

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS

1. Rap on government on missing monuments: House panel finds 'lack of seriousness' (*telegraphindia.com*) 12 Dec 2023

The story of untraceable monuments is almost a decade old. An audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in 2013 revealed that of the 1,655 centrally protected monuments it had jointly inspected with the ASI, 92 were missing

The parliamentary standing committee on transport, tourism and culture has expressed “deep concern and disappointment” at the Union culture ministry’s “lack of seriousness” in responding to the panel’s recommendations on untraceable monuments.

In its 363rd report, tabled in Parliament last week, the committee chaired by Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party member V. Vijayasai Reddy also recommended that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — which functions under the culture ministry — “explore the possibility of permitting pujas/ worship/ certain religious activities at historical Centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs) of religious significance....”

The story of untraceable monuments is almost a decade old. An audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in 2013 revealed that of the 1,655 centrally protected monuments it had jointly inspected with the ASI, 92 were missing. There are currently 3,695 centrally protected monuments in the country.

In 2017, then culture minister Mahesh Sharma had told Parliament that the ASI had found that only 24 monuments were untraceable.

On this list figure the “Ruins of fort, Bamanpukur, Nadia” in Bengal. A few months after Sharma’s reply, this newspaper had rediscovered the monument among the structures present at the Ballal Dhipi — a mound associated with 12th-century ruler Ballal Sen.

Last year, in its 324th report, the parliamentary committee had recommended: “ASI immediately undertake a survey of the remaining CPMs which were not inspected in the CAG Audit survey and ascertain whether there are any other missing monuments in the country apart from the 24 monuments.”

The 324th report was on “Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India”. The 363rd report — the latest — is on action taken by the culture ministry on the 324th report.

It says: “Upon query of the Committee, the Ministry has informed that no further study of the remaining monuments has been undertaken for ascertaining how many more monuments are missing.... The Committee is perturbed to note that having found out that at least 24 monuments are untraceable out of the sample of monuments studied, no further surveys were conducted for the remaining monuments, even nearly a decade after the original study.”

The ministry has not replied to the committee on this observation.

Urging the Centre to “re-evaluate its approach”, the report further said: “The Committee expresses its deep concern and disappointment at this apparent lack of seriousness, on the part of the Ministry, in responding to the Committee’s recommendations addressing critical issues. Disregarding or trivialising the views of the Committee undermines the trust, credibility and seriousness of the Ministry towards the development and preservation of the nation’s cultural heritage.”

The list is longer. In 2014, the Delhi circle of the ASI identified 13 more monuments that didn’t exist at their stated place. These included a statue of Brig. Gen. John Nicholson of the Bengal Army, at Kashmere Gate here, that had been gifted to Northern Ireland in 1958 but was retained on the list of protected monuments.

Some like the Moti Gate of Sher Shah near the Purana Qila have been mistakenly notified twice. Others like Joga Bai Mound and the Phoolchadar aqueduct in Mubarakabad have given way to private or government construction.

The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister had published a report in January titled “Monuments of National Importance: the urgent need for rationalisation”. It recommended a reduction in the number of monuments under the ASI.

The monuments named for possible denotification or transfer to state archaeological departments included the graves of colonial officials, and the Kos Minar highway markers of the Mughal era.

Heritage expert Sohail Hashmi told The Telegraph: “Which monument is important or unimportant is a British concept imposed on us.”

He contrasted the care the British showed for their own historical structures with the disregard they reserved for monuments in India.

“Near Trafalgar Square (in London) for example, there are four bricks displayed which are described as the remains of a Roman-era road that was exposed during sewer construction. Here, some 300 wells and step-wells were demolished for the Central Vista when New Delhi was made (in the early 20th century),” he said.

“Any structure older than 125 years should be protected. Whether it is important or not can only be decided by experts and not bureaucrats.”

On the recommendation for allowing worship at certain sites if not detrimental to the monument, the ministry told the committee: “Noted for exploring feasibility. In this regard, it is to submit that as per the policy decision revival of worship is not allowed where it was not in vogue at the time of protection or abandoned since long.”

The ASI had objected after a puja was conducted by lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha at the Martand Sun Temple in Anantnag, Kashmir, last year.

“There are several mosques, madrasas and temples operating from encroached monuments in Mehrauli (near the Qutb Minar). It is impossible for the ASI to control

construction and changes to the essential structure of monuments if worship is permitted in them,” author and heritage conservationist Swapna Liddle told this newspaper.

Last week, an ornate grill at an empty grave for Bahadur Shah Zafar collapsed in Mehrauli. The suspected vandalism led to outrage on social media. The parliamentary committee highlighted that only 6.7 per cent of centrally protected monuments have guards. In 2015, the committee, then chaired by former Trinamul member K.D. Singh, had recommended that a new force be raised to protect ASI monuments. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/rap-on-government-on-missing-monuments-house-panel-finds-lack-of-seriousness/cid/1986207>

2. Six central universities have received Rs 826.28 crore more than last year (*timesofindia.indiatimes.com*) 11 Dec 2023

NEW DELHI: Six central universities, including Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi University (DU), Jamia Millia Islamia, Maulana Azad National Urdu University and University of Hyderabad (UoH) have received Rs 826.28 crore more than last year. And Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) getting Rs 337.67 crore.

Last year these universities were allocated a total of Rs 4017.83 crore in 2022-23 as against Rs 3,191.55 in 2021- 22.

The information was shared by the union minister of education for the state, Subhas Sarkar, in response to a written question in the Lok Sabha by Congress MP, TN Prathapan on Monday about fund allocation by the government to the six central universities in the last four years and whether any of the aforementioned Universities returned the balance of Central funds after their expenditure, among others.

In response, Sarkar said, “The accounts of Central Universities are mandatorily subjected to audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) of India every year and the Annual Accounts duly audited are required to be tabled in both Houses of the Parliament. Further, the University Grants Commission (UGC) reviews the financial performance of each Central University on a periodical basis for ensuring proper utilization of funds and for providing further financial assistance to the Universities...”

Allocation for JNU increased from Rs 416.57 crore in 2019- 20 to Rs 517.97 crore in 2022-23, while for DU it was Rs 607.80 crore to 802.43 in the same period. Jamia’s allocation increased from Rs 361.91 crore to Rs 552.20 crore, AMU’s from 1180 crore to Rs 1552.30, Maulana Azad National Urdu University from 143.97 crore to Rs 194.85 crore, and UoH’s from Rs 290.82 crore to Rs 398.08 crore in this period. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/six-central-universities-have-received-rs-826-28-crore-more-than-last-year/articleshow/105909706.cms?from=mdr>

3. Universal healthcare: India races against time; experts call for scaling infrastructure, delivery system
(*economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Dec 11, 2023

Driven by the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases, India must act swiftly to address the rising healthcare demands. As the non-communicable disease burden is predicted to cost \$6 trillion by 2030, robust collaboration between public and private healthcare providers becomes imperative.

New Delhi: In a race against time, India strives to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030, with the clock ticking loudly towards Sustainable Development Goal 3.8. The ambitious Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), launched in September 2018, has been a significant leap towards this goal, providing health coverage of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to millions of families.

However, experts and healthcare leaders stress the urgency of scaling up both infrastructure and the delivery system to overcome the challenges in the next seven years. Driven by the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases, India must act swiftly to address the rising healthcare demands. As the non-communicable disease burden is predicted to cost \$6 trillion by 2030, robust collaboration between public and private healthcare providers becomes imperative.

"India has made significant progress towards achieving UHC. We must now focus on rational regulations and policies that support our ambitious goal. Collaborative efforts are key; this includes active participation from governments, healthcare providers, and financial institutions to build a framework promoting seamless cooperation," said Sugandh Ahulwalia, Chief Strategy Officer, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC), New Delhi.

"The private sector can play a pivotal role in bridging the gaps in service delivery. Public-private partnerships and promotional policies can ensure quality healthcare services are accessible to all. The Union and State governments need to accelerate their move towards mandatory health insurance is a step in the right direction, offering a safety net for individuals and contributing to effective population health management," added Ahluwalia.

The implementation of AB-PMJAY, the world's largest publicly funded health insurance scheme, has showcased significant progress. SP Singh Baghel, Minister of State for Health, Government of India in a reply to the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon Session, claimed substantial out-of-pocket expenditure savings related to hospitalisations for the targeted beneficiaries. With a total of 3.14 crore beneficiaries benefiting in the last two years and a central share of funds amounting to ₹6,048 crore released for the financial year 2022-23, the scheme has made substantial strides.

"We've witnessed remarkable success with AB-PMJAY, benefiting over three crore families. The scheme's expansion to cover 12 crore beneficiary families, and even up to 15.5 crore families in some states, reflects its positive impact. The scheme, coupled

with the ambitious goal of achieving UHC, aligns with our commitment to building a healthier India," Baghel had informed the Parliament.

"It is high time to strengthen and scale up both health infrastructure and delivery system with a focus on capacity building and use of technology. Private sector providers have made significant investments in health infrastructure and training and equipping health workers to deliver quality healthcare services. The achievement of UHC is not only critical to improving health outcomes but also has a multiplier effect on poverty eradication, economic growth, and social development," said Abhijit CP, Facility Director, NH RN Tagore Hospital, Mukundapur.

"The quest for UHC transcends the boundaries of health, weaving a tapestry that binds together the diverse threads of sustainable development. The integration of technology and innovation into healthcare systems strengthens their resilience and responsiveness. Embracing digital health solutions, telemedicine, and data-driven approaches enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery, contributing to the overarching goals of UHC. Let's work collaboratively to ensure no one is left behind," added Abhijit.

Notwithstanding triumphs and the government's claims, a recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report shed light on challenges within the scheme. Despite being a vital intervention, the PMJAY component of Ayushman Bharat is marred by corruption and inefficiencies.

"Enhancing the infrastructure and ensuring that healthcare providers adhere to the specified criteria will enhance the delivery of services. We also need to aggressively deploy artificial intelligence and machine learning to detect potential frauds in the scheme as addressing issues of discrepancies is essential to building trust in the system," said Amit Bhura, Facility Director, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram.

"Healthcare providers face challenges encompassing issues such as malfunctioning equipment, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient inpatient department beds, operational theatres, intensive care units with ventilator support systems, pharmacy services, dialysis units, blood banks, and the availability of around-the-clock ambulance services, among other essential requirements. Addressing these gaps is crucial for ensuring the delivery of comprehensive and effective healthcare services," added Bhura.

As India races against time to achieve UHC. Collaborative efforts, informed policies, and innovative solutions will be crucial in navigating the complexities of India's healthcare landscape. With concerted efforts, India can build a healthier, more productive, and prosperous society for all.
<https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/tamil-nadu-govt-organises-16516-special-medical-camps-treats-7-83-lakh-people-health-minister-ma-subramanian/105901887>

4. Election accounts of 11 states settled: Govt tells parliamentary panel (*moneycontrol.com*) DECEMBER 11, 2023

Election accounts of as many as 11 states to the tune of more than Rs 3,166 crore have been settled, the law ministry has told a parliamentary committee. Responding to an observation by the department-related standing committee on law and personnel, the legislative department in the law ministry said that in the year 2022-23, election accounts of 11 states were settled till February 27, 2022.

The 11 states are: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. "...on the basis of audit certificates received from their respective accountant general offices...a demand of Rs 3166.08 crore was made in the second and final batch supplementary from the Ministry of Finance," it said.

"Subsequently, an amount of Rs 3166.08 crore has been received for 'Major Head-2015 (Elections)' in the second and final batch supplementary. Thereafter, the amount of Rs 3166.08 crore has been released to the aforesaid 11 state governments," the department said. In an earlier report, the committee had observed that allocations for "Elections (Reimbursement to State/UTs)" has been drastically reduced in budgetary estimates 2023-24 over the projections made to the finance ministry, by about 90 per cent.

It had said that it is of the view that while making projections to the finance ministry in the future, the department should ensure that its projections are rational and appropriate to meet its requirements. The committee tabled its report in Parliament on Monday on 'Action Taken on 130th Report of the committee on Demands for Grants (2023-24)' pertaining to the legislative department'.
<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/election-accounts-of-11-states-settled-govt-tells-parliamentary-panel-11888561.html>

5. Cooking gas LPG rates for Ujjwala consumers cheapest in India compared to neighbouring nations: Govt (*economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Dec 12, 2023

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri informed the Rajya Sabha that the price of do cooking gas (LPG) for a 14.2 kg cylinder under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMU Rs 603 is the cheapest in India compared to rates in neighboring countries.

New Delhi: The price of domestic cooking gas LPG at Rs 603 for a 14.2 kilogramme cylinder for beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is the cheapest in India when compared to rates in neighbouring countries, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. The minister, during the Question Hour in the Upper House, said India imports 60 per cent of its LPG requirement. Despite volatile and high global prices of LPG, the government absorbed it and kept the prices lower for the Ujjwala beneficiaries.

"Ujjwala cylinders are available at Rs 603. It costs Rs 1,059.46 in Pakistan, Rs 1,033.35 in Sri Lanka and at Rs 1,198.56 in Nepal. We are providing LPG cylinders at 50 per

cent of the price. ...We have absorbed the global price increase and that's why cylinders are cheapest in India," he said.

The LPG price in Saudi Arabia has increased from USD 415 per tonne to USD 700-odd per tonne in two years, but the government has absorbed the rise in rates, he said.

The minister said that the consumption under PMUY has gone up to 2.8 cylinders per household annually now. The number of connections under the scheme has also increased to 9.6 crore and utilization has increased.

Responding to a query on the number of lives saved due to implementation of the PMUY, Puri said shifting from traditional firewood, kerosene and coal to a cleaner gas medium has significant health benefits, especially for women. However, it is difficult to quantify precisely.

He said the total number of cooking gas connections in the country, which stood at 14 crore in 2014, has increased to 33 crore at present. Out of which, the connections under the PMUY are 9.6 crore.

The government has decided to provide additional 75 lakh gas connections under the scheme, out of which 34 lakh has already been accomplished, he added.

To another query on incorporating the auditor CAG recommendations on PMUY, the minister said all the recommendations were included while tweaking the scheme.

"We take CAG recommendations very seriously unlike the previous dispensation," he said.

Responding to a query regarding the number of oil bonds issued by the UPA-2 government, the minister said that the question is distinctly related to the Ujjwala scheme.

The member's question is on the issue of price rise that was confronted by issuance of oil bonds. Close to Rs 1.41 lakh crore worth of oil bonds were floated between 2004 and 2014, for which the "second generation" (current government) is paying Rs 3.50 lakh crore.

"It was an irresponsible governance model," he said and added that the current government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi took many steps to address the price rise.

The government diversified sources of supply and reduced the central excise duty on petrol and diesel on two occasions. As a result, the loss of revenue to the government was Rs 2.2 lakh crore, he said.

BJP-ruled states also reduced value added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel, due to which there were two differential prices of petrol and diesel. In BJP-ruled states, the fuel was available at Rs 96 per litre and there was a difference of Rs 12 per litre from rates in Congress-ruled states, he added.
<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/cooking-gas-lpg->

STATES NEWS ITEMS

6. बिहार: पीएम आयुष्मान भारत योजना में घपला, सीएजी की रिपोर्ट से खुली पोल; जानें कैसे हुआ खेल (livehindustan.com) 12 Dec 2023

देश के गरीब तबके के लोगों को महंगे इलाज की सुविधा दिलाने के लिए केंद्र की नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार द्वारा आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना का शुभारंभ किया गया। बिहार में बड़े पैमाने पर इसमें खेल किया गया है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट से इसकी पोल खुली है। लेन देन करके उन अस्पतालों को भी लाइसेंस दे दिया गया जो योग्य नहीं हैं। लाभुकों की सूची में गड़बड़ी पकड़ी गई है।

सीएजी की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में इसका खुलासा हुआ है कि बिहार में प्रदूषण और फायर सेफ्टी के दस्तावेज नहीं देने वाले अस्पतालों को भी आयुष्मान कार्ड से इलाज का लाइसेंस दे दिए गए। लाइसेंस देने से पहले अस्पतालों के फायर सेफ्टी और प्रदूषण के कागजात की जांच नहीं की गई। सीएजी (कंट्रोलर एंड एं ऑडिटर जनरल ऑफ इंडिया) ने बिहार समेत पूरे देश में आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना का परफॉर्मेंस ऑडिट किया था।

बिहार स्वास्थ्य सुरक्षा समिति के प्रशासी पदाधिकारी ने इन आपत्तियों के निराकरण के लिए कहा है। राज्य के महत्वपूर्ण जिला मुजफ्फरपुर में आयुष्मान योजना के तहत 43 निजी और 19 सरकारी अस्पताल टैग हैं। राज्य सरकार ने मुजफ्फरपुर सहित सभी जिलों के सीएस को अस्पताल खोलने या आयुष्मान योजना का लाइसेंस देने से पहले फायर सेफ्टी, प्रदूषण और बायोवेस्ट निष्पादन का सर्टिफिकेट जमा कराने का निर्देश दिया है। बिना सर्टिफिकेट जमा कराए अस्पतालों को कोई लाइसेंस नहीं दिया जाएगा।

पता चला है कि सैकड़ों अस्पतालों ने बायोवेस्ट का लाइसेंस नहीं लिया। पिछले वर्ष प्रदूषण नियंत्रण विभाग ने बायोवेस्ट के निस्तारण के लिए अभियान चलाया था। इसमें जो अस्पताल बायोवेस्ट कचरे का निस्तारण नहीं कर रहे हैं। उनका लाइसेंस रद्द करने के लिए सीएस को लिखा गया था। जांच में बायोवेस्ट कचरे का निस्तारण नहीं करने वाले 100 अस्पताल मिले थे।

लाभुकों के नाम की स्पेलिंग में मिला अंतर

सीएजी की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में यह भी खुलासा हुआ है कि लाभुकों के नाम में हेराफेरी की गयी है। कई लाभुकों के नाम की स्पेलिंग में भी अंतर मिला है। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि आधार कार्ड में लाभुक का नाम सीता तो आयुष्मान कार्ड में शीता है। ऐसे कई मामले जांच में मिले हैं। इस पर स्वास्थ्य विभाग का कहना है कि आधार कार्ड में महिला जो नाम लिखाती है, वही सही होता है। कई बार लाभार्थी नाम जुड़वाते समय स्पेलिंग गलत भर देते हैं।

आवेदन के आधार पर ही बांटे गए लाइसेंस

स्वास्थ्य विभाग से जुड़े लोगों ने बताया कि पहले अस्पतालों को खोलने और आयुष्मान योजना के लाइसेंस प्रदूषण नियंत्रण सर्टिफिकेट के आवेदन के आधार पर ही बांटे गए। अस्पताल खोलने या आयुष्मान लाइसेंस के समय उनसे इन दस्तावेजों की मांग नहीं की गई। इस कारण से बड़ी संख्या में अस्पताल बिना इन दस्तावेजों के ही खुल गए।

क्या है आयुष्मान भारत योजना

बता दें कि युष्मान भारत योजना का दूसरा नाम आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना कर दिया गया है। इस योजना के तहत सरकार मुफ्त में लोगों को स्वास्थ्य बीमा उपलब्ध कराती है। आयुष्मान भारत योजना के लाभार्थी को 5 लाख रुपये तक निशुल्क में इलाज की सुविधा दी जाती

है। इसके लिए लाभार्थी के नाम आयुष्मान कार्ड जारी किया जाता है।
<https://www.livehindustan.com/bihar/story-bihar-scam-in-pm-ayushman-bharat-scheme-cag-report-exposed-know-how-corrupt-practice-happened-9057377.html>

7. **Haryana: HPGCL पर कैग रिपोर्ट के बाद आप के निशाने पर आई हरियाणा सरकार, कहा- 'घाटे के कारण बिजनेसमैन कर रहे पलायन'** (*jagran.com*) Dec 12, 2023

चंडीगढ़। आम आदमी पार्टी हरियाणा की प्रदेश उपाध्यक्ष चित्रा सरवारा ने कहा कि राज्य के लोगों को बिजली नहीं मिल रही है। 2016 से 2021 तक हरियाणा में एचपीजीसीएल को साढ़े 15 हजार करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ है। कैग की रिपोर्ट आने के बाद हरियाणा में बिजली की कमी, एक्सट्रा सरचार्ज और महंगी बिजली को लेकर लगातार सवाल उठ रहे हैं।

घाटे के कारण उद्योगपति कर रहे पलायन: आप

चित्रा सरवारा ने चंडीगढ़ में मीडिया वालों से बातचीत में कहा कि उद्योग धंधों से जुड़े लोग हरियाणा से पलायन करने को मजबूर हो रहे हैं। लोग सवाल करते थे कि ये एक्सट्रा एनर्जी चार्ज, फ्यूल सरचार्ज क्या है और सिक्योरिटी डिपोजिट एडवांस में क्यों लिए जा रहे हैं। इसके अलावा जब बिजली का मुद्दा आता है तो हरियाणा सरकार किसानों को गलत निगाह से देखती है। हरियाणा में बिजनेसमैन, उद्योगपतियों को लाखों का घाटा उठाना पड़ रहा है और वे हरियाणा से पलायन करने को मजबूर हैं।

कैग रिपोर्ट ने किए घाटे के खुलासे

प्रदेश उपाध्यक्ष ने कैग की रिपोर्ट का हवाला देते हुए कहा कि हरियाणा में बिजली की दुर्गति के पीछे हरियाणा सरकार की नीति, योजना और इनकी नीयत है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, 2016 से 2021 तक एचपीजीसीएल ने साढ़े 15 हजार करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान झेला है। यदि इसको वार्षिक तौर पर देखा जाए तो तीन हजार करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा का नुकसान प्रदेश का एचपीजीसीएल पिछले पांच-छह साल से दे रहा है। इसी कारण जनता को खामियाजा भुगतना पड़ रहा है। <https://www.jagran.com/haryana/panchkula-haryana-government-comes-under-aap-attack-after-cag-report-on-hpgcl-23602084.html>

8. **Depts have used just half of allocated funds this year** (*timesofindia.indiatimes.com*) Dec 12, 2023

Gandhinagar: Even as three quarters of the ongoing financial year is about to end, the trend of budgetary funds remaining unused carries on as departments have utilized only 50.93% of what was allocated to them in the 2023-24 budget. While the sports, youth and cultural activities department has utilized 105.41% of the allocated funds for the year, the revenue department has so far used up just 22.89%.

Among those making maximum use of the funds are legislative and parliamentary affairs, home, education and the women and children development departments.

On the other hand, the revenue, climate change, energy and petrochemicals, science and technology, the labour, skill development and employment department have utilized the least amount of funds allocated.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, tabled in the budget session of the Gujarat assembly earlier this year, had noted, “The state government needs to formulate

a realistic budget based on needs of the departments and their capacity to utilise the allocated resources.” The CAG report also noted, “An appropriate control mechanism may be instituted by the government to enforce proper implementation and monitoring of budget so that large savings within the grant or appropriation are controlled, and anticipated savings are identified and surrendered within the specified timeframe.” The national auditor had observed that though departments demand additional funds for different schemes and activities, they “finally end up spending less than the original budget provision and the supplementary provision or parts thereof. As a result, the unutilised funds cannot be made use of.”
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/gujarat-departments-utilize-5093-of-allocated-funds-in-2023-24-budget/articleshow/105917789.cms>

9. Telangana to borrow ₹500 crore through auction of securities by RBI (*thehindu.com*) 12 Dec 2023

State has almost reached the borrowing limit for the fiscal allowed by the Union Finance Ministry till November

The State government has decided to raise market borrowings of ₹500 crore. It has put up an indent for raising the amount through auction of securities to be conducted by the Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday. The development assumes significance as the State is inching closer to the limit on borrowings imposed by the Union Finance Ministry.

The Union Ministry, in response to a query, said that the borrowing limit of the State for 2023-24 was set at ₹57,813.99 crore. However, as the State government had over-borrowed in the preceding financial years, the gross borrowing limit of the State had been fixed at ₹42,225 crore after adjusting over borrowing of ₹15,588 crore of previous years.

Of the limit set by the Union Finance Ministry, the State had opted for negotiated loans of ₹1,500 crore and estimated borrowing from the public account was ₹4,107 crore, leaving a space for mobilising the remaining ₹36,617 crore from the open market.

The Ministry said the limit had been arrived as per the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission as well as the guidelines for annual borrowing ceiling. Given this background, the State had already mobilised ₹33,378 crore till October end, according to the provisional information released by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. In addition, it went for open market borrowings of another ₹3,000 crore in the auction of securities conducted by the RBI during November taking the total to ₹36,378 crore.

This means that the State can borrow around ₹300 crore for the remaining part of the financial year, but the State had submitted an indent for ₹500 crore.
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/telangana-to-borrow-500-crore-through-auction-of-securities-by-rbi/article67627398.ece>

10. Flood management at Chembarambakkam: An important lesson learnt from 2015 deluge (*thenewsminute.com*) 12 Dec 2023

One key lesson the Tamil Nadu government learnt following the 2015 Chennai floods was with regard to water release at the Chembarambakkam Lake. With a total capacity of 3645.00 mcft and a full tank of 85.4 ft, Chembarambakkam Lake is one of the biggest reservoirs near Chennai. In 2015, the ‘indiscriminate discharge of water from Chembarambakkam Lake’ burdened the Adyar River, leading to floods in Chennai, found a Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report.

In 2023, the lessons from the 2015 floods were put to practice. By November 30, Chennai and its neighbouring districts received 618 mm of rainfall since October 2023. Chembarambakkam Lake was 89% full with storage capacity at 3256 mcft on November 30. The next day, the India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for December 4 in Thiruvallur district and an orange alert for Chennai, Chengalpattu, and Kancheepuram.

The Water Resources Department ordered water to be released from Chembarambakkam, increasing the discharge from 200 cusecs to 10,000 cusecs. This brought down water levels from 89% on November 30 to 83% on December 1. It dropped to 80% on December 2, and came down further to 76% on December 3, the day before Cyclone Michaung brought widespread rainfall to Chennai and other districts. Chennai received about 530mm of rainfall over two days.

With heavy rainfall in the catchment areas and high inflows, the Chembarambakkam Lake reached 92% of its storage capacity on December 5 and to a maximum level of 95% on December 6 (3473 mcft). So, there was a 19 percentage point increase in storage capacity in just two days.

If water had not been gradually released from before December 1, the surplus water brought by the heavy rains on December 3 and 4 would have caused a massive flood. The outflow could have even gone up to 1 lakh cusecs, which would have flooded several areas along the Adyar River.. The effective and timely flood management of the Chembarambakkam Lake helped prevent a deluge similar to the 2015 floods. <https://www.thenewsminute.com/karnataka/kadlekai-parishe-2023-a-peek-into-the-legacy-of-bengalurus-peanut-festival>

11. State government mulling over 2 options to address flooding in southern areas of Chennai (*thehindu.com*) Dec 12, 2023

The first option – formation of a ‘cut and cover’ channel from the marshland to the sea – was mooted nearly 20 years ago and dropped in October 2014. While the second, regular dredging of the marsh, authorities would like to tread their path carefully in view of possible objections from activists

The State government is contemplating two options – the formation of a “cut and cover” channel from Pallikaranai marshland to the sea and regular dredging of the marsh – to address the problem of flooding in Velachery and the southern outskirts of the city.

The first option was mooted nearly 20 years ago and dropped in October 2014. While the second is also nothing new, authorities would like to tread their path carefully in view of possible objections from green activists.

Last week's torrential rain caused by Cyclone Michaung left Velachery and the city's southern suburbs flooded. Also called "straight cut", the cut and cover" channel was to complement the existing arrangement of water draining from the marsh into Muttukadu backwaters through South Buckingham Canal and Okkiyam Maduvu. Its carrying capacity was to be 3,500 cubic feet per second (cusecs).

When the idea was mooted during the 2005 flood, the cost was estimated at ₹63 crore, including ₹30 crore for land acquisition, said a report published by The Hindu on November 8, 2006. Eventually, the cost was revised as ₹131.9 crore four years later. In 2012, the Water Resources Department (WRD) proposed to drop the work as the alignment would pass through a private resort-cum-amusement park, and this would increase the land acquisition cost to ₹100 crore.

In October 2014, the State government agreed with the proposal and scrapped the project, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report of 2017 on the flood of 2015. The CAG had even pulled up the government for "lack of seriousness" in fulfilling the objective of providing a permanent solution to the inundation problems of thickly populated Velachery.

However, about 10 years ago, improvements were made to the South Buckingham Canal from Okkiyum Maduvu to Muttukadu backwaters to carry 9,000 cusecs, a fact that had been acknowledged by the CAG. Last week, a maximum of 11,000 cusecs would have flown through the marsh. The proposed "cut and cover" channel can carry at least 4,500-5,000 cusecs, says a senior official.

As for the other option, the State government, in September 2021, gave an undertaking before the Madras High Court that no dredging work would be undertaken in future, except when such a necessity arises out of removal of encroachments from the waterbody. This was in response to a public interest litigation petition filed by an environmental activist. At that time, the government also told the court that the removal of silt from the Pallikaranai marshland was done in the past, "after obtaining expert advice, only to maintain better water level in the wetland."

The official says the accumulation of silt and semi-solid substance in the marsh has reduced the capacity of the wetland to absorb floodwater, which comes from about 30 tanks in and around the city. The government is keen on ensuring that the ecosystem of the marsh does not get disturbed even as it plans to undertake dredging, which is for the purpose of providing relief to people in Velachery and surrounding areas, the official adds.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/state-government-mulling-over-2-options-to-address-flooding-in-southern-areas-of-chennai/article67628112.ece>

HYDERABAD AUDIT WEEK NEWS

12. Audit Diwas celebrations held in Hyderabad *(capitalinformation.net)* 20 Nov 2023

n.net

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023

Audit Diwas celebrations held in Hyderabad

(Capital Information)

Hyderabad, Nov 19 : Audit Week at Hyderabad is being celebrated from 20th to 24th November 2023 at AGs Offices Complex, Saifabad, Hyderabad. The inaugural ceremony on 20th November 2023 held at AGs Offices Complex will be graced with the presence of the Hon'ble Governor of Telangana as the Chief Guest.

In this connection, a Walkathon event was conducted on 19th November wherein the officials and staff of Indian Audit & Accounts Department (IA&AD) participated with great enthusiasm and fervour. During the Walkathon event, the participants along with the Chief Guest Ms. Priti Lamba, Bronze Medallist in 3000 metres Steeple Chase in the 19th Asian Games held a walk from AGs Offices Complex to People's Plaza spreading awareness on the



binding principles of CAG viz., transparency, accountability and good governance.

M. S. Subrahmanyam, IA&AS, Director General of Commercial Audit, Hyderabad, Anindya Dasgupta, IA&AS, Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad and Ms. Sudha Rajan, IA&AS, Accountant General (Audit), Telangana attended the Walkathon event.

<https://indianexpress.com/subscribe/epaper/>

13. Walkathon Event Coverage *(thehansindia.com)* 20 Nov 2023



A walkathon event was conducted on Sunday, where the officials and staff of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department participated. The participants, along with chief guest Priti Lamba, held a walk from AGs Offices Complex to People's Plaza.

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<https://epaper.thehansindia.com/Home/ArticleView?eid=1&edate=20/11/2023&pgid=139351>

14. Audit Week Celebrations (*greattelangaana.com*) Nov 22, 2023

As part of Audit Week Celebrations which was inaugurated by Hon'ble Governor of Telangana and Lt. Governor of Puduchery, Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan, on 20 November 2023, an enlightening and thought-provoking Panel Discussion on the theme "Digital Governance and Citizen Centricity" was organised On 21st November 2023.

The panel members included eminent dignitaries like Shri Rajendra Nimje, Director General of Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad; Shri Sanjay Bahadur, DGIT(Inv.), Income Tax Department; Shri Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary to Government of Telangana and Shri Rakesh Dubbudu, RTI and Transparency campaigner. Shri Anindya Dasgupta, Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad moderated the panel discussion.

Diverse perspectives shared by the panel members enriched the understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in this rapidly evolving landscape of Digital Governance.

The Q & A session at the end of Panel Discussion saw some lively discussion and exchange of ideas between the panel members and the audience.

The event concluded with Shri M. S. Subrahmanyam, DG Commercial Audit, Hyderabad presenting momentous to the panellists as a token of appreciation and gratitude.

A Health Camp was conducted in association with Apollo Spectra Hospital and a Cancer Screening Camp was conducted in co-ordination with MNJ Cancer Hospital. A Blood Donation Camp was also conducted which saw enthusiastic participation from officials and staff of IA&AD. <https://greattelangaana.com/english/audit-week-celebrations/>

15. E governance helped minimise digital divide: TS IT Secretary (*pynr.in*) 22 Nov 2023

Telangana Information Technology Secretary Jayesh Ranjan on Tuesday said that e-governance has helped minimise the digital divide in the State.

"There is so much talk about technology at present. However, there is need to understand whether it is helping the common people or not. The Telangana government built on the good legacy of IT which Hyderabad had. Foreign firms have set up their offices here and the State government's initiatives have led to the progress of IT in the State. Various steps have been taken to promote innovation and technology through T-Hub , T works etc.

"The Chief Minister constantly asked how technology is benefiting the common people. The IT department then decided to help other departments improve their performance

through technology. A few states have also replicated Telangana’s method. The government has stressed on agriculture, rice, cotton and maize were identified as major crops for which over 80 technologies have been identified and made affordable for the farmers. In all, 16 of the technologies have been implemented and yielded favourable results. There was one incident in Sircilla where an app to alert farmers regarding pest was launched. The organisers faced a technical issue and a farmer from the gathering helped them navigate,” Ranjan said.

Rajendra Nimje, Director General Centre for Good Governance said, “Telangana government’s focus on the startup culture is an essential step. It shows how the State has progressed. At present, there is no difference between governance and Digital Governance because governance is not possible without the digital assistance. It is the only governance which helps provide services to citizens. The Centre for Good Governance is also developing policies allowing startups to join the government initiative and provide services to the citizens and solve their issues efficiently.”

The panel discussion titled ” Digital Governance and Citizen Centricity” was organised as part of the Audit week 2023.

Apart from Jayesh Ranjan and Rajendra Nimje , the panel comprised Director General of Income Tax Investigations Sanjay Bahadur and RTI activist Rakesh Dubudu. The rapidly evolving landscape of digital governance and the challenges and opportunities related to it were highlighted. <https://pynr.in/e-governance-helped-minimise-digital-divide-ts-it-secretary/#:~:text=Telangana%20Information%20Technology%20Secretary%20Jayesh,the%20common%20people%20or%20not.>

16. Audit Diwas Celebrations (*capitalinformation.net*) 23 Nov 2023

Capital Information

Audit Week Celebrations

(Capital Information)
Hyderabad, Nov 22 : As part of Audit Week Celebrations being organised from 20th November to 24th November which was inaugurated by Hon'ble Governor of Telangana and Lt. Governor of Puducherry, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, on 20 November 2023, a Talk Event was organised on 22nd November 2023.

1. Mohammad Khan, Senior Consultant, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad spoke on the topic "Sustainable Construction Material".
2. Dr. G.P. Prasad, Assistant Director, National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Hyderabad spoke on "Introduction to Ayurveda".

Mohamad Khan gave detailed inputs about innovative

technologies for Sustainable and Cost-effective building and informed about Rat Trap Bond Brick Walls, Bamboo strengthened construction materials etc. which are eco-friendly, cost effective, sustainable and energy efficient. Dr. G.P. Prasad spoke about the Origin of Ayurveda, nature of individual known as Prakruti while also covering remedies and herbs for common ailments.

The Q&A session at the end of the talk programme allowed for an enlightening twoway dialogue between the audience and guest speakers.

Ch. V. Sai Prasad, Director (Indirect Taxes/Central Expenditure Audit), O/o Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad and Rakesh C. Sajjan, Director (Administration /Direct Taxes), O/o Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad chaired the event.

A Blood Donation Camp was organised, in which the officials and staff of IA&AD participated with a sincere attitude and great dedication for social service.

A successfully Health Camp was also organised.

A Cultural Evening is planned on 23 November 2023 for the officials and staff of IA&AD and their families.

RAJY SELLUM
 Nov 23, 2023 Page No. 2
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<http://capitalinformation.net/index.php>

17. Audit Week Celebrations held (*thehansindia.com*) 22 Nov 2023

Audit Week celebrations held

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AS part of the Audit Week celebrations, several dignitaries highlighted various topics at a talk event that was held on Wednesday.

Ch V Sai Prasad, Director (Indirect Taxes/Central Expenditure Audit), O/o Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad, and Rakesh C Sajjan, Director (Administration/Direct Taxes), O/o Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad, chaired the event.

Mohammad Khan, senior consultant, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, highlighted sustainable construction materials and gave insight into

innovative technologies for sustainable and cost-effective building. He informed about the rat trap bond brick walls, bamboo-strengthened construction materials, and others that are eco-friendly, cost-effective, sustainable, and energy efficient. Dr G P Prasad, Assistant Director, National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Hyderabad, spoke on Introduction to Ayurveda. He highlighted the origin of Ayurveda and the nature of the individual known as Prakruti while also covering remedies and herbs for common ailments. Later, a blood donation camp was organised, in which the officials and staff of the Indian Audit and Accounts department participated with dedication to social service.

<https://epaper.thehansindia.com/>

18. Audit Week Celebrations held (*thehansindia.com*) 23 November 2023

Audit Week celebrations held

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AS part of Audit Week celebrations being organised from November 20 to 24, which was inaugurated by the Governor of Telangana and Lt Governor of Puducherry, Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan, the finals of the quiz competition were conducted on Thursday in the premises of the AGs Offices Complex, Hyderabad. The audience also participated, which included questions on the history of IA and AD and general awareness. A cultural evening was organised for the officials of IA and AD and their families. Multiple skits were also performed which received great applause from the audience. The officials who enrolled in the health camp inaugurated by MS Subrahmanyam, Director General, expressed their gratitude for creating awareness around health and fitness. A total of 81 units were collected in the blood donation camp, which was inaugurated by A Pavanthan, Director.

<https://epaper.thehansindia.com/>

19. **Audit Week Celebrations by IA&AD Conclude**
(*thehansindia.com*) 25 Nov 2023



Audit Week celebrations by IA&AD conclude

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE weeklong Audit Week celebrations in Hyderabad by the Indian Audit & Accounts Department (IA&AD) concluded today with the closing ceremony at AGs' Offices Complex. HoDs of Audit Offices in Hyderabad as chief guests were M S Subrahmanyam, Director General of Commercial Audit, Hyderabad, J S Karape, Principal Accountant Gen-

eral (Accounts and Entitlements), Telangana, Anindya Dasgupta, Principal Director of Audit (Central), Hyderabad, Suhasini Gotmare, IA and AS, Principal Director of Audit (South Central Railways), Secunderabad and M Nageswara Reddy, IA and AS, Dy Director (Finance and Communications Audit) were present.

The closing ceremony commenced with a magnificent musical performance by Swaramadhuri. Priyanka

L Naik, Sr Deputy Accountant General welcomed the HoDs of Audit Offices in Hyderabad. Speaking on the occasion, the HoDs lauded the efforts of the IA and AD officials in the successful completion of Audit Week celebrations.

The winners of various competitions conducted as a part of the Audit Week celebrations were awarded prizes and Awards by the HoDs.

D Rajashekar, DAG also spoke on the occasion.

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<https://epaper.thehansindia.com/>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

20. Make more transfers to states conditional: RBI
(*financialexpress.com*) Updated: December 11, 2023

Urges Finance Commission to link such grants to reforms, spending quality

The Reserve Bank of India has urged the Finance Commission to consider recommending “an increased share of conditional transfers” to the state governments, based on reforms, quality of expenditure and fiscal sustainability. This, it said, would help harness healthy competition across the states, and strengthen the fiscal consolidation drive.

The RBI’s comments comes shortly after the Cabinet approval for the terms and reference of the 16th Finance Commission (FY27-31).

In its “State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2023-24” released on Monday, the RBI revealed that the states continued with fiscal consolidation in FY23 with their combined fiscal deficit contained at 2.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the second year in a row. As a result, the debt-GSDP ratio came down from 29.3% in FY22 to 27.5% in FY23, the report said, citing the revised estimates (RE).

The overall fiscal outlook for states remained favourable in 2023-24 too, the RBI, which is also the manager of the country’s public debt, said, adding that states have adequate fiscal space for undertaking higher capex. At the individual level, however, the debt-GDP ratio and fiscal deficit for some states remained high.

This is for the second year in a row that the states’ combined fiscal deficit is contained below the respective budget estimate (BE), and this consolidation was primarily through a reduction in the revenue deficit.

“... financial incentives to those States that initiate measures to boost tax revenue collections may be considered. For sustained fiscal consolidation, the FC- XVI could examine reinstating some of the fiscal efficiency parameters,” the RBI said.

With revenue deficit grants to revenue deficit states seen as a disincentive for states undertaking sound fiscal management, the RBI report said there is a need for a review of such grants. The 16th FC, which will be constituted shortly, will give its award on central tax devolution and grants for five years beginning FY27.

The report also called for grants linked to climate action by states.

So far, buoyancy in revenues has supported consolidation and sustained a large increase in capital spending. Over the medium term, however, states need to address several challenges to fiscal sustainability, the RBI said in the report.

The return to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) by a few states and reports of some other states moving in the same direction would exert a huge burden on state finances and restrict their capacity to undertake growth-enhancing capital expenditures, it warned. Internal estimates suggest that if all the State governments revert to OPS from the National Pension System (NPS), the cumulative fiscal burden could be as high as 4.5 times that of NPS, with the additional burden reaching 0.9% of GDP annually by 2060. “Thus, any reversion to OPS by the States will be a major step backwards, undermining the benefits of past reforms and compromising the interest of future generations,” it added.

Some states' fiscal deficits exceeded 4% of GSDP as against the prudential level of 3% of GSDP. They also have debt levels double or more of the prudential level of 20% of GSDP. Punjab, which has rolled out OPS and spends a lot on subsidies, saw its debt-GSDP remain at the highest among all major states at 47% in FY23 and is estimated to be 47.6% in FY24. Punjab's fiscal deficit was also estimated at 4.9% of GSDP in FY23 and is projected to be 4.7% in FY24. The debt-GSDP of West Bengal, Bihar and Kerala are estimated in the range of 36-40% in FY23-F24. Bihar's fiscal deficit was estimated to be the highest in FY23 at 9.2%.

Among the major states, Odisha has the best debt-GSDP at 16.85% in FY23, followed by Maharashtra at 18.5% and Gujarat at 18.6%. These states' fiscal deficit was well below the prudential level of 3%. <https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-rbi-report-states-should-look-at-asset-sales-in-infra-sector-to-bolster-revenues-3335877/>

21. A lodestone for the Loss and Damage Fund *(financialexpress.com)* 12 Dec 2023

It is not trajectory of the GDP or aggregate national carbon emissions that is important in evaluating a country's contribution to the Fund or its entitlement from it but the range of living conditions of its population

For the casual but well-informed observer, it must be astounding to see the levels of hypocrisy and double-standards that negotiations in the global arena can reach. And in this respect, few planetary issues can compete for the approval of the "greed is good" school of thought with various aspects of the climate crisis, which by its very nature and spread can only be dealt with by concerted, multilaterally generated and globally implemented solutions that need a different political way of thinking: egalitarian liberalism, one that has been widely extolled by Western philosophers and politicians, but rarely put to practice.

The past five decades have brought to the surface deep concern among those who think that certain aspects of our chosen pathways to "development" are not viable in the long run and cannot be sustained for long without causing grave harm to people, prosperity and the planet. Our consumption patterns guzzle too many resources that the Earth has carefully husbanded; our production systems are too inefficient and wasteful. And the outcome of these choices is often major breakdowns of our life support systems, frequently on a global scale, with heavy, life-threatening consequences. Around the time of the first of the many environmental summits held during this half-century (the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972), the Club of Rome published the highly perceptive "Limits to Growth", an influential study based on the latest computer modeling techniques that ambitiously set out basic principles, the wide adoption of which would ensure a better harmony between humans and nature.

Climate change has been at the centre of the global political agenda for half a century. Discovered in 1956 by scientists as a potential threat to wellbeing worldwide, it took nearly four decades of continuing scientific research and international policy-level discussions to be recognised as needing a framework for governance to manage its

potential impacts. A systematic framework for defining the rights and responsibilities of nations to ensure that the world did not suffer the large-scale negative consequences of climate change was needed, and after a long and detailed preparatory process, the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its detailed structure and functions were to be elucidated by the annual Conferences of the Parties, to create more specific sub-agendas that could be focused on by the appropriate agencies of the member governments and international agencies.

Already, 20 years earlier, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972, had attempted to define basic principles which governments should apply to the governance of major global issues. These included such fundamental commitments as “polluter pays” and the “precautionary principle”, with which the governments sought to limit or at least assign responsibility for causing environmental harm and redressing it. To bring in the needs to make these principles fair and effective, further refinements were introduced in different environmental fora, including, for example universal applicability, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, etc. These principles have been championed and attacked by different groups of nations but generally, they have stood the test of time and underlie the outcomes envisaged in most environmental conventions that have subsequently been adopted. In the arena of climate change, even from the earliest discussions, they are becoming critically important because of the turns in the discussions on funding climate action.

Such funding issues become all-important for climate change because of the massive costs of both preventive action and coping mechanisms. Those who have funds are not necessarily willing to disburse them to those who need them without the application of systematic criteria for effectiveness and economic merit. How can we get the biggest bang for the buck? Whose needs are the greatest and ability to finance these is the weakest? In the meantime, as the frequency of extreme events caused by climate change rose during the past couple of decades, many nations raised the question why should the victims (of climate-related catastrophes) have to pay the same as those who contribute most to climate change while their economic benefit from activities that cause climate change in the first place. This, of course, boils down to the age-old mutually accusatory North-South dialogue. While many nations who emit more than their share of climate-impacting GHGs can easily be identified, as can those who are suffering the most from climate-related events, there are some who are not obvious since their economic and emission trajectories have changed drastically in recent decades, namely India and China.

It is not beyond the current tools available to scientists and economists to factor in the changes that have taken place of time. Welfare economists do this all the time by well-known devices such as “discounting”. Even with the shortcomings of these tools, it is possible to calculate how much each country has contributed to the current carbon load and continuing emission in the atmosphere and, from this, to monetise the relative contribution it makes to the costs of climate-related impact, integrated over time. Similarly, the affordability and ability to pay of each country can be calculated and integrated over time. Combining these two calculations, the global community could easily put together a map showing who are the net emitters of carbon over time who should contribute most to the Fund and who would be worthy of receiving support from

it. Presumably, this is what the IPCC has been asked to do at the recent end of the first phase of the COP currently taking place in Dubai.

In the grand sweep of history, egalitarian liberalism in the West became an obsession quite recently—around the same time as the Industrial Revolution and the start of the era of climate change. Touted more vocally by Western societies than it was ever put into practice, this principle believes in essence that every individual has equal rights to a better life, including future generations. It is every individual, not every country as an aggregate that counts. National level statistics cannot reflect the diversity of the people's ability to pay towards climate action or of their past contributions to it. This means that it is not trajectory of the GDP or Aggregate National Carbon Emissions that are important in evaluating a country's contribution to the Fund or its entitlement from it but the range of living conditions of its population.
<https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/a-iodestone-for-the-loss-and-damage-fund/3336423/>

22. Rs 11 lakh spent under Green Hydrogen Mission to date against Rs 100 cr provision in FY24 (*moneycontrol.com*) DECEMBER 12, 2023

The government has incurred an expenditure of Rs 11 lakh under the National Green Hydrogen Mission to date against the revised estimates of Rs 100 crore for 2023-24, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

The Ministry of New & Renewable is implementing the National Green Hydrogen Mission, approved by the Union Cabinet on January 4, 2023, with an outlay of Rs 19,744 crore from 2023-24 to 2029-30, Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

The overarching objective of the Mission is to make India a Global Hub for the production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

Revised estimates for the Mission for 2022-23 were Rs 1,00,000 and there was no expenditure in 2022-23, he stated.

Revised estimates for the Mission for FY 2023-24 are Rs 100 crore and expenditure is Rs 11 lakh to date, the minister told the House.

The expected outcomes of the Mission, by 2030, are that India's Green Hydrogen production capacity is likely to reach 5 MMT per annum, contributing to reduction in dependence on import of fossil fuels.

Achievement of Mission targets is expected to reduce a cumulative Rs 1 lakh crore worth of fossil fuel imports by 2030.

This Mission is likely to leverage over Rs 8 lakh crore in total investments and create over 6 lakh jobs.

Nearly 50 MMT per annum of CO2 emissions are expected to be averted through the production and use of the targeted quantum of Green Hydrogen, the minister told the House.

About assessment regarding the impact on cost escalation resulting from the implementation of a Uniform Renewable Energy Tariff (URET), Singh told the House in another written reply that the procedure for implementation of URET was issued by Ministry of Power on October 25, 2023, however, the actual implementation of URET is yet to be initiated and hence Government has not conducted any such assessment.

Singh further explained that the intermediary procurer is a trader, buying RE power from the RE Power Generators as per the tariff-based competitive bidding (TBCB) guidelines and selling the same to one or more distribution licensees, who in turn supply power to consumers in their area of jurisdiction and have public service obligation.

Therefore, the minister stated that the intermediary procurer does not have any direct public service obligation.

In another reply to the House, Singh stated that so far, 72.02 GW of Solar Power Projects have been installed.

The government has set a target of achieving 500 GW of installed capacity from nonfossil fuels by 2030, in line with the Prime Minister's announcement at CoP-26, including from solar energy, he stated. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/rs-11-lakh-spent-under-green-hydrogen-mission-to-date-against-rs-100-cr-provision-in-fy24-11892581.html>

23. Generative AI generates real worries of identity privacy and data accuracy (*livemint.com*) 11 Dec 2023

On 6 December, Google revealed that its work on Bard, a Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) model, had resulted in a much more formidable competitor to the Microsoft-backed Open AI's ChatGPT. Google's new model is called Gemini, and it can work with video, images, and of course text, and is an attempt to re-establish Google as a world leader in AI. The model is already available in over 170 largely English-speaking countries and comes as an add-on to Bard. According to Google, as of 13 December, application programming interfaces (APIs) to this system will be made available to software developers for use in their own systems.

Google's initial attempts earlier this year to prove that it had an answer to ChatGPT were a fiasco. Its parent company, Alphabet, lost \$100 billion in market value in the wake of a fouled-up demonstration that gave a wrong answer to a question about the James Webb Space Telescope. In one of its answers, Bard said the telescope was used to take the first pictures of a planet outside the Earth's solar system, but America's space agency Nasa confirmed that those were taken by a different telescope. The paradox is that Bard's learning engine could have found that out by, well, just googling it.

To my mind, this proves an inescapable truth about using Generative AI chatbots to replace search engines for thorough and factually accurate searches. The logic in these chatbot's programs would cause them to make up an answer they didn't directly have in their learning repository. This is because they are trained essentially as 'autocomplete' programs: i.e., they are trained to 'generate' a response which may be factually suspect, especially when their knowledge base is incomplete or incorrect.

Many are quick to point out that this sort of technology is still only experimental, and therefore expecting perfection while they are still in their infancy is unfair. Maybe so. But there are other important points about the rise of Generative AI models that risk getting lost in the noise. For instance, how do these programs treat privacy? As it is, we live in a world of dying privacy. I'm willing to bet that at least Apple, Google and Facebook (and likely many other firms) know exactly where I'm sitting as I type this column out on my keyboard. And so do a handful of governments, not all of them benign. When I used Bard earlier today, it gave me the option of Kannada; it's clear it knows I'm in Bangalore.

Generative AI models are trained on massive data-sets of text and code, which can inadvertently include personally identifiable information (PII) such as names, addresses and financial logs. This information can be leaked in AI's output generation, potentially exposing individuals to significant harm. This is certainly easy to believe in the context of the autocomplete engines I spoke of above. Even if PII is removed from data-sets in the interest of providing 'anonymized' data for their training models, Generative AI can still be used to de-anonymize individuals based on their unique vocabulary, writing or speaking styles, as well as other personal characteristics that act as give-aways. This can be used to track individuals or target them with personalized advertising, which is the bread-and-butter of most Big Tech firms.

It's often unclear what private data is being collected by Generative AI models and how this data is used. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for you and me to understand and control how our data is deployed. Bard's disclaimers, written in legalese, make this amply clear. And yet in our excitement to get our hands on a shiny new toy, we usually agree to all the legal conditions in a heartbeat, just as we would rip off the wrapping paper of a gift or the packaging of a new electronic device.

There are also issues around intellectual property. Who owns the output that a Generative AI model comes up with for you? Similarly, it's difficult to hold anyone accountable for harmful output generated by Generative AI models. This makes it hard to prevent the spread of misinformation or hate speech. Both ChatGPT and Bard are open-access models, meaning anyone can use them to generate text. This makes it difficult to prevent the generation of potentially harmful or offensive content.

Also, while we know the overall process by which these models work, little is known of their innards, and their output can be unreliable or just plain wrong, as we saw publicly earlier this year with Bard.

While Google has also made strides in data privacy and responsible AI development, it has faced more criticism than Microsoft. Google has been accused before of collecting and using user data without the knowledge or consent of users. When I asked Bard to compare itself and Google's privacy norms with those of Microsoft and ChatGPT, this

is what I got: "Overall, Microsoft's alliance with OpenAI and ChatGPT appears to offer a more robust approach to data privacy and responsible AI development than Google Bard. Microsoft's commitment to transparency, OpenAI's privacy-preserving techniques, the decentralized nature of ChatGPT, and Microsoft's focus on explainability and ethical development all contribute to a more trustworthy and user-centric approach to generative AI."

Hmmm.... That response may have been accurate prior to the Altman debacle, but now I'm not so sure. Maybe Gemini/Bard's training data isn't recent enough to analyse what happened with Altman at Open AI just a few short days ago. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/generative-ai-generates-real-worries-of-identity-privacy-and-data-accuracy-11702303089541.html>