

## CHAPTER X : MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

### Department of Higher Education

#### 10.1 Delay in construction of UNESCO house leading to avoidable rental charges

**Failure of the Ministry to construct the UNESCO<sup>1</sup> house, for which the land was allotted in 1998, has delayed the project besides avoidable payment of Rs. 2.86 crore on account of rent for the hired UNESCO building for the period from September 2001 to July 2007. The Ministry will continue to incur expenditure on account of rental liability at the rate of Rs. 48 lakh *per annum* till the building is constructed.**

Examination of records revealed that even after a lapse of more than nine years from the date of acquisition of plot, the Ministry could not start construction of UNESCO house. Clearance from regulatory/local authorities had not been obtained as of March 2007. This resulted in avoidable expenditure of Rs. 48 lakh *per annum* on rent of the hired building.

As a part of a commitment made by the member states to provide office accommodation to the UNESCO in their respective countries, the Government of India decided in 1975 to provide rent-free accommodation to the UNESCO office in New Delhi. The Ministry of Human Resource Development reimburses the rent paid by the UNESCO's New Delhi office.

With a view to finding a permanent solution to the requirement of accommodation for the UNESCO office in India, the Ministry of Urban Development allotted a plot measuring 2302.75 sq. metres in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi at a cost of Rs. 11.38 lakh in December 1998. As per the terms and conditions of the allotment, the construction work was to be completed within two years from the date of taking over possession of land. The Ministry approved the appointment of an architect in 1999 for preparation of drawings and design of the building. As per the contract of August 2000 entered into by CPWD<sup>2</sup> with the architect, selected at the instance of the Ministry, the architect was to obtain necessary approval of the local/statutory bodies to the drawings and design of the building within 16 weeks i.e. by December 2000 to facilitate taking up the construction by CPWD. The architect, however, failed

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

<sup>2</sup> CPWD – Central Public Works Department

to obtain necessary approvals of the local/statutory bodies even as of October 2007.

The architect initially submitted the drawings of the building in February 2001, which the Ministry did not approve, since these did not conform to their requirement. The revised designs submitted by the architect in November 2002 needed further modifications and were finally approved by the Ministry in November 2003 and by the CPWD in February 2005. The detailed plans as approved by CPWD were submitted by the architect to NDMC in August 2005, but were rejected by the latter in October 2005. The Ministry took another 18 months to submit the revised drawings to NDMC in March 2007 which were again rejected by NDMC in May 2007 on the grounds of (i) Non-submission of NOC from Tree Officer and Chief Engineer, NDMC (ii) Non-deposit of Cess and Security and other various defects in the Building Plan. Thus, Ministry could not ensure finalisation of drawings and their clearance from the local bodies even after seven years of appointment of the architect. Construction of the building could not, therefore, commence even nine years after allotment of land. The Ministry of Urban Development in March 2005 allowed two years' extension for construction of the building which has also expired.

During September 2001 to July 2007, the Ministry paid rent of Rs. 2.86 crore for the UNESCO office.

Thus, Ministry's failure to ensure timely preparation of drawings by the architect and their clearance by the local bodies led to inordinate delay in the construction of the building which is bound to result in substantial escalations in the project cost. Besides, delay in construction of building also resulted in avoidable payment of rent of Rs. 2.86 crore for the UNESCO office.

The Ministry stated in October 2007 that the drawings relating to the construction of UNESCO house were already submitted to NDMC for their approval in July 2007 and the work on the construction of the building is scheduled to commence in January 2008.

The reply of the Ministry confirms the audit contention of significant delay in preparation of drawings and obtaining necessary clearances of the authorities concerned which has caused unnecessary burden on Government exchequer by way of avoidable payment of rent for the UNESCO building.

## Department of School Education and Literacy

### 10.2 Non-recovery of interest on unutilised balance

**Failure of the Internal Control in the Ministry to monitor the utilisation of the grant by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) resulted in idling of funds of Rs. 2.75 crore for over three years. The interest of Rs. 2.25 crore on the unspent balance of the grants was also not recovered.**

Test check of utilisation certificate of grants-in-aid paid by the Ministry to NCERT revealed deficient internal control in correlating the utilisation of the grant with the grant released, leading to non-recovery of interest of Rs. 2.25 crore earned on the unspent balance of grant from time to time.

Out of grants-in-aid aggregating Rs. 16.33 crore sanctioned by the Ministry during 1993-94 to 1996-97 for replacement of U-matic equipment in the Central Institute of Educational Technology and six State Institutes of Educational Technology, NCERT utilised only Rs. 13.58 crore during 1995-96 to 2002-03. On being pointed out in Audit, NCERT refunded the unspent grant of Rs. 2.75 crore to the Ministry only in May 2006, though no expenditure was incurred after 2002-03. In November 2006, the Ministry accepted the utilisation certificate of October 2006 furnished by NCERT, without correlating the grant released with the grant utilised and interest earned.

The NCERT retained the unutilised balances ranging between Rs. 7.54 crore to Rs. 0.25 crore in the savings account during April 1997 to March 2006 and invested Rs. 2.50 crore in October 1998 till February 2003 in short term deposit carrying average rates of interest of 4.5 and 5.6 *per cent per annum* respectively. The total interest earned thereon during April 1997 to April 2006 was Rs. 1.60 crore which was not refunded alongwith the unspent grant of Rs. 2.75 crore. Besides the Ministry did not secure compliance to its orders of March 1997 that the interest of Rs. 0.65 crore earned by NCERT on the unutilised balance until March 1997 should be treated as grant. Thus, the total amount still recoverable from NCERT worked out to Rs. 2.25 crore (Rs. 1.60 crore plus Rs. 0.65 crore).

Ministry may recover the interest earned by the NCERT on the unspent balances of the grant and strengthen its internal control for monitoring the utilisation certificates of grants.

The matter was referred to the Ministry in June 2007; their reply was awaited as of January 2008.