

CAG indicts state cultural forum

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WHILE every successive government has advocated economy measures, instances of conspicuous expenditure have never ceased. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), whose latest report was submitted to the Maharashtra legislature recently, has listed several such instances.

The Maharashtra Film, Stage and Cultural Development Corporation, an undertaking of the state government, has been indicted among others by CAG for over-expenditure. The report of CAG covers the period up to March 31, 1989 and is the latest in the series. The following instances have been reproduced from the report:

The Maharashtra government decided in 1987 to picturise value-based dramas with a view to preserving the stage heritage of the state. It entrusted the job to the corporation and handed over a sum of Rs 14 lakhs to film eight dramas. No time limit was set. Till July 1989, only three dramas were filmed and nearly Rs 8.50 lakhs had been spent. Till May 1990, there had been no further progress.

The corporation imported a Mitchell model camera from the U.S. for Rs 7.54 lakhs in January 1981, to hire it out to film producers. But the camera proved to be too heavy. Interest of Rs 6.75 lakhs has accrued on the idle investment.

Two cameras imported from California were sent back for repairs as they could not be set right locally. The cameras cost Rs 8.46 lakhs and Rs 6.26 lakhs, respectively. A technical officer of the corporation too, was sent to the U.S. to undergo training. The cameras and the officer returned to India in 1989 after spending Rs 3.89 lakhs. However, subsequently, it was discovered that some defects still persisted. As a result, the cameras could not be hired out. While the investment for the two cameras was Rs 14.72 lakhs, the loss of interest on the idle investment was Rs 17.25 lakhs.

The corporation has been allotted a picturesque location in Goregaon Film City by the state

government to carry out some of its activities. The corporation has created several facilities for film producers using the location. However, the major portion of its revenue comes from hiring out the location and not from the facilities.

Without consulting any experts, the corporation constructed a permanent temple in Film City. The construction was completed in August 1986 by spending Rs 11.93 lakhs against the original estimate of Rs 7.40 lakhs. According to CAG, even this estimate was quite high and the realistic estimate should have been Rs 5.79 lakhs. The corporation's board of directors ordered an inquiry into the huge spending. But no inquiry had been conducted by the corporation till May 1990.

Another scenic spot was created in Film City by spending Rs 3.52 lakhs in June 1981. The CAG found that the site was not used since its construction and had some defects.

The Maharashtra government formed the Kolhapur Chitranagri Mahamandal in March 1985. The CAG said the mahamandal lacked justification since the corporation with identical objectives was already in existence.

The mahamandal had been incurring losses from the day of its inception. The government was expected to invest Rs 10.30 crores for the execution of the project. However, by March 1989, it had invested only Rs 87.20 lakhs or 12.44 per cent of the required amount. According to a feasibility report prepared by a private firm in April 1983, the project was estimated to cost Rs 4.48 crores. The estimates were later revised.

The estimates were based on a proposal to transfer studio. Shantakiran and 47 acres of land to the mahamandal. The litigation delayed the transfer. Meanwhile, the government transferred 75 acres of land to it in another area which was without vegetation and water supply. The land was accepted without examining its feasibility.

As there was no source of revenue, the mahamandal had to depend upon the government for funds. The project remains to be implemented even after five years. The investment, so far, has been largely lying idle.