

TENTH REPORT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (1995-96)

(TENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*(Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the 6th Report
of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry
of External Affairs for 1995-96)*

*Presented to Lok Sabha on 22nd December, 1995
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 22nd December, 1995*



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(1995-96)

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Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

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3. Shri Venkata Krishna Reddy Kasu
4. Shri V. Sreenivasa Prasad
5. Shri Anwari Basavaraj Patil
6. Shri Inder Jit
7. Shri A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury
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39. Shri K. Mohammad Khan
40. Shri K. Rahman Khan
41. Shri Inder Kumar Gujral
42. Smt. Vyjayantimala Bali
- *43. Shri Mohd. Yunus

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Ashok Kumar Pandey | — | <i>Additional Secretary</i> |
| 2. Shri. G.R. Patwardhan | — | <i>Joint Secretary</i> |
| 3. Shri O.P. Ghai | — | <i>Deputy Secretary</i> |
| 4. Shri Ashok Sarin | — | <i>Under Secretary</i> |

* Ceased to be a Member of the Committee consequent upon his retirement from Rajya Sabha *w.e.f.* 14.6.1995.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs (1995-96) having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf, present this Tenth Report on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report (Tenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on the "Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1995-96".

2. The Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 28th April, 1995 and was laid in Rajya Sabha on 27th April, 1995. The Government furnished their replies indicating Action Taken on the Recommendations contained in the Report.

3. The Draft Report on the basis of Action Taken Notes was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on External Affairs (1995-96) at their sitting held on 19th December, 1995..Minutes of the Sitting of the Committee have been reproduced as Appendix I to the Report.

4. An Analysis of Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (Tenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix II.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
20 December, 1995

29 Agrahayana, 1917 (Saka)

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs.

CHAPTER I

REPORT

The Report of the Committee deals with the Action Taken by Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Sixth Report (10th Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants for the year 1995-96 in respect of Ministry of External Affairs. Sixth Report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 28th April, 1995.

2. Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the observations/recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorised as follows :

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by Government.

Para Nos. 8, 13, 20, 21, 24, 27, 38, 48, 49, 56 and 57

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies.

Para Nos. 36, 37, 45

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration.

Para Nos. 28, 43, 44

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.

Nil

3. The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their observations/recommendations.

Acquisition of Properties

(Para No. 24)

4. In para 24 of their 6th Report, the Committee had observed that they had earlier recommended that as the number of properties rented by Missions/Posts are more than those owned by them and the rentals for the hired accommodations are continuously rising, there is

a need to acquire/construct more and more buildings. In response to this the Ministry of External Affairs had stated that they had initiated an exercise to assess the total demand for accommodation. The Committee had desired the Ministry to complete that exercise at the earliest and wherever it was found that acquisition of properties would be better proposition, suitable action might be initiated for acquiring the same.

5. The Ministry in their reply have stated that they had drawn up a comprehensive plan for purchase/construction of properties which was proposed to be implemented in the period of 10 years beginning with the financial year 1995-96. The total demand for official as well as residential accommodation was also assessed by them. Since the plan entailed large financial outlays, the financial authorities expressed their inability to increase the allocation without an improvement in budgetary position of the Government. In the absence of requisite substantial increase in the budgetary outlay, the Ministry was not in a position to implement the proposed plan.

6. The Committee are concerned to note that the comprehensive plan drawn up by Ministry of External Affairs for purchase/co.struction of properties could not be implemented due to non availability of requisite funds from the financial authorities. The Committee are of the view that the number of properties rented by Missions/Posts out number those owned by them abroad and the Ministry had to incur substantial expenditure every year on the rented premises. Due to the continuous universal increase in rentals on the buildings, the need to acquire more and more buildings abroad so as to dispense with hired accommodation cannot be over-emphasised. Further, the acquisition of buildings would save the Ministry's time and energy to search for suitable accommodations. The Ministry of External Affairs should, therefore, vigorously pursue with the financial authorities for availability of more funds so as to implement the plan already drawn up by them. The Ministry while seeking funds in this regard may examine the feasibility of indicating the priority for acquisition of properties in the plan so that the financial authorities are in a position to sanction reasonable additional funds at least for those rented properties where rentals are very high and are rapidly increasing. The Committee hope that the Ministry of Finance would reconsider the matter and try to provide adequate funds for the purpose.

Strengthening of Commercial and Economic Wings in the Missions/Posts abroad

(Para No. 28)

7. In paragraph 28 of 6th Report the Committee had observed that the Commercial and Economic Wings/Sections in Missions/Posts abroad under Commercial Representative or otherwise should be suitably strengthened so as to attract the large needed foreign investment and give necessary thrust to our trade and economic activities. The Committee had desired that the expenditure incurred under the Ministry of External Affairs Budget in this behalf may be indicated separately so as to reflect the work done by them in this regard.

8. The Ministry were also asked to examine the feasibility of coordinating with the FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) to encourage them to open a larger number of overseas offices to supplement the work of the diplomatic Missions.

9. The Ministry in their reply have stated that the working of the economic and commercial wings in our Missions/Posts abroad has always attracted the Government's utmost attention. Their requirements are reviewed on a regular basis and upgradations, both personnel and infrastructural, are carried out to meet the evolving needs. Special courses and briefings are organised for our officers from time to time with a view to improving their skills for handling economic and commercial work including promotion of foreign investments.

10. Although the Ministry has assured that the economic and commercial wings in our Missions/Posts abroad are being strengthened for handling economic and commercial work including promotion of foreign investment, the reply of the Ministry is silent on the specific recommendation of the Committee that the expenditure incurred under the Ministry of External Affairs Budget in respect of trade and economic activities of the Missions/Posts abroad may be indicated separately so as to reflect the work done by the commercial and economic wings in this regard. The Ministry have also overlooked the observation of the Committee that the Ministry might examine the feasibility of coordinating with FICCI and CII to encourage them to open a larger number of overseas offices to supplement the work of the diplomatic Missions. In the opinion of the Committee this may supplement the work of the Missions/Posts abroad since the trade servicing work is often better undertaken by the people who are in the business. The Committee

are constrained to point out that the specific recommendations made by the Committee have not been taken note of by the Ministry of External Affairs. While reiterating these suggestions, the Committee hope that the Ministry in future would give due consideration to all the points contained in the observations and recommendations and implement the same. In case the Ministry are not in a position to implement any recommendation, suitable explanation therefore needs to be given in the Action Taken Notes for consideration of the Committee.

Augmentation of Passport Facilities

(Para No. 43)

11. In paragraph 43 of their 6th Report the Committee had observed that despite making provisions in BE 94-95 for the project on data entry and imaging of passport index card to enable centralised access, this was not finalised and RE 94-95 had to be reduced from Rs. 54.35 crores to Rs. 31 crores. One of the reasons of the failure to complete the project has been cited as the delay in computerisation of passport offices. The Committee had observed that if the project of data entry and imaging of passport index card was dependent on computerisation of passport offices (to be completed by the end of 1995-96), it was not clear on what basis the provision for this project was at all made in BE 94-95. The Committee had desire that necessary formalities should be expeditiously achieved to complete the project during the current financial year for which provision had already been made in Budget Estimates.

12. The Committee had also noticed that Rs. 60 crores provided in BE 95-96 for passport and immigration facilities included one time expenditure on computerisation and projection data entry etc. The Committee had desired that after incurring such one time expenditure, the Budget for passport and immigration should not be allowed to be reduced in the coming years as a substantial amount is being raised by the Government consequent upon revision in passport fees. The increased funds could then be utilised for augmenting and improving the passport facilities in the coming years.

13. The Ministry in their reply have stated that the data entry project which requires computerisation has been delayed due to the time taken in computerisation of the passport offices. Moreover, the data entry and photo scanning project is a major one both in terms of costs and infrastructure needed like office space, manpower and hardware. The Ministry is yet to identify the agencies which can undertake this project in different passport offices in a secure

environment, as due to the large volume of passports issued in the last 10 years any one agency may find it difficult to undertake the work.

14. As regards augmenting passport facilities, the Ministry have stated that they are giving high priority to providing improved office premises and facilities so that the passport offices are more congenial, conducive to greater productivity and user-friendly.

15. The Committee have again been assured that the computerisation of passport offices would be completed by the end of financial year 95-96. The Committee therefore desire that the data entry and photo scanning project which depend on computerisation of passport offices should also be completed in 1995-96 for which provisions have already been made in the Budget Estimates. The Committee are however constrained to point out that the Ministry is yet to identify the agencies which can undertake this project in different passport offices. The Committee emphasise the need for early selection of the agencies for handling data entry and photo scanning project with a view to completing the project in time. The Ministry should expeditiously take action in this direction.

16. The Committee regret to observe that the Ministry have not reacted to the specific recommendation of the Committee that the budget for Passport and Emigration should not allowed to be reduced in the coming years. The Ministry ought to strive to ensure increased funds for Passport and Immigration taking into consideration the fact that higher revenue is being collected by Government of India consequent upon the revision in passport and Visa fees. The Committee feel that increased budget outlay could be used for opening new offices, proper maintenance of buildings, improvement in customer amenities and overcoming the provisions of shortage of staff etc.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation

The Committee note that the Revised Estimate for 1994-95 works out to Rs. 926.90 crores against the Budget Estimates for Rs. 845.00 crores, thus reflecting an increase of Rs. 81.90 crores. The Ministry have stated that they constantly monitor the flow of expenditure and keep a tight rein on it in order to ensure that, as far as possible, it remains within the budgetary allocation. However, where unavoidable expenditure in excess of the Budgeting allocation is required to be made during the year, the Ministry, with the concurrence of the Ministry of Finance, is obliged to revise the budget estimates. The Committee hope that the Ministry of External Affairs would continue in their effort to refine and improve the system for the preparation of the budget so that the variation between the estimates and actuals are kept to a reasonable minimum limit. (Para No. 8)

Government's Reply

The progress of expenditure is monitored on a regular basis by the Ministry. Various circulars are issued to all the Divisions/Missions abroad from time to time to keep the expenditure within the allocated limits. However, cases do occur whereby expenditure beyond the allocated amount become inescapable due to certain developments which were not anticipated at the time of formulation of the Budget Estimates. The Revised Estimates are kept primarily to cater to these unexpected developments. However, the Ministry makes every effort to keep the expenditure within reasonable limits.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee find that the rent of the Akbar Bhavan was revised to Rs. 26.58 lakhs per month for the period 1.9.87 and again to Rs. 39.62 lakhs per month w.e.f. 1.9.92 onwards. The arrears of higher rent amounting to Rs. 5.82 crores have not been paid so far by the Ministry as the discussions with NDMC with regard to expenses in respect of major repairs/renovations which have become necessary are yet to be concluded. The Ministry hope to conclude the discussion in this regard and pay the rent arrears in 1995-96. The Committee are

surprised to find that the Ministry of External Affairs were not consulted while enhancing the rent for the Akbar Bhavan and the matter is stated to have been decided by the Committee of Secretaries. The Committee feel that the provisions for increase in the rental in subsequent years, if any ought to have been discussed and settled while taking possession of the Akbar Bhavan. It is also surprising that NDMC/CPWD insisted for increase in rent without carrying out the necessary repair works and maintenance of the building.

The Committee feel that MEA should have taken up this matter at the highest level with the Ministry of Urban Development much earlier so that the issue could be sorted out and arrears would not have accumulated to such a level.

The Committee desire that arrears for the enhanced rent should be paid by the MEA only when they are satisfied that the maintenance/repairs of the building has been carried out to their satisfaction. The Committee also desire that while finalising terms and conditions with the owners of such buildings in future it must be assure that the terms and conditions do not adversely affect the interests of the Ministry and all the relevant aspects of maintenance/repairs/enhancing of rent are adequately taken care of at that stage. (Para No. 13)

Government's Reply

Akbar Bhavan was taken over by Ministry of External Affairs w.e.f. 01.04.1986. In a meeting on 22.04.1988, Committee of Secretaries decided, *inter alia*, that MEA may continue to use Akbar Bhavan as a tenant and the rent to be paid by the MEA may be determined by the Ministry of Urban Development who may fix a reasonable rent after taking into account the standard rent and the market rent of the building. Accordingly, in July, 1988, CPWD fixed Rs. 5.72 per sq. ft. for basement area and Rs. 7.66 per sq. ft. for upper floor area as rate of rental of this building w.e.f. 01.01.1986 (applicable to MEA w.e.f. 01.04.1986). As per these rates of rental, the rent of the building works out to Rs. 24.62 lakhs per month keeping in view the total area of the building. At this rate, Ministry has paid all the arrears of the rent to NDMC. An amount of Rs. 5.34 crores was paid to NDMC during the financial year 1993-94 as the balance of arrears at the above rate of monthly rent.

Thereafter, a meeting was convened on 13.04.1994 to discuss the question of major repairs to the building. In the meeting on 13.04.1994, Administrator NDMC had agreed that the major repairs in the building like renovation of the building, repairs/replacement of leaking pipes, water-proofing of the building and major electrical repairs to the

wiring etc. will be carried out at NDMC's cost. However, despite repeated letters to the NDMC and two subsequent meetings with NDMC officials no progress has been made with regard to the major repairs to the building. In addition to the major repairs agreed to by Administrator, NDMC there are other major problems like repairs/ replacement of lifts in the building etc. NDMC has not responded to Ministry's repeated requests to carry out these repairs or to bear the cost of these repairs.

In July 1993, CPWD intimated that as per guidelines laid down by Director of Estates, the rent of the building had been reassessed—the standard dates of revision being 01.09.1987 and 01.09.1992. As per the revised rates of rentals per sq. ft. of the plinth area fixed by CPWD, the rent of the building works out to Rs. 26.58 lakhs per month for the period from 01.09.1987 to 31.08.1992 and Rs. 39.62 lakhs per month with effect from 01.09.1992 onwards. CPWD had only informed us of these revised rates but so far NDMC has not formally asked the Ministry to pay the monthly rent at the revised rate (s). A provision of Rs. 5.82 crores for payment of arrears of rent was kept in BE-95-96, on the assumption that NDMC would carry out the needed repairs to the building. However, since NDMC has not carried out the major repairs to the building, MEA have not so far released any arrears of rent and the rent is being paid at the old rate of Rs. 24.62 lakhs per month.

Akbar Bhavan building was taken over by MEA more than 9 years ago and some major repairs are over due. MEA are still trying to persuade NDMC to carry out these repairs or to agree to bear the cost of these repairs. However, as advised by the Hon'ble Committee arrears of enhanced rent/increased monthly rent will not be paid unless maintenance and repairs of the building are carried out satisfactorily by NDMC. The advice of the Hon'ble Committee regarding hiring of buildings in future has been note and it will be ensured that the interests of the Ministry are fully protected.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee note that RE 94-95 and BE 95-96 is more than BE 94-95 in case of provisions for Embassies and Missions in the Budget principally on account of a provision of Rs. 35 crores as part payment for renewal of lease for 65 years for the residence of our High Commissioner in London during 94-95 and further provision for payment of Rs. 40 crores during 95-96. The Committee are informed that lease of the building owned by Crown Estate, had expired and

was under unauthorised occupation for 4 years. A new lease for 65 years was signed by us in London not only because of the threat posed by Crown Estate Commissioner to take an early decision in this regard but also due to the fact we wanted to retain that property due to locational advantages. The Committee note that similarly the lease for the building occupied by British High Commissioner in Delhi had also expired six years ago. However, the attempt of the Ministry of External Affairs to offset one property against another without payment of any amount did not succeed. The Committee at this stage cannot but hope that the Ministry will be able to ensure that a suitable price is paid by them for the property in New Delhi.

The Committee regret to observe that such major decision of negotiations carried out between Indian and British authorities on renewal of lease of their respective Commissioner's residence in Delhi and London was not intimated to the Committee during the discussions on Demands for Grants last year. The Committee desire that they must be kept informed of such important decisions at the time of discussion of Demands for Grants so that they are seized of the matter and are in a position to give their considered opinion to the Ministry in that respect. (Para Nos. 20 & 21)

Government's Reply

As required under the lease terms for renewal of lease of the residence of the Indian High Commissioner in London (9KPG), the second and final instalment of the premium amounting to Pound Sterling 7 million has been paid in April, 1995. Necessary budgetary provision had been made in the current financial year (1995-96) for this payment. Provision for payment of arrears of ground rent and repairs and refurbishment of this property has also been made in 1995-96. The proposal for appointment of an architect in connection with proposed repairs is under process and budgeted funds will be utilised in the current financial year.

The Committee's expectation that a suitable price be charged for renewal of lease of the residence of the British High Commissioner in New Delhi (No. 2 Rajaji Marg) has been taken note of. Accordingly, a suitable price and terms and conditions have been formulated in consultation with Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Finance for negotiations with the British High Commission on renewal of lease for this property.

The Committee's directive to keep them informed of major decisions and negotiations on property matters has been noted for compliance.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee in their 2nd Report on Demands for Grants for MEA 1994-95 had recommended that as the number of properties rented by Missions/Posts are more than those owned by them and the rentals for the hired accommodation are continuously rising, there is a need to acquire/construct more and more buildings both in India and abroad. In this connection the Ministry of External Affairs have stated that they have initiated an exercise to assess the total demand for accommodation. The Committee expect the Ministry to complete this exercise at the earliest. In this case of property at New York, the Ministry have stated that the calculations made by the Ministry, keeping with its standard formula to determine the economic cost in the case of a property purchase proposal, indicated that we should not go in for purchase of the property under consideration. The Committee recommend that after a detailed assessment of their requirement for properties abroad, a study may be conducted whether acquisition of properties especially for Missions/residential accommodations for High Commissioner and Ambassadors would be economical instead of hiring those properties by having a cost benefit analysis in each case especially where the rents are very high. Where it is found that acquisition of properties would be better proposition suitable action may be initiated at the earliest for acquiring the same. (Para No. 24)

Government's Reply

In keeping with the instructions of the Standing Committee of Parliament, this Ministry had drawn up a comprehensive plan for purchase/construction of property that was proposed to be implemented in the period of 10 years beginning with the financial year 1995-96. The total demand for official as well as residential accommodation was also assessed by the Ministry. Since the plan entailed large financial outlays, the Financial authorities expressed their inability to increase the allocation without an improvement in budgetary position of the Government. In the absence of requisite substantial increase in the budgetary outlay, the Ministry was not in a position to implement the enclosed plan. However, within the available budgetary resources, the Ministry was able to acquire properties in priority Missions and Posts where these were found economically and financially beneficial. The properties purchased in 1994-95 include the Chancery building, the Embassy Residence and the Deputy High Commissioner's residence in Pretoria, the Consul General's residence in Durban, 3 officers' flats in Bangkok and 4 staff apartments in Berne.

As recommended by the Standing Committee, the Ministry continues to give due and expeditious consideration to purchase proposals from Missions/Posts. In the current financial year, this Ministry has already authorised purchase of the Chancery building in Kiev, the Chancery building in Reunion Island, and an officer's residence in the Hague. A study has also been undertaken to identify Missions where rental liabilities are very high so that suitable properties can be acquired within available resources.

As and when the financial authorities are in a position to sanction requisite substantial increase in the budget, a suitable modified time bound plan will again be prepared. Simultaneously, the Ministry is also continuing action for completion of current construction projects within the limits of its available financial resources.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee have been given to understand that during the comprehensive review of the working of the eight Missions inspected by the Foreign Service Inspectors during 94-95 number of short comings were noticed. In some Missions modern equipment had not been introduced to ensure efficient functioning while in some other cases, upkeep of Government owned properties needed to be improved. Further, procedural lapses in the maintenance of accounts were also noticed. The Committee feel that such shortcomings may also be prevailing in other Missions too. The Committee desire that suitable remedial steps should be taken to overcome these shortcomings and if necessary suitable instructions/guidelines should be issued to all the Missions/Posts with a view to avoid the recurrence of such shortcomings. (Para No. 27)

Government's Reply

The Foreign Service Inspectors had visited fourteen Missions during 1994-95. These Missions are Bursels, Kiev, Minsk, Tel Aviv, Nicosia, Athens, Malta, Moscow, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Committee's recommendation that suitable instructions/guidelines should be issued to all the Missions/Posts with a view to avoid the recurrence of shortcomings in Missions' working has been duly noted for compliance.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee also desire that the nomenclature of the heading "Advertising and Publicity" in the Demands for Grants may be changed to "Publicity and Advertising". (Para No. 38)

Government's Reply

It may be mentioned that a uniform list of object head exists which is prepared by the Controller General of Accounts. Such a list is required to be scrupulously followed to avoid misclassification of expenditure. However, the observation of the Committee would be forwarded to the Controller General of Accounts and the outcome intimated to the Committee.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee are concerned to note that against the estimated cost of Rs. 59.00 crores for construction projects at important Centres in New York, which were commenced as early as 1989, only Rs. 6.48 crores have been spent on these projects, till 1994-95. What is surprising is the fact that only Rs. 1.00 crores has been provided for the purpose in BE 95-96. On the other hand the substantial amounts have been provided in BE 95-96 for construction projects in the countries where rents may not be as high as in New York e.g. 20.00 crores for Riyadh (Total cost Rs. 45.00 crores), Rs. 6.5 crores for Port Louis (Total Cost Rs. 17.40 crores) and Rs. 3.00 crores for Abu Dhabi (Total Cost Rs. 5.50 crores) and Rs. 4.00 crores for Foreign Service Institutes (Total Cost Rs. 11.50 crores). The Committee would like to be apprised for inadequate Budget provisions made in BE 95-96 in case of Construction Projects in New York. Viewed in this context that projects in New York were started in 1989, it is imperative that those are completed expeditiously to avoid any further time and cost escalation. The Committee, therefore, desire that sufficient funds may be made available at RE stage this year and again in next year for these projects so that those could be completed without any further delay.

To have a clear picture of the progress of construction projects, the details as given on page 24 of the Demands for Grants should also include a column indicating dates of original approval and commencement and the cumulative expenditure incurred and the extent of work executed so as to have an idea of remaining work to be done and the amount to be provided therefore in the coming financial year. (Para Nos. 48 & 49)

Government's Reply

In para 48 of the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs, it has been mentioned that only Rs. 6.48 crores has been spent in the New York construction project till 1994-95. In fact, this figure of Rs. 6.48 crores is a sum of expenditure incurred in the years 1993-94 and 1994-95 and it is not the total expenditure incurred on the project upto 1994-95. The New York project was completed in January, 1993 and the total expenditure upto 31st March, 1995 was US\$ 27958815/- A final provision of Rs. 1 crore in BE 1995-96 for the project has been made on account of certain residual payments on certain pending issues. Provisions made for other current projects in Riyadh, Port Louis, the Foreign Service Institute and Abu Dhabi are realistic assessments based on the different stages of implementation that the projects are likely to cover in the current financial year. Construction in Riyadh was started in 1994 and is expected to be completed in 1995-96. In Port Louis the construction will begin on the main project in this year also. Similarly, construction will also begin on the FSI and the Abu Dhabi projects in the current financial year. It is being ensured that all current projects are completed expeditiously to avoid any further time and cost escalation.

As desired by the Standing Committee, to have a clear picture of the progress of construction projects, the details given on page 24 of the Demands for Grants will be expanded to include date of original approval, commencement, cumulative expenditure and extent of work executed.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dt. 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee note that against the total requirements of 2040 housing units in Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs have only 229 housing units. Even after proposed construction of 294 units at Pappankalan and Chankyapuri which is likely to take some time, the satisfaction rate would be 25.63% against the average percentage satisfaction rate of the Directorate of Estates of 35%. However, the Committee suggest that in working out the percentage of satisfaction type-wise requirement as well as actual allotment of available accommodation and notional entitlement of hostel accommodation should be taken into account. In any case the Committee recognise the need for allotment of more units form the General Pool to the Ministry of External Affairs and reason for exploring the possibility of creating a special pool for the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee would, therefore, like the Ministry of Urban Development/

Directorate of Estates to examine the feasibility of increasing the share of Ministry of External Affairs in Government accommodation in Delhi, *inter-alia* by relating the seniority of the employees posted at Headquarters to the date of their first posting in Delhi.

The Committee would also like the Ministry of External Affairs to give priority to the construction projects at Pappankalan and Chanakyapuri. The Committee however regret to observe that despite felt shortage of dwelling units, the Ministry did not make sufficient safeguards to protect the land at Chanakyapuri which is stated to have been grabbed by slum dwellers and is being used for burying dead bodies. The Committee deplore the inaction on the part of the Ministry in this regard. They would like them to take urgent remedial steps to release the land at Chanakyapuri or try to arrange another alternative site with the help of the Ministry of Urban Development. (Para Nos. 56 & 57)

Government's Reply

The Committee's suggestion to explore the possibility of creating a special pool of accommodation for the Ministry of External Affairs as well as the feasibility of increasing the share of the Ministry in government accommodation in New Delhi is being taken up with the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment. As desire by the Committee, the type-wise requirement as well as entitlements of accommodation will be taken into account while working out the percentage of satisfaction of accommodation requirements in the Ministry of External Affairs.

It is confirmed that due priority is being given to construction projects at Papankala and Chanakyapuri. It is also clarified that there have been no encroachments as such on the Chanakyapuri plot and adequate safeguards are being undertaken to protect the land. The Ministry has engaged 24-hours security to protects the land and the concerned authorities have been approached to avoid recurrence of the incident regarding use of the plot as a burial ground by slum dwellers. This problem has since been resolved and CPWD has been asked to resume construction of the boundary wall on the Chanakyapuri plot.

[MEA Letter no. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

CHAPTER III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

Recommendation

The Committee are constrained to point out that on the one hand Ministry often complain of lack of funds for publicity effort, at the same time exactly Rs. 1 crore earmarked for publicity work at Headquarters during 94-95 was reduced at RE 94-95 stage. The Committee are not aware whether this reduction of Rs. 1 crore was due to lack of proper planning or curtailment of some activities in this regard. It is incomprehensible as to how the budget demand was reduced particularly when Ministry propose to initiate so many new schemes in the field of publicity. They desire that the funds allotted for this purpose should be fully utilised and under no circumstances the budget provisions should be revised. Further, the Committee cannot but express their concern over the fact that sufficient publicity material is either not being made available by the Ministry in the Missions/Posts abroad or not being prepared by them for distribution to target groups including the NRIs, NGOs and local opinion and decision makers. The Committee emphasise the need to respond effectively to negative publicity by our adversaries as well as to project a positive consistent and coherent image of India abroad. The Committee particularly like to underline the need to monitor the local mass-media in all languages, directly or through available clipping services so that prompt remedial action can be taken. The Committee have been consistently voicing their concern in this regard for quite some time now. They would like the Ministry to step up their efforts to supply adequate information and publicity material to the Missions/Posts abroad without any further delay. At the same time the Committee would like the Ministry to explore the possibilities of utilising the electronic media and other available means to the fullest extent to supplement the efforts of the Missions/posts abroad not only to counter the hostile propaganda against India but also to project positive image of India.

The Committee fully agree with the Ministry that more funds are required for this purpose particularly keeping in view the large amount of expenditure being incurred by our immediate neighbour. However, they are distressed to find that there is hardly any increase in the provision for advertising and publicity in Missions/Posts in the

Budget Estimates for 1995-96 (Rs. 6.80 crores against 6.69 crores) rather in real terms it has gone down. The Committee feel that the Ministry have not been able to put up the case before the Finance Ministry effectively with a view to procure more funds for publicity efforts for Missions/Posts abroad. They would like them to pursue this matter vigorously with the Finance Ministry at the Revised Estimates stage level so as to substantially increase the budget allocation in this regard as well as that for Headquarters. At the same time, the battle of the image is not going to be won only on the strength of the funds in advertising and publicity. Ultimately it is a matter of idea, imagination and ingenuity. (Para Nos. 36 & 37)

Government's Reply

It is true that there is hardly any increase in the provision for advertising and publicity in missions/posts in the BE for 1995-96 over RE 1994-95. The BE for 1995-96 projected by the External Publicity Division to Budget Section, Finance Division, was Rs. 9,41,12,560/- as against an RE for 1994-95 of Rs. 6,75,86,285/-.

As regards non-utilisation of Rs. 1 crore out of the RE for 1994-95, this was on account of reappropriation by the approved RE by Rs. 1 crore by Finance Division in the closing days of the FY 1994-95 and not because of under utilisation of the budget by XP Division. In fact, bills amounting to approximately Rs. 1 crore incurred by the Division could not be passed by the Controller of Accounts, and had to be deferred to the current financial year. It is, however, true that there was a concentration of bills towards the end of FY 1994-95. This was because certain new items of expenditure placed on 'hold' for insufficient funds were effected in place of certain other items of expenditure under process which could not be settled in the last FY because of technical reasons. This deferred expenditure is to be adjusted in the RE for 1995-96.

As regards the observation that sufficient publicity material is not being made available by the Ministry for external dissemination, it is submitted that considerable efforts have been made in this direction, and are continuing to be made. These supplies cover news bulletins, feature articles, books, magazines, and journals, video programmes, documentary and feature films, transparencies, photographs, exhibitions and tourist literature. To give an idea of the scale of such supplies, over 100 feature articles, a similar number of documentary films in film and/or video, over 1500 new transparencies and photographs, around 250 books and journals, over 200 feature films, besides exhibition and other publicity material have been acquired and sent to missions and post abroad and have been used by them. Taken together, these represent a significant expansion in our publicity efforts.

Moreover, the production, acquisition and supply of new publicity material is being accompanied by a systematization and computerisation of records and stocks so as to qualitatively improve the level of functioning of the information wing of the Ministry at Headquarters. The benefits and results of this systematization will become more visible with time in the current financial year and beyond as data bases built up over the last two years are packaged and used in newer and more imaginative ways. Efforts to step up the supply of information and publicity material are continuing with plans to enlarge and strengthen the information base of the Division, modernise communications, link up the information base with the Internet information highway, conceive new image strategies, develop new exhibition material, exploit new information media, and intensity advertising and public relations activities.

The international media is also closely monitored by the Ministry and Missions on a daily basis. Periodic reports in this regard are received from all our missions. International coverage on specific developments are also being monitored. Missions are also taking prompt action against misrepresentations, misinformation and adverse publicity. In this connection, more and more missions have been equipped with satellite TV and wire facilities in order to keep them abroad of latest developments.

The Ministry is also utilising the potential of the electronic media in a variety of ways, direct and indirect. As a result of the range and quality of material being supplied by the Ministry, missions have become more active in placing documentary material on India on foreign television. From a negligible number of telecasts on foreign networks two years back, some 40 missions were able to have programmes on India telecast on national television networks on the occasion of Republic Day, 1995 besides occasional telecast outside national days in some countries. Over 150 broadcast quality tapes have been sent to some 75 missions for possible telecast on the occasion of the forthcoming Independence Day. Independent producers have also been assisted in placing their programmes in foreign networks. One such weekly programme, 'India This Week' goes out to some 25 television stations, mainly ethnic Indian TV networks, in North America and elsewhere. The Ministry has also been collaborating with popular Indian-owned satellite television networks including Doordarshan International which can be received and seen outside India by (a) providing programmes produced by the Division for external publicity purposes to some of these networks and (b) trying to cultivate greater viewership of promotional measures. Other ways in which the Ministry has been utilising the electronic media include placement of popular privately produced television serials (such as

the Mahabharata, Bahadur Shah Zafar etc.) and feature films abroad, occasionally underwriting telecast fees payable to the rights-holders, arranging for the representatives of Government to appear on satellite television, encouraging greater positive news coverage on India in such networks etc.

A number of films commissioned by the Division have been completed over the last two years. These include two films on economic reforms highlighting investment opportunities and the dynamic business environment in India as a result of it, a film on the doyen of Indian classical music, Pt. Malikarjun Mansur, which won the Best Documentary Film Award at the recently concluded 1995 National Film Award, a video film on Sufi traditions in India and their linkages with Central Asia, and two video programmes on the status of women in India in the context of the forthcoming Beijing Conference on Women. Foreign language versions of video programmes with an enduring shelf life have also been embarked upon. In this context, French, German and Arabic versions of 'India-Continuity in Change' have been added to our film library. An effort is being made to customize productions to suit target audiences according to style, taste and language.

Under the Ministry's book production programme, books have been produced on Muslims in India, Prime Minister's speeches during his visits abroad, Kashmir, Pakistani involvement in terrorism, human rights, and general information on India. Foreign language editions of some of these publications are also being brought out for non-English speaking nations. The Ministry also bring out a monthly feature magazine, 'India Perspectives' with a circulation off 50,000 in ten languages distributed through our missions abroad. New publications are under discussion currently.

At the time of furnishing our comments to the Standing Committee, many of the publicity initiatives mentioned in para 33 and 34 of the Report of the Standing Committee were at the planning or early implementation stage. In the intervening period, considerable progress has been made in regard to many of strategies mentioned and others are in various stages of implementation. Because many of these measures require some gestation period, the results are expected to be visible gradually over a period of time. They will definitely require higher budgetary outlays. Indeed, the quantum of work that can be accomplished depends partly on the outlays and on their speedy administrative approvals. Depending on the possibility of realising some of these proposals during the current financial year, It is proposed to project requirements for additional funds at the RE stage. The

Standing Committee's support in obtaining the approval for an enhanced outlay would be greatly valuable.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (ADS)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

During the course of evidence, some more points were raised mainly in connection with format of the Demands for Grants, which the Committee would like the Ministry to consider and take suitable action as suggested below :

- (i) The minor head of "Entertainment Charges" at B.6 in the Demands for Grants, should be changed to "Hospitality Charges". Besides a review of the norms of hospitality should be carried out and the Ministry should see that these norms are invariably observed/maintained during such occasions.
- (ii) As the ICCR is an apex institution, it should not be clubbed together with "grants to other Institutions" under the head B.8 (6) and should be depicted separately.
- (iii) Expenditure on "Repatriation of Indian Destitutes" under B.8 (9) (1) should not be put under Miscellaneous Category since repatriation of Indian destitutes is not only a continuous but also a legitimate function of a diplomatic or Consular Mission.
- (iv) Certain country-specific items, for example, expenditure incurred on Medical treatment of Afghan Patients at B.8 (9) (3) Treatment of Nepalese Patients in Indian Hospitals at B.8 (9) (4) etc. should be brought under the particular country's budget or these countries 'Mission' budget instead of being Sub-Items of expenditure in Demands for Grants.
- (v) The Budget proposals may reflect the expenditure incurred on bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and cultural interaction programmes so as to reflect the total expenditure on each of them there on at one place.
- (vi) The Distinguished Visitor's Programme may be reoriented to encourage and promote persons especially the second generation of Indians settled abroad who have attained the distinction in the fields of politics, business, cultures, etc. (Para No. 45)

Government's Reply

- (i) A Uniform list of Major and Minor Head is prepared by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with the Ministry of Finance

in consultation with the Controller General of Accounts. The Ministry is obliged to use the Minor head as per the list. The advice of the Committee for change of the classification from "Entertainment Charges" to "Hospitality Charges" would be taken up with the Office of the CGA and the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Action to review the norms of hospitality has already been initiated and approvals of the concerned authorities have been requested. It will be the endeavour of the Protocol Division to see that the revised norms are invariably observed/maintained.

- (ii) It may be pointed out here that heading under B. 8 (6) is not "Grant to Other Institutions" but "Grant to Institutions". The allocation for grant to ICCR has been shown first giving it the due importance. However, all the grants in Aid have been clubbed together on the specific recommendations of the Standing Committee in its earlier report (2nd Report) that items of similar nature of expenditure be depicted at one place in the Demands for Grants so as to give the totality of the allocated amount for a specific item *viz.* Grants in Aid.
- (iii) B.8 (9) (1) Repatriation of Indian Destitutes has been put under the Sub Head "Other Schemes". It may be emphasised that the mere putting of the items under "Other Schemes" is not meant to lessen the considerable importance the Ministry attaches to this item of expenditure. This is mainly due to the reason that effort was made, on the recommendation of the Committee in its earlier report (2nd report), to categories all similar type of expenditure into one category which resulted in the change in the format of our Demands for Grants. All items of expenditure which were unique in their nature were therefore clubbed together under "Other Schemes".
- (iv) As regards Expenditure incurred on Medical treatment of Afghan Patients at B.8 (9) (3), Treatment of Nepalese Patients in Indian Hospitals at B.8 (9) (4), it may be mentioned that the Ministry does not make any country-wise provisions. The Ministry, however, extends loan/aid to some neighbouring countries to respond to developmental requirements in that particular country. This is a manifestation of our foreign policy and part of our on-going commitment towards South-South cooperation. This Aid/loans is at times recoverable with or without interest. As regards expenditure on treatment which is given in India, classifying it under the Aid/loans programme would tantamount to misclassification of the nature of expenditure.

- (v) Although the Cooperation programmes have been categorised into two categories *viz.*, Bilateral Cooperation Programmes and Multilateral cooperation Programmes but the total of the two programmes separately has not been depicted at one place. The point raised by the Committee has been taken note of and the total would be incorporated in the Demands for Grants of the next financial year.
- (vi) The original idea was to invite US Congressmen and their staffers under the Distinguished Visitors' Programme. However, for some time, the programme was expanded to include influential academicians as well as eminent newsmen. As the visits by academicians and newsmen did not eventually materialise, it was decided to revert to the original objective of inviting Congressmen and their staffers given the great importance of winning support in the US Congress on matters of vital concern to India.

The observations of the Standing Committee *vide* para 45 (vi) regarding second generation of Indians have been noted for compliance.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS (AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION

Recommendation

The Committee would also like to emphasise that trade generating activities require diplomatic skill and expertise, and the entire mission including Head of the Mission and Political and Information Officer should be encouraged to develop necessary expertise and orientation. The Committee therefore desire that the commercial and economic wings/sections in Missions/Posts abroad under Commercial Representatives or otherwise should be suitably strengthened, so as to attract the much needed foreign investment and give necessary thrust to our trade and economic activities. The expenditure incurred under the MEA Budget in this behalf may be indicated separately so as to reflect the work done by them in this regard. Further, since the trade servicing work is often better undertaken by the people who are in the business, the Ministry may also examine the feasibility of co-ordinating with the FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) to encourage them to open a larger number of overseas offices to supplement the work of the diplomatic Missions. (Para No. 28)

Government's Reply

The working of the Economic and Commercial Wings in our Missions/Posts abroad has always attracted the Government's utmost attention. Their requirements are reviewed on a regular basis and upgradations, both personnel and infrastructural, are carried out to meet the evolving needs. Special courses and briefings are organised for our officers from time to time with a view to improving their skills for handling economic and commercial work including promotion of foreign investments.

A comprehensive exercise to review the manpower requirements of the economic and commercial wings of our Missions/Posts abroad is currently underway in consultation with the Ministry of Commerce. Proposals concerning as many as 38 Missions/Posts are under active consideration and further suitable action would be taken in this regard.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS(AD)/95 dated 30.8.95]

Recommendation

The Committee regret to observe that despite making provision in BE 94-95 for the project on data entry and imaging of passport index card to enable centralised access, this was not finalised and the RE 94-95 had to be reduced from Rs. 54.35 crores to Rs. 31.00 crores. One of the reasons for the failure to complete the project has been cited as the delay in computerisation of passport offices. The Committee were informed while examining the subject of Passport Facilities that all RPOs would be computerised only by the end of 1995-96. If the project on data entry and imaging of passport index card was dependent on computerisation of Passport Offices, it is not clear on what basis the provision for this project was at all made in BE 94-95. The committee at this stage cannot but over-emphasise the need to ensure that all the RPOs are computerised during 1995-96 so that there is no delay in completion of aforesaid project on this account. Further, necessary formalities for approval and other related project details should also be expeditiously achieved to complete the project during the current financial year for which provision has already been made at BE-95-96.

The Committee further note that Rs. 60 crores have been provided in BE 1995-96 for Passport and Emigration facilities. This may include one time expenditure on computerisation and projection data entry etc. After incurring such one time expenditure, the budget for Passport and Emigration should not allowed to be reduced in the coming years as substantial amount is being raised consequent upon revision in passport fees (Rs. 57 crores were collected out of a total revenue of Rs. 155 crores during the year 1993-94). The Ministry should strive to ensure that grant for Passport and Emigration is kept at a reasonable level taking into consideration the amount being collected on passport fee every year so as to utilise the same for augmenting and improving the passport facilities e.g. by opening new offices, proper maintenance of new buildings, improvement in customer amenities and overcoming the provision of shortage of staff etc. (Para Nos. 43 & 44)

Government's Reply

The Ministry is aware of the importance of computerisation in the streamlining of the procedures for the issue of a passport. Nine passport offices have been computerised, nine more are being computerised. It is expected that all 23 offices will be computerised by the end of the financial year 1995-96. The work in relation to all the offices has been entrusted to NIC and they are organising their available manpower for setting up the system and back-up facilities. The work of computerisation also requires site preparation

by other departments of the Government and coordination with the landlords of the office premises. Delay in computerisation has also taken place due to moving of office premises to better and more secure locations, as in the case of Hyderabad and Jaipur.

Consequently, the data entry project which requires computerisation has also been delayed. Moreover, the data entry and photo scanning project is a major one both in terms of costs and infrastructure needed like office space, manpower and hardware. The Ministry is yet to identify the agencies which can undertake this project in different passport offices in a secure environment, as due to the large volume of passports issued in the last 10 years any one agency may find it difficult to undertake the work.

The Ministry is giving high priority to providing improved office premises and facilities so that the passport offices are more congenial, conducive to greater productivity user-friendly. RPO, Delhi is housed in new modern premises since April 1994. Cochin, Bangalore, Jaipur and Hyderabad offices have also moved to more spacious premises. In Kozikhode, Goa and Hyderabad new properties have been located which are in various stage of construction/completion. In Jaipur, Bangalore, Calcutta and Lucknow, plots of land have been identified for acceptance or purchase. In Bareilly and Chandigarh discussions have been initiated for new sites. This process of upgrading the premises will have to be on a continuing basis.

[MEA Letter No. 4633/AS(AD)/95 dated 31.8.95]

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF
WHICH FINAL REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT
ARE STILL AWAITED

—NIL—

NEW DELHI;
20 December, 1995

29 Agrahayana, 1917 (Saka)

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs.

APPENDIX I

MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON TUESDAY THE 19TH DECEMBER, 1995

The Committee sat from 15.00 to 15.45 hours.

PRESENT

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Bijoy Krishna Handique
3. Shri Inder Jit
4. Smt. D.K. Thara Devi Siddhartha
5. Shri Syed Shahabuddin
6. Mohd. Yunus Saleem
7. Shri Roshan Lal
8. Dr. Sudarsan Raychaudhuri
9. Dr. Sudhir Ray
10. Shri R. Naidu Ramasamy

Rajya Sabha

11. Shri Sikander Bakht
12. Shri G.G. Swell
13. Shri V.N. Gadgil
14. Shri K. Rahman Khan
15. Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi

SECRETARIAT

Shri O.P. Ghai — *Deputy Secretary*

Shri Ashok Sarin — *Under Secretary*

At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee. The Committee then took up for consideration the

draft report on the "Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the 6th Report on Demand for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1995-96.

2. After some deliberations the Committee adopted the Report with some minor changes.

3. The Committee then authorised the Chairman to finalise the Report for presentation to the House.

4. The Committee then decided to meet again on 16th and 17th January, 1996 to hear the views of the representatives of the MEA on Indo-US relations—Nuclear Policy.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX II

(Vide Introduction of Report)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE 6TH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (10TH LOK SABHA)

- I. *Total Number of Recommendations* 17
- II. *Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by Government*
Para Nos. 8, 13, 20, 21, 24, 27, 38, 48, 49, 56 and 57
Total 11
Percentage 64.70%
- III. *Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies.*
Para Nos. 36, 37, 45
Total 3
Percentage 17.64%
- IV. *Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration.*
Para Nos. 28, 43, 44
Total 3
Percentage 17.64%
- V. *Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of Government are sill awaited.*

NIL

APPENDIX III

STATEMENT OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| Sl. No. | Para No. | Ministry | Observations/ Recommendations |
|---------|----------|---------------------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | 6 | External Affairs | The Committee are concerned to note that the Affairs comprehensive plan drawn up by Ministry of External Affairs for purchase/construction of properties could not be implemented due to non availability of requisite funds from the financial authorities. The Committee are of the view that the number of properties rented by Missions/Posts out number those owned by them abroad and the Ministry had to incur substantial expenditure every year on the rented premises. Due to the continuous universal increase in rentals on the buildings, the need to acquire more and more buildings abroad so as to dispense with hired accommodation cannot be over-emphasised. Further, the acquisition of buildings would save the Ministry's time and energy to search for suitable accommodations. The Ministry of External Affairs should, therefore, vigorously pursue with the financial authorities for availability of more funds so as to implement the plan already drawn up by them. The |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|----|------------------|--|
| | | | <p>Ministry while seeking funds in this regard may examine the feasibility of indicating the priority for acquisition of properties in the plan so that the financial authorities are in a position to sanction reasonable additional funds at least for those rented properties where rentals are very high and are rapidly increasing. The Committee hope that the Ministry of Finance would reconsider the matter and try to provide adequate funds for the purpose.</p> |
| 2 | 10 | External Affairs | <p>Although the Ministry has assured the economic and commercial wings in our Missions/Posts abroad are being strengthened for handling economic and commercial work including promotion of foreign investment, the reply of the Ministry is silent on the specific recommendation of the Committee that the expenditure incurred under the Ministry of External Affairs Budget in respect of trade and economic activities of the Missions/Posts abroad may be indicated separately so as to reflect the work done by the commercial and economic wings in this regard. The Ministry have also overlooked the observation of the Committee that the Ministry might examine the feasibility of coordinating with FICCI and CII to encourage them to open</p> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|----|------------------|---|
| | | | <p>a larger number of overseas offices to supplement the work of the diplomatic Missions. In the opinion of the Committee this may supplement the work of the Missions/Posts abroad since the trade servicing work is often better undertaken by the people who are in the business. The Committee are constrained to point out that the specific recommendations made by the Committee have not been taken note of by the Ministry of External Affairs. While reiterating these suggestions, the Committee hope that the Ministry in future would give due consideration to all the points contained in the observations and recommendations and implement the same. In case the Ministry are not in a position to implement any recommendations, suitable explanation therefore needs to be given in the Action Taken Notes for consideration of the Committee.</p> |
| 3 | 15 | External Affairs | <p>The Committee have again been assured that the computerisation of passport offices would be completed by the end of financial year 95-96. The Committee therefore desire that the data entry and photo scanning project which depend on computerisation of passport offices should also be completed in 1995-96 for which provisions have already been</p> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|----|------------------|--|
| | | | <p>made in the Budget Estimates. The Committee are however constrained to point out that the Ministry is yet to identify the agencies which can undertake this project in different passport offices. The Committee emphasise the need for early selection of the agencies for handling data entry and photo scanning project with a view to completing the project in time. The Ministry should expeditiously take action in this direction.</p> |
| 4 | 16 | External Affairs | <p>The Committee regret to observe that the Ministry have not reacted to the specific recommendation of the Committee that the budget for Passport and Emigration should not allowed to be reduced in the coming years. The Ministry ought to strive to ensure increased funds for Passport and Immigration taking into consideration the fact that higher revenue is being collected by Government of India consequent upon the revision in passport and Visa fees. The Committee feel that increased budget outlay could be used for opening new offices, proper maintenance of buildings, improvement in customer amenities and overcoming the provisions of shortage of staff etc.</p> |