

Accountant misappropriates Nu 1.26M

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The Bumthang Dzongkhag Administration’s accountant misappropriated Nu 1.26 million in stipends during the 2022-23 financial year.

This is according to the latest Royal Audit Authority’s (RAA) report.

The payments, according to the auditors, were made using both original and photocopied invoices, along with instances of excess disbursement of stipends.

The auditors observed that the dzongkhag administration disbursed stipends to Chumey Central School twice for both the month of September 2022 and November 2022, amounting to Nu 667,960.

The payments were processed twice—once with the original invoices and again with photocopies—resulting in double payments.

In December 2022, a stipend payment of Nu 198,889 was disbursed, but the dzongkhag administration failed to provide the payment voucher for verification, making it impossible to confirm the legitimacy of the expenditure.

The auditors further revealed that the dzongkhag administration made overpayments totalling Nu 400,000 in February and March 2023.

The stipends were mistakenly processed separately for day scholars and boarder students, leading to discrepancies between the disbursed amounts and the actual amounts payable.

The RAA found that the dzongkhag administration diverted funds between object codes without following financial procedures or obtaining necessary approvals from the delegated authority.

From the stipend fund, Nu 551,992 was used to pay retirement benefits for a retired teacher, and Nu 189,600 was allocated for firewood payments.

RAA classified these payments as “wrong booking”, indicating an apparent intent to misuse funds.

The dzongkhag administration justified the payment of Nu 551,992 for retirement benefits, explaining that it was made at the last minute after budget re-appropriation and supplementary allocations had closed.

Regarding the firewood payment of Nu 189,600, officials argued that the expenditure was necessary to settle longstanding complaints from NRDCL staff about unpaid bills, describing both payments as kitchen-related expenses.

The RAA’s inquiry with the Mess Incharge of Chumey Central School confirmed that double or excess payments had been deposited into the school’s account.

Following instructions from the accountant, the mess in-charge refunded the excess amounts in cash, which was later recovered and deposited into the Audit Recoveries Account.

RAA concluded that the misappropriation of funds resulted from deliberate double payments by accounts personnel.

Although all misappropriated amounts have been recovered, the findings highlight clear evidence of fraudulent practices.

The case has been referred to the Anti-Corruption Commission for further investigation.