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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 Second Report of the Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21]

**SEVENTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*February, 2021/ Magha, 1942 (Saka)*

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**(2020-21)**

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**Presented to Lok Sabha on 11 February 2021**

**Laid on the table of Rajya Sabha on 11 February 2021**



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

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE (2020-21)	(ii)
INTRODUCTION	(iii)
Chapter I Report	1
Chapter II Observations /Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government	46
Chapter III Observations / Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's Replies	79
Chapter IV Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee	80
Chapter V Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Final Replies of the Government are still awaited	84

## APPENDICES

I. Minutes of the Thirteenth Sitting of the Committee held on 28.01.2021	96
II. Analysis of Action Taken by the government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in the Second Report of the Committee on External Affairs.	98

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

### 1. Shri P.P. Chaudhary, Chairperson

#### Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal
3. Shri Abhishek Banerjee
4. Shri Kalyan Banerjee
5. Kunwar Pushpendra Singh Chandel
6. Shri Dileshwar Kamait
7. Shri Suresh Kumar Kashyap
8. Smt. Preneet Kaur
9. Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi
10. Smt. Goddeti Madhavi
11. Smt. Poonam Mahajan
12. Shri P. C. Mohan
13. Ms. Chandrani Murmu
14. Shri Ritesh Pandey
15. Dr. K. C. Patel
16. Shri N.K. Premachandran
17. Shri Navneet Ravi Rana
18. Shri Soyam Babu Rao
19. Shri Manne Srinivas Reddy
20. Shri Ram Swaroop Sharma
21. Shri Rebati Tripura

#### Rajya Sabha

22. Shri K. J. Alphons
23. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
24. Smt. Misha Bharti
25. Shri P. Chidambaram
26. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
27. Shri Ranjan Gogoi
28. Shri Shamsheer Singh Manhas
29. Shri Kapil Sibal
30. Shri Abdul Wahab
31. Shri Brij Lal

#### Secretariat

- |    |                        |   |                             |
|----|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Shri P. C. Koul        | – | Additional Secretary        |
| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai        | – | Director                    |
| 3. | Shri Paolienlal Haokip | – | Additional Director         |
| 4. | Ms.Smita Singh         | – | Assistant Committee Officer |

## 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 Seventh Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Second Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21.

2. The Second Report was presented to the Parliament on 2 January, 2019. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 4 December, 2019 (English version) and 9 December, 2019 (Hindi version).

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Report on action taken at their Sitting held on 28.01.2021. 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 Second 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,**  
**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 Second Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21 which was presented to Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 3 March 2020.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 40 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, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

**Total- 28**

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

NIL

**Total- NIL**

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

Recommendation Nos. 16 and 40

**Total- 2**

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

Recommendation Nos. 3, 5, 8, 9,11, 15, 24, 31, 32, and 35

**Total- 10**

**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.

## **ROLE OF MEA IN FACILITATING VISION OF US\$ 5 TRILLION ECONOMY**

### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO.1)**

5. The Committee had noted that since 2015 the Ministry of External Affairs had been practicing a purposeful and well defined policy of Diplomacy for Development. They had also noted that in the General Budget, 2019-20, the Government had announced its initiation of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. When asked about the role of Ministry of External Affairs in the scheme of things and steps taken to make this goal a reality the Foreign Secretary had enumerated several measures the Ministry was taking/intending to take in tandem with other ministries/departments of Government of India. Over the years, the Ministry of External Affairs has been acting as a facilitator for various Line Ministries in achievement of economic targets. Through its development cooperation/ assistance programme and Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme, the Ministry had been instrumental in facilitating the cause of Indian economic diplomacy abroad.

Having extensively considered across the board challenging requirements of the goal of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 and the efforts being put by MEA as of then as their contribution towards realization of this goal, the Committee had strongly felt that MEA could do more with better allocation of resources in that regard. In the globalised era the foreign policy elements and the economic policy elements are two sides of the same coin. What the Ministry was required to do immediately was to come up with a clear-cut foreign policy woven with the strands of economic policy. It was but imperative that the Ministry expanded its activities in the economic realm and play a proactive and pivotal role in India's vision of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion dollar economy. The Committee understood that it was a challenging task which may require strengthening of existing division with appropriate human resources and adequate budgetary allocation.



6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that Hon'ble Parliamentary Standing Committee, in its Recommendation No. 1, has required the Ministry to come up with a clear cut foreign policy woven with the strands of economic policy. It further states that it is imperative that the Ministry expand its activities in the economic realm and play a proactive and pivotal role in India's vision of becoming a US\$ 5 Trillion economy. To this end, some of the key initiatives planned to be undertaken by the Ministry in this regard are enumerated as below:

**I. MEA's Economic Diplomacy for Facilitating Trade and Investments:**

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The Ministry of External Affairs will leverage its diplomatic resources for achieving the defined trade and investment goals. It will systematically involve the missions across the world to reach out to business and economic stakeholders. The MEA, in consultations with the Line Ministries, will enhance involvement and engagement of Missions for increasing trade and investment.

**Coordination and Liaison with DPIIT:** The MEA liaises closely with DPIIT for success of the GOI's flagship programs including 'Make in India' and 'Access India' initiatives. The Ministry is also working closely with the DPIIT to formulate a plus one strategy, to pitch India as the preferred alternative for low cost manufacturing in the region. The Ministry will liaise closely with DPIIT and Invest India to disseminate opportunities for investment in India, encourage greater collaboration of Indian businesses with foreign investors, explore opportunities for technological collaboration and work on development and promotion of start-up ecosystems.

**Market Expansion & Investment Promotion Activities:** The Ministry will be coordinating with its Missions/Posts, setting short-term and long-term goals for the Three Ts highlighted by the PM: Trade, Tourism and Technology. All efforts are made to allocate sufficient budget to this end under MEA's Market Expansion Activities Budget.

**Website and Global Mapping of Resources:** The Ministry is also working to launch its website "indbiz.gov.in". The website aims to be a one-stop source of all information on Indian economy and business environment in India for foreign enterprises, as well as Indian businesses going abroad and for Indian Missions and Posts.

**Public Procurement:** The Ministry has been working in close coordination with our Missions/Posts abroad to garner detailed information on public procurement policies of various countries, to aid the Indian businesses in identifying opportunities for public tendering available in different countries.

**Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS):** The Ministry of External Affairs is a part of the Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS) on Economy and Resources, and is participating extensively in ongoing deliberations on the strategies to achieve the GOI's target of a US\$ 5 Trillion Economy.

## **II. Enhancing Development Partnership:**

**Development Partnership with Africa:** The MEA will be enhancing the reach and magnitude of India's Development Partnership with Africa, under the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-4) through Lines of Credit (LOC), Grant assistance, Small Development Projects (SDP), Technical Consultancy, Disaster Relief and Humanitarian aid, as well as capacity-building programmes.

**Third Country Development Partnerships:** As a part of its development partnerships, the MEA will be partnering with countries for projects in third countries, between 2019 and 2024.

**Capacity building in Human resources:** This will be done through the Africa-wide online projects (2019-24) in phases, including - Tele medicine and Tele-education: e-Vidya Bharati & e-Arogya Bharati.

## **III. Increasing Connectivity with Immediate Neighbours:**

The Ministry will continue to focus on enhancing connectivity with neighboring countries especially Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal, including roads, rail, inland waterways, shipping, energy and airlinks. These include: Motor Vehicle Agreement with Bangladesh; Finalization of SOPs for use of Chattogram and Mongla ports for movement of Indian goods; Initiating a coordinated and connected bus service with Myanmar from Imphal to Mandalay; India-Bangladesh Friendship pipeline project; early completion of the Akhaura-Agartala Rail link; completion of work on the 8 Integrated Check Points to improve border trade facilities with Nepal, Bhutan and

Bangladesh, and; establishment of new Border Haats (Markets) with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China.

**IV. Partnering with States for Greater Outreach & Economic Engagement:**

Provide enhanced funding under (a) “State Facilitation Abroad” Fund – allocated to Indian Missions/ Posts abroad for undertaking ‘state specific activities’ to enhance the external outreach; and (b) “State Facilitation Knowledge Support” Fund – that is available to Branch Secretariats, Regional Passport Offices and Passport Offices to undertake ‘state specific activities’. State-specific promotional strategies have been devised and deployed by the Missions to encourage promotion of exports, and inbound tourism.

**V. Sector-Specific initiatives: Matching Complementarities:** Increased push for negotiation of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), Air Services Agreements (ASAs), Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and, Social Security Agreements (SSAs).

**VI. Engagement with Multilateral Institutions:** India’s multilateral economic engagements in G20, BRICS, IBSA, Development Banks etc. are important mechanisms for developing common understanding with other partner countries on fiscal, monetary, financial, taxation, anti-corruption, customs issues. Efforts are also made at these fora to reduce the cost of trade, remittances, investments etc. that has positive effect. These mechanisms result in strengthening the global financial stability, which, in turn results in our economic growth.

**VII. Mitigation of the Economic Impact of COVID-19:** As a part of the *Aatma Nirbhar Bharat* Initiative, the MEA has been working in collaboration with its Missions to chalk out a detailed strategy to increase exports of India’s goods and services in other countries. MEA is working to identify the areas and countries where our manufacturers have the potential to emerge as the low-cost preferred alternative for imports. Missions are providing us with detailed inputs on the Non-Tariff Barriers being faced by Indian exporters in their respective countries of accreditation. The Missions are also working to

identify newer lines of goods and services as well as new destinations where India's exports can be enhanced. In order to identify and plug in the immediate gaps in the global supply chains, the Missions, in collaboration with the MEA and DPIIT, are already in the process of exploring sourcing and export opportunities in various countries and to guide our exporters by putting potential suppliers and buyers in touch with our EPCs and Industry and also facilitate B2B meetings for them. The MEA is working in close collaboration with the concerned line ministries for expanding our agri-exports to at least 15 focus countries. For this we are in the process of developing 'country-specific export strategies', based on the inputs received from the Missions in the focus countries, as well as the recommendations made by the concerned Ministries and Departments".

**7. Keeping in mind, India's vision of becoming a US \$ 5 trillion economy, the Committee had strongly felt that the Ministry of External Affairs should play a proactive role as a facilitator of this grand vision. Towards that direction, the Ministry was urged to not only spell out a clear-cut foreign policy interwoven with economic policy but also strengthen its existing Division with requisite human and financial resources. The Committee observe that the Ministry has taken significant initiatives to expand its activities in the economic realm which *inter alia* include enhancement of Missions/Posts abroad for increasing trade and investment; deepening developmental partnership; increasing connectivity with neighbours; partnering with states for greater outreach; economic engagements with multilateral economic institutions (such as BRICS, G20, IBSA, etc); country-specific export strategies. While appreciating these initiatives, the Committee also note that the reply of the Ministry has conveniently avoided the mention of the policy dimension of the Recommendation and its commitment to strengthen its existing Division with requisite human and bilateral resources. The Committee would, therefore, urge the Ministry to continue making steady and pivotal efforts toward bolstering India's economic growth and also pronounce the exact policy modification to establish its commitment and contribution in achieving the GoI's target of a US\$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. Needless to mention the Ministry's task is cut out with the additional burden of ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.**

## **BUDGETARY ALLOCATION**

### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO.2 AND 3)**

8. While examining the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21, the Committee had observed that as against a demand of Rs 23657.76 crore, an allocation of Rs. 17346.71 crore has been made. The given budgetary allocation was 3% less than BE 2019-20 allocation and 0.15% less than RE 2019-20 allocation. Even in terms of percentage, MEA's share in the total Government of India expenditure had come down to 0.57%. In view of the expanding mandate and global footprint of India, the reduction in allocation to MEA at both RE 2019-20 and BE 2020-21 stage was beyond comprehension. Furthermore, the Ministry had apprised the Committee that no reason had been furnished by the Ministry of Finance for diminished allocation for BE 2020-21. The Ministry had informed that due to reduction in funds disbursement in the last fiscal, the Ministry had to undertake re-assessment of fund requirements for various heads in order to ensure that ongoing projects, schemes and programmes are not adversely impacted.

In the considered opinion of the Committee, the underfunding of the Ministry of External Affairs invariably led to undermining of our foreign policy objectives. Taking a serious view of the issue and considering foreign policy as one of the Government's top priority, the Committee had strongly recommended that the Government of India should reconsider and enhance the allocation to MEA by at least nearly 20 per cent than what it was being provisioned then so that it could be commensurate with India's burgeoning global outreach and engagement. The Ministry of External Affairs was urged to identify priority heads to suitably incorporate the enhancement in allocation and seek additional requirement of funds at the RE 2020-21 stage so that lack of financial resources does not hinder the conduct of Indian foreign policy.

9. In its Action Taken Reply to Recommendation No. 2, the Ministry of External Affairs, has stated that in reference to the Sitting of the Hon'ble Standing Committee on External Affairs on 27 February 2020, the Committee had instructed Ministry to provide a note with justification for further increase in the BE 2020-21 allocation from the allocation of Rs. 17346.71cr announced in the Union Budget 2020-21. Ministry has already submitted the detailed note after taking note of the recommendation".

10. Over the years, the Committee had expressed a deep concern over the persistent mismatch between the budgetary demand made by the Ministry of External Affairs and actual allocations provided by the Ministry of Finance. In its written replies, the Ministry had submitted that the gap between the amount demanded and actual allocations had reduced over the years due to realistic and need based rationalization of various sub heads as well as extensive consultations with the Ministry of Finance. The claim of the Ministry that due to their more realistic and need based rationalization of various sub-heads the gap between amount demanded and actual allocations has reduced over the years was slightly confusing. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs should continue to pursue with the Ministry of Finance about the imperative of provisioning adequate budgetary allocation for efficient conduct of our foreign policy and diplomatic outreach so that shortage of funds does not lead to compromises in foreign policy objectives in the context of the allocation made during BE2020-21.

In pursuance of the Committee's earlier recommendation, the Ministry had informed that it had commissioned an inter-ministerial as well as a cross-country comparative study of budgetary allocations of Ministries/Departments with the mandate of managing foreign affairs to the Research and Information System for Economic Development (RIS). The Committee had noted that a preliminary report of the study has been received from RIS and was being examined in the Ministry. The Ministry of External Affairs should examine the preliminary data on cross-country study of budgetary allocations and apprise the Committee within two months of presentation of the Report. That data can assist the Ministry of External Affairs to bolster their case for enhanced allocation during the RE stage.

11. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply to Recommendation No.3, has stated that it has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members and would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that it will 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. The Ministry will also continue to make efforts to convince Ministry of Finance of its budgetary demands at the RE and supplementary grants stages justified by efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditures, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation. Ministry will

update the committee on the preliminary study conducted by the Research and Information System.”

**12. The under-funding of the Ministry of External Affairs has been a source of constant concern for the Committee. An allocation of less than 1 percent for a Ministry entrusted with the mandate of managing foreign affairs in an increasingly inter-connected and globalized world is incomprehensible. The Committee had, therefore, strongly urged that an enhancement in budgetary allocation to the tune of almost 20 per cent should be made for MEA during BE 2021-22. In its Action Taken Reply the Ministry has submitted that a note has been submitted for increased allocation. The Ministry of External Affairs was also exhorted to carry out a comparative study of inter-ministerial and cross country budgetary allocation to strengthen its case for higher funding. The Committee are dissatisfied with the tardy progress of that study and hope to be apprised about the findings of the study and the initiatives taken in the light thereof within three months. Recognizing the importance of adequate provisioning of finances in conduct of our foreign policy, MEA should continue making a compelling case for substantive increase in allocation in the next Fiscal.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO.5)**

##### **CLASSIFICATION OF MEA**

13. The Committee were aware that after the discontinuation of the Plan and Non- Plan classification since 2017-18, budget classifications are being done only in terms of Revenue and Capital heads and Scheme and Non-Scheme sections. During the examination of budget documents, the Committee had observed reduced allocation under both the Revenue and Capital sections for RE 2019-20 as well as BE 2020-21 *vis-à-vis* BE 2019-20. The Ministry had submitted that the declining trend in both the sections were a reflection of the overall budgetary allocation given to MEA and overall BE/RE ceilings. Owing to reduction in allocations, various schemes/programmes/activities of the Ministry had to be rationalized during RE 2019-20 as well as BE 2020-21. On the basis of the replies and justifications furnished by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Committee had deduced that the Ministry has accepted this fact of reduced allocations and further adjustments as the ceilings given by the Ministry of Finance. Given the Committee’s expectations from the MEA in the context of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 it was but imperative that the Ministry should think beyond its conventional

requirement of funds. For an endeavor of such a global magnitude, funds ought not to be a constraint for any reason whatsoever. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that a compelling rationale must be presented for availability of requisite funds to MEA through engagement with the Ministry of Finance at all levels, focused budgetary planning process and usage of comparative facts and figures and with the imperative to bolster India's standing in the comity of nations at the backdrop and the 5 trillion dollar economy target firmly in view.

14. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members. 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. The Ministry accepts recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee that a compelling rationale must be presented for availability of requisite funds to the Ministry aided by focussed budgetary planning process and usage of comparative facts & figures. The Ministry's efforts in this direction are guided by zero-based budgeting process, effective quarterly expenditure patterns of the Ministry and overall foreign policy priorities interwoven with economic objectives of the country."

**15. The Committee had observed that the reduction in Revenue and Capital sections of the budget of MEA has led to rationalization of activities of MEA. The Committee had, therefore, desired that the Ministry should make persistent efforts to persuade the Ministry of Finance about the imperative of adequate provisioning of funds, coupled with focussed budgetary planning and effective utilization pattern. In its reply, the Ministry has submitted that necessary steps are being taken towards zero-based budgeting process and effective quarterly expenditure patterns. The reply of the Ministry appears to be too general. The Committee are not satisfied with the way the issue of reduced allocation has been taken up with the Ministry of Finance as there has been no improvement in fiscal allocation. The Committee are hopeful that the BE 2021-22 will witness an increase in allocation so that the foreign policy objectives are not compromised due to shortage of funds. The Ministry is urged to make steady and sustained efforts towards putting forth a convincing case for better provisioning of funds and also ensure that the budgetary process is well-planned and all parameters of fiscal prudence are observed.**



**SCHEME SECTION**  
**RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 6)**

16. The Committee had observed that in terms of distribution, about 43 % of MEA's budget is on Scheme side and about 57 % on the Non-Scheme. The Scheme section primarily comprises of Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries, which is a central plank of our diplomatic outreach. The Committee had further observed that there had been a marginal decrease in allocation under this head during BE 2019-20. In its queries on the issue, the Ministry has stated that the slightly reduced allocation in BE 2020-21 (Rs. 7449.65 crores) was still much higher than the allocations made in 2018-19 (Rs. 5985.05 crores) and in previous years. The Committee found the justification offered by the Ministry as unconvincing. The Committee had also noted that the expenditure under the Scheme section is closely monitored and funds are released on the basis of progress reports of the implementation of programmes and schemes. The Ministry had also informed that as a result of intensive monitoring and review of technical aid and development projects in the past year, several new initiatives and projects had been identified in consultation with the concerned beneficiary host governments.

The Committee were of the considered view that the Ministry of External Affairs should continue making persistent efforts to pursue the Ministry of Finance to facilitate a better appreciation of our technical and development cooperation and associated fund requirements. The Ministry might also apprise the Committee about the various new initiatives and projects once it gets crystallized.

17. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it accords utmost priority towards effective and secure budgetary allocation & utilisation 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 based on efficient utilization of the allocated budgetary resources to the Ministry. The allocations for various Aid heads are done through careful prioritization within available resources & with priority that none of our developmental work suffers any setback and all our commitments are implemented smoothly and speedily. Reallocations at RE stage are carried out to cater to spending needs based on reassessed needs at RE stage based on physical progress by identifying savings, wherever possible, after undertaking a realistic spending assessment based on project implementation

cycles, local conditions and physical progress. Hence, budgetary allocation process is dynamically reassessed through the financial year with the sole objective of effective & outcome-based technical & development cooperation programme. 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 and also keep Honourable committee apprised about the various new initiatives and projects.

**18. The Committee are aware that a sizeable portion of MEA's budget is allocated to the 'Scheme' section that comprises of Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries. The Committee have repetitively recommended that budgetary cuts should not be inflicted upon the Scheme section of MEA's budget as it directly impinges on our bilateral engagements and international image. The Ministry of External Affairs was urged to prevail upon the Ministry of Finance for keeping this section insulated from fiscal cuts. However, it appears that these persuasions haven't yielded desired results. The Committee had also expressed their desire to be kept informed about new initiatives and projects that are finalized. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry has furnished assurances about active engagement with the Ministry of Finance at all levels. As the Ministry has not informed about any new initiatives/projects under 'Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Committee understand that no such projects have been finalized in past six months. The Committee, therefore, firmly recommend that MEA should make a stronger pitch for a predictable and availability of substantial funds during BE 2021-22 under the Scheme section. The Committee would appreciate feedback on this endeavour of the Ministry.**

### **INDIAN MISSIONS/POSTS ABROAD**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 8)**

19. The Committee had observed that there had been an upward trend in budgetary allocation under the sub-head 'Missions and Embassies', moving from Rs. 2748.06 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 2910.56 crore at RE 2019-20 stage and to Rs. 2994.06 crore at BE 2020-21 stage. As per the Ministry, the enhanced allocation under the Head was in keeping with the growing diplomatic outreach by the Government of India and the need to expand our presence in various parts of the world, which are presently represented through concurrent accreditations.

The Committee had noted that the establishment of Missions and Posts abroad is guided by six factors – assessment of India’s geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factors, diaspora connections, commercial, developmental cultural interests and reciprocal ties with the countries concerned. The Committee had also observed that approval has been given for establishment of 18 new Missions in Africa. Of these, 9 Missions are already operational in Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Rwanda and Kingdom of Eswatini (Swaziland).

The Committee were satisfied to note that with increase in the allocation under the sub-head ‘Embassies and Mission’ for 2020-21 the Ministry had shown determination to open new Missions in the countries. However, India still had no resident Missions in 61 UN member states, mostly in Africa and Latin America and it was carrying out preparatory work to ascertain the feasibility of establishing new Missions in such countries. The Committee had therefore, desired that the Ministry should complete the establishment of the remaining 9 Missions in Africa in a time-bound manner and after taking into consideration the various factors, prepare a roadmap along with timelines for opening up of Missions in remaining countries and apprise the Committee about the same. In view of our relations with Latin American countries, the Committee had expected the Ministry to accord due priority to setting up of Missions/Posts in that region.

20. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that India realizes its strategic objectives through various means including the expansion of its diplomatic footprint. Guided by various factors that govern the opening of new Missions, such as India’s geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factor, diaspora connections, commercial, developmental, cultural interests and reciprocal ties, decisions to open new Missions are evaluated at senior levels from time to time. Nine new Missions have already been established in Africa in pursuance of the Cabinet decision to open 18 new Missions in Africa during 2018-21. Remaining nine Missions are being opened on a time-bound manner. In addition, there is also a plan to open 15 new Missions in different parts of the world including in Latin America.

**21. While the Committee find the enhanced allocation made under the budget sub-head ‘Embassies and Missions’ satisfying, the uneven diplomatic presence of the Missions abroad has been worrisome. The Committee are hopeful that the increased**

**allocation would be utilized suitably to expand our diplomatic outreach, particularly in Africa and Latin America. As regards the nine remaining Missions in Africa, the Committee, at the cost of sounding repetitive, would like the Ministry to complete the task within the stipulated time and cost lines. The Committee also note with satisfaction the plan of the Ministry to open 15 new Missions in different parts of the world including Latin America. The Committee desire that a detailed and well laid out road map may immediately be worked out for the purpose by the Ministry and taken to its logical conclusion without any further lose of time.**

### **MONITORING OF INDIAN MISSIONS/POSTS ABROAD**

#### **RECOMMENDATION ( SL. NO. 9)**

22. In their previous Report on Demands for Grants, the Committee had been urging the Ministry to improve monitoring mechanism of all the Missions/Posts abroad. The Committee had observed that the Ministry has resorted to two broad tools *i.e* General Mechanisms such as inspections, annual general report, MEA Performance Smart Board and Specific Mechanisms like Political Reports, Economic and Commercial Reports, Annual Consular Report, Cultural Outreach etc. to regularly monitor the functioning and performance of Indian Missions and Posts abroad. The Ministry had apprised the Committee that the web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring Systems (PEMS) was being revamped and would be launched by second quarter of 2020.

The Committee were pleased to learn that the combination of tools employed by MEA for monitoring the functioning and performance of Indian Missions/Posts abroad with the objective of increasing their efficiency and effectiveness had considerably scaled up the activities by Missions and Posts and political engagement and bilateral meetings have picked up the pace. In this regard, the Committee, however, had suggested that the Ministry should prepare an annual data on the overall outcomes of monitoring mechanism of various Missions/Posts abroad along with the country-specific challenges faced by them. The Committee had also desired to be apprised about the launching of the revamped PEMS portal which has already failed on several schedules.

23. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that the Directorate General of Inspections (DGI) was set-up in 2014 to streamline the system of inspection of Indian

Missions/Posts abroad. Ministry introduced a web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) in 2016 using a set of 60 binary questions to evaluate the Missions/Posts. 19 Missions/Posts have been inspected based on PEMS between 2017-2019. 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 10 -15 Missions/Posts in a year. It was thus decided that off-site inspection mechanism may also be put in place. Keeping this in mind, existing PEMS portal is being 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 Missions/Posts on the basis of documents submitted/uploaded by them on PEMS portal. This is an innovative step being planned by the Ministry, which has become more relevant in this COVID era. Inputs from concerned Divisions have been sought to frame suitable questions/queries, which would enable the Ministry's directions on a particular subject/matter.

**24. The Committee note that the Ministry of External Affairs have employed general as well as specific mechanisms for increasing the efficiency of Missions/Posts abroad, Further, the Ministry has introduced a web-portal-Performance and Evaluation and Monitoring Systems (PEMS) in 2016. Plans for revamping this portal have been on the anvil since long and it was to be launched by second quarter of 2020. However, from the reply it seems that the Ministry has once again failed the scheduled launch. The Committee had also recommended that the Ministry should prepare annual data on overall outcomes of various monitoring mechanism of Indian Missions/Posts abroad along with country- specific challenges. In its response, the Ministry has not mentioned about the status of such an assessment. The Committee therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that based on the outcome of the monitoring mechanism, the Ministry should compile annual data about Missions/Posts abroad. The Committee would also like to be apprised about the status of launching of revamped PEMS portal incorporating the inputs from the concerned Division.**

## **SETTING UP OF VIDESH BHAWANS IN STATE CAPITALS**

### **RECOMMENDATION ( SL. NO.10)**

25. The Committee had setting up of Videsh Bhawans in all capitals recommended observed that the budgetary allocation under the sub-head 'Passport and Emigration' has decreased from Rs. 1620.95 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 1604.39 crore at RE 2019-20 to Rs. 1348.59 crore during BE 2020-21. The Committee had noted that the sub-head 'Protector General of Emigrant' (PGoE) has been brought under this head and a new sub-head 'Welfare of Overseas Indians' has been opened under this head *w.e.f.* FY2019-20. It was disconcerting to find that despite the inclusion of two significant sub-heads, namely Protector General of Emigrant and Welfare of Overseas Indian Affairs under this minor head, budgetary cuts had been effected. The Committee were of the view that the Ministry should provide requisite funds under such a critical minor-head, particularly after the merger of erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs. Moreover, in view of the significant contribution of revenue from the passport and visa services to the Consolidated Fund of India, sufficient investment in improving passport and visa service delivery was essential. The Committee had, therefore, also recommended that the Ministry should seek additional funds for this minor head that directly impinges on public services delivery and welfare of our Overseas Indians. The Committee had desired that a Videsh Bhawan may be established in every state capital on the lines of the one set up in Mumbai. These Videsh Bhawans should be the umbrella organization in each state for providing public services relating to all activities of MEA. In view of the compelling need of such institutions in the states, the Committee had desired that Videsh Bhawans in all state capitals might be set up within a period of 18months.

26. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that :-“Built on the pillar of cooperative federalism, Videsh Bhawan is conceived as an integrated MEA office which houses all MEA offices such as RPO, Branch Secretariat, POE and ICCR regional office in States under one roof. The offices would have a multi-dimensional approach and serve several stakeholders by acting as a bridge between States and foreign Governments; supporting local businessmen in furthering their interests abroad; liaising and extending support to NRIs in need etc. The Committee’s recommendation has been duly noted and the Ministry has taken

steps to seek Cabinet approval for setting up Videsh Bhawans in state capitals, within identified timelines.

The current status of the integrated “Videsh Bhawans” is as follows:

<b>City</b>	<b>Status</b>
Mumbai	Already Established and Inaugurated
Bhopal	Construction in Progress. Expected to be completed by end 2020.
Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru	Renovation/ expansion work in progress. Expected to be completed in 2020/2021.
Chennai, Kolkata, Ranchi	Design work completed/ nearing completion
Hyderabad	Boundary wall constructed.
Amaravati	Land Acquired
Dehradun, Srinagar, Guwahati	State Governments requested to allot alternate/ additional plot of land
Remaining State/ UT capitals	Request for Land Allotment made

**27. Passport and Emigration constitute two crucial aspect of Ministry’s direct public delivery services. With the merger of erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and MEA, the ambit of the latter has grown exponentially. Despite the inclusion of two important sub-heads, namely ‘Protector General of Emigrant’ (PoE) and ‘Welfare of Overseas Indians’, the Committee found the reduction in allocation under this head to be disappointing. The Ministry was, therefore, urged to seek additional funds under this budget - head during the RE stage. The Ministry has not furnished reply on this aspect. The Committee had also desired that Videsh Bhawans should be established in all state capitals as a one stop organization for catering to public services delivery of MEA. The Committee are pleased to discern that significant efforts are underway for setting up**

**Videsh Bhawans in state capitals. The Ministry should strive to complete the establishment of the Videsh Bhawans in all state capitals within fixed timelines. The Committee also recommend that the MEA should ensure that adequate finances are provisioned for passport and emigration during RE 2020-21 and BE 2021-22.**

### **PASSPORT SEVA PROJECT**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO.11)**

28. The Committee were aware that the Passport Seva Project (PSP) is one of the largest citizen-centric project under the National e-Governance Plan. The scale and magnitude of passport related services could be gauged from the fact that in 2019, approximately 1.22 crore passports were issued in India and abroad. The Committee were happy to learn that there are 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) and 424 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) that were functioning as extended arms of the 36 Passport Offices in the country. There was a proposal of opening of PSK/POPSK in every Parliamentary constituency of the country. The Ministry had also informed that Passport Seva Programme has been extended to Indian Missions/Posts abroad in order to provide better and smoother service delivery experience to Indian Diaspora living abroad. So far, 54 Indian Missions have been integrated into Passport Seva Project and integration in several other Missions/Posts are in progress. The Committee had observed that the Ministry maintains a central database called Passport Related Information Data Exchange (PRIDE) which contains details of Passports. Moreover, the Committee had also noted that MEA has put in place a strengthened Grievance Redressal Mechanism, whereby a Multilingual Call Centre with a toll free number (1800- 258-1800), operating in 17 languages and on 24\*7 basis caters to dissemination of information about various passport related services.

The issuance of passports in a timely, seamless and hassle-free manner is the most citizen centric public delivery function performed by the Ministry. The Committee were satisfied to know about the slew of initiatives taken by the Ministry to make qualitative and quantitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country during 2019-20. The Committee had however, desired that initiative should be taken to open up new PSK/POPks in every Parliamentary constituency as per the targets fixed in this regard. The Committee had also desired to be apprised about the progress made in integration of remaining Missions/Posts abroad



into the Passport Seva Project. The Ministry should also ensure that the grievance redressal of citizens related to passport services is addressed in a time-bound manner.

29. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has submitted that as on 13 April 2020, 517 passport Seva Kendras, including 93 PSKs and 424 POPSKs, are functioning in the country. By opening 93 PSK and 424 POPSM, the Ministry has covered 488 Lok Sabha Constituencies where there is at least one Passport Kendra. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working together to ensure operationalization of a POPSK in the remaining 55 Lok Sabha Constituencies. Out of this, POPSK in seven Lok Sabha Constituencies are ready for inauguration while availability of requisite space in eight POPSK locations is expected to be confirmed by the Department of Posts. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working closely to set up a POPSK in the remaining 40 Lok Sabha constituencies where requisite space is presently not available.

As on current date, 59 Missions/Posts have been successfully integrated into the Passport Seva Project (PSP). The Ministry has advised 121 Missions/Posts to acquire the necessary IT equipment for integration into the PSP system. Of this, 13 Missions/Posts have procured the requisite IT equipment and the integration work is currently in progress. 52 Missions/Posts are in the process of acquiring the necessary equipment while the Ministry is coordinating with the 56 other Missions/Posts to expedite the process. Once availability of the IT equipment is confirmed by the Missions/Posts to the Ministry, the integration will be effected remotely.

The grievance related to passport services are taken up by the respective Passport Offices on real-time basis and redressed on priority. Since February 2020, Ministry has moved to the upgraded version 7.0 of the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) mapping thereby the last mile grievance officers to improve grievance redressal time and quality of disposal. All the Missions/Posts abroad have also been brought on the upgraded CPGRAMS providing opportunity to the citizens to reach out to them directly.

**30. Realizing the magnitude and extent of Passport Sewa Project (PSP), the Ministry's outreach has been commendable. With regard to opening up of PSK/PoPSKs in every Parliamentary constituency, the Committee were pleased to note that with the opening up of 93 PSK and 424 Passport POPSM, 488 Lok Sabha constituencies have**

been covered and MEA is working with Department of Posts to open POPSKs in the remaining 55 constituencies. The Ministry has also informed that 59 Missions/Posts have been successfully integrated into PSP and the 121 Missions/Posts have been advised to acquire requisite IT equipment. The Committee are of the considered opinion that the extensive coverage and outreach of the Passport Seva Kendras/Offices is a significant achievement by MEA. The Committee are hopeful that the Ministry would continue its strides in opening up of POPSKs in the remaining parliamentary constituencies along with effective integration of the Mission/Posts with PSP in a time-bound manner. The Committee also desire to be informed at regular intervals about the progress made in this regard.

### **SHORTAGE OF HUMAN RESOURCE IN CPO**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 12)**

31. The Committee had noted that against a sanctioned strength of 2,697, the actual working strength of the Central Passport Office (CPO) cadre is 1,821 as on 1February, 2020. Shortage of personnel in CPO has been stated as a constraining factor in expansion of the Passport Seva Project. It was observed that there were 876 posts which were lying vacant in various grades in CPO. As per the Ministry, the difficulty in filing up the vacant posts stemmed from the extant Recruitment Rules. Direct recruitment is possible only in grades of Office Assistant, Junior Passport Assistant (JPA) Stenographers, Junior Translator and Assistant Superintendent. The Ministry had placed indents for 310 with the Staff Selection Commission since 2017 for recruitment in these grades. Further, the Ministry has engaged 361 Data Entry Operators and 60 Office Assistant (MTS) through Outsourced Service Provider. The Committee had noticed that a proposal for physical inspection and staffing study of CPO by the Staff Inspection Unit (SIU) of the Department of Expenditure has been sent to Ministry of Finance in November, 2019.

The issue of human resource crunch has been a major area of concern and has been part of the Committee's recommendations over the years. Taking serious cognizance of this matter, the Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry should take up that issue with Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) at the highest level and ensure that the

vacant positions are filled up in the shortest possible time. The Ministry should also apprise the Committee about the outcomes of the interaction with DoPT.

32. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it has written to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) drawing the attention to the shortage of manpower in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and requesting them to urgently fill up the vacant posts, which have been indented to the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) from time to time where direct recruitment is available as per extant Recruitment Rules. DoPT has also been requested to expedite conduct of Limited Departmental Competitive Examination by SSC to fill up the earmarked posts of Junior Passport Assistant (JPA), Senior Passport Assistant (SPA) and Assistant Superintendent from the respective feeder posts being one of the modes of recruitment as per extant Recruitment Rules. Recently, 87 dossiers were provided by the SSC against the indented vacancies of JPA for the year 2017. Out of these, 28 candidates have since joined the CPO and the remaining are expected to join soon.”

**33. The gap between the sanctioned strength and working strength in Central Passport Office (CPO) has been a worrisome trend. While noting the efforts made by the Ministry to tackle the shortage of staff, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should take up the matter with Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) at the highest level for timely filing up of the vacant posts. The Ministry has replied that it has written to DoPT and requested it to expedite the limited Department Competitive Examination by SSC to fill the earmarked posts of Junior Passport Assistants (JPA), Senior Passport Assistants (SPA) and Assistant Superintendents. The Committee also note that out of 87 dossiers provided by SSC against indented vacancies of JPA, 28 candidates have already joined the CPO. In the considered opinion of the Committee, augmenting of human capital is key to smooth and effective functioning of CPO and the Ministry should endeavour to take all necessary steps to bridge the gap between sanctioned strength and working strength of CPO in the shortest possible time.**

## **TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 15)**

34. The Committee were happy to learn that development cooperation that constitutes a significant facet of India's external engagement had expanded both geographically and sectorally in terms of its reach and spread. For BE 2020-21, just like the trend for MEA's budget, the proportion of allocation under the sub-head 'Technical and Economic Co-operation' had dipped from Rs. 7333.79 crore to Rs. 6617.37 (BE 2020-21). Despite repeated recommendations of the Committee to avoid budgetary cuts under this head, the reduced allocations for developmental aid and assistance was incomprehensible.

The Committee had observed that the budget head catered to India's aid and assistance programmes not only in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood but also to countries in South East Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Indo-Pacific region. The Ministry had informed that allocations for aid heads were based made after undertaking a realistic spending assessment based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress for ongoing projects. On the basis of facts and figures furnished by the Ministry, the Committee had observed a disparity between the budgetary demands made by MEA and actual allocations given by the Ministry of Finance as well as between actual allocation and utilization of the same by MEA. The Ministry's assertion regarding the provisioning of adequate allocation of funds being taken up with the Ministry of Finance at various levels had been noted. Taking a serious view of this matter, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs should ensure that the uneven utilization pattern under this head is reduced to bare minimum and limited only to delays pertaining to extraneous factors. Furthermore, the Committee had also suggested that a study might be conducted on the objectives, modalities and implications of our developmental cooperation over the years so that more funds allocation may be justified for India's external engagement. The Committee had also to conveyed that while allocating budget under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation', the Ministry of Finance should bear in mind the ramifications of budgetary cuts under this head on our bilateral, regional as well as multilateral engagements.

35. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it handles a variety of projects in different parts of the world, with each project involving multiple stakeholders

including Indian PSUs/ private companies in India and in the host countries, and each project involves a unique set of issues and challenges in execution. The Ministry is closely engaged in closely monitoring the progress of the respective projects, and regularly updates respective budget requirement based on inputs received from the project monitoring/ implementing agencies taking into account a realistic assessment of local conditions on the ground, local regulatory framework and assurances to be fulfilled by the local authorities etc. However, some amount of uncertainty and unpredictability in the project cycle and our ability to fulfil the physical and financial targets set in case of each project is unavoidable since we do not have control over the operating environment. However, efforts are made to periodically update and revise our budget projection and requirement for the development assistance to other countries taking into account the overall perspective of a dynamic and fluid nature.”

**36. In spite of being a central plank of our foreign policy, Development Cooperation/Technical and Economic Cooperation have been susceptible to budgetary cuts. Expressing strong disapproval of such tendencies, the Committee had recommended the Ministry to undertake a review study about the objectives, modalities and implications of our developmental partnership. The Committee had also suggested that the Ministry of Finance should refrain from reducing allocations for Technical and Economic Cooperation as it directly impinges on our bilateral engagements. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry has provided an explanation about the propelling factors, nature and challenges faced in development cooperation. It is a matter of regret that the Ministry has failed to respond to the Committee’s specific recommendation. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that a thorough review of our developmental cooperation should be carried out and the findings of the same may be furnished to the Committee within three months of presentation of this Report to the Parliament.**

#### **SEPARATE AID DISBURSAL BODY**

##### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 16)**

**37.** Expressing concern over the unpredictable and fluctuating budgetary demands and allocation under this Head, the Committee in their previous DFG Report had recommended that the Ministry should frame a developmental aid/cooperation policy with a clear roadmap for developmental assistance to countries in alignment with our national interest. The Committee

had also urged the Ministry to explore the feasibility of establishing an autonomous aid disbursement body that strictly caters to planning, execution and implementation of the projects in a timely manner. The Committee had reiterated its earlier recommendation that a general aid policy must be framed and a separate aid disbursement body on the lines of similar bodies in other countries (such as USAID, OECD etc) may be established by the Ministry.

38. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has submitted that it had decided to establish Development Partnership Administration in 2012 taking into account the unique nature of India's development partnership, the diversification and growing complexity of our assistance programmes and projects and resource and manpower constraints in GOI. The DPA has evolved as an innovative and cost-effective instrument of delivery of a broad-based developmental assistance to foreign countries encompassing Lines of Credit, projects under Grant-in-Aid, capacity building programmes for civilian and defence personnel etc. The model of DPA created in 2012 has served our purpose well as is evident from the robust growth of our projects both under Lines of Credit and Grant. The Ministry has been constantly monitoring the role of DPA in implementation of development projects and to support its work, has inducted technical experts from other Ministries. Currently more than 50% staff of DPA are deputationists with specialized technical expertise. Further, taking into account the growing importance of culture and heritage in our development partnership a new Division has been created (DPA-IV) to exclusively focus on cultural and heritage restoration projects and relevant capacity building engagement in this area. Also, a senior officer of the rank of Additional Secretary has been deployed for an effective and close overall supervision and coordination in the work of the four Divisions in DPA. Considering the importance attached by the government to our development partnership, the Ministry would continue to monitor and introduce suitable reforms and innovations in the DPA as required for its efficient and effective performance."

**39. In order to ensure a reasonable amount of budgetary certainty under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation', the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should frame a general aid policy and also establish a separate aid disbursement body on lines of international bodies (such as USAID, OECD). The reply furnished by the Ministry, as in the past, has simply focused on its Development Partnership Administration (DPA) launched in 2012. Had DPA been serving its desired purpose, the**

**Committee would not have made the instant recommendations. Unfortunately, however, the Ministry has time and again, without giving any cogent reason tended to take a call on the Committee's recommendations. With a view to take a final view on this important issue, the Committee desire that the Ministry ought to come up with a detailed review of DPA with facts and figures including the outcomes during last 8 years of its existence at the earliest.**

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 17)**

40. On the basis of data furnished by the Ministry, the Committee had observed a decline in allocation under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation' pertaining to our neighbourhood. Barring two sub-heads *i.e.* 'Aid to Bangladesh' and 'Aid to Nepal', there had been a reduction in allocation for development cooperation to South Asian countries. Such a situation was all the more appalling in the light of increasing Chinese presence in providing assistance and undertaking development projects in various countries under the 'Belt and Road Initiative'. The Committee had noted that in order to deal with that challenge, the Ministry had been extending GoI Lines of Credit (LoC) on concessional terms to 64 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Oceania and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). While appreciating such extensive LoCs, the Committee were of the view that much more needs to be done for positioning India as an emerging economic power. The Committee had therefore urged the Ministry to re-visit the development cooperation, particularly with our neighbours so as to enable long-term partnerships with careful assessment of projects, adequate disposal of funds and efficient implementation.

41. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in MEA is entrusted with implementing India's development cooperation initiatives with partner countries. Some projects, especially infrastructure projects have a longer gestation time and the budget appropriated in that financial year is commensurate with the project cycle based on physical and financial progress. The budgetary requirements for the financial year are projected after taking into account specific status and anticipated utilization for various projects and initiatives in these countries. This

causes a year-on-year variations in the budgetary allocation under a particular aid head. The Government remains committed to stronger development cooperation with our neighbouring countries based on bilateral imperatives and larger policy thrusts such as Neighbourhood First and Act East policy. The neighbourhood remains the largest recipient of Indian developmental assistance.

42. The Ministry further submitted that development assistance under Lines of Credit (LOCs) is extended in accordance with the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) guidelines issued by Department of Economic Affairs. So far, 302 LOCs aggregating to US\$ 30.66 billion have been extended to 64 countries covering projects in different sectors such as connectivity, energy, hydro power, roads, agriculture, civil infrastructure, capacity building, training, humanitarian assistance and health care etc. Of the US\$ 15.90 billion that has been committed under GoI LOCs to Asian countries, the largest value of commitments have been made in the India's immediate neighbourhood: Bangladesh (US\$ 7.862 billion), Sri Lanka (US\$ 2.02 billion), Nepal (US\$ 1.65 billion), Mauritius (US\$ 964.80 million), Maldives (US\$ 840 million), Myanmar (US\$ 538.90 million), Seychelles (US\$ 128 million). There is a specific focus on regional connectivity initiatives in the neighbourhood under GoI LOCs. A total of 98 connectivity projects (44 completed) in 5 countries in the neighbourhood for USD 6.93 billion (INR 49,200 Crore) under GoI Lines of Credit (LOCs). Our LOCs are financing some of critical infrastructure projects of the partner countries.”

**43. Technical and Economic Cooperation can prove to be a potent force in boosting regional connectivity and cooperation. Looking at the budgetary allocation under this head particularly to our South Asian neighbours, the Committee had noted that the Ministry has not utilized this instrument effectively. The amount of allocation and subsequent implementation of developmental projects in our immediate neighbourhood is a reflection of our foreign policy priorities. The Committee had, therefore, urged the Ministry to revisit the development partnership with our neighbouring countries with the greater objective of establishing deeper bilateral relations through timely implementation of projects. The Ministry, in its Action Taken Reply, have merely highlighted the broader policy and the rationale behind variations in budgetary requirements under different country heads. The reply, however, is silent about the concrete measures taken to optimize**



**aid and assistance projects for strengthening of bilateral ties with our neighbourhood. The Committee expect the same to be submitted to them at the soonest. They would also like to reiterate that the Ministry should continue its endeavour to foster stronger development cooperation with our neighbouring countries by exploring more connectivity projects with them.**

### **AID TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 24)**

44. It was disconcerting for the Committee to note decline in allocation under the sub-head 'Aid to African countries' from Rs. 450 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 300 crore in BE 2020-21. Delayed execution of projects leading to under-utilization of earmarked funds seemed to be the cause of that reduction. Justifying the delay in completion of projects under India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), the Ministry had stated that considerable challenges, including lack of funds and manpower from the Indian side, were faced in the implementation of the proposals to set up institutions in Africa. Moreover, IAFS-IV is scheduled to take place this year. The Committee were concerned to note that over the years, there had been slow progress in implementation of projects under India Africa Forum Summits I, II and III. The Committee had noted that a regular and high-level review of projects undertaken under various IAFS was carried out in consultation with all concerned stakeholders and policy decisions are taken accordingly. The Committee have noted that so far 15 African countries- Benin, Republic of Guinea, Zambia, Malawi, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Uganda, Mozambique, Comoros, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Mali and Eritrea - have signed MoUs with TCIL for participating in the Pan Africa e-network Project (PaenP).

Given the significance of the African region, the drooping allocation and the slow pace of progress in projects there was disappointing. The Committee had therefore, strongly recommended that MEA should accord due importance to Africa in our foreign policy and developmental cooperation should clearly reflect it. The Committee were hopeful that the Ministry would actively engage with the host countries, the concerned Indian Missions, Implementing Agencies and the line Ministries for timely implementation of the projects. In that regard, India's experience in development cooperation over the years should come handy in extending our outreach in Africa. The Committee had strongly recommended that enhanced

allocation must be provisioned for this head and based on a feasibility study, physical and financial targets should be established for completion of all ongoing projects in Africa. The Committee had further, urged that the Ministry should take suitable measures to ensure the timely handover of the Pan African e-Network Project and apprise the Committee about the same at regular intervals.

45. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it has sincerely noted the concerns and recommendations of the Committee. The Ministry would like to reassure the Hon'ble Committee that Africa is receiving very high priority by the Government.

1. Prime Minister enunciated 10 guiding principles in Uganda in 2018, which will guide India-Africa relations and take our engagement to the next level. These guiding principles have given "top priority" to a range of areas including digital & IT, especially for people-centric projects, agriculture, trade & investment, development partnership, enhance local capacity and assist African youth, capacity building, climate change, cooperation in terrorism & maritime issues, international cooperation for representative world order etc. The Ministry is in the process of taking these elements forward in a focused manner. This is reflected in the range of important events completed and/or planned between India and Africa in the run up to India-Africa Forum Summit-IV.

2. With regard to the e-VBAB Network Project for Tele-Education and Tele-Medicine in Africa, after signing of the MoU between Director, TCIL and High Commissioner of Republic of The Gambia on 9th March, 2020 in New Delhi, the number of countries participating in the Project stands at 16. Subsequent to signing of Agreements by TCIL with four Indian Universities recognized by UGC for offering programmes through online mode, enrolments were completed for the first academic semester of six degree and diploma programmes in March 2020. A total of 23 students from 6 African countries qualified for scholarships. With regard to tele-medicine, the first live tele-consultation took place on 17th March, 2020 on the e-Sanjeevani platform between faculty from the University Teaching Hospital, Zambia and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh.

3. We would like to reassure the Hon'ble Committee that this high priority and importance accorded to Africa in our Foreign Policy is sought to be reflected in the development cooperation context. In this context, the Ministry would also like to inter alia mention that regular review of the various projects is being conducted and coordinated to monitor the implementation and speed up, where necessary. The revision of India Development Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) Guidelines in 2015 is already making a difference to the pace of implementation and we are keeping it under review to enhance this further. Our effort to enhance our close bilateral links with African countries and to further enhance our development partnership has been appreciated by African countries.

4. The Ministry has taken a note of all the recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee and will seek to address them suitably.

**46. Concerned about the reduction in budgetary allocation and slow progress in implementation of projects in Africa, the Committee had urged the Ministry to ensure that adequate funds are provisioned under this sub-head and projects are implemented in line with stipulated physical and financial targets. The Committee had also recommended that the Pan African e-Network Project be handed over in a time-bound manner. The Committee also took note of the ten areas of focus (such as agriculture, trade & investment, capacity building, climate change, maritime issues, people-centric projects etc.) shaping our engagement with Africa. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry has assured the Committee about according high priority to Africa in India's foreign policy. The Ministry has also informed that the various projects in Africa are reviewed regularly. The Committee have also taken note of the progress made with regard to the e-VBAB Network Project for Tele-education and Tele-Medicine in Africa. In the considered opinion of the Committee, the Action Taken Replies should mention specific follow-up action taken by the Ministry in pursuance of their recommendation. Mere noting of Committee's recommendation is equivalent to no action. The Committee once again desire that Africa should find adequate fiscal space and significance in our**

**development cooperation. They would also like to be apprised of the action taken by the Ministry in this regard at the earliest.**

**AID TO AFGHANISTAN**  
**RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 25)**

47. The Committee were aware that despite daunting logistical and security challenges, India has been providing wide-ranging developmental assistance to Afghanistan. Allocation under that sub head had been kept unchanged for the ongoing and next fiscals. The Committee were pleased to see optimum utilization of funds under this head for the past two years. The Foreign Secretary has stated that India was providing small and medium projects development assistance in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan and large scale projects were in the planning stage. The Committee had, therefore, desired that the satisfactory experience gained from completion of large infrastructural projects in Afghanistan should be applied to all our developmental cooperation projects elsewhere. The Ministry should ensure that requisite funds are available for smooth functioning of all our small and medium sized projects in Afghanistan. The Committee also wanted to be kept informed about the large developmental projects in Afghanistan once finalized.

48. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it noted the recommendations made by the esteemed committee for compliance. All efforts are continuously made for optimal budgetary allocation under Aid to Afghanistan, in line with “Neighbourhood First Policy”. The recommendation of the Committee on learnings from our experiences of developmental projects in Afghanistan, elsewhere has been noted. The implementation of the development partnership programme of India is premised on learnings of best practices both in-house & elsewhere. The Development Partnership Administration vertical in MEA led by Additional Secretary-officer provides for holistic & integrative conceptualization, assessment & monitoring of our Development Partnership program.

**49. While appreciating the completion of important infrastructural projects in Afghanistan, the Committee had recommended that lessons learnt from this experience should be suitably utilized in carrying out developmental projects elsewhere. The Committee had also desired to be apprised about additional fund requirements for**

carrying out small, medium as well as large developmental projects in Afghanistan. The Committee are dismayed to note that the Ministry has once again given an incomplete reply without any updated information on status of new large scale projects and initiatives being taken for timely availability of funds in projects in Afghanistan. The Committee, therefore, desire that complete and updated reply should be furnished on each point of recommendation so that a clear picture emerges and a better assessment of Ministry's performance is facilitated.

### **AUGMENTATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN MEA**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO.29)**

50. The Committee were aware of the persistent human resource crunch in the Ministry of External Affairs over the years. The Committee had noted that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry is 8951, while the working strength was 6859. The huge gap between the sanctioned and actual strength in the Ministry of External Affairs had led to vacancies in vital departments of the Ministry. Time and again, the Ministry had furnished the same justification that the gap was due to delay in recruitment, which was beyond its control. In order to tide over this challenge of shortage in staff, the Ministry had taken various steps such as increasing indent with UPSC, reinforcing technical capacity by taking officers with domain expertise on deputation from Line Ministries and Departments of Governments, engaging Consultants with expertise in various fields and placing indent with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC).

Taking serious cognizance of the vacant posts in the Ministry, the Committee found the steps taken by the Ministry as inadequate and half-hearted. In view of the increasing rate of diplomatic endeavours in development and economy and the pivotal role MEA has to play in our efforts to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25, the Committee had exhorted upon the Government at the highest levels to consider the human resource requirements of MEA favourably and also direct Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to fill up the enhanced number of direct recruitments on top priority basis. The Committee had also recommended that the Ministry should continue to create cadre/ induct expertise from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and the private sector, as needed to augment human resource with relevant domain expertise.

51. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has responded that augmentation of manpower in the Ministry is being undertaken in a concerted and systematic fashion through a combination of recruitment, promotion, deputation, outsourcing and placing indents with SSC/UPSC. In terms of recruitment, average annual intake of IFS officers through the Civil Services Exam increased by 16% during 2015-18 in comparison with 2011-14. (While 32 officers were recruited annually on an average during 2011-14, the corresponding number for 2015-18 was 37). Similarly, the average number of Assistant Section officers who joined the Ministry during the period 2013-14 almost doubled from 63 to 124 in 2015-17. Enhancement of manpower is also done through promotions from feeder cadres across levels and deputation of experts. At present, there are 48 officers from various Ministries in MEA on deputation who are deployed in different Divisions.

**52. Concerned about the persistent shortage of staff in the Ministry of External Affairs, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should continue inducting expertise creating cadre from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and private sector. The Committee note that through a combination of recruitment, promotion, deputation, outsourcing and placing indents with SSC/UPSC the Ministry has undertaken concerted action on reducing the vacant posts. As recommended previously, the Ministry should ensure that adequate and well-trained human resources are available for smooth functioning of the Ministry through a mix of these methods.**

### **PROTECTOR GENERAL OF EMIGRANTS (PGOE)**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 31)**

53. The Committee had noted that Protector General of Emigrant (PGoE) through 12 Protector of Emigrant (PoE) Offices administers all operational matters related to emigration, provision of emigration services to emigrants and enforcement of Emigrant Act 1983. As a statutory authority under the Emigration Act 1983, the PGoE is primarily responsible for the welfare and protection of emigrant workers falling in the Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) category. With such a vast and critical mandate to fulfill, a measly allocation of Rs. 20.08 crore has been earmarked for BE 2020-21. The Committee had taken a serious view of the low priority being accorded to PGoE, post merger, as evident in the insignificant budgetary allocation. The

Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry pay attention to PGoE and its offices by provisioning of adequate funds and human capital. The Ministry might also chalk out a roadmap with timelines for setting up more PoE offices and apprise the Committee about the progress made in his regard within three months.

54. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it would like to mention that thirteenth Protector of Emigrant (PoE) Office in Guwahati is in the process of being fully operationalised with the joining of acting Protector of Emigrants there. For opening of more PoE offices across all over the India, in state where PoE offices do not exist at present, Ministry has regularly conveyed its intention of opening of PoE offices in States/Union Territories. Till date, Odisha and Tripura have conveyed their consent for opening of PoE office in their states while Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh have replied that opening of a PoE office in their States is not felt necessary at present. The Standing Committee will be informed about further progress in this regard.

**55. As a consequence of the merger of erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MoIA) with MEA, the office of the Protector General of Emigrant (PGoE) has become the responsibility of the latter. Based on the under-funding and under-staffing of Protector of Emigrant offices (PoEs), the Committee had exhorted the Ministry to pay requisite attention to these offices through provisioning of adequate funds and human capital. The Committee had also asked the Ministry to draw a roadmap with fixed timelines for establishing more PoE offices. The Committee note that thirteenth PoE office has been operationalized and states like Odisha and Tripura have shown interest in opening of PoE office in their respective states. The Ministry has, however, remained silent on the Committee's recommendation relating to augmentation of financial and human resources of PoE offices. The Committee once again urge the Ministry to desist from furnishing partial replies as it constrains their oversight functioning. The Committee, therefore, desire to be apprised about their earlier recommendation regarding measures for strengthening of PoE offices and progress made with regard to opening of PoE offices at the earliest.**

## **WELFARE OF OVERSEAS INDIANS**

### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 32)**

56. The Committee were aware that various schemes and programmes are undertaken by the Ministry for protection and welfare of Overseas Indians. It was observed that schemes like India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI), Study India Programme, Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) and Tracing the Roots Scheme had been closed between 2014 and 2018. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) acted as an effective instrument for engagement with our Diaspora. The Ministry had informed that in order to leverage the soft power of Indian Diaspora, it has been working to design appropriate and well-calibrated institutional responses. While tendering evidence before the Committee, the Foreign Secretary spelt out the '4 C's' approach of Government of India for engagement with the Indian Diaspora. These included Connect with India, Care for the safety and security, Celebrate with Diaspora and Contribute to India's Development.

Keeping in mind the size, magnitude and depth of our Diaspora across the globe, the Committee felt that the allocations made to various schemes and programmes for the welfare of Overseas Indians was uneven and inadequate. The Committee were hopeful that following the merger of MoIA and MEA, the engagement with Overseas Indians would receive due impetus. Upon a close scrutiny of the schemes, programmes and activities relating to Overseas Indians, the Committee found that the Ministry's assertion that highest priority had been given to Overseas Indian Affairs, post merger, did not find corresponding resonance in the budgetary allocation. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Ministry should constitute a working group to assess all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians and apprise them about its outcome within six months. The Ministry should also ensure that requisite institutional, administrative and fiscal arrangements are made so that the objectives behind merger of the Ministries are achieved.

57. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated as per the Committee's recommendation that Ministry should constitute a working group to assess all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians and apprise them about its outcome within six months is duly noted. It is submitted that all schemes and programmes for welfare of



overseas Indians are regularly reviewed at the level of the Minister-in-Charge and necessary action taken to optimise their functioning. Some examples are:

- (i) Study India Programme (SIP) was closed in 2016 given the similarity of SIP with KIP (Know India Programme);
- (ii) The format of the PBD Convention was changed from annual to once in two years after 2015. PBD conferences were held in the interval between two conventions and their deliberations fed into the plenary sessions of the PBD Convention. This was done to make the convention more meaningful and give the diaspora a voice in policy making in Government of India;
- (iii) Videsh Sampark programme was started from the year 2017 as a part of MEA's state outreach programme to promote in-depth dialogue between the Ministry and State Governments to design appropriate and well-calibrated institutional responses for Diaspora engagement and migration management;
- (iv) Modality of implementation of Media Campaign programme was changed from showing ads on various television channels, to roping in prominent personalities in different languages to promote safe and legal migration on social media;
- (v) Global Indian Students Portal is being developed to provide complete and comprehensive information on educational facilities abroad to Indian Students wishing to pursue studies abroad;
- (vi) Know India Programme was revamped during FY 2015-16 along with enhancing the budget allocation for the scheme. The enhancement of budget was made on account of increasing the number of KIP visits to India to 6 during one FY and due to addition of new element of Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY) as a special KIP. Besides, some new elements were also added in the KIP programme, like- Provide T-Shirt to KIP Participants; Visit to Kingdom of Dreams, Gurgaon (Theme Park); Showcasing a Bollywood Movie and a visit to Film City, Noida for the participants.
- (vii) India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) was closed in March 31, 2018 to avoid duplication of work and to enhance the efficiency of other schemes;

(viii) Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) was closed down with Cabinet approval on 30.3.2017 after functions related to promotion of investments by overseas Indians shifted to Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) following merger of MOIA with MEA;

(ix) Tracing the Roots Scheme was reviewed in 2016-17 and closed down with EAM's approval after it was observed that performance of the scheme was unsatisfactory with only 18 applications in 8 years;

Thus it may be seen that Ministry is constantly assessing the performance, reviewing and carrying out necessary changes to all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians. This review is carried out at the level of the Minister-in-Charge through existing institutional, administrative and fiscal arrangements which are sufficient for the purpose. Thus, it is felt that creation of a parallel authority to carry out the same functions as are already being carried out by Ministry is not necessary, but rather would entail duplication of work.

**58. Upon examination of the Demands for Grants of the Ministry for 2020-21, the Committee discerned a pattern, wherein, budgetary allocation to most schemes/programmes related to welfare of Overseas Indians has witnessed a progressive decline. After the merger of erstwhile MoIA with MEA, instead of according importance to this aspect, the Ministry has considerably downsized budgetary allocation to schemes/programmes directly impinging on welfare of overseas Indians. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should constitute a working group to assess all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians and apprise them about the outcome of its assessment within six months. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry has informed that all schemes and programmes for the welfare of overseas Indians are regularly reviewed at the level of the Minister-in-Charge and necessary action is taken to optimize their functioning. The Ministry has also submitted that the creation of a parallel authority to carry out the same functions as are already being carried out by Ministry would entail duplication of work. In the view of the Committee, the Working Group is not a parallel authority but a mechanism within the Ministry to facilitate a comprehensive assessment. Hence an assessment**

**study done by such Group is not the duplication of work rather it will only help in reorienting the focus of the schemes and programmes for overseas Indians. The Ministry may, therefore, conduct an assessment study by a Working Group for a thorough review of all schemes and programmes and based on its outcome, make a compelling case for enhanced allocation under this head for the next Fiscal.**

### **AWARENESS/MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 35)**

59. The Committee were displeased to note that the allocation under this head has been reduced from Rs. 11 crore in 2019-20 (BE) to Rs. 5 crore in 2020-21 (BE). The budget under the sub-head had been almost halved at a time when renewed efforts are required to spread awareness about safe and legal migration. The Committee had expressed their strong disapproval of the reduction being effected in such an important area of emigration. The Committee had noted that various personalities have been approached for greater outreach of media awareness campaigns and shooting of the ads would commence during financial year 2020-21. The involvement of famous personalities in the ad campaigns was a welcome step and the Ministry should seek funds at the RE stage for the advertisements. The Committee had also urged that the Ministry should carry out an impact assessment study of the awareness campaign and in the light of its findings, establish a formal mechanism for continuous monitoring and evaluation of these campaigns. The Committee had also recommended that the Ministry proactively engage with the State Governments to deepen the impact of information and awareness campaigns.

60. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it carried out media campaign on safe and legal migration by bringing out ads on safe and legal migration on various TV Channels and newspaper ads. The ads were also disseminated on social media by using twitter and facebook. Following a directive, the ads were sent to the Advertisement Approval Cell (AAC) which had observed that ads could be prepared by involving prominent personalities in regional languages and disseminated through social media at minimum expenditure. Thereafter, Ministry approached various prominent personalities in Hindi and regional languages for their support on gratis basis. Prominent persons have already agreed for their support in Hindi and Five regional languages for Media Awareness Campaign on gratis

basis. This resulted in economy of expenditure with due realisation of objective involving regional personalities to run an effective awareness campaign.

61. The Ministry also stated that it is carrying out impact assessment study of the media awareness through Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), including its campaigns on social media. The Recommendation of the Committee have been duly noted to establish a formal mechanism for continuous monitoring and evaluation of media awareness campaigns, after findings of the media assessment study by IIMC. Ministry has already engaged with State Governments to disseminate media awareness programme through electronic and print media either free or at the cost of the State Government. Many State Governments are doing the programme successfully to deepen the impact of information and awareness campaigns. The Ministry is following up with other States to disseminate media awareness programme.”

**62. Recognizing the importance of awareness campaigns in spreading awareness about safe and legal migration, the Committee had asked the Ministry to conduct an assessment study of the awareness campaigns and on the basis of its outcome, establish a formal monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The Committee are pleased to learn that Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) is conducting an impact assessment study of the media awareness including social media. The Ministry was also asked to actively engage with State Governments for dissemination of awareness programmes through electronic and print media. The Ministry in this context has furnished a generic reply only. The Committee desire to be apprised about the findings of the assessment study once completed. The Committee also recommend that the Ministry prepare a document on the specific measures taken by State Governments on awareness campaigns and furnish the same to the Committee at the earliest.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL.NO. 37)**

##### **ICCR'S REGIONAL OFFICES**

63. The Committee were aware that ICCR is the nodal organization for the projection of India's soft power abroad, and ever since its establishment in 1950, it has emerged as the principal governmental organization for our cultural engagement with the world and for

promoting our culture in all its magnificence through various activities. The Committee were pleased to note that in BE 2020-21, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) had been provided with an enhanced allocation of Rs. 290 crore. The Ministry had specified that the increased allocation has been provisioned for opening of 3 Indian Cultural Centres at Washington, Tel Aviv, and Paris, expenditure on the deployment of Hindi Chairs abroad, Conference & Seminars and Celebration of IDY. It is heartening to discern that there has been efficient utilization of funds by ICCR for the past three years. On a query raised by the Committee, the Ministry has informed that it is exploring the possibility of Partnership and PPP Models for ICCR where the partners also put in resources for executing projects. As a pre-eminent organization of the Ministry of External Affairs, ICCR's activities are spread across the globe ranging from providing scholarships to organizing exhibitions to performing arts and visuals arts programme. In the opinion of the Committee, even the increased budgetary allocation provisioned to ICCR is not in consonance with its wide-ranging activities. It is understandable that as a not for profit and 100 percent grantee organization under the Ministry of External Affairs, there exist limits for ICCR's ability to raise extra-budgetary resources to cater to its expansive activities.

Given the increasing salience of soft power projection in our Foreign Policy and the ICCR's critical role in it, the Committee were of the considered view that the latter should have augmented financial and manpower resources. It was, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should prepare an annual roadmap for activities/programmes to be organized by ICCR along with the enhanced number of scholars and the role of ICCR within MEA in the pursuit of the \$5 trillion economy and on the basis of it seek additional financial allocation at the RE stage. The Committee had also desire that the Ministry should revisit the necessity of having ICCR Regional Offices when Zonal Cultural Centres are in existence.

64. In its Action Taken Reply the Ministry replied that ICCR has prepared its Annual Plan of Action for financial year 2020-21 based on proposals received from Missions, Posts and ICCs overseas as well as programme/activities planned at ICCR headquarters and Regional offices. As recommended by Standing Committee, based on increased number of programmes / activities, as planned, Ministry strive for sufficient funds at RE 2020-21 stage based on robust quarterly expenditure patterns Mandates of Zonal Cultural Centres of the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Regional Offices of ICCR are not same, reason why existence of Regional Offices was

necessitated. While mandate of MoC's Zonal Cultural Centres is to promote culture within India, identify the artists and artisans and promote their work, create data-base of the cultural wealth available in India, mandate of ICCR's Regional Offices is primarily (a) to ensure smooth implementation of ICCR administered scholarship schemes and (b) promote cultural exchange between India and other countries. Both these functions are not part of mandate of MoC's Zonal Cultural Centres.

It is also pointed out that originally ICCR was under the administrative control the then Ministry of Education and was/is the nodal organization for attending to matters related to welfare of the foreign students studying in India, for which originally the Regional Offices were established. ICCR was transferred to Ministry of External Affairs primarily because its mandate included focus on exchange between India and other countries and fostering and strengthening relations between India and other countries through cultural and educational exchanges. Role of ICCR's Regional Offices was necessitated for taking the outreach of this exchange beyond Delhi to all parts of India and taking the cultural wealth of various parts of India to the world.

**65. In the considered opinion of the Committee, the allocation made to ICCR were not in proportion to its expansive mandate and activities. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should take appropriate steps to augment its financial and human resources. The Ministry was also asked to revisit the necessity of having both ICCR Regional Offices and Zonal Cultural Centres. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry has submitted that ICCR has prepared Annual Plan of Action for financial year 2020-21 based on proposals received from Missions, Posts and ICCs overseas as well as programme/activities planned at ICCR headquarters and regional offices. The Committee note that the mandate of Ministry of Culture's Zonal Cultural Centres and ICCR's Regional Offices is distinct. While the former seeks to promote culture within India, identify the artists and artisans and promote their work, create data-base of the cultural wealth available in India, the mandate of ICCR's Regional Offices is primarily concerned with promoting cultural exchange between India and other countries. Noting the distinct mandate of the Regional Offices and Zonal Councils, the Committee would urge the Ministry to undertake an impact assessment study of these two mechanisms and also work on chalking out an annual plan of activities that can intensify India's soft power outreach to other countries.**

## ICCR CULTURAL CENTRES

### RECOMMENDATION (SL.NO.38)

66. The Committee had observed that with the larger objective of promoting awareness and appreciation of India's rich cultural heritage, the ICCR currently operates 37 Indian Cultural Centres across the globe. These Centres were instruments of India's cultural outreach abroad and project our soft power through a wide range of cultural, academic and intellectual activities. The Committee were satisfied to learn that after the much delayed establishment of cultural Centres in two significant places like Washington and Paris both the Centres were expected to be completed and become operational by the middle of financial year 2020-21. The Committee had therefore desired that the Cultural Centres in Washington and Paris are operationalized positively this year and a Cultural Centre of ICCR should be opened in Gulf region. The Committee would like to be apprised about the developments in that regard.

67. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has furnished the following information in this regard as under:-

#### **“Renovation of U-Street property, Washington**

Being a heritage building, permission of local authorities is required for undertaking renovations in the property. The completion of work is expected till June 2021.

#### **Renovation of SVCC, Paris**

The renovation work was to be undertaken through separate contractors for various works awarded in May 2018. In February 2019, Mission was informed that one of the contractors, M/s. Lacroix, entrusted with civil works was declared bankrupt. Since other contractors' work would follow the civil works, in absence of civil works, the work at the site stopped. Judicial Administrator ordered M/s. SPID to undertake the remaining work of M/s. Lacroix. The proposal is under active consideration of the Ministry.

**68. ICCR's cultural Centres are the principal instruments of India's institutional cultural outreach. Notwithstanding this fact, the absence of Cultural Centres in two global cultural hubs – Washington and Paris – and the Gulf region is intriguing. Regarding the status of Cultural Centres in Washington and Paris, the Ministry has informed that renovation of the property in the former is expected to be completed by June 2021 while**

**the renovation of SVCC, Paris has been halted due to bankruptcy of contractor and the proposal for completion of civil works by another contractor is still under consideration of the Ministry. The Ministry has not responded on issue of opening up of Cultural Centres in the Gulf region. The Committee strongly recommend that the renovation work of Cultural Centres in Washington and Paris should not be further delayed and completed expeditiously. The Ministry should also chalk out a plan for opening of Cultural Centres in the Gulf region with fixed timelines and apprise the Committee about the same.**

### **FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY**

#### **RECOMMENDATION (SL. NO. 40)**

69. In the light of our deepening bilateral, regional and multilateral engagements, the Committee felt that the absence of a formalized policy document covering all aspects of our foreign policy was surprising. The Ministry had asserted that the practice of diplomacy required flexibility in order to respond to rapid shifts and unexpected developments in the global foreign policy environment. The Committee had noted that the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry along with its network of autonomous bodies like Indian Council of World Affairs and Research and Information Systems, think tanks and academic collaborations provided a well organized mechanism for the purpose of Policy Planning and Research in foreign affairs. Over the years the Committee had been exhorting the Ministry to spell out India's grand strategy encapsulating the dynamism in short term, medium term and long term objectives of our foreign policy. The Committee were of the considered view that the grand foreign policy strategy would also bolster the case for enhanced allocation by the Ministry of Finance. The Committee had, therefore, reiterated their earlier recommendation that the Ministry of External Affairs should take all requisite institutional as well intellectual steps to spell out a coherent and balanced Grand Foreign Policy strategy for India on priority basis.

70. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that while no single overarching and formalized policy document can capture all aspects of India's foreign policy, the underlying principles of India's diplomatic strategy are long-established and enduring. These include safeguarding India's sovereignty and security, enabling India's domestic economic transformation, and building influence in global forums through bilateral, multilateral and regional efforts.



Indian foreign policy and diplomatic actions must also be agile and responsive to the imperatives of the time and to changing circumstances. India is today an emerging power and a large economy with an impressive track record of growth. Aligning our actions with the national objectives of promoting 3 Ts- Trade, Tourism and Technology is one of our major objectives. This has been broken down to specific tactical measures that promote diversification of supply chains, foreign investment flows, Indian exports (some thrust areas being: agri products, automobiles, textiles, garments, consumer durable industries, e-commerce, yoga and AYUSH), virtual tourism, frontline technologies (some thrust areas being: tele-education, tele-medicine) and link up start-ups with foreign markets.

A number of other strategic objectives guide executive action. Strengthening and expanding connectivity in the neighbourhood, which acts as force multipliers to accelerate regional growth and development, promote people-to-people contact and encourage trade and commerce, is one such strategic goal. Other strategic goals include supporting Indian companies through leveraging Indian developmental assistance projects, generation of employment opportunities abroad especially in health care and digital domains, supporting the pharma and healthcare sectors with their competitive advantages in generics, APIs, biologics, clinical research and equipment, enhance global energy partnerships in renewable energy, clean tech, energy efficiency, and petroleum and natural gas, promoting India as preferred destination of higher learning, promotion of India digital platforms and working with state governments to develop export strategies based on its sector competitiveness and material and human resource strengths.

The pandemic, which is the greatest shock to the international system since World War II, has created severe disruptions. The Ministry of External Affairs is at the forefront of the management of the external aspects of this crisis. It has tried to align its response to the well-established parameters of its long-term diplomatic strategy and to the more contemporary compulsions of the pandemic. Some of these long-term objectives include assisting like minded nations through development assistance in the form of medical aid or pharmaceutical supplies; enhancing our global economic profile as a manufacturer by exporting critical medications; and tending to the needs of overseas Indians and the diaspora through initiatives such as Vande Bharat.

The Ministry of External Affairs, through Vande Bharat, has worked on the return of over 5 lakh Indians in an extremely complex and demanding logistical operation by land, sea and air. This operation involved multiple agencies including Air India, the Navy, foreign carriers, chartered flight carriers land movement authorities. The Ministry has also delivered COVID related medical supplies to over 100 countries and deployed Rapid Response Teams to 8 nations by leveraging its global network.

Diplomatic activity has adapted to changing times by using virtual and digital platforms. Prime Minister and External Affairs have initiated and participated in a very large number of multilateral and bilateral digital interactions.

The Government continuously assesses and refines its diplomatic stance and policies in response to evolving global challenges and opportunities which have a bearing on India's short, medium and long term interests. In the last 5 years, India's proactive diplomacy and rising global stature has been reflected in its pivotal role in shaping the global agenda on an array of issues. Relations with our neighbours have been given the highest priority (Neighbourhood First policy), with emphasis on greater connectivity, stronger cooperation and broader contacts. Ministry's external outreach has been aligned with Indian developmental priorities. The objectives of attracting foreign investment, including for infrastructure development and infusion of technology and best practices for advancing India's development programmes such as Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Smart Cities, Swachh Bharat, Namami Gange, AMRUT, have been at the forefront of all high-level exchanges.

Indian diplomatic strategy, both in response to contemporary realities and more long-term trends is articulated, in accordance with custom, precedent, law and parliamentary rules, in documents that are available in the public domain. The Annual Report of the Ministry that contains a comprehensive statement of policies followed in the diplomatic sphere and their implementation is tabled in Parliament. Public statements by the Minister of External Affairs, the Ministers of State in the Ministry and officials of the Ministry of External Affairs which are collated on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs are also utilized to articulate Indian diplomatic and foreign policy objectives. This is supplemented by other diplomatic documents which contain public expression of foreign policy priorities. This is in accordance with international practice as followed by the foreign offices of major powers.

The Government policy of simultaneous engagement with all major powers; new and more intensive orientation towards the Indo-Pacific, strengthening in relations with West Asia, Central Asia and Gulf regions and upgradation in the scale of India's vision for relations with African, Latin American and East European countries are all reflective of a more energetic, directed and focused approach.

The Government continues to proactively reach out and rescue Indians stranded in situations of crises and conflict across different regions. The outreach to the Indian diaspora, rekindling their sense of belonging to India and enlisting their support to achieving national objectives, also continues.

It has to be kept in mind that the practice of diplomacy requires to be flexible. The current global foreign policy environment is characterized by rapid shifts and unexpected developments, that transcend boundaries of land and water. Agility, in policy terms, is required to respond to these swift developments.

It is again submitted that the current practice of articulating strategies as described above allows the articulation of foreign policy within the parameters set by law, practice and the rules of parliamentary democracy while allowing clarity, consistency and, where necessary, the required flexibility.

**71. Over the years in their DFG Reports, the Committee have been strongly urging that the Ministry should articulate a cogent and comprehensive grand foreign policy strategy as a guiding framework for our bilateral, regional and multilateral engagements. The Ministry in its action taken replies have justified the absence of an overarching framework on grounds of imparting flexibility and fluidity to our foreign policy. In the considered opinion of the Committee, the Ministry's response has been too general. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Ministry should conduct a comparative study of countries' grand strategy. Based on such a study, the Ministry should justify the rationale for not spelling out a grand foreign policy document/strategy. The Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome of such a study at the earliest.**

## CHAPTER II

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

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

The Committee note that since 2015 the Ministry of External Affairs has been practicing a purposeful and well defined policy of Diplomacy for Development. They also note that in the General Budget, 2019-20, the Government has announced its initiation of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. The Foreign Secretary when asked about the role of Ministry of External Affairs in the scheme of things and steps taken to make this goal a reality, enumerated several measures the Ministry is taking/intending to take in tandem with other ministries/departments of Government of India. Over the years, the Ministry of External Affairs has been acting as a facilitator for various Line Ministries in achievement of economic targets. Through its development cooperation/ assistance programme and Investment Promotion and Publicity Programme, the Ministry has been instrumental in facilitating the cause of Indian economic diplomacy abroad.

Having extensively considered across the board challenging requirements of the goal of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 and the efforts being put by MEA as of now as their contribution towards realization of this goal, the Committee strongly feel that MEA could do more with better allocation of resources in this regard. In the globalised era the foreign policy elements and the economic policy elements are two sides of the same coin. What the Ministry is required to do immediately is to come up with a clear-cut foreign policy woven with the strands of economic policy. It is but imperative that the Ministry expand its activities in the economic realm and play a proactive and pivotal role in India's vision of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion dollar economy. The Committee understand that it is a challenging task which may require strengthening of existing division with appropriate human resources and adequate budgetary allocation.

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

Hon'ble Parliamentary Standing Committee, in its Recommendation No. 1, has required the Ministry to come up with a clear cut foreign policy woven with the strands of economic policy. It further states that it is imperative that the Ministry expand its activities in the economic realm and play a proactive and pivotal role in India's vision of becoming a US\$ 5 Trillion economy. To this end, some of the key initiatives planned to be undertaken by the Ministry in this regard are enumerated as below.

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## **I. MEA's Economic Diplomacy for Facilitating Trade and Investments:**

The Ministry of External Affairs will leverage its diplomatic resources for achieving the defined trade and investment goals. It will systematically involve the missions across the world to reach out to business and economic stakeholders. The MEA, in consultations with the Line Ministries, will enhance involvement and engagement of Missions for increasing trade and investment.

**Coordination and Liaison with DPIIT:** The MEA liaises closely with DPIIT for success of the GOI's flagship programs including 'Make in India' and 'Access India' initiatives. The Ministry is also working closely with the DPIIT to formulate a plus one strategy, to pitch India as the preferred alternative for low cost manufacturing in the region. The Ministry will liaise closely with DPIIT and Invest India to disseminate opportunities for investment in India, encourage greater collaboration of Indian businesses with foreign investors, explore opportunities for technological collaboration and work on development and promotion of start-up ecosystems.

**Market Expansion & Investment Promotion Activities:** The Ministry will be coordinating with its Missions/Posts, setting short-term and long-term goals for the Three Ts highlighted by the PM: Trade, Tourism and Technology. All efforts are made to allocate sufficient budget to this end under MEA's Market Expansion Activities Budget.

**Website and Global Mapping of Resources:** The Ministry is also working to launch its website "indbiz.gov.in". The website aims to be a one-stop source of all information on Indian economy and business environment in India for foreign enterprises, as well as Indian businesses going abroad and for Indian Missions and Posts.

**Public Procurement:** The Ministry has been working in close coordination with our Missions/Posts abroad to garner detailed information on public procurement policies of various countries, to aid the Indian businesses in identifying opportunities for public tendering available in different countries.

**Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS):** The Ministry of External Affairs is a part of the Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS) on Economy and Resources, and is participating extensively in ongoing deliberations on the strategies to achieve the GOI's target of a US\$ 5 Trillion Economy.

## **II. Enhancing Development Partnership:**

**Development Partnership with Africa:** The MEA will be enhancing the reach and magnitude of India's Development Partnership with Africa, under the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-4) through Lines of Credit (LOC), Grant assistance, Small Development Projects (SDP), Technical Consultancy, Disaster Relief and Humanitarian aid, as well as capacity-building programmes.

**Third Country Development Partnerships:** As a part of its development partnerships, the MEA will be partnering with countries for projects in third countries, between 2019 and 2024.

**Capacity building in Human resources:** This will be done through the Africa-wide online projects (2019-24) in phases, including - Tele medicine and Tele-education: e-Vidya Bharati & e-Arogya Bharati.

**III. Increasing Connectivity with Immediate Neighbours:** The Ministry will continue to focus on enhancing connectivity with neighboring countries especially Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal, including roads, rail, inland waterways, shipping, energy and airlinks. These include: Motor Vehicle Agreement with Bangladesh; Finalization of SOPs for use of Chattogram and Mongla ports for movement of Indian goods; Initiating a coordinated and connected bus service with Myanmar from Imphal to Mandalay; India-Bangladesh Friendship pipeline project; early completion of the Akhaura-Agartala Rail link; completion of work on the 8 Integrated Check Points to improve border trade facilities with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, and; establishment of new Border Haats (Markets) with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China.

**IV. Partnering with States for Greater Outreach & Economic Engagement:** Provide enhanced funding under (a) “State Facilitation Abroad” Fund – allocated to Indian Missions/ Posts abroad for undertaking ‘state specific activities’ to enhance the external outreach; and (b) “State Facilitation Knowledge Support” Fund – that is available to Branch Secretariats, Regional Passport Offices and Passport Offices to undertake ‘state specific activities’. State-specific promotional strategies have been devised and deployed by the Missions to encourage promotion of exports, and inbound tourism.

**V. Sector-Specific initiatives: Matching Complementarities:** Increased push for negotiation of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), Air Services Agreements (ASAs), Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and, Social Security Agreements (SSAs).

**VI. Engagement with Multilateral Institutions:** India’s multilateral economic engagements in G20, BRICS, IBSA, Development Banks etc. are important mechanisms for developing common understanding with other partner countries on fiscal, monetary, financial, taxation, anti-corruption, customs issues. Efforts are also made at these fora to reduce the cost of trade, remittances, investments etc. that has positive effect. These mechanisms result in strengthening the global financial stability, which, in turn results in our economic growth.

**VII. Mitigation of the Economic Impact of COVID-19:** As a part of the *Aatma Nirbhar Bharat* Initiative, the MEA has been working in collaboration with its Missions to chalk out a detailed strategy to increase exports of India’s goods and services in other countries. MEA is working to identify the areas and countries where our manufacturers have the potential to emerge as the low-cost preferred alternative for imports. Missions are providing us with detailed inputs on the Non-Tariff Barriers being faced by Indian exporters in their respective countries of accreditation. The Missions are also working to identify newer lines of goods and services as well as new destinations where India’s exports can be enhanced. In order to identify and plug in the immediate gaps in the global supply chains, the Missions, in collaboration with the MEA and DPIIT, are already in the process of exploring sourcing and export opportunities in various countries and to guide our exporters by putting potential suppliers and buyers in touch with our EPCs and Industry and also facilitate B2B meetings for them. The MEA is working in close

collaboration with the concerned line ministries for expanding our agri-exports to at least 15 focus countries. For this we are in the process of developing ‘country-specific export strategies’, based on the inputs received from the Missions in the focus countries, as well as the recommendations made by the concerned Ministries and Departments.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

While examining the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21, the Committee observe that as against a demand of Rs 23657.76 crore, an allocation of Rs. 17346.71 crore has been made. The given budgetary allocation is 3% less than BE 2019-20 allocation and 0.15% less than RE 2019-20 allocation. Even in terms of percentage, MEA’s share in the total Government of India expenditure has come down to 0.57%. In view of the expanding mandate and global footprint of India, the reduction in allocation to MEA at both RE 2019-20 and BE 2020-21 stage is beyond comprehension. Furthermore, the Ministry has apprised the Committee that no reason has been furnished by the Ministry of Finance for diminished allocation for BE 2020-21. The Ministry has informed that due to reduction in funds disbursement in the last fiscal, the Ministry had to undertake re-assessment of fund requirements for various heads in order to ensure that ongoing projects, schemes and programmes are not adversely impacted.

In the considered opinion of the Committee, the underfunding of the Ministry of External Affairs will invariably lead to undermining of our foreign policy objectives. Taking a serious view of this issue and considering foreign policy as one of the Government’s top priority, the Committee strongly recommend that the Government of India should reconsider and enhance the allocation to MEA by at least nearly 20 per cent than what it is being provisioned now so that it can be commensurate with India’s burgeoning global outreach and engagement. The Ministry of External Affairs is urged to identify priority heads to suitably incorporate the enhancement in allocation and seek additional requirement of funds at the RE 2020-21 stage so that lack of financial resources does not hinder the conduct of Indian foreign policy.

### **Reply of the Government**

In reference to the Sitting of the Hon’ble Standing Committee on External Affairs on 27 February 2020, the Committee had instructed Ministry to provide a note with justification for further increase in the BE 2020-21 allocation from the allocation of Rs. 17346.71cr announced in the Union Budget 2020-21. Ministry has already submitted the detailed note after taking note of the recommendation.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

#### **(Recommendation No 4)**

In their previous Demand for Grants Reports, the Committee had exhorted the Ministry to incorporate the idea of zero-based budgeting for drawal of budgetary demands. The Committee note that the overarching principles of zero-based budgeting is a guiding factor in the continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary allocation as against fund utilization in Ministry's budget management. The Committee are happy to learn and appreciate about the development of a rigorous mechanism of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings, where detailed exercise for head-wise evaluation of projects and evolving needs under various heads of Technical and Economic Cooperation as well as on the Non-Scheme section are undertaken. Furthermore, the Ministry has been scrupulously adhering to all instructions contained in various Circulars of Ministry of Finance relating to economy measures, rationalization of expenditure, etc and as a result, annual budget utilization has improved significantly. A fact that needs to be appreciated. However, despite the existence of a credible and meticulous budgetary planning process undertaken by the MEA and almost perfect spending of the allocated budget, the persistent mismatch between budgetary demand and budgetary allocation appears puzzling. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the Ministry should continue making sustained efforts towards projecting a rigorous, objective and realistic demand by incorporating the idea of zero based budgeting and on this basis make a positive case before the Ministry of Finance for provisioning of requisite funds at the RE and supplementary grants stage.

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

Ministry has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members. The principle of zero-based budgeting continues to guide the continuous evaluation and assessment of budgetary requirements under different heads, including our development partnership projects. 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. The Ministry will also continue to make efforts to convince Ministry of Finance of its budgetary demands at the RE and supplementary grants stages justified by efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditures, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee observe that in terms of distribution, about 43 % of MEA's budget is on Scheme side and about 57 % on the Non-Scheme. The Scheme section primarily comprises of Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries, which is a central plank of our diplomatic outreach. The Committee further observe that there has been a marginal decrease in allocation under this head during BE 2019-20. In its queries on the issue, the Ministry has stated



that the slightly reduced allocation in BE 2020-21 (Rs. 7449.65 crores) is still much higher than the allocations made in 2018-19 (Rs. 5985.05 crores) and in previous years. The Committee find the justification offered by the Ministry unconvincing. The Committee also note that the expenditure under the Scheme section is closely monitored and funds are released on the basis of progress reports of the implementation of programmes and schemes. The Ministry has also informed that as a result of intensive monitoring and review of technical aid and development projects in the past year, several new initiatives and projects have been identified in consultation with the concerned beneficiary host governments.

The Committee are of the considered view that the Ministry of External Affairs should continue making persistent efforts to pursue the Ministry of Finance to facilitate a better appreciation of our technical and development cooperation and associated fund requirements. The Ministry may also apprise the Committee about the various new initiatives and projects once it gets crystallized.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry accords utmost priority towards effective and secure budgetary allocation & utilisation 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 based on efficient utilization of the allocated budgetary resources to the Ministry. The allocations for various Aid heads are done through careful prioritization within available resources & with priority that none of our developmental work suffers any setback and all our commitments are implemented smoothly and speedily. Reallocations at RE stage are carried out to cater to spending needs based on reassessed needs at RE stage based on physical progress by identifying savings, wherever possible, after undertaking a realistic spending assessment based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress. Hence, budgetary allocation process is dynamically reassessed through the financial year with the sole objective of effective & outcome-based technical & development cooperation programme.

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 and also keep Honourable committee apprised about the various new initiatives and projects.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

### **(Recommendation No 7)**

The Committee are pleased to note the optimal and even expenditure pattern of MEA for the financial year 2019-20. On a thorough scrutiny of the utilization pattern of budgetary allocation during 2019-20, the Committee found that the Ministry has already utilized 83.77% of RE 2019-20 allocation. The Committee note that with continuous persuasion by the Committee

the Ministry has developed a mechanism to ensure optimal utilization of budgetary resources during each quarter of the financial year and the expenditure is being closely and regularly monitored by the Financial Advisor in consultation with Divisional Heads, through quarterly expenditure review meetings. The Ministry has also informed the Committee about new instructions issued by the Ministry of Finance regarding limiting of expenditure in the last quarter to only 25% of BE. Further the March spending has also been curtailed to a maximum 10% from the previous ceiling of 15%. The Committee are happy to learn that due to timely utilization and re-appropriation the Ministry will be able to present a convincing result sheet before the Ministry of Finance for a better appreciation of their future requirement of funds. The Committee also hope that the Ministry will also abide by the new ceiling of 10% for March spending.

The Committee are appreciative of the balanced and prudent utilization pattern of MEA for RE 2019-20 and urge that it should keep up the good performance in the last quarter of 2019-20 and in the new financial year. Such an expenditure trend will yield three benefits, that is, lead to timely progress of physical projects and targets, assist in making a strong case for increased allocation and also bolster our international credibility.

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

The Ministry appreciates the positive response of the committee and will continue to make more efforts in this direction to realize credible budgetary demands justified by past efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditures based on implementation progress, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to further improve budgetary assessment, management and utilization.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee observe that the budgetary allocation under the sub-head 'Passport and Emigration' has decreased from Rs. 1620.95 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 1604.39 crore at RE 2019-20 to Rs. 1348.59 crore during BE 2020-21. The Committee note that the sub-head 'Protector General of Emigrant' (PGoE) has been brought under this head and a new sub-head 'Welfare of Overseas Indians' has been opened under this head *w.e.f.* FY2019-20. It is disconcerting to find that despite the inclusion of two significant sub-heads, namely Protector General of Emigrant and Welfare of Overseas Indian Affairs under this minor head, budgetary cuts have been effected. The Committee are of the view that the Ministry should provide requisite funds under such a critical minor-head, particularly after the merger of erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs. Moreover, in view of the significant contribution of revenue from the passport and visa services to the Consolidated Fund of India, sufficient investment in improving passport and visa service delivery is essential. The Committee, therefore, also recommend that the Ministry should seek additional funds for this

minor head that directly impinges on public services delivery and welfare of our Overseas Indians. The Committee desire that a Videsh Bhawan may be established in every state capital on the lines of the one set up in Mumbai. These Videsh Bhawans should be the umbrella organization in each state for providing public services relating to all activities of MEA. In view of the compelling need of such institutions in the states, the Committee desire that Videsh Bhawans in all state capitals may be set up within a period of 18months.

### **Reply of the Government**

Built on the pillar of cooperative federalism, Videsh Bhawan is conceived as an integrated MEA office which houses all MEA offices such as RPO, Branch Secretariat, POE and ICCR regional office in States under one roof. The offices would have a multi-dimensional approach and serve several stakeholders by acting as a bridge between States and foreign Governments; supporting local businessmen in furthering their interests abroad; liaising and extending support to NRIs in need etc. The Committee’s recommendation has been duly noted and the Ministry has taken steps to seek Cabinet approval for setting up Videsh Bhawans in state capitals, within identified timelines.

The current status of the integrated “Videsh Bhawans” is as follows:

<b>City</b>	<b>Status</b>
Mumbai	Already Established and Inaugurated
Bhopal	Construction in Progress. Expected to be completed by end 2020.
Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru	Renovation/ expansion work in progress. Expected to be completed in 2020/2021.
Chennai, Kolkata, Ranchi	Design work completed/ nearing completion
Hyderabad	Boundary wall constructed.
Amaravati	Land Acquired
Dehradun, Srinagar, Guwahati	State Governments requested to allot alternate/ additional plot of land

Remaining State/ UT capitals	Request for Land Allotment made
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[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 12)**

The Committee note that against a sanctioned strength of 2,697, the actual working strength of the Central Passport Office (CPO) cadre is 1,821 as on 1February, 2020. Shortage of personnel in CPO has been stated as a constraining factor in expansion of the Passport Seva Project. It is observed that there are 876 posts which are lying vacant in various grades in CPO. As per the Ministry, the difficulty in filing up the vacant posts stems from the extant Recruitment Rules. Direct recruitment is possible only in grades of Office Assistant, Junior Passport Assistant (JPA) Stenographers, Junior Translator and Assistant Superintendent. The Ministry has placed indents for 310 with the Staff Selection Commission since 2017 for recruitment in these grades. Further, the Ministry has engaged 361 Data Entry Operators and 60 Office Assistant (MTS) through Outsourced Service Provider. The Committee notice that a proposal for physical inspection and staffing study of CPO by the Staff Inspection Unit (SIU) of the Department of Expenditure has been sent to Ministry of Finance in November, 2019.

The issue of human resource crunch has been a major area of concern and has been part of the Committee’s recommendations over the years. Taking serious cognizance of this matter, the Committee would strongly recommend that the Ministry should take up this issue with Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) at the highest level and ensure that the vacant positions are filled up in the shortest possible time. The Ministry should also apprise the Committee about the outcomes of the interaction with DoPT.

**Reply of the Government**

As advised by the Committee, the Ministry has written to Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) drawing the attention to the shortage of manpower in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and requesting them to urgently fill up the vacant posts, which have been indented to the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) from time to time where direct recruitment is available as per extant Recruitment Rules. DoPT has also been requested to expedite conduct of Limited Departmental Competitive Examination by SSC to fill up the earmarked posts of Junior Passport Assistant (JPA), Senior Passport Assistant (SPA) and Assistant Superintendent from the respective feeder posts being one of the modes of recruitment as per extant Recruitment Rules.

Recently, 87 dossiers were provided by the SSC against the indented vacancies of JPA for the year 2017. Out of these, 28 candidates have since joined the CPO and the remaining are expected to join soon.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee observe that the allocation for construction of South Asian University (SAU) has been kept at Rs. 325 crore for BE 2020-21 which is less than BE 2019- 20 allocation and more than RE 2019-20 allocation. The Committee note that there are two budget heads that cater to SAU, namely Operational Expenditure and Capital Expenditure. While the operational expenditure part of the budget is met through contributions from the Member States, the capital budget is met fully by the Government of India. The Committee observe that except India, no country has made any contribution for SAU under Phase II. Regarding the construction of the SAU campus, the Committee note that Package I has been completed; Package II and Package III are expected to be completed by 2020 and clearances relating to Package IV are under process.

Expressing disapproval and disappointment with the undue delay in the construction work of South Asian University Campus, the Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry should accord highest priority for timely construction and completion of the South Asian University project by ensuring that Package II and III are completed by 2020 and necessary clearances for Package IV are obtained at the earliest. The Committee also desire to be apprised of the progress made in this regard at regular intervals.

### **Reply of the Government**

Package I has been completed. Packages II and III are expected to be completed by December 2020.

As regards Package IV, concerted and sustained efforts are being made by the university as well as the Ministry for approval of revised DPR, clearance of forest land pockets and tree cutting permission from Forest Department and expeditious conclusion of court cases. The construction project is handled by the university itself. Ministry provides the finances and monitors the project through regular meetings with the university authorities. The Ministry accords high priority for timely completion of the South Asian University project.

Quarterly Progress Reports on SAU construction project are being sent to the LS Secretariat regularly for updating the esteemed Committee on the progress of work.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

After the approval of Nalanda University Act, 2010 by the Parliament, the Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs has approved financial support of Rs. 2727.10 crore for Nalanda University. Despite the time overrun in the initial stage, the Ministry has submitted that there is steady progress both in terms of physical structure of the campus as well as academic programmes. It is observed that a Project Monitoring Committee has been established to monitor

and evaluate project progress and quality of construction. It is disheartening to know that no contributions have been received from the partner countries during the past three years. The Ministry has informed that the matter of voluntary financial contributions have been taken up with respective Governments through concerned Indian Missions abroad.

As an international institution of national importance for pursuit of intellectual, philosophical and historical studies, the Committee find that the inordinate delay in completion of Nalanda University is highly unfortunate. The Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry should draw a clear roadmap with fixed timelines for completion of the project and adhere to the same. The Ministry should also pro-actively pursue the issue of foreign voluntary contributions with partner countries at all levels.

### **Reply of the Government**

Recommendations of the esteemed Committee have been noted. The academic and administrative wings of the university have since moved to the new campus and functioning from there. All efforts are being made to ensure that Packages still under constructions are completed by their targeted dates. The matter regarding voluntary foreign contribution is being pursued.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

On the basis of data furnished by the Ministry, the Committee observe a decline in allocation under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation' pertaining to our neighbourhood. Barring two sub-heads *i.e.* 'Aid to Bangladesh' and 'Aid to Nepal', there has been a reduction in allocation for development cooperation to South Asian countries. Such a situation is all the more appalling in the light of increasing Chinese presence in providing assistance and undertaking development projects in various countries under the 'Belt and Road Initiative'. The Committee note that in order to deal with this challenge, the Ministry has been extending GoI Lines of Credit (LoC) on concessional terms to 64 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Oceania and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). While appreciating such extensive LoCs, the Committee are of the view that much more needs to be done for positioning India as an emerging economic power. The Committee therefore would urge the Ministry to re-visit the development cooperation, particularly with our neighbours so as to enable long-term partnerships with careful assessment of projects, adequate disposal of funds and efficient implementation.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in MEA is entrusted with implementing India's development cooperation initiatives with partner countries. Some projects, especially infrastructure projects have a longer gestation time and the budget appropriated in that

financial year is commensurate with the project cycle based on physical and financial progress. The budgetary requirements for the financial year are projected after taking into account specific status and anticipated utilization for various projects and initiatives in these countries. This causes a year-on-year variations in the budgetary allocation under a particular aid head. The Government remains committed to stronger development cooperation with our neighbouring countries based on bilateral imperatives and larger policy thrusts such as Neighbourhood First and Act East policy. The neighbourhood remains the largest recipient of Indian developmental assistance.

Development assistance under Lines of Credit (LOCs) is extended in accordance with the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) guidelines issued by Department of Economic Affairs. So far, 302 LOCs aggregating to US\$ 30.66 billion have been extended to 64 countries covering projects in different sectors such as connectivity, energy, hydro power, roads, agriculture, civil infrastructure, capacity building, training, humanitarian assistance and health care etc.

Of the US\$ 15.90 billion that has been committed under GoI LOCs to Asian countries, the largest value of commitments have been made in the India's immediate neighbourhood: Bangladesh (US\$ 7.862 billion), Sri Lanka (US\$ 2.02 billion), Nepal (US\$ 1.65 billion), Mauritius (US\$ 964.80 million), Maldives (US\$ 840 million), Myanmar (US\$ 538.90 million), Seychelles (US\$ 128 million).

There is a specific focus on regional connectivity initiatives in the neighbourhood under GoI LOCs. A total of 98 connectivity projects (44 completed) in 5 countries in the neighbourhood for USD 6.93 billion (INR 49,200 Crore) under GoI Lines of Credit (LOCs). Our LOCs are financing some of critical infrastructure projects of the partner countries.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee note that an allocation of Rs. 200 crore has been provisioned as aid to Bangladesh for BE 2020-21 which is more than the allocation Rs. 175 crore during BE 2019-20 and RE 2019-20 stage. The enhanced allocation has been provisioned in anticipation of new HICDP projects in the areas of education, health, water, culture, urban development, disaster management etc. in the coming Fiscal Year. The Committee observe that physical progress of 29.5% and financial progress of 28.65% has been achieved on the Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project. Timely completion of infrastructure projects is key for our expanding development projects. The Committee, therefore, recommend that all possible measures should be taken to ensure the completion of Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project by September 2020. Moreover, additional fund requirements should be sought at the RE stage for implementation of all ongoing projects in Bangladesh.

### **Reply of the Government**

All possible measures would be taken to ensure the completion of Akhaura Agartala Rail Link Project. Moreover, additional fund requirements would be sought at the RE stage for implementation of all ongoing projects in Bangladesh. The point has been noted for compliance. However, COVID 19 will have some impact on the Demand for Grants scenario in the BE 2020-21 considering the lockdown imposed since March 24, 2020 thereby affecting the speed of execution of new projects.

The Bangladesh portion of the Akhaura-Agartala project has been progressing slowly and is currently aimed for completion by September 2020. The project is being monitored intensively. Both the Consultant (IRCON) and the Contractor have been asked to expedite the project work. The Ministry will keep close watch on the developing status with respect to this project. The Indian segment is under execution by Ministry of Railways, IRCON and funded by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee note that Bhutan has traditionally been the largest recipient of India's aid and assistance programmes and budgetary allocation to them are provided under Revenue and Capital Heads. The Committee note that while there has been a decrease under the aid components, the loans and advances component has witnessed an increase. The Foreign Secretary has informed that about 72 large and intermediate and 359 Small Development Projects have already been implemented. These projects cover all areas of socio-economic development ranging from agriculture, infrastructure, information and communication technology, health, education, capacity building and culture. The Committee are happy to learn that Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Power Project was inaugurated in August 2019. Due to geological factors, construction of Punatsangchhu – I and Punatsangchhu – II Hydroelectric Power Projects may need revision. The Committee note that the physical progress of Punatsangchhu – I, Punatsangchhu – II is 86.65% and 86.32%. Foreign Secretary has also apprised the Committee that talks on financing and management structure for the Sankosh Hydroelectric Power Project is ongoing. The Committee note with satisfaction the performance of the Ministry in spite of several constraints and are confident that the Ministry would leave no stone unturned towards its commitment in Bhutan.

### **Reply of the Government**

India has extensive development partnership with Bhutan, based on Bhutan's priorities. For the current 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2018-23) of the Royal Government of Bhutan, GoI has committed Rs. 4,500 crores towards Programme Grant, Project Tied Assistance and



Small Development Projects, besides providing INR 400 Cr as transitional trade Support Facility. About 72 large and intermediate, and 359 Small Development Projects are at various stages of implementation. These projects virtually cover all areas of socio-economic development, ranging from agriculture, infrastructure, ICT, health, education, capacity building and culture.

**Updated status of hydropower projects:**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Project/ Scheme</b>	<b>Approved Value</b>	<b>Scheduled date of completion</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
1.	Mangdechhu (720 MW HEP)	INR 5012.63 Cr (As approved in 3 <sup>rd</sup> RCE in March 2019) Final cost of completion is being examined by the Ministry in consultation with Ministry of Power.	Project has been commissioned. It was inaugurated in Aug 2019 by PMs of India and Bhutan.	Project has been commissioned. Fund releases so far: INR 5012.63 Cr
2.	Punatsangchhu-I (1200 MW HEP)	RCE of INR 9375.58 Cr (Approved in July 2015)	June 2019	Physical progress-86.84% (as of March 2020); Fund released so far: INR 8045.3796 Cr  <i>*The project has been delayed due to geological surprises.</i>
3.	Punatsangchhu-II (1020 MW HEP)	RCE of INR 7290.62 Cr (Approved in July 2016)  Proposal for 2 <sup>nd</sup> RCE of Puna-II at January 2020 Price Level is being vetted by CEA.	2018-19	Physical progress-87% (as of March 2020); Fund released so far: INR 6718.723 Cr  <i>*The project has been delayed due to geological surprises.</i>

4.	Kholongchhu (600 MW HEP)	INR 3868.870 Cr (DPR completion cost)	Pre-construction activities in progress.	INR 166.2817 Cr has been released by MEA towards DGPC's equity till date.
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Punatsangchhu-I and II hydroelectric projects have been delayed due to severe geological challenges encountered at the project site. 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. Technical experts from both countries are working constantly to resolve the geological challenges encountered by Punatsangchhu-I.

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/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 20)**

The Committee are concerned to note that the budgetary allocation under 'Aid to Nepal' has decreased from Rs. 1200 crore at RE 2019-20 stage to Rs. 800 crore at BE 2020- 21 stage. The main reason cited for increase in allocation during RE 2019-20 was the requirement of additional funds for pending payments and supplies relating to Operation Maitri. During the last financial year, construction of Integrated Check Post at Biratnagar, Motihari- Amlekhgunj Petroleum Products Pipeline and about 90% of post-earthquake housing project has been completed. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should continue making concerted efforts towards expeditious and timely completion of ongoing bilateral projects in Nepal. The Ministry should also obtain enhanced allocation at the RE stage to initiate the new work on aid commitments.

**Reply of the Government**

The Ministry continues to follow up closely with relevant agencies on the Indian side as well as with the Government of Nepal to ensure expeditious implementation of all the major ongoing development projects. Going forward, the key focus of the Government of India is to ensure expeditious delivery of projects through close coordination and partnership with relevant stakeholders on the Indian side as well as with the Government of Nepal.

The allocation of Rs. 800 crore for BE 2020-21 will be utilized for several ongoing projects, including reimbursement to the Government of Nepal and payment to the respective consultants and contractors to ensure smooth implementation of the projects. Ministry remains committed to the expeditious implementation of ongoing bilateral projects in Nepal. Requirement for additional funds will be considered at the revised estimates stage.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 21)**

The Committee observe a downward trend in budgetary allocation under the sub-head ‘Aid to Sri Lanka’ from Rs. 250 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 200 crore in BE 2020-21 owing to the deceleration in pace of progress of Hi-Impact Community Development Project due to April 21, 2019 terrorist attacks, Presidential elections, and the impending Parliament election in April/May 2020. The Committee are delighted to discern two notable developments in India-Sri Lanka *i.e.* resumption of flights between Chennai and Jaffna and the establishment of cultural centre in Jaffna with Indian assistance. During oral evidence, the Foreign Secretary apprised the Committee about the implementation of ongoing high profile projects such as Island-wide expansion of Emergency Ambulance Services in Sri Lanka, implementation of third phase of Indian Housing Projects. The Committee are of the considered view that the ongoing projects in Sri Lanka will invariably require more funds and the Ministry should ensure that underfunding does not lead to delay in their implementation. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should prepare a roadmap for completion of the ongoing projects in Sri Lanka and seek additional finances for the same at the RE Stage.

**Reply of the Government**

The Ministry attaches highest priority to smooth execution and timely completion of the ongoing projects in Sri Lanka and has been, through the Indian High Commission in Colombo, closely following up with the Government of Sri Lanka for expediting the project implementation.

Based on the recommendation of the Standing Committee, an updated sheet on the likely completion of the ongoing projects in Sri Lanka has been prepared and attached in **Annexure A**. It may be mentioned that due to Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown including in Sri Lanka, the progress of ongoing projects in Sri Lanka has slowed down. Depending upon the progress of the projects, Ministry will seek additional finances, if required, at the RE Stage.

**Annexure A**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Name of the ongoing Project in Sri Lanka</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>
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01	Housing project- Phase 3- (4000 houses for estate workers / Indian Origin Tamils)	January 2017	December 2020
02	Renovation of 27 Schools in Northern Province	May 2017	December 2020
03	Construction of 2889 units Rain Water Harvesting system in Jaffna District	April 2018	Sep - 2021
04	Construction of Multi-Ethnic Tri-Lingual School in Polonnaruwa	January 2018	March 2021
05	153 houses and infrastructure facilities in Sobitha Thero Village in Anuradhapura	July 2018	March 2021
06	Upgrading Saraswathy Central College in Pusselawa, Kandy	Aug 2018	September 2020
07	Setting up of a Training School for Dalada Maligawa, Pallekele, Kandy (Dalada Maligawa Cultural Heritage Project)	May 2018	September 2020
08	Construction of Surgical unit and Supply of Medical equipments to Teaching Hospital, Batticaloa.	June 2019	December-2020
09	Construction of 5000 MT cold storage in Dambulla, Central Province	Aug 2019	September 2020
10	Model Village Housing Project in 25 district in Sri Lanka	March 2018	Dec 2020
11	Grama Shakthi housing Project - I in Southern Province	June 2018	June 2021
12	Grama Shakthi Model Village Housing Project –II Southern Province	Aug 2019	Aug 2021
13	Grama Shakthi Model village Housing Project – Northern Province	Aug 2019	Aug 2021
14	Construction of Auditorium and multipurpose complex for Thondaman vocational Training Center	January 2020	April 2021

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No.22)**

The Committee notice that the budgetary allocation under the head ‘Aid to Maldives’, has been reduced from Rs. 400 crore at BE 2019-20 stage to Rs.300 crore at BE 2020-21 stage. The Committee have noted the assertion of the Ministry that there have been delays in certain

projects because of capacity constraints on Maldivian side. It is heartening to know that with an improved political situation in Maldives, several ongoing projects are stated to achieve significant progress and substantial new commitments are also in the pipeline under both grant and LoC assistance. The Ministry has also informed that the construction of the much delayed Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES) is proceeding at a good pace and is expected to be completed in 2020.

In view of the upswing in bilateral relations, the Committee are hopeful that there will be a renewed focus on completing ongoing projects and undertaking new projects of mutual interest. The Ministry should ensure smooth, expeditious and timely execution of various ongoing projects in Maldives. The Committee desire that the long standing projects construction of Police Academy and construction of Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies is completed as per the agreed timeline of 2020.

### **Reply of the Government**

GoI Lines of Credit worth \$840 million have been extended to Maldives for various development and infrastructure projects. Under the umbrella LOC of \$800 million sanctioned in 2019, 12 projects have already been identified by Government of Maldives. Six priority projects under it are already at various stages of implementation. A large connectivity project in Maldives is also under discussion for possible funding under GoI LoC.

Outstanding bottlenecks related to the host Government for the Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES) project have been resolved and the project is progressing at steady pace. Current physical progress is 76% and the Ministry is closely following up the project progress to ensure its scheduled completion in the second half of this year.

The Ministry takes note of the Committee's appreciation on significant progress in several ongoing projects and new commitments made under both grant and LoC assistance. In cooperation with the Government of Maldives, the Ministry will strive to implement various projects as per the agreed timelines.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are concerned to note the sagging budgetary allocation made under the sub-head 'Aid to Myanmar' and this reduction as per the Ministry is on account of slow

spending rate in 2019-20. The Committee also note that extraneous factors such as delay in getting clearances, adverse security situation in Myanmar, legal hurdles were some of the prominent reasons behind the slow utilization of allocated funds. The Committee, however, feel that the current allocation is not congruent with the ongoing strategic projects in Myanmar such as Kaladan Multimodal And Coastal Surveillance System. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take adequate steps to ensure that the allocated amount is utilized optimally for completion of the ongoing projects so that enhanced allocation can be provided at the RE stage. The Committee also desire that the Ministry in consultation with the concerned stakeholder in Myanmar draw a roadmap for completion of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project to ensure its completion in 2020.

### **Reply of the Government**

With respect to the road segment of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, status is being closely monitored in consultation with other stakeholders, including the Department of Heavy Industries, which is the parent Department of the Engineering Project (India) Limited (EPIL) that forms part of the Joint Venture implementing the project. The implementation of the Project is subject to the uncertain security situation at the project site and progress achieved by the Contractor.

Adequate steps have been planned for FY 2020-21 to ensure that the allocated amount is utilized optimally for completion of the ongoing projects and enhanced allocation would be sought at the RE Stage. However, global COVID 19 spread and its adverse impact on global/local supply chains & operations on the ground will likely impact the pace of the project & expenditure progress thereby. Also, the current infighting between the Government Forces and the insurgent groups in Myanmar would affect the progress of the project. In addition, Ministry has taken note of the committee recommendation regarding a road map for implementation of the Kaladan Project with concerned stakeholders.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware that despite daunting logistical and security challenges, India has been providing wide-ranging developmental assistance to Afghanistan. Allocation under this sub head has been kept unchanged for the ongoing and next fiscals. The Committee are pleased to see optimum utilization of funds under this head for the past two years. The Foreign Secretary has stated that India is providing small and medium projects development assistance in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan and large scale projects are in the planning stage. The Committee, therefore, desire that the satisfactory experience gained from completion of large infrastructural projects in Afghanistan should be applied to all our developmental cooperation projects

elsewhere. The Ministry should ensure that requisite funds are available for smooth functioning of all our small and medium sized projects in Afghanistan. The Committee also want to be kept informed about the large developmental projects in Afghanistan once finalized.

### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry has noted the recommendations made by the esteemed committee for compliance. All efforts are continuously made for optimal budgetary allocation under Aid to Afghanistan, in line with “Neighbourhood First Policy”. The recommendation of the Committee on learnings from our experiences of developmental projects in Afghanistan, elsewhere has been noted. The implementation of the development partnership programme of India is premised on learnings of best practices both in-house & elsewhere. The Development Partnership Administration vertical in MEA led by Additional Secretary-officer provides for holistic & integrative conceptualization, assessment & monitoring of our Development Partnership program.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware that Latin America and Caribbean region comprises of 33 countries occupying two large landmasses of North and South America as well as the islands of the neighbouring Caribbean Sea. Ministry has informed that India’s development partnership in Latin America is not limited to bilateral aid cooperation projects, but also in capacity building such as ITEC courses, Lines of Credits for industrial development as well as providing humanitarian assistance during disasters. Keeping in mind the geographical extent and magnitude of developmental cooperation with Latin America, the Committee are surprised to note a paltry allocation of Rs.20 crore to Latin America for BE 2020-21. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the budgetary allocation should be reflective of the importance India attaches to this region and bolster a mutually beneficial partnership with concerned countries in the region. Accordingly, the Committee desire that aid allocation to such a huge region should be improved by allocating more fund at the RE stage.

### **Reply of the Government**

India’s LOCs are demand-driven, and cater to specific requests from friendly countries. Thirty two Lines of Credit worth \$ 738.53 million have been extended to seven countries in Latin America and Caribbean region. GoI has decided to extend a new LOC of USD 35.80 million to the Government of Suriname for undertaking the project ‘Rural Electrification through Solar DG hybrid PV systems in 50 remote villages of Suriname on 14 November 2019. GoI has also decided to extend a new LOC of USD 100 million to undertake Development Projects proposed by the Government of Bolivia on 14 November 2019.

We take note of the Committee's recommendation that the aid allocation and all efforts will be made for effective allocation & utilisation of budget under Aid to LAC. The Ministry has strived for 100 percent utilization of the allocated total budget of 15 crores for the Financial Year 2019-2020 under the budget head "Aid to LAC countries", with actual expenditure till 31st March 2020 being 12.16 crores. Impact of global COVID 19 spread on logistics supply chains may likely impact the pace of the project & expenditure progress thereby. We have duly noted the Committee's recommendations and will strive to do so as directed.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee notice that the erstwhile budget sub head 'ASEAN Multilateral' has been discontinued and new head 'Indo-Pacific Cooperation' has been opened *w.e.f.* FY 2019-20. An allocation of Rs. 45.00 crore was made under the Head during BE 2019-20 and the same has been retained during BE 2020-21. A new Division on Indo-Pacific was also created in April 2019 by integrating ASEAN-Multilateral (AML) Division and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) from IOR Division.

The Committee are appreciative of the policy emphasis being placed to the Indo-Pacific region through amendment in existing budget head and creation of a separate Division in the Ministry. Since it is a new development, the Committee are hopeful that this step will lead to multi-faceted engagement with all countries in the region and evolve to become an effective counter strategy to deal with China's Belt and Road Initiative. The Committee desire to be apprised about the various projects that are being planned as well as implemented under this sub-head in three months.

### **Reply of the Government**

#### **DETAILS OF PROJECTS IN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS**

Ministry is implementing Quick Impact Projects in CLMV countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam).

The emphasis of QIPs is on short gestation high visibility projects, with a normal gestation period of up to one year that would directly benefit the local communities with results that are immediate and visible.

A total of 42 QIP projects have been implemented since their inception in 2015. Out of 42 QIP projects, 28 projects have been completed and 14 are under implementation. Of the 42 QIP projects, 26 have been implemented in Cambodia, 13 in Vietnam and 3 in Lao PDR.

A list of projects that are being planned as well as implemented in three months is as follows:



<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Status with Expected date of completion</b>
1	Cambodia	Supporting Community Based Eco-tourism and Livelihood Opportunity (SEBET) for Tu Tuek Pos Community Protected Area in Oral Wildlife Sanctuary, Kampong Speu Province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
2	Cambodia	Capacity Building of caregivers and professionals to empower children and adolescents with multiple disabilities and their families in Cambodia	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
3	Cambodia	Installation of hand pumps in Sambor Prei Kuk area, Kampong Thom Province.	
4	Cambodia	Contributing to the acceleration of Malaria elimination through intensifying the case detection, treatment and tracking in Kampong Speu province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
5	Cambodia	Intensifying the community and school-based source reduction and prevention for dengue control among the population living in high risk areas in Takeo	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
6	Cambodia	To eliminate the Arsenic Element in Drinking Water around the Tonle Sap Lake	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
7	Cambodia	Integrated community development through hygiene and sanitation and vocational training in Kampong Chhnang province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
8	Cambodia	Transforming villages to open Defecation Free(ODF) and safe Hygiene behaviour in Samaki Meanchey district, Kampong Chhnang province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21

9	Cambodia	Construction of a 3-classroom building for grade 1 to 3 pupils at Wat Purthisat Primary School	
10	Cambodia	Construction of a 3-classroom building for grade 4 to 6 pupils at Wat Purthisat Primary School	
11	Cambodia	Building Capacity on Digital Public Services Implementation and Cyber Security for Government Agencies	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
12	Cambodia	Child Online risks Awareness Campaign in Cambodia	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
13	Cambodia	Operation and Maintenance of Tumnap Daun Ath project	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
14	Cambodia	Operation and Maintenance of Pring Reservoir Project	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
15	Cambodia	Environmental Protection through Eliminating of Contaminant in Environmental Media	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
16	Cambodia	Reaching the unreached: last mile TB care delivery in rural & peri urban Cambodia	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
17	Cambodia	Toward the reduction in dengue morbidity and mortality among children through intensifying integrated-vector management and strengthening the capacity of case management among doctors and nurses at public health facilities in Cambodia.	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
18	Cambodia	Reducing the malaria burden and the potential spread of anti-malarial drug resistance among mobile and migrant population in the multi drug	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2020-21 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21

		resistant areas in Stung Treng province	
19	Vietnam	Construction of Hau Bong Kindergarten, Hau Bong Commune, Ha Hoa District	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
20	Vietnam	Construction of infield canal in Tan An Ward, Nghi Lo town, Yen Bai Province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
21	Vietnam	Construction of Housing block for the elderly and handicapped people at Centre for Social Assistance of Quang Ninh province at Nam Khe Ward, Uong Bi city, Quang Ninh	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
22	Vietnam	Building six classrooms of level III for Hoa Po Lang kindergarten at Phi Di Ja village, Krong No commune, Lak district, Dak Lak province.	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21
23	Vietnam	Upgradation and repair of overpass bridge at Tan Long village, Xuan Son Nam Commune,. Dong Xuan District, Phu Yen Province	The project has been sanctioned in FY 2019-20 and it is expected to be completed in 2020-21

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 28)**

The Committee note that by virtue of its extensive capacity-building and training programmes in 160 partner countries from Asia, Africa, East Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean as well as Pacific and Small Island countries, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has emerged as a visible symbol of India's South-South cooperation. The Committee, however, observe that a similar allocation of Rs. 220 crore has been provided under this sub-head for BE 2019-20 as well as as BE 2020-21. In pursuance of the Committee's recommendation, the Ministry has carried out a comprehensive review of the ITEC programmes and its partner institutions and based on its various systemic and policy level modifications have been made. There has been an expansion in the scope and outreach of these programmes and various new initiatives have begun including new modalities like e-ITEC, ITEC- Onsite and ITEC Executive to enhance its effectiveness and impact. The Committee are happy to learn

about the inclusion of premier institutes like IITs and IIMs as partner institutes and the existence of a robust feedback mechanism under these programmes. The Committee, however also desire that the Ministry should enhance the budget allocation positively to align the programme with the requirements of partner ITEC countries and our foreign policy priorities.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has been constantly monitoring the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and introducing new programmes and innovative modalities for delivery of capacity building to other countries. The Ministry had conducted a thorough review of the ITEC programme to align the content and structure of the courses offered with the requirements and priorities of partner countries and our foreign policy interests. All efforts will be made to prioritise budgetary allocation under the head based on effective utilisation pattern.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware of the persistent human resource crunch in the Ministry of External Affairs over the years. The Committee note that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry is 8951, while the working strength is 6859. This huge gap between the sanctioned and actual strength in the Ministry of External Affairs has led to vacancies in vital departments of the Ministry. Time and again, the Ministry has furnished the same justification that the gap is due to delay in recruitment, which is beyond its control. In order to tide over this challenge of shortage in staff, the Ministry has taken various steps such as increasing indent with UPSC, reinforcing technical capacity by taking officers with domain expertise on deputation from Line Ministries and Departments of Governments, engaging Consultants with expertise in various fields and placing indent with the Staff Selection Commission (SSC).

Taking serious cognizance of the vacant posts in the Ministry, the Committee find the steps taken by the Ministry as inadequate and half-hearted. In view of the increasing rate of diplomatic endeavours in development and economy and the pivotal role MEA has to play in our efforts to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25, the Committee exhort upon the Government at the highest levels to consider the human resource requirements of MEA favourably and also direct Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to fill up the enhanced number of direct recruitments on top priority basis. The Committee would also recommend that the Ministry should continue to create cadre/ induct expertise from other Ministries, academia, think tanks and the private sector, as needed to augment human resource with relevant domain expertise.

### **Reply of the Government**

Augmentation of manpower in the Ministry is being undertaken in a concerted and systematic fashion through a combination of recruitment, promotion, deputation, outsourcing and placing indents with SSC/UPSC. In terms of recruitment, average annual intake of IFS officers through the Civil Services Exam increased by 16% during 2015-18 in comparison with 2011-14. (While 32 officers were recruited annually on an average during 2011-14, the corresponding number for 2015-18 was 37). Similarly, the average number of Assistant Section officers who joined the Ministry during the period 2013-14 almost doubled from 63 to 124 in 2015-17. Enhancement of manpower is also done through promotions from feeder cadres across levels and deputation of experts. At present, there are 48 officers from various Ministries in MEA on deputation who are deployed in different Divisions.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee note with appreciation that the Foreign Service Institute, renamed as Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS), conducts in service training for Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers and other MEA personnel, courses for foreign diplomats and other professional training course. The Committee observe that the expenditure on training has increased substantially in recent times due to increasing demand for training programmes both for Indian diplomat/civil servants/others and for foreign diplomats. However, it is a matter of concern that despite the rising requirement of training, there has been shortfall in utilization of funds under this budget head for past three years and accordingly budget allocation has remained stagnant at the same level. The Committee would strongly urge the Ministry to observe strict fiscal prudence by optimum utilization of available funds. The Committee also desire that a continuous system of evaluation be established so that the inputs and feedback received from the trainees are duly incorporated at regular intervals for value addition of the training programmes and accordingly the number of training programmes should also be enhanced with desired budget allocation.

### **Reply of the Government**

Utilisation of funds by SSIFS has steadily increased from Rs. 9.76 crores in 2016-17 to Rs. 25.11 crores in 2019-20 observing strict fiscal prudence.

MEA personnel from all levels from MTS to Joint Secretaries undergo training at SSIFS. In 2019-20, SSIFS has introduced new training programmes for both Indian and foreign diplomats such as for MEA's Interpreters Cadre, stenography test for MEA officials and a thematic fellowship programme on environment and climate change for foreign diplomats. The number of training programmes for foreign diplomats has increased from 3 in 2016 to 9 in 2017 to 15 in 2018 to 36 in 2019. SSIFS has also introduced workshops on topics such as RTI.

SSIFS regularly takes feedback for every course. Feedback forms are circulated to the

participants to get written feedback on speakers, content of course and logistical arrangements. Dean (SSIFS) chairs a feedback session at the end of course to take oral feedback of participants. These feedbacks are taken into consideration for improving future training courses.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 33)**

The Committee are aware that the Know India Programme (KIP) is a flagship initiative of MEA to reconnect young persons of Indian-origin with their roots and give them an exposure to various aspects of Indian life, cultural heritage, art and contemporary India. It is observed that with time, the frequency and duration of the programme has enhanced. An allocation of Rs. 6 crore was made under this programme during BE 2019-20 which has been increased to Rs. 8 crore for BE 2020-21. In order to make it dynamic and for a better connect, the Ministry is in the process of launching its logo in the next financial year. The Committee find it incomprehensible as to how within the limited finances, will the Ministry manage such ambitious plans for expansion and branding of KIP? The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should with a view to spread awareness about the programme allocate additional funds for Know India Programmes which have been received very warmly by the Indian Diaspora. Additional requirements for funds should be placed before the Ministry of Finance during the RE stage.

**Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has been organizing 06 editions of Know India Programme (KIP) and 02 editions of Pravasi Teerth Darshan yojana (PTDY) every year.

The PTDY was introduced in FY 2018-19 on KIP lines for 45-65 age group of people from 07 Girmitya's countries who belong of lower income group and are unable to afford a visit to India. Expenditure of PTDY is also incurred from KIP head of budget. Approximately an amount of Rs. 01 crore is incurred on organizing one edition of the programme excluding the state leg of the programme. Expenditure on state leg programme is normally borne by the respective State Government. Further, the expenditure incurred on meetings with dignitaries and on visit to various departments/organizations are borne by the respective departments/organizations.

Besides, the KIP LOGO design contest was launched digitally and it was decided that the final winner would be awarded with the grand prize of government sponsored 25 days visit to India under the KIP programme as one of the KIP participants. Ministry has taken note of the suggestions of the esteemed Committee. All efforts will be made for optimal budgetary allocation to the KIP head at the RE stage based on effective utilization pattern.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee note that Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora (PCTD) scheme was launched in 2005 to nourish and strengthen the cultural bonds between India and its diaspora. Under this scheme the Ministry releases grant to the Indian Mission abroad which then works together with Diaspora Associations in organizing India-specific events. It is disheartening to note that for the past three years a token amount of Rs 2 crore is being provided for this scheme. The Ministry has apprised that an amount of Rs. 1,69,82,000/- has been allocated during the financial year 2019-20 to 54 Missions/Posts abroad under this scheme. Further, a financial grant of Rs 18.58 lakhs has been given as third installment for setting up Diaspora Research and Resources center (DRRC) to Antar- Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad in New Delhi. The Committee desire that the Ministry should impart necessary vigour to such a significant scheme through enhanced budgetary provisions and outreach to various Missions/Posts. The Committee also desire to be apprised about the progress made in setting up Diaspora Research and Resources Center (DRRC).

### **Reply of the Government**

MEA has adopted multi-pronged strategy for cultural & economic diplomacy and leverage the soft power of the Indian Diaspora. Promotion of culture is done by organizing various activities from the funding received from MEA, as well as through other Ministries such as Culture and Tourism.

Ministry, in addition, supports diaspora to organise cultural events under the Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora (PCTD) scheme with an aim to showcase Indian culture and new initiatives & developments of modern India. The scheme aims to nourish and strengthen the cultural bonds between India and its diaspora. The projected outcome of the scheme is to reinforce the cultural identity of the persons of Indian origin. The Scheme of PCTD has been able to attain its objective. The funds of Rs. 2 crore allocated are specifically given to the Missions and Posts abroad for Promotion of Cultural Ties. The Recommendation of the Committee has been duly noted to impart necessary vigour to PCTD.

The Diaspora Research & Resource Centre (DRRC) was set up with the financial support from Ministry of External Affairs in 2017 by Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP), in New Delhi. A financial grant of Rs. 50,57,270/- has been given to ARSP spread over three years, including third instalment of Rs. 17,75,132/- released in Financial year 2019-20 after receipt of utilisation certificate and outcomes generated. DRRC has fulfilled the widely felt need for a dedicated institute for studies on PIO and Girmitya issues. The Centre has emerged as a resource and networking hub on Diaspora matters for scholars and researchers working in this field, both from India and abroad. The Centre's work has provided valuable input for policy making and also

supplemented the Government's initiatives for more broad-based engagement with the Indian Diaspora.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 36)**

The Committee are aware about the rising incidence of frauds and marital disputes in NRI marriages. In the absence of a separate budget head for providing legal assistance to woman facing problems in overseas marriages, the Committee observe that the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) to assist Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the 'most deserving cases' on a 'means tested basis' is being utilized for the purpose. For the Financial Year 2019-20, 1057 grievances were received in the Ministry on NRI marital Disputes. The Committee note that MEA has addressed these grievances by way of providing them counseling, guidance and information about procedures, mechanisms for serving judicial summons on the Overseas Indian spouse, filing a case in India, issuing Look Out Circulars, impounding and revocation of Indian passport of the spouse, getting access to lawyers and NGOs empanelled with Indian Missions, etc. 18 cases have been provided financial assistance as per the ICWF guidelines on case merit basis so far in FY 2019-20. The Integrated Nodal Agency (INA) under the Ministry of Women and Child Development has also not got much success in providing timely solution to the problems of Indian citizens married to Overseas Indian spouses. The Committee are dismayed to see the casual attitude of the Ministry toward such a sensitive issue and hope that the problems faced in NRI marriages will engage more attention of the Ministry henceforth. Adequate budgetary allocation will be provided to each Indian woman in distress due to disputes in marriages and an awareness drive should be launched to ensure that such a gender specific scheme does not get lost under the ICWF which caters to multiple issues.

**Reply of the Government**

Ministry of External Affairs is cognizant of the importance of the issue of NRI Marital disputes and has taken various steps to proactively address them. The Ministry has addressed the complaints of distressed Indian nationals deserted by their NRI spouses by way of providing them counselling, guidance and information about procedures, mechanisms for serving judicial summons on the Overseas Indian spouse, filing a case in India, issuing Look Out Circulars, impounding and revocation of Indian passport of the spouse, getting access to lawyers and NGOs empanelled with Indian Missions etc.

Besides, relevant Missions/ Posts provide temporary shelter to the deserted Indian wives and in some cases pay for the repatriation of the Indian women to India.

Furthermore, with an aim to provide financial and legal assistance to distressed Indian



women married to NRI spouses, the Indian ‘Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) Guidelines’ were amended to enhance the amount and scope of legal & financial assistance. The amount of financial assistance has been raised to USD 4000 per case, since September, 2017, and is now applicable to all Indian Missions/Posts abroad. In addition to the assistance provided under the scheme, Indian Missions/Consulates abroad also guide and counsel the petitioners, provide them shelter and in some cases pay for the repatriation of the Indian women to India. Besides, the Heads of Missions/Posts have been delegated powers to provide the legal and financial assistance to the distressed Indian women married to NRI/PIOs through empanelled legal counsel of the applicant or Indian Community Association/Women’s Org./NGO concerned to assist the woman in documentation and preparatory work for filing the case. The assistance is released to the empanelled legal counsel of the applicant or Indian Community Association/Women’s Organization/NGO concerned to enable it to take steps to assist the woman in documentation and preparatory work for filing the case.

Furthermore, with an aim to provide online consular assistance expeditiously to Indian nationals who are in distress abroad (including marital dispute), MADAD portal – an online Consular Grievances Monitoring System- was launched in 2015 and a module “Marital Disputes” was added to the portal to provide digital platform to the distressed Indian nationals married to NRIs.

This Ministry also has a robust grievance redressal mechanism which was strengthened by launching Version 7.0, an online monitoring system, CPGRAMS in February 2020. Ministry has been part of the CPGRAMS portal since its inception in 2006.

A Consular Helpline is being run in 11 Indian languages including Hindi and English. Twitter Sewa @MEAMADAD was also launched in March 2020 to monitor and respond to grievances received on Twitter.

In addition, the Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019 was also introduced in the Rajya Sabha by former External Affairs Minister, late Smt. Sushma Swaraj on 11 February 2019 for creating more accountability and offering more protection against exploitation of Indian women by their NRI spouses.

Ministry is also taking steps to create greater awareness about this issue in the diaspora. Many Indian Missions have designated ‘Open House’ meetings during which any distressed Indian national including women can approach Mission for assistance and guidance. The Ministry has also posted Nodal/Welfare officers in the Missions/Posts abroad who have the ability to speak to majority of Indians residing in the country and where required, interpreters are hired by Missions/Posts at the cost of Government of India to provide necessary assistance.

Besides, Ministry of External Affairs has prepared comprehensive FAQs bilingually, information about legal provisions prevailing in foreign countries, data base of Organisations / NGOs / lawyers registered / empanelled with the Indian Missions/Posts abroad, with respect to various issues faced by aggrieved Indian women and how they can be addressed. The available information is also placed on the official website of the Ministry.

Besides, under the Videsh Sampark Series initiated by this Ministry, outreach events are held in partnership with State Government with an aim to brief the State Governments and the stakeholders about the programmes/schemes and welfare measures taken by the Ministry for the community and their cooperation is sought to disseminate information.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 37)**

The Committee are aware that ICCR is the nodal organization for the projection of India's soft power abroad, and ever since its establishment in 1950, it has emerged as the principal governmental organization for our cultural engagement with the world and for promoting our culture in all its magnificence through various activities. The Committee are pleased to note that in BE 2020-21, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has been provided with an enhanced allocation of Rs. 290 crore. The Ministry has specified that the increased allocation has been provisioned for opening of 3 Indian Cultural Centres at Washington, Tel Aviv, and Paris, expenditure on the deployment of Hindi Chairs abroad, Conference & Seminars and Celebration of IDY. It is heartening to discern that there has been efficient utilization of funds by ICCR for the past three years. On a query raised by the Committee, the Ministry has informed that it is exploring the possibility of Partnership and PPP Models for ICCR where the partners also put in resources for executing projects. As a pre-eminent organization of the Ministry of External Affairs, ICCR's activities are spread across the globe ranging from providing scholarships to organizing exhibitions to performing arts and visual arts programme. In the opinion of the Committee, even the increased budgetary allocation provisioned to ICCR is not in consonance with its wide-ranging activities. It is understandable that as a not for profit and 100 percent grantee organization under the Ministry of External Affairs, there exist limits for ICCR's ability to raise extra-budgetary resources to cater to its expansive activities.

Given the increasing salience of soft power projection in our Foreign Policy and the ICCR's critical role in it, the Committee are of the considered view that the latter should have augmented financial and manpower resources. It is, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should prepare an annual roadmap for activities/programmes to be organized by ICCR along with the enhanced number of scholars and the role of ICCR within MEA in the pursuit of the \$5 trillion economy and on the basis of it seek additional financial allocation at the RE stage. The

Committee also desire that the Ministry should revisit the necessity of having ICCR Regional Offices when Zonal Cultural Centres are in existence.

### **Reply of the Government**

ICCR has prepared its Annual Plan of Action for financial year 2020-21 based on proposals received from Missions, Posts and ICCs overseas as well as programme/activities planned at ICCR headquarters and Regional offices.

As recommended by Standing Committee, based on increased number of programmes / activities, as planned, Ministry strive for sufficient funds at RE 2020-21 stage based on robust quarterly expenditure patterns

Mandates of Zonal Cultural Centres of the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Regional Offices of ICCR are not same, reason why existence of Regional Offices was necessitated. While mandate of MoC's Zonal Cultural Centres is to promote culture within India, identify the artists and artisans and promote their work, create data-base of the cultural wealth available in India, mandate of ICCR's Regional Offices is primarily (a) to ensure smooth implementation of ICCR administered scholarship schemes and (b) promote cultural exchange between India and other countries. Both these functions are not part of mandate of MoC's Zonal Cultural Centres.

It is also pointed out that originally ICCR was under the administrative control the then Ministry of Education and was/is the nodal organization for attending to matters related to welfare of the foreign students studying in India, for which originally the Regional Offices were established. ICCR was transferred to Ministry of External Affairs primarily because its mandate included focus on exchange between India and other countries and fostering and strengthening relations between India and other countries through cultural and educational exchanges. Role of ICCR's Regional Offices was necessitated for taking the outreach of this exchange beyond Delhi to all parts of India and taking the cultural wealth of various parts of India to the world.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee observe that with the larger objective of promoting awareness and appreciation of India's rich cultural heritage, the ICCR currently operates 37 Indian Cultural Centres across the globe. These Centres are instruments of India's cultural outreach abroad and project our soft power through a wide range of cultural, academic and intellectual activities. The Committee are satisfied to learn that after the much delayed establishment of cultural Centres in two significant places like Washington and Paris both the Centres are expected to be completed and become operational by the middle of financial year 2020-21. The Committee would therefore like that the Cultural Centres in Washington and Paris are operationalized positively this year and a Cultural Centre of ICCR should be opened in Gulf region. The Committee would like to be apprised about the developments in this regard.

## **Reply of the Government**

### **Renovation of U-Street property, Washington**

Being a heritage building, permission of local authorities is required for undertaking renovations in the property. The completion of work is expected till June 2021.

### **Renovation of SVCC, Paris**

The renovation work was to be undertaken through separate contractors for various works awarded in May 2018. In February 2019, Mission was informed that one of the contractors, M/s. Lacroix, entrusted with civil works was declared bankrupt. Since other contractors' work would follow the civil works, in absence of civil works, the work at the site stopped. Judicial Administrator ordered M/s. SPID to undertake the remaining work of M/s. Lacroix. The proposal is under active consideration of the Ministry.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware that Section 13 of the ICWA Act enlists seven basic objectives of ICWA namely study of Indian and International Affairs; promote India's relations with other countries ; to serve as a clearing house of information and knowledge; to publish books and journals, review papers; to establish contacts with organisations promoting objects mentioned earlier; to arrange conferences and seminars; and to undertake such other activities for the promotion of ideas and attainment of the objectives listed above. The Committee also note that the Ministry's role is to guide and assist ICWA to meet its objectives within the broad framework of financial autonomy provided to it by the Parliament. With such an enormous mandate of undertaking research activities across the spectrum of international affairs, ICWA has been organizing conferences, Sapru House Lectures conferences and conducting track-two interactions. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should accord requisite importance to research activities undertaken by ICWA by provision of adequate funds and channelizing the inputs emanating from their research activities in the formulation of foreign policy agenda.

## **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has taken note of the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation and would accord requisite importance to research activities undertaken by ICWA by provision of adequate funds and channelizing the inputs emanating from their research activities in the formulation of foreign policy agenda.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**CHAPTER- III**

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

**NIL**

## CHAPTER – IV

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

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

Expressing concern over the unpredictable and fluctuating budgetary demands and allocation under this Head, the Committee in their previous DFG Report had recommended that the Ministry should frame a developmental aid/cooperation policy with a clear roadmap for developmental assistance to countries in alignment with our national interest. The Committee had also urged the Ministry to explore the feasibility of establishing an autonomous aid disbursal body that strictly caters to planning, execution and implementation of the projects in a timely manner. The Committee reiterate its earlier recommendation that a general aid policy must be framed and a separate aid disbursal body on the lines of similar bodies in other countries (such as USAID, OECD etc) may be established by the Ministry.

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

Ministry of External Affairs had decided to establish Development Partnership Administration in 2012 taking into account the unique nature of India's development partnership, the diversification and growing complexity of our assistance programmes and projects and resource and manpower constraints in GOI. The DPA has evolved as an innovative and cost-effective instrument of delivery of a broad-based developmental assistance to foreign countries encompassing Lines of Credit, projects under Grant-in-Aid, capacity building programmes for civilian and defence personnel etc. The model of DPA created in 2012 has served our purpose well as is evident from the robust growth of our projects both under Lines of Credit and Grant. The Ministry has been constantly monitoring the role of DPA in implementation of development projects and to support its work, has inducted technical experts from other Ministries. Currently more than 50% staff of DPA are deputationists with specialized technical expertise. Further, taking into account the growing importance of culture and heritage in our development partnership a new Division has been created (DPA-IV) to exclusively focus on cultural and heritage restoration projects and relevant capacity building engagement in this area. Also, a senior officer of the rank of Additional Secretary has been deployed for an effective and close overall supervision and coordination in the work of the four Divisions in DPA. Considering the importance attached by the government to our development partnership, the Ministry would continue to monitor and introduce suitable reforms and innovations in the DPA as required for its efficient and effective performance.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

In the light of our deepening bilateral, regional and multilateral engagements, the Committee feel that the absence of a formalized policy document covering all aspects of our foreign policy is surprising. The Ministry has asserted that the practice of diplomacy requires flexibility in order to respond to rapid shifts and unexpected developments in the global foreign policy environment. The Committee note that the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry along with its network of autonomous bodies like Indian Council of World Affairs and Research and Information Systems, think tanks and academic collaborations provide a well organized mechanism for the purpose of Policy Planning and Research in foreign affairs. Over the years the Committee has been exhorting the Ministry to spell out India's grand strategy encapsulating the dynamism in short term, medium term and long term objectives of our foreign policy. The Committee are of the considered view that the grand foreign policy strategy will also bolster the case for enhanced allocation by the Ministry of Finance. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Ministry of External Affairs take all requisite institutional as well intellectual steps to spell out a coherent and balanced Grand Foreign Policy strategy for India on priority basis.

### **Reply of the Government**

While no single overarching and formalized policy document can capture all aspects of India's foreign policy, the underlying principles of India's diplomatic strategy are long-established and enduring. These include safeguarding India's sovereignty and security, enabling India's domestic economic transformation, and building influence in global forums through bilateral, multilateral and regional efforts.

Indian foreign policy and diplomatic actions must also be agile and responsive to the imperatives of the time and to changing circumstances. India is today an emerging power and a large economy with an impressive track record of growth. Aligning our actions with the national objectives of promoting 3 Ts- Trade, Tourism and Technology is one of our major objectives. This has been broken down to specific tactical measures that promote diversification of supply chains, foreign investment flows, Indian exports (some thrust areas being: agri products, automobiles, textiles, garments, consumer durable industries, e-commerce, yoga and AYUSH), virtual tourism, frontline technologies (some thrust areas being: tele-education, tele-medicine) and link up start-ups with foreign markets.

A number of other strategic objectives guide executive action. Strengthening and expanding connectivity in the neighbourhood, which acts as force multipliers to accelerate regional growth and development, promote people-to-people contact and encourage trade and commerce, is one such strategic goal. Other strategic goals include supporting Indian companies through leveraging Indian developmental assistance projects, generation of employment

opportunities abroad especially in health care and digital domains, supporting the pharma and healthcare sectors with their competitive advantages in generics, APIs, biologics, clinical research and equipment, enhance global energy partnerships in renewable energy, clean tech, energy efficiency, and petroleum and natural gas, promoting India as preferred destination of higher learning, promotion of India digital platforms and working with state governments to develop export strategies based on its sector competitiveness and material and human resource strengths.

The pandemic, which is the greatest shock to the international system since World War II, has created severe disruptions. The Ministry of External Affairs is at the forefront of the management of the external aspects of this crisis. It has tried to align its response to the well-established parameters of its long-term diplomatic strategy and to the more contemporary compulsions of the pandemic. Some of these long-term objectives include assisting like minded nations through development assistance in the form of medical aid or pharmaceutical supplies; enhancing our global economic profile as a manufacturer by exporting critical medications; and tending to the needs of overseas Indians and the diaspora through initiatives such as Vande Bharat.

The Ministry of External Affairs, through Vande Bharat, has worked on the return of over 5 lakh Indians in an extremely complex and demanding logistical operation by land, sea and air. This operation involved multiple agencies including Air India, the Navy, foreign carriers, chartered flight carriers land movement authorities. The Ministry has also delivered COVID related medical supplies to over 100 countries and deployed Rapid Response Teams to 8 nations by leveraging its global network.

Diplomatic activity has adapted to changing times by using virtual and digital platforms. Prime Minister and External Affairs have initiated and participated in a very large number of multilateral and bilateral digital interactions.

The Government continually assesses and refines its diplomatic stance and policies in response to evolving global challenges and opportunities which have a bearing on India's short, medium and long term interests. In the last 5 years, India's proactive diplomacy and rising global stature has been reflected in its pivotal role in shaping the global agenda on an array of issues. Relations with our neighbours have been given the highest priority (Neighbourhood First policy), with emphasis on greater connectivity, stronger cooperation and broader contacts. Ministry's external outreach has been aligned with Indian developmental priorities. The objectives of attracting foreign investment, including for infrastructure development and infusion of technology and best practices for advancing India's development programmes such as Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Smart Cities, Swachh Bharat, Namami Gange, AMRUT, have been at the forefront of all high-level exchanges.



Indian diplomatic strategy, both in response to contemporary realities and more long-term trends is articulated, in accordance with custom, precedent, law and parliamentary rules, in documents that are available in the public domain. The Annual Report of the Ministry that contains a comprehensive statement of policies followed in the diplomatic sphere and their implementation is tabled in Parliament. Public statements by the Minister of External Affairs, the Ministers of State in the Ministry and officials of the Ministry of External Affairs which are collated on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs are also utilized to articulate Indian diplomatic and foreign policy objectives. This is supplemented by other diplomatic documents which contain public expression of foreign policy priorities. This is in accordance with international practice as followed by the foreign offices of major powers.

The Government policy of simultaneous engagement with all major powers; new and more intensive orientation towards the Indo-Pacific, strengthening in relations with West Asia, Central Asia and Gulf regions and upgradation in the scale of India's vision for relations with African, Latin American and East European countries are all reflective of a more energetic, directed and focused approach.

The Government continues to proactively reach out and rescue Indians stranded in situations of crises and conflict across different regions. The outreach to the Indian diaspora, rekindling their sense of belonging to India and enlisting their support to achieving national objectives, also continues.

It has to be kept in mind that the practice of diplomacy requires to be flexible. The current global foreign policy environment is characterized by rapid shifts and unexpected developments, that transcend boundaries of land and water. Agility, in policy terms, is required to respond to these swift developments.

It is again submitted that the current practice of articulating strategies as described above allows the articulation of foreign policy within the parameters set by law, practice and the rules of parliamentary democracy while allowing clarity, consistency and, where necessary, the required flexibility.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

## CHAPTER V

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

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

Over the years, the Committee have expressed a deep concern over the persistent mismatch between the budgetary demand made by the Ministry of External Affairs and actual allocations provided by the Ministry of Finance. In its written replies, the Ministry has submitted that the gap between the amount demanded and actual allocations has reduced over the years due to realistic and need based rationalization of various sub heads as well as extensive consultations with the Ministry of Finance. The claim of the Ministry that due to their more realistic and need based rationalization of various sub-heads the gap between amount demanded and actual allocations has reduced over the years is slightly confusing. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should continue to pursue with the Ministry of Finance about the imperative of provisioning adequate budgetary allocation for efficient conduct of our foreign policy and diplomatic outreach so that shortage of funds does not lead to compromises in foreign policy objectives in the context of the allocation made during BE2020-21.

In pursuance of the Committee's earlier recommendation, the Ministry has informed that it has commissioned a inter-ministerial as well as a cross-country comparative study of budgetary allocations of Ministries/Departments with the mandate of managing foreign affairs to the Research and Information System for Economic Development (RIS). The Committee note that a preliminary report of the study has been received from RIS and is being examined in the Ministry. The Ministry of External Affairs should examine the preliminary data on cross-country study of budgetary allocations and apprise the Committee within two months of presentation of this Report. This data can assist the Ministry of External Affairs to bolster their case for enhanced allocation during the RE stage.

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

Ministry has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members and would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that it will 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. The Ministry will also continue to make efforts to convince Ministry of Finance of its budgetary demands at the RE and supplementary grants stages justified by efficient utilization of funds and objective assessment of anticipated expenditures, in line with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation. Ministry will update the committee on the preliminary study conducted by the Research and Information System.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware that after the discontinuation of the Plan and Non- Plan classification since 2017-18, budget classifications are done only in terms of Revenue and Capital heads and Scheme and Non-Scheme sections. During the examination of budget documents, the Committee observe reduced allocation under both the Revenue and Capital sections for RE 2019-20 as well as BE 2020-21 *vis-à-vis* BE 2019-20. The Ministry has submitted that the declining trend in both the sections is a reflection of the overall budgetary allocation given to MEA and overall BE/RE ceilings. Owing to reduction in allocations, various schemes/programmes/activities of the Ministry had to be rationalized during RE 2019-20 as well as BE 2020-21. On the basis of the replies and justifications furnished by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Committee deduce that the Ministry has accepted this fact of reduced allocations and further adjustments as the ceilings given by the Ministry of Finance. Given the Committee's expectations from the MEA in the context of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 it is but imperative that the Ministry thinks beyond its conventional requirement of funds. For an endeavor of such a global magnitude, funds ought not be a constraint for any reason whatsoever. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a compelling rationale must be presented for availability of requisite funds to MEA through engagement with the Ministry of Finance at all levels, focused budgetary planning process and usage of comparative facts and figures and with the imperative to bolster India's standing in the comity of nations at the backdrop and the 5 trillion dollar economy target firmly in view.

### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry has taken full note of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Members. 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. The Ministry accepts recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee that a compelling rationale must be presented for availability of requisite funds to the Ministry aided by focussed budgetary planning process and usage of comparative facts & figures. The Ministry's efforts in this direction are guided by zero-based budgeting process, effective quarterly expenditure patterns of the Ministry and overall foreign policy priorities interwoven with economic objectives of the country.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee observe that there has been an upward trend in budgetary allocation under the sub-head 'Missions and Embassies', moving from Rs. 2748.06 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 2910.56 crore at RE 2019-20 stage and to Rs. 2994.06 crore at BE 2020-21 stage. As per the Ministry, the enhanced allocation under this Head is in keeping with the growing diplomatic

outreach by the Government of India and the need to expand our presence in various parts of the world, which are presently represented through concurrent accreditations. The Committee note that the establishment of Missions and Posts abroad is guided by six factors – assessment of India’s geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factors, diaspora connections, commercial, developmental cultural interests and reciprocal ties with the countries concerned. The Committee also observe that approval has been given for establishment of 18 new Missions in Africa. Of these, 9 Missions are already operational in Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Rwanda and Kingdom of Eswatini (Swaziland).

The Committee are satisfied to note that with increase in the allocation under the sub-head ‘Embassies and Mission’ for 2020-21 the Ministry has shown determination to open new Missions in the countries. However, India still has no resident Missions in 61 UN member states, mostly in Africa and Latin America and it is carrying out preparatory work to ascertain the feasibility of establishing new Missions in such countries. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should complete the establishment of the remaining 9 Missions in Africa in a time-bound manner and after taking into consideration the various factors, prepare a roadmap along with timelines for opening up of Missions in remaining countries and apprise the Committee about the same. In view of our relations with Latin American countries, the Committee expect the Ministry to accord due priority to setting up of Missions/Posts in that region.

### **Reply of the Government**

India realizes its strategic objectives through various means including the expansion of its diplomatic footprint. Guided by various factors that govern the opening of new Missions, such as India’s geo-political priorities, level of bilateral ties, regional factor, diaspora connections, commercial, developmental, cultural interests and reciprocal ties, decisions to open new Missions are evaluated at senior levels from time to time. Nine new Missions have already been established in Africa in pursuance of the Cabinet decision to open 18 new Missions in Africa during 2018-21. Remaining nine Missions are being opened on a time-bound manner. In addition, there is also a plan to open 15 new Missions in different parts of the world including in Latin America.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

In their previous Report on Demands for Grants, the Committee have been urging the Ministry to improve monitoring mechanism of all the Missions/Posts abroad. The Committee observe that the Ministry has resorted to two broad tools *i.e* General Mechanisms such as inspections, annual general report, MEA Performance Smart Board and Specific Mechanisms like Political Reports, Economic and Commercial Reports, Annual Consular Report, Cultural Outreach etc. to regularly monitor the functioning and performance of Indian Missions and Posts

abroad. The Ministry has apprised the Committee that the web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring Systems (PEMS) is being revamped and will be launched by second quarter of 2020.

The Committee are pleased to learn that the combination of tools employed by MEA for monitoring the functioning and performance of Indian Missions/Posts abroad with the objective of increasing their efficiency and effectiveness has considerably scaled up the activities by Missions and Posts and political engagement and bilateral meetings have picked up the pace. In this regard, the Committee, however, would suggest that the Ministry should prepare an annual data on the overall outcomes of monitoring mechanism of various Missions/Posts abroad along with the country-specific challenges faced by them. The Committee also desire to be apprised about the launching of the revamped PEMS portal which has already failed on several schedules.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Directorate General of Inspections (DGI) was set-up in 2014 to streamline the system of inspection of Indian Missions/Posts abroad. Ministry introduced a web-portal namely Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) in 2016 using a set of 60 binary questions to evaluate the Missions/Posts. 19 Missions/Posts have been inspected based on PEMS between 2017- 2019.

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 10 -15 Missions/Posts in a year. It was thus decided that off-site inspection mechanism may also be put in place. Keeping this in mind, existing PEMS portal is being 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 Missions/Posts on the basis of documents submitted/uploaded by them on PEMS portal.

This is an innovative step being planned by the Ministry which has become more relevant in this COVID era. Inputs from concerned Divisions have been sought to frame suitable questions/queries which would enable the Ministry's directions on a particular subject/matter.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are aware that the Passport Seva Project (PSP) is one of the largest citizen-centric project under the National e-Governance Plan. The scale and magnitude of passport related services can be gauged from the fact that in 2019, approximately 1.22 crore passports were issued in India and abroad. The Committee are happy to learn that there are 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) and 424 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) that are functioning as extended arms of the 36 Passport Offices in the country. There is a proposal of opening of PSK/POPSK in every Parliamentary constituency of the country. The Ministry has also informed

that Passport Seva Programme has been extended to Indian Missions/Posts abroad in order to provide better and smoother service delivery experience to Indian Diaspora living abroad. So far, 54 Indian Missions have been integrated into Passport Seva Project and integration in several other Missions/Posts is in progress. The Committee observe that the Ministry maintains a central database called Passport Related Information Data Exchange (PRIDE) which contains details of Passports. Moreover, the Committee also note that MEA has put in place a strengthened Grievance Redressal Mechanism, whereby a Multilingual Call Centre with a toll free number (1800- 258-1800), operating in 17 languages and on 24\*7 basis caters to dissemination of information about various passport related services.

The issuance of passports in a timely, seamless and hassle-free manner is the most citizen centric public delivery function performed by the Ministry. The Committee are satisfied to know about the slew of initiatives taken by the Ministry to make qualitative and quantitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country during 2019-20. The Committee, however, desire that initiative should be taken to open up new PSK/POPKs in every Parliamentary constituency as per the targets fixed in this regard. The Committee also desire to be apprised about the progress made in integration of remaining Missions/Posts abroad into the Passport Seva Project. The Ministry should also ensure that the grievance redressal of citizens related to passport services is addressed in a time-bound manner.

### **Reply of the Government**

As on 13 April 2020, 517 Passport Seva Kendras, including 93 PSKs and 424 POPSKs, are functioning in the country. 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 of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working together to ensure operationalization of a POPSK in the remaining 55 Lok Sabha Constituencies. Out of this, POPSK in seven Lok Sabha Constituencies are ready for inauguration while availability of requisite space in eight POPSK locations is expected to be confirmed by the Department of Posts. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts are working closely to set up a POPSK in the remaining 40 Lok Sabha constituencies where requisite space is presently not available.

As on current date, 59 Missions/Posts have been successfully integrated into the Passport Seva Project (PSP). The Ministry has advised 121 Missions/Posts to acquire the necessary IT equipment for integration into the PSP system. Of this, 13 Missions/Posts have procured the requisite IT equipment and the integration work is currently in progress. 52 Missions/Posts are in the process of acquiring the necessary equipment while the Ministry is coordinating with the 56 other Missions/Posts to expedite the process. Once availability of the IT equipment is confirmed by the Missions/Posts to the Ministry, the integration will be effected remotely.

The grievance related to passport services are taken up by the respective Passport Offices on real-time basis and redressed on priority. Since February 2020, Ministry has moved to the upgraded version 7.0 of the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) mapping thereby the last mile grievance officers to improve grievance redressal time and quality of disposal. All the Missions/Posts abroad have also been brought on the upgraded CPGRAMS providing opportunity to the citizens to reach out to them directly.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are happy to learn that development cooperation that constitutes a significant facet of India's external engagement has expanded both geographically and sectorally in terms of its reach and spread. For BE 2020-21, just like the trend for MEA's budget, the proportion of allocation under the sub-head 'Technical and Economic Co-operation' has dipped from Rs. 7333.79 crore to Rs. 6617.37 (BE 2020-21). Despite repeated recommendations of the Committee to avoid budgetary cuts under this head, the reduced allocations for developmental aid and assistance is incomprehensible.

The Committee observe that this budget head caters to India's aid and assistance programmes not only in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood but also to countries in South East Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Indo-Pacific region. The Ministry has informed that allocations for aid heads are based made after undertaking a realistic spending assessment based on project implementation cycles, local conditions and physical progress for ongoing projects. On the basis of facts and figures furnished by the Ministry, the Committee observe a disparity between the budgetary demands made by MEA and actual allocations given by the Ministry of Finance as well as between actual allocation and utilization of the same by MEA. The Ministry's assertion regarding the provisioning of adequate allocation of funds being taken up with the Ministry of Finance at various levels has been noted. Taking a serious view of this matter, the Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should ensure that the uneven utilization pattern under this head is reduced to bare minimum and limited only to delays pertaining to extraneous factors. Furthermore, the Committee also suggest that a study may be conducted on the objectives, modalities and implications of our developmental cooperation over the years so that more funds allocation may be justified for India's external engagement. The Committee would also like to convey that while allocating budget under the head 'Technical and Economic Cooperation', the Ministry of Finance should bear in mind the ramifications of budgetary cuts under this head on our bilateral, regional as well as multilateral engagements.

## **Reply of the Government**

Ministry of External Affairs handles a variety of projects in different parts of the world, with each project involving multiple stakeholders including Indian PSUs/ private companies in India and in the host countries, and each project involves a unique set of issues and challenges in execution. The Ministry is closely engaged in closely monitoring the progress of the respective projects, and regularly updates respective budget requirement based on inputs received from the project monitoring/ implementing agencies taking into account a realistic assessment of local conditions on the ground, local regulatory framework and assurances to be fulfilled by the local authorities etc. However, some amount of uncertainty and unpredictability in the project cycle and our ability to fulfil the physical and financial targets set in case of each project is unavoidable since we do not have control over the operating environment. However, efforts are made to periodically update and revise our budget projection and requirement for the development assistance to other countries taking into account the overall perspective of a dynamic and fluid nature.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

It is disconcerting for the Committee to note decline in allocation under the sub- head ‘Aid to African countries’ from Rs. 450 crore in BE 2019-20 to Rs. 300 crore in BE 2020-21. Delayed execution of projects leading to under-utilization of earmarked funds seems to be the cause of this reduction. Justifying the delay in completion of projects under India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), the Ministry has stated that considerable challenges, including lack of funds and manpower from the Indian side, were faced in the implementation of the proposals to set up institutions in Africa. Moreover, IAFS-IV is scheduled to take place this year. The Committee are concerned to note that over the years, there has been slow progress in implementation of projects under India Africa Forum Summits I, II and III. The Committee note that a regular and high-level review of projects undertaken under various IAFS is carried out in consultation with all concerned stakeholders and policy decisions are taken accordingly. The Committee have noted that so far 15 African countries- Benin, Republic of Guinea, Zambia, Malawi, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritius, Uganda, Mozambique, Comoros, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Mali and Eritrea - have signed MoUs with TCIL for participating in the Pan Africa e-network Project (PaeNP).

Given the significance of the African region, the drooping allocation and the slow pace of progress in projects there is disappointing. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that MEA should accord due importance to Africa in our foreign policy and developmental cooperation should clearly reflect it. The Committee are hopeful that the Ministry will actively engage with the host countries, the concerned Indian Missions, Implementing Agencies and the line Ministries for timely implementation of the projects. In this regard, India’s



experience in development cooperation over the years should come handy in extending our outreach in Africa. The Committee, strongly recommend that enhanced allocation must be provisioned for this head and based on a feasibility study, physical and financial targets should be established for completion of all ongoing projects in Africa. The Committee, further, urge that the Ministry should take suitable measures to ensure the timely handover of the Pan African e-Network Project and apprise the Committee about the same at regular intervals.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry has sincerely noted the concerns and recommendations of the Committee. The Ministry would like to reassure the Hon'ble Committee that Africa is receiving very high priority by the Government.

Prime Minister enunciated 10 guiding principles in Uganda in 2018, which will guide India-Africa relations and take our engagement to the next level. These guiding principles have given "top priority" to a range of areas including digital & IT, especially for people-centric projects, agriculture, trade & investment, development partnership, enhance local capacity and assist African youth, capacity building, climate change, cooperation in terrorism & maritime issues, international cooperation for representative world order etc. The Ministry is in the process of taking these elements forward in a focused manner. This is reflected in the range of important events completed and/or planned between India and Africa in the run up to India-Africa Forum Summit-IV.

With regard to the e-VBAB Network Project for Tele-Education and Tele-Medicine in Africa, after signing of the MoU between Director, TCIL and High Commissioner of Republic of The Gambia on 9th March, 2020 in New Delhi, the number of countries participating in the Project stands at 16. Subsequent to signing of Agreements by TCIL with four Indian Universities recognized by UGC for offering programmes through online mode, enrolments were completed for the first academic semester of six degree and diploma programmes in March 2020. A total of 23 students from 6 African countries qualified for scholarships. With regard to tele-medicine, the first live tele-consultation took place on 17th March, 2020 on the e-Sanjeevani platform between faculty from the University Teaching Hospital, Zambia and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh.

We would like to reassure the Hon'ble Committee that this high priority and importance accorded to Africa in our Foreign Policy is sought to be reflected in the development cooperation context. In this context, the Ministry would also like to inter alia mention that regular review of the various projects is being conducted and coordinated to monitor the implementation and speed up, where necessary. The revision of India Development Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) Guidelines in 2015 is already making a difference to the pace of implementation and we are keeping it under review to enhance this further. Our effort to enhance our close bilateral links

with African countries and to further enhance our development partnership has been appreciated by African countries.

The Ministry has taken a note of all the recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee and will seek to address them suitably.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 31)**

The Committee note that Protector General of Emigrant (PGoE) through 12 Protector of Emigrant (PoE) Offices administers all operational matters related to emigration, provision of emigration services to emigrants and enforcement of Emigrant Act 1983. As a statutory authority under the Emigration Act 1983, the PGoE is primarily responsible for the welfare and protection of emigrant workers falling in the Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) category. With such a vast and critical mandate to fulfill, an measly allocation of Rs. 20.08 crore has been earmarked for BE 2020-21. The Committee have taken a serious view of the low priority being accorded to PGoE, post merger, as evident in the insignificant budgetary allocation. The Committee strongly recommend that the Ministry ought to pay attention to PGoE and its offices by provisioning of adequate funds and human capital.. The Ministry may also chalk out a roadmap with timelines for setting up more PoE offices and apprise the Committee about the progress made in his regard within three months.

**Reply of the Government**

Ministry of External Affairs would like to mention that thirteenth Protector of Emigrant (PoE) Office in Guwahati is in the process of being fully operationalised with the joining of acting Protector of Emigrants there. For opening of more PoE offices across all over the India, in state where PoE offices do not exist at present, Ministry has regularly conveyed its intention of opening of PoE offices in States/Union Territories. Till date, Odisha and Tripura have conveyed their consent for opening of PoE office in their states while Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh have replied that opening of a PoE office in their States is not felt necessary at present. The Standing Committee will be informed about further progress in this regard.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**(Recommendation No 32)**

The Committee are aware that various schemes and programmes are undertaken by the Ministry for protection and welfare of Overseas Indians. It is observed that schemes like India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI), Study India Programme, Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) and Tracing the Roots Scheme have been closed between 2014

and 2018. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) acts as an effective instrument for engagement with our Diaspora. The Ministry has informed that in order to leverage the soft power of Indian Diaspora, it has been working to design appropriate and well-calibrated institutional responses. While tendering evidence before the Committee, the Foreign Secretary spelt out the '4 C's' approach of Government of India for engagement with the Indian Diaspora. These include Connect with India, Care for the safety and security, Celebrate with Diaspora and Contribute to India's Development.

Keeping in mind the size, magnitude and depth of our Diaspora across the globe, the Committee feel that the allocations made to various schemes and programmes for the welfare of Overseas Indians is uneven and inadequate. The Committee were hopeful that following the merger of MoIA and MEA, the engagement with Overseas Indians would receive due impetus. Upon a close scrutiny of the schemes, programmes and activities relating to Overseas Indians, the Committee find that the Ministry's assertion that highest priority has been given to Overseas Indian Affairs, post merger, does not find corresponding resonance in the budgetary allocation. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should constitute a working group to assess all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians and apprise them about its outcome within six months. The Ministry should ensure that requisite institutional, administrative and fiscal arrangements are made so that the objectives behind merger of the Ministries are achieved.

### **Reply of the Government**

Committee's recommendation that Ministry should constitute a working group to assess all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians and apprise them about its outcome within six months is duly noted. It is submitted that all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians are regularly reviewed at the level of the Minister-in-Charge and necessary action taken to optimise their functioning. Some examples are:

- (i) Study India Programme (SIP) was closed in 2016 given the similarity of SIP with KIP (Know India Programme);
- (ii) The format of the PBD Convention was changed from annual to once in two years after 2015. PBD conferences were held in the interval between two conventions and their deliberations fed into the plenary sessions of the PBD Convention. This was done to make the convention more meaningful and give the diaspora a voice in policy making in Government of India;
- (iii) Videsh Sampark programme was started from the year 2017 as a part of MEA's state outreach programme to promote in-depth dialogue between the Ministry and State Governments to design appropriate and well-calibrated institutional responses for Diaspora engagement and migration management;

(iv) Modality of implementation of Media Campaign programme was changed from showing ads on various television channels, to roping in prominent personalities in different languages to promote safe and legal migration on social media;

(v) Global Indian Students Portal is being developed to provide complete and comprehensive information on educational facilities abroad to Indian Students wishing to pursue studies abroad;

(vi) Know India Programme was revamped during FY 2015-16 along with enhancing the budget allocation for the scheme. The enhancement of budget was made on account of increasing the number of KIP visits to India to 6 during one FY and due to addition of new element of Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY) as a special KIP. Besides, some new elements were also added in the KIP programme, like- Provide T-Shirt to KIP Participants; Visit to Kingdom of Dreams, Gurgaon (Theme Park); Showcasing a Bollywood Movie and a visit to Film City, Noida for the participants.

(vii) India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) was closed in March 31, 2018 to avoid duplication of work and to enhance the efficiency of other schemes;

(viii) Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) was closed down with Cabinet approval on 30.3.2017 after functions related to promotion of investments by overseas Indians shifted to Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) following merger of MOIA with MEA;

(ix) Tracing the Roots Scheme was reviewed in 2016-17 and closed down with EAM's approval after it was observed that performance of the scheme was unsatisfactory with only 18 applications in 8 years;

Thus it may be seen that Ministry is constantly assessing the performance, reviewing and carrying out necessary changes to all schemes and programmes for welfare of overseas Indians. This review is carried out at the level of the Minister-in-Charge through existing institutional, administrative and fiscal arrangements which are sufficient for the purpose. Thus, it is felt that creation of a parallel authority to carry out the same functions as are already being carried out by Ministry is not necessary, but rather would entail duplication of work.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

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

The Committee are displeased to note that the allocation under this head has been reduced from Rs. 11 crore in 2019-20 (BE) to Rs. 5 crore in 2020-21 (BE). The budget under this sub-head has been almost halved at a time when renewed efforts are required to spread awareness about safe and legal migration. The Committee express their strong disapproval of the reduction being effected in such an important area of emigration. The Committee note that various personalities have been approached for greater outreach of media awareness campaigns

and shooting of the ads will commence during financial year 2020-21. The involvement of famous personalities in the ad campaigns is a welcome step and the Ministry should seek funds at the RE stage for the advertisements. The Committee also urge that the Ministry carry out an impact assessment study of the awareness campaign and in the light of its findings, establish a formal mechanism for continuous monitoring and evaluation of these campaigns. The Committee also recommend that the Ministry proactively engage with the State Governments to deepen the impact of information and awareness campaigns.

### **Reply of the Government**

Ministry carried out media campaign on safe and legal migration by bringing out ads on safe and legal migration on various TV Channels and newspaper ads. The ads were also disseminated on social media by using twitter and facebook. Following a directive, the ads were sent to the Advertisement Approval Cell (AAC) which had observed that ads could be prepared by involving prominent personalities in regional languages and disseminated through social media at minimum expenditure. Thereafter, Ministry approached various prominent personalities in Hindi and regional languages for their support on gratis basis. Prominent persons have already agreed for their support in Hindi and Five regional languages for Media Awareness Campaign on gratis basis. This resulted in economy of expenditure with due realisation of objective involving regional personalities to run an effective awareness campaign.

The Ministry is carrying out impact assessment study of the media awareness through Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), including its campaigns on social media. The Recommendation of the Committee have been duly noted to establish a formal mechanism for continuous monitoring and evaluation of media awareness campaigns, after findings of the media assessment study by IIMC.

Ministry has already engaged with State Governments to disseminate media awareness programme through electronic and print media either free or at the cost of the State Government. Many State Governments are doing the programme successfully to deepen the impact of information and awareness campaigns. The Ministry is following up with other States to disseminate media awareness programme.

[O.M. No. AA/Parl/125/17/2020]

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS (2020-21) HELD ON 28 JANUARY, 2021**

The Committee sat on Thursday, 28 January, 2021 from 1630 hrs. to 1700 hrs. in Committee Room No. 2, Block 'A' Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

**PRESENT**

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

**Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Dileshwar Kamait
3. Smt. Preneet Kaur
4. Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi
5. Smt. Goddeti Madhavi
6. Shri Ritesh Pandey
7. Dr. K. C. Patel
8. Shri Rebati Tripura

**Rajya Sabha**

9. Shri K. J. Alphons
10. Shri Brij Lal

**Secretariat**

- |                           |   |                     |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Dr. Ram Raj Rai        | - | Director            |
| 2. Md. Aftab Alam         | - | Additional Director |
| 3. 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 draft Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Second Report of the Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2020-21.

4. The Chairperson invited the members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report. The Members suggested some minor modifications. The Committee adopted the draft Report with the 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  
OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE SECOND REPORT  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

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

Recommendation Nos.1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

**Total- 28**

**Percentage: 70%**

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

NIL

**Total- Nil**

**Percentage: 0 %**

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

Recommendation Nos. 16 and 40

**Total- 2**

**Percentage: 5%**

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

Recommendation Nos. 3, 5, 8, 9,11, 15, 24, 31, 32, and 35

**Total- 10**

**Percentage: 25%**