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**COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2020-21)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[Action Taken Report on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the First Report of the Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2019-20]

FIFTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

February, 2020/ Magha, 1942 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 11.02.2021
Laid on the table of Rajya Sabha on 11.02.2021



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI
February, 2021 / Magha, 1942 (Saka)

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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2020-21)

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4. Shri Kalyan Banerjee
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Rajya Sabha

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23. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
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30. Shri Abdul Wahab
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- | | | | |
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| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai | – | Director |
| 3. | Shri Paolienlal Haokip | – | Additional Director |
| 4. | Shri Maneesh Mohan Kamble | - | Under Secretary |

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on External Affairs (2020-21) having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Fifth Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the First Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2019-20.

2. The First Report was presented to the Parliament on 12 December, 2019. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 12 March, 2020 (English version) and 11 June, 2020 (Hindi version).

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Report on action taken at their Sitting held on 17.12.2020. 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 First Report of the Committee on External Affairs is given at Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI
10 February, 2021
21 Magha (Saka), 1942

P.P.CHAUDHARY,
Chairperson,
Standing 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 First Report on the Demands for Grants for the year 2019-20 which was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha on 12 December, 2019.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 36 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, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35 and 36

Total - 25

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

Recommendation No. 3

Total - 01

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee.

Recommendation Nos. 8, 15, 27 and 30

Total - 04

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

Recommendation Nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 32

Total - 06

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. 8)

5. The Committee had noted that the allocations for Scheme side was Rs. 5985.05 crore at BE 2018-19 stage which was increased to Rs. 6466.00 crore at RE stage. During 2019-20 the allocation of Rs. 8175.79 crore with an increase of Rs. 2190.74 crore in BE allocation vis-à-vis BE 2018-19 and further an increase of Rs. 1709.79 crore in RE allocation of 2018-19 was noted. The enhanced allocation under the Scheme Head was mainly on account of expenditure in respect of MEA's assistance projects under Aid to Bhutan, Aid to Nepal, Aid to Sri Lanka, Aid to Maldives, Aid to Myanmar, Aid to Other Developing countries, Aid to African Countries, Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme, Aid to Eurasian Countries, Aid to Afghanistan and Loans to Govt. of Maldives, to ensure that India's projects abroad and other international commitments were not adversely affected due to lack of funds. Similarly, in the Non-Scheme side the BE allocation for 2018-19 was Rs. 9025.59 crore which was increased to Rs. 9116.00 crore at RE stage. The BE allocation during 2019-20 was Rs. 9708.99 crore which was an increase of Rs. 683.04 crore from BE 2018-19 and Rs. 592.99 crore from RE 2018-19 stage.

While welcoming the increase in allocations under both Scheme and Non-Scheme needs during 2019-20 and also the Ministry's commitment towards assistance for projects under Aid to foreign countries, the Committee had desired that the Ministry should monitor the implementation of the projects closely and take corrective measures to complete them within a specified timeline. They had also desired that they be apprised about the physical and financial progress made in each of these projects.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that implementations of the projects are being closely monitored and corrective measures are regularly taken to complete them within a specified timeline. Budgetary allocation and Utilization of funds upto third quarter of FY 2019-20 in key Aid heads under Schemes are given below:

Aid Heads	BE 2019-20	RE 2019-20	Actual Expenditure upto Dec. 2019
Aid to Bhutan	2135.79	2048.28	1650.41
Aid to Nepal	1050.00	1200.00	973.71
Aid to Sri Lanka	250.00	205.00	152.26
Aid to Maldives	400.00	150.00	87.34
Aid to Myanmar	400.00	170.00	90.67
Aid to Other Developing Countries	150.00	150.00	115.86
Aid to African Countries	450.00	450.00	354.14
Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme	300.00	200.00	179.63
Aid to Eurasian Countries	45.00	45.00	24.91
Aid to Afghanistan	400.00	400.00	330.41

7. **Inspite of the Ministry’s assurances to the contrary, the Committee still note both cost and time over runs. In case of Aid to Maldives for FY 2019-20, the Committee note that the BE of Rs. 400 crores was revised to Rs. 150.00 crore at RE stage but the Actual Expenditure was Rs. 87.34 crore only till December, 2019. Similarly, against the BE of Rs 400 crore, the RE for Aid to Myanmar was kept at 170.00 crore and Actual Expenditure was Rs. 90.67 crore till December, 2019. A similar trend is visible in case of Aid to Bhutan and Sri Lanka also where BE was revised to the lower side at RE stage and the actual expenditure is substantially less even then. All this denotes a slow pace of implementation of projects in those countries. The Ministry has also not submitted any details about the efforts made by it to address the issues of under-utilization of funds and the impact of the monitoring mechanism followed for effective implementation of these projects. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should open a bilateral dialogue with beneficiary countries for strictly adhering to specified timelines for finishing the projects**

abroad and if necessary, an independent inspection mechanism may also be appointed to examine the progress of the projects undertaken. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken in this regard and the outcome thereof.

(Recommendation No. 9)

8. The Committee had noted with dismay that the Ministry had not shown any determination in following the overarching principle of Zero Based Budgeting through continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation as against funds utilization in the Ministry's budget management. The Ministry had only explained the procedures followed by it like periodic quarterly meetings, review of ongoing projects, supplementary demands to be made etc. The Committee felt that some concrete steps should be taken by the Ministry towards the overarching principle of Zero Based Budgeting which guides the evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation with a view to improve its management of finances in a more business like manner. Furthermore, the Ministry should take pre-emptive measures to seek all the necessary clearances before seeking funds for international Aid projects. On another note, and notwithstanding the satisfaction expressed by the Principal Witness regarding the adequacy of allocation at BE 2019-20 stage, the Committee were informed by the Ministry that post globalization and opening of the economy, the foreign policy of countries has acquired a deeper meaning than even before. Foreign policy now influenced a country's economic policy in a major way too. The Committee, therefore, had felt that MEA should explore new dimensions and hitherto, unexplored vistas with a view to secure India's interest in the increasingly globalised matrix. The Committee had expected the Government to ensure that there was no shortage of funds for Ministry of External Affairs in its pursuits.

9. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it agrees with Hon'ble Committee's view that post globalization and opening of the economy, the foreign policy of countries has acquired a deeper meaning and is more interlinked with the economic policy than ever before. The Ministry undertakes continuous monitoring of projects under implementation, periodic review of its various commitments and assessment of fund utilization as part of its budgetary management exercise while finalizing its requirements. Ministry would

like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that it would continue to engage with the Ministry of Finance at all levels to ensure that there is no shortage of funds for the Ministry in its pursuits.”

10. The Committee in their 21st Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha), 24th Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) and 1st Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) have been continuously recommending the Ministry to take steps towards embracing the imperative of Zero-Based Budgeting for improved budgetary assessment and efficient financial management and planning. The Ministry has failed to mention any specific steps taken in that direction and has once again informed about the normal procedure being followed for monitoring of projects under implementation and that about the periodic review of various commitments being done.

The Ministry has further stated that it would continue to engage with Ministry of Finance to ensure that there is no shortage of funds. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their several previous Recommendations and strongly urge the Ministry to embrace the overarching principle of Zero-Based Budgeting for a better budgetary assessment, management and utilization and submit a pin-pointed reply on the specific steps taken in this regard. Further, on the issue of exploring new vistas to secure India's interests, the Committee strongly desire that the Ministry should frame an effective policy document underlying the vision and objectives of India's foreign policy, and establish clear linkages of projects to objectives outlined, which would help the Ministry to open new avenues in strengthening the country's position in international relations.

(Recommendation No. 10)

11. The Committee had noted that that the budgetary allocation under the Head „Embassies and Missions“ at BE during year 2018-19 was Rs. 2701.00 crore. At RE stage this had been

reduced to Rs. 2678.81 crore with actual expenditure being Rs. 2737.69 crore. During the year 2019-20, against the projection of Rs. 3243.22 crore, the allocation at BE stage is Rs. 2748.06 crore, which is a paltry increase over last year's spending. As India's global outreach and influence had increased over the years and based on assessment of India's geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factor diaspora connections, commercial developmental, cultural interests and reciprocal arrangement with the concerned country, the Ministry had commenced opening new Missions in countries where there was no resident Indian Mission, starting with Africa. The Union Cabinet in March, 2018 approved the opening of 18 Missions in Africa in a phased manner. 9 Missions have already been operationalised and 3 more Missions will be operationalised in next 3-4 months. In view of the increased budgetary allocations, the Committee had desired the Ministry to prepare a roadmap and adhere to the timelines in opening the remaining Missions/Posts in Africa. They had also desired that the Ministry of Finance should be impressed upon simultaneously to create adequate number of posts to run the new Missions/Posts.

For the purpose of improvement in monitoring of performance and evaluation of existing Missions/Posts abroad, the Committee had hoped that the Ministry would adhere to the timeline of launching revamped PEMS by December, 2019 which will improve the evaluation process of Missions/Posts. They had also desired that they be apprised of the progress of the project and the outcome thereof, in terms of improvement in services, saving of time and expenditure.

12. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it is submitted to the Hon'ble Committee that the Union Cabinet, in March 2018, approved the opening of eighteen Missions in Africa in a phased manner over a period of four years from 2018-2021. Accordingly, in keeping with this timeline, Missions in the following 9 countries have already been operationalized: Republic of Guinea (Conakry), Equatorial Guinea (Malabo), Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou), Rwanda (Kigali), Djibouti (Djibouti), Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Kingdom of Eswatini (Mbabane), Eritrea (Asmara) and Cameroon (Youande). Three more Missions, in Liberia (Monrovia), Sao Tome and Principe (Sao Tome), Sierra Leone (Freetown) are also likely to be operational by the first quarter of next financial year. The remaining 6 Missions would be opened subsequently, within the time frame approved by the Cabinet.

Appropriate budgetary provisions are projected as per the expected timeline of operationalization of the Missions, in consultation with the Internal Finance Division of the Ministry. Posts at officer and staff level have also been approved by the Ministry of Finance for these new Missions.

Ministry introduced a web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) in 2016 using a set of 60 binary questions for use as basis for selection of Missions/Posts for onsite inspections. On the basis of this, till date 46 Missions/Posts have been inspected so far. However, it was felt that on-site inspection of Missions/Posts is a time consuming process and it is not possible to inspect more than 15-20 Mission/Posts in a year. It was thus decided that off-site inspection mechanism may also be put in place. Keeping this in mind, it was planned that existing PEMS portal be modified with a view to not only identify Missions/Posts for onsite inspection but also to enable Ministry to undertake off-site inspection of all Mission/Posts on the basis of documents submitted/uploaded by them on PEMS portal.

As this was an innovative step being planned by any Ministry/Department of the Government of India, it thus took some time for Ministry to implement. Inputs from several Divisions have already been sought to frame suitable questions/queries which would enable the Ministry to conclude whether a particular Mission/Posts is in compliance with ministry's directions on a particular subject/matter. Since, Missions/Posts abroad work with limited work-force, attempt has also been made that the submission/upload of documents on revamped PEMS portal by Missions/Posts do not add to the existing work pressures. The revamped PEMS portal is likely to be launched by Ministry in the second quarter of 2020."

13. The Committee observe that the Union Cabinet had approved the opening of eighteen Missions in Africa during a period of four years from 2018-2021. Out of this 9 Missions have been operationalised and three are in advance stage of operationalisation. The Committee are happy to note that the budgetary provisions have also been projected as per expected timelines and Ministry of Finance has also approved the posts of officers and staff for all 18 missions. The Committee desire that the Ministry should strictly adhere to the timelines to operationlise remaining missions in Africa so that they may now take up

the work of operationlising missions in other countries where there is no resident Indian Mission.

The Committee are not exactly satisfied with the stereo-type reply submitted by the Ministry on the delay in implementing revamped PEMS web portal. The Committee observe that due to undue delay in launching of revamped PEMS portal for an off-site inspection process of all Missions/Posts, on the basis of documents submitted/uploaded by them on the portal out of 183 Indian Missions/Posts only 46 Missions/Posts have been inspected so far after the introduction of Web-Portal PEMS in the year 2016. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should ensure the launch of revamped PEMS portal within the specified time frame of second quarter of 2020 to enable them in conducting off-site inspection of all Missions/Posts on regular basis. The Committee also desire that the Ministry should prepare a time-bound action plan for covering all the Missions/Embassies through on-site or off-site annual inspections and the Committee may be intimated of the same.

(Recommendation No. 11)

14. The Committee observed that an allocation of Rs. 246.00 crore had been made under the budget head “Information Technology” in the financial year 2019-20 which included an expenditure on setting up of POPSKs. The Ministry had apprised the Committee that as the budgetary provision under this head was channelized for setting up of POPSKs, there was no fund constraint for opening up of PSK/POPSKs, and the necessary procurement of IT and non IT related equipment for each Kendra during 2018-19. Since only the opening up of PSK/POPSK will not serve the purpose until they are provided with proper and adequate IT related infrastructure. The Committee desired that the Ministry should take up this issue with the Ministry of Finance for allocation of adequate funds for opening of Kendras and for procurement of all necessary IT infrastructure in the proposed new PSKs/POPSKs. The Committee also

desired that in the future, channelizing the allocation for the purpose of IT related infrastructure should be avoided.

15. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that the Ministry is working towards providing adequate IT-related infrastructure in every POPSK in the country, including laying of Managed Network Services - Multi-Protocol Level Switches (MPLS) lines by BSNL. Ministry has taken up the issue for allocation of adequate funds for procurement of necessary IT infrastructure in the Passport Seva Kendras. Funds allocation under IT head in the Revised Estimates 2019-2020 has been increased to Rs. 331 crores from Rs. 246 crores sanctioned at the BE stage.

16. **The Committee have been continuously expressing their concern over under-allocation of funds for setting up of new POPSKs/PSKs along with IT related and non-IT related infrastructure and equipments. Now that the allocation has been raised from Rs. 246.00 crore to Rs. 331.00 crore under the IT head. The Committee expect the Ministry to kindly reassess the requirement of all PSK/POPSK and ensure that the enhanced funds leave no scope for any shortcomings in their functioning. The Committee further desire that if funds are still inadequate, then the Ministry should seriously take up the issue of allocation of funds, specifically for IT infrastructure of existing as well as new PSKs/POPSKs with Ministry of Finance and impress upon them to provide adequate funds in view of the urgency of upgradation of systems to efficiently handle the volume of work relating to passport issuance.**

(Recommendation No. 12)

17. Noting the challenge being faced by the Ministry in the expansion of the Passport Sewa Project due to shortage of personnel in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) at the superintendent level as against a total sanctioned strength of the CPO Cadre of 2697 was only 1996 as on 10 May, 2018 and in view of the tardy progress of work relating to filling up of the vacancies and opening up of 424 POPSK in all the Parliamentary constituencies and other parts of the country, the Committee were of the strong view that the man power constraints will

further aggravate. Therefore, they had strongly desired the Ministry to impress upon the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure to complete the staffing study of CPO at the earliest so that the vacant posts are filled up by DOPT within a fixed time framework.

18. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs informed the Committee that the recommendation of the Committee has been noted and it is being impressed upon the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure to complete the staffing study of CPO at the earliest. As regards vacant posts, the Staff Selection Commission has been indented to fill the vacancies for the posts of 31 Junior Translators, 6 Stenographers (Grade „D“) and 24 Office Assistant (MTS) grade.

19. **The Committee are anguished to note the progress made so far in the direction of undertaking staffing study of CPO and also in filling up the vacancies in CPO cadre. The Ministry has been able to indent only 61 posts from SSC against the existing vacancies of around 700 personnel in CPO and the requirement of more staff for new POPSKs to be opened in all Parliamentary constituencies. Moreover, they have also not been able to get conducted the staffing study of CPO. In Committee’s view with such shortfall in personnel in CPO, the existing PSKs/POPSKs may not be able to function optimally. The Committee, therefore, desire that the urgency of providing more staff may be impressed upon the Department of Personnel and Training and after getting completed the staffing study of CPO on priority basis by the Department of Expenditure, the Ministry should make all efforts to fill up the vacancies in existing as well as new PSKs/POPSKs in the shortest possible time. The Committee further desire that if necessary, the recruitment through lateral entry of qualified and experienced individuals from academic, private and other cadres of the Ministries may also be undertaken.**

(Recommendation No. 13)

20. Noting with grave concern that there was no improvement in regard to the timely and efficient delivery of passport services and the citizens faced a tough time in seeking basic information, getting appointments, and tracking their application in the POPSKs established in different parts of the country. Further, noting that the previous system of providing guidance or support to the passport seekers has been suddenly withdrawn, leaving them in jeopardy, the Committee, had desired that the Ministry should adopt urgent measures to resolve the problems arising at the POPSKs. Apprehensive about the achievement of the Ministry's ambitious target of having one POPSK in each of 543 Parliamentary constituency by 2021. Moreover, the Committee felt that only opening a PSK or POPSK in all 543 constituencies is not beneficial until and unless it is fully equipped with fully modernized infrastructure and adequate skilled man power. The Committee, therefore, had recommended the Ministry to take necessary steps to achieve the target of opening of POPSKs during 2019-20 equipped with adequate skilled manpower and modern infrastructure.

21. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs stated that as on 19 February 2020, 424 POPSKs have been made operational. There are 517 Passport Seva Kendras functioning in the country. 158 POPSKs are operating on full-fledged PSK mode with dedicated communication link of 2 Mbps each. MEA is working with BSNL for laying down Managed Network Services -Multi-protocol level switches (MPLS) lines for the remaining POPSKs as well. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working together to open a POPSK in every Lok Sabha Constituency where there is no PSK or POPSK to ensure that there is at least one PSK or POPSK in every Lok Sabha Constituency. By opening 93 PSK and 424 POPSK, the Ministry has covered 488 Lok Sabha Constituencies where there is at least one Passport Kendra. The Ministry is working closely with the Department of Posts to ensure operationalization of a POPSK in the remaining 55 Lok Sabha Constituencies.

22. The Committee observe that several steps have been taken by the Ministry to bring about qualitative and quantitative changes in modernizing the infrastructure as well as increasing the number of PSKs/POPSKs in the country. The Committee are satisfied to learn that the Ministry has opened 93 PSKs and 424 POPSKs in the country thus covering 488 Lok Sabha constituencies which will have at least 1 Passport Seva Kendra each. The Committee hope that the Ministry will achieve the operationlization of 55 more POPSKs in remaining Lok Sabha Constituencies within the time frame fixed in this regard. The Committee, however, find that the Ministry has not furnished any details about the steps

being taken for providing infrastructure and skilled staff in the new POPSKs. The Committee feel that in its absence the task of opening up of new PSKs/POPSKs cannot be termed as achieved. The Committee, therefore, strongly desire that the Ministry should ensure that the adequate experienced, qualified staff is placed in each PSK/POPSK so that these centres can work optimally. Furthermore, the Committee desire that technical training may be imparted for staff of Department of Posts who are engaged in the newly created POPSKs to acquaint them about operationalization of POPSKs and also prepare a plan to provide training to the staff to be engaged in POPSKs to be established in remaining 55 Lok Sabha constituencies where PSKs/POPSKs are yet to be operationalised.

(Recommendation No.15)

23. The Committee had noted that the budgetary allocation under the minor head, “Entertainment Charges”, the allocation of which at BE 2018-19 was Rs. 70.50 crore. This was reduced to Rs. 46.00 crore at RE stage. The actual expenditure was Rs. 45.82 crore. The allocation at BE 2019-20 is Rs. 367.75 crore. The enhanced allocation in the 2019-20 is towards allocation for maintenance of aircraft of Air India and expenditure on Vice President’s visits abroad. In view of the rationalization of the sub heads under other expenditure, a new sub head „high level delegation“ under which expenditure towards maintenance cost of Air craft of Air India for VVIP travel, Vice President visit and other special delegation have been opened. Therefore, there was a rise in the allocation at BE 2019-20. Further, pertaining to the bills received/settled and amount involved in the above mentioned travels during the last three years, the Ministry had informed the Committee that the concerned division is in the process of compiling the data because the bills accruing annually due to foreign visits of dignitaries run into several hundreds. The Committee deplored the lackadaisical approach of the Ministry in furnishing the complete information about expenditure made under this head despite continuous emphasis by the Committee upon the timely submission of bills relating to the visits of dignitaries in order to manage fiscal discipline and prudence in the Ministry.

24. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that the number of bills received/settled and amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the **incoming visits** of foreign dignitaries have been tabulated as under:

Year	Number of bills received	Number of bills processed	Amount Settled (in crores)
2016-17	970	970	35.19 /-
2017-18	973	973	32.98 /-
2018-19	1427	1341	33.04 /-

b) With regard to amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the **outgoing visits**, it is kindly submitted that Ministry settles the expenditure of the Air India chartered aircraft **only for the overseas visits of Hon'ble Vice President of India**. Details are tabulated as under:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	BE	RE	Actuals
2016-17	15.00	15.00	7.54
2017-18	180.00	150.00	158.27
2018-19	48.00	48.00	48.24

c) With regard to amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the **Maintenance cost of Aircrafts of Air India for VVIP travel**, it is kindly submitted that Ministry settles the bills of the Air India aircraft towards MEA's share **for the maintenance cost of Aircraft of Air India**. Details are tabulated as under:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	BE	RE	Actuals
2016-17	0.01	100.01	100.00
2017-18	215.00	215.00	214.85
2018-19	141.00	420.00	420.00

25. **On examination of the details of RE and Actuals of the last three years under the head ‘Maintenance cost of Aircrafts under Air India for VVIP travel’, the Committee find that the BE of Rs. 0.01 crore during 2016-17 was revised to Rs. 100 crore at RE stage and spent whereas the BE for 2017-18 of Rs. 141.00 crore went up to Rs. 420.00 crore at RE stage. The Committee do not find any justification in the substantial variations in Budget Estimates, Revised Estimates and Actual Estimates after year. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their recommendation of timely submission of Bills related to foreign visits of dignitaries by the concerned divisions of MEA and prudent fiscal management under this Head.**

(Recommendation No. 18)

26. The Committee observed that ICCR’s sanctioned strength had come down from 350 in the 1990s to 206 at present. Actual working strength of ICCR as on date is 149. As many as 44 posts were abolished in the year 2016. Since the discontinuation of practice of nomination of candidates by the Staff Selection Committee for regular appointment, ICCR had not been able to make direct recruitment on a regular basis and in absence of direct recruitment in a timely manner, the posts in ICCR’s cadre meant to be filled-up through direct recruitment lapsed. Creation of new posts and recruitment against the same is a time-consuming exercise which requires approval of the Ministry of Finance. ICCR is in the process of hiring an outsourced agency to make recruitment against 32 posts available in ICCR cadre for direct recruitment. ICCR is also pursuing its proposal for creation of 200 new posts in its cadre. It will require the approval of the Ministry of Finance. The Committee viewed the human resources crunch of ICCR very seriously. Further, the work of existing cultural centres will further deteriorate with its severe human resource crunch. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommended the Ministry to pursue this matter with the Ministry of Finance for the creation of 200 new posts in the cadre of ICCR. In the mean time, ICCR should complete the process of hiring an outsource agency to make recruitment of 32 posts available in ICCR cadre for direct recruitment. The Committee were to be apprised of the steps taken in that regard.

27. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs informed the Committee that Ministry has taken note of Hon'ble Committee's recommendation and acknowledges that for the smooth functioning and effective implementation of ICCR's mandate and to rejuvenate the Council, adequate staff is essential. Ministry is examining proposal for creation of additional 200 posts in ICCR. Regarding recruitment of 32 Direct Recruitment posts, Ministry has already identified the Recruitment Agency for conducting competitive exam on behalf of ICCR. The process is likely to be completed by April/May 2020.

28. In view of serious human resource crunch in ICCR, the Committee have consistently recommended the Ministry to pursue with Ministry of Finance the creation of 200 new posts in the cadre of ICCR and also to complete the process of recruitment for 32 posts through direct recruitment. The Committee, however, find that the proposal for creation of 200 posts is still at Ministry level and not yet sent to Ministry of Finance. The Committee also observe that the direct recruitment process for appointment on 32 posts is also yet to culminate. The Committee, therefore, desire that MEA should expedite action on both these points and revert back to the Committee with the positive inputs expeditiously.

(Recommendation No. 22)

29. The Committee had observed that as a key instrument of our foreign policy, the scope and magnitude of developmental partnership had been widened over the past few years. The Committee were happy to note that as per the Recommendations of the Committee in their earlier Reports on Demands for Grants to refrain from cuts in this head and suitable increase of allocation at RE stage, the Ministry of Finance had increased the allocations of Rs. 5148.55 crore given at BE 2018-19 to Rs. 5970.50 crore at RE stage. The increase is Rs. 821.95 crore. Further, the allocation at BE 2019-20 has also witnessed an increase with allocation of Rs. 7333.79 crore. The Committee were also happy to note that as per Government's neighbourhood first policy the allocations have been enhanced at BE 2019-20 over BE 2018-19 for Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives and Afghanistan.

The Committee had been apprised that Aid programmes are influenced by the dynamics of India's national interest, diplomatic engagements and political relations. The pace of

implementation of agreed projects are dependent on the host beneficiary Government's readiness and local security and climatic factors. In this regard, the Committee in their 21st Report had recommended to undertake a thorough review of all Aid projects and prepare a roadmap for their completion. The Committee are of the opinion that since the budgetary allocations have been increased, the Ministry should make a thorough review of all Aid projects to observe the status of physical and financial progress of each project. The Committee reiterated their earlier Recommendations to explore the feasibility of setting up of an autonomous aid disbursement body along the line of USAID to monitor the progress of the projects and to avoid arbitrary cuts imposed by the Ministry of Finance and prioritise the projects within the available allocation. The Committee strongly feel that in this way the aid to various countries for technical and economic cooperation will play a desired role for ushering developmental diplomacy.

30. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs stated that assured the Hon'ble Committee that it closely monitors expenditure and fund releases are made in line with physical and financial progress of projects to avoid any parking of funds with implementing agencies. The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in MEA is entrusted with implementing India's development cooperation initiatives with partner countries. The Projects under DPA are regularly reviewed at various levels. A timeline for both physical and financial progress is part of project planning and regular stakeholders meeting helps to review the progress of the Project against these timelines and resolve bottlenecks.

As regards the setting up of an autonomous aid disbursement body, it is submitted that our development partnership is based on the needs of our partner countries and our foreign policy priorities which are assessed in close coordination with the concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry. Specific proposals are progressed on the basis on assessment made by the Territorial Divisions factoring in the political relationship with the countries. The Development Partnership Administration evolved over the past seven years, by inducting expertise from other Ministries and also and leveraging capacities from outside government also. DPA is an integral part of Ministry and its programme are tightly linked with country's foreign policy priorities, which require flexibility and nimbleness to quickly respond and adapt to the inherent dynamic nature of international relations. Governments of many other countries are increasingly rethinking on the idea of an autonomous and independent agency on the lines of USAID. Some Governments, which earlier had separate autonomous aid/developmental agencies, have moved towards creating agency like DPA; for example, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has now been transformed to become an integral part of their Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Global Affairs of Canada."

31. The Committee are aware that the Ministry is cognizant of the importance of India's development co-operation initiatives with partner countries and a regular review of the projects is being done at various levels through the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) since last seven years. The Committee, however, find that there are still delays in implementation of projects and arbitrary cuts in funds under the direction of Ministry of Finance affecting the projects and reputation of the country adversely. That is why for better monitoring and to avoid such Budgetary cuts, the Committee had recommended that the feasibility of setting up of an autonomous aid disbursement body along the line of USAID may be explored. The Committee are not convinced with the justification given by the Ministry for not setting up of such body referring the case of Canada where an independent agency, CIDA has been converted as DPA like agency making it a part of their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also that Governments of many countries are increasingly rethinking on the idea of an autonomous and independent agency on the lines of USAID. The Ministry, however, to prove its view in the matter, has not clarified whether the current system of DPA is capable of reviewing all Aid Projects to different countries and monitor physical and financial progress made in each project efficiently or not the Ministry has also not presented any review report of all the aid projects as recommended by the Committee. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their recommendation and desire that the Ministry should explore the feasibility of setting up an autonomous aid disbursement body along the lines of USAID to implement and monitor the progress of projects abroad after preparation of a review report of all the aid projects.

(Recommendation No. 27)

32. In their first Report the Committee observed that the aid to Myanmar under BE 2018-19 was Rs. 280.00 crore and the same was increased to Rs. 370.00 crore at RE stage. The allocation for BE 2019-20 has further increased to Rs. 400.00 crore. The Committee had been apprised that the main infrastructure projects that require significant funding in BE 2019-20 are the Kaladan Multimodal Transport Project, Trilateral Highway linking India, Myanmar and Thailand, Coastal Surveillance System for Myanmar on its Bay of Bengal coast and the Andaman Sea; a Women's Police Training College; an ongoing project to support the Myanmar Institute for Information and Technology (MIIT). The Committee, further, noted that based on assessment of Myanmar's current capacity to absorb projects, the stage at which the existing menu of projects has currently reached, and the capacity to work with Myanmar's specific rules and regulations, the Ministry believes that the allocation currently sought is sufficient to secure India's fundamental strategic interests in Myanmar. The Committee were happy to note that the Ministry has successfully completed and handed over to 250 housing units under the Rakhine State Development Programme. In the Kaladan Multi-Modal Project, the waterways component comprising the Sittwe Port, the island water transport terminals at Sittwe and Paletwa, the navigation channel and six 300 tonne vessels have been completed. However, the Committee were constrained to note the long delay in completing the work on the Kaladan-Multi Modal road component which was accorded in March 2017. The Committee noted the reasons attributable to the delay are the worsening security situation as a result of Rohingya issues and financial insolvency of the contractors. In that regard, the Committee suggested the Ministry to make sincere efforts to ensure that at the tendering stage, the Ministry, along with the line Ministries, to examine the credibility of the contractors through a proper tendering process and they should regularly follow the examination so that the scarce resources of the Government of India do not get blocked or wasted due to the financial insolvency of the contractors. The Committee might be apprised of the steps taken in that regard. The Committee further desired that the Ministry in consultation with Myanmar Government to draw a road map for completion of the Kaladan-Multi Modal road component to ensure smooth and timely completion of the transport corridor.

33. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs informed the Committee that it vigorously pursuing with the host Government to expedite the completion of major infrastructure projects including the **Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project**. We have been trying to expedite the project by starting work from the Northern end, from the Zorinpui – Myeikwa end for the 60-109 km stretch of the road component. A Myanmar

delegation and an inter Ministerial Indian delegation visited the Zorinpui area (Mizoram) in December 2019. Men and material are being moved towards the Zorinpui by the contractor to start the work of the 60-109 km through Zorinpui. We have been able to gain some momentum in our efforts in moving ahead with the project from the Zorinpui end, with the Government of Myanmar starting procedures to give access to the contractors via Zorinpui (Mizoram). Meanwhile, India handed over the Sittwe port operations to A to Z Exim on 31 January 2020.

The Ministry in consultation with the Government of Myanmar would frame a roadmap for the completion of the project- taking in to account the fact that the project is hampered due to multiple factors including the local adverse security situation, over which even the Government of Myanmar does not have full control.

34. The Committee are pleased to note that the Ministry has taken positive steps towards completion of Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project. However, they reiterate their concern over delay in completion of the Project, firstly, due to security situation there and secondly, due to financial insolvency of the contractors, which portray lack of due diligence in the matter. The Ministry however, has not conveyed whether the Ministry in consultation with the Myanmar Government has finalized any road map for completion of the Project or not. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry in consultation with the Government of Myanmar should draw a road map for completion of the project and stick to the same so that the project is completed without any further delay. Moreover, the Ministry should conduct a thorough due diligence and financial insolvency check of all contractors before finalizing/awarding them the contracts in Myanmar Projects to avoid any time and cost overruns of projects due to re-tendering.

(Recommendation No. 30)

35. During examination of the Demands for Grants 2018-19, the Committee had observed considerable ad-hocism in the issue relating to Overseas Indians Affairs. Even after two years of merger of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, no separate budget head was provided for matter related to Overseas Indians. Allocation for the various schemes and programmes related to Overseas Indians were being made under the budget head “Other

Expenditures”. Therefore, the Committee had desired to do away with the odd budgetary practice and create a distinct budget head specifically pertaining to Overseas Indians. The Committee were pained to note the continuation of the ad -hoc approach in the financial year 2019-20, which is the third year of post merger of the erstwhile MOIA with MEA. In the detailed Demands for Grants 2019-20, the schemes/programmes related to Overseas Indian Affairs are covered under the sub heads i.e. (i) engagement with Indian Diaspora under the minor head International Cooperation and (ii) welfare of Overseas Indian under the minor head Passport and Emigration. The Committee were of the view that this budgetary practice does not reflect the serious attitude of the Ministry to look after the Overseas Indians. Therefore, the Committee reiteratef their earlier recommendation to create a separate budget head exclusively dealing with all the schemes/programmes related to Overseas Indians. The Committee were apprised of the steps taken in this regard.

36. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that the recommendation of the Hon’ble Committee regarding opening of separate heads have been duly complied with and the new budget heads have been opened after obtaining necessary approval of the Office of the Controller General of Accounts. The Ministry undertook review of various schemes and programmes under erstwhile „Other Expenditure“ minor head and decided to open these two heads as following.

All schemes targeted towards welfare of migrant Indians have been placed together by opening a new sub-head „welfare of overseas Indians“. This sub-head is placed under Minor Head „Passport & Emigration“ as all these programmes are for the welfare of Indian citizens who have migrated abroad. Due attention has been given to ensure adequate allocation of budgetary resources towards these schemes and Allocation in BE 2020-21 has been enhanced to Rs 7.27 crore from RE 2019-20 allocation of Rs. 3.29 crore.

On the other hand, all diaspora related schemes and programmes have been placed together under newly opened sub-head „Engagement with Indian Diaspora“ as distinct from schemes for Indian citizens abroad. These schemes are placed under „International Cooperation“ Minor Head clearly reflecting the priority attached by the Ministry towards engagement with India’s diaspora community. Due attention has been given to ensure adequate allocation of budgetary resources towards these schemes and Allocation in BE 2020-21 has been enhanced to Rs 69 crore from RE 2019-20 allocation of Rs. 38.12 crore.”

37. The Committee note that due to continuous persuasion of the Committee the Ministry has created some separate Budget sub- heads like ‘Welfare of Overseas Indians’

and ‘Engagement with Indian Diaspora’ replacing the head ‘Other Expenditure’ and has also enhanced the allocation for the Schemes/Programmes related to overseas Indians. However, the Committee are unable to understand the reasons for not creating a separate Budget Head for all the matters related to Overseas Indians which the Committee have been continuously recommending. In the Committee’s view, it is necessary to create a separate Head exclusively dealing with all the Schemes/Programmes related to overseas Indians and making provision of sufficient fund for each Scheme/Programme under this Head. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation and urge the Ministry to conduct an exercise of assessing the benefits the Diaspora renders to our country and their welfare requirements and find a way to expedite the process of creating a separate Budget Head dedicated only to the Schemes/Programmes relating to them with sufficient allocation every year.

(Recommendation No. 32)

38. The Committee noted that a Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) was given to potential emigrants under the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PKVY) Scheme. The Committee noted that Rs. 10.00 crore was released to the Ministry of Skill Development and Training in March, 2017 and only Rs. 3.00 crore have been utilized till date out of this. Due to this under utilization of funds, rationalisation has been done and in BE 2019-20, an allocation of Rs. 5.5 crore has been made. An enhancement is considered based on the progress of work and utilization of earlier released funds. The Committee noted that the number of emigrant workers imparted training under PDOT are the most in city of Mumbai which amount to 38976 trainees followed by New Delhi at 18727 trainees.

The Committee felt that the training centres in Metro-politan areas of Mumbai and New Delhi are running with full capacity while the smaller towns do not have the same priority. The Ministry had informed that new PKVY training centres have been opened in towns of Jaipur,

Sikar, Hyderabad, Karim Nagar, Nizamabad, Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Patna. The Committee desired that the Ministry of External Affairs take up the matter of PDOT on a grand scale and impart training in the particular domain that the potential emigrants want to learn like plumbing, carpenter, nursing, technician etc. The Committee also felt that guiding the emigrants against potential working hazards like passports being taken away by employers, loss of money through fake agents, etc. can also be part of the PDOT programme. The Committee had also recommended the Ministry to target more towns like Kochi, Chennai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, etc. to open new PDOT centres for potential emigrants. The Committee were apprised of the initiatives taken in this regard.

39. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that a one day Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programme has been started in a structured manner since January 2018, beginning with two centres each at Mumbai and New Delhi. Gradually, number of PDOT Centres has been increased to 21 by the end of 2019. Out of these 21 centres, 15 new PDOT centres have been opened across various states in India in 2019. Presently, PDO Training is being imparted to the prospective emigrant workers under the two models i.e. firstly, PDOT centres managed by NSDC empanelled Training Partners under MOU between MEA and MSDE on the implementation of PKVY and secondly, through State Government agencies. In this regard, MEA has transferred Rs 10 Lakhs each to State Government Agency/Department of Rajasthan, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Rs 5 Lakhs to Andhra Pradesh.

77,109 emigrant workers have been imparted PDO Training across 21 PDOT centers in the country by the end of year 2019 as follows:-

S.No	PDOT Centre	Agency	Year of Opening
1.	Mumbai (Videsh Bhawan)	NSDC Empanelled Training Partners under PKVY	2018
2.	Mumbai (Andheri)		2018
3.	Delhi (Okhla)		2018
4.	Delhi (Mandir Marg)		2018
5.	Kochi		2018
6.	Lucknow		2018
7.	Gorakhpur		2019
8.	Chandigarh		2019

9.	Chennai		2019
10.	Jaipur	RSLDC (Rajasthan)	2019
11.	Sikar		2019
12.	Nagaur		2019
13.	Hyderabad	TOMCOM (Telangana)	2019
14.	Karimnagar		2019
15.	Nizamabad		2019
16.	Darbhanga	Labour Resource Department, Government of Bihar	2019
17.	Gaya		2019
18.	Muzaffarpur		2019
19.	Patna		2019
20.	Vijaywada	OMCAP (Andhra Pradesh)	2019
21.	Kadapa		2019
TOTAL			

In reference to the Committee's recommendation to deliver domain training for potential emigrants, MSDE has conveyed that a pilot program comprising 14 India International Skill Centers (IISCs) was launched. Based on the learnings from the pilot, MSDE is revising the policy guidelines of IISCs, under which operational guidelines had to be redrafted for implementation of IISCs. MEA is yet to receive proposal from MSDE in this regard.

In reference to the Committee's recommendations to target more towns like Kochi, Chennai, Kolkata, Chandigarh etc. to open new PDOT Centres for potential emigrants. Ministry has opened PDOT centers in these cities. In January 2019, the Ministry has conveyed its approval to the Labour Department, Government of West Bengal for opening of PDOT centers districts of Nadia, South 24 Paraganas, North 24 Paraganas, Murshidabad, Hooghly, Kolkata and Howrah. However, opening of the same is still awaited. Ministry is regularly following-up with the State Government on this."

40. The Committee express their satisfaction in regard to the Ministry opening of new Pre Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) Centers in the towns like Kochi, Chennai, Kolkata and Chandigarh alongwith even smaller towns like Nagaur (Rajasthan),

Muzaffarpur (Bihar) and Kadapa (Andra Pradesh) having their own dedicated PDOT for potential emigrants. The Committee hope that the newly approved PDOT Centres in 7 Districts of West Bengal will also see the light of the day soon. The Committee also observe that in spite of launching a pilot programme for 14 India International Skill Centres (IISCs), MEA is yet to receive the revised Policy guidelines of IISCs incorporating redrafted operational guidelines from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The Committee urge the Ministry to attach significant attention to secure the revised policy guidelines for IISCs on priority basis so that these centres may be able to deliver domain training to potential emigrants without any further delay. The Committee would also like to know about the inclusion of sufficient safeguards in the PDOT to protect the migrants against the potential working hazards like passports being taken away by employers, loss of money through fake agents, etc. The Committee may be informed of the progress made in each matter.

(Recommendation No. 34)

41. The Committee noted that South Asian University is an ambitious project of the Government. The allocation at BE 2018-19 for South Asian University was Rs. 375.00 crore. Out of Rs. 375.00 crore, Rs. 31.00 crore was for operational cost, Rs. 310.00 crore for capital cost and Rs. 34.00 crore for rent. At RE stage the allocation was reduced to Rs. 246.00 crore because of slow pace of construction of South Asian University Campus and reduction in the operational cost. For the year 2019-20, Rs. 317.5 crore has been allocated as per the requirements projected for building works. The Committee noted that the construction work of South Asian University campus has now gained momentum. One building of Package II has almost been completed and another is scheduled to be completed in February 2020. Under Package III, 6 percent of physical progress has been achieved as on September, 2019 and the remaining works are expected to be completed by September, 2020. The Committee welcomed

these achievements. However, the Committee were pained to note that the works on remaining buildings under package IV could not be taken up until now due to various land acquisition issues and court cases and the Ministry has provided any specific schedule for completion of the work under package IV. The Committee have been apprised that the Ministry accords top priority for timely completion of the South Asian University project and are making all efforts to ensure all outstanding issues are resolved at the earliest. The Committee hoped that the Ministry would continue its efforts with all concerned agencies with increased pace of expenditure to complete the remaining works of South Asian University in a time bound manner.

42. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that it would like to update Hon'ble Committee on the further progress of work in SAU construction project. As of December 2019, progress under Package II and Package III has reached 85% and 65% respectively. Four buildings under Package II have already been completed. One housing block is scheduled for completion in February 2020. These will be habitable after completion certificate/occupancy certificate is granted by the concerned authorities. Work under Package III is scheduled to be completed by September 2020.

As regards Package IV, concerted and sustained efforts are being made for approval of revised DPR, clearance of forest land pockets and tree cutting permission from Forest Department and expeditious conclusion of court cases. The Ministry is continuously reviewing and monitoring the progress with a view to ensure timely completion of the South Asian University project.

43. **The Committee observe that the construction of South Asian University has been going on since 2010 and is phased in 4 packages. The Ministry in its reply has informed that work under package III will be completed by September, 2020. However, the Committee feel that given the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic causing lockdown etc. it may be difficult to complete work related to Package III by September, 2020. The Committee, therefore, strongly feel that the Ministry should revamp its complete plan of construction work and complete the Project as per the revised schedule.**

Further, the Committee feel that as regards to work on package IV of the project, the Ministry should make concerted efforts to get cleared the legal and environmental

issues in an expeditious manner so that the construction is completed within stipulated time frame under intimation to the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 35)

44. The Committee noted that an allocation of Rs. 200.00 crore was provided for Nalanda University at BE 2018-19 which was reduced to Rs. 190.00 crore at RE stage. The allocation at BE 2019-20 is Rs. 220.00 crore. The Ministry anticipated the expenditure on this project would be close to 400.00 crore but Rs. 220.00 crore was allocated deliberately.

The Committee had been apprised that the actual construction work of this University started in May, 2017. The current projection for completion of Nalanda University by the year 2021-22, but the Ministry has not made any projection about the escalation of the cost for completion of the project. Further, contribution to operational and capital costs of Nalanda University from other countries are voluntary in nature and no foreign contribution was received during the last three years. Channelizing contribution from other countries has a limited scope. Reduction of allocations at RE (2018-19) stage, ongoing pace of work and providing lesser allocation against the anticipated high expenditure during 2019-20, was indicative of a serious lack of determination to complete the construction of the University by 2021-22. The delay in completion of Nalanda University – an international institution of excellence for pursuit of intellectual, philosophical and historical studies was deplorable. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommended the Government to finalise the revised cost of the proposal to be disbursed during the next two financial years so that the project is completed by 2021-22. The Ministry should also explore the possibilities to get contributions from other participating countries to supplement the progress.

45. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted that it has taken note of Hon^{ble} Committee's concern regarding the delay in starting the construction of the Nalanda University construction project. Ministry would like to assure the Hon^{ble} Committee that the Ministry is in constant touch with the implementing agencies so that adequate fund flow to the project is ensured and momentum of progress in the construction is maintained. Based on the progress of the project, allocation at RE stage was increased to Rs. 300 cr. from Rs. 220 cr. at the BE stage. As regards voluntary contribution from the participating countries, the efforts are being made by requesting some of the resident Missions of the Nalanda partner countries in India to continue their patronage to the institution through voluntary financial contribution.

46. The Committee had suggested that the Ministry should expedite the process of completion of Nalanda University Project as the delay leads to escalation of cost apart from still costlier in delay in operationalisation of the project. The Committee had also strongly recommended the Ministry to finalize the revised cost to be disbursed during the next 2 years so that the project is completed by 2021-22 positively. The Ministry in its action taken note has assured the Committee that adequate fund flow to the project is being maintained and the allocation has been increased to Rs. 300.00 crore at RE stage from Rs. 220.00 crore for BE 2019-20. The Ministry is also making efforts for voluntary financial contributions from resident missions of Nalanda Partner Countries present in India. The Committee reiterate that the Ministry should ensure the adequate fund flow to the project and simultaneously make efforts for getting voluntary contributions from the other participating countries to supplement the progress of Nalanda University Project and ensure timely completion of the project.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation No. 1)

While observing the pattern of demand, allocation and expenditure in the Ministry of External Affairs from the year 2014-15 to 2017-18, the Committee have noted that there has been a continuous mismatch between budgetary demand by MEA and actual allocation by MoF, reduction in allocation at RE stage and lesser actual expenditure in comparison to the allocations given at RE stage as well as uneven quarterly expenditure. The Committee in their various Reports on Demands for Grants and Action Taken Reports have been emphasizing upon the Ministry for working out a formal budgetary mechanism with regular monitoring and evaluation of each Unit at the highest level, and constantly engaging with the Ministry of Finance at all possible levels to convince them about the need for providing substantial budgetary allocations to match with the broad frame work of Foreign Policy goals and to secure our national interest abroad.

The Committee further observe that the Ministry has been taking up the issue of the gap between the projected amount and the actual allocation with the Ministry of Finance at all levels. This has shown the results and the gap has gradually reduced with a modest increase in the period under consideration. The Committee, however, feel that the spread and scale of MEA activities still requires additional funds to ensure that the Ministry fulfils its international commitments. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should project the actual requirement of funds and strongly impress upon the Ministry of Finance to enhance the budgetary allocation in future by closely monitoring the expenditure pattern and fund releases in line with physical and financial progress of projects.

Reply of the Government

Over the years, the issue of provision adequate allocation of funds has been taken up with the Ministry of Finance at various levels, including EAM, Foreign Secretary and Financial Advisor. The response of the Ministry of Finance has been positive and constructive, as also indicated by the higher allocation for MEA in BE 2019-20 (Rs. 17884 cr.) and RE 2019-20 (Rs. 17372.27 cr.) as compared to the allocation in the interim budget 2019-20 (Rs. 16061 cr), or in previous years, i.e. RE 2018-19 (Rs. 15582 cr.) or BE 2018-19 (Rs. 15011 cr.).

The Ministry holds extensive discussions with Ministry of Finance at all stages of the budgetary cycle, including when the demands for grants for RE of a given financial year and the BE of the next financial year are submitted by the Ministry and discussed with Ministry of Finance.

The suggestion of the Standing Committee for evaluation of all aspects, such as physical and financial, in the recipient foreign country, before allocating funds for any particular project/programme, has been noted by the Ministry for compliance so as to ensure time bound and efficient execution of the projects. Ministry will make all efforts to continue to ensure optimum, balanced and full utilization of the allocation made. The Ministry would like to reaffirm that it continues to engage 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 to the Ministry.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020]

(Recommendation No. 2)

The Committee observe that due to continuous persuasion by the Committee and with regular quarterly reviews of the projects, the Ministry has been successful in striking a balance in the spending during each quarter of 2018-19. Through close monitoring of expenditure and fund release in line with physical and financial progress of projects, the Ministry could spend more than the allocations made in the 1st and 2nd quarter and in the 3rd quarter against the allocation of Rs. 3352.45 crore the expenditure was Rs. 3008.05 crore. In the 4th quarter against the allocation of Rs. 4953.65 crore the expenditure was Rs. 4164.57 crore which is about 27% of the total allocations and thus within 33% of allocations as per the instructions of the Ministry of Finance. While on this aspect, the Committee would also like to point out a serious shortcoming in the outlay information that has been furnished to the Committee. Varying figures were provided in writing to the Committee by MEA in regards to BE 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 in replies to their queries. It was only at the Report drafting stage when these disparities were pointed out to the Ministry that reconciled figures were furnished only/as late as on 5 December, 2019. While disapproving this casual approach of the Ministry in financial matters, the Committee desire that extreme caution should be exercised by the Ministry while submitting information to the Committee.

In the last quarter of the year, within the constraints of majority of the spending being in foreign countries which are conditioned by the local regulations, the Ministry could spend the allocations allocated to it in all the quarters of the Financial year. The Committee appreciate the optimal utilization of budgetary resources and are hopeful that the good work will continue during 2019-20 and ahead and that the monitoring mechanism will be further strengthened. Further, the Committee desire that the Ministry should anticipate the country/region-specific challenges they face abroad while implementing various projects and take appropriate steps in a timely manner to

overcome them. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken on these lines and the impact thereof.

Reply of the Government

To ensure optimal utilization of budgetary resources, quarterly expenditure is being closely monitored at different levels including at the level of Foreign Secretary and the Financial Advisor in consultation with Divisional Heads. Accordingly, funds are released in line with physical and financial progress of projects to ensure that there is no parking of funds with implementing agencies. Importance of adhering to the balanced pace of expenditure during each quarter is also emphasized to various Divisions and Spending Units.

The Ministry agrees with Hon'ble Committee's suggestion regarding assessment of country/region-specific challenges faced in implementation of projects. Ministry has been closely monitoring implementation of projects in different countries. Review mechanisms are at three levels – intra-Ministry, inter-Ministry and bilateral. Implementation of some projects have been part of „PRAGATI“ review meetings chaired by Prime Minister. Within Ministry, EAM and concerned Secretaries frequently chair inter-ministerial stakeholders meetings to assess implementation of all ongoing projects in various countries and regions and appropriate action to overcome challenges being faced in smooth implementation of projects are initiated.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 4)

The Committee note that pertaining to the rationale and methodology of ceiling being laid down for expenditure of allocated funds on schemes, programmes and projects, the Ministry submitted that it undertakes a detailed and careful assessment of requirements for the various heads in the MEA budget. This is done in consultation with concerned Divisions and Spending Units as per funds utilization status and implementation progress of projects, schemes and programmes to suitably allocate funds within the budgetary ceilings conveyed by Ministry of Finance to ensure that Ministry's ongoing projects, schemes, programmes and commitments have requisite funds. The Committee, however, observe that despite close monitoring and review meetings, there was under-spending in several important heads like Aid given to Bhutan, Mangedchhu, Kholongechhu, Maldives, Mangolia, ITEC Programme and MER. The Committee feel that there is a need for the Ministry to develop a focused and well defined budgetary planning process so as to ensure feasible targets for the projects. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry take stringent steps to address this issue without any further delay so that under utilization of funds does not continue in the financial year of 2019-20. The Committee would like to be apprised of the Ministry's efforts and endeavours in this regard and the outcome achieved therefrom.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry accords utmost priority towards effective and secure budgetary allocation under Technical & Economic Cooperation. The budgetary resource prioritization and allocation by the Ministry is aligned, both towards Aid commitments by the Government as well as efficient utilization of the allocated budgetary resources to the Ministry within the overall constraints of Government finances.

The allocations for various Aid heads are done through careful prioritization within available resources to ensure that none of our developmental work suffers any setback and all our commitments are implemented smoothly and speedily.

Under-spending in some heads sometimes occurs because of the factors outside the control of Government of India such as geo-political situation, non-resolution of project implementation issues, and political unrest in the host countries. Ministry is conscious of the need for utilizing the available funds and project review meetings are regularly held to ensure that these factors causing delay in implementation of various projects are minimized.

Reallocations at RE stage are carried out to cater to spending needs under other heads based on physical progress by identifying savings in other Aid heads after undertaking a realistic spending assessment based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 5)

19965.57 crore the Ministry has been allocated Rs. 17884.78 crore at BE 2019-20 stage. This is 19.14% more than the allocations given at BE 2018-19 and 14.78% more than the allocations at RE 2018-19. However, in percentage terms, there has been only 0.01% increase in the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs in comparison to the overall budget of Government of India. Allocation is made to various heads based on Ministry's priorities and realistic requirement of funds during the budgetary period. The Committee have been further apprised that the Ministry has been making constant endeavours to project its requirement of funds in a given year based on realistic and need based estimation of schemes and projects. During the oral evidence Foreign Secretary admitted that while the allocation is still short of the projected expenditure, it will substantially enable the Ministry to fulfill many of its obligations.

The Committee trust that the Ministry would ensure an optimum utilization of the budgetary allocations during each quarter of the year after finalizing the new initiatives in consultation with the concerned beneficiary governments and operationalizing the same at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has made full efforts to ensure optimum utilization of the available budgetary allocation evenly throughout the year. In 2019-20, Ministry has ensured smooth and balanced pace of expenditure during each quarter. Cumulative expenditure in the first three quarters has been 24%, 55% and 75% of the BE 2019-20. This has also ensured that Ministry has fully satisfied Ministry of Finance instructions that expenditure in the final quarter should not be more than 25% of BE. All efforts will be made to also ensure that as per Ministry of Finance guidelines this year, expenditure in the final month of March will also remain with the 10% ceiling.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 6)

The Committee observe that out of the total allocations of Rs. 17884.78 crore at BE 2019-20, Rs. 16511.23 crore has been allocated under Revenue Section and Rs. 1373.55 crore under Capital Section. In comparison to the allocations for Revenue Section at the BE 2018-19 i.e.13374.50 crore the RE allocation is Rs. 14636.50 crore. This shows an increasing trend. The allocations under Capital Section at BE 2018-19 i.e Rs. 1636.50 crore has been reduced to Rs. 945.50 crore at RE stage. In comparison to BE 2018-19 and 2019-20, there is a reduction of Rs. 262.95 crore. Capital outlays on public works, Housing and Loans to Government of Bhutan were affected due to reduced allocations. At BE 2018-19 allocations were kept at a higher level due to the minimum capital allocation specified by the Ministry of Finance. Reduction at RE and BE 2019-20 on account of capital budget was due to a realistic assessment of project implementation cycles and physical progress of ongoing projects. In addition, fund requirements for upcoming constructions, renovations and acquisitions have also been considered. The Committee are further apprised that the Ministry is taking corrective steps to resolve the problems related to delay in implementation of various projects through project monitoring mechanism but the hindrances arising out of geo-political situation or political unrest in the host countries are beyond the control of the Ministry as well as the concerned Mission/Post.

While acknowledging the above reasons put forth by the Ministry, the Committee are still apprehensive of the adequacy of the current allocations under Capital Section. Therefore, the Committee strongly desire that the Ministry should monitor the project implementation at every stage and after regular calculation of the anticipated expenditure, it should impress upon the Ministry of Finance to allocate judicious funds at RE stage.

Reply of the Government

Reduced allocation due to delays in acquisition of diplomatic properties abroad or in construction/renovation are primarily due to restrictive or changing norms and local regulations in the host country, which are beyond control of the Ministry. However, in order to proactively pursue the diplomatic properties projects and avoid delays, Ministry has strengthened the

Technical Team of Engineers and Architects by increasing the number of personnel. In addition, Ministry endeavours to undertake preparation activities and seek approvals simultaneously to optimally use the time available. Newer technologies for construction and renovation are being used to reduce the overall completion time. Ministry has also standardized various document templates so that the processing time for approvals is minimized. With extensive use of modern information technology tools and setting up of institutionalized review processes, the delays have been curtailed significantly. The Ministry continues to hold extensive discussions with Ministry of Finance at all stages of the budgetary cycle to convince and impress upon the need for judicious allocation of funds.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 7)

The Ministry has furnished a plethora of reasons for non-acquisition of Chanceries and residential properties in foreign States of Stockholm, Mexico, Pakistan and Sudan. The reasons elaborated for non-acquisition are non-suitability of property, local regulations, geo-political situations etc. The Committee desire that the Ministry should examine local rules and regulations as well as whether the properties are lease based ownerships before acquiring them so that the construction and acquisition of diplomatic properties is a smooth process. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to closely assess and examine the factors due to which these delay causing hurdles and barriers are arising and find a way to overcome them. The Committee also desire that a status note in this regard may be furnished to them within three months.

The Ministry has stated financial stress as the reason for the main contractor in the construction project in Wellington going into receivership, resulting in a decrease in expenditure. The Committee desire and strongly recommend the Ministry to exercise due diligence before awarding contracts of construction so as to avoid stalling of projects because of bankruptcy of the contractor. Such hurdles lead to time and cost overruns which are unaffordable and inexcusable. The Committee recall that in their previous Reports they had advised the Ministry to make changes to improve contract management in view of the adverse comments by the C&AG in its report about property management of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee also desire the Ministry to apprise the Committee of steps taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry has been strongly pursuing acquisition of properties, especially at high rental Missions/Posts abroad. Instructions to actively pursue acquisition of properties are being issued to the concerned Missions/Posts abroad from time to time. In the last three years, properties have been acquired at Amman, Kabul, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Hamburg, Tashkent and Nairobi. The Ministry is currently processing acquisition proposals for Missions/Posts at Doha, Tel Aviv, Rome, Berne, Bishkek, Milan and Manila.

As regards non-acquisition of properties in Stockholm and Mexico City, the acquisition of identified property in Stockholm was not concluded because owner's asking price was much higher than the price at which it was acquired by the owner two years ago, which couldn't be justified, notwithstanding that the market evaluated price was comparable with the asking price. The Mission in Stockholm has been directed to identify suitable alternate properties. Acquisition of the identified property in Mexico City has been delayed in want of a written confirmation from the concerned authorities for suitable land use change.

The reference to geo-political situation in Pakistan and Sudan in Ministry's initial reply was in the context of construction projects in these countries and not in context of acquisition projects.

Before considering any acquisition proposal, Ministry obtains detailed information on the ownership of the properties (whether freehold or lease-hold), local rules and regulations for acquisition/ construction by diplomatic Missions/Posts, applicable urban parameters, land-use permissions, etc. and thoroughly examines the information.

A composite team from the Ministry comprising representatives from the Global Estate Management Division, including its Technical Cell, and Integrated Finance Division visits the concerned stations for on-the-spot-assessment of the identified properties and to hold comprehensive discussions with all concerned stakeholders including the Foreign Office, urban authorities and owners of the properties. Subsequent to identification of a suitable property by the team, professional evaluations by reputed local firms/ agencies are undertaken for ascertaining the market price and structural soundness of the property. Due diligence by a reputed local law firm is carried out to establish the Owners' clear title and right to sell the properties. All these steps considerably diminish the risk of unforeseen hurdles/barriers cropping up at a later stage in the acquisition process.

Despite all these efforts, unforeseen circumstances/ developments sometimes come in the way of timely conclusion of acquisition proposals.

The Ministry has noted the advice of the Committee to continue to assess the hurdles faced by the Ministry and find ways to overcome them to make the acquisition of the diplomatic properties a smooth process.

Construction:

The contractors are selected through an open tender, as per provisions of General Financial Rules (GFR) with such modifications, as may be required to synchronize it with local regulations and practices. Essential safeguards and financial eligibility criteria, as mandated in CPWD Manual, CVC guidelines, and other GOI instructions, are also invariably adhered to, with appropriate modifications, where required in accordance with local regulations or practice. The tender conditions and eligibility criteria are regularly updated as per decisions/instructions of the Government. Any relaxation or modification in accordance with local regulations or practice is permitted only after thorough examination and obtaining concurrence of the Integrated Finance Division. The financial soundness of the bidders is assessed as part of the tender process and financial safeguards obtained in accordance with the above criteria.

The contractor in Wellington was one of the largest contractors in New Zealand. All mandatory financial criteria were fulfilled by the contractor. It also submitted the required financial safeguards.

Taking note of the advice of the Committee in its previous reports, Ministry has undertaken few changes for better contract management. The Technical Cell in the Ministry comprising Architects and Engineers, who advise the Ministry on technical aspects and assist it in contract management, has been strengthened. The Ministry has also begun engaging a separate Project Management Consultant in construction projects for focused monitoring of the progress of the works.

Further, the Ministry has introduced two stage two bid system for major construction projects to ensure that only adequately technically qualified and financially sound bidders are invited to submit the financial bids.

Learning from the experience of Wellington, Ministry will continue with its efforts to examine the financial soundness of the contractors with due care and diligence.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 14)

The Committee observe that the PSKs and POPSKs are projects initiated by the Ministry to bring about qualitative and quantitative improvement in Passport Services to citizens of India. One of the objectives of opening more centres is to reduce the time period for Police Verification process. The Committee find that in several states the period has reduced but in many states it requires improvement. Therefore, the Committee desire that the Ministry should sincerely follow up this issue with all the State Governments and Police Authorities and impress upon them to reduce the Police Verification period to the minimum by using online connectivity between PSKs/POPSKs and Police authorities. The Committee should also be apprised of the status of linking the Police Verification process with the database being prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Reply of the Government

The Police Verification Process under Passport Seva Project has marked a significant improvement during the last five years. Over the years, there has been significant improvement in the submission of Police Verification (PVR) reports by the States/UTs. The Ministry has taken significant steps to improve the Police Verification Process and submission of PVR in an expeditious manner. Some of the noticeable improvements taken by the Ministry are as under:

- Integration with 741 District Police Headquarters (DPHQs) in real-time with the Passport Seva System
- Process Improvements in Police Verification
- Doing away with physical submission of PVRs
- End-to-End digital movement of PV reports
- Improvements in Police Verification Questionnaire
- Launch of Mobile Police App „mPassport Police App“ through which the Police Authorities can directly upload the data at Thana/Applicant’s residence
- Visit of Police Verification Personnel to applicant’s address on a need basis

On the basis of above, the all India average time to submit PVR has come down to 16 days for the month of December 2019. For the State/UT using mPassport Police App, the average time of PVR submission is only 3 to 5 days. Ministry has been regularly emphasizing on the State/UT Governments and State Police authorities to reduce the time taken in completing the police verification process.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 16)

The Committee note that in BE 2018-19 ICCR was provided with an allocation of Rs. 255.00 crore which was reduced to Rs. 235.00 crore at RE stage and was actually spent. At BE 2019-20 it has been provided with Rs. 250.00 crore. The Ministry has informed that ICCR also carries out a detailed budgetary exercise based on realistic achievable objectives in line with overall a priority of the Government for cultural diplomacy. ICCR is the only organization of the Ministry of External Affairs which promotes India’s soft power abroad. ICCR activities are spread across the globe. These activities cover scholarship for organizing exhibitions and performing arts and visual arts programmes. Keeping in view the broad spectrum of the activities of ICCR, the Committee find that in view of wide ranging important activities, there is a need to enhance the budgetary allocation of ICCR as per their demand. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend the Government to increase the budgetary allocation for ICCR at RE 2019-20 and BE 2020-21 stage. The Ministry in its candid submission has also accepted that there is further scope of enhancement of budgetary grant to ICCR. Moreover, it will also require commensurate increase in ICCR’s regular staff strength to plan and execute its activities globally. The Committee, therefore, also desire that the recruitment process in ICCR should be expedited to minimize the existing manpower crunch in ICCR and future needs.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has noted the Hon'ble Committee's recommendations and would ensure an optimum utilization of the funds allocated to ICCR. As part of overall streamlining drive of ICCR’s functioning, ICCR has initiated framing guidelines for all its programmes and activities related to financial and administrative management. Under the same process following action is underway:

- (i) Guidelines and rules on resource mobilization, expenditure and accounting procedures have been prepared and are under consideration of the Ministry
- (ii) Learning from the success of existing Public-Private Partnership models, standard guidelines are in the process of being drafted.

ICCR has identified the Recruitment Agency for conducting competitive exam on behalf of ICCR for recruitment of personnel at existing posts. The process is likely to be completed by April/ May2020. BE 2020-21 allocation of ICCR has been enhanced to Rs 290 crore from BE 2019-20 and RE 2019-20 allocation of Rs 250 crore in line with Committee's recommendation .

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 17)

The Committee note that ICCR's cultural centres abroad are the principal instrument of India's institutional cultural outreach. The Ministry has submitted that establishment of a new cultural centre is dependent on various factors such as allocation of additional funds for establishing/running cost, identification of suitable premises and creation of post to man the cultural centre. During examination of Demands for Grants of the last two years the Committee were informed that ICCR was in the process of opening three new cultural centres in Tel Aviv (Israel), Paris (France) and Washington (USA). However, there has been no progress during the last three years. In view of the mandate of ICCR to project the rich cultural diversity of India and use the soft power diplomacy abroad, the Committee strongly recommend the Ministry to take concerted steps to open the new cultural centres at the earliest. The Committee also emphasize that the new cultural centres should be equipped with credible human resources along with judicious allocation of funds to the centres to undertake their activities. The Committee may be apprised about the steps taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Steps taken by Ministry in opening of three new cultural centres in Tel Aviv (Israel), Paris (France) and Washington (USA) are enumerated below:

SVCC, Paris: For establishment of SVCC Paris, Govt. of India has already purchased a property from the Govt. of France in a heritage Area of Paris. The building is presently under process of renovation and expected to be completed during the current financial year. Various functional requirements & number of personnel / India based teachers and local staff required at SVCC, Paris will be finalised in due course.

Washington: Ministry is in process of hiring of a multi- purpose hall for undertaking cultural activities till the regular cultural centre becomes operational. Ministry is taking efforts to remodel the U-Street property, which was purchased several years ago for this purpose and make it functioned as soon as possible.

Tel Aviv: Ministry has received approval of the President for opening of the Indian Cultural Centre, Tel Aviv and approved 4 India based and 4 local staff posts. In respect of hiring of premises for Cultural Centre, a property of 510 sq. m. is finalized in accordance with the area norms specified by the ICCR.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 18)

The Committee observe that ICCR's sanctioned strength has come down from 350 in the 1990s to 206 at present. Actual working strength of ICCR as on date is 149. As many as 44 posts were abolished in the year 2016. Since the discontinuation of practice of nomination of candidates by the Staff Selection Committee for regular appointment, ICCR has not been able to make direct recruitment on a regular basis and in absence of direct recruitment in a timely manner, the posts in ICCR's cadre meant to be filled-up through direct recruitment lapsed. Creation of new posts and recruitment against the same is a time-consuming exercise which requires approval of the Ministry of Finance. ICCR is in the process of hiring an outsourced agency to make recruitment against 32 posts available in ICCR cadre for direct recruitment. ICCR is also pursuing its proposal for creation of 200 new posts in its cadre. It will require the approval of the Ministry of Finance. The Committee view the human resources crunch of ICCR very seriously. Further, the work of existing cultural centres will further deteriorate with its severe human resource crunch. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend the Ministry to pursue this matter with the Ministry of Finance for the creation of 200 new posts in the cadre of ICCR. In the mean time, ICCR should complete the process of hiring an outsource agency to make recruitment of 32 posts available in ICCR cadre for direct recruitment. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has taken note of Hon'ble Committee's recommendation and acknowledges that for the smooth functioning and effective implementation of ICCR's mandate and to rejuvenate the Council, adequate staff is essential. Ministry is examining proposal for creation of additional 200 posts in ICCR. Regarding recruitment of 32 Direct Recruitment posts, Ministry has already identified the Recruitment Agency for conducting competitive exam on behalf of ICCR. The process is likely to be completed by April/ May 2020.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 19)

The Committee were informed that ICCR had been designated as the principal coordinating organization in the country to take welfare measures for all foreign students in India. The Committee note that in order to provide better services to the scholars studying under ICCR scholarships, an e-portal by the name Admission to Alumni (A2A) has been set up for admission of foreign students/scholars. The Committee desire that a proper feedback mechanism should be established to address the grievances posed by students/scholar and ICCR should act as a guardian and facilitator to them for ensuring their security and safety. The Committee also desire that besides looking into the various aspects of welfare of foreign students, the Ministry should also consider widening of the scope of scholarships and increase the number of ICCR scholarships also.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has noted all the recommendations made by the esteemed committee for compliance. The security and safety of foreign students is the foremost priority of Ministry. ICCR has its Regional Offices in 19 states, which function as first point of contact for all the ICCR students to reach to in times of difficulty. ICCR's regional offices also function in close coordination with the local FRROs as well as the International Students' Advisors (ISAs) or Dean International of the Universities and Institutes where ICCR students are studying, to jointly address the matters related to students' welfare. A feedback mechanism has also been established so as to receive grievances of foreign students and address them effectively in a time bound manner under direct supervision of DG, ICCR.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 20)

The Committee observe that the allocation for Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) at BE stage during the year 2018-19 was Rs. 16.70 crore which was reduced to Rs. 11.87 crore at RE stage. The reasons attributed by the Ministry for reduction at RE stage were primarily due to slow pace of expenditure and anticipated expenditure in the year 2018-19. This was done to ensure optimal utilization of funds. The slow pace of expenditure was primarily on account of unsatisfactory performance of CPWD which was assigned to carry out the renovation work of the library and annexe building of ICWA. During the year 2019-20 an allocation of Rs. 15.00 crore has been given as per ICWA's requirement of funds for the year. The Committee note that ICWA is endowed with the task to carry out research on political, economic and security development in Asia, Africa, Europe, United States, Latin America and Caribbean and the wider geo-strategic environment. These research works always give strong inputs while framing the foreign policy agenda of India. The Committee note that during the period 2018-19 the Council

had organized a total of 107 conferences /seminars/dialogues/panel discussions & book discussions which includes 20 international interactions in the form of Conferences and Bilateral Dialogues. The outcomes emerging out of these conferences and bilateral dialogues were beneficial in framing foreign policy agenda. In view of the above, the Committee strongly desire the Ministry not to look at only the slow pace of expenditure in the renovation work for lowering the budgetary allocations. ICWA should be fully supported by the Ministry by supplementing adequate budgetary allocations at the RE stage, under intimation to the Committee so that they may be able to give the best inputs to the Government in Foreign Policy matters.

Reply of the Government

Ministry will continue to work in consultation with ICWA to ensure adequate budgetary resources are available with it. Ministry has enhanced allocation to ICWA to Rs 16.50 crore in BE 2020-21 from Rs 15 crore in BE 2019-20 in line with Hon'ble Committee's recommendations.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 21)

RIS is a think tank specializing in international economic relations and development cooperation, serving as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue among think tanks of developing countries. An outlay of Rs. 12.00 crore has been earmarked under the head RIS at BE 2019-20 stage. The same amount was there at BE and RE stages in 2018-19. RIS continues to engage across intergovernmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive networks, RIS seeks to enhance policy coherence on international economic issues and the developmental partnership canvas. In view of the far reaching implications of the RIS initiatives, the Committee would recommend suitable enhancement of the budgetary allocations as per their requirement at the RE stage.

Reply of the Government

Ministry will continue to closely work with RIS to ensure adequate funds are available with it for its programmes and activities. In BE 2020-21, an enhanced allocation of Rs. 13 core in line with the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 22)

The Committee observe that as a key instrument of our foreign policy, the scope and magnitude of developmental partnership has been widened over the past few years. The Committee are happy to note that as per the Recommendations of the Committee in their earlier Reports on Demands for Grants to refrain from cuts in this head and suitable increase of allocation at RE stage, the Ministry of Finance has increased the allocations of Rs. 5148.55 crore given at BE 2018-19 to Rs. 5970.50 crore at RE stage. The increase is Rs. 821.95 crore. Further, the allocation at BE 2019-20 has also witnessed an increase with allocation of Rs. 7333.79 crore. The Committee are also happy to note that as per Government's neighbourhood first policy the allocations have been enhanced at BE 2019-20 over BE 2018-19 for Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives and Afghanistan.

The Committee have been apprised that Aid programmes are influenced by the dynamics of India's national interest, diplomatic engagements and political relations. The pace of implementation of agreed projects are dependent on the host beneficiary Government's readiness and local security and climatic factors. In this regard, the Committee in their 21st Report had recommended to undertake a thorough review of all Aid projects and prepare a roadmap for their completion. The Committee are of the opinion that since the budgetary allocations have been increased, the Ministry should make a thorough review of all Aid projects to observe the status of physical and financial progress of each project. The Committee would also like to reiterate their earlier Recommendations to explore the feasibility of setting up of an autonomous aid disbursement body along the line of USAID to monitor the progress of the projects and to avoid arbitrary cuts imposed by the Ministry of Finance and prioritise the projects within the available allocation. The Committee strongly feel that in this way the aid to various countries for technical and economic cooperation will play a desired role for ushering developmental diplomacy.

Reply of the Government

Ministry assures the Hon'ble Committee that it closely monitors expenditure and fund releases are made in line with physical and financial progress of projects to avoid any parking of funds with implementing agencies. The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in MEA is entrusted with implementing India's development cooperation initiatives with partner countries. The Projects under DPA are regularly reviewed at various levels. A timeline for both physical and financial progress is part of project planning and regular stakeholders meeting helps to review the progress of the Project against these timelines and resolve bottlenecks.

As regards the setting up of an autonomous aid disbursement body, it is submitted that our development partnership is based on the needs of our partner countries and our foreign policy priorities which are assessed in close coordination with the concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry. Specific proposals are progressed on the basis on assessment made by the Territorial Divisions factoring in the political relationship with the countries. The Development Partnership

Administration evolved over the past seven years, by inducting expertise from other Ministries and also and leveraging capacities from outside government also. DPA is an integral part of Ministry and its programme are tightly linked with country's foreign policy priorities, which require flexibility and nimbleness to quickly respond and adapt to the inherent dynamic nature of international relations. Governments of many other countries are increasingly rethinking on the idea of an autonomous and independent agency on the lines of USAID. Some Governments, which earlier had separate autonomous aid/ developmental agencies, have moved towards creating agency like DPA; for example, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has now been transformed to become an integral part of their Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Global Affairs of Canada.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 23)

In the context of developmental aid to various countries, the Committee note that there has been decrease in aid to countries like Maldives, Afghanistan, SAARC and ITEC Programme from BE stage to RE stage in the year 2018-19 and Chabahar Port and the Seychelles from BE to RE 2018-19 and from BE 2018-19 to BE 2019-20. The Committee further note that the progress of implementation of projects depends upon the geological and other practical challenges.

Many a time, the Ministry faces difficulties of applying Indian procurement rules in external market while constructing building abroad. As consequences, the pace of construction activities becomes very slow. When the Ministry float tender documents based on rules and regulations made in India, companies abroad are unwilling to bid for those tenders because the Indian requirements do not match the requirement of the foreign companies. This is the hindrance both for procurement and construction works. The Committee note that the Ministry is deliberating this issue with the Ministry of Finance to gradually relax the norms for the construction activities abroad as well as on Lines of Credit or other grant projects. On this account, the Committee desire the Ministry to vigorously pursue this matter with the Ministry of Finance for an early decision.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has taken note of the recommendation of the Hon^{ble} Committee for compliance. The Ministry in consultation with Ministry of Finance and Exim Bank has revamped IDEAS Guidelines for funding of development projects funded through India's Line of Credit extended to various countries. Similarly, under Rule 144 (iii) of GFR 2017, the flexibility to frame technical specifications based on requirements and standards of the host beneficiary governments, wherever such standards exist, has also been made available for GOI funded development projects abroad.

(Recommendation No. 24)

The Committee observe that the budgetary allocation under Aid to Bangladesh for the year 2018-19 was Rs. 175.00 crore an increase in comparison to the budgetary allocation of Rs. 125.00 crore in BE 2017-18. However, at the RE stage of 2018-19 the allocation was reduced to Rs. 120.00 crore. The expenditure till 30th September, 2018 was Rs. 52.79 crore only. The lower allocation at RE stage and slow pace of expenditure during the year 2018-19 was attributable to the local and other factors like heavy rains, etc. The allocation for the year 2019-20 is Rs. 175.00 crore. The Ministry has informed that an enhanced allocation of Rs. 175.00 crore has been provisioned to cater to expenditure anticipated towards ongoing development projects such as the Akhaura-Agartala rail link project, India Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline and dredging of fairway on inland waterway protocol routes apart from training of Bangladesh personnel, scholarships, and small development projects, etc. It is expected that the work will pick up pace from November, 2019 onwards after retreat of monsoon and mobilization of resources at the local level.

While looking at status of utilization of fund up to 31st September, 2019, the Committee are pained to note that for Akhaura-Agartala rail link project, out of total approved cost of Rs. 392.50 crore the released fund is only 85.52 crore. For construction of IBF pipeline from Siliguri to Prabatipur the release amount is only 2.85 crore against the approved cost of Rs. 285.00 crore. For dredging of rivers there is no release of funds against the approved cost of Rs. 245.00 crore. For HICDPs the released amount is Rs. 112.57 crore against the approved cost of Rs. 187.78 crore. For scholarship/training/health scheme the Ministry has released 4.64 crore. The total fund released up to 31st September, 2019 is Rs. 205.58 crore. The Committee express their disapproval of the slow pace of utilization of fund in all projects/schemes till now. In view of the tardy implementation a various projects in Bangladesh the Committee strongly urge the Ministry of External Affairs that they should make all out efforts to fully utilize the allocations and complete the projects within the agreed timeline. The Committee also wish to reiterate their earlier Recommendations that the Government of India should use its good offices to engage with Government of Bangladesh for promptly reciprocation in furnishing proposals and complete the projects in a fixed timeframe.

Reply of the Government

Ministry acknowledges the Hon'ble committee's concern on slow pace of utilization of fund. Brief report on key ongoing development projects in Bangladesh and underlying reasons for delay are mentioned below:

- **Akhaura-Agartala rail link project:** The project is delayed mainly due to delayed handing over of Site, relocation of utilities and hindrances due to encroachment of land, that are pending with the Bangladesh Government. As of now, 28.50% of the work has been completed. Further, our High Commission in Dhaka and Ministry have been regularly following up the issue with the concerned Bangladesh authorities and contractor by undertaking frequent site inspections, Project Steering Committee meeting and also through video conferencing.
- **Construction of IBF Pipeline from Siliguri to Prapatipur:** The current status of the project is as under:

PROJECT DETAILS IN BRIEF:

Pipeline (Length/Size/Capacity)	129.5 Km / 10 inch dia/ 1.0 MMTPA
Project start date	20.06.2018
Project period	30 months from 20.06.2018
Scheduled Commissioning target	19.12.2020

FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Total Project Cost	Rs. 346.04 Cr. (As of February 2017 pricing level)
Investment from NRL	Rs. 60.80 Cr. (for Indian portion)
Investment from MEA, GoI	Rs. 285.24 Cr. (for Bangladesh portion)

FINANCIAL PROGRESS (AS ON 31.01.20) :

India/Bangladesh, IBFPL	Expenditure planned upto FY 19-20 (in Cr)	Commitment Budget (in Cr)	Expenditure incurred (in Cr)
Indian part	40.0	28.62	1.00

Bangladesh part	123.5	124.57	4.32
Total Expenditure	163.5	153.19	5.32

PHYSICAL PROGRESS: Scheduled - 61.7 % and Actual - 21.4% (status as on 31.12.2019*)

MAIN REASON FOR MAJOR DELAYS:

Delay is due to slow progress in land acquisition for pipe laying, SV stations and for Receipt terminal in Bangladesh. We are in constant touch with the concerned Bangladesh authorities and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation to resolve these issues which are impeding speedy implementation of the project within the given timeframe. The Project Review Monitoring Committee meeting for the project with the participation of the concerned authorities of Bangladesh has been conducted twice in the year 2019.

(3) Dredging of Rivers: An MoU was signed between GoI and GoB during the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister to India in April, 2017. The total cost of project is Rs. 305.84 cr, out of which India's share would be Rs. 244.67 cr and Bangladesh share would be Rs. 61.16 cr. **(Project duration is 7years from the year 2019).**

(i) **Ashuganj-Sirajganj Stretch:** Dredging started on the Ashuganj-Zakiganj stretch in April 2019, but halted in May 2019 due to floods. Work resumed from 17 December 2019. As the year 2019 was the first year of the project, the dredgers found it difficult to mobilize the dredgers initially and also the alignment for dredging was released late by the BIWTA, Bangladesh. The issue was also discussed in the Shipping Secretary Level talks held in December 2019 in Dhaka and it was agreed that dredging will be expedited on this stretch. It is pertinent to mention that dredging becomes difficult during the Monsoon season in Bangladesh; hence the dredging would be feasible for only 6 months in a year (January to May and December).

(ii) **Sirajganj- Daikhawa Stretch:** Dredging has not started yet as the BIWTA, Bangladesh is finding it difficult to fix the alignment for this stretch due to frequent shifting of the river channels. The issue was also discussed in the Shipping Secretary Level talks held in December 2019 in Dhaka and it was agreed that resolution of this problem of not able to fix the alignment for the dredging will be discussed in the technical level Joint Monitoring Committee meeting to be held in Dhaka in February 2020 between the officials of the IWAI and IWTA. The case is also being taken up with the BIWTA and IWAI for the early appointment of the PMC (Project Management Consultancy) for the Dredging project.

(4) HICDPs (formerly SDPs): With regard to HICDPs, in the CFY 2019-20 the total number of ongoing HICDPs is 38 of which 2 are new projects undertaken. The overall progress of the

projects is satisfactory except a few projects due to issues such as unavailability of laborers and materials especially in long rainy seasons etc. It may be mentioned that of the 38 ongoing projects in the CFY 2019-20, 12 projects have already been completed and payment has also been effected. Of the remaining 26 projects, around 20 projects are likely to be completed in the CFY.

Nevertheless, Ministry, through our High Commission in Dhaka, will continue to exert all possible efforts for speedy implementation and timely completion of these projects.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 25)

The Committee observe that the Government of India has disbursed 100 percent earmarked assistance of Rs. 5000.00 crore to Bhutan committed for their 11th Five Year Plan which has concluded. The Government of India has now made a fresh commitment of Rs. 4500.00 crore during their 12th Five Year Plan. During the year 2018-19 the BE was Rs. 1813.50 crore. This has been increased to Rs. 2014.50 crore with an actual expenditure of Rs. 1985.87 crore. The allocation at BE 2019-20 is Rs. 2135.79 crore which is an increase of 17.77 percent vis-à-vis funds allocation during 2018-19. The increase in the allocation is on account of loan and Grant component of Mangdechhu Hydro Electrical Project (HEP), which has got commissioned in June 2019. Support for projects during 'Bridge' period (period after completion of 11th FYP of Bhutan in September 2018) and before commencement of our assistance for 12th FYP. Loan and Grant component of Associated Transmission System (ATS) for GoI assisted HEPs in Bhutan. The Committee are happy to note that Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project was jointly inaugurated by both the Prime Ministers on 17 August, 2019. The Committee further note that the construction of Punasanchu-I and Punasanchu-II projects are facing some geological challenges but the resolution of these issues is being worked out and India and Bhutan are also currently beginning discussions on the Sankosh Hydroelectric Project. The Committee hope that both the Government will come to an early conclusion and complete all the projects in a fixed timeframe by utilizing 100 percent fund allocation maintaining the earlier track record.

Reply of the Government

Punatsangchhu-I and II hydroelectric projects have been delayed due to severe geological challenges encountered at the project site. Technical experts from both the countries are devising strengthening measures to counter the geological challenges. These issues are discussed in respective Project Authorities, which has representatives from MEA, Ministry of Power, Central Electricity Authority, Central Water Commission from the Indian side and their counterparts from the Bhutanese side, in a transparent manner. The last Project Authority meetings have been held in September 2019 in New Delhi. Apart from this regular Technical Coordination

Committee meetings of the Projects have been held over the year to discuss and finalize remedial measures to counter the geological issues.

With significant technical efforts, Puna-II HEP is by and large back on track and project management is implementing remedial measures based on technical recommendations. CWC/WAPCOS have recently have concluded an assessment of the right bank slope stability at Puna-I and submitted a report on „holistic solution“ in October 2019. Subsequently, Ministry of Power has directed NHPC for an independent review of the „holistic solution“. Regarding Sankosh Reservoir HEP, discussions are ongoing between both the sides for finalizing the implementation modalities involving Financing Modality and Governance Structure. Last Talks were held on 21 October 2019.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 26)

The Committee note that the allocations given under Aid to Maldives was at BE 2018-19 was Rs. 125.00 crore was increased to Rs. 440.00 crore at RE stage and the amount of Rs. 439.40 crore was spent during that period. The allocations for the year 2019-20 is Rs. 400.00 crore. The allocation has kept at the same level to meet the requirement of funds towards budgetary support of US \$ 200 million to Government of Maldives in addition to the ongoing Projects such as construction of a MOD building, Police Academy, CTC, ISLES, supply of equipment and construction material, assistance in the digital mapping of the Maldives Islands, Defence/Police/Civil training etc. The allocation have been increased with the return of political stability in November, 2018. The Committee have been apprised that now the Ministry has renewed its focus on completing the ongoing project which were stall by the previous Government of Maldives and they are also undertaking new projects of mutual interest. The Foreign Secretary also expressed hope to complete the construction of the Institute of Security and Law Enforcement Studies and the Ministry of Defence building by mid 2020. The Committee trust that all the projects of Maldives will be completed in the scheduled time with 100 percent fund utilization thereof. The Committee may be apprised about the financial and physical achievement made in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Construction of Institute of Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES) project is scheduled for completion by July 2020. The current physical progress is 73.80% and the funds released so far for the project is Rs. 118.18 crore.

Construction of Composite Training Centre has been completed and was inaugurated by PM in June 2019.

Construction of MOD Building is a new project and site readiness as well as procurement process for implementation is currently underway in Maldives.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 28)

The Committee are happy to note that Africa has become an important Foreign Policy priority for the Government. Under the Head, „Aid to African countries“ the allocation at BE 2018-19 was Rs. 200.00 crore which was increased to Rs. 330.00 crore at RE stage. The utilization thereof was Rs. 340.00 crore. At BE 2019-20, the allocation has been further increased to Rs. 450.00 crore. The quantum jump in allocation is to meet several commitments announced at highest political level in India Africa Summit III (AFS III) and are based on the anticipated expenditure in financial year 2019-20. The major projects in Africa include a major Convention Centre in Niger in commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and it has been named after him, IT and Vocational Training Centres in Namibia, Lesotho, Mozambique and Gambia and the Technology Park in Zimbabwe. The Ministry has sent medicines Rs. 66.00 crore to various African countries who are in need of such assistance and which has been highly appreciated. The flagship project is the e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti programmes that we they be launching in phases in all 54 African States which will allow thousands of students to access online learning programmes to access online learning programmes. Besides the Government of India is also providing lines of credit around 10 billion US dollars of which projects of about 6.5 billion dollars are either already been approved or already in the implementation stage. The Committee are happy to note that the Ministry is taking steps to open 18 new embassies in Africa of which 9 are already in operational. As stated previously in their Report the Committee trust that the Ministry will implement the projects in a time bound manner to increase India’s presence in Africa which will in turn boost the strong bilateral relations and facilitate in enhancing the trade.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry appreciates Hon’ble Committee’s acknowledgement of its efforts and initiatives in African region. The Ministry would like to assure that it will continue to implement the projects in a time bound manner to increase India’s engagement with countries in Africa with a view to boost bilateral relations and facilitate trade.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 29)

The Committee note that Government accords highest priority to India's deep rooted and multi-dimensional relations with Sri Lanka. India is an active development partner of Sri Lanka and is involved in various projects there. On this account, the Committee are happy to note that the allocation of Rs. 150.00 crore at BE 2018-19 was increased to Rs. 165.00 crore at RE stage. The Ministry could also spend Rs. 168.77 crore during the said period. The allocations at BE of 2019-20 has been increased to Rs. 250.00 crore based on anticipated expenditure towards new projects in addition to payments against ongoing projects like completion of Jaffna cultural centre the construction work for remaining 4000 houses meant for Estate workers in the plantation Area in Phase III and additional 1000 houses under phase IV, Island-wise extension of free emergency Ambulance Services and many high impact community development projects. The Committee appreciate the steps taken by the Ministry to strengthen the developmental partnership with Sri Lanka on its own independent footing and in accordance with the domestic compulsion in our Foreign Policy. The Committee desire the Ministry to scrupulously undertake the monitoring mechanism to ensure timely completion of the projects with 100 percent fund utilization.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry appreciates Hon'ble Committee's acknowledgement of its steps taken to strengthen development partnership with Sri Lanka. Ministry would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that it will continue to scrupulously monitor implementation of various projects with a view to ensure their timely completion.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 31)

The Committee are happy to note that there has been enhancement in the fund allocation at RE 2018-19 and BE 2019-20 under the schemes like Know India Programme, Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children, Awareness campaign/media plan, Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Celebration. However, the Committee note that under the schemes naming promotion of Cultural ties with Diaspora, repatriation of Indian destitute, evacuation of Indian due to war or civil disturbance and Legal assistance to women facing NRI marriage, the allocation remains constant at BE 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Committee further observe that with an aim to extend the benefits of MEA's scheme for distressed Indian women married to NRI spouses, the guidelines for utilization of the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) were revised with the approval of the Union Cabinet with effect from 01 September 2017, and the amount of legal assistance to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad was increased to US\$ 4000/- per case. The Committee are constrained to note that with a meager allocation of Rs. 12 lakh in the Budget how can the Ministry extend the legal assistance of US \$ 4000/- per case and to how many distressed women? As the number of women facing problems in NRI marriages has increased the Committee

strongly desire the Ministry to ponder on this issue and suitably increase the allocations at RE stage and BE stage of the year 2020-21.

The Committee observe that under the Promotion of Cultural Ties with the Diaspora budget head, earlier proposals were received on an ad hoc basis and processed as and when received. In February 2017, in an attempt to streamline the procedure of fund allocation and optimise the use of available funds, all Indian Missions and Posts abroad were asked to send consolidated and timely proposals for PCTD. The budgetary allocation has been in the tune of Rs. 2 lakh during the year 2018-19 and 2019-20. The committee desire the Ministry to persuade Missions and post abroad for timely submitting the proposal of PCTD so that the Ministry can examine the nature of assistance required thereof and take appropriate action to promote cultural ties with Indian Diaspora. The Committee further desire that the Ministry should also chalk out mechanism to incorporate the feedback of the Indian Diaspora into the foreign policy agenda.

Reply of the Government

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is aimed at assisting Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the „most deserving cases“ on a „means tested basis“. In view of its immense utility, ICWF stands extended to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad. The ICWF guidelines were revised in September, 2017 to expand the scope of welfare measures which *inter-alia* includes financial and legal assistance upto US\$ 4000, to distressed Indian women married to NRI or a foreigner. The ICWF has become self sustaining in all Missions and Posts abroad with a global corpus of around Rs 400 Crore. This fund is sufficient to carry out onsite welfare activities including assistance to distressed NRI spouses.

The budgetary allocation under PCTD for the year 2018-19 and 2019-20 is Rs. 2.00 crore. The Ministry seeks proposals from Missions/Posts abroad for financial assistance before commencement of the financial year, so that proposals are submitted and processed in a timely manner. The proposals are examined and cultural assistance extended as per PCTD guidelines. Ministry takes note of the suggestions of the committee and would emphasize once again to all Missions to timely submit the proposals.

To incorporate the feedback of the Indian Diaspora into the foreign policy agenda, deliberations of the PBD Conferences feed into the discussions of the plenary sessions of the PBD Conventions. The recommendations of the PBD Conventions then form the inputs for policy making in the Government of India. The recommendations of PBD Conferences and PBD Conventions are shared with Union Ministries / Departments / Institutions of GoI for further action. Ministry has also started to take feedback from KIP delegates participating in the Know India Programme (KIP).

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 33)

The Committee are aware that the Know India Programme is a significant scheme to reconnect the Indian Diaspora youth with their roots. The Committee observe that during the year 2018-19 the Government had announced ten Know India Programme with an allocation of Rs. 7 Crore but only 8 programmes could be organized. Allocation for KIP has been reduced to Rs. 6.00 crore at BE 2019-20. The Committee are pained to note that there is no proposal to increase the number of Know India Programme. The Committee further note that Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister have sought inputs from all the Central Ministries for ideas/suggestions for reinvigorating Know India Programme. Some of the suggestions are yet to be incorporated in future KIP editions. The Committee are perturbed to note that such a significant scheme of Ministry of External Affairs is not getting due cognizance. Therefore, they strongly desire that the suggestions received from the Ministries should be duly incorporated and the number of Know India Programme should be increased supplemented by adequate budgetary allocation for KIP.

Reply of the Government

Ministry is organizing 06 editions of Know India Programme every year after revamping of the scheme in the financial year 2015-16. In the financial year 2018-19, Ministry had launched two new schemes “Self-financing Know India Programme” & “Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana” for which expenditure had been incurred from the budget head of Know India Programme. Ministry had also organized 50th edition of Know India Programme as “Golden Jubilee Know India Programme” in addition to 06 regular Know India Programmes to celebrate the golden jubilee edition of Know India Programme on the occasion of the 15th edition of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) Convention in the financial year 2018-19. Ministry had announced 07 Know India Programmes, 01 Self-financing Know India Programme and 02 programmes of Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (total 10 programmes) in the financial year 2018-19, hence the budgetary allocation was slightly enhanced to Rs. 7.00 crore. Ministry had conducted 07 Know India Programmes and 02 programmes of Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana in the FY 2018-19 (total 09 programmes). The scheduled programme of Self-financing Know India Programme was not organized due to the lack of minimum number of applications from diaspora youth. Ministry has announced 06 regular Know India Programme and 02 programmes of Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana for current financial year 2019-20. Hence the budgetary allocation has been reduced to Rs. 6.00 crore.

Ministry has received overwhelming response and positive feedback from diaspora youth for the KIP programmes. Ministry has incorporated relevant suggestions received from various Ministries / Departments in order to make KIP more attractive for the diaspora youth.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 34)

The Committee note that South Asian University is an ambitious project of the Government. The allocation at BE 2018-19 for South Asian University was Rs. 375.00 crore. Out of Rs. 375.00 crore, Rs. 31.00 crore was for operational cost, Rs. 310.00 crore for capital cost and Rs. 34.00 crore for rent. At RE stage the allocation was reduced to Rs. 246.00 crore because of slow pace of construction of South Asian University Campus and reduction in the operational cost. For the year 2019-20, Rs. 317.5 crore has been allocated as per the requirements projected for building works. The Committee note that the construction work of South Asian University campus has now gained momentum. One building of Package II has almost been completed and another is scheduled to be completed in February 2020. Under Package III, 6 percent of physical progress has been achieved as on September, 2019 and the remaining works are expected to be completed by September, 2020. The Committee welcome these achievements. However, the Committee are pained to note that the works on remaining buildings under package IV could not be taken up until now due to various land acquisition issues and court cases and the Ministry has provided any specific schedule for completion of the work under package IV. The Committee have been apprised that the Ministry accords top priority for timely completion of the South Asian University project and are making all efforts to ensure all outstanding issues are resolved at the earliest. The Committee hope that the Ministry would continue its efforts with all concerned agencies with increased pace of expenditure to complete the remaining works of South Asian University in a time bound manner.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry would like to update Hon^{ble} Committee on the further progress of work in SAU construction project. As of December 2019, progress under Package II and Package III has reached 85% and 65% respectively. Four buildings under Package II have already been completed. One housing block is scheduled for completion in February 2020. These will be habitable after completion certificate/occupancy certificate is granted by the concerned authorities. Work under Package III is scheduled to be completed by September 2020.

As regards Package IV, concerted and sustained efforts are being made for approval of revised DPR, clearance of forest land pockets and tree cutting permission from Forest Department and expeditious conclusion of court cases. The Ministry is continuously reviewing and monitoring the progress with a view to ensure timely completion of the South Asian University project.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 35)

The Committee note that an allocation of Rs. 200.00 crore was provided for Nalanda University at BE 2018-19 which was reduced to Rs. 190.00 crore at RE stage. The allocation at BE 2019-20 is Rs. 220.00 crore. The Ministry anticipates the expenditure on this project would be close to 400.00 crore but Rs. 220.00 crore has been allocated deliberately.

The Committee have been apprised that the actual construction work of this University started in May, 2017. The current projection for completion of Nalanda University by the year 2021-22, but the Ministry has not made any projection about the escalation of the cost for completion of the project. Further, contribution to operational and capital costs of Nalanda University from other countries are voluntary in nature and no foreign contribution has been received during the last three years. Channelizing contribution from other countries has a limited scope. Reduction of allocations at RE (2018-19) stage, ongoing pace of work and providing lesser allocation against the anticipated high expenditure during 2019-20, are indicative of a serious lack of determination to complete the construction of this University by 2021-22. The delay in completion of Nalanda University – an international institution of excellence for pursuit of intellectual, philosophical and historical studies is deplorable. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend the Government to finalise the revised cost of the proposal to be disbursed during the next two financial years so that the project is completed by 2021-22. The Ministry should also explore the possibilities to get contributions from other participating countries to supplement the progress.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has taken note of Hon'ble Committee's concern regarding the delay in starting the construction of the Nalanda University construction project. Ministry would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that the Ministry is in constant touch with the implementing agencies so that adequate fund flow to the project is ensured and momentum of progress in the construction is maintained. Based on the progress of the project, allocation at RE stage was increased to Rs. 300 cr. from Rs. 220 cr. at the BE stage.

As regards voluntary contribution from the participating countries, the efforts are being made by requesting some of the resident Missions of the Nalanda partner countries in India to continue their patronage to the institution through voluntary financial contribution.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 36)

The Committee note that the Ministry is planning to introduce a draft Emigration Bill to safeguard the rights of Overseas Indians as well as Migrants Working abroad. The Committee are perturbed to note that the Bill has been in the public domain for a long time and inspite of

repeated Recommendations by the Committee, the Ministry has not been able to introduce the Emigration Bill till date. The Ministry's move to introduce the Bill is a necessary step in the current scenario wherein under the Emigration Act 1983, the Central Government has limited scope of prosecution without the active support of State Governments against cheating recruiting agents. Therefore, the Committee desire the Ministry to expedite the finalization of the Bill and introduce the same in the Parliament at the earliest. The Committee feel that a helpline in multiple languages can be operational 24x7 to help Indian Diaspora in distress like workers who have not been paid by their employers abroad, workers whose passport have been taken away by their employers, Indian spouses who have been abandoned by their NRI spouses, etc. The Committee further suggest that the Ministry should arrange Shelter Homes for ill-treated Indians till the time arrangements are made for their repatriation back to India. The Committee further note that there is a change in Emigration pattern wherein blue collar workers, white collar professional employees and also huge number of students are going abroad. The Committee recommend that the Ministry take pro active steps to bring prosecution charges against recruiting agents in the new draft Emigration Bill so that safety of migrants can be ensured.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry has taken note of valuable suggestions of the Hon^{ble} Committee. The key steps taken by the Ministry to ensure safe and legal migration are given below.

The Draft Emigration Bill has been prepared with a view to provide an enabling institutional and legislative framework for an efficient management of emigration. It has been drafted after extensive consultations with all relevant stakeholders such as federations of Recruitment Agents, International Organizations, Think-tanks, Business organizations and Academia, concerned Ministries and State Governments and Union Territories. Currently, the Bill has been put in public domain with a view to hold consultation with all stakeholders before finalizing.

24X7 Helpline in Multiple Languages:-A multi-lingual 24X7 Helpline in centre called Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra (PBSK) in New Delhi provides information, guidance and grievance redressal on all issues and problems pertaining to overseas employment of Indian nationals in several Indian languages viz. Hindi, English, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, Bengali, Punjabi, Odia, Gujarati and Marathi.

Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSK) have been setup at Dubai (UAE), Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh, Jeddah (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). PBSKs have walk in facilities.

Missions in Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries have established 24x7 Toll Free help lines in multiple languages for the benefit of Indian workers who seek help. Besides the Missions have local employees who are well versed in different languages other than Hindi and English whose help are taken in cases of emergency.

Shelter Homes for ill-treated Indians:- Shelter Homes for distressed Indian nationals, including women workers, have been set up in Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman,

United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. In other Missions where necessary, such as, in Iraq, the Mission has a designated room in the Chancery as Shelter Home.

Prosecution charges against Recruiting Agents:-In cases of complaints involving emigration through an unregistered Agent, the concerned Police Authority in the State is requested to take action as „Law & Order“ is a subject of State Government(s). Simultaneously, if the emigrant is faced with difficulties/distress in the destination country, the concerned Indian Mission abroad is requested to take up the issue with the Foreign Employer to resolve the grievance of the emigrant as early as possible and if required, to arrange for his/her repatriation – irrespective of the fact whether the emigrant went legally or through illegal channel.

As per the laid down procedure, on receipt of complaints against unregistered Agents, the concerned Police Authority investigate the matter and after investigation requests the Central Government to grant prosecution sanction under Section 27 of Emigration Act, 1983 to enable them to prosecute such unregistered Agent or a person. Sanction is given expeditiously once the enquiry report is clear.

Section 27 of Emigration Act, 1983 provides that prosecution shall not be instituted against any person in respect of any offence under Emigration Act, 1983 without the previous sanction of the Central Government. However, no sanction shall be required when an offence has been committed in respect of an emigrant or an intending emigrant and the complaint is filed by such emigrant or intending emigrant, or on behalf of such emigrant or intending emigrant, by the father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister or guardian of such emigrant or intending emigrant, or if such emigrant or intending emigrant is a member of a joint Hindu family, by the manager of that family.

The Government had issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to be followed by States on receipt of complaints against unregistered/ unscrupulous agents.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

CHAPTER – III

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

(Recommendation No. 3)

The Committee observe that on one side the Ministry has always got inadequate allocation in Budget Estimates including BE 2018-19, and on the other side they did not put forth any demand of funds in the First and Third supplementary Demands for Grants in 2018-19. The Committee are not convinced with the fact that no supplementary demand was made in the first supplementary demands in keeping with the Budget circular of Ministry of Finance, and in the third supplementary due to it being the end of the year, besides being unable to face the challenge of spending the fund during the short period in hand. The Committee desire that the Ministry should continuously pursue the genuine fund requirements in each supplementary Demand if those are not allocated at BE stage and stress upon the Ministry of Finance to provide the same, it being necessary to fulfill the commitments relating to the projects in friendly countries, the Circular of Ministry of Finance notwithstanding.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry will continue to make efforts to convince Ministry of Finance of its budgetary demands justified by efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditures, in line with the Hon^{ble} Committee’s recommendation.

In 2019-20 there were only two Supplementary Demands for Grants. The Ministry of Finance budget circular for both the first and the final supplementary demand for grants restricted demands for additional funds to only certain cases (i.e. payments against Court decrees, cases where advance from Contingency Fund had been drawn, or cases where the Ministry of Finance has specifically advised to propose supplementary demand, etc).

In FY 2019-20, at time of the Final Supplementary, there was an additional reason why additional funds could not be requested. MoF conveyed – for this year only - a new reduced

ceiling of 25% of expenditure in the final three months of the financial year, and ceiling of 10% in March. Due to these ceilings, even if Ministry of Finance had accepted the request for additional funds, it would not have been possible to utilize these because the 25% ceiling would have been breached.

However Ministry has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members. We will make full efforts to make a proposal to Ministry of Finance for additional funds in the first supplementary demand for grants and at the RE stage for the year 2020-21, based on our realistic requirement of funds in 2020-21.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020]

CHAPTER – IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

(Recommendation No.8)

The Committee note that the allocations for Scheme side was Rs. 5985.05 crore at BE 2018-19 stage which was increased to Rs. 6466.00 crore at RE stage. During 2019-20 the allocation of Rs. 8175.79 crore with an increase of Rs. 2190.74 crore in BE allocation vis-à-vis BE 2018-19 and further an increase of Rs. 1709.79 crore in RE allocation of 2018-19 was noted. Similarly, in the Non-Scheme side the BE allocation for 2018-19 was Rs. 9025.59 crore which was increased to Rs. 9116.00 crore at RE stage. The BE allocation during 2019-20 is Rs. 9708.99 crore which is an increase of Rs. 683.04 crore from BE 2018-19 and Rs. 592.99 crore from RE 2018-19 stage. This enhanced allocation under the Scheme Head was mainly on account of required expenditure in respect of MEA's assistance projects under Aid to Bhutan, Aid to Nepal, Aid to Sri Lanka, Aid to Maldives, Aid to Myanmar, Aid to Other Developing countries, Aid to African Countries, Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme, Aid to Eurasian Countries, Aid to Afghanistan and Loans to Govt. of Maldives, to ensure that India's projects abroad and other international commitments were not adversely affected due to lack of funds.

The Committee welcome the increase in allocations under both Scheme and Non-Scheme needs during 2019-20 and also the Ministry's commitment towards assistance for projects under Aid to Foreign countries. The Committee desire that the Ministry should monitor the implementation of the projects closely and take corrective measures to complete them within a specified timeline. The Committee may be apprised about the physical and financial progress made in each of these projects.

Reply of the Government

Ministry would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that implementations of the projects are being closely monitored and corrective measures are regularly taken to complete them within a specified timeline. Budgetary allocation and Utilization of funds upto third quarter of FY 2019-20 in key Aid heads under Schemes are given below:

Aid Heads	BE 2019-20	RE 2019-20	Actual Expenditure upto Dec. 2019
Aid to Bhutan	2135.79	2048.28	1650.41
Aid to Nepal	1050.00	1200.00	973.71
Aid to Sri Lanka	250.00	205.00	152.26
Aid to Maldives	400.00	150.00	87.34
Aid to Myanmar	400.00	170.00	90.67
Aid to Other Developing Countries	150.00	150.00	115.86
Aid to African Countries	450.00	450.00	354.14
Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme	300.00	200.00	179.63
Aid to Eurasian Countries	45.00	45.00	24.91
Aid to Afghanistan	400.00	400.00	330.41

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No.15)

The Committee note the budgetary allocation under the minor head, "Entertainment Charges", the allocation of which at BE 2018-19 was Rs. 70.50 crore. This was reduced to Rs. 46.00 crore at RE stage. The actual expenditure was Rs. 45.82 crore. The allocation at BE 2019-20 is Rs. 367.75 crore. The enhanced allocation in the 2019-20 is towards allocation for maintenance of aircraft of Air India and expenditure on Vice President's visits abroad. In view of the

rationalization of the sub heads under other expenditure, a new sub head „high level delegation“ under which expenditure towards maintenance cost of Air craft of Air India for VVIP travel, Vice President visit and other special delegation have been opened. Therefore, there is a rise in the allocation at BE 2019-20. Further, pertaining to the bills received/settled and amount involved in the above mentioned travels during the last three years, the Ministry has informed the Committee that the concerned division is in the process of compiling the data because the bills accruing annually due to foreign visits of dignitaries run into several hundreds. The Committee deplore the lackadaisical approach of the Ministry in furnishing the complete information about expenditure made under this head despite continuous emphasis by the Committee upon the timely submission of bills relating to the visits of dignitaries in order to manage fiscal discipline and prudence in the Ministry.

Reply of the Government

The number of bills received/settled and amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the incoming visits of foreign dignitaries have been tabulated as under:

Year	Number of bills received	Number of bills processed	Amount Settled <i>(in crores)</i>
2016-17	970	970	35.19 /-
2017-18	973	973	32.98 /-
2018-19	1427	1341	33.04 /-

b) With regard to amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the outgoing visits, it is kindly submitted that Ministry settles the expenditure of the Air India chartered aircraft only for the overseas visits of Hon[’]ble Vice President of India. Details are tabulated as under:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	BE	RE	Actuals
2016-17	15.00	15.00	7.54
2017-18	180.00	150.00	158.27
2018-19	48.00	48.00	48.24

c) With regard to amount involved in the transaction during the last three years for the Maintenance cost of Aircrafts of Air India for VVIP travel, it is kindly submitted that Ministry settles the bills of the Air India aircraft towards MEA's share for the maintenance cost of Aircraft of Air India. Details are tabulated as under:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	BE	RE	Actuals
2016-17	0.01	100.01	100.00
2017-18	215.00	215.00	214.85
2018-19	141.00	420.00	420.00

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 27)

The Committee observe that the aid to Myanmar under BE 2018-19 was Rs. 280.00 crore and the same was increased to Rs. 370.00 crore at RE stage. The allocation for BE 2019-20 has further increased to Rs. 400.00 crore. The Committee have been apprised that the main infrastructure projects that require significant funding in BE 2019-20 are the Kaladan Multimodal Transport Project, Trilateral Highway linking India, Myanmar and Thailand, Coastal Surveillance System for Myanmar on its Bay of Bengal coast and the Andaman Sea; a Women's Police Training College; an ongoing project to support the Myanmar Institute for Information and Technology (MIIT). The Committee, further, note that based on assessment of Myanmar's current capacity

to absorb projects, the stage at which the existing menu of projects has currently reached, and the capacity to work with Myanmar's specific rules and regulations, the Ministry believes that the allocation currently sought is sufficient to secure India's fundamental strategic interests in Myanmar. The Committee are happy to note that the Ministry has successfully completed and handed over to 250 housing units under the Rakhine State Development Programme. In the Kaladan Multi-Modal Project, the waterways component comprising the Sittwe Port, the island water transport terminals at Sittwe and Paletwa, the navigation channel and six 300 tonne vessels have been completed. However, the Committee are constrained to note the long delay in completing the work on the Kaladan-Multi Modal road component which was accorded in March 2017. The Committee note the reasons attributable to the delay are the worsening security situation as a result of Rohingya issues and financial insolvency of the contractors. In this regard, the Committee wish to suggest to the Ministry to make sincere efforts to ensure that at the tendering stage, the Ministry, along with the line Ministries, to examine the credibility of the contractors through a proper tendering process and they should regularly follow the examination so that the scarce resources of the Government of India do not get blocked or wasted due to the financial insolvency of the contractors. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken in this regard. The Committee further desire that the Ministry in consultation with Myanmar Government to draw a road map for completion of the Kaladan-Multi Modal road component to ensure smooth and timely completion of the transport corridor.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry is vigorously pursuing with the host Government to expedite the completion of major infrastructure projects including the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project. We have been trying to expedite the project by starting work from the Northern end, from the Zorinpui – Myeikwa end for the 60-109 km stretch of the road component. A Myanmar delegation and an inter Ministerial Indian delegation visited the Zorinpui area (Mizoram) in December 2019. Men and material are being moved towards the Zorinpui by the contractor to start the work of the 60-109 km through Zorinpui. We have been able to gain some momentum in our efforts in moving ahead with the project from the Zorinpui end, with the Government of Myanmar starting procedures to give access to the contractors via Zorinpui (Mizoram). Meanwhile, India handed over the Sittwe port operations to A to Z Exim on 31 January 2020.

The Ministry in consultation with the Government of Myanmar would frame a roadmap for the completion of the project- taking in to account the fact that the project is hampered due to multiple factors including the local adverse security situation, over which even the Government of Myanmar does not have full control.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 30)

During examination of the Demands for Grants 2018-19, the Committee had observed considerable ad-hocism in the issue relating to Overseas Indians Affairs. Even after two years of merger of the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, no separate budget head was provided for matter related to Overseas Indians. Allocation for the various schemes and programmes related to Overseas Indians were being made under the budget head “Other Expenditures”. Therefore, the Committee had desired to do away with the odd budgetary practice and create a distinct budget head specifically pertaining to Overseas Indians. The Committee are pained to note the continuation of the ad -hoc approach in the financial year 2019-20, which is the third year of post merger of the erstwhile MOIA with MEA. In the detailed Demands for Grants 2019-20, the schemes/programmes related to Overseas Indian Affairs are covered under the sub heads i.e. (i) engagement with Indian Diaspora under the minor head International Cooperation and (ii) welfare of Overseas Indian under the minor head Passport and Emigration. The Committee are of the view that this budgetary practice does not reflect the serious attitude of the Ministry to look after the Overseas Indians. Therefore, they wish to reiterate their earlier recommendation to create a separate budget head exclusively dealing with all the schemes/programmes related to Overseas Indians. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The recommendation of the Hon’ble Committee regarding opening of separate heads have been duly complied with and the new budget heads have been opened after obtaining necessary approval of the Office of the Controller General of Accounts. The Ministry undertook review of various schemes and programmes under erstwhile „Other Expenditure“ minor head and decided to open these two heads as following.

All schemes targeted towards welfare of migrant Indians have been placed together by opening a new sub-head „welfare of overseas Indians“. This sub-head is placed under Minor Head „Passport & Emigration“ as all these programmes are for the welfare of Indian citizens who have migrated abroad. Due attention has been given to ensure adequate allocation of budgetary resources towards these schemes and Allocation in BE 2020-21 has been enhanced to Rs 7.27 crore from RE 2019-20 allocation of Rs. 3.29 crore.

On the other hand, all diaspora related schemes and programmes have been placed together under newly opened sub-head „Engagement with Indian Diaspora“ as distinct from schemes for Indian citizens abroad. These schemes are placed under „International Cooperation“ Minor Head clearly reflecting the priority attached by the Ministry towards engagement with India’s diaspora community. Due attention has been given to ensure adequate allocation of budgetary resources towards these schemes and Allocation in BE 2020-21 has been enhanced to Rs 69 crore from RE 2019-20 allocation of Rs. 38.12 crore.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

CHAPTER V

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

(Recommendation No. 9)

The Committee note with dismay that the Ministry has not shown any determination in following the overarching principle of zero based budgeting through continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation as against funds utilization in the Ministry's budget management. Ministry only explains the procedures followed by it like periodic quarterly meetings, review of ongoing projects, supplementary demands to be made etc. The Committee feel that some concrete steps should be taken by the Ministry towards the overarching principle of zero based budgeting which guides the evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation with a view to improve its management of finances in a more business like manner. Furthermore, the Ministry should take pre-emptive measures to seek all the necessary clearances before seeking funds for international Aid projects. On another note, and notwithstanding the satisfaction expressed by the Principal witness regarding the adequacy of allocation at BE 2019-20 stage, the Committee would like to inform the Ministry that post globalization and opening of the economy, the foreign policy of countries has acquired a deeper meaning than even before. Foreign policy now influences a country's economic policy in a major way too. The committee, therefore, feel that MEA should explore new dimensions and hitherto, unexplored vistas with a view to secure India's interest in the increasingly globalised matrix. The Committee expect the Government to ensure that there is no shortage of funds for Ministry of External Affairs in its pursuits.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry agrees with Hon'ble Committee's view that post globalization and opening of the economy, the foreign policy of countries has acquired a deeper meaning and is more interlinked with the economic policy than ever before. The Ministry undertakes continuous monitoring of projects under implementation, periodic review of its various commitments and assessment of fund utilization as part of its budgetary management exercise while finalizing its requirements. Ministry would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that it would continue to engage with the

Ministry of Finance at all levels to ensure that there is no shortage of funds for the Ministry in its pursuits.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 10)

3.10 The Committee note that that the budgetary allocation under the Head „Embassies and Missions“ at BE during year 2018-19 was Rs. 2701.00 crore. At RE stage this has been reduced to Rs. 2678.81 crore with actual expenditure being Rs. 2737.69 crore. During the year 2019-20, against the projection of Rs. 3243.22 crore, the allocation at BE stage is Rs. 2748.06 crore, which is a paltry increase over last year’s spending. As India’s global outreach and influence has increased over the years and based on assessment of India’s geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factor diaspora connections, commercial developmental, cultural interests and reciprocal arrangement with the concerned country, the Ministry has commenced opening new Missions in countries where there is no resident Indian Mission, starting with Africa. The Union Cabinet in March, 2018 approved the opening of 18 Missions in Africa in a phased manner. 9 Missions have already been operationized and 3 more Missions will be operationalised in next 3-4 months. In view of the increased budgetary allocations, the Committee desire the Ministry to prepare a roadmap and adhere to the timelines in opening the remaining Missions/Posts in Africa. They also desire that the Ministry of Finance should be impressed upon simultaneously to create adequate number of posts to run the new Missions/Posts.

The Committee have been continuously reminding the Ministry for improvement in monitoring of performance and evaluation of existing Missions/Posts abroad. But the web portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) launched in 2016 is only being used to identify the Missions/Posts which need inspection. The Committee hope that the Ministry would adhere to the timeline of launching revamped PEMS by December, 2019 which will improve the evaluation process of Missions/Posts. The Committee may be apprised of the progress of the project and the outcome thereof, in terms of improvement in services, saving of time and expenditure.

Reply of the Government

It is submitted to the Hon'ble Committee that the Union Cabinet, in March 2018, approved the opening of eighteen Missions in Africa in a phased manner over a period of four years from 2018-2021. Accordingly, in keeping with this timeline, Missions in the following 9 countries have already been operationalized: Republic of Guinea (Conakry), Equatorial Guinea (Malabo), Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou), Rwanda (Kigali), Djibouti (Djibouti), Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Kingdom of Eswatini (Mbabane), Eritrea (Asmara) and Cameroon (Youande). Three more Missions, in Liberia (Monrovia), Sao Tome and Principe (Sao Tome), Sierra Leone (Freetown) are also likely to be operational by the first quarter of next financial year. The remaining 6 Missions would be opened subsequently, within the time frame approved by the Cabinet. Appropriate budgetary provisions are projected as per the expected timeline of operationalization of the Missions, in consultation with the Internal Finance Division of the Ministry. Posts at officer and staff level have also been approved by the Ministry of Finance for these new Missions.

Ministry introduced a web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) in 2016 using a set of 60 binary questions for use as basis for selection of Missions/Posts for onsite inspections. On the basis of this, till date 46 Missions/Posts have been inspected so far. However, it was felt that on-site inspection of Missions/Posts is a time consuming process and it is not possible to inspect more than 15-20 Mission/Posts in a year. It was thus decided that off-site inspection mechanism may also be put in place. Keeping this in mind, it was planned that existing PEMS portal be modified with a view to not only identify Missions/Posts for onsite inspection but also to enable Ministry to undertake off-site inspection of all Mission/Posts on the basis of documents submitted/uploaded by them on PEMS portal.

As this was an innovative step being planned by any Ministry/Department of the Government of India, it thus took some time for Ministry to implement. Inputs from several Divisions have already been sought to frame suitable questions/queries which would enable the Ministry to conclude whether a particular Mission/Posts is in compliance with ministry's directions on a particular subject/matter. Since, Missions/Posts abroad work with limited work-force, attempt has also been made that the submission/upload of documents on revamped PEMS portal by

Missions/Posts do not add to the existing work pressures. The revamped PEMS portal is likely to be launched by ministry in the second quarter of 2020.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 11)

The Committee observe that an allocation of Rs. 246.00 crore has been made under the budget head “Information Technology” in the financial year 2019-20 which included an expenditure on setting up of POPSKs. The Ministry has apprised the Committee that as the budgetary provision under this head is being channelized for setting up of POPSKs, there was no fund constraint for opening up of PSK/POPSKs, and the necessary procurement of IT and non IT related equipment for each Kendra during 2018-19. The Committee note that there is a plan to open more PSKs/POPSKs during the current year also. The Committee are of the strong view that only the opening up of PSK/POPSK will not serve the purpose until they are provided with proper and adequate IT related infrastructure. Therefore, the Committee desire that the Ministry should take up this issue with the Ministry of Finance for allocation of adequate funds for opening of Kendras and for procurement of all necessary IT infrastructure in the proposed new PSKs/POPSKs. The Committee also desire that in the future, channelizing the allocation for the purpose of IT related infrastructure should be avoided.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry is working towards providing adequate IT-related infrastructure in every POPSK in the country, including laying of Managed Network Services - Multi-Protocol Level Switches (MPLS) lines by BSNL. Ministry has taken up the issue for allocation of adequate funds for procurement of necessary IT infrastructure in the Passport Seva Kendras. Funds allocation under IT head in the Revised Estimates 2019-2020 has been increased to Rs. 331 crores from Rs. 246 crores sanctioned at the BE stage.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 12)

The second challenge being faced by the Ministry in the expansion of the Passport Sewa Project is the shortage of personnel in the Central Passport Organization (CPO), particularly those at the superintendent level to function as the granting officers (PGO). There is also a shortage of Assistant Superintendent, Senior Passport Assistant (SPA) and Junior Passport Assistant (JPA) who function as Verifications Officers (VO). The total sanctioned strength of the CPO Cadre is 2697 against which the working strength is 1996 as on 10 May, 2018. The Ministry is facing the difficulties in filling up of the vacant Posts, the reasons being attributed to the recruitment Rules. The Report of the 4 Member cadre Review Committee for CPO cadre has been rejected and now the Ministry has approved the physical inspection and staffing study of the CPO by the Staff Inspection Unit, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. In view of the tardy progress of work relating to filling up of the vacancies and opening up of 424 POPSK in all the Parliamentary constituencies and other parts of the country, the Committee are of the strong view that the man power constraints will further aggravate. Therefore, they strongly desire the Ministry to impress upon the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure to complete the staffing study of CPO at the earliest so that the vacant posts are filled up by DOPT within a fixed time framework.

Reply of the Government

The recommendation of the Committee has been noted and it is being impressed upon the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure to complete the staffing study of CPO at the earliest. As regards vacant posts, the Staff Selection Commission has been indented to fill the vacancies for the posts of 31 Junior Translators, 6 Stenographers (Grade „D“) and 24 Office Assistant (MTS) grade.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 13)

The Committee observe that the aim of opening Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) was to make timely and efficient delivery of passport services in all parts of the country. However, the Committee note with grave concern that there is no improvement in the situation

faced during implementation of the Project and the citizens face a tough time in seeking basic information, getting appointments, and tracking their application in the POPSKs established in different parts of the country. The previous system of providing guidance or support to the passport seekers has been suddenly withdrawn, leaving them in jeopardy. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should adopt urgent measures to resolve the problems arising at the POPSKs. Moreover, if we compare the number of POPSKs opened during 1st & 2nd quarter of 2019-20 with the figures of 2018-19 we find that only 8 new centres have been opened during first six months of the current year against 232 POPSKs in 2018-19. Therefore, the Committee are apprehensive about the achievement of the Ministry's ambitious target of having one POPSK in each of 543 Parliamentary constituency by 2021. Moreover, the Committee feel that only opening a PSK or POPSK in all 543 constituencies is not beneficial until and unless it is fully equipped with fully modernized infrastructure and adequate skilled man power. The Committee, therefore, recommend the Ministry to take necessary steps to achieve the target of opening of POPSKs during 2019-20 equipped with adequate skilled manpower and modern infrastructure.

Reply of the Government

As on 19 February 2020, 424 POPSKs have been made operational. There are 517 Passport Seva Kendras functioning in the country. 158 POPSKs are operating on full-fledged PSK mode with dedicated communication link of 2 Mbps each. MEA is working with BSNL for laying down Managed Network Services -Multi-protocol level switches (MPLS) lines for the remaining POPSKs as well. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working together to open a POPSK in every Lok Sabha Constituency where there is no PSK or POPSK to ensure that there is at least one PSK or POSPK in every Lok Sabha Constituency. By opening 93 PSK and 424 POPSK, the Ministry has covered 488 Lok Sabha Constituencies where there is at least one Passport Kendra. The Ministry is working closely with the Department of Posts to ensure operationalization of a POPSK in the remaining 55 Lok Sabha Constituencies.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

(Recommendation No. 32)

The Committee note that a Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) is given to potential emigrants under the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PKVY) Scheme. The Committee note that Rs. 10.00 crore was released to the Ministry of Skill Development and Training in March, 2017 and only Rs. 3.00 crore have been utilized till date out of this. Due to this under utilization of funds, retionalisation has been done and in BE 2019-20, an allocation of Rs. 5.5 crore has been made. An enhancement is considered based on the progress of work and utilization of earlier released funds. The Committee note that the number of emigrant workers imparted training under PDOT are the most in city of Mumbai which amount to 38976 trainees followed by New Delhi at 18727 trainees.

The Committee feel that the training centres in Metro politican areas of Mumbai and New Delhi are running with full capacity while the smaller towns do not have the same priority. The Ministry has informed that new PKVY training centres have been opened in towns of Jaipur, Sikar, Hyderabad, Karim Nagar, Nizamabad, Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Patna. The Committee desire that the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter of PDOT on a grand scale and impart training in the particular domain that the potential emigrants want to learn like plumbing, carpenter, nursing, technician etc. The Committee also feel that guiding the emigrants against potential working hazards like passports being taken away by employers, loss of money through fake agents, etc. can also be part of the PDOT programme. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to target more towns like Kochi, Chennai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, etc. to open new PDOT centres for potential emigrants. The Committee may be apprised of the initiatives taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

One day Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programme has been started in a structured manner since January 2018, beginning with two centres each at Mumbai and New Delhi. Gradually, number of PDOT Centres has been increased to 21 by the end of 2019. Out of these 21 centres, 15 new PDOT centres have been opened across various states in India in 2019. Presently, PDO Training is being imparted to the prospective emigrant workers under the two models i.e. firstly, PDOT centres managed by NSDC empanelled Training Partners under MOU

between MEA and MSDE on the implementation of PKVY and secondly, through State Government agencies. In this regard, MEA has transferred Rs 10 Lakhs each to State Government Agency/Department of Rajasthan, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Rs 5 Lakhs to Andhra Pradesh.

77,109 emigrant workers have been imparted PDO Training across 21 PDOT centers in the country by the end of year 2019 as follows:-

S.No	PDOT Centre	Agency	Year of Opening
1.	Mumbai (Videsh Bhawan)	NSDC Empanelled Training Partners under PKVY	2018
2.	Mumbai (Andheri)		2018
3.	Delhi (Okhla)		2018
4.	Delhi (Mandir Marg)		2018
5.	Kochi		2018
6.	Lucknow		2018
7.	Gorakhpur		2019
8.	Chandigarh		2019
9.	Chennai		2019
10.	Jaipur	RSLDC (Rajasthan)	2019
11.	Sikar		2019
12.	Nagaur		2019
13.	Hyderabad	TOMCOM (Telangana)	2019
14.	Karimnagar		2019
15.	Nizamabad		2019

16.	Darbhanga	Labour Resource Department, Government of Bihar	2019
17.	Gaya		2019
18.	Muzaffarpur		2019
19.	Patna		2019
TOTAL			
20.	Vijaywada	OMCAP (Andhra Pradesh)	2019
21.	Kadapa		2019

In reference to the committee's recommendation to deliver domain training for potential emigrants, MSDE has conveyed that a pilot program comprising 14 India International Skill Centers (IISCs) was launched. Based on the learnings from the pilot, MSDE is revising the policy guidelines of IISCs, under which operational guidelines had to be redrafted for implementation of IISCs. MEA is yet to receive proposal from MSDE in this regard.

In reference to the Committee's recommendations to target more towns like Kochi, Chennai, Kolkata, Chandigarh etc. to open new PDOT Centres for potential emigrants. Ministry has opened PDOT centers in these cities. In January 2019, Ministry has conveyed its approval to the Labour Department, Government of West Bengal for opening of PDOT centers districts of Nadia, South 24 Paraganas, North 24 Paraganas, Murshidabad, Hooghly, Kolkata and Howrah. However, opening of the same is still awaited. Ministry is regularly following-up with the State Government on this.

[O.M No. AA/Parl/125/67/2019] dated 12/03/2020

NEW DELHI
10 February, 2021
21 Magha (Saka),1942

P.P.CHAUDHARY,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on External Affairs

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS (2020-21) HELD ON 17 DECEMBER, 2020**

The Committee sat on Thursday, 17 December, 2020 from 1230 hrs. to 1255 hrs. in Committee Room „D“Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi..

PRESENT

1. **Shri P.P. Chaudhary, Chairperson**

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Dileshwar Kamait
3. Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi
4. Smt. Goddeti Madhavi
5. Smt. Poonam Mahajan
6. Shri Ritesh Pandey
7. Shri N.K. Premachandran
8. Shri Soyam Babu Rao
9. Shri Ram Swaroop Sharma
10. Shri Rebati Tripura

Rajya Sabha

11. Shri K.J. Alphons
12. Shri Swapan Dasgupta

Secretariat

1. Shri Paolienlal Haokip - 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 Report on:

(i) Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the First Report of the Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2019-20.

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 Report 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 (16TH LOK SABHA)**

- (i) **Total Number of Recommendations 36**
- (ii) **Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.**
Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35 and 36
**Total-25
Percentage: 69.44%**
- (iii) **Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies.**
Recommendation Nos. 3
**Total-01
Percentage: 2.78%**
- (iv) **Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.**
Recommendation Nos. 8, 15, 27 and 30
**Total- 04
Percentage: 11.12 %**
- (v) **Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.**
Recommendation Nos. 9, 10,11, 12, 13 and 32.
**Total- 06
Percentage: 16.66%**