

## **NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (08.02.2023)**

**1. India's audits are increasingly focusing on cyber security: CAG** ([thestatesman.com](http://thestatesman.com)) February 7, 2023

**The SCO Member SAIs unanimously decided to hold the next meeting of SCO Member SAIs in Tajikistan in 2025.**

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu has appreciated the initiative of SCO Member SAIs in integrating new and emerging technologies in audit practices to enhance audit efficiency, effectiveness, and promoting transparency and accountability in public administration.

The CAG highlighted that SAI India was at the forefront in using innovative technology and AI to enhance audit processes for agile and risk-based examination of structured as well as unstructured data.

SAI India's audits are increasingly focusing on cybersecurity with audit personnel inspecting information system controls, third-party management, governance, documentation, user access controls, and legal compliance to ensure effective oversight and compliance, he said.

The CAG during his speech on the closing session of the 6th SCO Heads of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) here on Tuesday thanked the SCO SAIs for their cooperation in making the meeting happen reaffirmed the importance of the exchange of best practices between the SCO SAIs.

He emphasised that the conference reiterated SAIs commitment to work for achieving better audit results and create significant scope to improve the depth, accuracy, and timeliness of the audit products.

During the 2 day international conference, discussions were held on Integrating emerging technologies in audit with focus on Artificial Intelligence and Cyber-security. Around 30 delegates from the SCO SAIs of India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and SCO Secretariat were present.

The SCO Member SAIs unanimously decided to hold the next meeting of SCO Member SAIs in Tajikistan in 2025. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/indias-audits-are-increasingly-focusing-on-cyber-security-cag-1503153027.html>

**2. Artificial Intelligence to be a game changer in government audit space: CAG** ([economictimes.indiatimes.com](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com), [telegraphindia.com](http://telegraphindia.com), [business-standard.com](http://business-standard.com), [moneycontrol.com](http://moneycontrol.com), [millenniumpost.in](http://millenniumpost.in), [latestly.com](http://latestly.com)) Feb 07, 2023

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is going to be a game changer in the public audit space as it will help in quicker and more detailed analysis during both planning and execution stages, Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) G C Murmu said on Tuesday.

The potential benefits of applying AI techniques to the audit processes are substantial/ and have already been identified through several use cases, he said in his closing remarks at the SCO SAI Leaders meeting here.

High-level delegations from eight Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member countries participated in the 6th meeting of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) to deliberate on issues related to cyber security and artificial intelligence, and the role of auditors of the SCO nations.

"Our intent is to use AI not as a one-time solution for a specific audit, but to build an evolving AI model that will allow for quicker and more detailed analysis during both the planning and execution stages through risk assessment straddling multiple parameters and a far more comprehensive evaluation than afforded through sampling," he said.

Murmu emphasised that it's again crucial for SAIs to build the necessary skills to examine information system controls, given the shift to electronic processing and computerized systems in public sector entities.

"As shared by SAI India in this meeting, our cybersecurity audit teams focus on various key areas/including third-party management, governance aspects, documentation, user access controls, and legal compliance," he said.

They ensure that effective oversight of third-party activities is in place and that comprehensive agreements govern these activities, he said, adding the teams also verify the standards and procedures for incident management, problem management, and IT security policy.

Additionally, he said, they make sure that documentation is updated and accessible for knowledge transfer and exit management.

The audit also covers user access controls, including multi-factor authentication, and provides an assurance that the organization is compliant with overall legal frameworks prescribed for cybersecurity, he added.

Murmu appreciated the initiative of SCO Member SAIs in integrating new and emerging technologies in audit practices to enhance audit efficiency, and effectiveness, and promote transparency and accountability in public administration.

The SCO Member SAIs unanimously decided to hold the next meeting of SCO Member SAIs in Tajikistan in 2025. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/consultancy/-/audit/artificial-intelligence-to-be-a-game-changer-in-government-audit-space-cag/articleshow/97701026.cms>

**3. India's CAG calls AI game changer for public audit** ([freepressjournal.in](https://www.freepressjournal.in)) Updated: February 07, 2023

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#### **4. Artificial Intelligence to Be Game Changer in Audit Space: Government Auditor ([ndtv.com](https://www.ndtv.com)) Updated: February 07, 2023**

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## **5. Lucknow: 6th Meeting of Heads of Supreme Audit Institutions of SCO Member States concludes ([newsonair.com](https://www.newsonair.com)) February 7, 2023**

The 6th Meeting of the Heads of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States concluded in Lucknow today. In his closing remarks at the conference, Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Girish Chandra Murmu said the SAIs discussed integrating new and emerging technologies, with a focus on Artificial Intelligence, to enhance their audit capabilities, and deliver more impactful audit products. He emphasised that the conference reiterated SAIs' commitment to work for achieving better audit results, and

improve the depth, accuracy, and timeliness of the audit products. He exuded confidence that the work done by the SAIs in Artificial Intelligence, and to strengthen cyber security would improve governance and promote efficiency, accountability and transparency in public administration.

Mr Murmu highlighted that SAI India or CAG's audits are increasingly focusing on cyber security, with audit personnel inspecting information system controls, third-party management, user access controls, and legal compliance to ensure effective oversight and compliance. He informed that the SAIs unanimously decided to hold their next meeting in Tajikistan in 2025.

Our correspondent reports that about 30 delegates from the SCO SAIs of India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and SCO Secretariat attended the three-day conference. On the sidelines of the conference, India signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The pacts are aimed at strengthening cooperation and facilitating exchange of expertise in the field of auditing. The cooperation will encompass the exchange of experiences in methodologies and procedures, joint efforts in professional training and personnel development, sharing of information and best practices through workshops, conferences, and technical meetings. <https://newsonair.com/2023/02/07/lucknow-6th-meeting-of-heads-of-supreme-audit-institutions-of-sco-member-states-concludes/>

## 6. कैग ने ताजिकिस्तान व कजाकिस्तान के साथ एमओयू पर हस्ताक्षर ([pressnote.in](https://www.pressnote.in)) 08 Feb 2023

भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखापरीक्षक (सीएजी) ने लखनऊ में शंघाई सहयोग संगठन सर्वोच्च लेखापरीक्षा संस्थानों (एससीओ साई) के नेताओं की बैठक के अवसर पर साई ताजिकिस्तान और साई कजाकिस्तान के साथ दो समझौता ज्ञापनों (एमओयू) पर हस्ताक्षर किए। लेखापरीक्षण के क्षेत्र में दोनों देशों के बीच सहयोग और विशेषज्ञता के आदान-

प्रादान को सुदृढ़ करने के उद्देश्य से समझौते किए गए थे। समझौता ज्ञापन लेखापरीक्षण पेशेवरों और तकनीकी टीमों के आदान-

प्रादान, प्राशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों में सहयोग और लेखापरीक्षा आयोजित करने में परस्पर सहयोग के लिए एक मंच भी प्रादान करेंगे। यह समझौते तीन देशों के सर्वोच्च लेखापरीक्षा संस्थानों (एसएआई) के मध्य घनिष्ठ संबंधों और सहयोग को बढ़ावा देने की दिशा में एक कदम है। साई ताजिकिस्तान के साथ समझौता ज्ञापन पर काराखोन चिल्लाजोड़ा, अध्यक्ष, ताजिकिस्तान गणराज्य के लेखा चैंबर के साथ हस्ताक्षर किए गए। यह समझौता ज्ञापन संबंधित संस्थान की पेशेवर क्षमता को विकसित और सुदृढ़ करेगा और लेखापरीक्षा के क्षेत्र में पद्धतियों में सुधार करेगा।

[https://www.pressnote.in/International\\_News\\_473681.html](https://www.pressnote.in/International_News_473681.html)

## 7. साइबर सुरक्षा के खतरों से निपटने को तैयार साई के सदस्य ([pinewsservice.com](http://pinewsservice.com)) 07 Feb 2023

लखनऊ। प्रदेश की राजधानी लखनऊ में संघाई सहयोग संगठन (एससीओ) के सर्वोच्च लेखापरीक्षा संस्थानों (साई) के सदस्य देशों की छठी बैठक सोमवार से शुरू हुई। इसमें संगठन के सदस्य देशों के प्रतिनिधि शिरकत कर रहे हैं। भारत इसकी मेजबानी कर रहा है। तीन दिवसीय बैठक के पहले दिन सभी सदस्य देशों ने साइबर सुरक्षा के खतरों के रूप में उभर रही चुनौतियों से मिलकर निपटने व आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस (एआई) के बेहतर प्रयोग के लिए मिलकर काम करने का निर्णय लिया। इस अवसर पर भारत ने ताजिकिस्तान व कजाकिस्तान के साथ एमओयू भी साइन किया।

साई के सदस्य देशों के शीर्ष लेखा परीक्षा संस्थानों व महालेखा परीक्षकों की बैठक का विषय 'लेखा परीक्षा में उभरती प्रौद्योगिकियों का एकीकरण' है। उद्घाटन सत्र में भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक गिरीश चंद्र मुर्मू ने लेखापरीक्षा को साइबर सुरक्षा खतरों से बचाने के लिए वैश्विक सहयोग का आह्वान किया। उन्होंने कहा कि साइबर सुरक्षा को मजबूत बनाने के लिए सरकारों को निजी क्षेत्र के भागीदारों के साथ मिलकर काम करने की आवश्यकता है। सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी के उपयोग से साइबर सुरक्षा से जुड़ी दिक्कतें सामने आई हैं। इसलिए सदस्य देशों के शीर्ष लेखा परीक्षा संस्थानों के लिए यह जरूरी है कि वे साइबर सुरक्षा से जुड़े मुद्दों की जांच के लिए पर्याप्त क्षमता विकसित करें।

मुर्मू ने कहा कि साई सरकार में सुशासन और जवाबदेही को बढ़ावा देने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रहा है। साई सुधार के क्षेत्रों की पहचान करके, कमियों को पहचान कर और धोखाधड़ी व भ्रष्टाचार से संबंधित क्षेत्रों की पहचान करके बेहतर काम करने का प्रयास करता है। उन्होंने बताया कि सीएजी ऑडिट प्रक्रिया में आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस का प्रयोग कर रहा है। इससे ऑडिट प्रक्रिया को अधिक कुशलता और प्रभावी दृष्टिकोण मिलता है। हम यहां एआई और साइबर सिक््योरिटी के साथ ऑडिट में उभरती प्रौद्योगिकियों को एकीकृत करने के एजेंडे पर चर्चा और आगे बढ़ाने के लिए इकट्ठा हुए हैं। कार्यक्रम में उप नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक परवीन मेहता ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया। बैठक में अतिरिक्त उपनियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक रेबेका मथाई समेत विभिन्न देशों के प्रतिनिधि उपस्थित थे।

मुर्मू ने कहा कि आज हर क्षेत्र में तकनीकी असर डाल रही है। वह दुनिया की प्रमुख चुनौतियों जलवायु, गरीबी, भोजन, ईंधन, स्वास्थ्य और सुरक्षा के निस्तारण में भी प्रयोग की जा रही है। यह हमारी क्षमता को बेहतर कर रही है। भारत तकनीक के पावर हाउस के रूप में आगे बढ़ रहा है। साई डेटा विश्लेषण में एआई का प्रयोग कर रहा है। गुड गर्वनेंस के लिए हमें इसका प्रयोग करना होगा। हमें इसकी चुनौतियों के बारे में भी सजग रहना होगा। क्योंकि इससे डेटा की गोपनीयता और सुरक्षा संबंधित चिंता भी उठती है।

इस अवसर पर भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक (सीएजी) गिरीश चंद्र मुर्मू ने संघाई सहयोग संगठन के नेताओं की बैठक में ताजिकिस्तान और कजाकिस्तान के साथ एमओयू किया। यह लेखा परीक्षण के क्षेत्र में दोनों देशों के बीच सहयोग और विशेषज्ञता के आदान-प्रदान के लिए है। इसके तहत दोनों देश लेखा परीक्षण पेशवरों और तकनीकी टीमों के आदान-

प्रदान प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों में सहयोग करेंगे। ताजिकिस्तान से एमओयू पर काराखोन चिल्लाजो डा, अध्यक्ष ताजिकिस्तान गणराज्य के लेखा चैंबर ने किया। वहीं कजाकिस्तान की ओर से नता ल्या गोडुनोवा अध्यक्ष सुप्रीम ऑडिट चैंबर ने किया। इस अवसर पर मुर्मू ने कहा कि यह एमओयू दोनों संस्थानों के बीच संबंधों को मजबूत करेगा।

संघाई सहयोग संगठन में भारत समेत आठ देश शामिल हैं। सोमवार से शुरू हुई बैठक में चीन, ताजिकिस्तान, किरगिस्तान, कजाकिस्तान, उजबेकिस्तान, रूस, एससीओ सेक्रेटिएट के 22 प्रमुखों और अधिकारियों ने भौतिक रूप से प्रतिभाग किया। वहीं पाकिस्तान के प्रतिनिधि ऑनलाइन बैठक में शामिल हुए। <https://pinewsservice.com/sai-members-ready-to-tackle-cyber-security-threats/>

**8. Sabka Vishwas: Tax board on drive to recover Rs 50 k cr** ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) February 8, 2023

**Following a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the board has directed its field formations to “vigorously” pursue these cases so as to “protect the interest of revenue”.**

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has decided to go after tax evaders, who had made declarations under the Sabka Vishwas (Legacy Dispute Resolution) Scheme of 2019, but failed to pay the relevant tax subsequently. The drive aims to recover over Rs 50,000 crore lying with the taxpayers.

Following a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the board has directed its field formations to “vigorously” pursue these cases so as to “protect the interest of revenue”.

“In view of the observations made by the Audit, it is again directed that appropriate action may be taken in all the cases where the declarant has filed declaration under ‘voluntary disclosure’ category but did not make the payment under the scheme,” it said in a recent letter.

The move comes at a time when the CBIC is hoping to improve compliance and widen the tax net to boost revenue collection.

About 0.19 million declarations were made under the Sabka Vishwas scheme. The total tax dues revealed under these declarations were at Rs 90,000 crore. However, the scheme is understood to have resulted in recovery of only about `39,500 crore.

The audit had also highlighted that some tax evaders who had opted for the Voluntary Compliance Encouragement Scheme, 2013, were not retained in the tax net. These evaders had once again filed declarations under the voluntary disclosure category of the Sabka Vishwas scheme, the CBIC said.

It also cited a previous directive of the board, which had noted that those who had paid the tax under the previous two amnesty schemes “should be monitored regularly and should be kept in the tax net”. “The jurisdictional authorities may ensure that regular returns are being filed under GST by the assesseees (if registered), specifically in the cases pointed out by audit in this regard,” the letter said.

While 0.13 million cases were settled under the Sabka Vishwas scheme, another 28,825 cases were not completed due to non-fulfilment of obligation by the taxpayer. As many as 29,167 declarations were rejected.

“The Department may take effective steps to pursue, in a time-bound manner those cases which were rejected under the ‘Scheme’ as well as the 28,825 cases for which discharge certificates, could not be issued, especially due to non-payment of the estimated payable amount. In particular, ‘Voluntary Disclosure’ cases where liability was not discharged should be vigorously pursued to protect the interest of the revenue,” the report had said. It had stressed that arrears are confirmed demand and have no expiry date and it is possible that many of the declarants might have migrated to the GST regime as assesseees, and therefore recovery actions are pursuable.

The Sabka Vishwas scheme, which was a part of the Finance Act, 2019, was an amnesty-cum-dispute settlement scheme aimed at pre-GST taxpayers of central excise duty and service tax. It provided a one-time opportunity to the taxpayer to settle the tax dispute and avail tax relief. The relief varied from 40-70% of the tax dues for cases other than voluntary disclosure cases, depending on the amount of tax dues involved and also provided relief from payment of interest and penalty. For voluntary disclosures, the relief was regarding waiver of interest and penalty on payment of full tax dues disclosed. Further, the person discharged under the scheme was not liable for prosecution.

Other recommendations of the CAG report included removing the cases settled under the scheme from the pendency list of legal forums and rectifying error in cases where discharge certificate has not been issued due to technical reasons, despite the applicant having fulfilled all requisites and made payments in time. The CBIC has also asked field officials to work on these issues. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/sabka-vishwas-tax-board-on-drive-to-recover-rs-50cr/2974581/>

## **9. Education Ministry calls for CAG audit of 'misuse' of PM Poshan funds in West Bengal ([thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)) 08 Feb 2023**

The Ministry of Education has asked the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) for a special audit of alleged misuse of funds for the PM Poshan scheme in West Bengal over last three years, officials said on Wednesday.

Necessary corrective action will be taken by the Ministry based on the audit report, they said.



"The Education Ministry has requested CAG for a Special Audit of implementation of PM Poshan scheme in the State of West Bengal for the last three financial years. This audit will encompass compliance, performance and financial audit," a senior Ministry official said.

"CAG is empowered to conduct this Audit under Regulations on Audit and Accounts (Amendment) 2020 framed in pursuance of Section 23 of the Comptroller and Auditor Generals (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971, (Act No 56 of 1971)," the official said.

The Department of School Education and Literacy administers the PM Poshan scheme vide which funds are provided to states, based on proposals received from them, for providing one hot cooked meal to eligible children from classes I to VIII and those in Balvatika (below Class I).

The PM Poshan scheme benefits about 11.80 crore children in the country studying in 11.20 lakh government and government-aided schools. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/education-ministry-calls-for-cag-audit-of-misuse-of-pm-poshan-funds-in-west-bengal/article66484895.ece>

**10. Centre asks CAG to conduct special audit of implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in West Bengal ([livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)) 08 Feb 2023**

The Ministry of Education on Wednesday asked the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) for a special audit of the implementation of PM Poshan scheme in West Bengal.

The ministry said it has received reports about alleged misuse of funds meant for PM Poshan scheme in West Bengal. It added that instances of deviations in the implementation of the scheme have also been reported in the media.

The education ministry has requested audit of scheme over the last three financial years. This will encompass compliance, performance and financial audit.

The ministry added that necessary corrective action will be taken based on the CAG audit report.

The Department of School Education and Literacy administers the PM Poshan scheme through which funds are provided to states, based on proposals received, for one hot cooked meal to eligible children in classes one to eight and Balvatika.

Under the scheme, most components including cooking cost are split in a 60:40 ratio between the Union government and states and UTs with legislatures, and 90:10 with the northeastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The cost of food grains is borne entirely by the Centre.

According to the education ministry, PM Poshan Scheme benefits about 11 crore 80 lakh children in the country studying in government and government-aided schools. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/centre-asks-cag-to-conduct-special-audit-of-implementation-of-pm-poshan-scheme-in-west-bengal-11675846579422.html>

**11. Centre asks CAG to conduct special audit of implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in West Bengal ([newsonair.gov.in](https://newsonair.gov.in)) 08 Feb 2023**

Union Education Ministry has asked the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) for a special audit of the implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in West Bengal. The Ministry said, it has received reports about the alleged misuse of funds in West Bengal under the PM Poshan Scheme. It said, instances of deviations in the implementation of the scheme have also been reported in the media.

The Education Ministry has requested CAG for audit of implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in West Bengal for the last three financial years. This audit will encompass compliance, performance and financial audit. The Ministry said, necessary corrective action will be taken by the Department based on the audit report of CAG.

The Department of School Education and Literacy administers the PM Poshan Scheme through which funds are provided to States, based on proposals received from them for one hot cooked meal to eligible children in Classes one to eight and Balvatika. PM Poshan Scheme benefits about 11 crore 80 lakh children in the country studying in government and government-aided schools. <https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=Centre-asks-CAG-to-conduct-special-audit-of-implementation-of-PM-Poshan-Scheme-in-West-Bengal&id=455410>

**12. Ministry Of Education Asks CAG for A Special Audit of Implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in the State Of West Bengal ([orissadiary.com](https://orissadiary.com)) February 8, 2023**

Ministry of Education has received reports about alleged misuse of funds in West Bengal under the PM Poshan Scheme. Instances of deviations in implementation of the Scheme have also been reported in the media.

In view of above, the Education Ministry has requested 0/o CAG for a Special Audit of implementation of PM Poshan Scheme in the State of West Bengal for the last three financial years. This Audit will encompass compliance, performance and financial audit.

The 0/o of CAG is empowered to conduct this Audit under Regulations on Audit and Accounts (Amendment) 2020 framed in pursuance of Section 23 of the Comptroller and Auditor Generals (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971, (Act No 56 of 1971). Necessary corrective action will be taken by the Department based on the Audit Report by the 0/o CAG.

The Department of School Education and Literacy administers the PM Poshan Scheme vide which funds are provided to States, based on proposals received from them, for one hot cooked meal to eligible children in Classes I to VIII and Balvatika. PM Poshan Scheme benefits about 11.80 crore children in the country studying in 11.20 lakh Govt./Govt. aided schools. <https://orissadiary.com/ministry-of-education-asks-cag-for-a-special-audit-of-implementation-of-pm-poshan-scheme-in-the-state-of-west-bengal/>

13. 'पश्चिम बंगाल में ₹2.30 लाख करोड़ का घोटाला': CM ममता बनर्जी पर बड़ा आरोप, कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट में दर्ज याचिका में कैग की रिपोर्ट का भी जिक्र ([hindi.opindia.com](http://hindi.opindia.com)) 7 February, 2023

भाजपा सांसद और वरिष्ठ अधिवक्ता महेश जेठमलानी ने 'संडे गार्जियन' की एक रिपोर्ट का हवाला देते हुए ममता बनर्जी सरकार पर गंभीर आरोप लगाए हैं। उन्होंने मंगलवार (7 फरवरी, 2023) को ट्वीट किया, "यह पश्चिम बंगाल में बड़े पैमाने पर किए गए एक और घोटाले का संकेत है। कलकत्ता उच्च न्यायालय में दायर एक याचिका में राज्य सरकार द्वारा 2.30 लाख करोड़ रुपये की भारी रकम की हेराफेरी का आरोप लगाया गया है। यह मामला कैग की एक रिपोर्ट पर आधारित है, जो सबूतों पर आधारित है। नतीजे का इंतजार है।"

'संडे गार्जियन' की यह रिपोर्ट 4 फरवरी, 2023 की है। इसमें पिछले महीने कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट में दायर एक याचिका में पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार पर बड़े वित्तीय घोटाले का आरोप लगाया गया है। याचिका में राज्य सरकार पर हेराफेरी करने का आरोप लगाते हुए दावा किया गया है कि केंद्र सरकार द्वारा जारी कि गई राशि 229,099 करोड़ रुपये को उचित दस्तावेजों के बिना ही खर्च कर दिया गया।

भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) ने उपयोगिता प्रमाण पत्र से राशि का दुरुपयोग करने और गबन की ओर इशारा किया है। याचिका में राज्य के अधिकारियों पर कथित घोटाले का समर्थन करने का भी आरोप लगाया गया है। कलकत्ता उच्च न्यायालय के समक्ष दायर याचिका में कहा गया है कि CAG की रिपोर्ट में पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार द्वारा 31 मार्च, 2021 को समाप्त हुए वित्तीय वर्ष में विभिन्न विसंगतियों, अनियमितताओं और सरकारी धन के दुरुपयोग की ओर इशारा किया गया है, जो बड़े वित्तीय घोटाले और अपराध की ओर संकेत करती है।

यह याचिका तीन व्यक्तियों पत्रकार एवं पश्चिम बंगाल में भाजपा इकाई के महासचिव जगन्नाथ चट्टोपाध्याय, अधिवक्ता सुमन शंकर चटर्जी और सेवानिवृत्त सैन्यकर्मी रित्विक पॉल ने 20 जनवरी, 2023 को दायर की थी। यह उस वक्त दायर की गई थी, जब तीनों को कैग रिपोर्ट से पता चला कि ममता बनर्जी सरकार केंद्र सरकार द्वारा पश्चिम बंगाल को दिए गए धन के व्यय का दस्तावेजीकरण नहीं कर रही है।

'संडे गार्जियन' ने सीएजी की रिपोर्ट का हवाला देते हुए आगे लिखा है, अभी तक 2,29,099 करोड़ रुपये का यूसी (उपयोगिता प्रमाण पत्र) पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार के विभिन्न विभागों से प्राप्त नहीं हुआ है। इसमें बड़े विभाग शहरी विकास और नगरपालिका, स्कूल शिक्षा, पंचायत और ग्रा

मीण विकास शामिल हैं। प्रत्येक विभाग क्रमशः 30,693 करोड़ रुपए, 36,850 करोड़ रुपए और 81,839 करोड़ रुपए की सीमा तक किए गए खर्च का यूसी जमा करने में विफल रहे हैं।

याचिकाकर्ताओं ने यह भी कहा है कि प्रभावी रूप से सरकारी खजाने के 2,29,099 करोड़ रुपए यूसी जैसे किसी भी दस्तावेज के बिना खर्च किए गए हैं, जबकि इसके लिए दस्तावेजीकरण अनिवार्य है। उपयोगिता प्रमाण पत्र के जरिए यह पता लगाया जाता है कि केंद्र सरकार द्वारा राज्य सरकार को जारी की गई धन राशि सही उद्देश्य के लिए पूरी की गई है। ऐसे में यूसी के अभाव में यह पता नहीं लगाया जा सका है कि जिस राशि को केंद्र सरकार ने पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार को दिया था, उसे उचित कार्यों में लगाया गया है या नहीं।

बता दें कि इससे पहले राज्यसभा सांसद जेठमलानी ने बीबीसी की विवादित डॉक्यूमेंट्री (BBC Documentary) पर सवाल उठाए थे। उन्होंने कहा था कि भारत और प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की छवि खराब करने के लिए बीबीसी ने प्रोपेगेंडा डॉक्यूमेंट्री बनाई है। उन्होंने BBC को भारत विरोधी और बिकाऊ भी बताया था। <https://hindi.opindia.com/politics/cag-report-west-bengal-mamata-banerjee-mahesh-jethmalani-pil-2-lakh-crore-scam/>

**14. केंद्र से मिली धनराशि के गबन मामले की सुनवाई हाईकोर्ट में टली** (*hindustansamachar.in*) 07 Feb 2023

केंद्र सरकार की ओर से पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार को मिली ढाई लाख करोड़ रुपये की राशि के हेरफेर और गबन संबंधी मामले की सुनवाई कलकत्ता हाई कोर्ट में मंगलवार को टल गई है। पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार की ओर से मुख्य न्यायाधीश प्रकाश श्रीवास्तव और राजर्षि भारद्वाज की खंडपीठ में मामले की सुनवाई के दौरान अगली तारीख के लिए आवेदन किया गया जिसके बाद कोर्ट ने फिलहाल सुनवाई टाल दी।

राज्य सरकार की ओर से महाधिवक्ता सोमेंद्र नाथ मुखर्जी ने बताया कि पिछले साल 17 मार्च को विधानसभा में सीएजी रिपोर्ट के बारे में जानकारी दी गई थी। यह रिपोर्ट अभी भी विधानसभा में चर्चा के लिए लंबित है। इसीलिए फिलहाल इस मामले पर सुनवाई स्थगित रहनी चाहिए। इसके बाद कोर्ट ने आगामी 13 फरवरी तक के लिए मामले की सुनवाई टाल दी है। दरअसल केंद्र सरकार की ओर से जो राशि राज्य को भेजी जाती है उसके खर्च संबंधी हिसाब सीएजी को दिया जाता है। इसे यूटीलाइजेशन सर्टिफिकेट कहते हैं।

आरोप है कि राज्य सरकार ने कई सालों से सीएजी को कोई रिपोर्ट नहीं दी है जिसकी वजह से इस बात के दावे किए जा रहे हैं कि केंद्र की ओर से मिली धनराशि का बड़े पैमाने पर दुरुपयोग किया गया है। मूल रूप से राज्य के नगरपालिका, शहरी और पंचायत विभाग, परिव

हन विभाग के लिए बड़ी धनराशि केंद्र से मिली है जिसके खर्च का कोई हिसाब-किताब राज्य ने नहीं दिया है। <https://www.hindusthansamachar.in/Encyc/2023/2/7/Central-government-has-been-bes-TCP-cu.php>

## **STATES NEWS ITEMS**

**15. ₹22,000 Crore Bill Yet To Be Cleared By Assam Government, Highlights AG** ([guwahatiplus.com](http://guwahatiplus.com)) Feb 07, 2023

**GUWAHATI:** The department of Accountant General (Audit) has sought full information on the total funds allocated along with the pending dues to be disbursed by the Assam government to various institutions, and contractors involved in government projects until March 31, 2022.

A senior accounts officer of the Accountant General (Audit) office sent an emergency letter in this regard to the director of the budget branch of the finance department of the Assam government.

A source in Dispur said that the state government is yet to clear bills amounting to ₹22,000 crore to be given to the contractors and contractors associated with land acquisition till March 31 of this year. Out of this, the state government has to pay around ₹17,000 crore to the contractors for its previous year between 2020-21. Out of this, the state government's water resources department alone has to pay around ₹600 crore to the contractors.

Similarly, the health, education, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Public works department, Water Resources, Public Health, Social Welfare etc. have to pay more than ₹12,000 crore. <https://www.guwahatiplus.com/assam/rs22000-crore-bill-yet-to-be-cleared-by-assam-government-highlights-ag-audit>

**16. Tax collectors demand protection as angry residents attack them when they demand tax payment** ([thehindu.com](http://thehindu.com)) February 07, 2023

**“Many residents are unable to pay tax. We therefore, request protection, because they react quite angrily to our visits,” said a tax collector.**

Unable to pay property tax during financial distress, some residents have reportedly started attacking tax collectors in Chennai. On Tuesday, all the tax collectors of Chennai Corporation gathered in Ripon Buildings, demanding protection from angry residents who reportedly attacked the personnel for demanding tax payment.

A few days ago, a tax collector led a team to a residential locality in ward 139 in Saidapet to collect property tax. A resident reportedly attacked two employees, injuring them. After the two employees were admitted to the hospital, the police have not been able to trace the resident.

“Many residents are unable to pay tax. We therefore, request protection, because they react quite angrily to our visits. In many of the 200 wards, around 50% of the assesseees have not paid property tax,” said a tax collector. Skirmishes between the residents and the tax collectors have increased in other parts of the city also, they said.

Following the World Bank recommendation, many civic bodies in the country, including Greater Chennai Corporation, have increased their own source of revenue, by increasing property tax. The tax collectors are under constant pressure to collect tax from defaulters. But more than five lakh out of 13 lakh assesseees have not paid tax during October 1 - March 31 in Chennai.

The tax collector who had visited the residence in ward 139 had reportedly been served a memo for failure to collect tax.

Following the latest report from the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, the Greater Chennai Corporation was able to generate only 53% of its own revenue. Stressing the need for achieving fiscal autonomy and the release of grant from the Centre without any delay, the report said the expenditure incurred by all urban local bodies, including the GCC, towards programmes in accordance with the scheme works has showed a decreasing trend

As the borrowing of the Greater Chennai Corporation stood at 10% of its revenue, the civic body is in a situation to improve its own source of revenue, so that the World Bank provides more funds for executing infrastructure projects. The Chennai Corporation has set targets every week for tax collection, leading to more pressure to collect tax, and skirmishes between reluctant residents and determined tax collectors.

A total of 180 tax collectors, 80 tax assessors and 80 license inspectors have been responsible for tax collection, tax assessment and other revenue-related operations of Greater Chennai Corporation in 200 wards covering 426 sq. km. of the city. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/tax-collectors-demand-protection-as-angry-residents-attack-them-when-they-demand-tax-payment/article66482237.ece>

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

**17. Funds Available for Operational Defence Expenditure Are Up, but Little for Modernisation** ([thewire.in](http://thewire.in)) 08 Feb, 2023

**The ball is now in the armed forces' court, to determine how effectively – or not – they utilise the resources made available to them.**

The Rs 5,83,538 crore budget outlay for defence, representing a 13.2% hike for financial year 2023-24 (FY23-24) over the previous year's budget estimates (BE), is somewhat misleading.

The allocation has dipped from 2.04% to 1.97% of the gross domestic product (GDP), which is well short of the 3% demanded by military planners, service veterans and defence analysts. Additionally, the share of defence expenditure in the overall budget for the forthcoming FY too has declined, albeit marginally, from 13.31% to 13.18%.

Statistics apart, this increase is unlikely to satiate the armed forces' aspirations, who like the proverbial Dickensian orphan Oliver Twist, are always in the need for more.

This perennial debate notwithstanding, the entire defence outlay is not available to the armed forces for modernisation and operational tasks, as it includes Rs 1,38,205 crore for defence

pensions and Rs 22,613 crore for organisations like the Border Roads and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

The balance Rs 4,32,720 crore is for the military, of which Rs 2,70,120 crore has been earmarked for revenue expenditure and Rs 1,62,000 crore as the capital outlay, representing year-on-year hikes of 15.93% and 6.71% respectively. The former includes salaries and the armed forces' running costs like transportation, stores, while the latter is meant for procuring new equipment, upgrading existing kit, acquiring land and developing infrastructure.

But even this amount is not available to the armed forces in its entirety, as it also incorporates the outlay for the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), Director General of Quality Audit (DGQA) and other sundry departments. The DRDO, for instance, accounts for Rs 10,414 crore of the overall revenue budget and Rs 12,850 crore of the capital outlay, equalling a total of Rs 23,264 crore.

What further constricts the budget is that a significant proportion of the revenue expenditure is consumed by salaries, while that of the capital budget is pegged to 'committed liabilities', or payments due in the coming year on account of previously acquired materiel. It is not known how much of the capital budget will go towards discharging these liabilities, but past trends indicate that it could be as high as 80-90% in all three services, leaving limited funds for new acquisitions.

This has been an enduring handicap in modernising the armed forces and a cross-section of military planners and defence analysts agree that it is unlikely to change in the coming financial year. Hence, the chimera of upgrading military capability persists, seemingly without cure.

Furthermore, although the capital outlay has increased by 6.71% to Rs 1,62,000 crore over the current year's BE, or 8.4% over the revised estimates (RE), even then it is far less than the 16% hike anticipated by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), as reflected in the 2020 report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, which at the time had also suggested the establishment of a non-lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund. More than two years later, this remains a work-in-progress.

As for the revenue budget, salaries of the service personnel and the defence civilians have traditionally been a major and steadily increasing component of the outlay. But, remarkably, the share of salaries in the total net revenue budget has come down from 64.12% in the current year's BE to 57.18% in next year's budget due to all three services magically restricting their expenditure in this regard.

The Indian Army (IA), for its part, has brought down its salary share from 70.78% in the current year to 65.09% in FY 2023-24, while the other services have done even better; the Indian Navy (IN) has reduced its salary bill from 49.82% to 39.57% and the Indian Air Force (IAF) has cut it from 60.95% to 51.40%. What accounts for this dip is not presently clear, as there has not been any significant reduction either in the manpower or emoluments, but the puzzle is expected to resolve itself as the year progresses.

Be that as it may, a consequential outcome of this salary decrease has been that the moneys available for operational expenditure have increased almost five percentage points, up from

27.87% to 32.39% of the total net revenue allocation. For the IAF, this has jumped from 39.69% to 48.70%, for the IN from 40.56% to 48.75%, and from 25.22% to 27.47% for the IA.

These calculations are based on the premise that the operational expenditure comprises mainly the outlay for procurement of ordnance and other stores, execution of civil works related to maintenance of infrastructure, transportation of personnel and equipment, repairs and refit of naval vessels, and some other miscellaneous operational expenditure.

The outlay for Joint Staff, which caters for tri-services organisations like the Defence Cyber and Space Agencies, Strategic Forces Command, and Andaman and Nicobar Command, has been increased from Rs 3,195 crore to Rs 4,222 crore, signifying the increasing focus on operational jointness, especially in the Indo-Pacific. It also signifies a commitment to 'jointness' which all three services have been striving towards for years, but not achieving.

The defence R&D budget too has increased marginally from Rs 21,331 crore to Rs 23,264 crore. This includes a hike in the revenue budget from Rs 9,349 crore to Rs 10,414 crore and the capital outlay from Rs 11,982 crore to Rs 12,850 crore. This seems grossly insufficient keeping in mind the imperatives of atmanirbharta or self-reliance in defence production and a reduction in imports.

Also, there is no indication that 25% of the R&D budget has been set aside to finance private industry, start-ups and academia for taking up the design and development of military platforms and equipment, singly and in collaboration with the DRDO as announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech last year.

The capital allocation for the ICG, on the other hand, had jumped from Rs 5,245 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 7,310.29 crore in the current FY, but has been reduced to Rs 7,198 crore for the FY23-24. Concomitantly, there has been a sharp decline in the ICGs capital allocation from Rs 4,246 crore to Rs 3,526 crore, whereas its revenue or operational allocation has increased from Rs 3,064 crore to Rs 3,661 crore, which is an indication of the importance the government places on coastal defence. But the fall in capital allocation could adversely impact the ICG's expansion and acquiring platforms like patrol boats, helicopters and even fixed wing aircraft.

Amid all this, the allocation for the Border Roads Development Board has been increased from Rs 4,555 crore to Rs 6,005 crore, no doubt with an eye on infrastructure development along the disputed Line of Actual Control with an irredentist China.

To sum up, the major highlight of the defence budget is the increase in funds available for operational expenditure under the revenue segment of the budget but with little primacy to modernisation. Given the need for fiscal consolidation, increased capex for rapid economic growth, and containing the common man's tax burden, this is possibly the best the finance minister could do to strike a balance between the competing requirements.

The ball is now in the armed forces' court, to determine how effectively – or not – they utilise the resources made available to them. <https://thewire.in/security/funds-available-for-operational-defence-expenditure-are-up-but-little-for-modernisation>



18. **Invest in defence modernisation** ([dailypioneer.com](http://dailypioneer.com)) February 8, 2023

**The Government should shed the illusion of strength; we need modern warfare technology to face the menacing China threat.**

The only surprise in the defence budget was no surprise: static, in real terms, a negative budget for modernization- the litmus test of capability enhancement for maintaining deterrence in order to meet the two-and-a-half threat challenge plus government articulated missions of retaking PoK and Aksai Chin. Much of the capital is consumed by committed liabilities – payment for equipment already ordered and in the pipeline. Overconfidence in a strong government and leader, the chimera of G20 grandeur, and ‘it is not an era of war’ but ‘Amrit Kaal has ruled out conflict with China and Pakistan. Northern Army Commander, Lt Gen Dwivedi earlier and former Army Chief, Gen Naravane, only last month, revived illusions of ‘we are in a position of strength’ in Ladakh. In the last nine years, the ruling government has invested more in lip servicing and symbolism than in closing the capability gap with China as defence budgets have hovered between 1.5 and 1.6 percent of GDP. Former Defence Minister Arun Jaitley would admit: “we have no money, we can’t put cess on defence”. So the government has renamed anonymous islands after PVC winners, built giant statues, installed tall flags, and embellished Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Jai Vigyan with Jai Anusandhan.

In the current fiscal defence has dropped to 1.4 percent of GDP and for the first time in decades, dipped below 2 percent of GDP if the pension bill is included. The capital acquisition increased from Rs 12,000 crore to Rs 1.6 lakh crore just an 8 percent increase well below inflation and the falling rupee. As there is no National Defence Strategy and a Policy, Plans, and Budgeting System to evaluate inter se capabilities, allocation is erratic and prioritized by CDS. IAF chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhuri has thrice publicly mentioned the dangers of combat squadron strength dwindling to 28/30 squadrons against the authorized 45 squadrons. PM Modi acquired 38 Rafales against 126 MRCA urgently sought by IAF. Its requirement of 114 MRCA has been languishing for years: Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) is still not fructified i.e. forget it.

Similarly, the Navy, whose missions have multiplied – from the Gulf of Aden to the Indo-Pacific – is woefully deficient in submarines, and the indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant is minus aircraft and other subsystems. At this pace of modernization, the third aircraft carrier is a mirage. Manpower-intensive Army needs a new tank, a light tank, and a new gun. The increased capital segment of the revenue budget is to make up for deficiencies in ammunition and equipment to fight a 30-day war not 10 days of intense conflict. Neither the hand-picked service chiefs bar Chaudhuri, nor the deeply-selected CDS Gen Anil Chouhan, has pointed to shortfalls in the modernization budget. They are unlikely to do so in the prevailing environment when discretion has become a better part of valour. Young officers have proven the backbone as an ADC of President Murmu gently ticked off Modi when he tried to step ahead of her during the Republic Day parade.

Two instances need recall. Former Army Chief, Gen Shankar Roy Choudhury warned the government that Army will not be responsible for any operational mishap due to inadequate funding and former CNS Adm Vijay Shekhawat declared at a press briefing that naval shipyards not receiving ship orders will have a negative effect on naval capabilities. The next day Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav invited Shekhawat to breakfast. It is inconceivable that the highly nationalistic government that has excelled in capex –

infrastructure hikes and doubled railway budget – has kept the sword arm insufficiently sharpened.

The government took huge operational risks by keeping the Army alone deficient of 300,000 soldiers: no recruitment was done for the last three years due to Covid. While the annual demobilization of 65,000 soldiers continued, no salaries had to be paid for the void in recruitment. Only now will 46,000 Agniveers be recruited on a low salary and no pension. It's OROP whose cost equaled modernization allocation but has reduced to Rs 1.3 lakh crore that is hurting. OROP arrears worth Rs 23000 crores are due by 31 March. Modi must rue his 2014 BJP election manifesto in signing up for OROP. This is indeed an era of war. As Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters its second year, India has to review its relations with Russia which has China, a no-limit strategic partnership. India is still dependent on Russian military hardware, technology, and spares. Serge Chemezov, CEO of Russia military industrial Rostek was in India last month for payment of dues on account of Russian oil and S400 AD systems. The Americans are making determined efforts including the use of sanctions and diplomatic pressure to wean India away from Russian equipment. All European countries are increasing defence budgets to meet twin Russia-China challenges. The UK, France, and even Germany have reached 2 percent of GDP spending levels. Japan has erased the one percent GDP embargo and will spend USD332bn over the next five years. In Asia Pacific, South Korea, and the Philippines are increasing defence capabilities by 8 and 5 percent respectively. Despite active LAC and LoC and a sensitive internal environment, the Modi-Shah government is happy to let China march ahead with a defence budget thrice India's size. There is an urgent need for recapitalization of defence to deter China. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2023/columnists/invest-in-defence-modernisation.html>

#### **19. An impetus to green growth ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) February 8, 2023**

On February 9, India will conduct the auction of the second tranche of its planned Rs 16,000 crore sovereign green bond issuance for FY23. That it will be conducted amid a challenging global environment marked by economic uncertainty and capital flight from developing countries is a powerful reminder of India's commitment to sustainability.

CEEW research estimates that India's 'net zero by 2070' target requires \$10 trillion in investments. In this context, sovereign green bonds can emerge as a smart policy lever to address the financing challenges of low-carbon transition and stimulate green growth—one of the priority areas identified in Budget FY24.

First, sovereign green bonds can be an effective means of raising low-cost finance. This is evidenced by the greenium, or pricing advantage commanded by several sovereign green, social, and sustainability (GSS) issuances globally. However, pricing is just one part of the story. Scale is just as important. On this point, banks and institutional investors globally are increasingly looking to fund environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investments, particularly those associated with climate action. The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, a coalition of financial institutions with \$130 trillion in assets under management, is a case in point. But the actual avenues for deploying capital at scale towards such investments remain limited. By designating sovereign green bonds as specified securities under the 'fully accessible route', a pathway has been cleared for global capital to be channelled at scale to support India's journey towards sustainability. Going forward, the government should also consider sovereign Masala green bonds at GIFT IFSC as an additional route.

Second, the low-cost capital mobilised through sovereign green bonds can impart a green stimulus to economic growth. Pandemic-related disruptions and the Ukraine conflict have dampened growth in many economies. In addition, monetary policy responses to inflation have made capital more expensive. These disproportionately impact small businesses and households, and pose risks for low-carbon transition. Further, global capital flows being directed towards climate action are skewed towards large-scale mitigation activities, with adaptation receiving scant attention. The proceeds of sovereign green bonds can be directed to address these twin challenges. Distributed renewable energy for productive livelihood applications, for example, has a market potential of \$53 billion in rural India, per CEEW research. Investments in adaptation are needed to moderate the damage caused by extreme climate events. The UNESCAP Risk and Resilience portal estimates that India is at risk of average annual losses of \$80 billion from drought, floods, and tropical cyclones. Appropriately channelled sovereign green bond proceeds would both support the vulnerable and stimulate a green recovery.

Third, sovereign green bond issuances can also stimulate the domestic corporate green bond market. To date, domestic banks and NBFCs have been the major sources of debt finance for India's energy transition. Institutional investors such as pension, insurance, and mutual funds remain on the margins. As a result, their portfolios remain exposed to climate risk. Financial regulators in India are increasingly cognisant of the need to manage this risk, as evidenced by the 2022 RBI discussion paper on climate risk and sustainable finance. The ratings of sovereign green bonds make them attractive investment opportunities; investing in them could also nudge these investors towards corporate green bonds as an additional means to manage climate risk. To further accelerate the corporate green bond market, the Centre should consider regulatory mandates for minimum exposure (as a percentage of debt capital market exposure) to climate-related investments for institutional investors.

Fourth, sovereign green bond issuance could catalyse similar issuances at the sub-sovereign level. While India has witnessed a few sub-sovereign green bond issuances, perceptions of poor governance, particularly in municipalities, are one of the reasons why investors remain wary. The sovereign green bond issuance can serve as an exemplar for sub-sovereign issuers to replicate systems that allay these concerns. India's cash-strapped discoms could also tap into low-cost finance by issuing sustainability-linked bonds as they green their power purchases per their renewable purchase obligations (RPO).

Lastly, the sovereign green bond framework is an integral element of a wider sustainable finance regulatory ecosystem for guiding capital flows. It complements existing regulation such as the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reports. Another successful issuance should give policy makers confidence to implement other regulations under consideration as well. These include a taxonomy of sustainable activities and a framework for the management of climate risks in financial institutions.

India's sovereign green bond issuance has converted into action an idea whose time had well and truly come. It is also very much in sync with the country's commitment to an "action-oriented" G20 agenda. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/an-impetus-to-green-growth/2974538/>

**20. Public procurement via GeM portal to cross Rs 2 lakh crore in FY23 ([moneycontrol.com](https://www.moneycontrol.com)) FEBRUARY 08, 2023**

Procurement of goods and services from government portal GeM is expected to cross Rs 2 lakh crore during this fiscal year on account of an increase in buying activities by different ministries and departments, a top official said on Wednesday.

The procurement crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore on February 1.

CEO of the Government e-Market (GeM) P K Singh said huge potential is there in states and public sector undertakings to increase the buying from the platform.

"After crossing Rs 1.5 lakh crore, we are aspiring for Rs 2 lakh crore for the full fiscal," Singh told reporters here.

The portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments.

He said the portal has over 66,000 government buyer organisations and more than 58 lakh sellers and service providers offering a diverse range of goods and services.

He added that through automation and digitisation of processes, GeM has led to higher process efficiencies, better information sharing, improved transparency, reduced process cycle times, and a higher level of trust among bidders, which in turn have resulted in greater competition and higher savings.

"We need to tap states..we are continuously in discussions with them. There are huge benefits to onboard the platform," Singh said adding central public sector enterprises account for about 50 per cent of the total procurement happening at the platform.

The portal provides a wide range of products from office stationery to vehicles.

South Korea's KONEPS is the largest such platform in the world. Currently, GeM stands at the third position after Singapore's GeBIZ.

Singh had earlier exuded confidence that the GeM platform is growing at a faster pace and it would surpass GeBIZ this year. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/public-procurement-via-gem-portal-to-cross-rs-2-lakh-crore-in-fy23-10031211.html>

**21. Beneficiaries of scam money won't go scot free at any cost ([punemirror.com](https://punemirror.com)) 8 Feb 2023**

The Bombay high court has ordered the Maharashtra government to recover around Rs 15,000 crore paid to class 3 and class 4 employees of 11 universities after manipulating their posts.

While delivering an interim verdict on a clutch of writ petitions, the HC accepted that a scam happened in state universities from 2009 to 2023 by restoring certain non-teaching posts and enhancing the salaries of employees without obtaining the approval of the state government.

A division bench of acting Chief Justice SV Gangapurwala and justice RN Nadda directed the state government to start the recovery process after a gap of four weeks to allow other high court benches in the state to close similar petitions since the verdict has been delivered.

Significantly, the universities in question had changed the designation of non-teaching staff belonging to A, B, C, and D categories in order to provide them with enhanced salaries without making applications to the finance department or obtaining permission from the Wage Error Redressal Committee. This malpractice resulted in the loss of thousands of crores of rupees to the state exchequer. The then secretary, directors, administrative officials, and registrars of these universities have been accused of carrying out the scam.

A writ petition was filed by the Shivaji Vidyapeeth Sevak Sangha in the matter against the principal secretary, the secretary (higher and technical education), the director of higher education, the joint director of Kolhapur division, and the Shivaji University. The court tagged 1,100 plus writ petitioners in the case. State attorney general Ashutosh Kumbhakoni and advocate AV Anthurkar plead on behalf of all petitioners.

Atul Bagul, a petitioner, said, “The Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), Jalgaon’s North Maharashtra University, Amravati’s Sant Gadgebaba University, and Aurangabad’s Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada increased the pay scales of their employees by changing the name of the posts. These varsities caused a loss to the government exchequer to the tune of crores of rupees.”

Abhishek Haridas, a petitioner said, “The SPPU changed the designation of C posts consisting of plumbers and masons and named them construction assistants. This benefitted them by increasing their pay to the scale of Group B employees. While only 61 Group B posts are sanctioned, this led to the disbursal of salaries for more employees in a similar pay bracket. All four varsities adopted similar methods to enhance salaries by changing designations of over 1,000 employees from different groups providing them with an excess benefit of around Rs 2,500-3,000 each. Thus, each varsity committed fraud to the tune of Rs 110 crore. In all, a scam of about Rs 15,000 crore was perpetrated in 11 universities.”

### **FINANCE DEPARTMENT CAUGHT UNAWARES**

While Pune, Jalgaon, Amravati, and Aurangabad universities were changing designations and pay scales illegally, the finance department was caught napping, as it was completely ignorant about the issue. The state government approved the proposal by the universities to change the designation, but cleverly hid the fact that it would entail salary increments. A reference number of a letter from the finance department had been provided in the government decisions. However, the finance department, while replying to an RTI query by the Sajag Nagrik Manch, denied providing reference numbers in this manner. <https://punemirror.com/pune/others/beneficiaries-of-scam-money-won-t-go-scot-free-at-any-cost/cid1675813411.htm>