

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (21.12.2022)

1. CAG says delay in measures to strengthen security of coastal naval assets ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Dec 21, 2022

An approval accorded by the Cabinet Committee on Security in February 2009 to beef up security of all coastal and offshore naval assets within a period of three years in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks was "diluted" due to delays in creating the enabling framework, national auditor CAG has said.

It said Fast Interception Crafts (FICs) were inducted into the Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB) with a delay of 13 to 61 months, adding the infrastructure envisaged by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was not available till June last at a few naval ports, according to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The report was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

"The urgency in CCS's sanction (February 2009) following the 26/11 terror attack for setting up a maritime force (Sagar Prahari Bal, SPB) within a period of three years so as to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets, was diluted due to delays in creating the enabling setup (Fast Interception Crafts, FICs, and manpower infrastructure)," the CAG said in a press statement.

It said, "FICs were inducted into SPB with a delay of 13 to 61 months, (and) infrastructure for basing of FICs/SPB was still (June 2021) not available at a few naval ports envisaged in the CCS's sanction (February 2009) and manpower deployment at the officers' level was deficient."

The Indian security establishment initiated a series of measures to strengthen India's coastal security after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which over 166 people, including 28 foreigners from 10 nations, were killed by a group of Pakistani terrorists.

"The operational availability and exploitation of FICs since their induction at designated ports were sub-optimal," the CAG said.

In another observation, the CAG said Boost Gas Turbines (BGTs) were held in excess of the quantity prescribed as per the extant naval instructions.

"The imminent decommissioning of the ships and stock position were not considered while placing orders for procurement of BGTs. This resulted in excess holding of the newly procured BGTs worth Rs 213.96 crore," it said.

The CAG said the repair and overhaul of a naval helicopter were inordinately delayed due to time taken in accordance with Approval in Principle (AIP) by the Ministry of Defence (260 weeks) and conclusion of contract (95 weeks).

It said this resulted in the helicopter being grounded for over 10 years.

In another observation, the CAG said the chief engineer (Navy) in Mumbai concluded a contract for the construction of a security wall around defence land, which was not free from encroachment.

As a result, the contract was rescinded in June 2017 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 2.19 crore, it said.

The CAG also examined the execution of certain work by the IAF involving an expenditure of Rs 8,922 crore during the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The CAG said it assessed whether the planning and execution of work services were able to achieve quality output in a timely manner and also whether the tendering process in work services was able to ensure quality, optimum price and fair play.

"The approval of annual major works programme got significantly delayed in each year during the last five years which in turn had an adverse effect on the chain of sanctioning, tendering and execution of works," it said.

The CAG also gave specific examples of deviations from laid down rules.

"In one case, relating to runway works, award of work to an ineligible contractor led to premature failure of the runway, which in turn required fresh sanctioning and execution of work through another contractor for the same work.

"Thus, fresh runway resurfacing at the AF station was executed at a cost of Rs 37.40 crore within a span of six years instead of the prescribed period of 10-12 years," it said. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cag-says-delay-in-measures-to-strengthen-security-of-coastal-naval-assets-122122100136_1.html

2. CAG flags delays in implementation of measures to strengthen security of coastal and offshore naval assets (economictimes.indiatimes.com, theprint.in, devdiscourse.com) PTI | Dec 20, 2022

"The urgency in CCS's sanction (February 2009) following the 26/11 terror attack for setting up a maritime force (Sagar Prahari Bal, SPB) within a period of three years so as to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets, was diluted due to delays in creating the enabling setup (Fast Interception Crafts, FICs, and manpower infrastructure)," the CAG said in a press statement.

An approval accorded by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in February 2009 to beef up security of all coastal and offshore naval assets within a period of three years in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks was "diluted" due to delays in creating the enabling framework, national auditor CAG said on Tuesday. It said FastInterception Crafts (FICs) were inducted into the Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB) with a delay of 13 to 61 months, adding the infrastructure envisaged by the CCS was not available till June last at a few naval ports, according to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

The report was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

"The urgency in CCS's sanction (February 2009) following the 26/11 terror attack for setting up a maritime force (Sagar Prahari Bal, SPB) within a period of three years so as to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets, was diluted due to delays in creating the

enabling setup (Fast Interception Crafts, FICs, and manpower infrastructure)," the CAG said in a press statement.

It said, "FICs were inducted into SPB with a delay of 13 to 61 months, (and) infrastructure for basing of FICs/ SPB was still (June 2021) not available at a few naval ports envisaged in the CCS's sanction (February 2009) and manpower deployment at the officers' level was deficient."

The Indian security establishment initiated a series of measures to strengthen India's coastal security after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which over 166 people, including 28 foreigners from 10 nations, were killed by a group of Pakistani terrorists.

"The operational availability and exploitation of FICs since their induction at designated ports were sub-optimal," the CAG said.

In another observation, the CAG said Boost Gas Turbines (BGTs) were held in excess of the quantity prescribed as per the extant naval instructions.

"The imminent decommissioning of the ships and stock position were not considered while placing orders for procurement of BGTs. This resulted in excess holding of the newly procured BGTs worth Rs 213.96 crore," it said.

The CAG said repair and overhaul of a naval helicopter was inordinately delayed due to time taken in accordance with Approval in Principle (AIP) by the Defence Ministry (260 weeks) and conclusion of contract (95 weeks).

It said this resulted in the helicopter being grounded for over 10 years.

In another observation, the CAG said the Chief Engineer (Navy) in Mumbai concluded a contract for construction of a security wall around defence land, which was not free from encroachment.

As a result, the contract was rescinded in June 2017 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 2.19 crore, it said. The CAG also examined execution of certain work by the IAF involving an expenditure of Rs 8,922 crore during the period 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The CAG said it assessed whether the planning and execution of work services was able to achieve quality output in a timely manner and also whether the tendering process in work services was able to ensure quality, optimum price and fair play. "The approval of annual major works programme got significantly delayed in each year during the last five years which in turn had an adverse effect on the chain of sanctioning, tendering and execution of works," it said.

The CAG also gave specific examples of deviations from laid down rules.

"In one case, relating to runway works, award of work to an ineligible contractor led to premature failure of the runway, which in turn required fresh sanctioning and execution of work through another contractor for the same work.

"Thus, fresh runway resurfacing at the AF station was executed at a cost of Rs 37.40 crore within a span of six years instead of the prescribed period of 10-12 years," it said. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/cag-flags-delays-in->

[implementation-of-measures-to-strengthen-security-of-coastal-and-offshore-naval-assets/articleshow/96378558.cms](https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/coastal-force-set-up-after-26-11-lacks-infra-cag-flags-anomalies-463014)

3. Coastal force set up after 26/11 lacks infra: CAG; flags anomalies ([tribuneindia.com](https://www.tribuneindia.com)) Dec 21, 2022

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), in a report presented in Parliament today, said the coastal security force set up after the November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks still did not have full infrastructure.

CAG said the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) sanction in February 2009 following the November 2008 terror attack was for setting up a maritime force called the Sagar Prahari Bal. This was to be set up within three years to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets.

The plan was “diluted due to delays in creating the enabling setup (fast interception crafts (FICs), manpower and infrastructure,” CAG said. The specialised boats (FICs) were inducted into the force with a delay of 13 to 61 months, infrastructure for basing of these was not available (as of June 2021) at a few naval ports which was envisaged in the CCS sanction.

Manpower deployment at the officer level was deficient. The operational availability and exploitation of FICs since their induction at designated ports were sub-optimal, CAG said in its report on “Defence Services (Air Force and Navy)”.

Speaking on the project to upgrade runways, CAG said contracts were awarded to ineligible contractors by compromising the tendering process, which resulted in the execution of poor quality of work as well as foreclosure.

“In one case, relating to runway works, the award of work to an ineligible contractor led to premature failure of runway, which in turn required fresh sanctioning and execution of work through another contractor for the same work,” CAG said. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/coastal-force-set-up-after-26-11-lacks-infra-cag-flags-anomalies-463014>

4. Central Auditor Flags Delays In Strengthening Security Of Naval Assets ([ndtv.com](https://www.ndtv.com)) Dec 21, 2022

An approval accorded by the Cabinet Committee on Security in February 2009 to enhance the security of all coastal and offshore naval assets within three years in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks was "diluted" due to delays in creating the enabling framework, national auditor CAG has said.

It said Fast Interception Crafts (FICs) were inducted into the Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB) with a delay of 13 to 61 months, adding the infrastructure envisaged by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was not available till June last at a few naval ports, according to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The report was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

"The urgency in CCS's sanction (February 2009) following the 26/11 terror attack for setting up a maritime force (Sagar Prahari Bal, SPB) within a period of three years so as to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets, was diluted due to delays in creating the enabling setup (Fast Interception Crafts, FICs, and manpower infrastructure)," the CAG said in a press statement.

It said, "FICs were inducted into SPB with a delay of 13 to 61 months, (and) infrastructure for basing of FICs/SPB was still (June 2021) not available at a few naval ports envisaged in the CCS's sanction (February 2009) and manpower deployment at the officers' level was deficient."

The Indian security establishment initiated a series of measures to strengthen India's coastal security after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which over 166 people, including 28 foreigners from 10 nations, were killed by a group of Pakistani terrorists.

"The operational availability and exploitation of FICs since their induction at designated ports were sub-optimal," the CAG said.

In another observation, the CAG said Boost Gas Turbines (BGTs) were held in excess of the quantity prescribed as per the extant naval instructions.

"The imminent decommissioning of the ships and stock position were not considered while placing orders for procurement of BGTs. This resulted in excess holding of the newly procured BGTs worth ₹ 213.96 crore," it said.

The CAG said the repair and overhaul of a naval helicopter were inordinately delayed due to time taken in accordance with Approval in Principle (AIP) by the Ministry of Defence (260 weeks) and the conclusion of the contract (95 weeks).

It said this resulted in the helicopter being grounded for over 10 years.

In another observation, the CAG said the chief engineer (Navy) in Mumbai concluded a contract for the construction of a security wall around defence land, which was not free from encroachment.

As a result, the contract was rescinded in June 2017 after incurring an expenditure of ₹ 2.19 crore, it said.

The CAG also examined the execution of certain work by the IAF involving an expenditure of ₹ 8,922 crore during the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The CAG said it assessed whether the planning and execution of work services were able to achieve quality output in a timely manner and also whether the tendering process in work services was able to ensure quality, optimum price and fair play.

"The approval of annual major works programme got significantly delayed in each year during the last five years which in turn had an adverse effect on the chain of sanctioning, tendering and execution of works," it said.

The CAG also gave specific examples of deviations from laid down rules.

"In one case, relating to runway works, award of work to an ineligible contractor led to premature failure of the runway, which in turn required fresh sanctioning and execution of work through another contractor for the same work.

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"Thus, fresh runway resurfacing at the AF station was executed at a cost of ₹ 37.40 crore within a span of six years instead of the prescribed period of 10-12 years," it said. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/cag-flags-delays-in-implementation-of-measures-to-strengthen-security-of-coastal-offshore-naval-assets-3624843>

5. CAG report flags issues in Navy's Sagar Prahari Bal ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Dec 21, 2022

The Indian Navy's Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB), set up on the back of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, is facing issues pertaining to assets, infrastructure and manpower, among others, that have a bearing on its effectiveness, said a report tabled by the national auditor in Parliament on Tuesday.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by the Prime Minister, gave its sanction for SPB in February 2009 as part of an overarching plan to strengthen the country's maritime security.

"The urgency in CCS's sanction following the 26/11 terror attack for setting up SPB within a period of three years so as to provide security to all coastal and offshore naval assets was diluted due to delays in creating the enabling setup (fast interceptor craft or FIC, manpower & infrastructure)," said the report tabled by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

Months after the 26/11 terror attacks, the government came up with a comprehensive plan to plug the holes in India's vulnerable maritime security. It bestowed more powers on the navy — some taken away from the Coast Guard — and named it the sole authority responsible for maritime security.

"FIC were inducted into SPB with a delay of 13 to 61 months, infrastructure for basing of FIC/SPB was still (June 2021) not available at a few naval ports envisaged in the CCS's sanction (February 2009) and manpower deployment at the officers' level was deficient," CAG said in its latest report.

The operational availability and exploitation of FIC since their induction at designated ports were sub-optimal, the report added.

Maritime security remains a key focus area for the government. In February 2022, Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar (retd) took over as India's first national maritime security coordinator (NMSC) amid growing threats to coastal security and changing power dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) where China is trying to expand its sphere of influence.

Kumar was handpicked for the challenging role. He reports directly to national security advisor Ajit Doval. To be sure, NMSC will have no forces under him.

The CCS gave its nod to the creation of the post of NMSC in November 2021. The appointment came two decades after a recommendation made by a Group of Ministers on the back of the 1999 Kargil War with Pakistan to strengthen the national security architecture. The 26/11 Mumbai terror strikes gave new impetus to bolster maritime security. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cag-report-flags-issues-in-navy-s-sagar-prahari-bal-101671562157768.html>

6. CAG flags delays in implementation of measures to strengthen safety of coastal and offshore naval belongings ([wsquarenews.in](https://www.wsquarenews.in)) Dec 20, 2022

An approval accorded by the Cupboard Committee on Safety (CCS) in February 2009 to beef up safety of all coastal and offshore naval belongings inside a interval of three years within the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai assaults was “diluted” on account of delays in creating the enabling framework, nationwide auditor CAG mentioned Tuesday.

It mentioned Quick Interception Crafts (FICs) had been inducted into the Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB) with a delay of 13 to 61 months, including the infrastructure envisaged by the CCS was not out there until June final at a couple of naval ports, in keeping with the report by the Comptroller and Auditor Normal (CAG).

The report was tabled in Parliament Tuesday.

“The urgency in CCS’s sanction (February 2009) following the 26/11 terror assault for organising a maritime power (Sagar Prahari Bal, SPB)) inside a interval of three years in order to supply safety to all coastal and offshore naval belongings, was diluted on account of delays in creating the enabling setup (Quick Interception Crafts, FICs, and manpower infrastructure),” the CAG mentioned in a press assertion.

It mentioned, “FICs had been inducted into SPB with a delay of 13 to 61 months, (and) infrastructure for basing of FICs/ SPB was nonetheless (June 2021) not out there at a couple of naval ports envisaged within the CCS’s sanction (February 2009) and manpower deployment on the officers’ degree was poor.”

The Indian safety institution initiated a sequence of measures to strengthen India’s coastal safety after the 2008 Mumbai terror assault by which over 166 individuals, together with 28 foreigners from 10 nations, had been killed by a bunch of Pakistani terrorists.

“The operational availability and exploitation of FICs since their induction at designated ports had been sub-optimal,” the CAG mentioned.

In one other remark, the CAG mentioned Enhance Fuel Generators (BGTs) had been held in extra of the amount prescribed as per the extant naval directions.

“The upcoming decommissioning of the ships and inventory place weren’t thought-about whereas inserting orders for procurement of BGTs. This resulted in extra holding of the newly procured BGTs value Rs 213.96 crore,” it mentioned.

The CAG mentioned restore and overhaul of a naval helicopter was inordinately delayed on account of time taken in accordance with Approval in Precept (AIP) by the Defence Ministry (260 weeks) and conclusion of contract (95 weeks).

It mentioned this resulted within the helicopter being grounded for over 10 years.

In one other remark, the CAG mentioned the Chief Engineer (Navy) in Mumbai concluded a contract for building of a safety wall round defence land, which was not free from encroachment.

Because of this, the contract was rescinded in June 2017 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 2.19 crore, it mentioned.

The CAG additionally examined execution of sure work by the IAF involving an expenditure of Rs 8,922 crore in the course of the interval 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The CAG mentioned it assessed whether or not the planning and execution of labor companies was capable of obtain high quality output in a well timed method and in addition whether or not the tendering course of in work companies was ready to make sure high quality, optimum worth and truthful play.

“The approval of annual main works programme received considerably delayed in every year over the past 5 years which in flip had an antagonistic impact on the chain of sanctioning, tendering and execution of works,” it mentioned.

The CAG additionally gave particular examples of deviations from laid down guidelines.

“In a single case, regarding runway works, award of labor to an ineligible contractor led to untimely failure of the runway, which in flip required contemporary sanctioning and execution of labor by one other contractor for a similar work.

“Thus, contemporary runway resurfacing on the AF station was executed at a value of Rs 37.40 crore inside a span of six years as an alternative of the prescribed interval of 10-12 years,” it mentioned. <https://wsquarenews.in/cag-flags-delays-in-implementation-of-measures-to-strengthen-safety-of-coastal-and-offshore-naval-belongings/>

7. CAG: 26/11 आतंकी हमले के 14 साल बाद भी तटीय सुरक्षा मजबूत नहीं, सागर प्रहरी की जरूरतें भी अधूरी (amarujala.com) Dec 21, 2022

देश के नियंत्रक व महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने नौसेना की सभी तटीय संपत्तियों की सुरक्षा में देरी की आलोचना की है। कैग ने कहा कि 26/11 मुंबई हमले के बाद सुरक्षा मामलों की मंत्रिमंडलीय समिति (CCS) ने तीन साल में देश के सभी तटीय क्षेत्रों की सुरक्षा के पुख्ता इंतजाम के निर्देश दिए थे, लेकिन इसके लिए संसाधन जुटाने में 13 से 61 माह की देरी हुई।

राष्ट्रीय लेखाकार कैग ने तटों की सुरक्षा के लिए आवश्यक ढांचा तैयार करने में देरी से हुई। मुंबई हमले के बाद गठित किए 'सागर प्रहरी बल' (SPB) को फास्ट इंटरसेप्टर क्रॉफ्ट्स (FICs) मुहैया कराने में 13 से 61 माह का विलंब हुआ। यहां तक कि जून 2021 तक कुछ नौसैनिक बंदरगाहों को सुरक्षा के लिए आवश्यक संसाधन उपलब्ध नहीं थे। जबकि सीसीएस ने फरवरी 2009 में इनकी मंजूरी दे दी थी।

सुरक्षा मामलों को लेकर कैग की यह रिपोर्ट मंगलवार को संसद में पेश की गई। इसमें कहा गया है कि सीसीएस ने सागर प्रहरी के गठन के बाद तीन साल में नौसेना के सभी तटीय केंद्रों की सुरक्षा के निर्देश दिए थे। कैग की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि समुद्री गश्ती यान FICs उपलब्ध कराने में भारी विलंब हुआ। अधिकारी स्तर के कार्मिकों की भी पर्याप्त तैनाती नहीं की गई।

बता दें, भारतीय सुरक्षा संस्थानों ने 26 नवंबर 2008 को हुए मुंबई हमले के बाद देश के तटों की सुरक्षा सख्त करने के अनेक कदम उठाए हैं। पाकिस्तानी आतंकियों ने इस हमले में 10 देशों के 28 विदेशी नागरिकों समेत 166 लोगों की हत्या कर दी थी। ये आतंकी गुजरात के पोरबंदर तट से होते हुए मुंबई पहुंचे थे।

इन खामियों का भी कैग ने किया जिक्र

कैग ने यह भी कहा है कि जिन बंदरगाहों पर इन यानों को तैनात किया गया है, वहां भी इनका इस्तेमाल न्यूनतम हुआ। वहीं, बूस्ट गैस टर्बाइन (बीजीटी) को नौसेना द्वारा निर्धारित मात्रा से अधिक रखा गया। बीजीटी की खरीदी का आदेश देते समय इनके स्टॉक का ध्यान नहीं रखा गया, इस कारण नए बीजीटी की खरीदी पर 213.96 करोड़ रुपये का ज्यादा खर्च हो गया। इसी तरह रक्षा मंत्रालय की 'सैद्धांतिक मंजूरी' (एआईपी) की 260 सप्ताह की समय सीमा और अनुबंध पूरा करने की अवधि 95 सप्ताह होने के कारण नौसैनिक हेलिकॉप्टरों की मरम्मत में असाधारण देरी हुई। इस कारण हेलिकॉप्टर 10 सालों से ज्यादा समय तक खड़े रहे। रिपोर्ट में मंत्रालय के कई अन्य फैसलों में भी चूक की ओर ध्यान दिलाया गया है। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/cag-flags-delays-in-implementation-of-measures-to-strengthen-security-of-coastal-offshore-naval-assets>

8. GSAT-6 Satellite Launched In 2015 Largely Unutilised: Centre's Auditor CAG (ndtv.com) Dec 20, 2022

India's GSAT-6 satellite, launched in August 2015, has largely remained unutilised as the ground segment required for processing its data was not ready, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found.

According to the Compliance Audit on Scientific and Environmental Ministries/Departments of Union Government by the CAG, the Department of Space (DOS) launched the GSAT-6 at a cost of ₹ 508 crore but was unable to utilise the satellite as envisaged due to non-readiness of its ground segment.

"This resulted in non-utilisation of the satellite for nearly half of its life," the central auditor said in the report that was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

"We have to go through the report properly and analyse the points raised. Anyhow, the department will take necessary action as suggested in the report," N Sudheer Kumar, Director, ISRO's Capacity Building Programme Office told PTI.

The GSAT-6 satellite, aimed at providing Satellite Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (S-DMB) services for mobile communication applications, was originally planned in agreement with Devas Multimedia Private Limited.

However, after the termination of the agreement with Devas, the satellite was planned to be operated in association with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), who was to build the ground segment.

"Audit observed that DOS did not enter into any memorandum of understanding (MoU)/agreement with DRDO for the development of the ground segment. It also failed to devise a target-based action plan, in consultation with DRDO," the report said.

It added that as a result, DRDO was not able to complete the activities of the ground segment before the launch of the satellite in August 2015.

The DRDO had entrusted the project to build the dedicated hub for providing services of the satellites to the three Services, civil society agencies and strategic users, the report said.

"This project was to be completed by January 2015 but was, however, delayed by more than five years and completed only in July 2020. Reasons for the delayed completion of these two projects were, however, not furnished," the report said.

It said the DOS was not aware about the present status of Phase II or the operational phase which involved the induction of GSAT-6 into the network centric operations of the three Services, civil society agencies and strategic users.

"Therefore, objective of GSAT-6 satellite which was launched in August 2015 after incurring an expenditure of ₹ 508 crore was not fulfilled due to non-completion of the activities to be carried out under ground segment as the satellite has remained unutilised since its launch," the report said.

The report said the DOS conveyed to the auditor in November 2021 that the department has optimally used 20 per cent of the capacity in its societal applications and research projects.

It said that the DOS admitted in March last year that the present status of the operationalisation and utilisation of the ground station was not available with the Department. "Thus, DOS was not aware of the utilisation of the balance 80 per cent capacity of the satellite," the report said. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/gsat-6-satellite-launched-in-2015-largely-unutilised-centres-auditor-cag-3624125>

9. GSAT-6 largely unutilised as ground segment not ready: CAG (economictimes.indiatimes.com) Dec 20, 2022

The GSAT-6 satellite, aimed at providing Satellite Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (S-DMB) services for mobile communication applications, was originally planned in agreement with Devas Multimedia Private Limited. India's GSAT-6 satellite, launched in August 2015, has largely remained unutilised as the ground segment required for processing its data was not ready, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found. According to the Compliance Audit on Scientific and Environmental Ministries/Departments of Union Government by the

CAG, the Department of Space (DOS) launched the GSAT6 at a cost of Rs 508 crore but was unable to utilise the satellite as envisaged due to non-readiness of its ground segment.

"This resulted in non-utilisation of the satellite for nearly half of its life," the central auditor said in the report that was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

The GSAT-6 satellite, aimed at providing Satellite Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (S-DMB) services for mobile communication applications, was originally planned in agreement with Devas Multimedia Private Limited.

However, after the termination of the agreement with Devas, the satellite was planned to be operated in association with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), who was to build the ground segment.

"Audit observed that DOS did not enter into any memorandum of understanding (MoU)/agreement with DRDO for the development of the ground segment. It also failed to devise a target-based action plan, in consultation with DRDO," the report said.

It added that as a result, DRDO was not able to complete the activities of the ground segment before the launch of the satellite in August 2015.

The DRDO had entrusted the project to build the dedicated hub for providing services of the satellites to the three Services, civil society agencies and strategic users, the report said.

"This project was to be completed by January 2015 but was, however, delayed by more than five years and completed only in July 2020. Reasons for the delayed completion of these two projects were, however, not furnished," the report said.

It said the DOS was not aware about the present status of Phase II or the operational phase which involved the induction of GSAT-6 into the network centric operations of the three services, civil society agencies and strategic users.

"Therefore, objective of GSAT-6 satellite which was launched in August 2015 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 508 crore was not fulfilled due to noncompletion of the activities to be carried out under ground segment as the satellite has remained unutilised since its launch," the report said.

The report said the DOS conveyed to the auditor in November 2021 that the department has optimally used 20 per cent of the capacity in its societal applications and research projects.

It said that the DOS admitted in March last year that the present status of the operationalisation and utilisation of the ground station was not available with the Department.

"Thus, DOS was not aware of the utilisation of the balance 80 per cent capacity of the satellite," the report said. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/gsat-6-largely-unutilised-as-ground-segment-not-ready-cag/articleshow/96377641.cms>

10. GSAT-6 Largely Unutilised As Ground Segment Not Ready ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) 21 Dec 2022

India's GSAT-6 satellite, launched in August 2015, has largely remained unutilised as the ground segment required for processing its data was not ready, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found.

According to the Compliance Audit on Scientific and Environmental Ministries/Departments of Union Government by the CAG, the Department of Space (DOS) launched the GSAT-6 at a cost of Rs 508 crore but was unable to utilise the satellite as envisaged due to non-readiness of its ground segment.

"This resulted in non-utilisation of the satellite for nearly half of its life," the central auditor said in the report that was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

The GSAT-6 satellite, aimed at providing Satellite Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (S-DMB) services for mobile communication applications, was originally planned in agreement with Devas Multimedia Private Limited.

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"This project was to be completed by January 2015 but was, however, delayed by more than five years and completed only in July 2020.

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"Therefore, objective of GSAT-6 satellite which was launched in August 2015 after incurring an expenditure of Rs 508 crore was not fulfilled due to non-completion of the activities to be carried out under ground segment as the satellite has remained unutilised since its launch," the report said. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/big-stories/union-health-minister-reviews-covid-situation-directs-officials-to-be-alert-strengthen-surveillance-502936?infinite-scroll=1>

11. जमीनी हिस्सा नहीं था तैयार फिर भी आसमान में भेज दी सैटेलाइट, भारत की जीसैट-6 को लेकर बड़ा खुलासा (livehindustan.com) Dec 21, 2022

भारत की एक सैटेलाइट को लेकर चौंकानेवाला खुलासा हुआ है। नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 2015 में लॉन्च की गई इस सैटेलाइट का काफी हद तक इस्तेमाल नहीं हो सका। इसने कहा कि भारत के जीसैट-6 उपग्रह का काफी हद तक उपयोग नहीं किया जा सका क्योंकि इसके डेटा संबंधी प्रक्रिया के लिए जरूरी जमीनी हिस्सा तैयार नहीं था।

कैग की विभिन्न मंत्रालयों/विभागों की वैज्ञानिक और पर्यावरणीय अनुपालन लेखा रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, अंतरिक्ष विभाग ने जीसैट-6 उपग्रह को अगस्त 2015 में प्रक्षेपित किया था, जिस पर 508 करोड़ रुपये की लागत आई थी। लेकिन इसके जमीनी हिस्सा तैयार नहीं होने के कारण उपग्रह का उपयोग नहीं किया जा सका। संसद में मंगलवार को पेश की गई कैग की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, “इस कारण उपग्रह के सेवा काल के करीब आधे हिस्से तक उसका उपयोग नहीं किया जा सका।”

जीसैट-6 उपग्रह का लक्ष्य उपग्रह डिजिटल मल्टीमीडिया प्रसारण (एस-डीएमबी) सेवाओं के मोबाइल संचार एप्लीकेशन प्रदान करना है, जिसकी योजना मूल रूप से देवास मल्टीमीडिया प्राइवेट लिमिटेड के साथ समझौते के तहत तैयार की गई थी। हालांकि, देवास के साथ समझौता समाप्त होने के बाद उपग्रह के परिचालन की योजना रक्षा अनुसंधान एवं विकास संगठन (डीआरडीओ) के साथ बनाई गई, जिसे जमीनी हिस्सा तैयार करना था। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, अंतरिक्ष विभाग ने जमीनी खंड तैयार करने के बारे में डीआरडीओ के साथ किसी समझौता ज्ञापन पर हस्ताक्षर नहीं किया था। साथ ही, वह लक्ष्य आधारित कार्ययोजना तैयार करने में भी विफल रहा। <https://www.livehindustan.com/national/story-gsat6-satellite-largely-utilized-launched-in-2015-says-centres-auditor-cag-7517601.html>

12. FY21 saw big rise in debt, fiscal deficit, says CAG (tribuneindia.com) Dec 21, 2022

The Central macroeconomic indicators were extremely wobbly during the Covid-hit year of 2020-21, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) which examined compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA), 2003.

The fiscal deficit as per Union Government Finance Accounts was Rs 19.75 lakh crore, which was 9.98% of GDP at current prices. But the fiscal deficit as shown in the Budget at a Glance was Rs 18.18 lakh crore, which was 9.18% of GDP. In contrast, the FRBM framework mandates that the Central Government limits fiscal deficit up to 3% of GDP by March 31, 2021, and a 0.1% reduction thereafter.

The Central Government's debt at the end of 2020-21 was at Rs 121.91 lakh crore, which was 61.57% of GDP. The Act limits the Central Government Debt to 40% of GDP by the end of financial year 2024-2025.

The financial year 2020-21 was a non-standard year with respect to the performance of the economy and Government finances, cautioned the CAG.

Non-debt receipt was short realised by 14.83% from the targeted level. However, revenue deficit deviated on the higher side by 55.20% and fiscal deficit by 44.80% of the targeted level of 70% of Budget Estimate (BE) as on September 30, 2020.

Debt sustainability analysis revealed that while the Debt-GDP ratio was around 49% during 2016-17 to 2018-19, an increasing trend was seen during 2019-20 and 2020-21. The debt growth rate outgrew the GDP growth resulting in an increased Debt-GDP ratio of 52.33% and 61.57% in the financial year 2019-20 and 2020-21, respectively.

The average interest cost on debt showed a declining trend, from 6.81% in 2016-17 to 6.35% in 2020-21, but the actual interest paid on debt consistently increased across the five-year period.

Statistics at glance

-The fiscal deficit as per Union Government Finance Accounts was Rs 19.75 lakh crore, which was 9.98% of GDP at current prices

-In contrast, the FRBM framework mandates that the Central Government limits fiscal deficit up to 3% of GDP by March 31, 2021, and a 0.1% reduction thereafter. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/business/fy21-saw-big-rise-in-debt-fiscal-deficit-says-cag-463080>

13. No action plan in place for Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016, says CAG ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) December 21, 2022

The CAG, in an audit report, has said that plastic waste management rules could not be implemented effectively due to lack of an action plan by the Union Environment Ministry.

"Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) have no action plan for implementation of Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016, as a result, plastic waste management rules could not be implemented effectively and efficiently," the government auditor said in a report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

"There were data gaps due to which the CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) as well as the MoEF&CC did not have complete and comprehensive picture of plastic waste generation in entire country during the period 2015-20. Audit also observed that the data received from SPCBs and PCCs was not validated by the CPCB to assess its authenticity and correctness," it said.

The CAG report also said that all the three sampled ULBs (urban local bodies) of Delhi did not furnish the data of plastic waste generated to the DPCC every year during 2015-20.

"East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) did not furnish data for the period 2015-20, North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) for 2015-16 and 2017-18 and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) for 2015-16. However, on comparison of the data made available to the DPCC with that provided to audit, variation of 45.97 per cent was observed in the data of the NDMC; while, in case of the SDMC, the variation in the figures was 40 per cent," it said.

The CAG has recommended that the Ministry needs to put a system in place for effective data collection in relation to generation, collection and disposal of plastic waste, through its agencies (CPCB, SPCBs/PCCs) and monitor their performance.

It also said that the CPCB and state PCBs/PCCs in coordination with local bodies need to carry out, periodically, a comprehensive assessment of the quantity of plastic waste being generated and collected data according to parameters like population size, geographical size of the area, economic growth, increased demand for consumer goods and change in manufacturing methods etc.

It recommended that local bodies may expedite the process of notifying their bye-laws by incorporating plastic waste management rules.

The report also flagged unfruitful expenditure on a demonstration project saying: "Ineffective monitoring by MoEF&CC and delay in release of financial assistance resulted in non-achievement of environmental benefits from the demonstration project and unfruitful expenditure of Rs 73.35 lakh." https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/no-action-plan-in-place-for-plastic-waste-management-rules-2016-says-cag-122122100019_1.html

14. प्लास्टिक वेस्ट मैनेजमेंट रूल्स-2016 को लागू करने का कोई एक्शन प्लान नहीं- CAG (hindi.thequint.com) Dec 21, 2022

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने एक ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्रालय द्वारा कार्य योजना की कमी के कारण प्लास्टिक कचरा प्रबंधन नियमों को प्रभावी ढंग से लागू नहीं किया जा सका है।

सरकारी लेखा परीक्षक ने एक रिपोर्ट में कहा, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय (एमओईएफ और सीसी) के पास प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन नियम 2016 के कार्यान्वयन के लिए कोई कार्य योजना नहीं है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन नियमों को प्रभावी ढंग से और कुशलता से लागू नहीं किया जा सका।

कैग की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, डेटा गैप थे, जिसके कारण केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड के साथ-साथ एमओईएफ और सीसी के पास 2015-20 की अवधि के दौरान पूरे देश में प्लास्टिक कचरे की पूरी और व्यापक तस्वीर नहीं थी। ऑडिट ने यह भी देखा कि प्राप्त डेटा एसपीसीबी और पीसीसी को एसपीसीबी द्वारा इसकी प्रामाणिकता और शुद्धता का आकलन करने के लिए मान्य नहीं किया गया था।

कैग की रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि दिल्ली के सभी तीन सैंपल यूएलबी (शहरी स्थानीय निकाय) ने 2015-20 के दौरान हर साल डीपीसीसी को उत्पन्न होने वाले प्लास्टिक कचरे का डेटा नहीं दिया।

रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, पूर्वी दिल्ली नगर निगम (ईडीएमसी) ने 2015-20, उत्तरी दिल्ली नगर निगम (एनडीएमसी) ने 2015-16 और 2017-18 और दक्षिण दिल्ली नगर निगम (एसडीएमसी) ने 2015-16 के लिए डेटा प्रस्तुत नहीं किया। हालांकि, डीपीसीसी को उपलब्ध कराए गए आंकड़ों की लेखापरीक्षा को मुहैया कराए गए आंकड़ों से तुलना करने पर एनडीएमसी के आंकड़ों में 45.97 फीसदी का अंतर देखा गया, जबकि एसडीएमसी के मामले में आंकड़ों में 40 फीसदी का अंतर था।

कैग ने सिफारिश की है कि मंत्रालय को अपनी एजेंसियों (सीपीसीबी, एसपीसीबी/पीसीसी) के माध्यम से प्लास्टिक कचरे के उत्पादन, संग्रह और निपटान के संबंध में प्रभावी डेटा संग्रह के लिए एक प्रणाली स्थापित करने और उनके कामकाज की निगरानी करने की जरूरत है।

कैग ने यह भी कहा कि स्थानीय निकायों के समन्वय में सीपीसीबी और राज्य पीसीबी/पीसीसी को समय-समय पर, उत्पन्न होने वाले प्लास्टिक कचरे की मात्रा का व्यापक मूल्यांकन करने और आबादी के आकार, क्षेत्र के भौगोलिक आकार जैसे मापदंडों के अनुसार डेटा एकत्र करने की जरूरत है।

उन्होंने सुझाव दिया कि स्थानीय निकाय प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन नियमों को शामिल करके अपने उपनियमों को अधिसूचित करने की प्रक्रिया में तेजी ला सकते हैं।

रिपोर्ट में एक परियोजना पर निष्फल खर्च को भी दर्शाया गया है और कहा गया है : एमओईएफ और सीसी द्वारा अप्रभावी निगरानी और वित्तीय सहायता जारी करने में देरी के परिणामस्वरूप डिमॉन्स्ट्रेशन प्रोजेक्ट से पर्यावरणीय लाभ प्राप्त नहीं हुआ और 73.35 लाख रुपये का निष्फल व्यय हुआ। <https://hindi.thequint.com/hot-news/cag-said-no-action-plan-to-impliment-plastic-waste-management-rules-2016#read-more>

15. CAG flags 24 cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 cr in some Ministries, Departments (freepressjournal.in, business-standard.com, socialnews.xyz) Dec 20, 2022

A CAG report has flagged 24 cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 crore related to four Ministries and Departments and four Central Public Sector Enterprises.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report No. 24 of 2022 - Union Government (Civil), table in Parliament on Tuesday, contains 24 illustrative cases of irregularities involving

Rs 348.57 crore pertaining to four Ministries/Departments, four Central Public Sector Enterprises under their administrative control, and two Union Territories without Legislatures.

The report said that though the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had revised the rates for issue of fresh Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, 17 Missions/Posts in the Eurozone countries did not revise the same while three Missions/Posts in the UK adopted a lower rate of exchange for charging the OCI fees leading to loss of Rs 58.23 crore.

"The MEA, while admitting the observations stated that both MEA and Mission/Posts abroad, are responsible for revision of the OCI card fee in terms of local currency, based on Rate of Exchange (ROE) fluctuations but due to misinterpretation of the instructions that fixation of OCI Scheme fee is guided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, a notional revenue loss has occurred as Mission/Posts in the Europe did not implement the revised ROEs for local currencies in time," said the report.

The report also said that MEA had purchased two properties for setting up Indian Cultural Centres (ICC) at Paris (2011) and Washington (2013) but could not get them renovated in time for use as such. Due to inherent deficiencies, such as significant structural concerns and issues of encroachment at ICC Washington, the expenditure incurred on purchase of property along with its renovation or refurbishment aggregating Rs 41.93 crore remained infructuous.

"Similarly, the property for ICC Paris procured at a cost of Rs 30.03 crore remained unused as of June 2022 with an irregular expenditure of Rs 14.89 crore on hiring a local security agency for an under-renovation building," said the report.

Mentioning another instance, the CAG report said that Embassy of India, Beijing hired a firm for construction of Indian Embassy complex there. The audit observed that EoI, Beijing made avoidable payment of Rs 8.53 crore on account of escalation, even though the clause regarding escalation was not applicable as per the terms and conditions of the contract.

"Further, due to the issue of faulty lift, it withheld contractor's payment for a period ranging between three and five years which led to avoidable payment of interest of Rs 1.58 crore to the contractor," the report added.

The CAG report further said that the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances hired office space from State Trading Corporation of India Ltd, which required extensive renovation works to make it fit to occupy.

"Though the space was hired with effect from December 2020, the initiation of renovation process started only in September 2021. This resulted in infructuous expenditure aggregating Rs 13.26 crore towards rent for nine months from December 2020 to August 2021," said the report. <https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/cag-flags-24-cases-of-irregularities-involving-rs-34857-cr-in-some-ministries-departments>

16. CAG raps external affairs ministry for losses in OCI card scheme ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Dec 20, 2022

The use of incorrect exchange rates in fixing fees for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards by Indian missions in Europe and the UK resulted in a loss of ₹58.23 crore for the government, the country's audit watchdog said on Tuesday.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said in a report presented to Parliament that even after the external affairs ministry revised the rates for issuing fresh OCI cards, 17 missions in Euro Zone countries did not make the change, while three missions in the UK adopted a lower exchange rate for charging the OCI fee, thereby resulting in the loss.

The external affairs ministry, while admitting the CAG's observations, said the mission abroad are responsible for revising the OCI card fee in terms of local currency based on rate of exchange (RoE) fluctuations. The ministry contended "a notional revenue loss" had occurred as the missions didn't implement the revised RoEs "due to misinterpretation of the instructions that fixation of OCI Scheme fee is guided by" the Union home ministry.

The CAG dismissed the stand taken by the external affairs ministry and said in its report: "The contention of the Ministry that the loss of revenue was notional is not correct since the failure of the Missions/Posts to revise the fee structure for the OCI scheme on time and in accordance with prescribed norms resulted in loss of revenue of ₹ 58.23 crore to the Government."

The CAG put the cumulative loss in the Euro Zone - a currency union of 19 members of the European Union (EU) that have adopted the euro - between April 2017 and March 2020 at ₹16.26 crore. The issuing of fresh OCI cards at a lower exchange rate in the UK between February 2017 and March 2020 resulted in the loss of ₹41.97 crore, it said.

The watchdog pulled up the Indian missions for failing to take cognisance of the directions of the home and external affairs ministries about fixing the fee for the OCI scheme, which stated that the methodology for deciding the fee in the local currency was to be the same as that for determining visa fees.

The CAG also said the external affairs ministry incurred "infructuous" expenditure of ₹41.93 crore on purchasing and renovating and refurbishing two properties for setting up Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) in Paris and Washington. The ministry could not get both properties renovated in time for use as cultural centres, it said.

The centre in Paris was acquired in 2011 while the one in Washington was purchased in 2013. "Due to inherent deficiencies, such as significant structural concerns and issues of encroachment at ICC Washington, the expenditure incurred on purchase of property along with its renovation/refurbishment aggregating ₹41.93 crore remained infructuous," the CAG said.

"Similarly, the property for ICC Paris procured at a cost of ₹ 30.03 crore remained unused as of June 2022 with an irregular expenditure of ₹14.89 crore on hiring a local security agency for an under-renovation building," it added.

The property in Washington was purchased for \$5.75 million and an audit in June 2020 revealed that even after the lapse of nearly nine years, the structure was "in an abandoned condition and is unsuitable for conduct of any cultural activities".

The watchdog further pulled up the Indian embassy in the Chinese capital of Beijing for making an "avoidable payment of ₹8.53 crore on account of escalation" to the construction firm China Railway Construction Group Company, which was hired to build the embassy complex. The payment was made "even though the clause regarding escalation was not applicable as per the terms and conditions of the contract", it said.

“Further, due to the issue of faulty lift, it withheld contractor’s payment for a period ranging between three and five years, which led to avoidable payment of interest of ₹1.58 crore to the contractor,” the CAG said, referring to the completion of all payments in 2018. Work on the embassy complex started in 2007 and the mission took over the building in 2011.

The payments of ₹8.53 crore towards escalation costs and of ₹ 1.58 crore for interest were “completely avoidable”, the CAG said.

The CAG further said that after the external affairs ministry approved renovations of India House at Kingston in Jamaica and instructed the mission to follow procedures for tendering in line with the General Financial Rules, the mission “invited bids by opting for single bid system without any estimate and detailed scope of work” in 2016.

The ministry cancelled the tender and the work was subsequently awarded to the contractor selected earlier. However, in the period of five months between the two bids, the contractor escalated the prices, ranging from 16% to 175%.

After the renovation work began, additional work was given to the contractor without the ministry’s approval. The tendering done in “disregard of the ministry’s instructions and extant provisions necessitated retendering, resulted in time and cost overrun which led to avoidable expenditure of ₹ 51.76 lakh, coupled with an ad-hoc approach in execution of the work and arbitrary changes in agreed items of work costing ₹ 49.52 lakh”, the CAG said. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cag-raps-external-affairs-ministry-for-losses-in-oci-card-scheme-101671548317868.html>

17. CAG Report Reveals 24 Cases of Irregularities In Some Ministries Totalling Rs 348.57 Crore: Report ([news.abplive.com](https://www.abplive.com)) Dec 20, 2022

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has discovered 24 cases of irregularities worth Rs 348.57 crore involving four Ministries and Departments and four Central Public Sector Enterprises, news agency IANS reported on Tuesday quoting the report.

The Report No. 24 of 2022 - Union Government (Civil) of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, contains 24 illustrative cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 crore pertaining to four Ministries/Departments, four Central Public Sector Enterprises under their administrative control, and two Union Territories without Legislatures.

According to the report, while the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) revised the rates for issuing new Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, 17 Missions/Posts in the Eurozone did not, and three Missions/Posts in the UK adopted a lower rate of exchange for charging the OCI fees, resulting in a loss of Rs 58.23 crore.

"While admitting the observations, the MEA stated that both the MEA and the Mission/Posts abroad are responsible for revising the OCI card fee in terms of local currency, based on Rate of Exchange (ROE) fluctuations, but due to misinterpretation of the instructions that the fixation of the OCI Scheme fee is guided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, a notional revenue loss has occurred as Mission/Posts in Europe did not implement the revised ROEs for local currencies in time," said the report.

According to the report, MEA purchased two properties for the establishment of Indian Cultural Centres (ICC) in Paris (2011) and Washington (2013) but was unable to rehabilitate them in time for use as such. Due to intrinsic flaws, such as serious structural challenges and encroachment issues at ICC Washington, the Rs 41.93 crore spent on the purchase of property and its rehabilitation or refurbishment remained infructuous.

"Similarly, the property purchased for the ICC Paris at a cost of Rs 30.03 crore remained unused as of June 2022, with an irregular expenditure of Rs 14.89 crore on employing a local security agency for an under-renovation building," the report stated.

In another case, the CAG report stated that the Embassy of India in Beijing contracted a business to build the Indian Embassy complex there. The audit found that EoI, Beijing made an avoidable payment of Rs 8.53 crore due to escalation, despite the fact that the escalation clause was not applicable under the contract's terms and circumstances.

"Further, due to the issue of faulty lift, it withheld contractor's payment for a period ranging between three and five years, resulting in the avoidable payment of Rs 1.58 crore to the contractor," the report continued.

According to the CAG report, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances rented office space from State Trading Corporation of India Ltd, which required major renovations before it could be occupied.

"Though the space was hired with effect from December 2020, the initiation of renovation process started only in September 2021. This resulted in infructuous expenditure aggregating Rs 13.26 crore towards rent for nine months from December 2020 to August 2021," according to the report. <https://news.abplive.com/news/india/cag-report-reveals-24-cases-of-irregularities-in-some-ministries-totalling-rs-348-57-crore-report-1570866>

18. विभिन्न विभागों व पीएसई में गड़बड़ी उजागर, कैग ने पकड़ी 24 मामलों में 348.57 करोड़ की अनियमितताएं (jagran.com) Dec 21, 2022

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने चार मंत्रालयों व विभागों और चार केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उद्यमों के 24 मामलों में 348.57 करोड़ रुपये की अनियमितताएं पकड़ी हैं। मंगलवार को संसद के पटल पर रखी गई रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि विदेश मंत्रालय ने नए ओवरसीज सिटीजन आफ इंडिया (ओसीआइ) कार्ड के लिए दरें संशोधित की थीं, लेकिन यूरोप जोन के देशों में 17 मिशन ने इन्हें संशोधित नहीं किया था और ब्रिटेन में तीन मिशन ने विनिमय की कम दरें निर्धारित की थीं जिसकी वजह से 58.23 करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ।

कई मामलों में अनियमितताएं

रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि विदेश मंत्रालय ने पेरिस (2011) और वाशिंगटन (2013) में भारतीय सांस्कृतिक केंद्र (आइसीसी) स्थापित करने के लिए दो संपत्तियां खरीदी थीं, लेकिन उन्हें समय पर उपयोग के लिए पुनर्निर्मित नहीं किया जा सका। इसलिए इस पर किया गया कुल 41.93 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च निष्फल रहा। इसी तरह 30.03 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से

खरीदी गई आइसीसी पेरिस की संपत्ति जून, 2022 तक अप्रयुक्त रही, जिसमें एक स्थानीय सुरक्षा एजेंसी को एक निर्माणाधीन इमारत के लिए किराये पर लेने पर 14.89 करोड़ रुपये का अनियमित खर्च हुआ। बीजिंग स्थित भारतीय दूतावास ने वहां भारतीय दूतावास परिसर के निर्माण के लिए एक फर्म को काम पर रखा था।

कैग ने पेश की रिपोर्ट

आडिट में पाया गया कि भारतीय दूतावास ने 8.53 करोड़ रुपये का ऐसा भुगतान किया जिससे बचा जा सकता था। प्रशासनिक सुधार और लोक शिकायत विभाग ने स्टेट ट्रेडिंग कारपोरेशन आफ इंडिया लिमिटेड से कार्यालय की जगह किराये पर ली थी, जिसे कार्य उपयुक्त बनाने के लिए व्यापक नवीकरण कार्यों की आवश्यकता थी। दिसंबर, 2020 से जगह किराये पर ली गई थी, लेकिन नवीनीकरण की प्रक्रिया सितंबर, 2021 में ही शुरू हुई। इसके परिणामस्वरूप दिसंबर, 2020 से अगस्त, 2021 तक नौ महीने के किराये के लिए कुल 13.26 करोड़ रुपये का अनावश्यक खर्च हुआ। <https://www.jagran.com/news/national-cag-caught-irregularities-of-over-rs-348-crore-in-various-departments-and-pse-23265756.html>

19. CAG ने मंत्रालयों, विभागों में 348.57 करोड़ रुपये की अनियमितताओं के 24 मामले दर्ज किए (samacharnama.com) Dec 21, 2022

कैग की एक रिपोर्ट में चार मंत्रालयों और विभागों और चार केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उद्यमों से संबंधित 348.57 करोड़ रुपये की अनियमितताओं के 24 मामले सामने आए हैं। भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक की 2022 की रिपोर्ट संख्या 24 - केंद्र सरकार (सिविल), मंगलवार को संसद में पेश की गई, जिसमें चार मंत्रालयों/विभागों, चार केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों से संबंधित 348.57 करोड़ रुपये की अनियमितताओं के 24 मामले शामिल हैं।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि हालांकि विदेश मंत्रालय ने भारत के नए विदेशी नागरिक (ओसीआई) कार्ड जारी करने के लिए दरों में संशोधन किया था, लेकिन यूरोजोन देशों में 17 मिशन/पोस्टों ने इसे संशोधित नहीं किया, जबकि तीन मिशन/पोस्टों में यूके ने ओसीआई शुल्क चार्ज करने के लिए विनिमय की कम दर को अपनाया, जिससे 58.23 करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, "विदेश मंत्रालय ने टिप्पणियों को स्वीकार करते हुए कहा कि एमईए और विदेशों में मिशन/पोस्ट दोनों, विनिमय दर (आरओई) में उतार-चढ़ाव के आधार पर स्थानीय मुद्रा के संदर्भ में ओसीआई कार्ड शुल्क के संशोधन के लिए जिम्मेदार हैं, लेकिन निर्देशों की गलत व्याख्या के कारण ओसीआई योजना शुल्क का निर्धारण गृह मंत्रालय द्वारा निर्देशित है।

एक अनुमानित राजस्व हानि हुई है, क्योंकि यूरोप में मिशन/पोस्ट ने समय पर स्थानीय मुद्राओं के लिए संशोधित आरओई को लागू नहीं किया था।"

रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि विदेश मंत्रालय ने पेरिस (2011) और वाशिंगटन (2013) में भारतीय सांस्कृतिक केंद्र (आईसीसी) स्थापित करने के लिए दो संपत्तियां खरीदी थीं, लेकिन उन्हें समय पर उपयोग के लिए पुनर्निर्मित नहीं किया जा सका। आईसीसी वाशिंगटन में महत्वपूर्ण संरचनात्मक चिंताओं और अतिक्रमण के मुद्दों जैसी अंतर्निहित कमियों के कारण, संपत्ति की खरीद के साथ-साथ इसके नवीनीकरण या नवीनीकरण पर कुल 41.93 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च निष्फल रहा।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, "इसी तरह, आईसीसी पेरिस के लिए 30.03 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से खरीदी गई संपत्ति जून 2022 तक अप्रयुक्त रही, जिसमें 14.89 करोड़ रुपये का अनियमित खर्च एक निर्माणाधीन इमारत के लिए एक स्थानीय सुरक्षा एजेंसी को काम पर रखने पर हुआ।" कैग की रिपोर्ट में एक अन्य उदाहरण का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा गया है कि भारतीय दूतावास, बीजिंग ने वहां भारतीय दूतावास परिसर के निर्माण के लिए एक फर्म को काम पर रखा था। ऑडिट में पाया गया कि ईओआई, बीजिंग ने वृद्धि के कारण 8.53 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान किया, भले ही अनुबंध के नियमों और शर्तों के अनुसार वृद्धि से संबंधित खंड लागू नहीं था।

इसके अलावा, दोषपूर्ण लिफ्ट के मुद्दे के कारण, इसने ठेकेदार के भुगतान को तीन से पांच साल के बीच की अवधि के लिए रोक दिया, जिसके कारण ठेकेदार को 1.58 करोड़ रुपये के ब्याज का भुगतान हुआ। कैग की रिपोर्ट में आगे कहा गया है कि प्रशासनिक सुधार और लोक शिकायत विभाग ने स्टेट ट्रेडिंग कॉर्पोरेशन ऑफ इंडिया लिमिटेड से कार्यालय की जगह किराए पर ली थी, जिसे कब्जा करने के लिए उपयुक्त बनाने के लिए व्यापक नवीनीकरण कार्यों की जरूरत थी। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, "हालांकि दिसंबर 2020 से जगह किराए पर ली गई थी, लेकिन नवीनीकरण की प्रक्रिया सितंबर 2021 में ही शुरू हुई। इसके परिणामस्वरूप दिसंबर 2020 से अगस्त 2021 तक नौ महीने के किराए के लिए कुल 13.26 करोड़ रुपये का व्यर्थ खर्च हुआ।" <https://samacharnama.com/states/delhi-news/CAG-registers-24-cases-of-irregularities-involving-Rs-34857/cid9509693.htm>

20. OCI कार्ड स्कीम में नुकसान पर CAG ने विदेश मंत्रालय को लगाई फटकार, मंत्रालय ने कहा- विदेशी मिशन जिम्मेदार (hindi.oneindia.com) Dec 20, 2022

कैग (Comptroller and Auditor General) ने संसद में मंगलवार को कहा कि भले ही विदेश मंत्रालय ने नए ओवरसीज़ सिटीज़न ऑफ इंडिया (OCI) कार्ड जारी करने के लिए दरों

में संशोधन किया हो और यूरो जोन देशों के 17 मिशनों ने बदलाव नहीं किया, जबकि यूके में तीन मिशनों ने अपनाया ओसीआई शुल्क चार्ज करने के लिए कम विनिमय दर, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप नुकसान हुआ।

बता दें देश के ऑडिट वॉचडॉग ने मंगलवार को कहा कि यूरोप और यूनाइटेड किंगडम में भारतीय मिशनों द्वारा ओवरसीज सिटिजनशिप ऑफ इंडिया (OCI) कार्ड के लिए फीस तय करने में गलत विनिमय दरों के इस्तेमाल से सरकार को 58.23 करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ है।

कैग की फटकार के बाद विदेश मंत्रालय ने कहा कि विदेशी मिशन विनिमय दर (आरओई) के उतार-चढ़ाव के आधार पर स्थानीय मुद्रा के संदर्भ में ओसीआई कार्ड शुल्क को संशोधित करने के लिए जिम्मेदार हैं। मंत्रालय ने तर्क दिया कि "एक अनुमानित राजस्व नुकसान" हुआ था क्योंकि मिशनों ने संशोधित आरओई को लागू नहीं किया था "निर्देशों की गलत व्याख्या के कारण कि ओसीआई योजना शुल्क का निर्धारण केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय द्वारा निर्देशित है।

सीएजी ने विदेश मंत्रालय द्वारा उठाए गए स्टैंड को खारिज कर दिया और अपनी रिपोर्ट में उल्लेख किया: "मंत्रालय का तर्क है कि राजस्व का नुकसान काल्पनिक था, ओसीआई योजना के लिए शुल्क संरचना को संशोधित करने में मिशनों/पोस्टों की विफलता के बाद से सही नहीं है। समय पर और निर्धारित मानदंडों के अनुसार सरकार को 58.23 करोड़ रुपये के राजस्व का नुकसान हुआ। कैग ने अप्रैल 2017 और मार्च 2020 के बीच ₹16.26 करोड़ पर यूरो जोन-यूरोपीय संघ (ईयू) के 19 सदस्यों का एक मुद्रा संघ, जिसने यूरो को अपनाया है, में संचयी नुकसान रखा। फरवरी 2017 और मार्च 2020 के बीच यूके में कम विनिमय दर पर नए ओसीआई कार्ड जारी करने से ₹41.97 करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ। <https://hindi.oneindia.com/news/india/cag-reprimanded-the-ministry-of-external-affairs-for-the-loss-in-the-oci-card-scheme-ministry-reply-736525.html?story=2>

21. CAG Pulls Up CWC for Incurring Avoidable Expenses of Rs 8.65 crore (outlookindia.com) Dec 21, 2022

Government auditor CAG on Tuesday pulled up the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) for incurring an avoidable expenditure of Rs 8.65 crore on account of improper planning in the acquisition of land, delay in the surrender of surplus land and payment charges.

The Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) also said there were pending cases of execution of lease/title deeds in favour of CWC. Land acquired long ago (five years or more) was lying unutilised defeating the purpose of acquisition and resulted in blockage of funds.

In addition, CWC neither disposed-off flats lying vacant for considerable time nor could utilise them alternatively, it said the report (for the years ended March 2020 and 2021) tabled in Parliament.

According to the CAG, about 42 cases were pending for registration of title/lease deed in favour of CWC, since acquisition during 1964 to 2012. Maximum pendency of 66.66 per cent of non-execution of deeds was due to disputes with various government authorities/departments.

As on March 31, 2021, CWC had 3578.50 acre of land at 416 locations. It had vacant land measuring 794.78 acres in 103 locations worth Rs 90 crore adjacent to existing godowns in 14 Regional Offices (ROs). These vacant lands had a potential to augment capacity of 17.30 lakh tonne, it said.

It was observed that land measuring 721.46 acres in 95 locations were acquired long ago (i.e. five years or more) but were not fully utilised and parts of land were remained vacant as on March 31, 2021.

In four cases, where possession of 21.67 acres land was taken between 1993 and 2009, no capacity was constructed and entire land remained unutilised. This indicates acquisition of land without conducting any proper assessment/planning on requirement of godowns, the CAG added.

That apart, Assam government had allotted land to CWC (March 2003) near Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (LGBIA) for development of an Agri-cum-Air Cargo Complex (AACC). CWC paid an amount of Rs 5.79 lakh to state government towards cost of land and took possession of land in March 2006.

It was noticed that after a delay of more than five years from date of possession of land, RO Guwahati approached in August 2011 the North Eastern Council (NEC) for funding of the entire project.

In response, NEC stated in September 2011 that the CWC's request was devoid of any project proposal and requested them to submit a Detailed Project Report (DPR) along with concept paper for its consideration.

"CWC failed to submit DPR to NEC since August 2011. The DPR was yet to be submitted to NEC (March 2021). This resulted in loss of business opportunities of Rs 73 lakh per year besides blockage of funds of Rs 5.79 lakh paid as cost of land in February 2004," the CAG said.

The Kolkata office of CWC had a land of 40,468.55 square meter in Haldia, where a covered warehouse of 32,400 tonne capacity was in operation. It acquired (May 1988) another plot of land of 13,597.5 square meter adjacent to the existing land on 30 years lease from Kolkata Port Trust (KoPT) for future expansion of business by laying rail lines on it to make CW Durgachak a rail-fed warehouse. The lease rental for additional land taken in 1988, was Rs 85,446 per month.

"During scrutiny of records, it was noticed that the additional land acquired in 1988 was lying unutilised since acquisition," the CAG added.

The CAG recommended the CWC to frame time bound plan for utilisation of land remaining vacant for a long period (five years or more) and undertake cost benefit analysis before acquisition of land for godown/warehouse.

Besides, the CWC should make efforts to either dispose-off or identifying any alternative use for the residential flats lying vacant for a long time at Bhopal and Mumbai, it added. <https://www.outlookindia.com/business/cag-pulls-up-cwc-for-incurring-avoidable-expenses-of-rs-8-65-crore-news-246757>

22. CAG pulls up CWC for incurring avoidable expenses of Rs 8.65 crore ([business-standard.com](https://www.business-standard.com)) Dec 20, 2022

Government auditor CAG on Tuesday pulled up the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) for incurring an avoidable expenditure of Rs 8.65 crore on account of improper planning in the acquisition of land, delay in the surrender of surplus land and payment charges.

The Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) also said there were pending cases of execution of lease/title deeds in favour of CWC. Land acquired long ago (five years or more) was lying unutilised defeating the purpose of acquisition and resulted in blockage of funds.

In addition, CWC neither disposed-off flats lying vacant for considerable time nor could utilise them alternatively, it said the report (for the years ended March 2020 and 2021) tabled in Parliament.

According to the CAG, about 42 cases were pending for registration of title/lease deed in favour of CWC, since acquisition during 1964 to 2012. Maximum pendency of 66.66 per cent of non-execution of deeds was due to disputes with various government authorities/departments.

As on March 31, 2021, CWC had 3578.50 acre of land at 416 locations. It had vacant land measuring 794.78 acres in 103 locations worth Rs 90 crore adjacent to existing godowns in 14 Regional Offices (ROs). These vacant lands had a potential to augment capacity of 17.30 lakh tonne, it said.

It was observed that land measuring 721.46 acres in 95 locations were acquired long ago (i.e. five years or more) but were not fully utilised and parts of land were remained vacant as on March 31, 2021.

In four cases, where possession of 21.67 acres land was taken between 1993 and 2009, no capacity was constructed and entire land remained unutilised. This indicates acquisition of land without conducting any proper assessment/planning on requirement of godowns, the CAG added.

That apart, Assam government had allotted land to CWC (March 2003) near Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (LGBIA) for development of an Agri-cum-Air Cargo Complex (AACC). CWC paid an amount of Rs 5.79 lakh to state government towards cost of land and took possession of land in March 2006.

It was noticed that after a delay of more than five years from date of possession of land, RO Guwahati approached in August 2011 the North Eastern Council (NEC) for funding of the entire project.

In response, NEC stated in September 2011 that the CWC's request was devoid of any project proposal and requested them to submit a Detailed Project Report (DPR) along with concept paper for its consideration.

"CWC failed to submit DPR to NEC since August 2011. The DPR was yet to be submitted to NEC (March 2021). This resulted in loss of business opportunities of Rs 73 lakh per year besides blockage of funds of Rs 5.79 lakh paid as cost of land in February 2004," the CAG said.

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Besides, the CWC should make efforts to either dispose-off or identifying any alternative use for the residential flats lying vacant for a long time at Bhopal and Mumbai, it added. https://business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/cag-pulls-up-cwc-for-incurred-avoidable-expenses-of-rs-8-65-crore-122122001229_1.html

23. CAG asks customs dept to ensure periodic audit of SEZs (economictimes.indiatimes.com) Dec 21, 2022

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has asked the customs department to ensure periodic audits of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are conducted.

It also asked the customs department to ramp up its IT systems to track, monitor submission and renewal of solvency certificates, duty bond and bank guarantee, and risk insurance policy.

In a report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, the CAG pointed out several shortcomings in the current digital record keeping framework for customs bonded warehouses and said the warehouses are not maintaining the records in prescribed electronic formats.

It said if details of the goods removed from warehouses are not maintained properly, the reconciliation and monitoring of monthly returns would become difficult. "Therefore, the department is not in a position to ensure whether the correct duty and interest are paid or the correct bond and bank guarantee are available through record have a control," said the report. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/cag-asks-customs-dept-to-ensure-periodic-audit-of-sezs/articleshow/96380087.cms>

24. Audit objection. CBI to probe irregularities of Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone authority (thehindubusinessline.com) Dec 21, 2022

The Commerce Ministry has sought a Central Bureau Investigation (CBI) probe into irregularities committed by Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ) authority in giving ₹74.85 crore worth construction related contract to a company without open bidding in 2017.

As per Commerce Ministry's directions, "Matter of nomination of NFCD (National Co-operative Construction and Development Federation (NFCD) of India Ltd) has been forwarded to CBI for a detailed investigation," noted SEEPZ (SEZ) Authority in its 56th meeting held on November 11, this year, under chairmanship of joint development commissioner CPS Chauhan.

NFCD

The NFCD is an agency registered under Multi State Co-operatives Society Act 2002, Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, Agriculture Ministry. The Authority was informed that there were irregularities in the nomination of NFCD and violation of GFR (General Financial Rule) provisions which was an audit objection and included in the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit report of 2019, stated the minutes of meeting.

Contract sanctioning issue

The irregularities in the SEEPZ is alleged to have been committed during former Development Commissioner Baldev Singh's regime. Singh's appointment as Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra in 2020 before his retirement had become politically controversial on the grounds that corruption took place during his stint which he had, however, denied.

In February 2017, the SEEPZ Authority had awarded the works of structural repair and allied civil works and water proof treatment to NFCD amounting to ₹74.85 crore. The contract was given to NFCD without inviting tender and ignoring even the fact that it did not figure in the list of agencies notified by Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) for carrying out construction related work, CAG reprimanded in its Department of Revenue –Customs (Compliance Audit) Report of 2019.

Advance payment of ₹56.14 crore was made to the NFCD upto December 2017.

In another instance of corruption that is under the CBI glare is that the SEEPZ Authority had approved an expenditure of ₹40.48 crore including five per cent contingency for structural repair and allied civil works of Standard Designed Factories (SDF) buildings and Gems and Jewellery buildings. But, NFCD was issued work order in February 2017 for ₹44.58 crore which was ₹4 crore more without the concerned approval.

Further, an additional amount of ₹7.77 crore was sanctioned for structural repairs without approval of the Authority, revealed the audit findings.

'No MoU signed'

Disaster Management Advisor (DMA) of the Authority had inspected in November of 2017 all the structural and waterproofing works of SDF and Gems and Jewellery buildings completed by NFCD's contractors. "They submitted inspection report highlighting major structural discrepancies in all the buildings which included defective columns and beams and incomplete

work. Though the Authority had taken up the matter with NFCD several times to rectify the deficiencies, no action was taken by NFCD till the date of audit. Since no MoU was signed between the Authority and NFCD and no Bank Guarantee (BG)/Performance Guarantee (PG) was taken, Authority could not enforce action against NFCD,” the CAG had critically observed.

The irregularities in awarding of contract for major works indicated serious deficiencies in the financial management of the Authority for which responsibility needs to be fixed, the CAG report concluded. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/cbi-to-probe-irregularities-of-santacruz-electronics-export-processing-zoneauthority/article66285351.ece>

25. CAG Reforms~II (thestatesman.com) Dec 21, 2022

In almost all democratic countries in the world, the Auditor General is appointed from professionals specialising in Auditing and Financial Management because the work of the Auditor General is treated everywhere as a technical job. It is in India that the Government has deluded itself with the idea that a generalist can function better than a specialist and hold any post in the Government. This has created considerable credibility gap vis-à-vis Auditor Generals of the advanced countries

Two vital questions agitating the minds of the stakeholders and the officers of the CAG’s organization which have not been addressed by successive governments are:

- (a) Whether the CAG should not be a professional and proficient in his job which is of technical nature demanding specialist skill in public auditing and accounting?
- (b) Whether there is an inherent conflict of interest in appointing a generalist IAS administrator who heads several ministries in the Central and the State governments?

The Union Government has so far carefully skirted these questions and has been appointing generalist IAS officers without following any transparent procedure. This is probably done deliberately because the government in power does not want a powerful CAG and has always wanted a yes man. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court, which took active interest in the case of appointment of CVC, Director, CBI etc., has chosen to ignore this issue whenever it was brought to their notice.

These issues were raised by H D Shourie, founder of ‘Common Cause’, an organisation for just and fair Public Administration, through a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), but without success. When the twelfth CAG (Shashi Kant Sharma) was appointed in May 2013, a PIL was again filed in the Supreme Court which rejected it.

A similar petition had been pending in Delhi High Court for a long time but was finally disposed of without any verdict. While the Supreme Court did not wish to enter the domain of the PM’s executive powers, it could certainly question the transparency of the procedure.

The arguments of the litigants for a transparent procedure and the need for appointment of a non-controversial professional without having conflict of interest are quite logical and deserved consideration.

In almost all democratic countries in the world, the Auditor General is appointed from professionals specialising in Auditing and Financial Management because the work of the Auditor General is treated everywhere as a technical job. It is in India that the Government has deluded itself with the idea that a generalist can function better than a specialist and hold any post in the Government. This has created considerable credibility gap vis-à-vis Auditor Generals of the advanced countries.

In international forums, the Auditor General of India, howsoever a stoic look he may assume and however proud he may be of the expertise of his officers, cannot command the same respect as is commanded by the technically sound Auditor Generals of advanced democracies like Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Israel, UK, and USA. Therefore, it is ridiculous to argue in favour of appointment of a generalist as the CAG of India. In fact, it is a mockery perpetrated on a Constitutional position.

The second issue, apart from the question of transparency, raised in the Public Interest Litigation by 'Common Cause' was the existence of 'conflict of interest.' IAS officers work for the State as well as for the Central Government, and at senior levels, they head several Departments in the State as well as at the Centre. They become an integral part of the political system and are responsible for policy making and implementation of various schemes and programmes. Here lies the problem.

How could a CAG who had been responsible for the implementation of projects, schemes and programmes including highvalue acquisitions of the government, conduct effective audit of the same and report against himself? As for example, a CAG who had earlier been working as Defence Secretary would be directly or vicariously responsible for all acts of omissions and commissions in the management of several multi-billion-dollar contracts for purchase of military hardware. How can the same person be expected to carry out an honest audit of his own previous actions, and criticise his own policies and decisions (taken along with his political bosses) and report on those decisions to the Parliament?

Is it to be assumed that the Defence Secretary cannot be blamed for any of the scams occurring in defence deals during his tenure? This is absurd. Defence Audit has been one of most important and vital areas of CAG's Audit not only because of the magnitude of the deals, but also because of their implications on national security. Therefore, there is an obvious 'conflict of interest' in appointing a CAG who had worked as Defence Secretary. Similar would be the situation if any of the Secretaries to Government of India is appointed as the CAG. This bitter truth does not dawn on the government, or it conveniently chooses to close its eyes on this aspect. The government of the day, irrespective of the party affiliation, is too blind to listen to the rational voice of intellectuals and to retreat from feudalistic patronage predilections. Among the liberal democracies of the world, India is the only one where the CAG is still appointed from among generalists without following a transparent procedure and this is being quietly done by all governments despite serious recommendations to the contrary. In 2000, Prime Minister Atal Behari Bajpayee constituted the high-powered National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) to bring about fundamental changes in the body politic. The 11-Member Commission was headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice M N Venkatachaliah and included B P Jeevan Reddy, Chairman of the Law Commission, R S Sarkaria, former Judge of the Supreme Court, K Punnayya, former Judge of Andhra Pradesh High Court, Soli Sorabjee, Attorney General of India, K Parasaran, former Attorney General of India, Subhash C Kashyap, former Secretary General of Lok Sabha, C R Irani, Chief Editor & Managing Director of The Statesman, Abid Hussain, former Ambassador

of India to USA, Sumitra Kulkarni, former Member of Parliament and P A Sangma, former Speaker of Lok Sabha.

The Commission in its Report submitted to the Government in 2002 recommended a multi-member Board for CAGs organisation: An Audit Board should be constituted for better discharge of the vital function of public audit, but the number of members to be appointed, the manner of their appointment and removal and other related matters should be dealt with by appropriate legislation, keeping in view the need for ensuring independent functioning of the Board. The Commission recommended that under the present system, the appointment of CAG should be done in consultation with the Speaker of Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

The Commission also recommended devolution of more powers to the State Accountant General to enable him to act like the Auditor General of a State. New hopes were aroused about reforms in the CAG's organisation. However, the successor UPA government consigned this important report to the archives as they did with Veerappa Moily's Administrative Reforms Commission's seminal report on 'Ethics in Governance.'

While the Judicial system in the country is crying for reform, similar reform in the CAG's organization is overdue. First, it must be made a Multi-Member Body like the Audit Commission of Japan because of the vastness of the country, enormous increase in government budgets, plans and programmes, and the unitary control of the Central and State audits and accounts.

In the States, the designation of Accountant General may continue for the accounting functions but the designation of Accountant General (Audit), which is an anathema, should be changed to 'State Auditor General' because he is the de facto Auditor General of the State. This can be done without amending the Constitution.

Secondly, the Auditor General must be an expert in Auditing, Accounting and Financial Management and this should be made a condition in the recruitment rules.

Thirdly, the Auditor General must be appointed in a transparent manner through a Collegium consisting of Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, and the Leader of the Opposition.

Alternatively, since he is equated with a Judge of the Supreme Court, the existing Supreme Court Collegium can be requested to act as the search committee for recommending a name for the new CAG. Finally, as we have followed the British Parliamentary system, the Auditor General (CAG) of India should likewise be made an Officer of the Parliament with the right to speak in Parliament and defend his reports. This will not only give the Auditor General his due place in the Constitution but also will help strengthen our democracy. <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/cag-reformsii-1503139873.html>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

26. BMC legal notice to CAG: Can't audit any Covid-time spending (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Dec 21, 2022

MUMBAI: BMC has sent a legal notice to the Comptroller and Auditor General saying it cannot audit or probe any spending done during Covid-19 under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005.

Out of the Rs 12,000 crore spend that the CAG is probing, over Rs 3,500 crore is related to Covid.

Chief minister Eknath Shinde had asked the CAG in October to probe BMC projects between November 28, 2019, and February 28, 2022.

Civic chief Iqbal Chahal said, "The Epidemic Diseases Act provides that there can be no audit of any money spent when the Act is in force. Section 4 of the Act says that no suit or other legal proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done or in good faith intended to be done under this Act. The spending or decisions can't be questioned in any court of law except the Supreme Court, so the CAG has no jurisdiction to audit."

Officers have 100% immunity under Disaster Mgmt Act, says civic chief

Municipal commissioner Iqbal Chahal said officers have 100% immunity under the Disaster Management (DM) Act.

Confirming to TOI that BMC had sent a notice to the CAG, the civic chief said. "We have sent a notice to the CAG through our law department stating that under provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and Disaster Management Act, 2005, spending done under the pandemic, when these Acts were in force, can't be done... The CAG is set up to audit finances in ordinary circumstances but during the pandemic, there were extraordinary circumstances. So their auditors will scrutinise our decisions assuming ordinary circumstances but this can't be compared to ordinary circumstances since during the pandemic, the circumstances were extraordinary."

He said after the BMC's notice sent around a fortnight ago, the civic body had not heard back from the CAG so far.

CM Shinde had asked CAG to conduct a probe into BMC projects worth Rs 12,000 crore between November 28, 2019, and February 28, 2022. According to the CM's communication, the CAG, which is a wing under the Central government, is expected to look into controversial decisions by BMC related to setting up of field hospitals during the pandemic. This would include a land deal at Dahisar as well as purchases of equipment, medicines and oxygen from vendors who were allegedly linked to officials and politicians in office. Large-scale purchases made in the name of medical emergencies have also come under a cloud. In one such deal, BMC bought two lakh vials of Remdesivir at the rate of Rs 1,568 per vial on April 7, 2020. On the same day, Mumbai-based Haffkine Institute and the Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation bought Remdesivir vials at Rs 668 each.

Shinde had asked CAG to probe the case of assistant municipal commissioner Manish Valanju who had approved a contract in his area to Genehealth Diagnostic, a company connected to his father.

Chahal said, "Under the DM Act, officers have 100% immunity and the DM Act has an overriding effect on all other Acts, which include the CAG Act and CrPC also. The Covid-19 pandemic was equivalent to war and there can be no audit of war. The CAG can't audit decisions of Covid-19 since their auditors will have no experience of auditing during a pandemic." <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/bmc-legal-notice-to-cag-cant-audit-any-covid-time-spending/articleshow/96382761.cms?from=mdr>

27. Opposition seeks Eknath Shinde's ouster for allotting Rs 83 crore Nagpur land for Rs 2 crore (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Dec 21, 2022

NAGPUR: The opposition on Tuesday demanded resignation of chief minister Eknath Shinde for ordering the Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) to lease and allot land meant for housing for the poor to 16 persons in Nagpur during his tenure as urban development minister in the then Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

The opposition comprising MVA netas led by former deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and MPCC president Nana Patole also staged a walkout from the assembly accusing the CM of allotting the land worth Rs 83 crore for just Rs 2 crore. "CM Shinde as urban development minister in 2021 had allegedly indulged in 'bhukhand cha shreekhand' (kickbacks in the land allotment)," the opposition alleged.

A PIL related to the 19,331.24 sqm land is pending in the Nagpur bench of Bombay high court. Before the opposition walkout, the CM declared in the lower house that he has cancelled the land allotment, claiming that NIT and urban development department officials had not informed him about the court case.

Taking cognizance of a series of reports in TOI over the matter, the high court had on December 14, ordered the authorities to maintain status quo.

Based on a CAG report exposing irregularities by NIT in allotment of acquired lands and public utility lands, activist Anil Wadpalliwar had filed a writ petition in the HC in 2004. In the same petition, Wadpalliwar had challenged proposed regularization of layout comprising the said land. Gilani Committee appointed by HC in the case had observed violations and loss to urban poor. The HC had appointed advocate Anand Parchure as amicus curiae.

Shinde said when he had ordered land lease to 16 persons, he was "not informed by NIT about constitution of a panel under retired judge MN Gilani". "It was brought to my notice only on December 14 after HC's status quo. When I gave the land allotment order, all work was online due to the pandemic. I have also received many letters from the local MLAs, including Nitin Raut, for land allotment," he said and claimed he had not indulged in any wrongdoing.

While raising slogans against the government on the steps of the Vidhan Bhavan, Patole said, "How can he (Shinde) stay in office after committing such a huge land scam and court's observations against him? During the MVA government, the then home minister Anil Deshmukh and forest minister Sanjay Rathod had to resign soon after allegations were made against them." Earlier, when the matter was raised in the council Fadnavis replied that the

Shinde had taken the decision in April 2021. “After the amicus curiae placed before the HC the news reports published recently, the court asked the state government to submit its response. The government then sought details from NIT which accepted that it had not informed the government about the Gilani Committee. On December 16, the government cancelled the land lease to 16 persons and submitted response in court,” said Fadnavis.

When opposition started calling it a mistake, Fadnavis responded that it would have been a mistake “only if the Gilani committee report had been on record and then the minister still went ahead with the decision”. He also said the LoP has placed on record incorrect information. “Also since the matter is in court, I don’t think the house can proceed with the discussion,” he said.

Opposition leaders stated that Fadnavis put forth his points over the matter but when they wanted to speak, “the matter became sub-judice as per the deputy CM”. After the opposition created ruckus over the matter, the house was adjourned. The opposition then left the house raising slogans against the government and demand for CM’s resignation.

Besides past and present NIT chairperson Sheetal Ugale and Manojkumar Suryawanshi, then BJP MLA Sudhakar Kohle too had objected to Shinde’s April 2021 order. “How can he (Shinde) overlook NIT chairperson’s views without checking with the department?” said NCP’s Jitendra Awhad while speaking to media.

Former CM Uddhav Thackeray said, “If the issue was as simple as deputy CM has made it out to be, then why did the HC made those remarks? Since the case has been in court for a long time, a lot of questions have been raised.”

Without naming Shinde, Thackeray said, “The person who was the minister back then, is now the CM. When it’s observed that judicial process is being hampered, then the person should not ideally remain on the post.”

MLC Anil Parab said, “Regardless of what Fadnavis has said, the fact is that there was an irregularity. That’s the reason why the government cancelled the allotment.”

Before the start of the second day of the session, senior MVA netas and legislators held a meeting at the Congress Legislature Party office to formulate a strategy. Thackeray, LoP in assembly Ajit Pawar, opposition leader in council Ambadas Danve, Congress legislative party leader Balasaheb Thorat, Patole, former CMs Ashok Chavan, Prithviraj Chavan, NCP state president Jayant Patil, Chhagan Bhujbal, Dilip Walse Patil and others were present.

On the steps of the Vidhan Bhavan, the opposition raised slogans in favour of Samyukta Maharashtra and raised slogans like ‘50 khome ekdum okay, Gujrat la Volkswagen and Maharashtra la popcorn.’ Leaders from ruling party too raised slogans against the MVA leaders who were demanding CM’s resignation and criticising BJP netas for allegedly insulting great men and saints. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/opposition-seeks-eknath-shindes-ouster-for-allotting-rs-83-crore-nagpur-land-for-rs-2-crore/articleshow/96380420.cms?from=mdr>

28. Gujarat: FIR against 4 panchayat officials for diverting Rs 3.3 cr from MGNREGA fund (economictimes.indiatimes.com) Dec 21, 2022

An FIR has been registered against four panchayat officials in Gujarat's Amreli district for allegedly diverting Rs 3.30 crore meant for beneficiaries of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme, police said on Wednesday.

The accused conspired to divert the money between financial years 2015 and 2019, as per the FIR lodged on Tuesday at Jafrabad police station on the basis of a complaint by an officer of the Jafrabad taluka panchayat office, which looks after the MGNREGA scheme.

The scheme guarantees 100 days of employment to the beneficiaries in rural areas.

The accused served on posts like assistant programme officer/head of the MNREGA scheme for the Jafrabad taluka panchayat office, accounts assistant, Management Information System (MIS) coordinator and technical assistant.

According to the FIR, the four accused -- identified as Shaktisinh Jadeja, Vimal Basan, Jignesh Vadiya and Ashwin Shiyal -- allegedly forged duplicate job cards in the name of beneficiaries in different villages of the taluka and opened bank accounts in the names of people other than the job card owners.

They allegedly misused the ID and password of the Amreli district rural development agency to divert Rs 3.30 crore from the government exchequer, the FIR said.

An internal audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on December 7, 2021 revealed a third party payment was made for more than Rs 4 crore of wages under the scheme.

A probe committee was formed by the taluka development officer on September 22, 2022 which revealed in its December 1 report that a third party payment was made for a total Rs 3,30,26,548, as per the FIR.

The case was registered against the accused under various Indian Penal Code sections pertaining to cheating, criminal breach of trust by a public servant, forgery and criminal conspiracy.

An MIS coordinator is responsible for the online registration of job cards.

A beneficiary gets work sanctioned by the village panchayat within a periphery of five kilometres. The project is geo-tagged from the district level office. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/gujarat-fir-against-4-panchayat-officials-for-diverting-rs-3-3-cr-from-mgnrega-fund/articleshow/96389975.cms>

29. Srirangam temple accounts properly audited, no need for CAG audit, says court ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) December 21, 2022

The accounts of the Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple, Srirangam, have been properly audited upto June 30, 2021, and an audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India does not arise for this temple account, the Madras High Court has ruled.

The court accepted the counter filed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable department and dismissed the writ appeal by Rangarajan Narasimhan of Srirangam seeking a direction to the CAG to conduct an audit of the Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple account from 2000 to till date.

In the counter-affidavit, Commissioner of HR & CE J Kumaragurubaran submitted that invoking the powers under the CAG DPC Act, 1971, may not arise for the simple reason that temples under the control of HR & CE department were not established or created under any statute nor are the temples substantially financed by grants or loans from the consolidated fund of Indian or Tamil Nadu governments.

“The assets and financial accounts of the temples are audited by respective temples and the same is scrutinised by a separate audit department unit under the control of the Finance Department of the government of Tamil Nadu.

Therefore, without meaning any derogation to the powers of the CAG under the Act, it could be safely mentioned that when a special Act dealing with the administration of the religious institutions including audit is already in place the provisions under the CAG DPC Act, need not be invoked,” the commissioner stated.

“The writ petition was dismissed by a Bench headed by acting Chief Justice of Madras High Court Justice T Raja and Justice D Krishnakumar on December 14,” a release from the HR & CE said on Tuesday.

The court observed that the accounts of the Srirangam Ranganatha Swamy temple were properly audited up to June 30, 2021, by the Audit Department of Hindu religious institutions, under the control of the state finance department.

A perusal of the CAG (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971, showed that if any authority or body has to be audited by the CAG, the said authority or body should fall within the provisions of the Act. Section 14 of the Act empowers the CAG to audit receipts and expenditure of bodies or authorities substantially financed from the revenues of union and state governments, the bench observed.

“In the light of the above provision, if we look at the case on hand, the audit by the CAG invoking the powers under the said Act does not arise, for the temple in question, as it is not established / created under any statute,” the bench said.

The prayer for a direction to the CAG is not legally sustainable, and liable to fail as the assets and financial accounts of temples are being audited by the respective temples and scrutinised by the separate audit department unit of the state finance department, it said.

Also, no material evidence was produced to show maladministration or malafide functioning of the said temple. “Thus, for all the reasons stated above, we are of the considered view that

the writ petition is devoid of any merit and it is dismissed accordingly. No costs,” the bench said. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chennai/srirangam-temple-accounts-properly-audited-no-need-cag-audit-says-court-8336186/>

30. Telangana has highest contingent liabilities to GSDP ratio at 9.4%, says RBI bulletin (thehindu.com) December 20, 2022

The Reserve Bank of India has expressed concern that the cumulative guarantees given by the State governments has been on a rising trajectory over the past few years.

Amongst major States, Telangana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh had issued guarantees amounting to over five % of their GSDP. It is noteworthy that in case of some of these States, the quantum of outstanding guarantees now compares sizeably to their existing debt stock, the bank said in its latest bulleting issued on Tuesday.

It quoted outstanding guarantees in respect of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh were now more than a fifth of their total outstanding debt. “Telangana, in particular, stands out from the rest of the larger States with highest contingent liabilities to GSDP ratio at around 9.4 %,” the RBI said.

Although guarantees were not explicit debt, they had the potential to drain States’ budgetary resources in the case of their invocation. “Indiscriminate issuances of guarantees may also harm the banking sector as the loan sanctioning agencies might have been issuing credit only on the strength of the guarantee issued by the State without undertaking requisite due diligence,” the Apex Bank said.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India too flagged the issue pointing out that the government did not ensure financial performance and accountability of the institutions before providing guarantees. In its State Finances Audit Report for fiscal year 2020-21, the CAG said although the percentage of the total outstanding liabilities to GSDP at 28.11 % was within the limit of 29.5 % prescribed by the XV Finance Commission, this would be way above the limit at 38.1 % if the off budget borrowings of ₹97,940.45 crore were considered. The outstanding guarantes have since crossed ₹1 lakh crore mark and reached ₹1.05 lakh crore at the end of 2021-22.

The Union Finance Ministry on its part has imposed conditions on the market borrowings of the State on the grounds that OBBs raised in the name of State-owned corporations would be brought under the purview of the FRBM Act. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/telangana-has-highest-contingent-liabilities-to-gsdp-ratio-at-94-says-rbi-bulletin/article66285377.ece>

31. Chennai residents join Parandur villagers in stir over Tamil Nadu airport site (hindustantimes.com) Dec 21, 2022

Around 20 residents of Chennai have joined the protests of Parandur villagers affected by the second airport project, saying that the project can impact the downstream areas of the Adyar River and make them more disaster-prone.

These residents, including retired justice D Hariparanthaman, musician T M Krishna, environmentalist Nityanand Jayaraman, and disability rights activist Deepak Nathan have

written an open letter to the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority (TNSDMA) asking the state government to drop the project.

Residents of 13 villages in Parandur in Kancheepuram district have been protesting for more than 100 days as the new greenfield airport project seeks to make the land acquisition of 4,791.29 acres, of which 2,605 acres are wetlands so their homes and agricultural lands will be razed down.

On Tuesday, three ministers held discussions with members from the affected villages in the secretariat to convince them about the government's plans. This is the second such meeting.

On August 26, the Tamil Nadu government announced that they will provide 3.5 times the compensation for their land based on market value, alternative land to move and a government job for one member of each of the families who are affected. But, the villagers continue to be against the new greenfield airport.

"Their protests are as much about our food security as it is about the city's flood security," the letter from the Chennai residents dated December 19 read.

"We are residents of areas in the Adyar basin and concerned citizens from other parts of Chennai. All of us were severely affected - either directly or indirectly -- during the 2015 Chennai floods, and many of us were involved in rescue and rehabilitation efforts," they said.

"As important as it is to protect wetlands and commons, this proposal's implications for the city of Chennai should disturb planners. Increasing the built-up area and impermeable land cover over an 18 sq km site (4500 acres) in a river basin that is already under severe hydrological stress is a recipe for disaster."

They pointed out that during the disastrous December 2015 floods, among other factors, the macro drains were overwhelmed by excessive run-off from their catchments.

"The lands that will be urbanised for the airport are on River Adyar's 500 sq km southwestern catchment," they said, explaining that the run-off generated will be lesser in open and vegetated lands.

"This is the same catchment that drains into the Adyar through Manimangalam, Perungalathur, Tambaram, Mudichur and Varadarajapuram - all areas that were badly affected in the 2015 floods. It is noteworthy that these are all areas that are upgradient and unaffected by discharges from Chembarambakkam. Rather, they supplement Chembarambakkam's discharge into the Adyar."

One of the primary causes of the 2015 floods was found to be the uncontrolled release of excess water from the Chembarambakkam reservoir.

A Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the Chennai floods said that the release from the reservoir was only 800 cumecs, whereas "the flood flow from the parallel catchment (uncontrolled by the (Chembarambakkam) reservoir and flowing from Manimangalam, Perungalathur and Tambaram) may have contributed and the flood at its peak when it entered Chennai has been estimated to be about 1,34,195 cusecs, whereas the flood-carrying capacity of the Adyar river is only about 72,000 cusecs".

“In other words, the southwestern catchment, which includes the Parandur airport site, alone contributed 3000 m³/ to the Adyar,” their open letter said.

“Adyar’s flood-carrying capacity is a hard hydrological ceiling that the city has to reckon with. While the carrying capacity and network of micro drains can be increased, not much can be done to enhance the capacity of natural drains, especially ones like the Adyar and Coum, whose floodplains have been heavily urbanised. The conventional engineering response to such development would be to provide an efficient stormwater micro-drain network and rainwater harvesting structures on site. Micro-drains are only as effective as the capacity of major drains, Adyar in this case, to receive their discharge. And a project that proposes to pave over landscape-size rainwater harvesting structures like eris and wetlands cannot be compensated for by puny human-made rainwater harvesting structures.”

They pointed out how building the international airport for ₹20,000 crore with a capacity to handle 100 million passengers a year would naturally lead to further urbanisation and construction of transportation networks, logistics facilities, and real estate development.

“The TNSDMA must not just pick up the pieces after a disaster but also ensure that the state does not make itself more vulnerable to disasters. In the present case, TNSDMA has been noticeably absent,” their letter said.

“We urge the State Disaster Management Authority to carry out its investigations to verify the basis of our concerns and weigh in with the Government of Tamil Nadu to influence the course of events so that farmers in Parandur and residents in Chennai are not put to hardship.” <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/chennai-residents-join-parandur-villagers-in-stir-over-tamil-nadu-airport-site-101671563061257.html>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

32. India’s G20 presidency: An agenda for healthcare ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) Updated: December 21, 2022

Health needs to be a central agenda for the G20 2023. It has been one of the priority areas for G20 deliberations since 2017, when the first meet of health ministers of G20 countries was organised by the German presidency. The G20 now has health finance in its financial stream and health systems development in the Sherpa stream. An annual G20 meeting of health ministers and a joint health and finance task force reflects the seriousness the subject has gained. The Berlin Declaration 2017 of the G20 health ministers provided a composite approach focusing on pandemic preparedness, health system strengthening and tackling antimicrobial resistance. The Covid-19 pandemic gave added urgency to pandemic preparedness and the Indonesian presidency in 2022 made it the major focus. The Indian presidency needs to advance these agendas.

Health systems strengthening has engaged the global community in thinking through the content and directions — what is to be strengthened, and how? The concept of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) was born in the 2000s to prevent catastrophic medical expenditures due to secondary and tertiary level hospital services by universalising health insurance coverage. The UHC has been the big global approach for health systems strengthening since 2010, also adopted in 2015 as the strategy for Sustainable Development Goal-3 on ensuring healthcare for all at all ages. However, the limited impact of this narrow strategy was soon evident, with

expenditures on outdoor services becoming catastrophic for poor households and preventing access to necessary healthcare and medicines, while many unnecessary/irrational medical interventions were being undertaken.

C Raja Mohan writes |India's G20 Presidency: Championing the Global South

So, in 2018, the Astana Conference organised by WHO and UNICEF put out a declaration stating that primary healthcare (PHC) is essential for fulfilling the UHC objectives. In 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted the combined UHC-PHC approach as a “political declaration”. With demonstration of the benefits of PHC services during the pandemic, the World Bank published a report in 2021, “Walking the Talk: Reimagining Primary Health Care After COVID-19”. The dominant hospital-centred medical system is becoming unaffordable even for the high-income countries, as apparent during the 2008 recession and subsequently. However, these global vision documents, while adding primary level care to UHC, are not addressing the nature of hospital systems themselves and their linkages.

A PHC-with-UHC approach means strengthening primary level care linked to non-medical preventive action (food security and safety, safe water and air, healthy workspaces, and so on) through whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches, and extending the “PHC principles” to secondary and tertiary care services. This could be the most cost-effective systems design — the comprehensive game changer that global health care requires.

Building on the landmark Alma Ata declaration on PHC of 1978, what must be additionally included are the more recent initiatives that can be clustered together under five themes. First, making health central to development in all sectors: Health in all policies, one health (linking animal and human health for tackling antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases), planetary health, pandemic preparedness. Second, health systems strengthening: Designing PHC-with-UHC for diverse contexts. Conceptualised as a continuum of care — from self-care in households to community services, to primary level para-medical services and first contact with a doctor, to all hospital services; with PHC principles — services provided as close to homes as possible, with appropriate technologies that are cost-effective, affordable and easily deliverable, promoting self-reliance. This can be a win-win system design for the users, medical personnel and those involved in the management of healthcare systems.

Suranjali Tandon writes |India's G20 presidency must follow lessons from COP27

Third, appropriate technologies adopted as a norm — by strengthening health technology assessment, ethics of healthcare, equitable access to pharmaceutical products and vaccines, integrative health systems using plural knowledge systems rationally. Fourth, health and healthcare from the perspective of the marginalised: Gendered health care needs, Health care of indigenous peoples globally, occupational health, mental health and wellbeing, healthy ageing. Fifth, decolonisation and democratisation of health knowledge, with interests and perspectives of low-middle-income countries (LMICs), prevention and patient-centred healthcare.

India has several pioneering initiatives that can contribute to the PHC-with-UHC discussion: Lessons from the National Health Mission for strengthening public health delivery; the HIV-control programme's successful involvement of affected persons/communities and a complex well-managed service structure; pluralism of health knowledge systems, each independently supported within the national health system; health personnel such as the ASHAs, mid-level health providers and wellness centres, traditional community healthcare providers with voluntary quality certification; research designed for validation of traditional systems;

pharmaceutical and vaccines production capacity; developments in digital health; social insurance schemes and people's hospital models by civil society.

What is required is the drafting of PHC-with-UHC (a PHC 2.0) with a broad global consensus and commitment to a more sustainable (i.e. cost-effective and affordable, inclusive and just, environment-sensitive in infrastructural and technology choices) and people-empowering health system. Pursuing such an agenda would involve much dialogue within countries, regions and globally. This process could be kick-started by working through the G20 Indian presidency year towards a call for organising a global conference on rethinking healthcare systems that moves a Declaration on Sustainable and Empowering Health Care for the 21st Century. The G20, with its membership of the G7 high income countries and the emerging LMICs, and its think-tank structures, is an appropriate platform to take up this long unfinished agenda. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/indias-g20-presidency-an-agenda-for-healthcare-8335449/>

33. RBI cautions against darkening global outlook (indianexpress.com) Dec 21, 2022

A Reserve Bank of India report on Tuesday cautioned that the balance of risks is increasingly tilted towards a darkening global outlook and emerging market economies (EMEs) appear to be more vulnerable, even though incoming data suggest that global inflation may have peaked.

“Inflation may be slightly down, but it is certainly not out,” the RBI said in its ‘State of the economy’ report. “If anything, it has broadened and become stubborn, especially at its core. An unease hangs over energy prices,” it said.

After hiking Repo rate by 225 basis points since May this year to tame inflation, the RBI report said, “The near-term growth outlook for the Indian economy is supported by domestic drivers as reflected in trends in high frequency indicators. Equity markets touched a string of new highs during November buoyed by strong portfolio flows to India.” Headline inflation moderated by 90 basis points to 5.9 per cent in November driven by a fall in vegetables prices even as core inflation remained steady at 6 per cent.

With every passing day, the balance of risks gets increasingly tilted towards a darkening global outlook for 2023, the year that will bear the brunt of monetary policy actions of this year. “Emerging market economies (EMEs) appear even more vulnerable, having battled currency depreciations and capital outflows in addition to slowing growth and high inflation,” it said.

“Debt distress is rising, with a surge in default rates and an appreciating US dollar – the principal currency in which debt is denominated – although more recently it has tumbled down from 20-year highs,” the report said.

On December 7, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) hiked the repo rate by a smaller quantum of 35 basis points to 6.25 per cent after inflation eased in October. The six-member committee also slashed the GDP forecast for fiscal 2023 to 6.8 per cent from an estimate of 7 per cent earlier as risks continue to emanate from protracted geopolitical tensions, global slowdown and tightening of global financial conditions.

The outlook is overcast for 2023 with indications of weaker global growth, fraught with downside risks. Inflation is likely to moderate in 2023 from current levels, but it would remain well above targets in most economies, the RBI said.

On inflation, the report said the easing was primarily driven by the sharp moderation in food inflation. The index declined by 11 bps month-on-month (m-o-m), which along with a favourable base effect (month-on-month change in prices a year ago) of 73 bps, resulted in a fall in headline inflation by around 90 bps between October and November.

Regarding the economy, the RBI report said high frequency indicators suggest that domestic economic activity remained resilient in November and early December. The outlook for private consumption and investment is looking up, although relatively higher inflation in rural areas is muting spending in those regions, it said.

“Net exports are restrained by the global slowdown. Agricultural and allied activities and contact-intensive services are leading the supply response, with industry on an uneven recovery,” it said. In response, capital flows to India are strengthening. Business and consumer confidence is turning up, and expectations of a better second half of 2022-23 relative to the first half are being reflected in forward-looking surveys. <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/rbi-cautions-against-darkening-global-outlook-8335498/>