

## **NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS (21.04.2023)**

- 1. Audit reports gained immense significance by inducing action by executive: CAG Murmu** ([theprint.in](https://theprint.in), [aninews.in](https://aninews.in), [lokmattimes.com](https://lokmattimes.com), [bignewsnetwork.com](https://bignewsnetwork.com)) 20 April, 2023

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India Girish Chandra Murmu has expressed that audit reports have assumed immense importance as they induced action from the executive by way of design improvements, mid-course corrections, strengthening systems and even review of certain policies.

Delivering a keynote speech on “Audit impact – the Indian perspective” at IMPACT 2023 in Canberra, Girish Chandra Murmu said that all business processes in Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) were now fully digitized, and the entire audit cycle was being operated through the OIOS (One IA&AD One System), an end-to-end audit process and knowledge management system for the institution.

He further underlined the role of audit as a catalyst to good governance, promoting accountability, transparency, efficient and effective functioning of organizations and government.

Murmu also shared a few experiences wherein audit findings had a distinctly visible impact on executive functioning. He underlined that audit focus should be closely aligned with global megatrends and SAIs needed to be geared to not only adapt to new-age technologies and build capacities for seamless integration of the audit process into the new governance structures but also to effectively address the risk and ethical challenges posed by such technologies.

Murmu’s keynote speech on “Audit impact – the Indian perspective” highlighted the role of the founding fathers of the Indian constitution who ascribed great importance to the independence of the CAG through Article 148 to 151 of the Indian constitution.

He emphasized the use of technological tools such as machine learning algorithms, data analytics and visualization, Geographic Information Systems, remote sensing technology and unmanned aerial vehicles which had expanded the repertoire of audit techniques.

The overarching themes of IMPACT 2023 are “The Auditor of the Future” with two sub-themes: “technology as a tool” and “technology and the impact on the auditor.” The conference also focused on ethics in the delivery of government programs. The conference brought together participants from different countries to discuss the latest developments in audit and explore the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Australian Council of Auditors-General hosted IMPACT 2023, the International Meeting of Performance Audit Critical Thinkers, in Canberra on April 19-20. The conference aimed to explore the exponential rate at which technology was developing and its effect on the future of audits. Girish Chandra Murmu, the CAG of India, was invited as a keynote speaker during the conference.

During the IMPACT 2023 Conference, CAG Murmu, held separate meetings with the Controller and Auditor General of New Zealand, John Ryan and the Auditor-General of Australia Grant Hehir, to explore ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between their respective Audit Institutions.

The discussions focused on IT audit, data analytics, environmental audit, and sustainable development. Murmu expressed his commitment to strengthening cooperation between the Audit Institutions. <https://theprint.in/india/audit-reports-gained-immense-significance-by-inducing-action-by-executive-cag-murmu/1530348/>

**2. Audit reports gain immense significance by inducing action by executive: CAG Girish Chandra Murmu**  
([economictimes.indiatimes.com](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com), [outlookindia.com](http://outlookindia.com), [latestly.com](http://latestly.com), [newsdrum.in](http://newsdrum.in)) April 20, 2023

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu has said audit reports have assumed immense importance as they induced action from the executive by way of design improvements, mid-course corrections, strengthening systems and even review of certain policies. Murmu while delivering a keynote speech on 'Audit impact - the Indian perspective' at IMPACT 2023 in Canberra (Australia) shared a few experiences wherein audit findings had a distinctly visible impact on executive functioning.

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System), an end-to-end audit process and knowledge management system for the institution.

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The founding fathers of the Indian constitution ascribed great importance to the independence of the CAG through Articles 148 to 151 of the Indian constitution, he added.

He also emphasised the use of technological tools, such as machine learning algorithms, data analytics and visualisation, Geographic Information Systems, remote-sensing technology and unmanned aerial vehicles, which has expanded the repertoire of audit techniques.

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<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/consultancy/-/audit/audit-reports-gain-immense-significance-by-inducing-action-by-executive-cag-girish-chandra-murmu/articleshow/99642636.cms?from=mdr>

3. Audits vital due to impact on Govt functioning, says CAG  
([dailypioneer.com](https://www.dailypioneer.com)) 21 April, 2023

## **Audits vital due to impact on Govt functioning, says CAG Murmu**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
**NEW DELHI**

**T**he Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu has said audit reports have assumed immense importance as they induced action from the executive by way of design improvements, mid-course corrections, strengthening systems and even review of certain policies.

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<https://www.dailypioneer.com>



4. **ऑडिट रिपोर्ट से कार्यपालिका कदम उठाने को होती है मजबूर: कैग मुर्मू**  
([hindi.theprint.in](https://hindi.theprint.in), [ibc24.in](https://ibc24.in), [prabhasakshi.com](https://prabhasakshi.com)) 20 April, 2023

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखापरीक्षक (सीएजी) गिरीश चंद्र मुर्मू ने कहा है कि ऑडिट रिपोर्ट की अहमियत बढ़ी है क्योंकि इससे कार्यपालिका को चीजों को दुरुस्त करने के लिये कदम उठाने के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ा और कुछ मामलों में नीतियों की समीक्षा भी करनी पड़ी।

ऑस्ट्रेलिया के कैनबरा में 'इम्पैक्ट 2023' में 'ऑडिट प्रभाव- भारतीय पहलू' विषय पर अपने संबोधन में मुर्मू ने यह बात कही। उन्होंने अपने अनुभव साझा करते हुए बताया कि किस तरह से ऑडिट रिपोर्ट के निष्कर्षों का कार्यपालिका के कामकाज पर असर पड़ा।

उन्होंने कहा कि भारत में सभी व्यापारिक प्रक्रियाएं अब पूरी तरह डिजिटलीकृत हैं और पूरा ऑडिट का काम ओआईओएस (एक भारतीय ऑडिट और लेखा विभाग- एक प्रणाली) के जरिये पूरा किया जा रहा है।

मुर्मू ने बेहतर राजकाज के लिए प्रेरित करने, जवाबदेही बढ़ाने, पारदर्शिता और संगठनों व सरकार के समर्थ व प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन में ऑडिट की भूमिका का जिक्र किया।

उन्होंने कहा कि ऑडिट को वैश्विक स्तर पर जारी रुख के साथ जोड़ा जाना चाहिए। लेखा परीक्षकों को न केवल अत्याधुनिक प्रौद्योगिकियों को अपनाने और नई शासन व्यवस्था में ऑडिट प्रक्रिया के निर्बाध एकीकरण के लिए क्षमताओं का निर्माण करने के लिए कदम उठाने की जरूरत है बल्कि ऐसी प्रौद्योगिकी की वजह से जोखिम तथा नैतिक चुनौतियों को प्रभावी ढंग से निपटने के लिए तैयार होने की भी आवश्यकता है।  
<https://hindi.theprint.in/india/economy/audit-report-forces-the-executive-to-take-action-cag-murmu/524491/>

## **STATES NEWS ITEMS**

5. **Ministry of home affairs seeks report on paid parking scam from administration** ([timesofindia.indiatimes.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)) April 21, 2023

CHANDIGARH: The central government has taken note of the paid parking scam in the city, with the ministry of home affairs (MHA) seeking a report from the UT administration on recovery of dues and loss of stamp duty and registration fee owing to non-registration of lease agreement.

The move has come at a time when the CBI that falls under the ministry had recently taken away record related to a former paid parking contractor defaulting in paying over Rs 6 crore to the municipal corporation (MC) and submitting fake bank guarantees of Rs 1.60 crore. Details are also sought in respect of a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

The ministry has also sought information on audit paras, filling up of vacancies reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes and conversion of industrial commercial plots from leasehold to freehold.

A MHA joint secretary in a letter, a copy of which is with TOI, said, “The important issues on which information is still awaited are audit paras in respect of CAG report number 24 of 2022; non-action by the UT administration in matter of short recovery of parking fee by the MC from two licensees and loss of stamp duty and registration fee due to nonregistration of lease agreement; data on filling up of backlog vacancies reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes as on January 1, 2023; conversion of industrial commercial plots from leasehold to freehold.”

The joint secretary further said, “It may be appreciated that timely receipt of information is a key factor in processing and disposal of issues. Further, some issues assume more significance on account of related matters being sub judice in the Supreme Court and are therefore required to be Nikkei Asia India's Modi faces 3 potential snags in reelection effort processed without undue delay. It has been observed that the requisite information/inputs sought from the Chandigarh administration are delayed beyond reasonable period of time, leading to pendency of these issues.” <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/mha-seeks-report-on-paid-parking-scam-from-admn/articleshow/99654944.cms>

#### **6. RLA ‘benefitted’ 200 owners by delay in vehicle registration ([tribuneindia.com](https://tribuneindia.com)) Apr 21, 2023**

Chandigarh: The audit and inspection report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has pointed out several discrepancies in the functioning of the Registering and Licensing Authority (RLA) from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, causing a financial loss to the government exchequer.

The report has detected “irregularities” in entering the model description of high-end vehicles. During checking of records, it was noticed while in case of Ford Endeavour, the model and variant were entered/captured in the screening report, in

certain cases of Toyota Fortuner, only the model i.e. 'Fortuner' was entered/captured and not variants such as 2.7 L 4X2 MT, 2.7 L 4X2 AT, 2.8 L 4X2 MT, 2.8 L 4X2 AT, 2.8 L 4X4 MT and 2.8 L 4X2 AT.

“From the screening reports of said vehicles, it cannot be ascertained whether or not sale amount of Fortuner has been entered correctly and road tax taken accordingly,” it pointed out, adding similar discrepancies in other models of different companies may be checked and necessary correction in the matter taken at the earliest.

Further, it was noticed 200 vehicle owners got new vehicles registered with the department after a delay of 450 days to 1,397 days. The screening reports of vehicle registration certificates (RCs) revealed the road tax was taken for 15 years from the date of purchase. In certain cases, RCs were made valid for 15 years from the date of permanent registration of vehicles and fitness was granted up to the date of validity of RCs, in contravention of the Motor Vehicles Act provisions.

“This resulted in irregular issuance of RCs and undue benefit to vehicle owners in respect of fitness period (450 days to 1,397 days) of vehicles and validity of RCs,” pointed out the report.

CAG asked the department to check similar discrepancies in issuance of RCs during the year. The department, in its reply, stated compliance would be done accordingly.

As per the Act, the registration of non-transport vehicle is valid for a period of 15 years. The validity of registration should be from the due date of registration of vehicle, not from the actual date of registration. A temporary registration number, which is required when a vehicle is yet to be assigned a permanent registration number, is valid for a period of six months.

The report further revealed the RLA failed to recover Rs 22.37 lakh as special number fee allotted through e-auction. During examination of records, it was revealed the vanity numbers were allotted to 15 bidders but they deposited only the base price of auction and the balance bid amount of Rs 22.37 lakh was not deposited for more than 132 to 398 days, which resulted in loss to the government.

The report stated the department might review similar cases and the balance amount outstanding, if any, against vanity number allotted through auction be recovered at the earliest.

It further stated there was no provision for staff to be posted at various receipt counters. The work of collecting receipts in the department was being performed by contract staff hired from the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS).

While the department was not making any payment to the IRCS towards salary of contract staff, it paid Rs 1.97 crore to it during 2021-22 as share against the printing of smart cards. The report observed in the absence of regular staff, chances of embezzlement or misappropriation of huge amount could not be ruled out.

As per January 30, 2020, notification of the Local Government Department, UT, cow fee was to be collected by the authority concerned and given to the Municipal Corporation. The department got cow fee receipts printed and issued these to the registering dealers of Chandigarh. During checking of records for 2021-22, it was observed neither such records/receipts were maintained by the RLA nor verification conducted.

### **Failure to recover Rs 22.37 lakh in fee**

Failed to recover Rs 22.37 lakh in fee for special numbers allotted via e-auction. 15 bidders allotted vanity numbers deposited only base price and balance bid amount was not deposited for 132 to 398 days, causing loss to government. Outstanding amount be recovered after a review of similar cases, it said.

### **Irregular payment to contract staff**

As department staff are not allowed to be deployed at receipt counters, work is being handled by contract staff hired from Indian Red Cross Society. The dept paid society Rs 1.97 cr towards printing of smart cards, not salary of contract staff. Chances of misappropriation of funds or embezzlement can't be ruled out.

### **Cars registered up to 4 years after purchase**

200 owners got new vehicles registered with a delay of 450 to 1,397 days. Some RCs were made valid for 15 years from date of permanent registration and fitness was granted up to date of validity. Under norms, RC's validity should be from due date of registration, not actual date of registration



## **Anomalies found in model description**

In certain cases of Toyota Fortuner, only model name 'Fortuner' was entered in screening report, leaving out variant. "It can't be ascertained whether or not sale amount has been entered correctly and road tax taken accordingly," CAG report said, adding similar discrepancies in other vehicles may be checked. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/chandigarh/rla-benefitted-200-owners-by-delay-in-vehicle-registration-499387>

### **7. Nearly 85000 hectares of area treated against 6581 ha forest land diversion ([dailyexcelsior.com](https://www.dailyexcelsior.com)) April 21, 2023**

JAMMU: Nearly 85000 hectares (ha) area has been treated by the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) across Jammu and Kashmir as against 6581 hectares of forest land diverted for various types of developmental activities. Moreover, vulnerable forest areas in and around Jammu city have been secured from the encroachers by installing chain link fencing.

As per the official data available with EXCELSIOR during the past over one decade a total of 6581.65 hectares of forest land was diverted for non-forestry purposes across Jammu and Kashmir and against this 84439 hectares of area has been treated by planting 557.97 lakh saplings by CAMPA, which has the primary task of ensuring compensatory afforestation.

The situation has improved significantly during the past four-five years as on one side the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes has witnessed decline and on the other side treatment of area by CAMPA has increased enormously.

In 2019-20 and 2020-21, 794 hectares and 884.13 hectares of forest land was diverted for developmental activities but the diversion declined to 298.97 hectares in 2021-22 and 216.98 hectares in 2022-23. However, treatment of area has witnessed sharp rise and this is evident from the fact that compensatory afforestation was done on 6636 hectares of area in 2019-20 and in 2022-23 the same was on 10445 hectares of area. In 2022-23, record 61.77 lakh saplings were planted under the close monitoring of CAMPA and the survival rate of the plants is up to the expectations of the concerned authorities.

During the just concluded financial year (2022-23) 10445 hectares of area was treated under CAMPA while as 44.06 lakh Rft fencing was done and demarcation of forest was done by installing 14071 boundary pillars.

Moreover, for securing vulnerable forest areas in and around Jammu city, fencing work was carried out under CAMPA at Bathindi, Dungan, near Batra Hospital, Kheri and Roop Nagar. “A total of 28,800 Rft chain link fencing has been constructed covering 1000 hectares of forest area at the cost of Rs 3.5 crore to prevent encroachments”, official sources said.

Disclosing that due to heavy grazing and other anthropogenic factors the forest areas around Patnitop-Nathatop tourist circuit falling mainly in Batote Forest Division and partly in Udhampur Forest Division have degraded over a period of time, sources said that for eco-restoration of the area, angle iron mesh-wise fencing, stabilization of landslides and slips through engineering and biotic measures, natural and artificial regeneration of forests by planting of conifer and broadleaved species and repair/renovation of migratory routes of nomads have been undertaken at the cost of Rs 2.20 crore.

“To protect the forest land around Dera-Ki-Gali from encroachers, mesh-wire fencing of 30280 Rft covering the area of 120 hectares has been constructed”, sources said. Further, city forests have been created at different places like Jangi Morh near Batote, Sungli Puneja near Bhaderwah and in Reasi. These city forests will become major public attraction once these are opened for the commoners in near future.

When contacted, Sarvesh Rai, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) J&K CAMPA said, “we are carrying out all our activities by involving Panchayats so as to ensure transparency. Moreover, we have conducted 3rd party audit of all works done under CAMPA till March 2022 as the same is mandatory as per the guidelines”.

About the financial audit, the CEO said that financial audit of J&K CAMPA accounts for the period 2010-11 to 2019-20 have been completed by CAG empanelled Character Accountancy Firms and the reports of the Financial Audit for each year were placed before the Executive and Steering Committees, which approved the same for submission to the Principal Accountant General, J&K.

He further informed that in accordance with Rule 38 of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules, J&K CAMPA has prepared annual reports for the financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 and the same have been approved and submitted to the Principal Accountant General, J&K. <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/nearly-85000-hectares-of-area-treated-against-6581-ha-forest-land-diversion/>

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

### **8. The dam-building spree in Arunachal Pradesh is taking a toll on its biodiversity ([scroll.in](https://scroll.in)) 21 Apr 2023**

**India is currently building as many as six large hydropower plants in the North Eastern state. Experts question the rationale behind the big push.**

Tone Mickrow, a member of the indigenous Idu Mishmi community, lives a few hours' drive from Etalin – the proposed site of what has been envisaged as India's largest dam. Members of his community were elated that the government temporarily denied forest clearance to the Etalin hydroelectric project in December, but Mickrow remains fearful.

Since the inception of Etalin 14 years ago, the Idu Mishmis have opposed the project on the grounds that it will devastate their livelihoods and threaten their existence. Mickrow is sceptical about the temporary relief granted by the government, as “his experience with dams in the area” tells him the project will likely, eventually, go ahead. Work is underway on other mega-dam projects in Arunachal, such as the 2,000 megawatts Lower Subansiri and 2,880 megawatts Dibang.

“Larsen & Toubro [a multinational contractor] has already started working to build the roads and bridges for the construction of [Dibang] dam to start,” said Mickrow. The Lower Subansiri project is expected to be operational this summer.

### **Push for hydropower**

In early 2019, India recognised large hydroelectric projects (with a capacity of over 25 megawatts) as central to its renewable energy transition. Since then, there has been a renewed push for hydropower projects in the country, especially in the northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir. The central government even approved a slew of measures in 2019 giving financial support to hydropower construction.

In February last year, RK Singh, the minister of power and new and renewable energy, said in Parliament: “The development of hydropower is of paramount importance as it is clean, green, sustainable, renewable, non-polluting and environmental [sic] friendly,” adding that it provided the “cheapest energy in the long run”.

The minister spoke of constructing 70 hydroelectric projects in 18 states over 10 years. He also said that 36 large hydroelectric projects in total are under construction.

This year, the Indian finance minister proposed an allocation of Rs 350 billion (\$4.27 billion) for the green transition, net-zero objectives and energy security in the 2023-'24 budget, and specifically mentioned pumped hydropower.

Analysis of 2022-'23 data from the Indian Ministry of Power's responses in the Lower House of Parliament (Lok Sabha) and the Central Electricity Authority for Arunachal Pradesh shows the extent of the government's dam-building ambitions, and progress on projects. It is important to note that the data relates solely to large hydroelectric projects, and that there are also several smaller hydroelectric projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

The data shows as many as six large hydroelectric projects at different stages of construction, while 13 have been held up due to various reasons. From 2003 onwards, 21 dams were "concluded", or appraised, in Arunachal Pradesh, of which 13 are yet to be taken up for construction. The Central Electricity Authority concurs projects when it is satisfied with the techno-economic aspects of the proposal.

Shripad Dharmadhikary, coordinator and researcher at Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, a Pune-based centre that monitors and analyses water and energy issues, said that when carrying out appraisals, the Central Electricity Authority needs to "ensure the project is optimal for the river basin" as stipulated in the Electricity Act of 2003. "However, this is hardly done," he told The Third Pole.

Analysis of the data shows that most projects have been delayed because they are yet to receive either environmental or forest clearance.

### **Rationale for dams**

Despite delays, high costs, environmental and socio-economic risks, the Indian government has been persistent in its push for hydropower.

Fears of Chinese dam-building upstream are invoked as another justification for large hydropower projects in Arunachal. The Yarlung Tsangpo, as it is known in China, becomes the Brahmaputra when it flows into India. The two countries have the longest unresolved border dispute – of about 4,000 km – in the world, which includes a dispute on the status of Arunachal Pradesh. While historically there has

been calm since the short 1962 war between the two countries, in June 2020 fresh clashes broke out in Ladakh, leading to the first major casualties in 45 years.

There has been no official statement citing this as a reason for dam-building in Arunachal. But unnamed officials have been cited in numerous newspaper articles, including in The Times of India, the widest read newspaper in India, stating that India needs to build dams in Arunachal because China could unleash a “water war” through its control of upstream dams.

Nilanjan Ghosh, director of Mumbai-based thinktank the Observer Research Foundation, said the alleged threat “seems improbable and unrealistic – at best questionable”. This is not least because most of the water in the Brahmaputra comes into the river after it has entered Indian territory. He also pointed to evidence of cooperation between the two countries in the form of flood warnings during the monsoon season.

The government also argues that hydropower is linked to development in the area. Ginko Lingi, the chief engineer of transmission and planning at Arunachal Pradesh’s Department of Power, said: “Once the dams start operating, surplus power will be generated. Since transmission lines are better now, the power can also be carried over to other states,” pointing out that it could generate revenue for Arunachal.

However, Mickrow and other local communities question this form of development. “We don’t want to be refugees on our own lands. The dams will cause permanent loss of land we use for grazing mithuns [a highly prized bovine species], as fishing grounds and for medicinal plants. Several villages will be cut off. Instead, we need support for livelihoods, hospitals and community development centres,” Mickrow said.

Experts cast doubt on the financial viability of most of the projects. In contrast to other energy production methods, protracted delays – sometimes decades-long – in hydroelectric projects construction often result in the government giving projects back to public sector units, such as the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd.

In addition to this, at least 13 private company-owned projects have been “returned” to project authorities. This underscores the reluctance of companies to proceed with projects as they fear escalating costs and strong opposition from downstream communities.

Despite the availability of some slightly cheaper technologies, the projects are still costly and have required the government to provide subsidies in order to push for the hydroelectric projects, pointed out Dharmadhikary, from Manthan Adhyayan Kendra.

On Arunachal Pradesh's narrative of development, Dharmadhikary said that when the projects can't be justified on financial grounds, the narrative of development is pushed instead.

Since hydroelectric projects are extremely site-specific with costs incurred from their operation as well as delays, it is difficult to come up with a uniform overall cost for projects, he said. However, two years ago he and his team calculated the costs of operating the Etalin dam, after the Forest Advisory Committee had asked the power ministry to submit its estimate on costs.

The Manthan researchers found that, even with the subsidies that the government says it will provide to make hydropower projects commercially lucrative, the power generated is still not cheaper. In fact, experts say that it needs to be bundled up with solar and wind to make it an effective package for commercial players to buy.

For example, the Lower Subansiri project which is scheduled to be operational later this year has overrun its original costs by more than 200%. The overrun cost is Rs 132.1 billion (\$1.6 billion) higher than the original cost.

Ghosh asked, "Taking into consideration all the other costs that may arise, [such as] the value of lost ecosystem services... elements such as sediments which enhance soil fertility etc – the cost of building dams in this area is much higher than the benefit generated. Also, what about the costs of rehabilitation, displacement and the social cost of conflicts?"  
<https://scroll.in/article/1047680/the-dam-building-spree-in-arunachal-pradesh-is-taking-a-toll-on-its-biodiversity>

**9. Govt stops portal to track green impact of projects**  
([hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com)) 21 Apr 2023

**Activists and environmentalists who have long used Parivesh to gather information on how projects are impacting the environment claimed the rationale appears to be to make the system opaque.**



The environment ministry's Parivesh website that used to provide details on the environmental impact of projects stopped showing these -- including specifics on environment, forest, wildlife and coastal regulation zone clearances -- last September after the ministry took a decision that such information would be provided only when sought under the Right To Information (RTI) Act.

An environment ministry official who asked not to be named said the rationale behind this decision was to protect the interests of project developers, and cited the sensitivity and confidentiality of some of the information. Activists and environmentalists who have long used Parivesh to gather information on how projects are impacting the environment claimed the rationale appears to be to make the system opaque.

The change came to light when HT asked the environment ministry why the website had not been updated since September. The decision to not disclose the information in the public domain was not known until now.

An environment ministry spokesperson did not respond to queries.

Information associated with environment, forest and wildlife clearances have been aligned with the Right To Information Act, environment ministry officials said.

The agenda and minutes of the meetings of the ministry, fact sheets with details of the project including expected impact on wildlife, forests and ecology used to be published on the website. Information related to project proposals before September 5, 2022 are still available on the website.

The clause will apply to all infrastructure/ project proposals received after September 5, 2022 which are being streamlined and considered under Parivesh 2.0 (the expanded version of Parivesh which was launched last year).

Parivesh (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive and Virtuous Environment Single-window Hub) is a single window system for environment, forest, wildlife and coastal regulation zone clearances. The decision to align environmental information with RTI comes at a time when the ministry is facing flak for several contentious projects such as the ₹72,000-crore Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island at Andaman & Nicobar Islands project which will involve loss of 130.75 sq km of rain forests and de-notification of certain tribal reserves, and several mining projects that will involve diversion of primary forests in central India among others.

Ministry officials said the environment ministry briefed state environment ministers about the changes during the national conference of ministers of environment, forest and climate change held in Ekta Nagar, Gujarat, last September, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

“General public cannot access the agenda or minutes of meetings held by the Forest Advisory Committee, the Expert Appraisal Committee or new wildlife clearance proposals because Parivesh 2.0 has been aligned with the RTI Act. Several sections of the RTI Act now apply to this information including section 8 on Exemption from disclosure of information. Sections 8 (1) (e) and section 8 (1) (j). Those who need information can apply for the same under the RTI Act. We can consider those requests. The agenda, minutes of various clearances has been aligned with the RTI Act simply because companies share important economic and other information with us. We often ask for say balance sheets, cost-benefit analysis etc that companies do not wish to make public. We have to respect their interests,” said the environment ministry official cited in the first instance.

Section 8 (1) (e) states information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship need not be disclosed, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information. Section 8 (1) (j) states information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual need not be disclosed unless the Central Public Information Officer or the State Public Information Officer or the appellate authority, as the case may be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information.

The changes have disturbed experts and environmentalists.

“There are three aspects related to regulatory design which are important to consider with this interpretation. First, the decision revisits the intent of both the RTI Act that pushes for suo moto disclosure of information and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration related to participatory decision making through environment regulation. Second, it also reorganises the design of environment decision making as a matter of interest between two parties: the ministry and entities seeking approval. Finally, it would be necessary to clarify how this would align with the appeals before the National Green Tribunal especially if access to meeting minutes are denied or are not received in time for aggrieved parties to approach the tribunal,” said Kanchi Kohli, environment law and policy researcher.

While presenting Union Budget 2022-23 in Parliament on February 1, last year, union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the next phase of Ease of Doing Business 2.0 and Ease of Living would be launched. She proposed the expansion of the scope of the single window portal, Parivesh .

HT reported on September 23, 2022 that PM Modi urged state environment ministers against unnecessarily allowing obstacles hold up projects and to ensure ease of living and doing business while highlighting the importance of the Parivesh portal for the single-window forest, wildlife, environment, and coastal regulation zone clearances.

“Expedited clearances should also take care of the rules and give priority to the development of the people... It is a win-win situation for both the economy and ecology. ...we have to remember the faster the environment clearance is available, the faster the development will also take place,” he had said in his address at the environment ministers’ conference.

“If this is correct, using Section 8 (1)(e) and (j) concealing information which is mandated by law to be provided to an authority is legally wrong and unacceptable. The documents submitted as part of environment/forest clearances to MoEFCC as an authority cannot be claimed to be exempted from public disclosure under the pretext of ‘fiduciary relationship’ or ‘personal’ relationship. The mandate of MoEFCC is to execute the constitutional mandate (48A) to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife of the country. The documents related to environment and forest clearance including minutes of meetings which are mandated under their respective legislation are public documents which are required to be displayed on the MoEFCC website, as directed by the Central Information Commission in 2012,” said Debadityo Sinha, lead, Climate & Ecosystems, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.

“If such documents are not made available, how would people know the environmental and social impact of any industrial activity? This will also jeopardise one’s fundamental rights under Article 21 under the Constitution and statutory rights to appeal against any such environmental clearances and forest clearances in appropriate forums. MoEFCC or any other authorities cannot compromise transparency mechanism to escape their accountability towards the citizens of the country..,” he added. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indias-environment-ministry-stops-providing-project-impact-details-on-parivesh-website-citing-confidentiality-and-sensitivity-and-will-only-disclose-information-under-rti-act-101682024303352.html>

**10. Probe over Misappropriation of Funds Allocated to Force in Budget Last Year Underway ([republicworld.com](https://www.republicworld.com)) 21 Apr 2023**

Delhi Police have ordered an inquiry into the alleged misappropriation of funds allocated to the force in the Union Budget last year, officials said on Thursday.

They said Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora received information that some funds from 'Professional Services' have been utilised in other sectors or heads and so an inquiry is being conducted.

Special Commissioner of Police (Provisioning and Financial Division) Lalatendu Mohanti has asked all district chiefs to provide information on the expenditure of funds.

Mohanti said there is a head called professional services under which money is spent on the deployment of forces, be it hiring of data entry operators, hiring professionals for consultancy, guest lectures etc.

"We recently received information that someone might have used this money from another category such as 'Minor Works'. We don't know what exactly has happened and have asked district officers to provide us information on professional funds, expenditure in certain categories. We have only asked for clarification. There's no such multi-crore scam," he said.

Police officials said they are verifying the allegations and an internal inquiry is being conducted by the financial advisor who will report to the Special CP Mohanti.

No vigilance inquiry has been ordered against anyone yet, the officials added.  
<https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/probe-over-misappropriation-of-funds-allocated-to-force-in-budget-last-year-underway-articleshow.html>

**11. Rs 150-crore fund misuse charge: Police probes, AAP & Congress say act ([indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)) 21 Apr 2023**

The Delhi Police Commissioner has ordered an enquiry into alleged misappropriation and misuse of funds allocated to the force in the 2022-23 Union budget, said senior police officers.

Police sources said funds amounting to around Rs 150 crore have allegedly been misused. The Union budget allotted 10,600 crore to the Delhi Police for different work and services in the last financial year.

Police sources said the issue was raised recently before the Police Commissioner and meetings were held with senior district officers. A senior police officer said, “Someone in the force had informed the Commissioner about misuse of ‘professional services’ funds. This particular head receives around Rs 400 crore. Out of this, at least Rs 150-200 crore have been misused. We asked DCPs to clarify where they spent the money. If we detect any misuse or illegal activity, we will take action against the officers.”

Special Commissioner of Police (Provisioning and Financial Division) Lalatendu Mohanti has asked all district officers (DCPs and Additional DCPs) to provide information on expenditure of funds. Police are verifying allegations and an internal enquiry is being conducted by the financial advisor who will report to Mohanti.

Meanwhile, AAP and Congress leaders have demanded strict action against police. “Rs 350 crore scam in Delhi Police. Will CBI, ED or LG sir get it investigated? Will CBI-ED call LG Saxena for questioning? Or is their job only to implicate AAP leaders in fake cases?” alleged AAP in a tweet.

DPCC president Anil Kumar also alleged, “... the central government should get it investigated through a CBI inquiry or send the matter to ED for investigation. The Commissioner of Police has ordered an investigation into the Rs 350-crore scam in his department as a formality, which will only lead to a cover-up...”

Responding to the claims, Special CP Mohanti said: “There is a head called professional services under which you can spend on deployment of forces, hiring of data entry operators, hiring professionals for consultancy, guest lectures, MTS staff etc. We recently received information that someone might have used this money in another category... such as ‘minor works’. We don’t know what exactly has happened and have asked district officers to provide us with information on professional funds, expenditure in certain categories... We have only asked for clarification... There’s no such multi-crore scam.”  
<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/rs-150-crore-fund-misuse-charge-police-probes-aap-cong-say-act-8567907/>

## **12. UP: Rs 313 Cr MGNREGA Wages Pending, Workers Not Paid Since January ([newsclick.in](https://www.newsclick.in)) 21 Apr 2023**

Lucknow: A total of Rs 310 crore is pending as wages to workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, or MGNREGA, in the financial year 2022-23 till March 31 in Uttar Pradesh, according to the data by the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

The scheme ensures 100 days of guaranteed wage employment of unskilled manual work to at least one adult member of every household in rural areas.

The district-wise data, accessed by NewsClick, shows that Azamgarh tops the list of largest pending payments with Rs 10.16 crore in liabilities, followed by Sitapur with Rs 8.07 crore, Sonbhadra with Rs 6.08 crore, Jaunpur with Rs 5.18 crore and Lakhimpur with Rs 3.85 crore.

The data also showed that the Centre's flagship rural employment scheme did not generate work in Hapur, Baghpat, Gautam Buddh Nagar and Ghaziabad.

According to the data, there are 1.36 crore registered MGNREGA labourers in Uttar Pradesh, out of which only two to three lakh persons are getting work every day. Only 4.98 lakh people received work for 100 days, as mandated by the employment scheme in the financial year 2022-23, government data showed.

In 2019-20, the number of people who got 100 days of work was around 5.12 lakh. It was 4.26 lakh in 2018-19, according to the data.

Activists allege that the programme has been plagued by systemic problems that are disincentivising participation, the most recent being the app-based registration and attendance system.

"MGNREGA is a demand-driven wage employment programme, and resource transfer from the Centre to states is based on the demand for employment in each state. But the demand from people is not being considered, which is the key reason for people not getting work. Besides, choking of funds has led to suppression of work demand and delay in wage payments. The introduction of unnecessary technical complexities, like an app for attendance at worksites has caused more hardships for workers," Suresh Singh Rathod, convener of MGNREGA Mazdoor Union, told NewsClick.



Rathod condemned the decreasing funds allotted to the MGNREGA scheme by the Union government and said development works in several villages had come to standstill.

Pointing out the “apathy” shown by both state and Central governments, Singh, who is based in Varanasi, said, "All the development works are being done by machines in Varanasi. We have surveyed many blocks where people have been paid only for 8-10 days despite working for a month.”

Meanwhile, only 2,354 people got 100 days of work under MGNREGA in the Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency (Varanasi) while 12, 914 labourers received 100 days’ work in Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s home district, Gorakhpur, which is not even one-third of total registered workers, as per data.

Sudhir Panwar, former UP Planning Commission member and professor at Lucknow University, told NewsClick, "The government's focus at this time is on National Highways where they have spent huge money but all the work is being done by machines. Machines have eaten the wages of beneficiaries. Rural poverty will end only if labour components are involved in highways work."

When asked for the reason why people are not getting work under MGNREGA, he said, "In Western UP, labour wage is high in comparison to the government scheme. Also, they receive it on time whereas under MGNREGA they do not get money for months."

The Centre recently notified a hike in wage rates under the rural job guarantee programme for 2023-24 with Haryana having the highest daily wage at Rs 357 per day and Uttar Pradesh, the lowest at Rs 230.

### A Matter Of 'Survival'

People in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, engaged in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), have not been paid their wages for the past four months. The delay has adversely hit thousands of families.

Besides, most works under MGNREGA have come to standstill in the absence of funds for the purchase of materials like cement and steel, etc.

NewsClick spoke to at least dozen beneficiaries of the scheme in Bundelkhand, Sonbhadra, Sitapur, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Bahraich and Ghazipur who worked for months but have not yet received their payment.

"More than a month and a half has passed but the payment has not been made. This has made it difficult to make ends meet. Releasing wages three-four months late is a common practice. It is a matter of survival. Therefore, we are working as farm labourers or migrating to metro cities in search of a job," Bhola, a beneficiary of MGNREGA in Sitapur, told NewsClick.

Another worker who has not received her wages since January said that she started working in her village. She has a debt of Rs 12,000 to repay.

"It's been more than three months since the muster roll for works has been submitted, the beneficiaries haven't got the payment," said Raja Ram, village head in Bahraich district told NewsClick, adding that several development works had slowed down in the absence of funds.

However, another pradhan in Lakhimpur Kheri told NewsClick that payment had been released by the government last week which would be disbursed among workers soon.

Meanwhile, NewsClick also analysed the data of workers continuously decreasing in every district due to the government's app-based attendance and delay in payment. According to statistics, the number of labourers working under MGNREGA in 835 gram panchayats of the Ayodhya (Faizabad) district has been reduced to only 21,000, while a month ago the number of workers working daily was more than 25,000.

The situation in other backward districts, including Sitapur, Sonbhadra, Bahraich and Bundelkhand, is similar where workers either opted to work as farm labourers or are moving to cities in search of work. <https://www.newsclick.in/rs-313-cr-mgnrega-wages-pending-workers-not-paid-january>

### **13. Threadbare clothes, school drop outs due to lack of uniforms: West Bengal MGNREGA workers' lives in tatters ([downtoearth.org.in](http://downtoearth.org.in)) 20 April 2023**

The rural population in West Bengal is in a deep financial struggle following a freeze on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

(MGNREGS) funds by the central government for over a year. No labour budget was approved for the state for the Union Budget 2023-24 under the scheme.

The Centre abruptly stopped funds for the scheme in 2021 and stopped commissioning work in June 2022. It cited corruption and irregularities in the state and invoked Section 27 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. The section enabled it to “order stoppage of the release of funds to the scheme”.

The central government blocked the payment of over Rs 7,500 crore of funds to West Bengal for “non-compliance of directives”. Of this amount, the wage liability is over Rs 2,762 crore.

The funds’ freeze is lying heavy on the lives of over 13 million MGNREGS workers in the state, many of whom are awaiting their wages from 2021. Anuradha Mahato is one such villager from Nadia village in Manbazar-I block of Purulia district in West Bengal.

Down To Earth visited villages in Purulia and Bankura districts of West Bengal and witnessed the pitiful condition of many wearing tattered and threadbare clothes. Mahato, her husband and kids have not bought any new sarees or clothes since 2021.

“There’s barely any money to make ends meet, so there’s none to spare for clothes,” she said.

MGNREGS serves as a lifeline for rural workers. The funds freeze by Centre has jeopardised their economic condition. Photo: Himanshu Nitnaware

Other villagers showed their worn-out clothing to this reporter as well, lamenting about their destitute conditions due to the lack of work and non-payment of wages.

MGNREGS, introduced in 2005, serves as a lifeline for rural workers. Those registered can demand up to 100 days’ work with an average income of Rs 213 daily.

Lack of work under the scheme means new clothing is a luxury many villagers can no longer afford. The women said they keep mending the same clothing by adding patches over the torn area. Several people now can not afford to spare money for thread and needles either.

The festive season in 2022 was a gloomy time for 35-year-old Brindawan Bawri from Belma village in Purulia district, devoid of any festivities. Durga Pooja — the biggest festival in the region — along with Diwali was spent trying to earn two square meals.

“After the MGNREGS work stopped, I started looking for jobs as a daily wager or masonry work,” he said.

Work is now irregular for Bawri and the wages are inconsistent. There is no money for clothes, especially uniforms and education has taken a back seat. “My three children, Ritu, Abu and Samir, studying in classes VI, IV and II, have stopped going to school,” he added.

“I have never faced such a crisis in my life. I even migrated to Chennai and Tatanagar for work. But the money I earned did not help to cover my living costs in another city and fill the stomachs of four people back home,” he added.

Sukurti Murmu from Bandar Diha village in Paschim Medinipur district is entirely dependent on gifts from relatives to clothe her children. “Some of them visited during the festival season and they offered clothing after taking pity on my financial condition,” she said.

Kanchan Bawri from Babupara village in Bankura district said such conditions were unthinkable while he was getting work under MGNREGS. “The scheme was a life saver and even if we did not get the full 100 days of work, we could live a comfortable life,” he said.

Even though 100 days’ work is mandated under the Act, villagers across the districts claimed each job card holder got just 30-40 days’ work yearly.

“Even if my wife gets assigned a site for 30 days, together we contributed to 60 days of work in a year. This was enough to live our life without struggling for basic necessities. But the stopping of pending wages and work has had severe negative impacts on our lives,” Bawri said.

Premchand, district coordinator of Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (PBKMS), Bankura district, said the economic conditions of workers are degraded. They are unable to earn a livelihood and many are starving. “These workers have not had healthy food and adequate livelihood for more than a year,” he said.

Many MGNREGS workers do not even receive the total Rs 213 of their daily wage as about Rs 40 is taken by the officials who assigned work, claimed Premchand. “But the scheme is still a relief in many ways, which has been snatched from them,” he added.

The central government allotted a fund of Rs 60,000 crores for the scheme for the financial year 2023-24, excluding West Bengal. The budget will only fund work for 15 days for the active job card holders in the country — far less than the 100 mandated in MGNREGA.

Anuradha Talwar, the state coordinator for PBKMS, said that the situation is going to worsen for the workers. “Petitions have been filed in the high court, but that has not given any relief. Only the immediate release of funds will help the workers,” she added. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/threadbare-clothes-school-drop-outs-due-to-lack-of-uniforms-west-bengal-mgnrega-workers-lives-in-tatters-88876>

#### **14. Pitfalls of AI-generated content ([thehindubusinessline.com](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com)) April 20, 2023**

Though several experiments and projects have been happening across the world on Generative AI, it's OpenAI's ChatGPT that has shown the world the power of the LLM (large language models), which can churn out human-like answers.

It opened the floodgates with Google announcing a limited edition Bard and a host of Generative AI bots such as Perplexity.ai, ChatPDF, AgentGPT, YouChat, and ChatSonic — the list is getting bigger, with developers trying out newer features and introducing dedicated sector-specific platforms.

There are a host of other models that churn out art pieces, make videos and PowerPoint Presentations, create unique pictures and music, and what not.

The natural language processing models are ‘trained’ on books or other content that is fed into them. The quality of the output is based on the quality of the content that is fed into it and its learnings from each query that you ask.

Like some portals that offer you comparative prices of electronic goods on different e-commerce platforms, there are portals such as Nat.Dev that help you compare the answers on at least three different platforms for the same query that you pose. You can choose the best of them.

## **Stirring a debate**

The enormous volume of content generated, virtually overwhelming the users and disrupting a wide variety of sectors, has stirred a worldwide debate on who owns the content generated by the machines, whether the content generated by the Generative AI is authentic, and what will happen to the copyrights of authors whose books are being fed into the machines.

While students are using it extensively for their theses and project work, IT developers are deploying it to write codes and companies to write business and marketing strategies. Though its use cases are many and varied, the issues around content have triggered a global debate.

Those who are using the ‘output’ (content generated by Generative AI), need to be careful. If you are using the output as it is, you may be caught. If an AI model can generate content for you, another AI model can tell you if it is written by a human or a machine, for machines leave a pattern or a fingerprint in the output. The software solutions that are used for testing plagiarism too are getting equipped with AI, which can spot machine-produced content in no time.

Also, remember that another person in another remote part of the world might have asked the same question and the machine might have generated the same or almost a similar answer.

## **One of the two could get caught for plagiarism.**

Another big challenge in AI generated content is, you will never know whether it is quoting verbatim from one or more books while generating the output. In such cases, you would be using someone else’s work, exposing you to copyright violations. You can imagine what will happen if it used content from books that contained full of assumptions and falsehoods.

AI models are also posing a serious challenge to original authors and research organisations, whose books and content are freely used for training these AI models.

Another important problem with the ‘output’ is, there is a scope for bias as the output is completely dependent on the content that it was trained on. The AI models, which also constantly learn from the queries (which include sensitive content) that the users ask, might accidentally pop up sensitive information, violating the IP rights of others.



When ChatGPT was asked whether one can use the output as one's own, ChatGPT insists that one needs to "attribute the source of the information to OpenAI".

The same holds good if one refers to one's own text for correction. "If I were to correct your text, it would still be important to attribute the source of the corrections to OpenAI. It also respects the intellectual property of the creators of the AI model," it asserts.

### **Conflicting stand**

ChatGPT's views on the use of content look conflicting. On one hand, it says the text generated by ChatGPT is not subject to traditional IP protections because it is not the original work of any human author. On the other, it cautions that you could be subject to IP infringement claims by the owners of that material (used by ChatGPT for the generation of content).

For now, you may not face any challenges from OpenAI with regard to IP. "We assign to you all its right, title, and interest in and to output. You can use the content for any purpose, including for publication," it says.

It, however, comes with riders of 'comply with terms' and 'applicable law'. One must read carefully the terms and conditions listed by the AI models that you use to create content.

These issues should concern national governments and academic institutions. Policies governing copyright issues around AI-generated content might evolve sooner or later.

While the US Copyright Office recently kicked off an initiative to discuss the copyright law and policy issues raised by AI technologies, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB), an European Union agency, set up a task force to consider 'possible' enforcement actions against the use of ChatGPT. Italy has announced restrictions on its use. Sooner or later other countries might come out with their own set of rules on the use of AI-generated content.

Till the time national policies evolve, one should be very cautious about using the content.

Mushtaq Bilal, a social media influencer who is introducing several AI-based content tools to research students, has rightly asked the users not to outsource their thinking to ChatGPT.

You can, instead, outsource your labour, asking it for tasks like suggesting structures and reviewing, which will reduce the drudgery in writing.  
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/pitfalls-of-ai-generated-content/article66760697.ece>

**15. Higher temperatures are very costly to a developing economy — a one degree rise can reduce growth by 2%: Benjamin F. Jones**  
([economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com)) Apr 20, 2023

Economist Benjamin F. Jones is professor of entrepreneurship and strategy at the Kellogg School of Management. Speaking to Srijana Mitra Das, he explains how rising temperatures pose an economic danger:

What is the core of your research? I do a wide variety of research — on climate, I'm studying how heat and temperature influence entrepreneurial and innovative performance. We've researched how high heat influences economic outcomes in multiple dimensions. In discussions about climate change, people often make projections about the future which is uncertain — we realised we could see economic impacts when climate dimensions change by looking backwards in time. Nations often have relatively warmer or colder years or even decades and so, we looked at the historical record to see economic outcomes which occur when a country has a decade that is a degree warmer than normal.

This has been done at many levels, from the aggregate economy to the growth rate of GDP or GDP per capita. Across the world, there are good datasets about temperature and precipitation as well as the economic performance of nations which we drew from — we looked at all countries with national GDP data (which is pretty much every country in the world) and studied them historically from their independence or when GDP data became available. We've also studied climate data across the post-World War II period. In addition, we've looked at studies with specific data about a country's performance in agriculture, manufacturing, etc. This extended even to daily information in terms of how people performed on a very hot day, how crops did during a heated period and so on. So, we've been able to very closely research what it means economically to experience higher heat.

What are your central findings?

We've found that higher heat, especially when you start with already high temperatures, is extremely costly to an economy — this is especially true for developing nations. When a lower income country has a year that is one degree warmer than normal, its growth is 1% to 2% lower — this is huge. If India was

growing at, say, 6% and experienced a one degree rise in temperature, that growth could drop to 5% which is a very large difference. Further, not all countries are growing as fast as India, so a 1% or 2% drop means the difference between growth and stagnation.

We also found that the economic loss experienced from becoming a degree warmer in one year persists — when the temperature returns to normal, GDP per capita does not rise to where it should be. The economic shock continues, which means a long-run consequence. So, growing warmer in an already warm place is especially damaging to an economy.

**With output, do higher temperatures also impact investment and innovation?**

We found remarkably widespread damages — investment reduced in warmer years, which could be underpinning longer-term effects. We also saw sectoral impacts. I thought higher temperatures would be especially bad for the agricultural sector with both crops and workers exposed to heat. However, we found significant impacts just as much in manufacturing — studies have shown how on high heat days, there is less output from manufacturing plants and factories in India. This is possibly linked to impacted labour productivity with workers being able to do less per hour. Higher temperatures also impact cognition — studies show student performances on tests and how much they learn based on their heat experience. These indicate high heat days have a negative effect on a person's cognitive development and learning, which impacts economic sectors as well.

**Are there implications for inequality?** If these effects are stronger in hotter countries — which, on average, are also poorer — there will be a widening gap between average incomes and standards of living between rich and poor economies. This further strengthens the need for global policies to limit warming — if past is prologue and the data shows us the kinds of damages countries suffer from warming, we should be very concerned about inequality growing between nations. We need to do more to prevent those outcomes.

**What adaptation steps do you suggest?** Air-conditioning — especially if powered by clean energy — could help guard human productivity from the worst of these effects. In lower income countries though, the higher share of output and workforce is from agriculture. This sector needs interventions like redesigned irrigation systems and innovations in seeds and planting which can make crops more robust. There are also measures we see in different countries like changing timings for outdoor workers — these can be shared and examined these for efficacy. I'd stress that for indoor work and schools, air-conditioning via clean

energy is a good measure. It's very concerning that students are not able to take in as much during high heat days. This can make them permanently behind in terms of their own productivity and human capital. We must provide environments which optimise the knowledge students absorb, making them more successful personally — and a bigger part of their nation's economic success. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/et-evoke/higher-temperatures-are-very-costly-to-a-developing-economy-a-one-degree-rise-can-reduce-growth-by-2-benjamin-f-jones/articleshow/99647868.cms?from=mdr>

#### **16. Miles to cover ([millenniumpost.in](https://millenniumpost.in)) 20 Apr 2023**

Energy security has been a concern for India since the 1970s due to the threats emanating from instability in importing countries, threats to sea lines of communication, and increased burden on the government exchequer. For example, during the 1973 Arab Oil embargo, India's oil import bill went from under USD 500 million, accounting for 20 per cent of the country's export earnings in 1973, to about USD 1.3 billion by 1974, around 40 per cent of its potential export earnings and twice the amount of its existing foreign exchange reserves.

Since the 1980s, India has been making serious efforts to increase the share of non-fossil fuel sources of energy in its energy mix. Successive governments have made considerable efforts to design, develop, and deploy renewable energy sources in the country. These policies resulted in the tremendous growth of renewable energy sources, and today India stands as the world's third largest producer of renewable energy, with 40 per cent of its installed capacity coming from non-fossil fuel sources — Solar: 48.55 GW and Wind: 40.033 GW. India has the fourth-largest wind power capacity in the world. Small hydroelectricity-producing capacity is 4.83 GW, large hydroelectricity-producing capacity is 46.51 GW, biopower is 10.62 GW, and nuclear is 6.78 GW. India projects its renewable capacity at 500 GW by 2030, with the aim of meeting 50 per cent of the energy requirement from renewables, reducing cumulative emissions by 1 billion tonnes by 2030, and reducing the emission intensity of GDP by 45 per cent by 2030.

Mere governmental efforts with respect to achieving energy efficiency won't suffice to meet the goal of making India a net zero country; there is a dire need to adopt diverse policy initiatives in this regard. A policy that could be introduced is to codify different products, ranging from industrial to household items, wherein a consumer would be able to scan the product to get details about the energy efficiency employed during the production process as well as its utility.

With the world realising the intensity of emissions, the global community is making concrete, consistent, and considerable efforts to achieve net-zero and reduce emissions. India is also making efforts to achieve its net-zero goals by 2070, by increasing the share of non-conventional energy sources in its energy mix. To stay on its current growth trajectory, India will need to increase its energy consumption by at least 3.6 per cent annually, which will lead India's hydrocarbon demand to double by 2025, compelling it to import 75–85 per cent of its petroleum supply.

India is expected to take over China, the second-largest consumer of energy after the United States, by 2025. India imports nearly 84 per cent of its crude oil needs from more than 42 countries. It has just 0.3 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves while accounting for 4.5 per cent of global oil consumption. The country has 0.8 per cent of the world's proven natural gas reserves, but accounts for only 1.5 per cent of global gas consumption. India's crude requirements would be 7.2 million barrels per day by 2040. India would import around 2.3 million barrels per day in oil production by 2040. It is expected that by 2040, India's demand for energy will account for a quarter of global energy consumption. As far as the current financial year is concerned, data from April-November (2022) provides for total imports of 15,27,72,000 metric tonnes, the total import bill of crude oil is USD 1,13,618 million. India has diversified its conventional energy resources like coal, oil, and natural gas from different countries, but the top 20 sources of India's oil imports consistently account for over 95 per cent of India's oil imports, and the top 10 countries accounted for over 80 per cent in the last 15 years. Hence, India still needs to go miles to meet the target amicably.  
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