

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (02.11.2022)

1. CAG declares results of online essay competition; V-P to give prizes ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Nov 1, 2022

Harsh, a student of Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur has won the first prize in an English essay competition organised by CAG

Harsh, a student of Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur has won the first prize in an English essay competition organised by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

Sarang Mukeshbhai Patel, a student of Gujarat Ayurved University, bagged the first prize in the Hindi competition.

Vice president Jagdeep Dhankar will give away the prizes on November 16 to mark the Audit Diwas.

The competition carried cash prizes of Rs 30,000, Rs 20,000 and Rs 15,000 for the first, second and third prize winners in each category respectively.

Students from all over the country participated enthusiastically in the competition. The entries were evaluated in two stages by panels of experts drawn from the CAG's organisation.

There were three topics for the competition -- The CAG: Helping India achieve Panchamrit -- five nectar elements to deal with climate change; The CAG: Realising the Constitution's vision, Enlivening Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav: CAG@2047: Imagine you are the CAG of India in year 2047, What will be your strategy for the institution?

The competition was open to all students aged not more than 25 years who were enrolled in a course of study at any institution recognised by any University in the country. It was declared open on August 16 this year and was closed on September 15. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cag-declares-results-of-online-essay-competition-v-p-to-give-prizes-122110101437_1.html

2. CAG commemorates Audit Day with national essay competition (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Nov 1, 2022

NEW DELHI: Two law students from Chhattisgarh and Odisha and an Ayurvedic college student from Gujarat have bagged the top prizes in an essay competition organized by the Comptroller and Auditor General to commemorate its Audit Day on November 16. The prize includes a cash award of Rs 30,000 for the top entry and Rs 20,000 for second position besides a certificate.

The CAG has invited vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar for the award distribution function at the CAG office on November 16. The essay writing competition was launched on August 16 and final entries were accepted till September 15. The topics of the essays were: CAG helping India achieve Panchamrit to deal with climate

change; Realising the Constitution's vision; and a vision 2047 for CAG. The entries were accepted both in Hindi and English.

The competition carried attractive cash prizes of Rs 30,000, Rs 20,000 and Rs 15,000 for the first, second and third prize winners in each category respectively. Harsh of Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh has won the first prize. The second prize is shared by Ankesh from National Law University, Odisha and Kethavath Kumar Naik of Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati. The third prize has been won by Brahmabhatt Yogiraj Hiteshkumar of Aditya Silver Oak Institute of Technology, Ahmedabad.

In the Hindi category, the winners are Sarang Mukeshbhai Patel from Gujarat Ayurved University (first prize), followed by Sakshi Jain from University of Kota and Madhuri Chandrakar from Govt D/B Girls PG Autonomous College, who have won the second and third prizes respectively. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/cag-commemorates-audit-day-with-national-essay-competition/articleshow/95236913.cms>

3. CAG declares results of national online essay competition ([newsdayexpress.com](https://www.newspaper.com)) November 1, 2022

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has declared the results of the National Online Essay Writing Competition organized on the occasion of Audit Day.

Students below the age of 25 years enrolled in an institution recognized by any university participated in this competition.

The competition was announced on August 16, 2022 and the deadline to apply was September 15.

The competition had a cash prize of Rs 30,000 for first place, 20,000 for second place and Rs 15,000 for third place students.

The CAG said that it is happy to announce the result of the National Online Essay Writing Competition, 2022. There are four winners in the English category. Harsh, a student of Hidayatullah National Law University, Chhattisgarh has secured first position.

The second prize has been shared by Ankesh of Odisha's National Law University and Kethavat Kumar Naik, a student of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-Guwahati).

The third prize has been won by Brahmabhatta Yogiraj Hiteshkumar, a student of Aditya Silver Oak Institute of Technology, Ahmedabad.

At the same time, Sarang Mukeshbhai Patel of Gujarat Ayurved University has secured the first position, essay category.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will present the awards to these students at a function organized at the CAG's office in New Delhi on the occasion of Audit Day on November 16, 2022. <https://www.newspdayexpress.com/business/cag-declares-results-of-national-online-essay-competition/>

4. कैग ने राष्ट्रीय ऑनलाइन निबंध प्रतियोगिता के परिणाम घोषित किए (navbharattimes.indiatimes.com, hindi.theprint.in, hindi.latestly.com, ibc24.in) November 1, 2022

भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) के कार्यालय ने ऑडिट दिवस के अवसर आयोजित राष्ट्रीय ऑनलाइन निबंध लेखन प्रतियोगिता के परिणाम घोषित कर दिए हैं।

इस प्रतियोगिता में किसी भी विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा मान्यता प्राप्त संस्थान में नामांकित 25 वर्ष से कम आयु वाले छात्रों ने भाग लिया।

प्रतियोगिता की घोषणा 16 अगस्त, 2022 को की गई थी और आवेदन करने की समयसीमा 15 सितंबर थी।

प्रतियोगिता में प्रथम स्थान के लिए 30,000 रुपये, दूसरे स्थान के लिए 20,000 और तीसरे स्थान पर आने वाले छात्रों के लिए 15,000 रुपये का नकद पुरस्कार रखा गया था।

कैग ने कहा राष्ट्रीय ऑनलाइन निबंध लेखन प्रतियोगिता, 2022 का परिणाम घोषित करते हुए प्रसन्नता हो रही है। अंग्रेजी श्रेणी में चार विजेता हैं। छत्तीसगढ़ की हिदायतुल्ला नेशनल लॉ यूनिवर्सिटी के छात्र हर्ष ने प्रथम स्थान हासिल किया है।

दूसरा पुरस्कार ओडिशा के राष्ट्रीय विधि विश्वविद्यालय के अंकेश और भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी-गुवाहाटी) के छात्र केथवत कुमार नाइक द्वारा साझा किया गया है।

तीसरा पुरस्कार अहमदाबाद के आदित्य सिल्वर ओक इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ टेक्नोलॉजी के छात्र ब्रह्मभट्ट यो गीराज हितेशकुमार ने जीता है।

वहीं, हिंदी निबंध श्रेणी में पहला स्थान गुजरात आयुर्वेद विश्वविद्यालय के सारंग मुकेशभाई पटेल ने हासिल किया है।

उपराष्ट्रपति जगदीप धनखड़ 16 नवंबर, 2022 को ऑडिट दिवस के अवसर पर नयी दिल्ली में कैग के कार्यालय में आयोजित समारोह में इन छात्रों को पुरस्कार प्रदान करेंगे। <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/business/business-news/cag-declares-results-of-national-online-essay-competition/articleshow/95231653.cms>

5. कैग ने राष्ट्रीय ऑनलाइन निबंध प्रतियोगिता के परिणाम घोषित किए (epapervirarjun.com) November 2, 2022

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STATES NEWS ITEMS

6. 'Costly' Dahisar land deal under CAG scanner? (mid-day.com) Updated: November 2, 2022

The BMC's 2020 deal, wherein the civic administration acquired a land it valued at Rs 54 crore in 2011 for a whopping Rs 349 crore from private firm Nishalp Realities, is likely to be probed by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) for alleged violations. The company, however, told mid-day that no rules were broken for the acquisition.

The BMC's deal could be taken up for scrutiny for two reasons—one for buying the land at an inflated rate and second for violating norms during the acquisition," a senior government official said on condition of anonymity.

The BMC's land acquisition policy is for plots reserved for open spaces or other public amenities. The Dahisar plot was reserved for a maternity home and playground. The policy also mentions that only encroachment-free plots can be acquired. However, the Dahisar plot has a dense population of slum dwellers.

In October 2020, an investigation by mid-day had highlighted the inflated deal for the acquisition of the encroached land located at Eksar village. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Saturday urged the CAG to conduct a probe into the BMC's deals worth several thousand crores by the BMC, made in the past three years.

The senior government official said the Daishar land acquisition could be one the deals to be probed by the CAG, as it was in violation of the acquisition rules. "This deal was even discussed on the floor of the state legislature. BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis

had asked for an enquiry into the deal. Now that the CAG is likely to scrutinise this deal, more details would emerge in the near future,” the official added.

The alleged violations

Nishalp Realities bought the plot for Rs 2.55 crore from Mascarenhas family in 2010. Within a year of the purchase, BMC proposed to purchase the land from Nishalp for Rs 54 crore. However, the BMC’s Improvements Committee rejected the proposal in 2011.

The civic administration again tabled another proposal for the purchase of the land for Rs 349 crore in 2019. However, the then BMC chief Praveen Pardeshi shot down the proposal, because of the slum settlements. The civic administration still went ahead and bought 22,000 square meters of the land for crores. With the sale to the BMC in 2020, it made a profit of 13,556 per cent (Rs 346 crore).

Nishalp Speak

Alpesh Ajmera, one of the directors at Nishalp Realities, claimed that the land was not sold, but acquired by the BMC under the compulsory acquisition rule, and the price was not inflated. “The administration fixed the plot value at Rs 127 crore, the amount way below (nearly 20 per cent) of the prevailing ready reckoner rate and even market price of the plot,” Ajmera said.

Giving a break-up of the Rs 349-crore deal, Ajmera said, “Rs 127 crore was land valuation [or compensation] and another Rs 127 crore was solatium amount [equivalent to 100 per cent of the compensation amount]. Besides, additional Rs 95 crore was paid as interest for the 120-month delay in releasing the payment.” Besides the Daishar land deal, the CAG is likely to probe other deals related to road, bridges, and contracts worth crores given during the pandemic years.

Rs 2.55 cr

Amount Nishalp paid a family in 2010 for the plot

22,000 sq m

Area of the land acquired by BMC. <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai/mumbai-news/article/costly-dahisar-land-deal-under-cag-scanner-23253385>

7. CAG inquiry in offing, parties demand removal of Chahal from municipal commissioner, BMC administrator post ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) Updated: November 2, 2022

With the state government allowing a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) inquiry into expenses worth Rs 12,000 crore incurred by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the pandemic-induced lockdown, members of the Opposition parties have demanded removal of Iqbal Singh Chahal from his post of municipal commissioner and state-appointed administrator of the civic body.

In a letter to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, legislator and former corporator Rais Shaikh stated that since CAG will be carrying out an inquiry into the alleged discrepancies of BMC, having Chahal continue in his post may affect the fairness of the probe.

“The CAG is set to carry out inquiry in several BMC departments and officials against whom the allegations were made are still manning the same administrative posts. They should be transferred to some other department as long as the inquiry is on so that it doesn’t affect the fairness of the probe. If these officials continue to stay in their posts, there could be chances of them manipulating the probe as well,” Shaikh told The Indian Express on Tuesday.

“Now that a CAG probe will be carried out, the person whose spending is being questioned shouldn’t be allowed to stay as the commissioner and administrator. The official should be transferred from his post now since he has finished more than two years in BMC as commissioner and the tenure of administrator has also expired,” Shaikh added.

Meanwhile, a number of former corporators across party lines stated that the civic body chief had all the powers to take financial calls during the Covid-induced lockdown.

Ravi Raja, former Congress corporator and Leader of Opposition (LoP) in BMC, welcomed the decision of inquiry and said that a unanimous resolution was passed in 2020 in which all the powers related to taking financial calls was passed on to the administrative officers.

“The Standing Committee was dissolved from March and October 2020, and all the financial decisions were taken by the municipal commissioner. After October, the committee met through video conference and all the expenses that had occurred were brought for post-facto clearance. This means that by the time the proposals were tabled before the committee, the expenses were already made by civic administration,” said Raja.

“We had made multiple demands for withdrawing the special powers bestowed on the commissioner after the committee started to meet virtually, but the commissioner didn’t do so,” Raja added.

Prabhakar Shinde, former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) corporator and group leader in the BMC, said that the civic body had made multiple purchases during the pandemic and showed the expenses at an inflated cost.

“Emergency medicines like Remdesivir, oxygen cylinders and other logistical necessities like hospital beds, body bags, fans were shown to be purchased at an inflated cost. For example, the BMC showed that they have purchased Remdesivir at Rs 1,200 while at the same time, Haffkin institute had bought it at Rs 850. This clearly shows the mismanagement of funds and a proper CAG inquiry needs to be carried out...,” said Shinde.<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/cag-inquiry-in-offing-parties-demand-removal-of-chahal-from-municipal-commissioner-bmc-administrator-post-8243441/>

8. Opposition demands inquiry in PMC after govt starts CAG probe into BMC affairs in last two years ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Nov 02, 2022

After chief minister Eknath Shinde-led government ordered Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to conduct a probe into the allocation of works by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan on Tuesday demanded a similar probe at Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).

Speaking at a press conference, Chavan said, "The state government has initiated an inquiry in BMC through CAG. Why it is only for Mumbai civic body? It should be for Pune too."

Earlier on Monday, the state government ordered the CAG to inquire about the Mumbai civic body's affairs and decisions taken in the past couple of years. The probe would cover the measures by Uddhav Thackeray-led BMC taken in two years during the pandemic -- 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 -- and into the allegations of corruption and irregularities in awarding various contracts without tenders.

The probe came following a demand by several Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders alleging scams in the construction and purchases of Covid-19 facilities and jumbo hospitals.

The PMC too had faced allegations of irregularities during the pandemic years when the opposition Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) questioned purchases made to tackle Covid at higher prices. The BJP, which controlled Pune civic body however had refuted the allegations.

When asked about the probe by CAG at BMC, Chavan demanded a similar probe at Pune Municipal Corporation which was ruled by BJP between 2017 to 2022.

The state Congress chief Nana Patole too flayed the state government's decision saying BMC is being singled out because it was controlled by Shiv Sena.

The PMC administration in February 2021 had ordered an inquiry into the Rs16.80 crore inflated bill submission for Rs3.78 crore Covid care centre cleaning contract work. The inquiry was ordered following allegations of irregularities from the opposition.

The opposition had alleged that instead of offering wages to the cleaners on a daily basis, the civic body sanctioned bills on a rate per square feet basis causing a loss of public money to the PMC exchequer.

According to the complainants, despite objections being raised by the vigilance department of the civic body, the cleaning contract bills were processed. The cleaning contract deals with as many as 52 Covid care centres which were operational in the city and despite a number of discrepancies in the contract tenders, efforts were not taken to rectify the mistakes, the complainants alleged. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/opposition-demands-inquiry-in-pmc-after-govt-starts-cag-probe-into-bmc-affairs-in-last-two-years-101667329385657.html>

9. Highway hospitals unfit for treating trauma patients, says CAG report in Bengaluru ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) 02nd November 2022

BENGALURU: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's 2021 performance report on the Karnataka State Road Safety Authority (KSRSa) has unearthed a dismal lack of infrastructure, especially facilities for treating trauma cases, in district hospitals along National Highways in Karnataka.

The authority has established that no action plan was formed to create trauma care centres in 22 districts of the state.

"Accident victims did not receive timely medical care in about 90,000 cases, attributed to the base set-up of ambulances far away, or a delay in dispatching ambulances to the scene of accident. In 6,000 cases, the delay in dispatch was over 30 minutes," the CAG report further shows.

Also, the 2015 objective of the KSRSa seeking reduction in road accidents and deaths was not fulfilled. The audit report noticed that the targets set in 2015 were not met, with the fatality rate having risen by 2020.

Medical facilities along National Highways must provide definitive care to trauma patients, with specialists including surgeons and orthopedists being available round the clock. In an accident in Ramanagara, for instance, a patient succumbed to injury due to the unavailability of a specialist on call, and had to be shifted to another hospital. In a bike accident on the highway in Tumakuru, a pillion-rider lost his life to injuries while being shifted to a private hospital, due to lack of facilities at the nearest government hospital.

As part of an inspection recently, two district hospitals in Belagavi and Gadag were also examined. These two districts in North Karnataka had an overall 17 per cent shortage of staff and 30 per cent shortage of specialists. The sanctioned strength only worked a single shift and only a single doctor was available in hospitals for the rest of the day. The report also noted that an efficient emergency response system in providing proper medical care would improve chances of survival.

Meanwhile, the report recommends the KSRSa to issue directions to the road managing authorities (RMAs) to prepare an action plan for rectification of identified black spots, and to undertake maintenance work. They should also ensure that RMAs maintain comprehensive data of roads under their jurisdiction and update it periodically. Strengthening of highway patrolling and adequate number of base locations for ambulances was suggested to reduce response time. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2022/nov/02/highway-hospitals-unfit-for-treating-trauma-patients-says-cag-report-in-bengaluru-2513994.html>

10. Air Pollution Delhi: Ban on construction in Delhi, trouble for daily wage labourers ([newsleadindia.com](https://www.newsleadindia.com)) November 1, 2022

The Delhi government has banned construction and allied activities in the National Capital Region (NCR) with effect from 29 October 2022. This decision has been taken on the basis of the directions of the Air Quality Management Commission.

What is Air Quality Management Commission?

A Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 30 July 2021 by the Central Government for air quality management in the National Capital Region. Then on 4 August, it was passed in the Lok Sabha and the next day in the Rajya Sabha and given the status of a law.

The purpose of this commission is to establish mutual coordination between the states by identifying the problems related to air quality in Delhi and its surrounding areas. Along with this, through research, its work includes getting rid of the problem of pollution in this area.

This commission has been constituted in place of Environment Pollution Prevention and Control Authority established in NCR in 1998. Before the commission an ordinance for prevention and coordination of pollution in Delhi-NCR was issued during October 2020 to April 2021. This commission also canceled that ordinance of 2021.

The contravention of the provisions of the Commission or the orders or directions shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine which may extend to one crore rupees, or with both. Farmers have been kept out of the purview of this fine. However, the commission can charge compensation from farmers for pollution caused by stubble burning.

Reason for prevention in Delhi?

In view of the pollution situation, the Delhi government has directed to immediately implement the restrictions under the third phase of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). These restrictions will include a ban on all construction and demolition activities except for other essential projects including national security, defence, railways, central vista and metro rail.

Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai, through a press conference, said on the basis of the forecast of meteorologists that "from November 1 the wind speed will be 4 to 5 kilometers per hour and it has been estimated that the Air Quality Index (AQI) will be 400. can cross." He further said, "We have discussed with all the construction authorities – PWD, MCD, and DDA and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee has decided to implement the Air Quality Management Commission order.

The Delhi government has also formed teams for strict compliance and monitoring of the order.

Is this decision politically motivated?

The Delhi government has indicated that there may be a ban on plying of BS III petrol and BS IV diesel four wheelers and buses in the NCR.

Environment Minister Gopal Rai says that most of these buses run by Uttar Pradesh Transport in Delhi. These buses connect Delhi to almost all the cities of Uttar Pradesh through Anand Vihar ISBT, Sarai Kalekhan and Kashmere Gate Bus Terminal.

Keep in mind that not only Uttar Pradesh in Delhi, but also transport buses from other states come to Delhi.

Gopal Rai, a minister in the Aam Aadmi Party government, has also stopped an ongoing construction work at the Bharatiya Janata Party's headquarters at Deendayal Upadhyay Marg in Delhi. He has also imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on the BJP's under-construction office, citing orders after conducting a surprise inspection.

What will be the effect of this order

Similar restrictions were imposed in Delhi last year in 2021. Then Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had promised financial assistance of Rs 5000 to the workers affected by this ban and compensation for the day-long wages.

According to the estimates of Delhi Government, there are 11 lakh laborers in Delhi. Out of which 8.5 lakh are registered with Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board of Delhi Government. Out of these, an amount of 245 crores was provided to 491,488 laborers in November 2021. Then in March 2022, Rs 41.9 crore was sent to 83,000 laborers. After this, in April 2022, a grant of Rs 11.6 crore was released to 23,256 construction workers.

This amount was given only to the registered laborers till 24 November 2021. Apart from this, more than half the registered laborers did not get any benefit and the workers who could not get registered were also deprived of this assistance.

The current restrictions will also have a direct impact on the daily income of these registered and unregistered laborers. However, till now the Delhi government has not made any plan in the direction of providing relief to the laborers.

The impact of this order will also be on the mining units operating around Delhi and the problem of livelihood may arise in front of the laborers working there.

If buses coming from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi are also included in the purview of the ban, then the passengers coming to and from Delhi will also have to face a lot of trouble.

CAG has raised questions on Delhi government

The audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on the number of laborers provided by the Delhi government last year by citing the number of workers, says something else.

In fact, the CAG has raised questions on the wrong registration of laborers in Delhi in the year 2020 itself. Apart from this, the CAG had also raised doubts over the use of Rs 3,200 crore in the fund meant for migrant and construction workers.

In the audit report for the financial year ended March 2019, it was said that the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board of the Labor Department in the state did not conduct any survey to identify and register workers engaged in construction work.

The report elaborated, "Registration of workers engaged in construction work is required for the benefit of welfare schemes. Out of 10 lakh estimated construction workers, only 17,339 (1.7%) are associated with the board. As a result, 98 per cent workers were deprived of the benefits of welfare schemes. <https://newsleadindia.com/india/air-pollution-delhi-ban-on-construction-in-delhi-trouble-for-daily-wage-laborers/>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

11. A bit of fiscal room: What the latest data on government finances reveals ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) November 2, 2022

On Monday, the Controller General of Accounts released data on government finances for the month of September. Seen in conjunction with data for the previous months, the larger trend that emerges is that Union government tax collections continue to fare better than what was expected. For the first half of the year (April-September), gross tax collections have grown at a robust 18 per cent. In comparison, the Union budget had pegged tax collections to grow just shy of 2 per cent for the full year. The data for the first two quarters of the year only reinforces the view that the tax revenues projected in the budget were conservative, and that actual collections will significantly exceed budgeted expectations. This provides greater fiscal room to both the central as well as the state governments.

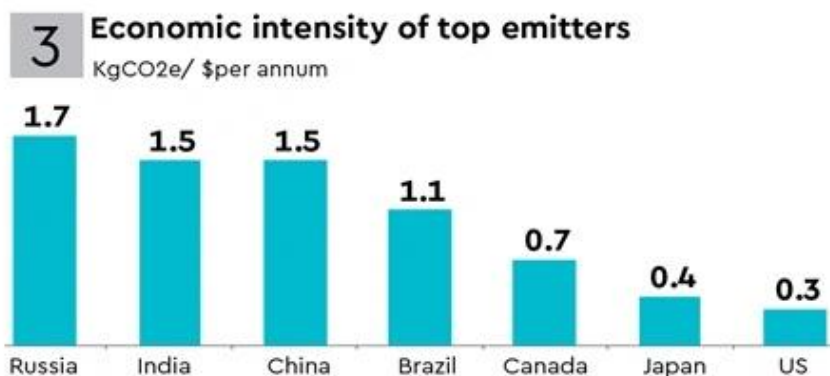
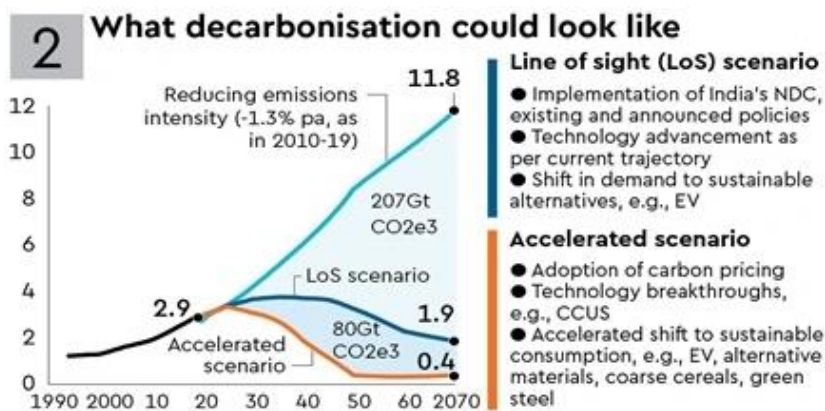
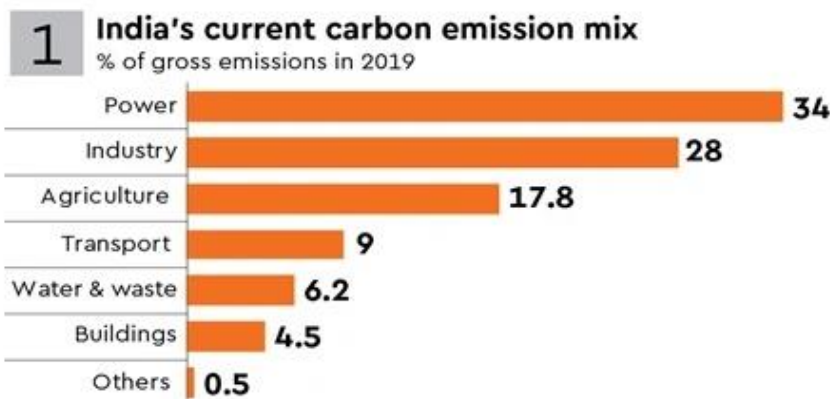
The disaggregated data indicates that much of the spurt in taxes has been driven by direct taxes, even as indirect tax growth has held steady. In the first half of the year, direct tax collections have grown at a healthy 24 per cent, with both corporate and income tax collections growing at a fast clip. As per data released by the finance ministry a few weeks ago, net direct tax collections till October 8 had already touched 53 per cent of the budget estimate. On the indirect tax side, while customs and excise collections have been subdued, GST collections have held steady. In fact, on Tuesday, data released by the government showed a sharp sequential uptick with collections touching Rs 1.51 lakh crore in October, driven in part by the festive season. This is the second highest monthly collection since April. However, non-tax collections, including dividends from public sector firms, have been subdued. And while the stake sale in LIC has helped boost government coffers, as total proceeds from disinvestment currently stand at Rs 24,543 crore as against the budgeted target of Rs 65,000 crore, meeting the full year target will be challenging.

On the expenditure side, capital spending continues to drive the Centre's overall spending. For the first half of the year, central government capex has grown at a staggering pace, especially in key ministries such as railways and road transport and

highways. Taking into consideration the spending so far, and the budgeted allocation, Union government capex is likely to grow at a healthy pace for the remainder of the year. If states also fully utilise the interest-free capex loan facility extended by the Centre — disbursements under the scheme remain subdued till now — then overall general government capex could get a significant fillip in the second half of the year. However, higher than budgeted spending on account of food and fertiliser subsidies will exert pressure on government finances, making it challenging to meet the fiscal deficit target for the year. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/a-bit-of-fiscal-room-what-the-latest-data-on-government-finances-reveals-8243537/>

12. A shot at green leadership ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) November 2, 2022

India’s proposed climate action plan is quite ambitious, but there is still more room for it to step up decarbonisation efforts, says a recently released report from McKinsey.



Source: McKinsey

The country has a low per capita emission, but a very high economic intensity of emission. On top, it is the third-largest emitter. McKinsey says that under an accelerated decarbonisation pathway, India could create 287 tonnes of carbon space by 2070. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/a-shot-at-green-leadership/2763986/>

13. Silos are yet to be broken to expeditiously deliver projects and policies ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) November 2, 2022

Lack of coordination between depts and ministries within the govt on the one hand, and between the Centre and the states on the other, has proved to be a hurdle

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been emphasising on breaking silos among ministries and departments to move things faster, but various policies and projects have been stuck due to differences within the government or between the Centre and the states.

Lack of coordination between departments and ministries within the government on the one hand, and the Centre and the states on the other, has not cropped up only with the current regime only, but is a legacy inherited from the past. In fact, there are examples of nodal ministry and a public sector unit (PSU) under it locking horns over contesting matters, not to talk of inter-ministerial or inter-departmental divergence of opinion.

For instance, then ONGC Chairman Subir Raha had threatened to quit in 2005 when the petroleum ministry tried to nominate two more directors on the board of the oil PSU. He continued in his post only after then petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar relented. One of the proposed directors was Director-General Hydrocarbons (DGH) V K Sibal. Saha had said that nominating Sibal was akin to nominating the Sebi chief on a company board.

Modi has time and again called upon bureaucrats to break the silos to push the government's development agenda. There was some success when PM Gati Shakti, a national plan for multi-modal connectivity, was launched a year back, involving 16 infrastructure ministries including the Railways and Road, Transport & Highways.

Earlier in 2015, the National Transport Development Policy Committee (NTDPC), headed by Rakesh Mohan, had recommended formation of a high-level and independent Office of Transport Strategy (OTS).

Mohan, now president of the Centre of Economic and Social Progress (CESP) and part time member of the economic advisory council to the prime minister (EAC-PM), said the committee had observed that unlike most large countries India does not have a single ministry for transport. There are a host of ministries such as Railways, Road Transport and Highways, Shipping, Port & Waterways, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Due to historical reasons it would not be possible to have a single ministry for transport, so the committee had suggested creation of OTS, he said.

The two recommendations did not find traction that time since the new regime had come, but experts said this was created in a new avatar of PM Gati Shakti.

Another success was the announcement of the CRs six trillion asset monetisation pipeline last year for 2021-22 to 2024-25. Niti developed the pipeline in consultation with infrastructure line ministries including power, road transport and highways, shipping ports and waterways, mining, coal, housing and urban affairs.

More recently, a "rojgar mela" (job fair) was organised last week to offer employment to 75,000 youth across 38 ministries and departments, including banking, customs, Railways, home, the labour and employment, Central Industrial Security Force, and the Central Bureau of Investigation. A total of one million youth would be given jobs in the drive.

However, this is only a part story.

Important policies such as e-commerce and pieces of legislation such as DESH Bill have been held up over lack of consensus among ministries and departments.

The e-commerce policy, the draft of which was floated by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) way back in 2019, could not see the light of the day since other offices such as the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) under the finance ministry and Niti Aayog aired different views.

DEA described the proposal, which sought to control a push to promote private-label brands and raise scrutiny of relationships between online marketplace operators and their vendors, as excessive and without economic rationale.

Then NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar also shot off a letter to Commerce and Industry minister Piyush Goyal, saying the rules could hit small businesses, and that they sent the message of unpredictability and inconsistency in the government's policy-making.

The Development of Enterprise and Services Hub (DESH) Bill, which was to replace the Special Economic Zone Act, is expected to be the next casualty, as the finance ministry has raised concerns over the tax concessions proposed and integration of hubs with domestic tariff areas without export obligations.

Besides, differences between the finance and commerce ministries have led to a delay in generating crucial foreign trade data. The delay was because the electronic portal of customs — Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE) — has not been sharing key information such as shipping bill number and date, bills of entry number in the daily trade return since October 7.

Infrastructure projects were the biggest casualties of lack of coordination among departments and ministries despite the progress made in Gati Shakti and asset monetisation pipeline.

In fact, the empowered group of secretaries under PM Gati-Shakti in June had pulled up the highways and railways ministries for their poor performance in completing port

connectivity projects, which are a crucial link to reducing the cost of logistics. Some of these projects were not taken up even after 28 years of being commissioned.

Bharatmala, the government's flagship highway building programme, has seen its costs almost double to Rs 10.63 trillion. Industry estimates attribute many of these overruns to delays in land acquisition and completion of stakeholder due diligence. All infrastructure projects require a geographical feasibility report, techno-economic feasibility test, and detailed project reports. Government data shows that seven years since Bharatmala was announced, nearly 40 per cent of highway projects have not even been awarded for construction yet. Rating agency ICRA attributed these overruns to delays in land acquisition, among other factors.

Similarly, the Sagarmala project, envisioned to transform India's marine economy, has also seen several delays due to lack of timely inter-departmental cooperation. Business Standard previously reported that 10 public-private-partnership (PPP) port projects worth almost Rs 7000 crore got delayed due to tardy pace of security clearances by other government bodies, including ministry of defence, home affairs, and external affairs. These delays ended up impacting the Centre's national monetisation pipeline proceeds from ports and shipping in 2021-22.

Delays in land acquisition are also often caused by lack of Centre-State coordination. The flagship project of Indian Railways — high speed rail or bullet train — was stalled for years due to the lack of clearance for land from the then opposition-ruled Maharashtra government. The clearance was granted within days of the Eknah Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government taking charge.

According to a report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) which monitors infrastructure projects of Rs 150 crore and above, 384 such projects of the total 1,514 have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.66 trillion till June 2022. As many as 713 of these projects were delayed.

Reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Way forward:

As is clear from the problem, the solution lies in some kind of coordination mechanism among ministries and departments as well as the Centre and the states and local authorities to smoothen the execution of various projects and implementation of policies in the country.

But what kind of coordinating agency should it be?

At a discussion on a report : 'Competitiveness Road Map for India@100': former Procter and Gamble India chief executive Gurcharan Das said it should be a deputy prime minister who would coordinate among different entities to raise competitiveness of the economy.

"The competitiveness touches every central ministry, and every state government. We know that these are silos and these are unwieldy structures. The only coordinator in our system is the prime minister. Even he does not have much control over the chief ministers of states. I have a suggestion which many of you will find controversial. It is to have a competitiveness czar at the level of a deputy prime minister of the country," Das had said.

India last saw deputy prime minister when L K Advani occupied the post during 2002-04.

Amit Kapoor, co-author of the report, told Business Standard there are close to 70 ministries and departments at the central government level.

For instance, for the energy sector there ministries such as petroleum, coal, power and renewable energy which want to achieve the same set of goals, said Kapoor, who is chairman of the Institute for Competitiveness that brought about the report. He said this is true of the transport sector too.

"Can we look at the situation where there is one big minister and then you have ministers of state who look at departments which would help in coordination mechanism?" said Kapoor, a professor at Stanford University.

Then there is requirement of coordination vertically too, he said adding sometimes the state governments will not implement central projects due to political reasons even as those would create development projects.

Kapoor believed that it is the prime minister who should drive the coordination from the central side and chief ministers from the states level. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/silos-are-yet-to-be-broken-to-expeditiously-deliver-projects-and-policies-122110200229_1.html

14. Why Indian Navy pilots haven't landed on an aircraft carrier in 2 yrs & won't anytime soon (theprint.in) November 2, 2022

The elite fighter pilots of the Indian Navy have not landed on an aircraft carrier for nearly two years and the wait is expected to get longer with the first landing on-board the INS Vikrant likely to take place only early next year, ThePrint has learnt.

The INS Vikramaditya, the other aircraft carrier, has been out of action for the past two years as it is undergoing a repair and refit process. A fire on-board the aircraft carrier in July this year, while it was on a sea trial after refit, added to the delay in its operationalisation, sources in the defence and security establishments said.

It is now expected that the Russian-origin carrier will be made fully operational by the end of this year or early next year.

Even though the naval pilots have been undertaking joint exercises with a number of countries, including the US, they can't take off from those aircraft carriers because they don't have a ski-jump, unlike the Vikramaditya and Vikrant.

Sources said that the flight trials on board the newly commissioned INS Vikrant are slated to start this month, but the actual landing of the MiG 29K by the pilots on-board is likely to happen only early next year as the Vikrant would only be fully operational by the end of 2023.

Sources asserted “there has not been any impact” on the training of the naval pilots with them continuing to fly for various operations from land-based assets, practising their ski-jumps from the shore-based test facility (SBTF) at INS Hansa, and on simulators.

They, however, admitted that it is nowhere close to an actual landing on an aircraft carrier, which has its own dynamics.

“The landing and take-off on an actual moving aircraft carrier is drastically different to what it is like on the SBTF or the simulator,” a source said.

They explained that the pilots carry out multiple landings and take-offs on an aircraft carrier to train in different situations, including night landings and different sea states, which is measured by the Douglas Sea Scale using the height of waves and the swell of the sea.

Each pilot, they added, undergoes various grading processes depending on the number of such landings, and this has been impacted over the past two years.

Former Indian navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd), a naval aviator himself, said that India is fortunate to have the SBTF which enables pilots to maintain and improve their flying skills.

“The Goa SBTF is the only second such facility in the world, with the other being in Crimea. It comes with an exact copy of the carrier landing space with arrestor wires and also the exact ski-jump,” he said.

“Except for the roll, the pitch and the movement of an aircraft carrier, the SBTF gives the same dynamics so that the flying skills are maintained. Not landing on a carrier is not a major concern and is easily surmountable. The pilots will take a week to 10 days max to get back into the deck operations,” he added.

Vikramaditya refit to take longer

INS Vikramaditya was originally a Russian carrier — Admiral Gorshkov — that was decommissioned in 1996 and later bought by India in 2004 and commissioned in 2013 after refurbishing. Sources said it is undergoing a process called “normal refit”, adding that the Covid pandemic had led to delays in the refit. The fire on board, which affected the blowers and fuel pipes, delayed it further.

The carrier had last undergone a five-month refit in 2018 which cost over Rs 700 crore. It was the second refit the vessel went through since it was commissioned in late 2013.

Asked if it was normal for a ship to undergo such frequent refits, sources explained that there is a cycle of refits for every ship.

In the Indian Navy, a ship undergoes three short refits (which take care of minor repair works) before undergoing a normal refit during which large scale checks are done and every system is overhauled.

After two rounds of normal refit, the ship undergoes what is known as the medium refit, which could entail drastic repair work that also includes dry dock works.

However, sources said Vikramaditya is an old carrier and the Vikrant will not face such drastic repair works for the foreseeable future.

Price escalation

The deal for Vikramaditya was signed in 2004 by the then NDA government at \$974 million, which finally settled at a whopping \$2.35 billion in 2010.

The price escalation process became a scandal when pictures of a senior Navy officer, who was closely involved in the Admiral Gorshkov deal, surfaced in 2010 showing him in a compromising position with an unidentified woman. It was seen as part of a Russian honey trap operation.

Incidentally, former Russian Ambassador to India, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, had in 2009 admitted that “the major reason” for the price escalation was that the contract was signed when the Russian company, Sevmash, “badly needed money and wanted to sign the contract, while the Indian side wanted to buy an absolutely modern aircraft carrier at lower than the cheapest price”.

“After the contract was signed (in 2004), both sides began to understand exactly the enormity of the task they had undertaken. But the realisation came a little late,” Trubnikov had said. <https://theprint.in/defence/why-indian-navy-pilots-havent-landed-on-an-aircraft-carrier-in-2-yrs-wont-anytime-soon/1191050/>

15. Government plans Rs 2,000-crore cash jab for ailing IFCI: Report (moneycontrol.com) November 2, 2022

The government plans to infuse about Rs 2,000 crore (\$242 million) into state-run IFCI Ltd, Bloomberg reported, quoting sources familiar with the development. The report goes on to suggest that the plan is to merge IFCI with its unit, Stock Holding Corp of India, in an attempt to rescue the lender.

IFCI incurred losses for at least four straight years until March 2022, and in the past one year alone, it lost over 17 percent of its market capitalisation. Earlier in July, Care Ratings flagged a rising NPA ratio and persistent losses at IFCI as a cause for concern.

The capital infusion plan is aimed at reducing the debt burden before the merger, according to Bloomberg.

The share price of IFCI grew by 20 percent from its opening price today, after the announcement. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/markets/government-planning-to-infuse-rs-2000-crore-in-ifci-9434321.html>

16. Centre pulls plug on Rs 214 crore Chandigarh smart power project ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) November 2, 2022

After spending a whopping Rs 28 crore on installation of smart meters, the Union government has now decided not to go ahead with its Smart Grid Project in parts of Chandigarh city where the project had been implemented during its pilot run.

The reason — the Centre’s unwillingness to shell out Rs 241 crore for full-time implementation of the project at a time when the power sector of Chandigarh was being privatised.

As part of its pilot project, the UT administration had installed as many as 24,149 smart meters in some sectors and villages of the city. The places where these 24,149 smart meters were installed included Industrial Area Phase I and II, sectors 29,31,47,48, Ramdarbar, Village faidan, Hallo Majra, Behlana, Raipur Kalan, Makhanmajra, and Daria.

A few months ago, the Centre had approved funds to the tune of Rs 241 crore to Chandigarh for full-time implementation of the smart power system in the rest of the city. However, later, they changed their mind and in response to a file sent by the UT administration, stated that the project was now being scrapped.

Sources said that a review meeting was held on Tuesday, during which it was conveyed by the Union government that the power sector was being privatised, and hence there was no requirement for the government to spend funds to carry out the project in parts of the city where the pilot project had not been implemented.

UT Chief Engineer CB Ojha confirmed to The Indian Express, “Yes, the Centre has turned down the project stating that as power was being privatised in Chandigarh, the private firm should be allowed to take over and carry out the necessary infrastructure related work. Everything will be need to be revamped. So, there is no point for the government to be spending Rs 241 crore.”

To have control and command on the smart grid project, the UT had set up a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) Centre at Sector 18. On the basis of the pilot project, the Centre was set up to know the power consumption in Chandigarh. The power control room was also to receive immediate alerts in case of tripping in main lines. For residents, it was said that these smart meters were to allow start of prepaid services and instead of paying bi-monthly bills , the consumers would be able to pay in advance for power that they were expected to consume.

Under the project, the UT administration had also decided to replace all the electricity meters in the city by 2022-23 fiscal. The project was allotted to the government-owned Regional Electricity Corporation in 2018 and was to be completed by June 2020. However, due to Covid it was delayed.

Monthly billing to become easier?

The UT administration had stated that the smart power grid project, once implemented, was going to be beneficial for both the power department as well as consumers.

However, UT's power department had stated that conversion of meter reading from bi-monthly to monthly would have led to various problems, as there was an acute shortage of staff. They had also pointed out that in order to produce monthly bills, the software would need heavy modifications.

Power privatisation firm already selected

The Chandigarh Electricity Department has already handed over work of privatising the power sector to one Eminent Electricity Distribution Limited, a private entity. The firm was finalized after it quoted Rs 871 crore against Rs 175 crore reserve price for the project. Eminent Electricity Distribution Limited is a Kolkata-based company. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/centre-pulls-plug-on-rs-214-crore-chandigarh-smart-power-project-8243789/>

17. Government welfare schemes slashed by half in 3 years (downtoearth.org.in) 01 November 2022

A country's progress is judged by the success of public welfare schemes for those on the lowest rung of society. The central government of India is lagging far behind, shutting down over half of such schemes over the last three years.

The fund allocation for several vital schemes have been reduced over the years, raising several concerns. Grants for wildlife habitat development under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, like Project Tiger, have also gone down.

Out of 19 schemes by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, now only three schemes are running — Mission Shakti, Mission Vatsalya, Saksham Anganwadi.

Similarly, out of 12 schemes by the Union Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, only two are running and the rest have been scrapped.

The Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare had 20 schemes under it, but now only three are running. Other funds to Union ministries have also been cut down.

The Animal Husbandry ministry has scrapped important schemes like Dairying through Cooperatives and National Dairy Plan-II. Now, only three out of 20 schemes — Krishonnati Yojana, the Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperatives and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana are being run by the Agriculture ministry.

While some experts believe that a reduction in welfare schemes is an achievement, the question remains whether the decrease will lead to better governance. The working capacity of the state may be affected as well.

Through June, 2022, Rs 1.2 lakh crore for central government schemes was deposited with banks that earn interest from the money for the Centre. For example, the Nirbhaya Fund was created in 2013 to improve the safety of women in public places and encourage their participation in economic and social activities.

The Nirbhaya Fund received Rs 1,000 crore annually from 2013-16, but most of it was not spent. The government allocated Rs 6,214 crore to the fund till 2022. However, only Rs 4,138 crore was disbursed from it and only Rs 2,922 crore was spent.

Similarly, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development received Rs 660 crore, but only Rs 181 crore was utilised through July 2021. But even then, several women-centric schemes have been shut down and public spaces remain unsafe all over the country.

Subsidies on fertilisers have also not been spared. In the financial year 2020-21, the government spent Rs 1,27,921 crore on fertilisers, Rs 79,529 crore in 2021-22 and allocated Rs 1,05,222 crore in the 2022-23 budget.

The allocation for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK) fertilisers was also 35 per cent lower than the revised estimates in the financial year 2021-22. Due to such budgetary cuts, the prices of fertilisers have risen sharply and the shortage has broken the back of small and marginal farmers.

Not just the number of schemes but fund allocations for the employment of the poor in rural areas have also been affected.

For example, the allocation amount for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in the financial year 2022-23 was Rs 73,000 crore. This is about 25 per cent less than last year's allocation. In the financial year 2021-22, Rs 98,000 crore was allocated.

Biodiversity is also getting affected by the lack of funds. Grants for wildlife habitat development under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change have also been trimmed. It went down from Rs 165 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 124.5 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 87.6 crore in 2020-21.

Project Tiger has been at the receiving end of this as well. From Rs 323 crore granted in the financial year 2018-19, it has gone down to Rs 194.5 crore in the financial year 2020-21.

These reductions in fund allocations are concerning, with climate obligations likely to be affected. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/government-welfare-schemes-slashed-by-half-in-3-years-85678>

18. Reform, Not Uniform: Why Modi's Plan for the Police in India is totally off the Mark (thewire.in) Sanjiv Krishan Sood / 02 November 2022

The government and police leadership need to give deep thoughts to improve the delivery of service by the police rather than waste their energy on perfunctory issues like the uniform.

In a widely reported incident, Rahul Gandhi had walked out of the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence in December 2020 when the then Chief of Defence Staff General Rawat focussed on presenting about proposed changes in the uniform of defence forces personnel instead of more important issues like the security scenario on the India-China Border.

A similar inanity has been inflicted upon the nation by no less than the prime minister through his suggestion at the 'chintan shivir' of the home ministers of states to consider introducing a single uniform for the police throughout the country.

It would be surprising if the prime minister doesn't already know that the police in the entire country wears a khaki uniform except in the case of Kolkata Police and perhaps the police in Mumbai and some north-eastern states. The traffic police in most states does have a different uniform as they are required to perform a totally different role. Other than these variations it is only the insignia on the caps and belts or the accoutrements' on their arms that distinguishes the police of one state from the other. Even these distinctions are not noticeable by the rural, marginalised and common people for whom khaki is the only visible symbol of authority of government which they hold in awe both for its potential to help him in times of need and also for its ability to inflict misery upon him.

Furthermore, imposing 'uniform-ity' may not be practicable because the weather conditions, terrain and operational requirements vary vastly in different parts of the country. For example, the extreme cold in the UTs Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and states like Himachal and Uttarakhand mandates that many uniform articles be different in these areas from those of states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra or the southern states where the weather is hot and humid. Again, a uniform stitched in the shape of a dungaree will be more suitable for states where the terrain is mountainous with thick foliage.

Maintaining a similarity of uniform even within the same state is extremely difficult because the items of uniform are not procured centrally. The colour shades and quality of the uniform worn by police persons within a "thana" itself may be different because these are procured individually in almost all states. This problem has now started emerging even in the Central Armed Police Forces after the central procurement system was done away with.

It will not be out of place to mention that the uniform even in the defence forces is not the same except the colour and quality of fabric worn. Indian Army regiments, fighting and support arms display their own distinct identity by way of headgear, belts and accoutrements.

Another negative aspect of a single uniform for the entire police force of the country is that it will become difficult to identify them when they move out of their jurisdiction to arrest people, and the system of zero FIRs will gain currency – which is prone to misuse as was seen in many recent incidents.

Irrespective of all that has been brought out above, it would be naïve to think that the Prime Minister has just made an off the cuff remark. One can say with fair amount of certainty that the prime minister does know that the police is a state subject and decisions like type of uniform for police are to be taken by states. Further, there certainly are more important matters afflicting policing in India for the home ministers to discuss than the "uniformity of uniform".

Prime Minister Modi exhorting state home ministers about the importance of police reforms mandated even by the Supreme Court, and finding ways to implement them,

would have been more appropriate for a forum like that. Brainstorming on ways to make police functioning independent of political interference and debating ways to improve the image of the police in the eyes of the public by converting it into a “people’s police” instead of a “rulers’ police” are the matters relevant for forums like that.

The police-public ratio of 152 per lakh of people is ab initio way below world standards and the fact is that a lot of this consists of the CAPFs which are not available for day to day policing jobs. We have been continuing with the system of recruiting home guards as casual workers to fill the human resources gap. This perhaps is one major reason for the lackadaisical policing in most states and should not be allowed to continue in perpetuity.

Other aspects that need “chintan” are improving police training and soft skills. Modernisation of the police is an important matter which receives very little attention. Except for the honourable exceptions of some states, the acquisition of swanky vehicles and computers is considered the be all and end all of modernisation.

There is lot of scope for improving personnel management amongst the police forces by providing them with a conducive work place and improving housing satisfaction.

It will be to the peril of the federal structure of the country if we get deceived into ignoring the latent object of the prime minister’s remarks – which are clearly aimed at guiding the narrative towards constituting a single police force for the entire nation by ignoring the constitutional scheme of things.

There have already been instances of Central police agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate, etc. being misused to target opposition voices and silence them in the past but more so during the past decade. A centrally controlled police will further enhance the scope of such misuse, which in the present constitutional scheme is counterbalanced to an extent.

A contrary point of view is that police being a state subject is not a divine order. It is a human construct, and as fallible as anything could be. It is suggested that we must not take the constitution to be the final word in shaping human destiny. Many legal experts maintain that the basic structure theory also is an artificial judicial construct. If we the people of India have reconciled with the idea of a strong Centre, we might as well accept a national police force. It is argued that this would also effectively defeat the local power nexuses.

The problem with this point of view is that it ignores the federal structure that our constitutional makers had envisioned and ignores the reality of the essential diversity of culture, language and ethnicity of the nation. The other problem with this view is that while it may be easy to manage the Indian Police Service and make it a true All India Service with officers liable to be posted anywhere, it will be very difficult for personnel management of those below officers’ rank. Finally, assuming it insulates the police leadership from undue influence by the local or state politicians, they may have to face the even bigger threat of pressure from Central authorities and the consequences of not yielding to such pressures may be even more severe than present with an all India liability of posting and transfers.

The bottom line is that the government and police leadership has to give deep thoughts to improve the delivery of service by the police rather than wasting their energy on perfunctory issues like the uniform.

Sanjiv Krishan Sood retired as additional director general, Border Security Force. <https://thewire.in/government/police-uniform-modi>