

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (27.09.2022)

1. Mid-day meal-related food poisoning cases in India at six-year peak ([thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)) 27 September, 2022

CAG audits blame poor infrastructure, insufficient inspections, irregular licensing and limited reporting

With most students back in school after pandemic restrictions were eased, cases of food poisoning due to the consumption of mid-day meals have resurfaced. In the last 90 days, close to 120 students suffered from food poisoning across schools in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

In 2022, 979 victims of food poisoning were reported in schools across India, the highest in the last six years. The number declined during the pandemic years as schools were closed. Chart 1 shows the number of food poisoning cases due to the consumption of mid-day meals at schools between 2009 and 2022 (till September 14).

In the last 13 years, data suggest that at least 9,646 such cases of food poisoning were reported. This figure is a conservative estimate based on data from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme and news reports. Close to 12% of such victims became ill after consuming mid-day meals in which lizards, rats, snakes and cockroaches were found. Chart 2 shows the number of such victims between 2009 and 2022.

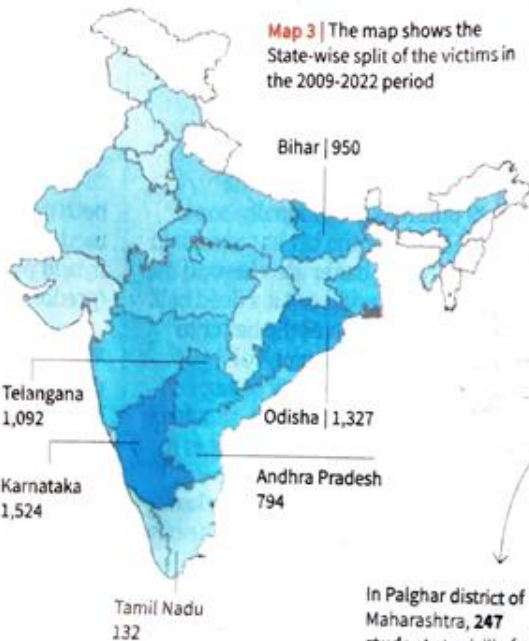
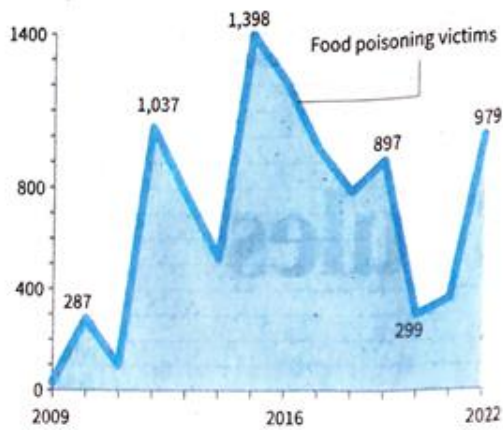
Most of the food poisoning cases by consumption of mid-day meals were recorded in Karnataka (1,524), Odisha (1,327), Telangana (1,092), Bihar (950) and Andhra Pradesh (794). Map 3 shows the State-wise split.

In Madhubani district of Bihar, 223 students complained of abdominal pain and giddiness after consuming mid-day meals in 2015. In 2016, 247 students fell ill after eating khichdi as their mid-day meal at a Zila Parishad school in a village in Palghar district, Maharashtra. In Belgaum district of Karnataka, 221 students complained of abdominal pain and nausea after consuming Upma as a part of their mid-day meal in 2017. Map 4 shows 232 such incidents of food poisoning due to consumption of mid-day meals in schools between 2009 and 2022.

When food turns poison

The charts and maps show the number of people who suffered from food poisoning after consuming mid-day meals in schools across India in the 2009-2022 period. The data were collated from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) and news reports by Arun (tweets as @amasaesle). This is a conservative estimate as the IDSP reports information on outbreaks and not individual cases. Also, only English language news reports were considered

Chart 1 | The chart shows the number of cases of food poisoning due to the consumption of mid-day meals in schools between 2009 and 2022 (till September 14)



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In Palghar district of Maharashtra, **247 students** took ill after consuming mid-day meals (*Kichodi*) in February 2016

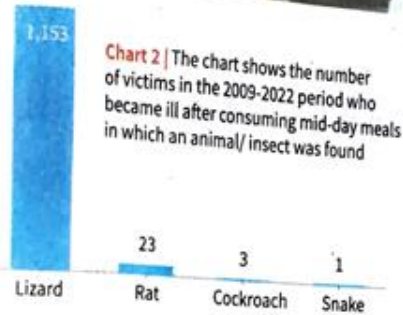


Chart 2 | The chart shows the number of victims in the 2009-2022 period who became ill after consuming mid-day meals in which an animal/ insect was found

Map 4 | The map shows the 232 incidents of food poisoning due to the consumption of mid-day meals in schools between 2009 and 2022

In Madhubani district of Bihar, **223 students** complained of abdominal pain and giddiness after consuming mid-day meals in 2015



In Belgaum district of Karnataka, **221 students** complained of abdominal pain and nausea after consuming *Upma* as a part of their mid-day meal in 2017

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has audited several States in the past decade and has cited many reasons that could lead to low standards of mid-day meal preparation such as poor infrastructure, insufficient inspections, irregular licensing, limited reporting and absence of feedback mechanisms.

In 2019, in Madhya Pradesh, the CAG found that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India did not notify doctors to report food poisoning cases. The Food Safety Commissioner did not have information relating to food poisoning cases that occurred during the 2014-19 period. The CAG found that one such missed instance involved 110 food poisoning cases that occurred in August 2014, in a school in the Hoshangabad district. As data were not collected, action was not taken against Food Business Operators (FBOs) responsible for preparing the meal.

In 2015-16, in Madhya Pradesh, the CAG found that around 14,500 schools did not have a kitchen shed for preparing mid-day meals. In 2016, in Arunachal Pradesh, 40% of the schools did not have a shed. In Chhattisgarh, a CAG survey between FY11 and FY15 found that the mid-day meal was cooked in open areas in unhygienic conditions in 8,932 schools.

Food delivered from centralised kitchens to schools should have a minimum temperature of 65°C when it is served. In 2018, during a field visit of schools in Valsad district in Gujarat, the CAG observed that the food served by the NGOs was not hot and none of the schools the CAG had visited had the facility to check the temperature. In five districts of the State, the CAG also found that there was over 80% shortfall in inspections of schools carried out by Deputy Collectors due to a shortage of staff.

In 2014, in Jharkhand, the CAG found that a grievance redressal mechanism was absent in many schools and so, reports about children falling sick were not addressed and rectified.

In 2017, in Himachal Pradesh, the CAG found that license and registration certificates were given to 97% and 100% of FBOs, respectively, without inspecting their premises. <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-mid-day-meal-related-food-poisoning-cases-in-india-at-six-year-peak/article65937530.ece>

2. Aadhaar number database, a tool for electoral ‘surveillance’ ([countercurrents.org](https://www.countercurrents.org)) 26 September, 2022

States, opposition parties clueless even after four years of Section 57 of Aadhaar Act being declared unconstitutional. Five years after Supreme Court’s verdict, no right to privacy law in sight, audit of UIDAI & Aadhaar schemes by CAG reveals Aadhaar Act as Black law

26 September 2022: Disregarding the ten fathom deep burial of the notorious majority opinion of the Supreme Court Justices P. N. Bhagwati, A.N. Ray, M.H. Beg and Y.V. Chandrachud in *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla* (1976) case that had suspended a person’s right to not be unlawfully detained by 9-Judge Constitution Bench in *Justice Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017), the majority opinion of Justices A. K. Sikri, Ashok Bhushan, A.M. Khanwilkar and D. Misra in *Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2018)

resurrected the notorious verdict by declaring Aadhaar Act to be partially constitutional on 26 September 2018. Court declared Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act which enabled body corporate and individual to seek authentication is held to be unconstitutional. Section 57 which was titled “Act not to prevent use of Aadhaar number for other purposes under law” has been “Omitted by the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Act 2019”. Section 57 provided that “nothing contained in this Act (Aadhaar Act) shall prevent the use of Aadhaar number for establishing the identity of an individual for any purpose, whether by the State or any body corporate or person...” So far State governments have failed to rescind their MoUs with UIDAI in the light of the judicial and legislative decisions. Opposition parties are yet to factor in the “incomplete” audit of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) of CAG and the audit of Aadhaar based Direct Benefits Transfer that creates a compelling logic for repeal of Aadhaar Act as has been done with UK’s Nation ID scheme which was cited as an example for India to emulate.

UIDAI’s Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR) of UID/Aadhaar Numbers and related sensitive information is akin to what Cathy O’Neil refers to as Weapons of Math Destruction while explaining the societal impact of the algorithm. It reveals how the use of big data and algorithms in a variety of fields, including education, and policing, insurance and advertising can lead to decisions that harm the poor, facilitate profiling for the minorities of all shades, reinforce racism, and amplifies inequality and creates a “toxic cocktail for democracy.” Her book won the Euler Book Prize of the Mathematical Association of America in 2019. Features used by UIDAI and its foreign technology solution providers are opaque, unregulated, and difficult to contest. They are also scalable, thereby amplifying any inherent biases to affect increasingly larger populations. These Weapons of Math Destruction are essentially Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Giorgio Agamben, the 74-year-old Italian philosopher who has been teaching at the University of Venice and New York University, predicted in 2004 that the ‘bio-political tattooing’ is the precursor to what would later turn into a normal identity registration of a good citizen. It provides a continuity between the world of the Nazi concentration camp and contemporary democracy. It paves the way for a genocidal liberal order. Biometrics ‘concerns the enrollment and filing away of the most private and incommunicable aspect of subjectivity, which results in the capture of the human body by the authorities for good. Till now such assault on the private human body was an exception, now it is becoming the norm. Surveillance has been used as a tool to shape the relationship between the citizen and the State. Both identification and surveillance have co-existed since time immemorial, but it is now assuming frightening architecture with the marriage of statistics of biological characteristics, and biometric technology with digital sculpture.

Aadhaar Act is aimed at making citizens entitlements like subsidies, benefits and service conditional on their identification based on “biometric information” such as “photograph, finger print, Iris scan, or such other biological attributes”. It suspends citizens’ right to not be denied their entitlements by their servant, the government although “Aadhaar number” is irrelevant for rights and entitlements of citizens.

Under Aadhaar Act “Aadhaar number” is an identification number issued to an individual who has resided in India for a period or periods amounting in all to one

hundred and eighty-two days or more in the twelve months immediately preceding the date of application for enrolment.

Notably, before abandoning its ID project, the UK used to cite Estonia as an example. Estonia has a population of 13 lakh people. It has come to light that 750,000 ID and e-residency cards of Estonians posed a security threat because it allowed private keys to be inferred from public keys resulting in the vulnerability of all systems depending upon the privacy of such keys facilitating identity theft or spoofing. It compelled the Estonian government to suspend these IDs. ID card manufacturer Gemalto, a Dutch company failed to inform the Estonian government about the vulnerability. It has also come to light that Gemalto and the Estonian government have reached a compromise agreement after the former agreed to pay 2.2 million EUR in compensation.

It may be recalled that Gemalto is part of World Bank's eTransform Initiative launched in partnership with Microsoft, Safran, Pfizer, IBM, France and South Korea. India's UID/Aadhaar scheme is part of biometric experiments underway in 14 developing countries. As a Member of Parliament from Bihar, K.C. Tyagi had raised the issue of threat from "Use of Aadhaar Cards as proof of address for procuring new SIM cards" manufactured by Gemalto, world biggest Sim card manufacturer on 13 March, 2015 in the Rajya Sabha and referred to "I.B. red flag over ADHAR based SIM card". Drawing the attention towards reported hacking into the data of this SIM card manufacturer by US and British intelligence agencies posing a national security threat as the majority of phones in India may have SIMs of that company. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, K C Tyagi, the Janata Dal-United MP said American and British spy agencies have hacked into the database of Dutch company Gemalto. Gemalto's SIM cards are widely used in India including by bureaucrats and the defence establishment. He added that the government's decision to link Aadhaar data base with SIM cards could potentially compromise strategic information. It poses a major national security threat. Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, the Trinamool Congress MP from West Bengal associated himself "with the concern expressed by Shri K. C. Tyagi." Notably, the West Bengal assembly has passed a unanimous resolution against Aadhaar.

Examination of the official documents indicates that the Indian UID/Aadhaar project was pushed by an ID cartel as a reaction to scrapping the National ID project of the UK. The technology solution providers like i. IBM, ii. Microsoft, iii. Oracle, iv. Computer Associates, v. Novell, vi. Honeywell, vii. HP, viii. Red Hat, ix. ILANTUS Technologies, x. MPhasis and xi. PwC were part of the 35 member task force constituted by the union government for identity management in 2006.

The concerns over the breach of citizens' data has prompted several state governments to halt the ongoing data collection process for a National Population Register (NPR). The fear is that the information sought under NPR is much wider in scope and could potentially be used to target a section of the society.

What the anti-NPR advocates do not realise is that there are more solid reasons to fear the NPR because it is not just a census exercise, but a larger data convergence project that can result in the government putting its citizens under surveillance, that is unwarranted and dangerous to the secular and constitutional credentials of the country. NPR's linkage with Aadhaar number plays a central role here.

In fact, MHA's NPR and MEITY's UIDAI's CIDR of UID/Aadhaar numbers are aimed at creating an architecture for indiscriminate mass surveillance of the present and future voters who are being structurally coerced to give their consent to the immoral and illegitimate exercise of their profiling for countless times.

It has turned every newborn into a suspect. There is a file being created to track and profile him for good. Like Indian NSA's threat to his adversaries about having a file on them, having a UID/Aadhaar number and NPR automatically creates a file of the Indian residents in question. Even infants are not spared in this cruel scheme of things.

In a country where no intelligence chief or official has held accountable for the assassination of two of its Prime Ministers and for betraying nation's secrets, can it be hoped that all those who compromised India's data security will be made liable for their treacherous acts of transferring the sensitive data of present and future citizens including ministers, soldiers, judges and ministers?

There is a compelling logic for setting up a High Powered Commission of Inquiry to probe the ongoing bartering of citizen's databases and transfer of national data assets to foreign entities.

The States should un-sign the MoUs they have signed with UIDAI and discontinue both UID/Aadhaar and NPR exercise to resist the emergence of an unlimited government, unlimited by the Constitution of India and Constitutionalism.

Here are some reasons for repealing Aadhaar Act:

-The majority order of the Supreme Court's 5-Judge Constitution Bench on September 26, 2018, has pointed out that the UID/Aadhaar Number project and NPR project are part of the one database convergence scheme. NPR has been mentioned at least on eight occasions in the order to underline the same. A centralized database is the most vulnerable entity in the digital world. The leakage of the database of UK's children has revealed the old maxim, "If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear, has been given a very public burial". This has been thoroughly debunked. This maxim is attributed to Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. Database State, a report from the UK, states: 'In October 2007, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (Department) lost two discs containing a copy of the entire child benefit database.' Only blind faith in a Utopian State can persuade people to think that they have nothing to fear after trusting their personal sensitive information to a Database State and non-State actors like Safran, Ernst & Young and Accenture.

-One of the earliest documents that refer to UIDAI, a 14-page document titled 'Strategic Vision: Unique Identification of Residents' prepared by Wipro Ltd for the government envisaged the close linkage that the UIDAI's Aadhaar would have with the electoral database. The use of the electoral database mentioned in Wipro's document remains on the agenda of the proponents of UID/Aadhaar.

-The 41-page Wikileaks document titled 'Creating a unique identity number for every resident in India' that declared itself to be a 'Confidential- property of UIDAI' states, "The Unique ID or UID will be a numeric that is unique across all 1.2 billion residents in India. The UID number will not contain intelligence. In older identity systems, it was

customary to load the ID number with information related to the date of birth, as well as the location of the person.”

This document reveals that from day one the Prime Minister wanted to create a file on each of “1.2 billion residents”, the division of work between Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)’s NPR and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY)’s UID/Aadhaar was/is merely an attention diversion tactics to outwit citizen’s scrutiny.

The ongoing merger of the electoral database with UID/number debunks UIDAI’s claim that UID/Aadhaar number “will not contain intelligence” and “the location of the person.” From these disclosures, it seems that the government has adopted an adversarial role vis-a-vis Indians and acting beyond its constitutional mandate in order to pander to the interests of the commercial czars, non-state actors and foreign intelligence companies.

-In an RTI reply dated October 25, 2013, UIDAI shared a truncated contract agreement with Ernst & Young. The contract agreement states that “the Unique ID will be a random 12-digit number with the basis for establishing uniqueness of identity being biometrics”. It announces that “we will provide a Unique Identity to over 113.9 crore people.”

This is evidently a fraudulent announcement because UIDAI with which the agreement has been signed had the mandate to provide Unique Identity to only 60 crore residents of India, and not to 113.9 crore people.

It is evident that while the government kept Ernst & Young informed about its motive, it kept states, citizens, the parliament and the Supreme Court in the dark. The contract agreement reveals that “biometric systems are not 100 % accurate” and “uniqueness of the biometrics is still a postulate.” This admission pulverizes the deceptive edifice on which MEITY’s UID/Aadhaar and MHA’s NPR rests.

-Section 57 of un-amended Aadhaar Act, 2016 stated that “Nothing contained in this Act shall prevent the use of Aadhaar number for establishing the identity of an individual for any purpose, whether by the State or any body corporate or person, pursuant to any law, for the time being in force, or any contract to this effect”.

It implies that UID/Aadhaar of “over 113.9 crore people” has been shared with foreign private body corporates like Ernst & Young. It is only after the horse had escaped the barn that the door was closed through Section 25 of Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 in compliance with the Court’s order dated September 26, 2018.

Section 25 of the Amendment Act 2019 states that Section 57 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 has been omitted with effect from July 24, 2019.

-At paragraph 8 of the majority order authored by Justice A K Sikri, it is recorded that “a Processes Committee was set up on July 03, 2006, to suggest the process for updation, modification, addition and deletion of data and fields from the core database to be created under the Unique Identification for BPL Families project.

This Committee, on November 26, 2006, prepared a paper known as 'Strategic Vision Unique Identification of Residents'. Based thereupon, the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) was set up on December 04, 2006, to collate the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number project of the Department "of Information Technology.

Subsequently, "a Committee of Secretaries was formed. The said Committee gave its recommendations which were discussed by EGoM. After approving the Aadhaar Scheme in principle, it instructed the Cabinet Secretary to convene a meeting to finalise the detailed organisational structure of the UID.

After considering the recommendation of the Cabinet Secretary, Notification No. A-43011/02/2009-Admn.I was issued on January 28, 2009, by the Government of India which constituted and notified the UIDAI." Annexure 1 of this notification that constituted UIDAI deals with the Role and Responsibilities of UIDAI. The fourth point in this notification reads: "implementation of UID scheme will entail" taking "necessary steps to ensure collation of NPR with UID (as per. approved strategy)".

-The minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Secretaries held under Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary November 23, 2015 talks of "integrating the twin approaches under NPR and Aadhaar."

The "integrating the twin approaches under NPR and Aadhaar" which is referred here is the same as taking "necessary steps to ensure collation of NPR with UID (as per. approved strategy)" underlined in the notification mentioned in the Aadhaar Act.

-A Ministry of Home Affairs communication dated July 19, 2019 states that "The National Population Register (NPR) thus prepared, was seeded with Aadhaar number during its updation exercise in 2015 along with a collection of demographic details of new household members. Approx. 60 crores Aadhaar numbers have been seeded in NPR Database."

This communication discloses that "It has now been decided by the Ministry of Home Affairs to update the existing NPR database during April 2020 – September 2020 along with House listing & Housing Census phase of Census 2021. While updating the NPR, the Aadhaar number of all the individuals whose Aadhaar number is not available in the NPR Database will also be collected along with various other items. Necessary notification for updating NPR in 2020 will be issued shortly."

-The Court's order reveals that "A core group was set up to advise and further the work related to UIDAI...The core group, inter alia, decided that it was better to start with the electoral roll database of 2009 for undertaking the UIDAI project." If an UID/Aadhaar-enabled Biometric Attendance System is indeed a 'digital equivalent' of an 'age-old attendance register,' why did the National Human Rights Commission object to a radio collar which can also be argued by sophists to be a 'digital equivalent'? It may be recalled that the Union ministry of external affairs had agreed with the NHRC's assessment. The Union minister of external affairs informed Parliament that some 18 students were detained and released in the US with radio monitoring devices on their ankles, pending completion of investigations for possible involvement in irregularities.

“We have also strongly protested the radio collars as unacceptable, which should be removed immediately.’ If the ‘digital equivalent’ means biometric equivalent as well, then radio collar and DNA-based identity and attendance will also be deemed equivalent to ‘age-old attendance register.’ It is quite evident that such claims are deeply misleading.

-The reference to ‘such other biological attributes’ in Section 2 (g) of Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, and the definition of ‘biometrics’ under the Information Technology (Reasonable security practices and procedures and sensitive personal data or information) Rules, 2011 under section 87 read with section 43A of Information Technology Act, 2000 underlines that it includes ‘the technologies that measure and analyse human body characteristics, such as “fingerprints”, “eye retinas and irises”, “voice patterns”, “facial patterns”, “hand measurements” and “DNA” for authentication purposes.’ It is abundantly clear that the plan of UID/Aadhaar-based surveillance does not end with the collection of fingerprints and iris scan, it goes quite beyond it. If surveillance is not a big deal, why is Edward Snowden in Moscow since June 23, 2013? Why is Australian journalist Julian Assange one of the 675 prisoners in Belmarsh, a category A prison, in London since April 2019 and why was he in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since July 19, 2012? If surveillance is indeed such an innocent act, then why are the entire US and European establishments paranoid about surveillance including electoral surveillance from Russia?

A confidential document of UIDAI titled ‘Creating a unique identity number for every resident in India’, leaked by Wikileaks on 13 November 2009 reveals that “One way to ensure that the unique identification (UID) number is used by all government and private agencies is by inserting it into the birth certificate of the infant. Since the birth certificate is the original identity document, it is likely that this number will then persist as the key identifier through the individual’s various life events, such as joining school, immunizations, voting etc.” There was never an occasion wherein there was an all-party meeting to seek the consent of all the political parties with regard to merger of UID/Aadhaar database with “electoral roll database”. The amendment to Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 has taken away the restriction that contribution can be made only to the extent of 7.5% of net average profit of three preceding financial years, enabling even newly incorporated companies to donate via electoral bonds. “This opens up the possibility of shell companies being set up for the sole purpose of making donations to political parties, with no other business consequence of having disburseable profits”, according to the Election Commission of India. The amendment to Section 182(3) abolished the provision that companies should declare their political contributions in their profit and loss accounts. This requirement is diluted to only showing the total expenditure under the head. This would “compromise transparency” and pave the way for the “increased use of black money for political funding through shell companies”. It is evident that the provision of Electoral Bonds in the Companies Act and the merger of Voter-ID Number and Aadhaar Number through amendment in Aadhaar Act is an exercise in merger of electoral database and Aadhaar database that will lead to total control of the extinguish political and civil rights of present and future generations by such rewriting of the political geography of the country with hitherto unknown adverse consequences.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, surveillance means 'close observation, especially of a suspected person'. So far the Supreme Court has not had the occasion to examine the most glaring aspect of unlimited-cyber biometric surveillance, which entails close observation of all the present and future Indians indiscriminately as suspects. The yet to be constituted 7-Judge Constitution Bench will have the opportunity to pronounce the verdict on the constitutionality of biometric-electoral surveillance through UID/Aadhaar database. Like UK's opposition parties India's opposition parties have the last opportunity to promise repeal of Aadhaar Act, a mini-Constitution emulating the example of 44th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1978 because in the name of biometric identification, civil death of citizens is being normalised and naturalised as if Article 21 of the Constitution has been abrogated. <https://countercurrents.org/2022/09/aadhaar-number-database-a-tool-for-electoral-surveillance/>

3. Need for financial details of centre & states jointly: Duly validated (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 27 September, 2022

One of the major complaints that all Finance Ministers have (at Centre and States and of whichever political affiliation) is that there is tax evasion.

One of the possible reasons for this tax evasion is the belief of the Indian Tax payer that he is not getting the quality of services that he is paying for and that there are too many leakages in the usage of funds. Funds are not utilized efficiently and too much is given away as give aways / freebies and assets that can be useful for the future are not being created.

Just as the American War of Independence was fought on the slogan of 'no taxation without representation', the Indian tax payer seems to have decided that unless he gets bang for the buck, as tax payer quite willing to risk tax evasion and face consequences.

If the Indian Tax Payer has to be convinced that there is a control on and better funds application, we are never ever going to see a significant drop in tax evasion. Moral science lectures on the matter of owing to the nation and being dutiful and ethical do not wash.

It is required that every year, the Controller and Auditor General of India office must compile a listing of the total of Central and States govts estimated actual revenue and expenditures in a format where Heads of Revenues and Expenditures are clearly spelt out. This is a standardized format.

It is in this way that we can better understand the annual fiscal deficits of :

- 1) Central Government;
- 2) Individual states and totality of state governments;
- 3) Central and state governments fiscal deficits in total. This is the National fiscal deficit.

The above information is required to understand which government is the more serious on fiscal deficits and which is not serious. It will also highlight which government is busy giving freebies and which government is creating valuable assets for the future.

It is important that this information is collated by end July for Budget years that are complete by end March. The CAG must do a professional job of collation and disclosure. This info must be available on Centre and States Internet sites relating to Finance and there needs to be debate on the quality of Funds utilization / application.

In my personal view, India has been a laggard on sharing of Govt financial data. As we expect Business and Individuals to display their financial details, something similar must happen at the Central and States levels also.

I am convinced that data availability of all state governments in the Union of India together will result in mutual learnings and competition. It is also the job of the Finance Commissions which determine the split of the tax pie to find out a methodology of rewarding the efficient and penalizing the inefficient (so far as state govts are concerned).

Unless the Indian tax payer is convinced that somebody is tracking governments Funds usage, the evasion of tax due to the feeling of mis-utilization of tax revenues will continue. Governments cannot keep themselves above scrutiny and Constitutional bodies must do a rethink on how they can contribute better. Their presence must become visible thru quality disclosures. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/spreading-light/need-for-financial-details-of-centre-states-jointly-duly-validated/>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

4. UP's Yamuna Expressway Authority paid for land unavailable on record: CAG report (theprint.in, ptinews.com, india.com) Updated: 27 Sept 2022

Uttar Pradesh government's Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) had purchased a land parcel in Gautam Buddha Nagar in 2015 but not verifying land records led to a loss of Rs 2.71 crore, a CAG report has revealed.

Further, the YEIDA also incurred an expenditure of Rs 0.10 crore as "stamp duty" on purchase of the land against an area not available in records, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)'s compliance audit report for the year ended March 2020 revealed.

The report, tabled recently in the UP assembly and accessed by PTI, states that the UP Power Transmission Corporation Limited had requested (June 2012) YEIDA to allot 75 acre (30.3514 hectare) land in village Jahangirpur in Gautam Buddha Nagar near the Yamuna Expressway for the construction of 765 KV sub-station.

A proposal for acquisition of land for sub-station was initiated (September 2012) by YEIDA officials which was approved the same month by its then chief executive officer (CEO).

The YEIDA executed (December 2012 to December 2015) 159 sale deeds for the purchase of 54.365 hectare land spread over 150 khasras, it noted.

“The Audit noticed (March 2019) that out of 150 khasras of revenue records, the actual area in 17 khasras was 6.3990 hectares. The YEIDA, however, overlooked the area actually available in land records or verification reports submitted by the District Authority, and purchased an area measuring 7.98935 hectares through executing sale deeds relating to aforesaid 17 khasras,” the CAG report noted.

“This has resulted in payment against 1.59035 hectare land which was not actually available in respective khasras or verification reports. The YEIDA paid Rs 13.60 crore as compensation, annuity and additional compensation for purchase of 7.98935 hectares of land. Consequently, due to not reconciling purchased land with land records/verification reports, the YEIDA suffered a loss of Rs 2.71 crore on purchase of 1.59035 hectare land,” the report said.

“Further, the YEIDA also incurred an expenditure of Rs 0.10 crore as stamp duty on the purchase of land against an area not available in records,” it stated.

The CAG report mentioned that in its reply, the YEIDA accepted (July 2021) that there was a difference of 1.5935 hectare between area mentioned in the 17 sale deeds and revenue records.

Further, it stated that the purchase of land was done on the basis of land records made available by the District Authority, according to the report.

However, the CAG said “the reply” that the purchase was done on the basis of land records made available by the District Authority “is not acceptable” as the land mentioned in verification reports of the District Authority was less than the area against which payment was made.

“Hence, the YEIDA is fully responsible for purchasing unavailable land due to not exercising due diligence by its officials of the Land Department,” the auditor stated.

The CAG report added that the matter was reported to the government (March 2021) but the reply was awaited (November 2021). <https://theprint.in/india/ups-yamuna-expressway-authority-paid-for-land-unavailable-on-record-cag-report/1144753/>

5. हाइटेक टाउनशिप में 600 करोड़ रुपये का घोटाला... इस रिपोर्ट में हुआ खुलासा, विजिलेंस जांच शुरू (navbharattimes.indiatimes.com) Updated: 27 Sept 2022

गाजियाबाद: उत्तर प्रदेश के गाजियाबाद से हाइटेक टाउनशिप मामले में करीब 600 करोड़ रुपये का घोटाला सामने आया है। हाइटेक टाउनशिप में बड़ी गड़बड़ी की लगातार मिलती शिकायतों और कैग की आप

ति को शासन ने गंभीरता से लिया है। शासन की तरफ से इस मामले की विजिलेंस जांच शुरू कराई गई है। विजिलेंस ने 39 सवालों की सूची बनाकर जीडीए से जवाब पूछा है। साथ ही यह भी कहा है कि इस सवाल के जवाब के साथ ही संबंधित कागजात भी भेजा जाए। फिलहाल जीडीए ने इस प्रकरण में विजिलेंस टीम के साथ को-ऑर्डिनेशन के लिए तहसीलदार दुर्गेश कुमार को नोडल ऑफिसर नियुक्त किया है।

दरअसल, हाइटेक टाउनशिप के तहत जिले में वेव सिटी और सनसिटी को विकसित किया जा रहा है। कैग ने 2017 के आसपास जब जीडीए की ऑडिट किया था तो हाइटेक टाउनशिप में बिना कन्वर्जन चार्ज लिए हुए ही लैंडयूज को आवासीय करने पर आपत्ति जाहिर की थी। उनका आरोप था कि इससे जीडीए को करीब 600 करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ था। कैग की आपत्ति का मामला शासन तक पहुंचा तो अब विजिलेंस जांच शुरू हुई है।

क्या है पूरा मामला?

मई 2005 में प्रदेश सरकार ने गाजियाबाद में हाइटेक टाउनशिप के विकास के लिए दो विकासकर्ताओं का चयन किया। तब मास्टरप्लान-

2001 लागू था। जिसके अनुसार हाइटेक टाउनशिप के लिए नामित क्षेत्र का भू-

उपयोग कृषि था। जुलाई 2005 में सरकार ने मास्टरप्लान-

2021 को मंजूरी दी। इसके तहत हाइटेक टाउनशिप के लिए चिह्नित भूमि का उपयोग सांकेतिक था, इसलिए विकासकर्ताओं को भू-

उपयोग परिवर्तन शुल्क देना था। वर्ष 2006 और 2007 में बनाई गई नीतियों में भी विकासकर्ताओं से भू-उपयोग परिवर्तन शुल्क लिए जाने की बात शामिल थी।

इसके बाद मास्टरप्लान-

2021 के संबंध में 23 अप्रैल 2010 को एक शासनादेश हुआ कि उत्तर प्रदेश शहरी नियोजन एवं विकास अधिनियम 1973 के तहत हाइटेक टाउनशिप के लिए भू-

उपयोग सांकेतिक दिखाने का कोई प्रावधान नहीं है। चूंकि गाजियाबाद मास्टरप्लान-2021 में जैसा भू-

उपयोग दिखाया गया था, उस प्रकार की भूमि का उपयोग आवासीय माना जाएगा। इसलिए, इस क्षेत्र पर भू-उपयोग परिवर्तन शुल्क देय नहीं होगा।

मई 2017 में ऑडिट के दौरान पाया गया कि आवास एवं शहरी नियोजन विभाग ने विकासकर्ताओं के अनुरोध पर मास्टरप्लान में सांकेतिक भू-

उपयोग को आवासीय में परिवर्तित कर उन्हें शुल्क से राहत दे दी। इस तरह डिवेलपर्स को अनुचित लाभ दिया गया और प्राधिकरण को 572.48 करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ। इस दौरान प्रदेश में सपा और बसपा सरकारें रही हैं।

जीडीए का है यह तर्क

जीडीए के अधिकारियों का तर्क है कि जब हाइटेक टाउनशिप योजना आई थी तो शासन से एक आदेश आया था कि हाइटेक टाउनशिप के तहत मास्टरप्लान के कोई भी भू उपयोग को आवासीय मान लिया जाए। जिसकी वजह से भू उपयोग परिवर्तन का चार्ज नहीं लिया गया। लेकिन जानकारों का कहना है कि हाइटेक टाउनशिप में आवासीय के साथ ही कमर्शियल एक्टिविटी भी हो रही है, जबकि शासनादेश में इसका जिक्र नहीं था।

दिव्य ज्योति की शमन शुल्क का भी मामला

हाइटेक टाउनशिप के साथ ही प्रवर्तन जोन-

2 के मुरादनगर एरिया में आने वाले दिव्य ज्योति संस्थान में शमन शुल्क को जमा करवाने में हुई गड़बड़ी की जांच भी विजिलेंस ने शुरू कर दी है। इसमें नियमों के खिलाफ जाकर शमन शुल्क जमा करवाने का आरोप है। इस पूरे मामले में विजिलेंस जांच के बाद बड़ा खुलासा होने की बात कही गई है। <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/state/uttar-pradesh/ghaziabad/ghaziabad-600-crore-scam-in-hitech-township-vigilance-started-investigation-after-cag-report/articleshow/94469660.cms>

6. 416 projects worth Rs 1,300 incomplete in Nagaland: CAG Report (theprint.in, eastmojo.com, nagalandpost.com, siasat.com) 26

September, 2022

Kohima: The Nagaland government has spent over Rs 1,300 crore on 416 projects which are incomplete for almost 20 years, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report said.

This was revealed in the State Finances Audit Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended March 31, 2021, which was tabled by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio in the just concluded Nagaland Legislative Assembly session.

There were 416 projects lying incomplete/ongoing as on March 31, 2021 for which Rs 1,380.04 crore had been spent by 36 Departments since the year 2003, the CAG report said.

The age profile of incomplete projects based on the year of sanction/year of start of these projects ranges from 2003, it said.

The CAG report revealed that from 2003-11, there were 63 incomplete projects for which Rs 722.61 crore has been spent with cost over-run amounting to Rs 156.61 crore as on March 31, 2021.

In 2011-12, an amount of Rs 67.96 crore was spent for 19 incomplete projects while in 2012-13, Rs 132.86 crore has been spent for 39 ongoing projects with cost over-run of Rs 25.84 crore.

Further, 2013-14: 134 projects (Rs 53.55 crore), 2014-15: 59 projects (Rs 23.98 crore), 2015-16: 21 projects (Rs 96.18 crore), 2016-17: 10 projects (Rs 11.98 crore), 2017-18: 34 projects (Rs 67.48 crore), 2018-19: 9 projects (Rs 42.78 crore), 2019-20: 4 projects (Rs 5.28 crore), the report said.

While for 2020-21 there were no such incomplete projects, the CAG report, however, said that a total of 24 incomplete/going projects on which Rs 155.38 crore was spent does not have information about the year of commencement.

The report stated that of the 36 defaulting departments, the major defaulting departments were PWD (Roads & Bridges) – Rs 258.85 crore against 15 projects; PWD (Housing) – Rs 235.56 crore against 35 projects, Police Engineering Project – Rs 177.75 crore for 48 projects; Urban Development – Rs 96.77 crore for 26 projects;

Geology & Mining – Rs 48.95 crore for 4 projects; Veterinary and Animal Husbandry – Rs 19.3 crore for 62 projects; Civil Administration Works – Rs 15.33 for 47 projects while other 29 (names not specified) had spent Rs 527.53 crore against 179 incomplete works.

The report said that analysis of the 416 incomplete projects revealed that in 63 projects, target year of completion was not furnished by the Departments till the end of audit period.

Of these 416 projects, works in respect of two projects (estimated cost Rs 10.93 crore) had been suspended during 2014-15 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 10.46 crore (95.70 per cent of estimated cost).

In 358 projects, there was no financial progress during 2020-21, it said, adding that there was 100 per cent financial achievement in six projects but 100 per cent physical progress was not achieved while in one project physical progress was nil.

There was no physical progress, despite expenditure of Rs 30.37 crore (16.04 per cent of the estimated/revised cost of 189.39 crore) incurred on 19 projects up to March 2021, it said.

Project cost in respect of 18 incomplete projects was revised from Rs 271.46 crore to Rs 454.82 crore, it said.

It said that the Capital Expenditure of Rs 1,380.04 crore incurred on these 416 incompletes remained blocked.

The CAG report said that blocking of funds on incomplete projects/works impinges negatively on the quality of expenditure and deprives the state of the intended benefits for prolonged periods.

Further, delay in completion of the projects was fraught with the risk of cost overrun, which was evident in 63 projects which were pending since 2003-11, it said.

Therefore, the CAG recommended that effective steps need to be taken to complete all these projects without further delay to avoid time and cost inefficiencies. <https://theprint.in/india/416-projects-worth-rs-1300-incomplete-in-nagaland-cag-report/1143840/>

7. Nagaland govt spent Rs 1,300 crore on 416 incomplete projects: CAG Report ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) 26 Sep 2022

KOHIMA: The Nagaland government has spent over Rs 1,300 crore on 416 projects which are incomplete for almost 20 years, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report said.

This was revealed in the State Finances Audit Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended March 31, 2021, which was tabled by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio in the just concluded Nagaland Legislative Assembly session.

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The age profile of incomplete projects based on the year of sanction/year of start of these projects ranges from 2003, it said. The CAG report revealed that from 2003-11, there were 63 incomplete projects for which Rs 722.61 crore has been spent with cost over-run amounting to Rs 156.61 crore as on March 31, 2021.

In 2011-12, an amount of Rs 67.96 crore was spent for 19 incomplete projects while in 2012-13, Rs 132.86 crore has been spent for 39 ongoing projects with cost over-run of Rs 25.84 crore.

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While for 2020-21 there were no such incomplete projects, the CAG report, however, said that a total of 24 incomplete/going projects on which Rs 155.38 crore was spent does not have information about the year of commencement.

The report stated that of the 36 defaulting departments, the major defaulting departments were PWD (Roads & Bridges) -- Rs 258.85 crore against 15 projects; PWD (Housing) -- Rs 235.56 crore against 35 projects, Police Engineering Project -- Rs 177.75 crore for 48 projects; Urban Development -- Rs 96.77 crore for 26 projects; Geology & Mining -- Rs 48.95 crore for 4 projects; Veterinary and Animal Husbandry -- Rs 19.3 crore for 62 projects; Civil Administration Works -- Rs 15.33 for 47 projects while other 29 (names not specified) had spent Rs 527.53 crore against 179 incomplete works.

The report said that analysis of the 416 incomplete projects revealed that in 63 projects, target year of completion was not furnished by the Departments till the end of audit period.

Of these 416 projects, works in respect of two projects (estimated cost Rs 10.93 crore) had been suspended during 2014-15 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 10.46 crore (95.70 per cent of estimated cost).

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Project cost in respect of 18 incomplete projects was revised from Rs 271.46 crore to Rs 454.82 crore, it said.

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Further, delay in completion of the projects was fraught with the risk of cost overrun, which was evident in 63 projects which were pending since 2003-11, it said.

Therefore, the CAG recommended that effective steps need to be taken to complete all these projects without further delay to avoid time and cost inefficiencies. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/sep/26/nagaland-govt-spent-rs-1300-crore-on-416-incomplete-projects-cag-report-2502107.html>

8. CAG

Report: नगालैंड में 1300 करोड़ रुपये के 416 प्रोजेक्ट अधूरे, सीएजी रिपोर्ट से खुलासा (amarujala.com) 26 Sep 2022

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि नागालैंड सरकार ने 416 परियोजनाओं पर 1,300 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए हैं जो लगभग 20 वर्षों से अधूरे हैं। यह बात 31 मार्च, 2021 को समाप्त वर्ष के लिए भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक द्वारा राज्य वित्त लेखा परीक्षा रिपोर्ट में सामने आई जिसे मुख्यमंत्री नेफियू रियो ने हाल ही में संपन्न नागालैंड विधानसभा सत्र में पेश किया था।

कैग की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 31 मार्च, 2021 तक 416 परियोजनाएं अधूरी थीं या चल रही थीं, जिसके लिए 36 विभागों द्वारा वर्ष 2003 से 1,380.04 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए थे। इसमें कहा गया है कि इन परियोजनाओं की मंजूरी के वर्ष/इन परियोजनाओं के शुरू होने के वर्ष के आधार पर अधूरी परियोजनाओं की आयु 2003 से है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट से पता चला है कि 2003-

11 से 63 अधूरी परियोजनाएं थीं, जिन पर 722.61 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए हैं, जो 31 मार्च, 2021 तक लाग से 156.61 करोड़ रुपये अधिक है।

वर्ष 2011-12 में 19 अधूरी परियोजनाओं पर 67.96 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए जबकि 2012-13 में 25.84 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से चल रही 39 परियोजनाओं पर 132.86 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए। इसके अलावा, 2013-14: 134 परियोजनाएं (53.55 करोड़ रुपये), 2014-15: 59 परियोजनाएं (23.98 करोड़ रुपये), 2015-16: 21 परियोजनाएं (96.18 करोड़ रुपये), 2016-17: 10 परियोजनाएं (11.98 करोड़ रुपये), 2017-18: 34 परियोजनाएं (67.48 करोड़ रुपये), 2018-19: 9 परियोजनाएं (42.78 करोड़ रुपये), 2019-20: 4 परियोजनाएं (5.28 करोड़ रुपये) रही। जबकि 2020-21 के लिए ऐसी कोई अधूरी परियोजनाएं नहीं थीं, हालांकि, CAG की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि कुल 24 अधूरी/चल रही परियोजनाएँ, जिन पर 155.38 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए थे, उनके शुरू होने के वर्ष के बारे में जानकारी नहीं है।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 416 अधूरी परियोजनाओं के विश्लेषण से पता चला कि 63 परियोजनाओं में लेखा परीक्षा अवधि के अंत तक विभागों द्वारा पूरा करने का लक्ष्य वर्ष प्रस्तुत नहीं किया गया। इन 416 परियोजनाओं में से दो परियोजनाओं (अनुमानित लागत 10.93 करोड़ रुपये) के संबंध में कार्य 2014-15 के दौरान 10.46 करोड़ रुपये (अनुमानित लागत का 95.70 प्रतिशत) खर्च करने के बाद निलंबित कर दिया गया था। 358 परियोजनाओं में 2020-21 के दौरान कोई वित्तीय प्रगति नहीं हुई थी। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/416-projects-worth-rs-1-300-incomplete-in-nagaland-cag-report>

9. प्रदेश में सार्वजनिक 31 उपक्रम निष्क्रिय, 4009 करोड़ का घाटा, कैग ने जताई नाराजगी (thehindkeshari.in) 26 Sep 2022

भोपाल। प्रदेश में सत्तर सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों में से 31 उपक्रम निष्क्रिय पड़े हैं और चौदह उपक्रम 4009 करोड़ के घाटे में चल रहे हैं। इनमें सर्वाधिक नुकसान मध्यक्षेत्र, पूर्व और पश्चिम विद्युत वितरण कंपनियों ने पहुंचाया है। इसको लेकर महानियंत्रक लेखा परीक्षक ने भारी नाराजगी जाहिर की है। राज्य के सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के चौदह उपक्रमों में से कुल नुकसान 4009 करोड़ में से बिजली वितरण कंपनियों ने सर्वाधिक नुकसान पहुंचाया है।

वर्ष 20-

21 में 70 में से 60 कंपनियों निगमों के लेखे ही विभिन्न कारणों से पूरे नहीं हो पाए। प्रदेश के साठ सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों में से 60 उपक्रमों के 229 लेखे महानियंत्रक को समय पर नहीं भेजे गए। जो 31 उपक्रम निष्क्रिय थे उनमें सोलह उपक्रम ऐसे थे जिनके नवीनतम लेखे उपलब्ध थे लेकिन वे निष्क्रिय थे। राज्य के सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के दस उपक्रम ऐसे थे जो तीन से 31 वर्षों तक निष्क्रिय रहे। पांच उपक्रम ऐसे थे जिनके प्रथम लेखे भी प्राप्त नहीं हुए इसलिए उनकी समीक्षा नहीं की जा सकी। दादा धुनीवाले खंडवा पॉवर लिमिटेड का नवंबर 2020 में विघटन हो गया और मध्यप्रदेश राज्य सेतु निगम का लोक निर्माण विभाग में विलय हो गया।

ये दोनों लेखा परीक्षा से बाहर हो गए। वहीं सागर सिटी ट्रांसपोर्ट सर्विसेस लिमिटेड महानियंत्रक के दायरे में आई। निष्क्रिय पड़े सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों और घाटे वाले उपक्रमों को लेकर महानियंत्रक लेखा परीक्षक ने नाराजगी जाहिर की है और सरकार से जवाब मांगा है।

15 कंपनियों में कामकाज 31 वर्षों से बंद

मप्र एमएमआरएल सेमरिया कोल कंपनी लिमिटेड, मप्र एएमआरएल मोरगा कोल कंपनी लिमिटेड, मप्र एएमआरएल बिछारपुर कोल कंपनी, मरकी बरका कोल कंपनी, जेपी कोल लिमिटेड, मप्र मोनेट माइनिंग कंपनी, मप्र जेपी कोल फील्ड, एमपी जेपी मिनरल्स, मप्र सैनिक कोल माइनिंग, मप्र सड़क परिवहन निगम एवं महाराष्ट्र मिनरल्स एवं कैमिकल्स लिमिटेड, मप्र पंचायती राज वित्त एवं ग्रामीण विकास निगम, मप्र फिल्म विकास निगम, आॅप्टेल टेलीकम्युनिकेशन और मप्र विद्युत यंत्र लिमिटेड का परिचालन 31 वर्षों तक बंद रहा।

बिजली कंपनियों का बढ़ रहा कर्ज

मध्यप्रदेश पश्चिम क्षेत्र विद्युत वितरण कंपनी को 3249 करोड़, पूर्व क्षेत्र विद्युत वितरण कंपनी को 4385 करोड़, मध्य क्षेत्र विद्युत वितरण कंपनी को 4933 करोड़ और पावर जनरेटिंग कंपनी को 748 करोड़ तथा पावर ट्रांसमिशन कंपनी को 3873 करोड़ रुपए का कर्ज चुकाना बाकी है।

ये कर्ज पर ब्याज भी नहीं दे पा रहे-

मध्यप्रदेश प्लास्टिक पार्क डेवलपमेंट कारपोरेशन को कर्ज पर 3 करोड़ 89 लाख रुपए का ब्याज देना हो। डीएमआईसी विक्रम उद्योग पुरी लिमिटेड को 53 करोड़ 84 लाख, मध्यप्रदेश पश्चिम क्षेत्र विद्युत वितरण कंपनी को 3289 करोड़ और मध्यप्रदेश पावर जनरेटिंग कंपनी को 3 करोड़ 50 लाख रुपए के ब्याज का भुगतान करना बाकी है।

सकल घरेलु उत्पाद का 10.81% कारोबार

राज्य के सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के 31 उपक्रम 41 वर्षों तक निष्क्रिय थे। वर्ष 2020-21 के दौरान सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के शेष 39 उपक्रमों ने 99 हजार 211 करोड़ 48 लाख रुपए का कारोबार किया है। यह मध्यप्रदेश के सकल घरेलु उत्पाद का 10.81 प्रतिशत था। मध्यप्रदेश वेयर हाउसिंग एवं लाजिस्टिक्स कारपोरेशन ने 242 करोड़ 20 लाख और मध्यप्रदेश पावर जनरेटिंग कंपनी ने 192 करोड़ 77 लाख रुपए का लाभ में योगदान किया है। <https://thehindkeshari.in/31-public-undertakings-inactive-in-the-state-the-loss-of-4009-crores/>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

10. Don't go overboard against GST offences (economictimes.indiatimes.com) September 26, 2022

Gol's reported move to decriminalise some of the offences in the goods and services tax (GST) law is a good idea now that the regime has stabilised. Collections are robust due to improved compliance, justifying the case against imposing disproportionate punishment. Searches and surveys that tax officers are empowered to conduct are blunt instruments of law enforcement. The threat of imprisonment looms when all omissions in reporting a transaction are viewed as fraudulent, or the outcome of a mala fide intent to evade GST is established. There are likely to be many cases that involve interpretation of law where these provisions must not be invoked.

Penalties must be commensurate with the offence. Decriminalising offences and switching to monetary penalties will lower the burden on courts. The plan is to raise the threshold of cognisable and non-bailable offences to ₹20 crore from ₹5 crore, and the attachment of bank accounts only for serious and high-value offences. Allowing compounding of offences would enable those charged with wrongdoing to pay compounding charges, and avoid criminal prosecution. The offences include fraudulent input tax credit (ITC) claims, falsifying documents to get refunds, issuing fake invoices and abetting in the commission of offences. The new system should be simple, without any discretion that raises the chances for arbitrariness.

GST leaves audit trails that must be pursued. Tax evasion can be uncovered by using data analytics and machine learning. It is also time to overhaul GST, learning from

five-plus years' experience of implementing the levy. Moving to a simple tax system, lowering rates, broadening the base and better tax administration will improve compliance manifold, and boost collections. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/et-editorial/dont-go-overboard-against-gst-offences/articleshow/94462548.cms>

11. Centre for disinvestment of CPSEs under 2 ministries, 3 departments ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) September 27, 2022

The government has reportedly initiated the process to disinvest/ close various Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSEs) under two ministries and three departments. These include CPSEs under the Ministries of Housing & Urban Affairs and Health & Family Welfare, and Departments of Pharmaceuticals, Telecommunications and Fertilisers, a report in BusinessLine (BL) said.

Twenty-seven CPSEs fall under these departments and ministries. Nine alone come under the ambit of the fertiliser department, the report added. Some of the CPSEs have been making huge losses.

The Centre is also holding discussions on the new CPSE policy that suggests disinvestments or closures in the non-strategic sectors, the BL report said further. All the above ministries and sectors belong to the non-strategic sector.

The report further added that the disposal and closure of the immovable assets will be delinked. The freehold lands will be transferred to a special purpose vehicle, and the leasehold land will be returned to the states.

The process is expected to get over within 7 months and 45 days.

In India, the process of disinvestment of CPSEs is generally conducted by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

It can be done through issuing an initial public offer (IPO), further public offer (FPO), strategic sale, Institutional Placement Program (IPP), and CPSE Exchange Traded Fund (ETF). https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/centre-for-disinvestment-of-cpses-under-2-ministries-3-departments-122092700141_1.html

12. Centre plans to extend free foodgrain programme ([telegraphindia.com](https://www.telegraphindia.com)) September 27, 2022

The Centre is likely to extend later this week the free foodgrain programme for the poor which officially expires on September 30.

Sources said there was consensus on the issue among the different ministries and the only point of discussion was whether to extend it by three or six months.

The government would not like to wreck its image ahead of the crucial elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, which are likely to be held in December when the term of current Assemblies expire.

It is also chary of dampening the mood during the festive season by scrapping the scheme at a time when food inflation has snowballed into a major concern.

There is, however, a massive cost burden that an extension of the programme will involve.

The food subsidy bill – which has been capped at Rs 2.07 lakh crore in this year's budget — is expected to balloon.

In its effort to put a lid on its fiscal deficit, the government had cut the food subsidy this year by 27.8 per cent from the revised estimate for fiscal year 2022.

In March, the Centre had extended the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme by six months till September 30. A fresh extension till March next year could see the food subsidy bill soar to Rs 4.36 lakh crore this fiscal, which means a 111 per cent increase over the budgeted amount.

The beneficiaries of PMGKAY get 5kg of free ration per person per month in addition to their normal quota of foodgrain under the National Food Security Act. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/centre-plans-to-extend-free-foodgrain-programme/cid/1888920>

13. Reducing carbon footprint: Indian Railways achieve 100% electrification of 4 zones, says Centre ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) September 26, 2022

Union MoS for Railways Raosaheb Patil Danve announced that Indian Railways has achieved 100% electrification on four of its zones namely — East Coast, South Eastern, Eastern and Central Eastern Railway. This development is in line with the Indian Railways' aim of becoming the largest Green Railways in the world and further moving towards becoming a "net zero carbon emitter" before 2030. Danve took to Twitter to make the announcement and stated that besides reducing carbon footprints, this will also enable seamless passenger and freight movement.

According to a report, if Indian Railways achieve the "net zero carbon emitter" goal, it could lead to an annual emissions reduction of at least 15 million tonnes of CO₂. This could further help meet 5% of India's Nationally Determined Contributions target and also save Rs 17,000 crore in fuel costs and other savings per year. Recently, the Indian Railways also registered a growth in passenger traffic revenue and automobile traffic.

Railways not only helps automobile industry to quickly transport bulk volumes over long distances, but also gives the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint. According to the Indian Railways, the volume of transportation of small passenger vehicles (cars) has increased by 68% YoY during the first five months of the current financial year. Moreover, the revenue from passenger traffic was Rs 25,276.54 crore with a 116% increase of Rs 13,574.44 crore over the corresponding period of last year. Passenger traffic also increased compared to last year in both the segments, reserved

as well as unreserved. These figures also point towards the increased use of trains and makes the reduction of carbon emissions' goal all the more important.

The Railways had said in June 2021 that electrification had increased nearly 10 times since 2014. Recently, Konkan Railway Corporation completed electrification on its entire 741-km route between Roha (Maharashtra) and Thokur (Karnataka). Konkan Railway connects Mumbai with Mangalore. The line passes through Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka along India's west coast. South Central Railway also announced the electrification of 163 km railway lines on various sections in Andhra Pradesh. <https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/railways/reducing-carbon-footprint-indian-railways-achieve-100-electrification-of-4-zones-says-centre/2691214/>

14. The RBI's rupee headache ([thehindubusinessline.com](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com)) Sep 26, 2022

For the central bank the biggest dilemma is to what extent it should intervene to shore up the rupee

The currency level for any country in the market is quite ironically in the hands of the central bank today. This rather unique situation has arisen due to the 'dollar story'. The dollar has been appreciating relentlessly against the euro, which is the starting point.

Consequently all currencies have borne the brunt and central banks everywhere have to decide how to counter this phenomenon.

Let us see why the dollar is getting stronger even while everyone talks of a recession in the US. The Fed has been increasing rates which are now at 3-3.25 per cent and are set to edge higher. The median projections for the Fed fund rates are 4.4 per cent in 2022 and 4.6 per cent in 2023. This means there will be more rate hikes.

It is possible to assume that the US is a strong economy, which makes the dollar more attractive. But as the rates increase, inflation gets tempered and activity slows down, there could well be a recession. However, higher rates also mean that the US is back to becoming attractive as an investment destination.

Now, other central banks are also increasing their rates with the Bank of England increasing them by 50 bps. The ECB may be next with another 75 bps. But the Fed will be ahead and the dollar will get stronger.

Theoretically, after a point of time when the recession sets in, the dollar should weaken and the euro should be back to the level of \$1.05-1.10. But this is still some way off.

In such a situation what should the RBI do? If the RBI sits back and lets the rupee fall, rupee depreciation will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The market will conclude that the RBI is okay with a level of 81 or 82 and probably push for 83 depending on the feelers that it is getting.

Exporters will hold back their earnings hoping to convert at a higher rate at a later date. Importers will rush in to buy future dollars to cover their imports.

Speculative risks

This will create a demand-supply gap and push down the rupee further. Speculators will also punt on the rupee in the non-deliverable forwards (NDF) market and widen the gap, thus accelerating the movement. Once this happens the rupee could be in free fall.

The central bank cannot allow this to happen. There are advantages surely in having a weak rupee. It supposedly gives a country a competitive advantage. But when the world is slowing down and the other currencies too are falling, this may not turn into an advantage.

Exports usually do well when the global economy is robust. A weak world economy is not beneficial for exports. On the other side, a weakening rupee without checks will lead to higher cost of imports. And as India has a large trade deficit with imports being higher than exports, this will result in imported inflation.

Higher inflation will become an issue for the central bank at MPC meetings. Therefore, the central bank doing nothing is not a good idea.

The RBI has so far been selling dollars in the market to stabilise the rupee. Hence, while the rupee has fallen, it has been better performing better than other currencies. Meanwhile, forex currency reserves have now fallen by \$93 billion on a year-on-year basis and \$55 billion since March 2022.

A part of this decline can be attributed to revaluation of reserves which happens automatically when the dollar strengthens and the euro, pound and yen (which are other minor components of our forex reserves) weaken. The RBI has also taken positions in the forwards market to drive sentiment. Evidently, the impact has been limited with the Fed factor dominating all movement of currencies.

Forex reserves

The question is: how much forex assets can the RBI keep supplying in the market to stabilise the rupee? The global reaction to the Fed is getting stronger. FPI flows are becoming volatile once again. August was a good month for us while the same cannot be said about September so far. The RBI has managed to control the rupee up to the ₹80/\$ threshold. The market believed that the RBI would use reserves which had been built up in the past to defend the rupee.

But it should be remembered that all these reserves have come in not due to a current account surplus but capital flows, and cannot, or rather should not, ideally be used to protect a current account deficit which is also being driven by global factors.

The rupee has crossed the 80 mark and is now testing 82. It does appear that the RBI will now let the rupee slide a little more and probably would use other tools to intervene.

One way out is to go in for larger rate hikes. While these cannot match the Fed's rate hikes, they will still send the signal that we are on the same page. Policy announcements are already in place such as getting in more ECBs, NRI deposits and FPIs. Those measures announced a couple of months back have not quite brought in funds and would take time to work under normal conditions.

As currency management gets interlinked with monetary management, the rupee movement cannot be left to the market. For the RBI there will be trade-offs. Forex management is now becoming an integral part of policy formulation as it affects not just inflation but also liquidity. Every time dollars are sold to banks, liquidity falls and it comes back to the door of the RBI; with liquidity now being tight, measures for inducing liquidity have to be part of the agenda. It is tough being a central banker in these times. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/the-rbis-rupee-headache/article65938832.ece>

15. RBI tells banks to make extra provisions for earlier defaults ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) Updated: 27 Sep 2022

The Reserve Bank of India has identified a set of loan accounts, including companies owned by the state governments which defaulted on repayments between FY20 and FY22, and has asked banks to make provisions against them retrospectively, two bankers in the know said. The regulator recently conducted an inspection for FY22 and insisted that the banks set aside 20% of outstanding loans taken by the entities as provisions. RBI pulled up banks for not following a 7 June 2019 circular on the resolution of stressed assets, which mandated lenders to review loan accounts within 30 days of default.

Bankers said public sector undertakings, at times, fail to repay within the deadlines, but such instances are temporary and do not last for more than a week or so. RBI has, however, questioned why the banks did not use the June 2019 circular to review the loan accounts, they said. State PSUs named by RBI were from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha. An email query to a spokesperson of the RBI remained unanswered till press time.

"These loans are in the standard category and are being repaid on time, but we were told to provide more owing to past defaults. We tend to give some leeway to PSUs because they are government entities and are unlikely to face severe repayment stress," said one of the two bankers cited above. The borrowers have large outstanding loans and a 20% provision will require them to set aside a lump sum, he added. Banks typically provide 0.25-2% on non-restructured standard loans as provisions, depending on the loan category. RBI's new diktat comes at a time when asset quality stress is relatively benign, and banks seem to have got a grip on it. On 21 September, Crisil Ratings said banks' gross non-performing assets are expected to improve by 90 bps year-on-year to about 5% this fiscal year and by another 100 basis points to a decadal low of 4% by 31 March 2024.

According to bankers, RBI took a strict view on exposure to certain state government-owned entities. In June, RBI said banks were violating its guidelines while lending to state PSUs, especially for infrastructure and housing projects. The second banker, however, said many lenders have already complied with the 14 June circular.

Mint reported on 20 July that the issue stems from off balance sheet borrowings by state governments. These are loans raised by state government entities and special purpose vehicles, supported by guarantees of the respective state. Banks were found

to be lending large sums to some state government entities, despite the fact that these borrowers did not have any cash flows from where the loans would be repaid.

“Some banks have already received the inspection report, while others are still waiting their turn,” said one of the bankers quoted above.

Meanwhile, the June 2019 circular, the basis of RBI’s recent action against some banks has cautioned that any deviation would attract higher provisions and even penalties. “Any action by lenders with an intent to conceal the actual status of accounts or evergreen the stressed accounts, will be subjected to stringent supervisory or enforcement actions as deemed appropriate by the Reserve Bank, including, but not limited to, higher provisioning on such accounts and monetary penalties,” it had said.

In June 2019, RBI had directed banks to put in place board-approved policies for resolution of stressed assets, including the timelines for resolution. In fact, it had said lenders were expected to initiate the process of implementing a resolution plan even before a default since default is a lagging indicator of financial stress. <https://www.livemint.com/industry/banking/rbi-tells-banks-to-make-extra-provisions-for-earlier-defaults-11664212585845.html>

16. Army Procuring a Range of UAVs, Including Loitering Munitions, for Vigil and Combat at Pak, China Borders ([news18.com](https://www.news18.com)) SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

The Army is procuring a range of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for surveillance and target acquisition purposes—including loitering munitions for combat roles—for its artillery units deployed along India’s borders with China and Pakistan, top defence sources privy to the development have told News18.

This includes an unspecified number of mini UAVs for which internal deliberations are at an advanced stage and also loitering munitions which the Army bought last year under emergency procurement.

The planned procurements are part of the Army’s artillery modernisation plans that have picked up pace in the last decade. As part of the plans, the Regiment of Artillery is also in the process of inducting a range of latest gun systems—procured in the last few years—along the northern and eastern borders of India.

As per sources, the UAVs will aid the Observation Post (OP) Officers and Forward Observation Officers (FOO) with information gathered through surveillance in advance.

“To begin with, we will be procuring a few UAVs. But, the idea is to procure enough quantity so that every OP officer is equipped with at least one mini UAV in the future, which would help him see beyond the hill features in the high-altitude border areas,” a defence source said. High-altitude border areas are often marked by towering hill features that restrict the visibility of troops.

The Army always has OP Officers deployed at its defensive positions and an FOO—who is an artillery representative—accompanies the assaulting troops to direct artillery fire when they are advancing to capture a location.

Sources said the mini UAVs will have a range varying from 15-20 km to 75-90 km with matching endurance and will be employed for engagement of targets in tactical and depth areas.

Earlier this year, medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) UAVs such as the Herons and Searchers with the Regiment of Artillery were transferred to the Army Aviation Corps.

Last year, the artillery regiment also ordered an unspecified number of loitering munitions under the fast-track procedure from a joint venture firm of an Indian and a foreign manufacturer.

The loitering munitions—which are unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs)—can loiter in the air and close on the designated target and attack it by self-destructing onto it when directed. They are expected to arrive soon, the sources said.

“We are also in the process of procuring an indigenously designed and developed advance loitering weapon system with enhanced strike capability,” a second source said.

The sources said that the launchers of the loitering munition can be protected passively and actively as well—including camouflage concealment, shoot and scoot mechanism, and air defence protection, among others.

The Army has received responses from the Indian industry and several firms have expressed their capability to manufacture the weapon system, said the sources, adding that in future India can develop self-reliance and graduate as a global leader in the loitering munition technology.

Sources said there is a need to procure runway-independent UAVs to possess the sensor-to-shooter capability.

This effectively means there is a need for UAVs to observe, acquire target, direct artillery fire and carry out post-strike damage assessment matching the extended ranges of the gun and rocket systems being procured by the Army. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/army-procuring-a-range-of-uavs-including-loitering-munitions-for-vigil-and-combat-at-pak-china-borders-6047995.html>

17. Short on transparency ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) September 27, 2022

Any effort by the government at replacing century old laws is a step in the right direction as it helps in ease of doing business and dealing with new and emerging technologies. In that sense, the intent of the government behind bringing the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022 is understandable as it seeks to replace the Indian Telegraph Act 1885, and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933. The draft Bill has a number of positive features such as reducing the quantum of fines that can be levied

on companies for specific violations and assigning spectrum administratively if need be. While placing the draft in the public domain and seeking stakeholders' comments is certainly laudable, what defeats the purpose is that the drafting seems to have not been done in a transparent manner. True, industry associations were asked to send their inputs, but these were never placed in the public domain. Even consultations between different wings of the government seem to have been given a pass.

Take the dilution of the powers of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) proposed in the Bill. While it can be argued that the changes in Trai's powers are being made only with regard to the policy-making aspects, and not the tariff part where the regulator is supreme, the reality is that it upsets the fine balance currently in place. Section 11 of the Trai Act 1997 lays down that for any policy change, the government needs to first seek the recommendations of the telecom regulator. It can finally decide to deviate from these, but the process definitely brought transparency to the entire exercise as Trai made the consultation process public. The draft Bill seeks to change this provision. Once the Bill becomes a law, it would be up to the government's sweet will whether to seek Trai's inputs on any given issue or not. If the government chooses not to refer a matter to the regulator, the entire process of arriving at a decision will become opaque. For instance, industry or the public will never get to know the methodology of setting reserve price for spectrum auctions. This, sadly, is a retrograde step which runs the risk of taking away even good measures like vesting powers in the government to waive penalties on companies or assigning spectrum administratively as the motive could be questioned.

The other aspect on which the draft Bill fails to provide a clear roadmap is with regard to insolvent telecom operators given the position of the department of telecommunications remains the same as before—that the government's dues should be cleared first, else, spectrum should be returned as the companies concerned hold it on lease and, upon default, lose all right over it. This is precisely the reason why resolution plans of Aircel and Reliance Communications are still hanging. Since DoT is an operational creditor as per the definition laid down by the IBC, its claim comes after financial creditors (banks); so, the right way on this front would have been to hold consultations with the ministry of corporate affairs to arrive at a workable solution. On most other matters, the Bill talks of good intent, but the clauses are very broad and sweeping in nature. The final draft will hopefully ensure that the improvised clauses do not become a tool in the hands of the officials to hand out arbitrary decisions and compromise the checks and balances which are in place. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/short-on-transparency/2691870/>

18. Draft telecom bill's bizarre way to protect business continuity ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) Updated: 27 Sep 2022

If a telecom operator goes bankrupt, its customers should not suddenly find themselves bereft of connectivity. Therefore, protecting business continuity is a legitimate concern in dealing with insolvency of a telco. However, the manner in which the draft telecom bill seeks to protect business continuity is bizarre. It seeks to take over the troubled telco's spectrum, leaving banks that could have lent money to the telco to acquire this valuable asset in the lurch. This not just erodes the creditworthiness of telcos but also undermines property rights in general and the accepted cascade of rights to the proceeds of insolvency, in particular.

There are better ways to protect business continuity of telcos than such disruption of the rules of capitalism.

"In the event the licensee," goes the text of the draft bill, "or assignee that has become subject to insolvency proceeding, fails to comply with the conditions stated in sub-section (2), then the spectrum, if any, assigned to such entity shall revert to the control of the Central Government, and the Central Government may take such further action, as may be prescribed, which may include allowing such licensee, or assignee to continue to use the spectrum, subject to placing the revenue of such entity in a separate designated account with license fee and charges applicable being paid first in priority during such period."

Sub-section (2) says the following: A licensee, or assignee that becomes subject to any insolvency proceedings may continue to operate under the terms and conditions specified under such license 19 or assignment, if such licensee, or assignee meets the following conditions cumulatively:

(a) continues to provide telecommunication services or operate the telecommunication network or utilise the assigned spectrum, as the case may be;

(b) does not default in the payment of any dues under such license, or assignment, including any fees, charges, and other amounts payable under such license or assignment of spectrum; and

(c) complies with such additional or modified terms and conditions, as may be prescribed.

In other words, if a telecom licensee or another operator who has been assigned spectrum defaults on dues to the government, would no longer qualify to operate its business, and its spectrum would revert to the government. Thereafter, the government might consider allowing the defaulting entity to continue to operate, while its revenues would be confiscated.

Does the government appreciate what this means to the prospects of the telecom industry's ability to raise a loan?

In a fully outsourced model, a telecom licensee does not need to own any of the gear required to run a network. It can lease space on telecom towers that cohost different operators' telecom kit. It can outsource the equipment and its maintenance to makers of telecom kit like Ericsson, buying use of the equipment for an annual payment. Its entire asset might consist of just the spectrum it has bid for and obtained in expensive auctions. Its job is to build its brand, acquire customers and keep them happy.

To finance the acquisition of spectrum, the operator would take loans from a bank. The bank's primary recourse is the valuable spectrum that the operator holds – it has few other assets, apart from its brand.

If its business fails, its primary asset, according to the draft law, would be confiscated by the government. The revenue generated by any business it does would go to a government dues account, entertaining no claim by the lender.

In which world would a bank lend money to such a telecom operator?

Business continuity is a legitimate concern. The government is right to worry that a telecom operator's mismanagement of its own business would endanger key connectedness of a chunk of the citizenry. But the way to address this concern is not to take away the spectrum.

Rather, it is to mandate business continuity as an additional condition of the insolvency resolution process.

The lender should be able to take over the business, complete with the valuable spectrum, keep it going and sell it as a going concern to a willing and capable buyer. For the government to interpose itself between the lender and the asset it finances is to break the chain of rights and obligations that allow the public's savings to be mediated to new value creation.

The government should mandate business continuity and remove the rest of the legalese contained in the section on insolvency.

In the government's defence, it could be said that, for practical purposes, the government is the primary lender to telecom operators, as it allows deferred payments for the spectrum acquired in auctions. However, it cannot make a law as if spectrum were the only purpose for which a telecom operator needs to borrow or that the government alone matters among a telco's lenders. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/draft-telecom-bill-s-bizarre-way-to-protect-business-continuity-11664255273908.html>

19. Telecom Bill may not help hasten insolvency cases in sector: Report ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) Updated: Sep 26, 2022

The draft Indian Telecommunication Bill may not help accelerate the resolution process for insolvent companies in the sector, a domestic rating agency said on Monday.

The bill stipulates that the ownership of spectrum remains with the government, and hence implies that the value of spectrum cannot be sold by creditors under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, India Ratings and Research explained.

The draft law also mentions that the government reserves the right to take back the spectrum if the ailing telecom operator fails to pay government dues, which further adds concerns to the operational viability of such telcos, the agency said.

The report further said even the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal had ruled that government dues must be cleared before a stressed telco is admitted to insolvency proceedings in an order passed in July 2021.

"Impact of the bill on the resolution process needs to be seen, given that the ailing telcos may not have the financial flexibility to clear government dues and/or have the operational cash flows to service the ongoing regulatory charges," the agency said.

The bill provides for a framework for placing revenues in a separate designated account for the telcos under insolvency, which are unable to pay government dues, but the implementation of the same remains to be seen, it added.

The agency also said the bill intends to provide one-stop clarity on several key aspects that have affected the telecom industry over the past two years.

It aims to remove ambiguities over the ownership of spectrum for the corporates under insolvency/stress as well as the regulating body for over-the-top (OTT) and internet service providers, the agency said.

The bill also empowers the government to provide relief to stressed telecom companies through waiver/deferment/restatement of regulatory dues, it added. <http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/rupee-rises-37-paise-to-8130-against-us-dollar-494237?infinite-scroll=1>

20. Maharashtra government to spend Rs 6 lakh crore on state's infrastructure (economictimes.indiatimes.com) Updated: Sep 26, 2022

The Maharashtra government is planning for a major overhaul of the state's infrastructure -- from airports and ports to expressways to railway networks -- that is estimated to cost anywhere north of '5-6 lakh crore, but which could give the state a much-needed facelift. The War Room, a brainchild of Devendra Fadnavis when he first took over as chief minister in 2014, is back in action and this time there are grander plans.

Some of the new projects planned include creating an Expressway grid comprising 6-8 lanes that connects all districts of the state. State government officials said nine new Expressways were being planned, one of which is going to be the Pune-Nashik eight-lane Expressway. The estimated cost of these nine expressways could be around Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

The War Room is also planning a Mumbai to Konkan six-lane Expressway that would originate from Pen near Panvel to Sawantwadi in Sindhudurg, which will cost around '80,000 crore. Those involved in the planning of the Mumbai-Konkan Expressway said that instead of the long-winding routes between Mumbai and Konkan currently available, the new expressways would be straight roads cutting across all coastal districts.

The state is also planning to upgrade its tier-3 airports to tier-2 ones by upgrading their infrastructure like extending the runways. Some of the airports that would be undertaken for this upgradation would be the ones at Sangli, Amravati and Gondhia.

Keen to ensure faster execution of these projects, the Maharashtra government has appointed IAS officer Radhyesham Mopalwar as Director General (War Room-Infrastructure) in charge of the War Room. He is known for the speedy execution of

projects like the Samruddhi Mahamarg (Mumbai to Nagpur Super Expressway). <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/maharashtra-government-to-spend-rs-6-lakh-crore-on-states-infrastructure/articleshow/94463192.cms>