

PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT OF INDIA **RAJYA SABHA**

COMMITTEE ON PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE (COPLLOT), RAJYA SABHA

Shri Tariq Anwar, Chairman, Committee on Papers Laid on the Table (COPLLOT) of Rajya Sabha, presented the 135th and 136th Reports of the Committee to the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, the 7th September, 2011.

135th Report of the Committee deals with the laying on the Table of Rajya Sabha the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur; All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi; and Central Information Commission, New Delhi.

136th Report deals with laying of Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi; Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram; and STCL, Bangalore.

The Committee has recommended to the Ministries of Youth Affairs and Sports, Culture, Science and Technology, Commerce and Industry and Human Resource Development to put in place a mechanism to ensure timely laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the respective organisations under their administrative control, i.e. within nine months from the date of closure of a financial year and that, in case of anticipated delay, they should seek extension from the Committee, citing convincing reasons for the delay.

The Committee also cautioned the Ministries that repeated delays in laying the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts was a matter of serious concern and responsibility must be fixed.

The Committee asked the Ministries to lay a comprehensive Review of the performance of the respective organisations, along with the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts.

In respect of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, the Committee recommended that Ministry/ Department must ensure timely approval of Annual Reports/Audited Accounts by the Executive Council. The Committee further recommended that rules must prescribe timely approval of Annual Reports/Audited Accounts by the Executive Council.

In respect of AICTE, the Committee expressed displeasure over the fact that despite the recommendations contained in its 120th Report (November 2009), there was no improvement in the situation regarding laying of papers of AICTE. The Committee was, therefore, apprehensive of the assurance given by the Ministry. However, it expected the Ministry and the AICTE to scrupulously adhere to the statutory obligations towards Parliament. The Committee, accordingly, directed the Ministry to effectively supervise the timely completion of all the stages involved in the preparation and laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of AICTE, so that such delays in laying of the papers were avoided in future.

In respect of Central Information Commission (CIC), the Central Government was required to lay Annual Reports of CIC before the Parliament as per Section 25 (4) of the RTI Act, 2005. The Committee took note of the delay in providing information by the Government Departments/public organisations to the CIC and the delay in laying of papers in Parliament. Considering the persistent delays in laying Annual Reports before the Parliament, the Committee felt that it was imperative that the Ministry and the Commission drew a time line for every stage of preparation of Annual Reports. It suggested that instead of waiting endlessly for the Ministries/Departments and State Governments/UTs to furnish their information on the implementation of the RTI Act, a deadline should be prescribed, for furnishing the information to the Commission. A senior officer should be assigned the task of monitoring.

In respect of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi, the Committee was surprised at the state of affairs, where the Ministry appeared to have no control over the autonomous organisations, in order to make them fulfill their obligations under the Memorandum of Association. It was of the firm view that the Ministry cannot abdicate its responsibility under the plea that a certain organisation is of national repute or is headed by persons of eminence. It was imperative that the Ministry ensured scrupulous adherence by the organisations to their obligation towards the Parliament.

Further, the Committee apprehended that the Reviews by the Ministries were routine exercise, instead of being a critical appraisal of the performance. Such apprehensions have been vindicated by the admission of the Ministry of Culture that “the Ministry prepared a Review Statement, containing only a gist of activities undertaken by the organization”. The Committee felt that the Reviews were not meant to be the gist of activities, but a critical appraisal of performance, against mutually agreed benchmarks. The Ministry’s Review must take cognizance of the audit observations, either contained in the final audit report or conveyed through letters to the management, and give comments on such observations in a separate section in the Review.

In respect of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram, the Committee observed that under the Act, the Secretary, Department of Science and Technology was a Member of both the Institute Body and the Governing Body of the Institute. Similarly, the Financial Advisor of the Department of S&T was a member of Institute Body. Despite this, the Ministry failed to lay a comprehensive separate Review statement. The Ministry could have taken advantage of

the presence of the Secretary & FA in the Institute Body and prepared a more comprehensive and objective review statement. The Committee, therefore, reiterated its recommendation that the Ministry should lay a comprehensive review statement, covering broad performance of the Institute, and a brief description of the critical areas, along with the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Institute.
