

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (29.10.2022 to 31.10.2022)

1. Maharashtra govt asks CAG to probe civic body contracts during Covid-19 pandemic (indiatoday.in) October 31, 2022

The Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government has ordered an investigation into the affairs of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in the last two years during the Covid period. The state government has ordered an inquiry into the allocation of work during the Covid period through an autonomous organization CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India).

Through this, allotment of Covid centres in BMC, purchase of necessary items and distribution of work done in an illegal manner will be brought under investigation. During the Covid period, priority was given to building facilities and purchasing goods immediately without conducting a tender process to provide services to people without any delay. However, the BJP has repeatedly accused the Maha Vikas Aghadi government of misusing their power and causing massive corruption.

Therefore, the state government has ordered the CAG to investigate all these cases and submit a report as soon as possible.

WHAT WOULD BE PROBED BY CAG?

-Covid Centres Scam, Scam of BMC: The CAG, which is a wing under the central government, is expected to probe the controversial decisions by the BMC related to setting up of field hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic. The contracts for Covid centre and medical services given by the civic body were allegedly in a non-transparent manner. The contract of around Rs 100 crore was given in a non-transparent manner.

-Purchases during Covid: Corruption in the name of medical emergency observed in purchases by BMC during Covid. BMC bought Remdesivir at Rs 1568 per vial and the order was given for 2 lakh vials on April 7, 2020. A deeper probe has revealed that a corrupt contract in connivance with the supplier was given.

-Probe into materials purchased: For purchases at various Covid centres, various materials extraordinary power was given to Assistant Commissioner at ward level. The manner in which the Covid Centres contracts were given for construction of Covid Centres also needs a special audit.

-Dahisar land Acquisition Purchase Scam: Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) purchased land at Eksar/ Dahisar from Nishalp Realities (Alpesh Ajmera) and paid Rs 349 crore. It was observed that Alpesh Ajmera bought the same land from the Mascarehans and family for Rs 2.55 crore. Several Municipal Commissioners have strongly objected to the purchase of this land. The builder has gone to court and demanded Rs 900 crore.

-Oxygen, Oxygen Generation Plant Purchase Scam: Last year, BMC ordered the purchase of oxygen generation plants to be installed in various hospitals. One company named Highway Construction Company was given a contract in June in a

non-transparent manner. The Highway Construction Company was black listed. While going into details, it is observed that there is a big scam in the purchasing of oxygen, oxygen tanks, and oxygen plant supplies.

-Involvement of MCGM official in Covid Contracts: Manish Radhakrishna Valanju gave a contract for his area i.e., Kurla 'L' Ward to Genehealth Diagnostic Private Limited Company. The company is connected with his father, Radhakrishna Balakrishna Valanju. RT-PCR Covid testing contract was given at various wards in a non-transparent manner to companies or inexperienced companies or companies which are connected with the ruling party, political leaders or BMC officials. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/maharashtra-govt-asks-cag-probe-bmc-contracts-during-pandemic-2291412-2022-10-31>

2. Maharashtra govt orders CAG to probe BMC's last two years' projects; Covid centres, land purchases to be audited (timesnownews.com) October 31, 2022

The Maharashtra government has ordered the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) to investigate Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) projects worth Rs 12 crores in the last two years which include the installation of Covid centers, road construction, and land purchase by the civic body.

On August 24, 2022, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced a special audit into the alleged irregularities in BMC through the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in the Legislative Assembly.

Fadnavis had said that the BMC officials used to open companies overnight and bag the contracts during the Covid pandemic from BMC.

Why has the CAG Audit of BMC been ordered?

1. Covid Centres Scam:

One of the reasons the probe has been ordered is to look into contracts given by BMC/Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) for running Covid Centres and to provide medical services in a non-transparent manner. The contract of around Rs 100 crore was given in a non-transparent manner.

For e.g. Lifeline Hospital Management Services was given the contract for five res. The company which did not exist when the contract was given on June 26, 2020. Subsequently, it is stated that it is an unregistered firm.

2. Purchases during Covid:

Rampant corruption in the name of medical emergencies was observed in purchases by BMC during Covid.

BMC bought Remdesivir at Rs 1,568 per vial and the order for the purchase of 2 lakh vials was given on April 7, 2020. Same Day Haffkine Institute of Government of Maharashtra and Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation bought the Remdesivir vials

at Rs 668 per vial. While going in-depth it has been observed that it was a corrupt contract given in connivance with the supplier.

For purchases at various Covid centres for various materials, extraordinary power was given to Assistant Commissioner at the ward level also indulged in rampant corruption.

The manner in which the Covid Centres contracts were given for construction of Covid Centres also needs a special audit.

3. Dahisar land Acquisition/ Purchase Scam:

MCGM purchased land at Eksar/ Dahisar from Nishalp Realities (Alpesh Ajmera) and paid Rs 349 crore. It is observed that Alpesh Ajmera bought the same land from Mascarehans and family at Rs 2.55 crore.

Several Municipal Commissioners have strongly objected to the purchase of this land while the builder has gone to court and demanded Rs 900 crore. This is one of the biggest scams of MCGM that needed to be probed.

4. Oxygen and Oxygen Generation Plant Purchase Scam:

In June-July 2021, BMC ordered the purchase of Oxygen Generation Plants to be installed in various hospitals. One company named Highway Construction Company is said to have been given a contract on June 16, 2021, in a non-transparent manner. Minister Aslam Sheikh also objected the same.

The company was blacklisted. While going into details, it is observed that there is a big scam in purchasing of Oxygen, Oxygen Tank, and Oxygen Plants supply.

5. Involvement of MCGM officials in Covid Contracts:

An example is enclosed, Shri Manish Radhakrishna Valanju gave a contract for his area namely Kurla 'L' Ward to Genehealth Diagnostic Private Limited Company. The company is connected with his father Radhakrishna Balakrishna Valanju.

RT-PCR Covid testing contract has been given at various wards in a non-transparent manner to newborn companies or inexperienced companies or companies which are connected with ruling party, political leaders, or, BMC officials. <https://www.timesnownews.com/mumbai/maharashtra-govt-orders-cag-to-probe-bmcs-last-two-years-projects-covid-centres-land-purchases-to-be-audited-article-95193955>

3. Mumbai: Trouble for Uddhav Thackeray as Shinde-Fadnavis govt orders CAG to probe into BMC's functioning of last two years (freepressjournal.in) October 31, 2022

In the run up to the BMC elections with an aim to target the Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray, the Shinde Fadnavis government has ordered an inquiry by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) into the functioning of the civic body and the

decisions taken in last two years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Chief Minister's Office on Monday in statement said that "The state government has ordered a CAG probe into the alleged corruption and irregularities in awarding various contracts without tendering including the development of Covid care facilities and procurement of various materials to combat the pandemic. The BJP had repeatedly alleged scam in the purchases and construction of jumbo facilities. The government has asked CAG to conduct an inquiry by doing proper audit of these works and procurements and submit it's report."

According to CMO, issues for CAG Audit of BMC which was ruled by Uddhav Thackeray led Shiv Sena till it's term expired early this year include:

1. Covid Centres Scam, Scam of BMC: Running of Covid Centres contract and to provide medical services were given by BMC (MCGM) in non transparent manner e.g. the Lifeline Hospital Management Services was given contract for five centres. The company which was not born when the contract was given on 26th June, 2020. Subsequently, it is stated that it is unregistered firm. The contract of around Rs.100 crore was given in non transparent manner.

2. Purchases during Covid: Rampant corruption in the name of medical emergency observed in purchases by BMC during Covid.

BMC bought Remdesivir at Rs.1568/- per vial, order was given for 2 lakh vials on 7th April, 2020. Same Day Haffkine Institute of Government of Maharashtra bought Remdesivir vial at Rs.668/- per vial and Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation also bought Remdesivir at Rs.668/-. While going in the depth it is observed that it was a corrupt contract in connivance with the supplier was given.

For purchases at various Covid centres for various materials extraordinary power was given to Assistant Commissioner at ward level also indulged into rampant corruption.

The manner in which the Covid Centres contracts were given for construction of Covid Centres also needs a special audit.

3. Dahisar land Acquisition/ Purchase Scam: MCGM purchased/bought land at Eksar/ Dahisar from Nishalp Realities (Alpesh Ajmera) and paid Rs.349 crore. It is observed that Alpesh Ajmera bought the same land from Mascarehans and family at Rs.2.55 crore. Several Municipal Commissioners have strongly objected the purchase of this land. The builder has gone in the court and demanded Rs.900 crore. This is one of the biggest scams of MCGM needed to be investigated in detail.

4. Oxygen, Oxygen Generation Plant Purchase Scam: In June-July, 2021 BMC ordered to purchase Oxygen Generation Plants to be installed in various hospitals. One company named Highway Construction Company was given contract on 16.06.2021 in non-transparent manner. Minister Aslam Sheikh had also objected the same. The Highway Construction

Company was black listed. While going into details, it is observed that there is a big scam in purchasing of Oxygen, Oxygen Tank, Oxygen Plants supply.

5. Involvement of MCGM official in Covid Contracts: An example is enclosed, Shri Manish Radhakrishna Valanju gave contract of his area i.e., Kurla 'L' Ward to Genehealth Diagnostic Private Limited Company. The company is connected with his father Radhakrishna Balakrishna Valanju. RCPCR Covid testing contract has been given at various wards in non transparent manner to newborn companies or inexperienced companies or the companies which are connected with ruling party, political leader or BMC officials. <https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/shinde-fadnavis-govt-orders-cag-to-probe-into-bmcs-functioning-of-last-two-years>

4. Congress 'chargesheet' states graft, irregularities under BJP rule, promises to review decisions ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) October 30, 2022

The Congress party on Saturday presented a "chargesheet" against the five-year rule of BJP in Himachal Pradesh. The 23-page document has alleged corruption and irregularities in government functioning under CM Jai Ram Thakur's tenure.

The party stated that they will review all decisions made by the CM in the past six months.

"There is corruption on all levels and all departments. Not only will there be enquiry, there will be jail as well. The leaders will also not be spared. For good government, there needs to be good governance. This government has been on remote control from Delhi," said Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, former HPCC chief.

The party attacked the government for inflation claiming that prices of petrol rose from Rs 67 in 2013-14 to Rs 97 in the current year. Till March, there have been nearly 8.7 lakh unemployed youth in the state while the unemployment rate stood at 9.2% which is higher than the national average, said the document.

Citing a CAG report, the party stated that the government has put the state under 51% debt amounting to nearly Rs 62,000 crore. More than 67,000 government posts are currently vacant, the party alleged.

Around 2 lakh youths participated in the police recruitment examination this year and the recruitment paper was leaked. The news of paper leak came 3 months after the paper was completed and the entire recruitment process was canceled under pressure from the Congress, said the party.

The party alleged that people paid Rs 6 lakh to 8.25 lakh for pamphlets of the police recruitment examination. After the paper leak was busted, it was found that the scam was worth more than Rs 250 crores which ruined the future prospects of more than 2 lakh youth in the state, the document said.

During the investigation, a total of 200 suspects in the paper leak case were arrested, most of whom were candidates who had given money to buy the paper. The ruling

party ensured that higher ups involved in the scam were not touched, alleged the document.

The Congress government will conduct a fresh investigation into the paper leak case once coming into power, said officials.

The party further alleged irregularities of appointments in Himachal Pradesh University, Central University, Cluster University, Mandi, IIT Mandi, Hamirpur IIIT, Una, Medical College, Nerchok, Hydro Engineering College, Bilaspur, AIIMS, Bilaspur and other institutions.

Causing harm to a 5500 crore apple economy, the party alleged that rising prices of fertilizers and the GST on packages have adversely impacted farming. The party also slammed private players such as Adani for disrupting market rates by purchasing at Rs 76 against Rs 85 as promised.

The party further highlighted that as per an audio clip a government official was asking for Rs 5 lakh bribe in PPE procurement as part of a larger scam. The former party head Rajiv Bindal eventually had to resign following the irregularity in procurement, said party.

The company from which the essential medical equipments during Covid wave were obtained only existed on paper, the party alleged. The ruling government also skipped protocol to made appointments of persons with RSS background at various positions in the education department, the chargesheet read. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/shimla/congress-chargesheet-states-graft-irregularities-under-bjp-rule-promises-to-review-decisions-8237610/>

5. AAP 'emptying' state coffers to bribe Gujarat voters (tribuneindia.com) October 30, 2022

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today accused the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab of playing havoc with the state's finances while trying to bribe Gujarat voters.

"The rampant corruption, illegal mining and massive borrowing in Punjab must be having a definite link with the hawala money being distributed by the AAP in Gujarat, which needs to be probed," BJP leader and state general secretary Subhash Sharma said here today.

He said the CAG report had revealed how much financial mess the AAP government had created in the state and simultaneously the money was being transferred through hawala channels to bribe the voters in Gujarat.

The BJP leader said the AAP is using all foul means to lure Gujarat voters. "First they used advertisement route by siphoning off Punjab money to Gujarat and now, it has been doing things more blatantly by transferring ill-gotten money from Punjab to Gujarat through hawala channels and distributing it among voters as has been revealed by one of their Assembly candidates," he said.

Dr Sharma demanded that the matter of distribution of hawala money in Gujarat, corresponding with growing borrowing in Punjab and also reports of illegal mining going on in Punjab, needed to be probed thoroughly as there must be a definite link between all these with AAP leadership being the mastermind. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/aap-emptying-state-coffers-to-bribe-gujarat-voters-445673>

6. New evidence unearthed against SP Velumani: TN govt to Madras HC ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) October 29, 2022

CHENNAI: The State government on Friday told the Madras High Court that the FIRs against former minister SP Velumani cannot be quashed based on the preliminary enquiry (PE) report as it is just a procedure to decide on whether to file an FIR and does not have legal backing.

"The PE was done in favour of him (Velumani) when they (AIADMK) were in power. It does not have legal backing. It is a procedure to decide whether FIR can be filed or not," Advocate General R Shunmugasundaram said.

Referring to unnamed officers as accused in the FIR, the AG stated that a list of names was ready and he would submit it in court, adding that new materials on the irregularities were found during the course of investigation by DVAC and in the CAG report.

The submission was made before a bench of justices PN Prakash and RMT Teekaa Raman during the hearing on the petitions filed by former municipal administration minister SP Velumani seeking to quash FIRs filed by DVAC in connection with irregularities in award of contracts in Chennai and Coimbatore municipal corporations and disproportionate assets.

Countering Velumani's arguments that the CAG report tabled in 2021 did not find fault with execution of tenders, the AG said that the report clearly indicates injudicious award of contracts. Senior counsel and Rajya Sabha MP NR Elango, representing DMK organisation secretary RS Bharathi, disapproved of the allegation of political vendetta behind registering the FIRs.

V Suresh, counsel for Arappor Iyakkam, said the organisation's complaints against the ex-minister, who wielded so much clout in the previous government, were based on documentary materials collected through RTI Act.

As many as 47 contracts were awarded to a company owned by Velumani's brother. The bidders had used the same IP address and mobile numbers for submitting tenders and it revealed collusion. Since the arguments could not be completed, the judges posted the matter to November 8. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/oct/29/new-evidence-unearthed-against-sp-velumani-tn-govt-to-madras-hc-2512680.html>

7. केवल प्रारंभिक जांच रिपोर्ट के आधार पर एफआईआर रद्द नहीं कर सकते: मद्रास हाईकोर्ट में एसपी वेलुमणि की याचिका पर तमिलनाडु सरकार ने कहा (hindi.livelaw.in) October 29, 2022

पूर्व मंत्री एसपी वेलुमणि की याचिकाओं की सुनवाई के दूसरे दिन निविदाओं के अनुदान में अनियमितता का आरोप लगाते हुए दो एफआईआर रद्द करने की मांग करते हुए राज्य ने तर्क दिया कि वह यह बताने के लिए प्रारंभिक जांच रिपोर्ट पर भरोसा नहीं कर सकते कि वह निर्दोष है।

जस्टिस पीएन प्रकाश और जस्टिस आरएमटी टीका रमन की खंडपीठ के समक्ष एडवोकेट जनरल आर शुनमुगसुंदरम ने यह दलील दी। एजी ने यह भी तर्क दिया कि अदालत केवल प्रारंभिक रिपोर्ट के आधार पर खारिज करने वाली याचिकाओं में निर्णय नहीं ले सकती है, इसे जोड़ने से एक बुरी मिसाल कायम होगी।

यदि कोई अदालत केवल प्रारंभिक रिपोर्ट के आधार पर किसी मामले का फैसला करती है तो यह एक बुरी मिसाल कायम करेगी। यह कभी नहीं किया गया। इसका एकमात्र उद्देश्य एफआईआर सत्यापित करना और केस दर्ज करना है। कोई सबूत नहीं है, केवल पूछताछ की गई है। केवल अधिकारी को संतुष्ट करने के लिए कि एक संज्ञेय अपराध किया गया।

उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि याचिकाकर्ता इस स्तर पर यह कहते हुए एफआईआर रद्द करने की मांग नहीं कर सकता कि उन्हें सुनवाई का मौका नहीं दिया गया।

एफआईआर सिर्फ शुरुआती बिंदु है। इस समय वे आकर यह नहीं कह सकते कि उन्हें अवसर नहीं दिया गया। जांच के दौरान ही काफी सामग्री सामने आती है।

याचिकाकर्ता के इस दावे पर कि सी सीएजी जी रिपोर्ट केवल अनुबंध के निष्पादन से संबंधित है और अनुबंध के आवंटन के तरीके से संबंधित नहीं है, एजी ने प्रस्तुत किया कि यह भ्रामक है, क्योंकिक्यों ऑडिटर रिपोर्ट में अनुबंध के अविवेकपूर्ण पुरस्कार के बारे में स्पष्ट रूप से बात की गई है।

उन्होंने आगे कहा कि सी सीएजी जी रिपोर्ट अनुमान लेने के तरीके में गंभीर अक्षमता की बात करती है जिसके कारण ठेकेदारों ने बेतुके कम कीमतों का हवाला दिया, जिससे उन्हें अनुचित लाभ हुआ।

याचिकाकर्ताओं ने शुक्रवार को कहा कि एफआईआर सामान्य प्रकृति की है और उन्होंनेनेहों लोक सेवक के खिलाफ कोई विशेष आरोप नहीं लगाया। हालांकि यह दावा किया गया कि संपत्ति लोक सेवक के धन का उपयोग करके खरीदी गई, लेकिन उन संपत्तियों का विवरण प्रदान नहीं किया गया।

आरोपी का प्रतिनिधित्व करने वाले वकील ने तर्क दिया कि अपराध तभी बनता है जब लोक सेवक संपत्ति का संतोषजनक विवरण देने में असमर्थ होता है। किसी लोक सेवक के

खिलाफ केवल इसलिए मामला दर्ज नहीं किया जा सकता, क्योंकि उसके पास कुछ संपत्ति है।

वेलुमणि का प्रतिनिधित्व करने वाले सीनियर एडवोकेट एसवी राजू ने अदालत के समक्ष कहा,

"आप केवल संपत्ति होने के कारण एफआईआर दर्ज नहीं कर सकते। आपको एफआईआर दर्ज करने से पहले मेरा स्पष्टीकरण मांगना चाहिए और यदि कोई उचित स्पष्टीकरण नहीं है तो ही एफआईआर दर्ज की जा सकती है।

" मामले में अगली सुनवाई 8 नवंबर को होगी। https://hindi.livelaw.in/category/top-stories/madras-high-court-sp-velumani-preliminary-enquiry-not-investigation-but-mere-enquiry-212710?infinite_scroll=1

8. नोएडा अथॉरिटी में करोड़ों का खेल, नेताओं के नौकरों को दे दिए फार्म हाउस, IT जांच शुरू (navbharattimes.indiatimes.com) October 31, 2022

नोएडा अथॉरिटी की फार्महाउस योजना के तहत आवंटित हुए 157 फार्महाउस पर आयकर विभाग की जांच बैठ गई है। इन फार्महाउस को 2008 से 2011 के बीच आवंटित किया गया था। कैग (CAG) के ऑडिट में इस आवंटन पर सवाल उठे हैं।

सूत्रों के मुताबिक, ये फार्महाउस बेस प्राइस से कम में दिए गए। इससे अथॉरिटी को 2,833 करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ और आवंटियों को फायदा हुआ। इस योजना में कई नेताओं और नौकरशाहों के नौकरों और रिश्तेदारों के नाम से फार्महाउस खरीदने की बात सामने आई है। आयकर की जांच में पता लगाया जा रहा है कि इंटरव्यू के आधार पर ये फार्महाउस जिन्हें आवंटित किए गए, वे कौन हैं? किस आधार पर आवंटन हुआ? इंटरव्यू में कौन

कौन से सवाल पूछे गए? आयकर टीम नोएडा अथॉरिटी से योजना और आवंटन का पूरा ब्योरा हासिल कर चुकी है। यह भी पता लगाया जा रहा है कि फार्महाउस के लिए पैसा कहां से आया। अथॉरिटी के तत्कालीन अधिकारियों ने फार्महाउस को औने-पौने दाम में आवंटित कर इन तक कनेक्टिविटी के लिए चौड़ी सड़कें भी बनवाकर दीं। आवंटन के बाद भी करोड़ों की लागत से निर्माण करवाया गया।

नोएडा के 4 सेक्टरों में बांटे गए फार्महाउस

नोएडा के सेक्टर-126, 127, 128 और 131 के सामने और प्राइम लोकेशन वाली जमीनों पर फार्महाउस के प्लॉट दिए गए। रेकॉर्ड के मुताबिक, 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। आयकर विभाग ने अपनी जांच दो महीने पहले ही शुरू कर दी थी। <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/state/uttar-pradesh/noida/sports-in-noida-authority-farmhouse-plan-farm-houses-given-for-less-than-base-price/articleshow/95191074.cms>

9. MP News: पांच साल में रातापानी अभयारण्य से चोरी हो गए 20 हजार पेड़ (naidunia.com) October 30, 2022

भोपाल: मध्य प्रदेश के संरक्षित क्षेत्र (टाइगर रिजर्व, नेशनल पार्क, अभयारण्य) वृक्षों के लिए सुरक्षित नहीं हैं। यह जानकारी भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक (कैग) के प्रतिवेदन-2022 से मिली है। रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि पांच साल (2016 से 2019) में प्रदेश के 11 संरक्षित क्षेत्रों से चोर 69,585 वृक्ष काटकर ले गए। इसमें सबसे अधिक 19,681 पेड़ रायसेन जिले में स्थित रातापानी अभयारण्य से चोरी हुए हैं। दूसरे नंबर पर सागर जिले का नौरादेही अभयारण्य है। जिससे 10,059 वृक्ष काटकर चुराए गए हैं। यह इसलिए भी चिंताजनक है क्योंकि भोपाल के नजदीक रातापानी अभयारण्य एक मात्र ऐसा स्थान है, जिसमें 60 से अधिक बाघ हैं। यहां के बाघ भोपाल शहर के नजदीक तक आते हैं। वहीं नौरादेही अभयारण्य को चीता परियोजना के तहत चिह्नित किया गया है। यदि इनसे वृक्ष चोरी होते रहेंगे, तो भविष्य में वन्यप्राणियों के लिए भी खतरा बढ़ सकता है।

लकड़ी चोरी के मामले में प्रदेश के सभी छह टाइगर रिजर्व असुरक्षित हैं। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि वन्यजीव संरक्षण अधिनियम 1972 के तहत संरक्षित क्षेत्रों में ईंधन के लिए लकड़ी इकट्ठा करने की अनुमति सिर्फ आसपास रहने वालों को है। वह भी व्यक्तिगत वास्तविक जरूरत के लिए। जंगल से ईंधन की लकड़ी की अवैध कटाई के कारण संसाधन का क्षरण इस हद तक होता है कि संग्रह और सतत उपज से अधिक हो जाता है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप वन क्षेत्र में कमी आती है और वन्यप्राणी रहवास में जैवविविधता पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है।

किस संरक्षित क्षेत्र में कितने पेड़ काटे गए

पार्क -- काटे गए पेड़ों की संख्या

रातापानी अभयारण्य -- 19,681

नौरादेही अभयारण्य -- 10,059

कान्हा टाइगर रिजर्व -- 8,544

बांधवगढ़ टाइगर रिजर्व -- 8,471

पन्ना टाइगर रिजर्व -- 6,459

पेंच टाइगर रिजर्व -- 5,670

खिवनी अभयारण्य -- 5,288

सतपुड़ा टाइगर रिजर्व -- 2,450

कूनों राष्ट्रीय उद्यान -- 1,552

संजय टाइगर रिजर्व - 418

<https://www.naidunia.com/madhya-pradesh/bhopal-mp-news-20-thousand-trees-were-stolen-from-ratapani-sanctuary-in-five-years-7911328>

10. राजस्व उगाही में पिछड़ी सरकार को विपक्ष ने घेरा, सरकार ने छह माह में लिया 11464 करोड़ का कर्ज [_amarujala.com](http://amarujala.com) October 29, 2022

चंडीगढ़। पंजाब सरकार की ओर से बीते छह माह में राजस्व उगाही में शानदार बढ़ोतरी के जो दावे किए जा रहे हैं, उनके विपरीत लगभग सभी मर्दों पर राजस्व उगाही कम होने का दावा भारतीय लेखा परीक्षा एवं लेखा विभाग (कैग) की ओर से जारी फिस्कल इंडेक्स में सामने आया है। साथ ही यह भी साफ हो गया है कि राज्य सरकार ने अप्रैल 2022 से 30 सितंबर 2022 के दौरान बाजार से 11464.68 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज लिया है। राज्य सरकार के दावों के विपरीत राजस्व की स्थिति को लेकर विपक्ष ने सरकार को घेरना शुरू कर दिया है। कांग्रेस, अकाली दल और भाजपा ने सरकार की ओर से जनता के सामने झूठे आंकड़े रखने और प्रदेश को दिवालियापन की तरफ ले जाने के आरोप लगाए हैं।

गौरतलब है कि वित्त मंत्री हरपाल सिंह चीमा ने हाल ही में राजस्व उगाही में जोरदार बढ़ोतरी के आंकड़े पेश करते हुए दावा किया था कि सरकार की वित्तीय हालत सुधर रही है। लेकिन कैग द्वारा जारी सितंबर के फिस्कल इंडेक्स के अनुसार, पंजाब सरकार की आमदनी में पिछले साल के मुकाबले कमी आई है। राज्य सरकार ने इस साल अप्रैल में 419 करोड़, मई में 2447.54 करोड़, जुलाई में 3385.41 करोड़, अगस्त में 1466.62 करोड़ और सितंबर में 5875.70 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज लेते हुए बीते छह माह में कुल 11464.68 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज लिया है, जबकि 2021-22 के दौरान तत्कालीन सरकार ने इस अवधि के दौरान 9779.76 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज लिया था।

मौजूदा सरकार ने जितना कर्ज अब तक लिया है, वह चालू वित्त वर्ष के लिए उसकी लक्षित उधारी का लगभग 48 प्रतिशत है। इस राशि में से 66 फीसदी पैसा (7803.51 करोड़ रुपये) राज्य पर पहले से चढ़े 2.84 लाख करोड़ रुपये के कर्ज पर ब्याज के रूप में दिया गया है। दूसरी ओर राजस्व उगाही के मामले में राज्य सरकार की जीएसटी से आमदनी में बीते साल के मुकाबले 3 फीसदी और स्टॉप ड्यूटी से आमदनी में 2 फीसदी की कमी आई है। वहीं पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों से आमदनी भी 15 फीसदी तक कम हुई है। हालांकि शराब से आमदनी 0.2 फीसदी बढ़ी है। चालू वित्त वर्ष के पहले छह माह में जीएसटी कलेक्शन प्रति व्यक्ति 3420 रुपये दर्ज की गई है।

दिवालियापन की ओर धकेल रही सरकार: वडिंग

पंजाब कांग्रेस के प्रधान अमरिंदर सिंह राजा वडिंग ने आरोप लगाया है कि आप सरकार राज्य को दिवालियापन की ओर धकेल रही है। उन्होंने कहा कि जिस दर से आप सरकार पैसा उधार ले रही है, वह पहले कर्ज में दबे राज्य पर कम से कम एक लाख करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज बढ़ा देगी। उन्होंने कहा कि छह माह में 11646 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज लिया गया है, जिसका अर्थ है कि 5 साल में एक लाख करोड़ रुपये का कुल कर्ज होगा। उ

न्होंने कहा कि सेल टैक्स और स्टांप ड्यूटी से राजस्व कलेक्शन में भारी कमी आई है। एक्साइज में जो इजाफा नजर आ रहा है, वह शराब ठेकेदारों द्वारा जमा कराई गई सिक्कोरिटी मनी के कारण है।

झूठ बोलने के लिए बिना शर्त माफी मांगें चीमा: खैरा

कांग्रेस के विधायक सुखपाल सिंह खैरा ने ट्वीटर हैंडल पर फिस्कल इंडेक्स की प्रति टैग करते हुए लिखा है कि कैग की ताजा रिपोर्ट ने हरपाल सिंह चीमा द्वारा पेश किए गए गलत और फर्जी वित्तीय आंकड़ों को खारिज कर दिया है। अपने दिल्ली के आकाओं के अहंकार को संतुष्ट करने के लिए पंजाब के लोगों से झूठ बोलने के लिए उन्हें बिना शर्त माफी मांगनी चाहिए।

पंजाबियों को धोखा दे रही सरकार : मजीठिया

शिरोमणि अकाली दल (शिअद) के सीनियर नेता बिक्रम सिंह मजीठिया ने ट्वीट किया कि आप का सच्चा बदलाव यानी 11000 करोड़ के कर्ज से सेवा ऋण और आंकड़ों की कलाबाजी करते हुए राजस्व बढ़ोतरी दिखा दी। आप का यह नया शासन मॉडल पंजाब को दिवालिया कर देगा और इसके लोगों को और भी ज्यादा नुकसान पहुंचाएगा। यह निंदनीय है कि सरकार नकारात्मक मोड में है और राज्य की वित्तीय स्थिति के बारे में पंजाबियों को धोखा दे रही है।

क्या यही है दिल्ली माडल : भाजपा

पंजाब भाजपा के प्रदेश महासचिव जीवन गुप्ता ने ट्वीट कर कहा कि भगवंत मान ने पिछले सात माह में करीब 15000 करोड़ का कर्ज विभिन्न ब्याज दरों पर लिया है। भगवंत मान एक कर्ज चुकाने के लिए दूसरा कर्ज लिए जा रहे हैं। मान के पास पंजाब के सरकारी कर्मचारियों को वेतन देने के लिए पैसा नहीं है, जबकि खुद मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान और उनके मंत्री पंजाब के खजाने पर ऐश कर रहे हैं। क्या यही है दिल्ली मॉडल? <https://www.amarujala.com/haryana/panchkula/opposition-surrounded-the-backward-government-in-revenue-collection-bureau-news-pkl4667333151>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

11. Tax surge a cushion to bear hit from subsidies (dailypioneer.com) October 31, 2022

But tax collection buoyancy has been slowing down since the last year, which calls for tightening slippages

In the past, a shortfall in tax receipts of the Union government vis-à-vis the budget estimate (BE) and excess of expenditure over BE led to high fiscal deficit (FD) year after year. To rein in FD, it often took recourse to non-tax receipts such as dividend from public sector undertakings (PSUs), proceeds from selling government shares in one PSU to another, transfer of surplus by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), proceeds from sale of spectrum for telecomservices, etc.

This was unsustainable as reliance on non-tax receipts is unreliable. For instance, dividend from a PSU depends on a host of factors specific to the undertakings and there is no certainty that it will deliver a target amount. For instance, during 2017-18, ONGC, an upstream oil and gas exploration and production company in the public sector was asked to buy 51.11 per cent of government's shares in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL), helping it to garner over `30,000 crore and, thus, achieve its FD target. In the process, ONGC was burdened with an extra debt.

Since 2021-22, the situation has changed drastically with tax collections exceeding the target by a substantial margin even as slippage in expenditure has continued unabated. The good thing is that the surplus in tax collection has offset the excess in expenditure over BE, thereby helping the government keep FD within the target – not having to rely much on the non-tax receipts.

During 2021-22, the gross tax revenue (GTR)—including total direct tax collection, proceeds from Goods and Services Tax or GST, customs and excise duty—net of refunds were `27,10,000 crore, which was higher than the budget estimate (BE) of `22,20,000 crore by a whopping `490,000 crore. The collection was even higher than the revised estimate (RE) of `25,20,000 crore (as given by FM Nirmala Sitharaman in the budget for 2022-23 on February 1, 2022) by `1,90,000 crore.

As per the Finance Commission (FC) formula 41 per cent of tax receipts of the Union government - excluding cess collections, which are not part of the divisible pool - are shared with states. After these mandatory transfers to states, the net tax revenue (NTR) of the Centre was around `18,50,000 crore, which was Rs 300,000 crore higher than the BE of `15,50,000 crore. It was even higher than the RE of `17,65,000 crore by `85,000 crore.

The excess of `300,000 crore in actual NTR of the Centre over the BE helped in making up for the slippage of about `284,500 crore in other areas of revenue and expenditure viz. proceeds from disinvestment in CPSUs: `161,500 crore (actual: `13,500 crore minus BE: `175,000 crore); fertilizer subsidy: `80,000 crore (actual: `160,000 crore minus BE: `80,000 crore); food subsidy: 43,000 crore (actual: `286,000 crore minus BE: `243,000 crore).

As a consequence, the FD for 2021-22 at 6.7 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) turned out to be even lower than BE at 6.8 per cent. For 2022-23, Sitharaman set the GTR target `27,60,000 crore. Against this, the collection during the first six months of the year was `13,49,000 crore (this includes direct tax proceeds up to October 2, 2022, central GST collection up to September 30, 2022 and customs and excise duty or CED till August 31, 2022). Deducting devolution to states of `376,000 crore, NTR of the Centre works out to `973,000 crore against BE of `19,35,000 crore for the year.

Of the year's targeted tax revenue, already, the government has collected a little over 50 per cent during the first half. Normally, the second half shows greater buoyancy in collection because of substantial pick up in economic activity during the festival season (Oct-Nov) as also the fact that most persons pay their tax liability towards the year end [for instance, 16 per cent of the taxes (pre-devolution) collected during 2021-22 were paid in March 2022]. Considering these factors and including September 2022 figure

for CED, the GTR during 2022-23 is estimated to be around ₹30,50,000 crore (but for the loss of revenue due to cut in central excise duty on petrol and diesel affected in May 2022 – estimated at ₹90,000 crore, this would have been even higher at ₹3140,000 crore), which is ₹290,000 crore higher than the BE. Correspondingly, the NTR of the Centre, (post-devolution) is expected to be about ₹21,00,000 crore - ₹165,000 crore more than BE.

According to Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj, the aim is for 30 per cent growth in direct tax collection against 16 per cent growth assumed previously. In that scenario, the additional GTR would be ₹425,000 crore. Correspondingly, the NTR would be ₹250,000 crore more.

On the other hand, the government faces massive slippage in the expenditure on various subsidies. On fertilizer subsidy, it is expected to spend ₹250,000 crore against BE of ₹109,000 crore, leading to excess of ₹141,000 crore. The food subsidy is likely to overshoot the BE ₹207,000 crore by about ₹130,000 crore, thanks to the continuation of the delivery of free foodgrains under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) till December 2022.

Add to this ₹22,000 crore given to the state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) to compensate them for the under-recoveries on supply of domestic LPG between June 2020 and June 2022 (during this period, against increase in the international prices of LPG by around 300 per cent, the OMCs were allowed hike of only 70 per cent in domestic LPG prices, leading to under-recovery), this leads to an additional subsidy payment of ₹293,000 crore.

In the non-tax receipt area too, against the target of ₹65,000 crore from proceeds of the disinvestment of government's shareholding in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), so far, it has realized only ₹25,000 crore. Considering that the big ticket sale of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) has been put on hold and sale of the LIC stake in IDBI is stuck, the year is expected to end with a shortfall of about ₹30,000 crore.

Overall, the government could be staring at a slippage of over ₹320,000 crore. Of this, around ₹250,000 crore is expected to be neutralized by excess tax collection over BE, leaving an uncovered gap of just ₹70,000 crore. This works out to a mere 0.25 per cent of the GDP. But, for the excess tax cushion, the slippage from the BE of FD (6.4 per cent) would have been 1.25 per cent.

The turnaround in tax collection is undoubtedly a creditable achievement of the Modi government. However, there is a dire need for prudent management of subsidies keeping in mind the fact that the tax cushion is not unlimited (during 2022-23, tax buoyancy – growth in collection against nominal GDP expansion – at 1 is much lower than 1.7 during 2021-22).

In major areas viz. food, fertilizers, fuel, substantial savings is possible by restricting coverage, cutting costs, improving efficiency, etc. For instance, free foodgrains under PMGKAY during April–December 2022 was uncalled for. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/columnists/tax-surge-a-cushion-to-bear-hit-from-subsidies.html>

12. Road transport, highways sector has maximum number of delayed projects ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) October 30, 2022

The expenditure incurred on these projects till June 2022 was Rs 3,21,084.28 crore, which is 59.8 per cent of their anticipated cost

The road transport and highways sector has the maximum number of delayed projects at 300, followed by railways at 119 and petroleum sector at 90, showed a government report.

In the road transport and highways sector, 300 out of 825 projects are delayed. In railways, out of 173 projects, 119 are delayed, while for petroleum, 90 out of 142 projects are delayed, as per the latest flash report on infrastructure projects for June 2022.

The Infrastructure and Project Monitoring Division (IPMD) is mandated to monitor central sector infrastructure projects costing Rs 150 crore and above based on the information provided on the Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS) by the project implementing agencies.

IPMD comes under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The report showed that a 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor being constructed by Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI) is the most delayed project. It is delayed by 168 months.

The second most delayed project is PARBATI-II hydro electric project (4X200 MW) of the NHPC, which is delayed by 162 months.

The third most delayed project is Subansiri Lower hydro electric project (8X250 MW) of NHPC at 155 months.

About the road transport and highways sector, the report stated that total original cost of implementation of 825 projects when sanctioned, was Rs 4,90,792.42 crore. This was subsequently anticipated at Rs 5,37,163.29 crore, implying a cost overrun of 9.4 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till June 2022 was Rs 3,21,084.28 crore, which is 59.8 per cent of their anticipated cost.

About railways, it said the total original cost of implementation of 173 projects when sanctioned, was Rs 3,72,761.45 crore, which later increased to Rs 6,12,578.9 crore, implying a cost overrun of 64.3 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till June 2022 was Rs 3,29,682.13 crore, or 53.8 per cent of the anticipated cost.

In the petroleum sector, it said the total original cost of implementation of 142 projects was Rs 3,73,333.65 crore, which rose to Rs 3,93,008.38 crore, showing a cost overrun of 5.3 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till June 2022 was Rs 1,33,493.59 crore, which is 34 per cent of the their anticipated cost. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/road-transport-and-highways-sector-has-maximum-number-of-delayed-projects-govt-report-122082100161_1.html

13. Public Sector Undertakings — A Tragedy of Errors ([swarajyamag.com](https://www.swarajyamag.com)) October 31, 2022

Finer words were never spoken. They were spoken on the eve of the 2014 general elections, by a man who went on to win by a landslide, and became our Prime Minister.

Over the ensuing eight years, his government has only gone on to increase its business in business, and because it has done so, he has managed another landslide, and by all accounts will furnish a third, come 2024.

Meanwhile, his grand declaration lies buried underneath dust and grime much like a public sector file.

Here, we aim to dissect why he failed to keep his promise and yet Indians didn't seem to mind.

In other words, we aim to discover why is it almost impossible to bring in much needed economic reforms in a country that has been taught to be risk-averse, generation upon generation service generation.

Indians want better quality of public healthcare, of education, of infrastructure — but they also want government jobs.

The irony of this is often missed by most taxpayers — more so as some of them want the government to continue to remain in the business of banking.

Be damned that infusion of close to Rs 6 lakh crore worth of capital in the public sector bank has resulted in only a few of the banks having a net market capitalisation greater than the capital infused in recent past.

The tragedy is compounded by the fact that some want public sector banks even as they shout corruption every time a new loan is sanctioned or waived of a business house.

That a waiver is not the same as a write off is a different matter.

The point being made here is that if the banks were not owned by the governments, there would be no issue with such routine business and accounting exercises. Yet, those who yell about malpractices in public sector banks oppose their privatisation.

Evidence across the world has proven time and again, that governments should not be responsible for running any kinds of business. Their focus should be on providing public goods and services such as education, healthcare, and law and order.

Yes, a country can and should aim to be a welfare state but a welfare state can only succeed on the back of a capitalist not socialist state.

Governments may be good at distributing wealth but they are hopeless at generating it.

However, because the Indian state is busy running factories across industries, providing banking services — it is too distracted to do its primary job. Many of these public sector undertakings are not justified on two key economic grounds.

The first is efficiency.

We have seen how companies that were privatised during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government managed to register a much faster growth post privatisation.

That the private sector is more efficient compared to the public sector is a well-accepted fact.

Therefore, why should there be any justification for having public funds being diverted into these public sector undertakings when they could be used to provide better healthcare facilities to the rural poor?

Telecom is an excellent example of the efficiency of the private sector with three private players and a recently revised public sector entity.

Would India have had the cheapest data charges in the world in the absence of these private players? Definitely not.

In fact, without these players, the penetration of telecom services itself would have been low, which in turn would have impacted India's IT success.

If people and politicians still need evidence in support of privatisation, then they must closely track the likely revival of Air India under their rightful owner, the Tatas.

But efficiency is just one criterion to support privatisation.

The other is opportunity costs. Take the example of banking. A capital infusion of Rs 6 lakh crore if instead was spent on education or even healthcare, it would have likely added to our overall human capital.

Instead, the money was spent to recapitalise banks after reckless lending in late 2000s — partly due to excessive political influence in day-to-day lending decisions of the bank — aka 'North Block banking'.

Therefore, not just Rs 6 lakh crore had to be spent on fresh capital infusion but a substantial part of the equity of these banks was destroyed due to lack of proper management of these institutions.

For the sake of comparison, Rs 6 lakh crore is greater than the budgets of Swachh Bharat or the Jal Jeevan Mission. This illustrates how much of taxpayer funds are

utilised to pay for these public sector undertakings — some of which exist only to provide a ‘sarkari naukri’ to friends and relatives.

The inefficient use of capital by these firms also means frequent losses and bailouts — which in turn hampers the growth prospects of the Indian economy.

This again results in lower revenue mobilisation through taxation and further acts as a fiscal squeeze.

So, even when these public sector units or PSUs do turn profitable, their deployment of capital is not as good as the private sector, and consequently the government makes less taxes to be able to spend on public welfare.

Despite all these facts being well accepted, central public sector units or CPSUs have deployed a total capital of Rs 20 lakh crore — capital which could have been better deployed by the private sector, including the MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises).

It is, therefore, important to seek accountability for the taxpayer funds that have been historically spent on CPSUs.

The problem of inefficient capital deployment is not unique to just CPSUs but the problem is just as pervasive at the state level.

While the Centre controls 389 PSUs out of which 255 are operating, the state governments have a combined total of 1,451 PSUs of which 330 do not even operate.

Kerala has the highest operational PSUs at 121 followed by Karnataka at 94. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of non-working PSUs at 46. Bihar, on the other hand has 44 non-working PSUs while it has 30 working PSUs.

It is, therefore, natural to question why taxpayer funds which are to be used for public welfare have been used for running hotels, airlines and condom factories.

Needless to say, that the quality of our governance has suffered as the quality of our public health and education continues to lag while on law and order we continue to have little state capacity.

Barring the recent Air India privatisation, even the Union government has moved slowly on the privatisation agenda while rest of the political class ignores the need to fix our fiscal priorities.

After all, as there is no such thing as public money — but there is only taxpayer money.

Perhaps, the real minority in India is the taxpayer but our politicians are not interested in cultivation of this minority as their vote bank. Perhaps, in our country, the only business of a government is to be in business. <https://swarajyamag.com/ideas/public-sector-undertakings-a-tragedy-of-errors>

14. Railways readies Rs 90,000 crore projects for freight optimisation ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) October 31, 2022

The Ministry of Railways will roll out projects worth Rs 90,000 crore in the months ahead to remove bottlenecks in the movement of freight, Union minister for railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Sunday.

“By now, we have identified projects worth Rs 90,000 crore, or \$10 billion, to remove all potential bottlenecks in the movement of freight. Some of these are small projects, some are bigger in scale. The projects will be sanctioned in the coming months, and will help us realise the aspiration of loading 3,000 million tonnes (mt) of goods,” Vaishnaw said at the 17th Foundation Day of Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCC).

The minister did not get into the particulars of the new projects, which are being closely monitored for a rollout by Railway Board Chairman V K Tripathi. At the start of the financial year, the ministry had rolled out a Rs 1.5-trillion procurement plan to augment railway performance.

“The prime minister sincerely believes that the only way to transform the Indian economy is to transform Indian Railways. This shows that the support for railways is foremost in the minds of the top leadership of this country,” the railways minister said.

Under Mission 3000, the national transporter intends to double its cargo loading from 1,418 mt in 2021-22 to 3,000 mt by 2027. It is widely understood that dedicated freight corridors (DFCs) will play a key role in this endeavour. So far, 56 per cent of the two DFCs of the railways are operational, with completion of a majority of the network expected by 2023.

With these infrastructure plans, the ministry would need extensive funding, especially through budgetary support, as previous public-private-partnership (PPP) efforts by railways did not elicit a strong response.

“Through the support of the railway officials, we were able to get an additional Rs 12,000 crore from the Centre for this financial year. Now, we should aim to reach at least Rs 2 trillion as the capital support from the general budget for railways,” Vaishnaw said, in context of the need for railways to execute more capital investment to achieve its modal logistics share aspirations of 40 per cent under the National Rail Plan. The ministry of railways was allocated Rs 1.37 trillion as budgetary support in the Union Budget for 2021-22

Addressing the ceremony, DFCC Managing Director R K Jain said a new state-of-the-art command centre for the western dedicated freight corridor (WDFC) will soon be launched at Ahmedabad, which will give a fillip to crucial industrial goods traffic of the country. WDFC connects to significant ports such as Mundra, Kandla, and Pipavav.

Meanwhile, the DFCC, which is already working on the project reports for three new DFCs — East Coast, East-West, and North-South — may have a different outlook in the future. The minister sought for the PSU to look at smaller focused freight corridors

for short distances, where potential for revenue growth and goods loading is significant, such as corridors between ports and major mining areas.

Business Standard had previously reported that the Centre may axe the three new DFCs to enhance existing corridors and make smaller focused routes branching out of the existing eastern and western DFCs. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/railways-readies-rs-90-000-crore-projects-for-freight-optimisation-122103000800_1.html

15. Cattle on tracks: 200 trains affected in first 9 days of Oct; 4,000 trains faced delay this year (theprint.in) 30 October, 2022

Cattle run overs affected 200 trains in the first nine days of October and over 4,000 trains so far this year, official data has shown.

The worst affected is the newly minted Mumbai-Ahmedabad Vande Bharat Express train which was launched on October 1. It suffered three run-ins with cattle this month, causing damage to its “nose”.

Officials said the Railways has barricaded several areas around the tracks which are prone to such incidents, but it is difficult to cover long stretches as there are residential areas with homes on one side and farms on the other.

The Railways has also identified stretches which have recorded a high number of such cases and are in the process of fencing them. Work has been completed in 40 per cent of these sections, an official said.

“Railways is taking all efforts to reduce cattle run overs (CROs). We are pinpointing locations where a pattern is found. We visit such sites and ascertain the cause of frequent CROs. Sometimes, there are reasons which can be addressed, but other times no direct reason is found. Still, our teams visit nearby villages and get in touch with the sarpanches. We counsel the villagers about the repercussions of CRO.

“Sometimes, illegal passages are found to have been created across the tracks. Sometimes, fencing is required to be done over a patch,” said Amitabh Sharma, Executive Director, Information and Publicity, Railways.

The identified stretches include sections in the North Central Railways and Northern Railways – in the Jhansi Division between Virangana Lakshmibai – Gwalior section, Prayagraj Division between Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay-Prayagraj section, Moradabad Division between Alam Nagar and Shahjehanpur and in the Lucknow Division between Alam Nagar and Lucknow.

North Central Railway zone, which saw more than 6,500 of the 26,000 cases of cattle run overs in 2020-21 is one of the worst-affected Railway zones. It covers 3,000 km of tracks and hosts parts of the Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah corridors.

It includes divisions like Agra, Jhansi and Prayagraj, and is the gateway for trains from the east to reach the northern parts of India.

The Northern Railway zone recorded the highest number of cattle run over cases — nearly 6,800 — across the divisions of Moradabad and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Firozpur in Punjab, Ambala in Haryana, and Delhi, officials said.

Three of the five Vande Bharat trains pass through routes in these two zones.

“The Vande Bharat trains were designed to ensure that there are no severe damages to them due to CROs. This is why these premium trains have replaceable cone-shaped cover in the front portion which is made of fibre reinforced plastic to absorb the impact of a collision with cattle,” an official said.

This cover costs the Railways around Rs 10,000 to 15,000 per piece and they are replaced within hours of a collision.

The national transporter has a basket of around 10 spares for these trains.

According to data provided by the Railways, trains affected by cattle run overs rose from 360 in January to 635 in September, with more than 22 trains being affected daily.

In the first nine days of October, 200 trains have been affected, taking the number to 4,433 for the year so far.

Cattle run overs can cause serious damage to trains, delay them and even cause derailment.

“The Railways takes a holistic view to know the cause. However, we again appeal to cattle owners to be vigilant and not to leave the animals near the tracks for grazing,” Sharma said. <https://theprint.in/india/cattle-on-tracks-200-trains-affected-in-first-9-days-of-oct-4000-trains-faced-delay-this-year/1188002/>

16. India’s green energy goals: Pragmatic way forward (dailypioneer.com) 30 October 2022

Of late, discussions around the greenhouse gases have become very important in the context of climate change and global warming. Several developed and developing nations have already declared or are in the process of firming up the timelines to achieve “net zero” emission with regard to the greenhouse gases.

The term “net zero” indicates a scenario where a balance between the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere and that removed from the atmosphere by various means (including capture) is achieved. Although such a situation is highly idealistic, wholehearted efforts are needed from all the advanced countries to make meaningful progress. At the same time, it is imperative that different countries firm up different timelines in this regard, based on the current level of preparedness and more importantly the access to the necessary resources.

In the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) held between October 31 and November 12 in Glasgow last year, India promised to reduce its emissions to net

zero by 2070. China announced plans to attain carbon neutrality by 2060, while the US and the EU declared their goals aiming to reach net zero by 2050.

India recently updated the first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under Paris Agreement (2021-2030) declared earlier in 2015, and communicated the revised NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in August 2022. The revised version clearly articulates India's key internal goals towards achieving "net zero". The country aims "to adopt a climate friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development". India also has committed "to reduce Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030, from 2005 level". Further, the country aspires to achieve "about 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030", which will involve transfer of technology from the advanced nations and assistance of low-cost international finance, including Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Since attaining the goal of a global transition such as the net zero is going to be gigantic and will have large-scale impact on the global economy, the sustainable pathways towards achieving the over-arching targets needs to be charted out.

Such a transition has many dimensions involving technological, environmental as well as socio-economic nuances which pan out differently in a country-specific manner. Therefore, any country should be cautious and pragmatic before envisaging a disruptive change in the incumbent infrastructure, and a system view approach needs to be adopted to understand the impact of the changes in an integrated manner.

From the latest NDC, it is quite evident that India's approach towards addressing "net zero" is heavily reliant on the "Green Energy", aimed primarily at reducing the CO₂ emissions. It is noteworthy that in 2021 the power sector alone accounted for 49 per cent of the total CO₂ emissions in India.

On the other hand, India's transport sector contributes to 13.2 per cent of the country's total CO₂ emissions, of which more 90 per cent emissions can be attributed to the road transport sector alone (comprising both passenger and freight transport).

Thus, the country is looking for measures to reduce CO₂ emissions from these two sectors. While the renewable energy sources such as solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind energy are being high priority among the various non-fossil energy sources, the electric vehicles (EVs) have been enjoying strong push through several government support schemes and e-mobility is often touted as the mainstay towards achieving a green and sustainable transport sector.

The key issue that is often overlooked while creating the aspiration-driven larger pictures is the availability of resources. To be more context-specific, the availability of the critical raw materials that go into the manufacture of the critical components for the key "green energy" systems and "green mobility" products needs to be identified as the priorities. The intermittencies in variable renewable energy (VRE) sources necessitate the use of grid-scale storages (batteries).

Batteries are also needed for the EVs. Critical materials that are used in the batteries are lithium, cobalt and nickel. The price of cobalt increased from approximately \$32,000 per ton to \$70,000 per tonne during January-December in 2021, while the price of lithium increased by more than five times in 2021. The price hikes are expected to continue in the near future.

Therefore, the aspiration for the large-scale green transition needs to be revisited periodically to have a relook at the priorities and to chart out the most viable trajectory for the transition to a cleaner future.

Further, the new norms brought forth by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) have enforced the heavy consumer durables to become energy-efficient. Two “white goods” that have great market potential in India are the room air conditioners (RACs) and the laundry washing machines (LWMs), since both of them have a much lower level of market penetration as compared to the refrigerators.

The energy-efficient RACs and LWMs necessitate the use of Rare Earth (RE) permanent magnets in their motor architecture because of their superior performance as compared to the ferrite counterparts. Currently, all the motors and magnets used in the air conditioners, washing machines, and EVs are imported.

The industrial capabilities related to manufacture of RE permanent magnets and customised motors for the “white goods” and EVs are currently absent in India. Creation and sustenance of an industrial ecosystem would require right incentives, uninterrupted availability of the critical RE materials used in the magnets, and demand for the indigenous products.

Availability of critical materials, smooth technology transfer, creation of industry are intricately linked facets of the green energy aspiration of the country. Integration of all these elements will need active intervention from the government and suitable financial arrangements need to be arrived at through close interactions with the industry.

Once the priorities are decided, it would be pragmatic to adopt a business-oriented hybrid model that combines both top-down and bottom-up approaches involving company-level information from relevant segments. Only then the true spirit of “AtmaNirbhar Bharat” and “Make in India” can be realised in a synergistic manner. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/sunday-edition/india---s-green-energy-goals--pragmatic-way-forward.html>

17. Hunger index reads India wrong ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) Written by Ashok Gulati | October 31, 2022

Apart from problems with nomenclature and weights, GHI's assessment of the undernourished population is on shaky grounds.

India's 107th rank out of 121 countries in Global Hunger Index (GHI, 2022) released recently by the Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe (CWW) has caused some anguish within the government of India (GoI). While opposition parties in India lapped it to show this as 'evidence' of poor policies and performance of the ruling government,

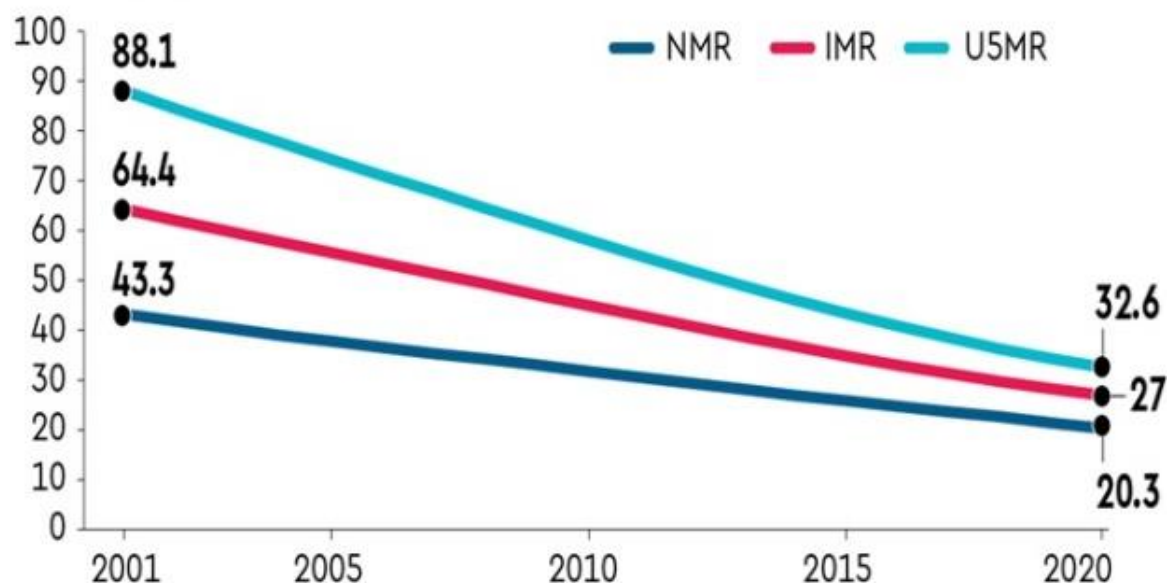
the Modi government hit back by rejecting it and even saying that it is a deliberate attempt to taint India's image globally. Let me try to dig a little deeper into it and see where is the problem with GHI and what can be done to improvise it.

Many readers may not know that GHI had its genesis in IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute), where I had the privilege to serve for more than a decade. Let me say at the very outset, IFPRI is a very responsible and credible organisation, and would never ever venture into maligning any country's image. Having said that, let me also add that any index of such nature can have conceptual and empirical problems, and there is always scope to improve. I recall when GHI was envisioned in IFPRI, we had discussed and debated this, from its very nomenclature to the weights of different components that comprise this. I, for one, had my reservations at that time and have it so even now. So, I have sympathy with GoI when it responded by saying, "Three out of four indicators used for calculation of the index are related to health of children and can not be representative of the entire population. The fourth and most important indicator—the estimate of Proportion of Undernourished Population—is based on an opinion poll conducted on a very small sample size of 3,000." I fully agree with this statement and even go further in saying that the weighting diagram in the GHI needs a revisit if it has to represent entire population.

Where is the problem with GHI? First, the very nomenclature conveys as if the country is starving for basic food and millions are victims of starvation deaths. That's not at all the case in India. India has been giving literally free food (rice/wheat)—10/kg per person per month to more than 800 million people since April 2020 in the wake of Covid-19. And it also exported more than 30 million metric tons (mmt) of cereals in 2021. This has helped many other countries avert starvation deaths. It has been well applauded by multilateral agencies like the UNDP, IMF, World Bank, etc. The anguish of GoI on the account of the GHI comes precisely from the fact that it does not consider this mega scheme of free food under PMGKAY, but instead relies on an 'opinion survey' of 3,000 in a country of 1.4 billion! In defence, the CWW says that consumption data from National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) isn't available beyond 2011, so they relied on this limited 'opinion survey'. This is not a credible excuse for a large country like India.

My humble suggestion to CWW is to use calorie-intake based on FAO's food balance sheets. I say so because even NSSO data on consumption has serious problems of underestimation. Statistical experts caution using NSSO consumption data for total consumption. Our own research at ICRIER shows that the gap in calories consumption as estimated from NSSO consumption surveys and those from production statistics of food has been growing over years. The food balance sheet approach gives 15-20% higher calorie consumption than NSSO. For 2019, we estimated 2,581 calories, while NSSO consumption survey of 2011 is stuck at 2,088 calories. More research is needed by CWW that brings out the GHI, to refine these numbers. I am sure with this improvement, India's ranking will also improve. And since India is such a large country, even global numbers on hunger will undergo significant changes.

Neonatal (NMR), Infant (IMR) and Under-5 Mortality rate (U5MR) (per 1,000 live births) in India



Source: World Bank, 2021

But let me turn to other variables that go into GHI and their weights. Besides the malnourished population, which has a weight of 0.33 in GHI, the other variables are stunting (low height for age) and wasting (low weight for height) of children below the age of 5, which together have a weight of 0.33. The fourth variable is that of mortality rate of children under 5 years, which also has a weight of 0.33. So, in the overall GHI, two-thirds of the weights are of children under 5 years age. No wonder the GoI is saying that GHI is more reflective of children's health status than that of the entire population. In the children's health status, much of the data used in GHI is from the National Family Health Surveys.

What we need to note however is that, in the case of mortality rates, no matter how you measure, there is a significant drop over time. The mortality rate for the under-5 age group (U5MR) has fallen from 88.1 in 2001 to 32.6 in 2020, per 1000 live births (see graphic).

The progress in stunting and wasting is much slower as measured by NFHS because when children are saved from dying, they often increase the inflow of malnourished children. The outflow from this reservoir of stunted and wasted children is still not large enough to show as dramatic a decline as mortality rates have shown. But once mortality rates stabilise at low levels, I am sure the fall in stunting and wasting will be must faster.

However, it must be noted that stunting and wasting, is not just because of lack of food (hunger). It is a multi-dimensional problem that requires focus on female education, access to immunisation, and better sanitation facilities. The upshot of all this is that we need a much more comprehensive index, like the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of UNDP, than the GHI to capture the status of entire

population. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/hunger-index-reads-india-wrong/2759388/>

18. Freebie critics should look at welfare schemes' transformative abilities to change lives (downtoearth.org.in) 31 October 2022

There will always be debates on freebies and their impact on the most vulnerable in a mixed economy like India. Welfare schemes — be they for pension, ration or housing — are riddled with various loopholes and inadequacies. However, they are still extremely beneficial for people especially women, children, the aged and vulnerable populations.

Freebies or welfare schemes do not wipe away poverty or vulnerability. Instead, they reduce them significantly so that a person availing these schemes can lead a life of dignity and escape from extreme hunger and poverty.

ActionAid, the non-profit I work for, did a study in 25 districts of Odisha to ascertain the status of welfare schemes related to pension, housing and maternity benefits.

Some 1,254 women from rural areas were interviewed to gain better understanding about the beneficiaries of different schemes introduced by both central and state governments.

Around 54 per cent of the interviewees had benefitted from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.

Eighty-six per cent of the beneficiaries were of the Mamata Yojana. The money (Rs 5,000) received by mothers was often used to provide proper nutrition, health facilities, medical treatment. It also acted as financial support.

Some 91 per cent of the women mentioned that they had received vaccination during their pregnancy which was facilitated by Anganwadi workers. Also, around 96 per cent of them received services from Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurses and Midwives (ANM) workers during pregnancy.

Around 79 per cent of the women were beneficiaries of the public distribution system (PDS) which provided their families with essential commodities.

There are two main categories within the PDS — the Priority House Hold (PHH) and the Antodaya category. Seventy-one per cent of women were benefitted under the PHH category, 17 per cent under the Antodaya category and rest under PDS as part of the National Food Security Act.

Around 28 per cent of the interviewees were pension beneficiaries. Some 29 per cent of them received old age pension, 63 per cent got widow pension, five per cent got PWD pension and 0.2 per cent got Permanent Local Housing Allocation pension.

It was found out that 27 per cent of the 1,254 interviewees were enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) where 92 per cent of them had their own job card.

But 61 per cent of the beneficiaries did not find the remuneration to be sufficient or timely. Also 50 per cent of them mentioned that they did not find jobs throughout all seasons.

It was found out that around 16 per cent of women benefitted from housing schemes. Of these, 45 per cent were benefitted under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana, 33 per cent from Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana, 13 per cent from Indira Awaas Yojana and the rest seven per cent from Pucca Ghar Yojana.

The study recommended that PDS schemes be simplified for adding new members to the ration card and allowing people to withdraw ration in subsequent months in case they are not able to procure PDS food grains in a month.

The eye scan and fingerprint scan in the ration distribution for elderly people needs to be rectified or changed since they face numerous difficulties in this regard.

The Mamata scheme should be available for girls who get pregnant below the age of 19. The work availability and timely wage payments need to be streamlined in MGNREGA.

The contractor system in MGNREGA needs to be abolished. There should be overall awareness generation programmes so that eligible people can access all government schemes.

Saving lives

Forty-four years-old Anupama Swain, a resident of Bandhadwara village under the Baghuapalli Panchayat of Bhapur Block, Nayagarh district, is differently-abled. Her husband is a small farmer and a daily wage labour. They were living in extreme poverty in a kutcha house.

Her life changed when she became recipient of series of government welfare programmes which changed her life – disability pension (Rs 500/- a month, wheelchair, 35 kg of foodgrain through Antodaya Annapurna yojana, pucca house and a toilet through Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Swacha Bharat Mission.

Due to these schemes, she was able to provide better education to her son. Now, her son is a graduate. So, these schemes helped her to live a life of dignity and she expresses her profuse thanks and appeals the government to continue these schemes.

Sixty-six years-old Renuka Jena belongs to a Schedule Caste community and resides with her family in Harijana Sahi village of Bonth block, Bhadrak district in Odisha.

Her family consists of four members — husband, widowed daughter and a granddaughter of 2 years. She is a daily labourer by her profession.

The deteriorating health condition of her husband had worried her for the last few years. She and her husband both got old age pension of Rs 500 each and PDS support after a long struggle.

The pensions were availed with the support of the Panchayat, which also added the name of her widowed daughter in the ration card. She also got the cash benefit for COVID-19 and Cyclone Yaas.

These government schemes are immensely beneficial to the elderly and vulnerable families who otherwise might have gone without sufficient food for at least 15 days in a month or might not have money to buy medicines.

Five kilograms of rice and wheat are available under the PHH card per household member. Thirty-five kg of food grain is available under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana.

This enables a household to be food secured for at least 14 days in a month. Pregnant women or mothers having new born babies can get medical help and support under the Janani Suraksha Yojana, Mamata scheme and nutritious food through ANM centres.

Similarly, housing support under Biju Pucca Ghar and PM AWAS is critical for vulnerable families, especially those living on the coasts and under threat from floods and cyclones.

A large number of people can reap benefits of such schemes if the delivery system is improved and the gaps in implementation are plugged.

The communities availing these schemes have uniformly appreciated their benefits for giving them critical support in the times of need when they did not have livelihoods during lean seasons or a pandemic like COVID-19 or even natural disasters. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/freebie-critics-should-look-at-welfare-schemes-transformative-abilities-to-change-lives-85693>

19. Delhi Liquor Scam: BJP Alleges AAP Govt's New Policy Led to Revenue Loss of Rs 2500 Cr (republicworld.com) 30 October, 2022

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has launched fresh salvos against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the Delhi liquor scam by citing an RTI and alleging that around Rs 2,500 crore loss was caused to the Delhi exchequers because of Arvind Kejriwal's liquor policy.

Taking to his Twitter, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla, citing an RTI, said that under the new liquor policy, the Delhi government earned Rs 5,036 Cr from 17th Nov 2021 to 31st Aug 2022 making the daily earning -- Rs 17.5 crore. However, the Delhi government earned Rs 768 crore through the old excise policy in September 2022, making the daily earning--Rs 25.6 crore, Poonawalla said in his tweet. The leader said that the new policy by the AAP government incurred a loss of Rs 8 crore per day as compared to the old one.

'It was not Sharab Niti, but Kharab Niti': BJP

Attacking the AAP, BJP's Shehzad Poonawalla said, "Once again AAP's paap (sins) has revealed that this was not 'Sharab Niti' (liquor policy) but their 'Kharab Niti' (bad policy). Many proofs have emerged already on which the AAP government is already

quiet. The proofs have also come out in the form of sting operations and other investigative material. Many AAP leaders and the liquor mafia are in jail and have got no relief from the court."

Speaking to Republic, the BJP leader said, "The RTI clearly shows the amount earned but the Delhi government under the new liquor policy in seven and half months was just Rs 5,000 crore and then they switched back to the old policy. The income or the revenue earned was much more. There was a daily loss of at least Rs 7-8 crores... this shows that there was not just the loss of Rs 2000-2300 crores by the new liquor policy, but also the corruption that took place."

Poonawalla also accused Arvind Kejriwal's AAP of funnelling the alleged commission money from the liquor mafia for the Punjab elections. "There are a series of questions raised by the BJP on which they (AAP) don't answer... When the questions are asked based on the documents, investigations and Court orders, they play the victimhood card," Poonawalla said.

Delhi liquor scam

In July, Delhi LG VK Saxena recommended a CBI probe into the Arvind Kejriwal-led government's excise policy for 2021-22. Delhi Deputy CM Sisodia, who is in charge of the excise department, has been under the scanner for alleged deliberate and gross procedural lapses which provided undue benefits to the tender process for liquor licenses for the year 2021-22 in Delhi. It was alleged that irregularities were committed including modifications in the Excise Policy and undue favours were extended to the license holders including waiver or reduction in license fee and an extension of L-1 license without approval.

The CBI booked 15 accused persons, including Sisodia under IPC Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 477A (falsification of accounts) and Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act. While AAP alleged that it was an attempt to force Sisodia and other MLAs to join BJP and topple the Arvind Kejriwal-led government, the saffron party has refuted this claim.

Earlier, the saffron party released two sting videos in which the accused were seen divulging details about money exchanging hands and key persons involved in formulating the liquor policy. The accused were also heard claiming that the ill-gotten money from the 'scam' was used in AAP's campaign for Assembly polls in Punjab and Goa. <https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/politics/bjp-calls-out-aap-over-delhi-liquor-scam-says-new-policy-led-to-rs-2300-cr-loss-articleshow.html>

20. Dead beneficiaries receive pension money for months ([orissapost.com](https://www.orissapost.com)) 31 oct 2022

Morada: Large-scale irregularities are allegedly scuttling the purpose of social security scheme in Morada block of tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district, as many people who died months ago were found to have received pension money. This was exposed in a social audit report. The report said, one of the beneficiaries who died eight months ago, was paid pension. Moreover, many other dead people have been shown as alive in official records and their pension money is being misappropriated for months together.

At a recent public hearing camp, block social auditor Mita Bentakar and district social auditor Pradip Chakraborty presented the audit report in which such irregularities were glaringly pointed out. Ram Marandi, a resident of Nuajhalia panchayat, was a beneficiary of old age pension. He died July 30, 2021, but surprisingly his pension money for six months has been embezzled. However, officials who have misappropriated the money are yet face the action. In the same panchayat, another beneficiary died June 4, 2021, but his pension money up to November, 2021, has been misappropriated.

Similarly, pension money of three other dead people in the same panchayat has been misappropriated. In Sanamundabani panchayat, a beneficiary died in December 2021, but his pension money for January was misappropriated.

In Barkand panchayat, pension money of a beneficiary who died months back has been embezzled for one and a half years. Apart, pension money of many beneficiaries in Palsamuduli, Bhaliadiha, Durgapur and Gadia panchayats has been misappropriated. On other hand, scores of poor people eligible for pension have been deprived of their entitlements.

In the report, it was stated that panchayat executive officers (PEOs) of those panchayats and block social security officer are responsible for such irregularities. ADM Rudranarayan Mohanty has directed Morada BDO Sagar Pal to take action in this regard. The BDO said that an investigation into the irregularities is on and action will be taken after the investigation report is available. <https://www.orissapost.com/dead-beneficiaries-receive-pension-money-for-months/>