

Standing Committee Report Summary

Functioning of Central Libraries in the country

- The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism, and Culture (Chair: Mr. T.G. Venkatesh) presented its report on 'Functioning of Central Libraries in the country', on February 3, 2022. According to the Seventh Schedule under the Constitution of India, Libraries are enlisted in the State list. The Ministry of Culture manages seven public libraries of national importance (national libraries) due to historical and legal reasons. Key observations of the Committee include the following:
 - **Organisational structure:** The Committee noted that only some states and UTs have enacted public library legislations in the country. It recommended enactment of library legislations in states where it has not been enacted, covering all aspects like structure of buildings, staff requirement, and preservation of valuable manuscripts. Further, it recommended setting up a committee for drafting a National Policy on Library and Information System.
 - **Financial resources:** The Committee noted that the central or state governments have not provided adequate funds for public libraries. It observed that money collected for libraries through taxes by local bodies is not spent on their development. The Committee recommended state governments to frame rules or amendments in the library legislations for proper utilisation of finances. Further, the legislation should contain provisions for collection of library cess.
 - The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Culture should come up with budgetary requirements for carrying out infrastructural improvements at public libraries. The Ministry may approach the Finance Ministry for a special one-time grant for the same.
- **Digitisation:** The Committee recommended that public libraries should provide facilities for virtual learning for school children. It recommended the Ministry to make guidelines for large scale digitisation of various books and journals. Further, a web portal for interlinking of National Digital Library of India with international-library portals should be created.
- The Committee recommended modifying the public library system to provide minimum network-based services for the urban and rural population. Further, libraries should be developed as Community Information Centre models and computerisation of libraries should be taken up fast to upgrade them.
- **National Libraries:** The National Library, Kolkata is an institution of national importance, under entry 62 in union list of the seventh schedule of the Constitution of India. The Committee noted that the post of the Director General of the library has been vacant for several years. It recommended urgently filling up the human resource requirements of the library. Further, the Committee recommended that the Director General must be a library and information science professional with a strong technical background.
- The Committee recommended the central and state governments, and the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata to devise a master plan for reviving India's public libraries to cater to needs of special groups like children, differently abled, elderly people, and ethnic minorities.

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