

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS

1. CAG reports unveil misuse of public funds, calling for enhanced accountability and oversight (*frontline.thehindu.com*) Aug 17, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has recently brought to light instances of misallocation and misuse of public funds in three significant projects. These audits shed light on financial discrepancies and call for increased transparency and accountability in public governance.

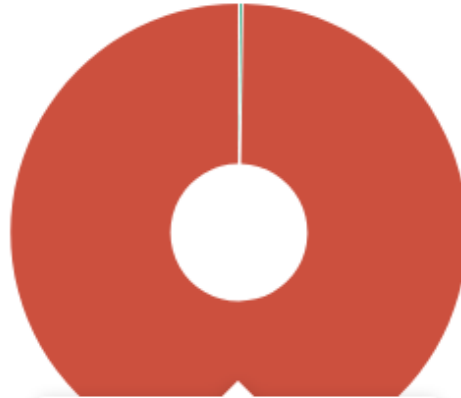
In the first instance, the CAG highlighted concerns surrounding the Dwarka Expressway project's construction cost. Originally approved at Rs 18.20 crore per kilometre, the project's cost skyrocketed to an astonishing Rs 250.77 crore per kilometre. The absence of a detailed project report and questionable decisions, such as constructing an eight-lane elevated main carriageway and a six-lane at-grade road, raised alarms about financial prudence. Toll rates, tolling mechanisms, and competing infrastructure projects, such as the Rapid Rail Transit System Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror (RRTS SNB) were also flagged as concerns. The CAG report has ignited discussions about the necessity for transparent governance in large-scale infrastructure initiatives. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) is yet to provide a comprehensive response to the report's findings.

In the second instance, the CAG report delved into the diversion of funds from the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD). Over the period of 2017-2021, approximately Rs 2.83 crore meant for NSAP activities, including old age pension schemes, were redirected to promote other government schemes.

Implementation of funds for the Dwaraka Expressway project.

The CAG found that the project exceeded the amount approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs by 14 times

- Initial project cost per km (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved)
- Total sanctioned civil construction cost



Series 1
Total sanctioned civil construction cost:

Source: The Comptroller and Auditor General Report

Period of audit – 2017-18 to 2020-21 | Length of Dwarka Expressway: 29.06 km

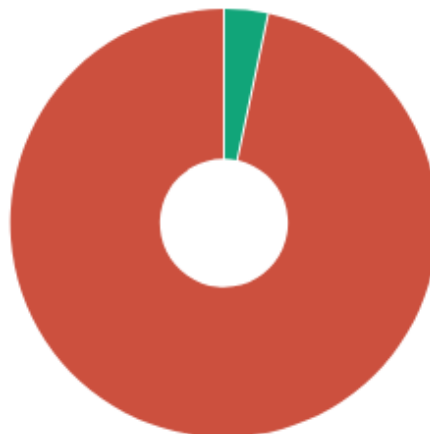
FRONTLINE

• A Flourish chart

Implementation of funds for the Dwaraka Expressway project.

The CAG found that the project exceeded the amount approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs by 14 times

- Sanctioned project cost per km (approved by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways)
- Total sanctioned civil construction cost

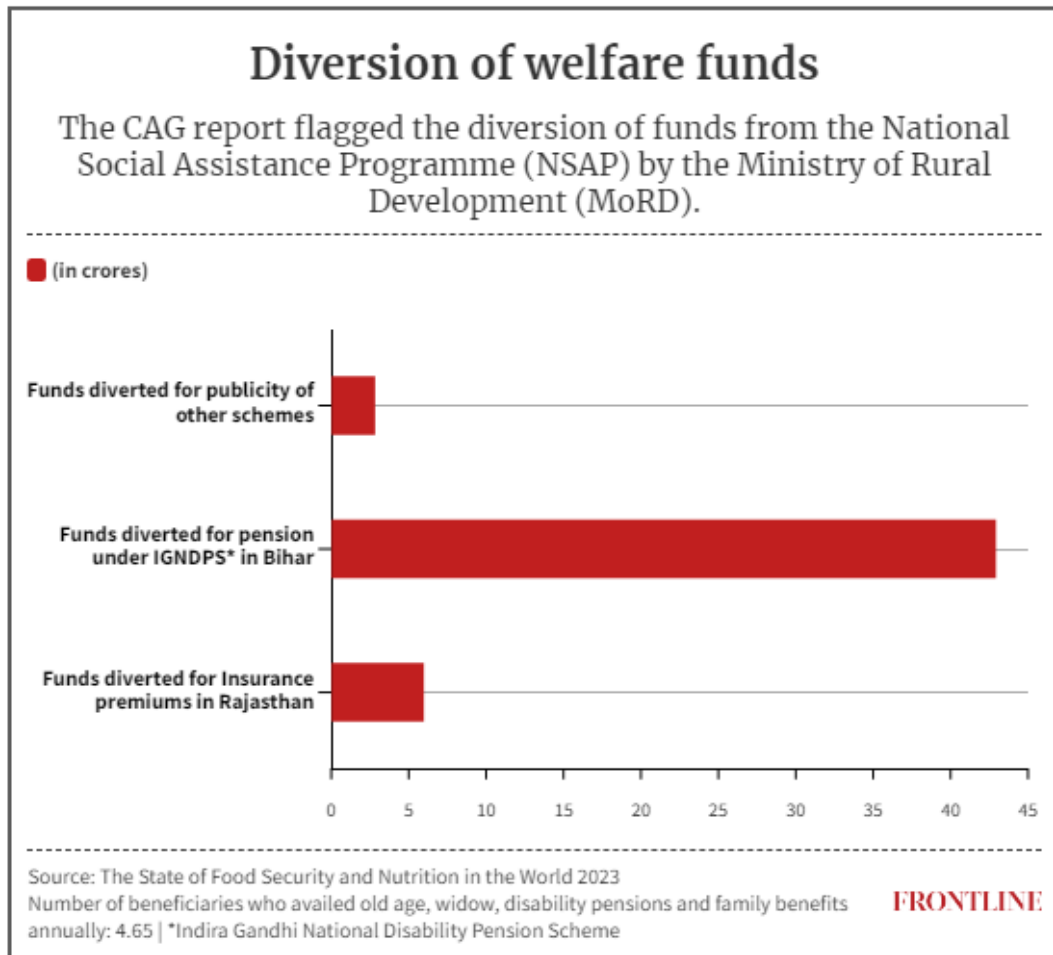


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FRONTLINE

Further financial misallocations in six States amounting to Rs 57.45 crore were also revealed. These diversions hindered awareness-raising activities, impacting the benefits for beneficiaries. The CAG’s report underscores the necessity of adhering to intended fund allocation and prioritising the goals of welfare schemes.



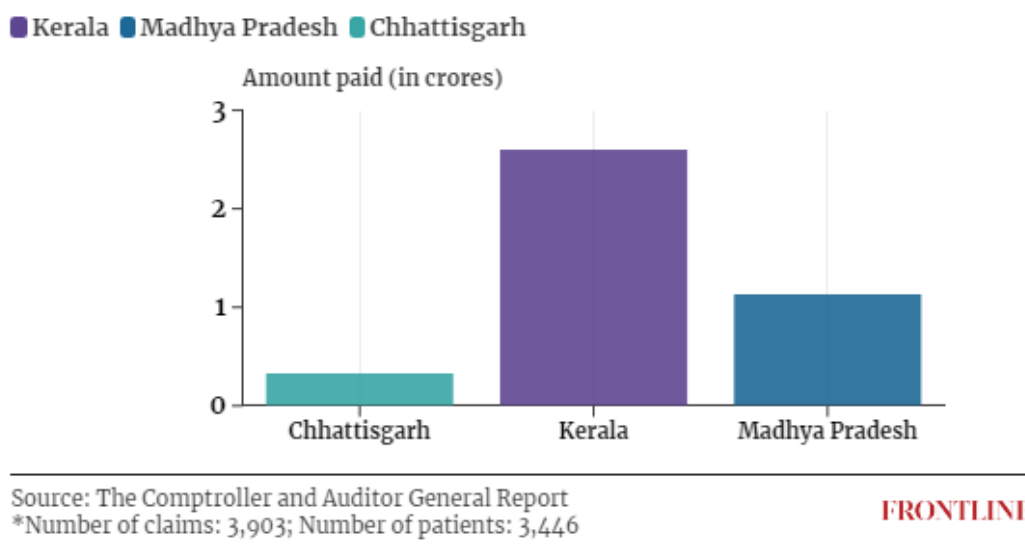
● A Flourish chart

In the third scenario, the CAG uncovered irregularities in the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat—Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) health insurance scheme. A total of Rs 6.97 crore was disbursed for the treatment of 3,446 patients who were recorded as deceased in the scheme’s database. The audit exposed weaknesses in the system’s application and control measures, despite claims of checks being in place. The report emphasises the urgency of enhancing oversight to prevent financial irregularities and ensure the scheme’s effectiveness in providing healthcare coverage to India’s vulnerable populations.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana scheme's financial irregularities.

The CAG uncovered inconsistencies in the implementation of the PMJAY health insurance scheme in States with the highest number of cases.

Under PMJAY, Rs 6.9 crore was paid for treatment of 'dead' patients.



These reports collectively highlight the critical need for accountable governance, adherence to financial guidelines, and the implementation of robust oversight mechanisms to safeguard public funds and ensure the effective execution of various government initiatives. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/news/cag-reports-reveal-misuse-of-public-funds-calling-for-enhanced-accountability-and-oversight/article67205926.ece>

2. CAG pulls up state-run HAL for mismanagement in aircraft engine project that caused loss of Rs 159-cr (*theprint.in*) Aug 17, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has reprimanded state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) for not envisaging the risks associated with the design and development of certain aircraft engines, leading to a wasteful expenditure of nearly Rs 160 crore, ThePrint has learnt.

In its 18th report on Public Sector Undertakings (PSU), tabled in Parliament last week, the auditor added that the scope of the project was modified after the initiation of design and development activities. ThePrint has a copy of the report.

The CAG added that in the case of a “Core Engine 1 [project unidentified in the report]”, the state-owned facility “failed to anticipate the delay in availability of the originally planned material” due to which it was manufactured using “substitute materials”.

It further pointed out that this then led HAL to approach the company's board to sanction the building of a second engine — Core Engine 2— with the originally planned material. The overall cost borne by the exchequer due to this was Rs 159.23 crores as of March 2022, stated the report. <https://theprint.in/defence/cag-pulls-up-state-run-hal-for-mismanagement-in-aircraft-engine-project-that-caused-loss-of-rs-159-cr/1718356/>

3. Centre denies report of the dead availing treatment under Ayushman Bharat scheme (*newindianexpress.com*) Aug 17, 2023

The government on Thursday flagged the media reports that claimed that there were irregularities in the audit of the Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY health insurance scheme to be completely false and misleading.

In a performance audit, under the head "Treatment of a beneficiary shown as 'died' during earlier claim/treatment", the CAG had noted that "patients earlier shown as 'died' in TMS (the Transaction Management System of the scheme) continued to avail treatment under the scheme".

The audit noted that there were 3,903 such claims, pertaining to 3,446 patients and that Rs 6.97 crore was paid to hospitals across the country.

"There have been media reports claiming that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged that treatments have been booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system. It further claims that the same beneficiary had been found to avail of treatment across two hospitals at the same time. These media reports are completely misleading and ill-informed," said the government.

It clarified that under Ayushman Bharat, hospitals are allowed to initiate requests for pre-authorization three days in advance, prior to the date of admission in the hospital. This feature is enabled to avoid denial of treatment in case of limited connectivity, emergency situations, etc.

In some cases, the patients got admitted and before their pre-authorization was raised, they died during the treatment. In such cases, the date of death is the same as the admission date or earlier.

Moreover, death has also been reported by the same hospital which raised the pre-authorization request. Thus, had the hospital intended to defraud the system, it would not have shown any interest in declaring the patient dead on record.

Regarding the same patient availing treatment in two hospitals at the same time, it may be noted that under AB PM-JAY, children up to 5 years of age avail treatment on the Ayushman Card of their parents.

Accordingly, Ayushman Card can simultaneously be used for children and parents in two different hospitals.

For example, a mother may be admitted to a hospital and delivers a baby during treatment and the hospital where the mother is availing treatment may not have a neo-natal care facility available, therefore, the child may be shifted to some other hospital

with a neo-natal care facility available. In this case, the mother's Ayushman Card is simultaneously being used for both, the baby and the mother.

Another example can be of a father and baby being treated simultaneously in two different hospitals on the Ayushman Card of the father.

The government also dismissed reports that claimed the CAG found that one mobile number was associated with multiple beneficiaries.

"It has no operational and financial implications as the beneficiary identification process under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is not linked with the mobile number. The mobile number is captured only for the sake of reaching out to the beneficiaries in case of any need and for collecting feedback regarding the treatment provided," it clarified.

"With regard to the use of the same mobile number by multiple beneficiaries, it may be noted that the mobile number is not a mandatory field for beneficiary verification. However, since there was a field for collecting mobile numbers, it is possible that some random ten-digit number was entered by the field-level workers in some cases in the earlier stages of the scheme implementation.

Initially, OTP-based validation was not enabled as many beneficiaries either didn't carry the mobile with them or shared the number of their relative or neighbour. However, non-validation of mobile numbers wouldn't impact either the correctness of the beneficiary verification process or the validity of the beneficiaries' eligibility under the scheme," it added.

Necessary changes have subsequently been made in the current IT portal used by NHA for capturing only valid mobile numbers, in case the same is possessed by the beneficiary.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India which contains results of the Performance Audit on Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) covering the period September 2018 to March 2021 was placed in parliament in the Monsoon Session of 2023, said the government. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/aug/17/centre-denies-report-of-the-dead-availing-treatment-underayushman-bharat-scheme-2606174.html>

4. Health Ministry Obfuscates CAG Findings on Ayushman Bharat to Train Guns at Media Reports (*thewire.in*) Aug 17, 2023

In a rare instance of its kind, the Union health ministry issued a press release on August 17 attempting to fact-check media reports on the recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on Ayushman Bharat that pointed to large-scale corruption in the scheme.

The press release is titled 'Myths Vs Facts: Media Reports claiming AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system availing treatment at hospitals are misleading'.

However, in the four-page press release, the ministry did not cite a single specific example wherein the media reports had erred in quoting the CAG report per se, for instance to say the CAG report was misquoted or quoted out of context. All that the release did was to counter the shortcomings found in the CAG report without blaming the auditor. Instead, it put the onus on journalists for having quoted various parts of the report.

Sample this: “There have been media reports claiming that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged that treatments have been booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system. The reports further claim that the same beneficiary had been found to avail treatment across two hospitals at the same time. These media reports are completely misleading and ill-informed,” the ministry’s release said.

The release goes on to qualify: “The hospitals are allowed to initiate request for pre-authorisation [for the purpose of availing claims] upto three days post the date of admission in the hospital...In some cases, the patients got admitted and before their pre-authorisation was raised, they died during the treatment.”

In other words, the ministry said that patients might have died in the time period ranging from date of admission in the hospital to the date on which the pre-authorisation request was raised by the hospital concerned. And therefore, it was perfectly legitimate to pay a claim to the hospital even if the patient died during this period as the request might have been raised after the admission, in a back-dated manner.

But did the CAG report really find a flaw with this process? It doesn’t seem so. The CAG report said: ” [The] IT system, TMS, was allowing pre-authorisation requests of [the] same patient who was earlier shown as ‘died’ during her/his earlier treatment availed under the scheme.”

There is a key difference between the ministry’s claim and the CAG’s report. The former said the pre-authorisation requests were raised by the hospitals during an ongoing treatment. On the other hand, the CAG report said, such requests were put up for the same people who were shown dead in the earlier treatments.

In fact, the CAG report went on to add: “Data analysis of mortality cases in TMS [Transaction Management System] revealed that 88,760 patients died during treatment specified under the Scheme. A total of 2,14,923 claims shown as paid in the system, related to fresh treatment in respect of these patients.”

This is what The Wire, and some other media publications too, had said in their articles.

Though now the ministry is finding fault in this reporting, the CAG report says that the National Health Authority (NHA) – the body that implements Ayushman Bharat Scheme at the Centre – had acknowledged this finding of the auditor.

“NHA, while acknowledging the audit comment, stated in July 2020 that necessary check(s) have been put in place on 22 April 2020 to ensure that PMJAY ID of any patient who has been shown as died in TMS is disabled for availing further benefit under the scheme.” (PMJAY or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is part of

Ayushman Bharat Scheme under which the eligible families get Rs 5 lakh insurance cover.)

However, despite the assurance, the CAG found that the gap continued to exist. “Audit noted that patients earlier shown as ‘died’ in TMS continued to avail treatment under the Scheme,” the report said.

The CAG had said that not only were patients who had been shown dead earlier later registered for fresh pre-authorisation requests, but the system was so faulty that it allowed entering dates for “all other entries such as admission date, surgery date and discharge dates” for them.

The ministry gave another argument about the back-dated pre-authorisation. “There are also many instances where the patient is admitted in the hospital as a private patient (self-paid) but subsequently on discovering about the scheme and their eligibility under the scheme, the patient requests the hospital to register them under the scheme for free treatment. This feature to request for back-dated pre-authorisation helps in saving out-of-pocket expenditure of the beneficiaries.”

The ministry had given the same clarification to the CAG, as per the report. And the auditor termed it untenable.

“The reply is not tenable, as pre-authorisation initiation, claim submission and final claim approval by Implementation Agency/State Health Authority for beneficiaries already shown as dead during treatment earlier, indicate flaws in application and make it susceptible to misuse at user levels,” the CAG said.

The release goes on to add that more than 50% of such cases were detected in public hospitals, which have no reason or incentive to commit fraud because the insurance claim would be deposited in these hospitals only. The CAG report made no such distinction.

According to the CAG, about Rs 7 crore were paid to settle some such claims.

One patient, many claims

The second charge that the ministry has tried to dispel is the CAG finding that one patient was shown to be availing treatment at different hospitals at one given point in time – thus indicating bogus patients were being treated. The CAG had said, “Data analysis during desk audit (July 2020) revealed that the IT system (TMS) did not prevent any patient from getting admission in multiple hospitals during the same period of hospitalisations.”

The ministry’s release denied the charge. It said that a child under five years of age and a mother are registered under the same card. “Accordingly, Ayushman Card can simultaneously be used for children and either of parents in two different hospitals,” it said. The ministry went on to explain that if during delivery, a mother is treated at a hospital and the child requires neonatal care which is not present at that hospital, then the child would be shifted to another facility and would be registered under the same card.

The ministry gave the same reply to the CAG, which the latter rejected. The CAG said, “Contrary to the claim of NHA, these patients included 23,670 male patients.”

It had another important finding on bogus claims. It found that the date of discharge for many patients for an earlier treatment was later than the date of admission for another treatment of the same patient. The CAG detected more than 40,000 such patients.

The ministry nonetheless claimed that it has a “four-step robust claim processing system” and hospitals are penalised for such frauds too.

Multiple IDs registered on one phone number

The CAG finding which grabbed the maximum attention in media reports was the one in which it said that multiple beneficiaries were registered with the same mobile number. It said 7.5 lakh beneficiaries were registered against the ‘9999999999’ mobile number and another 1.4 lakh under the ‘8888888888’ number.

The ministry said it was a useless finding as far as “operational and financial implications as beneficiary identification process” are concerned. The first defence that the ministry gave was that the mobile numbers were registered only for the purposes of “reaching out to beneficiaries in case of any need” and for the “feedback” on treatment given, and not necessarily for the verification of beneficiaries.

However, the ministry did not explain if the phone numbers were the same for so many people, how could the concerned officials reach out to so many different beneficiaries.

The ministry also said the government uses “Aadhaar based e-KYC” for the verification purpose. “The details fetched from the Aadhar database are matched with the source database and accordingly, the request for Ayushman card is approved or rejected based on the beneficiary details,” it explained.

But is the Aadhaar-based verification fool-proof? The CAG could find violations against this too, at least in Tamil Nadu, wherein it discovered 4761 registrations were made against seven Aadhaar numbers.

The ministry further added that many beneficiaries keep changing their mobile numbers, but how this fact has a bearing on the duplication of random phone numbers like 8888888888 or 9999999999 for so many beneficiaries is not clear.

The ministry said that there is no room to deny treatment if the beneficiary doesn’t carry a valid mobile number and the mobile number inconsistency has no bearing on the scheme workflow. However, to the CAG, it had acknowledged this lacuna, and been quoted thus in its report” “NHA, while agreeing with audit observation, stated (August 2022) that with the deployment of BIS 2.0, this issue shall be resolved.”

Other findings

The ministry’s release dealt with three of the CAG’s findings. But on many others, the ministry has remained silent. Some of them are as follows:

- In as many as 2.25 lakh cases, the date of the ‘surgery’ done was shown to be later than the date of discharge
- Payments transferred against such claims by hospitals which were dated even before the scheme was rolled out
- Payments made to hospitals on dates that preceded submission of claims
- Bogus claims made for adults being treated under paediatric packages
- Hospitals empanelled under the scheme not fulfilling the mandatory criteria
- Empanelment of hospitals without physical verification
- Failure of hospitals to provide services after empanelment
- After empanelment, hospitals submitting only 0-5 claims, indicating they were not providing services under the scheme
- Excess payment amounting to Rs 57.53 crore were made to the empanelled hospitals
- One unique PMJAY ID, which is to be issued to each beneficiary, was found to be registered against names of multiple beneficiaries
- Ineligible households registered as beneficiaries
- Beneficiaries being charged for treatment when it is supposed to be totally free.

As a matter of process, before the CAG report is finalised and tabled in the parliament, the auditor shares the findings with the department/ministry concerned to give it a chance to respond. The arguments given by the ministry in the August 17 press release were almost the same as to what it said to the CAG, as documented in the report. Despite the CAG rejecting them, they have been duplicated in the press release. <https://thewire.in/health/health-ministry-obfuscates-cag-findings-on-ayushman-bharat-to-train-guns-at-media-reports>

5. Govt Calls Media Reports On Dead Beneficiaries Availing Treatment In PM-JAY 'Misleading' (*businessworld.in*) Aug 17, 2023

On Thursday Union Health Ministry called out the media reports on dead beneficiaries accessing treatment in the AB PM-JAY scheme as misleading. The Ministry said that the media reports claiming that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged that treatments have been booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system are completely misleading and ill-informed.

The Ministry in a statement further said that these claim that the same beneficiary had been found to avail of treatment across two hospitals at the same time.

The report of the CAG of India which contains results of the Performance Audit on Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) covering the period September 2018 to March 2021 was placed in parliament in the Monsoon Session of 2023.

In a statement, Health Ministry clarified that under AB PM-JAY, hospitals are allowed to initiate requests for pre-authorization up to three days post the date of admission in the hospital. This feature is enabled to avoid denial of treatment in case of limited connectivity, emergency situations, etc.

"In some cases, the patients got admitted and before their pre-authorization was raised, they died during the treatment. In such cases, the date of death is the same as the

admission date or earlier. Moreover, death has also been reported by the same hospital which raised the pre-authorization request. Thus, had the hospital intended to defraud the system, it would not have shown any interest in declaring the patient dead on IT system," the Ministry claimed in the statement.

According to the Ministry's statement, 50 per cent of cases highlighted in the report have been booked by public hospitals, which have no incentive in committing fraud, as the money is reimbursed in the hospital account, the Health Ministry pointed out.

Regarding same patient availing treatment in two hospitals at the same time, the Ministry stated that it may be noted that under AB PM-JAY, children up to 5 years of age avail treatment on the Ayushman Card of their parents. Accordingly, Ayushman Card can simultaneously be used for children and either of parents in two different hospitals.

"For example, a mother may be admitted to a hospital and delivers a baby during treatment and the hospital where the mother is availing treatment may not have a neo-natal care facility available, therefore, the child may be shifted to some other hospital with neo-natal care facility is available. In this case, the mother's Ayushman Card is simultaneously being used for both, the baby and the mother. Another example can be of a father and baby being treated simultaneously in two different hospitals on the Ayushman Card of the father," the press statement added.
<https://bwhealthcareworld.businessworld.in/article/Govt-Calls-Media-Reports-On-Dead-Beneficiaries-Availing-Treatment-In-PM-JAY-Misleading-/18-08-2023-488051/>

6. Centre Refutes Claims about Dead Availing Treatment Under Ayushman Bharat Scheme (*ndtv.com*) Aug 18, 2023

Media reports claiming that Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY beneficiaries who are already dead are still on the system getting treatment are misleading, the health ministry said on Thursday.

The ministry also said that mobile numbers have no role in deciding beneficiary eligibility.

The ministry's remarks came in response to media reports that claimed that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged that treatments have been booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system.

The reports also claim that the same beneficiary had been found to avail treatment at two hospitals at the same time. "These media reports are completely misleading and ill-informed," the ministry said.

The CAG report which contains results of the Performance Audit on Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) covering the period September 2018-March 2021 was placed in parliament in the Monsoon Session of 2023, the ministry said in a statement.

"It is clarified that under AB PM-JAY, hospitals are allowed to initiate requests for pre-authorization up to three days post the date of admission in the hospital. This feature is enabled to avoid denial of treatment in case of limited connectivity, emergency situations, etc," the statement said.

In some cases, the patients were admitted and before their pre-authorisation was raised, they died.

"In such cases, the date of death is the same as the admission date or earlier. Moreover, death has also been reported by the same hospital which raised the pre-authorization request. Thus, had the hospital intended to defraud the system, it would not have shown any interest in declaring the patient dead on the IT system," the statement said.

It is pertinent to note that more than 50 per cent of cases highlighted in the report have been booked by public hospitals, which have no incentive in committing fraud, as the money is reimbursed in the hospital account, it said.

Further, in case of death during treatment, the hospital has to mandatorily submit a mortality report, it said.

There are also many instances where the patients were admitted in the hospital as private patients (self-paid) but when they discovered the scheme, they requested the hospital to register them under the scheme for free treatment, the statement said.

The feature that allows back-dated pre-authorisation helps save people out-of-pocket expenditure.

On the patient getting treatment in two hospitals at the same time, the statement said that under AB PM-JAY, children up to 5 years of age avail treatment on the Ayushman Card of their parents.

Accordingly, Ayushman Cards can simultaneously be used for children and either of parents at two different hospitals, it said.

Usually, mother and child avail treatment using one Ayushman Card only, and if the child dies during treatment, the hospital declares the child dead which erroneously gets registered against the card of the mother, the statement said.

Subsequently, when the mother comes for next treatment, she is denied services on the grounds of her Ayushman Card being marked as 'dead.' In such cases, grievances are raised, and the 'dead flag' against the card of mother is removed, it said.

The government said it has deployed a four-step robust claim processing system under AB PM-JAY with the veracity of the hospital's claims examined at each step, the statement said.

It said defined triggers are run on claims to identify cases which need further examination. Such cases undergo desk and field audits and in case a hospital is found to be committing any fraud or abuse, penal actions including de-empanelment are initiated against the erring hospital.

The CAG finding one mobile number associated with multiple beneficiaries has no operational and financial implications as beneficiary identification process under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is not linked with the mobile number, the ministry said.

"The mobile number is captured only for the sake of reaching out to the beneficiaries in case of any need and for collecting feedback regarding the treatment provided," the statement said.

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY identifies beneficiaries through Aadhaar identification.

"The details fetched from the Aadhaar database are matched with the source database and accordingly, the request for Ayushman card is approved or rejected based on the beneficiary details. Thus, there is no role of mobile numbers in the verification process," the statement said.

The AB PM-JAY caters to a beneficiary base (bottom 40 per cent) where many of them may not possess a mobile number or keep changing it frequently, it said.

Accordingly, the NHA has provided three additional options, i.e. fingerprint, iris scan, and face-authorisation for beneficiary verification along with OTP, of which fingerprint-based authentication is most used.

In view of the above, treatment to the beneficiaries can't be withheld just on the grounds that the beneficiary doesn't carry a valid mobile number, or the mobile number given by them has changed, the statement said.

"Accordingly, beneficiary mobile numbers have a very limited role in the AB PM-JAY treatment workflow. Also, the fact that PM-JAY is an entitlement-based scheme and not an enrolment-based scheme and therefore, the beneficiary database is fixed and cannot be edited to add new beneficiaries.

"Thus, mobile numbers have no role in deciding beneficiary eligibility. Therefore, it is an erroneous presumption that beneficiaries can avail treatment using mobile number," the statement stated.

The ministry also argued that since there was a field that asked for mobile numbers, it is possible that some random ten-digit number was entered by the field level workers in some cases in the earlier stages of the scheme implementation.

The OTP-based validation was not on initially as many beneficiaries either didn't carry the mobile with them or they shared the number of their relative or neighbour.

The ministry in the statement said that the National Health Authority and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare are examining in detail the recommendations of CAG performance audit report and necessary action is being taken to make the system more "robust, efficient and prudent." <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/centre-refutes-claims-about-dead-peoples-treatment-under-ayushman-bharat-4307397>

7. Govt refutes media reports claimin dead AB PM-JAY beneficiaries availing treatment (*economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Aug 17, 2023

There have been media reports claiming that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged that treatments have been booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries who have been declared dead on the system. The reports further claim that the same beneficiary had been found to avail treatment across two hospitals at the same time. These media reports are completely misleading and ill-informed.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India which contains results of the Performance Audit on Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) covering the period September 2018 to March 2021 was placed in the Parliament in the Monsoon Session of 2023.

It is clarified that under AB PM-JAY, hospitals are allowed to initiate request for pre-authorization upto three days post the date of admission in the hospital. This feature is enabled to avoid denial of treatment in case of limited connectivity, emergencies, etc.

In some cases, the patients got admitted and before their preauthorization was raised, they died during the treatment. In such cases, the date of death is the same as the admission date or earlier. Moreover, death has also been reported by the same hospital which raised the preauthorization request. Thus, had the hospital intended to defraud the system, it would not have shown any interest in declaring the patient dead on the IT system.

It is pertinent to note that more than 50 per cent of cases highlighted in the report have been booked by public hospitals, which have no incentive in committing fraud, as the money is reimbursed in the hospital account. Further, in case of death during treatment, the hospital has to mandatorily submit a mortality report.

There are also many instances where the patient is admitted to the hospital as a private patient (self-paid) but subsequently on discovering about the scheme and their eligibility under the scheme, the patient requests the hospital to register them under the scheme for free treatment. This feature to request for back-dated pre-authorization helps in saving the out-of-pocket expenditure of the beneficiaries.

Regarding the same patient availing treatment in two hospitals at the same time, it may be noted that under AB PM-JAY, children up to five years of age avail treatment on the Ayushman Card of their parents. Accordingly, Ayushman Card can simultaneously be used for children and either parent in two different hospitals. For example, a mother may be admitted to a hospital and delivers a baby during treatment and the hospital where the mother is availing treatment may not have a neonatal care facility available, therefore, the child may be shifted to some other hospital with a neo-natal care facility is available. In this case, the mother's Ayushman Card is simultaneously being used for both, the baby and the mother. Another example can be of a father and baby being treated simultaneously in two different hospitals on the Ayushman Card of the father.

Usually, mother and child avail treatment using one Ayushman Card only, and if the child dies during treatment, the hospital declares the child dead which erroneously gets registered against the card of the mother. Subsequently, when the mother comes for

treatment next, she is denied services on the grounds of her Ayushman Card being marked as dead. In such cases, grievances are raised, and the dead flag against the card of the mother is removed.

It is important to note that a four-step robust claim processing system has been deployed under AB PM-JAY. At every step, the veracity of the hospital's claims is examined. Further, defined triggers are run on claims to identify cases which need further examination. Such cases undergo desk and field audits. In case a hospital is found to be committing any fraud or abuse, penal actions including de-empanelment are initiated against the erring hospital.

The CAG finding that one mobile number is associated with multiple beneficiaries has no operational and financial implications as the beneficiary identification process under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is not linked with the mobile number. The mobile number is captured only for the sake of reaching out to the beneficiaries in case of any need and for collecting feedback regarding the treatment provided.

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY identifies beneficiaries through Aadhaar identification wherein the beneficiary undergoes the process of mandatory Aadhaar-based e-KYC. The details fetched from the Aadhaar database are matched with the source database and accordingly, the request for an Ayushman card is approved or rejected based on the beneficiary details. Thus, there is no role for mobile numbers in the verification process.

Further, it is also important to note that AB PM-JAY caters to a beneficiary base (bottom 40 per cent) wherein many of them may not possess a mobile number or the mobile number keeps changing at a very frequent interval. Accordingly, NHA has provided three additional options ie, fingerprint, iris scan and face-auth for beneficiary verification along with OTP, of which fingerprint base authentication is most used.

Given the above, treatment to the beneficiaries can't be withheld just on the grounds that the beneficiary doesn't carry a valid mobile number, or the mobile number given by them has changed. Accordingly, beneficiary mobile numbers have a very limited role in the AB PM-JAY treatment workflow. Also, the fact that PM-JAY is an entitlement-based scheme and not an enrolment-based scheme and therefore, the beneficiary database is fixed and cannot be edited to add new beneficiaries. Thus, mobile numbers have no role in deciding beneficiary eligibility. Therefore, it is an erroneous presumption that beneficiaries can avail treatment using a mobile number.

Concerning the use of the same mobile number by multiple beneficiaries, it may be noted that the mobile number is not a mandatory field for beneficiary verification. However, since there was a field for collecting mobile numbers, it is possible that some random ten-digit number was entered by the field-level workers in some cases in the earlier stages of the scheme implementation. Initially, OTP-based validation was not enabled as many beneficiaries either didn't carry the mobile with them or they shared the number of their relative or neighbour. However, non-validation of mobile numbers wouldn't impact either the correctness of the beneficiary verification process or the validity of the beneficiaries' eligibility under the scheme. Necessary changes have subsequently been made in the current IT portal used by NHA for capturing only valid mobile numbers, in case the same is possessed by the beneficiary.

National Health Authority and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are examining in detail the recommendations of the CAG performance audit report basis and necessary action is being taken to make the system more robust, efficient and prudent by strengthening the existing IT platform and processes. <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/govt-refutes-media-reports-claiming-dead-ab-pm-jay-beneficiaries-availing-treatment/102806805>

8. CAG finds gaps in Ayushman execution (*bizzbuzz.news*) Aug 18, 2023

The Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) has found a large number of inadequacies in the execution of Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). It went on to say that “the implementation of the scheme needs improvement.” Launched on September 23, 2018, the scheme aims to provide health cover of Rs5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 10.741 crore families from the poor and vulnerable sections of the population.

While calling the scheme ‘ambitious and well-intentioned programme,’ the CAG highlighted a number of lacunae. “In the absence of adequate validation controls, errors were noticed in beneficiary database, i.e., invalid names, unrealistic date of birth, duplicate PMJAY IDs, unrealistic size of family members in a household, etc.”

The CAG report pointed out that in 36 cases, two registrations were made against 18 Aadhaar numbers and in Tamil Nadu, 4,761 registrations were made against seven Aadhaar numbers. The expenditure on these ineligible beneficiaries was Rs22.44 crore in Tamil Nadu. In nine states and Union Territories, there were delays in processing of rejection cases, which went up to 404 days.

In several States and UTs, there was a shortage of infrastructure, equipment, doctors, etc. The available equipment was found non-functional. Some of the empanelled health care providers (EHCPs) neither fulfilled minimum criteria of support system and infrastructure nor conformed to the quality standards and criteria prescribed under the guidelines. As of November 2022, about 3.57 crore claims amounting to Rs42,433.57 crore were settled. Out of these, claims amounting to Rs22,619.86 crore or 53.3 per cent pertained to the six brownfield states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, the report said.

“These states use their own IT Platform to process the claims and subsequently feed into Transaction Management System of PMJAY through an Application Programming Interface (API). With no segregation of PMJAY beneficiaries in such cases, there is a possibility of overlap of PMJAY with state specific schemes,” the report said.

The report has mentioned a long list of the problems related to implementation, including fraudulence. In four states, excess payments amounting to Rs57.53 crore were made to the EHCPs. In Andhra Pradesh and Punjab, private hospitals were performing procedures reserved for public hospitals. In Gujarat and Uttarakhand, payments were made in cases of death, without obtaining a death summary by SHA and without receiving the mortality audit reports.

The list is very long and exhaustive.

<https://www.bizzbuzz.news/national/cag-finds-gaps-in-ayushman-execution-1241133?infinitescroll=1>

9. Review: CAG Highlights Multiple Discrepancies in Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, Makes Recommendations (*factly.in*)
AUGUST 18, 2023

Recently, the CAG tabled the performance audit report on the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). The CAG's performance audit report of AB-PMJAY covered five different aspects of the scheme that highlighted multiple discrepancies. The report also made important recommendations. Here is a review.

Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) is a flagship health scheme launched by Government of India in 2018. It aims to provide 'Universal Health Coverage' to the poor and vulnerable sections of the society by ensuring access to healthcare services and reduce the out-of-pocket medical expenditure. PMJAY provides a health cover up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization services. It provides cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiaries at the point of service.

Recently, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) tabled the performance audit report on the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). The CAG's performance audit report of AB-PMJAY covered five different aspects of the scheme – Beneficiary Identification and Registration, Hospital Empanelment and Management, Claims Management, Financial Management and Monitoring & Grievance Redressal. The sample size of the Performance audit was 964 hospitals across 161 districts in 28 States. Here is a review of the findings, observations, and recommendations from the CAG report on PMJAY.

Obsolete and erroneous information in the Database used for Beneficiary identification.

One of the key focus areas of the audit was around the process of identification and registration of the beneficiaries. Based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011 (SECC-2011), PM-JAY envisages to cover 10.74 core families.

States are also given the flexibility to use their own database for the implementation of PMJAY. This was expanded to 12 crore families in January'2022. The National Health Authority (NHA) laid out process for identification of beneficiaries.

CAG's report noted some inconsistencies across few states in flagging the beneficiaries eligible for central schemes and those that are part of the state schemes. It has suggested a review of the beneficiary registration system to ensure eligible beneficiaries are covered and a clear identification of beneficiaries under Central and State Schemes is available.

Apart from beneficiary identification, the report highlighted the following observations regarding the Registration process.

No uniform threshold for Match confidence score which is used for approving or rejecting an application, which leads to ambiguity.

Around 3.67 crores cases out of 11.38 crore approved cases did not fetch any match confidence score. Another 1.68 crore cases has the score as zero.

On the other hand, nearly 38.6 lakh cases out of 94.9 lakh rejected cases have a match confidence score in the range of 51-100.

CAG report also raised apprehensions about the quality of the data available in the Beneficiary Identification System (BIS) Database. One of the concerns was that the data available was for 2011. By 2018, there could have been changes to the status of the families i.e., few would no more be eligible, and few others are newly eligible, making the data obsolete. It also highlighted the concern with erroneous data.

Registration of multiple beneficiaries against same or invalid mobile numbers

Each verified eligible beneficiary is assigned a PMJAY ID and serves a unique identification key. Data analysis as part of the audit revealed that PMJAY ID is not unique in 1.57 lakh approved cases. Among them, in more than 1.05 lakh cases PMJAY ID is appearing twice.

This presence of duplicate IDs indicates the possible presence of ineligible beneficiaries in the database. Data analysis highlighted further inconsistencies:

For more than 43 thousand households, the family size was unrealistic ranging from 11 to 201 members. This not only indicates a lack of validation controls but also the possibility that beneficiaries are taking advantage of the lack of a clear definition of family in the guidelines.

In Tamil Nadu, 4761 PMJAY cards were mapped to multiple Aadhar numbers.

Guidelines indicate that a contact number will be used for any communication related to the scheme. Analysis of the database indicates large numbers of beneficiaries have registered against the same or invalid mobile numbers. Overall, 1119 to 7,49,820 beneficiaries were linked with a single mobile number in the BIS database.

NHA has accepted these discrepancies highlighted by CAG and stated that these issues would be resolved with the deployment of BIS 2.0.

The audit has also highlighted that across states, ineligible households are possessing PMJAY cards and also are availing treatment. Government employees, pensioners etc need to be excluded from the list of eligible beneficiaries. But is observed that in many states, they are part of the beneficiaries.

CAG also highlighted discrepancies in Hospital empanelment, claims management etc.

Apart from the inconsistencies in the beneficiaries of PMJAY, the CAG audit also highlighted issues with the implementation of the scheme in various other areas including Hospital empanelment, claims management, Finances, etc. Here is a snapshot of a few of these issues highlighted.

In several States, the hospitals empanelled were found to have shortage of infrastructure, equipment, doctors etc. Mandatory compliance criteria for empanelment of hospitals relating to infrastructure, safety measures, bio-medical waste management, pollution control etc were not met.

Physical verification was not conducted in 163 EHCPs in Manipur (17), Tripura (103) and Uttarakhand (43).

Empanelling a hospital needs to complete in 30 days, but 2733 hospitals were empanelled with a delay.

During 2018-19, NHA released grant amounting of Rs. 185.6 crores to eight States without ensuring release of upfront shares by the respective States. NHA has also released grants in three different bank accounts to Chhattisgarh during 2018-21.

In 20 State Health Authorities (SHA), administrative grant of around Rs. 368 crores remain unspent during 2018-21.

District Implementing Units (DIUs) were not formed in five states. There is shortage of manpower in 22 states for various posts in SHAs and DIUs.

Only 9.8% of the complaints received were redressed within the turnaround time.

Strengthening the validation process, investing in infrastructure among the recommendations.

CAG made various recommendations for improving the implementation of the scheme. Here are a few important recommendations.

To have a suitable mechanism in place for identifying State-wise beneficiaries under the scheme and to weed out ineligible beneficiaries in a time-bound manner.

Validation checks should be in place to avoid invalid entries and increase the accuracy and reliability of the data.

NHA must put in a mechanism to map and identify PMJAY beneficiaries so that there is no overlap of PMJAY and state specific schemes.

Need to invest in public hospitals to improve and upgrade the quality of the existing healthcare facilities. Encourage private hospitals to be part of the scheme.

Monitoring of EHCPs through physical inspections and necessary audits so that mal practices may get detected and action may be initiated.

SHAs must ensure that claim amount is utilized by Public/Government Hospitals for improving the overall infrastructure, functioning of the hospital etc.

Diversion of grant from one head to another should be discouraged and NHA/SHA should ensure that grant is utilized for the purpose it was released.

More than 24.51 crore Ayushman Cards created

As per AB-PMJAY dashboard, more than 24.5 crore Ayushman cards were created so far. In the last 30 days, more than 30 lakh cards were created. The highest number of Ayushman cards are in Madhya Pradesh with around 3.63 crores followed by Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Overall, 27.7 thousand hospitals are empanelled of which 15.6 thousand are public hospitals. The dashboard indicates that since the introduction of the scheme, there were around 5.5 crores authorised hospitalisations. Tamil Nadu has recorded the highest number of hospitalizations followed by Karnataka and Rajasthan.

Around 4.7 thousand empanelled hospitals are inactive since empanelment and a further 3.6 thousand were identified as inactive since the past 6 months. The highest number of hospitals inactive since empanelment are in Andhra Pradesh. In fact, 46% of the hospitals empanelled in Andhra Pradesh are inactive since the beginning.

Data indicates that PMJAY was mostly utilised to cover the procedure of Haemodialysis followed by screening test for COVID-19 infection. General Medicine and Infectious diseases top the list of specialties for which PMJAY was utilised. <https://factly.in/review-cag-highlights-multiple-discrepancies-in-ayushman-bharat-pradhan-mantri-jan-arogya-yojana-makes-recommendations/>

10. Examining recommendations of CAG performance audit report on AB PM-JAY: Union Health Ministry (*aninews.in, business-standard.com*) Aug 18, 2023

Union Health Ministry on Thursday said the recommendations made by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its performance audit report on the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana (AB-PMJAY) were being examined.

CAG tabled a performance audit report in the Lok Sabha on August 7 on the operationalisation of the AB-PMJAY scheme in hospitals.

Refuting media reports claiming that the CAG has flagged treatments booked for AB PM-JAY beneficiaries, who have been declared dead on the system, the Health Ministry said the reports are misleading.

"It is clarified that under AB PM-JAY, hospitals are allowed to initiate a request for pre-authorization three days in advance, prior to the date of admission in the hospital. This feature is enabled to avoid denial of treatment in case of limited connectivity, emergency situations," the ministry said in a statement.

"In some cases, the patients got admitted and before their pre-authorization was raised, they died during the treatment. In such cases, the date of death is the same as the admission date or earlier. Moreover, death has also been reported by the same hospital which raised the pre-authorization request. Thus, had the hospital intended to defraud the system, it would not have shown any interest in declaring the patient dead on the IT system," it added.

Health Ministry said more than 50 per cent of cases highlighted in the report have been booked by public hospitals that have no incentive in committing fraud, as the money is reimbursed in the hospital account.

"Further, in case of death during treatment, the hospital has to mandatorily submit a mortality report," the ministry said.

"Regarding the same patient availing treatment in two hospitals at the same time, it may be noted that under AB PM-JAY, children up to 5 years of age avail treatment on the Ayushman Card of their parents. Accordingly, Ayushman Card can simultaneously be used for children and parents in two different hospitals," it added.

The ministry stated further that a four-step robust claim processing system has been deployed under AB PM-JAY.

"At every step, the veracity of the hospital's claims is examined. Further, defined triggers are run on claims to identify cases that need further examination," the ministry added in its statement.

The ministry added that the beneficiary identification process under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is not linked with the mobile number.

"The mobile number is captured only for the sake of reaching out to the beneficiaries in case of any need and for collecting feedback regarding the treatment provided. Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY identifies beneficiaries through Aadhaar identification wherein the beneficiary undergoes the process of mandatory Aadhaar-based e-KYC," it said.

"The details fetched from the Aadhar database are matched with the source database and accordingly, the request for Ayushman card is approved or rejected based on the beneficiary details. Thus, there is no role for mobile numbers in the verification process," it added.

Further, AB PM-JAY caters to a beneficiary base (bottom 40 per cent) wherein many of them may not possess mobile phones or the numbers keep changing at frequent intervals, the ministry noted.

It added that the treatment to the beneficiaries can't be withheld just on the grounds that he/she doesn't carry a valid mobile number, or the mobile number given by them has changed.

"Accordingly, beneficiary mobile numbers have a very limited role in the AB PM-JAY treatment workflow," the ministry stated, adding, "Thus, mobile numbers have no role in deciding beneficiary eligibility. Therefore, it is an erroneous presumption that beneficiaries can avail treatment using the mobile number".

The National Health Authority and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare are examining in detail the recommendations of the CAG's performance audit report and necessary action is being taken to make the system more robust, efficient and prudent

by strengthening the existing IT platform and processes, the ministry added in its statement. <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/examining-recommendations-of-cag-performance-audit-report-on-ab-pm-jay-union-health-ministry20230818091314/>

11. **Examining Recommendations Of CAG Report On AB-PMJAY: Health Ministry** (*ommcomnews.com*) August 18, 2023

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) on Thursday said it is examining in detail the recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) performance audit report on Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

The CAG’s audit report on AB-PMJAY which was presented in Parliament recently, highlighted irregularities on implementation of the scheme.

“National Health Authority (NHA) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) are examining in detail the recommendations of CAG performance audit report basis and necessary action is being taken to make the system more robust, efficient, and prudent by strengthening the existing IT platform and processes,” the Ministry said in a statement on Sunday.

The Ministry further said: “The CAG finding that one mobile number is associated with multiple beneficiaries has no operational and financial implications as beneficiary identification process under AB-PMJAY is not linked with the mobile number. The mobile number is captured only for the sake of reaching out to the beneficiaries in case of any need and for collecting feedback regarding the treatment provided.

“AB-PMJAY identifies beneficiaries through Aadhaar identification wherein the beneficiary undergoes the process of mandatory Aadhaar based e-KYC. The details fetched from the Aadhar database are matched with the source database and accordingly, the request for Ayushman card is approved or rejected based on the beneficiary details. Thus, there is no role of mobile numbers in the verification process,” it said.

The MoHFW added: “Necessary changes have subsequently been made in the current IT portal used by NHA for capturing only valid mobile numbers, in case the same is possessed by the beneficiary.” <https://ommcomnews.com/india-news/examining-recommendations-of-cag-report-on-ab-pmjay-health-ministry>

12. **आयुष्मान भारत-पीएमजेवाई पर सीएजी रिपोर्ट की सिफारिशों की चल रही जांच: स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय** (*newsnationtv.com*) August 18, 2023

केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय ने गुरुवार को कहा कि वह आयुष्मान भारत-प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना पर भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट की सिफारिशों की विस्तार से जांच कर रहा है।

एबी-पीएमजेएवाई पर सीएजी की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट हाल ही में संसद में पेश की गई, जिसमें योजना के कार्यान्वयन में अनियमितताओं को उजागर किया गया है।

मंत्रालय ने रविवार को एक बयान में कहा था, राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण (एनएचए) और स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय (एमओएचएफडब्ल्यू) सीएजी प्रदर्शन ऑडिट रिपोर्ट के आधार पर सिफारिशों की विस्तार से जांच कर रहे हैं और मौजूदा प्रणाली को मजबूत करके प्रणाली को अधिक मजबूत, कुशल और विवेकपूर्ण बनाने के लिए आवश्यक कार्रवाई की जा रही है।“

मंत्रालय ने आगे कहा, सीएजी का निष्कर्ष है कि एक मोबाइल नंबर कई लाभार्थियों से जुड़ा हुआ है, इसका कोई परिचालन और वित्तीय प्रभाव नहीं है, क्योंकि एबी-पीएमजेएवाई के तहत लाभार्थी की पहचान प्रक्रिया मोबाइल नंबर से जुड़ी नहीं है। मोबाइल नंबर केवल इसलिए लिया गया है कि किसी भी आवश्यकता के मामले में लाभार्थियों तक पहुंच बने और प्रदान किए गए उपचार के संबंध में प्रतिक्रिया एकत्र किया जाए।

आगे कहा गया, एबी-पीएमजेएवाई आधार पहचान के माध्यम से लाभार्थियों की पहचान करता है, जिसमें लाभार्थी अनिवार्य आधार आधारित ई-केवाईसी की प्रक्रिया से गुजरता है। आधार डेटाबेस से प्राप्त विवरण स्रोत डेटाबेस से मेल खाते हैं और तदनुसार, आयुष्मान कार्ड के लिए अनुरोध को मंजूरी या अस्वीकार कर दिया जाता है। इस प्रकार, लाभार्थी के विवरण की सत्यापन प्रक्रिया में मोबाइल नंबरों की कोई भूमिका नहीं है।

मंत्रालय ने कहा: केवल वैध मोबाइल नंबरों को कैप्चर करने के लिए एनएचए द्वारा उपयोग किए जाने वाले आईटी पोर्टल में जरूरी बदलाव किए गए हैं।
<https://www.newsnationtv.com/india/cagcomptroller-and-auditor-general-cag-office-cag-office-cag-office-of-comptroller-and-auditor-general-cag-office-of-cag-397894.html>

13. CAG: पीएम जन आरोग्य योजना के तहत मृत लोगों के इलाज के दावे भ्रामक, स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने दिया स्पष्टीकरण (amarujala.com) August 17, 2023

पीएम मोदी की सबसे महत्वपूर्ण योजनाओं में से एक आयुष्मान भारत- प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना (पीएमजेएवाई) पर कैंग ने एक रिपोर्ट जारी की, जिसमें बताया गया है कि जिन रोगियों को पहले मृत दिखाया, वे अभी भी इलाज करा रहे हैं। वहीं अब स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने गुरुवार को स्पष्टीकरण देते हुआ कहा कि आयुष्मान भारत योजना

को लेकर मीडिया में जो दावे किए जा रहे हैं वह भ्रामक हैं। मंत्रालय ने यह भी कहा कि लाभार्थी की पात्रता तय करने में मोबाइल नंबरों की कोई भूमिका नहीं है।

भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक की रिपोर्ट, जिसमें सितंबर 2018 से मार्च 2021 की अवधि को कवर करने वाले आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री- जन आरोग्य योजना (एबी पीएम-जेएवाई) पर निष्पादन लेखा परीक्षा के परिणाम शामिल हैं, 2023 के मानसून सत्र में संसद में रखी गई थी। इसकी जानकारी सामने आने के बाद विपक्ष ने केंद्र सरकार की आलोचना की।

बयान में स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने कहा कि यह स्पष्ट किया गया है कि आयुष्मान भारत पीएम-जेएवाई के तहत, अस्पताल में भर्ती होने के तीन दिन बाद की तारीख तक पूर्व-प्राधिकरण के लिए अस्पतालों को अनुरोध शुरू करने की अनुमति है। यह सुविधा सीमित कनेक्टिविटी, आपातकालीन स्थितियों आदि के मामले में उपचार की मनाही करने से बचने के लिए प्रदान की गई है। कुछ मामलों में, मरीजों को भर्ती किया गया और उनकी पूर्व-प्राधिकरण बढ़ाने से पहले ही उनकी मृत्यु हो गई।

ऐसे मामलों में, मृत्यु की तारीख, भर्ती की तारीखके समान या उससे पहले की होती है। इसके अतिरिक्त उसी अस्पताल द्वारा मृत्यु की सूचना भी दी गई है जिसने पूर्व-प्राधिकरण अनुरोध प्रस्तुत किया था। इस प्रकार, अगर अस्पताल का उद्देश्य प्रणाली को धोखा देने का होता, तो उसने आईटी सिस्टम पर रोगी को मृत घोषित करने में कोई रुचि नहीं दिखाई होती।

यह ध्यान रखना उचित है कि रिपोर्ट में रेखांकित 50 फीसदी से अधिक मामले सार्वजनिक अस्पतालों द्वारा दर्ज किए गए हैं, जिनके पास धोखाधड़ी करने के लिए कोई अतिरिक्त प्रोत्साहन प्राप्त नहीं है, क्योंकि पैसे की प्रतिपूर्ति अस्पताल के खाते में की जाती है। इसके अलावा, उपचार के दौरान मृत्यु के मामले में, अस्पताल को अनिवार्य रूप से मृत्यु रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत करनी होगी।

बयान में कहा गया है कि ऐसे कई उदाहरण भी हैं जहां मरीजों को निजी मरीजों (स्व-भुगतान) के रूप में अस्पताल में भर्ती कराया गया था, लेकिन जब उन्हें योजना का पता चला, तो उन्होंने अस्पताल से उन्हें मुफ्त इलाज के लिए योजना के तहत पंजीकृत करने का अनुरोध किया। पिछली दिनांकित पूर्व-प्राधिकरण की अनुमति देने वाली सुविधा लोगों को अपनी जेब से होने वाले खर्च को बचाने में मदद करती है।

आयुष्मान भारत पीएम-जेएवाई आधार पहचान के माध्यम से लाभार्थियों की पहचान करता है जिसमें लाभार्थी अनिवार्य आधार आधारित ई-केवाईसी की प्रक्रिया से गुजरता है। आधार डेटाबेस से प्राप्त विवरण स्रोत डेटाबेस से मेल खाते हैं और तदनुसार, लाभार्थी विवरण के आधार पर आयुष्मान कार्ड के लिए अनुरोध स्वीकृत या अस्वीकार कर दिया जाता है। इस प्रकार, सत्यापन प्रक्रिया में मोबाइल नंबरों की कोई भूमिका नहीं है।

2018 में शुरू की गई आयुष्मान भारत योजना स्वास्थ्य देखभाल की मांग करने वाली गरीब और कमजोर आबादी के लिए अपनी जेब से होने वाले खर्च को कम करने के उद्देश्य से की गई थी। इस स्वास्थ्य बीमा योजना को ग्रामीण और शहरी दोनों क्षेत्रों में शुरू किया गया था। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/union-health-ministry-said-media-claims-about-dead-people-taking-treatment-under-ayushman-bharat-not-true-2023-08-17>

14. Centre saved 12% in construction cost of Dwarka Expressway, claims Road Transport Ministry official: Report (cnbctv18.com) August 17, 2023

The Central government saved nearly 12 percent in the construction cost of Dwarka Expressway, claimed a senior official of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, days after the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) flagged a nearly 14-fold increase in the budget of the project, according to reports.

Top sources within the Road Transport Ministry have confirmed that the findings by the CAG regarding exorbitant costs are misconstrued and that the actual expenditure was significantly lower than estimates, news agency PTI reported.

Initially, the CAG's findings had emphasised the National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) decision of an elevated roadway on the Dwarka Expressway's Haryana section. The report said that this choice led to an escalation in the construction cost, soaring to Rs 251 crore per kilometre from the estimated cost of Rs 18.2 crore per km.

PTI sources from the ministry revealed that these figures lack proper context. They clarified saying that all four contracts for the Dwarka Expressway were put out for tender at an average civil cost of Rs 206.39 crore per kilometre. Ultimately, the contracts were awarded at a substantially reduced rate of Rs 181.94 crore per km, which reflects a 12% reduction from the estimates.

A senior official of the ministry said that the project was awarded after a “transparent” bidding process, according to a Hindu report.

The ministry sources further highlighted the fact that the CAG's calculation method oversimplifies the complexity of the project. They said that the CAG divided the total construction cost of Rs 91,000 crore under the National Corridor Efficiency Programme by the entire length of 5,000 km under development. The ministry, on the other hand, claims that this methodological disparity does not account for elements such as flyovers, elevated roads, underpasses, tunnels and ring roads as these additional

components contribute significantly to the overall construction cost and were not originally included in the project.

Notably, the expressway's design includes an eight-lane 3.6 km tunnel, a six-lane 2.4 km tunnel connecting to Delhi's airport and elevated service roads at crucial interchanges. According to the ministry officials, these aspects justify the cost variations.

According to the PTI report, the ministry intends to communicate its perspective to the CAG and present its views when the issue is brought up for discussion before the Public Accounts Committee.

Meanwhile, on Monday, August 14, the Opposition parties accused the Modi government of record-breaking corruption in light of the CAG's findings. <https://www.cnbctv18.com/economy/centre-saved-12-percent-in-construction-cost-of-dwarka-expressway-road-transport-ministry-official-17559611.htm>

15. NHAI's Tolls, UDAN Delays, Unsanctioned Railway Costs: What the CAG Reports Say (*thewire.in*) August 17, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has released 12 audit reports which were presented in parliament during the Monsoon Session that ended last week.

In this series, The Wire brings together the major findings of the 12 CAG reports.

In the first part, we look at four reports:

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways: Compliance Audit on Toll Operation of NHAI in Southern India
 - Ministry of Civil Aviation: Compliance Audit on Regional Connectivity Scheme – UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik),
 - Ministry of Road Transport and Highways: Performance Audit on “Implementation of Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana”, and
 - Financial Audit of the Accounts of Union government.
- NHAI collected over Rs 150 crore from commuters in violation of toll rules

The CAG report on the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Toll Operations of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in Southern India has found that in five toll plazas, a total amount of Rs 132.05 crore was collected from commuters in violation of toll plaza rules.

The audit was conducted on 41 randomly selected toll plazas across the five southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Telangana.

The report tabled in parliament on August 10 stated that due to “non-implementation of NH Fee Amendment Rules 2013 dated 16 December 2013 with respect to upgradation of existing four lane highways, NHAI continued to collect user fee in three toll plazas (namely Nathavalasa, Chalageri, Hebbalu) during delayed period of construction though the amended rule stated that no user fee shall be levied for the delayed period.”

The report said that this resulted in the collection of user fees of Rs 124.18 crore during the period May 2020 to March 2021 in “violation of the amended toll fee rules”.

The report found that at the Paranur toll plaza, the NHAI delayed reduction in user fee to 75% of fee applicable.

At the Madpam toll plaza, the NHAI annually revised the user fee despite the stipulation of no revision during upgradation as per the amended Fee Rules.

NHAI collected Rs 7.87 crore from road users on the two toll plazas from August 2018 to March 2021.

“Thus toll collection in these five toll plazas led to undue burden of Rs 132.05 crore on road users,” the report stated.

The report also found that NHAI collected excess toll fees of Rs 22.10 crore from road users during 2017-2018 to 2020-2021 at the Paranur public-funded toll plaza.

A bridge had been constructed in 1954 and a user fee was being collected for it, again in violation of the NH Fee Second Amendment Rules 2011. Under the rules, since the bridge was constructed prior to 1956, the user fee was not to be levied.

The audit also found that delays in toll collection according to time limits prescribed by NH Fee Rules, 2008, in four stretches of public funded projects led to a loss of NHAI revenue amounting to Rs 64.60 crore.

NHAI also lost revenue of Rs 133.36 crore due to lack of provision for revenue sharing for two sections of NH 44 in Tamil Nadu constructed by NHAI and handed over to BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer toll) concessionaires for toll collection.

52% routes under UDAN scheme not operational

The CAG report on the regional connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation has found that up to March 2021, when UDAN-3 ended, 52% (403 out of 774 routes) of the awarded routes could not commence operations.

The scheme launched in 2016 is aimed at promoting affordability of regional air connectivity and refurbishing underserved airports.

The report said that of the 371 commenced routes, only 30% (112 routes) completed the full concession period of three years.

“Further, out of these 112 routes, only 54 routes (7% of the awarded routes) connecting 17 RCS [regional connectivity scheme] airports could sustain the operations beyond the concession period of three years, as of March 2023,” the report stated.

The report also found “significant delays” in revival or development of identified RCS airports out of the budgetary support sanctioned by Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in March 2017.

“Out of the 116 airports/ heliports/water aerodromes where expenditure was incurred, operations commenced at only 71 (61%) airports/heliports/water aerodromes,” the report said.

“Operations could not be commenced or were discontinued at 83 airports/heliports/water aerodromes even after incurring an expenditure of Rs 1,089 crore.”

Irregularities in highway projects

The CAG report of highway projects under the Implementation of Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I (BPP-1) has found instances of irregularities.

“Instances of irregularities in award of projects by implementing agencies were observed in clear violation of the prescribed processes of tendering, viz., successful bidder not fulfilling tender condition or bidder selected on the basis of falsified documents, award of works without there being approved detailed project reports or based on faulty detailed project report,” it said.

The report also found huge overrun costs in the Dwarka Expressway project which was prioritised to decongest NH-48 between Delhi to Gurugram by developing it into 14-lane national highway.

The report also found huge overrun costs in the Dwarka Expressway project. Photo: File

The NHAI’s decision to opt for an elevated carriageway in the Haryana portion pushed up costs to Rs 250.77 crore per kilometre as against the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs-approved per kilometre cost of Rs 18.20 crore.

The report added that the NHAI board approved the Delhi-Vadodara Expressway with a civil cost of around Rs 32,839 crore and which was not included in the CCEA approved list of BPP-I projects.

Unsanctioned expenditure by Railway ministry

The CAG report on the financial audit of the accounts of the Union government found that the Ministry of Railways had incurred unsanctioned expenditure.

In the financial year (FY) 2021-22 the ministry had unsanctioned expenditure of Rs 23,885.47 crore, encompassing 1,937 cases. In FY 2020-21 unsanctioned expenditure of Rs 8,127.97 crore was incurred by Indian Railways in 2,775 cases.

“Similar audit comments were made in the previous C&AG audit reports for the year 2018-19 to 2020-21. Thus, it is evident that no steps had been taken by the Ministry to

reduce the cases of unsanctioned expenditure despite being pointed out in the previous C&AG audit reports,” it said.

Trend analysis of object head wise expenditure in respect of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers’ Welfare revealed persistent savings of 40% to 96% of the Budget Estimate during the last five years. The report said that this indicates deficient planning at the Budget Estimate stage without taking into account previous years’ trends.

The opposition Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have highlighted the findings of these audit reports and accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of presiding over “scams”, demanding accountability from prime minister Narendra Modi. <https://thewire.in/government/cag-report-nhai-toll-collection-railway-bharatmala-udan>

16. Oppn cries ‘scam’, govt says ‘erroneous’ — what’s in CAG report on Rs 250-cr/km Dwarka Expressway (*theprint.in*) August 17, 2023

Amid a brewing political storm, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has challenged a Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report outlining the elevated cost of constructing the Dwarka Expressway, branding it as “erroneous”.

According to the CAG report, tabled in Parliament on 10 August, the 29.06-km expressway is being constructed at a “very high” cost of Rs 250.77 crore per km, far beyond the Rs 18.2 crore per km approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

The report has prompted AAP to launch a protest against the “sone ki sadak” (road of gold) and Congress leader Supriya Shrinete to remark that an interplanetary mission such as Mangalyaan could have been dispatched at the cost of constructing 2 km of the expressway.

However, speaking to ThePrint Wednesday, a senior MoRTH official claimed that the CAG report was flawed.

“CAG has erroneously calculated the average cost as Rs 18.2 crore per km by ignoring the nature of the project which has been clearly mentioned in the CCEA approval document,” the MoRTH official said.

Notably, though, the CAG report criticises the nature of the project itself, pointing out that the high construction cost of the Dwarka Expressway was due to the decision to build an eight-lane elevated corridor along with a six-lane at-grade (ground level) corridor. This, CAG suggested, was unnecessary since there was adequate space available for a 14-lane at-grade corridor.

ThePrint takes a look at some of the key arguments in the report as well as MoRTH’s contentions.

What is the CAG report all about?

Titled 'Implementation of Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana' (BPP-I), the CAG report examines the planning, financial management, implementation, and monitoring of 66 sampled projects being implemented under Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana, a centrally funded initiative to boost highway infrastructure across the country.

In the case of the Dwarka Expressway, the report flags not only the elevated per-kilometre cost of the project, but also claims that the construction was sanctioned by MoRTH without a detailed project report (DPR).

The auditor pegged the high cost of the project to the decision to construct "massive structures" in the form of an eight-lane elevated carriageway in addition to a six-lane at-grade road, rather than a 14-lane at-grade road.

Questioning this decision, it pointed out that while around 70-75 metres right-of-way was required to build a 14-lane at-grade corridor, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had more than that — 90 metres— at its disposal.

"However, for no reasons on record, the project highway in the Haryana region, where its length was 19 km, was planned with eight lane elevated main carriageway and six lane at grade road," the report said.

"This project... had sanctioned civil construction cost of Rs 7,287.29 crore i.e., Rs 250.77 crore/km as against per km civil construction cost of Rs 18.20 crore approved by CCEA for National Corridors/National Corridors Efficiency Improvements Program under which this project was being constructed," the CAG said in the report.

However, MoRTH officials have taken exception to CAG's calculations.

The senior official, quoted earlier, said that the Dwarka Expressway is part of the National Corridors Efficiency Improvement, a component under the Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-1. Under this, the civil cost for construction of 5,000 km is Rs 91,000 crore and this comes to Rs 18.2 crore per km.

But this, he added, does not account for features like flyovers and so on.

"In the CCEA approval, it has been clearly highlighted that the cost of flyovers and ring roads etc can be established only through Detailed Project Reports as there are no standard cost norms for these components," the official said.

Per the official, the average construction cost for all four packages of the Dwarka Expressway tender was Rs 206.4 crore per km, yet the awarded work was priced at Rs 182 crore per km— amounting to a 12 percent cost saving for the government

'No justification' for elevated carriageway?

The 29.06 km Dwarka expressway, which will connect Shiv Murli in Delhi at National Highway-8 and Kherki Daula in Gurugram, Haryana, is aimed at decongesting NH-48 and providing smooth access to the IGI airport.

Conceived in 2006 by the Haryana government, the project has been stuck due to multiple issues, mainly related to land acquisition. The construction work picked up pace only after it was transferred to the NHAI in 2016 by the Haryana government.

The CAG report mentions that MoRTH has justified its decision to include an eight-lane corridor with minimal entry-exit arrangements to facilitate smooth movements of inter-state traffic.

However, the report then proceeds to pick holes in this reasoning.

“MoRTH did not counter the audit observation that a 14-lane national highway could have been built at grade in available 90 meter right of way,” CAG report said.

The auditor further said that there was “no justification” for planning the eight-lane elevated corridor for “average daily traffic of 55,432 passengers”.

The report cited the feasibility study, which indicated that the daily traffic of 3,11,041 vehicles on NH-48 between Delhi and Gurugram primarily consisted of 2,88,391 passenger vehicles (92.72 percent). Among these, 2,32,959 passenger vehicles (80.78 percent) were inter-city traffic, which would not cross the Kherki Daula toll on NH-48.

The auditor noted that according to the feasibility report, around 55,432 passenger vehicles were projected to travel beyond Gurugram for longer distances in 2018. This traffic was meant to be shared between NH-48 and the eight-lane elevated main carriageway of the Dwarka Expressway.

“There was no justification on record for planning/construction of eight lanes (elevated lanes) for average daily traffic of 55,432 passenger vehicles, besides freight vehicles, whereas only six lanes (at grade lanes) were planned/constructed for average annual daily traffic of 2,32,959 passenger vehicles, besides freight vehicles,” the report said.

The project, which is being executed in four packages, was approved by the NHAI board without any detailed project report, the CAG report said.

“The individual projects of Dwarka Expressway were appraised (December 2017/February 2018) by Project Appraisal and Technical Scrutiny Committee and approved (January/March 2018) by NHAI Board without any detailed project report for the project being prepared (not prepared till date) and even the final feasibility report of the project was submitted (September 2018) after approval of the project by NHAI,” the report read.

CAG also noted that the lane configurations for the Dwarka Expressway were planned without considering the development of “parallel infrastructure”— the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) connecting Delhi to Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror and Alwar. This corridor is awaiting the central government’s final approval.

Delhi-Mumbai expressway may remain ‘underutilised’ for 24 yrs

The CAG report did not only highlight problems with the planning of the Dwarka Expressway. It also pointed out similar concerns over the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway.

Part of BPP-I, the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway comprises the Delhi-Vadodara and Vadodara-Mumbai Expressways. It is being developed as an eight-lane greenfield expressway, expandable to 12 lanes in the future.

However, the CAG noted that this eight-lane expressway would remain “underutilised for 24 years from its commercial operation date”. Not just this, it said that “even a six lane infrastructure created would have remained underutilised for 15 years from its commercial operation date”.

Referring to guidelines of the Indian Road Congress— the county’s apex body of highway engineers — the CAG report said that annual average daily traffic of 1,30,000 passenger car units (at 6 percent peak hour traffic) was required.

“Considering the traffic of 40,000 passenger car units on commercial operation date, the eight lane infrastructure and six lane infrastructure of this project would remain underutilised up to 2048 and 2039 respectively,” the report said.

“The required cost-benefit analysis to compare deliverables and cost in respect of four lanes, six lanes and eight lanes configurations respectively was not done by NHAI,” it notes.

Pointing at the deficiencies in the BPP-I projects, the CAG report said: “It is recommended that project appraisal and approval mechanism, including delegation of powers, need to be comprehensively reviewed for ensuring proper scrutiny, selection and approval of all modes of project construction at competent levels.” <https://theprint.in/india/oppn-cries-scam-govt-says-erroneous-whats-in-cag-report-on-rs-250-cr-km-dwarka-expressway/1718639/>

17. Dwarka Expressway को लेकर कैग की घोटाले वाली रिपोर्ट को लेकर परिवहन मंत्रालय का जवाब आया (punjabkesari.com) August 17, 2023

दिल्ली में बन रहे द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे को लेकर इन दिनों खूब चर्चा हो रही है क्योंकि बीते दिनों दिल्ली के सीएम अरविंद केजरीवाल ने केंद्र सरकार पर आरोप लगाए थे की एक्सप्रेसवे को बनाने में बड़ा घोटाला हुआ है। आपको बता दें द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे को लेकर कैग की आडिट रिपोर्ट आई जिसमें घोटाले का जिक्र किया गया है।

कैग की रिपोर्ट को मंत्रालय ने नकारा

लेकिन अब कैग की रिपोर्ट को केंद्रीय सड़क और परिवहन मंत्रालय ने नकार दिया है। मंत्रालय ने कहा है कि कैग की रिपोर्ट में कई तकनीकी खामियां हैं इसके अलावा उसने इसमें अन्य खर्चों की लागत को एड नहीं किया है। ऐसे में प्रोजेक्ट की लागत को अधिक बताना गलत है क्योंकि हमने तो पूरे प्रोजेक्ट में 12 प्रतिशत की बचत की है।

लागत को बढ़ाकर 251 करोड़ किया गया - रिपोर्ट

खबरों के मुताबिक, कैंग ने अपने लेखा परीक्षण में यह पाया है कि एनएचएआई के द्वारका एक्सप्रेस के हरियाणा वाले हिस्से को 'एलिवेटेड' मार्ग के रूप में बनाने के फैसले ने इसकी निर्माण लागत को बढ़ाकर 251 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर कर दिया। जबकि पुराना अनुमान 18.2 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर लागत का था।

इसका मतलब है कि इस प्रोजेक्ट के तहत निर्माण कार्य तय राशि से 14 गुना ज्यादा कीमत लगाई गई है।

भारतमाला परियोजना के तहत राजमार्गों का हो रहा विकास

भारतमाला परियोजना के तहत राजमार्गों के विकास के पहले चरण पर आई कैंग की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट ने नए राजनीतिक विवाद को जन्म दिया है। क्योंकि विपक्षी दल इस रिपोर्ट के आधार पर परियोजना के आवंटन में भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप लगा रहे हैं।

दिल्ली के सीएम ने केंद्र पर लगाए आरोप

दिल्ली के सीएम अरविंद केजरीवाल ने भी केंद्र सरकार पर भ्रष्टाचार का आरोप लगाया था। उन्होंने कहा था की मोदी सरकार ने भ्रष्टाचार के 75 वर्ष के सारे रिकॉर्ड तोड़ दिए। बता दें कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे का निर्माण दिल्ली से गुरुग्राम को जोड़ने के लिए किया जा रहा है। इस परियोजना का विकास दिल्ली और गुरुग्राम के बीच नेशनल हाईवे 48 के सामानांतर विकसित किया गया है। ताकि नेशनल हाईवे पर भीड़ को कम किया जा सके।

भारतमाला परियोजना के तहत 76,999 किलोमीटर सड़के बनाई गई

इसके साथ ही कैंग की रिपोर्ट भारत माला परियोजना के तहत बन रहे सड़कों के स्वीकृत और लागत राशि पर भी कई सवाल उठाए हैं। कैंग रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक अभी उसने एक्सप्रेसवे प्रोजेक्ट की 2017 से 2021 तक की रिपोर्ट का ऑडिट किया है। कैंग ने द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे के साथ दिल्ली-वडोदरा एक्सप्रेसवे पर निर्माण को लेकर भी सवाल खड़े किए हैं कैंग रिपोर्ट के अनुसार यह प्रोजेक्ट CCEA की ओर से स्वीकृत परियोजना की सूची में ही नहीं था। यानी एनएचएआई ने अपने स्तर पर 33 हजार करोड़ रुपये

खर्च कर किए CAG की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक भारतमाला परियोजना एक के तहत 76,999 किलोमीटर की सड़कें बनाई जा रही हैं। इसमें से 70,950 किलोमीटर सड़क NHAI बना रहा है।

91,000 करोड़ रुपये से हो रहा राजमार्गों का विकास

भारतमाला परियोजना के बारे में बात करें तो इसेक तहत सड़कों का विकास किया जाना है। इसलिए भारतमाला परियोजना के पहले चरण में 5,000 किलोमीटर लंबे राजमार्गों के लिए 91,000 करोड़ रुपये की लागत को सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय ने 10 अगस्त 2016 को अंतिम रूप दिया था।

देश की आठ लेन वाली पहली सड़क

मंत्रालय के मुताबिक यह एलिवेटेड मार्ग के रूप में विकसित होने वाली देश की आठ लेन वाली पहली सड़क होगी। इन सबके बीच द्वारका एक्सप्रेस को बनाने में आने वाले खर्च को लेकर सवाल किए जा रहे हैं क्योंकि कैग की रिपोर्ट में इस तरह के कई बड़े खुलासे हो चुके हैं। <https://punjabkesari.com/delhi-ncr/transport-ministry-s-reply-came-regarding-cag-s-scam-report-regarding-dwarka-expressway/>

18. 'एक्सप्रेसवे में गड़बड़ी', गडकरी के मंत्रालय ने CAG को बताया गलत, बड़ी गलती भी बता दी! (*thelallantop.com*) August 18, 2023

दिल्ली से गुरुग्राम जोड़ने के लिए द्वारका एक्सप्रेस वे (Dwarka Expressway) बन रहा है। इसकी लागत पर CAG ने सवाल खड़े किए थे। ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में दावा किया था कि एक्सप्रेस वे के निर्माण में अनुमान से ज्यादा लागत लग रही है। जैसे ही खबर आई, विपक्षी पार्टियों ने केंद्र सरकार को घेरना शुरू कर दिया। अब सरकार का जवाब आया है। CAG के इस दावे को अनुचित बताया गया है।

मीडिया रिपोर्ट्स के मुताबिक सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय ने इसका जवाब दिया है। बताया कि ये एक्सप्रेस वे भारतमाला प्रोजेक्ट के अंतर्गत बना है। इस एक्सप्रेसवे के लिए आर्थिक मामलों की कैबिनेट समिति (CCEA) से मंजूरी ली गई। मंत्रालय ने कहा कि एक्सप्रेसवे के लिए 206.39 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर की औसत लागत वाला टेंडर जारी किया गया था। लेकिन ठेकों का अंतिम आवंटन 181.94 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर की दर पर किया गया। यानी सरकार ने इसकी निर्माण लागत में 12 प्रतिशत की बचत की है।

सरकार की तरफ से दावा किया गया कि CAG ने निर्माण की वास्तविक लागत को ध्यान में नहीं रखा है. इसकी वजह से लागत बहुत अधिक होने की बात सामने आई है, जो कि अनुचित है. सरकार के इस दावे पर अभी CAG का जवाब नहीं आया है.

CAG रिपोर्ट में क्या कहा गया?

CAG की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 29.06 किलोमीटर लंबे इस एक्सप्रेस वे को कैबिनेट कमेटी ऑफ इकोनॉमिक अफेयर्स (CCEA) की तरफ से अप्रूवल जरूर मिला था, मगर 18.20 करोड़ प्रति किलोमीटर के बजट का. जबकि नेशनल हाइवे अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया (NHAI) की तरफ से इसका कुल बजट 7287.29 करोड़ रुपये कर दिया गया. यानी हर किलोमीटर पर 18.20 करोड़ की जगह करीब 251 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च.

कांग्रेस ने बोला हमला

CAG रिपोर्ट सामने आने के बाद कांग्रेस ने केंद्र सरकार पर जमकर हमला बोला. पार्टी की तरफ से तंज कसते हुए कहा गया,

"देश में मोदी विरोधी एक संस्था है. यह इंटरनेशनल साजिश में शामिल है. इस संस्था का नाम है- CAG. इस संस्था ने मोदी सरकार के 7 बड़े घोटालों का पर्दाफाश किया है. मोदी जी को तत्काल इस संस्था पर ताला लगवाना चाहिए और रिपोर्ट निकालने वालों को जेल भेजने का काम करना चाहिए. इन्हें लगता है देश में प्रजातंत्र है..."

इन विवादों के इतर मंत्रालय का दावा है कि इस एक्सप्रेसवे में कई खूबियां होंगी. द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे फोर लेवल इंटरचेंज सुविधा के साथ देश की पहली 8 लेन वाली एलिवेटेड सड़क है. एक्सप्रेसवे को दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट से जोड़ने के लिए इसमें 8 लेन वाली 3.6 किलोमीटर लंबी सुरंग और 6 लेन वाली 2.4 किलोमीटर लंबी सुरंग है. साथ ही साथ इसमें प्रमुख इंटरचेंजों पर ऊंची सर्विस सड़कों का भी निर्माण किया गया है. विवादों के बीच अब सीएजी का सरकार की बात पर क्या जवाब आता है. ये देखने वाला होगा.

<https://www.thelallantop.com/news/post/cag-report-on-dwarka-expressway-highways-ministry-official-says-report-erroneous>

19. दक्षिण के 5 राज्यों ने हाईवे पर अकेले इकट्ठा किया 28% टोल
(oneindia.com) August 18, 2023

देश में सर्वाधिक रोड टोल देने के मामले में दक्षिण भारत के पांच राज्य सबसे आगे हैं। इन पांच राज्यों ने हाईवे पर रिकॉर्ड टोल कलेक्शन किया है। अहम बात है कि इन

पांच राज्यों में देश के कुल सड़क नेटवर्क का सिर्फ पांचवा हिस्सा ही है, लेकिन देश में टोल कलेक्ट करने के मामले में यह सबसे आगे हैं।

हाल ही में सीएजी की जो रिपोर्ट सामने आई है उसके अनुसार दक्षिण के पांच राज्यों में कुल रोड नेटवर्क 27 हजार किलोमीटर है। जोकि देश के कुल रोड नेटवर्क का 19.85 फीसदी है। भारत में रोड नेटवर्क की बात करें तो यह 136000 किलोमीटर है। यह आंकड़ा मार्च 2021 का है।

तमिलनाडु, कर्नाटक, आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना, केरल में देश के कुल हाईवे का 19 फीसदी ही हाईवे है। बावजूद इसके इन राज्यों ने देश के कुल टोल में से 28 फीसदी टोल इकट्ठा किया है।

दक्षिण के इन राज्यों ने 28523 करोड़ रुपए का टोल इकट्ठा किया था। यह टोल NHAI से वित्त वर्ष 2017-18 से 2020-21 के बीच इकट्ठा किया गया है। हालांकि 2018-19 में टोल कलेक्शन घटा था।

तमिलनाडु ने सर्वाधिक 2400 करोड़ रुपए का टोल इकट्ठा किया जबकि आंध्र प्रदेश ने 1950 करोड़, कर्नाटक ने 1830 करोड़ रुपए का टोल इकट्ठा किया था। वहीं तेलंगाना ने 1040 करोड़ रुपए तो केरल ने 180 करोड़ रुपए का टोल इकट्ठा किया था।

चौंकाने वाली बात यह है कि कोरोना काल में भी टोल कलेक्शन में खास गिरावट देखने को नहीं मिली थी। कोरोना काल में टोल कलेक्शन में सिर्फ 2 फीसदी की गिरावट देखने को मिली थी।

इन राज्यों ने 7455 करोड़ रुपए कोरोना काल में इकट्ठा किया था, जबकि भारत में टोल कलेक्शन 3.1 फीसदी कम हुआ था और भारत में कोरोना काल में 26030 करोड़ रुपए का टोल इकट्ठा किया गया था। <https://hindi.oneindia.com/news/india/southern-satates-collects-around-28-percent-tolls-to-total-revenue-805853.html>

20. CAG bares major faults in Swadesh Darshan Scheme (thegoan.net) August 18, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has exposed massive irregularities of the Goa government in implementing Central government sponsored Swadesh Darshan Scheme resulting in wasteful expenditure.

From failing to adopt criteria for development of tourist circuits/destinations to diversion of funds or appointment of too many consultants and excess payments made to them, were major flaws observed by CAG in its report tabled in the Parliament.

“Irregularities such as execution on a leased land, diversion of funds, excess payment to contractor, procuring of items at significantly higher rates than its previous procurement rate, procuring equipment before completion of necessary infrastructure, dropping of components of a project etc., were seen during the execution of the projects in the circuit,” the CAG said in its performance audit report on “Swadesh Darshan Scheme”.

CAG also observed that “most of the infrastructure developed was lying in an abandoned state without any operation and maintenance plan and without revenue or employment generation”.

The CAG pointed out that as per the scheme guidelines, tourist circuits/destinations were to be identified considering factors such as current tourist traffic, connectivity potential and significance attached to the site, holistic tourist experience etc.

“However, it was observed that there were no proper criteria for selection of destinations by the State. The stakeholders such as local bodies or departments were not consulted before preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the circuit,” CAG said.

Auditor said that the DPR consisted of items mainly for basic infrastructure development like public toilets, parking, Tourist Information Center, etc. across the North coastal belt, as per the need and availability of land, without proper planning and were not integrated into a tourist circuit.

CAG cited example how the proposed helipad at Aguada Fort, upgraded at a cost of Rs 3.43 crore was shifted to a land parcel at Old Goa due to opposition from locals. The change of site was considered without taking into account the tourist potential at the relocated site.

Further, CAG said that as per the Scheme guidelines, implementing agencies were required to follow all codal formalities while awarding the contracts. However, it was observed that throughout the process of preparation of DPR, too many consultants were hired by the State Government.

“The consultancy charges ranged from 0.80 per cent to 4.30 per cent as against 2 per cent sanctioned by the Ministry. Considering the quantum of work, the issue of consultants was also objected to by the National Productivity Council in its Third-Party Impact Assessment Report of 2019,” CAG said.

The Auditor also slammed the State Government for failing to ensure necessary clearances before submission of proposals and as a result, there was delay in commencement of project, which also led to delay in completion.
<https://www.thegoan.net/goa-news/cag-bares-major-faults-in-swadesh-darshan-scheme/102783.html>

21. CAG nails J&K govt on selection of 'sensitive' Suchetgarh for border tourism (*thenewsnow.co.in*) August 18, 2023

Jammu: Even as the UT administration has been making strenuous efforts to promote border tourism in Jammu region, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has raised a question mark on the selection of 'sensitive' Suchetgarh International Border for tourism, saying "the site was not suitable for attracting tourism, hence defeating the very purpose of project".

The CAG report on Swadesh Darshan Scheme released last week, in its case study, has observed that Suchetgarh (Jammu) was situated in a sensitive border location. "Despite knowing this fact, the site was included in the project and it was approved", it said.

"The State Government selected this location for the execution of a project under the Himalayan circuit in Jammu and Kashmir and completed it by incurring an expenditure of Rs 3.71 crore. During the site visit, it was noticed that the project completed under the Scheme is occupied and used by the Border Security Force (BSF) for their operational purposes, hence defeating the very purpose of the project," the report stated.

Of late, the Suchetgarh International Border, which is located 28-km from Jammu, has emerged as a focal point for border tourism, as per the tourism department, with tourists in good numbers thronging Suchetgarh border. The Jammu tourism department, however, claimed that "the government's concerted efforts to promote border tourism are yielding results and reinvigorating villages".

The 198-km-long International Border between India and Pakistan—from Paharpur in Kathua, bordering Punjab to Akhnoor, north of Jammu—is manned by the BSF and it has seen major ceasefire violations during the past few years as Pakistani troops often resort to heavy firing and shelling, triggering fear among border dwellers many of whom have frequently been forced to flee.

On another border tourism site, the CAG said, "Salamabad-Uri is situated quite far away from major tourist destinations i.e., Srinagar, Gulmarg, etc. Further, this place is situated at a border location. The project was taken up without ensuring availability of land".

"The component 'Integrated Development of Border Tourism at Salamabad-Uri' under Swadesh Darshan Scheme was entrusted to J&K Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC) by the State Tourism Department. The land belonged to National HydroElectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and despite knowing this fact, the Implementing Agency went ahead with project execution. During physical inspection, it was seen that NHPC had constructed a wall around the land and work had been stopped after incurring an expenditure of Rs 1.27 crore for earthwork for basement and foundation columns, etc., which thus proved to be unfruitful", the report said.

In June 2016, the Central government had announced the 'Integrated Development of Jammu-Srinagar-Pahalgam- Bhagwati Nagar -Anantnag -Salamabad-Uri -Kargil-Leh' project under Himalayan circuit in Jammu and Kashmir with a sanctioned cost of Rs 77.33 crore, against which an amount of over Rs 60 crore was released while Rs 53.31 crore expenditure was made till date.

The CAG again observed that no identification criteria were indicated in the DPR for the projects planned and executed. "The project was taken up from existing developed tourist destinations and included the selection of sites not suitable for attracting tourism," it said. <https://www.thenewsnow.co.in/newsdet.aspx?q=153562>

22. सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में खादी ग्रामोद्योग की हालत पतली, जबकि मोदी सरकार पेश कर रही है रिकॉर्ड तोड़ बिक्री के आंकड़े (*janchowk.com*) August 17, 2023

हाल ही में 9 जून, 2023 को राष्ट्रीय समाचारपत्रों की सुर्खियां कुछ इस प्रकार थीं: "वित्तीय वर्ष 2013-23 तक खादी और ग्रामोद्योग का उत्पादन 26 हजार 109 करोड़ रुपये था। वहीं, 2023 में यह 268% बढ़कर 95 हजार 957 करोड़ रुपये तक पहुंच गया है। यह इस बात का प्रमाण है कि मेक इन इंडिया, वोकल फॉर लोकल और स्वदेशी उत्पादों पर देश की जनता का भरोसा बढ़ा है।"

लेकिन सीएजी की हालिया रिपोर्ट संख्या 9 में कहानी पूरी तरह से उलट है। खादी एवं ग्रामोद्योग आयोग (केवीआईसी) जिसकी स्थापना संसद के खादी एंड विलेज इंडस्ट्रीज कमीशन एक्ट, 1956 के तहत कानूनन अमल में लाया गया था। इसके लिए 92 डिपार्टमेंटल ट्रेडिंग यूनिट का निर्माण किया गया। सीएजी के अनुसार 31 मार्च, 2021 तक इन 92 डिपार्टमेंटल ट्रेडिंग यूनिट में से मात्र 18 डिपार्टमेंटल ट्रेडिंग यूनिट्स ही अपना कामकाज कर रही हैं, जबकि 74 डिपार्टमेंटल ट्रेडिंग यूनिट बंद पड़ी हैं। सीएजी ने इन बंद पड़े ट्रेडिंग यूनिट की पड़ताल की है, और उसकी तुलना में खादी ग्रामोद्योग बोर्ड की बैलेंस शीट पूरी तरह से हैरान करने वाली है, जिसमें बिक्री के शानदार आंकड़ों से खादी और गांधी की 'धूम' दिखाई देती है।

2017-18 से 2020-21 के 4 वर्षों के आंकड़ों में कोई एक वर्ष भी नहीं है, जिसमें खादी ग्रामोद्योग ने लक्ष्य हासिल किया हो। रिटेल सेल के आंकड़ों पर गौर करें तो (मुंबई, गोवा, कोलकाता, पटना, दिल्ली, भोपाल और एर्नाकुलम) की बिक्री का लक्ष्य 2017-18 (163.23 करोड़, बनाम वास्तविक बिक्री 115.14 करोड़) था, जो लक्ष्य का 71% ही हासिल हो सका था। इसी प्रकार वर्ष 2018-19 में लक्ष्य 163.23 करोड़ था, लेकिन बिक्री 126.70 करोड़ के साथ 78% हासिल हो सका था। वित्तीय वर्ष 2019-20 के लिए लक्ष्य को घटाकर 113.71 करोड़ कर दिया गया था, लेकिन उस वर्ष बिक्री पूर्व के वर्षों से भी घटकर 107.76 करोड़ के साथ 95% लक्ष्य हासिल किया जा सका।

कोविड-19 महामारी के मद्देनजर वर्ष 2020-21 के लक्ष्य को 119.35 करोड़ तक सीमित रखा गया, तो उस वर्ष बिक्री महज 55.72 करोड़ के साथ 47% पर सिमट चुका था। सीएजी के अनुसार जुलाई, 2022 में मंत्रालय ने अपने लिखित जवाब में

कोरोना महामारी के चलते मुंबई क्षेत्र की बिक्री पर असर की बात स्वीकार की, लेकिन केवीआईसी का प्रदर्शन कोविड-19 से पहले और बाद में भी संतोषजनक नहीं पाया गया, जिसके जवाब में मंत्रालय ने कोई ठोस उत्तर नहीं दिया है।

सीएजी के ये आंकड़े रिटेल सेल के हैं। खादी ग्रामोद्योग के निर्यात के आंकड़े भी हैं। इसमें खादी की बिक्री न के बराबर है। लेकिन पापड़ की बिक्री 52.41 करोड़ रुपये है। शहद 133 करोड़ रुपये और हैंडीक्राफ्ट की बिक्री 19 करोड़ रुपये तक है, जो 2020-21 में कुल निर्यात को 209.28 करोड़ रुपये तक ले जाती है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में खादी कोर्नर और खादी प्लाज़ा का भी विश्लेषण किया गया है। इसके अलावा सरकारी विभागों और थोक बिक्री के आंकड़ों का भी विश्लेषण किया गया है। इसके साथ ही भारतीय रेलवे, केंद्रीय सशस्त्र पुलिस बलों को जाने वाली बिक्री पर भी प्रकाश डाला गया है, और संस्तुति की गई है। लेकिन इन सबको भी मिला दें तो खादी ग्रामोद्योग के जिन आंकड़ों का जिक्र देश के समाचारपत्रों में किया जा रहा है, उसके आस पास भी फटकना संभव नहीं है।

इस गड़बड़झाले को समझने के लिए खादी ग्रामोद्योग की वेबसाइट पर जाने पर जो बात निकलकर आई, वह हैरान करने वाली है। वर्ष 2020-21 और 2021-22 की अपनी बैलेंसशीट में खादी ग्रामोद्योग ने बिल्कुल अलग आंकड़े पेश किये हैं। जहां तक उत्पादन का प्रश्न है वर्ष 2020-21 में खादी का उत्पादन 1,668.61 करोड़ रुपये दिखाया गया है। इसके साथ ही पोलीवस्त्र एवं सोलरवस्त्र के खाते में क्रमशः 230.51 करोड़ एवं 5.37 करोड़ रुपये का जिक्र है। लेकिन असल खेल ग्रामोद्योग नामक अलग खाते में है, जिसमें उत्पादन 70,330.15 करोड़ पहुंच जाता है। अर्थात खादी की तुलना में 4,200% अधिक। ये ग्रामोद्योग का खादी से क्या संबंध है? इसे कब से खादी ग्रामोद्योग से नत्थी कर दिया गया है? सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में इस बारे में कोई जानकारी नहीं मिलती।

इसी प्रकार बिक्री के आंकड़े हैं। खादी (3085.53 करोड़ रुपये), पोलीवस्त्र (436.52 करोड़) और सोलरवस्त्र 5.66 करोड़ की बिक्री दिखाता है। लेकिन ग्रामोद्योग में बिक्री 92,213.65 करोड़ रुपये के साथ खादी ग्रामोद्योग को 1 ट्रिलियन रुपये वाली अर्थव्यवस्था के करीब ले जाता है।

वर्ष 2021-22 में 1 ट्रिलियन के लक्ष्य को पार भी कर लिया गया है। सकल उत्पादन 84,289.93 करोड़ रुपये (ग्रामोद्योग के हिस्से में 81,731.62 करोड़ जबकि खादी

2275.74 करोड़ रुपये थी)। 2021-22 में बिक्री के आंकड़े 1,15,415.23 करोड़ रुपये (ग्रामोद्योग 110363.51 करोड़, खादी मात्र 4366.06 करोड़ थी)।

खादी ग्रामोद्योग की बैलेंस शीट को ध्यान से देखने पर पता चलता है कि असल में अब सरकार ने खादी के दायरे को काफी विस्तारित कर दिया है। ग्रामोद्योग को परिभाषित करते हुए केवीआईसी की वेबसाइट बताती है कि केवीआईसी अधिनियम के मुताबिक, ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में कोई भी उद्योग यदि कोई उत्पादन या सेवा प्रदान करता है, और उस काम के लिए मैदानी क्षेत्रों में 1 लाख रुपये और पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में 1.50 लाख रुपये से अधिक का निवेश नहीं किया है, तो उसे ग्रामोद्योग की श्रेणी में रखा जायेगा। इसके कार्यक्षेत्र को शहरी क्षेत्र में भी विस्तारित किया जा चुका है। इसमें हनी (शहद), कुम्हार सशक्तीकरण, खादी प्राकृतिक पेंट (गोबर युक्त), बांस का वृक्षारोपण, बायो गैस संयंत्र सहित विभिन्न उद्योगों को शामिल किया गया है।

यह वाकई में कमाल का मिश्रण है। देश खादी के प्रति प्रधानमंत्री की प्रतिबद्धता को लेकर शानदार एमोजी भेजने में लगा हुआ है, इधर मंत्रालय गांवों में सभी छोटे एवं सूक्ष्म उद्यमों को खादी ग्रामोद्योग में ठेलकर इस लक्ष्य को नई-नई ऊंचाइयां देने में मशगूल है।

खादी ग्रामोद्योग में ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में हर प्रकार के उद्यम को (1-1.5 लाख रुपये) शामिल कर आंकड़ों में भारी जालसाजी, वहीं दूसरी तरफ कुल 92 डिपार्टमेंटल ट्रेडिंग यूनिट में से 74 का बंद पड़ा होना बिल्कुल दूसरी तस्वीर पेश करता है। सीएजी की रिपोर्ट हमारे लिए एक तमाचा है, फर्जी आंकड़ों से देश की रंगीन तस्वीर किन लोगों को खुशी का अहसास कराती है, और इससे कितने समय तक देश को घसीटना संभव होगा, यह सोचना हर संवेदनशील नागरिक का काम है। <https://janchowk.com/pahlapanna/cag-exposed-the-modi-govt-on-the-matter-of-khadi-and-gramodyog-data/>

23. 774 में से 54 रूटों पर ही उड़ रहे विमान, केंद्र सरकार की सस्ती हवाई यात्रा फेल! CAG रिपोर्ट में हुआ खुलासा (tv9hindi.com) Aug 17, 2023

केंद्र सरकार की सस्ते में हवाई यात्रा कराने वाली स्कीम 'उड़ान' फेल हो गई है. ऐसा हम बल्कि CAG रिपोर्ट कह रही है. जी हां देश के कम्पट्रोलर और ऑडिट जनरल यानि CAG की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में रीजनल कनेक्टिविटी स्कीम की तीन चरणों में जांच की गई है. जिसमे सामने आया कि देशभर में जो 774 रूट उड़ान योजना के लिए चुने गए थे. उनमें से 403 पर अब तक उड़ान नहीं शुरू हो पाई जबकि 371 रूट पर संचालन शुरू हो गया है. यही नहीं कुल 112 रूट अब तक चालू हुए, जबकि ज्यादातर रूट इससे

पहले ही बंद हो गए और मार्च 2023 तक आते-आते सिर्फ 54 रूट पर ही योजना का संचालन किया जा रहा है.

ये था मकसद

2017 में लॉन्च की गई उड़ान योजना का मकसद देश के दूर-दराज इलाकों में हवाई यात्रा शुरू करना और बड़े शहरों या राजधानियों से उन इलाकों को हवाई मार्ग से जोड़ना था. ताकि छोटे शहरों की कनेक्टिविटी देश के बड़े शहरों से बेहतर हो सके.

रिपोर्ट में कैग ने उड़ान योजना के निराशाजनक प्रदर्शन को लेकर कई कारण भी गिनाए हैं, योजना के लिए चुने गए हवाई अड्डे या हवाई पट्टियों का समय पर निर्माण नहीं किया जाना या उनमें समुचित सुधार नहीं हो पाना, एक बड़ा कारण रहा है.

116 में से 83 एयरपोर्ट पर संचालन शुरू नहीं हुआ

कैग ने रिपोर्ट में कहा कि कुल 116 एयरपोर्ट और हवाई पट्टियां ऐसे हैं, जिसमें से 83 पर संचालन शुरू नहीं किया जा सकता है. रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक इन हवाई अड्डों पर अब तक 1089 करोड़ रुपए खर्च किए गए.

रिपोर्ट में कहा कि खास बात यह है कि योजना के तहत प्रावधान था कि ऑपरेटर पहले रियायती किराए वाले टिकट बचेंगे और बाद में गैर रियायती टिकट बेचे जाएंगे इससे जुड़ी पड़ताल को लेकर कैबिनेट स्पाइसजेट इंडिगो समेत अन्य विमानन कंपनियां द्वारा प्रावधान का अनुपालन नहीं किए जाने की बात कही

विमानन कंपनियों की ओर से स्पष्ट तौर पर रियायती दरों वाली सीटों की उपलब्धता नहीं बताई जा रही है इसकी वजह से यात्रियों को इन सीटों की जानकारी नहीं मिलती और टिकट बुकिंग में पारदर्शिता की भी कमी बरकरार है.
<https://www.tv9hindi.com/business/central-govt-udan-scheme-failed-cag-report-says-only-54-routes-out-of-774-covered-till-2023-2048518.html>

24. 'उड़ान' स्कीम पर कैग ने क्या खुलासा किया है? (thelallantop.com) Aug 17, 2023

खर्चा-पानी दी लल्लनटॉप का डेली फाइनेंशियल बुलेटिन है, खर्चा-पानी में आज,

1-केन्द्र सरकार की 'उड़ान' स्कीम को लेकर कैग ने क्या खुलासा किया है?

- 2-उड़ान योजना क्या है और यह योजना कब शुरू हुई थी?
- 3-उड़ान योजना के तहत चलने वाली कितनी फ्लाइट्स बंद हुई हैं?
- 4-उड़ान योजना फेल होने के कैग ने क्या कारण गिनाए हैं?

Video Link: <https://www.thelallantop.com/business/post/kharcha-paani-what-has-the-cag-revealed-on-the-udaan-scheme>

25. Is There Any CAG Report On Implementation Of Manual Scavengers Act? Supreme Court Asks Centre (*livelaw.in*) Aug 17, 2023

A Division Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justices S. Ravindra Bhat and Aravind Kumar, resumed its hearing of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on the implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (Act).

The details of the previous hearing can be seen here (<https://www.livelaw.in/topstories/supreme-court-expresses-anguish-at-states-not-implementing-prohibitionof-manual-scavenging-act-233791>).

At the outset, Centre, represented by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati, placed before the Bench several relevant documents, including the surveys carried out concerning the manual scavengers. Further, the documents demonstrating steps taken under PM-DAKSH Yojana were also placed. The scheme is a National Action Plan for skilling marginalized persons covering SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation workers, and waste pickers.

However, Justice Bhat inquired, “Where is the CAG report? This Act has been in force for ten years. Many schemes have come. Do you have any CAG report after 2013 on any aspect?”

To this, ASG answered that a note had been finalized and would be placed on record.

Post this, Advocate K Parameshwar, amicus curiae, commenced his submissions by taking the Bench through his proposed directions.

At the outset, he submitted that the constitutional question involved in the present case is not merely about compensation; it is about emancipation. He pointed out that the Apex Court has talked about fundamental rights but has seldom talked about Articles 15, 17, 23, and 24 of the Indian Constitution as a whole. He went on to submit that these Articles are transformative provisions as they address historical injustices. “It is about citizen and citizen,” he said.

It breaks the idea that fraternity is not enforceable, and thus, any rehabilitation measure that flows from the Act should be interpreted in the backdrop of these provisions.

Exceptions Carved out in the Act and Need for Proper Mechanism

Moving forward, he took the Bench through certain definitions in the Act, starting with 'hazardous cleaning' (Section 2(d) of the Act). It states:

“hazardous cleaning” by an employee, in relation to a sewer or septic tank, means its manual cleaning by such employee without the employer fulfilling his obligations to provide protective gear and other cleaning devices and ensuring observance of safety precautions, as may be prescribed or provided in any other law, for the time being in force or rules made thereunder;.”

He highlighted that there is no mechanism. He averred that the said definition should be interpreted restrictively and in a manner by which the dignity of any individual is not offended.

Further, he referred to the definition of manual scavenger (Section 2(g) of the Act) and its explanation. The explanation states:

“(b) a person engaged or employed to clean excreta with the help of such devices and using such protective gear, as the Central Government may notify in this behalf, shall not be deemed to be a 'manual scavenger';”

Based on these above-mentioned provisions, he pleaded before the Bench that this could not be the intent as the same is against the constitutional provisions. Pertinently, Justice Bhat also pointed out that the protective gears can be loose as well.

Pursuant to this, Justice Kumar asked Parameshwar: “What if they give complete suit”?

Adding to that, Justice Bhat inquired about what is being done in Countries where such practice is not prevalent. He cited the example of Europe.

Parameshwar replied that these countries have opted for the mechanism.

However, Justice Kumar rebutted by saying that there is a need for resources for mechanisms and the same cannot be done overnight.

Justice Bhat asked: “What is the ideal standard?...window dressing should not take place.”

Subsequently, the Counsel referred to certain relevant rules of The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules, 2013 (Rules). Intra-alia, advocate stressed upon the starting line of Rule 3. It starts with:

“No person shall be allowed to clean a sewer manually, with protective gear and safety devices under these rules except”

He highlighted how no one is allowed to clean a sewer even with protective gear. Justice Bhat acceded and said, "No, actually, rule 3 is very important. So, in that sense it truly carries the Act's intent.”

It is worth mentioning that during the proceedings, Justice Bhat also pointed out the news of the death of Sulabh International founder and social activist Bindeshwar Pathak that took place yesterday.

Parameshwar also averred that the entire stress in the Rules is on hazardous cleaning and not on manual scavenging, while in the Act the issue of hazardous cleaning is totally unregulated. Reports of Surveys Are Inadequate

Regarding the surveys of manual scavengers, he submitted that several commissions have flagged this issue and stated that these surveys are inadequate. Parameshwar argued that a comprehensive survey is required.

To bolster his argument, he emphasized that the Supreme Court pointed out that the National Survey of Manual Scavengers, 2013, was not conducted in rural areas. Moreover, Niti Ayog member, also stated that we need a fresh survey. He elucidated the same by emphasizing that except five states, no state-level survey committee is constituted by other states.

Parameshwar also brought to attention that no survey has been carried out regarding sewer deaths. In 2014, Supreme Court ordered a survey of sewer deaths since 1993. However, no survey was carried out, and there is a legislative void for this. He went on to submit that there is a need for the same in order to compensate and properly rehabilitate the victims adequately. He suggested that State Legal Services Authority must take action on this.

On being asked about the data, he replied that post the enforcement of the Act, 1 Sewer death takes place every five days. One of his proposed directions was that the municipal body pay first and recover later from sewer death.

<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-pil-manual-scavengers-act-implementation-235469?infinitemscroll=1>

26. बेपटरी वित्तीय व्यवस्था (*hindi.business-standard.com*) 17 August 2023

केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने बुधवार को रेल मंत्रालय के 32,512 करोड़ रुपये के प्रस्तावों को मंजूरी प्रदान की जो देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों में रेल नेटवर्क का विस्तार करने से संबंधित थे। मंजूर किए गए धन का इस्तेमाल उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात और ओडिशा में किया जाएगा। क्षमता बढ़ाने में किया जाने वाला निवेश हाल के वर्षों में काफी बढ़ा है और इसका स्वागत किया जाना चाहिए क्योंकि इससे समग्र आर्थिक क्षमता सुधारने में मदद मिलेगी।

परंतु केंद्रीय बजट के जरिये क्षमता निर्माण में उच्च निवेश की बदौलत रेलवे की वित्तीय स्थिति पर से ध्यान नहीं हटना चाहिए। वह केवल अपनी क्षमताओं के मुताबिक ही प्रदर्शन कर पाएगा और क्षमता निर्माण तथा आधुनिकीकरण में जरूरी निवेश करेगा, बशर्ते कि उसकी वित्तीय स्थिति का समुचित प्रबंधन किया जाए। इस बारे में हाल ही में आई दो रिपोर्ट उन कमियों को उजागर करती हैं जो रेलवे के संचालन में नजर आती हैं।

रेलवे पर स्थायी समिति की एक हालिया रिपोर्ट में यह बात दोहराई गई है कि रेलवे को वित्त मंत्रालय से आंशिक सहायता की जरूरत है ताकि वह अपनी पेंशन संबंधी जरूरतों को पूरा कर सके। रेलवे ने चालू वर्ष में जहां पर्याप्त इंतजाम किए हैं वहीं 2020-21 में उसे 79,398 करोड़ रुपये का ऋण लेना पड़ा था जिसे पेंशन फंड में इस्तेमाल किया गया। इसके अलावा महामारी के विस्तारित प्रभाव ने राजस्व को प्रभावित किया और सरकार ने रेलवे को यह अनुमति दी कि वह 2021-22 की राजस्व प्राप्तियों से परे राजस्व व्यय कर सके।

उक्त प्राप्तियों का इस्तेमाल पेंशन व्यय की भरपाई के लिए किया गया था। इन प्रावधानों को कवर करने से रेलवे का कामकाज स्वाभाविक तौर पर प्रभावित होगा। बहरहाल, बड़ा मुद्दा एक या दो साल का घाटा नहीं है क्योंकि ऐसा असाधारण परिस्थितियों में हुआ, लेकिन असल मुद्दा दीर्घकालिक स्थायित्व का है। पेंशन देनदारी में इजाफा जारी रहेगा और यह रेलवे के लिए एक चुनौती बना रहेगा। अनुमान है कि 2011-12 के 17,000 करोड़ रुपये से बढ़कर यह 2023-24 तक 60,000 करोड़ रुपये हो जाएगा।

बढ़ती देनदारी आने वाले वर्षों में और परेशान करेगी। आंशिक तौर पर ऐसा इसलिए कि पर्याप्त राजस्व नहीं एकत्रित हो पा रहा है। इस संदर्भ में स्थायी समिति का कहना है: 'आंतरिक संसाधनों में निरंतर गिरावट इस बात का संकेत है कि भारतीय रेल के समग्र नियोजन और प्रबंधन में अंदरूनी तौर पर कमियां हैं।' रेलवे का परिचालन अनुपात 2021-22 के 107.39 से मामूली रूप से सुधरकर 2022-23 में 98.10 हुआ।

रेलवे के पर्याप्त राजस्व नहीं जुटा पाने की एक वजह उसके परिचालन का तरीका है। उदाहरण के लिए भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक यानी सीएजी की 2021-22 की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि माल ढुलाई से होने वाले मुनाफे का इस्तेमाल यात्रियों को सब्सिडी देने में किया गया लेकिन इसके बावजूद 32,000 करोड़ रुपये की कमी रह गई। वर्ष के दौरान जहां यात्रियों तथा अन्य कोच सेवाओं पर होने वाले नुकसान में कमी आई, फिर भी यह 68,269 करोड़ रुपये के उच्च स्तर पर रहा।

सीएजी की अनुशंसा है कि यात्री परिचालन का आलोचनात्मक आकलन करने की आवश्यकता है ताकि नुकसान कम करने की दिशा में जरूरी कदम उठाए जा सकें। संसाधनों की अपर्याप्त उपलब्धता परिचालन सुरक्षा को जोखिम में डाल सकती है। जैसा कि सीएजी ने कहा मूल्य में कमी के लिए आरक्षित फंड में कुछ वर्षों के दौरान कमी

आई है जो पुरानी पड़ रही परिसंपत्तियों को बदलने के काम को मुश्किल बना सकती है।

बहरहाल, रेलवे की वित्तीय स्थिति पूरी तरह उसकी देन नहीं है। उदाहरण के लिए राजस्व के मोर्चे पर बात करें तो यात्री किराये पर उसका पूरा नियंत्रण नहीं है और व्यय के क्षेत्र में वेतन तथा पेंशन पर भी। परिचालन क्षमता में जहां सुधार की जरूरत है, वहीं सरकार को भी यह निर्णय लेना होगा कि वह रेलवे को कैसे चलाना चाहती है। केंद्रीय बजट पर बढ़ती निर्भरता शायद आगे जाने का अच्छा तरीका नहीं है।
<https://hindi.business-standard.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-bad-financial-system>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

27. CAG flags series of overruns in UP's major irrigation projects (*downtoearth.org.in*) 17 August 2023

Canal irrigation is provided in only 17 per cent of Uttar Pradesh's net irrigated area despite the government pumping huge amounts of money into its major irrigation projects, found a performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

Up to Rs 3,419.37 crore and Rs 682.5 crore have been spent on two major canal irrigation projects — Bansagar Canal Project and the modernisation of the Chaudhary Charan Singh Lahchura Dam Project — from 1996-1997 to 2020-21 and 1978-1979 to 2017-2018, respectively, the report pointed out. The latter amount also has Pahari Dam in its ambit.

The audit carried out to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the two canal projects identified the areas that require systemic corrections and improvements.

Bansagar Canal Project envisaged the construction of canal systems in Uttar Pradesh to utilise 34,008 million cubic feet of water from the Bansagar Dam, the document noted. The project aimed to increase the irrigation intensity of the nine existing canal systems from 85-150 per cent in the Culturable Command Area (CCA) of 0.23 million hectares in Prayagraj and Mirzapur districts. CCA is the cultivable area that can be irrigated using a project.

On the other hand, Chaudhary Charan Singh Lahchura Dam Project provides water to Dhasan Canal System, with a CCA of 97,169-hectare area in Mahoba and Hamirpur districts. Lahchura Dam, apart from its own storage, receives water from Pahari Dam.

The outcomes pertaining to the augmentation of water availability in the canal network, creation of additional irrigation intensity and change in cropping pattern remained largely unachieved due to deficient planning for remodelling the existing canal systems. It pointed out insufficient storage capacity of dams, inadequate supply of water in canals and consequently non-operation of canals for full cropping period, among other reasons.

Both the selected irrigation projects had significant issues in planning as well as execution. In Bansagar Canal Project, issues like the current availability of water in the canal systems and capacity enhancement of existing canal systems were either not addressed, or inadequate provisions were made in the detailed project reports, the report added. Due to this, the envisaged objective of enhancing the irrigation intensity of the canal could not be achieved.

The scope of the project for modernising Lahchura and Pahari dams Projects was limited to replacing the old structures of the dams. The insufficient water storage capacity of the dams was not addressed. As a result, the project would not be able to provide canal irrigation in the entire command area (the area which can be reliably irrigated from a source) of 97,169 hectares, the report highlighted.

The scope of the construction works in both projects could not be firmed up and kept changing during the course of the execution. Due to this, Bansagar Canal Project was delayed for more than 14 years and six years delay in the case of Lahchura Dam Project. These accompanied a huge cost overrun.

The performance audit also pointed out serious lapses. In Bansagar Canal Project, the provision of cost escalation in labour, petroleum, oil and lubricant and material was included belatedly after technical bid evaluation, it stated. “Ineligible contractors were awarded works in Lahchura Dam project,” the report noticed.

In the execution of works, irregularities such as unjustified payment of price adjustment, irregular grant of interest-free advances to contractors and unauthorised sanction of variations in the quantities of the contract were noticed. Grant of time extension without proper justifications, inadequate quality control, etc., were also noticed.

The envisaged connectivity between canals was also not achieved, it added. “The canal networks were not maintained regularly. Convergence efforts impacting the outcomes were also not adequate as there were short / delayed supply of certified seeds from the government seed stores and inadequate soil testing in the selected villages,” the document stressed.

The command area of the canal systems was also not developed, restricting the utilisation of created irrigation intensity. The report also suggested the Uttar Pradesh government to explore the feasibility of enhancing the storage capacity of Lahchura and Pahari dams so as to store adequate water from Dhasan river.

It also recommended the government to take up remodelling / restoration works in the nine canal systems of Bansagar Canal Project and Dhasan Canal System in an efficient and effective way.

CAG also recommended the state government to investigate the matter of defective surveys and faulty assessment of requirements of the projects. “Series of delays need to be looked into and remedial measures may be taken to ensure competence of contractor, penalty for delays and timelines in contract conditions for future projects.”

The audit further disclosed that the number of different structures, such as regulators, cross drainage, canal bridges, escape and service roads increased manifold (20 per cent to 581 per cent) during the entire period of execution of work (1994-2019).

The findings are critical as the economy of Uttar Pradesh is primarily agrarian, with about 65 per cent of the total population dependent on agriculture. Of a total 24.09 million hectare area of the state, 18.77 million hectares is agricultural land, of which 77 per cent is the net irrigated area. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/cag-flags-series-of-overruns-in-up-s-major-irrigation-projects-91214>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

28. Revamping public transport requires more than a subsidy for electric buses
(*livemint.com*) 18 Aug 2023

It needs planning and regulation at the local and state levels and buy-in at all levels of the polity

The union government has cleared a project to run 10,000 electric buses and build infrastructure to charge them in 169 urban centres across India, at an estimated cost of ₹57,600 crore over 10 years. It will provide ₹20,000 crore of this, and the rest will come, presumably, from state governments and private investors.

There are three things to note about the decision. One, the focus is on buses rather than cars, as in the first and second installments of the government's Faster Adoption of Manufacture of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme. Two, it allows for the introduction of battery swapping, which would prevent long waiting times at charging stations. Three, the contribution of electric vehicles to combating climate change depends to a great extent on the source of the electricity used to charge vehicles.

Countless studies have shown that public transport is the most energy-efficient form of mobility. This makes intuitive sense as well. If millions of cars crisscross the city, carrying just one or two passengers each, they will use up several times the energy needed to ferry the same number of people by bus or train.

The challenge here is three-fold. The first is optimising the routes of buses and Metro trains and the interconnections between them, and making sure journeys begin and end at predictable times. Buses, like Metro trains, could and should run on an approved schedule that's available online and at bus stops. This is vital to encouraging people to leave their cars at home and use public transport.

The second challenge is last-mile connectivity. It is not enough for a commute to end in a broad locality. If the distance between the bus stop and the final destination is longer than commuters are prepared to walk, few car owners will switch to public transport.

Electric three-wheelers and buggies available now may appeal to many people, but those who prefer to be alone during their commute are currently unserved. A larger supply and variety of e-buggies is easy to generate – all we need is to remove any

licensing requirement for them. But if traffic is not to be choked by these slow-moving, zigzagging vehicles, they will need to be restricted to side lanes. Cities will need to be designed or re-designed to include these.

The third challenge is insulation from the elements. Rain or intense heat make public transport a whole lot less appealing. Bus stops in certain parts of the world are enclosed and temperature-controlled. That will need to be implemented here, too. E-buggies will also need to be air-conditioned, given our longer summers frequent heat waves.

Meeting these challenges calls for planning and regulation at the local and state levels, not just a subsidy for buying electric buses. This calls for buy-in at all levels of the polity.

Building new charging stations across towns is a demanding task in itself. Also, parking buses for long periods to have their batteries charged is inconvenient and an inefficient use of their capacity. It would be far simpler to simply swap batteries. Fuel stations could stock fully charged batteries and swap them for drained ones in a matter of minutes if the buses are designed to allow this.

Will battery swapping hamper competition among bus makers on the range their models offer? Automobile manufacturers are not the ones who innovate battery technology. Batteries involve materials and electrochemistry, specialised branches that automobile manufacturers can, at best, invest in, rather than develop on their own.

The battery-swap model could stoke competition among alternative battery makers to offer superior products. This will allow battery charging to be restricted to off-peak hours of electricity demand, incentivised by time-of-the-day metering of electricity. It should be noted that the load on the grid rises significantly when thousands of electric vehicles are being charged simultaneously. Battery swapping already is operational in some towns.

Electric vehicles fight pollution in two ways. One is the geographic shifting of pollution, combined with superior energy efficiency, regardless of the source of the electricity used to charge them. Suppose the power comes from coal-fired power plants. The pollution produced by the kinetic energy that propels the vehicle forward will take place in a place far away, averting air pollution within the city. Internal combustion engines are very energy-inefficient – coolants have to be used to dissipate the heat they generate. Electric vehicles are far more efficient in converting the energy generated by burning coal in the thermal plant into motion.

The second contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the complete elimination of hydrocarbons in propelling the car. Here, the extent of energy saving can be exaggerated. A Volvo study estimated that if all the energy spent on mining, transporting and refining the metals and other chemicals that go into the battery are taken into account, an electric car would have to run a 100,000 km for it to pollute less than an internal combustion engine car (if the car runs on electricity produced primarily from coal, as is the case in India).

If the proportionate share of non-fossil fuel sources in electricity generation is on par with that of the EU — a little over 20% — the car would have to run about 65,000 km to pollute less than an internal combustion engine car.

The point is that a preponderance of electric vehicles does not warrant a let-up in the mission to boost the share of nuclear and renewable power in the total power generated, and to remove carbon dioxide from the air. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/revamping-public-transport-requires-more-than-a-subsidy-for-electric-buses-11692342751424.html>

29. Work-in-progress. After 25 years, a Data Protection Law
(*thehindubusinessline.com*) August 17, 2023

The President last week gave her approval to the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA), almost six years after the government had constituted an expert committee chaired by Justice BN Srikrishna for this purpose and the Supreme Court's landmark 2017 judgment affirming privacy as a fundamental right. However, this endeavour had begun in the 20th century!

25 years in the making

On July 25, 1998, the government had notified the 'Information Technology Action Plan' three weeks after the Prime Minister's Task Force on IT and Software Development submitted 108 recommendations submitted on July 4, 1998.

One of these averred that National Policy on Information Security, Privacy and Data Protection Act for handling of computerised data shall be framed by the government within six months.

This was barely three years after the European Data Protection Directive (95/48) of the European Union. Of course, OECD principles of data privacy as well as Council of Europe's Convention 108 preceded these.

The Information Technology Act (IT Act) became a reality in 2000. The 2008 amendments included certain provisions for data protection. In 2009, the government set up Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) as an attached office to the then Planning Commission. In 2012, a set of nine foundational principles for the privacy law were recommended by an experts group set up by the latter and chaired by Justice AP Shah.

It is pertinent to note that the government had initiated consultations for a privacy law in July 2010, couple of months before the first Aadhaar enrolment in September 2010. Interestingly, this was led by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), that also administers the Right to Information Act, 2005.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT has been repeatedly urging for a robust legal framework for data protection. However, as recently as in 2014, the government's stance was that post the 2008 Amendments, the IT Act contained adequate provisions to deal with the aspects of data security as well as for the protection of sensitive personal information.

Is privacy ensured now? In its 2012 report, the experts group chaired by Justice Shah had mentioned that at least 50 different legislations in the country already had some provisions pertaining to privacy. However, the DPDPA deals with ‘digital personal data protection’ only, a subset within the broader realm of ‘privacy’, as also dealt by the Supreme Court.

Legislative Intent

Litigation often entails discerning the ‘legislative intent’ behind a law, its specific provisions or even the delegated legislations with respect to the specific context and contours of a case. In the case of DPDPA, this would be largely limited to the ‘Statement of Object and Reasons’ accompanying the Bill.

Legislation in a Parliamentary democracy is a long and arduous process. However, once enacted, it tends to have a long shelf life even as the underlying social, economic, and political context changes significantly. Accordingly, the legislature vests certain rule-making powers with the executive as well as with the statutory authorities, albeit circumscribed by the principal legislation.

However, in the DPDPA, even the number of members of the Data Protection Board of India (DPBI) has been left to the discretion of the Central Government whereas specific numbers have been codified in laws like TRAI Act and SEBI Act.

Moreover, notwithstanding the option of being reappointed, two-years tenure may be too short to be effective.

Appeals with TDSAT

Considering that the Cyber Appellate Tribunal, the appellate body under the IT Act, had been merged with the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) in 2017, it is only logical that the appeals against the Data Protection Board of India (DPBI) decisions should also lie there.

All the same, structure and resourcing of the three-member (including the chairperson) TDSAT deserves a careful review.

After all, it would continue to be the appellate body for telecom and broadcasting sectors besides those arising from the decisions by the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority of India.

Act is Done, Action Ahead

There is a lot of administrative and procedural notifications to be done by the government. These include, but are not limited to, notifying the date of commencement of DPDPA itself, the various procedures under the Act, the norms for selection of the DPBI Board members, their selection and appointment. A roadmap would help everyone.

The day General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) became a reality in 2016, it was known that it would become enforceable exactly two years later, effective May 25, 2018. This is an unknown aspect of the DPDPA. Concerns have also been raised about certain legitimate uses without the individual’s consent as well as the powers for exemptions.

Accordingly, the government should become role models for other data fiduciaries and data processors even as all data fiduciaries need to buckle up.

By 2030, the Indian economy would have grown way beyond \$5 trillion and 6G networks would be rolling out.

At that time, if we, the people can discretely and securely control and access our personal data — stored across trusted federated goods and services and determine; if, what and how much information we would like to share with whom and when; with assurance that they would use such information only for the purpose that we have consented to and authorised, that should be evidence enough about the robustness, relevance and resilience of the DPDPA.

The Way Forward

Data Protection law is a necessary enabler for the growth, adoption, and acceptance of an inclusive and resilient digital ecosystem. However, it is insufficient by itself. This must be accompanied by National Cyber Security Strategy and Surveillance Reforms as well as the framework for Non-Personal Data. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/after-25-years-a-data-protection-law/article67206414.ece>