

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS

1. Debt played down by Rs 2 lakh cr: CAG (*tribuneindia.com*) Sept 19, 2023

CAG points out large number of footnotes inserted in all 16 statements of the Centre's financial accounts for 2021-22

A CAG report has frowned at the Centre's practice of disclosing the actual situation through footnotes that resulted in the main part of the Union Budget showing external debt of Rs 4.39 lakh crore at the "historical rate of exchange" whereas at current exchange rate, shown in small print as a footnote, the actual debt was Rs 6.58 lakh crore.

Cites Footnotes to flag facts

-CAG points out large number of footnotes inserted in all 16 statements of the Centre's financial accounts for 2021-22

-Footnotes put the actual external debt at Rs 6.58 lakh crore instead of Rs 4.39 lakh crore, as indicated in the Union Budget

"It was observed that the latter was Rs 2.18 lakh crore higher than what was shown at the historical rate. This disclosure of the value of external debt only through a footnote affected the transparency of the accounts," noted the CAG's financial audit of the Central Government for the 2021-22 fiscal. It also pointed out that the calculation of external debt at the "historical rate of exchange" was a violation of the FRBM Act, 2003, which specifies the valuation of external debt at current exchange rates.

Similarly, the difference of the Centre's account with the RBI's closing cash balance was also shown in a footnote. This footnote gave a break-up of the difference between civil ministries, non-civil ministries, UTs and broad reasons for the differences. "Disclosure through the footnote was inadequate as the difference was shown on a net basis and thus, did not capture its totality in terms of separate credits and debits that made up the difference," the CAG noted.

The CAG also pointed out that a large number of footnotes were inserted in all 16 statements of the Union Government's financial accounts for 2021-22 for disclosing additional information. These footnotes, though relating to significant transactions, lacked clarity and in some cases were being repeated year after year without a resolution, it said.

In their response, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) stated that the footnotes were inserted to qualify transactions during the year or the balances appearing in the Union Government's financial accounts (UGFA). In some cases, the footnotes were also inserted to provide additional information to the stakeholders, which was not part of the format of the UGFA.

Its defence was that the footnotes were inserted below the pages where these transactions were reported to aid readability. "However, the feasibility of inserting 'Notes to Accounts' is being examined," conceded the CGA.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/debt-played-down-by-2-lakh-cr-cag-545610>

2. Govt buried key information in footnotes, understated external debt by Rs 2 lakh crore, says CAG (*theprint.in*) 18 September, 2023

Audit body found several other irregularities in govt's accounts for FY22, including cess collections lying unused or misused, and expenditure being placed under opaque headings.

The Government of India understated its external debt by as much as Rs 2 lakh crore in fiscal 2021-2022 — running afoul of its own laws — the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has said in a report.

The CAG, in a report made public in August and pertaining to financial year 2021-2022, highlighted a tendency by the Narendra Modi government to bury important information in footnotes rather than report it in the main body of its accounts. Some of this information was “crucial in nature” and thus needed a more significant disclosure, the CAG said.

The CAG, in a section titled “depiction of critical information through footnotes”, found that the main section of the government’s accounts for the year 2021-22 showed the external debt of the Union government to be Rs 4.39 lakh crore based on a “historical” exchange rate. However, a footnote disclosed that at the latest exchange rate for the period (31 March, 2022), this debt would actually have been Rs 6.58 lakh crore — Rs 2.19 lakh crore higher.

This, the CAG said, was a violation of the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, which lays out the rules the government should adhere to in the interests of good, stable, and transparent fiscal policy.

“This disclosure of the value of external debt only through a footnote affected the transparency of the accounts and may also be seen in the light of Rule 2(aa) of FRBM Act, 2003, wherein the definition of Union Government Debt includes External Debt valued at current exchange rates,” the CAG report says.

According to the FRBM Act, government debt at any point of time includes, among other things, “the total outstanding liabilities of the central government on the security of the Consolidated Fund of India, including external debt valued at current exchange rates”.

Important disclosures buried

The CAG also found other instances of the government leaving important information in the footnotes of its accounts.

According to the ‘Liabilities of the Central Government’ statement released by the Centre, the total of liabilities of the Union government under the accounting head ‘Small Savings and Provident Funds’, as on 31 March, 2022, were Rs 6,01,445.58 crore.

However, the CAG found that information on “other liabilities” of the government with regard to this accounting head, and also some of its related investments, were made only through footnotes.

“Thus, depiction of Small Savings Liabilities amounting to Rs 6,23,006.29 crore through a footnote, and not as part of the main body of the Statement or depicting the consolidated picture at any place, did not present an appropriate picture of Public Account Liabilities of the Union Government,” the CAG says in the report.

The CAG said it had raised the issue of the improper use of footnotes in the report for FY21 as well, and had suggested then that the government should introduce a section where all such disclosures could be made in a consolidated form “to aid readability and transparency”.

Cesses unused, problem of ‘other expenditure’

The CAG also found that several cesses the government had collected from the public were unused, lying idle, or had been misappropriated for uses other than what they were intended for.

A cess is a form of tax the government collects for a particular purpose, the proceeds of which it does not need to share with the states. This has become a sore point between the Centre and the states, with the latter alleging that the Centre was increasingly using cesses rather than taxes, as it would not then need to share the proceeds.

An example of cesses lying unused, as noted by the CAG, was the Health and Education Cess collected in 2021-22, a part of which was to go towards two funds — Madhyamik and Uchchatar Shiksha Kosh (MUSK) and Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi (PMSSN).

“During FY 2021-22, an amount of Rs 52,732 crore was collected towards Health and Education Cess, out of which Rs 31,788 crore (60 per cent) was transferred to Parambhik Shiksha Kosh,” the CAG report says.

“For the remaining Reserve Funds, in spite of Cabinet’s approval for their creation i.e. MUSK (July 2017) and PMSSN (March 2021), both are yet to be operationalised due to non-finalisation of their accounting procedures,” it adds.

Similarly, the CAG found that in 2021-22, the government collected Rs 10,376 crore under the Universal Access Levy (UAL), a cess aimed at financing the Universal Service Obligation Fund — which is meant to help defray the cost of providing mobile services in remote areas. However, only Rs 8,300 crore was actually transferred to the fund.

“Thus, there was a short transfer of UAL collected during the year to USO Fund amounting to Rs 2,076 crore,” the CAG said. “This amount was retained in the Consolidated Fund of India and was available for use for purposes other than for which it was levied.”

The CAG also said that, despite repeated attempts by it to dissuade the Centre, various government departments still listed large parts of their expenditure under the catch-all and opaque accounting head of “other expenditure”.

“Classifying the expenditure of certain outlays at appropriate level is necessary for ensuring the transparency in books of accounts, which also enables to quantify the expenditure activity-wise for the purpose of management as well as monitoring,” the CAG report states.

“Hence, repeated use of Minor Head 800 [which is titled ‘other expenditure’] results in opaqueness in accounts and needs to be curtailed,” it added. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/govt-buried-key-information-in-footnotes-understated-external-debt-by-rs-2-lakh-crore-says-cag/1767391/>

3. CAG Report Finds Glaring Holes, Violation of Cardinal Rules in Centre's Accounting Practices (*thewire.in*) 18 September, 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General found multiple issues in the Centre's reporting practices, including funds being parked in unauthorised accounts and incomplete disclosures due to opaque use of footnotes.

Last month, 12 audit reports prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on various Union government departments were tabled in parliament. One of these was a financial audit on the government's accounts (Report 21).

The Telegraph conducted an analysis of a 27-page chapter within Report 21 called ‘Quality of Accounts and Financial Reporting Practices’, finding that it “shines a light on accounting shenanigans that will leave any private conglomerate and its auditors aghast at the sheer audacity of the sharp practices in central government accounts”.

For instance, the audit report finds that the Department of Space put public funds in banks' current accounts despite there being “no provision in government accounting ... rules to retain public funds outside government accounts”.

Rs 154.94 crore of public funds were parked in these accounts by the space department, the CAG said.

It added that although it had asked the department to close the accounts in October 2021, the latter had failed to do this even as of November 2022.

The auditor also pointed to a case where two Union government ministries failed to coordinate their share of funds with each other.

This was in respect to the ‘Rashtriya Swachhata Kosh’ (Hindi for ‘national cleanliness fund’), out of which the sanitation and urban affairs ministries were entitled to 80% and 20% shares respectively.

But in the financial years 2015-2017, the sanitation ministry “utilised the entire amount” in the fund, after which its urban affairs counterpart incurred an adverse balance.

This balance persists as of May 2023, the CAG noted.

Another one of the report's findings relates to cesses (a kind of additional tax) having nowhere to go despite prior approvals and planning.

In this case, the CAG said that during the financial year 2021-2022, Rs 52,732 crore was collected by the Union government as a 'health and education cess'.

Nearly 60% of this amount (Rs 31,788 crore) was transferred to the 'Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh' (Hindi for 'primary education fund').

The remainder was supposed to be transferred to two other funds: namely, the 'Madhyamik and Uchhatar Shiksha Kosh' (Hindi for 'middle and higher education fund') and the 'Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi' (Hindi for 'prime minister health protection fund').

But the audit body found that "in spite of the cabinet's approval for their creation", these two funds "were not even created".

"Both are yet to be operationalised [as of May 2023] due to non-finalisation of their accounting procedures," the report added.

The CAG also noted that the way the Union government used footnotes in its finance accounts made its finances more opaque.

"A total of 258 footnotes had been included for disclosing additional information in [the finance accounts] for FY 2021-22. However, these footnotes did not disclose the complete picture of the finances of the Union government," Report 21 said.

Apart from these, The Telegraph reported that the government underreported some of its liabilities by over Rs 21,000 crore.

Gujarat government didn't prepare state forest policy

A performance audit report by the CAG has found that the Gujarat government had not prepared a state forest policy as of 2021 even though the National Forest Commission recommended all states to do so in 2006.

The CAG's report was submitted to the Gujarat government last month and was tabled in its legislative assembly on Saturday (September 16).

It said that Gujarat's forest department had also not established a mechanism for ensuring the implementation of the National Forest Policy and National Wildlife Action Plan, PTI reported.

The state government had also not declared critical wildlife habitats in sanctuaries despite 14 years having passed following the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, the CAG's report said according to PTI.

The auditor also noted that ISRO had identified 12 wildlife corridors in Gujarat in 2014 and 2017, following which it made recommendations to the state's forest department.

But the department "neither conducted any study itself to identify the precise corridors nor took cognisance of the scientific study conducted by ISRO", the CAG said.

Kerala revenue departments 'tardy' in pursuing arrears

The country's apex audit institute also prepared a compliance report on the Kerala government's revenue sector, which it sent to the state government last month.

Kerala's legislative assembly tabled the compliance report on Thursday (August 14).

The report finds that the state government's revenue sector has racked up arrears worth Rs 28,258 crore as of March 2022, which amounted to a significant 24% of the state's total revenue.

"This necessitates urgent intervention from the government to clear the outstanding arrears," the CAG said in the report.

It added: "The absence of prompt reporting of arrears to [the] revenue department and tardy pursuance by the departments concerned for realising the arrears are the main reasons for the huge pendency of arrears."

The CAG also provided a breakdown of the Rs 28,258 crore in arrears, which says that Kerala's goods and services tax department holds the highest proportion of arrears at Rs 13,410 crore (or 47%) of the total.

But Kerala's finance minister K.N. Balagopal justified his government's measures, saying that tax arrears the state was supposed to collect had decreased by Rs 420 crore over one year.

"Usually, the deficits in tax departments never come down, but only increase. But this year, there is a reduction of Rs 420 crore in tax deficits, compared to the tax deficits during the last financial year. This is a historical achievement," PTI quoted Balagopal as saying. <https://thewire.in/government/cag-finds-tardy-performance-by-gujarat-and-kerala-govts-and-holes-in-centres-accounting>

4. Government accounting is an Executive function (*telegraphindia.com*) Sept 19, 2023

'Government accounts are prepared on cash basis and, therefore, external debt is reported at historical cost'

The finance ministry's response to a news report published in The Telegraph that was based on a CAG report

The piece "Central 'cash diversion' to unknown repositories", published in The Telegraph edition dated September 18, 2023, misinterprets Chapter 3 of the CAG's

report No 21 of 2023 and makes fictional claims about the Union government's accounting practices.

Government accounting is essentially an Executive function. In this context, CAG's observations on quality of accounting and financial reporting practices, as in the said Report, often triggers systemic and procedural improvements.

There are also a few issues that may tend to persist due to principles-based disagreement between the Government and the CAG, pending discussion on approaches to be adopted.

Chapter 3 of the CAG's report No 21 of 2023 titled 'Quality of Accounts and Financial Reporting Practices' of the CAG's report needs to be seen in this light. It discusses the presentation of financial information with reference to issues of completeness, transparency, accuracy and disclosures in the Union Government Finance Accounts (UGFA) for the FY 2021-22.

Beyond this, there is nothing in the said Chapter that could, even remotely in an unbiased reportage, invite the use of epithets — "something rotten", or "mess", or "smokescreen", or "secret repositories of public money". And, about the histrionic claims that "the government refuses to reveal" or "it has been stonewalled every single time", the CAG's report itself acknowledges that replies were received.

The piece raises the following 'concerns' with respect to observations of the CAG in report no 21 of 2023 on Union Government Accounts:

Claim: Undervaluation of external debt.

Government's response:

The Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement prepared as per provisions of the FRBM Act, 2003, and laid before Parliament along with the Union Budget every year, requires that Central Government debt as per cent of GDP be disclosed as one of the fiscal indicators. In this Statement, external debt is calculated using current exchange rate as on 31st March of the Financial Year. This is in accordance with the definition of central government debt provided in the FRBM Act.

However, Government accounts are prepared on cash basis and, therefore, external debt is reported at historical cost. The current value of liabilities of Government on account of external debt is also disclosed through footnotes in the Accounts. As a result, both the accounting requirement and FRBM requirements are being fully disclosed in a transparent manner.

Claim: Understatement of liabilities for small savings and provident fund.

Government's response:

As stated in the Summary of Debt Position of Union Government, the total liability of Central Government on account of small savings and PF etc., (excluding NSSF

investment in special securities of Central Government which is accounted in the internal debt) is Rs 12,24,452 crore.

Out of this Rs 6,01,446 crore is shown in the summary statement and balance amount of Rs 6,23,006 crore is shown in the footnote as amount excluded from summary statement amount, as this liability is on account of investments in state government special securities, investments in other public agencies, POLIF fund managed by private fund managers and accumulated deficit of NSSF.

While the CAG's advice suggests better depiction, the authors of the piece have calculated a difference between amount shown in summary statement (Rs 6,01,446 crore) and amount excluded as explained above Rs 6,23,006 crore).

The interpretation by the authors that there is an understatement of liabilities is therefore not correct.

Claim: Public funds parked in current accounts of banks.

Government response:

These current accounts were maintained by D/o Space for making customs duty payment as per requirements of ICEGATE portal of CBIC. Now that Electronic Cash Ledger system has been introduced in ICEGATE, Department of Space has already closed all but one current account, which will be closed shortly.

Claim: Levies & Cesses not used for intended purposes.

Government response:

It is wrong to say that levies and cesses are not used for the purposes for which they were levied. The accounting procedure adopted for collection and utilization of cess proceeds are governed by the underlying provision of the respective Acts.

Section 9C of Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003 provides that the Central Government may, after due appropriation made by Parliament credit such sums of money as that Government may consider necessary in the Fund. Thus, transfers to USOF are made in line with the statutory provisions.

The Union Government has already spent more than the actual proceeds of health and education cess on identified schemes with due appropriation of Parliament.

Claim: Stack of 258 footnotes appended to accounts.

Government response:

There is no restriction on the number of notes/ footnotes, which are inserted to improve readability and transparency. The number of footnotes is reasonable for an entity as mammoth as Government of India with an expenditure of about Rs. 38 lakh crore in FY 2021-22. However, CAG's advice to use "Notes" instead of "Footnotes" is being considered.

Claim: Mismatch between the government's statement on equity holding in public sector units and the information provided in the annual reports and financial statements of these companies.

Government response:

The major reasons for discrepancies are non-depiction of bonus shares and splitting of shares. The information is being reconciled.

Claim: Cases of adverse balances.

Government response:

Adverse balances do not necessarily arise due to excess expenditure against authorised heads. They mainly arise due to non-transfer of balances across ministries or non-settlement of claims by other departments/State governments, or misclassifications of balances. These are being closely monitored. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/government-accounting-is-an-executive-function/cid/1967294>

5. केंद्र सरकार के बही-खातों से पैसे कहां गए? जानिए सीएजी की रिपोर्ट (satyahindi.com) Sept 18, 2023

केंद्र सरकार के बही-खातों पर सीएजी ने गंभीर सवाल उठाए हैं। इसने कर्ज की राशि को बही-खातों में दिखाने में हेरफेर किए जाने से लेकर, रुपये प्राप्ति और खर्च में अंतर, नियमों की अनदेखी कर पब्लिक फंड का पैसा चालू खाते में रखने तक की रिपोर्ट दी है। इसने कहा है कि जिस मकसद से लेवी और उपकर लगाकर जनता से पैसे उगाहे गए उसके लिए उस पैसे का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया गया। रिपोर्ट में यहाँ तक कहा गया है कि कैसे नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार और उसके लेखाकारों ने सार्वजनिक धन के गुप्त भंडार के रूप में जगहें बना ली हैं।

पिछले महीने आई सीएजी की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि केंद्र सरकार के खातों में कुछ गड़बड़ है। इसने यह भी कहा है कि उस स्थिति को बहुत लंबे समय तक खराब रहने दिया गया है और गड़बड़ी को दुरुस्त करने का कोई वास्तविक प्रयास नहीं किया गया है।

रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि फंड को वित्त पोषित कार्यक्रमों और संसद द्वारा अनुमोदित नकदी निधि से उन उद्देश्यों के लिए निकाला गया है जिसके बारे में सरकार बताने से इनकार करती है। सीएजी ने पहले की रिपोर्टों में भी सरकार की बहीखाता प्रणालियों के बारे में कई तीखी टिप्पणियाँ की हैं।

टेलीग्राफ़ की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22 के लिए केंद्र सरकार के खातों से संबंधित सीएजी की रिपोर्ट संख्या 21 में खातों की गुणवत्ता और वित्तीय रिपोर्टिंग प्रथा शीर्षक वाला 27 पेज का अध्याय केंद्र सरकार के खातों में अपनाए गए तौर तरीकों पर चौकता है।

अंग्रेज़ी अख़बार की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार सीएजी ने इसमें जो प्रमुख गड़बड़ियाँ बताई हैं उनमें कर्ज से जुड़ी रक़म से लेकर लेवी और उपकर के रुपये तक शामिल हैं-

-सरकार के खातों में हेराफेरी विदेशी कर्ज को लेकर शुरू होती है। इसकी गिनती पुराने विनियम दर पर 4.39 लाख करोड़ रुपये की गई थी। यह 2003 के राजकोषीय उत्तरदायित्व और बजट प्रबंधन यानी एफआरबीएम अधिनियम में दी गई परिभाषा के विपरीत है। इस परिभाषा के अनुसार मौजूदा

विनिमय दर पर सरकार विदेशी ऋण का मूल्यांकन करती तो यह बढ़कर 6.58 लाख करोड़ रुपये हो जाता। इसका मतलब यह हुआ कि वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22 के लिए सरकार के खातों में विदेशी ऋण का मूल्य 2.19 लाख करोड़ रुपये कम दिखाया गया।

-केंद्र द्वारा जुटाए गए लेवी और उपकर के पैसे या तो बेकार पड़े हैं या फिर अन्य दूसरे मकसद के लिए इस्तेमाल किए गए हैं। यह उन शर्तों का उल्लंघन है जिनके तहत उपकर को जुटाया जाता है। यह वह पैसा है जिन्हें केंद्र सरकार राज्यों के साथ साझा करने के लिए बाध्य नहीं है। उपकर एक खास मकसद के लिए सरकार द्वारा लगाया गया एक अतिरिक्त कर है और शुरू में भारत के समेकित कोष में रखा जाता है।

-हेरफेर वाले लेखांकन, सरकारी खातों के बाहर धनराशि जमा करने और केंद्र के भुगतान दायित्वों को जानबूझकर कम देनदारी दिखाने के लिए दबाए जाने या फुटनोट में छिपाए जाने के कई उदाहरण हैं। सीएजी का दावा है कि यह केंद्र सरकार के वित्त की पूरी तस्वीर का खुलासा नहीं करता है। 2021-22 में सरकार ने 258 फुटनोट का इस्तेमाल किया। इससे दो साल पहले 2019-20 में उसने 254 का इस्तेमाल किया था।

-सरकार यह नहीं जानती है या वह सीएजी को दिए गए दस्तावेजों में यह नहीं बताती है कि राज्य के स्वामित्व वाली कंपनियों की इक्विटी में कितना निवेश किया है और उनसे लाभांश के रूप में कितना जुटाया है। राज्य के स्वामित्व वाले उद्यमों में सरकार द्वारा रखे गए इक्विटी शेयरों की संख्या को लेकर चौकाने वाला अंतर है। सीएजी को दिए गए वित्तीय खातों के विवरण और उन्हीं संस्थाओं द्वारा पेश वार्षिक खातों में यह अंतर पता चला है।

-दूरसंचार विभाग में भी अनियमितताएं दिखीं। टेलीकॉम ऑपरेटर सरकार को अपने समायोजित सकल राजस्व का 8 प्रतिशत राजस्व लाइसेंस शुल्क के रूप में भुगतान करते हैं। इसमें से 5 प्रतिशत एक सार्वभौमिक सेवा दायित्व निधि यानी यूएसओएफ को और 3 प्रतिशत सामान्य सरकारी खजाने को जाता है। सीएजी ने पाया कि सरकार ने टेलीकॉम लेवी से 10,376 करोड़ रुपये जुटाए लेकिन यूएसओएफ को केवल 8,300 करोड़ रुपये हस्तांतरित किए। बाकी कहाँ गए? सरकार ने नहीं बताया।

अंग्रेजी अखबार ने कुछ चार्टर्ड अकाउंटेंट्स से संपर्क किया लेकिन वे इस बात पर टिप्पणी करने से कतरा रहे हैं कि सरकार किस तरह अपना हिसाब-किताब रखती है। इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ चार्टर्ड अकाउंटेंट्स ऑफ इंडिया के एक पूर्व अध्यक्ष ने नाम न छापने की शर्त पर टेलीग्राफ से कहा, सीएजी के पास कंपनी अधिनियम की धारा 143(6)(ए) और उसकी टिप्पणियों सहित पूरक ऑडिट की मांग करने का अधिकार है। महत्वपूर्ण टिप्पणियाँ, सरकारी कंपनी की वार्षिक रिपोर्ट के साथ संसद के समक्ष रखी जा सकती हैं। इसके बाद विपक्ष इस मामले को उठा सकता है और सरकार से जवाब मांग सकता है।' <https://www.satyahindi.com/indian-economy/cag-report-modi-government-accounts-cash-diversion-unknown-repository-136222.html>

6. सीएजी ने 'फुटनोट' अकाउंटिंग पर नाराजगी जताई, कहा कि बाहरी कर्ज 2 लाख करोड़ रुपये से कम आंका गया (jantaserishta.com) SEP 18, 2023

कैग की एक रिपोर्ट ने फुटनोट के माध्यम से वास्तविक स्थिति का खुलासा करने की केंद्र की प्रथा पर नाराजगी व्यक्त की है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप केंद्रीय बजट के मुख्य भाग में 4.39 लाख करोड़ रुपये का बाहरी ऋण "विनिमय की ऐतिहासिक दर" पर दिखाया गया है, जबकि वर्तमान विनिमय दर पर दिखाया गया है। फुटनोट के रूप में छोटे प्रिंट में, वास्तविक कर्ज 6.58 लाख करोड़ रुपये था।

"यह देखा गया कि उत्तरार्द्ध ऐतिहासिक दर पर दिखाए गए से 2.18 लाख करोड़ रुपये अधिक था। केवल एक फुटनोट के माध्यम से बाहरी ऋण के मूल्य के इस खुलासे ने खातों की पारदर्शिता को प्रभावित किया," सीएजी ने 2021-22 वित्तीय वर्ष के लिए केंद्र सरकार के वित्तीय ऑडिट में कहा।

इसने यह भी बताया कि "विनिमय की ऐतिहासिक दर" पर बाहरी ऋण की गणना एफआरबीएम अधिनियम 2003 का उल्लंघन है जो वर्तमान विनिमय दरों पर बाहरी ऋण के मूल्यांकन को निर्दिष्ट करता है।

इसी तरह, आरबीआई के समापन नकद शेष के साथ केंद्र के खाते का अंतर भी एक फुटनोट में दिखाया गया था। इस फुटनोट ने नागरिक मंत्रालयों, गैर-नागरिक मंत्रालयों, केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों के बीच अंतर और मतभेदों के व्यापक कारणों का विवरण दिया। सीएजी ने कहा, "फुटनोट के माध्यम से खुलासा अपर्याप्त था क्योंकि अंतर शुद्ध आधार पर दिखाया गया था और इस प्रकार, अलग-अलग क्रेडिट और डेबिट के संदर्भ में इसकी समग्रता को शामिल नहीं किया गया जिससे अंतर बना।"

सीएजी ने यह भी बताया कि अतिरिक्त जानकारी का खुलासा करने के लिए 2021-22 के लिए केंद्र सरकार के वित्तीय खातों के सभी 16 विवरणों में बड़ी संख्या में फुटनोट डाले गए थे।

यह फुटनोट, हालांकि महत्वपूर्ण लेनदेन से संबंधित थे, उनमें स्पष्टता की कमी थी और कुछ मामलों में समाधान के बिना साल-दर-साल दोहराया जा रहा था, यह कहा।

अपने जवाब में, लेखा महानियंत्रक (सीजीए) ने कहा कि फुटनोट वर्ष के दौरान योग्य लेनदेन या केंद्र सरकार के वित्तीय खातों (यूजीएफए) में दिखाई देने वाली शेष राशि के लिए डाले गए हैं। कुछ मामलों में, हितधारकों को अतिरिक्त जानकारी प्रदान करने के लिए फुटनोट भी डाले जाते हैं, जो यूजीएफए के प्रारूप का हिस्सा नहीं है।

इसका बचाव यह था कि पठनीयता में सहायता के लिए उन पृष्ठों के नीचे फुटनोट डाले गए हैं जहाँ इन लेनदेन की सूचना दी गई है। सीजीए ने स्वीकार किया, "हालांकि, खातों में नोट्स डालने की व्यवहार्यता की जांच की जा रही है।" <https://jantaserishta.com/national/cag-frowns-at-footnote-accounting-says-external-debt-underrated-by-over-rs-2-lakh-crore-2823843>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

7. PM Kisan Yojana: इस राज्य में मुर्दे और सरकारी कर्मचारी ले गए करोड़ों रुपये, CAG की रिपोर्ट में हुआ बड़ा खुलासा
(hindi.moneycontrol.com) SEP 18, 2023

PM Kisan Yojana: पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि के तहत किसानों को सालाना 6000 रुपये दिए जाते हैं। इस योजना में शामिल होने के लिए नियम और शर्तें तय की गई हैं। लेकिन नागालैंड में सभी नियमों की धजियां उड़ाई गई हैं। CAG की ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में खुलासा है कि मार्च 2018 से 2021 के बीच 2053 अयोग्य लोगों ने फायदा उठाया। इसमें 2.36 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए

PM Kisan Yojana: देश में ज्यादातर किसानों की आर्थिक स्थिति बेहतर नहीं है। बहुत से ऐसे किसान हैं जिन्हें फसल का नुकसान झेलना पड़ता है। ऐसे में केंद्र सरकार ने किसानों की आर्थिक मदद के लिए कई योजनाएं चलाती है। इसी तरह की एक योजना का नाम प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना (PM Kisan Yojana) है। इस योजना में नागालैंड में एक बड़ी धांधली सामने आई है। भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (Comptroller and Auditor General of India -CAG) की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि नागालैंड में कई अयोग्य लोगों ने पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि का फायदा उठाया है।

कैग का कहना है कि राज्य सरकार ने भले ही लक्ष्य हासिल कर लिया हो, लेकिन इसमें कई खामियां पाई गई हैं। कैग का कहना है कि 200 से अधिक अयोग्य लोगों को पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि योजना का फायदा मिला है। कैग की इस रिपोर्ट को हाल ही मानसून सत्र में राज्य के विधान सभा में पेश किया गया था।

सरकारी कर्मचारी, रिटायर्ड सरकारी कर्मचारी और मृतकों को मिला फायदा

कैग की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, राज्य पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि का फायदा कई अयोग्य लोग उठा रहे हैं। इनमें मृतक, सरकारी कर्मचारी और रिटायर्ड सरकारी कर्मचारी भी शामिल हैं। दिसंबर 2018 से 2021 के दौरान कैग ने जो ऑडिट रिपोर्ट पेश की है। उसके मुताबिक, राज्य में 662 सरकारी कर्मचारी, 82 रिटायर्ड सरकारी कर्मचारियों समेत 2053 अयोग्य लोगों ने फायदा उठाया है। इसमें 2.36 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए। कैग का कहना है कि मृतकों को भी पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि का फायदा मिला है। 108 निष्क्रिय लाभार्थी (inactive beneficiaries) थे, जिन्हें इस योजना का फायदा मिला है। कैग का कहना है कि इसमें 86 लोगों की मौत हो चुकी है। बाकी लोगों के बारे में अभी जानकारी नहीं मिल पाई है।

मौत को बाद पीएम किसान योजना का मिला फायदा

ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि डेटाबेस में मौत के आंकड़ों को अपलोड करने में देरी की वजह से लाभार्थियों की मृत्यु के बाद भी किश्तें जमा की गईं। योजना का फायदा अयोग्य लाभार्थियों को ट्रां सफर की गई। कैग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में जोर देकर कहा कि 43 लाभार्थियों की मौत के बाद भी 2.64 लाख रुपये की 132 किश्तें उनके बैंक अकाउंट में जमा की गईं हैं। कैग ने यह भी बताया कि सिस्टम में लाभार्थियों की सूची बिना किसी जांच-पड़ताल के तैयार की गई थी। लाभार्थियों की खेती योग्य भूमि के मालिकाना हक को संबंधित प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों की ओर से वेरिफिकेशन नहीं किया गया था। बल्कि डिप्टी कमिश्नरों से काउंटरसाइन कराया गया।

अभी तक नहीं हुई वसूली

इस ऑडिट रिपोर्ट में आगे कहा गया है कि गाइडलाइंस के मुताबिक, अभी तक अयोग्य लोगों को दी गई पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि की राशि की वसूली नहीं की गई है। न ही विभाग की ओर से कोई कार्रवाई की गई है। जबकि गलत डेटा और वेरिफिकेशन के दौरान खारिज किए गए अकाउंट में पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि जारी की गई। इससे वास्तविक किसानों को इस योजना का फायदा नहीं मिल पाया है। <https://hindi.moneycontrol.com/news/your-money/consumer-news/pm-kisan-samman-nidhi-yojana-nagaland-cag-report-revelation-dead-ineligible-person-check-details-1491431.html>

8. नागालैंड: पीएम-किसान योजना के लाभार्थियों में मृत, अपात्र, कैग रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है (jantaserishta.com) Sept 19, 2023

सीएजी ऑडिट के अनुसार, नागालैंड में मृत व्यक्तियों, साथ ही अयोग्य सेवारत और सेवानिवृत्त सरकारी कर्मियों को प्रधान मंत्री-किसान सम्मान निधि (पीएम-किसान) योजना के लाभार्थियों के रूप में सूचीबद्ध किया गया था।

रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, व्यक्तिगत सूचना प्रबंधन प्रणाली (पीआईएमएस) और लाभार्थी डेटा के क्रॉस-सत्यापन में पाया गया कि 9,951 में से 662 सेवारत और 1,854 सेवानिवृत्त सरकारी कर्मियों में से 82 को अयोग्य होने के बावजूद लाभार्थियों के रूप में सूचीबद्ध किया गया था।

14 सितंबर को एनएलए में प्रस्तुत "सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सामान्य और राजस्व क्षेत्रों (31 मार्च 2022 को समाप्त वर्ष के लिए) पर भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) की रिपोर्ट" के अनुसार, 1.05 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान किया गया (तक)। सितंबर 2021) अपात्र प्राप्तकर्ताओं को।

अध्ययन के अनुसार, यहां तक कि मृतकों को भी भुगतान प्राप्त हो रहा था, जिसमें सितंबर 2021 में योजना के प्रबंधन सूचना प्रणाली (एमआईएस) रिकॉर्ड के ऑडिट का हवाला दिया गया था।

रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, मृत्यु के कारण 108 निष्क्रिय लाभार्थी थे, जिनमें से 86 मौतें पोर्टल पर पोस्ट की गईं और अन्य 22 लाभार्थियों की तारीखें अज्ञात थीं।

आगे की जांच में पाया गया कि 2.64 लाख रुपये के 132 भुगतान 43 प्राप्तकर्ताओं की मृत्यु के बाद भी उनके बैंक खातों में जमा किए गए थे।

सीएजी के अनुसार, योजना स्थल पर मृत्यु के बाद के मामलों के लिए अलग-अलग कार्यालयों में लगने वाली अवधि लाभार्थियों की मृत्यु की तारीख से 25 से 868 दिनों तक थी, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप मृत्यु के बाद भुगतान जमा होने में देरी होती थी।

रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, निष्कर्षों के जवाब में, राज्य सरकार ने घोषणा की (दिसंबर 2021) कि ऑडिट निष्कर्षों के अनुसार स्थिति को सत्यापित किया जाएगा, और उचित पुनर्प्राप्ति प्रक्रिया शुरू की जाएगी।

एक ही बैंक खाते और फ़ोन नंबर वाले एकाधिक लाभार्थी ऑडिट में यह भी पता चला कि 14 बैंक आईएफएससी और बैंक खाता नंबर 28 लाभार्थियों से जुड़े थे, जिनमें से 27 महिलाएं थीं।

पता चला कि 28 में से 24 लोगों को कुल 2.78 लाख रुपये की कम से कम एक किस्त मिली। इसके अलावा, अलग-अलग आईएफएससी वाले 55 बैंक खाता नंबर 110 लाभार्थियों से जुड़े थे, जिनमें से 109 "सक्रिय" थे।

दिलचस्प बात यह है कि समान बैंक खाते होने के बावजूद, लाभार्थी किफिरे, पेरेन, तुएनसांग, वोखा और जुन्हेबोटो में फैले हुए थे।

लाभार्थी डेटाबेस की जांच से पता चला कि 8,191 व्यक्तियों ने कई सेल फोन नंबर दिए। सीएजी के अनुसार, एक ही सेलफोन नंबर के साथ कई प्राप्तकर्ता एक लाल संकेत हैं, जिससे उनकी पात्रता के अधिक कठोर सत्यापन की आवश्यकता होती है।

अध्ययन के अनुसार, 2,053 अयोग्य प्राप्तकर्ताओं को 2.36 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए और अभी तक वसूल नहीं किए गए हैं।

इस बीच, सीएजी ने कहा कि दीमापुर और वोखा में गंतव्य बैंकों और वीसी जैसे अन्य हितधारकों की भागीदारी के कारण 657 अयोग्य लाभार्थियों की पहचान की गई थी।

रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, लाभार्थियों की पात्रता को सत्यापित करने के लिए वोखा और दीमापुर जिलों में उपयोग की जाने वाली प्रथाओं का उपयोग शेष जिलों में अयोग्य लाभार्थियों को हटाने के लिए किया जा सकता है।

वास्तविक लाभार्थी 'वंचित'

इसके अलावा, जबकि अपात्र प्राप्तकर्ताओं को लाभ मिला, कुछ वास्तविक आवेदन विशिष्ट बायोमेट्रिक पहचान, बैंक खाता संख्या, किसानों के नाम आदि की गलत प्रविष्टि के कारण खारिज कर दिए गए।

सीएजी ने कहा कि पोर्टल से डेटा/रिपोर्ट की जांच में उपयुक्त इनपुट नियंत्रण की कमी का पता चला। बयान के अनुसार, इस तरह के गलत इनपुट डेटाबेस की वैधता और अखंडता को खतरे में डाल देंगे और अधिक प्राप्तकर्ता इस पहल से लाभ उठाने में असमर्थ होंगे।

उदाहरणों में 107 प्राप्तकर्ता शामिल हैं जिन्हें अभी तक कोई भुगतान नहीं मिला है क्योंकि प्रस्तुत लिंग मूल्य 'शून्य' था (यह एम/एफ/टी होना चाहिए था), और 401 किसान जो राज्य सरकार कर्मियों द्वारा गलत डेटा प्रविष्टि के कारण लाभ एकत्र करने में विफल रहे हैं .

नवंबर 2019 के बाद 9,039 किसानों के लाभ वापस ले लिए गए क्योंकि उनके नाम उनकी विशिष्ट बायोमेट्रिक पहचान से मेल नहीं खाते थे, और 9,734 किसानों की विशिष्ट बायोमेट्रिक पहचान की पुष्टि नहीं की गई थी।

दूसरी ओर, राज्य के नोडल अधिकारियों ने हितधारकों को इन खामियों का खुलासा नहीं किया और अस्वीकृत डेटा की सूची साझा नहीं की, ताकि वे पोर्टल में संशोधित डेटा जमा करने या अपडेट करने में सक्षम हो सकें, रिपोर्ट के अनुसार।

20 दिसंबर, 2021 को सरकार ने तथ्यों को पहचाना और कहा कि पीएम-किसान डेटाबेस में किसानों की गुणवत्ता को सही ढंग से दर्ज करने के लिए अतिरिक्त प्रयास किए जाएंगे। सीएजी ने विभाग से डेटा सटीकता सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उचित इनपुट नियंत्रण/सत्यापन लागू करने का आग्रह किया।

नागालैंड में पीएम-किसान योजना के कार्यान्वयन पर प्रदर्शन ऑडिट 2018-19 से 2020-21 तक चला। यह योजना एक केंद्रीय क्षेत्र की योजना है जो पूरी तरह से भारत सरकार द्वारा वित्त पोषित है और प्रत्यक्ष लाभ हस्तांतरण (डीबीटी) के माध्यम से संचालित होती है।

अन्य बातों के अलावा, योग्य किसानों को प्रति किसान परिवार प्रति वर्ष 6,000 रुपये का नकद प्रोत्साहन मिलता है, जो तीन समान किशतों में देय होता है।
<https://jantaserishta.com/local/nagaland/nagaland-dead-ineligible-among-beneficiaries-of-pm-kisan-scheme-states-cag-report-2822973>

9. CAG ने नागालैंड में PM-KISAN योजना के कार्यान्वयन में अनियमितताओं को चिह्नित किया, कहा 'लाभार्थियों में मृत और अयोग्य' (jantaserishta.com) Sept 19, 2023

भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) ने पूर्वोत्तर राज्य नागालैंड में पीएम-किसान योजना के कार्यान्वयन में गंभीर अनियमितताओं को चिह्नित किया है।

हालाँकि, नागालैंड सरकार ने अपने लक्ष्य हासिल कर लिए, CAG ने कहा कि पूर्वोत्तर राज्य में प्रधान मंत्री-किसान सम्मान निधि (PM-KISAN) योजना का कार्यान्वयन कमियों से भरा है।

सीएजी की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2000 से ज्यादा अयोग्य लाभार्थियों को बड़ी रकम का भुगतान किया गया।

सीएजी ने कहा कि वास्तविक आवेदकों को विशिष्ट बायोमेट्रिक पहचान और बैंक खाता संख्या की गलत प्रविष्टियों जैसे कारणों से खारिज कर दिया गया था।

दिसंबर 2018 से मार्च 2021 की अवधि को कवर करते हुए प्रदर्शन ऑडिट में बताया गया कि नागालैंड में 2053 अयोग्य लाभार्थियों को 2.36 करोड़ रुपये की राशि का भुगतान किया गया था।

नागालैंड में अयोग्य लाभार्थियों में 662 सेवारत और 82 सेवानिवृत्त सरकारी कर्मचारी शामिल हैं।

सीएजी ने आगे कहा कि नागालैंड में पीएम-किसान योजना के लाभार्थियों की सूची में 108 मृत लोग थे।

सीएजी ने कहा, "आगे के विश्लेषण से पता चला कि 43 लाभार्थियों की मृत्यु के बाद भी 2.64 लाख रुपये की 132 किश्तें उनके बैंक खातों में जमा की गईं।"

<https://jantaserishta.com/local/nagaland/cag-flags-irregularities-in-pm-kisan-scheme-implementation-in-nagaland-says-dead-ineligible-among-beneficiaries-2825028>

10. CAG flags irregularities in PM-KISAN scheme implementation in Nagaland, says 'dead & ineligible among beneficiaries' (*nenow.in*) Sept 19, 2023

KOHIMA: The comptroller and auditor general (CAG) of India has flagged serious irregularities in the implementation of the PM-KISAN scheme in the Northeast state of Nagaland.

Although, the Nagaland government achieved its targets, the CAG said that implementation of the Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme in the Northeast state is fraught with shortcomings.

According to the CAG report a large amount of money was paid to over 2000 ineligible beneficiaries.

Genuine applicants were rejected over reasons such as incorrect entries of unique biometric identity and bank account numbers, the CAG stated.

The performance audit, covering the period from December 2018 to March 2021 reported that an amount of Rs 2.36 crore was paid to 2053 ineligible beneficiaries in Nagaland.

The ineligible beneficiaries in Nagaland included 662 in-service and 82 retired government employees.

The CAG further stated that there were 108 dead people in the list of beneficiaries of the PM-KISAN scheme in Nagaland.

"Further analysis revealed that 132 instalments of Rs 2.64 lakh were credited to bank accounts of 43 beneficiaries even after their deaths," the CAG noted.

<https://nenow.in/north-east-news/nagaland/cag-irregularities-pm-kisan-scheme-nagaland-dead-ineligible-among-beneficiaries.html>

11. Nagaland: Dead, ineligible among beneficiaries of PM-KISAN scheme, states CAG report (*indiatodayne.in*) Sept 18, 2023

Deceased persons, as well as ineligible in-service and retired government personnel, were listed as beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) Scheme in Nagaland.

According to the CAG audit, deceased persons, as well as ineligible in-service and retired government personnel, were listed as beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) Scheme in Nagaland.

Cross-verification of the Personal Information Management System (PIMS) and beneficiary data found that 662 out of 9,951 in-services and 82 out of 1,854 retired Government personnel were listed as beneficiaries despite being ineligible, according to the report.

According to the "Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on Social, Economic, General, and Revenue Sectors (For the year ended 31 March 2022)" submitted in the NLA on September 14, Rs 1.05 crore was paid (up to September 2021) to ineligible recipients.

Even the deceased were receiving payments, according to the study, which cited an audit of the scheme's Management Information System (MIS) records in September 2021.

According to the report, there were 108 inactive beneficiaries owing to death, with 86 deaths posted to the portal and the dates for the other 22 beneficiaries unknown.

Further investigation found that 132 payments of Rs 2.64 lakh were deposited to 43 recipients' bank accounts even after their deaths.

According to the CAG, the period it took the separate offices to post-death cases on the scheme site ranged from 25 to 868 days from the date of death of the beneficiaries, with the delay resulting in the credit of payments after death.

According to the report, in response to the findings, the State Government announced (December 2021) that the situation would be verified in accordance with the Audit findings, and the appropriate recovery procedure would be launched.

Multiple beneficiaries with the same bank account and phone number
The audit also discovered that 14 bank IFSC and bank account numbers were linked to 28 beneficiaries, 27 of whom were women.

It was discovered that 24 out of 28 people got at least one instalment totalling Rs 2.78 lakh. Furthermore, 55 bank account numbers with distinct IFSCs were linked to 110 beneficiaries, of whom 109 were "Active."

Interestingly, although having identical bank accounts, the beneficiaries were dispersed among Kiphire, Peren, Tuensang, Wokha, and Zunheboto.

An examination of the beneficiary database indicated that 8,191 individuals gave several cell phone numbers. Multiple recipients with the same cellphone number is a red signal that necessitates more rigorous verification of their eligibility, according to the CAG.

According to the study, Rs 2.36 crore was given to 2,053 ineligible recipients and has yet to be recovered.

Meanwhile, the CAG said that 657 ineligible beneficiaries were identified due to the engagement of other stakeholders such as destination banks and VCs in Dimapur and Wokha.

The practices used in Wokha and Dimapur districts to verify beneficiary eligibility may be used in the remaining districts to weed out ineligible beneficiaries, according to the report.

Genuine beneficiaries 'deprived'

In addition, while ineligible recipients received benefits, some genuine applications were turned down owing to inaccurate entry of unique biometric identities, bank account numbers, farmers' names, and so on.

The CAG stated that an examination of data/reports from the portal revealed a lack of suitable input controls. Such incorrect inputs would jeopardise the database's legitimacy and integrity, and more recipients would be unable to profit from the initiative, according to the statement.

Instances include 107 recipients who have yet to get any payout because the gender value submitted was 'Null' (it should have been M/F/T), and 401 farmers who have failed to collect benefits due to incorrect data entry by State Government personnel.

Benefits were withdrawn in respect of 9,039 farmers after November 2019 because their names did not correspond with their unique biometric identity, and 9,734 farmers' unique biometric identity was not confirmed.

The State Nodal Officers, on the other hand, did not disclose these flaws to stakeholders and did not share the list of rejected data to enable them to submit or update the rectified data in the portal, according to the report.

On December 20, 2021, the government recognised the facts and stated that additional efforts would be made to correctly record the farmers' qualities in the PM-KISAN database. The CAG further urged the department to implement proper input control/validation to ensure data accuracy.

Other shortcomings

The 'Performance Audit on the Implementation of the PM-Kisan Scheme in Nagaland' ran from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The plan is a central sector scheme funded entirely by the Government of India and operated through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Among other things, qualifying farmers receive a cash incentive of Rs 6,000 per year per farmer family, payable in three equal instalments every four months.

For the audit in Nagaland, a sample of four districts, eight blocks, and twenty-four villages was chosen using Stratified Random Sampling.

According to the study, 2,13,682 applications were approved out of 3,44,983 submitted, while 71,196 applicants were denied because they were either unqualified (68,684) or provided insufficient facts (2,512).

The implementing agency was awaiting clearance of 60,105 self-registered farmers' applications, while new beneficiary registration was temporarily halted in March 2020 since the State had met the overall saturation objective.

Although the State Government met the objective, the CAG found the scheme's execution was flawed. Beneficiary lists, for example, were generated without any checks and balances, and recipients' ownership of cultivable land was not confirmed.

The beneficiaries also did not correspond with the Nagaland Agriculture Census 2015-16, and no landholding records were kept at the village level, according to the report.

According to the study, the temporary suspension of new registrations robbed 23,144 scheme participants of their benefits in four test-checked areas.

While Review or Monitoring Committees were not constituted, there were delays in the constitution of Grievance Redressal Monitoring Committees, it said.

Recommendations

The CAG advised the State Government to identify eligible beneficiaries and cleanse the database in accordance with the plan parameters. Beneficiaries' self-declarations and ownership of cultivable land, as anticipated in the Operational Guidelines, should be confirmed.

Furthermore, it asked for the complete validation of bank accounts as well as the updating of Optional Attributes such as father's/husband's name, cellphone number, date of birth, landholdings, and so on.

The CAG advocated conducting state-wide beneficiary verification by involving destination banks and VCs to filter out ineligible beneficiaries.

It also encouraged efforts to establish accountability for non-verification of submitted applications, as well as the recovery of funds improperly credited to ineligible recipients.

It also suggested enhancing the grievance redressal procedure to ensure that complaints are resolved in accordance with the plan standards and conducting social audits. <https://www.indiatodayne.in/nagaland/story/nagaland-dead-ineligible-among-beneficiaries-of-pm-kisan-scheme-states-cag-report-680045-2023-09-18>

12. Dead, ineligible among beneficiaries of PM-KISAN scheme in Nagaland: CAG (*hindustantimes.com*) Sept 18, 2023

The audit covering the period from December 2018 to March 2021 said an amount of Rs.2.36 crore was paid to 2053 ineligible beneficiaries

The implementation of the central sector scheme Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) in Nagaland is fraught with shortcomings even though the target was achieved by the state government, says a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

The CAG report on social, general and revenue sectors for the year ended March 31, 2022 which was tabled in the recently concluded monsoon session of the state assembly on Thursday revealed that a large amount of money was paid to over 2000 ineligible beneficiaries while genuine applicants were rejected over reasons such as incorrect entries of unique biometric identity and bank account numbers.

The performance audit, covering the period from December 2018 to March 2021 reported that an amount of Rs.2.36 crore was paid to 2053 ineligible beneficiaries including 662 in-service and 82 retired government employees.

The CAG also detected instances of payment to deceased beneficiaries. On examining management information system (MIS) reports, it said there were 108 inactive beneficiaries, who had died. Of them 86 deaths were recorded while the information about the rest were unavailable. Delay in uploading deaths in the database resulted in instalments being credited even after the death of beneficiaries and transfer of scheme benefits to ineligible beneficiaries, the audit report said.

“Further analysis revealed that 132 instalments of Rs.2.64 lakh were credited to bank accounts of 43 beneficiaries even after their deaths,” it noted.

The CAG also pointed out that beneficiary lists were prepared without any checks in the system and ownership of cultivable land belonging to beneficiaries were not verified by concerned administrative officers but countersigned by the deputy commissioners.

“The beneficiaries were not correlated with the Nagaland’s Agriculture Census 2015-16 as the names of operational holders/farmers were not available on records. No landholding records were maintained at the village level and documents to cross verify the land-ownership of PM-KISAN beneficiaries was also not available with the government,” the report stated.

It noted that no action was taken by the department to recover and refund the amount as per operational guidelines while inaccurate data entries resulted in rejection of records during validation and deprived genuine farmers from availing scheme benefits.

The CAG report noted that a lack of social audit and non-participation of other stakeholders in the scheme impacted timely detection and rectification of incorrect records.

It recommended that the state government should conduct state-wide verification of beneficiaries by involving banks and village councils to weed out ineligible beneficiaries while underscoring the need to take steps to recover the amounts unduly credited to accounts of such beneficiaries .

The CAG further recommended that the state government strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism to ensure resolution of complaints as per procedure and social audit be conducted periodically to ensure transparency.

As per the state's Agriculture Census 2015-16, there are 1,95,874 individual operational holdings with an area of 9,53,460 hectares while the scheme registered a total 2,13,551 farmers. The CAG pointed out that the cultivable area as per the Census could be compared with PM-KISAN as beneficiaries farm sizes were not uploaded on the scheme portal. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/dead-ineligible-among-beneficiaries-of-pm-kisan-scheme-in-nagaland-cag-101695026823970.html>

13. Nagaland: CAG report says Rs 2.36 cr paid to dead, ineligible beneficiaries under PM-KISAN scheme (northeastlivetv.com) 18 Sept 2023

The CAG during its performance audit found that there were names of 43 deceased persons out the total 2053 ineligible beneficiaries

Startling facts have come to fore. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report regarding implementing of the Centre sponsored Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) in Nagaland has revealed that Rs 2.36 crore was given to dead persons and ineligible individuals under the scheme.

Over Rs 2 crore was paid to 2,053 ineligible beneficiaries which includes names of 43 dead persons.

As per the performance audit by CAG covers the period from December 2018 to March 31, 2022. The list of ineligible beneficiaries included 662 inservice and 82 retired government employees. Due to this, an amount of Rs 1.05 crore was paid upto September 2021 to 742 (662+82/2 did not receive any instalment) ineligible beneficiaries.

“Instance of payment to 43 deceased beneficiaries were also noticed,” the CAG report mentioned. “Further analysis revealed that 132 instalments of Rs.2.64 lakh were credited to bank accounts of 43 beneficiaries even after their deaths,” the CAG noted.

The CAG also pointed out that beneficiary lists were prepared without any checks in the system and ownership of cultivable land belonging to beneficiaries were not verified by concerned administrative officers but countersigned by the deputy commissioners.

“The beneficiaries were not correlated with the Nagaland's Agriculture Census 2015-16 as the names of operational holders/farmers were not available on records. No landholding records were maintained at the village level and documents to cross verify the land-ownership of PM-KISAN beneficiaries was also not available with the government,” the report stated.

The CAG has recommended the state government to conduct state-wide verification of beneficiaries by involving banks and village councils to weed out ineligible beneficiaries. The CAG in its report underscored the need to take steps to recover the amounts unduly credited to accounts of such beneficiaries.

The CAG further recommended that the state government strengthens the grievance redressal mechanism and social audit be conducted periodically to ensure transparency. <https://northeastlivetv.com/topnews/nagaland-cag-report-says-rs-2-36-cr-paid-to-dead-ineligible-beneficiaries/>

14. CAG Reports on Nagaland (*morungexpress.com*) 18 September 2023

‘Misappropriation, negligence, fraudulence, pilferage, incomplete projects, defalcation, fictitious transactions, delay, and overstatements’ are some recurring themes in the annual reports of the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) of India concerning Nagaland.

In the most recent Audit Report on Social, Economic, Revenue, and General Sectors (Report No. 1 of 2023) ending on March 31, 2022, presented in the State Assembly on September 14, the status quo prevails. Once again, the report highlighted a litany of anomalies. Notable among these were glaring deficiencies in the execution of the Kohima Smart City Mission and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) program. Equally troubling was the State Government's failure to operationalise a Modern Abattoir, despite a substantial investment of Rs 17.15 crore over a decade.

On the infrastructure front, the report noted that a proposed road connecting Peren district to National Highway-39 remained incomplete for more than a decade, resulting in a wasteful expenditure of Rs 9.21 crore, with excess payments of Rs 7.20 crore identified. Discrepancies totalling Rs 20.09 crore in projects funded through the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources and the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NLCPR & NESIDS) were detected in the Agriculture Department.

The State Government had violated Government of India directives by diverting Superior Kerosene Oil worth Rs 19.56 crore (6,113.19 KL) to recipients outside the intended beneficiaries under the Public Distribution System, while lapses by Drawing and Disbursing Officers and Treasury Officers resulted in fraudulent, double, or excessive withdrawals amounting to Rs 2.26 crore, the audit found. Among others, non-assessment of returns from 11 dealers within the stipulated time limit by the Assessing Authority resulted in a loss of revenue amounting to Rs 15.60 crore, it added.

In sum, the report paints a stark picture of a system marred by a severe lack of accountability, insufficient monitoring, and an alarming prevalence of irregularities across all sectors.

These revelations, however, have become all too routine. A similar narrative played out in the State Finances Audit Report (Report No. 1 of 2023) presented in the State Assembly in March 2023. As of March 2022, a staggering 149 Utilisation Certificates

(UCs) worth Rs 316.34 crore were outstanding, with some dating back to 2020-21. Additionally, UCs amounting to Rs 81.80 crore, dispersed to 16 Departments as part of 61 grants, was pending for the fiscal year 2022-23.

Regrettably, both reports were tabled in the Assembly without any discernible reaction from the legislators. The general public's response, too, has been lukewarm at best. It is pertinent to note that the CAG's mandate is just to highlight and illuminate the ground realities through its audits, and the onus falls upon the legislators and the public to act upon the findings.

Once tabled in the Assembly, the Reports are automatically referred to the Central and State Standing Committees on Public Accounts (PAC) and Committees on Public Undertakings (COPU). As per the CAG, these specialized committees are entrusted with the responsibility of scrutinizing the Reports and selecting the most critical issues in the public interest for detailed examination, holding hearings with technical support from the auditor. Subsequently, the Committee's reports, encapsulating its findings, actions taken, and recommendations, are submitted to the Legislature. However, the effectiveness of these hearings in ensuring accountability and course correction remains questionable, given the absence of a formal opposition and the apathy of the public.

The persistence of unresolved issues dating back to as early as 2011-12, as revealed by the Action Taken Report submitted in the recent Assembly session regarding the CAG's observations and recommendations, underscores the gravity of this concern.

Thus, the annual CAG reports serve as a recurring reminder of the endemic corruption entrenched at every level of society and government in the State and how it festers with impunity in social, political, and governance spheres. Breaking this vicious cycle necessitates the emergence of a genuine anti-corruption civil society organization in Nagaland. Mere proliferation of social and interest groups, often driven by self-interest, falls short of the transformative change required to instil accountability and good governance in the State. <https://morungexpress.com/cag-reports-on-nagaland>

15. PDS kerosene worth Rs 19.56 crore diverted in Nagaland, finds CAG (*morungexpress.com*) 19 September 2023

The Government of Nagaland (GoN) violated the Government of India (GoI) directives and diverted Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO) worth Rs 19.56 crore or 6113.19 kilo litre (KL) to open market other than the targeted beneficiaries under the Public Distribution System (PDS), according to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.

The conclusion is based on examination of central as well as GoN's data, informed the CAG report on 'Social, Economic, General and Revenue Sectors' Government of Nagaland for the year ended 31 March 2022. The report was tabled in the State Assembly on September 14.

As per the CAG, the Union Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) allocates SKO for distribution under the PDS to States and Union Territories (UTs) on quarterly basis.

The entire allocation is to be lifted within the quarter itself as carry-forward is not allowed except in case of exigencies, such as natural calamities.

The quantity is further based on electricity and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) penetration as well as historical allocations in each State or UT and the PDS is the sole distribution network.

Under allotment orders directives of the GoI, the subsidised kerosene is meant only for targeted beneficiaries under PDS, not to be diverted elsewhere, the CAG said.

The sub-allocation orders by GoN also stipulated that the District Food and Civil Supplies (F&CS) offices furnish monthly Utilisation Certificates (UCs) to the Director, F&CS.

The State's SKO quota are lifted from Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) depots located in Assam and Nagaland.

The CAG examination of records of the F&CS Directorate Dimapur in August 2021 showed that MoPNG allocated 17,892 KL SKO to the State during 2019-21.

Against this, the Department reported in August 2022 that it lifted 13,752 KL SKO from IOCL during 2019-21.

However, the CAG's cross verification of the total lifting data by the Department with the Indian Petroleum & Natural Gas Statistics (2019-21) as well IOCL's data in July 2022 showed that State Government lifted 17,367 KL (97.07%) of SKO, resulting in short lifting of 525 KL during 2019-21.

The Department, therefore, understated the SKO lifted from IOCL by 3615 KL (17,367 KL - 13,752 KL), it said.

Meanwhile, the GoN had issued (April 2019-January 2021) district-wise sub-allocation orders for 12,276 KL out of 17,892 KL SKO allocated by MoPNG, for distribution through FPSs in coordination with the concerned district administration.

Against 12,276 KL SKO allocated, the CAG observed that concerned District F&CS offices reported actual receipt of 11,253.81 KL from the SKO dealers and utilisation of 11,233.79 KL SKO (99.82%).

Accordingly, examination of the records showed that 6,113.19 KL SKO lifted from IOCL were diverted by the State for distribution/utilisation outside the PDS in contravention allotment orders issued by GoI, the CAG said.

The diverted quantity of 6,113.19 KL of SKO involved subsidy worth Rs 19.56 crore, it added.

Further scrutiny of records showed that GoN had allotted 4974 KL SKO to 51 individuals/ distributors while no records were available for the remaining quantity (1139.19 KL).

With regard to submission of UCs, the Audit also noticed that the District F&CS offices submitted UCs only for the quantity distributed through the PDS.

In absence of UCs and distribution records, the possibility of diversion of 6,113.19 KL of SKO involving subsidy of Rs 19.56 crore to open market or adulteration of petrol/diesel cannot be ruled out, the CAG noted.

As per the CAG, when the discrepancies were pointed out, the GoN accepted in September 2022 that 17,367 KL of SKO was lifted by the State. Out of 12,276 KL allotted for ration cardholders, 11,253.81 KL was lifted; UCs for 11,233.79 KL was furnished. It was further added that a quantity of 4,974 KL was allocated to individuals.

“Thus, the State Government violated GoI directives and diverted SKO to open market other than the targeted beneficiaries under PDS,” the CAG concluded.

To this end, the CAG recommended the State Government to strengthen and enforce monitoring mechanism effectively at various levels to ensure accountability in implementation of the scheme.

It further called for fixing responsibility on the officials concerned for diversion of the SKO meant only for distribution to beneficiaries covered under PDS. <http://morungexpress.com/pds-kerosene-worth-rs-1956-crore-diverted-in-nagaland-finds-cag>

16. Noida News: जीबीसी के लिए निर्धारित 90 हजार करोड़ का 60 प्रतिशत लक्ष्य ही पूरा कर पाया नोएडा (amarujala.com) 19 Sep 2023

नोएडा। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार के औद्योगिक विकास मंत्री नंद गोपाल गुप्ता नंदी ने ग्राउंड ब्रेकिंग सेरेमनी (जीबीसी) का निर्धारित लक्ष्य पूरा न करने पर नोएडा प्राधिकरण के अधिकारियों पर नाराजगी जताई। उन्होंने सोमवार को पिकअप भवन सभागार लखनऊ में नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के विकास कार्यों एवं उद्योगों को स्थापित करने के लिए किए जा रहे कार्यों की समीक्षा की। इस दौरान पाया कि नोएडा प्राधिकरण ने जीबीसी के लिए दिए गए 90 हजार करोड़ के स्थान पर केवल 53,875 करोड़ का निवेश दिखाने की तैयारी अब तक की है।

मंत्री ने बताया कि यूपी ग्लोबल इन्वेस्टर समिट में आए निवेश प्रस्ताव के सापेक्ष ग्राउंड ब्रेकिंग सेरेमनी के लिए नोएडा प्राधिकरण के निर्धारित लक्ष्य का 60 प्रतिशत निवेश ही तैयार है। उन्होंने कहा कि नोएडा यूपी का मुकुट है, इसलिए जो भी लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया जाए, उसे हर हाल में पूरा करें। लक्ष्यपूर्ति में लापरवाही कतई बर्दाश्त नहीं की जाएगी। उन्होंने अधिकारियों से पूछा कि निर्धारित लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति क्यों नहीं की जा सकी है, जिसका अधिकारी जवाब नहीं दे सके। मंत्री नंदी ने जल्द लक्ष्य पूरा करने के निर्देश दिए। बैठक में औद्योगिक विकास आयुक्त मनोज कुमार सिंह, अपर मुख्य सचिव औद्योगिक विकास अनिल सागर, नोएडा प्राधिकरण के सीईओ लोकेश एम व प्राधिकरण के एसीईओ, ओएसडी, जीएम, डीजीएम व अन्य अधिकारी उपस्थित रहे।

रिक्त भूमि का आवंटन कब तक होगा

मंत्री ने अधिकारियों से पूछा कि वर्तमान में विभिन्न श्रेणियों में कुल 319 एकड़ भूमि आवंटन हेतु रिक्त है। सबसे ज्यादा 222 एकड़ वाली श्रेणी के उपयोग की भूमि आवंटन हेतु उपलब्ध है। उन्होंने अधिकारियों से कहा कि रिक्त भूखंडों की आवंटन की क्या कार्य योजना है। अवशेष 319 एकड़ भूमि का आवंटन कब तक कर दिया जाएगा। अधिकारियों से पूछा कि सेक्टर 135 एवं 14 ए में

स्थित स्थाई गोवंश आश्रय स्थल में कुल 1550 गोवंश संरक्षित हैं। इस आश्रय स्थल की क्षमता कितनी है। गोवंशों की देखभाल के लिए क्या व्यवस्था है।

सीएजी की आपत्तियों के जवाब नहीं देने पर जताया रोष

मंत्री नंदी ने कहा कि सीएजी द्वारा अप्रैल 2018 से दिसंबर 2022 तक के कार्यों के कंप्लायंस ऑडिट में कुल 65 आपत्तियां जारी की गई थीं, जिसमें से मात्र 28 का ही जवाब अभी तक भेजा गया है। शेष 37 आपत्तियों का जवाब क्यों नहीं भेजा गया। शीघ्र ही इनके जवाब भेजे जाएं एवं सभी 65 ऑडिट आपत्तियों को ड्रॉप कराया जाए। यदि आपत्ति ड्रॉप नहीं होती है तो इन आपत्तियों के उल्लेखित वित्तीय प्रशासनिक अनियमितताओं के लिए दोषी अधिकारियों, कर्मचारियों के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई की जाए।

मंत्री ने यह भी दिए निर्देश

-नोएडा को सेफ सिटी बनाने के लिए प्रत्येक कोने में सीसीटीवी कैमरे लगाए जाएं

-जो एमओयू हुए, उन लोगों को जमीन की उपलब्धता के अनुरूप साइट विजिट कराई जाए

-उद्यमी मित्रों को सक्रिय रखते हुए प्राधिकरण और उद्योगों के मध्य बेहतर समन्वय स्थापित करें

-जीबीसी और जीआईएस एमओयू को प्राथमिकता के आधार पर सभी आवश्यक कार्रवाई पूर्ण करें ताकि ठीक समय में उन्हें जमीन पर उतारा जा सके।

-विभिन्न परियोजनाओं एवं विकास कार्यों की मासिक प्रगति रिपोर्ट प्रत्येक माह के प्रथम सप्ताह में प्रत्येक दिशा में प्रेषित कर दी जाए

-मानचित्र में छोटी-छोटी कमियों के कारण मानचित्र स्वीकृत होने से रोक दिए जाते हैं। कमियों को दूर करके तय समय में स्वीकृत किए जाएं

<https://www.amarujala.com/delhi-ncr/noida/noida-could-fulfill-only-60-percent-target-of-rs-90-thousand-crore-set-for-gbc-noida-news-c-1-gnd1002-929444-2023-09-19>

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

17. ‘States shifting to OPS major step backwards, fiscally unsustainable’ (*millenniumpost.in*) September 18, 2023

Mumbai: States reverting to the old pension scheme is a “major step backwards” and may take the fiscal stress of states to “unsustainable levels” in the medium to long term, according to an article by Reserve Bank of India staffers.

The article by Rachit Solanki, Somnath Sharma, R K Sinha, S R Behera and Atri Mukherjee said the cumulative fiscal burden in the case of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) could be as high as 4.5 times that of the New Pension Scheme, which was implemented over a decade ago as part of pension reforms.

The views expressed in the research paper are not that of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Recently, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have announced reversal to the OPS from NPS, the article said.

The OPS has Defined Benefits (DB) while the NPS has defined contributions, the article said, adding that while the Old Pension Scheme has a short term allure, the same poses challenges in the medium to long term.

“short run reduction in states’ pension outgo which may be driving decisions to restore OPS, would be eclipsed by the huge rise in future unfunded pension liabilities in the long run,” it said.

“States’ reverting to the OPS would be a major step backwards and can increase their fiscal stress to unsustainable levels in the medium to long term,” the article warned.

The immediate gain for states shifting back to the OPS is that they will not have to spend on the NPS contribution of the current employees, but in the future, the unfunded Old Pension Scheme is likely to exert “severe pressures” on their finances, it said.

States will save only 0.1 per cent of GDP in yearly pension outgo by reverting to the Old Pension Scheme till 2040 but would be required to incur an average additional increase in pension expenditure by 0.5 per cent of yearly GDP post 2040.

It said several developed economies with Defined Benefits schemes in the past have faced rising public expenditure due to the rising life expectancy of its citizens, and the changing demographic profile and rising fiscal costs have compelled several economies around the world to re-examine their pension schemes.

“Any reversion to the OPS by the states would be fiscally unsustainable, though it may result in an immediate fall in their pension outgo,” the article said. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/states-shifting-to-ops-major-step-backwards-fiscally-unsustainable-533404?infinite-scroll=1>

18. More time for states to meet norms for untied capex loans (*financialexpress.com*) September 18, 2023

Rs 33,000-cr support hinges on states capex pace in H1FY24.

The Centre will likely relax norms to help states utilise the last instalment of Rs 33,000 crore from the Rs 1 trillion untied interest-free capex loan facility if they meet the fiduciary condition of achieving 45% of their annual capex target by the third quarter instead of the second quarter of FY24.

The states, which fail to meet the likely revised timeframe would lose one-third of their quota from the untied capex loans. Of the total outlay of Rs 1.3 trillion for 50-year loans to states in FY24, the tied component is Rs 30,000 crore.

The last instalment of Rs 33,000 crore, under the untied part, would be disbursed on utilisation of 75% of the amount released in the first and on meeting 45% of the total state budget target fixed for capex by each state in FY24 in April-September.

Usually, states meet 25-30% of their capex in H1 of a year as monsoon slows down spending in Q2.

Also, some states back-end their capex to give priority to committed revenue spending including salary, pension and interest costs. So, states reach around 45% of their annual capex target by November of the year, a state government official said.

“So, relaxations in the time period with regard to meeting the 45% capex goal would be of immense help as no state would like to lose funds for not meeting the target by September,” the state government official said.

As part of the drive to frontload capex to support economic growth revival, the Centre is keen that states use the entire untied Rs 1 trillion before December to avoid disruptions due to a clutch of state elections, including in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan by the end of this year.

While the Centre would release the last instalment of untied funds if states achieve 45% of their annual capex target by the third quarter, the amount would be recovered from them in FY25 if they fail to meet the annual investment target by March 2024.

Accordingly, the states in aggregate would have to invest Rs 6.12 trillion in FY24, excluding capex support given by the Centre and their debt repayments.

As of September 12 of this year, the Centre’s liberal interest-free loan disbursement to state governments for asset-creating projects has reached Rs 50,000 crore or 54% of the sanctioned amount of Rs 92,000 crore so far in the current financial year.

In the first half of the previous financial year, the Centre had sanctioned Rs 51,000 crore out of the Rs 1 trillion facility but no disbursements had taken place. <https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-more-time-for-states-to-meet-norms-for-untied-capex-loans-3247668/>

19. Beyond GDP: Gross domestic product simply does not ascertain overall national well-being any more (*financialexpress.com*)
September 19, 2023

In reality, using GDP to measure people’s well-being has many limitations. We know that a tiny group of wealthy people have had a significant impact on GDP values.

Whether you like to quote GDP or per capita GDP to illustrate the nature of growth in a country, there’s little doubt that this artificial, abstract, complex, but exceedingly important statistic, GDP, serves as a driving force in today’s world. Mathematically, GDP is the sum of consumption, investment, and government spending (plus exports, minus imports). Cambridge professor Diane Coyle’s 2016 book *GDP: A Brief but Affectionate History* chronicles the history of the development of GDP from its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forebears through its invention in the 1940s following the devastation of the Great Depression and World War II and then through its postwar golden age and the Great Crash up to the present time.

In fact, economist Simon Kuznets, who’d get the Nobel Prize later in 1971, sought to encompass all economic production by individuals, companies, and the government in a single measure that would rise in prosperous times and fall in tough ones. Possibly because it displays a single headline figure in a deceptively easy format, GDP has

continued to rule the world. It's easy to use for comparisons, too. GDP remained central to our lives and lifestyles over decades, mostly unscathed; Nobel laureate American economist Robert Solow even said in 1987: "You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics."

In reality, using GDP to measure people's well-being has many limitations. We know that a tiny group of wealthy people have had a significant impact on GDP values. Additionally, the GDP ignores many important aspects of society and daily life, such as pandemics, war, environmental pollution, social crime, and even traffic congestion. While different economies are recovering in the post-Covid era, the GDP doesn't show how their underlying inequities are likewise intensifying. When calculating GDP, the contributions of unpaid workers are also not taken into account. A 2011 OECD study, for example, found that so-called "home production" would boost the GDP of its member countries by 20% to 50%.

According to Jennifer Blanke, economist at the World Economic Forum, "GDP is a partial, short-term measure, whereas the world needs more wide-ranging and responsible instruments to inform the way we build the economies of the future." Blanke mentioned three key questions that GDP overlooks: whether growth is fair, green, and improving our lives.

Why is it important to fix how we measure growth? This is because increasing GDP is the central goal of the policies adopted by most countries. That is unavoidable too. The book by Diane Coyle illustrates how even minor changes in GDP can affect significant political decisions, decide elections, and determine whether a country can continue to borrow money or enter a recession. Moreover, as Joseph Stiglitz put it, "What we measure informs what we do. And if we're measuring the wrong thing, we're going to do the wrong thing." Thus, many think that we need to find a new measure to assess the health of our economies and, more importantly, the people living in them.

The method used to calculate the GDP has further flaws. The Bureau of Economic Advisors (BEA) in America changed the way they computed GDP in the middle of 2013, and the American economy expanded by 3% overnight. In 2010, Ghana switched its base year from 1993 to 2006, which caused its GDP to increase by 60% and promoted it from a low to a lower-middle income country. Similarly, when Nigeria "rebased" its GDP figures in 2014, its GDP surged by 89% all at once, pushing it past South Africa to become Africa's largest economy without taking any additional action!

Overall, GDP is finding it difficult to remain relevant as the business landscape reinvents itself, demographics shift, inequality rises, climate change worsens, and technology continues to grow at a dizzying pace. So, is the global adoration of GDP coming to an end?

Over the past two decades, there has been a clear demand from decision-makers, governments, academia, and the general public to expand the statistical measuring framework beyond GDP, which largely concentrates on economic performance. Additionally, a number of high-profile commissions and research projects have been established to examine how we can measure welfare.

In an effort to create a “suitable” alternative for GDP, then-French president Nicholas Sarkozy assembled a prominent 20-person committee in 2008 led by Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi. The committee pushed for an end to “GDP fetishism.” It was argued that there are many different aspects of well-being, such as material living standards, health, education, personal activities, political, social, and environmental factors, and insecurity. In 2018, the OECD published a report based on the work of a follow-up commission headed by Joseph Stiglitz, Jean-Paul Fitoussi, and OECD chief statistician Martine Durand. The group recommended to create a dashboard of indicators that go beyond GDP and provide a more multifaceted picture of a nation’s quality of life. In his Our Common Agenda report from 2021, the UN secretary-general also stated that “we must urgently find measures of progress that complement GDP, as we were tasked to do by 2030.” And this February, the United Nations Statistical Commission also discussed statistical measures “beyond GDP.” Therefore, there’s a definite global trend against the use of GDP as a single measure of economic and social welfare. The conclusion of Diane Coyle’s book makes the case that while GDP was a useful measure for the twentieth century, it’s becoming increasingly inappropriate for a twenty-first-century economy driven by innovation, services, and intangible goods.

Would it be possible to expand the statistical measurement framework beyond GDP eventually? Or would GDP continue to dominate our lives and lifestyles? <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/beyond-gdp-gross-domestic-product-simply-does-not-ascertain-overall-national-well-being-any-more/3247723/>

20. How is India preparing to boost its naval capacity by 2035? (*indiatvnews.com*) September 18, 2023

The Ministry of Defence recently approved plans to acquire 26 Rafale M fighter jets by Dassault Aviation for the Indian Navy.

As China seeks to embolden its footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India faces a steep challenge in increasing its naval capabilities to set up a strong force to protect its geopolitical interests and counter Beijing's rising aggression.

The differences between China and India in terms of naval power are astute, as India currently possesses 150 warships and submarines as compared to China's 335 warships. Nevertheless, with the acquisition of two powerful indigenously-built aircraft carriers and a third one in the pipeline, India has presented itself as a strong rival to China's influence in the Asian continent.

India now aspires to acquire an ambitious target of 175-200 warships by 2035 equipped with indigenous nuclear-powered submarines, frigates and fighter jets with state-of-the-art technology, as part of its vision of becoming self-reliant in naval capabilities by 2047. There are over 50 ships and submarines under construction. India is also working on a war footing to acquire marine aircraft and carrier with the help of foreign allies.

India's progress in naval acquisition

According to a report by Times of India, India currently has 132 warships, 143 aircraft and 130 helicopters and the country has now ordered 68 warships and vessels worth Rs

2 lakh crore. In the coming years, India is also said to acquire eight corvettes, nine submarines and five survey vessels among the indigenously-crafted naval equipment.

Despite the push for greater naval fleet assets, India has also been plagued by slower pace of construction, rapid decommissioning of older ships and budget constraints. As such, India is expected to reach a fleet of just 155-160 warships by 2030.

India has two indigenously built aircraft carriers - INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant, launched last year. While INS Vikrant, which has a sophisticated air defence network and anti-ship missile systems, is preparing for being combat-ready, India is gearing up for a third 65,000-tonne Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) with the name of INS Vishal.

India has also recently launched a new warship Mahendragiri, the seventh ship of Project 17A frigates series that boasts enhanced stealth features, advanced weapons, sensors, and platform management systems. Project 17A ships have been designed in-house by Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau, the pioneer organisation for all warship design activities.

Now, seven more stealth frigates will be created under Project 17A by the timeframe of 2024-2026. Apart from two frigates, all remaining 61 warships are being constructed in India. India also possesses 23 corvettes and 11 guided-missile destroyers - INS Mormugao being the latest to join the latter. Two more destroyers - INS Imphal and Surat will join the fleet expectedly by 2024.

Project 75 (India)

Project 75 (India), launched in 2007, is arguably India's largest defence acquisition initiative under the Ministry of Defence, which aims to procure diesel-electric attack submarines possessing fuel cells and an Air-Independent Propulsion System. The original Project 75 was launched in 1997.

India's state-owned shipyard Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) has taken up the responsibility of procuring next-generation submarines for the Indian Navy. In April last year, MDL launched INS Vagsheer, the last of the six Kalvari class submarines under Project 75. INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi and INS Karang have already been commissioned.

The MDL is also in talks to acquire three Scorpene class conventional submarines for the Indian Navy from France. The procurement of such additional submarines is a major boost for India's indigenous sector by creating employment opportunities in the domestic sector while also helping to maintain the required force level and operational readiness of the Indian Navy.

The total strength of conventional diesel-electric submarines in India stand at 17, with a nuclear-powered submarine INS Arihant launched in 2009.

However, the Project 75 has been beset by several drawbacks, such as delays in infrastructural augmentation, deliveries and budgetary problems. There is good news on that front, as now Spanish and German companies have signed agreements to build additional submarines at the MDL

Acquisition of Rafale M Jets

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi geared up for his visit to France in July, the defence ministry approved plans to purchase 26 Rafale fighter aircraft. India worked to procure the Rafale jets for deployment on the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

Dassault Aviation, a French aerospace major and maker of the aircraft, said that the Navy Rafale demonstrated that it fully met the Indian Navy's operational requirements and was perfectly suited to the specificities of its aircraft carrier. They are called Rafale M fighters, which are different from the 36 Rafale jets India already possesses.

Rafale M is designed to be operated from aircraft carriers. The aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and Vikrant have been operating the MiG-29s and need the Rafales for operations on both carriers. It has a carrier-based microwave landing system and includes special features like broad range of weapons and a maritime-optimised radar.

In its fleet of aircrafts, India generally relies on the Russian-origin MiG-29K fighter jet, one of which featured on the INS Vikrant recently. The Navy also uses a naval version of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas designed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). India is now in dire need of deck-based fighter aircraft that can be operated from its two carriers.

Two prototypes of the naval LCA-Mk1 are already operational as part of the aircraft development. Additionally, six next-generation missile vessels will be developed by the Cochin Shipyard and 11 offshore patrol vessels that will be ready by 2026-27.

Competing with China

As India makes strong efforts to compete with China in its naval power, it is worth mentioning that Beijing itself is making strong efforts to increase its own capabilities on water. Apart from adding over 150 warships in their arsenal, China is believed to create over 550 such ships in another five to six years, necessitating a stronger support for India from its foreign partners.

China operates with over 50 destroyers and two aircraft carriers, and it also possesses over 70 corvettes, 43 frigates and 78 submarines.

China's rising aggression has been a source of contention for not only India, but also other Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines. Much of the territory in the South China is disputed as China seeks to lay claims to overcome logistical challenges and expand their diplomatic and economic interests.

Despite the large numbers of Chinese navy, it is said that the US Navy still has more firepower in comparison with a larger fleet of carriers and destroyers. <https://www.indiatvnews.com/explainers/india-preparing-to-boost-its-naval-capacity-by-2035-submarines-frigates-fighter-jets-submarines-china-project-75-indian-ocean-region-2023-09-18-893437>

21. Noida GST Scam: Multi-Agency Action Likely; ED, Central and State Intel May be Roped In (*news18.com*) September 19, 2023

The Centre is planning multi-agency action involving the Enforcement Directorate, Finance Ministry, intelligence agencies and state police forces to investigate a mammoth GST fraud unearthed by the Noida Police, News18 has learnt.

Sources told News18 that a central intelligence agency has prepared an initial report based on the preliminary investigation and recommended that multiple agencies be roped in to crack the scam which has reportedly caused the central exchequer a revenue loss of Rs 955 crore so far. Sources added that the amount is likely to go up “multi-fold” as the investigation progresses.

Officials added that initial analysis revealed the scam stretches across multiple states and Union Territories, with Delhi being the epicentre.

The central agencies have planned to initiate criminal investigation prosecution under Sections 120B and 420 of the IPC against the accused who allegedly procured GST numbers using fake credentials and sold it to ‘clients’. The ED may simultaneously open an investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, sources added.

Officials said several Chartered Accounts running “big firms” may also face action for alleged criminal conspiracy.

Investigating agencies will also individually verify close to 3,700 beneficiaries with the help of state GST authorities and will freeze the linked bank accounts. Entities and individuals that made frequent amendment to their Aadhaar details but had low enrolments will also be under the scanner.

The GST registration of those who procured it using fake credentials will be cancelled apart from other criminal and legal proceedings, officials said.

“An organised gang involved in fake GST input tax credit through a network of fake shell firms and entities was busted by the UP Police under Station Sec-20, Gautam Buddha Nagar on June 1, 2023. A database containing over 6 lakh PAN cards and 2,514 fake firms with GST registrations was recovered. The preliminary evidence suggests a revenue loss of Rs 955 crore (approx.) to the government exchequer,” an official said quoting from an official communication.

Sources said professionals who accepted huge amounts of money in exchange for helping exploit loopholes in the system will be booked under stringent sections as well.

MODUS OPERANDI

The scam pertains to thousands of bogus companies being floated on the basis of forged Aadhaar cards, fake invoices being raised by them and input tax credit (ITC) being claimed on their behalf.

The details of 6 lakh PAN cards were reportedly purchased from online portals and used to forge Aadhaar cards in the name of poor individuals who were paid off. These

Aadhaar cards were then allegedly used for GST e-registrations, which were in turn sold to entities that claimed input tax credit.

Analysis of the recovered data sets revealed that 1,407 unique PANs (out of 6 lakh) were used to avail the input tax credit through 1,907 unique source GST numbers (out of 2,514). Further, these 1,907 GST numbers were found to be linked with 741 unique mobile numbers.

A total of 3,745 unique beneficiary GST numbers were found to be associated with 1,907 source GST numbers and received input tax credit worth of Rs 955 crore against the supply value of Rs 5,651 crore. These unique beneficiaries were found to be spread across India, majority being from Delhi, officials said.

<https://www.news18.com/india/noida-gst-scam-multi-agency-action-likely-ed-central-and-state-intel-may-be-rope-in-exclusive-8582956.html>

22. Rs 100 crore money embezzlement: Supreme Court calls Noida Authority corrupt, directs probe by independent agency (indialegallive.com) September 18, 2023

The Supreme Court has pulled up the state government of Uttar Pradesh saying that probe by an independent agency is required for ascertaining the involvement of higher-ups for not initiating a probe against Noida authority officials who allegedly siphoned off public money tuned to nearly Rs 100 crore.

The order on the same was taken in a case where a former legal officer of Noida authority is accused of wrongfully sanctioning a compensation of Rs 7.28 crore in a land acquisition case, 22 years after it stood paid.

The Apex Court noted that the state government was also not probing 11 other cases of wrongful claims, which were revealed by the Noida authority in its affidavit filed before the court in April this year.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Dipankar Datta said, where is the accountability?

The Court noted that the state is doing nothing despite Noida authority claiming that money to the tune of Rs 100 crore has been siphoned off.

The Court added that this (siphoning off of funds) cannot be done at the instance of one or two officers. Prima facie, the entire setup seems to be involved and thus the matter should be handed to some independent agency for a deeper probe to unearth the truth.

The state was represented by advocate Ardhendumauli Prasad who sought some time to take instructions.

So for the time being, that is till the next date of hearing, the court has protected the accused legal officer Dinesh Kumar Singh and assistant legal officer Virender Singh Nagar from arrest in the first information report (FIR) pending before the Sector 20 police station in Noida.

It is important to note that the Noida authority had filed an affidavit in April blaming the legal officer for not carrying out an inquiry before sanctioning the compensation to the land owner in village Gheja Tilaptabad in Dadri tehsil of Gautam Budh Nagar district.

The acquisition was done in 1982 and the owner was paid compensation for his 10-15 bigha land (one bigha is about 25.29 acres in UP) at the rate of Rs 10.12 per square yard. Not satisfied with this amount, the owner approached the district court in Ghaziabad for enhanced compensation. In 1993, the court directed the Noida authority to pay the owner at the rate of Rs 16.61 per square yard. This was done and the claim stood settled. Much later, in 2015, Ramwati, the legal heir of the owner, filed an appeal before the Allahabad high court to reopen the compensation but the same was dismissed.

The same year, the Noida authority agreed to settle all pending claims with landowners by providing compensation at Rs 297 per square yard. According to the police FIR, Dinesh Kumar Singh, along with the other accused, filed an appeal against the dismissal of Ramwati's compensation claim to show the appeal as pending and paid Rs 7.28 crore to settle a claim that was never filed by the claimant in the first place.

The accused legal officer's bail plea was rejected by the Allahabad high court in January this year and in February, the top court protected him from arrest, added Noida authority as a party to the petition, and sought information on similar instances of wrongful payouts by authority staff.

The authority spilled the beans in its affidavit and said the same accused committed similar fraud by sanctioning compensation in other land acquisition cases as well.

It said, "on basis of examination of records carried out in the matter of acquisition of land in village Gheja Tilaptabad, there are 11 more instances where such settlement was proposed and approval of administrative authorities obtained by practising misrepresentation." The authority estimated the loss to the exchequer to be more than Rs 91 crore.

Read here: Some convicts more privileged than others: Supreme Court on Bilkis Bano case

Confronting the state with this information, the court said, "Have you investigated keeping the larger conspiracy in mind? Do you want us to think only one person is involved?"

The state counsel informed the court that the authority has not filed any formal complaint in this regard. To this, the court said, "Do you think the authority having officers of the state government will complain to you? Once this matter got reported, what have you done? <https://www.indialegallive.com/constitutional-law-news/supreme-court-news/rs-100-crore-money-embezzlement-independent-agency/>