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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

(1998-99)

TWELFTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*[Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the 4th Report of
the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of
External Affairs for 1997-98]*

SECOND REPORT

External - 6

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**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 1998/Shravana, 1920 (Saka)

SECOND REPORT
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(1998-99)

(TWELFTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*[Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the 4th Report
of the Committee (11th Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants
of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1997-98]*

Presented to Lok Sabha on 2 DEC 1998
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 30 NOV 1998



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

August, 1998/Shravana, 1920 (Saka)

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CORRIGENDA TO SECOND REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (1998-99)

Page	Para	Line	For	And
V	2	1	First Report	Fourth Report
3	6	15	sufficient	suffice
26	-	10	against	again
26	-	18	he	the
27	-	19	ore	on
27	-	Last Line	separated	separate
29	-	24	more funds	more funds
31	-	15	one	on
33	-	21	Insert 'is' between the words 'plan' and 'defeated'.	
39	-	15	must	much
39	-	17	centers	centres
45	-	7	suffice	sufficient

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

Shri Inder Kumar Gujral — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Jagmohan
3. Shri Dileep Sanghani
4. Shri D.B. Roy
5. Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste
6. Shri Bikram Keshari Deo
7. Smt. Ila Pant
8. Dr. Ashok Patel
9. Shri Tapan Sikdar
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24. Smt. Geeta Mukherjee
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26. Shri N. Dennis
27. Shri Ajay Kumar Sambasadashiv Sarnaik
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29. Shri E. Ahamed
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Rajya Sabha

31. Shri Madhav Sinh Solanki
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33. Shri K.M. Khan
34. Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma
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36. Smt. Jayaprada Nahata
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40. Dr. Yoginder K. Alagh
41. Shri Jayant Kumar Malhoutra
- #42. Shri Rangnath Misra
- *43. Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi
- **44. Dr. L.M. Singhvi
- ##45. Shri Swaraj Kaushal

SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. Ashok Kumar Pandey — *Additional Secretary*
2. Shri V.N. Gaur — *Director*
3. Shri R.K. Saxena — *Under Secretary*

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.

INTRODUCTION

1. I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf, present this Second Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the Fourth Report (Eleventh Lok Sabha) of the Committee on the "Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1997-98."

2. The First Report was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on 22nd April, 1997. 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 13 August, 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 (Eleventh 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;
13 August, 1998
22 Shravana, 1920 (Saka)

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

CHAPTER I

REPORT

The Report of the Committee deals with the Action Taken by Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Fourth Report (11th Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on the Demands for Grants for the year 1997-98 in respect of Ministry of External Affairs. Fourth Report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 22nd April, 1997.

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. 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 50, 61, 66

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

Para Nos. 44, 45, 57

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

Para No. 51

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

Para No. Nil

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

Advertising and Publicity

(Para Nos. 30 and 33)

4. The Ministry had informed that constant assessment of the publicity activities had revealed that they could not use more funds effectively at the Headquarters but it was possible to use more funds fruitfully at the Missions level. Perhaps keeping this in view the allocation for advertising and publicity for Headquarters had been pegged by Ministry of Finance at same level (Rs. 11 crores) at BE 97-98 as compared to BE 96-97 whereas the funds for this purpose at Embassies and Missions had been increased to Rs. 15 crores in BE 97-98 from Rs. 11.73 crores in BE 96-97. It was however, not clear as to why the Ministry projected the requirement of almost the same amount of funds for Headquarters and Embassies and Missions (Rs. 16 crores and Rs. 16.41 crores respectively) for BE 97-98 particularly when they could not utilise fully the funds allocated for publicity at Headquarters in 1996-97 whereas acute shortage of funds was felt for Missions/posts abroad. The Committee felt that more funds should have been projected by the Ministry for Embassies and Missions as compared to that for Headquarters especially when the proposal submitted by some Missions for modernisation of equipment and communication system could not be implemented due to lack of funds and some lobbyist firms were going to be engaged shortly in USA to promote India's cause.

5. The Ministry in their reply have stated that they had projected an enhanced budget of Rs. 16 crores (for Headquarters) for 1997-98 for three major reasons. First, an additional amount was envisaged to cater to activities connected with 50th Anniversary of Independence celebrations. Secondly, the practice of inserting image building advertisements in foreign newspapers/magazines was sought to be revived. Thirdly, they anticipated the setting up of a media centre with conference hall, projection and library facilities with a reading room that would have an instant data disseminating capability. The Ministry have also informed that a separate budget had been allocated for the 50th Anniversary celebrations. The current budget might be sufficient for establishing the media centre but would not suffice for the publicity campaign. In the event that enhancement of funds to include the advertising drive are not available in RE of 1997-98, this may have to be deferred to the next financial year.

6. The Committee observe with regret that the Ministry have once again not been able to make a realistic assessment of the requirements of funds for advertisement and publicity either at Headquarters or Missions/Posts abroad. The reply of the Ministry for projecting more funds for advertisement and publicity at Missions abroad is also vague. The Ministry have stated that for Headquarters they had projected an enhanced budget for three main reasons *viz.* to cater to activities in connection with the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of India's Independence, reviving image building advertisements in foreign newspapers/Magazines and setting up a media centre. Out of these, the first have already been taken care of by the Ministry of Finance by allocating Rs. 25 crores separately for the 50th Anniversary Celebrations. However the Ministry have stated that the current budget may be sufficient for establishing the media centre but would not sufficient for the publicity campaign. It is also stated that enhancement of funds to include the advertisement drive are not available in RE 1997-98 and may have to be deferred to the next Financial Year. This indeed is very surprising and is a case of gross mis-calculation. It shows the Ministry's inability to foresee as to how much funds were needed for undertaking publicity activities. The Committee would like to point out that a realistic assessment of the requirements of funds for publicity activities should have been made and reflected accurately in the Budget Estimates. It also recommend that provisions for allocation of adequate amount of funds should be made both at Headquarters as well as Missions/Posts level in order to enable those to step-up their publicity activities so that the country's image building advertisement in foreign newspapers/magazines are not affected adversely.

Computerisation of Passport Offices

(Para No. 40)

7. The Committee had noted that there was an increase of about Rs. 19 crores in the Budget Estimates 1997-98 for Passport and Emigration over the RE 1996-97 which would be used to meet the expenses for the comprehensive computerisation of Passport Offices, setting up and running of new Passport Offices at Ghaziabad, Pune, Thane and Visakhapatnam and for setting up of Collection Centres in six North-Eastern States, Madurai, Surat, Gurgaon, Vijayawada and Darbhanga. The Committee had observed with regret that computerisation of Passport Offices which was first mooted in 1986

was yet to be fully achieved. Since computerisations would contribute to the efficiency and productivity of passport offices, the Ministry must ensure that all passport offices are computerised during 1997-98. The Committee had also desired that necessary steps should immediately be taken to ensure that new passport offices and collection centres become operational at the earliest.

8. The Ministry while agreeing that the programme of computerisation of Passport Offices was started in 1986, have stated that over the last decade, the growing demand for passports and opening of new offices has entailed a rethink on the nature and extent of computer hardware and software application required to optimise the functioning of Passport Offices. The Ministry have also pointed out that a comprehensive satellite linked computerisation programme based on an extensive user study report has been approved on June 18, 1997 which is expected to become operational in the next 12-18 months. It will reduce the time taken in issuing passport as well as greatly improve the quality of services provided to the passport applicants.

9. As regards the opening of Passport Collection Centres in the Capitals of North-Eastern States is concerned, the Ministry of External affairs have informed that all these State Governments, except that of Manipur, have made the requisite arrangements. The Chief Secretary of Manipur has once again been approached in the matter.

10. The Committee has time and again been recommending for computerisation of all the passport offices in the country early as it would help in bringing down pendency and increasing the efficiency of Passport Offices. A comprehensive satellite based computerisation programme has been adopted by the Ministry which is expected to become operational in the next 12-18 months. However, the Committee feel that care should be taken that the proposed comprehensive satellite linked computerisation programme adopted by the Ministry in June, 1997 does not further delay the computerisation of Passport Offices. The Ministry may also ensure that the implementation of this programme does not face any financial or other constraints.

11. The Ministry have also stated that all the State Governments of the North-Eastern States except Manipur have made available the space and manpower for opening of Passport Collection Centres.

The Committee hope that the problems, if any, in setting up collection centre at Manipur would be sorted out and other collection centres would become operational in all the North-Eastern States early.

Passport, Emigration and Miscellaneous Services

(Para Nos. 41, 44 & 45)

12. The Committee had observed that Passport Offices were not issuing Passport even within 5 weeks. 11 out of 23 Passport Offices were taking about 6 weeks whereas the time taken by the remaining 12 Passport Offices was about 8 weeks. The delay in receipt of police verification reports and receipt of incomplete forms were the reasons usually attributed by the Passport authorities for not issuing the passports within the stipulated time. The Committee felt that there was a need to reduce the verification period. Further, the application form should be accepted only after thorough scrutiny at the time of submission of forms and in respect of applications received by post they ought to be despatched back to the applicants within a week if found incomplete specifying the inadequacies.

13. In their reply the Ministry have stated that the Ministry maintains close and continuous coordination with the Home Ministry to reduce the verification period. The Ministry have also stated that all Passport Offices have again been instructed to scrutinise passports received by post on priority and return incomplete applications within one week conveying the deficiencies. Performance of each passport office is monitored on regular basis. The Ministry received weekly reports regarding issue of passport and other services and thus the functioning of each passport office is under close scrutiny of the Ministry on a continuous basis. Besides monitoring inputs, surprise inspection and random checks are also made. All Passport Offices have been instructed to bring to the notice of Ministry any problems faced by them, in issuing passport within the stipulated time of 4-5 weeks. Deliberate delay on the part of any official is taken very seriously and suitable action is taken.

14. The Committee had observed that the applicants visit the passport offices in connection with some miscellaneous services such as renewal of passports, issue of duplicate passport in case of loss, change of address, etc. Often there are complaints that even these

miscellaneous services are not promptly attended to and they have to make frequent visits to Passport Offices for such purposes. The Committee had desired that a counter/cell may be created in each Passport Office which may exclusively attend to the complaints, grievances, suggestions of the applicants and the applicant should be invariably apprised of the status of their case.

15. The Ministry in their reply have stated that the Passport Officer meets public on all working days at a designated hour, and almost all offices have other designated officers and subordinate staff who also meet public for grievance redressal. Tele-enquiry system is already operational in five Passport Offices i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. Ministry had already processed extension of the tele-enquiry system in ten other Passport Offices and this was expected to be operational very soon. With installation of the tele-enquiry system applicants get to know the status of their applications on telephone itself.

16. In addition, the Ministry have stated that the public grievance redressal mechanism in the CPV Division had been supplemented with two Public Relations Officers (Public Grievances) who monitored every complaint coming to the office of the Chief Passport Officer, entering them in a computerised format provided by the Department of Administration, Reforms and Public Grievances and, effective follow-up was done directly under the supervision of the CPO. A separate Fax line and two telephone lines had been provided to the monitoring cell to attend to public grievances. Two PROs were available daily to listen to the grievances of the public.

17. As regards setting up of Passport Advisory Committees, the Ministry have stated that they were in the process of constituting Passport Advisory Committees. There would be a Central Passport Advisory Committee and State Passport Advisory Committees. The Central Passport Advisory Committee would have Members of Parliament from both the Houses and eminent public men as its members. The State Advisory Committee would be composed of local Members of Parliament and eminent public men. The proposed Central and State Passport Advisory Committees will give advice on improving the functioning of Passport Offices and upgradation of public facilities, make proposals to enhance the convenience of the public for obtaining the passports. The proposal includes involvement of Members of

Parliament in both the Central as well as the State Passport Advisory Committee.

18. The Committee find that several steps, which includes better co-ordination between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs to sort out the problems being faced in police verification, surprise inspection and random checks of passport offices, have been taken by the Ministry to reduce pendency of Passport applications. But the Committee is constrained to state that still the Passports are not issued to the applicants within the stipulated time of five weeks. The Committee desire that proper monitoring of the remedial measures taken by the Ministry should be done at the right earnest and there should not be any delay in issuing passports beyond the stipulated period of five weeks.

19. It has come to the notice of the Committee that in most of the Passport Offices people often face difficulty in meeting the Passport Officer for redressal of their grievances. Passport Offices often do not maintain complaint/suggestion book. There also seems to be a lack of a sufficient grievance redressal mechanism in the States as no proper record of suggestions/grievances is kept. The reply of the Ministry does not clarify as to how the grievances/suggestions coming from the Regional Passport Offices are monitored. The Committee recommend that a more effective grievance redressal mechanism, like in the office of Chief Passport Officer, should be introduced in the regional passport offices. Complaints/suggestion Book should invariably be maintained in each Passport Office. On receipt of any specific suggestion/complaint, Chief Passport Officer should be intimated about the same. Follow-up action taken by the Passport Office should be communicated to the applicant too.

20. The tele-enquiry system introduced in five Passport Offices *i.e.* Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore has been appreciated by the Committee as it helps the applicants to know the status of their applications on telephone. The Ministry have also stated that they had already processed expansion of tele-enquiry system in ten other Passport Offices which is expected to be operational very soon. However it has come to the notice of the Committee that during peak hours in passport offices where tele-enquiry system is in operation like in Hyderabad, tele-enquiry lines remains busy for a long time. Thus the very purpose of getting to know the status of application by the applicants is defeated if

they are unable to contact the passport office on phone. Also, wherever tele-enquiry system is in operation, it has come to the notice of the Committee that there are in-sufficient number of tele-enquiry lines resulting in inconvenience to the applicants. To provide more efficient service to the public, the Committee feel that tele-enquiry system is absolutely necessary in all the Passport Offices. The Committee thus recommend that tele-enquiry system with sufficient number of jumping lines facility should be introduced in all passport offices so that the problems of the applicants are obviated to a great extent.

21. The Committee note that the Ministry is still in the process of constituting Passport Advisory Committees both at Centre as well as State levels which would advise on improving the functioning of Passport Offices and upgrading of public facilities. The Committee feel that any delay in setting up Passport Advisory Committees would adversely effect the functioning of Passport Offices. Therefore, the Committee desire that Passport Advisory Committees, both at Central as well as regional level, may be set up soon so that the functioning of these offices may be improved and public facilities upgraded.

Cultural Centres Abroad

(Para No. 51)

22. The Committee had been given to understand that ICCR proposed to open cultural centres abroad in Sri Lanka, USA, Japan, South Asia etc. in near future. While it is necessary to have cultural centres in the countries which are politically and economically important to us, a particular country needs to be selected carefully after considering all the relevant aspects as the funds available with the ICCR are scarce and are unlikely to be stepped up substantially in near future. The Committee felt that the cultural centres should be opened in those countries only where it was considered absolutely necessary. The Committee hoped that this exercise would be completed soon and the Ministry of Finance would provide the additional funds for opening of new cultural centres abroad at the RE stage.

23. The Ministry in their reply have agreed with the observation of the Committee that Cultural Centres should be opened very selectively in those countries which are politically and economically important to us or where there is a large population of Indian origin.

24. While the Ministry have agreed with the observation that Cultural Centres should be opened very selectively in those countries which are politically and economically important to us or where there is a large population of Indian origin, the Ministry have not specified as to what steps they intend to take in this regard. In their reply the Ministry have also not mentioned what steps they have taken to ensure that more funds are allocated for the ICCR by the Ministry of Finance for opening new cultural centres in various countries.

25. The Committee once again stress that in countries where we do not have such institutions, cultural centres should be opened on a priority basis. Countries like USA, Japan etc. where many institutions exist could be strengthened for cultural activities with much less resources. Those institutions could effectively perform the role expected of the cultural centres with the involvement and support of the NRI's also. The Committee feel that Cultural Centres should be opened in the newly formed Central Asian Republics which are culturally akin to us in many ways and are politically, economically and strategically important to us. The Committee also recommend that the ICCR should judiciously utilise the limited funds available to them and also make serious efforts to persuade the Ministry of Finance to provide additional funds for opening of new cultural centres abroad and also to enhance their activities.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation of the Committee

The revised estimates for 1996-97 works out to Rs. 1357.92 crores against the BE for 1996-97 of Rs. 1274.12 crores, thus reflecting a increase of Rs. 83.80 crores. The net increase of Rs. 83.80 crores would have been more if there had not been reduction to the tune of Rs. 63.90 crores in technical and economic cooperation with other countries at the RE stage. The Committee have been consistently expressing concern over continuous trend of excess expenditure. Though some of it is unavoidable it should be ensured that excess expenditure for which the Parliament is later Presented with a *fait accompli* is kept to the barest minimum. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should ensure a comprehensive and realistic planning at estimate stage so that the excesses over voted grants are avoided at the RE stage. (Para No. 12)

Government's Reply

It is submitted that the increase of Rs. 83.80 crores at RE 1996-97 over BE 1996-97 was mainly on account of increase in Special Diplomatic Expenditure, as per details given below:

(in crores of Rupees)

Major Head	BE 1996-97	RE 1996-97	Increase
M.H. '2061'			
00.103-01			
01.00.50			
Special Diplomatic Expenditure	200	342	142

Of the increase of Rs. 142 crores in Special Diplomatic Expenditure, a sum of Rs. 58.19 crores was re-appropriated from the savings effected under other heads of this Ministry and the balance of Rs. 83.81 crores was sought as supplementary grant.

2. It is further submitted that the Special Diplomatic Expenditure takes into account our vital foreign policy interests. The requirements in this regard vary from time to time. The expenditure is incurred as and when special requirements arise. It is often difficult to forecast the developments which would necessitate such requirement. During 1996-97 an increase in allocation at RE stage under this head became necessary. The augmentation was made after obtaining concurrence of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and approval of Ministry of Finance.

3. Also, this Ministry monitors the expenditure on a regular basis to ensure as realistic a planning as possible at budget estimate stage itself. The requirement of additionality, however, due to unforeseen circumstances as a result of developments beyond this Ministry's control cannot be ruled out.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee further note that the enhancement proposed for BE 1997-98 over BE 1996-97 is Rs. 239.30 crores. A break up of this increase according to the Demands for Grants, indicate that Rs. 84.98 crores would account for advances to foreign Government: Rs. 33 crores would be for Capital Outlay, Public Works and Housing; and Rs. 92.88 crores for Embassies and Missions. Thus, the increase under these three Heads account for Rs. 210.86 crores out of the total increase of Rs. 239.30 crores. However, the stepping up of Rs. 92.88 crores for Embassies and Missions could be considered as the main increase for the day-to-day activities of the Ministry of External Affairs. Even this enhancement of Rs. 92.88 crores would in fact be much less if the amount towards depreciation of Indian rupee which, according to the Ministry, works out to Rs. 64.40 crores, is taken into consideration. Thus, it can be concluded there is hardly any increase in the budget allocation in real terms of the Ministry of External Affairs. Obviously, the Ministry would find it difficult to carry out its normal activities with the limited increase in resources particularly in the vital areas of

Advertising and Publicity, working and opening of the Missions/Posts abroad, ICCR etc. Although the funds requirement projected by the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 1997-98 was higher, it seems that they have not been successful in persuading the Ministry of Finance in securing adequate increase in budget proposals. The Committee regret to observe that the Ministry of Finance have failed to appreciate the requirement of the Ministry of External Affairs for more funds for vital areas of their activities in promoting India's foreign policy objectives. The Committee would, therefore, urge upon the Ministry of Finance to consider objectively the demands projected by the Ministry of External Affairs and provide the same at the RE stage. The Committee also desire that the Ministry of External Affairs should constantly endeavour to ensure that the available limited funds are prudently utilised keeping in view the foreign policy objectives. (Para No. 13)

Government's Reply

The Ministry assures the esteemed Committee that serious efforts will be made with the Ministry of Finance to provide the required funds at RE stage. The Ministry also assures that a constant endeavour will be made to ensure that the available funds are prudently utilised keeping in view our foreign policy objectives.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee note that the existing Foreign Allowance structure is based on '1954 formula' which provides for compensation for cost of living based on expenditure on various commodities and, for revising this allowance, Foreign Service Inspectors' report is taken into consideration. According to the Ministry, it is difficult for the inspectors to inspect all the Missions on regular basis as there are a number of Missions/Posts spread all over the world. The indexation proposal is therefore, under consideration for determining, fixing and revising the foreign allowance. The Ministry propose to adopt indexation system linked to the universally recognised norms of UN system of emoluments which would be uniformly applied to all the Missions/ Posts abroad. This proposal is likely to be cleared in the financial year 1997-98. The Committee hope that with the adoption of this proposal the need for regular inspection by the inspectors as a condition for

fixing the foreign allowance would not arise. Also, with the revision of allowance on the basis of UN system, the staff would not be unwilling to serve in Missions/Posts where the rate of allowance perhaps has not been attractive hitherto. (Para No. 18)

Government's Reply

No action required.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

Determination of the rate of Foreign Allowance is one of the tasks undertaken by the Foreign Service Inspectors when they visit various Missions/Posts. The other main function is to assess the functioning of the Missions and pin point the shortcomings and deficiencies. The Committee understand that only some important Missions are inspected on regular basis. The Committee desire that in view of the large number of Missions/Posts abroad those may be grouped together region-wise and inspected periodically so that all the Missions/Posts are invariably inspected every 2-3 years. The deficiencies/shortcomings noticed in any Mission must be brought to the notice of all the Missions. Suitable guidelines and directions may also be issued with a view to ensuring that the deficiencies noticed in one Mission do not recur elsewhere. (Para No. 19).

Government's Reply

Committees observation has been noted.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee are informed that after the finalisation of the allocations for BE 1996-97, some Missions/Posts were opened for which only token provision had been earlier kept. These are Zagreb (Croatia), Gaza (PNA), Capetown (South Africa), Glosgow (U.K.), Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Port Moresby (PNG). After taking into account Rs. 35 crores earmarked for implementation of indexation proposal and the remaining enhancement to cover depreciation of Indian rupee to the tune of Rs. 64.40 crores, there seems to be hardly any funds

left in the provisions for BE 1997-98 for these newly opened Missions unless other normal activities are made to suffer due to lack of funds. Further it is not clear from where the necessary staff to man these Missions would be provided when there has not been any increase in the number of staff with the Ministry which is static at 6480 from 1996 and would remain so till 1998. The Committee would like that adequate funds be provided for these Missions/Posts and they will be equipped with necessary staff so that they become operational without further delay. (Para No. 20).

Government's Reply

The Esteemed Committee has rightly pointed out that the opening of new Missions/Posts abroad, which are a manifestation of our new relationships with these countries, depreciation in the value of the Indian Rupee and worldwide inflation have, to a great extent, nullified enhancement of funds provided to Indian Missions/Posts abroad over the years.

The Ministry assures the Esteemed Committee that the position will remain under review so that the normal activities of the Mission/Post are not made to suffer for lack of funds. If required, Finance Ministry will be requested to augment the provisions at the RE stage. Simultaneously Missions/Posts have also been advised on the need to avoid wasteful expenditure in order that the funds available are optimally utilised.

With the approval of the Cabinet, some posts were created in 1994 for the new CGI in Glasgow and the Mission in Port Moresby and in 1995 for the new Mission in Zagreb and the CGI in Sao Paulo. The proposals are under way for creation of posts for the representative office in Gaza. As regards Capetown, the office has been opened by relocating some existing posts.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

During evidence, the Ministry have admitted that streamlining of the functioning of the Missions and Posts abroad is a priority area. However due to depreciation in the value of the Indian Rupee *vis-a-vis* the major currencies there has not been a real increase in the allocation made for the Missions. However, with the limited resources

some Missions have upgraded their facilities through modern means of communications, such as computerisation, E-Mail, Internet and Home page etc. which help them to remain in touch with the Headquarters and has also been very useful to both Consular and commercial information. The matter needs to be vigorously pursued with the Ministry of Finance for allocation of adequate funds so that these facilities are provided in all the Missions/Posts without any further delay. (Para No. 21).

Government's Reply

Ministry attaches considerable importance to the acquisition of modern means of communications and upgradation of facilities for its Missions/Posts abroad. Ministry assures the Esteemed Committee that progress in this regard will not be allowed to be adversely affected due to shortage of funds and that on the basis of review at that stage, vigorous efforts will be made with the Ministry of Finance to obtain whatever funds are required, at the RE stage.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

During the examination of Demands for Grants last year, Ministry has informed that constant assessment of the publicity activities had revealed that they could not use more funds effectively at the Headquarters but it was possible to use more funds fruitfully at the Missions level. Perhaps keeping this in view the allocation for advertising and publicity for Headquarters has been pegged by Ministry of Finance at same level (Rs. 11 crores) at BE 97-98 as compared to BE 96-97 whereas the funds for this purpose at Embassies and Missions have been increased to Rs. 15 crores in BE 97-98 from Rs. 11.73 crores in BE 96-97. It is, however, not clear as to why the Ministry projected the requirement of almost the same amount of funds for headquarters and Embassies & Missions (Rs. 16 crores and Rs. 16.41 crores respectively) for BE 97-98 particularly when they could not utilise fully the funds allocated for publicity at Headquarters in 1996-97 whereas acute shortage of funds was felt for Missions/Posts abroad. The Committee feel that more funds should have been projected by the Ministry for Embassies and Missions as compared to that for headquarters especially when the proposal submitted by some Missions for modernisation of equipment and communication system could not

be implemented due to lack of funds and some lobbyist firms are going to be engaged shortly in USA to promote India's cause. (Para No. 30).

Government's Reply

Ministry had projected an enhanced budget of Rs. 16 crores for 1997-98 for three major reasons. First, an additional amount was envisaged to cater to activities connected with 50th Anniversary of Independence celebrations. Secondly, the practice of inserting image building advertisements in foreign newspapers/magazines was sought to be revived. This effort was to be a sustained and focussed one in pre-selected target areas and not of the one-shot kind that fizzled out in a short time. Thirdly, we anticipated the setting up of media centre with conference hall, projection and library facilities with a reading room that would have an instant data disseminating capability. A separate budget has been allocated for the 50th Anniversary celebrations now. The current budget may be sufficient for establishing the media centre but would not suffice for the publicity campaign. In the event that enhancement of funds to include the advertising drive are not available in RE of 1997-98, this may have to be deferred to the next financial year. The Committee has remarked that more funds should have been projected for Missions as compared to Headquarters to help them modernise their equipment and communication system as well as to engage lobbyist firms. It is submitted that Budget Estimates of Missions and headquarters are separate and are based on their respective requirements at any given point of time.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee were informed earlier that the Mission had submitted proposals to step up, their publicity activities which could give desired results if backed by adequate financial support. Some of the Missions were selected for allotment of additional funds. However, the Ministry of Finance was not able to allocate more funds and it was, therefore, not found possible to expand or substantially strengthen our external publicity efforts. Now since some increase has been allowed by Ministry of Finance and they have also promised to consider the case for more funds at RE stage, some important Missions in priority areas should be selected for allotment of additional funds to augment their lobbying, advertising and Public relation efforts. These

efforts can be subsequently expanded in respect of other Missions after studying the impact created by more funds at the selected Missions. (Para No. 31).

Government's Reply

A list of core Missions for external publicity purposes is attached. Enhancement of publicity budgets in the case of our Missions in Washington and Bonn has yielded results and this effort is being expanded in line with the Committee's recommendation. The Missions identified would be required to submit action plans to the Ministry and indicate progress against the objectives identified. The Ministry would support the Missions in fulfilling their tasks.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

List of Core Missions for External Publicity

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ankara | 16. Kuwait |
| 2. Bangkok | 17. London |
| 3. Beijing | 18. Mexico City |
| 4. Bonn | 19. Moscow |
| 5. Brussels | 20. Ottawa |
| 6. Cairo | 21. Paris |
| 7. Canberra | 22. Port Louis |
| 8. Colombo | 23. Pretoria |
| 9. Dhaka | 24. Riyadh |
| 10. Geneva | 25. Rome |
| 11. Hanoi | 26. Seoul |
| 12. Islamabad | 27. Singapore |
| 13. Jakarta | 28. Tehran |
| 14. Kathmandu | 29. Tokyo |
| 15. Kuala Lumpur | 30. Washington |

Recommendation of the Committee

As regards the need for cleaner and more purposeful interaction by our Missions with NRIs with a view to involving them actively in publicity efforts, the Foreign Secretary admitted during evidence that they are effective people and the modalities and mechanisms are being developed to utilise their vast potential. The Committee expect the Ministry to devise ways and means at the earliest to enlist their support for the avowed objectives. The Committee would also like the Ministry/Missions to identify various news agencies and newspapers run by NRIs and friends of India and extend assistance to them by providing material and briefings and also the financial assistance as may be called for. This would supplement the publicity efforts carried out by our Embassies and Missions. The Committee would like to be apprised of the steps taken in this regard. (Para No. 32)

Government's Reply

NRIs or people of Indian origin are specifically targetted by our Missions in their publicity efforts. In many places there are large Indian communities which are well organised in terms of publicity and there are several ethnic TV channels besides radio stations. It is the constant endeavour of our Missions to maintain contact with as many of them as possible and keep them supplied with publicity material which is in great demand with them. On special India anniversaries and events including the Republic Day and Independence Day, they are encouraged and enabled to put out special programmes on India. They are briefed on our policies on a regular basis and assisted through advertising support and other means as may be called for. Missions give high priority to newspapers and agencies run by NRIs as well as friends of India and try to make optimal use of their services. This is an ongoing process and every effort is made to support initiatives that, in the assessment of the Missions concerned, have positive publicity potential and are not in contravention of local laws.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

Some measures are stated to have been taken recently by the Ministry with a view to giving more thrust to external publicity. These

include setting up of MEA's Home Page on INTERNET, use of Audio-visual print material, a CD-ROM on India, organising of seminars, visits by foreign media personalities to India etc. Ever since the inception of this Standing Committee, attempts have been made to impress upon the Ministry the need for aggressive publicity activities which could project a positive image of India and could counter negative trends. The Ministry on their part have been assuring the Committee of the efforts initiated by them in this regard. The Committee are of the view that it is time that an independent survey be conducted by a high level interdisciplinary team in some selected important countries that may meet NRIs, NGOs etc. to evaluate the impact created by the publicity activities of the Ministry/Missions undertaken so far and to pin-point deficiencies/shortcomings in the efforts with a view to taking further remedial measures. (Para No. 33)

Government's Reply

The Ministry and its Missions would welcome the recommendation of the esteemed Committee that an independent survey be conducted by a high level interdisciplinary team in selected important countries. The team could meet NRIs, NGOs and others to evaluate the impact created by the publicity activities of the Ministry/Missions undertaken so far. We would benefit by the team's assessment of deficiencies or shortcomings in the efforts and take remedial action where required.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee are informed that in connection with the 50th Anniversary celebrations of India's Independence which commence from 15th August 1997, Rs. 20 crores are likely to be made available to Ministry of External Affairs for use at headquarters as also at Missions/Posts. The Committee understands that a suitable programme for the purpose is under consideration of the Ministry. The Committee desires that proposed programmes should highlight the achievements of independent India as well as the future plans and programmes. As sufficient funds are being provided for this purpose. The Ministry may use this opportunity to carefully chalk out the programme that would supplement the usual publicity activities undertaken abroad especially in smaller and developing countries. (Para No. 34)

Government's Reply

The Ministry of External Affairs has been allocated Rs. 25 crores for 50th Anniversary of Independence celebrations. The Committee's recommendation that programmes being prepared in connection with these celebrations should highlight the achievements of independent India has been noted and will be implemented film weeks, photo and other exhibitions, cultural performances, seminars, food festivals and Independence Day, receptions are some of the activities planned by most of our Missions. The External Publicity Division is preparing relevant audio-visual and print material for the occasion in line with the Committee's recommendation. A CD ROM on India; a Radio newsreel; a photographic exhibition; a special issue of India Perspectives; and a seminar on Indian foreign policy are some of the projects being handled by the Division. Suitable documentary and feature films are being despatched to Missions to commemorate this special anniversary year. Activities planned will supplement the usual publicity efforts of all our Missions including those in smaller and developing countries.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee note that there is increase of about Rs. 19 crores in the Budget Estimates 1997-98 for Passport and Emigration over the RE 1996-97 which would be used to meet the expenses for the comprehensive computerisation of passport offices, setting up and running of new passport offices at Ghaziabad, Pune, Thane and Visakhapatnam and for setting up of Collection Centres in six north-eastern States. Madurai, Surat, Gurgaon, Vijayawada and Darbhanga. The Committee regret to observe that computerisation of passport offices which was first mooted in 1986 is yet to be fully achieved. Since computerisation would contribute to the efficiency and productivity of passport offices, the Ministry must ensure that all passport offices are computerised during 1997-98. The Committee also desire that necessary steps should immediately be taken to ensure that

new passport offices and collection centres become operational at the earliest. While expressing satisfaction over opening of these centres the Committee feel that passport authorities would continue in their endeavour to open new centres taking into consideration the wide variation in the work-load of the existing passport offices and their geographical locations. (Para No. 40)

Government's Reply

The programme of computerisation of passport offices was started in 1986. Over the last decade, the growing demand for passports and opening of new offices has entailed a rethink on the nature and extent of computer hardware and software application required to optimise the functioning of passport offices. Besides this, the earlier computer programme had some serious lacuna which is proposed to be removed now by a comprehensive satellite linked computerisation programme based on an extensive user study report. The proposal has been approved on June 18, 1997, by the Ministry of Finance and is now in the pre-implementation tendering stage.

This proposal envisages installation of latest computer hardware and application of software and satellite based communication to the functioning of all the 27 passport offices in India by linking up with a Central Processing Cell to be established in New Delhi.

This Central Processing Cell would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the passport offices through an integrated and networked system which will reduce the time taken in issuing passport as well as improve the quality of services provided to passport applicants.

This proposed automation of passport offices will facilitate the following:—

- (i) An on-line status Index checking through creation of central index by networking all the passport offices, which will obviate the necessity of correspondence between passport offices regarding issue of previous passport if any;
- (ii) Index checking using phonetic search on National Level data;

- (iii) Facility to match photograph for suspect cases;
- (iv) Simplification of application form omitting duplication of information;
- (v) Simultaneous processing of application by different sections of passport office with the availability of images of application on computers;
- (vi) Efficient planning, monitoring and control of passport issuing activity;
- (vii) Machine printing of passport;
- (viii) Future provision to connect POs with Indian Missions abroad to respond to queries instantaneously;
- (ix) Assistance in passport booklet inventory management;
- (x) Assistance in storage and retrieval of paper based documents like passport files.

The proposed system does not require highly skilled/technical manpower. Existing staff will be able to use the system. All technical aspects like networking, database administration and software will be handled by the Central Processing Cell.

Once the above comprehensive, satellite based computerisation becomes operational, which is expected in the next 12-18 months, passport offices would be able to provide services in an efficient and effective manner. It will greatly improve the quality of services provided to passport applicants as it will provide direct connectivity amongst passport offices and between passport offices and Chief Passport Officer in New Delhi. This will replace the present time consuming system of manual references.

All present monitoring is done by random checks by supervisory staff. With the introduction of the satellite based computer system, applications pending beyond the stipulated 4 week period will be automatically identified. This will curtail delay.

The present system of manual verification of particulars of passport holders through fax/telex will be replaced by direct access of data by any office.

The new Passport Office at Visakhapatnam and Ghaziabad were opened in January, 1997, while the new Passport Office at Thane was opened in February, 1997. While the Passport Office at Visakhapatnam is fully functional, the office space, proposed to be rented for the Passport Office, Ghaziabad, was not approved by the CPWD due to the difference in the fair rent calculated by them and the rent demanded by the landlord. As such the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment was requested in February, 1997, to allot suitable office space in the CGO Complex in Ghaziabad for the Passport Office. After protracted correspondence, office space has been allotted for the Passport Office in one of the CGO Complexes in July, 1997. The CPWD has been approached to erect the requisite counters and the like and it is hoped that the Passport Office, Ghaziabad, will also be fully operational within a period of two months. Likewise, in Thane, it was difficult to obtain proper office space and after extensive search, suitable office space has now been located and the proposal for its renting has been submitted to the Finance for approval. During the interregnum, the Passport Office, Ghaziabad, and the Passport Office, Thane, have been working with limited facilities and functions from make-shift arrangements. In so far as the opening of the Passport Office at Pune is concerned, in spite of regular visits by the Passport Officer, Mumbai, and officers from the CPV Division to Pune, it has not been possible to find a suitable building which may be rented for the proposed passport office. During his last visit to Pune, the Chief Passport Officer has shortlisted three buildings and the proposal for renting one of them will be submitted to Finance shortly. The Passport Office at Pune will be opened as soon as the space is available.

The State Governments of the North-Eastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura were requested to make available the space and manpower for opening of Passport Collection Centres in the capitals of these States. All these State Governments, except that of Manipur, have made the requisite arrangements. The officers concerned from these State Governments have been briefed/are being briefed regarding the functions of the Passport Collection Centres. These Collection Centres may start functioning before the end of September, 1997. The Chief Secretary of Manipur has once again been approached in the matter.

In so far as the opening of Passport Collection Centres at other place is concerned, the respective State Governments have been requested to assist in the allotment of office space for the Centres. The Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of Bihar have already allotted office space for the Collection Centres at Madurai and Darbhanga respectively and these two Passport Collection Centres are likely to be operational within a month. The matter is being pursued with the other State Governments for allotment of space for opening Collection Centres at Vijayawada, Gurgaon, Surat, Ranchi and Agra, and Passport Collection Centres will be opened at these places as soon as the State Governments provide the requisite space.

Opening of new passport offices is decided on certain parameters, such as, area and population of the State, demand for passports, workload in neighbouring offices, manpower and financial resources. Further the Standing Committee has itself recommended that new passport offices may be opened only in areas with a minimum input of 50,000 applications for fresh passports in a year. It is not proposed to open any new passport offices until the comprehensive computerisation proposal is implemented so that the parameters of the proposals do not go on changing leading to further delay. In any case, once all data is in a mainframe computer, it would be relatively easier to commission a new office as there would be no need to separate records of the parent office.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

Earlier the maximum time limit for issue of a Passport as per the Ministry was 4 weeks. However, norms for efficient issue of passport at the moment is taken as 5 weeks. The Committee however find that passport offices are not issuing passport even within 5 weeks. 11 out of 23 passport offices are taking about 6 weeks whereas the time taken by the remaining 12 passport offices is about 8 weeks. The delay in receipt of police verification reports and receipt of incomplete forms are the reasons usually attributed by the passport authorities for not issuing the passports within the stipulated time. The Committee feel that there is need for continuous close coordination at appropriate level within the Home Ministry/Police authorities to reduce the verification period. Further, the application form should be accepted only after thorough scrutiny at the time of submission of forms and

in respect of applications received by post they ought to be despatched back to the applicants within a week if found incomplete specifying the inadequacies. The Committee also desire that the concerned passport officers in the Passport Offices should be made accountable for any delay in issue of Passports beyond the revised stipulated norms of 5 weeks. (Para No. 41).

Government's Reply

Ministry maintains close and continuous coordination with the Home Ministry to reduce the verification period. All passport offices are in continuous and close touch with their counterparts in the state governments for obtaining police verification within the stipulated period of 4 weeks. Any particular problem faced by them are brought to the notice of the state government immediately. Problems which can not be resolved at the local level and require intervention of the Ministry are brought to the notice of the Ministry.

However in view of the continuing problem being faced by Passport Offices in terms of receipt of incomplete and vague report, and with due deference to the wishes of the Hon'ble Committee, it has been decided to institutionalise the consultation mechanism and provide for periodic meetings at the Joint Secretary level between Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry for better coordination.

Performance of each passport office is monitored on regular basis. All Passport Offices are regularly instructed to scrutinise each application form thoroughly at the time of submission to ensure that there is no backlog due to incomplete applications. Applications received by post are scrutinised on priority and returned to the applicant immediately if found incomplete. While there are standing instructions regarding this, in view of the points raised by the Committee, all Passport Offices have again been instructed to scrutinise passports received by post on priority and return incomplete applications within one week conveying the deficiencies.

Performance of each passport office is monitored on regular basis. The Ministry receives weekly reports regarding issue of passport and other services and thus the functioning of each Passport office is under close scrutiny of the Ministry on a continuous basis. Besides monitoring inputs, surprise inspection and random checks are also made. All passport offices have been instructed to bring to the notice of Ministry any problems faced by them, in issuing passport within the stipulated

time of 4-5 weeks. Deliberate delay on part of any official is taken very seriously and suitable action is taken.

Complaints received are looked into immediately. A Vigilance Cell manned by officers of Central Vigilance Commission is functioning in the Ministry to investigate any complaints.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl/22/97 dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

During evidence, the Committee pointed out that for applicants of Mizoram and Nagaland verification is first done by state police and against by the union Home Ministry which leads to unnecessary and avoidable delay. The Committee desire that the issue may be taken up with the Home Ministry to ensure that the applicants are not subjected to double police check. The Committee would like to be apprised of the factual position and the corrective measures taken in this regard (Para No. 42).

Government's Reply

Ministry had taken up the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs who have informed us that the process of dual verification being followed in respect of applicants from the state of Nagaland and Mizoram was examined by them. The dual verification system has since then been done away with in the case of residents of Mizoram and persons of Mizo origin. However unlike the state of Mizoram which happens to be peaceful and free of insurgent activities the state of Nagaland continues to be disturbed. In view of this the present system of dual verification in respect of Nagas and residents of Nagaland has not been reviewed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee find that the total pendency has increased in Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Madras, Nagpur, Patna, Trichy, Trivandrum and Jammu Passport Offices in 1996 as compared to that in 1994. The reasons for the increase in pendency in these passport offices need to be looked into with a view to taking suitable remedial measures. (Para No. 43).

Government's Reply

Passports are normally issued on receipt of clear police verification reports or on expiry of 4 weeks from the date making such a reference to the police, whichever is earlier and on first come first serve basis. While there are no delays in processing applications itself, there have been cases where delays have occurred in granting passports due to reasons like receipt of negative or incomplete reports from concerned police authorities, discrepancies in documents submitted by the applicants particularly in respect of applications received by post, lack of response from applicants who are asked to submit additional documents. In all such cases, necessary follow-up action is taken by the Passport Office with concerned police authorities to expedite police verification reports and also by advising concerned applicants to comply with full requirements and meet the deficiencies in their application form for expeditious issue of passports to them. Increase in pendency in some of Offices is partly also because of the increase in number applications received.

Delay in some cases result as issue of passport without police report results in very high number of applications with fake documents. Besides this, in sensitive areas passports are issued only one receipt of police report. This is the reason why there is delay in issue of passports from Jammu, as they have been issued instructions not to issue passport without clear police verification. Issue of Passports from PO, Jammu, is therefore directly related to the time taken by the local police to conduct enquiry. Similarly in case of Guwahati, passports are issued to applicants from some states only after a dual verification system which again leads to a slight delay beyond 4 weeks. (Srinagar Office will facilitate closer coordination with Jammu & Kashmir Home Department).

Ministry has already opened additional passport offices and collection centers to decongest the offices with very heavy load of applications. Thus with the opening up of new passport office in Vishakhapatnam and in Pune, some of the load will be taken off the Hyderabad and Mumbai office.

A number of offices had a sudden increase in applications because of the new instructions regarding 10 & 20 year passport. A number of countries have changed their visa rules recently and have started insisting on separated passport for minor children. This is another

reason why a number of offices have experienced a sudden spurt in the number of applications for minor children. As per new visa rules, almost all embassies have stopped issuing visa on additional sheets, thereby again leading to an increase in number of applications for fresh booklets, leading to diversion of manpower resources from routine work to the handling of new rush of applicants, who required time bound service.

The Ministry regularly monitors the functioning of all passport Offices through receipt of reports and inspection. Passport Offices have been instructed to bring to the notice of the Ministry any problems faced by them in the issue of passports. Extra staff is sanctioned for offices receiving more than the usual number of applications from time to time on request of Passport Officer. All specific constrains regarding man-power, office equipment, office space and related issues which can have an impact on the performance of the passport Offices are monitored regularly so that issue of passports within the stipulated period does not get delayed.

In the present system, there is a time lag between the realisation that pendency is increasing and time taken to take corrective action. By the time corrective action is taken, the pendency builds up considerably. With the comprehensive computerisation programme, this time lag will be reduced as the system is expected to have an internal system which would check any built up of pendency.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee understand that in Passport Offices sometimes touts operate with the possible collusion of issuing/verification authorities. The Committee, therefore, recommend that every effort should be made to identify such linkages and nexus with the unscrupulous elements who subvert the procedure and exploit the people. This may be done with the help of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the local police. Stringent action may be taken against the staff members who are found in collusion with these touts. (Para No. 46)

Government's Reply

All Passport Offices are under strict instructions to take strong measures against touts whenever complaints are received about their activities. Immediate action is initiated in coordination with the local police authorities and cases are registered against them in case they have been found submitting fraudulent applications. Access to office staff during office hours is strictly controlled. Passport Officers are under instruction to make surprise checks to see that touts do not operate within their office precincts. Any complaint received by Ministry regarding such activities is looked into immediately. A special Vigilance Cell has already been set up in the Ministry with staff from Central Vigilance Commission. Any complaint against an officer or a staff member is investigated by the Vigilance Cell.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee note that the grant to ICCR has been static at the level of Rs. 25 crores from 1995-96 onwards. Considering the usual inflationary trend and depreciation of Indian rupee vis-a-vis other major currencies, there is reduction in allocation for ICCR in real terms. This is bound to hamper the normal activities of the council and would further delay the Council's programme of opening of new cultural centres abroad. The Committee feel that Ministry of Finance ought to allocate funds in such a way that at least the grants every year cover the normal inflationary trends to sustain the activities of the Council. As regards the need for mere funds for opening of new cultural centres abroad the Ministry of External Affairs seems to have failed to put forward their case properly and effectively before the Ministry of Finance and has not been able to secure additional allocation. (Para No. 50)

Government's Reply

The Ministry appreciates the Committee's observation that the budget allocation of ICCR should be increased to cover inflation and depreciation of the Indian Rupee. The Ministry will continue to press this issue with the Ministry of Finance.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee are informed that development of the Tamu-Kalemyo road close to the Indo-Myanmar border is one of steps being taken to develop a more cooperative relationship with Myanmar keeping our national interests in perspective. The construction of this road close to the Indo-Myanmar border assumes importance in view of large scale of smuggling, drug trafficking and other nefarious activities taking place along the Border and also from the strategic situation of the region. The Committee would like to be satisfied that this project would indeed further our national defence, improve Border management and Border trade. (Para No. 61).

Government's Reply

For many years, it has been recognised that the lack of roads and communication facilities in the Indo-Myanmar border region was an obstacle to the development of better commercial, transport and other links between India and Myanmar and was contributing to difficulties in the security sphere. The lack of suitable road connection to Myanmar had limited the development of trade across the land border. It was also recognised that the areas across the border were also being used for movement by Indian insurgent groups due to infrastructural inadequacies. We also took note of the interest of the Myanmar authorities in securing India's assistance for construction/upgradation of certain roads along the Indo-Myanmar border. The Myanmar authorities had earlier obtained assistance from the Chinese government for development of roads close to the Sino-Myanmar border. It was in this context that in 1993, the then Foreign Secretary had offered to the Government of Myanmar, with PM's approval, India's cooperation in upgrading of border roads and development of telecommunication facilities in this region. After consultations with Myanmar and following consideration in the Committee of Secretaries of the Government of India, it was decided that India would assist in the upgradation and development of the Tamu-Kalemyo road and that funding for this project would be from the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs and Border Roads Organisation would undertake the construction programme.

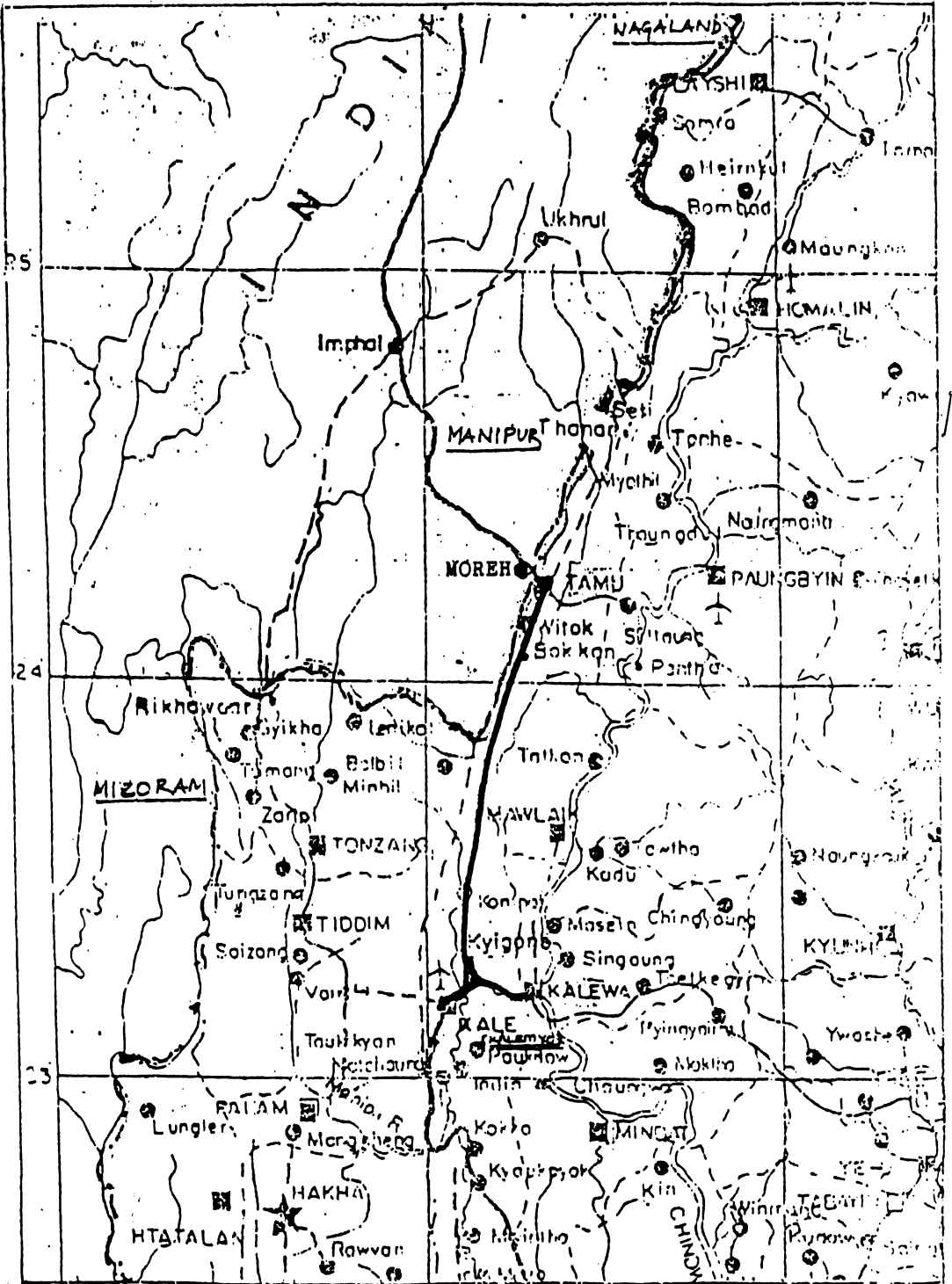
After the basic decision by the Government of India to assist in the upgradation and development of the road, the Border Roads Organisation undertook a preliminary recce and prepared a technical

report which was extensively examined in the Ministry of External Affairs in consultation with the Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Telecommunication and Surface Transport. The Committee of Secretaries also studied the proposal and decided that the road had strategic importance from India's security and commercial point of view. It was felt that in the national interest, the project should be implemented with a high priority. It was also felt that the road needed to be of high quality as it would be a visible symbol of Indian capability and our commitment to develop bilateral relations in areas of mutual interest.

The Tamu-Kalemyo road has the potential of becoming a connection with the NH 39 highway in Manipur (which leads up to the border at Moreh, *i.e.*, opposite Tamu) and of providing access into the interior of Myanmar. Kalemyo is situated on the main road network within Myanmar. It also has an airport which is one of the civil aviation network of Myanmar. There are reported to be plans for future rail development which would bring the rail network of Myanmar also up to Kalemyo.

It is the assessment of the government that upgradation of the Tamu-Kalemyo road would increase economic development and security in the north eastern states by enhancing trade and transport links with Myanmar and enabling better control over insurgency and illegal trade in areas close to our border. Improved communication links would reduce the sense of isolation in the area and improve prospects for border trade. In the long run, the development of the Tamu-Kalemyo road would catalyze legitimate economic exchanges and greater people-to-people contact with Myanmar. The access to Kalemyo will provide a road link to the road, rail and transport networks leading into the main commercial and economic centers of Myanmar, including Mandalay and Yangon. In the security perspective, the road would improve the infrastructure in areas close to our border and enhance Myanmar's capacity for cooperation to check the activities of Indian insurgent groups who have been able to use some parts of the border areas for movements and transit routes. Since 1993, institutionalised dialogue has been established between the relevant authorities of the Government of India and their Myanmar counterparts for improved border management, security and control of narcotic traffic. It has been recognised that effectiveness of security arrangements in areas close to our border would increase Myanmar's ability to cooperate in curbing insurgency and controlling drug trafficking. The road would also be

Kale/Kalewa - Kylgen - Tamu Road



in our long-term strategic interest and has the support of our Ministry of Defence and Army. The Tamu-Kalemyo road project will also symbolise India's capabilities and would send a positive signal to Myanmar in regard to India's economic and technological power. Road projects in the eastern borders of Myanmar have already been launched with assistance from China. In the areas close to India's border, it would be in our interest to ensure the development of roads and communications in cooperation with India rather than any other country.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

In response to a recommendation of the Standing Committee made in their 6th Report, the Ministry had drawn a comprehensive plan for purchase/construction of properties abroad with a view to progressively reduce escalating rental liability. The plan was proposed to be implemented over a ten year period from 1995-96. No funds were, however, provided for the purpose in 1995-96. To begin implementation of the comprehensive plan, the Department of Expenditure did not enhance the allocation at RE 96-97 stage. Even in 1997-98 against the projected demand of 150 crores only 90 crores have been provided at BE 1997-98. The very purpose of drawing up of such plan defeated if necessary allocations are not made therefor and the plans are not completed in time. Needless to say that non-allocation of requisite funds results in avoidable cost and time overrun. The Committee take strong exception and deplore the attitude the Department of Expenditure is not providing timely and adequate funds for the comprehensive plan. The Committee desire that the matter may be continuously pursued with the Department of Expenditure so that the work is completed according to the planned schedule. (Para No. 66).

Government's Reply

Committee's instruction have been noted. Ministry's request for adequate funds will be taken up again with the Department of Expenditure at RE 1997-98 stage.

CHAPTER III

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

Recommendation of the Committee

It is found that the applicants also visit the Passport Offices in connection with some miscellaneous services such as renewal of passports, issue of duplicate passport in case of loss, change of address, etc. Often there are complaints that even these miscellaneous services are not promptly attended to and they have to make frequent visits to Passport Offices for such purposes. The Committee desire that a counter/cell may be created in each Passport Office which may exclusively attend to the complaints, grievances, suggestions of the applicants and the applicants are invariably apprised of the status of their case so that when they come out of Passport Office, there is a sense of satisfaction to them. (Para No. 44).

Government's Reply

Applicants visit Passport Offices to submit application forms for issue of passports as well as for miscellaneous services in their passports. Ministry have instructed all Passport Offices to open express counter for miscellaneous service application so that the passport duly serviced is returned back to the applicant on the same day. Thus, miscellaneous services like addition of names of children, change of address, renewal after five years, ECNR, etc. can be obtained on the same day. Each Passport Office also has a counter to attend specifically to enquiries. The Passport Officer meets public on all working days at a designated hour. Besides the Passport Officer, almost all offices have other designated officers and subordinate staff who also meet public for grievance redressal. Tele-enquiry system is already operational in five Passport Offices *i.e.* Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. Ministry had already processed extension of the tele-enquiry system in ten other Passport Offices and this is expected to be operational very

soon. With the installation of the tele-enquiry system applicants get to know the status of their applications on telephone itself.

In addition, the public grievance redressal mechanism in the CPV Division has been supplemented with two Public Relations Officers (Public Grievances) who monitor every complaint coming to the office of the Chief Passport Officer, entering them in a computerised format provided by the Department of Administration, Reforms and Public Grievances and, effective follow up is done directly under the supervision of the CPO. A separate fax line and two telephone lines have been provided to the monitoring cell to attend to public grievances. Two PROs are available daily to listen to the grievances of the public.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Ministry have informed the Committee that various procedural changes (mentioned in para 39 of this report) have been brought about by them to reduce the complaints and grievances of the applications. However, the reply of the Ministry is vague and does not clearly explain the details involved in the various steps initiated by them. For instance, it has been mentioned that the life of a passport is to be for 20 years or 10 years. The Committee would like to be apprised whether there would be two types of passports having different life spans and the reasons therefor. As regards setting up of Passport Advisory Committees, the Committee would like to be informed whether such Advisory Committees have been set up and if so what are their compositions and functions and whether local MPs/MLAs are also associated with such Committee. (Para No. 45)

Government's Reply

Yes, at present passports have two different validity limits *i.e.* one valid for 10 years and the other for 20 years. On 9th September, 1996, the Government announced a new policy to issue passports for 20 years at a time which received a favourable response from the public. However, in view of the continued interest and demand for 10 year validity passports, this policy was modified and an option

was given to applicants to apply for either a 10 year validity passport on payment of the existing fee of Rs. 300 or a 20 year validity passport on payment of fee of Rs. 600.

Ministry is in the process of constituting Passport Advisory Committees. There would be a Central Passport Advisory Committee and State Passport Advisory Committees. The Central Passport Advisory Committee would have Members of Parliament from both the Houses and eminent public men as its members. The State Advisory Committee would be composed of local Members of Parliament and eminent public men. The proposed Central and State Passport Advisory Committees will give advice on improving the functioning of Passport Offices and upgradation of public facilities, make proposals to enhance the convenience of the Public for obtaining the passports. The Proposal includes involvement of Members of Parliament in both the Central as well as the State Passport Advisory Committee. In fact the Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha and the Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha have been asked to nominate two Members each from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for the Central Passport Advisory Committee. Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha has already nominated two Members of Rajya Sabha to the Central Passport Advisory Committee. Hon'ble Speaker is yet to nominate two Members from the Lok Sabha to the Central Passport Advisory Committee.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee note that the funds earmarked for technical and economic cooperation with other countries are utilised for India's multilateral and bilateral Aid and Assistance Programmes. These Aid Programmes are stated to be influenced by diplomatic, economic and political considerations. There are two types of Programmes ITEC covering 110 friendly developing countries excluding India's neighbours and Technical Assistance Programme (TAP) for India's neighbours. The total allocation under ITEC in 1996-97 is stated to be 15 crores which was less than 10% of the total funds covered under this Major Head.

The Ministry have admitted that periodic reviews of these Programmes are not only appropriate but also essential. However, it is seen that the review was carried out only in respect of ITEC Programme and that too was in 1993. The Committee are unable to understand why no review has been conducted so far in respect of TAP Programme for neighbouring countries which account for about 90 per cent of the grants earmarked for Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries. The Committee feel that frequent review of these Aid Programmes should be carried out in order to evaluate how far these Aid Programmes have helped India in strengthening mutual, bilateral relations with the recipient countries and for determining the need, desirability and quantum of the aid. (Para No. 57)

Government's Reply

Close and cordial relations with neighbouring countries are an essential underpinning of India's foreign policy objectives. TAP is one of the important mechanisms for assisting in the developmental objectives of our neighbours and thus consolidating close and constructive bilateral relations.

India and Bangladesh jointly review all on-going programmes at meetings of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission which most recently held its Fifth Session in New Delhi in March, 1997. The Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission, headed by the respective Foreign Ministers, held its Third Session in Colombo in January, 1997 during which all on-going cooperation programmes were reviewed.

The Indo-Maldives Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation, headed at the Foreign Ministers' level, reviewed on-going cooperation programmes at its Third Session held at Male in August, 1995. Our TAP commitments to Myanmar have increased appreciably since 1996-97 with the decision of the Government with Cabinet approval to construct a National Highway-grade road from Tamu to Kalembo at a cost of Rs. 91.68 crores. Earlier, our TAP commitments to Myanmar were largely confined to costs relating to the upkeep of the masoleum of the last Mughal Emperor, Bhadur Shah Zafar, and the provision of a few training slots.

Periodic, high-level reviews are a regular feature in respect of Bhutan, 'Biannual Plans Talks' are similarly held with Bhutan to monitor progress and guide the project activity. The last round of talks was held in New Delhi in August, 1996.

A High Level Task Force (led by Principal Secretary to Prime Minister from the Indian side), periodically reviews the on-going projects under 'Aid to Nepal' and takes a view on new requests. The last meeting was held in New Delhi in August, 1996.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

CHAPTER IV

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

Recommendation of the Committee

The Committee have been given to understand that ICCR propose to open cultural centres abroad in Sri Lanka, USA, Japan, South Asia etc. in near future. While it is necessary to have cultural centres in the countries which are politically and economically important to us, a particular country need to be selected carefully after considering all the relevant aspects as the funds available with the ICCR are scare and are unlikely to be stepped up substantially in near future. For instance in USA, there are already many institutions which can be strengthened with must less resources which could effectively perform the role expected of the cultural centres with the involvement and support of NRIs. The Committee feel that the cultural centers should be opened in those countries only where it is considered absolutely necessary. The Ministry then can forcefully plead with the Ministry of Finance for additional funds for the same. The Committee hope that this exercise would be completed soon and the Ministry of Finance would provide the additional funds for opening of new cultural centres abroad at the RE stage. (Para No. 51).

Government's Reply

The Ministry agrees with the observation of the Committee that Cultural Centres should be opened very selectively in those countries which are politically and economically important to us or where there is a large population of Indian origin.

[MEA Letter No. AA/125/Parl./22/97, dated 29th August, 1997]

CHAPTER V

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

NIL

NEW DELHI;
13 August, 1998
22 Shravana, 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 13 AUGUST, 1998

The Committee sat from 1100 hrs. to 1330 hrs.

PRESENT

Shri Inder Kumar Gujral — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Jagmohan
3. Shri Dileep Sanghani
4. Shri D.B. Roy
5. Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste
6. Shri Bikram Keshari Deo
7. Smt. Ila Pant
8. Dr. Ashok Patel
9. Shri Tarun Gogoi
10. Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita
11. Shri Sharad Pawar
12. Shri Shivraj V. Patil
13. Shri P. Shiv Shanker
14. Shri Suresh Kurup
15. Shri C. Gopal
16. Shri N. Dennis
17. Shri E. Ahmed
18. Shri Arif Mohammed Khan

Rajya Sabha

19. Shri Bhuvnesh Chaturvedi
20. Shri K.M. Khan
21. Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma
22. Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi
23. Shri Md. Salim
24. Smt. Kamla Sinha
25. Dr. Yoginder K. Alagh
26. Shri Jayant Kumar Malhoutra
27. Shri Rangnath Misra
28. Dr. L.M. Singhvi

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri V.N. Gaur — *Director*
2. Shri R.K. Saxena — *Under Secretary*

At the outset the Chairman welcomed the members to the sitting of the Committee. The Committee then took up for consideration the following draft Report:

“2nd Report on Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the 4th Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1997-98.”

2. The Chairman invited Members to offer their comments/suggestions on the draft Report. The Members however desired that the draft Action Taken Report may be adopted.

3. The Committee authorised the Chairman to present the Action Taken Report to the House.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX II

(Vide Introduction of Report)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE 4TH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (11TH LOK SABHA)

I.	Total Number of Recommendations	23
II	Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by Government Para Nos. 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 50, 61, 66	
	Total	19
	Percentage	82.61%
III.	Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government replies Para Nos. 44, 45, 57	
	Total	3
	Percentage	13%
IV.	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration Para No. 51	
	Total	1
	Percentage	4.35%
V.	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited	
	Para No. Nil	

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 observe with regret that the Ministry have once again not been able to make a realistic assessment of the requirements of funds for advertisement and publicity either at Headquarters or Missions/ Posts abroad. The reply of the Ministry for projecting more funds for advertisement and publicity at Missions abroad is also vague. The Ministry have stated that for Headquarters they had projected an enhanced budget for three main reasons <i>viz.</i> to cater to activities in connection with the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of India's Independence, reviving image building advertisements in foreign Newspapers/Magazines and setting up a media centre. Out of these, the first has already been taken care of

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by the Ministry of Finance by allocating Rs. 25 crores separately for the 50th Anniversary Celebrations. However the Ministry have stated that the current budget may be suffice for establishing the media centre but would not suffice for the publicity campaign. It is also stated that enhancement of funds to include the advertisement drive are not available in RE 1997-98 and may have to be deferred to the next Financial Year. This indeed is very surprising and is a case of gross miscalculation. It shows the Ministry's inability to foresee as to how much funds were needed for undertaking publicity activities. The Committee would like to point out that a realistic assessment of the requirements of funds for publicity activities should have been made and reflected accurately in the Budget Estimates. It also recommend that provisions for allocation of adequate amount of funds should be made both at Headquarters as well as Missions/Posts level in order to enable those

1	2	3	4
2	10	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>to step-up their publicity activities so that the country's image building advertisement in foreign newspapers/magazines are not affected adversely.</p> <p>The Committee has time and again been recommending for computerisation of all the passport offices in the country early as it would help in bringing down pendency and increasing the efficiency of Passport Offices. A comprehensive satellite based computerisation programme has been adopted by the Ministry which is expected to become operational in the next 12-18 months. However, the Committee feel that care should be taken that the proposed comprehensive satellite linked computerisation programme adopted by the Ministry in June, 1997 does not further delay the computerisation of Passport Offices. The Ministry may also ensure that the implementation of this programme does not face any financial or other constraints.</p>

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3	11	Ministry of External Affairs	<p>The Ministry have also stated that all the State Governments of the North-Eastern States except Manipur have made available the space and manpower for opening of Passport Collection Centres. The Committee hope that the problems, if any, in setting up collection centre at Manipur would be sorted out and other collection centres would become operational in all the North-Eastern States early.</p>
4	18	-do-	<p>The Committee find that several steps, which includes better co-ordination between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs to sort out the problems being faced in police verification, surprise inspection and random checks of passport offices, have been taken by the Ministry to reduce pendency of Passport applications. But the Committee is constrained to state that still the Passports are not issued to the applicants within the stipulated time of five</p>

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weeks. The Committee desire that proper monitoring of the remedial measures taken by the Ministry should be done at the right earnest and there should not be any delay in issuing passports beyond the stipulated period of five weeks.

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Ministry of
External Affairs

It has come to the notice of the Committee that in most of the Passport Offices people often face difficulty in meeting the Passport Officer for redressal of their grievances. Passport Offices often do not maintain complaint/suggestion book. There also seems to be a lack of a sufficient grievance redressal mechanism in the States as no proper record of suggestions/grievances is kept. The reply of the Ministry does not clarify as to how the grievances/suggestions coming from the Regional Passport Offices are monitored. The Committee recommend that a more effective grievance redressal mechanism, like in the office of Chief Passport Officer, should be introduced in the regional passport offices.

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			<p>Complaints/suggestion Book should invariably be maintained in each Passport Office. On receipt of any specific suggestion/complaint, Chief Passport Officer should be intimated about the same. Follow-up action taken by the Passport Office should be communicated to the applicant too.</p>
6	20	<p>Ministry of External Affairs</p>	<p>The tele-enquiry system introduced in five Passport Offices <i>i.e.</i> Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore has been appreciated by the Committee as it helps the applicants to know the status of their applications on telephone. The Ministry have also stated that they had already processed expansion of tele-enquiry system in ten other Passport Offices which is expected to be operational very soon. However it has come to the notice of the Committee that during peak hours in passport offices where tele-enquiry system is in operation like in Hyderabad, tele-enquiry lines remains busy for a long time. Thus the very purpose of getting</p>

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to know the status of application by the applicants is defeated if they are unable to contact the passport office on phone. Also, wherever tele-enquiry system is in operation, it has come to the notice of the Committee that there are insufficient number of tele-enquiry lines resulting in inconvenience to the applicants. To provide more efficient service to the public, the Committee feel that tele-enquiry system is absolutely necessary in all the Passport Offices. The Committee thus recommend that tele-enquiry system with sufficient number of jumping lines facility should be introduced in all passport offices so that the problems of the applicants are obviated to a great extent.

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Ministry of
External Affairs

The Committee note that the Ministry is still in the process of constituting Passport Advisory Committees both at centre as well as State levels which would advise on improving the functioning of Passport Offices and upgrading of public facilities. The Committee

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feel that any delay in setting up Passport Advisory Committees would adversely effect the functioning of Passport Offices. Therefore, the Committee desire that Passport Advisory Committees, both at central as well as regional level, may be set up soon so that the functioning of these offices may be improved and public facilities upgraded.

8	25	Ministry of External Affairs	The Committee once again stress that in countries where we do not have such institutions, cultural centres should be opened on a priority basis. countries like USA, Japan etc. where many institutions exist could be strengthened for cultural activities with much less resources. Those institutions could effectively perform the role expected of the cultural centres with the involvement and support of the NRI's also. The Committee feel that Cultural Centres should be opened in the newly formed Central Asian Republics which are culturally akin to us in many
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ways and are politically, economically and strategically important to us. The Committee also recommend that the ICCR should judiciously utilise the limited funds available to them and also make serious efforts to persuade the Ministry of Finance to provide additional funds for opening of new cultural centres abroad and also to enhance their activities.
