

CHAPTER IV

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CHAPTER IV WORKS EXPENDITURE

BUILDING AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT

4.1 Avoidable expenditure of Rs 10.90 lakh

Despite having its own architectural wing, the Department hired a private architect for preparation of design, drawing etc which led to avoidable expenditure of Rs 10.90 lakh

The Department has an architectural wing for preparation of designs, drawings and supervision of construction works as per specification and requirement.

Test check of records of Building and Housing Department revealed that the Department discussed (7 April 1995) with a local architect regarding preparation of design, drawing etc. of High Court and District Session Court buildings. Accordingly, a proposal for engagement of the above architect at a fee of 3 per cent of the total project cost was submitted (May 1995) to the Government. No bids from other qualified architects were obtained to ensure the reasonability of the rate. Even the reasons for non-engagement of departmental architects were not justified/recorded. The Secretary and the Minister approved (23 May 1995) the proposal. Accordingly, the private architect was engaged for the work and an amount of Rs 10.90 lakh was paid (upto June 1999).

The Department had one Senior Architect, 2 Assistant Architects, 5 Draftsmen and 4 Tracers in its architectural wing and they had prepared the design and drawing of a major project viz. Conference cum Banquet Hall at Gangtok. It was also noticed that no proposal was ever put up to utilise the services of the departmental architectural wing before engagement of a private architect. Moreover, the Secretary, after inspection of the site in July 1999, observed (July 1999) that proper application of mind was not made in finalising the size, specification and planning of various rooms. Thus, besides unsatisfactory design and planning by the architect engaged, the Department had to incur an avoidable expenditure of Rs 10.90 lakh.

The matter was reported to the Department in February 2000. In reply, the Department stated (March 2000) that there was shortage of architects due to absence of one architect (on study leave) and the available architects were busy with other assignments. The Department further (June 2000) stated that the departmental architects were always under pressure for other various projects (not specified by the Department) of the Government requiring early finalisation. The reply is not tenable as only one architect of the wing was on leave and the only noteworthy activity the Department undertook in 1995-96

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was to purchase some ready-made accommodation leaving limited scope of work for its architectural wing. Moreover, there was no important project other than High Court and District Session Court during that period and the scope of getting this work done through the departmental architectural wing was not even ascertained.

4.2 Avoidable payment of interest of Rs 14.53 lakh

Injudicious action of the Department in not utilising the fund received from the Police Department earmarked for purchase of flats resulted in extra liability of Rs 14.53 lakh towards payment of interest

The Building and Housing Department proposed (April 1995) purchase of 76 flats costing Rs 173.36 lakh from Sikkim Housing Development Board (SHDB) for Police (43 flats to be met from Police Department Fund) and General Pool Accommodation (33 flats). Rs 86.68 lakh (50 per cent) was to be paid in 1995-96 and the balance with interest thereon was to be paid at the rate of Rs 39.87 lakh each over a period of 3 years. The Housing Board was to hand over all the flats in 1995-96 itself. The Department paid Rs 98.75 lakh in 1995-96. The Board, however, handed over only 64 flats in 1995-96 and 8 flats in February 1999. Scrutiny revealed that an additional amount of Rs 50 lakh was received from the Police Department during 1996-97. But the Building and Housing Department instead of paying the outstanding amount due to the Board, diverted the fund for other payments not involving interest liability. Subsequently, Rs 94.10 lakh was paid during 1997-98 to 1999-2000 towards the final payment for 72 flats (39 Police and 33 General Pool Accommodation) taken over. Had the fund received from the Police Department been utilised, the liability towards 72 flats could have been met by paying only Rs 178.32 lakh* against the actual payment of Rs 192.85 lakh (including interest). Thus, diversion of the fund received for a specific purpose created an extra liability of Rs 14.53 lakh towards interest, which was avoidable. The balance 4 flats out of 76 were yet to be handed over by SHDB till June 2000.

In reply, the Department stated (June 2000) that the Police Department did not transfer the fund till the end of 1996-97 and also that all the flats were not handed over by the SHDB till then. The reply was not tenable as the fund received from the Police Department was diverted for other purposes and payments for flats taken over were also not cleared to avoid the liability towards interest.

* As calculated by Audit with reference to dates of handing over of Flats and adopting rate of interest charged by SHDB

FOREST DEPARTMENT

4.3 Irregular and avoidable payment of interest and penal interest of Rs 8.57 lakh

Delayed payment by the Department resulted in an avoidable expenditure of Rs 8.57 lakh

The Forest Department purchased 16 Middle Income Group (MIG) Flats at Jorethang (November 1986) at a total cost of Rs 8.61 lakh from Sikkim Housing Development Board (SHDB). The SHDB in its allotment letter clearly stated that the cost of the flats was valid only upto 31 December 1986 after which it would go up as the interest on the loan obtained for construction of houses by the Board was due for payment after the said period.

Scrutiny (January 2000) of records of Forest Department revealed that it did not make any payment to SHDB during (1986-87) on the plea of budgetary constraints, even though the Department surrendered Rs 8.50 lakh out of the total savings of Rs 12.57 lakh on the last day of the financial year under the relevant grant. Subsequently, against the cost of Rs 8.61 lakh, the Department paid Rs 3 lakh in December 1990 and Rs 5.61 lakh in March 1993. In addition, an amount of Rs 8.30 lakh was paid (September 1999) to the SHDB towards interest for late payment at 13.75 per cent and penal interest at 5 per cent on outstanding amount of interest upto March 1999. This led to an avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 8.57 lakh (payment of interest of Rs 6.60 lakh and penal interest of Rs 1.97 lakh (including Rs 0.27 lakh towards subsequent claim not cleared till March 2000).

In reply, the Department stated (July 2000) that they had not planned to meet the cost during 1986-87 as the incidence of the expenditure took place during the last quarter of the financial year and during the subsequent years also the payment could not materialise due to fund constraint.

The reply of the Department is not acceptable as it was expected to have taken all aspects of the purchase decision into consideration and it could have paid for the cost of the flats from the saving of Rs 12.57 lakh during 1986-87 itself.

POWER DEPARTMENT

4.4 Excess expenditure of Rs 226.00 lakh

The Department incurred an excess expenditure of Rs 226 lakh towards pay and allowances of work-charged employees in contravention of codal provision and beyond the permissible limit

In terms of para 234 of SPWD Code, work charged establishment means that “establishment whose pay, allowances etc. are all directly chargeable to

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works. Work charged staff are employed on the actual execution of the specific work or sub-work of a specific work or on the custody, maintenance and accounting of stock. The expenditure on work charged establishment is limited to the provision against the petty supervision charges in the estimate and the work charged establishment should be discontinued as soon as the work is completed". Para 190 of the code also provides that "in each detailed estimate, there must be provision of 6 per cent of the total cost of the actual items of works towards the expenditure on petty supervision and contingencies i.e. 3 per cent for petty supervision and 3 per cent for contingencies"

Test check of records revealed (January-February 2000) that during 1998-99, the Department spent Rs 3384.48 lakh under capital outlay on power projects which was for expenditure towards various projects and schemes. Accordingly, as per codal provision, an amount of Rs 98.58 lakh was to be spent as work charged establishment as calculated below:

Total expenditure under plan head:	Rs 3384.48 lakh
Permissible expenditure on work charged establishment:	
(Rs 3384.48 lakh X 3/103*):	Rs 98.58 lakh
Actual expenditure on 845 numbers of work charged establishment :	Rs 324.58 lakh
Excess expenditure	Rs 226.00 lakh

This indicates that the department incurred an excess expenditure of Rs 226.00 lakh towards pay, allowances etc on work charged employees in contravention of the codal provision and beyond the permissible limit. There was no analysis of job specification, quantum of work to be done per manday, requirement of project wise mandays etc conducted by the Department to justify the deployment of 845 number of work charged employees in the projects/ schemes.

While accepting the observations, the Department stated (September 2000) that due to administrative as well as legal implication the services of these employees could not be disposed of till date. However the matter has been taken up with the Government for decision.

* 100 per cent works expenditure + 3 per cent work charged establishment constituting the total expenditure.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

4.5 Irregular and unjustified release of financial assistance of Rs 33.60 lakh

The Department irregularly disbursed financial assistance of Rs 33.60 lakh to 168 beneficiaries without distributing the GCI sheets

The Rural Housing Programme (RHP) was started during 1995-96 by the State Government with a view to provide dwellings for those living below the poverty line and other economically weaker sections of society. The scheme envisaged provision of financial assistance to those beneficiaries who have already availed of GCI sheets (distribution of GCI sheet is a part and parcel of RHP). The financial assistance of Rs. 20,000 was to be given in two equal instalments of Rs. 10,000 each to the selected beneficiaries. The first instalment was to be provided at the time of allotment and the 2nd instalment should be made only after completion of more than 50 per cent works.

Test check (November 1999) of records of Rural Development Department revealed that against 848 beneficiaries selected for the year 1997-98 for distribution of GCI sheets, only 680 beneficiaries were distributed GCI sheets till September 1999. However, the Department released financial assistance of Rs 169.60 lakh being the 1st and 2nd instalments to 848 selected beneficiaries which included 168 beneficiaries to whom GCI sheets had not been provided. No physical progress reports / completion report of more than 50 per cent work in respect of all the beneficiaries was on record.

Thus, in the absence of progress/completion report, the financial assistance of Rs 33.60 lakh distributed to 168 beneficiaries without distribution of GCI sheets was not justified and whether the amount so distributed was utilised for the said programme could not be ascertained in audit. Further, despite specific stipulation in the guidelines of the programme for monitoring by the State Level Committee constituted for the purpose, no effective monitoring of the progress of work and utilisation of the fund ensuring the timely extension of benefits to the intended beneficiaries was conducted by the Department. This indicated the half-hearted approach of the implementing authorities about mitigating the suffering of the intended beneficiaries.

In reply the Department stated (June 2000) that it had distributed GCI sheets to 780 beneficiaries by May 2000 (for which no documentary evidence was furnished to audit) leaving a balance of 68 beneficiaries. It was further stated that the issue of GCI sheets was based on the progress of the work and in some cases issue of GCI sheets was not necessary. The reply is not acceptable as distribution of GCI was part and parcel of the programme without which, the construction of houses was not possible. Further, if issue of GCI sheets was not necessary in some cases, then these individuals should not have come under the ambit of the programme.

4.6 Blockage of fund

Casual approach of the Department resulted in unnecessary purchase of GCI sheets valuing Rs 38 lakh

Due to heavy rainfall during the monsoon of 1998, landslides occurred all over the State causing large-scale damage to houses and property of families living below the poverty line and economically weaker sections of the society. In order to mitigate the sufferings of these people, the Department proposed to provide GCI Sheets and cash assistance of Rs 20,000 each to affected families immediately. The proposal was approved (October 1998) by the Government and an amount of Rs 119.81 lakh was sanctioned (October 1998).

Test check (November 1999) of records of Rural Development revealed that against the actual requirement of Rs 77.80 lakh for 389 families, an amount of Rs 80 lakh was remitted (October 1998) to the Chairman, District Committee for Rural Housing Scheme, East District for financial assistance to the affected people. This resulted into excess release of Rs 2.20 lakh, which remained undisbursed with the Chairman and was kept outside the Government account. Further, an amount of Rs 38 lakh was paid (October 1998) to the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim (STCS) for supply of GCI sheets. The STCS supplied the GCI Sheets by November 1998. It was seen that despite the availability of the list of beneficiaries, the Department did not distribute (November 1999) a single GCI sheet to the affected people and retained the entire stock in the departmental stores. Thus, non- distribution of GCI sheet defeated the purpose for which the same was procured as well as blocking the amount (Rs 38 lakh) spent on procurement of GCI sheets.

In reply the Department stated (June 2000) that a total of 394 families (additional 5 families was covered after November 1999) were given financial assistances till 7 June 2000 and the balance of Rs 1.20 lakh was refunded and credited to the Government account (May 2000). The Department further stated that the GCI sheets were not distributed as GCI sheets of some houses, which were damaged by calamity, were found intact and the issue of fresh GCI sheets was found not necessary.

The reply of the Department establishes the fact that the entire purchase of GCI sheets valuing Rs 38 lakh was unjustified and without proper survey of actual requirement. Further, disbursement of cash assistance after November 1999 for mitigating the suffering of the affected families belonging to economically weaker sections by natural calamity during monsoon (June-July) of 1998 indicates the apathetic and indifferent approach of the Department towards delivery of vital support and services to the affected public.

**SIKKIM PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
(ROADS AND BRIDGES)**

4.7 Excess expenditure on hiring of trucks

Despite the existence of fixed hire rate of trucks per day, the Department paid hire charges in terms of trips resulting in excess expenditure of Rs 9.50 lakh

In accordance with the Notification dated 29 March 1997 issued by the Department, hire charge of trucks was fixed at Rs 800 per day exclusive of the cost of POL. Considering the expenditure towards POL, the Department allowed Rs 1200 per day for hiring of trucks from private parties.

Scrutiny of records revealed (October-December 1999) that despite the existence of fixed rate per day for hiring of trucks, the Department engaged trucks from private parties on a per trip basis and paid hire charges ranging from Rs 1400 to Rs 2400 per day. In North-East Circle, in 21 cases trucks were hired at Rs 2400 per day per truck for 9 to 42 days during June 1998 to February 1999. Similarly, in South-West Circle, in 74 cases hire charges were paid at rates ranging from Rs 1400 to Rs 1700 per day per truck for 7 to 35 days during July 1997 to March 1999. It was further seen that hire charges of trucks for other works during the same period and within the same locality, the prescribed rate of Rs 1200 per day per truck irrespective of the number of trips, was adhered to.

Thus, variation in the rates of hire charges within the same Department and deviation from the Departmentally prescribed rates resulted in excess expenditure of Rs 9.50 lakh towards hire charges during July 1997 to March 1999.

The matter was reported to the Department and Government (March 2000); reply has not been received (December 2000).

4.8 Unauthorised retention of Government money and loss due to non-obtaining of detailed accounts in time

Due to non-submission of detailed accounts of advances by Assistant Engineers, authenticity of expenditure of Rs 128.76 lakh could not be ascertained.

The SPWD code stipulates that “the account of temporary advance taken by the Assistant Engineer (AE) for making payments should be rendered to the division before drawal of the next temporary advance”.

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Scrutiny of records of Roads and Bridges Department (RBD) and Power Department revealed that between 1995-96 to 1999-2000, a total amount of Rs 128.76 lakh was drawn as advance through 330 withdrawals by the AEs of the Departments against which the detailed account had not been submitted till 31 March 2000 as below:

Name of department	1995-96		1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		Total amount
	Unad-justed with-drawals	Amount	Unad-justed with-drawals	Amount	Unad-justed with-drawals	Amount	Unad-justed with-drawals	Amount	Unad-justed with-drawals	Amount	
(Rupees in lakh)											
SPWD	14	5.58	14	15.86	22	15.42	18	14.23	3	2.99	54.08
POWER	13	0.52	11	1.34	14	2.52	221	70.30	NA*	NA*	74.68

- **Not available**

Due to non-submission of accounts, the authenticity of the expenditure of Rs128.76 lakh could not be ascertained in audit. In the absence of detailed accounts of the advances, the possibility of misappropriation of Government money also cannot be ruled out.

It was also seen that out of Rs 54.08 lakh drawn by RBD, Rs 39.05 lakh was drawn by 7 AEs through 63 withdrawals without submitting the detailed account of earlier advances which remained to be adjusted as on 31 March 2000. It was further noticed that out of the unadjusted advances totalling Rs 54.08 lakh, an amount of Rs 42.38 lakh was taken by AEs who have been either transferred to other Departments, promoted, retired from service or expired. It was seen that one of the officers involved was allowed to retire and his pensionary benefits authorised without Government dues of Rs 2.37 lakh being settled in full and one person, who had taken an advance of Rs 10.39 lakh, had expired. Due to inaction of the Department in obtaining detailed account in time, it sustained a loss of Rs 12.76 lakh in the last 2 cases.

In respect of advances drawn by the Power Department, although all the 37 officers did not render the accounts in respect of their earlier advances, they continued to draw the advances which remained unadjusted till 31 March 2000.

The persistent violation of the codal provisions relating to the drawal of temporary advances indicates a blatant disregard of the rules, absence of proper systems in the Department and lack of effective monitoring and control by the controlling officers.

While no reply was furnished by the RBD, the Power Department stated (September 2000) that out of 259 withdrawals, 172 withdrawals involving Rs 53.33 lakh have since been adjusted and the balance will be adjusted within March 2001.

4.9 Non-recovery of hire charges of machinery

The Department persistently violated codal provisions leading to non-recovery of hire charges amounting to Rs 118.93 lakh

As per the provisions of the Public Works code of the Government of Sikkim, hire charges at prescribed rates are required to be recovered in respect of machinery such as Bulldozers, Road Rollers etc. lent to the contractors/ indenters and departmental works.

In its reply to the Public Account Committee (PAC) on paragraph 6.13 of Audit Report 1992-93, the Department stated (September 1993) that against the non recovery of hire charges of Rs 47.53 lakh upto December 1992, an amount of Rs 25.53 lakh was recovered and further Rs 17.39 lakh had been recovered as on March 1996 and action had been taken to recover the balance amount. While noting that the bulk of hire charges had been realised, the PAC recommended (27th Report in March 1997) for periodical reviews to prevent accumulation of arrears in future. Consequently in the Action Taken Report (37th Report in September 1999), the PAC concluded that the balance amount was recovered in full by the Department. However, it was observed that the hire charges pertaining to the period 1990-91 to 1991-92 amounting to Rs 3.35 lakh was in fact not recovered/adjusted.

Scrutiny (October-November 1999) of records in the Mechanical Division of the Department revealed that hire charges aggregating Rs 118.93 lakh (contractors' Rs 59.76 lakh; departmental Rs 59.17 lakh) for the period 1990-91 to 1998-99 were outstanding as on 31 March 1999. The fact that the arrears of hire charges had increased from Rs 22 lakh (September 1993) to Rs 118.93 lakh (March 1999) indicated that the Department did not seriously follow up on the recommendations of the PAC and no periodical reviews were ever carried out after 1992-93 to prevent accumulation of arrears .

The matter was reported to the Department / Government in March 2000; reply has not been received (October 2000).

4.10 Avoidable expenditure of Rs 16.27 lakh

An avoidable expenditure of Rs 16.27 lakh was incurred for engagement of private trucks despite the availability of departmental trucks.

Scrutiny of records (November 1999) relating to maintenance of trucks and tippers of the Department with reference to the relevant log books revealed that the following trucks were lying idle during the period mentioned hereunder:

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Sl. No.	Month/Period	Truck number	Days on hire	Days on repair	Idle period (days)
1	March 1995 to February 1996	SK-03/796	119.5	91	105.5
2	-do-	SK-03/438	44	11	157
3	-do-	SK-03/451	74	16	146
4	-do-	SK-03/973	38	15	279
5	-do-	SK-03/439	45.5	13.5	152
6	-do-	SK-03/441	29	19	289
7	-do- (upto 5 March 1996)	SK-03/713	48	34	227
			398.00	199.5	1355.5

Despite the availability of these departmental vehicles lying idle in the Mechanical Division (including Sub-divisions) of the Department, it has incurred an expenditure of Rs 24.15 lakh during March 1995 to 5 March 1996 towards engagement of private trucks for 2404 days.

Had the 7 idle vehicles been utilised during the idle period of 1355.5 days, the Department would have saved an amount of Rs 16.27 lakh (at the rate of Rs 1200 per day) towards engagement of private trucks.

The matter was reported to the Department and Government (February 2000); no reply had been received (December 2000).

4.11 (a) Undue benefit to the contractors

The Department extended undue financial benefit of Rs 15.34 lakh to contractors due to non-deduction of cost of stone obtained free from hill cutting

As per paras 184 to 193 of the SPWD Code, the detailed estimate of any work is to be prepared taking survey report into consideration. At the time of conducting survey, the actual field conditions and availability of non-stock materials at site are ascertained and taken into account while preparing the detailed estimate. In case of hill cutting, where cutting involves hard rocks and blasting rocks, quantity of stone obtained from the cutting was required to be utilised in other item of works requiring stone and accordingly the estimates are prepared and no carriage/less carriage is provided for the carriage of stone from the quarry.

Further, as per SPWD analysis of rates, out of 1000 cubic feet of hill cutting in hard rocks/blasting rocks, 330 cubic feet (i.e. 33 per cent) would be collected and stacked. As per the same analysis, cost of labour component for stacking of stone obtained from the hill cutting is included in the hill cutting rate applicable for hard rocks and blasting rocks.

Scrutiny (October 1999) of 24 number of works executed by the Department through contractors during the period from June 1994 to December 1998, revealed that these works involved 304384.66 cubic meter of hill cutting in hard rock and blasting of rocks. According to the SPWD Rate Analysis, 100446.87 cubic metre (33 per cent of the hill cutting in hard rock and blasting rock) should have been available on the work site as detailed in **Appendix-XXV**. The availability of stone on the work site was confirmed from the fact that no carriage was involved as no amount was billed for carriage by the contractor for executing the other items requiring stones in the same works. Further, as per the rate analysis, the rate of other items requiring stone included the cost of stone. Hence the cost of stone obtained free from hill cutting and used in the same work should have been subtracted from the bills of the contractor 24815.16 cubic metre of stone was utilised for execution of the other items of the same works in which hill cutting was involved. Thus, due to non deduction of the cost of stone obtained free from hill cutting, the contractors were extended undue financial benefit to the tune of Rs 15.34 lakh (@ Rs 61.80 X 24815.16 cubic metre).

In reply the Department stated (April 2000) that the available stone was utilised in the other item of works after payment of extra lead and lift by the contractors Since the contractors did not claim the expenditure on lead and lift, question of further deduction did not arise.

The reply is not acceptable as rate for stacking of materials relating to hill cutting in hard/blasting rock allowed to the contractors included the element of expenditure on all lead and lift.

(b) Avoidable Expenditure

The Department incurred avoidable expenditure of Rs 1.25 crore on carriage of stone despite the ready availability of stone from hill cutting

As per para 35 of the SPWD Manual, the balance quantity of stone (difference between the availability and utilisation) obtained from the hill cutting, should be taken into account in the road metal account register to be maintained by various sub-divisions of the Department and issued to other works according to the necessity and requirement. Despite this clear and specific provision of the SPWD Manual, no subdivision of the Department is maintaining the road metal account register.

In spite of the availability of stone from the hill cutting, in the 24 works test checked in audit, the Department incurred an expenditure of Rs 4.32 crore towards carriage of 2374421.09 cubic metre of stone during 1998-99 for different adjacent works and also for the works at different stretches of the same road executed departmentally at rates varying from Rs 165 to Rs 270 per cubic metre. Had the balance quantity of 75631.71 cubic metres of stone (available in the 24 works) been utilised in these departmental works, the

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Department could have avoided the carriage expenditure of Rs 124.79 lakh at the minimum rate of Rs 165 per cubic metre. (75631.71 cubic metre @ Rs 165) as per **Appendix- XXV**.

Even in the event that the stone could not be utilised in the above departmental works, the same could have been issued to contractors thereby saving the cost of stone to the extent of Rs 46.74 lakh @ Rs 61.80 per cubic metre fixed by the Department in the Schedule of Rates. Due to non-maintenance of road metal account and non-utilisation of available stone at site, the Department had to incur an avoidable expenditure of Rs 46.74 lakh in other works (other than 24 works mentioned in the para).

In either of the cases, the Department could have avoided huge expenditure.

In reply the Department stated (April 2000) that in the mountains, it was not possible to collect all the blasted rocks as most of the boulders rolled down the slopes and it was difficult to ascertain the quantum of rocks to be collected.

The reply is not acceptable as the collection of 33 per cent of hill cutting in hard/blasting rock was stipulated in the departmental rate analysis and against which payment for stacking was included in the respective rates allowed to the contractors.

(c) Doubtful Expenditure of Rs 5.45 lakh

Genuineness of work relating to blasting of rocks in hill cutting could not be vouched resulting in doubtful expenditure of Rs 5.45 lakh

The work extension of the Chuba Parbing Link Road estimated at Rs 48.09 lakh (April 1995) revised to Rs 116.31 lakh (including the cost of land) was sanctioned by the State Government during October 1997. The work commenced during January 1996 and completed during April 1997 at a total cost of Rs 102.31 lakh.

The scrutiny of 1st R/A bill pertaining to the item "Hill cutting in blasting rocks" revealed that 17273.49 cubic meter of work on this item was executed without the use of explosives and blasting materials as seen through verification of stores and stock records. Under the circumstances, the genuineness of the work as also the payment of Rs 5.45 lakh (@ Rs 27.50/Cu.MX17273.49 Cu.M) made towards this work could not be vouchsafed in audit.

The matter was reported to the Department (April 2000); reply had not been received (December 2000).

4.12 Avoidable expenditure of Rs 5.13 lakh

The Department incurred avoidable expenditure of Rs 5.13 lakh in carpeting extra width of road in violation of IRC specification and departmental guidelines

Indian Road Congress (IRC) specification (IRC-52-1981 and 70-1977) stipulates the Carriageway Width of the National Highway (Single lane), State Highway, Major District Roads and Other District Roads as 3.75 metre.

Due to the topography of the State and the steep and hilly terrain, the major roads in the State have a carriageway width ranging between 3.05 metre to 3.75 metre.

Scrutiny of records (November-December 1999) relating to the work of carpeting, improvement of drainage system on Geyzing-Lingchom Road (Km 2 to Km 8) revealed that the carpeted carriageway width of the road was taken as 4.75 metre. Even accepting the necessity that the width of the said village road should be in line with that of the National Highway carriageway width of 3.75metre, the Department had unnecessarily spent Rs 5.13 lakh in carpeting on extra 1 metre (4.75 metre – 3.75 metre) of the entire length of the road.

Further, the above execution, in excess of the IRC stipulation, is also in contravention of the detailed guidelines issued by the Department in June 1998 to all Divisional Engineers for strictly adhering to the IRC stipulation.

The Superintending Engineer (South and West Circle) stated (April 2000) that on the way from Geyzing to Lingchom, there existed a number of schools, colleges and other Government offices and therefore, considering the necessity and future prospects, the road was constructed with 4.75 metre carriageway width. Further, the vehicle density of the road was comparatively more than that of the similar roads in Sikkim.

The reply is not acceptable in view of the fact that the only college (Sanskrit Mahavidhyalaya) and a few Government offices were located in the first kilometre of the road and the carriageway width of the other roads in Sikkim varied from a minimum 3.05 metres to a maximum 3.75 metres only. Further, the claim regarding the vehicle density on the particular road was not supported by traffic road report of the Motor Vehicle Department.

4.13 Excess expenditure due to wrong incorporation of quantities of bitumen in the Rate Analysis.

Despite the norms prescribed by Ministry of Surface Transport on requirement of bitumen at high rainfall areas, the Department irregularly projected excess requirement in Rate Analysis, which resulted in extra and avoidable expenditure of Rs 14.58 lakh

According to the norms prescribed by the Ministry of Surface Transport (MOST), the requirement of bitumen for 20 mm Premix Carpeting Work in high rainfall areas was 29.40 kg / 10 sq meter. This requirement as projected in the Rate Analysis (based on which Schedule of Rate was prepared) of Sikkim Public Works Department (SPWD) was 38.96 kg/10 sq meter.

As such there was an excess projection of requirement of bitumen to the extent of 9.56 kg/10 sq meter in the Schedule of Rate of SPWD.

This inflated Rate Analysis has been adopted by the SPWD since the inception of the State (1975) and even after the norms for maintenance of roads in hilly areas were prescribed by the MOST in June 1993.

Scrutiny of records (November 1999) relating to 25 works executed in South-West circle during November 1995 to September 1997 revealed that due to projection of excess requirement in the Rate Analysis, the Department incurred an extra and avoidable expenditure of Rs 14.58 lakh towards excess consumption of 152.32 MT (one drum containing 156.5 kg/drum at the rate of Rs 1498.50/drum) of bitumen for execution of 159329 sq meter of Premix Carpeting Work.

In reply, the SPWD (Roads and Bridges) stated (October 2000) that the figures of Rs 38.96 kg/10sq meter was based on the specification of Roads and Bridges works specified by MOST, Roads Wing and this figure is the latest amount required in the hilly region of Sikkim where the rainfall is high and the grade of the road is almost all the time in slope. While no documentary evidence in support of the stated specification could be produced to audit, the reply is not acceptable as the requirement of bitumen in high rainfall areas was 29.40 kg/10 sq meter as per the norms prescribed by the MOST.