

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG /AUDIT REPORTS

1. CAG Criticises Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for Delay and Cost Overruns in Development of Jet Engines (*swarajyamag.com*) 18 Aug 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has criticised Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for failing to foresee the risks associated with the design and development of aircraft engines.

This oversight resulted in a wasteful expenditure of nearly Rs 160 crore.

As detailed in its 18th report on Public Sector Undertakings (PSU), presented in Parliament recently, the CAG highlighted that the project's scope was altered after the commencement of design and development activities.

According to the report, CAG emphasised that the original project plan was modified.

The CAG pointed out that concerning a project labeled as "Core Engine 1" (unidentified in the report), the state-owned HAL "failed to anticipate the delay in availability of the originally planned material."

This led to the production of the engine using substitute materials.

Subsequently, HAL approached its board seeking approval to construct a second engine, Core Engine 2, using the initially planned materials.

This change resulted in a cost of Rs 159.23 crores borne by the exchequer by March 2022, according to the report's findings.

In September 2012, HAL sanctioned an estimated expenditure of Rs 441.41 crore for the design and development of a gas turbine engine.

The purpose was to build critical competency and achieve self-reliance.

The CAG report noted that HAL envisioned a market for such an engine in trainer aircraft for the armed forces, regional jets, autonomous unmanned research aircraft, future drones, and small business jets.

The engine's development was divided into two stages — project definition and design in the first stage, and design, prototype development, tests, and clarification in the second stage.

HAL's board approved a total of Rs 185.87 crore by March 2021 for this purpose.

The report disclosed that the first stage of engine development was completed with an expenditure of Rs 52.87 crore.

HAL attributed the delay to a "modified scope," extending the timeline from September 2014 to December 2015.

The CAG emphasised that, as of July 2022, the design and development of the engine project were still ongoing, even four years after the scheduled completion date.

The project's prolonged timeline and expenses amounting to Rs 159.23 crore had resulted in financial losses, as stated in HAL's financial statements between 2019-20 and 2021-2022.

The auditor also criticised HAL for inadequate planning of design and development activities and highlighted the absence of a technology gap analysis between the building of Core Engine 1 and Core Engine 2. <https://swarajyamag.com/defence/cag-criticises-hindustan-aeronautics-limited-for-delay-and-cost-overruns-in-development-of-jet-engines>

2. Top auditor asks Centre to bring tea body under CAG (*dailypioneer.com*) 20 August 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has asked the Government to bring the private tea research institutions (TRIs) under the ambit of the auditor given that they were being granted huge funds by the Tea Board of India without any check.

The top auditor in its report tabled in Parliament recently, also took exception that the private TRIs were incurring a larger chunk of grants for administrative purpose, as high as 92 per cent rather than on the research activities.

Also, said the report, “funds extended for conducting research work by Darjeeling Tea Research & Development Centre (DTR&DC) for Darjeeling tea industry were insignificant as compared to funds extended to private TRIs.” It is recommended that as a substantial amount of grants is disbursed to private TRIs by Tea Board India, a mechanism should be devised for bringing them under the scope of audit, said the report.

The Research Directorate of Tea Board co-ordinates tea research in the country mainly through three TRIs viz., two private TRIs namely Tea Research Association (TRA) for North-East India and United Planters’ Association of Southern India–Tea Research Foundation (UPASI-TRF) for South India and Darjeeling Tea Research and Development Centre (DTR&DC) functioning under Tea Board for Darjeeling tea industry. During the last five years ending March 2021, Tea Board disbursed 83.46 per cent research related funds (Rs 66.62 crore) to the TRA and UPASI-TRF. Out of the Rs 66.62 crore extended to private TRIs, only Rs 4.63 crore (6.95 per cent) was utilised for research and remaining Rs 61.99 crore (93.05 per cent) was used for administrative expenses. “Further, the Tea Board did not conduct any audit of these private TRIs during the period of the audit. Moreover, although 80 per cent of the total expenditure of the two private TRIs was funded from the grants-in-aid by the Government of India, these are out of the purview of the Government audit.”

The CAG also pointed out that while out of total grant of Rs 79.83 crore received from the centre, Tea Board disbursed Rs 66.62 crore (83.46 per cent) to TRA and UPASI-TRF during last five years ending March 2021 and only Rs 3.50 crore (4.38 per cent) was doled out to the DTR & DC. On auditing, the CAG found that out of Rs 66.62 crore extended to TRA and UPASI-TRF, Rs61.99 crore (93.05 per cent) was extended as

grants-in-aid in some specific heads viz., salary, PF, gratuity, medical, training, printing and stationery, travelling and vehicle etc., and only Rs 4.63 crore (6.95 per cent) was extended as research grant.

Thus, instead of spending the funds on research activities, a substantial amount was being spent for administrative purposes. Further, the Research Directorate under the Tea Board was to conduct an audit of accounts of TRA and UPASI-TRF annually to verify proper utilisation of funds provided to these institutions.

However, the Tea Board did not conduct any audit of these organisations during 2016-17 to 2020-21. During the same period, TRA obtained only one patent in February 2021 for Iron Filing Extractor machine and three other patents filed by them were awaiting final approval. In the case of DTR&DC and UPASI-TRF, no patent was filed.

Records relating to the targets for publication of research papers and filing of patents by scientists of TRA and UPASI-TRF were not available with the Tea Board. Although 80 per cent of the total expenditure of the two private TRIs was funded from the grants-in-aid by GoI, these are out of the purview of Government Audit, the report said. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2023/india/top-auditor-asks-centre-to-bring-tea-body-under-cag.html>

3. Few Functional Khadi Units, Tea Board Graft, Unapproved Spending: Inside the CAG Reports (*thewire.in*) 18 August 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports presented to parliament during the Monsoon Session that ended last week have found irregularities in the working of Khadi units, poor monitoring by the Tea Board, and non-approved sanctioning of funds for the Swadesh Darshan scheme, along with poor estate management by the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited.

In part two of The Wire's series on all 12 CAG reports presented in parliament, we look at findings from four reports:

-Ministry of MSME: Compliance Audit on "Departmental Trading Units including Supply Chain Management in Khadi and Village Industries Commission,"

-Performance Audit on "Swadesh Darshan Scheme" of the Union Government's Ministry of Tourism,

-Performance Audit on "Role of Tea Board of India in Development of Tea in India" of the Union Government's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and

-Compliance Audit on Finance and Communication, Union Government.

Less than 20% khadi units working

The CAG report on Departmental Trading Units Including Supply Chain Management in Khadi and Village Industries Commission under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has found that less than 20% of departmental trading units were operational.

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) was formed by the Union government under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956 to plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of Khadi and village industries in rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.

The departmental trading units were established by KVIC to carry out production and sales activities of Khadi and village industries products.

The CAG report is based on an audit conducted for the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

“KVIC had established 92 Departmental Trading Units over the years. Of these, only 18 Departmental Trading Units were functional as on 31 March 2021 and 74 Departmental Trading Units have become defunct over a period of time (73 Departmental Trading Units became defunct during the period 1962-2016 and one Departmental Trading Unit was closed in 2019),” the report said.

The report said that despite the fact that only less than 20% of departmental trading units were able to continue operations, “KVIC has not done any analysis to identify the reasons” behind them becoming defunct.

It added that the reason for closure was not available for 11 out of 25 departmental trading units.

“In case of three departmental trading units, the reasons and justifications of closure were not fully convincing and more efforts by KVIC could have prevented their closure,” it said.

“In case of another two departmental trading units, private parties were generating considerable revenue through unauthorised sales of Khadi products indicating scope for revenue generation through these departmental trading units.”

The report also found that the Khadi Gramodyog Bhavans of KVIC were collecting excess share of production subsidy due from the Khadi Institutions whose products were being sold through them.

While marking the 8th National Handloom Day on August 7, prime minister Narendra Modi said that “the demand for Khadi clothes is increasing in India and abroad,” reported the news agency PTI.

The CAG report has found KVIC was “unable to fulfil the demand in respect of wholesale/Government requirements due to lack of suppliers” and has recommended that KVIC take effective action to “augment the capacity of existing suppliers.”

It also recommended inducting more suppliers to increase the capacity to cater to the demand in the Government sector.

Ministry of Tourism sanctioned funds for Swadesh Darshan scheme without Cabinet approval

A performance audit of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme implemented by the Ministry of Tourism was conducted from the period from the Scheme's inception in January 2015 to March 2022.

The report said that while the scheme was launched with an initial outlay of Rs 500 crore, the Ministry continued to sanction projects and the amount sanctioned had exceeded Rs 4,000 crore by 2016-17.

The funds were sanctioned by the ministry "without obtaining approval of the Cabinet, which was necessary for sanctioning projects costing above Rs 1,000 crore."

The report added that the scheme was implemented "without conducting any feasibility study."

The report said that the ministry identified 15 tourist circuits for development under the scheme and a total of 76 projects were sanctioned under the scheme since its inception.

"Non-preparation of the feasibility report resulted in poor identification of sites and deficiencies in execution of projects, such as delay in completion of the projects and non-utilisation of funds," it said.

The report said that the rural circuit did not receive adequate attention from the ministry.

'The report said that the ministry identified 15 tourist circuits for development under the scheme and a total of 76 projects were sanctioned under the scheme since its inception.' Photo: dilip.../Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

"As on 31 March 2022, the total expenditure incurred under rural circuit was only Rs 30.84 crore, which constituted only 0.73% of the total expenditure incurred under the Scheme."

The report also found that the ministry did not develop a formal mechanism for evaluation and approval of projects.

"While 18 months to 36 months had been given to the State Governments/UTs to complete the projects, the Ministry itself kept the project proposals pending for up to six years in few cases without any action as it did not have a defined timeline for approval or rejection of project proposals," it said.

The audit also found that there was a lack of "proper planning on the part of the Ministry" as it did not ensure the preparation of a national or state-level plan before launching the scheme.

Even after the scheme was launched, it did not ensure preparation of detailed perspective plans for 14 out of 15 tourist circuits/themes, which were to form the basis of selection of projects and preparation of detailed project reports.

“Thus, the Ministry did not have any long-term vision/policy for implementing the Scheme,” it said.

‘Poor’ monitoring, ineligible subsidy payments by Tea Board indicate ‘corruption/fraud’

The CAG report on Role of Tea Board India in development of tea in India has recommended that the Tea Board initiate steps to investigate the cases of ineligible subsidy payments as these indicate “corruption/ fraud”.

The Tea Board was authorised by the Tea Act, 1953 to inspect the quality of tea.

The audit on the role of the Tea Board was conducted during November 2021 and April 2022 covering the period from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

The audit recommended that Tea Board should earmark stipulated budgetary allocation for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Area Sub Plan-intended to channel the flow of resources from the general sectors in the Central Ministries/ Departments towards the development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, at least in proportion to their numbers in the population, both in physical and financial terms.

“Planning Commission/ NITI Aayog directives provide for mandatory allocation of funds as 4.5% for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan during 2016-17 which was increased to 8.3% from 2017-18 onwards. However, Tea Board allocated only 3.29 per cent for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan scheme.

“Further, allocation towards Tribal Area Sub Plan scheme was only 2.63 per cent against mandatory allocation of 4.3 per cent during 2018-19 to 2020-21,” the report said.

The report found that in Assam, the Golaghat Regional Office under Guwahati Zonal Office of Tea Board disbursed subsidies under Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Area Sub Plan schemes “without proper inspection or verification of the requisite documents, which indicated serious systemic lapses and resulted in many ineligible payments of subsidies.”

“In light of the above, it is recommended that Tea Board should earmark stipulated budgetary allocation for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Area Sub Plan.

“The Board may also initiate steps to investigate the cases of ineligible subsidy payments as these indicate corruption/ fraud and accordingly, responsibility may be fixed, and an appropriate action may be taken.”

The report also found that Rs 1.55 crore lying in the bank account of one beneficiary who could not set up a new factory within the time frame stipulated in scheme guidelines.

“However, no recovery was initiated by Tea Board. Further, Tea Board disbursed excess subsidy of Rs 2.05 crore to 23 tea estates for creation of irrigation facilities for areas exceeding the approved limits as per scheme guidelines,” it said.

Amid rising instances of distress to tea garden workers, the audit has also found that as of March 31, 2021, 15 big gardens of north and south India remained closed affecting the livelihood of 12,039 permanent and 4,480 temporary workers.

The general reasons for sickness or closure were attributed to “poor garden management practices, falling quality and price realisations, labour unrest, lack of development perspective, high debt-oriented funding strategy, ownership disputes etc,” it said.

The report found that the Tea Board had not adequately inspected factories during 2016-17 to 2020-21.

“The shortfall of inspection ranged between 78.62% and 91.95% which showed poor monitoring on part of Tea Board,” the report said.

The report said that the Tea Board is meant to direct its officials to collect tea samples from the manufacturing units and send them to authorised laboratories for testing for quality assurance, once in six months.

The audit found that there was a shortfall in sample collection ranging between 84% and 97% during the audit period indicating “poor monitoring.”

The report also found that small tea growers contributed towards more than 50% of total tea production in 2020-2021.

But in the absence of a well-defined strategy for identification and registration of the small tea growers, 38% of small tea growers were not registered as of March 2021 and were out of the ambit of Tea Board’s regulatory activities and developmental assistance.

One hundred and nineteen out of 1,573 big tea growers were not registered as of March 2021, the report said.

The report added that the illegal practice of mixing Nepal tea with Darjeeling tea is still continuing “which would ultimately dilute the quality of world-famous Darjeeling tea.”

‘The report also found that small tea growers contributed towards more than 50% of total tea production in 2020-2021.’ Photo: nallin a, CC 2.0

Non/short payment of GST by Department of Post worth Rs 42.48 crores

The CAG report on the Compliance Audit on Finance and Communication, Union Government contains significant findings from the compliance audit of the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and Ministry of Finance.

The report found that the Department of Posts (DoP) under the Ministry of Communication did not formulate a conservation policy of its own to meet the requirements of protection and conservation of Heritage Buildings.

“The funds allocated to the Department for its mandated activities were inadequate. Inadequate planning and poor management, coupled with the absence of periodical physical verification further aggravated the dilapidated condition of the Heritage Buildings. Thus, the Department lacked the required sense of purpose and an appropriate strategy for the conservation and protection of its Heritage Buildings,” it said.

The report said that the DoP had incurred non- or short-payment of GST amounting to Rs 42.48 crores during the period from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

It said this was because DoP “failed to issue instructions to its subordinate offices to pay the GST on reverse charge basis on the commission paid to its sales force for procurement of Postal Life Insurance/Rural Postal Life Insurance policies which resulted in non / short-payment of GST amounting to Rs 42.48 crore during the period from 2018-19 to 2021-22.”

It added that the DoP also failed to segregate the financial assistance received from UIDAI on Aadhaar related services between its own revenue and Goods and Services Tax (GST) component which “resulted in non/short-payment of GST amounting to Rs 9.00 crore for the period from May 2018 to July 2022.”

The report found that “poor/inefficient planning coupled with ineffective monitoring” by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) led to wasteful expenditure of Rs 21.83 crore on establishment of the Electronics Test and Development Centre (ETDC) Ajmer.

The centre is meant for test and calibration of large area solar photo voltaic panel and telecom equipment.

The audit also found that the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited or BSNL under the Ministry of Communications which is in possession of substantial land and real estate holdings, has not instituted a comprehensive Estate Management Policy.

Despite assurances to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), “BSNL has incomplete records of ownership of its real estate, hindering utilisation of its assets through sale or rental.”

The report also said that BSNL procured 6,000 Aadhaar Enrolment Kits during 2018-19 worth Rs 77.88 crore. “Out of them, 3,941 kits remained non-operational till December 2022. This resulted in blockade of Government funds of Rs 51.15 crore,” it said. <https://thewire.in/government/cag-reports-government-corruption-tea-board-khadi-bsnl-swadesh-darshan>

4. CAG slams Tourism Ministry for `5 cr loss to Govt in Puducherry (*dailypioneer.com*) 19 August 2023

The Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) has come down heavily on the Union Tourism Ministry for wasteful expenditure of over ` 5 crore by sanctioning a project at a flood-prone zone in Puducherry without assessing its feasibility.

Needless to say, the spate of floods in the region in the past few years have washed away the tourism amenities constructed under the project at the site in Yanam in the UT, thus along with it, exchequer money also went down the drain, the CAG has revealed in its report tabled in Parliament recently.

It stated that under the central flagship Swadesh Darshan, the UT's project envisaging construction of tourism amenities such as of walkway, fencing, and bamboo house etc at a sand dune in mid-stream at the junction point of Coringa river and Gowthami Godavari river in Yanam was given nod. "The DPR for development of tourism amenities submitted by the Department of Tourism, Puducherry, was sanctioned in December 2015 by the Ministry under the project 'Development of UT of Puducherry as Tourist circuit'," said the report.

The approval came despite the fact that the site was in a flood prone area and the highest flood level was faced in Yanam in August 2013, stated the top auditor. The Andhra Pradesh Government too had objected to the work stating that it was obstructing free flow of the Godavari River. Also, approval for construction activities was not obtained from the Yanam Planning Authority, it noted.

However, works were awarded between March 2017 and June 2018 and expenditure of ` 5.26 crore was incurred by Puducherry Tourism Department on components of walkway, fencing, bamboo house, rainwater shelter, solar lights etc. However, during the flood in August 2018, amenities created on the site (valued at `1.33 crore) were damaged and another flood in August 2020 washed away the remaining structures (valued at ` 3.93 crore) completely, said the report. The Auditor has taken exception that the Ministry did not make any effort to assess feasibility and ground reality before sanctioning the project.

"The Programme Management Consultant visited the site only in December 2018, when works had already been executed and washed away in August 2018."

Thus, despite being aware of the fact that the island was flood-prone, infrastructure was created thereon, which was washed away in flood, thereby resulting in unfruitful expenditure of `5.26 crore, as per the report.

The Ministry, while noting the audit observations, seems to have washed away its hands by stating that "it would seek comments from Government of Puducherry in this regard." <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2023/india/cag-slams-tourism-ministry-for---5-cr-loss-to-govt-in-puducherry.html>

5. CAG on Indian Railways' Expenses, Ayushman Bharat Graft, Diversion of Pension Scheme Funds (*thewire.in*) 18 Aug 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports presented to the parliament this monsoon session have flagged that Indian Railways could not generate a net surplus during 2021-22 compared to 2020-21, funds for pension schemes were diverted for publicity of other schemes, corruption under Ayushman Bharat, and the need for daily updation of the exchange rate.

In part three of The Wire's series on all 12 CAG reports presented to parliament, we look at findings from four reports:

-Union Government, (Railways) Railways Finances

-Performance Audit of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana – Union Government (Civil) National Health Authority Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

-Performance Audit of National Social Assistance Programme – Union Government (Civil), Ministry of Rural Development

-IT Audit of Indian Customs Electronic Data Interchange System (ICES) 1.5, Union Government Department of Revenue-Indirect Taxes (Customs)

Indian Railways could not generate a net surplus during 2021-22 compared to 2020-21

The CAG report on Union Government, (Railways) Railways Finances has revealed that the Indian Railways could not generate a net surplus during 2021-22 as compared to 2020-21.

The Operating Ratio (OR) was 107.39% in 2021-22 against 97.45% in 2020-21. Operating Ratio refers to the ratio of working expenses to gross earnings.

A higher ratio indicates a poorer ability to generate surplus. Against the target of 96.15% in the Budget Estimates, the OR of Railways was 107.39% in 2021-22.

“This meant that railways spent Rs 107.39 to earn Rs 100. As compared to the Operating Ratio of 97.45% during 2020-21, there was deterioration in 2021-22,” the report said.

The report said that compared to the last five years, the OR was the highest in 2021-22.

In 2017-19 the OR was 98.44%, followed by 97.29% in 2018-19, 98.36% in 2019-20, 97.45% in 2020-21 and 107.39% in 2021-22.

“..the OR of Indian Railways reached an all-time high of 107.39% in 2021-22,” the report said citing the five-year figures.

The report found that the Gross Traffic Receipts increased by 36.02% during 2021-22 as compared to 2020-21 due to an increase in passenger earnings, other coaching earnings, and freight earnings.

However, the total expenditure of the Ministry of Railways (MoR), “increased by 35.19%, the capital expenditure increased by 22.61% during 2021-22”.

“On the other hand, revenue expenditure increased by 49.30% during the year. MoR incurred around 75.83% of the total working expenses on staff cost, pension payments, and lease hire charges on rolling stock.”

It also found that the Railways incurred an additional expenditure of Rs 7,778.43 crore more than the sanctioned budget of Rs 5,7626.20.

Treatment for the dead and discharge before surgery under Ayushman Bharat

The CAG report on the Performance Audit of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana – Union Government (Civil) National Health Authority Ministry of Health and Family Welfare – has found several instances of corruption in one of the Narendra Modi government’s flagship schemes on health.

The audit included the time period of September 2018 to March 2021. The audit was conducted on 964 hospitals in 161 districts of all 28 states and Union territories (UTs). Delhi, Odisha, and West Bengal have opted out of this scheme.

The auditors found large-scale corruption in insurance claims settlement.

In 2.25 lakh cases, the date of the ‘surgery’ done was shown to be later than the date of discharge. More than 1.79 lakh such cases were found in Maharashtra for which the claimed amount was over Rs 300 crore.

In other instances, the hospitals had made claims and the State Health Authority (SHA) transferred money for dates even before the inception of the scheme.

Lakhs of claims continued to be made against some who had been shown as ‘deceased’ in the database.

The scheme stipulates that a unique Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) ID should be issued to beneficiaries once verification is complete. The audit discovered that 1.57 lakh unique IDs appeared more than once in the database.

After widespread reporting on the CAG report including by The Wire, the health ministry on Thursday, August 17, issued a press release fact-checking media reporting on the CAG findings.

The release was 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 release, the ministry did not cite a single specific example where the media reports had been wrong in quoting the CAG report, for instance, to say the CAG report was misquoted or quoted out of context.

Pension scheme funds diverted to publicise other schemes

The CAG report on the Performance Audit of the National Social Assistance Programme – Union Government (Civil), Ministry of Rural Development, has found that funds meant to publicise the scheme were diverted for publicity of other schemes by the ministry.

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is meant to provide social assistance benefits to the below poverty line (BPL) households in the case of old age, disabled, widows, and the death of the primary breadwinner.

The audit covered the period between 2017-18 to 2020-21.

The NSAP includes five sub-schemes, of which, three are pension schemes, including the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS).

The other two sub-schemes are the National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) – a one-time assistance to the bereaved family in the event of the death of the breadwinner, and the Annapurna scheme – food security to the eligible old age persons who have remained uncovered under IGNOAPS.

The report said that funds of Rs 2.83 crore earmarked for IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) activities under NSAP were diverted for “campaigning of other schemes”.

The audit added that the absence of a prescribed procedure for proactive identification of beneficiaries coupled with the lack of IEC activities resulted in delayed/non-coverage of eligible beneficiaries from the ambit of NSAP and non-achievement of universal coverage of beneficiaries.

The report said that the Ministry of Rural Development in January 2017 decided to campaign through hoardings in states and Union territories for giving due publicity to all programmes/schemes of the Ministry.

“Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs 39.15 lakh was taken (June 2017) for a publicity campaign through hoardings with a limit of 10 hoardings at each capital city of the state and UT.

Administrative approval and expenditure sanction of Rs 2.44 crore was taken (August 2017) for campaigning Gram Samridhhi, Swachh Bharat Pakhawada and publicity material of multiple schemes of the Ministry through five hoardings in each District for 19 States.”

Subsequently, work orders were issued in June and September 2017 and publicity campaigns were to be undertaken in September 2017.

“The funds for the said campaign were stated to be available under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and were approved by the competent authority to be incurred under the same head; however, audit observed that funds were actually incurred from social security welfare-NSAP schemes,” the report said.

“However, the advertisement of only PMAY-G (Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin) and DDU-GKY(Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana) schemes were mentioned in the work order and no schemes of NSAP were included in the work order.

“Further, the campaigns were to be undertaken by DAVP(Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity) under intimation to the department; however, the payment to DAVP was made without confirmation of the execution of the work.

“Hence, planned IEC activities under NSAP were not undertaken as envisaged and funds of Rs 2.83 crore were diverted for campaigning in respect of other schemes of the Ministry. Hence, IEC activities intended to create awareness among potential beneficiaries of NSAP could not be taken up even though there was earmarking of funds for IEC activities.”

In addition, the report said that while the scheme is meant to include universal coverage, the report found that it was being implemented in a “demand-driven mode where benefits were provided to only those beneficiaries who applied for pensions/benefits under NSAP themselves”.

The report also found “idling of funds of Rs 18.78 crore”.

It said that while one of the key principles of NSAP is regular monthly disbursement of pension, in eight States/UTs, funds received under NSAP were lying idle either with the states/Union territories concerned or with implementing agencies.

This included Bihar, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, and Tripura.

The report found “Rs 18.78 crore were lying idle in eight States for a period ranging from one to five years”.

“The reasons for idling of funds were such as the release of funds at the fag end of the financial year, non-revalidation of funds from administrative department, duplication and non-permissible age limit of the beneficiaries,” it said.

The report added that this also shows lack of financial monitoring on part of the States/UTs which manifested in irregular payment of pension to the beneficiaries.

Implementation of module for daily updation of exchange rate

The CAG report on Union Government (Indirect Taxes – Customs) contains significant results of the Information Technology (IT) Audit of the Indian Customs Electronic Data Interchange System (ICES 1.5).

The test audit was conducted during December 2020 to May 2022 covering the period 2015-16 to 2019-20.

The report said that the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) determines the rate of exchange of conversion of major transactional foreign currencies generally after every 14 days on a regular basis and issues Notifications (Non-Tariff).

Based on these Exchange Rate Notifications, the Directory Officer after getting the approval of Directory Manager of the Directory Management Site makes changes in ICES.

“Implementation of a system which captures daily fluctuation in the exchange rate will minimise the undue benefit or loss to importers and exporters and correspondingly to the Department,” it said.

The report said the filing of custom duty refunds is being done manually.

“In Audit’s opinion, the work flow related to capturing and processing of refund claims needs to be automated on the lines of the GSTN (Goods and Services Tax Network) System. Decision of refund taking into considerations various factors like post adjudication, post-Appeal, double duty refund, refund due to re-assessment of duty etc could be taken by the competent authority online, with work flow automation. This will lead to effective monitoring and increase transparency,” it said.
<https://thewire.in/government/cag-on-indian-railways-expenses-ayushman-bharat-graft-diversion-of-pension-scheme-funds>

6. Ayushman Bharat database needs overhaul (*thehindubusinessline.com*) 18 Aug 2023

The inadequacy of public healthcare in India is a well-acknowledged fact. Public healthcare expenditure as a percentage of GDP at around 2 per cent, places India among the underdeveloped economies. According to the World Bank, proportion of out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare in India, at 50.59 per cent, is the highest among emerging economies. The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which promises health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh per year to low-income households, therefore needs greater attention, to compensate for the deficit in public healthcare facilities. But a recent CAG audit report shows that there are serious snags in the implementation of the scheme.

The problems in the Ayushman Bharat scheme stem from the way the database of beneficiaries has been constructed. The database has 7.87 crore beneficiary households. But the identification of beneficiaries is based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011, which could be irrelevant by now. Also, though beneficiaries had to be matched with the SECC in the online portal, the CAG audit shows that such matching was not done and registrations and rejections of applications was done in an arbitrary manner. This has resulted in invalid names and dates of birth, duplicate IDs and unrealistically large households. In Tamil Nadu, 4,761 registrations were made against seven Aadhaar numbers. Such lapses not only result in the needy getting deprived of the benefits of the scheme, it is also pointing towards financial frauds being committed through fake IDs and claims.

There is an urgent need to reconstruct the Ayushman Bharat database and issuance of fresh IDs and cards to all beneficiaries, based on their Aadhaar details. In States where existing state health insurance schemes were subsumed into the Centre’s Ayushman Bharat scheme, new cards need to be provided. This needs to be accompanied by a national awareness campaign so that those not aware of this scheme too onboard and avail of the benefits.

The other critical issue highlighted by the CAG audit is the malpractices in empanelling hospitals and shortage of healthcare infrastructure, doctors and equipment in many States and UTs. The current set of healthcare providers empanelled with Ayushman Bharat scheme need to be reviewed and fresh registrations issued. The report states that many of the healthcare providers did not fulfil the minimum criteria for infrastructure and quality standards prescribed; this is not acceptable. Another problem is that private sector hospitals do not want to get empanelled in the scheme due to the delayed payouts and other glitches. Offering some fiscal incentive to private hospitals agreeing to be part of the scheme could perhaps work. The problem of inadequate health infrastructure is almost endemic. Hospital staff or government employees found defrauding beneficiaries should be penalised severely. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/editorial/ayushman-bharat-database-needs-overhaul/article67210030.ece>

7. CAG Reports AB-PMJAY Beneficiaries Required to Pay despite Cashless Service Promise (*deccanchronicle.com*) 18 Aug 2023

In its recent performance audit report regarding the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has recorded instances where beneficiaries were required to make payments for medical treatment, despite the program's primary aim of offering cashless medical services.

The AB-PMJAY is designed to furnish annual health coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalizations. It assures beneficiaries seamless access to medical services without needing physical documents or payments at the point of care which is typically a hospital.

The CAG's audit analysis of AB-PMJAY, recently presented in Parliament, highlighted the discrepancy between the scheme's intended framework and the actual practice. According to the CAG, the agreement established between the State Health Agency (SHA) and private Empanelled Health Care Providers (EHCPs) emphasizes the necessity for complete cashless treatment for PMJAY beneficiaries. The agreement explicitly mandates that once a patient is admitted to the hospital, expenses for diagnostic tests, medications, implants, and related services are to be covered by the hospital, as these costs are incorporated within the comprehensive package amount.

Nonetheless, the audit discovered instances in which patients were required to make payments as part of their treatment under PMJAY. For example, in Himachal Pradesh, 50 beneficiaries across five EHCPs were compelled to cover the costs of their diagnostic tests at other medical facilities, with the expenses incurred by the beneficiaries. However, the report did not mention the exact amount paid by the beneficiaries in these cases in view of the data being unavailable with the State Health Agency (SHA).

The audit further revealed that in Jammu and Kashmir, 459 patients at 10 public EHCPs had initially paid Rs 43.27 lakh directly from their own funds for medical treatment, and they were later reimbursed after the verification of bills. There are still 75 patients awaiting reimbursement, which totals to Rs 6.70 lakh.

Similarly, in Jharkhand, the report noted that the insurance company identified that 36 patients at Life Care Hospital in Godda had paid different amounts for medicines, injections, and blood. The SHA is not in possession of the detailed expense records. Upon the insurance company's findings, the SHA sought an explanation from the concerned hospital within five days or face penalties. However, the hospital failed to provide the explanation, and SHA has not initiated the required punitive action.

In Meghalaya a similar scenario was played out, where out of the 19,459 beneficiaries who received treatment from five private EHCPs between February 2019 and March 2021, 13,418 individuals (approximately 69%) had to make the additional payments totaling Rs 12.34 crore during the discharge process.

In response to these findings, the National Health Authority (NHA) stated in August 2022 that the out-of-pocket expenses might be due to a lack of available health facilities. The audit, however, suggests that hospitals should collaborate with various interconnected service providers to ensure that beneficiaries receive free services. <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/180823/cag-reports-ab-pmjay-beneficiaries-required-to-pay-despite-cashless-se.html>

8. CAG Picks Holes in Implementation of PMJAY Scheme in J&K *(kashmirobsERVER.net)*

Ineligible beneficiaries, money disbursed for the treatment in the name of deceased person, out-of-pocket expenditure and no recovery of penalties: these are some of the irregularities found by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in government's much hyped Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) health insurance scheme in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the CAG report, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer, the PMJAY scheme in the Union Territory is marred with irregularities and measures have been suggested to the Union Territory administration to bring an end to financial discrepancies.

AB-PMJAY was launched on 23 September 2018.

The scheme aims to provide health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 10.741 crore families from the poor and vulnerable section of the population, based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the Socio- Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011.

The aim is to improve affordability, accessibility, and quality of care for the poor and vulnerable section of the population.

The scheme has been launched for achieving a significant reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure due to health care costs and achieving reduction in proportion of households experiencing catastrophic health expenditures and consequent impoverishment. The eligible beneficiaries are entitled under AB-PMJAY for cashless and paperless access to services at the empanelled hospitals.

The report of the CAG contains results of the Performance Audit on AB-PMJAY covering the period September 2018 to March 2021.

Audit noted that the PMJAY Scheme, an ambitious and well-intentioned programme to provide healthcare access to most vulnerable sections in the country, has had a strong positive impact on the economically weaker sections of the society who need healthcare facilities. However, the implementation of the scheme needs improvement in the light of the findings made in the report.

“It is expected that the compliance to the observations and recommendations made in this report will help in improving the implementation of the scheme,” it noted.

According to the report, in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, during the period 2018 to 2021, 16865 and 335 numbers of ineligible beneficiaries respectively were identified by SHA (state health authority) after clearing the SECC data, thus indicating the existence of ineligible beneficiaries in the SECC database.

The report revealed that 15 hospitals were empanelled with delay. The CAG report further stated that in Jammu and Kashmir, 4, 97,358 cases were rejected and the maximum delay in days was 404.

The report further reveals that Rs 10.96 lakh were disbursed for the treatment of 48 patients who had previously been declared deceased in the scheme’s database in Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the CAG’s performance audit, it was found that In Jammu and Kashmir, (459) beneficiaries were charged for their treatment in empanelled Health Care Providers (EHCPs) resulting in an increase in out-of-pocket expenditure of beneficiaries.

Data analysis revealed that SHAs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh failed to levy penalties amounting to Rs 20.93 crore and Rs 39.66 lakh respectively on Insurer for non-performance of various activities.

Penalty amounting to Rs 12.32 crore from 100 hospitals was pending in nine States/UTs. SHAs Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh failed to levy penalties amounting to Rs 20.93 crore and Rs 39.66 lakh respectively on Insurer for non-performance of various activities.

“Since no penalties were levied by the SHAs, no such recoveries were made from the defaulting hospitals, thereby not deterring the hospitals from deviating from the performance indicators specified under the scheme,” the report said.

Further, due to delay in payment of premium to the Insurance Company up to 161 days under Contract Agreement (PS-4), SHA, Jammu & Kashmir failed to recover a penalty of Rs 2.91 crore on account of delayed claim payments from the Insurance Company. <https://kashmirobserver.net/2023/08/19/cag-picks-holes-in-implementation-of-pmjay-scheme-in-jk/>

9. **आयुष्मान भारत: मरीजों को 'मृत' दिखाकर इलाज करा रहे, एक ही मोबाइल से 10 लाख लोगों का रजिस्ट्रेशन, आयुष्मान भारत स्कीम पर CAG का बड़ा खुलासा** (*news4nation.com*) 19 Aug 2023

एनडीए सरकार की महत्वाकांक्षी आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना के क्रियान्वयन में भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक यानी कैग की रिपोर्ट में गंभीर अनियमितताओं और कमियों का उजागर होना गंभीर मसला है. भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक ने अपनी हालिया रिपोर्ट में आयुष्मान भारत-प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना योजना के संबंध में तीखी टिप्पणियाँ कीं और उल्लेख किया कि जिन रोगियों को पहले 'मर गया' दिखाया गया था, वे इसके तहत उपचार का लाभ उठाते रहे. यह योजना जिन राज्यों में ऐसे सबसे अधिक मामले सामने आए हैं वे हैं छत्तीसगढ़, हरियाणा, झारखंड, केरल और मध्य प्रदेश। इससे जहां देश के करोड़ों लोगों के इलाज के लिये लायी गयी योजना की सार्थकता पर सवाल उठ रहे हैं, वहीं केंद्र सरकार के भ्रष्टाचार के खिलाफ जीरो टॉलरेंस के दावे पर भी प्रश्नचिन्ह लग रहे हैं. ऐसे में इस स्वास्थ्य योजना में धांधली करने वालों के खिलाफ समय रहते सख्त कार्रवाई वक्त की जरूरत है. वर्ष 2018 में जोर-शोर से लाई गई इस महत्वाकांक्षी जन स्वास्थ्य योजना को व्यापक पैमाने पर जनहित में बताया गया था. जिसका मकसद था कि देश के गरीब व कमजोर वर्गों को महंगे इलाज के खर्च से बचाने के लिये उनका चिकित्सा व्यय कम किया जाएगा.

पिछले सप्ताह संसद में पेश की गई नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक यानी कैग की रिपोर्ट में बताया गया कि ऐसे करीब साढ़े तीन हजार कथित मरीजों के इलाज पर लगभग सात करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान किया गया, जिन्हें योजना के डेटा बेस में पहले मृत दिखाया गया था.

यह तथ्य भी कम चौंकाने वाला नहीं है कि योजना के तहत साढ़े सात लाख लाभार्थियों को एक ही मोबाइल नंबर से जोड़ा गया था। वहीं एक हजार दो सौ से अधिक लाभार्थियों को एक ही फर्जी आधार नंबर से जोड़ा गया. कई स्तर पर सुनियोजित तरीके से धांधली को अंजाम दिया गया. संसद में कैग की रिपोर्ट का खुलासा होने के बाद सरकार ने लोकसभा को सूचित किया कि राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण यानी एनएचए द्वारा जारी दिशानिर्देशों का अनुपालन न करने तथा संदिग्ध गतिविधियों में शामिल होने के कारण देश के 210 अस्पतालों को योजना के पैनल से हटा दिया गया. साथ ही 188 अन्य अस्पतालों के लाइसेंस निलंबित कर दिये गये.

रिपोर्ट में आगे कहा गया है कि एबी-पीएमजेएवाई योजना के तहत कई सूचीबद्ध स्वास्थ्य देखभाल प्रदाताओं (ईएचसीपी) ने निर्धारित गुणवत्ता मानकों और मानदंडों का पालन नहीं किया है, जो देखभाल में लाभार्थियों की सुरक्षा और कल्याण और पैनल में शामिल होने के लिए न्यूनतम शर्तों की कुंजी हैं.

इनमें से कुछ ईएचसीपी में डॉक्टरों, बुनियादी ढांचे और उपकरणों की कमी थी. उनमें से कुछ न तो समर्थन प्रणाली और बुनियादी ढांचे के न्यूनतम मानदंडों को पूरा करते हैं और न ही पीएम-एबीजेवाई दिशानिर्देशों के तहत निर्धारित गुणवत्ता मानकों और मानदंडों के अनुरूप हैं.

कई राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में ईएचसीपी ने बुनियादी ढांचे, अग्नि सुरक्षा उपायों, जैव-चिकित्सा अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन और प्रदूषण नियंत्रण और अस्पताल पंजीकरण प्रमाणपत्र से संबंधित अनिवार्य मानदंडों का पूरी तरह से पालन नहीं किया। कुछ अन्य ईएचसीपी में, पैनल में शामिल होने से पहले अग्नि सुरक्षा प्रमाणपत्र समाप्त हो गए.

तीन नंबर पर लगभग 9.85 लाख लोग रजिस्टर्ड हैं. मोबाइल नंबर 9999999999 पर 7.49 लाख लोग PMJAY योजना के तहत लाभार्थियों के रूप में रजिस्टर्ड हैं. कैग की ओर से जांच में ये भी सामने आया है कि इस धांधली के लिए सबसे अधिक उपयोग किए जाने वाले अन्य नंबरों में 8888888888, 9000000000, 20, 1435 और 185397 शामिल है.

कई स्तरों पर लापरवाही और दायित्वों के निर्वहन में चूक के चलते शांतिर लोग इस योजना में धांधली करने में सफल हुए, जिसकी निगरानी में राज्य स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरणों की भी बड़ी भूमिका होती. वैसे राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण यानी एनएचए को आयुष्मान भारत प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना के तहत धोखाधड़ी और दुरुपयोग का पता लगाने व रोकथाम का दायित्व सौंपा गया था, लेकिन भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक की जांच रिपोर्ट के खुलासे के बाद स्पष्ट हो गया कि राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण अपने दायित्वों के फुलप्रूफ निर्वहन में विफल रहा है. <https://news4nation.com/news/ayushman-bharat-patients-being-treated-as-dead-registration-of-10-lakh-people-from-a-single-mobile-cag-s-big-disclosure-on-ayushman-bharat-scheme-237970>

10. सीएजी रिपोर्ट में आयुष्मान योजना के तहत डीआईयूएस का गठन न होने का खुलासा (newsnationtv.com) 18 Aug 2023

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) ने आयुष्मान भारत-प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना (एबी-पीएमजेवाई) पर अपनी ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में जिला कार्यान्वयन इकाइयों (डीआईयूएस) के गठन न होने का खुलासा किया है।

हाल ही में संसद में पेश सीएजी की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना के तहत जिला स्तर पर योजना के कार्यात्मक समन्वय के लिए प्रत्येक जिले में डीआईयूएस गठन किया जाता है। ऑडिट में कहा गया है कि पांच राज्यों/केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों अर्थात् अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीप समूह, दादरा में नगर हवेली और दमन और दीव, हिमाचल प्रदेश, पुदुचेरी और उत्तराखंड में डीआईयूएस का गठन एसएचए (राज्य स्वास्थ्य एजेंसी) द्वारा नहीं किया गया।

रिपोर्ट में आगे बताया गया है कि त्रिपुरा में आठ में से केवल पांच जिलों में डीआईयूएस का गठन किया गया है।

सीएजी रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है, योजना के कार्यान्वयन के लिए डीआईयू सबसे निचला स्तर है। डीआईयूएस का गठन न होने से पीएमजेवाई के उचित कार्यान्वयन में बाधा उत्पन्न होती है।

इसमें कहा गया है, एनएचए (राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण) ने ऑडिट अवलोकन को स्वीकार करते हुए (अगस्त 2022 में) जवाब दिया कि डीआईयूएस से सीएमओ या जिला कलेक्टर के नेतृत्व में काम करने की उम्मीद की जाती है, और जहां भी डीआईयूएस का औपचारिक रूप से गठन नहीं किया गया है, वहां योजना कार्यान्वयन किया गया है। सीएमओ कार्यालय द्वारा इसका ध्यान रखा गया।

गौरतलब है कि आयुष्मान योजना के तहत प्रति वर्ष प्रति परिवार 5 लाख रुपये तक का स्वास्थ्य कवर प्रदान किया जाता है। <https://www.newsnationtv.com/india/cag-report-reveal-non-formation-of-dius-under-ab-pmjay-398021.html>

11. Highways or Rural Roads, It's a Story of High Cost-Low Delivery (*newslick.in*) 19 Aug 2023

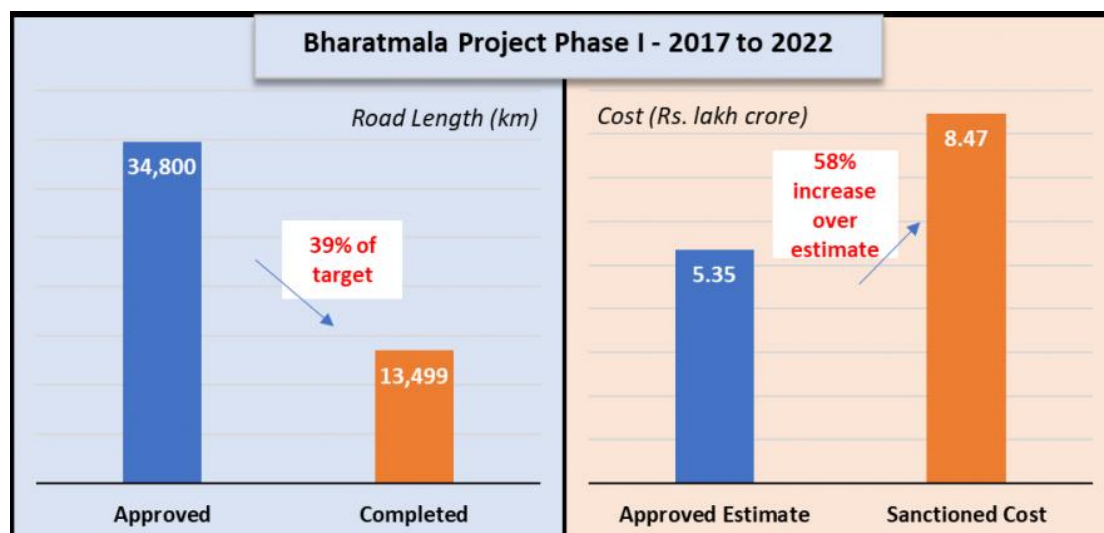
The NDA government led by Prime Minister Modi has repeatedly emphasised its commitment to building the country's infrastructure like roads, bridges, railway lines, etc. Periodically, the Prime Minister is seen inaugurating an expressway here, a bridge there. Announcements of massive construction projects keep happening, especially around election time. But two recent reports reveal a picture of missed targets, huge cost escalation, misconceived plans and a sense of disarray that is quite contrary to the impression that the government is efficiently going about creating essential infrastructure for the country.

One is the recently released performance report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on the central government's Bharatmala project which was to build nearly 35,000 kilometres of economic corridors, national highways, border roads, coastal highways, and connected feeder roads network between 2017 and 2022. The other is a report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj on the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), which is a programme to build rural roads connecting habitations and essential services. Undoubtedly, both types of roads are essential for economic development as well as for improving the quality of life of people. But their fate – as revealed by these official reports – is uninspiring if not distressing. Let's have a look.

Highways to Nowhere?

The CAG report (No.19 of 2023) says that the target for Phase I of the Bharatmala project was construction of 34,800 kms of roads. This was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister and consisting of top ranked Cabinet ministers. The approved estimated cost was pegged at Rs 5.35 lakh crore. But, as of March 2023, only 26,316 kms of highway length was actually

awarded and of that, only 13,499 kms have been completed. That's just 38.79% of the original CCEA target. (See chart below)



That's not all. The CAG also points out that over Rs 8.47 lakh crore has already been sanctioned. (See above) That's a jaw dropping 58% cost over-run. To put it differently, the cost was originally envisaged as Rs 15.37 crore per kilometre but it has now risen to Rs 32.17 crore per kilometre.

It is clear that the whole project is seriously lagging behind. It was to have been completed by September 2022 but six months after that, it is reported to be just 40% complete, with a massive cost overrun already there.

Some idea of why this may have happened can be gleaned from various comments made by CAG. For those interested, the detailed report may be studied at the CAG website. Here are some salient points, that make for worrying reading, and raise questions about the great efficiency of which this government often boasts about:

- Projects which were earlier stuck due to forest clearances or right of way disputes were again included in the Bharatmala project without resolving the issues.

- Much chopping and changing took place during an optimisation exercise with road lengths being added and shifted around. The CAG chided the ministry of road transport and highways that "MoRTH may carry out an in depth analysis based on accurate ground level data before proposing a scheme of this magnitude in future".

- The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) prioritised the work without any "rational, systematic and codified methodology". No timelines were decided for awarding and constructing the projects falling under different priorities. In some cases, projects were developed based on a "deficient cost-benefit study" or "without getting detailed project reports prepared".

- Costs have gone up because of "significant changes" in the scope of projects, cost estimates and "richer project specifications". Another reason was that the expected private sector participation did not materialise.

-Appraisal and approval mechanism for award of projects had many deficiencies leading to some major projects (like Delhi-Vadodara Expressway) not being assessed by CCEA or MoRTH. In some cases, the laid down mechanism was not even followed.

-Competent Authority did not evaluate Detailed Project Reports in many cases. Instances of irregularities in award of projects by implementing agencies were observed in clear violation of the prescribed processes of tendering,

Many projects were started without environmental clearances.

-Importantly, CAG observed that there was no “target for the achievement of measurable outcome parameters such as accident reduction, comfort in riding and user satisfaction, etc.” Resultantly, the benefits of the development of BPP-I projects and scheme as against these outcome parameters, could not be verified, the report said.

-In short, it is a costly mess of gigantic proportions but still, it is being portrayed as a big achievement by the spin-masters of the government.

Rural Roads Scheme Flounders

Now let us turn to the other end of the spectrum – the small rural roads, mostly of 3 kms or more. This is a programme launched way back in the year 2000 during the first NDA government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Since inception till October 25, 2022, Rs 2,87,798 crore have been spent towards the construction of rural roads under PMGSY. This includes state government contributions, which were introduced in 2015-16 by the new Modi government. Under Phase I, over 6.45 lakh kilometres were to be built connecting 1.57 lakh habitations, as identified on the basis of the 2001 Census. As of October 2022, 6.21 lakh kms have been constructed. Under Phase II of the programme launched in 2013, 50,000 kms were to be built to consolidate the existing network. Of this, some 48,383 kms have been completed. Under the Modi era, a programme for building roads and bridges called Road Connectivity Programme in Left-wing Extremism Areas (RCPLWEA) was launched in 2016 (with additions later) to build 12,076 km of road length out of which 6,495 km have been completed as of October 2022. And finally, in 2019, PMGSY III was launched which proposed to build 1.25 lakh kms roads to connect habitations to mandis, schools and hospitals, based on usage. This phase is supposed to be completed in March 2025.

What’s to be noted is that over two decades since Phase I of the scheme was launched, over 24,000 kms still remain unbuilt, while another 1,600 kms under Phase II launched a decade ago remain unbuilt. The new phases launched under the Modi government too have suffered a similar fate. Over 5,371 kms remain to be built under the RCPLWEA although its target date for completion was March 2023. While the Phase III completion target is March 2025, as of January 2023, some 75,717 remain to be built. These shortfalls are derived from data recorded in the Standing Committee Report.

The Standing Committee was told by the Rural Development ministry that Phase III projects are not being sanctioned for those states which have not yet completed their Phase I and II work. The net result is that the whole thing is delayed. Another factor has been the shift from a fully Central funded scheme to a shared funding system where the Centre-State fund sharing is on 60:40 basis, except in hilly states where it is 90:10.

Given the dire situation of State Government finances, especially after the pandemic, this has further decelerated the scheme implementation.

But, as the Standing Committee pointed out, the biggest shortcoming is that population and habitation counts are based on 2001 Census which was 22 years ago. Between 2001 and 2011, India's average population increased at 17.7%. If one assumes a similar growth rate for the 2011-21 decade, population would be at least 30% higher than in 2001. So, the number of habitations needing roads would be much more than the targets. The ministry told the Committee that the issue was raised with the Finance Ministry but they turned down the proposal arguing that funds were short.

Thus, in the case of rural roads, the situation is again a mess – but for different reasons. There is no will to spend more money for building these rural roads.

The great infrastructure creation drive launched by the present government appears to be floundering in different ways and for diverse reasons – at least in the case of road building. <https://www.newsclick.in/highways-or-rural-roads-its-story-high-cost-low-delivery>

12. As Modi govt, Opposition exchange barbs on CAG reports, a look at the auditor's role & how it functions (*theprint.in*) 21 August, 2023

The Parliament received 12 reports, including a bunch of performance audits, from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) during the monsoon session concluded earlier this month, which exposed several alleged flaws and shortcomings across various central government schemes and projects, sparking political outrage.

In the reports, the CAG, which is the supreme audit authority of the country, highlighted alleged issues in schemes and projects like Ayushman Bharat and the Dwarka Expressway.

It also claimed that the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) diverted Rs 57.45 crore from the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) — which is meant to provide basic financial support to old people, widows and disabled people who are below the poverty line — to other projects in six states.

Alleged gaps and irregularities were also reported in government projects like the regional connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik), under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and in the implementation of Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I (BPP-1).

The purported findings have triggered a political storm, with opposition parties using the reports to attack the BJP-led government over alleged corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency. The government, however, has defended its schemes and projects, claiming that they have benefited millions of people and contributed to the development of the country.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), which is one of the ministries whose flagship highway expansion project, Bharatmala Pariyojana, was audited by CAG, has refuted most of the allegations made by the auditor in its report.

ThePrint looks at the structure and working of the CAG, as the guardian of the public purse for both the central and the state governments, and why its reports are held in such importance.

What is the CAG?

The CAG is the sole hierarchical audit authority under the Constitution. Article 148 of the Indian Constitution requires it to audit the receipts and expenditures of the Union, states and Union Territory governments, including institutions, authorities and bodies that the government finances, as well as government-owned companies and major subsidiaries.

The CAG submits its audit reports before the Parliament or the legislature of the state or Union territory.

Article 148 of the Constitution further states that only the president can appoint the CAG, on the advice of the prime minister. The process of his removal from office before the termination of his six-year period is similar to that of a Supreme Court judge.

As an independent and non-partisan authority, the CAG is barred from holding any other office under the Union or state governments once he ceases to hold office.

The CAG submits annual audit reports to Parliament. This comprises finance accounts and appropriation accounts for financial year expenses from the consolidated fund of India and every state and UT with a legislative assembly.

The president or the governor of a state may also request the CAG to review the accounts of any authority, even if it is not directly supported by the government.

He and his team may investigate the government's financial transactions and question the administration on it. After reviewing the transactions, the CAG may remove his objections or include them in his Parliamentary report, if they are severe.

Article 151 requires the CAG to submit the Union's audit reports to the president, who presents them to Parliament. The governor presents state audit reports to legislatures.

The CAG does not oversee statutory businesses, like the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), State Bank of India (SBI), and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), but it can examine their accounts, if needed.

Staff members at the CAG's office that ThePrint spoke to said that CAG reports that are tabled during Parliament sessions are based on complete investigation and availability of records. In case of an adjournment, they are tabled in the next session.

However, according to a former CAG ThePrint spoke to, lack of timely receipt of information from ministries or authorities remains the single biggest hurdle during the preparation of reports.

What are the CAG reports

The CAG sends audit reports on appropriation accounts, finance accounts, and public undertakings to the president for placing before the Parliament. Once the audit report is tabled in the Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) reviews them and informs Parliament.

The finance and appropriation accounts, tabled in Parliament, contain audit findings on irregular expenses and the results of all audits of trading, manufacturing, profit and loss accounts, and balance sheets of public and private corporations as well as accounts of authorities and bodies substantially funded from the country's consolidated fund.

The CAG also conducts a performance audit to evaluate the efficacy of government schemes. Audit officials conduct a pilot study to find irregularities and then compare them to the rule. After auditing, ministries have two-four weeks to respond, before the president tables the reports in Parliament.

For instance, the CBI probe and Parliament's PAC hearings reportedly relied on the CAG findings in the 2G spectrum allotment case.

How are the reports made?

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India leads the Indian Audit and Accounts Department (IAAD). He is assisted by five deputy comptrollers and auditors general of India. One of the deputies also serves as the audit board's chairperson. There are four additional deputy comptroller and auditors general of India below the deputy CAGs.

At the regional level, a number of accountants general serve as agents of the CAG in carrying out their functional and supervisory tasks at the state level.

The audit report format is reviewed and changed periodically, according to sources in the CAG's office.

Departments within the CAG draw up separate "inspection reports" which are then sent to the relevant ministry during inspection with instructions on improvement, which are monitored. The annual audit reports cover the most significant inspections. Before being handed to the president or the governors, audit reports undergo rigorous quality assurance and CAG countersigning.

The legislature submits them to the relevant parliamentary committees for review. The Public Accounts Committee receives reports from all departments, including Railways, Post and Telegraph, and others. The Public Undertakings Committee receives corporate reports.

Since 1989, the CAG has published an Annual Activity Report for each of its departments to evaluate its operations and inform interested parties, sources added.

Although the CAG solely audits finances, when an administrative policy has substantial financial consequences, the CAG can determine if it followed the law and financial regulations and caused any extravagance or loss. The CAG can review and criticise wasteful spending on the Public Accounts Committee's advice and propose censure.

The CAG thus functions as a watchdog, by evaluating all public expenditures and revenue for efficiency, economy, and effectiveness.

Does the CAG question policies?

In the past, CAG reports have reportedly resulted in lawsuits, licence revocation, and convictions of politicians and officials. On the flip side, the auditor has also been reportedly accused of interfering in policy matters.

For instance, former Cabinet Secretary B.K. Chaturvedi in 2019, reportedly criticised the CAG for its reports on 2G spectrum allocation auction and coal block allotments, saying the auditing body tried to “usurp” the government’s policymaking role.

According to the duties as outlined in the Constitution, however, CAG can point out if there are severe issues in any schemes or policies and check for such.

Officials ThePrint spoke to also claimed the CAG can review system compliance policies.

According to the CAG’s Manual of Standing Orders (Audit), the practice of giving the auditor free files and information has continued since pre-Independence. In 1954, the central government, however, changed its policy to send classified documents to the CAG by name and return them after work, they added.

The office can still conduct a propriety audit, examining the “wisdom, fidelity and economy” of government spending and criticising waste. The propriety audit is discretionary, unlike the legal and regulatory audit, which the CAG must perform.

The officials ThePrint spoke to also informed that, while all data in most of its reports are made public, defence data is withheld owing to it being sensitive information.

In the case of secret service expenditure, the CAG cannot request details of execution, but must accept a certificate from the appropriate administrative authority that they were incurred within his jurisdiction.

Changes within CAG

Over the years, the CAG has undergone several changes in its functioning, according to a history of the organisation available on its website.

One of the modifications was the separation of the Union government’s accounting role from the CAG’s auditing function in 1976.

The Ministry of Finance’s Controller General of Accounts (CGA) assumed responsibility for creating and maintaining the Union government’s accounts. The CAG continues to examine and certify these accounts. Since then, the vast majority of CAGs have been recruited from among senior IAS officers rather than from the Indian Audit and Accounts Service.

In 1996, the CAG established an autonomous entity named the Institute of Public Auditors of India as a “think-tank” on audit, accounting, and accountability problems

to conduct research and development. In March 1999, the CAG established an Audit Advisory Board.

A National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), popularly known as the Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah Commission, was established by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in 2000. The commission reportedly proposed that a multi-member audit commission be formed to appoint and oversee the CAG's operations. The commission also advised using a collegium mechanism to pick the CAG from a panel of three names offered by the Prime Minister. However, the successive UPA government did not act on it.

The CAG also constituted the Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board (GASAB) in August 2002, to improve standards of government accounting and financial reporting, as well as accountability mechanisms.

Another reform was reportedly urged by a high-level committee (HLC) headed by former CAG V.K. Shunglu, which was established by the Prime Minister in 2010 to investigate Commonwealth Games anomalies.

The committee proposed that a collegium of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India appoint a three-member body consisting of a chairman and two members to undertake the CAG's tasks. The committee also chastised the CAG for the time it took to undertake and complete audits. No decision was taken on this as well.

The PMO, in reply to a query in Parliament on whether the government was considering making the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) a three-member body on the basis of the committee's suggestion, reportedly said "information regarding the future course of action" cannot be accessed under the transparency law.

Meanwhile, the CAG has argued that these changes will jeopardise its independence and autonomy. The CAG has asserted that it adheres to a rigorous and fair auditing procedure that includes numerous levels of inspection and interaction with the examined organisations. The CAG has also said that it adheres to worldwide auditing standards and best practices. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/as-modi-govt-opposition-exchange-barbs-on-cag-reports-a-look-at-the-auditors-role-how-it-functions/1722270/>

13. मोदी की योजनाओं के बारे में CAG रिपोर्टों पर विपक्ष का कटाक्ष, ऑडिटर की भूमिका और कामकाज पर एक नज़र (*hindi.theprint.in*) August 21, 2023

संसद को इस महीने की शुरुआत में पूरे मानसून सत्र के दौरान भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) से प्रदर्शन ऑडिट सहित 12 रिपोर्टें मिलीं, जिन्होंने विभिन्न केंद्र सरकार की योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं में कई कथित खामियों और कमियों को उजागर किया, जिससे राजनीतिक आक्रोश भड़क उठा.

कैग जो देश का सर्वोच्च ऑडिट प्राधिकरण है उसने अपनी रिपोर्ट्स में आयुष्मान भारत और द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे जैसी योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं में कथित मुद्दों पर प्रकाश डाला.

इसमें दावा किया गया है कि ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय (एमओआरडी) ने राष्ट्रीय सामाजिक सहायता कार्यक्रम (एनएसएपी) से 57.45 करोड़ रुपये निकाल लिए – जिसका उद्देश्य 6 राज्यों में अन्य परियोजनाओं के लिए गरीबी रेखा से नीचे रहने वाले वृद्ध लोगों, विधवाओं और विकलांग लोगों को बुनियादी वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करना है.

नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्रालय के तहत क्षेत्रीय कनेक्टिविटी योजना UDAN (उड़े देश का आम नागरिक) जैसी सरकारी परियोजनाओं और भारतमाला परियोजना चरण – I (BPP-1) के कार्यान्वयन में भी कथित अंतराल और अनियमितताएं दर्ज की गईं.

कथित निष्कर्षों ने राजनीतिक तूफान खड़ा कर दिया है, विपक्षी दलों ने कथित भ्रष्टाचार, कुप्रबंधन और अक्षमता को लेकर भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) के नेतृत्व वाली सरकार पर हमला करने के लिए रिपोर्ट्स का हवाला दिया है. हालांकि, सरकार ने अपनी योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं का बचाव करते हुए दावा किया है कि इनसे लाखों लोगों को लाभ हुआ है और देश के विकास में योगदान मिला है.

सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्रालय (MoRTH), जो उन मंत्रालयों में से एक है, जिनकी प्रमुख राजमार्ग विस्तार परियोजना, भारतमाला परियोजना, का CAG द्वारा ऑडिट किया गया था, इसने अपनी रिपोर्ट में ऑडिटर द्वारा लगाए गए अधिकांश आरोपों का खंडन किया है.

दिप्रिंट यहां केंद्र और राज्य दोनों सरकारों के लिए सार्वजनिक धन के संरक्षक के रूप में कैग की संरचना और कार्यप्रणाली और इसकी रिपोर्टों को इतना महत्व क्यों दिया जाता है, पर एक नज़र डाल रहा है.

यह भी पढ़ें: 'युवा उम्मीदवारों की कमी', संसदीय समिति ने चुनाव लड़ने के लिए न्यूनतम आयु 18 वर्ष करने पर दिया जोर

कैग क्या है?

संविधान के तहत एकमात्र श्रेणीबद्ध लेखापरीक्षा प्राधिकरण है – CAG. भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 148 के तहत कैग केंद्र, राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों की सरकारों की प्राप्तियों और व्ययों का ऑडिट करता है, जिसमें सरकार द्वारा वित्त पोषित संस्थानों, प्राधिकरणों और निकायों के साथ-साथ सरकारी स्वामित्व वाली कंपनियों और प्रमुख सहायक कंपनियां भी शामिल हैं.

कैग अपनी ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद या राज्य या केंद्र शासित प्रदेश की विधानसभा के समक्ष प्रस्तुत करता है.

संविधान के अनुच्छेद 148 में आगे कहा गया है कि प्रधानमंत्री की सलाह पर केवल राष्ट्रपति ही कैग की नियुक्ति कर सकते हैं. छह साल की अवधि समाप्त होने से पहले उन्हें पद से हटाने की प्रक्रिया सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीश के समान है.

एक स्वतंत्र और गैर-पक्षपातपूर्ण प्राधिकारी के रूप में कैग को पद छोड़ने के बाद केंद्र या राज्य सरकारों के तहत किसी भी अन्य कार्यालय को रखने से रोक दिया जाता है.

कैग वार्षिक ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद को प्रस्तुत करता है. इसमें भारत के समेकित कोष और विधानसभा वाले प्रत्येक राज्य और केंद्रशासित प्रदेश से वित्तीय वर्ष के खर्चों के लिए वित्त खाते और विनियोग खाते शामिल हैं.

किसी राज्य के राष्ट्रपति या राज्यपाल भी कैग से किसी प्राधिकरण के खातों की समीक्षा करने का अनुरोध कर सकते हैं, भले ही वह सीधे सरकार द्वारा समर्थित न हो.

कैग और उनकी टीम सरकार के वित्तीय लेनदेन की जांच कर सकते हैं और इस पर प्रशासन से सवाल कर सकते हैं. लेन-देन की समीक्षा करने के बाद, कैग अपनी आपत्तियों को हटा सकता है या गंभीर होने पर उन्हें अपनी संसदीय रिपोर्ट में शामिल कर सकता है.

अनुच्छेद 151 में कैग को संघ की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट राष्ट्रपति को सौंपने की शक्ति है, जो उन्हें संसद में प्रस्तुत करता है. राज्यपाल विधानमंडलों को राज्य लेखापरीक्षा रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत करता है.

कैग भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई), भारतीय स्टेट बैंक (एसबीआई) और जीवन बीमा निगम (एलआईसी) जैसे वैधानिक व्यवसायों की निगरानी नहीं करता है, लेकिन ज़रूरत पड़ने पर यह उनके खातों की जांच कर सकता है.

कैग कार्यालय के जिन स्टाफ सदस्यों से दिप्रिंट ने बात की, उन्होंने बताया कि संसद सत्र के दौरान पेश की जाने वाली कैग रिपोर्ट्स पूरी जांच और रिकॉर्ड की उपलब्धता पर आधारित होती हैं. सत्र के स्थगन की स्थिति में, उन्हें अगले सत्र में पेश किया जाता है.

हालांकि, दिप्रिंट से बात करने वाले एक पूर्व कैग के अनुसार, मंत्रालयों या अधिकारियों से समय पर जानकारी प्राप्त न होना रिपोर्ट तैयार करने के दौरान सबसे बड़ी बाधा बनी हुई है.

कैग की रिपोर्ट्स में क्या है?

कैग विनियोग खातों, वित्त खातों और सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों पर ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद के समक्ष रखने के लिए राष्ट्रपति को भेजता है. एक बार ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद में पेश होने

के बाद, लोक लेखा समिति (पीएसी) उनकी समीक्षा करती है और संसद को सूचित करती है.

संसद में पेश किए गए वित्त और विनियोग खातों में अनियमित खर्चों पर ऑडिट निष्कर्ष और व्यापार, विनिर्माण, लाभ और हानि खातों के सभी ऑडिट और सार्वजनिक और निजी निगमों की बैलेंस शीट के साथ-साथ देश की समेकित निधि से पर्याप्त रूप से वित्त पोषित प्राधिकरणों और निकायों के खातों की जांच भी शामिल हैं.

कैग सरकारी योजनाओं की प्रभावकारिता का मूल्यांकन करने के लिए परफॉर्मेंस ऑडिट भी करता है. ऑडिट अधिकारी अनियमितताओं का पता लगाने के लिए इसकी स्टडी करते हैं और फिर उनकी तुलना नियम से करते हैं. ऑडिटिंग के बाद, राष्ट्रपति द्वारा संसद में रिपोर्ट पेश करने से पहले, मंत्रालयों के पास जवाब देने के लिए दो-चार हफ्ते का समय होता है.

उदाहरण के लिए केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो (सीबीआई) जांच और संसद की पीएसी सुनवाई कथित तौर पर 2जी स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन मामले में सीएजी के निष्कर्षों पर निर्भर थी.

रिपोर्ट कैसे तैयार होती है?

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक भारतीय लेखापरीक्षा एवं लेखा विभाग (आईएएडी) का नेतृत्व करते हैं. उन्हें भारत के पांच उप नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षकों द्वारा सहायता प्रदान की जाती है. डिप्टी में से एक ऑडिट बोर्ड के अध्यक्ष के रूप में भी कार्य करता है. डिप्टी कैग के नीचे भारत के चार अतिरिक्त उप नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक होते हैं.

क्षेत्रीय स्तर पर कई महालेखाकार राज्य स्तर पर अपने कार्यात्मक और पर्यवेक्षी कार्यों को पूरा करने में कैग के एजेंट के रूप में कार्य करते हैं.

कैग कार्यालय के सूत्रों के अनुसार, ऑडिट रिपोर्ट फॉर्मेट को समय-समय पर रिव्यू किया जाता है और इसमें बदलाव किए जाते हैं.

इसके भीतर विभाग में अलग-अलग "निरीक्षण रिपोर्ट" तैयार होती हैं, जिन्हें निरीक्षण के दौरान सुधार के निर्देशों के साथ संबंधित मंत्रालय को भेजा जाता है, जिसकी निगरानी की जाती है. वार्षिक ऑडिट रिपोर्ट सबसे महत्वपूर्ण निरीक्षणों को कवर करती है. राष्ट्रपति या राज्यपालों को सौंपे जाने से पहले, ऑडिट रिपोर्ट कठोर गुणवत्ता आश्वासन और कैग प्रतिहस्ताक्षर से गुजरती हैं.

विधायिका उन्हें समीक्षा के लिए संबंधित संसदीय समितियों को सौंपती है. लोक लेखा समिति रेलवे, डाक और टेलीग्राफ और अन्य सहित सभी विभागों से रिपोर्ट प्राप्त करती है. सार्वजनिक उपक्रम समिति कॉर्पोरेट रिपोर्ट प्राप्त करती है.

सूत्रों ने बताया कि 1989 से कैग ने अपने प्रत्येक विभाग के संचालन का मूल्यांकन करने और इच्छुक पार्टियों को सूचित करने के लिए एक वार्षिक गतिविधि रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित की है.

हालांकि, कैग पूरी तरह से वित्त का ऑडिट करता है, जब किसी प्रशासनिक नीति के पर्याप्त वित्तीय परिणाम होते हैं, तो कैग यह निर्धारित कर सकता है कि क्या इसने कानून और वित्तीय नियमों का पालन किया और कोई अपव्यय या हानि हुई. कैग लोक लेखा समिति की सलाह पर फिजूलखर्ची की समीक्षा और आलोचना कर सकता है.

इस प्रकार कैग दक्षता, अर्थव्यवस्था और प्रभावशीलता के लिए सभी सार्वजनिक व्यय और राजस्व का मूल्यांकन करके एक निगरानीकर्ता के रूप में कार्य करता है.

क्या CAG नीतियों पर सवाल उठाता है?

अतीत में कैग रिपोर्टों के परिणामस्वरूप कथित तौर पर मुकदमे, लाइसेंस रद्दीकरण और राजनेताओं और अधिकारियों को दोषी ठहराया गया है. दूसरी ओर, ऑडिटर पर कथित तौर पर नीतिगत मामलों में हस्तक्षेप करने का भी आरोप लगाए गए हैं.

उदाहरण के लिए पूर्व कैबिनेट सचिव बी.के. चतुर्वेदी ने 2019 में कथित तौर पर 2जी स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन नीलामी और कोयला ब्लॉक आवंटन पर अपनी रिपोर्टों के लिए कैग की आलोचना करते हुए कहा कि ऑडिटिंग संस्था ने सरकार की नीति निर्धारण भूमिका को “हथियाने” की कोशिश की.

हालांकि, संविधान में उल्लिखित कर्तव्यों के अनुसार, कैग यह बता सकता है कि क्या किसी योजना या नीतियों में गंभीर मसले हैं और इसकी जांच की जा सकती है.

दिप्रिंट से बात करने वाले अधिकारियों ने यह भी दावा किया कि कैग सिस्टम अनुपालन नीतियों की समीक्षा कर सकता है.

कैग के मैनुअल ऑफ स्टैंडिंग ऑर्डर्स (ऑडिट) के अनुसार, ऑडिटर को मुफ्त फाइलें और जानकारी देने की प्रथा आज्ञादी से पहले से जारी है. उन्होंने बताया कि 1954 में केंद्र सरकार ने वर्गीकृत दस्तावेज़ को नाम से कैग को भेजने और काम के बाद उन्हें वापस करने की अपनी नीति बदल दी.

कार्यालय अभी भी एक औचित्य ऑडिट कर सकता है, सरकारी खर्च की “बुद्धिमत्ता, निष्ठा और अर्थव्यवस्था” की जांच कर सकता है. कानूनी और नियामक ऑडिट के विपरीत, औचित्य ऑडिट विवेकाधीन है, जिसे कैग को करना होगा.

दिप्रिंट ने जिन अधिकारियों से बात की, उन्होंने यह भी बताया कि, जबकि इसकी अधिकांश रिपोर्ट में सभी डेटा पब्लिक किए जाते हैं, डिफेंस से संबंधित डेटा को संवेदनशील जानकारी होने के कारण रोक दिया जाता है.

गुप्त सेवा व्यय के मामले में कैग निष्पादन के विवरण का अनुरोध नहीं कर सकता है, लेकिन उसे उपयुक्त प्रशासनिक प्राधिकारी से एक प्रमाण पत्र स्वीकार करना होगा कि वे उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र में खर्च किए गए थे.

कैग में बदलाव

अपनी वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध संगठन के इतिहास के अनुसार, पिछले कुछ वर्षों में कैग ने अपने कामकाज में कई बदलाव किए हैं.

संशोधनों में से एक 1976 में केंद्र सरकार की लेखांकन भूमिका को कैग के ऑडिटिंग कार्य से अलग करना था.

वित्त मंत्रालय के लेखा महानियंत्रक (कैग) ने केंद्र सरकार के खातों को बनाने और बनाए रखने की जिम्मेदारी संभाली. हालांकि, कैग इन खातों की जांच और प्रमाणित करना जारी रखे हुए है. तब से अधिकांश कैग की भर्ती भारतीय लेखापरीक्षा और लेखा सेवा के बजाय वरिष्ठ आईएएस अधिकारियों में से की गई है.

1996 में कैग ने रिसर्च और डेवलपमेंट करने के लिए ऑडिट, अकाउंटिंग और जवाबदेही समस्याओं पर एक "थिंक-टैंक" के रूप में इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पब्लिक ऑडिटर्स ऑफ इंडिया नामक एक स्वायत्त इकाई की स्थापना की. मार्च 1999 में कैग ने एक ऑडिट सलाहकार बोर्ड की स्थापना की.

संविधान के कामकाज की समीक्षा के लिए एक राष्ट्रीय आयोग (एनसीआरडब्ल्यूसी), जिसे न्यायमूर्ति एम.एन. वेंकटचलैया आयोग के नाम से जाना जाता है, साल 2000 में भाजपा के नेतृत्व वाली राष्ट्रीय जनतांत्रिक गठबंधन (एनडीए) सरकार द्वारा स्थापित किया गया था. आयोग ने कथित तौर पर प्रस्तावित किया था कि कैग के संचालन की नियुक्ति और निगरानी के लिए एक बहु-सदस्यीय लेखा परीक्षा आयोग का गठन किया जाएगा. आयोग ने प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा प्रस्तावित तीन नामों के पैनल से कैग को चुनने के लिए एक कॉलेजियम तंत्र का उपयोग करने की भी सलाह दी. हालांकि, यूपीए सरकार ने इस पर कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की थी.

कैग ने सरकारी लेखांकन और वित्तीय रिपोर्टिंग के मानकों के साथ-साथ जवाबदेही तंत्र में सुधार के लिए अगस्त 2002 में सरकारी लेखा मानक सलाहकार बोर्ड (GASAB) का भी गठन किया.

कथित तौर पर पूर्व कैग वी.के. शूंगलू की अध्यक्षता वाली एक उच्च-स्तरीय समिति (एचएलसी) द्वारा एक और सुधार का आग्रह किया गया था, जिसकी स्थापना राष्ट्रमंडल खेलों की विसंगतियों की जांच के लिए 2010 में प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा की गई थी.

समिति ने प्रस्ताव दिया कि प्रधानमंत्री, विपक्ष के नेता और भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश का एक कॉलेजियम कैग के कार्यों को करने के लिए एक अध्यक्ष और दो सदस्यों से युक्त तीन सदस्यीय निकाय नियुक्त करेगा. समिति ने ऑडिट करने और पूरा करने में लगने वाले समय के लिए भी कैग को फटकार लगाई. इस पर भी कोई फैसला नहीं लिया गया.

पीएमओ ने संसद में एक सवाल के जवाब में कहा कि क्या सरकार नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) बनाने पर विचार कर रही है? समिति के सुझाव के आधार पर तीन सदस्यीय निकाय ने कथित तौर पर कहा कि पारदर्शिता कानून के तहत “भविष्य की कार्रवाई के बारे में जानकारी” नहीं दी जा सकती.

इस बीच, कैग ने तर्क दिया है कि इन बदलावों से इसकी स्वतंत्रता और स्वायत्तता खतरे में पड़ जाएगी. कैग ने दावा किया है कि वह एक कठोर और निष्पक्ष ऑडिटिंग प्रक्रिया का पालन करता है जिसमें जांच किए गए संगठनों के साथ निरीक्षण और बातचीत के कई स्तर शामिल हैं. कैग ने यह भी कहा है कि वह विश्वव्यापी ऑडिटिंग मानकों और सर्वोत्तम प्रथाओं का पालन करता है. <https://hindi.theprint.in/india/opposition-takes-a-jibe-at-cag-reports-on-modis-schemes-a-look-at-the-auditors-role-and-its-functioning/587125/>

14. Gadkari expresses dismay over officials' inadequate response to CAG on Dwarka Expressway, asks to fix responsibility (indianexpress.com) August 19, 2023

CAG report on Dwarka Expressway According to reports, the CAG had found that the NHA decision to go for an elevated carriageway on the Haryana portion of the Dwarka Expressway pushed up the construction cost to Rs 251 crore per kilometre from Rs 18.2 crore per km estimated earlier. (File)

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has expressed dismay over the inadequate response to questions raised by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) which resulted in controversy over the cost of construction of Dwarka Expressway in Delhi.

According to ministry sources, Gadkari has conveyed his displeasure with the lopsided attitude adopted by certain officials responsible for responding to queries raised by the CAG with regard to the cost of construction of the Dwarka Expressway at a high-level review meeting on Thursday.

The source said that the minister also directed to fix the responsibility of this lapse on the part of senior concerned officials.

Earlier in the month, a political row erupted on the CAG report which flagged the high cost of construction of the Dwarka Expressway.

Earlier the ministry sources had said that in the absence of an adequate response from the ministry and the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), the CAG adopted an incorrect methodology for computing the cost of Dwarka Expressway.

They also explained that the CAG has simply divided the total cost of construction of Rs 91,000 crore (expenditure) under National Corridor Efficiency Programme with the project's entire length of 5,000 kilometres under development.

They had said the CAG has itself noted that the cost of construction of Rs 18.2 per kilometre does not include the cost norms for flyovers, ring roads, etc.

They were of the view that the expressway in question has elevated roads, underpasses, tunnels and other components which were not part of the project.

The cost of Rs 91,000 crore for 5,000 km under Bharatmala Phase-I project was finalised by the ministry on August 10, 2016, for the year 2016-17 to the extent possible.

The ministry sources had claimed that the government saved over 12 per cent in construction cost against estimates in awarding contracts for the expressway.

They pointed out that the CAG findings that the cost was exorbitant are misplaced as the auditor did not factor in the actual cost.

According to reports, the CAG had found that the NHAI decision to go for an elevated carriageway on the Haryana portion of the Dwarka Expressway pushed up the construction cost to Rs 251 crore per kilometre from Rs 18.2 crore per km estimated earlier.

The audit report on the implementation of Phase-I of the 'Bharatmala Pariyojana' highway projects, triggered a political row with the opposition parties alleging corruption in the process of awarding the project.

The ministry sources had explained that all four packages of Dwarka Expressway were put for tender at an average civil cost of Rs 206.39 crore per kilometre but the contracts were finally awarded at a lower rate of Rs 181.94 crore per km.

The average civil construction cost of the four packages of the expressway was 12 per cent lower than the estimates, they had said.
<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/cag-dwarka-expressway-construction-controversy-nitin-gadkari-8898356/>

15. Nitin Gadkari rejects auditor's fund mismanagement charge in expressway project (indiatoday.in) Aug 19, 2023

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, on Saturday, responded to an audit report on the "huge funding mismanagement" on the Dwarka Expressway project, rejecting the claim that Rs 250 crore was spent per kilometre.

Recently, a political row erupted over the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report which flagged the high cost of construction of the Dwarka Expressway.

According to the report, the expressway, which spans 29.06 kilometres, is being built at an exorbitant cost of Rs 250.77 crore per kilometre, exceeding the Rs 18.2 crore per kilometer that was sanctioned by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

Refuting the allegations of "high cost of construction", Nitin Gadkari said that the Dwarka Expressway was not 29 kilometres-long as mentioned in the CAG report but around 230 kilometres-long, as it had tunnels included in it as well.

He said that according to this, Rs 9.5 crore was being spent per kilometre. Gadkari claimed that he told the same to the CAG officials, and they were "convinced" by the clarification. However, he said, they still went ahead with the report.

'BJP IS THE ARCHITECT OF OPPOSITION UNITY'

When asked about the opposition alliance INDIA, Nitin Gadkari remarked that the "BJP is the architect of opposition unity."

"Those whose ideologies never aligned, those who never saw each others' faces, those who never drank tea together - now they are coming together to fight us (BJP)," he said.

Gadkari added that the BJP's power prompted the Opposition to come together.

Talking about upcoming projects, Gadkari announced plans to build an expressway to connect Kashmir to Kanyakumari. While speaking at the event, he said that the government was planning to connect Kashmir to Kanyakumari via an access control road.

In addition, he said the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is likely to be completed by January or February next year. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/new-expressway-kashmir-kanyakumari-cag-report-nitin-gadkari-2423440-2023-08-19>

16. कैग रिपोर्ट में द्वारका एक्सप्रेस वे में भ्रष्टाचार का खुलासा (bhaskarhindi.com) Aug 19, 2023

नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की रिपोर्ट में द्वारका एक्सप्रेस वे में हुए भ्रष्टाचार के खुलासे का सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्री नितिन गडकरी ने खंडन किया है। उन्होंने कहा है कि इसमें कोई भ्रष्टाचार नहीं हुआ है और इसकी लागत को लेकर कैग की रिपोर्ट में जो तथ्य सामने आए हैं, वह लिखित सूचना नहीं देने की चूक के कारण हुआ है। केंद्रीय मंत्री गडकरी ने कहा है कि उनका मंत्रालय पारदर्शी और निर्धारित

तरीके से सड़कों के निर्माण का काम कर रहा है और एक काम में भी कहीं कोई भ्रष्टाचार हुआ हो तो इसके लिए वह कोई भी सजा भुगतने के लिए तैयार है। द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे में सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में भ्रष्टाचार होने संबंधी आरोपों को खारिज करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेस वे स्टेट ऑफ आर्ट प्रोजेक्ट है और इसकी कुल लंबाई 29 किलोमीटर है। लेन के हिसाब से 563 किलोमीटर है। आठ लेन के इस एक्सप्रेस में छह लेन की सुरंग है और इसकी लागत 250 करोड़ रुपए नहीं बल्कि 206 करोड़ रुपए थी।

गडकरी ने कहा कि परियोजना में हर चरण पर कम लागत आने के लिए सभी कदम उठाए हैं। परियोजना के चार चरण के लिए चार टेंडर मंगाए गए और पहला पैकेज में पांच टेंडर आए और इसमें लागत पांच प्रतिशत कम हुई। दूसरे पैकेज में लागत चार प्रतिशत ऊंची गई और तीसरे पैकेज के टेंडर में 12 कंपनियां शामिल हुई जबकि चौथे पैकेज में आठ प्रतिभागी थे। पूरी परियोजना में 12 प्रतिशत लागत कम हुई। कैग की रिपोर्ट में लागत ज्यादा आने को लेकर सफाई देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि इसमें अंदर सुरंग है, इसलिए कीमत ज्यादा गई। उन्होंने कहा कि मुझे मोदी सरकार में 50 लाख करोड़ रुपये का काम करने का मौका मिला है। विपक्ष बता दें कि हमने कहीं कोई भ्रष्टाचार किया है। वे आए, उनको मैं अपने पारदर्शी होने का सबूत दूंगा।
<https://www.bhaskarhindi.com/state/delhi/road-transport-and-highways-minister-nitin-gadkari-has-denied-the-revelation-of-corruption-in-dwarka-expressway-956122?infinetscroll=1>

17. 250 करोड़ में एक किलोमीटर सड़क निर्माण के कैग के दावे को नितिन गडकरी ने बताया गलत, कहा - उनका आकलन सही नहीं (news4nation.com)
Aug 18, 2023

कुछ दिन पहले सीएजी ने एक रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत की थी, जिसमें उन्होंने दावा किया था कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे के निर्माण में प्रति किमी 18 करोड़ रुपए खर्च करने का प्रावधान था, जबकि केंद्र सरकार ने 250 करोड़ खर्च किए हैं। कैग की इस रिपोर्ट पर कांग्रेस ने मोदी सरकार पर एक और स्कैम का आरोप लगा दिया। ऐसे में अपनी सरकार के बचाव में खुद नितिन गडकरी सामने आ गए हैं। उन्होंने साफ कह दिया है कि सीएजी की रिपोर्ट सही नहीं है। गडकरी ने कहा जो कहा जा रहा है वह बिल्कुल गलत है।

दिल्ली में आयोजित एक कार्यक्रम को संबोधित करते हुए गडकरी ने कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे पर 12 फीसदी पैसा बचाया गया है। सीएजी का आकलन सही नहीं है।

सड़क परिवहन विभाग ने दी सफाई

सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय के सूत्रों ने कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे के सभी चार खंडों के लिए 206.39 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर की औसत लागत वाली निविदा जारी की गई थी। लेकिन ठेकों का अंतिम आवंटन 181.94 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर की कहीं कम दर पर किया गया था।

फ्लाई ओवर, रिंग रोड और सुरंग निर्माण का खर्च नहीं जोड़ा

सड़क मंत्रालय के सूत्रों ने कहा कि कैग ने राष्ट्रीय गलियारा सक्षमता कार्यक्रम के तहत निर्माण पर आई 91,000 करोड़ रुपये की कुल लागत को परियोजना के तहत विकसित होने वाले 5,000 किलोमीटर मार्ग से विभाजित कर अपना आकलन पेश किया है।

खुद कैग ने भी माना है कि 18.2 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर की अनुमानित लागत में परियोजना के तहत विकसित किए जाने वाले फ्लाईओवर, रिंग रोड की लागत मानकों को शामिल नहीं किया गया है। जबकि इस एक्सप्रेसवे के विकास में सड़कों के साथ अंडरपास, सुरंगों और अन्य हिस्सों का भी निर्माण हुआ <https://news4nation.com/news/nitin-gadkari-told-cag-s-claim-of-construction-of-one-kilometer-road-in-250-crores-wrong-said-his-assessment-is-not-correct-640191>

18. CAG रिपोर्ट- द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे की लागत अनुमान से ज्यादा:अफसरों ने रिपोर्ट खारिज की; नाराज गडकरी बोले- जिम्मेदारी तय करें (bhaskar.com)
19 August 2023

दिल्ली-हरियाणा के बीच बन रहे द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे के निर्माण को लेकर CAG की एक रिपोर्ट सामने आई है। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, एक्सप्रेस-वे के निर्माण में अनुमान से ज्यादा खर्च किया जा रहा है। केंद्रीय सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्रालय के अफसरों ने रिपोर्ट खारिज कर दी थी।

अब केंद्रीय मंत्री नितिन गडकरी ने अफसरों के रिएक्शन पर निराशा जताई है। गडकरी ने गुरुवार को हाई लेवल मीटिंग में CAG की रिपोर्ट पर अधिकारियों की जिम्मेदारी तय करने के निर्देश दिए।

एक KM का खर्च 18.20 करोड़ रुपए, 251 करोड़ किया इस महीने की शुरुआत में CAG की रिपोर्ट आई थी। इसमें दावा किया गया कि भारतमाला प्रोजेक्ट के तहत बन रहे द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे में अनुमान से ज्यादा लागत लग रही है। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, कैबिनेट कमेटी ऑफ इकोनॉमिक अफेयर्स (CCEA) ने 29.06 किमी लंबे द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे को 18.20 करोड़ प्रति किलोमीटर के बजट से बनाने की मंजूरी दी थी।

लेकिन नेशनल हाइवे अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया (NHAI) ने इसका बजट बढ़ाकर 7287.29 करोड़ रुपए कर दिया। इस हिसाब से प्रति किलोमीटर सड़क बनाने में 251 करोड़ रुपए खर्च होंगे।

अफसर बोले- ठेकों के आवंटन में 12% की बचत हुई CAG की रिपोर्ट पर नितिन गडकरी की प्रतिक्रिया से पहले सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय का जवाब सामने आया था। मंत्रालय ने CAG के दावे को खारिज किया था। मंत्रालय ने कहा कि ये एक्सप्रेस वे भारतमाला प्रोजेक्ट के तहत बना है, जिसके लिए आर्थिक मामलों की कैबिनेट समिति (CCEA) से मंजूरी ली गई थी।

मंत्रालय ने कहा कि एक्सप्रेस-वे के लिए 206.39 करोड़ रुपए प्रति किलोमीटर की औसत लागत वाला टेंडर जारी किया गया था, लेकिन ठेकों का अंतिम आवंटन 181.94 करोड़ रुपए प्रति किमी लागत के हिसाब से किया गया था। इस लिहाज से सरकार ने इसे बनाने में 12% की बचत की है।

CAG की रिपोर्ट पर कांग्रेस ने क्या कहा
कांग्रेस ने ट्विटर पर लिखा- 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। इस संस्था पर मोदी जी को तत्काल ताला लगवाना चाहिए। साथ ही ऐसी रिपोर्ट निकालने वालों को जेल भेजने का काम करना चाहिए, इन्हें लगता है कि देश में प्रजातंत्र है। <https://www.bhaskar.com/national/news/nitin-gadkari-on-dwarka-expressway-cag-report-131703224.html>

19. 12% कम कीमत पर बनाया जा रहा द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे, CAG रिपोर्ट पर बोले केंद्रीय मंत्री नितिन गडकरी (tv9hindi.com) 21 Aug 2023

द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे हाइवे को लेकर पिछले दिनों संसद में रखी गई नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (CAG) की रिपोर्ट को लेकर जोरदार हंगामा मचा हुआ है। विपक्ष की ओर से इसे सबसे बड़ा घोटाला कहा जा रहा है। कई गुना बढ़ी लागत पर हुए विवाद पर केंद्रीय सड़क परिवहन एवं राजमार्ग मंत्री नितिन गडकरी ने कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे का निर्माण टेंडर कॉस्ट से 12 फीसदी कम कॉस्ट पर हो रहा है। हमने कैग को सारी जानकारी मौखिक रूप से बताई थी लेकिन लिखित में नहीं दिया और इस वजह से यह सब कुछ हो गया।

गडकरी ने एक निजी चैनल से बातचीत में कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे हाइवे 29 किलोमीटर लंबा हाईवे है। हमने इसके लिए जो कैबिनेट नोट भेजा था उसमें लिखा था कि हम 5 हजार किलोमीटर टू लेन प्योर शोल्डर रोड बनाएंगे और उसकी लागत 91 हजार करोड़ रुपये आएगी। उसमें से रिंग रोड और फ्लाईओवर की कीमत इस्टीमेट डीपीआर बनने के बाद तय करेंगे। ये सब नोट में लिखा हुई था जिसे सीएजी ने भी देखा। इस पर उन्होंने कहा कि 85.5 किलोमीटर रोड के लिए आपने 250 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किया।

‘लेन के आधार पर हाईवे 563 km लंबा’

उन्होंने कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेस-वे एक स्टेट ऑफ आर्ट प्रोजेक्ट है, इसकी कुल लेंथ 29 किलोमीटर नहीं है, बल्कि लेन के आधार पर 563 किलोमीटर बैठता है। जो टेंडर हमने निकाले थे उसकी कीमत 250 करोड़ नहीं बल्कि 206 करोड़ प्रति किलोमीटर थी। ये कैग का भी कहना है। जबकि हमारे पहले पैकेज में खर्च 9 फीसदी नीचे गया। जबकि

दूसरे पैकेज में 4.8 फीसदी ज्यादा हो गया. तीसरे पैकेज -25 फीसदी, चौथे पैकेज में - 8.1 फीसदी गया. इस तरह से इस पूरे प्रोजेक्ट में हमने 12 फीसदी कीमत कम की.

कैग की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट पर मचे हंगामे के बीच केंद्रीय मंत्री गडकरी ने कहा कि समस्या यह हुई कि 2 लेन प्योर शोल्डर रोड जिसे 29 किलोमीटर का कहा जा रहा है वो असल 230 किलोमीटर है. इसके अंदर कई टनल भी हैं, और इसलिए 563 करोड़ की कुल लागत आई है. ये सब चीजें हमारे अधिकारियों ने कैग के सामने बताई थी. हमारी ओर से गलती यह हो गई कि आपसी चर्चा में सहमति बनने के बाद हमने उन्हें ये लिखित में नहीं दिया और इस वजह से यह रिपोर्ट में आ गई. उन्होंने आगे कहा कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेस अगले 3 से 4 महीने के अंदर खुल जाएगा. लोग इसे 100 साल तक नहीं भूल पाएंगे.

कैग की रिपोर्ट में कई गुना बढ़ गई लागत
इससे पहले कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे की प्रति किलोमीटर निर्माण लागत 18.2 करोड़ रुपये के शुरुआती अनुमान से कहीं बहुत ज्यादा 251 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर तक पहुंच गई. भारतमाला प्रोजेक्ट के पहले चरण के तहत 5,000 लेन किमी का यह द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे 91,000 करोड़ रुपये की लागत बनाया जाना है. इस प्रस्ताव को 10 अगस्त, 2016 को स्वीकृत किया गया था. लेकिन बाद में इसकी निर्माण लागत काफी ज्यादा बढ़ गई.

कैग का कहना है कि द्वारका एक्सप्रेस के हरियाणा वाले हिस्से को भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण (NHAI) ने एलिवेटेड सड़क के रूप में बनाने का फैसला किया जिससे इसके निर्माण में आने वाली लागत पहले से तय 18.2 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर से बढ़कर 251 करोड़ रुपये प्रति किलोमीटर तक पहुंच गई.

अपने अधिकारियों के रवैये से नाखुश गडकरी
केंद्रीय मंत्री गडकरी ने कैग के ऑडिट में द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे की निर्माण पर आ रही लागत को लेकर उठाए गए सवालों पर अपने मंत्रालय के स्तर पर सही तरीके से प्रतिक्रिया नहीं दिए जाने को लेकर गहरी नाराजगी जताई है. मंत्रालय से जुड़े सूत्रों ने पिछले हफ्ते शुक्रवार को बताया कि गडकरी ने इस मामले में कुछ जिम्मेदार अफसरों के असंतुलित रवैये पर असंतोष जताया. साथ ही मामले से जुड़ी आशंकाओं को सही समय से खत्म करने की नाकामी पर जवाबदेही तय करने का निर्देश भी दिया है.

विवाद बढ़ने के बाद सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय ने अपने स्तर पर स्थिति साफ करने की कोशिश की है. लेकिन कैग की आशंकाओं को लेखा परीक्षण के समय ही दूर न किए जाने को लेकर गडकरी संबंधित अधिकारियों के रवैये से खुश नहीं हैं. हालांकि मंत्रालय के उच्च पदस्थ सूत्र पहले ही कह चुके हैं कि कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में एक्सप्रेसवे के निर्माण में आने वाली वास्तविक लागत को ध्यान में नहीं रखा है.

<https://www.tv9hindi.com/india/union-road-minister-nitin-gadkari-clears-heavy-cost-controversy-cag-on-dwarka-expressway-2056589.html>

20. CAG के रिपोर्टों ने खड़ा किया राजनीतिक तूफान (*jubileepost.in*) Aug 21, 2023

संसद के मानसून सत्र के दौरान भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) से प्रदर्शन ऑडिट सहित 12 रिपोर्टें मिलीं, जिन्होंने विभिन्न केंद्र सरकार की योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं में कई कथित खामियों और कमियों को उजागर किया, जिससे राजनीतिक आक्रोश भड़क उठा. कैग जो देश का सर्वोच्च ऑडिट प्राधिकरण है उसने अपनी रिपोर्ट्स में आयुष्मान भारत और द्वारका एक्सप्रेसवे जैसी योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं में कथित मुद्दों पर प्रकाश डाला.

इसमें दावा किया गया है कि ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय (एमओआरडी) ने राष्ट्रीय सामाजिक सहायता कार्यक्रम (एनएसएपी) से 57.45 करोड़ रुपये निकाल लिए – जिसका उद्देश्य 6 राज्यों में अन्य परियोजनाओं के लिए गरीबी रेखा से नीचे रहने वाले वृद्ध लोगों, विधवाओं और विकलांग लोगों को बुनियादी वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करना है.

नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्रालय के तहत क्षेत्रीय कनेक्टिविटी योजना UDAN (उड़े देश का आम नागरिक) जैसी सरकारी परियोजनाओं और भारतमाला परियोजना चरण - I (BPP-1) के कार्यान्वयन में भी कथित अंतराल और अनियमितताएं दर्ज की गईं.

निष्कर्षों ने राजनीतिक तूफान खड़ा कर दिया है
कथित निष्कर्षों ने राजनीतिक तूफान खड़ा कर दिया है, विपक्षी दलों ने कथित भ्रष्टाचार, कुप्रबंधन और अक्षमता को लेकर भारतीय जनता पार्टी के नेतृत्व वाली सरकार पर हमला करने के लिए रिपोर्ट्स का हवाला दिया है. हालांकि, सरकार ने अपनी योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं का बचाव करते हुए दावा किया है कि इनसे लाखों लोगों को लाभ हुआ है और देश के विकास में योगदान मिला है.

सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्रालय जो उन मंत्रालयों में से एक है, जिनकी प्रमुख राजमार्ग विस्तार परियोजना, भारतमाला परियोजना, का CAG द्वारा ऑडिट किया गया था, इसने अपनी रिपोर्ट में ऑडिटर द्वारा लगाए गए अधिकांश आरोपों का खंडन किया है.

केंद्र और राज्य दोनों सरकारों के लिए सार्वजनिक धन के संरक्षक के रूप में कैग की संरचना और कार्यप्रणाली और इसकी रिपोर्टों को इतना महत्व क्यों दिया जाता है, पर एक नज़र डाल रहा है.

कैग क्या है?

संविधान के तहत एकमात्र श्रेणीबद्ध लेखापरीक्षा प्राधिकरण है, CAG. भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 148 के तहत कैग केंद्र, राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों की सरकारों की प्राप्ति और व्ययों का ऑडिट करता है, जिसमें सरकार द्वारा वित्त पोषित संस्थानों, प्राधिकरणों

और निकायों के साथ-साथ सरकारी स्वामित्व वाली कंपनियों और प्रमुख सहायक कंपनियां भी शामिल हैं.

कैग अपनी ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद या राज्य या केंद्र शासित प्रदेश की विधानसभा के समक्ष प्रस्तुत करता है. संविधान के अनुच्छेद 148 में आगे कहा गया है कि प्रधानमंत्री की सलाह पर केवल राष्ट्रपति ही कैग की नियुक्ति कर सकते हैं. छह साल की अवधि समाप्त होने से पहले उन्हें पद से हटाने की प्रक्रिया सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीश के समान है.

एक स्वतंत्र और गैर-पक्षपातपूर्ण प्राधिकारी के रूप में कैग को पद छोड़ने के बाद केंद्र या राज्य सरकारों के तहत किसी भी अन्य कार्यालय को रखने से रोक दिया जाता है. कैग वार्षिक ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद को प्रस्तुत करता है. इसमें भारत के समेकित कोष और विधानसभा वाले प्रत्येक राज्य और केंद्रशासित प्रदेश से वित्तीय वर्ष के खर्चों के लिए वित्त खाते और विनियोग खाते शामिल हैं.

किसी राज्य के राष्ट्रपति या राज्यपाल भी कैग से किसी प्राधिकरण के खातों की समीक्षा करने का अनुरोध कर सकते हैं, भले ही वह सीधे सरकार द्वारा समर्थित न हो. कैग और उनकी टीम सरकार के वित्तीय लेनदेन की जांच कर सकते हैं और इस पर प्रशासन से सवाल कर सकते हैं. लेन-देन की समीक्षा करने के बाद, कैग अपनी आपत्तियों को हटा सकता है या गंभीर होने पर उन्हें अपनी संसदीय रिपोर्ट में शामिल कर सकता है. अनुच्छेद 151 में कैग को संघ की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट राष्ट्रपति को सौंपने की शक्ति है, जो उन्हें संसद में प्रस्तुत करता है. राज्यपाल विधानमंडलों को राज्य लेखापरीक्षा रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत करता है.

कैग भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई), भारतीय स्टेट बैंक (एसबीआई) और जीवन बीमा निगम (एलआईसी) जैसे वैधानिक व्यवसायों की निगरानी नहीं करता है, लेकिन ज़रूरत पड़ने पर यह उनके खातों की जांच कर सकता है. कैग कार्यालय के जिन स्टाफ सदस्यों से दिप्रिट ने बात की, उन्होंने बताया कि संसद सत्र के दौरान पेश की जाने वाली कैग रिपोर्ट्स पूरी जांच और रिकॉर्ड की उपलब्धता पर आधारित होती हैं. सत्र के स्थगन की स्थिति में, उन्हें अगले सत्र में पेश किया जाता है.

कैग की रिपोर्ट्स में क्या है?

कैग विनियोग खातों, वित्त खातों और सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों पर ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद के समक्ष रखने के लिए राष्ट्रपति को भेजता है. एक बार ऑडिट रिपोर्ट संसद में पेश होने के बाद, लोक लेखा समिति (पीएसी) उनकी समीक्षा करती है और संसद को सूचित करती है.

संसद में पेश किए गए वित्त और विनियोग खातों में अनियमित खर्चों पर ऑडिट निष्कर्ष और व्यापार, विनिर्माण, लाभ और हानि खातों के सभी ऑडिट और सार्वजनिक और निजी

निगमों की बैलेंस शीट के साथ-साथ देश की समेकित निधि से पर्याप्त रूप से वित्त पोषित प्राधिकरणों और निकायों के खातों की जांच भी शामिल हैं।

कैग सरकारी योजनाओं की प्रभावकारिता का मूल्यांकन करने के लिए परफॉर्मेंस ऑडिट भी करता है। ऑडिट अधिकारी अनियमितताओं का पता लगाने के लिए इसकी स्टडी करते हैं और फिर उनकी तुलना नियम से करते हैं। ऑडिटिंग के बाद, राष्ट्रपति द्वारा संसद में रिपोर्ट पेश करने से पहले, मंत्रालयों के पास जवाब देने के लिए दो-चार हफ्ते का समय होता है।

उदाहरण के लिए केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो (सीबीआई) जांच और संसद की पीएसी सुनवाई कथित तौर पर 2जी स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन मामले में सीएजी के निष्कर्षों पर निर्भर थी।

क्या नीतियों पर सवाल उठाता है CAG?

अतीत में कैग रिपोर्टों के परिणामस्वरूप कथित तौर पर मुकदमे, लाइसेंस रद्दीकरण और राजनेताओं और अधिकारियों को दोषी ठहराया गया है। दूसरी ओर, ऑडिटर पर कथित तौर पर नीतिगत मामलों में हस्तक्षेप करने का भी आरोप लगाए गए हैं।

उदाहरण के लिए पूर्व कैबिनेट सचिव बी.के. चतुर्वेदी ने 2019 में कथित तौर पर 2जी स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन नीलामी और कोयला ब्लॉक आवंटन पर अपनी रिपोर्टों के लिए कैग की आलोचना करते हुए कहा कि ऑडिटिंग संस्था ने सरकार की नीति निर्धारण भूमिका को “हथियाने” की कोशिश की।

हालांकि, संविधान में उल्लिखित कर्तव्यों के अनुसार, कैग यह बता सकता है कि क्या किसी योजना या नीतियों में गंभीर मसले हैं और इसकी जांच की जा सकती है। गुप्त सेवा व्यय के मामले में कैग निष्पादन के विवरण का अनुरोध नहीं कर सकता है, लेकिन उसे उपयुक्त प्रशासनिक प्राधिकारी से एक प्रमाण पत्र स्वीकार करना होगा कि वे उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र में खर्च किए गए थे। <https://www.jubileepost.in/cag-reports-created-a-political-storm/>

21. Congress: '93% मार्गों पर काम नहीं कर रही UDAN योजना,' CAG रिपोर्ट का हवाला देकर खरगे ने सरकार पर साधा निशाना (amarujala.com) Aug 19, 2023

कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे ने शनिवार को दावा किया कि नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि केंद्र की 'उड़ान' योजना 93 फीसदी मार्गों पर काम नहीं कर रही है। उन्होंने कहा कि सरकार की ओर से आम लोगों को सिर्फ झूठ और जुमले मिले।

क्षेत्रीय हवाई संपर्क को प्रोत्साहित करने और टियर-2 और टियर-3 शहरों और कस्बों में जनता के लिए हवाई यात्रा को किफायती बनाने के लिए केंद्र सरकार द्वारा 21 अक्टूबर,

2016 को उड़ान (उड़े देश का आम नागरिक) के नाम से एक क्षेत्रीय संपर्क योजना शुरू की गई थी। उन्होंने ट्वीट किया, 'उड़ान मिली नहीं, बस झूठ और जुमलों की बात की! भारत अब ऐसी अक्षम सरकार को माफ नहीं करेगा।'

वादों को पूरा नहीं कर पाई सरकार: खरगे

मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे ने कहा कि हवाई चप्पल पहनने वालों को हवाई यात्रा करने की सुविधा देने का मोदी सरकार का वादा 'अपने सभी वादों की तरह' पूरा नहीं हुआ है। उन्होंने कहा, 'यह हम नहीं कह रहे हैं, कैग रिपोर्ट यह कह रही है। योजना (उड़ान) 93 फीसदी मार्गों पर काम नहीं कर पाई। यहां तक कि एयरलाइनों का स्वतंत्र ऑडिट भी नहीं किया गया। बहुप्रचारित हेलीकॉप्टर सेवाएं भी ठप रहीं। उन्होंने ट्वीट किया, 'उड़ान मिली नहीं, बस झूठ और जुमलों की बात की! भारत अब ऐसी अक्षम सरकार को माफ नहीं करेगा।'

घोटालों की होनी चाहिए जांच: कांग्रेस

इससे पहले बुधवार को कांग्रेस ने यह भी आरोप लगाया था कि कैग ने भाजपा नीत केंद्र सरकार की बुनियादी ढांचा परियोजनाओं में 'घोटालों' की ओर इशारा किया है और प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को जवाबदेह ठहराया जाना चाहिए। कांग्रेस प्रवक्ता सुप्रिया श्रीनेत ने कहा था कि कथित घोटालों की जांच होनी चाहिए और जवाबदेही तय की जानी चाहिए। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/kharge-slams-govt-says-cag-report-shows-udan-scheme-didn-t-work-on-93-per-cent-routes-2023-08-19?pageId=1>

22. Congress and BJP at loggerheads over CAG report on UDAN scheme (cnbctv18.com) 20 Aug, 2023

The Congress and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) are at loggerheads with each other on the CAG report on the Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) report.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said the CAG report has highlighted that the scheme did not work on 93 percent of its routes.

A regional connectivity scheme was launched under the name of UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) on October 21, 2016, by the Union government to stimulate regional air connectivity and make air travel affordable to the masses in tier-2 and tier-3 cities and towns.

In a post in Hindi on X, Mallikarjun Kharge said that the Modi government's promise of enabling those wearing slippers travel by air has not been fulfilled "just like all their promises".

"We are not saying this, the CAG Report is saying this! The scheme (UDAN) did not work on 93 per cent of the routes. Even independent audit of airlines was not done. The much publicized Helicopter services also remained stalled," Kharge alleged.

"Didn't get 'UDAN', just talk of lies and jumlas! India will not forgive such an incompetent government now!" the Congress president said.

Meanwhile, BJP's Amit Malviya responded that Congress is cherry picking facts to score political points. Malviya said that the CAG Report also mentions that the scheme is a good initiative for increasing air connectivity as a faster, safer and affordable option of travel for common people, with eco-multiplier effect.

As many as 74 airports/heliports/water aerodomes have been revived or upgraded and operationalised, providing air connectivity to tier 2 & 3 cities, because of the UDAN scheme, he said. It also also the cradle for the birth of new regional airlines like IndiaOne, Star Air, FlyBig and Fly91, along with a whole new market for small planes in India.

Last week, the Congress had also alleged the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) pointed out "scams" in infrastructure projects of the BJP-led Central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be held accountable.

There should be a probe into the alleged scams and accountability should be fixed, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete had said, asking when will the PM break his "silence" on the alleged irregularities. <https://www.cnbctv18.com/politics/congress-and-bjp-at-loggerheads-over-cag-report-on-udan-scheme-17581811.htm>

23. Large Vacancies, Underutilised Budgets in India's Forensic Science System
(*indiaspend.com*) 19 Aug, 2023

One of the reasons the Union government said it replaced the existing Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC)--which regulates the procedure for arrest, investigation, inquiry and trial of offences under the Indian Penal Code--with the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS) Bill is the inadequate use of forensics. This is one of the "biggest hurdles" in speedy delivery of justice, and the BNSS provides for the use of technology and forensic sciences in the investigation of crime.

But, a new report on India's forensic science system finds that there are large vacancies in government forensic labs, funding delays and underutilisation of budgets, and need for more space and better infrastructure.

The report, Forensic Science India report, was published today, by Project 39 A, a criminal justice research and litigation centre, part of the National Law University. The report is a collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The survey includes 61 Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs), including all eight Central Forensic Science Laboratories (CFSLs), 31 State FSLs and at least one Regional FSL, totalling 22, from each state, and uses data from 2013 to 2017. Of the 30 laboratories that responded to Project 39 A's request for information, three were CFSLs, 17 SFSLs and 10 RFSLs.

In October 2021, IndiaSpend reported on the large number of cases closed by police due to the 'lack of evidence'. One of the problems was the inadequate forensics infrastructure in India, which poses problems in timely investigation and completion of cases, we had reported.

High vacancy rate among scientific officers

Of the 3,211 sanctioned posts for 26 forensic science laboratories for which this information was available, 40% were vacant. Of the 1,294 vacant posts, more than two in three were scientific posts, that include personnel involved in any part of a forensic examination, such as the director, scientific officer, laboratory assistant or digital analyst.

SFSL Lucknow had the highest vacancy at 73%, and the same proportion of scientific posts were unfilled. The RFSL in Nagpur and Pune had more staff than sanctioned because the filled posts included contractual staff, which are otherwise not counted in permanent sanctioned posts, said the report.

Due to delays in recruitment, laboratories have to hire contractual staff leading to temporary hires at these institutions. Without contractual staff the proportion of filled scientific posts at these FSLs dropped from 63% to 52.5%, the report found. The lack of full time professionals also creates hierarchical gaps within the institution and impacts supervision of new recruits.

The high number of vacancies raise “serious concerns regarding the pendency of casework, the quality of forensic examination and the increased pressures on existing staff”, the report said.

During the introduction of the three criminal justice bills, including BNSS, Union home minister Amit Shah said that after three years, the country will get 33,000 forensic science experts and scientists every year. The BNSS has now made it mandatory for a forensic expert to visit the crime scene, if the crime has a punishment of seven years or more. If a forensic facility is not available, the state government is expected to notify “utilisation of such facility of any other state”, says the Bill.

According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development’s 2013 compendium of National Police Mission projects, “it is pertinent that forensic investigations are not left to the field officers but officers with background of forensic sciences are made available in the Police Stations to take up this job exclusively.”

Forensic science lab facilities remained “highly inadequate” in Uttar Pradesh, said a 2017 Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit report on Modernisation and Strengthening of Police Forces in Uttar Pradesh. More than 6,617 samples were pending for examination at Lucknow, Agra and Varanasi FSLs as of January 2011 which had more than doubled to 15,033 by March 2016, said the CAG’s report.

Budget underutilisation and bureaucratic delays

The CFSLs are funded by the Union government while SFSLs, RFSLs and Mobile Forensic Science Units (MFSUs) are funded by respective state governments and specific grants from the Union government. Central funding is “highly inconsistent” and none of the SFSLs or RFSLs received financial support from the Union government in every assessment year, said the report.

Eighteen of the 30 laboratories provided information on sources and amounts of funds received, 20 provided information on the budget forecasted and 22 supplied expenditure information, said the report.

In all, of 16 labs for which data were available on the forecasted budget, nine received as much or more than the forecasted amount between 2013 and 2017, while RFSL Nagpur and CBI CSFL received less than half of their forecasted budget.

The labs did not spend all the money they received. Only three FSLs in Lucknow, Shimla and Dharamshala had an overall expenditure-to-receipt ratio of 100% or more. Data relating to funds received for four out of five years were unavailable for RFSL Nashik.

The report said that the administrative and financial control of the respective state police departments made budget and expenditure approvals cumbersome, compared to FSLs that were directly under the home departments. Further, FSL officials said there was a delay in receiving funds under the Modernisation of Police Forces scheme of the Union government, in addition to the lapsing of funds at the end of each financial year.

At least five labs--CBI-CFSL, CFSL Chandigarh, SFSL Bhubaneswar, SFSL Raipur and RFSL Nagpur--have underutilised funds between 2013 and 2017, the analysis shows.

In all, the expenditure for all laboratories was less than three-fourth of the total forecasted amount. While less than half (40%) of the forecasted amount was spent on equipment and material in the five-year period, three-fourth or more was spent on salary and wages, allowances and professional services, and travel and transfer expenses.

Pending cases

The report also analysed case data in 29 laboratories between 2013 and 2017. The FSLs had at least one of 17 different divisions, such as biology, ballistics, DNA profiling, toxicology, narcotics, serology, documents, excise etc., functional in any assessment year between 2013 and 2017, said the report.

Excise (38.6%), toxicology (15.4%) and biology (14.7%) divisions reported the highest number of cases received in a year, while toxicology (116.7%), excise (106%) and explosives (105%)

had the highest examination rates--that is, the number of cases examined compared to the number of cases received by that division in a particular year. The examination rate is higher than 100% because of historical pendency, the report said.

The comparison between pendency and examination rates shows that the excise division, despite receiving the most cases, has the highest difference between examination and pendency (98%).

Cyber forensics, DNA profiling and ballistics had high pendency rate indicating need for expanding these departments, the report said.

The report also noted that across FSLs, the examination rate in DNA profiling “drastically declined” in 2016 and 2017, which was accompanied by a rise in pendency rates.

The examination rate in cyber forensics has always been lower than the pendency rate. Considering cyber forensics is new, “it signals the need for reassessing the resource allocation needs of this division”, the report says.

Among various challenges, FSLs said that police sent exhibits that bore “no forensic value” like sending “all mobile phones, sim cards or other digital devices for data extraction, without any investigative strategy”.

FSL scientists said that in the absence of video-conferencing facilities in the FSLs or across trial courts, they would often lose entire days of work during court visits, especially due to adjournments or other delays in recording witness testimonies, said the report.

Additional space required for FSLs

According to the report, more than half (13) of FSLs of the 25 that shared data on space said that they needed more space compared to the sanctioned space. This ranged from a nearly 10% increase in the CBI-CFSL to a nearly 300% additional space requirement in the case of the SFSL in Imphal.

Challenges cited by FSL personnel include inadequate planning and design, lack of security, inadequate equipment maintenance and availability and lack of safety procedures.

IndiaSpend has written to the Ministry of Home Affairs for its response on funds, vacancies, infrastructure and pendencies in the forensic science system. We will update the story when we receive a response. <https://www.indiaspend.com/police-judicial-reforms/large-vacancies-underutilised-budgets-in-indias-forensic-science-system-873773>

24. Can the Jal Jeevan Mission provide tapped water to all rural households by 2024? (*downtoearth.org.in*) 20 Aug 2023

When Prime Minister Modi announced the Jal Jeevan Mission from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, 2019, India kicked off its seventh major programme to ensure safe drinking water supply to rural India since Independence.

Under the mission, the government aims to provide tapped water connections to all rural households by 2024. But has the country learnt from the failed attempts to get it right this time around?

India has a long history of unsuccessful attempts to supply drinking water to its villages. The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, made water a state subject and gave all citizens the right to safe drinking water.

So, it was one of the priorities of the country's first five-year plan (1951-56), which asked state governments to build the required infrastructure to be able to provide basic water supply to rural areas. State governments, though, focused only on the easily accessible villages until the mid-1960s.

In 1969, India launched the National Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme. Using technical support from UNICEF, the country dug 1.2 million borewells and issued 17,000 piped water connections under the programme.

In 1972-73, the country rolled out the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Scheme (ARWS) to improve rural access to safe drinking water. A year later, ARWS was replaced with the Minimum Needs Programme (during the fifth five-year plan) that had the objective of improving the overall living standards of people. Owing to its slow progress, the Centre reintroduced ARWS in 1977-78.

In 1986, ARWS was put into mission mode with the formation of the National Drinking Water Mission. In 1991, it was renamed to Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission. Three years later, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment assigned Panchayati Raj Institutions the responsibility of providing drinking water.

In 1996, the now defunct Planning Commission carried out a sample survey in 87 districts across 16 states to understand the progress made with ARWS. It found that the scheme only covered 86 per cent of the sampled villages, and even there the water supply remained erratic.

The Planning Commission found excess iron, fluoride and bad odour made the water non-potable in many states. This was because the scheme relied predominantly on groundwater without any plans of water recharge.

The sinking groundwater levels meant that a number of villages that were initially "covered" under the scheme, slipped back to "not covered" status. Also, 87 per cent of water extraction structures were not operational, suggesting poor maintenance.

In 1999, the Centre rolled out the Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP 99) to increase the coverage of ARWS to the "not-covered" and "partially covered" rural habitations.

The Centre also rolled out the Sector Reform Programme (1999-2000) on a pilot basis to achieve self-sufficiency in drinking water in 67 districts across 26 states through community participation.

In 2002, the programme was modified and launched as Swajaldhara to be implemented in "villages, Panchayats, Blocks where people come forward to own, implement and maintain their water sources as per their choice".

Under the scheme, the community had to contribute 10 per cent of the capital cost (5 per cent in the case of SC/ST dominated villages). In 2007, the community contribution was made optional. In 2004, all the drinking water programmes were brought under the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission.

Over and above this, the Bharat Nirman Programme, launched in 2005, had a rural drinking water supply component, which took care of all uncovered habitations identified under CAP 99.

The Bharat Nirman Programme also faced limited success in addressing the problem of villages rolling back on progress. According to a report released by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), in most years between 2002 and 2007, the existing schemes could cover only about 50 per cent of the target habitations.

In 2018, CAG carried a performance report on the implementation of the National Rural Drinking Water Programme between 2012 and 2017, in 27 states. The report says that 0.48 million habitations slipped from “fully covered” to “partially covered” during the period. This was primarily because rural India saw an 80 per cent increase in deep tubewells between 2006-07 and 2013-14.

In 2017, the Centre launched the Har Ghar Jal programme with the objective of ensuring safe drinking water to all households, with piped supply. By April 1, 2018, however, as per the records of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, only 20 per cent of rural households were connected to piped water.

The promise was to cover 35 per cent of rural households in 2018-19 along with enhanced water entitlements for each household. Under Har Ghar Jal, the ministry also increased drinking water supply in rural areas to 55 litres per capita per day (LPCD). In 2019, the Jal Jeevan Mission replaced the ARWS.

An analysis of the previous schemes suggests they failed due to four major reasons. First, owing to their dependency on groundwater, they failed to ensure a sustainable water source.

Second, they failed to create a sense of ownership among the community towards the drinking water supply. This is the reason that the bulk of the infrastructure that the previous schemes created is now defunct due to poor maintenance.

Third, the progress of the previous projects was seldom shared with the public, which is a good way of sensitising the people. Fourth, mismanagement of funds: India had spent Rs 200 crore on rural water supply, but the problem still persists.

Source: Jal Jeevan Mission dashboard, accessed on Jaunaury 3, 2023

Departure from the past

The Jal Jeevan Mission at least partially addresses these key issues that led to the failure of the previous schemes. The scheme, for instance, says that depending on the availability, villages can be connected to either surface water sources or groundwater. It goes on to say that the water sources also need to be recharged and protected.

The scheme also has a major focus on sensitising the communities and implementing officers at all levels. One of the stated key objectives is to “Take up all support activities like Information, Education and Communication (IEC), training, development of utilities, water quality laboratories, water quality testing and surveillance, research

development, knowledge centres, capacity building of communities etc to make the mission successful”.

At present, however, the majority of the funds are being used to create infrastructure. As per government data, 22 per cent villages are yet to set up the Village Water Sanitation Committee which has the crucial responsibility of maintaining and overseeing the water supply on a day-to-day basis. Even the capacity of the members at the village level needs to be improved.

The programme has a robust dashboard where centralised progress of the scheme is pushed out for the general public. This much needed step helps villages understand how other villages are progressing and can play a major role in encouraging villages to take action.

The dashboard maps every village with water sources, water treatment plants, purification plants, storage facilities, delivery network and community sanitary complex. It, however, does not locate the source sustainability structures like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge.

The scope of the programme also includes preparedness for “natural disasters or unforeseen challenges”, implement on a case-by-case basis bulk water transfers to the villages and set up treatment plants and distribution systems. It also talks of bringing in technological interventions to supply safe water wherever water quality is an issue, and undertake greywater management.

The story so far

India has 193.6 million rural households. Of these, only 32.4 million or 16.7 per cent rural households had tapped water connections at the start of the Jal Jeevan Mission.

As of January 3, 2023, the number of rural households with a tapped water connection had increased to 108.7 million or 56.14 per cent, as per the programme’s dashboard. This means the Mission needs to cover 76.3 million additional rural households (47.3 per cent) in the next two years.

So far, only five states and Union Territories (UTs)—Haryana, Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, and Daman and Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli—have achieved the Har Ghar Jal status with tap water supply to all rural households. Two more states—Telangana and Gujarat—have reported having achieved Har Ghar Jal status and their claims are being verified under the scheme.

A lot is riding on the Jal Jeevan Mission. Its success will ensure India maintains its open-defecation-free status and achieves the Sustainable Development Goals on water and sanitation. The scheme is making quick progress, but a major part of rural India still remains to be covered. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/water/world-water-week-2023-can-the-jal-jeevan-mission-provide-tapped-water-to-all-rural-households-by-2024--91218>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

25. Lack of control on revenue leakage continues in Goa's mining sector: CAG report (*hindustantimes.com*) Aug 18, 2023

Goa's mining sector continues to be plagued by the lack of controls and mechanisms to prevent revenue leakages that marked the period of unabated illegal mining which led to its stoppage back in 2012, a report on asset accounts on mineral energy resources by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found.

The report, published in July 2023 and overseen by the Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board (GASAB), covered Goa's accounting practices for both minor minerals – basalt, laterite and sand, and major minerals – iron ore, manganese ore and bauxite.

“The lessees, based on their own assessment of quality of ore, declared the percentage of lumps and fines in ore and paid royalty at applicable IBM rate for the declared grade of the ore. There was no system for counter-checking the correctness of such declarations made by the lessees. As the onus of declaring the grade of the ore is on the lessees and they remitted royalty accordingly. Declaration of incorrect grade may impact the royalty revenue to the government,” the report stated, adding that the Directorate of Mines and Geology (DMG) “needs to put in a mechanism for drawing samples from the extractions for assessment of the quality of the ore and verify the correctness of the percentage of lumps and fines declared by the lessees in order to ensure that royalty remitted by lessees are at an appropriate rate and there is no leakage of royalty revenue to the government.”

The CAG in its report has called on the DMG to put in place an automated system to capture the data of supply/dispatch of resources linking the data for use of various agencies such as weigh-bridges, mobile checking, geo- surveillance, check-posts, exit gates, railway sidings, resellers, user agencies, industries, etc.

“The system should provide for drawing samples from the extractions of minerals for assessment of the quality and grade of minerals and verify the correctness of the percentage of lumps and fines declared by the lessees in order to ensure that royalty remitted by lessees are at appropriate rate,” the report recommended.

Goa is set to resume mining after a gap of more than a decade, save for a brief period from 2016-18 when some mines that received ‘renewals’ resumed operations, with the government holding auctions for several blocks of iron ore leases since December last year.

Goa director of mines and geology Suresh Shanbhogue said the recommendations would be implemented no sooner mining restarts in the state.

“At the moment, there is no production in Goa. The report has made some general recommendations. When mining restarts, we will make sure they are implemented,” Shanbhogue said.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/goas-mining-sector-plagued-by-lack-of-controls-and-mechanisms-says-cag-report-101692350442619.html>

26. Govt lost over Rs 36 cr in K-FON contract: CAG (*keralakaumudi.com*) 20 August 2023

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Comptroller and Auditor General has found that the exchequer lost Rs 36.36 crore by violating the rules and payin Bell Consortium in the K-FON contract. Mobilization funds were provided to Bell Consortium with interest waived as per the instructions of forme M Sivashankar, the operator of the K phone project, KSITIL.

The CAG has asked the government for more documents for detailed verification.

Bell was awarded the tender for K-FON services for Rs 1531 crore. The mobilization advance is 10 percent of the cost of purchase of goods. Sivash proposed to waive the interest on this amount.

In 2018, KSEB proposed to charge 3 per cent more interest than SBI rate and recover the same in the bill itself in the first instance, as the prescribe interest was not mentioned while giving the advance to Bell. But when Sivashankar informed that the money will be paid from KIIFB and they did the interest, a contract was signed with Bell on March 9, 2019.

On May 2, 2019, Bell demanded an advance of Rs 109 crore. The amount was transferred in August and October. The agreement with Bell did no interest to be received by the government or the interest to be charged. The CAG points out that this is against the provisions of the Store Purcha and the Central Vigilance Commission.

Mobilization advance also includes interest. In order to waive the interest, the approval of the board meeting of the contracting parties is require FON did not seek the approval of the Board of Directors. The government lost Rs 36,35,57,844 due to non-payment of interest. <https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=1133042&u=>

27. Chennithala alleges corruption in K-FON Internet deal (*thehindu.com*) August 20, 2023

The government's move to avoid BSNL as the Internet service provider for K-FON and to give the contract to Ishan Infotech, a firm with alleged links to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is yet another proof of the 'understanding' between the CPI(M) and the BJP, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala has said.

The move to give the contract to the Gujarat company without inviting a new tender smacked of corruption. After the Chief Minister began handling the IT portfolio, corruption of the same pattern linked to IT had been happening over and over, Mr. Chennithala said.

The CAG had found that the government had incurred a loss of ₹36 crore in giving interest-free mobilisation advance in the K-FON deal. The CAG also made it clear that the Central Vigilance Commission's directive that interest should be levied had been violated. Mr. Chennithala alleged that the CAG report on the K-FON deal made it clear that the Chief Minister excelled in 'systematic corruption.'

‘Consistent silence’

The Chief Minister was mocking the people of Kerala by maintaining silence consistently, when allegations, most of which had been proved, were being raised against his daughter and her business venture, Mr. Chennithala said. The Chief Minister’s arrogant silence to the allegations against resembled that of Mr. Modi, who also behaved as though he was not obliged to come clean before the people, he said. Both were challenging the faith of the people.

The allegations against the Chief Minister’s daughter were raised not by the Opposition, but by a quasi-judicial tribunal. The tribunal’s report clearly stated that the alleged illegal remuneration was handed over to Ms. Vijayan because she was the Chief Minister’s daughter, Mr. Chennithala said.

He also said that the CPI(M) State secretary was just a stooge of the Chief Minister and was openly defending anything that Mr. Vijayan did. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/chennithala-alleges-corruption-in-k-fon-internet-deal/article67217050.ece>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

28. Army wing takes up local projects worth Rs 44K crore
(*newindianexpress.com*) 20 August 2023

The multi-pronged in-house indigenisation push of the Indian Army is leading to successes in the form of projects worth more than `44,000 crore involving niche and modern technologies.

Sources in the military establishment confirmed that under the emergency procurement for the Army, 49 schemes worth `7,600 crore, have been contracted catering for capabilities ranging from mobility solutions to communication systems, energy solutions, individual protective equipment, drones & counter drones, armament and simulators.

While this is the fourth tranche, 68 schemes worth Rs 6,600 crore were signed in the first three tranches of the emergency procurement.

As part of the fourth tranche, another Rs 7,000 crore deal comprising 34 schemes is under the final stages of procurement, said sources.

"Niche technologies like logistic & nano drones, counter-drones, loiter munitions, the unarmed aerial vehicle launched precision-guided missiles, Automatic Spectrum Monitoring Systems, etc are being procured."

Keeping the changing geopolitics and requirement to indigenise defense production the Indian Army established the Army Design Bureau (ADB) in 2016 which has been working to 'Indigenise to Modernise by connecting capabilities of the Industry, Academia, Defence Public Sector undertakings & Defence Research and Development."

In a major step, the industry has come up with fully funded projects which are said to help in import substitution. “A total of 45 Make II projects worth `30,000 crore have been initiated in a short period of time with the first contract signed for Maneuverable Expendable Aerial Target in Jan 2022. The second contract for Upgraded Assault Track Way was signed on 28 Feb 23. These include 19 cases initiated based on Suo-Moto proposals.

Aiming to create solutions, the ADB is interacting with various Central and state industrial bodies for collaboration to increase its engagement with Industry, Micro Small Medium Entrepreneur (MSME), and startups.

In addition to the above projects, presently 46 projects of the Indian Army (costing `400 crore including a grant in aid and procurement of prototypes) as part of its challenge are being furthered. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/2023/aug/20/army-wing-takes-up-local-projects-worth-rs-44k-crore-2606933.html>

29. Major Defence Agreements with Russia, Including S-400 Deal, Remain In Limbo amid Payment Crisis (swarajyamag.com) Aug 21, 2023

The major defence deals with Russia, including the S-400 deal, have been facing uncertainty and delays due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The revised schedule for these deals remains unclear as efforts to resolve the payment crisis have not been successful so far.

Approximately \$3 billion in payments are currently held up, and the central banks are working to find a resolution, as reported by The Hindu.

Out of the five S-400 regiments that were contracted under a \$5.43 billion deal in 2018, three have been delivered, while the remaining two are facing delays. The revised schedule for their delivery is still unknown.

Both sides have attempted to settle payments through a Rupee-Rouble arrangement, but this has not resolved the crisis due to the significant trade imbalance and accumulation of Rupees on the Russian side. One of the sources stated that once the payment schedule is clarified, a new delivery schedule can be determined.

According to Alexey Rakhmanov, the Director-General of United Shipbuilding Corporation of Russia, the delivery of two Krivak or Talwar-class stealth frigates being constructed for the Indian Navy in Russia has been further delayed. They are now expected to be delivered by May and October 2024.

Rakhmanov acknowledged that payment has been a significant issue. Regarding two other frigates being constructed at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) under the same deal, he mentioned that the delivery schedule will be determined based on the payment schedule. Originally, GSL was supposed to deliver the first ship in 2026, followed by the second ship six months later.

After Russia was excluded from the global SWIFT system for money transfers starting from February 2022, India and Russia decided to settle payments using the Rupee-

Rouble route. This alternative method was extensively discussed between the central banks of both countries. While smaller payments have resumed, larger payments are still stuck, affecting various significant deals that are currently in the pipeline.

According to a source, some deliveries have been made despite delayed payments. However, in order to continue with further deliveries, a solution needs to be found. Companies and traders are concerned about sanctions, which continue to hinder the expansion of trade. The Reserve Bank of India should address these concerns to promote bilateral trade. It is acknowledged that a multi-pronged approach is necessary to resolve this issue.

In February, the Russian envoy in India, Denis Alipov, mentioned that vostro accounts have been established and a mechanism for Rupee-Rouble trade has been put in place. However, many Indian banks are being overly cautious due to the fear of secondary sanctions from the U.S. It is now up to the banks to utilize this mechanism.

India signed a deal in October 2018 to procure five S-400 regiments at a cost of \$5.43 billion or Rs 40,291 crore. However, the operationalization of the deal faced delays due to concerns about possible US sanctions under the CAATSA law. The ongoing Ukraine war has further complicated the situation, leading to delayed milestone payments.

In a written reply to the Parliament in July 2019, the government stated that the deliveries of the S-400 systems were expected to be completed by April 2023. Earlier this year, officials expressed confidence that the deliveries would be finished by the end of the year or early 2024, with no further delays.

According to a report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence in March, the Indian Air Force (IAF) informed the committee about a major project that had been halted due to the ongoing war.

The IAF representative explained that a significant delivery scheduled for this year would not take place as the supplier had informed them in writing about their inability to deliver. This setback has resulted in a reduction in the projected budget estimates for this year compared to the previous year.

From 2018 to 2021, India and Russia engaged in a defense trade worth approximately \$15 billion. This included significant deals such as the procurement of S-400 missiles, stealth frigates, AK-203 assault rifles, and emergency purchases following the Balakot air strike in 2019 and the 2020 stand-off with China in Eastern Ladakh. <https://swarajyamag.com/defence/major-defence-agreements-with-russia-including-s-400-deal-remain-in-limbo-amid-payment-crisis>

30. Net zero is stalling out. What now? (*moneycontrol.com*) Aug 18, 2023

“Net zero,” the professed goal of governments worldwide to eradicate their carbon output, is at risk of failure. A growing backlash against the rising costs should prompt policymakers to rethink their approach.

Just over 90 percent of global GDP (and 88 percent of greenhouse-gas emissions) are now covered by national net-zero targets, a monumental feat of climate diplomacy. Yet only 10

percent of nations with such targets have detailed plans in place (and only half have even incomplete plans).

Add to this “say-do” gap a growing public wariness. Across the developed world, polls generally show that most people see climate change as a significant threat. But voters have legitimate questions about net-zero policies: How much will they cost? What benefits will they bring? Will they actually work as advertised?

Such skepticism is already changing politics, from the recent losses suffered by Germany’s Greens to the fall of the Dutch governing coalition, which was partly fueled by farmers’ anger over forced reductions in nitrogen-oxide emissions. Even some avowed environmentalists — such as the governor of New Jersey and the leader of the UK’s Labor Party — have lately been siding with voters who feel aggrieved at the costs of environmental policies.

Britain, an early leader in emissions reductions and a global advocate on the topic, is likewise feeling the pressure. Its legally binding policy of carbon neutrality by 2050 had long enjoyed a bipartisan consensus and public support. But slow growth and rising costs have changed the political calculation. The current government has announced new oil and gas production licenses, effectively lowered the price of carbon in its emissions trading scheme (reducing the incentive for green investment), and promised to review environment-related driving restrictions. There’s no longer talk of the “green revolution”; the new watchwords are “pragmatic and proportionate.”

This shift has a certain logic. As former Prime Minister Tony Blair recently noted, the sacrifices of a country contributing only 1 percent of global emissions aren’t going to have much impact on climate change generally. China and other fast-growing developing nations have a much bigger role to play. Voters aren’t crazy to ask why they need to bear endless new costs for such little benefit.

How should governments respond? Hollowing out net-zero pledges would be a mistake; the stakes are too high for further inaction. But policymakers need to demonstrate tangible benefits from the green transition, while distributing costs fairly and transparently.

That starts with simple competence. The UK plans to install 600,000 heat pumps a year by 2028, but so far it has the worst record in Europe for actually doing so. If the government is going to ban the sale of gas boilers in 2035, as it says, it will need to make sure that cheaper alternatives are available. Likewise with a planned ban on new gas and diesel cars: It’s a fine goal, but it won’t go anywhere unless consumers have compelling incentives, charging infrastructure can meet demand and the government has otherwise laid the needed groundwork. If lagging upgrades and planning constraints mean new offshore wind and nuclear power can’t easily reach communities, consumers won’t feel the benefits.

Above all, what’s needed is leadership. Decarbonisation can drive economic growth, create jobs and bring substantial benefits to the environment and public health. But it must be done purposefully and strategically. If voters can’t see the advantages or find the costs too burdensome, all those fine pledges will go up in smoke. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/net-zero-is-stalling-out-what-now-11213971.html>