

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND
PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-25)**

EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA

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

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(2025-26)**

SEVENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2025/Phalguna, 1946 (Saka)

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(DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS)**

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(2025-26)**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 12.3.2025

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 12.3.2025



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2025/ Phalguna, 1946 (Saka)

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

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

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

RAJYA SABHA

22. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
23. Shri Prakash Chik Baraik
24. Shri Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya
25. Shri Baburam Nishad
26. Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan
27. Shri Arun Singh
28. Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah*
29. Vacant
30. Vacant
31. Vacant

SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. Ram Raj Rai - Joint Secretary
2. Dr. Mohit Rajan - Deputy Secretary
3. Shri Abdul Khan - Assistant Committee Officer

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (2024-2025) having been authorized by the Committee, to present on their behalf, this Seventh Report (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2025-26) relating to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs).

2. The Committee examined/scrutinized the detailed Demands for Grants (2025-26) of the Ministry which were laid on the Table of the House on 13th February, 2025. The Committee took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) on 20th February, 2025.

3. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the Officers of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs) for appearing before the Committee and furnishing the material and information which the Committee desired in connection with the examination of the Demands for Grants (2025-26).

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 11th March, 2025.

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

NEW DELHI;
11 March, 2025
20 Phalgun, 1946 (Saka)

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

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY

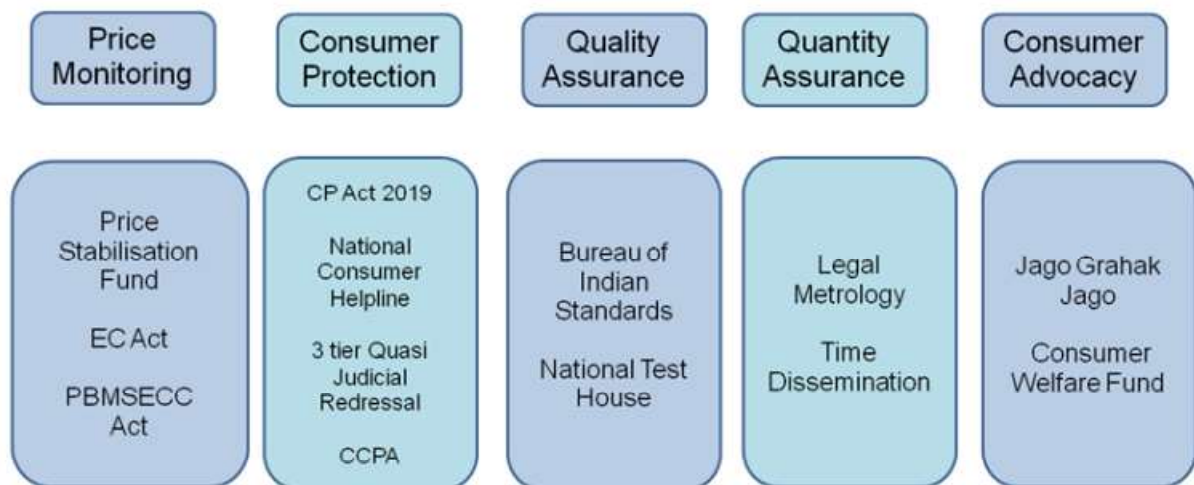
(i) An Overview

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is one of the two Departments under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution. The mandate of the Departments is consumer advocacy. India was pioneer in consumer advocacy with the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), a path breaking legislation at the time, enacted in 1986 and the establishment of a separate government department dedicated to consumer affairs as early as in 1997.

The new Consumer Protection Act, 2019 came into force on July 20th, 2020 in India, replacing the previous enactment of 1986. The new Act overhauls the administration and settlement of consumer disputes in India. It provides for strict penalties, including jail terms for adulteration and for misleading advertisements. More importantly, it now prescribes rules for the sale of goods through e-commerce. Translating this mandate into action entail:

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

1.2 (ii) Department at a Glance



(iii) Mandate of the Department

1.3 The Department has been entrusted with administering: -

- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019
- The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (Supply, Price and Distribution of Essential Commodities not dealt with specifically by any other Department).
- Prevention of the Black marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980;
- Legal Metrology Act, 2009;
- Regulation of Packaged Commodities.

- The Standards of Weights and Measures.
- Price Stabilisation Fund
- The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1952.
- The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016.
- Consumer Cooperatives.
- Monitoring of prices and availability of essential commodities.
- National Test House.

(iv) Vision of the Department

1.4 The Vision of Department is as follows:

- Provide timely and effective consumer grievance redressal
- Prevent malpractices of quality and measurements
- Ensure availability of essential food commodities at reasonable prices
- Move beyond consumer protection to consumer prosperity

1.5 The Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution laid on the table of Lok Sabha, the detailed Demands for Grants 2025-26 relating to the Department of Consumer Affairs on 13th February 2025. The detailed Demands for Grants for the Department of Consumer Affairs shows a budgetary provision of ₹ 4416.92 for the year 2025-26. This includes ₹ 4332.50 crore for revenue section and Rs 84.42 crore under capital section.

1.6 The Committee in present report have examined the detailed Demands for Grants of the Department of Consumer Affairs for the year 2025-26 as shown in the succeeding paragraphs.

CHAPTER – II

ANALYSIS OF DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2025-26)

(i) An Overview

The Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE) and Actuals during the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2021-22	3237.60	2717.14	2262.69	83.2%
2022-23	1762.38	256.55	249.72	97.3%
2023-24	287.66	367.13	311.55	84.9%
2024-25	10359.81	7401.24	7227.09 (upto 14.02.2025)	97.65%
2025-26	4416.92			

2.2. It was noted that there was a downward trend both in the Budget allocation and actual utilization during 2024-25 and further reduction in the BE for 2025-26. The Budget Estimates (BE) for the year 2024-25, which were initially set at ₹10,359.81 crore but were subsequently revised down to ₹7,401.24 crore at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage and the Budget Estimates for 2025-26 have been further reduced to ₹4,416.92 crore. In response to specific query about the reasons behind a consistent downward trend in both the allocation and actual utilization of funds during this period, the factors influencing this downward trend and whether the Department would be able to manage the operations with the reduced allocation in a written reply, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) submitted the following explanation and justification in this regard.

“The main reasons behind these reductions and the factors influencing this downward trend is reduction in the Budget provision for the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme. Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme has been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of ₹10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, ₹7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and ₹4,019.83 crore comprising of the balance amount of ₹3,019.83 crore plus ₹1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA under Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) is allocated in 2025-26 (BE). Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was ₹5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on ₹4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities.”

2.3 In response of a query whether there were any underutilized funds from the 2024-25 financial year contributed to the reduced allocation for 2025-26, the department clarified as under:

“There is no significant underutilization in any of the Scheme of this department. The actual expenditure upto (14.02.2025) is Rs 7227.09 Cr. The percentage of Actual expenses w.r.t RE is 97.65 % .”

(ii) Capital Section

2.4 The BE, RE and AE under Capital Section during the last 5 years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% w.r.t. RE
2021-22	46.05	19.41	33.37	171.88
2022-23	19.85	26.62	25.64	96.30
2023-24	28.07	50.44	48.65	96.44
2024-25	66.32	69.34	58.44 (upto 14.2.25)	84.28
2025-26	84.42			

2.5 In response to the request for the actual figures for the Capital Section for the year 2024-25, in comparison to the Revised Estimates of ₹69.34 crore, along with explanations for the variations between the Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE), and Actuals, the department has provided the following written reply:

“The actuals upto (14.02.2025) under capital section is Rs 58.44 Cr. The Capital expenditure of the departments mainly under two scheme Weight & Measures and National Test House

(A)For NATIONAL TEST HOUSE, the Capital Section in 2024-25, the Budget Estimates (BE) were ₹17.55 crore, which were revised to ₹20.57 crore. NTH is focused on fully utilizing the allocated Revised Estimates (RE) by the end of the fiscal year. Procurement is underway for major equipment for the EV Battery and Food Testing labs in Kolkata, along with additional equipment to address existing gaps and enhance testing capabilities, all expected to be completed within FY 2024-25. Additionally, significant construction work by CPWD for the Integrated Transformer Testing lab in Jaipur is progressing, with full utilization of the allocated funds expected by the end of FY 2024-25. Efforts are also being made to ensure optimal utilization of the budget for the NER

scheme, which includes capital equipment procurement and the development of a digital network, with implementation planned for this fiscal year.

(B)For weights & measures the BE and RE during 2024-25 are Rs. 47.50 crore, out of which Rs. 43.47 crore has been utilized. There is no variation in BE and RE. Funds under the Capital Section for Legal Metrology are essential for strengthening the country's measurement infrastructure, ensuring accuracy, and maintaining global trade compliance. These funds are primarily used for upgrading Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs), procuring advanced testing & calibration equipment and setting up software testing facilities for weighing and measuring instruments. Investments are necessary for modernization and digitalization, such as online monitoring & certification platforms, enhance efficiency, transparency and compliance with international standards like OIML.

Additionally, capital funding supports the procurement of standard equipment for field verification and the implementation of tamper-proof technologies to prevent fraudulent practices in trade measurements. Research & Development (R&D) initiatives also rely on these funds to innovate and adopt next-generation metrology solutions, ensuring India's leadership in global measurement standardization and fair-trade practices.”

2.6 The Committee noted that the capital outlay in the Budget Estimates (BE) of ₹84.42 crore for 2025-26 has increased from the Revised Estimate (RE) of ₹69.34 crore in 2024-25 and specifically desired to know about the new infrastructure or development projects which have contributed to the rise in allocation. The Department of Consumer Affairs submitted the following reply:

“NTH is expanding its testing facilities in key areas such as drones, EV batteries, and solar panels. Notable ongoing projects include the Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution in Jaipur, with an estimated cost of ₹83.76 crore (BIS financial support: ₹50.11 crore), expected to complete its first phase by FY 2025-26. The EV Battery Testing Facilities in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are being developed with a total cost of ₹24.0 crore, with operations set to begin in FY 2025–26. Organic Food Laboratories in Jaipur, Ghaziabad, and Guwahati are under the BIS scheme, with expected operations starting in FY 2025–26. The Drone Certification & Testing Laboratory in Ghaziabad is progressing, though costs are not specified, with operations planned for FY 2025–26. The Low Voltage Switch Gear Testing Facility in Mumbai, costing ₹5.0 crore, is expected to be completed by FY 2024-25. The Complete Food Testing Laboratory in Kolkata has an estimated cost of ₹12.0 crore, expected to complete by FY 2025–26. Other projects include the Short Circuit Test Facility in Chennai (₹24.0 crore), HT Cable Test Facility in Ghaziabad (₹3.15 crore), Solar PV Module Test Facility in Ghaziabad (₹47.0 crore), and Aerospace Components Test Facility in Bengaluru (₹5.03 crore), all expected to become operational by FY 2025–26”

(iii) Revenue Section

2.7 The BE, RE and AE under Revenue Section for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals to RE
2021-22	3191.55	2697.73	2244.16	83.2
2022-23	1742.53	229.93	183.84	80.0
2023-24	259.59	316.69	262.90	83.0
2024-25	10293.49	7331.90	7168.65(upto 14.2.25)	97.8
2025-26	4332.50			

2.8 The Committee observed that the revenue expenditure has decreased from ₹10,293.49 crore (BE 2024-25) to ₹4,332.50 crore (BE 2025-26). When the Committee specifically asked about the what major policy or operational changes which contributed in such significant reduction, the Department of Consumer Affairs has submitted as under :

“The major reduction under the revenue head is the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme. The PSF scheme has been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs.10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, Rs.7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and Rs.4,019.83 crore comprising of the balance amount of Rs.3,019.83 crore plus Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA under Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) is allocated in 2025-26 (BE). Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agricultural commodities.”

2.9 When asked about the proportion of the previous year’s budget that remained unspent, if any, and how did it influence the allocation for the current year, the Department of Consumer Affairs has submitted the following written response:

“a) During 2023-24 the Actuals under Revenue Section was Rs 262.90 Cr. The final surrender during 2023-24 is Rs 34.50 Cr . During 2024-25, the actuals upto 14.02.2025 is Rs 7227.09 Cr. The final estimate of surrender will be finalized by the end of current financial year.

b) For the NATIONAL TEST HOUSE , The initial Budget Estimates (BE) under Revenue head for NTH in 2023-24 were ₹9.24 crore, which were revised to ₹13.41 crore during the Revised Estimates (RE) stage. Of this, ₹13.25 crore has been utilized, indicating that nearly all the allocated funds were spent. The primary expenditures included head office expenses, maintenance work by CPWD under minor works, and the supply of chemicals to enhance fertilizer laboratories across NTH under the materials and supply section.”

(iv) Budgetary Provisions for Central Sector Schemes

2.10 The BE, RE and Actuals for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2021-22	2870.50	2348.25	2127.20	90.59
2022-23	1599.00	98.34	96.69	98.32
2023-24	113.50	182.61	146.36	80.14
2024-25	10169.00	7204.50	7063.89(upto 14.2.25)	97.99
2025-26	4230.82			

2.11 When asked to provide the actual figures for the fiscal year 2024-25, along with any specific challenges or bottlenecks that may have contributed to the underutilization of funds, as well as the department's plans to address these issues moving forward, the department has provided the following written response:

“The actuals upto (14.02.2025) under central and Centrally sponsored schemes is Rs 7063.89 Cr. The percentage of Actual expenses with respect to RE is 98.05%

As of February 13, 2025, ₹25.51 Crore has been utilized in FY 2024-25 by NATIONAL TEST HOUSE. Efforts are also underway to maximize the utilization of the RE, which includes the procurement of capital equipment and the development of a digital network, with plans for implementation within this fiscal year.”

2.12 The Committee noted that there was a significant decline of 41.2% in the Budget Estimates (BE) for schemes in 2025-26, with the allocation reduced to ₹4,230.82 crore, compared to ₹7,204.50 crore in the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2024-25. Consequently, the Committee sought the details of the Central Sector Schemes or projects that may be impacted by this reduced allocation, along with an explanation behind this reduction. In response, the Department of Consumer Affairs has provided the following written reply:

“The major reduction under the RE for 2024-25 is for Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme. The PSF scheme has been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs.10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, Rs.7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and Rs.4,019.83 crore comprising of the balance amount of Rs.3,019.83 crore plus Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA under Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) is allocated in 2025-26 (BE). Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities.”

2.13 On being asked about the breakdown of the Budget Estimates for 2025-26, set at ₹4,416.92 crore across major projects and schemes, including price stabilization, consumer protection, and digital infrastructure, the department provided the following disbursement across the major schemes.

(In ₹ Crore)

SCHEMES	BE 2024-25	BE 2025-26	Increase/ Decrease
Consumer Affairs (Publicity)	17.99	17.99	0
CONFONET	42.00	52.00	10
Consumer Protection Cell (ICGRS)	8.00	8.90	0.9
Strengthening Consumer Fora	5.00	11.00	6
Strengthening of Price Monitoring Structure	0.01	0.00	-0.01
Weight & Measures	60.00	54.30	-5.7
National Test House	35.00	65.80	30.8
Bureau of Indian Standards	1.00	1.00	0
Price Stabilization Fund	10000.00	4019.83	-5980.17
Consumer Welfare Fund (Non-Scheme)	56.20	56.20	0
Establishments	134.61	129.90	-4.71
Total Gross	10359.81	4416.92	-5942.89

(v) Non-Schemes Expenditure

2.14 The BE, RE and Actuals for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	366.00	357.26	115.70	32.39
2021-22	367.10	368.89	135.49	36.73
2022-23	163.38	158.21	153.04	96.73
2023-24	174.16	184.52	163.18	88.43
2024-25	189.54	195.47	163.20(upto 14.2.2025)	77.60
2025-26	186.10	-	-	-

2.15 The Committee observed that the Budget Estimates (BE) of ₹189.54 crore for non-scheme was in 2024-25, revised upwards to ₹195.47 crore. However, upto 14.2.2025 only ₹163.20 crore was utilized. When asked to provide reasons for this underutilization and the variation between the RE and the actual expenditure, the department, in its response, has stated the following:-

“the Actuals expenses upto 14.02.2025 is Rs 163.20 Cr. The Expenses under Non Scheme is Consumer Welfare Fund(CWF) and Establishment Expenses. Under CWF As of February 14, 2025, Rs. 40.19 Crore out of Rs. 56.20 Crore has been utilized in F.Y. 2024-2025. A total grant of approximate Rs. 8 Crore have been sanction and will be released soon.”

2.16 Budget proposals and amount actually provided for different schemes for the year 2025-26 is given below:-

(In ₹ Crore)

Sr. No.	Name of the Scheme/Project/ Programme	2024-25	2025-26	
		RE	Demanded BE	Allocated BE
1	Consumer Awareness (Publicity)	17.99	17.99	17.99
2	Strengthening Consumer Fora	7.00	11.00	11.00
3	CONFONET	70.00	52.00	52.00
4	Consumer Protection Cell (ICGRS)	10.49	8.90	8.90
5	Weights and Measures(Legal Metrology)	60.00	95.00	54.30

6	National Test House	38.02	65.80	65.80
7	Bureau of Indian Standards	1.00	1.00	1.00
8	Price Stabilization Fund	7000.00	3020.00	4019.83
	Total	7204.50	3271.69	4230.82

2.17 Upon being asked about the Revised Estimates (RE) for the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) for 2024-25, which stood at ₹7,000 crore, the department has requested ₹3,020 crore for 2025-26, with a Budget Estimate (BE) allocation of ₹4,019.83 crore. This allocation is still significantly lower than the previous RE. The Committee sought clarification on the reasons for this reduction in the PSF allocation and its potential impact on the measures being implemented under the scheme to address challenges faced by consumers due to price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities, the Committee also requested further details on how the department plans to mitigate these concerns. In response, the Department of Consumer Affairs has provided the following written reply:

“Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs.10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, Rs.7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and Rs.4,019.83 crore comprising of the balance amount of Rs.3,019.83 crore plus Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA under Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) is allocated in 2025-26 (BE).. Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities”

(vi) Budgetary Allocation for North Eastern Region (NER)

2.18 The BE, RE and Actuals for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% AE w.r.t. RE
2020-21	220.20	1194.15	529.87	44.37
2021-22	288.03	236.48	25.39	10.74
2022-23	159.90	10.05	9.38	93.34
2023-24	11.50	18.37	17.62	95.91
2024-25	1016.90	721.61	623.22	86.41
2025-26	423.11			

2.19 A significant decrease in the Revised Estimates (RE) for NER in 2024-25, from ₹1,016.90 crore (BE) to (RE) ₹721.61 crore, has been noted. In light of this, the Committee sought clarification on the reasons for the variation between the Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE), and the Actuals. In response, the Department of Consumer Affairs has provided the following reply:

“In FY 2024-25, the initial Budget Estimates (BE) for NTH under the Capital Head for the North Eastern Region (NER) is ₹3.50 crore among which ₹ 0.863 crore has been utilized. This expenditure will primarily be allocated for the procurement of capital equipment related to various projects, including the Food laboratory, Microbiological laboratory, development of the Electrical laboratory, and the enhancement of the digital network. These allocations are aimed at strengthening laboratory capabilities and improving overall operational efficiency in the region.”

2.20 The Budget Estimates for North Eastern Region has been reduced from ₹1,016.90 crore (2024-25) to ₹423.11 crore (2025-26). When asked to specify the factors leading to this downward revision, the department has provided the following explanation:

“In FY 2024-25, the RE for the department was reduced from Rs 10359.81 to Rs 7401.24 . The BE 2025-26 is Rs 4416.92 crore and accordingly the Budget for NER has been reduced from ₹1016.90 Cr (2024-25) to ₹423.11 Cr (2025-26). The major factor for this decline is as under :-

Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs.10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, Rs.7,000 is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and balance of Rs 3019.83 crore has been left for 2025-26. Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from

price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund can also be utilized for meeting fund requirement for NER, which become available for subsequent operations.”

2.21 When asked whether the reduced allocation for 2025-26 will impact consumer protection and awareness programs/initiatives in the NER, the department has provided the following response:

“The BE earmarked under SCC Scheme for NER for F.Y 2025-26 is higher than the one allocated during F.Y 2024-25 whereas under the CONFONET scheme, the Manpower and hardwares are being provided as per the prescribed norms. As such, there would not be any adverse impact so far as the schemes being dealt with by CPU division is concerned.”

2.22 When the Committee sought to know whether any alternative funding mechanisms are being considered to offset the reduced central budget for NER, the department provided the following response:

“Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26, which will be utilized for under taking PSF operations during 2025-26 Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities.”

2.23 The Committee inquired how the department is coordinating with state governments to ensure the continuity of consumer protection efforts despite the budget cut. In response, the department has stated the following:

“Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities.

However for the other Schemes, the department is coordinating with state governments to ensure continued consumer protection activity.”

2.24 The Committee note that as against the Demands of ₹327.69 crore by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) an allocation of Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26 to fund ₹4,230.82 crore has been made for the department in the fiscal year 2025-26, which is ₹959.14 crore more than the amount demanded. The Committee further observe that the revised expenditure for 2024-25 was ₹7,204.50 crore, yet the department has demanded

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

(Recommendation No. 1)

CHAPTER – III

CENTRAL SECTOR SCHEMES/PROJECTS

A. CONSUMER PROTECTION

(i) Consumer Awareness (Advertising and Publicity)

Under Consumer Awareness scheme, awareness campaigns are undertaken in the form of print, electronic, outdoor and social media through Central Bureau of Outreach & Communication (CBC) / National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), All India Radio (AIR), Doordarshan (DD), etc under the aegis of “JagoGrahakJago”. Under this Scheme, funds are also provided to the State / UT governments as Grant- in- Aid for consumer awareness programmes based on local themes. These funds can be used for advertisements in print and electronic media, local exhibitions, street plays, cultural functions etc. to educate the citizens about consumer rights. In order to create awareness amongst the people living in rural & backward areas, the Department also takes part in important fairs / festivals. The Department is actively using various social media platforms for generating consumer awareness. The Department has launched “Jagriti”, a mascot for empowering consumers and making them aware of their rights. 'Jagriti Mascot' aims to strengthen consumer awareness campaign in digital and multimedia and reinforce a young empowered and informed consumer as a top-of-mind consumer rights awareness recall brand.

3.2 The BE, RE and AE for the last five years is as follows

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Funds sought	BE	RE	Actual Expenditure	% AE w.r.t. RE
2020-21	60.00	60.00	60.00	42.50	70.83%
2021-22	60.00	44.50	44.50	23.00	51.68%
2022-23	44.50	25.00	25.00	17.50	70.00%
2023-24	25.00	17.99	17.99	24.55	136.59%
2024-25	17.99	17.99	17.99	16.93 (till 20th Jan 2025)	94.07%
2025-26	17.99	17.99			

3.3 The Committee noted that the Budget Estimates (BE) for consumer awareness have remained constant at ₹17.99 crore and inquired whether this budget is adequate to meet the growing demands of consumer education, given the increasing need for consumer awareness. In response, the department has stated the following:

“With increasing digitalization across the country, the department, in addition to conventional media like print, hoardings, etc. undertook awareness through social media to reach the nook and corner of the country at low cost, thus leading to optimal utilization of fund and less expenditure. As such, the Budgetary provision is adequate to meet the requirement.”

3.4 Upon the query on the specific steps being taken to expand the reach of consumer awareness programs, particularly in rural and digitally underserved areas, the Committee sought to understand how the department is ensuring these programs effectively reach and engage populations with limited access to digital resources. The department has provided the following response on the strategies being employed to bridge this gap:

“i. The Department of Consumer Affairs has been generating consumer awareness by undertaking country-wide multimedia awareness campaigns under the aegis of "Jago Grahak Jago" to reach out to every consumer across the country by utilizing traditional media like All India Radio, Doordarshan, fairs & festivals, etc. as well as social media.

ii. This year, Department run a campaign through All India Radio during ICC Cricket World Cup 2024 and Interactive Voice Response System(IVRS) campaign through NFDC.

iii. The Department has also been releasing grant-in-aid to States/UTs for generating consumer awareness at local level.

iv. Further as a part of the Capacity Building Programme of Panchayats on consumer-centric rights and issues, the Department of Consumer Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is organizing virtual interactive sessions with representatives of Panchayats in States/UTs to aware them about consumer issues.

v. Besides this, the Department has been participating in fairs and festivals having possibility of large congregation of people from diverse backgrounds to generate consumer awareness at nooks and corners of the country. The Department has participated Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj to directly engage with consumers.”

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

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

(Recommendation No. 2)

(ii) National Consumer Helpline (ICGRS)

3.6 Integrated Consumer Grievance Redressal System (ICGRS) - National Consumer Helpline

- (i) The Department has revamped, the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) which has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for grievance redressal at pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages (i.e. Hindi, English, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Maithali, Santhali, Bengali, Odia, Assamese, Manipuri) through a toll-free number 1915. These grievances can be registered on Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM), an omni-channel IT enabled central portal, through various channels- Whats App, SMS, mail, NCH app, web portal, Umang app as per their convenience.
- (ii) This helpline works in a dedicated manner from 8 AM to 8 PM on all seven days of the week except national holidays. For this purpose, an exclusive call centre has been established and to facilitate increase of access to our consumers, callback facility is also available from 8 PM to 8 AM. Further, NCH has also partnered with prominent stakeholders, namely- private companies, regulators, ombudsman, government agencies to bring them altogether on a single online IT platform wherein all grievances are collated in a central repository with unique docket numbers. Currently 1035 convergence partners are in collaboration with NCH to offer speedy resolution to consumer grievances.
- (iii) In order to bring transparency and efficiency, ease of business and many citizen centric digital initiatives have been taken during the year . To bring more efficiency, to make processes simple, easy and quick, process re-engineering has been undertaken for many manual tasks and as well as in the existing online digital solutions. Many existing softwares / portals have been reviewed to make them more secure and to apply the latest technology. New versions of existing softwares and portals have been deployed. This has helped both G to C and G toB processes cutting short the processing time effectively.
 - I. A new version of the Consumer Helpline software was launched (<https://consumerhelpline.gov.in>) which included improving the integrated Whatsapp for lodging consumer grievances. Around **1049** private companies have been made as convergence partners for speedy and effective grievance redressal.

Processes have been initiated for the application of Artificial Intelligence to help consumers to lodge grievances in a hazzle free manner.

- II. Enhanced version of NCH App has been launched for Android and IoS platforms. This App can be downloaded freely in Google Play Store.

3.7 The BE, RE and Actuals for ICGRS for the last five years is as follows

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	3.00	0.25	0.38	152.00
2021-22	0.50	0.40	0.40	100.00
2022-23	7.00	5.40	5.38	99.63
2023-24	7.00	5.00	4.99	99.80
2024-25	8.00	10.49	5.69(upto 16.02.2025)	57.27
2025-26	8.90			

3.8 The Committee note that the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2024-25 were increased to ₹10.49 crore from the initial Budget Estimates (BE) of ₹8.00 crore. When inquired about the reasons for this upward revision and how the additional funds were utilized during the fiscal year, the department provided the following response:

“ For the NATIONAL CONSUMER HELPLINE , the reason for upward revision is as follows:

- (i) Budget allocated in ORE for FY 2024-25 was less than the previous FY 2023-24.
- (ii) NCH 2.o. – Introduction of AI

Additional funds are required to meet the expenditure incurred primarily for:

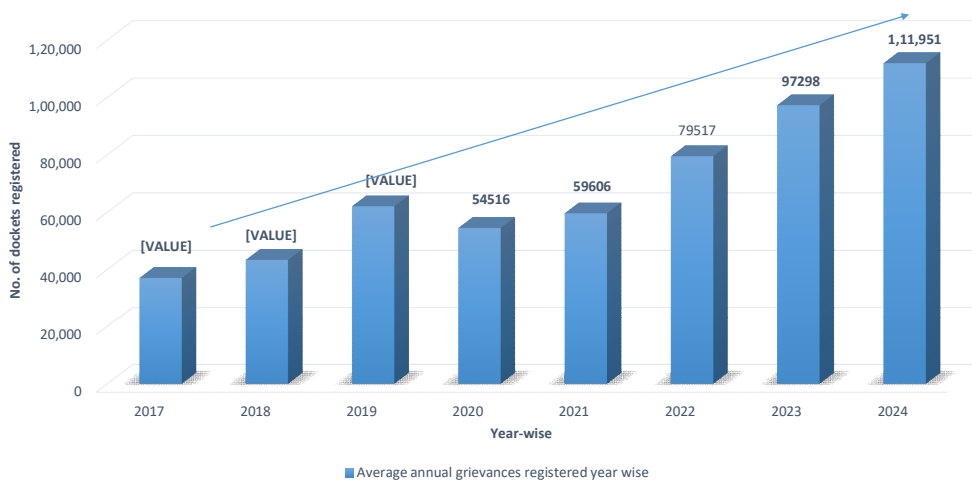
- (i) Operating National Consumer Helpline (Frontend and Backend team)
- (ii) Design, develop, implement and manage the AI enabled single window interface across channels with O&M for 3 years.

It is submitted that the total funds allocated will be fully utilized for the above purpose.”

3.9 When asked to elaborate on how the funds allocated to the Consumer Protection Cell were utilized during 2024-25, particularly in strengthening and enforcing the Consumer Protection Act, and what specific initiatives or actions were undertaken to enhance consumer protection during this period, the department provided the following response:

“Funds to the tune of Rs. 8 Cr are allocated under the Consumer Protection Cell during 2024-25. These funds are utilized for conducting various stakeholders events, developing of dark pattern apps, operating National Consumer Helpline (Frontend and Backend team), designing, developing, implementing and managing the AI enabled single window interface across channels with O&M for 3 years.”

Average annual Grievances Registered at NCH



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

(Recommendation No. 3)

3.11 The Committee are dismayed to note that the budget for the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has remained unchanged, despite the significant increase in consumer

complaints, which grew from 54,516 in 2020 to 111,951 in 2024. To improve the efficiency of consumer complaint resolution, enhance response mechanisms, and strengthen coordination with NCH, it is imperative to ensure that allocated funds are effectively and optimally utilized. The Committee is concerned by the low fund utilization during 2024-25, with only 57.27% of the budget spent, highlighting a considerable gap between the Revised Estimates (RE) and Actual Expenditure (AE). The Committee, therefore, recommend the department not only for improving the efficient use of allocated funds but also allocating additional resources to expand language support and increase the helpline workforce. The Committee further suggest conducting a performance audit to identify any bottlenecks in fund utilization and implement corrective actions to ensure the timely and effective deployment of resources.

(Recommendation No. 4)

(iii) Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC)

3.12 To supplement the efforts of the State Governments, the Central Government has been providing financial assistance to the State Governments under the scheme, ‘Strengthening of Consumer Commissions’ for strengthening the infrastructure of consumer Commissions so that minimum level of facilities are made available at each Consumer Commission. No fund is allocated to the Districts.

The financial assistance is limited to the creation of build up area of 5000 sq. ft. in respect of District Commission building and 11000 sq. ft. in respect of State Commission building, which include in both cases 1000 sq. ft. for construction of Mediation Cell.

Assistance for non-building assets is also provided for purchase of furniture, computer, office equipment, library books etc within the overall cost ceiling of Rs. 25.00 lakhs in respect of a State Commission and Rs.10.00 lakhs in respect of a District Commission.

3.13 The BE, RE and Actuals for the last five years is as follows

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)		Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	8.00	2.66		1.17	43.98
2021-22	8.00	2.79		2.79	100.00
2022-23	6.00	3.16		3.16	100.00
2023-24	7.60	8.60		6.20	72.09
2024-25	5.00	7.00		7(as on 12.2.2025)	100
2025-26	11.00				

3.14 The allocation has increased from ₹7 crore in the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2024-25 to ₹11 crore in the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2025-26. When asked about the key initiatives driving this increased funding, the department provided the following response:

“Since 2021-22, funds have been released to 13 State Commissions and 307 D.Cs. During 2025-26, it is proposed cover at least remaining 4 SCDRCs and 100 DCDRCs.”

3.15 In response to the inquiry about the key proposals for the utilization of the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2025-26, the department has provided the following details:

“During 2025-26, it is proposed to cover to at least 4 remaining SCDRCs and 100 DCDRCs. Demands are also expected from States viz. U.P, J&K, Mizoram, Haryana etc.”

3.16 When asked about the number of consumer forums, counseling centers, consumer commissions, and mediation facilities established during 2024-25 and proposed for 2025-26 with the current allocation, state/UT-wise, the department provided the following response:

“i. As per the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the State Governments are to establish the State Commission and District Commissions in each district and to provide infrastructure and manpower for their smooth functioning. However, to supplement the efforts of the State Governments, the Central Government has been providing financial assistance to the State Governments under the scheme, ‘Strengthening of Consumer Commissions’ for strengthening the infrastructure of consumer Commissions so that minimum level of facilities are made available at each Consumer Commission.

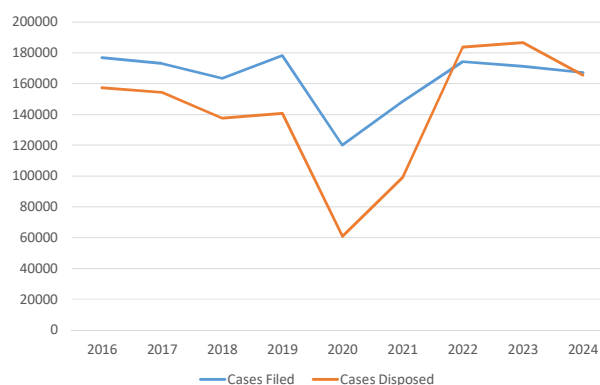
ii. The financial assistance is limited to the creation of build up area of 5000 sq. ft. in respect of District Commission building and 11000 sq. ft. in respect of State Commission building, which include in both cases 1000 sq. ft. for construction of Mediation Cell.

iii. At present, there are 36 State Commissions and approx. 680 District Commissions across the country.

iv. Since 2021-22, funds have been released to 13 State Commissions and 307 D.Cs. During 2025-26, it is proposed cover at least remaining 4 SCDRCs and 100 DCDRCs”

Enhanced Disposal in Consumer Commissions since 2022

Year	Cases Filed	Cases Disposed
2016	1,76,799	1,57,337
2017	1,72,996	1,54,282
2018	1,63,517	1,37,506
2019	1,78,147	1,40,821
2020	1,20,016	60,866
2021	1,48,418	99,073
2022	1,74,271	1,83,723
2023	1,71,218	1,86,672
2024	1,67,112	1,65,682



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3.17 When the Committee inquired about the current vacancies for the positions of Chairman and Member at the State and District Consumer Commissions, state/UT-wise, the department provided the following reply:

“Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to fill up the vacancies of President and Members in the State Commissions and District Commissions. As per the information furnished by respective states, a details of the vacancy position in Consumer Commissions across the nation are enclosed as following:

VACANCY POSITION IN CONSUMER COMMISSIONS

S. No.	State	State Commission				District Commission			
		President		Member		President		Member	
		Sanctioned Post	Vacant Post	Sanctioned Post	Vacant Post	Sanctioned Post	Vacant Post	Sanctioned Post	Vacant Post
1	A&N Island (UT)	1	1	4	0	1	0	2	2
2	Andhra Pradesh	1	1	4	1	17	1	34	1
3	Arunachal Pradesh	1	1	2	2	25	0	50	41
4	Assam	1	1	4	1	23	4	46	2
5	Bihar	1	0	4	0	38	17	76	38
6	Chandigarh (UT)	1	0	4	1	2	0	4	1
7	Chhattisgarh	1	0	4	3	17	7	54	17
8	D&N Haveli and D&D (UT)	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	1

9	Delhi (UT)	1	0	4	1	10	1	20	4
10	Goa	1	1	4	2	2	0	4	0
11	Gujarat	1	0	8	3	38	22	76	46
12	J&K (UT)	1	1	4	1	10	6	20	10
13	Kerala	1	0	4	2	14	0	28	4
14	Ladakh (UT)	1	1	2	2	2	2	4	3
15	Lakshadweep (UT)	1	0	4	0	1	0	2	0
16	Haryana	1	0	4	0	22	2	44	7
17	Himachal Pradesh	1	0	2	2	4	0	24	15
18	Jharkhand	1	1	4	3	24	6	48	13
19	Karnataka	1	1	8	7	33	14	66	12
20	Madhya Pradesh	1	1	5	2	25	4	102	32
21	Maharashtra	1	0	11	2	40	9	80	20
22	Manipur	1	1	4	1	3	0	6	0
23	Meghalaya	1	0	4	3	7	0	14	1
24	Mizoram	1	1	4	2	11	0	22	4
25	Nagaland	1	0	2	1	16	0	32	10
26	Odisha	1	1	4	0	31	16	62	44
27	Puducherry (UT)	1	1	4	2	1	0	2	0
28	Punjab	1	0	4	1	23	4	46	13
29	Rajasthan	1	0	10	2	37	11	74	25
30	Sikkim	1	1	4	2	6	0	12	6
31	Tamilnadu	1	0	4	4	30	2	64	15
32	Telangana	1	1	4	0	12	3	24	2
33	Tripura	1	0	2	0	4	0	8	2
34	Uttarakhand	1	1	4	0	13	9	26	1
35	Uttar Pradesh	1	0	4	1	79	18	158	25
36	West Bengal	1	0	10	5	26	17	52	16
	Total	36	18	161	61	648	176	1388	433

3.18 When asked whether the department has encountered any challenges in the operationalization of these forums and how it is addressing them, the department provided the following response:

“The State Governments are asked from time to time to take advance action for filling up of the vacancies so that any Consumer Commission does not remain non-functional for want of President and Members.

(b) Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to fill up the vacancies of President and Members in the State Commissions and District Commissions. The Central Government has been continuously holding interactions with the State Governments/UT Administrations for expeditious filling up of the existing and anticipated vacancies of President and Members of the Consumer Commissions.

(c) Besides, the Consumer Protection (Qualification for appointment, method of recruitment, procedure of appointment, term of office, resignation and removal of the President and members of the State Commission and District Commission) Rules, 2020

lay down that the process of appointments shall be initiated by the State Government at least six months before the vacancy arises.

(d) To supplement the efforts of the State Governments, the Central Government has also been providing financial assistance to the States for construction of buildings of the Consumer Commissions and also for acquiring non-building assets such as furniture, equipments, books etc for the Consumer Commissions. In addition to this under CONFONET scheme, manpower and hardwares are also being provided to NCDRC,SCDRCs and DCDRCs.”

3.19 The Committee inquired whether the department has assessed the impact of mediation services on reducing consumer disputes in courts. If so, they requested details of the assessment, along with information on the complaints received and resolved through such forums over the past five years. In response, the department provided the following details:

“A MoU was signed between Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India and Indian Institute of Management, Rohtak on 07th June, 2024 for conducting a study on “Reorientation of the Consumer Commissions towards providing an affordable, effective and speedy justice to the Consumers and make them consumer friendly”. The study aims at identifying areas of improvement and recommend strategies to provide an effective, efficient and speedy resolution of the consumers seeking redressal for their grievances.”

3.20 The details of requests received over the last three years for financial assistance under the Scheme for Strengthening Consumer Commissions (SCC), along with the Union Government’s responses for each state/UT, as furnished by the department in response to the query, are as follows:

“The status of requests received and the response of the Department (since 2022-23) is as follows:

1. Nagaland: Nagaland had submitted a proposal of ₹ 9.67 Cr. vide letter dated 28.09.2022 for construction of Mediation Cells and additional construction of State Commission building. However, UCs for an amount of Rs. 80 lakh is still pending against the State in respect of earlier release.

2. Uttar Pradesh: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 3997.47 lakh was received from the state of Uttar Pradesh vide letter dated 14.10.2022. However, at the time of receipt of this proposal, Utilisation Certificates (U.Cs) of an amount of ₹ 288.37 lakh were already pending out of the total grant of ₹ 2860.66 lakh released in earlier years. Subsequently, another proposal for release of funds amounting to ₹ 276.75 lakh for non-building assistance was received from Uttar Pradesh vide letter dated 27.05.2024. After receipt of the pending U.Cs from Government of Uttar Pradesh vide letter dated 03.07.2024, funds to the tune of ₹ 124.65 lakh were released to the state of Uttar Pradesh vide sanction letter dated 13.08.2024.

3. Punjab: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 405.05 lakh was received from the state of Punjab vide letter dated 24.11.2022. However, at the time of receipt of this proposal, Utilisation Certificates (U.Cs) for ₹ 54.18 lakh were already pending out of the total grant of ₹ 519.77 lakh released in earlier years to the state of Punjab. After receipt of the pending U.Cs from Government of Punjab vide letter dated 23.08.2023,, funds to the tune of ₹ 175 lakh for non-building purposes were released to the state of Punjab vide sanction letter dated 27.12.2023.

4. Assam: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 124.58 lakh was received from the state of Assam vide letter dated 07.09.2022. In its pursuance, this department had released funds amounting to ₹ 18.62 lakh vide sanction letters dated 29.12.2022 and 30.12.2022 keeping in view the admissibility of proposal in terms of the guidelines of the SCC scheme. Subsequently, vide sanction letter dated 20.02.2023, additional funds amounting to ₹ 3.46 lakh were released to Assam.

5. Chhattisgarh: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 245 lakh was received from the state of Chhattisgarh vide letter dated 02.07.2024. An amount of Rs 125 lakh was released to Chhattisgarh vide sanction letter dated 26.07.2024.

6. Madhya Pradesh: During the F.Y 2022-23, Government of M.P furnished a proposal seeking Rs. 23.79 Cr. However, the proposal was submitted without the approval of the Empowered Committee. Moreover, there were already pending U.Cs of ₹ 106.66 lakh out of ₹ 1714.78 lakh released earlier to the state of Madhya Pradesh. Subsequently, during F.Y 2023-24, funds amounting to ₹ 95.96 lakh were released to the state of Madhya Pradesh, vide sanction letter dated 18.01.2024 as non-building assistance under the SCC scheme.

7. Sikkim: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 65 lakh was received from the state of Sikkim vide letter dated 20.02.2023. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme and an amount of ₹ 65 lakh was released to Sikkim vide sanction letters dated 01.03.2023 and 15.05.2023.

8. Arunachal Pradesh: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 185 lakh was received from the state of Arunachal Pradesh vide letter dated 14.11.2022. An amount of ₹ 150 lakh was released to Arunachal Pradesh vide sanction letter dated 07.02.2023. Subsequently, on submission of U.Cs of this amount of ₹ 150 lakh vide letter dated 22.03.2024, the balance funds amounting to ₹ 35 lakh were released to them vide sanction letter dated 13.06.2024.

9. Goa: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 45 lakh was received from the state of Goa. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme an amount of ₹ 45 lakh was released to Goa vide sanction letter dated 22.05.2024.

10. Himachal Pradesh: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 65 lakh was received from the state of Himachal Pradesh vide letter dated 23.08.2023. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme and an amount of ₹ 65 lakh was released to Himachal Pradesh vide sanction letter dated 31.08.2023. In F.Y 2024-25, a proposal for ₹ 42.73 lakh for the renovation of building of District Commission, Solan was

received in the Department under the SCC scheme. In its pursuance, funds to the tune of ₹ 21.36 lakh were released as 1st installment in vide sanction letter dated 21.08.2024.

11. Meghalaya: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 145 lakh was received from the state of Meghalaya vide letter dated 24.02.2023. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme and an amount of ₹ 145 lakh was released to Meghalaya vide sanction letters dated 16.03.2023 and 18.05.2023.

12. Tamil Nadu: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 97.92 lakh was received from the state of Tamil Nadu vide letter dated 30.11.2022. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme and an amount of ₹ 97.92 lakh was released to Tamil Nadu vide sanction letter dated 29.12.2022.

Subsequently, another proposal for release of funds amounting to ₹ 29.42 lakh was received from the state of Tamil Nadu during 2023-24. However, the same could not be released as there were pending U.Cs to the tune of ₹ 97.92 lakh lying with the state of Tamil Nadu. The same was intimated to Government Tamil Nadu vide this department's letter dated 16.06.2023.

13. Telangana: During F.Y 2023-24, two proposals for release of funds amounting to ₹ 700 lakh and ₹ 145 lakh were respectively requested by Government of Telangana. However, the fund couldn't be released as there are pending UCs.

14. Rajasthan: During 2023-24, it was requested by the state of Rajasthan to release ₹ 32.11 crore under the SCC scheme. However, there were already pending U.Cs of ₹ 488.02 lakh pending with the state of Rajasthan out of total funds of ₹ 1563.43 lakh released earlier by this department under the SCC scheme.

15. Mizoram: During 2022-23, the state of Mizoram requested for an amount of ₹ 1.59 crore under the SCC scheme vide letter dated 08.12.2022. However, the proposal was not submitted as per the prescribed format under SCC scheme guidelines as well as without conveying the approval of the Empowered Committee. In its pursuance, this department, vide letter dated 20.02.2023 requested the Government of Mizoram to furnish the proposal in consonance with the stipulations laid down in SCC scheme. In addition, during 2024-25, a proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 4.43 crore was received from Mizoram but the same was also not approved by empowered committee as prescribed.

16. Tripura: During 2024-25, a proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 65 lakh was received from the state of Goa. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme an amount of ₹ 65 lakh was released to Tripura.

17. Gujarat: During 2024-25, a proposal for release of funds amounting to ₹ 275.15 lakh for non-building assistance was received from Gujarat. In its pursuance, this department released ₹ 2.39 crore to the state of Gujarat in the same F.Y.

18. Ladakh: A proposal seeking release of funds to the tune of ₹ 45 lakh was received from the U.T of Ladakh. The proposal was examined in terms of the existing guidelines of SCC scheme an amount of ₹ 45 lakh was released to Ladakh.”

3.21 When asked about the steps being taken to improve the submission of eligible proposals from states and UTs, the department provided the following response:

“The matter regarding the submission of eligible proposals under the SCC scheme is regularly taken up with the concerned state government representatives. This entails regular letters from the department, D.O letters from higher officers, Specific VC Meetings as well as conduct of various regional conferences to discuss the various challenges faced by states in the domain of consumer protection.”

3.22 In response to the query regarding the steps the department is taking to ensure the timely submission of eligible proposals under the SCC scheme in the future, to prevent under-utilization of funds, the department provided the following reply

“This entails regular letters from the department, D.O letters from higher officers, Specific VC Meetings as well as conduct of various regional conferences to discuss the various challenges faced by states in the domain of consumer protection.”

3.23 In response to the query regarding the frequency of discussions on delays in the submission of utilization certificates during review meetings and the specific actions being taken to expedite this process, the department has stated:

“In so far as the SCC scheme and other Schemes are concerned, the issue of pending UCs is being taken up regularly with the concerned states/UTs by the Department. In this regard, besides sending D.O. letters, various VC meetings are being held with the concerned States/UTs to furnish the pending UCs for the funds released to the respective states.”

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

filling these vacant posts within a fixed time-frame and the Committee may be apprised accordingly.

(Recommendation No. 5)

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

(Recommendation No. 6)

(iv) Computerization & Computer Networking of Consumer Commissions (CONFONET):

3.26 The objective of the scheme is to set up Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and implement an e-Governance solution for monitoring the consumer cases filed, disposed & pending with the Consumer Commissions at National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), State Commissions and District Commissions. The scheme is being implemented through National Informatics Centre (NIC). The NIC provides hardware, software and technical manpower to the Consumer Commissions through National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSi).

3.27 Under the scheme, NIC has developed an Online Case Monitoring System (OCMS). The Case Monitoring System provides a single-window solution for automation of all the activities undertaken at the Consumer Commissions at the National, State and District Levels. The registration of complaints, recording of court proceedings, issue of notices, generation of cause lists, recording of judgments, record-keeping and generation of statistical reports and all other court related activities are carried out through this standardized software alone.

3.28 The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, provides for e-filing and e-payment for filing of complaints in the Consumer Commissions. A web application for E-filing of consumer complaints named "edaakhil.nic.in" has been developed by NIC under CONFONET scheme to enable consumers to file consumer complaints. It also facilitates the consumer commissions to scrutinize the complaints online to accept, reject or forward the complaint to the concerned commission for further processing. Various events-based SMS/Email alerts are also being sent to the user at the time of complaint filing and processing.

3.29 The CONFONET 1.0 project has been revamped and transformed into NextGen CONFONET 2.0 to address key challenges such as outdated technology, non-standardized workflows, and limited automation. The new platform, named as “e-Jagriti”, aims to enhance consumer grievance redressal through a micro-service architecture, AI/ML integration, and latest features like faceless onboarding and role-based dashboards. It will unify existing applications (OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET application) into a single, scalable system that will significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, anytime, with multi-lingual support. The integrated platform will streamline the grievance redressal process, offering faster resolution and enhanced transparency. The revamped system will also support real-time data access, automated workflows, and offer enhanced participation tools for other stakeholders like judges, advocates etc.

3.30 Under CONFONET scheme, VC equipment for conducting hearing through video conferencing mode has been installed and made functional at 10 benches of the NCDRC and 35 SCDRCs. This initiative represents a crucial advancement in the area of consumer rights and the enhancement of dispute resolution mechanisms. By adopting this digital approach, we have effectively addressed geographical barriers, facilitating remote hearings and significantly improving convenience and accessibility for all parties involved. Additionally, consumer commissions have also been instructed to adopt VC facilities as the default mode for consumer interactions. This will promote ease of access and efficiency in the resolution process.

3.31 The BE, RE and Actuals for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	29.50	29.50	29.50	100.00
2021-22	26.00	32.00	32.00	100.00
2022-23	27.00	29.26	29.26	100.00
2023-24	29.40	67.00	36.21	54.04
2024-25	42.00	70.00	41.93(upto 14.2.2025)	59.90
2025-26	52.00			

3.32 An increase in the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2024-25 for CONFONET to ₹70.00 crore has been noted. Consequently, when asked about the specific improvements or expansions made with the enhanced allocation and how these funds will enhance the performance of consumer courts, the department provided the following written response:

“The enhanced funds at RE stage has been sought to meet the additional fund requirement for VC facilities provided in the 10 benches of NCDRC and 35 Benches of

States/UTs Consumer Commissions. This enhanced use of technology seeks to bring in transformative change in consumer dispute redressal mechanism by making it hassle free, cost effective and speedy justice to the consumers.”

3.33 With an increase in CONFONET’s budget from ₹42 crore in 2024-25 to ₹52 crore in 2025-26, the Committee sought to know the specific improvements or expansions have been proposed under the CONFONET project. In response, the department has provided the following reply:

“Besides providing VC facilities to Consumer Commissions, the Department has also revamping the CONFONET 1.0 project to NextGen CONFONET 2.0 named "eJagriti which will unify existing applications (OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET application) into a single, scalable system that will significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, anytime with multi-lingual support. The revamped system will also offer enhanced participation tools for other stakeholders like judges, advocates etc and thereby ensuring more efficient handling of their cases and improved access to case statuses and decisions.”

3.34 The Committee inquired about how the expansion of CONFONET has impacted the speed and efficiency of consumer dispute resolution and requested further details. In response, the department has provided the following information:"

i. The expansion of the CONFONET scheme has significantly improved the speed and efficiency of consumer dispute resolution over the last five years. In 2019, before major digital interventions, the system faced delays due to manual processes, leading to a growing backlog of cases. The situation worsened in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, as physical hearings were disrupted, highlighting the urgent need for digital transformation.

ii. In 2021, the introduction of the e-Daakhil portal enabled online case filing and payments, improving accessibility and efficiency. By 2022, the adoption of digital tools accelerated, leading to faster case disposal, with more cases resolved than filed for the first time. This trend continued in 2023 with further improvements in ICT infrastructure, automation, and workflow management, significantly reducing pendency. In 2024, several consumer commissions transitioned entirely to digital case filing, enhancing transparency and efficiency. Besides, hybrid VC facility was made functional in 10 benches of the National Commission and 35 State Commissions and different stakeholders like consumers, advocates, judges are getting benefitted with the facility

iii. Overall, CONFONET’s expansion has streamlined case management, reduced delays, and improved access to justice.

Year-wise details of the cases filed (2019-2024)

Year	Cases Filed	Cases Disposed	Key Developments & Observations
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Year	Cases Filed	Cases Disposed	Key Developments & Observations
2019	1,78,147	1,40,821	Limited digital infrastructure; manual processes led to backlog.
2020	1,20,016	60,866	COVID-19 impacted physical hearings; urgent need for digital transformation.
2021	1,48,418	99,073	Introduction of e-Daakhil Portal for online case filing.
2022	1,74,271	1,83,723	Expansion of CONFONET and e-Daakhil; digital adoption increased efficiency.
2023	1,71,218	1,86,672	More cases disposed than filed; improved ICT infrastructure at consumer commissions.
2024	1,67,112	1,65,682	Mandatory e-filing recommended; increased digital adoption, Hybrid VC facility made functional at 45 commissions

3.35 The Committee inquired about the key performance indicators used to assess the success of the CONFONET initiative, along with the targets set and achieved during 2024-25. In response, the department provided the following details:"

“Case Filing Performance is one of the primary indicators of CONFONET's effectiveness is the number of cases filed each quarter. For 2024-25, as per Output Outcome Monitoring Framework (OOMF), the set target for case filing was 35,000 per quarter, amounting to 1,40,000 cases annually. The actual performance indicates that this target has been consistently achieved across quarters: Q1: 41,179 cases filed, Q2: 40,444 cases filed and Q3: 34,448 cases filed. This filing target underscores the efficiency of the digital platform in enabling consumers to register grievances seamlessly.”

3.36 The Committee inquired about the measurable impact of the newly launched e-Jagriti platform on reducing case pendency and improving consumer grievance redressal. Specifically, they sought information on whether targets were set for its adoption and usage by both consumers and commission members, as well as data on the number of cases registered and disposed of over the past three years, to assess the platform's effectiveness in streamlining the grievance resolution process. In response, the department provided the following reply:

“eJagriti has only recently been launched at the National Commission level and is yet to be rolled out for the States/UTs and District Commissions, it is too early to comprehensively assess its impact. However, in the long run, eJagriti holds immense potential to revolutionize consumer grievance redressal by ensuring hassle-free, cost-effective, and speedy justice. It will not only benefit consumers by simplifying the complaint-filing process but also support other stakeholders, such as judges and advocates, by facilitating efficient case management and decision-making.”

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

(Recommendation No. 7)

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

(Recommendation No. 8)

(v) Price Stabilization Fund Scheme(PSF)

3.39 Price Stabilization Fund is implemented by Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) to mitigate the hardships to consumers on account of price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities. The basic objective of PSF scheme is to protect the consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities and to make essential food commodities available at affordable prices. The PSF scheme was introduced in 2014-15, initially, for market interventions to control price volatility in horticultural commodities. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the creation of buffer stock of pulses through Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (PSFMC) on 9th December, 2015. Under the PSF scheme, strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion are maintained by procuring from domestic as well as imported sources for calibrated release to discourage hoarding, unscrupulous speculation and for supplies to consumers at affordable prices. PSF interventions are also undertaken in the form of simultaneous procurement and distribution of perishable commodities like onion and tomato to moderate retail prices and also in the form of providing subsidies for retail sale of Bharat Atta, Bharat Rice and Bharat Dals to make these food commodities affordable to consumers and to nudge the market for bringing prices down.

3.40 The Union Cabinet in its meeting held on 18th September 2024 has approved the continuation of schemes of Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)

with the component of i) Price Support Scheme (PSS) of Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW); (ii) Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) Scheme of Department of Consumer Affairs; (iii) Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS) and (iv) Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) with total financial outlay of Rs. 35,000 crores during 15th Finance Commission Cycle upto 2025-26. The Integrated scheme of PM-AASHA will bring-in more effectiveness in the implementation which would not only help in providing remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce but also control the volatility in prices of essential commodities by ensuring their availability at affordable prices to consumers.

3.41 DoCA, implements PSF to mitigate the hardships to consumers on account of price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities. The basic objective of PSF scheme is to protect the consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities and to make essential food commodities available at reasonable prices. Under the PSF scheme, strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion are maintained by procuring from domestic as well as imported sources for calibrated release to discourage hoarding, unscrupulous speculation and for supplies to consumers at reasonable prices. PSF interventions have also been undertaken in perishable commodities like Onion, Tomato by procuring from source markets and for retail distribution in major consumption centres at discounted prices to nudge the market for bringing prices down. DoCA undertakes procurement of pulses at other than MSP.

3.42 The details of the budgetary allocation and actual utilization of the PSF over the last five years, as provided by the department, are outlined below:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	2000.00	11800.00	11135.30	94.37
2021-22	2700.00	2250.00	2030.83	90.26
2022-23	1500.00	0.01	0.01	100.00
2023-24	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
2024-25	10000.00	7000	6910.90(upto 15.2.2025)	98.73
2025-26	4019.83			

3.43 When asked about the physical targets and achievements under the PSF, the department provided the following response:

“Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) Scheme (CS)

FINANCIAL OUTLAY	TARGETS 2025-26

(Rs.in cr)			
2025-26	Output	Indicator(s)	Annual Target
	<p>1. Pulses: Maintaining a stable weighted average retail prices of pulses.</p> <p>(Combined weighted average retail prices for Chana Dal, Tur Dal, Urad Dal, Moong Dal and Masur Dal calculated using CPI weights).</p>	<p>% annual fluctuations in the combined weighted average retail prices of pulses (FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25) to be maintained within a defined range based on the monthly year-on-year variation.</p>	<p>6.61% to 8.53%</p>
(BE) 4020	<p>2. Pulses: Maintaining the spatial dispersion of weighted average prices of pulses across States.</p>	<p>Coefficient of variation in State-wise combined weighted average retail prices (FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25) of pulses across states to be maintained at a defined target based on the historical CV (deviation from mean).</p>	<p>0.229</p>
	<p>3. Pulses: Maintaining an average price mark-up of retail over mandi prices of pulses.</p>	<p>Percentage mark-up of combined weighted average retail prices of pulses over the combined weighted modal mandi prices (i.e., difference between the retail prices and mandi prices as percentage of retail prices) being maintained at a defined target based on historical level during FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25).</p>	<p>37.04%</p>

	<p>4. Onion: Maintaining a stable average retail prices of onion.</p>	<p>% annual fluctuations in the average retail prices of onion (FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25) to be maintained within a defined range based on the monthly year-on-year variation.</p> <p>For quarterly target, the maximum and minimum year-on-year monthly percentage variations of the corresponding quarters of the data set are taken; and for annual target range the maximum and minimum of the quarterly variations are taken.</p>	<p>7.21% to 52.26%</p>
	<p>5. Onion: Maintaining the spatial dispersion of prices of onion across States.</p>	<p>Coefficient of variation in State-wise average retail prices (FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25) of onion across states to be maintained at a defined target based on the historical CV (deviation from mean).</p>	<p>0.483</p>
	<p>6. Onion: Maintaining an average price mark-up of retail price over mandi prices of onion.</p>	<p>Percentage mark-up of average retail prices of onion over the mandi modal prices (i.e., difference between the retail prices and mandi prices as percentage of retail prices) being maintained at a defined target based on historical level during FY 2014-15 to</p>	<p>48.19%</p>

		FY 2024-25).	
	7. Maintaining regularity in daily price reporting by price reporting centres	Percentage of centres reporting daily prices data	95%

Outcome 2025-26		
Outcome	Indicators	Target
Maintaining Pulses & Products inflation rate in the CPI	CPI Inflation in Pulses and Products to be maintained	4% - 6%
Maintaining Pulses & Products inflation rate in the CPI	CPI Inflation in Onion to be maintained	<16%

Note:

- i. Quarterly targets of co-efficient of variation have been calculated by considering each quarter over the decade as one dataset. Annual targets have been set by considering the entire range of prices as one dataset.
- ii. In case of state dispersion of pulses, weighted average prices for each state for each month has been calculated for a decade (weights assigned on the basis of CPI), co-efficient of variation has been calculated by taking into consideration price points of all states across any given quarter for the past 10 years. Annual target has been calculated by taking the entire data set of all weighted average prices of states across 10 years as one data set.
- iii. Achievements calculation will be done through a rolling CV for 10 years, wherein every inclusion of a subsequent quarter in the data set will be balanced with an exclusion of a quarter from the initial quarter of the dataset i.e. 2014-15, to maintain equal number of observations.”

3.44 The Committee noted that under the PSF, the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2024-25 were reduced to ₹7,000 crore, down from the original Budget Estimate (BE) of ₹10,000 crore, and the allocation has been further lowered to ₹4,019.83 crore for BE 2025-26. When asked to explain the reasons for these downward trend and reductions, the department provided the following written response:

“Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme been approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs.10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, Rs.7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and Rs.4,019.83 crore comprising of the balance amount of Rs.3,019.83 crore plus Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA under Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) is allocated in 2025-26 (BE).. Apart from annual budgetary support, the sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities.”

3.45 Upon being asked whether the reduced allocation, in light of the fluctuating market prices of essential commodities, will impact the department’s ability to intervene effectively, the department provided the following response:

‘The budget allocation for FY 2025-26 for PSF is Rs. 4019.83 crore. Apart from annual budgetary support, sale proceeds from price stabilization operations accrues to the PSF Corpus fund which become available for subsequent operations. The annual average sale proceed which accrued to the Corpus Fund during past 5 years was Rs.5,184 crore. Similar amount of sale proceeds is expected in 2025-26. Therefore, the allocation on Rs.4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 (BE) will not have adverse impact on the price stabilisation measures to mitigate price volatility in agri-horticultural commodities. However, in case the budget allocation and accrued sale proceeds are still not being sufficient for PSF activities, additional fund requirement can be met by appropriating from other components of the PM-AASHA scheme.’

3.46 When asked about the measures being taken to enhance price monitoring and ensure timely interventions despite the budget cut, the department provided the following response:

“In 2024-25, the Department enhanced the scope of price monitoring to 38 commodities by including 16 additional commodities in daily price reporting over and above the existing 22 commodities. The 16 new commodities includes millets, spices, besan, egg, butter, desi ghee, brinjal and banana. The 38 commodities constitutes close to 31% of the total CPI weights as against 26.5% of CPI weights captured by the 22 commodities. The increase in commodities covered under daily price monitoring helps in better prediction of food inflation and plays a crucial role in policy interventions to stabilise price volatility in food items. Apart from daily price data, the Department also organized weekly interaction with DAFW, IMD, NAFED, NAFED and market intelligence for

inputs on production, area, yield, weather phenomena affecting prices of essential commodities. The prevailing price situation as well as factors which impact on prices, in both domestic and international markets, are studied and brought to the notice of high level committees for appropriate action at the policy level. Analyses of price trends and regular interactions with stakeholders ensures timely intervention for price stabilisation. The allocated budget together with expected accrual of sale proceeds to Corpus Fund are sufficient for price monitoring and price stabilisation interventions.”

3.47 Regarding the funds disbursed under the PSF during 2024-25 for maintaining buffer stocks of pulses, onions, and potatoes, and ensuring the availability of these commodities in the market to stabilize prices when needed, the department has provided the following state/UT-wise details:

PSF Corpus Fund Status as on 24.01.2025											
Fund Released from PSF Corpus (in Rs. Crore)											
Particulars	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*	Total
Funds released to agencies for procurement of Agri-Horticultural Commodities											
NAFED	202.75	3,471.68	3,138.00	3,928.07	3,279.44	9,226.29	10,331.69	4,139.54	7,693.51	7,887.20	53,298.18
SFAC	93.55	660.65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	754.20
FCI	150.00	706.00	510.23	-	151.27	56.78	-	-	-	-	1,574.28
MMTC	144.36	2,246.68	-	-	220.50	-	-	-	-	-	2,611.54
STC	-	42.81	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42.81

NCCF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	442.57	3,574.51	1,410.23	5,427.30
DoFPD (Rice Wheat Subsidy)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.15	1,028.96	1,047.11
Agency Total	590.66	7,127.82	3,648.23	3,928.07	3,651.21	9,283.07	10,331.69	4,582.11	11,286.17	10,326.39	64,755.42
Funds released to states for creation of State Level PSF											
Andhra Pradesh	25.00	-	25.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50.00
West Bengal	2.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.50
Telangana	9.15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.15
Odisha	-	-	-	25.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.00
Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-	2.50	-	-	-	-	-	2.50
Assam	-	-	-	-	75.00	-	-	-	-	-	75.00
Nagaland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37.50	-	37.50
States Total	36.65	-	25.00	25.00	77.50	-	-	-	37.50	-	201.65
Other releases for Price Monitoring, Admin Expenses, Transport Claims and Studies under PSF											

Price Monitoring										4.49	4.49
Admin Expenses	-	1.35	-	-	0.49	0.97	0.20	0.71	0.74	0.44	4.90
PMGKAY (Transport Claims)	-	-	-	-	-	-	35.60	-	-	2.36	37.96
Other Exp. Studies, Consultants etc										9.91	9.91
Others Total	-	1.35	-	-	0.49	1.45	36.00	0.71	7.48	17.20	64.68
Grand Total	627.31	7,129.16	3,673.23	3,953.07	3,729.20	9,284.52	10,367.70	4,582.82	11,331.15	10,343.59	65,021.75

Fund Returned to PSF Corpus by CNAs (in Rs. Crores)

Agency	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*	Total
NAFED	9.15	25.09	730.39	2,659.50	1,338.27	4,701.77	3,924.37	4,786.30	4,687.94	2,906.02	25,768.80

FCI	-	-	-	677.84	26.26	122.37	-	-	-	-	826.47
SFAC	-	8.93	164.11	266.28	9.66	-	-	-	-	10.99	459.97
MMTC	108.34	9.30	580.55	666.58	20.93	-	14.81	-	9.21	23.71	1,433.43
STC	-	-	23.11	0.21	-	-	-	-	-	-	23.32
NCCF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,129.67	1,543.05	2,672.72
CIPHET	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.04	-	0.04
Kendriya Bhandar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68.67	748.11	816.78
Others - Gujcomosl/ MSCM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71.32	718.40	789.72
Grand Total	117.49	43.33	1,498.16	4,270.41	1,395.12	4,824.14	3,939.18	4,786.30	5,966.85	5,950.28	32,791.27

3.48 When asked whether there have been any changes in the commodities covered under the PSF, the department has informed has furnished:

“As per PSF guidelines, PSF activities can be undertaken for agri-horticultural commodities. As of now pulses (Tur, Urad, Moong, Masur and Chana) and onion buffer stocks are maintained under PSF. Further, market intervention had been undertaken in

Tomato when there was sharp increase in its prices. Also, part of the subsidy under Bharat Atta and Bharat Rice are borne by PSF.”

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

(Recommendation No. 9)

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

(Recommendation No. 10)

(a) National Cooperative Consumers Federation (NCCF)

3.51 NCCF is one of the implementing agency under PSF scheme and works closely with Department of Consumer Affairs to ensure the strategic release of stocks and has contributed pro-actively in stabilizing consumer prices during inflationary periods and supply shortages particularly for pulses and onion through various PSF operations like calibrated release of onion procured under PSF at the issue price determined by DoCA, import of pulses during lean season to meet domestics availability of pulses; disposal of pulses procured under PSF under various welfare schemes like PDS, MDM, etc. some of the major interventions of NCCF/DoCA

includes subsidized sale of Onion, Tomato and supply of Bharat dals to ensure affordability and availability of these items to consumers.

3.52 The National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd is an apex level organization of Consumer Cooperatives in the country. It functions under the administrative control of Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Govt. of India. It operates through its 29 branch Offices all over the country located in State Capitals and other prominent places. The Government of India have major Share Capital holding in NCCF which is about 63.12%. The activities of NCCF are managed by its Board of Directors consisting of elected/nominated/Co-opted Directors from Cooperatives and the Government of India besides a Managing Director who is also appointed on the recommendations of the Govt. Of India.

3.53 NCCF has 152 members which includes the Govt. of India, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), NAFED and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) besides State level Consumer Cooperative Federations, Distt. and primary level consumer societies. The total paid up share capital of NCCF as on 31.3.2024 is Rs. 15.02 crore wherein Govt. of India contributed Rs.9.48 crores (63.12%).

3.54 The NCCF has been playing an important role of serving the consumers of the country by making them available items of daily use at reasonable prices. It intervenes at the hour of steep price hike of various commodities like tomatoes, onion, pulses, rice Atta on direction of Deptt. of Consumer Affairs to stabilize the prices of these commodities in the open market. The NCCF has been continuously receiving dispensation from the Deptt. of Consumer Affairs in development of its business activities since last many years which include procurement of Pulses, onion, tomatoes etc. under Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) to maintain the buffer stock. Besides, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) has recommended NCCF as a nodal Agency for procurement of wheat and paddy in the States. The NCCF also undertakes export of food-grains on demand from foreign buyers.

3.55 With the support of the Deptt. of Consumer Affairs, the NCCF has achieved an ever-historic turnover and net profit during 2023-24 with profit before tax soaring to ₹246.42 crore (604.7 % growth over the last year) and after-tax profit reaching ₹182.25 crore (623.1 % growth over the last year).

3.56 The NCCF has been receiving patronage and guidance from Ministry of Cooperation. In this direction, the NCCF was benefited immensely by the interaction of Hon'ble Union Home and Cooperation Minister with the Members of the Board of Directors of NCCF. Under his guidance, the NCCF entered into procurement of Maize directly from the farmers for supply to the Distilleries for production of Ethanol as a measure of Govt. of India to curtail dependency on import of crude oil. It has also entered into construction of Warehouses at PACS level for storage of different produces of farmers. NCCF has developed and is maintaining online portal for pre-registration of farmers for procurement of Tur, Urad, Masur and Maize with assurance of procurement under "Atmanirbhar Krishi" to develop self-sufficiency in pulses and ensure price stability.

Mechanism for Pre-registration of farmers and Procurement

E-Samridhi Portal of NAFED & E-Samyukti Portal of NCCF	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAFED and NCCF are central Nodal Agencies - Aadhar Based registration of farmers - Direct Benefit transfer to Farmers by NAFED and NCCF - Procurement , Storage and Stock Management by central nodal agencies
Registration of Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through State Level Support Agencies /PACS/FPOs - Farmers can directly register on the portal - Through insurance companies of PMFBY
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - @ MSP under PSS by DA&FW - @ Market Linked price under PSF by DoCA - Farmer has option to sell to NAFED/NCCF or in open market
Market Linked Price (Under PSF)	<p>MAPP – Minimum Assured Procurement Price – Weighted Average of Maximum & Modal prices across all mandis in the district 3 days prior to purchase date</p> <p>DBPP – Dynamic Buffer Procurement Price – Weighted Average of Maximum and Modal prices across all mandis in the district 3 days prior and 3 days after purchase including purchase date, which ever is higher</p> <p>Payment to farmers directly within 5 days from the date of issue of Warehouse receipt</p>

3.57 While referring to the Hon'ble Finance Minister's outline of the 'Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses,' with a focus on Tur, Urad, and Masoor, the Committee sought to understand the specific actions NCCF plans to undertake for the procurement of these pulses over the next four years. Additionally, the Committee inquired about how NCCF will ensure an efficient registration process for farmers and establish agreements to facilitate procurement. In response, the department has provided the following detailed roadmap:

" NCCF has developed a comprehensive strategy to support the "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses" through the following key actions over the next four years:

- Pre-registration of farmers** to ensure direct engagement and transparency in procurement. A total of 8.60 lakh farmers have registered on NCCF's Esamyukti portal for the cultivation and procurement of tur, masur, and urad. Additionally, 11,205 PACS and FPOs have also joined the platform. Under the Atmanirbhar Krishi initiative, crop-wise registration data shows that tur has the highest number of registrations at 6.18 lakh farmers, followed by masur with 1.52 lakh and urad with 90.2 thousand.
- Farmer outreach programs** to educate and encourage participation in the procurement process. Under the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses, NCCF has actively promoted self-reliance among farmers by distributing over 8,000 free seed kits of Tur, Urad, and Masoor across 30 districts in 14 states through its minikit seed distribution drives and plans to do this at 88 locations. We have executed a MoU with Bhartiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) for supply of seed minikits during our farmer awareness program.
- Assured buy-back agreements** to provide farmers with price security and market stability.

- d) **Collaborations with local-level relevant institutions** to strengthen procurement networks and ensure smooth operations.
- e) **Focused interventions in rainfed, aspirational districts, tribal, women-led, and naxal-affected areas** to promote inclusive growth.
- f) **Print, digital, and social media campaigns** to create awareness and enhance farmer participation.
- g) **Technical and technological collaborations** to improve productivity and streamline procurement processes.
- h) **Digital infrastructure development** to enhance efficiency and transparency in procurement operations.
- i) **Consistent follow-ups with state governments** to ensure seamless implementation and policy alignment.
- j) **Grain storage expansion and enhancement** by constructing grain storage warehouse at the PACS level under the world's largest grain storage scheme to maintain quality and minimize post-harvest losses.

These initiatives will collectively strengthen domestic pulse production and contribute to self-sufficiency in Tur, Urad, and Masoor.

NCCF road map for efficient registration of farmers

- a) NCCF has successfully registered over 21 lakh farmers and 26,334 PACS/FPOs/FPCs on the Esamyukti portal for various crops.
- b) For Tur procurement, over 6.16 lakh farmers have registered, while more than 1.5 lakh farmers have enrolled for Masur. Additionally, over 90,000 farmers have registered for Urad on Esamyukti.
- c) The farmer registration process is ongoing, with continuous efforts to expand outreach. NCCF has signed an MoU with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to facilitate the registration of small and marginalized women farmers, FPOs, and FPCs on the Esamyukti portal. Additionally, partnerships with State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) are ongoing. Special emphasis is being placed on the North-Eastern region, with MoUs and agreements signed with North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC) to ensure the registration of farmers.
- d) To enhance the efficiency of the registration process, NCCF has entered into MoU with National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) and integrating registered farmers' data for Aadhaar verification for DBT and linking it with AgriStack for land record verification. This integration will enable the generation of unique farmer registration numbers. Collaborations with state and central agricultural universities, as well as Krishi Vigyan Kendras, are also underway to provide technical assistance to farmers. Furthermore, NCCF is securing assured buy-back agreements by ensuring 100% farmer registration on the Esamyukti portal. A real-time monitoring mechanism is being under development to track crop production and ensure timely procurement.
- e) NCCF is focusing on technological advancements and digital integration to enhance the efficiency of registration, procurement and payments. It aims to increase pre-registered farmers by 20-30% annually, with a target of registering an additional 10 lakh farmers from the North-Eastern Region alone. Regarding PACS, NCCF plans to register at least 50% of all computerized PACS within the next four years, while registration of FPOs, societies, and cooperatives is expected to grow by 15-20% per year.

Projected Farmer Registration Growth (YoY):

Year	Farmers' Registration (30% increase per year)
2024-25	2100000
2025-26	2730000
2026-27	3412500
2027-28	4265625
2028-29	5332031

To ensure price assurance and market security, structured buy-back agreements will be executed with registered farmers, strengthening their financial stability and boosting confidence in agricultural procurement processes.

Progress of Pre-registration of farmers and procurement

	E-Samridhi portal of NAFED	E-Samyukti portal of NCCF
Procurement in 2023-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total no. of registered farmers benefitted – 2,20,045 - Commodities Purchased - Tur – 26,132 MT from 9,122 farmers - Masoor – 2,48,783 MT from 1,16,907 farmers - Moong – 2,27,079 MT from 94,016 farmers (under PSS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total no. of registered farmer benefitted – 48,285 - Commodities Purchased - Tur – 7,029.37 MT from 1,687 farmers - Masoor – Nil - Moong – 1,19,732.25 MT from 46,598 farmers
Registration of Farmers in 2024-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total 17,41,010 farmers registered, Out of which 5,78,317 Farmers registered for Tur, Urad and Masoor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9,50,043 farmers registered
Procurement in 2024-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tur – 17,350 MT Tur (Under PSS) - Urad – 41 MT (Under PSF) 	

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3.58 When asked whether NCCF has made budgetary provisions to support this initiative, and if so, to provide the relevant details, the department has submitted the following reply:

“NCCF does not have a dedicated budget for farmer registration or outreach campaigns. However, it is utilizing funds allocated by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) for media campaigns and outreach programs, amounting to ₹1 crore in FY 2024-25. Additionally, NCCF is leveraging CSR contributions from partner banks—₹30 lakh from the Central Bank of India and ₹80 lakh from IDBI—to facilitate farmer outreach initiatives. These funds are being used for pre-registration of farmers, distribution of seed mini-kits, and implementation of assured buy-back agreements.

3.59 On being asked about the role and intervention of Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) viz. NCCF, NAFED, SAFAL, Kendriya Bhandar etc. in procurement under the PSF, as well as their contribution to stabilizing the prices of essential commodities, the department provided the following response in its oral reply:"

“Sir, talking about onions, I would like to submit that we raised the buffer stock of 4.7 lakh metric tonnes to take care of those particular lean months when the supplies of onions had gone down in the country. We dispatched almost 3 lakh metric tonnes of quantity through both NCCF and NAFED. Out of which, the entire 2,96,198 metric tonnes were ‘A’ Grade onion, and 71 per cent of this was sold in the wholesale market and 29 per cent was sold directly in the retail market. To sell it in the wholesale market, of course, we were taking it to the various mandis and all.

But even for retail partners, we tied up with Safal, we tied up with Kendriya Bhandar, with Reliance Retail, e-commerce platforms, plus stationary outlets including mobile vans of NCCF and NAFED in the major consumption hubs, which were making these onions available to the common man at Rs.35 per kilogram. This was a very successful initiative which we were able to manage through our buffer stock.

एक नया इनोवेटिव कार्य कांदा एक्सप्रेस रूप में किया गया। पहली बार रेल के माध्यम से हमने प्याज को नासिक से पूरे देश में ट्रांसपोर्ट करवाया। आप देखें कि नासिक से चलकर दिल्ली में 5600 मीट्रिक टन, लखनऊ में 1400 मीट्रिक टन, गुवाहाटी में 835 मीट्रिक टन, कोलकाता में 1640 मीट्रिक टन, चेन्नई में 2300 मीट्रिक टन, नॉर्थ-साउथ-ईस्ट, जो देश के अन्य भाग हैं, प्याज प्रोजेक्टिंग बेल्ट नासिक से लेकर पूरे देश में हमने रेल के माध्यम से ट्रांसपोर्ट करवाया और करीब 12 हजार मीट्रिक टन कैरी किया गया, रेल के माध्यम से यह किया गया। इस सफलता को संतोषजनक पाते हुए आने वाले सालों में भी हमारा प्रयास रहेगा कि रेल के माध्यम से हम इस इंटरवेंशन का प्रयोग करें। इसका बहुत अच्छा नतीजा आया और प्याज की कीमतें स्थिर हुईं। पूरे देश में एक समय ऐसा था कि प्याज की कीमतें समस्या पैदा करेंगी। अतः ट्रेन के माध्यम से आम आदमी को सही रेट पर प्याज मुहैया कराने में हम सफल हो पाए।

This graph basically gives a clear depiction of how does policy intervention help in controlling the prices. Particularly, I will point out a couple of points. There is a spike, which you see, when we had to impose 40 per cent export duty, the price of onion was going up. This was sometime in September 2023, when the price of onion was shooting up. That was the time when we decided to impose a 40 per cent export duty so that

whatever onion is available in the country should not unnecessarily go out of the country and create further inflation as well as problem of prices.

Then, there was a decline in Kharif production, which we were estimating. As a result, the prices further shot up. That was when you see that blue spike in the centre. That was the time when we decided to impose a Minimum Export Price on onion exports so that onion should not be exported beyond that. Even in December 2023, we prohibited the export of onions so that absolutely no onion leaves the country. Thus, we were able to bring down the prices of onion.”

3.60 When the Committee inquired about the interventions and strategies being implemented to address the gap between wholesale and retail prices of essential commodities, the department provided the following response in its oral reply:"

“despite all our interventions, there was a gap between wholesale prices and the retail prices. Some of the interventions had been able to peg the wholesale prices, but the retail prices were still quite up. And, this was what was leading to speculative trade. So, we wanted to look at what would be the possible interventions in this scenario.

In these challenges which we were facing, it was important that we should be able to ensure a regular and smooth inflow of pulses import to supplement the domestic availability of pulses, and then we had to think of policy decisions which could maintain a stable price regime. So, besides pre-registration of farmers for procurement, we also thought of directly intervening in the retail market through the sale of Bharat pulses, which was done last year also. And this year, it was continued with the second phase. I will come with greater detail in the subsequent slides. “

3.61 In the context of government’s emphasis on achieving self-sufficiency in pulses, the Committee inquired about the specific procurement targets NCCF has set for Tur, Urad, and Masoor over the next four years, as well as how NCCF plans to manage the procurement process to ensure these targets are met. In response, the department has provided the following written reply:

“ The procurement targets set by NCCF for Tur, Urad, and Masoor over the next four years is as under :-

Year	Target for Tur, Urad, and Masoor in MT
2025	450000
2026	540000
2027	648000
2028	777600

Following plan has been made by NCCF to manage the procurement process to ensure these targets are met

- a) Pre-registration of farmers to ensure direct engagement and transparency in procurement.
- b) Farmer outreach programs to educate and encourage participation in the procurement process. Under the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses, NCCF is actively promoting self-reliance among farmers by distributing seed kits of Tur, Urad, and Masoor across 14 states where these crops cultivated.
- c) Assured buy-back agreements to provide farmers with price security and market stability.
- d) Collaborations with local-level relevant institutions to strengthen procurement networks and ensure smooth operations.”

3.62 When asked how NCCF intends to support farmers in registering and entering into agreements for the procurement of pulses under the 'Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses,' and what measures are being taken to ensure the procurement process remains accessible and beneficial, particularly for farmers in remote areas, the department provided the following response:

- a) **Pre-registration of farmers** to ensure direct engagement and transparency in procurement. A total of 8.60 lakh farmers have registered on NCCF's Esamyukti portal for the cultivation and procurement of tur, masur, and urad. Additionally, 11,205 PACS and FPOs have also joined the platform. Under the Atmanirbhar Krishi initiative, crop-wise registration data shows that tur has the highest number of registrations at 6.18 lakh farmers, followed by masur with 1.52 lakh and urad with 90.2 thousand.
- b) **Farmer outreach programs** to educate and encourage participation in the procurement process. Under the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses, NCCF has actively promoted self-reliance among farmers by distributing over 8,000 free seed kits of Tur, Urad, and Masoor across 30 districts in 14 states through its minikit seed distribution drives.
- c) **Assured buy-back agreements** to provide farmers with price security and market stability. In FY 2024-25, an assured Buyback Agreement has been signed with 1,995 farmers in Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Tamil Nadu for the procurement of Tur, Urad, and Maize at MSP, with further expansion underway. Plans are in place to extend these outreach programs and buy back agreements at 88 remote locations in various states for Tur, Urad and Masur, focusing on rainfed, women-led, tribal, and naxal-affected areas.
- d) **Collaborations with local-level relevant institutions** to strengthen procurement networks and ensure smooth operations. NCCF collaborated with NRLM, NERAMAC, SRLMs, KVKs, SAUs etc.
- e) **Focused interventions in rainfed, aspirational districts, tribal, women-led, and naxal-affected areas** to promote inclusive growth. NCCF has registered over 1.16 lakhs farmers on Esamyukti for NER states which will further increase to 10 lakhs in next 1-2 years. We have assured 100% procurement commitment for Tur, Urad and Masur at MSP with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) payments to farmers
- f) **Print, digital, and social media campaigns** to create awareness and enhance farmer participation. NCCF also providing assistance to farmers through its toll-free number and timely procurement SMS to farmers.
- g) **Technical and technological collaborations** to improve productivity and streamline procurement processes.

- h) **Digital infrastructure development** to enhance efficiency and transparency in procurement operations.
- i) **Consistent follow-up with state governments** to ensure seamless implementation and policy alignment.
- j) **Grain storage expansion and enhancement** by constructing grain storage warehouse at the PACS level under the world's largest grain storage scheme to maintain quality and minimize post-harvest losses.

Retail Sale of Bharat Dals

Key Highlights

- Bharat Chana Dals (Phase – II) launched on 23rd Oct 2024
- Bharat Chana Dal at MRP of Rs.70 per kg and Bharat Chana Whole at MRP of Rs.58 per kg.
- Bharat Moong Dal at Rs.107 per kg, Bharat Moong Sabut at Rs.93 per kg and Bharat Masur Dal at Rs. 89 per kg.



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3.63 When inquired about the estimated quantity of commodities procured and sold at subsidized prices during 2024-25 by NCCF to mitigate price fluctuations and inflationary pressures, the department provided the following response:

“ NCCF has successfully procured 9.75 LMT of pulses and oilseeds during the 2024-25 season, with the total procurement value reaching approximately ₹5,850 crores to date.

In the same period, NCCF distributed 0.75 LMT of Moong at subsidized prices under the Bharat Brand initiative.

In 2023, NCCF procured 3.66 LMT of onions to stabilize market supply. In 2024, procurement reached 246,647.2 metric tons, primarily from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, directly benefiting over 7,400 farmers with payments totaling ₹628.46 crore.

To control tomato prices, NCCF undertook two major interventions:

- a) **July 29 – August 8, 2024:** 7,159 kg of tomatoes were sold via mobile vans and retail shops across 95 locations, reducing market prices by ₹50/kg, bringing them below ₹50/kg nationwide.
- b) **October 7 – October 23, 2024:** Amidst a price surge above ₹120/kg, NCCF intervened in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai, selling 10,014 kg of tomatoes across 58 locations, lowering open market prices by ₹30/kg, bringing them below ₹100/kg nationwide.”

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

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

(Recommendation No. 11)

(vi) Consumer Welfare Fund

3.65 The Consumer Welfare Fund Rules were framed and notified in the Gazette of India in 1992, under the Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944 (1 of 1944) pursuant to its amendment in 1991. On enactment of the CGST Act, 2017, Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) has been constituted under Section 57 of the Central Goods & Service Tax (CGST) Act, 2017. The provision for utilization of CWF has been made in Section 58 of the CGST Act, 2017 which provides that the fund shall be utilized by the Government for the welfare of the consumers in such manner as may be prescribed. Accordingly, the provisions governing the manner of utilization of the Fund has been prescribed in Rule 97 of the CGST Rules, 2017.

Sub-rule (7A) of rule 97 of CGST Rules, 2017, provides that the Committee, constituted under sub-rule (4), shall make available to the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (Board) 50 per cent. of the amount credited to the Fund each year, for publicity or consumer awareness on Goods and Services Tax, provided the availability of funds for consumer welfare activities of the Department of Consumer Affairs is not less than twenty-five crore rupees per annum.

The money that is not refundable to the manufacturers etc. is credited to the Consumer Welfare Fund, to be utilized for the welfare of the consumers in accordance with the above Rules and Guidelines prepared thereunder. *3t of Consumer Affairs*

Based on the decisions of the Standing Committee, Financial assistance from CWF is given to various consumer awareness/publicity programmes of DoCA, Autonomous Institutions like Universities/Corporations/Educational Institutes etc., Central/State/UT departments/organizations, Government bodies and States to promote and protect the welfare of the consumer, engaged in consumer awareness/protection activities, for consumer awareness/protection and strengthen consumer movement in the country.

Financial assistance from the CWF have been given for following projects by DOCA:-

- i. Creation of Consumer Law Chairs/ Centres of Excellence in Institutions/ Universities of repute to foster research and training on consumer related issues.
- ii. Projects for spreading consumer literacy and awareness.
- iii. Establishment of Corpus Fund in the States/UTs on sharing basis viz Central and State share as decided from time to time.

The Department of Consumer Affairs initiates number of steps to promote a responsible and responsive consumer movement in the country.

3.66 After enactment of the concerned State Goods and Services Tax Acts, Consumer Welfare Fund has been established by the State Governments in their State under these Acts.

In the year 2003, all the States/UTs were impressed upon to set up a Consumer Welfare Fund at the State level, proactive efforts for promoting the consumer movement could be strengthened by States/UTs at grass root level with the financial support from CWF. As of now the ratio of Central and State/ UT sharing is 75:25 (90:10 in the case of Special Category States/UTs) to establish Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund of ₹ 20.00 crores (enhanced from ₹ 10.00 crores). CWF and Consumer Welfare(Corpus) Funds are kept in separate interest bearing accounts in a nationalised bank. With the help of Government of India, Consumer Welfare Fund has been set up in 25 States/UTs viz. Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Nagaland, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, Jharkhand, Telangana, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Assam and Puducherry.

3.67 The BE, RE and AE for the last five years is as follows

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	BE	RE	AE	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	261.00	261.00	22.92	8.8
2021-22	263.50	263.50	37.00	14.0
2022-23	37.50	37.00	37.00	100
2023-24	37.00	57.87	36.85	63.6
2024-25	56.20	56.20	40.19(upto	71.5

			14.2.2025)	
2025-26	56.20			-

3.68 The allocation for BE 2024-25 remains constant at ₹56.20. The Committee sought clarification on the details and reasons for this allocation, as well as the key proposals for utilizing the BE 2025-26 allocation. In response to this query, the department has provided the following information:

“(i) The grants from CWF are given to the State/UT Governments to establish/enhance their respective Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund. As of now, the Consumer Welfare Fund has been established in 25 States/UTs. It is proposed to establish Consumer Welfare Fund (Corpus) in remaining states/UTs in financial year 2025-26.

(ii) Establishment of Consumer Law Chairs in National Law Universities/Institutions of Importance.

(iii) To provide Grants in Aid to NLU/Educational Institutions for conducting Capacity Building Programmes for the Presidents/Members of the National/State/District Consumer Redressal Commissions.”

Grant Released under CWF to States/UTs

North-East States			Other States/UTs		
Sl. No.	Name of State / UT	Amount Released (In Crore)	Sl. No.	Name of State / UT	Amount Released (In Crore)
1	Assam	10.00	1	Andhra Pradesh	15.00
2	Arunachal Pradesh	09.00	2	Bihar	07.50
3	Mizoram	08.91	3	Gujarat	15.00
4	Meghalaya	05.00	4	Goa	10.00
5	Nagaland	09.00	5	Haryana	07.50
6	Sikkim	11.25	6	Jharkhand	10.50
7	Tripura	18.00	7	Karnataka	07.50
			8	Kerala	07.50
			9	Madhya Pradesh	15.00
			10	Maharashtra	15.00
			11	Odisha	15.00
			12	Rajasthan	15.00
			13	Tamil Nadu	15.00
			14	Telangana	07.50
			15	Uttar Pradesh	15.00
			16	Uttarakhand	18.00
			17	West Bengal	15.00
			18	Puducherry	05.00
			Total	234.00	

Total Grants of Rs.305.16 Cr

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3.69 On being asked regarding the details of financial assistance provided to States/UTs under the Consumer Welfare Fund, along with the Utilization Certificates received from the respective States/UTs, the department has provided the following information:

S.R. No.	Name of State /UTs	Amount Released (In Crore)
1.	Assam	10.00
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	9.00
3.	Mizoram	8.91
4.	Meghalaya	5.00
5.	Nagaland	9.00
6.	Sikkim	11.25
7.	Tripura	18.00
8.	Andhra Pradesh	15.00
9.	Bihar	7.50
10.	Gujarat	15.00
11.	Goa	10.00
12.	Haryana	7.50
13.	Jharkhand	10.50
14.	Karnataka	7.50
15.	Kerala	7.50
16.	Madhya Pradesh	15.00
17.	Maharashtra	15.00
18.	Odisha	15.00
19.	Rajasthan	15.00
20.	Tamil Nadu	15.00
21.	Telangana	7.50
22.	Uttar Pradesh	15.00
23.	Uttarakhand	18.00
24.	West Bengal	15.00
25.	Puducherry	5.00
Total Grants		305.16

The Utilization Certificates are submitted by the State/UTs Governments providing details of the projects undertaken by them from the interest accrued on the Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Funds. Further grants are released only on receipt of the UCs for the funds granted earlier.

3.70 The Committee inquired about how the department ensures the effective utilization of funds allocated to NGOs and State Governments under the CWF, and what monitoring mechanisms are in place to track their usage. In response, the department has provided the following information:"

“The Utilization Certificates are submitted by the State/UTs Governments providing details of the projects undertaken by them from the interest accrued on the Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Funds. These UCs are examined and the states/UTs are

sensitized regarding the utilization of the funds on Consumer Welfare through regular review meetings.

Reminders/Letters/D.O. Letters are sent regularly for submission of UCs once the activities/project has completed Release of second & subsequent installments is subject to submission of UCs for earlier released grants.”

3.71 On being asked whether there are any new proposals to enhance the reach and impact of the CWF, the department has provided the following response:

“The following steps are being taken for enhancing the reach and impact of the CWF:-

(i) The remaining States/UTs where Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund is yet to be established are continuously being pursued to establish Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Fund in their states. The state of Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh etc. are in advanced stage of establishing Corpus fund.

(ii) The States/UTs where Corpus Fund has been established are being asked to submit their share so that the Central Share can be deposited to enhance the fund to the Rs. 20 Crore.

(iii) Institutions/Universities are being requested to establish the Consumer Law Chair. At present, the Consumer Law Chairs have been established at National Law University, New Delhi, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru and National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi.

(iv) The reach of the Capacity Building Programme for the Presidents/Members of National/States/District is increasing having its pan Indian impact.

(v) The moot court competition is being conducted for raising awareness and educating the students about Consumer Law. “

3.72 The Committee asked the department whether they have any mechanism to track and evaluate the success of projects funded under the CWF, and if so, to provide details, the department furnished the following information:

“The Utilization Certificates are submitted by the State/UTs Governments providing details of the projects undertaken by them from the interest accrued on the Consumer Welfare (Corpus) Funds. These UCs are examined and the states/UTs are sensitized regarding the utilization of the funds on Consumer Welfare through regular review meetings.

2. Reminders/Letters/D.O. Letters are sent regularly for submission of UCs once the activities/project has completed Release of second & subsequent installments is subject to submission of UCs for earlier released grants.”

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

(Recommendation No. 12)

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

(Recommendation No. 13)

B. LEGAL METROLOGY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

(i) Strengthening of Legal Metrology Regulation and Enforcement

3.75 Under the sub-scheme 'Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Regulation and Enforcement', administered by the Legal Metrology in the Department of Consumer Affairs, there are following there components:

(a) Strengthening Legal Metrology infrastructure of State/ UTs:

1. The objective is to modernize and strengthen the infrastructure of the Legal Metrology department across states and union territories, ensuring that they are well-equipped to enforce the provisions of the Legal Metrology Act and associated rules. The scheme support the State's Legal Metrology Department for strengthening infrastructure in holistic way namely construction of laboratory building, supply of equipments and capacity building of enforcement officials for effective implementation of weights and measures laws. The Scheme aims at better implementation of weights and measures laws, thus ensuring better consumer protection.
2. The said scheme is a continuing scheme, which includes release of grant in aid for construction of laboratory buildings, supply of standard equipments for verification of weights and measures used in any transaction & protection and capacity building of Legal Metrology enforcement officials. Under the scheme proposal for the construction of Controller Office and establishment of R&D Centre are also considered. Under the scheme provision for supply of Standard equipment like CNG/ LPG testing kits for dispensing units, sphygmomanometer testing kit, clinical thermometer testing kit, Mobile weighbridge testing kits, computers, printers etc. is made.

(b) Strengthening Regional Reference Standards Laboratory [RRSLs] and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology [IILM], Ranchi:

1. RRSLs are vital for maintaining the standards of weights and measures, which are used as reference points for calibration and verification across the country. The schemes aim to modernize and upgrade these laboratories to meet the current and future demands of legal metrology. The objective of the scheme is to strengthen Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs) by complementing the existing facility in mass, volume and length measurement. The said scheme is a continuing scheme. The scheme aims at providing new testing facilities for better consumer protection. Department has established the RRSLs at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Guwahati and Nagpur.
2. Laboratory equipments like sphygmomanometer testing kit, clinical thermometer testing kit, Laser based length measurement instrument etc. are being provided to Regional Reference Standards Laboratory (RRSL) and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi for calibration of weights and measures used in any transaction & protection.
3. The IILM, Ranchi, is a premier training and research institution in the field of legal metrology in India. It plays a key role in training legal metrology officers and stakeholders in the latest practices, technologies and standards. The schemes support the IILM in its mission to develop a skilled workforce. Strengthening IILM enhances the overall capacity of the legal metrology system in India by ensuring that officers are well-trained, up-to-date with the latest standards and practices and capable of effectively implementing legal metrology laws. It also promotes innovation and continuous improvement in the field.
4. The schemes implemented by the Department play a pivotal role in strengthening the Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) and the Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi. By providing financial support, modernizing infrastructure, enhancing training and research, and promoting international collaboration, these initiatives ensure that India's legal metrology framework is robust, reliable, and in line with global standards. This, in turn, helps to protect consumers, promote fair trade, and boost confidence in the country's measurement system.

(c) Time Dissemination [Dissemination of Indian Standard Time (IST)]:

1. The Time Dissemination Project is a critical support mechanism for legal metrology, providing a standardized and accurate time reference that is essential for a wide range of measurement processes, legal compliance, digital systems, and trade practices. By ensuring that all time-dependent activities are based on a reliable and uniform time standard, the project helps maintain the integrity of measurements, supports fair trade, and ensures legal and regulatory compliance.

2. There are seven base units for any quantitative measurement, which in the international systems of units (SI unit) are kilogram for mass, meter for length, second for time, Ampere for electric current, Kelvin for temperature, Candela for light intensity and mole for amount of substance. Provisions for units of weights and measures are provided under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.
3. In India, dissemination of Time, one of the seven base units, is being maintained at only one level which is at NPL, New Delhi. The Group of Secretaries on Science & Technology, constituted by the Cabinet Secretariat in 2016, recommend that, "Presently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being adopted mandatorily by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and 'Internet Service Providers' (ISPs). Non-uniformity of time across different systems creates problems in investigation of cyber crime by the law enforcement agencies (LEAs). Hence, synchronisation of all networks and computers within the country with a national clock is a must, especially for the real time applications in strategic sector and national security.
4. Accurate time dissemination as well as precise time synchronization has significant impact on all societal, industrial, strategic and many other sectors like monitoring of the power grid failures, international trade, banking systems, automatic signalling in road & railways, weather forecasting, disaster managements, searching for natural resources under the earth's crust requires robust, reliable and accurate timing systems.
5. An MoU with CSIR- NPL for executing the project for setting up of atomic clocks has been signed. Under the MoU, the hardware and software for setting up the time ensembles will be procured, installed and commissioned by NPL. NPL will handhold LM and shall provide requisite technical support. The MoU also envisages setting up of a Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) at RRSL, Bengaluru.
6. Precise time is essential for country's strategic and non-strategic sectors for navigation, tele-communication, internet, power grid synchronisation, banking systems, digital governance, transport systems, financial transactions, defence systems, cyber physical systems, and upcoming technologies of 5G, artificial intelligence and internet of things. Precise time with nanosecond accuracy is also required for high-end research in science, namely, measurement of fundamental physical constants, detection of the gravitational waves, geodesy, deep space navigation, radio telescopes etc.
7. Presently in our country the Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being adopted mandatorily by all Telecom Service Providers (TSP) and Internet Service Providers (ISP). They are utilizing the servers synchronized to NIST, USA. Synchronisation of all networks and computers within the country with a national clock is a must, especially for the real time applications in strategic sector and national security.
8. Considering the importance of dissemination of Indian Standard Time (IST), the project has been undertaken by the Department of Consumer

Affairs. The project aims to create technology and infrastructure to disseminate IST from five sites across India to all the telecom operators, power grids, financial institutions, data centres, common citizens etc. These locations are at the Regional Reference Standard Laboratories of this Department at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati.

9. The project shall establish the satellite links to NPL for traceability during the year 2024-25. A Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) of the Primary Time Scale generating IST at NPL is also being setup at Bangalore.

3.76 Some of the highlights that the department bought before the Committee are as under:

Time Dissemination Project

- Presently, timing servers are synchronized to GPS/ NIST, USA
- Synchronization of all networks and computers with national clock is must
- Considering the importance of dissemination of Indian Standard Time (IST), the project is implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs
- Project aims to create technology and infrastructure to disseminate IST
- Legal Metrology in association with NPL and ISRO is establishing:
 - ✓ Five time ensembles (including atomic clocks) at 5 RRSLs at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati
- **Public Comments on draft Legal Metrology IST Rules are being sought**



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3.77 The Committee requested for a detailed note on the funds sought and allocated over the past three years, the amount actually spent, the targets set for various activities versus actual achievements, and the reasons, if any, for not meeting the targets. In response, the department has provided the following reply:"

2022-23							
Scheme	B E	RE	Actual expen diture	% of of expenditur e w.r.t. RE	Target fixed	Actual Achievement s	Reason for not achieving the targets
Strengthe	3	3	3.0	100%	(i) To supply	(i) Equipment	NA

ning Legal Metrolog y Infrastru cture of States/U Ts					standards equipment for verification and stamping of weights and measures used in transaction and protection (ii) to provide training to Legal Metrology officers of States/ Uts under the Capacity Building Programme	were provided. (ii) officers were trained through online mode	
Strengthening of Regional Reference Standards Laboratory [RRSLs] and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology [IILM], Ranchi	4.7	4.85	4.38	90.31%	(i) To renovate/maintenance RRSLs (ii) To Provide standards equipment for testing and calibration (iii) to provide training to Legal Metrology officers of Govt. of India under the Capacity Building Programme	(i) Funds were utilised for Annual Maintenance of RRSLs and for up-gradation of RRSLs (ii) Equipment were provided. (iii) officers were trained	NA
Time Dissemination	9.3	15.15 / 11.65	11.55	99.14%	To establish the infrastructure for time dissemination	(i) Funds were sanctioned for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD and	NA

						for procurement of equipment to NPL	
Total	17	23	14.17				
2023-24							
Scheme	B E	RE	Actual expenditure	% of expenditure w.r.t. RE	Target fixed	Actual Achievements	Reason for not achieving the targets
Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs	6.75	16.23	16.23	100%	(i) To supply standards equipment for verification and stamping of weights and measures used in transaction and protection (ii) to provide training to Legal Metrology officers of States/ Uts under the Capacity Building Programme	(i) Equipment were provided. (ii) officers were trained through online mode	NA
Strengthening of Regional Reference Standards Laboratory [RRSLs] and Indian Institute	16	16	15.74	98.37%	(i) To renovate/maintenance RRSLs (ii) To Provide standards equipment for testing and calibration (iii) to provide training to Legal Metrology officers of Govt. of India under the Capacity Building Programme	(i) Funds are utilised for Annual Maintenance of RRSLs and for up-gradation of RRSLs (ii) Equipment were provided. (iii) officers	NA

of Legal Metrology [IILM], Ranchi						were trained	
Time Dissemination	5.25	12.77	11.99	93.89%	To establish the infrastructure for time dissemination	(i) Funds are sanctioned for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD and for procurement of equipment to NPL	NA
2024-25 (Rs. in Crore)							
Scheme	B E	RE	Actual expenditure (as on 27.01.2025)	% of expenditure w.r.t. RE	Target fixed	Actual Achievements	Reason for not achieving the targets
Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs	27	26.40	24.38	-	(i) To release grant in aid for the construction of Laboratory Buildings to States/UTs (ii) To supply standards equipment for verification and stamping of weights and measures used in transaction and protection (iii) to provide	(i) Equipment were provided. (ii) officers were trained through online mode	NA

					training to Legal Metrology officers of States/ Uts under the Capacity Building Programme		
Strengthening of Regional Reference Standards Laboratory [RRSLs] and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology [IILM], Ranchi	25	24.03	18.81	-	(i) To renovate/maintenance RRSLs through CPWD (ii) To Provide standards equipment for testing and calibration (iii) to provide training to Legal Metrology officers of Govt. of India under the Capacity Building Programme	(i) Funds are utilised for Annual Maintenance of RRSLs and for up-gradation of RRSLs (ii) Equipment were provided. (iii) officers were trained	NA
Time Dissemination	8	9.57	7.21	-	To establish the infrastructure for time dissemination	(i) Funds were sanctioned for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD and for procurement of equipment by NPL and ISRO	NA
Total	60	60	50.40				

3.78 The BE, RE and AE for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	62.00	42.74	41.02	95.98
2021-22	55.00	18.15	17.79	98.02
2022-23	17.00	19.50	18.93	97.08
2023-24	28.00	45.00	44.28	97.73
2024-25	60.00	60	50.52(upto 10.2.25)	82.2
2025-26	54.30			

3.79 The Committee noted that the Budget Estimate (BE) for 2025-26 reflects a reduced allocation of ₹54.30 crore compared to the BE for 2024-25. Consequently, the Committee inquired about the details and rationale behind this reduction, as well as the key proposals for utilizing the BE for 2025-26. In response, the department has provided the following reply:

“The Budget Estimate (BE) for 2025-26 reflects an allocation of ₹54.30 crore less than the BE for 2024-25, which is as per the approved outlay of the Schemes of Legal Metrology during 2021-26 for enhancing efficiency in legal metrology infrastructure. It will be ensured that ongoing projects are completed efficiently while prioritizing essential initiatives. Additionally, improved coordination with States/UTs and streamlining of fund disbursement mechanisms will enable more focused and need-based allocation of resources.

ii. For 2025-26, the allocated budget will be utilized for key initiatives, including strengthening Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs), modernizing state-level legal metrology facilities and advancing the time dissemination project. Emphasis will be placed on establishing software testing facilities for weighing and measuring instruments, capacity-building programs for enforcement officials and leveraging digital solutions for better regulatory oversight through development of the National Legal Metrology Portal. These measures will ensure continued progress in enhancing legal metrology infrastructure while maintaining fiscal prudence and efficiency.”

3.80 In response to the query regarding the details of financial assistance provided to States/UTs for setting up working standards/secondary standards laboratories, Controller offices, Research and Development Centres, etc., during 2024-25, state/UT-wise, the department has provided the following response:"

“During 2024-25 as on 17.2.2025, a grant in aid of Rs. 1.0 cr is released to Government of Uttar Pradesh for construction of two new working standard laboratories for providing verification & stamping facilities to traders.”

3.81 The Committee inquired about the steps being taken to prevent delays, if any, in the release of grants for strengthening the Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs due to non-submission of proposals from the States and UTs. In response, the department has provided the following details:

“ Department is proactively ensuring timely release of grants in aid under the Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure of States/UTs scheme by facilitating and expediting the proposal submission process. To address any delays, the department has been engaging with State and UT governments through regular follow-ups, capacity-building programs and communications. States/ UTs are advised/ guided for preparing and submitting complete proposals in accordance with the scheme’s guidelines.

2. Furthermore, the department has initiated proactive measures, including periodic review meetings and coordination with relevant authorities, to resolve any procedural bottlenecks. States and UTs are being encouraged to leverage the available resources efficiently, and any technical or administrative challenges faced by them are being promptly addressed. These efforts ensure that the grants are disbursed without undue delays, thereby strengthening the legal metrology infrastructure across the country and enhancing consumer protection, trade facilitation, and regulatory compliance.”

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

(Recommendation No. 14)

3.83 The Committee note that, currently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being mandatorily adopted by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and lack of uniformity in time across different systems presents significant challenges for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in investigating cybercrimes. Therefore , keeping in view the critical role of synchronized time systems in strategic sectors and national security, the Committee emphasizes the importance of aligning all networks and

computers in the country with a national clock. The Committee note that with the funds allocated for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD an for procurement of equipment by NPL and ISRO, the Committee recommend that the Department should prioritize the swift completion and expansion of the Time Dissemination Project to ensure nationwide synchronization of time systems including establishing and completing time dissemination infrastructure at all Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) and ensuring that TSPs and ISPs adopt Indian Standard Time (IST).

(Recommendation No. 15)

(ii) National Test House (NTH)

3.84 The National Test House (NTH), a subordinate office under the administrative control of Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India is a premier scientific institution of the country. NTH has established itself as a key player in the fields of testing, calibration, evaluation, and quality control for engineering materials and finished products.

3.85 Established in 1912 under the Railway Board, it has evolved into a nationally significant laboratory, providing test certificates that comply with national, international, or customer-specific standards and specifications. NTH plays a vital role in driving technological advancement across various sectors, including industry, commerce, trade, and standardization. It has been pivotal in the growth of indigenous industries, connecting industrial research with the production of high-quality products that adhere to rigorous quality control standards.

3.86 NTH is modernizing by digitizing its testing processes to enhance service quality and efficiency. In the recent past, we have built advanced laboratories that compete globally while offering local solutions. Their goal is to create a cutting-edge testing environment that supports product quality and aligns with the “Atmanirbhar Bharat” vision for self-reliance and national growth.

3.87 Various schemes/programmes/projects under implementation by NTH are detailed below:

a) Setting up of “Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution Sectors” at Jaipur:

NTH is setting up “Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution Sectors” at Manda, Jaipur district during the year 2024-25 and 2025-26. Apart from transformer testing, the facility caters testing needs of other allied distribution and transmission equipment like current transformers, potential transformers, overhead conductors, high voltage XLPE cables, insulators and surge arrestors. Manufacturers with BIS license for Transformer in Jaipur and nearby area will be benefitted by this project, as the project reduces in testing time and transportation

cost. Total estimated project cost is ₹83.76 crore. The project is approved for financial support of approximately ₹50.11 crore from BIS under the "scheme for supporting other Government laboratories". Under the scheme, BIS provide financial assistance in purchase of necessary equipment for the project.

(ii) For infrastructure development an amount of ₹ 41.62 has been authorized to CPWD (NZ). Presently, construction of boundary wall has been completed. Security room and filling of earth between the boundary wall and front road is under final stage and is expected to be completed by FY 2024-25.

b) Setting up of Electric Vehicle (EV) Battery Test Facilities at Kolkata, Mumbai & Bangalore:

NTH is setting up Electric Vehicle (EV) battery testing facilities at its RRSL campuses in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bengaluru during the FY 2024–25. The total estimated project cost for all three locations is ₹24.0 crore, with equipment procurement through GeM currently in progress. The lab designs, equipment specifications, and drawings have been finalized. Procurement of equipment for all three facilities is advancing steadily. For NTH (WR) in Mumbai and Bengaluru, a Battery Life Cycle Tester (150V, 300A) has been procured at a cost of ₹2.39 crore. Procurement for the Kolkata facility through GeM is ongoing, and operations at all three locations are expected to commence in the FY 2025–26.

For infrastructure development an amount of ₹ 1.50 Crore has been authorized to CPWD (SZ) and is expected to be completed by FY 2024-25.

c) Organic Food laboratory at Jaipur, Ghaziabad and Guwahati:

NTH is establishing Organic Food Testing Laboratories in Jaipur, Ghaziabad, and Guwahati to combat food adulteration and promote public health. These laboratories will analyze food and beverages for safety, purity, and labeling accuracy. All three facilities are notified by FSSAI for chemical and biological testing, accredited by NABL under ISO/IEC 17025:2017, and recognized by BIS. They will test for contaminants such as toxic metals, pathogens, additives, and pesticides, ensuring the availability of hazard-free food. The projects are being executed under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Labs for the Creation/Augmentation of Test Facilities in Critical Areas," and are expected to commence operations in the FY 2025–26.

d) UAS (Drone) Certification & Testing laboratory at NTH, Ghaziabad:

- i. Drone Certification: As part of the Certification Scheme for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), NTH, Ghaziabad has received provisional approval from the Quality Council of India (QCI) as a Certification Body for type certification of drones. In alignment with this responsibility, a team of auditors from NTH conducted a Stage-1 & Stage-2 (onsite) assessment, and the resulting report has been forwarded to QCI. This assessment represents a crucial step toward securing type certification—a mandatory requirement for drones operating in India under the Drone Rules 2021.

- ii. Drone Testing: In addition to providing type certification for drones, NTH (NR) is developing a facility for testing drone components to ensure compliance with applicable national and international standards. The procurement of capital equipment and specifications is progressing through GeM. Currently, a major piece of equipment, a Dust Chamber, has been procured at a cost of ₹12.5 lakh. Orders have also been placed for a Climatic Chamber and a Mechanical Shock Tester. The facility is expected to commence operations in the FY 2025–26.
- e) **Low Voltage Switch Gear Testing Facility at NTH, Mumbai:** A state-of-the-art "Low Voltage Switch Gear Testing Facility" has been established at NTH (WR), Mumbai, under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Labs for the Creation/Augmentation of Test Facilities in Critical Areas." The project has an estimated cost of ₹5.0 crore. The installation of major equipment has been completed, while the procurement of the remaining equipment is underway through GeM. The process is expected to be finalized by the FY 2024–25.
- f) **Creation of complete Food Testing Laboratory at Kolkata:** NTH (ER), Kolkata, is developing a comprehensive food testing laboratory to combat food adulteration and enhance public health. The total estimated project cost is ₹12.0 crore. The procurement of specified capital equipment is in its final stages, and the necessary infrastructure is under development. Completion of the project is anticipated in the FY 2025–26, subject to the availability of budgetary funds.
- g) **Short Circuit Test facility at Chennai:** NTH (SR), Chennai is setting up a comprehensive Short Circuit Test facility of 120 kA, 525V to ascertain the behavior of transformer and transmission line equipment during short circuit conditions. The project, with an estimated cost of ₹24.0 crore, is currently at approval stage by the Governing Council, under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Laboratories." The facility is expected to become operational in the FY 2025–26.
- h) **HT Cable Test facility at Ghaziabad:** NTH (NR), Ghaziabad is setting up a comprehensive High Tension Cable Test facility of IS 7098(Part-2):2011 and IS 1554(Part-2):1988 to support manufacturers in meeting regulatory standards and contribute to the overall quality and safety of HT Cable products in India. The total estimated project cost is ₹ 3.15 crore, is currently at approval stage by the Governing Council, under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Laboratories." The facility is expected to become operational in the FY 2025–26.
- i) **Solar PV Module test facility at Ghaziabad:** NTH (NR), Ghaziabad is setting up a comprehensive Test Facility for Solar Photo Voltaic Modules Upto 1000W to meet testing needs of manufacturers and domestic consumers of Solar PV Modules. The total estimated project cost is ₹ 47.0 crore. The proposal is currently at approval stage by the Governing Council, under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Laboratories." The facility is expected to become operational in the FY 2025–26.

- j) **Aerospace components Test facilities at Bengaluru:** NTH Satellite Centre, Bengaluru is setting up a comprehensive Test Facility for Aerospace Components as per relevant Indian and international standards to meet testing requirements of booming aerospace industry at Bengaluru and surrounding areas. The total estimated project cost is ₹ 5.03 Crore, is currently at approval stage by the Governing Council, under the BIS scheme, "Support to Other Government Laboratories." The facility is expected to become operational in the FY 2025–26.

3.88 The BE, RE and AE for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	20.00	14.00	13.43	95.93
2021-22	23.50	13.50	12.40	91.85
2022-23	14.75	20.50	19.44	94.83
2023-24	17.00	25.00	23.97	95.88
2024-25	35.00	38.02	25.51 (upto 13.2.2025)	67.09
2025-26	65.80			

3.89 In response to the query regarding the actuals for 2024-25, along with the reasons for any variation from the RE, the department has provided the following details:

“As of February 13, 2025, ₹25.51 Crore has been utilized in FY 2024-25. NTH is working towards fully utilizing the allocated RE by the end of the fiscal year. Procurement is underway for major equipment for the EV Battery lab and Food Testing lab in Kolkata, as well as additional equipment to bridge existing gaps and enhance testing facilities, all of which are expected to be completed within FY 2024-25. Furthermore, significant construction work by CPWD for the Integrated Transformer Testing lab in Jaipur is in progress, with full utilization of the allocated funds anticipated by the end of FY 2024-25. Efforts are also being made to maximize the budget utilization for the NER scheme, which includes capital equipment and the development of a digital network, with implementation planned within the current fiscal year.”

3.90 The Committee, reiterating its earlier recommendation, sought information on the steps taken by NTH to establish a collaborative framework with AERB and CDSCO to address gaps in testing and regulatory oversight for radiation-emitting medical devices, such as X-ray and MRI machines. In its response, the department has provided the following details:"

“In line with the Committee's recommendation, NTH is dedicated to exploring a collaborative approach with AERB and CDSCO to bridge the identified gaps. We are confident that such a partnership would enhance regulatory oversight, ensure compliance with safety standards, and protect public health.

2. Although NTH currently no specialized capabilities in medical device testing, we are open to building these capabilities in the future. This would require strategic investments in advanced testing infrastructure and staff training. Additionally, we may explore collaborations with leading research institutions to expand our expertise and effectively support AERB and CDSCO in regulating radiation-emitting medical devices.

3. NTH remains committed to supporting national regulatory initiatives and maintaining high safety standards across all areas within our mandate. We will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to identify potential opportunities for collaboration and growth.”

3.91 The Committee asked whether NTH has initiated targeted investments in advanced testing infrastructure, staff training programs, and partnerships with leading research institutions to develop specialized capabilities for regulating radiation-emitting devices and requested an update on the progress made so far. In response, the department has provided the following details:

“In response to the Committee's recommendation, NTH acknowledges the importance of developing specialized capabilities for regulating radiation-emitting devices. We are actively exploring targeted investments in advanced testing infrastructure and staff training programs to enhance our capacity in this area.

2. We have already carried out preliminary assessments to determine the necessary infrastructure upgrades and skill development needs. Currently, NTH is working on a comprehensive investment plan that includes modernizing existing facilities and procuring state-of-the-art equipment. We are also exploring potential partnerships with leading research institutions to benefit from their expertise and accelerate our capacity-building initiatives. While considerable progress has been made in the planning stages, the implementation of these initiatives is expected to begin shortly. NTH remains committed to supporting national regulatory frameworks and ensuring compliance with safety standards.”

3.92 In response to the query regarding the steps being taken to expedite the filling of vacant positions, which has led to significant savings in the Salaries head (e.g., Secretariat Economic Services and National Test House), the department has provided the following details:

“To expedite the filling of vacant positions at the National Test House, which has resulted in significant savings in the salaries budget, the following steps are being taken:

1. **Streamlined Recruitment Processes:** The recruitment process is being streamlined to reduce time spent on hiring, including establishing better communication with relevant agencies such as the SSC and UPSC.

2. **Proactive Job Advertisements:** Positions are actively advertised across multiple platforms, including the organization's website and various newspapers, to attract a wider pool of candidates.
3. **Internal Promotions and Transfers:** Timely identifying and promoting suitable internal candidates also helps to fill positions more quickly while also enhancing employee morale and retention.
4. **Temporary Staffing Solutions:** Utilizing temporary staff, such as Young Professionals and skilled/unskilled workers, helps address critical gaps in the short term while permanent positions are being filled.
5. **Regular Monitoring and Reporting:** Implementing regular tracking of recruitment progress to identify bottlenecks and allow for timely interventions if certain positions remain unfilled.
6. **Budget Reallocation:** Reviewing the budget to prioritize funds for critical positions can help ensure that necessary roles are filled without delays.

By taking these steps, the National Test House aims to expedite the recruitment process, effectively filling vacant positions while managing budgetary constraints.”

3.93 The Committee note that the Budget Estimates (BE) for National Test House (NTH) for 2025-26 has been increased to ₹65.8 crore as compared to ₹35 crore for BE 2024-25. However, the Committee are dismayed to learn that the utilization of funds as of February 13, 2025, stands at only 67%. Given the critical role of these facilities in advancing national goals like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and driving technological progress, it is imperative that procurement processes for equipment and construction works be expedited. The Committee, therefore, recommend the NTH to prioritize the timely completion of key infrastructure projects, such as the Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution Sectors, Electric Vehicle (EV) Battery Test Facilities, and Solar PV Module Test Facility. The Committee also urge NTH to ensure full utilization of the Revised Estimates (RE) for FY 2024-25 by closely monitoring budget expenditure and ensuring that funds are effectively allocated and used for the successful completion of ongoing projects by the end of the fiscal year.

(Recommendation No. 16)

3.94 In their 5th Report, the Committee had urged National Test House(NTH) to establish a collaborative framework with the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) to address gaps in testing and regulatory oversight for radiation-emitting medical devices such as X-ray and MRI machines. The Committee are disappointed to learn that no tangible progress has been made in this regard. Hence, the Committee strongly urge again the NTH to accelerate its efforts to collaborate with AERB and CDSCO, focusing on developing specialized testing and regulatory frameworks for radiation-emitting medical devices.

(Recommendation No. 17)

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

(Recommendation No. 18)

(iii) Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

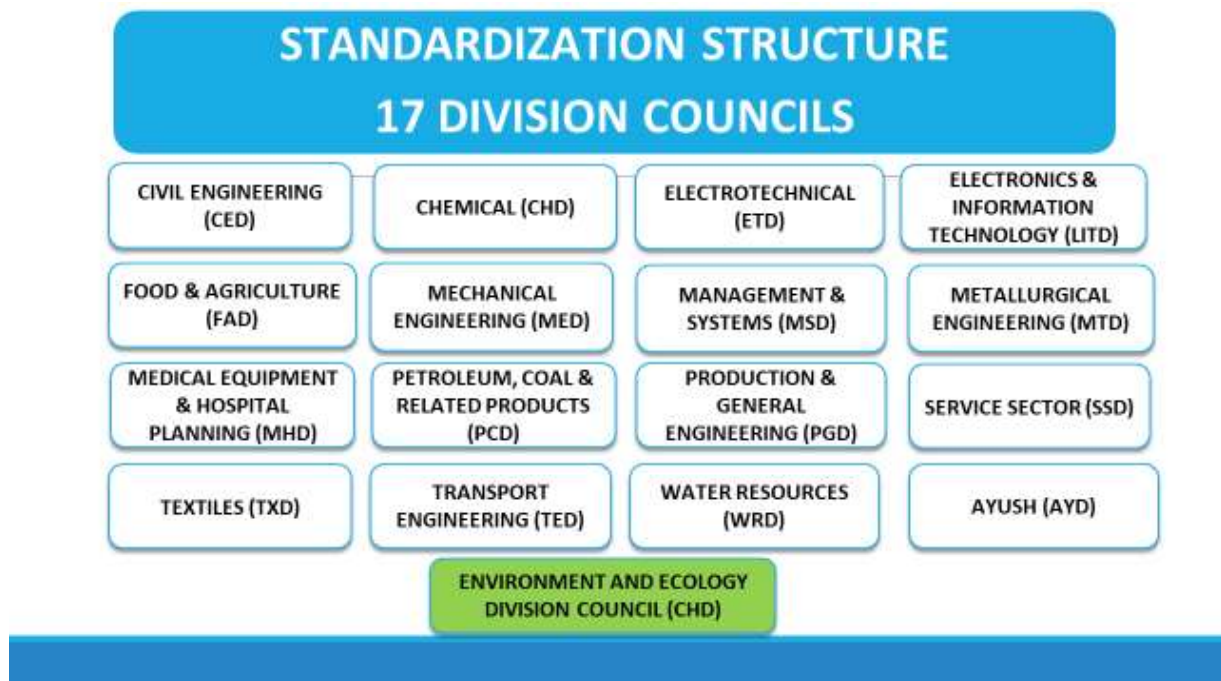
3.96 The Bureau of Indian Standards was set up as a statutory organization under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986 by taking over the assets and liabilities of the Indian Standards Institution (ISI) that came into existence in 1947. The Bureau has its Headquarters in New Delhi. It has a network of 05 Regional Offices, 36 Branch Offices, 10 Laboratories and 01 Training Institute.

BIS Act 2016 came into force with effect from 12 October 2017, subsequently Governing Council was reconstituted and its third meeting was held on 01 March 2021 at BIS HQ New Delhi.

The mandate of BIS is to formulate standards that promote quality of goods and services. The Bureau provides technical support to industries and services sector by way of updated standards, developing new standards in emerging areas, and providing certification of goods and services for ensuring quality and safety.

As the National Standards Body (NSB) of India, the process of standards development in BIS follows accepted international best practices based on principles of openness, transparency, impartiality and consensus. BIS develops Indian Standards through a consultative process in more than 400 Sectional Committees. The committee structure is designed to bring together relevant stakeholders like manufacturers, users, technologists, academia and regulators.

BIS carries out standardization work in the following 17 broad technology areas/sectors:



3.97 Under the sub-scheme ‘**Strengthening of Gold Hall Marking, Standard related capacity building and research and development work**’, administered by the BIS, an autonomous organisation of the Department of Consumer Affairs, BIS implements Scheme for setting up of Gold Assaying/ Hallmarking Centres in India with Central Assistance.

There are two components of the Hallmarking Scheme: -

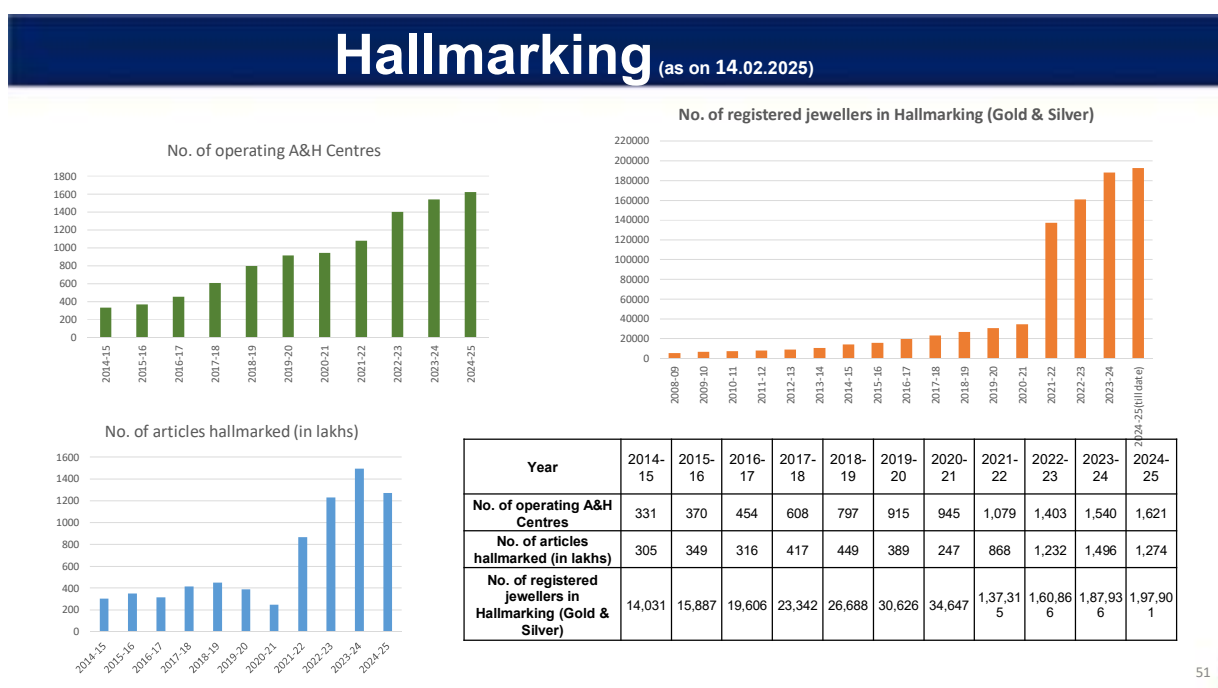
(i) **Infrastructure Building:** - Under this component setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres under Government scheme is envisaged. The rate of one time financial assistance for ‘Setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres’ in India where no Assaying & Hallmarking Centre (assisted or otherwise) exists is as follows: -

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

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

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

(ii) **Capacity Building**:-Under this component, organizing various training programmes, i.e. Artisan Training Programme, A&H Personnel Training Programme and BIS officers Training Programme is envisaged



Mandatory Hallmarking

3.98 Hallmarking of gold jewellery was started by BIS in April 2000 to provide third party assurance to consumers on the purity of gold jewellery or its fineness. The scheme for Hallmarking of silver jewellery/ artefacts was launched in October 2005. Under the Scheme, while the jewellers are granted registration to sell hallmarked jewellery, Assaying & Hallmarking centres are recognized to assay the purity of the jewellery submitted by the registered jeweller, along with declaration of purity and to apply hallmark on such jewellery which is found conforming to relevant Indian Standard including declared fineness.

During the period 01 April 2024 to 24 January 2025, the no. of BIS Registered Jewellers increased from 1,87,936 to 1,96,902, while the number of BIS recognized Assaying and Hallmarking centres increased from 1,540 to 1,623. During the same period, approximately 12 crore articles of gold and silver jewellery/artefacts have been hallmarked.

3.99 Quality control order for mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery/artefacts was issued on 23 June 2021 by the Govt. of India which makes hallmarking mandatory in 256 districts of the country where there is atleast one assaying and hallmarking centre. Second phase of mandatory hallmarking was implemented in 288 districts from 01 June 2022 vide Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery and Gold Artefacts (Amendment) Order, 2022, dated 04 April 2022. The third phase of mandatory hallmarking was implemented in 343 districts from 06 September, 2023 vide Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery and Gold Artefacts (Third Amendment) Order, 2023, dated 06 September, 2023. The fourth phase of mandatory hallmarking was implemented in 361 districts from 05 November, 2024 vide Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery and Gold Artefacts (Amendment) Order, 2024, dated 05 November, 2024.

In view of the implementation of Mandatory Hallmarking Order, a new online system for the automation of the assaying & hallmarking activities at AHCs has been made functional with the new Hallmark consisting of six digit HUID (Hallmarking Unique ID). The HUID-based system of hallmarking was felt necessary because with hallmarking becoming mandatory, the credibility of the hallmark put on every piece of jewellery had to be ensured along with a robust system of real-time monitoring of the entire process. This has been introduced in the interest of consumers. Since the launch of HUID based system for hallmarking on 1 July 2021, 46.3 crore articles of gold jewellery/artefacts have been hallmarked as on 24 January 2025.

3.100 The BE, RE and AE for the last five years is as follows:

(In ₹ Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actuals	% Actuals w.r.t. RE
2020-21	2.00	1.00	1.00	100.00
2021-22	1.50	0.10	0.00	0.00
2022-23	0.75	0.01	0.01	100.00
2023-24	0.50	1.00	0.95	95.00
2024-25	1.00	1.00	0.81(upto 14.2.25)	81.00
2025-26	1.00			

3.101 In response to the query regarding the budget estimate (BE) for 2025-26, which is set at ₹1.00 crore, the department has provided the following details on how this allocation is expected to impact the planned activities or projects for the fiscal year:

“It is informed that the BE for 2024-25 which is set at ₹1.00 Crore shall be utilized for infrastructure building as well as capacity building as per the following:

a) Infrastructure Building:- Under this component, setting up of Assaying & Hallmarking Centres under Government scheme is envisaged. The rate of one time financial assistance for ‘Setting up of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres’ in India where no Assaying & Hallmarking Centre (assisted or otherwise) exists is as follows:-

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

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

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

b) Capacity Building:- Under this component, organizing various training programmes, i.e. Artisan Training Programme, A&H Personnel Training Programme and BIS officers Training Programme is envisaged.”

3.102 In response to the query regarding the number of beneficiaries who have received central assistance for establishing AHCs in select districts over the past five years, along with the funds allocated and utilized in the previous fiscal year, district-wise, the department has provided the following details:

“The beneficiaries benefitted with the central assistance during the last 5 years along with the funds allocated and utilized are as follows:-

Year	BE (in Cr.)	RE (in Cr.)	AE (in Cr.)	Number of AHCs setup	No. of AHC personnel trained	No. of Artisans Trained	No. of BIS Auditors trained
2020-21	1.0	0.5	0.48	2	80	267	12
2021-22	0.75	0.0	0.84	5	116	338	90
2022-23	0.75	0.01	0.01	0	179	178	44
2023-24	1.0	0.95	0.94	7	117	334	46
2024-25	1.0	1.0	0.81 (as	11	ongoing	116 (as on	ongoing

			on 14.02.20 25)			14.02.202 5)	
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District wise expenditure in the previous fiscal year for setting up of AHCs in deficient districts (2023-24):-

Sl. No.	District	Expenditure(Rs.)
1	Bhadohi, UP	11, 59, 331
2	Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh	11,33,883
3	Haridwar, Uttarakhand	9, 49,948
4	Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh	13,37,608
5	Bagalkot, Karnataka	12,13,212
6	Palwal, Haryana	6,68,804
7	Charkhi Dadri, Haryana	6,60,381

3.103 In response to the request for a detailed note on the funds sought and allocated over the past three years, the amount actually spent, the targets set for various activities versus the actual achievements, and any reasons for not meeting the targets, the Department has provided the following information:

“No fund received during the FY year 2021-22. However, carry forward fund from last year was utilized during FY 2021-22 for the purpose of setting up of hallmarking/assaying centres and under capacity building programme.

2. During the FY year 2022-23, 100% fund was utilized for the purpose of setting up of hallmarking/assaying centres and under capacity building programme.
3. During the FY year 2023-24, 99% fund was utilized for the purpose of setting up of hallmarking/assaying centres and under capacity building programme.
4. During the current FY, 2024-25, 81% funds have been utilized (**till 28.2.2025**) for the purpose of setting up of hallmarking/assaying centres.

Targets vis-a-vis actual achievements for the last three financial years are furnished below:-

Component of the Scheme	Name of Scheme	Division	2022-23			2023-24			2024-25(as of 23 Jan 2025)			% of achievements for the last three years	2025-26 Target
			Target	Achievement	Short fall if any indicating reasons in berif	Target	Achievement	Short fall if any indicating reasons in berif	Target	Achievement	Short fall if any indicating reasons in berif		
	Scheme for setting up of Gold Assaying/ Hallmarking Centres in India with Central Assistance.	MoC A/ BIS											
Infrastructure Building			10	04	<u>100% fund utilised</u>	10	07	<u>99% fund utilised</u>	10	11		73.33%	10
Capacity Building													
• Training of Artisans			10	08	02	10	08	02	10	03	(The targets are expected to be met before 31/03/25)	<u>63.33%</u>	10
• A & H Personal			04	06	-	04	04		04	00		<u>83.33%</u>	04
• Training of BIS officers			01	01	-	01	02		01	00		<u>100%</u>	01

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

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

(Recommendation No. 19)

NEW DELHI;
11 March, 2025
20 Palguna, 1946 (Saka)

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

MINUTES OF THE EIGHT SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2025-2026) HELD ON THURSDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 1400 HRS

The Committee sat from 1400 hrs to 1530 hrs in Committee Room 1, Extension to Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

2. **Shri Manish Jaiswal**
3. **Shri Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa**
4. **Shri Manoj Kumar**
5. **Shri Sunil Kumar**
6. **Shri Bharat Singh Kushwah**
7. **Shri Neeraj Maurya**
8. **Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat**
9. **Shri Rao Rajendra Singh**
10. **Shri Bajrank Manohar Sonwane**

Rajya Sabha

11. **Smt. Sumitra Balmik**
12. **Shri Prakash Chik Baraik**
13. **Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan**

SECRETARIAT

1. **Dr. Ram Raj Rai - Joint Secretary**

2. The Hon'ble Chairperson extended a warm welcome to the Members of the Committee and the representatives of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. She informed the Members that the sitting had been convened to examine the Demands for Grants (2025-26) for the Department of Consumer Affairs and to hear the oral evidence of its representatives.

3. The following representatives from the Department of Consumer Affairs were present before the Committee:

- (i) Smt. Nidhi Khare, Secretary (CA)
- (ii) Shri Bharat Khera, AS(CA)
- (iii) Shri I.S. Negi, Sr. (EA)
- (iv) Smt. Tanuja Thakur Khalkho, JS&FA
- (v) Shri Kamkhenthang Guite, EA
- (vi) Shri Anupam Mishra, JS(CA)
- (vii) Shri Shashi Bhushan, Advisor (Cost)
- (viii) Smt Jenny Kiloung, CCA
- (ix) Smt. Anice Joseph Chandra, MD (NCCF)
- (x) Shri Alok Kumar Srivastava, DG (NTH)
- (xi) Shri H.J.S. Pasricha, Scientist-G
- (xii) Shri S.C. Dass, Scientist –E
- (xiii) Shri Subhash Chandra Meena, Director (PMD)
- (xiv) Smt. A.B.S. Shalini, Director (BIS)
- (xv) Shri Ashutosh Agarwal, Director (LM)
- (xvi) Dr. N. Natarajan, Technical Director (NIC)
- (xvii) Shri K.C. Singha, Director (Budget)
- (xviii) Shri Aman Jain, Director (P&C)

4. The Secretary of the Department of Consumer Affairs gave a PPT presentation providing an overview of the Budget Allocations for 2025-26. She highlighted several key initiatives that would be the focus of the Department during the year. Her presentation included reaffirmation of the Department's commitment to consumer protection and the need for improved forecasting, execution, and monitoring of budgetary allocations.

5. After the presentation, Members sought clarifications on the following:

- a) What are the reasons for the sharp reduction in budget allocation for the Department from RE (2024-25) ₹ 7,401.24 Crore to BE(2025-26) ₹ 4,416.92 Crore?
- b) How does the Department plan to ensure the efficient utilization of ₹ 4,019.83 crore under the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)?
- c) Why has the allocation for BIS been limited to only ₹ 1 crore, despite its increasing responsibilities?
- d) What steps have been taken to minimize discrepancies between Budget Estimates, Revised Estimates, and Actual Expenditure?
- e) There is no budget allocation for the National Consumer Helpline (1915). How will the Department ensure its continued operation and efficiency?
- f) How effective has E-Daakhil been in improving the disposal rate of consumer complaints?

- g) What measures are being implemented to regulate misleading advertisements and dark patterns in e-commerce?
- h) How is the Department tackling cases of fraudulent listings and counterfeit products on e-commerce platforms?
- i) What initiatives are planned to further improve consumer awareness campaigns such as 'Jago Grahak Jago'?
- j) What steps are being taken to improve quality checks and inspections in the Public Distribution System (PDS)?
- k) Given the price fluctuations in essential commodities like onions, tomatoes, and garlic, does the Department plan to extend PSF coverage to these products?
- l) How is the Department ensuring that food products reaching rural consumers meet safety standards?
- m) What is the roadmap for expanding National Test House (NTH) centers across the country?
- n) How does the Department plan to enhance enforcement of mandatory quality certifications and hallmarking?
- o) What steps are being taken to streamline fund disbursement under the Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF)?

6. Representatives of the department responded and assured the Committee that the Department was committed to addressing all concerns and providing necessary clarifications

7. The Chairperson thanked the Secretary and other officials for their candid responses and acknowledged the valuable insights provided. The Committee emphasized the need for additional clarifications on certain issues and requested the Department to submit written responses within two days to the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

8. The evidence was concluded. A verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDICES - II

MINUTES OF THE NINTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (2024-2025) HELD ON TUESDAY, 11TH MARCH, 2025

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1530 hrs. in Committee Room No. 62, Samvidhan Sadan, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - Chairperson

Members

Lok Sabha

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

Rajya Sabha

18. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
19. Shri Prakash Chik Baraik
20. Shri Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya
21. Shri Baburam Nishad
22. Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan
23. Shri Arun Singh
24. Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah

APPENDICES - III

**IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
COMMITTEE**

Sl.No.	Para No.	Recommendation
1.	2.24	<p>The Committee note that as against the Demands of ₹327.69 crore by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) an allocation of Budget Estimates (BE) 2025-26 to fund ₹4,230.82 crore has been made for the department in the fiscal year 2025-26, which is ₹959.14 crore more than the amount demanded. The Committee further observe that the revised expenditure for 2024-25 was ₹7,204.50 crore, yet the department has demanded a lower BE for 2025-26. Additionally, the Committee express their concern over the consistent reduction in budgetary allocations for key schemes, particularly the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) and consumer protection initiatives. Although there have been assurances of continued funding through sale proceeds from PSF operations, the department has failed to assess the exact requirements under the scheme. The Committee are also concerned by the reductions in allocations for programs such as CONFONET, the Consumer Protection Cell (ICGRS), and Weights and Measures (Legal Metrology). The Committee, therefore, urge the Department to adopt more realistic and cautious budgeting practices to avoid the underfunding of critical projects. This may, inter alia, include focusing on strategic resource optimization, such as phased implementation and prioritization of essential activities. Enhanced coordination with States/UTs may also be ensured along with regular monitoring of expenditure to ensure the effective utilization of funds. Furthermore, the Department should consider reallocating surplus funds from less critical schemes to address funding gaps in high-priority areas as well as ensure that the schemes/programmes do not suffer due to less allocation and the gaps are fulfilled at RE stage. The Committee hence strongly recommend that the Department to exercise greater caution in estimating its demands and take all necessary steps to ensure that schemes and programs are not hindered by a lack of or under-utilization of allocated funds.</p> <p align="right">(Recommendation No. 1)</p>
2.	3.5	<p>The Committee note that the allocation of funds under the Consumer Awareness (Advertising and Publicity) program has declined in recent years in comparison to 2022-23 while the budget for the scheme remaining stagnant at ₹17.99 crore since 2023-24. The actual expenditure for 2023-24 was ₹24.55 crore, representing a 136.59% increase over Revised Estimates. However, despite this increase, the spending trend shows a decline in allocated funds over the years. The Committee opine that consumer awareness is a key aspect of consumer</p>

		<p>protection. Given the expanding scope of consumer issues, the Department needs to enhance its outreach to consumers particularly in rural areas through various channels such as social media, regional languages, and digital campaigns. To ensure the effectiveness of these efforts, it is critical to guarantee full and efficient utilization of funds, maximizing the impact of consumer awareness programs. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department assess the impact metrics of its advertisements to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness, particularly in reaching underserved and remote regions, including rural areas and ensure that the funds allocated for consumer awareness are used effectively and reach the widest audience possible.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 2)</p>
3.	3.10	<p>The Committee are pleased to note that, as part of the initiative to expedite consumer grievance redressal, the Department has launched a new version of the Consumer Helpline software (https://consumerhelpline.gov.in). This update includes the integration of WhatsApp for lodging grievances, and approximately 1,038 private companies have been made convergence partners to facilitate swift and effective resolution. Moreover, the Department has begun implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to streamline the grievance submission process for consumers. The Committee look forward to the timely completion and full implementation of this initiative. The Committee hope for timely introduction and implementation of WhatsApp-base AI chatbot for real-time complaint resolution, which would further enhance the efficiency of the system.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 3)</p>
4.	3.11	<p>The Committee are dismayed to note that the budget for the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has remained unchanged, despite the significant increase in consumer complaints, which grew from 54,516 in 2020 to 111,951 in 2024. To improve the efficiency of consumer complaint resolution, enhance response mechanisms, and strengthen coordination with NCH, it is imperative to ensure that allocated funds are effectively and optimally utilized. The Committee is concerned by the low fund utilization during 2024-25, with only 57.27% of the budget spent, highlighting a considerable gap between the Revised Estimates (RE) and Actual Expenditure (AE). The Committee, therefore, recommend the department not only for improving the efficient use of allocated funds but also allocating additional resources to expand language support and increase the helpline workforce. The Committee further suggest conducting a performance audit to identify any bottlenecks in fund utilization and implement corrective actions to ensure the timely and effective deployment of resources.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 4)</p>

5.	3.24	<p>The Committee express concern over the vacancy position in Consumer Commissions as informed by the Department out of the total 36 sanctioned posts of President of State Commissions 18 (50%) posts are vacant and those of 161 sanctioned posts only 100 Members are in position. Similarly, vacancy position in Consumer Commission, as informed out of 433 vacant member positions at the district level (out of 1,388 sanctioned posts), which represent approximately 31% of the total positions. These vacancies contribute to significant capacity constraints, potentially undermining the objectives of the Strengthening of Consumer Commissions (SCC) Scheme and delaying the timely redressal of consumer grievances. Such persistent vacancies, both at the State and District Consumer Commissions, are severely impacting the Scheme's effectiveness and therefore, addressing these staffing gaps is critical to alleviating capacity constraints and improving the overall functioning of the SCC Scheme, thereby ensuring more efficient and timely consumer redressal. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Department to take immediate and proactive steps to ensure that States and UTs prioritize filling these vacant posts within a fixed time-frame and the Committee may be apprised accordingly.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 5)</p>
6.	3.25	<p>The Committee note that actual expenditure under the SCC Scheme has consistently been revised downward from the Budget Estimates since 2020-21, with the exception of 2024-25, and conclude that this downward revision is largely due to slow fund disbursement caused by delays in the submission of eligible proposals and pending Utilization Certificates (UCs) from States. The Committee find that these administrative delays are significantly hindering the optimal utilization of allocated funds and therefore, recommend that proactive measures may be taken to facilitate the timely submission of Utilization Certificates and ensure that funds are disbursed efficiently. The Committee also urge the department to explore the possibility of dynamically reallocating unutilized funds from underperforming regions to states that demonstrate readiness and compliance with the scheme's objectives, in order to ensure the optimal utilization of resources and enable states with the capacity to implement the SCC Scheme effectively.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 6)</p>
7.	3.37	<p>The Committee recognise the Department's efforts to enhance the efficiency of case handling and improve access to case statuses and decisions by revamping CONFONET into e-Jagruti and are hopeful that</p>

		<p>this initiative will significantly benefit consumers by enabling them to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere, at any time, with multi-lingual support, thereby expediting the disposal and monitoring of consumer dispute cases. The Committee desire to be apprised of the measurable impact of the newly launched e-Jagruti platform on reducing case pendency and improving consumer grievance redressal time to time.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 7)</p>
8.	3.38	<p>The Committee are concerned to note that after an upward revision of allocation for CONFONET to ₹ 70 crore at RE stage during 2024-25, the utilization of fund is ₹41.93 crore (upto 14.2.2025). Moreover, BE for 2025-26 has also been kept at ₹52 crore only. The Committee find that at this stage of expansion of CONFONET such poor utilization of Budget and less allocation than RE may not be suitable. The Committee therefore urge the Department to identify the bottlenecks in the effective utilization of funds and conduct a more thorough financial assessment to ensure the optimal use of the allocated resources and allocation of required fund at RE stage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 8)</p>
9.	3.49	<p>The Committee observe that the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2024-25 under the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) saw a substantial increase, rising to ₹10,000 crore from a nominal ₹0.01 crore in 2023-24. However, this allocation was later revised downward to ₹7,000 crore in the Revised Estimate (RE) for 2024-25, with actual expenditure reaching ₹6,910 crore as of February 15, 2025, indicating that the funds allocated were not fully utilized. Also for 2025-26, the PSF budget has been significantly reduced to ₹4,019.83 crore. The Committee understand that Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) scheme was approved on 18.09.2024 for continuation during the 16th Finance Commission award period till 2025-26 with a total outlay of ₹10,019.83 crore as a sub-component of the PM-AASHA scheme. Out of the approved outlay, ₹ 7,000 crore is allocated in 2024-25 (RE) and ₹ 4,019.83 crore in 2025-26 including Rs.1,000 appropriated from other sub-scheme of PM-AASHA. In light of the ongoing price volatility of essential food commodities, the Committee recommend that a minimum allocation be ensured to support the timely disbursement of funds to key agencies, such as NCCF, NAFED, Kendriya Bhandar and MMTC, in order to avoid delays in procurement. The Committee also impress upon the critical importance of strengthening buffer stock storage infrastructure to minimize wastage and enhance the effectiveness of market interventions</p>

		<p>under the fund.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 9)</p>
10.	3.50	<p>The Committee note that the disbursement of funds under the PSF to several states and key agencies, such as NAFED, MMTC, NCCF, and Kendriya Bhandar, has not been uniform. The Committee opine that strengthening the monitoring system to track procurement activities for essential commodities like pulses, onions, and potatoes, improving buffer stock management, and conducting periodic reviews of fund utilization at the state level will help achieve the goals of the PSF Scheme more effectively. Therefore, it is recommend that steps be taken to implement a more streamlined fund release process to minimize delays in disbursement and ensure the uniform distribution of fund.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 10)</p>
11.	3.64	<p>The Committee note that the Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs), such as NCCF, NAFED, and Kendriya Bhandar, play a crucial role in procurement and market stabilization, particularly through retail interventions in essential commodities like Bharat Dal, which includes perishable commodities such as tomatoes and onions. Acknowledging the importance of these interventions, the Committee urge that, in order to further enhance the effectiveness of market interventions, the availability of Bharat Brand products should be expanded to more states through CNAs and increasing and expanding cold storage capacity for perishable commodities, such as tomatoes and onions, across states to minimize losses and reduce wastage.</p> <p>Also, while commending the department for its initiatives in launching the E-Samyukti portal for farmer registration and procurement tracking, and recognizing it as a significant step towards ensuring that farmers receive fair prices for their produce, the Committee recommend to enhance digital integration by linking the E-Samyukti portal with AI-driven demand forecasting, which would improve operational efficiency.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 11)</p>
12.	3.73	<p>The Committee note that only 71.5% of the RE for 2024-25 relating to Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) has been utilized as of 14.2.2025. The Committee also note that the CWF has been established in 25 States/UTs, and it is proposed to extend the establishment of the</p>

		<p>Consumer Welfare Fund (Corpus) to the remaining states/UTs during 2025-26. The Committee recommend that the Department should prioritize the establishment of the CWF in those States/UTs where it has not yet been set up, including consistent follow-up with states such as Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh, which are in the advanced stages of establishing their funds. The Committee stress that in order to ensure comprehensive nationwide coverage and strengthen consumer welfare initiatives across the country, the fund may be established in all states/UTs by the end of FY 2025-26.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 12)</p>
13.	3.74	<p>The Committee note that the delay in receiving Utilization Certificates from the states is hindering the optimum utilization of funds under CWF. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the department should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effective utilization of funds under the CWF. This should include ensuring the timely submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) and conducting regular reviews of projects to assess their impact. Also, a more structured evaluation framework should be implemented, with clear and measurable outcomes to track the success of funded projects, ensuring that the funds disbursed directly benefit consumers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 13)</p>
14.	3.82	<p>With the reduced Budget Estimate for 2025-26 of ₹54.30 crore, which is lower than the Revised Estimates (RE) of ₹60.00 crore for 2024-25, the Committee hope that, despite this reduction, key initiatives under the sub-scheme ‘Strengthening of the Legal Metrology Regulation and Enforcement’—including strengthening Regional Reference Standards Laboratories (RRSLs), modernizing state-level legal metrology facilities, advancing time dissemination projects, and other related initiatives—will be completed efficiently, while prioritizing essential activities. The Committee urge that the Department to take necessary steps to intensify efforts to streamline and expedite the proposal submission process for States/UTs under the Strengthening Legal Metrology Infrastructure scheme, and ensure the timely and effective implementation of these critical projects. The Committee also desire to be updated on the progress made and the timely completion of such projects.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 14)</p>

15.	3.83	<p>The Committee note that, currently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being mandatorily adopted by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and lack of uniformity in time across different systems presents significant challenges for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in investigating cybercrimes. Therefore, keeping in view the critical role of synchronized time systems in strategic sectors and national security, the Committee emphasizes the importance of aligning all networks and computers in the country with a national clock. The Committee note that with the funds allocated for renovation of RRSLs for time project to CPWD and for procurement of equipment by NPL and ISRO, the Committee recommend that the Department should prioritize the swift completion and expansion of the Time Dissemination Project to ensure nationwide synchronization of time systems including establishing and completing time dissemination infrastructure at all Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) and ensuring that TSPs and ISPs adopt Indian Standard Time (IST).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 15)</p>
16.	3.93	<p>The Committee note that the Budget Estimates (BE) for National Test House (NTH) for 2025-26 has been increased to ₹65.8 crore as compared to ₹35 crore for BE 2024-25. However, the Committee are dismayed to learn that the utilization of funds as of February 13, 2025, stands at only 67%. Given the critical role of these facilities in advancing national goals like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and driving technological progress, it is imperative that procurement processes for equipment and construction works be expedited. The Committee, therefore, recommend the NTH to prioritize the timely completion of key infrastructure projects, such as the Integrated Test Facility for Power Transmission & Distribution Sectors, Electric Vehicle (EV) Battery Test Facilities, and Solar PV Module Test Facility. The Committee also urge NTH to ensure full utilization of the Revised Estimates (RE) for FY 2024-25 by closely monitoring budget expenditure and ensuring that funds are effectively allocated and used for the successful completion of ongoing projects by the end of the fiscal year.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 16)</p>
17.	3.94	<p>In their 5th Report, the Committee had urged National Test House(NTH) to establish a collaborative framework with the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) to address gaps in testing and regulatory oversight for radiation-emitting medical devices such as X-</p>

		<p>ray and MRI machines. The Committee are disappointed to learn that no tangible progress has been made in this regard. Hence, the Committee strongly urge again the NTH to accelerate its efforts to collaborate with AERB and CDSCO, focusing on developing specialized testing and regulatory frameworks for radiation-emitting medical devices.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 17)</p>
18.	3.95	<p>The Committee opine that by building specialized capabilities in advance testing infrastructure specially in drones, electric vehicles and solar energy the NTH will not only enhance public safety and regulatory oversight but also contribute to India's self-reliance in technology, while supporting the national drive for innovation and the establishment of high-quality standards. The Committee, therefore recommend that NTH to prioritize and expedite investments in advanced testing infrastructure and staff training also strive to establish at least one testing centre/facility in each state.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Recommendation No. 18)</p>
19.	3.104	<p>The Committee note that the number of Gold Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) during 2024-25 stood at 1,621, while there was a significant increase in the number of BIS Registered Jewellers from 1,87,936 to 1,96,902 between April 2024 and January 2025 and approximately 12 crore articles of gold and silver jewellery/artefacts were hallmarked during this period. It is evident that there is an increasing demand and significant potential for expansion, the Committee, therefore, recommend that the department should take steps to enhance the accessibility of hallmarking services and further strengthen the gold certification system. The Committee also urge the Department to prioritize the establishment and expansion of AHCs, particularly in underserved and rural areas, including districts that currently lack such infrastructure. They opine that expanding the network of AHCs in these areas will not only improve consumer trust but also provide a robust system of third-party assurance on the purity of gold and silver jewellery.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Furthermore, the Committee emphasize that under the existing financial assistance scheme, BIS should ensure the full utilization of allocated funds and meet the targeted establishment of AHCs in these regions so as to ensure hallmarking services reach all segments of the population and foster greater transparency and consumer protection in</p>

		the gold and silver jewellery sector. (Recommendation No. 19)
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