

NEWS ITEMS ON CAG/ AUDIT REPORTS

1. The pangs of preservation (*dtnext.in*) Oct 26, 2023

The commemorative day chosen by UNESCO in 2005 was aimed at raising awareness of the significance and preservation risks of recorded sound and audiovisual documents.

In the backdrop of World Day for Audiovisual Heritage which is observed on October 27 every year, it might be pertinent to take stock of how we are pushing the agenda of conserving such artefacts in this country. The commemorative day chosen by UNESCO in 2005 was aimed at raising awareness of the significance and preservation risks of recorded sound and audiovisual documents. These include films, sound and video recordings, radio and television programmes.

To jog one's memory, back in 2019, it was reported that over 31,000 precious reels or cans held by the National Films Archives of India (NFAI) were lost or destroyed, per the observations of a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, which was contested by the NFAI. The Department of Audit and Accounts under the CAG had carried out a test check of records maintained by the Director, NFAI Pune between May 1, 2015 and Sept 30, 2017. As the report suggested, India has a poor track record with regard to the preservation of cinematic artefacts.

For instance, there are no film reels of India's first talkie Alam Ara (1931), a much coveted title, and it has been deemed lost forever. Similarly, footage pertaining to a majority of the 1,138 silent films made between 1912 and 1931 do not exist anymore. The state-run Film and TV Institute of India (FTII) in Pune has managed to archive 29 of these films. It's a travesty that prints and negatives of such invaluable vestiges of our cinematic heritage have been found discarded in shops, homes, basements, warehouses and even in cinema halls in south east Asia.

In fact, the original negatives of some of the most acclaimed films of India's inimitable auteur Satyajit Ray, including The Apu Trilogy were also considered lost, until Hollywood filmmaker Martin Scorsese intervened and mobilised a like-minded group of directors to spearhead a large scale restoration of Ray's works. Subsequently, the Film Heritage Foundation, an NGO, has taken up the mammoth task of scouting for and restoring some of long lost features, to ensure they are available for future generations.

There are several pain points, when it comes to the restoration and preservation of audiovisual heritage in India. Last year, the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said India was embarking on the world's largest film restoration project, under the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM) with a budget of Rs 363 crore. To place that in context, the recent Shah Rukh Khan film Jawan, was made at a budget of Rs 300 cr. And here we're utilising a similar amount for recovery, digitisation and restoration of thousands of old film stocks which is a painstaking process.

Understandably, the NFAI, which is now a part of the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), has sought funds in the form of sponsorships and donations for undertaking film digitisation and

preservation <https://www.dtnext.in/edit/the-pangs-of-preservation-744175> 4/18 restoration projects. The NFHM, launched in January 2017, plans to carry out preventive conservation of as many as 60,000 film reels held by the film archive, undertake film condition assessment of the reels, and digitise carefully prioritised 1,345 feature films and 2,768 short films, and carry out restoration of 1,145 feature and 1,108 short films. So far, 180 films are being restored while 3,700 films, including short films, are being digitised. <https://www.dtnext.in/edit/the-pangs-of-preservation-744175>

2. In a first, Army gets vertical wind tunnel to train Special Forces (*thehindu.com*) Oct 26, 2023

The system simulates varied freefall scenarios which is crucial in assessing individual reactions to numerous airborne situations, an Army statement said

To augment the training infrastructure of Special Forces and combat free-fallers, the Army's Special Forces Training School (SFTS) at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, got the Army's first Vertical Wind Tunnel (VWT). It was virtually inaugurated by Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Wednesday.

"The state-of-the-art wind tunnel is set to refine the Combat Free Fall (CFF) skills of armed forces personnel," the Army said in a statement. "Functioning as a freefall simulator, the VWT creates a column of air at specific velocities, orchestrating different CFF conditions. The system offers a controlled environment, enabling trainees to enhance their skills by simulating real-life freefall conditions."

Gen Manoj Pande #COAS inaugurated '#UDAAN', the first Vertical Wind Tunnel, a state of the art training facility at the Special Forces Training School. This virtual inauguration marks the operationalisation of a training asset that will be a game changer for Combat Freefall

Stating that the VWT's integration into the CFF training curriculum at SFTS brings forth numerous pay-offs, the Army said that the system simulates varied freefall scenarios which is crucial in assessing individual reactions to numerous situations in an airborne operating environment.

"It reduces potential instability in the air and during parachute deployment thereby assisting trainees to get used to freefall conditions. The VWT is not only beneficial for beginners but also an exceptional resource for delivering advanced training to seasoned free-fallers and CFF instructors," the statement said.

In the past, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had pulled up the Army for extreme delays in installation of the VMT. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/in-a-first-army-gets-vertical-wind-tunnel-to-train-special-forces/article67458249.ece>

STATES NEWS ITEMS

3. Kerala Health Minister denies allegations of corruption in drug procurement (*health.economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Oct 25, 2023

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Health Minister Veena George on Wednesday denied the opposition Congress' allegations of corruption in the procurement of medicines by the state-run Medical Services Corporation. The minister also said that neither Medical Services Corporation (KMCL) nor the government hospitals were providing expired medicines to patients or the general public.

She was responding to the allegations by the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V D Satheesan, who on Tuesday had cited a CAG report and charged that certain medicines were procured without examining their quality and 26 hospitals were given medicines which were past their expiry date.

Denying the same, George said that CAG had sent a draft report seeking the response of the government on the issue.

She claimed that a performance audit was conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and in connection with that it has sought a response from the government.

The performance audit of the health services was conducted for the financial years from 2016-17 to 2021-22, the minister said.

"It is not a final finding or report," George clarified while speaking to reporters here. The minister said that on receiving the CAG report, the Principal Secretary, Health, sent it to the Kerala Medical Services Corporation and the Directorate of Health Services and sought their replies.

The minister said when she went through the report, what she saw was that it was "probable" that expired medicines were given to hospitals.

"However, neither KMCL nor the government hospitals are giving expired medicines to the patients," she added.

George further said that someone in the position of Leader of Opposition ought not to have made such remarks as a large majority of the public approaches government hospitals for treatment and medicines.

"It was wrong on his (LoP's) part to make such allegations as it would create fear and apprehension in the minds of the people. What I understand is that he did not act like an opposition leader," she said.

The minister also alleged that sub-standard medicines with short shelf life were procured in huge quantities during the last UDF government and the same were dumped in warehouses across the state instead of being destroyed.

Responding to the contentions of the state Health Minister, Satheesan said she need not teach him how he should raise allegations and that her statements were "highly irresponsible".

"When opposition raises allegations, straight answers need to be given instead of teaching us how to raise allegations.

"The opposition has filed a complaint before the Lok Ayukta on the loot in procuring medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic and also pointed out the same in writing in the state Assembly," the LoP said, hitting back at George.

Satheesan claimed that according to the CAG's preliminary finding, expired medicines were given to 26 hospitals, 483 hospitals were given the medicines which were kept aside from distribution due to lack of quality and drugs against which stop memos were issued were given to 148 hospitals.

"So should we not question it? We are giving these medicines to our children also," he said.

Regarding the minister's allegation that medicines with short shelf life were procured during UDF rule, Satheesan said that it has been seven years since UDF lost power and if such medicines came into possession of KMCL, there are guidelines on disposing them of.

"Those medicines can be returned to the manufacturing companies and a refund and fine can be obtained from them. Instead of doing that, for the last seven years they were holding on to these medicines," he said.

Intensifying his allegations, Satheesan said when tenders are invited, the pharmaceutical companies that win the bid, supply medicines which have expired or are about to expire.

"They charge only a fraction of the bid amount for the same and the remaining comes back as commission to the government. It goes into a magic box," he alleged.

The LoP further alleged that quality of medicines is not checked when each batch comes and drugs of many companies are never inspected.

"This is the gravest form of corruption as it involves medicines to be given to the common people. Therefore, the reply of the minister is highly irresponsible," he contended.

Once these medicines expire, their molecular combination changes and can affect the health of people, the Congress leader alleged. <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/kerala-health-minister-denies-allegations-of-corruption-in-drug-procurement/104698285>

4. CAG report on medicines not final, says Veena; accuses Satheesan of creating panic (*thehindu.com*) October 25, 2023

Health Minister Veena George has taken exception to the statement made by Leader of the Opposition Leader V.D. Satheesan, quoting the CAG report, that the lives of patients had been put on peril through the supply of date-expired medicines in government hospitals

At a press conference here, Ms. George said that Mr. Satheesan's pronouncement did not behove that of a responsible Opposition Leader.

"Mr. Satheesan should not have said that, because in one swipe he condemned the entire health system and has put fear and anxiety in the minds of the public that their lives were put at risk. The government is not supplying date-expired medicines to public hospitals.," she said.

"The CAG's report is a draft report, which states that it was "probable" that date-expired medicines were supplied in 26 hospitals. The report was submitted to the government seeking clarification. The Principal Secretary (Health), has sought an explanation on the same from the Kerala Medical Services Corporation and the Directorate of Health Services and the government will give a reply to the CAG before it comes out with the final report," Ms. George said.

She said that the CAG report is a draft report based on the CAG's performance audit report of KMSCL in the 2016-17 and 2021-22 period.

Ms. George said that the bulk storage of "drugs of non-standard quality" in KMSCL godowns, mentioned in the CAG report, were in fact drugs bought in bulk during the UDF regime and which were stored in warehouses across the State, instead of disposing it properly.

Mr. Satheesan, reacting to Ms. George's statements, said that the findings in the CAG's preliminary report had been highlighted much earlier by the Opposition in the Assembly. A complaint had been filed by the Opposition before the Lok Ayukta also.

He said that the Opposition had the right to raise questions based on the CAG's findings. He also questioned Ms. George's allegation that the bulk quantities of date-expired drugs in KMSCL godowns had been procured during the UDF rule. He pointed out that if that was the case, in these last seven years, KMSCL could have taken measures to dispose it off, rather than keep it.

Mr. Satheesan said that when KMSCL floated purchase tenders, pharmaceutical companies that won the bid, supplied medicines which had expired or were about to expire, at much reduced costs and that the remaining amount would come back to the government as commissions. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/cag-report-on-medicines-not-final-says-veena-accuses-satheesan-of-creating-panic/article67458810.ece>

5. BMC's failures on pollution: Alarm bells in Mumbai (*indianexpress.com*) October 26, 2023

For the second year running, the withdrawal of the southwest monsoon in Mumbai has been accompanied by a spike in the pollution burden on the city's residents. Last winter, the city registered poor or very poor on the Air Quality Index (AQI) on most days from November to January. People in the country's financial capital have been choking on bad air for much of this month. Adverse meteorological conditions, triggered by climate change, seem to have negated the natural cleansing advantages of the city by the sea.

But as a series of reports in this newspaper has shown, a large part of the blame should be taken by the city's municipality, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The agency's Pollution Mitigation Plan, released in March, identifies five sources of pollution — construction debris, road dust, open burning of solid waste, use of unclean fuel in eateries and industrial emissions. But the municipality's response to its own report has been belated and patchy at best. Its Standard Operating Procedure, released on October 21, does detail measures to curb dust pollution but the agency has yet to find ways to tackle Mumbai's longstanding waste management problem.

The BMC's waste segregation system is restricted to residential buildings and gated societies. It leaves out the city's slum clusters where most people burn waste, mainly comprising plastic, rubber, polythene and paper. The incineration releases fine particles in the air, making it toxic.

This month, Mumbai has recorded a 45 per cent increase in PM 2.5 components compared with October last according to the Central Pollution Control Board data. BMC rules prohibit garbage burning but the municipality's enforcement mechanism leaves much to be desired. The municipality has not made adequate investments in creating awareness about responsible waste management. In 2007, it contracted public agencies for the services of marshals to monitor garbage disposal in public places. But the contract lapsed last year and the BMC's plans to conduct garbage disposal-related inspection drives remain on paper.

The BMC has a budget of Rs 52,600 crore, more than that of several states in the country. But there is a wealth of evidence on this rich municipality's failures to use funds judiciously. In March, a CAG report flagged "major systemic problems, poor planning, and careless use of funds" by the BMC. It pulled up the agency for "lack of transparency and probity in the execution of works taken up at a significant cost". The municipality's multiple omissions on the pollution front have public health costs. The alarm bells have, in fact, been ringing for at least seven years now. Since 2016, Mumbai has been reporting an increasing number of fatalities due to respiratory diseases, including COPD and lung cancer. The exposure of school children to poor air is another pressing concern. The BMC needs to get its act together, to make people's well-being its priority. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/bmcs-failures-on-pollution-alarm-bells-in-mumbai-8999622/>

6. After 2007 J&K State Lands (VoO to the Occupants) ACT No XII of 2001 Could Not Be Called ‘Roshni’ Act (*statetimes.in*) Oct 26, 2023

Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of Ownership to Occupants) Act, 2001 amended upto date – 2007 of J&K Legislature and rules made for that had come under discussions / allegations more after a CAG report was tabled in Legislative Assembly in March 2014 where in it was mentioned that upto March 2013 only 3, 48,160 kanals (3.48 Lakh Kanals) out of original estimates of 20 Lakh Kanals of government lands (anticipated for transfer to occupants of government lands) had been approved for transfer by revenue department for “very less” realisation of cost towards land transfer which was more so because the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) ACT, 2001 Act No XII of 2001 which had received the assent of Governor on 9th Nov 2001 was then described as Act to provide for vesting of ownership rights to occupants of State Land for purposes of generating funds to finance Power to the tune of Rs.25000 crore since the unauthorisedly occupied government lands were then estimated to be around 20 Lakh Kanals (20,00,000 Kanal @ average 1.24 Lakh per kanal.). Since the Act was in 2001 aimed at generating funds for power generation it was referred as “Roshni Act” in public meetings (although this name nowhere appeared in the text of the 2001 Act.The CAG report had observed that only Rs 76.24 crore (24 per cent) was reportedly realized against a demand of Rs 317.54 crore raised by revenue department on the approved transferee by the end of March 2013 for the actual transfer of 3,48,160 kanals out of 20 Lakh Kanals (20,00,000 kanal estimates) in whole state .

The then Accountant General Audit (PAG) Subhash Chander Pandey was quoted as having told the media on 8 March 2014 that the “Roshni Act” was launched in 2001, it was amended in 2004 and a clause, which had maintained that the land was allotted to those who have encroached from 1990, was deleted. “The benefits of this amendment were taken by the law knowing people and ‘insiders’ and it lead to more encroachment on the land taking total illegally occupied land to 20 lakh kanals till 2014.The estimated market value of the encroached 20 lakh kanals land in November 2006 was Rs 25,500 crores. The issue was surely to create immediate inflated public wrath since some facts and elements of the Act as regards other amendments to the Act 2001 as made upto 2007 and the revised policies of the governments that followed thereafter were not presented in the rightful prospective particularly in the public domain like (i) the government had in 2007 amended the policy so as to transfer the ownership rights to occupants of government lands for agriculture purpose at Zero price with only Rs.100 / kanal as documentation charges. J&K Assembly passed the amendment to the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) ACT, 2001 Act No XII of 2001 on February 9, 2007. The then Government claimed that the bill will provide free of cost ownership of 16.6 lakh kanals (worth Rs. 20,000 crores; and with 19 lakh cultivators as beneficiaries) to farmers and termed the decision “historic” and next only to the passing of the Land to the Tiller Act by the State’s first Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who took land from the feudal lords and handed it over to tillers without any compensation.. Chief Minister had moved the Bill with amendments in the House saying that the land occupying farmers would have to pay a nominal fee of Rs 100 per kanal for getting mutation in their favour in the revenue record. He said the Bill, which would go down as revolutionary in the history of the State after the Land to the Tiller Act, was farmer-friendly and good for the growth of the agriculture sector, on which the State’s economy depends. With such like policy the

estimated recoveries would not have been Rs 25,000 crores and would have reduced to not more than Rs 2000 to 3000 crore for the bulk there by stripping the Act 2001 of its nick name “Roshni”. Even as per CAG report tabled March 2014 out of total 348160 kanals decided till March 2013 a huge chunk (97.68%) of 3,40,091 kanals had been categorized as ‘agricultural’ land worth free of cost transfer.(ii)The CAG report had observed that revenue department had approved till end of March 2013 only 17.4 percent (3,48,160 kanals out of 20,00,000 kanal estimates) of land for transfer in whole of state which in a way otherwise reflects that the revenue department have been exercising meaningful vigil while approving the claims since in 7 years proposals for only 17.4 percent of estimated lands under unauthorized occupation were technically cleared (iii) The CAG report had further observed that out of total land cases worth 3,48,160 kanal land decided till March 2013 97.68% (3,40,090 kanal) land was given as Agriculture land at zero cost (free) , then how could the Act could be designated as Rs 25000 Cr ‘money bank’ ? (iv).The same Audit itself had said in the report that the actual transfer included a major portion (3,40,091 kanals) categorised as ‘agricultural’ land transferred free of cost and for that demand raised was to be Rs. 00.00 Cr (Rs.3.40 Cr realised as documentation charges) . Further it has to be noted that the demand notes raised for Rs.317.54 Cr (before discounts to long lease holders & others) if included Rs.3.4 Cr as documentation of Agri land charges then the amount of Rs. 314.14 Cr was billed for only 6949 kanals residential use , 990 kanals commercial use and 130 kanals lands in urban areas/ town out of 348160 Kanals. In earlier days (1950s/ 1960s) there were no organisations like J&K Housing Board / JDA/SDA and lands were allotted for residential purposes under government authority /under J&K Land grants Act1960 to the permanent residents of J&K for residential purposes on lease basis like lands are given in present times in colonies of JDA/SDA/ J&K Housing Board (may be 20 Yrs, 40 Yrs, 60Yrs) . These people were not /are not unauthorized occupants but their cases for renewal had also been sanctioned / invited for renewal under the “said’ Act of 2001 (amended). These allottees were given ownership rights on some concessional assessed market price which was surely much more than the average anticipated price in 2001 but much more than the price charged by rietory JDA / J&K HB for conversion of lease to proprietary rights. Even some of the allottees objected to cost in the demand notes raised and had even gone to the courts. That was also one of the reasons for lesser receipts against demand notes raised and should not have been outrightly seen by some one as favoured low price.

It may not be unfair to observe that the way the issues related to said Act have been handled all these years has not been fair to the revenue officers community , the J&K Legislature, the legitimate lease holders and even the small farmers since all have been named “bad”.

In 2007 the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of Ownership To The Occupants) Act, 2001 Act No XII of 2001 had been stripped of its financial value worth the ” nick name Roshni” since over 85 percent lands were to be given free and this could not become feeding channel to Power Projects.

No doubt there could be some cases of even wrong / favoured assessment of rights/ possession/ cost but those could be individually fished out instead of blaming the whole infrastructure. One gratitude surely goes to Revenue Department for having exercised close vigil since even in 7 years only less than 3.5 Lakh kanal out of 20 Lakh kanal expected cases were cleared, had they bad intentions they could give much more lands

“free”. Since out of the 17 percent of total land in view that had been approved for transfer 97.68% has been given as agriculture land may be a very very large number of cultivators who might have been holding unauthorized occupation of small pieces of lands even since before 1990 have been made to forego the due benefits of the goodwill gestures of the govt. Ofcourse the bonafide residential lease right holders since 1960s and earlier times too have made to unfairly suffer mental agony due to the controversies. No doubt it has been learnt that the present UT Government may be considering the undue impacts of some orders made in 2020 and some remedial measures in fairness may be sought / taken to relieve those who might have been made suffer due some needed actions not taken at appropriate time. <https://statetimes.in/after-2007-jk-state-lands-voo-to-the-occupants-act-no-xii-of-2001-could-not-be-called-roshni-act/>

7. अवैध खनन (Illegal mining) का खौफनाक खेल (*mukhyadhara.in*) 25 Oct 2023

देवभूमि उत्तराखंड में जहां प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री द्वारा राज्य को किसी तरह से भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त बनाने के दावे किए जाते हैं वहीं कुछ भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों की मिलीभगत से प्रदेश में धड़ल्ले से अवैध खनन का कारोबार किया जा रहा है प्रदेश की बड़ी नदियों से लेकर छोटी नदियों में दिन रात खनन का काम चल रहे हैं ऐसे खनन माफियाओं को प्रशासन का कोई भय नहीं रहा आखिर किसकी मिलीभगत से अवैध खनन के कारोबार चल रहे हैं और तो और पिछले काफी समय से ऋषिकेश हरिद्वार मां गंगा नदी में से खनन माफियाओं द्वारा सरेआम खनन किया जा रहा है जबकि इन्ही गंगा घाटों पर दिन भर हजारों श्रद्धालु स्नान करने के लिए आते हैं मां गंगा नदी के जिस स्थानों से खनन का काम किया जा रहा है वहीं से कुछ दूरी पर ही पुलिस चौकी स्थित है उसके बावजूद इन खनन माफियाओं द्वारा सरेआम खनन किया जा रहा है

देहरादून जिले में स्थित थाना रायवाला क्षेत्र में पढ़ने वाले हरिपुर कलां के परमार्थ घाट गीता कुटीर के पास गंगा नदी से सुबह पांच बजे से ही कई घोड़े खच्चरों से रेता निकालने का काम शुरू हो जाता है जो कि दोपहर तक निकाला जाता है खनन कारोबारी घोड़े खच्चर से कई कुंतल रेता निकाल कर हरिपुर कलां में ही अपने अड्डे पर इकठ्ठा कर रहे हैं जो कि दिन भर हजारों रुपए में बेचने का खेल शुरू हो जाता है इन खनन माफियाओं के अड्डे से पुलिस कर्मियों का आना जाना लगा रहता है लेकिन ना जाने क्यों सब कुछ देखने के बावजूद इन खनन माफियाओं पर कार्यवाही नहीं की जाती प्रशासन के उच्चअधिकारियों को ऐसे खनन माफियाओं के विरुद्ध कार्यवाही करनी चाहिए जिससे देवभूमि उत्तराखंड में ऐसे खनन कारोबारियों पर नकेल कसी जा सके।

उत्तराखण्ड राज्य, विकास की नई ऊंचाईयों को छू रहा है। आए दिन सरकार राज्य की जनता के सामने अपने विकास को लेकर उन्हें यकीन दिला रही है कि उत्तराखण्ड विकास की राह पर किस तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है। हालांकि विकास की जो छवि जनता को दिखाई जा रही है, वह हकीकत से कितना इत्तफाक रखती है यह कहना बहुत मुश्किल है? उत्तराखण्ड का निर्माण हुए दो दशक से अधिक का समय बीत चुका लेकिन कुछ दुश्चारियों आज भी जस की तस बनी हुई है। अगर इन दुश्चारियों को रैंक के हिसाब से पिरोया जाए तो पहला स्थान अवैध खनन को ही हासिल होगा।

राज्य निर्माण के बाद से आज तक न जाने कितनी सरकारें आईं और कितनी सरकारें गईं लेकिन कोई भी सरकार अवैध खनन के गोरखधंधे को पूर्ण रूप से रोकने में सफल नहीं हो पाई। हां, इतना जरूर है कि जब कभी भी विभागीय अधिकारियों पर दबाव पड़ता है तो उनकी टीम जरूर अवैध खनन से भरी कुछ गाड़ियों को पकड़कर यह जताने से पीछे नहीं हटती कि उन्होंने-नें ने अवैध खनन पर कितनी बड़ी कार्रवाई की है। राज्य में अवैध खनन के काले कारोबार का फैलाव एक वायरस की तरह हो रहा जोकि धीरे-धीरे प्राकृतिक स्रोत से बहने वाली नदियों की हस्ती को मिटाने का कार्य कर रहा है। मौजूदा समय में तो आलम यह है कि अवैध खनन का खेल अब खौफनाक हो गया है। खनन माफिया बदमाशों की तर्ज पर तांडव मचाते हुए नजर आ रहे हैं।

बेलगामी और बेखौफी का आलम तो यह है कि यह खनन माफिया किसी भी पुलिसकर्मी या किसी आम आदमी पर खनन के वाहन चढ़ाने से भी पीछे नहीं हट रहे हैं? सरकार के खनन विभाग से लेकर उत्तराखण्ड पुलिस के आला अधिकारियों के पास दबंग कर्मचारियों की अच्छी खासी फौज मौजूद है लेकिन बावजूद इसके वे लगातार खुलेआम हो रही काले सोने की चोरी को रोकने में उनकी नाकामी किसी से छिपी नहीं है। 'क्राइम स्टोरी' लगातार खनन माफियाओं की पोल खोलता आ रहा है लेकिन हैरान करने वाली बात यह है कि न तो पुलिस और न ही खनन विभाग इसके खिलाफ कोई एक्शन लेने में रूचि दिखाते हुए नजर आते हैं? हां, अब इतना जरूर है कि दो दिन पूर्व कैट कोतवाली क्षेत्र में हुई घटना के बाद पुलिस जरूर हरकत में आई है।

अब सवाल यह उठता है कि पुलिस तभी नींदनीं से जागी जब उसके एक कर्मचारी पर हमला हुआ जबकि खनन माफिया तो लगातार नदियों का सीना चीर कर वहां से सरकार का काला सोना चुरा रहे हैं? सफेदपोशों और खनन माफियाओं के गठजोड़ की चर्चाएं उत्तराखण्ड में आम है। राज्य के किसी भी जनपद में जब भी अवैध खनन का मुद्दा प्रकाश में आया है तो उस गोरखधंधे को अंजाम देने वाले माफियाओं के साथ किसी न किसी सफेदपोश का भी धीमें से उठा ही है? यही वह गठजोड़ है जिसके चलते विकास की राह पर अग्रसर राज्य उत्तराखण्ड आज तक अवैध खनन के दानव से मुक्ति नहीं पा सका है। खनन माफियाओं के हौसलों अब इतने बुलंद हो चुके हैं कि वह जो काम छिपते छिपाते करते थे उसे अब वह बेखौफ होकर खुलेआम कर रहे हैं और तो और यदि कोई उनके रास्ते का रोड़ा बनने की कोशिश करता है तो वह उसे रास्ते से हटाने के लिए भी तैयार रहते हैं।

बता दें कि कैट कोतवाली से कुछ किलोमीटर दूरी पर जैतनवाला के समीप एक खननमाफिया ने कैट कोतवाली के पुलिसकर्मी के ऊपर खनन सामग्री से भरा ट्रैक्टर चढ़ा दिया था। बताया जा रहा है कि इस घटना की गूँज सीएम दरबार तक जा पहुंची और मुख्यमंत्री ने स्वयं इसका संज्ञान लेते इस घटना पर कड़ी नारजगी जताई और पुलिस महानिदेशक को दोषियों पर कड़ी कार्रवाई के निर्देश दिए थे। मुख्यमंत्री के निर्देश के बाद डीजीपी ने वरिष्ठ पुलिस अधीक्षक को घटना में शामिल चारों आरोपित भाइयों को तत्काल गिरफ्तार करने के आदेश दिए थे। वहीं, डीजीपी के आदेश पर कैट कोतवाली निरीक्षक को लाइन-हाजिर कर दिया गया।

बताया जा रहा है कि ट्रैक्टर-ट्राली चढ़ाने के आरोपित ट्रैक्टर चालक को पुलिस ने गिरफ्तार कर लिया है। पुलिस अब उसके तीन भाइयों को तलाश रही है। चारों भाइयों पर अवैध खनन करने और सिपाही पर ट्रैक्टर ट्राली चढ़ाने का आरोप है। चारों के खिलाफ हत्या के प्रयास सहित अन्य संगीन धाराओं में मुकदमा दर्ज किया गया है। मात्र दो दिन के भीतर पुलिस के आला अधिकारियों ने जिस तेजी के साथ इस घटना में खुलासों को लेकर जो फुर्ती दिखाई है अगर ऐसी ही फुर्ती वे समूचे राज्य में चल रहा अवैध खनन के खिलाफ दिखा दें तो खनन माफियाओं के दिल में भी उनका डर स्थापित होगा लेकिन ऐसा कभी संभव हो पाएगा, इस सवाल को जवाब तो भविष्य के गर्भ में ही कैद है? उत्तराखण्ड में अवैध खनन का कारोबार खूब फल-फूल रहा है खनन माफिया नदियों का सीना चीर अवैध खनन को बेखौफ अंजाम दे रहे हैं।

जानकारी के मुताबिक पूरे देहरादून जिले की नदियों में अवैध खनन के कारोबार में यूपी से आए लोग सलिप्त हैं। इनके साथ मजदूर भी... जानकारी के मुताबिक पूरे देहरादून जिले की नदियों में अवैध खनन के कारोबार में यूपी से आए लोग सलिप्त हैं। इनके साथ मजदूर भी हिमाचल बॉर्डर पर बहने वाली यमुना, कालसी, टोंसटों और आसन नदी क्षेत्रों में भी रात में अवैध खनन के लिए ट्रैक्टर, डंपर आते- आए लोग सलिप्त हैं। देश की सबसे बड़ी आडिट एजेंसी कैग की रिपोर्ट में उत्तराखण्ड में अवैध खनन को लेकर बड़ा खुलासा हुआ है।

रिपोर्ट में सामने आया है कि देहरादून जिले की तीन प्रमुख नदियों (सौगसौ, ढकरानी और कुल्हाल) से एंबुलेंस और शव वाहनों से भी अवैध खनन ढोया गया है। इसके साथ ही हजारों रवनों में सरकारी वाहनों के नंबर भी पाए गए हैं। https://mukhyadhara.in/the-dreadful-game-of-illegal-mining/#google_vignette

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS/ARTICLES FOR READING

8. India's growth must not be taken as inevitable (*livemint.com*) Oct 26, 2023

As anxieties over growth grow globally amid geopolitical and economic threats, the trajectory of India's economy appears relatively secure. According to new projections by S&P Global Market Intelligence, we will jump from our fifth spot to become the world's third biggest by 2030, moving past Germany and Japan, with only China and the US ahead of us. At \$7.3 trillion, our nominal GDP in 2030 would be more than double the \$3.5 trillion figure for 2022. To a significant extent, S&P's optimism stems from our young demographic profile and growing incomes, which make the country a vast market for businesses to serve. With about two-thirds of our population below the age of 35, we have a potentially vast workforce that an ageing China will soon be unable to match. Of course, the country will need to create jobs at scale, on which we have been falling short, to make the most of our youth bulge. And that's just the labour part. We face challenges of capital too.

One problem has been the lopsided expansion of our economy. In recent years, much of the heavy lifting to drive it ahead has been done by outsized government spending. Private investment was expected to join the game (or get 'crowded in'), but a prolonged slump that's proving too slow to reverse has left the economic momentum at risk of flagging off. With the Centre's fiscal thrust nearing exhaustion, we will have to let private enterprise lead the expansion at some point. How soon that happens is hard to say, though some businesses are ready for it. Should the shift not happen and the government's fiscal bloat get extended much too far, we could find the going getting harder. America offers a cautionary example of fiscal and monetary excess; a big US debt overload associated with its covid fiscal loosening is partly to blame for its earlier inflation spike and recent surge in Treasury bond yields (the Fed's over-easing had a starring role too). Back home, our economy's growth has been supported by a decline over recent years in the real cost of capital. This wasn't just on account of a pandemic stimulus. With the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mandated in 2016 to keep inflation in check, cheaper credit was an expected benefit, and while RBI's record on price-stability has been rather patchy, we have escaped US-style nerve-fraying volatility so far. Yet, we must stay watchful of the capital story's underlying risks.

Should RBI's effort to contain inflation go awry and its credibility suffer a jolt, then a significant aspect of the optimistic narrative would be squandered. A flare-up of hostilities in West Asia that sends oil prices—already around \$90 per barrel—soaring could spell trouble on this front. So RBI needs to maintain a strict price vigil, lest we end up with a spiral that leads to costlier credit in time to come. Capital could also get more costly if lending rates harden globally, signs of which have been a cause of worry in the past few weeks. After decades of global savings chasing investments, a reversal of this dynamic has been spied by some financial analysts, even as US bonds are seen to be in such heavy oversupply (relative to demand) that their yield hardening may acquire durability. Although India has not had much trouble attracting capital inflows, higher rates overseas would exert upward pressure on rates here too. All said, we don't just face a challenge of labour utilization, capital instability could pose its own

complexities too. We must neither take 7% plus growth for granted, nor let our guard down. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/indias-growth-must-not-be-taken-as-inevitable-11698247355080.html>

9. A green transition, but not without the coal-rich states (*indianexpress.com*) Oct 26, 2023

Green industrial policy should not be the exclusive privilege of historically well-endowed states. Otherwise, the energy transition will simply be yet another drain of resources from India's least developed to its most developed regions.

Reports of coal's death are highly exaggerated. Between the strike notice by Coal India's unions, to the power minister's recent announcements of India's intent to build new coal power plants, to addressing the peak power problems which have repeatedly surfaced during seasonal demand surges, the dilemma of energy transition has reared its face in the last few months. Between the G20, the Clean Energy Ministerial and the actions of the International Solar Alliance, much has been said about India's global commitments and actions toward decarbonisation. But the logic and incentives of domestic energy transition need to be considered closely.

The first wave of power plant construction in India, between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s, happened on the back of a push by central PSUs to solve the imbalances of state power supply. Some state electricity boards managed to build up power plants, others did not. The creation of the NTPC and Coal India in the mid-1970s was a central solution to a regional problem. NTPC's first four power plants (Ramagundam, Farakka, Singrauli and Korba) were sited so that they could supply power to multiple states. The second great wave of power plant construction between 2000-2015 was driven primarily by private promoters who built plants after the Electricity Act, 2003 was passed. These plants were largely located in central, western and southern India. From the mid-1990s onwards, India invested in a national power grid, and by the mid-2000s moving power between states became easier. Private investment in the power sector post-2000 clustered around states with more industrial demand, histories of commercial activity and stronger finances.

The next wave of power plant construction in India is likely the mass construction of renewable energy assets over the next few decades. While projections from government agencies about India's power future have varied, the Central Electricity Authority's report on Optimal Generation Capacity Mix for 2029-2030 establishes a clear expectation of sustained RE growth. According to this report, by 2030, solar and wind will make up almost 51 per cent of total generation capacity (up from less than 20 per cent in 2019) and almost 31 per cent of all generated power (up from 8.3 per cent in 2019). If these projections materialise, they are likely to have major fiscal consequences for states.

Research by Sanjay Mitra and me zoom into the regional consequences of this RE build-out, and the accompanying expectation of greater RE procurement by state discoms. India's massive RE build-out so far has largely benefited western and southern states. In August 2023, 92.5 per cent of all grid-connected RE generation came from eight states. This is largely driven by higher insolation and wind density but also bolstered by favourable state finances and investment environments.

Assuming such patterns persist, RE-poor, coal-rich states are likely to face a double hit to state revenues: Coal royalties as a proportion of overall state revenue will decline as coal growth starts slowing later this decade, and the cost of power procurement will increase as new RE contracts are layered on top of existing commitments for firm power. Grid-scale energy storage technologies are still expensive and experimental, and are unlikely to be adopted at a large scale by the end of the decade. Since most coal-rich states have limited grid-scale RE-deployment, they will have to import more power from other states. This means that the quantum of inter-state financial transfers for power procurement will shoot up over the next decade. We find that the combined revenue impact of declining coal royalties and increasing electricity imports could worsen budget deficits of RE-poor power-importing states by almost 8.66 per cent on average, taking them well beyond the norms established by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management Act, 2003.

The reality of India's fiscal federalism is that states are protective about the few major sources of revenue they have left post-GST. Coal royalties and their delayed upward revision cause frequent disagreements between coal states and the Union government. The power sector is another site of frequent tension. Between attempts to establish a centralised spot market for electricity, enforcing strict payment discipline on state discoms, privatisation of state discoms, drastic Electricity Act amendments, uncompensated transmission waivers for RE projects, and financing struggles with state lenders, there are many axes of policy friction between Union and state governments. Of particular concern is the displacement of RE integration costs onto state transmission companies. By giving inter-state transmission waivers to an entire generation of new RE projects, the integration costs of the energy transition are displaced onto state PSU balance sheets without necessarily facilitating compensatory investment in upgraded transmission capacity, which can better manage the variability of the new RE projects.

If these emerging frictions are not addressed, reluctant states and frequent policy conflicts could hold back India's ambitions for an energy transition. RE-poor states need to be given a bigger stake in this energy transition, rather than be treated as collateral damage. The philosophy of balanced regional developmentalism that led to the creation of NTPC in the 1970s needs to be revived. This could take many forms — preferential lending for RE projects in RE-poor states by state lenders, greater voice in federal power negotiations (through revival of institutions like the Inter-State Council), explicit financial transfers to RE-poor states through the Finance Commission and collaborative industrial policy through just transition mechanisms. Green industrial policy should not be the exclusive privilege of historically well-endowed states. Otherwise, the energy transition will simply be yet another drain of resources from India's least developed to its most developed regions. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/a-green-transition-but-not-without-the-coal-rich-states-8999599/>

10. Mandatory imported-coal blending extended till FY24-end *(financialexpress.com) Oct 26, 2023*

The government on Wednesday extended mandatory blending of imported coal with domestic fuel for power gencos till the end of the current financial year, in an attempt to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the country.

It also extended the emergency clause or Section 11 of the Electricity Act 2003 which mandates imported coal-based power plants to run on their full capacity till June 30, 2024. The clause was to expire by the end of this month.

About 15 imported coal-based plants including Adani Power Mundra, Essar Power Gujarat, Coastal Gujarat Power, Tata Trombay, and IL&FS Tamil Nadu Power Company will now have to operate at full capacity.

“The gencos may continuously review their stock position and opt for blending as per the requirements if the shortfall in domestic coal supply is more than 6 %,” the ministry of power said in an order released Wednesday.

The move came after a review of the power demand-supply scenario in the country. Inadequate supply of domestic coal has resulted in rapid depletion of coal stocks at domestic coal based (DCB) plants across the country.

Coal stocks with thermal units slumped to 18.55 MT as on October 23 and around 75 out of 165 domestic coal based thermal power plants had “critical” level stocks only, as per the latest data available on Central Electricity Authority (CEA).

“The move will increase the cost of power procurement for discoms,” said an official source from a coal mining company who did not wish to be identified. “Whether the cost is passed on to the consumers will depend upon the discoms.”

During September 1 to October 9, the gap between receipt of domestic coal and consumption of coal was reported at 12 million tonnes.

The government highlighted that in the first half of the current financial year, hydro power generation has fallen by about 11% from the corresponding period last year due to invariable monsoon and almost 2 giga watt (GW) of hydro capacity being stranded because of recent floods in Sikkim.

“The reservoir levels in northern, eastern and southern regions are less compared to the previous year as on 9th October 2023, which has resulted in lower reservoir energy content at pan India level,” the government said. “This has put additional burden on coal based thermal generation.”

Earlier, the CEA had estimated domestic coal requirement from October 2023 to March 2024 at 404 million tonne.

The government has estimated peak power demand of 256.53 GW for the financial year 2024-2025.

“The eight-month extension (of emergency coal import clause) has been directed by the power ministry because of a surge in demand, inadequate supply of domestic coal, and reduced hydropower generation,” the order said.

There is a severe shortage of power in the country which is unlikely to be compensated by imports, experts believe.

The country's power demand in September grew by almost 10-12% from the corresponding period of last year with demand reaching to 140-142 billion units, according to a report by CRISIL Ratings released last month.

In the first half of the current financial year, India's electricity consumption grew nearly 8% to 847 billion units from 786 BU in the same period last financial year.

The government had pegged India's energy requirement till September at 8,47,896 million units (MU). However, the total availability was reported at 8,45,451 MU, down by 0.3% or 2,444 MU, as per the data from CEA.

The country recorded a peak demand of 2,40,500 MW of power in September and was able to meet only 2,39,769 MW of the total demand.

However, coal stocks with Coal India Ltd were at 41.1 million tonne as of October 24, up 15% from the corresponding period last year, an official from the company told FE. "Stocks with the captive power plants is also higher by 4-5 million tonnes from last year," the official said.

The electricity generation target for the year 2023-24 was fixed at 1,750 BU comprising of 1,324.11 BU from thermal, 156.700 BU from hydro, 46.190 from nuclear and import of 8 BU from Bhutan. The rest 215 BU was estimated to come from renewable energy sources. However, so far in the Apr-Sep period, the country has generated 897.737 BU of power, as per the ministry's data. <https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-mandatory-imported-coal-blending-extended-till-fy24-end-3286547/>

11. Cabinet OKs nutrient-based fertiliser subsidy for Rabi season at cost of Rs 22,303 crore (*moneycontrol.com*) Oct 25, 2023

The Union Cabinet, on October 25, approved the nutrient-based fertiliser subsidy rates for the 2023-24 Rabi season at a cost of Rs 22,303 crore to the government.

The approved subsidy rates for October 2023-March 2024 are as follows:

- >> Rs 47.02 per kg for nitrogen
- >> Rs 20.82 per kg for phosphorous
- >> Rs 2.38 per kg for potash
- >> Rs 1.89 per kg for sulphur

The aforementioned rates, however, are well below what they were for the kharif season. For instance, the nitrogen subsidy announced in May for this year's kharif season was Rs 76 per kg, while that for phosphorous was Rs 41 per kg.

The government said in a statement that the "rationalisation of subsidy on P&K fertilisers" was being done "in view of recent trends in the international prices of

fertilisers and inputs". Addressing reporters, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said farmers will continue paying the same price for fertilisers as a result of the Cabinet's decision.

The Rabi season fertiliser subsidy also means the central government is all set to exceed its budget estimate for the same.

As per the budget presented on February 1, the Centre was to spend Rs 44,000 crore in 2023-24 on nutrient-based fertiliser subsidy. However, it had already spent Rs 34,111 crore in the first five months of the current financial year, accounting for 78 percent of the budget estimate. As such, the Cabinet's October 25 decision takes the total nutrient-based fertiliser subsidy amount to Rs 56,414 crore - 28 percent more than the full-year target.

The Cabinet today also approved the inclusion of Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project of Uttarakhand under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana-Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme.

The project, which will be completed by March 2028 at a total cost of Rs 2,584 crore - 90 percent of which will be borne by the Centre - will see a dam being built on the Gola river near Jamrani village in the Nainital district. Once completed, it will help irrigate an additional 57,065 hectares of land in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The project will also involve construction of two new feeder canals, renovation of 207 kilometre of existing canals, and hydro power generation of 14 MW, along with the provision of 42.70 million cubic metre of drinking water to Haldwani and surrounding areas, the government said.

"A substantial part of irrigation benefits of the project would flow to the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh... However, drinking water and power benefits shall be available entirely to Uttarakhand," the government added.
<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/cabinet-oks-nutrient-based-fertiliser-subsidy-for-rabi-season-at-cost-of-rs-22303-crore-11596171.html>

12. IAF signs contract with Indian manufacturer for Automatic Weather Stations procurement (*telanganatoday.com*) Oct 26, 2023

The Indian Air Force recently signed a contract with an Indian manufacturer for the procurement of Automatic Weather Stations at 82 IAF locations, according to an official statement from the IAF.

This technological enhancement will provide a major boost to Aerospace Safety by making available real-time weather updates during flying operations and training, the IAF added.

Meanwhile, working on upgrading its fleet of its Russian-origin Su-30 MKI combat aircraft, the Indian Air Force is planning to equip them with an indigenous advanced radar named 'Virupaaksha'.

The Indian Air Force is working on the upgrade programme of the Su-30MKI fleet under a package worth over Rs 65,000 crore where 84 planes would be upgraded indigenously with advanced made-in-India radars and weapon systems.

“The Virupaaksha is an advanced radar being developed indigenously. This would be a strong push for the indigenization process in the military sector,” defence officials told ANI.

Virupaaksha is one of the names of the God Mahadev, worshipped by Hindus living across the world.

The Indian Air Force has already decided to replace the Israeli radar on the LCA Tejas Mark 1A fighter jet with the indigenous Uttam Actors Electronically Scanned Array radar along with the Angad electronic warfare suite.

The Su-30 fighter jets are the mainstay of the Indian Air Force, with 260 of them already in service. The jets have been inducted in different batches and now form around 50 per cent of the fighter fleet.

The Su-30MKI fleet upgrade plan is also seen by the Indian Air Force as an opportunity for exports, as many countries in southeast Asia and Africa operate the plane and can use these solutions to provide advanced capabilities to their fleets.

India is one of the largest operators of the Su-30MKI fighters and has constantly equipped the planes with new capabilities. <https://telanganatoday.com/iaf-signs-contract-with-indian-manufacturer-for-automatic-weather-stations-procurement>

13. PM Modi reviews progress of eight key projects worth Rs 31,000 crores (*businessinsider.in*) Oct 26, 2023

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the meeting of the 43rd edition of PRAGATI on Wednesday to review the progress of eight key projects spread across seven states with a cumulative cost of around Rs 31,000 crore, according to a press release from the Prime Minister's Office.

PRAGATI is an ICT-based multi-modal platform for pro-active governance and timely implementation, involving the central and state governments.

"In the meeting, a total of eight projects were reviewed. Among these, four projects were concerned with water supply and irrigation, two projects for expanding National highways and connectivity, and two projects for rail and metro rail connectivity. These projects have a cumulative cost of around Rs. 31,000 crore and relate to 7 states viz., Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Odisha, West Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra," as per the release.

The Prime Minister emphasised that PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Portal in conjunction with technologies such as satellite imagery can help address various issues of implementation and planning relating to location and land requirements for projects.

He also instructed that all the stakeholders executing projects in high-population-density urban areas may appoint nodal officers and form teams for better coordination.

"For irrigation projects, the Prime Minister advised that visits of stakeholders be organised where successful rehabilitation and reconstruction work has been done. The transformational impact of such projects may also be shown. This may motivate the stakeholders for the early execution of projects," the release stated.

During the interaction, the Prime Minister also reviewed 'Mobile Towers and 4G Coverage under USOF Projects'. Under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), 33,573 villages with 24,149 mobile towers are to be covered for saturation of mobile connectivity. Prime Minister asked to ensure the setting up of mobile towers in all uncovered villages within this financial year with regular meetings with all stakeholders. This will ensure saturation of mobile coverage in the remotest of the areas.

Up to the 43rd edition of PRAGATI meetings, 348 projects with a total cost of Rs. 17.36 lakh crore have been reviewed, the release said. <https://www.businessinsider.in/india/news/pm-modi-reviews-progress-of-eight-key-projects-worth-rs-31000-crores/articleshow/104720824.cms>

14. Dodgy finance, missing infrastructure: Over 200 ailing health centres on UP govt radar (*indianexpress.com*) Oct 26, 2023

More than 80% were commissioned before Yogi Govt came to power, SIT set up in several cases

From a building with no doors and windows to one where stairs are missing; projects whose finances are under a cloud; where construction work is abandoned because the agency has lost interest. These are some of the key reasons why more than 200 community health centres (CHCs) and primary health centres (PHCs) in 52 Uttar Pradesh districts are stuck, some from as far back as 2005, information accessed by The Indian Express under the Right to Information Act shows.

Indeed, most of these centres are languishing from before the Yogi Adityanath government came to power in 2017, and the UP government's health department has flagged alleged financial irregularities, ongoing internal inquiry, or the need for a probe by a Special Investigative Team in around 90 such centres (see interview below).

According to information available until August 2023, 86 CHCs and 132 PHCs commissioned between 2005 and 2023 are pending completion. The state has a total of 970 CHCs and 3,976 PHCs across 75 districts. As many as 178 or 81.6% of the centres were commissioned before the Yogi government came to power.

The health department has also highlighted the extent of completion of each project and the year in which they were commissioned.

A PHC is the first point of contact between the village community and the medical officer, meant to provide curative and preventive healthcare to the rural population. They are established and maintained by state governments under the Minimum Needs

Programme or Basic Minimum Services Programme, and are supposed to be manned by a medical officer supported by paramedical and other staff.

UP government, UP govt, Uttar Pradesh government, health centres, up health centres, up health centres infra, RTI applications, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express India

CHCs are a step higher, serving as referral centres for four PHCs and providing facilities for obstetric care and specialist consultations. A CHC is required to be staffed by four medical specialists – surgeon, physician, obstetrician/gynaecologist and paediatrician – supported by paramedical and other staff. It typically has 30 beds with one OT, X-ray, labour room and laboratory facilities.

-In around 90 unfinished projects, the health department has highlighted alleged “financial irregularities”, ongoing internal inquiry, or an SIT (Special Investigation Team) probe. In all these cases, more than 90 percent of the amount that was allocated for construction has been spent. While internal inquiries are ongoing, one of the seven agencies tasked with the construction – the Rajkiya Nirman Nigam – has recommended an SIT probe.

-In one instance, the health department notes: “The building has no doors, windows and the floor is incomplete.” This particular CHC was commissioned in 2006-07 in Ervakatra in eastern Uttar Pradesh. A total of Rs 2.24 crore was allotted, which has been spent, and the government has already rejected the revised estimate.

-On the status of a CHC in Raniganj Kaithola of Pratapgarh, commissioned in 2014-15, the department notes: “The building does not have stairs or ramp to go from the first floor to the second floor.” While 94 percent of the allocated money has been spent, 60 percent of progress has been made.

-“Affected by financial irregularities. The doors, windows, electric fixer in the buildings are partially complete,” notes the health department on the status of a CHC in Azamgarh’s Mohammadpur, commissioned in 2007-08. A total of Rs 3.02 crore was released, and despite over 96 percent of the funds being spent, only the first floor of the main building has been finished, records show.

-On the status of a CHC in Dapsaura of Fatehpur, which was allotted in 2014-15 and passed its completion deadline in June 2021, the department notes: “Due to high expenditure by the construction unit, internal investigation is ongoing. Work stalled. OHT (overhead tank) is incomplete, there are no nets/glasses in the windows of the main building and MO’s (medical officer) residence.”

- “Due to non-completion of work even after the entire amount has been spent, the process of filing chargesheet against the responsible officers is going on at the executing agency level,” notes the department on the status of one of the oldest commissioned projects from 2006-07 in Paras, Gonda district.

-“On-site inspection was conducted on 06.07.2023. The work of medical officer and category-2 residence septic tanks and soak pits is still in progress. Apart from this, minor defects are being rectified,” notes the department on the status of a PHC in

Amaujaspur in Sultanpur district, commissioned in 2018-19, which was declared complete.

-“The doors installed have to be replaced. The approach road has to be repaired. The floor of the overhead tank is broken,” notes the department on the status of two PHCs in Bijnor district, commissioned in 2018-19.

-On the status of a CHC in Sultanpur, the department notes: “An FIR has been lodged by the executing agency against its JE (junior engineer) and AE (assistant engineer) on 20.03.2015. The work is stalled.” The project was commissioned in 2008-09.

-“The construction/executing agency is not taking interest in completing the work. The balance amount of Rs 70.26 lakh was released on 22.11.2022,” notes the department on the status of a PHC in Bhadari, Pratapgarh district, commissioned in 2007-08. Despite spending about 50 percent of the allocated money, the project is still at the level of foundation work.

-“Almost the allocated cost for the medical officer’s residence has been spent and the construction work has been done only up to the chair level. Report has been sought from the construction unit,” noted the health department on the status of a PHC in Kudarcot in Auraiya district, commissioned in 2005-06.

-Other reasons cited by the health department for the delay include incomplete wiring; no water supply; unavailability of land; no mesh/glass in windows, etc. Records also show that even in the case of some “completed” works, irregularities were found during on-site inspection.

Seven government agencies were tasked with the construction – UP Rajkiya Nirman Nigam, UP Housing & Development Board, Construction & Design Services of UP Jal Nigam, Uttar Pradesh Rajya Nirman Sahkari Sangh Ltd, UP Projects Corporation Limited, UP State Construction And Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited, and UP Rural Engineering Department.

The maximum number of projects are being constructed by the Rajkiya Nirman Nigam (63 CHCs and 66 PHCs), followed by the Housing & Development Board (36 projects) and the Rajya Nirman Sahkari Sangh Ltd (28 projects).

In total, of the Rs 393.80 crore allocated for the construction of CHCs, Rs 353.36 crore has already been released until August 2023, and Rs 305.30 crore spent by construction agencies. In the case of PHCs, of the Rs 166.75 crore allocated for construction, Rs 160.55 crore has been released and Rs 129.80 crore spent.

Working to finish projects in a timely manner: Minister
Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, who also holds the health portfolio, told The Indian Express that the state government is cognizant of alleged financial irregularities in some under-construction PHCs and CHCs, and action has already been initiated.

In response to a questionnaire, Pathak said, “SIT investigation has been ordered by the current government against officials of the executing agency concerned, UP Rajkiya

Nirman Nigam Limited. Based on the findings of the SIT investigation, UP Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Limited is taking action against the guilty officials at their own level.”

UP Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Limited is handling 63 CHCs and 66 PHCs that are yet to be completed.

Explaining the plan to complete projects that are stuck, Pathak said, “It has been decided by the Cabinet that some of the financial burden will be borne by the Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Limited and some by the Health Department, so that work can be completed in a time-bound manner. Action is being taken accordingly.”

The unfinished projects include 40 commissioned under the current BJP government in the state. On that, Pathak said, “The works which are currently under construction are being closely monitored and action is being taken to complete them on time so they can be made operational to the public soon.”

“To complete the projects on time, administrative and financial approvals are being issued in a timely manner and funds are being allocated accordingly. The projects are being continuously monitored by the government,” said Pathak, adding that this is to ensure financial irregularities do not happen in the future and projects are finished on time. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/on-up-govt-radar-200-ailing-health-centres-missing-infra-dodgy-finance-8999700/>