Government may consider removing the following infirmities in the Act/Rules:

* Under the Act an original licence continues to be valid on filing of a renewal application on due date irrespective of the issue of renewal certificates after mandatory verifications. It may, therefore, be considered whether the mandatory verifications should be completed and certificate of renewal issued latest by the eve of date of expiry of original license as in the case of renewal of registration and insurance of motor vehicles.

* The power granted to DIs for launching prosecutions is inhibited by the Rules which insist on securing prior approvals from the Chief Controlling Officer. This has contributed to failure in filing prosecution cases due to non-issue or belated issue of approval by the Controlling Officer.

* The differentiation between minor and major offences should be brought in the Act/Rules in order to ensure that penal action is appropriate to the gravity of the offence.

* There is no provision for free surrender of samples by the drug manufacturers to the regulatory authority. This position of law coupled with financial constraints has contributed to failure in systematic sampling of drugs by the Drug Inspectors.

* The work study recommendations regarding special efforts to clear the long pending court cases should be considered and suitably implemented.

* Lack of in-service training to the DIs had its adverse impact on the quality of their performance including proper framing of prosecution cases, which could stand judicial scrutiny. Therefore, in-service training must be imparted to DIs.

LABOUR AND REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT

3.3   Computerisation in Professional and Executive Employment Exchange, Thiruvananthapuram

Highlights

Professional and Executive Employment Exchange, Thiruvananthapuram is the only computerised employment exchange under the control of Director of Employment & Training set up for registration of job seekers, renewal of registration, selection and submission of list of candidates to the employers etc. A review of the working of the Exchange revealed inordinate delay in completion and installation of software, delay in data entry, absence of input and validation controls and lack of documentation.

> ↘ **Due to long delay in development of software, computers procured in 1995 became obsolete.**

[Paragraph 3.3.3]

> ↘ **Absence of input and validation controls caused defective data entry.**

[Paragraph 3.3. 4]

> ↘ **On-line registration and renewals commenced only in July 2003. Selection module was still defective and selection process was being done manually.**

[Paragraph 3.3.5]

> ↘ **Absence of documentation exposed the system to the risk of unauthorised practices.**

[Paragraph 3.3.6]

3.3.1 Introduction

Professional and Executive Employment Exchange, Thiruvananthapuram (P&EEE) is one of the 84[*] employment exchanges under the control of Director of Employment & Training set up for registration of job seekers, renewal of registration, selection and submission of list of candidates to the employers etc. Under the manual system the bio-data of job seekers are noted in Index cards after assigning Registration Number and National Classification of Occupation (NCO) code according to their educational qualification and arranged in a rack (referred to as Live Register) NCO-wise. This procedure is vulnerable to omission as the cards may get shuffled when they are taken for selection/renewal. The computerisation of Employment Exchanges was proposed to minimise the risk of fraud and to render more useful and prompt service to the job seekers and the employers.

3.3.2 Scope of Audit

Initiative for computerisation of Employment Exchanges was taken during 1995. Audit undertook, during June-July 2002, a review of the computerisation of the only computerised employment exchange (P&EEE) at Thiruvananthapuram.

The database was maintained in Microsoft SQL Server and data was made available to audit in text format. It was analysed using an audit software to ascertain the completeness/accuracy of the data maintained.

3.3.3 Delay in development of Software

Due to long delay in development of software, computers procured became obsolete

The Technical Committee decided (April 1996) to develop a software in DBMS[@] for online registration and renewal. During 1997, a new software for registration and renewal developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) was installed and tested for one week and thereafter the computers went out of order. Software for data entry developed by NIC was installed only during December 1998. Finally, the software, "Thozhil" (meaning employment) operating under Windows environment was installed in August 2000. By the time, 4 Pentium I computers and accessories purchased in November 1995 at a cost of Rs 3.83 lakh became obsolete and non-compatible with the windows based graphical user interface software developed by NIC which necessitated procurement of another set of computers[#] at a total cost of Rs 5.34 lakh. Thus there was inordinate delay in developing the application software "Thozhil".

---

[*] Divisional Employment Exchanges-3, District Employment Exchanges-14, Professional & Executive Employment Exchanges-3, Town Employment Exchanges – 58 and Special Employment Exchanges - 6

[@] Database Management System

[#] During 1999 (5 Personal Computers), 2000 (1 Server) and 2001 (1 Personal Computer)

Despite several meetings, the Department failed to ensure timely delivery of the software by NIC. Absence of any agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with specific time frame largely contributed to the delay in developing the software. Normal software development methodologies like determining the Users' Requirement Specifications, System Requirement Specifications, etc. were not adopted.

The Evaluation Committee of the Department observed (March 2002) that the software developed by NIC was satisfactory but selection and placement modules needed thorough check up. But the Department did not bring this defect to the notice of NIC for rectification.

The above facts would indicate that though the initiative to computerise the Exchange started as early as 1995, there was no coordination between hardware procurement and software development. The normal means to achieve such coordination like formulating a strategic IT Plan, formation of a Steering Committee to oversee the development of the computerisation were never followed. The computerisation programme languished for almost 4 years for lack of co-ordination. The Department stated (August 2003) that a Computer Cell was formed at the Directorate in July 2003 so as to co-ordinate all work related to computerisation of the Department.

3.3.4 Defective data entry

Analysis of the database revealed serious mistakes in the critical fields. Some instances of wrong data are narrated below:

Incorrect data entry in vital fields involved the risk of sponsoring ineligible persons for jobs

The *Regn* table, which is the master table with key data about a job seeker Registration Number, registration date, name, date of birth, caste, sub-caste, religion etc contained 73218 records including records relating to Regional Exchanges, Kochi and Kozhikode. Audit scrutiny of the database as on 1 January 2002 revealed obvious error orders. In 133 records, the date of birth was later than 1 January 1984 though it was not possible to acquire professional qualification before attaining the age of 18. In 14 records, the date of birth was later than the current date while in six records, the date of birth was before 1 January 1945 indicating that job seekers were more than 55 years old. In 73 records, the date of birth and registration date were the same.

Audit scrutiny of the column "Reg_no" in the same table showed that in many of the records male candidates had been given register numbers with prefix 'w' (a prefix meant for women candidates) and female candidates did not have the prefix 'w'. Audit also came across at least 833 pairs of records (the list is not exhaustive) where the candidate's name and date of birth etc. were duplicated with incorrect registration numbers.

Such seriously flawed master data obviously indicate that the input control/field restrictions were disabled for the sake of faster data entry and rendering online registration and renewal as also selection and placement liable to inaccuracies. This defeats the very purpose for which the computerisation was initially planned for.

The Department stated (December 2002) that, in respect of the data pertaining to the P&EEE, all the defects pointed out in audit were rectified with the help of NIC and rectification of data in respect of index cards transferred to the

regional exchanges at Ernakulam and Kozhikode would be possible only after the computerisation of the said offices.

But an analysis (June 2003) of the data claimed to have been rectified showed that the database still contains impure data.

3.3.5 *Lack of use of the software*

The software "Thozhil" developed as an online system has separate modules for Registration, Selection, Lapse, Query, Report and Administration (of Users and Passwords). Audit scrutiny of the system revealed the following:

Registration Module: Though registration module is complete and can be made use for on-line registration and renewal, it was observed in audit that all the fresh registrations have not been fed into the computer, as only 8076 records out of 10660 registrations during 2001 and only 656 out of 1611 registrations upto June 2002 have been entered in the database.

As regards renewal of registration, the renewal particulars of 36590 registrations made before 1 April 1999 were not entered. Data entry of fresh renewal was also in arrears.

The selection module was defective and could not be put to use. The selection of candidates in 2000 and 2001 was made by manual system

Selection Module: The Selection module which is to help faster and fairer processing of submissions against the vacancies reported was not functioning as the module did not have any provision for ensuring communal rotation of vacancies. Further, the database contains records relating to the other two regional exchanges, which have not been updated. Data relating to submission and placement are not even being entered in the database at any stage. Thus, the very purpose for which computerisation work was undertaken, was defeated.

Against 21905 submissions made during the years 2000 and 2001, the dates of submission in respect of only 936 persons have been entered into the database. Again, though 1496 candidates have been given placement during the years 2000 and 2001, no information has been entered in the table. This would indicate that the module has never really been used and the manual system has been allowed to continue.

Lapse Module: As per rules, the job seekers are required to renew registration every third year failing which their names are to be purged from the Live Register and transferred to Dead Register. But the Lapse module included in the software has not been made use of, leading to risk of sponsoring candidates and payment of unemployment assistance to those who have already been employed.

On this being pointed out by audit, the Department stated (August 2003) that online operation has been commenced during July 2003 in the P&EEE and action was being taken to update the data relating to two Regional Professional Employment Exchanges. It was found on verification by Audit (August 2003) that registration and renewal are online and job seekers are at present disposed of quickly against 3 to 4 hours required earlier for the purpose. But due to delay in commencement of computerised process of selection, after updating the impure data, the unemployed persons are deprived of the benefit of quick selection and sponsoring of candidates for job.

URS, SRS, User manual etc. were not prepared and amendments to program not documented

3.3.6 *Absence of documentation*

Whenever a system is developed, it is necessary to have enough documentation about the system. *viz.* feasibility report of Software, System Requirement Specifications (SRS)/User Requirement Specifications (URS)/User Manual etc. It was however, revealed that the Department does not possess any such documentation relating to the system.

The Department stated (August 2003) that NIC had developed the software after due consultation with Departmental officers and taking into consideration all user requirements. In view of the deficiencies in the software especially in the Selection Module, the reply is not tenable. Though a User Manual was stated (August 2003) to have been submitted by NIC it was not available for verification in the P&EEE (August 2003).

3.3.7 *Recommendations*

∗ A strategic IT plan synchronising the development of software and procurement of hardware should be evolved.

∗ Methodology of imparting sufficient training to the Departmental staff should be formulated.

The above points were referred to Government in July 2003; reply has not been received (December 2003).

SOCIAL WELFARE/HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE/LABOUR AND REHABILITATION DEPARTMENTS

3.4   Welfare of Handicapped

Highlights

Welfare activities for the Handicapped are governed by the provisions of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which came into force in Kerala from February 1997. Welfare of Handicapped is a complex social issue involving coordination of preventive, curative, promotional and rehabilitational activities directed at different forms of handicap and a multitude of measures. The review however revealed lack of co-ordination between the Government of India (GOI) and State Government and among the various Departments and Agencies in the State and lack of monitoring by the State level committees and the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities leading to non-utilisation, misutilisation and diversion of funds released by GOI and State Government.

⊾ **No full time State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities was appointed as of March 2003.**

[Paragraph 3.4.4]

⊾ **No survey was conducted to identify the disabled in the State. The State Commissioner had never exercised his judicial powers. He did not have the details of funds released by GOI/State**