

## **NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (23.11.2022)**

### **1. Mumbai: CAG initiates probe in BMC contracts worth Rs 12,000 Cr during pandemic ([freepressjournal.in](https://www.freepressjournal.in)) 22 NOV 2022**

Days after the Chief Minister Mr Eknath Shinde's announcement, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has launched the audit/probe into the Rs 12,000 crore contracts awarded by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the coronavirus pandemic.

About 10 officers from the CAG on Tuesday visited the BMC headquarters and reportedly demanded the documents pertaining to various transactions of various departments.

#### **The nearing BMC election and the audit**

CAG probe was ordered by the Shinde-Fadnavis government based on the demand made by the BJP suspecting corruption and huge scam in the Rs 12,000 crore contracts awarded during the pandemic. This was an attempt to checkmate the Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray in the run up to the BMC elections.

Transactions made by at least 10 Departments of the BMC are expected to be probed and the CAG will conduct an audit for the same.

A senior BMC officer said that the CAG team held a meeting with the Municipal Commissioner Mr Iqbal Singh Chahal, who is the administrator after the tenure of the general body expired early this year. Thereafter, CAG team visited the accounts department and sought details with regard to various transactions. Some of those documents were taken by the CAG team for conducting an inquiry and audit.

As per the CM's announcement made on October 31, the transactions between November 28, 2020 and February 28, 2022 will be probed by the CAG. The BJP was constantly alleging that there was malpractice in the transactions. The Deputy Chief Minister Mr Devendra Fadnavis in the monsoon had announced the CAG probe into the transactions that took place during the pandemic. Mr Shinde asserted that the government's move to order a CAG probe was not done with political vengeance. He had assured that it would be done in a fair and transparent manner.

#### **What are the transactions of the BMC that are under the radar?**

- > Rs3538.73 crore spent on various matters during the Corona period
- >Purchase of plot of Ajmera at Dahisar for Rs 339.14 crore
- > Rs 1496 crore spent on construction of four bridges, Rs 904.84 crore spend on procurement of medicines and other material in three hospitals during Corona period
- > Expenditure of Rs 2286.24 crore on repair of 56 roads in the city
- > Rs 1084.61 crore spent on six sewage projects
- > Rs 1020.48 crore expenditure on solid waste management projects
- > Expenditure of Rs 1187.36 crore for three sewage treatment plants

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/mumbai-cag-initiates-probe-in-bmc-contracts-worth-rs-12000-cr-during-pandemic>

## **2. Probe into Covid-19 irregularities: CAG team visits BMC office, meets senior officials** (*indianexpress.com*) 23 NOV 2022

A team of officials from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India visited the BMC office on Tuesday afternoon to hold a meeting with senior officials, including the municipal commissioner and state-appointed administrator Iqbal Singh Chahal.

The visit comes after the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government, on October 31, ordered a CAG probe into expenditures worth Rs 12,000 crore incurred by the BMC — then run by the Shiv Sena before it split — during the Covid-19 pandemic. This, after the BJP alleged that the contract for running Covid-19 care facilities were awarded in a non-transparent manner.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Chahal said, “The meeting was a routine entry conference for audit.”

Sources said that at least eight CAG officials visited the BMC and met officials who were mainly in-charge of Covid-19 care centres and medical expenditures made during the pandemic.

“The team asked for photocopy of certain documents from the audit department and held a meeting with officials mainly from the health department. The commissioner has assured full cooperation and also instructed his subordinates to cooperate,” said an official.

The official added that for the next few days, the CAG team may visit some civic hospitals.

The Opposition, however, questioned the fairness of the CAG probe since the incumbent civic officials are the ones against whom allegations have been made.

Ravi Raja, former Congress corporator and leader of Opposition in BMC, said, “I respect the decision of the state government to carry out a CAG investigation. However, all the officials from the BMC departments, against whom allegations have been made, should be transferred or sent on leave with immediate effect, or else this will affect the fairness of the probe... the same officials will handle the files wanted by the CAG team, so there are chances that they can misguide the team.”

Vinod Mishra, former BJP corporator and group leader of the party in BMC, meanwhile, said: “The investigation is the need of the hour and will show the malpractices done by the ruling Shiv Sena during the pandemic. Now that the state government is backing the probe, I believe that due course of action will be taken against whoever found guilty, be it an elected member or a bureaucrat.

Mishra had made multiple allegations of financial mismanagement against the BMC administration during 2020-21. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/probe-into-covid-19-irregularities-cag-team-visits-bmc-office-meets-chahal-officials-8283912/>

**3. CAG Begins Probe into Allocation of Works by Mumbai Civic Body During Covid-19 Pandemic** ([outlookindia.com](https://outlookindia.com), [economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com)) UPDATED: 22 NOV 2022

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on Tuesday began its probe into the allocation of works by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A 10-member team of the CAG held a meeting with BMC commissioner Iqbal Chahal at the civic body's headquarters in the morning, officials said. The Eknath Shinde-led government had on October 31 asked the CAG to conduct a probe into the allocation of works by the Mumbai civic body in the pandemic period when the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power.

"We had a conference today. An audit is underway regarding various departments," Chahal told PTI. According to civic officials, Chahal had conducted a meeting ahead of the CAG team's arrival with the heads of all departments, ward officers, deans of major hospitals and COVID-19 centres and gave necessary instructions about the probe.

"We have been asked to present whatever details (about expenditure and tenders during the COVID-19 period) the CAG demands and give suitable justification (if any query raised)," an official said. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/cag-begins-probe-into-allocation-of-works-by-mumbai-civic-body-during-covid-19-pandemic-news-239282>

**4. Mumbai: CAG begins probe into allocation of works by BMC during Covid-19 pandemic** ([mid-day.com](https://mid-day.com)) 22 November, 2022

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) began its probe into the allocation of works by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the Covid-19 pandemic, reported the PTI.

A 10-member team of the CAG held a meeting with BMC commissioner Iqbal Chahal at the civic body's headquarters on Tuesday morning, officials said, as per the PTI.

Maharashtra's Eknath Shinde-led government had on October 31 asked the CAG to conduct an investigation into the allocation of works by the Mumbai civic body during the pandemic when the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power.

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According to the civic officials, Chahal had conducted a meeting ahead of the CAG team's arrival with the heads of all departments, ward officers, deans of major hospitals and Covid-19 centres and gave necessary instructions about the probe, according to the PTI.

"We have been asked to present whatever details (about expenditure and tenders during the Covid-19 period) the CAG demands and give suitable justification (if any query raised)," an official said. <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai/mumbai-news/article/mumbai-cag-begins-probe-into-allocation-of-works-by-bmc-during-covid-19-pandemic-23256895>

**5. Mumbai: BMC's Covid expenses under the scanner ([mid-day.com](https://www.mid-day.com)) 23 November, 2022**

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India or CAG on Tuesday launched its probe into the civic body's expenditure during the MVA's tenure, including the allocation of works for the COVID-19 pandemic. A team from the audit authority met BMC's chief and heads of its various departments as part of the process.

Confirming the meeting, BMC Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said, "The audit is on for various departments. As per the routine procedure, they met me today. It was an entry conference." Chahal met the heads of all civic departments, and ward and health officials on Monday to brief them about the audit procedure. The BMC faces allegations of corruption in various projects, with a total worth of Rs 12,000 crore, including its expenditure to contain Covid-19.

During an Assembly session in August, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced a probe into alleged corruption in various departments of the BMC in the two years of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) rule. On October 31, the Eknath Shinde-led government wrote to the CAG for the inquiry.

The main allegations were related to allocation of works for COVID Care Centres, purchase of medical equipment, medicines, oxygen generation plants and awarding of contracts. The BJP legislators repeatedly alleged that the BMC awarded work worth Rs 4,000 crore during the pandemic without proper tender process and at a higher price by misusing its power. The BMC has also been accused of purchasing a parcel of land in Dahisar at an inflated price. <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai/mumbai-news/article/mumbai-bmcs-covid-expenses-under-the-scanner-23256942>

**6. CAG begins probe into allocation of works by BMC during COVID19 pandemic ([lokmatimes.com](https://www.lokmatimes.com)) 22 Nov 2022**

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) began its probe into the allocations of works by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Eknath Shinde-led government had on October 31 asked the CAG to conduct a probe into the allocation of works by the Mumbai civic body in the pandemic period when the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power.

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We have been asked to present whatever details (about expenditure and tenders during the COVID-19 period) the CAG demands and give suitable justification (if any query raised), an official said. <https://www.lokmatimes.com/maharashtra/cag-begins-probe-into-allocation-of-works-by-bmc-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

**7. महामारी के दौरान बीएमसी के कार्य आवंटन मामले में कैग ने जांच शुरू की** ([navbharattimes.indiatimes.com](http://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com), [hindi.theprint.in](http://hindi.theprint.in), [ibc24.in](http://ibc24.in)) 22 Nov 2022

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने बृहन्मुंबई महानगर पालिका (बीएमसी) द्वारा कोविड-19 महामारी के दौरान कार्यों के आवंटन के मामले में मंगलवार को अपनी जांच शुरू की। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि कैग के 10 सदस्यीय दल ने आज सुबह बीएमसी मुख्यालय में उसके आयुक्त इकबाल चहल के साथ बैठक की।

एकनाथ शिंदे नीत सरकार ने 31 अक्टूबर को कैग से महामारी के दौरान बीएमसी द्वारा कार्यों के आवंटन के मामले में जांच करने को कहा था। उस समय महा विकास अघाड़ी सरकार थी।

चहल ने 'पीटीआई-भाषा' से कहा, “आज हमारी बैठक हुई। अनेक विभागों के संबंध में ऑडिट चल रहा है।”

निगम अधिकारियों के अनुसार, कैग के दल के आने से पहले चहल ने सभी विभागों के प्रमुखों, वार्ड अधिकारियों, प्रमुख अस्पतालों के डीन और कोविड-19 केंद्रों के साथ एक बैठक की और जांच के बारे में आवश्यक निर्देश दिए।

एक अधिकारी के अनुसार, “हमें कहा गया है कि कैग जो भी जानकारी मांगे (कोविड-19 महामारी के दौरान खर्च और निविदाओं के बारे में), वह प्रस्तुत की जाए और जरूरी होने पर उचित स्पष्टीकरण दिया जाए।” <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/metro/mumbai/other-news/cag-initiates-probe-into-bmcs-work-allocation-case-during-pandemic/articleshow/95692376.cms>

**8. Maharashtra: कैग ने शुरू की कोविड-19 के दौरान बीएमसी के दिए ठेकों की जांच, शिंदे सरकार ने की थी सिफारिश** ([amarujala.com](http://amarujala.com)) 22 Nov 2022

एकनाथ शिंदे सरकार की सिफारिश पर भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने मंगलवार को बृहन्मुंबई नगर निगम (बीएमसी) द्वारा कोविड-19 महामारी के दौरान कार्यों के आवंटन की जांच शुरू की। निकाय के अधिकारियों ने इसके बारे में जानकारी दी। गौरतलब है कि कोरोना महामारी के दौरान महाराष्ट्र में महा विकास अघाड़ी (MVA) की सरकार थी। महामारी के दौरान लोगों को असुविधा नहीं हो, इसके लिए बगैर निविदा प्रक्रिया के तत्काल सुविधाओं की व्यवस्था करने और वस्तुओं की खरीद को प्राथमिकता दी गई थी। वहीं, उस दौरान विपक्षी पार्टी भाजपा ने सरकार पर बार-बार शक्तियों का दुरुपयोग करने का आरोप लगाया था।

**कैग ने की थी बैठक**

वहीं, जांच के क्रम में अधिकारियों ने कहा कि कैग की 10 सदस्यीय टीम ने सुबह नगर निकाय के मुख्यालय में बीएमसी आयुक्त इकबाल चहल के साथ बैठक की थी। बैठक के बाद बीएमसी आयुक्त ने बताया था कि विभिन्न विभागों का ऑडिट किया जा रहा है। वहीं, कैग टीम के आने से पहले उन्होंने सभी विभागों के प्रमुखों, वार्ड अधिकारियों, प्रमुख अस्पतालों के डीन और कोविड-19 केंद्रों के साथ एक बैठक की और जांच के बारे में आवश्यक निर्देश दिए थे।

गौरतलब है कि एकनाथ शिंदे के नेतृत्व वाली सरकार ने 31 अक्टूबर को कैग से महामारी के दौर में मुंबई नगर निकाय द्वारा किए गए कार्यों के आवंटन की जांच करने को कहा था। उस समय महाविकास अघाड़ी (एमवीए) सरकार सत्ता में थी।

## भाजपा विधायक आशीष शेलार ने लगाया था घोटाले का आरोप

भाजपा विधायक आशीष शेलार ने आरोप लगाया था कि बीएमसी के 10 विभागों ने निविदाओं और अनुबंधों में 12,000 करोड़ रुपये का भ्रष्टाचार किया था। शेलार ने आरोप लगाया था कि एक बिल्डर से जमीन का एक टुकड़ा 339 करोड़ रुपये में खरीदा गया था, हालांकि उसे केवल 2-3 करोड़ रुपये में मिल गया। उन्होंने कहा कि कोविड-19 महामारी के दौरान की गई केंद्रीकृत खरीद संदिग्ध है। हम पूरी जांच चाहते हैं। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/cag-begins-probe-into-allocation-of-works-by-brihanmumbai-municipal-corporation-during-covid-19-pandemic>

### 9. कैग ने शुरू की मनपा घोटालों का जाँच ([jantaserishta.com](http://jantaserishta.com)) 22 November 2022

मुंबई: राज्य सरकार द्वारा मुंबई मनपा में पिछले तीन सालों के दरम्यान किए गए कामों की जांच कैग (कंट्रोल ऑफ ऑडिटर जनरल ऑफ इंडिया) से कराने का निर्देश दिया था। कैग की टीम मंगलवार को मनपा आयुक्त इकबाल सिंह चहल (Iqbal Singh Chahal) से मुलाकात की। मनपा आयुक्त ने सभी अधिकारियों की बैठक लेकर जांच में पूरा सहयोग करने का निर्देश दिया। मनपा में पिछले तीन साल के दौरान 12 हजार करोड़ के कामों में घोटाला होने का आरोप लगाया था और मनपा के कामों को कैग से जांच कराने का आदेश दिया था। सूत्रों से मिली जानकारी के अनुसार कैग की टीम 16 नवंबर से पहले सभी कार्यों का ऑडिट पूरा करने के प्रति कृत संकल्पित है।

मनपा और राज्य में शिवसेना की सत्ता के दौरान भाजपा ने मनपा में बड़े पैमाने पर घोटाला होने का आरोप लगाया था जिसमें कोरोना काल में बिना टेंडर के किए गए कामों में बड़ा घोटाला होने का आरोप लगाया था। जिसमें महापौर किशोरी पेडकर सहित कई नेताओं पर कोरोना के नाम पर घोटाला करने का आरोप लगाया था। राज्य में सरकार बदलने के बाद मनपा में हुए घोटालों की जांच करने के लिए राज्य सरकार ने कैग को निर्देश दिया था। कैब अब अपनी जांच शुरू कर दी है। कोरोना काल में हुए घोटाले की भाजपा सहित कई बार कांग्रेस भी जांच करने की मांग कर चुकी है। मनपा स्थायी समिति में मंजूर किए गए कई प्रस्तावों पर राजनीतिक दलों ने आपत्ति जताई थी। महानगरपालिका प्रशासन और प्रशासक पर भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप लगाए गए थे। कैग की टीम मनपा में आने के बाद मनपा आयुक्त इकबाल सिंह से मुलाकात की इसके बाद टीम ने मनपा के ऑडिट डिपार्ट में जाकर कागजात को अपने कब्जे में लिया। कैग की टीम में 10 अधिकारी शामिल थे। कैग के अधिकारी अब मनपा के अस्पतालों सहित अस्पताल के अधीक्षक से पूरी जानकारी इकट्ठा करेंगे इसके बाद मनपा के सीपीडी विभाग जहां से पूरे मुंबई में मनपा के कामों का टेंडर कर मंजूरी दी जाती है इस विभाग की जांच करेंगे।

मनपा आयुक्त ने सभी अधिकारियों को सूचित किया कि वे जांच में सहयोग करें। आयुक्त ने अस्पतालों के डीन और जंबो कोविड सेंटर के प्रमुख नोडल अधिकारी के साथ बैठक कर कैग की टीम को इस बैठक में पूरा सहयोग देने का आदेश दिया। मनपा अस्पताल, कोविड सेंटर एवं अन्य विभागों के नोडल अधिकारी जिस तारीख को ऑडिट किया जाना है, वह तारीख अधिकारी के पास तय की जानी है। कैग की टीम 16 दिसंबर से पहले ऑडिट पूरा कर लेगी। राज्य सरकार की ओर से सीएजी को भेजे गए प्रस्ताव के अनुसार 10 करोड़ रुपये तक की लागत वाले कार्यों का विशेष ऑडिट कराया जाएगा। इसमें प्रमुख रूप से कोरोना काल में विभिन्न मामलों पर 3538.73 करोड़ खर्च, मनपा द्वारा दहिसर में अजमेरा के एक प्लॉट की 339.14 करोड़ में खरीद, चार पुलों के निर्माण पर खर्च किए गए 1496 करोड़ रुपये, कोरोना काल में तीन अस्पतालों द्वारा 904.84 करोड़ की खरीद और शहर में 56 सड़क मरम्मत पर 2286.24 करोड़ खर्च के साथ कैग से सीवेज प्रोजेक्ट पर 1084.61 करोड़, सॉलिड वेस्ट मैनेजमेंट प्रोजेक्ट पर 1020.48 करोड़ के खर्च आदि का ऑडिट करने का अनुरोध किया गया है। मनपा में भाजपा के पूर्व गुट नेता रहे प्रभाकर शिंदे ने कहा कि कोरोना की सच्चाई मुंबईकरों के सामने आनी चाहिए। कैग के इस जांच का स्वागत किया जाना चाहिए। इस जांच में मुंबईकरों को लूटने वाले निशाने पर हैं। भाजपा

ने ढाई साल से लगातार इस मुद्दे को उठा रही थी. 17 मार्च, 2020 को संकल्प द्वारा व्यय शक्तियां आयुक्त को प्रदान की गई. स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में कोविड के 2100 करोड़ के खर्च का प्रस्ताव रखा गया था. भाजपा ने उन प्रस्तावों को वापस भेजने की मांग की थी. स्थायी समिति और सदन को किए गए व्यय का विवरण नहीं दे पाई थी। सत्तारूढ़ शिवसेना ने प्रस्ताव को वापस भेजने के बजाय बहुमत से मंजूरी दे दी. हमारा मानना है कि इन प्रस्तावों की जांच होनी चाहिए और सच्चाई मुंबईकरों के सामने आनी चाहिए. मनपा विरोधी पक्ष नेता रहे रविराजा ने कैग की टीम मनपा में आने पर कहा कि टीम सिर्फ पिछले तीन सालो के काम की जाँच न करे पिछले 25 साल में मनपा के बड़े कामो खासकर बिल्डरों को बेची गई जमीन का भी जाँच कैग को करना चाहिए। <https://jantaserishta.com/local/maharashtra/cag-started-investigation-of-municipal-scams-1772569>

**10. Collaborative link between PAC/CoPU, CAG stressed (*dailypioneer.com*)** 23 November 2022

Bhubaneswar: The Audit Diwas was held at the Lokaseva Bhavan with Assembly Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairman Mohan CharanMajhi and Committee on Public Undertakings (CoPU) Chairman SudamMarndi attending as guests.

The other dignitaries include Director General of Audit, East Coast Railways, BibhuduttaBasantia, Principal Accountant General (A&E) AK Behera and Accountant General (Audit) Vishwanath Singh Jadon.

Delivering the welcome address, PAG Behera highlighted the importance of the legislative committees - PAC and CoPU- in exercising accountability of the Executive to the Legislature.

He highlighted that accountability framework envisages a mutually collaborative relationship between the PAC/ CoPU and the institution of the CAG, and this interaction and engagement needs to be strengthened to contribute positively towards good governance.

He expressed the hope that the PAC and CoPU would take up more and more CAG Reports for discussion with renewed energy and attention.

PAC Chairman Majhi congratulated the IA and AD offices on the occasion of Audit Diwas and Audit Week. He emphasised that the institution of CAG is a pillar of democracy, and therefore itsfunctioning, particularly, its role in upholding transparency and accountability is vital for good governance.

The Chairman assured that the PAC shall continue to extend full cooperation to the CAG in discharging its constitutional responsibilities.

CoPU Chairman Marndi stated that CAG plays a great role in nation building and appreciated the role of CAG in furthering good governance by highlighting issues which are vital to the public interest. He appreciated that CAG maintains vigil over the manner of utilisation of natural resources, and at the same time examines if public welfare programmes reach the doorstep of beneficiaries.

He emphasised that CoPU, which monitors functioning of PSUs, must devote attention to the audit observations and recommendations made by the CAG, and ensure action thereon in order to rectify deficiencies, irregularities and inefficiencies in the system.

Senior DAG SushantRanjan delivered the valedictory address. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/state-editions/collaborative-link-between-pac-copu--cag--stressed.html>

**11. Audit week celebrations: Massive cleanliness drive carried out on Sangam banks** ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) November 23, 2022

Continuing with its week-long celebrations to mark ‘Audit Week’, which commenced on November 16, the Indian Audit and Accounts Department (IAAD) undertook a massive cleanliness drive on the banks of Sangam, on Tuesday.

The department is carrying out a number of events and awareness programmes in a phased manner while celebrating the “Audit Week” which is being organised under the aegis of the office of the Principal Accountant General (PAG) Audit-1, Prayagraj.

The cleanliness campaign at Sangam area was inaugurated by Principal Accountant General Vijay Kumar Mohanty.

While joining a huge team of volunteers comprising the staff and officers along with their family members of the department, Mohanty gave an awareness message to the people present on the Sangam bank regarding cleanliness and also encouraged the cleanliness of river Ganga. He described the Ganga as India’s heritage and ‘sanjivani’.

Mohanty also said that cleanliness is not a week or a fortnight programme but a continuous process, for which the audit and accounts department has tried to make people aware of its importance in its office and outside.

“All of us, employees and officers along with our home, family, neighbourhood need to be aware to keep our national heritage Ganga and Yamuna as well as other heritage rivers clean,” said Mohanty.

The programme was attended by senior deputy accountant general (administration) Sanjeev Kumar from audit office along with deputy accountants general Avnindra Rai, Shreyansh Singh, Sahil Sangwan and officers and employees of the office.

Cleaning of the banks was done by sweeping the banks of the Ganga by the officials and the garbage was disposed of through garbage collection vehicles provided by the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation. Under the cleanliness campaign, a special drive is being run by the participating offices outside their respective office premises during the week-long events.

In this sequence, an inter-office quiz competition of the offices of the department will be organised at the North-Central Zone Cultural Center (NCZCC), Prayagraj on November 23. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/audit-week-celebrations-massive-cleanliness-drive-carried-out-on-sangam-banks-101669143390328.html>

**12. Shimla: Celebrations of Audit Week begin** ([tribuneindia.com](https://www.tribuneindia.com)) November 22, 2022

Chief Secretary RD Dhiman inaugurated Audit Week being celebrated at the National Academy for Audit and Accounts, here today.



Dhiman chaired a panel discussion on the “Accountability in Governance”.

The event is being organised under the aegis of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India from November 21 to 27. Officer trainees of 2021 batch.

The discussion covered various facets of accountability, including expanding the horizon of audit, role of citizenry and digitization in governance. It also shed light on the need for awareness of organisational goals and continuous communication between various accountability mechanisms to foster good governance. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/celebrations-of-audit-week-begin-453755>

### **13. Accountant General’s Office Srinagar Concluded Week Long Audit Celebrations ([onlykashmir.in](http://onlykashmir.in)) Nov 23, 2022**

The office of Principal Accountant General Srinagar today concluded weeklong audit celebrations.

In the series of events, an ‘Audit Run’ was organised from Nehru Park to Centaur Hotel to make aware the local people about the C&AG and its functioning. PCS Negi, Senior DAG, Ranjeet Singh, Sr DAG and Inabat Khaliq, DAG along with all staff members of the office took part in the event.

A special cleanliness drive was also held at the Dal Lake where Ghazala Abdullah, DFO, Srinagar along with her colleagues explained the initiatives taken by the department to clean the Dal Lake.

On Monday a special program was held in Srinagar, where Gazala Abdullah, DFO Srinagar talked about the works carried out by the Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) for the conservation of Dal Lake and its bowl-shaped catchment area. PCS Negi, Senior DAG, Ranjeet Singh, Senior DAG and other senior staff members of the office of Principal Accountant General, Jammu and Kashmir were present during the lecture.

On Tuesday, the week-long program was held in Srinagar, during which mementos and medals were distributed among the participant, and the office bearers were felicitated for their contribution to the programs. Pag Abhishek Gupta, Sr. Dag Pcs Negi, Sr. Dag Ranjeet Singh Dag Sudhakar Pingle, Inabat Khaliq Deputy Accountant General (Audit) addressed the occasion.

<https://onlykashmir.in/24204/accountant-generals-office-srinagar-concluded-weeklong-audit-celebrations/>

### **SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING**

#### **14. RFPs out for ballistic shield and camera systems for Indian Army ([financialexpress.com](http://financialexpress.com)) November 22, 2022**

**According to the RFP there should be a harness which will enable hands-free carriage of ballistic shields and once worn should ensure unhindered usage of personal weapons and balanced weight distribution.**

In an effort to give a boost to its operational capabilities and to modernize its infantry, the Indian Army has issued two Requests for Proposals (RFP) for procuring 7,000 body worn camera systems, and around 1,612 ballistic shields with harnesses. These two items are going to be purchased through emergency procurement through the Fast Track Procedure (FTP).

### **Specifications for Ballistic shields**

The indigenous content in these ballistic shields should be upto 50 percent. It should have a service life of five years and the maker, according to the RFP, has to provide 60 months warranty for the ballistic shield and 24 months for the harness.

The design should be of ambidextrous, and height not less than 860 mm and the width should not be less than 520 mm. The weight of the ballistic shield should not be over 20 kg plus 5 percent. And ballistic view port and accessories should be attached to the shield.

According to the RFP there should be a harness which will enable hands-free carriage of ballistic shields and once worn should ensure unhindered usage of personal weapons and balanced weight distribution.

### **Specifications for Body-worn camera**

This device is used by the soldiers for real time video and images and will be useful during counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. These are small and video recording devices, are compact in size and light weight of about 200 gms and the soldier will wear it on his uniform.

The battery life should be for around 12 hours of video capturing and for recording there should be two independent video streams – for local record and remote view.

The RFP has specified that it should be able to burn in officer ID, location, date, device ID and time and should be capable of operating in extreme temperatures from almost minus 20 degree C to 45 degree C and should be able to support encryption. Also the data gathered should not be editable and the encrypted video should play only on a special player.

### **What is FTP and Emergency procurement?**

Emergency financial powers have been granted by the government to the armed forces to procure certain items which are required urgently up to Rs 300 crore. These have been used in the past on three different occasions – during Uri surgical strikes in 2016; Balakot air strike in 2019; and during the border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

Financial Express Online has reported earlier that for FTP through the emergency procurement route no further approvals are required. The objective of the procedure is to cut down the decision making process.

In the recent months the Indian Army has issued several RFPs – for 80 mini Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, 163 high altitude logistic drones, and 1,000 surveillance copters among others. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/rfps-out-for-ballistic-shield-and-camera-systems-for-indian-army/2886111/>

### **15. Soaring Bad Loans, Abysmal Recoveries Show Bankruptcy Code Is Itself Bankrupt ([thewire.in](http://thewire.in)) Nov 23, 2022**

The Reserve Bank of India has disclosed that Rs 10 lakh crore in bad loans have been written off in the last five years. Worse, banks have only been able to recover about 13% of the bad loans from defaulting corporates and other entities. The revelation made to Indian Express in response to an RTI confirms the worst fears — that the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code of 2016, touted as a showpiece reform, has failed in many respects. The corporates of course will

hail the reform because they have got away with a 87% haircut on their defaulted loans. Some time ago, a prominent Kolkata-based industrialist said exploiting the bankruptcy law was the new game in town and corporates were getting away with 90% haircut on average on defaults. He was pretty close to the actual figure, the RTI reply reveals.

Only 13% recovery on loan defaults of Rs 10 lakh crore shows that all is not well with the operation of the bankruptcy reforms. The new law was meant to shift the advantage from corporate borrowers to lending banks, which could assume ownership of their assets in case of a default, and sell them to recover a reasonable amount.

But the law is of no use if banks have to take an 87% haircut. This shows that corporates have taken out much of the money they borrowed from banks, hollowed out their company and happily handed it over to the courts, under the bankruptcy law. In most instances, it looks like companies were stripped of their assets. Funds have possibly been stashed abroad via the standard procedure of over-invoicing the value of imports. It's the oldest trick in the book. Strangely, enforcement agencies like ED don't go after these cases with the same vigour that they show in the case of Opposition leaders or political dissenters.

In many cases, asset-stripping or diversion of bank funds to other entities should have invoked the 'wilful default' clause. There is no transparency about how many defaulting companies have been named for wilful default, calling for a deeper probe by enforcement agencies. Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan had written to the PMO some years ago, giving a list of defaulting corporates which should be investigated for wilful default and even fraud. Nothing further is known, because the RBI drops a veil of secrecy on the names of corporates which may have wilfully defaulted.

The bankruptcy law also suffered a big setback sometime ago, when the Supreme Court ruled that the National Company Law Tribunals, which conduct bankruptcy proceedings, have the discretion to accept or reject a bank's plea to take over a defaulting company. In one case, a prominent defaulting company argued before the NCLT that it could not pay back loans because of several legal disputes with the authorities, which hampered business operations. Typically, this argument has been made by infrastructure companies which depend on the government and regulatory authorities for clearances. The order of the Supreme Court giving such discretion to the NCLT has come as a major set back to the creditors — the banks. It may also be noted that over 70% of loan writeoffs have happened in public sector banks.

After such writeoffs, banks have had to depend on the government to infuse additional capital of several lakh crore. This is just taxpayers subsidising massive loan defaults by corporates, from which recoveries by courts have been abysmally low. This would further embolden corporates, who know that the taxpayer will keep bailing them out.

The new law was supposed to transform the credit culture and create a new framework to hold corporates to account. One doesn't know if any of this is really happening, after seeing the operation of the bankruptcy code in the last six years. <https://thewire.in/economy/soaring-bad-loans-show-bankruptcy-code-is-itself-bankrupt>

**16. Rural spending may see a massive jump in Budget 2023** ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) Nov 23, 2022

India may increase rural spending by nearly 50% to 2 trillion rupees (\$24.51 billion) next fiscal year, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters, as the country seeks to boost jobs and affordable housing before the national elections.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to present the 2023/24 budget on Feb. 1, the last full budget before the 2024 national elections. India's fiscal year starts on April 1 and runs through March.

The Indian government had allocated 1.36 trillion rupees towards the rural development ministry for the current fiscal year but it could end up spending more than 1.60 trillion rupees, according to two government sources who wished to remain unnamed as the information is yet to be made public.

They said the increased spending is mainly to address pandemic-driven stress in rural areas that has driven up demand for the country's only minimum job guarantee scheme, which pays \$2 to \$3 a day.

India's finance and rural development ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Coming out of the pandemic, the Asian country's rural areas were under pressure from rising prices and limited non-farm job opportunities, forcing more people to sign up for the government's job scheme - the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, or MNREGA.

Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party swept the national elections for the second time in 2019, making him one of the most popular leaders of the country since its independence.

Modi, however, has had a mixed record of managing the economy and he has been criticized for rising unemployment.

The rural unemployment rate has remained above 7% for most of the months in the current fiscal year, according to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), a private think-tank.

The rural unemployment rate was 8.04% in October, according to CMIE.

For the current year, the government had initially budgeted 730 billion rupees for the job scheme and 200 billion rupees for the housing scheme. It has already spent 632.6 billion rupees on the jobs programme, according to the rural development ministry's website. <https://www.livemint.com/budget/news/rural-spending-may-see-a-massive-jump-in-budget-2023-11669171552035.html>

**17. PMGKAY likely to end in December on fiscal, foodgrain constraints** ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Nov 22, 2022

The Centre is likely to discontinue the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) after December due to considerations on its fiscal position and foodgrain stocks, apart from the fact that there is no immediate political imperative to continue with it, Business Standard has learnt.

“The scheme may end after the current extension runs out. The food subsidy burden is crossing Rs 3 trillion and we are hopeful that it will be brought down below that mark as some savings may be realised,” said a senior government official.

The person conceded the point that the last extension was partly done keeping the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh elections in mind. “It was always meant to be a temporary measure introduced during the pandemic to ensure that the poor did not go hungry due to the pandemic-induced economic hardship,” the second official said.

The fiscal considerations are rather pressing. The finance ministry has committed itself to containing the fiscal deficit as close to the target of 6.4 per cent of fiscal deficit as possible for this fiscal year (FY23).

The Centre had estimated the FY23 food subsidy at Rs 2.07 trillion. After two extensions this year (sixth and seventh extensions since 2020), it is expected to rise to Rs 3.34 trillion. Then there are fertiliser subsidies, which could rise to

Rs 2.5 trillion from the budgeted Rs 1.05 trillion. Both are a result of shocks caused to food and energy prices due to the war in Europe.

The PMGKAY was launched in March 2020 to alleviate the hardships of people affected by the pandemic, and it provides about 5 kg free grains to food security beneficiaries.

“Our topmost priority is the 6.4 per cent target, it is a red line. The revenue flows may not compensate for the additional costs adequately, so we will have to find ways to cut non-priority expenditure,” a second official said.

The finance ministry is hoping to have savings in foodgrain procurement and carrying costs this year due to a steep decline in wheat purchases.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has been asked to look at how the cost of procurement is calculated for foodgrains meant for the Central government’s food guarantee schemes.

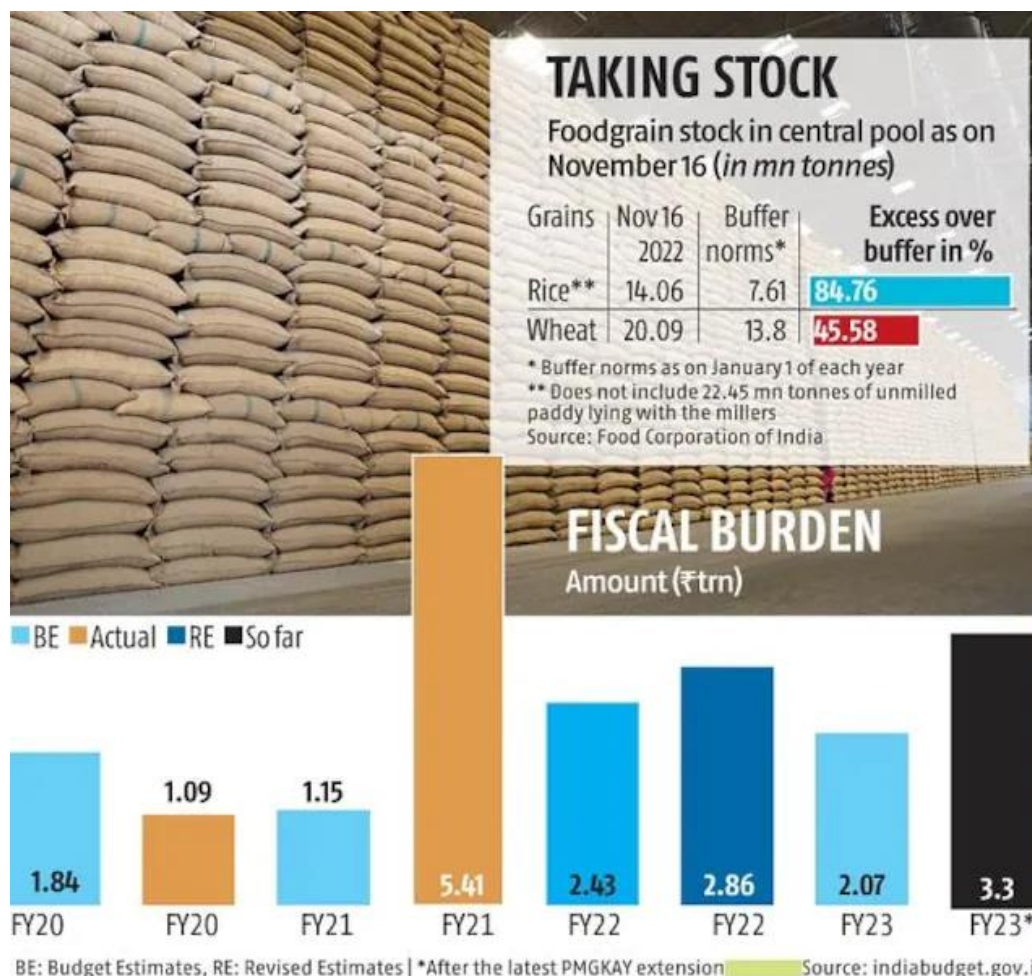
According to some reports, the government is hopeful that by the end of March 2023, India will have approximately 11.3 million tonnes of wheat and 23.6 million tonnes of rice in the central pool after meeting all the requirements.

This would be significantly higher than the buffer requirement of 7.5 million tonnes of wheat and 13.6 million tonnes of rice as on the same date.

However, the tight position also means the Centre has very little leeway to intervene in the open market to cool rising domestic wheat prices. This year, since April, no wheat has been sold through the Open Market Sale Scheme, which, traders says, is the basic reason for wheat prices reaching almost Rs 2,900 a quintal in the North Indian markets, which is much higher than 2022-23 MSP of Rs 2,125 a quintal.

To manage stocks, the Centre had a few months back changed the mix between rice and wheat distributed through the public distribution system and PMGKAY. As a consequence of this, between June and September, it distributed 8.66 million tonnes of rice and 6.32 million tonnes of wheat.

According to rough calculations, the monthly drawdown of grain stocks based on the changed mix between wheat and rice since June is around 8 million tonnes (2 million tonnes of wheat and 6 million tonnes of rice) for both the regular PDS and PMGKAY.



[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-may-end-pmgkay-in-dec-as-fiscal-foodgrain-considerations-bite-122112201167\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-may-end-pmgkay-in-dec-as-fiscal-foodgrain-considerations-bite-122112201167_1.html)

**18. The big short in oil & gas PSUs: Lack of leadership in sector hurting India** ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Nov 23, 2022

How many years should the chairman of a state-owned company have at the job? Last week, the finance ministry decided it should be five years, extendable to 10 years, for the 12 state-owned banks. Curiously, the petroleum and natural gas ministry has decided to offer a three-

year term for the job for companies that come under its purview. The other ministry with big state-run companies under it — power — is yet to take a call. But these differences could further delay the appointment of the chief at India's flagship oil and gas exploration company, ONGC.

Discussions are ongoing within the government over whether there should be uniform, but more merit-based selection criteria for setting the term limit for the chairman's role in state-owned companies. ONGC has been without a chairman since April 2021 when Shashi Shanker retired after a four-year term. Petroleum sector mandarins, current and former, blame the delay in appointing a successor on the lack of good leadership in the sector.

They might have a point — this week, there were media reports that Arun Kumar Singh, who retired as chairman of BPCL in October, has been shortlisted for the post. If correct, not only will Singh be the first person to become a chairman of a listed state-owned enterprise after reaching 60 years of age, but he will also be the first to become a chairman of a company instead of being its regulator. That's because Singh was already shortlisted to be the chairman of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board, for which interviews were held in August.

Unlike banks, for which the finance ministry had to amend the Nationalised Banks (Management and Miscellaneous Provisions) Scheme, 1970, last week, there was no bar to offer a five-year term in other sectors. But lack of planning had led to a situation where the terms of corner office holders had begun to come down.

Legendary chairman of ONGC, Subir Raha served the post from 2001 to 2006. He was only 57, when he had to step down, and could have continued for another three years. The year he stepped down, ONGC lost its status as the most valuable company on the Indian markets. His successor RS Sharma served for less than five years and since then others too have had terms of less than five years. But since then, others have had progressively shorter tenures. This time if, instead of Singh, any of the other aspirants had been chosen they all would have had a term of three years or less.

This short tenure partly explains why state-owned oil and gas companies are struggling to get leaders. Add to this inadequate pay compared with private sector peers and the problem only becomes more challenging. Then there is the related problem of operational autonomy but that, former officials say, is also linked to the short term at the helm. It makes the bosses chase short-term goals rather than fight for a long-term strategy.

For instance, S M Vaidya — chairman of India's largest oil marketing company, IOC — who joined in July 2020, shall have only a three-year term. He will turn 60 next year.

The selection process for ONGC has also run in a rather curious fashion this time. The Public Enterprises Selection Board, which picks candidates for the top jobs in state-owned enterprises, had found no suitable candidate from a pool of nine officers and informed the government accordingly.

Based on their recommendation to set up a fresh search committee, the ministry did so. It also suggested a shorter term of three years but a higher threshold of 60 years of age to choose a panel of names. In most government-run companies, the maximum age limit to become a chairman is 58 years (56 in some cases).

The committee again shortlisted a pool of nine names, but some of them did not appear. IOC Chairman Vaidya and interim chairman of ONGC Alka Mittal both skipped the offer.

Not that there were no major names from the private sector bidding for the post. This is in stark contrast to the 26 candidates who appeared for interviews, when Raha retired in 2006. Of course, even then there was a problem, as the candidate, who got the top billing from the committee that had Vijay Kelkar among others, was initially not cleared by the government. R S Sharma got the shoo-in about a year later, in mid-2007.

An industry expert, who requested anonymity, said: “Unless the government decides which companies will remain state owned and which will be privatised, the candidate pool will not expand.”

The disinvestment and asset management department has identified both BPCL and Engineers India as candidates for privatisation in the sector. The government has tried to sell BPCL in 2021 but got no attractive bids.

There is other evidence of lack of leadership in the sector. To resolve a gas price dispute, the petroleum and natural gas ministry had to recall distinguished sector expert Kirit Parikh from retirement this year to head the committee and, more importantly, to convey a sense of impartiality to both the producer and distribution companies such as RIL and Adani Enterprises.

ONGC has its own specific problems. It needs to expand investment quickly. In August this year, it signed an agreement with petroleum giant ExxonMobil to undertake deep water exploration in both the country’s east and west coasts. The non-binding agreement needs additional investment by the Indian company whose budget for capex has hovered at a median Rs 30,000 crore annually for the better part of this decade.

The same problem bedevils expansion plans for the downstream IOC. It has decided to spend over Rs 1 trillion to modernise its refineries, both to expand their capacity and make them environmentally compatible.

The gas disputes at the regulator have just piled up. For long those were held up, since there was no law member and the courts ruled the decisions were not proper in the absence of such a member. Now, the regulator does not have a full-time chairman. In the middle of the energy transition, the absence of leadership in the sector is hurting India. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/the-big-short-in-oil-gas-psus-lack-of-leadership-in-sector-hurting-india-122112200997\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/the-big-short-in-oil-gas-psus-lack-of-leadership-in-sector-hurting-india-122112200997_1.html)

#### **19. At COP27, one hit and many misses ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) Nov 23, 2022**

The Sharm el-Sheikh climate meeting will probably always be remembered for its decision to set up a loss and damage fund. This decision has earned it a place among the major milestones in the global response to climate change.

But on most other parameters, the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting — the 27th session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP27 — proved to be an underachiever. The meeting was built up as the ‘implementation COP’ or the



meeting that would accelerate the actions being taken on climate change. The final agreement had little to justify that expectation.

### **Mitigation**

Going into the conference, it was expected that COP27 would respond to the growing urgency for greater emission cuts. Most scientific estimates now suggest that the 1.5 degree Celsius target for temperature rise is likely to be breached within a decade. With current efforts to reduce emissions, the world is headed to a temperature rise of about 3 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times by the end of this century.

There were different ways in which COP27 was expected to respond to this. One of the ideas, floated by the European Union, was to ask every country to strengthen their respective climate actions every year from now to 2030, a radical suggestion that was unlikely to have met with approval from most countries. As of now, the countries have to upgrade their climate actions every five years. The latest upgrade was just this year.

Another idea was to call for a phase-down of all fossil fuel use. This was unlikely to have done much to reduce emissions in the short term, but would still have been meaningful towards the larger objective of curbing the use of the main causes of global warming.

The idea, proposed by India, was initially expected to be opposed by developed countries, especially since their dependence on oil and gas has increased in the last one year. However, after initial hesitation, both the EU as well as the United States backed the proposal. The opposition came from within the ranks of the developing countries, especially from the oil-producing Gulf nations. The matter was not pushed.

The least that was hoped for on this front was an inclusion of a stronger mention of the goal of pursuing the 1.5 degree Celsius target. It would have been little more than a statement of intent. But even that was not agreeable to all.

The only decision in this regard was to continue the discussions on a work programme set up last year to “urgently” scale up mitigation action. COP27 decided that two global dialogues would be held each year as part of this work programme.

Most of the conversation on climate actions is focused on mitigation efforts. Developing countries, who are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, have often argued that adaptation is not given sufficient attention. Adaptation involves efforts that help a country to negate or deal with the impacts of climate change.

At the Glasgow climate meeting, an effort was initiated to define global goals on adaptation, just as the 2 degree or 1.5 degree Celsius targets serve as the global goal for mitigation.

Defining global goal on adaptation is much more complex, considering that benefits of adaptation accrue locally, not at a global level. If at all, there would be multiple global goals on adaptation. It was hoped that COP27 would make some progress on identifying the adaptation goals. However, nothing much was delivered on this track, except for expressing support to the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme that is scheduled to finish its work next year.

Another expectation was to see some money flowing in for adaptation purposes. Developing countries have been demanding that at least half of climate finance should be directed towards adaptation projects. Some countries, including the United States, did promise some money, but it wasn't more than a trickle.

An important initiative on adaptation came from the UN Secretary General, who unveiled plans of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to set up early warning systems in areas that do not have them. About one-third of the world, including about 60 per cent of Africa, is not equipped with early warning and climate information systems. The WMO said this needs to be corrected in the next five years. The COP27 agreement said it fully supported the initiative, and invited development organisations and international financial institutions to help the effort.

### **Finance**

The biggest disappointment, not surprisingly, came in matters related to money. The developed countries have not yet delivered on their promise to mobilise USD 100 billion every year, something that should have happened in 2020. All that the COP27 final agreement did about this was to “express serious concern”.

Interestingly, the COP27 agreement, for the first time, quantified the financial needs for climate action. It said about USD 4 trillion had to be invested in the renewable energy sector every year till 2030 if the 2050 net zero target was to be achieved. Additionally, at least USD 4-6 trillion was required every year for global transformation to a low-carbon economy. About USD 5.9 trillion was needed by the developing countries in the pre-2030 period, just to implement their climate action plans.

The developed countries have said they will ensure the USD 100 billion flow from 2023. A parallel discussion is going on to scale up this amount from 2025.

Additionally, the COP27 agreement has urged international financial institutions to simplify their procedures and priorities, so that it is easier for developing countries to access money for climate actions. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/cop27-climate-summit-highlights-loss-and-damage-fund-india-8284047/>

### **20. Groundwater report waters down aquifer-level data, say experts (*business-standard.com*) November 23, 2022**

The latest groundwater data showing an increase in recharge and a decrease in extraction may not be offering an accurate representation, observe water experts, since the assessment units are too large in size and too few in number to present a micro-level picture.

The Dynamic Groundwater Resources of India 2022 report said the total annual groundwater recharge for the country this year has increased by 1.29 billion cubic metres (bcm), in contrast with the last assessment conducted in 2020.

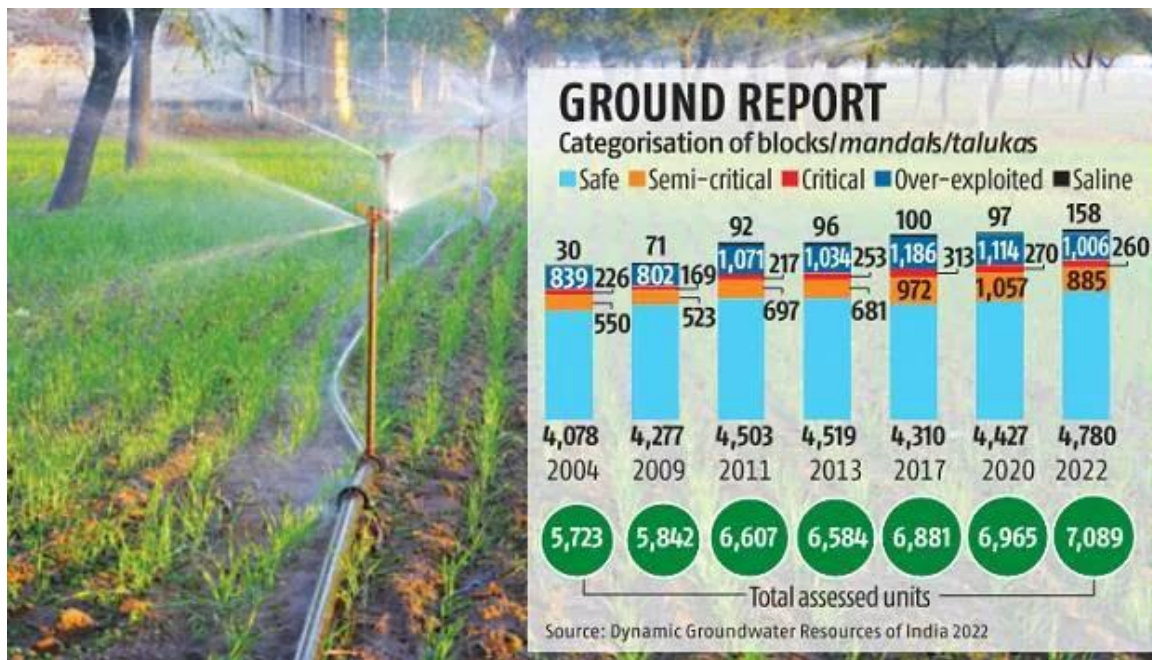
The total annual extractable groundwater resources have also increased by 0.56 bcm.

The annual groundwater extraction for irrigation, domestic, and industrial uses has also decreased by 5.76 bcm during this period.

“These variations are attributed mainly to the refinement of parameters, refinement in well census data, and the changing groundwater regime,” the report said.

“There is no ground reality change that will lead to extra reduction. It has been on an upward trend for six decades at the macro level. That recharge upwards also seems problematic as systems like wetlands and riverbeds are getting destroyed. We need convincing evidence,” says Himanshu Thakkar, coordinator with South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers, and People.

The agriculture sector is the predominant consumer of groundwater resources. About 87 per cent of the total annual groundwater extraction is for irrigation use. Only 30.69 bcm is for domestic and industrial consumption, which is about 13 per cent of the total extraction.



### Aquifer-level picture missing

Several water experts raise questions about the methodology used, in terms of selection of assessment units, which are at the administrative level of talukas or tehsils and do not give a micro-level scenario.

The micro-level data is essential for any usage plan to be made by either the government or the community, say experts.

“Groundwater does not follow administrative boundaries, but is governed by size, shape, and transmissibility of the aquifer.

Therefore, its assessment based on administrative boundaries will not serve any real purpose,” says former water secretary Shashi Shekhar.

India being the highest extractor, groundwater assessment, says Shekhar, must be done by dividing the country into a 1x1 kilometre grid, each having an observation well with a piezometer that can seamlessly supply groundwater level to the aquifers.

“Such information will enable the government and the community to make a demand response with crop selection, while giving priority to meeting human and cattle needs,” he adds.

There are a total of 7,089 assessment units that have been observed in the study.

Shekhar says that the data is skewed because almost half of these units cover Tamil Nadu (TN) and the rest spread across the country.

“In TN, the data is collected at the ‘firka’ level that goes deeper than talukas. One taluka in TN would have the data of several firkas, which is why the data gives a better assessment of the groundwater situation in the state,” says Shekhar.

On average, there are only nine assessment units per district. “They are mainly tehsil-level units. This is clearly much larger than an aquifer-level assessment and can lead to misleading conclusions,” says Thakkar.

Thakkar also says it is important to see if there has been an increase in the areas that are critical or waterlogged.

Of the total 7,089 assessment units in the country, 1,006 units, or 14 per cent, have been categorised as over-exploited; 260 units, or 4 per cent, critical; 885 units, or 12 per cent, semi-critical; and 4,780 units, or 67 per cent, safe.

A K Gosain, professor of civil engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, also says the present-day technology can capture data much more accurately instead of the approximations used in the current report.

“You can find out actual recharge on the basis of land and soil use. Validating the current data with that of aquifers will not be possible. Even the lateral flow of groundwater is not possible to ascertain using the present assessment units,” says Gosain.

While water experts have welcomed that the assessment is being done once every two years, they have stressed that this data has to be passed on to the community, so that they can decide their water use based on groundwater level.

“This report does not nudge farmers for a demand response. It has limited scientific basis and no real use to the community,” says Shekhar.

The Central Ground Water Board under the Ministry of Jal Shakti monitors groundwater levels four times a year — January, April/May, August, and November. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/groundwater-report-does-not-capture-the-aquifer-level-data-water-experts-122112201005\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/groundwater-report-does-not-capture-the-aquifer-level-data-water-experts-122112201005_1.html)