



## **Agencies asked to resolve audit irregularities by June 20 next year**

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### **The deadline to resolve the irregularities worth Nu 816.4 million was set by Parliament**

Ministries and agencies must resolve unsettled irregularities from 2010 to 2015 by June 20 next year, members of the parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) informed the heads of agencies yesterday during a public hearing on annual audit reports.

The deadline was issued as per the resolution of a joint session of Parliament that concluded last month.

Committee chairman Phuntsho Rapten and deputy chairman Dophu Dukpa urged the heads of agencies to take early actions towards resolving the unsettled irregularities. The public hearing, which was held in the National Assembly hall, lasted for about six hours.

Among the heads of agencies summoned for the public hearing were Secretary of the National Land Commission, Pema Chewang, Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan, Nidup Dorji and government secretaries.

As of March this year, irregularities amounting to Nu 816.4 million (M) remained unresolved. However, agencies reported that some of those reflected in the report had been resolved.

Instituted in accordance with Article 25 of the Constitution, the PAC comprises five Members of Parliament – three from the National Assembly and two from the National Council.

The agencies briefed PAC on the measures being taken to resolve the issues. It was submitted that some of the agencies could not trace the officials involved in the irregularities.

Unresolved issues include uncollected taxes from business ventures and lack of restitution of properties from convicts of corruption. Officials from the finance ministry explained that some of the unsettled taxes needed to be reassessed and that the process took time.

Officials from the health ministry said they were planning to auction a three-room apartment belonging to a former accountant who was convicted of corruption. The former accountant is serving a nine-year prison term, the officials informed.

It was also found that the RAA did not update their reports in few cases although the issues were resolved. RAA officials said they did not receive documents about the action taken by the concerned agencies.

The first public hearing on unresolved irregularities was conducted in 2016.

Aimed at resolving pending irregularities lying with the agencies without any actions being taken, the recently concluded summer session of Parliament had resolved that a public hearing be held as soon as possible.

The public hearing provided an avenue for the agencies to provide their perspective and clarifications on the unresolved audit issues. It was also helpful for the RAA and PAC members to gather more information and gain deeper understanding of the issues.

Officials the ministries of agriculture and forests, economic affairs, health, information and communications, works and human settlement, foreign affairs and finance showed up for the public hearing.

Also summoned for the public hearing were Bhutan Cricket Federation, Bhutan Development Bank Ltd, Bhutan Education City, Bhutan Football Federation, the Election Commission, GNH Commission, National Land Commissions and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature.

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