NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (21.03.2023)

1. **Exclusive: How CAG is taking on a more proactive role** *(theweek.in)* By Sanjib Kr | Baruah Updated: March 21, 2023

CAG is adopting ways to achieve economy and efficiency even during audit process

The iconic 1990 chart-busting rock classic 'Winds of Change' by the Scorpions may have been all about the defining fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. If one listens carefully though, the song could well be reverberating off the high pale earth-coloured boundary walls of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India located in the national capital.

That the BJP's new swanky national headquarters at Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg is just across the road may well be a metaphor for the new effort to change the nature of relationship between the national auditor and the political executive—from antagonism to one of cooperative affability.

Historically maintaining a low profile, constitutional bodies like the Election Commission (EC) and the CAG, have often demonstrated the range and intensity of powers they wield. After all, it took just one T.N. Seshan from EC and one Vinod Rai from CAG to show the country how seriously they should be taken because of their constitutionally-vested mandate.

In the not-so-distant past, CAG's probing audit was looked upon by the government ministries, departments and state governments as a fault-finding exercise hell-bent on chastising the entities audited.

Nor did the CAG connect with the political executive as the entire gamut of work relating to furnishing of data and detailing explanations lay with the bureaucrats. And that is what may be changing soon with a new outreach plan by the CAG.

CAG Girish Chandra Murmu, told THE WEEK in an exclusive chat: "Earlier our engagement was primarily with the bureaucrats, but of late, we have extended our outreach to political executives. In a few instances, it has also been due to the invitation from the political executive who wanted audit inputs on various financial and governance issues pertaining to their domain or sector."

Among the entities requesting proactive engagement with the CAG include Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Union Rail Ministry.

The national auditor elaborates: “In states, our Accountant Generals have always been closely interacting with state officials for all audit engagements but now we have further strengthened our engagement efforts not only through various innovative products such as ‘departmental appreciation notes’ and ‘management letters’ but also by increasing level of interaction and touch points.”

On the response received, he says: “Wherever we have engaged with political executives, they have been very responsive. These engagements have helped in creating shared understanding of the most pressing concerns, nuances of the challenges faced and possible solutions which would help in furthering the shared goal of good governance.”

The prompt for a change to the exercise of wider powers by the CAG may have first germinated in a landmark Supreme Court verdict on October 12, 2012 which ruled that the CAG is not there just to keep and maintain accounts.

The apex court had then said: “The CAG is not a ‘munim’ (keeper of accounts). He is a constitutional authority who can examine the revenue allocation and matters relating to the economy.”

The case pertained to a plea challenging the CAG’s power to conduct a performance audit of the controversial allocation of coal blocks by the Congress-led UPA government.

A constitutional authority, CAG audits the Union ministries, departments and offices, state government departments and offices, government-owned companies and corporations, autonomous bodies substantially financed by government and other bodies/authorities whose audit is entrusted to CAG.

And then again, on November 16, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing the first-ever Audit Diwas (Audit Day), had said that the ‘CAG vs Government’ had to change: “I used to tell my officers when I was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, and I continue to say even today that you must give all the documents and data that are asked by the CAG. Give them other files related to your work as well. This creates scope for us to do better work. Our self-assessment work becomes easy.”

Change of role

Another sphere where the CAG is moving away from the traditional role and adopting a pro-active role is in trying to bring about mid-course corrections and suggesting ways and means to achieve economy and efficiency even during the course of the audit process.

In the past, the CAG's role was limited to reading of accounts while maintaining total distance from policy design and execution.

An imperative need was felt to change that approach also because SAIs are in a unique position to give near real time feedback to governments and policymakers for not only mid-course correction but also changes in approach, where required.

"As it (audit) is a contemporary exercise, which goes on during the implementation of the policy, the audit observations and constructive recommendations not only helps in mid-course corrective action to improve policy implementation but also in improving the policy design. This is very significant as through these audits, we are able to be an aid to good governance and protect public interest," the CAG said.

"As you know that apart from compliance and financial audits, we also do performance audits, the main objective of which is to constructively promote economical, effective and efficient governance. Though we do not question the policy but we audit its implementation to see how policy has translated into practice. This includes audit of the scheme, program and delivery design and the governance mechanism put in place to implement the policy."

Improving efficiency of LSGDs

Another area witnessing CAG's proactive initiative is in the effort to improve effectiveness and efficiency of local self-government bodies be it the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) or the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Says Murmu: "Greater resources by way of a higher number of audit personnel have been allocated for the audit of local bodies and some restructuring in the state Accountant General offices has also been carried out to enhance audit coverage, keeping in view their rising importance in the scheme of governance."

"The emphasis is on capacity building through training and regular interactions by the state AG Offices on various facets of auditing and reporting."

"District-centric approach with a primary focus on the implementation of activities under the functions devolved to the PRIs and ULBs. The focus is to assess how effectively the LBs have been able to provide the designated services to the target beneficiaries and citizens with the funds and powers devolved to it," the national auditor added.

With India assuming presidency of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and of G20, this year is a particularly important year for CAG with a number of meetings being held with the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) of all the participating countries with the two focus areas being 'Blue Economy' and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Blue Economy

'Blue Economy' looks 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 a 7,517 km long coastline and an Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square km, India has about 199 ports, including 12 major ports that handle approximately 1,400 million tons of cargo each year with the coastal economy sustaining over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities.

The primary challenge to auditing the complex and variegated 'Blue Economy' sub sectors like marine fisheries, coastal eco-system, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism, bio-technology from marine resources, and extraction of sea-bed mineral resources, lies in integrating them into a single auditing framework.

Privacy concerns on AI

Asked about the addressing of serious privacy concerns on AI and its applications in the case of of audit processes, the CAG says: "India is well aware of the privacy concerns of AI and its applications. Though AI is an amazing performance enhancing tool, the concerns regarding bias and privacy, transparency and accountability are real and important. That's why we are having this engagement regarding responsible AI in SAI20."

"We in SAI India have some experience in applying AI tools in some of our audit products. We are seriously engaging with the major players in AI, both in the government and private sector in order to have a deep understanding of the privacy issues and to develop frameworks and control regarding application of AI in audit process as well as auditing AI applications."

Aiding these changes is a total automation of the audit process and knowledge management system under a project called One IAAD One System (OIOS) Project that is expected to be launched in less than a month.

The OIOS will connect CAG's 138 field offices with the headquarters in New Delhi. Of the total 45,000 staff in CAG, about 29,000 are in the field audit offices. https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2023/03/21/exclusive-how-cag-is-taking-on-a-more-proactive-role.html

2. Congress fires more questions on Adani issue *(economictimes.indiatimes.com)* 20 March 2023

The Congress on Monday alleged that the Union Ministry of Power and Gujarat Pollution Control Board did not take action against the Adani group for environmental violations.The opposition party also claimed the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) ignored violations of longstanding power-purchase agreements by the Adani group under the Electricity Act.

The Adani group has rejected all the allegations against it and has claimed that it has not indulged in any wrongdoing.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed a set of three questions to the prime minister on the Adani group as part of what the opposition party calls the "Hum Adani ke Hain Kaun" series,

He has so far asked 99 questions and said these can only be answered by a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe.

"Here is HAHK(Hum Adanike Hain Kaun)-33. Our questions directly to the PM on the Adani 'Maha Mega Scam'. With this, we have reached 99. But we won't stop, tomorrow we will hit the century mark. These questions can only be unravelled through a JPC.

"Chuppi Todiye Pradhan Mantriji (Break your silence, Mr prime minister)," he said on Twitter.

Ramesh claimed a CAG report tabled in the Gujarat Vidhan Sabha on September 22, 2022 found that the state government had turned a blind eye to environmental violations by the Adani Group.

"Adani Power had illegally dumped 15.42 lakh tonnes of toxic fly ash in lowlying areas between 2014-15 and 2018-19 without the approval of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB). It had wrongly reported the recycling of this toxic byproduct even though it had no online monitoring system to ensure it, as required by the Union Ministry of Power," Ramesh alleged.

He pointed out that the CAG reported that "GPCB did not take any action against APL for dumping the fly ash as in the low-lying areas without its approval and for incorrect reporting of 100 percent utilisation of fly ash".

"Is your concern for your favourite group's profits so much greater than for the Gujarati villagers and fishermen whose health and livelihoods have been damaged by rampant fly-ash pollution," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader also alleged that Adani Power has been defaulting on its power supply obligations to Haryana since December 2020.

"It now transpires that not only is Haryana not receiving the electricity it is due from Adani Power in Mundra, but electricity from Haryana has been illegally diverted to Mundra for onward supply to consumers in Gujarat," he alleged.

The All India Power Engineers' Federation has shown that 1,790.25 million units of electricity power flowed in the reverse direction on the MundraMohindergarh high-voltage direct current line between April and December 2022, he claimed.

"Is it true that Haryana paid for the electricity supplied to Gujarat?" the Congress leader asked.

He also claimed that a July 9, 2018 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India found that the Adani Group had been the major beneficiary of "flawed" coal import tenders issued by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) between July 2012 and February 2016.

"Your personal influence over the then AIADMK-run state government is no secret. Did you play any role in helping your cronies make yet another illicit gain, this time at the expense of Tamil Nadu taxpayers," Ramesh asked.

The Congress has been raising the Adani issue and demanding a JPC after the Hindenburg report levelled several allegations against the business group.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/congress-fires-more-questions-on-adani-issue/articleshow/98818648.cms?from=mdr

STATES NEWS ITEMS

3. CAG flags use of ambulance, hearse for illegal mining in Uttarakhand *(newindianexpress.com)* 21 March 2023

Along with this, the number of government vehicles have also been found "deployed" for thousands of outlet permits.

DEHRADUN: The Uttarakhand Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) has made a sensational revelation in its report on illegal mining, which it says, has been carried out by "ambulances" and "hearse" vehicles from three rivers beds (Song, Dhakrani and Kulhal) of various districts adjacent to Himachal Pradesh and in Dehradun.

Along with this, the number of government vehicles have also been found "deployed" for thousands of outlet permits. The illegal mining has taken place between 2017-18 and 2020-21. The mining mafia has thus duped the state exchequer of crores of rupees by changing the number plates of vehicles by taking millions of tonnes of illegal mining material.

"Thousands of vehicles engaged in carrying out illegal mining turned out to be ambulances and non-commercial vehicles," it said. According to the CAG report, 1,24,474 metric tonnes of mining material was transported from 2,969 government vehicles engaged in illegal mining.

The CAG report, which has surprised many officials and ministers, also revealed that "835 passenger vehicles carried 97 thousand metric tonnes and 2,500 taxi vehicles had 1.52 metric tonnes of mining material. There were more than 57 thousand vehicles that were not registered. Apart from this, about 2,500 tonnes of illegal mining has been ferried in ambulances, fire tenders, autopsy vehicles, road rollers, and X-ray van numbers.

Speaking to this paper, state Finance Minister Prem Chand Agarwal said, "After studying the CAG report in detail, the government will take the strictest action against the culprits involved in it. Any kind of negligence will not be spared." The CAG report puts the number of such vehicles at 40. As many as 782 petroleum tanks were also found in the illegal mining racket.

How the fraud came to light

-CAG examined vehicle numbers mentioned in challans along with database of vehicles

-Out of 4.37 lakh vehicles, 1.18 lakh were matched by CAG. It found that out of 1.18 lakh vehicles, 0.43 lakh carried illegal mining material. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/mar/21/cag-flags-use-ofambulancehearsefor-illegalmining-inuttarakhand-2558101.html

4. **Uttarakhand: कैग की रिपोर्ट में खुलासा, पांच साल में 93% शहरी गरीबों को नहीं मिला सस्ता घर** *(amarujala.com)* March 21, 2023

पिछले पांच साल के दौरान उत्तराखंड के शहरी स्थानीय निकायों में 93 फीसदी गरीबों को सस्ता घर देने का सपना अधूरा रह गया। घर बनाने के लिए निकायों को पांच हजार से अधिक आवेदन प्राप्त हुए, जिनमें से तीन हजार से अधिक वास्तविक लाभार्थी पाए गए। इनमें से भी सिर्फ 210 लाभार्थियों की सस्ता घर पाने की मुराद पूरी हो सकी। यानी सात फीसदी को ही सस्ता घर मिल सका।

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक (कैग) की रिपोर्ट में यह खुलासा हुआ है। कैग ने शहरी क्षेत्र स्थानीय निकायों के माध्यम से प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना के ऑडिट में यह भारी गड़बड़ी पकड़ी है। कैग ने देहरादून नगर निगम समेत प्रदेश की 19 निकायों में सस्ता घर योजना के आवेदनों की नमूना जांच में यह अनियमितता उजागर की है।

घर बनाने के लिए मिलती है ये वित्तीय सहायता

पात्रता पूरी करने के बाद निर्माण शुरू करने से पहले 20 हजार रुपये, प्लिंथ स्तर तक पूरा होने पर एक लाख रुपये और निर्माण के बाद तक छत 60 हजार रुपये और निर्माण पूरा होने पर 20 हजार रुपये दिए जाते हैं।

योजना पर पलीता, यह है सच्चाई

प्रधानमंत्री शहरी आवास योजना पर स्थानीय निकायों ने पलीता लगा दिया। 2015-16 से 2019-20 के दौरान 19 निकायों के पास सस्ता घर के लिए 5165 लोगों ने आवेदन किया। इनमें से 3094 को वास्तविक लाभार्थी चुने गए। लेकिन घर की मुराद केवल 210 यानी सात फीसदी ही पूरी हो सकी। 2884 यानी 93 फीसदी आवास नहीं बन पाए।

ये गड़बड़ियां पकड़ी गईं

-भीमताल नगर पंचायत ने 2019-20 में डीपीआर तैयार नहीं की।
-शक्तिगढ़ नगर पंचायत में पैसे की कमी से 2017-18 से निर्माण लटका था।
-नमूना इकायों में निर्माण विभिन्न चरणों में वर्षों से लंबित।
-निर्माण पूरा करने में शहरी स्थानीय निकायों के स्तर पर प्रयास नहीं हुए।
-योजना पर काम बेहद धीमी गति से हुआ।
-डीपीआर की लंबित स्वीकृति, पैसे की कमी और निर्माण में देरी से योजना का उद्देश्य विफल हो गया।
-भगवानपुर, पिरान कलियर नगर पंचायत, नगर पालिका परिषद, मुनि की रेती व हरबर्टपुर में 911 लाभार्थियों में से 529 के पास भूमि का स्वामित्व नहीं था। परिवार के सदस्यों से अनापत्ति प्रमाण पत्र (एओसी) प्रस्तुत दिया गया।

योजना का लाभ लेने से ही मना कर दिया

कैग ने पाया कि सत्यापन के बाद 1164 लाभार्थियों में से 32 अपात्र पाए गए अथवा उन्होंने योजना का लाभ लेने से मना कर दिया। अफसरों ने सत्यापन में लापरवाही की। अनियमित भुगतान हुए जिनकी वसूली नहीं की गई। https://www.amarujala.com/dehradun/uttarakhand-news-cag-report-revealed-93-percent-urban-poor-did-not-get-affordable-house-in-five-years-2023-03-21?pageId=2

5. **FAC's decision on Etalin power project a chance to reduce harm of dams in Arunachal** *(nenow.in)* March 21, 2023

On 27 December 2022, the apex body at India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) declined to give forest clearance to the Etalin hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh. In its recommendation, the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) advised that the state government further assess how to protect the Dibang Valley area's rich biodiversity. This was the sixth time the 3,097-megawatt project – which, if built, would be the largest dam in India in terms of installed capacity – has been refused forest clearance since it was first envisaged in 2008.

The news of the denial of clearance for Etalin is a reminder of too-often-forgotten uncomfortable truths about the chaos and destruction caused by hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh. These concerns are particularly important now, after news earlier this year that the government is moving forward on five dams in

Arunachal Pradesh, in addition to approving the 2,880 MW Dibang mega-dam, whose installed capacity would be just a little less than that envisaged for Etalin.

Backdrop to Etalin – a sorry story

Within a short span of time in 2008, the government of Arunachal Pradesh signed more than 130 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with power companies for hydropower projects ranging in size from 5 MW to 4,000 MW. The number of MoUs, and the speed at which they were signed, led the environment minister at the time Jairam Ramesh to describe the trend as an "MoU virus". This virus has not only been destructive for biodiversity, but has also infected the democratic political institutions and indigenous communities of the state.

As the approvals were pushed for, every possible violation of norms and procedures was committed. In 2010, a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) declared that Arunachal Pradesh's Department of Hydropower Development "does not have proper planning process" and that it went ahead with several projects based on inadequate information and lacking rigorous environmental impact assessment (EIA). In a 2013 report, the CAG said that an absence of open tendering and failure to take actions like forfeiture of security deposits had led to financial losses. Activists have described "huge corruption" in certain hydropower projects.

India's biodiversity pledges and Etalin

Mamang Dai, the Arunachal Pradesh-based novelist, poet and journalist, spoke for many across the state when she described the development brought by hydropower as "an invasion", deploring the labelling of those who protest as "illiterate".

Organisations such as the Siang People's Forum, Adi Student's Union and Save Mon Region Federation have spearheaded an anti-dam movement and protests across the state. In turn, these groups were branded as 'Maoists' by the authorities, in reference to extremist Left militias that are banned by the state. Activist Bamang Tago, a member of the Idu Mishi tribe, has stated that this gave license to the police and Central Reserve Police Force to attack protesters and sabotage the movement.

There are reports of efforts to inhibit public participation. Research published in 2014 by the Institute of Chinese Studies, a think tank based in Delhi and funded by the Indian government, detailed allegations of tactics designed to lessen villagers' ability to protest against dams, which include dam-building companies distributing opium and bribing leaders. In 2012, there was a failed assassination attempt on

Tongam Rina, associate editor of The Arunachal Times, who had written critically on hydropower projects in the state.

India's biodiversity pledges and Etalin

The rush to build large hydropower dams in Arunachal Pradesh clashes with India's international aspirations. On 22 December, just a few days before the FAC refused forest clearance to Etalin, the world's governments adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, aiming to halt species extinction and loss of biodiversity. One of the agreements specifies that countries will "Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services are effectively conserved and managed" while "recognising and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories."

Since Arunachal Pradesh, and the whole of the Eastern Himalayas, is considered one of the world's 'biodiversity hotspots', policymakers need to carefully consider the sentiments of indigenous tribal communities while undertaking any kind of developmental project.

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In the case of the proposed Etalin project, the conservation of wildlife, especially tigers, has been a major bone of contention between the Idu Mishmi tribe and authorities. Following the discovery of tigers in and around the Dibang Valley in

2018, the National Tiger Conservation Authority decided to declare the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary a tiger reserve – a plan that involved fences and patrol guards.

This was rejected by the Idu Mishmi community, who stressed to the authorities that they consider the tiger a ‘brother’ and have been living alongside the apex predator for centuries. They argued, therefore, that the conservation model should be “based on deep-rooted cultural values and beliefs”. The Idu Mishmi also consider the Talo River, on which a dam for the Etalin project is planned, sacred, as they believe that the souls of the deceased are guided along it by Idu shamans to reach their heavenly abode.

The FAC minutes from 27 December show that preserving biodiversity was a focal point in the decision to reject Etalin for forest clearance. The FAC demanded that the state government further assess both the number of trees to be felled in consultation with the Forest Survey of India and the protection of wildlife. Having noted the dissent of several organisations to the Etalin project as well as “already approved projects”, the Committee also “requested the State Govt. to review the status of all approved projects” and submit a report on the projects’ compliance with FAC conditions “at the earliest”.

The FAC decision is a welcome step. It not only limits the Etalin project, but also commits the government of Arunachal Pradesh to review already approved projects like the Dibang mega-dam project and diligently implement environmental impact assessments (EIAs) before applying for approval of any new projects in the state.

The Pakke Declaration – too much to hope for?

There are some faint glimmers of hope for biodiversity conservation coming from within Arunachal Pradesh. In November 2021, the state government adopted the ‘Pakke Declaration’, which assures its citizens it will act on climate change and biodiversity loss. In April 2022, the Arunachal Pradesh State Biodiversity Board and World Wildlife Fund-India signed an agreement to prepare a State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SBSAP), in which Mama Natung – Arunachal Pradesh’s environment and forest minister – declared that the SBSAP will align with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and Pakke Declaration. Such measures by the state government mean the people of Arunachal Pradesh can hope for real progress in halting biodiversity loss and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has pointed out, biodiversity is facing an existential threat as humanity continues to wage "war on nature". In order to "make peace with nature", it will be crucial to integrate biodiversity concerns into decision-making tools like EIAs.
Hopefully the Etalin project – and the five hydropower projects that in January were transferred from private power companies to central public sector undertakings – will be an example of this. https://nenow.in/environment/facs-decision-on-etalin-power-project-a-chance-to-reduce-harm-of-dams-in-arunachal.html

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

6. Govt aims to cap fertiliser subsidy, pilot projects in 7 districts soon *(financialexpress.com)* March 20, 2023

The government will roll out a modified direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme of fertilisers in seven districts across as many states on a pilot basis. Under the new plan, sales of subsidised fertilisers to farmers will be capped, taking into consideration their land holdings.

The government has, however, abandoned a plan to make farmers pay for the nutrients at market rates, before they receive the subsidies in their bank accounts.

According to Arun Singhal, secretary, department of fertilisers, based on the land records of the farmers, the quota of highly subsidised fertilisers to be sold to them will be fixed. The idea is to promote rational use of soil nutrients. "Any volume above the fixed quota, farmers have to buy the fertiliser at the market rate," Singhal told FE.

States need to have digital land records, crops surveys, coverage of soil health cards and provisions for formal and informal tenancy in landing holdings before rolling out the pilot projects.

Seven states including Karnataka, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra have come forward for pilots in one district each.

Among the three explicit subsidies funded out of the Budget, that on oil has almost been got rid of, while food subsidy is statutory, given the National Food Securities Act.

Fertiliser subsidy is prone to wild fluctuations, given a substantial part of the nutrients and feedstock (natural gas) are imported. Because of higher global prices caused by the Ukraine war, the fertiliser subsidy in 2022-23 has surged to a recordRs 2.53 trillion.
Regulating subsidy on fertilisers is key to the plan to rein in revenue expenditure and find more resources for capital investments.

Based on information provided by farmers on land holdings, the quantum of subsidised fertiliser to be sold will be updated on an integrated fertiliser management system operated by the department of fertilisers.

The data on farmers' quota will be transferred to respective point of sale (PoS) machines installed at the fertiliser retail outlets.

The idea of direct cash transfer was objected to, as under that model, the farmers would have to pay a substantial amount upfront for buying fertilisers prior to the actual subsidy amount being transferred to their bank accounts.

"Subsidy component of the fertiliser sold is quite high while the farmers' ability to buy fertilisers at actual market rate is limited," Singhal said. Based on the response of the pilots, the modified DBT will be implemented across the country.

Sale of all subsidised fertiliser to farmers or buyers is currently made through 0.26 million point of sale (PoS) devices installed at outlets since March 2018. Beneficiaries are identified through Aadhaar number, Kisan Credit Card and other documents.

Fertiliser subsidies have been released to companies on the basis of sales made by the retailers to the farmers.

In case of urea, farmers pay a fixed priceRs 242 per bag (45 kg) against the cost of production of aroundRs 2,650 per bag. The balance is provided by the government as a subsidy to fertiliser units.

The retail prices of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertiliser, including diammonium phosphate

(DAP) were 'decontrolled' in 2020 with the introduction of a 'fixed-subsidy' regime as part of Nutrient Based Subsidy mechanism announced by the government twice in a year.

Because of higher global prices, the fertiliser subsidy in 2022-23 is seen at a recordRs 2.53 trillion.

It would be the third year in a row that the annual Budget spending in the current fiscal on fertiliser would be aboveRs 1-trillion mark, against a lower range ofRs 70,000 – 80,000 crore in the past few years.

In terms of volume, imports account for a third of domestic soil nutrients consumption of around 65 million tonne annually.

The country imports about half of its requirement of DAP and around 25% of urea requirements are met through imports. The domestic muriate of potash (MoP) demand is met solely through imports (from Belarus, Canada and Jordan, etc). https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/govt-aims-to-cap-fertiliser-subsidy-pilot-projects-in-7-districts-soon/3015100/

7. India likely to miss divestment and tax collection target in current fiscal *(cnbctv18.com)* Updated: March 21, 2023

The Rs 50,000 crore target for divestment receipts in the current financial year is unlikely to be met. With barely 10 days left for the fiscal year to close, the government has to catch up on Rs 19,000 crore worth of divestment revenues. The recent volatility in the market, which continues, may have been one of the factors for the shortfall.

A volatile stock market has added to the government's woes, creating challenges for the government's plans to come out with an OFS, although the possibility of an offering is not completely ruled out. Even then, it would be highly unlikely to meet the Rs 19,000 crore gap between current actuals and the target.

Earlier, the government's plans for the Hindustan Zince OFS got nixed with the face-off with Vedanta Grp on its purchase of global zinc assets using HZL's balance sheet. The outcome of this matter is still awaited.

However, DIPAM has been batting for inclusive or 'DIPAM receipts' for a while, meaning including the dividend receipts from CPSEs into the overall divestment pool. While from a budget-accounting purpose, it may not be feasible to have 1 combined head for both, DIPAM favours including dividend receipts as part of its revenues - at least being considered in toto instead of counting only the pure disinvestment receipts.

The government has already exceeded the FY23 dividend aim. Against a Rs 43,000 crore target, the government has received over Rs 52,000 crore as dividends from CPSEs, much higher than the disinvestment actuals of Rs 31,106 crore.

This has helped push the total mop up by DIPAM to over Rs 83,000 crore, against a combined disinvestment and dividend aim of Rs 93,000 crore for FY23.

Tax revenue aim: Marginal gap likely

Not just disinvestment, but on the tax revenue front too, the government could face a marginal shortfall.

Sources indicate around 98 percent of the total tax revenue aim for FY23 will be met, leaving the govt short by likely 2 percent of the aim.

On a combined base of direct and indirect tax targets, the 2 percent odd gap could translate into a shortfall of Rs 50,000-60,000 crore for this financial.

The government has to achieve Rs 16.5 trillion as direct tax revenue and Rs 13.82 trillion as indirect tax revenue. Sources say the targets are somewhat steep given the high base of last year and upward revision in the aim in the revised estimates of this year's budget.

However, this is a possibility looking at the current trends, sources say. If tax refunds do not pinch in these 10 days, the govt may still be within its overall tax revenue target. https://www.cnbctv18.com/economy/india-likely-to-miss-divestment-tax-collection-target-government-revenue-budget-16220741.htm

8. Indian economy on course to 7% growth, inflation set to cool off: Finance ministry *(moneycontrol.com)* Updated: March 21, 2023

Indian economy is expected to grow at 7 percent in FY23 despite global headwinds while retail inflation would moderate in line with wholesale inflation which fell to a 25-month low in January, the finance ministry has said.

Supported by the gains from high services exports, the moderation in oil prices, and the recent fall in import-intensive consumption demand, India's current account deficit is estimated to fall in FY23 and FY24, providing a buffer to the rupee in uncertain times, Monthly Economic Review by the ministry said.

This will provide a much-needed cushion to India's external sector at a time when the Fed is likely to raise rates further and ensure that India's external finances are not a major cause of concern, it said.

The jump in net service exports over the previous year is a critical development as India increases its market share in both IT and non-IT services, whose demand has been triggered by the pandemic, it said, adding, imports are also less costly now with the easing of global commodity prices.

"With a manageable current account deficit and a growth rate highest among the major economies in FY23, the Indian economy has shown a new-found resilience in sailing through the turbulence caused by the pandemic and geopolitical stress," it said.

Macroeconomic stability is likely to receive a further boost in FY23 as the current account deficit is set to narrow from the year-beginning estimates, it added.

With regard to growth, the report said, real GDP estimates for Q3 of 2022-23 reaffirm the ability of the Indian economy to grow on the strength of its domestic demand even as a rise in global uncertainties slows global output.

Indian economy witnessed a growth of 4.4 per cent in the third quarter that ended in December 2022.

Growth momentum gathered in Q3 of 2022-23 is likely to be sustained in Q4, as reflected in the performance of High-Frequency Indicators for January/February 2023, it said.

GST collections have now, in February 2023 crossed the Rs 1.4 lakh crore benchmark for twelve successive months.

Noting that falling international commodity prices and government measures have aided in easing inflationary pressures, the report said, inflationary pressures eased in February, with a slight moderation in CPI inflation and WPI inflation softening to a 25-month low.

"With WPI inflation declining to a 25-month low, its transmission to CPI inflation is soon expected. Household inflation expectations remained anchored, as seen in the January 2023 round of RBI's Households' Inflation Expectations Survey," it said.

Going forward, it said, the inflation trajectory will likely be determined by extreme weather conditions like heatwaves and the possibility of an El Nino year, volatility in international commodity prices and pass-through of input costs to output prices.

Forecasts by various international agencies show that inflation in India will moderate in FY24 compared to FY23 and is likely to remain in the range of 5-6 per cent, with risks evenly balanced, it said.

Tightening of financial conditions by central banks to tame inflation has raised concerns regarding the exacerbation of corporate debt vulnerabilities, with corporates being already highly leveraged, it said. https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/gdp-to-grow-at-7-inflation-set-to-moderate-finmin-report-10281621.html

9. 'Bad loans of PSBs down from 14.6 per cent in 2018 to 5.53 per cent in 2022' *(newindianexpress.com)* Updated: March 21, 2023

The reforms taken by the government have reduced the size of bad loans of the public sector banks, said the Minister of State Finance, Bhagwat Karad on Monday. The Gross Non-Performing Assets (NPA) ratio has declined from the peak of 14.6% in March 2018 to 5.53% in December 2022, he told the Parliament.

"Government implemented a comprehensive 4R's strategy of Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem," said Minister of State Finance, Bhagwat Karad in Parliament. "Major banking reforms undertaken by the Government over the last eight years addressed credit discipline, responsible lending and improved governance, besides adoption of technology, amalgamation of banks, and maintaining general confidence of bankers. As a result of implementation of Reforms, performance of PSBs has significantly improved," he said.

All Public Sector Banks (PSBs) are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22, and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in first nine months of current financial year, Minister of State for Finance said in a written reply to Lok Sabha. At the same time, resilience has increased with provision coverage ratio of PSBs rising from 46% to 89.9% in December 2022, he said, adding capital adequacy ratio of PSBs improved significantly from 11.5% in March 2015 to 14.5% in December 2022. Total market cap of PSBs (excluding IDBI Bank, which was categorised as private sector bank in January 2019) rose from Rs 4.52 lakh crore in March 2018 to Rs 10.63 lakh crore in December 2022, he said.

PSU profit up in 9 months of FY23 to Rs 70,167 crore

All Public Sector Banks (PSBs) are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22, and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in first nine months of current financial year, Minister of State for Finance said in a written reply to Lok Sabha. https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2023/mar/21/bad-loans-of-psbs-down-from-146-per-centin-2018-to-553-per-centin-2022-2558110.html

10. India's power sector owes coal mining PSUs Rs 20,342 crore *(moneycontrol.com)* Updated: March 20, 2023

India's power sector owes coal mining public sector undertakings (PSUs) Rs 20,342.56 crore in outstanding dues, according to the country's Union Minister for Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs, Pralhad Joshi.

The outstanding dues to Coal India Limited (CIL) have increased by 25% to Rs 16,629.41 crore from Rs 13,335.91 crore in March 2022. Meanwhile, dues to Singareni Collieries Limited (SCCL) have decreased by Rs 2,042.35 crore to Rs 3,713.15 crore.

The timely payment of dues to the coal sector is crucial to ensure a constant supply of the fuel to thermal power plants. Last year, the country faced a power crisis due to a coal shortage.

The senior power ministry official warns that the lack of payment discipline causes supply-side problems in generating electricity, and it also negatively affects new investments in the sector.

The outstanding dues of the power sector to coal mining PSUs have increased by nearly 5% to Rs 20,342.56 crore in February this year from Rs 19,091.41 crore in March last year.

The government is constantly monitoring sales dues and holding bilateral meetings with consumers to settle commercial disputes, with several claims already filed with the Administrative Mechanism for Resolution of CPSE Disputes (AMRCD) regarding different power plants and boards.

Joshi said the government's focus is on increasing domestic coal production and reducing non-essential coal imports.

The country has produced about 785.24 million tonnes (MT) of coal up to February 2023, compared to about 681.98 MT during the same period last year, an increase of about 15.14%. Most of the country's coal requirements are met through indigenous production supply, with total imports up to December 2022 amounting to 186.06 MT. https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/power/indias-power-sector-owes-coal-mining-psus-rs-20342-crore-10281011.html

11. 'Not doing enough': IPCC report warns global warming will breach critical threshold by 2030 *(indianexpress.com)* Updated: March 21, 2023

Reiterating its earlier findings, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on Monday reminded the world yet again that it was still not doing enough to rein in global temperatures from breaching the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold despite there being "multiple, feasible and effective options" to do so.

In its latest report, the IPCC, a UN-backed global scientific body, said average temperatures had already touched 1.1 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial times, and the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold was "more likely than not" to be reached in the "near term" itself.

Monday's Synthesis Report, a summary of the five earlier reports released between 2018 and 2022, marks the culmination of IPCC's sixth assessment cycle that began in 2015. These include three parts of the main sixth assessment report, one special report on the feasibility of keeping temperature rise within 1.5 degree Celsius, and another one on the connections between oceans and cryosphere. Together these form the most comprehensive scientific understanding of the science of climate change, its impacts and actions that need to be taken.

"The synthesis report says that by 2030 there is a 50 per cent chance that global surface temperature in any single year could exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. The modelling shows that it is theoretically possible to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, but the current scale, scope and pace of global action, pledged until 2030, is not enough. We are not on track, and the report reiterates this," said Professor Joyashree Roy, one of the 93 authors of the Synthesis report.

Roy said if the temperature rise overshoots the 1.5 degree threshold, there could be irreversible damages.
Of the 1.1 degree Celsius temperature rise since pre-industrial times, about 1.07 degree Celsius was contributed by human activities, the new report said. It said the world had emitted about 2,400 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide between 1850 and

2019, of which a little over 1,000 billion tonnes, or about 42 per cent, had been emitted after 1990.

In order to have a 50 per cent chance of keeping warming below 1.5 degree Celsius, the world must not emit more than 500 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent after 2020, the report said. Incidentally, current annual emissions in 2019 amounted to 59 billion tonnes. That means that the 500 billion tonnes carbon budget would be exhausted in less than ten years.

The Synthesis Report also highlighted the fact that climate impacts were "unequally distributed" with the poor and disadvantaged being the most vulnerable. Accordingly, it stressed that the strategies to counter climate change needed to be rooted in "diverse values, worldviews and knowledge, including scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge and local knowledge".

"This approach will facilitate climate resilient development and allow locally appropriate, and socially acceptable solutions," it said.

Aditi Mukherjee, another author of the report, said India was among the countries that were expected to face largescale impacts.

"Even though India's per capita emissions are less, and we have much less historical responsibility (of emissions), the reality is India is at the forefront of impacts. We simply cannot say that because we haven't emitted much, we would not be the ones to take action. Everybody has to take action according to their national context and circumstances urgently," Mukherjee said.

The report said that while adaptation planning and implementation had progressed across all sectors and regions, large gaps existed.

"For those irreversible impacts that turn into losses and damages, the report emphasises on the need for better quantification of those losses and damages, as we still do not have those quantified as well as the policy makers need to for negotiations,'' Mukherjee adds.

Joyashree Roy said India's future development needed to be in sync with the climate objectives.

"In terms of energy, India is one of the developing countries which have been practising energy efficiency in all sectors, be it the household sector, industry sector or transport sector. So, from that point of view, India could achieve low per capita emission growth because of one of these policies. India can increase it more but it has done a lot in that sense already. India can decarbonize the energy supply sector by not only solar and wind renewable energy deployment but using other cleaner options. What India can also do is to reduce the demand for energy and do the distributional justice by reducing wasteful energy use," she said.

"On the demand side, when India is expanding its cities or urban infrastructure, it can see how it can integrate the infrastructure design which allows more space for cyclists, pedestrians or better public transport system, access to different technologies for recycling food waste reduction etc,'' Roy said.

The IPCC report said limited resources, insufficient finance, low sense of urgency, lack of political commitment were among the key barriers to effective climate action. https://indianexpress.com/article/technology/science/global-warming-to-breach-critical-threshold-by-2030-climate-report-8508625/

12. New IPCC Report Lists Numerous Low-Cost Options to Tackle Climate Change *(thewire.in)* Mar 21, 2023

From supporting public transport and walking and cycling in cities to implementing policies that incorporate weather and health insurance, there are numerous feasible, effective, and low-cost options available to spur climate action and address the issue of climate change, as per the latest climate report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on March 20.

The Synthesis Report of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) is the final document in the series, and summarises the available information on climate change, how it is affecting people and ecosystems, as well as how to adapt to and mitigate climate change and its impacts. The report has numerous messages that India could adopt, said several scientists who contributed to the report.

The Synthesis Report

With increasing global greenhouse gas emissions, human-caused climate change has already caused widespread changes in our natural ecosystems and is also affecting weather and causing climate extremes, per the report. The changes are also affecting people drastically.

“Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected,” the report noted. Unfortunately, these impacts are only set to intensify, the report predicts.

Many climate-related risks (such as human deaths due to increased heat, for example) too are higher now than when the IPCC team assessed them in its previous report, the AR5. Projected long-term impacts too are multiple times higher than currently observed, the Synthesis Report read. As global warming increases, many of these changes will become “unavoidable” and “irreversible” too.

“Every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards,” it read. Per the report, only “deep”, “rapid” and “sustained” reductions in greenhouse gas emissions can slow down global warming over the next two decades.

Measures to adapt to climate change (such as ensuring access to air conditioning as many regions of the world face extreme heat due as a result of global warming) – also known as adaptation – are being implemented but these are clearly not enough given the current rates of climate change, the Report stressed.

The lack of global funds is also a challenge for implementing adaptation measures, especially in developing countries, per the Report. Adaptation measures that are possible today will become less feasible and effective as global warming continues, the Report warned.

Though mitigation measures – actions that help reduce climate change such as reducing the sources of carbon emissions – are also being implemented through changes in national policies, there are gaps here as well.

Effective, low-cost actionables

However, there are multiple ways to increase climate action; feasible and cost-effective adaptation and mitigation measures are now available, the Report underlined. These include minimising the use of fossil fuels, alternative energy options (such as wind and solar), switching to electric vehicles, supporting public transport and active mobility in cities (such as walking and cycling), conservation and restoration of forest and other ecosystems and adaptive social safety nets such as weather and health insurance, among others. Many of these actions can complement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as listed by the United Nations in 2015 for countries to work towards.

The Report also highlighted the importance of equity and inclusion in implementing these climate actions.

“The importance given to equity and climate justice in the synthesis report is significant,” said Bejoy K. Thomas, associate professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Pune, who was part of the IPCC’s Working Group III and contributed to one of their reports last year.

“This acknowledges historical responsibility for climate change, and should reflect in setting targets, especially mitigation goals, differently between countries based on their development priorities,” he wrote in an email to The Wire.

Finance, technology and international cooperation are also “critical enablers for accelerated climate action”, the Report noted.

“It [the Synthesis Report] is not a doom and gloom report, it’s a report about actionable things that the world and India can take,” said Dipak Dasgupta, Distinguished Fellow, The Energy Resource Institute, one of the scientists who contributed to the Report, in an online interaction with journalists organised by Climate Trends on March 20.

The report provides robust science but also succinct messages which are actionables and shows why urgent action can be taken given the options available across different sectors in the economy, said Joyashree Roy (Energy Academic Programme, Asian Institute of Technology), also part of the core writing team of the Synthesis Report.

The report is very explicit about the aspect of equity, the disproportionate effects on vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to climate change, how global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise with unequal historic and ongoing contributions arising due to aspects including lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production, said Aditi Mukherji, director, Climate Change Impact platform, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, during the same online interaction. Mukerji is also an author of the core writing team.

Many messages for India

There are a lot of messages that India can take home and implement in the Synthesis Report, the authors said.

For instance, the report talks about lifestyles, consumption and demands. This not only applies to the global north but it also applies to the rich and the wealthy in the global south, said Mukherji. Inequality in consumption is as much a global north-south problem as much as it is a within-the-global south problem. “We cannot skirt that issue,” she said.

India has been pushing the concept of LiFE – Lifestyle for Environment – which stresses on individuals and communities limiting unnecessary consumption and making sustainable use of resources – at national and international stages. LiFE is part of India’s Nationally Determined Contribution that it has submitted as part of the Paris Agreement to curb climate emissions.

The report clearly shows that current trends (of climate change and climate action) are incompatible with a sustainable, equitable world, commented Chandni Singh, one of the authors of the extended writing team of the Synthesis Report.

“In India, while there is an acknowledgment of the need to mitigate and adapt simultaneously, most action is incremental,” Singh, Senior Research Consultant at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru, told The Wire. “Adaptation in particular is continuously focusing on short-term measures.”

She took the example of coastal areas, which are witnessing coastal erosion, salinisation, and flooding simultaneously, she said. However, infrastructure such as sea walls or geotubes alone will not be adequate, she said.

“The synthesis report draws on WGII [Working Group] and WG III to demonstrate that bundles of adaptation and mitigation actions are necessary, and more effective in the long run. This is what India needs to focus on and fund,” Singh added.

In the case of our adaptation programmes, part of the confusion also stems from the fact that these cannot be easily distinguished from general development interventions, commented Thomas.

“In a hypothetical situation without the current thrust on climate action, many projects on ‘water conservation’, ‘sustainable livelihoods’ or ‘resilient agriculture’ would have happened anyway since they are crucial to development and improvement of living conditions,” he told The Wire.

“So, probably one needs to look at the various development interventions, even those that are not explicitly stated to be speaking to climate action goals, as a whole in assessing funding allocations, priorities and interventions. So, I would argue that the government needs to strengthen activities including under [the] MGNREGA since they do not just enhance livelihoods, but directly or indirectly speak to climate action goals as well."

The government, incidentally, has slashed fund allocation for the MGNREGA – the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment every year to every rural household in which its members take up unskilled manual labor – in this year's Union Budget. It allocated only Rs. 60,000 crore for 2023-24, lower than the budget estimates for 2022-23 (Rs. 73,000 crore), as The Wire reported.

Climate resilient development

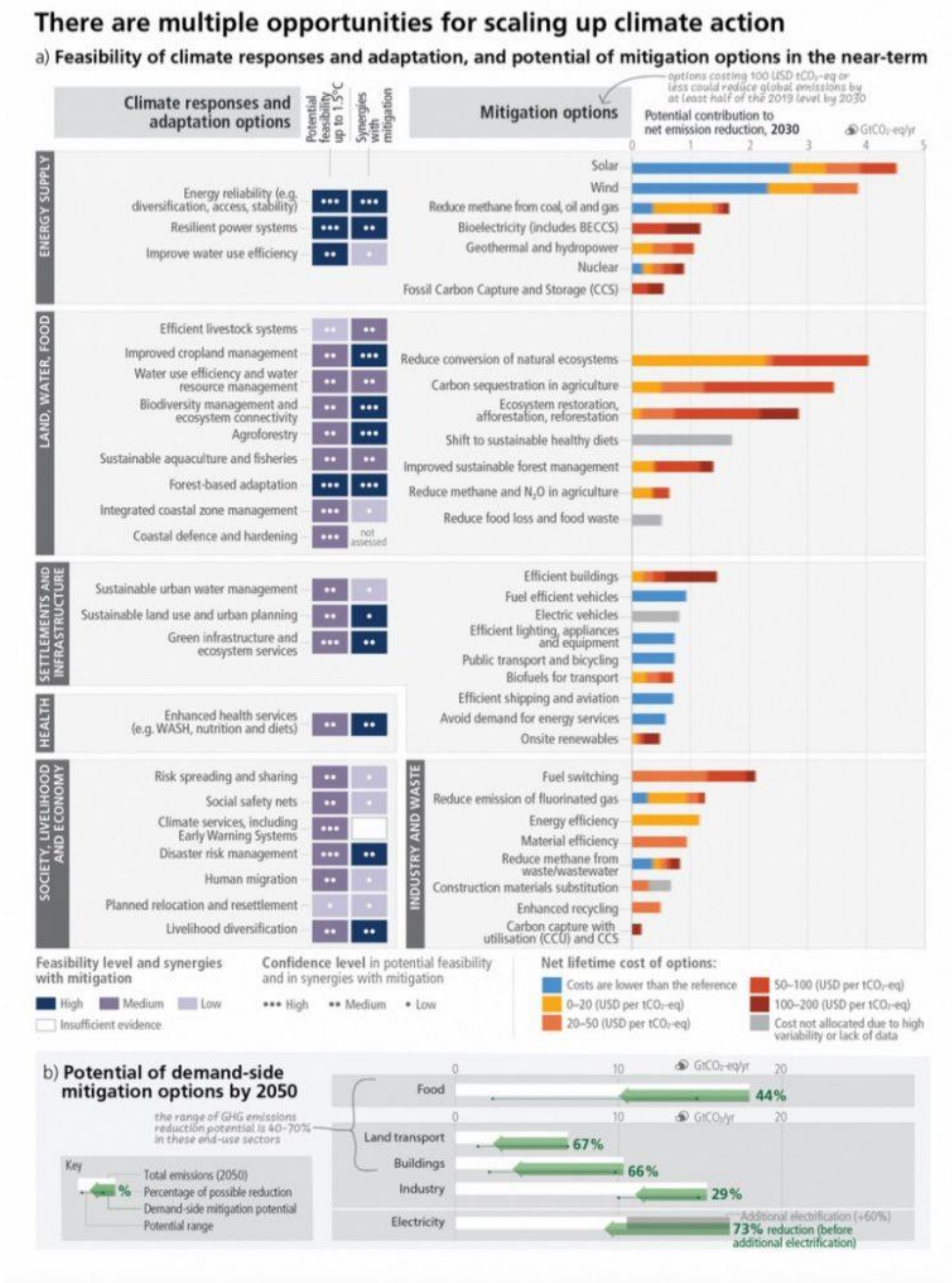
The Synthesis Report also touched on the importance of climate-resilient development, wherein adaptation and mitigation measures to counter climate change also support sustainable development. As per the Report, the window of opportunity for enabling this is "rapidly narrowing".

"Investing in development props societies towards resilience," said Singh. "The report articulates this as climate-resilient development and Figure 7 shows how climate actions can contribute to different SDGs. So it is not a question of whether we should use development funds for climate change but rather how we can effectively use existing funds to meet these complementary goals."

One of the important aspects that the report also focuses on is the interdependence of ecosystem and human health, Mukherji said. According to her, the dualistic model of development versus environment that we tend to apply needs to be rethought.

"What is happening in the Himalayas in the name of development is really not the direction," she said.

"There are things that can be done differently, and that can make us more climate resilient overall," Mukherji said. "We have seen several crises unfolding in India recently…subsidence, Joshimath, drying up of springs…these [suggestions] need to become a strong basis for action."



https://thewire.in/environment/new-ipcc-report-lists-numerous-low-cost-options-to-tackle-climate-change

13. India Considering Creation of 'Non-Lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund' To Boost Resources *(republicworld.com)* Mar 21, 2023

The Indian government has proposed the creation of a Non-Lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund (DMF). The development came in Lok Sabha, when the Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt informed of the DMF in a written reply to Mr Balashowry Vallabhaneni. The government's latest bid for the allocation of a Non-Lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund will significantly supplement the regular annual budgetary allocations, the Indian Ministry of Defence stated in a press release.

The DMF is aimed at the modernisation and enhancement of the Indian Armed Forces and will eliminate "any uncertainty in provisioning of adequate funds", the Ministry of Defence added. Notably, the DMF will be specifically aimed at projects pertaining to infrastructure and defence capability development. The Indian Ministry of Defence is currently working on a suitable mechanism to operationalise the DMF in collaboration with the Finance Ministry.

DMF to bolster national security

The DMF is considered "non-lapsable" because any unspent funds in a financial year are carried forward to the next financial year, rather than being returned to the government's general revenue. This ensures that the fund has a steady stream of resources to support the long-term efforts of the Indian government to modernise India's defence services. The fund also helps boost the indigenous defense industry in India by financing research and development programs and encouraging domestic production of defense equipment.

The purpose of the Non-Lapsable DMF is to provide sustained funding for the acquisition of critical defence equipment and infrastructure, as well as research and development programs. The fund is intended to reduce the dependence on annual budgetary allocations for defence modernisation, which can be unpredictable and subject to political pressures. Notably, the Indian Defence Ministry's Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) recently approved proposals worth Rs 70,500 crore to acquire BrahMos missiles, Shakti EW systems and Utility Helicopters for maritime use by the Indian Navy.

The Indian Air Force is also set to acquire Long Range Stand-Off Weapon to be integrated into SU-30 MKI aircraft. Meanwhile, the DAC acquisition bid added 155mm/52 Caliber ATAGS in addition to High Mobility and Gun Towing

Vehicles for the Indian Army. Notably, 99% worth of defence equipment will be sourced from Indian industries, the Ministry of Defence stated.
https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/india-considering-creation-of-non-lapsable-defence-modernisation-fund-to-boost-resources-articleshow.html

14. Ahmedabad loses 300 million litres of water to theft, leaks every day *(timesofindia.indiatimes.com)* Mar 21, 2023

AHMEDABAD: In the past eight years, the city's local body has spent Rs 125 crore on installing hi-tech systems and conducting water vigilance as well as water audits to arrest the wastage of water from its supply lines. But the bitter truth is that Ahmedabad loses 300 million litres of water daily (MLD) to theft and leakage alone. If accounted for annually, this loss costs the civic body as much as Rs 100 crore.

One of the first attempts to check water wastage was made in 2016 when the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) spent Rs 25 crore to conduct a water audit in the city. The report suggested implementing two projects: supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) for general monitoring of civic systems and another SCADA to manage the water network. The budget allotted for these projects was Rs 100 crore. But despite sanctioning the projects, the loses 300 million litres of water every single day.

"The AMC buys raw Narmada waters from the state government for Rs 120 crore annually, and it then treats and supplies the water to individual homes. The cost of water production adds to Rs 9 per 1,000 litres," says a senior AMC official. The AMC spends Rs 531.41 crore annually to procure and treat the raw water.

In 2021, the AMC calculated that it spent Rs 380 crore to pump water to 15.56 lakh households and establishments in the city. Amdavadis pay just Rs 119 crore towards this effort. Of this, residential areas pay just Rs 36 crore. Between 2018 and 2021, municipal councillors mobilized households to regularize 28,000 water connections for a fee of Rs 500.

The senior AMC official says, "In 2016, the AMC paid an agency to audit the city's water supply and suggest measures to prevent water theft. The civic body earmarked Rs 60 crore to install SCADA. Of this, Rs 35 crore was meant to set up SCADA for the water network.

"However, the AMC does not have any specific system to know or calculate the difference between the water that exits the water treatment plant and the amount of water that reaches the people." The reason is that the SCADA project involved installing 655 flow meters at various AMC water distribution stations. Of these, only 500 flow meters have been installed to date. Of these, around 350 flow meters are yet to be made operational.

"Rs 100 crore has been spent by AMC on two SCADA projects, and there are large-scale irregularities in both these projects," admitted a retired AMC official, refusing to be named. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/ahmedabad-loses-300-million-litres-of-water-to-theft-leaks-every-day/articleshow/98846722.cms

15. Delhi Transport Corporation's working losses rise to ₹3,000 crore *(hindustantimes.com)* Mar 21, 2023

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC), the capital's largest public bus transport facility, continues to bleed, with losses expected to mount to ₹3,004 crore in the year to March 31, compared with ₹1,730 in losses in 2017-18, the 2022-23 Economic Survey revealed on Monday.

Rising costs of compressed natural gas fuel, high maintenance of an ageing fleet, and free and concessional bus rides provided by the Delhi government were among the factors for the rising losses, officials said, requesting anonymity.

DTC runs around 4,010 buses on 461 city and seven national capital region routes. Its income barely rose to an estimated ₹994.59 in 2022-23 compared with ₹889.33 in 2017-18, the survey noted. Operating costs of the public utility would increase to an estimated ₹3,998.68 crore in 2022-23 from ₹2,619.35 in 2017-18, it said.

DTC fares have remained unchanged since November 2009, accounting for the low increase in earnings.

"The working losses (i.e. revenue receipt minus establishment expenditure excluding interest payment and depreciation) of DTC was ₹3004.09 crore in 2022-23 (BE) in comparison of ₹2280.14 crore in 2021-22 (provision). Till the year 2010-11, the Delhi government used to meet the working losses of DTC by providing them with the loan, from the year 2011-12, the system has been changed by providing them with grant, instead of loan, in order to meet working losses," the Economic Survey stated.

The Delhi government provides a subsidy to DTC to defray the cost of free and concessional passes. The Delhi government provided a subsidy of a provisional ₹38.46 crore in 2021-22 for concessional passes. The government provides a subsidy to cluster buses for free travel for women. In 2021-22, ₹126.90 crore has been released on subsidy, and a provision of ₹125 crore has been made for 2022-23, the survey said.

Delhi government started offering free travel to women in DTC and cluster buses from October 29, 2019. During 2021-22, 13.04 crore trips in DTC and 12.69 crore trips in cluster buses were made by woman passengers.

DTC posting losses is not a new phenomenon, an official said. "DTC was never a profit-making venture because public transport is for the public good. The operational losses may go down in the time to come when more electric buses are inducted into the DTC, which will lead to a reduction in maintenance cost," he said.

A Delhi government official declined comment.

DTC is trying to explore ways to increase non-fare revenue by monetizing assets like the unused spaces in its depots such as leasing them out to private entities for commercial activities, said the official cited earlier.

Public transport in Delhi has two major components, DTC and cluster buses and the Metro. The daily average passenger ridership in DTC was 15.62 lakh and 9.87 lakh in cluster buses in 2021-22. In addition to DTC's 4,010 buses, 3319 buses are in operation under the cluster scheme.

The Delhi government has decided to launch electric buses in Delhi to reduce vehicular emissions. So far, 300 electric buses have been inducted in city routes. https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/delhi-transport-corporation-s-working-losses-rise-to-3-000-crore-101679339119819.html