

**04**

**COMMITTEE  
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(2024-25)**

**EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS  
(2024-25)**

**FOURTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*DECEMBER 2024 / Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)*

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**COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**  
**(2024-25)**

**(EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

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**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS**  
**(2024-25)**

*Presented to Hon'ble Speaker on 30 January, 2025*  
*Presented to Lok Sabha on 03 February, 2025*  
*Laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 18 December, 2024*



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT**  
**NEW DELHI**

*DECEMBER, 2024 / Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)*

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## COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2024-25)

**Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson**

### **Lok Sabha**

2. Smt. D. K. Aruna
3. Shri Vijay Baghel
4. Shri Mitesh Patel Bakabhai
5. Shri Abhishek Banerjee
6. Shri Arun Govil
7. Shri Deepender Singh Hooda
8. Shri Navaskani K.
9. Shri Kripanath Mallah
10. Shri Brijendra Singh Ola
11. Shri Asaduddin Owaisi
12. Shri Sanatan Pandey
13. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy
14. Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
15. Shri Y. S. Avinash Reddy
16. Smt. Aparajita Sarangi
17. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant
18. Ms. Praniti Sushilkumar Shinde
19. Ms. Bansuri Swaraj
20. Shri Akshay Yadav
21. Vacant

### **Rajya Sabha**

22. Dr. John Brittas
23. Smt. Kiran Choudhry
24. Smt. Sagarika Ghose
25. Dr. K. Laxman
26. Ms. Kavita Patidar
27. Shri A. D. Singh
28. Kunwar Ratanjeet Pratap Narayan Singh
29. Dr. Sudhanshu Trivedi
30. Vacant
31. Vacant

### **Secretariat**

1. Shri Anjani Kumar – Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Reena Gopalakrishnan – Director
3. Ms. K. Muanniang Tunlut – Deputy Secretary
4. Ms. Smita Singh – Assistant Committee Officer

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Committee on External Affairs having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Fourth Report of the Committee on External Affairs (2024-25) on Demands for Grants (2024-25) of the Ministry of External Affairs.

2. The Committee heard the views of the representatives of the Ministry of External Affairs at their Third Sitting held on 06 November, 2024.

3. The Committee wish to express their gratitude to the officers of the Ministry of External Affairs for placing before them the material and information that the Committee desired and also appearing before the Committee for placing their considered views before them in connection with the examination of Demands for Grants (2024-25).

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sixth Sitting held on 11 December, 2024.

5. The Minutes of the Sitting of the Committee held on 06 November, 2024 and 11 December are given in Appendix-I and II to the Report.

6. For facility of reference, the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold.

**NEW DELHI**  
**11 December, 2024**  
**20 Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)**

**Dr. Shashi Tharoor,**  
**Chairperson,**  
**Committee on External Affairs**

## CHAPTER 1

### ANALYSIS OF DEMANDS FOR GRANTS FOR THE YEAR 2024-25

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) formulates and conducts India's foreign policy within the framework of our values and principles of fostering international peace and cooperation with the overall objective of meeting India's strategic aims and aspirations as well as to secure our national interests. In pursuance of its mandated objectives, the MEA headquarters in New Delhi is assisted by 196 Missions and Posts abroad, its Branch Secretariats and Passport Offices in India, and Autonomous Bodies funded by it. The Ministry is also supported by other Ministries and State Governments who also contribute to India's international engagement in consultation and coordination with MEA.

1.2 Under the Constitution of India [Article 113 (2)], estimates of expenditure is submitted to Lok Sabha in the form of Demands for Grants. The Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs (Demand No. 29) was presented on 23 July, 2024.

#### I. OVERALL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

1.3 The budgetary allocation for the Ministry of External Affairs in Budget Estimates (BE) 2023-24 was Rs. 18050.00 crore. The allocation in Revised Estimates (RE) 2023-24 was Rs. 29121.88 crore and the Actual Expenditure of the Ministry in FY 2023-24 was Rs. 29003.38 crore (99.59% of RE 2023-24). The allocation in BE 2024-25 is Rs. 22154.67 crore, which is 23% higher than BE 2023-24 allocation and 24% less than RE 2023-24 allocation. The total Budgetary Allocation during the last five years along with the Budget Estimates (BE) and Revised Estimates (RE) for the respective years including Actuals & shortfall/excess in utilization of RE is as follows:

*(Rs. in crore)*

Financial Year	BE	RE	Actual Expenditure	Increase/Decrease at RE Stage
2018-19	15011.00	15582.00	15527.70	+571
2019-20	17884.78	17372.27	17272.06	-512.51
2020-21	17346.71	15000.00	14365.84	-2346.71
2021-22	18154.73	16000.00	14173.70	-2154.73
2022-23	17250.00	16972.79	16684.78	-277.21
2023-24	18050.00	29121.88	29003.38	+11071.88
2024-25	22154.67		8333.33*	

\*Actual Expenditure up to September 2024



1.4 The trends shown by the above table indicates that the initial budgetary allocations during the four financial years (2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23) were reduced at RE stage. However, there was a steep increase of Rs. 11,071.88 crore at the RE stage in FY 2023-24. Specifying the reasons for such a steep increase at RE stage during 2023-24, the Ministry stated that it projected a budgetary demand of Rs. 21552.24 crore for BE 2023-24 and Rs 31872.50 crore for RE 2023-24 to the Ministry of Finance, accompanied by detailed justifications. As per the recommendations of the Hon'ble Standing Committee and best practices in budgetary management, the Ministry continues to strive for more rigorous budget planning through Zero-Based Budgeting. This involves creating expenditure plans based on anticipated progress in ongoing projects, potential new initiatives, and challenges in individual projects, all of which are considered when formulating budgetary demands and allocations. Detailed discussions on budget demands take place in Quarterly Budget Management meetings with Division Heads and are further reviewed in meetings chaired by the Finance Secretary, following a whole-of-government approach to budget management. The projected demands and allocations for RE 2023-24 were thus based on thorough discussions with divisions, careful assessments of project progress, and realistic evaluations of budget utilization for FY 2023-24. A consistent improvement in the Ministry's RE and BE demand-allocation indicates realistic projections and a constructive appreciation of Ministry's requirements by Ministry of Finance as a result of the zero-based budgeting principle. Out of Rs 11,071.88 Cr, Rs 9013.72 Cr was expended to cater to RBI mandated provisioning requirements for India's Line of Credits to various countries.

1.5 The Committee enquired about the rationale and objective for the enhanced BE 2024-25 of Rs 22154.67 crore, which is 23% higher than BE 2023-24 allocation and 24% less than RE 2023-24 allocation along with the initiatives/projects/schemes proposed to be taken up under the increased allocation. The Ministry responded that the higher allocation in BE 2024-25 is mainly due to allocation of Rs 4383.40 Cr for expenditure charged to the Guarantee Redemption Fund upon invocation of the GoI Guarantee by Exim Bank to comply with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) norms.

1.6 Elaborating on the Lines of Credit provisioning during BE 2024-25, the Foreign Secretary submitted:

“For the benefit of the Hon. Members, if I can explain this concept, in recent years, we have been under directions of the RBI and the Ministry of Finance to provide in our MEA’s budget the provisioning for the payments that are due to the EXIM Bank of India on account of the lines of credit that it extends to foreign countries on our recommendation. This repayment is both for principal as well as interest accrued. Due to financial stresses that our partners face when there is a disruption in the schedule of repayments, they get classified as receivables in the books of the EXIM Bank. Contrary to previous practice where this was taken on the books of the bank, the RBI and the Ministry of Finance have now decreed that this be shown and taken on the books of the MEA.

As you pointed out, Sir, the provisioning and the notional expenditure that this shows on our part is actually an accounting exercise. And it is an adjustment of the books between different branches of the Government of India. It does not represent any productive expenditure. So, you can safely actually remove the entire provisioning amount from our budgets. That would give you a much better sense of how much substantive the budget is that goes into productive or consumption expenditure. Some of the reduction in the allocation is also on account of lesser allocation for India's G20 Presidency which came to an end in November last year. We do not have the need for providing it this year. So, if we take out Rs. 4,383 crore which is LOC provisioning; MEA's effective budget for 2024-25 is only Rs. 17,771 crore.”

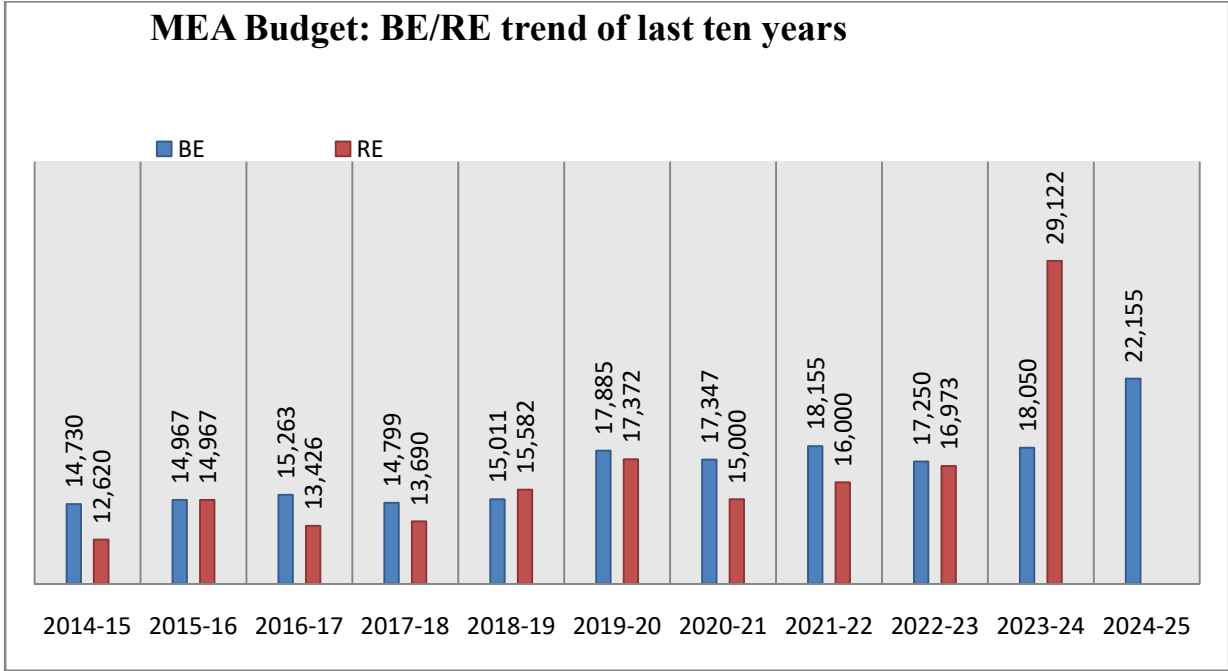
1.7 MEA’s budgetary allocation to the GOI budget for the last ten financial years is provided below:

**Budget Estimates**

(Rs. in crore)

<b>FY</b>	<b>MEA Budget</b>	<b>GoI Budget</b>	<b>MEA budget as a %age of GoI budget</b>
2014-15	14,730.39	14,51,493.96	1.01%
2015-16	14,966.83	15,67,081.78	0.95%
2016-17	15,262.66	17,29,508.48	0.85%
2017-18	14,798.55	21,46,735.00	0.62%
2018-19	15,011.00	24,42,213.00	0.61%
2019-20	17,884.78	27,86,349.00	0.64%
2020-21	17,347.00	30,42,230.00	0.57%
2021-22	18,155.00	34,83,235.00	0.52%
2022-23	17,250.00	39,44,908.00	0.44%
2023-24	18,050.00	45,03,097.00	0.40%
2024-25	22,155.00	48,20,512.00	0.46%

1.8 The following graph represents the BE-RE trends of MEA for the last ten years:



1.9 The differential between RE and BE demand-allocation differential has been a recurring feature of MEA’s Demands for grants over the years. Justifying the rationale for this trend, the Ministry stated that budgetary demand and allocation is a dynamic exercise aided by regular assessment of Ministry’s expectation of expenditure progress in a given financial year. Instruments of re-appropriation of budget, Supplementary demands, etc., allow re-prioritisation and re-allocation of funds for full and efficient allocation of budgetary resources. The quarterly budgetary and expenditure assessment instituted by the Ministry in the form of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings strengthens the useful re-purposing of budgetary distribution and is further reviewed in meetings chaired by the Ministry of Finance, following a whole-of-government approach to budget management. Ministry’s RE and BE demands are submitted to the Ministry of Finance and suitable RE and BE allocation is provided to the Ministry as per Parliamentary approval.

1.10 The budgetary demands sought from the Ministry of Finance and the actual allocations made during the last three financial years are as follows:

(Rs. in crore)

<b>FY</b>	<b>BE Demand</b>	<b>BE Allocation</b>	<b>RE Demand</b>	<b>RE Allocation</b>	<b>Actuals</b>
2021-22	22888.73	18154.73	18224.52	16000.00	14173.70
2022-23	20707.18	17250.00	19095.45	16972.79	16684.78
2023-24	21552.24	18050.00	31872.50	29121.88	29003.38
2024-25	27865.04	22154.67	28234.31	-	

1.11 The details of allocations sought at supplementary Demands/Additional Demands during the year 2023-24 are as under:

(Rs. in crore)

<b>Supplementary 2023-24</b>	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
First Supplementary	11116.18	11116.18*
Second & Final Supplementary	0.02	0.02

*\*Rs. 44.30 crore technical supplementary (surrender of funds from Capital Section for utilization under Revenue Section)*

1.12 On being asked whether the BE for 2024-25 will be sufficient for carrying out its expansive activities, the Ministry replied that it undertook an assessment of the funds requirements for various heads in the MEA budget for suitable allocation within the BE 2024-25 ceiling of Rs. 22154.67 crore to ensure that the on-going projects, schemes and programmes as per the ongoing pace of the projects, schemes and programmes. Budgetary demand and allocation is a dynamic exercise aided by regular assessment of Ministry's expectation of expenditure progress in current financial year. Instruments of re-appropriation of budget, Supplementary demands etc, allow re-prioritisation, and re-allocation of funds for full & efficient allocation of budgetary resources. The Ministry's Quarterly Budget Management Meetings aids in analysis of expenditure utilization and assessment of budget resources and the useful repurposing of budgetary distribution with the priority towards Ministry's development partnership portfolio. The quarterly budgetary and expenditure assessment instituted by the Ministry in the form of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings strengthen. It is Ministry's assessment, that projected budget in RE 2024-25 would suffice our expenditure commitments in CFY.

1.13 The Committee enquired about the budgetary constraints facing the MEA, including the areas that are underfunded. The Ministry responded that its anticipation of expenditure progress

in the current fiscal year is regularly assessed, which makes budgetary demand and allocation a dynamic process. Instruments for re-appropriating money, such as supplementary requests, permit re-prioritization and re-allocation of funds in order to allocate budgetary resources fully and effectively. Funds provided to the Ministry in BE 2024-25 reflect a fair evaluation of our current international obligations, predicted spending growth, and realistic assessment of our requirements. The quarterly budgetary and spending evaluations put in place by the Ministry in the form of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings reinforce the beneficial reallocation of budgetary distribution with a preference towards the Ministry's development partnership portfolio. According to the Ministry's assessment, the projected RE 2024-25 would suffice our expenditure commitments in the current financial year.

1.14 The Committee wanted to know whether MEA's budget is adapted to address emerging global challenges such as cyber security, climate change, public health, emerging technologies, etc. The Ministry stated that its budget includes various components that address emerging global challenges. For instance, the autonomous policy research bodies funded by the Ministry, *viz.* the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA) and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), undertake several research and academic activities on a broad range of subjects including cyber security, climate change, public health, emerging technologies, migration and mobility. Ministry's Multilateral Economic Relations Programme budget head caters to India's contribution to the South Centre, Geneva for supporting climate change activities. The Quad Cooperation budget head supports initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region relating to climate change and public health such as off-grid solar projects and the Quad Cancer Moonshot for providing HPV sampling kits, detection kits, and cervical cancer vaccines. The ITEC programme offers training courses in contemporary subject matters such as govtech, IT, digital economy, and emerging technologies (blockchain, artificial intelligence, etc.). In the current financial year 2024-25, a new head has been created labelled "Aid to Tech Infrastructure Project", to support projects pertaining to Digital Public Infrastructure, Small and Medium Enterprises, and green technology/solar/ water projects. The Ministry has administrative provisions in its budget for actively participating in international dialogues and negotiations pertaining to cyber security, climate change, public health and emerging technologies, in close coordination with nodal Ministries and agencies in the Government. However, it may be noted

that the substantive portfolio relating to these matters reside with the respective line ministries of the Union Government.

1.15 On Committee's specific question on incorporation of the dimension of gender budgeting in proposing the budgetary demands, it has been submitted that the Ministry has made efforts to adopt welfare measures to support women of Indian origin who have been deserted by their overseas Indian spouses fraudulently, through the mobilization of the local Indian community in the endeavour and with some financial assistance from the Government. The objective of the scheme is to provide some financial assistance for providing legal services to needy women. A Bill in this regard is also under consideration.

1.16 In pursuance of the Committee's recommendation, RIS has examined empirical trends in MEA Budget through an inter-Ministerial comparison and cross country comparison of different countries. The key findings of the report titled, "Analysis of Trends of MEA Budgetary Allocation" prepared by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) are as follows:

- i. The budgetary allocation for MEA has been less than 1% of the Union Budget in the last four decades.
- ii. In percentage terms, while some developed countries like Germany, Canada and Australia spend more than 60% of their MFA budget on schemes/development aid, others like USA (42.3%) and China (39.5%) are comparable with India (38.3%) in terms of their spending on the Scheme side.
- iii. ASEAN countries spend in the range of 55-99% of the MFA budget on Establishment heads, developed countries like USA spends around 20%. India (28%) and Brazil (48.78%) fall in the median range, while China spends around 20%.
- iv. India's development assistance is mostly concentrated in neighbouring countries, (78.5 % of MEA's total development assistance in 2020-21).
- v. The study also concludes that higher budgetary allocation is not the sole determinant for the efficacy of any Ministry. Portfolio of composition of budgetary spend is an important component, for instance development partnership budget of MEA is more than its establishment expenses.
- vi. Budgetary support is needed for MEA to promote India's robust foreign policy to effectively deal with emerging challenges such as climate change, global terrorism, and global pandemic, among others. The study notes that implementation of a bilateral project is a demand-driven initiative by the partner country.

1.17 As per the report, the share of the respective Foreign Ministry budget of sample countries as a percentage of that country's GDP for the year 2019 is indicated in the table below:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Overall MFA budget allocation (in USD billion)</b>	<b>Ratio of MFA budget to GDP (in % age)</b>
USA	73.23	0.37
China	7.87	0.06
Germany	7.57	0.17
Canada	6.95	0.31
Australia	4.78	0.35
India	2.02	0.09
Brazil	0.74	0.04
Indonesia	0.53	0.05

1.18 In the Report, MEA has been categorized as a Ministry with middle sized allocation of resources among sample ministries/departments. The Committee desired to know the list of high sized, middle sized and low budgeted Ministry/Departments on the basis of this study. The Ministry stated that the study conducted by RIS has taken a sample of Union Ministries / Departments, including MEA, to make a comparative analysis of their budgetary allocation. The large-budgeted Ministries are those that are given a large allocation of resources (more than Rs. 15,000 crore) with asset creation being a key focus for these Ministries. The Ministries with low to medium level budgetary allocation are 'policy-driven' Ministries, with comparatively lesser allocation for asset creation. The report has studied the following sample of Ministries / Departments:

<b>Ministries of large budget allocation</b>	<b>Ministries of small to medium budget allocation</b>
Ministry of Finance Ministry of Home Affairs Ministry of Human Resource Development Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Department of Telecommunication Ministry of Science & Technology Ministry of Commerce & Industry	Department of Economic Affairs Department of Commerce Department of Science & Technology Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology Department of Biotechnology

MEA has been taken into both the groups for making a comparison with large and small ministries.

1.19 The top ten Ministries in terms of budgetary allocation in the BE 2024-25 are:

Sl. No.	Ministry	BE 2024-25 (in INR crore)
1.	Finance	18,58,158
2.	Defence	6,21,941
3.	Road Transport and Highways	2,78,000
4.	Railways	2,55,393
5.	Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	2,23,323
6.	Home Affairs	2,19,643
7.	Rural Development	1,80,233
8.	Chemicals and Fertilisers	1,68,500
9.	Communications	1,37,294
10.	Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare	1,32,470

MEA is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> with BE allocation of Rs. 22,154 crore.

**1.20 An outlay of Rs. 22154.67 crore has been provisioned for the Ministry of External Affairs during BE 2024-25, which is 23 % higher vis-a-vis BE 2023-24. The Ministry has informed that the enhancement in allocation was to cater to RBI mandated provisioning requirements for India's Line of Credit (LoC) to various countries. The Foreign Secretary during the Committee's deliberations has submitted that the LoC provisioning and notional expenditure of Rs. 4383.40 crore represent an accounting exercise and not a productive expenditure. Without the notional expenditure of Rs. 4383.40 crore, the productive allocation for MEA during BE 2024-25 is Rs. 17,771 crore only. Upon scrutiny of MEA's budget during the past ten years, it is observed that the percentage share of MEA's budget allocation to the GOI budget has hovered below 1%. Even though the inadequacy of funds is clearly evident, the Ministry, in written replies, have asserted that the allocated budget reflect a fair evaluation of our current international obligations, predicted spending growth and realistic assessment of our requirements.**

Despite their repeated recommendations and India's rising global profile, the Committee note that the allocation being made to MEA over the years has remained sub-optimal. The Committee emphasize the need to reflect the demands of India's dynamic foreign policy environment in the MEA's budget. A robust financial commitment is not



only a requisite for fulfilling India's aspirations as a global leader but also a strategic investment in safeguarding our national interests and contributing to a stable, multipolar world order. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend a phased increase of at least 20% annually in the MEA budget over the next five years to address resource deficits and alignment with long-term goals. The Ministry of External Affairs should ensure that the imperative of adequate funding is communicated firmly and rationally to the Ministry of Finance during the upcoming budget cycle.

*(Recommendation No. 1)*

1.21 Observing disparities between Budget Estimates (BEs) and Revised Estimates (REs) over the years, the Committee have been recommending that adequate and timely financial allocation is essential for the functioning of the Ministry of External Affairs. India's growing stature on global arena requires consistent and predictable investments in diplomatic, economic and cultural engagements. Budgetary instability and fluctuations undermine India's credibility as a partner in bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Notwithstanding this fact, the trend of BE-RE differential persists. The Committee lay stress on the need for consistent and predictable financial allocations to MEA and recommend that the BE-RE differentials be minimized and key areas be protected from budgetary cuts. Further, MEA should work with the Ministry of Finance to create a dedicated contingency reserve fund for emergency, diplomatic or humanitarian situations.

*(Recommendation No. 2)*

1.22 In pursuance of the Committee's recommendation over the years, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) has carried out an inter-Ministerial as well as cross-country comparison of budgetary allocation for foreign affairs of different countries. The findings of the Report titled 'Analysis of Trends of MEA Budgetary Allocation' are revealing and reinforce the necessity for substantive budgetary support to MEA to meet its expanding responsibilities and advance India's global aspirations effectively. A granular analysis of the cross-country comparative budgetary allocations show that many of our global counterparts allocate higher budget to foreign affairs ministries, enabling more robust and extensive global outreach.

The Committee underscores the growing importance of the Ministry of External Affairs in addressing India's multifaceted global engagements, including diplomacy, trade, security, cultural exchange and developmental partnerships. The Ministry is strongly urged to use this comparative empirical data on budgetary allocations to foreign affairs ministries to highlight the need for enhanced resources. A compelling case supported by cross-country statistics should be made to the Ministry of Finance so that MEA is well-equipped to navigate the dynamic global landscape. The Committee would like to be apprised of the response of the Ministry of Finance in this regard.

*(Recommendation No.3)*

1.23 In addition to cross-country comparison, RIS Report titled 'Analysis of Trends of MEA Budgetary Allocation' contains data on inter-ministerial budgetary allocation across the GOI. With a ranking of 18<sup>th</sup>, MEA has been categorized as a Ministry with middle sized allocation of resources amongst sample Ministries/Departments. The Committee note that the reason for higher allocation to a Ministry is determined by its potential for asset creation. The Committee are of the considered opinion that MEA is underrepresented in resource allocation. The MEA operates at the intersection of multiple sectors such as trade, technology, education, defence, culture and so on. Hence, enhanced budgetary allocation to MEA can amplify India's ability to coordinate inert-Ministerial efforts and strengthen international partnerships. Recognizing that MEA plays a pivotal role in advancing India's interests globally, the Committee recommend that the Ministry should leverage this statistics on inter-ministerial budgetary allocation across the GOI to make a strong case for increased funding in BE 2025-26.

*(Recommendation No.4)*

## **II. CLASSIFICATION OF BUDGET OF MEA**

1.24 The budget classifications of the Ministry are in terms of Revenue and Capital heads and Scheme and Non-Scheme sections. The Scheme section comprises of Ministry's Central Sector Schemes, which are essentially the technical and economic cooperation (Grants and Loans) assistance programmes for other countries.

### **a. Revenue and Capital**

1.25 The allocations as per Revenue/Capital heads are as below:

*(Rs. in Crore)*

<b>Section</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Revenue	16529.79	27145.95	20479.49
Capital	1520.21	1975.93	1675.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>18050.00</b>	<b>29121.88</b>	<b>22154.67</b>

1.26 Head-wise details of Revenue section allocations during BE & RE of 2023-24 and the BE of 2024-25 are given below:

*(Rs. in crore)*

<b>Heads</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Secretariat – General Service	1518.29	1395.06	789.68
Foreign Service Training Institute	21.19	28.87	27.48
Embassies & Missions	3528.85	3773.32	3867.64
Special Diplomatic Expenditure	4162.01	4834.53	4659.01
International Conference/Meetings	1.00	1.00	1.00
Passport & Emigration	1002.78	1792.14	970.66
Entertainment Charges	67.76	65.79	63.74
Assistance to Autonomous Bodies & Other Institutions	380.50	350.16	369.85
International Co-operation	762.56	955.20	659.32
Other Expenditure	9.60	8.72	9.85
Miscellaneous General Services	0.01	9013.73	4383.41
Technical & Economic Co-operation With Other Countries	5080.24	4927.43	4677.86

1.27 Head wise details of capital section allocations during BE & RE of 2023-24 and the BE of 2024-25 are given below:

*(Rs. in crore)*

<b>Heads</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Capital Outlay on Public Works	353.00	160.00	324.00
Capital Outlay on Other Administrative Services	66.82	77.52	89.67
Capital Outlay on Misc. General Services	24.05	23.05	21.81
Capital Outlay on Housing	308.00	101.00	250.00
Loans for General Financial and Trading Institutes	0.00	9013.72	4383.40
Advances to Foreign Governments	768.34	1614.36	989.70

1.28 When asked about the sub-heads/areas for which enhanced allocation has been provisioned in the BE 2024-25, the Ministry replied as under:

*(Rs. in crore)*

<b>Heads</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Revenue Section</b>			
Embassies & Missions	3773.32	3867.64	Increase in the Allowances and Rent, Rates & Taxes for Land and Building
Indian Council for Cultural Relations	315.21	331.25	Increase in Salaries only
Indian Council of World Affairs	13.77	15.47	
Research and Information System for Developing Countries	16.64	18.00	
South Asian University	93.00	100.00	Increase in India's contribution to SAU
Engagement of Indian Diaspora	39.00	44.00	Celebration of PBD in January/February 2025
Special Programme	49.50	57.20	Increase under Fulbright Programme and Trilateral Development Co-operation
Aid to Bhutan	784.61	1078.86	Increase in Other Project due to Economic Stimulus Package (1500 Cr) was included under GOI's assistance to RGOB as approved by the Cabinet as part of GoI assistance to Bhutan's 13th FYP worth Rs. 10,000 Cr in March 2024.
Aid to Nepal	650.00	700.00	Expenditure towards Nepal Police Academy and ICP Bhairahawa
Sri Lanka – other Aid Programme	60.00	245.00	Funds allocated for SLUDI project, Floating Dock and Settlement of LOC projects
Aid to Other Developing Countries	95.00	125.00	Expenditure towards procurement of Sea Ambulances, Hospital project in Fiji, Water Treatment plants to FIPIC countries
ITEC Programme	140.00	160.00	Increase in courses offered and participants

Aid to African Countries	180.00	200.00	Expenditure towards e-VidyaBharati e-Aarogya Bharti, Supply of Medicines and ICCR scholarships
Aid to Mauritius	330.00	370.00	Supply of e-Buses, Interest Equilization Support, Agalega project
Aid to Seychelles	9.91	40.00	Refit of SCGS Zoroaster Ship
Aid for Cultural and Heritage Projects	10.00	15.00	Conservation and Restoration of Heritage sites in Cambodia, Lao PDR
<b>Capital Section</b>			
Capital Outlay on Public Works	160.00	324.00	Purchase of Chancery in Rome and Oslo
Capital Outlay on Other Administrative Services	77.52	89.67	Purchase of official cars in Missions abroad
Capital Outlay on Housing	101.00	250.00	Purchase of Embassy Residence in Croatia, Payment for MEA Housing Projects.

**b. Scheme and Non-Scheme**

1.29 Explaining the basis for distinction between Scheme and Non Scheme section, the Ministry stated that The ‘Scheme’ and ‘Non-Scheme’ classification has been made by Ministry of Finance and is not exclusive to MEA. The Central Sector Schemes of MEA, as classified by the Ministry of Finance, refers only to Major Head 3605 “Technical and Economic Cooperation with Other Countries” and Major Head 7605 “Advances to Foreign Governments”, which pertain to the Ministry’s budget towards development partnership with other countries.

1.30 The following table provides the allocations of the Ministry under Scheme/Non-Scheme sections:

*(Rs. in Crores)*

<b>Section</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Scheme	5848.58	6541.79	5667.56
Non-Scheme	12201.42	22580.09	16487.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>18050.00</b>	<b>29121.88</b>	<b>22154.67</b>

1.31 The details of allocations under the heads of Scheme and Non-Scheme for the year 2024-25 along with BE & RE of 2023-24 are given below:

*(Rs. in Crores)*

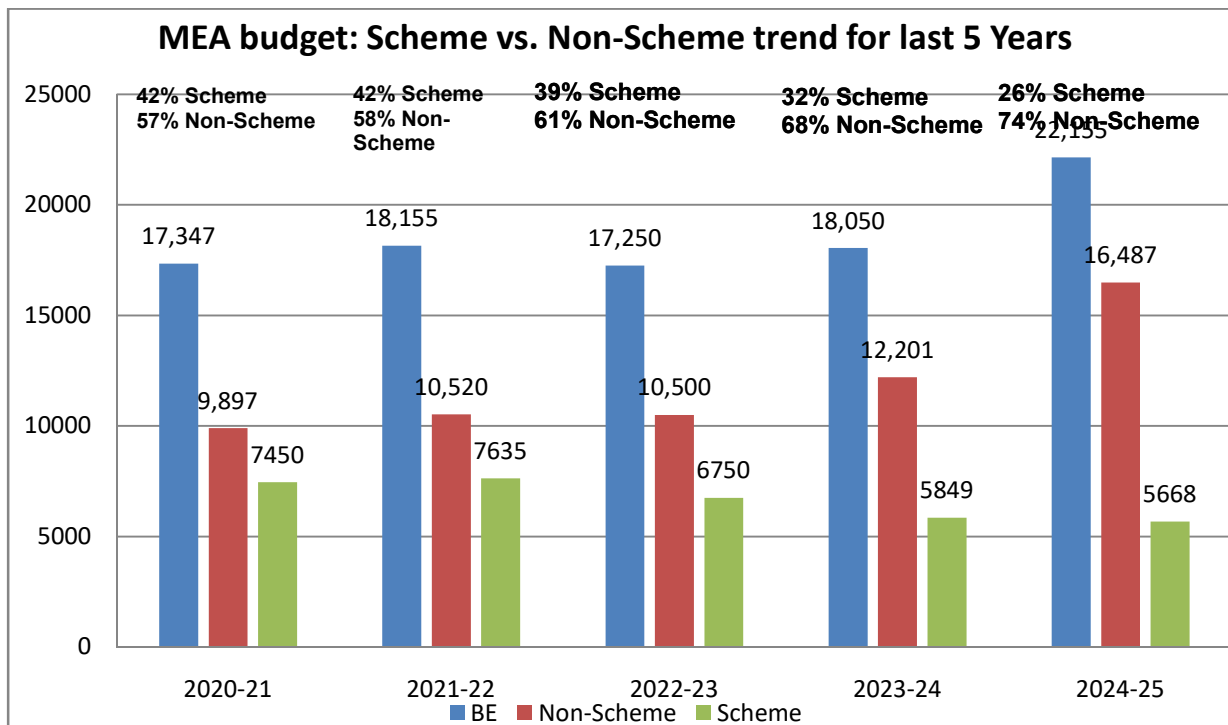
<b>Schemes</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Bhutan			
Grants	1632.24	784.61	1078.86
Loans	768.34	1614.36	989.70
Afghanistan	200.00	220.00	200.00
Aid to Bangladesh	200.00	130.00	120.00
Aid to Nepal	550.00	650.00	700.00
Sri Lanka Other Aid Programmes	150.00	60.00	245.00
Aid to Maldives	400.00	770.90	400.00
Myanmar	400.00	370.00	250.00
Aid to Mongolia	7.00	5.00	5.00
Aid to African Countries	250.00	180.00	200.00
Eurasian Countries	75.00	20.00	20.00
Aid to Latin American Countries	50.00	32.00	30.00
Aid to Other Developing Countries	150.00	95.00	125.00
Aid for Disaster Relief	5.00	55.00	10.00
Chahbahar Port	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aid to Mauritius	460.79	330.00	370.00
Aid to Seychelles	10.00	9.91	40.00
ITEC-Programme	150.00	140.00	160.00
SAARC Programme	6.00	5.00	5.00
Multilateral Economic Relation (MER) Programme	10.00	10.00	10.00
Indo-Pacific Co-operation	40.00	50.00	50.00
Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme	229.21	900.00	539.00
Aid for Cultural and Heritage Projects	5.00	10.00	15.00
Quad Co-operation	0.00	0.01	5.00
Aid to Tech Infrastructure Project	0.00	0.00	10.00
<b>Total Schemes</b>	<b>5848.58</b>	<b>6541.79</b>	<b>5667.56</b>

*(Rs. In Crores)*

<b>Non-Scheme</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
Secretariat-General Services	1518.29	1395.06	789.68
Training	21.90	28.87	27.48
Embassies & Missions	3528.85	3773.32	3867.64
Passport & Emigration	1002.78	1792.14	970.66
International Conferences/ Meetings	1.00	1.00	1.00
Entertainment Charges	67.76	65.79	63.74
Other Scheme	6.60	5.59	5.85
Public Works	353.00	160.00	324.00

Housing	308.00	101.00	250.00
Capital Outlay on Other Administrative Services	66.82	77.52	89.67
Capital Outlay on Misc. General Services	24.05	23.05	21.81
Special Diplomatic Expenditure	4162.01	4834.53	4659.01
International Cooperation	368.56	547.20	339.32
Nalanda University	250.00	300.00	200.00
South Asian University	129.00	93.00	100.00
Demarcation of Boundaries	2.00	3.00	3.00
Celebration of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas	15.00	15.00	20.00
Expenditure relating to Pilgrimages abroad	1.00	0.13	1.00
Loss by exchange	0.01	9013.73	4383.41
Other Institutions	4.63	4.54	5.13
Indian Council of Cultural Relations	345.21	315.21	331.25
Indian Council of World Affairs	14.02	13.77	15.47
Research and Information System for Developing Countries	16.64	16.64	18.00
<b>Total Non-Scheme</b>	<b>12201.42</b>	<b>22580.09</b>	<b>16487.11</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>18050.00</b>	<b>29121.88</b>	<b>22154.67</b>

1.32 The following chart provides a succinct view of MEA's budget under Scheme and non-scheme section for past five years:



1.33 On being asked about the reasons for reduced allocation under Scheme section while enhancing the allocation under Non-Scheme section, the Ministry stated that the Scheme and

Non-Scheme heads are further classified into heads indicated in the table. Allocation of funds under each sub-head as part of the Government's overall budgetary management, budgetary demands are discussed in great detail with the Heads of Division in the quarterly Budget Management meetings, which are further discussed in a meeting presided over by the Finance Secretary. The projected demand & allocation of RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25, is thus based on exhaustive unit wise discussions with respective Divisions, careful assessments of progress in projects and realistic assessment of budgetary utilization in respective Financial Years.

1.34 With regard to the monitoring mechanism followed for keeping a check on expenditure under 'Scheme' and 'Non-Scheme' Heads, the Ministry responded that all expenditure is closely monitored and fund releases are made in line with implementation progress of projects, programmes and schemes, including through quarterly expenditure review meetings. There has been more intensive monitoring and review of the technical aid and development assistance projects in the past year, including at the level of the External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary. These reviews have identified the way forward for many projects where progress was slow. Further, due to the regular review and monitoring of MEA's scheme section at high levels, several new initiatives and projects have been identified in consultation with the concerned beneficiary host governments, which would be getting finalized and operationalized in due course.

**1.35 The Committee is aware that the budget classifications of MEA are in terms of Revenue and Capital heads and Scheme and Non Scheme heads. While the Scheme section constitutes the Ministry's Central Sector Schemes *i.e.* towards development partnership with other countries, the Non scheme section on the other hand, caters to establishment costs, assistance to autonomous institutions, passport, emigration, welfare of Diaspora, international cooperation, etc. Out of the total budgetary allocation to MEA during 2024-25, Rs. 5667.56 and Rs. 16487.11 crores are allocated under Scheme and Non scheme sections, respectively. While both the heads are important and funding should be enhanced in both, the Committee have continuously maintained that in light of its global implication, the Scheme section should be kept immune from any budgetary cuts. The Committee, however, observe that the percentage share under the Scheme section has reduced from 42 % in 2021-22, 39 % in 2022-23, 32 % in 2023-24 to 26 % in 2024-25. The justification put**



forth by the Ministry for this downward trend is unconvincing. Development partnerships being central to fostering goodwill, strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing global standing as a reliable and responsible partner, the Committee strongly recommend that the Scheme section of MEA should be appropriately funded and under no circumstance be subjected to budgetary cuts during resource allocation or fiscal rationalization exercises.

*(Recommendation No.5)*

### III. REVIEW OF PAST PERFORMANCE

1.36 The details of the utilization of quarterly allocations of MEA during the last three years is as under:-

*(Rs. in crore)*

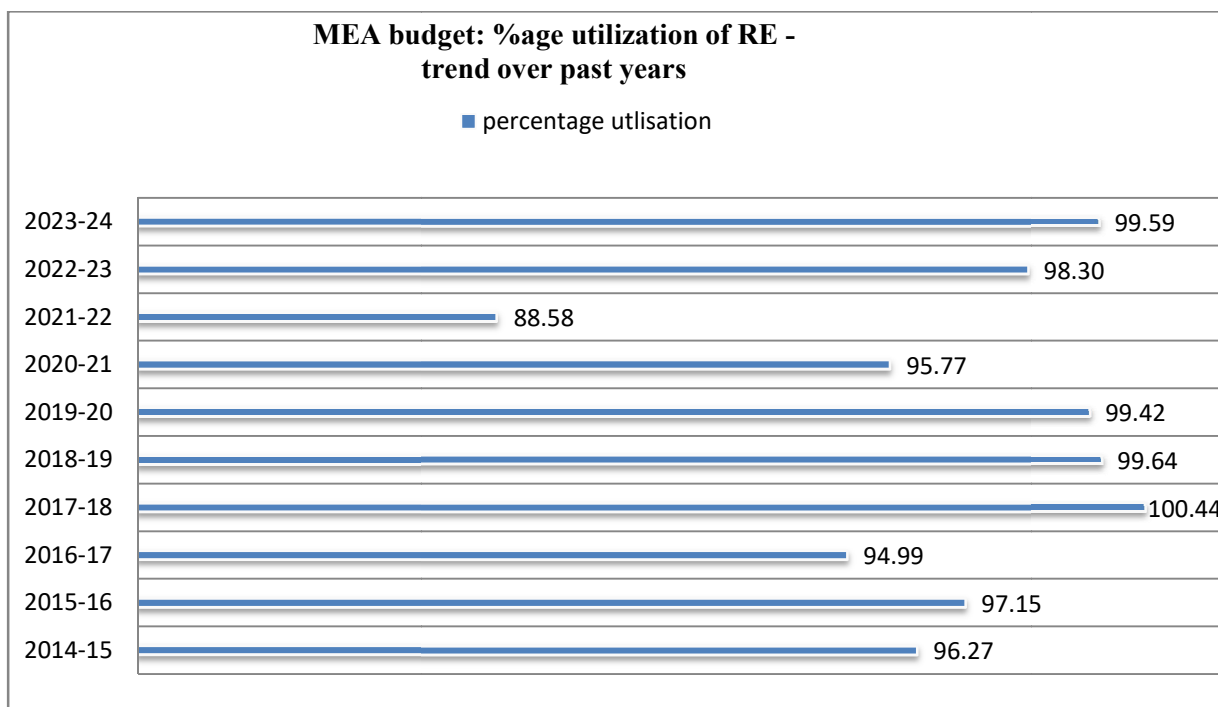
<b>2021-22</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total (BE)</b>
Allocation	4054.54	4054.55	4054.55	5991.09	18154.73
Utilisation	2654.70	4017.85	3375.88	4125.27	14173.70
% Utilised	65.47%	99.09%	83.26%	68.86%	

<b>2022-23</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total (BE)</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	3852.49	3852.50	3852.50	5692.51	17250.00
<b>Utilisation</b>	2954.80	3864.38	3556.72	6308.88	16684.78
<b>% Utilised</b>	<b>76.70%</b>	<b>100.31%</b>	<b>92.32%</b>	<b>110.83%</b>	

<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total (BE)</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	4031.16	4031.16	4031.16	5956.52	18050.00
<b>Utilisation</b>	3976.83	3655.71	3653.69	17717.15	29003.38
<b>% Utilised</b>	<b>98.65%</b>	<b>90.69%</b>	<b>90.64%</b>	<b>297.44%</b>	

1.37 On the Committee's query about the reasons for uneven expenditure during any quarter, the Ministry stated that in the Financial Year 2023-24, they had ensured smooth and balanced pace of expenditure during each quarter, to the extent possible. The quarterly expenditure by the Ministry is majorly in consonance with Cash Management Guidelines of Ministry of Finance. The enhanced expenditure during the last quarter of FY 2023-24 was mainly due to recouplement of Contingency as well as additional cash supplementary towards the Guarantee Redemption Fund as well as release of funds towards Gyalsung project under loan to Bhutan.

1.38 The following chart provides an overview of the Ministry's budget utilization pattern for the past 10 years:



1.39 Regarding the existence of a mechanism for ensuring optimal utilization of budgetary resources during each quarter of the year, the Ministry stated that all expenditure is closely monitored and fund releases are made in line with physical and financial progress of projects to ensure that there is no parking of funds with implementing agencies. To ensure optimal utilization of budgetary resources during each quarter of the financial year, expenditure is closely and regularly monitored by the Financial Advisor in consultation with Divisional Heads, including through quarterly budget management & expenditure review meetings. In these meetings the expenditure plans of the Ministry's various Divisions and Spending Units are discussed and the importance of ensuring balanced expenditure during each quarter of the financial year is emphasized & monitored. Divisions/Spending Units accordingly make all efforts to ensure evenly paced expenditure, within the constraints of majority of the Ministry's spending being in foreign countries, where diverse local conditions, inter-alia including geological, security, administrative, legal & economic ecosystems and varying project development and implementation schedules posing significant challenge for alignment of expenditure to our own budget cycle.

1.40 The Ministry has also furnished details of unspent funds surrendered by it during the last three years as below:

(Rs. in crore)

Years	BE	RE	Actual (Percentage)	Unspent balance of RE
2021-22	18154.73	16000.00	88.59%	3110.72
2022-23	17250.00	16972.79	98.30%	281.17
2023-24	18050.00	29121.88	99.59%	66.68

1.41 The Committee were keen to learn about the initiatives taken by the Ministry to improve financial management and spending pattern to avoid last quarter expenditure beyond the 33% ceiling and the 15% expenditure ceiling for March and the outcome so far. The Ministry stated that it follows all instructions contained in various Circulars of Ministry of Finance towards economy measures, rationalization of expenditure, etc., scrupulously. The number of personnel sent on visits to foreign countries is limited to the bare essential. The conduct of seminars, conferences, etc. in five star hotels is discouraged. Purchase of new cars is banned, except against condemned ones, which is pursued with the approval of Ministry of Finance. Creation of posts is avoided, and where functionally necessary, is done with the approval of Ministry of Finance. All expenditure is closely monitored and fund releases are made in line with physical and financial progress of projects to ensure that there is no parking of funds with implementing agencies. To ensure optimal utilization of budgetary resources during each quarter of the financial year, expenditure is closely and regularly monitored by the Financial Advisor in consultation with Divisional Heads, including through quarterly expenditure review meetings. Ministry's budgetary & expenditure management thus is unlike any other Ministry in Government, with global diversity of various ecosystems, in which our projects are executed & expenditure managed. The major constraints being faced by this Ministry, which affects spending patterns *interalia* include uncertain and changing geopolitical situation, security and political situation in neighborhood, unforeseen aid for disaster relief and evacuations and dynamic nature of foreign relations lead to unforeseen expenditures on account of new schemes/projects as well as slowdown in implementation of projects posing challenges in budget management.

1.42 When asked about the manner in which Estimated Committed Liabilities (ECL) module has helped MEA in aligning its allocations and commitments, it stated that the Budget Circular 2024-25 dated 17 September 2024, wherein among other things, Ministries/Departments have been requested to take special note of data being captured under Estimated Committed Liabilities

in MoF Portal for projecting allocations. The ECL module envisages capturing all committed liabilities of Government of India, internationally & domestically in single place and mapping them to budgetary outlays & commitment execution period. This in turn is expected to align budgetary allocation with actual commitments made. This Ministry has already submitted the data on the portal designed by Ministry of Finance.

**1.43 Upon a careful scrutiny of the budget documents and replies furnished by the Ministry, the Committee observe a smooth and balanced pace of expenditure during each quarter of the Financial Year 2023-24. The expenditure pattern of MEA during the past three years has been 88.58%, 98.47% and 99.65%. The Committee note that in order to ensure optimum utilization of budgetary resources, expenditure is closely and regularly monitored by the Financial Advisor in consultation with Divisional Heads, including through quarterly budget management and expenditure review meetings. The Ministry has also submitted that the regular submission of data under Estimated Committed Liabilities (ECL) in Ministry of Finance Portal has further streamlined the utilization pattern. It is satisfying to note that the plethora of initiatives and mechanisms has resulted in effective budgetary utilization during the past three years. While acknowledging the prudent and optimum utilization pattern of MEA for BE 2023-24, the Committee urge the Ministry to continue its focused approach towards sharper monitoring and expenditure management through its review meetings. The Ministry should also make use of its budgetary utilization pattern effectively to make a convincing case for enhanced budgetary allocation during RE 2024-25 as well as BE 2025-26.**

*(Recommendation No. 6)*

## CHAPTER 2

### SECTORAL ALLOCATION

This chapter contains an analysis of some of the key sectors relating to establishment, training, Missions/Post, passport, emigration, South Asian University and Nalanda University. Budgetary provisions on these issues are covered under two Major Heads - General Secretariat Services (Major Head 2052) and External Affairs (Major Head 2061). The Major Revenue Head 2052 on 'Secretariat-General Services' caters to the Ministry's expenses on secretariat/establishment, Public Diplomacy, Press and Media Relations, States Facilitation and knowledge Support, Hostels and Residential Complexes, Trade & Investment Promotion and G 20 Presidency Summit. The Major Head 'External Affairs' caters to Foreign Service Institute, expenditure on India's diplomatic Missions and Posts abroad, Central Passport Organisation and Protector General of Emigrant, welfare of overseas Indians, hospitality to dignitaries, contributions to UNO and other international organisations, grants to autonomous bodies and institutions, etc.

2.2 The details of allocations to the Major Heads for the year 2024-25 are given below:

Major Head	Components	Allocation
2052	Secretariat	789.67
	Other Expenditure	0.01
2061	Training	27.48
	Embassies & Missions	3867.64
	Special Diplomatic Expenditure	4659.01
	International Conference/Meetings	1.00
	Passport & Emigration	970.66
	Entertainment Charges	63.74
	Assistance to Autonomous Bodies and Other Institutions	369.85
	International Co-operation	659.32
	Other Expenditure	9.85
		Misc. General Services
3605	Technical & Economic Co-operation with Other Countries	4677.86
4059	Capital Outlay of Public Works	324.00
4070	Capital Outlay on Other Administrative Services	89.67
4075	Capital Outlay on Misc. General	21.81

	Services	
4216	Capital Outlay on Housing	250.00
7465	Loans for General Financial and Trading Institutions	4383.40
7605	Loans to Govt. of Bhutan	989.70
7465	Loans for General Financial and Trading Institutions	-4383.40

## I. ADMINISTRATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

### (a) Organizational Strength

2.3 The Ministry of External Affairs is headed by the External Affairs Minister, who is currently aided by two Ministers of State for External Affairs. The Ministry has five Secretaries – Foreign Secretary, Secretary (East), Secretary (Economic Relations), Secretary (West) and Secretary (CPV & OIA). MEA also consists of the following Divisions/Section/Unit Cell -

1.	Americas (AMS) Division	30	Development Partnership Agreement-I (DPA-IV)
2.	Bangladesh & Myanmar (BM)	31	Economic Diplomacy (ED)
3.	Central & West Africa (C&WA)	32	Emigration Policy & Welfare (EP&W)
4.	Central Europe (CE)	33	External Publicity Division (XPD)
5.	East Asia (EA)	34	Indo Pacific (IP)
6.	East & Southern Africa (E&SA)	35	Legal & Treaties (L&T)
7.	Eurasia Division	36	Multilateral Economic Relations (MER)
8.	Europe West (EW)	37	New Emerging & Strategic Technologies (NEST)
9.	Gulf Division	38	Overseas Employment And Protectorate General Of Emigrants (OE & PGE)
10.	Indian Ocean Region (IOR)	39	Policy Planning & Research (PP & R) and Nalanda
11.	Latin America & Caribbean (LAC)	40	Passport Seva Programme (PSP)
12.	Northern Division	41	Protocol Division
13.	Oceania Division	42	Rajbhasha And Bhartiya Bhashayein & Interpretation and Translation (RBB &IT)
14.	Pakistan, Afghanistan & Iran (PAI)	43	Right to Information (RTI)
15.	Southern Division	44	Rapid Response Cell (RRC)
16.	West Asia & North Africa (WANA)	45	Shanghai Co-Operation Organization (SCO)
17.	Archives & Record Management (A&RM)	46	States Division

18.	BIMSTEC & SAARC	47	Principal Chief Controller Of Accounts (PCCA)
19.	Coordination & Parliament	48	United Nations Economic & Social (UNES)
20.	Counter Terrorism (CT)	49	United Nations Political (UNP)
21.	Consular, Passport & Visa (CPV)	50	Welfare Division
22.	Conference & Summits Division	51	Administration Division
23.	Center for Contemporary Chinese Studies (CCCS)	52	Bureau of Security (BOS)
24.	Cyber Diplomacy (CD)	53	Cypher, NGO & Vigilance & Inspection (CNV &I)
25.	Disarmament & International Security Affairs (D&ISA)	54	E-Governance & Information Technology (EG&IT)
26.	Diaspora Engagement (DE)	55	Establishment Division
27.	Development Partnership Agreement-I (DPA-I)	56	Integrated Finance Division
28.	Development Partnership Agreement-I (DPA-II)	57	Global Estate Management (GEM)
29.	Development Partnership Agreement-I (DPA-III)		

2.4 Other offices which also fall under the purview of the MEA Organizational Structure are Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS), Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR] and Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).

2.5 The sanctioned cadre strength at Headquarters and Missions abroad as on 01 March 2024 is provided below:

S.No.	Cadre/Post	Post at Headquarters	Post at Missions	Total
1	IFS	383	740	1123
2	General Cadre of IFS B	1178	1140	2318
3	Stenographer's Cadre	592	589	1181
4	Other cadres	561	538	1099
	Total (India-based staff)	2714	3007	5721
5	Local Cadre	0	2976	2976
6	Total (India based + Local cadre)	2714	5983	8697

2.6 On the Committee's query, the Ministry submitted a detailed statement on human capital in MEA. As on 01 March 2024, the sanctioned strength of the Ministry was 8697. The actual in-position strength was 7630. These positions span various cadres within the Ministry, such as the

Indian Foreign Service (IFS), IFS General Cadre, Branch B, Stenographers Cadre, Interpreters Cadre, and the Legal and Treaties Cadre. Missions/Posts abroad also consist of a sanctioned Local cadre strength of 2976. MEA also engages consultants with specialised skills and officers on deputation from other Ministries and Departments. The detailed working strength of the Ministry as on 01 March 2024 is as follows:

S.No.	Grade of post	Total	Total In-Position
		Sanctioned strength	
1	Group A	1661	1380
2	Group B	2501	2062
3	Group C	1559	1212
4	Total India-based staff (1 + 2 + 3)	5721	4654
5	Local Cadre	2976	2976
6	Total (4 + 5) (India based + Local cadre)	8697	7630

2.7 Explaining the reason for gap in the sanctioned and actual strength, the Ministry stated that the actual strength in MEA is dependent on recruitment cycles, cadre management, and retirement in various cadres. Also, there is a time gap between creation of posts as part of opening of new Missions/Posts, Cadre Review, etc., and filling up of the newly created posts by indenting these new posts through Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Staff Selection Commission (SSC). Vacancies in IFS are being filled by direct recruitment conducted by UPSC for recruitment of IFS officers and by promotion from feeder cadre. Vacancies in Group B and C are being filled by promotions and by direct recruitment to Group B and C posts by SSC. Indents are placed with UPSC and SSC on time to fill the vacancies in Group A, B and C posts in MEA.

2.8 The Ministry also furnished data on the number of women employees (at both Gazetted and non-Gazetted positions), Ambassadors within the MEA as under:

Sl. No.	Number of women employees in MEA	
1	Gazetted	503
2	Non-Gazetted	349



Currently, India has 15 female officers posted as Heads of Missions abroad.

2.9 Over the issue of under representation of women in MEA, the Foreign Secretary during the course of oral evidence on 6 November 2024 made the following submission:

“... I am delighted to report to the Committee that the percentage of our intake of women officers has shot up significantly. In some cases, it is close to 40 per cent of the batches.... I think it will reflect directly from the number of women that joined the service. Now that we have more of them joining the service, I am sure that this number will increase and get better in coming years”

2.10 On being asked about the current status of the Cadre Review, the Ministry stated that it received the approval of the Union Cabinet for the 5th Cadre Review of the Indian Foreign Service in October 2023 to be implemented between 2023-27. These were aimed at keeping the Ministry’s personnel requirements in line with India’s expanding diplomatic footprint, enabling the growth of bilateral trade, investment and economic engagements, bolstering political outreach in multilateral fora and helping garner support for India’s foreign policy objectives.

2.11 As regards additional steps that can be taken to augment cadre strength, the Ministry stated that it accords highest priority to optimize the deployment of its human resources to help fulfil its growing responsibilities. The Ministry regularly reviews the requirement of manpower at various levels and takes appropriate action, including recruitment of additional Officers and Staff, through placement of requisite indents with the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) respectively.

2.12 Keeping in mind the requirements of Ministry, and to fill up the vacancies on a priority basis, Ministry has increased our indent with the UPSC and SSC. 374 officers have joined the Indian Foreign Service since 2014 by direct recruitment through the Civil Services Examination. For the year 2024 and 2025, a total of 110 vacancies has been indented to UPSC. Ministry had also placed an indent of 538 vacancies in 2023 and 2024 for direct recruitment of officials through SSC and the recruitment is expected to be completed in the coming months.

2.13 Regarding steps being taken to address the shortage of skilled diplomats in specialized areas like climate diplomacy, global health, cyber-security, new and emerging technologies, the Ministry stated that the need for optimal requirement of human resource keeps changing with India’s expanding and diversifying global role, and the Ministry of External Affairs regularly

monitors such changes and adjusts its personnel strength for meeting these needs to the extent possible. The Ministry of External Affairs accords highest priority to optimize the deployment of its human resources to help fulfil its growing responsibilities. The Ministry regularly reviews the requirement of manpower at various levels and takes appropriate action, including recruitment of additional Officers through placement of requisite indents with the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and by cadre management of the Indian Foreign Service and other cadres of the Ministry. Further, given its multifarious functions, the Ministry of External Affairs has a long tradition of having officers with specific domain expertise from a wide range of line Ministries/Departments/Cadres/Services and other sources, working at various Missions/Posts abroad as also at the Headquarters.

2.14 The Committee also wanted to know whether in the opinion of the Ministry there is a possibility for lateral entry of skilled expertise in specialized skills such as climate change, health, cyber security, artificial intelligence, etc. The Ministry responded that to address the requirement of specialised skills, the Ministry has increased indent for recruiting IFS officers by direct recruitment through Civil Services Examination and 110 officers are expected to join after the Civil Services Examination of 2024 and 2025. The Ministry also takes officers with specialised skills from other Departments/Ministries on deputation. The Ministry also engages consultants with relevant skill sets in key areas of functioning of the Ministry such as counter terrorism, project management, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, international law, consular and disarmament related work.

**2.15 The persistent under-staffing and gap between the sanctioned and actual cadre strength in the Ministry of External Affairs has been a source of significant concern. Against the sanctioned strength of 8697, the actual working strength of MEA is 7630. The Committee observe that vacancies in the Ministry are filled through a combination of direct recruitment through the Civil Services Examination conducted by UPSC, examinations conducted by SSC and promotion from feeder cadres as per extant Rules. The Committee note that the Ministry has taken proactive steps, such as placing increased indents with the UPSC and SSC; implementing the 5th Cadre Review (2023-2027); reinforcing technical capacity by taking officers with domain expertise on deputation from**

**Line Ministries and Departments of Governments and engaging Consultants with expertise in various fields.**

**Given India's expanding diplomatic footprint and its engagement in critical global issues, the Committee recommend that the Ministry should work closely with Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Staff Selection Commission (SSC) to streamline recruitment cycles and reduce the time lag between the creation of posts and their fulfillment. Filling up critical vacancies in Group A, B and C posts, both at Headquarters and in Missions abroad should be prioritized. Further, the Ministry should continue to create cadre/ induct expertise from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and the private sector, as needed, to supplement its human resource with relevant domain expertise.**

*(Recommendation No.7)*

**2.16 The Committee are happy to note that the number of women recruited into the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) is steadily growing and in the recent IFS batch women constituted around 40%. At present, 15 female officers are serving as Heads of Missions abroad. However, the under-representation of women in senior leadership roles, especially in key posts or in high-profile capital missions is noticeable. Though the percentage of women recruits have increased over the years, the structural and cultural barriers, if any, in ensuring equal opportunities for women's advancement and leadership need to be addressed. Since the Committee feel that prioritizing women in diplomacy can strengthen India's soft power and better reflect the values and strengths of a modern India on the world stage, they desire for proactive measures towards this end.**

*(Recommendation No.8)*

**(b) Training**

**2.17 Foreign Service Institute (FSI) conducts in-service training for Indian Foreign Service Officers and other MEA personnel, courses for foreign diplomats and other professional training courses. The budgetary allocation under the sub-head was Rs. 21.19 crore during BE 2023-24, which was enhanced to Rs. 28.87 crore during RE 2023-24. In BE 2024-25, it has been reduced to Rs. 27.48 crore vis-a-vis RE 2023-24. When asked about the reasons for enhancement of the allocation in RE 2023-24 and later reduction in the BE 2024-25 vis-à-vis RE 2023-24, the**

Ministry responded that the enhancement of the allocation in RE 2023-24 was because of some of the training programmes like Mid-Career Training Programme Phase-II (MCTP-II) for Director level officers, Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) and a few country-specific courses for foreign diplomats such as training of diplomats from Iraq and Syria could not be held in previous Financial year due to elections and slotting of other training programmes. These slots were rescheduled and conducted in the next financial year.

2.18 The Ministry also informed that the reduction in demand for grant for training is primarily due to reduction in number of days in the training programme of foreign diplomats as per the discussions with the participating countries. The funds allocated for the FY 2024-25 is sufficient to conduct all training programmes, both mandatory and skill development programmes for both Indian training vertical and foreign training vertical, as per the training calendar of SSIFS. No capacity building activities will be impacted on account of reduction in the allocation.

2.19 On the Committee's specific query whether the number of training programmes conducted by the FSI is likely to decrease as a result of the reduced allocation under this sub-head, the Ministry stated that there will not be any decrease in the number of training programmes conducted by SSIFS. As explained above, the decrease in allocation is attributable to reduction in number of days in training programmes of the foreign diplomats as per the discussions with the participating countries.

2.20 The Ministry also provided details of training programmes conducted for Indian diplomats/officials and foreign diplomats/officials during the past three financial years, separately in Annexure I and II respectively. Given the integrated nature of SSIFS facilities, personnel, resources, utilities, etc, it is not feasible to make an accurate division of expenditure on training of Indian diplomats/officials and foreign diplomats/officials.

2.21 When asked about the measures taken to incorporate feedback from trainees, the Ministry responded that Feedback for each course is gathered and analysed at two levels. During the course itself, participants give a written feedback on all sessions/speakers. At the end of each course, the participants give their overall written feedback and suggestions about various aspects of the course. A feedback session (in-person or virtual) is also held for the participants at the end

of the course which is chaired by the Dean with participation of Joint Secretary and Course Coordinators at the SSIFS where the participants share their feedback with them. Feedback from trainees is considered carefully and SSIFS endeavours to incorporate valuable suggestions from the trainees to the extent possible.

2.22 On the Committee query whether there have been instances of non-conducting of any regular training programme during the last three years, the Ministry specified that all regular training programmes were conducted during the past three financial years.

2.23 When asked about any proposal to introduce new training programmes or modify existing framework for training programmes during 2024-25, the Ministry stated that as per the National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions (NSCSTI) recommended by Capacity Building Commission (CBC), SSIFS is in the process of aligning all its activities in the framework of eight pillars. This would specifically require a special effort in the pillar of digitalization and training delivery where SSIFS has not previously taken sufficient action in terms of using available technology for efficient and transparent training and mentoring process.

2.24 Regarding the steps being taken to professionalize FSI by inducting domain experts as well as faculty from foreign countries, the Ministry responded that apart from the in-house faculty at SSIFS, which is currently at 10-12 members (including the deputed Foreign Service officers), the Institute draws its visiting faculty broadly from four different categories – (i) retired and professionally active Indian Ambassadors; (ii) serving officials at MEA (including current Heads of Missions abroad virtually); (iii) reputed domain experts from think tanks, industry bodies and similar institutions in India; and (iv) serving officials in other Ministries having domain knowledge on subject related to development, culture, education, technology etc.

2.25 The Committee were keen to know about partnerships or collaborations exist between India and international organizations/governments to share best practices in diplomatic training. The Ministry submitted that the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) has established partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities in India and abroad for enabling enriched training experience to trainees. The international knowledge partners of SSIFS include Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore and the

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. SSIFS also invites experts from international organizations like International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group and UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for the Disarmament & International Security Affairs Fellowship Programmes. Cooperation/collaboration between India & international organizations/governments to share best practices in diplomatic training exists under the following formats:

- i. International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT): SSIFS became a member of IFDT in 2018. This is a premier forum for diplomatic academies of the world (permanently co-chaired by USA and Austria). Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiatives, SSIFS hosted the IFDT Annual Conference from 14-17 November 2022 to coincide with India@75.
- ii. Collaboration with the Diplomatic academies in BRICS, BIMSTEC & CARICOM to exchange knowledge and ideas pertaining to course design, faculty development, resource and training targets. SSIFS also collaborates with the International Community of Practice led by the Foreign Service Institute of the US Department of State.
- iii. Visits by trainee diplomats from diplomatic academies such as UAE and Malaysia
- iv. High level study visits from Tanzania and Jamaica to capture experiences from India which would help them to restructure and revitalize their diplomatic training institute.

2.26 MoUs with diplomatic academies of foreign countries: SSIFS has signed 100 MoUs for cooperation with diplomatic academies of foreign countries; the latest being that of Diplomatic Academy of Mauritania which was signed in October 2024. Under these MoUs, SSIFS conducts diplomatic training programmes in bilateral, regional and multilateral formats with partner countries on a regular basis.

2.27 On being asked about the kind of training received by the non-diplomatic staff at the MEA for equipping them to support Indian Missions/Posts abroad, the Ministry responded that it conducts training of the non-diplomatic staff with the objective of preparing them for a wide range of tasks that they would be required to perform in their professional careers. SSIFS provides/facilitates elaborate functional and domain specific training to non-RG/non-diplomatic

officials of the Ministry to ensure that they are equipped with necessary knowledge and skill-set to support Indian Missions abroad (as well as HQ). Following are various training in this regard.

1. All direct recruit officials are trained on “Karmayogi Prarambh”, an online orientation course hosted on iGOT Karmayogi platform.
2. Induction and Promotion Programs, which have sessions focusing on India's foreign policy, international relations, structure and functions of the Missions abroad etc., among others.
  - a. Induction Training Program for Direct Recruit officials
  - b. Promotion-Related Training Program officials under consideration for promotion to enable them to be equipped with the essential skills to perform their duties with higher responsibilities
3. IMAS and IVFRT Programs.
  - a. IMAS (Integrated Mission and Accounting System) focuses on Admin roles of accounting, finance and other related aspects.
  - b. IVFRT (Immigration, Visa, Foreigner’s Registration & Tracking) focuses on Consular roles, imparting necessary training for the officials to effectively work in the Consular divisions of the Missions.
4. Mandatory Pre-Posting Training, as recommended by PAC in their 87th Report. The training focuses on (a) General Financial Rules, 2017 and other relevant rules and regulations such as the central Receipts and Payment Rules, 1983 (b) CCS Conduct Rules (c) Delegation of Financial Powers of HOMs/HOPs.
5. Further, the officials are required to undertake various training programmes as per the Annual Capacity Building Plan of the Ministry.

**2.28 The Committee note that the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) is providing comprehensive training to Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers, non-diplomatic staff, and foreign diplomats. The range of programmes, such as the Mid-Career Training Programme (MCTP), Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD), and specialized courses like IMAS and IVFRT, reflects a commitment to enhancing both functional and domain-specific expertise. The Ministry has taken efforts to align training with the National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions (NSCSTI) and have partnered with global institutions and organizations such as the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, IAEA and UN bodies. The practice of collecting and analyzing feedback from trainees is also followed. While appreciating the initiatives taken and efforts made by the Ministry, the Committee find scope for further improvement in ensuring that MEA personnel are well-equipped to meet evolving global**

**challenges and operational demands and urge the SSIFS to accelerate the digitization of training delivery and integration with advanced technologies such as e-learning platforms, virtual simulations and artificial intelligence to make training more efficient, transparent and accessible. The global collaborations should focus on exchanging best practices, designing innovative training modules and organizing joint capacity-building initiatives. The Committee also desire that the Ministry should institutionalize a mechanism to periodically review and adapt training content based on feedback to address emerging needs and improve the learning experience.**

*(Recommendation No.9)*

## **EMBASSIES AND MISSIONS**

2.29 The budget sub head ‘Embassies and Missions’ provides for expenditure on India’s representation abroad and functioning of Missions/Posts abroad. An outlay of Rs. 3528.85 crore was allocated during BE 2023-24 and it was increased to Rs. 3773.32 crore at the RE stage. The allocation has been further increased to Rs. 3867.64 crore in BE 2024-25. The Ministry has stated that the enhanced allocation in the budget is to ensure prudent allocation of overall budget. In this context:

2.30 Providing the reasons for enhanced allocation under this Head during RE 2023-24 as well as BE 2024-25 over the BE of the previous year, the Ministry stated that the enhancement during RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 for Embassies & Missions has been made mainly on account of operationalisation of new Missions/Posts in Tirana in Albania, La Paz in Bolivia, Tbilisi in Georgia, Riga in Latvia, Dili in Timor Leste, Libreville in Gabon, Brisbane in Australia, Marseille in France and Auckland in New Zealand. Increase under the Allowances, Office Expenses and Rate, Rents and Taxes for Land and Building Salaries head, is after factoring in inflation and various aspects having inflationary impact on establishment expenses of our Embassies/Posts.

2.31 The details of the projections made by the Ministry, actual allocations and actual expenditure incurred under the Head ‘Embassies and Missions’ during the last three years are given below:-



(Rs. in Crores)

Sl. No.	Financial Year	Projection	Allocation	Projection	Allocation	Actual Expenditure
		BE	BE	RE	RE	
1	2021-22	3539.68	3240.07	3285.64	3397.99	3033.71
2	2022-23	3674.19	3769.06	3500.06	3512.15	3494.42
3	2023-24	3674.18	3528.85	4125.68	3773.32	3759.99

2.32 The Committee enquired whether the available funds are adequate for smooth functioning of various Embassies and Missions abroad after the devaluation of Indian Rupee *vis-à-vis* US Dollar. The Ministry responded that funds have been allocated after accounting for numerous variables that have an inflationary or deflationary impact on the costs associated with establishing embassies, such as currency exchange rates, - therefore, allocated funds seem adequate to ensure the smooth operation of Missions and Posts abroad.

2.33 Region-wise list of Mission/Posts in various parts of the world is attached in Annexure III.

2.34 In view of the expanding ties between India and other countries and diplomatic visits abroad, the Ministry also elaborated on the plans of expansion in terms of establishing new Missions/Posts/Consulates/Indian Cultural Centres abroad. The Ministry of External Affairs from time to time formulates proposals for opening of resident Missions in countries where there are no Indian Missions. The objective of our foreign policy is to build a conducive environment for India's growth and development through partnerships with friendly countries. Our Missions and Posts across the world serve as conduits of our relations with partner countries. The objective of opening new Indian Missions is to expand our footprint in various regions and broaden international support for our interests. Expansion of global and diplomatic outreach is an important element in our objective of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy and in boosting growth and development of the economy in line with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Enhancement of India's diplomatic presence will, inter alia, also provide market access for Indian companies and bolster Indian exports of goods and services. In 2024, subsequent to approval by Union Cabinet Embassies have been operationalized in Tirana in Albania, La Paz in Bolivia, Tbilisi in Georgia, Riga in Latvia, Dili in Timor Leste, Libreville in Gabon. Further in 2024, new Consulates have

been operationalized in Brisbane in Australia, Marseille in France and Auckland in New Zealand.

2.35 When asked about new Missions/Posts that have been opened in 2024 and the future plans, the Ministry stated that in 2024, new Missions have been opened in Riga (Latvia), Tbilisi (Georgia), Tirana (Albania), Libreville (Gabon), and Dili (Timor Leste). Embassy of India in La Paz (Bolivia) is currently being operationalized. New Consulates have been opened in Brisbane (Australia), Marseille (France), Barcelona (Spain), and Auckland (New Zealand). Efforts are underway to operationalize Consulates in Fukuoka (Japan), Kazan (Russia), and Yekaterinburg (Russia). Future plans include opening of 5 Missions in Europe and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

2.36 Enumerating the criteria which determine the decision for establishment of Embassies/Missions abroad, the Ministry stated that in recent years, there has been a visible enhancement in India's standing as a global power with advances in economic, scientific and technological arenas. There is a growing interest from across the world in engaging with India. This has resulted in expansion of India's diplomatic outreach manifesting in India taking the lead in regional groupings, increase in the number of high-level exchanges, bilateral agreements and MOUs signed, growth in economic and developmental cooperation, and initiatives led by India on the international stage such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) etc. The broad foreign policy vision of the Government is to maximize India's presence abroad in the most optimal manner. The objective of our foreign policy is also to build a conducive environment for India's growth and development through partnerships with friendly countries. Countries are identified for opening of resident Indian Missions on the basis of potential for deepening strategic cooperation; strong potential for bilateral trade and investment; strong Diaspora presence; to bolster political outreach in multilateral fora; and for signaling India's commitment to stepping up of diplomatic engagement with important countries/regions etc.

2.37 The Ministry informed that India does not have resident Missions in 42 countries. The scope and depth of the bilateral relations with the countries where GoI does not have a resident Indian Mission or Post are regularly reviewed and Missions are opened in these countries

accordingly. Opening of a resident Indian Mission or Post is a time-taking exercise requiring internal planning and approvals for logistics, deployments, infrastructure as well as coordination and liaisoning with the host Government. India has diplomatic engagements with those countries (wherein resident Missions are not currently functional) through concurrent accreditation arrangements. The scope and depth of bilateral relations with these countries are regularly reviewed and Missions are opened in these countries according to need.

2.38 On being asked, the Ministry has also furnished updated status of revamping of the Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) portal for Missions abroad. The Directorate General of Inspections (DGI) was set-up in 2014 to streamline the system of inspection of functioning of Indian Missions/Posts abroad. However, it was felt that on-site inspection of Missions/Posts is a time-consuming process and it is not possible to inspect more than 15-20 Missions/Posts in a year. In 2016, the Ministry had put in place a web-based portal - Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) for the very first time to identify Missions/Posts for physical inspection.

2.39 In July 2021, revamped PEMS portal was launched in order to make the evaluation process more comprehensive and to devise a mechanism of off-site inspection, to reduce the number of onsite inspections. Since then, the inspection process has been turned into an annual exercise. Three more updated versions i.e. PEMS 3.0, PEMS 4.0 and PEMS 5.0 have been introduced to evaluate functioning of Missions/Posts in FY 2021-22, FY 2022-23 and FY 2023-24 respectively. An updated questionnaire, incorporating latest guidelines/instructions of Ministry, is prepared every year on the basis of the inputs received from the Divisions of the Ministry. The questionnaire prepared is comprehensive one and covers the functioning of Missions/Posts in several areas like Administration, Consular, Establishment, Finance etc.

2.40 Latest proposal regarding revamping of the portal was proposed in September 2024, which will be implemented in the next version of PEMS. Certain functional Divisions at Headquarters will be onboarded on the PEMS portal. This will empower these Divisions to monitor the performance of Missions/Posts in their respective area of work, so that Ministry may identify and address the issues being faced at the end of Mission/Post. In addition, the data will be displayed in graphical forms so that a detailed insight of the performance of

Missions/Posts can be obtained. This feature will help the Ministry to analyze the year-on-year progress of a Mission and compare its performance with other Missions. Moreover, the PEMS interface is being made more user friendly to make it easier for Missions/Posts to submit their responses and less time consuming. These changes are targeted to be incorporated from next version of PEMS.

2.41 The introduction of PEMS portal has been instrumental in analyzing the performance of Missions/Posts, as it provides a clear and structured way to assess the functioning of Missions/Posts in various areas of work. The PEMS portal has also expanded the scope of inspection as the physical inspection of only 15-20 Missions/Posts could be conducted in a year, earlier. The PEMS evaluation is an annual exercise where Missions/Posts are provided scores based on the actions taken by them in various areas of work and their compliance with the instructions of the Ministry. The scores generated after each evaluation gives Missions/Posts an indication of their performance in that Financial year and encourages them to work harder and complete all the actions recommended by Ministry in a timely manner to achieve higher scores.

2.42 A physical inspection is recommended/ conducted for the least scoring Missions of PEMS evaluation. It is worth noting that the scores of Missions/ Posts for which physical inspection has been conducted have shown a notable improvement in their performance. For instance, the physical inspection for HCI Brunei, CGI Zahidan, HCI Freetown and HCI Port Moresby was conducted in 2023 (on the basis of PEMS 3.0). After the inspection these Missions/Posts showed significant improvement in the following evaluation. In PEMS 4.0, these Missions/Posts improved their scores by more than 15% over their scores in PEMS 3.0. Also, while analyzing the performance of all Missions/Posts for past two assessments, it was found that the number of Missions/Posts which achieved a score of more than 80% in the evaluation has increased from 165 in FY 2021-22 to 173 in FY 2022-23. The improvement in the performance of Missions/Posts clearly highlights the effectiveness of PEMS portal.

2.43 The Ministry has also given an indicative list of the concerns observed from the responses of Missions/Posts in PEMS along with the remedial measures suggested based on the findings of the evaluation system. The PEMS evaluation is an annual exercise and has a

questionnaire of about 100 questions related to different areas of work of the Mission/Post like Administration, Consular, Establishment, Finance etc. The shortcoming of each Mission/Post is reported individually. However, following concerns impacting multiple Missions/Posts have come to light during the evaluation.

<b>S. N.</b>	<b>Concerns found during the evaluation of Missions/Posts (M/Ps)</b>	<b>Remedial action taken/suggested</b>
1.	Around 30% of the M/Ps do not update their page on MEA website quarterly using integrated webpage portal. Specifically, Posts were not able to do so.	<p>Inspection Unit followed on this issue with XP Division, which clarified that Posts can review/update its page on MEA website only through Mission's credentials. Therefore, the question was modified and Posts were asked to update their page using Mission's credentials in co-ordination with its respective Mission.</p> <p>As a result, most of M/Ps were found to have completed this action in the current evaluation.</p>
2.	Around 65% of Missions/Posts abroad do not have a verified social media accounts.	<p>As the remedial action, XP Division informed that all Missions/Posts need to have social media presence through verified accounts. M/Ps were also advised to approach XP Division if they face any issues getting their social media accounts verified.</p> <p>As a result, most of M/Ps have completed this action in the current evaluation.</p>
3.	On being asked whether M/P has sent Utilization certificate to XP Division for funds sanctioned under Publicity Budget Head, Many M/Ps reported that they were not allocated funds under this head.	<p>Inspection Unit raised this issue with the XP Division, which clarified that this budget was allocated to only some M/Ps abroad. Hence, this question was not applicable to all.</p> <p>As the remedial action, Unit removed this question from the next questionnaire.</p>
4.	Lack in communication of Instructions: In past, many Missions/Posts had submitted that they did not receive clear instructions regarding performing some actions suggested in PEMS questions.	<p>This issue was taken up with all the concerned divisions while preparing questionnaire for PEMS 5.0. As a remedial action, the reference number of the instructions issued by Ministry was provided alongside each question.</p> <p>However, similar concerns have also been reported during ongoing PEMS evaluation. Therefore, to address this concern, a report on all</p>

		the questions will be shared with the concerned Divisions after the completion of evaluation process.
5.	Regarding preparing CMP and sending it to BOS division for its approval, it was found around 55% of the M/Ps had not performed this task and almost 37% of M/Ps had sent the proposal to the Division and it was pending on Divisions end for the approval.	Inspection Unit raised the issue with the BOS Division to look into the matter and also requested them to expedite the process of approval.
6.	During the last evaluation, it was observed that many of the Posts were not able to frame the panel of packers as they were using services of the packers of their Missions.	After seeking clarification from Administration Division, it was clarified that Post is to send a proposal to GA section to bring the packers of Missions on their Panel. Quotations from other reputed packers may also be obtained and submitted to GA Section along with other documents.  In the current evaluation, it was found that most of M/Ps have either framed the required panels or have sent the proposals to Ministry.
7.	On the question of compliance of the recommendations made in security audit. Many M/Ps said that no security audit had been done till date.	After the consultation with the BOS it was observed that the applicability of the question is very less.  As a result, the question was removed from the next questionnaire.
8.	Regarding posting the trade/tender queries on the India trade portal, M/Ps were confused whether the queries to be posted on the portal are from India or from the Host country.	C&E division after seeking clarification from the FIEO who manages the India trade portal, clarified that portal is for trade/tender queries from the foreign country for the use of exporters.  This concern of M/Ps is now resolved and no such concern was raised during this evaluation.

2.44 In light of recent developments, the Committee were keen to know about the steps that are being taken to ensure the safety and security of our Missions/Posts abroad. The Ministry responded that safety and security of our Missions / Posts is continuously reviewed and measures taken accordingly. These include steps relating to physical security of the Missions, Access

Control System, security equipment, local security guards etc. The expenses for the above come from various budgetary heads of the Ministry of External Affairs.

2.45 Providing details of strength of each Mission/Posts abroad, the Ministry stated that India Missions and Posts worldwide have a sanctioned strength of 8697 in 149 Resident embassies and 61 Consulates, which includes 5721 India-based posts and 2976 local posts as on 1 March 2024. These positions span various cadres within the Ministry, such as the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), IFS General Cadre, Branch B, Stenographers Cadre, Interpreters Cadre, Legal and Treaties Cadre etc.

2.46 In terms of manpower requirements the Committee enquired about the concerns of our Missions/Posts abroad as well as the current status of manpower availability with regard to sanctioned/ required strength. The Ministry responded that it accords highest priority to optimize the deployment of its human resources to help fulfill its growing responsibilities. The Indian Embassies and Consulates are staffed in accordance with their respective sanctioned strengths. Vacancies in Indian Missions/Posts abroad are regularly reviewed and officers posted against these vacancies. The Ministry regularly reviews the requirement of manpower at various levels in Embassies and Consulates abroad and takes appropriate action, including recruitment of additional Officers and Staff, through placement of requisite indents with the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) respectively.

2.47 Current status of manpower availability with regard to sanctioned/required strength - As of 01 March 2024, the current sanctioned strength of the Ministry stands at 5721. Out of this, 52.56 percent are located in Missions and Posts abroad. These positions spanned various cadres within the Ministry, such as the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), IFS General Cadre, Branch B, Stenographers Cadre, Interpreters Cadre, Legal and Treaties Cadre. Missions/Posts abroad also consist of a Local cadre strength of 2976.

**2.48 The Committee note that the increased allocation for ‘Embassies and Missions’ in the Revised Estimates (RE) 2023-24 and Budget Estimates (BE) 2024-25 is primarily due to the operationalization of new Missions and Posts and inflationary pressures. The Committee also take note of the criteria for establishing new Missions, focusing on**

economic partnerships, strategic cooperation, diaspora engagement and multilateral diplomacy. The Committee acknowledge the establishment of new Embassies in Tirana (Albania), La Paz (Bolivia), Tbilisi (Georgia), Riga (Latvia), Dili (Timor Leste), and Libreville (Gabon), as well as new Consulates in Brisbane (Australia), Marseille (France), Barcelona (Spain) and Auckland (New Zealand). The Committee have also been informed about ongoing efforts to operationalize Missions in other strategic locations such as Fukuoka (Japan), Kazan (Russia) and Yekaterinburg (Russia) and future plans for opening five Missions in Europe and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

The Committee further note that India currently lacks resident Missions in 42 countries. While acknowledging the challenges involved in establishing new Missions, the Committee recommend accelerating efforts to bridge these gaps, particularly in countries where India has significant economic or strategic interests or a large Diaspora presence. The Committee note that the Ministry is leveraging concurrent accreditation arrangements effectively in countries where resident Missions have not been operationalized. Despite the Ministry's assurance that the allocated funds are adequate to account for inflationary pressures and currency fluctuations, the Committee urge that the Ministry is be prepared for addressing any unforeseen shortfalls promptly through supplementary grants to ensure uninterrupted functioning of Embassies and Missions.

*(Recommendation No. 10)*

2.49 The Committee recognize the importance of an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure the optimal performance of Indian Missions and Posts abroad. It is observed that Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) which was established in 2016, has been revamped in 2021 to make the evaluation of Mission/Posts more comprehensive. While noting the improvement in performance scores across Missions and Posts, the Committee find that certain areas still require consistent compliance, such as updating web pages, maintaining verified social media accounts and adhering to communication guidelines.

Acknowledging the efforts of the Ministry towards making the PEMS interface more user-friendly, the Committee recommend that periodic feedback surveys from Missions and Posts should be conducted to identify scope for further improvements in the



portal's functionality and reduce time spent on submissions. To encourage higher performance, the Committee also recommend instituting a system of incentives for Missions/Posts that consistently achieve high scores in PEMS evaluations. This can include recognition, additional resource allocation or capacity-building opportunities for staff.

*(Recommendation No.11)*

**2.50** In view of recent developments, the Committee feel that that the security of Indian Missions and Posts abroad is paramount for ensuring the safety of personnel, the protection of sensitive information and the continuity of diplomatic functions. The Ministry has informed that safety and security of our Missions/Posts is continuously reviewed. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should conduct a comprehensive security assessment of all Missions/Posts taking into account the geopolitical situation, potential threats and vulnerabilities in host countries. Adequate resources should also be allocated for protection of physical and digital infrastructure of our Missions.

*(Recommendation No.12)*

**2.51** The Committee note that India's Missions and Posts abroad operate with a sanctioned strength of 5721 India-based posts and 2976 local posts as of March 2024. In light of the increasing responsibilities of Missions and the growing scope of India's foreign policy objective, the Ministry should ensure that all sanctioned positions are filled promptly to avoid any disruption in diplomatic functions. The Committee also desire that vacancies be reviewed and filled on a priority basis through expedited recruitment processes in collaboration with the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Staff Selection Commission (SSC). Highlighting the importance of local staff in supporting Missions' operational efficiency, the Committee urge the Ministry to allocate adequate resources for retaining skilled local staff, including competitive remuneration and benefits to attract and retain talent in host countries.

*(Recommendation No.13)*

## **PASSPORT**

**2.52** Indian Passports (together with other travel documents such as Certificate of Identity to Stateless persons, Emergency Certificates for returnees to India, Police Clearance Certificates,

Surrender Certificates, Line of Control Travel Permits in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir) are issued by the Ministry through the PSP Division, the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and its all-India network of 37 Passport Offices, the CPV Division (Diplomatic and Official passports) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration. This network has been vastly expanded by adding 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode and 434 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) (in association with the Department of Posts) as extended arms of these 37 Passport Offices.

### **Budgetary Allocation**

2.53 The sub-head 'Passport and Emigration' caters to expenditure on Passport Offices, printing of travel documents including e-passports, lease/purchase of passport printers, payments to State Governments and Union Territories for verifications, expenses of pre-departure orientation and skill upgradation of emigrant workers, etc. The allocation during BE 2023-24 was Rs. 1002.78 crore, which was increased to Rs. 1792.14 at the RE stage. The Budgetary Allocation for BE 2024-25 has been steeply reduced to Rs. 970.66 crore.

2.54 Providing the rationale for enhancing the allocation for RE 2023-24 and then decreasing during BE 2024-25, the Ministry stated that the enhanced allocation at RE 2023-24 has been made primarily due to higher anticipated expenditure under printing and procurement of travel documents, postal and freight charges for travel documents and service charges for Passport Seva Projects. However, at BE 2024-25 lesser funds have been provisioned for printing and procurement of travel documents, postal and freight charges for travel documents and service charges for Passport Seva Projects as the bills pertaining to these services are raised with a time lag and allocation made as per the overall budgetary allocation to MEA. However, in view of requirement of funds for these services at later stage, budgetary enhancements have been requested by the Ministry under each of aforesaid sub-heads at Supplementary stage, RE stage etc, keeping in view realistic assessment of expenditure progress and optimization & efficient utilization of Ministry's total budgetary resource allocation.

2.55 The details of revenue earnings collected through Passport Fees *vis-a-vis* allocation made in BE and RE during the last three years are as under : -

*(in Rs Crores)*

<b>Budget Estimate and Revised Estimate for the F.Y 2021-22, 2022-23 &amp; 2023-24</b>									
<b>HEAD OF ACCOUNT</b>	<b>F.Y 2021-2022 (Upto March 2022)</b>			<b>F.Y 2022-2023 (Upto March 2023)</b>			<b>F.Y 2023-2024 (Upto March 2024)</b>		
	<b>BE</b>	<b>RE</b>	<b>Actual Receipts</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>RE</b>	<b>Actual Receipts</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>RE</b>	<b>Actual Receipts</b>
Visa Fee	1800.00	200.00	<b>316.93</b>	1800.00	1200.00	<b>1440.10</b>	1200.00	1000.00	<b>1396.91</b>
Passport fee	2600.00	2000.00	<b>2332.50</b>	2600.00	3000.00	<b>3360.03</b>	3000.00	3500.00	<b>3543.66</b>
Fee under Overseas Citizenship Act	400.00	440.00	<b>679.40</b>	500.00	700.00	<b>719.21</b>	700.00	550.00	<b>661.46</b>
Emigration Fee	7.00	3.35	<b>5.74</b>	7.00	7.00	<b>9.26</b>	7.00	10.00	<b>9.50</b>
Receipts From Guest Houses Govt. Hostels Etc.	0.40	0.20	<b>0.21</b>	0.40	0.40	<b>0.19</b>	0.40	0.40	<b>0.18</b>
Receipts Under RTI Act, 2005	0.01	0.06	<b>0.01</b>	0.02	0.03	<b>0.02</b>	0.03	0.03	<b>0.02</b>
Other Receipts	330.00	170.00	<b>188.82</b>	200.00	200.00	<b>209.21</b>	200.00	200.00	<b>210.43</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>5137.41</b>	<b>2813.61</b>	<b>3523.61</b>	<b>5107.42</b>	<b>5107.43</b>	<b>5738.02</b>	<b>5107.43</b>	<b>5260.43</b>	<b>5822.16</b>

2.56 On being asked about the inability to convince the Ministry of Finance to obtain more funds in view of increased revenue earnings through these services and significant expansion of Passport Seva Programme, the Ministry stated that the issue of providing an adequate allocation of funds has been raised with the Ministry of Finance on several occasions over the years. Even with the fast increase of passport services brought on by the establishment of new PoPSKs in recent years, it should be highlighted that the budgetary allocation under this head has more or less sufficed. The Ministry will keep working in this regard to make budgetary demands that are credible and supported by past effective fund usage and an unbiased estimate of anticipated expenditures based on implementation progress.

2.57 The Committee enquired about the progress made so far in the direction of integration of Missions and Posts abroad with the Passport Seva Portal along with the budgetary allocation

during 2024-25. The Ministry submitted that it has integrated all 193 Indian Missions/Posts abroad into Passport Seva Program as on 30th September 2024. There is no separate Budget allocation for Indian Missions/Posts abroad. The payment to TCS towards the same is made from the Budget Head PSP “Service Charge”. The PSP “Service Charge” budget of Rs. 240 Crs was allocated under this Head for FY 2024-25. Additional funds, if required will be requested at RE stage towards this Head i.e. PSP “Service Charge”.

### **Passport Seva Programme (PSP)**

2.58 The Passport Seva Programme (PSP) Division provides passport related services in India and abroad. The issuance of Passports has emerged as one of the most noticeable statutory and citizen centric services rendered by the Ministry. The Ministry has been making quantitative and qualitative changes so that passports can be delivered to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and by a committed, trained and motivated workforce.

2.59 Providing details about the constraints faced in the implementation and expansion of the Passport Seva Programme, the Ministry stated that at present, 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) with required amenities are operating across the country as extended arms of the 37 Passport Offices, thus providing extended reach to passport applicants. Out of the 93 PSKs, 16 new Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) were opened since May 2014 by MEA, which includes all the States in the North East of India.

2.60 In order to take the passport services to the doorsteps of the citizens, MEA in association with the Department of Posts announced an innovative initiative on 24 January, 2017 to open Passport Seva Kendras at the Head Post Offices (HPO)/ Post Offices (PO) in the country called ‘Post Office Passport Seva Kendra’ (POPSK). The objective was to enhance citizens experience and for better governance in delivery of Passports and related services. There are 445 POPSKs functioning across the country as on date, bringing the total number of Passport Kendras to 538 (445 POPSKs +93 PSKs), out of which 460 have been set-up since May 2014. MEA and DOP are working together to open a POPSK in every Lok Sabha Constituency where there is no PSK/POPSK to ensure that there is at least one PSK/POPSK available in every Lok Sabha Constituency.

2.61 For opening of more POSPKs, the Ministry is facing difficulties getting suitable space from DOP. There is also shortage of manpower in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) affecting pendency of applications. The PSP Division is taking various measures to address the shortage of manpower in POs. These include timely promotions, engagement of retired Government Servants on contractual basis, hiring of DEOs from the outsourced Agency, nomination of Official on CGO duty to clear pendency at POs etc.

2.62 When asked about the progress made in the work relating to establishment of PSKs/POPSKs including the remaining Lok Sabha constituencies, the Ministry submitted that PSP Division, MEA has made a substantial progress in establishment of POPSKs in the balance of Lok Sabha Constituencies, where there are no PSK/ POPSK. As on date, there are 93 PSKs & 442 POPSKs operational under 37 RPOs in India. Ministry is in close contact with DoP, Ministry of Communications, for opening of POPSKs in balance 40 Lok Sabha Constituencies. POPSK is a joint venture of DoP, Ministry of Communications and PSP Division, MEA, wherein both the Ministries work closely for opening of POPSKs. Lots of coordination is required in terms of selection of space and making it functional by our Service Provider M/s TCS.

2.63 On the Committee's further query about the steps taken towards opening of the POPSKs in the balance 40 Lok Sabha constituencies, the Ministry stated that regular co-ordination meetings and follow ups are being done with the officials of Department of Posts for the early operationalisation of the remaining 40 PoPSKs. 6 PoPSKs are getting ready to start the functioning by early 2025 and in remaining 34 PoPSKs, work will start as soon as space allocation is done by Department of Posts.

2.64 Enumerating the challenges faced with respect to selection of space for POPSKs, the Ministry stated that POPSKs are co-located in the post offices, the minimum space requirement for a PoPSK is 500 square feet. There are constraints of space allocation in Post Offices. There are locations where is no network connectivity for TCS to integrate the IT systems with PSP server, in some places there are frequent power outage issues. This delay owing to non-fulfillment of functional requirements is inevitable and is beyond the control of Ministry. In such cases, the Ministry looks for alternate locations in consultations with Department of Posts and TCS (service provider for PSP).

2.65 When asked about the measures taken to make quantitative and qualitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country during 2023-24, the Ministry stated that several quantitative and qualitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country have been made to ensure that passports are delivered to the citizens by the Ministry in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and committed, trained and motivated workforce. The Ministry has worked extensively to bring passport services closer to the people and has opened 538 Passport Kendras across the country, which are working as extended arms of 37 Regional Passport Offices. The citizens can easily apply for the passport and other passport related documents online, upload relevant documents, make the payments online through debit/credit card or Net-Banking, SBI Challan, schedule an appointment through a user-friendly portal and then visit the designated PSK or POPSK. The end-to-end process has been made digital and paperless.

2.66 The Ministry also informed that the next version of Passport Seva Program, PSP V2.0 would have facial and bio-metric matching solution for identity verification and lesser documentation process and thereby expeditious processing of passport applications. Integration of Passport Seva System with Aadhaar, UIDAI would enable passport issuance system to validate the authenticity of Aadhaar document based on bio-metric validation with Aadhaar database. Approximately, 80% of passport applicants provide Aadhaar as proof of address/identity/dob proof etc. while applying for passport related services. Verification with Aadhaar database would not only help in expeditious processing of passport applications but would also help ease the issuance process at large. Integration with DigiLocker order to provide enhanced level of citizen experience in a paperless mode, the Ministry has now successfully integrated into DigiLocker platform of Government of India. This would enable citizens to submit various documents required for Passport Services through DigiLocker in a paperless mode. They are not required to carry the original documents. Chat Bot with Artificial Intelligence in the background for resolving applicant queries. The applicant will be able to chat with an AI Bot with respect to queries related to application process, appointment, and other parts of passport system where the system can handle matters independently.

2.67 The average passport issuance time (excluding Police Verification time) is as follows:

Normal Passports : 7-10 working days

Tatkaal Passports : 1-3 working days

2.68 The Committee wanted to know the manner in which outreach of passport services has been catering to far-flung areas of North East and other hilly terrains. The Ministry responded that outreach of Passport services has been catering to far flung areas of North East and other hilly terrain. No POPSK has been established in this area during this last three years.

2.69 Regarding the lessons learnt from implementing the Passport Seva Project, the Ministry stated that Passport Seva Project (PSP), an IT driven mission mode project has successfully provided an efficient, secure, user-friendly, transparent, and accountable passport service to citizens across the country, since its inception in 2012. Leverage of technology and out-sourcing of front office operations have enabled a large number of citizens to get easy and fast track access to passport services. With a mere volume of 55 lakh passports issued in the country in 2010, the number of passports issued has crossed over 1.65 Cr in 2023.

2.70 Setting up of 93 Passport Seva Kendras, a state-of-art passport facilitation centers across the country has transformed the citizen's perception of a public office. The end to end streamlined and standardized online processes and procedures have substantially reduced the scope for manual intervention and made passport issuance, a system driven process, guided by rules and established procedures leaving less scope for manipulation.

2.71 Further, extension of passport facilities in premises of Post Offices, by way of opening Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (*442 PoPSKs are in operations*) have enabled citizens to easily access passport services in nearby locations, in their vicinity and thereby dispensing the need to travel to major cities.

2.72 The leveraging of technology has brought down the police verification from 45 days in 2012 to 15 days in 2024. The launch of mPassport Police App has further brought down the Police Verification Report (PVR) time to 5-7 days in 24 States/UTs where mPassport Police App has been implemented.

2.73 A uniform, standardized, secured, digitally overhauled passport issuance system for Indian citizens living abroad was created by the integration of PSP with 193 Indian Missions/Posts across the world.

2.74 On being asked about rolling out of Passport Seva Project 2.0, the Ministry stated that the Service Provider M/s TCS is expected to complete the different milestones viz. Application Functionality, Application Security testing by Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate for completion of the Pilot Certification within the following year. The roll out of PSP V2.0 and ePassport project is expected by mid-2025.

2.75 Apprising the Committee about the PSP version 2.0, the Foreign Secretary during testimony before the Committee on 6 November, 2024 submitted as under:

“The Passport Seva Project is one of the largest citizen-centric projects under the National e-Governance Plan. PSP version 2.0 is currently under implementation and is scheduled to go live in April 2025 after completion of testing and certification by concerned agencies. Through this initiative, we hope to achieve end-to-end processing in a paperless and cashless environment, which will be connected to every stakeholder including the police, Department of Posts, and India Security Press, Nasik. The applicant will submit their application on an interactive portal. We are targeting to integrate artificial intelligence-enabled bot and Robotic Process Automation. The PSP V2.0 will have facial and biometric matching solution for verification of applicant’s identity, which will nullify identity fraud and availing of multiple passports by submitting fake supporting documents. This would also expedite the decision-making process of verification and granting officer.”

2.76 The Committee was informed earlier that the tentative timeline for Go-live for Passport Seva Program version (PSPV) 2.0 is July 2023. When asked about the current status of launch of e- Passport project along with constraints faced in its launch, the Ministry stated that the Go-Live of Passport Seva Program (PSP) Version 2.0 (PSP V2.0) has been delayed by 1.4 years by the Service Provider, M/s. TCS as on 30th September 2024. ePassport pilot launch started on 1st April 2024 in the base platform of PSP. The ePassport is dependent on the base platform of PSPV2.0 and the tentative Go-Live date of PSP V2.0 is April/May’2025 as per the revised timeline submitted by TCS. There is no additional fund required for the same.

2.77 Articulating the details and status of issuing E passports to Indian citizens, the Ministry said that e-Passport, which is the Ministry’s flagship programme, is a combined paper and electronic passport with a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Chip and an antenna embedded as an inlay. The passport’s critical information will be printed on its data page as well as stored



in the chip. The characteristics of the document and the chip are as per the specifications of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as mentioned in its Document 9303.

2.78 For the e-Passport Project, National Informatics Centre (NIC) is the technical partner of MEA and National Informatics Centre Services Incorporation (NICSI) is the system integrator. The Project involves setting up of complex technical ecosystem, including Public Key Infrastructure (PKI), Key Management System, Inter-operability test bed, Project Management Unit, e-Personalization, as also creation of e-Passport verification set-up at Immigration Check Points by Bureau of Immigration.

2.79 Benefits to Indian citizens: The main benefit of the e-Passport is its enhanced ability to maintain the integrity of its data. Since the e-Passport has the data in printed form on the booklet, as well as encrypted in the chip, it makes it harder to forge and thereby it is expected to increase the level of confidence in the Indian Passport. e-Passports would also facilitate the ease of travel for Indian citizens, making their interface with immigration authorities much smoother. Since ICAO has recommended its introduction by member countries, the introduction of Indian e-Passport would be in consonance with global best practices and also in tune with the 'Digital India' initiative of the Government of India.

2.80 Present Status: For e-Passport validation, the Ministry has successfully uploaded the Country Signing Certificate Authority Certificate for the validation of e-Passport at ICAO headquarter in Montreal, through a Key Ceremony held on 12 March 2024 and a Verbal note in this regard was issued to all Embassies.

2.81 The launch of e-Passport is planned with PSP Version 2.0, in this regard, integration of e-Passport with PSP Version 2.0 has been carried out and currently its pilot test is under way at two RPOs. The Pilot Launch of PSP V2.0 along with e-Passports was commenced on 01 Apr 24 at Bhubaneswar and Nagpur RPOs (with their attached PSKs & POPSKs). Post successful pilot test and requisite certification, Ministry will roll out e-Passport in phased manner at all RPOs and subsequently at Missions/Posts abroad. Currently, RPO Nagpur and RPO Bhubaneswar are issuing e-Passports to applicants since 01 Apr 2024. As on 31 October 2024, RPO Nagpur & RPO Bhubaneswar have issued total 38,125 & 26,875 e-Passports respectively to Indian citizens, thus total of 65,000 e-Passports were issued during the period 01 Apr 2024 to 31 October

2024. The integration of PKI with BOI passenger application got completed in July 2024. In September 2024, BOI has successfully commenced the validation of foreigners' e-Passport and Indian e-Passport at one of their immigration counters in IGI Delhi Airport.

2.82 The Committee also asked whether there exists any database containing details of passports issued to Indian citizens. The Ministry replied that the central database called 'PRIDE' is the repository of all data related to Passports issued to Indian citizens.

2.83 With regard to integration of the database with system of MHA and the steps for data security and privacy, the Ministry submitted that the concerned Division of MHA (BOI and NATGRID) has been integrated with PSP database. The Passport data being collected is protected against unintentional, unlawful, or unauthorized access, disclosure, or theft as part of Data Confidentiality. The Passport Seva system has been designed and architected in such a way that the Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability (CIA) of passport-related data being collected from the citizens is maintained throughout its lifecycle. The Passport Seva Project has a well-defined Information Security Management System (ISMS) Policy, which illustrates the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information assets by providing policies, procedures and operating procedure documents (OPDs) designed to mitigate or eliminate all acknowledged risks. The layered security approach and zero trust principles in PSP have capabilities to deal with growing security challenges, emanating from internal operating environment and fast changing exploit scenarios evolving from global cyberspace.

### **'mPassport Police' App**

2.84 The Ministry has launched the 'mPassport Police' App for speedy submission of Police Verification Report (PVR) to bring down the time limit of verification to twenty one days. Elaborating on the impact of mPassport Police App so far in expediting Police Verification Reports, the Ministry submitted that on 22nd January 2016, the Ministry launched mPassport Police App for Android/iOS mobile phones for use by State/UT police personnel tasked with conducting police verification, enabling them for an expeditious submission of PVR digitally directly from the Police Station itself. The mPassport Police App enables the Police authorities to receive and submit the PV data directly through the mobile phones or tablets of the concerned police personnel, who capture the PV report in the system digitally while conducting the

verification process of applicant’s credentials. With the introduction of this App, the need to download and print the physical ‘Personal Particular Forms’ and ‘Questionnaire’ are not required, resulting in paperless end-to-end digital flow of the PV process, enabling further reduction in the time required for completion of PVR.

2.85 When asked about the details of State/UT wherein launch of mPassport Police App is pending and the time by which mPassport Police App is likely to be launched in these States/UTs, the Ministry stated that it is worthwhile to note that 25 States/UTs covering more than 8400 Police Stations across the country have already launched mPassport Police App. The details of states/UTs where it has been launched are given below:

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>State/UT</b>
1.	Andhra Pradesh
2.	Assam
3.	Bihar
4.	Chandigarh
5.	Chhattisgarh
6.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli
7.	Daman and Diu
8.	Delhi
9.	Gujarat
10.	Haryana
11.	Jharkhand
12.	Karnataka
13.	Kerala
14.	Madhya Pradesh
15.	Maharashtra
16.	Odisha
17.	Puducherry
18.	Punjab
19.	Rajasthan
20.	Sikkim
21.	Tamil Nadu
22.	Tripura
23.	Uttar Pradesh
24.	Uttarakhand
25.	West Bengal

2.86 The Ministry and the concerned RPOs are coordinating with the States/UTs where mPassport Police App has not yet launched. The list of 12 States/UTs where mPassport Police App is yet to be launched is placed below:

	<b>State Name</b>
1.	Andaman and Nicobar
2.	Arunachal Pradesh
3.	Goa
4.	Himachal Pradesh
5.	Jammu and Kashmir
6.	Ladakh
7.	Lakshadweep
8.	Manipur
9.	Meghalaya
10.	Mizoram
11.	Nagaland
12.	Telangana

The roll out of mPassport Police App at State/UT depends on the readiness of IT infrastructure at the concerned State/UT.

2.87 On the Committee’s query whether there is any timeline for integration of the remaining police districts into the PSP system, the Ministry specified that the Ministry endeavors to integrate all the police stations before the “Go live” of PSP 2 in April 2025. However, it will depend on the support and co-operation to be extended by the respective State Governments/UTs.

2.88 Regarding applications that have been expedited by this process of Police Verification Report, the Ministry stated that these District Police authorities are now processing Police Verification digitally (paperless) right from Police Station level. With these measures initiated by the Ministry and with the participation of State/UT Police, Police Verification process has become faster and Passport Offices in India and Indian Missions/Posts abroad are now receiving Police Verification Reports within 2 - 10 days.

2.89 The Committee were keen to know about the technical constraints faced by the Passport offices in capturing the Police Verification Report (PVR) digitally. The Ministry responded that at present no such technical constraints are being faced.

2.90 On the impact of mPassport Police App in expediting Police Verification Reports, the Ministry submitted that with the introduction of the mPassport Police app, the time taken for police verification has been reduced from 45 days to 15 days (national average) excluding J&K and North Eastern States.

### **Central Passport Organization (CPO)**

2.91 On being asked about the actual sanctioned strength and actual working strength of the Central Passport Organization (CPO), the Ministry stated as under:

Sanctioned Strength - 2737

Working Strength - 1751

2.92 Explaining the reason for this gap, the Ministry stated that shortage of personnel in the CPO is primarily due to the high attrition rate (over 40%) in the direct entry grade of Junior Passport Assistant (Level 2) and Assistant Superintendent (Level 6). These personnel resign or do not join the Organization as they get better opportunities in terms of pay scales, career prospects, and absence of all India transfer policy.

2.93 On being asked about the way in which this gap has affected the functioning of CPO, the Ministry responded that as of now, passports are being issued in a timely manner to the citizens. The Ministry is taking all remedial measures for filling up the vacancies as per the procedure laid down by the Government. Vacancies upto the year 2024 have been indented to SSC for inclusion in the examination to be conducted for 61 Office Assistants, 301 Junior Passport Assistants, 63 Assistant Superintendents, 07 Stenographers, and 15 Junior Translation Officers.

2.94 Promotions through Department Promotion Committees (DPCs) meeting are carried out in a timely manner. For the vacancy year 2024, 14 Junior Passport Assistants (JPAs) were promoted to the post of Senior Passport Assistants (SPAs), 34 Assistant Superintendents were promoted to the post of Superintendent, 149 Superintendents were promoted to the post of Senior Superintendents, 26 Senior Superintendents were promoted to the post of Assistant Passport

Officer, and 11 Assistant Passport Officers were promoted to the post of Deputy Passport Officer. Further, the process for promotions for the vacancy year 2025 has also been initiated.

2.95 As regards promotions through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) for the post of JPA and SPA, results upto the vacancy year 2024 will be declared by SSC. Further, the Ministry will shortly conduct LDCE 2024 for promotion to the post of Assistant Superintendent.

2.96 The Ministry has also approved hiring of 475 Data Entry Operators and 57 Multi Tasking Staff from Outsourced Agency as an interim measure to fill the vacant non-Gazetted posts for smooth functioning of the Passport Offices. In addition, Ministry has also approved the engagement of 108 retired Government Officers/Officials as consultants for efficient functioning of the Passport Offices.

2.97 The details of vacant Gazetted /Non-Gazetted posts in CPO is given below:

Vacant Gazetted Posts	272
Vacant Non-Gazetted Posts	714

2.98 When asked about the steps taken to embark upon a recruitment drive to tide over manpower inadequacies, the Ministry stated that it is taking all remedial measures for filling up the vacancies as per the procedure laid down by the Government. Some of the steps taken by Ministry are as follows:

- (a) Regular indents have been placed with Staff Selection Commission (SSC) for Direct Recruitment (DR) quota vacancies.
- (b) To fill up Promotion vacancies, regular meetings of the Department Promotion Committees (DPCs) have been held for the promotion of eligible officials to the next grade.
- (c) Ministry has also hired 338 Data Entry Operators (DEOs) and 23 Multi Tasking Staffs (MTSs) from Outsourced Agency as an interim measure to fill the gap against the vacant non-Gazetted posts for smooth functioning of the Passport Offices.
- (d) Appointing Deputy Passport Officers (DPOs) and Passport Officer (POs) level officers on deputation basis as per Recruitment Rules.

2.99 The Ministry also informed that at present there are around 440 PoPSKs for which 440 CPO cadre manpower is required.

**2.100 The Committee acknowledge the significant strides made by the Ministry of External Affairs in enhancing passport services through the expansion of the Passport Seva Programme, including the establishment of 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) and 434 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) in collaboration with the Department of Posts. The integration of all 193 Indian Missions/Posts abroad into the Passport Seva Portal is commendable and reflects the commitment of the Ministry to streamline and digitize passport services globally. The Committee observe that the substantial revenue generated from passport-related services, including Rs. 3543.66 crore in passport fees during FY 2023-24, highlights the increasing public demand for these services.**

However, the Committee expresses concern over the steep reduction in the budgetary allocation for passport and emigration services from Rs. 1792.14 crore at the RE 2023-24 stage to Rs. 970.66 crore in BE 2024-25. This reduction appears incongruous with the rising demand for passport services, expansion of the Passport Seva Programme and the higher anticipated expenditure on travel document printing, freight charges, and service charges for the Passport Seva Project. The Ministry should ensure that budgetary provisions for passport services align with the growing demand and the significant revenue generated through passport fees. Given the steep decline in BE 2024-25, it is imperative that adequate funds be allocated at the Supplementary or Revised Estimate stage to address anticipated shortfalls. To further enhance the utilization of passport services, the Committee recommend that MEA should undertake widespread awareness campaigns regarding POPSKs, online application processes and e-passports. Special focus should be given to remote and underserved regions to ensure equitable access to these services.

*(Recommendation No.14)*

**2.101 The Committee note that the expansion of Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) and Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) has enhanced accessibility for citizens across the country. In the opinion of the Committee, the introduction of e-Passports as part of the PSP Version 2.0 is a forward-looking initiative aligned with global best practices and the**

**“Digital India” mission. The pilot issuance of e-Passports at RPO Nagpur and RPO Bhubaneswar with 65,000 e-Passports issued as of October 2024 and the efforts to ensure one PSK/POPSK in every Lok Sabha constituency are highly appreciable.**

**While recognizing that the issuance of passports as one of the most visible and citizen-centric statutory services rendered by the MEA, the Committee discern challenges in infrastructure, manpower and the implementation timeline for critical advancements such as PSP Version 2.0 and e-Passports which warrant immediate attention. The Committee also express concern over the delay in the rollout of PSP V2.0, which is now scheduled for April 2025. The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry to closely monitor and ensure strict adherence to the revised timeline by the Service Provider, M/s TCS. As regards the pending establishment of POPSKs in 40 constituencies, the Ministry is urged to focus on inter-departmental coordination and periodic reviews to operationalize these POPSKs at the earliest.**

*(Recommendation No.15)*

**2.102 The Committee note that the centralized database, PRIDE has been integrated with the Ministry of Home Affairs’ (MHA) systems, such as BOI and NATGRID, which enhances inter-agency coordination. The Ministry’s efforts to ensure data confidentiality, integrity and availability through a robust Information Security Management System (ISMS) Policy, layered security measures and adherence to zero trust principles to address evolving cyber-security threats has also been noted. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should further strengthen the existing data protection framework by conducting periodic audits of the Passport Seva Project’s security infrastructure to proactively identify and mitigate vulnerabilities. Additionally, the Committee emphasize the importance of raising public awareness about data privacy measures undertaken by the Ministry to enhance citizens’ confidence in the system.**

*(Recommendation No. 16)*

**2.103 It is noted that with the implementation of the mPassport Police App, the average time for Police Verification Reports (PVRs) has been significantly reduced from 45 days to 15 days nationally. The Committee observes that the app has not been rolled out in 13**



States/UTs. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the MEA, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and State/UT governments, should prioritize the nationwide rollout of the app by April 2025, ensuring its adoption across all police stations before the launch of PSP Version 2.0 in April 2025. To facilitate this, the Ministry should provide technical and financial support to address IT infrastructure gaps in these regions and establish a dedicated task force to monitor progress and address implementation challenges. The Committee further recommend the enhancement of training and capacity-building programs for police personnel to ensure efficient app usage.

*(Recommendation No. 17)*

2.104 The Committee note with concern the significant gap between the sanctioned strength (2737) and actual working strength (1751) of the Central Passport Organization (CPO), resulting in a vacancy of 986 posts, including 272 Gazetted and 714 Non-Gazetted posts. The shortfall of workforce is further exacerbated by a high attrition rate (over 40%) in key direct entry grades such as Junior Passport Assistant (JPA) and Assistant Superintendent, primarily due to better career prospects and pay scales elsewhere. While the Ministry has made efforts, such as outsourcing staff, expediting promotions and hiring on a deputation basis, the Committee observe that these are interim measures and stress the need for long-term solutions to address this persistent issue. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should expedite recruitment by engaging closely with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) to ensure timely inclusion of vacancies in upcoming examinations. They also urge the Ministry to address the root causes of attrition by revising pay scales, improving career progression opportunities, etc. Additionally, to meet the manpower demands of 440 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) and ensure efficient functioning of Passport Offices, the Ministry should formulate a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy.

*(Recommendation No. 18)*

## **EMIGRATION**

2.105 A large number of Indians go abroad for employment. The process of emigration of Indian workers, with Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) category passports, is regulated

under the Emigration Act, 1983, which is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) enforces the Emigration act with the help of 14 offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) located at Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Raebareli, Patna, Bengaluru, Guwahati and Ranchi. In order to expand the outreach of the PoEs, the ministry has established additional PoE offices in Patna, Bengaluru and Guwahati, which are fully functional. As of now, setting up of 3 new PoE offices in Tripura, Bhubaneswar, and Ahmedabad is underway and the offices are expected to be fully operational in the year 2024.

2.106 The details of the allocation made for protection of the Emigrants during the last three years and the current year and the actual utilization are provided below:

S N	Name of Protector of Emigrants	F.Y. 2021-22 BE	F.Y. 2021-22 Actual Utilization	F.Y. 2022-23 BE	F.Y. 2022-23 Actual Utilization	F.Y. 2023-24 BE	F.Y. 2023-24 Actual Utilization	F.Y. 2024-25 BE	F.Y. 2024-25 Actual Utilization (till date)
1	PoE, Tirvandrum	4579	3667.481	6070	4729.055	6889	6216.508	6183	3383.56
2	PoE, Ranchi	Not Applicable				3800	2405.14	6815	2987.787
3	PoE, Guwahati	5487	5477.62	7698	6188.67	7871	6680.58	6335	4706.45
4	PoE, Bhubaneswar	Not Applicable						8832	1950
5	PoE, Chennai	8745	7350	8345	8679	11855	11017	10794	6420
6	PoE, Mumbai	21585	19685	20075	19340	17795	16534	14389	9449
7	PoE, Patna	4045	3591.19	4215	3885.98	5445	4948.49	5380	3184
8	PoE, Delhi*	7455	6949.760	9296	7576.126	12139	8096.589	10305	6122.535
9	PoE, Bengaluru	4406	4355	6325	5618.65	6885	6272	5870	3167
10	PoE, Kolkata	3358	2907	5180	5180	4555	3969.129	3675	2794
11	PoE, Cochin	3257	3193.861	3257	4371.894	5062	4368.945	4915	2963.740
12	PoE, Hyderabad	5425	4758	8250	6461	6059	4814	5830	4151
13	PoE, Chandigarh	2085	2186.357	2870	2889.848	3572	2880.868	3056	2193.931

2.107 The Ministry informed that with the help of 16 offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) located at Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Cochin,

Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Raebareli, Patna, Bengaluru, Guwahati, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar and Agartala across the country, the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) enforces the Emigration Act, 1983. The Protectors of Emigrants performs its functions assigned to them by this Act under the general superintendence and control of the Protector General of Emigrants. The main function of the Protector of Emigrants includes the grant of Emigration Clearance to the emigrants to ECR (Emigration Check Required) Countries as per the procedure prescribed under the Emigration Act, 1983, monitoring of recruitment process and reporting illegal agents, inspection of office premises of prospective Recruiting Agents (RAs) as they apply for the Registration Certificate and helping the Protector General of Emigrants in implementation of Emigration Act, 1983. As per the Act, the Recruiting Agents (RAs) are required to obtain Registration Certificate (RC) from the PGE before they could engage in recruitment for overseas employment. Emigration of ECR passport holders is regulated by way of grant of Emigration Clearance (EC) by any of the above 16 officers of the POEs for employment in any of the 18 notified ECR countries, namely, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

2.108 The details of PoE Offices is as given below:

<b>SI No.</b>	<b>Name of PoE Office &amp; address</b>
1.	<b>PoE Delhi</b> Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, 26, Mansingh Road, New Delhi – 110001 Ph. No. - 011-23382472, 23073908 Email: <a href="mailto:poedelhi@mea.gov.in">poedelhi@mea.gov.in</a>
2.	<b>PoE Mumbai</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Videsh Bhawan, Bandra Kurla Complex, Plot No. C-45, G Block, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051. Ph. No. - 022-26520060, 26520090 Email: <a href="mailto:poemumbai@mea.gov.in">poemumbai@mea.gov.in</a>
3.	<b>PoE Rae Bareli</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, Rudra Plaza, Hospital Road, Rae Bareli, Uttar Pradesh. Ph. No. - 0535-2211122/23 Email: <a href="mailto:poerb1@mea.gov.in">poerb1@mea.gov.in</a>

4.	<p><b>PoE Kolkata</b>  Room No. 16, Wing 'A', C.G.O. Complex, DF Block, Sector-I, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064.  Ph. No. - 033-23343407, 23344026  Email: <a href="mailto:poekol@mea.gov.in">poekol@mea.gov.in</a></p>
5.	<p><b>PoE Chandigarh</b>  SCO 28-32, RPO Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sector-34/A, Chandigarh-160022.  Ph. No. - +91 172 2741790  Email: <a href="mailto:poechd@mea.gov.in">poechd@mea.gov.in</a></p>
6.	<p><b>PoE Chennai</b>  New No 158, Old No. 785, Rayala Towers, Tower No. 2 IV Floor, Anna Salai, Chennai-600002.  Ph. No. - 044-28525610, 28521337, 29862069  Email: <a href="mailto:poechennai1@mea.gov.in">poechennai1@mea.gov.in</a></p>
7.	<p><b>PoE Jaipur</b>  CFC Building, RIICO, Sitapura Industrial Area, Tonk Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan – 302022.  Ph. No. - 0141-2771529/2948775  Email: <a href="mailto:poerjaipur@mea.gov.in">poerjaipur@mea.gov.in</a></p>
8.	<p><b>PoE Guwahati</b>  A DEE Tower, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Lalmati, Opposite Nidhi Bhawan, NH-37, Assam-281029.  Ph. No. - 0361-2306332  Email: <a href="mailto:poeguwahati@mea.gov.in">poeguwahati@mea.gov.in</a></p>
9.	<p><b>PoE Cochin</b>  Ground Floor, Regional Passport Office, Panampilly Nagar, Cochin-682036.  Ph. No. - 0484-2315400  Email: <a href="mailto:poecochin@mea.gov.in">poecochin@mea.gov.in</a></p>
10.	<p><b>PoE Ranchi</b>  3rd Floor, Galaxia Mall, Ratu Road, Ranchi, Jharkhand -834001.  Ph. No. - 0651-2913311  Email: <a href="mailto:poeranchi@mea.gov.in">poeranchi@mea.gov.in</a></p>
11.	<p><b>PoE Thiruvananthapuram</b>  5th Floor, NORKA Centre, Thycaud P.O, Thiruvananthapuram-695014.  Ph. No. - 0471-2336625  Email: <a href="mailto:poetvm@mea.gov.in">poetvm@mea.gov.in</a></p>
12.	<p><b>PoE Patna</b>  5th floor, B block, Niyogan Bhawan, near Income Tax Golumbar, Patna 800001.  Ph. No. - 0612-2521133  EMail: <a href="mailto:poepatna@mea.gov.in">poepatna@mea.gov.in</a></p>
13.	<p><b>PoE Bengaluru</b>  Room No 1-4, Ground Floor, RPO Building</p>

	80 Ft Road, 8th Block, Koramangala Bengaluru 560 095. Ph. No. - +91-80-25711499/599 Email: <a href="mailto:poebengaluru@mea.gov.in">poebengaluru@mea.gov.in</a>
14.	<b>PoE Hyderabad</b> 2nd Floor, Regional Passport Office Building, 73 Red Cross Road, Secunderabad – 500003. Ph. No. - 040-27772557 Email: <a href="mailto:poehyd@mea.gov.in">poehyd@mea.gov.in</a>
15.	<b>PoE Bhubaneswar</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Niyojan Bhawan, Kharvel Nagar, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar, Orissa Ph. No. - 040-27772557 Email: <a href="mailto:-poe.bhubaneswar@mea.gov.in">-poe.bhubaneswar@mea.gov.in</a>
16.	<b>PoE Agartala</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, Shram Bhavan (Directorate of Labour), Office Lane, Agartala, Tripura (West)-799001 Email: <a href="mailto:-poe.agartala@mea.gov.in">-poe.agartala@mea.gov.in</a> *This PoE Office is yet to become fully operational. At present, an ASO has been posted in this office.

2.109 On being asked whether the MEA has any plan to set up offices of Protector of Emigrants in migration hotspots in the country, the Ministry submitted that it has already identified migration hotspots (in terms of the number of Emigration Clearance issued) which primarily include the States of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana. Protector of Emigrant (PoE) offices have already been opened in these States. PoE Hyderabad has jurisdiction over Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, Ministry has been exploring the possibility of opening of Protector of Emigrants Offices (PoEs) in those states, where such offices do not exist currently. PoE Offices in Jharkhand, Odisha and Tripura have been opened. As of now, PoE Offices in Jharkhand and Odisha are fully functional, whereas one ASO has joined PoE, Agartala for setting up of PoE office there and the POE, Agartala has also been selected who will be joining his Office shortly. OE & PGE Division is in the process of opening PoE Offices in Uttarakhand and Gujarat.

2.110 The details of applications for grant emigration clearances received, EC approved and rejected in the last three (03) years, month- wise is as tabulated below:

EC Approved Counts Year and Month wise			EC Rejected Counts Year and Month wise			Total Received
Year	Month	EC Count	Year	Month	EC Count	
2021	October	14,537	2021	October	495	15,032
2021	November	19,297	2021	November	420	19,717
2021	December	31,345	2021	December	526	31,871
2022	January	34,491	2022	January	201	34,692
2022	February	31,520	2022	February	233	31,753
2022	March	28,460	2022	March	155	28,615
2022	April	37,900	2022	April	287	38,187
2022	May	26,728	2022	May	703	27,431
2022	June	30,744	2022	June	2023	32,767
2022	July	26,501	2022	July	605	27,106
2022	August	32,622	2022	August	806	33,428
2022	September	29,784	2022	September	567	30,351
2022	October	23,758	2022	October	453	24,211
2022	November	28,431	2022	November	712	29,143
2022	December	43,718	2022	December	614	44,332
2023	January	41,357	2023	January	393	41,750
2023	February	29,664	2023	February	330	29,994
2023	March	32,607	2023	March	478	33,085
2023	April	23,119	2023	April	490	23,609
2023	May	32,433	2023	May	370	32,803
2023	June	34,688	2023	June	443	35,131
2023	July	29,807	2023	July	303	30,110
2023	August	34,428	2023	August	346	34,774
2023	September	36,958	2023	September	309	37,267
2023	October	39,063	2023	October	459	39,522
2023	November	34,297	2023	November	454	34,751
2023	December	29,747	2023	December	361	30,108
2024	January	37,103	2024	January	1,027	38,130
2024	February	29,188	2024	February	1,318	30,506
2024	March	22,183	2024	March	428	22,611

2024	April	33,504	2024	April	530	34,034
2024	May	33,193	2024	May	462	33,655
2024	June	24,833	2024	June	301	25,134
2024	July	30,008	2024	July	728	30,736
2024	August	38,542	2024	August	1,127	39,669
2024	September	39,925	2024	September	1,166	41,091
2024	October	11,330	2024	October	314	11,644
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,37,813</b>			<b>20,937</b>	<b>11,58,750</b>

Total EC application pending as on date is 967.

2.111 Enumerating the criteria for grant of such clearances and the average time taken in this regard, the Ministry stated that the received EC applications are Forwarded by CPC with remarks to PoEs, further applications are approved/rejected by PoEs (based on valid employment contacts, proper documentation of emigrants e.g. valid passports, VISA). Additionally, the following documents are scrutinized by the PoEs:

1. The Foreign employer documents issued by the Government of the country
2. Demand Acknowledgement letter by the RA
3. Power of Attorney Document

The average time taken for grant of EC clearances is 3.02 days (on the basis of last two years data).

2.112 Apprising the Committee on the working of eMigrate portal, the Ministry stated that e-Migrate project, launched on 26 May 2014, is designed to facilitate emigration of Indians having ECR category passports emigrating to 18 notified ECR countries for employment purposes and mitigate the scope of malpractices. This fully digitized B-2-B platform provides a contactless interface for Foreign Employers (FEs) and RAs and helps to conduct the recruitment process in a hassle-free and transparent manner. The portal also provides a comprehensive online database of Indian emigrants to Indian Missions/Posts abroad, RAs, FEs, insurance agencies and other stakeholders to make the whole emigration cycle fast, transparent and efficient. The e-Migrate system has been integrated with Ministry's Passport Seva Project (PSP) for online validation of passport details of the ECR category workers being registered. This integration helps in detecting fake passport cases and checking data entry errors at registration stage itself. e-Migrate is also integrated with Bureau of Immigration (BoI) system of MHA, used at Immigration Check Post

(ICP)/Indian airports for online validation of the ECs granted by PoEs to Indians ECR category passport holders proceeding for employment purposes to ECR Countries. DG Shipping system is also integrated with eMigrate system since August 2017. The data of seafarers submitted by RPSL (Registration and Placement Service Licenses) to DG Shipping System is forwarded to eMigrate system through this integration and eMigrate portal forwards this data to BoI for facilitation of emigration through Immigration Check Posts (ICPs)/airports within the country. This Portal is also integrated with insurance agencies providing Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna (PBBY) so that the genuineness of the PBBY policy details being submitted at the time of seeking EC could be established online. In the eMigrate V2.0, which was inaugurated by Hon'ble EAM on 14th October 2024, DigiLocker, Common Service Centre (CSC), Bhashini, UMANG etc. have also been integrate with the eMigrate portal.

2.113 The details of contact less, paperless and cash less Emigration Clearances (ECs) issued so far, State-wise is as given below:

<b>State/UT wise EC Approved Counts till 10-Oct-2024</b>	
<b>State/UT</b>	<b>EC granted</b>
Andaman & Nicobar	125
Andhra Pradesh	1,97,467
Arunachal Pradesh	39
Assam	26,112
Bihar	6,24,387
Chandigarh	2,034
Chhattisgarh	1,255
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	57
Daman & Diu	214
Delhi	14,432
Goa	6,107
Gujarat	39,156
Haryana	14,539
Himachal Pradesh	5,615
Jammu & Kashmir	34,948
Jharkhand	40,528



Karnataka	56,618
Kerala	2,00,412
Ladakh	3
Lakshadweep	21
Madhya Pradesh	10,992
Maharashtra	78,839
Manipur	185
Meghalaya	93
Mizoram	12
Nagaland	42
Odisha	85,084
Puducherry	3,119
Punjab	1,98,034
Rajasthan	2,77,169
Sikkim	82
Tamil Nadu	3,21,392
Telangana	1,51,309
Tripura	13,657
Uttar Pradesh	11,72,956
Uttarakhand	29,624
West Bengal	3,31,978
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39,38,636</b>

2.114 As regards the collaboration of PoE with Indian Embassies to support emigrants, the Ministry stated that the Protector of Emigrants (PoE) collaborate closely with Indian Embassies and Consulates to support Indian emigrants in multiple ways, ensuring their welfare and well-being, grievances redressal, and addressing issues related to overseas employment. This support is extended in multiple ways, some of which are elaborated below:

(a) **Advisories and Awareness:** PoEs work with Indian Missions/Consulates to spread awareness amongst emigrants and issue advisories for prospective emigrants. These awareness activities like issuance of advisories equip emigrants with information on safe migration practices, registered recruiting agents, valid foreign jobs, ways to avoid fraudulent recruiting agencies, etc. The information about these issues is also

disseminated through social media handles of the Missions/Posts as well as those of the OE & PGE Division and POEs.

(b) Grievance Redressal: Indian Embassies/Posts, in collaboration with concerned PoEs, address grievances filed by emigrants on issues like mistreatment, contract discrepancies, and non-payment of wages by foreign employers or any cheating by registered recruiting agents. PoEs resolve such issues of emigrants which are related to registered recruiting agents, and Indian Missions resolve issues related to registered foreign employers. In case action against illegal recruitment agencies based in India is required to be taken, the PoEs communicate with the local police authorities for necessary action.

(c) Verification of Foreign Employers: Embassies assist PoEs in verifying the credentials of foreign employers by registering them on the eMigrate portal. This verification process helps prevent emigrants from taking up potentially unsafe or exploitative jobs abroad.

(d) Rescue and Repatriation: In cases of exploitation or distress, OE & PGE Division and Indian Missions work together for the rescue and repatriation of affected emigrants. Missions often take the lead in local negotiations, while OE & PGE Division coordinate efforts back in the country. The Division also assists the family members, relatives by informing them about the emigrant's safe return and any required follow-up actions in India.

(e) Emigration Clearance and Documentation Support: For emigrants requiring emigration clearance, OE & PGE Division liaise with Indian Missions/Posts to verify genuineness of work contracts/attestation of Visa, financial security in case of female domestic workers and ensure compliance with the Emigration regulations. Embassies/Posts also provide information on specific labor laws, job conditions, and wages, which PoEs can share with RAs and emigrants.

(f) Welfare Schemes and Insurance: Various welfare schemes like the Pre Departure Orientation Training (PDOT), Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) and encourage emigrants to register for PBBY which in turn assists Indian Missions in resolving matters involving expenses to be borne by emigrants, are promoted by the Division. These collaborative efforts help in safe and legal mobility of Indian emigrant workers, especially in countries where high migration is taking place and where Indian workers are more vulnerable to exploitation.

2.115 The Committee also desired to know about the manner in which PoE works with the State Government and regional bodies on emigration issues. In reply, the Ministry stated as under:

“The Protector of Emigrants (PoE) work with state governments to monitor emigration processes, prevent exploitation, and ensure the welfare of Indian emigrants by ensuring that the provisions of the Emigration Act are enforced in letter and spirit. This collaboration is essential for raising awareness, implementing regulatory measures, and providing support to emigrants at the grass-root level. Following are the main areas where PoEs and state government collaborate:

(a) Awareness Programs: PoEs work with state governments to identify high emigration districts, for awareness campaigns and imparting PDOT to emigrants. These campaigns, conducted in partnership with district authorities and local bodies, inform communities about safe migration, legal recruiting agents, and potential risks. The PoEs also coordinate with state-level NRI departments and employment departments and impart training on various emigration rules and regulations, and welfare schemes.

(b) Integration with Common Service Centers (CSCs): In collaboration with state authorities and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY), OE & PGE Division intends to facilitate access to emigration services through CSCs. This allows village-level entrepreneurs (VLEs) to offer services such as emigrant registration, job opportunities, emigration clearance, grievance registration, and insurance policies to rural emigrants, particularly in remote or underserved areas.

(c) Training Programs for State Government Officials: PoEs collaborate with state-level departments to train district officials on emigration-related processes and the use of the eMigrate portal. This training helps state government officials to support emigrants more effectively, guiding them on legal emigration channels and available support systems. This also assists the state employment generation departments with the information on available opportunities of overseas employment for Indian workers.

(d) Preventing Illegal Recruitment: With the assistance of state police and law enforcement agencies, PoEs monitors and crack down on unauthorized recruiting agents and assist in detection of fraudulent Visas and fake job offers. PoEs collaborate with the State authorities on information and intelligence sharing on illegal recruiting agents and detected illegal practices, supporting state government officials to regulate emigration and prevent exploitation.

(e) Supporting Repatriation: In cases where emigrants are required to be repatriated from foreign countries due to various contingency situations, PoEs coordinate with state governments and corresponds with the Indian Missions, Consulates with required information for repatriation of emigrants.

Through these collaborative efforts, PoEs under the direct supervision and guidance of OE & PGE Division and in collaboration with state governments work in ensuring safe and

legal mobility of emigrants, as well as protect emigrants from potential fraud and exploitation”.

2.116 On the Committee’s specific query about the proposed Emigration Bill 2023, its current status and the objectives, the Ministry submitted that the proposed legislation on Emigration [Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2024) seeks to replace the Emigration Act of 1983 with a view to facilitate the circular mobility of people intending to emigrate for overseas employment. It aims to establish an enabling framework which will promote safe, orderly and regular migration for overseas employment. The proposed draft is under consultation with line Ministries. After the internal consultations draft will be put up for public Consultation for 15/30 days thereafter it will be followed up by Inter Ministerial Consultations along with the Draft Cabinet Note on revised draft.

**2.117 The Committee take cognizance that emigration process in India is governed by the Emigration Act of 1983, administered by MEA through the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE). The Ministry has informed that the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE ) oversees the functioning of all Protector of Emigrants (PoE) offices across India. As of now there are 14 offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) located at Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Raebareli, Patna, Bengaluru, Guwahati and Ranchi. In order to expand the outreach of the PoEs, the Ministry has established additional PoE offices in Patna, Bengaluru and Guwahati, which are fully functional. Additional offices are being planned in Tripura, Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad. The Committee desire that establishment of PoE offices in States where such offices do not exist currently and additional PoE offices in migration hotspots including States like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, etc. should be expedited to ensure better outreach and support for emigrants. Realizing an urgent need for spreading awareness about safe migration, the Committee recommend that the Ministry should collaborate with local civil society groups, media outlets in the most affected regions to ensure that emigrants are fully informed about their rights, processes involved and the risks of illegal migration. In addition, the Committee urge that all citizens departing India should be given basic information at the immigration counters.**

*[Recommendation No. 19]*

2.118 Keeping in view the contemporary global migration dynamics and the needs of Indian citizens, the Committee has over the years underscored the pressing need for a comprehensive legislative overhaul to replace the outdated provisions of the Emigration Act 1983. After much delay, the Ministry is seriously considering enacting a new law tentatively titled ‘Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2024’. The Ministry has further informed the Committee that the proposed draft is under consultation with line Ministries and will, thereafter, be put up for public consultations. The Committee desire that it should be consulted on the salient features of the Bill and the enactment of a revised act reflecting changed global migration realities should be done in a time bound manner *i.e.* not later than one year. An update about the progress made in this regard may be submitted to the Committee within three months.

*[Recommendation No. 20]*

**SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY AND NALANDA UNIVERSITY**

2.119 The budgetary allocation to South Asian University and Nalanda University is provided from the budget sub-head ‘International Cooperation’. Under this budget sub-head allocation is made for obligatory contributions to UNO and other international organizations of which India is a member; establishment of South Asian University (SAU) and Nalanda University (NU); and for expenses on celebration of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas and other schemes related to engagement with Indian Diaspora. The BE 2023-24 of Rs. 762.56 crore was enhanced to Rs. 955.20 crore at the RE stage. The allocation for BE 2024-25 was reduced to Rs. 659.32 crore. The Ministry has also stated that the enhancement in RE 2023-24 has been made under United Nation Organization and Nalanda University. The reduction in allocation at BE 2024-25 compared to BE 2023-24 has been made on account of pace of expenditure, it has been proposed to start from a lower base with augmentation of funds to be sought at the RE stage, at the time of requirement.

2.120 The details of allocation and utilization of funds under the various sub-heads under this budget sub head during last three years is given below:

*(Rs. In Crores)*

Budget Heads	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
	BE	RE	Actual Exp.	BE	RE	Actual Exp.	BE	RE	Actual Exp.

<b>Common wealth</b>	12.62	12.60	12.14	13.86	12.74	12.22	13.86	12.84	12.75
<b>Other International Organisation</b>	55.00	55.00	13.83	50.00	15.00	47.46	30.00	50.00	56.73
<b>United Nations Organisation</b>	400.00	565.00	518.43	400.00	400.00	378.75	200.00	382.54	397.70
<b>Contribution to SAARC Sectt.</b>	12.00	12.00	8.67	12.00	11.30	11.30	12.00	11.30	2.31
<b>Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific</b>	0.50	0.50	0.05	0.50	0.50	0.14	0.50	0.02	0.01
<b>South Asian University</b>	314.00	94.00	99.98	128.00	116.00	110.32	129.00	93.00	123.00
<b>Nalanda International University</b>	250.00	350.00	350.00	200.00	300.00	290.00	250.00	300.00	300.00
<b>BIMSTEC Secretariat</b>	25.00	11.26	2.68	17.00	17.00	14.02	17.00	17.00	7.40
<b>Engagement with Indian Diaspora</b>	41.00	28.50	10.93	35.50	46.00	45.77	37.00	39.00	37.39
<b>Special Programmes</b>	39.85	24.95	14.73	41.60	33.85	27.63	73.20	49.50	33.19

## **Nalanda University**

2.121 The Government of India enacted the Nalanda University Act, 2010 with a vision to revive the ancient seat of learning – the Nalanda University at Rajgir, Bihar. Its recent origins could be traced to March 2006 when the then Hon’ble President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam proposed the revival of the ancient Nalanda while addressing a Joint Session of the Bihar Legislative Assembly. Concurring ideas came seeking the re-establishment of ancient Nalanda, including from some Southeast Asian governments and leaders of the sixteen member-states of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in January 2007 and at the 4th EAS in October 2009 held in Thailand. The location of the modern Nalanda University and its historical linkages to the internationally renowned ancient seat of learning, reinforce its global mandate in the present day through intergovernmental MoUs for collaboration signed by 17 countries, as well as academic and research partnerships pursued by the University.

2.122 The budgetary allocation for Nalanda is for two components Capital and Recurring expenditure and is as per Cabinet Approval. The funds allocated under BE 2023-24 was Rs 250 Cr and, RE 2023-24 was 300 Cr.

2.123 The Committee wanted to know the progress made as well as challenges faced in construction of Nalanda University. The Ministry stated that the construction of Nalanda University's state-of-the-art NET-ZERO sustainable green campus has achieved progress. The campus was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2024. Spanning about 455 acres, the campus encompasses approximately 200 buildings and structures, catering to academic, administrative, residential, and recreational needs. It has a total built-up area of over 20 lakh square feet, including academic blocks, administrative offices, amenities, utilities, student hostels, and staff residences. Designed with sustainability at its core, the campus features a 6.5 MW (DC) solar photovoltaic (PV) farm, Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connection, and advanced energy management systems, such as a demand-side energy optimization system and Building Management System (BMS). Water management utilizes the indigenous *Ahar-Pyne* method, complemented by a comprehensive waste management system.

2.124 The site development includes 12.5 kilometers of internal roads, 8.3 kilometers of boundary walls, 4.5 kilometers of stormwater drains, and 40 hectares (100 acres) of waterbodies. Extensive landscaping and horticulture further enhance the campus environment. The campus is fully furnished and equipped with modern utilities, ensuring readiness for academic and operational use.

2.125 However, the project faced several significant challenges. Being located in Rajgir, Bihar, a remote and predominantly agricultural area with limited infrastructure, posed logistical and operational difficulties. The construction of the NET-ZERO campus required highly skilled manpower, which was not readily available locally. Skilled professionals had to be mobilized from various parts of India. Additionally, the procurement and transportation of high-quality construction materials to this remote location were complex and time-consuming.

2.126 The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2022 further exacerbated these challenges. Despite the Government of India granting a six-month blanket extension for ongoing projects under force

majeure provisions, the pandemic caused severe disruptions during its three waves. These included supply chain disruptions, reverse migration of laborers, and cross-border movement restrictions, leading to unavoidable delays and a time overrun. Despite these challenges, Nalanda University has undertaken the construction of its campus. In accordance with the approved plans, the construction work of Nalanda University is nearing completion. The University has successfully achieved its goal of establishing a net-zero sustainable campus.

2.127 As per Section 9(2) of the Nalanda University Act, 2010, which outlines the objectives of the University, "*The University shall be a non-profit public-private partnership, which shall seek support from each of the Member States and from other sources but shall be autonomous and accountable to the Governing Board.*" Furthermore, under the framework of the East Asia Summit (EAS), participating countries were encouraged to support the funding of Nalanda University on a voluntary basis through contributions from governments and other sources, including public-private partnerships. The University has received some financial contributions from various foreign governments and private donors, which reflect the global collaboration in supporting its mission. Details of the contributions made by the various countries and endowments made by private individuals are as follows:-

#### Contributions from Foreign Governments

Government of China: Contributed USD 1 million in December 2011.

Government of Thailand: Contributed a total of USD 1,32,600 by March 2016.

Government of Indonesia: Contributed USD 30,000 in December 2013.

Government of Lao PDR: Contributed USD 50,000 in March 2013.

Government of Australia: Contributed AUD 1 million (approximately USD 737,000) in June 2016.

Shri Krishna N. Pimple, Honorary Consulate of the United Republic of Tanzania: Contributed INR 6,75,000 (approximately USD 8,000) till June 2023 under the *Prof. Sunaina Singh Merit Scholarship*.

#### External Private Endowments

1. Rajendra & Ursula Joshi Foundation, Switzerland: Contributed USD 1 million in August 2015.

2. Prof. Pyong Rae Lee, Korea: Contributed USD 11,535 in March 2017.



3. Mr. Hung Jia Nan, Taiwan: Contributed approximately USD 10,000 in January 2021.
4. Mr. Lee Wan Lik, Ex-Chairman of Azeus Group: Contributed USD 10,667 in June 2023.

**2.128 The Committee acknowledge the Government of India’s commitment to reviving the ancient seat of learning through the establishment of Nalanda University under the Nalanda University Act, 2010. Despite significant budgetary allocations and the completion of the state-of-the-art Net-Zero sustainable green campus spanning 455 acres, the Committee are concerned to note that the University’s establishment has been marred by delays and operational challenges. Although the construction has progressed and the campus was inaugurated in June 2024, delays caused by logistical bottlenecks, the COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions, and a lack of skilled manpower have resulted in significant time overruns.**

**Despite its mandate under the East Asia Summit framework to be a collaborative global enterprise, the Committee find that financial support from member states and other international donors has been sporadic and insufficient. The Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs, in concert with the Ministry of Education and the Nalanda University Governing Board, should establish a more rigorous framework of oversight to expedite the resolution of pending tasks. Diplomatic channels must be strategically leveraged to secure greater financial and institutional support from East Asia Summit member states and other international partners, commensurate with the University’s global mandate. The Committee may also be kept informed about the progress made in operationalization of Nalanda University on a regular basis.**

*(Recommendation No. 21)*

### **South Asian University**

2.129 The Union Cabinet in July 2009 approved India's contribution of USD 198 million (excluding land cost of 100 acres) towards capital expenditure of South Asian University (SAU). The actual construction at the campus project site began late in second half of 2015 due to the time taken to resolve the issues of Gram Sabha land, forest land and geo-morphological status of the allotted land. The construction project was initially planned for the entire campus in the

master plan, however, due to land encumbrances, the construction work had to be split in packages. COVID-19 and frequent NGT bans on construction also delayed the project.

2.130 The project was planned to be completed in two phases. Phase I was further divided into 4 Packages. With regard to the planned construction of Phase I, Package I (boundary wall) and Package II (5 buildings- faculties, guest house and staff housing) are completed; Package III (7 buildings- faculties, administration, South Asian Studies Centre, Convention Centre, Library and Utility buildings) is 96% complete. However, Package IV of Phase I, i.e. hostels, sports complex, etc. and Phase II constituting Engineering and Medicine faculties are yet to be constructed. Out of Cabinet approved amount of USD 198 million as capital expenditure, as on date, an amount of USD 166.09 million has been disbursed to SAU.

2.131 The remaining balance is not sufficient to completely execute the construction project and SAU has submitted the revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) with the escalated cost wherein the total cost of the project has been revised to Rs. 2896 Crore (approx USD 342 million). The DPR is under consideration and the Ministry shall be moving a Cabinet note seeking more funds to complete the project.

2.132 The budgetary allocation for South Asian University consists of three components. First being assessed contribution decided as per the share of contribution of the member states which a fixed amount is. Second is the expenditure incurred on rentals towards temporary accommodation of the University at Akbar Bhawan premises which is also fixed. Third being the Capital contribution for the construction of the permanent campus raised by the University based on their assessment on the pace of construction. The funds allocated under BE 2023-24, RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 are an aggregate of the above three components. The variation in the total allocation under BE and RE is mainly on account of capital contribution. The Capital contribution under RE 2023-24 had to be reduced due to slow pace of construction.

2.133 Regarding the contribution of other countries in SAU, the Ministry submitted that the operational budget of SAU for academic year 2024-25 is USD 12.756 million. India contributes 57.49% towards the operational budget of SAU and the rest is contributed by other member states. However, in the recent past, the other member states have not been paying their assessed

contribution. The due contribution from the member states other than India till June 2024 is as below:

S.No	Country	Contribution Sharing (%)	Dues (in US\$ millions)
1.	Afghanistan	3.83	1.51
2.	Bangladesh	8.2	3.05
3.	Bhutan	3.83	0.64
4.	Maldives	3.83	1.25
5.	Nepal	4.92	0.80
6.	Pakistan	12.98	6.61
7.	Sri Lanka	4.92	1.94

2.134 Regular efforts have been made by SAU for payment by the member states with regard to their pending dues. The matter has also been taken up by GoI during the SAU Governing Board meetings and SAARC Programming Committee meetings.

**2.135 Despite its strategic importance as a flagship initiative under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), slow progress in the establishment and operationalization of the South Asian University (SAU) is disappointing. The Committee note that the construction of SAU’s permanent campus has been severely delayed, with Phase I remaining incomplete and Phase II yet to commence. While Packages I and II have been completed, Package III is only 96% complete and Package IV, including essential infrastructure such as hostels and sports facilities, remains pending. As per the replies furnished by the Ministry, these delays are attributed to land encumbrances, forest clearance issues, National Green Tribunal (NGT) bans and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also observed that India contributes 57.49% to the operational budget of SAU, in addition to its overwhelming capital contribution. However, other member states have failed to fulfill their assessed contributions, with a cumulative outstanding amount of USD 15.80 million as of June 2024.**

**While acknowledging the Government of India’s substantial financial contribution and continued commitment to SAU, the Committee are of the considered opinion that the protracted delays and recurring challenges in the project’s implementation should be resolved. SAU is a symbol of regional cooperation and academic excellence envisioned**

under the SAARC framework. The tardy progress and lack of commitment by certain member states dilute its strategic significance and undermine India's substantial investment in the project. The Committee desire that all the stakeholders should demonstrate the resolve necessary to complete the project without further delay and to fulfill the vision of SAU as a premier institution fostering regional integration and academic collaboration, while coming to a conclusion about the continued interest of foreign countries in contributing to this process. In view of the non-payment of assessed contribution by other SAARC countries, the Committee urge the Government to explore the option of developing this University on its own by assuming a principal role in administrative and academic matters. Those foreign countries who make contributions may ne assigned an appropriate seat at the advisory or governing board.

*(Recommendation No. 22)*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

Development cooperation is a key instrument in India's foreign policy. The scope and reach of India's development cooperation has seen considerable expansion in the past few years which includes grant assistance, Lines of Credit (LoC), technical consultancy, disaster relief, humanitarian aid, educational scholarships and a range of capacity-building programmes including short-term civilian and military training courses which have been growing consistently encompassing the geographical reach and sectoral coverage. Developmental cooperation with the partner countries is mainly being executed through instruments such as grant assistance, LoC and Concessional Financing Scheme.

3.2 India's development partnership is based on the needs of the partner countries and is geared towards responding to as many requests received from these countries as technically and financially feasible. The main instruments of India's development assistance include Lines-of-Credit, High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs), Technical Consultancy, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, as well as capacity-building programmes for civilian and military training under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). The focus of development assistance has been the countries in India's neighbourhood, CIS and Africa, though India is also expanding its development assistance reach to South East Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Pacific Island Countries.

3.3 The major budget head '3605' on 'Technical and Economic Cooperation' caters to India's aid and assistance programmes not only in India's immediate and extended neighborhood, but also to the countries in South East Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Indo-Pacific region. It also caters for Aid for Disaster Relief and contributions to various regional funds. Aid programmes are influenced by the dynamics of India's national interest, diplomatic engagements and political relations as also by dependency on the pace of implementation of agreed projects by host beneficiary government's readiness, local security and climatic factors as well.

3.4 The table below illustrates the details of the Grant in Aid given to countries and for various programmes/projects:

(Rs. in crore)

Sl.No.	Country	BE 2023-24	RE 2023-24	BE 2024-25
1.	Bangladesh	200	130	120
2.	Bhutan	1632.24	784.61	1078.86
3.	Nepal	550.00	650	700
4.	Sri Lanka	150.00	60	245
5.	Maldives	400	70.90	400
6.	Myanmar	400	370	250
7.	Other Developing Countries	150	95	125
8.	Disaster Relief	5.00	55	10
9.	ITEC	150.00	140	160
10.	SAARC Programme	6.00	5.00	5.00
11.	African countries	250.00	180	200
12.	Multilateral Economic Relations Programmes	10.00	10.00	10.00
13.	Investment & Promotion	229.21	900.00	539.00
14.	Eurasian Countries	75.00	20.00	20.00
15.	Afghanistan	200.00	220.00	200.00
16.	Latin America	50.00	32.00	30.00
17.	Indo-Pacific Cooperation	40.00	50.00	50.00
18.	Mongolia	7.00	5.00	5.00
19.	Chabahar Port	100.00	100.00	100.00
20.	Mauritius	460.79	330.00	370.00
21.	Seychelles	10.00	9.91	40.00
22.	Aid for Cultural and Heritage Projects	5.00	10.00	15.00
23.	Quad Cooperation	0.00	0.01	5.00

3.5 In addition to the above grants to various countries, etc., a loan of Rs. 989.70 crore was extended to the government of Bhutan under Capital Section Major Head '7605' - 'Advances to Foreign Governments'. Thus, in FY 2024-25, a total outlay of Rs. 2068.56 crore has been made for Bhutan.

3.6 During the examination of Demands for Grants during the past three years and through the Action Taken Reports, the Committee had specifically recommended that the Ministry

should refrain from reducing funds earmarked for aid to countries under this budget head. The Ministry was therefore asked to enumerate the actions taken to secure additional funds from the Ministry of Finance. In response the Ministry replied that as per the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, allocations for various Aid heads are done through careful prioritization within available resources to ensure that none of our developmental work suffers any setback and all our commitments are implemented smoothly and speedily. For ongoing projects under the aid programs, the budgetary requirements are gauged based on inputs from the primary Divisions/Spending units who are closely involved with the Implementing Agencies in monitoring the progress of work. The inputs thus received are collated and compared with the past utilization, work progress and pace of expenditure of the project. With this information, deliberations are conducted with the Divisions to get realistic estimates of their demands, assessment based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress of projects. It is in consonance with Zero-based budgeting, that no head including Scheme or Non-Scheme heads are given fixed or rigid budgetary resource allocation/management, but, each head is assessed for respective demands considering a base of Zero. Reduction and enhancement of budget is in alignment with principle of Zero-based budgeting and overall approach of Outcome-centric assessment instead of Outlay-centric, which guides Government's Scheme implementation.

3.7 Further, the issue of provision of adequate allocation of funds is regularly taken up with the Ministry of Finance at various levels, including at the level of Minister, Secretary and Financial Advisor, apart from regular interaction at other levels. The response of the Ministry of Finance has been positive and constructive, as indicated by the decreasing gap between Ministry's demand and allocation of funds, over the years, thereby indicating constructive appreciation of Ministry's requirements. Ministry will keep doing a dynamic and realistic assessment of funds for the Aid heads, in line with Committee's recommendation, and if required will seek additional funds from Ministry of Finance, including Supplementary grants or enhanced RE 2024-25 allocation.

3.8 The percentage of MEA's total budget outlay earmarked under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation' during the past three years, year-wise is given below:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	Budget Outlay (BE)	TEC (BE)	% age of BE	Budget Outlay (RE)	TEC (RE)	% age of RE
2021-22	18154.73	7635.15	42.06	16000.00	5698.43	35.62
2022-23	17250.00	6750.00	39.13	16972.79	6005.70	35.38
2023-24	18050.00	5848.58	32.40	29121.88	6541.79	22.46
2024-25	22154.67	5667.56	25.58			

3.9 On being asked, the Ministry has furnished details of budgetary demands made, actual allocations given and utilization under this Head to various countries during past three years, year- wise.

(Rs. in crores)

	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
Budget Heads	BE Allocation	Actual Exp.	BE Allocation	Actual Exp.	BE Allocation	Actual Exp.
Aid to Bangladesh	200.00	219.53	300.00	133.88	200.00	157.63
Aid to Bhutan	3004.95	1646.57	2266.24	2467.31	2400.58	2332.17
Aid to Nepal	992.00	446.43	750.00	434.27	550.00	657.38
Aid to Sri Lanka	200.00	48.56	200.00	126.04	150.00	119.37
Aid to Maldives	250.00	246.10	360.00	183.17	400.00	832.83
Aid to Myanmar	400.00	598.25	600.00	454.62	400.00	352.96
Aid to Other Developing Countries	130.00	83.70	150.00	89.99	150.00	112.85
Aid to African Countries	300.00	141.92	250.00	153.31	250.00	184.76
Aid to Eurasian Countries	100.00	83.96	140.00	54.75	75.00	28.75
Aid to Latin American Countries	40.00	37.69	40.00	2.79	50.00	51.13
Aid to Afghanistan	350.00	166.37	200.00	279.37	200.00	207.26
Aid to Mongolia	2.00	0.00	12.00	0.00	7.00	3.45
Aid to Mauritius	900.00	839.16	900.00	568.08	460.79	358.87



Aid to Seychelles	160.00	18.46	14.06	6.05	10.00	6.18
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3.10 The Committee were keen to know the reason for declining trend under this head. The Ministry has stated that allocation of funds under each head, as part of the Government's overall budgetary management, is discussed in great detail with the Heads of Division in the quarterly Budget Management meetings, which are further discussed in meetings presided by the Ministry of Finance. Financial releases are made in accordance with the degree to which projects, programmes, and other plans are implemented. This ensures timely disbursement of funds, efficient monitoring of project implementation etc. thereby, ensuring that the target project status as well as fund management is achieved. The projected demand and allocation of BE 2024-25 is thus based on exhaustive unit wise discussions with respective Divisions, careful assessments of progress in projects and realistic assessment of budgetary utilization in respective Financial Years. Emphasis is given on regular monitoring of ongoing projects as well as its pace of expenditure. The allocation of funds in any Financial Year is a function of utilization pattern and anticipated expenditure in last year.

3.11 The declining trend under this head could be attributed to few factors such as India's reduced presence in Afghanistan, a major beneficiary of India's development cooperation. As an important neighbouring country, Afghanistan has been receiving developmental aid from Government of India for decades. However, owing to the changed politico-security uncertainties there, circumstances do not recommend an enhanced budgetary commitment to the country concerned. Hence, the downfall in the trend under this head. Moreover, certain projects such as those being carried out in regions with internal strife, such as in Myanmar, are moving slower than expected owing to the ongoing security situation there. This has also impacted our capacity to complete projects in a timely manner and upended budgetary calculations.

3.12 To the Committee's specific query on the manner in which the varying allocation under this Head impacted our bilateral, regional and international ties adversely, the Ministry responded that India's international development cooperation has expanded significantly in the recent years in its geographical reach as well as in the areas of cooperation. Most of India's significant development partnerships are with neighbouring countries, given the focus on the

'Neighborhood First' and 'Act East' policies, creating mutually beneficial, people-oriented, regional frameworks for stability and prosperity. Government has accorded special significance to our foreign policy and diplomatic outreach. Revitalizing traditional ties, re-setting strategic relations and reaching out to Indians abroad have been primary to India's diplomatic efforts. Adequate budgetary provision is done under international scheme heads based on realistic assessment of ongoing projects as well as new commitments. Our longstanding development cooperation with partner countries is based on consultative model of cooperation, sharing of development experiences and is focused on addressing the priorities and needs of the countries. Government's budgetary allocations to partner countries depend on factors including status of implementation of various ongoing projects and requirement of financial assistance. There is no notable adverse impact of our bilateral, regional and international ties with partner countries due to the varying budget allocation but rather reflect the close partnership we share since spending is tailored to suit the partner country's national priorities.

3.13 When asked about the primary objectives of India's financial aid and assistance programmes, the Ministry stated that furtherance of bilateral relations along with strengthening bonds of friendship, respect and mutual trust between India and partner countries underlies Indian financial aid and assistance programmes abroad. These reaffirm the strong ties that exist between India and the host country where the programmes are implemented and enhances India's visibility globally, the relationship on ground with an increased people-to-people connect and overall appreciation of the work rendered by Government of India. India's approach to development is human-centric and is marked by respect, diversity, care for the future, and sustainable development. India's approach towards developmental partnerships has also been comprehensive, offering assistance while sharing India's own developmental experience in the full spectrum of activities, ranging from creation of infrastructure to building capacities to education, healthcare, agriculture and community development.

3.14 Describing the parameters for allocation of Budget under this head, the Ministry stated that allocations for Aid heads are made after undertaking a realistic assessment of needs & spending patterns, based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress for on-going projects, schemes and programmes; and based on project implementation timelines and cost estimates for planned projects, schemes and programmes. For ongoing

projects under the aid programs, the budgetary requirements are gauged based on inputs from the primary Divisions/Spending units who are closely involved with the Implementing Agencies in monitoring the progress of work. The inputs thus received are collated and compared with the past utilization, work progress and pace of expenditure of the project. With this information, deliberations are conducted by Integrated Finance Division of the Ministry, with the Divisions to get realistic estimates of their demands. Similarly, for new projects, budgetary provisions are made as per estimates determined by project implementation timelines and cost estimates in their Detailed Project Reports. Allocations are then made to the extent of funds available within the overall budgetary provision made by Ministry of Finance. The selection of the projects to be undertaken under the Aid heads is an administrative decision which is taken by the Territorial Divisions and Development Partnership Administration Division, in view of the political relations with the respective countries.

3.15 Enumerating the specific sectors such as health, infrastructure, education, etc prioritized in India's aid programme, the Ministry stated that India's aid programme is defined by the priorities set by the partner country. India's developmental assistance is demand-driven i.e. the developmental priority set by the partner country leads Indian aid in that project/programme. Indian developmental aid encompasses various sectors such as health; education; large-scale infrastructure projects involving ports, electricity transmission lines, roads, railway links, etc.; development of small and medium enterprise; humanitarian relief; foodgrains assistance; supply of vehicles, digital public infrastructure, etc. The differentiator in India's development cooperation has been respecting development partners and to be guided by their development priorities, free of conditionalities.

3.16 Spelling out the ways in which India's aid programme aims to strengthen people to people ties, cultural exchanges and bilateral relations with recipient countries, the Ministry stated that India's aid programme whether it be through concessional loans, grant-in-aid projects, capacity building and scholarships, heritage conservation, among other interventions has been undertaken keeping all stakeholders, on Indian and host country side, involved and invested in any such project. Indian aid projects, conceived and implemented with the cooperation of recipient or partner countries, are a visible instrument for furthering people-to-people ties (such as through railway linkages and integrated checkposts, etc.); cultural exchanges (such as through

scholarships and construction of cultural centres, etc); and overall bode well for the bilateral relationship.

3.17 India's aid programmes are aimed at enhancing the developmental needs of partner countries, which invariably makes an impact on livelihood of and socio-economic profile of common people. Notable among them is the Government of India funded High Impact Community Development Projects, which are smaller in scale but people-oriented projects that are implemented mainly in areas of rural infrastructure such as drinking water supply networks, irrigation canals, farm roads, basic health units across social, economic and cultural sphere in friendly neighbouring countries. Being short gestation projects, these are delivered faster and spread across various parts of the recipient countries that directly impact the people at grassroots levels thereby generating significant good will for India and contributing towards deepening of people-to-people ties.

3.18 India has also been extending several capacity building initiatives through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) for civilian and defence officials, and customized training programme for various government officials from friendly foreign countries thereby contributing towards human resource development in these countries.

#### **Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, India has undertaken several large scale infrastructure projects such as Indian Housing Projects Phase I, II and III for Sri Lankan nationals and currently implementing Phase IV of the project, thereby delivering 60000 housing units for poor peoples; focused financial assistance to undertake socio-economic development projects for Indian Origin Tamils and peoples in Eastern Province of Sri Lanka; construction of Jaffna Culture Centre to provide an avenue to promote culture and art in Northern Province of Sri Lanka and financial assistance for solar electrification of religious places in Sri Lanka.

Further, India is also extending Viability Gap Funding towards operating ferry services between Nagapattinam in India and Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka, which commenced in October 2023 after four decades. Earlier, India has also extended Viability Gap Funding for commencing flights between Chennai in India and Jaffna in Sri Lanka, which resulted in sustained traffic in the sector translating into commercial operations from October 2023.

#### **Maldives**

Similarly, for Maldives, the Government of India has been extending Viability Gap Funding to the Shipping Corporation of India to operate cargo ferry services between India and Maldives facilitating supply of essential commodities and exports from India for the benefit of Maldivian people.

The Government of India's financial assistance of approx USD 4 billion to Sri Lanka comprising financial assistance, supply of food, fuel, medicines and other emergency assistance at their time of distress helped Sri Lanka come out of its unprecedented economic crisis and made a life changing impact on common people of Sri Lanka, who were struggling to secure fuel and other essentials for their survival. The aid programmes, be it is developmental assistance or capacity building or other support initiatives while based on needs and priorities of the recipient countries, have invariably focused on enhancing the livelihood of common people, thereby receiving a widespread appreciation of India's assistance and contributed towards generating good will for India and deepening of bilateral ties as well as people-to-people ties between the two countries.

## **Bhutan**

India's development assistance to Bhutan is an important pillar of the close and enduring ties between India and Bhutan. During the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2018-2023) of Bhutan, GoI allocated an amount of INR 5000 Crores under which a total of 83 Project Tied Assistance (PTA) projects and 524 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) were undertaken in Bhutan. Under the 13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2024-2029) of Bhutan, GoI has announced development support of INR 10,000 Crores including INR 7,000 Crores for PTA projects and INR 1,000 Crores for HICDPs. PTA projects include construction of boarding primary schools, Colleges, reconstruction of monasteries, drinking water projects, waste management projects, development of central schools, scholarships, construction of hospitals, maternity wards, children health facilities, live-stock development, skill development, preservation of cultural heritage, institutional capacity development, human resources development, roads, energy, urban development, etc. Through these projects, there is an increased focus to enhance people to people relations through exchange of professionals, foster more institutional engagement especially in the area of sports and education, and promote capacity building for Bhutanese nationals in India.

Scholarship schemes such as the Ambassador's Scholarship, Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship, PTA Undergraduate Scholarship, Nalanda University Scholarship, and ICCR Undergraduate Engineering scholarships benefit a large number of Bhutanese students. Additional scholarships, including ICCR, AYUSH, BIMSTEC and SAARC, further bolster educational engagement. Bhutanese students also secure placements at IIT-Kanpur under the India-Bhutan Friendship Scholarship, IIT Gandhinagar Global Fellowship, and Rashtriya Raksha University Scholarships.

With a focus to enhance cultural ties, several flagship initiatives such as projects for preservation of cultural heritage, have been undertaken. In recent years, these include conservation of important Buddhist sites in Bhutan such as Lingzhi Dzong, Sangen Choekhor, Rigsum Goenpa as well as development of cultural infrastructure for Gyalsung academies and infrastructure development for Dratshang. To promote direct people-to-people ties, the India-Bhutan Foundation (IBF) was established in 2003 and it contributes to enhanced exchanges amongst the people of India and Bhutan through funding of activities in educational, cultural, scientific and technical fields.

## **Nepal**

There are close linguistic, marital, religious and cultural ties at people-to-people level between Indians and Nepalese. India's programs with Nepal, aim to strengthen people-to-people ties, cultural exchanges, and bilateral relations through development cooperation, educational opportunities, and enhanced connectivity.

India provides significant financial and technical assistance to Nepal, focusing on community development projects in areas such as education, health, irrigation, rural infrastructure, and livelihood. Key initiatives include the construction of roads, bridges, and rural electrification, benefiting thousands of communities across Nepal.

In the educational domain, India offers over 1,500 scholarships annually for Nepalese students in fields ranging from medicine, engineering, and agriculture to business, nursing, Ayurveda, music, and dance. Since 2001, approximately 38,000 Nepalese students have benefitted from these scholarships, which help foster long-term educational and cultural ties between the two countries.

Furthermore, India's focus on connectivity through physical, digital, and energy linkages has strengthened bilateral relations. Projects like integrated check posts, cross-border railways, and petroleum pipelines facilitate trade, travel, and communication, deepening people-to-people interactions. The cooperation in Nepal's hydro-power sector has also proven mutually beneficial, with Nepal's hydro-power exports to India creating a new revenue source for Nepal and providing clean energy to India.

India is also enhancing Nepal's cricketing capabilities through training, exposure, and infrastructure support. The Nepali national team has trained at India's National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru and External Affairs Minister offered Nepal a Home Ground for practice. These initiatives strengthen cricket cooperation and foster sportsmanship between the two nations.

India and Nepal are also advancing cross-border payments through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), making transactions easier for travellers and businesses. Indian and Nepali travellers can now make QR-based payments at each other's merchant locations using UPI-enabled apps. Furthermore, a P2P mechanism is under implementation which would make remittances and money flow between two countries seamless.

These initiatives underscore India's commitment to fostering lasting ties with Nepal, addressing its developmental needs while enhancing cultural, educational, and economic cooperation.

3.19 During the course of oral evidence, the Foreign Secretary highlighted several completed aid programmes that has proved beneficial to the common citizens of the partner countries and has generated immense goodwill for India. Some of these projects are enlisted below:

- Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Bhutan
- Construction of 60,000 houses to address the housing needs of internally displaced persons as a result of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, mainly comprising Indian origin Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Tamils in the northern province.
- National Police Academy in Nepal
- Civil Services College in Mauritius
- National College for Policing and Law Enforcement in the Maldives
- Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link in Bangladesh
- integrated check-post at Nepalgunj in Nepal
- India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline

3.20 As regards the plan to evaluate the impact of our development partnership over the years, the Ministry has informed that the Government of India's developmental initiatives have had a positive impact on the overall bilateral relationship in diverse ways – the diplomatic impact is visible through enhanced interactions and exchanges with the concerned partner country, including repeated requests and even similar requests from other partner countries. From an economic perspective, projects are evaluated from the prism of the economic benefits that would accrue to India and the concerned partner country. For eg, the concessional Govt of India Lines of Credit are executed through Indian companies and these projects open up markets for Indian project exports.

3.21 On being asked about existing review mechanism for project implementation and existence of an institutionalized coordination amongst various Ministries/Departments, the Ministry replied that all expenditure is closely monitored and fund releases are made in line with implementation progress of projects, programmes and schemes, including through quarterly expenditure review meetings. There has been more intensive monitoring and review of the

technical aid and development assistance projects in the past year, including at the level of the External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary. These reviews have identified the way forward for many projects where progress was not as per desired milestones. Further, due to the regular review and monitoring of MEA's scheme section at high levels, several new initiatives and projects have been identified in consultation with the concerned beneficiary host governments, which would be getting finalized and operationalized in due course.

3.22 Every project undertaken by MEA has a Joint Project Monitoring Committee (JPMC) set up to regularly monitor and review the project progress. The JPMC is usually comprised of senior officials representing the Indian side as well as the partner country where/with whom the project is being executed.

3.23 Further, the relevant Ministries and Departments of the Government of India are consulted on major aspects of undertaking and executing bilateral projects abroad. The feasibility study reports as well as the detailed project reports are shared with the relevant line Ministries to obtain their views and concurrence. The Project Management Consultant are appointed in consultation with the line Ministry concerned. As per the standing procedure for financial appraisal of the project through Public Investment Board or Delegated Investment Board or Standing Finance Committee the views of all concerned Ministries and Departments of Government of India are invariably sought in a time bound manner and are incorporated in the appraisal process. If required, inter-Ministerial meetings are held to resolve the differences and clarify the doubts. Indian Missions and Posts abroad are also involved in the monitoring and review process. Besides review meetings at different levels in MEA, inter-ministerial project review and monitoring meetings are held, including but not limited to PMO, Cabinet Secretariat, Sectoral Group of Secretaries, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Ministry of Defence, etc.

3.24 In complex projects which involve coordination among multiple stakeholders, inter-ministerial Project Monitoring Committees (PMC) are set up for close monitoring and regular review of the progress in the project. For instance, for early start of the commercial operations from the Sittwe Port in Myanmar built by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit and



Transport Corridor, a PMC consisting of representatives from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (c/o Ministry of Shipping), Kolkata Port Trust and MEA has been constituted.

3.25 Regarding the steps taken to publicize our international aid projects and its impact in host country as well as in India, the Committee have been informed that the Ministry has a publicity wing, viz. the External Publicity Division (XPD Division), which publishes on social media and other channels, developmental work undertaken by Government of India abroad through documentaries, reels, short films, and other publicity material both in India as well as abroad. Content on Indian developmental assistance abroad, its positive impact on the lives of the common citizens of the partner country is pushed out through various media, in English as well as local languages. Missions/Posts publicise India's international aid projects through their respective social media handles. MEA's social media handles posts in real time, about humanitarian aid assistance provided to various countries, as and when the consignments are shipped/ airlifted from India. MEA also organizes interactions of visiting foreign media delegations, especially from Global South, with senior officials of Ministry, on India's development partnership initiatives and its impact.

3.26 Ministry also publicizes the international aid projects through documentary films. In the recent past, the Division has produced – (a) Two short films on conservation and restoration of ancient temples complexes in ASEAN countries, showcasing the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties between India and ASEAN countries, inspiring the present and future generation of the countries through art and cultural practices; (b) On India-Africa partnership showcasing India's assistance to the people of Africa enhancing their education through scholarships and training & capacity building; (c) A film on “What MEA did” projecting the expansion of India's diplomacy in the world arena shaping global agenda on various crux areas such as energy, defence etc.; (d) MEA has recently commissioned a documentary film “India and the Global South” to showcase various aspects of India's development partnerships with the countries of Global South and its growing role in impacting the lives of the people in the countries of Global South.

3.27 On the challenges faced in implementation of development partnership in other countries, the Ministry has stated that implementation of large infrastructure projects is a challenging task irrespective of their location. The challenges are further increased when such projects are

undertaken abroad. The nature of challenges varies from country to country depending upon the special circumstances under which the project is to operate. Some common issues faced during project execution or implementation include non-availability of encumbrance-free site, difficulties in land acquisition, Right of Way issues, contractual issues, delays in environmental impact assessments, etc. Apart from these, other major challenges include the changing politico-security situation in countries abroad which renders changed priority accorded to the project and its smooth implementation as difficult.

3.28 Regarding the measures taken to overcome these challenges, the Ministry has stated that it has been India's endeavour to put in place a robust mechanism for handling all aspects of project implementation, including project formulation, appraisal, execution, monitoring, review and evaluation, so that challenges facing projects are approached in a systematic and organized manner. Priority is given to the efforts to closely involve and engage the host beneficiary government and other stakeholders in all aspects of the project to manage the challenges in nascent stage and alleviate their impact.

3.29 Underlying the challenges faced in execution of aid projects abroad, the Foreign Secretary made the following submission before the Committee:

“I would like to take this opportunity to give you a sense of the practical and somewhat unique challenges that we face in executing projects abroad which are unlike those that are faced while executing projects within the country. This is one of the issues that also comes up for discussion when we are discussing our budget grants and allocations because it is important to understand the environment in which we function if the budget grants are to be tailored to our real needs and demands. We have the obvious logistical constraints of geographies, difficulty in applying Indian procurement rules in foreign commercial and legal ecosystems, the obvious challenge of security concerns, variable and changing geopolitical realities, and the political flux in host countries. These are all issues that are really beyond our control. These comprise the spectrum of our challenges in project execution. A number of these challenges have affected the utilisation of funds as well thereby resulted in a decreased resource allocation to a few development partnership head”

**3.30 The Committee observe that as a key instrument of our foreign policy, the scope and magnitude of developmental partnership has expanded from our immediate and extended neighbourhood to countries in South East Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific Island. However, the declining trend of budgetary allocation under this Head is**

particularly concerning. Despite repeated emphasis by the Committee about the imperative of provisioning adequate and predictable budgetary provisions under this Head as it directly hinges on our global standing and image, the Committee are surprised to note that the percentage share under this important Head has plummeted from 42 per cent in 2021-22, 39 per cent in 2022-23, 32 per cent in 2023-24 to 25.58 per cent this year. Justifying the reduction, the Ministry submitted that allocations for various Aid Heads are done through careful prioritization within available resources to ensure that none of our developmental work suffers any setback and all our commitments are implemented smoothly and speedily. The Committee find the Ministry's justification untenable as a well-funded development partnership is pivotal to furthering bilateral relations and strengthening bonds of friendship, respect and mutual trust with partner countries and enhancing India's global standing. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend a significant increase in allocation for development partnerships with a focus towards key regions such as neighbourhood, Africa, South East Asia, Indo-Pacific and so on. Accordingly, the Ministry should make budgetary demands for 2025-26 putting forth a convincing case before the Ministry of Finance.

*(Recommendation No. 23)*

3.31 The Committee note that in order to deal with the unique logistical and practical challenges faced in project execution, the Ministry has devised a robust review mechanism for handling all aspects of project implementation, including project formulation, appraisal, execution, monitoring, review and evaluation. The review mechanism exists at multiple levels including a review at the level of Prime Minister (through the PRAGATI mechanism) as well as the External Affairs Minister. Accordingly, the Committee urge the Ministry to ensure that regular monitoring, impact assessments and accountability measures are instituted and strictly followed to achieve the intended outcomes. In this regard, the Committee would encourage the Ministry to explore the possibility of having a dedicated 'international aid review and monitoring cell' tasked with overseeing the planning, execution and evaluation of all international aid projects.

*(Recommendation No.24)*

**3.32 India's aid programmes have been a visible instrument for furthering people-to-people ties, cultural exchanges and fostering strong bilateral ties. Some of the notable projects include Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Bhutan, construction of 60,000 houses for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka, National Police Academy in Nepal, Civil Services College in Mauritius and connectivity projects such as Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link in Bangladesh, integrated check-post at Nepalgunj in Nepal, etc. However, the Committee note that despite the enormous impact and importance, these projects have limited domestic as well as global visibility. Recognizing the need to prioritize publicity for these projects, the Committee suggest that MEA should proactively evolve a set approach to global and domestic promotion through usage of digital platforms and social media, engaging Indian diaspora and launching awareness campaigns.**

*(Recommendation No.25)*

#### **I. Aid to Bangladesh**

3.33 As per the Ministry, the budgetary allocation made under the sub-head 'Aid to Bangladesh' was Rs. 200 crore during BE 2023-24, which was reduced to Rs. 130.00 crore in RE 2023-24. Now, in the allocation for BE 2024-25 it has been further reduced to Rs. 120 crore. When asked to enumerate the reasons for reduction in the allocation at the RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 stage, the Ministry has stated that some large infrastructure projects being undertaken under India's grant assistance have been completed such as India Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFPL), Supply of 20 BG locos to Bangladesh" in the last financial year. In view of the current political and security situation in Bangladesh, it is foreseen that depending on the security situation, projects will be initiated and funds are requested for continuation of ongoing projects like dredging of Ashuganj-Zakiganj and Sirajganaj-Daikhowa stretch and HICDPs, which are people-centric projects. Hence, the demand of funds has been adjusted suitably. Reduction of expenditure in Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project, is due to delay in approval of variation by Bangladesh Railways (BR) and payment to the contractor could not be made in 2023-24. Further funds demand in BE 2024-25 for the project has been reduced due to variations in Contract amount from Rs. 185 Cr to Rs. 165 Cr (variation under approval with Bangladesh Railways).

3.34 When enquired about projects along with timelines that will be initiated or completed in Bangladesh during 2024-25, the Ministry has stated that they are currently having a close watch

at the evolving situation. Depending upon the circumstances, decisions for the new projects will be taken. At the moment, following HICDP project is under consideration to be initiated in FY 2024-25. Development of Primary Health Care Center and Anath Ashram for Shri Harigurugopal Chand Ashrambari at Shridham Lokkhikhali Morelganj in Bagerhat at a total cost of INR 7.62 Cr. The projects are currently at MoU signing stage.

3.35 The Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project was initiated to provide better connectivity between India and Bangladesh. In their Demands for Grants Reports, the Committee have been firmly recommending that this project should be expedited without any delay and adequate funds should be allocated for the same. In this context The Committee wanted to know the present status of this project along with a timeline for its completion. In reply, the Ministry stated that the Akhaura-Agartala rail line project is substantially completed, with less than 1% of minor works pending. The track trials were completed by October 2023, and thereafter the completion of track works was marked with an inauguration ceremony on 01 November 2023 at the VVIP level. The project is expected to be fully completed with all corrective works etc., and handed over to Bangladesh Railway by 31st October 2024. Bangladesh Railway is also in the process of revising the Development Project Proposal (DPP) of the project for extension of time and defect liability till 30 June 2025, and to process variation request of the contractor for non-scheduled items.

3.36 Responding to a query, the Ministry has also furnished a detailed note on the status of other ongoing developmental projects especially in the light of the current political scenario in Bangladesh and the likely impact envisioned. Government of India has undertaken several developmental projects under its various financing instruments, such as LOC, Concessional Financing Scheme, and Grants. Under concessional loans:

- 14 projects have been completed
- 02 projects are in defect liability period
- 08 projects are in physical execution stage
- For 01 project the contractor has been identified and is about to start execution
- 07 projects are at consulting stage with detailed design and tender documents under preparation
- 09 projects are in project preparation stage

3.37 Under grant, the Akhaura-Agartala rail project is nearly complete with track works having been inaugurated on 01 November 2023, the India-Bangladesh Friendship pipeline project is also complete and was inaugurated in March 2023. The dredging projects undertaken on 80-20 cost sharing basis with GoB are continuing as per the agreed terms. Apart from these, HICDPs are also implemented under Grant. The political unrest during the months of July-August 2024, and the resulting law and order deterioration, resulted in several Indian project personnel facing threats and security/safety concerns due to which they had to evacuate to India under emergency conditions. Since then, work has gradually resumed on some sites and is expected to return to normal pace of execution for some critical projects in the short term. However, given the changed political situation, it is expected that the spending under ‘Aid to Bangladesh’ may continue to see a downward trend.

3.38 While tendering evidence before the Committee on 6 November 2024, the Foreign Secretary submitted as under:

“With Bangladesh, development partnership is a major priority. We have extended concessional financing in the form of loans and grants amounting to approximately 10 billion dollars making it India’s largest development partner. Key ongoing projects include cross-border rail links, river dredging works, and several high impact community development projects, some large infrastructure projects that have been undertaken under our grant assistance include the Friendship Pipeline and the supply of rail locomotives to Bangladesh which were completed in the last financial year.

We are all looking at the recent developments, the political upheaval that has taken place in Bangladesh. This did impact the security situation in the country and as a result impacted the execution of our projects. We are carefully observing the situation and taking the steps to resume work on these projects as soon as possible.”

**3.39 The Committee find that the budgetary allocation under the sub-head ‘Aid to Bangladesh’ has come down from Rs. 200 crore in BE 2023-24 to Rs. 120 crore in BE 2024-25. The Ministry has stated that the downward trend is due to the completion of large infrastructure projects such as India Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFPL), supply of 20 BG locos and the ongoing political and security situation in Bangladesh. The Committee note that the Akhaura-Agartala Rail project is nearing completion and is expected to be handed over in 2024. Considering Bangladesh’s critical importance as a neighbouring country and key partner in India’s regional diplomacy, the Committee are hopeful that**

with resumption of normalcy, projects will pick up pace and additional funds, if required, be sought at the RE stage.

*(Recommendation No 26)*

## II. AID TO BHUTAN

3.40 Government of India's aid and assistance programmes in Bhutan are currently covered under both Revenue and Capital Heads with Grants coming under Revenue and Loans coming under Capital sections of the budget. The funds under the Grants head are utilized for various development projects including hydroelectric power projects, development subsidy to Bhutan, subsidy to Power Grid Corporation of India for drawal of power from Chukha hydroelectric project, payment to IOC for supply of kerosene oil and liquefied petroleum gas to Bhutan at a subsidized price, excise duty refund to Bhutan, projects/schemes under Project Tied Assistance framework, scholarships to Bhutanese students in various institutions in India etc.

<b>Budget Head: 3605 - Aid to Bhutan (Grant)</b>			
Financial Year	BE (in Cr.)	RE (in Cr.)	Actual Expenditure (in Cr.)
2021-22	2124.20	1274.64	1203.15
2022-23	1560.01	1779.28	1763.11
2023-24	1632.24	784.61	720.18
2024-25	1078.86 crore		
<b>Budget Head: Loans to Govt of Bhutan 7605- Loan</b>			
2021-22	880.75	480.59	443.43
2022-23	706.23	720.87	704.20
2023-24	768.34	1614.36	1611.99
2024-25	989.70		

3.41 An allocation of Rs. 2124.20 crore was made under this head during BE 2021-22, which was the highest developmental cooperation to our neighbouring country. There is a fluctuating pattern being seen for the BE and RE estimates during the last three years. The Aid is currently pegged at Rs. 1078.86 crore for BE 2024-25. As per the Ministry, There was a major fluctuation

between B.E and R.E 2021-22 due to stoppage of works in GoI assisted Hydro-electric projects and on many developmental projects, on account of the impact of COVID-19 and the strict lockdown imposed by Bhutan. Except for the COVID period, the total expenditure under Aid to Bhutan (Loan + Grant) has been mostly around Rs. 2200-2400 Cr. The Budget Estimates for Aid to Bhutan (Grant) in FY 2023-24 were revised from BE Rs. 1632.24 Cr to RE 784.61 Cr due to change in fund disbursement budget head for Gyalsung Project from Grant to Loan Budget head. While the GoI contribution to Gyalsung Project was projected in the Grant side at B.E stage, it was later changed to Loan side at R.E stage, as a result of bilateral discussions. However, It may be noted that for FY 2023-24, the total expenditure in Aid to Bhutan (Loan + Grant) did not fluctuate much from what was projected in B.E. Other factors influencing estimates under this Budget are i) Five Year Plan cycles of Bhutan ii) completion of works of Mangdechhhu HEP in Bhutan ii) restart of works on Punatsangchhu -II HEP in Bhutan after being delayed on account of geological surprises iii) inception of the Gyalsung Project etc.

3.42 On being asked about the latest loan to grant ratio vis-à-vis Bhutan based on BE 2024-25, the Ministry has stated that the loan to Grant ratio for the hydro power projects in Bhutan are fixed. For Puna-I, the ratio is 60:40, for Puna-II, the ratio is 70:30 and for Mangdechhu, the ratio is 70:30. As per approved BE 2024-25, Total funds allocated is Rs. 2068.56 Cr. out of which Loan is Rs. 989.70 Cr. and Grant is Rs. 1078.86. Therefore, the current Loan to Grant ratio stands at 47.84 : 52.16. The majority of Grant component, however, includes projects other than hydro power projects. As per past practice, the loan to grant ratio is maintained during the fund releases. The latest position with regard to Loan: Grant for HEPs is tabulated below:

<b>Name of HEPs</b>	<b>Loan (% of total funds released so far)</b>	<b>Grant (% of total funds released so far)</b>
Punatsangchhu-I	60.00	40.00
Punatsangchhu-II	70.00	30.00
Mangdechhu	70.00	30.00

3.43 When asked whether the allocated funds are adequate for the completion/ progress of the projects, the Ministry justified that B.E allocation for CFY (2024-25) for Aid to Bhutan (Grant) head is Rs. 1078.86. But, as these funds are not sufficient for expenditure on ongoing projects, at



R.E stage, Division has sought funds to the tune of Rs. 1876.28 Cr in this head. The increased request is for (Aid to Bhutan) Other Projects (Grant) Head, where an increase of Rs. 851 Cr has been sought. This is on account of GoI's assistance of Rs. 1500 Cr. on the Economic Stimulus Package (ESP) to Bhutan, approved by the Cabinet in March 2024 and announced by the Prime Minister during his visit to Bhutan on March 22, 2024. This increased allocation is urgently necessary to fulfil GoI's commitments to the Royal Government of Bhutan.

3.44 Over the issue of budgetary allocation under this sub head, the Foreign Secretary during evidence before the Committee on 6 November 2024 stated:

“As a part of our Neighbourhood First policy -- as you have pointed out -- the largest share of the aid portfolio has traditionally been extended as loans and grants to Bhutan. It constitutes 36 per cent of the Ministry's development assistance portfolio. We are implementing large infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric plants, power transmission lines, housing, roads, and bridges along with a large number of small-scale but high-visibility grass-root level projects. We have made a commitment of Rs. 10,000 crore towards Bhutan's 13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2024-29), which is double the amount of India's assistance to their 12<sup>th</sup> Plan. This includes an Economic Stimulus Package of Rs. 1500 crore for supporting Bhutan's economy as it came out of the impact of COVID. We have also extended Rs. 1000 crore as Standby Credit Facility to Bhutan.

We have also partnered with the Royal Government of Bhutan in its priority greenfield project called the Gyalsung programme, which aims to provide vocational and military training to all Bhutanese youth of age 18 years or older. We helped them to construct four Gyalsung academies across the country and this is resulting in about 13,000 Bhutanese youth passing out of these academies every year. Training for the first batch has just commenced in 2024.

I would also like to inform the Committee that among the projects under hydropower cooperation with Bhutan, which is the signature element of our cooperation, the 720-megawatt Mangdechhu Power Project and which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister during his visit in August 2019, is now fully operational and has been handed over to the Bhutan Power Corporation in December 2022. We are addressing certain geological challenges faced by the Punatsangchhu-I Power Project in consultation with the Royal Government. The 1020-megawatt Punatsangchhu-II Project has progressed well. It is now over 98 per cent completed and is expected to be commissioned in the first half of 2025.”

3.45 To the Committee's query about the present status of the Gyalsung project along with a timeline for its completion, the Ministry stated as under:

S. No.	Name of the Project	Project period	Funds allocated/ Approved amount (Loan) (In Crores)	Completion Date
1	Gyalsung (Loan-Head 7605)	Jan 2024-Ongoing	1500	Ongoing

Gyalsung, the National Service Project of Bhutan is implemented by His Majesty's Secretariat of Bhutan. GoI is assisting infrastructure creation for the Gyalsung Academies by extending a loan of Rs. 1500 Cr. Gyalsung academies are nearing completion and they have started the training of their first restricted batch of cadets in September 2024. Full scale training for all eligible youth will be started from 2025, once all academies are fully completed.

3.46 The details of various ongoing projects in Bhutan along with their funds allocation, timeframe for completion and the status is as under:

S. No.	Name of the Project	Time-frame/ Project period	Funds allocated/ Approved amount (In Crores)	Completion Date
1.	Mangdechhu HEP (Loan-Head 7605) (Grant-Head 3605)	2010- 2019	5033.56	Already Completed Inaugurated in 2019
2.	Punatsangchhu-I HEP (Loan-Head 7605) (Grant-Head 3605)	2008- till date (ongoing)	9375.58	Under implementation
3.	Punatsangchhu-II HEP (Loan-Head 7605) (Grant-Head 3605)	2010- till date (ongoing)	9445.684	Expected to be commissioned in April, 2025
4.	13th Five Year Plan of Bhutan	01.07.2024-30.06.2029	10000	ongoing
5.	Gyalsung Project	20 Jan 2024-ongoing	1500	Ongoing

3.47 Hydro-electricity is central to Indian-Bhutan economic cooperation under the plan outlay. On being asked the Ministry furnished the following details about the various hydro-electricity projects that are ongoing/have been completed or commissioned:

<b>Hydro-electric Projects in Bhutan built with GoI assistance</b>	<b>Status</b>
Chukha HEP (336 MW)	Commissioned in 1988
Tala HEP (1020 MW)	Commissioned in June 2006
Kurichhu HEP (60 MW)	Commissioned in Dec 2002
Mangdechhu HEP (720 MW)	Commissioned in August 2019
Punatsangchhu-I HEP (1200 MW)	Under implementation
Punatsangchhu-II HEP (1020 MW)	Expected to get commissioned in 2025

**3.48 In view of our unique and time-tested relationship, Bhutan has consistently been the largest recipient of India's aid programmes. India's aid and assistance programmes in Bhutan are currently covered under both Revenue and Capital Heads with Grants coming under Revenue, and Loans coming under Capital sections of the budget. In the BE 2024-25, an allocation of Rs. 2068.56 crore has been made under this Head, reaffirming Bhutan's importance to India's foreign policy. The Committee note that India is supporting Bhutan in areas such as hydroelectric development (Punatsangchhu-I and II), infrastructure connectivity, education, power transmission lines and greenfield projects. The Committee recommend that MEA should not only ensure that all ongoing projects in Bhutan are completed expeditiously but should also expand cooperation in new areas such as renewable energy, health care, space technologies and so on.**

*(Recommendation No.27)*

### **III. AID TO NEPAL**

3.49 Under the sub-head 'Aid to Nepal', the budgetary allocation for BE 2023-24 was Rs. 550.00 crore and it was increased to Rs. 650.00 crore at the RE stage. The allocation under BE 2024-25 is pegged at Rs. 700.00 crore which is 27.27% more than BE 2023-24. Furnishing the reasons for the increased allocation under this head, the Ministry stated that in FY 2023-24, total allocation after RE was Rs 650.00 Cr. Out of this, the utilization was Rs 657.38 Cr i.e. 101.13% of the allocation. The allocation under BE 2024-25 pegged at Rs 700 Cr is only 6.5% higher than the actual spent in FY 2023-24. The additional RE in 2023-24 was requested on account of

Education, Health & cultural Heritage projects under Earthquake reconstruction; Supply of MPVs, SUVs and Electric Buses under sub head Defence stores; Scholarship and Trainings (Rs 101.7 Cr spent in FY 2023-24); HICDPs including supply of ambulances & school buses; payment to NHPC for energy supplied to Nepal from Tanakpur Power station and other expenses like port demurrage charges from Kolkata Port Trust, official visits and construction of UP & Bihar transmission lines etc. Point wise justification for the increase in requested allocation is as below:

- (i) Earthquake reconstruction: With expenditure at Rs 150 Cr in last FY, a similar amount is expected to be spent in this FY with respect to ongoing construction projects in Nepal including in areas of education, health & cultural heritage.
- (ii) Supply of Defence Stores: The projections were on account of supply of Defence stores to Nepal including SUVs & Electric Buses, Light Utility Vehicles, AD System, Communication Equipment and Medical Equipment. An estimated amount of Rs 40 crore will be required for this sub-head for BE 2024-25, assuming no additional expenditure arises due to pending decisions on store supplies. Should such decisions result in further financial obligations, additional funds may be necessary.
- (iii) Scholarship and Training: Going by the previous estimates and expected additions in trainings, an amount of Rs 100-120 Cr is expected in this sub-head. While Rs 23 crs has already spent under this head, Rs 60 Cr is expected for Edcil scholarships and Rs 17-20 Cr for other scholarships and trainings (ICCR, APS and etc).
- (iv) HICDPs (includes supply of ambulances and buses): As per the G2G agreement signed on January 4, 2024, financial ceiling for HICDP projects has been increased fourfold to NR 20 Cr. Projects of increased outlay are thus being planned by our Mission in Kathmandu. The estimated outlay in this subhead could be close to Rs 50 Cr.
- (v) Payment to NHPC: Regular bills for energy supplied to Nepal from Tanakpur Power station are incurred annually. In addition, certain bills to a tune of Rs ~90 Cr are pending, on account of changes in annual fixed cost since 2018.
- (vi) Siliguri Jhapa pipeline: The DIB consultation for the proposed Siliguri Jhapa pipeline is being opened for consultations, and post the decision, IOCL would be ready to start this key project. As per the proposal 20% of the payment is to be released against certain works, which call for a provisioning of Rs 86 Cr.
- (vii) Supply of Kidney dialysis Machine to Nepal: Last tranche to be released to M/s CHPS, post receipt of confirmation of successful commissioning from EoI Kathmandu. Proposed utilization : ₹2,00,00,000 from BE 2024-25 (CFY).

- (viii) Nepal Police Academy: The project is in the execution phase. The DPR for the project was approved in 2019. The site was handed over to the contractor on 13th July, 2022. Amount utilized till date in BE 2024-25: ₹1,564,893,648. Anticipated expenditure for FY 2024-25: ₹312 cr.
- (ix) ICP Bhairahawa: The total approved cost and tendered cost for the project is 273.25 Cr. The physical progress and financial progress of the project is 54.70% and 49.30% respectively. Total expenditure is Rs. 99.89 Cr as of now. Payment of 5th instalment has been released and payment of 6, 7 and 8th instalment is to be paid in this financial year. The project is likely to be completed in next FY 2025-26. Amount utilized till date in BE 2024-25: ₹19.80 Cr. Actual expenditure in 2023-24 = 61 Cr while proposed RE 2024-25 = 78.9 Cr.
- (x) ICP Nepalgunj: The project has been completed on 31.03.2024 and handed over to GoN on 21.04.2024. Final payments are to be done in this FY 2024-25 amounting rupees 9.03 Cr. Amount utilized till date in BE 2024-25: ₹3.57 Cr. Actual expenditure in 2023-24 = 39.4 Cr. Proposed RE 2024-25 = 12.6 Cr.
- (xi) Jaynagar-Bardibas Rail Link Projects: Expected payment for Rs 40 Cr after receipt of revised estimate from M/o Railways. The project is expected to be completed within 3 years after resumption of work at site.
- (xii) Raxaul Kathmandu FLS: FLS survey completed and report submitted to Govt. of Nepal on 01.06.2023. Payment of Rs. 6Cr. Will be done after receipt of bill from Ministry of Railways.
- (xiii) Miscellaneous: In addition, final bill wrt Tanakpur Projects (Link canal) is expected; NDRF Flood Relief Package is expected on account of heavy rains and damage in Nepal and Misc. expenditure on account of port demurrage charges from Kolkata Port Trust, official visits and construction of UP & Bihar transmission lines are expected. Rs 30-35 Cr could be accounted for these sub-heads.

3.50 The details of projects initiated / completed during last three financial years (2021-2022; 2022-2023; 2023-2024) are as under:

S. No.	Name of Project	Cost of project (INR crores)	Physical progress	Financial progress	Expected timeline for completion of project	Remarks / Status
Large projects						
1.	National Police Academy	625.94	44.74%	35.5%	July, 2025	Initiated on

						13.07.2022
2.	ICP Bhairahawa	273.21	54.7%	49.3%	May, 2025	Initiated on 26.05.2023
3.	Final Location Survey report for Raxaul Kathmandu Rail Link	30.44	100%	0%	December, 2024	Initiated in 2021
4.	ICP Nepalgunj	152.17	100%	100%	-	Completed in 2024.
5.	Giftng of Kidney Dialysis Machines to GoN	20.01	100%	90%	-	Completed in 2024.
<b>Reconstruction projects</b>						
1.	Reconstruction in the Housing Sector	741.62 (Actual)	100%	100%	-	Completed in November 2021
2	Reconstruction in the Education Sector	423.20	100%	87%	-	Completed in January 2024

### Other projects

S. No.	Name of Project	Cost of project (INR crores)	Physical progress	Financial progress	Expected timeline for completion of project	Remarks / Status
<b>Large projects</b>						
1.	Terai Roads Project	500	100%	99%	December, 2024	Ongoing
2.	Jayanagar-Bardibas rail link	548	74.86%	72%	Phase-III yet to start	Ongoing
3.	Jogbani - Biratnagar rail link	373.87	85.73%	89%	Phase-II yet to start	Ongoing
4.	Nepal Bharat Maitri	39.31	46.08%	64%	Decision pending	Ongoing

	Polytechnic Institute, Hetauda				with Ministry	
Reconstruction projects						
1.	Reconstruction in the Health Sector	423.20	88%	64%	September 2025	Ongoing
2.	Reconstruction in the Cultural Heritage Sector	423.20	83%	31%	March 2026	Ongoing

**3.51 Under the Head ‘Aid to Nepal’, the budgetary allocation has witnessed a 27 % increase from Rs. 550 crore during BE 2023-24 to Rs. 700 crore for BE 2024-25. The increased allocation is on account of earthquake reconstruction, supply of defense stores, scholarship, HICDPs, Siliguri Jhapa pipeline, Nepal Police Academy, Jaynagar-Bardibas Rail Link Project, Integrated check posts at Bhairahawa, etc. The Committee are happy to note that the Integrated Check Post (ICP) Nepalgunj has been completed on 31 March 2024 and handed over to the Government of Nepal. While welcoming the enhanced allocation under this Head, the Committee urge the Ministry to ensure that all ongoing projects are completed in a time bound manner.**

*(Recommendation No.28)*

#### **IV. AID TO SRI LANKA**

3.52 The budgetary allocation under the sub-head ‘Aid to Sri Lanka’ for BE 2023-24 was Rs. 150.00 crore, which was decreased to Rs. 60.00 crore at the RE stage. The budgetary allocation during BE 2024-25 has been increased to Rs. 245.00 crore which is 63.33% more than BE 2023-24. On being asked about the reason for increased allocation under this head, the Ministry indicated that the Division expects the flagship Unique Digital Identity and Phase IV of the Indian Housing Project, along with Projects focusing on Indian Origin Tamils and Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, as announced at leadership level, will be implemented in this FY and hence the increased budgetary allocation. Subsequently, a decision has been taken to assist Sri

Lanka by providing grant assistance of INR 173.6 crore to cover payments due under Indian LOC projects, which will be released to Sri Lanka side in the last quarter of 2024-25. Further, India will also initiate works related to rehabilitation of Kankesanthurai along with payment towards completed Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and ongoing Floating Dock in Sri Lanka, which will require budgetary support. Based on pace of execution of the projects, if required, Ministry will request for additional funds, at RE stage.

3.53 Currently, 6 (six) on-going projects are being dealt by the DPA-III Division for which Division has proposed Rs. 111.9 cr as RE for FY 2024-25:

1. Indian Housing Project- Phase-III: Under Phase -3, Construction of 78 houses (out of the 135 remaining cases) are at various stages of implementation. Construction of 63 houses is expected to be started soon. An amount of ₹28.43 Cr is anticipated by Mission for third and fourth quarter of FY 2024-25
2. Indian Housing Project- Phase-IV: Under Phase 4, on the construction/repair of 10,000 houses, Tender for selection of Implementing Agencies, has been completed. Agreement with the two IAs was concluded on 28.11.2023. 1300 houses will be constructed in the first year with the allocated budget of Rs. 100 crores. Land preparation, beneficiary selection and supplier selection work are in progress. Amount utilized till date in BE 2024-25: 97,54,622 utilized and Rs. 27 Crore is likely expenditure in the CFY for the construction of 1300 houses.
3. SLUDI Project: GoI has appointed National Institute of Smart Government as PMC for the project. (Approved by Sri Lanka govt). An NISG team visited Sri Lanka to take the project forward. Division is anticipating for an expenditure of Rs. 30 Cr. In the CFY on the project.
4. Development of Fishing harbour at Point Pedro, Sri Lanka: Initial preparation of DPR underway by Central Institute of Coastal Engineering for Fishery (CICEF). Anticipated expenditure is Rs. 25 lakh for the projects.
5. Implementation of the 3 islands project: The Hybrid power projects consisting of wind, solar, efficient diesel generators, battery storage in the 3 islands in Jaffna area of the



Northern Province with a total financial implication of USD 10.995 million. M/s U Solar has signed the contract on 01.03.2024 to implement the project.

Amount utilized till date in BE 2024-25: Rs. 9,19,18,200/- & Proposed utilization in BE 2024-25: 25 Cr.

3.54 When enquired about the various projects that have been initiated and completed during the last financial year, the Ministry stated that GOI has successfully completed and handed over Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and several houses in various dates under Phase III of Indian Housing Project and few HICDPs in Sri Lanka.

**3.55 The budgetary allocation under the sub-head 'Aid to Sri Lanka' has increased from Rs 150.00 crore (BE 2023-24) to Rs. 245.00 crore (BE 2024-25). The increased allocation is for meeting the funds requirements for six ongoing projects, namely Indian Housing Project (Phase III and IV), SLUDI Project, development of fishing harbor at Point Pedro and implementation of three island projects. The Ministry has informed that the GOI has successfully completed and handed over Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre, several houses under Phase III of Indian Housing Project and few HICDPs in Sri Lanka. Given Sri Lanka's ongoing economic recovery and its importance for maintaining regional stability, the Committee are pleased to note the 63.33% increase in allocation under this Head. While welcoming the enhanced allocation, the Committee expects that the corpus of fund will be utilized appropriately and optimally during the year.**

*(Recommendation No.29)*

## **V. AID TO MYANMAR**

3.56 An allocation of Rs. 400.00 crore was made under this head during BE 2023-24. However, the allocation has been reduced to Rs.370.00 and Rs. 250.00 Crore at RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 stage respectively. There is a drop of 37.50% under this Head. Explaining the reasons for reduced allocations under this head, the Ministry stated that the ensuing political turmoil and the security situation have negatively impacted the pace of progress of key projects underway in Myanmar. However, the project works are not paused and are on-going. With election announced in 2025, and support being obtained from both the GoM and the resistance forces, project work will continue, albeit at a slower pace. Accordingly, budgetary expenditure

for this head was rationalized. Bilateral agreements on these projects have been concluded and our commitments need to be fulfilled.

3.57 When asked whether the allocated funds are adequate for the completion/ progress of the projects, the Ministry stated that the funds allocated are commensurate to the given pace of work and implementation schedule of the projects. However, in case of the improvement in security situation and on ground realities, if required, revised allocation will be requested at RE stage.

3.58 With regard to the impact of ongoing political turmoil on our developmental projects in Myanmar, the Ministry stated that the current political turmoil has adversely impacted the developmental projects in Myanmar. Our Mission is working in close coordination with all the stakeholders including GoM ministries and implementing agencies as well as local groups, in order to ensure steady progress in the implementation of the projects in Myanmar. All stakeholders are currently engaged to pursue execution of ongoing projects despite the security challenges.

3.59 The Ministry a status note on the progress of Kaladan Project, which will connect India's eastern seaboard with Myanmar's Sittwe Port. Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT) is a strategic connectivity project to connect the eastern ports of India with Myanmar by developing a port at Sittwe on the western coast of Myanmar and linking the Sittwe port with Kaladan river channel and road to the Mizoram state of India.

3.60 The project has two components: (i) Waterways component and (ii) Roadways component.

1. Sittwe port was inaugurated by GoI and GoM jointly on 9th May, 2023 and now the same is fully operational. MOU between GoM & GoI has been extended for a period of 3 years till October 2026 for O&M of waterways component. M/s IPGL, a wholly owned subsidiary of MoPSW has been nominated / appointed for undertaking O&M activities of Port, IWTs w.e.f. 22 April 2024 for a period of 2.5 years and further extension subjects to revision of MoU between GoI and GoM.

2. The Road component of KMMTT includes a new greenfield road project of 109.2 km to be built from Paletwa in Myanmar to Zorinpui on India-Myanmar border (Mizoram) to double-lane NH specifications. The work was awarded to EPI-C&C JV [joint venture of

Engineers Projects (India) Limited and C&C Construction Co. Ltd.] on 17 March 2017. Due to slow progress and bankruptcy of lead partner of JV contractor, contract has been terminated. IRCON has been appointed a new Project Executing Agency for completion of remaining works at a cost of Rs 1780 cr. Agreement with IRCON was signed on 7th March 2022. IRCON has finalised contract for entire 109 km stretch from Paletwa end (Myanmar) to Zorinpuri end (Mizoram). Currently, Earth Work is under progress in Km 99-109 and Km 60-90. Work in Km 0-40 has been stopped since November 2023 due to security challenges.

The current physical progress is 10%. Work progress is affected due to present security scenario in Myanmar.

3.61 The Ministry also furnished details about the various ongoing, completed and under progress projects in Myanmar since the last three Financial Years.

1. Trilateral Highway road connectivity Project in Myanmar: India has undertaken two projects in Myanmar under the Trilateral Highway that starts from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Myanmar (Total length of 1360 kms) on the request of Government of Myanmar.

(a) Construction of 112 kms of Kalewa-Yagyi road section to highway standard: Construction work in the project is underway since May 2018. M/s National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is the Project Management Consultant (PMC) for the project. Current Physical progress is 54 %. The first phase of the project (55 km stretch) is targeted to be handed over to Government of Myanmar after issuance of provisional completion certificate.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Expected Completion</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Phase I (Km 57 to 112)	December 2024	92% physical progress. Work is in progress with limited activities.
Phase II (Km 0 to 27)	March 2025	23% physical progress. Work is in progress between km 0 to 12 & km 20 to km 27.
Phase III (Km 27 to 57)	July 2025	40.5% physical progress. Recently, the stretch between Km. 47 to Km. 57 was permitted.

(b) Construction of 69 Bridges on Tamu-Kyigone Kalewa (TKK) section of 150 kms. The project was approved in December 2015 at the estimated cost of Rs.371.58 crore. The contractor for implementing the project was appointed on 28 November 2017. Contract was terminated on 24 December 2018 in view of Nil progress. Manipur high court on 20.08.2020 dismissed the contractor's appeal and upheld the termination. However, due to present security challenges (including Manipur) the project is kept on hold.

2. India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills (IMCEITS): The Government of India (GoI) has been assisting the Government of Myanmar (GoM) for establishing and running the IMCEITS in Yangon since 2008. The project has gone through four phases. IMCEITS was set up with GoI's financial assistance by CDAC in 2008. The Division has received the request of GoM forwarded by the Mission in Yangon for extension of the project for phase V for further three years. The proposal is under process in the Ministry.

3. Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT), Mandalay: The Bilateral MoU for setting up of MIIT was signed between India and Myanmar in May 2012. The project was approved in March 2015 at a total cost of Rs 125.15 cr. The project has now been completed.

4. Supply of 10000 MT of rice and 200 MT of wheat to Myanmar: MEA has also successfully supplied of 10000 Mts of rice and 200 Mts of wheat to Myanmar as humanitarian assistance in May 2022.

5. Quick Impact Projects (QIP): 1st installment for 5 QIPs (FY 2023-24) were released on 25 April 2024. 2nd for 2 QIPs were released in September 2024. Mission is working on signing of 10 new QIPs in FY 2024-25.

6. Construction of Sarsobeikman Edifice: Project Agreement was signed on 18th March 2024 with a project cost of Rs. 7918.833 million (USD 3.77 Million @ official rate 2100). Request for release of first installment is pending with BM / IFD.

7. Conservation of 92 Earthquake damaged Pagodas at Bagan: 18 works (9 restoration works and 9 chemical works) has been completed till date in Phase I of the project. ASI has been advised to finalize DPR and initiate work on Phase II.

- Completed projects in Myanmar in the last three FY:
- Distribution of electricity by solar power in five townships of Rakhine State under RSDP.
- Water supply systems in Gwa Township under RSDP.
- Indo-Myanmar Industrial Training Centre at Thaton: The Centre was inaugurated on 10 January 2024 at Ministry of Industry, Nay Pyi Taw.

- India Myanmar Border Area Development: 41 activities completed under phase 5 of BADP.

3.62 In view of the need to effectively counter inroads made by China in Myanmar and ensure the completion of all the ongoing projects, the Committee were keen to learn about the strategy adopted in this regard. The Ministry stated that the ensuing political turmoil and the security situation have negatively impacted the pace of progress of key projects underway in Myanmar. However, the project works are not paused and are on-going. With support being obtained from relevant stakeholders, project work will continue, albeit at a slower pace. Bilateral agreements on these projects have been concluded and our commitments need to be fulfilled.

3.63 It has been stated that under the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT) Project, the Sittwe port is fully functional now while the MOU between GoM & GoI has been extended for a period of three years till October 2026 for O&M of waterways component. As regards the Roadways component, the current physical progress is 10%. Work is affected due to the present security scenario in Myanmar. In this regard, when asked about the efforts being made to improve the progress of work under this component, the Ministry stated that Mission is working in close coordination with all the stakeholders including Government of Myanmar ministries and implementing agencies as well as local groups, in order to ensure steady progress in the implementation of the project.

3.64 As regards the current status of the Earth Work in the Km 99-109 and Km 60-90 stretch of Paletwa end (Myanmar) to Zorinpui end (Mizoram), the Ministry informed that As per IRCON International Ltd., Earthwork is in progress in 6km at Km 99 – Km 105. Earthwork is almost completed at Km 105 – Km 109.2Earthwork is in progress in 5 Km at Km 60 – Km 90.

3.65 On the Committee's specific query about the efforts being made to commence work in the Km 0-40 stretch which has been stopped since November 2023 due to security challenges, the Ministry stated that Km 0 – Km 40 - subgrade completed - 15 km. GSB completed - 5 km and earthwork is in progress in the remaining section. At present, there is no permission from the Govt. of Myanmar for mobilization of machineries. Therefore, all the machineries are being mobilized from the Indian side. Diesel is being supplied to the contractors on a regular basis

from the Indian side. All the logistics support is also being given to the contractors to expedite the progress of the project.

3.66 During the course of oral evidence on 6 November 2024, the Foreign Secretary made the following submission relating to India's development partnership with Myanmar :

“With Myanmar, our development cooperation portfolio is nearly USD 2 billion, almost all of it in the form of grants. The pace of implementation has been variable largely because we are functioning in a conflict economy. The ongoing political and security situation in Myanmar since the events in 2021 has become more difficult. But nevertheless, even despite these challenges, we are continuing to implement both the Kaladan Project as well as the Kalewa Yargyi Highway Project which is a part of the trilateral highway between India, Myanmar and Thailand. The Sittwe port, as I said, was completed and jointly inaugurated on 9 May 2023. It has handled 110 vessels thus far and is being managed by an Indian entity, India Ports Global Limited, which is a PSU. The border with India is in considerable ferment at the moment and, therefore, we are not able to take up the 69 bridges project which is along the border but we remain in touch with Myanmar authorities in so far as the evolving security situation in that country is concerned.”

**3.67 The Committee note that the budget allocation under the Head ‘Aid to Myanmar’ has dropped from Rs 400 crore during BE 2023-24 to Rs. 250 at RE stage and to Rs. 370 crore during BE 2024-25. This downward revision is due to the slow pace of project implementation owing to the ensuing political turmoil and security situation in Myanmar. The Committee further note that the progress in our key connectivity projects like the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT) and Trilateral Highway in Myanmar have been adversely impacted. While the waterway component (Sittwe port) of KMMTT project is operational since May 2023, the physical progress of the road component of the project is 10 percent. The Committee understand that the slow pace of ongoing projects in Myanmar is due to the current political environment, but desire that the Ministry should continue diplomatic engagements with all stakeholders for expeditious and timely progress of ongoing projects, particularly the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT) and India-Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway.**

*(Recommendation No.30)*

## VI. AID TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES

3.68 Under the Head 'Aid to African Countries', an outlay of Rs 250.00 crore was provisioned during BE 2023-24, which was reduced to Rs. 180.00 crore during RE 2023-24 stage. During 2024-25, the budgetary allocation has been kept at Rs. 200.00 crore.

3.69 The Committee has been strongly recommending that enhanced allocation must be provisioned for this head. Keeping in mind the geographical extent and significance of the Africa region, the Committee wanted to be apprised as to why enhanced allocation has not been requested under this Head. The Ministry stated that the budget allocation under the 'Aid to African Countries' for the FYs preceding 2024-25 was notably higher due to the expenditure on the e-VBAB Network Project, which was launched in 2019. As the project is set to conclude by the end of 2024, the budget proposal for FY 2024-25 has been optimised to reflect the project's nearing completion. Furthermore, few changes happened in the e-VBAB Network Project which prevented us in enhancing the allocation of budget in the African region:

- i. Dropping e-Aarogya Bharati (Tele-Medicine Services): Despite investing considerable efforts and time, the Tele-medicine component of the e-VBAB project faced implementation challenges due to poor response, readiness issues, and various challenges such as absence of legal guidelines, data privacy concerns, and language barriers in African countries. Consequently, it was considered appropriate to drop the idea of implementing the Tele-medicine component under e-VBAB project in November 2023.
- ii. Reduction in overall project cost: The project cost has drastically been reduced from Original Cost Estimates of Rs. 951.22 crore to Revised Cost Estimates of Rs. 300.58, mainly due to continuous technological advancement (from satellite-based service delivery to internet-based service delivery) and regulatory changes in online education (UGC Guidelines) in India.
- iii. Expenditure in earlier version of PAeNP on infrastructure like studios at Universities, TCIL Data Centre, Satellite Hub Station in Senegal, RASCOM satellite, Learning Centres with VSAT equipment in Africa were removed.

3.70 Further, the overall projection of funds for the financial year 2023-24 under the Head 'Aid to African Countries' were made with a view to support setting up/upgrade of various institutes, capacity building training programmes & scholarships (short term and long term), providing medical-aid/books/vehicles/food-aid and organising events/seminars/ studies/ visits/cultural exchange programmes, etc. as have been committed during the IAFS-I, IAFS-II

and IAFS-III. We anticipated holding IAFS-IV during this period. Meetings were held with delegation from AU Commission from 21-28 April 2024 in New Delhi on IAFS IV preparations and for finalising the dates. The AUC delegation informed that they had a packed calendar on account of AUC Chair elections in the first quarter of 2025. Due to prolonged after effects on economies in Africa due to Post-Covid-19 recovery phase, political situations and natural calamities faced by some countries most of these activities slowed down resulting in reduced expenditure and subsequent allocation cut to Rs. 180 crore for the financial year 2023-24 at RE stage.

3.71 During the oral evidence on 6 November 2024, the Foreign Secretary submitted that “our partnership with Africa is based on four pillars - Grant assistance, trade and investment, defence and maritime security and people to people ties”. In this regard, the Committee wanted to know the details of partnership/projects taken by MEA on these four dimensions in the past five years. The Ministry provided the list of key projects under these four dimensions as follows:

#### **Development Partnership**

- MEA launched e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project as a flagship initiative to strengthen ties with Africa through digital education and healthcare. Launched in 2019, it offers tele-education and telemedicine services to African nations, building on the earlier Pan-African e-Network Project.
- Over 50,000 scholarships have been offered to African students under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation program and e-VBAB.
- Training programs for African professionals in fields like public administration, healthcare, and information technology.
- Supply of 10 Ambulances to Malawi in 2020
- Gifting of 200 laptops for the Parliamentarians of Malawi in 2022
- Gifting of Bhabhatron tele-cobalt cancer-therapy machine to Malawi in 2024
- Supply of 44 Indian manufactured SUVs for donation to the Government of Mozambique in 2019.
- Supply of 10 Ambulances to Tanzania in 2023.
- Supply of 45 buses and 5 fire trucks to Liberia in 2020.
- Supply of 04 SUVs to Ministry of East Africa Community Affairs (MEACA) Uganda in 2020
- Gifting of Bhabhatron tele-cobalt cancer-therapy machine to Uganda in 2019
- Gifting of 44 Utility Vehicles to Uganda in 2020
- Supply of 10 Ambulances to Zimbabwe in 2021



- Quick Impact Project (QIP) for establishment of a modern Gymnasium and enhancement of current library at command and Staff College, Duluti (Tanzania) – ongoing
- Setting up of Kabu Hydro Electric Project in Burundi in 2024
- Setting up of Upper Ruvu Water Treatment Plant in Tanzania in 2019.
- Setting up of Deka Pumping Station and River Water Intake System in Zimbabwe in 2024.
- Setting up of Rehabilitation and improvement of water supply system in Zanzibar in 2024
- Setting up of Water Supply scheme in 17 towns in Tanzania.
- Supply of 150 computers to Sao Tome and Principe in 2021.
- Supply of 6 buses to Sao Tome and Principe in May 2023.

### **Defence and Maritime Security**

- Gifting of one (01) unit of Infantry Weapon Training Simulator (IWTS) to Mozambique in 2022
- Procurement and supply of two (02) High Speed Interceptor Boats to the Government of Mozambique as gift from the Government of India in 2024
- Supply of 22 vehicles to Ugandan People Defence Force (UPDF), Uganda in 2020
- Supply of 14 Motorcycles to Ugandan People Defence Force (UPDF), Uganda in 2020
- Setting up laboratories at National Forensic Science University Jinja Uganda
- Supply of defence items by OFB to the Republic of Guinea in 2019.

### **Trade and Investment**

- Setting up of Entrepreneurship Development Centre (IAFS-II Project) in Rwanda in 2023
- Supply and installation of power backup system to ICT Resource Centre in NM-AIST, Arusha, Tanzania in 2023
- Upgradation of Indo Zimbabwe Technology Centre in Zimbabwe in 2023
- Donation of 950 units of Hand Run Sewing Machines to the angel of Hope Foundation, Zimbabwe, a Charitable Trust of the First Lady of the Republic of Zimbabwe in 2022
- Establishment of India-Africa Regional Material testing Laboratories for Highways in Uganda (IAFS-II Projects)
- Setting up of Export Targeted Modern Irrigated Agricultural Project in Rwanda

### **People to People Ties**

- India supplied millions of doses of Made-in-India vaccines under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, along with essential medical supplies like PPE kits, ventilators, and medicines.
- Setting up of an Artificial Limb Fitment Temporary Camp in Malawi in 2024
- Setting up of an Artificial Limb Fitment Temporary Camp in Tanzania in 2019
- Grant of US\$ 100,000 as flood relief to RoC in March 2020.
- Supply of 40 Haemodialysis Machines to The Gambia in 2024.
- Supply of 1000 MTs of rice as grant to Sierra Leone in March 2021.

- Supply of medicines worth INR 43 lakhs to Sao Tome and Principe in July 2023

3.72 Several initiatives have been taken in Africa in the field of IT, communications. As regards, the working of completed projects in Africa, the Ministry stated that the projects in Africa have significantly impacted the region by improving access to education, healthcare, and digital infrastructure. The Pan-African e-Network Project and e-VidyaBharati and e-Aarogya Bharati Network Project (e-VBAB) have enhanced tele-education and telemedicine, benefiting thousands of students and healthcare professionals across the continent. These projects have bridged gaps in access to quality education and healthcare, particularly in remote and underserved regions.

3.73 Additionally, India's capacity-building initiatives, including ICT training programs and the establishment of technology parks and incubation centers, have helped build a skilled workforce and foster innovation. Countries like Mali, Ghana, and Nigeria have seen growth in their digital sectors, with more local startups and entrepreneurs emerging.

3.74 On being asked about the response to these projects by the host countries, the Ministry stated that African countries have expressed strong appreciation for India's aid, particularly in health-care, education, and infrastructure. The support has been vital in addressing developmental challenges, with African leaders acknowledging India's role in capacity-building, technological advancement, and economic growth. India's assistance is seen as a partnership based on mutual benefit.

3.75 The Committee specifically enquired about the nature and outcome of India-Africa Forum Summit, the Ministry informed that The India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is a platform for strengthening India's ties with African nations, promoting mutual development and South-South cooperation under the motto *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Initiated in 2008, the summit fosters partnerships in areas like trade, education, health, technology, and sustainable development. Three summits have been held so far (2008, 2011, 2015), with key commitments including support by providing concessional credit, grants, and scholarships. India has supported capacity building, infrastructure development, and initiatives like the e-VidyaBharati and e-Aarogya Bharati Network Project (e-VBAB) for tele-education and tele-medicine. IAFS has strengthened India-Africa relations in economic, social, and strategic spheres. With bilateral

trade of around US\$ 100 billion, supported by Indian investments in infrastructure, energy, and technology, IAFS has bolstered India's relations with the African nations. Over \$12 billion in concessional credit has enabled capacity-building and infrastructure projects in Africa. Initiatives like the e-VBAB have improved access to education, while scholarships for African students enhance people-to-people ties. Strategically, the summits promote collaboration on global issues like climate change and UN reforms. IAFS underscores India's commitment to South-South cooperation for sustainable, inclusive development.

3.76 Several commitments were announced at highest political level in IAFS - III. When enquired about adherence to such commitments with slashed budget, the Ministry stated that at the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in October 2015, PM committed to offering 15,000 scholarships to African students through online education. Following this, the Cabinet approved the e-VBAB Network Project with a budget of ₹951.22 crore. However, continuous technological advancements in service delivery and regulatory changes in online education, as notified by the UGC, significantly reduced the costs. The revised cost estimate for the e-VBAB project now stands at Rs. 300.58 crore. To date, 15,281 scholarships have been awarded to African students from 22 countries, enabling them to pursue online undergraduate, postgraduate, and diploma programs. With this, the target of providing 15,000 scholarships under the e-VBAB project has been successfully achieved.

3.77 On the Committee's query about conducting a comprehensive review of all projects announced so far under India-Africa Summit I and II, the Ministry stated that all Projects announced under IAFS I and II were reviewed in October 2015 during the IAFS-III Summit held in New Delhi. The Ministry has also been regularly reviewing the progress in various projects in consultation with all concerned Ministries and relevant stakeholders. There is no policy change so far as fulfilment of our commitment in completing the Projects in Africa. The last Mid-term Review Meeting of the Strategic Cooperation Framework of IAFS-III was held in New Delhi on September 11-12, 2019 which comprised representatives from MEA, a Delegation from the African Union and representatives of African Diplomatic Corps including the IAFS Committee in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary (ER) in MEA and Ambassador of the Republic of Mali and Chair of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee of the Whole on Multilateral Cooperation (SCWMC) of the African Union. The Meeting took

stock of the state of implementation of the cooperation areas of the IAFS-III, namely – Economic, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Energy, Blue Ocean Economy, Infrastructure, Education and Skills Development, Health, Peace and Security, Multilateral Fora and Monitoring Mechanism.

3.78 Further, a comprehensive review of PAeNP under India-Africa Summit I & II was conducted by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and MEA. These teams had suggested for continuation of the PAeNP with technological upgradation from satellite-based service delivery to internet based service delivery. Further, the Ministry has also been regularly reviewing the progress in various projects in consultation with all concerned Ministries and relevant stakeholders. There is no policy change so far as fulfillment of our commitment in completing the Projects in Africa.

3.79 Furnishing the reasons for delay in setting up of projects committed under IAFS-I, II & III., the Ministry stated that the Ministry has faced considerable challenges in the implementation of the proposals to set up institutions in Africa. These include: long delays in decision making on choice of locations by host institutions (by the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities or the countries selected); sub-optimal choice of locations in several cases by host countries; lack of interest/ inability to deliver in several designated host countries; lack of funds with the host countries (mostly LDCs) to provide land/building/running costs as per the terms and conditions of the partnership model; internal conflicts and civil unrest.

3.80 Despite these challenges, we have established a total of 8 Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in Africa. We have also established 7 IT Centers, a CGARD Center, an Entrepreneurship Development Centre, a Technology Centre (upgraded) and set up several other capacity building institutions. A number of projects are under various stages of implementation. As part of grant assistance, India has also provided medicines, medical equipment, ambulances, vehicles, NCERT books, vehicles, food grains, etc. to several African countries. Over US \$ 700 million has been incurred on various grant projects in Africa, since IAFS-III.

3.81 When asked, the Ministry provided a status Note on Pan Africa e-network Project which is attached as Annexure –IV.

3.82 The allocation and actual budget for the last 5 years is as below:

S.No.	Financial Year	'Aid to Africa' Budget Allocation	e-VBAB Actual Expenditure
1	2019 -2020	450 Cr	1.89 Cr + 20 Cr (mobilization advance)
2	2020-2021	225 Cr	2.30 Cr
3	2021-2022	200 Cr	21.99 Cr
4	2022-2023	160 Cr (R.E)	19.45 Cr
5	2023-2024	180 Cr (R.E)	33.38 Cr

3.83 On Committee's further query, the Ministry informed that 22 African Countries are beneficiaries to the e-VBAB Project namely, Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mauritius, Mozambique, Gambia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, D R Congo, Mali, Cote' d Ivoire, Guinea, Benin, Madagascar, Djibouti, Comoros, Eritrea and Seychelles. There has been time overrun without any cost overrun in the project. As the e-VBAB project period was 5 years from 2016-21, because of continuous change in scope of work of the project due to technological and regulatory changes from time to time, the project could be launched only October 2019 and the actual implementation started in January 2020. Since the implementation started only in January 2020, as envisaged in the Cabinet approval, the project has to be implemented for a period of 5 years (i.e. till 2024). Accordingly, Division has obtained the approval of competent authority for extension of the project till December 2024 at a reduced Revised Cost Estimate of Rs. 300.58 Cr, Moreover, since there has been a significant change in scope of work, a fresh appraisal and approval process has also been undertaken by the Division. It is pertinent to note here that due to the cautious approach taken by the Ministry in implementing the project taking into account the evolving technological and regulatory changes, there were huge savings to the tune of Rs. 650 Crore and the Revised Cost Estimate for the project is now only Rs. 300.58 Crore. Hence, there has been time overrun without any cost overrun. On the contrary, there have been huge savings to Government of India.

3.84 The Committee desired to know whether any complaints have been received about the functioning of the Pan Africa e-network project. The Ministry submitted that all academic activities regarding delivery of online degree programme are managed by the participating Indian University. Thus, students directly interact with Indian Universities for any issues related to

academics and technical support. Any grievances which are escalated to the Ministry are being addressed on real time basis.

3.85 Regarding the existence of any mechanism in the Ministry or at the level of the African Union to oversee the quality and pace of implementation of Projects, the Ministry informed that there exists a mechanism between the Ministry and the African Union to oversee the quality and pace of implementation of Projects. The last Mid-term Review Meeting of the Strategic Cooperation Framework of IAFS-III was held in New Delhi on September 11-12, 2019 which comprised representatives from MEA, a Delegation from the African Union and representatives of African Diplomatic Corps including the IAFS Committee in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary (ER) in MEA and Ambassador of the Republic of Mali and Chair of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee of the Whole on Multilateral Cooperation (SCWMC) of the African Union. The Meeting took stock of the state of implementation in the various areas of cooperation announced during the IAFS-III, namely – Economic, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Energy, Blue Ocean Economy, Infrastructure, Education and Skills Development, Health, Peace and Security, Multilateral Fora and Monitoring Mechanism. Further, following steps were also taken:

- (i) Collaborative meetings headed by Secretary (ER) were undertaken with African Ambassadors in New Delhi and Indian Missions in Africa to appraise the implementation progress and support required from African countries (17.05.2019 and 22.03.2021).
- (ii) Feedback Sessions chaired by Secretary (ER) were conducted with Head of Missions 9 May 2023, and with Vice Chancellors of Indian Universities on 17 May 2023.
- (iii) Periodic meetings chaired by Joint Secretary (C&WA) are organized with M/s TCIL and Project Monitoring Unit to review the progress of implementation and resolve the day-to-day issues arising in the implementation of the Project.
- (iv) Review meetings at the highest level by the External Affairs Minister (EAM) were held in December 2021 and April 2022
- (v) Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries has accepted the request to conduct mid-term impact assessment of the project.

3.86 As regards the conducting of mid-term impact assessment of the project under IAFS by Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries, the Ministry stated that so far, the Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) has not performed any mid-term impact evaluation for previous schemes launched in IAFS-I, II and III. For the evaluation of

e-VBAB Network Project, RIS was approved by the competent authorities in November 2024, to conduct the Mid-term Impact assessment of the project. RIS has agreed to carry out the Mid-term Impact Assessment on a pro-bono basis. In the Draft Terms of Reference shared by Division with RIS, the Division has indicated the tentative time-line of assessment as below:

- Interim Report: 15 days based on the data compiled by MEA.
- Data Collection and Interim Report: 1 month
- Final Report and Presentation: 2 months

**3.87 After a careful scrutiny of the budgetary allocation under the Head ‘Aid to African countries’, the Committee observe that the allocation has remained constant at Rs. 250 crore during the last two fiscal years. However, in the current fiscal, the allocation has been reduced to Rs. 200 crore from Rs 250 crore in 2023-24. The basis for reduction under this Head is understood to have stemmed from completion of e-VBAB Network Project by the end of 2024. The Ministry’s assertion that Africa is a key foreign policy priority and our engagement has been intensifying, albeit the budgetary allocation speaks otherwise. It is observed that India’s partnership with the African countries is based on four pillars- development partnership, defence and maritime security, trade and investment and people to people ties. The three India Africa Forum Summits (IAFS- I, II and III) in 2008, 2011 and 2015 have further reinforced development partnership with the country. The Ministry has also stated that initiatives in the field of health, education, digital infrastructure` and capacity building have been well received and appreciated by the partner countries. The Committee feel that given the imminent convening of the fourth India Africa Forum Summit in 2025, there is an urgent need to intensify our diplomatic presence in the region and strongly advocate a substantial enhancement in allocation under this Head to strengthen bilateral and multilateral engagements with African countries. The Ministry should also take all requisite steps, including seeking enhanced allocation and effective utilization of funds, for the expeditious implementation of our diverse ongoing projects in Africa.**

*(Recommendation No.31)*

**3.88 It is observed that several commitments have been made during the three India Africa Forum Summits in 2008, 2011 and 2015 including capacity building, infrastructure**

development, digital initiatives such as e-Vidya Bharati and e-Arogya Bharati Network Project (e-VBAB) for tele-education and tele-medicine. The Committee note that 22 African countries have so far joined the e-VBAB - project which was approved in 2015 to provide quality education/ medical services through web portals to the students/ doctors/paramedical staff in Africa. The Ministry has also informed that the progress in various projects under India Africa Summits is reviewed regularly in consultation with concerned Ministries and relevant stakeholders including African Union. Moreover, Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) has agreed to carry out mid-term evaluation of e-VBAB Network Project on a pro-bono basis. The Committee are concerned at the delay in project implementation and organization of India Africa Forum Summit which has been attributed to delay in deciding the location by host countries, internal conflicts and civil unrest. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should review all ongoing projects in the African region on priority and based on such an evaluation, frame modalities for future progress in coordination with the partner countries.

*(Recommendation No.32)*

## **VII. AID TO AFGHANISTAN**

3.89 The Budgetary allocation under ‘Aid to Afghanistan’ was Rs 200 crore during 2023-24. It was increased to Rs. 220.00 crore at the RE stage. The BE 2024-25 has been kept at the same level as the BE 2023-24 of Rs. 200.00 crore. Increase in RE 2023-24 allocation is on account to cater to expenditure on humanitarian assistance, medical support, supply of wheat, and scholarships for Afghan students, space cooperation and other related activities. BE 2023-24 level to cater to ongoing activities, for efficient allocation of overall budget, it has been proposed to start the allocation from a lower base of fund allocation with scope for augmentation of funds to be sought at the RE stage, depending on the pace of expenditure and requirement at that juncture.

3.90 The quantum of humanitarian assistance, medical support, supply of wheat, and scholarships for Afghan students, space cooperation and other related activities along with the funds utilized in this regard are placed below :

*(amount in crore)*



S. No.	Scheme	Approved BE 2024-25	Funds utilized till 09.10.24	RE 2024-25	BE 2025-26
<b>(a) Medical Assistance</b>					
1.	Medical scheme for 200 Afghan Patients (02 patients are treated and treatment of 06 patients is ongoing)	3.00	0.23	3.00	3.00
2.	Treatment of Local staff of embassy of India, Kabul (04 local staff)	1.00	0.39	1.00	1.00
3.	Supply of medicines and medical equipment (IGICH, 400-bed and 300-bed Hospital) (7.5 tonnes of medicines successfully shipped)	60.00	1.41	60.00	60.00
<b>(b) Educational Assistance</b>					
4.	ICCR scholarship (physical mode) (860 students)	42.00	0	22.00	42.00
5.	e-ICCR scholarship (2,000 students)	8.00	0	8.00	10.00
6.	Establishment of Agriculture University (ANASTU)	1.50	0	1.50	1.50
7.	500 Scholarships for ANDSF martyrs Children (125 students)	1.00	0	6.00	6.00
8.	Assistance to Habibia School, Kabul (500 pullovers successfully shipped)	1.00	0.12	1.00	1.00
<b>(c) Humanitarian Assistance</b>					
9.	Wheat Assistance to Afghan People	75.00	0	0	80.00
10.	UNODC consignment (Sanitary pads, towels, soaps etc.)	5.00	0	5.00	5.00
11.	Other Humanitarian Assistance	2.00	0	2.00	2.00
<b>(d) Others</b>					
12.	Space Cooperation (NSIL)	0	0	0	1.81
13.	Other Miscellaneous Expenditure	0.50	0.03	0.50	0.50
<b>Total (a+b+c+d)</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>110.00</b>	<b>213.81</b>

3.91 Regarding the plans of the Ministry for effective implementation of projects and development programmes including aid and humanitarian relief in view of the reduced Budgetary allocation for 2024-25, the Ministry stated that given the deterioration humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the urgent appeals by UN for humanitarian assistance, Government

of India decided to continue its special relationship with the people of Afghanistan by providing humanitarian aid in the field of education, health and aid material. Assistance provided during the current F.Y. has been elaborated above. With the current allocation in BE 2024-25, Ministry will make its best endeavors to fulfill the basic humanitarian assistance requirement of the Afghan people. Ministry shall also make efforts for the continuation of our medical assistance and our various scholarship/fellowship programmes for the Afghan students. If additional funding is required, the same shall be requested at R.E stage.

3.92 When asked whether there is the possibility of an adverse impact of reduced budgetary allocation on our vital interests in the changed political situation in Afghanistan, the Ministry stated that there is a distinct possibility of an adverse impact of our vital interests in the changed political situation in Afghanistan. The country is currently undergoing multiple crises simultaneously. India has always been seen as a friend of the people of Afghanistan and a ‘first-responder’ in times of crises. Ministry shall make its best efforts to utilize the allocated funds in the best possible manner, for the welfare of Afghan people. In case, additional funding is required, the same shall be requested at R.E stage.

**3.93 The Committee note that the allocations under the sub-head ‘Aid to Afghanistan’ has been kept constant for the past two fiscals and the current fiscal at Rs. 200 crore in view of the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan. The Committee note that our engagement with Afghanistan was primarily focused on providing humanitarian assistance, health/ aid material and assistance in the field of education, particularly of women. The Committee further understand that the changed political situation in Afghanistan has adversely impacted our developmental partnership with them. However, as a reliable development partner for the Afghan people, the Committee desire that the Government should continue making persistent efforts to utilize the allocated funds in the best possible manner, without diluting our national priorities, particularly relating to empowerment of women to the extent feasible. In addition, MEA should coordinate with multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and World Food Programme to maximize the impact of our humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.**

*(Recommendation No.33)*

## VIII. AID TO LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

3.94 The BE 2023-24 under this Head was Rs. 50 crore which was reduced to Rs. 32.00 crore at the RE stage. It has been further reduced to Rs. 30.00 crore in BE 2024-25. The RE 2023-24 allocation has been decreased based on the pace of expenditure. BE 2024-25 is retained to cater to requirement of funds towards ongoing commitments such as donation of medicines and medical supplies to countries in the region, providing SME equipment to LAC countries.

3.95 On being asked about the pace of expenditure under the Head ‘Aid to Latin American Countries’ as well as the reasons for the slow pace of expenditure during 2022-23, the Ministry stated that the funds allocated under ‘Aid to Latin American Countries’ was Rs.50 Cr under BE 2023-24, Rs.32 Cr under RE 2023-24 and restored to Rs.50 Cr under FE 2023-24. The allocated budget during the year 2023-24 was fully utilized. RE 2022-23 has been reduced based on the pace of expenditure i.e 15% up to January 2023 and non finalization of new projects by host countries till RE 2022-23.

3.96 The Ministry furnished the projected quantum of donation of medicines and medical supplies to countries in the region, to LAC countries as under:

Heading (total value in INR cr)	Exp till now during CFY, INR cr	Likely total Exp during CFY, INR cr
Grant supply of APIs to Cuba (~86.6 cr/; of this 36 cr/- paid in FY2022-23)	30	50.6
Medical / HADR supplies (40 Cr)		27
SME machinery supply (112 Cr)	0.7	20
Food assistance to Suriname (80 Cr)		40
Electronic scoreboard in Jamaica (6 cr)		4
Old age home in Suriname (24 cr)		5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

3.97 The Committee were keen to know whether the Ministry has any plan to extend our outreach to this vast and significant region. The Ministry replied affirmatively and stated that India is consistently outreaching to the significant region, for example, it is one of the first countries to initiate a dialogue mechanism with CELAC (The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States called CELAC, is a regional bloc of 33 sovereign countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with a population of about 600 million, land area 6 times bigger than India

and GDP of US\$ 3 trillion.) CELAC gives India a platform to interact directly with these 33 sovereign countries of this region. Most of the countries are positively disposed towards India. India-CELAC share common democratic values and developmental aspirations; and have common commitment to strengthening South-South Cooperation in the interest of developing countries. Our cooperation with the UN and other multilateral fora has been close and determined by common interests. Further a number of proposals for developmental cooperation are under consideration including for financial inclusion, DPIs, maritime connectivity, trade and economic facilitation over state of the art portal, early warning system, pharma and healthcare, STEM education, combat against non communicable diseases.

3.98 The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States called CELAC, is a regional bloc of 33 sovereign countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with a population of about 600 million, land area 6 times bigger than India and GDP of US\$ 3 trillion.) CELAC gives India a platform to interact directly with these 33 sovereign countries of this region. On being asked, the Ministry has furnished a note on the nature of India's cooperation and engagement with CELAC countries along with the prospects for further cooperation. India and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) have been deepening their collaborative efforts since 2012, beginning with the inaugural Foreign Ministerial meeting in Delhi. This partnership has steadily grown, driven by our shared aspirations for sustainable development and economic prosperity in an increasingly multipolar world.

3.99 India views CELAC as a key partner in the context of South-South cooperation. Both India and CELAC countries face similar challenges, including development, poverty reduction, and climate change. India's advancements in science and technology, education, and capacity-building have received global recognition, and we are eager to share these innovations with CELAC nations. Likewise, India values CELAC's unique strengths and looks forward to a reciprocal exchange that will support our mutual developmental goals and enhance the well-being of our peoples.

3.100 In recent years, India-CELAC meetings have been held on the margins of UNGA. A permanent mechanism for political dialogue and cooperation with CELAC was established in 2016 to strengthen engagement with the region. At the India-CELAC meeting on the sidelines of UNGA 2017, India reaffirmed its commitment to deepening relations with CELAC. During the

CELAC Summit hosted by Argentina in January 2023, President Droupadi Murmu delivered a video message underlining India's support for this partnership.

3.101 At the most recent India-CELAC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York in September 2024, co-chaired by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Honduras Mr. Enrique Reina, both parties decided to institutionalize this collaboration through the signing of an India-CELAC Joint Commission in order to review bilateral cooperation, develop systematic approach towards strengthening India-LAC relations in all areas, draw an agenda for our next Foreign Ministerial meeting and thus provide this missing institutional support for our deliberations. A draft MoU has been shared with CELAC to support this effort.

3.102 India is committed to fostering a close and enduring partnership with CELAC, with an emphasis on consolidating current projects and dialogues and exploring new avenues of collaboration. Together, we aspire to build a more multipolar world that benefits from our combined strengths and shared dedication to a prosperous and sustainable future.

**3.103 Expressing concern over the relatively low prioritization of assistance to Latin American countries which stood at Rs 30 crore in BE 2024-25, the Committee feel that India's aid to Latin America is disproportionately low compared to its assistance to other regions such as Africa and South Asia. The potential to leverage aid for deepening economic and strategic partnerships in Latin America remains underutilized. Recognizing the growing strategic importance of the Latin American region for India's economic, political, and diplomatic interests, the Committee highlight the need for enhanced budgetary support to deepen India's engagement in the region. The Committee, therefore, recommend a significant increase in budgetary allocation for Latin American countries to ensure meaningful engagement through development aid and capacity-building initiatives. Further, platforms like BRICS, G20, and CELAC should be leveraged to enhance India's strategic influence in the region and strengthen South-South cooperation.**

*(Recommendation No. 34)*

## **IX. CHABAHAR PORT**

3.104 The BE 2023-24, RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 for the head 'Chabahar Port' in Iran have been maintained at the same level of Rs. 100 crore. Stating the reason for stagnant allocation, the Ministry stated that the demand of Rs. 100 crore for FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 has remain stagnant as the long-term main contract for the development of Chabahar Port was under negotiation. As such, the funds were requested to meet the revenue expenditure, to meet future commitments including any contingency and to accommodate immediate requirement of funds after the long-term main contract for the development of Chabahar Port was signed.

3.105 When asked about the General Framework of Cooperation on the Chabahar Port signed with Iran, the Ministry stated that an MOU on 'Partnership of India in the Development Plan of Chabahar Port' was signed between India and Iran in May 2015. A Trilateral Agreement to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan in May 2016. India is participating in the development of the first phase of the Shahid Behesti Terminal, Chabahar Port in cooperation with Iran. An Indian company, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), took over the operation of Chabahar Port with effect from 24.12.2018. A long term main contract for the development of Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar between India Port Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran was signed on 13 May 2024 in Tehran.

3.106 Explaining the importance of the Chabahar Port, the Ministry stated that the project was conceptualized as an alternate trade corridor to facilitate reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan and to boost economic and trade linkages between India and Afghanistan. Chabahar Port has provided much needed sea-access to the landlocked countries of the region, including Afghanistan. The Port has facilitated supply of humanitarian assistance from India to Afghanistan. It is also a more economical and stable route for landlocked Central Asian countries of the region to reach India and the global market.

3.107 The Ministry also submitted that the long-term main contract for equipping and operating Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar was signed on 13 May 2024 between India Ports

Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran. The main contract was signed subsequent to the decision of the Empowered Committee (constituted by the Cabinet on 24 February 2016) in its first meeting held on 12 March, 2024, which also includes: (a) increase in investment commitment for the purchase of port equipment from USD 85 million to USD 120 million; (b) increase in amount of Line of Credit (LoC) from USD 150 million to USD 250 million for the development of port. As per the provisions of main contract, IPGL will remit the full amount of money required for the procurement and installation of port equipment to account(s) provided by PMO in UAE within one month of agreeing on the prices by the Joint Procurement Committee (JPC) of the project.

3.108 In view of the above commitment and requirement, PAI Division has proposed the following demands for grants for the Chabahar Port budget head:

*(Rs. in Crores)*

<b>Budget Head</b>	<b>Actuals 2023-24</b>	<b>Approved BE 2024-25</b>	<b>Actual expenditure till 31 August 2024</b>	<b>Anticipated expenditure from 1 Sept 2024 to 31 March 2025</b>	<b>Proposed RE 2024-25 (Col. 3+4)</b>	<b>Proposed BE 2025-26</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Chabahar Port	100	100		835.73	375	466

3.109 The total investment commitment by GoI as mentioned above is USD 120 million. Out of this, USD 24 million (approx.) worth of port equipment was delivered to Iran in January 2021. The remaining commitment is of USD 96 million (approx.). In the latest meeting of JPC held on 24 September 2024, cost of two types of port equipment is indicated as USD 77 million. The price of the remaining equipment is yet to be indicated.

3.110 On the Committee's query about the current status of Chabahar Port Project, the Ministry submitted that the Port is operational since December 2018. India has so far supplied six Mobile Harbour Cranes worth approx USD 24 million for the development of Chabahar Port. Until now, India has delivered humanitarian assistance including 2.51 million tonnes of wheat, 2,200 tonnes of pulses, 40,000 litres of pesticides, medical supplies etc. to Afghanistan through the Port. Chabahar Port has also so far handled more than 449 vessels, 126,708 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent) of containerized cargo and more than 9.5 million tons of bulk cargo. A long term

main contract for equipping and operating the Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar between India Port Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran was signed on 13 May 2024 in Tehran. Under the 2024 main contract, India has revised total grant assistance to USD 120 million and the credit facility to USD 250 million. The two sides are currently working to implement the obligations under the contract.

**3.111 The Committee note that the budgetary allocation under the Head ‘Chabahar Port’ has remained stagnant at Rs. 100 crore in BE 2023-24, RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 as the long-term main contract for the development of the Port was under negotiation. On 13 May 2024, the long-term main contract for equipping and operating Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar was signed between India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran with India’s enhanced investment commitment of USD 120 million and revised Line of Credit of USD 250 million. The provisions of main contract also stipulates that IPGL will remit the full amount of money required for the procurement and installation of port equipment to account(s) provided by PMO in UAE within one month of agreeing on the prices by the Joint Procurement Committee (JPC) of the project. Accordingly, PAI Division of the MEA has proposed Rs. 375 crore in RE 2024-25 and Rs. 466 crore for BE 2025-26. The Committee realize the potential of the Chabahar Port as a more economical and stable route for landlocked Central Asian countries of the region to reach India and the global market. While conscious of the challenging environment in which the Ministry is operating given the prevalent sanctions, the Committee emphasize the need for expedited completion of the project and fulfillment of India’s commitment under the main contract and recommend an upward revision of the budgetary allocations and proposals under the Head. The Committee also urge the Ministry to work closely with India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and the Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran to finalize and implement the procurement of remaining port equipment within a time-bound framework. The Joint Procurement Committee may be facilitated to expedite cost approvals and ensure that all equipment is delivered and installed by mid-2025.**

*(Recommendation No.35)*



**CHAPTER 4**  
**OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS**

The Committee on External Affairs (2024-25) has selected the subject ‘Indian Diaspora Overseas including NRIs, PIOs, OCIs and Migrant Workers: All Aspects of their Conditions and Welfare, including the Status of the Emigration Bill’ for detailed examination and Report. A detailed review of the performance of the various schemes will be contained in the subject Report. Hence, this chapter will focus on the overall budgetary allocation for the welfare of Indian Diaspora.

**Budgetary Allocation**

4.2 The budgetary allocation dealing specifically for welfare of overseas Indians is provisioned under the Major Head ‘External Affairs’ (sub-heads ‘Welfare of Overseas Indians’ and ‘Engagement with Indian Diaspora’). The details of allocation under this Head for the past two years and the current year are given below:

(Rs. in crores)

Sub head	BE 2023-24	RE 2023-24	BE 2024-25
Welfare of Overseas Indians	13.21	63.21	15.21
Engagement with Indian Diaspora	37.00	39.00	44.00

4.3 The Ministry of External Affairs has furnished details of allocations made to various schemes/programmes implemented for the welfare of Indian Diaspora during the last three years and the current year, scheme-wise as under:

**(Welfare of Overseas Indians)**

(Rs. in crore)

Heads	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24			2024-25
	BE	RE	Actual	BE	RE	Actual	BE	RE	Actual	BE
Pre-Departure Orientation and Skill Upgradation of Emigrant Worker	7.00	2.00	0.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	3.00	3.00	0.80	5.00

Evacuation of Indians due to War/Civil Disturbance	3.00	11.00	11.58	3.00	93.96	94.08	10.00	60.00	54.27	10.00
Repatriation of Indian Destitutes	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
Legal Assistance to Women facing problems in NRI Marriages	0.12	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.05
Legal Counseling/Assistance to Indian workers in the Gulf	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.15

### Engagement with Indian Diaspora

Heads	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24			2024-25
	BE	RE	Actual	BE	RE	Actual	BE	RE	Actual	BE
Know India Programme	7.00	3.50	0.00	7.00	3.00	3.70	7.00	10.00	10.09	10.00
Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children	10.00	15.00	8.33	10.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00
Promotion of Cultural ties with Diaspora	2.00	2.00	1.24	3.00	3.00	1.89	4.00	4.00	3.91	4.00
Awareness Campaign/media Plan	2.00	3.00	0.90	5.50	1.00	0.23	2.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Celebration of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas	20.00	5.00	0.45	10.00	30.00	30.96	15.00	15.00	14.39	20.00

4.4 The schemes implemented by Diaspora Engagement Division for engagement of Indian Diaspora has helped immensely in engagement with the Diaspora worldwide be it Know India Programme where young members of Indian Diaspora are invited to know about the new India

and to connect them with their Indian roots. The scholarship scheme enables the young diaspora children to study in India and avail of the benefits of scholarships offered to them by the Government of India. The PCTD scheme is utilized by our Missions/Posts abroad in engaging with our Diaspora members and helps in connecting the Diaspora members with their ancestral cultural roots. Through celebration of biennial Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the Ministry has been encouraging the Diaspora members to attend the event which usually happens in coordination with a partner Indian State to showcase the rich cultural heritage, unity in diversity and to make the Diaspora members aware of the various technological advancements made in India in various fields. PBD invite the diaspora members to invest in India and bolster the Indian economy with the technological experiences gained by them in their respective countries.

**Pre-Departure Orientation and Skill Upgradation of Emigrant Worker:** PDOT programmes, which commenced in 2018, are aimed at enhancing soft skills of Indian migrant workers largely going to the Gulf region and Malaysia, in terms of culture, language, tradition and local rules and regulations of the destination country, to sensitize migrant workers about pathways to safe and legal migration and various government programmes for their welfare and protection. The initiative has been a success and is being expanded further. The Ministry launched online PDOT in April 2021 to reach out to prospective emigrants who live far away from PDOT centres. There has been a very positive response from participants especially women participants. Initially, 31 Centers across various States were opened for imparting the Pre-Departure Orientation Training. Ministry had approved opening of additional 62 New PDOT Centres in August 2022. The Ministry has been following up with concerned State Governments for early operationalisation of new PDOT Centres and promotion of PDOT Programme among prospective migrant workers. In this regard, Ministry has written to the Chief Secretaries/Principal Secretaries of the concerned States seeking their intervention for early opening of new PDOT Centres in their States. The matter is being followed up directly with the State Governments as well as through the PoEs in these States.

**Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF):** The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) was initially set up in 2009 in 17 ECR countries aimed at assisting overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency. The scope of the scheme was further expanded and revised ICWF guidelines was issued in 2017 and set up in all Indian Missions/Posts abroad. The ICWF scheme has the provisions for individual assistance to Indian nationals; community welfare and improvement of consular services in Missions/Posts. ICWF is a self sustained fund raised by levying a service charge on consular services provided by Missions/Posts, voluntary contribution from Indian

community and income from deposits and investments. However, ICWF does not receive any budgetary support from the Government.

**Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY):** The Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) came into effect in 2003 and was applicable for all emigrants who apply and obtain Emigration Clearance as required under Emigration Act 1983. The coverage of insured person was initially Rs. 2 lakh. The scheme was further revised in 2006, 2008 and 2017. Under the revised scheme, the insurance coverage is Rs.10 lakh in case of accidental death or permanent disability and also other benefits available at a nominal insurance premium of Rs.275/- for two years or Rs.375/- for three years validity. At present seven Insurance companies provide insurance facilities under the PBBY scheme. The revised PBBY scheme effective from August, 2017 provides insurance coverage for both ECR and ECNR passport holders. The Government, however, does not provide any budgetary assistance for PBBY insurance scheme.

**Know India Programme (KIP)** is flagship scheme of Government of India to reconnect young Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) with their motherland and inspire them by giving them exposure to the ongoing socio-economic transformation in India, as well as various aspects of contemporary India's forms of art, heritage and culture. Since 2003, Ministry has so far conducted 65 editions of KIP, with participation of 2296 PIO youth from 47 countries. KIP has so far been organised in partnership with 22 States & Union Territories. The Know India Programme was resumed in 2022-23 after a gap of two years due to pandemic, and six editions of KIP have taken place in partnership with the States of Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

4.5 On being asked about the portion of budget dedicated to supporting the Indian Diaspora and improving consular services abroad, the Ministry stated that as per approved BE for 2024-25, an amount of Rs. 15.21 crores has been allotted for the Welfare of Overseas Indians and Rs. 44.00 crores has been allotted for Engagement with the Indian Diaspora.

4.6 Regarding the initiatives taken during the last three years to facilitate the active involvement of Overseas Indians in the socio-economic, political and technological development of the country, the Committee have been informed that over the past three years, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has implemented various initiatives to engage Overseas Indians in India's socio-economic, political, and technological development. Key initiatives include the expansion of "Know India Program," allowing young Overseas Indians to connect with their roots while participating in workshops on Indian culture, economy, and governance. Ministry offers opportunities to Indian Diaspora for voicing their opinions and perspectives on policy-

making and developments in India through forums such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD). The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has also evolved into a key platform for networking and collaboration, focusing on integrating Diaspora contributions for India's growth narrative.

4.7 As regards the manner in which it is proposed to utilize the soft power potential of Indian Diaspora, the Ministry stated that it proposes to enhance its soft power diplomacy by actively engaging the Indian Diaspora to facilitate India's growth through cultural exchanges, economic partnerships and global advocacy. By promoting Indian arts, heritage and cuisine, it aims to strengthen cultural ties. Ministry encourages Diaspora members to invest in Indian startups and innovation, fostering economic collaboration.

4.8 When asked about the new initiatives and ventures being explored for engaging Indian Diaspora, the Ministry stated that it is exploring several new initiatives to engage the Indian Diaspora by promoting cultural initiatives through PCTD contributions to our Missions/Posts abroad and also by virtue of celebrating Indian festivals and holding art exhibitions to celebrate Indian heritage worldwide. A quiz titled 'Indian Diaspora Connect Series' is being administered by Diaspora Engagement Division daily on its social media platform to engage the Indian Diaspora.

4.9 The MEA has initiated several initiatives over the recent years to facilitate active involvement of leading academicians and scientists from the Diaspora in enhancing India's educational, scientific and technological capacities. On being asked about the outcome of these initiatives, the Ministry stated that it is continuously working with the Department of Science and Technology (D/o S&T) and other stakeholders to facilitate contribution of diaspora academia and scientists to India's educational, scientific and technological capacities. VAIBHAV Fellowship envisages a collaboration between scientists of Indian Diaspora with Indian Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), Universities and/ or public funded Scientific Institutions, implemented by D/o S&T. These fellowships are exclusively for Diaspora scientists and researchers to facilitate academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and best institution in the world through mobility of Diaspora faculty/researcher from overseas institutions to India.

**4.10** The Committee observe that during 2024-25 an allocation of Rs. 59.21 crore has been earmarked for schemes and programmes aimed at welfare of Indian Diaspora and engagement with them. A series of Schemes and programmes such as Know India Programme, Promotion of Cultural Ties with Indian Diaspora, Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC), Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Pre-Departure Orientation and Skill Upgradation of Emigrant Worker (PDOT), Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna (PBBY), Legal Assistance to Women facing problems in NRI Marriages, Evacuation of Indian due to War/Civil Disturbance and other are being implemented by MEA.

Keeping in mind the expanse, magnitude and depth of our Diaspora across the globe, the Committee are of the view that that the existing allocations made to various schemes and programmes for the welfare of Overseas Indians is arbitrary, unchanged and inadequate. While expressing concern over the stagnant allocation to welfare schemes for Indian citizens overseas, the Committee desire that additional funds should be sought during the next financial year. An increase in budgetary allocation and the establishment of a robust, responsive mechanism during crisis will not only enhance India's ability to protect its citizens but also reinforce its global standing as a nation committed to the well-being of its people. The Committee further desire to be apprised of the outcome of the Joint Working Group constituted to analyze the objectives, working and challenges of various programmes/initiatives/schemes for welfare of Indian diaspora and the extent of reach and delivery of such schemes, so far. It should be the endeavour of the Ministry to conduct continuous review of the performance of its existing programmes/schemes so that the reach and impact can be used as leverage for an enhanced budgetary allocation.

*(Recommendation No.36)*

**4.11** With over 32 million persons of Indian origin (PIOs) and non-resident Indians (NRIs) spread across the globe, the Committee are of the considered opinion that Diaspora represents a powerful network capable of advancing India's cultural, economic, and strategic interests. Through their economic might, strategic engagement and cultural outreach the Indian Diaspora contributes significantly to India's developmental agenda and soft power projection. It is discerned that the Ministry is exploring new initiatives and ways for active involvement of Diaspora in enhancing India's outreach and influence. The

**Committee emphasizes that the Indian Diaspora is a unique and valuable asset that can significantly enhance India’s global influence. The potential of diaspora academia and scientists to contribute to India’s educational, scientific and technological capacities and investment by the diaspora community in Indian startups and innovation also needs to be harnessed. For leveraging the full potential of the Indian Diaspora as an instrument of soft power and fostering economic, scientific and technological development in the country, the Ministry of External Affairs should adopt a proactive approach and formulate a comprehensive Diaspora Engagement Policy in consultation with other line Ministries such as Ministry of Culture, Commerce, etc.**

*(Recommendation No.37)*

#### **Scheme for Welfare of Indian Women Abroad**

4.12 On the Committee’s specific query regarding the Scheme for Welfare of Indian Women Abroad, and progress regarding establishment of One Stop Centres for assistance to women, the Ministry responded that the scheme for Welfare of Indian Women abroad is provided under the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) provides financial and legal assistance to Indian women abroad who have been abused, cheated, or abandoned by their foreign or NRI/PIO spouse. This assistance is available for up to seven years after the marriage. One Stop Centre (OCS) scheme under Nirbhaya Fund is proposed to be set up for safety, security and well being of distressed Indian women in countries abroad. The centres would be providing a 24x7 helpline dedicated to women, medical assistance, wherever needed, police assistance, wherever needed, legal aid/ counseling, psycho-social support/counseling, run awareness programs, through campaigns, seminars, etc. for the benefit of women. The implementation of OCS is under consideration of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

4.13 While giving testimony before the Committee, the Foreign Secretary updated the Committee about the One Stop Centre under Nirbhaya Fund when he stated:

“...the Ministry of Women and Child Development has given clearance for a one-stop centre under the Nirbhaya Fund just very recently. We have now requested our Missions to submit their budget proposals to us for implementing this scheme. We will make a provision in the budget and try to take this thing forward.”

4.14 The Committee wanted to know about the activities under Repatriation of Indian Destitute, Legal assistance to women facing problems in NRI marriages and Legal counselling of workers in Gulf during the last three years and the budget provisions made and actual expenditure incurred. The Ministry stated that the ICWF Guidelines of 2017 has the specific provisions on providing air passages for (i) repatriation of distressed Indian nationals; and (2) legal assistance .The expenditure incurred by the Missions/Posts on legal assistance is out of ICWF, a self sustained fund which does not receive any budgetary support from the Ministry.

**4.15 The Committee are aware that women residing overseas often face unique challenges, including spousal abandonment, marital disputes, workplace exploitation, human trafficking, forced labour etc. These vulnerabilities necessitate a targeted approach to ensure the safety, dignity and well-being of Indian women. The Ministry has informed that the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) provides financial and legal assistance to Indian women abroad who have been abused, cheated, or abandoned by their foreign or NRI/PIO spouse. In addition, One Stop Centre (OCS) scheme under Nirbhaya Fund is proposed to be established for safety, security and well being of distressed Indian women in countries abroad. The Committee are happy to learn that the Ministry of Women and Child Development has provided clearance for extending the One Stop Centre under Nirbhaya Fund and accordingly the Missions/Posts are working out budgetary proposals to roll out this scheme. The Committee are hopeful that adequate budget would be sought for the Scheme during the upcoming budget session. The Committee also urge the Ministry to launch awareness campaigns to educate Indian women abroad about their legal rights, local laws and resources available through Indian Missions/Posts abroad.**

*(Recommendation No.38)*



**CHAPTER 5**  
**AUTONOMOUS BODIES & INSTITUTIONS**

Allocation under the head 'Assistance to Autonomous Bodies and other Institutions' is towards Ministry's Grants-in-Aid to Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and other institutions such as International society of International Law. The allocations made to these institutions are shown in the table below:-

(Rs. in crore)

<b>Assistance to Autonomous Bodies and other Institutions</b>				
<b>Sl.No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>ICCR</b>	<b>345.21</b>	<b>315.21</b>	<b>331.25</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>ICWA</b>	<b>14.02</b>	<b>13.77</b>	<b>15.47</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>RIS</b>	<b>16.64</b>	<b>16.64</b>	<b>18.00</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>India Centre for Migration</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Other Institutions</b>	<b>4.63</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>5.13</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380.50</b>	<b>350.16</b>	<b>369.85</b>

5.2 When asked about the reason for nil allocation under sub-heads India Centre for Migration and Other Institutions in RE 2023-24 and BE-2024-25, the Ministry stated that India Centre for Migration has been merged with ICWA in 2022. Hence no allocation has been made. The allocation under Other Institutions has been made in RE 2023-24 and BE 2024-25 as tabulated below:

(Rs. in crore)

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>BE 2023-24</b>	<b>RE 2023-24</b>	<b>BE 2024-25</b>
<b>Other Institutions</b>				
1	Indian Society of International Law	0.05	0.10	0.10
2	Support to Institutes of Chinese Studies	0.70	0.70	0.70
3	Indian Federation of UN Association	0.12	0.00	0.12
4	ICCR and IFUNA for organising UD Day functions	0.02	0.00	0.02
5	Centre for Land Warfare Studies – Centre for UN Peacekeeping	2.00	2.00	2.00
6	Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra	1.74	1.74	2.19

5.3 Elaborating on the manner in which ICCR, ICWA, RIS can play a more effective role in policy planning, research and foreign policy formulations, the Ministry stated as under:

The Ministry of External Affairs, India's Missions abroad and ICCR constitute the triangle within which the task of projecting Indian Culture through public and cultural diplomacy is fulfilled. MEA accept the strategic significance of the work done by ICCR through public and cultural diplomacy as among the key tools in the formulation and implementation of India's foreign policy and therefore, Heads of Mission attach top priority and importance to the task of projecting cultural heritage and assets of India. All ICCR's activities, including those conducted through its extended arms like Indian Cultural Centers, the Chairs of Indian Studies in Foreign Universities and the foreign students' scholarships programme are conducted in close coordination with MEA and Indian Missions/posts in the country concerned. Activities of ICCR contribute substantially towards overall formulation of India's foreign policy.

**ICWA:** To address issues that are at the top of the foreign policy agenda and make its dialogues, discussions and research outputs more policy effective and impactful, ICWA would continue its coordination with MEA and increase consultations with various Divisions of MEA. To undertake focused studies on specific areas of government priorities in consultation with Government stakeholders; such as G20, Migration, Multilateralism, etc. Mechanism to provide feedback to MEA on various consultations and discussions organized at the Council can be strengthened.

**RIS:** The specialized research programme of RIS can be further strengthened and integrated within the Government system, including the MEA, for timely absorption of its critical research inputs in policy formulation. Closer interaction of government officials with RIS would help take further advantage of the policy research studies, publications as well as interactions organized by RIS. RIS can also widen its outreach to put across India's standpoint on areas of critical importance to the country in the evolving world where counter narratives need to be handled effectively through evidence-based research, for example- in South-South Development Cooperation, technology adoption, new ITEC programs, etc. DAKSHIN, the global South centre of excellence was set up as a Special Purpose Vehicle under RIS in 2023, to steer institutional collaboration between think-tanks of Global South countries to conduct research, identify specific projects, and share best practices in the fields of health, education, digital connectivity/solutions, and agriculture. Till date RIS has reached out to think-tanks in 121 countries, and signed Letters of Association with think-tanks in 65 countries.

**5.4 The Committee are aware that Autonomous bodies and institutions under the Ministry of External Affairs, such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR),**

**Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), significantly contribute to India’s cultural diplomacy, regional cooperation and research capabilities. While the budgetary allocation for this Head has shown incremental growth, it remains insufficient to meet the expanding mandates of these institutions and would have led to scaling down of critical activities. With India’s increasing global engagement, the Committee feel that these institutions require additional resources to expand their research, cultural and diplomatic initiatives, particularly in strategic regions such as Africa, Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a significant increase in budgetary allocation may be made under ‘Assistance to Autonomous Bodies and Other Institutions’ at both Revised Estimates (RE) and Budget Estimates (BE) stages. This would enable these entities to expand their initiatives and meet growing international expectations. The Ministry should also actively promote partnerships and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models, encouraging autonomous bodies to collaborate with domestic and international organizations to leverage additional resources and expertise. Enhanced budgetary support, coupled with improved oversight and innovative funding models, will empower these entities to deliver more impactful outcomes.**

*(Recommendation No. 39)*

#### **A. INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS**

5.5 The Indian Council for Cultural Relations was formally set up in 1950 with the primary objective of establishing, reviving and strengthening cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries. As enunciated in the Memorandum of Association, it aims at participating in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes relating to India's cultural relations with other countries, fostering and strengthening cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries and establishing and developing relations with national and international organizations in the field of culture.

5.6 Illustrating the manner in which ICCR can play a more effective role in promotion of India’s soft power and cultural diplomacy abroad, the Ministry stated that ICCR is a unique

platform to promote India's global cultural relations and soft power abroad. Some key aspects of how ICCR promotes its soft power abroad are as follows:

- i. ICCR has been playing an important role in the field of education for international students in India. It offers about 3000 scholarships annually under various schemes from about 180 countries which helps foreign nationals to pursue higher studies in Indian Central/State Universities. Many of ICCR Alumni have achieved positions of influence in their respective countries and each ICCR scholar is India's goodwill Ambassador abroad.
- ii. ICCR has 38 full –fledged Indian Culture Centres abroad in different parts of the world. This facilitates the exchange of ideas, traditions and artistic expressions between India and the rest of the world, helping to strengthen cultural bonds and promoting mutual understanding.
- iii. To promote Indian Studies and languages abroad, ICCR established Chairs of Indian Studies in foreign universities/institutes. The purpose of these Chairs is familiarizing students about Indian History and culture to become a local hub around which Indian Studies and Indian Languages can be promoted in academic institutions abroad.
- iv. One of the major activities of the Council is to send Indian Cultural troupes abroad to showcase rich Indian Dance and Music to the world and to invite cultural troupes from abroad to showcase their culture in India on a reciprocal basis.
- v. To promote India's cultural relations with other countries, ICCR has instituted various awards to recognize the foreign nationals for their contribution in the respective fields. These awards are (a) Bharat Mitra Samman – Distinguished Alumni (b) Bharat Mitra Samman – Indology (c) Bharat Mitra Samman – Sanskrit and International Award for Promotion of Buddhism.
- vi. In 2023, 'Annapurna Certificate' was instituted by the ICCR for Promoting India's Soft Power through its traditionally diverse cuisine and culinary culture to recognize restaurants abroad who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of Indian cuisine and culinary traditions.
- vii. ICCR organises 'Pratibha Sangam Competition' annually in the categories of Classical Indian Music and Dances. In this competition, foreign nationals and PIOs were invited to compete and prizes and certificates are awarded to the selected participants.
- viii. Under Visitors Programmes, ICCR hosts the visit of eminent personalities from abroad for a certain period. These programmes includes a variety of sessions such as lectures, round table discussions, call on Ministers etc. as well as visits to places of cultural and educational importance.
- ix. ICCR showcases performances by foreign cultural troupes across India so that the people of India get to see and appreciate cultures from across the globe. This includes Cultural Weeks and Festivals dedicated to a specific country, region or even a continent.

- x. Council is regularly publishing the Hindi bi-monthly magazine Gagananchal. Its main objective is to promote Hindi in the country as well as abroad. Indian culture can be further promoted in foreign countries through the articles published in this magazine.
- xi. ICCR organizes bilateral and multilateral exhibitions to promote India's rich and diverse visual art forms including contemporary and traditional art, folk and tribal art, textiles, ceramic arts, etc.
- xii. To meet the objectives of cultural diplomacy, ICCR organizes international conferences on subjects like Indology, Buddhism, Sufism, Tagore and other subjects related to Indian culture, philosophy and society.
- xiii. Leveraging social media and digital platforms, ICCR shares cultural content, heritage, and traditions, through its various social media handles engaging with a broader audience and fostering connections across borders.

5.7 The allocation during BE 2023-24 was Rs. 345.21 crore, which was reduced to Rs. 315.21 crore at the RE stage. The Budgetary Allocation for BE 2024-25 has been increased to Rs. 331.25 crore. Enhanced allocation in BE 2024-25 has been made with regard to RE 2023-24 on account of expanding research & academic activities, expanding scope of cultural diplomacy under ICCR as well as revision in scholarship rates, cultural hospitality norms, etc. for ICCR schemes and programmes.

5.8 The details of Budgetary Allocations sought by ICCR, actual allocations made and expenditure incurred during the last three financial years are given below:

(Rs. in Crores)

Year	BE		RE		Actual
	Demand	Allocation	Demand	Allocation	
2021-22	300.00	300.00	239.74	239.74	148.35
2022-23	350.00	320.00	340.00	320.00	290.26
2023-24	370.00	345.21	345.21	315.21	298.24

5.9 On the question of sufficiency of the allocated amount to meet the expanding activities of ICCR, the Ministry stated that against the projected budget of Rs. 370.00 crores, BE of Rs. 345.21 crores and RE of Rs 315.21 crores was allocated which is reasonable to run the activities of ICCR, based on utilization pattern and anticipated activities in last financial year.

5.10 Regarding extra budgetary resources available with ICCR, the Ministry informed that ICCR is fully funded by MEA through Grants-in-Aid. Except receipt from ICCs abroad on

account of fee from local students which is an insignificant amount, ICCR has no additional source of funding to run its activities.

5.11 On being asked about the efforts being made by ICCR to further generate additional resources, the Ministry stated that the promotion of soft power and cultural diplomacy is not based on profit generation, hence primary funding for these depends on Government funding. Further, in some countries local rules & regulations do not allow Missions/Culture Centres to engage in revenue generation/commercial activities. Nevertheless, with the new initiatives of MEA/ ICCR, one centre in Valladolid (Spain) has been established on Public-Private-Partnership model. Also ICCR encourages its cultural centres to charge nominal fee for courses being conducted by them for local populace subject to local rules and regulations as applicable in the respective countries. Considering the soft power and cultural diplomatic activities being undertaken by other countries, it is necessary that substantial Government funding should continue to sponsor pro-active and effective conduct of soft power and cultural promotion.

5.12 The Committee desired to know the extent to which ICCR has achieved efficiency and effectiveness in its operations in India through restructuring and ensured optimum utilization of the funds allocated through specific examples. The Ministry responded that to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in its operations in India, ICCR restructured its regional offices structure and each division of ICCR at HQs with the purpose to streamline the work-flow of all sections and to restructure vertical hierarchy of the organization in an efficient and empowered horizontal to review/reform the work process of ICCR officials. Restructuring of the regional offices saved the operating expenses with maximum utilization of human resources.

5.13 Since April, 2021 the ICCR has been following the clear objective of Full Utilization of Budget in order to ensure its functioning at the optimum level, as organizational effectiveness is reflected through its fund utilization. With the FUB objective in mind, the ICCR has also started the practice of monitoring its monthly expenditure and nudging the spending units to maintain its expenditure level in proportion to the number of months that has elapsed. As a result, the spending capacity of the ICCR has crossed Rs. 300 crore in 2023-24 for the first time in its history, which means more programmes, more activities and more output per employee i.e. employee productivity.

5.14 ICCR's Cultural Centres are the principal instrument of India's institutional outreach. On the Committee's query whether ICCR is in the process of opening more Indian Cultural Centers abroad during the upcoming financial year, the Ministry replied that at present ICCR operates 38 full fledged centres abroad. Now in the honour of Thiruvalluvar, an Indian poet and philosopher, best known as the author of the Tirukkural, ICCR will setup Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre (TVCC) in a few select locations abroad including Singapore, Paris and Jaffna. The Prime Minister of India during his meeting with H.E. Mr. Lawrence Wong, Prime Minister of Singapore in September 2024, highlighted that cultural connect between the two countries is an important component of their bilateral relations and announced that India's first Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre would be opened in Singapore shortly.

5.15 As regards objective criterion for setting up new cultural centres, the Ministry asserted that Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) are principal institutional instruments mandated for cultural outreach abroad and projecting India's cultural diplomacy through a wide range of cultural, academic intellectual activities, promoting, *inter alia*, knowledge, information and understanding of various aspects of Indian culture including Indian Dance, Music, Yoga, Languages, Food, Festivals, History, Ethos & Traditions and contemporary issues. The broad foreign policy vision of the Government is to maximize India's cultural promotion abroad in the most optimal manner. ICCs are headed by a Director and supported by a team of teachers & local staff. The ICCs closely coordinate with the Mission's Culture, Education and Press wings.

5.16 Indian Cultural Centres are opened by ICCR in consultation with concerned Mission and with the approval of MEA. Hiring of premises/ property is taken up in consultation with Global Estate Management Division (GEM Division), MEA and creation of posts at Cultural Centre are taken up with Administration Division, MEA, who thereafter take it up with Ministry of Finance.

5.17 Elaborating upon the procedure for opening of these centres abroad and the appointments made thereon, the Ministry specified that the procedure for opening of Cultural Centres abroad is depending upon the recommendation of the concerned Indian Mission abroad and also on the basis of bilateral relations between the two countries. Missions are required to send the detailed information including the following while sending the proposal by giving reasons and justifications for opening of ICCs:

- (a) Background information of Mission and proposed activities to be undertaken

- (b) Population of the country with details of persons of Indian origin
- (c) Area programme for ICC
- (d) Local formalities and approvals to be followed while opening ICCs
- (e) Details of running of other Foreign Cultural Centres in that country
- (f) Interest of General Public with regard to knowledge of India and its culture
- (g) Number of ICCR events organised by the Mission
- (h) Details of universities that have chair of Indian studies supported by ICCR

5.18 The ICCR deploys Directors, teachers of Yoga, Hindi & Performing Arts in the ICCs. While directors are deployed by three modes (1) nominated by President ICCR, (2) ICCR officials and (3) Open advertisement, selection of teachers is done through open advertisements. Engagement of support staff for administration, accounts & housekeeping are administratively managed locally by the Indian Missions. These procedures are followed diligently and no lapse has been pointed out in the procedure. The ICCR is administratively working under the Ministry of External Affairs and necessary guidance where ever necessary is always taken.

5.19 ICCR scholarships are a key tool for fostering people-to-people connections and projecting India as a hub of higher education. They play a vital role in promoting cultural exchange and goodwill among participating nations. When asked whether the digitization of the process of admission of Foreign National on scholarship slots has helped ICCR in improving the utilization of slots, the Ministry stated that ICCR has launched A2A (Admissions to Alumni) portal in 2018 to manage admissions of foreign students. The portal has been designed to keep all records of the students in a transparent manner and accepting applications in online mode for ICCR scholarship. It is easy to access for anyone who wishes to apply for the ICCR scholarship. After digitization, students can apply for admission in five Universities/Institutes, whereas earlier it was limited to three universities/institutes.

5.20 Governing Body has approved the to and fro airfare for the students in Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarships Scheme (GSS) from 2022-23. (Earlier no air fare was provided to the students under GSS)

5.21 There is no limit of number of students applying for ICCR scholarship. Institutions are given provisional confirmation of admission based on merit, thereafter, Mission issues offer



letter for scholarship. This exercise has increased the utilization of slots for which details are as under:-

S. No.	Academic year	Slots offered	Slots Utilized
1	2022-23	3775	2917
2	2023-24	3775	3121

5.22 The Ministry has also specified several reasons for not fully utilizing all the scholarship slots as follows:-

- Lack of uniformity in the different academic programmes, curriculum and infrastructure across institutes.
- Lack of awareness of students about the scholarship scheme in some countries.
- Language barrier/different food habits/new environments are also some factors which inhibit students from foreign countries in applying for the scholarships.

The following Steps have been taken to address the issues:-

- ICCR is accepting applications in online mode through A2A portal which is easy access to anyone for availing ICCR scholarships. ICCR has increased the number of universities to apply for scholarship. Now, students can apply to five Universities/Institutes instead of three Universities/Institutes.
- Governing Body has approved to and fro air fare to the students under Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarships Scheme (GSS) from 2022-23. (Earlier no air fare was provided to the students under GSS)
- Missions have also been advised to disseminate the scholarships schemes widely.

5.23 **As the principal agency for India's soft power and cultural diplomacy, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) undertakes a wide range of global activities, including providing scholarships, promoting Indian languages, organizing exhibitions, instituting rewards and hosting performing and visual arts programmes. The Committee note that a budgetary provision of Rs. 331.25 crore has been allocated for ICCR in BE 2024-25, compared to Rs. 315.21 crore in BE 2023-24. The Ministry has indicated that the increased allocation is intended for expanding research/academic activities, expanding scope of cultural diplomacy, revision in scholarship rates, cultural hospitality norms, etc. On the issue of extra-budgetary resources of ICCR, the Ministry informed that apart from a modest fee from local students, ICCR is fully funded by it through Grants-in-Aid. Despite the limited allocation, the Committee found that the budget was not fully utilized.**

Keeping in view the broad spectrum of activities undertaken by ICCR, the Committee feel that the budgetary allocation for ICCR is inadequate. ICCR's work is a cornerstone of India's cultural diplomacy, contributing to national interests in a highly competitive global environment. The Committee desire that the Ministry should examine the reasons for the underutilization of the budget and draft a policy which will enable it to scale up its operations, enhance India's soft power and contribute meaningfully to the nation's diplomatic objective. This will require a significant increase in ICCR's budgetary allocation. The Committee, therefore, recommend an increase in the budgetary allocation for ICCR in BE 2025-26 justifying the increasing salience of soft power projection of the country and the central role of ICCR in it. Furthermore, ICCR should establish a mechanism to improve its pace of expenditure to ensure optimal utilization of allocated funds, strengthening its case for higher budgetary demands in the subsequent fiscal year, subject to the Ministry providing a satisfactory explanation of its underutilization.

*(Recommendation No. 40)*

5.24 The Committee are aware that Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) are principal institutional instruments mandated for cultural outreach abroad and projecting India's cultural diplomacy through a wide range of cultural, academic intellectual activities, promoting, *inter alia*, knowledge, information and understanding of various aspects of Indian culture including Indian Dance, Music, Yoga, Languages, Food, Festivals, History, Ethos & Traditions and contemporary issues. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations works with its 38 Indian Cultural Centers (ICCs) abroad and 11 Zonal Offices. The Ministry has informed that in honour of renowned Indian poet and author, ICCR will be setting up Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre (TVCC) in a few select locations abroad including Singapore, Paris and Jaffna. The Committee would like to be apprised about the progress made regarding establishment of the Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre as well as the plans for opening other Cultural Centres. The Committee also desire that ICCR should make persistent efforts to empanel artists and performers from the widest possible range of Indian languages, dialects, and cultural backgrounds to showcase the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India globally and regionally.

*(Recommendation No.41)*

**5.25** The Committee acknowledge the important role of ICCR scholarship programs in strengthening India’s cultural and educational diplomacy and promoting goodwill, long-lasting ties with partner countries and enhancing India’s soft power. The Committee note that the Ministry has launched A2A (Admission to Alumni) portal in 2018 to manage admissions of foreign students. However, the scholarship slots have not been fully utilized due to factors such as lack of awareness, language barrier, mismatched academic requirements between Indian Universities and foreign students, etc. The Ministry has taken corrective measures like online application mode through A2A portal, increasing the number of universities students can apply to, providing air fare to students under Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarships Scheme (GSS) and wider dissemination through the Missions abroad. While appreciating the streamlining of admission and selection process, the Committee notice that limited outreach, administrative delays, lack of follow-up with alumni, and inadequate support for scholars during their stay in India are some of the barriers to the program’s effectiveness. The Committee, therefore, desire that targeted awareness campaigns, leveraging digital platforms and collaborating with Missions abroad should be undertaken by ICCR to ensure maximum visibility of scholarship opportunities. In addition, a robust global alumni network which can serve as a platform for cultural diplomacy, advocacy, and strengthening bilateral ties should be established to maintain long-term engagement with former scholars. The Committee further desire that the budgetary allocation for ICCR scholarships should be enhanced to provide adequate support for scholars and accommodate more students from developing and strategically important countries, particularly in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Indo-Pacific region.

*(Recommendation No. 42)*

## **B. INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS (ICWA)**

**5.26** An outlay of Rs. 14.02 crore was provided for Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) during BE 2023-24 which has been reduced to Rs. 13.77 crore at the RE stage. The budgetary allocation for 2024-25 is Rs. 15.47 crore. The Ministry has stated that the enhanced allocation in BE 2024-25 compared to BE 2023-24 has been made on account of salaries and capital assets. The details of expenditure incurred by ICWA during last three years are given below:

*(Rs. in Crores)*

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure</b>
1	2021-22	12.01
2	2022-23	13.74
3	2023-24	13.84

5.27 The reduced expenditure during 2021-22 was due to COVID-19 pandemic. During 2021-22, most of the activities were held virtually and several activities could not take place. Physical events resumed during 2022-23 and hence, the expenditure increased during 2022-23 over previous year and the trend continued during next year 2023-24. The budgetary allocation of Rs.15.47 was made for 2024-25. The increase in budgetary allocation for 2024-25 is due to increase in anticipated expenditure on salaries and capital expenditure.

5.28 On the Committee's query whether ICWA has been able to attain its stated objective, the Ministry informed that the ICWA has been successfully working to achieve its stated objectives since its inception and till date. ICWA has undertaken a range of activities, which include research, publications, dialogues with international partners, holding of conferences, seminars, lectures, discussions and undertaking outreach activities, in order to fulfill its mandated objectives mentioned below:

- (1) To promote the study of Indian and international affairs so as to develop a body of informed opinion on international matters.
- (2) To promote India's relations with other countries through study, research, discussions, lectures, exchange of ideas and information with other organisations within and outside India engaged in similar activities.
- (3) To serve as a clearing house of information and knowledge regarding world affairs.
- (4) To publish books, periodicals, journals, reviews, papers, pamphlets and other literature on relevant subjects.
- (5) To establish contacts with organisations promoting objects mentioned in this section.
- (6) To arrange conferences and seminars to discuss and study the Indian policy towards international affairs.

5.29 Furnishing the tangible policy outcomes of the conferences organized by ICWA that were beneficial in framing foreign political agenda, the Ministry stated that the Council organized International interactions in the form of International Conferences, Bilateral Dialogues (Track II & Track 1.5), and Lectures on important themes of international affairs. A number of activities were organized in coordination with and support of the MEA and also its representatives regularly participated in a range of activities organized by ICWA.

5.30 Some important bilateral Track –II dialogues that ICWA held were with its MoU partners in Russia, Uzbekistan, Poland, South Korea, New Zealand, Vietnam, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Morocco, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Bilateral Track I.5 Dialogues were held with partners in Germany. Besides, it held interactions with experts from other think tanks from Romania, South Korea, US and Poland. These interactions have been very fruitful in terms of exchange of perspectives and positions, views on areas of mutual interest and concerns relating to global, regional and bilateral issues.

5.31 Foreign dignitaries visiting India delivered Sapru House Lectures on issues of mutual interest. ICWA organized SHL by Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr. Pham Minh Chinh, Prime Minister of Vietnam, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN, Mr. Dennis Francis, President of 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Ambassador Karla Samayoa Recari, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala; Raquel Pena, Vice President of Dominican Republic, Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of North Macedonia and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Enrique A. Manalo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of Philippines, and Mr. Csaba Korosi, President, 77th UN General Assembly (UNGA). The objective of these lectures was to give a platform to the visiting dignitary to present their views on issues of interest to bilateral relations or to India and to provide for an interaction of the dignitary with an informed audience.

5.32 In addition to dialogues and lectures, regular interactions were held with foreign dignitaries visiting India such as senior officials from Iran, Albania, Latvia, Slovakia, Kazaksthan, and also visiting experts from Foreign Think tanks and Universities.

5.33 Besides international interactions, the Council regularly held conversations in form of seminars and panel discussions among subject experts, former diplomats, academics and strategic community. These conversations focused on the developments in North East Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, South Caucasus, West Asia, Multilateralism, Summit of the Future, Asia, developments in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives, West Asia, North Africa, Indo-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Migration and Diaspora issues and SCO. The objective of these conversations was to promote India's relations with other countries and discuss India's policy towards international affairs.

5.34 It also organized several outreach activities in several Universities and colleges across the country as part of its Foreign Policy awareness programme. One of the many ways in which the Council contributed to a better understanding of foreign policy and international relations from an Indian Perspective was through training and engaging the youth. ICWA greatly expanded the scale and scope of its Youth engagement programs through increasing internships; conducting lectures by ICWA faculty in universities and colleges; inviting students to participate in ICWA programmes and organizing young scholar's conference involving participation of early career scholars from universities across the country.

5.35 Specifying the research and academic activities undertaken by ICWA during the last year, the Ministry submitted that last year ICWA has undertaken several research and academic activities to fulfill its mandated objectives. In its research, the Council's scholars responded to the changing dynamics of the world by focusing on a broad range of subjects including political, security and economic developments in Asia, North America, Europe, Russia, Africa, the Indo-Pacific and Latin America & Caribbean, multilateral groupings- G20, SCO, ASEAN and BRICS, and thematic issues including SDGs, Climate change, cyber policy, migration and mobility. Through peer-review mechanism and greater discussion with relevant stakeholders it brought out high quality and effective research products, which are in line with India's interests.

5.36 The range of research publication that the Council produced included short analytical papers, in-depth studies, special publications, guest articles, and its Flagship journal India Quarterly. These research publications focused on topical issues and on emerging trends in international relations having a bearing on Indian foreign policy.

5.37 The Council also published books on issues related to G20 Indian Presidency, development partnership, diplomacy and trade, UN Peace Operations, India's bilateral and regional ties, and global developments. It came out with Special Publications on topical issues having bearing on Indian foreign policy. It also brought out translations of its publications in Hindi and regional languages for greater outreach.

5.38 These research outputs have been regularly shared with the Ministry of External affairs and other stakeholders with an aim to influence policymakers and public opinion. In all its areas

of work namely research, publications and discussions it has been ICWA's endeavour to closely coordinate with Ministry of External Affairs.

5.39 The Committee enquired whether any specific/ innovative plan of action has been chalked out by ICWA to play a more effective role in policy planning, research and foreign policy formulations. The Ministry responded as below:

“The Council's Plan of Action to play a more effective role in research policy planning and foreign policy formulations will be based on its four Pillars of activities: Research; Publications; Policy Discussions/Conversations; and Outreach.

**Research:** The Council is expanding its areas of Research in terms of geography as well as thematic cross cutting issues, keeping in view their importance and relevance to India's foreign and security policies. Added focus is given on thematic studies including maritime studies, multilateral institutions like IORA, SCO, UN, and G20, defense and security, migration and mobility, development partnership, polar studies, SDGs, energy and environment, gender and foreign Policy, international economy, emerging technologies and IR.

Collaborative short term and long term research work on cross cutting issues will be on the research agenda. It will need more team work involving senior and young researchers. This will require strengthening of the Research Division as well. While building on existing cohort of trained and experienced Research faculty there will be requirement for hiring consultants and young dynamic motivated researchers on newer areas to undertake research on cross cutting issues. Retaining experienced researchers on which the Council has invested a lot in order to continue with its planned activities will require streamlining work environment in terms of providing stability and better pay structure to the researchers. Conducting joint Research and publications with Foreign Think Tanks will be encouraged as it will lead to cross fertilization of ideas and enhance understanding of each other's perspectives. Currently joint research publication with institutions in South Korea, Poland, Malta are being carried out. Similar exercise with Vietnam is also being planned.

**Publications:** Efforts will be made to enhance its Research Publications in the form of commentaries, special reports, research articles in its Journal *India Quarterly*, peer-reviewed in-depth Sapru House research papers, commissioned Guest articles, special publications on key emerging issues, books, monographs and conference proceeding Volumes.

ICWA will continue to disseminate the output of its research work as broadly as possible to benefit the public good. So, our endeavor will remain to share our research publications as much as we can in digital format as a public service for promoting foreign policy thinking.

**Policy Discussions/Conversations:** ICWA plans to increase its intellectual activities as it has signed new MoUs with domestic and foreign counterpart institutions. More lectures and Talks by foreign dignitaries and eminent scholars will be organized.

ICWA plans to hold panel discussions, Conferences and Young Scholar seminars on contemporary issues involving experts and participants from different institutions across the country to have diversity of views and perspectives.

**Outreach:** ICWA has signed 11 new MoUs with academic and research institutions across the country this year increasing our national MoU partners to 43. The Council collaborates with its national MoU partners in undertaking joint research and joint conferences/seminars. The researchers from ICWA and Partners institutes also participate as resource persons in each other's intellectual activities and exchange views that contribute to better understanding of International Affairs. Given the increase in MoU Partners there will be increase in activities.

To facilitate and promote research on foreign policy issues, the Council continues with its *Book Project Grant Scheme* through which it gives book research grants to scholars, experts and early career researchers across the country. The book grant has a provision for field visit too. Council has been receiving a number of good proposals in this regard.

Under its "Foreign Policy Awareness Scheme", ICWA makes effort to build synergies with Universities and increases its outreach by supporting the conferences on foreign policy and international affairs through its *Conference Grant Scheme* which provides a maximum conference grant of rupees two lakhs for organizing conference. The aim remains to spread awareness amongst students, faculty and researchers and provide platform for generation of new ideas for further research on international politics and Indian foreign policy. As Council has been receiving number of proposals, outreach activities would likely to increase".

**5.40 The Committee appreciate the important role of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in promoting informed discourse on international affairs, fostering bilateral and multilateral relations, and enhancing India's global presence through research, publications and intellectual exchanges. While the budgetary allocation for ICWA has seen an increase in BE 2024-25 to Rs. 15.47 crore , the Committee observe that this increase is primarily attributed to salaries and capital expenditures. The Committee note the collaborative efforts of ICWA with institutions in countries such as South Korea, Poland and Vietnam. The ICWA's efforts to increase awareness of foreign policy through university collaborations and conferences are commendable. To meet the growing scope and scale of ICWA's research, outreach, and policy-related activities, the Committee recommend a further enhancement of budgetary allocation of ICWA. The Committee desire that ICWA should be scaling up joint research initiatives with other countries to**



**foster cross-pollination of ideas and strengthen India's intellectual diplomacy. The Committee also urge ICWA to expand its partnerships with academic institutions and think-tanks across India, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, to ensure equitable access to its programs.**

*(Recommendation No.43)*

### **C. RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

5.41 Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a think tank specializing in international economic relations and development cooperation, serving as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue among think tanks of developing countries. An outlay of Rs. 16.64 crore was earmarked under this Head during 2023-24 which was kept at the same level at the RE stage. The allocation under BE 2024-25 is Rs. 18.00 crore.

5.42 Furnishing the details of activities proposed to be taken up by RIS under the enhanced allocation, the Ministry stated that RIS has been utilizing the enhanced allocation to deepen and widen its evidence-based policy research study programmes during the current financial year with particular focus on issues confronting the Global South in general and India and in particular in line with the broad foreign priorities and objectives of the Government. In the recent past, it has organized a large number of policy dialogues, interactions and programmes.

5.43 The areas of focused attention in this regard are Indo-Pacific region peace and stability, including the economic pillar of the Quad partnership, promotion of some of the globally acclaimed digitally driven home grown development solution for their increased replication in Global South through DAKSHIN, wider and closer connect with national and global academic and research institutions for deeper complementarities, strengthening of ASEAN-India partnership, strengthening of BRICS partnership, closer regional maritime connectivity as part of ongoing research work covering from Ocean Science to Sustainable Blue Economy for responsible exploitation of ocean resources for economic growth, climate change, including special focus on Indo-Pacific countries and for the promotion of LiFE, infra spillover and green finance, future of work, partnership in science & diplomacy through technology and digital solutions for wider economic development, Strengthening of higher education in the SAARC region, BIMSTEC synergies in agriculture for regional growth, connecting the unconnected

through 5G and beyond, promoting national districts as export hubs for increased exports, follow-up on initiatives taken by India during G-20 Presidency as a major Voice for Global South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, evolution of India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor; connect between Capacity Building Programmes under South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and giving space to national academics and youth scholars, as part of the University Connect initiative of RIS.

5.44 During the rest of the financial year, RIS would vigorously pursue policy relevant work in order to meaningfully deal with emerging regional and global development through its specialized research studies and initiatives and share their important outcomes and insights with the MEA and other Ministries engaged in the task of policy shaping in areas of core interests of the country and closely monitor the evolving global situation and its impact on the region and share its recommendations with them.

5.45 At the same time, RIS would continue to work for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues and for the promotion of South-South Cooperation, apart from collaboration with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. It would also continue to work as a bridge to bring both Global South and Global North together to identify best possible solutions for accelerated growth of Global South to bring about larger convergence between Global South and Global North in areas of collective interest while guiding the Global South to defend and promote its core trade and economic interests at bilateral, regional and global levels during intergovernmental negotiations. It would also further strengthen its partnerships for attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), financial inclusion, gender equality, reformed multilateralism etc. in line with India's rising stature in the world economy.

5.46 RIS would also continue to pursue the dialogues, meetings and discussions encompassing various themes of national interest such as energy efficiency in effective energy transition, future digital currencies and crypto-currencies and e-commerce. RIS considers such policy dialogues are of profound importance for our country as they enable RIS scholars and external academicians, policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders to carry out extensive deliberations on various economic issues confronting the Global South at national, regional, sub-regional and multilateral level and share their insights towards evolving possible solutions. RIS

also intends to organize similar in-depth discussions on a regular basis in coordination with its wide range of national and international partner institutions on key issues and strengthen its connect with Ministries of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) to bring to table holistic understanding of issues on trade, investment and economic cooperation assimilated from subject scholars from across the globe with different affiliations and enable MEA to appropriately utilize the value of such discussions for evolution of effective real time foreign policy formulations.

5.47 To strengthen India's Neighbourhood First policy and Act East Policy, as advised by the MEA, RIS would continue to work closely with Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways to strengthen India's maritime connectivity pillar through its newly established Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) at RIS. MEA has nominated JS Indo-Pacific as a member of the Advisory Board of this Centre. In addition, to strengthen collaboration on regional issues, RIS would be closely working with the Indo-Pacific Division to manage and lead with ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS on issues related to multi-modal connectivity. MEA has also nominated RIS as member of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) and the West Europe Division of MEA has also engaged RIS for leading to India-EU Connectivity Partnership launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and EU President. On trade facilitation measures, RIS has come up with a dedicated research programme.

5.48 RIS has so far made major efforts to create its global footprint and has been engaged in major international meetings and negotiations including at the WTO and the UN entities. RIS has also in the recent past made efforts to work closely with regional bodies like the BIMSTEC, ASEAN, IORA and AU. MEA shall, in consultation with RIS, continue to facilitate its engagement in major global forums. MEA would consider supporting/ facilitating RIS in obtaining observer status in institutions like the UN-ECOSOC. MEA has also supports the RIS Flagship Annual Conference the Delhi Process on South-South and Triangular Cooperation. This would help in amplifying the scope and nature of support provided by RIS to the Government including in new areas like sustainability, SDGs, LiFE, gender, etc.

5.49 In overall terms, RIS would continue to work on the following key verticals of its domain knowledge to defend and promote the interests of the country during the year with enhanced

financial assistance from the Government. The key pillars of RIS work programme and the institutional initiatives taken by it are at V.

5.50 The actual expenditure made during the last three years under various Conferences/Dialogues and Special Plenary sessions conducted during these years are provided below:

(in Rupee)		
<b>FY 2021-22</b>	<b>FY 2022-23</b>	<b>FY 2023-24</b>
1,21,91,646.00	1,46,28,911.00	1,33,67,115.00

5.51 On being asked about the exact role of RIS in providing intellectual support to the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry, it has been submitted as under:

“ RIS remains in regular contact with PP&R Division and other Divisions in the MEA and carries forward its research programme well aligned to Government’s evolving priorities and focus areas of India’s foreign policy goals.

RIS has a comprehensive programme of research collaboration with international organizations and academic bodies of other countries. The outcome of such collaboration is usually in the form of academic research, which is published in various indexed academic journals and is regularly shared by RIS with PP&R Division and gets reflected in its compendium for wider internal circulation among policy makers. These important inputs are also appropriately utilized by the Division in its bilateral and multilateral policy planning dialogues with other Foreign Offices, preparation of research papers, policy briefs and situation reports pertaining to global developments and international affairs in general and India’s foreign policy in particular and in the preparation of the Annual Report of the Ministry.

RIS also organizes collaborative conferences and seminars and interactions with the academia on core areas of India’s interest in the geopolitics and geoeconomics, trade, finance, development, neighbourhood connectivity and South-South Cooperation in partnership with its wide network of think tanks and institutional and academic partners. These interactions provide the Ministry critical policy making inputs on emerging knowledge domains and technologies and also serve as important platforms for the articulation, discussion and dissemination of India’s foreign policy and views among national and global audiences. Senior officials of the MEA also participate in them and share their perspectives on emerging issues of critical importance to India.

RIS also conducts rigorous studies on issues connected with regional trade and economic integration and brings out its reports which are also utilized by the Government for effective policy articulation on critical issues. Based on inputs received from various think tanks, including RIS, the Government structures its short, medium and long-terms policies for its neighbouring countries. RIS also helps the government by bringing regional and countries experts who regularly contribute to its research

programme and also take part in policy dialogues for a better understanding by the government of ground realities on such matters in the neighbouring countries.

In consultation with the Government, RIS also holds track 1.5 and 2 dialogues on emerging issues to promote India's foreign policy objectives.

Under its University Connect Programme, RIS organizes national level seminars in collaboration with universities and academic institutions in different locations across the country to generate greater awareness on foreign policy issues. With the support of MEA, RIS is currently organizing a large number of seminars on a countrywide basis to generate awareness about the importance of India's G20 Presidency. In addition, RIS also conducts IBSA Fellowship Programme with support of MER Division, organizes five ITEC courses annually with support of DPA-II, organizes an annual international conference on South-South Cooperation with the support of MER Division, and Delhi Dialogue with ASEAN with the support of ASEAN-ML Division. RIS also organizes the meetings of BRICS and IBSA Academic and Civic forums with the support of MEA.

5.52 The Ministry has also furnished a detailed note on research institutions, bodies and organizations working in collaboration with RIS in various countries. Over the years, RIS has developed a wide network of partner institutions across the world as part of its work programme to gain from their valuable experience, expertise and new knowledge in dealing with its areas of domain knowledge for a holistic and multi-dimensional examination and understanding of the critical issues involved. It also enables RIS to succinctly put across India's policy postures at the global level through their networks of scholars. Many of them have entered into formal MOUs with RIS to promote policy research on mutually agreed areas of cooperation, exchange of scholars and publications, and participation in events organized by them. This process has significantly boosted the convening power and footprint of RIS across the world and a large number of its institutional partners have entered into agreements to carry out joint studies and programmes on issues of profound importance to developing countries. The list of its partner institutions abroad is attached at VII.

5.53 Elaborating on the manner in which RIS can play a more effective role in policy planning, research and foreign policy formulations, the Ministry stated that the specialized research programme of RIS can be further strengthened and integrated within the Government system, including the MEA, for timely absorption of its critical research inputs in policy formulation. Closer interaction of government officials with RIS would help take further advantage of the

policy research studies, publications as well as interactions organized by RIS. Visiting Heads of Indian Missions could be encouraged to visit RIS for special briefings on areas of their interest. RIS can also widen its outreach to put across India's standpoint on areas of critical importance to the country in the evolving world where counter narratives need to be handled effectively through evidence-based research, for example- in South-South Development Cooperation, technology adoption, new ITEC programs, etc.

**5.54 The Committee commend the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) for its consistent efforts in providing evidence-based policy research and its substantial contribution towards advancing India's foreign policy objectives. Recognizing the increasing complexities of global geopolitics and geoeconomics, the Committee underscores the need to further strengthen RIS's institutional capacity and broaden its engagement with national and international stakeholders. The Committee note RIS's role in organizing Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues. The University Connect Programme is a valuable initiative to engage youth and academia in foreign policy discussions. The budgetary allocation for RIS has also been increased from Rs. 16.64 crore in 2023-24 to Rs. 18.00 crore in 2024-25. While appreciating the increase in allocation for RIS, the Committee desire that the Government should continue progressive enhancement of RIS's financial resources to enable it to expand its research capacity and activities, particularly in emerging areas like the Blue Economy, climate change and digital transformation, cyber security, artificial intelligence etc. RIS should continue its work in promoting regional connectivity through initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and ASEAN-India multi-modal connectivity. The Committee also urge the MEA to work towards integration of the specialized programme of RIS within the Ministry for timely absorption of research outputs into policy formulation.**

*(Recommendation No 44)*

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **POLICY PLANNING AND RESEARCH**

The Policy Planning and Research is the nodal division of the Ministry for initiatives relating to medium-term policy planning, research and outreach to the strategic, think-tank and academic community specializing in foreign policy, as well as engaging bilateral partner countries on policy planning dialogues.

6.2 Furnishing the exact role of Policy Planning Division, the Ministry stated that the Policy Planning & Research Division is the nodal division for coordinating the Ministry's engagement for Viksit Bharat and the Special Group of Secretaries (SGOS) 10. It is also the nodal Division for the organisation of the Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS), the three editions of which were held respectively in January, 2023, November 2023, and August 2024.

6.3 The Policy Planning & Research Division is also the nodal division of the Ministry for outreach to the think-tank, strategic and academic community on policy and public diplomacy initiatives. The Division along with its network of autonomous bodies (Indian Council of World Affairs and Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries), think tanks and academic collaborations, provides a well-organized mechanism for the purpose of Policy Planning and Research in foreign affairs. These think tanks include both Government funded and private organizations.

6.4 The Division organizes four flagship Track 1.5 strategic outreach initiatives, namely the Raisina Dialogue, Global Technology Summit, Asia Economic Dialogue and the Indian Ocean Conference, as well as a gamut of country and region-specific Track 1.5 engagements, in association with various think-tanks. Narrative-building on India's foreign policy is a key purpose of these outreaches initiatives. In such conferences, policy ideas are also gathered from specialists from outside the government, for seeding into and deliberation in the government apparatus.

6.5 In addition to these, the Division also organizes national level seminars in collaboration with universities and academic institutions in different locations in the country to aid in the dissemination of foreign policy awareness. Recently, the Division has also taken the initiative to expand its footprint beyond New Delhi through initiatives such as NADI Dialogue in Guwahati,

Act East to Indo-Pacific: Role of North Eastern States in Connecting the Connectivities in Imphal and the Raisina Forum for Future of Diplomacy in New Delhi and Varanasi.

6.6 The Division also conducts Track 1.0 policy planning dialogues with the Foreign Offices of more than 20 countries. These engagements are either bilateral, trilateral or plurilateral in nature.

6.7 The Division is tasked with responsibility of providing inputs for Foreign Policy Planning. It prepares research papers, policy briefs and situation reports pertaining to global developments and international affairs in general and India's foreign policy in particular. The Division also prepares the Daily Report and Connecting the Dots, Arth Niti, Raksha Niti, and Tech Niti, Monthly Reports and other reports. These reports are disseminated within the Ministry and our Missions abroad.

6.8 The Division's research output also goes to several Government agencies/departments/ministries including PMO, Ministry of Defence, NSCS, etc. as well as to heads of some prominent think tanks in India.

6.9 The Division is also mandated to prepare and publish the Annual Report of the Ministry which is tabled in Parliament. This is an intensive, three-month-long process during which this Division collates and synthesizes inputs from all our Divisions. The Annual Report of the Ministry is the only such comprehensive document on India's foreign policy in the public domain and is referred to by the academic and think-tank community both within India and abroad.

6.10 The Division is also the nodal division for India's "Neighbourhood First Policy" where it conducts regular mid-term evaluation and research on India's engagement with its immediate neighbourhood in consultation with the concerned territorial and functional Divisions of the Ministry.

6.11 On the Committee's specific query whether the Division has been able to spell out long term strategic doctrine for India, the Ministry stated that while there is no single overarching and formalized strategic document that can delineate a roadmap for India's foreign policy apparatus, the underlying principles of our diplomatic strategy are long-established and enduring. The



Ministry continually assesses and refines its diplomatic stance and policies in response to evolving global challenges. India's positions on relevant issues and its interests, in the context of these principles, have been articulated through various platforms. These include safeguarding India's sovereignty and security, protecting and promoting India's national interests, enabling India's domestic economic transformation, ensuring peaceful, secure and stable regional and global environment that is conducive to India's growth and development and building influence in global forums through bilateral, multilateral and regional efforts. This pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy orientation has revitalized our traditional ties, re-energized our strategic, commercial and economic relations with new partners and re-connected us with our Diaspora abroad. It has provided us with a foundation for dealing with the new and fast-changing realities of the world.

6.12 Elucidating the manner in which external expertise has been inducted into the Ministry, the Ministry stated in a written reply as under:

“Through its nodal division for policy planning and public diplomacy initiatives, i.e. PP&R Division, organizes collaborative conferences and seminars with various think tanks enabling the participation of domain experts on key foreign policy issues. The Raisina Dialogue, the Global Technology Summit, the Asian Economic Dialogue and the Indian Ocean Conference are some of the flagship conferences organised by the division, in partnership with prominent think tanks. These conferences are intrinsically Public Private Partnership (PPP) where think tank partners play a key role in designing the event, curating themes, listing speakers and panelists and raising funds (generally about 50-80% of overall budget) from other sponsors, with Ministry's financial support forming only a part of multiple funding sources.

The track 1.5 and 2.0 conferences of MEA form a significant component of India's public diplomacy outreach and serve multiple diplomatic objectives such as agenda setting, narrative building, and shaping international discourses on geopolitics, besides academic deliberations on topical foreign policy themes.

Over the years, the Ministry's flagship conferences such as Raisina Dialogue and Global Technology Summit have steadily grown in stature and profile, ranking amongst the top international strategic dialogues, comparable to global peers like Munich Security Conference. Achieving such an enhanced profile for these initiatives was one of the original objectives conceived in 2015, when policy decisions were undertaken to expand the Ministry's track 1.5 outreach to strategic community.

The Ministry has also been utilizing external expertise in the form of subject specialist consultants for the purpose of research and policy planning. These consultants are used for producing research papers, policy briefs, coverage of strategic conferences

and seminars, preparation of template speeches, think-tank compendium, as well as daily analysis of significant global events”.

6.13 Regarding the mechanism for incorporating academic expertise into policy formation, the Ministry stated that it accords high priority to engaging academics based in universities and think tanks and utilizing their expertise in the preparation of research papers and policy briefs for use in the ministry. There are multiple mechanisms for engaging with academics. For example, the division funds universities for the conduct of national/international seminars and thematic conferences on a regular basis.

6.14 The Ministry also engages with academia through its autonomous bodies – ICWA and RIS which have a systematic programme of academic events as well as collaborations with corresponding institutions in other countries. The research output of the academic activities is compiled into reports and compendiums which are utilised by the Ministry.

6.15 Another channel through which the ministry utilizes academic expertise is by commissioning of research projects through think tanks like ICWA, RIS, IDSA, etc. Apart from these formal channels, the officers of the Ministry maintain close links with academics and researchers working on areas of interest to the ministry and frequently interact with them in order to exchange views and gain insights from them.

6.16 The Ministry supports various Track 1.5 and Track 2.0 Dialogues, in partnership with prominent think tanks, enabling the participation of domain expertise on key foreign policy issues. The Ministry has also intensified institutional engagement with academic experts by facilitating regular interaction of high functionaries with academics.

6.17 Niti Shakti is a new program that was started in 2023 whereby Divisions within the Ministry can identify specific research requirements and commission them from relevant universities, think tanks, institutes, centres of excellence, or any organization with relevant subject matter expertise, through the PP&R Division. Proposals have been sought from Indian Missions abroad and different divisions of the Ministry. The approved budget for this program for the FY 2024-25 is Rs 4 crore.

6.18 The Ministry has also been utilizing external expertise in the form of subject specialist consultants for the purpose of research and policy planning. These consultants are used for

producing research papers, policy briefs, coverage of strategic conferences and seminars, preparation of template speeches, think-tank compendium, as well as daily analysis of significant global events.

6.19 Some of the research institutes/think tanks/universities that Ministry of External Affairs collaborates with from time to time, through the Policy Planning Division are placed below:

Name of Research Institutes	Remarks
ICWA	ICWA was established in 1943 as a think tank and was registered as a non-official, non-political and non-profit organization under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860. By an Act of Parliament in 2001, the Council has been declared an institution of national importance. The Hon'ble Vice President of India is ICWA's ex-officio President. ICWA is administered as per the provisions of the Indian Council of World Affairs Act, 2001. The budget for ICWA is provided by the PP&R Division, MEA
RIS	The RIS was established in 1983 as a registered society. The Society was envisaged to serve as a national focal point to identify and discuss priority areas of research concerning multilateral issues, primarily on economic, social, scientific and technological matters. It was decided that the society will undertake research activities or may assign areas of research to specified national institutions. The society will also forge effective links between research institutions of other Non- aligned and developing countries. It would also organize discussions, seminars and workshops and involve research institutions of other countries in these undertakings. It would also advise the Government of India on all matters pertaining to multilateral economic and social issues as may be referred to from time to time.
MP-IDSA	The Manohar Parikar Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Defence. PP&R Division collaborates with IDSA for carrying out various conferences and thematic projects.
Delhi Policy Group	The Ministry collaborates with Delhi Policy Group for the organisation of the India-Japan Track 1.5 Dialogue.

Asian Confluence	The Ministry collaborates with Asian Confluence for organising NADI Dialogue in the North East. Recently, the Ministry organized a dialogue on Act East to Indo-Pacific: Role of North-east Indian States in Connecting the Connectivities in Imphal, Manipur with Asian Confluence.
Observer Research Foundation (ORF)	The Division collaborates with ORF for the organisation of the Raisina Dialogue. So far 09 editions of the Raisina Dialogue have been successfully organised till 2024. Raisina Dialogue is the Ministry's flagship conference relating to international strategic affairs and geo politics. In the past, ORF has also collaborated with the Ministry for activities connected to BRICS. ORF has also organized the Raisina Forum for Future of Diplomacy for young diplomats since 2022.
India Foundation	The Division collaborates with India Foundation for the organisation of the Indian Ocean Conference. So far 7 editions of the Indian Ocean Conference have been held since 2016.
Ananta Aspen Centre	The Division collaborates with Ananta Centre for the organising of the India US Forum, India-Japan Forum, India-EU Track 1.5 Dialogue, India-Nordic Dialogue and India Korea Track 1.5 Dialogue.
Carnegie India	The Division collaborates with Carnegie India for organising the Global Technology Summit. 8 editions of the Global Technology Summit have been held so far. The 1st GTS Innovation Dialogue was held on October 8-9, 2024 in Bengaluru in partnership with Carnegie India.
Pune International Centre	The Ministry collaborates with PIC in organising the Asia Economic Dialogue which is one of the Ministry's flagship strategic outreach conferences.
Chennai Centre for Chinese Studies	The Ministry provides grant-in-aid to this institute for funding its research activities where all to the Ministry.
Centre for China Analysis and Strategy	The Ministry provides grant-in-aid to this institute for funding its academic activities.
Manipur University, and Rashtriya Raksha University	The division collaborates with Universities to organize seminars, events, etc.

NEDFi	The Division has collaborated with NEDFi on a Research Study focused on Neighbourhood.
Others	The division has collaborated with several Universities and Organizations in India for numerous foreign policy outreach conferences

6.20 Regarding existence of research collaboration with other countries on issues pertaining to Foreign Policy, the Ministry stated that it undertakes research collaborations with other countries through ICWA and RIS. ICWA maintains a regular programme of interactions and academic collaborations with its partner institutions in several countries. Similarly, the RIS has a comprehensive programme of research collaboration with international organisations and academic bodies of other countries. The ASEAN-India Centre located within the RIS is specifically mandated for research collaboration on issues of mutual interest for India and ASEAN countries. DAKSHIN, the global South centre of excellence was set up as a Special Purpose Vehicle under RIS in 2023, to steer institutional collaboration between think-tanks of Global South countries to conduct research, identify specific projects and share best practices in the fields of health, education, digital connectivity/solutions and agriculture. Till date, RIS has reached out to think tanks in 121 countries, and signed Letters of Association with think tanks in 65 countries. The outcome of such collaboration is usually in the form of academic research which is published in various prominent academic journals.

6.21 Further, the Ministry has recently established new initiative on Strategic Outreach Fund (SOF) to provide budgetary support to Political Wings of our Missions to conduct strategic outreach activities in their respective countries, as well as commission short term research projects with think tanks, on topics/issues of immediate relevance to bilateral relations of India and the country of Mission's accreditation.

6.22 The Policy Planning Division conducts Track 1.0 policy planning dialogues with Foreign Offices of more than 20 countries. When asked about the nature of Policy Planning Dialogues, the Ministry informed that Policy Planning Dialogues are government-to-government consultations that are held between the PP&R Division and its counterpart division/department dealing with Policy Planning in the foreign offices/ministries of partner countries. These are both bilateral and multilateral in nature and are conducted as per mutually agreed agenda with

topics of common interest. These are largely consultative in nature, and facilitate discussion on issues of wider policy implications and understanding each other's positions on regional and international issues of contemporary relevance. The outcomes of the discussions in the policy planning dialogues are provided as inputs to the relevant Divisions within the Ministry.

6.23 The Ministry further informed that from the year 2015 till August 2024, the PP&R Division has conducted policy planning dialogues with the counter-part policy planning units in the foreign offices of Armenia, Australia, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russia, Turkey, UK, USA and Vietnam. Multilateral policy planning dialogues with the EU, BRICS and QUAD countries have also been held. These policy planning dialogues are held at Joint Secretary/Director-General level.

6.24 On the response received so far regarding Niti Shakti, the Ministry stated that the Niti Shakti initiative was launched in July 2024. A number of proposals under the initiative are currently under various stages of approval.

6.25 The Committee were keen to know whether the Ministry has explored the idea of having a grand strategy that clearly spells out coherent foreign policy objectives, goals and strategy for the long run. The Ministry responded that while there is no single overarching and formalized strategic document that can delineate a roadmap for India's foreign policy apparatus, the underlying principles of our foreign policy and diplomatic strategy are long-established and enduring. The Ministry continually assesses and refines its diplomatic stance and policies in response to evolving global challenges. India's positions on relevant issues and its interests, in the context of these principles, have been articulated through various platforms.

6.26 These include safeguarding India's sovereignty and security, protecting and promoting India's national interests, enabling India's domestic economic transformation with the objective of achieving Prime Minister's Vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, which in turn requires ensuring peaceful, secure and stable regional and global environment that is conducive to India's growth and development and building influence in global forums through bilateral, multilateral and regional efforts. This pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy orientation has revitalized our traditional ties, re-energized our strategic, commercial, and economic relations with new

partners and re-connected us with our Diaspora abroad. This has also provided us with a foundation for dealing with the new and fast-changing realities of the world.

6.27 India's 'Neighbourhood First policy' guides its approach towards the management of relations with countries in its immediate neighbourhood, that is, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Neighbourhood First policy, *inter alia*, is aimed at enhancing physical, digital and people to people connectivity across the region, as well as augmenting trade and commerce. This policy has evolved into an institutional priority for all the relevant arms of the Government managing relations and policies with our neighbourhood. With the objective to further strengthen ties with countries of the Southeast Asian region, India's 'Look East Policy' launched in 1992, was upgraded to the 'Act East Policy' in 2014, with proactive and pragmatic focus on the extended neighbourhood in the Indo-Pacific region. The objective of India's Act East Policy is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and developing strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The 'Act East Policy' recognizes connectivity, in its broadest sense, as the key for growth and prosperity of the region, which includes physical, digital, economic and people-to-people movement. India's relationship with the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) is at the core of India's 'Act East Policy'. Further, along with strengthening bilateral ties with the countries of the region, India has also enhanced its engagement in various multilateral and plurilateral institutions in the region, such as, ASEAN, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting plus, ASEAN Regional Forum, Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indian Ocean Commission, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, QUAD, among others. India's outreach to the Gulf and West Asian countries has become an increasingly important pillar of its foreign policy. This region has traditionally been important for India's energy security. The welfare of the Indian Diaspora in the region is also a high priority. Under the 'Think West Policy', India's ties with these countries have moved beyond conventional areas of cooperation. Relations with countries in West Asia have continued to deepen through sustained high-level visits, increased trade and investment and strengthening of relations in areas including energy, security, defence, culture, education, health and enhanced investments. The 'Connect Central Asia Policy' envisages a deep, meaningful and sustained engagement with the Central Asian region. This has been implemented by the continuous efforts taken in this direction, in particular, the

institutionalization of the ‘India-Central Asia Summit’ mechanism. The ‘Connect Central Asia Policy’ also focuses on leveraging India’s historical and civilizational connections with the Central Asian region and strengthening strategic and security cooperation, capacity building, economic and commercial cooperation, enhancing connectivity and people to-people ties. The Security and Growth for All in the Region’ (SAGAR) concept was first articulated by the Prime Minister in Mauritius in 2015. Under this concept, India envisages a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, one which is built on a rules-based international order, sustainable and transparent infrastructure investment, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, mutual respect for sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes, as well as equality of all nations. Guided by SAGAR, India is making concrete contributions in connectivity, capacity building, disaster management, enhancing people to people exchanges, promoting sustainable development, creating awareness on illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, enhancing maritime safety and security as well as strengthening underwater domain awareness in the Indian Ocean Region. These policy formulations have been clearly articulated from time to time by our leadership, including the Prime Minister and EAM.

6.28 The Ministry has also provided an indicative list of major countries that have publicly put out strategy documents in recent years :

S.no	Country	Name of Document	Issuing Authority
1.	Australia	Foreign Policy White Paper 2017	Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT)
2.	Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Austrian Security Strategy 2013</li> <li>• Austrian Security Strategy 2024</li> </ul>	Office of Head of Government (Federal Chancellor)  Office of Head of Government (Federal Chancellor)
3.	Azerbaijan	National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2007  No new strategy after 2007	Office of the President of Azerbaijan



4.	Belgium	Comprehensive Approach - Strategy Note 2017  No new strategy after 2017	Council of Ministers
5.	Belarus	The National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Belarus.	Belarus National Assembly
6.	Bhutan	Bhutan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade released a "Foreign Policy" document in 2021.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
7.	Bosnia & Herzegovina	The foreign policy strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018 – 2023  No new strategy after 2018	Office of Head of State
8.	Costa Rica	Institutional Strategic Plan 2021-2025  No new strategy after 2021	Ministry of External Affairs
9.	Czech Republic	Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10.	Ecuador	Agenda De Politica Exterior	Ministry for External Relations
11.	Estonia	Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12.	European Union	Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe  European Union Global Strategy 2016	European External Action Service
13.	Finland	Foreign and Security Policy for New Era 2024	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
14.	Germany	National Security Strategy 2022	Federal Ministry of Defence
15.	Iceland	Parliamentary Resolution on a national security policy for Iceland	
16.	Ireland	Statement of Strategy	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (Such

			statements are released by various ministries)
17.	Japan	National Security Strategy of Japan 2022	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
18.	Malawi	Malawi Foreign Policy: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Foreword by President)
19.	New Zealand	Strategic Intentions 2024-2028	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
20.	Nigeria	National Security Strategy	Office of the President
21.	Pakistan	National Security Policy (NSP) 2022-2026	The National Security Division (NSD) of Pakistan is a federal body that is part of the National Security Council (NSC)
22.	The Philippines	National Security Policy 2023-2028	Office of the President
23.	Peru	Multi-annual Strategic Plan for Foreign Affairs of Peru for 2015-2021  No new strategy after 2021.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
24.	Poland	The Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021  No new strategy after 2021.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
25.	Russia	The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2023	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
26.	Serbia	National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021	Strategic Planning Department, Ministry of Defence
27.	Slovenia	Safe, Successful, globally respected: The Foreign Policy of Republic of Slovenia,	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

		2022 No new strategy after 2022.	
28.	Spain	External Action Strategy 2021-2024	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
29.	South Africa	Strategic Plan 2020-25	Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Made separately by various Ministries)
30.	Sweden	Statement of Foreign Policy 2024	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
31.	Switzerland	Foreign Policy Strategy 2024-27	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
32.	Thailand	20-year Foreign Affairs Masterplan (2018-2037)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
33.	Turkiye	2019-23 Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs As of November 2024, the Ministry has not publicly released a new strategic plan for the subsequent period. For the most current information, please refer to the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
34.	United Kingdom (UK)	➤ Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy 2021  5. Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world	Prime Minister's Office  Prime Minister's Office
35.	United States of America (USA)	US National Security Strategy 2022 No new strategy after 2022	Office of the President

36.	Uruguay	Strategic Priorities for International Cooperation for Sustainable Development (2020-2025)	Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation
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6.29 On being asked about the present strength of the Policy Planning and Research Division including domain experts and whether the strength is adequate to perform its functions effectively, the Ministry replied as follows:

<b>Ministry's personnel</b>		<b>Consultants</b>
<b>PP&amp;R Division</b>	<b>Boundary Cell</b>	
Joint Secretary -1 Director -1 US-3 PPS-1 PS-1 SO-1 PA/Steno-3 ASO-2 JSA/SSA-2 MTS-5  Total-20	Ex cadre officer (Defence)-03 SO-01 PA-02  Total-06	Consultants-08

The present strength is adequate to perform its functions effectively.

6.30 On being asked about details of subject specialist consultants working in the Division of the Ministry along with their area of expertise, the Ministry stated that the consultants with PP&R Division have post-graduate and/or doctoral degrees in various fields of International Relations with subject specialisations in international law, conflict studies, Maritime Security and UNCLOS, International Organisations, Peace and Security, Climate change and energy transition, Arctic geopolitics and governance, India's polar diplomacy, Security Studies, Outer Space Security, New and Emerging Technology, Trade and Investment Policy. In many instances, the Consultants have prior expertise of working in relevant research domains in think tanks or other agencies or Ministries of Government of India.

6.31 At present consultants are appointed on the basis of a consultancy agreement for a period of one year, which is renewable as per extant guidelines of Department of Expenditure.

6.32 Enumerating the research activities undertaken by these consultants during the past five years, the Ministry stated that in the course of their work with the PP&R Division, the Consultants have worked on research and drafting on subjects such as, reforms within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), tracking defence-related and technological developments across the world, Indo-Pacific policies of the Netherlands, Italy, Lithuania, Estonia, UK, US, EU, France, Australia and OECD, and India's vision for the Indo-Pacific, geopolitics of the Northern Sea Route, India's role in the Global South, legality of land reclamation activities in the sea, geopolitical significance of IMEC Corridor, maritime engagement in Indo-Pacific, UN and World Bank reform, African policy developments, trade relations between southeast Asian countries, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Arctic institutions; national and international forums active in the Arctic, Arctic policies of G20 members, augmenting climate solutions through Digital Public Infrastructure, regulation and legal aspects of militarism in Outer Space, sustainability in Outer Space, detailed analysis of the WOMEERA and MILAMOS manuals for Outer Space security, relations of ASEAN countries towards QUAD, the geopolitics of semiconductor supply chains, Critical Minerals and their importance in global supply chains, tracking cross-sectoral initiatives carried out by QUAD, China's economic and technology outreach, China's lawfare and foreign policy, suggestions for lawfare strategy in India, among other topics and reference to the Ministry's work.

6.33 On the Committee specific query whether is a proposal to absorb these consultants, the Ministry stated that there is no proposal at present to absorb the consultants in the Ministry. At present consultants are appointed on the basis of a consultancy agreement for a period of one year, which is renewable as per extant guidelines of Department of Expenditure.

**6.34 The Committee acknowledge the crucial role played by the Policy Planning & Research Division in shaping and strengthening India's foreign policy apparatus through strategic outreach, policy research and engagement with academia, think-tanks and international partners. The Ministry has also undertaken new initiatives such as setting up of DAKSHIN, a Global South Centre of Excellence under RIS; Strategic Outreach Fund (SOF) to provide budgetary support to Political Wings of Indian Missions for conducting strategic outreach activities as well as commissioning short term research projects with**

think-tanks and Niti Shakti, whereby Divisions within the Ministry can identify specific research requirements and commission them. The Committee are hopeful that these initiatives would scale up the quantum and quality of research and outreach activities and provide valuable inputs for foreign policy planning and formulation. The Ministry is also urged to fast-track these initiatives with greater transparency in the selection and funding of proposals from think tanks, universities and institutes.

*(Recommendation No.45)*

6.35 The Committee find that the Policy Planning Division's has taken efforts to expand its footprint beyond Delhi through NADI Dialogue and regional seminars, which they find quite commendable. To further enhance the reach and effectiveness of such initiatives, the Committee urge the Ministry to organize more regional dialogues in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and also ensure greater representation of the North-East region. The Committee also desire that policy planning dialogues conducted by the Division with the Foreign Offices of countries as well as multilateral policy planning dialogues held with key groups like EU, BRICS and QUAD should be institutionalized into annual frameworks with a dedicated mechanism for follow-ups and tracking of outcomes for more impactful engagements.

*(Recommendation No.46)*

6.36 While the PP&R Division has undertaken commendable work in foreign policy planning, the Committee note the absence of a formalized long-term strategic doctrine. The Ministry is encouraged to develop a comprehensive Strategic Foreign Policy Doctrine Document to provide a cohesive and long-term vision for India's diplomacy. Several countries, such as the United States, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom as well as the European Union, have successfully implemented such documents to guide their foreign policy. By adopting a similar approach, India can enhance its capacity to navigate global challenges and maintain its leadership role on international platform. MEA should initiate consultations with relevant stakeholders, including experts, diplomats, policymakers and parliamentary bodies to explore the feasibility and scope of developing a grand strategy document for India's foreign policy. The Committee may be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

*(Recommendation No.47)*

**6.37** The Committee note that the present staffing of the Policy Planning and Research Division comprises of 20 personnel from the Ministry, 08 external consultants and 03 ex-cadre officers. The Ministry has been utilizing external expertise in the form of subject specialist consultants with specialized knowledge in areas such as international law, maritime security, outer space, climate change, arctic geopolitics, etc. The Committee note that these consultants have enriched the Division's work by providing in-depth research and analysis on a wide range of contemporary and emerging issues, aligning with India's strategic and diplomatic objectives. At present, consultants are engaged on a one-year renewable contract basis as per extant guidelines of the Department of Expenditure, with no proposal for absorption into the Ministry. While this arrangement allows for flexibility, it risks losing valuable institutional knowledge when contracts end. In view of this, the Committee desire that various options should be explored to utilize the experience and expertise of the Consultants, including that of engaging them in the research institutes/think tanks, etc. that the Ministry of External Affairs collaborate with. The Ministry should inform the Committee expeditiously of the manner in which it contemplates to utilize their expertise and experience.

*(Recommendation No.48)*

**MINUTES OF THE THIRD SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS (2024-25) HELD ON 06 NOVEMBER 2024**

The Committee sat on Wednesday, the 06 November 2024 from 1100 hrs. to 1330 hrs and from 1415 hrs to 1540 hrs. in Room No. 2, Extension Building, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

**PRESENT**

**Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson**

**MEMBERS**

**LOK SABHA**

2. Smt. D. K. Aruna
3. Shri Mitesh Patel Bakabhai
4. Shri Arun Govil
5. Shri Navaskani K.
6. Shri Asaduddin Owaisi
7. Shri Sanatan Pandey
8. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy
9. Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
10. Shri Y. S. Avinash Reddy
11. Smt. Aparajita Sarangi
12. Ms. Bansuri Swaraj

**RAJYA SABHA**

13. Dr. John Brittas
14. Smt. Kiran Choudhry
15. Smt. Sagarika Ghose
16. Dr. K. Laxman
17. Shri A. D. Singh
18. Kunwar Ratanjeet Pratap Narayan Singh

**SECRETARIAT**

- |                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Shri Dheeraj Kumar        | Joint Secretary  |
| 2. Smt. Reena Gopalakrishnan | Director         |
| 3. Ms. K. Muanniang Tunlut   | Deputy Secretary |



## **MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

<b>Sl No.</b>	<b>Name of the officer</b>	<b>Designation</b>
1	Shri Vikram Misri	Foreign Secretary [Leader of Delegation]
2	Shri Anurag Agarwal	SS (FA)
3	Shri Kumaran Periasamy	SS (ER & DPA)
4	Shri Sanjiv Ranjan	AS (AD)
5	Shri Y K Sailas Thangal	AS (GEM)
6	Shri Puneet Agrawal	AS (IOR)
7	Ms. Godavrthi Venkata Srinivas	AS (LAC)
8	Shri Sevala Naik Mude	AS (C&WA)
9	Shri Raj Kumar Srivastava	Dean (SSIFS)
10	Shri Rajeev Kumar	Acting Director General (ICCR)
11	Shri Vanlalvawna Bawitlung	JS (AD)
12	Shri Balasubramanian Shyam	JS (BM)
13	Ms. Sugandha Rajaram	JS (SAARC)
14	Ms. Pratibha Parkar	JS (Parl & Coord.)
15	Shri Ankan Banerjee	JS (DE)
16	Shri Rohit Rathish	JS (DPA-III) & RRC
17	Shri Anurag Srivastava	JS (North)
18	Shri Siddhartha Nath	JS (Indo-Pacific)
19	Dr. K.J. Srinivasa	JS (CPO)
20	Shri Anish Rajan	Joint Secretary (PSP-II)

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members of the Committee and the representatives of the Ministry of External Affairs to the sitting of the Committee convened to take oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry on Demands for Grants of the Ministry for the year 2024-25. He also drew attention of the representatives of the Ministry to Direction 55 (1) of Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. In his opening remarks, the Chairperson provided an in-depth analysis of the overall budgetary allocations for the Ministry of External Affairs for both the BE 2024-25 and RE 2023-24. He highlighted that the budget allocation of ₹22,154.67 crore for the

financial year 2024-25 represents a 23% increase over the BE 2023-24 allocation. The enhanced allocation is primarily earmarked for expenditure related to the Guarantee Redemption Fund, arising from the invocation of the Government of India's Guarantee by Exim Bank to comply with Reserve Bank of India norms. In light of India's expanding global presence and the evolving activities of the Ministry, the Chairperson expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of the budgetary provision in achieving the nation's foreign policy objectives.

3. After expressing his gratitude to the Committee for its continued guidance, the Foreign Secretary provided a comprehensive overview of the Ministry's budget, achievements during the ongoing fiscal year, challenges encountered in implementing projects abroad, and the actual expenditure trends of the previous year. The Members raised pertinent queries on a range of issues relating to the Ministry's mandate, including but not limited to MEA's budget *vis-a-vis* the Government's overall budget; cross-country comparative assessment of budgetary allocation; Line of Credit (LoC) provisioning; demand-allocation differential; fluctuating nature of demands and allocations to various countries under developmental cooperation; time line for Passport Seva Programme (PSP) version 2.0; opening of Passport Seva Kendras (PSK/PoPSKs) in all Lok Sabha constituencies; arbitrariness in budgetary allocation for the Diaspora functions of the Ministry; establishment of one stop centres for assistance to women; under-staffing in vital departments & Missions/Posts abroad; cultural exchanges through Indian Council of Cultural Research (ICCR); current status of the construction of Nalanda University and South Asian University Projects; and status of proposed new Emigration Bill, etc.

4. In response to the Members' queries, the Foreign Secretary provided detailed clarifications on various issues such as rationalization of expenditure; enhanced coordination with the Ministry of Finance; distinction between scheme and non scheme classification of MEA's budget; monitoring mechanism for implementation of international projects; lessons learnt from implementing the Passport Seva Programme (PSP); revenue earnings from passport and visa services; establishment of Protector of Emigrants (PoE) offices; status of Chabahar Port; representation of women in senior positions; and welfare schemes and programmes dealing with Indian Diaspora. The Chairperson also directed that the Ministry should furnish written replies on the various points raised by the Members during discussion to the Secretariat at the earliest.

5. In conclusion, at the Members' request, it was agreed that the next agenda of the Committee meeting would focus on a briefing by the Foreign Secretary on pending issues such as India-Canada and India-China relations, among other matters.

The witnesses then withdrew.

*The Committee then adjourned.*

A verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS (2024-25) HELD ON 11 DECEMBER, 2024**

The Committee sat on Wednesday, 11 December, 2024 from 1600 hrs. to 1645 hrs. in Committee Room C, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

**PRESENT**

**Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson**

**MEMBERS**

**LOK SABHA**

2. Shri Vijay Baghel
3. Shri Mitesh Patel Bakabhai
4. Shri Deepender Singh Hooda
5. Shri Brijendra Singh Ola
6. Shri Asaduddin Owaisi
7. Shri Sanatan Pandey
8. Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
9. Smt. Aparajita Sarangi
10. Ms Praniti Sushilkumar Shinde

**RAJYA SABHA**

11. Dr. John Brittas
12. Smt. Kiran Choudhry
13. Smt. Sagarika Ghose
14. Dr. K. Laxman
15. Ms. Kavita Patidar
16. Shri A. D. Singh
17. Dr Sudhanshu Trivedi

**SECRETARIAT**

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Shri Anjani Kumar        | Joint Secretary  |
| 2. Ms. K. Muanniang Tunglut | Deputy Secretary |

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the Sitting of the Committee.

3. The Committee took up for consideration the draft Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2024-25.

4. The Chairperson invited the Members to offer their suggestions for incorporation in the draft Report. The Members suggested some minor modifications. After deliberations the Committee adopted the draft Report with these minor modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Report incorporating the suggestions made by the Members and present the same to Parliament.

*The Committee then adjourned.*

**Details of Training Programme for Indian Diplomats/Officer for the year 2021-22**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Training Programme</b>	<b>Dates</b>
1.	Promotion related Training Programme for Principal Private Secretaries	05-09 Apr 2021
2.	6th Mid Career Training Programme Phase-I (MCTP-I)	05-16 Jul 2021
3.	Promotion related Training Programme for Private Secretaries	12-16 Jul 2021
4.	Promotion related Training Programme for Section Officers	12-23 Jul 2021
5.	Special Training Programme for Officers of Haryana State	23 Jul 2021
6.	Training Programme for the Officers of International Relations Division, Office of Comptroller and Auditor General of India	02-03 Aug 2021
7.	IVFRT	02-03 Aug 2021
8.	Accounts Training Programme	05-06 Aug 2021
9.	80th IMAS	09-23 Aug 2021
10.	Probation Related Training Programme for Officers at the Level of Under Secretaries	31 Aug – 24 Sep 2021
11.	Accounts Training Programme	06-08 Sep 2021
12.	81st IMAS	13-24 Sep 2021
13.	Training Programme for Defence Attachés	27 Sep – 01 Oct 2021
14.	Online Mid-Career Training Programme-II (MCTP-II) for IFS officers	04-14 Oct 2021
15.	1st Induction Training Programme for Personal Assistants and Stenographers	22 Nov -03 Dec 2021
16.	Induction Training Programme for Assistant Section Officers (ASOs) of the 2017 and 2018 batches	13-24 Dec 2021
17.	Training Programme for Officers Posted to Overseas Audit Officers	06-07 Jan 2022
18.	IVFRT	10-11 Jan 2022
19.	Accounts Training Programme	13-14 Jan 2022

20.	82nd IMAS	17-21 Jan 2022
21.	Induction Training Programme (ITP) for the Second Batch of Assistant Section Officers (ASOs) of the 2017 and 2018 batches	31 Jan -11 Feb 2022
22.	AKAM Special Course on Foreign Policy for Indian Media	21-25 Feb 2022
23.	1st Training module on 'India and its Neighbourhood' as part of 96th Foundation Course at LBSNAA, Mussoorie	09-11 Mar 2022
24.	Induction Training Programme for IFS Officer Trainees of 2021 batch	21 Mar – 09 Sep 2022

### **Details of Training Programme for Indian Diplomats/Officer for the year 2022-23**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Training Programme</b>	<b>Dates</b>
1.	Induction Training Programme for the 2018 batch of Direct Recruit Assistant Superintendents of the Central Passport Organisation (CPO)	04-13 Apr 2022
2.	Accounts Training and 83rd IMAS Training	18-25 Apr 2022
3.	IVFRT	26-27 Apr 2022
4.	Mid- Career Training programme-III (MCTP-III) for IFS Joint Secretary Level officers	09-27 May 2022
5.	Training in Computer Skills	02-03 Jun 2022
6.	Mid- Career Training Programme-I (MCTP-I) for IFS Officers	06-22 Jun 2022
7.	Citizen-Centric Orientation Programme for MEA Interns	21-22 Jun 2022
8.	Induction Training Programme for ICCR Officials	22-24 Jun 2022
9.	Mid- Career Training Programme-II (MCTP-II)	11 Jul – 03 Aug 2022
10.	IVFRT (Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration and Tracking) Training	27-28 Jul 2022
11.	Training Programme for Defence Attaches	22-26 Aug 2022
12.	Induction Training Program for DR-ASOs of 2019 Batch Batch I	22 Aug – 02 Sep 2022
13.	2nd Training module on 'India and its Neighbourhood' as part of 97th Foundation Course at LBSNAA, Mussoorie	19-20 Sep 2022

14.	Induction Training Program for DR-ASOs of 2019 Batch Batch II	19-30 Sep 2022
15.	Promotion related Training Programme for ASOs and Cypher ASOs	21 Nov-25 Nov 2022
16.	Promotion-related Training Programme for Stenographers and PAs	28 Nov-02 Dec 2022
17.	Training Session on India's Foreign Policy for Haryana State Services Officers	28-29 Nov 2022
18.	Training Programme for Liaison Officers for G20 meetings	02 Dec 2022
19.	IVFRT	06-08 Dec 2022
20.	Accounts Module and 84th IMAS Training	22 Dec 2022 – 06 Jan 2023
21.	Induction Training Programme for IFS OTs of 2022 batch and Bhutanse Diplomats	12 Dec 2022 to 13 Jun 2023
22.	Liaison Officers Training Programme for G20 summit	12 Feb 2023
23.	Accounts Module and 85th IMAS Training	21 Feb – 07 Mar 2023
24.	Mid Career Training Programme-II (MCTP-II)	06-31 Mar 2023
25.	IVFRT	21-23 Mar 2023

#### **Details of Training Programme for Indian Diplomats/Officer for the year 2023-24**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Training Programme</b>	<b>Dates</b>
1.	Induction Training Programme for DR-ASOs of 2020 Batch (Batch I)	10-24 Apr 2023
2.	Training Programme for Indian Trade Service Officers	02-04 May 2023
3.	Promotion related Training Programme for Section Officers	08-19 May 2023
4.	Promotion related Training Programme for Principal Private Secretaries & Private Secretaries	22-26 May 2023
5.	Promotion related Training Programme for ASOs (Batch I)	29 May-02 Jun 2023
6.	Promotion related Training Programme for ASOs (Batch II)	05-09 Jun 2023
7.	Mid Career Training Programme-I (MCTP-I)	12-30 Jun 2023
8.	Promotion Related Training Programme for Stenographers and Personal Assistants	19-23 Jun 2023



9.	86th Integrated Mission Accounting System (IMAS) for SOs/ PSs and below	26-30 Jun 2023
10.	Promotion related Training Programme for Junior Secretariat Assistant (JSAs)	17-21 Jul 2023
11.	IVFRT	17-21 Jul 2023
12.	Training Programme for Defence Attaches	7-9 Aug 2023
13.	Accounts Module and 87th IMAS Training	28 Aug-06 Sep 2023
14.	Induction Training Programme for DR-ASOs of 2020 Batch (Batch I)	03-16 Oct 2023
15.	3rd Training module on 'India and its Neighbourhood' as of 98th Foundation Course at LBSNAA, Mussoorie	18 Oct 2023
16.	Induction Training Programme for Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees of 2023 batch and Bhutanese Diplomats	6 Nov 2023 to 10 Nov 2024
17.	Training Programme/workshop on International Negotiation for COP	10 Nov 2023
18.	IVFRT	17 Nov 2023 15-2
19.	Mid Career Training Programm-III (MCTP-III) for JS L IFS Officers	4-22 Dec 2023
20.	Accounts Module and 88th IMAS Training	15-22 Dec 2023
21.	Accounts Module and 89th IMAS Training	03-10 Jan 2024
22.	IVFRT	16-18 Jan 2024
23.	Promotion related Training Programme for ASOs and SAs (Batch I)	19-23 Feb 2024
24.	Promotion related Training Programme for ASOs and SAs (Batch I)	26 Feb-01 Mar 2024
25.	Accounts Module and 90th IMAS Training	04-22 Mar, 2024
26.	Training Programme for IRS Officers Trainee	11-13 Mar, 2024

**Annexure –II****Details of Courses for Foreign Diplomats for the year 2021-22**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Training Courses</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1.	2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Vietnam	11-12 May 2021
2.	Special Training Module on 'Reformed Multilateralism' for Diplomats from Dominican Republic	16 Jun 2021
3.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Sierra Leone	21 Jun – 02 2021
4.	8th Special Course for Diplomats from Afghanistan	05-17 Jul 2021
5.	4th Familiarization Programme for Resident Diplomats	26-30 Jul 2 021
6.	4th Familiarization Programme for Resident HoMs	23-27 Aug 2021
7.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)	20 Sep – 01 2021
8.	Sushma Swaraj Lectures 2021 on Introduction to India for Resident Foreign Diplomats	21-22 Oct 2021
9.	2nd Special Course for Diplomats from The Gambia	15-26 Nov 2021
10.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Oman	06-17 Dec 2021

**Details of Courses for Foreign Diplomats for the year 2022-23**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Training Courses</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1.	3rd Special course for Diplomats from the Republic of South Sudan	17-27 May 2022
2.	5th Familiarization Programme for Resident Diplomat	13-17 Jun 2022
3.	60th Know India Programme	29-Aug-22
4.	Orientation Programme for 52nd MCTP for Civil Servants of Bangladesh	2-Sep-22
5.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Mexico	5-17 Sep 2022
6.	Orientation Session for 61st Know India Programme	27 Sep 2022
7.	69th Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats	03-28 Oct 2022
8.	Orientation Session for 62nd Know India Programme	4-Nov-22
9.	2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Central Asia	5-16 Dec 2022
10.	Orientation Session for 63rd Know India Programme	23-Dec-22
11.	Orientation Session for 64th Know India Programme	04 Jan 2023
12.	3rd Annual Disarmament & International Security Affairs (D&ISA) Fellowship Programme	09-17 Jan 2023

13.	2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Iran	06-17 Feb 2023
14.	Orientation Session for 65th Know India Programme	07 Feb 2023
15.	3rd Special Course for Diplomats from Pacific Island Countries	20 Feb - 03 Mar 2023
16.	70th Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD)	13-31 Mar 2023

**Details of Courses for Foreign Diplomats for the year 2023-24**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Training Courses</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Eritrea and Zambia	17-28 Apr 2023
2.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Uganda	12-23 Jun 2023
3.	Orientation Session for 66th Know India Programme (KIP)	31 Jul 2023
4.	Special Course for Diplomats from El Salvador	31 Jul-11 Aug 2023
5.	Orientation Session for 67th Know India Programme (KIP)	14 Aug 2023
6.	2nd Special Course for Diplomats from the League of Arab States (LAS)	23 Aug-01 Sep 2023
7.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Timor Leste and 2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Dominican Republic	20-29 Sep 2023
8.	1st Special Course for Diplomats from Armenia & Georgia and 2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Mongolia	18-27 Oct 2023
9.	Orientation Session for 68th Know India Programme (KIP)	01 Nov 2023
10.	1st Global South Young Diplomats Forum	20 Nov-01 Dec 2023
11.	Orientation Session for 70th Know India Programme (KIP)	12 Dec 2023
12.	Orientation Session for 71st Know India Programme	04 Jan 2024
13.	Orientation Session for 72nd Know India Programme	16 Jan 2024
14.	4th Annual Disarmament & International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme	22 Jan-09 Feb 2024
15.	Orientation Session for 74th Know India Programme	12 Feb 2024
16.	1st Special Course for diplomats from Cambodia	27 Mar-05 Apr 2024
17.	2nd Special Course for diplomats from Lao PDR	27 Mar-05 Apr 2024

**OVERVIEW OF INDIAN MISSIONS/POSTS ABROAD****A. List of Resident Missions (total – 149)**

<b>Sl No</b>	<b>Name of Mission</b>	<b>Country</b>	
<b>AFRICA - 47</b>			
1.	Embassy of India, Abidjan	Cote d'Ivoire	1.
2.	Embassy of India, Addis Ababa	Ethiopia	2.
3.	Embassy of India, Algiers	Algeria	3.
4.	Embassy of India, Antananarivo	Madagascar	4.
5.	Embassy of India, Asmara	Eritrea	5.
6.	Embassy of India, Bamako	Mali	6.
7.	Embassy of India, Brazzaville	Republic of the Congo	7.
8.	Embassy of India, Cairo	Egypt	8.
9.	Embassy of India, Conakry	Guinea	9.
10.	Embassy of India, Dakar	Senegal	10.
11.	Embassy of India, Djibouti	Djibouti	11.
12.	Embassy of India, Freetown	Sierra Leone	12.
13.	Embassy of India, Juba	South Sudan	13.
14.	Embassy of India, Khartoum	Sudan	14.
15.	Embassy of India, Kinshasa	Democratic Republic of Congo	15.
16.	Embassy of India, Libreville	Gabon	16.
17.	Embassy of India, Lome	Togo	17.
18.	Embassy of India, Luanda	Angola	18.
19.	Embassy of India, Malabo	Equatorial Guinea	19.
20.	Embassy of India, Monrovia	Liberia	20.
21.	Embassy of India, N'Djamena	Chad	21.
22.	Embassy of India, Niamey	Niger	22.
23.	Embassy of India, Nouakchott	Mauritania	23.
24.	Embassy of India, Ouagadougou	Burkina Faso	24.
25.	Embassy of India, Praia	Cape Verde	25.
26.	Embassy of India, Rabat	Morocco	26.
27.	Embassy of India, Sao Tome	Sao Tome and Principe	27.
28.	Embassy of India, Tripoli	Libya	28.

29.	Embassy of India, Tunis	Tunisia	29.
30.	High Commission of India, Abuja	Nigeria	30.
31.	High Commission of India, Accra	Ghana	31.
32.	High Commission of India, Dar Es Salaam	Tanzania	32.
33.	High Commission of India, Gaborone	Botswana	33.
34.	High Commission of India, Harare	Zimbabwe	34.
35.	High Commission of India, Kampala	Uganda	35.
36.	High Commission of India, Kigali	Rwanda	36.
37.	High Commission of India, Lilongwe	Malawi	37.
38.	High Commission of India, Lusaka	Zambia	38.
39.	High Commission of India, Maputo	Mozambique	39.
40.	High Commission of India, Mbabane	Eswatini	40.
41.	High Commission of India, Nairobi	Kenya	41.
42.	High Commission of India, Port Louis	Mauritius	42.
43.	High Commission of India, Pretoria	South Africa	43.
44.	High Commission of India, Victoria (Mahe)	Seychelles	44.
45.	High Commission of India, Windhoek	Namibia	45.
46.	High Commission of India, Yaoundé	Cameroon	46.
<b>ASIA - 43</b>			
47.	Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	1.
48.	Embassy of India, Amman	Jordan	2.
49.	Embassy of India, Ashgabat	Turkmenistan	3.
50.	Embassy of India, Astana (Nur-Sultan)	Kazakhstan	4.
51.	Embassy of India, Baghdad	Iraq	5.
52.	Embassy of India, Manama, Bahrain	Bahrain	6.
53.	Embassy of India, Bangkok	Thailand	7.
54.	Embassy of India, Baku	Azerbaijan	8.
55.	Embassy of India, Beijing	China	9.
56.	Embassy of India, Beirut	Lebanon	10.
57.	Embassy of India, Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan	11.
58.	Embassy of India, Damascus	Syria	12.
59.	Embassy of India, Dili	Timor Leste	13.
60.	Embassy of India, Doha	Qatar	14.
61.	Embassy of India, Dushanbe	Tajikistan	15.
62.	Embassy of India, Hanoi	Vietnam	16.

63.	Embassy of India, Jakarta	Indonesia	17.
64.	Embassy of India, Kabul	Afghanistan	18.
65.	Embassy of India, Kathmandu	Nepal	19.
66.	Embassy of India, Kuwait City	Kuwait	20.
67.	Embassy of India, Manila	Philippines	21.
68.	Embassy of India, Muscat	Oman	22.
69.	Embassy of India, Phnom Penh	Cambodia	23.
70.	Embassy of India, Pyong Yang	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	24.
71.	Embassy of India, Riyadh	Saudi Arabia	25.
72.	Embassy of India, Sanaá	Yemen	26.
73.	Embassy of India, Seoul	Republic of Korea	27.
74.	Embassy of India, Tashkent	Uzbekistan	28.
75.	Embassy of India, Tehran	Iran	29.
76.	Embassy of India, Tel Aviv	Israel	30.
77.	Embassy of India, Thimphu	Bhutan	31.
78.	Embassy of India, Tokyo	Japan	32.
79.	Embassy of India, Ulaan Baataar	Mongolia	33.
80.	Embassy of India, Vientiane	Laos	34.
81.	Embassy of India, Yangon	Myanmar	35.
82.	Embassy of India, Yerevan	Armenia	36.
83.	High Commission of India, Bandar Seri Begav	Brunei	37.
84.	High Commission of India, Colombo	Sri Lanka	38.
85.	High Commission of India, Dhaka	Bangladesh	39.
86.	High Commission of India, Islamabad	Pakistan	40.
87.	High Commission of India, Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	41.
88.	High Commission of India, Male	Maldives	42.
89.	High Commission of India, Singapore	Singapore	43.
EUROPE - 38			
90.	Embassy of India, Ankara	Turkiye	1.
91.	Embassy of India, Athens	Greece	2.
92.	Embassy of India, Belgrade	Serbia	3.
93.	Embassy of India, Berlin	Germany	4.
94.	Embassy of India, Berne	Switzerland	5.
95.	Embassy of India, Bratislava	Slovakia	6.

96.	Embassy of India, Brussels	Belgium	7.
97.	Embassy of India, Bucharest	Romania	8.
98.	Embassy of India, Budapest	Hungary	9.
99.	Embassy of India, Copenhagen	Denmark	10.
100.	Embassy of India, Dublin	Ireland	11.
101.	Embassy of India, Helsinki	Finland	12.
102.	Embassy of India, Kyiv	Ukraine	13.
103.	Embassy of India, Lisbon	Portugal	14.
104.	Embassy of India, Ljubljana	Slovenia	15.
105.	Embassy of India, Madrid	Spain	16.
106.	Embassy of India, Minsk	Belarus	17.
107.	Embassy of India, Moscow	Russian Federation	18.
108.	Embassy of India, Oslo	Norway	19.
109.	Embassy of India, Paris	France	20.
110.	Embassy of India, Prague	Czech Republic	21.
111.	Embassy of India, Riga	Latvia	22.
112.	Embassy of India, Reykjavik	Iceland	23.
113.	Embassy of India, Rome	Italy	24.
114.	Embassy of India, Sofia	Bulgaria	25.
115.	Embassy of India, Stockholm	Sweden	26.
116.	Embassy of India, Tallinn	Estonia	27.
117.	Embassy of India, Tbilisi	Georgia	28.
118.	Embassy of India, Tirana	Albania	29.
119.	Embassy of India, The Hague	Netherlands	30.
120.	Embassy of India, Vienna	Austria	31.
121.	Embassy of India, Warsaw	Poland	32.
122.	Embassy of India, Zagreb	Croatia	33.
123.	Embassy of India, Vilnius	Lithuania	34.
124.	High Commission of India, Nicosia	Cyprus	35.
125.	High Commission of India, London	United Kingdom	36.
126.	High Commission of India, Valletta, Malta	Malta	37.
<b>NORTH AMERICA - 9</b>			
127.	Embassy of India, Guatemala City	Guatemala	1.
128.	Embassy of India, Havana	Cuba	2.
129.	Embassy of India, Mexico City	Mexico	3.

130.	Embassy of India, Panama City	Panama	4.
131.	Embassy of India, Santo Domingo	Dominican Republic	5.
132.	Embassy of India, Washington	USA	6.
133.	High Commission of India, Kingston	Jamaica	7.
134.	High Commission of India, Ottawa	Canada	8.
135.	High Commission of India, Port of Spain	Trinidad & Tobago	9.
<b>OCEANIA – 4</b>			
136.	High Commission of India, Canberra	Australia	1.
137.	High Commission of India, Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea	2.
138.	High Commission of India, Suva	Fiji	3.
139.	High Commission of India, Wellington	New Zealand	4.
<b>SOUTH AMERICA - 14</b>			
140.	Embassy of India, Asuncion	Paraguay	1.
141.	Embassy of India, Bogota	Colombia	2.
142.	Embassy of India, Brasilia	Brazil	3.
143.	Embassy of India, Buenos Aires	Argentina	4.
144.	Embassy of India, Caracas	Venezuela	5.
145.	Embassy of India, La Paz	Bolivia	6.
146.	Embassy of India, Lima	Peru	7.
147.	Embassy of India, Paramaribo	Suriname	8.
148.	Embassy of India, Santiago	Chile	9.
149.	High Commission of India, George Town	Guyana	10.

**B. List of Permanent / Multilateral Mission (total – 4)**

Sl No	Multilateral Mission	Country	
1.	Permanent Mission of India, Geneva	Switzerland	1.
2.	Permanent Delegation of India, Paris	France	2.
3.	Permanent Mission of India, New York	USA	3.
4.	ASEAN Mission in Jakarta	Indonesia	4.



**STATUS NOTE ON E-VIDYABHARATI AND E-AAROgyABHARATI (E-VBAB) NETWORK PROJECT**

➤ **eVidyaBharati (Tele-education)**

22 African countries joined the project, under which 27 Indian Universities (10 Government and 17 Private Universities) are offering more than 300 online UG/PG/Diploma/Certificate programmes in various disciplines to African students under the project.

A total of 15,281 scholarships have been awarded in 5 academic sessions viz., January 2020, July 2020, January 2021, July 2022 and July 2023 which equals the target of 15,000 scholarships. However, 15116 have actually enrolled into their respective academic sessions and are pursuing their programmes.

**The session wise details of scholarships awarded are provided in table below:**

S.No.	Academic Session	Secretary Approved	Enrolment
1	Jan'2020	16	16
2	Jul'2020	1206	1199
3	Jan'2021	2348	2341
4	Jul'2022	10415	10199
5	Jan'2023	**	125
6	Jul'2023	1296	1236
Total		15281	15116

**The University wise distribution of enrollment of e-VBAB learners is as below:**

eVBAB enrolled students 15116									
S.No	University	Govt/ Pvt	Jan' 2020	Jul' 2020	Jan' 2021	Jul' 2022	Jan' 2023	Jul' 2023	Total
1	IGNOU	Govt				2612	104	581	3297
2	Amity Univer ***	Pvt		697	1034	700			2431
3	D Y Patil Vidyapeeth ***	Pvt	3	250	752	700			1705
4	Manipal Acade of Higher Education***	Pvt		114	350	464			928
5	JSS Academy Higher Education Research***	Pvt	11	96	114	497			718
6	Jain University*	Pvt				676			676

7	Vignan University***	Pvt				617			617
8	Bharati Vidyapeeth***	Pvt		17	39	537	21		614
9	Chandigarh University***	Pvt				475			475
10	SASTRA***	Pvt	2	25	52	354			433
11	Hindustan Institute of Technology*	Pvt				428			428
12	Lovely Professional University***	Pvt				413			413
13	Alagappa University	Govt				32		359	391
14	Aligarh Muslim University	Govt				272		108	380
15	Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeeth ***	Pvt				232			232
16	Mizoram University	Govt				215		9	224
17	Anna University	Govt				77		107	184
18	Jamia Hamdard ***	Pvt				181			181
19	Datta Meghe Institute ***	Pvt				171			171
20	Kurukshetra University	Govt				144		26	170
21	Andhra University	Govt				142		17	159
22	Jamia Millia University	Govt				54		22	76
23	Sathyabhama Institute ***	Pvt				74			74
24	Symbiosis University ***	Pvt				62			62
25	SRM Institute ***	Pvt				61			61
26	Mahatma Gandhi University	Govt				9		7	16
	<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>1199</b>	<b>2341</b>	<b>10199</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1236</b>	<b>15116</b>
<b>*** Indicates Pvt/ deemed Universities who had a capping of 700 intake of students in each academic session.</b>									

The Country wise distribution of enrolment of e-VBAB learners is provided in table below:

eVBAB Students Enroled		Year 2020		Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023		Total
S.No	Country	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul	
1	Nigeria				4541	49	401	4991
2	Zambia	9	177	592	1227	19	119	2143
3	Malawi	1	220	420	984	9	347	1981
4	Uganda	1	306	428	969	15	151	1870
5	Ghana	4	207	375	945	9	61	1601
6	Sierra Leone		83	130	327	1	8	549
7	Mauritius		86	174	229	4	53	546
8	Mozambique		21	120	137	2	17	297
9	The Gambia		32	49	156	3	12	252
10	Somalia				231	3	14	248
11	South Sudan				187	4	34	225
12	Republic of Sudan			9	135	4		148
13	D R Congo		33	14	35		1	83
14	Mali		1	11	32		8	52
15	Cote d'Ivoire		8	8	23			39
16	Republic of Guinea		12	4	7		2	25
17	Benin	1	12	7	2	1	1	24
18	Madagascar				14		6	20
19	Djibouti				17	2		19
20	Comoros				1		1	2
21	Eritrea		1					1
22	Seychelles							
	Total	16	1199	2341	10199	125	1236	15116

The programme wise distribution of enrollment of e-VBAB learners is as below:

S.No.	Programme Type	Enrolment
1	MBA	5425
2	BCA	2334
3	BBA	1704
4	MA	1107
5	BA	890
6	PG DIPLOMA	693
7	MCA	688
8	CERT	644

9	BCOM	478
10	MCOM	334
11	DIPLOMA	302
12	MSC	286
13	BSC	231
	Total	15116

The **gender wise** distribution of enrolment of e-VBAB learners is provided in table below:

eVBAB Scholarships Gender Distribution	
Gender	Enrolment
Female	3326
Male	11790
Total	15116

The completion rate of the learners enrolled under e-VBAB is provided in table below:

Session (Total admitted)	Programme Category	Admitted	Passed/ Programme	Completed	Ongoing
Jan Academic Session (16)	Bachelors	2	1		
	PG Diploma	11	10		
	Certificate	3	2		
July Academic Session (1199)	Masters	760	534		
	Bachelors	226	97		
	PG Diploma	184	177		
	Certificate	29	19		
Jan Academic Session (2341)	Masters	1586	1057		512
	Bachelors	524	0		524
	PG Diploma	169	74		
	Certificate	62	34		
Jul Academic Session (10199)	Masters	4615			4615
	Bachelors	4517			4517
	PG Diploma	573			573
	Certificate	494			494
Jan Academic Session (125)	Bachelors	18			18
	Masters	107			107
Jul Academic Session (125)	Masters	695			695
	Bachelors	413			413
	PG Diploma	72			72

	Certificate	56		56
	Overall	15116	2005	12596

**eAarogyaBharati(Tele-medicine)**

Despite putting significant efforts and time, the Tele-medicine component of e-VBAB project could not be implemented due to poor response, readiness and other challenges like availability of legal guidelines, data privacy requirements and language difference in Africa countries. Therefore, in November 2023, the competent authority approved to drop the idea of implementing the Tele-medicine component under e-VBAB project.

- **Global Governance and Development Cooperation Architecture**
  - SDGs Work Programme would cover:
    - Agriculture and Nutrition (Goal 2)
    - Education (Goal 4)
    - Maritime Connectivity for Blue Economy (Goal 14)
    - Development Finance (Goal 17)
    - STI for SDGs (Goal 17)
  - Research Programme on LiFE related issues related issues
  - BRICS and IBSA Work Programme:
    - ❖ *Russian BRICS Presidency 2024*
    - ❖ *BRICS Think Tank Network for Finance*
  - Development Cooperation
    - *Development Compact*
    - *Database on India's Development Cooperation (1947-2024)*
    - *Emerging Facets of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation*
  - DAKSHIN at RIS (Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative), initial focus areas:
    - Agriculture
    - Health
    - Digital Solutions
  - Agriculture, Nutrition and Climate Resilience
  - Management Study of G20 Indian Presidency
  - University Connect Hub
- **Trade, Investment and Regional Cooperation**
  - Evaluating the Impact of FTAs on India's Economic Interests
  - Agri Value Chains in BIMSTEC: Potential for Regional Cooperation
  - India's in the Global Marketplace: Trade Dynamics and Future Outlook
  - Trade and Sustainability Issues
  - Trade in Fintech and Fintech-Enabled Services between India and UK
  - Fintech and Financial Inclusion
  - India-Oman FTA: Opportunities for India and GCC
  - Exploring India's Economic Partnerships with MERCOSUR
  - Micro-level Trade Management through Districts as Export Hubs Initiative
  - RIS-IFPRI Partnership on Food and Agriculture Trade in BIMSTEC
  - A Regional Approach to Measuring the Blue Economy in IORA Member States
  - Digitalization of MSME in India: Status, Challenges and Way forward
  - Insolvency Laws and International Trade

**C. Trade Facilitation, Infrastructure & Connectivity and Regional Integration**

- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)
- International Trade, Productivity and Efficiency of Indian Ports
- Development of ICTP at Galathea Bay
- Deepening Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)
  
- ***ASEAN-India Centre at RIS:***
  - ❖ *The East Asia Summit (EAS) Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation*
  - ❖ *RIS-ERIA partnership on Current Dynamics of ASEAN-India Economic Relations*
  - ❖ *Promotion of India-Indonesia Trade and Economic Relations*
  - ❖ *Role of Spirituality and Culture in ASEAN-India Relations: Case of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar*
  
- ***Center for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) at RIS:***
  - ❖ Maritime Business for India
  - ❖ Geo Strategic Imperatives for Indian Economy: Promote alternate shipping routes INSTC and IMEC corridors
  - ❖ India's legal landscape for carbon credits and offsets: Study on inclusion of ship recycling industry

**D. New Technologies and Development Issues:**

- STI Work Programme
  - ❖ *Artificial Intelligence*
  - ❖ *Science Diplomacy*
  - ❖ *Modern Biotechnologies and Bioeconomy*
  - ❖ *India's Engagements in Arctic*

**LIST OF RIS INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES**

<b>MoU with Foreign Institutes</b>	
	Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC) Jakarta, Indonesia
➤	The International Institute for Trade and Development (IITD) Chulalongkorn University Bangkok, Thailand
➤	Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
➤	International Cooperation Deptt. Development Research Centre (DRC) of the State Council of China Beijing, China
➤	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Singapore
➤	Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Sri Lanka
➤	Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) Seoul, Korea
➤	Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jakarta, Indonesia
➤	Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKIIRSS) Colombo, Sri Lanka
➤	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with NeST
➤	Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization, (JETO) Japan
➤	Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Ebene, Maurius
➤	Policy Analysis and Department Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia
➤	Institute for Strategic and Socio-Economic Research Nepal
➤	South Centre Switzerland, Geneva
➤	The Centre for Foreign Relations (CFR) of the United Republic of Tanzania
➤	Foundation for Ecological Security Gujarat
➤	Department for International Relations (DFID) now FCDO The Government of United Kingdom
➤	Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Pertoria, South Africa



➤	South Africa Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) Johannesburg, South Africa
➤	Economic Institute for ASEAN and East Asia
➤	The National Institute of Strategic Studies Kyrgyz Republic (NISS KR), Bishkek
➤	Presidential Agency of International Cooperatin of Colombia (APC- Colombia)
➤	Michigan State University (MSU), East Lansing, Michigan, USA
➤	Chile Pacific Foundation (FCHP)
➤	The Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) of The Korea National Diplomatic Academy, Republic of Korea; The Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIPP), Republic of Korea

## B. TRADITIONAL PARTNERS

•	Biruni Institute, Kabul, Afghanistan
•	Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dhaka, Bangladesh
•	Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS) Bhutan
•	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
•	China Agricultural University (CAU) Beijing, China
•	Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC) Beijing, China
•	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Emberging Market Sustainability Dialogues, EMSD Berlin, Germany
•	German Development Institute(DIE) Bonn, Germany
•	Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) Jakarta, Indonesia
•	Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jakarta, Indonesia
•	UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability Tokyo, Japan
•	Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) Yangon, Myanmar

•	South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) Kathmandu, Nepal
•	Institute for Strategic and Socio-Economic Research (ISSR) Kathmandu, Nepal
•	Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal
•	Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) Kathmandu, Nepal
•	Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) Lahore, Pakistan
•	Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Islamabad, Pakistan
•	Marga Institute Colombo, Sri Lanka
•	National University of Singapore Singapore
•	Institute for Global Dialogue Pretoria, South Africa
•	Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Pretoria, South Africa
•	Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies Sri Lanka
•	Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) Bangkok, Thailand
•	Institute of Development Studies Brighton, UK
•	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions Bangkok, Thailand
•	Chulalongkorn University Bangkok, Thailand

### **Multilateral and Regional Institutions**

•	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Beijing, China
•	New Development Bank (NDB) Shanghai, China
•	OECD Paris, France
•	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

	Paris, France
•	World Food Programme (WFP) Rome, Italy
•	Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Rome, Italy
•	Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Ebene, Republic of Mauritius
•	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Secretariat, Nepal
•	Asian Development Bank (ADB) Manila, Philippines
•	Islamic Development Bank Saudi Arabia
•	African Development Bank South Africa
•	International Labour Organization (ILO) Switzerland
•	South Centre Geneva, Switzerland
•	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Geneva, Switzerland
•	World Trade Organization (WTO) Geneva, Switzerland
•	UN ESCAP Bangkok, Thailand
•	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) USA
•	The World Bank Washington D. C., USA
•	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Washington, DC, USA
•	Commonwealth Secretariat London, UK
•	BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka
•	ASEAN-Network of Think-Tanks (AINTT), Jakarta