



Finance Matters

News, Views & Perspectives on Financial Policies & Institutions

Why Should We Care About Development Finance? ...because it's our money!

Volume 9, Issue 27, January 16, 2024

The Quiet Dilution of Workers' Rights

The Building and Other Construction Workers cess was never meant to be charity. It was a hard-won levy. One percent of construction cost. Money meant to protect workers who fall from scaffolds, migrate across states, and age without pensions. The Draft Social Security Rules of 2025 quietly change how this money is checked. Under Rule 42, the State steps back. Contractors now self-assess their liability and get it certified by a chartered engineer they themselves hire. This is not reform. It is withdrawal. When private professionals paid by builders decide what builders owe, under-reporting is not a risk. It is the business model.

The rules go further. If the self-assessed cess is below Rs 10 lakh, no scrutiny is required at all. That covers projects under roughly Rs 10 crore. A huge part of India's construction economy lives right there. Medium projects. Apartment blocks. Commercial buildings. Add to this a 180-day deadline after which self-assessment becomes final by default. Delay becomes a reward. Inaction becomes policy. Meanwhile, refunds to employers must be cleared in 30 days. Fast lanes for capital. Slow queues for workers.

This logic of dilution repeats itself in the Draft Code on Wages. The State defines a standard working family as four people but counts them as only three adult consumption units. One earner. A spouse. Two children. No parents. No dependents. No reality. In speeches, the joint family is praised. In wage law, it disappears. The message is blunt. Care for elders is your duty. Paying for it is not the employer's problem. Even food is out mathematically. Women are assumed to need less. Children even less. In 2026, this arithmetic still survives.

The same hollowing out appears in maternity protection. Crèches can be moved farther away in industrial zones. Nursing breaks are capped by travel time that may not exist in real life. And childcare can be replaced with a Rs 500 allowance. That is not support. It barely buys milk powder. Worse, maternity benefits can be withdrawn for vaguely defined misconduct, including moral turpitude. A pregnant woman's survival is turned into a disciplinary tool. Fight back, lose your benefit.

Taken together, these rules mark a clear shift. From inspection to facilitation. From rights to paperwork. From welfare to accounting. The State collects less, checks less, and forgives more. Funds grow on paper but fail to reach people. Workers remain invisible unless registered by employers who gain nothing by doing so. This is not simplification. It is erosion by design. And the cost will be paid, as always, by those who build India and remain unseen once the building is complete.

- Team CFA

We refuse to give up trying to demystify finance. We will continue to hold the government and financial institutions accountable for their economic policies and investments. Support us.



Random Reflections How Tamil Nadu Achieved Economic Growth with Social Justice and Development

As per the RBI Handbook on Statistics of States, Tamil Nadu doubled its economy in a decade from a GSDP of Rs. 14.6 lakh crore in 2017-18 to Rs. 31.18 lakh crore in 2024-25. It is second among all states in GSDP, next to Maharashtra. It was at the bottom two when we got independence. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has reached 56%, double the national average for college-level enrolment. [Read More.](#)



The Coastal Course: Kerala's Deep Dive Into the Blue Economy and Its Paradox



Article: माधव गडगिल : प्रकृति, विज्ञान और जनतंत्र के पक्षधर पर्यावरणविद्



12 YEARS OF INJUSTICE: STILL NO ACTION ON TATA MUNDRA

Communities in Tata Mundra are still fighting for clean water, safe air, and justice. Add your voice — urge the World Bank and IFC to act now. Follow the link or scan the QR code to sign the petition here: <https://indiaactioncenter.org/petition>

The Tata Mundra Project: A Decade of Broken Promises

A decade of environmental destruction. Thousands of lives affected [9].

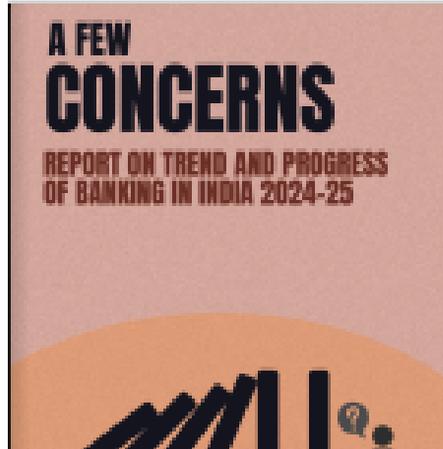
It's time for the World Bank to act.

Call to action

Flip Book

A Few Concerns: Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2024-25

The Report is the RBI's annual report card on the health, structure and direction of India's banking system. Find here a few snippets of the concerns that the report flags and a few data points that it shares, which should concern us. Bend Back Banking to the Needs of the People! [Read More](#)



FLIP BOOK: POCKET MONEY

Brief on what they kept from you about your money this week.

A weekly In-Digest from the Centre for Financial Accountability

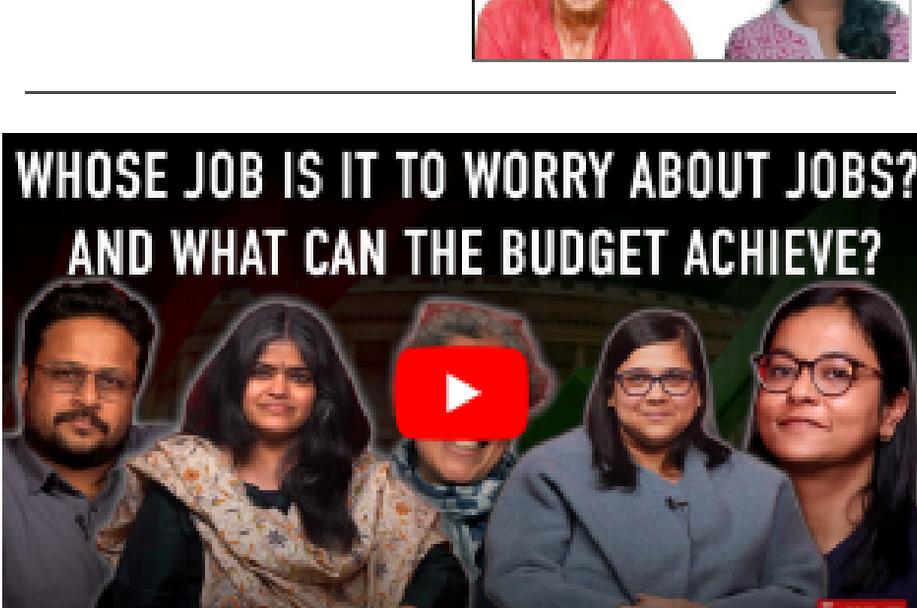
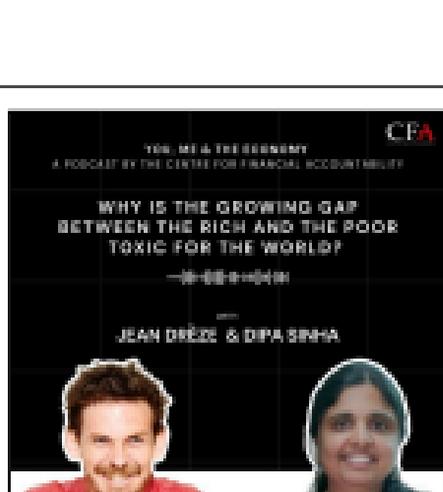
[Read More.](#)

You, Me and the Economy | Podcast

Why is the growing gap between the rich and the poor Toxic for the World? | Jean Drèze and Dipa Sinha

The super-rich have a feast of delicacies, while the rest of the country struggles to get two square meals a day.

[Read More](#)



WIRE



Centre for Financial Accountability

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Youtube](#)

You've received this email because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)