at Rs 6.48 trillion, which is 35.5 per cent higher than the same period last year, the Finance Ministry said in a statement on Friday.

“Direct tax collections, net of refunds, stand at Rs 5.29 trillion, which is 30.2 per cent higher than the net collections for the corresponding period of last year, the ministry said, adding that this was 37.2 per cent of the net direct tax Budget Estimate for FY23.

The ministry said refunds amounting to Rs 1.19 trillion have been issued till September 8 this fiscal year, 65.3 per cent higher than the refunds issued for the same period in FY22.

Net corporate tax and personal income tax collections, after adjusting for refunds, grew 32.7 per cent and 28.3 per cent refunds, respectively, the statement said.

Weeks earlier, Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman Nitin Gupta had told Business Standard that gross direct tax collection as on August 30 stood at Rs 4.8 trillion, 33 per cent more than the Rs 3.6 trillion collected in the same period last year.

Gupta said if the trend continued, the direct tax collection for FY23 could exceed the Budget target of Rs 14.20 trillion. Of the target, Rs 7.2 trillion is expected from corporate tax and Rs 7 trillion from taxes on various incomes, including personal income tax and securities transaction tax.

The Centre is counting primarily on healthy direct and indirect tax collection this year to maintain its FY23 fiscal deficit target of 6.4 per cent of GDP at a time when its subsidy and welfare spending commitments have increased due to inflationary pressures and supply-chain disruptions caused by the war in Europe.

Goods and services tax collections in August remained above Rs 1.4 trillion for the sixth month in a row.

"As the economy continues to recover from the Covid downturn, the efforts at nudging tax-payers to better compliance through a combination of technology intervention and data reporting are paying off, and tax collections continue on their upward trajectory," said Rohinton Sidhwa, Partner, Deloitte India. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/at-rs-6-48-trillion-direct-tax-collection-35-5-higher-yoy-govt-122090901155_1.html

15. 19 loss-making CPSEs returned to profit in FY21, shows govt data ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) September 11, 2022

Chennai Petroleum Corp (CPCL), Western Coalfields (WCL), and National Fertilizers (NFL) are among 19 central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) that returned to profit in FY21 from loss, data from the Public Sector Enterprises Survey 2020-21 shows.

Of the 19 PSUs belonging to industries, such as refinery, fertilisers, financial services, industrial and consumer goods, eight reported losses for two consecutive financial years preceding FY21.

The majority of CPSEs returning from loss to profit were from industrial and consumer goods sectors, such as Sambhar Salts, Hindustan Salts, Andrew Yule & Company, and Cement Corporation of India. There was an increase in the turnover and revenue backed by a fall in the expenditure of these CPSEs.

The salt manufacturing units of Sambhar Salts were able to leverage the favourable market conditions and accordingly the salt prices were increased, which, along with effective cost-cutting measures, contributed towards better performance.

The strong growth in cement consumption amid the pandemic is believed to have helped Cement Corporation of India make profit as labour availability in rural India aided growth in construction of rural infrastructure and low-cost housing. Andrew Yule & Company saw an increase in the net sales of tea and foreign earnings.

However, despite reporting profit over Rs 200 crore each, CPCL, WCL, and NFL registered a fall in their revenue. The profit was mainly on account of reduced expenditure. CPCL reduced its total expenses by 21 per cent, NFL by 10.45 per cent, and WCL 5.84 per cent.

Making a case for privatisation of more CPSEs, the FY20 Economic Survey mentioned that privatised CPSEs have performed better than their peers in terms of net worth, profit, return on equity, return on assets (RoA), and sales, among others. "The RoA and net profit margin turned around from negative to positive surpassing that of the peer firms which indicates that privatised CPSEs have been able to generate more wealth from the same resources," the survey said.

The total gross revenue of 255 operating CPSEs during FY21 was Rs 24.26 trillion against Rs 24.58 trillion in the previous year, showing a decrease of 1.30 per cent. Operating CPSEs does not cover those CPSEs that are either under construction or under liquidation or closure.

This decline in gross revenue in FY21 was largely due to the decline in the petroleum (refinery & marketing), transport & logistics services & crude oil CPSEs. At the sector level, the manufacturing, processing, and generation sector accounted for the maximum share (65.43 per cent) of gross revenue from operations in FY21, followed by services (25.75 per cent), mining & exploration (8.77 per cent), and agriculture (0.05 per cent).

Of the 255 operational CPSEs, as many as 177 recorded net profit and 77 recorded net loss. Food Corporation of India reported no profit or loss.

The aggregate net profit of profit-making CPSEs rose by 37.53 per cent to Rs 1.9 trillion in FY21 compared to Rs 1.4 trillion in the previous year. Among the profit-making CPSEs, the top five CPSEs accounted for 41.11 per cent of aggregate net profit comprising Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, and NTPC.

The aggregate loss of loss-making PSUs declined by 29.85 per cent to Rs 31,058 crore in FY21 against Rs 44,277 crore in the previous year. This reduction in loss is mainly due to a decline of loss in Bharat Sanchar Nigam (51.91 per cent), Rashtriya Ispat Nigam (79.82 per cent), Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemicals (92.31 per cent), and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam (33.38 per cent).

TOP FIVE CPSEs THAT TURNED PROFITABLE IN FY21

(In ₹ cr)

CPSEs	FY20	FY21
National Fertilizers	-171.01	249.63
Chennai Petroleum Corp	-2,077.58	237.56
Western Coalfields	-528.28	234.29
Hindustan Copper	-569.35	109.98
National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corp	-1.28	23.59

Source: Public Enterprise Survey, FY21

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/19-loss-making-cpses-returned-to-profit-in-fy21-shows-govt-data-122091100250_1.html

16. The gap widens ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) September 10, 2022

The Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme has been a constant source of criticism, with many arguing that the measures are flawed. Be that as it may, the fact is that in the absence of a more accurate measurement, the HDI gives a reasonable picture of the average achievement of a country in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, education and a decent standard of living. It is calculated using four indicators—life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, and the gross national income per capita. In that context, the latest HDI, for 2021, published on Thursday, is a disappointment for India as the country has dropped two ranks, to 132 out of 191 countries. India's HDI value stood at 0.633 during 2021, which was lower than the world average of 0.732. India registered a decline in its HDI score for two consecutive years for the first time in three decades.

There is of course some merit in the argument that the drop in score is in line with the global trend since the outbreak of Covid-19, during which 90% of the countries have fallen backward in human development. The period has also seen other crises such

as the Russia-Ukraine war and environmental challenges, as a result of which human development globally has stalled for the first time in 32 years. It is also a fact that India has achieved a satisfactory improvement in life expectancy—according to a World Health Organization report, the average age in the country has increased from 47 years in 1970 to over 71 years in 2021.

There's more. Though the pandemic exacerbated gender inequality, which increased 6.7% globally, India has shown a slight improvement in its gender inequality index value in the latest HDI report as compared to the 2020 index (0.490 vs 0.493), after gender inequality worsened between 2019 and 2020 (0.486 vs 0.493).

So why did India slip in the HDI ranking? The answer perhaps has been best summed up by UNDP Resident Representative Shoko Nada who said the drop in ranking doesn't mean that "India didn't do well, but other countries did better". That's probably the reason why India remains consistently below even Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka on human development parameters. There is thus no doubt that sustained efforts have to be made to improve the human development indicators. A central government-led programme is not the answer, and there is no getting away from partnerships between the Centre and states for need-based implementation of development schemes. In a fractious polity, that spirit of cooperation is missing. For example, Indian youth need jobs for improving the quality of their lives and the management of skill programmes has to be decentralised at the district level. Creating opportunities for diversification of livelihoods can't be done by a diktat from Delhi; all states need to have a buy-in. Similarly, despite some improvements, nutrition experts have repeatedly said that India has one of the highest burdens of malnutrition in the world. The Global Hunger Index (2020)—which is calculated on the basis of total undernourishment of the population, child stunting, wasting and child mortality—places India at the 94th spot among 107 countries. There is a need to address gaps and inefficiencies in the present setup through public awareness, community engagement and empowerment. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/the-gap-widens/2661767/>