

## **NEWS ITEMS ON CAG /AUDIT REPORTS**

**1. Govt carried out coal auctions after tweaking rules, alleges Congress citing CAG reports** (*indianexpress.com, nationalheraldindia.com, economicstimes.indiatimes.com*) February 24, 2024

The Congress on Saturday cited CAG reports to allege that the government carried out coal auctions after tweaking rules in order to favour a select few industrialists and this caused huge revenue loss.

The opposition party also asked why no action was taken by the government and the prime minister on letters by two BJP leaders raising concerns over the coal auctions. It further asked whether the government would order an ED investigation into the matter.

While addressing a press conference, Congress leader Pawan Khera showed letters by BJP leader and now ministers R K Singh and Rajeev Chandrasekhar, raising concerns in 2015 over the coal auctions to some companies by allowing only two companies, who were related, to bid for the blocks that led to cartelisation and loss of revenue.

He alleged that the two were later made ministers and no action was taken on their concerns thereafter.

“Will the Modi government order an ED raid and investigate this sordid saga of collusion and corruption,” Khera asked.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said, “The prime minister has gone to town talking about ‘Modi ki Guarantee’. The only guarantee that he has delivered on is the one he has made to his corporate chanda-givers: ‘Chanda do, koila lo’.” He said the Modi government’s ‘white paper’ began with discussion of the alleged ‘coalgate’ scam in 2014.

“The real scam however was in the ‘Anyay kaal’ of the last 10 years, when the Modi government – despite warnings from its own leaders – handed over ready-to-use, highly profitable coal mines for a pittance to its ‘param-mitr’ and biggest ‘chanda-giver’. Coal auctions have been completely rigged...,” he alleged.

“The Modi government rigged the auctions with a ‘limited tender’, so that for each coal block auctioned, only one type of coal usage was allowed. This limited the number of companies that could compete for each coal block, leading to much lower prices which cost the public exchequer thousands of crores,” Ramesh alleged.

“In 2014, a BJP MP, now Union power minister, wrote to the-then finance minister Arun Jaitley that a ‘limited tender’ such as this one could lead to ‘cartel formation and deliberate undervaluation’, causing loss to the public exchequer.

“Another MP, now MoS Electronics and IT, wrote to then Coal Minister to flag the same issue in 2015. True to the warnings, the Coal Minister and the CAG themselves admitted that at least 15 coal blocks saw cartelisation, causing loss of revenues to the exchequer,” he alleged.

Khera asked why the prime minister ignored the BJP leaders when they were writing letters about “corruption, rigging and factionalism”.

Explaining the chronology, Khera said the Modi government brought a new coal auction and allocation policy to distribute over 200 blocks of coal with over 41 billion tonnes of coal in 2015. Subsequently, internal dissenting opinions were raised against the policy from within the party and such dissenting warnings came from 2 BJP politicians themselves.

“However, in 2016, the CAG tabled a report in the Parliament giving evidence of how dubious the coal auctions had turned out,” he claimed. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/congress-govt-coal-auctions-tweaking-rules-cag-reports-9179126/>

## 2. Congress: कांग्रेस का आरोप- सरकार ने नियमों को बदलकर की कोयले की नीलामी, कैग की रिपोर्ट का दिया हवाला (*amarujala.com*) 24 Feb 2024

कांग्रेस ने शनिवार को नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की रिपोर्ट का हवाला देते हुए सरकार पर निशाना साधा। पार्टी ने कहा कि केंद्र ने कुछ चुनिंदा उद्योगपतियों को फायदा पहुंचाने के लिए नियमों में बदलाव कर कोयले की नीलामी की और इससे राजस्व का भारी नुकसान हुआ।

विपक्षी दल ने यह भी पूछा कि कोयले की नीलामी को लेकर चिंता जाहिर करने वाले भाजपा के दो नेताओं के पत्रों पर सरकार और प्रधानमंत्री ने कोई कार्रवाई क्यों नहीं की। कांग्रेस ने यह भी पूछा कि क्या सरकार इस मामले की जांच के लिए प्रवर्तन निदेशालय (ईडी) को आदेश देगी।

कांग्रेस नेता पवन खेड़ा ने एक प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंस को संबोधित किया। इस दौरान उन्होंने भाजपा नेता आरके सिंह और राजीव चंद्रशेखर के पत्र दिखाए। पत्र में 2015 में कुछ कंपनियों को कोयले की नीलामी पर चिंता जताई गई थी और केवल दो कंपनियों को कोयले की नीलामी के लिए बोली लगाने की अनुमति दी गई थी। जिससे गुटबंदी हुई और राजस्व का नुकसान हुआ।

उन्होंने आरोप लगाया कि बाद में दोनों को मंत्री बना दिया गया और उसके बाद उनकी चिंताओं पर कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की गई। पवन खेड़ा ने पूछा, क्या मोदी सरकार ईडी को छापे मारने का आदेश देगी और मिलीभगत व भ्रष्टाचार की इस धिनौनी कहानी की जांच करेगी?

वहीं, कांग्रेस नेता जयराम रमेश ने कहा, प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की गारंटी की बात करते हैं। उन्होंने अपने कॉर्पोरेट चंदा देने वालों को एकमात्र गारंटी दी है। वह गारंटी है- चंदा दो, कोयला लो। उन्होंने कहा कि मोदी सरकार का श्वेतपत्र 2014 के कथित कोलगेट घोटाले पर चर्चा के साथ शुरू हुआ। लेकिन असली घोटाला पिछले दस वर्षों के अन्याय काल में हुआ, जब मोदी सरकार ने अपने ही नेताओं की चेतावनी के बावजूद कोयले की खदानों को अपने परम मित्र और सबसे बड़े चंदा दाता को सौंप दिया था। कोयले की नीलामी में पूरी तरह धांधली हुई है। <https://www.amarujala.com/india-news/govt-carried-out-coal-auctions-after-tweaking-rules-alleges-cong-citing-cag-reports-2024-02-24?pageId=1>

### 3. कांग्रेस का आरोप- मोदी सरकार ने नियमों में बदलाव के बाद की कोयला नीलामी, CAG रिपोर्ट का दिया हवाला ([navodayatimes.in](http://navodayatimes.in)) Updated: 25 Feb, 2024

कांग्रेस ने कैग रिपोर्ट का हवाला देते हुए आरोप लगाया कि सरकार ने कुछ चुनिंदा उद्योगपतियों को फायदा पहुंचाने के लिए नियमों में बदलाव कर कोयला नीलामी की और इससे राजस्व का भारी नुकसान हुआ। विपक्षी दल ने यह भी पूछा कि कोयला नीलामी पर चिंता जताने वाले दो भाजपा नेताओं के पत्रों पर सरकार और प्रधानमंत्री ने कोई कार्रवाई क्यों नहीं की। इसने पूछा कि क्या सरकार इस मामले में ईडी जांच का आदेश देगी।

कांग्रेस नेता पवन खेड़ा ने एक संवाददाता सम्मेलन में भाजपा नेता और अब मंत्री आर के सिंह तथा राजीव चंद्रशेखर के पत्र दिखाए तथा कहा कि इनमें 2015 में कुछ कंपनियों को कोयला नीलामी में केवल दो संबंधित कंपनियों को ब्लॉक के लिए बोली लगाने की अनुमति देने पर चिंता जताई गई थी जिससे राजस्व की हानि हुई। उन्होंने आरोप लगाया कि बाद में दोनों को मंत्री बना दिया गया और उसके बाद उनकी चिंताओं पर कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की गई। खेड़ा ने पूछा, "क्या मोदी सरकार ईडी (प्रवर्तन निदेशालय) छापेमारी का आदेश देगी और मिलीभगत एवं भ्रष्टाचार की इस घटना की जांच करेगी।"

कांग्रेस नेता जयराम रमेश ने कहा, "मोदी की गारंटी' के बारे में बात करते हुए प्रधानमंत्री शहर गए हैं। उन्होंने अपने कॉर्पोरेट चंदा देने वालों को एकमात्र जो गारंटी दी है, वह 'चंदा दो, कोयला लो' है।" उन्होंने कहा कि मोदी सरकार का 'श्वेतपत्र' 2014 में कथित 'कोलगेट' घोटाले की चर्चा से शुरू हुआ। रमेश ने आरोप लगाया, "हालांकि असली घोटाला पिछले 10 वर्षों के 'अन्याय काल' में हुआ, जब मोदी सरकार ने अपने ही नेताओं की चेतावनियों के बावजूद उपयोग के लिए तैयार, अत्यधिक लाभदायक कोयला खदानों को अपने 'परम मित्र' एवं 'चंदा दाता' को कौड़ियों के भाव में सौंप दिया।

कोयला नीलामी में पूरी तरह से धांधली हुई है।" उन्होंने आरोप लगाया, "मोदी सरकार ने 'सीमित निविदा' के साथ नीलामी में धांधली की, ताकि नीलाम किए गए प्रत्येक कोयला ब्लॉक के लिए, केवल एक प्रकार के कोयले के उपयोग की अनुमति दी जाए। इससे प्रत्येक कोयला ब्लॉक के लिए प्रतिस्पर्धा करने वाली कंपनियों की संख्या सीमित हो गई, जिससे कीमतें बहुत कम हो गईं। इससे सरकारी खजाने को हजारों करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ।" कांग्रेस नेता ने कहा, "2014 में, एक भाजपा सांसद, जो अब केंद्रीय ऊर्जा मंत्री हैं, ने तत्कालीन वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली को लिखा था कि इस तरह की 'सीमित निविदा' से 'कार्टेल गठन और जानबूझकर कम मूल्यांकन' हो सकता है, जिससे सरकारी खजाने को नुकसान हो सकता है।"

उन्होंने कहा, "एक अन्य सांसद, जो अब इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और आईटी राज्य मंत्री हैं, ने 2015 में इसी मुद्दे को उठाने के लिए तत्कालीन कोयला मंत्री को पत्र लिखा था। चेतावनियों के अनुरूप, कोयला मंत्री और कैग ने खुद स्वीकार किया कि कम से कम 15 कोयला ब्लॉक में कार्टेल गठन हुआ, जिससे सरकारी खजाने का नुकसान हुआ।" खेड़ा ने पूछा कि जब भाजपा नेता "भ्रष्टाचार, धांधली और कार्टेल" के बारे में पत्र लिख रहे थे तो प्रधानमंत्री ने उन्हें नजरअंदाज क्यों किया। उनके अनुसार, मोदी सरकार 2015 में 41 अरब टन से अधिक कोयले के साथ 200 से अधिक ब्लॉक वितरित करने के लिए एक नयी कोयला नीलामी और आवंटन नीति लेकर आई थी।

इसके बाद, पार्टी के भीतर से इस नीति के खिलाफ आंतरिक असहमति दिखी। खुद दो भाजपा नेताओं की ओर से असहमति की चेतावनी आई। उन्होंने दावा किया, "हालांकि, 2016 में कैग ने संसद में एक रिपोर्ट पेश की थी जिसमें सबूत दिया गया था कि कोयला नीलामी कितनी संदिग्ध रही थी।"

<https://www.navodayatimes.in/news/khabre/congress-allegation-modi-government-auctioned-coal-after-changing-rules-citing-cag-report/234992/>

## **STATES NEWS ITEMS**

### **4. India's National Auditor Uncovers Unsanctioned Expenditure by Former BRS Government (*bnnbreaking.com*) 26 Feb 2024**

Discover the alarming revelations from the CAG report exposing the BRS government's massive overspending of Rs 2,88,811 crore without necessary approvals. Delve into the implications of this fiscal mismanagement and the urgent need for accountability.

In an eye-opening revelation, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has unearthed a financial oversight of monumental proportions. The former government of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), led by K. Chandrashekar Rao, has been found to have spent an exorbitant Rs 2,88,811 crore over the allotted budget without obtaining the necessary approvals. This staggering figure spans from the financial years 2014-15 to 2021-22, casting a long shadow over the administration's financial discipline and accountability.

#### **The Tip of the Iceberg**

The CAG's findings are particularly alarming in the context of a series of financial scandals that have recently come to light, including the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation scheme, suspected to have cost over Rs 1,00,000 crore, and other notable scams such as the sheep, metro, and Dharani scams. These revelations raise serious questions about the governance and oversight mechanisms in place during the BRS government's tenure. The report criticized the government for its lack of budgetary control and flagged an urgent need for the regularization of this excess expenditure.

#### **Fiscal Irresponsibility Unveiled**

According to the CAG report, the peak of this fiscal indiscipline was observed in the financial year 2020-21, with excess expenditure amounting to Rs 81,514.54 crore. A significant portion of this overspending was attributed to the repayment of Ways and Means Advances, highlighting a mismanagement of funds. The report further noted an increase in expenditure under fiscal administration, while allocations for welfare schemes fell short of their targets. This discrepancy underscores a misalignment between the government's spending and its avowed commitment to welfare.

#### **Accountability in Question**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meetings convened to discuss these irregularities saw participation from notable members, including Dr. Jetty Geetha, Kamalakar Hanmanth Shinde, and Akbaruddin Owaisi. The finance ministers during the scrutinized period were Etela Rajendar, K Chandrashekhar Rao himself, and T Harish Rao, with K Ramakrishna Rao serving as the principal secretary for the finance department. The involvement of such high-ranking officials in this oversight raises concerns about the checks and balances that are supposed to safeguard public funds from misuse.

As the CAG report sheds light on this significant financial mismanagement, the need for stricter fiscal discipline and transparency in government spending becomes evident. This development has added to the growing concern among the public and has sparked a debate on the effectiveness of governance and oversight mechanisms. The findings

underscore the importance of accountability and the need for regular audits to prevent such occurrences in the future, ensuring that public funds are used judiciously and for the intended purposes. <https://bnnbreaking.com/politics/indias-national-auditor-uncovers-unsanctioned-expenditure-by-former-brs-government>

## **5. CAG Report: KCR Spent 2.8 Lakh Cr without Authorization** (*gulte.com*) 26 February 2024

The Comptroller Audit General of India recently quoted that there are severe financial irregularities related to the humongous Kaleshwaram project amounting to Rs 1 lakh crore. The Audit General has unearthed another unregulated fiscal misuse done during the KCR regime.

According to the democratic regulations, the financial spending of the incumbent government must first be approved by the majority of the MLAs in the legislative assembly. This is called budget approvals and it is done every financial year by the government. However, in this case, KCR spent government funds well over the approved government budget presentations and its limitations.

Between the financial years 2014-15 to 2021-22, the then CM spent Rs 2.88 lakh crore in public money without any authorization. These funds were spent without budget approvals in the assembly, according to the report from CAG.

The CAG report referred to the Kaleshwaram project scam, sheep scam, Dharani scam, and metro scam in the report that cites the Rs 2.88 lakh crore irregularities in the KCR regime. The CAG called this “financial indiscipline and mismanagement of public resources”.

CM Revanth Reddy said recently that an investigation is due on KCR over the scams and financial mismanagement in his tenure and this report from CAG further adds to the woes of the ex-CM. <https://www.gulte.com/political-news/281493/cag-report-kcr-spent-2-8-lakh-cr-without-authorization>

## **6. KCR Spent Rs. 2,88,811 Crore Public Money Without Authorisation** (*en.etemaaddaily.com*) 26 Feb 2024

The former BRS government led by the-then chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao did not get an excess expenditure of Rs 2,88,811 crore, over and above allocation, pertaining to financial years 2014-15 to 2021-22, regularised, said India's national auditor, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), in its recently released report. This comes as yet another shock to people who are still reeling from the humongous scam being unravelled in the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation scheme, possibly to the tune of over Rs 1,00,000 crore, to the sheep scam to the metro scam, Dharani scam, among others.

In a democracy, financial power vests in the House of Representatives– the Assembly of MLAs in the state and MPs at the Centre. At the state level, the government has to get an approval from the majority of the MLAs assembled in the Legislative Assembly for the money it plans to spend. This process is called Budget approval. In its report, the CAG admonished the government under the BRS, saying, “The excess expenditure

is to be regularised after discussion in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the Legislature.

The Committee met five times – May 2018, twice in August 2021, February 2022 and March 2022 – to discuss 10 paragraphs pertaining to State Finance Audit Reports. However, the issue of regularisation of expenditure incurred in excess of Legislative authorisation has not yet been taken up.”

The CAG said the excess expenditure vitiated the system of budgetary and financial control and encouraged financial indiscipline in the management of public resources. As per Appendix 3.2 of the CAG report on State Finances Audit Report (Report 3 of 2023), the excess expenditure without legislative sanction was Rs 303.65 crore in 2014-15, Rs 5,880.79 crore in FY 2015-16, Rs 21,161.59 crore in FY 2016-17, Rs 28,171.27 crore in FY 2017-18, Rs 29,133.69 crore in FY 2018-19, Rs 47,896.43 crore in FY 2019-20, Rs 81,514.54 crore in FY 2020-21 and Rs 75,053 crore in FY 2021-22.

The CAG has not revealed data for the remaining term (FY 2022-23 and half of FY 2023-24) of the Rao-led BRS regime. The greatest deviation from the budget occurred in FY 2020-21, when the government spent Rs 81,514.54 crore in excess of budgetary sanction. Of this, the excess expenditure of Rs 67,174 crore was made to repay Ways and Means Advances of the Reserve Bank of India. For this, the CAG said in its commentary:

“The original provision was only Rs 100 crore with nil supplementary provisions, while the actual expenditure was Rs 67,274 crore under Grant No. IX - Fiscal Administration (Loans Charged).”

The Ways and Means Advances is a temporary loan provided by the RBI to state governments. Though the CAG did not explain the reasons for excess expenditure from FY 2014-15 to FY 2020-21, the lion’s share was from fiscal administration, planning, surveys and statistics, which comes under the finance department. There was no excess expenditure under the fiscal administration, planning surveys and statistics in the first year of the Rao government.

However, the excess expenditure under this head increased every year from the second year. If the excess expenditure under this head was Rs 4,934.94 crore in FY 2015-16, it went up to Rs 18,501.94 crore in FY 2016-17 and Rs 25,379.74 crore in FY 2017-18. It, however, declined to Rs 22,576.44 crore in FY 2018-19. It went up to Rs 45,075.99 crore in FY 2019-20, Rs 80,385.22 crore in FY 2020-21 and Rs 67,274 crore in FY 2021-22. The major expenditure under the heading ‘fiscal administration, planning surveys and statistics’ relates to interest payments, pensions, and internal debt. Contrary to excess expenditure on fiscal administration, the CAG observed that the Rao government spent less money on several welfare schemes for which the Legislature allotted money.

Commenting on the persistent excess expenditure, the CAG said: “Savings occurred under the voted section every year. This indicates that even though more budget is provided in the voted section towards schemes/ welfare / development activities, the actual expenditure is less than the provision, resulting in savings. On the other hand, excess expenditure occurred under the charged section in all the years mainly on

account of Repayment of Ways and Means Advances.” According to internal rules framed by the State Legislature, the government has to explain to the Public Accounts Committee if there is a saving on money allocated and excess money spent.

Though the Principal Accountant General (Accounts and Entitlements) sought reasons and explanations from departments for excess expenditure and savings, the CAG said, “controlling officers have not provided an explanation for the variations in the expenditure vis-a-vis budgeted allocation. The PAC, in the first term of the Rao government, had Dr Jetty Geetha, Gangula Kamalakar, Hanmanth Shinde, Guvvala Balaraju, Ashannagari Jeevan Reddy, Manchireddy Kishan Reddy, Akbaruddin Owaisi, Dr K. Laxman, Thatiparthi Jeevan Reddy and Sabavat Ramulu Naik as members. In the second term, the PAC had Akbaruddin Owaisi, Gurka Jaipal Yadav, Ramavath Ravindra Kumar, Bigala Ganesh, Gadari Kishore Kumar, Gaddigari Vittal Reddy, Peddi Sudarshan Reddy, Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Sandra Venkata Veeraiah, D. Rajeshwar Rao, Kadium Srihari and Pochampally Srinivas Reddy as its members. During this period, Etela Rajendar was finance minister from 2014 to 2018. Chandrashekhar Rao held the finance portfolio from 2018 to 2019, which was later taken over by his nephew, T. Harish Rao. Bureaucrat K. Ramakrishna Rao was the principal secretary for the finance department, who was responsible for ensuring that the departments meet the rules.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has exposed the reckless fiscal mismanagement under the K. Chandrashekhar Rao-led government in Telangana. The latest report unveils an astronomical excess expenditure of Rs 2,88,811 crore spanning from 2014-15 to 2021-22, far exceeding allocated budgets and defying legislative mandates. The government's reckless fiscal management showed effect from the second year. It took more loans to meet its expenditure. More loans meant more interest payouts.

To cover up more payouts on RBI loans and interests, the government showed higher expenditure on welfare schemes and development activity in the budget. It spent less money on welfare and developmental activity and diverted that money to pay interest on loans and part-pay loans.

As debt and interest payouts increased every year, so did the amount allocated for welfare schemes and developmental activities. And so did the opaque excess expenditure by the finance department to pay interest and part-pay loans. The Constitution and other rules on financial management requires the government to notify reasons to the accounts department, and Public Accounts Committee and take approval from the Legislature. The KCR government, however, did nothing.

The then BRS government used a rule which says that excess expenditure for pre-approved purposes can be released, if the concerned secretary promises to get legislative approval later on. An example was mentioned by CAG on how the Rao government exploited this rule: For financial year 2021-22, the original provision for the ‘Repayment of Ways and Means Advances’ was only Rs 100 crore. However, it paid Rs 67,274 crore, which is an excess of Rs 67,174 crore.

The Principal Accountant General (Accounts and Entitlements) sought reasons and explanations from departments for excess expenditure and savings, but controlling

officers have not provided an explanation for the variations in the expenditure vis-a-vis budgeted allocation. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the State Legislature met five times. But the issue of excess expenditure was never brought up during the meetings. <https://www.en.etemaaddaily.com/world/hyderabad/kcr-spent-rs-288811-crore-public-money-without-authorisation:148429>

## **7. Expedite clearance of pending CAG reports, L-G writes to Delhi CM (*tribuneindia.com*) February 24, 2024**

Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena has urged Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to request Finance Minister Atishi to expedite the clearance of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) reports, which have been pending since August 2023.

In a letter dated February 22, Saxena emphasised that as the budget session is currently underway, he urged the CM to advise the Finance Minister to swiftly process these reports, allowing them to be presented before the House without further delay.

“The CAG reports relating to the accounts of the Capital for any period subsequent to the date referred to in sub-section (1) of section 46 shall be submitted to the L-G who shall cause them to be laid before the Legislative Assembly,” he stated in the letter.

The files encompass various crucial reports, including the state finance audit reports for 2021 and 2022; performance audit on prevention and mitigation of vehicular air pollution in Delhi for 2021-22; revenue, economic, social and general sectors and PSUs for 2020-2021; and performance audit on children in need of care and protection for 2021.

He further mentioned that his Secretariat has received copies of communication from the Controller of Accounts, Principal Accounts Office (PAO), Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), addressed to the Secretary to the Finance Minister. This communication follows a letter by the Principal Accountant, General Audit, Delhi, requesting the consideration of five CAG reports and one Delhi government accounts to be cleared by the Finance Minister and forwarded to the L-G for presentation before the Legislative Assembly.

Saxena emphasised, “It is an obligation of the government of the day to share with the people, through the House, an objective account of its performance, revenue and expenditure of public funds.”

Saxena cited Section 48 of the GNCTD Act, 1991, and Article 151 of the Constitution to underscore the provision for the reports to be presented before the Assembly through the L-G. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/delhi/expedite-clearance-of-pending-cag-reports-l-g-writes-to-delhi-cm-593918>

## **8. Delhi L-G writes to CM Kejriwal for clearing pending CAG reports for tabling in Assembly (*millenniumpost.in*) 24 Feb 2024**

Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena has asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to advise Finance Minister Atishi to expeditiously process reports on state finances, including



five CAG reports “pending” with her since August 2023, so they can be tabled in the ongoing Budget session.

The Delhi government said in a statement the reports will be tabled soon in the Assembly.

The L-G said in his letter to the chief minister that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) reports are constitutionally mandated, independent and impartial assessment of the performance of the government and in many ways are a guidance document for assessment of its financial performance.

Also Read - Supreme Court seeks ED's reply to AAP leader Sanjay Singh's bail plea in Delhi excise policy 'scam' case

“It is an obligation of the government of the day to share with the people, through the House, an objective account of its performance - revenue and expenditure of public funds,” he noted.

He said the L-G secretariat received copies of communications which the controller of accounts sent to the finance minister’s secretary requesting that the minister clear the five CAG reports and send them to the L-G to be laid before the Assembly.

His letter cited Section 48 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act, 1991 and Article 151 of the Constitution that provide for the reports to be laid before the Assembly through the Lt Governor.

Since the Budget session of the Assembly is underway, the chief minister may advise the finance minister to expeditiously process these important reports so that they can be laid before the House, added the letter.

The CAG reports included: State Finance audit report for the year ended 31 March, 2022; State Finance Audit Report for the year 31 March, 2021, Performance Audit on Prevention and Mitigation of Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi for 2021-22, Revenue Economic, Social and General Sectors and PSUs for the years ended 31 March, 2020 and 2021; and Performance Audit Report on Children in Need of Care and Protection for the year ended March 31, 2021.

Apart from the five CAG reports, the Finance Accounts and Appropriation Accounts for the years 2021-2022, along with audit certificates have also been pending since August, 2023, said the L-G’s letter. <https://www.millenniumpost.in/delhi/delhi-l-g-writes-to-cm-kejriwal-for-clearing-pending-cag-reports-for-tabling-in-assembly-553361>

## 9. Delhi: एलजी ने सीएम केजरीवाल को लिखी चिट्ठी- कहा- विधानसभा में रखें कैग की पांच रिपोर्ट (amarujala.com) 24 Feb 2024

उपराज्यपाल वीके सक्सेना ने भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की पांच रिपोर्ट को दिल्ली विधानसभा की पटल पर रखने के लिए मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल को पत्र लिखा है। इस संबंध में दिल्ली सरकार ने जल्द ही सदन के पटल पर रिपोर्ट रखने की बात कही है।

पत्र में उपराज्यपाल ने कहा है कि पांचों रिपोर्ट लंबे समय से दिल्ली सरकार के पास लंबित हैं। मुख्यमंत्री, वित्त मंत्री और दिल्ली सरकार जल्द इस पर कदम उठाएं। संविधान के अनुच्छेद 151 के अंतर्गत उपराज्यपाल का यह सांविधानिक दायित्व है कि वह कैग की रिपोर्ट को विधानसभा के समक्ष रखकर सार्वजनिक करें।

पांचों रिपोर्ट राज्य के वित्त से संबंधित हैं, जो अगस्त 2023 से ही वित्त मंत्री के विचार के लिए लंबित हैं। यह रिपोर्ट सरकार के कामकाज के तरीके में भी सुधार करने में भी मददगार होती हैं। सरकार का दायित्व होता है कि वह सदन के माध्यम से अपने प्रदर्शन व सार्वजनिक धन के राजस्व और व्यय का एक वस्तुनिष्ठ लेखा-जोखा जनता से साझा करे।

### यह रिपोर्ट लंबित

-31 मार्च, 22 को समाप्त वर्ष के लिए 2023 की रिपोर्ट संख्या-2 राज्य वित्त लेखा परीक्षा रिपोर्ट

-वर्ष 2022 की रिपोर्ट क्रमांक-1 राज्य वित्त लेखा परीक्षा रिपोर्ट वर्ष 31 मार्च, 2021

-वित्त वर्ष 2021-22 के लिए दिल्ली में वाहन वायु प्रदूषण की रोकथाम और शमन पर प्रदर्शन ऑडिट पर 2022 की रिपोर्ट संख्या-2

-31 मार्च, 20 और 2021 को समाप्त वर्षों के लिए राजस्व आर्थिक, सामाजिक और सामान्य क्षेत्रों और पीएसयू पर 2022 की रिपोर्ट संख्या-3

-31 मार्च, 21 को समाप्त वर्ष के लिए देखभाल और संरक्षण की आवश्यकता वाले बच्चों पर प्रदर्शन ऑडिट रिपोर्ट पर 2023 की रिपोर्ट संख्या-1 <https://www.amarujala.com/delhi-ncr/delhi-lg-wrote-a-letter-to-cm-kejriwal-said-keep-five-cag-reports-in-the-assembly-2024-02-24>

## 10. L-G writes to CM for ‘failing’ to implement Ayushman Bharat scheme in Capital (*indianexpress.com*) February 26, 2024

Questioning what he termed was the AAP-led Delhi government’s “intransience” on the matter, Delhi L-G V K Saxena on Sunday wrote to CM Arvind Kejriwal, urging him to implement the central government’s Ayushman Bharat health scheme in the Capital soon.

Saxena said he had received requests from several disadvantaged groups, complaining that “they were not able to avail the benefits of the scheme, which has a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family a year — for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation; recalling file related to it; and asking the CM to implement it at the earliest “for providing the benefit to the poorest of the poor.”

Responding to this, Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj accused “mounting concerns” over the scheme’s efficacy, and accused Saxena of being “disconnected from ground realities”, while referring to a CAG report, citing revelations related to ineligible beneficiaries reaping its benefits.

“The eligibility criteria of the scheme is such that most of the Delhi residents would not be eligible for availing its benefits... In hospitals like GB Pant Hospital, almost half of the total surgeries are on patients from states wherein the scheme is operational, like the BJP-ruled states of UP and Haryana. It is very sad to see that though the L-G is boasting about the scheme, there is practically no success on the ground...”

Saxena wrote in his letter to the CM, “My Secretariat is constantly in receipt of requests and applications for financial aid for health purposes, almost entirely from the economically weakest sections... who are not able to avail of secondary and tertiary health services because of lack of a ration card or a voter ID in Delhi, and because they do not have the Ayushman registration either.” He, while disposing the file, questioned why the Delhi government, despite having given in-principle approval for its implementation back in 2018, and even having announced it in its budget in 2020, had “inexplicably stalled it for merely political reasons” and deprived “lakhs of poor migrants in the city” of health services under it. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/l-g-writes-to-cm-for-failing-to-implement-ayushman-bharat-scheme-in-capital-9180751/>

## 11. कोरबा: DMF घोटाले की CAG ने शुरु की ऑडिट, 1200 करोड़ की गड़बड़ी की खुलेगी पोल (*theduniyadari.com*) 24 Feb 2024

कोरबा जिले में जिला खनिज न्यास मद में कराए गए कार्य में करीब 1200 करोड़ की गड़बड़ी का खुलासा होने के बाद CAG की टीम ने कलेक्टोरेट में डेरा डाल दिया है। CAG की टीम 2015 से लेकर अब तक जो भी कार्य DMF के मद से कराए गए हैं, सभी रिकॉर्ड की जांच की जा रही है

बता दें कि कोरबा जिले में DMF फंड में गड़बड़ी की गूँज विधानसभा में तक में हो चुकी है। वहीं इसी मामले में भूविस्थापितों की याचिका पर बिलासपुर हाईकोर्ट में मामले की सुनवाई हो रही है।

DMF के दुरुपयोग को लेकर है याचिका

बता दें कि प्रदेश में कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक कोयले का उत्पादन होता है, जिसकी वजह से इस जिले को DMF का सर्वाधिक फण्ड भी मिलता है। DMF मद से किये जाने वाले अनाप-शनाप खर्चों को लेकर कोयला खदान से विस्थापितों ने बिलासपुर हाईकोर्ट में जनहित याचिका दायर कर दी है।

याचिका में कहा गया है कि DMF के तहत पूरे प्रदेश में 10 हजार करोड़ रुपये का घोटाला किया गया है। कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक 1200 करोड़ रुपये की गड़बड़ी की गई है। राशि खर्च करते समय डीएमएफ रूल्स 2015 के नियम 25 (3), 12 (3), 12 (6) तथा 12 (2) का उल्लंघन किया गया है।

याचिका में बताया गया है कि खनिज न्यास के कामकाज में टीडीएस कटौती नहीं की गई तथा ऑडिट भी नहीं कराया गया। खर्च की गई राशि का कोई हिसाब किताब भी नहीं रखा गया है। इस मामले की सीबीआई जांच जरूरी है। सुनवाई के दौरान सीबीआई व केंद्र सरकार से जवाब मिल गया। मगर राज्य शासन की ओर से कोई जवाब नहीं दिया गया है, इसलिए राज्य शासन को जवाब के लिए अवसर दिया गया है। अब मार्च के दूसरे सप्ताह में मामले की अगली सुनवाई होगी। <https://theduniyadari.com/cag-starts-audit-of-korba-breaking-dmf-scam-fraud-worth-rs-1200-crore-will-be-exposed/>

## 12. डीएमएफ घोटाले की जाँच करने कोरबा पहुंची कैग टीम, 2015 से अभी तक के सभी कार्यों की होगी जाँच (*news36garh.com*) 25 Feb 2024

कोरबा - कोरबा कलेक्टोरेट में कैग की टीम ने डेरा डाला है। कैग टीम जिला खनिज न्यास मद से कराये कार्यों में 1200 करोड़ की गड़बड़ी की जाँच करने पहुंची है। टीम 2015 से अभी तक डीएमएफ मद से हुए सभी कार्यों के रिकॉर्ड खंगाल रही है। कोरबा जिले में डीएमएफ फंड में हुई गड़बड़ी की बात विधानसभा में उठने के बाद इस मामले में जाँच तेज़ हो गई। इसी मामले में भू-विस्थापितों की याचिका पर बिलासपुर उच्च न्यायालय में मामले की सुनवाई हो रही है।

डीएमएफ के दुरुपयोग को लेकर है याचिका दायर प्रदेश में कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक कोयले का उत्पादन होता है, जिसकी वजह से इस जिले को डीएमएफ का सर्वाधिक फण्ड भी मिलता है। डीएमएफ मद से किये जाने वाले अनाप-शनाप खर्चों को लेकर कोयला खदान से विस्थापितों ने बिलासपुर उच्च न्यायालय में जनहित याचिका दायर कर दी है। याचिका में कहा गया है कि डीएमएफ के तहत पूरे प्रदेश में 10 हजार करोड़ रुपये का घोटाला किया गया है। कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक 1200 करोड़ रुपये की गड़बड़ी की गई है। राशि खर्च करते समय डीएमएफ रूल्स 2015 के नियम 25 (3), 12 (3), 12 (6) तथा 12 (2) का उल्लंघन किया गया है। याचिका में बताया गया है कि खनिज न्यास के कामकाज में टीडीएस कटौती नहीं की गई तथा ऑडिट भी नहीं कराया गया। खर्च की गई राशि का कोई हिसाब-किताब भी नहीं रखा गया है। इस मामले की सीबीआई जांच जरूरी है। सुनवाई के दौरान सीबीआई व केंद्र सरकार से जवाब मिल गया। मगर राज्य शासन की ओर से कोई जवाब नहीं दिया गया है, इसलिए राज्य शासन को जवाब के लिए अवसर दिया गया है। अब मार्च के दूसरे सप्ताह में मामले की अगली सुनवाई होगी। <https://news36garh.com/5220/>

### **13. अब खुलेगी DMF घोटाले की पोल.. CAG की टीम इस जिले में हुए कार्यों का कर रही ऑडिट.. हाई कोर्ट में भी चल रही है सुनवाई...**

*(theruralpress.in)* February 24, 2024

जिला खनिज न्यास (DMF) के फण्ड से हुई गड़बड़ियों को लेकर जिलों से लेकर विधानसभा तक में चर्चा हो रही। केंद्र से DMF के खर्चों को लेकर नियमों में बदलाव भी किया गया है। इस बीच कोरबा जिले में CAG की टीम DMF से हुए कामकाज की ऑडिट कर रही हैं, वहीं यहां के भूविस्थापितों द्वारा DMF को लेकर हाई कोर्ट में दायर जनहित याचिका को लेकर सुनवाई भी चल रही है।

DMF के दुरुपयोग को लेकर है याचिका दरअसल प्रदेश में कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक कोयले का उत्पादन होता है, जिसकी वजह से इस जिले को DMF का सर्वाधिक फण्ड भी मिलता है। सन 2015 में जब से DMF का कानून अस्तित्व में आया तब से इस मद से किये जाने वाले अनाप-शनाप खर्चों को लेकर आरोप जिला प्रशासन और जिम्मेदार जन प्रतिनिधियों के ऊपर लगते रहे हैं। इसी मुद्दे को लेकर कोयला खदान से विस्थापित हुए कुछ युवाओं ने मिलकर हाई कोर्ट में जनहित याचिका दायर कर दी है। संतोष राठौर, ब्रजेश श्रीवास, मनजीत यादव, प्रकाश कोराम और सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता अजय श्रीवास्तव ने मिलकर यह याचिका लगाई है।

DMF में 10 हजार करोड़ के घोटाले का आरोप पेश याचिका में कहा गया है कि DMF के तहत पूरे प्रदेश में 10 हजार करोड़ रुपये का घोटाला किया गया है। कोरबा जिले में सर्वाधिक 1200 करोड़ रुपये की गड़बड़ी की गई है। राशि खर्च करते समय डीएमएफ रूल्स 2015 के नियम 25 (3), 12 (3), 12 (6) तथा 12 (2) का उल्लंघन किया गया है।

टीडीएस कटौती नहीं और ऑडिट भी नहीं याचिका में बताया गया है कि न्यास के कामकाज में टीडीएस कटौती नहीं की गई तथा ऑडिट भी नहीं कराया गया। खर्च की गई राशि का कोई हिसाब किताब भी नहीं रखा गया है। पूरे मामले की सीबीआई से जांच कराने की आवश्यकता है।

केंद्र और CBI ने दिया जवाब, मगर...

पिछली सुनवाई के बाद कोर्ट ने राज्य सरकार, केंद्र सरकार व सीबीआई से जवाब दाखिल करने को कहा था। इसकी सुनवाई के दौरान सीबीआई व केंद्र सरकार से जवाब मिल गया। मगर राज्य शासन

की ओर से कोई जवाब नहीं दिया गया है, इसलिए राज्य शासन को जवाब के लिए अवसर दिया गया है। अब मार्च के दूसरे सप्ताह में मामले की अगली सुनवाई होगी।

CAG की टीम कर रही है जांच

DMF की रकम के अनाप-शनाप खर्च को लेकर कोरबा जिला सर्वाधिक चर्चा में रहा है, यही वजह है कि नियंत्रक एवं लेखा महानिरीक्षक (CAG) ने इस बार DMF के ऑडिट के लिए कोरबा को केंद्र बिंदु बनाया है। यहां बीते कुछ महीने से CAG की एक टीम ने डेरा डाल रखा है। इस टीम द्वारा जिला खनिज कार्यालय के बाजू में स्थित एक कक्ष में जिले के समस्त विभागों से दस्तावेज तलब कर ऑडिट का कार्य किया जा रहा है। इसमें सन 2015 से लेकर अब तक जो भी कार्य DMF के मद से कराये गए हैं, सभी के रिकॉर्ड की जांच की जा रही है और यह भी देखा जा रहा है कि नियम के तहत कार्य का आबंटन और खर्च हुए हैं या नहीं।

पहले भी पकड़ में आ चुकी है गड़बड़ी

दरअसल इससे पूर्व CAG ने शिकायतों के आधार पर कोरबा जिले में DMF से हुए कामकाज की जांच की थी। तब तत्कालीन कलेक्टर ने आदिवासी विकास विभाग के सहायक आयुक्त रहे श्रीकांत दुबे को DMF का नोडल अधिकारी बनाया था। तब की गई ऑडिट में CAG ने लगभग सौ करोड़ की गड़बड़ी पकड़ी थी। इस मामले में कांग्रेस नेता अजय जायसवाल की शिकायत पर EOW ने FIR भी दर्ज किया था। हालांकि इस केस की प्रगति का कुछ भी पता बही चल सका है, मगर यह तय है कि CAG की अभी हो रही ऑडिट में DMF में की गई गड़बड़ियों का उजागर होना तय है।

बताया जा रहा है कि कोरबा जिले में DMF की ऑडिट अंतिम चरण में है। इसकी रिपोर्ट कब प्रकाश में आएगी, इसका सभी को इंतजार रहेगा। वहीं हाई कोर्ट में चल रही सुनवाई में फ़िलहाल राज्य सरकार के जवाब का इंतजार हो रहा है, जिसके बाद कोर्ट क्या फैसला सुनाती है, इसको लेकर भी खदान के प्रभावितों और आम-अवाम की उत्सुकता बनी हुई है।

<https://theruralpress.in/2024/02/24/now-the-dmf-scam-will-be-exposed-cag-team-is-auditing/>

#### **14. GIDC diverted Rs 32cr unspent export infra fund to repay bank loan: CAG (timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Feb 25, 2024**

Panaji: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) observed that the Goa Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) submitted false utilisation certificates (UCs) to central govt and allegedly diverted the funds under Assistance to States for Infrastructure Development of Exports (ASIDE) scheme to the tune of Rs 32.2 crore.

Under the scheme, the GIDC, being the nodal agency, received grants aggregating to Rs 63.3 crore during the period from 2002-03 to 2013-14.

Of this, the GIDC utilised an amount of Rs 50.4 crore to take up approved works in the state and an amount of Rs 12.9 crore (including Rs 6.12 crore received in 2013-14) remained unutilised, the CAG said.

The scheme was delinked from central govt's budgetary support in 2015-16. Though no specific project was taken up since the last release of the grant in 2013-14, the GIDC did not surrender the unutilised amount after nine years and despite repeated reminders from central govt.

Instead, the GIDC parked the unutilised grant of Rs 12.9 crore in fixed deposit accounts with scheduled banks.

As of Jan 2023, a sum of Rs 32.2 crore (including interest earned of Rs 19.3 crore) remained in fixed deposits.

Audit scrutiny revealed that, as central govt was repeatedly reminding Goa of UC for Rs 6.1 crore of the grant released for 2013-14, the GIDC decided (Dec 2022) to show its own two works namely (construction of 800m<sup>3</sup> raw and filter water reservoir at Verna Industrial Estate and raw water distribution network at Verna Industrial Estate) completed for Rs 6.3 crore during the period 2017-19, as works executed under the ASIDE scheme without any approval of the state-level export promotion committee (SLEPC) and DoC (department of commerce).

After taking approval from state govt for incorporating the above completed projects under the ambit of the ASIDE scheme, the GIDC submitted (Jan 2, 2023) the UC to central govt certifying that the grant-in-aid of Rs 6.1 crore sanctioned during 2013-14 was utilised for the purpose for which it was sanctioned; but without revealing the names and purposes of the two projects, the CAG said.

“In the UC submitted, the unspent balance of previous year and the balance remaining at the end of the year were shown as nil, although an unspent balance of Rs 6.8 crore of the previous years remained with the GIDC. It may be noted that, under the ASIDE scheme, state can take up projects only after getting prior approval of the SLEPC and DoC,” the CAG said. “The two works for which the UC was submitted in Jan 2023 had neither prior nor post facto approval of the SLEPC and DoC. Further, though central govt had been insisting for submission of UC since 2013-14, the GIDC did not submit the UC for the two works executed in 2017-19, till Jan 2023, even though the works were claimed to be executed under ASIDE scheme,” the CAG said.

It is evident from the above that the GIDC misled central govt by submitting a false UC incorporating the two works which were not executed under ASIDE scheme, as there was no approval of the SLEPC and DoC for these works, the central auditor said.

“On submission of the UC, the GIDC encashed (Jan 2023) FDs amounting to Rs 26.9 crore at Rs 27.4 crore (with interest of Rs 0.4 crore) and transferred (Jan 2023) Rs 25.9 crore to its current account with Punjab National Bank. From the amount, the GIDC utilised an amount of Rs 16.9 crore to repay the loan availed by it from Punjab National Bank for refund of the dues to SEZ parties,” CAG said.

Thus, without utilising the grant amount for any approved projects under ASIDE scheme and submitting an incorrect UC, the GIDC diverted the scheme fund to avoid refund of the unutilised grant amount and interest earned thereon to central govt and used the diverted proceeds for discharge of its loan liability.

Further, the GIDC also misled central govt by stating that there was no unspent balance in previous years, while an unspent balance of Rs 6.8 crore of previous years remained with it. “By submitting false UC under ASIDE scheme to central govt, the GIDC has irregularly diverted the unutilised grant and interest earned thereon amounting to Rs 32.2 crore to its own benefit,” CAG said. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/gidc-diverted-rs-32cr-unspent-export-infra-fund-to-repay-bank-loan-cag/articleshow/107974067.cms>

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

### **15. Railways to upgrade Kavach to LTE; formal rollout likely in 12-15 months (*thehindubusinessline.com*) February 23, 2024**

Indian Railways has deployed Kavach, the indigenous train collision avoidance system, on 1,465 route km primarily across the South Central Railway division. The Railways would soon float tenders, around May or June, to upgrade existing and upcoming installations to LTE (long term evolution) technology making the entire system 4G or 5G-enabled and operable.

The formal introduction of Kavach could happen in at least another 12 to 15 months, if not later, sources told businessline.

Current tenders would cover 6,000 kms, including 3,000 route km (Rkm) along the Delhi – Mumbai and Delhi – Howrah routes (covering 3,000 kms), where surveys are currently underway, officials said.

The North Western Railway (NWR) – covering States like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, and Haryana – has reportedly awarded tenders worth ₹426 crore for the train protection system to be rolled out on 1,600 kms across the zone. The targeted completion is in 2025.

Earlier this month, successful trial runs for Kavach were carried out on Vande Bharat trains (running at 160 km/hr) along the test track located between Mathura and Palwal. Trials were carried out with an eight-car Vande Bharat train and in the next phase, it would be carried out in a 16-car Vande Bharat.

In case of the South Central Railway zone (where 1,465 km of Kavach is already deployed) – which predominantly serves Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and portions of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh – there would be an upgrade of infrastructure.

“Apart from a collision avoidance system, there are many other components such as station Kavach, RFID tags throughout the track length, and the installation of Kavach towers along tracks, which need to be in sync at the same time,” an official said, adding that Railways is in the process of installing these components and getting their safety certified.

#### **Capacity ramp up**

Earlier this month, the Cabinet approved reserving an additional 5MHz spectrum in the 700 MHz band for the Railways for the national rollout of Kavach, over the earlier assigned 5 MHz for the automatic train protection system.

Right now, the Railways have an annual capacity to install 1,500 Rkm of Kavach, which will subsequently be taken up to 2,500 Rkm in FY25 and then to 5,000 Rkm in FY26 as approvals for new vendors come in.

At least two new vendors are awaiting approvals, sources said. Existing vendors for the tech include Medha, Kernex, and HBL PowerSystems.

The cost for provision of trackside, including station equipment of Kavach, is approximately ₹50 lakh per km and cost for the provision of Kavach equipment on a loco is ₹70 lakh per loco. The budgetary allocation for Kavach, in FY24 was ₹710 crore and in the FY25 Interim Budget, it is nearly ₹560 crore.

#### Installation of other components

According to a senior Railway official, optical fibre cable (OFC) laying has occurred across 3040 kms of the proposed 6000 kms, while 269 towers have been installed.

Some 186 Station Kavach installations (data centre-type installations at rail stations) have happened.

Trackside equipment has been installed in 827 Rkms, and 170 loco equipment has been set up.

“In all there are 139 locomotives including electric multiple unit rakes that are Kavach enabled,” the official said.  
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/railways-to-upgrade-kavach-to-lte-formal-rollout-likely-in-12-15-months/article67877357.ece>

## 16. A strategic shift (*millenniumpost.in*) February 24, 2024

### **Poshan 2.0 brings holistic change to India's malnutrition strategy, focusing on diverse approaches like food system incentives, traditional and fortified foods, accountability, and multi-sectoral convergence**

The spotlight on nutrition has intensified, both within India and on the global stage. No longer pushed to the sidelines, the nutrition agenda has become a priority for governments and development partners worldwide. Driven by the evolution of global evidence on nutrition, it is very evident that nutritional outcomes are influenced by multiple determinants, thus underscoring the need for a multi-pronged and holistic approach to address the malnutrition burden. Against this backdrop, understanding the strategic shift in the National Nutrition Policy of India, which houses the world's largest child and adolescent population, becomes very critical. This policy not only defines the national agenda for the nutrition mission but also has the potential to shape the larger global agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) acting as the nodal agency for steering India's nutrition policy framework, the evolution from 'Poshan Abhiyaan' towards the adoption of 'Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0' guidelines, also known as Poshan 2.0, marks a pivotal transition. Defined as an integrated nutrition support programme, Poshan 2.0 stands for the restructuring of Anganwadi Services and Poshan Abhiyaan into one programme that aims to promote multi-sectoral convergence for targeted nutritional outcomes. Poshan 2.0 offers a comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategy to promote balanced diets, leverage traditional wisdom, use technology for monitoring last-mile delivery of nutrition services, and prioritise people's participation in the collective fight against malnutrition at the grassroots.



This brings us to the critical question: How does Poshan 2.0 mark a strategic shift in India's national nutrition policy?

First, Poshan 2.0 marks a move towards diet-based solutions for holistically addressing the burden of malnutrition. The guidelines identify dietary diversity, good eating habits, and the development of green ecosystems as key strategies for sustainable health and nutritional outcomes. As we break down these strategies into actionable guidance, it translates into consumption of fresh and local food produce like fruits and vegetables, cultivation of native crops like millets or nutri-cereals that are suited to local agro-climatic cropping patterns, promotion of regional meal plans, and uptake of culturally contextual and nutritious food recipes. One innovation that stands out in this strategy is the setting up of Poshan Vatikas or nutri-gardens at Angawadi Centres, government schools and Panchayat lands. In line with the vision of 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat' and 'Vocal for Local', by 2023, more than 6.42 lakh Poshan Vatikas had been set up across India with the aim of supplying fresh fruits and vegetables for local consumption at the Anganwadi Centres.

Second, Poshan 2.0 puts a major emphasis on effective delivery and uptake of high quality and nutrient dense Take Home Rations (THR) for children (6 months-3 years), pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls (focus on NE states and aspirational districts). Delivered through an infrastructure of 1.4 million Anganwadi Centres under MoWCD's Supplementary Nutrition Programme, Poshan 2.0 clearly distinguishes THR from raw ration. It also specifies that as opposed to simply distributing raw rice or wheat under the THR programme, recipes for THR must stick to the prescribed nutritional norms for calories, proteins, and essential micronutrients. The inclusion of millets, fortified rice, nuts, oilseeds, jaggery and fresh food produce that is suited to local tastes and culturally appropriate is strongly encouraged. An equal focus has been laid on the quality of THR being procured by states with the provision for random lab testing of samples through Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)-owned or -authorised laboratories. As of January 2024, Anganwadi services are providing take home rations to more than 31.5 million beneficiaries for at least 21 days in a month. In this regard, another important aspect of Poshan 2.0 guidelines is the plan to strengthen, upgrade, and rejuvenate 2 lakh Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) as 'Saksham Anganwadis' at the rate of 40,000 per year nationwide. The focus of Saksham Anganwadis is on convergence with education development programmes, enhancing infrastructure with amenities like Internet connectivity, LED screens, water purifiers, and early childhood care and education resources such as smart learning aids, audio-visual aids, child-friendly learning equipment, and educational artwork.

Third, Poshan 2.0 envisages technology playing a key role in tracking the nutritional parameters of target beneficiaries and delivery of critical Anganwadi services to the last mile. Manifested in the form of a real-time mobile-based monitoring tool, Poshan Tracker represents one of the largest nutrition surveillance systems in the world. Rolled out by the MoWCD, this tool enables more than a million Anganwadi workers across the country to share real-time data on children's growth parameters, delivery of take-home rations, tracking of eligible beneficiaries, and overall functioning of Anganwadi centres. As of January 2024, Poshan Tracker is monitoring the delivery of key Anganwadi services to more than 99 million beneficiaries, including pregnant and lactating women, children up to the age of 6 years and adolescent girls in northeast region and aspirational high-focus districts.

Fourth, Poshan 2.0 further intensifies the focus on Jan Andolan as a tool for large-scale mobilisation of people to recognise nutrition as a social problem and thus act collectively to address the health and nutritional needs of the local communities. Until now, more than 900 million sensitisation activities have been carried out across the country as a part of the Jan Andolan . Moving a step beyond, Poshan 2.0 aims to transform the Jan Andolan campaign to enlist people’s participation or ‘Jan Bhagidari’ for improving transparency and accountability of Anganwadi services. Building on the vision of grassroots mobilisation of beneficiaries, guidelines also envisage a framework for ‘Poshan Panchayats.’ Defined as an action-oriented community dialogue, Poshan Panchayats also foresee a big role for the utilisation of ‘People’s Audit’ as a mechanism for improving bottom-up accountability of Anganwadi services.

Conclusively, Poshan 2.0 guidelines signal a holistic shift in India’s strategy to address malnutrition through limitless possibilities and approaches like incentivising nutrition-sensitive food systems, leveraging the benefits of traditional as well as fortified foods, improving bottom-up accountability of services, breaking the horizontal and vertical silos between different ministries and tiers of the government for multi-sectoral convergence, and driving a fundamental change towards healthier eating habits. While setting the policy framework is only the first step, the impact of Poshan 2.0 will rest upon how well this policy guidance translates into actionable and monitorable programmes on the ground. As the Poshan 2.0 guidelines get socialised and adopted across the country, some of the critical game changers to watch out for are the capacities of states to carry out effective implementation, convergence frameworks for the nutrition programme at the district level, training and incentivisation of Anganwadi workers to take upon the expanded mandate, and most importantly, enlisting people’s participation in the national drive to achieve ‘Kuposhan Mukta Bharat.’ <https://www.millenniumpost.in/opinion/a-strategic-shift-553366>

## **17. 431 infra projects hit by cost overrun of Rs 4.80 lakh crore in January: MoSPI (*financialexpress.com*) February 25, 2024**

As many as 431 infrastructure projects were hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.80 lakh crore in January 2024, an official report stated. Each project entails an investment of Rs 150 crore or above.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), out of 1,821 projects, 431 reported cost overruns, and 780 projects were delayed. MoSPI monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above.

The total initial cost of implementation of the 1,821 projects was Rs 26,09,679.38 crore, and their expected completion cost is likely to be Rs 30,90,135.99 crore, the ministry’s latest report for January 2024 said. This reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,80,456.61 crore (18.41 per cent of the original cost).

According to the report, till January 2024, the expenditure incurred on these schemes is Rs 16,43,821.69 crore. It is 53.20 per cent of the expected cost of the projects.

However, it said that the number of delayed schemes decreases to 583 (if the delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion). It further informed that for

373 schemes, neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period was reported.

Out of the 780 delayed schemes, 194 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, for 13-24 months – 187 projects have been delayed, 284 projects delayed for 25-60 months, and 115 schemes have been delayed for more than 60 months. 36.13 months is the average time overrun in these projects.

Causes for time overrun, as reported by various project implementing agencies, include delay in land acquisition, in obtaining forest and environment approvals, and absence of infrastructure support and linkages.

Among the other causes are – delays in tie-up for project financing, finalisation of detailed engineering, tendering, change in scope, ordering and equipment supply, and law and order issues.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's report also mentioned state-wise lockdowns due to COVID-19 (imposed in 2020 and 2021) as a reason for the delay in the implementation of these projects. <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/infrastructure-431-infra-projects-hit-by-cost-overrun-of-rs-4-80-lakh-crore-in-january-mospi-3404526/>

## **18. India sets annual defence production target of Rs 3 lakh cr and defence exports worth Rs 50,000 cr by 2028-29 (*indianexpress.com*) Feb 24, 2024**

In the next four years, India's annual defence production is expected to touch a whopping Rs 3 lakh crore and exports of military hardware is poised to reach Rs 50,000 crore, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday, announcing that high-end systems like aero-engines and gas turbines will be produced within the country.

In an address at a defence conclave, Singh, delving into structural defence reforms, said the three services used to work in "silos" earlier but now they are ready with better coordination to deal with any challenge jointly.

"Earlier, the three services used to work in silos. We focused on their integration which was an out-of-the-box step and the need of the hour. It was a little difficult in the beginning; but today our military is ready with better coordination to deal with every challenge together," he said at the Firstpost Defence Summit.

Singh noted that the government has been focusing on jointness among the Indian Army, the Navy and the Indian Air Force that would ensure enhanced coordination in times of "crisis". He said India's annual defence production is expected to clock Rs 3 lakh crore and defence exports Rs 50,000 crore. According to latest data, the defence production has crossed Rs one lakh crore mark while the defence exports in 2023-24 has been estimated at around Rs 16,000 crore.

"Earlier, India was known to be an arms importer. But today, under the leadership of the prime minister, we have come out of our comfort zone and found a place in the list of top-25 arms exporter nations," Singh said. "Seven-eight years ago, defence exports

did not even touch Rs 1,000 crore. Today, it has touched Rs 16,000 crore. By 2028-29, annual defence production is expected to touch Rs 3 lakh crore and defence exports Rs 50,000 crore,” he added.

The defence minister added that Rs 6.21 lakh crore was allocated to the defence budget for 2024-25.

He said capital acquisition projects worth more than Rs 4,35,000 crore have been given in-principle approval in the financial year 2023-24, and the government is now aiming for production of high-end systems like aero-engines and gas turbines in India in the next five years.

Singh said restrictions on import of arms was difficult in the short-term but the challenge is slowly turning into opportunity, and India is rising on the defence industrial landscape of the world. “Today, our military is using weapons and platforms, which are manufactured on our own soil,” he said.

He asserted that no military can protect its nation from equipment imported from outside and self-reliance in defence production is must for India in today’s time, adding the government’s persistent efforts have started to bear fruit as the defence production has crossed Rs one lakh crore.

“The government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is focusing on long-term gains and not short-term outcomes to make India a developed nation by 2047,” Singh said.

He described “giving priority to long-termism and long-term gains” as the main difference between the present government and the previous dispensations, adding radical changes have been made in the defence sector for long-term gains and achieve the goal of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ (self-reliant India).

On the major steps taken in the field of defence manufacturing, Singh said the his ministry notified five “positive indigenisation lists” of the services, comprising over 500 items, and four other lists, with over 4,600 items for defence public sector undertakings to ensure that the soldiers use made in India weapons and platforms.

He also referred to the decision to earmark 75 per cent of the capital acquisition budget for procurement from local companies. The defence minister added that some people were of the view that indigenous weapons won’t be world class. However, the government believes in the capabilities of the domestic industry and that they can consistently improve and deliver state-of-the-art products, he added.

He enumerated reforms undertaken in the defence sector for long-term gains in the last few years, including creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff and setting up of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

Singh said the DMA has enhanced jointness, synergy and smooth coordination among the three services.

He added that Rs 6.21 lakh crore was allocated to the defence budget for 2024-25. He also spoke of the Agnipath scheme, saying it aims to make the country’s military as one

of the strongest in the world. “These decisions reflect the government’s long-term approach towards national security,” he said.

Singh said the government has firmly set its sight to make India a major defence manufacturer.

“When the ability and dedication of our youth is extraordinary and the intentions of the government are clear, the question of setting simple targets does not arise. We will soon embark on an exciting journey towards achieving extraordinary goals,” he said.

Singh stated that while the government is supporting huge companies, it is also inviting young ignited minds to the defence sector through start-ups, terming it another step taken for long-term gains. He said in the coming 20-25 years, these companies, on the back of their innovations, will help give a new dimension to India’s strong identity on the global stage.

He referred to the recent meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council, in which effective steps were taken to promote start-ups. For procurement from start-ups, costing, payment terms, eligibility etc have been liberalised, he said. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-sets-annual-defence-production-target-defence-exports-9179118/>

**19. Drones, Missiles, Radars, Fighter jets: Indian armed forces to get nearly 1 lakh crore infusion for game-changer tech** (*economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Feb 26, 2024

In the past week, the Cabinet Committee on Security approved several major defence deals, collectively worth over Rs 92,000 crore, to bolster the combat capabilities of the armed forces. These investments are part of India's broader strategy to enhance its defence capabilities and promote self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The recent approvals include:

-Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), supported by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), securing approval for a major upgrade of the Su-30MKI fighter jet fleet. This Rs 60,000 crore project aims to integrate new radars, mission control systems, electronic warfare capabilities, and weapon systems.

-Acquisition of over 220 extended-range BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, with a strike range of 450 km, for deployment on frontline warships of the Indian Navy. This deal, valued at approximately Rs 19,500 crore, marks the largest-ever contract for the BrahMos missiles.

-Approval for the manufacture of new advanced engines for the existing fleet of MiG-29 fighters in the Indian Air Force (IAF), to be produced by HAL in collaboration with Russia, at a cost of about Rs 5,300 crore.

-Approval for the acquisition of high-powered radars and new versions of the L-70 air defence guns, each project valued at around Rs 6,000 crore, to enhance India's radar coverage in strategic areas and provide enhanced protection against potential attacks by drones and aircraft.

### **IAF's Sukhoi fighter jet upgrades**

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), supported by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has secured approval from the defence ministry for a major upgrade of the Su-30MKI fighter jet fleet.

This Rs 60,000 crore project aims to bolster the aircraft's capabilities through the integration of new radars, mission control systems, electronic warfare capabilities, and weapon systems. This project reflects India's commitment to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, as indigenous systems will replace several Russian-origin components. Key upgrades include the installation of a new indigenous radar system, enhancing target detection and engagement capabilities. Additionally, the aircraft will be equipped with a new electronic warfare system to counter incoming threats and disrupt enemy communication.

### **Killer Drones and Supersonic Missiles**

One of the most significant contracts approved is for the acquisition of over 220 extended-range BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles. These missiles, with a strike range of 450 km, will be deployed on frontline warships of the Indian Navy. This deal, valued at approximately Rs 19,500 crore, marks the largest ever contract for the BrahMos missiles.

According to top government sources, the contract between BrahMos Aerospace and the ministry of defence is expected to be signed in the first week of March. "The BrahMos is the main weapon for anti-ship and attack operations for the Indian navy warships which have been regularly firing the weapon system," they noted.

#### **BrahMos Missile Contract**

-The contract for over 220 extended-range BrahMos missiles, with a strike range of 450 km, was approved to arm frontline warships of the Navy.

-The contract, to be inked in early March, is the first consolidated order for the extended-range BrahMos missiles and will be delivered over five to six years.

### **Advanced Engines for Fighter Jets**

In addition to the BrahMos deal, the Indian government also greenlit a project for the manufacture of new advanced engines for the existing fleet of MiG-29 fighters in the Indian Air Force (IAF). The engines, to be produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in collaboration with Russia, will cost about Rs 5,300 crore.

High-Powered Radars and Air Defence Guns Further enhancing India's defence capabilities, the government approved two other projects for the acquisition of high-powered radars and new versions of the L-70 air defence guns. Larsen and Toubro (L&T) will manufacture these systems with some foreign technology, with each project valued at around Rs 6,000 crore.

The Indian Air Force will procure new radars to replace and augment the existing chain of radars along both borders. This move aims to strengthen India's radar coverage in strategic areas. The Cabinet Committee has also approved the ambitious Made in India Close-in Weapon System project, valued at around Rs 7,000 crore. This system, based

on a derivative of air defence guns, will provide enhanced protection to vital assets and points against potential attacks by drones and aircraft.

### **Other Defence Deals**

-Hindustan Aeronautics will manufacture new advanced engines for existing MiG-29 fighters in IAF fleet, in collaboration with Russia, for about Rs 5,300 crore.

-L&T will manufacture high-powered radars and new versions of the L-70 air defence guns, each deal valued at almost Rs 5,000 crore.

### **Strengthening National Security and Indigenous Manufacturing**

These investments highlight India's commitment to bolstering its defence capabilities and promoting indigenous manufacturing. The BrahMos missiles, jointly manufactured with Russia in India, have already become a key precision-strike weapon for the armed forces, with contracts worth over Rs 38,000 crore. The recent approvals further solidify India's position as a key player in the global defence market and underscore the country's drive towards self-reliance in defence production. **READ MORE:** Govt clears Rs 31,000 cr defence orders

### **Future Outlook**

India's defence sector is witnessing a paradigm shift towards indigenization and self-reliance, with significant deals and projects being approved. The strategic move to enhance the Indian Navy's firepower with BrahMos missiles and the push for 'aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing reflect India's broader defence strategy. These developments not only aim to strengthen national security but also position India as a key player in the global defence export market.

### **Rs 3 lakh crore Annual Defence Production by 2028-29**

India is set to achieve a milestone in its defence sector, with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announcing that the country's annual defence production is expected to reach Rs 3 lakh crore by 2028-29. Singh emphasized the Modi government's focus on "long-term gains" in all sectors, aiming to develop India into a developed nation by 2047. He highlighted the significant progress India has made in defence exports, which have increased from under Rs 1,000 crore to Rs 16,000 crore.

### **Budget Allocation and Strategic Acquisitions**

The defence ministry has been allocated Rs 6.2 lakh crore in the 2024-25 budget, the highest among all ministries. Singh highlighted that capital acquisitions worth over Rs 4.3 lakh crore have been approved, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing national security. He emphasized the importance of jointness among the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, noting improved coordination to address challenges jointly. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/drones-missiles-radars-fighter-jets-indian-armed-forces-to-get-nearly-1-lakh-crore-infusion-for-game-changer-tech/articleshow/107981352.cms?from=mdr>

**20. Why farmers are protesting: Behind reluctant diversification in Punjab — and MSP law demand — a litany of loss (*indianexpress.com*)**  
Feb 25, 2024

**With no or minimal procurement by govt, farmers have been selling maize, millets, moong in market at rates below MSP**

FROM PULSES such as moong and arhar (tur) to other diversification crops like maize, sunflower and bajra (millets), the farmers in Punjab have sold most of their produce to private traders in the past three years, and largely at the rates below the Minimum Support Price (MSP), indicates data accessed from the Punjab Mandi Board.

The farmers of Punjab are currently leading a protest, demanding a law from the Centre to ensure guaranteed MSP on 23 crops.

The Centre's Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) declare sMSP on 23 crops. However, in Punjab, only wheat and paddy are procured by government agencies on MSP. The other commodities are largely purchased by private traders, who are not legally bound to pay MSP. Farmers are demanding that both government and private buyers should be legally bound to pay them at least the MSP on all crops. The Mandi Board data largely answers why farmers in Punjab prefer to remain entangled in wheat-paddy cycle, and are reluctant to adopt other crops.

crop diversification However, in Punjab, only wheat and paddy are procured by government agencies on MSP.

Sample this: The maize, considered the most crucial crop to usher diversification in Punjab, was sold to private players for Rs 500-1,815 per quintal in 2021-22, while government had announced the MSP of Rs 1870 per quintal.

The next two years, farmers fetched a little more from maize but even then there was huge variation in market rates—ranging from Rs 600 to 2495 per quintal in 2022-23 and from Rs 660 to 2,256 per quintal in 2023-24. The MSP was Rs 1962 per quintal in 2022-23 and Rs 2,090 per quintal in 2023-24.

The markets in Punjab also recorded an uptick in maize arrival largely due to more area coming under water-guzzling spring variety of the crop, which is discouraged.

Meanwhile, Bajra too has been sold at the rates that are way less than the MSP — in 2023-24, it was procured by private players at Rs 1650 per quintal against the MSP of Rs 2500 per quintal.

The Centre, while negotiating with farmers' leaders, had offered procurement of three pulses — arhar (tur), moongi and mash (urad), via government agencies at MSP. The offer, however, was rejected. The data shows that in past three years, handful of farmers who have been growing arhar, sold their produce to private traders at rates lower than the MSP. In 2021-22, the market rate for arhar was Rs 4920 per quintal against MSP of Rs 6300. In 2023-24, even as the MSP was hiked to Rs 7000 per quintal, the market rate for arhar hovered between Rs 5,200-6000 per quintal.

Less than 1 per cent of total cultivable area in Punjab (42.16 lakh hectares) is under pulses. Farmers, however, had some solace in crops such as groundnut, sunflower and



sarson (mustard) with the market prices for groundnut having remained mostly above MSP.

In 2022, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government announced to procure summer moongi at MSP from farmers. However, over 90 per cent of the produce brought to mandis was purchased by private players, at rates below MSP. In 2022-23, nearly 4.62 lakh quintals of moong was purchased by private players, compared to 54,761 quintals by government agencies.

The MSP in 2022-23 was Rs 7,755 per quintal whereas the market rates hovered from Rs 2800 to 7275. In 2023-24, private traders purchased 5.55 lakh quintals of the crop as against government's 20,252 quintals.

Against the MSP of Rs 8558 per quintal, farmers sold their produce for Rs 2,400 to 7,555 in the open market.

Private traders say there are several reasons why the government procurement and legalized MSP on all crops is a demand nearly impossible to fulfil.

Rajinder Arora, a trader from Rajpura, said that the government does not have adequate infrastructure to handle harvested maize. "Sometimes we have to purchase maize at rates lower than MSP as we have several other costs to bear. Farmers bring freshly harvested maize, which has high moisture content and it has to be dried first and then as per the quality, it is decided that it would be supplied to poultries, cattle sheds or crushed into flour for human consumption. The government announces MSP on dry maize, which doesn't include all these extra costs that we incur at our own level. It is not possible to legalize MSP for private traders. A farmer picks the produce from the fields but then we get it cleaned, dried and packed for end consumers," said Arora.

Vinod Mittal, a moong trader from Jagraon of Ludhiana and the district president for Dal Mill Association said that even as the Punjab government had engaged its agency MARKFED to procure moong from farmers in past two years, most of the produce was picked by private players as the quality wasn't up to the mark due to excessive rains." The government will not buy a single grain if quality isn't as per the specified standards and then if the private traders will also be forced to pay the MSP, then we will not buy at all. Why should we suffer losses," he asked.

Another moong trader from Jagraon, Satpal Singh, said that the government cannot procure pulses and other crops as it lacks adequate infrastructure. "There are so many steps involved till produce is finally packed for factories. The current infrastructure is insufficient to handle it," he said.

Punjab Arthiya Association president Ravinder Singh Cheema said that that primary reasons why the state government's plan to procure moong at MSP failed were lack of infrastructure, harsh quality parameters and farmers' apprehension of delay in payments. "They decide to procure moong via cooperatives. Had they done it via arthiyas, it would have succeeded. In other states such as Rajasthan, the government procurement of crops fail due to poor infrastructure," said Cheema.

Meanwhile, Harchand Singh Barsat, AAP leader and chairman, Punjab Mandi Board, blamed the quality of crop for MARKFED not procuring moong at MSP. “I was told that the produce brought by farmers did not match the required quality standards due to which it was mostly purchased by private players. For all those farmers who sold moong below MSP, the AAP government paid them ‘bhavantra’ amount (the difference between market rate and MSP) so that they don’t suffer losses. Rest all crops, except wheat and paddy, are purchased by private players in Punjab. The need of the hour is setting up agrobased industries in Punjab to promote diversification,” he said. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/farmers-protesting-diversification-punjab-msp-law-demand-litany-loss-9179474/>

## **21. 4-laning of Goa highway stretch in limbo for 12 years; cost doubles (*timesofindia.indiatimes.com*) Feb 25, 2024**

MUMBAI: Costs have risen two-fold almost 12 years after it was first conceptualised, and the 440 km Mumbai-Goa highway’s 112 km stretch is yet to be four-laned with the earlier deadline of Dec 23 now moving to May and maybe even beyond.

According to officials and information got through an RTI query, both the central government and the state PWD , have spent roughly Rs 7,300 crore on the four-laning work that also involves tunnels, flyovers, subways, service lanes besides concretised four-laning.

The original project cost was around Rs 3,500 to 4,000 crore then.

Officials from the state PWD and Centre’s National Highways Authority of India (Nhai) refused to speak on record.

While an 84 km stretch from Panvel to Indapur is being developed by Nhai, the remaining 355 km stretch is being widened by the state PWD. While Nhai stretch was earlier projected to cost Rs 900 cr, now the expenses are already crossing Rs 1,200 cr-mark with 28 km of four-laning work still remaining. Similarly, on the PWD stretch, expenses are already around Rs 6,100 crore and around 84 km of widening work still remains and may finish only after monsoon.

“Though the concrete four lanes will be ready in May, the service lanes, subways, viaducts are expected to take time, maybe till August,” an official said on the condition of anonymity, pointing out that the overall cost escalation was mainly because of changes in specifications like concrete lanes instead of planned asphalted lanes, addition of some flyovers or viaducts, subways and service lanes besides initial expenses on land compensation.

Jeetendra Ghadge of the The Young Whistleblowers Foundation, who obtained certain information through an RTI application, said, “Over 2,500 people from Konkan belt lost their lives on this highway since 2010 which has been under construction for more than a decade. A white paper should be ordered on the work done so far.”

Ghadge said present spending is in sharp contrast to current status of the road which highlights need for closer examination of the project’s management and oversight. “PWD, which is responsible for a major portion of the road, was initially reluctant to

provide information... Nhai reported that out of the total stretch of Mumbai-Goa highway, it was only responsible for around 84 km, the rest fell under jurisdiction of PWD. Nhai also disclosed that since 2013, it spent around Rs 1,800 cr on new roads and Rs 146 cr on repairs. Also, Nhai ended an agreement with a contractor in 2011 for various defaults,” said Ghadge.

PWD office, initially hesitant to provide information, eventually complied an order over his appeal after initial denial, said Ghadge. Though Ratnagiri and Pen divisions pegged Rs 4,171 crore expense so far, officials suggested Rs 6,100 cr expenses but provided very few details of action against contractors for not maintaining new roads. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/4-laning-of-go-highway-stretch-in-limbo-for-12-yrs-cost-doubles/articleshow/107977892.cms>

## **22. Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation officials booked for causing loss of Rs 11 crore (*newindianexpress.com*) 24 Feb 2024**

BENGALURU: The chief accounts officer and financial advisor, officers and staff of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) have been booked by the Wilson Garden police for allegedly causing a loss of over Rs 11 crore to the corporation.

Based on a complaint filed by Ramya CK, BMTC security and vigilance officer, an FIR was registered by the Wilson Garden police. Abdul Khuddus, BMTC chief accounts officer and financial advisor, has been named as the first accused.

As per the FIR, the commercial wing of BMTC had to issue an invoice for GST and licence fee to be collected every month from its commercial shops/establishments. But between March 2021 and December 2022, 456 credit notes were issued to the licensees exempting them from paying the fees and related GST to the accounts section from the commercial section. 52 such credit notes were issued without approval and accounts have been manipulated, the FIR stated.

The accounts section has allowed the exemption without verifying the credit notes, resulting in a loss of commercial revenue of Rs 11.81 crore to the BMTC coffers, the FIR alleged. Officials of both the commercial and accounts sections had created fake documents and caused the loss, it added.

Apprehending arrest, Vijayalaxmi Somayya Hiremath, then accounts officer of BMTC and now working at KSRTC, approached the city civil court for anticipatory bail. Objecting to her bail petition, the public prosecutor argued that there is a prima facie case against the petitioner. Without any office order, the petitioner prepared the credit note and she is also responsible for the loss to the exchequer, the PP said.

Judge Shriram Narayan Hegde, LV Additional City Civil and Sessions Judge, allowed the anticipatory bail petition filed by Vijayalaxmi Hiremath with conditions. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2024/Feb/26/case-of-fence-eating-crop-material-against-cops-in-bitcoin-scam-court>