

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

### **1. To fill a critical gap, Indian Air Force looks to buy six mid-air refuellers (*indianexpress.com*) 30 August 2023**

#### **Process being revived after two failed attempts earlier over pricing disputes**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is set to revive the process of procuring six mid-air refuellers after failing to make any headway during two earlier attempts over the last two decades.

Highly placed Defence officials told The Indian Express that the request for proposal to procure six mid-air refuelling aircraft, also known as tankers, should be floated within six months to invite bids from interested Defence majors.

This is the IAF's third attempt since 2007 to buy the tankers. Two of its earlier tenders were scrapped due to pricing disputes.

Officials said the IAF is looking to procure six "pre-owned" aircraft — these can be modified into tankers — to meet its requirement of refuellers so that they can serve for 25 to 30 years.

Indian Air Force, Indian Air Force (IAF), IAF looks to buy six mid-air refuellers, mid-air refuellers, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express India An IAF IL-78 MKI carries out air-to-air refuelling. (@IAF\_MCC)

"Several global companies will let go of their older aircraft models in the next three to four years as they make the transition to advanced aircraft with new engines. There will be an adequate number of pre-owned aircraft available in the market which can be modified into tankers," a Defence official said.

The IAF is looking for an Indian maintenance partner for the tankers.

Once inducted, the refuellers will fill a critical capability gap in the IAF's inventory and will prove to be a vital strategic asset and force multiplier as they will allow fighter aircraft to stay airborne longer.

The six aircraft will be procured in addition to another tanker which the IAF would take on lease from interested global vendors to meet its training needs, the process for which has already been initiated. The IAF also provides limited refuelling efforts to the Navy's MiG-29K fighter aircraft.

"It might take two to three years to start the deliveries of the tankers. Meanwhile, the one tanker to be leased will be used for immediate training requirements of the force," the official said, adding that it cannot, however, be used in operations.

Currently, the IAF operates a fleet of six Russian Ilyushin-78 tankers procured in 2003-04, but at any given time only three to four are serviceable. Their maintenance and serviceability issues were also brought out in an August 2017 report of the Comptroller

and Auditor General (CAG) that studied their operations from 2010 to 2016. The tankers were bought in 2003-2004 at Rs 132 crore per aircraft.

The need to procure six additional tankers – in line with the IAF's laid down long-term procurement plans – have significantly gone up in the last few years as the force looks to induct a range of fighter aircraft with the capability of receiving fuel in air to build up its depleting number of squadrons.

The Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport and the Ilyushin Il-78 had both fought in the past to secure a contract.

Even Einstein referred to a force as God, former ISRO chairman says, just...

Last year, state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) also signed an agreement with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to convert the Boeing-767 passenger aircraft into tankers in India. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/to-fill-a-critical-gap-iaf-looks-to-buy-six-mid-air-refuellers-8915461/>

## **2. Exempted category vehicles take a toll on public funded highway plazas: CAG (*dtnext.in*) 30 August 2023**

CHENNAI: The percentage of exempted category or violating vehicles passing through public funded toll plazas in the State is much higher compared to toll plazas set up under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model, revealed the Comptroller and Auditor General report.

The audit report of NHAI's toll operations in South India said a review of data from 10 toll plazas shows that percentage of exempted category vehicles ranged from 18.32 per cent (Lembalakudi toll plaza) to 53.27 per cent (Paranur toll plaza).

Of the 1.17 crore vehicles passed through the public funded Paranur toll plaza from August 2019 to June 2020, as many as 62.37 lakh were recorded as exempted category or violating vehicles. It was 36 per cent of all vehicles in the case of Athur toll plaza in the same period. Similarly, Kappalur (25%) and Lembalakudi (18%) toll plazas, too, recorded a high number of such vehicles from January to September 2020.

In sharp contrast, privately operated toll plazas under the BOT model witnessed a completely different scenario, with exempted category vehicles forming only 6.06 per cent in Kodai Road toll plaza and 12.6 per cent in Sengurichi.

Rejecting NHAI's claim that there was no loss to the exchequer as the payment was fixed as per the agreement, the audit report said the reply was not tenable as the full toll collection as per NH Fee Rules was an indicator of revenue potential. Hence, under collection would impact the assessment of revenue potential for future agreements.

Terming the facility at Paranur as "BJP model tollgate", CPM Parliamentarian Su Venkatesan pointed out that 53 per cent of vehicles passing through the toll plaza was counted as VIPs, while it is only 6 per cent in Kodai Road. "This shows irregularities in toll collection," he said in a statement.

<https://www.dtnext.in/news/tamilnadu/exempted-category-vehicles-take-a-toll-on-public-funded-highway-plazas-cag-733008>

**3. Decide by Sept 5 CPR plea on release of 25% unutilised funds: Delhi HC to Govt on FCRA certificate suspension** (*indianexpress.com*) Updated: August 30, 2023

The Delhi High Court asked the central government on Tuesday to decide by September 5 the application of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) for release of “25% of unutilised amounts” in its accounts after its certificate of registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) was suspended in February.

In the think tank’s application for interim stay of the suspension order, senior advocate Arvind Datar submitted before a single judge bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad that “without foreign contribution the petitioner organisation will be forced to shut down”.

In any event in the past six months, the activities of the organisation have come to a “grinding halt” and 83 scientists/employees have left the organisation, Datar said.

On August 25, in an interim order, a division bench of Justice Rajiv Shakti and Justice Girish Kathpalia had stayed a June 30 order passed by Income-Tax authorities cancelling the tax exemption status granted to CPR under the Income Tax Act. The bench observed that cancellation of registration under provisions of the Act would “result in disabling the petitioner from accepting any contributions from domestic contributors”.

Noting that CPR “survives on contributions”, the bench listed CPR’s plea on November 30. “In the meanwhile, the operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed, subject to the petitioner maintaining a proper account of the contributions received by it, including the details of the contributors,” it had said.

The bench had also directed CPR to furnish details of the “mode and manner” in which the contributions received are spent by way of an affidavit accompanied by a certificate of the statutory auditor. It also said that CPR shall ensure that the contributions received are spent in a manner that is aligned with the objects for which it was constituted. In case of any violation, the revenue authorities can bring it to the court’s notice for seeking “variation of the interim order”, it had said.

On Tuesday, appearing for the Centre in the FCRA matter, advocate Arunima Dwivedi pointed to Rule 14 of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2011, which provides that in case certificate of registration under the FCRA is suspended, up to 25% of unutilised amount can be spent with the “prior approval of the central government for the declared aims and objects for which the foreign contribution was received”.

Dwivedi submitted, “They (CPR) applied before us for getting this 25% amount when they were already under suspension within 180 days. As per the rule, we have to be satisfied about what they want; and we asked for certain documents/replies from them. They filed a reply on May 15. We have to just pass an order on seeing the documents

and we will ourselves release the 25% amount if we find it just and proper. There is a procedure which is being followed. Things are in place, we are duly vigilant.”

The court noted that CPR made an application under Rule 14 in March; and clarifications were given by them in May. Justice Prasad then said, “Be that as it may it has transpired that three months have passed after the clarifications have been given. It is expected that the application will be decided by the central government before September 5.”

“On the next date of hearing, the counsel for respondent (Union) is directed to bring the file in the court for this court to appreciate the nature of inquiry conducted before the suspension order was passed,” the court said.

The matter is next listed on September 5.

The court also issued notice in CPR’s main writ petition challenging the February 27 order of the Centre suspending the certificate granted to the think tank under the FCRA.

During the course of the hearing, Datar argued that CPR had not paid salaries since March. He said that “no kind of inquiry has been initiated before the petitioner’s license was suspended”. This was opposed by Centre’s counsel, the court noted.

Arguing that the showcause notice was only issued on August 1 under the FCRA, Datar said, “This (CPR) is not an ordinary NGO. This is the number 1 think tank in India by a mile. We are part of the Indian Science Society, we started in 1973. We come under CAG audit and Home Ministry audit. The Home Ministry completed my audit on February 22, 2022. CAG completed the audit on February 24, 2022. All the allegations in the showcause notice are dated 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Everything has been examined by the CAG, nothing wrong has been found.”

“I (CPR) get money from foreign contributions and local donations. I don’t know why the release of salaries is being opposed. What have the employees done? You may not like any dissent in the country... and the allegation is that there is a place called Hasdeo in Chhattisgarh where there is an organisation which we engaged for making some report. They have done some protest against some mining activity... What are we doing? Just because there is one newspaper report about one mining activity this is happening?”

Calling it a “multi-pronged attack”, Datar argued, “It is extremely sad if an Indian think tank is going to be closed... One small dissent and this is done... This is a pattern. Any adverse report, cancel the FCRA, cancel 12A (income tax act-tax exemption status to trusts/institutions etc).”

Datar said that around 60% of the money comes from foreign grants. “If the court says that I can’t receive any foreign grant I will shut down tomorrow itself. They need not go for cancellation, I’m over in all seriousness,” Datar argued. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/decide-by-sept-5-cpr-plea-on-release-of-25-unutilised-funds-delhi-hc-to-govt-on-fcra-certificate-suspension-8915442/lite/>

**4. Why governments must not turn to global consulting agencies for advice (*indianexpress.com*) 30 August 2023**

The area of human resources — amongst the most mishandled and underappreciated areas of development in India — has seen the Centre, the states and public sector units floundering on independently developing rules, regulating, identifying trends, and delivering on declared objectives. Consequently, government departments and organisations are increasingly turning to global consulting firms for advice. The outcomes and consequences of outsourcing “thinking” do not become clear for years and are difficult to quantify, further undermining the state’s capacity to analyse, strategise and govern. That it can be detrimental to the nation’s interests is explained by Mariana Francesca Mazzucato and Rosie Collington in *The Big Con*. The ill-fated farm laws were a demonstrable failure of agency and capacity.

In the US, the rules of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 prohibit accounting firms from providing management consulting services to companies they audit. Now more nations are pushing back. In 2016, Germany established its public sector consulting firm. Recently, PwC has been embroiled in a controversy in Australia and government agencies are reportedly reviewing contracts with the firm. China is clamping down on multinational consulting firms, accusing them of indulging in corporate espionage on behalf of their non-Chinese clients. In 2017, the Danish government concluded that the transfer of responsibility for its public sector IT to outside agencies had adversely affected its ability to govern — it established an in-house public sector body.

In India, this problem is evident with regard to Aadhaar data and its hosting issues. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare is using the World Economic Forum to design the digitalisation of the agricultural landscape with AGRISTACK. Astonishingly, we are increasingly outsourcing the development of rules and frameworks to market actors who will be affected or governed by them. As dependence on contractors increases, governments and the public sector become incapable of making independent decisions or even changing the contracted firms.

Punjab is hiring the Boston Consulting Group to diversify agriculture while ignoring the wealth of state-level expertise. It is similar to the last government in the state engaging J-PAL to reduce groundwater withdrawal.

Deloitte has been engaged by Uttar Pradesh to make a roadmap to turn the state into a trillion-dollar economy in five years — it will require an annual growth rate over 30 per cent when the country is growing at a rate of around 6 per cent. Philanthropists and donor organisations with deep pockets like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been accused of giving advice and influencing policy by contributing resources with a pre-set agenda.

There is also a conflict of interest when the advice is anything but neutral. Unfortunately, there are no regulations to compel consulting firms to reveal information about who they work for. Some of these consultancies are known to provide services free or for a fee that is far below the cost to the government because this paves the way for profitable contracts in the future. They use their access to the top echelons of the government to influence and shape policy-recommending actions that actually benefit private sector clients. Many reports are proven cut-paste jobs from global sources.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare used Grant Thornton to develop the 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations. The programme is failing.

As consultancies flourish, the risks of their flawed advice or any other harm they cause are never reckoned with. Nor are the officers who retire, after having hired a consultancy, held accountable. Inevitably, the costs end up much higher than if the government had invested in capacity-building and improving processes.

It is not that consultancies are incapable of giving good advice. However, very often senior functionaries in the administration work in their respective silos and are unable to extract the full value from the contracted engagement. They end up using the deployed personnel as glorified assistants and for preparing jargon-filled presentations.

Often while inviting consultants, several public sector and government departments set “qualifying” conditions that make it nearly impossible for local Indian companies to even qualify for bidding. Such conditions include a very high annual turnover threshold, a high number of full-time employees and a large number of offices in India and outside India. It’s common to find top-level retired bureaucrats with lucrative advisory retainerships or their family members employed with such global firms. I am not one to believe in conspiracies, but Michael Forsyth and Walt Bogdanich’s *When McKinsey Comes to Town* is a convincing exposé of McKinsey’s hidden influence on the world.

Rebuilding of capabilities must begin with recognising the government as a value creator in the economy – not an inefficient value extractor. The solution is building capacity within the organisations with support from local firms that are more grounded in local realities and can deliver on national objectives. One would have hoped that the NITI Aayog would have become the flagbearer of this approach.

To establish accountability, every senior civil servant may be asked to provide an annual (confidential) disclosure if any of their close family members are employed by any multinational advisory firm. If such a firm is being considered to be engaged by their department, then this disclosure should be made public. Finally, at the end of every such consulting engagement, the CAG or another suitable agency must audit the “outcomes” of very high-value contracts (say a threshold of Rs 10 crore per project). There seems to be no light at the end of this long tunnel.  
<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/global-consulting-firms-psus-human-man-resources-development-digitalisation-of-agricultural-landscape-8915274/>

**5. छत्तीसगढ़ में मृतकों का भी आयुष्मान योजना के तहत हुआ 'इलाज', CAG रिपोर्ट में चौंकाने वाले खुलासे (*jagran.com*) 29 August 2023**

छत्तीसगढ़ में प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना (आयुष्मान भारत) में मरे हुए लोगों का भी इलाज किया गया है। ये तथ्य आए हैं भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की ऑडिट परफार्मेंस रिपोर्ट 2023 में। कैग ने सितंबर 2018 से मार्च 2021 तक की रिपोर्ट पेश की है। इसके मुताबिक, छत्तीसगढ़ में 365 ऐसे मरीज मिले, जिनकी मृत्यु के बाद इलाज पर 33 लाख 70 हजार 985 रुपये खर्च हुए हैं। डेटाबेस में इन सभी मरीजों

को मृत दिखाया गया है। देश में 3,446 मृत मरीजों के इलाज पर कुल 6.97 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान किया गया।

30 लाख से अधिक का इलाज योजना के तहत प्रदेश में 02 करोड़ 02 लाख 05 हजार 315 व्यक्ति पंजीकृत हैं। योजना लागू होने से अब तक 30 लाख 69 हजार 24 लोगों का निशुल्क इलाज हुआ है।

योजना में ये हो रही दिक्कतें आयुष्मान भारत योजना के तहत निजी अस्पतालों में मरीजों से अतिरिक्त राशि लेने की शिकायतें आम हैं। समय पर क्लेम की राशि नहीं मिलने से निजी अस्पताल योजना का लाभ देने से कतराते हैं। करीब 22 लाख बच्चों का अभी तक कार्ड नहीं बन पाया है। इसकी वजह इन बच्चों का आधार कार्ड और बायोमेट्रिक्स नहीं होना बताया जा रहा है।

65 लाख से ज्यादा के पास कार्ड नहीं प्रदेश में 75 लाख 50 हजार 535 राशन कार्डधारी हैं। इनमें 02 करोड़ 67 लाख 07 हजार 289 व्यक्तियों में से 02 करोड़ 02 लाख 05 हजार 315 व्यक्तियों का आयुष्मान कार्ड बन पाया है। अभी तक 65 लाख 01 हजार 974 व्यक्तियों का कार्ड नहीं बन पाया है। आयुष्मान योजना में केंद्र 60 और राज्य शासन 40 प्रतिशत राशि वहन करती है। इसके अलावा राज्य सरकार डा. खूबचंद बघेल स्वास्थ्य सहायता योजना में 50,000 रुपये तक का चिकित्सा लाभ की सुविधा देती है।

कैग ने गिनाई अन्य खामियां 65 ईएचसीपी ने 0.29 करोड़ की राशि के पैकेज का दावा किया जिसके लिए अस्पताल सूचीबद्ध नहीं थे। राज्य स्वास्थ्य प्राधिकरण (एसएचए) ने योजना के लिए अलग से खाते न खोलकर वित्तीय निमय का उल्लंघन किया। 2018-21 के दौरान एसएचए ने तीन अलग-अलग खातों से नियम विरुद्ध 280.20 करोड़, 217.60 करोड़ और 112.62 करोड़ का अनुदान जारी किया।

कोरिया में आई गड़बड़ी आयुष्मान योजना में कोरिया जिले के खड़गवां प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्र में एक करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की प्रोत्साहन राशि फर्जी खाते में डालने के मामले में जांच चल रही है। वहीं मनमानी भुगतान करने वाले निजी अस्पतालों पर पांच करोड़ से ज्यादा का जुर्माना लगा चुके हैं।

<https://www.jagran.com/elections/chhattisgarh-cag-shocking-report-on-ayushman-bharat-yojana-23516187.html>

## **STATES NEWS ITEMS**

**6. VIP cars 'account for' 53% vehicles at Paranur toll plaza: CAG report**  
([newindianexpress.com](http://newindianexpress.com)) 30 August 2023

CHENNAI: In a startling disclosure, a CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) report has said that about half of the vehicles that passed through the Paranur toll plaza on Tambaram-Tindivanam NH between August 2019 and June 2020 did not pay toll fee because they were 'VIP vehicles'.

The toll operating agency designated by the NHAI had claimed that 62.37 lakh of 1.17 crore vehicles (53.27%) that passed through the booth were VIP vehicles and no fee was collected from them as per rules. Similarly, 36% vehicles that used the Athur toll plaza located on the same road were recorded as VIP vehicles. Out of 88.92 lakh vehicles, 32.39 lakh vehicles have not paid user fee at the Athur toll booth.

The CAG report said on an average, percentage of VIP vehicles exempted from toll fee was 6% at Kodai Road and a few other toll booths managed by private operators. The Tambaram-Tindivanam NH was financed entirely through the public exchequer, and user fee is being collected at Paranur and Athur toll gates located on the NH since April 1, 2005.

If the actual earning from a toll plaza is not correctly accounted for, the recovery of the project cost is delayed and toll operators continue to collect the fee even after the concessionaire agreement period is over, sources Z. Interestingly, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways responded to the CAG's report by saying that there was no loss to the exchequer as the payment made by toll operators to the NHAI was predetermined as per the agreement. Even if there is a drop in collection, the NHAI will not incur any loss, the union highways ministry said.

### **Paranur is BJP model toll gate corruption, says Madurai MP**

Due to the agreement between NHAI and the contractor, the original quantum of toll collection in Athur and Paranur toll booths have not been recorded for several years, sources said. As per the National Highway Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, toll fee has to be slashed by 60 % on realisation of the project cost.

TNIE contacted the NHAI Chennai Regional Office to seek clarity on the provision of "predetermined toll collection" for the Tambaram-Tindivanam NH that witnesses a daily traffic of over one lakh vehicles. But officials declined to comment.

Sources said a section of political leaders and their supporters, advocates, journalists, relatives of top government officials and other influential people always evade fee as Paranur and Athur toll plazas have been functioning even after the contract period.

Su Venkatesan, Madurai Lok Sabha member, tweeted saying that Paranur toll plaza stands as symbol of modern corruption that can be called "BJP model toll gate". A TNIE report dated October 4th, 2021, had exposed huge disparities in toll collection at the Paranur toll plaza before and after the implementation of FASTag payment system.

As per the data obtained by TNIE through RTI, around 5.08 lakh vehicles passed through the Paranur toll plaza in July 2019, resulting in a collection of `3.14 crore. In contrast, the number of tolled vehicles went up by 7.39 lakh in July 2021 generating a collection of `8.83 crore. About 12.47 lakh vehicles had crossed the toll gate after FASTag roll out.

### **More 'free rides' mean longer collection period**



If the actual earning from a toll plaza is not correctly accounted for, the recovery of the road project cost is delayed and toll operators continue to collect the fee even after the concessionaire agreement period is over. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/aug/30/vip-cars-account-for-53-vehicles-at-paranur-toll-plaza-cag-report-2609896.html>

**7. Paranur toll gate collection stands testimony to BJP model of corruption, says Madurai MP (*thehindu.com*) 30 Aug 2023**

Madurai MP Su. Venkatesan has expressed shock over the Comptroller and Auditor General of India report, which had said that 53% of the vehicles that passed the Paranur toll gate near Chennai belonged to VIPs and did not pay any toll.

Pointing out that over 50% of the vehicles getting a free pass at a toll gate was unique, he said it stood testimony to the BJP model of corruption.

It is the same case with other public-funded toll gates in the State, where higher percentage of vehicles — in the guise of belonging to VIPs — have been allowed to pass free of cost, he said in a statement.

According to the CAG report, 1.17 crore vehicles have used the Paranur toll plaza between August 2019 and June 2020. “Over 1 crore vehicles passing through this gate is a mind-boggling number. A more staggering point is that of them, 62,37,152 vehicles, which belonged to VIPs, had not paid toll,” he added. As for other public-funded toll gates, 36% of vehicles at Authur toll gate; 25% of vehicles belonging to VIPs at Kappalur (Madurai) toll gate and 18% at Lanbagudi toll gate were allowed to pass free of cost, he said. These numbers, he said, were in sharp contrast to the percentage of VIP vehicles that passed through privately-developed road (build-operate transfer (BOT)) projects.

While 49.77 lakh vehicles have passed through the Senkurichi toll gate near Uluthurpet between January 2020 and September 2020, free pass were given only for 12.60% of vehicles of VIPs. Only 11.12% of vehicles of VIPs had passed free of charge at Kaniyur toll gate, 7.13 % through Velan Chettiyur toll gate, 6.93% through Palayam toll gate, 6.76% through Vaigundam toll gate and 6.06% through Kodai Road toll gate.

“The fact that as high as 53% of vehicles have been allowed to pass free of cost at the public-funded Paranur toll gate and only 6% of vehicles of VIPs passed through BOT toll gates for free shows a large-scale pilferage of public money,” the MP said.

The CAG report dropped another bomb-shell, stating that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had not produced any evidence for the free usage of highways by vehicles belonging to VIPs.

**Clarification rejected**

In a clarification issued in July 2021, the NHAI had said that collection of toll, even in public-funded road projects, had been entrusted to private agencies. Any loss in collection is their responsibility and, hence, government had not incurred any loss. However, the CAG report has rejected this clarification, Mr. Venkatesan said. Rules for both public-funded and BOT toll gates are the same, the MP said, adding that it was the duty of the Union Highways Ministry to ensure that toll collection agencies were complying with them.

He questioned whether the Centre had incurred any loss or if the toll was collected and not been included in the accounts.

Pointing out that the contracts of toll collection were given to private agencies only based on anticipated revenue, he wondered how much public money would have been swindled. While the toll should be collected for the bridges constructed after September 11, 1956, NHAI had collected toll for a bridge built in 1954 at Paranur toll gate, the MP said.

This toll gate has become “historically-special” on many aspects as per the CAG report, he added. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/paranur-toll-gate-collection-stands-testimony-to-bjp-model-of-corruption-says-madurai-mp/article67248509.ece>

## 8. परनूर टोल प्लाजा पर 53% वाहन वीआईपी कारों के हैं: सीएजी रिपोर्ट (jantaserishta.com) 30 Aug 2023

एक चौंकाने वाले खुलासे में, CAG (भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक) की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि अगस्त 2019 और जून 2020 के बीच तांबरम-तिंडीवनम NH पर परनूर टोल प्लाजा से गुजरने वाले लगभग आधे वाहनों ने टोल शुल्क का भुगतान नहीं किया क्योंकि वे 'वीआईपी वाहन' थे।

एनएचएआई द्वारा नामित टोल संचालन एजेंसी ने दावा किया था कि बूथ से गुजरने वाले 1.17 करोड़ वाहनों में से 62.37 लाख (53.27%) वीआईपी वाहन थे और उनसे नियमों के अनुसार कोई शुल्क नहीं लिया गया था। इसी तरह, उसी सड़क पर स्थित अथुर टोल प्लाजा का उपयोग करने वाले 36% वाहन वीआईपी वाहनों के रूप में दर्ज किए गए थे। 88.92 लाख वाहनों में से 32.39 लाख वाहनों ने अथुर टोल बूथ पर उपयोगकर्ता शुल्क का भुगतान नहीं किया है।

सीएजी रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि कोडाई रोड और निजी ऑपरेटरों द्वारा प्रबंधित कुछ अन्य टोल बूथों पर टोल शुल्क से छूट वाले वीआईपी वाहनों का प्रतिशत औसतन 6% था। तांबरम-तिंडीवनम एनएच को पूरी तरह से सार्वजनिक खजाने से वित्तपोषित किया गया था, और 1 अप्रैल, 2005 से एनएच पर स्थित परनूर और अथुर टोल गेटों पर उपयोगकर्ता शुल्क एकत्र किया जा रहा है।

यदि किसी टोल प्लाजा से होने वाली वास्तविक कमाई का सही हिसाब नहीं लगाया जाता है, तो परियोजना लागत की वसूली में देरी होती है और टोल ऑपरेटर रियायती समझौते की अवधि समाप्त होने के बाद भी शुल्क वसूलना जारी रखते हैं, सूत्र जेड। दिलचस्प

बात यह है कि केंद्रीय सड़क परिवहन मंत्रालय और हाईवे ने सीएजी की रिपोर्ट पर प्रतिक्रिया देते हुए कहा कि सरकारी खजाने को कोई नुकसान नहीं हुआ क्योंकि टोल ऑपरेटरों द्वारा एनएचएआई को किया गया भुगतान समझौते के अनुसार पूर्व निर्धारित था। केंद्रीय राजमार्ग मंत्रालय ने कहा कि भले ही संग्रह में गिरावट हो, एनएचएआई को कोई नुकसान नहीं होगा।

मदुरै के सांसद का कहना है कि परनूर बीजेपी मॉडल टोल गेट भ्रष्टाचार है

सूत्रों ने कहा कि एनएचएआई और ठेकेदार के बीच समझौते के कारण, अथुर और परनूर टोल बूथों पर टोल संग्रह की मूल मात्रा कई वर्षों से दर्ज नहीं की गई है। राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग शुल्क (दरों और संग्रहण का निर्धारण) नियम, 2008 के अनुसार, परियोजना लागत की वसूली पर टोल शुल्क में 60% की कटौती की जानी है।

टीएनआई ने तांबरम-तिंडीवनम एनएच के लिए "पूर्व निर्धारित टोल संग्रह" के प्रावधान पर स्पष्टता प्राप्त करने के लिए एनएचएआई चेन्नई क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय से संपर्क किया, जहां प्रतिदिन एक लाख से अधिक वाहनों का आवागमन होता है। लेकिन अधिकारियों ने टिप्पणी करने से इनकार कर दिया।

सूत्रों ने कहा कि राजनीतिक नेताओं और उनके समर्थकों, अधिवक्ताओं, पत्रकारों, शीर्ष सरकारी अधिकारियों के रिश्तेदारों और अन्य प्रभावशाली लोगों का एक वर्ग हमेशा शुल्क से बचता है क्योंकि परनूर और अथुर टोल प्लाजा अनुबंध अवधि के बाद भी काम कर रहे हैं।

मदुरै लोकसभा सदस्य सु वेंकटेशन ने ट्वीट कर कहा कि परनूर टोल प्लाजा आधुनिक भ्रष्टाचार का प्रतीक है जिसे "भाजपा मॉडल टोल गेट" कहा जा सकता है। 4 अक्टूबर, 2021 की एक TNIE रिपोर्ट ने FASTag भुगतान प्रणाली के कार्यान्वयन से पहले और बाद में परनूर टोल प्लाजा पर टोल संग्रह में भारी असमानताओं को उजागर किया था।

टीएनआई द्वारा आरटीआई के माध्यम से प्राप्त आंकड़ों के अनुसार, जुलाई 2019 में लगभग 5.08 लाख वाहन परनूर टोल प्लाजा से गुजरे, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप ₹3.14 करोड़ का संग्रह हुआ। इसके विपरीत, जुलाई 2021 में टोल वाहनों की संख्या 7.39 लाख बढ़ गई, जिससे ₹8.83 करोड़ का संग्रह हुआ। FASTag लागू होने के बाद लगभग 12.47 लाख वाहन टोल गेट पार कर चुके थे।

अधिक 'मुफ्त सवारी' का मतलब लंबी संग्रहण अवधि है

यदि टोल प्लाजा से होने वाली वास्तविक कमाई का सही हिसाब नहीं लगाया जाता है, तो सड़क परियोजना लागत की वसूली में देरी होती है और टोल ऑपरेटर रियायती समझौते की अवधि समाप्त होने के बाद भी शुल्क वसूलना जारी रखते हैं।

<https://jantaserishta.com/local/tamil-nadu/53-vehicles-at-paranur-toll-plaza-are-vip-cars-cag-report-2762119>

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

**9. 830 fake institutes got Rs 144 crore in minority scholarship funds, alleges CBI (*scroll.in*) 30 Aug 2023**

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered a case of scam in minority scholarships in which 830 allegedly fake institutions received funds from the government, The Indian Express reported on Wednesday.

The alleged scam has caused a loss of Rs 144 crore to the Ministry of Minority Affairs between financial years 2017-'18 and 2021-'22, according to the first information report.

More than 700 of the 830 institutions accused of duping the government are from five states. Assam (225 such institutes) tops the list followed by Karnataka (162) and Uttar Pradesh (154). These institutes were registered on the National Scholarship Portal and found to be “either non-operational or fake, or partial fake”, the FIR stated, according to The Indian Express.

The case has been registered on a complaint lodged by minority affairs ministry which had asked the National Council of Applied Economic Research to conduct an evaluation following reports about embezzlement of funds under the scholarship schemes, The Hindu reported.

The case has been filed against unknown officials of the alleged fake institutes and public sector banks as well as nodal officers at the district and state-level officers. They have been booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheating), 468 (forgery), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record) and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

How was the scam carried out?

The alleged embezzlement was carried out by three types of scamsters: fake beneficiaries enrolled under fake institutes, fake beneficiaries enrolled under genuine institutes and partially fake beneficiaries from genuine institutes, The Hindu reported.

Citing a specific case, the FIR stated that at a primary government school in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh, several “fake students” were getting scholarships under a post-matric scheme. In Bihar, the nodal officers registered in the government’s records were in fact cyber cafe owners, who likely made fake applications.

In certain schools in Madhya Pradesh, scholarship applications had been filed for higher classes even as they had classes running only till standard 8, the FIR alleged. Some of the other schools did not even have any students from the minority communities.

<https://scroll.in/latest/1055121/830-fake-institutes-got-rs-144-crore-in-minority-scholarship-funds-alleges-cbi>

**10. Jan Dhan 2.0: Consider a universal basic income (*livemint.com*) Aug 29, 2023**

India now has over half a billion Jan Dhan accounts, a truly staggering count of basic banking relationships created by the government in less than a decade under its Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. As finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said this week, over

55.5% of these bank accounts are held by women. The scheme, she added, stood out as a “pivotal initiative” for financial inclusion. With digital identities proven by Aadhaar as its base, it has served as a channel for the direct transfer of cash benefits to various beneficiaries. By making formal credit accessible, it has also helped many of our most needy escape the clutches of moneylenders. Crucially, the scheme’s coverage of India’s poor allows the Centre to provide instant relief from distress in case the need arises. In 2020, for example, Jan Dhan’s reach proved useful after covid struck. An all-India lockdown sent large numbers of city migrants walking long distances to reach the security of food and shelter at their birthplaces. Pandemic panic may have been worse without the monthly aid of ₹500 for three months announced for each of the 200 million odd Jan Dhan accounts held by women back then. As a mechanism, however, its most heroic role may be yet to come. For it enables us to envision a social safety net in the form of a universal basic income (UBI).

As a policy concept, a UBI is redistribution at its most literal; it puts everyone on the state’s payroll. The proposal is simple: Apart from fulfilling its usual duties of governance and paying for the security, healthcare and education of people, the state should deploy public funds to grant every adult a certain sum of money for personal use every month. The usual objection to this ‘money for nothing’ is the moral hazard it could pose. If cash handouts start showing up in bank accounts, would it not make recipients too lazy to work? The answer depends on the actual size of these monthly transfers. With popular aspirations on an incline, transfers that allow no more than bare subsistence are very unlikely to distort labour-market incentives. What helps the hard-up meet primary needs will aid rather than disturb an economy driven by fast swelling demand for goods and services. The next major question, for us especially, is whether the government can afford to run such a programme. Although maximum coverage is the conceptual aim of a UBI, its beneficiary list need not strictly be ‘universal’. The well-off would certainly have to be kept out. Yet, even if the nearly 68 million individuals who filed income tax returns last year are excluded (along with their dependents), and we manage to minimize tax evasion, we may still have over a billion Indians to pay. And even a monthly UBI of ₹1,000 each, a pittance by today’s standards, would imply an annual fiscal outgo of ₹12 trillion. This is about ₹2 trillion more than the current year’s budget for infrastructure and not an attractive proposition at this juncture.

But what of the future? Annual economic expansion of 6% plus could change the fiscal calculus within a decade or less. As poverty declines and our tax base expands (as expected to), fewer people will need transfers. With its viability just a matter of time, we should place the concept of a UBI under evaluation. Since it would impart a powerful fiscal stimulus by placing money directly in people’s hands, for instance, its macro impact would need to be studied in advance. Once the numbers begin to add up, it could form the basis of Jan Dhan 2.0, a whole new welfare deal for the needy. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/jan-dhan-2-0-consider-a-universal-basic-income-11693320199610.html>

**11. Govt to monetize BSNL’s telecom towers on OMT model for 20 years**  
(*economictimes.indiatimes.com*) Aug 30, 2023

MUMBAI: The government will monetize 10,014 telecom tower assets of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) on an Operate-Maintain-Transfer (OMT) concession for

20 years on the lines of the Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT) model followed in the highways sector.

The initial estimated concession value (IECV) for the 10,014 telecom towers has been set at Rs 4,200 crore at an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of 13.18 percent, according to the minutes of an inter-ministerial meeting that gave final shape to the plan. ET Infra has reviewed a copy of the minutes.

IECV refers to the discounted value (discounted at a rate equal to three percent above the bank rate for debt and a normative rate for equity return) of the net free cash flow expected to be generated by the project from the valuation date till the 20-year concession period ends.

A single stage, two-part selection process will be followed for the transaction and the bid will be awarded to the entity placing the highest total upfront concession fee.

According to the Department of Telecommunications (DOT), BSNL has some 68,049 tower assets spread across 26 circles, of which 70 percent are fiberized, suitable for network and service densification (for both 5G and 4G).

Since this is a brownfield O&M concession, there is no capital investment on infrastructure for the successful bidder.

Given the rapid technological developments in the sector, a concession period of 20 years has been decided.

The eligibility criteria exclude technical qualification to attract maximum participation from the industry. Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs) will also be allowed to participate in the transaction.

The eligibility of bidders will be based solely on their financial capacity. However, bidders are required to submit an undertaking stating that they have the requisite expertise either on their own or through O&M partner(s) to fulfill the service level requirements.

The revenue streams for the concessionaire include site rentals (79 percent of expected revenues), deployment of MEC servers (12 percent of expected revenues), new technology and microwave rollout (6 percent of expected revenues) and EV charging (3 percent of expected revenues).

The concessionaire would fix the tariffs/rentals for leasing out space to telecom service providers (TSPs) on commercial terms. The agreement provides the right to the concessionaire to demand, collect and appropriate rentals and fees based on terms laid out in the Master Service Agreement and other project agreements. The concessionaire can also generate other ancillary revenue, which it will be allowed to charge on commercial terms.

The concessionaire has to provide BSNL one reserved spot of infrastructure on the towers free of cost. The concessionaire will charge rentals and fees from BSNL for all assets deployed by the state-owned company on the project beyond the reserved spot.

The rates for such rentals and fees for BSNL will be fixed based on the benchmark Master Service Agreements entered by the concessionaire with other tenants and as determined by BSNL.

The successful bidder will have the right of first refusal (RoFR) when BSNL puts up more towers for monetization in subsequent rounds.

At the meeting, the Department of Economic Affairs observed that there are some 2,000 tower sites for which the rental agreement renewal is pending. It asked BSNL to ensure that known disputed sites are kept out of the deal. Further, there should be a mechanism for rental agreement renewal for rented sites. It also wanted clauses relating to termination payments to be brought in line with the TOT agreements.

The NITI Aayog suggested that a mechanism may be inbuilt into the project to capture any windfall gain that may accrue to the concessionaire. Besides, the right of first refusal to the concessionaire may be done away with as there is no visibility on handing over additional tower assets.

Responding to these issues, the DoT said that “known disputed sites will not be included in the proposal”. Further, rental agreement renewal is a continuous, ongoing process and sites are renewed on a five-year basis. However, this is a business risk and will be accounted for in the bids. About 90 percent of site renewals occur on time. There are continuous efforts and liaising with landlords to ensure that rental agreement is renewed on time. An appropriate mechanism for the same exists in BSNL.

Termination payments, according to BSNL, have been linked with discounted concession fee. A table with discounting factors applied to the concession fee less insurance cover to be paid by the concessionaire for each scenario that triggers a termination event will be provided in the concession agreement.

The possibility of earning a windfall gain, as observed by NITI Aayog, is “very limited due to intense competition in the sector and very small land parcel and nature of asset”, the state-owned operator said.

BSNL further explained that the RoFR will come into play only in case of bids within 10 percent of the highest offer and in case of matching the highest offer. “While this is not having any adverse impact on the bid, but it has positive impact in terms of giving comfort to existing and tested operator. The same is included in the Draft Concession Agreement (DCA) to increase bidder participation,” it said.

The scope of allied activities, according to BSNL, is limited as only 120-150 sq ft area is provided to the concessionaire. Some allied activities like EV charging, edge computing and advertisement have been considered for computing IECV. However, given that concession is for a 20-year period, and it is a technologically fast evolving sector, it may not be possible to envisage all possible use cases upfront. Hence, mechanisms to protect the interests of BSNL have been incorporated in the DCA.

While monetization of 10,802 telecom tower assets were recommended in the feasibility report for the transaction, 10,014 towers have been selected for monetization



out of which 8,356 towers have been validated till March. BSNL will endeavor to have complete clarity on sites being taken up for monetization, it added.

<https://infra.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/urban-infrastructure/govt-to-monetize-bsnls-telecom-towers-on-omt-model-for-20-years/103194178>

## **12. India's green energy transition could cost trillions of dollars – where will the funds come from? (scroll.in) 29 Aug 2023**

When G20 leaders gather in New Delhi in September, the issue of how to fund the action needed to turn their economies green and tackle climate change will be high on the agenda.

India, which has positioned itself as a voice for the Global South on the international stage, is demanding accountability on an overdue promise by rich nations to deliver \$100 billion in annual climate finance to vulnerable countries.

India also faces a significant challenge at home: mobilising trillions of dollars for its own climate plans, such as boosting renewable energy, to cut emissions to net zero by 2070.

While there is no official estimate, researchers say trillions of dollars will be required by 2030 – and flows of green finance are only about a quarter of what is needed now.

To unlock larger amounts of money faster, experts told Context that India should provide a clear definition of the economic activities it considers to be green.

Here we take a closer look at current funding, needs and ways to increase green investment in India:

### **Huge funding requirement**

On the path to meeting a national goal to cut emissions to net zero by 2070, India has set short-term targets for 2030, including increasing clean power capacity to 500 gigawatts (GW) up from about 170 GW now, and meeting half of its energy needs with renewables.

The Indian government has not published an assessment of how much funding it will need to achieve those aims.

But the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, an Indian think-tank, pegs the investment required to reach net zero at \$10.1 trillion.

The lion's share of the money is to shift India from a fossil fuel-heavy economy, now reliant on coal, to one driven by renewables led by solar power.

To make the energy transition, India will need to green its electricity supply and transport, and decarbonise its industries.

This will require financing for infrastructure including renewable power capacity, new electricity grids and large-scale battery plants to store clean energy, as well as technologies like cooling and capturing carbon emissions.



In May, the Reserve Bank of India said the country should seek to deploy green financing equalling at least 2.5% of gross domestic product each year until 2030.

It will need new investments in the range of \$7.2 trillion to \$12.1 trillion by 2050, the central bank noted in a report.

If the energy transition is accelerated, experts say the financial requirements will grow exponentially.

For instance, several coal power plants in India's energy fleet are just 10-15 years old. To recover the initial investment, a plant typically needs to run for 30 years.

But if India decides to shut down those plants early, it would create huge non-performing assets - a major financial risk given that 4%-5% of the balance sheets of Indian banks and other financing institutions are exposed to coal power plants, said Labanya Prakash Jena, head of the Center for Sustainable Finance at the Climate Policy Initiative, a global think-tank.

Lenders and equity investors would have to be compensated using vast sums of concessional finance, Jena added.

Making up for the lost power-generation capacity would require installing renewables capacity and battery storage on a much larger scale than now planned, hiking the bill.

In addition, between five million and 10 million people whose livelihoods now depend on the fossil fuel economy, directly and indirectly, will need help to shift to new jobs.

The topic of a "just transition" for workers is fairly new in India – and it remains unclear how much helping impacted communities will cost, said Sandeep Pai, research director at the Swaniti Initiative, an Indian policy think-tank.

#### Global potential

Green investment is so far at much lower levels than India requires, analysts say.

In the financial year 2020, green finance flows tracked by Climate Policy Initiative were at \$44 billion per year, only about a quarter of what India estimated it would need through to 2030 when it produced its first – and now outdated – climate action plan under the Paris Agreement in 2015. It has yet to update the figures.

Domestic funding accounted for 83% in 2020, with international finance making up the balance.

Within India, sources of climate finance remain limited – but globally there are huge amounts that could be tapped.

For example, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, the world's largest coalition of financial institutions committed to transitioning the economy to net zero, has a pool of \$130 trillion that could be used for climate action globally.

But for India to access that money, experts say it needs a framework to help define how much is required and to attract investors.

Getting more, faster

As a first step, India should define for the capital markets what it regards as “green” economic activities and finance, which would also help it measure and monitor flows, said Dhruva Purkayastha, India director, Climate Policy Initiative.

India has yet to put in place a so-called “green taxonomy” – as in the European Union, China and Malaysia – which provides definitions and signals where green investments are possible.

India’s finance ministry started working on recommendations for a green taxonomy in late 2020, which were submitted in 2022. But the government has yet to make anything public.

Once India has a taxonomy, it can use methods such as “priority sector lending” to channel bank loans into green projects in areas of the economy that may not otherwise receive adequate or timely finance, Purkayastha said.

Further, India needs to allocate more direct government spending to green activities, which can be blended with private sources to leverage commercial investment, he added.

India would also benefit from the creation of a green financial institution or green bank, enabling it to mobilise funding from both domestic and international sources, he said. <https://scroll.in/article/1054775/indias-green-energy-transition-could-cost-trillions-of-dollars-where-will-the-funds-come-from>

**13. Outlay on roads and renewables may climb to Rs 13 lakh crore in FY24, FY25 (*indianexpress.com*) August 30, 2023**

The combined capital outlay on roads and renewables in the current and next fiscals is likely rise to Rs 13 lakh crore, a whopping 35 per cent growth compared with the preceding two fiscals, backed by strong execution speed.

The pace of construction of roads and capacity addition in renewables is seen increasing 25 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively, over the current and next fiscals, rating firm Crisil said in a report. “This bodes well for the economy, given the high multiplier effect of road development and the critical role renewable energy can play in achieving India’s energy transition,” it said.

According to Crisil, the growth is expected to sustain over the medium term, supported by conducive policies, strong investor interest and healthy financial profiles, leading to stable credit quality of companies in the Crisil Ratings portfolio in both sectors.

Gurpreet Chhatwal, Managing Director, CRISIL Ratings, said, “The pace of execution of renewable energy projects is set to increase 33 per cent to ~20 GW per annum over current and next fiscals (15 GW per annum in the past two fiscals) supported by a healthy executable pipeline of 50 GW of projects as on March 31, 2023. Similarly, road

construction is set to accelerate 25 per cent to 12,500-13,000 km per year over the current and next fiscals on continued healthy awarding of projects and step up in execution by road construction players.”

“A supportive policy environment adds its own spurs. For instance, steps such as late payment surcharge has helped keep dues from discoms to renewable generators in check,” Crisil said. In roads, the introduction of the hybrid annuity model (HAM) has speeded up execution and drawn in investments, it said.

Further, initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat, forbearance during the pandemic, and emergence of infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) have afforded a fillip to both sectors.

“Investor interest has been encouraging, with Rs 75,000-80,000 crore raised through equity and asset monetisation in the past two fiscals in both sectors,” it said.

Continued focus on asset monetisation and equity raising, along with healthy cash flows will keep the capital structure balanced in both sectors. So, despite higher capital outlays, rated renewables and road entities should have a healthy average debt service cushion of 1.2-1.3 times over the tenure of debt on their balance sheets, which supports their credit profiles, Crisil said.

But challenges remain such as risks of aggressive bidding and execution by new entrants. Rationalisation in bidding strategies will be crucial to sustain profitability and maintaining quality, Crisil said.  
<https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/outlay-on-roads-and-renewables-may-climb-to-rs-13-lakh-crore-in-fy24-fy25-8915300/>