

CAG raps science dept

**The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI, May 13.**

THE latest report of the comptroller and auditor-general of India (CAG) says the department of science and technology (DST) has wasted at least Rs 10.82 lakhs through its scheme, 'science and technology for weaker sections', due to injudicious sanction of projects and ineffective monitoring.

Though the CAG has been auditing the expenditure of various scientific ministries, a separate cell was set up only in 1986 to look into the funds of the government's scientific departments.

A prime example of DST's improper sanctioning of public funds is a private project called 'improvement and development of leather technology for Harijan beneficiaries of village Mangroth.' The proposal for funding, received from a private association, was sent to five experts for review in 1985.

Despite adverse comments against the proposal from three of the experts, and their recommendations to DST not to fund the project, the department sanctioned Rs 1.99 lakhs after consulting the Central Leather Research Institute, Madras.

The DST released Rs 1.4 lakhs for the project in August 1986. The association did not submit any progress report in December 1986 and 1987. Despite many reminders, there was no progress report and the DST decided to close the project after a group monitoring workshop found the programme unsatisfactory. The funds were not refunded to the department.

Another such infructuous pro-

gramme was a project 'scientific awareness programme: popularisation among tribals' carried out by the National Institute of Social Work and Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar.

Two of the three experts consulted by the DST supported the proposal with modifications; the third one recommended against its funding as he found the proposal was diffused and lacked scientific understanding. A DST officer who visited the institute also recommended against funding the project proposal. Yet, the DST approved it for funding in September 1989.

The project envisaged adoption of 200 villages of Phulbani district in Orissa for covering subjects such as environment, agriculture and utility resources. The institute was given Rs 1.68 lakhs against the total sanction of Rs 2.68 lakhs.

In September 1990, the DST felt that the project's progress was limited and unsatisfactory and it was closed. The CAG says the expenditure on the project was infructuous because of wrong selection of agency for which the DST had enough forewarning, even at the time of sanction.

Even though the CAG referred the matter to the ministry last September, DST did not bother to reply till this March, when the audit report was finalised.

The DST approved a Rs 6.45-lakh project 'a training-cum-demonstration programme in scientific agricultural practices and modern dairy technologies in 25 villages in Rajasthan' in September 1988. Though Rs 4.35 lakhs were spent on it in the next two years, no annual progress reports were given to the DST by the voluntary or-

ganisation which was handling the project.

After an official review, the project was closed in November 1989. However, the CAG found that the DST did not initiate any action to take back the equipment, costing Rs 1.52 lakhs, bought for the programme.

In another case, the DST gave Rs 2 lakhs out of sanctioned Rs 3.06 lakhs to a voluntary agency for a project, 'dissemination of sericultural practice — application of S and T for rural weaker section' in 1989. The DST did not get any progress report in the next two years.

The DST advised the project's chief coordinator to seek scientific and technical advice for its implementation. As the co-ordinator did not take this advice seriously, the DST had to stop the project in September 1991.