

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (25.02.2023 to 27.02.2023)

1. Blue economy is intrinsically linked to Sustainable Development Goal 14: CAG (theprint.in, aninews.in) Feb 27, 2023

Comptroller and Auditor General of India Girish Chandra Murmu on Monday said that blue economy is intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 14, labelled as 'Life below Water', which concerns the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

"The UN (United Nations) has declared the decade 2021-2030 as the decade of "Ocean Science for Sustainable Development"," said Girish Chandra Murmu.

During a seminar on the blue economy on Monday, the CAG of India said, "SDG 14 helps to focus attention on the priority area of the blue economy. However, the concept of the blue economy can be grounded in a more holistic perspective of other Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDG 13 — climate action, SDG 6 — clean water; SDG 7 — clean and renewable energy, etc."

He added, "...which also highlight areas such as fresh water and riverine life and resources; the issue of marine pollution from oil spillage and fossil fuel dependent shipping and transportation modalities; biodiversity and marine agricultural resources etc."

"The agenda of World Economic Forum Davos 2022 recognised the fact that G20 nations primarily have 45 per cent of global coastline and jurisdictional responsibility over 21 per cent of World's Exclusive Economic Zone," the CAG said, adding, "Therefore, eradicating poverty from the world would require realising the full potential of the Blue Economy in all countries, while ensuring a sustainable flow of resources." <https://theprint.in/economy/blue-economy-is-intrinsically-linked-to-sustainable-development-goal-14-cag/1403228/>

2. How India allowed RP-Sanjiv Goenka firms to beat coal auctions (aljazeera.com) Feb 27, 2023

The Narendra Modi-led government enabled private firms to continue to bypass competitive processes to corner large coal reserves.

New Delhi, India – At 11am on January 31, 2015, India's Ministry of Coal started the online bidding for the Sarisatolli coal mine in the eastern state of West Bengal. But it did not generate heat in the energy-hungry nation, and the first bid came one hour and 37 minutes later from a conglomerate's firm. Of the five companies that were eligible to compete, only one kept sparring with the firm. Another made a fleeting appearance once and the rest did not bid.

Three of those five bidders, including the winner, belonged to the same conglomerate, the RP-Sanjiv Goenka (RPSG) group, previously undisclosed internal documents of India's top auditor, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), reveal. The group is a \$4bn-revenue conglomerate with interests in power, IT, education, retail and media.

Of the three RPSG subsidiaries, the documents showed, one did not bid at all. Another subsidiary, a shell company the group acquired two days before the auction, tendered a bid

from the same private internet protocol (IP) address used by its parent company and the bid-winner, the Calcutta Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC).

The documents indicated a lack of bid secrecy, essential for getting optimum value during an auction. Related entities participating and communicating with each other during the bidding process is widely considered to be “bid-rigging,” per CAG’s protocols.

CESC had the licence for the Sarisatolli mine until 2014 when India’s Supreme Court cancelled it, along with licenses for 203 other mines. Earlier governments, the court found, had handed out licences illegally and at a pittance, part of an alleged \$22bn coal scam. The Narendra Modi-led BJP government that rode into power on an anti-corruption wave that year set out to “transparently” re-auction the mines through an electronic bidding process.

The first part of our investigation reveals that the new administration enabled private corporations to continue to bypass the competitive process to corner large coal reserves, ignoring several warnings from its auditors of loss to the government exchequer, as it had under previous governments.

The Sarisatolli mine was part of the first lot of auctions the Modi government conducted to hand over the coal reserves to private companies. The CAG officials red-flagged its auction and that of 10 other mines to the government in its final report on electronic auctions of coal mines submitted to Parliament in August 2016. It said the “potential level of competition” was not achieved during the auctions — a bureaucratic euphemism for failed auctions.

An auction is considered successful when different businesses compete to get an asset by bidding what they think is the fair value for it without being aware of the offers their competitors have made. In a true competition, the highest bidder gets the asset and the seller receives a fair market price. In this case, it seems this did not happen because some companies may have colluded through their subsidiaries to artificially lower the bids being offered for the coal block.

CAG’s final report listed the auctions for these 11 mines in which some bidders participated along with their sister firms. Apart from the RPSG Group, the other bidders that employed similar practices were Aditya Birla Group’s Hindalco Industries Limited, Vedanta’s BALCO and OP Jindal Group’s Jindal Power Limited (JPL).

Although CAG had evidence of RPSG companies bidding from the same IP address for the Sarisatolli mine, it only detailed their modus operandi in a “case study” to demonstrate the potential collusion without their identifiable details. It did not disclose the name of the mine or the identities of the bidders in the case study.

The Ministry of Coal rubbished CAG report findings at the time, and the secrecy around the names of the bidders and the mine served only to bury the Sarisatolli case.

The Reporters’ Collective (TRC), a non-profit media organisation based in India, accessed internal records of the CAG audit that named RPSG’s subsidiaries and detailed how it won the mine. The group’s financial records also showed that it acquired three shell firms immediately before the coal auctions, which influenced the auctions of at least two other mines.

- Analysis of the 'bid history' details revealed that
 - (i) Haldia Energy Ltd. did not bid at all.
 - (ii) Though the time of initiation of bidding was from 11:00 hrs, the first bidding was done at 12:37 hrs (by CESE Ltd.) from an IP Address – '10.50.71.129'. However, IP Address for bidding by CESE Ltd. in the subsequent bids changed to '10.50.71.171' (it continued to bid from the same IP Address till the closure of the bidding). After the commencement of the Financial Bidding by CESE Ltd., none of the other 3 bidders submit their bids. Only GMR Chhattisgarh Energy Ltd. and CESE Ltd. kept on bidding. Then interestingly, at 18:56 hrs., Sheesham Commercial Pvt. Ltd. cast its first bid from the same IP Address as that of the CESE Ltd.'s first bid IP Address i.e. '10.50.71.129', and thereafter it did not bid at all. Finally, at 22:32 hrs. CESE Ltd. bid its closing bid at Rs.470 per Tonne (Forward).

A few months after these auctions, the Modi government internally admitted the auction process was “prone to be misused” and rules that governed the auctions could allow bidders to “stifle competition”. But it modified the rules only after most “ready-to-use” coal mines had been auctioned. Most of the winners, including the RPSG firm, CESC, have continued to operate the mines today.

The collective and Al Jazeera sent detailed questions to the RPSG firms, the coal ministry and the CAG. None responded.

Queries were also sent to Hindalco, BALCO and JPL. Only JPL responded, stating that the CAG's finding that the potential level of competition may not have been reached, “is unfounded”. It said, “on the contrary, India's auction policy has attracted good competition and fetched maximum premium which has no parallel in the world” and that its participation in the auctions “has all along been in compliance with the tender terms and conditions”.

Stifling competition

To ensure auctions are competitive and fetch the best rate for national assets, the coal ministry's auction rules said there should be at least three qualified bidders in the final round after an initial screening of applicants.

Two days before the due date to apply for the auction of the Sarisatolli coal block in January 2015, CESC, along with two of its subsidiaries Haldia Energy Limited and Dhariwal Infrastructure, acquired the three shell companies – Sheesham Commercial Private Limited, Wigeon Commotrade Private Limited and Water Hyacinth Commosale Private Limited.

CESC, along with Sheesham Commercial and one of its older subsidiaries Haldia Energy, participated in the auction of the Sarisatolli block. Two more bidders — Adani Power Limited and GMR Chhattisgarh Energy Limited — were in the fray in the final round to make it a total of five contestants. Adani did not bid at all and GMR went back and forth with CESC but was outbid.

In late 2015, as the top auditors of the country examined the electronic logs of bidding records, they found that Haldia Energy did not bid despite submitting an initial price offer with a non-refundable fee at the screening stage, and Sheesham Commercial bid once, from the same IP address used by CESC.

“ Thus, out of the three Parent Company/ Subsidiary Company coalition, one Company did not bid at all, and another Company bid only once that too from the same IP Address as of that of its Parent Company, and finally the Parent Company was declared the Preferred Bidder. ”

The auction rules also required bidders to specify the power plants they owned and which would use the coal from the mines they had bid for. The auditors found that Sheesham Commercial, which did not own any power plants, showed a unit of a CESC power plant as its own end-use plant. Immediately after winning the auction, CESC requested the coal ministry to allow it to “divert” coal from its mine to the power plant unit quoted by Sheesham Commercial. The ministry agreed.

“This was a tailor-made case of cartelisation,” said Sudiep Shrivastava, a lawyer and one of the key litigants in the case that led to the cancellation of coal blocks in 2014. “Three companies from the same group bid together; two deliberately lose the bid and one gets the coal at the cheap rate. The winning bidder then diverts the coal to the power plant of the company that lost the auction. In effect, the subsidiary, which lost the auction, also got the coal at the same price as that quoted by the winning company.”

Web of zero-revenue firms

CESC’s shell firms Sheesham Commercial, Wigeon Commotrade and Water Hyacinth Commosale were incorporated in Kolkata in May 2012, two months after a draft CAG report blowing the lid off the past arbitrary allocations of coal mines was leaked to the press. According to their incorporation documents, their main “objective” was to carry out mining to supply coal to their shareholders’ thermal power plants.

On paper, however, the original shareholders of these companies were entities that had no public record of owning any thermal power plant or links with coal businesses. The three companies shared the same email address and two of them were registered at a common postal address.

All three firms turned in the same exact figures in their balance sheets for the financial year 2013-14, a year before the auctions. In fact, multiple financial documents of Water Hyacinth were attached as records for Sheesham Commercial.

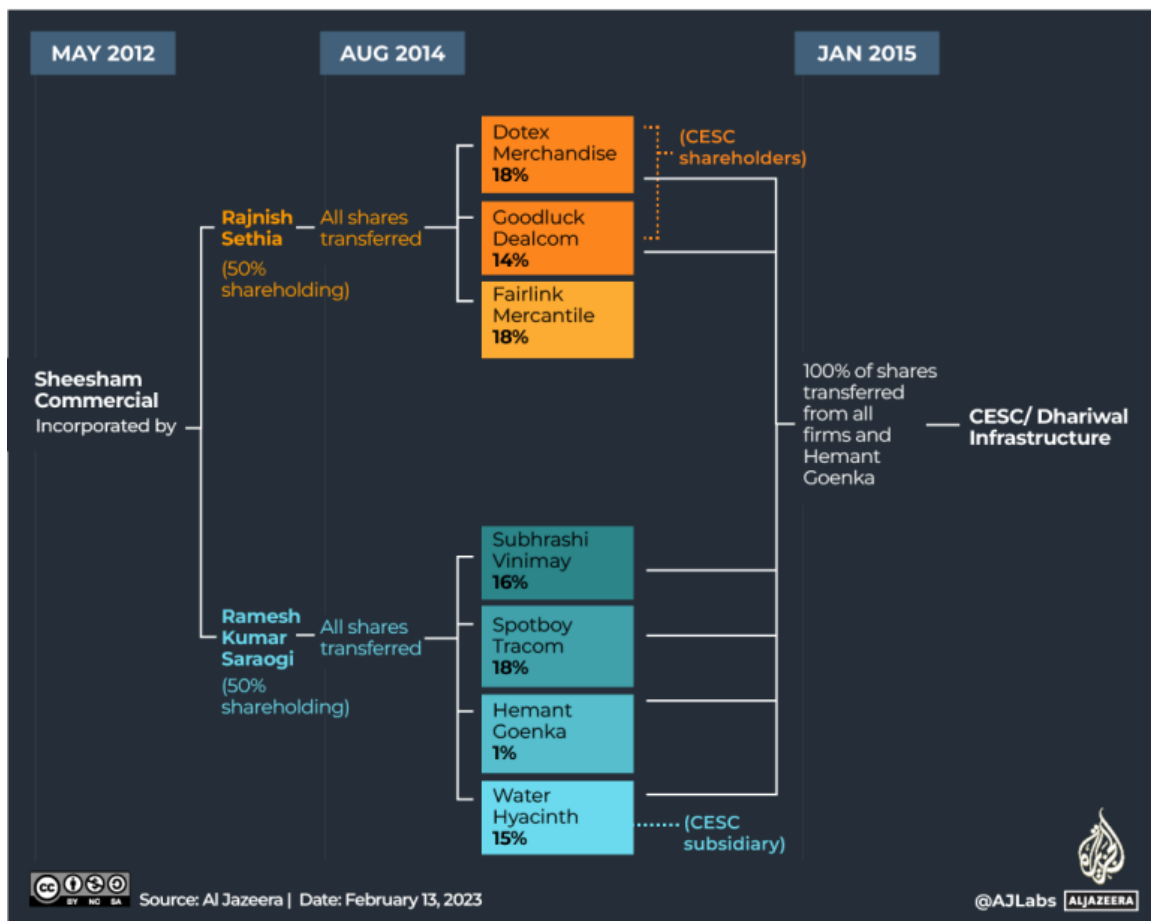
In August 2014, several other companies became shareholders in Sheesham Commercial and Water Hyacinth. TRC reviewed their financial statements and found relations existed between some of these and RPSG.

On January 29, 2015, with 48 hours remaining for the auctions, RPSG's flagship company CESC took direct and full control of all three shell companies.

INDIA

Auction games

How shares were transferred from Sheesham Commercial, a shell firm, to CESC through multiple intermediaries.



The three companies did not conduct any business operations for another financial year after the coal auctions. The sole business activity on their books until 2016 was participating in the coal auctions by taking a loan from their parent group companies. In June 2016, RPSG changed Sheesham Commercial's name to Kota Electricity Distribution Limited and got its first real business operation to supply electricity. Similarly, Wigeon Commotrade's identity was changed to Bharatpur Electricity Services and Water Hyacinth's name was changed to Bikaner Electricity Supply Limited, both of which started real operations, supplying electricity.

The flawed rule

In its October 2015 audit query, CAG asked the coal ministry whether it "took cognizance of the fact that CESC Ltd became the holding company of Sheesham Commercial Pvt Ltd" two days before the due date for bidding applications for Sarisatolli mine. It further asked if it knew that both firms submitted their bids from the same IP address and that Sheesham Commercial listed CESC's power plant unit as its own in the application. "If yes, did the MoC [Ministry of Coal] call for any clarification from the successful bidder in this regard?" the CAG asked.

Keeping in view the above scenario, following issues need elucidation:

1. Whether the Ministry took cognizance of the fact that CESE Ltd. became the holding company of Sheesham Commercial Pvt. Ltd alongwith its own subsidiary Dhariwal Infrastructure Ltd. only in 29 January 2015 and that the Budge-Budge Power Generating Station Unit III (which was shown as one of the SEUPs of Sheesham in the Sarisatolli Coal Block auction) was part of the Budge-budge Power Generation Station owned by CESE Ltd. with a total cumulative capacity of 750 MW.

66 Further, did the MoC took notice of the fact that Sheesham had submitted its financial bid from the same IP Address as that of CESE Ltd.? If yes, did the MoC call for any clarification from the Successful Bidder in this regard?

In an internal email on November 9, 2015, coal ministry officials recorded that the participation of joint venture companies and their parent companies with “common” end-use plants was allowed “in accordance with the tender document”.

The standard tender document (STD), which laid out the rules for conducting auctions, said all applicants would be first ranked based on their “initial price offers”, which is the cost of coal they were willing to pay to the government. Either the top 50 percent of all applicants or the top five bidders, whichever number was higher, would then be selected for the final round of bidding.

But the STD also had a clause that allowed joint venture companies and their parent companies, including those with common end-use power plants, to participate in the auction as bidders. This ensured that while there was a cap on the maximum number of firms that could participate in the final bidding, related companies that might communicate and agree with each other about bid pricing and profit-sharing from the auctions were allowed to participate.

Within the first week of auctions in February 2015, when only 11 mines were auctioned, one of the bidders challenged the clause in the Delhi High Court, arguing that it could lead to “cartelisation” among bidders and “lowering of final bid price”. But on February 18, 2015, the court dismissed the petition, ruling that, in the auctions conducted until then, the “processes had worked well” and that it could not find any “indication or evidence” of cartelisation.

The Sarisatolli mine’s internal bidding records were never placed before the Delhi High Court as evidence, but the coal ministry repeatedly used the court judgement to claim before the CAG and in Parliament that there was nothing wrong with the auction process.

The ministry, however, later agreed internally that the rule allowing joint ventures and parent companies to participate as competing bidders was flawed and removed it.

“It has been felt that this provision is prone to be misused” the ministry had said while recommending the change before the third round of auctions in June 2015, the CAG noted.

In later auctions, the ministry considered all joint ventures and subsidiaries of one company as a single bidder and allowed more independent bidders to participate to maintain competition.

It, however, did not act on CAG’s findings about suspected collusion by CESC and its subsidiaries using this clause in the Sarisatolli auction. It never responded to the auditors’ specific query seeking clarification on CESC and Sheesham Commercial submitting bids from the same IP address.

Government vs CAG

Though CAG did not disclose specific details of the Sarisatolli auction in its final report submitted to Parliament in August 2016, it said because the government allowed joint ventures and subsidiaries to participate as independent bidders, effective competition in at least 11 of 29 auctions until then was reduced to between two to three bidders even though more might have technically qualified.

“Further, in 7 coal mine auctions (27%) the winning bidder was a coalition company,” it said. CAG summarised, “Audit could not draw an assurance that the potential level of competition was achieved during Stage II bidding of these coal mines.”

To ascertain the government’s response to the CAG’s report, TRC accessed through Right to Information queries the coal ministry’s Action Taken Note, a formal response submitted to Parliament in response to CAG’s findings.

In the note, the ministry said the provision to allow subsidiaries and parent companies as independent bidders “was a result of a well thought out process based on a logical analysis of bidding behaviour”.

It further elaborated that “even assuming that bidders for a particular mine belong to the same company, some of them would still have to bid aggressively in order to qualify in the top 50%”.

- Further, the fact remains that MoC, while recommending (June 2015) a change in the provision relating to participation by the same company/ JV Companies for the coal mines to be auctioned in the 3rd Tranche, had noted that *‘It has been felt that this provision is prone to be misused as the same company may not bid at all or aggressively for its bids placed with different EUPs for the same coal mine. It has also been seen that out of multiple bids, a company has participated in FPO against only one of its multiple bids’*. Moreover, most of the

The CAG, in its response, pointed out the ministry was defending the same clause it had found to be “prone to be misused” by bidders and changed later. It said the ministry had no “specific reply” regarding the 11 cases, including Sarisatoli, in which the CAG could not determine if the potential level of competition was achieved.

The ministry’s Action Taken Note, along with the CAG’s remarks submitted to Parliament, has so far not been taken up for discussion or acted upon. The CAG, too, did not follow through with the investigation in the 11 cases that it suspected of rigging.

Someone was indeed trying to become famous. However, on this occasion, it was not to be. On this occasion, the CAG was up against a more determined government that was in no mood to take such frivolous allegations lying down. The averments in the draft report were contested with the backing of the comments of the Attorney General. The CAG had to back down substantially in its final

Anil Swarup, the former coal secretary who oversaw the auction, cast doubt on the findings of CAG. In his memoir, *Not Just a Civil Servant*, he boasted that the government ensured many of CAG’s initial findings did not make it to the final report tabled before Parliament.

Shashi Kant Sharma, the former CAG who oversaw the 2015 audit of the coal auctions, did not respond to requests from the collective for an interview.

Fast forward to the future

Once the government changed the rule, and with most “ready to use” mines taken in the first two rounds, few bidders showed interest in the following auctions and the government could auction only two more mines to private players until 2020.

That year, New Delhi removed the restriction on the bidders to use the coal in their own plants. After the change, they could mine the coal to sell on the open market. With this relaxation, 43 coal mines have been successfully auctioned for the commercial sale of coal. Another 141 new mines — the highest so far — have been put up for auction in the latest tranche in November.

Misuse of the bidding process was not the only way through which corporations bypassed competition in coal mining. Part two of this series will reveal how the Modi government helped another big corporation do so through another route. <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/2/27/how-india-allowed-rp-sanjiv-goenka-firms-to-beat-coal-auctions>

3. Samagra Siksha Abhiyan: Centre approves Rs 2,750 cr ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) 25 Feb 2023

Kolkata: Centre has approved Rs 2,750 crore for Bengal under Samagra Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). The funds have been approved for the 2023-24 academic year.

According to sources, in the state School Education department, 60 per cent of the approved fund will be borne by the Centre and the rest 40 per cent by the state government.

The fund is utilised as a part of the composite grant, distribution of free textbooks, library grant, para teachers' salary etc.

The meeting of the Programme Appraisal Board (PAB) was held on Friday in presence of concerned representatives of the Union Ministry of Education in which a detailed presentation was made on the part of the state regarding the utilisation of earlier funds under SSA for infrastructure development.

The Centre expressed their satisfaction over the virtual report of the state and the funds were approved. "A written communication in this regard is expected in 3 to 4 days," a Nabanna official said.

The approval of funds assumes significance with the Union Education ministry recently asking CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) for a special audit of the PM Poshan (mid-day meal) scheme in Bengal for the last three financial years.

The ministry had alleged misuse of mid-day meals in Bengal.

The ruling party in Bengal the Trinamool Congress had hit out at the BJP by terming the move as a conspiracy by the saffron party to deprive school children of their food before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and create pressure in the state government. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/bengal/samagra-siksha-abhiyan-centre-approves-rs-2750-cr-509900?infinitemscroll=1>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

4. CAG pulls up MGKV and LUfor fees, scholarship slip-ups (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Feb 25, 2023

PRAYAGRAJ: Amid state government's keen focus on enhancing education in the state, a report compiled by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and presented in the state assembly on February 22, speaks volumes about serious shortcomings in the high education institutions of the state.

The report pertains to performance audit of outcomes in higher education, covering the period from 2014 to 2020.

Two universities—Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi (MGKV) and University of Lucknow (UoL) — along with 10 colleges affiliated with these universities were selected for detailed examination. Talking to the media on Friday, principal accountant general B K Mohanty shared the highlights of the comprehensive report.

The audit report mentions that in spite of specific provision given in University Grant Commission (UGC), the testchecked universities — MGKV and UoL — did not approve fees structure for their affiliated private colleges. The audit observed that the tuition fee fixed by the state government through executive order was not complied with by many higher education intuitions test-checked in the audit. Only 73% to 80% students in MGKV and 56% to 67% students in UoL benefited from post-matric scholarships provided by the social welfare department during 2017-20. During 2019- 20, only 29% and 17% class rooms in MGKV and UoL, respectively, were ICT-enabled.

From 2014-15 to 2019-20 (except during 2018-19), results of different courses were delayed up to 273 days in MGKV. As analysed in audit the results during 2017-20 were delayed up to 175 days in UoL.

The report says that the state did not have any specific policy for opening of universities/colleges. The number of state public universities, private universities and government and non-government aided colleges under the administrative control of higher education department was stagnant from 2016-17. However, the number of self-financed colleges increased from 5,377 in 2016-17 to 6,682 in 2019-20. Likewise, Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of the state during 2019-20 was lower (25.30 %) than the all-India average (27.10 %). None of the state universities/colleges was in the top 100 higher educational institutions (HEIs) of India. Only 8.47 % (498 HEIs) of HEIs graded in the state with NAAC grading in 2018- 19 were further reduced to 2.60 % (i.e.183 HEIs) in 2019-20. Of these, only 29 HEIs (0.40%) were accredited with ‘A’ grading.

The worrying fact was that five districts did not have any government degree colleges and another five did not have men’s or co-ed government degree colleges. Further, 20 districts did not have either government or non-government aided girls’ colleges. The enrolment level too showed a regular decline from 94.88 lakh students in 2015-16 to 90.61 lakh students in 2019-20. The average enrolment per college reduced from 1,830 students in 2015-16 to 1,261 students in 2019-20, mentions the report.

Another worrying fact is that against the prescribed ratio of 20:1, the student-teacher ratio (STR) in government colleges during 2019-20 was 49:1. Moreover, data of students going for higher education either outside the university or colleges or pursuing the higher education in the same university during 2014-20 was not maintained. Also, the governing bodies in universities were not functioning effectively due to vacant seats of members and lack of requisite meetings. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/allahabad/cag-pulls-up-mgkv-and-lufor-fees-scholarship-slip-ups/articleshow/98223318.cms>

5. No university, college in state among top 100 in India: CAG report ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Feb 25, 2023

Report, which was tabled in the assembly on Wednesday, highlights shortcomings in higher education institutions in Uttar Pradesh

At a time when the Uttar Pradesh government showed keen interest in improving the quality of education in its latest annual budget, a report compiled by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and tabled in the state assembly on February 22, speaks of serious shortcomings in higher education institutions in the state.

The report pertains to the performance audit of two universities—the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV), Varanasi and the University of Lucknow (LU)—along with 10 colleges affiliated to them, in the period 2014-20.

Principal accountant general BK Mohanty shared the highlights of the comprehensive report with the media here on Friday.

The report stated that the state did not have a specific policy to regulate the opening of universities/colleges. “The number of public and private universities, and government and non-government aided colleges under the administrative control of the higher education department had been stagnant since 2016-17. However, the number of self-financed colleges increased from 5,377 in 2016-17 to 6,682 in 2019-20,” it added.

Likewise, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of the state in 2019-20 was lower (25.30%) than the national average (27.10 %). According to the report, no state university/college was among the top 100 higher educational institutions (HEIs) in India. Only 8.47% (498 HEIs) of HEIs had NAAC gradings in 2018-19. Their number further reduced to 2.60% (i.e. 183 HEIs) in 2019-20. Of them, only 29 HEIs (0.40%) had NAAC ‘A’ grading, the report says.

The more worrying fact was that five districts did not have any government degree college, while five others did not have a men’s or co-ed government degree college, the report stated. Furthermore, 20 districts did not have either a government or non-government aided girls’ college.

The enrolment level too showed a regular decline, from 94.88 lakh students in 2015-16 to 90.61 lakh students in 2019-20. The average enrolment per college reduced from 1,830 students in 2015-16 to 1,261 students in 2019-20, the CAG report mentioned.

The audit report also said in spite of a specific provision laid by the University Grant Commission (UGC), MGKV and LU did not approve the fee structure of their affiliated private colleges. The audit also observed that the tuition fee fixed by the state government through an executive order was not complied with by many higher education institutions.

Around 73% to 80% of students of MGKV and 56% to 67% of LU benefited from post-matric scholarships provided by the Social Welfare Department during 2017-20. During 2019-20, only 29% and 17% of classrooms in MGKV and LU, respectively, were ICT enabled.

Another worrying fact was that against the prescribed ratio of 20:1, the student-teacher ratio (STR) in government colleges during 2019-20 was 49:1.

From 2014-15 to 2019-20 (except during 2018-19), the publication of exam results of different courses was delayed up to 273 days in MGKV. An analysis for LU during the 2017-20 period showed the delay was up to 175 days.

Moreover, the data of students who pursue further education within the same university or go to a different one had not been maintained.

The report also observed the governing bodies of the universities could not function effectively due to the vacant seats of members and the lack of requisite

meetings. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/lucknow-news/no-university-college-in-state-among-top-100-in-india-cag-report-101677266807384.html>

6. 30k sqft mansion that UP officer ‘allotted himself’ to be made community centre (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Feb 25, 2023

Meerut: Eight years after former vice chairman of Meerut Development Authority (MDA), Rajesh Kumar Yadav, had “allotted himself” a three-storeyed 30,000 sq ft mansion during his tenure, the civic body has now decided to convert the palatial structure into a community centre.

The under-construction structure, which was over 12 times his entitlement, has been lying in a state of disuse and neglect for past seven years. “The building is located in Shatabdi Nagar township developed by the MDA. It can be put to good use by developing it into a community centre. That’s what we are aiming for,” said current vice chairman (VC) of MDA Abhishek Pandey. As per the UP government order of 2009, Yadav -- who served as VC of MDA from February 6, 2014, to July 26, 2016 -- was entitled to an apartment of around 2,500 sq ft. The matter came to light when a report by CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) flagged the discrepancy in its observation. “The construction work began in May 2015. The building plan included a 20,000 sq ft house with 9,700 sq ft of recreation area having a swimming pool, gym, sauna, snooker and table tennis rooms,” the CAG said in its audit report on ‘Economic Sector and PSUs in UP’, tabled on August 19, 2021. In October 2016, three months after Yadav was transferred from Meerut to Prayagraj as additional land management commissioner, the MDA realised that the project was too costly to continue.

“VC accommodations in several districts are much bigger in size. This particular plot was freed from encroachment at that time following which construction work began. Moreover, the approval of a project is not solely in the hands of a VC. It is approved by a board and the VC is only a member of that board chaired by divisional commissioner and also includes secretaries, finance controller, etc,” said Yadav, who is currently posted as special secretary, department, UP government. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/30k-sqft-mansion-that-up-officer-allotted-himself-to-be-made-community-centre/articleshow/98223521.cms>

7. उच्च शिक्षा की स्थिति पर CAG का खुलासा: 12 बिंदुओं पर सरकार को दिए सुझाव, रोजगारपरक नहीं है शिक्षा प्रणाली ([bhaskar.com](https://www.bhaskar.com)) Feb 25, 2023

नामांकन में कमी, छात्र शिक्षक अनुपात में भारी अंतर, शोधपरक और रोजगार परक शिक्षा न होने पर नियंत्रक एवं महालेखाकार परीक्षक (CAG) ने निराशा जताई है। उत्तर प्रदेश में उच्च शिक्षा पर सरकारों को भेजी गई रिपोर्ट में कैग ने कई चौंकाने वाले खुलासे किए हैं। इसके साथ ही साथ 12 बिंदुओं पर सुझाव भी दिए हैं।

प्रयागराज स्थित मुख्यालय में उच्च शिक्षा पर सीएजी ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में प्रदेश में वर्ष 2019-20 में उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों की खस्ताहाल स्थिति पर सरकार को रिपोर्ट पेश की है। उत्तर प्रदेश के प्रधान महालेखाकार बीके मोहन्ती ने प्रेस वार्ता में सरकार को भेजी गई रिपोर्ट के मुख्य बिंदुओं को साझा किया।

उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में एनरोलमेंट 25.30 प्रतिशत पहुंचा

बीके मोहन्ती ने बताया कि प्रदेश में उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में एनरोलमेंट 25.30 प्रतिशत पहुंच गया है। यह राष्ट्रीय स्तर 27.10 से बहुत कम है। राज्य में उच्च शिक्षा में छात्र शिक्षक अनुपात 150 :

1 का है, जबकि यूजीसी ने उच्च शिक्षा में 20:1 का अनुपात तय किया है। NAAC की देश टॉप 100 युनिवर्सिटी या महाविद्यालयों में यूपी का कोई भी राज्य विश्वविद्यालय या उसका महाविद्यालय शामिल नहीं है। यह घोर चिंता का विषय है।

20 जिलों में नहीं है एक भी उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान

बीके मोहन्ती ने कहा कि राज्य के 20 जिलों में कोई भी सरकारी उच्च शिक्षा का संस्थान नहीं है। पांच जिलों में एक भी सरकारी या निजी उच्च शिक्षा संस्थान नहीं हैं। CAG ने प्रदेश के दो सबसे पुराने विश्वविद्यालय काशी विद्यापीठ और लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय की विस्तृत ऑडिट में उच्च शिक्षा को लेकर और भी निराश करने वाली रिपोर्ट सामने रखी है। इनमें शोध को लेकर गिरावट, नए रोजगार आधारित पाठ्यक्रमों को शामिल करने में अरुचि, इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर में बड़ी कमी को सामने रखा है।

कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा है कि उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान में पढ़ा रहे शिक्षक शोध के क्षेत्र में हो रही नई नई खोजों से खुद परिचित नहीं है। यही कारण है कि उच्च शिक्षा में शोध की गुणवत्ता काफी नीचे गिर गई है। इसके अलावा उच्च शिक्षा में रोजगार फर्क पाठ्यक्रमों की और कमी है। आज के युवा ऐसा पाठ्यक्रम चाहते हैं जिसको पढ़ने के बाद उन्हें रोजगार मिल सके। लिहाजा सरकार को इस तरफ ध्यान देने की जरूरत है।

CAG ने सरकार को ये दिए सुझाव

- सभी महाविद्यालयों में गुणवत्ता परक शिक्षा देने के लिए सरकार को शासकीय महाविद्यालयों में निर्धारित आधारभूत ढांचा डेवलप करना चाहिए। इसके अलावा संबद्ध निजी महाविद्यालयों में इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर और मूलभूत सुविधाओं को यूजीसी के मानकों के हिसाब से देना चाहिए।

- उच्च शिक्षा देने वाले निजी महाविद्यालयों के शुल्क ढांचे को राज्य सरकार व विश्वविद्यालयों द्वारा विनियमित किए जाने की जरूरत है।

- उत्तर प्रदेश में 2030 तक लक्षित सकल नामांकन अनुपात 40% प्राप्त करने के लिए राज्य सर

कार द्वारा उन जनपदों में जहां शिक्षण संस्थानों की कमी है अधिक महाविद्यालयों की स्थापना करनी चाहिए।

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पाठ्यक्रमों में संशोधन और संवर्धन करने की जरूरत है रोजगार पर पाठ्यक्रम कोर्स में शामिल किए जाने की जरूरत है।

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क्वालिटी एजुकेशन देने के लिए राज्य सरकार और विश्वविद्यालयों को शासकीय महाविद्यालय विश्वविद्यालयों में निर्धारित छात्र शिक्षक अनुपात को बनाए रखने की जरूरत है।

-वर्तमान में छात्र शिक्षक अनुपात कहीं-

कहीं एक के सापेक्ष 150 है। यानी 150 छात्रों को पढ़ाने और उन्हें शोध कराने के लिए सिर्फ एक शिक्षक मौजूद है यह घोर चिंता का विषय है।

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व्यक्तिगत और संस्थागत उन्नति के लिए शिक्षकों के कार्य व्यवहार में सुधार लाने की जरूरत है। राज्य सरकार और विश्वविद्यालय नियमित रूप से प्रासंगिक व्यवसायिक विकास कार्यक्रम आयोजित करें और सभी शिक्षक इन प्रशिक्षण में प्रतिभाग करें।

-परीक्षा प्रणाली व परिणाम घोषणा में विलंब नहीं होना चाहिए

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परियोजनाओं के माय न्यू टॉप जवेशन से विश्वविद्यालय और राज्य सरकार द्वारा अनुसंधान की गुणवत्ता व समानता सुनिश्चित की जानी चाहिए।

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राज्य सरकार विश्वविद्यालयों को सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए प्लेसमेंट प्रकोष्ठ और प्लेसमेंट प्रकोष्ठ सभी शिक्षण संस्थानों में गठित किए जाने चाहिए।

उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों में पढ़ने वाले छात्र छात्राओं व पढ़कर निकले छात्र-

छात्राओं में कितने लोगों को नौकरी मिली इसका आंकड़ा भी एकत्रित किया जाना चाहिए।

-राजकीय विश्वविद्यालयों के साथी निकायों में रिक्त पदों को प्राथमिकता में भरा जाना चाहिए।

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विश्वविद्यालयों को संबद्धता प्रक्रिया को मजबूत करना चाहिए, जिससे केवल सभी नियामक आवश्यकताओं का पालन करने वाले महाविद्यालयों को ही समय मिल सके। <https://www.bhaskar.com/local/uttar-pradesh/prayagraj/news/cag-report-on-the-status-of-higher->

8. UP: उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान बढ़ने के बावजूद घट गए 4.27 लाख विद्यार्थी, सीए जी की रिपोर्ट चौंकाने वाला सच समाने आया ([jagran.com](https://www.jagran.com)) Feb 24, 2023

उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों में विद्यार्थियों की संख्या घटने के साथ-साथ गुणवत्ता में भी कमी सामने आई है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वर्ष 2015-16 में प्रदेश में 5,186 विश्वविद्यालय व डिग्री कालेज थे और विद्यार्थियों की संख्या 94.88 लाख थी। वर्ष 2019-20 में 7,183 विश्वविद्यालय व कालेज थे लेकिन विद्यार्थियों की संख्या घटकर 90.61 लाख हो गई। यानी पांच वर्ष में उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों की संख्या तो 1,997 बढ़ी लेकिन 4.27 लाख विद्यार्थी घट गए।

उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों ने नैक मूल्यांकन कराने में दिखाई बेरुखी

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राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद (नैक) से ग्रेडिंग करवाने के मामले में भी उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों ने बेरुखी दिखाई।

-यानी गुणवत्ता के मामले में भी विश्वविद्यालय व कालेज बैकफुट पर ही रहे। वर्ष 2018-19 में राज्य के 498 उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों ने नैक मूल्यांकन कराया जो कि कुल उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों का 8.47 प्रतिशत थे।

-वर्ष 2019-20 में नैक मूल्यांकन कराने वाले उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों की संख्या घटकर 183 रह गई।

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यानी कुल उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों में से मात्र 2.60 प्रतिशत उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान ही नैक मूल्यांकन के लिए आगे आए।

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इसमें से सिर्फ 29 को नैक में ए ग्रेड मिला। यानी कुल उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों के 0.40 प्रतिशत उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान ही नैक में ए ग्रेड रहे।

-यही नहीं वर्ष 2019-20 में राज्य का सकल नामांकन अनुपात भी अखिल भारतीय नामांकन अनुपात से कम था।

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उस समय अखिल भारतीय नामांकन अनुपात 27.10 प्रतिशत था और राज्य का सकल नामांकन अनुपात 25.30 प्रतिशत था।

-सर्वाधिक आबादी वाले राज्य यूपी के लिए यह स्थिति ठीक नहीं थी।

विश्वविद्यालयों की उपलब्धता में दिखा क्षेत्रीय असंतुलन

प्रदेश में वर्ष 2019-

20 में राज्य विश्वविद्यालय व निजी विश्वविद्यालयों की संख्या में क्षेत्रीय असंतुलन देखने को मिला।

18 वर्ष से 23 वर्ष की आयु वाले युवाओं की संख्या के अनुसार क्षेत्रवार विश्वविद्यालयों की संख्या कम थी। पूर्वी क्षेत्र के 28 जिलों में सरकारी व प्राइवेट विश्वविद्यालय थे। यहां युवाओं की आबादी 90.50 लाख यानी प्रदेश में इस आयु वर्ग की कुल आबादी की 38 प्रतिशत आबादी थी। वहीं पश्चिम क्षेत्र के 30 जिलों में 26 सरकारी व प्राइवेट विश्वविद्यालय थे। यहां युवाओं की आबादी 93.15 लाख यानी कुल आबादी का 39 प्रतिशत थी। इसी तरह मध्य क्षेत्र के 10 जिलों में नौ सरकारी व प्राइवेट विश्वविद्यालय थे। यहां 42.57 लाख युवा थे। यानी कुल आबादी का 19 प्रतिशत थी। इसी तरह बुंदेलखंड के सात जिलों में एक विश्वविद्यालय ही था। 10.94 लाख युवा थे जो कि युवाओं की कुल आबादी का पांच प्रतिशत थे।

बेहतरी के लिए दिए गए यह सुझाव

- वर्ष 2030 तक सकल नामांकन अनुपात 40 प्रतिशत प्राप्त करने के लिए राज्य सरकार को उन जिलों में जहां पर उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान कम हैं। वहां संख्या बढ़ाएं व क्षेत्रीय असंतुलन दूर किया जाए।

-गुणवत्तापरक शिक्षा के लिए सरकारी डिग्री कालेजों में आधारभूत सुविधाएं बढ़ाई जाएं।

-प्राइवेट डिग्री कालेजों में फीस को घटाया जाए।

-पाठ्यक्रम में बदलाव कर उसे रोजगारपरक बनाया जाए।

-परीक्षा प्रणाली में बदलाव की जरूरत है। रिजल्ट समय पर घोषित किए जाएं। देर से रिजल्ट घोषित होना बड़ी समस्या है।

-प्लेसमेंट सेल को मजबूत बनाया जाए। अभी यह ढंग से काम नहीं कर रहीं।

-विश्वविद्यालय व कालेजों में शिक्षकों और कर्मचारियों के खाली पद तत्काल भरे जाएं।

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विश्वविद्यालयों को संबद्धता की प्रक्रिया को पारदर्शी व मजबूत बनाने की जरूरत है। ताकि मा नक विहीन कालेजों को संबद्धता न मिल सके। <https://www.jagran.com/uttar-pradesh/lucknow-city-4and27-lakh-students-decreased-despite-increase-in-higher-educational-institutions-cag-report-revealed-shocking-truth-23339587.html>

9. Banda **News:**
PWD ने 42 करोड़ मिट्टी में मिला दिए, बांदा बाइपास पर आई CAG रिपोर्ट में बड़ा खुलासा (navbharattimes.indiatimes.com) Feb 25, 2023

उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने बांदा बाइपास सड़क (रिंग रोड) के लिए मंजूरी देते हुए पीडब्ल्यूडी को 41.89 करोड़ रुपये केवल मिट्टी के कार्य के लिए दिया था। हाल ये है कि 9 साल में न सड़क बनी और न ही बाइपास बनकर तैयार हुआ। सीएजी रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि ये रुपये व्यर्थ में मिट्टी में चले गए।

रिंग रोड उपेक्षा का शिकार

बसपा शासन काल में वर्ष 2011 में पूर्व कैबिनेट मंत्री रहे नसीमुद्दीन सिद्दीकी ने शहर को ट्रेफिक से मुक्त कराने के लिए बाइपास के लिए करीब 46 करोड़ रुपये की स्वीकृत दी थी। समय के साथ लागत भी बढ़ती गई। उस समय बाइपास रोड का निर्माण पीडब्ल्यूडी ने आधा-अधूरा कराया था। इसके बाद सत्ता बदलती रही और यह रिंग रोड उपेक्षा की शिकार होती रही। बाइपास की 10.7 किलोमीटर निर्माण की मंजूरी दी गई थी। इसी वर्ष तकनीकी स्वीकृति भी दे दी गई। विभाग के अधीक्षण अभियंता ने दो ठेकेदारों के साथ 1 साल की निर्धारित पूर्णता अवधि अर्थात् जून 2012 तक कार्य पूरा कराने के लिए 37.83 करोड़ का अनुबंध किया। सरकार ने भूमि अधिग्रहण के लिए 13.55 करोड़ रुपये का धन स्वीकृत किया। जिसे बाद में संशोधित करते हुए जून 2019 में 21.64 करोड़ किया गया। मार्च 2021 तक विभाग द्वारा आवश्यक भूमि की संशोधित आवश्यक भूमि 43.57 हेक्टेयर के मुकाबले कुल 40.02 हेक्टेयर भूमि का अधिग्रहण किया गया।

41.89 करोड़ रुपये फालतू खर्च

इस मामले में जारी सीएजी रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 41.89 करोड़ रुपये खर्च करने के बाद भी पीडब्ल्यूडी सड़क निर्माण के सुरक्षित स्तर का महज 1.6 किलोमीटर ही प्राप्त कर सका, जिससे जरूरी भूमि पर कब्जा प्राप्त किए बिना कार्य शुरू करने से 41.89 करोड़ रुपये फालतू खर्च किया गया। कार्य पूरा करने की निर्धारित अवधि के 9 वर्ष से अधिक बीत जाने पर भी भूमि के अभाव में इसे पूरा नहीं किया जा सका। विभाग द्वारा किए गए मिट्टी के कार्य की लंबी अवधि बीत जाने से क्षरण संभावित है। 10.7 किलोमीटर लंबाई वाले सड़क का महज 1.06 किलोमीटर ही सुरक्षित किया गया। <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/state/uttar->

10. UP

Budget 2023: CAG की रिपोर्ट ने उच्च शिक्षा में कमियों पर उठाए कई सवाल (hindi.oneindia.com) Feb 25, 2023

कैग की रिपोर्ट में यूपी में उच्च शिक्षा में कमियों की ओर इंगित किया गया है। इसको लेकर रिपोर्ट में कई सवाल खड़े गए हैं। इस रिपोर्ट को लेकर प्रधान महालेखाकार बीके मोहंती ने इस रिपोर्ट की मुख्य बातें साझा की।

CAG report submitted in UP assembly: उत्तर प्रदेश में विधानसभा का बजट सत्र चल रहा है। यूपी सरकार ने इस बार लगभग सात लाख करोड़ रुपये का बजट सदन में पेश किया है। इस बजट के बाद सदन में राज्यपाल के अभिभाषण पर चर्चा चल रही है। इस बीच शुक्रवार को सदन में भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) की रिपोर्ट सदन में पेश की गई। कैग की रिपोर्ट में यूपी में उच्च शिक्षा में कमियों की ओर इंगित किया गया है। इसको लेकर रिपोर्ट में कई सवाल खड़े गए हैं।

विश्वविद्यालय या कॉलेज खोलने के लिए सरकार के पास ठोस नीति नहीं

प्रधान महालेखाकार बीके मोहंती ने शुक्रवार को यहां मीडिया के साथ व्यापक रिपोर्ट की मुख्य बातें साझा कीं। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि विश्वविद्यालयों एवं कॉलेजों को खोलने के लिए राज्य के पास कोई विशिष्ट नीति नहीं है। उच्च शिक्षा विभाग के प्रशासनिक नियंत्रण के तहत सार्वजनिक और निजी विश्वविद्यालयों और सरकारी और गैर-सरकारी सहायता प्राप्त कॉलेजों की संख्या 2016-17 से स्थिर रही है। हालांकि, स्व-वित्तपोषित कॉलेजों की संख्या 2016-17 में 5,377 से बढ़कर 2019-20 में 6,682 हो गई।

यूपी के 20 जिलों में कन्या महाविद्यालयों का आभाव

रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, सबसे अधिक चिंताजनक तथ्य यह है कि यूपी के पांच जिलों में कोई भी सरकारी डिग्री कॉलेज नहीं था, जबकि पांच अन्य में पुरुष या सह-एड सरकारी डिग्री कॉलेज नहीं था। इसके अलावा, 20 जिलों में सरकारी या गैर-सरकारी सहायता प्राप्त कन्या महाविद्यालय नहीं हैं। इसके अलावा रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, नामांकन स्तर में भी नियमित गिरावट देखी गई। 2015-16 में 94.88 लाख छात्रों ने नामांकन लिया था लेकिन 2019-20 में यह आंकड़ा गिरकर 90.61 लाख तक पहुंच गया।

कई विश्वविद्यालयों में नहीं हो रहा यूजीसी के नियमों का अनुपालन

ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग (UGC) की ओर से निर्धारित एक विशिष्ट प्रावधान के बावजूद MGKV और LU ने अपने संबद्ध निजी कॉलेजों की फीस संरचना को मंजूरी नहीं दी। ऑडिट में यह भी पाया गया कि राज्य सरकार द्वारा एक कार्यकारी आदेश के माध्यम से निर्धारित शिक्षण शुल्क का कई उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों द्वारा अनुपालन नहीं किया गया था।

विश्वविद्यालयों में परीक्षा परिणामों के प्रकाशन में हो रही देरी

2017-20 के दौरान समाज कल्याण विभाग द्वारा प्रदान की गई पोस्ट-मैट्रिक छात्रवृत्ति से MGKV के लगभग 73% से 80% और LU के 56% से 67% छात्र लाभान्वित हुए। 2019-20 के दौरान, MGKV और LU में क्रमशः केवल 29% और 17% कक्षाएँ ही ICT सक्षम थीं। विभिन्न पाठ्यक्रमों के परीक्षा परिणामों के प्रकाशन में MGKV में 273 दिनों तक की देरी हुई। 2017-20 की अवधि के दौरान एलयू के विश्लेषण से पता चला कि देरी 175 दिनों तक थी। इसके अलावा, एक ही विश्वविद्यालय में आगे की शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाले या किसी अन्य विश्वविद्यालय में जाने वाले छात्रों का डेटा नहीं रखा गया था।

सरकार ने उच्च शिक्षा क्षेत्र को दिया भारी भरकम बजट

दरअसल, ऐसे समय में जब उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने अपने नवीनतम वार्षिक बजट में शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता में सुधार करने में गहरी दिलचस्पी दिखाई है इसी बीच भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) की तरफ से तैयार की गई कैग की रिपोर्ट ने सरकार को असहज करने का काम किया है। इस रिपोर्ट में यूपी में शिक्षा की स्थिति को लेकर उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में कमियों को लेकर गंभीर बातें उठाई गई हैं। <https://hindi.oneindia.com/news/uttar-pradesh/up-budget-2023-cag-report-presented-in-vidhansabha-questions-raised-on-higher-education-752551.html?story=3>

11. यूपी में उच्च शिक्षा को लेकर CAG की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कई चौकाने वाले खुलासे (up.punjabkesari.in) Feb 25, 2023

उत्तर प्रदेश में उच्च शिक्षा की स्थिति पर भारत के नियंत्रक महालेखा परीक्षक CAG ने चौकाने वाला खुलासा किया है...प्रयागराज स्थित मुख्यालय में उच्च शिक्षा पर सीएजी ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में प्रदेश में साल 2019-20 में उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों की खस्ताहाल की तस्वीर दिखाई है।

Video **Link:** <https://up.punjabkesari.in/uttar-pradesh/news/many-shocking-revelations-in-cag-audit-report-regarding-1778343>

12. राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों से निकल रही बेरोजगारों की फौज : प्रधान महालेखाकार (livehindustan.com) Feb 24, 2023

प्रयागराज। उत्तर प्रदेश के राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों और उनसे संबद्ध महाविद्यालयों से बेरोजगारों की फौज निकल रही है। भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक की रिपोर्ट में यह खुलासा हुआ है। प्रधान महालेखाकार (लेखा परीक्षा-

1) बीके मोहंती ने शुक्रवार को 'उच्च शिक्षा के परिणामों की निष्पादन लेखा परीक्षा' पर रिपोर्ट मीडिया के समक्ष प्रस्तुत की। बताया कि लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय और महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ वाराणसी के साथ इनसे संबद्ध दस महाविद्यालयों के विस्तृत लेखा परीक्षा में यह बात सामने आई कि इन विश्वविद्यालयों से पढ़कर निकलने वाले छात्र-छात्राएं रोजगार की दौड़ में पीछे रह जा रहे हैं।

महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ में 2016 से 2020 तक चार सत्रों में कुल 42 रोजगार मेला लगाए गए और 781 छात्रों का चयन हुआ। वहीं लखनऊ विवि में 13 रोजगार मेलों में 2692 छात्रों का कैम्पस प्लेसमेंट हुआ। नमूना जांच से यह साफ हुआ कि राजकीय महाविद्यालयों में कैम्पस प्लेसमेंट की संस्कृति नहीं है। लगभग यही स्थिति दूसरे विश्वविद्यालयों की भी है। इसका एक और कारण इन संस्थाओं में रोजगारपरक पाठ्यक्रमों की कमी भी है। ये संस्थान अपने पुराने छात्रों का भी कोई रिकॉर्ड नहीं रखते। काशी विद्यापीठ में विभिन्न पाठ्यक्रमों के परिणाम 273 दिन तक जबकि लखनऊ विवि के परिणाम 175 दिनों तक विलंबित थे। <https://www.livehindustan.com/uttar-pradesh/prayagraj/story-army-of-unemployed-coming-out-of-state-universities-principal-accountant-general-7816816.html>

13. Punjabi University Finances: CAG probes existence, activities of private firms (tribuneindia.com) Feb 27, 2023

The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India is enquiring into the existence and activities of various private companies that provided contractual employees to Punjabi University in the past many years but have failed to pay GST to the government. The office has estimated lapses to the tune of Rs 6 crore since the financial year 2017-18 and paid two visits to the university campus.

Officials on the campus privy to the matter said questions have already been raised on the legitimacy and existence of the private companies that provided the contractual employees such as sweepers, cleanliness workers, security guards and peons to the university.

“The companies have failed to submit the requisite tax amount since the financial year 2017-18. It is anticipated that they were ghost companies and were being operated from the campus,” an official said. Officials added that the companies were hired by seeking quotations and continued their services till December 2021 after which the university did away with the process of hiring contractual workers.

A senior administrative official said the CAG office had earlier sent a notice to the Department of Higher Education and it was later received by the university six months ago. “The team has

paid two visits to the campus already. They came and collected various documents, including copies of agreements, quotations and others,” the official said.

Finance officer Prof Parmod Aggarwal said, “A three-member team had paid a visit to the campus regarding the standing matter recently. We provided them with the requisite documents.” <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/patiala/punjabi-university-finances-cag-probes-existence-activities-of-pvt-firms-483352>

14. Indore is showing how India’s resource-scarce municipal bodies can improve their financial health (scroll.in) Feb 26, 2023

Indore’s first green bond has received overwhelming response. Can other cities learn from its success?

Indore’s Municipal Corporation received an overwhelming response from institutional and corporate investors when it issued a green bond last week. This development set a positive tone for similar resource-scarce urban bodies looking for investments to meet civic needs and ambition. However, mobilising capital through bond issuance is still at a nascent stage for urban bodies, experts opined.

Bonds are issued by governments or companies to borrow money from investors for major projects. For investors, bonds are a fixed-income investment. ‘Green’ bonds, in particular, are for raising money for climate and environment projects.

Indore, one of India’s ‘smart’ cities, aims to use this fund to reduce its financial burden related to the drinking water needs of the city. With the mobilised fund, Indore aims to install solar plants and use the renewable energy to fetch water from the Narmada River from the Khargone district, some 80 km away from the city. The Indore’s Municipal Corporation spends around Rs 3 billion every year for the same. Closing on February 15, the issuance was subscribed 5.9 times and attracted a subscription of Rs 7.2 billion. The base price was Rs 1.2 billion.

Experts called it exciting news. Namita Aggarwal from Janaagraha, a Bengaluru-based think tank working with urban local bodies on policy and governance, said that this is a very encouraging development given the fiscal gap under urban local bodies functioning. The fact that the bond was oversubscribed is a positive development.

She lauds Indore’s initiative to issue green bonds to focus on sustainability issues. Before this, Ghaziabad has issued a green bond in 2021 for setting up a water treatment plant.

When it comes to local governance, the Indore urban local body has been setting records. In India’s Municipal Performance Index, Indore emerged as the highest-ranked municipal corporation in 2020. The city has maintained a top position in the cleanliness survey for consecutive six years.

The city received a special mention in a recently published report by the Reserve Bank of India for being the first municipal corporation to list on the National Stock Exchange in 2018.

Focused on municipal finance, the report appeared on November 10 and gives a glimpse of urban local bodies’ financial health.

Burgeoning needs

The cities of India have been growing in population over the past fifty years. In 1951, there were five metropolitan cities with a population of over one million. In the latest census (2011), India's 53 cities have more than one million population. There are estimates that India will add over 416 million urban residents in its cities between 2018 and 2050, bringing the urban population to over 850 million people by the end of the period.

The rapid growth of urbanisation in India has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in urban infrastructure, says the Reserve Bank of India report on municipal finances.

The increasing urbanisation is putting pressure on the infrastructure. There is an increasing demand for affordable housing, integrated transport systems, and basic infrastructure like water, and electricity along with schools, hospitals, etc. The Covid-19 pandemic has also exposed the lack of preparedness of Indian cities which now need to be prepared for managing future disasters. Simultaneously, there is added burden due to climate change. Rise in sea level, cyclones, flooding, and heat waves warrant climate adaptation and risk mitigation plans, says the Reserve Bank of India paper.

In this scenario, the three-tier local governments need significant capital to prepare their infrastructure for future challenges.

To estimate the required capital, the government of India constituted a high-power expert committee that gave its report in 2011. The committee estimated that urban infrastructure (eight sectors) will need Rs 31 trillion in 20 years from 2012 to 2031 (estimated at 2009-'10 prices). Those sectors include water supply, sewerage, solid waste management, urban roads, storm water drains, urban transport, traffic support infrastructure, and street lighting.

This estimated investment however, has not been revised in the last decade, said Janaagraha's Aggarwal, adding that currently, urban local bodies do not have the financial capacity to meet citizens' needs. They are heavily dependent on state and federal grants that are unpredictable and insufficient. The capital expenditure of cities has grown manifold in the last decade or so, she added.

The Reserve Bank of India paper also reiterates the same, "Due to limited sources of revenue generation, municipal corporations in India are largely dependent on grants from the central and state governments for meeting their expenditure needs."

Nilachala Acharya from the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability said that the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 empowered urban local bodies to function as independent 'institutions of self-government.' However, for discharging their obligatory functions and basic services to urban residents, most of these urban local bodies have been dependent on the resources from the Union and state governments. Acharya works as the research lead with Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and has studied the finances of six municipal corporations in India and leading the work on presenting fiscal information of municipal corporations through a dashboard for easy to understand and comprehend by non-technical audience.

Acharya's study reveals that "now the urban local bodies are heavily dependent on grants given by the centre and states."

The grants for these local bodies are decided by the recommendations of the Central Finance Commission from time to time. The State Finance Commissions also recommend grants from the consolidated fund of states to supplement the municipalities' resources. Both the Central Finance Commissions and State Finance Commissions are constituted every five years and recommend grants for municipalities from the Consolidated Fund of India and States. However, it is not a guarantee that the urban local bodies get the entire amount of the recommended grant. There are some suggested guidelines from both the Union and state governments that need to be followed to be eligible.

The latest Finance Commission (Fifteenth) for the year 2021 to 2026, recommends Rs 1.2 trillion for five years in way of grants to local governments. It says, "To cater to the growing urbanisation needs, a total of Rs 1,21,055 crore is recommended for urban local bodies for the period 2021-'26." Before this, the Fourteenth Finance Commission recommended Rs 871.4 billion to urban local bodies for five years from 2015 to 2020 which included Rs 697.1 billion as a basic grant and Rs 174.29 billion as a performance grant. Apart from these Central Finance Commission grants, states also devolve grants to urban local bodies, however, these grants are minimal.

As per the Reserve Bank of India paper, the local rural and urban bodies received less than 90% of the recommended grants during thirteenth and fourteenth plan period. Being dependent on grants also affects urban local bodies' financial autonomy, says the Reserve Bank of India report which goes on to explore possible ways through which municipalities can generate resources. It discusses bond issuance as a tool too.

Financing through bonds

In the last few years, there has been a push from the centre for local governments to use bonds to mobilise capital from the market. In her budget speech, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "States and cities will be encouraged to undertake urban planning reforms and actions to transform our cities into 'sustainable cities of tomorrow.' This means efficient use of land resources, adequate resources for urban infrastructure, transit-oriented development, enhanced availability and affordability of urban land, and opportunities for all." For this, cities will be incentivised to improve their creditworthiness for municipal bonds, she added.

Though, market borrowings through bond issuances are not new in India. The first municipal bond came in 1997 when Bengaluru tried to mobilise funds through the debt instrument. "Since then, the Indian municipal bond market witnessed healthy growth until the mid-2000s, with nine municipal corporations raising around Rs 12 billion," informs the Reserve Bank of India paper. However, it came to a sudden halt after 2005 with the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

Acharya from Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability explained the possible reason saying that urban local bodies might have stopped exploring venues of resources, including bonds, as they were getting resources from centre and states to improve basic services.

However, there is a resurgence of municipal bonds since 2017 with nine municipal corporations raising around Rs 38.4 billion during 2017-'21, the paper informed.

The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs also provides incentives to urban local bodies for the issuance of municipal bonds.

Though there is an exclusive emphasis on issuance bonds, experts said that this is still a distant dream. Namita Aggarwal said that revenue mobilisation through bonds is at a very nascent stage. Re-issuance of municipal bonds have been very limited. It means cities that have gone for municipal bond issuance have only done it as a one-time activity to raise money, and not as a sustainable form of funding for their infrastructure projects.

The larger million-plus cities can look for mobilising finance through this tool. “But it does not look to me as a major source of funding given the current status of smaller municipalities. The cities lag on many fronts. They do not have their strong revenue source and also there are no predictable grants from the states. There is a lack of trust in the market regarding the repayment capacities of municipal corporations. Trust needs to be built first, for the market to be able to see that this is a good investment,” she adds.

She listed several hurdles including the gap between market expectations and what municipal corporations are offering. Cities lack financial literacy and cannot take this forward. They are heavily dependent on state capacities and privately hired advisors to guide them in the overall process of bond issuance. “Cities should have their own set of bankable projects that they have created and have inherent revenue potential. And to fund those projects, they should go to market. Right now, what is happening is the opposite of this. Cities are going to the market because this is a new thing to do. They are going into the market first and thinking about the project later,” she added.

Due to poor planning and programme budgeting; and varying accounting practices followed by urban local bodies across states, the level of fiscal transparency is very low and hence the chance of mobilising resources from market through issuing bonds would be bleak, said Nilachala Acharya.

The Reserve Bank of India paper also underlines this fact by saying that municipal laws do not prescribe any uniform accounting standard to be followed, rendering municipal accounts largely incomparable across states and even within a state.

The Comptroller & Auditor General of India constituted a task force on accounting format for urban local bodies in 2002. The task force recommended an accrual accounting system for municipalities to ensure the correct, complete, and timely recording of municipal transactions. It is also supposed to help in producing accurate and relevant financial reports. Following this, the central government formulated the National Municipal Accounts Manual in 2004. As a next step, state governments were supposed to implement National Municipal Accounts Manual, however, only nine states (of the fourteen states for which information pertaining to adoption of state municipal accounts manual is available in the Comptroller & Auditor General reports have approved it, as per the Reserve Bank of India paper.

Now, the central government is relying on the credit rating of municipal corporations and has included it in the reform agenda of the Smart Cities and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation programme. Of the 94 cities that have been assigned credit ratings in 2018, 59% received a rating of investment grade or above, highlighting the under-utilised potential for bond financing by Indian municipalities, concludes the Reserve Bank of India paper. <https://scroll.in/article/1044372/indore-is-showing-how-indias-resource-scarce-municipal-bodies-can-improve-their-financial-health>

15. Govt mulling PSU disinvestment to generate funds: Gujarat FM ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) February 24, 2023

The Gujarat government is planning to divest its stake in non-strategic and commercially run public sector enterprises in an attempt to explore new sources of revenue.

“In addition to traditional revenue income sources, the plan to raise new capital receipts has been undertaken. The government will explore the possibility of disinvestment of non-strategic and commercially run public enterprises, along with asset monetisation,” said Finance minister Kanu Desai, while presenting the budget for the financial year 2023-24 in the Gujarat Assembly Friday.

When asked how the state government plans to go about with the disinvestment process, JP Gupta, Principal Secretary, Finance Department told The Indian Express, “Disinvestment is a long drawn process. We want to close down or merge entities and this reorganisation has already taken place. The government should not be part of certain businesses.”

The announcement came a year after the Comptroller and Auditor General had last year flagged 15 PSUs as being either “inactive” or “under liquidation”.

Gujarat has 97 state public sector undertakings (PSUs), some of which are listed on the stock exchanges and are profit-making entities. However, in a report tabled in the state legislature in March last year, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) had pointed out that 15 PSUs in were either inactive or under liquidation. Those under liquidation include Gujarat Small Industries Corporation Ltd, Gujarat Leather Industries Ltd, Gujarat State Construction Corporation Ltd, Gujarat State Textile Corporation Ltd, Gujarat Communications and Electronics Ltd and Alcock Ashdown (Gujarat) Ltd.

The inactive government companies included the Gujarat Fisheries Development Corporation, Gujarat Dairy Development Corporation Ltd, Gujarat State Rural Development Corporation Ltd, Gujarat Foundation for Mental Health and Allied Sciences, Infrastructure Finance Company Gujarat Ltd, Gujarat Trans-Receiver Ltd, Naini Coal Company Ltd and Gujarat Industrial Corridor Corporation Ltd.

The CAG had also pointed out that the state government had continued to invest in PSUs such as Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation and Diamond Research and Mercantile Company Ltd, whose net worth had eroded completely. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/gujarat-finance-minister-govt-psu-disinvestment-generate-funds-8465122/>

16. Five Southern States took off-Budget loans worth ₹2.34 lakh crore in FY21 ([thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)) February 25, 2023

Unlike other States, Karnataka accounts its off-Budget loans in its debt calculation

While tabling the Budget a week ago, Telangana Finance Minister T. Harish Rao accused the Centre of “creating hurdles after hurdles” in the development of the State. He said that the State had resorted to off-Budget borrowings to complete irrigation projects in the shortest time but the Centre had imposed borrowing limits. This cut in borrowing limit, he argued, was against the “spirit of federalism”.

Off-Budget borrowings are loans obtained by government entities, such as PSUs or special purpose vehicles, on behalf of the government to finance its expenditure. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, these borrowings are not included while computing the debt and the fiscal deficit of the State governments. However, the State government is responsible for repaying the loan and servicing the debt from its Budget.

As extra-Budgetary borrowings find no mention in the Budget documents, one has to rely on the CAG reports to ascertain the figures. Five Southern States — Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka — accounted for ₹2.34 lakh crore, around 93%, of the total off-Budget liabilities of eleven major States analysed.

As of March 2021, Telangana had the highest burden of such loans followed by Andhra Pradesh. Chart 1 shows the State-wise off-Budget borrowings by the end of March 2021 in rupees crore.

Andhra Pradesh had an off-Budget borrowing of ₹86,260 crore. The State's Civil Supplies Corporation accounted for 35% of the borrowing, while the Andhra Pradesh Power Finance Corporation's share was 18%. The CAG's contention is that resorting to extra-budgetary resources will lead them to a debt trap.

“Fiscal rules related threshold deficit ratios and increasingly volatile intergovernmental transfers have affected the fiscal space of States. [Hence] they resort to OBB for financing [and] ...innovate alternative sources of financing.... For instance, Telangana has resorted to restructure the debt maturity. They postponed the refinancing risks by resorting to long term securities. Kerala has resorted to KIFFB (corporate entity) to engage in OBB for financing infrastructure,” Lekha Chakraborty of the NIPFP told The Hindu.

In almost all States, if the off-Budget loans were added to their declared debt, it can take their debt-to-GSDP ratio even further away from State targets.

Barring Karnataka, the debt-to-GSDP ratio exceeded the target in all States already. If off-Budget loans were also factored in, it raised a States' debt-to-GSDP ratio further.

For instance, in Andhra Pradesh, outstanding liabilities were 35.3% of the GSDP, which was slightly higher than State's target of 35%. But if the off-Budget borrowings were included, the State's debt-to-GSDP ratio shot up to 44%. Karnataka already accounts off-Budget borrowing in its debt calculation, unlike the others.

Further, the guarantees given by the States to PSUs and SPVs to raise loans or borrowings from banks have also been witnessing a rising trend. According to the data from an RBI paper that evaluates State finances, the guarantees issued by States as a share of GSDP have been on a rising trend in all the States shown except West Bengal. <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-five-southern-states-took-off-budget-loans-worth-234-lakh-crore-in-fy21/article66529708.ece>

17. Pension disbursed to dead persons in Haryana: HC seeks affidavit from DG vigilance ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Feb 25, 2023

The Punjab and Haryana high court has directed the director general, Haryana vigilance bureau, to file a comprehensive affidavit after going through the entire record and assessing the participation of the officer/official of the district social welfare department in a case of alleged disbursement of social security pensions to dead persons in the state. The DG has also been directed to assess the participation of officials at the directorate level, along with the public representatives/municipal councillors, who had identified the dead persons for seeking benefits of such illegal disbursement, about the involvement and also as to whether the investigating officers have deliberately not taken note of the evidence available on record.

The court also asked the principal secretary, department of social welfare, to file an affidavit giving details about the reasons for the delay in taking action on the report furnished by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) as well as the subsequent committees. “The affidavit shall also place on record the office noting files and giving details of the officials who delayed the file; the period during which it remained pending with them and all those officers who remained posted as directors or principal secretaries/ACS of the department,” the bench of justice Vinod S Bhardwaj ordered adding that he (principal secretary) was also required to furnish the details of the action to be taken against departmental officers, who were seemingly more interested in saving the violators and the illegal beneficiaries than performing their duties as per law.

The court has made it clear that in case the affidavits are not filed upon a comprehensive examination of the issue in its entirety, the court would be inclined to refer the matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for further investigation. Twelve weeks have been given to both officers and the matter adjourned for May 25.

The court was hearing a plea pending in the high court since 2017. Filed by one Rakesh Bains, the plea demanded a CBI probe and alleged that a large-scale scam in Haryana took place in which social welfare pensions were disbursed in the name of dead persons by state officials in connivance with local bodies’ elected representatives across the state.

The court noted that the CAG, as well as subsequent inquiry reports submitted by different inquiry committees, have concurrently reported large amounts of money which had been disbursed to ineligible persons. “...the aforesaid reports reflect the complacency of the officials of the department of social welfare, the respective municipal councillors as well as the illegal beneficiaries themselves,” it said, adding that it was surprising, the state admitted to 14,000 illegal beneficiaries but no action has been taken by way of criminal proceedings.

State’s counsel had argued that since the matter in question pertained only to Shahabad, hence, action was not taken against the violators of the law and the unlawful beneficiaries of the state.

“It is incomprehensible as to why the state chose to keep the file buried despite the aforesaid illegality having been brought to its notice by the petitioners. Another glaring instance which rattles the court and questions the intentions of the state is that even though the report implicated the persons who identified the dead beneficiaries, yet, they all have been cited as witnesses in the investigation conducted (in the case of Shahbad),” it said.

The court said that the CAG and committee had feared that officials have entered into an unholy nexus to squander the public funds and to retain undue benefits with themselves. “Such gross illegalities, once having been brought to the notice and duly acknowledged by the state in its reply, necessitated for an immediate retributive action against the violators, but it failed to activate the state agencies,” the court lamented giving last chance to the state authorities before it tasks CBI with the probe. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/pension-disbursed-to-dead-persons-in-haryana-hc-seeks-affidavit-from-dg-vigilance-101677268607559.html>

18. Social security pension to dead, HC calls for affidavit (*tribuneindia.com*) Feb 25, 2023

Chandigarh: Taking up the matter revolving around the release of social security pension to the dead in Haryana, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has asked Haryana Director-General, State Vigilance Bureau, about the involvement of persons identifying the deceased for illegal disbursement.

Justice Vinod S Bhardwaj also asked the Principal Secretary, Department of Social Welfare, to file an affidavit giving details about reasons for delay in taking action on the report furnished by the CAG and subsequent committees on illegal disbursements.

“The affidavit shall also place on record the office noting files and giving details of the officials who delayed the file; the period during which it remained pending with them and all those officers who remained posted as directors or Principal Secretaries/ACS of the department. He is also required to furnish the details of the action to be taken against departmental officers who were seemingly more interested in saving the violators and the illegal beneficiaries than performing their duties as per law,” Justice Bhardwaj added.

The Bench was hearing a petition against the CBI and other respondents by Rakesh Bains and another petitioner through Counsel Pardeep Kumar Rapria. The matter will now come up for hearing on May 25. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/social-security-pension-to-dead-hc-calls-for-affidavit-482896>

19. हाईकोर्ट ने जारी किया नोटिस (*dainiktribuneonline.com*) February 25, 2023

मृतकों के नाम पर पेंशन घोटाला

मृतकों के नाम पर पेंशन घोटाले में अब नया मोड़ आ गया है। पंजाब एवं हरियाणा हाईकोर्ट ने भाकियू नेता राकेश बैस व सुखविंद्र सिंह द्वारा दायर याचिका पर सुनाई करते हुए सीबीआई की राय जानने के लिए नोटिस जारी किया है। आरटीआई कार्यकर्ता राकेश बैस ने हाईकोर्ट में याचिका दायर कर पूरे हरियाणा में पेंशन घोटाले की सीबीआई जांच की मांग की थी और आरोप लगाया कि तत्कालीन सरपंचों व नगरपालिका के पार्षदों ने समाज कल्याण विभाग के अधिकारियों से मिलीभगत करके ऐसे व्यक्तियों को पेंशन वितरण की जो स्वर्ग सिधार चुके हैं और सरकार को करोड़ों रुपए का चूना लगाया है।

हाईकोर्ट के जज ने अपने आदेश में कहा कि डायरेक्टर विजिलेंस व मुख्य सचिव समाज कल्याण विभाग को 12 हफ्तों में विस्तृत हल्फनामा दायर करते हुए समाज कल्याण विभाग के भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों व पार्षदों के खिलाफ भ्रष्टाचार अधिनियम के तहत कार्रवाई का विवरण देने को कहा है। अगर संतुष्टिजनक जवाब कोर्ट को नहीं दिया तो घोटाले की जांच सीबीआई को सौंप दी जाएगी। कैग की रिपोर्ट व अन्य जांच में पाया गया कि समाज कल्याण विभाग के अधिकारियों, जिसमें निदेशालय के अधिकारी भी शामिल हैं व पार्षदों की मिलीभगत हुई है। <https://www.dainiktribuneonline.com/news/haryana/high-court-issued-notice-142670>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

20. 335 infra projects show cost overruns of Rs. 4.46 lakh crore ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) February 26, 2023

As many as 335 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.46 lakh crore, as per an official report.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,454 projects, 335 reported cost overruns and as many as 871 projects were delayed.

“Total original cost of implementation of the 1,454 projects was Rs 20,59,065.57 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 25,05,248.43 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,46,182.86 crore (21.67 per cent of original cost),” the ministry’s latest report for January 2023 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till January 2023 was Rs 13,53,875.70 crore, which is 54.04 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, the number of delayed projects decreased to 703 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion.

Further, it showed that for 309 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of the 871 delayed projects, 169 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, 157 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 414 projects for 25-60 months and 131 projects have been delayed for more than 60 months. The average time overrun in these 871 delayed projects was 39.69 months.

Reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Delay in tie-up for project financing, finalisation of detailed engineering, change in scope, tendering, ordering and equipment supply, and law and order problems were among the other reasons.

The report also cited state-wise lockdowns due to COVID-19 (imposed in 2020 and 2021) as a reason for the delay in implementation of these projects.

It has also been observed that project executing agencies are not reporting revised cost estimates and commissioning schedules for many projects, which suggests that time/cost overrun figures are under-reported, it added. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/335-infra-projects-show-cost-overruns-of-446-lakh-crore-509995>

21. Direct benefit transfers at Rs 5.5 trillion this fiscal ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) February 27, 2023

Transfer of assorted subsidies and sops to the beneficiaries through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) has reached about Rs 5.5 trillion so far in the current financial year, nearly the same as for the whole of FY21 and just 13% short of the achievement in the whole of FY22.

Given that a lot of dues are cleared in the last month of the year, the DBT transfers are expected to surpass Rs 6.3 trillion achieved in FY22.

Fertiliser subsidies worth Rs 1.9 trillion have been provided to farmers so far in the current financial year, which was 53% higher than Rs 1.24 trillion in the whole of FY22 as input costs and global prices of fertiliser doubled in a year or so.

Given that over two months are still to go before closure of FY23, the subsidised fertiliser to farmers for the whole of the year would be substantially higher than reported so far. The Centre's total fertiliser subsidy bill is estimated to be Rs 2.25 trillion for FY23 as against the budget estimate of Rs 1.05 trillion and the actual Rs 1.54 trillion (including dealer and manufacturer) in FY22.

Subsidies worth Rs 1.5 trillion were transferred to beneficiaries via foodgrains under the public distribution system (PDS) so far in FY23. The food DBT through PDS will likely end the year around Rs 2.2 trillion in FY23, the same as in FY22. The elevated food DBT was due to the free grains scheme.

Among other major DBT schemes, the government's assistance for beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana-Rural (PMAY-R) beneficiaries in FY23 would likely exceed the FY22 achievement of about Rs 40,000 crore. So far in the current fiscal, DBT in PMAY-R has reached Rs 38,638 crore.

The DBT system has enabled the government to save significantly on its social-sector welfare expenditure through targeted deliveries. The government's cumulative savings on expenditure, thanks to the DBT till FY21-end, was 2.23 trillion.

The jump in DBT from FY19 onwards could be largely attributed to the increased use of Aadhaar-enabled DBT platforms for in-kind food and fertiliser subsidy distribution. According to an estimate by the Centre, the Aadhaar-enabled DBT platform helped eliminate 41.1 million fake LPG connections, 39.9 million duplicate ration cards and resulted in 10% savings on wages on account of the deletion of non-existent MGNREGS beneficiaries. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/direct-benefit-transfers-at-rs-5-5-trillion-this-fiscal/2993305/>

22. Dehradun: GST evasion scam of over ₹20 crore detected, 1 held ([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) Feb 26, 2023

The Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST) Dehradun Commissionerate has detected a GST evasion of ₹20.83 crore and arrested the proprietor of one city-based firm, officials said.

Dehradun-based Thakur Traders issued goods-less invoices, in excess of ₹135 crores (inclusive of GST) to various entities throughout India and passed on fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) of more than ₹20 crore, and Ishrat Ali Ansari, the proprietor of one of the beneficiary firms, A&A Trading Co., Dehradun, has been arrested and sent to 14-day judicial custody, said Deepankar Aron, commissioner CGST Commissionerate Dehradun.

Aron said CGST Uttarakhand has been developing intelligence about GST evasion from different sources.

“Apart from informers, the officers are relying heavily on data analysis. A major drive has been taken by this office as regards those entities who have availed or utilised fake ITC in order to evade government revenue. Intelligence inputs reveal that a nexus of newly registered firms has been passing huge amounts of ineligible ITC within a very short period of their registration. This fraudulent ITC is then being utilised to pay the GST liabilities causing losses to the government exchequer,” he said.

Aron said it was against this context an investigation was initiated against Thakur Traders, Dehradun. “Initial analysis has revealed that Thakur Traders has issued invoices in excess of ₹ 135 crores to various entities registered across India and have passed on Input Tax Credit of more than ₹ 20 crores. On further analysis, it came to light that this firm has obtained GST registration on forged documents like ‘edited electricity bill’ Subsequently, searches under Section 67 of CGST Act 2017, were carried out by a team of officers at the office premises of Thakur Traders and it was found to be a non-existent entity created merely for the purpose of passing on fraudulent Input Tax Credit without actual supply of goods,” he said.

The Commissioner said the beneficiary firms of this fraudulent ITC chain in Uttarakhand were identified, which included Eramet Enterprises, Dehradun, SK Traders, Dehradun, Pravin Enterprises, Dehradun, Indian Trading Company, Dehradun, A&A Trading Co., Dehradun, Anurag Enterprises, Dehradun, VK Enterprises, Dehradun and Laxmi Enterprises, Haridwar.

“Follow-up searches were conducted at the declared premises of the above-mentioned entities by the Anti-Evasion officers of CGST Dehradun Commissionerate. During the course of the searches, all these entities/taxpayers were found non-existent at their registered premises. Inquiries conducted also revealed that the said taxpayers never existed at their declared principal place of business and no business activities were carried out by them and that they were bogus entities created merely on papers to pass on fake Input tax credit,” he said.

Aron said during the search at the residential premises of the proprietor of Indian Trading Co. Dehradun, various incriminating documents, including multiple chequebooks, fake invoices, debit cards and so on of other firms of this fraudulent chain were seized. “The proprietor of Indian Trading is presently on the run and has been avoiding multiple summons issued to him,” he said.

Aron said during interrogation the proprietor of A&A Trading Co., Dehradun revealed that the firm Indian Trading Co. was created by him to utilise fraudulent ITC and consciously evade taxes. Subsequently, searches were also conducted at other suppliers of A&A Trading Co., based in Kanpur and Muzaffarnagar, which in turn also turned out to be fake. Accordingly, the proprietor of A&A Trading Co. who has utilised fraudulent ITC to the tune of ₹ 9.36 crore and seems to be part of a wider nexus, was arrested on Friday under Section 69 of CGST Act, 2017 and was sent to 14-day judicial custody. The evasion of such a huge amount of GST dues is punishable with imprisonment of up to 5 years in jail along with a fine. Further investigation on various other aspects is underway,” he added. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/dehradun-news/dehradun-gst-evasion-scam-of-over-20-crore-detected-1-held-101677410273264.html>