

VIGILANCE AND REDRESSAL OF PUBLIC GRIEVANCES

21.1 VIGILANCE

The areas which have potential for corruption and malpractice and have been identified.

Preventive and corrective measures are being taken to prevent recurrence of corrupt practices to instil confidence in the minds of people about the objectivity and impartiality in the functioning of the Ministry and to create conditions, which can spread the signal of probity, rectitude and orderliness in public dealings.

Instructions have been issued to all autonomous bodies and attached/subordinate offices of the Ministry to the effect that for handling sensitive posts at all levels only such of the Officers should be posted whose integrity is beyond doubt. They have also been advised to introduce greater transparency and openness in the functioning of the offices in general and in the offices having extensive dealing with public in particular.

All the public dealing offices under the control of the Ministry have been advised to simplify the work procedures at the cutting edge level so as to avoid delays in the decision-making, as it is the delay at this level that generally breeds corruption.

Vigilance awareness week was observed in the Ministry from 3.11.2003 to 8.11.2003. All Officers and staff in the Ministry also took a pledge on 3.11.2003 to maintain absolute integrity, transparency in all spheres of activities and to work unstintingly for eradication of corruption in all spheres of life.

Services of retired Government servants are being utilised for conducting departmental enquiries. Chief Vigilance Officer held meetings with the Inquiring Authorities to review the progress of enquiries pending with them. All Inquiring Authorities were asked to hold hearings at the regular intervals and complete the enquiry within the given time frame. All Vigilance Units in the Attached/Subordinate Offices were also asked to review the enquiries pending with them and submit a report to the Ministry.

As part of the current drive against corruption, Prime Minister's Office forwards complaints received from various quarters containing allegations of corruption against individuals and organizations. Such complaints received from the Prime Minister's Office were pursued with the requisite degree of promptitude and thoroughness at senior levels. Proper inquiry was conducted in each case within a time bound manner and feedback sent to the PMO.

In the EPF Organization, a strict vigil is being kept on the activities of the officers particularly those working in the areas relating to purchase of land, purchase of ready made flats, investments of funds etc. Further, it is being insisted that purchase of goods in large quantities is done on the basis of the recommendation of the Committee and no individual officer is authorised to make such purchases.

With a view to ensuring that the possible corrupt practices or malpractices in the area relating to coverage of establishments under the ESI Scheme, recovery of ESI dues from the defaulting establishments, purchase of land and readymade flats, construction of hospitals/dispensaries, investment of ESI funds, grant of medical benefits on forged medical certificates and purchase of inferior quality medicines and equipments for use in hospitals and dispensaries are checked, the following instructions have been issued to the ESI Corporation:-

- Assessment of dues decided by the Officers may be reviewed at random basis.
- The Officers found to be lacking in their efforts to make recovery of ESI dues should be transferred and necessary action be taken against them for not performing their duties efficiently.
- A definite time schedule for disposal of various types of cases may be prepared and officers/officials not adhering to the time schedule should be severely dealt with.
- The nexus between the employees of the ESIC and the suppliers of medicines, if found, should be broken at the earliest and necessary action taken against those found to be involved in such deals.
- A quick assessment regarding integrity of the persons holding sensitive positions may be made and such of the officers/officials whose integrity is suspect should be immediately transferred out and such positions should be manned only by Officers whose integrity is beyond doubt.

21.2 REDRESSAL OF PUBLIC GRIEVANCES

A Committee constituted under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary in the Ministry had reviewed the functioning of the public grievances redressal mechanism in the Ministry and its attached / subordinate offices and autonomous organizations and made recommendations for making this mechanism more meaningful and effective. Consequent to the recommendations, complaint box has been installed at the main entrance, which are being opened on every Monday morning by Head of Office.

A Public Grievance Cell is functioning in the Ministry of Labour under Joint Secretary (Administration), who has been designated as Public Grievance Officer. The Public Grievances Officer is assisted by an Officer of the rank of Director. Most of the public grievances pertain to the Employees Provident Fund Organization and Employees State Insurance Corporation, apart from State Governments and the Ministry of Labour. These organizations also have their own public grievances redressal machinery. All grievances from individuals, trade unions, employers, VIPs, etc. relating to problems of labour is centrally monitored in the Public Grievance Cell. These are forwarded to various field/attached offices of the Ministry, EPFO, ESIC, State Governments, etc. for redressal.

A fully functional Facilitation Centre in the Ministry of Labour receives applications for redressal of grievances and provides necessary information to the members of the public on various matters dealt in the Ministry. Separate Facilitation Centres have been set-up and are working in all field offices of Employees Provident Fund Organization, including the one in the Head Office. Facilitation Centres have also been set up in all offices/units of the Employees State Insurance Corporation which receive complaints / grievances from different sources, namely insured persons, employers, VIPs, items appearing in the Newspapers etc.

In the Employees' Provident Fund Organization, a system of ventilation and redressal of grievances from employers, trade unions and subscribers/members of provident fund has been introduced. The Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, in-charge of the regions and officers-in charge of the Sub-Regional/Sub-Accounts Offices are available in person without any appointment to the members of the fund for redressal of their grievances on all working days from 11.00 AM to 4.30 PM.

Bhavishya Nidhi Adalats (Lok Adalats) are being organised in all the EPF Offices every month. Wide publicity is given about organization of such Bhavishya Nidhi Adalats so that members could approach for ventilation and redressal of their grievances. 714 Bhavishya Nidhi Adalats were organized at various field offices in which 1710 out of 1739 cases were disposed of during 2003-2004 (up to Oct. 2003). 98.33% grievances were disposed off in the Bhavishya Nidhi Adalats.

The grievances received from the Cabinet Secretariat, Department of Administrative Reforms, Prime Minister's Office etc. are referred to the field offices for settlement. These are specially monitored in the Ministry for prompt and complete redressal. Out of 91,623 grievances received during 2002-2003, 86931 have been disposed off and out of 40881 received during 2003-2004 (upto October 2003) in the EPF Offices, 35028 cases were settled.

In the Employees' State Insurance Corporation, all complaints received from different sources are registered and allotted a registration number. Acknowledgement is issued to the concerned complainant. In order to ensure transparency, complainant is informed of the action taken on their complaint.

In the Regional/Sub-Regional Offices of ESI Corporation, a notice board with the name of the complaint officer is displayed at a prominent place advising the beneficiaries to approach him for any grievance or complaint.

In the Emigration Division of the Ministry, sporadic complaints alleging adoption of various malpractices by the recruiting agents are being received from time to time. Immediate action is taken to settle the grievances of the workers by way of directions to the recruiting agents. Indian Missions are also requested to solve the problems of the workers, whenever necessary, with the help of foreign sponsors/Government. In the event of recruiting agents failing to solve the problems of workers, action is initiated to suspend/cancel their registration certificates. During the year (up to 30.9.2003) registration certificates of five Recruiting Agents were suspended/cancelled.

Detailed instructions have been issued to the State Governments that strict action should be taken against persons who make recruitment of Indian workers for overseas employment without holding a Registration Certificate. Thirty-nine cases have accordingly been registered against unauthorised persons. During the year end in 16 cases prosecution has been sanctioned.

The Protector General of Emigrants hold public hearings twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays from 11.30 AM to 12.30 PM at Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi. Public hearing system has been extended to all the offices of the Protector of Emigrants located in 8 cities where intending emigrants, recruiting agents, project exporters etc. can meet the senior most Protector of Emigrants for redressal of their grievances, for obtaining any information on various aspects of emigration, lodging their complaints etc. during the days and timings indicated above without prior appointment.

