පාර්ලිමේන්තු ප්‍රශ්න මාලා අංක - 492
ආයතනයේ නම - ජාතික උද්භිද උද්‍යාන දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව

පාර්ලිමේන්තුවේ රජයේ ගිණුම් පිළිබඳ කාරක සභාව විසින් සභාගත කරන ලද වාර්තා සම්බන්ධයෙන් ස්ථාවර නියෝග අංක **119(4)** යටතේ ගරු අමාත්‍යවරයාගේ නිරීක්ෂණ හා ගනු ලබන පියවර පාර්ලිමේන්තුව වෙත ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම

பாராளுமன்ற வெளியீட்டுத் தொடர் இலக்கம் - **492**
நிறுவனத்தின் பெயர் - தேசிய தாவரவியல் பூங்காக்கள் திணைக்களம்.

பாராளுமன்றத்தின் அரச கணக்குக் குழுவினால் முன்வைக்கப்பட்ட அறிக்கை தொடர்பாக நிலையியற் கட்டளை இலக்கம் 119(4)-இன் கீழ் கௌரவ அமைச்சரின் அவதானிப்புகளும் மற்றும் அது தொடர்பாக எடுக்கப்படும் நடவடிக்கைகளும் பாராளுமன்றத்திற்கு சமர்ப்பித்தல்

Parliamentary Series No. - 492
Name of the Institution - Department of National Botanic Gardens

Submission of observations of Hon. Minister and steps taken with regard to the reports tabled by the Committee on Public Accounts in terms of Standing Order No .119(4)

Parliamentary Questionnaire Series No. - **492**
Name of the Institution - **Department of National Botanic Gardens**

Presentation of observations and actions taken as mentioned in the report tabled in Parliament by the Committee on Public Accounts under Standing Order No. 119(4) - Financial Year 2023

	Weaknesses identified according to the performance evaluation for the financial year 2023	Actions taken to correct the shortcomings and the current status
Part One		
1	Reporting of instances where replies were not provided within a month for every audit query submitted by the Auditor General.	More than a month was not taken to provide answers for every audit query presented by the Auditor General. However, in instances where audit queries were directed regarding other botanic gardens and units under the Department, it takes time to call for information (along with the necessary annexures to support the replies) from the relevant units. Due to the slight difficulty in providing answers to such audit queries, it has taken more than a month to provide the replies. Nevertheless, I kindly state that replies have been sent to the audit promptly on every possible occasion, and unit heads have been instructed to forward the replies to the Head Office to enable providing answers within a month in the future.
2	Reporting of instances where replies were not provided within a month for internal audit queries.	More than a month was not taken to provide answers for every audit query presented by the Internal Audit Divisions. However, in instances where audit queries were directed regarding other botanic gardens and units under the Department, it takes time to call for information (along with the necessary annexures to support the replies) from the relevant units. Due to the slight difficulty in providing answers to such audit queries, it has taken more than a month to provide the replies.

		Nevertheless, I kindly state that replies have been sent to the audit promptly on every possible occasion, and unit heads have been instructed to forward the replies to the Head Office to enable providing answers within a month in the future.
3	Failure to appoint a suitable officer for the coordination of the provisions of the circular in accordance with paragraph 13 of Asset Management Circular No. 1/2017 dated 2017.06.28 and to inform the Office of the Comptroller General.	An officer has been appointed on 2023.10.09 to report information regarding assets, and steps have been taken to direct it to the Comptroller General. (Annex 01)
4	Failure to conduct the board of survey in accordance with F.R. 756(6) within the time frame mentioned in Part I, paragraph 11.1 of the Public Finance Circular No. 01/2020 dated 2020.08.28 and report the relevant reports to the Auditor General by the due date.	The board of survey reports have been forwarded to the Auditor General on 2024.06.14, and due to the delay in receiving the disposal reports from only two units to the Head Office, those two reports were forwarded on 2024.07.29. Currently, the board of survey has been conducted strictly within the timeframe mentioned in Part I, paragraph 11.1 of the Public Finance Circular No. 01/2020 in accordance with F.R. 756(6), and the relevant reports have been forwarded to the Auditor General by the due date. (Annex 02, 03)
5	Failure to implement the recommendations regarding excesses and shortages, as well as other recommendations revealed from the annual board of survey, within the stipulated time frame.	No excesses or shortages have been reported.
6	Entering into liabilities exceeding the balance provision remaining at the end of the year after the utilization of provisions allocated for a set expenditure object, as per F.R. 94(1).	Action has been taken to apprise Heads of Units to refrain from entering into liabilities that exceed the remaining balance of provisions at the end of the year.

7	Existence of outstanding loan balances dating back more than a year.	As at 2023.12.31, there existed an outstanding loan balance of Rs. 4,343,939.00 to be recovered, of which 85% had been recovered by 2026.04.30. I hereby kindly inform you that the measures taken in respect of the outstanding loan balance still recoverable as at 2026.04.30, amounting to Rs. 622,573.34, are as follows: **<u>Outstanding Loan Balances Recoverable from Deceased Officers</u>** Mr. H.P.R. Hathurusinghe – Recoverable loan amount: Rs. 34,365.00 The Department of Pensions has informed that documents should be submitted to the central division for settlement of liabilities under payment to the heir in relation to the pension entitlement. However, as an issue has arisen regarding definitive information relating to the heir, relevant actions are currently being carried out to verify the heirs. Mr. W.I.M. Wickramanayake – Recoverable loan amount: Rs. 152,648.34, of which the remaining recoverable balance is Rs. 107,048.34. (Recoveries are being made monthly from deductions commencing from May 2024.) Ceremonies – Rs. 8,750.00 Special – Rs. 2,800.00 **<u>Outstanding Loan Balances Recoverable from Officers Who Have Vacated Service</u>** Mr. A.H.S. Hettiarachchi – Recoverable distress loan amount: Rs. 179,350.00 The referral of the relevant information is sent to the Legal Department, as requested by the Secretary to the Ministry and a letter dated 2026.04.08 has been issued to the officer informing to settle the said loan amount. (Annexure 04)

		<u>Outstanding Loan Balances Recoverable from Retired Officers</u> Mr. K.G. Jayasinghe – Recoverable distress loan amount: Rs. 84,460.00 Action is being taken to prepare the gratuity. Mr. S.P. Wijeratne – Recoverable distress loan amount: Rs. 205,800.00 The pension file has been forwarded to the Department of Pensions.
8	Failure to act in accordance with F.R. 571 regarding lapsed deposits in the General Deposit Account.	I kindly inform you that the lapsed balance of Rs. 15,000 in the General Deposit Account for tender deposits is an amount related to the Peradeniya Royal Botanic Gardens Museum Renovation Project, and it has been retained in the General Deposit Account until the issues that have arisen regarding it are resolved. I kindly inform you that the money retained during the payment of contract bills for the Peradeniya Royal Botanic Gardens Museum Renovation Project amounting to Rs. 4,938,003 and the retention money related to the contract for the construction of the Molecular Biology Laboratory of the National Herbarium amounting to Rs. 542,850, which are deposited in the General Deposit Account for contract retention monies, are further retained in that account until the issues that have arisen regarding them are resolved. The balance remaining in the General Deposit Account for refunds to third parties is from the funds received for the projects "Conservation actions for threatened endemic species" and "Development of conservation plan for two endemic and critically endangered (CR) tree species". As the relevant project is still ongoing, it is further retained as constant payments have to be made for the tasks performed according to the project action plan. In addition to this, actions have been taken in accordance with F.R. 571 for all lapsed deposit balances related to the year 2023.

9	Failure to settle ad-hoc sub-imprest issued under F.R. 371 within one month of the completion of the relevant task.	Action has been taken to instruct Heads of Units to settle obtained ad-hoc sub-imprest within one month of the completion of the task.
10	Failure to take necessary actions in accordance with the provisions of the State Accounts Circular No. 30/94 dated 1994.04.20 regarding foreign aid received by the institution.	When submitting the project proposal to the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) under the heading "Development of conservation plan for two endemic and CR tree species Stemonoporus affinis and Stemonoporus gracilis", the proposal was submitted by the Program Assistant through the Director General of the Department. Later, after the proposal submitted by us was accepted by the BGCI, agreements were entered into year by year for this project for the three years the project was implemented (from 2021 to 2023). During the signing of these agreements, on behalf of the Sri Lankan party, the agreements were entered into under the title of Director General of the Department of National Botanic Gardens, and all responsibilities of the project were borne by the Director General in accordance with the agreements. Accordingly, since the BGCI, the organization that provided the foreign grants, requested the details of an account in the name of the contracted party to remit the relevant foreign grants, the details of the current account belonging to the Bank of Ceylon in the name of the Director General of the Department of National Botanic Gardens were provided to that organization. The money provided for those three years was remitted to the above account, and the money was credited to the General Deposit Account of the Department, and the relevant expenditures were incurred. However, the relevant officers have now been informed by the departmental internal circular No. DNBG/F/08/DEPOST/General/2023 and the letter dated 2023/06/27 regarding the instructions to act in accordance with the State Accounts Circulars regarding the remittance of foreign grants. Accordingly, I kindly inform that actions are currently being taken as pointed out by the audit. (Annexure 05)

11	Failure to remit all money received as foreign grants to the official bank account of the Deputy Secretary to the Treasury.	Currently, the money received as foreign grants is being remitted to the official bank account of the Deputy Secretary to the Treasury.
Part Two		
12	Failure to prepare and enter into performance agreements covering the entire staff.	Performance agreements have been prepared for the staff.
13.	The number of training opportunities provided out of the planned training opportunities remaining at a level below 50%.	Because the provisions allocated for training programs in the year 2023 were limited, it was not possible to conduct all the planned training programs, and only the most essential training programs were conducted based on service requirements.
14	The audit opinion regarding the accounts of the institution was at a qualified / disclaimed / adverse level.	A qualified opinion has been given.
15	Directives / recommendations of the Committee on Public Accounts had not been implemented.	The progress of implementing the prior directives of the Committee on Public Accounts is stated below: 01. Improving the beautification activities of the Gampaha Botanical Garden. This project was initiated in the year 2017, and under it, specialized structural frameworks for floriculture have been constructed and installed. Various colorful flowering plant species are maintained on these frameworks, being periodically replaced as annual flowering plants. For this purpose, the continuous production and maintenance of additional annual flowering plants and seedlings are carried out in the nursery section. The sprinkler irrigation system, designed to provide a systematic and uninterrupted water supply to these frameworks, remains in proper working condition. To sustain the uninterrupted production of plants, seeds are obtained from the garden itself, and the nursery is maintained through seed exchange with other botanical gardens. (Annexures 06, 07)

		02. Action taken regarding unauthorized settlers at the Hakgala Botanical Garden. A meeting was held on 16.03.2026, chaired by the Nuwara-Eliya District Secretary and with the participation of the Director General of National Botanic Gardens, regarding the lands belonging to the Hakgala Botanical Garden in the Badulla and Nuwara Eliya districts that have been occupied by unauthorized settlers. During this meeting, it was decided to survey and prepare a survey plan incorporating the remaining lands into the garden, excluding the lands with permanent buildings occupied by unauthorized settlers and the lands gazetted as reserves. It was further decided to formally transfer the lands pertaining to this new survey from the Director General of Agriculture to the Department of National Botanic Gardens. Accordingly, survey requisitions for the relevant surveys in the Nuwara Eliya and Badulla districts have been forwarded to the respective Survey Offices. The approximate boundary of the garden has been marked using GPS, and measures are underway to conduct the survey in a manner that incorporates every possible extent of land into the garden. 03. Action taken regarding the canteen lease rent of the Hakgala Botanical Garden. An amount of Rs. 1,053,900.00, which was received as lease rent from August 2007 to July 2013 for the Hakgala Botanical Garden cafeteria and deposited in the Employees' Welfare Society Account, along with an amount of Rs. 270,650.00 deposited in the General Deposit Account, has been credited to the Government Revenue.
16	Officers who completed the maximum service period had not been duly transferred.	a) The information of all officers belonging to the Combined Service serving in the Department of National Botanic Gardens has been included under the update of service information on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration. Furthermore, lists containing the information of officers serving in this Department for more than 05 years have been submitted to the annual transfer

	"	boards of the Combined Service, and transfers of the Combined Service occur outside the control of this Department. b) An annual transfer procedure has been prepared for the posts of the Sri Lanka Scientific Service. Accordingly, actions are currently being taken to transfer officers who have completed 03 years in their current workstation by 2026.06.01. c) A transfer procedure has also been prepared for the posts of Garden Development Assistant and Ticketing Assistant, and accordingly, transfers are scheduled to be implemented by 2027.01.01. d) When recruiting minor staff to the gardens belonging to the Department of National Botanic Gardens, residence in areas close to the botanic gardens is also considered for the respective recruitments. Therefore, transferring them is done based on service requirements and changes in their places of residence. Furthermore, I kindly inform you that periodically transferring employees drawing a minor salary to gardens located physically distant from each other appears inhumane under the current economic pattern. When recruiting minor staff for the gardens belonging to the Department of National Botanic Gardens, residence in close proximity to the botanical gardens is also taken into consideration. Therefore, their transfers are carried out based on service requirements and changes to their places of residence. Providing official quarters is also difficult. Furthermore, I kindly inform you that periodically transferring employees who earn a minimal salary to geographically distant gardens appear inhumane under the current economic conditions.

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Dr. Dammika Patabendi
Minister of Environment