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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS
AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2020-2021)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

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

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2021-22)

TENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2021/ Phalguna, 1942 (Saka)

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(DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS)**

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(2021-22)**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 19.03.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 19.03.2021



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2021/ Phalguna, 1942 (Saka)

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Composition of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution (2020-2021):-

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay, Chairperson

Lok Sabha

2. Dr. Farooq Abdullah
3. Shri Karadi Sanganna Amarappa
4. Shri Girish Bhalchandra Bapat
5. Shri G. S. Basavaraj
6. Shri Shafiqur Rahman Barq
7. Ms. Pratima Bhoumik
8. Shri Anil Firojiya
9. Shri Rajendra Dhedya Gavit
10. Shri Bhagwant Mann
11. Shri Khagen Murmu
12. Shri Mitesh Rameshbhai (Bakabhai) Patel
13. Shri Subrat Pathak
14. Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Singari
15. Smt. Himadri Singh
16. Smt. Kavita Singh
17. Shri Ganesan Selvam
18. Shri Ajay Misra Teni
19. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka
20. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan
21. Shri Ve. Vaithilingam

Rajya Sabha

22. Smt. Shanta Chhetri
23. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey
24. Smt. Roopa Ganguly
25. Shri K. G. Kenye
26. Dr. Fauzia Khan
27. Smt. M. C. Mary Kom
28. Shri Rajmani Patel
29. Shri Sakaldeep Rajbhar
30. Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss
31. Vacant

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Shri Pawan Kumar | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Shri Lovekesh Kumar Sharma | - | Director |
| 3. Shri G. Guite | - | Deputy Secretary |
| 4. Shri Dong Lianthang Tonsing | - | Under Secretary |
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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution (2020-2021) having been authorized by the Committee, present on their behalf the Tenth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) relating to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs).

2. The Committee examined/scrutinized the detailed Demands for Grants (2020-21) of the Ministry which were laid on the Table of the House on 13th February, 2021. The Committee took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) on 17th March, 2021.

3. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) for appearing before the Committee and furnishing the material and information which the Committee desired in connection with the examination of the Demands for Grants (2021-22).

4. The Draft Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 18th March, 2021.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations/recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold type in the body of the Report.

**New Delhi
18 March, 2021
27 Phalguna ,1942 (Saka)**

**SUDIP BANDOPADHYAY
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Food,
Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution**

CHAPTER – I

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fourth Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution on Demands for Grants (2019-20) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) was presented to Lok Sabha on 13 March, 2020 and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha the same day. The Report contained 20 Observations/Recommendations.

1.2 The Minister concerned is required to make a Statement under Direction 73-A of Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha about the status of implementation of Recommendations contained in the original Report of the Committee within six months of presentation of Report to the Parliament. Statement under Direction 73-A in the context of the Fourth Report (17th Lok Sabha) was made by the Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution on 22 September, 2020 in Rajya Sabha and on 09 February, 2021 in Lok Sabha.

1.3 On the basis of Action Taken Replies received on 19 June, 2020 from the Department of Consumer Affairs in respect of the Fourth Report (17th Lok Sabha), the Committee presented the Action Taken Report to the Parliament on 10 February, 2021. The Committee commented on the Action Taken Replies furnished by the Department in respect of the observations/recommendations of the Committee at Para Nos. 1.10, 2.10, 2.11, 2.25, 2.26, 2.32, 2.55, 2.56, 2.97 and 2.107 of the Fourth Report (17th Lok Sabha). An analysis of the Action Taken Replies revealed that the Government had accepted 90% of the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee. The Committee did not desire to pursue 5% of the Observations/Recommendations. The replies in case of 5% of the Observations/Recommendations were of interim nature.

1.4 The Committee note that the Action Taken Replies in respect of the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fourth Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the Committee were furnished by the Government a few days after expiry of the stipulated period of three months on 19 June, 2020 though the Report on Demand for Grants was presented to the House on 13 March, 2020. The Statement of Minister under Direction 73-A was, however, laid in Rajya Sabha on 22 September, 2020. Due to adjournment of the House *sine die* on account of COVID-19 pandemic, Ministers Statement in Lok Sabha was made on 09 February, 2021. Thereafter the Action Taken Report was presented on 10 February, 2021. An analysis of the Action Taken Replies revealed that the Government had accepted 90% of the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee. The Committee did not desire to pursue 5% of the Observations/Recommendations. Replies of the Government in case of 5% of the Observations/Recommendations were of interim nature. The Committee hope and trust that the Department will strictly adhere to the laid down stipulations in regard to time limit in future, in letter and spirit and also inform them of the status of implementation of the recommendations, the replies in respect of which were interim in nature and also in respect of those replies on which the Committee had commented on in their Action Taken Report

CHAPTER – II

INTRODUCTORY

Role of the Department

2.1 The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is one of the two Departments under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution. The mandate of the Departments is consumer advocacy.

2.2 India was pioneer in consumer advocacy with the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), a path breaking legislation at the time, enacted in 1986 and the establishment of a separate government department dedicated to consumer affairs as early as in 1997. Translating this mandate into action entail:

1. Enabling consumers to make informed choices;
2. Ensuring fair, equitable and consistent outcomes for consumers;
and
3. Facilitating timely and effective consumer grievance redress.

2.3 The Department has been entrusted with administering:

- Internal Trade
- The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986
- The Bureau of Indian Standards
- The Consumer Protection Act, 1986
- The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (10 of 1955) (Supply, Price and Distribution of Essential Commodities not dealt with specifically by any other Department)
- Monitoring Price and availability of essential commodities
- The Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supply of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 (7 of 1980)
- Consumer Cooperatives
- Regulation of Packaged Commodities
- The National Test House

2.4 The Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution on 13.02.2021 laid on the Table of Lok Sabha, the Detailed Demands for Grants (2021-22) relating to the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Detailed Demands for Grants for the Department of Consumer Affairs shows a gross budgetary provision of Rs. 3237.6 crore. This includes Rs. 2,870.50 crore for Scheme and Rs.367.10 crore for non-Scheme.

2.5 The gross BE, RE and AE for the year 2020-21 are Rs. 2,561 crore, Rs.12,298.91 crore and Rs. 8002.74 crore respectively. The combined figures for BE, RE and AE pertaining to the year 2020-21 and BE for 2021-22, furnished to the Committee on 13.02.2021 are as follows :

(Rs. In Crore)											
Sl. No.	HEAD	2020-21						BE FOR 2021-22			
		SCHEME			NON- SCHEME			TOTAL AE*	SCHEME	NON- SCHEME	TOTAL
		BE	RE	AE*	BE	RE	AE*				
1	Secretariat & Economic Service	0.00	0.00	0.00	105.00	96.26	81.95	81.95	0.00	103.60	103.60
2	Consumer Awareness(Publicity)	60.00	42.50	40.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	40.08	44.50	0.00	44.50
3	Consumer Protection	49.00	40.41	34.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	34.60	44.00	0.00	44.00
4	Weights and Measures Establishment of Laboratories	62.00	42.74	35.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	35.79	55.00	0.00	55.00
5	National Test House	20.00	14.00	10.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.68	23.50	0.00	23.50
6	Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell	2.00	1.00	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	2.00	0.00	2.00
7	BIS Gold Hallmarking Assaying Centres and Standardisation of Quality Control	2.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.50	0.00	1.50
8	Price Stabilization Fund	2000.00	11800.00	7798.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7798.00	2700.00	0.00	2700.00
9	Consumer Welfare Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	261.00	261.00	0.37	0.37	0.00	263.50	263.50
	Total	2195.00	11941.65	7920.42	366.00	357.26	82.32	8002.74	2870.50	367.10	3237.60

* Actual Expenditure as on 09/02/2021

2.6 Out of the total amount of Rs. 11941.65 crore made in the Revised Estimate(RE) of scheme fund during the year 2020-21 an expenditure of Rs. 7920.42 crore was made.This is 66.33 % of the RE.

2.7 The Department of Consumer Affairs has intimated in a written note that poor performance was due to Non-receipt of proposals from State/UT Governments, incomplete proposals received from State Governments further delaying fund release, non-utilisation of the previous grant and non-submission of the utilization certificate, Non-receipt of proposals from State/UT Governments and proposal for release of approximately Rs. 17.00 lakh to National Productivity Council for conducting evaluation study being under submission.

2.8 With regard to Non-Scheme funds the BE, RE and AE of the year 2020-21 are Rs. 366 crore, Rs. 357.26 crore and Rs. 82.32 crore respectively. The expenditure is 23.04 % of the RE made during the year 2020-21.

2.9 The Committee note that Budget Estimates (BE) and Revised Estimates (RE) and Actual Expenditure (AE) during the year 2020-21 were Rs. 2561 crore Rs. 12298.91 crore and Rs. 8002.74 crore respectively, which means that only 65.07 percent of the Revised Estimates was actually spent. The Ministry has stated that poor performance was due to Non-receipt of proposals from State/UT Governments, incomplete proposals received from State Governments further delaying fund release, non-utilisation of the previous grant and non-submission of the utilization certificate, Non-receipt of proposals from State/UT Governments and proposal for release of approximately Rs. 17 lakh to National Productivity Council for conducting evaluation study still being under submission, are the reasons for the poor spending of funds. The spending of the non-Scheme funds of Rs. 82.32 crore as proportion to RE of Rs. 357.26 crore was 23.04%. The Committee opine that with a closer monitoring and better handling of the problems, the utilisation of allocated funds could have been higher resulting in achievement of the desired objectives. The Committee desire that the Government should make up for the poor performance during the year 2020-21 by constant monitoring of the performance under each and every project/scheme/proposal during the financial year 2021-22.

CHAPTER – III

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2021-22) – AN OVERVIEW

3.1 The Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Department of Consumer Affairs make a net provision of Rs. 2,870.50 crore for Central sector schemes.

3.2 The Schemes/programmes/projects are being implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs through its two umbrella schemes namely (1) Consumer Protection and (2) Legal Metrology & Quality Assurance. Apart from these two umbrella schemes, the Department also implements Price Stabilization Fund (PSF). The umbrella scheme of Consumer Protection covers (a) Scheme of Strengthening Consumer Fora (SCF), (b) Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the Country (CONFONET), (c) Integrated Consumer Grievances Redressal System (ICGRS) and (d) Consumer Awareness (Advertising & Publicity).

3.3 The umbrella Legal Metrology and Quality Assurance covers (i) Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs and Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi (ii) Strengthening of the NTH and (iii) Strengthening of Gold Hall Marking, Standard related capacity building and research and development work.

3.4 The Committee note that the Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Department of Consumer Affairs make a net provision of Rs. 2,870.50 crore for Central sector schemes. The Schemes/programmes/projects are being implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs through its two umbrella schemes namely (1) Consumer Protection, and (2) Legal Metrology & Quality Assurance. Apart from these two umbrella schemes, the Department also implements Price Stabilization Fund (PSF). While the umbrella scheme of Consumer Protection covers Schemes of Strengthening Consumer Fora, Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the Country (CONFONET), Integrated Consumer Grievances Redressal System (ICGRS) and Consumer Awareness (Advertising & Publicity), The umbrella Legal Metrology and Quality Assurance covers Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs and Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi, Strengthening of the NTH and Strengthening of Gold Hall Marking, Standard related capacity building and research and development work. The Committee opine that the schemes being implemented by the Government through the Department of Consumer Affairs are of utmost importance which encompasses a wide range of activities. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Department should give topmost priority to efficient execution of the schemes under Consumer Protection and Legal Metrology and Quality Assurance.

CHAPTER – IV

SCHEME-WISE ANALYSIS

Consumer Protection

According to the Department, the main objectives of the Consumer Protection Programme are :

- (i) To create suitable administrative and legal mechanisms which would be within the easy reach of consumers and to interact with both Government and non-Governmental Organizations to promote and protect the welfare of the consumers.
- (ii) To involve and motivate various sections of society including consumer organizations, women and youth to participate in the programme.
- (iii) To generate awareness among consumers about their rights and responsibilities, motivate them to assert their rights so as not to compromise on the quality and standards of goods and services and to seek redressal of their disputes in consumer fora, if required.
- (iv) To educate the consumers as to be aware of their rights & social responsibilities.
- (v) To provide a meaningful consumer protection through proper legislation.

4.2 The BE, RE and AE for the year 2020-21 are Rs 49 crore, Rs. 40.41 crore and Rs. 34.60 crore respectively. For the year 2021-22 an amount of Rs. 44 crore is allocated by the Government for the Consumer Protection.

4.3 The Government has been extending financial assistance under the scheme of strengthening of infrastructure of Consumer Commissions so that minimum level of facilities are made available at each Consumer Commission, which are required for their effective functioning. Computer hardware/software and technical manpower are provided to the Consumer Commissions for computerisation under the Scheme CONFONET. Also State Governments are being provided one-time non-recurring grant for establishing the State Consumer Helpline and recurring grant for five years

for smooth running of the Helpline.

4.4 With a view to modernise the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and to further strengthen the Act in the new era of globalization, tools and technologies, e-Commerce markets, Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 was passed in the Parliament 09.08.2019. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 has since been implemented w.e.f. 20th July, 2020. The new Act repealed and replaced the 33 year old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Data on Digital Transaction

4.5 The new act covers e-Commerce transactions. It allows electronic filing of complaints, hearing and/or examining parties through video-conferencing for procedural ease and reduces inconvenience. The new Act has also introduced the concept of product liability bringing within its scope, the product manufacturer, product service provider and product seller for any claim for compensation. It can also impose a penalty on the manufacturer/endorser for a false or misleading advertisement and can also prohibit them from endorsing a particular product or service. The Act also provides for mediation as an Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanism for making the process of dispute adjudication simpler and quicker and reduce pressure on consumer courts. But the Department has no data regarding digital transactions/payments.

4.6 Under the provisions of CP Act, 2019, the executive agency called the Central Consumer Protection Authority has been set up and came into effect w.e.f 24.07.2020. It is empowered to conduct investigations into violations of consumer rights and institute complaints / prosecution through its Investigation Wing headed by a Director-General. The authority can also take *suo-motu* actions, recall products, order reimbursement of the price of goods/services, cancel licenses and file class action suits.

(a) **Strengthening Consumer Fora (SCF)**

4.7 Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, a three tier-quasi-judicial mechanism, called Consumer Commission, has been established at the District, State and National levels to provide speedy, simple and inexpensive resolution of consumer disputes. As per the provisions of the Act, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to establish and effectively run the District Commission and State Commissions in their respective States/UTs. However, to supplement the efforts of the State Governments, the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India has been extending financial assistance under the scheme to strengthen the infrastructure of Consumer Commission so that a minimum level of facilities are made available at each Consumer Commission, which are required for their effective functioning. Infrastructural facilities being provided under the scheme, include construction of new building of the consumer commission, carrying out addition/alteration/renovation of existing buildings and also for acquiring non-building assets such as furniture, office equipment, installation of CCTV Cameras etc. It is also proposed to establish new District Commission where there is none.

4.8 The Budget Estimate for 2021-22 under SCF is Rs.8.00 crore. During the year 2020-21, a total of Rs 8 crore in the BE and Rs. 2.66 crore in the RE have been allocated for Strengthening of Consumer Fora, but no expenditure made due to Non-receipt of proposals from State/UT Governments, incomplete proposals received from State Govts. further delaying fund release, non-utilisation of the previous grant and non-submission of the utilization certificate.

4.9 The Department of Consumer Affairs intimated the Committee that no data relating to cases coming up in consumer helplines which were subsequently registered in consumer courts has been maintained.

4.10 Asked about the disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions, the Department of Consumer Affairs submitted :

Year	FILED	RESTORED	DISPOSED	PENDING (includes previous pendency)	DISPOSAL RATE
2018	162167	1664	130336	33495	79.56
2019	177064	2166	132602	80123	73.98
2020	117417	1675	56660	142555	47.58
2021	17350	109	9459	150555	54.18
GRAND TOTAL	473998	5614	329057	150555	68.61

(b) Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism

4.11 The Department of Consumer Affairs has set up a National Consumer Helpline (NCH) to handle consumer grievances. In addition, six Zonal Consumer Helplines (ZCH) have been set up at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kolkata and Patna as extension of National Consumer Helpline (NCH) to cater to the growing regional needs w.e.f. October, 2017. The ZCH is networked with the NCH through a common platform/software. After the 12th plan period, it was decided to have a single scheme to fund all the activities related to consumer grievance redressal, to be called “Integrated Consumer Grievance Redress System (ICGRS)”. Financial Assistance from this scheme is being provided for:

- National Consumer Helpline(NCH)
- State Consumer Helplines in the States(SCH)
- Zonal Consumer Helplines(ZCH)

4.12 The BE, RE and AE during the year 2020-21 are Rs. 8.50 crore, Rs. 8.00 crore and Rs. 4.91 crore respectively. Asked about data relating to settlement of cases in the National Consumer Helpline (NCH)/ Integrated Consumer Grievance Redressal System (ICGRS), the Department furnished the following information:

FY	Docket Registered (A+B)	General Enquiry (A)	Total Grievances (B)	Total Grievances(B)		
				Convergence	Non Convergence	Govt Sectors
Apr.2017-Mar.18	455029	56916	398113	215814 (47.42%)	99694	82605
Apr.2018-Mar.19	565579	86128	479451	241420 (42.68%)	131001	107030
Apr.2019-Mar.20	741094	127750	613344	289483 (39.06%)	207448	116413
*Apr.2020-Jan.21	558551	75385	483166	293205 (52.49%)	139323	50638

4.13 NCH under the Convergence initiative provides a platform to complainants to get their complaints addressed and redressed by companies who have voluntarily partnered with the NCH. Thus convergence acts as a handholding platform for an Alternate Dispute Resolution of Consumer grievances. The Department of Consumer Affairs has furnished information about Redressal through Convergence Route as follows :

FY	Convergence	Company Redressal	Company Redressal (%)
Apr.2017-Mar.18	215814	194597	90.2
Apr.2018-Mar.19	241420	228342	94.6
Apr.2019-Mar.20	289483	269500	93.1
*Apr.2020-Jan.21	293205	246768	84.2
Total	1,039,922	939207	90.31
*Work in Progress			

4.14 It may be stated here that 28.5% of the grievances received in NCH during the year 2020 was from e-commerce sector.

4.15 During the year 2021-22, with an allocation of Rs. 9 crore, the Department plans to handle 125000 complaints in the first quarter, 150000 complaints in the second quarter, 150000 complaints in the third quarter and 175000 complaints in the fourth quarter of the year which is an increase by 5% over each of the previous year's quarters.

State Consumer Helpline

4.16 Grant-in-aid under the scheme "State Consumer Helplines" for setting up and running State Consumer Helplines is considered on the basis of an undertaking from the State Government concerned to run the helpline in post grant period by itself. The Department furnished information about the amount of fund sanctioned and released State-wise *vis-a-vis* utilization of funds under the scheme of State Consumer Helplines during the last two years and the current year till date as:

(₹ in lakhs)

Sl. No.	State/UT	Financial Year 2018-19	Financial Year 2019-20	Financial Year 2020-21	Utilization of Funds
1	Rajasthan	27.24			
2	Chandigarh	5.07	6.27	1.93	13.27
3	Uttar Pradesh		32.78		
4	Puducherry			10.29	10.29
5	Madhya Pradesh			37.78	
Total		32.31	39.05	50.00	23.56

4.17 It may be seen that an amount of Rs.121.36 lakh has been released for the State Consumer Helpline to 5 States. Out of that Utilization Certifications for Rs. 23.56 lakh (ie 19.4%) has been received by the Department of Consumer Affairs. Asked about the States with un-operational State Helplines and difficulties that are coming in the way of getting them operational and along with the reasons for States having not set up helplines, the Government stated:

"The State Consumer Helplines (SCH) at Bihar, Nagaland and Puduchery are not functioning. Delhi, Goa and Ladakh have not sought funds under the SCH scheme for setting up Helplines".

(c) **Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the country, (CONFONET)**

4.18 The scheme of 'Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora (now Commission) in the country, (CONFONET)' aims to digitalize the functioning of the Consumer Commission at all the three tiers throughout the country to enable access of information and quicker disposal of cases. The CONFONET project has provided an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) solution for efficiency, transparency, systemizing of working and e-governance at the consumer commissions for speedy delivery of information to the consumers. An online Case monitoring system has been developed and implemented by NIC to facilitate entry of consumer cases online in the consumer commissions. The registration of complaints, recording of court proceedings, issue of notices, generation of cause lists, recording of judgments, record-keeping and generation of statistical reports etc. are carried out through the Case Monitoring application software. Through the portal <http://confonet.nic.in>, consumers have easy access to acquire accurate and dependable information regarding cause lists, judgments, case status and case history. Quick search facility using case number, complainant name, respondent name etc. and free text search for judgments is also available. Computer hardware/software and technical manpower are provided to the Consumer Commissions for computerization of their functioning under the scheme CONFONET. Expansion of the above scheme is envisaged so as to enable court annexed mediation process and also to take the Confonet Project to advanced levels to enable filing of complaints online. Data mining will further simplify the process of getting redressal through consumer commission.

4.19 The allocation and utilisation for the scheme of CONFONET for the year 2020-21 is Rs. 29.50 crore. In other words, the Department utilised the full amount allocated.

Hardwares for the Consumer Commissions

4.20 Asked about supply of or replacement of old/obsolete hardware in Consumer

Commissions, the Department submitted that in the first phase, 415 locations with 3 new locations of Consumer Commissions have been supplied with Hardware. For the second phase 167 locations and 32 new locations have been identified for supply of the Hardware.

4.21 The Department has intimated that computer hardware is yet to be installed in 17 locations under CONFONET as per the details given below :

S/N	State	No. of remaining Consumer fora	Name of Consumer forum	Remark
1	Arunachal Pradesh	4	Dibang Valley, Tirap, Kurung Kumey, Anjaw	Site not ready.
2	Chattisgarh	2	Narayanpur, Bijapur	Site not ready
3	Daman & Diu	2	Site at Daman State Commission & Diu DCF is not ready.	Site at Daman State Commission & Diu DCF is not ready and consumer forum not functional.
4	Haryana	1	Charkhi dadri	Newly created DCF, HW requirement recently received, would be taken up now. Site is ready.
5	J & K	1	Srinagar DCF	Site not ready
6	Karnataka	2	Chikballapur DCF, Ramnagra DCF	DCF at Chikballapur is newly created, HW requirement recently received, would be taken up now. Site is ready. Site confirmation and HW requirement from Ramnagra DCF recently received, would be taken up now.
7	Nagaland	3	Peren, Longleng, Kiphire	Site not ready
8	Tamilnadu	2	Ariyalur DCF, Tirupur DCF	Site confirmation and HW requirement from Ariyalur and Tirupur DCF recently received, would be taken up now.

	TOTAL	17	Daman & Diu State Commission & 16 District forums.	
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Data Traffic

4.22 Details of Users Traffic to Confonet Portal given by the Department, for the years 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 is as follows:

Period	Page Views	Unique Visits
April 2017 - March 2018	5,561,347	3,031,866
April 2018 - March 2019	5,264,570	2,917,101
April 2019 - March 2020	6,163,572	3,161,557
April 2020 - 10 Feb 2021	4,160,589	2,375,929

Plans for 2021-22

4.23 The allocation for the year 2021-22 is Rs. 26.00 crore.

4.24 As per information furnished to the Committee through the Output-Outcome Monitoring Framework, the Department plans to computerise 2 Consumer Commissions each in the first and second quarters and 4 Consumer Commissions each during the third and fourth quarters of the Financial Year 2021-22. With such computerisation the Department expects a 3% increase in data traffic of Consumer Commissions over each quarter of 2020-21.

4.25 The Department also stated in a written reply that facility for Online filing has been introduced through recently developed/implemented eDaakhil portal (<https://edaakhil.nic.in>) in National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) during September 2020 and thereafter in 15 State/UTs to facilitate and empower the consumers for online filing of their consumer complaints from anywhere. The Department also stated that implementation of online filing application will also help in reducing the initial data entry work for electronically filed cases at consumer commissions as all basic details of consumer complaint would already be filled up by consumer/advocates only through eDaakhil portal.

Consumer Protection

4.26 The Committee observe that Rs. 44 crore has been allocated at BE 2021-22 for Consumer Protection. Under this head, various schemes/projects are being implemented, such as Strengthening of Consumer Fora, Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora (CONFONET), and Integrated Consumer Grievances Redressal System (ICGRS). The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 allows electronic filing of complaints and hearing and examination of parties through video-conferencing. The Committee are concerned with the fact that the Department has no data on digital transactions. They are of the view that the strengthening of various Consumer Commissions, computerization and helplines are essential for achieving the objectives/desired results envisaged under Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The Committee, therefore, recommend that Department should take steps so that the administrative, legal and technological mechanisms are geared up to meet the challenges posed by the evolving ways of trade and commerce

Strengthening of Consumer Fora

4.27 The Committee note that for strengthening of Consumer Fora, though the Government allocated an amount of Rs. 8.00 crore in the BE, 2020-21, the amount was reduced to Rs. 2.66 crore in the Revised Estimate stage, but no expenditure was incurred due to reasons such as non receipt of proposal, incomplete proposals, non-utilisation of fund and non-submission of

utilisation certificate. The Committee are of the opinion that the dismal situation of not incurring of expenditure under the Strengthening of Consumer Fora (SCF) could have been avoided through better attention to procedural formalities with regard to submission of proposals. Strengthening of infrastructure of the consumer fora being vital for consumer empowerment, the Committee are of the view that monitoring of the progress of implementation of projects cannot be over emphasised. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Union Government should facilitate submission of application for SCF online and regularly update the level of sophistication of the system. The Committee also note with concern the declining rate of disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions from 79.56% in 2018 to 73.98% in 2019 to 47.58 % in 2020 and to 54.18% in 2021. Also the Department has not maintained data of cases from consumer helpline registered in the Consumer Commissions, which would have been helpful in re-evaluation of the scheme of consumer protection. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Department of Consumer Affairs should devise measures to ensure higher disposal of cases in the Consumer Commissions and require aggrieved consumers to specify whether they have exhausted their options in the Consumer Helplines while filing a case in the Consumer Commissions.

National Consumer Helplines

4.28 The Committee note that the Government has allocated funds to the tune of Rs. 9.00 crore for the Financial Year 2021-22 for National Consumer Helpline (NCH), State Consumer Helplines in the States (SCH) and Zonal Consumer Helplines (ZCH). During the year 2020-21 the Department spent Rs. 4.91 crore (61.4%) out of the allocation of Rs. 8.00 crore at the Revised

Estimate stage. The Committee observe that 90.2% (194597) of the total grievances registered through convergence route (215814) between April, 2017 and March 2018 had been settled by companies. The figure between April, 2018 to March, 2019 (228342 out of 241420) is 94.6%, that between April, 2019 and March, 2020 (269500 out of 289483) is 93.1 % and that between April, 2020 and January, 2021 (246768 out of 293205) is 84.2 %. 28.5% of the grievances received in NCH during 2020 pertained to e-commerce. The Committee also observe that the Department has planned to make an increase in performance in terms of handling of complaints in the helplines during the year 2021-22 by 5% over each of the previous year's quarters. The Committee hope that the Department would make optimum utilisation of the allocated funds during the year 2021-22.

State Consumer Helplines

4.29 The Committee also note that an amount of Rs.121.36 lakh has been released for the State Consumer Helpline to 5 States/UTs of Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Puducherry and Madhya Pradesh during the years 2018-19 to 2020-21. Out of that amount, Utilization Certificates for Rs. 23.56 lakh has been received by the Department of Consumer Affairs from Chandigarh and Puducherry. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have not furnished the utilisation certificates. The helplines in Bihar, Nagaland and Puducherry are not functioning and Delhi, Goa and Ladakh have not sought funds under SCH Scheme. The Committee believe that settlement of cases through the Helpline has a good potential to bring about justice to consumer. The Committee, therefore, recommend the Department to vigorously pursue with the 3 States to furnish Utilization Certificates in respect of grants under Consumer Helpline Scheme and apprise them the outcome thereof at the earliest. States/UTs should be pursued to make the Helplines functional and Delhi, Goa and Ladakh should be persuaded utilise the facility of Grant-in-aid under the SCH Scheme.

4.30 The Committee note that the scheme of Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the country (CONFONET) aims to digitalise the functioning of the Consumer Commissions at all the three tiers throughout the country, i.e. National, State and District levels. During the year 2020-21 the Department fully utilised the allocated amount of Rs. 29.50 crore. 415 locations with 3 new locations of Consumer Commissions have been supplied with hardware. For the second phase 167 locations and 32 new locations have been identified for supply of the Hardware. The Department has also stated that computer hardware is yet to be installed in 17 locations in the States/UTs of Arunachal Pradesh (4), Chhattisgarh (2), Daman & Diu (2), Haryana (1), J&K (1), Karnataka (2), Nagaland (3) and Tamil Nadu (2) where problems of sites not being ready are being faced in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, J&K and Nagaland. Regarding users traffic to CONFONET portal, the Committee note that between April, 2020 and February, 2021 a total of 41,60,589 page views and 23,75,929 unique visits were recorded. The Committee appreciate the fact that in order to facilitate the consumers/advocates to file the complaint online, the eDaakhil portal has been launched in NCDRC during September 2020, and thereafter the facility has been launched in 15 States/UTs. The Department has intimated about its target of computerisation of 2 Consumer Commissions each during the first and second quarters and 4 Consumer Commissions each during the third and fourth quarters of the year 2021-22. With an allocation of Rs. 26.00 crore during the year 2021-22, the Department expects an increase by 3% in data traffic in Consumer Commissions over each quarter of 2020-21. The Committee desire the Department to convince States/UTs to come up with the necessary modalities to enable timely installation of hardware at Consumer Commissions in line with the slogan of 'Digital India' initiative. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the concerned States/UTs should be pursued more vigorously to ensure site readiness and inform to NIC/State Coordinators at the earliest for necessary further action for replacement of old / obsolete Hardware without any loss of time. While appreciating the facility of online

case filing, the Committee also desire the Department to ensure that the facility of eDaakhil portal is extended to all the Consumer Commissions at the State and District levels at the earliest to ease the problems of consumers.

CHAPTER – V

CONSUMER AWARENESS (PUBLICITY)

Under the scheme of Consumer Awareness, print, electronic and outdoor awareness campaigns are undertaken through Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC) / National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), All India Radio (AIR), Doordarshan (DD) & Lok Sabha Television (LSTV). Under this Scheme funds are also released to State / UT governments for consumer awareness programmes based on local themes. These funds can be used for advertisements in print and electronic media, local exhibitions, street plays, cultural functions etc. to educate the citizens about consumer rights. In order to create awareness amongst the people living in rural & backward areas, the Department also takes part in important fairs / festivals of various States / UTs keeping in view of the fact that such fairs / festivals draw a large number of people from rural & backward areas. The Department is also actively using various social media platforms for generating consumer awareness. The Department is making use of post offices across the country by displaying posters on consumer awareness through Department of Posts. Innovative campaigns have been run by way of scroll messages, laptop branding, news report captions on Lok Sabha Television and Doordarshan. Sponsored Radio Programmes (SRPs) are being broadcast on All India Radio (AIR) to generate awareness in regional languages in North-eastern region.

5.2 During the year 2020-21, against the BE of Rs. 60 crore and RE of Rs. 42.50 crore, the actual expenditure in respect of Consumer Awareness (Advertising & Publicity) was Rs. 40.08 crore as on 09.02.2021. The Department of Consumer Affairs stated about the break-up of expenditure as Rs. 3.68 crore to DD, Rs. 0.95 crore to AIR, Rs. 4.81 crore to BOC, Rs. 0.62 crore to LSTV, Rs. 6.10 crore as Miscellaneous Rs. 22.74 crore to Department of Posts and Rs. 1.18 crore as Grant-in-Aid during the year.

5.3 About the Grant-in-aid, the Department has further stated that considering the fact that active involvement of State Governments in awareness campaign is crucial in taking forward the movement to rural, remote and backward areas, State/ UT Governments have been actively associated in expanding the area of consumer awareness. The provision for grant in aid /support to State/ UTs has been one of the key components of the Consumer Awareness scheme. An amount of Rs. 40 Lakh to Tripura and Rs. 78 Lakh to Madhya Pradesh has been released as Grant- in aid.

5.4 Asked whether the publicity campaign of the Government with slogan 'Jago Grahak Jago' and other multimedia publicity campaign has increased or decreased court cases, the Department stated that the number of consumer grievances registered in NCH in the last three years have shown an increasing trend suggesting more number of customers coming forward to register their complaints being aware of the procedure and government initiatives like NCH.

5.5 In another reply furnished to the Committee on 13 February, 2021, the Department of Consumer Affairs stated that the docket registered in consumer helplines has increased from 455029 during 2017-18 to 565579 in 2018-19 to 741094 in 2019-20 and to 558551 in 2020-21.

5.6 The Budgetary allocation for the year 2021-22 under this head is Rs. 44.50 crore. The Department plans to release funds for Print Advertisements in News papers during the first and fourth quarters of the year. It also plans to participate in trade fairs/exhibitions during the fourth quarter and also plans to spread awareness through television and radio during the fourth quarter. The Department also has plans to spread awareness through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram during the year 2021-22. With such campaigns, the Department expects an enhancement in consumer awareness by 25% over each quarter of the year 2020-21.

5.7 The Committee note that under the Scheme of Consumer Awareness, print, electronic and outdoor awareness campaigns are undertaken. Out of the Rs. 42.50 crore allocated in the Revised Estimates, the Department utilised an amount of Rs. 40.08 crore (as on 09.02.2021) during 2020-21. The Committee also note the fact that as a result of the awareness campaigns, dockets in consumer helplines registered an increase from 565579 in 2018-19 to 741094 in 2019-20, which is 31.03%. The Committee also note that during the year 2021-22, an amount of Rs. 44.50 crore is allocated for Consumer Awareness (Publicity). The Department plans to utilise the fund for participation in fairs/exhibitions, advertisement in print, television and radio. It also plans to spread awareness through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. With such campaigns, the Department expects an overall increase in consumer complaints by 25% over each quarter of the year 2020-21. The Committee are of the opinion that messages conveyed through the campaign need to be clear, articulate, proper and catchy to dispel the possible sense of inhibition or predicament of consumers in approaching available facilities such as helplines, Consumer Commissions, test centres, etc. The campaign should also be fashioned in such a way as to protect consumer from online fraud. Considering the fact that active involvement of State Governments in awareness campaign is crucial in taking forward the movement to rural, remote and backward areas an amount of Rs. 118 lakh has been released to the States of Madhya Pradesh and Tripura as grant-in-aid. The Committee desire that States should be given a clear idea on how to spend the money judiciously and optimally so as to achieve maximum results. In addition, the

Committee recommend that States and UT Administrations may be asked to allocate a certain proportion of their annual budget to the respective Consumer Affairs Department for spreading consumer rights awareness, which would be consistent with the objectives of the Consumer Affairs Department of the Union Government.

CHAPTER - VI

STRENGTHENING OF LEGAL METROLOGY

The Legal Metrology Act, 2009 (1 of 2010) has come into force w.e.f. 01.04.2011 after repealing the Standards of Weights & Measures Act, 1976 & the Standards of Weights & Measures (Enforcement) Act, 1985. The Central Government has made seven rules for the better implementation of the Act. The State Governments have also framed their Legal Metrology (Enforcement) Rules. The following Legal Metrology Rules have been framed under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 for protection of consumer interest:

- a) The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011
- b) The Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011
- c) The Legal Metrology (Approval of Models) Rules, 2011
- d) The Legal Metrology (National Standards) Rules, 2011
- e) The Legal Metrology (Numeration) Rules, 2011
- f) The Indian Institute of Legal Metrology Rules, 2011
- g) The Legal Metrology (Government Approved Test Centre) Rules, 2013

6.2 The BE, RE and AE of the year 2020-21 under the scheme are Rs. 62 crore, Rs. 42.74 crore and Rs. 35.79 crore respectively. The BE for 2021-22 is Rs. 55 crore.

6.3 Asked about the reason for low expenditure, which is 57.72% of BE and 83.73% of RE for the year 2020-21, the Department of Consumer Affairs has stated :

“The Grant in Aid was released to the States/ UTs Governments for construction of Laboratory Buildings however, the whole funds could not be utilised due to non-submission of complete proposal for Grant in Aid by State Governments. Further, funds for procurement of equipment could not be utilised due to non-finalisation of technical specifications by State Governments/ RRSLs & IILM, Ranchi.

The main reasons for low expenditure incurred under the project for strengthening of RRSL and IILM and Time dissemination are non-utilization of the funds by

CPWD allocated for construction/renovation of Laboratories Buildings and non-finalisation of the specification and floating of indent/ tender for procurement of instrument by RITES.

During the next financial year all the specifications will be finalised immediately and indents will be submitted to Rail India Technical and Economic Service Limited (RITES) for tendering or funds will be released to State Government”.

(a) Strengthening of Legal Metrology Infrastructure in States/UTs, RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi

6.4 The Central Government has established five Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati. These RRSLs serve as a vital link in dissemination of the values of national standards of Legal Metrology down to the commercial level. Two more laboratories at Varanasi, (Uttar Pradesh) and Nagpur, (Maharashtra) are being established. The laboratories maintain Reference Standards of appropriate accuracy for Verification of Legal standards of the States, Calibration of weighing and measuring instruments, Model approval tests of weighing and measuring instruments, Training and Seminars on weights and measures. Each laboratory provides calibration service to the industries in the region.

Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs

6.5 On Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs the Department of Consumer Affairs in written reply has stated that out of an amount of Rs. 15.00 crore in BE and Rs. 6.25 crore in RE, an amount of Rs. 5.15 has been spent on Release of Grant-in-aid to State Governments for construction of Laboratory Buildings and Procurement of equipment.

Strengthening of RRSLs and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi

6.6 On strengthening of RRSLs and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi, the Department has stated that out of the BE of Rs. 20.00 crore and RE of Rs. 8.96 crore for 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 4.75 crore has been spent on:

- (a) Annual Maintenance and boundary wall of RRSLs;
- (b) Procurement of equipment;
- (c) Training of officers at various organisations of repute.

6.7 The Department of Consumer Affairs has stated that during the year 2021-22, for Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs out of Rs. 10.0 crore Rs. 6.0 crore would be released as grant in aid for the construction of laboratory buildings, Rs. 3.50 crore would be spent on procurement of equipment and Rs. 0.50 crore for capacity building of officers. Similarly for Strengthening of RRSLs and IILM, the Department has stated that out of Rs. 15.00 crore it plans to spend Rs. 6.00 crore on Major Works, Rs. 1.00 crore on Minor Works, Rs. 7.00 crore on Procurement of Equipment and Rs. 1.00 crore on Capacity Building of Officers. Some amount would also be spent for establishment expenditures.

(b) Time Dissemination

6.8 In India, dissemination of Time, one of the seven base units, is being maintained at only one level which is at NPL, New Delhi. The Group of Secretaries on Science & Technology, constituted by the Cabinet Secretariat in 2016, recommend that, "Presently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being adopted mandatorily by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and 'Internet Service Providers' (ISPs). Non-uniformity of time across different systems creates problems in investigation of cybercrime by the law enforcement agencies (LEAs). Hence, synchronization of all networks and computers within the country with a national clock is a must, especially for the real time applications in strategic sector and national security. Accurate time dissemination as well as precise time synchronization has significant impact on all societal, industrial, strategic and many

other sectors like monitoring of the power grid failures, international trade, banking systems, automatic signaling in road & railways, weather forecasting, disaster managements, searching for natural resources under the earth's crust requires robust, reliable and accurate timing systems. On the request of Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) the Department of Consumer Affairs has decided to disseminate the Indian Standard Time through five laboratories of Legal Metrology (LM) located at Ahmeddabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati with the cooperation of National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and a budget provision of Rs. 100 crores has been made. An Memorandum of Undey (MoU) with CSIR- NPL for executing the project for setting up of atomic clocks for dissemination of Indian Standard Time has already been signed. Under the MoU, the hardware and software for setting up the time ensembles will be procured by NPL which shall also be responsible for installation and commissioning of the same including training on equipment operation to the LM personnel. NPL will handhold LM and shall provide requisite technical support. The MoU also envisages setting up of a Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) at RRSL, Bengaluru. The operational laboratory space and technical manpower would be provided by the RRSLs and the project would be funded by the Department of Consumer Affairs. Implementation of Indian Standard Time and its dissemination will reduce the error in time dissemination to just a few milli to micro seconds. Accurate time dissemination would ensure national security and will enhance cyber security.

6.9 The BE, RE and AE for the project of Time Dissemination during the year 2020-21 are Rs. 27.00 crore, Rs. 27.53 crore and Rs.24.88 crore respectively. The fund was spent on renovation/construction for establishment of time ensembles at RRSLs and for boundary wall of new RRSLs.

6.10 Asked about the reason for spending Rs. 24.88 crore out of allocation of Rs. 27.53 crore at the RE stage, the Department of Consumer Affairs have stated in a written note that NPL could not float indent/tender for procurement of timing instruments for Time Dissemination projects. The note also stated that CPWD could not utilize the funds allocated for construction/renovation of Laboratories Buildings and hence, the expenditure was less.

6.11 It may be stated here that Project of Time Dissemination was started in 2017 and was originally slated for completion in the year 2022. But the deadline for completion of the project has since been set at the year 2023. (Q.56 (d), P.68 LoP Reply on DFG.

6.12 Under the scheme 'Time Dissemination' out of Rs. 30.0 crore allocated for the year 2021-22, Rs. 1.00 crore will be utilized for Minor Works for renovation of Laboratories, Rs. 19.00 crore for procurement of equipment and balance amount will be spent for establishment expenditure like DTE, OE, etc.

Major and Minor Works in Legal Metrology

6.13 The Committee observe that the Department of Consumer Affairs is undertaking the strengthening of Weights & Measures (W&M) infrastructures of States/UTs as also of Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi. Out of the BE of Rs. 35 crore and RE of Rs. 15.21 crore and AE of Rs. 9.9 crore had been spent, which is 65.09% of the RE for the year 2020-21. The funds were utilised on release of grants-in-aid for construction of laboratories, annual maintenance and boundary wall of RRSLs and procurement of equipment and training of officers. RRSLs in locations like Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati have been vital link in dissemination of values of National Standards of Legal Metrology down to commercial level. As such, the operationalisation of such laboratories is an urgent necessity in a modern economy. The Committee is dismayed to learn that implementation of projects suffer due to non submission of complete proposal for Grant in aid by States/UTs, non-finalisation of technical specifications by State Governments/RRSLs & IILM, Ranchi, non-utilisation of fund by CPWD and non-finalisation of specifications and floating of indents/tender for procurement of instrument by Rail India Technical and Economic Service Limited (RITES). The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Government should take necessary steps to ensure timely completion of major and minor works, procurement of equipments and capacity building of officers. The Committee desire to be apprised of the position with regard to the

Strengthening of Legal Metrology infrastructure of States/UTs and RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi.

Time Dissemination

6.14 The Government has undertaken the project of Time Dissemination with a tentative timeline originally set at the year 2022 and later at the year 2023 for executing the project, for setting up of atomic clocks for dissemination of Indian Standard Time (IST). The Committee note that non uniformity of time across different systems creates problems in investigation of cyber crime by the Law Enforcement Authorities (LEAs). Hence synchronisation of all networks and computers within the country with the national clock is a must. The Committee are of the opinion that a precise time synchronisation and robust, reliable and accurate timing systems have significant impact on all societal, industrial, strategic and many other sectors like monitoring power grid failures, international trade, banking systems, automatic signalling in road & railways, weather forecasting, disaster managements, etc. They had expressed their desire that care should be taken to most accurately synchronise all networks and computers in the country with a national clock while implementing the project for ensuring absolute national security and enhanced cyber security with minimal scope of errors in time dissemination. The Committee are, however, dismayed to note that NPL could not float indent/tender for procurement of timing instruments and that CPWD could not utilize the funds allocated for construction/renovation of Laboratories Buildings and hence the project of Time Dissemination suffered a setback, due to which only an amount of Rs. 24.88 crore out of allocation of Rs. 27.53 crore at RE stage has been spent on the scheme. The Committee opine that non-utilisation of the full amount of allocation during the year 2020-21 reflects upon either the lack of accurate planning or weak implementation of the project which should not be repeated in future. During the Year 2021-22 the Department plans to utilise the allocation of Rs. 30 crore to fund Minor Works, for renovation of Laboratories, Procurement of Equipment and establishment expenses. The Committee, therefore, recommend the Government to ensure proper stamping of Indian Standard Time in various

transactions timely and, in any case, not to miss the deadline of completion of the project by 2023. They desire the Government to spend the allocation of Rs. 30 crore productively within the financial year, 2021-22.

CHAPTER - VII

THE BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) was set up as a statutory organization under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986 by taking over the assets and liabilities of the Indian Standards Institution (ISI) that came into existence in 1947. The Bureau has its Headquarters in New Delhi. It has a network of 5 regional offices, 32 branch offices and 8 laboratories.

7.2 The Department has informed that the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 came into force with effect from 12 October 2017, and subsequently the Governing Council was reconstituted and the second meeting was held on 20 December, 2018.

(a) National System for Standardisation (NSS)

7.3 The Department has stated that the BE, RE and AE for 2020-21 for NSS are Rs. 1.00 crore, Rs. 0.50 crore and Rs. 0.50 crore respectively. Asked about the number of standards formulated and that aligned with international standards by the BIS, the Department submitted the following:

“As on 25th January 2021, BIS has formulated 20989 Indian Standards out of which 6565 Indian Standards are aligned with International Standards (ISO and IEC standards). Considering that there are 7815 existing Indian Standards for which corresponding international standards (ISO and IEC standards) exist, about 84% of Indian Standards have been aligned with International standards (ISO and IEC standards). During the current financial year, 2020-21 till 25th January 2021, BIS has reviewed 2174 standards and revised 293 standards”.

7.4 The Department has stated that the allocation for 2021-22 is Rs. 0.75 crore for NSS. The Department plans to organise workshops and seminars and to intensify participation of members in BIS Technical Committee meetings and international meetings. The Department has stated that it has planned to revise and also to formulate 400 standards each.

(b) Setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres

Infrastructure building

7.5 The Department of Consumer Affairs has stated that under this component, setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres (AHC) under Government scheme is envisaged. The rate of one time financial assistance for 'Setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres' in India where no Assaying & Hallmarking Centre (assisted or otherwise) exists is as follows:-

Area	Rate	
	To Private Entrepreneur	To PSU
Normal	30%	50%
NE/SCS/RA	50%	75%

NE – North East States; SCS - Special Category States; RA – Rural Areas

7.6 The Special Category States includes the North-Eastern States and Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. Municipal Acts concerned is the basis for definition and identification of rural areas.

Capacity Building

7.7 Under the component of capacity building, organizing various training programmes, i.e. Artisan Training Programme, A&H Personnel Training Programme and BIS officers Training Programme is envisaged.

7.8 The Department has stated that a total amount of of Rs. 0.50 crore out of the BE of Rs. 1.00 crore and RE of Rs. 0.50 crore, has been utilised during the year 2020-21.

7.9 The Department has also stated that BIS has recognized 938 AHC till date which are in operation. The personnel/groups are trained through following programmes:

- a) Training Programmes for artisans: In this programme artisans are trained and

made aware of present practices w.r.t jewellery forming, refining and uses of non-permitted solders which are health hazards. The training helps them make jewellery as per requirement of standard.

- b) Training Programmes for personnel of A & H Centres: In this programme, personnel of A&H Centres are trained. After training, the personnel are able to understand and implement the requirements of the standard in a better way w.r.t Assaying & Hallmarking.
- c) Training Programmes on Auditing of A&H Centres for BIS officers: In this programme BIS officers are trained for conducting audits of A&H Centres

7.10 The Department further stated that upto January, 2021 a total of 54 training programmes for artisans, 23 for A&H personnel and 7 for BIS officers have been organized.

7.11 The allocation for setting up of Gold Hallmarking and Assaying Centres in India for the year 2021-22 is Rs. 0.75 crore. According to information received from the Ministry, the BIS has invited an Expression of Interest (EOI) for 'Setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centre' in any District in India where no such A&H Centre exists and obtaining Central Assistance. The EOI was invited on 17.07.2020 with last date of submission of application being 15.09.2020. The copy of the EOI was also sent to Chief Secretaries of the States with a request for giving wide publicity. 51 number of applications were received against the EOI. Out of that the 45 eligible applicants were given go-ahead by Implementation Committee in its 33rd meeting held on 09 October, 2020, and advised to setup the A&H centre preferably within 6 Months.

7.12 With regard to cases arising from the Bureau of Indian Standards (Hallmarking) Regulations, 2018 the Government submitted the following:

"Bureau of Indian Standards (Hallmarking Regulations) were notified on 14 June 2018. The Hallmarking scheme is now being operated through Hallmarking Regulations. Regulations consists of three chapters viz- Chapter I, Grant, Operation, Renewal and Cancellation of Certificate of Registration, Chapter II, Grant, Operation, Renewal, Suspension and Cancellation of Recognition of Assaying and Hallmarking Centre and Chapter III, Grant,

Operation, Renewal and Cancellation of Licence for Refinery or Mint. The details of jewellers registration granted, the A&H centres recognised and Enforcement cases after the implementation of Bureau of Indian Standards (Hallmarking) Regulations, 2018 is as given:

“

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (upto Dec. 20)
Jeweller Registration Granted	5531	6910	3299
A&H centre recognised	206	149	42
Enforcement cases	17	27	01

7.13 In reply to a supplementary question, the Department intimated the Committee that 21 cases of violation of Hallmarking Regulations were pending as on 26th February, 2021.

National Systems for Standardization

7.14 The Committee note that Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) implements the National System for Standardization (NSS). Out of 20989 Indian Standards (IS) formulated, 6565 standards have been aligned with ISO/IEC standards. That is 84% of the total number of 7815 ISs for which corresponding international standards exist. During the year 2020-21, the BIS has reviewed 2174 standards and revised 293 standards. The Committee desire that utmost care should be taken in regard to formulation of new ISs so as to achieve better integration of India with the world in trade and commerce.

Recognition of Assaying and Hallmarking Centres

7.15 The Committee observe that the Bureau of Indian Standards(BIS) has been implementing the Plan scheme for setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHC) in India with Central assistance. They also note that 938 BIS recognized Assaying & Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) are in operation in the country. Further, the Implementation Committee, in its meeting held on 9 October, 2020 had given a go-ahead on 45 applications against 51 Expression of Interest and the applicants were advised to set up the centres within 6 months. The Committee are of the view that setting up of more AHCs will go a long way in serving the interests of gold jewellery consumers, especially those residing in the small towns and remote areas. They, therefore desire the Government to ensure completion of setting up of A&H Centres by the 45 eligible applicants by the month of April, 2021.

Capacity Building for AHC

7.16 The Committee further note that with regard to capacity building, training have been imparted to 54 artisans, 23 Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHC) personnel and 7 BIS officers during the year 2020-21. India being one of the top consumers of gold jewellery items in the world the Committee, therefore, recommend that all possible efforts should be made to enable early recognition of more AHCs in the larger interest of the consumers. Since awareness of the rights is extremely important in the matter of hallmarking of gold jewellery, the Committee further recommend that all jewellers should be made to display the addresses and contact numbers of nearby test laboratories/AHCs in their bills/vouchers in respect of hallmarked gold jewellery sold by them for the convenience of consumers.

BIS Hallmarking and Regulations

7.17 The Committee also note that out of a total number of 45 cases filed for violation of BIS Hallmarking Regulations, 2018, 21 cases are pending for disposal. The Committee desire that the Ministry/BIS should closely monitor the cases and also make concerted efforts to ensure that there is speedy settlement of cases. The Committee would like to be apprised of further progress made in this regard.

CHAPTER - VIII

NATIONAL TEST HOUSE

National Test House, a subordinate office under the administrative control of Department of Consumer affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India, traveled a long journey and in the year 2020 it completed 108 years of dedicated service to the Nation.

8.2 According to Department of Consumer Affairs, the objective of the scheme of Strengthening of NTH is to strengthen the National Test House in the area of testing and quality evaluation. The scheme provides Consumer Protection through testing and quality evaluation of different kind of products (except drugs, arms and ammunition). It will also extend value added services to the neighbouring SAARC countries and other developing countries as well. The strengthening of NTH is mainly by way of creating infrastructure (civil works and procurement of equipments) for enabling it to carry out tests in new areas such as LED luminaire testing , all kinds of tests relating to transformers such as Impulse, short circuit etc, testing of equipments used for generating solar energy, packaged drinking water, etc.

8.3 The BE, RE and AE for National Test House for the year 2020-21 are Rs. 20.00 crore, Rs. 14.00 crore and Rs. 10.68 crore respectively and the BE for the year 2021-22 is Rs. 23.50 crore.

Works Undertaken

8.4 The activities undertaken in respect of the different Head of accounts during the year 2020-21, are as given below:

(a) Major Works:

8.5 NTH (WR), Mumbai: Considering the Demand for fund by the respective CPWD unit and also progress of the On-Going Constructions, an amount of Rs.1.25 Crore was released for Providing and Fixing Furniture at the on-going of G+4 Phase-

II Building at NTH(WR)-Mumbai on 16.10.2020 and till date an amount of Rs. 1.01 Crore/- has been utilized by CPWD(WZ). Though the work has been completed, the remaining amount is due for billing to working agencies only for which CPWD(WZ) has been assured to utilize in this financial year 2020-21. The newly constructed G+4 Phase-II Building at NTH(WR), Mumbai has been inaugurated and is in use.

8.6 NTH(SR)-Chennai: A demand for authorization for Rs.0.82 Crore was sent to DoCA on 11.09.2020 under the Head "Major Works" during the year 2020-21, for settlement of final bill and on receipt of authorization and completion the CPWD will make the laboratory fully operational.

8.7 As on date, for NTH (WR) Mumbai, since the year 2013-14 an amount of Rs. 22.864 crore was authorised for civil works and Rs. 15.717 crore utilised. For Electrical Works an amount of Rs. 6.050 crore was authorised and Rs. 5.648 crore utilised. In case of NTH (SR) Chennai, since the year 2014-15, an amount of Rs.7.533 crore was utilized for civil works and Rs. 5.911 crore utilized. In case of electrical works an amount of Rs. 1.650 crore was authorised and Rs. 0.967 crore utilised.

(b) Status of Procurement of Machineries & Equipment

8.8 The installation & commissioning of the Equipment Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GCMS), for NTH (SR) Chennai, for analysis of residual pesticides in drinking water to the lowest possible detection limit is at final stage. The installation & commissioning of the Equipment Ion Chromatographs for NTH (SR) Chennai, NTH (NWR), Jaipur & NTH (NR), Ghaziabad will be used for estimation of different anions (Bromate) in packaged drinking water, to as low as PPB level have been completed are functioning satisfactorily.

8.9 The procurement of Impulse Generator for NTH (SR), Chennai has been initiated in FY 2020-21, which will be used for conducting Lightning Impulse Test especially on Distribution and Power Transformers and High Voltage Line Materials up to 220 kV insulation class as per latest Indian Standards (IS), IEC, IEEE etc.

(c) *Minor works*

8.10 The fund allocated under the head has been utilised for regular maintenance works of the existing infrastructure at the regional centres and for AMC & Calibrations of the existing equipment.

(d) *Information & Technology*

8.11 The fund has been utilised for maintenance of the existing IT Infrastructure.

8.12 As may be seen in the foregoing paras, an amount of Rs. 23.50 crore has been allocated for implementation of scheme of NTH during 2021-22. The Department has intimated the Committee about the details of the plans for the year and how the fund is proposed to be utilized in a written reply as :

“The details of plans made for the current year i.e. 2021-22 is as below:

- (i) The fund allocated for major Works will be utilised for completion of the On-Going Constructions at NTH(SR), Chennai.
- (ii) The following capital equipment's are in the pipeline to be procured depending on the availability of the fund under ME:

SI No	Name of Equipments	Budgetary Estimate (in Crore)	Status	Timeline
i.	Atomic absorption spectroscopy (AAS) (002 Nos.) for water	1.0	Procurement process has been initiated for the financial year 2021-22.	The complete procurement process may take 6 to 7 months to complete.
ii.	2000 kN Universal Testing Machine and Dynamic Tensile Testing Machine	1.5	The technical specification have been prepared and the procurement process will be initiated in the	The procurement of the equipment may vary from 6 to 8 months for completing the process

iii.	Gas Chromatograph y- Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) with EDC & FID and	0.7	The technical specification have been prepared and the procurement process will be	The complete procurement process may take 6 to 7 months to complete.
iv.	FTIR for water analysis for NTH(NR), Ghaziabad	0.3	Procurement process will be initiated in the financial year of 2021-22.	The complete procurement process may take 7 to 8 months to complete.
v.	Microwave Digester for sample preparation for chemical	0.3	Procurement process will be initiated in the financial year of 2021-22.	The complete procurement process may take 6 to 7 months to complete.
vi.	Universal Testing Machine of capacity 100 kN (01No.) for NTH(WR), Mumbai &	0.7	Procurement is under process & fund will be utilized in the financial year of 2021-22.	The complete procurement process may take 4 to 5 months to complete.
vii.	Automatic Schering Bridge for NTH (NR), Ghaziabad	0.3	The technical specification have been prepared and the procurement	The complete procurement process may take 6 to 8 months to complete.
viii.	Impulse Voltage Generator at NTH(SR), Chennai	3.5	A generalized technical specification is under preparation which will be uploaded in the	The process completion is based on bid response which will be received for various equipments.
ix.	Air Conditioner Test Facility at NTH (WR), Mumbai.	--	The technical specification and other relevant document are under preparation. The process of	The process completion is based on bid response which will be received for various equipments.

x.	Equipments required to set-up complete Food Testing laboratory at NTH(ER), Kolkata	13	The competent authority of DoCA has principally approved for creation of Food testing laboratory at NTH(ER), Kolkata	Process will be initiated soon. Also out of Rs. 13Crore, Rs. 10Crore will be funded by th concerned Ministry/Deptt. & remaining Rs. 3crore will be utilised from the allocated fund in
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(iii) The fund allocated under the head Minor works will be utilized for regular maintenance works of the existing infrastructure at the regional centers and for AMC & Calibrations of the existing equipment.

(iv) The fund for Information & Technology will be utilized for upgradation of existing MIS system, creating e-office, leased line, maintenance of the existing IT Infrastructure and also for creating Digital Signature Certificates for Test & Calibration Certificates”.

8.13 The Committee note with appreciation the fact that National Test House (NTH) has completed 108 years of dedicated service to the nation under the administrative control of the Government of India. The Department has initiated procurement of Impulse Generator for NTH (SR), Chennai and is also in the process of installation of Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) for NTH (SR) Chennai, Ion Chromatograph for NTH (SR) Chennai, NTH (NWR) Jaipur and NTH (NR) Ghaziabad. The Committee also note that apart from the major and minor maintenance works already undertaken for NTH, the Government plans to complete major works for NTH (SR) Chennai. With an allocation of Rs. 23.50 crore for the year 2021-22, the Government is planning to procure equipments for NTH (WR) Mumbai, NTH (NWR), Jaipur, NTH (ER), Kolkata, NTH (NR) Ghaziabad, NTH (SR) Chennai and NTH (NER) Guwahati. The Department has stated that the fund allocated under the head Minor Works would be utilized for regular maintenance works of the existing infrastructure at the regional centres and for AMC & Calibrations of the existing equipment. The Department has also stated that the fund for Information and Technology would be utilized for upgradation of existing MIS System, creating e-office, leased line, maintenance of the existing IT infrastructure and also for creating Digital Signature Certificates (DSC) for test and calibrations certificates. The NTH being an important institution for testing and quality evaluation of different kinds of products, the Committee urge the Government to complete undertaking of major works, procurement of machineries and equipments, minor or maintenance works or upgradation of machinery and IT infrastructure in the various regions with efficiency and concrete planning at appropriate stage.

CHAPTER - IX

STRENGTHENING OF PRICE MONITORING STRUCTURE

The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 empowers the Government to regulate prices, production, supply, distribution etc. of essential commodities for maintaining or increasing their supplies and for securing their equitable distribution and availability at fair prices. Most of the powers under the Act have been delegated by the Central Government to the State Governments with the direction that they shall exercise these powers. Exercising powers under the Act, various Ministries/Departments of the Central Government and State Governments/UT Administrations have issued Control Orders for regulating production, distribution, pricing etc. and trading of the commodities declared as essential.

Essential Commodities

9.1 The following are the essential commodities specified in the EC Act (along with names of the Departments/Ministries of Central Government authorized as per Allocation of Business Rules to issue Control Order with respect to the commodity) :

Sl. No.	Commodity	Administrative Department/Ministry
1	Drugs	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
2	Fertilizers, whether inorganic, organic or mixed	DACFW
3	'Foodstuffs'* including edible oilseeds and oil	DACFW, MoFPI, DFPD, DoCA
4	Hank yarn made wholly of cotton	M/o Textiles
5	Petroleum and Petroleum Products	M/o Petroleum & Natural Gas
6	Raw jute and jute textiles	M/o Textiles
7(i)	Seeds of food crops, fruits and vegetables	} DACFW
(ii)	Seeds of cattle fodder	
(iii)	Jute seeds; and	
(iv)	Cotton seed	

Downward revision of allocation

9.2 The BE, RE and AE for Strengthening of Price Monitoring Structure during 2020-21 are Rs. 2.00 crore, Rs. 1.00 crore and Rs. 0.27 crore respectively.

9.3 Asked about the reasons for downward revision at RE stage, the Department of Consumer Affairs has stated that proposals had not come from States/UTs during the first half of the financial year 2020-21. It has also stated that allocations for Zonal workshops for capacity building could not be spent because of COVID -19 pandemic. However, the Department has assured that several new centres have been added with sufficient proposals received and that the allocation of Rs. 1.00 crore would be fully utilized.

Price Reporting Mechanism

9.4 The Price Monitoring Division (PMD) of Department of Consumer Affairs was set up in 1998 for regular monitoring of prices and to formulate policy recommendations on essential food items. From an initial coverage of 14 commodities and 18 Price Reporting Centres, PMD now monitors retail and wholesale prices of 22 commodities from 122 centres across the country. The items covered include rice, wheat, atta, gram dal, arhar dal, moong dal, urad dal, masoor dal, tea, sugar, salt, vanaspati, groundnut oil, mustard oil, milk, soya oil, palm oil, sunflower oil, gur, potato, onion and tomato.

Prices Collection

9.5 The prices are collected for the most popular/maximum consumed variety of the commodity from one wholesale market and three retail markets of each reporting centre. Retail prices are collected from markets catering to three income groups' viz., low income, middle income and high income group. These information on prices of select 22 commodities are furnished by the States Food and Civil Supplies Departments.

Daily Retail and Wholesale Prices

9.6 Prices of 22 essential food items are collected through Mobile App Since 1 January, 2021 from 122 centres in 33 States/UTs spread across the country by the Food and Civil Supplies Department of the concerned State/UT. Retail and Wholesale prices of 22 essential food items is released every day by 5.00 P.M.

Prices Updated Daily

9.7 Based on the information provided by the reporting centres, prices of these items are brought out daily by the PMD. These commodity prices are available on the website of the Department which is updated daily. PMD also analyses the price situation and provides policy recommendations to manage price rise.

Meetings with Stakeholders

9.8 The role of State Government is vital to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities at fair prices in the larger public interest. One of the ways in which States/UTs may facilitate achievement of this objective is by holding regular meetings with the traders/dealers of the essential food items to get feedback on price and availability of these items from them (traders/dealers) and impress upon them the need to desist from hoarding, speculative trading, profiteering, unfair and illegal trade practices like cartelling. In this context, all the States/UTs have been requested to hold regular meetings with stakeholders of essential food items at the State and district levels.

Limit on Stock

9.9 As per Cabinet Decision, Central Govt. has issued Order G.S.R. 929(E) dated 29th September, 2016 and merged all the relevant Orders and allowed any dealer may freely buy, stock, sell, transport, distribute, dispose, acquire, use or consume, any quantity of wheat, wheat products (namely maida, rava, suji, atta, resultant atta and bran) paddy, rice, coarsegrains, gur, hydrogenated vegetable oils or vanaspati, onions, edible oilseeds, edible oils, pulses and sugar and potato and shall not require a permit or license therefore, under any order issued under the Act, save as

otherwise. In view of the rising prices of Onion, Government of India has imposed stock limit on Onion. Accordingly, wholesale traders may keep the stock of onion upto 250 quintals and for retail traders upto 20 quintals.

9.10 Besides the above higher MSP has been announced so as to incentivize production and thereby enhance availability of food items which may help moderate prices; Government maintains buffer stock of onion and pulses under Price Stabilisation Fund for making appropriate market interventions; and measures such as ban on export and reduction of import duty on specific commodities are taken to improve domestic availability for price stabilisation.

Review of Prices

9.11 The Ministry have stated in a written reply that in order to improve coverage and building a robust system for collection and reporting of prices, efforts are continuously being made by Department of Consumer Affairs to increase the number of Price Reporting centers across the country. Regular monitoring is done by way of organising workshop (regional, zone wise and State workshop), inter-alia, to review the prices, its authenticity and ensuring regularity of price reporting from each centre. Time to time field visits are also being undertaken by officers of the Ministry whenever necessary.

Problems in Implementation of Scheme

9.12 Asked about the difficulty, if any, faced by the Government in the implementation of the scheme, the Department of Consumer Affairs stated as:

“Effective monitoring of retail & Wholesale of essential/ commodities prices is possible only with effective cooperation of States/UTs. While States have come forward to increase the number of Centres, it is sometimes seen that all centres do not report prices regularly and considerable follow up is required. Regular review and supervision of the price collection at these centres by State government officials will go a long way in improving the quality of this information which is vital for timely intervention decisions. An even wider spread of Centres would also help in broad basing and strengthening the price data. Since, Important policy decisions are taken on the basis of prices reported by State officials, States are requested to take necessary steps to ensure that:

1. State requires deploy dedicated human resources to collect daily prices.
2. All the existing centres in the State report the prices regularly and accurately following the methodology laid down.
3. States with relatively lower number of centres may set up additional centres for price reporting.
4. States may take steps to ensure that price data are submitted for seven days a week.
5. To ensure timely release of funds under the Central Scheme for 'Strengthening of Price Monitoring Mechanism' States have to provide details related to the Public Finance Management System (PFMS) and various Utilization Certificates of the grants released so that subsequent releases could be made for smooth functioning price monitoring centres. States may also send proposals in accordance with the revised Guidelines of the Scheme".

Plans for the year 2021-22

9.13 An amount of Rs. 2.00 crore is allocated for Strengthening of Price Monitoring Structure for the year 2021-22. With the fund the Department proposes to undertake the following activities:

(₹ in lakhs)

Sr. No.	Head of Account	BE 2021-22
1	North East States*	20.00
2	Strengthening of PMC at States	130.00
3	Strengthening of PMC at Centre	50.00
(i)	Office Expenses	15.00
(ii)	Other Admn. Expenses	5.00
(iii)	Professional Expenses	20.00
(iv)	Information Technology(OE)	10.00
	Total PMC (1+2+3)	200.00

*10% mandatory allocation

9.14 The Department has plans to add 5 new price reporting centres during each quarter of the year, get services of atleast 1 independent professional organizations for studies related to price, conduct 5 Zonal Conference cum training and Market Visit for each of the 5 zones and support each Price Reporting Centres of states with engagement of 1 Data Entry Operator (DEO) and Handheld device. The Department also expects an increase in price reporting centres switching over to mobile app by 25% during the first quarter, 75% during the second quarter and 100% each during

the 3rd and 4th quarters of the the year 2021-22. Similarly, the analytical capability of officers of PMD, DoCA will be enhanced and data precision and validation ensured.

9.15 The Committee observe that out of the BE of Rs. 2.00 crore and RE of Rs. 1.00 crore for 2020-21, an expenditure of Rs. 0.27 crore has been incurred and the Department of Consumer Affairs has assured that entire Revised Estimated amount would be fully utilized. For the year 2021-22 and an amount of Rs. 2.00 crore has been allocated for Strengthening Price Monitoring Structure, both at the Centre and State levels. The Committee also note that regular monitoring is done by way of organising workshop (regional, zone wise and State workshop), *inter-alia*, to review the prices, its authenticity and ensuring regularity of price reporting from the 122 centres. Field visits are also being undertaken by officers of the Ministry from time to time, whenever necessary. The Committee are, however, concerned to note that while States have come forward to increase the number of Price Reporting Centres, it is sometimes seen that all centres do not report prices regularly and considerable follow up is required. The Committee are of the opinion that regular review and supervision of the price collection at these centres by State Government officials will go a long way in improving the quality of this information, which is vital for timely intervention decisions. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Government should utilize the allocated funds of Rs. 2.00 crore for the year 2021-22, in a most prudent manner and ensure that the States/UTs report prices regularly, accurately and from the widest range of centres. The Committee also recommend that the States/UTs may be reminded to exercise powers available as per relevant provisions of the law in the interests of the consumers. The Government should ensure that uniform price of essential commodities prevail across all the States in the country.

CHAPTER -X

PRICE STABILIZATION FUND

The Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) was set up with a corpus of Rs 500 crore to tackle price volatility in some agri-horticultural commodities viz. onion, potato and pulses to protect the interests of consumers. These commodities are to be procured from farmers/farmer's association at the time of harvesting and stored for regulated release during lean season to help bring down their prices. Such market intervention by Government would not only help send the appropriate market signal but also deter speculative/hoarding activities. To begin with, the Fund was to be used only for market interventions in case of perishable agri-horticultural commodities such as onion and potato which showed extreme volatility of prices. Subsequently, pulses were also covered. Under the PSF, interest free working capital advance is provided to Central Agencies, State/UT Governments/Agencies to undertake such market intervention operations. Apart from domestic procurement from farmers/wholesale mandis, imports may also be undertaken under PSF.

10.2 Budget allocation of ₹28,823 crore has been made to PSF corpus over 2014-19 to 2021-22. This fund was largely utilized for building the dynamic buffer of pulses. Details of funds are :

Rs. In Crore	
Financial year	BE/RE/AE
2014-15	50
2015-16	660
2016-17	6900
2017-18	3500
2018-19	1500
2019-20	1713
2020-21	11800
2021-22	2700

10.3 As per the Government's decision, the PSF was transferred to the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) w.e.f. 1st April, 2016. Price stabilization operations are determined at the Centre by the Central Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (PSFMC) which was reconstituted on transfer of Scheme

and is now headed by Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs. The Corpus Fund is managed by Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC). There is also a Sub-committee for investing surplus from PSF corpus chaired by Financial Adviser, M/o CA, F&PD. Till now, 49 meetings of the Re-constituted PSMFC have been held.

10.4 Creation of buffer stock of pulses has helped in moderating pulses prices for consumers which lead to consumer savings. Pulses from the buffer are being utilized for PDS distribution, in Mid-day Meal and in ICDS Scheme. In addition, pulses from the buffer are being utilized to meet the requirement of Army and Central Para-Military Forces. The stock is also utilized for releases in open market to effectively manage/moderate the prices of pulses.

10.5 During the year 2020-21, out of an allocation of Rs. 2000.00 crore at the BE stage and Rs. 11800.00 crore at the RE stage, the Department utilised an amount of Rs. 7798.00 crore.

Pulses Buffer

10.6 During 2020-21, no Procurement of pulses took place. However the Department has intimated about the transfer from Price Support Scheme (PSS), Department of Agriculture and Co-operation and Farmers' Welfare (DACFW) to PSF, Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) as:

Transfer of pulses from PSS to PSF		Quantity in MT
	2019-20	2020-21 (upto 31.01.2021)
Tur	4,35,031.99	3,99,888.96
Gram	2,86,770.71	-
Urad	2,69,331.84	-
Masur	98,817.66	-
Moong	1,49,040.67	99,820.10
	12,38,992.87 MT	4,99,709.06 MT

10.7 The Department also stated that the Government utilised during the years 2019-20 and 2020-21 amounts of Rs. 2198.30 crore and Rs. 7610.60 crore on transfer / procurement and differential claim in the operation of PSF respectively . As on 08.02.2021 a quantity of 3,92,539.50 MT of pulses is available in PSF buffer. The commodity-wise break-up of the pulses available in stock is as follows:

Commodity	Balance Stock(Qty. in MT)
1	2
Tur	2,45,604.48
Moong	50,865.95
Urad	89,095.64
Chana	1,256.92
Masur	5,716.52
Total	3,92,539.51 MT

{Reply to Q 15(a), P. 20-22 }

10.8 During the year 2021-22, the Department anticipates a procurement/transfer requirement of 9 LMT of pulses.

Onions Buffer

10.9 The Government has approximately 1281.85 MT of onion in stock. {Reply to Q 15(f), P. 23}. During the year 2020-21 the expenditure incurred on procurement of onions is 151.4039 crore details of quantities of onion procured, imported and lost due to spoilage during the years 2019-20 and 2020-21 as submitted by the Department is as follows:

Year	Commodity	Department	Procurement (MT)	Expenditure incurred(Rs.Lakh)	Quantity of Onion lost due to spoilage
					(MT)
2019-20	Onion (Rabi)	DOCA	57,372.94	10,020.14	9,305.75
2019-20	Onion (Kharif)	DOCA	914.98	537.21	-
2019-20	Imported onion Turkey	DOCA	15,372.74	6,387.61	1,854.65
2019-20	Imported onion Egypt	DOCA	5,758.30	2,520.97	-
2020-21	Onion (Rabi)	DOCA	98,740.59	13,823.22	26,637.81
2020-21	Onion (Kharif)	DOCA	104.24	49.22	-
2020-21	Imported onion	DOCA	2,975.25	1,267.95	-

Source: NAFED; Information on expenditure incurred for R-20, K-20 and Imported 20 received from branches on tentative basis.

10.10 For the year 2021-22, the Government accorded approval for procurement of 1.5 LMT Onion under PSF buffer during Rabi 2021 and storing 30,000 MT in Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage to minimise losses of Onions.

State Corpus Funds

10.11 In the States/UTs, the price stabilization operations are to be managed by the State level PSFMC and operated out of the State level Corpus Fund. Interest free advances from the PSF corpus may be made both to Central Agencies and to State level Corpus. The State level Corpus is created with a sharing pattern between Gol and State in the ratio of 50: 50, which is 75:25 in case the North Eastern States.

10.12 The Department has informed about release of fund for State level PSF as:

"Till date Department of Consumer Affairs has released fund to six State Government for setting up a State Level PSF. Details of released are as under:

State	Total PSF Fund requirement (₹ crore)	State's Share (₹ crore)	Centre's Share Released (₹ crore)		
			1st Instalment	2nd Instalment	Total
Andhra Pradesh	100	50	25 (2015-16)	25 (2017-18)	50
Telangana	18.31	9.15	4.575 (2015-16)	4.575 (2015-16)	9.15
West Bengal	10	5	2.50 (2015-16)	-	2.50
Odisha	100	50	25 (2018-19)	-	25
Tamil Nadu	10	5	2.50 (2019-20)	-	2.50
Assam	200	50	75 (2019-20)	-	75
Total Released					164.15

"

10.13 Asked about efforts made to convince States to set up State level PSF, the Department stated in a written reply furnished to the Committee that during National Consultation Meeting of Ministers of States/UTs in-charge of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs and in Zonal Conference regarding Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell at State/UTs, it urged State/UTs to create State/UTs level corpus.

Commodities Buffer

10.14 The Committee note that Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) was set up with an initial corpus of Rs. 500 crore to tackle inflationary trends of some agricultural commodities. The Committee also note that price stabilization operations are determined by the Central Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (CPSFMC), headed by Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, which has held 49 meetings so far. They further note that during the year 2020-21 an amount of Rs. 7798.00 crore has been utilized comprising, *inter alia*, of Rs. 7610.60 crore on transfer/procurement and differential claim on pulses and Rs. 151.4539 crore on Onions buffer. A quantity of 3,99,888.96 MT of tur and 99,820.10 MT of moong have been transferred from PSS to PSF. The Committee also note that as on 08.02.2021, a quantity of 3,92,539.50 MT of pulses and 1281.85 MT of Onion is available in PSF buffer. For the year 2021-22 the Department plans to procure/transfer 9 LMT of pulses and 1.5 LMT of Onion. The Committee are of the opinion that price fluctuation is a serious issue for consumers, especially to those belonging to irregular and low income groups. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Government should carry out market intervention operations with due diligence and sensitivity to the needs of consumers in various parts of the country.

Storage of Onions

10.15 The Committee note that damage of Rabi Onions has occurred and that Government has accorded approval for storage of 30,000 MT of Onions in Controlled Atmosphere (CA). The Committee also desire that as far as

possible Government should give emphasis on storage of Onions in Controlled Atmosphere especially in view of the nature of the commodity and prevailing weather condition.

State Level Corpus Fund

10.16 The Committee also note that State-level corpus funds are created with Centre-State sharing on 50:50 basis, which is 75:25 ratio in case of NE States. They also note that between the years 2015-16 to 2019-20 a total of Centre's share of Rs. 164.15 crore had been released for setting up of State Level Price Stabilisation Fund with Centre's share of Rs. 50.00 crore out of total fund requirement of Rs. 100.00 crore of Andhra Pradesh; Rs. 9.15 crore out of requirement of Rs. 18.31 crore of Telangana; Rs. 2.50 crore out of requirement of Rs 10.00 crore of West Bengal; Rs. 25 crore out of requirement of Rs. 100.00 crore of Odisha; Rs. 2.50 crore out of requirement of Rs. 10.00 crore of Tamil Nadu; and Rs. 75.00 crore out of requirement of Rs. 200 crore of Assam. The funds are meant to be used to tackle inflationary trends in commodities like onion, potatoes and pulses. At the same time the rest of the States have been urged by the Department of Consumer Affairs to set-up State/UT level PSF. The Committee recommend that the States/UT may be vigorously pursued to set up the Fund to tackle situations of scarcity in pulses, onions and other essential commodities. The Committee also desire that the Department of Consumer Affairs favourably respond to any requests or demands for such commodities received from the States/UTs.

CHAPTER - XI

CONSUMER WELFARE FUND

Central Consumer Welfare Fund

The Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) Rules were framed and notified in the Gazette of India in 1992, under the Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944 (1 of 1944) pursuant to its amendment in 1991. On enactment of the CGST Act, 2017, the Consumer Welfare Fund has been setup under section 57 thereof. Rule 97 of the CGST Rules, 2017 deals with the Consumer Welfare Fund. The money that is not refundable to the manufacturers etc. is credited to the Consumer Welfare Fund, to be utilized for the welfare of the consumers in accordance with the above Rules and Guidelines prepared thereunder.

11.2 Financial assistance from CWF is given to spread consumer awareness, promote the welfare of consumers and strengthen the consumer movement and also establish Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund at the State/UT level through sharing basis of Central and State share as decided from time to time; and Centre for Consumer Studies, IIPA. During the year 2020-21 an amount of Rs. 150000/- to Sudha, Odisha for Protection & Promotion of Consumer Rights; Rs. 1992168/- to CERC, Ahmedabad for Insight Magazine (Grahak Sathi); Rs. 754899/- to IIPA, New Delhi for NCH; and Rs. 784000/- to Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Tamil Nadu for Establishing Chair of Excellence on Consumer Law and Jurisprudence have been provided.

11.3 A sum of Rs. 496.9474 crore was available in the Consumer Welfare Fund as on 31.01.2020. Of this balance, a budget provision of Rs. 261.00 crore has been provided during the financial year 2020-21.

11.4 Out of amount of Rs. 261.00 crore allocated for the year 2020-21 an amount of Rs. 0.37 crore has been utilised. For the year 2021-22 the allocation is Rs. 263.50 crore.

Consumer Welfare Fund in States

11.5 In order to strengthen the Consumer Welfare Fund in all the States/UTs further, in the year 2010 it was decided that States/UTs which are willing to establish a corpus fund of Rs. 10.00 Crore will be supported by the Central Government by contributing 75% of that amount as Central share from the Central Consumer Welfare Fund. The State/UT Government to become eligible to receive the one time grant should deposit their share in a non-plan, non-lapsable public account. State/UT Government may draw up their own guidelines for administering this Fund, which should not be inconsistent with the Central guidelines.

11.6 In the year 2003, all the States/UTs were impressed upon to set up a Consumer Welfare Fund at the State level, so that voluntary efforts for promoting the consumer movement could be strengthened at grass root level through financial support. The ratio of sharing is 75:25 by the Centre and State (90:10 in the case of Special Category States/UTs) for Corpus Fund of Rs. 20.00 crore (enhanced from Rs. 10.00 crore). With the help of Government of India Consumer Welfare Fund has been set up in 16 States/UTs viz. Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Nagaland, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, Jharkhand, Telangana, Rajasthan, Sikkim & Mizoram. After enactment of the concerned State Goods and Services Tax Act, Consumer Welfare Fund has been established by the State Governments in their States under these Acts.

11.7 The details of States and amount of fund released to them for setting up of Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund, as submitted by the Department in a written reply is as follows:

(Rs. in Crore)		
S. No.	Name of States	Amount Released
1.	Andhra Pradesh	10.00
2.	Bihar	10.00
3.	Gujarat	10.00
4.	Haryana	10.00
5.	Jharkhand	10.00
6.	Karnataka	10.00
7.	Kerala	10.00

8.	Madhya Pradesh	10.00
9.	Nagaland	10.00
10.	Odisha	10.00
11.	Rajasthan	10.00
12.	Tamil Nadu	10.00
13.	Telangana	10.00
14.	West Bengal	20.00
15.	Sikkim	5.00
16.	Mizoram	2.00
Total		157.00

11.8 The Department of Consumer Affairs further intimated the Committee that letters from various levels have been sent to all States to create Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund in their States from time to time. They are also impressed upon for the same in various meetings organized by the Department of Consumer Affairs with the State Governments as well as by the officers of Department while visiting the States. The Department further stated in written reply that apart from States like Haryana, Jharkhand and Karnataka, the States/UT Administrations of Uttrakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra and Puducherry have also intimated the Department of Consumer Affairs in the Video Conferencing held on 07.12.2020 that they are interested in setting up of Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund in their States and they will submit the proposals in near future.

Utilization of CWF

11.9 The Committee note that for the year 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 261.00 crore had been earmarked for Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) where the money which is not refundable to the manufacturers, etc. is credited. The actual utilization of the allocated fund is, however, Rs. 0.37 crore which was given to 4 organisation/institutions. The Committee hope and expect that the financial allocation of Rs. 263.50 crore for the financial year 2021-22 would be utilized productively and optimally. The Committee desire that the Department should ensure that such institutions make utilization of the funds in a most productive manner, by insisting on Utilization Certificates (UCs) from them.

State Level Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund

11.10 The Committee also note that so far 16 States/UTs have set up State level Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund, with contribution of 75% from the Union Government and that States/UT Administrations like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Puducherry intimated their interest in setting up the Fund. The Committee are of the view that while the steps taken by the Government to convince the States/UTs to set up the Fund have yielded some results, the Committee are constrained to note that the growth pattern in the scenario is not satisfactory. Considering the urgent need to create consumer awareness and strengthening the consumer movement in the country, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Consumer Affairs should vigorously pursue and impress upon the remaining States/UTs to send proposals at the earliest. The

Committee also desire that proposals, once received, should be processed favourably to ensure setting up of the Consumer State Corpus Welfare Fund on priority.

**New Delhi
18 March, 2021
27 Phalguna ,1942 (Saka)**

**SUDIP BANDOPADHYAY
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Food,
Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution**

MINUTES OF THE TWELFTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2020-2021) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH, 2021

The Committee sat from 1600 hrs. to 1730 hrs. in Committee Room 'D', Ground Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Farooq Abdullah - Acting Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Girish Bhalchandra Bapat
3. Shri Shafiqur Rahman Barq
4. Ms. Pratima Bhoumik
5. Shri Anil Firojiya
6. Shri Rajendra Dhedya Gavit
7. Shri Bhagwant Mann
8. Shri Khagen Murmu
9. Shri Mitesh Rameshbhai (Bakabhai) Patel
10. Smt. Himadri Singh
11. Smt. Kavita Singh
12. Shri Ajay Misra Teni
13. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka

Rajya Sabha

14. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey
15. Dr. Fauzia Khan

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Pawan Kumar - Joint Secretary
2. Shri Lovekesh Kumar Sharma - Director
3. Shri Khakhai Zou - Additional Director

2. At the outset, the Committee were informed that due to certain exigencies, the Hon'ble Chairperson was not in a position to preside over the sitting of the Committee and were requested to choose one amongst themselves to preside over the day's sitting. Accordingly, the Members present chose Dr. Farooq Abdullah, MP (Lok Sabha) to preside over the sitting of the Committee for the day in terms of Rule 258(3) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

3. The Acting Chairperson then welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened to take oral evidence of the representatives of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) in connection with examination of the Demands for Grants (2021-22).

[The witnesses were then called in.]

SI No.	Name	Designation
1.	Ms. Leena Nandan	Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs
2.	Shri G. Srinivas	AS & FA
3.	Shri Pramod Kumar Tiwari	DG (BIS)
4.	Ms. Nidhi Khare	Additional Secretary
5.	Ms. Rupa Dutta	Sr. Economic Advisor
6.	Shri Anupam Mishra	Joint Secretary
7.	Shri Vineet Mathur	Joint Secretary
8.	Dr. Kamkhenthang Guite	Economic Advisor

3. The Hon'ble Acting Chairperson then welcomed the representatives of the Department of Consumer Affairs to the sitting and apprised them about Direction 55 (1) of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding confidentiality of the proceedings. Then, the representatives of Department of Consumer Affairs with the permission of Acting Chairperson made a power

point presentation highlighting functions of the Department, Achievements and Activities (2020-21), Consumer Grievance Redress Mechanism, Consumer Protection, Central Consumer Protection Authority, Price Monitoring, Price Stabilization Fund, CONFONET, Consumer Awareness (Publicity), Legal Metrology (LM), LM (Packaged Commodities) Rules, Time Dissemination (TD) Project, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), National Test House, The Essential Commodities Act, 1955, The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana and Atmanirbhar Bharat (ANB), Budget Allocation and Expenditure etc. The queries raised by the Hon'ble Chairperson and the Members on various issues during the course of discussion were responded to by the representatives of the Department.

4. The Hon'ble Acting Chairperson directed the representatives of the Department of Consumer Affairs to furnish written replies to the queries raised by the Members, which could not be responded to during the sitting of the Committee.

5. The Hon'ble Acting Chairperson then thanked the Secretary and other representatives of the Department of Consumer Affairs for their free and frank discussion.

[The *witnesses* then *withdrew*.]

A verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2020-2021) HELD ON THURSDAY, 18 MARCH, 2021

The Committee sat from 1000 hrs. to 1030 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Ground Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Ajay Misra Teni - Acting Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

2. Dr. Farooq Abdullah
3. Shri Girish Bhalchandra Bapat
4. Shri Shafiqur Rahman Barq
5. Ms. Pratima Bhoumik
6. Shri Anil Firojiya
7. Shri Rajendra Dhedya Gavit
8. Shri Bhagwant Mann
9. Shri Khagen Murmu
10. Shri Mitesh Rameshbhai (Bakabhai) Patel
11. Smt. Himadri Singh
12. Smt. Kavita Singh
13. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka

Rajya Sabha

14. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey
15. Dr. Fauzia Khan
16. Shri Rajmani Patel

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Pawan Kumar - Joint Secretary
2. Shri Lovekesh Kumar Sharma - Director
3. Shri Khakhai Zou - Additional Director

2. At the outset, the Committee were informed that due to certain exigencies, the Hon'ble Chairperson was not in a position to preside over the sitting of the Committee and were requested to choose one amongst themselves to preside over the day's sitting. Accordingly, the Members present chose Shri Ajay Misra Teni, MP (Lok Sabha) to preside over the sitting of the Committee for the day in terms of Rule 258(3) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

3. The Acting Chairperson then welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened for consideration and adoption of the two Draft Reports on Demands for Grants (2021-22) relating to the (i) XXXX XXXX XXXX, (ii) Department of Consumer Affairs under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution XXXX XXXXXXXX (i) XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX (ii) XXXXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXX.

3. Thereafter the Committee took up for consideration the following four Draft Reports :-

(i) XXXX XXXXX XXXX

(ii) The Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Department of Consumer Affairs;

(iii) XXXX XXXXX XXXX

(iv) XXXX XXXXX XXXX

4. After due discussion, the Committee adopted all the Draft Reports without any amendments/modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized the Acting Chairperson to finalize the aforesaid Draft Reports in the light of verbal and consequential changes and also in the light of factual verification from concerned Departments and also authentication of the Reports on behalf of the Committee for presentation of the same to Parliament during the current Budget Session.

6. XXXX XXXX XXXX

The Committee then adjourned.

XXX Matter does not relate to the Report