

1.2.2 Wasteful Expenditure

Lack of co-ordination between National Health Mission (NHM) and H& FW Department, Government of Assam led to dismantling of four buildings constructed by NHM at a cost of ₹2.36 crore on the land proposed for construction of Medical College and Hospital, Dhubri. Further, the dismantling cost of ₹13 lakh was also borne by the State Government.

Government of Assam (GoA) decided (January 2011) to set up a Medical College and Hospital in Dhubri district. The decision was communicated to the Deputy Commissioner (DC), Dhubri and copy was also sent to the Mission Director, National Health Mission (MD, NHM). In the said communication, it was specifically mentioned that existing Civil Hospital of the district will be taken over as Hospital of the proposed Medical College. Further, DC, Dhubri forwarded (January 2012) copies of the proposal for acquisition of land and site plan for construction of the Medical College and Hospital to Additional Chief Secretary to the GoA, H&FW, Director of Medical Education (DME), Joint Director of Health Services (Jt. DHS), Dhubri and MD, NHM.

During audit (July 2018) and subsequent verification of records, we noted that during the same period (December 2010 to March 2016), MD, NHM, Assam took up construction of four health infrastructure buildings at Dhubri Civil Hospital (DCH) as shown in **Table 1.2**:

Table 1.2

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Date of sanction	Date of Commencement of work	Physical progress (till March 2017)	Expenditure incurred (₹in lakh)
1.	Rural Health Block Pooling Complexes (2 units)	14.12.2010	01.03.2012	62 per cent	158.26
2.	61-bedded Male and Female Ward	30.12.2014	24.02.2015	NA	35.98
3.	District Early Intervention Centre	10.04.2015	01.11.2016	43 per cent	24.51
4.	10-bedded Geriatric Unit	09.03.2016	24.11.2016	50 per cent	17.54
Total					236.29

It was seen that the Commissioner & Secretary to the GoA, H&FW Department issued (26 March 2017) an order to stop all construction activities. Subsequently, the above-mentioned four buildings were dismantled after obtaining 'No Objection Certificate' (14 August 2017) from MD, NHM, Assam. The MD, however, claimed (27 October 2017) recoupment of ₹2.36 crore being the expenditure incurred by NHM on the said constructions. H&FW Department, GoA accorded (15 March 2018) sanction for the amount claimed as Grants-in-Aid which was drawn by the MD, NHM, Assam on 31 March 2018. Construction of the Medical College and Hospital commenced in (February 2017) at an approved cost of ₹189 crore, to be shared 90:10 between GoI and GoA and the construction work was ongoing.

MD, NHM, Assam stated (May 2019) to audit that advance information regarding construction of Medical College at DCH campus was not available to NHM nor there was any direction from Government or other authorities not to undertake any work in view of such proposal. However, the reply is not based on facts as DC and Jt. DHS are the Chairman and Member Secretary of District Health Society (DHS), NHM

respectively. MD, NHM despite being made aware (January 2011) of the fact of selection of the site for Medical College, had proceeded with the construction works.

Above observations point towards non coordination between the MD, NHM and the State Health Department which ultimately resulted in wasteful expenditure of ₹2.49 crore⁸ incurred on construction of health infrastructures which had to be dismantled midway. In addition, GoA had to bear the cost of dismantled construction.

The matter was reported to the Government in December 2019, the Principal Secretary stated (September 2020) that to upgrade Dhubri Civil Hospital to Medical College, the existing structure was not appropriate for the use of medical college, and there was no other option but to dismantle these four buildings, in view of the larger benefit supposed to accrue from a Medical College.

Recommendations: Both the cases at Paras 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 point out indifferent approach/ attitude towards programmes and projects funded by the GoI, though they were meant for the benefit of the State's citizens. The GoA may take necessary action to not only streamline the systems and coordination between all agencies, but also ensure that responsibility is fixed on officials whose action led to waste of government funds and non-utilisation of facilities created out of these funds.

1.2.3 Unfruitful Expenditure

“Establishment of Hospital Ship on the river Brahmaputra” a GoI funded novel project for providing health care services, remained incomplete and unfruitful after incurring an expenditure of ₹2.20 crore on the project.

Government of India (GoI), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) accorded (November 2009) Administrative Approval of ₹ four crore (₹ three crore for ship building and ₹one crore for equipment and machineries) to Government of Assam (GoA) for the scheme “Support for establishment of Hospital Ship on the river Brahmaputra by the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES)⁹, Guwahati”. Objective of the scheme was to provide quality health care services in the riverine and *char* areas¹⁰ with full time medical and pathological facilities. The funds were to be contributed by GoI and GoA in 90:10 ratio with ₹ 3.60 crore by GoI and ₹ 0.40 crore by GoA and the target date for completion of the project was 31 December 2011. GoI released ₹ 2.40 crore to GoA in two instalments during November 2009 (₹0.40 crore) and October 2012 (₹ two crore). Director of Medical Education (DME), Assam released ₹ 2.20 crore between December 2011 and April 2015 to the C-NES for implementation of the Project on the basis of demands raised by C-NES.

⁸ ₹2.36 crore on construction and ₹0.13 crore on dismantling

⁹ As per the website of C-NES (an NGO), it aims to develop strategies and policies to impact policies and perceptions and mobilise public opinion on issues relating to the North East across a broad range of areas: health, education, environment, infrastructure, connectivity, conflict, gender, civil society, culture and heritage, communications and as well as regional cooperation.

¹⁰ A riverine island locally known as char area.