

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) Rajya Sabha, presented the 137th, 138th and 139th Reports of the Committee to the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, the 21st December, 2011.

137th Report of the Committee deals with the laying on the Table of the Rajya Sabha the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of Kerala State Agro-Industries Corporation Ltd; Thiruvananthapuram, Sarva Shiksha Abiyan, Kerala and Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bangalore.

138th Report deals with the laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities (CLM), Allahabad; National Commission for Women, (NCW), New Delhi and National Institute of Siddha, Chennai.

139th Report deals with the laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of National Projects Construction Corporation Limited (NPCC); All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi.

The Committee has recommended to the Ministries of Agriculture, Human Resource Development (Departments of School Education & Literacy and Higher Education), Health & Family Welfare (Department of AYUSH), Minority Affairs, Women and Child Development and Water Resources to put in place a mechanism to ensure timely laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the respective organizations 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 organizations, along with the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts.

137th Report

In respect of Kerala State Agro-Industries Corporation Ltd, Thiruvanthapuram, the Committee observed that its recommendations and observations contained in its 87th Report, have not been complied with. The Committee also found that despite specific responsibility given to the Ministry to monitor and ensure timely laying of Reports, the Ministry had chosen to limit its role to routine meetings and reminders, instead of fixing responsibility. The Committee cautioned the Ministry that repeated extensions can not be taken for granted. Repeated Delays in laying the Reports are a violation of Statutory obligation towards Parliament, responsibility for which must be fixed. The Committee took strong objection to the violation of provisions of the Companies Act.

In respect of Sarva Shiksh Abhiyan, Kerala, the Committee recommended that the Ministry of Human Resource Development should take up the issue of timely appointment of auditors, so that the audit could be conducted within a reasonable time. The Committee also observe that though elaborate schedule for timely compilation and presentation of Reports had been prescribed by the Ministry, they were seldom followed in practice. The Committee was of the view that in the interest of concurrent monitoring of utilization of funds and prompt compilation of accounts, the SSA Societies must undertake computerization of their accounts. The parent Ministry or the State Governments should provide for expenditure in their components for SSA.

In respect of Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, the Committee took note of the fact that the Institute did not have sufficient man-power. The Committee also took note of the repeated extensions sought by the Ministry, despite the assurance committee to lay the Reports in the Monsoon Session and took strong exception to lackadaisical approach of the Ministry. The Ministry did not lay the Reports pending since 2005-06

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In respect of Commissioner For Linguistic Minorities, Allahabad, the Committee impressed upon the need to adhere to the Constitutional mandate. It recommended that the Commissioner should generate awareness about rights of linguistic minorities and obligations of the Government in this regard. The Committee also observed that despite directions of the President of India in respect of July-June cycle, every Report was being sent to the Ministry after considerable delay. The Committee recommended that the Ministry, for the sake of uniformity, may explore the possibility of adhering to April-March cycle, instead of the current July-June cycle. The Committee also expressed reservation over the delay in appointing the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in time-which, in turn, impacted the performance of the organisation in meeting its Constitutional mandate and caused delay in preparation and laying of Reports before the Parliament. The Committee, having considered the schedule provided by the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities also observed that the schedule was never adhered

to. The bottlenecks in implementation of the schedule needed to be identified and checked. The Committee was dismayed over large number of positions have remained vacant for a significant period of time which had, affected the Commission in meeting its statutory obligations.

In respect of National Commission for Women (NCW), the Committee observed that in addition to delays occurring due to late receipt of Action Taken Notes from the concerned Ministries/Departments, there had been inexplicable delays in obtaining the Audit certificates. The Committee noted that the Rules prescribe that Accounts are required to be submitted to the Audit Officer (CAG), on or before the last day of June, for audit and report and that within thirty days of receipt of Audit Report, the Commission should remedy any defect or irregularity pointed out therein and report to the Central Government and the Audit Officer about the action taken by it thereon. The Committee recommended that the causes of delay in obtaining the audit certificate must be addressed. The Ministry and the Commission should not take the recurrent extensions of time for granted and persistent delays is a matter of serious concern. The Ministry and Commission should fix a date for receiving Action Taken notes and any further delay should, accordingly, be reflected in the Memorandum of Action Taken. The existing mechanism of Inter-Ministerial Committee should be further strengthened to ensure timely submission of ATNs and also to make an appraisal of the action taken by the concerned Ministry/Department on the recommendation of the Commission. Web-based computerization could help the Commission in removing delays, by communicating with the concerned Ministries/Departments and monitoring the action taken on its recommendations.

In respect of National Institute of Siddha, the Committee observed that there had been duplication in the audit procedure i.e. audit by the Audit firm and subsequent audit by the office of Accountant General. Instead, the two audits could have been complemented for the timely laying of audited accounts. The Committee also found the delay in issuing audit certificate by the Accountant General rather remarkable, particularly when the first stage of the audit was done by a Chartered Accountant firm. The Committee believed that either the audit by Accountant General had found infirmities with the audit by the Chartered Accountant or there had been delays on the part of AG. The Committee, therefore, suggested that the NIS or the Ministry should take up the issue with the AG to evolve a mechanism that the audit by the CA was done in conformity with the standards and timelines prescribed by the AG. The Committee also recommended that the Department of AYUSH and the Institute should take appropriate steps to fill up the administrative and accounts positions, which had been approved by the Governing Council of the Institute.

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In respect of National Projects Construction Corporation Limited (NPCC) the Committee recommended that in case of delay, the Ministry, should furnish the details

about the reasons for the delay, which should invariably contain, in chronological order, the dates of finalization of annual accounts, appointment of auditors, forwarding the accounts to the auditor, completion of audit, submission to C&AG, adoption of report by AGM, completion of translation and printing and forwarding of the papers to the Ministry. Such a statement should necessarily be laid, along with the delay statement, on the Table of the House. The Government Review Committee recommended that it should cover broadly the performance of the corporation containing a brief description of the core areas of the functioning of the corporation, for the year under review. The responsibility for the persistent non-compliance of statutory requirements and Committee's recommendations in this regard should be fixed.

In respect of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi the Committee, after comparing the schedule prescribed for the preparation of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts with actual time taken during 2008-09 and 2009-10, found it contrary to the assertion made by the Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that, there was no delay in the audit. The audit certificates were received by the first week of November. Instead, the delays took place in translation/ editing and in obtaining the approval of Governing Body and Institute Body of the AIIMS, the responsibility for which squarely lies with the Institute and the Ministry. The Ministry should also lay before the House a Delay Statement alongwith the Annual Report and Audited Accounts, giving chronological details as laid down in its recommendation. The Ministry must eschew from laying a generic delay statement in the House directly. The Committee took note of the assurance of the Ministry in respect of delays and cautioned that recurrent delays in laying the papers was a matter of serious concern and that repeated extensions could not be taken for granted. The Ministry and the Institute must fix the responsibility for recurrent delays. The Committee also recommended that the Rules must provide for regular meetings of the Governing Body and the Institute Body of AIIMS, so that Reports were approved in a time-bound manner.

In respect of University Grants Commission (UGC), the Committee observed that there have been delays in submission of accounts for audit due to delay in release of last instalment by the Ministry. There have also been delays in furnishing the Draft audit reports and subsequently in furnishing the replies thereon by the UGC. The Committee felt that efforts should be made to reduce the time taken in release of instalment by the Ministry and also in furnishing the replies to the Draft Audit Report. The Committee also observed that deadlines were never adhered to. The Bureaux and the Regional Offices submitted their inputs late and there were delays at every successive stage of vetting and proof reading. The Committee recognised that the Commission was facing acute shortage of manpower, which was reflected in the delays in meeting its statutory obligations. The Committee is also averse of practice of employing contract workers in crucial assignments. With contract workers, there was a imminent danger of losing institutional memory, which was so crucial for the evolution and efficiency of the institution. The Committee acknowledged that with Staff Selection Commission declining to conduct recruitment on behalf of Commission, the problem of shortage of staff had further accentuated. The Committee recommended that the Ministry must resolve the staffing issues of UGC expeditiously and take up the issue with Staff Selection Commission and the concerned

Department of Personnel and Training. The Committee also observed that no extension was sought in case of delay in submitting the Annual Report for the year 2008-09. Even in case of 2007-08 and 2009-10, the Reports were eventually laid only after extended time had lapsed. The Committee also felt that apart from prescribing a time schedule. The Committee also noted the delays in compilation of accounts and their submission for audit due to delay in releasing the instalment of grants. This issue needed to be addressed by the Ministry, in consultation with the UGC. However, the Committee had been apprehensive of avoidable delays due to delay in approvals by the Governing bodies of Organisations. The Rules must specifically provide for regular and timely meetings of the Commission that would also help in monitoring of performance and utilisation of annual grants.
