

NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON PM CARES FUND

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency & Accountability including Right to Information and Citizen Charter

There is something about the nature of the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund that has led to demands for its scrutiny. While the Supreme Court has [rejected a writ petition](#) calling for a funds diversion from this fund to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and also denied the petitioners' demand that the "public charitable trust" be audited by the CAG, questions remain about its need, operation and its persisting lack of transparency. A three-judge Bench asserted that no exception could be taken to the constitution of yet another public charitable trust at a time of a raging COVID-19 pandemic. But the need for a fresh trust when there is the PM's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) with a substantial corpus in place is not clear. Since the PM CARES Fund existed independent of budgetary support or government money, the Court's reasoning was that there was "no occasion" for a CAG audit. However, the concern is not about the legal basis or the absence of a CAG audit, or whether it is superfluous or indeed essential. As responses to RTI queries on the Fund reveal, the [government is not forthcoming](#) on questions on its transparency or accountability. Queries on the trust deed for the Fund, and its creation and operation have been summarily dismissed by arguing that the Fund was not a "public authority" even though the PM is its ex-officio chairman and three Cabinet ministers are its trustees. And, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs had also treated it as a [fund set up by the Centre](#).

Since the trust was created, lakhs of public and private sector employees have donated a day's salary to it, with some of them claiming that this deduction was done without their explicit consent. Many public sector units and corporate entities too have made donations because of a proviso allowing uncapped corporate donations that would qualify as corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditure. Earlier, a government panel had rightly suggested that the double benefit of tax exemption would be a "regressive incentive". Thus far, the exact amount of donations and a clear break-up of the expenditure from the fund have not been provided apart from an announcement in May that [3,100 crore had been sanctioned](#) from it to be spent on ventilators, migrant worker welfare and vaccine development. States have led the response to COVID-19 and their resources have increasingly been stretched by the continuing rise in infections and deaths, which have crossed the 2.8 million and 54,000 mark, respectively. At the very least, RTI requests that seek to understand how funds are being received and how they are being disbursed so far should be seen as legitimate. Also, more needs to be done by the government to publicise donations to the more accountable NDRF which allows for a transfer of funds to States.

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

To get full access, please subscribe.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep pace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep pace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days free trial [Sign Up](#)

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com