

Big spending on minor irrigation futile: report

By A Staff Reporter

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A HUGE amount of investment (Rs. 700 crores) on minor irrigation in the state has remained "unfruitful" according to the report of the comptroller and auditor general of India.

The report for the year 1982-83 laid on the table of the legislative assembly by the finance minister, said that the potential for minor irrigation in the state had been identified at 32.75 lakh hectares, of which 9.0 lakh hectares had been targeted for development by the end of 1982-83.

"The actual potential created was 7.50 lakh hectares at a cost of Rs 907.16 crores" a summary of the report said, and pointed out that only about 1.55 lakh hectares or about 20 per cent of the created potential was being utilised.

"A substantial investment of over Rs. 700 crores has remained unfruitful" the report added.

Other irregularities pointed out in the report include payment of Rs. 2.59 crores to 2,039 ineligible persons, as assistance under the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan Yojana.

FISH SEED: The government incurred an expenditure of Rs. 2,039.50 lakhs during the period 1974-83 in the development of fisheries in the state. Despite huge financial investment, the physical performance of many fish seed farms was below expectation, resulting in shortfall in annual production of fish seed.

NON-UTILISATION OF HOSPITAL BEDS: Two wards, one with 100 beds and the other with 50 beds, was provided at a cost of Rs. 82.77 lakhs at the medical college and hospital at Aurangabad in September 1981. The 50-bed ward started functioning only in February 1983, and the 100-bed ward had not yet started functioning till November 1983, though the staff and equipment had been duly provided.

IMPORTED EXPLOSIVES: Orders for import of 1,675 tonnes of gelatine at a cost of Rs. 333 lakhs, were placed with the State Trading Corporation by the irrigation department without assessing the actual requirement. Only a part (1,027 tonnes) of

this quantity was received till January 1981. The failure of the department to utilise it, resulted in an avoidable investment of Rs. 155.52 lakhs. A loss of Rs. 114.92 lakhs was incurred due to issue of gelatine at subsidised rates to the contractors, so as to "utilise" the unutilised stocks and scrapping of time-barred quantity. An amount of Rs. 158.37 lakhs advanced to the STC against orders which were later cancelled (for 648 tonnes), has not been recovered from the STC for more than three years.

EDIBLE OIL PURCHASES: In 1981, two of the five non-official members of a high power committee appointed by the state government to prepare a plan for meeting the edible oil requirements were empowered to decide the rates and sources of edible oil purchases. In May-July 1981, 16,193 tonnes of oil was purchased at higher-than-market prices, resulting in an avoidable extra expenditure of Rs. 56.50 lakhs. A quantity of 2,583 tonnes purchased at a price of Rs. 3.82 crores could not be sold. Delay in its disposal resulted in the stocks becoming unfit for human consumption.

LOSSES ON SUGAR DEALS: During the same period (May-July 1981), the government purchased 1.58 lakh quintals of sugar to enhance the buffer stock of 0.69 lakh quintals, without taking into account the additional release of free sale sugar by the government of India and the bumper crop of the season. "Even with the steep reduction in the sale prices the stock of 1.10 lakh quintals remained unsold. Government sustained a loss of Rs. 3.61 crores on the sale of 1.17 lakh quintals at prices lower than the economic price, and also a loss of Rs. 3.46 crore on account of interest on the idle capital on the unsold stocks till the end of June 1983."