



Once again we have scathing reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the Government of Goa. In its latest audit of the finances and financial functioning of the government, tabled in the State Assembly a few days ago, the CAG is reported to have revealed several financial “irregularities” across practically all departments; so many and so universally visible that they should really be called regularities, rather than irregularities.

For example, the River Navigation Department is said to have lost Rs 11 lakh by ‘not maintaining a cashbook’. The Excise Department lost Rs 30 lakh by ‘short levy of duty’. The Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) lost Rs 45 lakhs plus interest, by ‘not renewing the advertising agreements’ as recommended by the Standing Committee. Mapusa Municipal Council (MMC) carried out roadworks in 11 private properties without invoking Section 170 of the Goa Municipality Act, resulting in the property-owners not having to pay for the work or, in other words, an MMC loss of Rs 86.81 lakhs.

The Goa Tourism Department is, surely, in a league of its own. The CAG has pointed out a vast number of ‘serious lapses’, ‘wasteful expenditures’, and ‘poor execution’ here, resulting in the loss (or siphoning off?) of huge public moneys. One case relates to the purchase of equipment for a sound and light show at Aguada Jail in 2018 when the renovations of the site were yet incomplete. Why would anyone purchase material today when your own plan says that it will be needed only after three years? The answer is obvious. The equipment was not cheap; it was purchased for Rs 3.9 crore. And then – being unused – it was handed over (or gifted?) to a private party in Baga, and that too, without any formal authorization. We don’t know what happened to it after that. And then the same kind of equipment was freshly purchased for Aguada, this time for Rs 3.3 crore again, but once again before the show was ready to start. One does not know what has happened to this lot of equipment. And this is not the only instance where expensive assets were purchased long before they were to be used, resulting in them being abandoned, deteriorated, or simply missing; it seems almost a norm with this department.

One must also mention the more than 12,800 utilisation certificates (UTs) which were not submitted by 31 government departments for funds that they had received and spent, to the tune of more than Rs 3000 crore, as of 31 March 2024. UTs are supposed to be submitted by a recipient organization when they receive government funds, to prove that the funds were used as intended. Not submitting them implies that the funds did not go to the intended organization, or for the intended purpose, or, in other words, that they were misused. These thousands of unsubmitted UTs span the decade before 2014, and some date back to even earlier than that; so the chance of them being submitted now is practically nil. More than Rs 3000 crores have disappeared without a trace.



In other words, every single government department and ministry of the Government of Goa - of any authority under the state government who controls any government money, really - is busy spending huge public funds without the proper procedures, without records of proper usage, and, further, without even any intentions of proper usage. Now that we know this, on the authority of the CAG of India, no less, what happens next?

Very simply: NOTHING. The office of the CAG is the auditor of all expenditures and receipts of the Union Government (including Defence, Railways, etc), the state governments (including state government companies, corporations, and autonomous bodies), and also local governments. It files an enormous number of reports every year on the expenditures and receipts by these government bodies, indicting them for lapses, delays, oversights, disappearances, incompletions, inefficiencies, negligence, all of which entail the regular loss of enormous amounts of public funds every year. But has anything ever resulted from these reports? How much of this lost public money gets recovered? How many of those responsible get punished? How many habitual offenders get kicked out of their jobs, or sent to jail? How many ministers in charge of such loss-riven departments lose their cabinet positions? Is the lost money ever recovered from them or their top officers? All of us know the answers.

There is actually a requirement of action to be taken within a stipulated period of time by the government bodies indicted by the CAG, but the CAG cannot enforce this, and it almost never happens. All the CAG can do is to table its reports in the Assemblies and Parliament, and put them up on the CAG website; and that's it.

The purpose of the CAG reports thus seems to be just about providing damning information about how shamelessly venal the system is, and thus about spreading cynicism and acceptance of the idea of corruption and inefficiency in government, especially the brazen idea that nothing can be done, that all this drain of public funds into private hands is, in fact, normal politics. The other impact is to make it clear how lucrative government jobs can be - via not just the high salaries and perks, but also all these illegal routes - with ample ways of pocketing public moneys, and apparently no repercussions at all.

It is not that systems have not been introduced to stop the loot. Central Vigilance Commissions, Lok Ayukta, Lok Pal, Right to Information (RTI), etc., etc.... so many solutions which have been reluctantly set up and then completely undermined by the looters, right up to getting determined RTI activists killed when nothing else works. All the better for convincing everyone that nothing can be done to change things.

The rest of the world is different. China has executed several corrupt officials and politicians; Korea has now a history of putting corrupt Presidents in jail; government heads in Europe and South America have also gone to jail, but in India no such worthy ever has to worry. It is the

whistleblowers who get into big trouble here, while the wholesale loot of people and nation continues undisturbed.



Corruption reported, and reported, and reported...

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