

Chapter VI: Conclusions

6.1 The Performance Audit of Defence Estates Management indicated dismal performance on all aspects of land management. In case of land norms, orders issued by the Ministry laying down norms of requirement of land suffered from many deficiencies. This has given rise to many acres of surplus land in possession of Forces and Cantonments, obviously making land management - in particular, to avoid encroachment and misuse, far more challenging than it would have been otherwise. Combined with this, lack of updated records and mutations in favour of the Ministry have created a situation in which there is complete lack of accountability. The records maintained by the LMAs and DEOs varied widely and in fact the records of the DEOs were in dismal state. The computerization of land records undertaken by the Defence Estates Organisation showed little progress. Huge amount of land were yet to be mutated in favour of the Ministry of Defence. The state of affairs is fraught with risks of encroachment and land grab.

6.2 Multiplicity of agencies managing Defence estates has further contributed to the mismanagement. No centralized information base was available and responsibilities were diffused. Resources in the Ministry were woefully inadequate to fully discharge their responsibilities resulting in poor oversight and accumulation of cases for which the Ministry is the competent authority.

6.3 The Ministry of Defence which is the competent authority in respect of many transactions relating to land, has only one section with a minimum complement of staff which is completely inadequate to deal with vast number of cases. During the audit, it was noticed that the lines of responsibilities and consequently of accountability were blurred and on many aspects of Defence Estate management, no agency accepted responsibility. The replies to many audit observations indicated that such observations were tossed around among different agencies. While the LMAs stated that the information sought for by audit would be available with the Ministry or DGDE, DGDE and the Ministry did not have these information and asked Audit to gather them from the Services HQ.

Recommendation 14

In order to bring about more focus and professionalism in management of Defence Land and to overcome the problems of co-ordination among the multiple agencies entrusted with the responsibility of management of Defence land, it is necessary that a single independent authority is established with overall responsibility of management of all Defence land. Considering that such an authority must function with all Services as also other agencies like Cantonment Board etc. it should be an Inter Service Organization with a Board representing all Services and the Ministry of Defence. The Authority should function on the lines of an autonomous Body and should preferably be headed by Raksha Mantri. DGDE should function under the control of this Authority. All powers of local military authorities and Defence Estates Offices to dispose of

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land including issue of NOCs in any form or manner should be withdrawn and vested with the Defence Land Management Authority.

Recommendation 15

In the interest of transparency in management of Defence land, details of land holdings including Old Grant sites should be in public domain on the website. Any transaction on them like issue of NOC, de-hiring of buildings etc. should be put in public domain within 15 days of such transaction.

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