

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(1999-2000)**

**THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

*Action Taken on the Recommendations contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Report  
of the Committee (13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the  
Ministry of External Affairs for 2000-2001*

**FOURTH REPORT**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 21 December, 2000  
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 21 December, 2000

**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

December, 2000/Agrahayana, 1922 (Saka)

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## **COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (1999-2000)**

**Shrimati Krishna Bose - Chairperson**

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3. Shri R.L. Bhatia
4. Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi
5. Shri Bhim Dahal
6. Shri Mohan S. Delkar
7. Shri Bikram Keshari Deo
8. Shri Gurcharan Singh Galib
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15. Dr. Prasanna Kumar Patasani
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18. Shri Saiduzzaman
19. Shri Dileep Sanghani
20. Shrimati Minati sen
21. Shri Sushil Kumar Shinde
22. Shri Chandra Bhushan Singh
23. Shri Thirunavukarasu
24. Shri Dinesh Chandra Yadav
25. Shri Saleem Iqbal Sherwani
26. Shri Kolar Basavanagoud
27. Shri Kirti Jha Azad
28. Shri Chandra Vijay Singh
29. Shri Ganta Sreenivasa Rao
30. Dr. (Smt.) Beatrix D'Souza

#### **Rajya Sabha**

31. Shri Ranganath Misra
32. Ms. Mabel Rebello
33. Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma
34. Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi
35. Dr. L. M. Singhvi
36. Shrimati Sarla Maheswari
37. Shrimati Jayaparada Nahata
38. Shri N. Thalavai Sundaram
39. Shri Swaraj Kaushal

40. Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma
  41. Shri Pritish Nandi
  42. Dr. Karan Singh
  43. Shri Mahendra Prasad
  44. Shri Arjun Singh
  45. Shri Manoj Bhattacharya
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### SECRETARIAT

- |    |                     |   |                      |
|----|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. | Dr. A.K. Pandey     | - | Additional Secretary |
| 2. | Shri Harnam Singh   | - | Joint Secretary      |
| 2. | Shri A.K. Singh     | - | Deputy Secretary     |
| 3. | Shri R.K. Saxena    | - | Under Secretary      |
| 4. | Smt. Anita B. Panda | - | Assistant Director   |
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## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on External Affairs having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf, present this Fourth Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Report (13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 2000-2001.

2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Report was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2000. 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 (1999-2000) at their sitting held on 15.12.2000. Minutes of the sitting of the Committee have been reproduced as Appendix-IV to the Report.

4. An analysis of Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix-V.

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 and have also been reproduced in consolidated form in Appendix-VI.

**KRISHNA BOSE,**

Chairperson,  
*Standing Committee on External Affairs*

**NEW DELHI;**  
**19 December, 2000**  
**28 Agrahayana 1922 (Saka)**

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## **Report**

1. The report of the Committee deals with the Action Taken, by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for the year 2000-2001 in respect of the Ministry of External Affairs. The 2<sup>nd</sup> report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2000.

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. 21, 22, 24, 29, 33, 34, 41, 42, 50, 54, 65, 75

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

Para Nos, 51, 70

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

Para Nos. 23

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

Para Nos. Nil

3. The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their Observations/Recommendations:

## **Winding up of Historical and Research Division**

**(Para No.23)**

4. The Committee had expressed its concern over the fact that winding up of Historical and Research Division and also the revival of Research Cadre had not been handled with the seriousness they deserved. The Committee strongly felt that Historical and Research Division should be re-established soon where Historical documents/records could be kept not only for the benefit of the Ministry but also for the use of academicians, researchers, students and others interested in the subject.

5. The Ministry in their reply have stated that the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs for re-establishing the Historical & Research Division and the revival of the Research Cadre has been engaging the attention of Ministry of External Affairs for quite some time.

6. The Ministry have further informed the Committee that under the instructions of the Foreign Secretary, a Committee comprising Additional Secretary (Administration), Joint Secretary (Policy, Planning & Research), Joint Secretary (Administration) and Director (Finance) was formed to look into the matter. The Ministry of External Affairs Committee carefully examined the proposal of the Policy, Planning and Research Division for creating 24 posts of Research Cadre officers and 24 post for supporting staff (subsequently scaled down to 10 posts of Research Cadre officers and 10 posts of supporting staff). The Committee, formed by the Ministry, felt that in view of the existing ban on creation of new posts and the decision of the Government to right size the bureaucracy for limiting non-plan expenditure, it would not be feasible to revive the Research Cadre as it had existed in the past.

7. The Committee reiterate that with the winding up of Historical & Research Division, anyone who was seriously interested in research and analysis felt handicapped because of lack of first-rate material. In the absence of a Historical & Research Division, maintaining historical documents/records, the Ministry perhaps also faced difficulties in responding effectively to the complex international situation.

8. The Committee are not satisfied with the reply of the Ministry over the issue of revival of Research Cadre for the Historical and Research Division. The Committee note that the Ministry had not found it feasible to revive the Research Cadre as it existed in the past considering the existing ban on creation of new posts and the decision of the Government to right size the bureaucracy for limiting non-plan expenditure. The Committee find that the Ministry has implemented the provisional Staff Inspection Unit report thereby abolishing 151 posts and following

review of all posts, 36 vacant posts have been surrendered. The Committee feel that all the posts recommended by Staff Inspection Unit for abolition need not necessarily be abolished. Before taking a decision to abolish/surrender the existing posts in the Ministry, the Ministry should have considered utilising some of these posts as supporting staff to the Historical and Research Division. As regards Research Cadre officers, the Ministry may consider either posting some suitable officers from other divisions of the Ministry or appointing some Research officers on deputation so that the Historical and Research Division could be revived. Thereafter the question of creating posts exclusively for this Division could be reconsidered at an appropriate time after a thorough evaluation of the functioning of Historical and Research Division.

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### **Passport & Emigration**

**(Para No. 51)**

9. The Committee had expressed their dissatisfaction over the issue of variation in the per capita cost of passport in each of the 28 Passport Offices and had recommended a closer look on the issue of such a sharp and radical variation and means of reducing it. With regard to corrupt practices prevalent in some Passport Offices, the Committee felt that it was very important to eradicate such practices by entrusting the responsibility to officers of known integrity who might keep a strict vigil over persons of dubious character and effectively deal with them through administrative control. So far as the computerisation of Regional Passport Offices was concerned, the Committee were not satisfied with the slow progress of the project and desired that the efforts should be made to complete the project during the current year.

10. The Ministry in their reply have stated that per capita cost of passport has been arrived at by dividing the total expenditure incurred by a Passport Office by the number of passports issued by it. It may be mentioned in the first instance that number of passports issued per office is quite independent of the cost of running of the establishment of a Passport Office, which has to be incurred irrespective of the number of applications received or processed by it. Generally Passport Offices receiving a small number of applications show higher per unit cost e.g. Jammu, Srinagar and Guwahati, whereas Passport Offices receiving large number of applications show lower per unit cost e.g. Lucknow and Chennai.

11. The Ministry has regretted that in the Appendix IV of the Annual Report of the Ministry some errors had crept in. The corrected expenditure figures of all Passport Offices are enclosed.

12. As regards corrupt practices prevalent in Passport Offices, the Ministry have stated that several corrective measures to prevent occurrence of corrupt practices in the Passport Offices have already been undertaken. To deal with these problems, a Vigilance Cell has

been opened in the CPV Division. Passport Offices all over India have been instructed to be extra vigilant and sensitive about these problems. A monitoring system in this regard is in place in each Passport Office.

13. The Chief Passport Officer has written to all Chief Secretaries to control the menace of touts outside the Passport Offices who misguide the general public and claim to have a nexus with the passport officials. The Ministry have further informed that during the current calendar year, CBI has raided two Passport Offices, Ahmedabad and Patna. At Passport Office, Ahmedabad, definite evidence of corruption involving 8 officials of the Passport Office has been found. These 8 officials of the Passport Office, Ahmedabad have already been suspended.

14. The objective of the Central Passport Organisation is to make the system of issue of passports transparent, time-bound, user-friendly and error-free. Timely issue of passports and correct filling up of forms so that there are no objections would automatically reduce the scope for any corrupt practices. Correct filling up of application forms with submission of all the required documents makes the task of the Passport Office easy and processing speedy. Large display boards for the guidance and information of passport applicants have been put up in all the Passport Offices.

15. All Passport Officers meet the general public everyday and redress their problems. Whenever any complaint from the members of the public is received against any official of the Passport Office, an inquiry is invariably conducted and appropriate action is taken. Many such complaints are about the police officials who may demand some illegal gratification from the passport applicants while conducting police verification. Such complaints are immediately forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs or the concerned State Police Department for further action. It is hoped that with these corrective and punitive measures, it would be possible to minimise the occurrence of corrupt practices in the Passport Offices.

16. On computerisation of Passport Offices, the Ministry have informed that till date 20 of the 28 Passport Offices have been computerised. These Passport Offices constitute the bulk of the workload (90% in terms of receipt of application of all the Passport Offices put together). Efforts are underway to computerise the remaining eight Passport Offices at the earliest. These eight Passport Offices could not be computerised mainly because of site problems, as most of the premises are rented. The premises either do not offer enough room for installation of generators and other equipment, and/or there are problems with regard to electrical cabling. NIC, the agency for the computerisation of Passport Offices, has indicated that in all likelihood these remaining Passport Offices should be computerised by December, 2000.

17. The Central Passport Organisation is now rapidly moving to the next stage of computerisation. This includes improvement in the software and hardware of the 20 computerised offices ; and computerisation of the remaining 8 offices within the year if civil works can be completed. A pilot project for the machine writing of passports is starting in RPO, Delhi this month and the scanning of index cards has been started for six Passport Offices in the current year.



18. The Committee note with satisfaction the steps taken by the Ministry to reduce the scope for corrupt practices prevalent in Passport Offices. The Committee, however, feel that considering the seriousness of the matter more concerted efforts are required to tackle this menace effectively. The Committee would like the Ministry to consider utilizing services of ex-servicemen, educated unemployed persons or NGOs for guiding/assisting the applicants in filling up application forms thereby reducing their dependence on undesirable persons. The Committee would like the Ministry to increase the frequency of Passport Adalats for speedy redressal of public grievances. The Committee also expect the Ministry to take appropriate steps for early introduction of machine-writing of passports in all the Passport Offices and taking up of suitable measures to ensure error free writing of entries in the passports. The Committee have, time and again, expressed their concern at the plight of casual workers and stagnation being faced by various cadres of employees in Passport Offices. The Committee would like the Ministry to urgently address the issues involved after a proper and thorough study.

#### **Indian Council for Cultural Relations**

**(Para No.59)**

19. The Committee had expressed satisfaction over the fact that the ICCR was maintaining a high standard in its publications and other activities with regard to cultural projection of India abroad. However, with regard to the selection of artists, the Committee had desired that regional art forms and artists must be given a fair chance to get selected for presentations abroad in order to give impetus and recognition to them. The Committee hoped that the selection process would be such so as to give fair representation to the deserving artists and art performers from all over the country. The Committee strongly felt that the delay in selecting a building to house the Cultural Centres in Washington was a matter of serious concern and desired that instead of sending the Purchase Committee every time to inspect a property, the Ministry might explore the possibility of empowering the Indian Ambassador to the US along with a few experts to take an early decision in the matter.

20. The Ministry in their reply have stated that the ICCR sponsors only those artists/groups which are “empanelled” on the basis of the advice of experts. At present there are nearly 2000 artistes/groups on the reference panel of the Council representing all art forms and regions in the country. Artistes/groups wishing to be empanelled are required to fill up a simple prescribed form and enclose material including video/audio cassettes, photographs, press clippings, certificates from Gurus. This is placed for consideration before the Expert Committees of the Council. The recommendations of the various expert committees are considered by the Empanelment Advisory Committee for approval and the final list of empanelled artistes/groups is prepared.



21. Regarding the Cultural Centre in Washington, the Ministry is in the process of developing in consultation with the Embassy of India, Washington, ICCR and other interested groups, an appropriate concept and working out the costs involved.

22. The Committee note that the ICCR sponsors only those artistes/ groups which are “empanelled” on the basis of the advice of the Expert Committee. The Committee feel that while selecting artistes/groups, the Government should evolve some modalities whereby upcoming and talented artistes from remote and rural areas get a good exposure so that they could get through selection process and represent in true fashion the multiplicity and diversity of our cultural heritage abroad.

23. Insofar as the setting up of Cultural Centre in Washington is concerned, the Committee are dismayed at the reply of the Ministry which states that the Ministry was even now in the process of developing a concept and working out the costs involved in the project. The Committee express its distress over casual manner in which the whole issue has been handled by the Ministry over the years. The Committee expect a time bound action in the matter and reiterate that Indian Ambassador and some other experts should be empowered to take an early decision in this matter.

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#### **Dungsam Cement Plant**

**(Para No.70)**

24. The Committee had noted that the Dungsam Cement Plant (DCP) in Bhutan was being executed with 100% Government of India assistance. The Committee further noted that although the Government of India Assistance to DCP was under consideration since the early 1980s, the project was finally started in the 1990s with the Government of India commitment of Rs.400 crores. The Committee were surprised that so far an amount of Rs.8.074 crores only had been released for the project which denoted that even the infrastructural facilities were yet to be provided fully for the project. The reason cited by the Ministry for the delay in the project was that M/s ACC Ltd., a JV Partner, withdrew from the project and so far the Ministry had been unable to identify another JV Partner for the project. The Committee felt that the reason was unconvincing and that the Ministry should make whole-hearted efforts to identify a JV Partner so that the project could progress

satisfactorily. The Committee felt that inordinate delay would lead to massive cost and time overruns and thus desired that the priorities in the proposed project be identified by the Ministry and executed under a strict time-bound programme.

25. The Ministry in their reply have stated that following the formal withdrawal of M/s ACC Ltd., an inter-Governmental meeting was held on October 13, 1999 in New Delhi. The inter-Governmental Meeting through a Sub-Committee selected M/s Holtec consultants in January, 2000 to update the techno economic feasibility report, identify possible JV Partners and suggest the modalities of restructuring the JV.

26. The final Report of the short-term consultant was submitted in July 2000 updating the Techno-Economic Feasibility of the project. The consultant contacted six possible/suitable JV Partners i.e. M/s Jai Prakash Industries Ltd., New Delhi, Saurashtra Cement Ltd., Mumbai, Shree Cement Ltd., Beawar, J.K. Cement Works, Kanpur and India Cement Ltd., Chennai. Out of these, only two groups namely, Jai Prakash Industries Ltd. and Saurashtra Cement Ltd. evinced interest in participating in the project as a Joint Venture partner. However, it has now been intimated that M/s JP Industries Ltd. have withdrawn their expression of interest in the project.

27. The Committee note that M/s Holtec Consultants was selected to update the techno-economic feasibility report, identify possible JV Partners and suggest the modalities of restructuring the JV. The Consultant had contacted six possible/suitable JV Partners. Out of these only two groups namely, Jai Prakash Industries Ltd. and Saurashtra Cement Ltd. had evinced interest in participating in the project as a Joint Venture Partner. However, one of them i.e. JP Industries Ltd. have now withdrawn from the project. The Committee find that the final report of the short-term Consultant was submitted in July, 2000 updating the techno-economic feasibility of the project. Also, M/s Saurashtra Cement Ltd. have evinced interest in the project as a Joint Venture Partner. However, the Committee are unhappy with the progress or lack of it of the project and desire that all out efforts to execute the project expeditiously should be made and the work on the project be completed according to the planned time schedule to avoid further delay which could lead to massive cost and time overrun.

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New Delhi;  
19 December, 2000  
28 Agrahayana, 1922 (Saka)

KRISHNA BOSE,  
*Chairperson,*  
*Standing Committee on External Affairs*