

FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

(2021-23)

SEVENTEENTH REPORT

(Presented on^{7th} July, 2022)



SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

2022

FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**COMMITTEE
ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
(2021-23)**

SEVENTEENTH REPORT

**Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations
contained in the Nineteenth Report of the Committee on
Public Accounts (2001-04)**

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

(2021-23)

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Shri P.S. Selvarajan, Deputy Secretary

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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 Seventeenth Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the Nineteenth Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2001-04).

The Committee considered and finalised this Report at the meeting held on 8th June, 2022.

Thiruvananthapuram
7th July 2022.



SUNNY JOSEPH,
Chairman,
Committee on Public Accounts.

REPORT

This Report deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the 19th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2001-04).

The 19th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2001-04) was presented to the House on 13th June 2002. The Report contained 24 recommendations relating to Higher Education Department. Government was addressed on 25th June 2002 to furnish the Statements of Action Taken on these recommendations and the final reply was received on 7th August 2009.

The Committee examined the Statements of Action Taken in its meetings held on 09.12.2004, 23.05.2018 and 04.12.2019 and decided not to pursue further action on the recommendations in the light of the replies furnished by the Government. The recommendations and Government replies are incorporated in this Report.

HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 1, Para No. 61)

1.1 The Committee note that the Higher Education Department had incurred expenditure under 'plan' section under 'capital' portion of the head – Printing & Stationary without budget allocation during the year 1987-88 and 1988-89. The Committee believe that it was the responsibility of Higher Education Department to assess the requirement well in time so as

Higher Education Department to assess the requirement well in time so as to get necessary provision sanctioned through supplementary grants. In an additional note subsequently furnished to the Committee the Department stated that the heads under which expenditure had been incurred regularly were operated by Chief Engineer (Buildings and Local Works) and the connected files could not be traced out. The Committee find that Higher Education Department and Finance Department are equally responsible for their lapses in providing required information to the committee. The Committee desire that such lapses should not be repeated in future and express anguish over the attitude of the witness. The Committee urge that the connected files should be traced out and a detailed report regarding this issue should be furnished to the Committee.

Action Taken

1.2 The Head of account 4055-103-plan capital is being operated by chief engineer (PWD) (B&L). The Printing Department has no control over the above head of account. In spite of repeated request details are still pending with Chief Engineer.

On the basis of the notings in the appropriation accounts 1987-88 and 1988-89 the excess expenditure were occurred due to reclassification of expenditure from major head 4059 of Demand no.XV-PW to 4058 of Demand no.XIV. As the amount has already been provided under voted Grant of 4059-PW the regularisation was not necessary and the PAC has accepted the replies.

The re-classification expenditure under the major head 4058-Printing and Stationary for the year 1987-88 and 1988-89 occurred due to the implement action of the 5 tier classification of accounts implemented in State of Kerala with effect from 01.04.1987.

Recommendation

(Sl. No. 2, Para No. 62)

The Committee understand that adequate attention is not given in phasing out the old and outdated machines in the Government presses especially those procured prior to 1960, when the printing technology is undergoing rapid modernisation. As the conventional type metal system is still in use here. It badly affects the productivity of the Press. Modern technological upgradation is essential for the economical working of Government Presses and for reducing the operational cost. The Committee urge that dependence on old technology with poor obsolete systems should be discouraged by shifting over to the latest innovative methods of printing. The Committee also desire that advanced training in a phased manner should also be imparted to the employees of Government Presses so as to avoid the problem of non-availability of trained hands to run the modern machines.

Action Taken

Considering the rapid changes in Printing Technology, some old machines which was obsolete has been disposed of in public auction. Due to the strong protest of the Trade Unions in the Presses, some machines could not be disposed of for which Government sanction has been accorded. Attempts are being made to dispose the machines with the co-operation of Trade Unions. Action has also been taken to identify the obsolete machineries of this department. As a part of modernisation, the employees of the Composing Sector, Machine Composing Section and letter Press wing, were given advanced training in DTP and Offset Printing respectively. Now all the Offset machines and DTP are being operated by the above trained hands

Recommendation
(Sl. No. 3, Para No. 63)

The Committee are distressed to note that the Report submitted to Government by the Expert Committee constituted for studying modernisation of Government presses has not yet been approved by Government. The Committee recommend that final decision of Government on the Report may be expedited and the recommendations acceptable may be implemented without any further delay. The Committee desire to be furnished with a copy of the Report of the Expert Committee.

Action Taken

1.6 Necessary instructions were given to Director of Printing. Final decision will be taken after the receipt of the report from Director of Printing.

Recommendation
(Sl. No. 4, Para No. 64)

1.7 The most disappointing fact noticed by the Committee was that the break down register and the log books for each machine are not maintained in the Government Presses as required in the press manual. The Committee hope that the Department would bestow immediate attention to maintain these registers showing the productivity of machines. The Committee recommend that the monthly performance chart of each machine be maintained upto date and percentage of utilisation of the production capacity of each of them may be intimated to the committee.

Action Taken

1.8 Break down Registers are being maintained in all the Government presses. In the case of Log Book, directions has already been issued to maintain

the Book. Necessary instructions have been issued to maintain monthly performance chart registers for machines to the concerned Monthly performance is being maintained.

Recommendations

(Sl. No.05 Para No. 65)

1.9 The Committee find that the centralised air condition plant installed in the Government Press, Mannanthala has not been functioning properly for the last many years. The Higher Education Department is blaming the Public Works Department for not rectifying the defects. The Committee desire that earnest attempts should be made to repair the air condition plant in Government Press, Mannanthala, immediately so as to avoid damages to the sophisticated machines imported from abroad.

Action taken

1.10 Since the repair of Centralised Air Condition Plant in Government Press, Mannanthala is not economically viable, Split Air-Conditioner has been provided safe guard the sophisticated machines.

Recommendations

(Sl. No. 6 Para No. 66)

1.11 The Committee note that there was undue delay in reprocessing the accumulated "dross" and that the failure to reprocess 26638 kg. "dross" accumulated during the period from November 1988 to December 1993 had resulted in non-recovery of 13.320 kg of type metal costing Rs. 4.66 lakhs During discussion the Committee were told that it had been decided to dispose of the "dross" by public auction after assigning the value of lead. The

Committee desire to be furnished with the full particulars of the total quantity and value of the "dross" available for auction. The Committee also desire that the out come of the chemical analysis of "dross" conducted by the regional Research Laboratory should be intimated to it.

Action taken

1.12 During December 2000, 17.915 kgs of metal "dross" has been auctioned and an amount of Rs. 3,50,000/- has been remitted into Government account.

Recommendations

(Sl.No. 7 Para No. 67)

1.13 The Committee deplore the non-adherence of the provisions of the press manual which specifically provides for the preparation of annual consolidated stock account of type metal etc. In the context of various irregularities that had occurred, the Committee stress the need for maintaining the essential basic records and keeping upto date stock accounts of inventories. The Committee urge that the physical verification should be conducted regularly and that any lapse in this regard should be taken up seriously.

Action taken

1.14 Due to the introduction of modern technology the purchase of new type metal has been stopped for the last twelve years. Proper records about the type metals are maintained in Government Central Press, Thiruvananthapuram. Government Press, Shornur. Physical verifications are being done periodically.

Recommendations

(Sl. No. 8 Para No. 68)

1.15 Provision in the Factories Act and Press Manual stipulate certain limit upto which overtime allowance can be sanctioned. Government had also directed to limit overtime allowance to 10 per cent of the pay and allowances. It was noticed that there was steep increase in overtime expenditure which stood in the range of 30 to 69 per cent of salary in 4 presses during 1992-93. Details in respect of subsequent years were not made available to the Committee by the department. The Committee stress the need for restricting overtime works to the barest minimum and containing payment of overtime allowance to the prescribed limit.

Action taken

1.16 The details of overtime allowance paid to the employees during the last five years is given below:

1998-1999 - 301 lakhs

1999-2000 - 444 „

2000-2001 - 332 lakhs

2001-2002 - 92.16 lakhs

2002-2003 - 72.5 lakhs

The overtime was drawn from the salary head upto 1999-2000. A separate head of account has been allotted for overtime allowances from 2000-2001. Now the overtime allowance has been reduced to the barest minimum, directed by the Government.

Recommendations

(Sl. No. 9, Para No. 69)

1.17 The Committee view very seriously that the Department has not conducted any effective study/assessment about the extent of outturn achieved by employees. The

Committee reasonably doubt that there is deliberate attempt to slow down production during normal working hours in order to engage in overtime work. The contention of the Department that the conventional system of letter press method with hot metal system and the fact that inflow of work cannot be forecast is not tenable to the Committee. The Committee strongly feel that the position should be changed drastically and recommend that a detailed assessment/review of outturn of each employee should be conducted and urgent measures evolved to streamline the present system in all Government Presses so as to minimise the incidence of overtime works. The Committee also urge that payment of overtime allowance should be restricted to the admissible limit of 10% of pay and allowances.

Action taken

1.18 Now-a-days overtime has been considerably reduced to the barest minimum. Only in exigent cases of budget, Assembly and similar situation overtime work is engaged. Orders has been issued constituting a Committee for revision of out-turn. Now the overtime allowance has been reduced to the admissible limit of 10% of the salary.

Recommendations

(Sl. No. 10 , Para No. 70)

1.19 The Committee find no justification for the payment of overtime allowance for non productive hours with no outturn and for the printers who were posted to the machines under repair. Such payments made in two presses.

1.20 In two months alone amounted to Rs. 0.42 lakh. The Committee desire that responsibility for sanctioning unjustifiable payments should be fixed and that stringent action should be taken to prevent recurrence of such instances in future. So also, the

practice of paying overtime allowances even to employees who have shown minus outturn should be stopped forthwith.

Action taken

1.21 The practice of giving overtime allowance to the employees working in the machines under repair has completely been stopped. Directions has been issued to the concerned head of offices not to sanction overtime to those employees who show minus out-turn.

Recommendations

(Sl. No. 11, Para No. 71)

1.22 The Committee understand that there has been inordinate delay ranging upto 11 years in executing the work orders and heavy pendency in executing the works even after composing had been completed and this resulted in holding up of metal in composing sections. The Committee feel that had there been periodical submission of return showing the position of pending works and better co-ordination and liason between the various wings of the Government Presses and intending Departments as well as between different presses and the Superintendent of Government Presses, the work could have been completed within a stipulated period. The Committee notice that the performance of the Planning Cell revived in April 1992 to monitor the position of work had been thoroughly disappointing. The Committee recommend that the procedure for execution of printing works should be streamlined so that such pendencies or accumulation of arrears do not occur in future.

Action Taken

1.23 A Cell has been constituted for monitoring the pending works in various

Government Presses. The pending occurred due to the non-returning of the proofs sent to the department concerned for approval. A Monitoring Committee is meeting periodically for the evaluation of progress of printing works of other departments. The Planning Cell has been revived as directed by the Public Accounts Committee. Much progress has been achieved in enclosing the pending work orders.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 12, para no. 72)

1.24 The Committee notice that about 45.88 lakhs forms and registers printed based on specific work orders remained to be lifted by the indenting departments during the period 1988 to 1992, since the indenting department showed least interest in taking back the materials in time. There is also no system to intimate the indenting departments of the execution of the Work order with the result that there had been instances of issuing work orders again for the same items. The Committee further note that the practice of placing huge work orders to the press, without ascertaining the actual requirement adversely affects the normal works of the Press. Therefore, the Committee recommend that Government should take a serious note of the state of affairs and take appropriate steps to avoid the unnecessary printing in future.

Action Taken

1.25 As directed by Government a Monitoring Committee with Director of Printing as convener and other heads of departments as members. The Committee is meeting monthly and considerable progress has been achieved.

Further Recommendation

The Committee decided to seek the situation after the constitution of the

monitoring committee.

Action Taken

Monitoring Committee meeting for the last three years were conducted on 30.09.2004, 30.08.2005 and 08.01.2007. For the meeting held on 08.01.2007, about 35 department heads had been informed to attend the meeting but only 21 representatives of various departments had attended the meeting. The matters and problems regarding the printing , delayed printing and removal of printed items had been discussed in detail. Action had been taken as per the discussions, considering the volume of work entrusted by the Forest, Higher Education and Excise departments. These departments were invited for the meeting, but they had not attended for the same. So the problems of these departments could not be discussed and printed materials of these departments kept in various branch presses could not be removed in time, despite the information given to them. Steps have already been taken to estimate the volume of printed items kept in branch presses, which were not taken by the departments in time for conducting the next meeting. Action has already been taken for conducting the meeting for this year. Minutes of the last meeting held on 08.01.2007 is enclosed for ready reference.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 13, Para No. 73)

1.26 The Committee notice that no comprehensive work study has been conducted about the working of Government Presses since their inception. The Committee are dissatisfied to learn that the department did not conduct a work study so far despite the recommendations to this effect of the Committee on Public Accounts in

its 23rd Report (July 1992).

Action Taken

1.27 A work study have been conducted by Government during 1986 and 1994-95. The observation of the Committee noted for guidance.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 14, Para No.74)

1.28 The Committee stresses the need for the detailed work study in view of the modernization of Government Presses as recommended by the Expert committee. So also, regular periodical review of workload and actual requirement of man power should be conducted and the surplus idling man power should be re-deployed to needy places accordingly.

Action Taken

1.29 After a detailed work assessment in view of modernization, 105 posts, has been identified as excess. Director of Printing has forwarded proposal for deployment of posts founds excess. Director of Printing also forwarded proposal to sanction 55 posts of Binder in place of 70 posts of Compositor found excess. But Director of printing has been requested to forward detailed report explaining the necessity of additional post of Binders.

Recommendation

(Sl.No.15, Para No.75)

1.30 The Committee are inclined to believe that the photo offset composing and type setting machine in Government Press, Mannanthala was procured without proper planning and without ensuring its workability as defects developed in the warranty period itself. The Committee observe that the procurement of such a

costly machine without ensuring availability of required infrastructure facilities and provisions for its installation was unwarranted. The Committee further vehemently criticised the attitude of Printing Department in not responding to the recommendation of Committee on Public Accounts in its 23rd report (1992) to take urgent steps to commission the photo offset machine. The Committee urge that responsibility should be fixed and stringent action taken against the officers found responsible for backing out of the supplier firm from its contractual obligation.

Action Taken

1.31 At the time of installation of machine a proposal was forwarded for centralised A/C. But final decision was delayed for 3 years. This the technology become obsolete DTP replaced photo type settings.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 16, Para No. 76)

1.32 The Committee also take a serious note of the fact that the Department had not even made any assessment of their requirement before ordering the purchase of fully programmed paper cutting machines for Government Press, Mannanthala. The Committee recommend that the responsibility for scant regard for public money and Government interest shown in this purchase by the concerned officers and those responsible should be strongly proceeded against.

Action Taken

1.33 The fully programmed paper cutting machine was purchased on the recommendations of M/s HMT Limited, the project consultant appointed by Government. It may also be noted that the machine is working satisfactorily.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 17, Para No. 77)

The Committee note that the capacity of the Government Press, Mannanthala has not yet been fully utilised due to the non introduction of a second shift as envisaged in the Project Report. The Committee observe that scarcity of staff in the Government Presses is the stumbling block against the utilisation of full capacity of the machines. Therefore, the Committee recommend that Government should take appropriate steps to sanction the required number of staff in accordance with the Project Report, for the speedy disposal of the work orders.

Action Taken

Second shift has been started in Government Press, Mannanthala and sufficient staff has also been sanctioned. Now this press is working in full swing. So the capacity is fully utilised.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 18, Para No. 78)

The Committee find serious dereliction of duty on the part of the officers of the publication Wing of Printing Department on account of no-maintenance of proper stock accounts and discrepancies/shortage noticed in stock in three sales outlets attached to the Government Presses. The Committee notice that even after a lapse of more than 10 years, the Department would not complete the consolidation of stores and stock accounts. In the absence of annual physical verification of main sub stores as stipulated in the Press Manual the Committee whether the Department is in a position to fix responsibility for shortages and omissions, against officials handling stores. The Committee recommend that a thorough probe should be conducted in respect of the entire transactions for the last 10 years to ascertain whether the sales and sales proceeds were accounted properly. The Committee also urge Government to streamline the arrangement for effective verification of stores and stock of Government Presses and to ensure that annual physical verification of stores is conducted by the officers entrusted

with the work.

Action Taken

Annual verification of stock and stores are being conducted regularly. A team has been constituted to take the stock position and transactions of the Publication Stores. The work is in progress. It is presumed that it can be completed within six months. The Department have initiated to sell the Publications through book exhibitions throughout the state. A considerable stock has been sold out through the exhibition.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 19, Para No. 79)

The Committee urge that Government should take a final decision as to whether the cost of printing of lottery tickets should be recovered from the department of State Lotteries or not. The Committee desire to know the outcome of the discussion with the Taxes Department in this issue.

Action Taken

The Director of printing has forwarded a proposal to Government in this regard. On the basis of this proposal the department informed the Taxes Department that though Lottery Department is a service department, working of that department is commercial in nature. In this principle it has been decided that payment of charge for printing the lottery ticket and the cost of paper to be given to the printing department by the lottery department.

Recommendation

(Sl.No. 20, Para No. 80)

The Committee notice that the two metal remelting furnances for foundries at Central Press, Thiruvananthapuram and Government Press, Ernakulam were purchased without any foresight and planning. The Committee express displeasure on these purchases when the existing, one was working satisfactorily. The Committee observe that it is quite deplorable that these furnaces remained idle for many years and could not be put to use due to non-response of supplier

firm on the request for servicing the furnances. The Committee desire to know the action taken against the supplier firm to make good the loss sustained by the department. The Committee also urge that responsibility should be fixed for the idle investment on purchase of furnace on the eve of modernization of Government Presses.

Action Taken

The purchase of the second furnaces for Government Central Press, Thiruvananthapuram and Government Press, Ernakulam is meant as a substitute for the existing ones. A drastic modernisation cannot be done in Government Presses due to paucity of funds and the deployment of existing staff working in the letter press system has to be accommodated in the old technology and the old technology can be replaced only on a phased manner. Due to the above reasons the purchase of two metal remitting furnaces was effected.

Recommendation

(Sl. No.21, Para No.81)

The Committee note that while recommending the purchase of six second hand machines to Government from the KBPS, the Director did not mention about the report of Assistant Executive Engineer on the high maintenance cost that would have to be incurred on the upkeep of the same. Expressing strong displeasure over the action of the Director, the Committee opine that the present situation would have been avoided had the Department sought an expert opinion regarding the necessity as well as prudence in procuring conventional letter press.

Action Taken

The conventional Machine Composing technology was continuing in the Government Presses during the time. About 50 employees were engaged in that section. Monocasting and Lino casting machines were not available in

the market. In order to provide sufficient work to the staff in the M.C. section, the offer of KBPS was accepted by the Department with Government sanction at the book value prices. Now the machines were in working condition.

Recommendation
(Sl. No.22, Para No.82)

The Committee understand that it was not prudent to introduce Malayalam matrices costing Rs.3.55 lakhs at a time when the hot metal process technology had become obsolete. Eventhough, there are facilities in the Printing Department itself for seeking expert opinion/study before ordering the item it seems that the Department had not analysed the necessity of Malayalam matrices seriously, there by increasing the idle and infructuous investment.

Action Taken

The hot metal process is still continuing along with hand composing for which Malayalam matrices are highly necessary and this system has to be continued till the total modernisation of Government Presses.

Recommendation
(Sl. No.23, Para No.83)

The Committee notice that the amount outstanding in respect of the Printing charges aggregating to Rs. 337.83 lakh as of 31st March 1993 has not yet been realised from the various indenting agencies. Further development in the recovery/ adjustment of receipts of the Department may also be reported to the Committee.

Action Taken

A major portion of the outstanding dues were collected from various department. Earnest efforts has been taken to settle the arrears.

Recommendation
(Sl. No.24, Para No.84)

The Committee notice with serious concern that certain detailed information required to be furnished to the Committee as promised by the

officers at the time of examination of departmental witnesses has not been received yet., The Principal Secretary, Higher Education Department was also subsequently requested to furnish the details vide letter No. 13921/PAC A4/2000 dated 02.01.2001. Without these details the Committee cannot make an assessment of the exact state of affairs prevailing in the Printing Department. The Committee desire that the details called for as mentioned in the respective paragraphs of this Reports should be furnished without any further delay.

Action Taken

Final Action Taken Note will be furnished as supplementary.

Further Recommendation

The Committee desired to be furnished with the information called for by the Committee at the time of examination of departmental witnesses.

Action Taken

A work study has been conducted by Government in 1996. As a part of modernisation of Government Presses Government have decided to abolish the post of Compositor Grade II, Printer Grade II in Printing Department and steps have been taken to post DTP Operator and Offset Operators instead of Compositors and Printers. Out of Rs. 337.87 lakhs an amount of Rs. 24,13,526.40/- has been collected and action is being taken to realise the remaining amount.

Thiruvananthapuram

7th July 2022



Sunny Joseph

Chairman

Public Accounts Committee