

PERSPECTIVES

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Rationalising TA/DA

The Royal Audit Authority's call to rationalise in-country travel claims should be heeded. It will save the government millions of ngultrums. For some reasons, civil servants or public corporation employees cannot understand the logic for travel and daily allowance. Perhaps, it is deliberate – not wanting to know the purpose of allowance.

The issue of travel and daily allowance, known as TA/DA, is not new. It is a problem not willing to go away. Fake TA/DA, table tours and groups claiming mileage when taking only one car is a common practice. It is eating into the resources and it is illegal. But the problem still persists. We cannot find a solution.

There will be no solution if the allowance is seen as a source of additional income and not an allowance to meet your basic needs when on tour. Some officials hesitate to escort ministers when their daily allowance was cut to Nu 200 a day, even with meals and lodging paid for.

This misconceived additional source of income is a problem not in itself. It hampers human resource management, service delivery and brews misunderstanding. It can beget corruption or misuse of our scarce resources. Among some civil servant, who hardly gets the opportunity to travel, it is seen as a solera from the “kind and understanding” boss. That is why five people taking a car are allowed to claim five separate mileages for the same tour.

The danger is that when people are encouraged to do this and bosses are considered good and generous. No rule will be fool proof to stop this misuse of public fund. The morality of the staff or the boss can help a bit.

TA/DA should be rationalised. Together with it the porter pony charges and the mileage. The allowance should be able to meet basic costs like the cost of lodging and food. If the daily allowance in Nu 500 and the cost of room Nu 700, it is not rational. This is excluding the cost of three meals.

Officials on tours should be paid enough to cover the cost. This is one way of rationalizing. Today, officials on tour ‘rationalise’ it by crashing in with a distant relative or with a friend's friend.

One area to rationalise is the porter and pony charges. With roads reaching almost every village in the country, there is no need of paying porter and pony charges. Because it is in the rule, officials claim. Gasa is officially a two-day trip from the capital. That was a long time ago. Today, we can go to Gasa and come back on the same day. Why should we pay daily allowance for two days, porter and pony charges?

The distance between and Phuentsholing has become shorter. It is not 180 kilometres. With the Chukha-Damchu bypass cutting distance by about 20 kms, why should we pay mileage for 180kms?

Monitoring false claims is better in the private sector and public corporations. This is because the money is not coming from the government coffer. It is their hard earned money and they rationalize it.