

CHAPTER XVI : MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS

16.1 Irregular grant of financial assistance

Ministry approved financial assistance of Rs. 7.90 crore to Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi for construction of a hostel in contravention of the provisions of the scheme.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs had been operating a centrally sponsored scheme for construction of boys' hostels for Scheduled Tribes (ST). Under the scheme, 50 *per cent* financial assistance was given to State Government on matching (50:50) basis and cent percent to UTs for construction of hostel building and/or extension of existing hostels for middle schools, higher secondary schools, colleges and universities. Financial assistance under the scheme was admissible for a maximum number of 100 seats in a hostel.

As the budget allocation under the above scheme was not being fully utilised, the Ministry decided to extend the benefit of the scheme to the established institutions/universities in New Delhi. In October 2000, the Ministry invited Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi to avail of the benefit under the scheme. Accordingly, IIT Delhi sent a proposal in May 2001 for construction of a hostel for 380 students at a cost of Rs. 8.01 crore for housing students of all castes and creeds. IIT had categorically mentioned that it would not be possible to restrict the allotment of hostel rooms constructed out of financial assistance given by the Ministry only to ST students. Despite this, the Ministry approved a grant of Rs. 7.90 crore for construction of hostel of 380 seats and released the first instalment of Rs. 50 lakh in December 2001. This was irregular as the funds meant specifically for benefitting ST students were diverted for the benefit of other categories. Diversion of funds for benefitting students of general category was irregular and defeated the objective of the scheme. The Ministry had also not installed any mechanism to determine how many seats of the hostel constructed by IIT with this financial assistance would actually be given to ST students.

The Ministry stated in August 2004 that the proposal for construction of hostel for 380 students was approved as IIT Delhi had decided to increase 25 *per cent* seats and did not have the necessary infrastructure to meet the need for additional seats in the hostels and since the idea was to bring the ST students into the mainstream, it had approved IIT Delhi's proposal to construct a hostel for 380 students for all castes and creeds. IIT informed in July 2004 that the

task of construction of hostel had been entrusted to CPWD. Audit ascertained (December 2004) that the estimated cost of construction had been revised to Rs. 10.18 crore and CPWD had awarded the contract to a firm in September 2004. IIT intimated in December 2004 that Rs. 3.08 crore had been spent and Ministry had been requested to release Rs. seven crore during 2004-05 and the balance in the next financial year. The reply of the Ministry is not tenable as (i) the scheme provided for giving financial assistance for construction of hostel for ST students only, (ii) financial assistance under the scheme could be given for only 100 seats hostel and (iii) the Ministry had no means of determining to what extent the funds which were meant for benefiting ST students had actually benefitted this category. The action of the Ministry in diverting funds meant for welfare of ST students defeated the very objective of the scheme.