

CAG reports remain exercise in futility

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Mumbai: Year after year, the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, or the CAG report, unearths fraud worth thousands of crores and submits these with proof to the state legislature. Yet no politician or top bureaucrat named in the reports is indicted and experts say that without action, the exhaustive report is reduced to an exercise in futility.

For example, the CAG reports for 2004 and 2006 said that Democratic Front (DF)

di, co-operatives minister Patangrao Kadam and former minister Javed Khan in addition to education baron D Y Patil and ex-director of Cidco Vijay Choughule. This time around too, it was for getting prime plots of land allotted to them at highly reduced rates. None of the politicians named have been charged for any of the offences mentioned in the reports.

After the CAG presents its report to the legislature, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) studies it. The PAC consists of 25 members of the legislature and a member of the opposition is usually the chairperson. It prepares a report which is again tabled before the legislature. The government is then expected to act on its recommendations.

Even after the PAC's report, action is often not taken. BJP MLA Girish Bapat recently pointed out that a six-year-old PAC was being tabled. The PAC can subsequently ask for an Action Taken Report (ATR) but often doesn't.

While experts point out that the CAG report should have statutory power as MLAs are not financial experts and accountant generals are, Malashri Prasad, principal accountant general (audit) for Maharashtra, said that the government's track record of action taken on the CAG report was improving. "Ultimately, the report is only recommendatory. We cannot insist on action being taken," she added.

"It's only economics students and newspapers who are interested in the CAG; the government doesn't care," said a senior bureaucrat who did not wish to be named. In fact, CAG officials do not face much co-operation from the government while compiling information; when they recently came across discrepancies in the distribution of ex-gratia after the floods, the state government did not take their queries seriously. When the office of the AG said it would go public with its findings, the state had to constitute a three-member committee to file a reply.

ministers had got prime plots of land allotted to them at throwaway rates for their educational institutions.

The 2004 report named institutions owned by then labour minister Satish Chaturvedi, irrigation minister Padamsinh Patil and former ministers Kamal Kishore Kadam and Datta Meghe. It also remarked on the role of chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh in reducing the rates of some of these plots.

Then in 2006, the CAG report again named Chaturve-

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