

CHAPTER VI

AUDIT OF TRANSACTIONS (PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS)

Audit of transactions in the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department in the Secretariat, Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, two panchayat unions in Sivagangai and Tirunelveli Districts brought out instances of lapses in management of resources and failures in the observance of the norms of regularity, propriety and economy. These have been presented in the succeeding paragraphs.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT

6.1 Unfruitful expenditure

ILAYANGUDI PANCHAYAT UNION

6.1.1 Non utilisation of sanitary complexes

Eleven integrated sanitary complexes for women constructed at a cost of Rs 24.35 lakh were not put to use due to non-provision of power supply. Two complexes (cost Rs 4.39 lakh) were not made use of by public due to locational disadvantage.

Government of Tamil Nadu proposed (2001-02) to provide sanitary complexes for women in all the 12,619 villages as coverage of rural sanitation was 11 per cent in the State as against the national average of 15 per cent. Eighteen sanitary complexes were constructed during 2001-04 by Ilayangudi Panchayat Union at a cost of Rs 39.43 lakh under the State scheme of "Integrated Sanitary Complex for Women".

Test-check of records (September 2007) regarding functioning of the sanitary complexes revealed that (i) eleven complexes constructed at a cost of Rs 24.35 lakh did not function due to non-availability of power connection, and (ii) two complexes constructed at a cost of Rs 4.39 lakh were not made use of by public due to locational disadvantage though all facilities were available.

Thus due to the failure of the panchayat union in obtaining power connection (11 complexes) and injudicious selection of site (2 complexes), 13 complexes constructed at a cost of Rs 28.74 lakh did not serve the intended purpose of the scheme.

The Block Development Officer of the panchayat union stated (December 2007) that the Presidents of the panchayats concerned were instructed to deposit the requisite amount with Tamil Nadu Electricity Board for getting power connections.

The matter was referred to Government in January 2008; the reply has not been received (April 2008).

6.2 Avoidable expenditure

PALAYAMKOTTAI PANCHAYAT UNION

6.2.1 Avoidable expenditure

Delay in surrender of staff employed in rural dispensaries to Indian Medicine and Homeopathy Department by Palayamkottai Panchayat Union resulted in avoidable expenditure of Rs. 18.42 lakh on their pay and allowances.

Rural dispensaries for Indian Medicine and Homeopathy were functioning under panchayat unions with 50 per cent grant (subject to a maximum of Rs 5,400 per year) from the State Government. As grants were released to such dispensaries functioning under Primary Health Centers and Sub centers, State Government decided (May 2006) that the dispensaries functioning under panchayat unions were not needed and the existing 64 rural dispensaries along with the staff may be transferred to Department of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy (IM & H). The surrender was subject to the conditions that (i) if any of the posts was under the purview of Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission, clearance should be obtained from them and (ii) the staff so transferred would be placed as junior most in the cadre on the date of joining.

Though the orders of the Government were issued in May 2006, the Palayamkottai Panchayat Union (panchayat union) had not surrendered three medical officers, two pharmacists and one female nursing assistant working in the three rural dispensaries¹ so far.

The panchayat union had spent Rs 18.61 lakh on pay and allowances of the above staff for the period from June 2006 to October 2007. It had also received Rs 0.19 lakh from the State Government as grants during the same period. Thus, the net avoidable expenditure due to non-surrender of staff worked out to Rs 18.42 lakh (November 2007).

The Block Development Officer of the panchayat union stated (November 2007) that the above staff could not be surrendered due to non-receipt of posting orders from the IM & H Department. The reply was not tenable as the panchayat union had neither pursued the matter with the IM & H Department nor brought it to the notice of the Director of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department for necessary action. Based on the request of the Special Commissioner of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, Government again issued an order in November 2007 transferring the functionaries from the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department to IM & H Department and to absorb them in Government service under Tamil Nadu Medical Service with effect from the date of issue of Government order, subject to verification

¹ Ponnakudy, Rajavallipuram and Seevalaperi.

of the educational qualification and age as per their service records. However, the fact remains that the panchayat union incurred an avoidable expenditure of Rs 18.42 lakh between June 2006 and November 2007.

The matter was referred to Government in December 2007 and February 2008; the reply has not been received (April 2008).

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