

CHAPTER XIII : MINISTRY OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

13.1 Infertuous expenditure due to non-utilisation of software

Failure of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to utilise the software for automation of the functions of the Ministry resulted in infertuous expenditure of ₹ 45.82 lakh besides non-achievement of envisaged objectives of having a paperless office.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal Ministry of the Government of India for all matters relating to new and renewable energy. The broad aim of the Ministry is to develop and deploy new and renewable energy for supplementing the energy requirements of the country. MNRE has two regional offices and two specialised technical institutions i.e. Solar Energy Center (SEC) at Gurgaon and Centre for Wind Energy Technology (C-WET) at Chennai.

In view of its long term objective to set up a paperless office with an online electronic flow of data using office automation/information technology tools, MNRE decided in July 1999 to establish a web based software 'Renewable Energy Network' (RENET). The objectives of RENET project were:

- automated functioning of divisions of MNRE;
- online creation and updatation of data;
- generation of various types of reports (division-wise, project-wise, plan-wise, year-wise and state-wise etc.);
- online availability and submission of forms;
- financial/budget monitoring; and
- online submission of feedback forms.

It was observed in audit that the Integrated Finance Division (IFD), MNRE, while clearing the RENET proposal, had remarked that the concept of having a paperless office in a ministry was more hypothetical and even the training programmes conducted for staff of MNRE relating to computerisation did not show satisfactory results, which were a cause of concern. However, MNRE went ahead and signed a MoU with CMC in November 2000 for ₹ 34.17 lakh for development and installation of RENET. This also included ₹ 7.92 lakh for

running and maintenance of the integrated RENET for two years¹ after the expiry of warranty period of three months. The associated expenditure for online connectivity, specific hardware procurement, licenses etc., to make the software functional was not available to Audit. MNRE stated that the relevant volume of the file was not traceable. CMC developed the software and submitted it to MNRE in June 2001. Audit however observed that RENET was non-functional as of March 2011 and the objectives of having a paperless office in MNRE could not be achieved rendering the whole investment of ₹ 45.82 lakh wasteful. The deficiencies noticed in the project implementation were:

- Although the software was to be tested under field conditions, the divisions of MNRE did not provide any input data for testing of the modules of the software due to which CMC tested the software using dummy data.
- Despite demonstration of the modules, the divisions did not submit any 'User Acceptance' or submit their feedback.
- As no division provided data, the database could not be populated to generate reports/queries. As a result, division-wise, project-wise, plan-wise, year-wise and state-wise reports etc., as envisaged could not be generated.
- Forms and project proposals were not being submitted online from regional offices or State Nodal Agencies through RENET.

MNRE, in March 2004 further extended the Facility Management Services (FMS) to CMC from 2004 to 2006, incurring a further expenditure of ₹ 7.92 lakh and increased the scope of work of CMC to include Renewable Energy Electronic Processing System (REEPS) for integrating online receipt of project proposals from State Nodal Agencies through RENET and processing them electronically by various wings of MNRE. The FMS was further extended upto March 2007 at a cost of ₹ 1.98 lakh. However, it was seen that REEPS was also not utilised by MNRE and the State Nodal Agencies as of March 2011.

¹ Facility Management Service period.

It was further observed that TIFAD², the Information Technology implementing division had no information about utilisation of RENET in any division of MNRE. Non-utilisation of the software was confirmed from various sections like Budget, IFD, Biogas and Administration sections. Although TIFAD requested divisional heads in March 2008 to use the software available for automation and online processing, no feedback was received from the divisions. As of March 2011, the software was yet to be utilized.

The hyperlink of RENET/REEPS provided on the MNRE website which would have enabled users to access the software, was also not presently (March 2011) functional. Thus, the expenditure of ₹ 45.82 lakh³ on development of the software was wasted.

In reply to Audit, TIFAD division of MNRE stated (May 2009) that work done in various division/regional offices through RENET was not available and that the software required updation and maintenance. MNRE confirmed in March 2011 that no updation and maintenance was undertaken as the Ministry considered this to be expensive and further there was no feedback from any user.

Thus, failure of MNRE to make efforts for utilisation of the software RENET for the last ten years resulted in non-achievement of the envisaged objectives of paperless office, online availability of renewable energy database and connectivity thereby rendering the expenditure of ₹ 45.82 lakh incurred thereon infructuous. With MNRE not considering maintenance and updation of the software, there was no possibility of its utilisation in future. The files relating to the expenditure on hardware, online connectivity and other associated expenditure on this project was not made available to Audit.

The matter was referred to MNRE in October 2009; their reply was awaited as of March 2011.

² The Technology Information, Forecasting, Assessment and Databank division of MNRE was set up for utilisation of information technology and establishment of technology information system in the area of renewable energy.

³ Inclusive of ₹.1.75 lakh on System Requirement Study by CMC.