

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (01.11.2022)

1. Govt orders CAG audit of BMC works during Covid ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) NOVEMBER 01, 2022

Maharashtra government has issued orders for a CAG audit of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the two years when Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power.

The CAG audit will include a probe into allegations of a scam in the running of Covid centres. It was alleged by BJP that contract to run Covid centres and to provide medical services were given by BMC in a non-transparent manner. Lifeline Hospital Management Services was given the contract of around Rs 100 crore to run five Covid centres. The company had not been formed when the contract was given to it on June 26, 2020. Subsequently, it was alleged that it is an unregistered firm.

There were also allegations of a scam in purchases during Covid. BMC bought Remdesivir at Rs 1,568 per vial and an order was given for two lakh vials on April 7, 2020. The same day, Maharashtra's government's Haffkine Institute bought Remdesivir at Rs 668 per vial. Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation also bought Remdesivir at Rs 668 per vial.

There were also allegations that for purchases at various Covid centres, "extraordinary power" was given to Assistant Commissioner at ward level, which led to corruption. The manner in which contracts were given for construction of Covid centres also needs a special audit, it was alleged.

BJP MLAs had also raised the issue of acquisition/ purchase of a land parcel by BMC at Dahisar from Nishalp Realities for which it paid Rs 349 crore. It was alleged that Nishalp Realities' Alpesh Ajmera bought the same land from Mascarehans and family at Rs 2.55 crore.

Several municipal officials had strongly objected to the purchase of this land.

There were also allegations of irregularities in purchase of oxygen generation plants. In June-July 2021 BMC ordered oxygen generation plants to be installed at various hospitals. A company named Highway Construction Company was given the contract on June 16, 2021.

Minister Aslam Sheikh had objected to it. The company was later blacklisted.

Probe will also be conducted into allegations of involvement of BMC officials in award of Covid contracts. RT-PCR testing contracts were given in various wards allegedly in a non-transparent manner to newly formed companies, inexperienced companies or companies connected to the ruling parties, political leaders or BMC officials.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the Terms of Reference (ToR) have been fixed for the probe. "There will be inquiries into every wrongdoing," he said.

NCP said targeting BMC with CAG inquiry is nothing but a political move to defame the Opposition. "Why no inquiry is being conducted at Pune or Nagpur? Those municipal corporations also undertook similar projects during Covid pandemic," said NCP state president Mahesh Tapase.

Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray welcomed the CAG audit and said that along with BMC similar audits should be held for civic corporations in Thane, Nagpur and Pune. “I welcome the CAG audit, but there should also be an audit of Thane, Nagpur and Pune as well as the Urban Development department which was headed by the current CM (Eknath Shinde),” Aaditya said.

BJP is the ruling party in Pune and Nagpur civic bodies while Thane Municipal corporation was under the control of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde when he was in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/govt-orders-cag-audit-of-bmc-works-during-covid-8241377/>

2. BMC’s COVID steps under CAG scanner (punemirror.com) 1 Nov 2022

In a significant move ahead of the upcoming BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, the Eknath Shinde government on Monday ordered the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) to inquire the civic body’s affairs and certain decisions taken in the past couple of years, here on Monday.

The probe would cover the measures taken during the two pandemic years — 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 — and into the allegations of corruption and irregularities in awarding various contracts without tenders.

These included setting up several COVID care facilities in the city and procurement for the jumbo field hospitals erected during the pandemic years, according to an official statement from the CMO.

The probe comes in the wake of a clamour by several BJP leaders alleging scams in the construction of and purchases for COVID facilities and jumbo hospitals.

Besides this, the BMC’s land purchase deal in Dahisar-Eksar from Alpesh Ajmera of Nishalp Realities worth Rs 349 crore, which was reportedly bought by the builder from the owner family for just Rs 2.55 crore.

Several top BMC officials, including commissioners had raised objections to the land deal after which the builder moved the courts and demanded Rs 900-crore, and the state government feels it is one of the biggest BMC scams.

“The investigation is not ordered out of vendetta... It’s to get at the truth. Let the probe be completed and the real picture will emerge,” Shinde told the mediapersons later.

Lauding the move, MNS spokesperson Sandip Deshpande alleged that “the corruption in BMC had exceeded the lootings carried out by the banditry of KM Veerappan.” <https://punemirror.com/news/india/BMC%E2%80%99s-COVID-steps-under-CAG-scanner/cid9033284.htm>

3. Shinde-Fadnavis government orders CAG inquiry into BMC affairs during pandemic (deccanherald.com) Oct 31, 2022

The Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government, on Monday, ordered a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) inquiry into the affairs of the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation

(BMC) over the past few years, including projects worth Rs 12,000 crore during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The audit comes ahead of the elections, due shortly, to the one of the biggest, and richest civic bodies in India.

Confirming the reports, Chief Minister Shinde told reporters: “The probe has been ordered to get at the truth. Let the probe be completed, the real picture will emerge, there is no political vendetta and no one should be worried.

From the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, up till March 2022, when the term ended, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders had alleged severe irregularities in the functioning of BMC.

On August 24, during the monsoon session of Maharashtra Legislature, Deputy Chief Minister Fadnavis had announced a special audit, through CAG, into the alleged irregularities. |

“I have myself announced in the House about the CAG probe and that terms of reference were being drafted,” Fadnavis said, adding that responsibilities would be affixed and necessary action would be taken.

According to officials, the audit would involve investigations into the setting up of several Covid Care facilities in the city and procurement of supplies for the jumbo field hospitals set up during the pandemic.

The Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena welcomed the inquiry, while the Maha Vikas Aghadi partners—the Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and the Indian National Congress and Congress—called it a political vendetta.

“The corruption in BMC had exceeded the loot carried out by notorious Veerappan,” MNS general secretary and spokesperson Sandeep Deshpande said.

Thackeray’s son and Worli MLA Aaditya Thackeray, on the other hand, said there should be a similar audit for all civic corporations. “They are trying to defame Mumbai and Maharashtra,” he said.

State Congress President Nana Patole flayed the government’s decision, saying those who looked at ‘khoka’ were now accusing the Opposition of corruption.

“If there is a probe, why is BMC singled out? Why not probe into corporations in Pune and Nagpur?” NCP state chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase wanted to know. “The corporations function under the Urban Development Department...who handled this portfolio at the time?” he said, in a reference to Shinde. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/west/shinde-fadnavis-government-orders-cag-inquiry-into-bmc-affairs-during-pandemic-1158227.html>

4. मुंबई मनपा में 12 हजार करोड़ के ठेके की जांच करें कैग: भाजपा (hindusthansamachar.in) Oct 31, 2022

मुंबई महानगरपालिका में 12 हजार करोड़ के ठेके की जांच कैग द्वारा कराने की भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने वकालत की है। मुंबई भाजपा के अध्यक्ष आशीष शेलार ने कहा है कि हम इस तथ्य का स्वागत करते हैं। कैग के माध्यम से जांच बिल्कुल ठीक है।

शेलार ने सोमवार को मुंबई भाजपा कार्यालय में प्रेस वार्ता को संबोधित करते हुए मुख्यमंत्री एकनाथ शिंदे के मुंबई मनपा में भ्रष्टाचार की जांच के आदेश का गर्मजोशी से स्वागत किया। उन्होंने कहा कि हम लगातार कहते रहे हैं कि मुंबई मनपा में अनियमितता और भ्रष्टाचार हुआ है। हमने विधानसभा में सवाल उठाए थे। इसके जवाब में उपमुख्यमंत्री देवेंद्र फडणवीस ने आश्वासन दिया था कि एक विशेष ऑडिट किया जाएगा। अब खबर है कि मुख्यमंत्री ने ऐसा आदेश जारी किया है।

आशीष शेलार ने बताया कि कोरोना काल के दौरान

28 नवंबर 2019 से 28 फरवरी 2022 की अवधि के बीच दस अलग-अलग विभागों में करीब 12 हजार 13 करोड़ रुपये के ठेके दिए गए। कोरोना काल में आम मुंबईवासियों की जान कैसे बचेगी, इसे लेकर लोग सहमे हुए थे। दूसरी ओर ठेकेदारों द्वारा सत्ता में बैठे लोगों की जेब कैसे भरी जाएगी, इस पर जोर था। कोरोना काल में 3 हजार 538 करोड़ की खरीद की जांच होगी। सार्वजनिक आवश्यकता के रूप में लिए गए भूखंड के अधिग्रहण में अजमेरा ठेकेदार को कितनी राशि का भुगतान किया गया था? <http://www.hindusthansamachar.in/Encyc/2022/10/31/CAG-should-investigate-12-thousand-crore-contracts-in-bmc.php>

5. नोएडा अथॉरिटी में एक और बड़ा खेला : इंटरव्यू लेकर सरकार को पहुंचाया 283 करोड़ का नुकसान, 157 फार्महाउस आयकर विभाग की रडार पर (tricitytoday.com) Oct 31, 2022

नोएडा अथॉरिटी (Noida Authority) में एक और बड़ा खेला हुआ है। फार्महाउस योजना (Farm House Plan) के तहत आवंटित हुए 157 फार्महाउस पर अब इनकम टैक्स डिपार्टमेंट (Income Tax Department) की नजर है। इस मामले में इनकम टैक्स डिपार्टमेंट की जांच बैठ गई है। इन फार्महाउस को 2008 से 2011 के बीच आवंटित किया गया था। बीते दिनों कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में इस पर सवाल खड़े किए थे। जिसके बाद इनकम टैक्स डिपार्टमेंट की जांच बैठी।

सरकार को हुआ 2,833 करोड़ का नुकसान

दावा किया जा रहा है कि यह सभी 157 फार्महाउस काफी कम दरों पर बेचे गए हैं। जिससे नोएडा अथॉरिटी को करीब 2,833 करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ और आवंटियों को फायदा हुआ। बताया जा रहा है उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार में नेता और मंत्रियों के रिश्तेदारों को ये फार्महाउस बेचे गए हैं। इसके अलावा कुछ अफसरों के भी नाम बताए जा रहे हैं।

इन सवालों की तलाश में आयकर विभाग

अभी तक आयकर की जांच में पता चला है कि इंटरव्यू के आधार पर ये फार्महाउस आवंटित किए गए थे। अब बड़ा सवाल है कि इंटरव्यू किसने लिया? इंटरव्यू में कौन-कौन से सवाल पूछे गए?

इंटरव्यू देने वाले कौन कौन थे? क्या उनका अधिकारियों और मंत्रियों से कुछ कनेक्शन तो नहीं था? इन सारे सवालों को पूछने के लिए इनकम टैक्स डिपार्टमेंट की टीम जांच कर रही है। बताया जा रहा है कि काफी महत्वपूर्ण जानकारी इनकम टैक्स डिपार्टमेंट को हाथ भी लग चुकी है।

इन सेक्टरों में हैं फार्म हाउस

नोएडा के सेक्टर-126, 127, 128 और 131 के सामने और प्राइम लोकेशन वाली जमीनों पर फार्महाउस के प्लॉट दिए गए। कुल 18,37,340 वर्ग मीटर जमीन फार्महाउस प्लॉट में आवंटित की गई है। जिस जमीन पर प्लॉट दिए गए। उसके आस-पास अथॉरिटी के कई विकसित किए गए सेक्टर और इंस्टिट्यूशनल प्लॉट हैं।

एक और बड़ा सवाल

एक और बड़ा सवाल यह है कि आखिरकार किसने नोएडा अथॉरिटी को सरकार को घाटा पहुंचाने का कार्य किया। उसका नाम भी बहुत जल्द सामने आ जाएगा। क्योंकि इस तरीके से उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार को काफी बड़ा नुकसान पहुंचाया गया है। नोएडा प्राधिकरण के तत्कालीन अधिकारियों ने फार्म हाउस को औने-पौने दाम में बेच दिया। <https://tricitytoday.com/noida/there-is-another-big-game-in-noida-authority-income-tax-department-is-now-eyeing-34481.html>

6. MP के 11 संरक्षित क्षेत्रों से 69 हजार 585 वृक्ष चोरी। CAG की रिपोर्ट में हुआ चौकाने वाला खुलासा ([ibc24.in](https://www.ibc24.in)) Oct 31, 2022

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Video Link: <https://www.ibc24.in/videos/madhya-pradesh-cag-report-1239789.html>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

7. Rise in incremental spending: Govt stares at a steeper fiscal challenge ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) NOVEMBER 01, 2022

The additional spending on account of inflated subsidies bill and any further extension to the free foodgrains scheme is seen as adding to the fiscal burden, which may necessitate reducing government expenditure.

With three months left for the government to present the Budget for the next fiscal, it is staring at a fiscal challenge that appears to have turned steeper on account of some incremental expenditure needs: a provisioning for the newly announced recruitment drive for 10 lakh personnel and the stepping up in allocations for security and administrative preparations for the G20 summit to be held in India over the course of the next year.

Discussions in key economic ministries are learnt to be centering around concerns of reduced space to cut spending in other schemes to maintain the fiscal targets as there are already existing challenges due to higher subsidies for food, fuel and fertilisers and an imminent extension to the subsidised food grains scheme. A downward revision of the new windfall tax on fuels is also likely to impact collections under this head, even as overall tax collections appear buoyant. Most ministries and departments have seen an escalation in their estimates on account of higher transport costs due to high fuel prices, a senior government official told The Indian Express.

Security and intelligence agencies are also learnt to have sought additional funds for purchase of over 1,000 cars and key security apparatus for preparations for the G20 summit. Key economic ministries are spending more to carry out the administrative work in preparation for the summit to be held next year.

Reduced space to cut expenditure

Discussions in key economic ministries are learnt to be centering around concerns of reduced space to cut spending in other schemes to maintain the fiscal targets as there are already existing challenges due to higher subsidies.

Additionally, the recruitment drive announced by the government for 10 lakh posts, out of which 75,000 will be recruited in the first phase, is also expected to result in “a substantial fiscal outgo”. Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi handed out appointment letters to 75,000 appointees as part of the Rozgar Mela — a recruitment drive for 10 lakh personnel across 38 ministries and departments. “Additional spending would imply a need to cut expenditure somewhere even though receipts have grown. There is a challenge as the fiscal space to manoeuvre has shrunk,” the official said.

This comes at a time when the government is already grappling with an additional subsidy bill of over Rs 2.4 lakh crore for food, fuel and fertiliser subsidies, most of which has not been accounted for in the Budget for this fiscal. The additional spending on account of inflated subsidies bill and any further extension to the free foodgrains scheme is seen as adding to the fiscal burden, which may necessitate reducing government expenditure. Last month, the government gave nod to extend the subsidised foodgrains programme beyond the September deadline only for 3 months despite the upcoming state polls prompted by specific concerns flagged by the Finance Ministry that any extension beyond these three months would have meant overshooting the budgeted level of borrowing to meet the incremental expenditure.

Though tax revenues are expected to overshoot budget targets by over Rs 2.5-3 lakh crore this fiscal, it is being felt that the revenue trend will have to turn better in October-March with some signs of moderation in corporate tax growth. The collections from windfall tax on fuel are also expected to come lower than expected. Query sent to the Finance Ministry by The Indian Express on the issue went unanswered.

Another worry is on the external front, with fears of further aggressive rate hikes by the Federal Reserve resulting in FII outflows. India’s current account funding needs continue to be large, with the deficit for the current financial year expected to widen to levels last seen in 2013. Higher, expensive imports and flagging exports due to a global slowdown has resulted in higher trade deficit.

Finance Ministry officials, however, maintain that the government will stick to its fiscal deficit target of 6.4 per cent of the GDP for 2022-23. Officials said the government has the cushion of higher tax revenues and the upside in GDP in nominal terms due to high inflation will also help the fiscal arithmetic. However, any additional spending of Rs 25,000 crore is expected to approximately result in 0.1 percentage point deviation from the fiscal deficit target. The Finance Ministry has begun its inter-ministerial consultative exercise to discuss revised estimates with other ministries from October 10

“The government remains committed to its fiscal deficit target of 6.4 per cent (of the GDP). It will remain most transparent in its fiscal math exercise. There are challenges on account of subsidies and additional spending and we are keeping a close watch on it,” a senior government official told The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/rise-in-incremental-spending-govt-stares-at-a-steeper-fiscal-challenge-8241472/>

8. Centre's fiscal deficit widens to Rs 6.20 lakh crore in April-September (moneycontrol.com) Oct 31, 2022

The Central government's fiscal deficit widened to Rs 6.20 lakh crore in April-September, accounting for 37.3 percent of the full-year target, data released on October 31 by the Controller General of Accounts showed.

The fiscal deficit for April-September 2021 had accounted for 35 percent of the FY22 target.

The fiscal deficit in the first half of the last financial year months was Rs 5.27 lakh crore. As such, the fiscal deficit in April-September of the current financial year is 17.65 percent higher on a year-on-year basis.

The Centre is targeting a fiscal deficit of Rs 16.61 lakh crore for FY23, or 6.4 percent of GDP.

The Centre posted a fiscal deficit of Rs 78,248 crore in September, 33 percent higher than a year ago. Its net tax revenue rose 13 percent year-on-year to Rs 3.12 lakh crore, while non-tax revenue jumped 248 percent to Rs 40,796 crore. Total receipts rose 22 percent to Rs 3.55 lakh crore.

Total expenditure, meanwhile, gained 24 percent in September to Rs 4.34 lakh crore, while capital expenditure gained 57 percent from last year to Rs 90,561 crore.

For April-September as a whole, the Centre's total receipts stood at Rs 12.04 lakh crore, up 9.5 percent, while total expenditure was 12 percent higher at Rs 18.24 lakh crore.

The government has cut its market borrowing for the financial year by Rs 10,000 to Rs 14.21 lakh crore, as per its borrowing calendar for the fiscal second half. https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/centres-fiscal-deficit-widens-to-rs-6-20-lakh-crore-in-april-september-9417881.html/amp?utm_campaign=fullarticle&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=in_shorts

9. GST collections rise to Rs 1.52 lakh crore in October, second highest ever (moneycontrol.com) NOVEMBER 01, 2022

India collected Rs 1.52 lakh crore in Goods and Services Tax (GST) in September, the second-highest ever collection, the finance ministry said on November 1.

Monthly GST revenues have been more than Rs 1.40 lakh crore for eight months in a row, an indication of continued economic recovery.

“The revenue for October 2022 is the second highest monthly collection, next only to the collection in April 2022 and it is for the second time the gross GST collection has crossed Rs. 1.50 lakh crore mark,” the finance ministry said.

The GST mop-up in April 2022 was Rs 1.68 lakh crore. The gross GST collection was Rs 1.30 lakh crore in October 2021 and Rs 1.42 lakh crore in September 2022.

”The fact that the collections have moved up to a new level in excess of Rs 1.5 lakh crore is impressive and is on account of the festive primary and secondary demand together with the various measures taken to improve compliance,” MS Mani, Partner at Deloitte India said.

In October, Central GST was at Rs 26,039 crore, while State GST was Rs 33,396 crore. Integrated GST was Rs 81,778 crore and cess was Rs 10,505 crore.

The government settled Rs 37,626 crore to Central GST and Rs 32,883 crore to State GST from Integrated GST. It also settled Rs 22,000 crore on ad hoc basis in the ratio of 50:50 between Centre and states.

As such, post settlement, the total revenue of the Centre and the states in October was Rs 74,665 crore and Rs 77,279 crore, respectively.

While overall GST collections posted an impressive year-on-year growth in October, several states and Union Territories (UTs) continued to see sub-14 percent growth in their revenues.

In all, 17 states and UTs saw their GST revenues rise by less than 14 percent in September. Several states saw a fall in their GST revenues year on year.

With the protected GST revenue period having ended on June 30, states are no longer compensated if their collections aren't 14 percent higher compared to the corresponding month of last year. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/gst-collections-rise-to-rs-1-52-lakh-crore-in-october-second-highest-ever-9425541.html>

10. Decentralise MGNREGS for better implementation, says study ([thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)) Nov 01, 2022

An internal study commissioned by the Ministry of Rural Development has argued for decentralisation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), allowing for more “flexibility” at the ground level.

The Ministry recently made public the report of the sixth Common Review Mission which surveyed seven States — Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Nagaland, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh — and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in February to assess the implementation of all rural development schemes, including the MGNREGS.

“There should be a greater diversification of permissible works instead of listing the types of permissible works, broad categories of works may be listed out and flexibility should be given at ground level to select the type of works as per broad categories,” the study noted.

This is a problem also highlighted by activists and academicians working in the field. “In the past few years, the fund management has been centralised instead of paying the gram sabhas an advance enabling them to decide the work they want to undertake. The gram sabhas can take into account the local conditions and the community’s requirement instead of chasing a target set for them,” said Professor Rajendra Narayanan of Azim Premji University, who co-authored a study on the role of MGNREGA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The internal study also flagged the frequent delay in fund disbursement, and to deal with it suggested “revolving fund that can be utilised whenever there is a delay in the Central funds”.

The survey quoted various instances to underline this chronic problem. In Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, for example, the surveyors found that because of the delay in the material component the beneficiaries ended up buying the construction material themselves to complete the projects. In Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, the delay in wages was by three or four months and the material component was delayed by six months.

The study also noted that the MGNREGS wages were far below the market rate in many States, defeating the purpose of acting as a safety net.

At present, the minimum wage of a farm labourer in Gujarat is ₹324.20, but the MGNREGS wage is ₹229. The private contractors pay far more. In Nagaland, the wage is ₹212 per day, which does not take into account the difficult terrain conditions. Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, the rate is ₹214 per day. This, the study noted, “is lower than what is offered by private contractors which can go up to ₹600-₹700 per day”. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/decentralise-mgnregs-for-better-implementation-says-study/article66077782.ece>

11. A foot in basic education skill can increase India’s GDP over 2,000%, reveals NBER study ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) Nov 01, 2022

Nearly two-third of the world’s youth in 159 countries which constitute 98.1% of world population and 99.4% of world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), lack basic skills which are required in order to be internationally competitive, a study conducted by National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) has revealed. As a result, the economic cost of these deficits would amount to over \$700 trillion over the remaining century, that is, 11% of discounted GDP, the study stated.

As per the estimate of the study, 85.1% of Indian students fall below basic skill levels. This skill deficit reflects the economic performance of the country, the study stated. “Basic skill level in every child is directly proportional to the economic development of a country. Without necessary skills in the modern world economy, people will be unable to contribute to and participate in the fiscal development,” the NBER working paper series said.

South Asia which includes India can benefit with an economic gain of \$97.8 billion which will result in an 821% increase in the GDP if currently enrolled students get at least basic educational skills. Furthermore, the gains could go up to 2,176% at \$259.5 billion if all children achieve the basic skills. “These educational reforms in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals can immensely contribute to economic gains of a country,” the NBER study added.

Meanwhile, India has already begun battling for skill development of its youth with the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The new education policy lays extra emphasis on skill based learning to create an industry ready workforce. The document suggests introducing vocational education from sixth grade onwards. Such courses will now get equal weightage in higher education institutes. “India is en-route to a better economic performance by bridging the skill development gap through its education reforms. It is certainly going to be a game changer for the education system as well as the economy,” Madhu Batta, associate

professor, Delhi University, said. <https://www.financialexpress.com/education-2/a-foot-in-basic-education-skill-can-increase-indias-gdp-over-2000-reveals-nber-study/2762241/>

12. The ambitious plan that will fix India's logistics mess (*livemint.com*) Nov 01, 2022

If there is any factor that puts India high on the unease of doing business index, it is logistics. The movement of goods through this vast country is expensive and inefficient. The overall logistics cost is about 14% of GDP, significantly higher than that of many other countries. Transporting goods by rail costs 45% less (on a per tonne, per km basis) compared to road, but three-fourths of all goods are sent across the country by road because of the inefficiencies in rail transport. The government has come up with one answer to this problem—a network of multi-modal logistics parks (MMLPs). So, where are these parks coming up? How ambitious is this plan? And what stands in the way?

MMLPs: why are they needed?

These are large land parcels with rail and road connectivity, where goods coming in get seamlessly transferred to trains and other modes of transport in a hub-and-spoke model. So, freight from production zones will be shipped to nearby logistics parks, where it will be aggregated and shipped on a larger vehicle to a logistics park near the consumption zone.

Then, the freight arriving at the destination logistics park will be disaggregated and distributed to the consumption zones inside the city. Logistics parks acting as freight aggregation and distribution hubs enable freight movement (between hubs) on large trucks, thereby aiding in reduction of freight transportation cost.

The parks will also offer mechanized warehousing services, among other things. So, for example, cold chains are available for storing perishables, racked warehousing facilities are available for packages and apparel. Value added services such as customs clearance (which currently happens at sea ports for export consignments), warehousing management services and late-stage processing facilities will also be available.

All these features will ultimately bring down the overall logistics cost.

How many such parks are planned? Have any been built so far?

The first multi-modal logistics park is coming up in Chennai. The bidding process, in which private companies were invited to take part, closed in August this year.

According to Knight Frank Research, the park will be spread over 153 acres of land and will be the first of the 35 such parks the government wants to build under the public private partnership (PPP) mode. Planned to be built across the country, they are expected to cater to about 50% of the total road freight movement in India, enabling seamless intermodal freight transfer.

Industry sources say one of India's biggest private logistics and port companies—which also operates its own MMLPs—is among the interested bidders. Another interested party is an

international logistics player, while the third is an Indian construction company with experience of building national highways.

Which is the nodal agency for setting up MMLPs?

The National Highways Logistics Management (NHLML), a wholly owned special purpose vehicle (SPV) of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), is the nodal agency for getting the 35 MMLPs up and running. CEO Prakash Gaur says a winning bidder for Chennai would be announced soon and the first phase of this park is expected to be commissioned by 2024.

Such parks were mooted in 2009 by the railways ministry, which proposed connecting them to the upcoming dedicated freight corridors. But talk of MMLPs remained just that—talk—till the government's Bharatmala Pariyojana project for the development of highways revived the idea.

How much is the estimated investment in these parks?

Gaur says the estimated total investment in the 35 MMLPs would be to the tune of ₹52,500 crore. The government will invest ₹26,000 crore and the private developers will bring in a similar amount (₹26,500 crore). The 35 parks will handle 700 million metric tonnes of cargo at their peak capacity and be developed over 7,000 acres of land, catering to logistics activities in about 2.75 lakh sqm area across the country. "The development of MMLPs is a key solution that aims to reduce India's logistics costs from the current about 14% of GDP to less than 10% of GDP, on par with international standards," Gaur says. Neeraj Bansal, co-head and chief operating officer of KPMG, India Global, says there is an active private sector participation in the bidding process for three MMLPs (which are currently at a stage where bids can be invited). The total investment by private parties in MMLPs at Chennai, Bengaluru and Nagpur would be over ₹2,000 crore, Bansal says. The bids for all three parks will be awarded in the December quarter, says Gaur. Bids have also been invited for Indore and the award is slated for the next quarter. At nine other locations, feasibility studies are in progress.

How does an MMLP actually work?

Take Jodhpur, Rajasthan, a key production hub for exports of textiles, furniture, etc, from India. As of now, Jodhpur has three Inland Container Depots (ICD) but only one of these depots is connected to a rail network. The frequency of trains is also low. ICDs are dry ports equipped to handle and temporarily store cargo brought in containers. But since only one of the depots has (infrequent) rail connectivity, exporters prefer to send goods by road to the nearest seaport instead of waiting to transport by rail. This saves time but costs more.

Rajeev Vijay, executive director at Knight Frank India, says with trucks there is the certainty of the cargo reaching in time, unlike with rail transport that is prone to delays. "But when an MMLP comes up in Jodhpur, it will not only lower the cost of logistics for exporters but also help in aggregation of demand. The park will ensure improved train services, use of modern equipment, and electronic data interchange which will obviate the need for manual filing of forms. So, the time taken for the entire process of moving goods from the production centre to ports will be reduced," Vijay says.

Not just for exports, MMLPs will also facilitate the movement of containers to seaports for inland demand. As of now, inland goods movement—say between Delhi and Bangalore, or Delhi and Chennai—is usually not done via containers. With MMLPs, container movement will get a leg up.

Take the example of another production hub, Pantnagar in Uttarakhand, which has several companies (pharma, automobiles etc) that need efficient and low-cost transportation to seaports. But in the absence of an integrated facility like an MMLP, truckloads of goods have to first come to either Dadri in Noida or Tughlaqabad in Delhi. From there, they are put on freight trains to the Mundra port. Like Jodhpur, Pantnagar also has an ICD, but again frequency of trains is low and the nearly 2,000 km distance to Mundra means the cargo movement is not viable via road. Which is why both road and rail routes have to be used. Inside an MMLP, the seamless transfer of goods from road to rail is possible since railways will build infrastructure inside the park.

There are other benefits of MMLPs too: lower warehousing charges since these parks are typically situated outside city limits where land costs are lower; reduction in freight movement on busy city roads, leading to lower costs and lesser pollution; movement of goods in larger trucks which will also lower overall cost of freight.

This is in line with the new National Logistics Policy, which aims to create a system to transport goods from point A to point B in the cheapest way. Gaur of NHLML says MMLPs will act as catalysts in centralizing freight cargo consolidation and distribution. These parks are envisaged on a hub-and-spoke model (versus point-to-point movement of goods). "MMLPs are expected to lower handling costs due to the presence of best-in-class modern and mechanised handling infrastructure. They are expected to reduce secondary freight costs by co-location of large warehouses and value-added services," Gaur says. MMLPs, in turn, benefit from economies of scale by creating shared infrastructure and due to availability of more options for selection of competitive and reliable logistics providers.

What is the process of setting up an MMLP?

NHLML, along with respective state governments, first identifies land parcels which can be used to set up the park. Typically, land parcels between 100 and 300 acres are needed. Then the state government does due diligence and starts the process of land acquisition. Thereafter, consultants are appointed and together with NHLML they decide which land parcel is best suited for an MMLP, based on proximity to land location, connectivity with other transportation modes etc. Once the ideal location has been picked, NHLML floats a request-for-proposal inviting private parties to build the MMLP by forming a three-way SPV between itself, the state government and the private concessionaire. As per the concession agreement for MMLPs, the private investor is given land on a 45-year lease.

Gaur says NHLML has entered into MoUs with state governments in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana to build the logistics parks.

What are the terms of the concession?

The type of PPP under which MMLPs will be built is called DBFOT—design, build, finance, operate and transfer. In the first phase, which is to be completed within two years from the award of the concession, the private developer must bring in at least 30% of the promised

investment and the MMLP should have begun commercial operations. The second phase can be completed within 10 years and by then, investment should be at least 60% of the committed sum. The third phase would be completed in 15 years, marking the end of the project.

The concessionaire is required to pay a percentage in gross revenue from the third year and the bidding parameters include declaration of the minimum guaranteed revenue share. NHLML, on its part, will be responsible for construction and maintenance of access roads—minimum four-lane paved road within two years from the appointed date. It will also be mandated to provide rail connectivity in the form of a single line rail siding within four years from the appointed date. External power and water supply connections are also to be provided by NHLML within 18 months from the appointed date.

The terms of the concession also clearly specify that neither NHLML nor any government entity shall construct a new, competing MMLP within a minimum 50 km radius of the project site for 10 years from the appointed date.

What are the challenges for MMLPs?

It's an ambitious plan, but challenges abound. First and foremost is viability for the private parties which will be making the investments and will also be sharing revenue with the government. A logistics industry veteran pointed out that several industry bigwigs are hesitant in coming forward to participate in bids.

Bansal of KPMG says that the three MMLPs for which bids have been invited have seen good interest from the private sector. But “challenges with respect to the viability of a proposed project are currently being encountered by the government. To tackle this, feasibility studies are being conducted across the proposed cities. So far, studies are in progress in Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad and Coimbatore. It will also be initiated at Anantapur, Visakhapatnam, Jammu, Kanpur and Jalna.”

Another aspect is the multiplicity of government agencies involved in setting up MMLPs. Soaring fuel and land prices are some of the other key concern areas for the industries. Also, availability of land at an affordable rate and the challenges of land acquisition remain barriers. <https://www.livemint.com/industry/infrastructure/building-the-fast-lane-to-logistics-11667237480951.html>

13. Why is the Tata-Airbus C-295 project important for Indian defence manufacturing? ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Updated: Nov 01, 2022

The Airbus-Tata joint venture to manufacture C-295 medium-lift transport aircraft in Vadodara in Gujarat through the strategic partnership route is the first among many steps that India needs to take before “Atamanirbhar Bharat” campaign of Prime Minister Narendra Modi becomes a serious catalyst for military-industrialisation of the country.

The C-295 project is a far cry from the 1990s when decision was taken to assemble Su-30 MKI fighters by defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) after purchasing the initial lot from Russia post clearance of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) by the then United Front government.

The C-295 project has also been cleared by the CCS of the NDA government but for the first time a private partner has been chosen by the original equipment supplier for manufacturing two-thirds of the contracted order in India not a defence PSU.

While 40 C-295 aircraft will be assembled in India, the remaining 16 of the total ₹22,000 crore order will be flown from Spain. The Gujarat manufacturing will also create domestic supply chain of MSMEs to provide key parts for making the C-295 aircraft. But this is only the first important step towards true “Atamanirbhar Bharat.”

PM Modi will be able to develop large scale military-industrial complex in the country provided steps are taken to indigenously set up design, development, testing and certification facilities for capital platforms like armed drones, fighters, tanks, and submarines by involving the key players in private defence sector.

This accompanied by industrial units manufacturing critical parts like infra-red seekers (needed for anti-tank missiles), inertial navigation system (for missiles and fighters) and hot engine technologies, will ensure that India does not have to depend on any third country for its military requirements. This will also allow India can export to other countries in the world without being bound by any technology transfer restriction or licenses.

While to date India depends on the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) to design, develop, test, and certify any hardware platform, it is time that independent facilities are build where military products design and developed by the private sector are tested and certified to meet global requirements.

It is most important to involve private sector in hardware development as neither the defence PSUs nor the DRDO have been able to meet required deadlines or accountability. Fact is that the Su-30 MKI assembled/ manufactured by the HAL is more expensive than the one directly imported from Russia due to inherent inefficiencies in the PSU with long man hours and comparative low productivity.

The delays in the design and development of the shoulder fired anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) system and the medium altitude long endurance unmanned aerial vehicle by the DRDO makes a fit case for private sector involvement in weapons manufacturing in India.

While the proposed India-US venture to manufacture Javelin ATGM fell through in the past decade due to American license restrictions to transfer heat seeker technology to India, the decision to domestically manufacture Israeli Spike ATGM fell through as the DRDO told the government in writing that it already had the technology.

Fact is that the DRDO still not has fully developed the shoulder fired version of ATGM and India had to rush to Israel to buy Spike ATGM from Israel at hiked rates when Chinese PLA transgressed into East Ladakh in May 2020 with tanks, missiles and rocket regiments deployed in occupied Aksai Chin areas.

Rather than go for outright purchase of hardware in critical areas like submarines and fighters, India needs to go into joint development with the original equipment manufacturer so that it acquires the specialized skills for weapons design and development.

If India had jointly designed and developed Scorpene submarines with French Naval Systems as was offered in past decades, it would now have the talent, capability, and machine tooling skills to produce more such platforms and save precious foreign exchange spent on direct acquisition.

With the global supply chains still to recover from Covid pandemic and uncertainty further compounded by Russia's Ukraine war and Chinese belligerence in Indo-Pacific and East Ladakh, India needs a military-industrial complex to bolster its strategic autonomy.

Despite both Russia and US both selling to Pakistan, India has no options but to purchase platforms, common with the adversary, from these two countries. The C-295 project is the right beginning. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/why-tata-airbus-c-295-project-important-for-indian-defence-manufacturing-101667281504583-amp.html>

14. Wind sector in India needs an overhaul — here's why (downtoearth.org.in) Oct 31, 2022

Transparent and closed bids, bundling of tariff some ways in which wind energy sector can go up again

Globally, India has the fourth-highest installed capacity to generate wind energy. However, the potential is higher and can be accelerated with changes to the bidding system and policies.

The country's total installed capacity was 41.67 GW as on September 30, 2022, according to the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Around 60.15 billion units were generated in 2020-21.

The Indian government set a target for 175 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity by 2022. The goal included achieving 60 GW of onshore and 5 GW of offshore capacity for wind energy.

The country has potential for more than 602 GW of onshore wind energy at 120-metre hub height and 100 GW of fixed and floating offshore, according to estimates by the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) and the World Bank Group.

Even though India's wind sector is performing well, the pace of the wind energy sector has slackened, believe experts in the industry.

The procurement model was changed from state procurement based on feed-in tariff (FiT) to central procurement through an e-reverse auction in 2017.

This is when the downside of wind-based electricity began, a senior official in India's wind energy sector told Down To Earth.

A feed-in tariff is an energy policy focused on supporting the development and dissemination of renewable power generation. A reverse auction is a type of auction in which the traditional roles of buyer and seller are reversed. Thus, there is one buyer and many potential sellers.

“Currently, there is only one procurement model through the central public sector undertaking Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), where the bid size is 50 megawatts. Also, low tariffs

resulted in exploitation only in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. However, even Gujarat halted when the government stopped allotment of land for wind projects,” the official said.

Since the bid size is 25 MW for state bids and 50 MW for SECI bids, it eliminated small and retail investors from participating in procurement. The government is now considering closed bidding with eligibility criteria for bidders and allotment of bids on bucket filling method.

Challenges in meeting targets

“With 37.5 GW of onshore wind power installed at the end of 2019, India may fall short of its 2022 targets due to pricing, payment risk mitigation, transmission capacity and land use challenges,” said energy forum Global Wind Energy Council’s report, India Wind Outlook towards 2022.

Even in a best-case scenario, wherein these bottlenecks are resolved, the cumulative installed base of onshore wind would reach only 54.2 GW by 2022, it added.

Current bidding is based on tariffs derived from site plant load factor (PLF). PLF is the ratio of average power generated by the plant to the maximum power that could have been generated in a given time.

Also, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are the highest PLF states and to realise better tariffs, most projects are being planned in these states only (60 per cent in Gujarat and 30 per cent in TN).

Competitive bidding at low tariffs has led to the concentration of wind projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. This has put pressure on land availability and power evacuation infrastructure in these states, leading to delays in project commissions — Bhuj II, Jam Khambhaliya and Tirunelveli extension projects were due in 2021.

The issue of land availability in Gujarat may have been covered, but experts believe the greater issue of grid planning persists. There is a need for more consultation from industry stakeholders to implement the green corridor and for the transmission of power.

For example, projects awarded by SECI in 2020 are yet to take off due to delays in the commissioning of substations at Koppal and Gadag in Karnataka.

Apart from the concentration of projects that create severe pressure on land, the creation of infrastructure for power evacuation leads to a choking situation, as seen in Gujarat. This is creating execution challenges at the state level.

In spite of the availability of land and infrastructure in other states, investors do not prefer Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra as the proposed projects cannot compete with projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu due to PLF and economic constraints.

What can be done?

To accelerate growth in the wind energy sector, FiT is required in various states, based on their resources and PLF. Currently, the PLF in India varies in the range of 35 per cent to 43 per cent across sites in seven windy states.

SECI should come out with four 4.2 GW bids in a year, distributed across the seven windy states as 600 MW x 7, according to experts. By doing this, the current manufacturing capacity will be well utilised.

These bids should be transparent and closed without reverse auction. Lower wind zones will get bids with higher tariffs and medium wind zones will get bids with lower tariffs. SECI, they added, must bundle this tariff and sell power to distribution companies at an average power purchase agreement (PPA) tariff of these seven windy states.

The estimated difference in average PPA tariffs and highest/lowest tariff of any state shall be a maximum 30 paise per unit. Also, bidders must be made accountable for delivering on time, otherwise, a penalty should be imposed.

Additionally, NIWE can map wind resource potential and declare the PLF and wind zone at each state site. Project registration must be obtained through the state nodal agency before bidding and Central Transmission Utility (CTU) must create a power evacuation facility as per the potential mapped by NIWE.

CERC should come out with FiT based on the PLF of each state site wind zone, prevailing project costing, prevailing interest rates and operational expenses. Also, the tariff has to be less than the state's average power purchase cost.

With these measures, the wind energy that is generated, land, evacuation and related state resources can be uniformly utilised across seven windy states. Also, current manufacturing capacity of 10,000 MW every year can be utilised and commissioned.

Projects can be planned in low/medium windy sites in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, where in the last three years, no major development for standalone wind power projects has been seen.

Closed wind turbine and component manufacturing capacity in low windy states can be revived — this way, CTU/Power Grid Corporation of India infrastructure in these States will be effectively utilised and more investors can be mobilised.

Way ahead

The market is becoming more competitive, forcing tariffs to come down, said Secretary General of the Indian Wind Turbine Manufacturers Association, D V Giri.

“There is a need for larger turbines, of 4 to 5 MW size with higher PLF to reduce the levelised cost of energy. Also, a steep increase in commodity price, nearly 30 per cent to 40 per cent, has pushed up the cost of turbines and the engineering, procurement and construction,” he told Down To Earth.

Apart from tariffs that have gone down drastically, costs have also gone up since 2019-20. The majority of wind suppliers are facing financial challenges and the market is slowing down at 1.5 GW per annum year-on-year due to delayed project commissioning.

Under the circumstances, major original equipment manufacturers have resorted to exporting turbines and components as the domestic market is going down south. While FiT is the answer, closed bidding will perhaps see viable tariffs.

Encouragement of captive and group captive with annual banking and interstate trading under Green Open Access will accelerate capacity addition, concluded Giri. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/energy/wind-sector-in-india-needs-an-overhaul-here-s-why-85694>

15. India must adopt quantum-safe cryptography ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) Oct 31, 2022

Quantum computers are maturing quickly—perhaps even faster than we could have predicted just five years ago. We see quantum technology’s rapid pace of development as an important opportunity: We believe these machines are going to solve important problems in research and industry, which could revolutionize fields from materials and drug discovery to finance and machine learning. But this rapid development also brings about an important consideration: The encryption schemes we use today to safeguard sensitive data— such as our financial and health records—could be made obsolete in a world where future quantum computers reach their full potential.

As we work to bring about quantum-centric supercomputing, we’ll need to ensure that each facet of the computing workflow can protect future systems and data from the ‘harvest-now, hack-later’ that’s already happening. This is especially critical for governments and highly regulated industries such as financial services, healthcare and telco. In fact, anyone responsible for securing data or digital infrastructure will need to take steps today to make themselves quantum safe. Waiting is just not an option.

Why quantum-safe matters

According to IBM’s 2022 Cost of a Data Breach Report, 83% of organizations worldwide have experienced more than one data breach in their lifetime.

According to the same report, organizations in India, on average, reported 29,500 breaches (between March 2021-March 2022). Organizations in India, including both government and private institutions that hold sensitive data, need to immediately start implementing quantum-safe protocols.

Governments across the world are concerned that bad actors are positioning themselves to take advantage of next-generation code-breaking tools. Attackers could be stealing and hoarding large tranches of encrypted data, unreadable with contemporary tools, with the intent to decrypt it once better quantum technology becomes available. Organizations may have already experienced breaches that they will not know about for many years, creating an uncertain security and liability environment. We may not know exactly when it will be possible to breach today’s encryption, but one thing is clear: any data that falls into the wrong hands before an organization transitions to quantum-safe protocols should be considered already lost.

Setting the standards

Organizations cannot afford to wait, and it is already possible to start using secure cryptography. In July 2022, the U.S. Government’s Department of Commerce’s National

Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announced four quantum-safe protocols as their “post-quantum cryptographic standards,” which they expect to finalize in the next couple of years.

While securing critical Indian data with quantum-safe cryptography will be important, there is also a huge opportunity here for Indian engineers and the IT industry. India’s IT industry received its biggest boost when the Y2K problem happened at the turn of the millennium. Companies worldwide scrambled to fix the date change problem that could cripple industries, ranging from finance and airlines to mining, on 1 January 2000. In many cases, it required going through thousands and millions of lines of code to fix the bug. This needed trained programmers. And the Indian software industry seized the opportunity.

Fixing the “YQK” problem—this time, the “Q” stands for “quantum”—presents an even bigger opportunity for India. This is the time for decisive action from the Indian standards organizations, industry and government to address the challenge and figure out ways in which the Indian IT industry can contribute and take advantage.

Don’t wait

With so-called ‘quantum advantage’ on the horizon, business leaders should be preparing for how their industry could benefit. But they should also understand the risk of future fault-tolerant quantum computers on the horizon and explore available solutions based on quantum-safe cryptography standards, such as the IBM hybrid cloud system z16, that will protect their data and classical systems.

In conclusion, any computer system that will have to operate securely without major modifications over a period of years—the computer in your next car or embedded in a satellite, for example —will need to be quantum-secure well in advance of the threat. Can you afford to wait?

Amith Singhee is Director, IBM Research India and L.V. Subramaniam is Senior Manager AI and IBM Quantum Ambassador at IBM Research India. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/india-must-adopt-quantum-safe-cryptography-11667236978279.html>

16. Ludhiana DC marks inquiry after AAP alleges misuse of govt in Dakha ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Nov 01, 2022

Deputy commissioner Surabhi Malik has marked an inquiry into the allegations of large-scale corruption in the usage of grants for purchasing street lights and other works in the Pakhowal and Sudhar blocks of the Dakha constituency after having received a formal complaint from KNG Kang, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)’s Dakha in-charge on Monday.

Kang has alleged misappropriation of grant money, saying it was used for buying voters over during the elections.

Alleged violation of rules while using grants issued under the Punjab Nirman Programme — ₹98 lakh for Pakhowal and ₹97.5 lakh for Sudhar block — right before February’s assembly elections, Kang raised fingers at higher ups including Congress leader Sandeep Singh Sandhu

— who has recently been booked by the Vigilance Bureau in a similar case. Sandhu is currently on the run.

“The information obtained under the Right to Information Act (RTI) Act from Pakhowal block revealed no cost estimate or technical approval were provided for buying street lights, sports kits and repair of building work. There is also no record of the grants, tenders or utilisation certificates,” he said.

Highlighting further discrepancies, Kang said, “The bill for street lights shows that each unit may have cost ₹12,560m while the government-approved rate was ₹3,325 per unit, including wires, labour and control set plus taxes. Similarly, the street lights have been bought for ₹12,560 in Sudhar block too.”

“In another case, the rate for lights purchased by the Punjab Mandi Board for the Mullanpur flyover project was ₹37,000 per unit. The poles were installed, but street lights have not been installed till date,” he further added.

The absence of a cost estimate, technical approvals, tenders and bills or vouchers while buying sports kits was also highlighted, with Kang saying, “A grant ₹40 lakh has been spent for sports kits while the details are not available in the records.”

AAP has also flagged the appointment of Sudhar block’s patwari, alleging that Hira Singh, the then block development and panchayat officer (BDPO) of Pakhowal and Sudhar blocks, unfairly appointed his son to the post.

“An RTI shows that no advertisement was issued for the said post, no merit list was prepared and the copy of the orders of appointing Hira Singh’s son as patwari after checking eligibility and experience certificate and attested copies of the biodata are not available with the Sudhar block,” Kang said, adding that the patwari was paid the salary for six days from Sudhar block and was then transferred to Sujanpur block.

Speaking of the allegations, DC Malik said, “We have received the complaint and are looking into the allegations.” <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/ludhiana-dc-marks-inquiry-after-aap-alleges-misuse-of-govt-in-dakha-101667251255135.html>