

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS,
FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-2025)**

11

EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD
AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS)**

{Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on the Demands for Grants (2025-2026) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)}

ELEVENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

October, 2025/ Ashvina, 1947 (Saka)

ELEVENTH REPORT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-2025)

(EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS)

{Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on the Demands for Grants (2025-2026) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)}

Presented to Hon'ble Speaker on 4.10.2025

Presented to Lok Sabha on 2025

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 2025



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

October, 2025/ Ashvina, 1947 (Saka)

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Composition of the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (2024-25)

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - **Chairperson**

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Anto Antony
3. Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay
4. Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor
5. Smt. Malvika Devi
6. Shri Manish Jaiswal
7. Shri Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa#
8. Shri Manoj Kumar
9. Shri Sunil Kumar
10. Shri Bharat Singh Kushwah
11. Shri Ajendra Singh Lodhi
12. Shri Neeraj Maurya
13. Shri Bastipati Nagaraju
14. Shri Haribhai Patel
15. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat
16. Shri Buntty Vivek Sahu
17. Shri Rao Rajendra Singh
18. Shri Ujjwal Raman Singh
19. Shri Bajrang Manohar Sonwane
20. Dr. Indra Hang Subba
21. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan

RAJYA SABHA

22. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
23. Shri Prakash ChikBaraik
24. Shri Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya
25. Shri Baburam Nishad
26. Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan
27. Shri Arun Singh
28. Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah*
29. Shri Kamal Haasan@
30. Shri Kanad Purkayastha@
31. Smt. Rajathi@

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Smt. Maya Lingi | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Dr. Vatsala Joshi | - | Director |
| 3. Dr. Mohit Rajan | - | Deputy Secretary |
| 4. Shri Abdul Khan | - | Assistant Committee Officer |

Committee constituted w.e.f. 26.09.2024 vide Bulletin Part II, Para No. 838 dated 26.09.2024.

* Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah, MP, RS nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 23.01.2025 Vide Bulletin Part-II, Para No.1655 dated 27.01.2025.

Shri Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, MP, LS nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 29.1.2025 Vide Bulletin Part-II, Para No.1710 dated 30.1.2025 vice Shri Saumitra Khan, MP, LS.

@ Shri Kamal Haasan, Shri Kanad Purkayastha and Smt. Rajathi, MP, RS nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 08.08.2025 vide Bulletin Part-II, Para No.3117 dated 13.08.2025

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (2024-2025) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Eleventh Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on the Demands for Grants (2025-2026) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs).

2. The Seventh Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 12.03.2025. The Government has furnished its replies indicating Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the Report on 05.06.2025.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 08.09.2025. The Minutes of the sitting of the Committee have been given at Appendix-I to the Report.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on Observations/Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee is given at Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI;
08 September, 2025
17 Bhadrapada, 1947 (Saka)

Kanimozhi Karunanidhi,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

REPORT

CHAPTER - I

This Report of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee (2024-2025), (18th Lok Sabha) on the Demands for Grants 2025-26 of Department of Consumer Affairs.

1.2 The Seventh Report was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid in the Rajya Sabha on 12.03.2025. It contained 19 Observations/ Recommendations.

1.3 Action taken replies in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received and categorized as follows:-

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:

Recommendation Nos.: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

Total: 19

Chapter-II

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies:

Recommendation No.: Nil

Total: 0

Chapter-III

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration:

Recommendation No.: Nil

Total: 0

Chapter-IV

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited:

Recommendation No.: Nil

Total: 0

Chapter-V

1.4 The Committee trust that utmost importance will be given to the implementation of the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee desire that final action taken notes to the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter I of this Report should be furnished to them not later than three months of the presentation of this Report.

1.5 The Committee will now deal with action-taken by the Government on some of their Recommendations that require reiteration or merit comments.

The Committee had recommended as under:

Recommendation No. 1 (Para No. 2.24)

A. Budgetary Provisions for Central Sector Schemes

1.6 The Committee in their original report observed/ recommended as follows:-

"The Committee note that as against the Demands of ₹3271.69 crore by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) an allocation of Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26 to fund ₹4,230.82 crore has been made for the department in the fiscal year 2025-26, which is ₹959.14 crore more than the amount demanded. The Committee further observe that the revised expenditure for 2024-25 was ₹7,204.50 crore, yet the department has demanded a lower BE for 2025-26. Additionally, the Committee express their concern over the consistent reduction in budgetary allocations for key schemes, particularly the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) and consumer protection initiatives. Although there have been assurances of continued funding through sale proceeds from PSF operations, the department has failed to assess the exact requirements under the scheme. The Committee are also concerned by the reductions in allocations for programs such as CONFONET, the Consumer Protection Cell (ICGRS), and Weights and Measures (Legal Metrology). The Committee, therefore, urge the Department to adopt more realistic and cautious budgeting practices to avoid the underfunding of critical projects. This may, inter alia, include focusing on strategic resource optimization, such as phased implementation and prioritization of essential activities. Enhanced coordination with States/UTs may also be ensured along with regular monitoring of expenditure to ensure the effective utilization of funds. Furthermore, the Department should consider reallocating surplus funds from less critical schemes to address funding gaps in high-priority areas as well as ensure that the schemes/ programmes do not suffer due to less allocation and the gaps are fulfilled at RE stage. The Committee hence strongly recommend that the Department to exercise greater caution in estimating its demands and take all necessary steps to ensure that schemes and programs are not hindered by a lack of or under-utilization of allocated funds."

1.7 The Ministry in its Action Taken Reply has stated as under:-

“PSF Operations are dynamic in nature and depend on prevailing market scenario. The primary purpose of PSF operations are not to replace the market, but to nudge the market players towards a stable price regime. The PSF market interventions are broadly based on buffer stocking for subsequent release to stabilise volatility in prices arising due to seasonality in production, annual variations in production, trade disruptions etc. The annual budgetary allocations for PSF take into account the quantum of balance funds available in the PSF Corpus to undertake necessary interventions. The government is committed to protecting the consumers from price volatility by ensuring availability of essential food commodities at affordable prices. During the FY 2024-25 budget allocation at RE level was Rs. 7000 crore of which 99.60% was utilized for various PSF operation.

In this context, it is submitted that the budget allocation under the CONFONET scheme for 2024-25 was increased at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage to address the additional funding requirements for video conferencing facilities in Consumer Commissions. Additionally, the enhanced funds were necessary to ensure the continuity of ongoing activities under the scheme. For the financial year 2025-26, the Department, in consultation with the Implementing Agency i.e NIC assessed the realistic fund requirements and accordingly proposed an amount of ₹52 crore in the Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26.

The Department acknowledges the concern of the Committee regarding the reduced allocation for the Integrated Consumer Grievance Redressal System (ICGRS) Scheme during 2025-26. The initial Budget Estimates (BE) for the ICGRS Scheme were prepared based on the projected requirements and following a rationalization of expenditure to ensure efficient fund utilization. However, the Department is committed to ensuring that the implementation of the scheme is not adversely affected. Accordingly, the Department intends to review the fund requirements of the ICGRS Scheme during the course of the year and propose an enhancement at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage, based on actual progress and need. Furthermore, the Department also intends to enhance the funds allocated under the ICGRS Scheme during its revalidation for the Sixteenth Finance Commission (2026-2031) to support system upgrades, capacity expansion, and improved outreach.

The Department acknowledges the Committee's concerns regarding reduced allocations for Legal Metrology in BE 2025-26. It is to state that the allocation of ₹54.30 crore has been made in accordance with the approved outlay for the ongoing scheme period (2021-26), with a focus on completing key infrastructure projects, modernizing Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) and advancing initiatives such as the Time Dissemination Project, National Legal Metrology Portal and software testing facilities. Efficient utilization of available resources and prioritization of essential components will ensure that core objectives related to consumer protection, regulatory compliance and trade facilitation remain unaffected. To mitigate any potential impact, the Department has adopted phased

implementation, strengthened coordination with States/UTs and instituted robust monitoring mechanisms. The Department is fully committed to maintaining the momentum of modernization in Legal Metrology and ensuring that all key initiatives are delivered effectively within the available budgetary framework.”

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

1.8 The Committee in their recommendation had highlighted a mismatch in the budget demand and allocation for the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) for 2025–26, with ₹4,230.82 crore allocated against a demand of only ₹3271.69 crore. Despite a higher expenditure in 2024–25, the department sought a lower budget for the next year. The Committee were concerned about reduced funding for key schemes like the Price Stabilisation Fund and consumer protection programs and had therefore stressed for more realistic budgeting, better coordination with States/UTs, reallocation of surplus funds from lower-priority schemes, and regular monitoring to ensure critical programs are not underfunded or delayed.

The Committee have examined the response furnished by the Department with regard to the observation made and note that the Department in its action-taken reply has *inter alia* stated that the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) operations are dynamic in nature and based on prevailing market conditions. It was further submitted that 99.60% of the ₹7000 crore allocation at RE stage during 2024–25 had been utilized. Also regarding other schemes such as CONFONET, ICGRS, and Legal Metrology, the Department has mentioned enhanced allocations at RE stage, rationalization of projected needs, phased implementation, and future plans for enhancement under the Sixteenth Finance Commission cycle.

The Committee note that while the Department has attempted to explain the rationale for reduced allocations under various schemes, the reply remains inadequate and evasive on several critical issues raised by the Committee. Despite the heavy expenditure of ₹7,204.50 crore in the previous financial year, the Department’s lower BE proposal for 2025–26 appears incongruous and lacks adequate justification. The Department has failed to clarify why the BE was pegged

significantly lower despite upward trends in expenditure and pressing scheme requirements.

With regard to the CONFONET and ICGRS schemes, while the Committee note the assurance of the Department to review and reallocation at RE stage, they regret to note that no concrete plan has been specified to safeguard implementation continuity. The reply also lacks any specific performance benchmarks or indicators which the Department plans to use to monitor and assess fund utilization.

In view of the above, the Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Department must exercise greater caution and realism in estimating its budgetary demands and avoid a casual reliance on RE-stage reallocations to address fundamental planning gaps. The Committee emphasize that critical schemes should not suffer from delayed or inadequate funding.

The Committee therefore impress upon a more prudent budgetary practices to ensure that consumer welfare schemes are executed with the timeliness, accountability, and effectiveness they warrant.

Recommendation No. 5 (Para No. 3.24)

B. Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC)

1.9 The Committee in their original report observed/ recommended as follows:-

“The Committee express concern over the vacancy position in Consumer Commissions as informed by the Department out of the total 36 sanctioned posts of President of State Commissions 18 (50%) posts are vacant and those of 161 sanctioned posts only 100 Members are in position. Similarly, vacancy position in Consumer Commission, as informed out of 433 vacant member positions at the district level (out of 1,388 sanctioned posts), which represent approximately 31% of the total positions. These vacancies contribute to significant capacity constraints, potentially undermining the objectives of the Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC) Scheme and delaying the timely redressal of consumer grievances. Such persistent vacancies, both at the State and District Consumer Commissions, are severely impacting the Scheme’s effectiveness and therefore, addressing these staffing gaps is critical to alleviating capacity constraints and improving the overall functioning of the SCC Scheme, thereby ensuring more efficient and timely consumer redressal. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that

the Department to take immediate and proactive steps to ensure that States and UTs prioritize filling these vacant posts within a fixed time-frame and the Committee may be apprised accordingly.”

1.10 The Ministry in its Action Taken Reply has stated as under:-

“As per Section 32 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, if, at any time, there is a vacancy in the office of the President or Member of the District Commission, the State Government may, by notification, direct –

- a) any other District Commission specified in that notification to exercise the jurisdiction in respect of that district also; or
- b) the President or a member of any other District Commission specified in that notification to exercise the powers and discharge the functions of the President or member of that District Commission also.

Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to fill up the vacancies of President and Members in the State Commissions and District Commissions. Further, as per Rule 6 (4) of the Consumer Protection (Qualification for appointment, method of recruitment, procedure of appointment, term of office, resignation and removal of the President and members of the State Commission and District Commission) Rules, 2020, the process of appointments shall be initiated by the State Government at least 6 months before the vacancy arises.

Besides above, the Department has also been continuously taking up with the State Governments/UT Administrations for expeditious filling up of the existing and anticipated vacancies of President and Members of the Consumer Commissions.”

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

1.11 The Committee in their recommendation had expressed serious concerns about the high number of vacancies in Consumer Commissions at both State and District levels, which is affecting the timely resolution of consumer grievances and the effectiveness of the SCC Scheme. The Committee had therefore strongly recommended to take urgent action and to ensure States and UTs fill these vacancies within a fixed timeframe.

In its action-taken reply, the Department has submitted that under Section 32 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, temporary jurisdictional arrangements can be made by State Governments when vacancies occur. The Department has also stated that it is the responsibility of the State Governments to fill these vacancies, and that

Rule 6(4) of the Consumer Protection Rules, 2020 mandates initiating the appointment process at least six months before a post falls vacant. The Department further informed that it is in regular communication with State Governments and UT Administrations to expedite the process.

The Committee acknowledge the statutory framework outlined by the Department and the reliance on Section 32 for interim arrangements. However, the Committee find the response insufficient and lacking accountability in view of the persistent and widespread vacancies that continue to undermine the objective of the Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC) Scheme. Invoking statutory provisions to shift full responsibility to the States, without evidence of concrete outcomes from the Department's coordination efforts, appears more procedural than solution-oriented. The Committee reiterate that nearly 50% of President positions and 38% of Member positions remain vacant in State Commissions, while approximately 31% of sanctioned posts remain unfilled at the district level. These alarming figures indicate not merely administrative delays but a systemic failure to prioritize consumer justice. The Committee are of the view that invoking Section 32 as a stop-gap cannot be a substitute for timely and permanent filling up of vacant position, which is essential to ensure fair, accessible, and timely consumer grievance redressal. Furthermore, the Committee are dismayed to note that no timelines or action plan have been furnished by the Department to ensure compliance by the States/UTs in filling the vacancies. The Department's submission does not reflect any monitoring framework, accountability mechanism, or escalation protocol in the event of persistent non-compliance by States.

In light of the above, the Committee reiterate their recommendation and desire to address the matter at the highest level, in order to fill the vacant positions. They urge the Department to adopt a more proactive, results-driven approach to address the matter of filling vacancies in the Consumer Commissions. The Committee further urge the Department to develop and share with all States/UTs a time-bound vacancy-filling calendar aligned with Rule 6(4) and establish a quarterly monitoring mechanism to track recruitment progress. Additionally, the Committee desire to be apprised of the

specific action plan, including timelines, monitoring tools, and enforcement steps proposed by the Department within three months of the presentation of this Report.

Recommendation No. 7 (Para No. 3.37)

C. Computerization & Computer Networking of Consumer Commissions (CONFONET)

1.12 The Committee in their original report observed/ recommended as follows:-

“The Committee recognise the Department’s efforts to enhance the efficiency of case handling and improve access to case statuses and decisions by revamping CONFONET into e-Jagriti and are hopeful that this initiative will significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, at any time, with multi-lingual support, thereby expediting the disposal and monitoring of consumer dispute cases. The Committee desire to be apprised of the measurable impact of the newly launched e-Jagriti platform on reducing case pendency and improving consumer grievance redressal time to time.”

1.13 The Ministry in its Action Taken Reply has stated as under: -

“The new platform, named as “e-Jagriti”, aims to enhance consumer grievance redressal through a micro-service architecture, AI/ML integration, and latest features like faceless onboarding and role-based dashboards. It unifies existing applications (OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET application) into a single, scalable system that significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, anytime, with multi-lingual support. The integrated platform streamlines the grievance redressal process, offering faster resolution and enhanced transparency. The revamped system also supports real-time data access, automated workflows and offer enhanced participation tools for other stakeholders like judges, advocates etc. The e-Jagriti platform is now fully operational in the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC).”

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

1.14 The Committee in their recommendation while appreciating Department’s efforts in upgrading CONFONET to the e-Jagriti platform to improve case handling and consumer access had hoped that the initiative would enhance the efficiency of complaint filing and case resolution and, therefore, had sought updates on the measurable impact of e-Jagriti in reducing case pendency and improving grievance redressal timelines.

While appreciating the Department's efforts in launching and operationalizing the e-Jagriti platform, the Committee note with concern that the reply lacks specific data or measurable outcomes regarding its stated objectives—namely, reduction in case pendency, improvement in grievance redressal timelines, and enhanced user access. The Committee had explicitly desired to be apprised of quantifiable impact metrics to assess the effectiveness of the new system. However, no data, such as comparative timelines before and after launch, number of users onboarded, or case disposal rates has been provided. The Committee are of the view that mere technological enhancement, unless supported by periodic data-driven assessments and public performance metrics, may not fully address the concerns of delayed grievance redressal. Therefore, the Committee reiterate that the Department should establish a structured monitoring mechanism to track key performance indicators such as average disposal time, pendency rates, user satisfaction, and system uptime.

CHAPTER – II

RECOMMENDATIONS/ OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED

BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation No. 1 (Para No. 2.24)

The Committee note that as against the Demands of ₹3271.69 crore by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) an allocation of Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26 to fund ₹4,230.82 crore has been made for the department in the fiscal year 2025-26, which is ₹959.14 crore more than the amount demanded. The Committee further observe that the revised expenditure for 2024-25 was ₹7,204.50 crore, yet the department has demanded a lower BE for 2025-26. Additionally, the Committee express their concern over the consistent reduction in budgetary allocations for key schemes, particularly the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) and consumer protection initiatives. Although there have been assurances of continued funding through sale proceeds from PSF operations, the department has failed to assess the exact requirements under the scheme. The Committee are also concerned by the reductions in allocations for programs such as CONFONET, the Consumer Protection Cell (ICGRS), and Weights and Measures (Legal Metrology). The Committee, therefore, urge the Department to adopt more realistic and cautious budgeting practices to avoid the underfunding of critical projects. This may, inter alia, include focusing on strategic resource optimization, such as phased implementation and prioritization of essential activities. Enhanced coordination with States/UTs may also be ensured along with regular monitoring of expenditure to ensure the effective utilization of funds. Furthermore, the Department should consider reallocating surplus funds from less critical schemes to address funding gaps in high-priority areas as well as ensure that the schemes/ programmes do not suffer due to less allocation and the gaps are fulfilled at RE stage. The Committee hence strongly recommend that the Department to exercise greater caution in estimating its demands and take all necessary steps to ensure that schemes and programs are not hindered by a lack of or under-utilization of allocated funds.

Reply of the Government

1. PSF Operations are dynamic in nature and depend on prevailing market scenario. The primary purpose of PSF operations are not to replace the market, but to nudge the market players towards a stable price regime. The PSF market interventions are broadly based on buffer stocking for subsequent release to stabilise volatility in prices arising due to seasonality in production, annual variations in production, trade disruptions etc. The annual budgetary allocations for PSF take into account the quantum of balance funds available in the PSF Corpus to undertake necessary interventions. The government is committed to protecting the consumers from price volatility by ensuring availability of essential food commodities at affordable prices. During the FY 2024-25 budget allocation at RE level was Rs. 7000 crore of which 99.60% was utilized for various PSF operation.

2. In this context, it is submitted that the budget allocation under the CONFONET scheme for 2024-25 was increased at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage to address the additional funding requirements for video conferencing facilities in Consumer Commissions. Additionally, the enhanced funds were necessary to ensure the continuity of ongoing activities under the scheme. For the financial year 2025-26, the Department, in consultation with the Implementing Agency i.e NIC assessed the realistic fund requirements and accordingly proposed an amount of ₹52 crore in the Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26.

3. The Department acknowledges the concern of the Committee regarding the reduced allocation for the Integrated Consumer Grievance Redressal System (ICGRS) Scheme during 2025-26. The initial Budget Estimates (BE) for the ICGRS Scheme were prepared based on the projected requirements and following a rationalization of expenditure to ensure efficient fund utilization. However, the Department is committed to ensuring that the implementation of the scheme is not adversely affected. Accordingly, the Department intends to review the fund requirements of the ICGRS Scheme during the course of the year and propose an enhancement at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage, based on actual progress and need. Furthermore, the Department also intends to enhance the funds allocated under the ICGRS Scheme during its revalidation for the Sixteenth Finance Commission (2026-2031) to support system upgrades, capacity expansion, and improved outreach.

4. The Department acknowledges the Committee's concerns regarding reduced allocations for Legal Metrology in BE 2025–26. It is to state that the allocation of ₹54.30 crore has been made in accordance with the approved outlay for the ongoing scheme period (2021-26), with a focus on completing key infrastructure projects, modernizing Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) and advancing initiatives such as the Time Dissemination Project, National Legal Metrology Portal and software testing facilities. Efficient utilization of available resources and prioritization of essential components will ensure that core objectives related to consumer protection, regulatory compliance and trade facilitation remain unaffected. To mitigate any potential impact, the Department has adopted phased implementation, strengthened coordination with States/UTs and instituted robust monitoring mechanisms. The Department is fully committed to maintaining the momentum of modernization in Legal Metrology and ensuring that all key initiatives are delivered effectively within the available budgetary framework.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No.1.8 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 2 (Para No. 3.5)

2.2 The Committee note that the allocation of funds under the Consumer Awareness (Advertising and Publicity) program has declined in recent years in comparison to 2022-23 while the budget for the scheme remaining stagnant at ₹17.99 crore since 2023-24. The actual expenditure for 2023-24 was ₹24.55 crore, representing a 136.59% increase over Revised Estimates. However, despite this increase, the spending trend shows a decline in allocated funds over the years. The Committee opine that consumer awareness is a key aspect of consumer protection. Given the expanding scope of consumer issues, the Department needs to enhance its outreach to consumers particularly in rural areas through various channels such as social media, regional languages, and digital campaigns. To

ensure the effectiveness of these efforts, it is critical to guarantee full and efficient utilization of funds, maximizing the impact of consumer awareness programs. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department assess the impact metrics of its advertisements to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness, particularly in reaching underserved and remote regions, including rural areas and ensure that the funds allocated for consumer awareness are used effectively and reach the widest audience possible.

Reply of the Government

2.3 The recommendations of the Committee have been duly noted. It is pertinent to mention that while the Budget Estimate for 2023–24 was ₹17.99 crore, the Department ensured efficient and impactful utilization of available resources, leading to an actual expenditure of ₹24.55 crore, which is 136.59% of the Budget Estimates and almost 100% of RE i.e. 25.00 Cr. for FY 2023-24. Further, recognizing that consumer awareness is pivotal to consumer protection, especially in the context of emerging digital markets and increasing complexity in consumer grievances, the Department has taken steps to diversify its outreach channels. Efforts have been made to leverage social media, participation in fairs and festivals where people from rural and backward areas congregate, convening VC interaction with panchayats in States in their regional languages, and expanding digital communication strategies to reach rural and remote areas effectively. In line with the Committee's recommendation, the Department is working towards the development of robust impact assessment mechanisms for its publicity campaigns, seeking report from the organizations/agencies through which the campaigns are run/ executed. The Department remains committed to efficient fund utilization also focusing to strengthen consumer by running awareness campaign specifically in rural & remote areas in FY 2025-26. The Department is also conducting weekly interaction programme with the Panchyats of India to empower the rural consumers about their rights

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 3 (Para No. 3.10)

2.4 The Committee are pleased to note that, as part of the initiative to expedite consumer grievance redressal, the Department has launched a new version of the Consumer Helpline software (<https://consumerhelpline.gov.in>). This update includes the integration of WhatsApp for lodging grievances, and approximately 1,038 private companies have been made convergence partners to facilitate swift and effective resolution. Moreover, the Department has begun implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to streamline the grievance submission process for consumers. The Committee look forward to the timely completion and full implementation of this initiative. The Committee hope for timely introduction and implementation of WhatsApp-base AI chatbot for real-time complaint resolution, which would further enhance the efficiency of the system.

Reply of the Government

2.5 The National Consumer Helpline (NCH) administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for their grievance redressal at a pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages including Hindi, English, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Maithili, Santhali, Bengali, Odia, Assamese and Manipuri through a toll-free number 1915. These grievances can be registered on Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM), an omni-channel IT enabled central portal, through various channels- WhatsApp (8800001915), SMS (8800001915), email (nch-ca@gov.in), the NCH app, the web portal (consumerhelpline.gov.in) and the Umang app, as per their convenience. 1083 companies, who have voluntarily partnered with NCH, as part of the 'Convergence' programme directly respond to these grievances according to their redressal process and revert by providing a feedback to the complainant on the portal. Complaints against those companies, who have not partnered with National Consumer Helpline, are forwarded to the company for redressal.

The technological transformation of the NCH has significantly boosted its call-handling capacity. The number of calls received by NCH has grown more than tenfold, from 12,553 in

December 2015 to 1,55,138 in December 2024. Similarly, the average number of complaints registered per month has increased from 37,062 in 2017 to 1,11,951 in 2024. Additionally, grievance registration via WhatsApp has gained momentum, with the percentage of complaints filed through the platform increasing from 3% in March 2023 to 20% in March 2025, demonstrating a growing preference for digital communication channels. This exponential growth reflects the rising confidence of consumers in the helpline.

NCH has introduced AI-based Speech Recognition, a Translation System, and an AI enabled Chatbot as part of the NCH 2.0 initiative. These technological advancements aim to make the grievance filing process more seamless, efficient, and inclusive. The AI-powered Speech Recognition and Translation System enables consumers to file complaints through voice input, reducing manual intervention. The AI enabled Chatbot provides real-time assistance, streamlining complaint-handling processes, and improving the overall user experience. These upgrades ensure that consumers have equal access to the grievance redressal system.

In line with the Committee's recommendation, the Department is in the process of implementation of WhatsApp-based AI chatbot for real-time complaint resolution, which would further enhance the efficiency of the system as a step forward.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 4 (Para No. 3.11)

2.6 The Committee are dismayed to note that the budget for the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has remained unchanged, despite the significant increase in consumer complaints, which grew from 54,516 in 2020 to 111,951 in 2024. To improve the efficiency of consumer complaint resolution, enhance response mechanisms, and strengthen coordination with NCH, it is imperative to ensure that allocated funds are effectively and optimally utilized. The Committee is concerned by the low fund utilization during 2024-25, with only 57.27% of the budget spent, highlighting a considerable gap between the Revised

Estimates (RE) and Actual Expenditure (AE). The Committee, therefore, recommend the department not only for improving the efficient use of allocated funds but also allocating additional resources to expand language support and increase the helpline workforce. The Committee further suggest conducting a performance audit to identify any bottlenecks in fund utilization and implement corrective actions to ensure the timely and effective deployment of resources.

Reply of the Government

2.7 The status of fund utilization under the Integrated Consumer Grievance Redressal System (ICGRS) Scheme during 2024-25 (up to 31.03.2025) is as follows:

Scheme	B.E.	R.E.	A.E.	% Expenditure w.r.t. R.E.
ICGRS	6.25 cr.	8.74 cr.	8.49 cr.	97.00%

The Department intends to enhance the funds allocated under the ICGRS Scheme during its revalidation for the Sixteenth Finance Commission (2026-2031). Digital transformation with the help of technology, Infrastructure updating, capacity building and awareness for broader outreach are some of the initiatives in collaboration with relevant agencies managing the helpline, to maintain and improve service standards.

Furthermore, the Department has decided to conduct an Impact Assessment Study to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the grievance redressal system at the pre-litigation stage, with the objective of enhancing its robustness and accessibility. Proposals in this regard have been solicited from the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

The Department remains committed to strengthening the helpline in alignment with the vision of the Committee and will continue to assess and refine its strategies to meet consumer needs effectively.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 5 (Para No. 3.24)

2.8 The Committee express concern over the vacancy position in Consumer Commissions as informed by the Department out of the total 36 sanctioned posts of President of State Commissions 18 (50%) posts are vacant and those of 161 sanctioned posts only 100 Members are in position. Similarly, vacancy position in Consumer Commission, as informed out of 433 vacant member positions at the district level (out of 1,388 sanctioned posts), which represent approximately 31% of the total positions. These vacancies contribute to significant capacity constraints, potentially undermining the objectives of the Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC) Scheme and delaying the timely redressal of consumer grievances. Such persistent vacancies, both at the State and District Consumer Commissions, are severely impacting the Scheme's effectiveness and therefore, addressing these staffing gaps is critical to alleviating capacity constraints and improving the overall functioning of the SCC Scheme, thereby ensuring more efficient and timely consumer redressal. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Department to take immediate and proactive steps to ensure that States and UTs prioritize filling these vacant posts within a fixed time-frame and the Committee may be apprised accordingly.

Reply of the Government

2.9 As per Section 32 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, if, at any time, there is a vacancy in the office of the President or Member of the District Commission, the State Government may, by notification, direct –

- a) any other District Commission specified in that notification to exercise the jurisdiction in respect of that district also; or
- b) the President or a member of any other District Commission specified in that notification to exercise the powers and discharge the functions of the President or member of that District Commission also.

Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to fill up the vacancies of President and Members in the State Commissions and District Commissions. Further, as per Rule 6 (4) of the Consumer

Protection (Qualification for appointment, method of recruitment, procedure of appointment, term of office, resignation and removal of the President and members of the State Commission and District Commission) Rules, 2020, the process of appointments shall be initiated by the State Government at least 6 months before the vacancy arises.

Besides above, the Department has also been continuously taking up with the State Governments/UT Administrations for expeditious filling up of the existing and anticipated vacancies of President and Members of the Consumer Commissions.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No.1.11 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 6 (Para No. 3.25)

2.10 The Committee note that actual expenditure under the SCC Scheme has consistently been revised downward from the Budget Estimates since 2020-21, with the exception of 2024-25, and conclude that this downward revision is largely due to slow fund disbursement caused by delays in the submission of eligible proposals and pending Utilization Certificates (UCs) from States. The Committee find that these administrative delays are significantly hindering the optimal utilization of allocated funds and therefore, recommend that proactive measures may be taken to facilitate the timely submission of Utilization Certificates and ensure that funds are disbursed efficiently. The Committee also urge the department to explore the possibility of dynamically reallocating unutilized funds from underperforming regions to states that demonstrate readiness and compliance with the scheme's objectives, in order to ensure the optimal utilization of resources and enable states with the capacity to implement the SCC Scheme effectively.

Reply of the Government

2.11 Under the SCC scheme, funds are being released to the States/UTs from where proposals are being submitted in accordance with the SCC guidelines. The states are routinely impressed upon to furnish the proposals in accordance with the scheme guidelines

as well as furnish the pending U.Cs lying with them in respect of funds earlier released to them under the SCC scheme. The Department is pro actively taking steps to ensure that the states/U.Ts furnish the proposals seeking funds under the SCC scheme to upgrade the infrastructure of Consumer Commissions located in respective states/U.Ts. These include various regional workshops, conferences on the occasion of National Consumer Day as well as World Consumer Rights Day which see participation from the concerned stakeholders. Besides, various VC Meetings as well as D.O letters are sent routinely to the eligible states/U.Ts requesting them to furnish the proposal under SCC scheme to this department. As a result of these sustained efforts of the department, during F.Y 2024-25, the budget for the SCC scheme was revised upwards to ₹ 7 crore from ₹ 5 crore, 100% of which was successfully released to the states/U.Ts who furnished the proposal complying with the extant guidelines of the SCC scheme.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 7 (Para No. 3.37)

2.12 The Committee recognise the Department's efforts to enhance the efficiency of case handling and improve access to case statuses and decisions by revamping CONFONET into e-Jagriti and are hopeful that this initiative will significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, at any time, with multi-lingual support, thereby expediting the disposal and monitoring of consumer dispute cases. The Committee desire to be apprised of the measurable impact of the newly launched e-Jagriti platform on reducing case pendency and improving consumer grievance redressal time to time.

Reply of the Government

2.13 The new platform, named as "e-Jagriti", aims to enhance consumer grievance redressal through a micro-service architecture, AI/ML integration, and latest features like faceless onboarding and role-based dashboards. It unifies existing applications (OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET application) into a single, scalable system that significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from

anywhere, anytime, with multi-lingual support. The integrated platform streamlines the grievance redressal process, offering faster resolution and enhanced transparency. The revamped system also supports real-time data access, automated workflows and offer enhanced participation tools for other stakeholders like judges, advocates etc. The e-Jagriti platform is now fully operational in the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC).

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No.1.14 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 8 (Para No. 3.38)

2.14 The Committee are concerned to note that after an upward revision of allocation for CONFONET to ₹ 70 crore at RE stage during 2024-25, the utilization of fund is ₹41.93 crore (upto 14.2.2025). Moreover, BE for 2025-26 has also been kept at ₹52 crore only. The Committee find that at this stage of expansion of CONFONET such poor utilization of Budget and less allocation than RE may not be suitable. The Committee therefore urge the Department to identify the bottlenecks in the effective utilization of funds and conduct a more thorough financial assessment to ensure the optimal use of the allocated resources and allocation of required fund at RE stage.

Reply of the Government

2.15 The budgetary provision has been enhanced from ₹ 42 Crore to ₹ 70 Cr at RE stage during the financial year 2024-25 and the same has been fully utilized. The BE for 2025-26 has been kept as per the anticipated requirements for manpower and e- Jagriti platform.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 9 (Para No. 3.49)

2.16 The Committee observe that the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2024-25 under the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) saw a substantial increase, rising to ₹10,000 crore from a nominal ₹0.01 crore in 2023-24. However, this allocation was later revised downward to ₹7,000 crore in the Revised Estimate (RE) for 2024-25, with actual expenditure reaching ₹6,910 crore as of February 15, 2025, indicating that the funds allocated were not fully utilized. Also for 2025-26, the PSF budget has been significantly reduced to ₹4,019.83 crore. The Committee understand that Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme was approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of ₹10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, ₹ 7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and ₹ 4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 including Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA. In light of the ongoing price volatility of essential food commodities, the Committee recommend that a minimum allocation be ensured to support the timely disbursement of funds to key agencies, such as NCCF, NAFED, KendriyaBhandar and MMTC, in order to avoid delays in procurement. The Committee also impress upon the critical importance of strengthening buffer stock storage infrastructure to minimize wastage and enhance the effectiveness of market interventions under the fund.

Reply of the Government

2.17 The annual budgetary allocations for PSF take into account the quantum of balance funds available in the PSF Corpus to undertake necessary interventions. The total available fund comprising annual budgetary support and balance fund in the Corpus is sufficient for market interventions and for buffer building. The PSF scheme is on-boarded in CNA Model-2 of fund flow and fund are disbursed to Implementing Agencies on Just-in-Time basis. In order to determine the long-term storage losses in pulses, the Department has assigned a study titled, Determining Storage Losses of Pulses Stored in Warehouses and to Recommend Norms for Loss/Gain during Long Term Storage, to ICAR-CIPHET, Ludhiana.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 10 (Para No. 3.50)

2.18 The Committee note that the disbursement of funds under the PSF to several states and key agencies, such as NAFED, MMTC, NCCF, and KendriyaBhandar, has not been uniform. The Committee opine that strengthening the monitoring system to track procurement activities for essential commodities like pulses, onions, and potatoes, improving buffer stock management, and conducting periodic reviews of fund utilization at the state level will help achieve the goals of the PSF Scheme more effectively. Therefore, it is recommend that steps be taken to implement a more streamlined fund release process to minimize delays in disbursement and ensure the uniform distribution of fund.

Reply of the Government

2.19 Funds to Implementing agencies (NCCF, Nafed, FCI) and vendors are disbursed as per the progress made in the implementation of the approved operation or activity. In order to streamline the disbursement of of funds, PSF scheme has been on-boarded in CNA Model-2 of fund flow and funds are disbursed on Just in Time basis to implementing agencies. The progress of procurement made by the Implementing Agencies are monitored on daily basis.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 11 (Para No. 3.64)

2.20 The Committee note that the Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs), such as NCCF, NAFED, and KendriyaBhandar, play a crucial role in procurement and market stabilization, particularly through retail interventions in essential commodities like Bharat Dal, which includes perishable commodities such as tomatoes and onions. Acknowledging the importance of these interventions, the Committee urge that, in order to further enhance the effectiveness of market interventions, the availability of Bharat Brand products should be expanded to more states through CNAs and increasing and expanding cold storage capacity

for perishable commodities, such as tomatoes and onions, across states to minimize losses and reduce wastage.

Also, while commending the department for its initiatives in launching the E-Samyukti portal for farmer registration and procurement tracking, and recognizing it as a significant step towards ensuring that farmers receive fair prices for their produce, the Committee recommend to enhance digital integration by linking the E-Samyukti portal with AI-driven demand forecasting, which would improve operational efficiency.

Reply of the Government

2.21 The Department has, through NAFED and NCCF, invited proposals from controlled atmosphere (CA) warehouse operators for storage of onion across 19 major consumption centres. The objective is to reduce storage loss, efficient disposal of onion to stabilise prices and also to encourage the development of CA storage infrastructure in the country. Presently, NCCF and NAFED undertake procurement of pulses from pre-registered farmers through their online procurement portals like E-Samyukti, E-Samriddhi. The Department is constantly monitoring prices and availability situation in pulses, onion, tomato and potato. Price forecasting models using a combination of fundamental and technical analyses and machine learning (ML) model are used for price forecasting to support decision making.

NCCF is committed to serve the consumers of the country and therefore agrees to the recommendations of the committee. Further, It is informed that NCCF is taking appropriate steps to increase the reach to more states. For onion storage this year it is proposed to double cold storage/ controlled atmosphere storage.

An AI based algorithmic models can be build based on the real-time market dynamics by integrating data from weather patterns, market trends, supply chains (domestic and global production, distribution, stock etc.) and consumer behavior which provide insights of the demand patterns. These key influencing factors to populate precise demand forecasting and can help farmers registered under eSamyukti to strategically optimize their crop planning and production which will result in better income realization as well as valuable contribution to the

national food security. As the model matures different crop advisories related to weather, production practices, price trends would also be extended to the farmers. The sustained engagement of farmers through eSamyukti will certainly be helpful in bringing operational efficiency.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 12 (Para No. 3.73)

2.22 The Committee note that only 71.5% of the RE for 2024-25 relating to Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) has been utilized as of 14.2.2025. The Committee also note that the CWF has been established in 25 States/UTs, and it is proposed to extend the establishment of the Consumer Welfare Fund (Corpus) to the remaining states/UTs during 2025-26. The Committee recommend that the Department should prioritize the establishment of the CWF in those States/UTs where it has not yet been set up, including consistent follow-up with states such as Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh, which are in the advanced stages of establishing their funds. The Committee stress that in order to ensure comprehensive nationwide coverage and strengthen consumer welfare initiatives across the country, the fund may be established in all states/UTs by the end of FY 2025-26.

Reply of the Government

2.23 The recommendation of the Committee has been duly noted. With the establishment of CWF in Himachal Pradesh, the total number of States/UTs that have established CWF has reached 26. The states of Chhattisgarh, Punjab etc are in advance stage of establishing CWF. In this regard, a D.O. letter dated April 30, 2025 has already been issued to states which are yet to establish CWF.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 13 (Para No. 3.74)

2.24 The Committee note that the delay in receiving Utilization Certificates from the states is hindering the optimum utilization of funds under CWF. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the department should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effective utilization of funds under the CWF. This should include ensuring the timely submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) and conducting regular reviews of projects to assess their impact. Also, a more structured evaluation framework should be implemented, with clear and measurable outcomes to track the success of funded projects, ensuring that the funds disbursed directly benefit consumers.

Reply of the Government

2.25 The recommendation of the Committee has been duly noted. As per the guidelines and terms & condition of Consumer Welfare Fund(CWF), all the concerned states have to furnish the Utilization Certificate by the end of financial year. A D.O. letter will be issued to all the concerned States/UTs, followed with review meetings.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 14 (Para No. 3.82)

2.26 With the reduced Budget Estimate for 2025-26 of ₹54.30 crore, which is lower than the Revised Estimates (RE) of ₹60.00 crore for 2024-25, the Committee hope that, despite this reduction, key initiatives under the sub-scheme ‘Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Regulation and Enforcement’—including strengthening Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs), modernizing state-level legal metrology facilities, advancing time dissemination projects, and other related initiatives—will be completed efficiently, while prioritizing essential activities. The Committee urge that the Department to take necessary steps to intensify efforts to streamline and expedite the proposal submission process for States/UTs under the Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure scheme, and ensure the timely and effective implementation of these critical projects. The Committee also desire to be updated on the progress made and the timely completion of such projects.

Reply of the Government

2.27 The Department assures that despite the reduced Budget Estimate of Rs. 54.30 crore for 2025–26, all key initiatives under the sub-scheme ‘Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Regulation and Enforcement’ will be implemented effectively through strategic prioritization and efficient resource utilization. Critical projects such as the modernization of RRSLs, enhancement of state-level legal metrology facilities, advancement of the time dissemination initiative and establishment of software testing facilities will continue to be executed in a phased and time-bound manner, ensuring minimal disruption.

2.28 To further improve implementation, the Department has intensified its engagement with States/ UTs by streamlining the proposal submission process through regular follow-ups, capacity-building sessions and proactive technical assistance. Structured review mechanisms have been put in place to monitor progress, resolve procedural delays and facilitate timely release of funds. The Department remains committed to providing regular updates to the Committee and ensuring the timely and successful completion of all critical Legal Metrology projects in alignment with national objectives.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 15 (Para No. 3.83)

2.29 The Committee note that, currently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being mandatorily adopted by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and lack of uniformity in time across different systems presents significant challenges for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in investigating cybercrimes. Therefore, keeping in view the critical role of synchronized time systems in strategic sectors and national security, the Committee emphasizes the importance of aligning all networks and computers in the country with a national clock. The Committee note that with the funds allocated for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD and for procurement of equipment by NPL and ISRO, the Committee recommend that the Department should prioritize the swift completion and expansion of the Time Dissemination Project to ensure nationwide synchronization of time systems including establishing and completing time dissemination

infrastructure at all Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) and ensuring that TSPs and ISPs adopt Indian Standard Time (IST).

Reply of the Government

2.30 The Department is committed for uniform adoption of Indian Standard Time (IST) which is vital for national security, effective cybercrime investigation and synchronization across strategic sectors. The Time Dissemination Project is being implemented as a priority initiative, with active collaboration between the Department, CSIR-NPL, ISRO, CPWD and other stakeholders. Funds have been allocated for the renovation of RRSLs and procurement of high-precision equipment and work is progressing in a phased and time-bound manner to establish robust time dissemination infrastructure across all RRSLs.

Efforts are also underway to engage with relevant regulatory bodies and stakeholders to promote the mandatory adoption of Indian Standard Time (IST) by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The Department is committed to ensuring seamless and accurate dissemination of IST through dedicated reference nodes, thereby achieving uniformity in timekeeping across digital networks. Regular monitoring and inter-agency coordination are being undertaken to ensure swift implementation and the Department remains committed to the timely and successful completion of this nationally significant project.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)

OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 16 (Para No. 3.93)

2.31 The Committee note that the Budget Estimates (BE) for National Test House (NTH) for 2025-26 has been increased to ₹65.8 crore as compared to ₹35 crore for BE 2024-25. However, the Committee are dismayed to learn that the utilization of funds as of February 13, 2025, stands at only 67%. Given the critical role of these facilities in advancing national goals like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and driving technological progress, it is imperative that procurement processes for equipment and construction works be expedited. The

Committee, therefore, recommend the NTH to prioritize the timely completion of key infrastructure projects, such as the Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution Sectors, Electric Vehicle (EV) Battery Test Facilities, and Solar PV Module Test Facility. The Committee also urge NTH to ensure full utilization of the Revised Estimates (RE) for FY 2024-25 by closely monitoring budget expenditure and ensuring that funds are effectively allocated and used for the successful completion of ongoing projects by the end of the fiscal year.

Reply of the Government

2.32 With respect to the Committee's observation on budget utilization, it is humbly intimated that, at the end of FY 2024-25, 86% of the allocated budget was utilized (BE: ₹35.0 crore, RE: ₹38.22 crore & AE: ₹32.96 crore). The shortfall in achieving full utilization is primarily attributable to the funds earmarked for the NER Region under the 10% GBS scheme, where the procurement of capital equipment and the lab integration project are in progress, resulting in partial utilization of the allocated funds.

NTH remains fully committed to prioritize the timely completion of the key projects and concrete steps have been taken in this direction. Efforts are being made to ensure that these projects are completed as per the stipulated timelines and contribute meaningfully to India's evolving industrial and technological landscape. Going forward, NTH has been implemented a more robust monitoring mechanism to track budget expenditure, enhance inter-departmental coordination, and ensure the full and effective utilization of the Budget Estimates (BE) for FY 2025-26.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)

OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 17 (Para No. 3.94)

2.33 In their 5th Report, the Committee had urged National Test House(NTH) to establish a collaborative framework with the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) to address gaps in testing and regulatory oversight for radiation-emitting medical devices such as X-ray and MRI machines. The

Committee are disappointed to learn that no tangible progress has been made in this regard. Hence, the Committee strongly urge again the NTH to accelerate its efforts to collaborate with AERB and CDSCO, focusing on developing specialized testing and regulatory frameworks for radiation-emitting medical devices.

Reply of the Government

2.34 NTH is a premier scientific institution in the country, specializing in testing, calibration, and quality evaluation across a wide range of sectors, including industry, commerce, and trade, adhering to international and national standards in these areas. However, medical devices in our country are regulated under Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Medical Devices Rules, 2017 by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) under the administrative control of MoHFW. It is the National Regulatory Authority for these devices. Besides, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) oversees the regulation, specifically for radiation-emitting medical devices. As a result, the regulatory and testing needs of devices such as X-ray and MRI machines, which are critical to healthcare services, are to be assessed by CDSCO. In response to the Committee's recommendation, NTH is committed to exploring a collaborative framework with CDSCO and AERB to address the identified gaps and strengthen regulatory oversight, ensuring compliance with safety standards, and safeguarding public health. DoCA has already written to MoHFW in this regard.

NTH is making targeted investments in advanced testing infrastructure, as well as staff training programs, and exploring partnerships with leading research institutions to enhance our knowledge and build the necessary capacity in the country. NTH remains committed to supporting national regulatory efforts and upholding safety standards across all sectors within our mandate. NTH will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to explore potential areas of collaboration and development.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 18 (Para No. 3.95)

2.35 The Committee opine that by building specialized capabilities in advance testing infrastructure specially in drones, electric vehicles and solar energy the NTH will not only enhance public safety and regulatory oversight but also contribute to India's self-reliance in technology, while supporting the national drive for innovation and the establishment of high-quality standards. The Committee, therefore recommend that NTH to prioritize and expedite investments in advanced testing infrastructure and staff training also strive to establish at least one testing centre/facility in each state.

Reply of the Government

2.36 NTH is actively enhancing its technical capabilities to strengthen the delivery of critical testing, calibration, and quality assurance services. Current efforts are focused on key sectors such as consumer goods, construction materials, and industrial products, with an overarching goal of ensuring product safety and compliance with national and international standards.

Recognizing the evolving needs of industry, NTH is strategically diversifying into emerging and high-growth sectors, including drone technology, electric vehicle (EV) batteries, solar photovoltaic modules, and organic food testing. This expansion is driven by growing demand and the pressing need to improve regional access to advanced testing facilities.

While NTH is committed to extending its service footprint, broadening the network of testing centers requires substantial investment in infrastructure, human resources, and advanced equipment, and also recruiting and training specialized technical personnel, alongside the procurement of sophisticated testing instruments. At present, NTH operates six regional centers and two satellite centers. The Bangalore facility, currently under construction will be a significant milestone, housing an EV battery testing unit and an upcoming facility for aerospace components testing, reinforcing NTH's commitment to supporting innovation and next-generation technologies. Going forward, NTH aims to

gradually expand its national footprint. However, the location and timing of new centers will be guided by a range of considerations, including regional demand, industrial development patterns, resource availability, and logistical feasibility.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

Recommendation No. 19 (Para No. 3.104)

2.37 The Committee note that the number of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) during 2024-25 stood at 1,621, while there was a significant increase in the number of BIS Registered Jewellers from 1,87,936 to 1,96,902 between April 2024 and January 2025 and approximately 12 crore articles of gold and silver jewellery/artefacts were hallmarked during this period. It is evident that there is an increasing demand and significant potential for expansion, the Committee, therefore, recommend that the department should take steps to enhance the accessibility of hallmarking services and further strengthen the gold certification system. The Committee also urge the Department to prioritize the establishment and expansion of AHCs, particularly in underserved and rural areas, including districts that currently lack such infrastructure. They opine that expanding the network of AHCs in these areas will not only improve consumer trust but also provide a robust system of third-party assurance on the purity of gold and silver jewellery.

Furthermore, the Committee emphasize that under the existing financial assistance scheme, BIS should ensure the full utilization of allocated funds and meet the targeted establishment of AHCs in these regions so as to ensure hallmarking services reach all segments of the population and foster greater transparency and consumer protection in the gold and silver jewellery sector.

Reply of the Government

2.38 Setting up of Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) is a market driven activity in which the decision to establish an AHC at a particular location is taken by an entrepreneur based on the business viability. However, based on the availability of funds, BIS invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from the entrepreneurs for setting up the AHC at deficient

locations with Central Assistance and also provides financial assistance to the eligible applicants wherever requested for setting up the AHC.

Out of the 1600 AHCs which are recognised by BIS till date, only 104 have been setup with financial assistance from the Central Government. The remaining AHCs have been set up independently by the applicants, based solely on market demand and commercial viability, without any Central Assistance.

Further, with an objective to expand the existing hallmarking infrastructure and to provide the jewellers an easy access to the hallmarking facility, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), rolled out a policy in 2022 allowing the BIS Recognised AHCs to set up Off-Site Centres (OSCs). An OSC, which is conceived of as an extended arm of an AHC, has all the facilities as in an AHC except the facilities required for fire assay. Since its launch, 98 OSCs have been setup by the BIS Recognised AHCs as on date.

In order to prioritize the establishment and expansion of AHCs, particularly in underserved and rural areas, including districts that currently lack such infrastructure, BIS is considering floating an EOI in the Financial year 2025-26 for the interested applicants to apply for the setting up of AHCs in the deficient districts under the Central Assistance Scheme.

The annual targets for the establishment of AHCs have consistently been achieved in the past, except during the COVID years. In the FY 2024-25, financial assistance was provided to 11 AHCs against a target of 10 under the Infrastructure Building component of the Plan Scheme.

Further, for the current financial year, i.e., 2025-26, efforts will be made to ensure that the targets set by the Government under the plan scheme are fully achieved.

[Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)
OM No. H-12015/1/2025 dated 27.05.2025]

CHAPTER – III

RECOMMENDATIONS/ OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO
PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

- NIL -

CHAPTER – IV

**OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE
GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE
REITERATION**

- NIL -

CHAPTER - V

RECOMMENDATIONS/ OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH THE FINAL REPLIES
OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED

- NIL -

NEW DELHI;
08 September, 2025
17 Bhadrapada, 1947 (Saka)

(KANIMOZHI KARUNANIDHI)
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Consumer
Affairs and Public Distribution

APPENDIX-I

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTHSITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-2025) HELD ON MONDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

The Committee sat from 1600 hrs. to 1630 hrs. in Committee Room No. '2', Extension to Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Anto Antony
3. Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor
4. Smt. Malvika Devi
5. Shri Manish Jaiswal
6. Shri Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa
7. Shri Manoj Kumar
8. Shri Sunil Kumar
9. Shri Bharat Singh Kushwah
10. Shri Neeraj Maurya
11. Shri Bastipati Nagaraju
12. Shri Haribhai Patel
13. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat
14. Shri Bunt Vivek Sahu
15. Shri Ujjwal Raman Singh
16. Shri Bajrang Manohar Sonwane
17. Dr. Indra Hang Subba
18. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan

Rajya Sabha

19. Shri Prakash Chik Baraik
20. Shri Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya
21. Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan
22. Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah
23. Shri Kanad Purkayastha
24. Shri Kamal Haasan
25. Smt. Rajathi

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Smt. Maya Lingi | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Dr. Vatsala Joshi | - | Director |
| 3. Dr. Mohit Rajan | - | Deputy Secretary |

2. At the outset, Hon'ble Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened for consideration and adoption of the following Draft Reports of the Committee:

(i) Eleventh Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Committee (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2025-26) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs); and

(ii) XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX

3. Thereafter, the Committee took up for consideration the abovementioned Draft Reports of the Committee.

4. After deliberations, the Committee adopted the above mentioned Draft Reports without any amendments/modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized Hon'ble Chairperson to finalize and present the aforesaid Reports to the Speaker under the Direction 71 A (1) of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha as the House is not in session. Further, as per Rule 280 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha the Reports would be presented to the House during the next session.

6. The Committee, thereafter, decided to hold the next sitting of the Committee for oral evidence of the officials of State Government of Bihar, Meghalaya, Telangana, Tamil Nadu & Kerala and Department of Food and Public Distribution on the subject 'Modernisation of Public Distribution System- Strengthening Technical Data base' on 19 September, 2025.

The Committee then adjourned.

XXXX Matter does not pertain to report

(Vide Para No. 4 of Introduction of the Report)

**ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/
RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE SEVENTH REPORT OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-2025)**

(EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA)

- (i) Total number of Recommendations: 19
- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government :19
Recommendation Nos.:- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19
(Chapter – II, Total 19)
Percentage: 100%
- (iii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of there plies received from the Government:
Recommendation No. Nil
(Chapter–III, Total- NIL)
Percentage: 0%
- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:
Recommendation No. Nil
(Chapter–IV, Total - NIL)
Percentage: 0%
- (v) Observations/ Recommendations in respect of which the interim replies of the Government have been received.
Recommendation No. Nil
(Chapter–V, Total NIL_)
Percentage: 0%