



Irregularities not a loss in entirety: PM

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The irregularities spotted by the audit, dissected properly, are not losses to the nation in its entirety, the Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering said at the meet the press session in Thimphu yesterday.

Referring to the unresolved irregularities of Nu 1.44B between 2010 and 2016, Lyonchhen said that during the discussion in the Parliament, he had requested the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to drop some of the irregularities because there was no way the government could recover the money.

“But that doesn’t mean that issues of corruption and embezzlement would be dropped, however small,” he said.

The Royal Audit Authority, according to Lyonchhen, was accurate in spotting the irregularities.

He indicated that while pursuing official duties with good intentions certain laws were overlooked. For instance, the access road to old hospital in Dewathang, Samdrupjongkhar was built because it was found necessary. Lyonchhen said that when new hospital came up, part of road had to be dismantled. Audit, he said, was right in pointing out that proper planning had not been done. However, the road benefited the people.

“It is not a loss. But the government is not going to get back money spent from anyone,” Lyonchhen said, adding that he felt that the issue had to be dropped.

Unresolved audit issues would be resolved, he said if the PAC could recommend to drop some issues after careful dissection.

Unresolved irregularities of 2017 amounted to Nu 4.3B, of which 91.5 percent pertains to hydropower sector. A major share of irregularities (Nu 3B) is on account of Punatshangchhu II.

The PAC also observed that not a single issue had been resolved by both the hydropower projects of Punatshangchhu as of September 2018.

Economic affairs minister, Loknath Sharma, said that investment in hydropower was very high and a small issue could translate into huge amount of irregularity.

The projects, he said, were governed by rules of two countries (India and Bhutan) which were not in harmony with one another. That is why substantial observations were made, he said. “But none

of the irregularities was under embezzlement and fraud,” he said, adding that most observations were from administrative lapses and violation of rules.

Lyonpo said that the government was supposed to get a consolidated report from the projects in September. “I have assured this in the Parliament. There will be significant improvement in irregularities,” he said

The PAC’s report stated that the committee was concerned about the huge losses that the government suffered from overpayment, double payment, outstanding advances, inadmissible claims, claims from works not executed, sub-standard work, and supplies.

The committee also found that there was weak enforcement of rules and regulations and lack of supervision and monitoring mechanisms in agencies leading to numerous lapses, wastage and avoidable cost.

Tshering Dorji