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NEW DELHI: Way back in 1984, the Department of Atomic Energy's (DAE) nuclear power profile aimed at adding 7,880 MW by the end of 2000, to take the total nuclear power generation to about 10,000 MW.

But "sluggish execution" by the department and the Nuclear Power Corporation (NPC) has taken this target out of reach. In fact, the department had not completed even a single plant till March-end last year.

The indictment comes in the just-released report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) for the year ended March 1998 on the Union government's scientific departments. It says, "No additional capacity of nuclear power had been added till 1997-98 as against the target of 2,645 MW."

Most of the plants had not even been sanctioned till the period under review. Besides, the allotment of funds was nowhere close to the requirement up to March 1998 — the department had provided Rs 2,617 crore as against a projection of about Rs 15,000 crore.

The CAG report alleges that the material procured "hastily" and in advance for Rs 1,069 crore lay unutilised for nine years. Of this, material worth Rs 523 crore related to plants which hadn't been sanctioned. Some of the material had not even been stored properly and might have to be disposed off as scrap. The department has also been accused of not spending its entire allocation.

In transactions, the DAE revised

the compensation payable to Southern Petrochemical Industries Corporation, leading to an "unintended benefit of Rs 1.22 crore to the company".

The CAG report deals with eight departments — the departments of Atomic Energy and Space, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the department of electronics, ministry of environment and forests, ministry of mines.

Expenditure on these departments in 1997-98 was Rs 7,417 crore, up 36 per cent over the last two years. A sample of what the report has to say on other departments:

■ Department of Space: The Hyderabad-based National Remote Sensing Agency has been collecting more and more data each year but sale or use has not kept pace. It was not able to recover the annual fee paid to foreign satellite owners from data sales. It was keeping two aircraft for aerial survey although there wasn't enough demand even for one. One aircraft was bought for nearly Rs 14 crore in February 1997 when demand had been going down over the previous four years.

■ ICMR: Although nutrition profiles were to be prepared for 10 states by 1997, only one was ready. Meanwhile, the cost had shot up from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1.26 crore due to the "indecisiveness" of the National Institute of Nutrition and department of women and child welfare over four years.

■ Ministry of Environment and Forests: A project was sanctioned in 1993 for biodiversity conservation. But the Indian Botanical Garden, Howrah, preserved only 10 of the 2,000 species of flowering plants likely to be rare or threatened by next year.

■ Ministry of Mines (Geological Survey of India): It got its residential quarter requirement wrong. So, 260 of the 428 built in 1985 in Hyderabad had not been occupied till 1998. Neither was an alternative use found for these nor was any responsibility fixed.

■ CSIR's Central Scientific Instruments Organisation, Chandigarh: It finished just two in-house and 33 grants-in-aid projects from 1993-98. All were behind schedule. The in-house projects suffered time over-runs of 24 and 44 months. There are several more such examples. Its main objective of indigenous design and development of sophisticated instruments has not been met since the users did not show interest in the technologies developed by it.

■ CSIR's National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur: Technology developed wasn't made available in packages for user-needs. It failed to seal even a single patent out of the total of 294 filed by it during 1988-98.

■ CSIR's National Institute of Oceanography, Goa: It wanted an auditorium with a "shell appearance" roof. The roof developed cracks during construction, owing to faulty structural design and nearly Rs 34 lakh will be needed for repairs.



Policemen carry the body of a Pakistani national at Gopalpora on the outskirts of Srinagar on Saturday. Two foreign militants were killed and an Indian security force personnel was injured in a gun battle.