

# CAG indicts Congress govt. in Orissa

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SHOWING scant concern for mass poverty and starvation deaths, the previous Congress government in the state squandered crores of rupees in the name of various development schemes. This is clear from the latest report of the comptroller and auditor-general of India (CAG).

A perusal of the report reveals that while funds were misappropriated, infructuous expenditure turned many schemes unproductive.

For instance, a special rice production programme was implemented in the state between 1985 and 1989 in 63 blocks, with 50 per cent Central assistance. Although the purpose of the scheme was to boost productivity of the paddy crop by adopting improved techniques of cultivation, it failed miserably because the minikits worth Rs 38.82 lakhs distributed among the farmers contained seeds which had not been recommended and were untreated and of sub-standard quality.

A bulk of the subsidy amounting to Rs 1,355 crores drawn for providing power tillers remained unutilised and sprayers worth Rs 8.85 lakhs were not found handy for use. Out of the Rs 14.85 crores shown as spent in two years, Rs 80.99 lakhs remained unutilised. While the government could not avail of the Central assistance to the extent of Rs 4.13 crores, the state could produce only 13.49

quintal of rice per hectare as against the target of 16.57 quintals.

The universal immunisation programme for pregnant women and infants was launched in 1985 and declared a technology mission in 1987. But it was found that by April 1990, the percentage of intended beneficiaries not vaccinated ranged from 22 to 41, indicating that the programme had not achieved its objective.

The incidence of diphtheria rose from 728 cases with 80 deaths in 1987-88 to 931 cases with 108 deaths in 1989-90. The vehicles meant for the programme were used for other purposes and the report of achievement of vaccination did not tally with the doses of vaccines administered. Besides, out of six vaccines utilised under the programme, the potency of only one was tested.

The command area development programme, being implemented in the state since 1976-77 as a Centrally sponsored scheme with the objective of raising the farm output by bridging the gap between the irrigation potential created and actual utilisation, also experienced a similar fate. Out of the irrigation potential of 531.41 thousand hectares created, the shortfall of such land utilisation was 47 per cent. But, curiously, the state government proclaimed cent per cent achievement to the Centre.

Finally, by March 1991, it was found that of the Rs 15.07-crore Central assistance released, there was an unutilised balance of Rs 2.79 crores. The shortfall in the construction of field drains ranged from 30 to 79 per cent. While Rs

2.81 crores remained in the personal ledger accounts of executing agencies without being utilised, land levelling and shaping was never done between 1985 and 1990. Instances of abandonment of incomplete works and non-utilisation of funds earmarked for ground water development programme were also noticed.

A dryland horticulture project implemented in the tribal-dominated Koraput and Rayagad areas proved to be a failure as less than 50 per cent of the plants survived. On the other hand, the government showed an expenditure of Rs 30.78 lakhs on soil conservation work which did not have the approval of the Centre.

The medium irrigation project at Kansabahal, which was taken up to improve the socio-economic condition of tribals of Sundargarh district, saw a huge purchase of spare parts worth over Rs 22 lakhs without any immediate requirement. The Rs 28-crore (second revision yet to be sanctioned) project also suffered a loss of over Rs 51 lakhs following modification in the designs of the spillway and the aquaduct and execution of the work departmentally.

In the construction of the earth dam, an amount of nearly Rs 10 lakhs had been spent on some works which was to be borne by the contractor. In another case, a sum of Rs 3.20 lakhs was found due for recovery from a contractor who had already left.

Similarly, in the case of the Upper Kolab irrigation project in Koraput district, infructuous expenditure to the tune of about Rs

38 lakhs had been made, which included Rs 26.85 lakhs given to contractors beyond the scope of their agreements.

Investigations further revealed that during the construction of the Muran dam under the Upper Indravati project, a contractor was given excess cement worth nearly Rs 23 lakhs although the actual consumption was much less.

The government spent a huge amount in Puri and Phulbani districts to raise coffee and other plantations but ultimately it was discovered that the projects could not be productive, resulting in a loss of about Rs 1.63 crores to the state exchequer.

Similarly, the ambitious Marichipur regional coconut nursery project, which was taken up at a cost of more than Rs 10 lakhs, turned out to be largely unproductive owing to improper location.

Inaction by the then government in the recovery of sales tax loans and electricity duty loans resulted in extending unintended benefits, while Rs 33.40 lakhs towards principal and Rs 20.55 lakhs towards interest remained blocked.