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## Relief efforts all at sea

3 yrs after tsunami, one-fourth of funds utilised

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CAUGHT UP in labyrinthine procedural complications involving several departments and ministries, tsunami relief and rehabilitation works appear to have been substantially derailed.

More than three years after the tsunami, only about one-fourth of the funds allocated have been spent — Rs 2,504.68 crore utilised from the total allocated amount of Rs 9135.66 crore until September last.

The tsunami balance sheet of two states presents a drab picture: Rs.914.58 crore of the total allocated amount of Rs 4165.33 crore spent in Tamil Nadu and Rs 67.40 crore of Rs 1441.75 crore in Kerala.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands scenario is apparently even more serious not only because of the low percentage of utilisation (Rs 983.15 crore of the total Rs 2654.69 crore), but also on account of allegations of inefficiency, corruption and diversion of funds, as pointed out in the 2006-07 report of the

Comptroller and Auditor General.

The report highlights that "61 per centage of funds released to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands remained unutilised, while different departments of the UT administration surrendered Rs 83.89 crore".

Two departments in the UT administration are reported to have shown — incorrectly - high utilisation by placing the funds with other departments and advances drawn were lying unadjusted for long periods.

In May 2005, the UT administration floated tenders for Rs 450 crore contracts for the construction of 7,000 temporary shelters. Till date, the numbers of shelters completed and handed over are only about 200, said a highly placed official of the Central Public Works Department, which is the nodal agency overseeing tsunami relief and rehabilitation works.

"There are some problems — particularly in the Andamans — which we are attempting to sort out," said Urban Development and Housing Minister S. Jaipal Reddy.

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**The Andaman and Nicobar Islands scenario is particularly serious not only because of the poor utilisation (Rs 983.15 cr of Rs 2654.69 cr), but also due to allegations of inefficiency and corruption**