

## CHAPTER 6. INADEQUATE DOCUMENTATION AND COMPUTERISATION OF RECORDS

### 6.1 Maintenance of records

The Compendium of Information, issued by the L&DO in October 2005, under Section 4 of the Right to Information Act, 2005, specifies various records which need to be maintained by the individual Lease and Property sections based on their territorial jurisdiction, for exercising control over the different aspects of lease administration. Similarly, the Office Manual<sup>7</sup> of L&DO also prescribes the maintenance of such records.

Of the 60, 526 leases administered by L&DO, 28,824 leases had reportedly been converted to freehold. However, the detailed colony-wise break-up of the current leases (after excluding leases converted to freehold) is not available with L&DO due to inadequate documentation, and these figures had been adopted by L&DO on the basis of historical data. The authenticity of these figures could, thus, not be verified.

The key records, containing complete details of various matters related to leases administered by L&DO, which were to be maintained in the form of registers, are summarized as follows:

**Table-6 : Key Registers**

| Register             | Purpose   |
|----------------------|---|
| Ground Rent Register | To watch recovery of ground rent due, and date of next revision; to be maintained separately by each dealing hand.  |
| Squatter Register    | To record squatting noticed during survey of government lands; to be maintained by each Overseer to note particulars of each squatter.                                      |
| Register of Damages  | To maintain record of damages recovered under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act 1971. The register is to be maintained separately for each year. |

However, the above registers were not produced to Audit by any of the sections. As regards the alternative method of data capture in computerized fashion, this had been done only partially. Since these registers were not produced to Audit, these were evidently not maintained, despite assurances in the Action Taken Note (ATN) on the earlier Audit report. L&DO was, however, maintaining the register of defaulters and the register of eviction in computerized format.

<sup>7</sup> The Manual was last revised way back in March 1995

While discussing an earlier Audit Review of the functioning of L&DO, which appeared in C&AG's Audit Report (Civil), Union Government for 1986-87, the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament (PAC) had, in September 1989, expressed concern regarding improper maintenance of land records, which had caused substantial loss of revenue. PAC had recommended that the Ministry needed to draw up an appropriate action plan for improvement of documentation. In the ATN, the Ministry had assured the PAC that it would update the basic records within a time bound period. Again, in the ATN to Para 5.1 of C&AG's Audit Report No. 2 of 2000, the Ministry assured improvements in the system and procedures. These were found to be absent during the current audit too, even though 20 years had elapsed since PAC gave its recommendations. In the absence of well maintained registers and documentation of leases/vacant land, L&DO would not be able to exercise effective control over their properties.

As an example, in response to Audit's request for records relating to allotment of 9.28 acres of land in Old Rajinder Nagar to a lessee, the L&DO stated that the original files had not been received from the erstwhile Department of Rehabilitation. It is not known how such leases were being administered by the L&DO, in the absence of original files.

In reply (March 2009), the Ministry admitted that the records were only partially maintained, and that too only by some sections and added that instructions were being issued to the sections in this regard.

## **6.2 Computerisation**

### **6.2.1 Overview**

According to the 2003-04 Annual Report of the Ministry, a comprehensive plan for computerisation had been prepared for complete office automation of L&DO; key components of the plan included the following:

- establishing a mapping system, by creation of base maps for all land parcels, to be linked to a database containing address and other details, which could be used for easily locating any property or lease;
- digitization of layout plans for all properties;
- scanning of documents relating to the markets transferred to New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) /Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD); and
- development of modules for the property database, lease administration, and other ancillary activities.

Audit scrutiny revealed that in the Action Taken Report on the recommendations contained in the 24th Report (12th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Demands for Grants (1999-2000) of the

erstwhile Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment, the Ministry had stated that the exact data of vacant land under L&DO was not available and this would be collected through information technology and techniques like aerial survey, digitally computerized drafting and map storage facilities.

### **6.2.2 Establishing a Mapping System**

One major component of L&DO's computerisation plan was the establishment of a mapping system, by creation of base maps on a scale of 1:1250 for all land parcels; this would be linked to a database containing address and other details, which could be used for easily locating any property or lease. While the total cost of the project was estimated at Rs. 1.82 crore, National Informatics Centre (NIC) was commissioned to execute Phase-I, covering 40 *per cent* of the area, at a cost of Rs. 80 lakh for completion by March 2002.

Audit scrutiny, however, revealed that the establishment of the mapping system had not even commenced as of March 2009, despite payment of Rs. 80 lakh to NIC between September 2001 and March 2002. Of this, an amount of Rs. 40 lakh was released to NIC on 31st March 2002 (evidently to avoid lapse of funds), despite concerns over the high rates quoted by NIC.

In its response (March 2009), the Ministry stated that the project could not commence since it involved flights over no fly zones of Delhi. Even after meetings with officials of NIC, the amount paid to them was not refunded, and now, a proposal was underway to utilize this amount for procuring new hardware and software from NIC.

Clearly, the Ministry has resigned itself to the scrapping of this important project for mapping of property parcels, and has not explored alternative options for mapping e.g. use of satellite data from NRSA<sup>8</sup>.

### **6.2.3 Non-utilization of Digitized Layout Plans**

The component for digitization of layout plans involved scanning of 4200 layout plans of different sizes of various colonies/land/pockets/survey which were available with L&DO for the last 70 years but were badly damaged due to wear and tear. In addition, there were about 16800 sheets of approved plans and 8600 sheets of B-1<sup>9</sup> copies. The digitization of layout plans was to be completed by 31st March 2005, which was later extended to 31st May 2005.

In reply (March 2009), the Ministry stated that five CDs<sup>10</sup> of layout plans were received. The Ministry, however, did not intimate how many plans were digitized, and how these were being utilized. Further, in none of the joint field visits by the Audit team and L&DO staff, was the use of these digitized plans, or printed copies thereof, noticed.

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<sup>8</sup> NRSA: National Remote Sensing Agency

<sup>9</sup> In land records terminology, B-1 copy refers to Khatauni.

<sup>10</sup> One was an installer CD, while the remaining were two copies each of data in 4 CDs.

Clearly, in the absence of details of how many plans were scanned and how the scanned data was utilized, the purported completion of digitization of layout plans could not be verified.

#### **6.2.4 Scanning of Market Records**

In view of the transfer of markets under L&DO's control to NDMC and MCD, L&DO requested NIC in November 2005 to deploy an agency (through National Informatics Centre Services Inc.) for scanning of the related property files. This task was to be completed by January 2006. However, after payment of Rs. 0.94 lakh, NIC handed over one set of DVDs to L&DO only in January 2008, after an earlier set of DVDs handed over in August 2006 were found to be defective. Further, on random checking, even these DVDs contained many blank pages, and a few folders on different disks were empty.

In reply (March 2009), the Ministry stated that the scanning of documents relating to transferred markets was completed. 8500 property files were scanned and stored in 117145 image files spanning 32 CDs. Since 2398 pages were found blank, the agency was paid for 114747 images, and an amount of 30 *per cent* was thus withheld. However, the Ministry did not indicate how these CDs had been put to use by L&DO, and what action was taken on the scanning of pages/folders found to be blank.

#### **Recommendations**

11. L&DO must have a strictly defined timeframe, within which complete details of all leases of properties within its control must be captured in the IT system. Computerised data should, then, form the basis for all lease administration as well as statistics reported by L&DO. This should also include establishment of the mapping system, and digitization of layout plans.
12. In case difficulties are experienced in conduct of the mapping exercise, L&DO can also consider alternative options, like using satellite data from NRSA etc. Establishment of a comprehensive mapping system is, in any case, a most essential tool for administration of lease lands.
13. All the manual registers, required to be maintained by the sections, should be computerized, and linked with the computerized database of leases and properties. Recovery of ground rent and other receipts should also be computerised in similar fashion.
14. Accountability for complete and upto date entry of data for all leases/properties should be ensured. Option for outsourcing also needs to be seriously explored, after considering the available resources for data entry.