

## **NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (28.02.2023)**

**1. Blue economy could well be next GDP multiplier, says CAG Murmu** ([thehindubusinessline.com](http://thehindubusinessline.com)) BY KR SRIVATS | Feb 27, 2023

### **Wants G20 nations to cooperate, do knowledge sharing for devising a coordinated audit response to blue economy**

The Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) of the G20 nations must cooperate and undertake knowledge sharing so as to establish a coordinated audit response to audit the Blue Economy, GC Murmu, Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), said on Monday.

Such an approach would strengthen good governance and public welfare, Murmu said at a conference on 'Blue economy' organised by CAG, which as SAI India had on January 31 formally assumed the Chairmanship of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) 20.

In this pursuit, SAI can scale up their audits, develop study papers on the condition of the blue economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for the sustainable development of the blue economy of their nations, Murmu said.

SAIs can also consider developing international auditing guidelines for conducting marine audits, bringing out joint research papers on marine health, sharing practical knowledge and expertise on audit of Blue Economy through audit toolkits, conduct of joint co-operative-audits, etc, Murmu suggested.

### **Collaboration of G20 SAIs**

Under the guiding philosophy for India's presidency of G20, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the CAG has proposed the collaboration of G20 SAIs on the blue economy.

Blue economy is an economic system that encompasses a spectrum of policy and operational dimensions aimed at conserving marine and freshwater environments while promoting their sustainable use, producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and acting as a driver for economic advancement and welfare.

The blue economy is intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 14, labelled as 'Life below Water', concerning conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The UN has declared the decade 2021-2030 as the decade of "Ocean Science for Sustainable Development".

### **NEXT GDP MULTIPLIER**

With its vast maritime interests, the blue economy occupies a vital potential position in India's economic growth, according to Murmu. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at centre-stage, he added.

India has a 7,517-km-long coastline that is home to nine coastal States and 1382 islands. The coastal economy sustains over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities. There are nearly 199 ports, including 12 major ports that handle approximately 1,400 million tons of cargo each year. Moreover, India's Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square kilometres has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas.

The Centre had in 2019 unveiled its Vision for India 2030, listing Blue Economy as one of the ten most important dimensions to create a modern India. The draft policy document on India's Blue Economy focuses on seven thematic areas.

### **AUDIT CHALLENGES**

Murmu highlighted that the concept of the blue economy is labyrinthian, cross-cutting, and complex in nature with multi-faceted regulatory landscapes being practiced in different parts of the globe.

Further, even nationally there is a potential of multiplicity of implementation agencies at different tiers of governance.

This intricately complex and variegated nature of the Blue Economy poses several challenges to audit, he said.

Gaps in monitoring and surveillance as well as insufficiency of coordinated granular data from various sub-sectors of the blue economy presents another challenge for auditors, Murmu added.

Audit criteria and framework for auditing sub-sectors like marine fisheries, coastal ecosystem, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, biotechnology from marine resources in particular, extraction of sea-bed mineral resources may exist. Murmu said that integrating them into a single auditing framework would be the key for all SAIs, including the SAI20 Engagement group.

### **GLOBAL MARITIME COMMERCE**

According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) , more than three billion people depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, a majority of them living in developing countries. Around 80 per cent of the total volume of international trade in goods is carried by sea according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) thereby again underlining the importance of the oceans to global maritime commerce and livelihoods dependent upon it.

World Economic Forum, Davos Agenda 2022 recognised the fact that G-20 Nations primarily have 45 per cent of global coastline and jurisdictional responsibility over 21 per cent of World's Exclusive Economic Zone.

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, according to Murmu. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/blue-economy-could-well-be-next-gdp-multiplier-says-cag-murmu/article66559935.ece>

### **2. CAG wants G-20 auditors on the same page to foster a blue economy ([indianarrative.com](https://www.indianarrative.com)) Feb 27, 2023**

As India focuses on blue economy to touch the \$5 trillion, there is an urgent need to tighten its multi-layered audit structure and increase cooperation among other countries to plug the loopholes.

Under the guiding philosophy of India's G20 presidency outlining Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) of India has proposed the collaboration of G20 supreme audit institutions (SAIs) on the blue economy.

Addressing a seminar on blue economy, CAG GC Murmu today said that blue economy could be the next multiplier of GDP only when sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at the centre-stage.

"SAIs can also consider developing international auditing guidelines for conducting marine audits, bringing out joint research papers on marine health, sharing practical knowledge and expertise on audit of Blue Economy through audit toolkits, conduct of joint co-operative-audits, etc," he said.

Blue economy supports about 10 per cent — \$1.5 trillion of China's gross domestic product but it is about 4 per cent in India. As the geopolitical thrust is now shifting on the Indo Pacific, the Narendra Modi government is now aggressively looking at boosting the ocean economy and turning a part of it into a global economic corridor. India, with a coastline of about 7.5 thousand kilometres has carved out a blueprint on blue economy. A holistic ocean policy is key for India's economy to touch the \$5 trillion mark, experts said, adding that issues relating to the environment and maritime security need to be weaved into the blueprint. <https://www.indianarrative.com/economy-news/cag-wants-g-20-auditors-on-the-same-page-to-foster-a-blue-economy-113439.html>

**3. Blue Economy Occupies Vital Position in India's Economic Growth: CAG** ([outlookindia.com](http://outlookindia.com), [business-standard.com](http://business-standard.com), [financialexpress.com](http://financialexpress.com), [newindianexpress.com](http://newindianexpress.com), [latestly.com](http://latestly.com), [newsdrum.in](http://newsdrum.in)) February 27, 2023

**In line with the Indian theme of the G20 Presidency- "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth. One Family. One Future", the CAG has selected two priority areas viz. 'Blue Economy' and 'Responsible AI' for deliberations**

The blue economy occupies a vital position in India's economic growth and it could well be the next multiplier of GDP and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at the centre stage, said CAG G C Murmu on Monday. India has a 7,517 km long coastline that is home to nine coastal states and 1,382 islands. The coastal economy sustains over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities.

There are nearly 199 ports, including 12 major ports that handle approximately 1,400 million tons of cargo each year, Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) said at a seminar on the challenges and opportunities in the Blue Economy. Moreover, he said, India's Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square kilometres has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas.

"With these vast maritime interests, the blue economy occupies a vital potential position in India's economic growth. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at centre stage," he said. With India assuming the Presidency of the G20 in 2022-2023, CAG holds the chair for SAI20.

In line with the Indian theme of the G20 Presidency- "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth. One Family. One Future", the CAG has selected two priority areas viz. 'Blue Economy' and 'Responsible AI' for deliberations. Highlighting the importance of blue economy, Murmu said that the blue economy economic system promotes the sustainable use of marine and freshwater resources while conserving their environments.

It encompasses policies and operational dimensions aimed at producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and driving economic advancement and welfare, he said. He emphasized that the Blue Economy while being intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 - which focuses on conserving and using oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development -- shall also be viewed from a holistic perspective of SDG 13 - Climate Action; SDG 6 - Clean Water; SDG 7- Clean and Renewable Energy.

While there were audit criteria and framework for auditing sub-sectors, such as, marine fisheries, coastal eco-system, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, bio-technology from marine resources and extraction of sea-bed mineral resources, he said, integrating them into a single auditing framework would be key to all Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), including the SAI20 Engagement group.

SAIs could strive to scale up their efforts, develop study papers on the condition of the Blue Economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for sustainable development of the Blue Economy of their nations. <https://www.outlookindia.com/business/blue-economy-occupies-vital-position-in-india-s-economic-growth-cag-news-265936>

#### **4. Comptroller & Auditor General gears up for auditing framework of blue economy ([millenniumpost.in](https://www.millenniumpost.in)) Feb 27, 2023**

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India is gearing up to explore the process of auditing of blue economy resources as the untapped sector has a huge potential.

A framework in this regard is being prepared in coordination with heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) of G20 countries and the final framework is slated to be announced after a round of deliberations with heads of SAI G20 nations in Goa this year. A meeting of auditing officials belonging to SAI G20 countries is also scheduled in March.

Given that auditing of 'intricately complex' and 'variegated nature' of the blue economy poses several challenges, the co-operation and knowledge-sharing among nations is vital to establish a coordinated audit response to audit of the blue economy which would strengthen good governance and public welfare, CAG Girish Chandra Murmu said at an event organised on the challenges and opportunities in the blue economy.

"The blue economy occupies a vital position in India's economic growth. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at the centre-stage," Murmu said.

In this pursuit, SAIs can scale up their audits, develop study papers on the condition of the blue economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for the sustainable development of the blue economy of their nations, the CAG said,

adding that SAIs would also consider developing international auditing guidelines for conducting marine audits. The CAG also stressed on bringing out joint research papers on marine health, sharing practical knowledge and expertise on auditing of Blue Economy through audit toolkits, conduct of joint co-operative- audits, etc.

Notably, India has a 7,517-km-long coastline that is home to nine coastal states and 1,382 islands. The coastal economy sustains over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities. There are nearly 199 ports, including 12 major ports that handle about 1,400 million tonnes of cargo each year. Moreover, India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2 million square kilometres has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/comptroller-auditor-general-gears-up-for-auditing-framework-of-blue-economy-510114>

#### **5. India's blue economy could be next GDP multiplier: Girish Chandra Murmu, Comptroller General of India ([newsonair.com](https://www.newsonair.com)) Feb 27, 2023**

Comptroller General of India (CAG), Girish Chandra Murmu said that India's blue economy could be the next GDP multiplier. He was speaking at a seminar on Blue Economy organised as part of the G20 and SAI Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) 20 in New Delhi today.

Mr. Murmu said that India's Exclusive Economic Zone of over two million square km has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas.

He added that the Blue economy is intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>14</sup>. This includes the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Mr. Murmu noted that the UN has declared the decade 2021-2130 as the decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. He added that the SAIs can make recommendations on how the government could direct their efforts and policies for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy of the nations. <https://www.newsonair.com/2023/02/27/indias-blue-economy-could-be-next-gdp-multiplier-girish-chandra-murmu-comptroller-general-of-india/>

#### **6. Blue Economy to be next GDP multiplier: CAG GC Murmu ([theprint.in](https://www.theprint.in), [lokmattimes.com](https://www.lokmattimes.com), [aninews.in](https://www.aninews.in)) Feb 27, 2023**

With a 7,517-km long coastline, the importance of a "Blue Economy" for India can hardly be overemphasised. Already a key component in the government's Vision for India 2030 to create a modern India, the benefits from a blue economy could be transformative.

Speaking at a seminar on Blue Economy, organised as part of the G20 and SAI (Supreme Audit Institutions) 20, on Monday, the Comptroller General of India (CAG), Girish Chandra Murmu, said India's blue economy could be the next GDP multiplier.

"India's Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square km has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas. With these vast maritime interests, the blue economy occupies a vital potential position in India's economic growth. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP (gross domestic product) and

well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at centre stage,” Murmu said.

“SAIs can scale up their audits, develop study papers on the condition of the Blue Economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy of their nations,” he added.

With nearly 199 ports, including 12 major ports that handle approximately 1,400 million tonnes of cargo each year, India’s coastal economy sustains over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities.

Blue Economy is an economic system that encompasses a spectrum of policy and operational dimensions aimed at conserving marine and freshwater environments while promoting their sustainable use, producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and acting as a driver for economic advancement and welfare.

With the UN declaring the 2021-2030 period as the decade of ‘Ocean Science for Sustainable Development’, Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 14, labelled as ‘Life below Water’ occupies primacy in the overall context of a Blue Economy.

“SDG 14 helps to focus attention on the priority area of the Blue Economy,” Murmu added.

More than three billion people depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Around 80 per cent of the total volume of International trade in goods is carried by sea, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). World Economic Forum, Davos Agenda 2022 recognized the fact that G20 Nations, primarily have 45 per cent of global coastline and jurisdictional responsibility over 21 per cent of the World’s Exclusive Economic Zone.

“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,” the CAG added. <https://theprint.in/economy/blue-economy-to-be-next-gdp-multiplier-cag-gc-murmu-2/1403439/>

## **7. Blue economy occupies a vital position in India’s economic growth: CAG ([timesofindia.indiatimes.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)) Feb 27, 2023**

NEW DELHI: As part of the G20 programme, the Comptroller and Auditor General on Monday conducted a conference on Blue economy, one of the 10 most important dimensions of the Narendra Modi government’s Vision 2030 to create a modern India.

Speaking at the workshop at its headquarters, CAG GC Murmu emphasised on the importance of a national accounting framework for the blue economy, ocean governance, security, strategic dimensions, and international engagement. India has offered to upskill supreme auditors of G20 member countries while seeking a close coordination in establishing an oversight mechanism in Blue economy governance.

The seminar, held in the runup to the Engagement Group meet of the Supreme Auditors of G20 nations next month, highlighted the importance of promoting the blue economy economic system for sustainable use of marine and freshwater resources while conserving their environments. “It encompasses policies and operational dimensions aimed at producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and driving economic advancement and welfare,” Murmu said. The CAG has selected two priority areas viz. ‘Blue Economy’ and ‘Responsible AI (artificial intelligence)’ for deliberations at its meeting next month.

Highlighting the importance of the blue economy, Murmu said the blue economy system promotes the sustainable use of marine and freshwater resources while conserving their environments. It encompasses policies and operational dimensions aimed at producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and driving economic advancement and welfare.

The CAG said the Blue economy while being intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 -- which focuses on conserving and using oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development -- shall also be viewed from a holistic perspective of other SDG goals of climate action, clean water and clean and renewable energy.

“The blue economy occupies a vital position in India’s economic growth. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at the centre-stage,” Murmu said.

Murmu emphasised that while there were audit criteria and framework for auditing sub-sectors, such as marine fisheries, coastal ecosystem, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, biotechnology from marine resources and extraction of seabed mineral resources, integrating them into a single auditing framework would be key to all Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI), including the SAI20 engagement group.

He said SAIs could strive to scale up their efforts, develop study papers on the condition of the Blue economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for sustainable development of the Blue economy of their nations. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/blue-economy-occupies-a-vital-position-in-indias-economic-growth-cag/articleshow/98282926.cms>

**8. Blue Economy to be next GDP multiplier: CAG GC Murmu** ([timesofindia.indiatimes.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)) February 28, 2023

Comptroller General of India Girish Chandra Murmu attended the Seminar on Blue Economy, organised as part of the G20 and Supreme Audit Institutions 20 on February 27 where he said India’s blue economy could be the next GDP multiplier. “India's Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square km has a bounty of living and non-living resources with significant recoverable resources such as crude oil and natural gas. With these vast maritime interests, the blue economy occupies a vital potential position in India's economic growth. It could well be the next multiplier of GDP (gross domestic product) and well-being, provided sustainability and socio-economic welfare are kept at centre stage,” GC Murmu said.

**Video Link:** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/news/blue-economy-to-be-next-gdp-multiplier-cag-gc-murmu/videoshow/98297956.cms>

**9. Blue Economy promotes sustainable use of marine, freshwater resources: CAG** ([theprint.in](https://theprint.in), [latestly.com](https://latestly.com), [malaysiasun.com](https://malaysiasun.com), [news.webindia123.com](https://news.webindia123.com)) February 28, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) hosted a seminar on the challenges and opportunities in the Blue Economy at the CAG Office in New Delhi on Monday.

The seminar was held in the run-up to the Engagement Group Meet of SAI 20 Nations next month, being organised as part of the G20 presidency of India.

With India assuming the Presidency of the G20 in 2022-2023, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) holds the chair for SAI20.

In line with the Indian theme of the G20 Presidency- “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or “One Earth. One Family. One Future”, the CAG has selected two priority areas viz ‘Blue Economy’ and ‘Responsible AI’ for deliberations.

Highlighting the importance of the blue economy, Girish Chandra Murmu, CAG of India, said that the blue economy economic system promotes the sustainable use of marine and freshwater resources while conserving their environments. It encompasses policies and operational dimensions aimed at producing food and energy, supporting livelihoods, and driving economic advancement and welfare.

Murmu highlighted that while there were audit criteria and frameworks for auditing sub-sectors, such as, marine fisheries, coastal eco-system, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, biotechnology from marine resources and extraction of sea-bed mineral resources, integrating them into a single auditing framework would be key to all Supreme Audit Institutions, including the SAI20 Engagement group.

Murmu emphasized that SAIs could strive to scale up their efforts, develop study papers on the condition of the Blue Economy and make recommendations on how the governments could direct their efforts and policies for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy of their nations.

Avinash Mishra, Advisor, NITI Aayog, stated that the “Blue Economy plays a vital role in the Indian economic system. It has great potential and we need to pay greater attention to it.”

Chair of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Task Force on Blue Economy Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia said: “The subject of Blue Economy has a place for all of us – scientists, technologists, diplomats, business and policy-makers and the thinktank community. By nature, it is a multi-dimensional, multidisciplinary subject.” He stressed on the importance of maritime and naval security, saying “without it, we cannot think of stabler development.”

Lead Environmental Specialist at World Bank Tapas Paul said three areas – technology, programme and policies -will determine whether the blue economy is sustainable. He also highlighted the importance of gender equity in India’s emerging Blue economy planning.

National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management Director Purvaja Ramachandran said that seven priority areas were identified in India’s draft for the Blue economy. She was optimistic



that India would adapt and adopt the UNESCO-IOC guidelines and the national coastal mission would be integrated with the blue economic activities shortly.

Director, Bay of Bengal Project P Krishnan spoke about harnessing of biotic resources. He stressed that the fisheries sector is a highly connected sector and is the central theme of the Blue Economy.

Prof SK Mohanty, Research and Information System for Developing countries, stated that Blue Economy is the fastest growing economy than other sectors and stressed the need for publishing reports on Blue Economy and organizing discussion to create awareness about the sector. <https://theprint.in/india/blue-economy-promotes-sustainable-use-of-marine-freshwater-resources-cag/1405105/>

**10. Blue economy is intrinsically linked to Sustainable Development Goal 14: CAG** ([economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com), [theprint.in](https://theprint.in), [lokmattimes.com](https://lokmattimes.com)) February 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://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/renewable/blue-economy-is-intrinsically-linked-to-sustainable-development-goal-14-cag/98270097>

**11. "Blue Economy is Intrinsically Connected to SDG 14": CAG** ([krishijagran.com](https://krishijagran.com)) February 28, 2023

**On February 27, Comptroller and Auditor General of India Girish Chandra Murmu stated that the blue economy is inextricably linked to SDG 14 titled 'Life below Water,' which concerns the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.**

"The United Nations has designated the decade 2021-2030 as "Ocean Science for Sustainable Development," Girish Chandra Murmu said.

Goal 14 is about conserving and using oceans, seas, and marine resources in a sustainable manner. Healthy oceans and seas are necessary for human survival and life on Earth.

"SDG 14 helps to focus attention on the priority area of the blue economy," said the CAG of India on Monday during a seminar on the blue economy.

The concept of the blue economy, on the other hand, can be grounded in a more holistic view of other Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDG 13-climate action, SDG 6-clean water, SDG 7- clean and renewable energy, and so on."

"It 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 modes; biodiversity and marine agricultural resources, and so on," he added.

"The agenda of the World Economic Forum Davos 2022 recognized the fact that G20 nations primarily have 45 percent of global coastline and jurisdictional responsibility over 21 percent of the World's Exclusive Economic Zone," the CAG said, adding that "eradicating poverty from the world would require realizing the full potential of the Blue Economy in all countries, while ensuring a sustainable flow of resources." <https://krishijagran.com/news/blue-economy-is-intrinsically-connected-to-sdg-14-cag/>

**12. 'Blue economy is intrinsically linked to Sustainable Development Goal 14' ( [dtnext.in](https://dtnext.in)) February 27, 2023**

**Comptroller and Auditor General of India Girish Chandra Murmu said that blue economy is intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 14, labelled as 'Life below Water'.**

"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."

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." <https://www.dtnext.in/national/2023/02/27/blue-economy-is-intrinsically-linked-to-sustainable-development-goal-14>

### 13. ब्लू इकोनॉमी समुद्री, मीठे पानी के संसाधनों के सतत उपयोग को बढ़ावा देती है: कैग ([jantaserishta.com](http://jantaserishta.com)) February 27, 2023

भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) ने सोमवार को नई दिल्ली में सीएजी कार्यालय में नीली अर्थव्यवस्था में चुनौतियों और अवसरों पर एक संगोष्ठी की मेजबानी की।

भारत के G20 प्रेसीडेंसी के हिस्से के रूप में आयोजित होने वाले अगले महीने SAI 20 राष्ट्रों के सगार्ड समूह की बैठक के लिए संगोष्ठी आयोजित की गई थी।

2022-2023 में भारत के G20 की अध्यक्षता संभालने के साथ, SAI20 की कुर्सी भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) के पास है।

जी20 प्रेसीडेंसी की भारतीय थीम-

"वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्" या "एक पृथ्वी। एक परिवार। एक भविष्य" के अनुरूप, कैग ने विचार-विमर्श के लिए दो प्राथमिकता वाले क्षेत्रों 'ब्लू इकोनॉमी' और 'रिस्पॉन्सिबल एआई' का चयन किया है।

नीली अर्थव्यवस्था के महत्व पर प्रकाश डालते हुए, भारत के कैग, गिरीश चंद्र मुर्मू ने कहा कि नीली अर्थव्यवस्था आर्थिक प्रणाली समुद्री और मीठे पानी के संसाधनों के सतत उपयोग को बढ़ावा देती है जबकि उनके पर्यावरण का संरक्षण करती है। इसमें खाद्य और ऊर्जा का उत्पादन, आजीविका का समर्थन करने, और आर्थिक उन्नति और कल्याण को चलाने के उद्देश्य से नीतियों और परिचालन आयामों को शामिल किया गया है।

मुर्मू ने इस बात पर प्रकाश डाला कि जबकि समुद्री मत्स्य पालन, तटीय पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र, जलीय कृषि, तटीय और समुद्री पर्यटन, समुद्री संसाधनों से जैव प्रौद्योगिकी और समुद्री-तल खनिज संसाधनों के निष्कर्षण जैसे उप-

क्षेत्रों के ऑडिटिंग के लिए ऑडिट मानदंड और रूपरेखाएँ थीं, उन्हें एकीकृत करना SAI20 एंगेजमेंट ग्रुप सहित सभी सर्वोच्च ऑडिट संस्थानों के लिए एक एकल ऑडिटिंग ढांचा महत्वपूर्ण होगा।

मुर्मू ने जोर देकर कहा कि साईं अपने प्रयासों को बढ़ाने का प्रयास कर सकते हैं, ब्लू इकोनॉमी की स्थिति पर अध्ययन पत्र विकसित कर सकते हैं और सुझाव दे सकते हैं कि कैसे सरकारें अपने देशों की ब्लू इकोनॉमी के सतत विकास के लिए अपने प्रयासों और नीतियों को निर्देशित कर सकती हैं।

नीति आयोग के सलाहकार अविनाश मिश्रा ने कहा कि "ब्लू इकोनॉमी भारतीय आर्थिक प्रणाली में एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती है। इसमें बड़ी क्षमता है और हमें इस पर अधिक ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है।

" ब्लू इकोनॉमी पर फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडियन चैंबर्स ऑफ कॉमर्स एंड इंडस्ट्री (FICCI) टास्क फोर्स के अध्यक्ष राजीव भाटिया ने कहा:

"ब्लू इकोनॉमी के विषय में हम सभी के लिए एक जगह है - वैज्ञानिक, प्रौद्योगिकीविद्, राजनयिक, व्यवसाय और नीति-निर्माता और थिंकटैंक समुदाय। स्वभाव से, यह एक बहु-आयामी, बहु-विषयक विषय है।" उन्होंने समुद्री और नौसैनिक सुरक्षा के महत्व पर जोर देते हुए कहा, "इसके बिना हम स्थिर विकास के बारे में नहीं सोच सकते।"

विश्व बैंक के प्रमुख पर्यावरण विशेषज्ञ तापस पॉल ने कहा कि तीन क्षेत्र - प्रौद्योगिकी, कार्यक्रम और नीतियां - यह निर्धारित करेंगे कि नीली अर्थव्यवस्था टिकाऊ है या नहीं। उन्होंने भारत की उभरती नीली अर्थव्यवस्था योजना में लैंगिक समानता के महत्व पर भी प्रकाश डाला।

नेशनल सेंटर फॉर सस्टेनेबल कोस्टल मैनेजमेंट के निदेशक पूर्वजा रामचंद्रन ने कहा कि ब्लू इकोनॉमी के लिए भारत के मसौदे में सात प्राथमिकता वाले क्षेत्रों की पहचान की गई थी। वह आशावादी थी कि भारत यूनेस्को-

आईओसी दिशानिर्देशों को अपनाएगा और अपनाएगा और राष्ट्रीय तटीय मिशन को जल्द ही नीली आर्थिक गतिविधियों के साथ एकीकृत किया जाएगा।

बंगाल की खाड़ी परियोजना के निदेशक पी कृष्णन ने जैविक संसाधनों के दोहन के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने जोर देकर कहा कि मत्स्य क्षेत्र अत्यधिक जुड़ा हुआ क्षेत्र है और ब्लू इकोनॉमी का केंद्रीय विषय है।

प्रो एसके मोहंती, विकासशील देशों के लिए अनुसंधान और सूचना प्रणाली, ने कहा कि नीली अर्थव्यवस्था अन्य क्षेत्रों की तुलना में सबसे तेजी से बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था है और इस क्षेत्र के बारे में जागरूकता पैदा करने के लिए नीली अर्थव्यवस्था पर रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित करने और चर्चा आयोजित करने की आवश्यकता पर बल दिया। <https://jantaserishta.com/delhi-ncr/blue-economy-promotes-sustainable-use-of-marine-freshwater-resources-cag-2078369>

**14. Centre Ignored CAG's Finding That RP-Sanjiv Goenka Used Shell Companies to Win Coal Auction: Report ([thewire.in](https://thewire.in)) February 27, 2023**

**The Union government also ignored the country's top auditor's warning of collusion in auctions by 10 other private companies to corner large coal reserves, causing loss to the exchequer.**

The Narendra Modi government looked the other way when the country's top auditor, the Comptroller and Auditor General, raised concerns about business groups deploying shell companies and colluding to corner India's coal reserves, reveals an investigation by The Reporters' Collective published in Al Jazeera.

Documents accessed by The Collective reveal the Modi government allowed the RP-Sanjiv Goenka (RP-SG) group, a \$4 billion revenue conglomerate with interests in power, IT, education, retail and media, to manipulate the auction for a coal mine in West Bengal. The company accomplished this by using its shell companies to undercut competition in the auctions, and breaking bid secrecy protocol.

The Union government also ignored the country's top auditor's warning of collusion in auctions by 10 other private companies to corner large coal reserves, causing loss to the exchequer.

These auctions were held after the apex court in 2014 cancelled leases for 204 coal mines that had been given to private companies "arbitrarily" by the previous governments in what was then alleged to be a \$22 billion coal scam. Fresh off ousting the previous Congress-led regime accused of selling the nation's assets cheap, the new government led by the BJP promised a clean and fair re-auction of coal mines.

Previously undisclosed internal documents of the CAG, the Al Jazeera report notes, reveal that three of the five companies selected by the Modi government's coal ministry for the auction of the Sarisatolli coal mine in West Bengal belonged to the RP-Sanjiv Goenka (RP-SG) group.

Financial records of the group show that Goenka's company acquired three shell firms immediately before the coal auctions. Of the three companies from the RP-Goenka group that participated, one of the RP-SG subsidiaries did not bid at all. Another subsidiary, a shell company, bid from the same private IP address as that used by the parent company and the winner – Calcutta Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC).

The West Bengal mine was part of the first lot of auctions that the Modi government carried out to hand over national assets to private companies. The CAG officials red-flagged its auction and that of 10 other mines to the government in its final report submitted to Parliament in August 2016. It said the "potential level of competition" was not achieved during the auctions.

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 collude and "stifle competition". But it modified the rules only after most "ready-to-use" coal mines were auctioned. Most of the winners, including the RP-SG firm CESC, continue to operate the mines till today.

The CAG's final report listed these 11 mines for which it suspected collusion among bidders and the companies that participated in the auctions along with their sister firms. In the case of the Sarisatolli mine, the CAG found evidence of RP-SG Group's companies bidding from the same IP address. However, in the final report, the mine's name and bidders' identities were not disclosed, the Al Jazeera report notes. Instead, a "case study" was presented, detailing the bidders' modus operandi as an example of collusion without revealing their identifiable information.

The Union coal ministry rubbished the findings, and the secrecy around the names of the bidders and the mine helped the government bury the Sarisatolli case, the report continues. <https://thewire.in/government/centre-ignored-cags-finding-that-rp-sanjiv-goenka-used-shell-companies-to-win-coal-auction-report>

15. **Strategic lessons from the Ukraine conflict** (*thestatesman.com*) February 28, 2023

**Global support to the weaker nation can be expected mainly to stem and embarrass the adversary, rather than on ideology. Direct involvement by allies or even partners would be unlikely as it could expand the conflict drawing them in, implying proxy wars are possibly the new future. In such scenarios, chances of early peace are unlikely.**

In 2017, Manohar Parrikar, as the defence minister, reduced India's ammunition holding from 40 to 10 days on the premise that future conflicts would be short, intense, and swift. This was a follow up of a CAG report which stated that Indian ammunition supplies can only sustain a war up to 10-15 days. A substantial hike in revenue expenditure in this year's defence budget appears to be to increase ammunition holdings beyond current levels. This was just one of the many beliefs which have been dumped in the dustbin with the Russia-Ukraine war completing one year with no sign of ending.

There are other lessons which merit attention. The most important is that wars can be fought below nuclear thresholds for prolonged durations, especially when one of the participants is a permanent member of the UNSC, employing a veto to any insistence for a ceasefire. Calls from global bodies can be rejected or ignored with no consequences. Further, a major power would be unwilling to stop operations prior to achieving objectives, as it could involve loss of face, prestige and international standing.

Global support to the weaker nation can be expected mainly to stem and embarrass the adversary, rather than on ideology. Direct involvement by allies or even partners would be unlikely as it could expand the conflict drawing them in, implying proxy wars are possibly the new future. In such scenarios, chances of early peace are unlikely. Assistance would remain below designated redlines of the stronger adversary.

Ultimate gainers would be global armament industries, which push governments to get involved. The war is also an opportunity to test weapon systems for the global armament market. Loss of innocent lives can always be justified. Sanctions remain the only tools to be employed, while ensuring they do not impact nations imposing them. This is how future conflicts involving China against any of its adversaries would play out.

Land has historically been the root cause of any conflict and will continue to be so. Thus, primacy will remain with the army with other services creating an environment for ensuring

defence or capture of territory. Since land is involved, war can rarely come as a surprise. There would be indicators especially in this technological age where adversaries are monitored 24X7 employing multiple means, though the warning periods may be reduced. This implies that plans and resources to counter the adversary must be in place, especially where borders are unsettled, and the scenario is volatile.

No single service is capable of ensuring victory or creating conditions for victory. This is more pronounced in the Indian scenario where the land dispute involves inhospitable terrain. While air and land power will be directly involved in the conflict, sea power will ensure that the adversary is prevented from opening a third front as also resources needed to prolong operations are denied to him.

With the advent of missiles, formidable air defence systems and cheap drones, all based on rapidly evolving technology, the role of airpower will undergo a change. Its employment will have to be dovetailed with other aerial weapon platforms to obtain maximum leverage. As accuracy of missiles increase, their employment will become a new normal as infrastructure destruction would gain precedence, intending to compel the adversary into accepting unacceptable terms and conditions. There will always be a decision dilemma on engaging targets by missiles or airpower. Missiles and drones would be essential to suppress an enemy's air defence systems prior to employment of air power.

The days of air superiority and air dominance appear to have passed. Simultaneously, missiles and specialized UAVs, such as loitering ammunition, have short technological lifespans. Hence, they will need to be domestically manufactured and at an affordable cost to ensure that they are frequently upgraded. Technology will dominate the battlespace.

This brings forth the requirement of developing domestic armament industries. Foreign supplies can be impacted during operations as also nations aligned to the adversary may adopt delaying tactics in continuing supplies during hostilities, necessitating adequate stocks being maintained. Allies and alliances will be an advantage, especially if the adversary is a competitor. India can expect large scale global support in any conflict with China and lesser in a conflict with Pakistan.

Apart from a technology-dominated battlefield, informational and cyber domains will act as force multipliers. Public morale and global perceptions can be influenced by an organized informational campaign, while cyberattacks can impede the adversary in multiple ways including damaging his economy and critical infrastructure. Both these tools must be effectively employed.

As war prolongs, the world moves on. War news will remain global headlines for some time, subsequently relegated to back pages. Only nations involved will remain concerned. Global bodies will regularly demand peace, but their calls will be ignored. The aggrieved will seek regaining of its territory, while the aggressor will continue till its objectives are met. Global concern would remain only till nations overcome economic dependency on warring nations. Europe appears to ignore the conflict now that it has overcome dependency on Russian gas as well as Ukrainian wheat.

For the aggressor, military power ascendancy, better economy and a stronger industrial base are no guarantor for victory, as Russia has witnessed. The scenario can be reversed with support from allies, will of the people, strength and determination of its leadership. An experienced

army, such as India's, can reverse the scenario rapidly. Training and equipping are therefore vital and should never be ignored. Threatening employment of nuclear weapons will remain unacceptable. A grinding war, as is currently unfolding in Ukraine, benefits Ukraine while it is punishing on Russia.

The Russia-Ukraine war has already cost the globe in excess of USD 70 Billion, with thousands dead and millions displaced. Can we afford another one?

While wars are unnecessary, they will remain a reality for nations seeking to change the status quo believing they possess the authority and power to do so. Leaders secure for life, such as Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, will attempt to amalgamate perceived territory, hoping to go down in history as the greatest leader the country has ever witnessed. Nations in their periphery must be prepared for aggressive actions, not 'if' but 'when'. <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/strategic-lessons-from-the-ukraine-conflict-1503157989.html>

**16. 'Pension not revised once since 1998' — why former coal sector workers are planning fresh stir** ([theprint.in](https://theprint.in)) February 28, 2023

**While rules say pension amount was to be revised every 3 years, govt admits it hasn't changed since 1998. All India Coal Pensioners Association says many get just Rs 500 per month.**

Around 5.5 lakh pensioners of public sector coal companies have seen their pension amount remaining unchanged for the past 25 years, the All India Coal Pensioners Association (AICPA) has said, adding that they have been protesting against the issue and will again hold a dharna over it on 27 March.

Apart from an enhancement of pension, the pensioners are also demanding the provision of dearness relief to account for inflation, and the imposition of a cess on the sale of coal to fund this.

The AICPA had earlier organised similar dharnas at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi in December 2019, July 2022 and December 2022.

The rules relating to the pension due to the workers of Coal India, Singareni Collieries Company Limited, and several other public sector coal companies are laid out in the Coal Mines Pensions Scheme (CMPS) 1998, which came into effect on 31 March that year.

According to the rules, pensioners are to be paid 25 per cent of their average emoluments, with the payout also based on the length of their employment.

The payments are to be made from a pension fund under the Coal Mines Provident Fund Organisation (CMPFO). Contributions to the pension fund are made by employees from their salaries, and from the employer.

The rules state that the commissioner of the CMPFO should review the pension fund every three years, and can recommend its enhancement, revise the pension payments, and also revise the contribution amount. However, while the contribution amount has been revised since the rules were put in place, the pension payments have not been revised even once.



“Despite the rules saying that the pension scheme should be revised every three years, it has not been revised even once since 1998 when it was launched,” P.K. Singh Rathore, convener of AICPA, told ThePrint.

The AICPA is the umbrella body under which the dharna on 27 March will be held.

### **No revision since 1998**

“If, for example, a pensioner received Rs 1,000 per month in 1998 as per the scheme, then they are still receiving that same amount even now,” Rathore explained.

“Rs 1,000 back then might have been a comfortable amount, but the real value now, after taking into account inflation, is only about Rs 200-300 per month, which is not enough to even cover basics like food. This is even lower than the amount the government is giving those below the poverty line,” he added.

According to him, there are approximately 5.5 lakh coal pensioners in the country, of which about 50,000 are receiving less than Rs 500 per month as pension.

That the pension amount has not been revised was confirmed by coal minister Pralhad Joshi to the Lok Sabha on 8 February, although he said this is because of the way the scheme has been designed.

“No revision has taken place in the pension provided to retired employees of Singareni Collieries and other coal companies covered under Coal Miners Pensions Scheme 1998 since it came into force on 31st day of March, 1998, due to wide gap between contribution to the fund and pension disbursement,” Joshi said in a written answer to a question.

“When the pension fund permits, BoT (Board of Trustees of CMPFO) on the recommendation of an actuary and with the approval of the Central Government may amend the rates of contribution payable under the Scheme or the scale of any benefits admissible or the period for which such benefit may be allowed,” he added.

### **Board of Trustees blocks enhanced contribution**

According to the minister, while the actuarial report was placed before the BoT several times, it was rejected each time.

“Due to the resistance by the Central Trade Union representatives, who are also members of the BoT, the recommendation of the actuary to enhance pension contribution could not be implemented,” Joshi’s written reply stated.

In fact, in a 2021 reply to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) attached to the coal ministry, which had raised several key issues with the functioning of the CMPFO, the ministry said the actuary’s report was raised before the BoT 13 times between 2005 and 2015, but to no avail.

The resistance to the recommendations of the actuary centred around the suggestion to increase the contributions of the employees so that the contribution to the pension fund could at least match the amount that needed to be disbursed.

“The trade unions on the BoT made it a political issue, saying it was an injustice to take away the salaries of the employees in such a manner,” a retired official, who was in a senior position and present during these discussions, told ThePrint.

Amrit Lal Meena, secretary in the coal ministry, told ThePrint: “The Board of Trustees of the CMPFO is the competent body that looks at the pension fund as well as the provident fund. Whatever the entitlement is according to the norms is being given. If there are any additional issues, those can be taken up with the Board of Trustees and they will look into it.”

### **Breakthrough following CAG audit**

In 2017, there was a breakthrough, and the contribution to the pension fund was increased to 14 per cent from the erstwhile 4.91 per cent, with effect from 1 October, 2017.

Here, too, the upward revision of the contribution amount was done after the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India found irregularities in the financial affairs of the CMPFO.

According to the CAG’s report for the year ending March 2016, it had not only found that the non-implementation of the actuary’s recommendations had led to an “acute deficit” in the pension fund, but also that there had been an “incorrect diversion” of funds from the provident fund account to the pension fund.

This, the coal ministry said in its reply to the PAC, was done because it had “no other option” but to borrow funds from the provident fund to finance the growing deficit in the pension fund.

Since it was a general transfer of funds from one account to another account of the same organisation, and the amount would be returned with interest to the provident fund, “no irregularity was construed” by the ministry, it said.

“However, after CAG audit in its Report 12 of 2017 pointed out that the said diversion of funds was a financial irregularity, the ministry immediately impressed upon the members of the BoT to resolve the issue and pension fund contribution was enhanced to 14 per cent from a meagre 4.91 per cent,” the coal ministry stated in its action taken report to the PAC.

### **‘Insufficient change’**

According to the pensioners, the change in contribution is insufficient because it does not address the fact that past pensioners haven’t seen their pensions being revised at all.

“The coal pensioners are compelled to stage this dharna at Varanasi on 27 March, 2023, for hastening appropriate decision-making process to allow fulfilment of... demands which have been denied,” the AICPA said in a release Sunday.

Among their demands is the incorporation of a dearness relief component as part of pension to “ensure equitable pension irrespective of retirement date”.

Another major demand is the collection of a cess of Rs 20 per tonne of coal sold by all government and private coal companies, and linking this cess as a percentage of the coal price “to take care of future enhancement of pension linked with Dearness Relief”.

A coal ministry official, who did not wish to be named, said the issue of dearness relief was a new one that the pensioners had raised and had not been mentioned in the last meeting of the BoT that took place earlier this month.

Other demands include adhering to the provisions of the CMPS 1998 and revising the pension every three years. <https://theprint.in/economy/pension-not-revised-once-since-1998-why-former-coal-sector-workers-are-planning-fresh-stir/1404400/>

### **17. Rs 76 Tr States' Debt | Discoms Dump Heavy Losses (*thedispatch.in*) February 28, 2023**

The Reserve Bank of India has red flagged states' debt touching critical high of Rs 76.10 tr (trillion) and classified debt liabilities of five states – Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal – which is no longer sustainable. The Northeast states have the lowest. Ten states are the worst defaulters. The state debt in 2013 was Rs 22.44 trillion (tr). This is in addition to Rs 155.77 tr central debt as on 31 March 2023, and is expected to go up to Rs 172.5 tr on 31 March 2024.

The RBI has called for deep introspection and immediate corrective steps. Among the reasons cited for the crisis is slowdown in tax revenue and rising expenditure on non-merit freebies; expanding contingent liabilities; and worse the ballooning of over dues of private power distribution companies (Discoms).

The RBI has lambasted the practice of infusing capital and giving subsidies to the Discoms. At least thrice major states have bailed out Discoms. Indirect bailing out and taking over their losses is usual. The Power sector, it finds is mismanaged and has become a major liability. The sector accounts for much of the financial burden of state governments in India, both in terms of subsidies and contingent liabilities. At same time, it has substantial repercussion for state finances.

The RBI warning on power situation apparently is in the context of moving every activity on electricity from railways, buses, and cars to many others. It calls for immediate corrective measures. However, neither does it speak of the high pricing of electricity and other utilities nor does it mention high road toll rates and consequent inflation.

The highest debt-infested states are Haryana Rs 2.87tr, Uttar Pradesh Rs 7.1 tr, West Bengal Rs 6.08 tr, Kerala Rs 3.91 tr and Punjab Rs 3.05 tr, Maharashtra 6.80 lakh cr, Karnataka 5.35 Andhra Pradesh Rs 4.42 tr, Gujarat 4.23 tr, Rajasthan Rs 5.37 tr, Bihar 2.86 lakh cr, Jharkhand Rs 1.29 tr. The debt-GSDP ratio of the stressed states is to fall beyond 35 per cent by 2026-27.

States such as Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal are classified as the most stressed in terms of their finances and liabilities. The tax revenues of some of the 10 states, including Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, have been declining. For most of these states, non-tax revenue dropped significantly in recent years forcing them to resort to higher market borrowings.

The lowest debts are with North-East states — Assam Rs 1.21 tr, Arunachal Pradesh Rs 15917 Crore, Meghalaya Rs 17433 crore, Mizoram Rs 12991crore, Nagaland Rs 16562 crore, Sikkim Rs 12982 crore and Tripura Rs 26446 crore.

The Central bank criticises the states for doling out high subsidies, particularly free electricity, free water, free public transportation, waiver of pending utility bills and farm loan waivers. The RBI has not included corporate doles in its deliberations. As per CAG, state subsidies grew at 12.9 per cent in 2021-22 and 11.2 per cent during 2020-21, after contracting in 2019-20.

Gujarat, Punjab and Chhattisgarh spend more than 10 per cent of their revenue on subsidies. Average subsidies are at 8.2 per cent in 2021-22 having risen from 7.8 per cent in 2019-20. Jharkhand, Kerala, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh are the top five states with the largest rise in subsidies over the last three years.

Committed expenditure like interest payments, pensions and administrative expenses, accounts for a significant portion (over 35 per cent) of the total revenue expenditure in states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Punjab, leads to lower expenses on developmental activities.

State finances are vulnerable to a variety of unexpected shocks that might alter their fiscal outcomes, causing slippages in their overall performance. Shocks may increase their debt by a significant amount, posing fiscal sustainability challenges. Among the five most indebted states, Punjab and Rajasthan appear to be most vulnerable to fiscal shocks arising out of realisation of contingent liabilities. Financial restructuring or bail-out of ailing Discoms could have severe impact on the debt-GSDP ratio of these two states.

Taking into account the warning signs flashing from all the indicators, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Punjab exceeded both debt and fiscal deficit targets for 2020-21 set by the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (FC-XV). Kerala, Jharkhand and West Bengal exceeded the debt target, while Madhya Pradesh overshot the fiscal deficit target. Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were exceptions as they met both criteria.

According to the RBI, the debt level will remain higher than Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) stipulated 20 per cent. The states are anticipating an increase in non-tax revenue, which is generated from sources such as fees, fines, and royalties. The report notes that states are expecting to see an increase in revenue from various sources such as GST, excise duty and other taxes.

The financial risks from freebies seem to be moderate in case of many states, except Punjab which spends a huge amount on provision of free utilities. It justifies it by saying that allocation to healthcare, education infrastructure can promote economic growth and development. The RBI has also proposed to establish a fund that would be used for buffer capital expenditure during periods of strong revenue growth. The state governments must restrict their revenue expenses by cutting down expenditure on non-merit goods in the near term. In the medium term, the states need to put efforts towards stabilising debt levels.

In competitive politics, fiscal responsibility is largely ignored. Votes are better off than fiscal prudence. Of late, the spree of infrastructure spending has caused heavy burden on meagre finances. The need for infra is there. The governments, however, have become reckless spenders even for ill-designed roads and retrospection is passé. Lobbies work to rob the states and the pressures created are a bit hard for the state governments to resist. This leads to many duplication, irrational constructions as the Delhi's Ashram Chowk or NH9 witnessed.

For transport linkages the metro, its space guzzling stations and other paraphernalia drain the states out. At least 11 cities' metros remain unutilized and have failed. Easier and inexpensive options are shunned because of factors of rent seeking. More expensive a product, the higher is the rent. An immediate review and pause on infra can help the states cut debt. Even the RBI has chosen to ignore it. —INFA <https://www.thedispatch.in/rs-76-tr-states-debt-discoms-dump-heavy-losses/>

## **STATES NEWS ITEMS**

18. टॉप 100 में नहीं है यूपी की कोई भी स्टेट यूनिवर्सिटी, उच्च शिक्षा के मामले में खस्ता है उत्तर प्रदेश का हाल ([abplive.com](http://abplive.com)) February 27, 2023

सीएजी रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, सबसे बदहाल स्थिति में लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय और वाराणसी की महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ है. इन यूनिवर्सिटी से हर साल करीब 60,000 विद्यार्थी पढ़ाई करके निकलते हैं.

उत्तर प्रदेश देश के सबसे बड़े राज्यों में से एक है. इस प्रदेश में कई विश्वविद्यालय, मेडिकल कॉलेज, इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज और उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान हैं. लेकिन इस राज्य से एक भी स्टेट यूनिवर्सिटी देश के टॉप हंड्रेड विश्वविद्यालयों में नहीं है. सीएजी की रिपोर्ट हाल ही में जब आई तो पता चला कि उत्तर प्रदेश के सभी स्टेट यूनिवर्सिटी देश के टॉप हंड्रेड यूनिवर्सिटी और कॉलेज की रैंकिंग से बाहर हैं. भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक की रिपोर्ट हाल ही में सदन में पेश की गई थी.

### **सबसे खराब हैं ये विश्वविद्यालय**

इस रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, सबसे बदहाल स्थिति में लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय और वाराणसी की महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ है. इन यूनिवर्सिटी से हर साल करीब 60,000 विद्यार्थी पढ़ाई करके निकलते हैं. लेकिन उनमें से सिर्फ एक हजार को ही आगे रोजगार मिल पाता है. यहां तक कि इन संस्थानों के पास इस बात की भी जानकारी नहीं है कि पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद यहां से पढ़ने वाले छात्र और छात्राएं क्या कर रहे हैं.

### **स्कॉलरशिप का उठा रहे हैं पूरा लाभ**

सीएजी की इस रिपोर्ट की माने तो काशी विद्यापीठ के करीब 73 से 80 फीसद और लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय के करीब 56 से 67 फीसदी छात्र पोस्ट मैट्रिक स्कॉलरशिप का लाभ उठा रहे हैं. आपको बता दें कि यह स्कॉलरशिप सोशल वेलफेयर डिपार्टमेंट द्वारा दिया जाता है. इसी रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि मार्च 2020 तक काशी विद्यापीठ से कुल 341 और लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय से कुल 171 कॉलेज एफिलिएट थे. इन कॉलेजों की संख्या देखकर साफ जाहिर होता है कि सेल्फ फाइनेंस कॉलेजों की संख्या उत्तर प्रदेश में तेजी से बढ़ रही है.

## छात्रों को क्यों नहीं मिल रहा रोजगार

इन कॉलेजों से पढ़ने वाले छात्रों को रोजगार ना मिलने का सबसे बड़ा कारण है उनके अंदर स्किल्स की कमी होना. यहां पढ़ने वाले ज्यादातर छात्रों की शिकायत रहती है कि उनके क्लासेस समय पर नहीं चलते और ना ही उन्हें इस तरह का कोई स्किल डेवलपमेंट कोर्स कराया जाता है, जिससे वह यहां से पढ़ने के बाद बाहर कहीं नौकरी ले सकें. <https://www.abplive.com/education/no-state-university-of-up-is-in-top-100-uttar-pradesh-is-bad-in-terms-of-higher-education-2345749>

19. **यूपी का कोई राज्य विश्वविद्यालय शीर्ष 100 में नहीं है, उत्तर प्रदेश की स्थिति दयनीय है।** ([trendswire.in](https://www.trendswire.in)) February 27, 2023

उत्तर प्रदेश देश के सबसे बड़े राज्यों में से एक है। राज्य में कई विश्वविद्यालय, मेडिकल कॉलेज, इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज और उच्च शिक्षा संस्थान हैं। लेकिन देश के शीर्ष सौ विश्वविद्यालयों में इस राज्य का एक भी राज्य विश्वविद्यालय शामिल नहीं है। हाल ही में जब कैग की रिपोर्ट आई तो पता चला कि उत्तर प्रदेश के सभी राज्य विश्वविद्यालय देश के शीर्ष सौ विश्वविद्यालयों और कॉलेजों की रैंकिंग से बाहर हो गए हैं. भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक की रिपोर्ट हाल ही में सदन में पेश की गई थी।

## ये विश्वविद्यालय सबसे खराब हैं।

इस रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय और वाराणसी के महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ की हालत बेहद खराब है. इन विश्वविद्यालयों से हर साल करीब 60,000 छात्र पास आउट होते हैं। लेकिन उनमें से केवल 1000 को ही अधिक रोजगार मिलता है। यहां पढ़ने वाले लड़के

लड़कियां पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद क्या कर रहे हैं, इसकी जानकारी इन संस्थानों को भी नहीं है।

## छात्रवृत्ति का पूरा लाभ उठाएं

कैग की इस रिपोर्ट के अनुसार काशी विद्यापीठ के करीब 73 से 80 फीसदी और लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय के करीब 56 से 67 फीसदी छात्र पोस्ट मैट्रिक छात्रवृत्ति का लाभ उठा रहे हैं. आपको बता दें कि यह स्कॉलरशिप समाज कल्याण विभाग द्वारा दी जाती है। इसी रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि मार्च 2020 तक काशी विद्यापीठ से कुल 341 और लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय से 171 संबद्ध कॉलेज थे। इन कॉलेजों की संख्या को देखकर साफ है कि उत्तर प्रदेश में सेल्फ फाइनेंसिंग कॉलेजों की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ रही है।

## छात्रों को नौकरी क्यों नहीं मिल रही है?

कौशल की कमी मुख्य कारण है कि इन कॉलेजों में पढ़ने वाले छात्रों को रोजगार नहीं मिल रहा है। यहां पढ़ने वाले अधिकांश छात्रों की शिकायत है कि उनकी कक्षाएं समय पर नहीं लगती हैं और उन्हें कोई कौशल विकास पाठ्यक्रम नहीं दिया जाता है, जिससे उन्हें यहां पढ़ने के बाद बाहर नौकरी मिल सके। <https://trendswire.in/education/%E0%A4%AF%E0%A5%82%E0%A4%AA%E0%A5%80-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%88-%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%9C%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF-%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B6%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF/>

20. नोएडा प्राधिकरण को लगी 36 करोड़ की चपत, कंपनी को चुकानी होगी रकम  
(amarujala.com) February 28, 2023

## नोएडा प्राधिकरण को लगी 36 करोड़ की चपत, कंपनी को चुकानी होगी रकम

नोएडा। एलिवेटेड रोड के निर्माण के दौरान कंपनी को ज्यादा पेमेंट के नोएडा प्राधिकरण के दावे को आर्बिटर ने खारिज कर दिया। अब प्राधिकरण ब्याज के साथ करीब 36 करोड़ रुप ये एलिवेटेड रोड बनाने वाली कंपनी आईटीडी सीमेंटेशन इंडिया लिमिटेड को देगा। हाईकोर्ट की आरे से नियुक्त किए गए आर्बिटर के फैसले के बाद अब नोएडा प्राधिकरण जिला जज के सामने अपील करेगा।

दरअसल, कंपनी ने पहले करीब 1.5 करोड़ का क्लेम किया था। लेकिन मामला जब आर्बिटर न में गया तो कंपनी ने परियोजना में देरी पर बजट बढ़ने को लेकर और अधिक पैसों का दावा किया और यह दावा करीब 36 करोड़ तक चला गया। वहीं प्राधिकरण ने यह भुगतान रोक लिया था और बताया कि कंपनी को पहले से ही ज्यादा पेमेंट हो गया है। इस मामले में प्राधिकरण के कर्मचारियों और अधिकारियों के खिलाफ जांच भी चल रही है। इसका खुलासा सी एजी की ऑडिट में हुआ था। ऑडिट में बताया गया था कि एलिवेटेड रोड के निर्माण के दौरान 17 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक पेमेंट हुआ है। इसी बीच कंपनी आर्बिटर न में चली गई और हाईकोर्ट से इस मामले में आर्बिटर नियुक्त कर दिया। हाईकोर्ट के रिटायर्ड जज पीकेएस बघेल को आर्बिटर बनाया गया। सुलह समझौते से इसके समाधान की कोशिश हो गई।

बताया गया कि इस मामले में पीडब्ल्यूडी के 10सीसी और 10सीए के क्लॉज को लगाने पर विवाद था। इसको लगाने और नहीं लगाने पर सुनवाई हुई। सारी की सारी गणना इसी पर निर्भर थी। इसी मामले में आर्बिटर ने प्राधिकरण पर इस क्लॉज को लगाने पर आपत्ति की और प्राधिकरण को पैसे के भुगतान के आदेश दिए। हालांकि प्राधिकरण ने 48 करोड़ रुपये और मांगे थे। लेकिन आर्बिटर ने क्लेम को नहीं माना और क्लॉज लगाने की अनुमति नहीं दी। इ

सके बाद कंपनी के हक में फैसला सुनाया। इसमें आर्बिट्रेशन के दौरान कंपनी ने करीब 54 लाख रुपये खर्च किए। वह भी प्राधिकरण को देने होंगे।

## यह था मामला

आईटीडी सीमेंटेशन इंडिया लिमिटेड ने सेक्टर-

60 से विश्वभारती स्कूल तक एलिवेटेड रोड बनाया था। कंपनी को अधिक पेमेंट का मामला था। जिसको लेकर नोएडा प्राधिकरण उसकी जांच भी कर रही थी और उनसे रिकवरी की प्रक्रिया भी चल रही थी। ठेके के प्रावधान के तहत कंपनी आर्बिट्रटर के पास गई। आर्बिट्रेशन प्रक्रिया में आर्बिट्रटर ने माना कि उन पर अधिक पेमेंट का मामला नहीं बनता। वहां तय हुआ कि प्राधिकरण को करीब 36 करोड़ रुपये ब्याज समेत आईटीडी सीमेंटेशन को देना पड़ेगा।

## 468.9 करोड़ की थी परियोजना

नोएडा प्राधिकरण ने फरवरी 2014 में एमपी-2 रोड पर विश्वभारती स्कूल से सेक्टर-

61 तक करीब पांच किमी लंबे एलिवेटेड रोड का टेंडर निकाला था। शुरुआती दौर में परियोजना की अनुमानित निर्माण लागत करीब 415 करोड़ थी। लेकिन परियोजना में देरी के बाद 2018 में इसकी अनुमानित निर्माण लागत करीब 468 करोड़ पहुंच गई। इस परियोजना में कंपनी को करीब 12 करोड़ रुपये की जमानत राशि जमा करनी पड़ी। <https://www.amarujala.com/delhi-ncr/noida/36-crore-loss-to-noida-authority-the-company-will-have-to-pay-the-amount-noida-news-c-1-gnd1002-308410-2023-02-28>

## 21. Auditor general report highlights irregularities in various sectors and departments ([ifp.co.in](http://ifp.co.in)) UPDATED 27 FEB 2023

**As per the Comptroller and Auditor General of India report, there is a suspected misappropriation in the Fisheries Department and infructuous expenditures on idle equipment in the department of Commerce and Industries under the economic sector (other than public sector undertakings).**

Manipur: The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on economic sector (other than public sector undertakings), economic sector (public sector undertakings) and social sector for the year ending March 31, 2020, found various irregularities in the utilisation of funds.

The report was laid before the legislature on February 22, 2023 and was made available to the media houses on Monday.

As per the report, under the economic sector (other than public sector undertakings) there is a suspected misappropriation in the Fisheries Department and infructuous expenditures on idle equipment in the department of Commerce and Industries.

Under the economic (public sector undertaking), there is idle investment in the Manipur Food Industries Corporation Limited.



In the social sector, there is unfruitful expenditure in the Art and Culture department, misutilisation of funds in the department of Labour and Employment, suspected misappropriation in the Tribal Affairs and Hills department and idle expenditure in the Youth Affairs and Sports department.

It stated that the department of Fisheries withdrew Rs 26.64 lakh for six works for payment to contractors out of which Rs 16.73 lakh for two works was suspected to have been misappropriated as the amount drawn was neither supported by APR as proof of payment nor was deposited back to government account as assured by the department.

In this regard, recommendation had been given to the state government to fix responsibility on the DDO concerned for fabrication of records with an intention to defraud the government by misappropriation of funds.

It further recommended conduction of investigation for the suspected misappropriation at the earliest and strict action, including filing of FIR, if necessary, should be initiated against the delinquent officials for misappropriation of government funds.

The report also pointed out that the department of Commerce and Industries procured 73 equipment worth Rs 4.30 crore to set up nine Livelihood Business Incubators, out of which 42 equipment worth Rs. 3.26 crore were kept idle and two equipment worth Rs10 lakh remained traceless.

In this regard, it had recommended the state government to take up urgent steps to get operationalise the idle equipment, trace the two missing equipment so as to use them for their intended purpose in order to achieve the objectives of LBI Scheme.

Coming to the Manipur Food Industries Corporation Limited, it has pointed out that the Cold Storage facility constructed at Food Park, Nilakuthi remained un-utilised even after nine years of its completion, resulting in idle and unfruitful expenditure of Rs 2.79 crore.

For this, it had recommended the state government to conduct proper investigation to ascertain the bottlenecks leading to these Cold Storages remaining idle.

In the Art and Culture department, it pointed out that the Stack Room of Manipur State Archives Complex remained incomplete for more than nine years even after incurring expenditure of Rs 1.07 crore, rendering the expenditure unfruitful.

In this regard, it recommended the state government to investigate as to how the financial expenditure was not commensurate with the physical progress of the buildings. As the building is meant to provide storage facilities for archival materials, effective steps should be taken to complete the building without further delays, it added.

The report also pointed out that the Manipur Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board diverted and utilised Welfare Fund of Rs 1.48 crore for construction of Office Building that was not permissible under the Workers' Welfare Scheme.

In this regard, it recommended the state government to refund the expenditure that had been spent from the Board's fund and the funds should be utilised only for the intended purpose in future.

Failure of Deputy Labour Commissioner, Imphal to safeguard Government property created at Rs 1.27 crore rendered the public property wasteful for more than twelve years, it added.

It further recommended taking up all necessary action to secure the land and the buildings from the unauthorised occupant to avoid loss of state government's property without further delay.

The report further informed that the Tribal Affairs and Hills department withdrew scheme funds deposited in the bank accounts in gross violation of financial rules.

It said, payment of Rs 30.36 crore could not be verified in Audit due to non-availability of records, vouchers/APRS which points toward doubtful expenditure and suspected misappropriation of funds.

For this, it recommended the state government to complete the investigation by the Departmental Enquiry at the earliest and strict action, including filing of FIR, if necessary, should be initiated against the delinquent officials for misappropriation of government funds.

For the Youth Affairs and Sports department, it pointed out that the construction of District Sports Complex at Senapati sanctioned since January 2007 at the cost of Rs 13.23 crore remained incomplete for more than eight years.

Moreover, there was no progress on the project since October 2014, the incomplete sport facilities have further deteriorated and the assets already created were being misused by unauthorised occupants, it added.

In this regard, it recommended the state government to take effective measures to complete the complex at the earliest and the sports infrastructures are put to use to achieve the intended objective of the project. <https://www.ifp.co.in/manipur/auditor-general-report-highlights-irregularities-in-various-sectors-and-departments>

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

**22. India may not be able to meet 19 SDG goals by 2030: Study** ([financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com)) February 28, 2023

**The report stressed that India needs to urgently conduct an appraisal of the policies and programs that relate to SDGs, especially those that relate to four SDG targets relating to no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being and gender equality.**

India may not be able to meet at least 19 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals indicators, the deadline for which is 2030, according to a study published in The Lancet journal.

“India is not on-target for 19 of the 33 SDGs indicators. The critical off-target indicators include access to basic services, wasting and overweight children, anaemia, child marriage, partner violence, tobacco use, and modern contraceptive use,” said the study titled Progress on Sustainable Development Goal indicators in 707 districts of India: a quantitative mid-line assessment using the National Family Health Surveys, 2016 and 2021.

More worryingly, many districts will never meet the targets on the SDGs even after 2030 due to a worsening trend observed between 2016 and 2021, said the study by an international team of researchers. “These off-target districts are concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha,” it said, adding that it also does not appear that Aspirational Districts, on average, are performing better in meeting the SDG targets than other districts on majority of the indicators.

The situation has also worsened for three of the off-target goals including those relating to anaemia among women, pregnant and non-pregnant women, between 2016 and 2021. “...assuming this trend continues, India would never be able to meet the SDG targets related to Anaemia,” it said. For the remaining 16 indicators that are Off-Target, the observed rate of change between 2021 and 2016, though in desirable direction, is insufficient to meet SDG targets by 2030.

The report stressed that India needs to urgently conduct an appraisal of the policies and programs that relate to SDGs, especially those that relate to four SDG targets relating to no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being and gender equality. “With eight more years to go, and a majority of the districts not on course to meeting the SDGs (or at the risk of never meeting their targets) on critical indicators of health and social determinants of health, there is a need for a greater degree of precision in identifying and prioritizing districts for intervention,” it said.

It however, found that at the all-India level, the one SDG indicator that has already been achieved is relating to adolescent pregnancy in the age group of 10-14 years. India is also On-Target to meet 13 out of the 33 indicators, including Internet use, women having bank account, full vaccination (card), improved sanitation, multi-dimensional poverty, birth registration, skilled birth attendants, electricity access, tobacco use (women), child marriage of girls less than 15 years of age, under 5 mortality, teenage sexual violence and neonatal mortality.

The authors of the study include SV Subramanian, Maynak Ambade, Akhil Kumar, Hyejun Chi, William Joe and Sunil Rajpal from institutes including Harvard University, US, Laxmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute in New Delhi, Graduate School of Korea University, and Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi.

## **GLOOMY PICTURE**

\* India is not on-target for 19 of the 33 SDGs indicators

\* The critical off-target indicators include access to basic services, wasting and overweight children, anaemia, child marriage, partner violence, tobacco use, and modern contraceptive use

\* Most off-target districts are concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha

\* The situation has also worsened for three of the off-target goals including those relating to anaemia among women, pregnant and non-pregnant women, between 2016 and 2021

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-may-not-be-able-to-meet-19-sdg-goals-by-2030-study/2994445/>

23. **Being atmanirbhar in climate finance** ([thehindubusinessline.com](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com)) Feb 28, 2023

### **India needs to develop its own framework and a variety of funding systems, rather than work on terms laid down by the Western countries**

India needs to develop its own paradigm of climate finance. It cannot allow itself to be boxed in by the watertight categories of ‘green’ and ‘brown’ projects being laid down by the western world as a precondition to secure green funds.

If these categories are inappropriate, there is another issue which compounds the problem here — the sheer absence of funds coming from the West, which has not kept to its commitment of raising \$100 billion annually for the developing countries. Therefore, both the framework for climate finance as well as funds raised to this end will have to be homegrown.

The Climate Finance Working Group has estimated a funds requirement of ₹118 trillion, available resources of ₹64 trillion and a gap of ₹54 trillion. This gap has to be met by way of domestic and foreign debt. Indian development financial institutions (DFIs) and commercial banks have to contribute by raising domestic funds and channelling resources from abroad.

Broadly speaking, government(s) and private sector have to work in tandem. While investments for renewable power and green mobility will flow commercially, finance for climate proofing agriculture and allied sectors have to be influenced only through policy. Hence, budgetary support and credit policy assume importance.

#### **Catalytic funding**

To begin with, government(s) may consider catalytic or start-up funding and capacity building. Catalytic funding should be utilised for ‘re-purposing’ key economic activities into green activities — something that western finance and its frameworks do may not recognise as per their taxonomy.

Re-purposing, supported by a simple and inviolable classification framework, oversight and capacity building mechanisms can transform existing economic activities to green activities, crucially with smaller amounts of investments.

The RBI influenced flow of credit, since the 1970s, to sectors and population groups which did not receive adequate attention from the banking system. This is widely known as priority sector lending. RBI’s policy stance was to ensure development impact by directing credit. Climate change (CC) is the significant development issue now.

The banking system, left to itself, is unlikely to finance mitigation and adaptation investments, as they are of lower commercial appeal, compared to other lending opportunities. Shouldn’t the priority sector be sharply defined by including climate finance?

Yet given the large financing gap, long-term resources have to be raised from abroad, especially by the DFIs. In the recent past, DFIs have avoided foreign currency loans on account of competitive domestic funds and high hedging costs. Given the requirements, the government may have to step in to manage hedging costs. Can part of its budgetary resources earmarked for CC be leveraged to this end?

Investments from the private sector are equally important for financing mitigation and adaptation projects. While some of these investments that yield reasonable returns can be made on normal terms through access to bank credit, many other investments cannot meet the interest costs on account of below-par returns, long gestation periods and higher financial risks.

When the return on investment and financial rate of returns (FRR) are low, there is a need for either subsidising capital costs or the rate of interest or even both. While a small farmer investing in micro irrigation might be able to afford normal rates of interest, another farmer taking up soil remediation/enrichment may not get a return that can service the loan and sustain the investment.

The nature of funding CC investments by private sector will have to differ from activity to activity and at times based on geography. While the government will need to fund and carry out investments that are in the nature of public goods, it could also consider spending part of its budget earmarked for CC for subventions and subsidies to the private sector to compensate for the loss of income to the sector; hence the necessity of ‘blended finance’.

### **Blended finance**

The need for ‘blended finance’ arises from investments which have a ‘development payoff’ but low/no revenue streams. While FRR is the most important determinant of investment decisions, most CC related investments will not be able to meet the FRR thresholds.

Hence economic rate of return (ERR) methodology which will take on board development payoffs is necessary to justify investments relating to mitigation and adaptation investments related to CC. Mainstream funders [read commercial banks] predominantly rely on FRR. Blended finance, through reduction of interest costs can improve FRR in the hands of the project holder.

Mainstream funders therefore, require financial and non-financial incentives for financing CC projects and their investment appraisals must be based on ERR. Suitable subventions and subsidies will nudge the bankers towards climate finance and also reduce the actual rates of interest to the borrowers. Another critical revenue stream is that of carbon credits. While some initial work on monetising carbon credits has started in India, a lot more can be done. The revenue from carbon credits can offset the low CC project revenues and make the investments feasible.

Going forward, DFIs and commercial banks must be nudged to play an active role in designing credit products for managing CC. The government has demonstrated its commitment, by successfully mobilising ₹16,000 crore through sovereign green bonds.

In sum, India’s commitments to net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are based on a bouquet of options: shifting to renewable energy, battery storage systems, cleaner transport, climate resilient sustainable farming, optimisation of water use, afforestation to create carbon sinks and reducing fossil fuel consumption, which were well articulated in the Budget 2023.

Climate proofing investments for coastal areas through mangrove restoration, lowlands affected by floods and for rain-fed regions are priorities. Coordinated strategy between governments, the RBI and the financial sector can manage the concerns of green lending to commercial and marginalised sectors alike. We need to be atmanirbhar in climate

finance. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/being-atmanirbhar-in-climate-finance/article66560960.ece>

**24. Govt schools need urgent fixing** (*thehindubusinessline.com*) Feb 27, 2023

### **Local governments and women's collectives should be given the responsibility for primary schools**

The Annual Status of Education Report 2023 confirms what is seen in schools today — unprecedented learning poverty due to Covid. Given the already unsatisfactory learning outcomes in schools, the situation demands an immediate response. The non-hiking of school Budgets on the grounds of poor governance and politicisation cannot be justified. Three-fourths of the children have come back to government schools as incomes and employment have shrunk.

Government schools in most States have become the abode of children from vulnerable social groups, where the parents have limited disposable incomes and the education of girls often continues to be a formality, merely for bettering marriage prospects. Improving a government school is the most pro-poor activity that any State can undertake.

Going beyond Central/State funding issues, it is time to improve governance in schools. Also, schools must shed their forlorn and dilapidated look, an outcome of the long school closure due to Covid. Uttar Pradesh's 'Mission Kayakalpa' for making schools attractive and an inviting place once again, is a great example to follow. All States must strive to improve the look of their schools; it does not cost much.

While a lot has been done to improve the schools on the supply side with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and subsequent efforts, there is a need for rejuvenating and re-imagining learning in schools. As ASER 2023 confirms, boys and girls of elementary school-going age have all come back to schools; the system is failing them, though. Making learning attractive for children is possible today with little effort.

To ensure impactful outcomes of learning in schools, the following needs to be done at the earliest:

Firstly, local governments and women's collectives should be given the responsibility for elementary schools with funds and functionaries. They must be authorised to fill any vacancy by rationalisation or recruiting a community volunteer who has cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test. The devolved funds should be sufficient to meet the needs for basic learning and support. The school should become a community institution rather than be a government entity. It should be able to draw on voluntarism/donations and get the support of gadgets to ensure healthy learning outcomes. The physical and human infrastructure have to be adequate for learning to happen.

Secondly, all teachers and teacher educators (block and cluster coordinators, State/District resource persons) should be trained in the use of gadgets and course material that can facilitate learning. Every classroom must have a large TV and a good sound system to provide online lessons that supplement what is taught in class.

Thirdly, the Mid-Day Meal responsibility must be handed over to the village level self-help group (SHG) of women. The Panchayat and School Management Committee shall be the supervisors of the SHG. Teachers should not have any role in the Mid-Day Meal scheme. They must only teach.

#### Public libraries

Fourthly, develop public libraries where older children in the village can study and prepare for jobs and admissions to good institutions. Such community institutions attract volunteers. Karnataka has done outstanding work on strengthening its public libraries and this has gains for school learning outcomes as well.

Fifthly, use sound boxes, video films, play-way learning items, indoor and outdoor sports, cultural activities for learning on scale. Let toys based learning start from early childhood learning, with support of the Integrated Child Development Services. In any case, the New Education Policy 2022 mandates a continuum from ages 3 to 8 to ensure this important early beginning in life.

The nutrition challenge must be the school leadership's responsibility, as too many committees only dilute convergent action. Field functionaries like Aanganwadi Sevikas, Ashas, ANMs and Panchayat Secretaries must all be made responsible for the well-being of children. To make a difference, healthcare management must be in partnership with the local government.

Sixthly, there should be community campaigns and regular school level interactions with parents. Teachers must build a relationship with every household to ensure children's care and learning. Parental involvement can greatly improve learning outcomes. The Nipun Bharat Mission to ensure oral and written literacy and numeracy, should become a people's movement like the Total Literacy Campaign.

And finally, let the Central and State grants be disaggregated gram panchayat-wise and urban local body-wise, to ensure transfer of untied funds to schools, including salary payment. The school must be community managed and the State is at best the principal financing agent. Let the private sector adopt schools to make them better.

Let the Central/State governments equally share the additional resources needed to rejuvenate the system, given that education is a Concurrent subject 1976 onwards. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/govt-schools-need-urgent-fixing/article66560935.ece>

#### **25. Grave irregularities found in 13 out of 22 educational institutions under radar of CBI in scholarship scam (*theprint.in*) 27 February, 2023**

Shimla: Grave irregularities have been found in 13 out of 22 educational institutions which are on the radar of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Rs 250-crore scholarship scam, agency sources said.

Investigations revealed that these 13 institutions took scholarships in the name of about 2,000 fictitious students, sources in the CBI said. The accounts and other documentation of the remaining institutions are yet to be checked, they added.

Scrutiny of documents, accounts and data procured from computers and other related material of these institutions located in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh by the CBI revealed that scholarship fund was siphoned and scholarship was taken in the name of students who either did not exist or had left the institutions, sources added.

These institutions bagged a major chunk of the scholarship amount.

The scam started in 2012-13 when the scholarship for pre-matric and post-matric students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes under 36 schemes were not paid to eligible beneficiaries.

The scam remained hidden for almost five years as the person who created the online portal for disbursement of scholarship was also responsible for transferring the amount.

The matter came to light in 2018 following reports that students of government schools in tribal Spiti valley in Lahaul and Spiti district had not been paid any scholarship for the past five years.

Investigations had pointed out that fake letterheads to show false affiliation were used by some institutions to mislead the education department which failed to ensure physical verification of infrastructure and strength of students.

The other discrepancies included non-submission of Aadhaar numbers of students by institutions, use of same Aadhaar accounts to withdraw scholarships of multiple students who did not exist and opening of fake accounts in nationalised banks.

In order to grab the scholarship money, the institutions allegedly used the blank cheques and vouchers submitted at the time of admission, allegedly in connivance with some employees of nationalised banks which opened the accounts without Aadhaar verification.

The management allegedly gave their own phone numbers as registered numbers of students so that they receive SMSes regarding transactions and withdraw the money.

More than Rs 28 crore of post-matric scholarship money for SC/ST/OBC students was disbursed to nine fake institutions in Una, Chamba, Sirmaur and Kangra districts running under one name without affiliation from the competent bodies.

The key accused, the then Superintendent Grade-II of the Department of Higher Education (dealing with disbarment of scholarship), was arrested and it was found that his wife had 33 per cent stakes in these institutions.

The CBI had registered a case under sections 409, 419, 465, 466 and 471 of the IPC for criminal breach of trust, forgery and cheating here on May 8, 2019. During the course of investigations, it was found that 80 per cent of the scholarship money was paid to private institutions.

So far four charge sheets have been filed in the case against more than 16 people, including directors of the erring institutions, employees of the education department and bank staffers. <https://theprint.in/india/grave-irregularities-found-in-13-out-of-22-educational-institutions-under-radar-of-cbi-in-scholarship-scam/1403570/>



**26. Padmasarovaram project: Kochi Corporation suffers loss of Rs 99 lakh** ([timesofindia.indiatimes.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)) Feb 28, 2023

KOCHI: The city corporation has suffered a loss of Rs 99 lakh for trying to implement Padmasarovaram project without securing necessary approvals. The state high-powered steering committee (SHPSC) for Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (Amrut) projects has asked the corporation to pay Rs 99 lakh which KMRL spent on constructing a bund across Chilavannoor backwaters.

The corporation had started the work on the project which envisaged construction of a walkway and cycle track on a viaduct across Chilavannoor backwaters in 2018. The local body entrusted the work with KMRL at a cost of around Rs 10 crore allotted from Amrut.

The bund, constructed for facilitating the work on the viaduct, had to be demolished after the project was wound up due to lack of approvals from competent agencies. “The instruction of the SHPSC attests to my argument that the project was carried out violating norms. The KCZMA declined nod for the work as it would intersect flow of tidal influenced water in Chilavannoor backwaters,” said K T Cheshire, an RTI activist. “The SHPC should have instructed the respondents to pay the sum. The then chairman of the SHPSC and former additional chief secretary T K Jos, former Kochi mayor Soumini Jain and officials with the corporation, KMRL, etc. are the respondents,” Cheshire said.

Meanwhile, the corporation authorities said that the local body can’t spend the money from the exchequer. “How can Kochi corporation bear the cost given the fact that somebody’s faults led to the winding up of the project and subsequent loss? The amount should be recovered from the respondents,” mayor M Anilkumar said. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/padmasarovaram-project-corp-suffers-loss-of-99/articleshow/98290364.cms>