

**24**

**COMMITTEE  
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(2018-19)**

**SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

[Action Taken Report on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report of the Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2018-19]

**TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*February, 2019 / Magha, 1940 (Saka)*

**TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT**  
**COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**  
**(2018-19)**

**(SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

[Action Taken Report on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report of the Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2018-19]

*Presented to Lok Sabha on 13 February, 2019  
Laid on the table of Rajya Sabha on 13 February, 2019*



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT**  
**NEW DELHI**  
*February, 2019 / Magha, 1940 (Saka)*

**COEA NO. 139**

*Price: Rs.*

© 2019 by Lok Sabha Secretariat

Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha (Thirteenth Edition) and Printed by

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE (2018-19).....	(ii)
INTRODUCTION.....	(iii)
Chapter I   Report.....	1
Chapter II   Observations /Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.....	23
Chapter III   Observations / Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's Replies.....	52
Chapter IV   Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.....	55
Chapter V   Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Final Replies of the Government are still awaited.....	60

## APPENDICES

I.    Minutes of the Seventh Sitting of the Committee held on 11.2.2019.....	72
II.   Analysis of Action Taken by the government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report of the Committee on External Affairs. ....	74

(i)

## **COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2018-19)**

### **1. Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson**

#### **Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Sirajuddin Ajmal
3. Shri Gurjeet Singh Aujla
4. Prof. (Dr.) Sugata Bose
5. Shri Ranjit Singh Brahmpura
6. Shri Ramen Deka
7. Shri Arka Keshari Deo
8. Shri Rahul Gandhi
9. Prof. Richard Hay
10. Shri Raghav Lakhpal
11. Shri Jagdambika Pal
12. Shri P.R. Senthilnathan
13. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
14. Shri Vishnu Dayal Ram
15. Shri Venakateswara Rao (Babu) Magantti
16. Shri Mohammad Salim
17. Prof. (Dr.) Mamta Sanghamita
18. Shri Ram Swaroop Sharma
19. Smt. Supriya Sadanand Sule
20. Shri Sharad Tripathi
21. Vacant

#### **Rajya Sabha**

22. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
23. Shri Jose K. Mani
24. Shri P. Bhattacharya
25. Shri Sambhaji Chhatrapati
26. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
27. Shri Chunibhai Kanjibhai Gohel
28. Smt. Kanimozhi
29. Shri Kumar Ketkar
30. Shri V. Muraleedharan
31. Shri D. Kupendra Reddy

#### **Secretariat**

1.	Smt. Abha Singh Yaduvanshi	—	Joint Secretary
2.	Dr. Ram Raj Rai	—	Director
3.	Smt. Jyochnamayi Sinha	—	Additional Director
4.	Ms. Smita Singh	—	Committee Assistant

## **INTRODUCTION**

I, the Chairperson, Committee on External Affairs (2018-19) having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Twenty-Fourth Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2018-19.

2. The Twenty-First Report was presented to the Parliament on 9 March, 2018. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 7 December, 2018 (English version) and 3 January, 2019 (Hindi version).

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Report on action taken at their Sitting held on 11 February, 2019. The Minutes of the Sitting of the Committee have been given at Appendix-I to the Report.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report of the Committee on External Affairs is given at Appendix-II.

**NEW DELHI**  
11 February, 2018  
22 Magha, (Saka)

**DR. SHASHI THAROOR,**  
*Chairperson,*  
*Committee on External Affairs*

## **CHAPTER – I**

### **REPORT**

This Report of the Committee on External Affairs deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Twenty First Report on the Demands for Grants for the year 2018-19 which was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha on 9 March, 2018.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 46 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorized as follows: -

**(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:-**

Recommendation Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40 and 43	<b>Total- 28</b>
--	------------------

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

Recommendation No. 14	<b>Total- 1</b>
-----------------------	-----------------

**(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration:-**

Recommendation Nos. 6, 18, 33 and 46	<b>Total- 4</b>
--------------------------------------	-----------------

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

Recommendation Nos. 2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 17, 31, 35, 37, 41, 42, 44 and 45	<b>Total- 13</b>
--	------------------

3. The Committee desire that final replies to the comments contained in Chapter-I and Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.

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

**(Recommendation No. 1)**

**Strict Compliance of Statements under Direction 73A**

5. Despite persistent written/ oral reminders and repeated Recommendations in previous Reports of the Committee, Statements under Direction 73A of Directions by Speaker, Lok Sabha in context of the Reports of the Committee were piling up, which was not a happy augury. Direction 73-A has been issued with the specific intent of keeping the Parliament aware of the implementation status of Observations/Recommendations contained in the Reports of the Parliamentary Committees. For this purpose a six months period has been prescribed for the Government to make the Statement, which is a reasonable time period. The Committee were distressed to note that in the instant pendency of Ministry of External Affairs, Statements were to be made for Reports presented as long as six years ago. In the considered opinion of the Committee, such inordinately long delays amounted to hindering the oversight function of the Committee as well as the Parliament, which was a serious matter. The Committee had hoped that the Ministry would appreciate the gravity of the situation and get all the pending Statements under Direction 73A made in both the Houses as desired by the Committee in their Twentieth Report. Furthermore, in future, the Ministry would scrupulously adhere to the prescribed timelines in this regard.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated as under:-

“The Hon’ble Committee’s directions are noted for compliance. The Minister made Statements on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the Lok Sabha and on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session 2018 on the status of implementation of Recommendations and Observations contained in the following Reports of the Hon’ble Committee:

- a. 13<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2012-13
- b. 19<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2013-14
- c. 15<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Problems related to Overseas Indian marriages: Scheme for providing legal/financial assistance/rehabilitation to Indian women deserted by their overseas Indian Spouses.
- d. 25<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Passport Seva Project – Targets and Achievements
- e. 3<sup>rd</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2014-15
- f. 5<sup>th</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2015-16
- g. 13<sup>th</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on India’s Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Indian Diaspora

Minister's Statements in respect of other pending Reports is proposed to be made during the forthcoming Session of Parliament."

**7. Emphasizing the significance of legislative oversight over the Executive, the Committee had urged the Ministry to strictly adhere to timelines for making Statements by the Minister under Direction 73A of the Directions by Speaker, Lok Sabha. The Committee are happy to learn that the Minister of External Affairs has taken a serious view of this matter and made Statements on the status of implementation of Observations/Recommendations contained in seven pending Reports. Minister's Statement in respect of other pending Reports is also proposed to be made during the ongoing session of Parliament. The Committee urge the Ministry to strictly comply with Statements under Direction 73A of Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha, in context of all the Reports that are presented to the Parliament. The Committee are also hopeful that the Ministry would ensure that the Statements with regard to the pending Reports are made during the ongoing budget session positively.**

**(Recommendation No. 3)  
Need for Zero-Based Budgeting**

8. The Committee had noted that the Ministry was in agreement with their observations regarding the scope for improvement in the process by which budgetary demands were being prepared at the Unit level but it has also submitted that the mismatch between funds demanded and actual utilization was largely on account of its technical assistance and development cooperation schemes, projects and programmes being implemented abroad where certain extraneous factors come into play which were beyond its control. The Ministry, inexplicably, had not intimated about steps taken towards formulating a zero-based budgeting process, which incorporated continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation against fund utilization. The Zero Based Budgeting seemed all the more imperative where the Committee had observed significant and unrealistic gaps between the allocations sought, BE and RE and the expenditure actually incurred. While acknowledging the factors put forth by the Ministry, the Committee had desired that the Ministry take fool proof steps to secure all clearances and pre-emptive steps before going ahead with the international aid projects

9. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

"The Ministry will continue to improve its budgetary assessment and management in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendations of better unit-based budgeting. Ministry has instituted a mechanism of holding Quarterly Budget Management Meetings with major Divisions and Spending Units, chaired by Foreign Secretary or Financial Advisor, where spending as well as demands are assessed in detail based on project-wise status of implementation. This has assisted in the Ministry projecting more realistic demands for a given

financial year for the Revised Estimates and for the subsequent financial year for the Budget Estimates.

The overarching principle of zero-based budgeting guides the continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation and optimal funds utilization in Ministry's budget management. The Ministry will continue to make more efforts in this direction to realize credible budgetary demands justified by past efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditure based on implementation progress, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to further improve budgetary assessment, management and utilization."

**10. Highlighting the imperative of Zero-Based Budgeting in improving budgetary assessment and management, the Committee in the instant recommendation had specifically urged the Ministry to consider a zero-based budgeting process. Though the Ministry has accepted the overarching principle of zero-based budgeting, it has failed to enumerate the specific steps taken in that direction. In order to narrow down the gap between allocations sought and actual utilization during both the BE and RE stage, the Ministry was suggested to take fool proof steps before initiating international aid projects. As a follow-up to the Committee's recommendation, the Ministry has stated that the mechanism of holding Quarterly Budget Management Meetings with major Divisions and Spending Units has assisted in projecting more realistic demands for a given financial year. The Committee urge the Ministry to furnish clear, pointed and updated action taken replies so that accurate assessment of financial performance of the Ministry is made. The Committee strongly desire that Zero based budgeting process should be incorporated to bolster budgetary assessment, management and utilization. Furthermore, pre-emptive measures ought to be taken to seek all requisite clearances before seeking funds for international aid projects.**

**(Recommendation No. 4)**  
**Optimum utilization of budgetary allocation**

11. On examining utilization of budgetary allocation during 2017-18, the Committee had found that the Ministry had an amount of Rs. 4223.85 crore to spend in the last quarter. Thus, 30.85 percent of the RE allocation was remaining for spending in last quarter, which was slightly less than the Ministry of Finance guidelines of expenditure within 33% of allocation. The Committee had made a note of the specific steps taken by the Ministry to improve financial management and spending pattern. It was perplexing to note that while on one hand, there had been a discrepancy in budgetary demands made by MEA and actual allocations provided, on the other hand, even the lower Revised allocated outlays were not spent by the Ministry. The budgetary cuts inflicted upon the Ministry of External Affairs seemed to be a fall out of its own expenditure pattern. The Committee were satisfied

to note that the Ministry has now felt that the gap between budgetary demands and allocation could be narrowed down by demonstrating robust and prudent expenditure in first two quarters of the financial year and presenting a positive case before the Ministry of Finance. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Ministry should first demonstrate efficient utilization of funds in first two quarters of the year by observing the progress at Unit level and also maintain it at optimal level so that the Ministry of Finance at least not reduce the funds at the RE stage. Simultaneously, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs convince the Ministry of Finance to well-equip them financially so that the foreign policy objectives do not get restricted due to lack of financial resources.

**12. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-**

“As per the recommendation of the Hon’ble Committee, the Ministry has made concerted efforts to improve expenditure in the first two quarters of a financial year to be in a realistic position to seek additional funds from Ministry of Finance at the RE stage. In FY 2017-18, Ministry’s expenditure in the first two quarters of the FY was 44.81% of the BE 2017-18 allocation. In FY 2018-19, Ministry has achieved expenditure of 55.6% of the BE 2018-19 allocation in the first two quarters. Ministry assures the Hon’ble Committee of its commitment towards continuing to make further efforts to improve the utilisation pattern of its allocated budget while addressing the inherent political, security, geological and other challenges faced in implementing projects abroad. Ministry has also been engaging with Ministry of Finance to keep them informed of funds required to meet our international commitments and to emphasize the importance of providing adequate budgetary allocations for the same.”

**13. In their recommendation, the Committee had urged the Ministry to demonstrate optimum utilization of budgetary funds so that a strong case for enhanced budgetary allocation can be made before the Ministry of Finance. It was desirable for the Ministry to furnish the details of budgetary demands and allocation at the RE stage at the time of submission of action taken replies. The Committee are satisfied with the Ministry’s efficient utilization of funds during the first two quarters of the current fiscal year and would desire that the latter should continue to be an effective spender in the remaining two quarters as well. The Committee are of the considered view that good utilization pattern can prove to be a potent tool for impressing upon the Ministry of Finance for future funds requirements. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should continue taking concerted efforts to pursue the issuance of increased budgetary allocation with the Ministry of Finance at all levels.**

**(Recommendation No. 6)**  
**Scheme Section to be kept immune from budgetary cuts**

**14. The Plan and Non-Plan distinction in expenditure budgeting had been discontinued and the**

then budget classifications were in terms of Revenue and Capital Heads and Scheme and Non-scheme sections. The Committee were happy to learn that the bifurcation of Scheme and Non-Scheme section had resulted in better appreciation of budgetary requirements and allocation for projects related to international commitments as aid related spending has come under a single classification. In view of the declining share of the scheme section in the last fiscal, the Ministry had carried out an intensive monitoring and review of the technical and aid development assistance project, including at the levels of External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary. The Ministry was hopeful that the aid and non-aid outlays would be evenly distributed in the next two financial years. The Committee had, therefore, desired that the Ministry of External Affairs should take appropriate measures in that direction and keep them informed. Notwithstanding the fact that the expenditure covered under the Scheme section exclusively pertains to two Major Heads namely „Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries“ and „Advances to Foreign Governments“, which constituted the central plank of a country’s international credentials, this section had not been kept immune from budgetary cuts. The Committee were dismayed to note that despite repeated recommendations that budgetary cuts should not be effected in such a critical aspect of our global engagement and diplomacy, it has neither found much reverberation in MEA’s fiscal prudence nor in Ministry of Finance’s budgetary allocation to the former. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Government refrain from making financial cuts under the scheme section of MEA’s budget pertaining to International aid and commitments as it directly impinges on our foreign relations and international image abroad.

15. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The Ministry assures the Hon’ble Committee that it will make firm and focused efforts to utilize its allocated funds in an efficient and timely manner for its overall budget and particularly for the „Scheme“ Section, while addressing the inherent political, security, geological and other challenges faced by the Ministry in implementing projects abroad, and while remaining prudent in the spending of public funds. The Ministry is focused in achieving anticipated implementation progress in all key result areas and demonstrating robust expenditure in the first half of the financial year, which would assist in making a positive case with Ministry of Finance to narrow the gap between the Ministry’s funds demands and allocations.

In FY 2018-19, Ministry achieved expenditure of 32.38% of its BE 2018-19 allocation in the first quarter (1 April to 30 June 2018), which is much higher than the minimum 25% benchmark; and by the end of the second quarter (till 30 September 2018), Ministry achieved expenditure of 55.65% of its BE 2018-19 allocation, which is higher than the minimum 50% benchmark.

As recommended by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will make strenuous efforts to secure adequate budgetary support from Ministry of Finance, especially for its international technical aid and assistance commitments, based on this robust spending demonstrated by the Ministry.”

**16. With the bifurcation of the Budget Heads into Revenue and Capital Heads and Scheme and Non- Scheme sections, the Committee were optimistic about enhanced budgetary allocation to MEA, especially for its international technical aid and assistance programmes. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should take up this matter of financial cuts under the Scheme Section with the Ministry of Finance and ensure that it is kept immune from budgetary cuts. In its reply, the Ministry has merely provided verbal assurance that firm and focused efforts will be made in making a positive case before the Ministry of Finance. Generally, the Ministry of Finance in its Budget circular asks the Ministries to convey their proposal for Revised Estimate and Budget Estimate by the month of August/September. The Ministry has furnished the action taken replies in December 2018 *i.e.* after the submission of proposal for Revised Estimates to the Ministry of Finance. However, they have not bothered to furnish the proposed amount at the RE stage. Non-availability of RE figures and generic response to most of the important recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report is unacceptable. Without complete and specific replies, the Committee cannot have a clear perspective about the overall functioning of the Ministry. Expressing disapproval of the tendency on part of the Ministry of not furnishing all available details on date of submission of replies, the Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry should submit updated, specific, pointed and accurate action taken replies urgently. The Ministry is further urged to make a strong case for the necessity of having adequate funds before the Ministry of Finance about timely implementation of international aid projects and apprise the Committee about their response.**

**(Recommendation No. 9)**

**Bridging the gap between Sanctioned Strength & Actual Strength of CPO**

17. The Committee had noted that against sanctioned strength of 2697, the actual strength in CPO was 2051. The Ministry had stated that steps have been taken to improve service conditions of the CPO personnel, including indenting of 224 posts of different non-gazetted level from SSC. However, the Committee did not find these steps as sufficient, particularly when most of the 92 PSKs operating as arms of 37 Passport Offices are working with inadequate staff. Furthermore, to bring passport services closer to the citizens, the Ministry in association with the Department of Posts had initiated opening up of 251 POPSKs in two phases. Of these, 60 POPSKs are functional. These POPSKs also required granting officers. The Committee insisted that the sovereign functions of passport services like processing and issuance of passports should always be carried out by the staff of MEA while the non- sovereign functions are vested with the staff of Department of Posts.

Expressing disapproval of the persistent manpower crunch in CPO, the Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry should augment manpower in the CPO and its network of Passport Offices, PSKs and POPSKs either through direct recruitment or on deputation. Furthermore, training programmes should be conducted for the staff of Department of Posts to familiarize them about Passport services so as to avoid technical glitches and human errors in delivery of passport services.

18. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The Hon’ble Committee’s recommendation that the sovereign function of passport services should be carried out by MEA staff is being followed. As on 31 October 2018, 229 out of 251 POPSKs have been inaugurated. In the Passport Seva Project model, the tasks of „A“ Counter pertain to application acceptance after biometric data collection and initial scrutiny of documents and are carried out by the service provider M/s TCS in the existing Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs); while the tasks at the „B“ and „C“ counters pertain to sovereign functions of verification and grant of passports. In POPSKs, only the „A“ counter tasks would be carried out by officials of the Department of Posts, while those of „B“ and „C“ counters would be performed by officials of the Central Passport Organization (CPO).

Augmentation of the manpower strength of the CPO and its offices is a priority of the Ministry. The total sanctioned strength of the CPO cadre is 2697 against which the working strength is 1996 as on 10 May 2018. In addition, 15 Technical and 6 supporting staff man the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Passport Seva Project. Ministry has engaged 446 Data Entry Operators through an outsourced service provider to bridge the gap between the sanctioned strength and the working strength for the non-gazetted posts.

The difficulty in filling the vacant posts in the CPO cadre stems from the extant Recruitment Rules. Direct recruitment is possible only in the grades of Office Assistant, Junior Passport Assistant and Assistant Superintendent. Ministry has been regularly placing its indents with the Staff Selection Commission for recruitment in these grades as per the vacancies.

The Granting Officers are in the grades of Superintendent and Senior Superintendent where 100% recruitment is by promotion of Assistant Superintendents. There is no scope for direct entry or taking officials on deputation, or promotion of Assistant Superintendents through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination. Further, there is a shortage of Assistant Superintendents with the requisite qualifying service to be promoted as Superintendent.

Ministry has taken several steps to improve the service conditions of CPO personnel by restructuring and expanding the CPO cadre to ensure that vacant posts available to them are filled by promotion. In the years 2016-17, 2017-18 and till date in 2018-19, regular meetings of the Department Promotion Committee have been held for promotion of eligible officials to the next grade. The cadre position as on 11 May 2018 is enclosed at Annexure-A (Gazetted) and Annexure-B (non-Gazetted).

Ministry has also decided to undertake a Cadre Review to address the issue of manpower shortage in the CPO.”

19. Concerned about the constant understaffing of Central Passport Organization, the Committee in their earlier recommendation had recommended that human resource should be augmented in CP and its network of Passport Offices, PSKs and PoPSKs either through direct recruitment or through deputation. Even though the Ministry has taken steps to bridge the gap between sanctioned strength and working strength of the non-gazetted posts, it appears grossly inadequate. As per the extant Recruitment rules, direct recruitment is possible only in the grades of Office Assistant, Junior Passport Assistant and Assistant Superintendent. The Ministry has also informed that it has decided to undertake a Cadre Review to address the issue of shortage of staff in the CPO.

The Committee are happy to learn that in pursuance of their recommendation, the sovereign functions of passport services are being carried out by MEA staff while the non-sovereign tasks are being carried out by officials of Department of Posts. They observe that the gap between the sanctioned strength and working strength can be narrowed down by direct recruitment, promotion and deputation. While the Ministry has taken steps to fill the vacant posts through the direct recruitment and promotion, much remains to be explored at the level of deputation. The Committee are of the considered opinion that Central Passport Office need to be provided with better infrastructure, including human resource and the Ministry should take adequate steps to ensure it. The Committee also desire that the Cadre Review should be done expeditiously and the Committee may also be apprised of the same.

**(Recommendation No. 15)**

**Expedite construction of permanent campus of SAU**

20. The Committee had noted that there has been an increase in allocation for South Asian University from Rs. 260 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 378.30 crore in RE 2017-18 and to Rs. 375 crore in BE 2018-19. The Ministry had informed that work related to the construction of the SAU campus has gained momentum in the last year and therefore, adequate funds had been provisioned for contribution towards creation of capital assets. In view of the slow and tardy progress of the construction of permanent campus in the previous years, that was a welcome development. The Committee were aware that construction work for the SAU campus had been devised under four packages. The Ministry has informed that work under Package I for boundary wall and site office has been completed, work under Package II for five building was in full progress and scheduled to be completed by December 2018; and work under Package III was slated to be complete by January 2020. However, the Ministry had not provided a specific schedule for completion of work under Package IV. The Committee were happy to know that after much prodding, Pakistan had made a part

of the payment of US\$ 2.259 million against an overdue payment. The efforts for getting the remaining contribution should be continued till it is deposited. Given the record of sluggish progress in the construction of SAU, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should ensure that work related to Package II and III are completed as per schedule and issues related to works of Package IV were sorted out expeditiously. The Committee had also desired to be apprised of the progress made in that regard at regular intervals.

21. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The current progress of construction work for the SAU campus is as follows:

**Package-II** (five buildings): Work under this package is being undertaken in an expeditious manner. As of September 2018, the structure works for the building housing the Faculties of Life Sciences and Earth Sciences has been completed. Miscellaneous structure works have also been completed. Internal works are nearing completion from basement up to third floor, and work is in progress for works till the last floor. The superstructure work in two Faculty Housing Blocks has been completed and internal and external works are in progress. The foundation for the fourth faculty and housing block has been completed. The superstructure work for the main building of faculty club, guest house and civil work for swimming pool has been completed. Miscellaneous, internal and external works are in progress. Overall progress in this package as of September 2018 was 56%.

**Package-III** (seven buildings): As of September 2018, the RCC structure work for the faculty of Physics, Chemistry, Maths, IT and Law and Humanity has been completed. The structure work for Administration Block, Library, Institute of South Asian Studies, Faculty of Art Design and Convention Centres, and Utility Building are at various stages of construction. Overall progress in this package as of September 2018 is 35%.

**Package IV:** The works on remaining buildings could not be planned due to various land issues. However, based on the recent directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court, permission has been accorded for construction in the geo-morphological ridge area. In respect of litigations pertaining to acquisition of land, the final verdict of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in one leading case is awaited which will determine the outcome in similar cases in the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi. Ministry has already deposited an amount Rs. 10.39 crore with the Hon'ble Supreme Court as compensation to the land owner. Once these issues are resolved, construction for the buildings under Package IV will also be able to commence.

In 2009, Cabinet approval was accorded for USD 239.93 million (*approx. Rs. 1200 crore at the then exchange rate*) for GoI's assistance to South Asian University, of which USD 198 million (*approx. Rs. 990 crore at the then exchange rate*) was towards capital cost for campus construction with the project to be completed by 2014. However, due to delays in construction attributable to factors like non-receipt of approvals from various statutory authorities and encumbrances on the allotted land, the project could not commence before 2016. This has also resulted in cost escalation over the amount approved by the Cabinet. The University has now sent a revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) to the Ministry in which the preliminary cost

estimate has been revised to Rs. 3115.73 crore (*approx. USD 430 million at prevalent exchange rate*). The revised DPR is being processed for vetting by CPWD and fresh approval of the Cabinet will be sought for the revised cost of the project.

Pakistan has paid a sum of USD 7,339,563 but balance contribution of USD 521,631 is remaining. SAU through the SAARC Secretariat has taken up the case for early release of the balance payment.

**22. The construction work of permanent campus of the South Asian University devised under four packages has been underway since 2010. Owing to the enhanced allocation for South Asian University during both RE 2017-18 and BE 2018-19, the Committee observe that there has been satisfactory progress in the construction work. The Ministry has informed that work under Package I had been completed last year; work under Package II for five buildings is being undertaken in an expeditious manner; work under Package III (seven buildings) are at various stages of construction and work under Package IV have not commenced due to legal and environmental issues. The delay in construction work has led to cost escalation over the amount approved by the Cabinet. The Ministry has also stated that revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) is being processed for vetting by CPWD and subsequent approval has to be obtained from the Cabinet for the revised cost of the project. It is a matter of greater disappointment that a construction work for permanent campus of an international university has been delayed for such a considerable time period and its completion, even in the near future appears grim. The Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry should invest due diligence and priority to ensure that all outstanding issues – legal, environmental and procedural – are resolved at the earliest and the construction of SAU campus is completed within a given time frame under intimation to this Committee.**

**(Recommendation No. 16)**  
**Timely completion of construction of Nalanda University**

23. The Committee had noted that an allocation of Rs. 200 crore was provided for Nalanda University in BE 2017-18, but it was reduced at RE Stage and an outlay of Rs. 200 crore had been kept in BE 2018-19. It was expected that the splitting up of tender into several packages and establishment of Nalanda Mentor Group (NMG), the construction of Nalanda University would be facilitated and expedited. However, the downward allocation in RE 2017-18 and an allocation of Rs. 200 crore at BE 2018-19 told a different story. The Committee had observed that the University had started three courses since 2014 but they were unable to start new courses or enhance the intake of students due to non-availability of accommodation. The delay in completion of Nalanda University – an international institution of excellence for pursuit of intellectual philosophical and historical studies – was highly unfortunate. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Government

should streamline the process in all the packages and draw a clear roadmap for the completion of this project with fixed timelines. Necessary funds should also be provided for timely completion of the progress. The Ministry should explore opportunities to channelize contribution for this project from other participating countries to buttress domestic funds.

24. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“Ministry, in coordination with Nalanda University, has taken measures to expeditiously complete the campus construction project. The University has constituted a Project Monitoring Committee (PMC) consisting of two experts from civil engineering and electrical engineering fields respectively, one expert from the Government of Bihar and one from the Ministry of External Affairs. The PMC has been mandated with the task of overseeing the construction project in addition to the monitoring done by the Architect Consultant and the Project Management Consultant. The status of work is as follows:

**Package I-A (Internal Roads and Earthwork for Water Bodies):** Work in this package has been completed.

**Package I-B (Non-Residential Building):** Work commenced in end of April 2017 and till end of April 2018, 31% of the work in this package has been completed. The scheduled period of completion is February 2020. The contractor has been instructed to compress the micro-schedule and increase manpower, materials and machinery to accelerate work and minimize the delay.

**Package 1-C (Residential Buildings):** The tender is under process.

Article 3 of the MoU on establishment of Nalanda University states that “*funding for the establishment and operations of the University will be on a voluntary basis*”. Therefore, contributions from countries such as Australia, China, Thailand, and Lao PDR were purely voluntary and for specific purposes. However, in view of the Hon’ble Committee’s recommendations, Ministry will explore opportunities of channelizing contributions for the project from other countries which have signed the MoU.”

25. **Regarding construction work of Nalanda University, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should chalk out a roadmap for completion of this project with fixed timelines and also explore opportunities of channelizing contributions for the project from participating countries. Providing a status note of the project, the Ministry replied that work related to Package I-A has been completed; work in Package I-B have commenced in April, 2017 and is expected to be completed by February, 2020; and the tender for Package I-C is under progress. Delay in construction work of such international projects not only leads to cost escalation but also result in loss of face of the Indian Government. The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry to coordinate with Nalanda University Administration and make concerted efforts to**

**complete work in Package I-B and I-C in expeditious and time-bound manner. The Committee may be apprised about the outcome thereof.**

**(Recommendation No. 18)**  
**Making Developmental Partnership immune from budgetary cuts**

26. The Committee had observed that as a key instrument of our foreign policy, the scope and magnitude of developmental partnership has widened tremendously over the past few years. An allocation of Rs. 5093.77 crore was made in BE 2017-18, which was reduced to Rs. 4273.82 crore in RE 2018-19. An outlay of Rs. 5148.55 crore, which is 34% of total MEA's budget has been earmarked in BE 2018-19. The reduction to the tune of 9% at RE 2017-18 stage was based on physical and financial progress of projects under various Heads. While recognizing the practical challenges faced by the Ministry in execution of various projects under this Head and its subsequent impact on making budgetary demands, the Committee feel that the allocation under this Major Head is indicative of our international commitments and of our bilateral relations with various countries. With the inclusion of the major Head under the scheme section, the Committee in their previous Report on Demands for Grants were hopeful that it will remain immune from budgetary cuts of the Ministry of Finance. However, that has not been the case and significant reduction has been made at the RE stage.

The Committee had recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs should undertake a thorough review of all Aid projects and prepare a roadmap for their completion. Based on this review exercise, the Ministry can prevent any reduction at RE stage and if required liaise with the Ministry of Finance for additional financial resources at that stage. The Committee had also reiterated their earlier recommendation that the Ministry should explore the feasibility of setting up an autonomous aid disbursal body along the lines of USAID to avoid the arbitrary cut's imposed by the Ministry of Finance and prioritization being done within the available allocations. This would make the DPA more predictable and play a vital role for ushering developmental diplomacy.

27. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

"The Ministry is constantly monitoring the progress of GoI-assisted development cooperation projects to ensure that projects are completed within the scheduled timeframes, have continuity of resources, and achieve the desired impact. In line with the recommendations of the Committee, projects are being reviewed at regular intervals and at multiple levels in the Ministry as well as with all concerned stakeholders. A roadmap of milestones specific to each project is part of the monitoring process that is updated and reviewed in consultation with the respective project management consultants.

The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was created in 2012 within MEA to channel Indian development and technical assistance through various schemes and projects

that are aligned with India's overall foreign policy priorities and aims, and that respond to the needs and requests of the recipient partner countries. DPA consists of three Divisions, handling different streams of development cooperation, and are overseen by Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry. DPA's work involves close coordination and consultation with concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry where the projects are located, as they are the principal interlocutors with partner countries. Projects and schemes are initiated in Territorial Divisions as per overall foreign policy priorities and objectives, and then handed over to DPA for implementation. There is continuous coordination by DPA with other Divisions of the Ministry, as required, during the implementation stage. Funds requirements are assessed and calibrated carefully to ensure continuity of resource flow for smooth project implementation. Ministry has not faced any serious constraints *vis-à-vis* budget till now. The existing institutional set-up with a healthy mix of cross-Ministry expertise and consultants from outside Government has served well in the Ministry's ability to execute and deliver its development cooperation and technical assistance programmes."

**28. Developmental partnership constitutes a central aspect of our foreign policy and have widened in scope and outreach. Notwithstanding this fact, it has been susceptible to budgetary cuts. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should undertake a thorough review of all ongoing aid projects and prepare a roadmap of their timely completion. In order to impart fiscal predictability, the Committee had also urged the Ministry to explore the feasibility of creating an autonomous aid disbursal body along the lines of USAID. The Ministry has informed that there exists a regular review process at multiple levels with all concerned stakeholders. The Committee find the silence of the Ministry over the issue of a more institutionalized autonomous mechanism like USAID as totally unacceptable. Yet again, the Ministry has failed to furnish updated RE figures. With such half-stated facts and incomplete replies, the Committee are not in a position to comment appropriately. They, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should submit all available data so that accurate picture can be seen and apt observation be made.**

**(Recommendation No. 24)**  
**Aid to Maldives**

29. The Committee have noticed that the budgetary allocation under the sub-head „Aid to Maldives“ had been increased from Rs. 75 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 125 crore in RE 2017-18 as well as in BE 2018-19. The Ministry had stated that the 66.67 per cent increase in allocation during RE 2017-18 was on account of implementation of Coastal Surveillance System project, regular payment towards training course and scholarships for civilians and physical progress of the Institute of Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES). The assertion that in view of the prevailing political situation in Maldives, project related expenditure was likely to be lower than what was envisaged has been duly noted by the Committee. The Committee observe that only 19 per cent

physical progress had been accomplished in construction work of ISLES. The Committee had therefore, recommended that allocation should be made on a realistic basis. The Committee had further recommended that the Government reach out to the Government of Maldives to ensure the smooth implementation of our projects. The Committee had also desireed that the construction of the long-delayed ISLES should be expedited and completed by May, 2019.

30. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The implementation of the ISLES project has been affected due to undue delay in the issuance of work permits by the Government of Maldives in recent months. So far, the physical progress of the project stands at 26%. The issue of delay in work permits has been raised bilaterally with the Government of Maldives, and the Ministry continues to pursue the matter. While all efforts are being made to achieve the completion of the project on schedule, funds allocation would be reviewed at RE 2018-19 stage to align the same with the actual progress of the project bearing in mind the prevailing political situation in Maldives”.

31. **The Committee observed that there was an increase in budgetary allocation under the sub-head ‘Aid to Maldives’ during RE 2017-18 and BE 2018-19 in comparison to BE 2017-18. The major reason behind the augmented allocation was implementation of Coastal Surveillance System, payment towards training course and scholarships for civilians and physical progress of the Institute of Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES). In the earlier recommendation, the Committee had asked the Government to coordinate with the Government of Maldives for Quick and smooth implementation of ongoing projects. They had also specifically desired that the construction of ISLES project be fast tracked so that it is completed by May, 2019. In their reply, the Ministry have stated that efforts are being taken to complete the desired project on schedule, fund allocation would be reviewed at RE 2018-19 stage. It is inexplicable that when the replies were submitted to the Committee in December, 2018, the RE figures were readily available with the Ministry, however, the casual reply to Committee’s recommendation is a serious concern. If the physical progress of the project stands at 26 % only, then how does the Ministry envision completing it as per the schedule *i.e.* May, 2019. Criticizing the lackadaisical approach of the Ministry, the Committee strongly reiterate that complete and updated replies should be furnished by the former. The Committee desire to know the deadline for completion of the long-delayed ISLES.**

**(Recommendation No. 30)  
Augment human capital in MEA**

32. The Committee had noted that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry was 8208, while the working strength was 7012. The Committee were unhappy to learn about the huge gap between the sanctioned and actual strength in the Ministry of External Affairs, leading to vacant posts in vital

departments. Over the years, the Ministry had provided the same justification that the gap was due to delay in recruitment which is beyond its control. The Committee had also observed that to tide over this manpower crunch, various steps such as induction of officers from other Ministries, engagement of Consultants etc had been taken. The Committee had taken serious cognizance of the persistent vacant posts in the Ministry and find the steps taken by the Ministry as inadequate and half-hearted. The Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry impress upon the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to enhance the direct recruitment process to fill up the vacant positions in the Ministry so that it is appropriately staffed. The Committee had also recommended that the Ministry continue inducting expertise from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and the private sector, as needed to ensure the quality of manpower is also augmented simultaneously.

**33. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-**

“Ministry has taken concerted action to ensure adequate human resources as follows:

- Requisite indents were placed with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) for ASOs, Steno /PAs, Junior Secretarial Assistants and MTSSs. Regular follow-up was done with SSC. Accordingly, 125 ASOs and 35 Stenos/PAs joined the Ministry in May 2018. In addition, 28 more JSAs are expected to join the Ministry. Recruitment of nearly 80 MTSSs is in its final stages.
- Regarding resources at the officer level, 38 IFS officers of the 2017 batch have joined the Ministry. After regular follow-up, UPSC has recommended one candidate to the post of Junior Interpreter in 2018. Further, Ministry has placed an indent with UPSC for five vacancies in the grade of Legal Officer Grade II.
- To augment its human resources, Ministry has continued to take officers on deputation from various line Ministries and Departments of Government of India as well as State Governments. More than 70 such officers on deputation are currently working in the Ministry.
- Ministry engages consultants, including retired Government officials as well as from the open market, with expertise in varied fields including project management, international law, consular services and disarmament. More than 50 such consultants are currently engaged by the Ministry”.

**34. While noting the steps taken by the Ministry to tackle the shortage of staff, the gap between the sanctioned strength and working strength has been an issue of persistent concern to the Committee. In order to deal effectively with this problem, the Committee had recommended the Ministry to increase the direct recruitment process and also continue induction of expertise from other Ministries, think tanks, academia and Private Sector. They did notice that the Ministry has taken concerted actions to augment its human resources which *inter-alia* included placing requisite indents with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and**

**(UPSC), engaging consultants and taking officers on deputations. The Committee desire that the Ministry should ensure that adequate and well-required human resources are available for smooth functioning of the Ministry by adopting all these methods.**

**(Recommendation No. 32)**

**Due priority should be accorded to PoE offices**

35. The Committee had observed that out of the total budgetary allocation of Rs. 440.64 crore in BE 2018-19, for the major head Secretariat General Service, Rs.17.09 crore had been earmarked for expenditure on Protectorate General of Emigrants (PGoE). The allocation of Rs. 14.82 crore at BE 2017-18 was raised to Rs. 21.89 crore at the RE stage. The Ministry had stated the reason for increase in allocation to PGoe during the RE 2017-18 was due to payments to the Implementing Agency for running the e-Migrate project. The Committee had observed that the bulk of the expenditure under PGoe is for the sub-head 'Information Technology.' It was observed that against the sanctioned strength of Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices of 87 posts, 62 posts are occupied. The Ministry had informed that there was no proposal of shifting of present POE offices. However, in principle approval had been obtained for opening one POE office in Bengaluru, Karnataka and a PoE Cell has also been staged in Lucknow under PoE Rai Bareli.

The Committee had taken a serious note of the negligence accorded to PGoe post merger, as can be discerned from the budgetary allocation. It was a matter of deep concern that another vital department of MEA, namely POE offices, has been enduring manpower constraint. The Committee had strongly recommended that the Government should pay special attention to strengthen the POE offices through adequate provisioning of finances and human capital. The Ministry was further urged to improve the working conditions of POE offices by either shifting them to new buildings or by investing on infrastructural development of the offices in the process of establishment or to be established and apprise the Committee about the progress in this regard.

36. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The Ministry has been giving high importance to augmenting manpower in POE offices. Officers of the Ministry as well as from other Ministries/Departments have been posted to POE offices on deputation basis. Contractual staff have also been hired against sanctioned vacant positions as per administrative requirements to ensure that the important functions performed by these offices are not hampered. Ministry is also taking active steps to fill the 14 vacancies in POE offices expeditiously”.

**37. The Committee observed that after the merger of erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) with Ministry of External Affairs in 2016, the Protector of Emigrants (PoE) Offices and the Protectorate General of Emigrants (PGoE) have not been**

given adequate institutional as well as fiscal space. Expressing concern over this worrisome development, the Committee had recommended that the Government should strengthen PoE offices through adequate provisioning of human as well as financial capital. The Ministry was also urged to improve the working conditions of PoE offices through requisite infrastructural development. In their reply, the Ministry has enumerated measures taken to augment human resources in PoE Offices; however, it does not mention anything about infrastructural development of PoE Offices. The Committee urge the Ministry to attach significant attention to PoE Offices by giving them adequate finances and staff so that the intended objectives behind the merger is not jeopardized. Furthermore, the Ministry may also apprise the Committee about the role of PoE Offices in the proposed Draft Emigration Management Bill that has been recently released for public feedback.

**(Recommendation No. 33)**  
**Making Public Diplomacy more visible**

38. The Committee had noted that the budgetary allocation to the sub-head 'Expenditure on Public Diplomacy' was Rs. 21.66 crore in BE 2017-18, Rs. 20.55 crore in RE 2017-18 and is Rs. 21.87 crore in BE 2018-19. The marginal decrease in RE 2017-18 as cited by the Ministry was on account of the transfer of certain routine activities to the Secretariat Establishment budget. The Committee had observed that out of the allocated budget in BE 2018-19, more than 90% has been earmarked for 'Advertising and Publicity'. The Ministry had cited two objectives of this Division - introducing and acquainting people within the country about India's foreign policy objectives and promoting India in foreign countries. For attainment of these twin objectives, the Ministry had been emphasizing on traditional as well as digital platforms. The Committee had been informed that while constantly endeavouring to follow global trends in Public Diplomacy, it has been adapting to best international practices as per Indian requirements.

In the considered view of the Committee, the budgetary allocation made to the XPD Division was not in proportion to the critical role played by it in creating awareness about India's Foreign policy priorities and effective global engagement. There was further room for incorporating the best global practices to make this Division truly dynamic and consequently, the Committee had desired that the Ministry should undertake an assessment study of successful global practices. The Committee had also urged that the Ministry should expand its public outreach through an innovative and grassroots presence.

39. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs replied as under:-

"The Ministry has taken steps for conducting the exercise recommended by the Hon'ble Committee to learn from the best global practices being followed by the publicity and information wings of other Foreign Ministries and how the same may be

adapted by the Ministry. The Ministry has also undertaken several innovative public outreach initiatives in recent times. The Ministry will further focus on extending the reach of these initiatives and take them to the desired beneficiaries”.

**40. In their recommendation, the Committee found that the budgetary allocations made to the External Publicity Division (XPD) were not in sync with the crucial role assigned to it. The Ministry was, therefore, recommended to carry out an assessment study of global best practices and incorporate it in order to make the Division more dynamic. The Committee are of the firm view that in a globalized and inter-connected world, the role of public diplomacy as a powerful tool cannot be downplayed. The Committee express the view that the Ministry’s external communication efforts are, at best, unsatisfactory and a major overhaul is needed. The Government ought to exploit the full potential of our public diplomacy by making it more pro-active, target-oriented, innovative and foresighted. To achieve this objective, the Ministry should complete the assessment study at the earliest and inform the Committee about its findings and outcomes.**

**(Recommendation. No. 40)**  
**Gender-sensitive approach towards distressed women**

41. The Committee have noted that scheme on „Legal Assistance to Women Facing problems in NRI marriages“ was the only gender specific scheme being implemented by MEA for Overseas Indians. The Committee were dismayed to note that there had been a drastic reduction in allocation under this scheme, from Rs. 0.25 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 0.01 crore in BE 2018-19. The Ministry had informed the Committee that after bringing this scheme under the ambit of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), budgetary allocation had been reduced to a token amount in BE 2018-19 and the existence of the budget head will be assured in light of feedback received. The Committee have noted that various steps have been taken by the Ministry to create awareness among Indian nationals about NRI marital issues. The Committee had urged that the Ministry should actively monitor the efficacy of the new modality under ICWF in providing legal and other assistance to distressed Indian women. Further, adequate budgetary funds and awareness drive should be launched to ensure that such a gender specific scheme does not get lost under the ICWF which caters to multiple issues.

42. In their action taken reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted as under:-

“The Ministry has continuously endeavoured to address problems pertaining to distressed Indian women who have been abused, cheated or abandoned by their NRI/PIO spouses. As recommended by the Hon’ble Committee earlier and with an aim to provide financial and legal assistance to distressed Indian women married to NRI spouses by Indian Missions and Posts, the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) guidelines were revised in September 2017. Under the

revised ICWF guidelines the assistance amount for distressed Indian women was increased to US\$ 4000 per case on a means-tested basis; scope of assistance was enhanced to include boarding and lodging; and, funds disbursement to lawyers/NGOs providing assistance would be made through Indian Missions/Posts.

Indian Missions and Posts have been asked to widen the empanelment of lawyers, NGOs and Community Organizations to provide guidance, counseling services and assistance. Many Indian Missions have designated „Open House“ meetings in which any distressed Indian national can approach Mission for assistance and guidance. Ministry is empowering aggrieved Indian nationals by providing information and guidance about procedures, mechanisms for serving judicial summons on the offending overseas Indian spouse; filing a case in an Indian court or police station; issuing Look-Out Circulars; impounding and cancelling of Indian passport of the offending spouse etc.

Ministry has prepared a comprehensive bilingual FAQs providing information on legal provisions prevailing in foreign countries and database of organizations, NGOs and lawyers who are registered or empaneled with Indian Missions and Posts. This information has also been made available on Ministry’s website at <http://www.mea.gov.in/faq-hi.htm>. State authorities and Regional Passport Offices have been asked to translate the above-mentioned FAQs, legal provisions and revised guidelines for legal and financial assistance under ICWF and other relevant information into local languages to be posted on their respective websites.

An Integrated Nodal Agency (INA), as recommended by the Expert Committee on NRI Marital Disputes set up by the Ministry, has been constituted. The INA, aimed to be an effective mechanism to provide a single-window timely solution to the problems of affected women, is headed by Ministry of Women and Child Development with senior officials from Ministries of External Affairs, Home Affairs, and Law and Justice as members. The INA has held five meetings so far.

NRI marital issues are also taken up during bilateral meetings and Consular Dialogues held with foreign countries. The State Commissions for Women are being involved for providing appropriate guidance and counseling to distressed Indian women abandoned in India by their NRI spouses and assisting women to get in touch with district legal authorities who have empaneled lawyers who also work on pro-bono basis with them.

Under the Videsh Sampark series initiated by Ministry, outreach events are held in partnership with State Governments with an aim to brief State Governments and relevant stakeholders about the programmes, schemes and welfare measures of the Ministry and cooperation is sought to disseminate information. Such outreach events have been held in Telangana, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Ministry is in the process of producing a film/ad on NRI marital disputes as part of its awareness campaign in Hindi and regional languages”.

**43. The Committee had noted that the only gender-specific scheme of the Ministry of External Affairs i.e. Legal Assistance to women facing problems in NRI marriage’s has been subsumed under Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). Recognizing the gravity of the problems pertaining to distressed women, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry**

should ensure that budgetary funds and awareness campaigns are lunched to provide them with requisite legal and financial assistance. In its reply, the Ministry has provided a detailed note on the concerted efforts made to address the problems related to distressed Indian women who have been abused, cheated or abandoned by their NRI/PIO spouses. Widening empanelment of lawyers, NGOs and Community Organizations in Indian Missions and Posts, preparation of a comprehensive bilingual FAQs, establishment of Integrated Nodal Agency (INA), holding outreach events with state Governments are commendable steps taken by the Ministry in this direction. The Committee are satisfied with the follow-up action taken by the Ministry over such a critical aspect. The Committee would like to be informed about the impact/outcome of this endeavour towards having a gender-sensitive approach towards India Diaspora.

**(Recommendation No. 46)**

**Time to frame a Grand Strategy for Indian foreign Policy**

44. The Committee noted that there were ten key principles and objectives guiding our foreign policy. The Ministry has informed that the Government followed a pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy. The Committee were surprised by the Ministry's submission that there is no overarching and formalized policy document covering all aspects of our foreign policy. However, policy initiatives and strategies such as „Neighbourhood First“ Policy, „Act East“, SAGAR maritime doctrine, revitalizing ties with West Asia, simultaneous engagement with all powers, focus on regional connectivity and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), reform of multilateral institutions, including of the UN Security Council, reconnecting with Diaspora, constituted the elements of that multi-faceted approach to India's international relations and our diplomatic strategy. The Committee had also noted that the existence of mechanisms of consultation and coordination between MEA and other arms of Government to ensure that factors shaping India's foreign policy were in tune with the country's national priorities.

The Committee were cognizant of India's deepening engagement at the bilateral, regional as well as multilateral level. The Committee were of the considered view that the formulation of a grand strategy encompassing the broad aspects of our foreign policy with short term, medium term and long term objectives is the need of the hour. By imparting coherence and clarity on our hitherto long established and enduring principles of foreign policy, the grand foreign policy strategy would also bolster the case for enhanced allocation by the Ministry of Finance. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs should take all requisite institutional as well intellectual steps to spell out a coherent and balanced grand strategy for India in the world.

45. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its action taken reply stated as under:-

“The process of formulating a road map for India’s international engagement is an ongoing one. The Ministry undertakes continuous stock-taking of changes in the global landscape with a view to identify challenges and opportunities over a short, medium and long-term horizon. It is this process that has led to enunciation of the „Neighbourhood First“ policy, the „Act East“ policy and the SAGAR maritime doctrine.

Our policy of simultaneous engagement with all major powers, our new and more intensive orientation towards the Indian Ocean region, recent strengthening in our relations with West Asia and the Gulf, and upgradation in the scale of our vision for relations with African countries, are all reflective of a more energetic, coherent and focused approach.

The immediate and most fundamental factor shaping our foreign policy thinking is the flux and transition that characterizes the current world order. There is a clear trend of new voices and issues arising in the overall global discourse. In such a scenario, while locking in to a particular strategy may not prove to be an ideal approach in the long run; it is indeed very important for us to have our own world view – and we do. India’s world view is essentially centered on the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – the world is one family. This is increasingly being enunciated at global platforms through references by our leaders to various ideas under this concept.

Keeping this unique Indian world view at its core, the Ministry will continue to take institutional as well as intellectual steps to implement a pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy, which is agile and responsive in the face of short term developments and forward looking in dealing with emerging global trends in the longer term”.

**46. In view of India’s expanding and deepening global engagements, the Committee were surprised to note the absence of an overreaching and formal policy underlying the visions and objectives of India’s foreign policy. The Committee, therefore, had recommended that the Ministry should spell out a comprehensive, coherent and balanced ‘grand strategy’ for directing and guiding India’s foreign policy. The Ministry’s circuitous response in this regard is unacceptable. While the Committee do realize that formulating a roadmap is an ongoing process, the presence of an overreaching policy framework can be a potent force in giving shape and direction to our foreign policy. The Committee, thereby, reiterate their recommendation that the Ministry of External Affairs should undertake a thorough study and frame a comprehensive and cogent ‘grand strategy’ document to guide, shape and direct our foreign policy on a priority basis.**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT**

#### **(Recommendation No. 1)**

Despite persistent written and oral reminders and repeated Recommendations in previous Reports of the Committee, Statements under Direction 73A of Directions by Speaker, Lok Sabha in context of the Reports of the Committee are piling up, which is not a happy augury. Direction 73-A has been issued with the specific intent of keeping the Parliament aware of the implementation status of Observations/Recommendations contained in the Reports of the Parliamentary Committees. For this purpose a six months period has been prescribed for the Government to make the Statement, which is a reasonable time period. The Committee are distressed to note that in the instant pendency of Ministry of External Affairs, Statements are to be made for Reports presented as long as six years ago. In the considered opinion of the Committee, such inordinately long delays amount to hindering the oversight function of the Committee as well as the Parliament, which is a serious matter. The Committee hope that the Ministry would appreciate the gravity of the situation and get all the pending Statements under Direction 73A made in both the Houses as desired by the Committee in their Twentieth Report. Furthermore, in future, the Ministry will scrupulously adhere to the prescribed timelines in this regard.

#### **Reply of the Government**

The Hon'ble Committee's directions are noted for compliance. The Minister made Statements on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the Lok Sabha and on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session 2018 on the status of implementation of Recommendations and Observations contained in the following Reports of the Hon'ble Committee:

- h. 13<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2012-13
- i. 19<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2013-14
- j. 15<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Problems related to Overseas Indian marriages: Scheme for providing legal/financial assistance/rehabilitation to Indian women deserted by their overseas Indian Spouses.
- k. 25<sup>th</sup> Report (15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Passport Seva Project – Targets and Achievements
- l. 3<sup>rd</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2014-15

m. 5<sup>th</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for 2015-16

n. 13<sup>th</sup> Report (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Indian Diaspora

Minister's Statements in respect of other pending Reports is proposed to be made during the forthcoming Session of Parliament.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 3)**

The Committee note that the Ministry is in agreement with their observations regarding the scope for improvement in the process by which budgetary demands are prepared at the Unit level but it has also submitted that the mismatch between funds demanded and actual utilization is largely on account of its technical assistance and development cooperation schemes, projects and programmes being implemented abroad where certain extraneous factors come into play which are beyond its control. The Ministry, inexplicably, has not intimated about steps taken towards formulating a zero-based budgeting process, which incorporates continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation against fund utilization. The Zero Based Budgeting seems all the more imperative now where the Committee observe significant and unrealistic gaps between the allocations sought, BE and RE and the expenditure actually incurred. While acknowledging the factors put forth by the Ministry, the Committee desire that the Ministry take fool proof steps to secure all clearances and pre-emptive steps before going ahead with the international aid projects.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry will continue to improve its budgetary assessment and management in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendations of better unit-based budgeting. Ministry has instituted a mechanism of holding Quarterly Budget Management Meetings with major Divisions and Spending Units, chaired by Foreign Secretary or Financial Advisor, where spending as well as demands are assessed in detail based on project-wise status of implementation. This has assisted in the Ministry projecting more realistic demands for a given financial year for the Revised Estimates and for the subsequent financial year for the Budget Estimates.

The overarching principle of zero-based budgeting guides the continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation and optimal funds utilization in Ministry's budget management. The Ministry will continue to make more efforts in this direction to realize credible budgetary demands justified by past efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated

expenditure based on implementation progress, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to further improve budgetary assessment, management and utilization.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

**(Recommendation No. 4)**

On examining utilization of budgetary allocation during 2017-18, the Committee find that the Ministry has an amount of Rs. 4223.85 crore to spend in the last quarter. Thus, 30.85 percent of the RE allocation is remaining for spending in last quarter, which is slightly less than the Ministry of Finance guidelines of expenditure within 33% of allocation. The Committee have made a note of the specific steps taken by the Ministry to improve financial management and spending pattern. It is perplexing to note that while on one hand, there has been a discrepancy in budgetary demands made by MEA and actual allocations provided, on the other hand, even the lower Revised allocated outlays are not spent by the Ministry. The budgetary cuts inflicted upon the Ministry of External Affairs seem to be a fall out of its own expenditure pattern. The Committee are satisfied to note that the Ministry has now felt that the gap between budgetary demands and allocation can be narrowed down by demonstrating robust and prudent expenditure in first two quarters of the financial year and presenting a positive case before the Ministry of Finance. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should first demonstrate efficient utilization of funds in first two quarters of the year by observing the progress at Unit level and also maintain it at optimal level so that the Ministry of Finance at least not reduce the funds at the RE stage. Simultaneously, the Committee would recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs convince the Ministry of Finance to well-equip them financially so that the foreign policy objectives do not get restricted due to lack of financial resources.

**Reply of the Government**

As per the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry has made concerted efforts to improve expenditure in the first two quarters of a financial year to be in a realistic position to seek additional funds from Ministry of Finance at the RE stage. In FY 2017-18, Ministry's expenditure in the first two quarters of the FY was 44.81% of the BE 2017-18 allocation. In FY 2018-19, Ministry has achieved expenditure of 55.6% of the BE 2018-19 allocation in the first two quarters.

Ministry assures the Hon'ble Committee of its commitment towards continuing to make further efforts to improve the utilisation pattern of its allocated budget while addressing the inherent political, security, geological and other challenges faced in implementing projects abroad.

Ministry has also been engaging with Ministry of Finance to keep them informed them of

funds required to meet our international commitments and to emphasize the importance of providing adequate budgetary allocations for the same.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

**(Recommendation No. 7)**

The Committee note that the budgetary allocation under the Head „Embassies and Missions“ has witnessed an upward trend, moving from Rs. 2528.56 crore in BE 2016-17 to Rs. 2631.47 crore in RE 2017-18 and to Rs. 2701 crore in BE 2018-19. With an increase in allocation at the RE Stage *vis-à-vis* BE stage over the past four years, it is observed that this head is an exception to the general trend of budgetary allocation of MEA. The Ministry has enlisted five parameters for deciding the opening of new Missions, *viz*, assessment of India’s geo-political priorities; intensity of bilateral engagement; welfare of Indian Diaspora; commercial, developmental and cultural interest; and reciprocal arrangement with the country concerned, on a case to case basis. With a view to expanding India’s global footprint, the Ministry is in the process of consultation with concerned Departments of Government of India for opening of New Missions in different regions of the world, beginning with Africa. With regard to opening of Missions in Latin America or Baltic States, the Ministry informed that it will be the next step of MEA, but it is difficult to persuade the Ministry of Finance to create posts to run the Mission/Posts. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should chalk out a roadmap along with timelines for opening of new Missions/Posts, and inform the Committee about the same. While determining the location of new Missions, the Ministry should strike a balance between the demand and the extent of the country’s presence in our country. So far as the issue of creation of human resource is concerned, the Committee desire that the Ministry ought to take up the matter at the highest level to persuade the Ministry of Finance in this matter.

The Committee have been continuously reminding the Missions for improvement in monitoring of performance and evaluation of existing Missions/Posts. In this regard, the Foreign Secretary in his candid submission apprised that the Ministry has introduced an online monitoring system on weekly and monthly basis, however it needs further improvement. The Committee, therefore, strongly desire that centralized monitoring mechanism is established to ensure an efficient and timely delivery of services in the Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

**Reply of the Government**

The Hon’ble Committee’s recommendation that while determining the location of new Missions a balance should be struck between the demand and the extent of the country’s presence in our country has been incorporated in the Ministry’s plan of opening of new Missions and Posts abroad.

In March 2018, the Union Cabinet approved the opening of 18 new Missions in Africa (Rwanda, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Chad, Sao Tome and Principe, Eritrea, Somalia, Guinea Bissau, Swaziland, Liberia, and Togo) over a four year period from 2018 to 2021. Of these, six Missions will be opened in 2018 and 2019 as follows: Mission in Rwanda has been opened in July-August 2018; personnel have been identified for Missions in Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, and Guinea; and, administrative processes are under way for Missions in Republic of Congo and Burkina Faso.

The Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) for monitoring of Mission and Posts was introduced by Ministry's Directorate General of Inspection (DGI) in 2016. PEMS is a dynamic two-way interface between Ministry and Missions/Posts, providing an objective, transparent and participatory process to evaluate performance of Missions/Posts and to identify Missions/Posts for DGI's on-site inspection. PEMS is currently being modified to put in place an annual appraisal system by which Missions/Posts will be evaluated on a set of objective identified areas to measure performance. The modified portal is expected to be launched shortly.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 9)**

The Committee note that against sanctioned strength of 2697, the actual strength in CPO is 2051. The Ministry has stated that steps have been taken to improve service conditions of the CPO personnel, including indenting of 224 posts of different non-gazetted level from SSC. However, the Committee do not find these steps as sufficient, particularly when most of the 92 PSKs operating as arms of 37 Passport Offices are working with inadequate staff. Furthermore, to bring passport services closer to the citizens, the Ministry in association with the Department of Posts had initiated opening up of 251 POPSKs in two phases. Of these, 60 POPSKs are functional. These POPSKs also require granting officers. The Committee insist that the sovereign functions of passport services like processing and issuance of passports should always be carried out by the staff of MEA while the non-sovereign functions are vested with the staff of Department of Posts.

Expressing disapproval of the persistent manpower crunch in CPO, the Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry augment manpower in the CPO and its network of Passport Offices, PSKs and POPSKs either through direct recruitment or on deputation. Furthermore, training programmes should be conducted for the staff of Department of Posts to familiarize them about Passport services so as to avoid technical glitches and human errors in delivery of passport services.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

## **Reply of the Government**

The Hon'ble Committee's recommendation that the sovereign function of passport services should be carried out by MEA staff is being followed. As on 31 October 2018, 229 out of 251 POPSKs have been inaugurated. In the Passport Seva Project model, the tasks of „A“ Counter pertain to application acceptance after biometric data collection and initial scrutiny of documents and are carried out by the service provider M/s TCS in the existing Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs); while the tasks at the „B“ and „C“ counters pertain to sovereign functions of verification and grant of passports. In POPSKs, only the „A“ counter tasks would be carried out by officials of the Department of Posts, while those of „B“ and „C“ counters would be performed by officials of the Central Passport Organization (CPO).

Augmentation of the manpower strength of the CPO and its offices is a priority of the Ministry. The total sanctioned strength of the CPO cadre is 2697 against which the working strength is 1996 as on 10 May 2018. In addition, 15 Technical and 6 supporting staff man the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Passport Seva Project. Ministry has engaged 446 Data Entry Operators through an outsourced service provider to bridge the gap between the sanctioned strength and the working strength for the non-gazetted posts.

The difficulty in filling the vacant posts in the CPO cadre stems from the extant Recruitment Rules. Direct recruitment is possible only in the grades of Office Assistant, Junior Passport Assistant and Assistant Superintendent. Ministry has been regularly placing its indents with the Staff Selection Commission for recruitment in these grades as per the vacancies.

The Granting Officers are in the grades of Superintendent and Senior Superintendent where 100% recruitment is by promotion of Assistant Superintendents. There is no scope for direct entry or taking officials on deputation, or promotion of Assistant Superintendents through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination. Further, there is a shortage of Assistant Superintendents with the requisite qualifying service to be promoted as Superintendent.

Ministry has taken several steps to improve the service conditions of CPO personnel by restructuring and expanding the CPO cadre to ensure that vacant posts available to them are filled by promotion. In the years 2016-17, 2017-18 and till date in 2018-19, regular meetings of the Department Promotion Committee have been held for promotion of eligible officials to the next grade. The cadre position as on 11 May 2018 is enclosed at Annexure-A (Gazetted) and Annexure-B (non-Gazetted).

Ministry has also decided to undertake a Cadre Review to address the issue of manpower shortage in the CPO.

### **(Recommendation No. 10)**

The scale of passport related services can be estimated from the fact that approximately 5.44 crore passport related applications have been processed and Rs. 5.34 crore services rendered through the Passport Seva Portal (PSP) system in 2017. The Committee are satisfied to learn that several steps have been taken to bring about qualitative and quantitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country. The Committee, however, find that during 2015, 2016 and 2017 only 123,80 and 17 Passport Sewa Camps were organized respectively. The Committee do not agree with the justification given by the Ministry for organizing lesser number of Passport Sewa Camps during the last three years. Since the POPSKs have just started functioning and mostly cover big cities with Head Post Offices, the purpose of organizing Passport Sewa camps still exists. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Passport Sewa Camps should be organized in all far away areas in order to bring the Passport delivery services to the door of the citizens.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **Reply of the Government**

One of the objectives behind setting up POPSKs is to take passport services closer to the people. The Ministry and Department of Posts have decided to set-up POPSKs in 251 Head Post Offices/ Post Offices of which 229 have been inaugurated as of 31 October 2018. Both the Ministries are working towards making the remaining POPSK functional at the earliest.

Currently, almost early 12,000 appointments are being released daily in these POPSKs, and nearly 14 lakhs passports have been issued through POPSKs till 31 October 2018. Consequently, the requirement of holding Passport Seva Camps has come down during this period.

Ministry has noted the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee and Passport Seva Camps would be planned in far-flung places to take passport delivery services to the doorsteps of the citizens.

### **(Recommendation No. 12)**

The Committee note that the budgetary allocation under the Minor Head „Entertainment Charges“ have been reduced in RE 2017-18 *vis-à-vis* BE 2017-18 and the same amount of Rs. 70.50 crore has been retained at the BE 2018-19. Although there has been an increase in the number of high level visits in last three years, the same is not reflected in the budget cycle as the bills pertaining to visits are not settled in the same fiscal year. For expeditious settlement and processing of bills by the Protocol Division, a new system was put in place under which agencies, service providers, vendors and hotels were required to submit their bills within two weeks, delayed/ incomplete submission of bills continued. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should ensure a time

bound process of submission of bills relating to a visit and processing to manage fiscal discipline and prudence. The Ministry should take adequate steps to strictly clear the bills of a visit in the same financial year in order to avoid rolling over the settlement of bills to next year. Towards this direction, all the pending bills should be cleared in this financial year by seeking additional funds at the RE Stage.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry accepts the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee. The Ministry will pursue fiscal discipline and prudence towards time-bound settlement of bills relating to visits within the given financial year. The Ministry will proactively follow-up with service providers for submitting their bills for processing and settlement soon after a visit so as to avoid rolling over the expenditure to the next financial year. If required, additional funds will be provided for the „Entertainment Charges“ budget head at the RE stage.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 15)**

The Committee note that there has been an increase in allocation for South Asian University from Rs. 260 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 378.30 crore in RE 2017-18 and to Rs. 375 crore in BE 2018-19. The Ministry has informed that work related to the construction of the SAU campus has gained momentum in the last year and therefore, adequate funds have been provisioned for contribution towards creation of capital assets. In view of the slow and tardy progress of the construction of permanent campus in the previous years, this is a welcome development. The Committee are aware that construction work for the SAU campus has been devised under four packages. The Ministry has informed that work under Package I for boundary wall and site office has been completed, work under Package II for five building is in full progress and scheduled to be completed by December 2018; and work under Package III is slated to be complete by January 2020. However, the Ministry has not provided a specific schedule for completion of work under Package IV. The Committee are happy to know that after much prodding, Pakistan has made a part of the payment of US\$ 2.259 million against an overdue payment. The efforts for getting the remaining contribution should be continued till it is deposited. Given the record of sluggish progress in the construction of SAU, the Committee recommend that the Ministry ensure that work related to Package II and III are completed as per schedule and issues related to works of Package IV are sorted out expeditiously. The Committee also desire to be apprised of the progress made in this regard at regular intervals.

## Reply of the Government

The current progress of construction work for the SAU campus is as follows:

**Package-II** (five buildings): Work under this package is being undertaken in an expeditious manner. As of September 2018, the structure works for the building housing the Faculties of Life Sciences and Earth Sciences has been completed. Miscellaneous structure works have also been completed. Internal works are nearing completion from basement up to third floor, and work is in progress for works till the last floor. The superstructure work in two Faculty Housing Blocks has been completed and internal and external works are in progress. The foundation for the fourth faculty and housing block has been completed. The superstructure work for the main building of faculty club, guest house and civil work for swimming pool has been completed. Miscellaneous, internal and external works are in progress. Overall progress in this package as of September 2018 was 56%.

**Package-III** (seven buildings): As of September 2018, the RCC structure work for the faculty of Physics, Chemistry, Maths, IT and Law and Humanity has been completed. The structure work for Administration Block, Library, Institute of South Asian Studies, Faculty of Art Design and Convention Centres, and Utility Building are at various stages of construction. Overall progress in this package as of September 2018 is 35%.

**Package IV:** The works on remaining buildings could not be planned due to various land issues. However, based on the recent directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court, permission has been accorded for construction in the geo-morphological ridge area. In respect of litigations pertaining to acquisition of land, the final verdict of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in one leading case is awaited which will determine the outcome in similar cases in the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi. Ministry has already deposited an amount Rs. 10.39 crore with the Hon'ble Supreme Court as compensation to the land owner. Once these issues are resolved, construction for the buildings under Package IV will also be able to commence.

In 2009, Cabinet approval was accorded for USD 239.93 million (*approx. Rs. 1200 crore at the then exchange rate*) for GoI's assistance to South Asian University, of which USD 198 million (*approx. Rs. 990 crore at the then exchange rate*) was towards capital cost for campus construction with the project to be completed by 2014. However, due to delays in construction attributable to factors like non-receipt of approvals from various statutory authorities and encumbrances on the allotted land, the project could not commence before 2016. This has also resulted in cost escalation over the amount approved by the Cabinet. The University has now sent a revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) to the Ministry in which the preliminary cost estimate has been revised to Rs. 3115.73 crore (*approx. USD 430 million at prevalent exchange rate*). The revised DPR is being processed for vetting by CPWD and fresh approval of the Cabinet will be sought for the revised cost of the project.

Pakistan has paid a sum of USD 7,339,563 but balance contribution of USD 521,631 is remaining. SAU through the SAARC Secretariat has taken up the case for early release of the balance payment.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 16)**

The Committee note that an allocation of Rs. 200 crore was provided for Nalanda University in BE 2017-18, but it was reduced at RE Stage and an outlay of Rs. 200 crore has been kept in BE 2018-19. It was expected that the splitting up of tender into several packages and establishment of Nalanda Mentor Group (NMG), the construction of Nalanda University would be facilitated and expedited. However, the downward allocation in RE 2017-18 and an allocation of Rs. 200 crore at BE 2018-19 tell a different story. The Committee observe that the University has started three courses since 2014 but they are unable to start new courses or enhance the intake of students due to non-availability of accommodation. The delay in completion of Nalanda University – an international institution of excellence for pursuit of intellectual philosophical and historical studies – is highly unfortunate. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Government streamline the process in all the packages and draw a clear roadmap for the completion of this project with fixed timelines. Necessary funds should also be provided for timely completion of the progress. The Ministry should explore opportunities to channelize contribution for this project from other participating countries to buttress domestic funds.

#### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry, in coordination with Nalanda University, has taken measures to expeditiously complete the campus construction project. The University has constituted a Project Monitoring Committee (PMC) consisting of two experts from civil engineering and electrical engineering fields respectively, one expert from the Government of Bihar and one from the Ministry of External Affairs. The PMC has been mandated with the task of overseeing the construction project in addition to the monitoring done by the Architect Consultant and the Project Management Consultant. The status of work is as follows:

**Package I-A (Internal Roads and Earthwork for Water Bodies):** Work in this package has been completed.

**Package I-B (Non-Residential Building):** Work commenced in end of April 2017 and till end of April 2018, 31% of the work in this package has been completed. The scheduled period of

completion is February 2020. The contractor has been instructed to compress the micro-schedule and increase manpower, materials and machinery to accelerate work and minimize the delay.

**Package 1-C (Residential Buildings):** The tender is under process.

Article 3 of the MoU on establishment of Nalanda University states that “*funding for the establishment and operations of the University will be on a voluntary basis*”. Therefore, contributions from countries such as Australia, China, Thailand, and Lao PDR were purely voluntary and for specific purposes. However, in view of the Hon’ble Committee’s recommendations, Ministry will explore opportunities of channelizing contributions for the project from other countries which have signed the MoU.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 19)**

While analyzing the major Head „Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation”, the Committee observe a wide array of unpredictable budgetary allocation to various sub-heads. The Committee make a note of the practical challenges posed by geo-political realities and security concerns in execution of international projects. The Committee have been informed that in keeping with India’s Neighbourhood First Policy”, there has been deepening of India’s developmental engagement with our immediate neighbourhood by implementing large as well as small scale infrastructure projects.

The Committee strongly urge that the Ministry observe pragmatism and prudence while planning and proper execution of developmental aid and assistance to other countries. In view of the unfortunate mismatch between the BE and RE stage budgetary demands and allocation of Ministry of External Affairs, the Committee are not very confident about the Foreign Secretary’s assurance that additional fund will be flagged to Ministry of Finance at a later stage. The Ministry should make earnest efforts to impress upon the Ministry of Finance to have a considered view of the bilateral, regional and multilateral implications of not having adequate funds for developmental partnership. The Committee further desire that a strategy should be formulated to effectively counter the presence of other regional powers by increasing our presence through widening as well as deepening of our developmental partnership with our neighbourhood in consonance with the „Neighbourhood First Policy”.

#### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry agrees with Hon’ble Committee’s observation regarding need for pragmatism and prudence in planning and proper execution of developmental aid and assistance. Ministry is closely

monitoring progress of development cooperation projects being implemented with Government of India's assistance to ensure that projects are completed within the scheduled timeframes, have continuity of resources, and achieve the desired impact. The Ministry, in line with „Neighbourhood First Policy“ of the Government of India, has been constantly in engagement with our neighbouring countries for identification and implementation of development projects in these countries.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 20)**

The Committee observe that there has been an increase in budgetary allocation under „Aid to Bangladesh' from Rs. 125 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 175 crore in BE 2018-19. The BE allocation of 2017-18 *i.e.* Rs. 125 crore has been reduced to Rs. 65crore. The Committee have made a note of Ministry's reply on drastic reduction in allocation under this head at RE Stage due to slow pace of spending. Furthermore, the expenditure under this budget head till January, 2018 has been Rs. 50.25 crore. The Ministry has informed that enhanced allocation in BE 2018-19 has been primarily provisioned for expediting work on Akhaura-Agartala rail link. The Committee also note that Government of Bangladesh have taken time to come forward with proposals of Small Development Projects.

While satisfied with the increased allocation under „Aid to Bangladesh“ in BE 2018-19, the Committee express their disapproval of the slow pace of utilization by MEA during FY 2017-18. With the provisioning of requisite finances, the Committee would recommend that the Ministry fully utilize allocations for Akhaura-Agartala rail link and complete the same within the agreed timeline. The Government of India is also urged to use its good offices to engage with its Bangladeshi counterpart for promptly furnishing proposals on Small Development Projects.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee to engage with Government of Bangladesh for promptly furnishing proposals on Small Development Projects has been taken on board, and the Ministry has been able to conclude the MoUs for three Small Development Projects at the cities of Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet in Bangladesh and project implementation has begun.

The Akhaura-Agartala rail link project on the Bangladeshi side is being executed by Bangladesh Railways with the financial assistance of Government of India. The work on the Bangladesh side has been awarded in April 2018. Close supervision and periodic reviews are being undertaken to achieve full utilization of allocation for the Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project and to complete the same within the stipulated timeline.

**(Recommendation No. 21)**

Due to historical, strategic and civilizational linkages, Bhutan has traditionally been the largest recipient of India's aid and assistance programmes and budgetary allocation to them are provided from both Revenue and Capital heads. The Committee are disappointed to observe a massive reduction in budgetary allocation in both aid as well as loan and advances to Bhutan. The two main reasons for this drop in allocation, as cited by the Ministry, are completion or near completion of few projects and geographical challenges confronting Punatsangchu I and II projects. The Committee are happy to learn that the ongoing GOI-assisted Hydro-electricity Projects in Bhutan are making desired progress without any shortage of funds. The Kholongchhu Project under the pre-construction activities and signing of concession agreement is under discussion. The Committee recommend that the Ministry ensure that the various GOI-assisted HEPs in Bhutan are completed within the agreed timelines.

**Reply of the Government**

In FY 2018-19, Bhutan continues to be the largest recipient of Government of India's aid and assistance programme. During Bhutan's 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2013-18), India's contribution of Rs. 5000 Crore is the largest source of external assistance received by Bhutan. The reduction in allocation in aid grant as well as aid loans to Bhutan is due to reduced requirement of funds for GoI-assisted Hydro-Electric Projects (HEPs), Punatsangchhu-I, Punatsangchhu-II and Mangdechhu, under implementation as these projects have crossed their respective peak construction stages.

Mangdechhu HEP is progressing steadily and is expected to be commissioned in 2018. In the Punatsangchhu-I and II HEPs, remedial measures to respond to geological challenges have been undertaken by the respective project managements and additional measures are being considered in consultation with the Project Consultant and technical experts. The Technical Coordination Committee (TCC) comprising subject matter experts including from GoI's Central Water Commission and Central Electricity Authority; representatives from Royal Government of Bhutan; and the Project Management, deliberates and recommends remedial measures for addressing the technical issues facing these two HEPs. The TCC also obtains additional assistance of experts from premier GoI institutions, including National Institute of Rock Mechanics, IIT Delhi, IIT Chennai and Geological Survey of India, to address technical issues facing the projects. The recommendations of the TCC are considered during the meetings of the Project Authorities, comprising representatives

from GoI and the Royal Government of Bhutan, which are held regularly. Apart from regular Project Authority meetings, both HEPs are regularly monitored at various levels within the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 22)**

The Committee notice that there has been a substantial increase in allocation under the budget head „Aid to Nepal,” from 375 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 650 crore in BE 2018-19. The jump is 73.33% over the last fiscal. The Committee are aware that the situation in Nepal had led to a considerable delay in the implementation of our projects. It is heartening to know that with an improved political situation, several ongoing projects are stated to achieve significant progress, and post-earthquake reconstruction works are scheduled to start. The renewed vigour in the implementation of our ongoing projects in Nepal is a welcome step. The Committee urge that the Ministry prepare a blueprint for the completion of various projects in Nepal in a smooth and timely fashion. The Committee hope that the wide ranging and expanding partnership will give a fresh impetus to our bilateral ties.

### **Reply of the Government**

Allocation of Rs. 375 crore under the „Aid to Nepal” budget head was fully utilized in FY 2017-18. In close coordination with the Government of Nepal (GoN), a number of projects were completed in FY 2017-18 including (i) Construction of new bays at four sub-stations at Raxaul, Parwanipur, Kataiya and Kusaha; (ii) Construction of two GoI-assisted 132 kV cross-border transmission lines from Raxaul (India) to Parwanipur (Nepal) and from Kataiya (India) to Kusaha (Nepal); (iii) Construction of 2700 shallow tube wells in 12 districts of Nepal under the Nepal-Bharat Maitri Irrigation Project; and (iv) Small Development Projects in health, education and community infrastructure sectors.

The Ministry has laid particular focus on expeditious implementation of development projects, establishing clear timelines and continuous monitoring and review. Timelines are prepared in consultation with concerned agencies in India and Nepal. Major ongoing GoI-assisted development projects in Nepal are being monitored at various levels, including in Prime Minister’s PRAGATI platform, at the level of External Affairs Minister, and senior officials’ level, to ensure smooth and expeditious implementation of projects and achievement of targets within specified timelines.

A bilateral „Oversight Mechanism”, co-chaired by the Ambassador of India to Nepal and the Foreign Secretary of Nepal, was established in 2016 and has held regular meetings to review progress and address issues in project implementation. Progress of projects being implemented in Nepal also

depends upon GoN making land available for these projects and providing necessary local permits and other clearances. Ministry continues to follow up closely with relevant agencies on the Indian side as well as with GoN to ensure expeditious implementation of all major ongoing development projects. Going forward, the key focus of the Ministry is to ensure expeditious delivery of projects through close coordination and partnership with relevant stakeholders in India as well as GoN.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 23)**

The Committee observe an increase of 20% in budgetary allocation under the head „Aid to Sri Lanka“ in BE 2018-19 in view of the anticipated commencement of some development projects during the course of the year. The Committee note that the reduction in RE 2017-18 was mainly due to the delay in land allotment for the third phase of the housing project. The Committee are of the view that the Ministry’s requirement of an enhanced allocation in BE 2018-19 stands in stark contrast to its utilization pattern of Rs. 28.84 crore till 31 January 2018 against an allocated amount of Rs. 75 crore in RE 2017-18. The Committee would recommend that the Ministry make realistic budgetary demands backed by robust expenditure so that underutilization of funds is not cited as a justification for budgetary cuts in MEA’s budget at the RE 2018-19 stage.

#### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry values the recommendation of the Hon’ble Committee. Expenditure was towards the last quarter in FY 2017-18, essentially due to the payment schedules of projects which were in turn linked to achievement of milestones. By the end of FY 2017-18, Ministry completely utilized the RE allocation of Rs. 75 crore under the „Aid to Sri Lanka“ budget head.

The projections for BE 2018-19 are based on a realistic assessment of progress in the implementation of ongoing projects and anticipated expenditure on new projects. The Ministry will make further adjustments at the RE 2018-19 stage based on review of the progress during the course of the FY.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 24)**

The Committee notice that the budgetary allocation under the sub-head „Aid to Maldives“ has been increased from Rs. 75 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 125 crore in RE 2017-18 as well as in BE 2018-19. The Ministry stated that the 66.67 per cent increase in allocation during RE 2017-18 was on account of implementation of Coastal Surveillance System project, regular payment towards training course and scholarships for civilians and physical progress of the Institute of Security and

Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES). The assertion that in view of the prevailing political situation in Maldives, project related expenditure is likely to be lower than what was envisaged has been duly noted by the Committee. The Committee observe that only 19 per cent physical progress has been accomplished in construction work of ISLES. The Committee, therefore, recommend that allocation should be made on a realistic basis. The Committee would further recommend that the Government reach out to the Government of Maldives to ensure the smooth implementation of our projects. The Committee also desire that the construction of the long-delayed ISLES should be expedited and completed by May, 2019.

### **Reply of the Government**

The implementation of the ISLES project has been affected due to undue delay in the issuance of work permits by the Government of Maldives in recent months. So far, the physical progress of the project stands at 26%. The issue of delay in work permits has been raised bilaterally with the Government of Maldives, and the Ministry continues to pursue the matter. While all efforts are being made to achieve the completion of the project on schedule, funds allocation would be reviewed at RE 2018-19 stage to align the same with the actual progress of the project bearing in mind the prevailing political situation in Maldives.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 25)**

The Committee note that under the head „Aid to Myanmar“ allocation has been enhanced from Rs. 225 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 280 crore in BE 2018-19 in view of the fund requirements for various ongoing infrastructure projects. The Committee have been informed that both the components-waterways and roads - of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project have shown steady progress. Given the timely availability of funds, the Committee are hopeful that the execution of various ongoing projects in Myanmar would be expedited. The Committee desire that the Ministry in consultation with the concerned stakeholder in Myanmar draw a roadmap for completion of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project to ensure smooth and timely completion of the transport corridor.

### **Reply of the Government**

The enhanced allocation of funds under „Aid to Myanmar“ in BE 2018-19 would facilitate in completing the activities scheduled to be completed under various ongoing projects. Works under the original waterways component of the Kaladan project were completed in FY 2017-18. Various additional waterways works, approved in 2015, are also in an advanced stage of implementation.

Civil works for construction of road under the Kaladan project is currently underway. The Ministry is in constant engagement with the concerned authorities in the Government of Myanmar through our Mission in Yangon to secure their support for smooth and expedited progress, where required.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 26)**

It is noticed that the budgetary allocation under the head „Aid to African countries“ has witnessed a downward spiral from Rs. 330 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 200 crore in BE 2018-19 based on the expenditure pace. The Ministry has informed that there exists a possibility of upward revision of allocation at RE 2018-19 based on actual progress of project and pace of utilization. The Committee note that the regular and high level review of projects undertaken under India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is carried out and accordingly policy decisions are taken. It is learnt that both sides have gained experience in institutionalizing and implementing development partnership programmes. The Committee are happy to observe that 48 countries have benefitted from Pan Africa e-Network (PAeNP) project and 169 sites/centres have been integrated with it. The Committee discern that the developmental partnership between India and Africa is premised on three editions of IAFS and the PAeNP. The progress of various projects under IAFS and PAeNP has been well received. The Committee, therefore, desire that while the good work may be continued, the lessons learnt from such experiences be utilized in our other development partnership programmes.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry is vigorously engaged with the host countries through the concerned Indian Missions and implementing Agencies for timely implementation of GoI-assisted development projects in African countries. The Ministry partners with host countries in identification of major impediments like lack of resources, awareness about the utility of the projects/capacity building etc., so as to take appropriate remedial steps for timely implementation of various projects. Information about the training programmes/scholarships for African nationals is being effectively disseminated, through Indian Missions abroad, to ensure maximum participation. Training programmes/scholarships have generated enthusiasm among African students leading to gained momentum of our endeavors. The learning from implementation of projects in African countries in the past are being factored in during future planning, identification and execution of projects.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 27)**

The Committee note that the budgetary allocation under the head „Aid to Latin America“ has been kept constant at Rs. 20 crore during the BE 2017-18 as well as BE 2018-19. The Committee find the reason offered by the Ministry for keeping the allocation constant as unconvincing. The Committee are of the firm opinion that the budgetary allocation provided under this Head is not at all commensurate with the importance this region has to our overall foreign policy. The Committee would strongly recommend that the Government enhance our engagement with Latin American countries in form of our visible developmental aid programmes and assistance.

### **Reply of the Government**

Over the last few years, our political as well as trade and commercial engagement with the Latin American and Caribbean region has intensified significantly. In the last couple of years, several high-level visits both incoming and outgoing have been exchanged and political and official consultations have been conducted with all major countries in the region. High level visits by Hon'ble President, Vice President, Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister have been planned throughout 2018.

Major commitments like supply of tractors to Cuba, upgradation of Information and Communication Technology system of the CARICOM Secretariat and setting up of Centres of Excellence in Information Technology are being implemented. The supply of an Ocean Passenger Ferry to Guyana has been making progress and it is expected that the order will be placed for its manufacture with the selected Indian company in FY 2018-19.

Other mechanisms of providing funding assistance, such as Lines of Credit and soft loans, are being explored to finance developmental and infrastructure-related projects. Such financing mechanisms encourage the beneficiary governments to be an active stakeholder in the project which in turn ensures its long term sustainability. Ministry, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, will take steps to further enhance our development partnership with Latin American countries.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 28)**

The Committee are happy to learn that the Shaheed Behesti Terminal in the Port has been inaugurated in December 2017. The Committee further note that the budget head „Chabahar Port“, created in Fiscal 2016-17, has been allocated Rs. 150 crore in BE 2018-19. However, the Committee

observe a drastic reduction in this head during the 2017-18 from Rs. 150 crore (BE 2017-18) to Rs. 0.10 crore (RE 2017-18). The justification provided by the Ministry for this massive budgetary cut is the non-completion of procurement tendering process from the Iranian side and the subsequent delay in purchasing of equipment.

Although the situation was beyond the Ministry's hands, in the considered view of the Committee, fluctuations in allocation under this head, catering to strategic oceanic port is not in the interest of our international credibility on delivering connectivity projects. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry pursue a pro-active policy to engage the Iranian side to accelerate the tendering process so as to fast track the purchase of requisite equipments to complete the project in a time bound manner.

### **Reply of the Government**

Chabahar Port development is being pursued proactively and monitored regularly by the Ministry and Ministry of Shipping. Ministry has been actively engaging with the Government of Iran, and the Iranian Parliament has approved the Trilateral Agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement). During the visit of the President of Iran to India in February 2018, it was agreed that the Coordination Council would meet as per the stipulated timelines in the Trilateral Agreement. Government of Iran has also agreed to organize a business promotion event at Chabahar, with participation of countries from the region and beyond, with the objective of showcasing the economic opportunities offered by the Chabahar Port. Efforts are also being made to popularise the port – an international North-South Transport Corridor Friendship motor rally passed through Chabahar in June 2018.

Some notable developments in the recent months with regard to the project are as follows:

Procurement and supply of equipment has been taken forward. The contract for four Rails Mounted Quay Cranes was awarded on 30 November, 2017, and the order for 14 Rubber Tyred Gantry Cranes has been placed on 21 march 2018.

The Lease Contract for Shahid Beheshti Port Phase-I during Interim Period was signed between India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and the Port and Maritime Organization of Iran on 17 February 2018 during the State Visit of President of Iran to India.

The Iranian side has agreed in principle to delink the USD 150 million funding from contract activation; and IPGL has initiated the process of selection of a local partner to operate the port.

The process of formation of a local Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV to operate the port has been taken forward with the transfer of 35% of share capital in April 2018, with a view to commence interim operation by June 2018.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 29)**

The Committee note that the budget heads - „Aid to Mauritius“ and „Aid to Seychelles“ were created in FY 2016-17 and an amount of Rs. 300 crore and Rs. 350 crore respectively have been provisioned for them. It is observed that in pursuance of India’s Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR) vision, a renewed thrust has been given to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and it’s member States. Given the salience of Indian Ocean Region to our strategic developmental aspirations, the Committee urge that the Ministry ensure that the allocated funds are optimally and fully utilized with tangible gains in ground implementation. The Committee also desire that the Government of India deepen our engagement with all the Indian Ocean countries.

### **Reply of the Government**

Fund allocations under the „Aid to Mauritius“ and „Aid to Seychelles“ budget heads in FY 2017-18 were fully utilized. Realistic projections have also been made for FY 2018-19 to keep up with the pace of implementation of our bilateral projects in these two countries. Allocation will be reviewed at the RE 2018-19 stage based on physical progress in implementation of these projects. Ministry values the Hon“ble Committee“’s recommendation to deepen engagement with all Indian Ocean countries.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 30)**

The Committee note that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry is 8208, while the working strength is 7012. The Committee are unhappy to learn about the huge gap between the sanctioned and actual strength in the Ministry of External Affairs, leading to vacant posts in vital departments. Over the years, the Ministry has provided the same justification that the gap is due to delay in recruitment which is beyond its control. The Committee also observe that to tide over this manpower crunch, various steps such as induction of officers from other Ministries, engagement of Consultants etc have been taken. The Committee take serious cognizance of the persistent vacant posts in the Ministry and find the steps taken by the Ministry as inadequate and half-hearted. The Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry impress upon the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to enhance the direct recruitment process to fill up the vacant positions in the Ministry so that it is appropriately staffed. The Committee would also recommend that the Ministry continue inducting expertise from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and the private sector, as needed to ensure the quality of manpower is also augmented simultaneously.

## **Reply of the Government**

Ministry has taken concerted action to ensure adequate human resources as follows:

Requisite indents were placed with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) for ASOs, Steno /PAs, Junior Secretarial Assistants and MTSs. Regular follow-up was done with SSC. Accordingly, 125 ASOs and 35 Stenos/PAs joined the Ministry in May 2018. In addition, 28 more JSAs are expected to join the Ministry. Recruitment of nearly 80 MTSs is in its final stages.

Regarding resources at the officer level, 38 IFS officers of the 2017 batch have joined the Ministry. After regular follow-up, UPSC has recommended one candidate to the post of Junior Interpreter in 2018. Further, Ministry has placed an indent with UPSC for five vacancies in the grade of Legal Officer Grade II.

To augment its human resources, Ministry has continued to take officers on deputation from various line Ministries and Departments of Government of India as well as State Governments. More than 70 such officers on deputation are currently working in the Ministry.

Ministry engages consultants, including retired Government officials as well as from the open market, with expertise in varied fields including project management, international law, consular services and disarmament. More than 50 such consultants are currently engaged by the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 32)**

The Committee observe that out of the total budgetary allocation of Rs. 440.64 crore in BE 2018-19, for the major head Secretariat General Service, Rs.17.09 crore has been earmarked for expenditure on Protectorate General of Emigrants (PGoE). The allocation of Rs. 14.82 crore at BE 2017-18 was raised to Rs. 21.89 crore at the RE stage. The Ministry stated the reason for increase in allocation to PGoE during the RE 2017-18 was due to payments to the Implementing Agency for running the e-Migrate project. The Committee observe that the bulk of the expenditure under PGoE is for the sub-head 'Information Technology.' It is observed that against the sanctioned strength of Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices of 87 posts, 62 posts are occupied. The Ministry has informed that there is no proposal of shifting of present POE offices. However, in principle approval has been obtained for opening one POE office in Bengaluru, Karnataka and a PoE Cell has also been staged in Lucknow under PoE Rai Bareli.

The Committee have taken a serious note of the negligence accorded to PGoE post merger, as can be discerned from the budgetary allocation. It is a matter of deep concern that another vital department of MEA, namely POE offices, have been enduring manpower constraint. The

Committee strongly recommend that the Government pay special attention to strengthen the POE offices through adequate provisioning of finances and human capital. The Ministry is further urged to improve the working conditions of POE offices by either shifting them to new buildings or by investing on infrastructural development of the offices in the process of establishment or to be established and apprise the Committee about the progress in this regard.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has been giving high importance to augmenting manpower in POE offices. Officers of the Ministry as well as from other Ministries/Departments have been posted to POE offices on deputation basis. Contractual staff have also been hired against sanctioned vacant positions as per administrative requirements to ensure that the important functions performed by these offices are not hampered. Ministry is also taking active steps to fill the 14 vacancies in POE offices expeditiously.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 34)**

The Committee note that the Foreign Service Institute conducts in service training for Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers and other MEA personnel, courses for foreign diplomats and other professional training course. The Ministry has informed that the demand for country specific courses have increased in recent times. The Committee are concerned to note the 15-20 % shortfall in utilization of allocated funds under the sub-head 'training' for past three financial years. The justification offered by the Ministry for such underutilization is the delayed implementation of some modernization proposals. The Ministry is strongly urged to observe fiscal prudence in expenditure on the Sub-head „Training“ by optimum utilization of available funds. The Committee also desire that a continuous system of evaluation be established so that the inputs and feedback received from the trainees are duly incorporated at regular intervals for value addition of the training programmes.

### **Reply of the Government**

A summary of funds utilization in past three FYs by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) on training-related activities, met from FSI's „Other Administrative Expenses“ (OAE) budget head, is as follows:

*(In Rupees crores)*

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Budget Allocation</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
2015-16	<b>10.77</b>	<b>9.14 (84.9%)</b>
2016-17	<b>12.00</b>	<b>9.77 (81.4%)</b>
2017-18	<b>15.42</b>	<b>14.54 (94.3%)</b>

As seen above, utilization of available funds for training activities has improved in FY 2017-18, as compared to previous years. FSI has an established a system of training evaluation. Inputs and feedback received from trainees are duly incorporated in designing and conducting of future training programmes.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 36)**

Upon careful scrutiny of the schemes, programmes and organizations relating to Overseas Indians, the Committee find that the Ministry's verbal assertion that highest priority has been accorded to Overseas Indian Affairs post- merger, does not find resonance in the budgetary allocation. While comparing the budget and allocation of erstwhile MOIA and MEA on schemes/programmes related to Overseas Indians, the Committee discern that a number of schemes have witnessed a reduction in allocation. Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre, India Development Foundation, Overseas Indian Centre, Overseas Citizenship of India, Parvasi Bhartiya Kendra have been given 'nil' allocation in BE 2018-19; there has been drastic budgetary cut to India Centre for Migration, Know India Programme, Promotion of Cultural ties with Diaspora, Legal Assistance to women facing problems in NRI marriages. The sudden closure OIDF-OI and OIFC without any substitute arrangement and without taking a policy decision on establishment of Pravasi Bhartiya Kendras, the Committee are apprehensive about the objectives of merger being realized.

The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Government seriously have a re-look at the budgetary allocation to various schemes and programmes in order to ensure that our engagement with Diaspora is mutually beneficial, welfare of our Overseas Indians is secured, and our migrant workers, students and women are particularly protected in their country of destination. The Ministry should ensure that due priority and financial sanctity is given to schemes and programmes related to Overseas Indians.

## **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry attaches a great deal of importance to engagement with the Indian diaspora. Following the merger of erstwhile MOIA with MEA, a review of all the schemes/programmes was undertaken to rationalize resources and avoid duplication of work and effort. As a result, some schemes were revamped, some were closed, new and some ones were initiated. The Study India Programme (SIP) for young diaspora was found to be similar to the Know India Programme (KIP) and it was decided to close SIP. The Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), an Autonomous Body set up as a not-for-profit Trust in 2007 to facilitate investments into India by overseas Indians was closed down in March 2017, as its functions were similar to the mandate of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion such as the „Invest India“ platform. Similarly, the India Development Foundation for Overseas Indians (IDF-OI), an Autonomous Body set up as a not-for-profit Trust in 2008, was closed down in March 2018, as contributions received in IDF-OI were mainly for GoI's flagship schemes such the National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Swachh Bharat Mission, which are separately administered by their respective administrative agencies. Performance of the scheme „Tracing the Roots“ was found unsatisfactory with only 18 applications received in 8 years, and the Government expenditure on the scheme was discontinued.

Budgetary allocation for expenditure on various schemes and programs for our engagement with the Indian Diaspora and welfare of overseas Indians, particularly migrant workers, students and women will be reviewed, at the RE 2018-19 stage and more funds will be allocated, if required.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 38)**

The Know India Programme (KIP) is a significant scheme to reconnect the Indian Diaspora youth with their roots. The Committee observe that in the last financial year, 46 KIPs were conducted with almost 240 participants. With the increase in the India Diaspora, there have been rising demands from different Indian Missions and Posts abroad to organize more KIPs. However, due to limited resources and manpower, the Ministry is currently working on a proposal from CGI New York and EOI Paris for two KIPs editions in 2018. The Committee are of the opinion that manpower and financial paucity should not be a hurdle in expanding KIPs to meet the increasing demand from Indian Missions and Posts abroad. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs make sustained efforts for spreading awareness about the programme and allocate additional funds for Know India Programmes which have received a warm reception from future generations of the Indian Diaspora.

## **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry values the Hon'ble Committee's encouragement and appreciation of the Know India Programme (KIP). Allocation to the KIP head was enhanced in FY 2017-18 from BE of Rs.0.90 crore to RE of Rs. 5.56 crore enabling successful organization of all six editions of KIP with 240 participants in FY 2017-18.

Ministry continues its efforts to spread awareness about KIP. The proposal for organizing additional KIP editions from France and the US could not be materialize as first and second generations of young Indian diaspora participants who have not visited India earlier are not easily available. Now two special KIP editions have been initiated to be held annually from 2018-19 onwards for participants in the age group of 45-65 years from seven Girmitiya countries – Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Reunion Island – who have not visited India before and belong to lower income group. It is expected that this new programme will be useful in promoting Indian tourism amongst other persons of Indian origin as well as foreigners encouraging them to visit India at their own cost. These new editions are in addition to six KIPs during 2018-19 with 40 participants in each group.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 39)**

Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is a skill development scheme of MEA aimed at enhancing the skill set of potential emigrant workers in select sectors and job roles in line with international standards to facilitate overseas employment opportunities. On the basis of a MoU signed in 2016, PKVY is to be implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The Committee note that the budgetary allocation for PKVY was Rs. 10 crore at BE 2017-18, which was reduced to Rs. 3 crore in RE 2017-18 and an allocation of Rs. 5 crore has been made in BE 2018-19. The Committee do not favour such poor allocation for the scheme of skill development of prospective workers. The Committee, therefore, desire that the allocation should be enhanced at RE 2018-19 stage so that the maximum number of potential emigrant workers are trained across India. The Committee also note that on its part, MSDE has set up 13 India International Skill Centres (IISCs) under Skill India Mission for this Yojana. The Committee are not aware about the criteria for the selection of places for establishing such centres. The Committee strongly recommend that while identifying the places for establishing the Centres, areas from where a significant number of workers go abroad should be given the priority. The Committee would also recommend that MEA take up the issue of the slow implementation and low utilization under this scheme by MSDE at the highest level

and apprise the Committee of the outcome of such an endeavour.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY), a joint collaboration of the Ministry and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), includes domain training as technical top-up and certification benchmarked to international standards (MSDE's responsibility) and Pre-Departure Orientation training (MEA's responsibility) for migrant workers. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is MSDE's implementation partner for PKVY.

Initially, the scheme's focus is on sectors in demand in Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries primarily in the Gulf countries and Malaysia. MSDE is setting up India International Skill Centres (IISCs) in different parts of India, and sixteen IISCs are operational covering sectors including Domestic Workers, Retail, Hospitality, Capital Goods, Healthcare, Construction, Automotive and Security. Around 500 students have been enrolled in these centres.

This Ministry transferred Rs. 10 crore to National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) operated by the NSDC in FY 2016-17, of which MSDE has informed that around Rs. 3 crore have been utilized on IISCs. Accordingly, allocations for the PKVY budget head was reduced in RE 2017-18 from Rs. 10 crore to Rs. 3 crore, which could also not be transferred to NSDF in view of the surplus funds already available with NSDC. In FY 2018-19, a provision of Rs. 5 crores has been made, which would be assessed in the RE 2018-19 stage. At the same time, one-day Pre Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programmes as part of PKVY have been rolled out by this Ministry in Mumbai and New Delhi on a pilot basis for workers going to the Gulf region from the beginning of FY 2018-19. Around 8800 prospective emigrant workers have been imparted PDOT in four months. Ministry is considering expanding the one-day PDOT programmes to other major cities in India.

There have been regular meetings by Ministry with officials of MSDE and NSDC. A high-level review meeting of PKVY was co-chaired by EAM and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in April 2018.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 40)**

The Committee have noted that scheme on „Legal Assistance to Women Facing problems in NRI marriages“ is the only gender specific scheme being implemented by MEA for Overseas Indians. The Committee are dismayed to note that there has been a drastic reduction in allocation under this scheme, from Rs. 0.25 crore in BE 2017-18 to Rs. 0.01 crore in BE 2018-19. The Ministry has informed the Committee that after bringing this scheme under the ambit of Indian Community

Welfare Fund (ICWF), budgetary allocation has been reduced to a token amount in BE 2018-19 and the existence of the budget head will be assured in light of feedback received. The Committee have noted that various steps have been taken by the Ministry to create awareness among Indian nationals about NRI marital issues. The Committee would urge that the Ministry actively monitor the efficacy of the new modality under ICWF in providing legal and other assistance to distressed Indian women. Further, adequate budgetary funds and awareness drive should be launched to ensure that such a gender specific scheme does not get lost under the ICWF which caters to multiple issues.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has continuously endeavoured to address problems pertaining to distressed Indian women who have been abused, cheated or abandoned by their NRI/PIO spouses. As recommended by the Hon'ble Committee earlier and with an aim to provide financial and legal assistance to distressed Indian women married to NRI spouses by Indian Missions and Posts, the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) guidelines were revised in September 2017. Under the revised ICWF guidelines the assistance amount for distressed Indian women was increased to US\$ 4000 per case on a means-tested basis; scope of assistance was enhanced to include boarding and lodging; and, funds disbursement to lawyers/NGOs providing assistance would be made through Indian Missions/Posts.

Indian Missions and Posts have been asked to widen the empanelment of lawyers, NGOs and Community Organizations to provide guidance, counseling services and assistance. Many Indian Missions have designated „Open House“ meetings in which any distressed Indian national can approach Mission for assistance and guidance. Ministry is empowering aggrieved Indian nationals by providing information and guidance about procedures, mechanisms for serving judicial summons on the offending overseas Indian spouse; filing a case in an Indian court or police station; issuing Look-Out Circulars; impounding and cancelling of Indian passport of the offending spouse etc.

Ministry has prepared a comprehensive bilingual FAQs providing information on legal provisions prevailing in foreign countries and database of organizations, NGOs and lawyers who are registered or empaneled with Indian Missions and Posts. This information has also been made available on Ministry's website at <http://www.mea.gov.in/faq-hi.htm>. State authorities and Regional Passport Offices have been asked to translate the above-mentioned FAQs, legal provisions and revised guidelines for legal and financial assistance under ICWF and other relevant information into local languages to be posted on their respective websites.

An Integrated Nodal Agency (INA), as recommended by the Expert Committee on NRI Marital Disputes set up by the Ministry, has been constituted. The INA, aimed to be an effective mechanism to provide a single-window timely solution to the problems of affected women, is headed

by Ministry of Women and Child Development with senior officials from Ministries of External Affairs, Home Affairs, and Law and Justice as members. The INA has held five meetings so far.

NRI marital issues are also taken up during bilateral meetings and Consular Dialogues held with foreign countries. The State Commissions for Women are being involved for providing appropriate guidance and counseling to distressed Indian women abandoned in India by their NRI spouses and assisting women to get in touch with district legal authorities who have empaneled lawyers who also work on pro-bono basis with them.

Under the Videsh Sampark series initiated by Ministry, outreach events are held in partnership with State Governments with an aim to brief State Governments and relevant stakeholders about the programmes, schemes and welfare measures of the Ministry and cooperation is sought to disseminate information. Such outreach events have been held in Telangana, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Ministry is in the process of producing a film/ad on NRI marital disputes as part of its awareness campaign in Hindi and regional languages.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 43)**

The Committee observe that the grants to institutions and autonomous bodies to five major institutions, namely Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA), Society for Research and information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS), India Centre for Migration (ICM) and India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) are provided for in the minor head „Other Expenditure“. While analyzing the budgetary allocations made to these institutions, the Committee discerned that the bulk of grants is provided to ICCR while the allocation to other four is abysmally low.

With an enormous mandate of undertaking research activities across the spectrum of international affairs, ICWA has been organizing conferences, Sapru House Lectures conferences and conducting track-two interactions. RIS, on the other hand provides research inputs on economic and social matters, ICM specifically studies overseas labour markets and workers. The Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs accord requisite importance to research activities undertaken by these institutions by placing adequate funds at their disposal and channelizing the inputs emanating from their research activities in the formulation of foreign policy and engagement with Overseas Indians.

## **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry attaches significant importance to the research and analysis of evolving international affairs. Contribution of ICWA in organizing conferences, lectures and conducting track-two interactions, research of RIS on economic and social matters, and analysis of overseas labour markets by ICM provides valuable inputs for Ministry's overall foreign policy formulation. Grant-in-Aid is provided to these organizations based on their demand for grants and past trend of expenditure. The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is noted and will be kept in mind while allocating funds for these organizations.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

## **CHAPTER – III**

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

#### **(Recommendation No. 14)**

The Committee observe that the minor head „International Cooperation“ caters to expenditure for obligatory contributions to UN and other international organizations of which India is a member. While analyzing the allocations under this head, the Committee discerned that enhanced allocation has been provided in the RE 2017-18 and BE 2018-19 for contributions to UN, South Asian University Construction Project, BIMSTEC Secretariat. Quite surprisingly, no allocation has been made for India Development Foundation and Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre. The Committee are unconvinced by the justification extended by the Ministry about the closure of India Development Foundation- Overseas India (IDF-OI) and nil allocation for the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre. While the allocation to sub-heads pertaining to cooperation with international and regional groupings have remained either constant or has been enhanced but those pertaining to our Overseas Indians namely, IDF-OI and OICF has been provided with nil allocation. The closure of organizations without establishment of any substitute mechanism for carrying out their functions appears to be an arbitrary move. In the opinion of the Committee, such arbitrariness in budgetary demands and fluctuation in functional organization reflects poorly on the Ministry’s vision of the global order and role of our Overseas Indian in it. Consequently, the Committee urge that the Ministry eschew the practice of tinkering with allocations to organizations by abruptly closing them. The Committee would also desire to be apprised about the substitute mechanism being adopted to carry out the functions which were hitherto being performed by IDF-OI and OICF.

#### **Reply of the Government**

The India Development Foundation for Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) and the Overseas Indians Facilitation Centre (OIFC) were erstwhile Autonomous Bodies of the Ministry, to which Grant-in-Aid was provided from the Ministry’s budget for their operational expenditure. With the closure of these Autonomous Bodies, budget allocation had to discontinued, since allocation could not be kept for entities which no longer existed. Closure of these two Autonomous Bodies was in keeping with the directions of Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog, based on the recommendations made by the Expenditure Management Commission to review and streamline funding of Autonomous Bodies by the Government. The reasons for the closure of IDF-OI and OIFC are given below:

India Development Foundation for Overseas Indians: IDF-OI was set up in 2008 by the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the approval of the Union Cabinet as a not-for-profit Trust to facilitate philanthropic contributions by overseas Indians for social and development projects in India. Since the Trust received contributions of only Rs.36.80 lakhs between December 2008 and March 2015, a comprehensive review was undertaken and Government of India's flagship programmes such as National Mission for Clean Ganga and Swachh Bharat Mission as well as development projects selected by State Governments were identified in sectors such as education, sanitation, health, and women and child development, for encouraging contributions by overseas Indians. As a result of these efforts, IDF-OI received contributions of Rs.10.17 crore between April 2015 and March 2018, with most of the contributions being for projects related to either the National Mission for Clean Ganga or the Swachh Bharat Mission. Since these two programmes are separately administered by their respective administrative agencies, therefore, to enhance synergies and improve efficiency and avoid duplication of work, the IDF-OI Board of Trustees decided to close down the Trust by 31 March 2018. This decision was implemented with the approval of the Union Cabinet. Since there were no administrative, operational or financial liabilities beyond 31 March 2018, therefore budgetary allocation was not kept in the Ministry's budget for IDF-OI for FY 2018-19.

Overseas Indians Facilitation Centre: OIFC was set up in 2007 by the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) as a not-for-profit Trust in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry. Following the merger of erstwhile MOIA with the Ministry of External Affairs in February 2016, OIFC's work was reviewed and it was observed that work relating to promotion of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into India, including from Non-Resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin, had been re-allocated to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Government of India's Allocation of Business Rules in February 2016; the Ministry's Economic Diplomacy Division was coordinating promotion of FDIs with DIPP and as such its mandate overlaps with that of OIFC; increasingly State Governments and business organizations have direct outreach to overseas Indians for investment promotion and other purposes; and, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention and related seminars by the Ministry provide opportunity to exchange views and ideas with the Indian diaspora, including through focused sessions on investments, which are held in coordination with DIPP. Accordingly, to enhance synergies and improve efficiency and avoid duplication of work as recommended by the Expenditure Management Commission with regard to funding of Autonomous Bodies by the Government, it was decided with the approval of the Union Cabinet to close down OIFC, which was done with effect from 31 March 2017.

With regard to the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to ensure that the functions carried out by the erstwhile IDF-OI and OIFC are continued through a substitute mechanism, it is submitted

that contributions from overseas Indian donors are being coordinated directly by agencies administering Government's flagship development programmes for contributions to the Swachh Bharat Kosh or for the Namami Gange Mission etc, including with the assistance of Indian Missions and Posts abroad; and the promotion of FDI is being handled directly by DIPP, in coordination with the Ministry's Economic Diplomacy and Overseas Indian Affairs Divisions and Indian Missions and Posts abroad. DIPP has since established the „Invest India“ platform to provide investment facilitation services for investors, including overseas Indians.

Ministry assures the Hon'ble Committee that it continues to give high priority to matters regarding overseas Indians and ensuring regular interaction and outreach with the Indian Diaspora. There are two dedicated Divisions in the Ministry to handle overseas Indian affairs, which administer many schemes and programmes in coordination with Indian Missions and Posts abroad, such as the Know India Programme, the Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children, and the Bharat Ko Jaaniye Quiz, besides the flagship Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention and its related seminars.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

## **CHAPTER – IV**

### **OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE REITERATION**

#### **(Recommendation No. 6)**

The Plan and Non-Plan distinction in expenditure budgeting has been discontinued and currently budget classifications are in terms of Revenue and Capital Heads and Scheme and Non-scheme sections. The Committee are happy to learn that the bifurcation of scheme and non-scheme section has resulted in better appreciation of budgetary requirements and allocation for projects related to international commitments as aid related spending has come under a single classification. In view of the declining share of the scheme section in the last fiscal, the Ministry has carried out an intensive monitoring and review of the technical and aid development assistance project, including at the levels of External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary. The Ministry is hopeful that the aid and non-aid outlays will be evenly distributed in the next two financial years. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry of External Affairs should take appropriate measures in this direction and keep them informed. Notwithstanding the fact that the expenditure covered under the Scheme section exclusively pertains to two Major Heads namely „Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries“ and „Advances to Foreign Governments“, which constitute the central plank of a country’s international credentials, this section has not been kept immune from budgetary cuts. The Committee are dismayed to note that despite repeated recommendations that budgetary cuts should not be effected in such a critical aspect of our global engagement and diplomacy, it has neither found much reverberation in MEA’s fiscal prudence nor in Ministry of Finance’s budgetary allocation to the former. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Government refrain from making financial cuts under the scheme section of MEA’s budget pertaining to International aid and commitments as it directly impinges on our foreign relations and international image abroad.

#### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry assures the Hon’ble Committee that it will make firm and focused efforts to utilize its allocated funds in an efficient and timely manner for its overall budget and particularly for the „Scheme“ Section, while addressing the inherent political, security, geological and other challenges faced by the Ministry in implementing projects abroad, and while remaining prudent in the spending of public funds. The Ministry is focused in achieving anticipated implementation progress in all key result areas and demonstrating robust expenditure in the first half of the financial

year, which would assist in making a positive case with Ministry of Finance to narrow the gap between the Ministry's funds demands and allocations.

In FY 2018-19, Ministry achieved expenditure of 32.38% of its BE 2018-19 allocation in the first quarter (1 April to 30 June 2018), which is much higher than the minimum 25% benchmark; and by the end of the second quarter (till 30 September 2018), Ministry achieved expenditure of 55.65% of its BE 2018-19 allocation, which is higher than the minimum 50% benchmark.

As recommended by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will make strenuous efforts to secure adequate budgetary support from Ministry of Finance, especially for its international technical aid and assistance commitments, based on this robust spending demonstrated by the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 18)**

The Committee observe that as a key instrument of our foreign policy, the scope and magnitude of developmental partnership has widened tremendously over the past few years. An allocation of Rs. 5093.77 crore was made in BE 2017-18, which was reduced to Rs. 4273.82 crore in RE 2018-19. An outlay of Rs. 5148.55 crore, which is 34% of total MEA's budget has been earmarked in BE 2018-19. The reduction to the tune of 9% at RE 2017-18 stage was based on physical and financial progress of projects under various Heads. While recognizing the practical challenges faced by the Ministry in execution of various projects under this Head and its subsequent impact on making budgetary demands, the Committee feel that the allocation under this Major Head is indicative of our international commitments and of our bilateral relations with various countries. With the inclusion of the major Head under the scheme section, the Committee in their previous Report on Demands for Grants were hopeful that it will remain immune from budgetary cuts of the Ministry of Finance. However, that has not been the case and significant reduction has been made at the RE stage.

The Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs undertake a thorough review of all Aid projects and prepare a roadmap for their completion. Based on this review exercise, the Ministry can prevent any reduction at RE stage and if required liaise with the Ministry of Finance for additional financial resources at that stage. The Committee would also like to reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Ministry should explore the feasibility of setting up an autonomous aid disbursal body along the lines of USAID to avoid the arbitrary cut's imposed by the Ministry of Finance and prioritization being done within the available allocations. This would make the DPA more predictable and play a vital role for ushering developmental diplomacy.

## **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry is constantly monitoring the progress of GoI-assisted development cooperation projects to ensure that projects are completed within the scheduled timeframes, have continuity of resources, and achieve the desired impact. In line with the recommendations of the Committee, projects are being reviewed at regular intervals and at multiple levels in the Ministry as well as with all concerned stakeholders. A roadmap of milestones specific to each project is part of the monitoring process that is updated and reviewed in consultation with the respective project management consultants.

The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was created in 2012 within MEA to channel Indian development and technical assistance through various schemes and projects that are aligned with India's overall foreign policy priorities and aims, and that respond to the needs and requests of the recipient partner countries. DPA consists of three Divisions, handling different streams of development cooperation, and are overseen by Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry. DPA's work involves close coordination and consultation with concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry where the projects are located, as they are the principal interlocutors with partner countries. Projects and schemes are initiated in Territorial Divisions as per overall foreign policy priorities and objectives, and then handed over to DPA for implementation. There is continuous coordination by DPA with other Divisions of the Ministry, as required, during the implementation stage. Funds requirements are assessed and calibrated carefully to ensure continuity of resource flow for smooth project implementation. Ministry has not faced any serious constraints vis-à-vis budget till now. The existing institutional set-up with a healthy mix of cross-Ministry expertise and consultants from outside Government has served well in the Ministry's ability to execute and deliver its development cooperation and technical assistance programmes.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 33)**

The Committee note that the budgetary allocation to the sub-head 'Expenditure on Public Diplomacy' was Rs. 21.66 crore in BE 2017-18, Rs. 20.55 crore in RE 2017-18 and is Rs. 21.87 crore in BE 2018-19. The marginal decrease in RE 2017-18 as cited by the Ministry was on account of the transfer of certain routine activities to the Secretariat Establishment budget. The Committee observe that out of the allocated budget in BE 2018-19, more than 90% has been earmarked for 'Advertising and Publicity'. The Ministry has cited two objectives of this Division - introducing and acquainting people within the country about India's foreign policy objectives and promoting India in foreign countries. For attainment of these twin objectives, the Ministry has been emphasizing on traditional

as well as digital platforms. The Committee have been informed that while constantly endeavouring to follow global trends in Public Diplomacy, it has been adapting to best international practices as per Indian requirements.

In the considered view of the Committee, the budgetary allocation made to the XPD Division is not in proportion to the critical role played by it in creating awareness about India's Foreign policy priorities and effective global engagement. There is further room for incorporating the best global practices to make this Division truly dynamic and consequently, the Committee desire that the Ministry should undertake an assessment study of successful global practices. The Committee would also urge that the Ministry expand its public outreach through an innovative and grassroots presence.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has taken steps for conducting the exercise recommended by the Hon'ble Committee to learn from the best global practices being followed by the publicity and information wings of other Foreign Ministries and how the same may be adapted by the Ministry. The Ministry has also undertaken several innovative public outreach initiatives in recent times. The Ministry will further focus on extending the reach of these initiatives and take them to the desired beneficiaries.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 46)**

The Committee note that there are ten key principles and objectives guiding our foreign policy. The Ministry has informed that the Government follows a pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy. The Committee were surprised by the Ministry's submission that there is no overarching and formalized policy document covering all aspects of our foreign policy. However, policy initiatives and strategies such as „Neighbourhood First“ Policy, „Act East“, SAGAR maritime doctrine, revitalizing ties with West Asia, simultaneous engagement with all powers, focus on regional connectivity and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), reform of multilateral institutions, including of the UN Security Council, reconnecting with Diaspora, constitute the elements of this multi-faceted approach to India's international relations and our diplomatic strategy. The Committee also note the existence of mechanisms of consultation and coordination between MEA and other arms of Government to ensure that factors shaping India's foreign policy are in tune with the country's national priorities.

The Committee are cognizant of India's deepening engagement at the bilateral, regional as well as multilateral level. The Committee are of the considered view that the formulation of a grand strategy encompassing the broad aspects of our foreign policy with short term, medium term and long

term objectives is the need of the hour. By imparting coherence and clarity on our hitherto long established and enduring principles of foreign policy, the grand foreign policy strategy will also bolster the case for enhanced allocation by the Ministry of Finance. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs take all requisite institutional as well intellectual steps to spell out a coherent and balanced grand strategy for India in the world.

### **Reply of the Government**

The process of formulating a road map for India's international engagement is an ongoing one. The Ministry undertakes continuous stock-taking of changes in the global landscape with a view to identify challenges and opportunities over a short, medium and long-term horizon. It is this process that has led to enunciation of the „Neighbourhood First“ policy, the „Act East“ policy and the SAGAR maritime doctrine.

Our policy of simultaneous engagement with all major powers, our new and more intensive orientation towards the Indian Ocean region, recent strengthening in our relations with West Asia and the Gulf, and upgradation in the scale of our vision for relations with African countries, are all reflective of a more energetic, coherent and focused approach.

The immediate and most fundamental factor shaping our foreign policy thinking is the flux and transition that characterizes the current world order. There is a clear trend of new voices and issues arising in the overall global discourse. In such a scenario, while locking in to a particular strategy may not prove to be an ideal approach in the long run; it is indeed very important for us to have our own world view – and we do. India's world view is essentially centered on the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – the world is one family. This is increasingly being enunciated at global platforms through references by our leaders to various ideas under this concept.

Keeping this unique Indian world view at its core, the Ministry will continue to take institutional as well as intellectual steps to implement a pragmatic and outcome-oriented foreign policy, which is agile and responsive in the face of short term developments and forward looking in dealing with emerging global trends in the longer term.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

## **CHAPTER V**

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

#### **(Recommendation No. 2)**

While examining the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs over the past few years, the Committee have noted four discernible trends in budgetary allocation and utilization, namely mismatch between budgetary demand and actual allocation; uneven quarterly expenditure; reduction in allocation at the RE level and actual expenditure even less than RE and; failure to convince Ministry of Finance for higher allocation in consonance with the ever increasing foreign policy mandate. Overcoming these cyclical patterns have remained the most daunting challenge before the MEA. Emphasizing on the need for a well-defined and focused budgetary planning process, the Committee in their Fifteenth Report on Demands for Grants had specifically recommended that the Ministry create a formal mechanism to work out the budgetary exercise in a holistic manner. The Ministry was further asked to consider the concept of zero based budgeting. In the Committee's view, the current practice of making budgetary projections at the Unit level in an arbitrary fashion appears to be the major factor behind the mismatch in demand and allocation and further recurrent budgetary cuts imposed by the Ministry of Finance at all stages of budgetary allocation. Notwithstanding observance of measures of economy, rationalized spending and restrictive conditions of international aid and projects, the discrepancy between the projections and actual allocations has become a defining aspect of the annual Demands for Grants of MEA. The Committee, therefore, are of the firm opinion that the Ministry should follow a two-pronged strategy in budget management to solicit adequate budgetary allocations at every stage. First, an exhaustive internal reform should be initiated by working out a formal budgetary mechanism with regular monitoring and evaluation of each Unit at the highest level. Second, the Ministry should endeavour to consistently engage with the Ministry of Finance at all possible levels to convince them about the significance of allocating substantial budgetary allocations to a Ministry that not only has burgeoning foreign policy goals but also is a carrier of India's image abroad. The Government of India pre-poned the presentation of the Budget by a month or so to 1 February, 2017 with a view to ensure amongst others that the budgetary process was completed on time and funds allocated to various Ministries/Departments were available to them from day one of the Fiscal. The Committee, however, observe from the data on spending furnished by the Ministry that major expenditure will still be booked in the second half of the Fiscal 2017-18. Being the first year of the initiative, the Committee would refrain from forming any opinion in the matter. However, they desire a detailed note in the

matter from the Ministry so as to arrive at a considered view. Since this major initiative ought to affect all Ministries/Departments of the Government of India, the Committee desire that while preparing this note the Ministry of External Affairs should seek inputs from the Ministry of Finance as well.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has instituted a mechanism of having Quarterly Budget Management Meetings, chaired by Foreign Secretary or Financial Advisor, for reviewing quarterly expenditure and assessing future funds requirements by the Ministry's various Divisions and Spending Units. As a result, utilization of allocated funds has improved significantly, and in FY 2018-19, the Ministry was able to achieve expenditure of 55.65% of its BE 2018-19 allocation by the end of the second quarter, i.e. till 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. The Ministry has also been engaging with Ministry of Finance to keep them informed of funds required to meet international commitments and to emphasize the importance of providing adequate budgetary allocations to the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 5)**

The Committee observe that against a projected demand of Rs. 20,873 crore by MEA, only 72% of the demand *i.e.* Rs. 15,011 crore has been provided in BE 2018-19. In comparison to BE 2017-18, there has been a marginal increase of 1.44% in budgetary allocation to MEA during BE 2018-19. However, in terms of percentage of MEA's budget to the overall budget of the Government, there has been a decline from 0.69% to 0.62% *vis-a-vis* BE 2017-18. The Ministry's contention that for the first time the budgetary allocation of MEA has crossed Rs. 15,000 crore appears to be of no solace to the Committee.

Despite the Committee's strong emphasis on enhanced budgetary allocation to MEA in keeping with its expanded foreign policy goals and objectives, the budgetary allocation made in BE 2018-19 has been modest. The Ministry of External Affairs is strongly urged to undertake a cross-Ministry as well as cross- country (of Ministries/Departments with the mandate of managing foreign affairs) comparative analysis of budgetary allocations and apprise the Committee of such an endeavour within three months. The Committee are of the considered opinion that such a readily available data can serve as a potent tool for convincing the Ministry of Finance about the necessity of granting enhanced allocation to MEA. In view of the burgeoning global footprint and mandate of the Ministry, the Committee further suggest that the Ministry of External Affairs explore other funding mechanisms in cooperation with Line Ministries to ensure foreign policy objectives are achieved successfully.

## **Reply of the Government**

As recommended by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry has commissioned a cross-Ministry as well as cross-country comparative study of budgetary allocations of Ministries/Departments with the mandate of managing foreign affairs. The study is likely to be completed by March 2019.

Ministry closely coordinates with other Ministries/Department in implementation of projects abroad, such as Ministry of Power, Ministry of Defence, Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways etc. along with maintaining close liaison with Ministry of Finance for seeking funds at various stages of the budgetary cycle, based on physical progress of projects.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 8)**

The Committee observe that there has been enhanced allocation under the head 'Passport and Emigration' at both RE 2017-18 and BE 2018-19 stages. The reason for increase in allocation is on account of opening up of new Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK), to clear pending payments to States/UTs and printing of travel documents. The Committee observe that while the head is called 'Passport and Emigration', expenditure under this Head caters to expenditure on Passport related items only. The budget provision for emigration is provisioned under the sub-head Protector General of Emigrants (PGoE). The Committee, therefore, suggest that the nomenclature of this Minor Head, should be revisited so as to make it in line with the activities for which the expenditure is incurred.

## **Reply of the Government**

As per the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, the Ministry has requested the Office of Controller General of Accounts for making suitable amendments to the nomenclature of this budget head.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 11)**

The Police Verification process comprises a vital aspect of timely issuance of passports and towards smooth and expeditious delivery of passport. The launching of the m-Passport App is a commendable step in that direction. Wherever it is applied, it brings the average time to receive PVR to 5 days. The Committee, however, find that it has been launched in very few states. The

Committee, therefore, recommend that steps should be taken to support and incentivize various State Governments to adopt a uniform police verification process expeditiously by launching the m-Passport App for smooth verification of passport services in a time-bound manner.

### **Reply of the Government**

The following States and Union Territories have introduced the m-Passport Police App for the purpose of Police Verification necessary prior to the issue of passport:

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>State Name</b>	<b>No. of District Police Headquarters</b>	<b>No. of Police Stations</b>
1.	Chandigarh	1	1
2.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	2
3.	Daman and Diu	1	8
4.	Delhi	10	10
5.	Haryana	1	2
6.	Jharkhand	1	1
7.	Karnataka	2	110
8.	Kerala	2	4
9.	Madhya Pradesh	2	90
10.	Maharashtra	37	966
11.	Puducherry	3	35
12.	Punjab	1	23
13.	Tamil Nadu	39	1337
14.	Uttarakhand	2	26
15.	West Bengal	2	80
<b>Total</b>		<b>105</b>	<b>2695</b>

Ministry has noted the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee and is requesting the remaining State Governments to introduce m-Passport Police App in a time-bound manner.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 13)**

The Committee observe that a constant outlay of Rs. 0.10 crore has been provisioned under the Head „International Conferences/Meetings“ for the past two years. The Ministry has informed that following the creation of a Conference Division in 2016 for organizing and managing multilateral conferences and summits, this budget head merely caters to small scale events that had not been envisaged by the concerned Territorial or Nodal Division. The Committee also note that a review mechanism headed by the Foreign Secretary has been created for evaluating outcomes of the Conferences organized. In the opinion of the Committee, existence of two heads for similar activities creates accounting complexities and therefore, it would urge the Ministry to have a single budget Head for organizing Conferences of all scale and magnitude. Furthermore, the Committee recommend that the Ministry channelize effectively the various intellectual inputs emanating from Conferences into the foreign policy formulation process.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee are noted. The Ministry is holding internal discussions to ensure that in future expenditure on various international conferences and meetings by the Ministry is booked under one Head, subject to programming constraints such as evens or meetings being organized at short notice.

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee that the Ministry channelize effectively the various intellectual inputs emanating from Conferences into the foreign policy formulation process is duly noted for compliance.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 17)**

While analyzing the budgetary allocation under the sub-head „Other Expenditure“, the Committee were struck by the fact that it catered to expenditure on disparate and unrelated activities. Within the ambit of this sub-head is included expenditure on activities like grant to Indian diplomatic Missions/Posts abroad, schemes and programmes related to Overseas Indians, from maintenance of VVIP aircrafts, Vice President's visit, demarcation of boundaries, Kailash Mansarovar Pilgrimage. The Committee note that Ministry has taken due cognizance of this large budget head covering diverse activities. The Committee recommend that the Ministry split this budget head into smaller sub heads minor heads with related activities under one sub head so as to make the budgetary practice look rational and coherent. The greater the clarity in budgetary practice and nomenclature of sub-heads, the greater is the possibility of making a strong case for larger allocation from the Ministry of

Finance. It is specifically recommended that the schemes and programmes pertaining to the Overseas Indians be put under a separate budget head.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is duly noted for compliance. Foreign Secretary, as the Chief Accounting Authority of the Ministry, has approved the rationalization and streamlining of the various budget heads in the Ministry's budget, as per functional congruence of the various types of expenditure, as recommended by the Hon'ble Committee. Since the proposed amendments in the nomenclature will entail a major reorganization of the budget, Ministry is in the process of holding consultations with the Office of the Controller General of Accounts to ensure that the nomenclature changes of the budgetary heads make the budget more rational and coherent to the expenditure under the respective heads. In this exercise, the schemes and programmes pertaining to overseas Indians will be placed together under an appropriate budget head.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 31)**

The Committee note the Foreign Secretary's submission that the shortage of language capability has been on account of drastically reduced recruitment in the Indian Foreign Service between 1982 and 2005. The Committee also note that concrete steps have been taken by the Ministry to augment linguistic specialization which inter-alia includes compulsory training in Compulsory Foreign Language to all promotee IFS officers, establishment of Language Lab in FSI, employing local people in Missions/Posts. The Committee have learnt that the Ministry is planning to create a translation, Interpretation Division to do away with practice of using outside interpreters. The Committee are of the view that the shortage of linguistic resources in the Ministry of External Affairs acts as a great impediment to our diplomatic outreach and therefore the issue needs to be accorded highest priority and urgency. The Committee, therefore, urge that the Ministry expedite the creation of a separate Translation and Interpretation Division. The Committee also desire to be apprised about the progress made in this regard.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry accords utmost importance to development and augmentation of language capability of its officers through encouraging specialized training in interpretation for IFS officers and allotment of Compulsory Foreign Language to inductees entering the IFS. The Ministry is in the process of formulating a comprehensive policy for translation and interpretation that would address our requirement in the mid to long term. This policy would also cover all aspects including

recruitment, cadre management and regular training of the Interpreters Cadre and related issues for IFS officers who have trained as interpreters. The Ministry is undertaking a study of international best practices. The Translation and Interpretation Division has also been set up in the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 35)**

The Committee note that following the merger of erstwhile MOIA with MEA, Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) Divisions have been created to deal with the issues relating to the engagement of the Indian Diaspora. The Ministry has informed that by streamlining the various schemes/programmers and establishing greater synergy with related Divisions, the merger has led to greater integration and adoption of a holistic approach to issues related to Overseas Indians. It is noted that four principles of protection, welfare, proactive engagement and outreach guide the diverse programmes and schemes pertaining to Overseas Indians. The Committee also note the specific steps taken by the Government to convert brain-drain into brain gain.

While recognizing the benefits flowing out of the merger of MOIA with MEA, the Committee observe considerable *ad hocism* leading to the issues relating to the Overseas Indian Affairs getting neglected. Even two years after the merger, no separate budget head has been provided for matters related to Overseas Indian Affairs. Allocation for the various schemes and organizations related to Overseas Indians are being made under the budget Head 'Other Expenditures'. This odd budgetary practice speaks volume about the seriousness attached to such a critical aspect of the Ministry's work, post-merger. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry create a distinct budget head specifically pertaining to Overseas Indians. Pertaining to mechanisms to incorporate the feedback of the Indian Diaspora into the Foreign Policy agenda, the Committee note that the Ministry is taking feedback not only through considering the 360 degree spectrum, it is taking feedback from the States as well. However, there is no such formal mechanism for taking feedback from the Indian Diaspora and incorporating the same into the Foreign Policy agenda. Therefore, the Ministry is urged to establish a formal mechanism for integrating the concerns and feedback of Indian Diaspora so that the same is fruitfully converged in the work of the Ministry.

### **Reply of the Government**

Following the merger of erstwhile MOIA with MEA, a review of all the schemes/programmes was undertaken to rationalize resources and avoid duplication of work and effort. As a result, some schemes were revamped, some were closed, new and some ones were initiated. The Study India Programme (SIP) for young diaspora was found to be similar to the Know India Programme (KIP)

and it was decided to close SIP. The Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), an Autonomous Body set up as a not-for-profit Trust in 2007 to facilitate investments into India by overseas Indians was closed down in March 2017, as its functions were similar to the mandate of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion such as the „Invest India“ platform. Similarly, the India Development Foundation for Overseas Indians (IDF-OI), an Autonomous Body set up as a not-for-profit Trust in 2008, was closed down in March 2018, as contributions received in IDF-OI were mainly for GoI's flagship schemes such the National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Swachh Bharat Mission, which are separately administered by their respective administrative agencies. Performance of the scheme „Tracing the Roots“ was found unsatisfactory with only 18 applications received in 8 years, and the Government expenditure on the scheme was discontinued.

As per the revised format of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), 10 PBD Conferences were held in 2016, chaired by External Affairs Minister and co-chaired by respective GoI Cabinet Minister. Recommendations from these Conferences were circulated to GoI Ministries and other stakeholders. Three PBD Conferences were held in 2017 and six are scheduled to be held in 2018. The Know India Programme has been revamped with an increase in the number of KIP editions from two to six per year. In 2016-17, seven KIP editions were successfully organized including one Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz. In 2017-18, six KIP editions were held with participation of 240 diaspora youth. The Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children (SSDC) was revamped and the scheme was extended from 40 to 66 countries and scholarships slots were increased from 100 to 150.

In 2017, Ministry launched an outreach initiative with State Governments under its Videsh Sampark series with the objective of seeking cooperation of States in addressing issues pertaining to welfare and protection of our citizens abroad and briefing State Governments on the Ministry's various initiatives. A Conference of sitting Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Parliamentarians was organized in January 2018 which was attended by 137 PIO MPs and Mayors, providing an opportunity for an additional level of sustained interaction with the Indian diaspora. A Regional PBD was organized in Singapore in January 2018.

The revamped programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Ministry are part of a mechanism under which Ministry has intensive and sustained engagement with the Indian Diaspora.

The issue of a separate budget head for expenditure on activities pertaining to overseas Indians and the Indian diaspora is being taken up in consultation with Office of Controller General of Accounts.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 37)**

The Committee find that there has been a declining trend in allocation to the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme due to a reduction in the pendency of cases. However, the Committee fails to decipher the rationale behind nil allocation to this scheme during BE 2018-19. Following the plethora of steps taken by the Ministry, there has been a reduction in pendency under the OCI Card Scheme. The Committee observe that for the smooth conversion of POI cards into OCI cards, the procedures have been simplified and bare minimum time lines have been fixed. The Ministry has informed that while printing of OCI cards is going on in missions in London and Washington and the Consulates in Chicago, Sydney, Melbourne and New York, printing of OCI cards is expected to commence soon in High Commission in Singapore and Consulates in Houston and Atlanta. The Committee fail to understand how the process of conversion of PIO cards and OCI cards will happen with NIL allocation? The Committee urge that the Ministry make realistic budgetary projections and seek additional budget for the Scheme at the RE stage to execute the task of conversion of PIO cards to OCI cards in a time-bound manner.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee has been noted.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 41)**

The Committee are happy to note that the budgetary allocation under 'Awareness Campaign/Media Plan' has witnessed a four-fold increase from Rs. 2.5 crore in 2017-18 (BE) to Rs. 11 crore in 2018-19 (BE). The Committee also note that the Ministry has extensively used the social and print media to spread awareness among potential emigrants on safe and legal migration. It is also satisfying to note that the budgetary allocation of Rs 11 crore provided at the RE 2017-18 stage has been fully utilized. The Committee would urge that the Ministry carry out an impact assessment study of the awareness campaign and in light of its findings, establish a formal mechanism for continuous monitoring and evaluation of these campaigns. The Committee also recommend that the Ministry proactively engage with the State Governments to deepen the information and awareness campaigns.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry values the Hon'ble Committee's appreciation for the awareness campaign/media plan, and is pleased to report that the enhanced allocated funds were fully utilized in FY 2017-18.

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee for an impact assessment of the media campaign is noted for implementation.

Ministry continues to proactively engage with the State Governments to deepen the reach and scope of the awareness campaign. Ministry is seeking support and cooperation from various States in screening the campaign on Safe and Legal Migration in private cinema halls and cable TV channels besides other means available at the disposal of the State Governments including electronic and print media. External Affairs Minister has chaired a meeting with State NRI Ministers and senior officials to discuss issues relating to safe and legal migration and address issues of NRI marital disputes.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 42)**

As regards advisories issued to the migrants, the Committee note that the Ministry does prepare advisories each time there is a crisis and it does circulate them widely through XP Division and through website. However, people go through a third country without the knowledge of the Ministry. The Ministry has very little control over that situation. The Ministry has admitted the fact that it is trying to evolve an evacuation policy and currently it is in the stage of consultations with the Missions. Once that is there, one can have effective preventive mechanism for those who misuse it. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry finalise the evacuation policy at the earliest so that Indian citizens can be evacuated safely in emergent situation with due promptitude.

#### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee has been noted and the Ministry will hold internal consultations in this regard.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

#### **(Recommendation No. 44)**

The Committee note that in BE 2018-19, ICCR has been provided with an enhanced allocation of Rs. 255 crore. The Ministry has informed that ICCR carries out a detailed budgetary exercise based on realistic achievable objectives in line with overall priorities of the Government for cultural diplomacy. As a pre-eminent organization of Ministry of External Affairs with a mandate of India's soft abroad, ICCR's activities are spread across the globe ranging from providing scholarships to organizing exhibitions to performing arts and visuals arts programme. The Committee are happy to learn that over the past few years, ICCR has fully utilized the allocation provided to it at the RE stage. The Committee, however, are concerned to note the issue of under-

staffing of ICCR. Moreover, in the opinion of the Committee, even the increased budgetary allocation provisioned to ICCR is not in sync with its wide-ranging activities. Realizing that as a not for profit and 100 per cent grantee organization under Ministry of External Affairs there exist limits for ICCR to raise extra-budgetary resources to cater to its expansive activities. The Committee would therefore, recommend that the Government embark on a recruitment drive to tide over the existing manpower crunch in ICCR. Given the increasing salience of soft power projection in our Foreign Policy and the centrality of ICCR's role in it, the Committee are of the considered view that the latter should have augmented financial and manpower resources.

### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry has been making efforts to take required measures to resolve ICCR's manpower crunch. While a formal proposal for creation of new posts is being formulated, steps for filling vacant posts have been taken such as approaching the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) again to provide the list of candidates who could not clear the final stage of selection and are wait listed; selection of a recruitment agency for conducting examinations to select candidates for vacant posts; outsourcing of services wherever possible is being considered; and review of recruitment rules, as needed.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

### **(Recommendation No. 45)**

The Committee are aware that ICCR's Cultural Centres abroad are the principal instrument of India's institutional cultural outreach. The Ministry has informed that the policy of establishing Indian Cultural Centres is a well thought out decision and designed in alignment with our foreign policy priorities. The Committee observe that ICCR is currently in the process of consolidating its activities of its Cultural Centres and the proposal for opening up of new Culture Centres will be taken up once the process is completed. With regard to the current projects in Washington, Paris and Tel Aviv, action is being initiated for its establishment. The Committee note that ICCR is also in the process of putting in place a standard format for conducting feasibility study before establishment of new Cultural Centers Overseas. The Committee recommend that the Ministry equip ICCR with requisite financial resources at the RE stage to expedite the completion of ongoing projects in Washington and Paris which have been lying in limbo for a considerable period of time. The Committee also desire to be apprised about the outcome of the consolidation process and feasibility study once it is completed.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee to expedite completion of ongoing projects in Washington and Paris is duly noted and adequate financial resources will be allocated, as required.

As part of its consolidation process, ICCR is seeking inputs from various Missions and Posts by circulating a standard format for proposing new Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) to enable a thorough assessment of the need and feasibility of an ICC in those countries. Diplomatic relations, financial resources, availability of suitable property etc. are key parameters of this exercise.

[File No. AA/Parl./125/31/2018]

**NEW DELHI**  
11 February, 2018  
*22 Magha, (Saka)*

**DR. SHASHI THAROOR,**  
*Chairperson,*  
*Committee on External Affairs*

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS (2018-19) HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY, 2019**

The Committee sat on Monday, 11 February, 2019 from 1500hrs. to 1550 hrs. in Committee Room No. '2' Block „A“, Extension to Parliament House Annex, New Delhi..

## PRESENT

## 1. Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson

## Lok Sabha

2. Shri Gurjeet Singh Aujla
3. Shri Mohammad Salim
4. Prof. (Dr.) Mamta Sanghamitra
5. Smt. Supriya Sadanand Sule
6. Shri Sharad Tripathi

## Rajya Sabha

7. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
8. Shri P. Bhattacharya
9. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
10. Shri Kumar Ketkar
11. Shri D. Kupendra Reddy

## Secretariat

2. Dr. Ram Raj Rai - Director  
3. Smt. Jyochnamayi Sinha - Additional Director

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the members to the Sitting of the Committee.
3. The Committee took up for consideration the following draft Reports on:
  - (i) Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty First Report of the Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2018-19.
  - (ii) XXXXXZ XXXXXZ XXXXXXXXX.

4. The Chairperson invited the members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Reports. The members suggested some minor modifications. The Committee adopted the draft Reports with these minor modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Action Taken Reports incorporating the suggestions made by the members and present the same to Parliament.

*The Committee then adjourned.*

*(Vide Para 4 of Introduction of Report)*

**ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN  
THE TWENTY FIRST REPORT OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (16<sup>TH</sup> LOK SABHA)**

**(i) Total Number of Recommendations 46**

**(ii) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.**

Recommendation Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40 and 43.

**Total-28**

**Percentage: 68.86%**

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

Recommendation Nos. 14

**Total-01**

**Percentage: 2.17%**

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

Recommendation Nos. 6, 18, 33 and 46

**Total- 04**

**Percentage: 8.69 %**

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

Recommendation Nos. 2, 5, 8 11, 13, 17, 31, 35, 37, 41, 42, 44 and 45.

**Total- 13**

**Percentage: 28.26%**