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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**(1998-99)**

**TWELFTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

*[Action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations  
contained in the 1st Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants  
of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1998-99]*

**THIRD REPORT**

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**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*December, 1998/Agrahayana, 1920 (Saka)*

# THIRD REPORT

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (1998-99)

(TWELFTH LOK SABHA)

### MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*[Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations  
contained in the 1st Report of the Committee (12th Lok Sabha) on  
Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1998-99]*

*Presented to Lok Sabha on 23.12.98  
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 23.12.98*



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI

*December, 1998/Agrahayana, 1920 (Saka)*

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(1998-99)

Shri Inder Kumar Gujral—*Chairman*

MEMBERS

*Lok Sabha*

2. Shri Dileep Sanghani
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4. Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste
5. Shri Bikram Keshari Deo
6. Smt. Ila Pant
7. Dr. Ashok Patel
8. Shri Tapan Sikdar
9. Shri Tarun Gogoi
10. Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita
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13. Shri P.A. Sangma
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42. Shri Rangnath Misra#
43. Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi\*
44. Shri L.M. Singhvi\*\*
45. Shri Swaraj Kaushal##

SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. Ashok Kumar Pandey — *Additional Secretary*
2. Shri Harnam Singh — *Joint Secretary*
3. Shri A.K. Singh — *Deputy Secretary*
4. Shri R.K. Saxena — *Under Secretary*
5. Smt. Anita B. Panda — *Committee Officer*

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# Nominated as Member of the Committee w.e.f. 17.7.1998.

## Nominated as Member of the Committee w.e.f. 11.8.1998.

\* Ceased to be a Member of the Committee consequent upon his retirement w.e.f. 4.7.1998 and re-nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 31.7.1998.

\*\* Nominated as Member of the Committee w.e.f. 31.7.1998.

### Nominated as Member of the Committee w.e.f. 16.12.1998.

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf, present this Third Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the First Report (Twelfth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on the "Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1998-99".

2. The First Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 6th July, 1998 and was laid in Rajya Sabha on 7th July, 1998. The Government furnished their replies indicating Action Taken on the Recommendations contained in the Report.

3. The Draft Report on the basis of Action Taken Notes was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on External Affairs (1998-99) at their sitting held on 21 December, 1998. Minutes of the Sitting of the Committee have been reproduced as Appendix I to the Report.

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

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report and have also been reproduced in consolidated form in Appendix III.

NEW DELHI;  
December, 1998  
*Agrahayana, 1920 (Saka)*

INDER KUMAR GUJRAL,  
*Chairman,*  
*Standing Committee on External Affairs.*

## CHAPTER 1

### REPORT

The Report of the Committee deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the First Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants for the year 1998-99 in respect of Ministry of External Affairs. First Report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 6th July, 1998.

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

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

Para Nos. 15, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 37, 38, 41, 48 and 52.

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

Para Nos. 16 and 17.

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

Para Nos. Nil.

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

Para Nos. 43 and 46

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



## **Rate of Foreign Allowance**

### **(Para No. 22)**

4. In para 22 of the First Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 1998-99, the Committee had observed that one of the main functions of Foreign Service Inspectors was to determine the rate of Foreign Allowance of the employees in Missions/Posts abroad, after taking into consideration the expenditure on commodities in a particular country. Since the Indexation scheme had come into effect w.e.f. 1.1.1998, the FSI would be required to inspect the Missions/Posts abroad with a view to identifying weaknesses and recommending corrective measures to improve the efficiency and performance of Missions. The Committee had desired that the inspection of Missions be made a regular phenomenon and if any deficiency/lacuna is noticed in any Mission, suitable directions be given and remedial measures taken. The Committee further felt that since the indexation scheme is not applicable to the local staff employed by the Missions/Posts abroad, a suitable alternative scheme, which takes into account the increase in local cost of living, may be worked out to provide relief to the local employees working in the Missions/Posts abroad.

5. The Ministry have reassured the Committee that the inspection of Missions/Posts abroad by Foreign Service Inspectors would be carried out in a rational and scientific manner and the lacuna, if any, would be rectified by suitable measures.

Regarding neutralisation of local cost of living, the Ministry have informed that a system of granting cost of living allowance (COLA) based on the index for the concerned country is already in place. It is further stated that while the system has by the large been satisfactory, the Ministry is examining proposals to rationalise the system.

6. The Committee note that the Ministry have agreed to the Committee's recommendation for continued inspection of Missions/Posts abroad by Foreign Service Inspectors (FSIs) in a rational and scientific manner. The Committee would like to be apprised of the specific steps contemplated in this regard. The Committee feel that only some selected Missions/Posts abroad are inspected on regular basis while others are seldom inspected. The Committee desire that a plan for periodic inspections should be formulated by the Ministry

urgently ensuring that all the Missions/Posts abroad are covered at the earliest. The lacuna/shortcomings noticed by FSIs during the course of their inspections should be brought to the notice of all Missions alongwith suitable directions.

7. Keeping in view the need to provide relief to the local employees working in the missions/posts in the wake of any steep rise in the cost of living in a particular country, the Committee had recommended that a suitable alternative scheme, in line with the already existing Indexation Scheme which is meant only for the regular staff of the missions/posts, may be formulated. The Committee understand that the system of granting Cost of Living Allowance is already applicable to the local employees employed in Missions/posts abroad. The Committee, desire that a more realistic and suitable scheme to rationalise the system of granting Cost of Living Allowance should be formulated early for the local employees of the missions/posts abroad so that their grievances are met effectively.

### **Haj Pilgrimage**

#### **(Para No. 25)**

8. In para 25 of their First Report, the Committee drew the attention of the Ministry to the fact that there had been lot of complaints about the method of selection of Haj pilgrims and also making the funds available to them for the pilgrimage. The Committee had felt that there should be a clear demarcation of powers of the Indian Consulate-General at Jeddah and Haj Committee to avoid any overlapping between them which, in turn, results in lot of difficulties to the Hajis. As the Haj Committee is still functioning under the old statute, the Committee had desired that early steps be taken to review and make necessary amendments in the Central Haj Committee Act.

9. The Ministry in their reply have stated that since 1995, all intending pilgrims who submit their applications in time and otherwise are not disqualified under the Rules, are able to perform Haj through the Haj Committee. While the Government does not provide funds, the pilgrims obtain foreign exchange from the bank selected by the Haj Committee annually for the purpose. The Ministry have further stated that the management of Haj is presently regulated by the Haj Committee Act of 1959 and the Rules made thereunder. A draft Bill to

review and update the Act is under preparation in the Ministry and will be finalised and presented to Parliament after consultation with the Ministries/Departments concerned and the State Governments.

10. The Committee have noted that the Ministry is finalising a Bill to review and update the Haj Committee Act of 1959 in consultation with the concerned Ministries/Departments and State Governments. There has been an inordinate delay in having this legislation. The Committee, therefore, expect an expeditious action in the matter. The Ministry has, however, not responded to the recommendation of the Committee regarding demarcation of powers between the Consulate-General at Jeddah and Haj Committee to avoid any overlapping between them. In order to minimise the difficulties faced by the Hajjis, the Committee, once again emphasize that the powers conferred on the Consulate-General at Jeddah and the Haj Committee should be clearly demarcated.

#### **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**

##### **(Para No. 26)**

11. In para 26 of their First Report, the Committee had asked the Ministry to take necessary measures for making suitable arrangements and providing more facilities for the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage. The Committee had also observed that the possibility of providing an easier alternate route to the Mansarovar through Nepal under a tripartite visa arrangement with China and Nepal may also be explored.

12. In their reply the Ministry have stated that the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra was reopened for Indian pilgrims *via* the traditional route across Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragarh District of Uttar Pradesh in 1981, following a bilateral agreement between India and China. Besides efforts are being made to improve the facilities and arrangements along the route including development of infrastructure and improvement in lodging, boarding and transportation.

13. The Ministry have further stated that the possibility of providing an alternative route for the yatra has been under consideration since 1992 taking into account the growing popularity of the yatra, constraints of the existing route and requests from the Ladakh residents. Accordingly, some proposals have been made to the Chinese authorities to open alternative routes through Shipki La in Himachal Pradesh and through Demchok route. These proposals are under the consideration

of the local authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). However, China has cited difficulty in opening new routes on the ground that it would involve travel over much longer distances over difficult terrain, with poor road conditions and lack of proper infrastructure for accommodation and communications. They have also expressed apprehension that development of infrastructure in these remote areas would not be an easy task. Building facilities for alternative routes could take a long time and could also lead to a substantial escalation in the fee charged from Indian pilgrims which is currently US \$ 500 per pilgrim. The Ministry have also stated that the differences over the boundary question may also add complexity to the task of identifying mutually acceptable alternative routes.

14. The Committee have been further informed that the Ministry is examining the feasibility to open an alternative route for Indian pilgrims through Nepal as per their recommendation and evaluating the costs, duration of journey, availability of infrastructure and logistical facilities. However, the Ministry have cited one of the constraints in having such an arrangement *i.e.* the facilities currently provided to Indian pilgrims by the Chinese side under the bilateral arrangement may not be available under a tripartite arrangement. Moreover, in the broader context of long-term relations with China, a bilateral arrangement might be preferred to an arrangement involving a third country.

15. The Committee express their deep concern on the tragedy that struck the Kailash Mansarovar Yatris during August this year in which several yatris lost their lives. The Government had to close the route and cancel the remaining yatra. The Committee are of the opinion that if an alternative route with suitable facilities was available, the need for cancellation of Mansarovar yatra would not have arisen. The Committee also note that the talks with China are going on for opening of an alternate route for Kailash Mansarovar Pilgrimage via Ladakh. The Committee feel that the opening of this route will make it easier for pilgrims to reach the holy site. If this route opens, pilgrims can motor down to base camp within two days as against several days of trekking through Garhwal mountains. The Committee, therefore, desire that the proposal to open an alternate route via Ladakh may be pursued effectively with China for an early decision.

16. In so far as the feasibility of an alternate route to Kailash-Mansarovar through Nepal is concerned, the Committee desire that

**the Ministry should take immediate steps to ensure that the costs, duration, availability of infrastructure and logistical facilities of the alternative route are examined and the Committee may be informed of the progress.**

#### **A. Pilgrimages to Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb**

17. In para 27 of their First Report, the Committee had observed that there has been an increasing demand for Visa for visiting Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb. However, the Indian pilgrims face considerable difficulties in obtaining Visas to visit these places in Pakistan. Therefore, the Committee had urged the Ministry to take up the matter with the Government of Pakistan at the earliest.

18. In their reply, the Ministry of External Affairs have stated that the visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan, including to Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb, are governed by the bilateral Protocol on Visits to religious Shrines of 1974. Under the Protocol, 4 jathas of Sikh/Sehejdhari totalling 7,500 pilgrims visit various Gurudwaras in Pakistan every year.

The Ministry have further informed the Committee that matters relating to the Protocol are discussed under Sub-Commission IV of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission. An increase in the number of pilgrims allowed to visit Pakistan under the Protocol can only be discussed at the next meeting of Sub-Commission IV. The last meeting of Sub-Commission IV took place in July 1989 and Pakistan has not responded to our subsequent requests to convene the India-Pakistan Joint Commission and its Sub-Commission.

The Committee are further informed that as regards the difficulties faced by the pilgrims in obtaining Visas, the matter has been taken up with Government of Pakistan, Pakistan maintains that clearance in principle is granted for the visit of the jatha but it is well within its rights to refuse Visas to individual pilgrims.

19. The Committee note that the visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan, including Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb are governed by a bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974. Under the Protocol every year 4 jathas totalling 7,500 pilgrims visit Gurudwaras in Pakistan. It is further noted that matters relating to this Protocol are discussed under Sub-Commission IV of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission. However, the Committee are surprised

to know that the last meeting of Sub-Commission IV took place way back in July 1989 and despite a gap of more than nine years Pakistan has not responded to India's subsequent requests to convene the India-Pakistan Joint Commission and its Sub-Commissions. The Committee feel that the matter could have been pursued at a higher level. The ongoing Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan perhaps can be an appropriate forum to discuss these issues.

20. With regard to the difficulties being faced by Indian Pilgrims in obtaining Visas, the Committee are concerned to note that despite the matter being taken up with the Pakistani authorities, positive results do not seem to be forthcoming. As per the Ministry's Annual Report of 1997-98, the Indian Government has taken up certain measures last year to liberalise the Visa regime for Pakistani nationals desiring to visit India. The Committee feel that this matter should be pursued with Pakistani authorities to liberalise their procedures on reciprocal basis to further promote people-to-people contact between the two countries.

### **Role of Lobbying Firms**

#### **(Para No. 32)**

21. The Committee had noted certain measures taken by the Ministry with a view to giving more thrust to external publicity which includes hiring of one lobbying firm in the U.S. However, the Committee were of the view that there was considerable scope for making professional public relation efforts more effective. Therefore, the Committee had recommended that to achieve maximum impact, particularly in the US, the Ministry might explore the feasibility of engaging firms specialising in lobbying with different target groups. The Committee had also recommended that while engaging such firms, the Ministry might carefully evaluate their antecedents and the influence carried by their members. The performance of the lobbying firms in furthering our objectives also needed close and continuous monitoring.

22. In Their reply, the Ministry have stated that in order to increase effectiveness of our lobbying efforts, the Embassy of India, Washington and the Ministry have reviewed existing lobbying arrangements. In June, 1998, two well-reputed lobbying firms, namely, M/s Verner Liipfert and M/s APCO Associates were appointed for a period of six months.

23. The Ministry have further informed the Committee that although our existing arrangements have served us well, it was decided to supplement them in the wake of the reactions to India's nuclear tests. APCO Associates is a well-know lobbying firm, with 24 offices worldwide. The main strength of APCO Associates is the involvement of former congressman Stephen Solarz, who has been one of India's staunchest friends in the Congress. Mr. Solarz has visited India on two occasions for in-depth discussion on steps needed to forcefully put across India's point of view in U.S. Congressional circles.

24. The Committee have also been informed by the Ministry that M/s Verner Liipfert is an eminent legal firm with wide-ranging contacts on both the Republicans as well as with the Democratic Parties. Senator Robert Dole, the Presidential Candidate, and former Senator Mitchell act as consultants.

25. In response to the Committee's recommendation regarding monitoring of the performance of these firms, the Ministry have stated that an effective system of monitoring and coordination of our lobbying efforts has been put in place. The Embassy of India, Washington closely liaise and directs the Work of the lobbying firms through weekly coordination meetings which are chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission with the participation of the senior officers of the Mission. Fortnightly reports of activities undertaken by the firms are also sent to the Ministry.

26. The Committee note that the Ministry have taken certain positive steps to improve the effectiveness of our lobbying efforts in the US including appointment of two renowned lobbying firms. namely APCO Associates and M/s Verner Liipfert. However, the Committee would like to emphasise once again that determined efforts by the Ministry are required, to put India in the hearts and minds of the US leaders. At present, India is engaged in talks with the US to improve bilateral relations. In this context, the Committee hope that the role of these lobbying firms will be monitored very closely to ensure that the Government's efforts are supplemented in an effective manner.

## Opening of a Research Policy Cell

(Para No. 41)

27. The Committee had found that there is only a small Policy Cell in the Ministry for Policy Planning and Research and had recommended that the Ministry should present a well worked-out proposal for a proper Research Policy Cell in the context of present very complex challenges to the foreign policy. The Committee had also recommended that after finalisation of such proposal, appropriate funds may be asked for in the RE 1998-99 stage.

28. The Ministry in their reply have merely stated that the matter is under consideration of the MEA, New Delhi.

29. The Committee feel that any delay in setting up of a Research Policy Cell may seriously hamper the Ministry's capability of dealing with complex issues in a fail-safe manner. In the absence of a research-oriented Policy Cell, the Ministry may also find it difficult to respond optimally and effectively to the dynamic international situation. The Committee recommend urgently setting up of a Research Policy Cell having adequate trained manpower equipped with an up-to-date data base. This Cell, if properly manned, should be able to identify niche-areas in our foreign relations for formulating well-targetted action plans. The Committee feel that the Historical Division of the Ministry should be immediately upgraded by appointing highly accomplished academicians from outside as was the position about five years back. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the progress and plans of modernisation of the library. It is also felt that appropriate accommodation for the library attached with Policy Planning & Research Division should be provided near the main office of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee also wish to know about the progress of the new building which is proposed to be constructed for housing the Ministry of External Affairs.



## CHAPTER II

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

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

The Committee feel that going by the stated objectives of the Ministry of External Affairs, the total allocation of Rs. 2120.72 crore for BE 1998-99 appears to be too little for achieving these objectives. In real terms after taking into account the loss of 10% due to exchange, only about 30% of the BE 1998-99 is available to the Ministry to carry out their normal activities in promoting India's foreign policy objectives and reinforcing a positive image of the country abroad. The Committee are of the view that there is a case of substantial enhancement in the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs to enable them to pursue the objectives in a more vigorous, effective and pro-active manner. This should also enable them to modernise our Missions as well as Headquarters with most modern equipments including those for communication. The Committee desire that the matter may be pursued with the Ministry of Finance so that the activities like modernisation are completed at the earliest.

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

The Ministry has carefully noted the Committee's observations and directions for augmentation of the budget of the Ministry to enable it to pursue its objectives, in a more vigorous, effective and pro-active manner including the modernisation of Missions and the Headquarters through the provision of latest equipment including those for communication.

The Ministry, will in compliance of the Committee's recommendations, take up with the Ministry of Finance at RE stage after making an updated assessment and will also take all possible steps to provide latest equipment including those for communication in a phased manner.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.198]

**Recommendation (Para No. 21)**

The Committee note that after finalisation of the allocation for BE 1998-99, two new Missions in Armenia and Azerbaijan have been opened and reopening Missions at Fiji is being considered. Besides the Ministry is also contemplating the reopening of Indian Missions in Africa particularly in Democratic People's Republic of Congo. Considering that an amount of Rs. 293.30 crore has been earmarked for salaries, overtime allowance and wages, 59.30 crore on travel expenses, Rs. 102.03 crore for office expenses, Rs. 15.23 crore for advertising and publicity and Rs. 130.31 crore for rent, rate and taxes etc., there seems to be hardly any funds left in the provision for BE 1998-99 for the new and proposed Missions unless normal activities are curtailed. The Committee hope that adequate funds would be provided for the setting up and of the new/proposed Missions/Posts and also providing them with necessary infrastructural facilities so that there does not occur any delay in making them operational. The Committee hope that while deciding the posting of the India based officers and staff to the Missions/Posts broad consideration is given to the posting of members of SC & ST.

**Reply of the Government**

The Ministry assures the august Committee that requisite funds would be provided for the setting up of new/proposed Missions/Posts and where required, budget augmentation would be requested for at the appropriate time from the Ministry of Finance. All efforts would be made for providing such new Missions/Posts the necessary infrastructural facilities to enable them to become fully operational in the least possible time.

Transfers of India-based officers and staff to Missions/Posts abroad including members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are decided in a transparent manner and as per clearly laid down procedures which ensures adequate representation of these categories.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.198]

**Recommendation (Para No. 22)**

One of the main functions of Foreign Service Inspectors was to determine that rate of Foreign Allowance of the employees in Missions/Posts abroad, after taking into consideration of the expenditure on

commodities in a particular country. Since the indexation scheme has come in operation with effect from 1.1.98 the FSI would be required to inspect the Missions/Posts abroad with a view to identifying weaknesses and recommend corrective measures to improve the efficiency and performance of Missions. The Committee desire that the inspection of Missions be made a regular phenomenon and if any deficiency/lacuna is noticed in any Mission, suitable directions be given and remedial measures taken. The Committee further feel that since the indexation scheme is not applicable to the local staff employed by the Missions/Posts abroad, a suitable alternative scheme which takes into account the increase in local cost of living may be worked out to provide relief to the local employees working in the Missions/Posts.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Ministry agrees with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation for continued inspection of Missions/Posts abroad with a view to identifying weaknesses and recommending corrective measures to improve the efficiency and performance of Missions. The Ministry would like to re-assure the Committee that the inspection of Missions/Posts abroad by Foreign Service Inspectors would be carried out in a rational and scientific manner and any lacuna that comes to the attention of the Ministry would be rectified by suitable measures.

In so far as the neutralisation of local cost of living is concerned, the Ministry would like to inform the Committee that a system of granting Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) based on the index for the concerned country, is already in place. While the system has by and large been satisfactory, the Ministry is examining proposals to rationalise the system.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.198]

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

The Committee drew the attention of the Ministry to the fact that there has been lot of complaints about the method of selection of Haj pilgrims and making the funds available to them for the pilgrimage. Since the Haj Affairs are looked into by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Committee feel that there should be a clear demarcation of powers of the Consulate-General at Jeddah and Haj Committee to avoid any overlapping between them which, in turn, results in lot of difficulties

to the Hajis. As the Haj Committee is still functioning under the old statute, the Committee desire that early steps be taken to review and make necessary amendments in the Central Haj Committee Act.

### **Reply of the Government**

It is submitted that since 1995, all intending pilgrims who submit their applications in time and otherwise are not disqualified under the Rules, are able to perform Haj through the Haj Committee. No funds are provided to pilgrims by the Government. Pilgrims obtain their foreign exchange from the bank selected by the Haj Committee annually for the purpose.

2. The management of Haj is presently regulated by the Haj Committee Act of 1959 and the Rules made thereunder. With the passage of time, a need is now felt to review and update the Act. A draft Bill is under preparation in the Ministry and will be finalised and presented to Parliament after consultations with the Ministries/ Departments concerned and the State Governments.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.198]

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

The Committee also desire that necessary measures be taken by the Ministry for making suitable arrangements and providing more facilities for the pilgrims going to Kailash Mansarovar, Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb. The possibility of providing an alternate and easier route to the Mansarovar pilgrimage through Nepal under a tripartite visa arrangement with China and Nepal may also be explored.

### **Reply of the Government**

#### **(A) Kailash Manasarovar Yatra**

The Kailash Manasarovar Yatra was reopened for Indian pilgrims *via* the traditional route across Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragarh District of Uttar Pradesh in 1981, following a bilateral agreement between India and China. The Yatra is co-ordinated by the Ministry of External Affairs and conducted with the assistance of various Central and State Government agencies. Over the years, efforts have been made to

improve the facilities and arrangements for the Indian pilgrims, including development of infrastructure along the route and improvement in lodging, boarding and transportation.

The possibility of providing an alternative route for the Yatra has been under consideration since 1992, taking into account the growing popularity of the Yatra, constraints along the existing route, and requests from residents of the border areas, especially Ladakh. A number of suggestions have been made to the Chinese side in this period. In 1993, it was proposed that an alternative route be opened through Shipki La in Himachal Pradesh, and since 1994, we have also proposed the Demchok route. The Chinese side have indicated that our proposals for alternative routes are under consideration of the local authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). They have cited difficulty in opening new routes on grounds that it would involve travel over much longer distances over difficult terrain, with poor road conditions and lack of proper infrastructure for accommodation and communications. They have also expressed the view that development of infrastructure in these remote areas would not be an easy task. Building facilities for alternative routes could take a long time, and could also lead to a substantial escalation in the fee charged from Indian pilgrims (currently frozen at US \$ 500 per pilgrim until the year 2000 A.D.). The differences over the boundary question may also add complexity to the task of indentifying mutually acceptable alternative routes.

The suggestion of the Standing Committee to open an alternative route for Indian pilgrims through Nepal is being examined by the Ministry of External Affairs. The feasibility of the route through Nepal, including costs, duration, availability of infrastructure and logistical facilities, is being evaluated. One of the considerations that has to be kept in mind is that the facilities currently provided to Indian pilgrims by the Chinese side under the bilateral arrangement may not be available under a tripartite arrangement. Moreover, in the broader context of long-term relations with China, a bilateral arrangement might be preferred to an arrangement involving a third country.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

#### **B. Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb**

In order to facilitate smooth conduct of jathas from India to Pakistan, Government provides the following services/assistance;

- (i) Obtains the approval of the Government of Pakistan for the visit of each jatha.
- (ii) Co-ordinates with various State Governments/Ministries/ Authorities and forwards the lists of intending pilgrims to Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi.
- (iii) Arranges with the Ministry of Railways special train services for the pilgrims, both for journey from India to Pakistan and back.
- (iv) The Reserve Bank of India expeditiously releases foreign exchange as a special case.
- (v) Liaison officers from the High Commission of India, Islamabad are attached with the visiting jatha and they render assistance to the visiting pilgrims during their stay in Pakistan.

2. However, the Indian Government is not involved in the arrangements for stay and internal travel of the pilgrims on the Pakistani side. These arrangements are made by the Pakistani Auqaf Board. Government impresses upon Government of Pakistan to make adequate arrangements.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

There has been increasing demand for Visa for visiting Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb. However, the Indian pilgrims face considerable difficulties in obtaining Visas to visit these places in Pakistan. The matter needs to be taken up with the Government of Pakistan at the earliest.

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

Visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan, including to Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb, are governed by the bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974. Under the Protocol, 4 jathas of Sikh/Sehjdhari totaling 7500 pilgrims visit various Gurdwaras in Pakistan every year.

Matters relating to the Protocol are discussed under Sub-Commission IV of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission. An increase in

the number of pilgrims allowed to visit Pakistan under the Protocol can only be discussed at the next meeting of Sub-Commission IV. The last meeting of Sub-Commission IV took place in July 1989 and Pakistan has not responded to our subsequent requests to convene the India-Pakistan Joint Commission and its Sub-Commissions.

As regards the difficulties faced by the pilgrims in obtaining visas, the matter has been taken up with Government of Pakistan. Pakistan maintains that clearance in principle is granted for the visit of the jatha but it is well within its rights to refuse visas to individual pilgrims.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

The Committee were informed earlier that some Missions had submitted proposals to step up their publicity activities if backed by adequate financial support. Some of the Missions were selected for allotment of additional funds too. The need to step up information campaigns both at headquarters and Missions/Posts level are much more today in the changed international scenario. In the opinion of the Committee the increase of Rs. 1.49 crores in BE 1998-99 over RE 1997-98 for this purpose at Missions level seems to be insignificant. The Committee feel that sufficient funds should have been projected by the Ministry for augmenting the publicity activities and also for modernisation of Communication system in the Missions.

### **Reply of the Government**

A global review has been completed to assess the requirement of additional funds for publicity efforts by the missions abroad. These are being considered at RE 1998-99 stage by the Ministry. A list of core missions for purposes of external publicity is attached at annexure. The Ministry endorses the need to step up information campaigns in the changed international scenario and is actively backing the effort of our missions in this regard. The Ministry has placed insightful inserts in reputed international newspapers such as "The New York Times" and "The Washington Post" to reinforce a positive image of our country abroad and these publicity efforts will be expanded.

All missions have up-to-date communications equipment and are equipped with audio-visual publicity tools. Requests for upgrading

and enhancing their effectiveness have been obtained and collated and digital overhead projection systems and other publicity apparatus are being provided. Internet and e-mail is increasingly being used by our missions; many have set up their own websites, hyperlinked to Ministry's own home page, which has been recognised internationally as one of the most content-rich sites on India. Recent recognition included the Los Angeles Times pick of the month award and the BBC Education Web Guide's decision to add MEA's site on their select list because they were "particularly impressed by the quality and educational content" of the MEA site. The address of this site is <http://www.indiagov.org> or <http://www.meadev.gov.in>

#### **List of Core Missions/Posts for External Publicity**

1. Abu Dhabi/Dubai\*
2. Ankara/Istanbul\*
3. Beijing/Hong Kong\*/Shanghai\*
4. Bonn/Berlin\*/Frankfurt\*
5. Brussels
6. Cairo
7. Canberra/Sydney\*
8. Colombo
9. Dhaka
10. Islamabad
11. Kathmandu
12. Kuala Lumpur
13. London
14. Moscow
15. Ottawa/Toronto\*/Vancouver\*

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\*Consulate General of India.



16. Paris
17. Port Louis
18. Pretoria/Johannesburg\*/Durban\*
19. Riyadh/Jeddah\*
20. Rome
21. Singapore
22. Tehran
23. Tokyo/Kobe\*
24. Washington/Chicago\*/Houston\*/New York\*/San Francisco\*
25. Permanent Missions of India/New York/Geneva

Note: Consulate General of India

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

Certain measures are stated to have been taken by the Ministry with a view to giving more thrust to external publicity which includes hiring of one lobbying firm in the U.S. However, the Committee are of the view that there is considerable scope for making professional public relations efforts more effective. To achieve maximum impact, particularly, in the US, the Ministry may explore the feasibility of engaging firms specialising in lobbying with different target groups, and while engaging such firms, the Ministry may carefully evaluate their antecedents and the influence carried by their members. The performance of the lobbying firms in furthering our objectives also needs close and continuous monitoring.

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

In order to increase effectiveness of our lobbying efforts, the Embassy of India, Washington and the Ministry have reviewed existing lobbying arrangements. In June, 1998, two well-reputed lobbying firms, namely, M/s Verner Liipfert and M/s APCO Associates were appointed for a period of six months.

Although our existing arrangements have served us well, it was decided to supplement them in the wake of the reactions to India's nuclear tests. APCO Associates is a well-known lobbying firm, with 24 offices worldwide. The main strength of APCO Associates is the involvement of former Congressman Stephen Solarz, who has been one of India's staunchest friends in the Congress. Mr. Solarz has visited India on two occasions for in-depth discussion on steps needed to forcefully put across India's point of view in US Congressional circles.

M/s Verner Lippfert is also an eminent legal firm with wide-ranging contacts on both the Republicans as well as with the Democratic parties. Senator Robert Dole, the Presidential candidate, and former Senator Mitchell act as consultants.

An effective system of monitoring and co-ordination of our lobbying efforts has been put in place. The Embassy of India, Washington closely liaise and directs the work of the lobbying firms through weekly coordination meetings, which are chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission with the participation of the senior officers of the Mission. Fortnightly reports of activities undertaken by the firms are sent to the Ministry.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

The Committee recommend to the Government to have a fresh look at the provisions of the Passports Act, some of which have become archaic and obsolete with time. The Committee would like to stress upon the necessity of having such a review done in a time-bound manner in order to avoid unnecessary delay and hardships to the passport seekers.

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

As desired by the Committee, an extensive discussion was held on the various provisions of the Passports Act, 1967, at the recently concluded Annual Passport Officers Conference held on October 8, 1998. A Committee under the chairmanship of the Regional Passport Officer, Mumbai, has been set up to submit detailed proposals for amendment to the Passports Act as well as the Passport Rules 1980. A time frame of two months has been fixed for the Committee to give its recommendations.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

The Committee would also like to express their dissatisfaction at the slow progress of the computerisation of passport offices. Although the Ministry have assured the Committee about the early completion of the said project, the Committee feel that the project was first mooted in the year 1986, yet even today many passport offices remain to be computerised and are still depending upon manual processing of applications. The Committee desire that the computerisation of all the passport offices may be done expeditiously. The Committee are also of the opinion that while processing the passport applications received from the disturbed areas, due care should be taken to ensure the antecedents of the applicants are not doubtful.

### **Reply of the Government**

There are a total number of 28 Passport Offices functioning under the Ministry of External Affairs. Out of these, 15 Passport Offices, which include all the major Offices, have already been computerised. Three Passport Offices are at a stage where they can be computerised within a very short period. Ministry is in addition actively considering a proposal for a satellite based comprehensive computerisation of all the 28 Passport Offices, with interlinkages between all the Offices. Funds have already been sanctioned by the Committee on Non-Plan Expenditure for the above proposal. A fresh tender is being reworked in consultation with Department of Electronics. This is likely to be implemented in the next financial year.

All Passport Officers have been instructed to take due care while processing applications received from disturbed areas to ensure that passports are not issued to individual with doubtful antecedents.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

The Committee are unanimous in their opinion that the role of cultural diplomacy is crucial in projecting India's policies, perceptions and concerns abroad, not only to better the environment of relationship between India and various countries but also to defeat concerted attempts by unfriendly quarters at image distortion. The ICCR is required to project India in an increasingly holistic fashion by not restricting activities only to performing and visual arts but also

projecting modern India in its totality. All this is bound to eventually help in an increased interaction and dividends in political, economic and commercial fields. Since the ICCR is one of India's premier institutions for fostering cultural exchanges and mutual understanding with the outside world, the Committee feel that the Ministry of External Affairs need to take up their case properly and effectively with the Ministry of Finance to secure more funds for supplementing the activities of ICCR.

### **Reply of the Government**

The august Committee's recommendation has been noted and a strong case for augmentation of the budget of ICCR is being prepared for submission to the Ministry of Finance at the time of finalisation of the Revised Estimates 1998-99 and the Budget Estimates 1999-2000 of this Ministry.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

### **Recommendation (Para No. 48)**

The Committee are of the view that although the ITEC Programme is extremely helpful in promoting technical cooperation at the Government to Government level with developing countries other than our immediate neighbours, the funds allocated for the same, around Rs. 19 crores, do not seem to be sufficient. If a number of proposals under ITEC, particularly on the project side materialise this year, the fund requirements would be much larger. There is a need to strengthen the ITEC Programme in order to sustain our very close relations with the developing world. The Committee, therefore, recommend that additional funds be made available for augmenting the activities under ITEC.

### **Reply of the Government**

Following the recommendations of the Committee on the need to strengthen the ITEC Programme in order to sustain our very close relations with the developing world, steps are being taken by the Ministry (T.C. Division) to arrange 20 study visits instead of 11-12 at present in a year and to increase the number of experts on deputation to various countries progressively upto 50 per year against 23 now in position. In order to undertake these expanded activities, the Division

has projected its requirements for allocation of additional funds in RE 1998-99 and BE 1999-2000.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

**Recommendation (Para No. 52)**

The Committee note that the funds earmarked for capital Outlay on public works and housing are being utilised accordingly to a comprehensive plan for purchase/construction of properties abroad with a view to progressively reduce the escalation of rental liabilities. The Committee desire that the matter may be earnestly pursued and the work is completed accordingly to the planned time schedule so that cost and time overrun could be avoided.

**Reply of the Government**

The observations of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for 1998-99 as contained in para-52 of their 1st Report have been noted for compliance.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

### **CHAPTER III**

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

##### **Recommendation (Para No. 16 & 17)**

The Committee also observe that Rs. 410 crores have been provided in the BE 1998-99 for the hydroelectric projects in Bhutan & Nepal. Reflecting them in the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs gives a very distorted and exaggerated view as this accounts for nearly 19% of the total budget of the Ministry.

The Committee, therefore, recommend that the fund allocation to projects like hydroelectric project in Bhutan and Nepal should be more appropriately reflected in the budget of the concerned Ministry which in this case would be Ministry of Power.

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

The Ministry will take the matter up with the Ministry of Power as also the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

## CHAPTER IV

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

—NIL—

## **CHAPTER V**

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

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

While expressing deep concern over the current state of affairs in the ICWA, the Committee are of the view that unless the ICWA is taken over by the Government there would be further deterioration in this Institution which was set up with high hopes of making it a credible and respectable institution. The Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should come forward and make every effort to revive the proposal of takeover of ICWA by the Government.

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

The recommendation of the Committee is under examination of the Ministry of External Affairs.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

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

Noting that the budgetary expenditure 1998-99 on Grants to Institutions is just Rs. 1.32 crores and that there is only a small Policy Cell in the Ministry for policy Planning and Research, the Committee recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should present a well worked-out proposal for a proper Research Policy Cell in the context of present very complex challenges to the foreign policy. The Committee also recommend that after finalisation of such proposal, appropriate funds may be asked for in the RE 1998-99 stage.



**Reply of the Government**

The Matter is under consideration of the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./21/98, Dated 18.11.98]

NEW DELHI;  
21 December, 1998  
30 Agrahayana, 1920 (Saka)

INDER KUMAR GUJRAL,  
Chairman,  
Standing Committee on External Affairs.

## APPENDIX I

### MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON 21 DECEMBER, 1998

The Committee sat from 1600 hrs. to 1700 hrs.

#### PRESENT

Shri I.K. Gujral — *Chairman*

#### MEMBERS

##### *Lok Sabha*

2. Shri Dileep Sanghani
3. Smt. Ila Pant
4. Shri Tapan Sikdar
5. Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita
6. Shri Sharad Pawar
7. Shri P.A. Sangma
8. Shri P. Shivshanker
9. Shri C. Gopal
10. Shri Heera Lal Rai
11. Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab
12. Shri Anant Gangaram Geete
13. Shri E. Ahamed

##### *Rajya Sabha*

14. Shri Madhav Sinh Solanki
15. Shri Md. Salim
16. Dr. L.M. Singhvi

#### SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. A.K. Pandey — *Additional Secretary*
2. Shri A.K. Singh — *Deputy Secretary*
3. Shri R.K. Saxena — *Under Secretary*

At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members of the Committee. Thereafter the Committee took up for consideration the draft third Report on Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the 1st Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1998-99. The Chairman invited Members to offer their comments on the draft Report. The Members suggested certain modifications/ amendments and desired that those be suitably incorporated into the body of the Report. The draft Report was then adopted.

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

*The Committee then adjourned.*

## APPENDIX II

(Vide Introduction of Report)

### ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE 1ST REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (12TH LOK SABHA)

I. Total Number of Recommendations	17
II Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by Government.	
Para Nos. 15, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 37, 38, 41, 48 and 52.	
Total	13
Percentage	76.48%
III. Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government replies	
Para Nos. 16 and 17	
Total	2
Percentage	11.76%
IV. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration.	
Para No. Nil	
Total	Nil
Percentage	Nil
V. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.	
Para Nos. 43 and 46	
Total	2
Percentage	11.76%

### APPENDIX III

#### STATEMENT OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sl. No.	Para No.	Ministry	Observations/Recommendations
1	2	3	4
1	6	Ministry of External Affairs	The Committee note that the Ministry have agreed to the Committee's recommendation for continued inspection of Missions/Posts abroad by Foreign Service Inspectors (FSIs) in a rational and scientific manner. The Committee would like to be apprised of the specific steps contemplated in this regard. The Committee feel that only some selected Missions/Posts abroad are inspected on regular basis while others are seldom inspected. The Committee desire that a plan for periodic inspections should be formulated by the Ministry urgently ensuring that all the Missions/Posts abroad are covered at the earliest. The lacuna/shortcomings noticed by FSIs during the course of their inspections should be brought to the notice of all Missions alongwith suitable directions.

1	2	3	4
2	7	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>Keeping in view the need to provide relief to the local employees working in the missions/posts in the wake of any steep rise in the cost of living in a particular country, the Committee had recommended that a suitable alternative scheme, in line with the already existing Indexation Scheme which is meant only for the regular staff of the missions/posts, may be formulated. The Committee understand that the system of granting cost of Living Allowance is already applicable to the local employees employed in Missions/posts abroad. The Committee, desire that a more realistic and suitable scheme to rationalise the system of granting Cost of Living Allowance should be formulated early for the local employees of the missions/posts abroad so that their grievances are met effectively.</p>
3	10	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>The Committee have noted that the Ministry is finalising a Bill to review and update the Haj Committee Act of 1959 in consultation with the</p>

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concerned Ministries/ Departments and State Governments. There has been an inordinate delay in having this legislation. The Committee, therefore, expect an expeditious action in the matter. The Ministry has, however, not responded to the recommendation of the Committee regarding demarcation of powers between the Consulate-General at Jeddah and Haj Committee to avoid any overlapping between them. In order to minimise the difficulties faced by the Hajis, the Committee, once again emphasize that the powers conferred on the Consulate-General at Jeddah and the Haj Committee should be clearly demarcated.

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Ministry of  
External Affairs

15. The Committee express their deep concern on the tragedy that struck the Kailash Mansarovar Yatris during August this year in which several Yatris lost their lives. The Government had to close the route and cancel the remaining yatra. The Committee are of the opinion that if an

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alternative route with suitable facilities was available, the need for cancellation of Mansarovar yatra would not have arisen. The Committee also note that the talks with China are going on for opening of an alternate route for Kailash Mansarovar Pilgrimage *via* Ladakh. The Committee feel that the opening of this route will make it easier for pilgrims to reach the holy site. If this route opens, pilgrims can motor down to base camp within two days as against several days of trekking through Garhwal mountains. The Committee, therefore, desire that the proposal to open an alternate route *via* Ladakh may be pursued effectively with China for an early decision.

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Ministry of  
External Affairs

In so far as the feasibility of an alternate route to Kailash-Mansarovar through Nepal is concerned, the Committee desire that the Ministry should take immediate steps to ensure that the costs, duration, availability of infrastructure and logistical facilities of the alternative route are examined and the Committee may be informed of the progress.



1	2	3	4
6	19	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>The Committee note that the visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan, including Nankana Saheb and Punja Saheb are governed by a bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974. Under the Protocol every year 4 jathas totalling 7,500 pilgrims visit Gurudwaras in Pakistan. It is further noted that matters relating to this Protocol are discussed under Sub-Commission IV of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission. However, the Committee are surprised to know that the last meeting of Sub-Commission IV took place way back in July 1989 and despite a gap of more than nine years Pakistan has not responded to India's subsequent requests to convene the India-Pakistan Joint Commission and its Sub-Commission. The Committee feel that the matter could have been pursued at a higher level. The ongoing Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan perhaps can be an appropriate forum to discuss these issues.</p>

1	2	3	4
7	20	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>With regard to the difficulties being faced by Indian Pilgrims in obtaining Visas, the Committee are concerned to note that despite the matter being taken up with the Pakistani authorities, positive results do not seem to be forthcoming. As per the Ministry's Annual Report of 1997-98, the Indian Government has taken up certain measures last year to liberalise the Visa regime for Pakistani nationals desiring to visit India. The Committee feel that this matter should be pursued with Pakistani authorities to liberalise their procedures on reciprocal basis to further promote people-to-people contact between the two countries.</p>
8	26	—do—	<p>The Committee note that the Ministry have taken certain positive steps to improve the effectiveness of our lobbying efforts in the US including appointment of two renowned lobbying firms, namely APCO Associates and M/s. Verner Liipfert. However, the Committee would like to emphasise once again that</p>

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determined efforts by the Ministry are required, to put India in the hearts and minds of the US leaders. At present, India is engaged in talks with the US to improve bilateral relations. In this context, the Committee hope that the role of these lobbying firms will be monitored very closely to ensure that the Government's efforts are supplemented in an effective manner.

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Ministry of  
External Affairs

The Committee feel that any delay in setting up a Research Policy Cell may seriously hamper the Ministry's capability of dealing with complex issues in a fail-safe manner. In the absence of a research-oriented Policy Cell, the Ministry may also find it difficult to respond optimally and effectively to the dynamic international situation. The Committee recommend urgently setting up of a Research Policy Cell having adequate trained manpower and equipped with an up-to-date database. This Cell, if properly manned, should be able to identify niche-areas in our

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foreign relations for formulating well-targetted action plans. The Committee feel that the Historical Division of the Ministry should be immediately upgraded by appointing highly accomplished academicians from outside as was the position about five years back. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the progress and plans of modernisation of the library. It is also felt that appropriate accommodation for the library attached with Policy Planning & Research Division should be provided near the main office of Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee also wish to know about the progress of the new building which is proposed to be constructed for housing the Ministry of External Affairs.

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