

FOURTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**COMMITTEE
ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
(2019-2021)**

FORTY FIFTH REPORT
(Presented on 7th February, 2019)



**SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
2019**

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On

**Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the
78th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2014-2016)**

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**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
(2019-2021)**

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Committee on Public Accounts, having been authorised by the Committee to present this Report, on their behalf present the 45th Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the 78th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2014-2016).

The Committee considered and finalised this Report at the meeting held on 5-2-2019.

Thiruvananthapuram,
5th February, 2019.

V. D. SATHEESAN,
Chairman,
Committee on Public Accounts.

REPORT

This Report deals with the Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the 78th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2014-2016).

The 78th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2014-2016) was presented to the House on 16th December, 2014. The Report contained 17 recommendations relating to Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (Legal Metrology) Departments. Government was addressed on 26th December 2014 to furnish the Statements of Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the Report and the final copy was received on 6th December 2016.

The Committee considered the Action Taken Statements at its meeting held on 21st June 2017.

The Committee decided not to pursue further action on the recommendations in the light of the replies furnished by Government. These recommendations of the Committee, and the Action Taken by Government are included in this Report.

FOOD & CIVIL SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 1, Para No. 28)

The Committee expresses its displeasure over the slow pace of computerization in the Civil Supplies Department and directs the department to gear up the action to complete Computerisation at the earliest. It is optimistic that with the computerization, effective and equal distribution of food grains could be ensured. Also corruption in the prevailing rationing system could be curtailed to a great extent. It recommends that in order to achieve the intended objectives, all data should be brought under one platform through a Wide Area Network with a centralized server.

Action Taken

The Model Pilot for End to End Computerisation is currently running in 22 ARDs in two districts. Regarding Server, the Department proposed to utilize the cloud infrastructure maintained by Kerala State IT Mission. Different applications are under production and they have to be integrated. KELTRON is now appointed as System Integrator.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 2, Para No. 29)

The Committee suggests the Civil Supplies Department to develop a robust database with proper firewalls for security and ensure a centralized database to avoid duplication and other pilferages. Taking into account of the huge number of beneficiaries under the scheme, the Committee urges the Civil Supplies Department to check the feasibility of switching over the database from SQL to Oracle. The Committee understands the enormous data including images are included in a single spread sheet which result in huge time loss in fetching a single information. So it recommends the Civil Supplies Department to take necessary steps to modify the database with images stored separately as a single unit which could be linked to the main table as and when necessary.

Action taken

The Ration Card Management System (RCMS) is maintained by NIC and a Central Database is being prepared including Aadhaar details, Bank Account details, Socio-economic parameters etc. The Database is prepared by using Postgre SQL which is an open source database. Switching over to Oracle is quite expensive and hence open source software is being used. In the revised RCMS database images are kept as separate table.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 3, Para No. 30)

The Committee advocates to follow a system which use Unicode fonts for inputting data rather than typing in one language and then converting into another.

Action Taken

The present database is using Unicode fonts and names of family members can be entered in both Malayalam and English.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 4, Para No. 31)

Regarding, the audit paragraph 'absence of mandatory provisions' the Committee remarks that unless certain fields made mandatory people may skip them. So it directs the Civil Supplies department to modify the Software to incorporate mandatory provisions.

Action Taken

For the revised RCMS certain provisions are mandatory. NIC has modified the software accordingly.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 5, Para No. 32)

The Committee is of the opinion that for seeding the data with Aadhaar the database of both should be compatible. So it urges the Civil Supplies Department to prepare a bilingual database instead of preparing it only in Malayalam and to furnish the details of steps taken in this regard.

Action Taken

In the revised RCMS, Aadhaar data is seeded and details of family members can be entered both in Malayalam and English.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 6, Para No. 33)

The Committee directs the Civil Supplies Department that the revised version of the Ration Card Management System (RCMS) should be designed with provisions to upgrade it in accordance with the future requirements and evolving technologies.

Action Taken

NIC is preparing the application with provisions for enhancement.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 7, Para No. 34)

The Committee understands that the present version of RCMS is used only for issuing Ration Cards. So the Committee suggests that the Civil Supplies Department should take necessary steps to modify the current versions so that essential reports could be generated out of it without waiting for the change over to RCMS version II.

Action Taken

The revised RCMS is under preparation by NIC. The Department also decides to revamp the RCMS application and prepared an RFP for selection of vendor.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 8, Para No. 35)

The Committee remarks that the mode of purchase of computer followed in the Civil Supplies Department should be revised. It suggests that Civil Supplies Department should opt for open tender system for procuring more advanced and stable computers and other accessories rather than procuring them at DGS & D rate from Government agencies. It also urges to furnish a report detailing the steps taken to introduce e-tender system in the Department.

Action Taken

Computers and accessories were purchased through open RFP in the current year via e-tender system.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 9, Para No. 36)

The Committee opines that all the data centres in our state are integrated, lot of man power, energy etc. could have been saved and advocates to use the power saving Blade Server instead of Rack Servers. So it exhorts the Civil Supplies Department to take immediate steps to rectify such discrepancies.

Action Taken

The Department proposed to utilize the cloud server maintained by Kerala State IT Mission, as per the specifications fixed by technical agencies like SeMT, KSITM, KELTRON etc.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 10, Para No. 37)

The Committee recommends that a password policy should be implemented in the Civil Supplies Department at the earliest without waiting for the completion of End to End Computerisation. It also instructs to take necessary measures to deactivate the user ID of the retired/transferred employees to prevent unauthorized access to the system.

Action Taken

Password policy already implemented. The passwords should contain Alphabets, numbers and special characters. User Management is not yet implemented and would be decided soon.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 11, Para No. 38)

The Committee is displeased to note that the Civil Supplies Department had not been taken any step to rectify the defects pointed out by Accountant General in 2009-10. It notices that the department is hesitant to install any antivirus packages to the existing system and simply waiting for completion of the End to End Computerization for getting everything fine. It directs the Civil Supplies Department to make necessary arrangements to install antivirus software in each and every computers in the Department.

Action Taken

Necessary directions were given to all concerned officers for the installation of Antivirus in all computers. Firewall has already been installed in networks at Commissionerate level. Data security is ensured to the maximum level possible.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 12, Para No. 39)

The Committee reiterates the recommendations of the Accountant General that authorization and validation of data should be given utmost priority. It also directs that completeness and correctness of data should be certified at appropriate levels.

Action Taken

The authorization and validation of data is checked in the new RCMs. For ensuring correctness of data, printouts of the entered data were taken and distributed to each cardholder and collect the correct data and re-enter the data. In RCMS data, validation mechanisms have already been included.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 13, Para No. 40)

The Committee concludes that the Civil Supplies Department should take necessary steps for setting up two separate servers so that data could be retrieved in case of contingencies, if any. It stresses that a suitable Business Continuity/ Disaster Management Plan should also be implemented.

Action Taken

It is proposed to utilize the cloud infrastructure maintained by Kerala State IT Mission and the existing Disaster Management facilities with State Data Centre may be utilized by the Department.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 14, Para No. 49)

The Committee directs the Legal Metrology Department to establish an effective enforcement mechanism to protect the interest of the consumers as envisaged in the Standard Weights and Measures Act. It also recommends to conduct inspection at regular intervals in petrol pumps.

Action Taken (From Revenue Department)

The enforcement officers of Legal Metrology Department have been conducting frequent inspections and surprise checks. Accordingly during the last financial year, 2014-15, 2005 cases were detected and a compounding fee of ₹ 6,90,62,750 was collected and remitted to the public exchequer. At present in every district there is an Assistant Controller in addition to a Flying Squad Assistant Controller under whom 18 Senior Inspectors and 86 Inspectors are working throughout the State. Besides the Assistant Controller (Net Content Verification Unit) and Assistant Controller (Central Lab) are also assisting the inspection. During the period from 01/15 to 05/16, the Department conducted 2142 number of inspections in petrol pumps, booked 430 cases and realised ₹ 10,33,000 as compounding fee. Regular inspections are being conducted in petrol pumps. Steps are being taken to enhance the regular inspections. Directions have already been issued to enforcement officers to conduct inspections at regular intervals and it is being strictly followed by them.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 15, Para No. 50)

The Committee recommends to install state of the art machinery in the gold testing laboratory which use non-destructive methods for testing the purity of gold and that would help more people to avail this facility.

Action Taken (From Revenue Department)

An XRF machine was purchased for ₹ 40 Lakhs during the financial year 2013-14 and installed at Gold Testing Laboratory. Hence non-destructive method of testing facilities are available at present.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 16, Para No. 51)

The Committee admonishes the officials in not taking any disciplinary action against the delinquents for their lapse in not filing the cases in time. It strongly recommends that immediate explanation should be sought from the officers concerned and instructs the Legal Metrology Department to take appropriate disciplinary action against the officers who failed to file cases in time.

Action Taken (From Revenue Department)

Actions being taken against the officers who failed to file cases in time.

1. CC No.-1063/2003 JFCM-II, Aluva

A legal opinion in the above case was sought by the Department. It was opined by the Additional Public Prosecutor that there was no scope for an appeal. Hence Department could not file appeal.

2. ST-474/08 JFCM-II, Haripad

The fine amount of ₹ 5,000 was realised from the alleged officer on 20-5-2016.

3. CC-631/02 JFCM-II, Thrissur

Since the delinquent officer was an Assistant Controller, Government served notice to the officer and gave him an opportunity to be heard while he was holding

the post of Controller. After hearing the officer, Government took a decision to exonerate the officer on the circumstances that no financial loss was incurred to the Government due to the action of the officer.

4. ST 5671/2003

The accused were acquitted by the Judicial Ist Class Magistrate, Chittur on the ground that the officer concerned not observed the rules and procedures at the time of inspection. Strict direction was given to the Assistant Controller (Flying Squad), Palakkad to file an Appeal Petition before the Hon'ble High Court against the judgment of Judicial Ist Class Magistrate, Chittur. Even after repeated directions the officer failed to file appeal. As the officer responsible for not filing the appeal in time has retired from service on superannuation as per the letter No. 2209/F3/15/RD dated 28-7-2016, Government directed the Controller, Legal Metrology Department to furnish necessary proposals to Government for initiating action against him at Government level.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 17, Para No. 52)

The Committee urges the Department to set-up an internal audit wing in the Department urgently.

Action Taken (From Revenue Department)

As per the directions contained in the Government letter No.2209/F3/15/RD dated 18-4-2016, vide proceedings No. A1-8264/15 dated 22-4-2016, the Controller, Legal Metrology Department has set up an Internal Audit Wing within the Legal Metrology Department with the following staff in addition to their normal duties.

Senior Superintendent – 1

Head Clerk – 1

U D Clerk – 1

Thiruvananthapuram,
5th February, 2019.

V. D. SATHESAN,
Chairman,
Committee on Public Accounts.

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