

**PRESS RELEASE**

**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA**

**NEW DELHI  
20<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2022**

**CAG's Audit Report on Scientific and Environmental  
Ministries/Department (Compliance Audit) presented in Parliament**

Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended March 2021, Union Government, Scientific and Environmental Ministries/Department (Compliance Audit) was presented in Parliament here today.

This report relates to matters arising from compliance audit of the transactions of eight Scientific and Environmental Ministries/Departments of the Government of India as well as of autonomous bodies and Central Public Sector Enterprises under them. The report contains 11 paragraphs relating to environmental issues, weaknesses in procurement and contract management, inefficient project management, irregular financial benefits extended to employees and deficient internal controls. An overview of the main audit findings included in this report is given below.

**Management of fabrication activities at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre**

Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) executed contracts for fabrication of structures for its various launch vehicle programmes without ensuring due diligence and strict compliance to the provisions of the Department of Space Purchase Manual. There were cases of single tender contracts continuing for prolonged periods of time, idling of infrastructure created, irregular expenditure in facility augmentation, deviations from codal provisions, as well as poor contract management.

**Avoidable Investment of ₹ 28.09 crore**

VSSC invested for the establishment of a Pure Grade Sodium Chlorate Crystals Manufacturing plant at Travancore Cochin Chemicals Limited (TCC) for ₹ 28.09 crore. The investment was avoidable since alternate suppliers were available in the market. Despite the investment in TCC, VSSC procured these crystals at higher than market rate from TCC, resulting in excess payment of ₹ 3.23 crore.

**Non-utilisation of GSAT-6 Satellite**

Department of Space launched the GSAT-6 satellite at a cost of ₹ 508 crore but was unable to utilise the satellite as envisaged due to non-readiness of the ground segment of the satellite. This resulted in non-utilisation of the satellite for nearly half of its life.

**Irregular expenditure of ₹ 7.57 crore towards development of Sullurupeta**

Department of Space approved the proposal of Satish Dhawan Space Centre for taking up of work related to development of Sullurupeta Municipality in Andhra Pradesh beyond its mandate which resulted in irregular expenditure of ₹ 7.57 crore.

### **Management of Projects under Medical Bio-technology Programme**

The Department of Biotechnology did not effectively manage the execution of its Medical Bio-technology programme. Critical processes such as assessment of project proposals, ensuring compliance to mandatory safety protocols, periodic monitoring of projects and timely evaluation of all completed projects was not done. The number of publications in high impact journals was very low, indicating poor quality of the projects. Even after disbursement of ₹ 1203.40 crore on projects under Medical Bio-technology Programme, only one patent has been granted with no technology transfer, indicating poor planning and outcomes of the projects for translational research in the area of improving human health and wellness.

### **Irregular grant of incentives and allowances**

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research granted incentives viz., Special Pay, additional increments and Professional Update Allowance to their Scientists without obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Finance. The financial implication of the payment of irregular Professional Update Allowance alone was to the extent of ₹ 54.60 crore.

### **Assistance to Botanic Gardens Scheme**

The scheme 'Assistance to Botanic Garden (ABG)' undertaken by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and implemented through Botanical Survey of India at the cost of ₹ 48.07 crore could not achieve the targets of *ex-situ* conservation and multiplication of threatened and endemic plants. Due to non-multiplication of targeted plant species, the same could not be distributed to other organisations for re-introduction. The lead botanic gardens and botanic gardens could not form network with each other and as a consequence, the gardens failed to generate knowledge and exchange plant materials of the species. Moreover, the conserved plant species could not be rehabilitated in natural habitats in collaboration with the State Forest Departments. The gardens also failed to develop propagation techniques which affected the conservation efforts. Thus, the objective of conserving threatened plant species to avoid the threat of extinction of the species by means of the ABG scheme remained largely unfulfilled.

### **Pollution caused by Plastic**

**Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) have no action plan for implementation of Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016, as a result, plastic waste management rules could not be implemented effectively and efficiently.**

### **Recommendations**

(i) MoEF&CC needs to put a system in place for effective data collection in relation to generation, collection and disposal of plastic waste, through its agencies (CPCB, SPCBs/PCCs) and monitor their performance.

(ii) CPCB and State PCBs/PCCs in coordination Local bodies need to carry out, periodically, a comprehensive assessment of the quantity of plastic waste being generated and collected data according to parameters like population size, geographical size of the area, economic growth, increased demand for consumer goods and change in manufacturing methods etc.

(iii) CPCB and State PCBs/PCCs may identify and register all the PIBOs operating under their jurisdiction, so as to comply to the provisions of Extended Producer's Responsibility.

(iv) Local bodies may expedite the process of notifying their bye-laws by incorporating Plastic Waste management Rules.

**Unfruitful expenditure of ₹ 73.35 lakh on a demonstration project**

Ineffective monitoring by MoEF&CC and delay in release of financial assistance resulted in non-achievement of environmental benefits from the demonstration project and unfruitful expenditure of ₹ 73.35 lakh.

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