

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (31.08.2022)

1. The Long(er) Ukraine War: Lessons for the Indo-Pacific (orfonline.org) AUG 31 2022

The Russia-Ukraine war has upended many paradigms, among them the belief that a modern-day war will be sharp and swift. That it has carried on, at the time of writing this brief, for six months and shows no signs of ending, needs to be examined by all militaries of the world.

After a first phase that ended the possibility of the conflict being a quick affair, it has devolved into a grinding war of attrition that is playing out primarily on land. It is difficult to predict its course or character, and expert verdicts given over the past couple of months have proved inadequate. What is certain is that the war has led to significant geopolitical turmoil and realignments. This brief focuses on the military lessons it offers for China, India, and the United States, all three of which, in different circumstances, could find themselves involved in a military conflict.

The war is fairly unique in that the two adversaries have roughly similar levels of technological capability. Ukraine may be far smaller than Russia in population and economic capacity, but from the military point of view, it has a similar profile, often using the same kind of equipment. Yet, Ukraine's estrangement from Russia beginning in 2014 has also provided it with an important injection of Western equipment and military training.

A crucial feature of modern war revealed by the Ukraine-Russia conflict has been the massive availability of open-source intelligence based on social media posts, smartphone photos, commercial drone videos, and satellite imagery, all reporting on the battles almost in real-time. Combined with the more sophisticated equipment available to the militaries, it suggests that the battlefield has become dangerously transparent, making it easier to target forces and disrupt logistics. However, there remain issues with the quality of communications equipment and its vulnerability to interception and hacking.

In the early months of the war, there were several instances of Russia threatening to use nuclear weapons if third parties got involved. While it would later temper its nuclear rhetoric, perhaps a bottom-line lesson for many countries will be about the importance of nuclear weapons in deterring the aggression of larger and stronger powers. In 1994, Ukraine became one of three former Soviet republics (other than Kazakhstan and Belarus) that gave up nuclear weapons in exchange for a commitment that it would get immediate assistance from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the event of aggression. The problem is that one of the signatories of the memorandum was Russia, which is also a permanent member of the UNSC.

The Two Phases of the War

The war has so far had two broad phases. Phase I began when the Russian military invaded four main fronts in Ukraine on 24 February 2022—two of them towards Kyiv, one towards Kharkiv, and a southern front from Crimea towards Odessa. The Russian military failed in its campaign to swiftly decapitate the Ukrainian leadership by a strike

on the first day through Hostomel's Antonov airport, 10 km north-west of Kyiv. The airport was swiftly captured by Russian Special Forces. Forces from Belarus in the north reached it on 25 February and tried to move towards Kyiv. Then began the contest, with teams of Ukrainian forces using their familiarity with the land and employing American Javelin and NLAWS missiles, as well as a combination of drones and artillery, and employing hit-and-run tactics. The Russians dug in, but their forces, backed up in a 60-km-long convoy, were unable to take their artillery and other support equipment forward. (In spring and summer the terrain in that part of the world becomes muddy, preventing the off-road movement of vehicles and even tanks.) A month later, the Russians were forced to retreat and focus their effort in south-east Ukraine, employing different tactics.

In this phase, the inability of the Russians to establish air superiority also became obvious. They could not cope with the Ukrainian response using Stinger man-portable missiles and S-300 SAM systems. Neither could they counter the Ukrainian use of drones for surveillance, electronic jamming, and attacks Russia responded with cruise and ballistic missile strikes. Though these strikes were resorted to following its inability to achieve air superiority, they have been highly effective and destructive. The Russians have used missiles such as the Kaliber, Kh59 and KH 101, the ground-based Tochka and the Iskander short-range missiles, and even the Kinzhal hypersonic missile. As the war stretched, the Russians found themselves running short of some of these systems. A further burden for them has been the difficulty in acquiring many key components used in these missiles, because of Western sanctions.

Perhaps more important in this phase was the cyber war between Russia and Ukraine. At the outset, the Russians hacked the commercial US Viasat satellite used by Ukraine for its communications. In response, Western countries rallied behind Ukraine, and in a systematic action involving intelligence agencies and private players, have been supporting Ukraine in maintaining its military communications and degrading the Russian ones, while boosting Ukraine's ability to project its side of the conflict to the world. The US's Space X Starlink system played a significant role: it quickly provided Ukraine with resilient and reliable means of communication.

Phase II of the war has been different. The Russians regrouped in the Donetsk and Luhansk fronts (the Donbas region) and launched a slow and systematic campaign using superior artillery-based firepower to make incremental advances. The Russians also made effective use of drones and electronic warfare. They had already seized territory in the south in the opening days of the war; yet they learnt another series of lessons in urban warfare that saw them take three months to capture Mariupol. Thereafter redeploying their forces, they advanced through sheer attrition to capture the cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk in early July, suffering heavy losses, but imposing similar costs on the Ukrainians, too. The pace of advance was excruciatingly slow, more akin to the First World War. This was mainly an army battle with air forces being reluctant to fly low to provide support because both sides had strong air defences over their respective fronts. Once again, it is not clear why the larger Russian air force was not able to dominate.

What the closing stage of the Donbas battle revealed was the importance of long-range precision firing artillery. US and European equipment like the HIMARS multiple rocket system and the M777 155 mm howitzer and Caesar 155mm artillery systems,

though available to Ukraine only in limited numbers, were able to make a mark on the battlefield. They compelled the Russians to alter their tactics. By mid-August 2022, the war appeared to have reached a stalemate, with both sides entrenching themselves in World War I-style defences in the eastern and southern parts of the country. There is sporadic heavy fighting in the east. In the south, there has been talk of a Ukrainian offensive, but nothing has happened so far.

What is notable is the possible rise of partisans aided by Ukrainian Special Forces in the south. There had been earlier reports of partisan attacks in the Kherson region, but more significant developments have occurred in the Crimean peninsula that the Russians seized from Ukraine in 2014. One of the attacks devastated the Saki Russian airbase, a large ammunition depot in Maiske, and another airfield. These have given Ukrainians a psychological boost.

Lessons for the US

There are many lessons that the US could learn from the war. First of all, it needs to reflect on whether it can fight a war of attrition with a near-peer adversary. In recent times, American war tactics have involved high-tech capabilities—wielded by a highly trained professional force—to undertake quick and decisive campaigns, defeating the adversary with minimum casualties. It has fought long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but after their initial phase, those were low-intensity conflicts with poorly armed adversaries.

From the military point of view, the Ukraine war has reinforced for the US the importance of long-range precision fires—which go back to its first Gulf war in 1990. Today it is readying the next generation of the precision-strike missiles, the extended range cannon artillery system and the mid-range capability MRC missile to maintain its advantage in taking out enemy targets from standoff distances. The US Army Futures Command is focusing on six lines of modernisation: long-range precision fires, next-gen combat vehicles, future vertical lift, network air and missile defence, and soldier lethality.

The Ukraine war is also helping the US to refine its decade-old Mission Command Concept aimed at decentralising command and control by having all levels of its army involved in coordinating and executing decision-making in combat situations. Along with an emphasis on better logistics and total networking, this will lead to dispersed command and control which will yet have the ability to exercise unified combat power. This is closely linked to the cyber capabilities of the forces at all levels. The US is supplementing this with lessons from Ukraine, such as the use of drones in combination with electronic warfare to track frontline troops of adversaries, and conversely, reducing the electronic footprint of its own forces.

This process of change had begun earlier with the US seeing the need to evolve technologies and tactics to overcome the Chinese A2/AD challenge in the western Pacific region. The Ukraine war has provided further lessons. The US is not unaware that in a potential conflict with China over Taiwan or the South China Sea, it will confront a different order of challenges as compared to those China will face.

Back in 2018, within months of the onset of the US-China tariff war, then President Donald Trump had ordered an assessment of US defence manufacturing and

industrial base resiliency. The study found serious deterioration of US capabilities and a “surprising level of foreign dependence on competitor nations.” Many sectors continued to move critical capabilities offshore to obtain competitive pricing and access to foreign markets. Even at that time, the US had noted the “re-emergence of long term strategic competition” from Russia and China.

Many of the trends initiated by the trade war and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic have underlined the importance of resiliency in supply chains and of near-shoring and friend-shoring critical materials and components.

Lessons for China

There is no doubt that Beijing will be studying the Ukraine war closely, especially in the context of what is known as the “Taiwan contingency”. There is an argument that politically, the Ukraine invasion could be tempting China to make a similar move towards Taiwan. Following Ukraine’s robust response, however, the cautious Chinese must also be realising the hazards of such an undertaking.

Despite its experience of combat in diverse areas such as Chechnya, Syria, Ukraine (in 2014, when it captured Crimea), and Georgia, in the last two decades, the Russian military has faltered in Ukraine in 2022. China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is inexperienced and a high-intensity resistance by Taiwan could lead to failure, especially as Beijing will have a far more difficult task than Russia, since it will be launching an operation across a 180-km-wide strait. A military failure would be politically disastrous for the Communist Party of China.

Even so, Beijing may attribute the Russian failure to take Kyiv by a blitzkrieg to hubris: It could convince itself that the real failure was in the Kremlin’s political assessment that the Ukrainians would collapse at the first sign of approach of the Russian military. By the same measure, it may underestimate the determination and the capacity of Taiwan to impose huge costs on the PLA if it tried to land on the island, and then resist it in the forests and mountains of the country. If China has its attack plans, so does Taiwan have for its defence.

An important Chinese imperative will be to prevent any Western re-supply to Taiwan in the event of war. However, this would inevitably draw it into direct conflict with the US and, possibly, Japan. Like Ukraine, Taiwan is not a treaty ally of the US. Taiwan is a more valuable component of the global economy than Ukraine, and has greater strategic importance to the US and its allies in East Asia. There is sufficient ambiguity about a possible US response to warrant caution on China’s part.

Finally, there is an important difference between the Taiwan and Ukraine situations. In the case of the latter, the Russians have successfully “othered” the Ukrainians as “neo-Nazis” and have had no hesitation in destroying cities and causing considerable civilian casualties. Whether the Chinese would be able to do the same with people they claim are their own, mainly Han Chinese, is an important consideration.

India and the War

The Ukraine war has important lessons for India as well in relation to its two potential adversaries—China and Pakistan. India’s military seems to be well aware of this. The Indian Army has already conducted an exercise, called Skylight, to apply the lessons

learnt from its detailed study of the cyber and electromagnetic aspects of the Ukraine war.

India has used its Special Forces in previous wars to conduct special operations, often behind enemy lines. What needs further study is the manner in which Ukraine used its special forces in the first phase of the war in hunter-killer teams, aided by drones and portable anti-tank missiles, to knock out Russian armour. No doubt such an effort depends on the terrain and the circumstances; it would be worth examining if India could employ similar tactics in specific areas. Another issue is that the larger conduct of a modern large-scale combined arms operation requires highly skilled and motivated personnel—whether as cyber warriors, operators of sophisticated sensors and communication equipment, or even as ordinary soldiers operating tactically in urban warfare. This is obviously not something that the Agniveer kind of military recruit can handle.

In the context of a possible future war in the Himalaya, the Indian military is in the process of shifting its doctrinal perspective. The operational directive of the 1980s called for “dissuasive defence” in relation to China, which meant adopting a strong defensive posture for deterrence. Lately, however, the Army has allotted two strike corps to its holdings along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It suggests that the doctrine has changed and the Army is now preparing for the possibility of launching offensive operations across the LAC, if required.

In China’s doctrinal perspective, tactical and operational offence is an intrinsic feature of its “strategic defence”. As its 2015 White Paper on military strategy notes, “integrated combat forces will be employed to prevail in system-vs-system operations featuring information dominance, precision strikes and joint operations.”

All this has implications for how India should prepare for any conflict with China—a conflict whose geographic space can be Tibet or part of Xinjiang on the Chinese side, and eastern and northern India on the Indian. The last war India fought with China ended when the latter achieved its military objectives, ceased fire, and returned to its starting points, except in Ladakh. Being a permanent member of the UNSC, China has the power to veto any UN-sponsored move to mandate a ceasefire.

What a Longer War Could Mean

In a panel discussion in July, Prof. Stephen Rosen of Harvard University speculated on the consequences of a Ukraine-like scenario involving China and India where the former’s effort at a quick victory stalemates into a longer war of attrition. This would require a larger stockpile of consumable military supplies, ranging from ammunition to fuel and food. It would also call for more capacity to train additional forces.

The Indian military paradigm, based on the 2009 Operational Directive, was to be sufficiently prepared “to fight on both fronts simultaneously a war at 30 days (intense) and 60 days (normal) rates.” This essentially meant the stocking of ‘war wastage reserves’ (WWR) of ammunition and spares for this period. Soon after, this was modified to stock for 20 days of intense fighting and in reality is down to just 10 days. Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) reports in 2015 and 2017 were sharply critical of the Ministry of Defence’s procurement and storage of ammunition for the armed forces. The 2017 report noted that while there had been some

improvement, ammunition for tanks and artillery were “under critical level”. A stock of 61 types of ammunition out of a total of 152 types was available for just 10 days.

After 2017, the C&AG stopped making its defence reports public. However, a media report in December 2020 said that the Indian Army would now stock ammunition for 15 days of intense fighting instead of 10. Since stocks have dwindled it will take time to reach the appropriate level.

Since 2019, China has been increasing its forces in Tibet and Xinjiang, both with relevance to India. It is sharply improving its air defence posture by positioning new SAM systems, as well as building billets to position its forces closer to the LAC. It is building heliports and augmenting its facilities in existing air fields. This is in addition to the upgrade of the PLA’s logistics capabilities to enable “a more rapid movement of troops, weaponry and equipment.”

India has strong defences across the Himalaya with troops well dug in and supported by artillery, including the American M777. Any attacker will face a formidable challenge. However, the mountain terrain on the Indian side imposes its own difficulties. Roads, already prone to landslides, are easy to disrupt, and mobile artillery will not easily be able to ‘shoot and scoot’ that easily. The Indian military will also have to consider the Chinese ability to strike fixed infrastructure targets such as ammunition depots and railway and road bridges, as well as its capacity to disable fragile mountain communications using precision-guided cruise and ballistic missiles. It will need to conceal and diversify logistics routes, as well as storage of missiles, variable time fuses and sensitive ammunition that require air conditioning. It must also ensure that ammunition factories can surge their production in quick time. India may need to make substantive investments in helicopters for logistics, as well as lateral movement of forces in the mountain areas.

The issue of long-range precision strikes by missiles is important since India’s principal cities such as New Delhi are a mere 400 km from Tibet, while mainland Chinese cities like Beijing or Shanghai are 3,000-4,000 km away. China has a vast arsenal of highly accurate medium- and short-range missiles. Table 1 gives an estimate of the development of Chinese land-based conventional missiles. In terms of sheer numbers, the Chinese force has “reshaped the security landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.”

It was therefore no surprise that Japan has announced that not only would it sharply increase its military spending, but that it would acquire 1,000 long-range land, air and sea-based missiles that would be deployed in the Nansei islands and Kyushu. Currently, Japan has no long-range missiles. The issue has gained salience since China launched ballistic missiles into waters near Okinawa as a fallout of the visit of the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.

Table 1. Estimated Number of Launchers in China's Land-based Missile Forces

Missile Type	Range (km)	DoD 2010 Estimate	IISS 2010 Estimate	DoD 2020 Estimate	IISS 2020 Estimate
IRBM	3,000-5,500	0	0	200	72
MRBM*	1,000-3,000	75-85	36	150	94
SRBM	300-1,000	210-250	204	250	189
GLCM	>1,500	40-55	54	100	70

Equally important for India are lessons from the Ukraine-Russia conflict relating to information warfare. Ukraine was able to respond quickly to the Russian cyber-warfare challenge and prevent any large-scale disruption of its communications or electricity grids. It could not have achieved what it did without the assistance of the US and its IT giants such as Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Space X, as well as its Western Europe allies with whom it has been associating closely since 2014. India has a large IT sector but needs to plan in advance for a coordinated response to any Chinese challenge. It will need an army of hackers and cyber defenders. This is a battle that begins even before the guns begin to fire. Producing some 1.5 million software engineers every year, India has no lack of IT workers, but nurturing and effectively employing specialised talent is not easy.

A prolonged conventional war takes much greater effort to fight and requires a sustained, unified approach. As of today, India's levels of WWR are not known, but clearly would be inadequate for a Ukraine-like scenario, especially if war unfolds across two fronts. Indeed, ground experience has shown that in wartime, munitions tend to get used up at even faster rates than projected. Besides meeting its own WWR targets, the government would be advised to devise a protocol for its munitions-producing plants, which could enable a quick ramp up of production if needed.

The military and its associated organisations may be able to cope with short and quick wars, but a longer battle of attrition will invariably strain physical and human resources. Planning for longer wars also requires attention to be paid to replenishment of skilled personnel at all levels of the military and as noted earlier, the Agnipath scheme is not the way to go.

Ukraine saw extensive partisan warfare when it was occupied by Germany during the Second World War. During the current conflict, there have been reports of partisan activity in some of the southern regions of the country. Any future Russian occupation of Ukrainian-speaking areas could well see such forces play a role again.

In the mid-1960s, India created the Special Services Bureau (SSB) which is now transformed into the Shastra Seema Bal. The SSB was created as a "stay behind" force which would launch partisan warfare if the PLA captured large tracts of Himalayan territory. It trained villagers in small arms and hoped to use them to bolster its activities. The force was also created to promote a sense of national belonging among residents of high mountain areas. New Delhi could consider reviving the old SSB.

The Nuclear Danger

Unlike in the Ukraine-Russia war, where Ukraine is non-nuclear, Indo-Pacific adversaries—India-China, India-Pakistan, or China-US—are all nuclear weapons powers. The danger of a long drawn-out, attritional war in this region, featuring long-range rocket strikes, is that it can easily slide into a nuclear conflict.

Take the India-China scenario. India had separated its weapons' assembly and nuclear cores, the former being held in Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) facilities, the latter by the Department of Atomic Energy. Today, however, with the undersea deterrent being shaped, and land-mobile missiles being canisterised, the clear distinction can no longer be maintained, as warheads need to be fully assembled and stored.

Given the requirements of keeping nuclear weapons secure, their storage sites are relatively easy to detect. They have to be co-located in military facilities where the requisite security—far more stringent than for other weapons systems—can be provided. Their road-mobile container trucks also have to be protected, as these could be detected and taken out by Chinese surveillance satellites and drone combinations. Even in a non-nuclear, long-drawn conflict, Chinese precision-guided conventionally armed missiles aimed at Indian military and logistical facilities could inadvertently destroy a significant portion of the Indian nuclear arsenal. This could set up a “use it or lose it” dilemma for India.

In an India-Pakistan war, the scenario would be similar, with Indian conventional and missile strikes potentially threatening Pakistan's nuclear storage facilities and presenting them with a “use it or lose it” scenario. All countries possessing nuclear weapons and involved in a conventional war, need to work out ways of avoiding nuclear escalation, which could end up in destruction beyond any rational political calculation.[a]

Conclusion

The Ukraine war has not ended and many of the observations made in this brief are tentative. War is a harsh teacher, after all. Each war brings with it its own lessons, whereby some old principles that no longer work are quickly discarded and new ones discovered.

The job of militaries, especially in peacetime, is to study conflicts, draw lessons, and test them in exercises. Often, the lessons from a war help reinforce some ongoing plans and dispense with others. New developments sometimes occur, calling for a shift in the way the forces are organised, trained, equipped and employed.

Several tentative military lessons from the current war have been outlined— the importance of combat leadership skills in large-scale combined arms operations, the value of logistics and training, the need to disperse command and control at every echelon in the increasingly transparent battle-space. The design of tanks and their self-protection suites, the role of drones in offence and defence, the rising salience of urban warfare in a world that is rapidly urbanising, the importance of modern long-range precision artillery and battlefield rocket systems—all need to be reconsidered and evaluated. Separate lessons need to be drawn from the human failures of this

war, arising out of poor planning, logistics, low combat readiness and inefficient use of equipment.

The key lesson, however, is that while most assumptions of modern conventional conflict scenarios spoke of short, sharp wars, the Russia-Ukraine war has shown that this need not necessarily be the case. This has enormous consequences for the war preparations that all military services make. It relates to military industrial capacity, supply chain resiliency, as well as training of soldiers, logistics, provisioning for the battlefield, and building the stamina the system needs to see through such a war. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-longer-ukraine-war/>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

2. Telangana High Court orders probe into misuse of TSTCDC funds ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) Aug 31, 2022

HYDERABAD: A division bench of Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the Vigilance Commissioner to investigate the alleged misuse of Rs 234.69 crore funds of Telangana State Tourism and Culture Development Corporation (TSTDC).

The bench, comprising Chief Justice Ujjal Bhuyan and Justice C V Bhaskar Reddy, was hearing a PIL filed by political activist Bakka Judson, seeking an investigation into the misuse of public funds.

The division bench also ordered the High Court registry to assign the PIL a normal number.

Petitioner's attorney Sharath Kumar informed the court that nine private companies, which signed a Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement with the Tourism Department, were entrusted with the responsibility of developing 13 projects -- to build, operate and transfer, across the State. These companies were also given the right to lease out priceless government lands in order to construct tourism projects on the lands.

According to a GO, these private firms are required to pay the lease rental and additional development premium for the lands assigned to them, but these corporations have casually disregarded the Rs 234.69 crore in payment money due to the government.

The private companies have generated crores of rupees by using the government land on which they built the projects. The government has also decided to waive off the amount, which is taxpayers' money, he added.

According to the Accountant General's Audit Report for the financial year 2020-21, the Ocean Park Multitech (P) Ltd, Hyderabad Trade Expo (P) Ltd, Jubilee Hills Resorts & Hotels Ltd, Jalavihar Entertainment (P) Ltd, Secunderabad Golf Course, Prasad Media Corporation, Pantaloon Retail (India) Ltd, and GSG Constructions Private Limited have a total outstanding debt of Rs 234.69 crore, including interest.

According to Special Government Pleader (SGP) Sanjeev Kumar, all the lands that were allocated to these corporations are under the PPP mode, and all of their dealings with the government are contractual in nature. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/telangana/2022/aug/31/telangana-high-court-ordersprobe-into-misuse-of-tstcdc-funds-2493231.html>

3. Mamata Govt Ignores Fishermen in Coastal Zone Plan despite Adverse CAG Report ([newslick.in](https://www.newslick.in)) Aug 31, 2022

The Mamata Banerjee government has allegedly left out large sections of fishing communities from a public hearing held on August 23 to discuss a coastal zone management plan (CZMP) for Purba Medinipur district despite an August 8 Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report pulling up the Centre for its poor track record in conserving the fragile ecology of the country's shoreline.

The public hearing was held allegedly without being adequately publicised even as local communities of the coastal district were grappling with the ravages of a cyclone that hit the North Indian Ocean just days before August 23.

The tropical cyclone triggered widespread rainfall in the coastal villages of Purba Midnapore inundating low-lying agricultural fields. Villages like Chamasuli, Dakshin Purushottampur, Dadanpatrabar and Mandarmoni, where locals rely primarily on fishing and farming for livelihood, were the most affected from the incessant rains.

"Fishing was halted for several days, seasonal vegetables grown by farmers were damaged due to flood and there was no electricity supply for more than three days. We were trying to save our lives and livelihood from the wrath of the rains," Srikanta Das, a leading fisher in Dadanpatrabar, a major fish-landing centre in Purba Medinipur, tells Newslick.

Das alleges that "no notices regarding the public hearing were published in local newspapers popular" in the villages. "We could neither read any online notice issued by the government regarding the hearing as Internet was inaccessible due to the outage," he adds.

In a letter addressed to the district administration on August 26, the Purba Medinipur Matsyajibi Forum wrote that cognisance should have been taken of the inclement weather in the region around a fortnight ago before going ahead with the public hearing, which is mandatory under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019.

The Forum alleges that it learnt about the public hearing only on August 24 because a notice was posted only on the West Bengal's environment department's website. The Forum has demanded further extension of the deadline for inviting suggestions and recommendations and a fresh public hearing before approving the draft plan for 2019.

"The public notice posted on the environment department's website was in the English, which is still alien to the majority of fishermen. A public consultation held without engaging the fishing communities is absolutely non-inclusive and infructuous," says

Debasish Shyamal, of the National Platform for Small-Scale Fish Workers, a Kolkata-headquartered trade union of fishermen communities.

As per the CRZ Notification, 2019, a state government is required to give “wide publicity” to the draft CZMP of any district before proceeding with a public hearing so as to receive suggestions and recommendations from all stakeholders. Fishermen alleged in the past that Purba Medinipur’s earlier CZMP, which had been published subsequent to CRZ Notification, 2011, had not adequately demarcated all fishing villages and fish-landing centres.

However, the district administration refuted these allegations and claimed that, at least, 50 project-affected individuals attended the public hearing, conducted by the West Bengal Coastal Zone Management Authority and the Institute of Environmental Studies and Wetland Management, an organisation under the environment department that prepares draft CZMPs for the state.

“The draft CZMP map was sent to every block headquarter of Purba Medinipur in advance for circulation among the local villages. The map was also adequately publicised on various forums, including newspapers,” a senior official of the district administration tells Newsclick.

The weather disturbance prior to the public hearing, the official adds, was “applicable to all stakeholders. Individuals and families concerned about the CZMP attended the meeting. There was a good attendance of project-affected people”.

Notably, the Trinamool Congress government is also constructing a coastal road in Purba Medinipur which will connect the tourist destinations of Digha and Mandarmoni despite the opposition from fishermen, whose livelihood concerns have been allegedly grossly disregarded before going ahead with the project.

Amid questions regarding whether the West Bengal government took CRZ clearance for the marine drive project, the CAG report has highlighted several instances where such clearances were given by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) despite inadequacies in the manner in which the project proponents had conducted mandatory environment impact assessment studies.

“Preaudit studies conducted to understand the risks in coastal zone management revealed that there were large-scale CRZ violation in the coastal stretches. Incidence of illegal construction activities (reducing coastal space), effluent discharge from local bodies, industries and aquaculture farms have been recorded from various data sources,” the report reveals.

The audit reveals that, at least, 21 projects in which consultants appointed by the project proponent were either non-accredited or not accredited for the specific sector were cleared by the MoEFCC.

As many as 12 projects used baseline data outdated by 2-11 years in their respective proposals but got approval. These include a 35-km-long coastal road project from Princess Flyover to Worli, Mumbai, approved by the Narendra Modi government in 2017 and the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Sea Link project of the Mumbai Metropolitan

Region Development Authority cleared by the United Progressive Alliance government in 2013.

The audit further reveals that in 14 CRZ clearances, the environment impact studies had not only failed to identify the inventory of biodiversity in the area but had also not included mitigation measures to protect the flora and fauna affected by the project. As many as 16 clearances were given despite the projects in question either lacking disaster management plans or not specifically addressing disasters.

A project for the redevelopment of an edible oil terminal belonging to Ruchi Infrastructure Limited in Chennai was cleared in 2018 though no disaster management plan was in place despite the area being prone to cyclone and floods. A mini-bulk carriers handling facility of the Kolkata Port Trust in West Bengal was cleared in 2017 without a disaster management plan despite the area being a “severe intensity seismic zone”.

In 13 instances, CRZ clearances were accorded to projects where activities forming part of mitigation plans—like mangrove conservation, replantation, biodiversity conservation plan or rain water harvesting systems—were not included in the respective environment management plans. The ministry had left it upon the project proponents to carry out these mitigation plans. But the audit reveals that the MoEFCC had failed to verify whether the project proponents had implemented the mitigation measures.

The ministry had cleared 11 proposals in which the proponent didn’t carry out cumulative impact assessment studies of the respective projects on local environment and ecology.

In three instances, CRZ clearances were provided without making any effort to ascertain the veracity of data furnished by private consultants. The ministry had “merely relied on the information submitted by the project proponent with respect to potential ecological risks due to the project activities”, the report states.

In five cases, the CAG found deficiencies in the manner in which public hearing was conducted for the projects. These include the High-Speed Railway Corridor of the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited, which passes through Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Maharashtra, cleared by the MoEFCC in 2019.

In two projects—Mumbai Manmad Pipeline Project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited in Maharashtra and the Cochin Residential Development Project of TRIF Kochi Projects in Kerala—the ministry had granted CRZ clearance in 2015 and 2016, respectively, without factoring in the consideration that these were located near eco-sensitive zones of protected areas.

As per the report, there were 20 instances in which State Coastal Zone Management Authorities granted clearances by exceeding their own powers and sidelining mandatory approval from statutory bodies like the National Board for Wild Life. In 46 instances, CRZ clearances were granted despite the project proponent not submitting mandatory documents like environment impact assessment reports, disaster

management reports, risk assessment reports, CRZ maps or no-objection certificates from concerned state Pollution Control Boards.

The Modi government, the report finds, had even modified the CRZ Notification, 2011, to allow construction of a coastal road in Mumbai by the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation in 2017 and a memorial of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Nariman Point in Mumbai in December 2014.

“There were cases where the MoEF&CC amended the CRZ notification to facilitate approval of individual projects. These modifications were made without conducting any technical studies on the repercussions of the same to ecosystems and impacted the entire coastline ... As such, the process of grant of clearances for setting up projects could not ensure fully that the proposed projects would not have a detrimental impact on the coastal ecology,” the audit report states. <https://www.newsclick.in/Mamata-Govt-Ignores-Fishermen-Coastal-Zone-Plan-Despite-Adverse-CAG-Report>

4. Delhi L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena flags ‘delay’ in audit at Delhi govt universities ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) Aug 31, 2022

Amid the ongoing tussle between the BJP and AAP, Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has opened a new front, flagging an alleged delay in audit of accounts of universities under the Delhi Government.

Saxena sought explanations from the Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University (DPSRU) within 15 days over “delaying the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit for five years along with details of officers responsible for this lapse”.

Saxena is the chancellor of all state universities in Delhi.

Officials in the L-G house said, “Recently, disposing of a file in his capacity as the Chancellor for audit of accounts of the DPSRU for five years between 2015-16 and 2020-21 by the CAG, the L-G expressed serious concerns over the undue delay in conduct of audit of the university.”

Officials also said the L-G has come across “serious and continuous procedural lapses” on part of the state universities in Delhi and has taken serious note of it.

The L-G office also wrote to all V-Cs to ensure that meetings of the ‘Court of University’ are held at least twice a year.

Officials said the L-G has directed the Training and Technical Education, Higher Education Department to take immediate action to ensure entrustment of audit of accounts to the CAG of all state universities in accordance with the statutes in place.

The CAG had asked for the entrustment of audit of accounts of four other universities – Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT-Delhi), Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women (IGDTUW), Delhi Technological University (DTU) and Netaji Subhash University of Technology (NSUT), said

officials. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/l-g-vinai-kumar-saxena-flags-delay-audit-delhi-govt-universities-8121329/>

5. Delhi:

LG ने विश्वविद्यालय के खातों में CAG ऑडिट में देरी पर वीसी से स्पष्टीकरण मांगा (hindi.thequint.com) Aug 30, 2022

दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल वी.के. सक्सेना ने डिप्टी सीएम मनीष सिसोदिया की अध्यक्षता में दिल्ली सरकार के उच्च और तकनीकी शिक्षा विभाग के तहत सार्वजनिक शिक्षा क्षेत्र में लेखा प्रक्रियाओं में घोर उल्लंघन, वित्तीय कुप्रबंधन और ऑडिटिंग में अत्यधिक देरी पर वीसी से स्पष्टीकरण मांगा है।

हाल ही में, सीएजी द्वारा 2015-16 से 2020-

21 के बीच पांच साल के लिए दिल्ली फार्मास्युटिकल साइंसेज एंड रिसर्च यूनिवर्सिटी (डीपीएसआरयू) के खातों के ऑडिट के लिए कुलाधिपति के रूप में अपनी क्षमता में एक फाइल का निपटान करते हुए, एलजी ने इस पर गंभीर चिंता व्यक्त की विश्वविद्यालय की ऑडिट में अनुचित विलम्ब हुआ है। एलजी कार्यालय के एक सूत्र ने मंगलवार को कहा कि उन्होंने कुलपति को 15 दिनों के भीतर इस चूक के लिए जिम्मेदार अधिकारियों के विवरण के साथ स्पष्टीकरण देने का निर्देश दिया।

सीएजी द्वारा 2015-

16 से संबंधित डीपीएसआरयू के खातों का ऑडिट कराने के प्रस्ताव को मई 2019 में तत्कालीन एलजी द्वारा मंजूरी दी गई थी। डीपीएसआरयू ने विश्वविद्यालय अधिनियम की धारा 27 और सीएजी की धारा 20 के प्रावधानों के तहत प्रस्ताव को आगे बढ़ाया था। सूत्र ने कहा कि इससे अनिवार्य रूप से ऑडिट में देरी हुई।

कैग ने यह भी कहा था कि चार अन्य विश्वविद्यालयों- इंद्रप्रस्थ सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान दिल्ली (आईआईआईटी-ईटी-

दिल्ली), इंदिरा गांधी दिल्ली महिला तकनीकी विश्वविद्यालय (आईजीडीटीयूडब्ल्यू), दिल्ली प्रौद्योगिकी विश्वविद्यालय (डीटीयू) और नेताजी सुभाष प्रौद्योगिकी विश्वविद्यालय (एनएसयूटी) के भी धारा 19(3) के तहत खातों के ऑडिट का काम सौंपा जाए।

स्रोत के अनुसार, कैग की सलाह का पालन करने में दिल्ली सरकार को एक वर्ष से अधिक का समय लगा और अंत में उपरोक्त धारा 19

(3) के तहत इस आशय का एक प्रस्ताव अगस्त 2022 में बनाया गया, जिसमें अभी तक इसके लिए फाइल नहीं है। सूत्र ने कहा कि सीएम के संयुक्त सचिव द्वारा फाइल पर एक टिप्पणी के साथ, सीएम के हस्ताक्षर के बिना फिर से एलजी के सचिवालय में आए, जिसे माननीय सीएम ने देखा और मंजूरी दे दी है।

एलजी, जिन्होंने हाल ही में दिल्ली के सरकारी स्कूलों में नामांकन में गिरावट और बढ़ती अनुपस्थिति पर रिपोर्ट मांगी थी, ने सीएजी द्वारा दिल्ली सरकार के तहत विश्वविद्यालयों के खातों के ऑडिट में 5 साल से अधिक की अनुचित देरी पर गंभीर चिंता व्यक्त की है।

एलजी, जो राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों के चांसलर भी हैं, ने प्रशिक्षण और तकनीकी शिक्षा / उच्च शिक्षा विभाग को निर्देश दिया है कि वह सभी राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों के खातों की लेखा परीक्षा कैग को सौंपे गए कानूनों के अ

नुसार तत्काल कार्रवाई करें। उन्होंने यह भी निर्देश दिए हैं कि भविष्य में सभी विश्वविद्यालयों के लेखा परीक्षा लेखाओं को उनके देय होने पर बिना किसी विलम्ब के तुरन्त सौंपे जाएं।

चांसलर के रूप में उपराज्यपाल को भी दिल्ली के राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों की ओर से गंभीर और निरंतर प्रक्रियात्मक खामियों का सामना करना पड़ा है और उन्होंने इसे बहुत गंभीरता से लिया है।

तदनुसार, एलजी सचिवालय ने सभी कुलपतियों को यह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए भी लिखा है कि विश्वविद्यालय के न्यायालय की बैठकें वर्ष में कम से कम दो बार आयोजित की जाएं। एलजी सचिवालय के पत्र में रेखांकित किया गया है कि विश्वविद्यालय की अदालतों को विश्वविद्यालय की व्यापक नीतियों और कार्यक्रमों की समीक्षा करने और विश्वविद्यालयों के सुधार और विकास के लिए उपाय सुझाने की वैधानिक जिम्मेदारी सौंपी गई है। <https://hindi.thequint.com/hot-news/delhi-lg-seeks-clarification-from-vc-on-delay-in-cag-audit-in-university-accounts#read-more>

6. 5 साल में 1613 बसें हुई कंडम, खरीदी गयीं महज 450 (dainiktribuneonline.com) Aug 31, 2022

खट्टर सरकार पार्ट-1 में परिवहन विभाग नहीं रहा गंभीर : करीब चौथाई बजट ही कर पाया खर्च

हरियाणा में खट्टर पार्ट - 1 में परिवहन विभाग के दुलमुल रवैये के चलते बसों की संख्या कम होती चली गई। खट्टर पार्ट-1

(2015 से 2020) में नयी बसों की खरीद के लिए 700 करोड़ 45 लाख रुपये मंजूर हुए, लेकिन विभाग महज 157 करोड़ 48 लाख रुपये ही खर्च कर पाया। इसी कारण 2015-

16 में परिवहन बेड़े में बसों की संख्या 4208 से घटकर 2019-

20 में 3592 रह गई। तब से बसें कम ही होती गयीं। कुल 1613 बसों को कंडम घोषित कर दिया गया। 2015-

20 के दौरान 450 सामान्य बसों के चेसिस और 150 मिनी बसों की खरीद हो पाई। साथ ही, सरकार ने 18 सुपर लम्बरी बसें खरीदीं। मिनी बसों को मोरनी हिल्स के अलावा कॉलेजों में बेटियों के लिए लगाया गया है। वर्तमान में सरकार के पास 2 हजार 651 सामान्य बसें हैं। 48 वोल्वो बस हैं और 562 बस किमी स्कीम के तहत चल रही हैं।

यहां बता दें कि जिस समय यह लापरवाही बरती गई, उस समय प्रदेश में परिवहन मंत्रालय का जिम्मा कृष्ण लाल पंवार के पास था। उनकी गिनती मुख्यमंत्री के नजदीकी मंत्रियों में होती रही है। वर्ष 2019 में इस राना हलके से चुनाव हारने के बाद अब भाजपा ने उन्हें राज्यसभा में भेजा है। इधर, पुरानी गलती को सुधारते हुए खट्टर सरकार ने अब करीब दो हजार नयी बसें खरीदने का निर्णय लिया है। 1000 बिल्डअप बसों की खरीद होगी ताकि उनकी डिलीवरी होते ही उन्हें सड़कों पर उतारा जा सके। इसी तरह से 250 मिनी बसों की खरीद की मंजूरी सरकार ने परिवहन विभाग को दी है। 550 इलेक्ट्रिक बस भी परिवहन बेड़े में शामिल होंगी, लेकिन इन्हें किमी स्कीम के तहत हायर किया जाएगा। परिवहन विभाग की कार्यशैली पर कैंग ने भी गंभीर सवाल उठाये हैं। 2015-

16 के दौरान 995 बसों की खरीद के लिए 156 करोड़ 97 लाख रुपये जारी किए गए। विभाग ने केवल 600 स्टैंडर्ड बसों के चेसिस की खरीद के लिए टेंडर जारी किए। टेंडर शर्तों में बदलाव से एक ही कंपनी चेसिस के लिए योग्य मिली। इसके बाद भी विभाग ने खरीद प्रक्रिया आगे बढ़ा दी। सरकार के स्तर पर जाक

र टेंडर रद्द किया गया और बसों की खरीद पूरे साल नहीं हो पाई। 2016-17 में अधिक चेसिस का आर्डर दिया जाना चाहिए था, लेकिन पिछले साल के मुकाबले संख्या घटाकर 595 चेसिस खरीदने की प्रक्रिया शुरू की गई। इनके विरुद्ध भी विभाग ने दो अलग-अलग आर्डर में 300 चेसिस खरीदने का निर्णय लिया। मार्च-2017 तक विभाग महज 50 ही चेसिस की डिलीवरी ले पाया। बाकी 250 बसों के चेसिस अगले साल जा कर मिले।

2017-

18 में 589 सामान्य बस चेसिस के लिए 180 करोड़ रुपये मंजूर हुए। इनमें से भी विभाग ने 150 ही बस चेसिस खरीदे और इनकी डिलीवरी भी एक साल बाद ली। 2018-

19 में 100 करोड़ रुपये का बजट परिवहन विभाग को मिला ताकि वह 367 बस चेसिस खरीद सके। पूरे वित्तीय वर्ष में भी इस पैसे का इस्तेमाल विभाग ने नहीं किया। अगले वित्तीय वर्ष में भी यही हाल रहा। 100 चेसिस खरीदने का निर्णय तो लिया, लेकिन ले एक भी नहीं पाया।

1600 से अधिक कंडक्टर होंगे भर्ती

खुद की बसें खरीदने के साथ सरकार किमी स्कीम को भी आगे बढ़ा रही है। वर्तमान में किमी स्कीम के तहत चल रही बसों की संख्या बढ़कर 626 हो चुकी है। 550 इलेक्ट्रिक बस भी इसी स्कीम के तहत खरीदी जाएंगी। ऐसे में सरकार ने तय किया है कि कंडक्टर (परिचालक) के 1600 से अधिक पदों पर भर्ती होगी। विभाग राज्य कर्मचारी चयन आयोग को डिमांड भेजेगा। विभाग में दूसरे तकनीकी खाली पदों पर भर्ती करने की तैयारी है। खाली पदों का डाटा तैयार हो रहा है। <https://www.dainiktribuneonline.com/news/nation/1613-buses-were-destroyed-in-5-years-only-450-were-bought-115835>

7. द्विन टावर का सबक: बिल्डरों के खिलाफ कैसे लें एक्शन (hindi.news18.com) Aug 30, 2022

द्विन टावर को गिराए जाने को नाकाम और भ्रष्ट बिल्डरों के खिलाफ बायर्स की जीत बताया जा रहा है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के अवैध टावर्स के मामले में आरडब्ल्यूए की लंबी लड़ाई की वजह से जेन्युइन बायर्स को न्याय मिल सका। लेकिन दूसरे मामलों में छोटे और संगठित बायर सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक लंबी लड़ाई नहीं लड़ पाते हैं। खबरों के अनुसार नोएडा में आशियाने के लिए तीन लाख लोग भटक रहे हैं, जिन्हें या तो फ्लैट का कब्जा नहीं मिला या फिर उनके फ्लैट की रजिस्ट्री नहीं हुई।

एनसीआर और देश के अनेक महानगरों में बिल्डर लॉबी रियल इस्टेट कानून और रेरा के नियमों का खुले आम उल्लंघन करते हैं। बिल्डरों की मनमानी और एफआईआर में बार-बार बदलाव का खामियाजा ग्राहकों को भुगतना पड़ता है। देशभर में ऐसे लाखों बायर्स की सुरक्षा और शिकायतों के समाधान के नियम कानून और सिस्टम को समझना जरूरी है।

बायर्स की सुरक्षा के लिए नियम, कानून और रेगुलेटर

रेरा कानून के तहत कोई भी आवासीय या वाणिज्यिक परियोजना शुरू करने से पहले बिल्डर को उसका पंजीकरण कराना अनिवार्य है- जमीन, प्रोजेक्ट की अनुमति, नक्शा, एनओसी और अन्य अनुमतियों से जुड़े कागजातों को देखने का बायर्स को अधिकार भी है। प्राधिकरण या विभाग से प्रोजेक्ट को अनुमति मिलने के बा

द बिल्डर उसमें मनमाने तरीके से बदलाव नहीं कर सकता है. ऐसा करने से पहले कानून के तहत दो ति हाई खरीददारों की मंजूरी लेना जरूरी है. यदि समय सीमा के भीतर प्लैट या आवासीय यूनिट का कब्जा नहीं मिलता है तो बायर्स को मुआवजा लेने का भी अधिकार है. रेरा कानून आने के बाद बिल्डर को उसी दर से ब्याज के साथ मुआवजा देना पड़ता है जितना भुगतान में देरी होने पर बिल्डर वसूली करता है.

बिल्डरों के साथ सरकारी प्रोजेक्ट्स के खिलाफ भी शिकायतें

रियल स्टेट के कारोबार में काले धन और भ्रष्टाचार का बोलबाला है. जमीन के आवंटन और एफएआर में जब भी विवाद होते हैं तो उसका खामियाजा बायर्स को भुगताना पड़ता है. प्रोजेक्ट को बेचते समय ग्राहकों को हसीन सपने दिखाए जाते हैं, लेकिन फिर उन्हें पूरा नहीं किया जाता है. देश के अधिकांश रियल स्टेट प्रोजेक्ट देरी से चल रहे हैं. निजी डेवलपर्स के साथ सरकारी प्रोजेक्ट्स में भी देरी होती है. दिल्ली में डीडी ए द्वारा विकसित कठपुतली कॉलोनी के लगभग 2 हजार परिवार करीब 14 सालों से अपने आशियाने की बांट जोह रहे हैं. ऐसी गड़बड़ियों को रोकने के लिए अनेक नियम और कानून होने के बावजूद बायर्स को न्याय और मुआवजा मिलना मुश्किल होता है.

रेरा में शिकायत

रियल स्टेट के ग्राहकों की समस्याओं को निपटाने के लिए सरकार ने रियल इस्टेट रेगुलेशन एंड डेवलेपमेंट एक्ट 2016 बनाया था जिसे रेरा कानून भी कहते हैं. लेकिन इस कानून के लागू होने के पहले शुरू हुए प्रोजेक्ट्स में बिल्डरों के खिलाफ शिकायत करना मुश्किल है. इसके अलावा रेरा के पास न्यायिक अधिकार नहीं होने की वजह से अधिकांश खरीददारों की परेशानियों का समाधान नहीं हो पाता है. कनफेडरेशन ऑफ रियल स्टेट डेवलपर्स एसोसिएशन ऑफ इंडिया (क्रेडाई) के अनुसार रेरा के तहत उपभोक्ताओं के हितों की रक्षा होनी चाहिए. इससे उस नए भारत का निर्माण हो सकेगा, जहां पर कानून का शासन सर्वोपरी है.

सिविल अदालत और उपभोक्ता अदालत में शिकायत और मुआवजा

रेरा कानून के तहत बिल्डर और खरीददार के बीच विवाद होने पर दीवानी अदालत में मुकदमा दायर नहीं हो सकता. लेकिन बिल्डर के फ्रॉड और घोटालों के खिलाफ आपराधिक मामला दायर किया जा सकता है. सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने साल 2019 में ऐतिहासिक फैसला देते हुए कहा था कि रेरा कानून के बावजूद लोग उपभोक्ता अदालत यानी कंज्यूमर कोर्ट में भी शिकायत दर्ज करा सकते हैं. सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने ग्राहकों को यह विकल्प दिया है कि वे रेरा या उपभोक्ता अदालत में जाने के दोनों विकल्पों में से किसी का भी चयन कर सकते हैं.

उपभोक्ताओं के संरक्षण के लिए संसद ने 2019 में नया कानून बनाया है. इसके तहत जिला अदालतों में 50 लाख तक की कीमत के मामले और राज्य प्राधिकरणों में 50 लाख से 2 करोड़ तक के मामलों में राहत और मुआवजे के लिए मामला दर्ज किया जा सकता है. 2 करोड़ से ज्यादा के मामलों को राष्ट्रीय उपभोक्ता शिकायत निवारण आयोग के सामने दर्ज कराया जा सकता है. उपभोक्ता मामलों में सबसे अच्छी बात यह है कि बायर्स वकील के बगैर अपने मामलों की पैरवी कर सकते हैं.

भूमि घोटालों में सीएजी की रिपोर्ट पर अमल होने से बायर्स को राहत मिले

नोएडा में नीरा यादव मामला (1993-95), यादव सिंह मामला (2011), यमुना ई-वे भूमि घोटाला (2012-13) जैसे अनेक घोटालों के खिलाफ सीबीआई और विजिलेंस जांच होने के साथ अदालती कार्यवाही हो रही है. सीएजी ने बिल्डरों को गलत तरीके से भूमि आवंटन और न्यूनतम रिजर्व मूल्य पर सवालिया निशान ल

गाए हैं. बिल्डरों की लॉबी के साथ नोएडा ऑथोरिटी के अधिकारियों के साथ स्याह सम्बन्धों पर तो सुप्रीम कोर्ट और हाईकोर्ट ने भी तख्ख टिप्पणी की है. सीएजी की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2005-06 और 2017-18 के बीच आवंटित 113 प्रोजेक्ट्स में 71 अभी तक पूरे नहीं हुए. ऐसे प्रोजेक्ट्स में निवेश करने वाले बायर्स को ना तो फ्लैट का कब्जा मिलता है और ना ही ब्याज सहित रिफण्ड.

सुप्रीम कोर्ट में मामले और दीवालिया कानून

सुप्रीम कोर्ट के अगस्त 2021 के आदेश के बावजूद ट्विन टावर में निवेश करने वाले सैंकड़ों लोगों को अभी तक ब्याज समेत रिफंड नहीं मिला है. एनसीआर से जुड़े अनेक बिल्डर जैसे जेपी, आम्रपाली और यूनीटेक के मामले सुप्रीम कोर्ट में चल रहे हैं. लेकिन राजधानी से दूर दूसरे राज्यों के लोगों के लिए सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक लड़ना आसान नहीं है. रियल इस्टेट से जुड़े सहारा और पर्ल ग्रुप के मामलों में भी सुप्रीम कोर्ट के कई फैसले आए, लेकिन निवेशकों को अभी तक रिफंड और मुआवजा नहीं मिला. सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा नियुक्त लोढ़ा समिति की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार पर्ल ग्रुप ने 6 करोड़ लोगों के साथ 80 हजार करोड़ की धोखाधड़ी की, लेकिन उनके पास 7600 करोड़ रुपए की सम्पत्तियां हैं.

ट्विन टॉवर मामले में भी सुपरटेक के सीएमडी ने बयान दिया है कि बिल्डरों को बायर्स का मन नहीं दुखाना चाहिए. उसके बावजूद अधिकांश बिल्डर निवेशकों और बायर्स के प्रति संवेदनशील नहीं होते हैं. ग्राहकों से मिले पैसे को दूसरे प्रोजेक्ट्स में ट्रांसफर या फिर उन्हें व्यक्तिगत लाभ के लिए साइफन करने के खिलाफ अनेक कानून हैं, लेकिन उनका पालन नहीं होता है. बिल्डर और उनकी कंपनियां दीवालिया कानून के तहत मामला दायर करके प्रोजेक्ट को अदालतों और सरकार के पाले में डालकर सारी आपराधिक जिम्मेदारियों से मुक्ति पा लेती हैं. लेकिन बिल्डरों की गड़बड़ियों, नाकामी और भ्रष्टाचार का खामियाजा निवेशकों और बायर्स को भुगतना पड़ता है. इन मुद्दों पर सरकार और संसद गौर करे तो टावर्स के ध्वस्तीकरण के बाद निवेशकों के हितों को सुरक्षित करने का सिस्टम भी मजबूत हो सकता है. <https://hindi.news18.com/blogs/virag-gupta/noida-twin-towers-demolition-lesson-of-twin-towers-how-to-take-action-against-builders-4519491.html>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

8. Government links funds release to usage ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) Aug 31, 2022

The Centre has rolled out a new expenditure management scheme, under which monies will be released from the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI) directly to the bank accounts of implementing agencies 'just in time' for use. The scheme, which initially covered all centrally sponsored schemes and autonomous bodies, has now been extended to expenditure routed through Centre-sector schemes as well, a move that will result in significant fiscal savings.

The benefit to the Centre's finances from the move arises from the fact that expenditures would be budgeted only when funds are actually spent in the real economy. In the earlier system, large funds used to float with government accounts other than CFI, including state treasuries, even as the expenditures have been accounted for.

Thanks to the calibrated release of funds, buoyant tax receipts and steps to rationalise revenue expenditure, the Centre is unlikely to raise its gross market borrowing in FY23 from the budgeted level to fund the fiscal deficit.

This is despite large additional spending commitments on subsidies and the revenue loss from tax cuts on auto fuels announced in May.

The Centre is budgeted to spend Rs 11.8 trillion through central sector schemes and another Rs 4.43 trillion in the centrally sponsored scheme in FY23. The Budget estimate for total expenditure is Rs 39.4 trillion in FY23.

The Centre has recently estimated extra spending of Rs 2 trillion over the Budget Estimate on the subsidies on fertilisers, food and cooking gas in FY23. While about Rs 1.3 trillion in additional net (post-devolution) tax revenues is expected, another Rs 30,000-40,000 crore may come in from windfall taxes on petroleum products, leaving the deficit over and above budgeted level at a manageable Rs 30,000 crore. Here, the just-in-time funds release will come in handy.

The Union government had announced a plan to borrow Rs 8.45 trillion from the market through dated securities in the first half of FY23. It pegs FY23 gross market borrowing via dated securities at Rs 14.31 trillion, against the budgeted Rs 14.95 trillion, citing a switch programme conducted on January 28. The second half borrowing calendar is expected to be announced by end-September.

“We don’t think there is any requirement of additional borrowings this year. However, it will be our effort to rationalise revenue expenditure at the time of revised estimate as subsidies are going to go up,” an official said.

With the implementation of the Central Nodal Agency (CNA) for central sector schemes, Single Nodal Agency (SNA) for centrally sponsored schemes and Treasury Single Account (TSA) for autonomous bodies, the Centre will be able to track fund flows till the end-users.

“The fund releases in Q1 this fiscal could have been higher if we had not implemented the scheme. Now, we clearly know how much funds are lying with an implementing agency at a given time. Next installment can’t be booked until the previous releases have been used,” the official said.

Even as it maintained the pace of capital expenditure, the Centre reined in revenue spending in the later part of Q1FY23, with overall expenditure growth declining from 23.7% on year in May to 5.4% in June.

Lower floating of funds will help the Centre calibrate borrowings and is estimated to save nearly Rs 10,000 crore annually in interest costs, according to a source.

The Centre had budgeted to restrict revenue expenditure at Rs 31.94 trillion in FY23, down 0.2% from the actual spending of Rs 32.01 trillion in FY22. It intended to rein in the fiscal deficit at 6.4% of GDP from 6.7% last fiscal. However, the Budget calculations went haywire after the Ukraine war caused massive disruptions in the global supply chains, leading to a spike in international commodity prices. This, in turn,

forced the government to raise the fertiliser subsidy from Rs 1.05 trillion in BEFY23 to Rs 2.15 trillion (it could be even higher at Rs 2.25 trillion), on top of Rs 80,000 crore additional spending on account of the extension of the free ration scheme by six months through September.

The cut in the fuel excise duty in May to tame inflation may lead to about Rs 85,000 crore loss in excise revenues in FY23, which will further exert pressure on the government's balance sheet.

"However, a large part of this would be absorbed by higher-than-estimated non-excise taxes, as well as the windfall tax on domestic crude oil production and export duties on petroleum products, limiting the extent of the overshoot in the government's fiscal deficit in FY23 relative to the Budget estimates at Rs 30,000-80,000 crore," rating agency Icria chief economist Aditi Nayar said.

"Unless the free food grain scheme (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana) is extended beyond September 2022, we do not expect the fiscal deficit to exceed 6.4% of GDP based on a nominal GDP of Rs 272.1 trillion," she added. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/government-links-funds-release-to-usage/2649970/>

9. Infertile scheme (thehindubusinessline.com) Aug 31, 2022

The Centre could look at the DBT model to distribute fertiliser subsidies to farmers

The One Nation One Fertilizer scheme is reminiscent of the control era and may end up creating fresh problems

The Centre's decision to roll out a 'One Nation, One Fertilizer' scheme to save on the subsidy bill and make farmers aware of the benefit they enjoy, appears to be a remedy that is worse than the disease. The scheme, to be called Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janurvarak Paryojna (PMBJP), requires all fertiliser manufacturers and marketers to drop their brands and to substitute them with a homogenous 'Bharat' brand from October 2. As per the scheme only standard government-designed packaging must be used, with the 'Bharat' brand and PMBJP logo to be displayed over two-thirds of the bag's surface and the manufacturer's name and the fertiliser grade relegated to one-third of the display. These new measures add an additional layer of control to an already over-controlled industry where selling prices and distribution are dictated by the government. The bar on branding will effectively deprive fertiliser makers of the ability to differentiate their products and retain market shares, serving as a deterrent to private presence in the sector. A throwback to the license era, the scheme dashes hopes of reforms that could have set this critical sector on the path to commercial viability and self-sufficiency.

The Centre has offered two explanations as to why it is keen to white-label fertilisers. It contends that, as a major portion of the production cost for fertilisers is met by the exchequer, there's no point in individual fertiliser makers incurring freight costs on shipping their products cross-country, just because farmers prefer one brand over another. This argument is weak because freight costs, by the Centre's own admission,

account for just ₹6,000 crore of the subsidy bill of ₹2.25 lakh crore. While the savings on freight will be small, the bar on branding could prompt fertiliser makers to suspend all marketing, advertising and extension activities that they've so far used to build farmer connect and market share in this commoditised business. Private players would also have little incentive to experiment with customised products or new nutrient combinations. Should these constraints prompt them to reduce their presence in this sector over time, the country may come to rely on public sector producers who may not be efficient or low cost. Two, the Centre seems to be keen on making farmers aware that it is footing a hefty bill to make nutrients available to them at ultra-cheap prices. While it's true that the subsidy component on fertilisers has been shooting through the roof lately, the main reason for this is the Centre's own unwillingness to hike selling prices even marginally to keep up with inflation. Branding this scheme with the acronym 'PMBJP' smacks of an attempt to gain political mileage out of an expense that is funded by taxpayer money.

If the intent is to prune the bloating subsidies, the Centre can explore the more intuitive solution of decontrolling prices of fertilisers, while subsidising farmers directly through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). With JAM-enabled bank account penetration quite high and DBT being successfully used for PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and other welfare payouts, there's no reason why fertiliser subsidies cannot be transitioned to this mode. Making subsidy payments directly into farmers' accounts instead of routing it through manufacturers will not only help in targeting of small farmers and reduce leakages, but also promote the Centre's objective of making them aware of the subsidy element in fertilisers in a more direct manner. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/editorial/the-one-nation-one-fertilizer-scheme-is-reminiscent-of-the-control-era-and-may-end-up-creating-fresh-problems/article65830635.ece>

10. Finance Ministry undertakes performance review of PSU banks; takes stock of financial inclusion drive ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) August 30, 2022

During the April-June period of the previous fiscal, state-owned banks recorded a total profit of Rs 14,013 crore.

The Finance Ministry on Tuesday reviewed the performance of public sector banks (PSBs) in the backdrop of the first quarter numbers and asked them to step up lending to productive sectors of the economy. The meeting chaired by Financial Services Secretary Sanjay Malhotra also deliberated on the need to cut non-performing assets and drive financial inclusion, sources said. Managing directors and executive directors of all public sector banks who participated in the meeting were asked to focus on credit growth during the festive season, beginning in September.

There was a comprehensive review of the progress of various government schemes, including the Kisan Credit Card, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, StandUp India, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). The secretary also reviewed the performance of banks with respect to lending towards Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries sectors.

PSBs have raked in more profits in the three months ended June on the back of a persistent decline in bad loans and the trend may have a positive bearing on their balance sheets in the coming quarters.

In the June quarter, the Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) and State Bank of India (SBI) were in the lowest quartile as far as Gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and net NPAs were concerned, according to an analysis of the quarterly financial numbers published by the public sector lenders. Cumulatively, all the 12 public sector banks reported a profit of about Rs 15,306 crore in the three months ended June, registering an annual growth of 9.2 per cent. However, leading public sector lenders — SBI and PNB — posted lower profits in the June quarter.

During the April-June period of the previous fiscal, state-owned banks recorded a total profit of Rs 14,013 crore. <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/banking-finance/finance-ministry-undertakes-performance-review-of-psu-banks-takes-stock-of-financial-inclusion-drive/2649909/>

11. Privatisation may make banks more efficient, but will compromise on social objectives, says former RBI governor D Subbarao (moneycontrol.com) August 31, 2022

Economists and bureaucrats have differed on an article published in the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin this month suggesting that a big bang approach to privatisation of government-owned banks may do more harm than good. Public sector banks have better than private sector counterparts on counts such as financial inclusion and have in place a sounder credit system, the article said. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said the central bank was ownership-neutral.

In an exclusive interview with Moneycontrol, former RBI governor Duvvuri Subbarao spoke about the impact bank privatization would have on the Indian economy, and other contemporary issues. Edited excerpts:

There has been a lot of talk about privatization in recent times. What do you think could be the impact of bank privatization on Indian economy?

One broad trend of our mix of public and private banking structure has been that while private banks have focussed almost exclusively on profit maximization, public sector banks (PSBs) have had to compromise on profits to drive social objectives such as, for example, financial inclusion and lending to microenterprises. If that be the case, the impact of privatization will manifest in two ways. First, overall efficiency of the banking system will go up since PSBs will also become profit oriented; second, some social objectives may be compromised.

I believe the net cost benefit calculus of privatization will be positive. PSBs have done a great job in meeting social objectives. But it's time to move on. At our current stage of development, we should be using other instruments to pursue those objectives rather than continue to place the burden on bank depositors and borrowers. A big bang privatization is not advisable; but that does not mean the issue remains on the backburner forever. Ideally, we should have a roadmap, maybe over a 10 year

timeframe, to privatize all PSBs. That will give much needed predictability to all stakeholders. Meanwhile, the government should also be thinking about corporatization of public sector banks so that they come within the umbrella of uniform RBI regulation.

Can privatization cause an asset-liability mismatch for the banks?

I saw that Dr. Pronob Sen raised this issue of asset liability mismatch in a recent speech. I gather the average maturity of a deposit (liability) is about two and a half years whereas the average term of a loan (asset) is about nine years. This asset liability mismatch (ALM) has come about because of two reasons. First, Indian banks are dependent almost exclusively on retail deposits of relatively shorter duration for their funding because unlike their western counterparts, they are not allowed to tap capital markets for deposits. Second, earlier banks used to specialize in financing working capital of shorter maturity. But since becoming universal banks after reforms, the proportion of term loans of longer duration in their loan portfolios has gone up lengthening the average maturity of a loan.

But it's unlikely that this ALM will result in an explosion if PSBs are privatized. We must understand that maturity transformation has historically been one of the underlying drivers of banking. The RBI, as the regulator, keeps a watch to ensure that this transformation does not go overboard. Besides, the Basel III norms which are ownership neutral ensure that banks are adequately capitalized to withstand shocks of this nature.

What could however be a concern when PSBs are privatized is a possible sudden flight of deposits. PSBs enjoy a 'perception advantage' because depositors believe that these banks will be bailed out by the government if they come under pressure and therefore their deposits will always remain safe. That perception advantage will be gone with privatization and depositors might flee to what they see as stronger banks.

What this implies is that there is a lot of learning to be done by doing. The government should move forward adopting 'cross the river by feeling the stones' approach. In particular, the first set of banks for privatization should not be the weakest banks. That might wrongfoot the whole process. Instead, the government should choose one reasonably strong bank and one reasonably weak bank to test the waters, learn the lessons and then move forward.

Since you mentioned that corporatization of the existing banking sector can happen, in that matter do you think more NBFCs will be turned to private banks?

I believe the RBI licencing policy allows a route for NBFCs to become banks. NBFCs also have the opportunity to establish a track record in the finance space as compared to non-NBFC applicants for bank licences. But it's not as if every NBFC should aspire to become a bank. In fact, many NBFCs might want to stay as NBFCs because of the flexibility in operation it allows them even if the cost of funding is higher. Also, in operating its licencing policy, the RBI should avoid giving the impression that becoming an NBFC is a necessary entry point for a bank licence.

Apart from bank privatization, dealing with inflation has been a major area of focus in recent times. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das mentioned in the interview that inflation might come down to 4 per cent in the next two years. Do you think it will be possible within this short target, and even if it's possible, what will be ways to achieve it?

I think bringing inflation down to 4 percent over the next two years is possible. This will come about both because of RBI's monetary policy action as well as possible base effect.

Monetary policy action will involve raising interest rates and withdrawing liquidity. RBI has already started on the job by raising the repo rate by 140 basis points. There is a case for further tightening although I cannot speculate on how much. The trend inflation of 6% suggests that the repo rate should be 7% so that it is positive in real terms. It's possible that RBI might not be so aggressive given global slowdown.

On the liquidity front, the net absorption under the SDF window has come down substantially from about 4 trillion rupees to about 1 trillion. But there is need for further tightening on this front as well.

But tightening monetary policy is just the first line of defence against inflation. Fiscal and exchange rate policies have to complement that effort. In choosing the appropriate policy mix, the government and the RBI will have to navigate several dilemmas.

The first balance is between fighting inflation while supporting recovery. Even as we are the 'fastest growing large economy in the world', we should note that our output (GDP) remains below trend which is to say that it is still lower than what it would have been in the absence of the pandemic. In that sense, there has been a permanent loss of output. The RBI will have to calibrate its financial tightening to manage this tension, according priority though to price stability which is its primary responsibility.

The second dilemma pertains to the exchange rate which has been under downward pressure. The question is to what extent should the exchange rate be used as a shock absorber. In the face of significant trade imbalance and high current account deficit, a weaker rupee can help restore balance. But a weaker rupee will also be inflationary.

The third dilemma pertains to fiscal policy. It's important that the government deliver on the budgeted fiscal deficit of 6.4% of GDP notwithstanding higher than budgeted expenditure commitments on food and fertilizer subsidies. Any additional borrowing, apart from eroding fiscal credibility, will also put upward pressure on inflation.

This year's fiscal performance will also set the stage for the government's glide path to the FRBM fiscal deficit target of 3% of GDP. If the government borrows and spends the money on capital expenditure which lays the base for future growth, I believe the market will tolerate even a slower fiscal consolidation path.

These are the three dilemmas the government and the RBI will have to manage to achieve the 4% inflation target over the next two years.

Do you think there is further room for depreciation for the rupee?

The rupee depreciated by about 7% against USD on account of capital outflows and a rising current account deficit. Even so, the rupee has been more resilient compared to other emerging market currencies as reflected in the broader 40 currency real effective exchange rate (REER) which is still over 100.

Rupee movement going forward will largely depend on commodity prices and financial conditions in the global economy, in particular the monetary policy stance of the US Federal Reserve.

I believe the RBI has sold I believe about \$50 billion of reserves so far to defend the rupee. The question is, to what extent can the RBI sustain this? No doubt we have a fairly comfortable level of reserves. Even so, market confidence can be dented by rapid drop in that level. It's best if the exchange rate is allowed to track fundamentals which means that the RBI should intervene in the market not to prevent the depreciation of the rupee but only to engineer the trajectory of that fall. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/banks/privatisation-may-make-banks-more-efficient-but-will-compromise-on-social-objectives-says-former-rbi-governor-d-subbarao-9109291.html>

12. GST revision can enable India achieve \$5 trillion economy: EY (economictimes.indiatimes.com) Aug 30, 2022

EY has released a book on India's GST journey titled 'GST Transformation: The Road Ahead'. The book has delved into the topic of how to make it more simple and responsive to the needs of the businesses and government. It explores the implementation of reforms to make all facets of GST law and processes more efficient. This in turn will raise productivity and reduce prices for businesses. This coupled with a clear manufacturing strategy can attract global investments, create jobs, and make India a large manufacturing economy by 2025-26.

In a statement, Sudhir Kapadia, Partner, Tax & Regulatory Services, EY India, said, "Our book is an effort to capture the benefits and challenges of this journey while incorporating critical feedback and recommendations from all key stakeholders. As this reform completes five years, it is time to look ahead, deliberate and decide on necessary changes required to streamline the five-tier tax rate structure, availing of input tax credits, and inclusion of the remaining items in GST."

The book recommends the policy measures required to reform GST hinging on revenue buoyancy, world-class dispute resolution, institutional strengthening, and enhancing the ease of doing business. In terms of tax simplification measures, there is a need for government intervention on the legislative front and regular notifications needed to avoid litigation. It draws out a discussion of having a dispute resolution system to help in ease of doing business.

It also delves into a sector-wise impact analysis and suggests the inclusion of petroleum products, electricity, and real estate within the ambit of GST to make manufacturing more competitive.

Some key sectoral recommendations:

-For the automobile sector, as battery constitutes approximately 40% of the cost of EVs, it suggests that the GST rate on batteries could be rationalized (with a lower rate of 5% instead of 18%) to make usage of EVs more affordable and commercially viable, thereby boosting its demand as well as supply.

-For the MSMEs, the book suggests making a composition scheme for small businesses more attractive by relaxing conditions to enable them to register under GST. Allowing input tax credit to the extent of output tax payable will make the composition scheme more liberal, facilitate streamlining of tax credits and eliminate tax cascading.

-The rate on mobile handsets and their parts under GST should be aligned with policy impetus to incentivize mobile handset manufacturing in India with an ideal rate of 5% or at best 12%. It is relevant to note the tax rate in the pre-GST era for mobile handsets.

-To remove ambiguity around online skill-based gaming, it inserting a separate service entry titled, Online Skill-Based Games, with a rate of 18% applicable only on the platform fees/fees collected for the services provided by the platform operators and not on the prize pool contribution made by the respective users.

-In the Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) specifically the cryptocurrency sector, while no taxation has been announced under GST, the book suggests clarity on non-taxability under the current GST law, including futuristic framing of clear laws that are aligned to emerging international best practices, is the need of the hour.

-To facilitate input tax credit availability across all sectors and make Indian manufacturing more competitive

(i) petroleum products, particularly, ATF and natural gas.

(ii) electricity

(iii) real estate should be covered within the ambit of GST at the earliest.

While electricity can be taxed at 5% uniformly across the supply chain, petroleum products at 28% and real estate (land and constructed building) at 12% with seamless credit eligibility, will help the country immensely by incentivizing investment and enhancing demand for consumption.

The book also highlights the various disputed areas where an express clarification by the lawmakers will go a long way in settling the matters and eliminating unwarranted litigation. Decriminalizing minor offences and providing forthright clarification on contentious industry (or trade) issues are also needed. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/gst/gst-revision-can-enable-india-achieve-5-trillion-economy-ey/articleshow/93877560.cms?from=mdr>

13. US Army grounds Boeing's Chinook helicopters, IAF demands report ([theweek.in](https://www.theweek.in)) August 31, 2022

US Army has about 400 Chinook helicopters, India has 15

The Indian Air Force has sought a report from US defence manufacturer Boeing regarding the US Army's decision to ground its entire fleet of Chinook helicopters.

The IAF acquired 15 Chinook helicopters from the US and inducted them into service in 2019. The Indian fleet operates from Chandigarh and Assam for operations in respective regions.

ANI quoting a government official reported, “Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter fleet is still operational. India has sought details of the reasons which have led to the grounding of the entire fleet of US Army’s Chinook CH-47 helicopters because of a risk of engine fires.”

The Wall Street Journal which reported about the grounding of the US fleet quoted US officials saying, US Army was aware of a small number of engine fires in the helicopters, and the incidents didn’t result in any injuries or deaths.

“The U.S. Army Materiel Command grounded the fleet of hundreds of helicopters out of an abundance of caution,” the publication reported. According to the report, officials were looking at more than 70 aircraft that contained a part suspected to be connected to the problem.

The grounding of the heavy-lift Chinook helicopters could pose logistical challenges for American soldiers, depending on how long the order lasts, the Journal said. The US Army has about 400 such helicopters in its fleet. <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2022/08/31/us-army-grounds-boeings-chinook-helicopters-iaf-demands-report.html>

14. A coal economy to a green economy ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) August 31, 2022

In the last 18 months, several modelling studies have been published on the costs and benefits of net zero emissions in India. A few days back, another modelling study was published, which projected that India will require an economy-wide investment of \$10.1 trillion to achieve its net zero targets by 2070. But this will have significant gains, as it would boost annual GDP by 4.7% by 2036 and create 15 million new jobs by 2047. The benefits are even greater if India reaches net zero by 2050, says the study. In the words of Jayant Sinha, Member of Parliament, like previous modelling studies, this too predicts that “Net Zero is Net Positive” for India.

These reports are important at one level because they give us a macro picture of what it would entail to achieve the net zero target. They also give us the hope that we can address the climate crisis while growing our economy and creating millions of new green jobs. However, these macro-assessments do not tell us about the regional implications or the political economy of this transition. In other words, these reports have minimal relevance for planning a net zero pathway at the district or state levels.

For instance, the costs that these studies account for mainly include the investments required to build the new green industries and infrastructure—renewable energy, hydrogen, green steel, etc. They do not have the costs of closing the existing fossil-fuel based industries and infrastructure—coal mines, power plants, freight corridors, etc. However, at the district level, closing mines and plants are far more important than building the new industries, especially when there is no guarantee that these will come at the same place. In a nutshell, while macro-economic modelling has its value, today,

we need studies to understand the costs, benefits and regional implications of achieving the net zero target so that we can plan and achieve a just energy transition. Let me illustrate this with the case of Angul, Odisha.

Over the last two years, my colleagues and I have been studying the coal districts of India to understand what a Just Energy Transition (JET) means and entails for these districts. We studied Ramgarh in Jharkhand, Korba in Chhattisgarh and, last week, we published our report on Angul.

The study of Ramgarh showed that the district has mostly unprofitable old mines, which will close soon. Ramgarh, therefore, needs to quickly start implementing an economic diversification plan to deal with the repercussions of the economic downturn due to the closure of mines. In Korba, India's top coal-producing district, the reserves are getting exhausted, and most existing mines and power plants will close between 2040-2050. So, Korba has a little more time than Ramgarh to implement a JET.

Angul, however, tells a very different story. The district produces about 100 million tonnes (MMT) of coal—about 12% of the country's production. About 168,000 people are employed by coal mining and coal-dependent industries, and over 61% of the district's GDP is dependent on coal. But coal production will grow three-fold in the next 10 years and peak at 300 MMT by 2033. Other coal-dependent industries, such as steel and aluminium, are also expanding. This growth is possible because Angul produces some of the cheapest coal in the country.

As per the current plans, there is no way that coal production in Angul can be phased out by 2050. If we try to reach net zero in Angul by 2050, then almost all mines will have to forego 30-60% of their reserves, and industrial assets would have to be shuttered at the peak of their economic life. So, how do we plan a net zero pathway for a district where the coal economy is growing exponentially? How do we close the mines and industries, and who will pay for this? How do we create alternative jobs for coal workers? Who will invest in the green economy? These are the questions that matter, and we need answers to these to develop a realistic just transition plan for real people.

Our study shows that it is possible to achieve net zero by 2050 in Angul, but it would require a JET plan spanning over the next three decades and billions of dollars of compensation and investments. It would require what we call the 5 Rs of Just Transition.

* Restructuring of the economy: Angul's economy will have to diversify through investments in agriculture, forestry and service sectors. Its industries will have to move from a brown economy to a green economy through investments in renewables, hydrogen-based steel and urea, green aluminium, and a circular economy.

* Repurposing of the existing infrastructure: Repurposing mining land and industrial plants will be crucial for economic diversification. For instance, about 33,000 hectares of land in Angul are under coal mines and power plants. These can be used for solar PV, food parks, the development of fisheries and tourism sectors, etc.

n Reskilling and skilling of the workforce: Large-scale skilling and reskilling programmes will have to be implemented to develop a skilled workforce for economic diversification.

* Revenue substitution: Currently, coal mines in Angul contribute over Rs 6,000 crore as royalty and cess to the state and the central government. This is projected to increase to Rs 18,000 crore by 2030. Angul's economic diversification plan must at least substitute the revenues foregone from the coal economy.

* Responsible environmental and social investments: Angul is an economically-backward district and also a critically polluted area. Massive investments would be required for the closure and remediation of mines. Likewise, the district needs investments in social infrastructure—health, education, water, livelihoods etc., to build a sustainable economy.

Overall, Angul's study shows that if we want to achieve the net zero target, then we must understand its implications at the district and state levels. Without this, big macro-assessments make no sense. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/a-coal-economy-to-a-green-economy/2649946/>

15. Wind energy has huge potential in India, to cost less by 2026: GWEC ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) August 30, 2022

Wind energy in India has huge potential, with its cost of generation being 40 per cent lower than that of conventional sources of power, according to the Global Wind Energy Council, which has released a study titled "India Wind Energy Market Outlook 2022-2026".

The levelised cost of energy (LCOE), or the net present cost of generation for a generator over its lifetime, for wind is expected to be Rs 2.8-3.3/Kwh, the study says.

The prices of wind-energy instruments like turbines have risen owing to the increase in global logistics costs and the recent surge in goods and services tax. Despite these hiccups, India is expected to install more than 19 Gw in the next five years, peaking in 2024, says the study.

Also, over the next five years, a transition is expected from standalone wind to wind-solar hybrids (WSHs).

Developers are taking a greater interest in central auctions due to a change in government policy. Due to states delaying the signing of power-sharing agreements (PSAs), the tenders of Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) specify which state discom would procure the power generated. This is expected to reduce project cancellation or delay on account of signing PSAs.

This has come after many changes made by the government. Earlier in 2003, the wind energy sector ran on a tax-benefit scheme called Accelerated Depreciation (AD), which anyone setting up or investing in a wind farm could take, while a portion of the project cost was repaid by the Centre.

In 2011, the government announced the generation-based incentive (GBI) scheme while retiring the one on AD. The GBI scheme provided wind power producers an incentive of 50 paise for each unit generated. This ended in 2012 but resumed in 2013.

To improve grid availability, SECI specified land and grid details of the delivery point in the tender document before auction.

The government has removed tariff caps, which has resulted in increased bidding as well as a lower price of about Rs 2.7/Kwh, as compared to about Rs 2.8/Kwh. It has reduced performance bank guarantees (PBGs) from 8-10 per cent from November 2020 to 3 per cent in 2021. The rate will remain for renewable tenders issued until March 31, 2023. It also removed capacity restrictions on repowering existing projects.

Earlier, excess generation could be sold only to SECI and at 75 per cent of the rate in the PPA. It has also taken out the obligation to sell excess generation to SECI only and allowed third-party sales of projects.

According to the study, the major driver of future installations is renewable purchase obligations (RPO) notified by the central and state governments. The Ministry of Power has laid out a road map for purchasing renewable power, whose share will increase from 6.94 per cent to 43.33 percent of the power purchased by discoms by 2029-30.

By 2025-26 the share of wind power is targeted at 33.01 per cent. Considering this trend, India is expected to install nearly 19.4 Gw of wind capacity, 76 per cent of which will come from central tenders, followed by state utility markets, and lastly commercial and industrial segments.

Solar energy has the lowest LCOE, followed by wind, and the wind-solar hybrid. Wind has stronger capacity utilisation, a more consistent daily generation profile, and lower societal costs, marginal costs for dispatch, balancing costs.

However, solar will remain a cost-competitive and complementary resource alongside wind towards 2026, says the study.

One of the major challenges discoms face is the lack of round-the-clock power supply from renewable energy due to its variability in generation. Owing to this, they are forced to depend on conventional sources like coal.

According to the study, discoms require a firm and consistent supply of renewable energy to maintain grid stability, so there needs to be a balancing source of power. Hence, WSHs, coupled with battery storage, provide round-the-clock power for consumers. But high battery costs mean this solution still needs to gain in competitiveness against conventional sources.

The study finds lithium-ion battery pack prices, which were \$186/Kwh in 2018, have decreased sharply to \$132/Kwh in 2021. In the medium to long term battery pack costs are expected to decline at a compound annual growth rate of 9 per cent until 2026 and dip below \$100/kWh that year. This will lead to a decline in co-located storage costs at a CAGR of 6 per cent until 2026. Hence, the expected fall in battery prices by 2026 would make WSH, combined with storage, a viable proposition in comparison with

conventional generation sources. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wind-energy-has-huge-potential-in-india-to-cost-less-by-2026-gwec-122083001400_1.html

16. MGNREGA, NCRB, insurance data point to unabated strain at middle and lower ends of income distribution (indianexpress.com) Updated: August 31, 2022

As policymakers navigate the tumultuous global macroeconomic environment, they must be mindful of the highly uneven nature of the recovery, and take measures to address the distress of the most vulnerable.

After contracting in 2020-21, the Indian economy rebounded sharply in 2021-22, ending the year 1.5 per cent above its pre-pandemic level. This year the Reserve Bank of India expects it to grow at 7.2 per cent, making India one of the fastest growing economies in the world during this period. But the recovery from the pandemic lows has been anything but even. Beyond the headline numbers, there are indicators of the unabated pain stemming from the pandemic and the continuing distress in parts of the economy.

One possible indication of the scale of the distress comes from data on households/individuals who have worked under MGNREGA. In 2019-20, the year prior to the pandemic, 7.88 crore individuals worked under the scheme. In 2020-21, the first year of the pandemic, this number rose to 11.19 crore. While in the subsequent year it dipped to 10.62 crore, the number of individuals working under the scheme remained considerably higher than in the pre-pandemic period. In fact, so far this year, 6.29 crore individuals have already worked under the scheme as compared to 6.21 crore in the entire year of 2014-15. This growing reliance on MGNREGA likely indicates that other more remunerative employment opportunities remain limited. Another pointer to the economic distress at the lower end of the income distribution scale comes from the National Crime Records Bureau report — there has been a rise in suicides by daily wage earners and in 2021, daily wage earners accounted for a fourth of suicides in the country. As this paper has also reported, in 2021-22 over 2.3 crore life insurance policies were surrendered way ahead of their maturity by policy holders — this was more than thrice the number of policies surrendered the previous year. Other indicators point to subdued household purchasing power. As per data from SIAM, in 2021-22, sales of two-wheelers were lower than their 2019-20 levels by almost a quarter. Similarly, as per CRISIL, sales of cars priced below Rs 10 lakh grew by a mere 7 per cent in 2021-22, while those priced above Rs 10 lakh (the premium segment) grew by 38 per cent.

The bigger picture that emerges is one of pain at the lower and middle levels of income distribution. As policymakers navigate the tumultuous global macroeconomic environment, they must be mindful of the highly uneven nature of the recovery, and take measures to address the distress of the most vulnerable. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/distress-of-vulnerable-8121629/>

17. Low growth, inequality a trigger for freebies (thehindubusinessline.com) Aug 30, 2022

Governments need to initiate deep rooted reforms on several fronts to curb the ballooning subsidy bill

To define is to limit, said Oscar Wilde, which is perhaps the problem with freebies — for a low-income economy, it is difficult to limit the number of goods and services that need to be provided free or below cost.

But even rich countries provide freebies mainly to address inequalities — 70 per cent of all government spending in the US is on subsidies and transfer payments, in India it is at 44 per cent. The current controversy therefore seems more about political mileage. The tipping point seems to have been the electricity dues of Discoms to power utilities which amount to a staggering ₹1.3 trillion.

Provision of freebies is difficult to challenge since welfare is the goal of any elected government. Peter Drucker propounded 50 years ago that there was no established economic theory of what governments can do but that has not stopped them from trying; if they could not deliver growth, they would deliver the fruits of growth — cash, goods and services. Getting rid of subsidies will require a multi-fold increase in incomes and more equitable growth. A per capita income at around \$2,000 constrains us in many ways even though our GDP is the fourth largest.

First, it hugely restricts the direct tax base — income tax limits start at ₹2.5 lakh, well above the average per capita income which means the government has to depend on indirect taxes for as much as 50 per cent of all revenue. And even this is dependent on a few commodities like petroleum, alcohol which limits the capacity to tax.

Second, low incomes limit the ability of many to pay market prices for essential public goods — water, electricity, roads, transportation, education, health, requiring greater government subsidies. So, the political compulsions or the economic justification are hard to ignore.

Sustainability issue

The major criticism over freebies has been on grounds of sustainability. Governments cannot borrow infinitely without something giving. But the issues are more nuanced — first, sustainability is not about the probability of default, because governments service debt through rollovers and fresh borrowings, given that they have few cash flows other than borrowings and taxes.

This is not to understate the sustainability issue or support a free run on borrowing, but only to point out the larger perspective that sustainability should be a test of every government programme, not just freebies and subsidies, especially since outcomes are hard to establish. Finally, there is also the criticism that subsidies lead to under-recovery of costs and distort market prices. This would be true if all the costs were properly benchmarked but simply adding on the costs of inefficiencies, policy flip-flops and time over-runs cannot also be justified. This is evident in the pricing of public goods such as electricity, water, roads and highways, sanitation.

Many market experiments such as BOT, PPP did not work as expected, posing the classic social infrastructure problem — the failure of government to provide them (either for reasons of efficiency or funds) pushed them to markets, but market failure, for various reasons, have put the ball back to the government's court. Our PSUs have not exactly been models of efficiency, the power sector being an example.

A large part of the blame lies with the government. At the heart of the problem is an overestimation of power demand and a reckless asset creation between FY2010 and FY2017, thermal generation capacity expanded at an annual average rate of 11.4 per cent while annual power demand grew by less than 5 per cent. Saddled with excess capacity and muted offtake, discoms preferred to buy power through short-term contracts or from the open market often defaulting on their long-term PPAs, adversely impacting the generating utilities. The government's earlier policy of favouring state-owned utilities by protecting them from the bidding process also led to a pre-emption of PPAs in favour of utilities like NTPC, leaving private power producers stranded, a fact that RBI had also pointed out.

The costs of inefficiencies, delays, cost overruns would always lead to under recoveries as these often cannot be passed on. There was ambiguity over taxation — multiple taxes on coal (which account for 50 per cent of all generation) including GST but with electricity itself being outside GST led to input taxes being passed on to consumers. Clearly multiple reforms on many fronts are required, not just the scrapping of free power. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/low-growth-inequality-a-trigger-for-freebies/article65831484.ece>

18. Only 37% of trees transplanted in last 3 yrs survived in Delhi: Forest Dept ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) August 31, 2022

Only 37 percent of the trees transplanted in the national capital in 2021-22 have survived despite the implementation of the Delhi tree transplantation policy, according to forest department data.

A senior forest department official said, "The policy has made the tree transplantation process more scientific but we are yet to study its impact as it was implemented just a year-and-a-half ago".

The forest department data showed that only one-third (33.33 percent) of the 16,461 trees transplanted in Delhi over the last three years survived.

Only 1,521 of the 4,162 trees transplanted in the city in 2019-20 survived.

Just 2,001 (28.57 percent) of the 7,003 trees survived in 2020-21 and 1,965 (37.10 percent) of the 5,296 trees transplanted in 2021-22 are alive, the data showed.

According to the Delhi government's tree transplantation policy notified in December 2020, agencies concerned have to transplant a minimum of 80 percent of the trees affected by their development works.

The benchmark tree survival rate at the end of one year of tree transplantation is 80 percent.

Tree transplantation for 22 development projects has been undertaken in the last three years. The survival rate varies from five percent to 97 percent.

According to the data, only 1,382 (37 per cent) of the 3,736 trees transplanted for the construction of a stretch of the Dwarka Expressway, connecting Mahipalpur in Delhi to Kherki Daula toll plaza in Gurgaon, have survived.

Just 27 percent of the 4,425 trees transplanted for the construction of another stretch of the expressway are alive, it showed.

Of the 404 trees transplanted for "expansion, restoration of existing Parliament building" under the Central Vista project, only 30 percent have survived.

The survival rate of the 961 trees transplanted for the construction of the Majlis Park-Maujpur corridor of the Ph-IV project of the Delhi Metro is 46 percent.

The Delhi tree transplantation policy document states: "The final payment of the technical agency shall be linked to the tree survival rate achieved with a provision for a penalty for tree survival rate below the benchmark rate."

The first payment (20 percent of the finalized rate) is made after 100 percent completion of the transplantation of all trees through proper technical methods.

No further payment will be made if less than 50 percent of the trees fail to survive "as the transplantation operation will be declared a failure", it says.

In April, the government had approved a proposal to conduct a third-party audit to assess the success and survival rate of all transplanted trees in the national capital.

The Dehradun-based Forest Research Institute (FRI) has been roped in for this purpose. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/only-37-of-trees-transplanted-in-last-3-yrs-survived-in-delhi-forest-dept-122083000419_1.html.

19. Only 1 tree transplantation project in Delhi met 80% survival rate criteria ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Aug 31, 2022

Out of all tree transplantation projects undertaken in Delhi over the last three years, wherein authorities relocate 100% of those identified, only one project has so far met the Delhi Tree Transplantation Policy's survival rate threshold of 80%.

Unfortunately, a majority of these projects have had a low survival rate of around 20-30%, data submitted by the forest department in May 2022 through an affidavit in the Delhi high court showed.

This includes a meagre 7% survival rate for the Delhi Jal Board's tree transplantation efforts for the rehabilitation of the Kondli Sewage Treatment Plant (STP). Delhi's major projects have fared no better either.

Out of the 4,425 trees transplanted for the Dwarka Expressway Project from Shiv Murti to Road Under Bridge Sector 21, only 1,195 (or 27%) survived. Of the 927 trees transplanted as part of NBCC's Sarojini Nagar GPRA redevelopment project, only 222 (or 24%) survived, the submission showed.

Agency/ Department	Project	Trees being transplanted	Survival rate as per user agency	No of trees survived as per user agency	Survival rate as per forest dept	No of trees survived as per dept
MCD	Tehkhand Waste to Energy Project	45	N/A	N/A	97%	44
CPWD	Re-development of GPRA Colony at Mohammadpur	213	N/A	N/A	24%	51
Transport	Cluster bus depot at Burari	168	N/A	N/A	26%	44
NHAI	Site for Dwarka Expressway	3736	66%	2465	37%	1382
NCRTC	Regional Rapid Transit system in Delhi NCR	327	77%	252	46%	150
DJB	564 MLD STP at Okhla	18	80%	14	66%	12
NHAI	Dwarka Expressway Package-I from Shiv Murti, NH-8 to Road Under Bridge, near Sec-21	4425	69%	3052	27%	1195
DSIIDC	In Front of Entry Exit Gate of DTC Bus Depot in Bawana	23	N/A	N/A	22%	5
CPWD	Redevelopment of GPRA colony at Thyagraj Nagar	42	95%	39	N/A	N/A
DJB	Rehabilitation and Upgradation of Kondli -Phase I, Phase II & Phase III Waste Water Treatment Plant	181	N/A	N/A	7%	13
PWD	RUB at Shalimar Bagh	58	N/A	N/A	29%	17
CPWD	Proposed Expansion and Restoration of Parliament Complex at Plot no. 118	404	66%	266	30%	121
CPWD	Proposed Grameen Vikas Bhawan adjacent to Pandit Ravi Shanker Shukla Lane at KG Marg	38	92%	34	63%	24
NBCC	Redevelopment of AIIMS West Campus at Ansari Nagar	69	N/A	N/A	46%	32
NBCC	Redevelopment of GPRA Colony at Sarojini Nagar	927	N/A	N/A	24%	222
NBCC	AIIMS Ansar Nagar	298				

Overall, only one-third, or 33.33% (5,487), of the 16,461 trees transplanted over the last three years survived the process.

The Delhi Tree Transplantation Policy was officially notified in December 2020. However, projects from 2019 too began adhering to the norms. The policy mandates

at least 80% of all trees identified to be felled, be transplanted, and at least 80% of these must survive the process.

Transplantation, as per the policy, should be carried out only through empaneled agencies identified by the government, and four such expert bodies were recognised last year.

Other projects mentioned in the affidavit include the 'Proposed Expansion and Restoration project of Existing Parliament Building at Plot No. 118' — a part of the Central Vista project, which according to the forest department, saw a low survival rate of 30% for its 404 transplanted trees. Another segment of the Dwarka Expressway project, for which 3,736 trees were relocated, only 1,382 (or 37%) survived.

The affidavit also mentioned 22 projects that involved tree transplantation over the last three years, of which 100% transplantation was completed in 19 of these projects. However, if data submitted by the user agency were to be considered, at least three different projects met the 80% survival rate threshold.

In most cases, the survival rate analysed by the user agency for the project differed significantly with the survival rate mentioned by the forest department.

For instance, the Okhla STP project required transplantation of 18 trees. While the DJB pegged the survival rate at 80%, with 14 trees surviving, the forest department said that only 12 survived, bringing down the survival rate to 66%.

While the forest department said only 1,382 out of the 3,736 trees survived from the Dwarka Expressway project, the NHAI pegged that figure at 2,465. Similarly, for the Central Vista Project, the CPWD said the survival rate was assessed at 66%, compared to 30% by the forest department.

Officials believe that difference in methodology and time of assessment carried out by the user agency may be a factor behind data disparity between the forest department and the user agency.

"Trees for all projects were assessed prior to the submission in May, whereas the user agency may have carried out their assessment earlier. It is possible that trees were healthy initially but were unable to survive the transplantation process after a few months," said a forest official, stating that for a tree to survive, the monsoon season, along with summer and winter periods provide different challenges. "It is possible that the tree appears to be doing well initially, but is then unable to survive the winter, or the monsoon period," the official added.

Experts in Delhi say that while skills and expertise in transplantation are important factors, the root type of the tree, its age and the soil regime all play a crucial role in determining its transplantation survival. "If a tree has deep tap roots, it is difficult to transport. This includes Jamun and Neem trees. On the other hand, trees such as Banyan, Pilkhan, or even from the fig family, have surface roots, and these can easily be cut and made into a ball," says environmentalist Pradip Krishen.

Krishen stated that if the soil type and moisture regime don't match, trees will not be able to grow. "If a tree is taken from the Yamuna landscape to a rocky Aravalli terrain, it has little chance of survival," he said.

Environmental activist Bhavreen Kandhari said that a detailed tree preservation report should be prepared for each project, based on which decision should be taken on on-site preservation.

"It is a flawed and dangerous premise that large mature trees can be transplanted successfully from their location. As we have seen already with trees transplanted from the Dwarka Expressway, tree transplantation is a very challenging process and the success rate in Delhi is practically zero due to the climatic and soil conditions, tree species involved and other resource requirements like water that are in short supply," she said.

While the NHAI told HT it will assess the reasons behind the differing figures, other agencies like the DJB, NBCC and CPWD did not respond to queries. "We have not seen the forest department's assessment. We will try and analyse why there is a gap," an NHAI official said. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/only-1-tree-transplantation-project-in-delhi-met-80-survival-rate-criteria-report-101661936128905.html>

20. Private telecom operator laying cables beyond Chennai Corp-approved limit: Councillor (newindianexpress.com) 31 Aug 2022

CHENNAI: Ward 35 councillor Jeevan has alleged that a private telecom operator was laying cables beyond the permitted limit and this was causing a loss to the Corporation. According to the track rental agreement between the Greater Chennai Corporation and Jio Digital Fiber Private Limited, the company can lay cables for 1026.990 km on 6,473 streets across 200 wards.

For this purpose, the company has paid Rs 5.88 crore. "In my ward, they have permission to lay cables for 1,030m on eight streets. On 392 streets in my ward, they have erected 956 poles in 280 streets. Their work order was only for 2019-20, but they are continuing to work without seeking any permission," said Jeevan.

He added that the assistant engineer, who inquired about the work on his insistence, was threatened after which he went on leave. Another assistant engineer, who replaced him, is also being threatened. It seems like the funds that should ideally reach the Corporation have been diverted to some people as a one-time settlement.

The councillor added that according to the agreement, the company has to pay around `5,263 per km as rent every year. "The agreement says that there should be no overhead cables and the workers involved should always wear company uniforms. They are laying overhead cables for which they don't have permission and also exceeding the length permitted. This would cause a huge loss to the corporation's exchequer. I also filed a complaint with the electrical department of the corporation on August 6, but I haven't got any reply," said Jeevan.

In reply, Corporation Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said the Corporation prefers companies to lay underground cables. We would enquire into the agreement

executed in 2019 and check the work that took place subsequently. "While the telecom department of the central government recommends collecting a one-time fee, we have written to the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department seeking for a convergence between two policies without causing loss to the Corporation," he said. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2022/aug/31/private-telecom-operator-laying-cables-beyond-chennai-corp-approved-limitcouncillor-2493279.html>

21. कल्याणकारी योजनाओं में धांधली: अपात्रों को दी गई आर्थिक मदद, अब 80 करोड़ पंजाब सरकार वसूलेगी (amarujala.com) 30 Aug 2022

पंजाब की कई कल्याणकारी योजनाओं में धांधली उजागर हुई है। वित्त विभाग के विशेष ऑडिट में इस खुलासे के बाद अब सरकार लगभग 80 करोड़ रुपये की वसूली करने जा रही है। सूबे की शगुन और निर्माण श्रमिकों को विभिन्न योजनाओं में अपात्रों को आर्थिक मदद दी गई है। हैरानी की बात यह है कि इन अपात्रों में कुछ ऐसे भी लाभार्थी हैं जिनकी पहले ही मौत हो चुकी है।

पंजाब वित्त विभाग द्वारा हाल ही में किए गए विशेष ऑडिट में यह पाया गया है कि पंजाब बिल्डिंग एंड अदर कंस्ट्रक्शन वर्कर्स (बीओसीडब्ल्यू) अधिकारियों ने कथित तौर पर बिचौलियों के साथ मिलकर अपात्र लाभार्थियों को वित्तीय मदद दी। कुछ मामले तो नौ साल पुराने भी हैं। विडंबना यह है कि श्रम विभाग के दोषी अधिकारियों के खिलाफ कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की गई है।

विभिन्न जिलों के सहायक श्रम आयुक्तों को जारी पत्र में अपात्रों को दी गई योजना की राशि वसूल कर जमा करने का निर्देश दिया है। इससे पहले 2020 में सेंट्रल एडमिनिस्ट्रेटिव ट्रिब्यूनल की एक रिपोर्ट विधानसभा में प्रस्तुत की गई। इस रिपोर्ट में 80 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की वित्तीय अनियमितताओं को उजागर किया गया था। अब वित्त विभाग के विशेष ऑडिट में फिर से वित्तीय अनियमितताओं का खुलासा हुआ है।

ऑडिट में हजारों अपात्र लाभार्थियों को शगुन योजना के तहत आर्थिक मदद मिलने का खुलासा हुआ है। अनुग्रह राशि योजना के तहत उन निर्माण श्रमिकों को आर्थिक मदद दी जाती थी जिनके नाम मृत्यु के बाद दर्ज किए गए थे।

अधिकारियों के खिलाफ आरोप पत्र दाखिल

विभिन्न कल्याणकारी योजनाओं में वित्तीय अनियमितताओं के लिए जिम्मेदार अधिकारियों के खिलाफ भी सरकार ने कार्रवाई शुरू कर दी है। प्राथमिक जांच में दोषी अधिकारियों के खिलाफ संबंधित विभागों द्वारा आरोप पत्र दाखिल किए गए हैं। जल्द ही सरकार के स्तर पर इस मामले में कार्रवाई को अंतिम रूप दिया जाएगा।

विभाग अपात्र लाभार्थियों से राशि वसूलने का प्रयास करेगा। यदि किसी लाभार्थी की मृत्यु हुई है तो राशि उसके कानूनी वारिसों से वसूल की जाएगी। - मनवेश सिंह सिद्धू, प्रधान सचिव, श्रम विभाग। <https://www.amarujala.com/chandigarh/financial-irregularities-found-in-welfare-schemes-in-punjab>