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2022

KERALA NIYAMASABHA PRINTING PRESS

**FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE  
ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
(2021-2023)**

**NINETEENTH REPORT**  
(Presented on 7th July, 2022)



SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
2022

FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**COMMITTEE  
ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
(2021-2023)**

**NINETEENTH REPORT**

**On**

**Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations  
contained in the Twenty Seventh Report of the  
Committee on Public Accounts (2008-2011)**

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (2021-2023)

**Composition**

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Shri P. S. Selvarajan, Deputy Secretary

Smt. Shamy J., Under Secretary.

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Committee on Public Accounts, having been authorised by the Committee to present this Report, on their behalf present the Nineteenth Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the One Seventeenth Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2008-2011).

The Committee considered and finalised this Report at the meeting held on 8th June, 2022.

Thiruvananthapuram  
7th July, 2022.

SUNNY JOSEPH,  
*Chairman,*  
*Committee on Public Accounts.*

## **REPORT**

This Report deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the 117th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2008-11).

The 117th Report of the Committee on Public Accounts (2008-11) was presented to the House on 20th July 2010. The Report contained 6 recommendations relating to General Administration and Information Technology Departments. Government was addressed on 26-7-2010 to furnish the Statements of Action Taken on the Recommendations contained in the report and the final reply was received on 1-1-2013.

The Committee examined the Statements of Action Taken in its meeting held on 17-10-2012, 30-4-2014 and 22-1-2020 and decided not to pursue further action on the recommendations in the light of replies furnished by the Government. The recommendations and Government replies are incorporated in this Report.

### **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT**

#### **Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 1, Para No: 9)*

The Committee views the action of Kerala Public Service Commission in purchasing computer hardware costing ₹ 47.57 lakhs well before the development of software and to keep it idle for more than one year as a serious irresponsible act. This happened mainly due to improper planning and lack of preparation. Similarly, the Committee finds that there was a prolonged delay in the development of software for Phase III computerization. As the scope of the project was to be finalised at the user requirement stage, the Committee views this lapse as very serious and opines that in this matter also lack of proper preparation and improper planning are the main reasons for the lapse. The Committee is dissatisfied with the reasons for the delay put forth by the department.

### **Action Taken**

Considering the peculiar and sensitive nature of the work entrusted with the Kerala Public Service Commission, a number of modifications and additions were required to be incorporated in the software to suit the time tested and a fool-proof procedure in recruitment process. Moreover, the draft documents had to be circulated to the respective sections for suggestions on modifications and changes. As this process was time-consuming, there occurred the delay and the same may be condoned. The hardware purchased was utilized for checking and testing the software which was being developed at that time and it was never kept idle.

The delay in the implementation of software development at the user requirement stage was due to the fact that keen attention was required to be paid to ensure that even a minor error did not creep into the recruitment process. Any error can have major repercussions on thousands of job-seekers. The Commission could not compromise on its credibility and transparency in any of its activities. Hence computerization could not be implemented in a hurry, since the work of the Commission is unique and open to scrutiny. During the above process of correction, addition and modification the hardware purchased was utilized for checking and testing the software which was being developed.

### **Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 2, Para No: 10)*

The Committee regrets to note that though a report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the audit paragraph for the rectification of lapses such as delay in procuring and utilizing OMR, lack of proper IT strategy failure to mitigate risks in OMR scanning of answer sheets, improper maintenance of Log Book relating to scanning of answer sheets, and delay in publishing results of examinations etc., was assured to be submitted within one week, the same is yet to be submitted. The Committee views this as an insult and desires the department to furnish a detailed report in respect of remedial measures taken against those points without any more delay.



### **Action Taken**

The procedures and formalities involved in procuring and utilizing OMR is so complicated that it cannot be done within a short period because all these processes are time- consuming. It is also submitted that there was no purposeful delay in connection with the procurement of OMR machines.

Computerization Programme was launched in Kerala Public Service Commission in a phased manner with clear IT strategy. The phased programme was implemented in the Kerala Public Service Commission in consultation with the Technical Committee comprising of experts in automation constituted by the Commission. The Commission discussed the suggestion and recommendations of the Committee and took decision on computerization by implementing Recruitment Application Processing System (REACT) in 2001.

After the examination, the candidates themselves separate Part A and Part B of the answer scripts and the same are packed in separate packets. A and B parts are separated in such a way that half the portion of barcode appears in each part. All details relating to the valuation/scanning of answer scripts (A&B part) such as name of the post, department, barcode numbers of four alpha versions of key, total questions in the key, total marks for which the answer scripts are to be evaluated bundle number of the scripts, total number of scripts in the bundle as reported by the Chief Superintendent of the centre, starting and ending scan numbers of the bundle, number of rejected/defective answer scripts are scanned with appropriate application in the scanning software and discrepancies if any, in the number of A and B parts are reconciled by the examination wing, using various other examination related documents received from the Examination centre.

Log Books are maintained properly in the OMR section. When the bundles received from the Examination centre are taken for scanning, the bundle number , the number of answer sheets to be scanned in the particular bundle, starting scan number is recorded in the log book. The difference between the starting number and ending number are tallied with the total number of answer sheets in the bundle, it is reconciled by counting answer sheets manually, and referring to the signed list of candidates.

The applications received are scanned and subjected to computerization only upto valuation. Further processes such as verification of certificates of candidates and preparation of Short lists/Ranked lists are done manually. A number of candidates fail to produce the required documents such as proofs of qualification, experience, community etc. In time before the Commission. Therefore the Commission finds it difficult to publish in time, the Short Lists, Ranked lists etc. The selection to certain posts such as Sub Inspector of Police, Excise Inspector, Police Constable, Excise Guard, HDV Driver, LDV driver etc., involves physical efficiency test practical tests, endurance tests etc. The conduct of the tests for these posts and publishing of Short Lists and Ranked Lists are rather time consuming. However with the introduction of online application and the forthcoming one time registration, the selection process will become speedy. A software has now been developed for preparation of Short Lists and Ranked Lists. Thus the delay in recruitment process can be minimized.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

### **Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 3, Para No: 19)*

The Committee observes that even though the IPPM System procedure needs only less effort, the department failed to implement it in a useful manner. The Committee criticizes the department for not adopting a procedure for periodical verification of data entered as a result of which so many errors remain unnoticed. Regarding the rectification of defects in the data entry, the Committee suggests to revalidate the data at the entry stage itself. The stand of the General Administration Department that monitoring of the system is vested with the Information Technology Department is not at all acceptable to the Committee. The Committee stresses that rectification of defects is the joint responsibility of the Administrative Department and SPARK. The Committee expresses dissatisfaction over the careless entry of date of birth etc. of incumbents. The Committee suspects whether salary bills in respect of all employees could be disbursed through SPARK within the time limit if such works go on in a snail's pace.

### **Action Taken**

As per the circular No. 4917/B2/09/ITD dated 13th May 2009, instructions of data entry of new service books and detailed step by step procedures has been issued. The procedure for verifying the correctness of the service book data which has already been entered is also issued in the circular. The responsibility of each officer concerned is clearly defined. It has been instructed that the Head of the Department/controlling officer shall ensure that no new duplicate records are created. Necessary provision for verification of records by taking printouts and locking of records has been done in the SPARK software itself. Instructions to Department Management User (DMU) for providing access to the Establishment, DDOs and Individual users is also included in the circular. This will safe guard the SPARK system from unauthorized access by the users.

As per G.O (Rt.) No. 171/2011/ITD dated 23-9-2011 it was ordered that processing of salary bills of Non Gazetted Officers and Self Drawing officers shall be done only through SPARK from the month of January 2012.

### **Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 4, Para No: 20)*

The Committee emphasizes the need for a system to verify and rectify the defects in the bills generated. The Committee instructs the department to revalidate the data related to retired employees and defective data immediately so as to implement the system in the year 2009 itself. The Committee suggests the Information Technology Department to instruct all departments to rectify the defects in the data base in a war footing. The Committee is of the opinion that administrative lapses, deficiency of supervision and lack of will power are the main reasons for the failure of the system. Hence the introduction of a skillful advanced software testing is needed for the proper functioning of the SPARK. Sample test audit is also necessary to ascertain the correctness of data.

**Action Taken**

Testing of software by STQC for performance and security has been completed and the anomalies pointed out have been rectified by NIC. The new version of the SPARK Software is due for testing. (Version 2.2.0)

STQC is the testing agency who is assigned the work.

**Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 5, Para No: 21)*

The Committee earlier suggested to implement the foolproof system of SPARK in all Government Department by the year 2009. Hence, the Committee desires to know the present position of the implementation of the system.

**Action Taken**

As on 30th November, 2011, the number of departments in which SPARK has been implemented is 89 (includes Kerala Public Service Commission, Raj Bhavan and Kerala Legislative Assembly). Out of 5, 17, 375 employees, as per 9th Pay Revision Commission Report, data entry completed is 4,52,896. Number of employees whose salary has been processed through SPARK is 2,66,065.

**Recommendation**

*(Sl.No : 6, Para No: 22)*

The Committee recommends to conduct a study either by Information Technology department or by any other competent agency for evaluating the upto date functioning of the system, defects and drawbacks, methodology adopted to rectify defects, precaution accepted to shun errors etc. And to take appropriate follow up action on the basis of the study report.

**Action Taken**

The Center for Management Development have been entrusted to conduct a Stratified Random Study on SPARK in 14 districts covering 3195 offices and 78 departments, with sample taken from 343 offices and 65 departments.

Thiruvananthapuram,  
7th July, 2022.

SUNNY JOSEPH,  
*chairman,*  
Committee on Public Accounts.