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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS
AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2021-2022)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

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

{Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the Tenth Report of the Committee (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) pertaining to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)}

FIFTEENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2021/Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

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(DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS)**

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 7.12.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 7.12.2021



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2021/ Agrahayana, 1943 (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. Shri Anil Firojiya
8. Shri Rajendra Dhedya Gavit
9. Shri Bhagwant Mann
10. Shri Khagen Murmu
11. Shri Mitesh Rameshbhai (Bakabhai) Patel
12. Shri Subrat Pathak
13. Smt. Himadri Singh
14. Smt. Kavita Singh
15. Shri Ganesan Selvam
16. Shri Nandigam Suresh
17. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka
18. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan
19. Shri Ve.Vaithilingam
20. Vacant
21. Vacant

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 (2021-2022) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Fifteenth Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations contained in the Tenth Report of the Committee (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs).

2. The Tenth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 19th March, 2021. The Government has furnished replies indicating Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the Report on 25th June, 2021.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 01 December, 2021.

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

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the Observations/Comments of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the text of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
01 December, 2021
10 Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

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

REPORT

CHAPTER – I

This Report of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution deals with the action taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations contained in the Tenth Report of the Committee (17th Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22), pertaining to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs)

1.2 The Tenth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 19th March, 2021. It contained 21 observations/recommendations. Action taken replies in respect of all the 21 observations/recommendations contained in the Report have been received and these have been categorized as follows:-

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

Para Nos.:- 2.9, 3.4, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28, 4.30, 5.7, 6.13, 6.14, 7.14, 7.15, 7.16, 7.17, 8.13, 10.14, 10.16, 11.10.

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

Para No.:- 9.15 and 10.15.

- (iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee -

Para No.:- 4.29.

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

Para No. :- 11.9

1.3 The Committee desire that action taken notes on the Recommendations/Observations contained in Chapter I and final replies in respect of recommendations for which only interim replies have been given by the Government, should be furnished to the Committee expeditiously.

1.4 The Committee emphasize that utmost importance should be given to the implementation of Recommendations/Observations accepted by the government. In case where it is not possible for the Government to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit for any reason, the matter should be reported to Committee in time with reasons for non-implementation.

A. BUDGET UTILIZATION

Recommendation No. 1 (Para No 2.9)

1.5 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.6 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“All the necessary efforts will be made to ensure that funds allocated will be judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality. The Department will closely monitor the progress of implementation and will make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised. Also, for monitoring of the schemes, Monthly Expenditure Plan (MEP), Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) and Output Outcome Monitoring Framework are reviewed periodically.

Price Stabilisation Fund(PSF)

The Price Stabilization Fund had an RE allocation of Rs 11800 cr during the financial year. An amount of Rs 11135.30 cr was spent for stabilization of prices of pulses and onions. Therefore, 94.37% of the budget allocation was utilized for creation of buffer stocks for pulses and onions. These stocks were created to cool down the prices of pulses and onions in lean season and support the consumers. The monitoring of prices and buffer stocks of pulses and onions is regularly undertaken in the Department and adequate funds are pledged for creation of buffer stocks based on market conditions.

Consumer Awareness

For consumer awareness activities, Department had received RE allocations amounting to Rs 42.5 crores and Rs 42.25 cr were utilized out of the budget allocated. Therefore 99.4% of the revised estimates were utilized for awareness activities. Although the budget under "Consumer Awareness" scheme for FY 2020-21 was almost completely utilised, the Department has noted the recommendations of the Committee and all possible efforts will be made for monitoring utilization of funds. Department pursues with States/UTs to submit proposals for release of Grant – in- Aids with adequate utilization reports and justifications to increase consumer awareness activities.

Consumer Protection

CPU Division pursued with State governments through letters and VC for

- (i) getting themselves registered on PFMS for allocation of funds.
- (ii) furnishing UCs for the grants already received by them
- (iii) submitting complete proposals in the prescribed proforma for funds alongwith required enclosures

The final Report (after incorporating the evaluation of Consumer Protection Cell which was left out an addendum) was received on 24.3.21 from NPC. Soon after, sanction order for release of final instalment was issued on 26.03.2021 and payment was released on 31.03.2021.

Legal Metrology

It is to submit that out of the BE of Rs. 35 crore and RE of Rs. 15.21 crore the AE was Rs. 13.30 crore, which is 87.44% of the RE for the year 2020-21.

Further, an amount of Rs. 1.05 crore out of RE of Rs. 15.21 crore was re-appropriated for time dissemination project to fulfil the immediate requirement of NICS I to procure the Routers, etc. for the said project for RRSLs.

With regard to the position of strengthening of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi under the Scheme "Strengthening of RRSLs & IILM, Ranchi" the maintenance of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing exercise, based on the requirement of the Laboratory or IILM, Ranchi. However, during the previous Financial Year no funds for Minor Works of IILM, Ranchi were requested by IILM, Ranchi, as it was completed during 2018-19 at an approximate cost of Rs. 45.0 Lakhs by CPWD, Ranchi. Hence, the Minor works/ maintenance of Civil and Electrical Works of RRSLs/ IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing process as per requirement of offices.

The State Legal Metrology Departments will be strengthened by providing computers with printers and laptops etc. during this year 2021-22 through RITES. The Grant in Aid will also be released to States for construction of laboratory buildings. The officers will be trained at institutes of National and International Repute.

All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the major construction projects and maintenance of such laboratories are completed at the earliest possible time. The procurement of equipment will also be done at the earliest.

Bureau of Indian Standards

With regard to National System for Standardization (NSS), it is submitted that the NSS Scheme has been discontinued beyond 31 March 2021. As the NSS Scheme ceases to exist, no further action is required to be taken in respect of Scheme for National System for Standardization

With regard to the Hallmarking Scheme, it is informed that Setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres has been delayed due to Covid-19 Pandemic situation in the country. BIS is regularly following up with the Assaying & Hallmarking Centres for early setup.

Consumer Welfare Fund

In respect of non scheme funds, it is submitted that Consumer Welfare Fund had a component of funds which is transferred to Ministry of Finance for GST activities and advertising and initially forms part of CWF non lapsable non scheme expenditure. Therefore, an amount of Rs 226 crores was not to be utilized from the establishment expenditure and was to transferred to Central Board of indirect taxes. The fund could only be transferred after receipt of authorizations and due accounts, which has since been completed."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

1.7 The Committee recommended in their original report that the Government should make up for the poor performance of spending 65.07 per cent of the Revised Estimate of the year 2020-21, by constant monitoring of the performance under each and every project/scheme/proposal during the financial year 2021-22. In its reply, the Department has stated that it would make all the necessary efforts to ensure that funds allocated are judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality, would closely monitor the progress of implementation and would make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised. The Department has also stated that Monthly Expenditure Plan (MEP), Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) and Output Outcome Monitoring Framework have been reviewed periodically. Regarding Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF), the Department has stated that 94.37% of the budget allocation was utilized for creation of buffer stocks, which is done to cool down the prices of pulses and onions in lean season and support the consumers. As regards consumer awareness, the Department has intimated spending of 99.4 per cent of the Revised Estimates. Regarding Consumer Protection the Department has intimated that the CPU Division pursued with State Governments through letters and Video Conferencing for (i) getting themselves registered on Public Financial Management System for allocation of funds; (ii) furnishing Utilisation Certificates for the grants already received by them; and (iii) submitting complete proposals in the prescribed proforma for funds along with required enclosures. With regard to the Legal Metrology, the Department has stated that an expenditure of 87.44 per cent of Revised Estimates was incurred. As regards the Bureau of Indian Standards, the Department of Consumer Affairs has stated that the National System for Standardization (NSS) has been discontinued beyond 31 March, 2021. The Department has also stated that setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres were delayed due to Covid-19 Pandemic situation and that BIS regularly follows up with the centres for early set up. In respect of Consumer Welfare Fund, the Department has intimated that a proportion of

the fund meant to be transferred to Ministry of Finance could be done after receipt of authorizations. The Committee are not convinced with the reply of the Government on the reasons for poor performance. Concrete and meticulous planning and monitoring by the Department at the right stage could have helped avert the undesirable results/position. It is the opinion of the Committee that lack of proper planning at the right stage resulted in spending about 63 per cent of the RE. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Department of Consumer Affairs get the projects completed by productive utilization of the allocated funds. As regards the issue of discontinuation of the National Scheme for Standardisation (NSS) mentioned by the Department in action taken reply to this recommendation, the same is not consistent with reply given on specific recommendation on NSS. This is a serious issue which needs immediate clarification by the Department.

B. NEED FOR EFFICIENT EXECUTION OF SCHEMES

Recommendation No. 2 (Para No 3.4)

1.8 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.9 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“ Legal Metrology:

Sir, the funds provided in RE during this financial year 2020-21 were sufficient as the procurement of equipments for the project of time dissemination could not be started by National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in coordination with ISRO and therefore, funds will only be required during next Financial Year 2021-21 when the procurement of equipment will start.

However, all the necessary efforts will be made to ensure that funds allocated for procurement of equipment, construction of laboratory buildings and capacity building of Legal Metrology Officers of States/ UTs/ UOI will be judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality.

The Department will closely monitor the progress of implementation and will make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised.

Consumer Protection

Department of Expenditure has prescribed that the State Govt. should get registered on PFMS in respect of the schemes of the Department before release of Funds. As such, Department had pursued with the States/UTs vide letters dated 31.08.2020 and 04.11.2020 and thorough VCs to ensure that the above requirements are completed so that funds could be released to the States/UTs.

The Department of Consumer Affairs issued sanction Order worth Rs 2.66 Crores (Out of the RE of Rs. 2.66 Crores). But funds amounting to Rs 1.17 Crores only could be released as only 4 States/UTs registered on PFMS. Remaining Rs.1.49 crores could not be released as they did not register the Scheme on PFMS.

The Department had also approached the Ministry of Finance for relaxation of the condition of registration on PFMS portal vide letter dated 24.02.2021 which was not agreed to by the Ministry of Finance.

Bureau of Indian Standards:

With regard to National System for Standardization (NSS), it is submitted that the NSS Scheme has been discontinued beyond 31 March 2021. As the NSS Scheme ceases to exist, no further action is required to be taken in respect of Scheme for National System for Standardization

With regard to the Hallmarking Scheme, it is informed that Setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres has been delayed due to Covid-19 Pandemic situation in the country. BIS is regularly following up with the Assaying & Hallmarking Centres for early setup.

National Test House

The National Test House is focusing on improvement of its scientific testing infrastructure and is therefore efficiently improving its machinery and equipment spending, improvements in IT and physical infrastructure by utilizing the budgetary allocations.”

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

1.10 The Committee in their Original Report on Demands for Grants urged the Department to give topmost priority to efficient execution of the schemes under Consumer Protection and Legal Metrology and Quality Assurance. In reply, the Department has stated that the funds provided for Legal Metrology in RE during the financial year 2020-21 were sufficient as the procurement of equipments for the project of time dissemination could not be started by National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in coordination with ISRO and therefore, funds would only be required during the Financial Year 2021-22 when the procurement of equipment would start, that all the necessary efforts will be made to ensure that funds allocated for procurement of equipment, construction of laboratory buildings and capacity building of Legal Metrology Officers of States/ UTs/ UOI would be judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality and that the Department would closely monitor the progress of implementation and would make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised. Regarding Consumer Protection, the Department has intimated that Department of Expenditure had prescribed that the State Govt. should be got registered on PFMS in respect of the schemes of the Department before release of Funds due to which the Department had pursued with the States/UTs vide letters dated 31.08.2020 and 04.11.2020 and thorough VCs to ensure that the above requirements are completed so that funds could be released to the States/UTs. The reply also stated that the Department of Consumer Affairs issued sanction Order worth Rs 2.66 Crores (Out of the RE of Rs. 2.66 Crores) but funds amounting to Rs 1.17 Crores only could be released as

only 4 States/UTs registered on PFMS. Remaining Rs.1.49 crores could not be released as they did not register the Scheme on PFMS. The Department has also intimated having approached the Ministry of Finance for relaxation of the condition of registration on PFMS portal vide letter dated 24.02.2021 which was not agreed to. Regarding Bureau of Indian Standards the Department has stated in the reply that the National System for Standardization (NSS), had been discontinued beyond 31 March 2021 and as such no further action was required to be taken in respect of the Scheme. This needs to be clarified in the light of reply to specific recommendation on the issue of NSS. With regard to the Hallmarking Scheme, the Department has intimated that BIS is regularly following up with the Assaying & Hallmarking Centres for early set up. As regards the National Test House (NTH) the Department has stated that the NTH is focusing on improvement of its scientific testing infrastructure and is, therefore, efficiently improving its machinery and equipment spending, improvements in IT and physical infrastructure by utilizing the budgetary allocations. The Committee strongly recommend that the Department should get the schemes implemented in the most efficient and speedy manner.

C. NEED FOR HIGHER DISPOSAL OF CASES

Recommendation No. 4, (Para No 4.27)

1.11 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.12 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“The Committee recommendation regarding devising system for online submission of proposals from State/UTs under SCF scheme has been noted. As regards declining rate of disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions, the same may be attributed to vacancies of Presidents and Members in various State Commissions and District Commissions as well as frequent adjournments. As per the provisions of Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of State Govts. to fill up the vacancies in State/District Consumer Commissions. Central Govt. has taken up time and again with the State Govts. to fill up the vacancies in Consumer Commissions of their respective States.”

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

1.13 The Committee recommended in their original report that the Union Government should facilitate submission of application online for Strengthening Consumer Forum and regularly update the level of sophistication of the system and also required aggrieved consumers approaching the consumer commissions, which suffer from declining rate of disposal of cases, to specify whether they have exhausted their options in the Consumer Helplines. The Department has stated in its reply that the recommendation has been noted and that the declining rate of disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions is due to vacancies of Presidents and Members in various State Commissions and District Commissions as well as frequent adjournments. According to the Department, it is the responsibility of State Governments to fill up the vacancies in State/District

Consumer Commissions. The Committee is not satisfied with the reply. The Department had been urged to ensure a simple procedural improvement of requiring the aggrieved consumer to spell out whether she/he had exhausted the options in consumer helplines. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the Department should take effective steps for addressing the grievances of the aggrieved consumers and resolving their cases expeditiously.

D. NEED TO OPEN STATE CONSUMER HELPLINES

Recommendation No. 6 (Para No 4.29)

1.14 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.15 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“Uttar Pradesh have furnished Utilizations Certificates(UC) for full amount against the funds released during the year 2018-19 and 2019-20. As regards Govt. of Rajasthan, out of ₹27.24 lakhs released during 2018-19, UC for amount of ₹19.58 lakhs have been received and UC for only ₹7.66 lakhs is pending. Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has been sanctioned an amount of Rs. 37.78 lakhs in 2020-21, therefore it has time to submit utilization certificate upto 31.03.2022. Recently the letters were sent on 30.03.2021 to concerned State/UT Govts. for furnishing of Utilization Certificates under State Consumer Helpline Scheme. As regards proposal for grants under SCH scheme to the States which have not availed this

grant so far such as Delhi, Goa and Ladakh, it is submitted that already six Zonal Consumer Helplines have been made functional which caters to various geographical regions and in regional languages of these regions, apart from NCH, which responds in English and Hindi.”

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

1.16 The Committee, in their original report urged the Department to vigorously pursue with 3 States of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to furnish Utilization Certificates in respect of grants under State Consumer Helpline Scheme (SCH) and apprise them the outcome thereof at the earliest, and persuade the States/UTs of Bihar, Nagaland and Puducherry to make the Helplines functional and Delhi, Goa and Ladakh to use the facility of Grant-in-aid under the SCH Scheme. In reply, the Department has stated that Uttar Pradesh had furnished Utilization Certificates (UC) for full amount against the funds released during the years 2018-19 and 2019-20, that Governments of Rajasthan has furnished UCs of just a portion of the fund and that letters were sent on 30.03.2021 to concerned State/UTs for furnishing of UCs under State Consumer Helpline Scheme. As regards proposal for grants under SCH scheme to the States/Union Territories which have not availed this grant so far such as Delhi, Goa and Ladakh, the Department has stated that six Zonal Consumer Helplines, which are already functional, cater to various geographical regions and in regional languages of these regions, apart from NCH, which responds in English and Hindi. It may be stated that the six ZCHs, that are functioning, are at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kolkata and Patna. The Committee are not satisfied with the reply furnished by the Department. They are of the opinion that the State of Rajasthan needs to be pursued for furnishing UCs vigorously. As regards the cases of States/UTs of Delhi, Goa and Ladakh which have not sought funds under the SCH Scheme, the Committee are not convinced with the contention of the Department that the existing ZCHs would cater to them efficiently, at least

as regards the UT of Ladakh, residents of which might not understand either English or Hindi. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that States/UTs that have not sought funds under SCH Scheme, should be persuaded to utilise the facility of Grant-in-aid under the Scheme.

E . ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR AWARENESS.

Recommendation No. 8 (Para No 5.7)

1.17 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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, docket 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.”

1.18 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“Catchy creatives on specific topics (including online fraud) for protecting the interests of the consumers are uploaded on social media platforms of the Department. Also, audio-visual creatives on Consumer Protection Act, 2019 produced by the Department have been shared with States / UTs for dissemination. The rest of the recommendations have been duly noted and follow-up with the States will be ensured.”

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

1.19 The Committee in their Original Report recommended 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. In reply thereto, the Department has stated that the recommendation has been duly noted and follow-up with the States would be ensured without indicating if any effort has been made in this regard. The Committee are not satisfied with this monotonous reply and, therefore, desire that the States and Union Territory Administrations should be specifically asked to allocate a certain proportion of their annual budget to the respective Consumer Affairs Department for spreading consumer rights awareness, which is consistent with the objectives of the Consumer Affairs Department of the Union Government.

F. NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR STANDARDISATION

Recommendation No. 11 (Para No 7.14)

1.20 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.21 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) implemented the National System for Standardization (NSS). BIS has till date formulated 21901 standards. BIS intends to review 3380 existing ISs and formulate 1438 ISs (new & revision) during the year 2021-22. While formulating new Indian Standards efforts are made to ensure that these are aligned, to the extent possible, with relevant International Standards so as to achieve better integration of India with the world in trade and commerce. So far, out of 7848 Indian Standards (IS) having corresponding international standards, 6631 ISs are harmonized with corresponding international standards.”

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1.22 The Committee in their original report had recommended that utmost care should be taken in regard to formulation of new Indian Standards (IS) so as to achieve better integration of India with the world in trade and commerce. In reply the Department has stated that Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) which implemented the National System for Standardization (NSS), has till date formulated 21901 standards, intends to review 3380 existing ISs and formulate 1438 ISs (new & revision) during the year 2021-22. The Department has also intimated that while formulating new Indian Standards efforts are made to ensure that these are aligned, to the extent possible, with relevant International Standards so as to achieve better integration of India with the world in trade and commerce. The Department has further stated that so far, out of 7848 IS having corresponding international standards, 6631 ISs have been harmonized with corresponding international standards. While appreciating the increase in the figure of standards being harmonised with international standard by 66 (the figure was 6565 in March, 2021), the Committee have also seen replies of the Department to the recommendations on the issues of “Budget

Utilization” and “Need for Efficient Execution of Schemes” wherein it has been stated that that the National System for Standardisation has been discontinued beyond 31st March, 2021. The Committee, therefore, demand immediate clarification of the matter.

G. NEED FOR SETTING UP OF ASSAYING AND HALLMARKING CENTRES

Recommendation No. 12 (Para No 7.15)

1.23 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.24 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“Completion of setting up of A&H Centres by the 44 eligible applicants by the month of April, 2021 would be ensured.”

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1.25 The Committee in their report on Demands for Grants (2021-22) which was presented during the Budget Session of Parliament, had expressed their desire for completion of setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres (AHC) by the 45 eligible applicants, whose applications had been given a go ahead on 9 October, 2020. The Ministry has stated in its reply furnished in the month of June, 2021 that completion of setting up of AHCs by the 44 eligible applicants by the month of April, 2021 would be ensured. The

Committee are anguished and take serious view of the fact that the Ministry had not taken the Committee seriously and furnished one line reply which is factually incorrect. Even the case of 1 eligible applicant among the 45 has been omitted in the reply. The Committee, therefore, reprimand the Ministry to not take their considered view lightly in future and furnish the factual status of the case of setting up of AHCs urgently considering the fact that mandatory hallmarking of jewellery has already been enforced with effect from June 15, 2021.

H. NEED TO SETTLE PENDING CASES.

Recommendation No. 14 (Para No 7.17)

1.26 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.27 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the period from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of cases decided by the Hon’ble Courts was low. The number of total criminal complaints filed in various courts all over India till 25 April 2021 is 47 for misuse of the Hallmark (violation of the provisions of the BIS Act, 2016). The number of pending criminal complaints in the Courts is 25 as on 25 April 2021. It is to mention that in case of complaints filed by the Bureau for misuse of hallmark, the conviction rate is cent percent.”

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1.28 The Committee, in their report presented in March, 2021, urged the Ministry/BIS to closely monitor and make concerted efforts to ensure that there is speedy settlement of the 21 (out of the 45) cases pending with regard to violation of BIS Hallmarking Regulations, 2018. The Ministry in its reply has stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the period from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of cases decided by the Hon'ble Courts was low, that the number of total criminal complaints filed in various courts all over India till 25 April 2021 is 47 for misuse of the Hallmark (violation of the provisions of the BIS Act, 2016) and the number of pending criminal complaints in the Courts is 25 as on 25 April 2021 and that in case of complaints filed by the Bureau for misuse of hallmark, the conviction rate is cent per cent. In the opinion of the Committee, even if conviction rate is cent per cent, the aggrieved party would have suffered as long as cases are delayed. The Committee, therefore, recommend that priority should be given for early settlement of cases filed as also appeal cases.

I. NEED FOR EARLY COMPLETION OF PROJECTS IN NATIONAL TEST HOUSE.

Recommendation No. 15 (Para No 8.13)

1.29 The Committee in their Original Report observed/recommended as follows:-

“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.”

1.30 The Ministry in its action taken reply has stated as under:-

“GCMS has been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai. Three(3) Ion Chromatographs have been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai, NTH(NR) Ghaziabad and NTH(NWR) Jaipur respectively. During the year 2020-21 a demand for authorization for Rs.0.82 Crore was sent to DoCA on 11.09.2020 as requested by CPWD(SZ) and probably due to paucity of fund the same may not have been authorised so far. With final authorization of above fund the project will be completed in all respect. Out of total allocation of Rs. 23.50 crore for the year 2021-22, 7.6 crores 25 have been allocated for procurement of Machinery and Equipments. 2 Nos AAS [for NTH(WR) and NTH(NWR)], FTIR [NTH(NR)], UTM & FTM, [for NTH(ER)], Shearing Bridge [for NTH(NR)], Microwave Digester [for NTH(NWR)] & UTM [for NTH(ER)], Impulse Voltage Generator [for NTH(SR)] are proposed for procurement. Furthermore, many small equipments and machineries have been initiated for procurement to fill up the gap in testing, through the financial powers of regional centers of NTH. Rs. 2.5 Crore has been utilized under head Minor Works(Scheme) for the f.y 2020-21. For f.y 2021-22 Rs.4 Crores have been allocated under head Minor Works. The fund will be utilized towards Regular Maintenance of all regional office buildings, AMC and Calibration of Equipments. Rs. 0.65 Crore has been utilized under head Information Technology for the f.y 2020-21. All the old and obsolete devices (Router, Firewall, Core/LAN Distribution Switches etc) declared by its OEM have been replaced with new active components which are at present under warranty coverage. The internet band width of all six Regions of NTH has been upgraded to 6 mbps during Oct-Nov 2020. Among of the five existing servers (Application, DB1, DB2, Webserver and Mail Server), the Webserver and Mail Server have already been shifted to NIC Meghraj cloud and deployment of MIS Application servers to cloud is in progress. Deployment of Application & Database servers to NIC Cloud will take place after development of New MIS Application with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) feature for issuing test and calibration certificates. The process of implementation of e-office has been initiated through correspondence with NIC.”

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1.31 The Committee in their original report urged 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. The Government has in its reply stated that Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) has been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai. The Department has also stated that three(3) Ion Chromatographs have been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai, NTH(NR) Ghaziabad and NTH(NWR) Jaipur respectively. The reply has also stated that during the year 2020-21 a demand for authorization for Rs.0.82 Crore was sent to Department of Consumer Affairs on 11.09.2020 as requested by CPWD(SZ) and probably due to paucity of fund the same may not have been authorised so far and that with final authorization of above fund the project would be completed in all respect. The Department has further stated that out of total allocation of Rs. 23.50 crore for the year 2021-22, Rs. 7.6 crores have been allocated for procurement of Machinery and Equipments, 2 Nos AAS [for NTH(WR) and NTH(NWR)], FTIR [NTH(NR)], UTM & FTM, [for NTH(ER)], Shearing Bridge [for NTH(NR)], Microwave Digester [for NTH(NWR)] & UTM [for NTH(NER)], Impulse Voltage Generator [for NTH(SR)] are proposed for procurement. The Department has further stated that many small equipments and machineries have been initiated for procurement to fill up the gap in testing, through the financial powers of regional centres of NTH, that Rs. 2.5 Crore had been utilized under head Minor Works (Scheme) for the FY 2020-21, that the amount of Rs. 4 crores allocated for the FY 2021-22 under head Minor Works would be utilized towards Regular Maintenance of all regional office buildings, AMC and Calibration of Equipments. The reply has also further stated that Rs. 0.65

crore has been utilized under head Information Technology for the FY 2020-21, that all the old and obsolete devices (Router, Firewall, Core/LAN Distribution Switches etc.) declared by its OEM have been replaced with new active components which are at present under warranty coverage, that the internet band width of all six Regions of NTH has been upgraded to 6 mbps during October-November 2020. Further the Department has also intimated the Committee that among the five existing servers (Application, DB1, DB2, Webserver and Mail Server), the Webserver and Mail Server have already been shifted to NIC Meghraj cloud and deployment of MIS Application servers to cloud is in progress, that deployment of Application & Database servers to NIC Cloud would take place after development of New MIS Application with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) feature for issuing test and calibration certificates and that the process of implementation of e-office has been initiated through correspondence with NIC. While the Committee's recommendation with regard to procurement of Ion Chromatograph & Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) and upgradation of hardware and band width has been complied with, the case of procurement of Impulse Generator for NTH (SR), Chennai is still gloomy and upgradation of software is still in progress. The Committee desire that the case of procurement of Impulse Generator should be taken at the highest level with a view to iron out problems in the way and early functioning of the facility. They also recommend that software upgradation should be completed at the earliest.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation No. 1 (Para No 2.9)

2.1 “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”.

Reply of the Government

2.2 “All the necessary efforts will be made to ensure that funds allocated will be judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality. The Department will closely monitor the progress of implementation and will make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised. Also, for monitoring of the schemes, Monthly Expenditure Plan (MEP), Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) and Output Outcome Monitoring Framework are reviewed periodically.

Price Stabilisation Fund(PSF) The Price Stabilization Fund had an RE allocation of Rs 11800 cr during the financial year. An amount of Rs 11135.30 cr was spent for stabilization of prices of pulses and onions. Therefore, 94.37% of the budget allocation was utilized for creation of buffer stocks for pulses and onions. These stocks were created to cool down the prices of pulses and onions in lean season and support the consumers. The, monitoring of prices and buffer stocks of pulses and onions is regularly undertaken in the Department and adequate funds are pledged for creation of buffer stocks based on market conditions.

Consumer Awareness

For consumer awareness activities, Department had received RE

allocations amounting to Rs 42.5 crores and Rs 42.25 cr were utilized out of the budget allocated. Therefore 99.4% of the revised estimates were utilized for awareness activities. Although the budget under "Consumer Awareness" scheme for FY 2020-21 was almost completely utilised, the Department has noted the recommendations of the Committee and all possible efforts will be made for monitoring utilization of funds. Department pursues with States/UTs to submit proposals for release of Grant – in- Aids with adequate utilization reports and justifications to increase consumer awareness activities.

Consumer Protection

CPU Division pursued with State governments through letters and VC for

- (i) getting themselves registered on PFMS for allocation of funds.
- (ii) furnishing UCs for the grants already received by them
- (iii) submitting complete proposals in the prescribed proforma for funds alongwith required enclosures

The final Report (after incorporating the evaluation of Consumer Protection Cell which was left out an addendum) was received on 24.3.21 from NPC. Soon after, sanction order for release of final instalment was issued on 26.03.2021 and payment was released on 31.03.2021.

Legal Metrology

It is to submit that out of the BE of Rs. 35 crore and RE of Rs. 15.21 crore the AE was Rs. 13.30 crore, which is 87.44% of the RE for the year 2020-21. Further, an amount of Rs. 1.05 crore out of RE of Rs. 15.21 crore was re-appropriated for time dissemination project to fulfil the immediate requirement of NICSI to procure the Routers, etc. for the said project for RRSLs. With regard to the position of strengthening of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi under the Scheme "Strengthening of RRSLs & IILM, Ranchi" the maintenance of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing exercise, based on the requirement of the Laboratory or IILM, Ranchi. However, during the previous Financial Year no funds for Minor Works of IILM, Ranchi were requested by IILM, Ranchi, as it was completed during 2018-19 at an approximate cost of Rs. 45.0 Lakhs by CPWD, Ranchi. Hence, the Minor works/ maintenance of Civil and Electrical Works of RRSLs/ IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing process as per requirement of offices. The State Legal Metrology Departments will be strengthened by providing computers with printers and laptops etc. during this year 2021-22 through RITES. The Grant in Aid will also be released to States for construction of laboratory buildings. The officers will be trained at institutes of National and International Repute. All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the major construction projects and maintenance of such laboratories are completed at the earliest possible time. The procurement of equipment will also be done at the earliest.

Bureau of Indian Standards

With regard to National System for Standardization (NSS), it is submitted that the NSS Scheme has been discontinued beyond 31 March 2021.

As the NSS Scheme ceases to exist, no further action is required to be taken in respect of Scheme for National System for Standardization. With regard to the Hallmarking Scheme, it is informed that Setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres has been delayed due to Covid-19 Pandemic situation in the country. BIS is regularly following up with the Assaying & Hallmarking Centres for early setup.

Consumer Welfare Fund

In respect of non scheme funds, it is submitted that Consumer Welfare Fund had a component of funds which is transferred to Ministry of Finance for GST activities and advertising and initially forms part of CWF non lapsable non scheme expenditure. Therefore, an amount of Rs 226 crores was not to be utilized from the establishment expenditure and was to be transferred to Central Board of indirect taxes. The fund could only be transferred after receipt of authorizations and due accounts, which has since been completed.”

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Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.7 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 2 (Para No 3.4)

2.3 “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.”

Reply of the Government

2.4 “ Legal Metrology:

Sir, the funds provided in RE during this financial year 2020-21 were sufficient as the procurement of equipments for the project of time dissemination could not be started by National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in coordination with ISRO and therefore, funds will only be required during the Financial Year 2021-22 when the procurement of equipment will start.

However, all the necessary efforts will be made to ensure that funds allocated for procurement of equipment, construction of laboratory buildings and capacity building of Legal Metrology Officers of States/ UTs/ UOI will be judiciously utilized in time without compromising on quality.

The Department will closely monitor the progress of implementation and will make every sincere effort to get the funds utilised.

Consumer Protection

Department of Expenditure has prescribed that the State Govt. should get registered on PFMS in respect of the schemes of the Department before release of Funds. As such, Department had pursued with the States/UTs vide letters dated 31.08.2020 and 04.11.2020 and thorough VCs to ensure that the above requirements are completed so that funds could be released to the States/UTs.

The Department of Consumer Affairs issued sanction Order worth Rs 2.66 Crores (Out of the RE of Rs. 2.66 Crores). But funds amounting to Rs 1.17 Crores only could be released as only 4 States/UTs registered on PFMS. Remaining Rs.1.49 crores could not be released as they did not register the Scheme on PFMS.

The Department had also approached the Ministry of Finance for relaxation of the condition of registration on PFMS portal vide letter dated 24.02.2021 which was not agreed to by the Ministry of Finance.

Bureau of Indian Standards:

With regard to National System for Standardization (NSS), it is submitted that the NSS Scheme has been discontinued beyond 31 March 2021. As the NSS Scheme ceases to exist, no further action is required to be taken in respect of Scheme for National System for Standardization. With regard to the Hallmarking Scheme, it is informed that Setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres has been delayed due to Covid-19 Pandemic situation in the country. BIS is regularly following up with the Assaying & Hallmarking Centres for early setup.

National Test House

The National Test House is focusing on improvement of its scientific testing infrastructure and is therefore efficiently improving its machinery and equipment spending, improvements in IT and physical infrastructure by utilizing the budgetary allocations.”

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Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.10 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 3 (Para No 4.26)

2.5 “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.”

Reply of the Government

2.6 “Department of Consumer Affairs has already taken many steps to gear up the mechanisms to meet the challenges posted by the evolving ways of trade and commerce such as

Technological measures:

As of now, eDaakhil portal facilitating e-filing of Consumer Cases has been launched in 17 States/UT and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. Online payment of fee is also available. Action is underway for facilitating hearing through videoconferencing at all Consumer Commissions. Further, consumer can check status of consumer cases filed in Consumer Commission using CONFONET portal.

Administrative measures:

CP Act, 2019 provides for several administrative measures such as simplification of the adjudication process in the Consumer Commissions by introducing Mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, Enhancement of pecuniary jurisdiction of the Consumer Commissions, Filing of complaints from a consumer commission having jurisdiction over the place of

residence/work of consumer, Deemed admissibility of complaints if not admitted within twenty-one days etc.

Legal measures:

(i) Consumer Protection Act, 2019 has come into force from 20.07.2020. The Act provides for Product liability, Provision for penalty for adulteration of products and manufacture sale of spurious goods.

(ii) Department has notified the E-Commerce Rules on 23 rd July, 2020, for protection of the interest and rights of consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce under section 94. Rules are intended to complement the Consumer Protection Act, 2020 (“Act”) by regulating all e-commerce activities and transactions by laying down duties and liabilities to be adhered by e-commerce entities, marketplace e-commerce entities, sellers on marketplace, and inventory e-commerce entities. Mediation,

(iii) CCPA established under the CP Act, 2019. CCPA with effect from 24.07.2020 to regulate matters relating to violation of rights of consumers, unfair trade practices and false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the interests of public and consumers and to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.”

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Recommendation No. 4 (Para No. 4.27)

2.7 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.8 "The Committee recommendation regarding devising system for online submission of proposals from State/UTs under SCF scheme has been noted. As regards declining rate of disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions, the same may be attributed to vacancies of Presidents and Members in various State Commissions and District Commissions as well as frequent adjournments. As per the provisions of Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of State Govts. to fill up the vacancies in State/District Consumer Commissions. Central Govt. has taken up time and again with the State Govts. to fill up the vacancies in Consumer Commissions of their respective States."

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Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.13 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 5 (Para No. 4.28)

2.9 " 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."

Reply of the Government

2.10 " The Department would endeavor to ensure optimum utilization of the allocated funds under the various schemes of this Department including ICGRS Scheme."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 7 (Para No. 4.30)

2.11 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.12 "Under the CONFONET scheme, hardware are supplied to Consumer Commissions when site readiness certificates and demand for the same are received from concerned State Govts. For Consumer Commissions where hardware could not be installed, as per the information received from NIC, hardware demand have not yet been received from concerned State Govts. mainly because at present these Consumer Commissions are non-functional. e-Daakhil portal is being constantly expanded in remaining States/UTs. At present, it is functional in State and District Commissions of 17 States/UTs as well as in National Commission. Three more States/UTs namely Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh and Telangana are ready to launch the portal."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 8 (Para No. 5.7)

2.13 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.14 "Catchy creatives on specific topics (including online fraud) for protecting the interests of the consumers are uploaded on social media platforms of the Department. Also, audio-visual creatives on Consumer Protection Act, 2019 produced by the Department have been shared with States / UTs for dissemination. The rest of the recommendations have been duly noted and follow-up with the States will be ensured."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.19 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 9 (Para No. 6.13)

2.15 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.16 "It is to submit that Out of the BE of Rs. 35 crore and RE of Rs. 15.21 crore the AE of Rs. 13.30 crore had been spent, which is 87.44% of the RE for the year 2020-21. Further, an amount of Rs. 1.05 crore out of RE of Rs. 15.21 crore was re-appropriated for time dissemination project to fulfil the immediate requirement of NICS I to procure the Routers, etc. for the said project for RRSLs. With regard to the position of strengthening of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi under the Scheme "Strengthening of RRSLs & IILM, Ranchi" the maintenance of RRSLs and IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing exercise, based on the requirement of the Laboratory or IILM, Ranchi. However, during the previous Financial Year no funds for Minor Works of IILM, Ranchi were requested by IILM, Ranchi, as it was completed during 2018-19 at an approximate cost of Rs. 45.0 Lakhs by CPWD, Ranchi. Hence, the Minor works/ maintenance of Civil and Electrical Works of RRSLs/ IILM, Ranchi is an ongoing process as per requirement of offices. The State Legal Metrology Departments will be strengthened by providing computers with printers and laptops etc. during this year 2021-22 through RITES. The Grant in Aid will also be released to States for construction of laboratory buildings. The officers will be trained at institutes of National and International Repute. All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the major construction projects and maintenance of such laboratories are completed at the earliest possible time. The procurement of equipment will also be done at the earliest. "

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 10 (Para No. 6.14)

2.17 " The Government has undertaken the project of Time Dissemination with a tentative timeline originally set at the year 2022 and 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. "

Reply of the Government

2.18 "Due care will 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. 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 Regional Reference Standards Laboratories of Legal Metrology located at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati with the cooperation of National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and a budget provision of Rs. 100 crores was made. AnMoU with CSIR- NPL for executing the project for setting up of atomic clocks for dissemination of Indian Standard Time was signed on 28.12.2018. With coordination of NPL and ISRO it will be ensured that the project is completed within timeline by 2023. The allocated funds will also be utilised within the financial year, 2021-22 productively. "

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 11 (Para No. 7.14)

2.19 " 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. "

Reply of the Government

2.20 "Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) implemented the National System for Standardization (NSS). BIS has till date formulated 21901 standards. BIS intends to review 3380 existing ISs and formulate 1438 ISs (new & revision) during the year 2021-22. While formulating new Indian Standards efforts are made to ensure that these are aligned, to the extent possible, with relevant International Standards so as to achieve better integration of India with the world in trade and commerce. So far, out of 7848 Indian Standards (IS) having corresponding international standards, 6631 ISs are harmonized with corresponding international standards."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.22 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 12 (Para No. 7.15)

2.21 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.22 "Completion of setting up of A&H Centres by the 44 eligible applicants by the month of April, 2021 would be ensured."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.25 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 13 (Para No. 7.16)

2.23 " 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."

Reply of the Government

2.24 "With regard to capacity building, training have been imparted to 267 artisans, 80 Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHC) personnel and 12 BIS officers during the year 2020-21."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 14 (Para No. 7.17)

2.25 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.26 "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the period from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of cases decided by the Hon'ble Courts was low. The number of total criminal complaints filed in various courts all over India till 25 April 2021 is 47 for misuse of the Hallmark (violation of the provisions of the BIS Act, 2016). The number of pending criminal complaints in the Courts is 25 as on 25 April 2021. It is to mention that in case of complaints filed by the Bureau for misuse of hallmark, the conviction rate is cent percent."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.28 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 15 (Para No. 8.13)

2.27 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.28 " GCMS has been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai. Three(3) Ion Chromatographs have been procured, installed and commissioned successfully at NTH(SR) Chennai, NTH(NR) Ghaziabad and NTH(NWR) Jaipur respectively. During the year 2020-21 a demand for authorization for Rs.0.82 Crore was sent to DoCA on 11.09.2020 as requested by CPWD(SZ) and probably due to paucity of fund the same may not have been authorised so far. With final authorization of above fund the project will be completed in all respect. Out of total allocation of Rs. 23.50 crore for the year 2021-22, 7.6 crores have been allocated for procurement of Machinery and Equipments. 2 Nos AAS [for NTH(WR) and NTH(NWR)], FTIR [NTH(NR)], UTM & FTM, [for NTH(ER)], Shearing Bridge [for NTH(NR)], Microwave Digester [for NTH(NWR)] & UTM [for NTH(NER)], Impulse Voltage Generator [for NTH(SR)] are proposed for procurement. Furthermore, many small equipments and machineries have been initiated for procurement to fill up the gap in testing, through the financial powers of regional centers of NTH. Rs. 2.5 Crore has been

utilized under head Minor Works(Scheme) for the f.y 2020-21. For f.y 2021-22 Rs.4 Crores have been allocated under head Minor Works. The fund will be utilized towards Regular Maintenance of all regional office buildings, AMC and Calibration of Equipments. Rs. 0.65 Crore has been utilized under head Information Technology for the f.y 2020-21. All the old and obsolete devices (Router, Firewall, Core/LAN Distribution Switches etc) declared by its OEM have been replaced with new active components which are at present under warranty coverage. The internet band width of all six Regions of NTH has been upgraded to 6 mbps during Oct-Nov 2020. Among of the five existing servers (Application, DB1, DB2, Webserver and Mail Server), the Webserver and Mail Server have already been shifted to NIC Meghraj cloud and deployment of MIS Application servers to cloud is in progress. Deployment of Application & Database servers to NIC Cloud will take place after development of New MIS Application with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) feature for issuing test and calibration certificates. The process of implementation of e-office has been initiated through correspondence with NIC.”

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.31 of Chapter -I of the Report)

Recommendation No. 17 (Para No. 10.14)

2.29 "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 agri-horticultural 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."

Reply of the Government

2.30 " The primary objective of pulses and onion buffer are to utilise the stocks to moderate volatility in prices of these commodities and make them available to the consumer at affordable price. During 2020-21, 2 LMT Tur from the buffer was released in the market through open market sale (OMS) to moderate the rising prices. Mechanism for retail intervention in pulses was introduced by which States/UTs were offered Moong, Urad and Tur for supply through retail outlets such as Fair Price Shops, Consumer Cooperative outlets, Horticulture outlets etc. The objective was to directly tackle and contain the rising retail prices of these pulses and ensure availability to the common people at affordable prices. Order for over 2 LMT of these pulses had been received from the States for retail intervention. Pulses from the buffer have also been supplied to States/UTs for welfare/ nutrition schemes such as Midday Meal, ICDS and PDS, and also to meet the requirement of Army and Central Para-Military Forces. During 2020-21, a total of 15.79 LMT of processed pulses from the buffer were allocated for distribution under the PMGKAY and ANB packages. Supplies of pulses under these routes have also contributed towards moderating prices as quantities were directly supplied from the buffer without affecting the availability in the market. Onion buffer under PSF has been built by procuring Rabi onion from farmers and FPOs at the time of harvest and releasing the stocks during the lean season i.e., September to December. 1 LMT onion buffer created in 2020-21 was released from September 2020 in markets located in major consumption centres to signal availability and moderate prices, and also supplied to State Governments and Government agencies such as Safal and KendriyaBhandar for supply through retail outlets. The strategic disposal of the PSF onion buffer together with other measures such as ban on export, imposition of stock limit under EC Act and import of onion had succeeded in containing the spike in onion prices during 2020-21."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 19 (Para No. 10.16)

2.31 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.32 "Department of Consumer Affairs has requested States/UTs to set up State Level Price Stabilization Fund (PSF). This has been followed up with letters, emails and taken up during official visits, Zonal Conferences on price monitoring, Video Conferences and annual National Consultation Meetings (no NCM in 2020-21 due to the COVID pandemic). Till date six States namely Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Assam have been provided funds for creation of State Level PSF for pulses and onion. In-principal approval has been given to the proposal of Uttar Pradesh for setting up State Level PSF as per the scheme guidelines. Further, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Jharkhand have been requested to revise their proposals in accordance with the scheme guidelines, and Sikkim and Delhi have informed that they would be submitting proposals for setting up State-level PSF in due course."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 21 (Para No. 11.10)

2.33 "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."

Reply of the Government

2.34 " The recommendations of the Committee have been noted for compliance. It is pertinent to state here that this Department requests the remaining States/UTs to send the proposals to set up the Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund in their States from time to time on various occasions. Proposals, once received processed favourably to ensure setting up of the Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund. A letter dt. 23.10.2020 was sent to the Secretaries/Principal Secretaries of the States/In-Charge of Department of Consumer Affairs of the States/UTs, where Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund has not been established. A D.O. letter dt. 29.01.2021 from the Additional Secretary (Consumer Affairs) was also sent to the Chief Secretaries of the States/UTs where Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund has not been established. A meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (Consumer Affairs), with the Principal Secretaries/Secretaries of State Governments and UTs through Video Conferencing on 07.12.2020 to convince the States/UTs to set up State Corpus Fund which is now known as Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund in the States. An E-mail has also been sent in this regard to Secretaries/Principal Secretaries of the States/In-Charge of Department of Consumer Affairs of the State Governments and UTs."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

CHAPTER III

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

Recommendation No. 16 (Para No. 9.15)

3.1 "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."

Reply of the Government

3.2 " To ensure that maximum number of price reporting centres reports the daily retail and wholesale prices and that the data reported are accurate, meetings chaired by Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs had been held with the Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries of State Food & Civil Supply and Consumer Affairs Departments. Apart from these meetings, training sessions were organised for price reporting centres through Videoconferencing on the use of Mobile App for price reporting and also sensitize them to ensure accurate and regular daily reporting of prices. Further, officers of the Department are interacting with the price reporting centres on daily basis to sort out issues such as late reporting, non-reporting, data verification, technical issues etc. To improve the accuracy of price data and ease of reporting, the Department has

operationalised Mobile App w.e.f. 1st January, 2021 and all the reporting centres have shifted from web-based reporting to Mobile App reporting w.e.f. 1st April 2021. Data reported through the Mobile App are geotagged to ensure actual reporting from the market and inbuilt features to facilitate reporting of prices for same type/variety of a commodity and to calculate average of the retail prices collected from three markets. The budget allocation of Rs.1.0 crore in 2020-21 (RE) under Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell has been fully utilised. The allocation of Rs.2.0 crore in 2021-22 (BE) will be utilised as the 35 price reporting centres have been added in recent months, thereby taking the total price reporting centres to 157 (upto 20th May, 2021)."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

Recommendation No. 18 (Para No. 10.15)

3.3 "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."

Reply of the Government

3.4 "The Government approved creation of 2 Lakh MT of onion buffer under Price Stabilisation Fund with Rabi onions 2021 and planned 30,000 MT for Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage in major producing and deficient States. Procurement for Rabi 2021 has started since last week of April, 2021 and DOCA through Inter Ministerial Committee (IMC) is closely monitoring the procurement situation. Cold storage capacity of about 27,425 MT located in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana has been arranged. All possible steps are being taken to minimize damage and storage losses."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

CHAPTER IV

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

Recommendation No. 16 (Para No. 4.29)

4.1 "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."

Reply of the Government

4.2 "Uttar Pradesh have furnished Utilizations Certificates(UC) for full amount against the funds released during the year 2018-19 and 2019-20. As regards Govt. of Rajasthan, out of ₹27.24 lakhs released during 2018-19, UC for amount of ₹19.58 lakhs have been received and UC for only ₹7.66 lakhs is pending. Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has been sanctioned an amount of Rs. 37.78 lakhs in 2020-21, therefore it has time to submit utilization certificate upto 31.03.2022. Recently the letters were sent on 30.03.2021 to concerned State/UT Govts. for furnishing of Utilization Certificates under State Consumer Helpline Scheme. As regards proposal for grants under SCH scheme to the States which have not availed this grant so far such as Delhi, Goa and Ladakh, it is submitted that already six Zonal Consumer Helplines have been made functional which caters to various geographical regions and in regional languages of these regions, apart from NCH, which responds in English and Hindi."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

(Please see Para No. 1.16 of Chapter -I of the Report)

CHAPTER V

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

Recommendation No. 20 (Para No. 11.9)

5.1 " 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."

Reply of the Government

5.2 " The recommendations of the Committee have been noted for compliance. It is also pertinent to state here that in year 2020-21, out of BE/RE of 261.00 Crore, Rs. 226.00 Crore was earmarked for CBIC (Ministry of Finance) for Publicity/Consumer awareness on GST, which could not released to CBIC as the details of account in which the said amount is to be transferred was not provided."

[Department of Consumer Affairs (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution) O.M. No. N-19/5/2021-P&C]

**NEW DELHI;
01 December, 2021
10 Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)**

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

APPENDIX I

CONFIDENTIAL

**MINUTES OF THE THIRD SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2021-2022)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 01 DECEMBER, 2021**

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1645 hrs. in Committee Room 'B', Ground Floor,
Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay - Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

2. Dr. Farooq Abdullah
3. Shri Girish Bhalchandra Bapat
4. Ms. Debasree Chaudhuri
5. Shri Anil Firojiya
6. Shri Khagen Murmu
7. Shri Mitesh Rameshbhai (Bakabhai) Patel
8. Smt. Kavita Singh
9. Shri Ganesan Selvam
10. Shri Saptagiri Ulaka
11. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan
12. Shri Ve. Vaithilingam

Rajya Sabha

13. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey
14. Smt. Roopa Ganguly
15. Shri Ramji

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Pawan Kumar - Joint Secretary
2. Dr. Vatsala Joshi - Director

XXXXX

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XXXXX

XXXXX

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened to consider and adopt the draft Reports on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations/observations contained in (i) 10th Report (17th LS) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) pertaining to Department of Consumer Affairs; XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX.

Thereafter, the Committee took up for consideration the Draft Report. After due deliberations, the Committee unanimously adopted the said Action Taken Report without any amendment/modification and authorized the Chairperson to carry out verbal and consequential changes, if any, therein.

XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

3. XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

4. XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

5. XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

The Committee then adjourned.

XXXXX XXXXX Matter does not relate to the Report.

APPENDIX II

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

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE TENTH REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2020-2021)

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

- (i) Total number of Recommendations: 21
- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government :
Para Nos.:- 2.9, 3.4, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28, 4.30, 5.7, 6.13, 6.14, 7.14, 7.15, 7.16, 7.17, 8.13, 10.14, 10.16, 11.10.
(Chapter – II, Total - 17)
Percentage : 80.95%
- (iii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies received from the Government

Para Nos. 9.15 and 10.15
(Chapter – III, Total - 2)
Percentage : 9.52%
- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:

Para Nos. 4.29
(Chapter – IV, Total -1)
Percentage : 4.76%
- (v) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the interim replies of the Government have been received.

Para Nos.:- 11.9
(Chapter – V, Total - 1)
Percentage : 4.76%