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Human resource shortage has caused lapses and irregularities. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) attributed a number of lapses and irregularities in the gewogs to shortages in human resources.

During field visits, the PAC observed a gradual decline in the number of civil servants over the years, resulting in an increased workload for those serving. This situation has led to additional responsibilities, time pressure, and inadequate handover processes, all of which have contributed to lapses affecting the quality of public service delivery.

At a joint sitting to deliberate the PAC review report on the Annual Audit Report (AAR) for 2021-22, Dawa, deputy chair of the PAC, highlighted specific examples of the challenges faced.

In some gewogs, engineers are responsible for supervising more than 30 projects, far exceeding the recommended maximum limit of two projects at a time. Additionally, gups and mangmis, who lack technical backgrounds, have been assigned project supervision roles, leading to further lapses and irregularities in budget management.

MP Dawa also said that in certain gewogs and dzongkhags, officials are burdened with additional responsibilities from other departments due to a lack of human resources. These officials receive no incentives for their extra workload, which often results in demotivation and affects their ability to deliver services efficiently.

The PAC acknowledged the implementation of the Rules for Administrative Disciplinary Action (RADA) to ensure discipline in the civil service. However, the Committee highlighted that RADA has introduced a rigid and controlling atmosphere that has negatively impacted employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall motivation.

Civil servants hesitate to take initiative due to the fear of disciplinary action, even when their actions are done in good faith and unforeseen shortfalls occur.

The attrition rate of civil servants in Bhutan is on the rise, posing challenges for agencies in attracting and retaining skilled and experienced employees. MP Dawa expressed concerns about the complexity of the RADA system, which imposes strict penalties, including termination, for repeated audit memos.

MP for Bongo-Chapcha, Tshewang Lhamo, emphasised the need to hold the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) accountable for not providing officials at the gewog level to ensure effective service delivery. She cited an example

where an animal husbandry official couldn't respond promptly to an outbreak of animal diseases in the southern part of the country due to long distances.

In light of these issues, the PAC recommended that the government and the RCSC review the situation and take necessary measures to improve the quality of service delivery and address the increasing attrition rate. Furthermore, the Committee urged the RCSC to review the effectiveness and relevance of RADA, considering the emerging challenges faced during its implementation.

According to the PAC, the Annual Audit Report (AAR) for 2021-2022 highlighted irregularities amounting to Nu 7,525.498 million, of which Nu 176.893 million (2.35 percent) has been resolved. The remaining irregularities amount to Nu 7,348.605 million (97.65 percent) as of December 2022. Despite efforts, only Nu 2,048.27 million (27.22 percent) has been resolved as of May 31, 2023, leaving a balance of Nu 5,477.225 million (72.78 percent).

To address these irregularities, the PAC recommended that the Royal Audit Authority (RAA) review and decide on the unresolved issues of the AAR 2021-2022 in collaboration with the agencies concerned.

A status report on the progress should be submitted to the PAC by the end of March 2024. The PAC also stressed the importance of incorporating the recommendations of the RAA.

PAC also made several other recommendations, including the enforcement of effective internal control systems throughout agencies, the Ministry of Finance addressing risks associated with assigning all access rights to a single user in implementing e-PEMS, and the need for better coordination and integration of sectoral master plans with the national Five-Year Plan.

The government was advised to review the relevance of the CSI bank, establish a robust credit appraisal system for financial service providers, and enforce consistent rules and regulations for entitlements. These recommendations were adopted by the Joint Sitting, receiving unanimous approval with 100 percent of the 67 members present voting in favour.