

## Top officials booked in Orissa health scam

The Orissa vigilance department has registered graft cases against seven officials, including a retired bureaucrat, for their involvement in an alleged scam in a World Bank funded health project, sources said Tuesday.

'We have registered criminal cases against Mayadhara Panigrahi, a retired IAS officer, and six others after we found huge irregularities and corruption in the project implemented during their tenure,' a senior official of the state vigilance department told IANS wishing anonymity.

The department began probing allegations about wrong-doings in the state government- launched \$76.4 million Orissa Health System Development Project (OHSDP) about six months ago. The project was launched in 1998 and completed in 2006.

A detailed implementation review (DIR) launched by the World Bank in 2006 and supported by the government of India found fraud and corruption in the implementation of the project.

The bank in its report pointed out that a state health minister and some officials had taken Rs.500,000 in bribes to give undue favours to a particular firm.

After pressure from opposition parties, the state government asked the vigilance department to probe the allegations.

Three people, including Panigrahi, have been charged with showing undue favour to a firm in the purchase of some medicines at exorbitant rates that caused huge losses to the state exchequer, the official said.

Three of the seven accused are still in government service, he said.

Among the accused were joint director of the project Sugat Kar, assistant director of the project Taramani Patnaik, deputy director Rajesh Mishra, financial advisor and chief accounts officer Bibhuti Bhusan Mishra, executive engineer Bijoy Chandra Tripathy and deputy control procurement S. Balgopal, the official said.

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