Finance Matters

News, Views & Perspectives on Financial Policies & Institutions

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

Volume 9, Issue 45, May 22, 2026

Who Pays for India's AI Revolution?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is projecting India as the next global hub for artificial intelligence, with companies like Google, Microsoft and OpenAI pouring billions into data centres. The biggest symbol of this ambition is in Visakhapatnam, where Google is building what could become its largest data centre outside the US. Governments are celebrating this as "development". But behind the AI hype lies a troubling story of land acquisition, environmental damage and growing inequality.

Data centres are extremely power- and water-intensive, especially the new AI-focused hyperscale facilities that operate 24x7. Yet India still has no proper national policy regulating them. In Vizag, environmental activists and lawyers have raised serious concerns because the project received rapid environmental clearance without clear public information on water consumption, energy use or long-term environmental impact. This is happening in a region already facing groundwater stress. While corporations are promised uninterrupted resources, nearby communities are often left dealing with shortages and uncertainty.

The burden of this "digital development" is falling disproportionately on the poor. Reports from Vizag and Mumbai show Dalit and low-income communities facing displacement and pressure to give up land for data centres and related projects. In Tarluvada village, residents allege that Dalit-owned land is being specifically targeted for acquisition. At the same time, the electricity demands of these projects are pushing governments to continue depending on coal power, worsening pollution and public health risks in already vulnerable regions.

What is happening in Vizag reflects a growing global pattern surrounding the unchecked expansion of Big Tech infrastructure. In the United States, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recently exposed complaints from residents in Georgia who say water near a massive Meta data centre turned discoloured and unsafe after construction intensified, forcing some families to depend on shipped water even for bathing and cooking. Big Tech's AI expansion is being sold as progress, while ordinary communities are left to bear the environmental damage, water stress and public health risks.

India has every right to build digital infrastructure and strengthen technological sovereignty. But growth without accountability is not progress. If AI expansion comes at the cost of displaced communities, depleted water resources and increased coal dependence, then the country risks repeating the same destructive development model in a new digital form. India does not just need more data centres, it needs democratic regulation, environmental safeguards and justice for the people forced to bear the cost of this AI boom.

\- 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.

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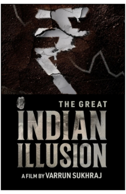

Blog

The Great Indian Illusion!

The documentary film "The Great Indian Illusion" by young & promising film director Mr. Varun Sukhraj emerges at a critical historical moment when the Indian banking sector is being projected as a spectacular success story through carefully curated balance-sheet figures, rising profits and declining NPAs. Yet beneath this glossy narrative lies a disturbing reality of deepening inequalities, growing corporate concentration, privatisation pressures and the systematic marginalisation of ordinary bank employees, rural customers and small borrowers. Read More.

Workshop:

Stories in Numbers | Storytelling and Data Interpretations Workshop

Fellowship:

Just and Sustainable Transitions (JUST) Fellowship 2026

Internship:

2nd Marjorie Fernandes Internship Program for Undergraduate Students (2026)

Article

तेंदूपत्ता प्रबंधन से आत्मनिर्भरता की ओर आदिवासी समाज

कई ग्राम सभाओं ने तेंदूपत्ता संग्रह, भंडारण और बिक्री का निर्णय स्वयं लिया है। बिचौलियों की भूमिका घटने से मजदूरी का लाभ सीधे आदिवासी परिवारों तक पहुंच रहा है। यह आर्थिक आत्मनिर्भरता की रचनात्मक मिसाल है। आदिवासी परिवारों के आजीविका का मुख्य आधार जंगल, कृषि और लघु वनोपज है। लंबे समय तक तेंदूपत्ता, महुआ जैसे वनोपज पर ठेकेदारों का कब्जा रहा है।इसी तारतम्य में गांव गणराज्य महा ग्रामसभा बैहर बालाघाट द्वारा विगत कुछ वर्षों से तेंदूपत्ता संग्रहण एवं विपणन का कार्य किया जा रहा है। Read More.

Response Letter

Response to the RBI on it's revised directions on relief measures in areas affected by natural calamities

CFA has written to the RBI raising serious concerns over its revised disaster relief framework for borrowers affected by natural calamities. CFA highlights critical gaps, including restrictive eligibility criteria, absence of loan waivers, inadequate grievance mechanisms & the exclusion of affected communities from the policy process, urging the RBI to make the framework more inclusive & responsive to India's growing climate vulnerabilities. Read More

Article

Pocket Money

Vol III Issue 49
23th May 2026

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

A weekly In-Digest from the **Centre for Financial Accountability**

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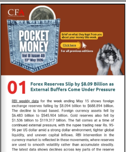

West Asia, War, and Rising Trade Insecurities in India | Online discussion

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