

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (05.01.2023)

1. 63,000 animals, including 4 Asiatic lions and 73 elephants, died on rail tracks from 2017-2018 to 2020-21: CAG (theprint.in, ptinews.com, theweek.in, news18.com, oneindia.com, latestly.com)
January 4, 2023

Over 63,000 animals, including four Asiatic lions and 73 elephants, died on railway tracks between 2017-18 to 2020-21, the CAG has cited, raising concern over steps taken by the Union environment ministry as well as the railways in preventing such episodes. In its report 'Performance Audit on Derailment in Indian Railways' submitted to Parliament last month, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) noted that the railways should ensure that "joint advisories" issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forest and the Ministry of Railways be followed scrupulously to prevent animal deaths, which in turn will also help in preventing derailments on this account.

In these three years, the CAG found that 63,345 animals, including 73 elephants and four lions, had died after being run over.

The CAG said that to prevent train accidents involving elephants, general advisories approved by both the ministries had been jointly issued to the railways in 2010.

The advisories include clearance of vegetation on sides of railway track, under passes/overpasses across railway track to allow elephants to escape, signage boards to pre-warn train drivers, sensitising programmes for train drivers, guards and station masters, engagement of elephant trackers, and to keep railway track free from food waste that attract elephants.

Joint inspections conducted in 102 sections across 18 divisions on nine ZRs (zonal railways) by officials of Audit Department and Engineering Department of ZRs show that there is a 76 per cent shortfall in construction of underpasses and ramps for the movement of elephants at identified locations, 41 per cent shortfall in fencing at isolated locations and 64 per cent shortfall in deployment of forest department staff in railway control offices.

"It can be seen that the important precautionary measures related to provision of signage boards, construction of underpasses, provision of fencing and deputation of forest staff in divisional offices had not been implemented in many sections, even after a lapse of more than 10 years period from the issue of Joint General Advisories by Ministry of Environment & Forests, and MoR," the report said.

With special reference to Asiatic lions, the report said that even these are not safe in the Gir Forest despite the existence of passages in the Bhavnagar Division.

"It was observed that there were two accidents involving run over of four lions.

"During the joint inspections conducted by Audit with the Railway Engineers, sufficient signages, fencing and watch towers were not provided at vulnerable locations. This implies that action towards safety of Asiatic lions was lacking on the part of railway administration," it said. [https://theprint.in/india/63000-animals-including-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-
elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-from-2017-2018-to-2020-21-cag/1298074/](https://theprint.in/india/63000-animals-including-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-from-2017-2018-to-2020-21-cag/1298074/)

2. 10 years on, Railway yet to implement SOP to protect animals: CAG report ([thestatesman.com](https://www.thestatesman.com)) January 4, 2023

The Railway Board and the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued a joint general advisory in 2010 to prevent elephants, wild animals, and cattle from being run over by trains. In this series, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was made for the protection of the Asiatic Lion of Gir Forest of Gujarat.

However, after a decade, the Railways have not been able to implement measures to save lions, elephants, cattle, and other wild animals. In just three years, four lions, 73 elephants, and more than 63,000 wild animals and cattle have been killed by the train.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has made the above observation in its report presented in the winter session of Parliament.

The CAG said that the status of animal deaths in train accidents during 2017-18 to 2020-21 was examined. A joint general advisory was issued by the Ministry of Railways and Environment.

Cleaning of vegetation along the railway track, construction of an underpass and overpass for elephants to cross the track, train speed restriction, fencing, indicator boards for pre-monitoring of train drivers, the appointment of elephant trackers, the Forest Department in Railway Control Offices. Deputation of staff and awareness programmes to drivers, guards, station masters, etc. were to be implemented.

The CAG said that even after a decade, the Railways could not implement important measures like the provision of indicator boards, construction of underpasses-overpasses, fencing, a deputation of forest personnel, etc. in many sections. SOP was not followed for the protection of the Asiatic Lions of Gir Forest. Monitoring towers could not be installed due to the neglect of the Forest Department and Railways.

No initiative was taken to install CCTV, an early warning system. The department did not conduct a joint site test. Due to this, four lions were killed in three years. While 73 elephants and 63,345 wild animals, and cattle were killed. The CAG has suggested timely and quick implementation of measures to save lions, elephants, and other wild animals.

Joint inspections conducted in 102 sections across 18 divisions on nine ZRs by officials of the Audit Department and Engineering Department of ZRs show that there is a 76 percent shortfall in the construction of underpasses and ramps for the movement of elephants at identified locations, 41 percent shortfall in fencing at isolated locations, and 64 percent shortfall in the deployment of forest department staff in railway control offices.

“It can be seen that the important precautionary measures related to the provision of signage boards, construction of underpasses, provision of fencing, and deputation of forest staff in divisional offices had not been implemented in many sections, even after a lapse of more than 10 years period from the issue of Joint General Advisories by Ministry of Environment & Forests, and MoR,” the report said.

“During the joint inspections conducted by Audit with the Railway Engineers, sufficient signages, fencing, and watch towers were not provided at vulnerable locations. This implies

that action towards the safety of Asiatic lions was lacking on the part of the railway administration,” it said.

Recommendations were made to stop the death of animals on 102 divisions of Railways. Number of Recommendations Division Measures Not applicable Percentage. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/10-years-on-railway-yet-to-implement-sop-to-protect-animals-cag-report-1503143893.html>

3. ‘Over 63K animals died on rail tracks from 2017-18 to 2020-21’ ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) January 5, 2023

Over 63,000 animals, including four Asiatic lions and 73 elephants, died on railway tracks between 2017-18 to 2020-21, the CAG has cited, raising concern over steps taken by the Union environment ministry as well as the railways in preventing such episodes.

In its report ‘Performance Audit on Derailment in Indian Railways’ submitted to Parliament last month, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) noted that the railways should ensure that “joint advisories” issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forest and the Ministry of Railways be followed scrupulously to prevent animal deaths, which in turn will also help in preventing derailments on this account.

In these three years, the CAG found that 63,345 animals, including 73 elephants and four lions, had died after being run over.

The CAG said that to prevent train accidents involving elephants, general advisories approved by both the ministries had been jointly issued to the railways in 2010. The advisories include clearance of vegetation on sides of railway track, under passes/overpasses across railway track to allow elephants to escape, signage boards to pre-warn train drivers, sensitising programmes for train drivers, guards and station masters, engagement of elephant trackers, and to keep railway track free from food waste that attract elephants.

Joint inspections conducted in 102 sections across 18 divisions on nine ZRs (zonal railways) by officials of Audit Department and Engineering Department of ZRs show that there is a 76 per cent shortfall in construction of underpasses and ramps for the movement of elephants at identified locations, 41 per cent shortfall in fencing at isolated locations and 64 per cent shortfall in deployment of forest department staff in railway control offices.

“It can be seen that the important precautionary measures related to provision of signage boards, construction of underpasses, provision of fencing and deputation of forest staff in divisional offices had not been implemented in many sections, even after a lapse of more than 10 years period from the issue of Joint General Advisories by Ministry of Environment & Forests, and MoR,” the report said. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/nation/over-63k-animals-died-on-rail-tracks-from-2017-18-to-2020-21-504410>

4. 63,000 Animals, Together with 4 Asiatic Lions and 73 Elephants, Died on Rail Tracks from 2017-2018 to 2020-21: CAG ([freshheadline.com](https://www.freshheadline.com)) January 4, 2023

Over 63,000 animals, together with 4 Asiatic lions and 73 elephants, died on railway tracks between 2017-18 to 2020-21, the CAG has cited, elevating concern over steps taken by the Union setting ministry in addition to the railways in stopping such episodes.

In its report 'Efficiency Audit on Derailment in Indian Railways' submitted to Parliament final month, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that the railways ought to make sure that "joint advisories" issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forest and the Ministry of Railways be adopted scrupulously to forestall animal deaths, which in turn may even assist in stopping derailments on this account.

In these three years, the CAG discovered that 63,345 animals, together with 73 elephants and 4 lions, had died after being run over. The CAG mentioned that to forestall prevent accidents involving elephants, common advisories issued by each the ministries had been collectively issued to the railways in 2010. Rajasthan Prepare Derailment Linked to Rail Fracture; CAG Not too long ago Flagged Monitor Upkeep Subject.

The advisories embrace clearance of vegetation on sides of railway track, underneath passes/overpasses throughout railway track to permit elephants to flee, signage boards to pre-warn prepare drivers, sensitising programmes for prepare drivers, guards and station masters, engagement of elephant trackers, and to maintain railway track free from meals waste that entice elephants.

Joint inspections performed in 102 sections throughout 18 divisions on 9 ZRs (zonal railways) by officers of Audit Division and Engineering Division of ZRs present that there's a 76 per cent shortfall in building of underpasses and ramps for the motion of elephants at recognized areas, 41 per cent shortfall in fencing at remoted areas and 64 per cent shortfall in deployment of forest division workers in railway management workplaces.

"It may be seen that the essential precautionary measures associated to provision of signage boards, building of underpasses, provision of fencing and deputation of forest workers in divisional workplaces had not been carried out in lots of sections, even after a lapse of greater than 10 years interval from the difficulty of Joint Common Advisories by Ministry of Environment & Forests, and MoR," the report mentioned.

With particular reference to Asiatic lions, the report mentioned that even these usually are not secure within the Gir Forest regardless of the existence of passages within the Bhavnagar Division. Elephant Present process Therapy Dies Two Days After Getting Hit by Rajdhani Categorical Prepare in Jorhat (Movies).

"It was noticed that there have been two accidents involving run over of 4 lions.

"Through the joint inspections performed by Audit with the Railway Engineers, ample signages, fencing and watch towers weren't supplied at weak areas. This suggests that motion in the direction of security of Asiatic lions was missing on the a part of railway administration," it mentioned. <https://freshheadline.com/63000-animals-together-with-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-from-2017-2018-to-2020-21-cag/254977/>

5. 63,000 Animals, Including 4 Asiatic Lions and 73 Elephants, Died On Rail Tracks: CAG (huntedailynews.in) January 4, 2023

In the country between 2017-18 and 2020-21, more than 63,000 animals, including four Asiatic lions and 73 elephants, have died on railway tracks, giving information about this by the Union Environment Ministry as well as the Railways. Expressed concern over the steps taken to

prevent such incidents. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), in its report 'Performance Audit on Derailment in Indian Railways' tabled in Parliament last month, has said that the Railways should ensure that the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Railways take steps to prevent animal deaths. The "Joint Advisory" issued by the Ministry should be followed carefully. This advice will also help in preventing deaths on railway tracks. The CAG found that 63,345 animals, including 73 elephants and four lions, had died after being hit by trains in these three years.

The CAG noted that a general advisory approved by both the ministries was jointly issued to the Railways in 2010 to prevent train accidents involving elephants. The advisories include clearing of vegetation along railway tracks, 'underpasses/overpasses' near railway tracks to allow elephants, signage boards to pre-warn train drivers, train drivers, 'guards' and station masters. Sensitization programs for movement of elephants on railway tracks and keeping railway tracks free from waste food which attract elephants.

The joint inspection carried out by the officers of Audit Department and Engineering Department of Zonal Railways in 102 sections of 18 divisions on nine Zonal Railways (Zonal Railways) revealed that tunnels (underpasses) and bridges (ramps) for the movement of elephants at the identified places) there is a shortfall of 76 percent in the construction of There is a 41 percent reduction in fencing at isolated places and a 64 percent reduction in the deployment of forest department staff in railway control offices. <https://huntedailynews.in/63000-animals-including-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-cag/>

6. CAG: तीन सालों में रेल पटरियों पर मारे गए 63 हजार से ज्यादा जानवर, 4 एशियाई शेरों और 73 हाथियों की भी हुई मौत (amarujala.com) January 4, 2023

रेल की टक्कर से अक्सर जानवरों के मरने खबर सामने आती है। वहीं अब कैग ने अपनी एक रिपोर्ट जारी की है कि 2017-18 से 2020-21 के बीच चार एशियाई शेरों और 73 हाथियों समेत 63,000 से अधिक जानवरों की रेलवे पटरियों पर मौत हो गई। कैग ने इन तीन वर्षों में पाया कि 73 हाथियों और चार शेरों सहित 63,345 जानवर कुचले जाने के बाद मर गए।

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने पिछले महीने संसद में पेश की गई अपनी रिपोर्ट 'परफॉर्मंस ऑडिट ऑन डिरेलमेंट इन इंडियन रेलवे' में कहा है कि रेलवे को जानवरों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए और पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय और रेल मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी संयुक्त सलाह के साथ जानवरों की मौत को रोकने के लिए सावधानी से पालन किया जाना चाहिए।

कैग ने कहा कि हाथियों से जुड़े ट्रेन हादसों को रोकने के लिए दोनों मंत्रालयों द्वारा अनुमोदित सामान्य सलाह रेलवे को 2010 में संयुक्त रूप से जारी की गई थी। वहीं सलाह में रेलवे टैक के किनारों पर वनस्पति की सफाई, रेलवे ट्रैक के पास खाना न रखने, भोजन की बर्बादी के साथ साइनेज बोर्ड, ट्रेन चालकों, गार्ड और स्टेशन मास्टर्स के लिए हाथी ट्रैकर्स शामिल हैं।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भावनगर डिवीजन में मार्ग होने के बावजूद गिर वन में ये भी सुरक्षित नहीं हैं। यह देखा गया कि रेल की चपेट में आकर चार एशियाई शेर मारे गए। आगे बताया गया है कि रेलवे इंजीनियरों के साथ ऑडिट द्वारा किए गए संयुक्त निरीक्षण के दौरान, संवेदनशील स्थानों पर पर्याप्त साइनेज, बाड़ और वॉच टावर उपलब्ध नहीं कराए गए थे। इसका मतलब है कि रेलवे प्रशासन की ओर से एशियाई शेरों की सुरक्षा के लिए कार्रवाई में कमी थी। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/more-than-63-thousand-animals-killed-on-railway-tracks-in-three-years-says-cag>

7. 2017 से 2021 के बीच रेल पटरियों पर चार एशियाई शेरों सहित 63,000 जानवरों की हुई मौत: CAG (ndtv.in) January 4, 2023

CAG ने संसद में पेश की गई अपनी रिपोर्ट 'परफॉर्मंस ऑडिट ऑन डिरेलमेंट इन इंडियन रेलवे' में कहा है कि रेलवे को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि जानवरों की मौत को रोकने के लिए पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय एवं रेल मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी "संयुक्त सलाह" का सावधानी से पालन किया जाए.

देश में 2017-18 से 2020-21 के बीच चार एशियाई शेरों (Asiatic lions) और 73 हाथियों सहित 63,000 से अधिक जानवरों की रेलवे पटरियों पर मौत हो गई है जिसकी जानकारी देते हुए कैग ने केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्रालय के साथ-साथ रेलवे द्वारा इस तरह की घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए उठाए गए कदमों पर चिंता जताई. नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने पिछले महीने संसद में पेश की गई अपनी रिपोर्ट 'परफॉर्मंस ऑडिट ऑन डिरेलमेंट इन इंडियन रेलवे' में कहा है कि रेलवे को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि जानवरों की मौत को रोकने के लिए पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय एवं रेल मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी "संयुक्त सलाह" का सावधानी से पालन किया जाए. यह सलाह रेलवे पटरियों पर होने वाली मौतों को रोकने में भी मदद करेगा. कैग ने इन तीन वर्षों में पाया कि 73 हाथियों और चार शेरों सहित 63,345 जानवर ट्रेन की चपेट में आने से मर गए थे.

कैग ने कहा कि हाथियों से जुड़े ट्रेन हादसों को रोकने के लिए दोनों मंत्रालयों द्वारा अनुमोदित सामान्य सलाह रेलवे को 2010 में संयुक्त रूप से जारी की गई थी. सलाह में रेलवे पटरी के किनारों पर वनस्पति की सफाई, हाथियों को जाने की अनुमति देने के लिए रेलवे पटरी के पास 'अंडरपास/ओवरपास', ट्रेन चालकों को पूर्व-चेतावनी देने के लिए साइनेज बोर्ड, ट्रेन चालकों, 'गार्ड' और स्टेशन मास्टर्स के लिए संवेदीकरण कार्यक्रम, रेलवे पटरी हाथियों की आवाजाही और हाथियों को आकर्षित करने वाले व्यर्थ भोजन से रेलवे पटरी को मुक्त रखना शामिल है .

लेखापरीक्षा विभाग और क्षेत्रीय रेलवे के इंजीनियरिंग विभाग के अधिकारियों द्वारा नौ क्षेत्रीय रेलवे (क्षेत्रीय रेलवे) पर 18 मंडलों के 102 खंडों में किए गए संयुक्त निरीक्षण से पता चलता है कि चिन्हित स्थानों पर हाथियों की आवाजाही के लिए सुरंग (अंडरपास) और पुल (रैंप) के निर्माण में 76 प्रतिशत की कमी है। पृथक स्थानों पर बाड़ लगाने में 41 प्रतिशत की कमी और रेलवे नियंत्रण कार्यालयों में वन विभाग के कर्मचारियों की तैनाती में 64 प्रतिशत की कमी है। https://ndtv.in/india/63-000-animals-including-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-cag-3664465?pfrom=nav_storyicon_link

8. 2017 से 2021 के बीच रेल दुर्घटना में मारे गए 63 हजार जानवर, 4 एशियाई शेर और 73 हाथी भी कटे (abplive.com) January 4, 2023

भारतीय रेलवे पिछले कुछ दिनों से आधुनिकता पर जोर दे रहा है। मोदी सरकार में नई-नई हाई स्पीड ट्रेनें लॉन्च की जा रही हैं। देश में अब 200 किमी. प्रति घंटे की रफ्तार से चलने वाली वंदे भारत ट्रेनें शुरू हो चुकी हैं। हालांकि हाई स्पीड ट्रेनों से रेलवे ट्रैक पर जानवरों के मरने का आंकड़ा काफी बढ़ गया है। CAG ने इस पर चिंता भी जताई है।

CAG की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, 2017-18 से 2020-21 के बीच रेल दुर्घटनाओं में 63,000 से अधिक जानवरों की मौत हो चुकी है। इनमें चार एशियाई शेर और 73 हाथी भी शामिल हैं। कैग ने इस तरह की घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्रालय के साथ-साथ रेलवे की ओर से उठाए गए कदमों पर चिंता जताई है।

कैग ने रेलवे को दी यह सलाह

पीटीआई के अनुसार, कैग ने रेल दुर्घटनाओं पर पिछले महीने संसद में अपनी एक रिपोर्ट पेश की थी। इसी रिपोर्ट में इस बात का जिक्र किया गया है। कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में भारतीय रेल को पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय और रेल मंत्रालय की ओर से जारी की गई सलाह और नियमों का ईमानदारी से पालन करने की सलाह दी है। रेलवे ने कहा, "इससे ट्रेन हादसों में जानवरों की मौत को रोका जा सकता है और बदले में ट्रेन के पटरी से उतरने का खतरा भी समाप्त हो जाएगा।"

3 साल में ट्रेन से 63,345 जानवर कटे

कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा कि पिछले तीन वर्षों में 4 एशियाई शेरों और 73 हाथियों सहित 63,345 जानवरों की रेल से कटकर दर्दनाक मौत हो चुकी है। कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा कि साल 2010 में पर्यावरण एवं वन मंत्रालय और रेल मंत्रालय की ओर से हाथियों से जुड़े ट्रेन हादसों को रोकने के लिए एक संयुक्त सलाह जारी की गई थी। इसके बाद भी इतनी बड़ी संख्या में जानवरों के कटने पर चिंता जताई गई है।

'10 साल बाद भी नियमों का पालन नहीं'

कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा, "10 साल बीत जाने के बाद भी नियमों और सलाह का पूरी तरह से पालन नहीं किया गया." कैग ने कहा, "रेलवे इंजीनियरों के साथ किए गए संयुक्त निरीक्षण के दौरान संवेदनशील स्थानों पर बाड़ लगाने, साइनबोर्ड और निगरानी टावर दिखाई नहीं दिए. इसका मतलब यह है कि रेलवे प्रशासन की ओर से एशियाई शेरों की सुरक्षा के लिए कार्रवाई में कमी थी." रेल मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने भी संसद में कहा था कि ट्रेन की चपेट में आने से हर साल 50 से अधिक जानवरों की मौत हो रही है. <https://www.abplive.com/news/india/63000-animals-including-4-asiatic-lions-and-73-elephants-died-on-rail-tracks-2299743>

9. CAG की रिपोर्ट में खुलासा: 2017 से 2021 तक रेल पटरियों पर 4 एशियाई शेरों सहित 6 3,000 जानवरों की मौत (punjabkesari.in) January 4, 2023

देश में 2017-18 से 2020-21 के बीच चार एशियाई शेरों और 73 हाथियों सहित 63,000 से अधिक जानवरों की रेलवे पटरियों पर मौत हो गई है जिसकी जानकारी देते हुए कैग ने केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्रालय के साथ-साथ रेलवे द्वारा इस तरह की घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए उठाए गए कदमों पर चिंता जताई।

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने पिछले महीने संसद में पेश की गई अपनी रिपोर्ट 'परफॉर्मंस ऑडिट ऑन डिरेलमेंट इन इंडियन रेलवे' में कहा है कि रेलवे को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि जानवरों की मौत को रोकने के लिए पर्यावरण और वन मंत्रालय एवं रेल मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी "संयुक्त सलाह" का सावधानी से पालन किया जाना चाहिए। यह सलाह रेलवे पटरियों पर होने वाली मौतों को रोकने में भी मदद करेगा। कैग ने इन तीन वर्षों में पाया कि 73 हाथियों और चार शेरों सहित 63,345 जानवर ट्रेन की चपेट में आने से मर गए थे।

कैग ने कहा कि हाथियों से जुड़े ट्रेन हादसों को रोकने के लिए दोनों मंत्रालयों द्वारा अनुमोदित सामान्य सलाह रेलवे को 2010 में संयुक्त रूप से जारी की गई थी। सलाह में रेलवे पटरी के किनारों पर वनस्पति की सफाई, हाथियों को जाने की अनुमति देने के लिए रेलवे पटरी के पास 'अंडरपास/ओवरपास', ट्रेन चालकों को पूर्व-चेतावनी देने के लिए साइनेज बोर्ड, ट्रेन चालकों, 'गार्ड' और स्टेशन मास्टर्स के लिए संवेदीकरण कार्यक्रम, रेलवे पटरी हाथियों की आवाजाही और हाथियों को आकर्षित करने वाले व्यर्थ भोजन से रेलवे पटरी को मुक्त रखना शामिल है।

लेखापरीक्षा विभाग और क्षेत्रीय रेलवे के इंजीनियरिंग विभाग के अधिकारियों द्वारा नौ क्षेत्रीय रेलवे (क्षेत्रीय रेलवे) पर 18 मंडलों के 102 खंडों में किए गए संयुक्त निरीक्षण से पता चलता है कि चिन्हित स्थानों पर हाथियों की आवाजाही के लिए सुरंग (अंडरपास) और पुल (रैंप) के निर्माण में 76 प्रतिशत की कमी है। पृथक स्थानों पर बाड़ लगाने में 41 प्रतिशत की कमी और रेलवे नियंत्रण कार्यालयों में वन विभाग के कर्मचारियों की तैनाती में 64 प्रतिशत की कमी है। <https://www.punjabkesari.in/national/news/63000-animals-including-asiatic-lions-died-on-railway-tracks-from-2017-to-2021-1745937>

10. Missing Monuments: देश से 'गायब' हो गए 50 स्मारक, कैसे हुए लापता और इसके बाद क्या? (abplive.com) January 4, 2023

देश भर में ऐतिहासिक और पुरातात्विक महत्व के स्मारकों को सरकार संरक्षित करती है। इस समय में 3693 स्मारक ऐसे हैं जिन्हें केंद्र सरकार ने संरक्षित किया है। इनमें से 50 स्मारक गायब हो चुके हैं। ये जानकारी केंद्रीय संस्कृति मंत्रालय ने संसद को दी है। यातायात, पर्यटन और संस्कृति मामले पर संसद की स्टैंडिंग कमेटी के सामने पेश की गई रिपोर्ट में ये कहा गया है। आखिर कोई स्मारक कैसे गायब हो सकता है, इसका क्या मतलब है और गायब होने के बाद अब आगे क्या होगा? आइए समझते हैं।

राष्ट्रीय महत्व के स्मारकों और पुरातात्विक स्थलों को सुरक्षित रखने के लिए केंद्र सरकार ने प्राचीन स्मारक और पुरातत्व स्थल और अवशेष अधिनियम (AMASR Act) बनाया है। भारतीय पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण विभाग (एएसआई) इसी एक्ट के तहत काम करता है। इस एक्ट के तहत 100 साल से पुराने स्थलों जैसे मंदिर, अभिलेख, मकबरे, समाधि, किले, महल, पत्थर काटकर बनाई गई गुफाएं आदि जो भी ऐतिहासिक महत्व रखने वाले स्मारक हैं, उनका रखरखाव किया जाता है। एक्ट के मुताबिक एएसआई के अधिकारियों पर नियमित तौर पर इन स्मारक स्थलों का निरीक्षण करके इनकी स्थिति को देखते हुए इनके रख-रखाव का जिम्मा होता है।

आखिर स्मारक कैसे गायब होता है?

1861 में ASI के गठन के बाद से अब तक बड़ी संख्या में स्मारकों को संरक्षित श्रेणी में रखा गया है। हालांकि आजादी के बाद देश की सरकारों का ध्यान स्मारकों के संरक्षण के बजाय स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और ढांचा निर्माण पर अधिक रहा। एएसआई के अधिकारियों के मुताबिक बहुत सारे स्मारक और स्थल तेजी से होते शहरीकरण, बांधों के निर्माण और कई बार अतिक्रमण के चलते गायब हो गए।

एसआई ने संसद को बताया है कि 14 स्मारक शहरीकरण के चलते गायब हुए, 12 बांध और जलाशयों में विलुप्त हो गए, वहीं 24 का पता नहीं चल पा रहा है.

केवल 248 स्थलों पर गार्ड तैनात

एसआई ने यह भी बताया कि उसके पास रख-रखाव के लिए लोगों की बहुत कमी है. रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक बजट की कमी के चलते इस समय 3693 संरक्षित स्थलों में से केवल 248 स्थलों पर सुरक्षा गार्ड तैनात हैं. इन 248 स्थलों पर 2578 सुरक्षाकर्मियों की तैनाती की गई है.

क्या पहली बार स्मारक गायब हुए हैं?

एसआई ने बताया है कि आजादी के बाद से देश भर में सभी स्थलों को लेकर कोई व्यापक सर्वे नहीं किया गया है. हालांकि 2013 में कैग की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि कम से कम से संरक्षित कम से 92 स्थल गायब हैं. कैग रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि एसआई के पास ऐसी कोई विश्वसनीय रिपोर्ट नहीं है, जिसमें यह बताया गया हो कि इसके अधीन कितने स्मारक संरक्षण के लिए हैं. इसमें किसी योग्य अधिकारी द्वारा स्थलों का सर्वे किए जाने की संस्तुति की गई थी लेकिन उस दिशा में कुछ खास नहीं हुआ.

कौन से स्थल हुए गायब

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि एसआई के प्रयासों से कैग की रिपोर्ट में लापता बताए गए 92 स्थलों में से 42 को ढूंढ लिया गया है. बाकी बचे 50 में से 26 के साथ क्या हुआ इस बारे में जानकारी मिल गई है, जबकि 24 के बारे में पता नहीं चला है.

जिन स्थलों के बारे में कोई जानकारी नहीं मिली है, उनमें 11 उत्तर प्रदेश, दो-दो दिल्ली और हरियाणा में हैं. इसके अलावा असम, पश्चिम बंगाल, अरुणाचल प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड से भी स्थल लापता हैं.

होगी एक आखिरी कोशिश

एसआई ने कहा है जो स्मारक शहरीकरण और बांध में गायब हुए हैं, उन्हें अब 'खो चुका' समझा जाए. बाकी बचे 24 को खोजने का एक आखिरी प्रयास किया जाएगा. अगर इनमें से कोई मिलता है तो इसकी जानकारी उपलब्ध कराई जाएगी. हालांकि गायब हो चुके स्मारकों को लिस्ट से बाहर निकालना इतना आसान नहीं होगा. इसके लिए AMASR एक्ट के सेक्शन 35 के तहत इन्हें डीनोटिफाई करना होगा, जो एक लंबी प्रक्रिया है. <https://www.abplive.com/news/india/50-protected-asi-monuments-missing-how-this-happens-and-what-next-explain-2299517>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

11. CAG report 2022 reveals 22% reduction in land revenue, excise down by 1.57% (ptcnews.tv) January 5, 2023

Chandigarh: Major revelations became known with CAG report 2022, as the statistical data confirms that Punjab's land revenue has dropped by 22%. While the chief Minister Bhagwant Mann led Punjab Government claims to have achieved budget targets, CAG reports that Punjab has recorded decline in GST collection too in comparison with last year .

The Punjab government has earned 35569.29 crores in tax revenue this year as compared to 30034.29 crores last year, which is 5535 crores as compared to last year. The government has earned 2935.66 crores from non-tax revenue, in this way there has been an increase of 20 percent in the income from non-tax revenue. The Punjab government has set a target of earning 119913.44 crores this year, while the government has earned 69911.95 crores in 8 months i.e. till November.

The Punjab government, which has earned less in the last 8 months from GST than last year, the government has earned 11954 crores from GST from April 22 to November 2022, which is 59.78 percent of the previous year. It is 58.17 percent as compared to last year, which means the government has earned 1.61 percent compared to last year. <https://www.ptcnews.tv/punjab-2/cag-report-2022-reveals-22-reduction-in-land-revenue-excise-down-by-716229>

12. C'garh lags behind in revenue surplus target (dailypioneer.com) January 5, 2023

The Chhattisgarh government could not achieve its revenue surplus target during 2019-20 and 2020-21. In 2020-21, revenue deficit of the state was Rs 6,856.66 crore as compared to Rs 9,608.61 crore in 2019-20, states a CAG report.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday tabled the Audit Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on State Finances for the year ended on March 31, 2021 in the assembly.

The report states that there was a revenue deficit of Rs 6,856.66 crores for 2020-21. This decreased by Rs 2,147.17 crore (Rs 15,822.38 crore) from Rs 17,969.55 crore in 2019-20.

It states that the percentage of total outstanding debt to GSDP during 2020-21 was (25.58 percent) more than the target prescribed in the Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement (MTFPS) (21.59 per cent) by the state government but within the target recommended by the XV Finance Commission (28 percent).

Similarly, revenue receipts decreased by Rs 692.52 crore (1.08 percent) from Rs 63,868.70 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 63,176.18 crore during 2020-21.

This was due to a decrease in receipts of state's non-tax revenue by Rs 796.82 crore (10.04 percent) and Grants-in-aid from the Centre by Rs 798.75 crore (5.87 percent).

The report states that 58 percent of borrowed funds were utilized towards repayment of earlier borrowings. Only 27 percent was used for capital expenditure during 2020-21.

The funding of revenue expenditure from borrowings increased from Rs 3,602.01 crore (11.28 percent) to Rs 5,036.04 crore (15.06 percent) of borrowings during 2020-21 over previous year. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2023/state-editions/c---garh-lags-behind-in-revenue-surplus-target.html>

13. Bihar Engineering Colleges: 90% teacher vacancy; some have no non-teaching staff, finds CAG (news.careers360.com) January 4, 2023

DST Bihar: CAG report is based on audit of engineering colleges, polytechnics launched under Bihar government's Avsar Badhe Aage Padhein scheme.

Bihar Engineering Colleges: 90% teacher vacancy; some have no non-teaching staff, finds CAG

Thirty-one engineering colleges in Bihar are running with 90% teaching and 98% non-teaching posts vacant, a recent report by the Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) has found. The CAG report also says that in 15 polytechnic institutions, there was 80% shortage of teaching and 96% shortage of non-teaching staff. The report, tabled during the assembly session in Bihar, caused very heated debate.

The institutes were built under the Avsar Badhe Aage Padhein (ABAP) scheme, one of the Saat Nishchay — seven decisions — of the Nitish Kumar-led Grand Alliance government in Bihar. Launched in 2016, the scheme was to provide technical and professional skill-based education in Bihar. Under it, nine types of institutions were to be built in each of Bihar's 38 districts by 2021. The 31 engineering colleges and 15 polytechnic institutes planned were the department of science and technology's responsibility. The CAG picked six engineering colleges and three polytechnics for auditing.

"The department could not implement the scheme properly due to acute shortage of teaching and almost non-availability of non-teaching staff that could adversely affect the quality of technical education," the CAG report says. Plus, despite the 2021 deadline, 18 out of the 46 buildings planned had not been completed even by March 2022, the report noted. So, in addition to the shortage of staff, there is also acute shortage of space with three colleges running from the premises of one in seven cases, the CAG found.

Since February 2016, Rs 3,015.96 crore was allocated for the establishment of 31 engineering colleges and Rs 841.10 crore for 15 polytechnic institutes. "46% and 22% of the total budget provision were surrendered by the science and technology department and building and construction department, respectively during the period 2016-21," says the report.

Teacher shortage, land acquisition delay

The section of the report on the functioning of the engineering colleges and polytechnics established under Avsar Badhe Aage Padhein attributed the failure of the scheme not only to the shortage of teachers and non-teaching staff but also of other infrastructure and delays in the land acquisition.

“Objective of the scheme was also defeated by delayed acquisition of land, acquisition of unsuitable lands, non/delayed construction of buildings by the Building Construction Department (BCD), insufficient infrastructure, equipment, facilities etc. Further, due to the absence of an effective monitoring mechanism of the department, unsuitable land was selected, buildings [or] portable cabins were not constructed and adequate laboratories were not available,” says the CAG.

Sumit Kumar Singh, minister of science and technology, reportedly said in the state assembly that except the one in Buxar district, all the engineering colleges will start functioning from March 2023.

Engineering: Vacant posts, empty seats

In Engineering College, Buxar, 94% teaching posts were vacant and the college had no non-teaching staff at all. The non-teaching staff typically perform crucial non-academic administrative functions such as managing the finances of the institution. Without them, the responsibility falls on the academic staff. The vacancy levels of the institutions the CAG reviews are given in the table below.

Teacher vacancy in Bihar engineering colleges, polytechnic institutes

Institute (%)	Vacancy - Teaching (%)	Vacancy - Non-Teaching
Engineering College, Buxar	94	100
Engineering College, Buxar	92	98
Engineering College, Purnea	87	96
Engineering College, Rohtas	64	100
Engineering College, Bakhtiyarpur	48	92
Polytechnic Institute, Samastipur	77	100
Polytechnic Institute, West Champaran	77	97
Polytechnic Institute, Jehanabad	71	97

Engineering College, Vaishali had 92% vacancy in teaching and 98% in non-teaching staff. Polytechnic Institute Samastipur and Engineering College Rohtas have no non-teaching staff at all.

The report also mentioned that despite advertisements sent to Bihar Public Service Commission and Bihar Technical Service Commission, recruitment of teachers against the advertisement posted in September-October 2020 is still pending and posts for non-teaching staff have not been advertised at all.

Swathes of seats have remained vacant during the 2016-17 to 2019-20 academic years at the institutions that did start. Over this period, 26% of 13,680 seats in undergraduate courses of the engineering colleges remained vacant; 7% out of 8,640 seats remained vacant in diploma courses of the polytechnics. “The under-utilisation of intake capacity of seats was due to lack of availability of man-power, infrastructure and facilities,” the report said.

In 2019-20 alone, 61% of 4,560 seats across 19 engineering colleges went vacant .

3 engineering colleges, one campus

The department in a five year span couldn't build proper infrastructure for the institutes, the CAG noted. According to AICTE 2016-17 rules, engineering and polytechnic institutes have to have essential infrastructure and a minimum ratio of teaching staff. But many of the new engineering institutes had neither. "17 engineering colleges and six polytechnic institutes were functioning from the premises of other institutes, with insufficient classrooms, laboratories and hostels etc.," said the report. It added that in seven cases, three engineering colleges were running from the same premises.

In seven cases, three engineering colleges were functioning from the premises of one college, the report mentioned. For instance, Engineering College, Sheikhpura and Engineering College, Nawada were functioning from the premises of Engineering College, Nalanda; similarly, Engineering College, West Champaran and Engineering College, Sheohar were functioning from the buildings of Engineering College, Motihari.

Further, hostels were not available in five out of nine institutes the CAG committee visited. In some cases, students travelled 50 to 187 km between hostels where they were put up and institutes where they were studying. "If a college or an institute has to accommodate students three times to its capacity and where the students have to travel a distance of 30 kms to 187 kms to reach the college or institute, the purpose of establishing an engineering college or polytechnic institute in every district is defeated," said the report.

The report also informed that none of the institutes it checked during February 2022 had proper laboratories for practical training.

The audit report observed that the department did not have any state level monitoring unit, internal audit wing or any grievance redress system or department. <https://news.careers360.com/engineering-college-polytechnic-dst-bihar-government-90-percent-teacher-vacancy-cag-report>

14. What happens after the CAG detects a scam in NRC updation? (eastmojo.com) January 4, 2023

The CAG report, submitted to the state legislative assembly, stated that due to a lack of proper planning, hundreds of software utilities were added haphazardly to the core one.

As predicted, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) detected massive financial anomalies involving Indian Rupees hundreds of crores in the process of National Register of Citizens (NRC) updation. The national audit body also recommended action against the former State NRC coordinator Prateek Hajela and the system integrator (Ms Wipro Limited).

The CAG report, submitted to the state legislative assembly, stated that due to a lack of proper planning, hundreds of software utilities were added haphazardly to the core one. Asserting that highly secure and reliable software was necessary for the exercise, it added, no due process like the selection of vendors following a national tender was followed.

The intended objective of preparing a valid and error-free NRC was not met despite the direct expenditure of Rs 1,579 crore as well as the manpower cost of deployment of around 50,000 government employees for over four years.

The NRC project was done under the supervision and guidance of the Supreme Court of India, where the Assam government was asked only to provide logistic support.

The CAG report recommended penal measures against the then State NRC coordinator and the system integrator for violating the country's wage laws while paying monthly salaries to nearly 6000 part-time data entry operators (DEO). The wage difference allowed an undue benefit of Rs 155 crore to the system integrator and also the labour contractor. Wipro was also supposed to supply DEOs, but its officials in Assam allegedly engaged subcontractors, where some Guwahati-based television journalists were also seemingly involved.

Wipro was sanctioned Rs 14,500 (to 17,500) per DEO per month by the NRC authority, but the subcontractors paid only Rs 5,500 (to 9,100) to each DEO every month. Shockingly, those DEOs were even denied minimum amounts as guaranteed by India's Minimum Wage Act. Some DEOs even approached the state labour commissioner, and many came to the street demanding their dues. But they are still deprived of their full payments (which should be over Rs 150 crore in total).

The NRC updation process was started in December 2014 with an initial project cost of Rs 288 crore and was supposed to be completed within 14 months (by February 2015). But the timeline for the project went on lingering, and the final draft was published in August 2019 only.

Because of the time overrun, the project cost escalated up to Rs 1,579 crore. Though claimed by Hajela as the draft NRC was a final one, it is yet to be endorsed by the Registrar General of India.

The final draft of the citizens' list excluded 19 lakh people as they could not provide valid documents supporting their permanent stay in Assam before 25 March 1971. It should be noted that unlike other parts of India, Assam has a different cut-off date for claiming citizenship following the historic Assam Accord signed in 1985 after a six-year long agitation, but that has been lately challenged in the SC.

Mentionable is former NRC coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma, before his retirement, who filed a first information report with the state government's vigilance and anti-corruption wing. He alleged massive corruption in the exercise (during Hajela's tenure, who was later transferred to his home state of Madhya Pradesh). Hajela is also facing several FIRs from different organisations, including Assam Public Work, demanding a thorough probe against him as the state NRC coordinator.

Dev Sarma also publicly stated that the draft NRC has included millions of illegal Bangladeshi citizens (while excluding thousands of indigenous families). He argued that faulty software was used in the process to make it possible and it should be identified as a serious offence which would impact national security. If the NRC draft is accepted as the final one, it would create more trouble for the indigenous population of Assam.

Along with Dev Sarma, millions of genuine residents of the State would expect a concrete initiative from the governments in both Dispur and New Delhi, so that a correct NRC can be obtained. <https://www.eastmojo.com/assam/2023/01/04/what-happens-after-the-cag-detects-a-scam-in-nrc-updation/>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

15. Indian Army floats open tender to acquire 300 logistics rough terrain ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) 04 Jan 2023

The Indian Army has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to procure 300 logistics rough terrain vehicles (Lgs RTVs). These rough terrain vehicles are required for the transportation of the military in medium to high-altitude areas.

The procurement will take place under emergency power granted to the Armed Forces which makes the acquisition process much faster. This procurement of Lgs RTVs will be processed under Buy (Indian) category of Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 through Fast Track Procedure.

The RFP mandates that these vehicles should be able to operate at an altitude of 16,000 feet. Their ability to operate in snow-covered undulating terrain with long endurance makes them ideally suitable for last-mile delivery (LMD) tasks, the RFP said.

The army puts stringent criteria for such vehicles which must be able to operate under extreme temperatures. The RFP mentions the minimum operating temperature range as between minus 20 degrees C to minus 10 degrees C while the maximum temperature range must be between 40 degrees C to 45 degrees C.

Describing the equipment, the army says Lgs RTV must be highly mobile, multi-configurable, rough terrain capable vehicles for employment in medium to high altitude areas. The vehicle must have high off-road capabilities in inaccessible terrain to be able to operate on existing Animal Transport (AT) tracks and does not require any other specific tracks for their movement.

The RFP also mandates that the vehicle should be based on the concept that it can quickly be customised for different missions from loading to evacuating casualties during an operation.

According to army officials, the procurement is being carried out through an Open Tender Enquiry and will be decided by an Empowered Committee (EC). According to the army's stringent timelines, the delivery of the equipment must be completed within 12 months from the date of signing of the contract.

The RFP also highlights the key aspect of Heliportability which means that the RTVs can be lifted or transported, using the existing fleet of Chinook/Mi- 26 helicopters. Besides, the vehicle should also have a roll cage or a rollover protection system.

The army's mountainous challenge

The rough terrain vehicle family consists of light, tactical, off-road vehicles designed and manufactured specifically for use by military and highly trained law enforcement officers.

The most unique aspect of RTVs is the ability to carry multiple payloads due to unique payload integration technology basis the customisation.

The Indian army has been scouting for such capabilities in light of recent India- China standoffs across the high-altitude terrain. This adds to the forces' ability to improve upon the troops-to-ground ratio giving personnel greater flexibility in movement.

The Indian army has to operate across vast High-Altitude Areas (HAA) and rough terrain regions which are accessible only by road and air. In fact, these areas are only open for a few months. Besides the troop movement, the army needs steady supplies throughout the year during deployment.

India's quest for high-calibre military UAVs is still in its infancy

The Indian army maintains a huge contingent of troops—more than 12 divisions – across the HHA region which makes it the largest mountain fighting force in the world. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/indian-army-floats-open-tender-to-acquire-300-logistics-rough-terrain-vehicles/2936672/>

16. The Race for the Indian Naval Fighter Contract (*idsa.in*) 04 Jan 2023

November 2022 saw the visit of the French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu as well as the US Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro to India. Lecornu was in New Delhi for the Fourth India–France Defence Dialogue, where both countries decided to enhance military industrial cooperation with a focus on Make In India (MII). Apart from their interactions in New Delhi, Lecornu and Del Toro also visited Kochi, the headquarters of the Southern Naval Command, where the indigenously constructed aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, is also based. The visits of the French and the American delegations brought into focus their parallel efforts to secure the contract for equipping India's indigenous aircraft carrier with a fighter wing.

The Indian Navy's sole operational aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, currently operates Mig-29K fighters. The choice of the Multi-Role Carrier Borne Fighter (MRCBF) programme to equip the INS Vikrant is between the twin-engined US Boeing F/18 E/F Super Hornet and the French Rafale Marine (M). The single-engine Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was found unsuitable for aircraft carrier operations.¹ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) issued a Request for Information (RFI) for MRCBFs procurement in January 2017 for 57 fighters, which was subsequently reduced to 26 fighters to be procured via the government-to-government (G2G) route. These include eight twin-seater trainer variants and 18 single-seater variants.

Aircrafts in Contention

Both the aircrafts in contention, the Rafale and the Super Hornet, did demonstration ski-jumps at the Shore-Based Test Facility (SBTF) at INS Hansa, Goa in January and June 2022 respectively. Boeing insists that the Super Hornet is fully compliant with the requirements of India's aircraft carriers, INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant and notes that the two-seater F/18 can also be used for land-based missions as well as a trainer aircraft.

The US aerospace major also highlights the fact that the aircraft is inter-operable with the Indian Navy's Boeing P-8I reconnaissance aircraft. Boeing notes that the P8I is operated by three out of the four Quad countries (US, Australia and India). Two out of the four Quad countries also operate the F/18 aircraft (US and Australia).

Boeing further reiterates that the same family of engines powers the F/18 and the LCA Tejas. While the General Electric (GE) F-414 powers the F/18, the US\$ 716 million contract to supply 99 GE F-404 engines to power the LCA Mk-I A fighter aircraft was signed in August 2021.

The MoD had earlier in February 2021 placed an order with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for 83 LCA MK-1A jets worth Rs 48,000 crore.

Boeing further reiterates that over 800 Super Hornets and its variants have been delivered worldwide and the massive scale will enable competitive incorporation of newly developed technology. The US aerospace major's 'By India-For India' sustainment programme is also expected to ensure a higher availability of aircraft for operational deployment.²

As for the other competitor, Rafale Marine, India has procured 36 Rafale aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF), the contract for which was signed in 2016. While the first aircraft was received in October 2019, all 36 were inducted by December 2022. Apart from France and India, Egypt, Qatar and Greece also operate the cutting-edge French fighter aircraft while the UAE signed a deal to acquire 80 Rafales in December 2021 and Indonesia signed a deal in February 2022 to acquire 42 Rafales.

The MRCBF options are slated to be an interim solution, before the Twin-Engined Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF) project comes to fruition. The project was approved in 2020, with the Preliminary Design Review (PDR) expected to be completed by mid-2023. The aircraft will be powered by the GE F414 engines—the same engines that power the F/18s, and is expected to be inducted by 2031–32.³

Both Dassault and Boeing are also competing for the multi-role fighter aircraft (MRFA) programme of the IAF, RFI for which was issued in 2018.

French Arms Exports to India

The Rafale is the latest in a series of fighter aircraft of French origin that have been operated by the IAF. French fighter aircraft in India's inventory date back to 1953, when the IAF acquired the Ouragans (Toofani), becoming Dassault Aviation's first export customer. Subsequently, the IAF also procured the Jaguars (beginning from 1978) and the Mirage 2000, from 1982 onwards. India currently has more than 100 Jaguars and more than 50 Mirage 2000s (single and dual-seat versions). The Mirages were upgraded with new radars, mission computers and electronic warfare (EW) suites (from Thales) in 2011.

Prior to the 2016 Rafale G2G deal, the 2005 Scorpene deal for six submarines was another major acquisition from France. The first submarine, INS Kalvari was launched in 2015 and commissioned in 2017 while the sixth INS Vagsheer, was launched in 2022. The Scorpene and the Rafale deals accounted for India being the second biggest purchaser of French arms during 2010–20, after Saudi Arabia. While Saudi Arabia imported over Euros 9 billion from France, India imported arms worth Euros 7.2 billion.⁴ Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, along with Saudi Arabia and India, made up the top five importers of French arms during 2010–20. Aircraft were the major category of French arms exports during 2010–20, accounting for a quarter of all its arms exports.⁵

The Strengthened India–US Defence Relationship

Even as India's arms imports from France registered a massive jump in 2010–20, and irrespective of India's interim naval fighter choice, the India–US defence and strategic partnership has been significantly strengthened in recent times. India was designated as a Major Defence Partner in 2016. While US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to India from 1950 to 2021 amounted to US\$ 13.2 billion, US\$ 4.7 billion (or 28 per cent) were during the period 2017–

21.6 The authorised value of US defence articles and services through Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) to India has been over US\$ 18 billion in the period 2010–21.7

Some of the key equipment that have been procured include transport aircrafts (Lockheed Martin C-130J; 12 inducted), multi-mission helicopters (Boeing CH-47F I Chinook; 15 inducted), Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (Boeing P8-I; 11 inducted; 1 more ordered), and attack helicopters (Boeing AH-64E Apache; 22 inducted in IAF; six more ordered for Indian Army in 2020), ASW helicopters (Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky MH-60R; 24 helicopters worth US\$ 2.6 bn to be inducted by 2025), heavy transport aircraft (Boeing C-17A Globemaster III; 11 inducted) and UAVs (General Atomics MQ 9 Sea Guardian; two leased).

India–US joint ventures like the Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited (TBAL), established in 2016, has supplied over 150 Apache fuselages to Boeing’s global clientele. At the India–US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue held in April 2022, both sides also pledged to ‘promote the means to encourage reciprocal participation of Indian and US vendors in each other’s defence supply chains’.⁸

Going Forward

If India opts for the Rafale Marine, as noted in this 9 December 2022 report⁹, it will highlight the continued lack of success of US fighter aircraft manufacturers to become a part of India’s inventory, despite long-standing and robust efforts. It will also signify an increasing share of European manufacturers in the Indian military aerospace market. This is in the light of the 2016 Rs 60,000 crore Rafale deal and the 2022 Rs 22,000 crore deal for 56 C-295 transport aircraft from Airbus, 40 of which will be manufactured at Vadodara by Tata Advanced Defence Systems Limited and Airbus Defence and Space. While the C-295 is a replacement for the IAF’s HS-748 transport planes, it is also being seen as a possible replacement for the 100-odd AN-32s in the IAF fleet.¹⁰

Even as the robust India–US defence and military partnership can be expected to absorb the near-term setback that could possibly flow out of India’s interim choice for naval fighter aircraft, US aircraft engine manufacturers like GE will continue to be an integral part of indigenous fighter aircraft programmes like the LCA Mk 1 and Mk 2A. <https://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/the-race-for-the-indian-naval-fighter-contract-sscrajiv-040123>

17. Policy on Satcom needs more deliberation ([thehindubusinessline.com](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com)) 04 Jan 2023

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) should tread carefully while formulating the rules for auctioning spectrum for satellite-based communication services. While an auction mechanism brings in transparency into the spectrum allocation process, no other country has attempted to sell airwaves for satellite services.

Unlike mobile services, satellite communication networks do not need dedicated spectrum resources. Most satellite players in other countries operate by sharing spectrum resources. Satellite players have warned that any move to auction spectrum would cause segmentation of airwaves and drive down the efficiency of broadband services. Satellite spectrum allocation is also more complicated than its terrestrial counterpart because it needs global coordination. On the other hand, telecom operators are pushing for an auction mechanism to ensure a level

playing field in the market since satellite service providers will end up competing with mobile operators for a pie of the booming broadband market. They also cite the Supreme Court order mandating auctioning of spectrum, in the aftermath of the 2G scam. The TRAI will have to find a balance between the technological drawbacks of auctioning satellite spectrum and the need for adopting a process that is non-arbitrary and transparent so that users can get access to satellite communication services at an affordable price. The main advantage of satellite service is that it can provide high-speed internet access in remote areas, where terrestrial networks cannot be set up, for instance in rugged unreachable terrain such as the Himalayas.

India has so far been using Geostationary Earth Orbit satellites mostly for imagery, and direct-to-home broadcasts. However, these systems have some limitations for two-way communications because they are operating in an orbit that is 36,000 km away from Earth. This latency can become a problem when it comes to mission-critical data services which need real-time data access. Now, players such as Elon Musk's SpaceX and Sunil Bharti Mittal promoted OneWeb are deploying Low Earth Orbit satellites which operate at 250 km from Earth, making them conducive for providing high-capacity broadband. Such a constellation of satellites will be very useful for India given the dismal fixed broadband infrastructure. Even the mobile data network is quite erratic outside major cities. Mobile operators also have to keep upgrading their networks from 3G to 4G and now 5G. Each upgrade requires the purchase of fresh spectrum and investments into rolling out new networks. The mobile operators are under huge financial strain which has reduced the telecom market into a duopoly. In comparison, investment into a satellite network is a one-time event with minimal additional investments required.

There are at least four new players that have expressed interest in launching satellite broadband services, thus offering more options to consumers. Policymakers should ensure that the nascent satellite communication industry is not stifled by tough regulatory rules while taking the spectrum access interests of existing telecom operators into account. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/editorial/policy-on-satcom-needs-more-deliberation/article66338639.ece>

18. The Char Dham Road Project is a Freeway to Disaster: CP Rajendran ([newsclick.in](https://www.newsclick.in)) 05 Jan 2023

Joshimath is a serious warning signal. Any realistic development strategy should balance infra development, acceptable levels of risk, and carrying capacity of the terrai, says the noted expert on earthquakes.

Dr CP Rajendran is among India's foremost experts on seismo-tectonics, earthquakes and tsunami geology. He is also a strong critic of the development model being pursued in Uttarakhand, a hilly state where the intensity of large-scale infrastructure projects has been rising along with the risks this poses to the fragile ecosystem, the latest being the cracks and land slide in Joshimath. Rajendran, who is also an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, is fearlessly vocal about the ills of such constructions, especially the large number of tunnels—66 to be exact—and dams that are being built across the small hilly state. He speaks to senior journalist Rashme Sehgal. Edited excerpts.

RS: You were critical of the government's Char Dham project, which is under construction at a relentless pace. In the next 10 years, the government also plans to build 66 tunnels in Uttarakhand, which already has 18 tunnels in operation. What is the problem with these projects?

CPR: I have always thought the Char Dham road project is a freeway to disaster. As feared, it is indeed turning out to be an unscientific road construction project with catastrophic consequences for the mountain ecology. There are important environmental caveats to be respected before engaging in a mammoth engineering project in the Himalayas. The authorities, in their enthusiasm for “smoother” and “faster” “all-weather” connectivity for pilgrim tourists from the plains and the armed forces, ignored the government’s own recommended best practice norms to minimise the impact on the mountain ecosystems and landscapes. These engineering interventions are being done with scant regard to the local geology and environment. The construction of highways and railway tracks has now become a prime cause of landslides, whose occurrences have doubled over the years.

RS: Many tunnels are being built as part of a rail project that will criss-cross the Himalayas. Half the work on the Rishikesh-Karnprayag rail project is complete. Tunnels will account for 70% of this project. What kind of environmental impact does this imply?

CPR: Out of the 125 km track, the train will travel 105 km through tunnels. The longest tunnel will be 14 km long, from Devprayag to Janasu. Unlike many mountain chains in the world, the Himalayas are the youngest and most active in terms of tectonics. There is a belief that building tunnels may decrease the infrastructural impact on the environment. In fact, these subsurface structures could result in gross damage to the environment, including the concentration of pollutants from traffic exhausts compounded by a micro-environment with no sunlight and limited dispersion in long-distance tunnels.

Rail traffic may rely on electric locomotion, but constantly generated vibrations during train movements is another issue related to tunnels that will keep the mountain slopes eternally unstable and thus make them vulnerable to slide at the slightest trigger. Blasting to make these tunnels would often lead to weakening rock formations, further leading to landslides, besides generating huge quantities of excavated rock waste. The irreversible impact on groundwater, such as descending water levels, has also been observed in tunnel construction areas.

RS: And the world’s longest 30-km road tunnel is also being constructed between Dehradun and Tehri despite scientists warning on the increase in landslides from large-scale construction works.

CPR: Landslides do not occur in isolation. Depending on the nature of rocks, their competency, and the blasting methods employed, road and dam constructions act as contributing triggering mechanisms. The geology of the rocks and the nature of fissility within them (their tendency to split along planes of weakness) are important criteria to be considered. Many times, a slip occurs along such fractures.

Increased anthropogenic activities like road construction have made hill slopes extremely unstable. That is why recurring landslides have increased in numbers in the Himalayas, to which heavy downpours and cloud bursts due to climatic changes have also contributed. Excavating a tunnel induces stress changes, and consequent deformation within rock formations could also contribute to landslide vulnerability.

RS: Homes have developed cracks in villages around flattened mountain slopes and where massive excavation work is being done to construct tunnels. The list of peoples’ complainants is growing. What does this indicate?

CPR: Residents constantly complain about damage to their homes and the drying up of water sources. Such massive construction procedures will impact villagers and the livelihood of people there. Blasting during construction has resulted in cracks in houses and other buildings.

Equally alarming is vanishing spring water and other community water sources. For instance, a People's Science Institute report says, "Their natural water sources, gharats, irrigation canals have all dried up, so much so that the village does not even have enough water to immerse cremated remains. Adding to their woes, cracks have started appearing on the walls of homes and other buildings..."

Erratic rainfall and ecological degradation associated with land use change for infrastructure development are already impacting mountain aquifer systems. In August 2018, a NITI Aayog report spoke of "increasing evidence that springs are drying up or their discharge is reducing throughout the Indian Himalayan Ranges and, indeed, throughout the entire Hindu Kush Himalayan region".

Groundwater use in the Himalayan states differs from that in the plains, as large and contiguous aquifers do not exist in the hills. Villagers tap into small pockets, called perched aquifers, where water percolates into the soil, depending on the orientation of the rocks. Sometimes, these small aquifers overflow as springs, but there is enough evidence to show these are drying up.

Tunnelling may cause impediments to groundwater if it heads in a direction perpendicular to the tunnel axis. It can adversely affect the structures and can also influence the local ecosystem by hampering vegetation.

Despite claims of a successful tourism policy, the social conscience confronts many issues concerning the mountain population. Most of the local population continues to live in abject poverty, and the innumerable dams across the Himalayan rivers provide no relief to the people—read women—who must trudge miles looking for water from natural springs, which are also drying up fast.

RS: In strategically important Joshimath town, not only have many houses developed cracks, the town itself is sinking. Residents recently met the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Secretary and told him they believed the Tapovan Vishnugad hydroelectric project tunnel and a bypass—part of the rail project—are responsible for their crisis. Is that right?

CPR: The residents allege that cracks have been developing in their houses since last year, but they did not get a proper response from the district administration. The geoscientists who visited Joshimath have recorded that several areas in that town in the Chamoli district, located at an altitude of 6,150 feet, are sinking rapidly due to human-induced causes. An expert team constituted by the Uttarakhand Disaster Management Authority certified in its 2022 report that "Joshimath town located on the thick cover of landslide material has been witnessing gradual sinking for a long time... Further uphill from the Joshimath-Auli Road, cavities and ground fissures were found."

The Tapovan Vishnugad hydro project tunnel that passes just below Joshimath could be a contributing factor, among others. During the tunnel construction, it was reported that the boring machine had perforated a water-bearing stratum on the left bank of the Alaknanda River near Shelong village.

RS: In June 2022, the Chamoli district magistrate ordered the construction of a one-and-a-half-kilometre wall along the Alaknanda river to stop soil erosion. Will this help, or is it a cosmetic solution?

CPR: While implementing a freeway project in the Himalayas, a major question that stares you down is whether the mountain morphology with steep slopes and sharp gradients is easily amenable to human engineering. All these “hard approaches”, like building a retaining wall, will not work in such a dynamic environment in the long term. Upslope erosion or the river scouring during the flood seasons will eventually degrade such walls. The bank stabilisation must be done primarily by planting the appropriate species of trees. The rivers need their space to flow, and we must respect their relationship with their floodplains.

RS: With 100 dams under construction in Uttarakhand, scientists have warned of disturbances to the isostatic equilibrium, thereby increasing the possibility of earthquakes in the mountains.

CPR: It is reported from many sites that the gravitational load created by the large reservoir disturbs the isostatic equilibrium of the earth’s crust. The crust converts the received potential energy of hydrostatic pressure into the kinetic energy of vertical displacement that lasts for many decades, which are generally reservoir-generated earthquakes. The entire central Himalayas are currently locked, and the accumulated stresses due to Indian plate collisions are waiting to be released in earthquakes.

RS: Apart from Joshimath, Bhatwari and Uttarkashi are also sinking. Why would this be happening?

CPR: What we see in Joshimath and towns like Uttarkashi is a warning of what is in store for us in future. Experts believe the resilience of the Himalayan ecosystem is likely to overshoot. It is thanks to the unprecedented combination of climate change and its consequences, like flooding, droughts and wildfires, alongside other global change drivers (such as changes in land use, pollution, fragmentation of natural systems and over-exploitation of resources).

The melting of Himalayan glaciers is also likely to impact local rivers, either in the form of massive seasonal flooding or forcing them to dry up. We must remember that the Himalayan environment is on the brink of collapse. It may not be able to withstand another push generated by intrusive anthropogenic activities in the form of massive construction projects like highways, railway tracks and dams. Nor are there any serious attempts for compensatory afforestation.

RS: Why does the government not pay attention to scientific objections and conduct technically sound environmental impact assessments led by independent experts?

CPR: I fail to understand why the concerns expressed by many experts have been ignored. Economic interests play a major role. This is clear from the fact that there is a mad rush to award hydroelectric projects to private companies. Why?

Infrastructural development is one thing, but we also need to understand the fragility of the landscape we are interfering with. A realistic development strategy should be based on a blueprint that strikes a balance between infrastructure development, acceptable levels of risk, and the carrying capacity of the terrain. The average daily footfall last year in these areas was

around 58,000. Ground reports say plastic waste has been dumped in large or small pits, and the cleaning operations resort to open burning, which is highly hazardous.

The Char Dham routes also witnessed a growing mound of garbage since the beginning of the pilgrimage season. Unregulated human activity during pilgrimages is most likely to impact water and air quality in these regions. Imagine the millions of travellers visiting the hills as part of the Char Dham pilgrimage circuit using the upcoming rail and road travel facilities and how this will pollute the mountain environment. Many hydroelectric projects need to be reviewed from the perspective of their long-term adverse impact.

The 2013 Kedarnath flood was a wake-up call. The intensity of this disaster was directly proportional to the unregulated rise in tourism that led to a construction boom in unsafe zones such as the river valleys, floodplains and slopes vulnerable to landslides, which violated land use laws. Any human-induced change beyond the carrying capacity of the Himalayas will impact stream run-offs and erosional and depositional processes. Considering such vulnerabilities, we need to keep the scale of human-induced disturbances to the minimum possible level. In its current form, the Char Dham project goes against all environmental safeguards.

RS: These projects cost lakhs of crores of rupees. Could these funds have been better utilised?

CPR: Many scholars like Sunita Narain have suggested how we should go about funding a development strategy for the Himalayas that does not come at the cost of the environment. This strategy should be based on the region's natural resources like forests, water, biodiversity and ecotourism. Rather than building massive dams, our focus should be on small projects that would help provide a local energy supply. Agriculture in the Himalayan ranges is closely linked to animal husbandry and natural forests. Most farmers have now abandoned traditional practices and local seed varieties and wait for the State or private sector to supply them with the necessary inputs.

Reportedly, due to massive migrations from villages to the plains, less than 20% of agricultural land in the Himalayan districts of Uttarakhand is being farmed. The remaining 80% has become fallow land. It is one area that needs a massive influx of funds. An appropriate development strategy should also be able to use traditional knowledge of agriculture, construction practices, and local cultural aspects. <https://www.newsclick.in/The-Char-Dham-Road-Project-Freeway-Disaster-CP-Rajendran>

19. Set the G20 pace on plugging public finance data gaps ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) 04 Jan 2023

At the G20 Leaders' Summit in Bali, India affirmed that "data for development" will be integral to its G20 presidency. More recently, India emphasized that the strategic use of data for governance and public service delivery, especially in its aspirational districts, is its key focus.

This brings fiscal data to the fore. The scale of the fiscal response to the covid crisis makes sound fiscal reporting and transparency critical. Governments must monitor their fiscal position reliably in a context of heightened uncertainty, to instil market and public confidence that state resources are being used effectively, and outline a medium-term strategy for the risks associated with the response. This is particularly so where public borrowings exceed net household financial savings, which risks crowding out private investment.

Many countries face information gaps that impede their ability to fully grasp the impact of policies. And without comprehensive and internationally comparable data to monitor progress, it is difficult to know what works, and where corrections are needed. All this makes the full availability of fiscal data across all levels of government a public good.

What needs to be done: Fiscal reporting practices in India are still behind most peer G20 economies, implying that policymakers lack key data to anchor economic policies. New Delhi's commitment under the G20 Data Gaps Initiative to compile and disseminate internationally comparable government finance statistics (GFS) on a quarterly basis, covering the general government, is critical. But India is not there yet, being among the G20 countries that do not produce or report full general government (GG) data in line with GFS standards. This needs to be fixed.

Lessons can be drawn from Brazil, a large federal emerging market, which has managed to produce consolidated general government data within a few years by setting up a dedicated IT system and smart incentives for states to share their fiscal data on time.

There are several factors embedded in India's public financial management (PFM) system that contribute to data gaps in Indian numbers. The system has a complex history that dates back to the colonial era, when it had little transparency and citizen oversight. Since independence, the system has undergone significant reforms and changes. However, the Constitution covers only a basic framework and many operational budgetary reforms have no specific legal framework governing them; documentation requirements and budget timelines are not legally defined. Key practices, accounts and classifications have stayed unchanged, and the use of public accounts that conceal expenditures and result in a misleading picture of fiscal activity.

The main issues are:

Complex and fragmented structure: India's PFM system has multiple layers of government and multiple agencies responsible for different aspects of financial management. This has led to comparability and classification problems, duplications of effort, and related inefficiencies that create data gaps.

Inconsistent fiscal definitions and targets: The Union's definitions of deficit and debt in its fiscal rule are mutually inconsistent, and the GG debt target is not consistent with the wider definition of 'Central Government Debt' in the updated FRBM Act. Many states do not have a wider definition of debt and deficit to cover extra budgetary expenses.

Lack of standardization: This is seen in the way different agencies and levels of government collect and report numbers.

Low use of technology: India's PFM system still relies heavily on manual processes and the absence of a dedicated platform for all government units hampers streamlined financial management. This can lead to errors.

Weak transparency and accountability: This is another contributor to gaps.

External evaluation: At the Centre and in states, external assessment and evaluation mechanisms for fiscal plans, performance and macro forecasts are not fully in place.

Timelines: The swiftness of audited annual financial statements could be improved. Report delays must end.

There's progress being made: In the July 2019-20 Budget, the Union finance minister introduced Statement 27 on Extra Budgetary Resources; it disclosed the borrowings of government agencies that funded central schemes and whose repayment burden was on the government. In subsequent budgets, the finance minister enhanced the scope and coverage of the statement, in part, by including loans extended by the Centre to the Food Corporation of India.

Agenda ahead: Most states are well behind the standards achieved by the Centre. Some, like Telangana and Kerala, have been in the spotlight for fiscal strains borne by their economies, rendered more severe by off-budget borrowings. In March 2022, the Centre announced that it will retrospectively include states' off-budget borrowings within their net borrowing ceiling under Article 293.

PFM reforms at the sub-national level should be consistent with reforms at the Union government level in terms of a clear framework that ensures consistent and well defined targets and accounting standards, timely and reliable reporting of sub-national fiscal operations, and strengthens automatic mechanisms for deviation correction and sanctions for non-compliance.

Also helpful would be the support of G20 leaders for a new Data Gaps Initiative to make fiscal statistics more detailed and timely. Fiscal data needs to be broader, more detailed and timely, and must include the translation of state fiscal data into a GFS template. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/set-the-g20-pace-on-plugging-public-finance-data-gaps-11672852531891.html>

20. The Great Moderation is dead and a stagflationary debt crisis looms ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) Nouriel Roubini | Updated: 05 Jan 2023

Inflation rose sharply throughout 2022 across both advanced economies and emerging markets. Structural trends suggest that the problem will be secular, rather than transitory. Specifically, many countries are now engaged in various 'wars'—some real and some metaphorical—that will lead to even larger fiscal deficits, more debt monetization, and higher inflation in the future.

The world is currently going through a form of 'geopolitical depression' topped by the escalating rivalry between the West and aligned (if not allied) revisionist powers such as China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan. Cold and hot wars are on the rise. Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine could still expand and involve NATO. Israel, and thus the US, is on a collision course with Iran, which is on the threshold of becoming a nuclear-armed state. The broader Middle East is a powder keg. And the US and China are facing off over the questions of who will dominate Asia and whether Taiwan will be forcibly reunited with the mainland.

Accordingly, the US, Europe and NATO are re-arming, as is pretty much everyone in the Middle East and Asia, including Japan, which has embarked on its biggest military build-up in many decades. Higher levels of spending on conventional and unconventional weapons

(including nuclear, cyber, bio, and chemical) are all but assured, and these expenditures will weigh on the public purse.

The global war against climate change will also be expensive, for both the public and private sectors. Climate-change mitigation and adaptation could cost trillions of dollars per year for decades to come, and it is silly to think that all these investments will boost growth. After a real war that destroys much of a country's physical capital, a surge of investment can of course produce an economic expansion; nonetheless, the country is poorer for having lost a large share of its wealth. The same is true of climate investments.

A significant share of the existing capital stock will have to be replaced, either because it has become obsolete or because it has been destroyed by climate-driven events.

We are also now waging a costly war against future pandemics. For a variety of reasons—some of them related to climate change—disease outbreaks with the potential to become pandemics will become more frequent. Whether countries invest in prevention or deal with future health crises after the fact, they will be incurring higher costs on a perpetual basis, and these will add to the growing burden associated with societal ageing and pay-as-you-go healthcare systems and pension plans. Already, this implicit unfunded debt load is estimated to be close to the level of explicit public debt for most of the world's advanced economies. Moreover, we will increasingly find ourselves fighting a war against the disruptive effects of 'globotics': the combination of globalization and automation (including artificial intelligence and robotics) that is threatening a growing number of blue- and white-collar occupations. Governments will be under pressure to help those left behind, whether through basic-income schemes, massive fiscal transfers, or vastly expanded public services.

Big crisis of Big Tech means innovation curve had plateaued

These costs will remain large even if automation leads to a surge in economic growth. For example, supporting a meagre universal basic income of \$1,000 per month would cost the US about 20% of its GDP.

Finally, we also must fight an urgent (and related) war against rising income and wealth inequality. Otherwise, the malaise afflicting young people and many middle- and working-class households will drive a renewed backlash against liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. To prevent populist regimes from coming to power and pursuing reckless, unsustainable economic policies, liberal democracies will need to spend a fortune to reinforce their social safety nets—as many are already doing.

Fighting these five 'wars' will be expensive, and economic and political factors will constrain governments' ability to finance them with higher taxes. Tax-to-GDP ratios are already high in most advanced economies (especially Europe), and tax evasion, avoidance and arbitrage will further complicate efforts to increase taxes on high incomes and capital (assuming such measures could even get past the lobbyists or secure buy-in from centre-right parties).

Thus, waging these necessary wars will increase government spending and transfers as a share of GDP, and without a commensurate increase in tax revenues. Structural budget deficits will grow even larger than they already are, potentially leading to unsustainable debt ratios that will increase borrowing costs and culminate in debt crises, with obvious adverse effects on economic growth.

For countries that borrow in their own currencies, the expedient option will be to allow higher inflation to reduce the real value of long-term fixed-rate nominal debt. This approach functions as a capital levy against savers and creditors in favour of borrowers and debtors, and it can be combined with such draconian measures as financial repression, taxes on capital and outright default (for countries that borrow in foreign currencies or whose debt is largely short-term or indexed to inflation). Because this ‘inflation tax’ is a subtle and sneaky form of taxation that doesn’t require legislative or executive approval, it is the default path of least resistance when deficits and debts are increasingly unsustainable.

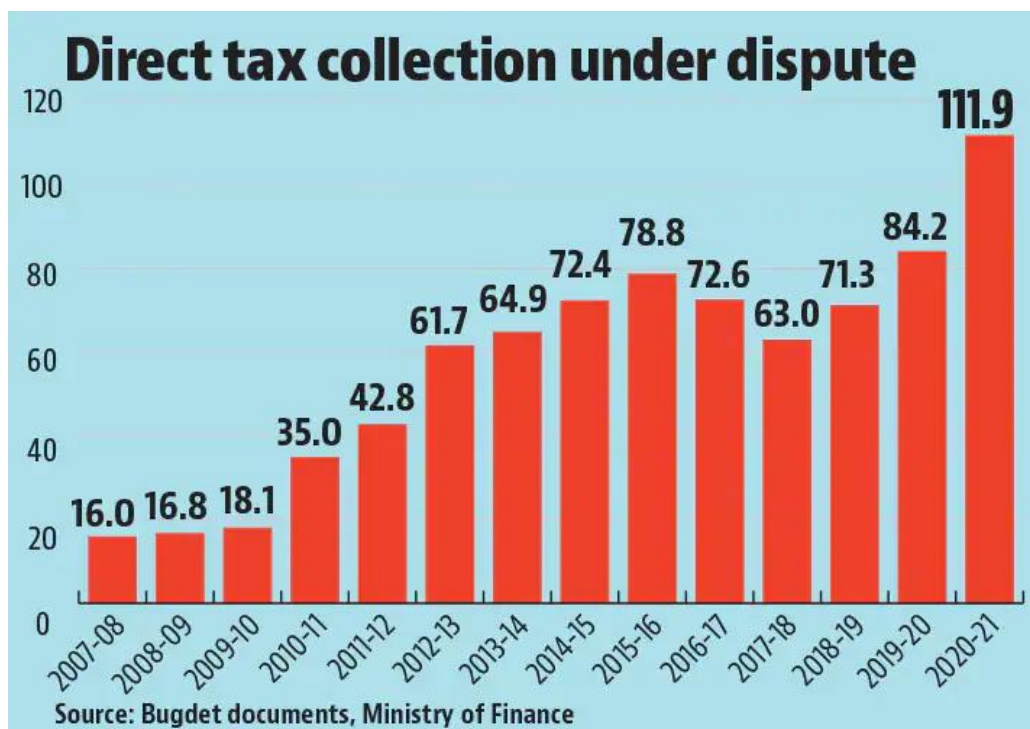
I have focused primarily on demand-side factors that will likely lead to higher spending, deficits, debt monetization and inflation. But there are also many medium-term negative aggregate supply shocks that could add to today’s stagflationary pressures, increasing the risk of recession and cascading debt crises. The Great Moderation is dead and buried; the Great Stagflationary Debt Crisis is upon us. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/the-great-moderation-is-dead-and-a-stagflationary-debt-crisis-looms-11672856870753.html>

21. Budget: Look for ways to reduce tax disputes ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Jan 04, 2023

As finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares the Union Budget for 2023-24, it is worth recalling her Budget speech from 2019, when she quoted Tamil poet Pisiranthaiyar’s allegory for government-taxpayer relations, “A few mounds of rice from paddy, that is harvested from a small piece of land, would suffice for an elephant. But what if the elephant itself enters the field and starts eating? What it eats would be far less than what it would trample over.” An imaginative mind might see the shape of an agitated elephant in the adjoining chart, which plots direct tax collection under dispute at the end of a year, as a percentage of the gross direct tax collection during that year. The year-on-year change reflects the net change during the year, as some disputes get resolved, while others get instituted.

At the beginning of the previous decade, disputes rose rapidly, moderating slightly in 2016-17 and 2017-18, probably due to amnesty schemes. But in 2018-19 and 2019-20, the elephant raised its trunk in hunger. To make matters worse, in 2020-21, low revenue receipts, a rise in disputes, and the slow resolution of disputes pushed the stock of direct tax collection under dispute to a level higher than the flow of direct tax revenues in the year. The spike in the early 2010s was mostly on account of disputes in personal income tax, but the recent spike is seen in both corporate and personal income tax.

What makes this rise in disputes troubling is that the administration seems unsuccessful in winning most of them. OECD’s biannual report on tax administration reports the percentage of cases resolved in favour of the administration in leading jurisdictions — that is, cases in which the administration was successful in more than 50% of the issues contested. In 2020, the average for the 47 jurisdictions included was 66%. In India, this was only 7.9%. This disparity has persisted for many years, and India has consistently ranked at the bottom of the list of countries on this count.



While the poor success rate could be partly explained by a failure to fight these disputes properly, the extreme rarity of success suggests the administration may be making some unreasonable demands. It is worth considering why this may be happening. First, the rise in disputes has corresponded with periods of economic slowdown. Early in the 2010s, direct tax disputes increased while a fledgling, stimulus-driven recovery from the global financial crisis was underway. The recent rise also corresponds with a growth slowdown. Economic problems may have translated into low tax collection, and under pressure to deliver revenue targets, the tax authorities made some unreasonable demands, triggering disputes that they lost.

Second, the rise in disputes also corresponds with diluting checks and balances in the law that constrains the actions of revenue authorities. In 2017, the income tax law was amended to weaken the checks on tax authorities. These include not requiring the tax authorities to disclose the reasons for conducting or expanding searches and seizures, even to the appellate tribunal; empowering the officer conducting the search and seizure to attach property for up to six months with the prior approval of senior officers; reducing the seniority level of the officer who can call for information for any inquiry or proceeding, among others.

Third, the fiscal context may also create pressures to make excessive direct tax demands. The government has large, committed expenditures but has, in most years since 2008-09, registered weak performance in collecting indirect taxes, non-tax revenues (for example, dividends and spectrum auction), and non-debt capital receipts (primarily, disinvestment receipts). Since 2015, states' share of the Union government's tax pool has also increased. There also seems to be an unwillingness to increase indirect taxes, except through duties on petroleum products, depending on crude oil prices. It seems administratively easier to make additional demands for direct taxes than other revenue receipts.

Finally, the rhetoric of political leadership in the last few years suggests they suspect large-scale tax evasion. This might have translated into political pressure on the tax administration, which then had to appear to go after tax evasion. In 2020, additional assessments raised from

audits corresponded to 44.1% of tax collections, while the average for the 51 countries that reported this information in the OECD report was just 5.2%.

The Economic Survey of 2015-16 found India's direct tax collection is consistent with other countries at this level of income. India's income tax collection is much higher than the average for countries with its per capita income. So, the expectation from direct taxes might be built on false assumptions.

The allegory of the elephant and farmer must include a mahout riding the elephant. When and how to exercise the elephant's power is a matter of the mahout's practical wisdom in understanding what is in the elephant's (and the mahout's) long-term interest. If the State goes too easy, taxpayers may take advantage, but if it becomes too draconian, it could have a chilling effect. The powers of tax authorities are the Sword of Damocles dangling over all individuals and enterprises. They can disrupt businesses and harm personal reputations, but they can eventually hurt the government's ability to mobilise resources.

In recent years, the government has tried to reduce disputes, mostly through dispute-settlement schemes. However, it is also important to prevent unnecessary disputes from arising in the first place. While the budget is primarily about raising and deploying resources, decisions regarding revenue administration and expenditure management systems are also important. The finance minister should consider whether the government's revenue-mobilisation strategy and its approach to the administration of direct tax are consistent with India's investment and growth ambitions and how the tax administration's incentives can be structured so that unnecessary disputes do not arise. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/budget-look-for-ways-to-reduce-tax-disputes-101672842591078.html>

22. Turnaround of PSBs: From Rs 85K-cr loss in 2017 to nearing Rs 1-trn profit ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Updated: January 4, 2023

Public sector Banks have travelled a long distance since 2017 when they posted a net loss of Rs 85,390 crore to a profit of Rs 66,539 crore in FY22 and are estimated to touch a milestone of Rs 1 lakh crore by the end of the current fiscal.

There was a time when 11 out of 21 PSBs were placed under the prompt corrective framework of the Reserve Bank due to deteriorating financial health on account of mounting bad loans to alarming levels of 14.58 per cent of the total credit. PSBs suffered from a host of problems, including a dismally low capital base, unprofessional management, demoralised staff and huge inefficiencies.

Many of them were on the brink of default posing a threat to the financial security of the country. Their share prices were hitting a rock bottom.

PSBs booked collective losses to the tune of Rs 2,07,329 crore for five straight years -- from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

The highest amount of net loss was registered in 2017-18 at Rs 85,370 crore, followed by Rs 66,636 crore in 2018-19; Rs 25,941 crore in 2019-20; Rs 17,993 crore in 2015-16 and Rs 11,389 crore in 2016-17.

The doom-to-bloom story of the public sector banking industry can be attributed to the initiatives and spate of reforms undertaken by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar.

As part of the strategy, the government infused an unprecedented Rs 3,10,997 crore to recapitalise PSBs during the last five financial years -- from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The recapitalisation programme provided much-needed support to the PSBs and prevented the possibility of any default on their part.

Also, the methodology of providing capital through the issuance of recapitalisation bonds is undertaken without impacting the fiscal deficit of the government, except for the interest outgo.

While announcing the recapitalisation programme in October 2017, Kumar had termed PSBs as 'Article of Faith' and the very faith is being validated by the financial sector experts and markets.

Simultaneously, efforts were made to curb the circulation of black money in a layered fashion. Days after joining the Department of Financial Services, Kumar froze bank accounts of about 3.38 lakh shell companies that were being used for creating fictitious equity.

Due to record recovery in FY19, PSBs' Credit Risk-weighted Assets (RWAs) to Gross Advances ratio decreased from 80.3 per cent in September 2017 to 63.9 per cent in December 2019.

As part of the reform agenda, the politically sensitive decision of privatising a PSB was taken to give a signal that the government is really committed to reforms and can bite the bullet. After hectic parlays, the majority 51 per cent stake of IDBI Bank was sold to LIC in January 2019, making it a private sector bank.

Aided by the capital infusion and nudge from the Department of Financial Services compelled PSBs to step up action on defaulters who committed fraud. Action against big defaulters like Bhushan Steel, Jet Airways, Essar Steel, Nirav Modi and Rotomac along with bankers like Yes Bank, DHFL, IL&FS, etc. fundamentally corrected the imbalance in the creditor-debtor relationship.

As a result, the PSBs, which reeled under the stressed assets, bounced back with a vengeance and have started giving a tough fight to private sector peers on all counts. They turned the corner during 2020-21 with a combined net profit of Rs 31,820 crore, supported by impressive loan recovery, reduction in NPAs and windfall gains on their bond portfolio.

Subsequently, the combined profit more than doubled to Rs 66,539 crore in 2021-22 despite COVID-19 pressure. Many state-owned banks after a hiatus also declared dividends in the last financial year. In all, nine banks, including SBI, declared dividends of Rs 7,867 crore to shareholders.

According to Bank of Maharashtra Managing Director AS Rajeev, PSBs are on solid footing and this year too, they will witness exponential growth in the bottomline.

"My own sense is that the consolidated profit of PSBs would be anything between Rs 80,000 crore to Rs 1,00,000 crore during the current financial year going by the past two years' trend. It may even cross Rs one lakh milestone, depending on the pace of resolution of the NCLT and NARCL cases, recovery, credit growth and other factors in the ongoing fourth quarter.

"Public sector banks are making efforts for sustainability of their market share. All other key parameters are looking good and gradually moving towards global standards," he told PTI.

Echoing a similar view, Punjab and Sind Bank Managing Director Swarup Kumar Saha said that with slippages getting arrested and asset quality improving, a hike in interest rate will add to profitability.

"PSBs are now in a golden period in terms of their profitability... although income on investment was constrained due to rising yield, it will improve next year with yields stabilising," he said.

The story of revival also had anecdotes like the publishing of photographs of defaulters was allowed as per their PSB's board-approved policy, forensic audit of all defaulting loans above Rs 50 crore and capturing passport details. Besides, specialised monitoring for high-value loans was introduced for clean post-sanction follow-up and timely raising of red flags.

As part of the reform agenda of the government, Rajiv Kumar was instrumental in conceiving and implementing mega-mergers in the financial sector. The first-ever three-way bank amalgamation -- Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank -- was done, and after successfully implementing it, the mega-merger of 10 PSBs resulting in a total of 12 PBSs was carried out.

Last but not least, kudos to foot soldiers -- bank employees and Unions, who showed great faith and did not resist monumental changes.

On the customer protection side, the government made an amendment in the law to first raise deposit insurance five times to Rs 5 lakh per account and payment of this within 90 days of the RBI imposing a moratorium on the bank. https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/turnaround-of-psbs-from-rs-85k-cr-loss-in-2017-to-nearing-rs-1-trn-profit-123010400818_1.html

23. CCEA approves Rs 2,539 crore BIND scheme for modernising Doordarshan, AIR ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Updated: January 4, 2023

Largest outlay by government, say experts; I&B Ministry had spent over Rs 2,300 cr to modernise DD, AIR between 2014 and 2021, it disclosed in Lok Sabha last year

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved a scheme worth Rs 2,539.61 crore for Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR), in a boost to public sector broadcasting in the country.

The investment, announced under the Central Sector 'Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development (BIND)' scheme, will be up to 2025-26 and will aim to modernise the two entities run by Prasar Bharati. It is also the largest investment outlay by the government for the two public broadcasters under the BIND scheme, media experts said.

The Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry had last year disclosed in the Lok Sabha that it had spent over Rs 2,300 crore to modernise DD and AIR between 2014 and 2021.

"The BIND scheme is the vehicle for providing financial support to Prasar Bharati for expenses related to expansion and upgrade of its broadcasting infrastructure, content development and civil work related to the organisation," I&B Minister Anurag Thakur said while announcing the investment on Wednesday.

"Prasar Bharati, as the public broadcaster of the country, is the most important vehicle of information, education, entertainment and engagement for the people, especially in remote areas of the country, through DD and AIR," he said.

According to Shashi Shekhar Vempati, media expert and former CEO of Prasar Bharati, the BIND scheme would enable the public broadcaster to undertake major upgrade of its facilities across the country.

Another priority area of the scheme would be the development of high-quality content for both domestic and international audiences and ensuring availability of diverse content to viewers by upgrade of capacity of DD Freedish, the free-to-air DTH platform run by Prasar Bharati, to accommodate more channels, the I&B Ministry said.

Purchase of OB vans and digital upgradation of DD and AIR studios to make them high-definition-ready would also be done as part of the project, the ministry said.

"Prasar Bharti is the public broadcaster... it is not just about profit making. The aim is to ensure information regarding the government's work and schemes reaches people. Different reports have pointed at the quality of content, whether it is DD or AIR," said Thakur. Both DD and AIR would be available on mobile phones, he added. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ccea-approves-rs-2-539-crore-bind-scheme-for-modernising-doordarshan-air-123010401098_1.html

24. Delhi govt refuses to participate in arbitral award payment to RInfra ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Updated: January 4, 2023

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Wednesday said before the high court that the Delhi government will not participate in the rights issue launched by DMRC to seek equity for payment of an arbitral award of Rs 3,565.64 crore to Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Ltd (DAMEPL).

"The liability for such payment of arbitral award does not rest with GNCT of Delhi," the Delhi government told DMRC in a letter.

It also said that the shareholders cannot be held liable for payments arising out of disputes or contractual defaults.

"DMRC may raise money through the open market or via externally-aided funds or loans from the Centre to meet its liabilities," the Delhi Government submitted.

On December 15, the DMRC had launched the rights issue to raise Rs 7,131 crore from existing shareholders — the Centre and the Delhi government — which own 50 per cent each in the company.

It was to put an end to DMRC's tussle with Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra). DAMEPL is an arm of RInfra.

The decision of the rights issue was taken at a meeting of the DMRC's board on December 13, a day after the Supreme Court cracked the whip on the urban transporter for repeatedly failing to pay DAMEPL Rs 4,500 crore as an arbitral award.

The issue will close on January 11, and DMRC has asked both its shareholders to subscribe equally (Rs 3,565.64 crore each) to the equity share capital. It had also said that if it is forced to pay the arbitral award, the operations of Delhi Metro would come to a halt.

The DMRC wrote a letter to its equity shareholders — the ministry of housing and urban affairs and the Delhi government on December 13 asking for the funds.

“This would require non-budgeted financial outflows during the financial year from the government exchequer,” it said.

The urban transporter added that this has to be done through the passing of the Appropriation Bill.

Meanwhile, the ministry of housing and urban affairs told DMRC that the matter is under examination.

The next board meeting of DMRC is scheduled on January 16.

The counsel for DAMEPL on Wednesday expressed anguish over the matter being stretched in the court.

He requested the court to fix a date by which the payment would be made.

After assurance of the attorney general and going through the affidavit of DMRC, the court held, “The appropriate authorities are hopeful the impasse will be resolved by January 16.” The matter will be heard again on January 19.

DMRC and DAMEPL have been at odds ever since the latter pulled out of the Delhi Metro Airport Line operations. It was due to safety issues arising from structural defects.

An arbitral court ruled in favour of RInfra in 2017. It asked DMRC to pay the arbitral award, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court. https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/delhi-govt-refuses-to-participate-in-arbitral-award-payment-to-rinfra-123010400975_1.html

25. Maharashtra Opposition seeks probe into cost escalation in bridge contract work ([newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)) 05 January 2023

The Opposition has demanded a probe into cost escalations of the chain bridges construction contract from initial Rs 2.26 crore to Rs 540 crore on Wednesday.

The Opposition has demanded a probe into cost escalations of the chain bridges construction contract from initial Rs 2.26 crore to Rs 540 crore on Wednesday. The state public works department had given this bridge's construction contract to Khare and Tarkunde Infrastructure Pvt Ltd, Nagpur. Leader of Opposition (LoP) and senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar said that it is shocking and surprising to see such high-value escalations of bridge construction costs.

He said that this was a waste of public and honest taxpayer's money. "A high-level, proper probe should be carried out to check why and how this cost escalated from initial Rs 2.26 crore to Rs 540 crore for bridge construction contract. Action should be taken against officials and ministers who are guilty," Pawar said. He pointed out that the contractor initially demanded Rs 5 crore for his work, but the government refused to pay and decided to fight the case in respective court but ended up paying almost Rs 540 crore.

"Government has to either carry out the judicial probe or they can set up a special investigations team (SIT) as it is the most favourite of this incumbent government. The truth should come out in the public domain. This is after all people's and honest taxpayers' money. The contractor is happy because he got a huge amount but what about the loss that the government exchequer suffered," asked Pawar.

He said that the matter was taken to the Supreme Court, therefore the government officials must have pressurised the state cabinet to approve and release the fund to avoid contempt of court. "But this is wrong and not acceptable. The respective minister's role should be probed, whether they were also involved in cost escalation decisions," he added. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/jan/05/maharashtra-opposition-seeks-probe-into-cost-escalation-in-bridge-contract-work-2534854.html>