

10

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2005-2006)**

FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(2006-2007)**

TENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

May, 2006/Vaisakha, 1928 (Saka)

TENTH REPORT
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2005-2006)

(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(2006-2007)

Presented to Lok Sabha on 18th May, 2006
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 18th May, 2006



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

May, 2006/Vaisakha, 1928 (Saka)

COEA NO. 57

Price : Rs.

© **2006 by Lok Sabha Secretariat**
Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct
of Business in Lok Sabha (Eleventh Edition) and Printed by

CONTENTS

PAGE

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE.....	
INTRODUCTION.....	
A. Introductory.....	
B. Background to the Creation of Ministry.....	
C. Overall Budgetary Proposals.....	
D. Capital Outlay on Public Works.....	
E. Advertising and Publicity.....	
F. Migration Management.....	
G. Schemes & Initiatives.....	
H. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.....	

APPENDICES

I. Minutes of the sitting of the Committee held on 04.04.2006.....	
II. Minutes of the sitting of the Committee held on 12.05.2006.....	
III. Statements of Observations and Recommendations.....	

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2005-2006)

Chairman

Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey

MEMBERS
LOK SABHA

2. Shri Omar Abdullah
3. Shri Yogi Aditya Nath
4. Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel
5. Shri Narayan Chandra Borkataky
6. Shri P.C.Gaddigoudar
7. Shri Vinod Khanna
8. Shri S.K. Kharventhan
9. Shri Nikhil Kumar
10. Shri Somabhai Patel
11. Shri Sebastian Paul
12. Smt. Ranjit Ranjan
13. Dr. (Col) Dhani Ram Shandil
14. Shri Saleem Iqbal Shervani
15. Shri Damodar Barku Shingada
16. Shri Madhu Goud Yashki
17. Shri Suresh Prabhu
18. Shri George Fernandes
19. Vacant *
20. Vacant ***
21. Vacant #

MEMBERS
RAJYA SABHA

22. Smt. Prema Cariappa
23. Dr. Karan Singh
24. Shri Jana Krishnamurthy K.
25. Shri Arun Shourie
26. Smt. S.G. Indira
27. Shri S.M. Laljan Basha
28. Shri Arjun Kumar Sengupta **
29. Vacant \$
30. Vacant \$
31. Vacant \$\$

SECRETARIAT

Shri S.K. Sharma	-	Additional Secretary
Shri U.S.Saxena	-	Director
Shri A. K. Balwani	-	Under Secretary
Shri Lalkithang	-	Committee Officer

- * Shri P.A. Sangma ceased to be Member of the Committee consequent upon his resignation from his seat from Lok Sabha w.e.f. 10.10.2005.
- ** Shri Fali S. Nariman ceased to be Member of the Committee consequent upon his retirement from the membership of Rajya Sabha w.e.f. 21.11.2005. Shri Arjun Kumar Sengupta has been nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 16.1.2006
- *** Shri Narendra Kumar Kushawaha ceased to be Member of the Committee consequent on the adoption of a Motion by the Lok Sabha on the 23rd December, 2005 regarding expelling of some Members from the membership of the Lok Sabha.
- # Shri Dinsha Patel ceased to be Member of the Committee consequent upon his appointment as Minister.
- \$ Shri P.K. Maheshwari and Dr. Mahendra Prasad have ceased to be Members of the Committee consequent upon their retirement from the Membership of Rajya Sabha w.e.f. 02.04.2006
- \$\$ Smt. Jaya Bachchan has ceased to be Member of Rajya Sabha consequent upon her disqualification from her Membership of Rajya Sabha w.e.f. 14.7.2004.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs (2005-2006) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Tenth Report (14th Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for the year 2006-2007.

2. The Standing Committee on External Affairs was constituted on 5th August, 2005. One of the functions of the Standing Committee, as laid down in Rule 331E of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, is to consider the Demands for Grants of the concerned Ministries/Departments and make a report on the same to both the Houses. The Report shall not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions.

3. The Committee (2005-2006) took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs on 4th April, 2006. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for placing before the Committee the material and information which they desired in connection with the examination of the Demands for Grants of the Ministry for 2006-2007 and for tendering evidence before the Committee.

4. The Committee (2005-2006) considered and adopted the report at their sitting held on 12th May, 2006.

5. The Committee place on record their appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered to them by the officials of the Lok Sabha Secretariat attached to the Committee.

NEW DELHI
05th May, 2006

Vaisakha 15, 1928(Saka)

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs

REPORT

A. INTRODUCTORY

An independent Ministry by the name 'Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs' was created vide notification No. Doc.CD-160/2004 dated 27 May, 2004 issued by the President of India. Subsequently, vide notification No. Doc.CD-278/2004 dated 3 September, it was renamed the 'Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs' (MOIA)

B. BACKGROUND TO THE CREATION OF THE MINISTRY

2. The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (HLCID) had noted that the single refrain of a cross-section of Overseas Indians was for a mechanism that obviates the need for them to deal with a multiplicity of organizations and departments in their interaction with India.

Against this background, Government decided to set up an independent Ministry to address the concerns of the Indian Diaspora. The emphasis placed by the new Government on forging relations with overseas Indians was amply reflected in Para 53 of the President's address to both houses of the Parliament on 7 June 2004:

"Indians abroad have not only been successful in many walks of life, but have also been a source of inspiration for their brethren back home. The new Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, which reflects our recognition of their values, will tap their potential of contributing to our economic growth."

3. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs is a young ministry. Established in May 2004 as the 'Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs' it was renamed the 'Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs' (MOIA) in September 2004. The emigration division of the ministry of Labour and employment was attached to the new ministry in Dec 2004. The NRI division of the MEA provides support to the MOIA and now functions as the Diaspora division in the Ministry.

4. The Ministry is headed by a cabinet minister and is organized into four functional service divisions: Diaspora Services, Financial Services, Employment Services, and Social Services. A small team of eleven officers (DS and above) is working in the Ministry in a de-layered and multi-task mode leveraging the power of partnerships and outsourcing.

5. The Protector General of Emigrants administers the Emigration Act, 1983. He oversees the eight field offices of the protectors of emigrants located at Chandigarh, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram.

6. The Demand for Grants of the MOIA for the year 2006-07 were laid on the table of the Lok Sabha on 14th March, 2006. The Budget of the MOIA is primarily non-plan. The Committee took evidence of the representatives of the MOIA on 4th April, 2006 on the issues arising out of Demands for Grants of the MOIA under Demand No. 65 for the year 2006-07.

C. OVERALL BUDGETARY PROPOSALS

7. Demand No.65 pertaining to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) contains the figures of Revenue as well as Capital expenditure under the charged and voted sections for the year 2006-2007 as per details given below:-

(Rs. in crore)

Section	Revenue	Capital	Total
Charged	-	-	-
Voted	35.50	2.50	38
Total	35.50	2.50	38

8. The Total allocation in BE 2005-2006 for the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) under Revenue and Capital sections was Rs. 35 crore. This allocation was subsequently reduced to Rs. 19.10 crore at RE 2005-2006 stage. For BE 2006-2007, the proposed allocation is Rs. 38 crore which is an enhancement over BE 2005-2006 by Rs. 3 crore and over RE 2005-2006 by Rs. 18.90 crore.

9. The Budget Estimates of different Major Heads and Minor Heads for the year 2006-2007 are shown as follows:-

Budgetary Estimates (BE) of Major Heads and Minor Heads under Demand No. 65 for the year 2006-2007:

(Rs. in crore)

Section	Major Head	Minor Head	BE 2005-2006	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Revenue	2052-Secretariat General Services			21.16
		00.90-Secretariat 00.800 other Expenditure	20.16 1.00	
	2061-External Affairs			14.34
		00.104-International Conference Meetings	3.00	
		00.800-other Expenditure	11.34	
		Total-Revenue Section		35.50
Capital	4059-Capital			

	outlay on public works			
		60.051-construction	2.50	
		Total-Capital Section		2.50
		Total-Grant No. 65		38.00

10. The overall budgetary position for the year 2005-2006 and the proposed allocations for the year 2006-2007 under the Revenue and Capital Sections – under both the Plan and Non-Plan Heads are as follows:

(Rs. in crore)

	BE 2005-2006		RE 2005-2006		BE 2006-2007	
	Non-Plan	Plan	Non-Plan	Plan	Non-Plan	Plan
Revenue Section	32.00	-	18.60	-	35.50	-
Capital Section	3.00	-	0.50	-	2.50	-
Total	35.00	-	19.10	-	38.00	-
Grand Total	35.00		19.10		38.00	

Variation between BE 2005-2006 and RE 2005-2006 = Rs.15.90 crore

Variation between RE 2005-2006 and BE 2006-2007 = Rs.18.90 crore

Variation between BE 2005-2006 and BE 2006-2007 = Rs.3 crore

11. Allocation of funds at BE & RE stage to the Ministry, Actual Expenditure and the unspent balances from the year 2004-05 onwards are:

Year	BE	RE	Actual Expenditure	Unspent/Overspent Balance
2004-05	7.00	10.00	6.16	2.84
2005-06	35.00	19.10	8.20(upto Jan 06)	10.90(upto Jan 06)
2006-07	38.00	-	-	-

12. According to the detailed DFGs of the Ministry, it is observed that Rs. 7 crore was allocated at BE stage in 2004-05, which was enhanced to Rs. 10 crore at RE stage. However, the Actual Expenditure (i.e. Rs. 6.16 crore) was less than what was projected at BE and RE stage. In sharp contrast in 2005-06 Rs. 35 crore was allocated at BE stage, which was reduced to Rs. 19.10 crore at RE stage.

13. When asked about the reasons for the Actual Expenditure less than what was projected at BE and RE stage during 2004-05, and the reasons for decreasing the allocation to Rs. 19.10 crore at RE stage in 2005-06; the Ministry stated that:

“ As there was delay in renovation of Akbar Bhawan and adequate staff was also not available, schemes planned for 2004-05, had to be deferred and the expenditure was less than projected.”

14. Explaining the reason for decreasing the allocation at the RE stage to Rs. 19.10 crore during 2005-06, the Ministry in a written submission stated that:

“There was only skeleton staff till almost November, 2005 and therefore expenditure on salaries and office expenses was much less than projected. Further, in the absence of proper staffing many of the activities planned were deferred or could not gain momentum, resulting in less expenditure.”

15. The Ministry also submitted that the Projected Actual Expenditure for the year 2005-06 is likely to be Rs. 18 crore.

16. According to the detailed DFGs of the Ministry, it is observed that the total budgetary allocation of the Ministry during BE 2006-07 is Rs. 38 crore, which is an enhancement of Rs. 18.90 crore over the RE stage allocations during 2005-06.

17. On being asked the reasons for this increase in allocations, the Ministry stated as under:

“Now that the Ministry have got adequate officers on its strength, the activities of the Ministry have increased and it is now in a position to implement its Agenda for Action with speed. The increased allocation is based on the initiatives planned to be taken up by the Ministry in the ensuing year.”

18. The Ministry was asked whether there was any re-appropriation of funds from one head to another during 2005-06. The Ministry informed the Committee that there was re-appropriation of funds during the year which are as under:

(Rs. In lakhs.)

From		To	
Head of Account	Amount	Head Of Account	Amount
Revenue/Non plan/Voted 2052-Secretariat General Services(Major Head) 00.800-Other Expenditure(Minor Head) 07-Expenditure on Holding Seminars & studies 07.00.20-other Administrative Services	75	Revenue/Non plan/Voted 2061-External Affairs (Major Head) 00.800-Other Expenditure(Minor Head) 15.00-Celebration of Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas 15.00.50-Other Charges	500
Total Major Head 2052 Secretariat General Services	75	Total Major Head 2061-External Affairs	
2061-External Affairs(Major Head) 00.800 Other Expenditure(Minor Head) 03-Other Scheme 03.00.50-Othe charges	425		
Total Major Head 2061- External Affairs	425		
Grand Total	500	Grand Total	500

19. When asked whether the Ministry have adequate staff now. The Secretary, MOIA, during evidence, stated as under:

“We have been pressing for staff with the Ministry of Finance. Out of 63 posts cleared, 24 are in position. 40 are in various stages of filling up. 63 is what the Ministry of Finance had accepted. We are asking for more than this. This is with regard to the Headquarters. There is another dimension which I must explain. The Directorate of Protector General is from the Labour Ministry. It is transferred to us. That has come to us during the last financial year. It has 104 people including PG. We have no problem over that. We have got 8 Protectorates and the PG in Headquarters. The Diaspora Division as it is called is with the External Affairs Ministry, comprising of one Joint Secretary and 11 officers and staff. Posts for them in our Ministry are in the process of being created. They are today on deputation from the Ministry of External Affairs. The matter is presently before the Committee of Secretaries. Once that decision is taken, we will have an over all picture of our Ministry in the next 3 months it would be done.”

20. The Committee observed that Rs. 7 crore was allocated at BE stage in 2004-05 which was enhanced to Rs. 10 crore at RE stage. However the actual expenditure (Rs. 6.16 crore) was less than what was projected at BE and RE stage. In sharp contrast, the allocation made at BE stage during 2005-06 was

Rs. 35 crore which was reduced to Rs. 19.10 crore at RE stage. The projected actual expenditure for the year 2005-06, according to the Ministry, is likely to be Rs. 18 crore, which again is less than the allocation made at BE and RE stage. Despite the Ministry not having been able to spend their budgetary allocations during the last two years, the Budgetary allocation of the Ministry during BE (2006-07) stage is Rs. 38 crore. It is also observed that there has been huge variation between BE and RE during the last two years.

The Committee are, therefore, of the view that the Ministry have not been able to make a realistic projection of their budgetary requirements over the last two years as there have been substantial unspent balances and re-appropriation of funds from one head to another head. The Committee recommend that the Ministry must make the projection as realistic as possible and spend funds properly and judiciously within the allocation.

(Recommendation No. 1)

21. The Committee are appalled to note that even almost after two years the Ministry is still inadequately staffed. The Committee feel that no concrete steps have been taken by the Ministry in the last one year to fill up the vacant posts. The fact that of the 63 posts that have already been created only 24 are in position, is a telling evidence of the lethargic approach of the Ministry in filling up the vacant posts.

The Committee note that lack of staff has apparently been the reason for many of the planned activities getting deferred or not gaining momentum.

The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take some concrete steps towards filling up the already created posts immediately so that the proposed agenda/activities could be taken up during the ensuing year.

(Recommendation No. 2)

D. CAPITAL OUTLAY ON PUBLIC WORKS

22. The MOIA in their Annual Report (2005-06) have mentioned that the MUD had earlier allotted plots No. 15A & 15 B in Chanakyapuri measuring 5854 Sq.mt. lying between the Russian and Bulgarian Embassies in favour of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. They have recently allotted another Plot No.15 D measuring 3024 sq. meters. Although the total allocation of land is much less than the requirement earlier assessed for an integrated Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra complex, nevertheless the Ministry proposes to proceed further with the project based on the available land. Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra would be the focal point for interaction with overseas Indians and would, in course of time, become the hub of various activities aimed at creating pride in the achievements of India and its Diaspora. Work on this project will commence in the ensuing year.

23. Under the major head '4059' a provision of Rs. 2.50 crore has been made during BE (2006-07) which according to the Ministry is for detailed Project Report and design competition award of contract etc. During BE 2005-

06 also a provision of Rs. 3 crore was made under the same head which was revised to Rs. 0.50 crore at the RE stage.

24. When asked whether any expenditure was incurred under this head during 2005-06. The Ministry in a written submission stated that:

“ MOIA has been pursuing allotment of land with the Ministry of Urban Development (MUD) since the very inception of the Ministry for construction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PB Kendra). Earlier two plots of land namely 15A and 15B in Chanakyapuri were allotted to MOIA by the Ministry of Urban Development and amount of Rs.31,83,430/- was paid to MUD. Now the MUD has allotted plot No. 15D also to MOIA for construction of the PB Kendra vide order dated 24-2-2006 and a further payment of Rs. 20,72,571/- has been made to L&DO in this regard.”

25. The Ministry in a written submission further stated that:

“During the year 2006-07 steps will be taken to engage suitable consultants for preparation of the detailed project report and implementation plan. In parallel steps will be taken for obtaining necessary clearance of statutory authorities for construction of Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra. It will be followed by inviting bids and awarding contracts. This entire action is proposed to be taken during FY 2006-2007.”

26. Elaborating further on the issue, the Secretary, MOIA submitted during evidence that:

“Infact, in the earlier deliberations also there was a mention of the Kendra. I had myself inspected the site on the 7th of March. Finally, we have paid the Land and Development Office. The possession of this must come to us in the next 7 to 10 days. After that there is a little bit of unauthorised structures that are to be removed. Some construction materials of the work being done by the Bulgarian and possibly also the Russian Missions are lying there and I expect that by the end of this month we should get the possession of this land. This year we have a budget allocation of Rs. 2 ½ crore. We intend to go through a proper design competition for this purpose. We will have to have very clear objectives. It should reflect the purpose for which we are making this. It will reflect the history on the one side and on another side it will have the technological developments also to be exhibited. So, this year we expect to get through the design and other formalities and go for tendering. We have got an Action Plan on this. “

27. The Committee are pleased to note that the Ministry of Urban Development in addition to plot no.15A & 15B has also allotted plot no. 15D in Chanakyapuri to MOIA for construction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra(PBK) vide order dated 24.02.06. The Committee, however, regret to note that physical possession of these plots are yet to be handed over to the Ministry. The Ministry informed the Committee that there is a little bit of unauthorized

structure that are to be removed and expects to get possession of the land by the end of April, 2006. The Committee desire that the Ministry should take immediate possession of the land and take steps to engage suitable consultants for preparation of detailed project report and implementation plan. A time bound programme may be drawn up for completion of the project which may be placed before the Committee. The Committee further desire that they may be informed about the progress made in this regard from time to time.

(Recommendation No. 3)

E. ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

28. When asked about the kind of Advertising and Publicity effort made by the Ministry during the year 2005-06, the Ministry made a written submission as under:

“Ministry has taken a number of steps to advertise and publicize the various plans and schemes of the Ministry for the benefit of Overseas Indian. These include:-

1. Release of advertisements in the national and international print media on Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2006.
2. Preparation and screening of a short video film to promote PBD 2006. The film was shown in various countries to the Indian associations. Copies of the film were also sent to select Embassies for publicity of the Ministry.

3. Printing of brochure, posters, fliers, booklets etc. on Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2006 as well as on few schemes such as marriages to Overseas Indians, educational opportunities in India for Overseas Indians, Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Card scheme, Internship Programme for Diaspora Youth (IPDY), Scholarship Scheme, Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna (PBBY) and Do's and Don't for Overseas Indian workers in the countries of their employment etc.”

29. The Ministry in their explanatory note for DFG 2006-07 stated that a proposal of Rs. 2 crore has been made under the head Advertising & Publicity.

30. The Ministry was asked to furnish the details of action plans drawn up by the Ministry for intensive publicity campaign during the year 2006-07. Accordingly the Ministry furnished their media plan for the year 2006-07 as under:

“A media plan for the year 2006-07 is being drawn up. A productive balance will be maintained on spending in the various media for publicity of the Ministry's schemes. Publicity campaign would be carried out both in the national and international media including print and electronic. It has also been planned to organize national consultations, conferences, workshop etc. during 2005-06. Some of these programmes include:

- State level workshops in collaboration with the National Commission for women for sensitisation to and creation of awareness on issues related to marriages to Overseas Indians
- Promotion of the electronic remittance facility and advisory services in major diaspora countries.
- Promotion of the Diaspora Knowledge Network amongst professional organisations of the Overseas Indians
- Promotion of the idea of the proposed PIO University.
- A series of the pre-PBD conferences in important diaspora regions that will culminate in the PBD 2007.”

31. Further in reply to a question as to whether the Ministry will be able to undertake the proposed Advertising & Publicity related activities with the support of the budgetary estimates under this head. The Ministry in their written submission stated as under:

“ Since January 2006, the Ministry is working with the full complement of staff upto DS level. Various new schemes have been started by the Ministry in 2005-06. Some of them were announced by the Prime Minister at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2006 at Hyderabad. All these schemes are required to be publicised extensively. Although it is true that Ministry was unable to utilize the funds allotted under advertisement and publicity in

2005-06 the Ministry is now well-equipped to pursue the schemes and will be in a position to utilise the advertisement and publicity fund in a productive manner.”

32. The Committee note that a proposal of Rs. 2 crore has been made during BE 2006-07 under the head ‘Advertising & Publicity’. The Ministry has accordingly drawn up a media plan for the year 2006-07 for publicity of the Ministry’s various plans & schemes. The Committee appreciate that the campaign would be carried out both in the national and international media both in print and electronic. The Committee are of the view that the Advertising and Publicity efforts of the Ministry will play a very vital role in popularizing the proposed plans & schemes and their success would greatly depend on how effectively they are publicized. The Committee are of the view that intense publicity campaign should particularly be made to create awareness on issues related to marriages to overseas Indians. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the guidance booklet and other documentation that are proposed to be brought out should be made available in regional languages for better sensitization, especially among women. The Committee also want the Ministry to widely disseminate among overseas Indians information regarding matters of interest to Overseas Indians such as investment opportunities, scholarship schemes, promotion of Diaspora knowledge network, promotion of electronic remittance facility etc.

(Recommendation No. 4)

F. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

33. The Committee note from the Annual Report(2005-06) that the number of workers who were given emigration clearance for contractual employment abroad during the last five years and data on distribution of labour outflows is detailed in **Tables A and B** below.

A vast majority of migrants to the Middle East, including Gulf countries, are semi-skilled and unskilled workers and most of them are temporary migrants who return to India after expiry of their contractual employment.

TABLE – A

Emigration for Employment during the last five years

Year	No. of workers (in lakhs)
2001	2.79
2002	3.68
2003	4.66
2004	4.75
2005	5.49

It is observed from **Table A** above that there has been a consistent and steady increase in the number of persons emigrating for employment abroad from the year 2001 onwards. The number of emigration clearances granted by the eight offices of the Protector of Emigrants has increased from 2.79 lakhs in 2001 to 5.49 lakhs in 2005.

TABLE – B

The distribution of Annual Labour Outflows from India by destination

2001-2005

Sl. No.	Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1.	U. A. E.	53673	95034	143804	175262	194412
2.	Saudi Arabia	78048	99453	121431	123522	99879
3.	Kuwait	39751	4859	54434	52064	39124
4.	Oman	30985	41209	36816	33275	40931
5.	Malaysia	6131	10512	26898	31464	71041
6.	Bahrain	16382	20807	24778	22980	30060
7.	Qatar	13829	12596	14251	16325	50222
8.	Mauritius	--	--	--	3544	1965
9.	Maldives	--	--	--	3233	3423
10.	Jordan	--	--	--	2576	1851
	Others	39865	83193	44044	10715	15945
	TOTAL	278664	367663	466456	474960	548853

Table B indicates that the U.A.E. become the main destination for Indian workers closely followed by Saudi Arabia. Outside the Gulf region, the intake of Indian manpower by Malaysia has shown a significant and consistent increase. Employment for Indian workers in these countries holds a great potential.

34. The employment of Indian workers abroad helps to earn foreign exchange and thereby adds to the foreign exchange reserves of the country. The private transfer of foreign exchange from the year 2000-2001 onwards is given in **Table – D** below.

TABLE - D

Private Remittances

YEAR	<u>In US \$ million</u>	<u>In Rs. Crore</u>
2000-2001	12873	58756
2001-2002	12125	57821
2002-2003	14807	71642
2003-2004	18885	86764
2004-2005	14494	66861
2005-2006**	12043	52563
Upto 0.09.2005.		

It may be observed that there has been a steady increase in the remittances from Rs. 58756 crores in 2000-2001 to Rs. 52563 crores in 2005-06 (upto 30th September, 2005). It is assessed that a major proportion of this is contributed by the increasing number of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers employed in the Gulf countries, Malaysia and Singapore.

35. The Committee note from the Information Booklet for Indian Emigrants (a publication of MOIA), that the work relating to emigration from India to overseas countries and the return of emigrants has been transferred from the Ministry of

Labour & Employment to Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). The provisions of the Emigration Act, 1983 govern emigration from India. The Emigration Act, 1983 provides for a regulatory framework in respect of emigration of Indian Workers for overseas employment on contractual basis and seeks to safeguard their interests and ensure their welfare. The Act makes it mandatory for registration of all Recruiting Agents with the Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs before they can conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment.

Emigration Act, 1983

36. The Committee were informed that the Ministry proposed to amend the Emigration Act, 1983. When asked to state the reasons for such proposal and the extent to which the Act is proposed to be amended, the Ministry submitted that:

“The existing section 24 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides for mandatory imprisonment for a minimum period of six months and a minimum fine of Rs. 1000/- in respect of agencies engaged in illegal recruitment. All Offences under the Act are cognizable under Section 26 of the Act. However, the existing provisions are not sufficient enough to protect the interest of the emigrant workers. Hence, the Act is proposed to be amended to provide more teeth by incorporating deterrent punishment and harsher penalties to the illegal recruitment agencies.”

37. Elaborating further on this, the Secretary, MOIA during evidence stated as under:

“ We will not take much time to do this. This Act has not undergone too much change from 1983. We will attempt to bring amendments both in the Act as also in the Rules. By the Monsoon Session of Parliament we will make an attempt and we can pursue that. Once we are very clear about the changes, we will go to the Law Ministry. That will be our aim.”

38. When asked as to what the Ministry propose to do by way of enhancing the punishment which at present is a pittance and whether the punishment is going to be really prohibitive. Replying to this query, representative of the Ministry stated that:

“Right now, the punishment is that the minimum fine is Rs. 1,000 and imprisonment of 6 months and the maximum punishment is that the fine is Rs. 2,000 and one year imprisonment. It should be 7 to 8 years of imprisonment and the fine should be at least Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000.”

Protector of Emigrants(PoEs)

39. The Information Booklet for Indian Emigrants also mention that, in a bid to safeguard the interests of Indian nationals working abroad and also to protect them in case of any adverse or unfortunate event occurring in their country of work, the Emigration Act, 1983 requires all workers seeking contractual employment abroad to seek emigration clearance from any of the eight Offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs). The Act also mandates that no agency/establishment can undertake recruitment of Indians for employment abroad without obtaining

registration from the Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India.

40. The Annual Report (2005-06) mentions that the Government has progressively decentralized the process of Emigration clearance. Currently, this is being done through the eight offices of Protectors of Emigrants (POEs) located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochin, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram. In order to facilitate smooth public interface, all eight POE Offices work six days a week.

41. The Committee wanted to know whether the eight offices of PoEs are adequate to process emigration clearance and whether there is any proposal to open new office. The Ministry responded as under:

“ The labour outflow from India which requires emigration clearance has been rising year by year. During the recent Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, a session was held on ‘Indians in Gulf’ in which suggestions were received for opening more offices of the Protectors of Emigrants at Lucknow, Patna, Guwahati, Ahmedabad etc. The need for opening of more POE offices is well taken. The proposal, however, needs to be examined in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.”

42. The Ministry was also asked whether all the 8 emigration offices are functioning from rented premises and to furnish the details of their rental liabilities. The Ministry in a written statement submitted as under:

“Out of the 8 Protectors of Emigrants Offices, four of the offices viz. POE, Mumbai, POE, Chennai, POE Thiruvananthapuram and POE, Cochin have been

functioning from rented premises. The rental charges/liabilities for these offices are given as under:

<i>Name of the POE</i>	<i>Rent per month</i>	<i>Annual rent</i>
<i>POE, Mumbai</i>	<i>Rs. 1,64713/-</i>	<i>Rs. 1976556/-</i>
<i>POE, Chennai</i>	<i>Rs. 42003/-</i>	<i>Rs. 504036/-</i>
<i>POE Thiruvananthapuram</i>	<i>Rs. 8510/-</i>	<i>Rs. 102120/-</i>
<i>POE Cochin</i>	<i>Rs. 17808/-</i>	<i>Rs. 213696/-</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>Rs. 233034/-</i>	<i>Rs. 2796408/-</i>

(iii) The working strength vis-à-vis the sanctioned strength of each of the eight emigration offices across the country indicating the existing vacancies is given as under:

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of the POE Office</i>	<i>Sanctioned Posts</i>	<i>In position</i>	<i>Vacancy</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
	<i>Mumbai</i>	<i>POE-I (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>POE-II (3)</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
		<i>Assistant (3)</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>UDC (6)</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>LDC (8)</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>Peon (6)</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>Safaiwala (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>Frash (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>Watchman (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Delhi</i>	<i>POE-I (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
		<i>POE-II (1)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>

		<i>Assistant (2)</i>	1	1
		<i>UDC (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>LDC (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Record Sorter (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Peon (1)</i>	2	1
		<i>Chowkidar (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Sweeper (1)</i>	1	-
3	<i>Chennai</i>	<i>POE-II (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>Assistant (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>UDC (3)</i>	3	-
		<i>LDC (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>Peon (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Watchman (1)</i>	1	-
4	<i>Cochin</i>	<i>POE-II (1)</i>	1	-

		<i>Assistant (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>UDC (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>LDC (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>Peon (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Watchman (1)</i>	1	-
5	<i>Thiruvananthapuram</i>	<i>POE-II (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Assistant (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>UDC (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>LDC (2)</i>	2	-
		<i>Peon (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Chowkidar (1)</i>	1	-
6	<i>Hyderabad</i>	<i>POE-II (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>Assistant (1)</i>	1	-
		<i>UDC (1)</i>	1	-

7	Chandigarh	POE-II (1)	1	-
		Assistant (1)	1	-
		LDC (1)	1	-
		Peon (1)	1	-
8	Kolkata	POE-II (1)	1	-
		LDC (1)	1	-
		Peon (1)	1	-

43. The Ministry also stated that the working staff strength in respect of PoE, Hyderabad is not sufficient and thus, it requires augmentation. A proposal for sanction of one post of LDC and one post of Peon is being formulated.

44. The Committee asked the Ministry whether all the emigration offices across the country are computerized and if not, whether there is any proposal to do so.

To this the Ministry submitted that:

“Under the scheme of automation of offices of Protectors of Emigrants, it was proposed by Ministry of Labour to computerize all the POE offices and

the PGoE office as well to facilitate networking and sharing of data between POE offices and identified Indian Missions. However, this scheme did not move forward sufficiently. The position has been reviewed by MOIA and a project for modernization of the office of PGE and Protectors of Emigrants and streamlining of the emigration process will be implemented during the year 2006-07.

Recruiting Agents(RAs)

45. According to the Annual Report (2005-06), The Emigration Act, 1983, which came into force with effect from 30th December, 1983 embodies the guidelines enunciated by the Supreme Court of India in its judgement and order dated 20.03.1979 (Kanga Vs. Union of India & Others) and provides for a regulatory framework in respect of emigration of Indian workers for overseas employment on contractual basis and seeks to safeguard their interests and ensure their welfare. The Act makes it mandatory for registration of all Recruiting Agents with the ministry before they conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment. The certificate is granted by the Protector-General of Emigrants after taking into account, inter alia, the Recruiting Agent's financial soundness, trustworthiness, adequacy of premises, experience in the field of handling manpower export, etc., and after obtaining security deposit ranging between Rs.3 lakhs to Rs.10 lakhs in the form of Bank Guarantee. The scale of security, at present, is as under:

- i. upto 300 workers.....Rs.3.00 lakhs
- ii. 301 to 1000 workers.....Rs.5.00 lakhs
- iii. 1001 workers and above.....Rs.10.00 lakhs

The security deposit is provided for to secure due performance of the terms and conditions of the Registration Certificate and also to meet any contingencies that may arise if any worker is stranded abroad. Under Section 16 of the Emigration Act, 1983, an employer can recruit any citizen of India for employment abroad either through a registered Recruiting Agent or directly by obtaining a permit issued by the Protector-General of Emigrants under Section 15 of the Act. Indian workers are also taken abroad by Indian Companies for deployment on Projects undertaken by them. The Recruiting Agents are authorised to charge, as service charges, from each worker at the following rates: -

Category Maximum service charges

- i. Unskilled workers Rs. 2,000/-
- ii. Semi-skilled workers Rs. 3,000/-
- iii. Skilled workers Rs. 5,000/-
- iv. Other than the above Rs.10,000/-.

46. During evidence, the Committee pointed out to the Ministry that emigrant labour from India especially to the Middle East countries are facing lot of difficulties. The Committee also noted that the problems are aggravating and wanted to know what steps the Ministry has taken in the last one year.

47. Responding to the query of the Committee, the Secretary, MOIA stated during evidence that:

“I fully share the point regarding the problems which emigrants face. They are two-fold – one is within the country and the other is abroad. Within the country, it is a case of being cheated by unregistered recruiting agents, over-charging by registered recruiting agents, sometimes persons who are not having the requisite training bring in certificates saying that they are trained for a particular assignment in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait and so on and so forth. The recruiting agents may not be exercising that sort of caution in the scrutiny of such cases. With the result, when the emigrant goes abroad, there are problems in dealing with the employer. That is one side of it. What happens on our side? I would frankly admit over here that there are staff among Protector of emigrants whose integrity – it is in my perception as I have studied it for the last one month – ought to be of much higher standard. That is an understatement which I am making. There is an element of collusion between the staff and illegal agents. I have in mind certain corrective measures on which I will be able to report after sometime.

On the other side, in the foreign countries it is a case of substitution of the employment contract. If there is a proper relationship between recruiting agent and the employer, let us say in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait or Oman and the employer is a person whose record of treating his employees is satisfactory and conforming to the contract. The employee has to have three basic documents. One is the contract; the second is the power of attorney which authorises the employer to engage a recruiting agent to

recruit for him; and thirdly there is a demand letter saying he I wants 25 or 45 employees as drivers, carpenters, etc. When the emigrant reaches the destination, the malpractice which often happens in this country is that he his passport is taken custody of. Apparently, this is taken custody of in almost all the Gulf countries by way of some sort of precaution and security on their part. It is the general practice not exclusive to one country. But having done that the next step is the contract substitution. The emigrant may have been promised that he will be put into this particular level of post and be paid so many Riyals or Dirhams but what he is actually paid is a smaller sum and not given the level of responsibility which he should have been. We have this problem.”

48. Elaborating further on the issue, the Secretary, MOIA, further submitted as under:

“Now, I must point out here to hon. Members that last year something like 5.56 lakh persons went through emigration clearance. I am not referring to people who are above the level of 10+2 with superior qualifications and who do not need emigration clearance. If you deduct Malaysia where 71,000 people went the overwhelming majority of this would have gone to the Gulf countries. It is not as though a majority of them are being put into this sort of difficulty. But what happens is sizeable nevertheless for us to take note. In this connection, whenever it comes to our notice, through our Ambassadors and Consulate Generals, we take action. For example, let

us take United Arab Emirates where a large number of Indians in the Gulf are found. Our missions at Dubai or Abu Dhabi intervene with the employers and with the local Labour Department. But as the hon. Member rightly said, we do not have labour agreements with all the countries. A labour agreement is there with certain countries. We have an old agreement with Jordan and Qatar. There is a draft agreement under consideration with Kuwait and Malaysia. The High Commissioner of India and Malaysia brought to our notice recently that despite two years of negotiations, we do not seem to be able to make much head way on a labour agreement. So, we have to appreciate here that we are dealing with the foreign country which may not be always labour protective or labour sympathetic. There is a problem here. But then we will try to persuade them. Our Ministry will not be found wanting in trying to get the agreements pursued strongly with these governments. After the agreement comes in also there will always be a certain number of cases. I would like to re-assure the hon. Members that it is not a case when the majority of our people working over there are in dire straits. That is not the perception we have. But as I said there are sizeable numbers.”

49. On the issue of fraudulent agent/recruiters the Committee observed that this is a blatant breach of law and it is important that the fraudulent recruiters should be prosecuted against and brought to book. The Committee therefore wanted to know whether there was any case in which somebody has actually been punished or whether they are merely blacklisted.

50. To this query of the Committee, the Secretary, MOIA responded as under:

“A recruiting agent who is registered is within the purview of the Act. A person who is not a registered agent has no business to take any person. But they are the ones who are involved in the labour rackets. I would like to request the permission of the Chair to allow the Protector General of emigrants to elaborate on this point and tell us whether there are any cases where somebody has been booked recently or not. I would, however, like to tell you broadly as to what we have been doing. Now we suspect that people are going into Malaysia outside the emigration clearance route, prescribed under the Act, *via* Thailand. There has been a perception that this is happening *via* Thailand. So, Thailand, which was one of the 54 countries previously not requiring any emigration clearance has now been removed from the exempted category. In fact, we do not insist on emigration clearance for several countries because some countries have good labour practices and local laws also are good. Thailand figured among those 54 countries earlier. Once we found that Thailand could be a pipeline in this whole matter we have brought Thailand under scrutiny. Even people first go to Sri Lanka and then from there also they go to Malaysia. The Protectorate of emigrants in Chennai and Hyderabad have now been put under the scanner. I have written to the Chief Secretaries of both these States to watch the activities here.”

51. The Committee further wanted to know whether there is a law against which fraudulent recruiters can be prosecuted. The Secretary, MOIA, responded to this query as under:

“You can book them under the IPC, in any case, it is a case of fraud. One is giving the impression that one is a recruiting agent which he is not. Several sections are indicated. Under the Emigration Act, under section 24 we can prosecute such people.”

52. The Protector General of Emigrants stated that:

“Under the Emigration Act we can book the legal recruiting agent. Against the legal recruiting agent, we first issue show cause notice, then we suspend them for 30 days and then they are suspended for an indefinite period and finally it results in cancellation. In case of illegal agent, the police can take action and the prosecution sanction has to be done by me. In the year 2003, there were 25 cases filed, in 2004, 39 cases were filed and last year there were 53 cases, which was the maximum. Normally the POEs pursue these cases. Since the Secretary has taken over it has been decided that I will take up with the DG and the Secretary would take it up with the Chief Secretary and the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs would take it up with the concerned Chief Minister.”

53. According to the Annual Report (2005-06) of MOIA, complaints are received from various quarters, regarding non-payment/delayed payment of

wages, unilateral changes in the contracts of workers, changing the jobs arbitrarily etc. In extreme cases, the workers are not given any employment at all and are left in the lurch in the foreign country. In such instances, the Protector-General of Emigrants (PGE) steps in and gets the concerned Recruiting Agent to get the workers repatriated on his expense.

54. On being asked about the number of cases where workers were not given any employment and were left in the lurch in foreign countries during the last two years and the number of cases where the Protector General of Emigrants got the concerned RA to get the workers repatriated on his expense. The Committee further asked the Ministry about instances where the Bank guarantee of the RA was forfeited to pay for repatriation. The Ministry responded to the queries of the Committee as under:

“As per the record available, there were 62 workers who faced such hardship during the year 2005. During the years 2005, 451 workers have been repatriated at the expense of the recruiting agents. There were instances where the Bank Guarantee amounting to Rs. 3 lakhs each of the three RA’s viz. M/s. Vaishak International, Mumbai, M/s Kingdom Enterprises, Mumbai and M/s High Speed Travels, Mumbai were revoked to pay for repatriation of workers.”

55. The Committee note that the Ministry intend to amend the Emigration Act as the existing provisions in the Emigration Act, 1983 are not sufficient enough to protect the interests of the emigrant workers.

The Committee are of the view that the existing section 24 of the Emigration Act, 1983 which provides for mandatory imprisonment for a minimum period of six months and a minimum fine of Rs. 1,000/- in respect of agencies engaged in illegal recruitment is merely a pittance and is not in proportion to the crime illegal recruiters commits. The fact that during the years 2004 and 2005 alone, 451 workers were left in the lurch by the recruiting agencies underscores the need to amend the Act. The Ministry must incorporate stringent punishment and harsher penalties for the illegal recruitment agencies. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Act should be amended to tighten the emigration rule by making the penal provisions harsher to control illegal recruitments. The Committee further desire that the Amendment Bill should be introduced in Parliament by the monsoon session after changing the necessary provisions in the Act.

(Recommendation No. 5)

56. The Committee observe that there has been a consistent and steady increase in the labour outflow from India which requires emigration clearance from the year 2001. The Committee are of the view that only 8 offices of Protectors of Emigrants may not be sufficient to process emigration clearance for persons emigrating for employment abroad. The Committee, therefore, would like the Ministry to explore the possibility of opening more offices of the Protector of Emigrants at places such as Lucknow, Patna, Guwahati and Ahmedabad to cater to the needs of the increasing emigrant labour.

The Committee are also of the view that the Ministry is spending substantial amount of money on account of rent for its 4 offices of Protectors of Emigrants(PoEs) which are operating from rented premises. The Committee feel that the Ministry should work towards accommodating these offices in their own building and utilize the rental money for infrastructural development of the offices. The Committee further recommend that the staff strengths in each of the offices of the PoEs should be augmented and the existing vacancies filled immediately. The Ministry should also take up, on priority basis, the project for modernizing and computerizing all emigration offices across the country to facilitate networking and sharing of datas between offices of PoEs and with Indian missions abroad. This is all the more important because in the absence of an electronic environment the proposed smart card would have no meaning. The Ministry should also start the project to streamline the emigration process during the current year.

(Recommendation No. 6)

57. The Committee are extremely concerned to note that many emigrant labourers continue to get duped by both registered and unregistered recruiting agents. The Committee find it alarming to note that there is a degree of connivance between the agents and officials of the Protectors of Emigrants. The Committee desire that the Ministry should immediately undertake vigilance measures in all the PoE offices to identify officials whose integrity may be doubtful. Officials who have been conniving with agents in cheating emigrant

workers should be accorded the most stringent punishment and criminal procedure initiated against them. The Committee note that the Ministry in this regard is thinking of certain corrective measures of scrutiny. The Committee desire that the proposed corrective measures and its resultant impact may be placed before them.

The Committee are deeply concerned about the increasing number of complaints received against the registered recruiting agents. The Committee desire that the Ministry should properly scrutinize the credentials of the Recruiting Agents before granting them license. Another issue of serious concern to the Committee is the involvement of unregistered agents in the labour rackets. The Committee are of the view that such rackets are thriving due to the lack of awareness among the public. The Ministry should therefore undertake massive publicity drive in the media to publicise names of illegal agents as well as legal agents who are involved in labour rackets so that prospective emigrant workers may not approach them for their services.

(Recommendation No. 7)

58. The Committee observed that the employment of Indian workers abroad helps to earn foreign exchange. During 2004-05 the remittances of Indian workers was over \$20 billion whereas total FDI to India was only \$3-4 billion. It is assessed that a major proportion of this is contributed by the increasing number of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers employed in the Gulf countries, Malaysia and Singapore. Despite their huge contribution,

emigrant workers are facing exploitations in different forms and the government seem to be a mute spectator to all this. The workers are agitated about poor working conditions, ill-treatment and mis-guidance by recruiting agents. The Committee also note that there was a big demonstration in Dubai recently, in which workers complained that they were not getting what was promised to them. Sizeable number of Indian workers are thus exploited both in India and abroad. The Committee feel that the Ministry should initiate to get labour agreement signed with countries where there are large number of Indian workers in order to put a check to the exploitation of Indian workers. The Committee also desire that the draft labour agreement under consideration with Kuwait and Malaysia should be pursued strongly so that an agreement can be reached with both countries. The Committee further desire that the Ministry should also pursue with countries particularly in the Gulf region for labour agreement so that Indian workers can be protected from further exploitation.

In an attempt to protect the vulnerable workers from exploitation the Ministry has been saying that they would introduce an electronic emigration card/a smart card which will contain all details pertaining to the worker. The smart card project, however, is yet to be started. The chairman of the Semi Conductor Ltd. (SCL), the PSU entrusted with executing the smart card project, had expressed some difficulty in executing this project. The Committee regret to note of the delay in implementing this project. Now that SCL will not be able to execute the project, the Committee desire that the Ministry should


immediately look for another company which has the technology and capability to execute the project. The Committee want that the Ministry must speed up the process of issuing smart cards to emigrant workers.

(Recommendation No. 8)

Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana(PBBY)

59. The Committee note from the Annual Report (2005-06) that the PBBY, 2003 has now been upgraded as the PBBY, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers. The PBBY, 2006 has been notified on 25.01.2006 and it has come into effect from 01.02.2006.

60. Elaborating further on the PBBY, 2006, the Secretary, MOIA stated during evidence that:

“This scheme came into existence in the year 2003. It was, in fact, notified in 2003. This provided the highlights of this scheme. We were able to rope in six Indian insurance companies into the scheme. The salient features of this were after competition, the initial premium which was at Rs. 1000 per person was brought down to Rs. 400. We have already insured 5 lakh people in the Gulf. In the event of death or in the event of circumstances of very serious injury compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs would flow to them under the revised scheme of 2006 while Rs. 2 lakhs was payable under the 2003 scheme 

This year, in February, we have improved on the scheme. The amount of Rs. 2 lakhs has been raised to Rs. 5 lakhs under the new yojana of 2006. The amount payable either of grievous injury or death has been raised from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs. We are also negotiating in this regard and we are about to give a direction to these insurance companies. At a meeting scheduled tomorrow we will try and bring if possible those under the old scheme of 2003 within the purview of 2006 scheme by paying a little extra premium.”

61. The Annual Report also mentions that, an additional cover of Rs. 25,000 for the legal expenses incurred by the emigrants in connection with their employment has also been included.

62. The salient features of the PBBY, 2006 are listed below:

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006 provides for an insurance cover of a minimum sum of Rs. 5.00 lakhs payable to the nominee/legal heir in the event of death or permanent disability of any Indian emigrant who goes abroad for employment purpose after obtaining emigration clearance from the concerned Protector of Emigrants (POE).
- In the case of death, besides the cost of transporting the dead body, the cost incurred on the one-way airfare of one Attendant shall also be reimbursed by the Insurance Company.
- If a worker is not received by the employer on his arrival to the destination abroad or there is any substantive change in Employment Contract to his

disadvantage or if the employment is pre-maturely terminated within the period of employment for no fault of the emigrant, the Insurance Company shall reimburse one way economy class airfare provided the grounds of repatriation are certified by the concerned Indian Mission/Post.

- In cases where the repatriation is arranged by the Indian Mission/Post, the Insurance Company shall re-imburse the actual expenses to the concerned Indian Mission/Post.
- The Insured person shall be reimbursed actual one way economy class airfare by the Insurance Company if he falls sick or is declared medically unfit to commence or continue working and the service contract is terminated by the Foreign Employer within twelve months of taking the insurance.
- The Insurance Policy shall be valid for a minimum period of two years or the actual period of contract, whichever is longer.
- The Insurance Policy shall also provide medical cover of a minimum of Rs. 50,000/- as cash-less hospitalization and/or reimbursement of actual medical expenses of the insured emigrant workers on grounds of accidental injuries and/or sickness/ailments/diseases occurring during the period of insurance whether in India or in the country of his employment.

- An insured person shall be covered for a minimum sum of Rs. 25,000/- in connection with the legal expenses incurred by him in any litigation relating to his/her employment.
- The Insurance Policy shall also provide maternity benefits, subject to a minimum cover of Rs. 20,000/- in case of women emigrants. In case of medical treatment in the country of employment, the maternity benefits would be provided if the requisite documents are certified by the concerned Indian Mission/Post.
- The family of emigrant worker in India consisting of spouse and two dependent children up to twenty one years of age shall be entitled to hospitalization cover in the event of death or permanent disability of the insured person for a maximum amount of Rs. 25,000/- per annum. The Insurance Companies shall charge fair and reasonable premium. Service tax will be charged as applicable.

63. The Committee are happy to note that Ministry has upgraded the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana(PBBY), 2003 as the PBBY, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers by raising the insurance amount from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs. The Committee are also happy to note that the Ministry is planning to bring those insured under the old scheme within the purview of the new scheme. The Committee also share the view that all those insured under the old scheme should be covered under the new scheme. The

Committee however feel that they should not be charged any extra premium as that might act as a deterrent for subscription. The Committee are also of the view that subscription to this scheme should be made compulsory for all emigrant workers so that in case of any exigencies they will have something to fall back upon. To this end, the Committee feel that the scheme should be widely publicized among emigrant workers by highlighting its benefits.

(Recommendation No. 9)

Overseas Centers

64. The Committee note from the Annual Report (2005-06) that the proposal of the Ministry to establish overseas centers for Indian workers abroad is awaiting approval of Government. The overseas centers is expected to be operational by October 2006.

65. On this issue during the evidence, the Secretary, MOIA, informed the Committee as follows:

“At the moment the matter is before the Committee of Secretaries and we intend to create one in the Gulf, one in Malaysia and one in the USA. In the Gulf we could position it at United Arab Emirates where we have the largest complement of our workers or at Oman where it may be cheaper to establish.”

66. During the course of evidence, the Committee pointed out that ICCR also has center overseas and is opening new center. The Committee asked whether there is any type of co-ordination or consultation between MOIA and the ICCR with regard to Overseas Centers. In reply, the Secretary, MOIA submitted that:

“In respect of Overseas Centres we have not had any consultation with the ICCR, because their objectives are different.”

67. The Committee note that the Ministry propose to set up three overseas centres for Indian workers in the Gulf, Malaysia and U.S. The Committee also note that the proposal is awaiting approval of the Government and are expected to be operational by October 2006. The Committee feel that this is a very important step in the right direction to help the overseas Indians by way of providing guidance and counselling to them. During the examination of DFG(2005-06) the Ministry informed the Committee about their intention to create posts abroad. The Committee had accordingly observed also in their earlier Report (6th Report, 14th Lok Sabha) that this was a much-felt need to help Overseas Indians as there have not so far been any reciprocal gesture from the government side. The Committee had also recommended that such centres should be created within the time frame then set out by the Ministry. The Committee, however, regret to note that there have not been any follow up action by the Ministry in this regard. Now that the proposal has again come up, the Committee desire that the Ministry should stick to the new time frame of

setting up the centres in Gulf, Malaysia & U.S. by October, 2006. The Committee further desire that the centres should be adequately managed by persons who are experts in the field of economics, investments and law.

(Recommendation No. 10)

G. SCHEMES & INITIATIVES

Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme

68. The Committee note from the Annual Report(2005-06) of the Ministry that the Overseas Citizenship of India(OCI) scheme was operational w.e.f. 2nd December, 2005. OCI has been introduced by statute as a new category of citizenship to facilitate life long visa, free travel and certain economic, educational and cultural benefits. This is not to be construed as 'dual citizenship' since it does not confer political rights.

69. On the issue of OCI scheme the Committee wanted to know whether the Government is also considering granting of voting rights to OCI. To this, the Ministry replied in the negative.

70. The Committee further enquired about the benefits to which an OCI is entitled to and the number of persons who have already been granted/applied for OCI till date.

71. The Ministry in a written submission responded as under:

“The OCIs are entitled for following benefits:

- Multiple entries, multi-purpose, life-long visa to visit India.
- Exemption from reporting to police authorities for any length of stay in India.
- Parity with NRIs in financial, economic and educational fields except in the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties.

Eligibility to apply for grant of Indian citizenship under section 5(1)(g) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, if he/she is registered as OCI for five years and has been residing in India for one year continuously out of the five years before making the application. The applicant has to surrender his foreign citizenship (nationality) on acquisition of Indian citizenship.

- Any further benefits to OCIs will be notified by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) under Section 7B(1) of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

As of 14th March 2006, 6423 applications have been received and 6264 OCI documents have been granted.”

72. The Committee are pleased to note that the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme has become operational w.e.f. 2nd December, 2005. The Committee also note that the OCI scheme has been introduced by statute as a new category of citizenship to facilitate life long visa, free travel and certain economic, educational and cultural benefits. The popularity of the scheme can be gauged from the fact that within three months of its operation, 6264 OCI documents have been granted. The Committee however regret to note that the question of granting of voting rights to OCI is not at all being considered. The Committee are of the view that the old rigid notion of nationality no longer

works in a global scenario with a fluid and mobile workforce. Keeping this in mind, the Committee in their earlier Report (6th Report, 14th Lok Sabha) have recommended that the Ministry must seriously consider and explore the feasibility of extending the benefits of voting right to Overseas Citizens of India. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the Ministry in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice should explore the possibility of granting voting rights to overseas citizens of India.

(Recommendation No. 11)

H. PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS (PBD)

73. The Committee note that the outlay for PBD celebration has been increased from Rs. 4 crores during 2005-06 to Rs. 6 crores during 2006-07. Thus, the Ministry was asked to furnish the reasons for increasing the outlay for PBD celebration from Rs. 4 crore to Rs. 6 crore.

74. The Ministry in a written submission stated as under:

“The first three PBDs were organized with FICCI as institutional partner. The fourth PBD is the one, which was organized by the Ministry fully on its own. The actual budget outflow for PBD 2006 was under Rs. 3 crores taking into consideration the revenue generated, thus reducing the budget outflow from earlier PBDs. The intention of the Ministry is to make PBD self-sustaining over a period of time.”

75. When asked about the assessment of the Ministry about the fourth PBD, the Ministry responded as under:

“The Ministry’s assessment is that the Fourth PBD held in January 2006 could be rated as a success in the conscious progression towards emphasizing the content and outcomes of the conference rather than a mere form or participation. The highlights include:

- Twenty sessions on a wide and inclusive range of topics with an impressive array of speakers from India and overseas;
- Many topics and themes discussed for the first time, such as gender, political discourse, knowledge networks, media, etc;
- Commitment on Overseas Citizenship of India redeemed with the symbolic handing over of the first two OCI documents by the PM. Over 6000 OCI documents have been since printed and dispatched.
- Importance of the Overseas Indian Worker (OIW) acknowledged and a package for them including a revamped Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) launched effective from 1st February 2006;
- Voting rights for Indian citizens who are away from their normal area of residence on account of employment, education or otherwise have been approved and a bill on this has been introduced in the Parliament;
- Integrated electronic remittance portal to be linked to the website of MOIA launched and is functional from Doha. Roll out plan in respect of other countries will be operational during the next financial year.
- Under the MOU signed with the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), work on basic health and emergency services in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar is set to commence in April 2006.

- Idea of Diaspora Knowledge Networks (DKN) and Communities of Interest (COI) presented and follow up action is being undertaken.
- Overseas Indian, the in-house journal of the Ministry launched in five languages, and its e-version as also three more language editions have since been launched in February.

A National Consultation on Marriages to Overseas Indians was organized on 18th February. Guidance booklet to be launched in April. Action plans for sensitization and publicity as also help lines and support networks drawn up. Gender cell to be set up in the Ministry.”

76. During the PBD-2006, interactive sessions were held with several state Governments and the Ministry was asked to furnish details and outcome of the discussions held with the state Governments. The Ministry was also asked whether any participation fees was charged from the states for participating in the interactive sessions.

77. Responding to the queries of the Committee, the Ministry responded as under:

“(i) The Chief Ministers/Leaders of the State Delegations were given opportunities to address the delegates in the Plenary Session. The second day of PBD 2006 was kept for interactive sessions with the States. Five key issues, namely fiscal reforms, labour reforms, agriculture, urban management and regulatory framework for investment. State representatives could have one-to-one sessions and assess their own

potential for development and obtaining foreign investment. The idea of an Overseas Investment Promotion Union promoted by MOIA in coordination with Apex industry as well as various State Governments was discussed and was well received.

(ii) Rs. 10 lakhs was charged from each participating State which enabled them to take part in the Plenary Session, send five delegates to the plenary and the Interactive Sessions and also participate in the exhibition organized during the occasion.”

78. The Committee note that the fourth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas(PBD) was organized by the Ministry in Hyderabad from 7-9 January 2006 with Andhra Pradesh as the partner State. The Committee also note that the outlay for PBD celebration has been increased from Rs. 4 crore in 2005-2006 to Rs. 6 crore in 2006-07. The Committee further note that in the assessment of the Ministry, the fourth PBD could be rated as a success in the conscious progression towards emphasizing the content and outcome of the conference rather than a mere form of participation. The Committee have also attended the conference and were satisfied with the overall arrangements made in Hyderabad except for some minor shortcomings. The Committee have noticed the absence of viable arrangements made for receiving and guiding delegates from abroad to the venue of the conference. The Committee feel that there should have been a cell positioned at various places such as places of stay of delegates and meeting venues and preferably under one roof to help and guide them. The Committee

desire that the Ministry must take care of these shortcomings in the next edition of PBD.

The Committee also note that interactive sessions were held with States on five key issues viz. Fiscal Reforms, Labour Reforms, Agriculture, Urban Management and Regulatory Framework for Investment. The idea of an overseas investment promotion union promoted by MOIA in coordination with apex industry as well as various State Governments was also discussed and was well received. The Committee desire that the Ministry should follow up on the key issues that were discussed in the interactive sessions so that some concrete steps can be taken further during the ensuing year.

(Recommendation No. 12)

NEW DELHI
5th May, 2006

Vaisakha 15, 1928(Saka)

DR.LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY,

*Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs*

**MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON
4th April, 2006**

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1730 hrs.

Present

Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey – Chairman

Members

Lok Sabha

2. Shri P.C. Gaddigoudar
3. Shri S.K. Kharventhan
4. Shri Nikhil Kumar
5. Shri Somabhai Patel
6. Dr. (Col.) Dhani Ram Shandil
7. Shri Saleem Iqbal Shervani
8. Shri Madhu Goud Yashki
9. Shri Suresh Prabhu

Rajya Sabha

10. Smt. Prema Cariappa
11. Dr. Karan Singh
12. Shri Jana Krishnamurthy K

Secretariat

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Additional Secretary
2. Shri U.S. Saxena - Director
3. Shri Ashok Balwani - Under Secretary

Witnesses (Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs)

<u>Sl. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>		<u>Designation</u>
1.	Shri R. Narayanaswami	-	Secretary
2.	Shri G. Gurucharan	-	Joint Secretary (FS)
3.	Shri Malay Mishra	-	Joint Secretary (Diaspora)
4.	Shri R.K. Singh	-	Protector General of Emigrants
5.	Smt. Sandhya Shukla	-	Director (SS)

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members of the Committee and representatives of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to the sitting of the Committee.

3. The Committee then took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs on the various points arising out of the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for the year 2006-2007 and the replies to the List of Points by the Ministry. The representatives of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs replied to the queries made by the Members.

The verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX-II

MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON 12th May, 2006

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1630 hrs.

PRESENT

Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey – Chairman

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Somabhai Patel
3. Dr. (Col.) Dhani Ram Shandil
4. Shri Saleem Iqbal Shervani
5. Shri Damodar Barku Shingada
6. Shri Madhu Goud Yashki

Rajya Sabha

7. Dr. Karan Singh
8. Shri Jana Krishnamurthy K
9. Shri Arjun Kumar Sengupta

Secretariat

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Additional Secretary
2. Shri U.S. Saxena - Director
3. Shri Ashok Balwani - Under Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed Members to the sitting of the Committee.

3. After that, the Committee took up for consideration the draft 10th Report (14th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for the year 2006-2007. The Chairman invited the Members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report. The Members offered minor modifications.

4. XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX

5. The Committee desired that modifications suggested by the Members be suitably incorporated in the body of the Report.

6. The Committee then adopted the draft Reports and authorized the Chairman to finalise the Reports and present the same to Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX-III

STATEMENT OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sl. No.	Para No.	Ministry	Observations/Recommendations
1.	20	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee observed that Rs. 7 crore was allocated at BE stage in 2004-05 which was enhanced to Rs. 10 crore at RE stage. However the actual expenditure (Rs. 6.16 crore) was less than what was projected at BE and RE stage. In sharp contrast, the allocation made at BE stage during 2005-06 was Rs. 35 crore which was reduced to Rs. 19.10 crore at RE stage. The projected actual expenditure for the year 2005-06, according to the Ministry, is likely to be Rs. 18 crore, which again is less than the allocation made at BE and RE stage. Despite the Ministry not having been able to spend their budgetary allocations during the last two years, the Budgetary allocation of the Ministry during BE (2006-07) stage is Rs. 38 crore. It is also observed that there has been huge variation between BE and RE during the last two years.</p> <p>The Committee are, therefore, of the view that the Ministry have not been able to make a realistic projection of their budgetary requirements over the last two years as there have been substantial unspent balances and re-appropriation of funds from one head to another head. The Committee recommend that the Ministry must make the projection as realistic as possible and spend funds properly and judiciously within the allocation.</p>
2.	21	Overseas Indian	The Committee are appalled to note

		Affairs	<p>that even almost after two years the Ministry is still inadequately staffed. The Committee feel that no concrete steps have been taken by the Ministry in the last one year to fill up the vacant posts. The fact that of the 63 posts that have already been created only 24 are in position, is a telling evidence of the lethargic approach of the Ministry in filling up the vacant posts.</p> <p>The Committee note that lack of staff has apparently been the reason for many of the planned activities getting deferred or not gaining momentum.</p> <p>The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take some concrete steps towards filling up the already created posts immediately so that the proposed agenda/activities could be taken up during the ensuing year.</p>
3.	27	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee are pleased to note that the Ministry of Urban Development in addition to plot no.15A & 15B has also allotted plot no. 15D in Chanakyapuri to MOIA for construction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra(PBK) vide order dated 24.02.06. The Committee, however, regret to note that physical possession of these plots are yet to be handed over to the Ministry. The Ministry informed the Committee that there is a little bit of unauthorized structure that are to be removed and expects to get possession of the land by the end of April, 2006. The Committee desire that the Ministry should take immediate possession of the land and take steps to engage suitable consultants for preparation of detailed project report and implementation plan. A time bound programme may be drawn up for completion of the project which</p>

			may be placed before the Committee. The Committee further desire that they may be informed about the progress made in this regard from time to time.
4.	32	Overseas Indian Affairs	The Committee note that a proposal of Rs. 2 crore has been made during BE 2006-07 under the head 'Advertising & Publicity'. The Ministry has accordingly drawn up a media plan for the year 2006-07 for publicity of the Ministry's various plans & schemes. The Committee appreciate that the campaign would be carried out both in the national and international media both in print and electronic. The Committee are of the view that the Advertising and Publicity efforts of the Ministry will play a very vital role in popularizing the proposed plans & schemes and their success would greatly depend on how effectively they are publicized. The Committee are of the view that intense publicity campaign should particularly be made to create awareness on issues related to marriages to overseas Indians. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the guidance booklet and other documentation that are proposed to be brought out should be made available in regional languages for better sensitization, especially among women. The Committee also want the Ministry to widely disseminate among overseas Indians information regarding matters of interest to Overseas Indians such as investment opportunities, scholarship schemes, promotion of Diaspora knowledge network, promotion of electronic remittance facility etc.
5.	55	Overseas Indian	The Committee note that the Ministry

		Affairs	<p>intend to amend the Emigration Act as the existing provisions in the Emigration Act, 1983 are not sufficient enough to protect the interests of the emigrant workers.</p> <p>The Committee are of the view that the existing section 24 of the Emigration Act, 1983 which provides for mandatory imprisonment for a minimum period of six months and a minimum fine of Rs. 1,000/- in respect of agencies engaged in illegal recruitment is merely a pittance and is not in proportion to the crime illegal recruiters commits. The fact that during the years 2004 and 2005 alone, 451 workers were left in the lurch by the recruiting agencies underscores the need to amend the Act. The Ministry must incorporate stringent punishment and harsher penalties for the illegal recruitment agencies. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Act should be amended to tighten the emigration rule by making the penal provisions harsher to control illegal recruitments. The Committee further desire that the Amendment Bill should be introduced in Parliament by the monsoon session after changing the necessary provisions in the Act.</p>
6.	56	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee observe that there has been a consistent and steady increase in the labour outflow from India which requires emigration clearance from the year 2001. The Committee are of the view that only 8 offices of Protectors of Emigrants may not be sufficient to process emigration clearance for persons emigrating for employment abroad. The Committee, therefore, would like the Ministry to explore the possibility of opening more offices of the Protector of Emigrants at places such as Lucknow, Patna, Guwahati</p>

			<p>and Ahmedabad to cater to the needs of the increasing emigrant labour.</p> <p>The Committee are also of the view that the Ministry is spending substantial amount of money on account of rent for its 4 offices of Protectors of Emigrants(PoEs) which are operating from rented premises. The Committee feel that the Ministry should work towards accommodating these offices in their own building and utilize the rental money for infrastructural development of the offices. The Committee further recommend that the staff strengths in each of the offices of the PoEs should be augmented and the existing vacancies filled immediately. The Ministry should also take up, on priority basis, the project for modernizing and computerizing all emigration offices across the country to facilitate networking and sharing of datas between offices of PoEs and with Indian missions abroad. This is all the more important because in the absence of an electronic environment the proposed smart card would have no meaning. The Ministry should also start the project to streamline the emigration process during the current year.</p>
7.	57	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee are extremely concerned to note that many emigrant labourers continue to get duped by both registered and unregistered recruiting agents. The Committee find it alarming to note that there is a degree of connivance between the agents and officials of the Protectors of Emigrants. The Committee desire that the Ministry should immediately undertake vigilance measures in all the PoE offices to identify officials whose integrity may be doubtful.</p>

			<p>Officials who have been conniving with agents in cheating emigrant workers should be accorded the most stringent punishment and criminal procedure initiated against them. The Committee note that the Ministry in this regard is thinking of certain corrective measures of scrutiny. The Committee desire that the proposed corrective measures and its resultant impact may be placed before them.</p> <p>The Committee are deeply concerned about the increasing number of complaints received against the registered recruiting agents. The Committee desire that the Ministry should properly scrutinize the credentials of the Recruiting Agents before granting them license. Another issue of serious concern to the Committee is the involvement of unregistered agents in the labour rackets. The Committee are of the view that such rackets are thriving due to the lack of awareness among the public. The Ministry should therefore undertake massive publicity drive in the media to publicise names of illegal agents as well as legal agents who are involved in labour rackets so that prospective emigrant workers may not approach them for their services.</p>
8.	58	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee observed that the employment of Indian workers abroad helps to earn foreign exchange. During 2004-05 the remittances of Indian workers was over \$20 billion whereas total FDI to India was only \$3-4 billion. It is assessed that a major proportion of this is contributed by the increasing number of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers employed in the Gulf countries, Malaysia and Singapore. Despite their huge contribution, emigrant workers are</p>

			<p>facing exploitations in different forms and the government seem to be a mute spectator to all this. The workers are agitated about poor working conditions, ill-treatment and misguidance by recruiting agents. The Committee also note that there was a big demonstration in Dubai recently, in which workers complained that they were not getting what was promised to them. Sizeable number of Indian workers are thus exploited both in India and abroad. The Committee feel that the Ministry should initiate to get labour agreement signed with countries where there are large number of Indian workers in order to put a check to the exploitation of Indian workers. The Committee also desire that the draft labour agreement under consideration with Kuwait and Malaysia should be pursued strongly so that an agreement can be reached with both countries. The Committee further desire that the Ministry should also pursue with countries particularly in the Gulf region for labour agreement so that Indian workers can be protected from further exploitation.</p> <p>In an attempt to protect the vulnerable workers from exploitation the Ministry has been saying that they would introduce an electronic emigration card/a smart card which will contain all details pertaining to the worker. The smart card project, however, is yet to be started. The chairman of the Semi Conductor Ltd. (SCL), the PSU entrusted with executing the smart card project, had expressed some difficulty in executing this project. The Committee regret to note of the delay in implementing this project. Now that SCL will not be able to execute the project, the Committee desire that the</p>
--	--	--	--

			Ministry should immediately look for another company which has the technology and capability to execute the project. The Committee want that the Ministry must speed up the process of issuing smart cards to emigrant workers.
9.	63	Overseas Indian Affairs	The Committee are happy to note that Ministry has upgraded the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana(PBBY), 2003 as the PBBY, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers by raising the insurance amount from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs. The Committee are also happy to note that the Ministry is planning to bring those insured under the old scheme within the purview of the new scheme. The Committee also share the view that all those insured under the old scheme should be covered under the new scheme. The Committee however feel that they should not be charged any extra premium as that might act as a deterrent for subscription. The Committee are also of the view that subscription to this scheme should be made compulsory for all emigrant workers so that in case of any exigencies they will have something to fall back upon. To this end, the Committee feel that the scheme should be widely publicized among emigrant workers by highlighting its benefits.
10.	67	Overseas Indian Affairs	The Committee note that the Ministry propose to set up three overseas centres for Indian workers in the Gulf, Malaysia and U.S. The Committee also note that the proposal is awaiting approval of the Government and are expected to be operational by October 2006. The Committee feel that this is a very important step in the right direction to help the overseas Indians

			<p>by way of providing guidance and counselling to them. During the examination of DFG(2005-06) the Ministry informed the Committee about their intention to create posts abroad. The Committee had accordingly observed also in their earlier Report (6th Report, 14th Lok Sabha) that this was a much-felt need to help Overseas Indians as there have not so far been any reciprocal gesture from the government side. The Committee had also recommended that such centres should be created within the time frame then set out by the Ministry. The Committee, however, regret to note that there have not been any follow up action by the Ministry in this regard. Now that the proposal has again come up, the Committee desire that the Ministry should stick to the new time frame of setting up the centres in Gulf, Malaysia & U.S. by October, 2006. The Committee further desire that the centres should be adequately managed by persons who are experts in the field of economics, investments and law.</p>
11.	72	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee are pleased to note that the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme has become operational w.e.f. 2nd December, 2005. The Committee also note that the OCI scheme has been introduced by statute as a new category of citizenship to facilitate life long visa, free travel and certain economic, educational and cultural benefits. The popularity of the scheme can be gauged from the fact that within three months of its operation, 6264 OCI documents have been granted. The Committee however regret to note that the question of granting of voting rights to OCI is not at all being considered. The Committee are of the view that the</p>

			<p>old rigid notion of nationality no longer works in a global scenario with a fluid and mobile workforce. Keeping this in mind, the Committee in their earlier Report (6th Report, 14th Lok Sabha) have recommended that the Ministry must seriously consider and explore the feasibility of extending the benefits of voting right to Overseas Citizens of India. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the Ministry in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice should explore the possibility of granting voting rights to overseas citizens of India.</p>
12.	78	Overseas Indian Affairs	<p>The Committee note that the fourth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas(PBD) was organized by the Ministry in Hyderabad from 7-9 January 2006 with Andhra Pradesh as the partner State. The Committee also note that the outlay for PBD celebration has been increased from Rs. 4 crore in 2005-2006 to Rs. 6 crore in 2006-07. The Committee further note that in the assessment of the Ministry, the fourth PBD could be rated as a success in the conscious progression towards emphasizing the content and outcome of the conference rather than a mere form of participation. The Committee have also attended the conference and were satisfied with the overall arrangements made in Hyderabad except for some minor shortcomings. The Committee have noticed the absence of viable arrangements made for receiving and guiding delegates from abroad to the venue of the conference. The Committee feel that there should have been a cell positioned at various places such as places of stay of delegates and meeting venues and preferably under one roof to help and guide them. The Committee desire that the Ministry</p>

			<p>must take care of these shortcomings in the next edition of PBD.</p> <p>The Committee also note that interactive sessions were held with States on five key issues viz. Fiscal Reforms, Labour Reforms, Agriculture, Urban Management and Regulatory Framework for Investment. The idea of an overseas investment promotion union promoted by MOIA in coordination with apex industry as well as various State Governments was also discussed and was well received. The Committee desire that the Ministry should follow up on the key issues that were discussed in the interactive sessions so that some concrete steps can be taken further during the ensuing year.</p>
--	--	--	---