

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (05.10.2022 to 06.10.2022)

1. Dolo controversy revives demand for regulating pharma marketing practices ([frontline.thehindu.com](https://www.frontline.thehindu.com)) Oct 06, 2022

The Hippocratic Oath aside, there are laws in place to check unethical doctors. However, that is not the case with the marketing practices of the pharmaceutical industry, which are governed only by a voluntary code of conduct. The demand for a statutory code has been a long-standing one and was made again recently after the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) issued a press release on July 13 regarding raids it carried out on a Bengaluru-based group “engaged in the business of manufacturing and marketing of pharmaceutical products and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients”. The search operations were spread across nine States and 36 locations of the group, which has a presence in over 50 countries. The press release pointed to the group’s use of unethical practices to promote its brands.

The charge against the company was that it had in its books expenses for the distribution of freebies to medical professionals under the heads “promotion and propaganda”, “seminars and symposiums”, and medical advisories. The freebies were worth Rs.1,000 crore and included travel expenses, perquisites, and gifts to doctors and medical professionals.

Pharma marketing is governed by the Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP), which is voluntary and has been in force since 2015. The Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives’ Associations of India (FMRAI) has been demanding that it be made a legal requirement. (See “Faulty Prescriptions”, Frontline, April 2016.) On August 18, at the hearing of a public interest litigation petition that the federation and the Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan, an NGO, filed last year, the petitioners shared the CBDT press release and media reports with the Supreme Court. During the proceedings it became known that the company in question was the Bengaluru-based Micro Labs Limited, which manufactures the antipyretic Dolo 650.

Dolo, available for Rs.30 for a pack of 15, was in huge demand during COVID and was recommended by doctors. According to market estimates, the company sold 350 crore tablets, earning it Rs.400 crore in revenue during that period.

Micro Labs did not refute the CBDT’s seizures but was emphatic that it had nothing to do with promoting Dolo 650. The company did not respond to Frontline’s request for an official response.

According to the company, the medicine was under price control and did not need promotion. On January 22, Dilip Surana, chairman and CEO of Micro Labs, was quoted in the media as saying that the brand’s popularity was unexpected. <FZ,1,0,24>On February 4, a report in a business daily described how Dolo “turned into a hit with the right dose of perception and prescription”.

Government’s response

On the issue of pharmaceutical companies providing freebies to doctors, the National Medical Commission (the body that replaced the Medical Council of India) wrote to the Income Tax

Department on August 3 seeking details of doctors who are said to have received freebies. The conduct of doctors is covered by the Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002, under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956. Any complaint of professional misconduct by a medical practitioner is addressed by State Medical Councils.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha on August 5, Bhagwanth Khuba, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers, stated that the UCPMP had been in operation since January 1, 2015. He said it had been adopted by all the major associations of pharmaceutical companies. He stated that complaints about code violations had been forwarded to the associations concerned for action.

The Minister also said the Department of Pharmaceuticals had not received “any representation in the recent past from civil societies and patents groups to make the UCPMP code mandatory and that the writ petition by the FMRAI was under the consideration of the Supreme Court of India”.

The FMRAI had made numerous requests to the government since 2005 to implement a statutory code for pharma marketing. When the UCPMP was introduced in 2015, the FMRAI had criticised its voluntary nature. Besides, in a reply to an RTI application by the FMRAI in 2017, a Deputy Director (Policy) of the Department of Pharmaceuticals had written that the Ministry of Law was looking into making the UCPMP statutory.

According to Khuba’s statement, the code was sufficient to address the concerns raised as it covered various aspects pertaining to medical representatives, textual and audiovisual promotional materials, samples, gifts, and so on. The code outlined the need to form ethics committees for complaints about marketing practices, an apex ethics committee for their review, and other complaint-handling procedures as well as penalty provisions.

He also listed out provisions of the Income Tax Act, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, the Prevention of Corruption Act, and the Indian Medical Council Professional Conduct (Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002, as a sufficient and enforceable legal regime to counter, control, and disincentivise unethical marketing practices.

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 and its accompanying rules govern the manufacture, sale, and distribution of drugs. Direct-to-consumer advertising is prohibited. However, there is no law to regulate the promotion of pharmaceutical products to health care professionals, which is the main contention of the FMRAI’s petition.

High-level committee

On September 12, the Department of Pharmaceuticals issued an office memorandum announcing the constitution of a five-member High-Level Committee “to consider various issues pertaining to the UCPMP and examine the requirement for a legally enforceable mechanism for regulating marketing practices by pharma companies”. The committee, with NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul as chair, includes the CBDT chairman, the Secretaries of Health and Family Welfare and the Department of Pharmaceuticals, and the Joint Secretary (Policy) in that department officiating as member secretary.

The committee will examine, one, the provisions with regard to pharmaceutical marketing practices and align the interventions for effective implementation among health care providers

and industry, and, two, the need for a legally enforceable mechanism for regulating marketing practices, including a study of such practices across the globe. The committee has to submit its recommendations within 90 days.

The setting up of the committee coincides with the hearings on the UCPMP in the Supreme Court, which is still to receive the counter-affidavit it asked the government to file within 10 days of the last hearing on August 18.

‘Investment in doctors’

Micro Labs might not have needed to promote Dolo 650 by investing a lot of money, but it is possible that it did reach out to medical professionals.

According to an industry insider who left the industry after 2010 because the marketing style had become “difficult to digest”, nobody would spend money on Dolo to promote it. Dolo as a brand had a turnover of Rs.30-35 crore, which increased to Rs.500 crore because of the circumstances created by the pandemic. It now accounts for nearly 40 per cent of Micro Labs’ total sales.

However, he explained that in the medicine industry there was the chronic segment—hypertension, diabetes, cardiac conditions, neuro-psychiatry, skin and skin structure, and so on, which required long-term treatment—and the non-chronic segment. “Investments in doctors” made financial sense in the former segment, he said.

“Investment” in doctors happened in various ways. For instance, companies would sponsor a physician for a conference and sponsor travel and cost of stay for the physician’s family as well. Then there were personal forms of investment in doctors. For a long-term business relationship with a customer (the doctor) in the chronic segment, there would be a 10-15 per cent investment, and the contract would run for about a year. Micro Labs was said to be among the pioneers in segmented speciality-driven marketing.

Changed atmosphere

The nature of marketing in the industry has changed over time. Earlier, every company had only one division, but in the last one and a half decades, multiple divisions emerged, diversifying on the basis of speciality. From one banner of products, there were now multiple ones. Focussed marketing was the catchword.

Doctors also realised the value of their prescriptions. For example, a drug prescribed for a patient with cardiovascular disease was expected to be used at least for a year until a replacement arrived. The investment model suited both. Sales representatives who relied on knowledge-based marketing found themselves at sea as doctors increasingly turned to the Internet for information about a drug. There was little new that marketing executives could tell them.

A medical representative was evaluated on the basis of how much he could sell. Industries earmarked marketing expenses and made investments on the basis of territory and productivity of the medical representative. Those who brought in, say, a business of Rs.25 lakh a month would have their marketing expenses shored up accordingly. “If it was the doctor who was

targeted for a period of seven days, the next seven days it would be the chemist,” explained the insider.

However, a minuscule percentage of doctors refuse to succumb to such incentives and will go to great lengths to ensure that their products are of high quality and that the patient benefited.

Pharmas go scot-free

While doctors’ licences are revoked for violating the code outlined in the IMC Regulations 2002, there is nothing to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable for the largesse doctors receive. There are numerous examples around the world of pharmaceutical companies being subject to stringent laws that prohibit and penalise unethical marketing practices.

According to the FMRAI petition, sales promotion expenses account for nearly 20 per cent of the cost of medicines. Unethical drug promotion may result in over prescription in terms of higher doses and longer durations, as well as prescriptions for irrational drug combinations, the petition says.

Despite the fact that several drugs were banned between 1983 and 2013, studies say that combination drugs accounted for 47 per cent of the pharmaceutical market. Experts such as Malini Aisola of the All India Drug Action Network estimate that unsafe Fixed Dose Combinations account for 25 per cent of the pharmaceutical market by sales value even today.

In order to control unethical pharmaceutical practices, in 2009 the then United Progressive Alliance government at the Centre called a meeting with stakeholders. Six years later, the UCPMP was established. Since then the FMRAI has sent several suggestions to strengthen the code, including making it statutory.

The 59th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Functioning of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, published in 2012, notes a link between drug manufacturers and medical professionals.

In November 2015, 10 months after the UCPMP came into being, the government admitted that the voluntary code was ineffective and that a statutory framework was necessary. In 2016, the FMRAI submitted the draft of an Ethical Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing and Practices to the Department of Pharmaceuticals. But nothing came of it.

A Comptroller and Auditor General report in 2016 found that there were 36 cases across seven States with a tax impact of Rs.55.10 crore in connection with freebies/gifts to medical professionals. In 2017, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers proposed a draft Drugs Control (Marketing) Order under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, to the Ministry of Law. Nothing came of it too.

The issue is not whether an antipyretic drug manufacturer pushed for the drug’s promotion. The point is that even if it did there is, at present, little the government can do by way of prosecuting such a manufacturer.

-Pharma marketing is governed by the Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP), which is voluntary and has been in force since 2015.

-The demand for a statutory code for the marketing practices of pharmaceuticals resurfaced with the Central Board of Direct Taxes raids on a Bengaluru-based pharmaceutical group. The group was reportedly using unethical practices to promote its brands.

-The Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives' Associations of India (FMRAI) has been demanding that it be made a legal requirement.

-On September 12, the Department of Pharmaceuticals issued an office memorandum announcing the constitution of a five-member High-Level Committee "to consider various issues pertaining to the UCPMP and examine the requirement for a legally enforceable mechanism for regulating marketing practices by pharma companies". <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/public-health/dolo-controversy-revives-demand-for-regulating-pharma-marketing-practices/article65949470.ece>

2. EC writes to political parties to give authentic info on financial viability of election promises (theprint.in) October 05, 2022

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday wrote to the political parties for providing authentic information to the voters to assess the financial viability of their election promises.

"It cannot overlook inadequate disclosures on election promises and consequential undesirable impact on financial sustainability as empty Election promises so made have far-reaching ramifications," said ECI.

ECI prescribes a standardized disclosure proforma, facilitating comparability, with minute details broadly capturing standard parameters as used by FC, RBI, FRBM, CAG and in Budgets.

Election Commission aimed to inform voters about the financial feasibility of election promises in the manifesto and also whether sustainable within the financial space of the State/Union.

While the existing guidelines under MCC require the political parties and candidates to explain the rationale for promises made therein as well as the possible ways and means to finance such promises, the Election Commission of India has observed that the declarations are quite routine, ambiguous and do not provide adequate information to voters to exercise informed choice in an election.

Election Commission in its meeting led by CEC Rajiv Kumar and attended by EC Anup Chandra Pandey decided that ECI cannot remain a mute spectator and overlook the undesirable impact of some of the promises and offers, on the conduct of free and fair elections and maintain a level playing field for all political parties and candidates. ECI agrees in principle with the point of view that framing manifestos is the right of the political parties.

This came amid an ongoing political debate over freebie politics. <https://theprint.in/india/ec-writes-to-political-parties-to-give-authentic-info-on-financial-viability-of-election-promises/1154862/>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

3. CAG highlights glaring lapses in rural electrification scheme rollout ([deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com)) OCT 05 2022

Karnataka: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on the implementation of Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) across five electricity supply companies (escoms) in Karnataka has revealed several discrepancies in allotment of contracts and deficiencies in the management of the funds under the scheme.

Though 39 unelectrified villages, 13,949 partially electrified villages, and 5,70,922 BPL households were electrified in the state under the said schemes, the report pointed out that the failure to monitor the projects by the state government and respective escoms had resulted in cost and time overrun.

The five escoms considered for the CAG audit are Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom), Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (CESC), Gulbarga Electricity Supply Company Limited (Gescom), Hubli Electricity Supply Company Limited (Hescom), and Mangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Mescom).

Pointing out the major discrepancies in awarding the contract, the audit observed that all five escoms appointed a project management agency (PMA) without inviting tenders, by availing exemption under Section 4G of Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Act, 1999. Also, the PMA was appointed at a higher rate against what was allowed in the scheme.

Deviations were also observed in selecting the bidder while awarding the contract and it was observed that non-responsive bidders who had failed to submit all the required documents for evaluation were also considered. "The grounds on which the bidder was made responsive was not justified as the essential requirements of the bid conditions were not met with, and the action had negated the purpose of tendering. Moreover, awarding the work to non-responsive bidders violated KTPP Rules," the audit report noted.

According to the report, the escoms took 12 to 37 months beyond the stipulated periods thus deferring the beneficiaries of the project. The major reason for time overrun was attributed to the delay in awarding the contract and initiating the work on the ground. In a few cases, there were delays in acquiring the statutory clearances from forest and railway authorities to execute the works.

Also, the escoms failed to conduct field surveys before preparing the detailed project report (DPR), resulting in variation in the quantity of materials required and reallocation of costs multiple times.

An additional financial burden of Rs 225.49 crore over and above the sanctioned cost on which no grant was eligible under DDUGJY was also recorded, owing to the procurement of materials at a higher cost, awarding the contract at higher rates, and failure to penalise the contractors for the delay in completion of the projects.

The state government and the escoms had also failed to monitor the project progress periodically, the report noted.

Both the DDUGJY and Saubhagya are Centre's initiatives that are directed at rural electrification by providing last-mile connectivity and electricity connections to all unelectrified households. <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/top-karnataka-stories/cag-highlights-glaring-lapses-in-rural-electrification-scheme-rollout-1150976.html>

4. Karnataka needs a law to fix potholes ([deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com)) OCT 05 2022

The Karnataka High Court on September 19, 2022 came down heavily on the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for its failure to implement the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on storm water drains (SWDs) for filling of potholes and removing the encroachments on SWDs.

According to the statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau for 2021, Bengaluru accounts for 30 incidents and 30 deaths caused due to negligence of civic bodies. Bengaluru has topped the chart in 2019 and 2020 too. Karnataka saw the highest number of incidents, 32, and the highest number of deaths, 33, because of the negligence of civic bodies in 2021.

The issue of potholes is an important one for Bengaluru, especially in the backdrop of the heavy rains that have increased waterlogging and worsened the condition of the roads. The incessant rains add on to the worries, as the accumulated water makes it almost impossible to find out if the road has potholes, leading to a spike in accidents. This puts the life of commuters at risk, as evidenced by the fatalities, which have been on the rise. But, why are there so many potholes? This is potentially owing to the bad quality of roads, made of materials that are substandard and inadequate. Additionally, the lack of coordination between various civic agencies leads to the digging of roads, leaving them unattended.

BBMP maintains a mobile application, Fix my street, where the citizens can file complaints against potholes. Based on the complaint, action is taken along with photographs and a report. The app has drawn criticism for technical glitches and has been touted to be dysfunctional. BBMP has also provided toll free numbers, which are not functional, making it difficult for citizens to file complaints.

Social media outrage triggers action, always. In June 2022, a commuter shared a video of a road that was riddled with potholes on the Bengaluru-Mysuru road. This video triggered many responses on social media, forcing the authorities to take action. But, is social media outrage the only way forward to force civic agencies to fulfill their responsibilities?

In 2019, the Karnataka High Court ordered the BBMP to give compensation for accidents caused due to poor condition of roads and footpaths. This would be subject to submission of all relevant documents by the victims. Sadly, the BBMP has only paid rarely, indicating that there is lack of clarity in the compensation guidelines. There have been various instances of affected victims approaching the BBMP, but their claims have either been rejected without cause, or have been made to run from pillar to post. Even to this day, most citizens are not aware that they have a right to compensation for injury or death caused by potholes and poor condition of the roads and footpaths.

Every citizen has a right to live a meaningful and dignified life and this includes the right to good roads. Therefore, BBMP as a statutory body has a legal and constitutional obligation to ensure pothole-free roads and should be held accountable for accidents caused due to potholes. Additionally, the lack of coordination between various civic agencies is also a reason for the pathetic condition of the roads, with civic agencies shying blame on who has dug the road, shrugging off the responsibility. The lack of transparency and accountability in construction projects along with the lack of oversight makes this a never-ending saga. The buck should stop at some point-- where the negligence of those responsible is exposed. Contractors and engineers should be held accountable for faulty design and poor maintenance. Authorities owe a nondelegable duty of care to citizens and should be held accountable for the same.

In Karnataka, the approach should move beyond being merely just compensation-based. It is imperative that officials are held responsible for the conditions of the victims. Despite the multiple deaths and injuries caused, we see there is no legislation that is explicitly or specifically dealing with the accountability for injuries or deaths caused because of potholes. Post complaint of a pothole, it is imperative that such potholes are filled within a stipulated time, failing which action should be taken and this should attract criminal liability.

Potholes have plagued the state for long, and it is time to put an end to these woes, by granting compensation while also holding those responsible accountable. A specific law to deal with cases of bad roads and potholes, and to prescribe accountability and monitoring mechanisms should be enacted to ensure that erring authorities and officials are held liable. The insufficiency of the existing provisions should provide an impetus for the same. The Kerala High Court very rightly described road accidents caused by potholes as man-made disasters. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/karnataka-needs-a-law-to-fix-potholes-1150990.html>

5. Bhopal: Urban bodies collected 60% of property tax in 5 yrs, says report ([freepressjournal.in](https://www.freepressjournal.in)) October 05, 2022

Amid the conflict between Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) and Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) a report suggests the urban bodies collected only 60% of property tax during the five-year period from 2015 to 2020, showing laxity on their part or their limitation.

Notably, a team of IMC led by an officer Lata Agrawal reached MPCA headquarters on Monday and asked the staff to pay the property tax while India-South Africa T-20 match was to be played on Tuesday.

The MPCA president Abhilash Khandekar later alleged that this was all done as a few young IAS officers of IMC didn't get the passes to watch the match whereas the MPCA had already provided 25 passes to the IMC commissioner Pratibha Pal.

A CAG report on urban bodies financial status in Madhya Pradesh states, "The average collection of Property Tax for the period 2015-20 was 60 per cent of total demand. The collection declined from 69 to 45 per cent during the period 2017-20. An amount of Rs 269.66 crore was outstanding for collection as on March 2020 in the selected Urban Local Bodies. GIS Survey was conducted only in 123 (30 per cent) of Urban Local Bodies. Out of 12 selected Nagar Palika Parishads, only Raghogarh and Seoni and out of 17 selected Nagar Parishads, only Sultanpur collected Service Charges in lieu of property taxes."

The report further stated similarly, in the case of water charges of 33 selected Urban Local Bodies, during 2016-20, collection had declined from 29 to 15 per cent. An amount of Rs 375.40 crore of water charges was outstanding in selected Urban Local Bodies as on March 2020.

“Further, we noticed that none of the selected Urban Local Bodies had installed metres for water connections and only fixed water charges were being levied. Therefore, the collection of monthly water charges from the beneficiaries was insufficient against the expenses incurred on operation and maintenance of water supply. Shop rent amounting to Rs 8.9 crore was also outstanding against leaseholders / occupiers”, stated the report. <https://www.freepressjournal.in/bhopal/bhopal-urban-bodies-collected-60-of-property-tax-in-5-yrs-says-report>

6. बिजली कंपनियों पर 3762 करोड़ लुटाने का आरोप, कैग रिपोर्ट में खुलासा (mpbreakingnews.in) October 4, 2022

भोपाल। मार्क्सवादी कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी ने प्रदेश में बिजली कंपनियों की मनमानी को लेकर कड़ा प्रहार किया है। उसने कहा है कि ऊर्जा मंत्री जब कभी खंबे पर चढ़कर, कभी नाले में उतरकर सुर्खियां बटोर रहे हैं लेकिन उनकी सरकार की बिजली कंपनियों पर मेहरबानी से 3762 करोड़ का घाटा हुआ है। इससे साफ है कि ऊर्जा मंत्री जी और उनकी सरकार जनता की नहीं बिजली उत्पादन कंपनियों की सरकार है।

रिटायरमेंट एज वृद्धि पर बड़ी अपडेट, हाई कोर्ट का अहम निर्णय, कर्मचारियों को मिलेगा लाभ

मार्क्सवादी कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के राज्य सचिव जसविंदर सिंह ने एक बयान जारी करते हुए कहा है कि हाल की कैग रिपोर्ट में यह खुलासा हुआ है कि पिछले छह साल में ज़रूरत से ज्यादा बिजली खरीदने पर 827 करोड़ का अतिरिक्त भुगतान किया गया है। उन्होंने ने कहा है 'मंत्री जी और उनकी सरकार बिजली कंपनियों पर इतनी मेहरबान है कि उसने न केवल ज़रूरत से अधिक बिजली खरीदी, बल्कि प्रति यूनिट बिजली की दर का भुगतान भी अधिक कर 1397 करोड़ का फायदा पहुंचाया।' माकपा के कहा है कि कैग की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2015-16 से 2020-21 के दौरान आईपीपी से क्रय किए बिना 706 करोड़ का अतिरिक्त भुगतान किया गया है। इतना ही नहीं कंपनियों के मुनाफे का समायोजन करने से भी 30 करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ है।

जसविंदर सिंह ने कहा है कि इससे न केवल कंपनियों की तिजोरियां भरी गई बल्कि बिजली की दरों में वृद्धि, जबरिया वसूली, फर्जी बिलों और आंकलित खपत के नाम पर उपभोक्ताओं की लूट भी की गई है। जिससे जाहिर कि यह सरकार प्रदेश के बिजली उपभोक्ताओं की नहीं बल्कि बिजली कंपनियों की हितैषी सरकार है। जाहिर है कि इस लूट में से भाजपा को चुनाव में चंदा और मंत्री जी को मोटा कमीशन भले ही मिल गया हो, मगर प्रदेश की जनता को बेरहमी से लूटा गया है। माकपा ने कहा है कि कैग की रिपोर्ट सामने आने पर मंत्री जी से इस्तीफे की मांग की जानी चाहिए लेकिन ऐसा न होने पर इतनी उम्मीद तो कर ही सकते हैं कि वे उपभोक्ताओं की लूट के लिए जनता से माफी तो मांगें। <https://mpbreakingnews.in/headlines/mp-3762-crore-loss-due-to-power-companies-disclosed-in-cag-report-cpim-took-a-dig-msk/>

7. Yamuna Authority: अब जमीन खरीद घोटाले में फंसंगे कई अफसर, जल्दी गिरेगी गाज (tricitytoday.com) Oct 04, 2022

Greater Noida News: बुलंदशहर जिले के वैलाना गांव के किसानों से कौड़ियों के भाव जमीन खरीदकर यमुना एक्सप्रेसवे इंडस्ट्रियल डेवलपमेंट अथॉरिटी (Yamuna Authority) को करोड़ों रुपए में बेचने वालों पर जल्दी गाज गिरने वाली है। इस जमीन खरीद घोटाले में शामिल यमुना अथॉरिटी के अधिकारी भी नपने वाले हैं। जमीन बेचकर करोड़पति बनने वाले लोगों पर जल्द शिकंजा कसेगा। यह जमीन यमुना अथॉरिटी के अधिसूचित एरिया से बाहर है, लेकिन नियमों को ताक पर रखकर जमीन खरीदी गई थी। आपको बता दें कि इसी घोटाले में यमुना अथॉरिटी के तत्कालीन मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी पीसी गुप्ता जेल जा चुके हैं।

मनमाने ढंग से जमीन की कीमत बढ़ाते गए अफसर

जमीन खरीदने का खेल इतने तक ही नहीं थमा। एक ही गांव में एक ही स्थान पर अलग-अलग रेट पर जमीन खरीदी गई। पहली बार जमीन 990 रुपये प्रतिवर्ग मीटर की दर से खरीदी गई। इसके बाद 1,254 रुपए प्रति वर्ग मीटर की दर से खरीदी गई। तीसरी बार जमीन 1,896 रुपए प्रति वर्ग मीटर की दर से खरीदी गई। मामला जमीन खरीद तक ही नहीं थमा। इस जमीन की खरीद में अथॉरिटी ने साढ़े तीन करोड़ रुपए स्टॉप ड्यूटी और 14 लाख रुपये रजिस्ट्रेशन मनी पर खर्च कर दिए।

घोटाले में इन अधिकारियों की आ सकती है शामत

जमीन खरीदने के लिए अलग से अथॉरिटी में एक समिति होती है। जिसमें उच्च अधिकारियों के साथ प्लानिंग, प्रॉजेक्ट, लैंड और राजस्व विभाग से जुड़े अफसर शामिल होते हैं। यह जमीन मास्टर प्लान से बाहर खरीदी गई। इस जमीन की जांच सीएजी ने की है। अब मामले का हुआ है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट विधानसभा में पटल पर रखी जाएगी। आपको बता दें कि पिछले सप्ताह ग्रेटर नोएडा विकास प्राधिकरण से जुड़ी सीएजी की रिपोर्ट विधानसभा में पेश की जा चुकी है। इस घोटाले के लिए जिम्मेदार अफसर जल्दी जेल जा सकते हैं। इस मामले में एफआईआर दर्ज है। पुलिस जांच कर रही है। <https://tricitytoday.com/yamuna-city/now-many-officers-will-be-caught-in-the-land-purchase-scam-33783.html>

8. खुलासा: ग्रेटर नोएडा और यमुना अथॉरिटी में मैनेजर रहे बसी खान के कारनामे, खुद छाप दिए अफसरों के आदेश (tricitytoday.com) 5 Oct 2022

Greater Noida: यमुना अथॉरिटी में लॉजिक्स बिल्ड एस्टेट प्राइवेट लिमिटेड से जुड़े मामले की परत दर परत उखड़कर सामने आने लगी हैं। इस मामले को महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने पकड़ा है। वहीं इस मामले की जांच ग्रेटर नोएडा अथॉरिटी के तत्कालीन अपर मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी जर्नादन ने भी सन 2017 में की थी। मार्च 2017 में एसीईओ जर्नादन की जांच में प्रबंधक बसी खान पर लगाए गए आरोप पूरी तरह से सही पाए गए थे। एसीईओ ने अपनी जांच पूरी करके 4 मई 2017 को ग्रेटर नोएडा के तत्कालीन सीईओ के पास भेज दी थी।

जांच समिति का फर्जी पत्र जारी किया गया

मिली जानकारी के मुताबिक तत्कालीन एसीईओ जर्नादन की जांच में सामने आया कि बसी खान ने लॉजिक्स बिल्ड एस्टेट प्राइवेट लिमिटेड की पत्रावली पर वित्त विभाग के अभिमत के आधार पर परीक्षण किया। यह परीक्षण यमुना अथॉरिटी की ओर से उपलब्ध कराए गए प्रकरण पर किया गया था। एसीईओ जर्नादन की ओर से विवेचना शुरू की गई। एसीईओ ने अपनी विवेचना में पाया कि 2 सितंबर 2016 को बसी खान की ओर से एक समिति का गठन किया गया। जिसमें अध्यक्ष एसीईओ को बनाया गया। वहीं, सदस्य के तौर पर उप मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी, ओएसडी भूलेख, जीएम प्लानिंग, ओएसडी परियोजना, सहायक विधि अधिकारी और प्रबंधक सम्पत्ति को शामिल किया गया। इस समिति का गठन करने के लिए एसीईओ का हस्तारक्षित पत्र 2 सितंबर 2016 को दिखाया गया। आदेश के डिस्पेच नंबर 373 और दिनांक 2 सितंबर को समिति का गठन करने संबंधित आदेश कूटरचना करके निर्गत किया गया।

दागी होने के बावजूद मलाईदार विभागों में रहे बसी खान एसीईओ की जांच आख्या में बताया गया है कि पहले से गठित समिति को अतिक्रमित करते हुए नई समिति बनाई गई। नई समिति में एसीईओ की अध्यक्षता में कुछ नए अधिकारियों को शामिल किया गया। एसीईओ जर्नादन ने अपनी जांच में बसी खान को दोषी ठहराया। उस दौरान बसी खान यमुना अथॉरिटी में प्रतिनियुक्ति पर थे। बसी खान पर लगाए गए सभी आरोप सिद्ध हुए थे। मजेदार बात यह है कि बसी खान के खिलाफ अभी तक कोई कार्रवाई नहीं हुई है। बसी खान अभी तक ग्रेटर नोएडा अथॉरिटी में मलाईदार प्रॉपटी डिपार्टमेंट और बिल्डर डिपार्टमेंट में काम कर रहे थे। अभी हाल ही के दिनों मस उनका तबादला यूपीसीडा कानपुर हुआ है। अब देखना है बसी खान के खिलाफ एक्शन कब होता है। <https://tricitytoday.com/greater-noida/the-exploits-of-basi-khan-who-was-manager-in-greater-noida-and-yamuna-authority-33813.html>

9. Noida आवेदक की जगह दूसरी कंपनी को जमीन दी (samacharnama.com) 5 Oct 2022

सीएजी ऑडिट में जमीन आवंटन को लेकर यमुना प्राधिकरण को कठघरे में खड़ा किया गया है। वर्ष 2012 में आवेदन करने वाली कंपनी के बजाय दूसरी कंपनी को चार लाख वर्ग मीटर जमीन आवंटित कर दी। इससे प्राधिकरण को करीब 30 करोड़ रुपये का लीज रेंट में नुकसान हुआ है।

यमुना प्राधिकरण का सीएजी ने ऑडिट किया है। यह ऑडिट रिपोर्ट इसी सत्र के दौरान विधानसभा के पटल में रखी गई है। इस रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि वर्ष 2012 में रवि डेवलपर और पीआरजी ग्रुप ने जमीन आवंटन के लिए आवेदन किया। इसमें कंसोसिएम पीआरजी ग्रुप को चार लाख वर्ग मीटर जमीन आवंटित की गई, लेकिन जमीन की रजिस्ट्री एससी इंफ्रासिटी को की गई। इससे प्राधिकरण को नुकसान हुआ। सीएजी रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि यहां पर बिना विकास कार्य किए ही पांच सब लीज कर दी गई, जबकि पहले विकास कार्य करना होता है। कंपनी ने रियल वेंचर्स को 11610 वर्ग मीटर, स्वीकृति इंफ्राकॉम को 25010 वर्ग मीटर, लोटस को 10332 वर्ग मीटर, त्रिवेली को 11662 वर्ग मीटर और कास्मिक को 10262 वर्ग मीटर जमीन सबलीज कर दी गई। यह भी नियमों के विरुद्ध किया गया। उस समय तत्कालीन प्रबंधक ने बिना उच्च अधिकारियों की अनुमित के ही यह सबलीज की थी। अब विधानसभा की समिति कार्रवाई की सिफारिश करेगी। <https://samacharnama.com/city/noida/Noida-gave-land-to-another-company-instead-of-the-applicant/cid8691877.htm>

10. Maharashtra government sanctions revised budget of 11,736 crore for two-decade-old Marathwada dam ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Oct 05, 2022

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday gave a revised administrative approval for the two-decade-old Krishna-Marathwada irrigation scheme in Marathwada region. The state cabinet has sanctioned ₹11,736 crore as the revised cost of the project, which is almost five times the original cost. This is the second revised administrative approval given to the project, whose cost has increased by close to ₹7,000 crore in the last 14 years.

Revised administrative approval had become a contentious issue after an irrigation scam worth thousands of crores was unearthed in the erstwhile Congress-NCP government in 2012. Krishna-Marathwada was one of the 242 irrigation projects over which the then Maharashtra government was indicted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in his 2013 report for serious cost and time overruns.

Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, a vocal voice against the scam and revised administrative approvals given by the then government, said that they never objected to it. “We have never objected to approving revised administrative approval. Our objection was spending crores on projects without taking revised administrative approval, which is an irregularity,” Fadnavis told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

The Krishna-Marathwada irrigation project was first approved by the state back in 2003-04 and its estimated cost was ₹2,383 crore. In 2008-09, after the first revised administrative approval, its cost went up to ₹4,845 crore. “The current revised administrative approval to the project of ₹11,736 crore means that the cost of the project has increased by ₹6,891 crore in the last 14 years,” said officials from the water resources department.

The project is aimed at irrigating over one lakh hectares of land in the drought-prone Marathwada region. It envisages three lift irrigation schemes to draw 23.66 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) water from the Krishna basin. Of this, 17.98 TMC is proposed to be utilised for Osmanabad district and 5.68 TMC to be utilised for Ashti tehsil in Beed district.

“The project will help in bringing 1.24 lakh acres of land under irrigation. It will benefit Paranda, Bhoom, Kalamb, Washi, Tuljapur, Lohara and Omerga talukas of Osmanabad district and Ashti taluka of Beed district,” the deputy chief minister said. “Once completed, it will help in tackling the problem of drought in the suicide-prone Marathwada region,” added a senior official from the water resources department. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/maharashtra-government-sanctions-revised-budget-of-11-736-crore-for-two-decade-old-marathwada-dam-101664911073671.html>

11. Govt fails to pay interest of Rs 11.38 cr under SDRF ([syllad.com](https://www.syllad.com)) October 5, 2022

Meghalaya: The state government has failed to pay interest amounting to Rs 11.38 crore under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

According to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), at the beginning of 2020-21, the SDRF had an opening balance of Rs 47.70 crore.

In addition to Rs 104.00 crore being investment amount pertaining to the period 2015-16 to 2018-19, Rs 53.18 crore (Rs 49.52 crore central share and Rs 3.66 crore state share) was transferred to the Fund.

The report said that the SDRF had an utilized balance of Rs 122.70 crore as on March 31, 2021.

During the year an amount of Rs 82.18 crore was disbursed from the funds under the MH-8121-122, however, no entry was made against the Major Head – 2245-05-911.

“This act of the state government was in contravention of the SDRF guidelines as no expenditure was to be made directly from public account,” the CAG said.

“As the SDRF is an interest bearing Reserve Fund, the liability of interest payment rests with the state government. Non-payment of interest amounting to Rs 1.91 crore resulted in understatement of revenue deficit to that extent,” it stated.

In terms of the guidelines on the constitution and administration of the SDRF and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), which was notified in September 2010, the Centre and States are required to contribute to the Fund in a certain proportion.

The contributions are to be transferred to the Public Account to Major Head – 8121. No direct expenditure is to be made from the Public Account.

As per the guidelines, the state government shall pay interest to the SDRF at the rate applicable to overdrafts under overdraft regulation guidelines of the RBI.

The interest will be credited on a half-yearly basis. Further, as per the guidelines, the accretions to the SDRF together with the income earned on the investment of SDRF shall be invested in central government dated securities, auctioned treasury bills and other interest earning deposits with Scheduled Commercial Banks.

In terms of the guidelines, the Centre and the North Eastern and Himalayan States are required to contribute to the Fund in the ratio of 90:10. <https://www.syllad.com/govt-fails-to-pay-interest-of-rs-11-38-cr-under-sdrf/>

12. ITIs on PPP mode: Punjab Govt decision to end lease with private educational society in Abohar upheld (tribuneindia.com) Oct 06, 2022

The Punjab Infrastructure Regulatory Authority (PIRA) has upheld the decision of the Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training to terminate the lease agreement with a private educational society running Industrial Training Institute (ITI) from a government building at Abohar.

While hearing an adjudication petition filed by one of the institutions, Social Welfare Society (ITI, Abohar), against the department, PIRA, while upholding the termination notice, directed the department to calculate the pending lease amount.

The department has also been directed to fix responsibility and take action against its officials for lapses in closely monitoring and implementing the concession agreement signed in December 2004. Hearing on similar petitions filed by six other societies is in the process.

Apart from the ITI at Abohar, the department has issued termination notices to five other private societies for violation of the lease agreement, including non-payment of lease money. Each ITI has strength of 300 students.

The societies that have been issued termination notices are Sri Guru Nanak Dev Education Trust, Dalewal, Hoshiarpur; Sri Guru Angad Dev Educational Society, Khadoor Sahib, Amritsar; Shyama Shyam Society, Banarsi (Moonak), Sangrur; St Soldier Educational Society, Shahkot; and Balaji Education Trust, Nathana, Bathinda.

Rahul Bhandari, Secretary, Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training, said the department had received the PIRA order and the defaulting amount would be recovered as per provisions of the agreement.

The institutions had moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court against the termination notices. However, the HC directed them to file an adjudication petition before PIRA, a statutory body that regulates private investment under the PPP mode in social and infrastructure sectors.

Rakesh Ahuja, general secretary of the Social Welfare Society (ITI, Abohar), said they had filed an appeal before PIRA. “There is no default in payment. Issues related to revenue sharing of fee collected from students, levying of compound interest and other issues have been contested by us.”

Leased out in 2004

In 2004, the government leased out nine ITIs to private players for 33 years. As per the agreement signed between the government and private players, the lessees had to provide infrastructure, get approval for courses and pay the lease money (termed concession fee).

Dept’s stand

The department has claimed that despite enhancing the academic fee, the societies did not share the incremental concession fee with it. This resulted in accumulation of concession fee and incremental concession fee along with interest from eight societies amounting to Rs 8.47 crore till March 2020, as per a CAG report. “If the default amount is calculated till date, the amount will cross Rs 10 crore”, said officials. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/government-decision-to-end-lease-with-pvt-edu-society-in-abohar-upheld-438521>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

13. DESH Bill: Finmin says ‘no’ to 15% benign tax ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) October 5, 2022

The finance ministry has stuck to its opposition to key provisions of the Development of Enterprise and Services Hub (DESH) Bill, including a benign corporate tax rate of 15% until 2032 for the units in these proposed hubs. The DESH Bill will replace the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act.

According to official sources, in its formal comments on the Bill, the ministry has also expressed its reservation on a proposal to integrate the hubs with the domestic market, unlike SEZs that have clear export obligations.

The finance ministry's stance may delay the introduction of the DESH Bill in Parliament, although the commerce ministry is making all efforts to finalise the draft and introduce it in the winter session, usually convened in November-December.

In the past, the finance ministry had, in internal deliberations, raised similar concerns over granting tax incentives to SEZs, in sync with its bid to prevent fiscal erosion and its vision to herald an exemption-free and simplified tax regime. It had also resisted the idea of allowing SEZ units to sell goods in the domestic market at zero or nominal tax, instead of the usual customs duty.

However, its opposition, especially on the issue of freezing the concessional tax for greenfield and certain brownfield DESH units in both manufacturing and services sectors for a decade, was expected to soften in the light of the fact that it had already trimmed such a tax to 15% for new manufacturing units that begin operations by March 2024.

The commerce ministry had inserted these provisions in the draft Bill to make it more attractive for investors to set up units in these specially delineated zones. SEZs have been fast losing their appeal due to the withdrawal of a slew of incentives.

To resolve the issues, however, the commerce ministry will likely hold consultations in a week or two with the finance ministry and others who have raised queries on the draft Bill or concerns over certain provisions.

The new Bill was necessitated to woo investors after the government set a sunset date for SEZ units to start operations (June 30, 2020) to be eligible for a phased income-tax holiday for 15 years.

Moreover, India lost a case at the World Trade Organization (WTO) filed by the US, which had claimed New Delhi was offering illegal export subsidies through these SEZs.

Consequently, the draft Bill has proposed to scrap the primary requirement for an SEZ unit to have positive net foreign exchange (NFE) for five years; instead, the unit's performance will be evaluated on the basis of "net positive growth" (NPG) under the proposed Bill. The NPG of a unit will be based on certain parameters, including employment generation and economic activity.

However, the finance ministry's fresh reservation about the lack of export focus of these units stems from the concern that it would spur demands for similar incentives for firms outside these zones, said one of the sources.

The draft DESH Bill proposes to allow units in such hubs to sell goods in the domestic tariff area (DTA) by paying basic customs duty on just inputs, instead of finished products. It also proposes customs duty deferment for imports of inputs and capital goods by units with no interest liability. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/desh-bill-finmin-says-no-to-15-benign-tax/2700719/>

14. Why power supply liberalisation won't work ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) October 5, 2022

The Electricity Amendment Bill 2022 was introduced in the Lok Sabha in the monsoon session. Thereafter, it was referred to the relevant departmental Standing Committee.

One of the most important changes that is proposed as an amendment to the Electricity Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) is to grant licence to distribute electricity as a distribution licensee in an area of supply. At the heart of this provision is also the deletion of the words “through their own distribution system” contained in the Fifth Proviso to Section 14 of the 2003 Act.

The consequent inference is that new companies/entities will be eligible to distribute electricity as a distribution licensee without installing or setting up their own distribution system, comprising substations, transformers, electrical wires, and all other associated facilities, which is hugely capital-intensive, entailing major capital works and time outlay of several years, to cover an area of supply.

The words “through their own distribution system” was interpreted in the legal battle between Tata Power and Reliance Energy, which went up to the Supreme Court of India, in *Tata Power Co. Ltd. v. Reliance Energy Ltd.*, (2008) 10 SCC 321. The apex court held “The concept of wheeling has been introduced in the 2003 Act to enable distribution licensees who are yet to install their distribution line to supply electricity directly to retail consumers, subject to payment of surcharge in addition to the charges for wheeling as the State Commission may determine.”

Currently, in the Amendment Bill 2022, the proposal to delete the words “through their own distribution system” effectively means implementing the observations laid down by the Supreme Court in the case of *Tata Power*. However, the enabling provision to allow new entrants to secure a distribution license without requiring them to set up their own distribution system actually cuts across the other way. In other words, the main inefficiency lies in the distribution system of networks and wires, which requires to be addressed and rectified by disinvesting them and getting in new players to bring efficiency to the wire business. Even the Return on Equity, the reasonable return, lies only in the wires business and not the supply business. The risks and rewards both lie in the distribution system, i.e., network business. Thus, enabling new entrants only in the supply business will be unattractive, as it would neither entail any significant reward nor would it be easy to procure power cheaper than what is otherwise available to incumbent discoms in the market through competitive bidding.

Another unshackling effect for the power sector has been made by the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity in its recent judgment in the *Noida Power Corporation Ltd. Vs. UPERC* in Appeal No. 72 of 2021. The issue was whether Noida Power had a perpetual licence, because of the absence of tenure/term in its 1993 licence. The tribunal held that Noida Power did not have a licence in perpetuity but would operate for 25 years computed from 10.6.2004, i.e., one year after the enactment of the 2003 Act. This is in consonance with the First Proviso to Section 14, read with Section 15 (8) of the 2003 Act. The First Proviso to Section 14 applies to entities like Noida Power which existed on or prior to the date of enactment of the 2003 Act and saved the balance of term of their licence. But it also says that the repealed laws which hitherto applied to them would continue to apply to them for a period of one year after the enactment of the 2003 Act, i.e., 10.6.2003. The tribunal held that Noida Power has licence till the year 2029, i.e., 25 years from 10.6.2004 (one year after the enactment of the 2003 Act). The tribunal's

judgment will have a strong bearing on all those state electricity boards/reorganised utilities in India where either no licence has been granted by the SERCs to them or no conditions are specified defining the term of licence. All these bodies will now have to gear up to deal with the end of their licence term in 2029, since the deadline of 25 years post the enactment of the 2003 Act would also apply in their case. If Noida Power cannot have licence in perpetuity, the entities/utilities that are operating with the assumption that they have perpetual licence can't either.

State electricity boards/reorganised utilities have a monopoly over the network and wires business in the whole of the state, causing inefficiency. Even their supply business incurs humongous losses, inter alia, on account of their failure to recover arrears of dues from consumers.

To sum up, the provision to introduce competitors only in the supply business by omitting the words "through their own distribution system" is a non-starter. This should not be carried out into effect by the legislature. Secondly, a substantial network business in our country will open up for new investments by efficient government bodies or private enterprises should the regulators and the state governments have the teeth to implement the Noida Power judgment in letter and spirit. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/why-power-supply-liberalisation-wont-work/2700675/>

15. Indian Air Force will have 35 -36 combat squadrons by mid 2030s says IAF Chief ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) October 6, 2022

To tide over the acute fleet shortage the Indian Air Force is looking forward to induction of the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas' and is also in the process of finalizing a separate proposal with the foreign partners for more fighter jets.

On Tuesday at the annual press conference ahead of the Indian Air Force Day on Oct 8, Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari said: "It will be impossible to keep watch and do combat air patrol across the country with the given number of 31 squadrons." He said that the target of 42 fighter squadrons will remain even though it may take a decade to meet it.

While citing the growing strength of the Pakistani and Chinese Air Forces, Vice Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Sandeep Singh, made it clear that there was no question to review the sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons of fighter jets. When it came to combating opponents with bigger numbers and operating in vast geographical areas the numbers of fighter squadrons was absolutely necessary.

It will be impossible to keep watch and do combat air patrol across the country with the given number of 31 squadrons, the chief told the media persons in New Delhi. He said that the target of 42 fighter squadrons will remain even though it may take a decade to meet it.

Acquisition plans

In response to several questions related to the shortage of fighter squadrons the chief explained that an order for 83 Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas' Mk 1A is already in place.

According to the chief, the IAF will get another 10 jets of the first lot of 40 'Tejas' which will be delivered this year.

Adding, the proposal to make 114 medium-range fighter aircraft (MRFA) in India is in the process of being firmed up based on the technical requirements and soon the Request for Proposal will be sent out.

Why the delay?

The government has been in discussions with the OEM to increase the indigenous content in the fighter jets and to have greater 'Make in India' commitment.

Status of the additional Su-30 MKI and MiG-29

"The project to get additional 12 Su-30 MKI and 21 MiG-29 has been deferred," the chief said in response to a question.

Long-term acquisition Plans

He said that the force was committed to Tejas Mk2 and will get six squadrons and also the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). Both Tejas Mk2 and the 5th generation AMCA are still in the design phase.

Phase out plans

By 2024, the IAF has plans to phase out three squadrons of MiG-21 Bison. This will be followed by the phasing out of six squadrons of the ageing Jaguar fighter fleet starting 2025 and continuing till 2032. By late next decade three squadrons each of the upgraded Mirage 2000 and MiG-29 fleets would be scheduled to be phased out.

In response to media queries, the IAF Chief said by mid next decade all these aircraft will be number plated.

Position of the fighter fleet in IAF

The number has gone down to 31 fighter jets squadrons. And roughly each squadron has 18 fighters.

Last month the strength of fighter squadrons fell to 31 as the Srinagar based MiG-21 Bison squadron was phased out.

Background

The IAF has an authorised strength of 42 fighter squadrons which stands at 31 and this number includes two squadrons of the French Rafales and the indigenous LCA 'Tejas'

When will it be 42 squadrons?

According to the chief, even if all the procurement planned goes on without any delays or any glitches the number of squadrons by 2035-36 will just touch 35 as against the sanctioned 42. The focus is not on numbers but on technology and

quality. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/indian-air-force-will-have-35-36-combat-squadrons-by-mid-2030s-says-iaf-chief/2701254/>

16. Spectrum of issues ([thehindubusinessline.com](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com)) October 05, 2022

The Centre should be commended for enabling telecom operators to launch 5G services within just two months of auctioning spectrum. However, now that the launch euphoria is over, it is time for a reality check on the challenges that could come in the way of making 5G available to the masses. While there is an expectation that 5G technology will enable the delivery of critical services such as digital learning, telesurgery and the Internet of Things over a mobile network with unprecedented efficiency, there are some major issues that need to be addressed if the Centre wants the benefits of this technology to reach every citizen.

The biggest challenge to the mass adoption of 5G services is the availability of affordable phones. The cheapest 5G-enabled phone is priced at ₹10,000 which makes it beyond the means of the majority of the population. The lack of a cheap handset had also slowed down the adoption of 4G services as many consumers found it tough to migrate from their 2G voice-only services to 4G. As a result, there are still over 300 million 2G subscribers in the country. One way of overcoming this issue is for the Centre to use the money lying idle in the Universal Services Obligation Fund to offer direct subsidies to consumers to buy 5G devices. The second hurdle is the cost of subscribing to 5G services. Even though some operators have said that they will not be charging a higher tariff for 5G, the reality is that the telecom companies are under huge financial pressure to increase their average revenue per user from ₹180 at present to ₹250 a month. More can be done to reduce regulatory levies and taxes so that the operators don't have to increase tariffs. The third important aspect is the lack of use cases. Other than offering high-speed broadband, the promise of 5G remains on paper. Globally and in India there are a number of pilots being done in different areas, including telemedicine, warehouse management, and surveillance. The DoT is spearheading an inter-ministerial committee to explore the incorporation of the benefits of 5G technology into public infrastructure that includes a private network for police communications, incorporation in hazardous applications such as mining, and also in public waterworks systems for agriculture. But there is no clarity on when these services will be ready for commercial use. This needs to be taken up on a mission mode. This will ensure that telecom operators have a separate revenue stream to recover their investments. An area of concern is the emergence of a duopoly in the telecom sector. The Centre has made provisions to help financially stressed operators under the Telecom Bill but there is no clarity on many of these aspects.

Finally, the telecom regulator must review the quality of service parameters. Consumers are still grappling with basic network issues like voice call drops and interrupted data services. The focus on 5G will have no meaning if this remains unchanged. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/editorial/spectrum-of-issues/article65972203.ece>

17. Centre plans auctioning of 22 mineral blocks in next 2 mnths ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) 5 Oct 2022

The government plans to auction 22 mineral blocks in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Goa in November and December.

The mines to be auctioned include six iron ore blocks, three blocks each of limestone and gold, two blocks of bauxite, one block each of copper, phosphorite and glauconite, according to the mines ministry. The notice inviting tenders for the blocks were floated in September.

While the mines in Maharashtra will be auctioned next month, those in Uttar Pradesh and Goa will be put on sale in December. So far, more than 180 mineral blocks have been put on sale since the system of auctioning of mineral blocks began. The government started the process of allocating mineral blocks through auctions in 2015-16. The ministry has expressed hopes of auctioning 500 mines by the end of 2024. The Centre is aiming to increase the mining sector's contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 5 per cent from 2.5 per cent at present.

The ministry has also notified the Minerals (Evidence of Mineral Contents) Second Amendment Rules, 2021, and the Mineral (Auction) Fourth Amendment Rules, 2021. <http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/centre-plans-auctioning-of-22-mineral-blocks-in-next-2-mnths-494992>

18. Freebies out, but let welfare schemes continue ([newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com)) 06th October 2022

New Delhi's move to extend the free foodgrain scheme for another three months may fly in the face of economic prudence. Or so believe several economists. At a time when India continues to face high fiscal deficit, the decision is bound to cost the exchequer an additional Rs 44,762 crore, taking the food subsidy bill to a massive Rs 3.4 lakh crore, way above the budget estimate of Rs 2.07 lakh crore. The additional expenditure may push up the fiscal deficit beyond the targeted 6.4% of the GDP.

It is a given that the government has to tighten the belt and control the deficit. But the Centre is aware that winding up the foodgrain scheme ahead of the state elections is suicidal. There is documented evidence that such social schemes always sway the outcome of elections.

Interestingly, no political party ever called the extension of the scheme meant for those below the poverty line a freebie or part of a 'revdi' culture. Everyone knows that post-pandemic, the number of hungry stomachs in the country has gone up substantially despite most economic activities back on track. There is a healthy consensus that it is the government's job to feed them. This is exactly what many state governments screamed when New Delhi ran a smear campaign against them for initiating social welfare schemes. Tamil Nadu, which is at the forefront of the fight for social justice, flatly objected to the usage of the term 'freebie'. The state finance minister said free food, uniforms and computers are not random freebies, but an investment into TN's future.

The Supreme Court believes that freebies or handouts would continue to destroy the economy unless there is a conscious decision by political parties to stop them. However, the Court went back on its earlier proposal to form an expert committee to study the issue. Instead, it said a new three-judge bench would take up pleas to review a 2013 SC judgment that said some freebies are related to the directive principles guiding a state's policies. Let's hope that the review would bring more clarity on 'freebie' and keep all social welfare schemes out of its purview. State governments should continue to reach out to the people at the bottom of the pyramid with welfare schemes to herald social justice to

all. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/editorials/2022/oct/06/freebies-outbut-let-welfare-schemes-continue-2505270.html>

19. Despite US Finding Proof of Bribery in Indian Railways, Modi Government Has Taken No Action ([thewire.in](https://www.thewire.in)) 06 Oct 2022

More than a week after the US Securities and Exchange Commission accused Oracle Corp. of paying \$400,000 in bribes to unidentified officials working for a public sector company owned by the Indian rail ministry, neither the Narendra Modi government nor its normally hyper-active investigative agencies are willing to say publicly what they intend to do about the matter.

The money was paid between 2016 and 2019. Though the SEC, which uncovered the bribery, fined Oracle millions of dollars for their crime, the offence by both the bribe giver and recipient is not compoundable in Indian law. Yet, the railway ministry spokesperson, when asked by The Wire if the CBI is going to be sounded out for a probe, simply said they had no comments to offer. Senior Rail Bhavan officials also refused to speak about the subject and the Enforcement Directorate chose not to respond to queries.

Since the allegations pertain to the period when commerce minister Piyush Goel held the railways portfolio, The Wire also reached out to his office, only to be directed to the railways' spokesperson.

Reprise of Louis Berger scandal?

The apparent unwillingness to investigate a case where bribery has been proved mirrors the reluctance – on display over the past several years – to probe top politicians in Goa and Assam for the role they are alleged to have played in the Louis Berger bribery scandal.

In 2015, the US construction and consultancy firm, Louis Berger International, admitted paying nearly a million dollars as bribes – including an unspecified sum to an unidentified minister – in connection with a public sector water project in Goa in August 2010. Bribes were also paid to people in the Assam government. Both states were ruled by the Congress at the time. While the Goa minister was never identified, the water ministry during the period in question was run by Filipe Rodrigues, who is now in the Bharatiya Janata Party. Himanta Biswa Sarma, who ran the Gauhati Development Department in the Congress-run Assam government when it appointed Louis Berger International as consultants, is now the BJP's chief minister in the state.

'Slush fund' to bribe rail officials

Oracle Corporation, the software giant registered in Texas, US, admitted to having created a "slush fund" which was used in 2019 to bribe officials of a "transportation company, a majority of which was owned by the Indian Ministry of Railways". Following an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission – the US equivalent of SEBI, India's stock market watchdog – the company agreed to pay a penalty of \$23 million for violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in countries such as the UAE, India and Turkey. The SEC did not identify the 'transportation company' whose officials were bribed.

According to the SEC, Oracle used its India arm, Oracle India Private Limited registered in New Delhi, to devise a clever method of bribing officials. An approval was taken from the

parent company for giving a 70% discount on the product to the transportation company while the latter was billed in full. The difference was the slush fund thus created and used to bribe officials.

The SEC order says, “In January 2019, the sales employees working on the deal, citing intense competition from other original equipment manufacturers, claimed the deal would be lost without a 70% discount on the software component of the deal.”

The SEC concluded this rationale was dishonest since the company concerned committed to purchasing Oracle products in its tender documents. “In fact, the Indian state owned enterprise’s publicly available procurement website indicated that Oracle India faced no competition because it had mandated the use of Oracle products for the project. One of the sales employees involved in the transaction maintained a spreadsheet that indicated \$67,000 was the “buffer” available to potentially make payments to a specific Indian SOE official. A total of approximately \$330,000 was funneled to an entity with a reputation for paying SOE officials and another \$62,000 was paid to an entity controlled by the sales employees responsible for the transaction”.

The Wire searched the tender documents of various railway PSUs and found several floated by the Container Corporation or Concor, in which Oracle was a requirement.

Oracle a repeat offender, India has yet to take action

The Wire approached the SEC for more details but a commission spokesperson said, “The SEC does not comment beyond public filings.” But Indian diplomats say the SEC would be bound to cooperate with Indian law enforcement if a criminal investigation is pursued here.

Oracle spokesperson Michael Egbert, told The Wire, “The conduct outlined by the SEC is contrary to our core values and clear policies, and if we identify such behavior, we will take appropriate action.”

The SEC order further says, “Due to the size of the discount, Oracle required an employee based in France to approve the request. The Oracle designee provided approval for the discount without requiring the sales employee to provide further documentary support for the request.”

Oracle is a repeat offender and has got away using the penalty provision in the FCPA. Oracle’s Indian arm was penalised in 2012 as well. SEC says, “Oracle resolved charges relating to the creation of millions of dollars of side funds by Oracle India, which created the risk that those funds could be used for illicit purposes. On August 16, 2012, Oracle agreed to pay a \$2 million penalty to settle the SEC’s allegations that Oracle violated the books and records and internal accounting controls provisions of the FCPA by failing to prevent Oracle India Private Limited (“Oracle India”) from keeping unauthorized side funds at distributors from 2005 to 2007. “The creation of off-book slush funds inherently gives rise to the risk those funds will be used improperly, which is exactly what happened here at Oracle’s Turkey, UAE, and India subsidiaries,” said Charles Cain, the SEC’s FCPA Unit Chief. “This matter highlights the critical need for effective internal accounting controls throughout the entirety of a company’s operations.”

In 2012, “According to the SEC’s complaint filed in U.S. District Court of California, the misconduct at Oracle’s India subsidiary – Oracle India Private Limited – occurred from 2005

to 2007. Oracle India sold software licenses and services to India's government through local distributors, and then had the distributors "park" excess funds from the sales outside Oracle India's books and records.

For example, according to the SEC's complaint, Oracle India secured a \$3.9 million deal with India's Ministry of Information Technology and Communications in May 2006. As instructed by Oracle India's then-sales director, only \$2.1 million was sent to Oracle to record as revenue on the transaction, and the distributor kept \$151,000 for services rendered. Certain other Oracle India employees further instructed the distributor to park the remaining \$1.7 million for "marketing development purposes." Two months later, one of those same Oracle India employees created and provided to the distributor eight invoices for payments to purported third-party vendors ranging from \$110,000 to \$396,000. In fact, none of these storefront-only third parties provided any services or were included on Oracle's approved vendor list. The third-party payments created the risk that the funds could be used for illicit purposes such as bribery or embezzlement.

"Without admitting or denying the SEC's findings, Oracle agreed to cease and desist from committing violations of the anti-bribery, books and records, and internal accounting controls provisions of the FCPA and to pay approximately \$8 million in disgorgement and a \$15 million penalty."

Oracle Corporation while filing its annual financial statement for 2019 said, "We are under audit by the IRS and various other domestic and foreign tax authorities with regards to income tax and indirect tax matters and are involved in various challenges and litigation in a number of countries, including, in particular, Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Mexico, Pakistan and Spain, where the amounts under controversy are significant."

According to the regulator, Oracle's Turkey and UAE units also used slush funds to pay for foreign officials to attend technology conferences in violation of Oracle policies.

Employees of the Turkey unit also used the funds to pay for the officials' spouses and children to accompany them, or take side trips to Los Angeles and Napa Valley, California, the SEC said. <https://thewire.in/government/despise-us-finding-proof-of-bribery-in-indian-railways-modi-government-is-reluctant-to-act>

20. Nandurbar's nutrition centres are showing dismal results in helping malnourished children ([scroll.in](#)) 06 Oct 2022

Less than half the malnourished children admitted at the district's nutrition rehabilitation centres since 2021 have gained the targeted weight.

Chandni Patle placed Bau Pawara, a feeble-looking 17-month-old baby, on an electronic weighing machine. The child, with bony limbs, was quiet and inactive – unusual for toddlers his age. It was early September, and this was his fourth check-up in two months at the nutrition rehabilitation centre in Dhadgaon, in Maharashtra's Nandurbar district. Patle, a nurse, noted his weight and shook her head in disapproval. He weighed 5 kg; for his age, the normal range is between 8 kg and 13 kg.

She held up a chart that tracked the child's weight over the preceding few months. "His weight has fallen by 300 grams in two weeks," Patle told his parents. She advised them to admit him to the nutrition rehabilitation centre.

The centre, which is attached to a rural hospital, is a health facility for children who suffer from severe acute malnourishment. They are usually referred to these centres from anganwadis – once admitted, they are treated for medical complications they might have, such as diarrhoea and fever, and are given nutrition supplements to increase their weight.

The idea for such centres originated several decades ago in Africa. The concept was replicated in India, beginning with Madhya Pradesh in 2007. Their number has fluctuated in recent years – from 800 nutrition rehabilitation centres in 2014, up to 1,151 in 2018 and down to 1,073 in 2021.

In 2019-'20, 2.25 lakh children were admitted to these centres; this number fell to 1.04 lakh in 2020-'21. According to health experts, this decline occurred because of the pandemic, during which only critical cases were being referred to the centres.

Bau's was one such critical case. His problems began within a few months of his birth in April 2021. He was admitted to the Dhadgaon centre last year, and, when his health did not improve, he was referred to a larger centre in Nandurbar city. This year, on June 17, he was admitted again to the Dhadgaon centre. After 18 days, during which he was fed nutritious food every few hours, his weight rose by 700 grams, from 4.7 to 5.4 kgs.

His parents, Jadiya and Sangita Pawara, said they did everything that the doctors and local anganwadi worker advised. During Bau's stays at the centres, they left their two other children in the care of an uncle so they could be with the baby. During that time, they were not able to work on their farmland. After Bau's stay in June, they visited the centre for a follow-up every fortnight, spending Rs 100 on each trip from the village of Amala, 30 km away.

So when, despite all these efforts, Bau's weight dropped to 5 kg, they were dismayed.

Other families in the district have faced even greater hardships.

In August, the Bombay High Court took cognisance of a report submitted by activist Bandu Sampatrao Sane, which claimed that 411 children younger than five have died in Nandurbar district this year. The court criticised the district officials of Nandurbar for these deaths and ordered the collector to appear before it in September and submit a report on the problem.

The same month, the chief secretary took note of the problem at a quarterly meeting held to review the affairs of districts with sizeable tribal populations. According to two officials present at the meeting, also attended by the heads of various government departments, and representatives of NGOs, the chief secretary raised concerns about the poor performance of nutrition rehabilitation centres, especially in Nandurbar, and their failure to pull children out of severe malnourishment.

Scroll.in visited three centres in Nandurbar's Taloda, Dhadgaon and Molgi regions, and found that most children had not gained the target weight specified under the guidelines of the National Health Mission. According to these guidelines, between the time of admission and

discharge, the weight of a child must increase by 15%. Further, like Bau, many had slipped back into malnourishment after being discharged.

Data sourced from the district health office confirmed this trend. Across the four nutrition rehabilitation centres in Nandurbar, of 1,233 children who were admitted since 2021, only 471, or 38%, gained the targeted weight. Molgi nutrition rehabilitation centre, located on an isolated hill north of Nandurbar, saw the worst outcomes – only 51 of 280 children admitted to the centre, or 18%, gained the required weight.

Rajalakshmi Nair, nutrition specialist at UNICEF, noted that a complex web of factors was to blame for poor weight gain at the centres, including whether the child had suffered prolonged malnutrition, whether it had had a low birth weight, and the feeding practices that were followed at its home. “All these factors contribute to how much weight gain a child can have at an NRC,” she said.

The National Family Health Survey-5 of 2019-'21 found that Nandurbar had the second-highest percentage of underweight children under five years of age in the country, behind only Jharkhand's Paschimi Singhbhum. While in Paschimi Singhbhum, 62.4% of the children were found to be underweight, 57.2% were underweight in Nandurbar, up from the 55.4% found underweight in the NFHS-4, conducted in 2015-'16.

Sane said that beyond a child's health, there were other factors at play as well. “Policies are not being implemented properly, be it in anganwadis or in health centres,” he said. “As a result, a child continues to remain malnourished.”

The district's civil surgeon, Dr Charudatta Shinde, told Scroll.in that since he had joined, earlier this year, he had been seeking to ensure that the centres reported weight gain accurately, and did not manipulate numbers to show that they were achieving targets. “Hence the high numbers,” he said.

He added that migration was a key challenge in ensuring that children received the nutrition they needed. “These children go out of our monitoring system once they migrate,” he said.

Poor policy implementation

Back in the Dhadgaon centre, Bau's parents, both lean and sun-burnt, were reluctant to readmit their child. Sangita Pawara was pregnant with a fourth child, and another stay in the centre would be difficult, she said. The couple have limited savings, and depend heavily on their daily earnings from agricultural work.

But there were other reasons too. The couple pointed out that Bau's weight had not increased much over the last two admissions and that, therefore, they weren't sure another stay would prove effective. Besides, Jadiya Pawara said, stepping aside and whispering, “The centre also told us we will be paid Rs 300 for each day. But we haven't got any money.”

He was referring to a scheme under the National Health Mission, under which one parent of a severely acute malnourished child is paid Rs 300 per day as wage compensation for staying at the centre. Once a child is admitted, the minimum stay mandated by the National Health Mission is 14 days – they can stay up to 21 days, or when the targeted weight gain is achieved, whichever occurs sooner. The payment for parents is an incentive for people like Jadiya

Pawara, who lose several days of farm work to get their child treated. As per the guidelines of the National Health Mission, on the day of the child's discharge, the centre is required to pay wage compensation for all the days of admission.

Jadiya Pawara showed this reporter the discharge card for his son, which stated that for an 18-day stay at the centre between June 17 and July 5, the father was entitled to receive Rs 5,400. He made several visits to the centre in July and August, but did not get any money. When this reporter enquired in September about the payment with the medical officer of the rural hospital to which the centre is attached, he immediately instructed a clerk to make the payment. The payment was made in cash the same day, two months after it was due. For last year's admission, Jadiya Pawara said, he was yet to receive wage compensation from the Nandurbar centre.

Jadiya Pawara's payments are far from the only ones that are delayed. When Lalit, aged a year and half, was discharged on September 5 from the Dhadgaon centre, his mother, Kavita Pawara, did not receive Rs 4,500 as wage compensation for the 15 days that she had stayed with him. Neither did Rumaliya Pawara, whose son Aakash was also discharged that day. Rupsa Krishna, whose eight-month-old son, Anush, was admitted to a centre in Taloda, 43 km from Dhadgaon, said the centre's staff did not even tell her about the wage compensation scheme.

District data shows that of the 1,233 children who were admitted to the centres in Nandurbar since 2021, wages of 22% of parents remain pending. But Scroll.in's reporting suggests that there may be flaws in this data: in the Nandurbar nutrition rehabilitation centre, for instance, data shows that parents of all 276 admitted children in 2021-'22 received wage compensation. But Bau was admitted in Nandurbar centre last year and his father is yet to receive wage compensation for that stay.

The delays impact the programme's functioning. In Dhadgaon's Son village, Pramila Valvi, an anganwadi worker, said people become distrustful when wages are promised and not given. "In my anganwadi, there is a child who requires NRC admission," she said. "But his mother has refused to go."

Valvi showed this reporter her register, which had details of this child, whose name was Ditya Vasave. The record showed that Vasave was a 10-month-old who weighed 6 kg and needed urgent admission. His elder sister, Manisha, was three years old and suffered from moderate acute malnourishment, although she did not yet need to be admitted to a nutrition centre. Their father migrates out of Nandurbar for work for most months of the year, leaving only their mother, Hathu Vasave, to take care of them. "Hathu works on farms to earn a daily wage," Valvi said. "I told her the NRC will pay her, but she does not believe me."

Delays are not the only hurdle when it comes to payments, Valvi added. Payments are often held up because parents need to furnish their Aadhaar card to avail of wage compensation. Dr Sulochana Bagul, resident medical officer in Nandurbar Civil Hospital, said that payments could not be processed without an Aadhaar number.

On the ground, however, Scroll.in found that different nutrition rehabilitation centres follow different protocols. Some, like the Dhadgaon centre, register parents for wage compensation payment even if they don't have an Aadhaar card, while some, like the centre in Taloda, demand Aadhaar for the process.

Rajib Dasgupta, professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, said that in regions like Nandurbar, where food security concerns are common, and the incidence of malnutrition is high, an insistence on Aadhaar and delays in wage compensation payments can deter people from admitting their children.

“People are caught up in trying to get their wages,” he said. This occupies their energy rather than “ensuring their child gains weight in two weeks. It is difficult to achieve this,” he added.

Lack of funds and staff

According to the Central government’s guidelines, each nutrition centre must have a number of staff, including a dietician to prepare the diet chart, a nurse to monitor the child, and a paediatrician to treat medical complications. The three centres that Scroll.in visited had no paediatricians posted in them.

In the Molgi centre, where only 18% children gained the required 15% weight by the time of discharge, a staffer pointed out that several children who visit the centre have diarrhoea, high fever and a loss of appetite, and that it typically first takes around three or four days to clinically treat them, before staff can focus on nutrition. “If there is no paediatrician, managing them clinically becomes difficult,” the staffer said. “Nutrition alone cannot help.”

Where there are no paediatricians, “critical children are referred to the civil hospital,” said Dr Bagul. She added that the district administration had attempted to appoint paediatricians to different regions of Nandurbar in the past, but that few doctors are willing to work in relatively remote centres that cater largely to tribal people.

The centres don’t just suffer from a shortage of personnel, but also of funds. In June, Taloda rural hospital, which runs a nutrition rehabilitation centre, raised concerns over the dearth of funds to buy food supplements for children. In each centre, every child is given one litre of milk per day and two special feeds, called F75 and F100. The feeds both have, in different proportions, cereal, milk powder, sugar and coconut oil. A child is usually given food 12 times a day for the first week; this is slowly reduced to eight portions per day in the second week if the child’s weight improves.

For this, the Taloda centre requires an average of Rs 15,000 per month for 10 children, a senior doctor at the hospital said. “Vendors started pressing for payments,” the doctor explained. “We reached a point where we thought they could stop supply any day. We got funds after two months, in August.” The doctor added that the fund crunch had also delayed payment of wage compensation to parents.

Staffers also pointed out that centres are often short of space. The Dhadgaon centre, for instance, has 10 beds. During the monsoons, when diarrhoea cases rise, the number of malnourished children admitted at any given point often rises above 15. “We have to spread mattresses on the floor, make two children share a cot,” a staffer said.

Holistic measures needed

Their flaws notwithstanding, many argue that the centres serve an essential function.

At the Molgi centre, dietician Varsha Pawara did a round of the centre with a register in hand, halting by each cot to talk with mothers cradling their children. She inquired about problems such as loose stools, vomiting and fever, and then counseled the mothers on what to feed the child at home.

“This kind of quality conversation can’t happen if they treat their child at home,” she said. She added that though the centre had been unable to ensure that children gained the desired weight, it had been able to prevent deaths by intervening and stabilising them early, through the provision of nutritious food.

Dr Gulrukh Hashmi, an independent consultant in community medicine who has researched nutrition rehabilitation centres in Karnataka’s Kalaburagi district, said that the work of the centres needed to be supplemented by other initiatives. She explained that it was always difficult to convince a parent, usually the mother, to leave some children at home, stop her daily labour work and spend at least two weeks at a centre. “Therefore, NRCs should be the last option for only critical kids in need of clinical management,” she said. “Others must be managed at community level with therapeutic feeding.”

The interventions Hashmi was referring to included ensuring the provision of proper meals at anganwadis, counselling parents about children and regularly monitoring children’s weight. In her research, she has found that these measures are crucial to preventing malnutrition in the long run. In any case, she explained about children’s stay at the centres, “two weeks is also a short duration to see improvement in a child”

Health activist Sane said that once a child is discharged, anganwadis had to ensure the continued progress of their health. “Anganwadi must continue to provide proper meals so that the weight gain continues,” he said. <https://scroll.in/article/1034223/nandurbars-nutrition-centres-are-showing-dismal-results-in-helping-malnourished-children>

21. Stuck between Delhi govt and DDA, a project to revive 500 lakes in capital ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) Updated: October 5, 2022

The Delhi government’s ‘City of Lakes’ project is in jeopardy after it has had to “return” to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) water bodies that it was meant to work on and rejuvenate.

Officials in the Delhi Jal Board said that more than 500 water bodies have been “returned” to the DDA. The DDA had granted no-objection certificates to DJB for work on these water bodies.

“A majority of the water bodies in Delhi are owned by the DDA and these have been sent back to them. The departments in the DDA and the DJB are both engineering departments and the DDA’s question was why they should not do this (rejuvenation of water bodies) themselves,” said a DJB official who is associated with the project. The official added that the process of returning these water bodies began around a month ago, and was underway even on Monday, when seven were returned.

A DDA official associated with water bodies said, “We had issued NOCs on the request of the DJB. But they have now returned it. They have written letters now saying that these are being returned. These are policy decisions that have been made.”

On many of the water bodies that are now being returned, work has not begun. “On a majority of water bodies that are being returned, work has not happened. Tenders were invited but not awarded. Now, on these, DJB will not work,” the official said.

For around 150 of these water bodies, the DJB had issued tenders but these had not yet been awarded. Among the prominent ones that have been returned are the Satpula lake, Tihar lake, Bhalswa lake, Tikri Khurd lake and a lake in Rani Khera. At the Satpula lake, no significant work had begun on the field since tenders were called multiple times and were not awarded. For Tihar Lake as well, tenders were invited.

Work by the DJB has been completed on 35 water bodies and was underway in seven.

“There were two main components to the work that was to be done on these water bodies. One was to ensure clean water supply in the water body and the second was to clean up the place and ensure a good ambience. The DJB was initially planning on doing all the work, including the landscaping, by itself. Now, all of the work will have to be taken up by the DDA,” the official said.

“The work that falls under the DJB’s ambit, which is to lay an intercepting drain near the Bhalswa lake, will be done by the DJB. But the overall work, which is work like cleaning of the pond and landscaping, will now have to be done by the DDA,” he explained.

“The DJB will maintain the water bodies on which work has already been completed. We have sent a memorandum of understanding to the DDA in this regard for approval,” the official said.

According to the DDC website, the Delhi government aimed to revive 500 lakes. In the first phase, 250 water bodies and 15 lakes were identified for rejuvenation. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/stuck-between-delhi-govt-and-dda-a-project-to-revive-500-lakes-in-capital-8190257/>

22. How Tamil Nadu is failing to capitalise on its renewable energy goldmine (scroll.in) Oct 6, 2022

A hybrid structure of solar-wind power is cost effective and efficient but the model is underutilised due to the lack of a focused state policy.

The salt-filled air from sea breeze winds and the sight of a freshly emerging sun in the tiny village of Thirupullani in Tamil Nadu make for a picturesque sight – and a potentially valuable one.

The natural bounties of the village on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, 125 km away from Madurai, hold clues to crucial steps India could take in its renewable energy journey.

Seven years ago, a team of researchers from Madurai’s Thiagarajar College of Engineering chose this village for a feasibility study of a wind-solar hybrid system – one that would generate power by using both photovoltaic cells to produce solar energy and wind turbines.

The sun and wind are intermittent but complementary energy sources. Solar generation peaks during the daytime while power generated by wind sources is high during the twilight and the night. Similarly, during the monsoon, when sunlight is weaker, wind could compensate.

Thirupullani, a village of 6,000 people, with adequate sunlight and wind, was a good site to conduct the study, the team thought.

The findings from the study, conducted between 2012 and 2014, were eye-opening: when wind and solar sources are hybridised, production costs could be cut by half.

The team calculated power output and costs with 725 different combinations by adjusting many variables, such as the price of land, solar panels, turbines, maintenance and energy storage.

In Tamil Nadu, it costs about Rs 6 to generate a unit of electricity from a conventional source such as coal. The per-unit cost from solar is about Rs 10 and from wind Rs 7.50 – but from the hybrid model, the team calculated it was Rs 3.50.

Hybrid systems are cost effective because they share the transmission infrastructure such as power lines, transformers and substations. The vast pockets of land between two turbines – which remain vacant mostly – can be used to set up solar panels.

Further, while the maintenance of wind equipment requires skilled labour and sophisticated apparatus, that is not the case with solar. When wind and solar are co-located, the benefits include cost synergies through the sharing of personnel and infrastructure.

“Our Thirupullani case study may not be exactly replicable across Tamil Nadu or India’s landscape but it has enough pointers” to indicate that hybrid models can be successful, said Suresh Kumar, an electrical engineer who led the research team.

Complementary sources

About 150 km from Thirupullani lies India’s energy research cradle of Kayathar, home to Asia’s first wind farm set up in the late 1980s. It is a vast landscape with ever-flowing winds. The flat topography enjoys a steady supply of sunlight too.

At this government-run facility, a solar constituent was added four years ago to supplement wind energy, a steady source between May and September due to seasonal gusts from the Sengottai pass of the Western Ghats.

Here, the hybrid structure works efficiently. But despite the cost-effectiveness of hybrids and the state’s desire for cleaner power, such models remain severely underutilised in Tamil Nadu, thanks to the lack of a focused policy. Tamil Nadu is yet to produce any hybrid power.

India has now created wind-solar hybrid plants with installed capacity of about 1.3 GW, mainly in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka. As per central government regulations, to be deemed a hybrid facility, at least one-fourth of power output should come from either wind or solar.

Lack of policy framework

Tamil Nadu has been a pioneer among Indian states when it comes to renewable energy. About half of its installed capacity or 17GW is from renewables like wind, solar, hydro and biomass. So, any adoption of newer systems by the southern state will directly benefit the national power situation.

India is the world's third-largest renewable energy producer after China and the United States. At the United Nations Climate Action Summit in 2019, it set ambitious goals to switch to cleaner energy sources: by 2030, it aims to generate 450 GW from non-fossil sources but is likely to miss the target of 175 GW for this year.

In 2016, Tamil Nadu was expected to be the biggest beneficiary when the central government announced the draft policy to boost the green energy sector through hybrid systems.

However, interviews conducted across the green energy-rich belts in the state and detailed discussions with over two dozen stakeholders indicated that the state has fallen short of its potential – mainly because of the absence of a clear policy.

In 2018, India's ministry of new and renewable energy's National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy in 2018 offered a set of incentives such as smoother procurement of components for renewable energy, waiver of charges on energy production, and sale of electricity to third parties instead of just the government.

Power policies fall under India's concurrent list, meaning the central government only issues guidelines and the states decide how to implement them.

Shortly after the ministry announced its hybrid policy, states like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan formulated hybrid-specific regulatory frameworks while others like Kerala and Karnataka issued drafts.

Andhra Pradesh is expected to generate 5,000MW of power from hybrid facilities by 2023 while Rajasthan will touch 3,500MW 2024-'25.

Still, Tamil Nadu is nowhere on the scene. "Because of a lack of policy, hybrid is still in limbo in Tamil Nadu," said Sajay KV, chief executive officer of the Indian arm of BrightNight, a US-based renewable energy firm. "We tried for five-six years and somehow there is no vision."

An absence of a coherent policy means that if wind energy suppliers want to add solar components to the existing facility, they have to obtain additional permissions, a cumbersome and expensive process.

Sajay helped build India's first commercially successful wind-solar hybrid power plant in the neighbouring state of Karnataka in collaboration with the government and the plant was commissioned in 2018.

"Someone has to take initiative," he said. "This is like having a coal mine but mining only 50% of its capacity. The national resource is going to waste. It's a loss to the state exchequer."

S Gomathinayagam, an independent consultant, said that Tamil Nadu could "greatly benefit from wind-solar hybrids at GW level, MW level as well as microgrids with 100s of kW level".

When he was director general of the Chennai-headquartered National Institute of Wind Energy, a central government-run research think tank in 2016, he led a detailed analysis of the hybrid system in Tamil Nadu.

The state is missing a “golden opportunity” by not capitalising on the hybrid model, he said.

“The hybrid power in the grid would relieve the load demand by households and agricultural demands in the grid making less costly power to attract industrial development and green investments,” said Gomathinayagam. “If there is enough socio-political will, there is no dearth of renewable energy power. RE [renewable energy] hybrids with REs could take Tamil Nadu into a total green-powered state in India.”

A detailed economic viability analysis by JMK Research on Tamil Nadu’s energy architecture showed that a hypothetical hybrid renewable energy storage system would cost Rs 3.4/kWh by 2030 as against coal-generated power, which is at Rs 4.5-6/kWh.

This echoes the findings of the Thirupullani case study.

However, despite a wealth of data suggesting the potential of the wind-solar hybrid model, Thirupullani remains a sleepy little town filled with favourable winds and sunshine that could be captured for energy generation – but aren’t.

Despite repeated requests, Tamil Nadu’s energy minister and his representatives declined to answer any questions for over two months. A detailed questionnaire with specifics remains unanswered. <https://scroll.in/article/1033528/how-tamil-nadu-is-failing-to-capitalise-on-its-renewable-energy-goldmine>

23. Probe failure to collect Rs 13 crore rent from Puducherry club, says vigilance commission ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) 06th October 2022

PUDUCHERRY: The Central Vigilance Commission on Wednesday directed the Puducherry Chief Vigilance Office to inquire into and initiate action on the non-collection of lease arrears to the tune of Rs 13.5 crore for renting out a building to a club, Cercle de Pondicherry.

The commission urged the UT government to take action within a month and complete the probe within three months

This comes after a complaint by P Raghupathy of Rajiv Gandhi Human Rights Awareness Organisation. As per the complaint, the non-renewal of the lease after expiry and non-revision of rent for leased government buildings to the club resulted in the loss of revenue to the government.

The government building and an adjoining tennis court on Victor Simonel Street, near the Legislative Assembly, had been leased out to Circle De Pondicherry by the erstwhile French Government in 1938.

While the lease agreement expired on December 31, 1963, and was not renewed, the club continues to occupy the area to date, found the organisation. The lease rent was revised with effect from July 1978.

The Executive Engineer, B&R (Central), PWD on July 14, 2011, moved a proposal to the Chief Engineer, PWD that the AG (Audit), DAT Buildings, Puducherry raised an audit objection that the B&R Central Division has not renewed the lease agreement, or revised the lease rent since 1978. This has resulted in foregoing revenue resources.

In response to audit objection, the EE, B&R Central division requested the Deputy Collector (North) on October 18, 2010, to furnish the fair rent of the building, who then fixed it to Rs 10 lakh a month. He also advised them to adopt the fair rent after obtaining concurrence from the Finance Department.

"The club shall settle the rent arrears to the government and execute a fresh lease agreement within the time stipulated by Rent Controlling Authority...or else it shall vacate the premises within three months after settling dues, failing which eviction will be instituted under provisions of Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971, on account of unauthorised occupation," he said.

In 2011, a notice was issued to the Circle De Pondicherry asking for dues of 435 lakh crore within three months from the date of the notice.

"However, years after the notice was sent, no action was taken. Especially in the memorandum of understanding signed on October 21, 1954, Circle De Pondicherry was working for cultural promotion, but on what basis can they get a liquor license and sell liquor in violation of all the provisions of this agreement?" asked Raghupathy.

The agreement does not specify that no rent shall be charged either. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/oct/06/probe-failure-to-collect-rs-13-crore-rent-from-puducherry-club-says-vigilance-commission-2505191.html>

24. For the first time, Punjab GST collection crosses Rs 10,000 crore ([thestatesman.com](https://www.thestatesman.com)) October 5, 2022

Punjab Finance, Planning, Excise and Taxation Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Wednesday claimed that the state has crossed Rs 10,000 crore mark for the first time since the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. The state government has collected Rs 10,604 crore GST during the first six months of the current financial year.

The Minister said the state has seen a growth of 22.6 per cent in GST collection in the current financial year as against the same period last year. He said that during the first six months of the last financial year, the GST collection stood at Rs 8,650 crore whereas during the current year, the state has earned Rs 1,954 crore more, taking the total GST collection to Rs 10,604 crore.

Disclosing the GST figures for the month of September 2022, Cheema said that the state has registered a growth rate of 22 per cent. He said that the GST collection for September this year was Rs 1,710 crore as compared to the collection of Rs 1,402 crore in September 2021.

Finance Minister Cheema said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann led Punjab government has estimated a GST collection of Rs 20,550 crore in its maiden budget for the financial year 2022-23.

"The state has achieved more than 50 per cent in the first six months," he said, adding that the state is expected to see a healthy growth in the GST collection during the upcoming festival season.

Cheema said the state government has passed the Punjab Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill 2022 in the Punjab Assembly to plug all loopholes, besides stopping bogus billing which would not only benefit the traders but will also increase the own revenue of the state. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/for-the-first-time-punjab-gst-collection-crosses-rs-10000-crore-1503118205.html>