

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

FORTY THIRD REPORT

[Action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations made by the Committee in their Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) regarding delay in laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Science and Engineering Research Board]

(Presented on 10 August, 2021)



सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

August, 2021/ Sravana, 1943(Saka)

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COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE ON PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

(2020-2021)

Shri Ritesh Pandey

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Chairperson

MEMBERS

2. Shri Shafiqur Rahman Barq
3. Shri Margani Bharat
4. Dr. A. Chellakumar
5. Shri PallabLochan Das
6. Shri Chowdhury Mohan Jatua
7. ChoudharyMehboob Ali Kaiser
8. Dr. AmolRamsingKolhe
9. Shri Raja AmareshwaraNaik
10. Shri JamyangTseringNamgyal
11. Smt. AparupaPoddar
12. Shri T.N. Prathapan
13. Shri S. Ramalingam
14. Shri SaptagiriUlaka
15. Shri Ashok Kumar Yadav

SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Suman Arora - Joint Secretary
2. Smt. B. Visala - Director
3. Shri Munish Kumar Rewari - Additional Director
4. Shri Manjinder Pubbi - Under Secretary
5. Shri K.P. Kashyap - Assistant Committee Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, Chairperson of the Committee on Papers Laid on the Table, having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Forty Third Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee regarding the delay in laying the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Science and Engineering Research Board.

2. The Committee considered and adopted this Report at their sitting held on 22 July, 2021 and the extracts of the minutes of the sitting are given at Annexure.

3. For facility of reference, observations/recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI
July, 2021
Sarvana, 1943 (Saka)

Ritesh Pandey
Chairperson
Committee on Papers Laid on the Table
Lok Sabha

REPORT

This Report of the Committee deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations made by the Committee on Papers Laid on the Table in their Fifth Report (17th Lok Sabha) regarding the delay in laying the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB) which was presented to Lok Sabha on 20.03.2020.

2. The Action Taken Notes have since been received from the Government in respect of all the recommendations/observations contained in the aforesaid Report. Accordingly, the statement showing the action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the Fifth Report (17th Lok Sabha) are given in Appendix.

3. **The Committee in their Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) had pointed out the failure of the Ministry of Science and Technology (Department of Science and Technology) regarding the timely laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the SERB for the years 2013-14 to 2018-19 and had recommended that the documents of the SERB should be laid within the stipulated time in future.**

4. **The Committee appreciate that the Government has accepted all the recommendations of the Committee made in the said Report and has also taken effective steps for their implementation. The Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the SERB for the years 2011-2012 to 2016-2017 were laid with delays ranging from 03 to 28 months and for the year 2017-2018, the said documents were laid on the Table of the House almost within the stipulated time period. However, the Committee are dismayed to note that the documents for the year 2018-2019 which were required to be laid on the Table of the House within 9 months from the closure of the respective financial year, were laid on 22.09.2020 with the delay of about 09 months. The Committee firmly desire that the Ministry and SERB should strive to make concerted efforts to ensure timely laying of documents of the SERB in future.**

NEW DELHI
July, 2021
Sarvana, 1943 (Saka)

Ritesh Pandey
Chairperson
Committee on Papers Laid on the Table
Lok Sabha

STATEMENT SHOWING ACTION TAKEN ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS/
OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN THIS FIFTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE.

Science & Engineering Research Board
(Recommendation Serial No.12)

The Committee note that the Ministry of Science & Technology and Science & Engineering Research Board had not complied with the specific recommendations of the Committee in laying the requisite documents before the Parliament for the years 2011-2012 to 2015-2016. The Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the SERB for the years 2011-2012 to 2016-2017 were laid on the Table of the House with delays ranging from 03 months to 28 months. The Committee appreciate that the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts for the year 2017-18 were laid on the Table of the House almost within the stipulated time period. The Committee also note that the documents for the year 2018-2019 which are required to be laid on the Table of the House within 9 months from the closure of the respective financial year are not laid as yet.

Action Taken/Reply of the Department

In pursuance of above observations/recommendations, it is submitted that being at nascent stage, SERB, which was established by an Act of Parliament i.e. SERB Act, was initially facing multiple hardships for want of proper work force. However, Annual Reports and Audited Accounts for the years 2011-12 to 2015-16 in respect of SERB have already been laid on the table of the House of Parliament, after following all procedural requirements. The Annual Reports for the year 2016-17 were laid on the Table of the House on 04.04.2018. It is also submitted that the Annual Reports & Audited Accounts for the year 2017-18 were laid on the Table of the House almost within the stipulated time period, which has been appreciated by the Committee. This was possible only as Department of Science & Technology and the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) are making sincere efforts for preparing the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts as per time schedule and laying thereof on the Table of the House. It is also submitted that the laying of Annual Reports & Audited Accounts for the year 2018-19 was got delayed as the Final Report {Separate Audit Report (SAR)} from Comptroller and Auditor General of India (C&AG) was received on 16.12.2019.

Further, the Department has issued an advisory to Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) to strictly adhere to the time schedule/guidelines for submission of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts for laying the same on the table of the House on time, so that such delays do not occur in future (Annexure-I).

As the laying of Annual Report and Audited Accounts during the Winter Session was expected to be delayed, extension of time was sought from the Lok Sabha Secretariat vide Department of Science and Technology's OM No.AI/2/2/AR/2019, dated 30.12.2019 (Annexure II) and further extension was requested by this Department's OM No. AI/2/2/AR/2019 dated 15.04.2020 (Annexure-III).

The Annual Report & Audited Accounts along with review statement for the year 2018-19 could not be laid on the Table of the House during Budget Session due to curtailment of the Session in the year 2020, due to out-break of COVID-19 pandemic and the same has now been laid on the Table of the House on 22.09.2020.

(Department of Science & Technology O.M. No. AI/7/14/LS/SERB/2020 Dated 21.10.2020)

(Recommendation Serial No.13)

While examining the reasons for the delay in laying the document of the SERB, the committee note that the undue delay occurred in filling up the regular sanctioned posts. The Committee observed that handling of the SERB schemes and programmes on dual charge basis were the main reasons for the delay in laying the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts on the Table of the House. The Committee also note that the SERB took 3 years for filling up of the sanctioned posts and the resultant compilation of Annual Accounts for the aforesaid years was delayed abnormally. The Committee feel that such administrative/procedural delays could be avoided with proper planning and prompt monitoring. The Ministry of Science and Technology and SERB apparently did not do enough to prevent these delays, even though it was capable of doing so.

Action Taken/Reply of the Department

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) was established by an Act of Parliament i.e. The Science and Engineering Research Board Act, 2008 (No.9 of 2009). The provisions of Science and Engineering Research Board Act came into force w.e.f. 29th March 2010, as the Rules of SERB were notified in the Gazette Notification on 29th March, 2010. Action for framing of Recruitment Regulations for 20 scientific and 4 administrative posts was initiated and the same were notified on 24th April, 2014. Thereafter, action for recruitment was initiated in the month of June, 2014 and the selected candidates started joining w.e.f. 01.01.2015.

It may kindly be appreciated that appointment of personnel was made in complete compliance of statutory provisions contained in Act, Rule and Regulations and hence delay in filling up of the sanctioned posts resulting in abnormally delayed compilation of Annual Accounts for the aforesaid years, may kindly be attributed to accomplishment to procedural formalities.

However, it is ensured that henceforth there is no delay in laying of Annual Reports and Audited Accounts, due to shortage of manpower.

(Department of Science & Technology O.M. No. AI/7/14/LS/SERB/2020 Dated 21.10.2020)

(Recommendation Serial No.14)

The Committee was satisfied to note that the Ministry had strengthened its administrative structure and had given a time table to the SERB to complete all the tasks at each stage. The Committee suggested that the said time period should be strictly followed for completion of reports and accounts, so as to avoid any delay in laying of these documents within the stipulated time period in future.

Action Taken/Reply of the Department

In pursuance of above observations/recommendations, it is submitted that the Department of Science and Technology is issuing relevant instructions to the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) from time to time and pursuing it in right earnest, for completion of Annual Reports and Audited Accounts, so as to avoid any delay in laying of these documents within the stipulated time frame.

(Department of Science & Technology O.M. No. AI/7/14/LS/SERB/2020 Dated 21.10.2020)

(Recommendation Serial No.15)

The Committee also impress upon the Ministry that if due to any unavoidable reasons, the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the SERB could not be laid on the Table of the House within the stipulated time; a statement explaining the reasons as to why the requisite documents could not be laid within prescribed period should be laid on the Table of the House strictly within 30 days or as soon as the House meets, whichever is later.

Action Taken/Reply of the Department

With regard to above observations/recommendations, it is submitted that in case of delay in laying of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts in respect of SERB on the Table of the House within the stipulated time, a statement explaining the reasons as to why the requisite documents could not be laid within prescribed period, shall be invariably laid on the Table of the House strictly within 30 days or as soon as the House meets, whichever is later.

(Department of Science & Technology O.M. No. AI/7/14/LS/SERB/2020 Dated 21.10.2020)

EXTRACTS OF MINUTES OF THE NINTH SITTING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE (2020-2021)

The Committee sat on Thursday, 22nd July 2021 from 15:00 hrs to 16:30 hrs. in Committee Room 'B', Parliament House Annexe Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Ritesh Pandey - Chairperson

MEMBERS

2. Dr. A. Chellakumar
3. Shri Pallab Lochan Das
4. Shri Raja Amareshwara Naik
5. Shri S. Ramalingam
- 6.. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka

SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Suman Arora - Joint Secretary
2. Shri Munish Kumar Rewari - Additional Director
- 3 Smt. Manjinder Pubbi - Under Secretary

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2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members of the Committee to the sitting and explained the purpose of convening the meeting.

3. The Committee then took up for consideration two original draft Reports regarding delay in laying of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts of :-

- Action Taken by Government on the recommendations/observations made by the Committee in their Fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) regarding National Council for Teacher Education(NCTE), New Delhi; and
- Action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations made by the Committee in their Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) regarding delay in laying of the Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Science and Engineering Research Board.

4. After deliberations, the Committee adopted the two Action Taken Reports without modifications.

5. The Committee authorized the Hon'ble Chairperson to present both the Original and Action Taken Reports to the Parliament.

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The Committee then adjourned.