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**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2004-2005)**

FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*[ACTION TAKEN ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE THIRTEENTH
REPORT (13TH Lok Sabha) ON "WORKING OF INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL
RELATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CULTURAL CENTRES ABROAD"]*

THIRD REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2004/Agrahayana, 1926 (Saka)

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Lok sabha) ON "WORKING OF INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CULTURAL CENTRES ABROAD"]*

***Presented to Lok Sabha on 21st December, 2004
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 21st December, 2004***



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2004/Agrahayana, 1926 (Saka)

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS (2004-2005)**

Chairman - Shri 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.Gaddigouda
7. Shri Vinod Khanna
8. Shri S.K. Kharventhan
9. Shri Narendra Kushwaha
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11. Shri Dinsha Patel
12. Shri Somabhai Patel
13. Shri Sebastian Paul
14. Smt. Ranjit Ranjan
15. Shri P .A. Sangma
16. Dr. (Col) Dhani Ram Shandil
17. Shri Saleem Iqbal Shervani
18. Shri Damodar Barku Shingada
19. Shri Madhu Goud Yashki
20. Shri Suresh Prabhu
21. Shri George Fernandes*

MEMBERS
RAJYA SABHA

22. Shri P. K. Maheshwari
23. Smt. Prema Cariappa
24. Dr. Karan Singh
25. Shri Jana Krishnamurthy K.
26. Shri Arun Shourie
27. Smt. S.G. Indira
28. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
29. Shri S.M. Laljan Basha
30. Shri Fali S. Nariman
31. Dr. Mahendra Prasad

SECRETARIAT

Shri S.K. Sharma	-	Joint Secretary
Shri U.S.Saxena	-	Director
Shri Shiv Kumar	-	Under Secretary

* Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee ceased to a Member of the Committee consequent upon his resignation w.e.f. 13.8.2004 Shri George Fernandes has been nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 1.10.2004

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf, present this 3rd Report (14th Lok Sabha) on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the 13th Report (13th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on "Working of Indian Council for Cultural Relations with special reference to Cultural Centres Abroad".

2. The 13th Report was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on 23rd December, 2003. 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 (2004-2005) at their sitting held on 15th December, 2004. 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 13th Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (13th Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix-II.

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

NEW DELHI;

December, 2004/Agrahayana, 1926 (Saka)

Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs

CHAPTER – I

REPORT

This report of the Committee deal with the action taken by Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the 13th report of Standing Committee on External Affairs on “Working of Indian Council for Cultural Relations with special reference to Cultural Centres Abroad”. The 13th report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 23rd December, 2003. It contained 38 Recommendations/Observations.

2. Action taken notes on all the observations/recommendations contained in the Report have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs These have been categorized as follows:-

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

Recommendations Sl. Nos. 2, 9,11,12,16,17,21,24,26,27,28,29,30,31, 32, 33, 35
Total – 17
Chapter - II

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

Recommendations Sl. Nos. 7,8,14, 22
Total – 4
Chapter – III

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

Recommendations Sl. Nos. 1,3,4,5,6,10,13,15,18,19,20,23,25,34,36,37,38
Total – 17
Chapter – IV

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

Nil
Total – Nil
Chapter-V

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

A. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Recommendation No. 1(Para No.1.6)

4. During the examination of the subject, the Committee had visited the Headquarters of ICCR and its regional Cultural Centres in various parts of the country. The Committee felt that the ICCR had not quite fulfilled the vision and mission with which it was launched 53 years ago. Although the Committee appreciated the work ICCR was doing, yet keeping in view the increasing role of cultural diplomacy, an extensive campaign needed to be done through media and other sources to spread the rich Indian cultural heritage all over the world, which would not only strengthen our diplomatic relations with other countries but also expand the horizon of our great artistes and exponents.

5. Reply of the Government is as under

“ICCR has consistently endeavoured to fulfill the mandate of the organization for promoting cultural relations and international understanding since its inception in 1950. The range and scope of its multi-faceted activities has progressively been increased. Starting from a budget of meagre amount, the Council’s budget during the financial year 2003-2004 is Rs. 54.50 crores. This reflects the increase in the level of the Council’s activities which are designed to fulfil this mandate.

6. Apart from the traditional activities of the ICCR, which the Hon’ble Committee is aware of, the Council has embarked in recent times on innovative programmes such as promoting human resource development, specially in the field of Information Technology, in Cambodia. A proposal to establish a prominent Museum of Asian Textiles accompanied with a training component is also being implemented”.

Recommendation No. 3 (Para No. 2.4)

7. During the Examination of subject, the Committee had expressed that the cultural diplomacy is a powerful tool for furthering diplomatic interests in commercial, political and strategic fields. Keeping this important aspect in view, the Committee were of the opinion that the ICCR was doing a good job in the field of cultural diplomacy. But there was need to further increase the scope and

intensity of its activities with innovative policies and programmes in the ever-changing circumstances. Its policies and programmes would have to be specific, pointed and purposeful. The Committee felt that ICCR's approach was conventional and unprofessional and as such, the ICCR was not able to go beyond propagating the stereotyped image of our country. The Committee impressed upon the Government to accord cultural diplomacy the highest importance. Since ICCR was the nodal agency under the Ministry of External Affairs for cultural promotions, the Committee had urged the ICCR to intensify its efforts in external projection. Apart from our efforts in sustaining our traditional ties with some specific Asian countries, the ICCR should widen its area of activity and strive hard to achieve a stronger cultural presence all over the world.

8. The Ministry in their reply have stated as under:

“ICCR has 15 Cultural Centres in different parts of the world for promoting its aims and objectives. The most recent Centre established was in Dushanbe (2002). Financial and administrative approval for obtaining two additional Centres and a Sub-Centre has been obtained. Accordingly, Cultural Centres in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Suva (Fiji) along with a Sub-Centre in Laotoko (Fiji) are in the process of being opened. Proposals for opening additional Cultural Centres in other parts of the world including USA, China, Iran etc. are being considered. In so far as activities are concerned, the Council is diversifying the range of its activities to project contemporary trends in Indian culture. Innovative projects like establishing Computer Kiosks in Cambodia for imparting IT education are also being undertaken.”

9. The Committee feel that the Ministry have not taken their recommendation in its proper perspective. While the Committee have been insisting on strengthening our cultural relations and spreading our rich cultural heritage worldwide, ICCR is merely working on few countries without any visible plan of action to this effect. The Committee are of the view that establishing a computer Kiosk for spreading IT Education, opening a museum of Asian textiles and cultural centres in one or two countries will not suffice. The larger goal of ICCR cannot be achieved by these occasional steps. Promotion of culture is a continuous and ongoing process and hence ICCR needs to engage itself into the larger perspective of this continuous cultural promotion globally.

(Recommendation No.1)

10. The Committee once again wish to strongly stress on the fact that apart from consideration of proposals for opening new cultural centres in order to become an effective instrument of cultural promotion, the ICCR will have to come up with dynamic plans and novel ideas, which can widen its areas of activity such as there should be frequent cultural exchanges with our neighbouring countries as we share a common cultural heritage and political history, special thrust needs to be given to direct people to people contact through food festivals, art and crafts exhibitions, literary exchanges etc. All these can go a long way in effectively portraying our rich and composite cultural heritage.

(Recommendation No.2)

Recommendation No. 4 (Para No. 2.5)

11. The Committee were also of the opinion that it was not sufficient for the ICCR to merely draw up ambitious projects for cultural promotion. What was needed was the effective implementation of these projects. To achieve its objectives, the ICCR had to work in unison with the civil society, the Indian Diaspora who have been the strongest promoters of Indian culture in foreign countries. Therefore, the Committee strongly felt that the ICCR needed to change its mantle, reorient its activities in such a way that it was able to cope with the changing requirements in cultural diplomacy and actively involve the Indian diaspora in all its drives for cultural promotion. This way, the image of our country could be projected in a better perspective and at the same time the creative energies and the subtle strength of these people could also be utilized in the most efficient and productive manner.

12. The Ministry in their reply have stated that:

“The Council is consistently engaged in cooperating with the Indian Diaspora overseas in organizing its activities. On many occasions sponsorships are obtained from the Indian Diaspora for organizing ICCR events.”

13. The Committee in their recommendation had stated that the ICCR in order to achieve its objectives, had to work in unison with the civil society, the Indian diaspora who have been the strongest promoters of Indian culture in foreign countries. This way the image of our country could be projected in a better perspective and at the same time the creative energies and subtle strength of these people could be utilised in the most efficient

and productive manner. To this, the Ministry have replied that the Council is consistently engaged in cooperating with the Indian Diaspora overseas in organizing its activities and on many occasions sponsorships are obtained from the Indian Diaspora for organizing ICCR events. The Committee are not convinced with the reply put forward by the Ministry. The Committee feel that whatever little initiatives have been taken by ICCR to engage Indian Diaspora in its activities, these are not up to the desired level. In fact, there are many regional groups worldwide such as the Telegu Association, Marathi Association, Punjabi Association, Gujarati Association etc. which are better organised, more active in cultural promotion. These groups are doing a commendable job in the preservation of their regional cultural identity. The Committee reiterate that Ministry of External Affairs and particularly our Embassies/Missions must keep in touch with such groups. The ICCR, on its part should make much vigorous efforts to involve such groups and utilize their potential in its drive for cultural promotion.

(Recommendation No.3)

B. REGIONAL CENTRES OF ICCR

Recommendation No. 5 (Para No. 3.6)

14. The Committee noted that ICCR had planned to open more regional centers in different parts of the country viz. Jaipur, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar and North-eastern Region. However, the Committee found that certain key regions of the country like Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir had been ignored. Hardly any attention had been given to Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir who had contributed significantly to the country's culture and the latter attracts a large number of tourists. Besides, to remove the regional imbalances, certain regions needed to be strengthened.

15. The Ministry have replied that,

“The statutory bodies of the Council comprises personalities in different fields of art and culture. In order to further improve and strengthen the functioning of the Regional Centres of the Council, the Council is constituting "Advisory Committees" for each of the existing and proposed new Regional Centres. Each such Committee would comprise of people from diverse field of culture in the region and General Assembly member from the region. The Advisory Committees will give its recommendations to further strengthen the activities of

the Council. With regard to the recommendation of the Standing Committee to remove regional imbalance while opening the new regional centers, a detailed proposal would be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council.”

Recommendation No. 6 (Para No. 3.7)

16. The Committee also found that the Chief Secretary of Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa have been requested to nominate officers from the concerned State Governments with whom the Council could coordinate the opening of Regional Offices, The Committee’s hope was that the matter would be pursued earnestly with the concerned authorities and the proposed regional centers would be opened soon. The Committee also recommended that regional centers in Srinagar, Bihar and other parts of the country which had rich cultural traditions should be opened at the earliest.

17. The Ministry in their reply stated as under:

“The matter with regard to opening of new regional centers is being pursued earnestly. The Council has received positive response from the concerned State Governments for Council's proposed regional centers in the North-East and Jaipur. The Council is hopeful to receive such positive responses from the other State Governments. With regard to opening of regional centers in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country, a detailed proposal will be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council.”

18. The Committee had expressed their view that hardly any attention had been given to Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir who had contributed significantly to the country’s culture as they attract a large number of tourists. Along with the removal of regional imbalances, these regions need to be strengthened. However, the Committee are dismayed to note that the proposal to open new regional centres has not even been initiated in the last seven months and a detailed proposal is still to be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council and desire that it should be expedited.

(Recommendation No. 4)

19. The Committee are aware that States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have rich Buddhist Cultural Heritage and World famous Buddhists sites and monuments. They attract a large number of Buddhist Pilgrims and tourists from the East-Asian countries. In many Universities abroad, there

is a department of Buddhist Studies. The Committee suggest that these states have immense potential for spiritual Tourism and ICCR can encash this for intensive promotion of our diverse culture. A large number of settlers in Mauritius, South Africa, West-Indies and Suriname belonged to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and their links to their roots can also help in Cultural diplomacy. Regional Centres in these States will definitely help in achieving our goal. Similarly, opening a Regional Centre in Jammu and Kashmir will respect the sentiments of the people of that state.

(Recommendation No. 5)

20. The Committee are partially satisfied with the reply of Government that the Council is constituting "Advisory Committees" for each of the existing and proposed new cultural centres, These Advisory bodies will advise and recommend for further strengthening the activities of the Council. To the Committee, this signals a welcome development. However, at the same time, the Committee are apprehensive of the fact that these Advisory Committees may, in effect, turn into defunct advisory bodies because they might take their own sweet time to give their recommendations. Thus, the task of opening as well as strengthening the activities of the regional centres may be stretched too far. The Committee strongly recommend that this process must be completed at the earliest.

(Recommendation No. 6)

C. CULTURAL CENTRES ABROAD

Recommendation No.10 (Para No. 4.15)

21. As recommended in their 12th Report presented on 17th December, 2003 the Committee had desired that the Cultural Centre at Washington should be opened without any further delay. The Committee desired that setting up of a centre at Kathmandu should be given sincere consideration.

22. The Government has stated that,

"The proposal with regard to the premises to house the Indian Cultural Centre, Washington is being processed by the Ministry of External Affairs".

23. During the evidence on 6th November, 2003, Foreign Secretary had stated that as far as the Indian Cultural Centre in Washington was concerned, they were

on the verge of a decision. The property had been selected and negotiation was going on. If everything went according to the plan, then in the middle of January they would have this building in their own possession.

24. In this context, at the time of examination of Demands for Grants for the year 2004-2005, the Ministry had informed the Committee:

“The Ministry had purchased the property of PR’s Residence in New York after placing fund in Escrow Account. The intention was to follow a similar procedure for the purchase of the property in Washington. However, while processing this requirement, it was ruled by the Ministry of Finance that the purchase proposal be processed without resorting to Escrow Account payment. In the meantime, it was informed by the property agents handling this transaction that the seller could not wait further as the local government was taking much time in giving permission from zoning angle for the intended use of the property as a Cultural Centre.

25. Earlier, the Ministry had informed that the Property Team had also explored the possibility of development of a portion of land available in the Chancery Annexe Complex in Washington DC. This land has the potential of being developed for construction of an Auditorium and office for a Cultural Centre. A local consultancy firm has been commissioned to undertake a feasibility study for the construction of a cultural centre.

26. However, again during the course of examination of Demands for Grants, the Ministry submitted as under:

“The feasibility report of construction of auditorium and other areas for use of the India Culture Centre has revealed that only marginal addition of space would be possible through fresh construction owing to the local body regulations. As such, the Mission has been asked to look for properties with rental options. Following these developments, Mission has been asked to make a concerted, renewed effort to locate a suitable rental property in the Washington D.C. area to house the India Cultural Centre.

27. The Committee are dissatisfied and note that inspite of repeated recommendations for the last several years on the urgent need to finalise the proposal regarding the setting up of Cultural Centre in Washington, the Ministry have failed to acquire the selected property and the deal has once again slipped out from their hands. It is only due to the extremely bureaucratic, rigid and cumbersome procedures and inept handling by the Ministry that the matter has once again come back to square one. The Committee feel that there is a need to review the very working of the

Ministry to this effect so that opportunities do not continue to be lost like it happened in the present case. The Committee in their First Report (14th Lok Sabha) had also expressed their deep anguish over the lapses committed by the Ministry in establishment of Cultural Centre in Washington and recommended that the Cultural Centre in Washington should be established at the earliest. The Committee again reiterate that immediate action should be initiated on the project on top priority so that a Cultural Centre is opened in Washington at the earliest and hope that it will be in place by the end of 2005.

The Committee further desire that the process to open the Cultural Centre at Iran, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia and also in China should be expedited.

(Recommendation No. 7)

D. BUDGET OF ICCR

Recommendation No.13 (Para No. 5.6)

28. The Committee find that ICCR's budget had recorded only marginal increase over successive years while there was constant pressure on it to increase the scope and intensity of its activities. If inflationary trends were taken into account, ICCR's budget, in real terms, had been actually reduced over the last few years. It was also noted that the Council had visualized a number of innovative activities, projects and it also intends to promote more aggressively India's culture abroad and provide a better national and international profile for its activities. Furthermore, there were a number of proposals awaiting the establishment of cultural centres abroad. But the Council due to lack of additional financial resources could not take up all those projects.

29. The Government has replied as under:

“ICCR projected a revised estimate for 2003-04 for Rs. 58.86 crores as against this projection an allocation of Rs. 54.50 crores (which was the Budget Estimate figure) has been given. The net increase in actual allocation of ICCR during the two years 2002-03 and 2003-04 has been Rs. 12.88 crores which is way above the normal inflationary trends, whereas during the same period Ministry's non-plan budget allocation has been reduced in RE by Rs. 38.34 crores and Rs. 110.00 crores respectively. Additionally, MEA has also been incurring expenditure from its capital outlay on behalf of ICCR for construction/purchase of properties for use by cultural centers abroad, in addition

to payment of grants-in-aid which is not indicated separately. For the establishment of new cultural centers abroad, allocation of additional funds from Capital Outlay of the Ministry will be considered to meet ICCR's requirement for purchase/construction of cultural centers.”

30. In a written reply to a question whether non-availability of adequate fund restricted ICCR to increase its activities and programmes in the country as well as abroad, the Ministry itself had stated that the ICCR's budget recorded only marginal increase over successive years. If inflationary trends and rise in cost of living were also taken into account, ICCR's budget, in real terms, actually stood reduced over the last few years. However, subsequently in their action taken reply to the Committee's observation on budget, the Ministry of External Affairs have stated that the net increase in actual allocation of ICCR during the two years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 has been Rs. 12.88 crores which is way above the normal trends. The Committee feel that such a reply is self-contradictory and should be avoided in future.

(Recommendation No. 8)

31. The Committee note that Ministry of External Affairs have also been incurring expenditure from its capital outlay on behalf of ICCR for construction/purchase of properties for use by the cultural centres abroad, in addition to payment of grants-in-aid which is not indicated separately. The Committee further note that for the establishment of new cultural centres abroad, allocation of additional funds from capital outlay of the Ministry is to be considered by the Ministry to meet ICCR's requirement for the purchase/construction of cultural centre. The Committee expect that paucity of funds which had been a major impediment in previous years will no more be there and through this new arrangement ICCR will be able to meet its future requirements and the target set for the purchase/construction of cultural centres will be achieved without any difficulty.

(Recommendation No. 9)

Recommendation No.15 (Para No. 5.8)

32. Furthermore, the Committee had pointed out that ICCR was not working in

tandem with the civil society of various countries of the world which left it high and dry and somewhat lonely in the matter of raising resources. The Committee had no doubt that ICCR could substantially augment its resources if it will start involving the civil society globally and the Indian Diasporas in those countries. The Committee had also suggested that to reduce the budgetary constraints of the Council, the Ministry should explore the possibility of coordinating trade and culture as there were several Fortune 500 companies of Indian origin and their resources could be tapped. Greater coordination between business and culture would certainly be helpful in meeting the budgetary constraints.

33. The Government have stated in their reply that,

“Efforts are being made in this regard. Many of the reputed Hotels are giving accommodation to the Council at discounted rates for boarding/lodging of various cultural groups/distinguished visitors coming to India. A donation of Rs. 10.00 lacs was received from Jammu & Kashmir Bank during the year 2001-02 towards hosting of "International Festival of Indian Literature" at Neemrana (Haryana).”

34. The Committee note that the Ministry in general and the Council in particular have not made any progress in the matter of raising resources by working in close coordination with civil society and this keeps the Council high and dry as far as the budget is concerned. Getting mere discounts from hotels or donation of Rs. 10.00 lakh are not sufficient to achieve global objectives. The Committee are unable to understand as to why the Ministry/ ICCR are not exploring the possibilities of seeking coordination with important public and private companies of Indian origin and getting sponsorships for their cultural programmes in India and abroad to raise their resources. Even the advertisements of ICCR in Newspapers could be sponsored which will considerably reduce its financial constraints. Coordination, cooperation and intermingling of trade and culture is the order of the day and need of modern age. The Committee are of the view that in line with this trend, the Ministry should without any hesitation explore the possibility of coordinating trade and culture and benefit from it immensely. Further efforts should also be made to involve the civil society globally and Indian Diaspora in various countries in this cause. This, in the opinion of the Committee, is certainly one of the better options available to

the ICCR to overcome their budgetary constraints.

(Recommendation No. 10)

E. SCHOLARSHIP AND WELFARE OF STUDENT

Recommendation No. 18 (Para No. 6.22)

35. The Committee noted that under the scholarship programme of the Council, scholarships were offered to foreign students in different courses. It was only the foreign students who come here and not the other way round. The Committee felt that ICCR did not make any arrangement under its schemes for the Indian students who wish to go for studies in the Universities abroad. The Committee had desired that ICCR should bring under its schemes the programme of sending Indian students abroad for studies to Universities, like Harvard University and other who may, perhaps, be willing to offer a couple of scholarships for the Indian students.

36. The Government replied that "ICCR administers 16 Scholarship Schemes on behalf of various Government Departments. These Schemes provide for scholarships to be offered to foreign students. The Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development looks after work relating to Indian students studying abroad. Since our Scholarship Schemes are not linked to foreign universities, it is unlikely that they would entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students."

37. The Committee had expressed their desire that the ICCR should bring under its schemes the programme of sending Indian students abroad for studies to universities like Harvard University and others who may, perhaps, be willing to offer a couple of scholarships for the Indian students. But ICCR has stated that their scholarship schemes are not linked to the foreign universities and it is unlikely that they would entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students. The Committee are surprised to note how the ministry makes such a hypothetical assumption that foreign universities will not entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students – without practically making any efforts in approaching foreign universities in this regard. Many of the foreign universities have full-fledged Oriental Studies Divisions and Departments of Indology - imparting education of Hindi, Sanskrit and Buddhist studies etc. The Committee are of the strong opinion that ICCR/Ministry can co-

ordinate with these departments for obtaining scholarships for Indian students in foreign universities. Many Non-Resident Indians settled abroad have also been patronising and propagating Indian art/culture and music. ICCR can seek the assistance of these people for more vigorous projection of our culture abroad. The Committee further reiterate that ICCR/Ministry must make efforts to get scholarships for Indian students in foreign universities and for this purpose, if required, the help of the Ministry of Human Resource Development may also be taken.

(Recommendation No. 11)

Recommendation No. 19 (Para No. 6.23)

38. The committee were constrained to note that utilization of scholarships offered to foreign students was constantly very low, although, the ICCR had stated that it was working towards optimizing utilization of scholarships being offered. Even during the year 2003-2004 ICCR offered 1093 scholarships out of which only 606 students had joined their respective courses. The reasons cited by the ICCR for non-utilisation of scholarships, viz. decision of the scholars not to pursue studies in India after making application or to opt for some scholarship schemes in another country or the scholar's inability to pay international fare which was not covered by scholarship scheme, was not satisfactory at all. The Committee, therefore, suggest that a system should be evolved whereby if seats offered for scholarships for a particular course remain unutilized, waitlisted candidates should be offered the scholarship.

39. The Government has stated in their reply that,

“During the academic year 2003-2004 placements were offered to 779 scholars against 1093 available slots. The slots are earmarked for different countries as per specific bilateral agreements and allocations made by a Special Committee. The Council has been allocating unutilized slots from certain countries to reserve candidates of countries who have fully utilized their given slots.”

40. The Committee regret to note that the scholarship allocations meant for certain countries have not been optimally utilized. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the scholarship slots earmarked for scholars from a particular country should preferably go to that country and unutilized slots do not go to reserve candidates of other countries who

have fully utilized their given slots. For this, the Committee recommend that ICCR should evolve such a system whereby if scholarship slots offered for a particular country remain unutilized – waitlisted candidates from that country should, in the first instance, be offered the scholarships and only in the event of waitlisted candidates not being available, the unutilized slots should be allowed to go to reserved candidates of those countries who have fully utilized their given slots. Further, the Committee are of the considered opinion that the number of seats as also the amount of scholarship being offered to students from the countries having maximum number of Persons of Indian Origin need to be increased so that the number of students coming to our country go up who in turn may act as brand ambassadors for promoting Indian culture abroad.

(Recommendation No. 12)

Recommendation No. 20 (Para No. 6.24)

41. As regard the student's inability to pay international airfare, the committee find that the air fares offered had been increased from 3 to 30 for each country. The committee desired that the number of airfares being offered be increased substantially covering not only Central Asia but also other parts of the world. The Committee also expressed hope that the ICCR would take steps to provide suitable hostel facilities to foreign students and ensure their comfortable stay in the country so that they may not feel home sick and could cope with the new environment. It should also be ensured that the students receive their financial dues as per their entitlement in time. The Committee also recommend that the amount of scholarships being paid to the scholars should be reviewed biannually.

42. In reply to the recommendation of the Government had stated that, "The question of offering additional airfares to foreign scholars would be considered in the context of availability of sufficient funds. Regarding the comfort of the students, various universities have been asked to present proposals for assistance in developing hostel facilities. Special arrangements to deliver financial dues and entitlements in time have also been made. Scholarship dues were last revised by the Finance Committee in June, 2001."

43. The Ministry have stated that the question, offering additional airfares to foreign scholars would be considered in the context of availability of sufficient funds. However, the Committee feel that efforts should be made to provide some additional funds for this purpose which in

turn will go a long way to enhance our bilateral goodwill globally. The Committee reiterate that the number of airfares may be increased substantially covering central Asia as well as other parts of the world. The Committee also reiterate that the ICCR should take appropriate steps to provide suitable hostel facilities to foreign students for their comfortable stay in the country to avoid their home sickness and easy adjustment with new environment. As the Ministry have overlooked the Committee's view about the review of scholarship, the Committee would like to recommend that scholarships being paid to the scholars by the ICCR should be reviewed biennially.

(Recommendation No. 13)

F. VISITING PROFESSORS AND CHAIRS OF INDIAN STUDIES

Recommendation No. 23 (Para No. 6.29)

44. The Committee were of the opinion that the Council's programme of establishing chairs and deputing Visiting Professors abroad to educate foreign university students in Indian studies and other related subjects, was very meagre but useful as it influences the perception of foreign students about India and assists them to understand India's position on various issues in the right perspective. The Committee find that there were presently only sixteen Chairs and Professorships which are functional worldwide under the aegis of ICCR. They expressed the desire that more Chairs should be established under this programme and the number of Professors being sent abroad to teach Hindi and other Indian languages, particularly where a large number of persons of Indian origin reside, should be increased substantially.

45. The Government have stated that,

“Presently, the Council is maintaining 17 Chairs and Professorships worldwide under the aegis of ICCR. Efforts are being made to establish a Chair in Malaysia”.

46. The Committee still hold the opinion that the council's programme of establishing Chairs and deputing visiting Professors abroad to educate foreign university students in Indian studies and other related subjects are not at all satisfactory. Visiting Chair and Professors abroad play an important role in educating foreign university students, enlightening and influencing the mind of foreign students about India and assisting them to

understand India's position on various issues in the right perspective. By maintaining only 17 Chairs and professorship all over the world under the aegis of ICCR cannot fulfill the vision and Mission of India's cultural diplomacy. Therefore, the Committee reiterate that more Chairs should be established under the programme and the number of professors being sent abroad to teach Hindi and other Indian languages, particularly where a large number of persons of Indian origin reside should also be increased substantially.

(Recommendation No. 14)

G. PROMOTION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

Recommendation No. 25 (Para No.6.44)

47. The Committee had received the impression that ICCR was focussing more on performing arts and was sending a number of troupes/groups for performances in various parts of the world, but contemporary art had not been sufficiently promoted by the Council. In the Committee's view whatever recognition the Indian contemporary art had achieved, had been more through private galleries or otherwise rather than through the efforts of the Council. In order to promote contemporary Indian art, to give exposure to the Indian art and culture worldwide and also to organise festivals and other activities, permanent presence of Indian art was a must at least in key cities of the world. The Committee had desired that the Council, in collaboration with Indian Missions abroad, should make sincere efforts in this regard.

48. The Government has replied that,
"We are now participating in more and more festivals organized abroad".

49. The Committee are of the view that while much attention is being paid on performing arts and to send a number of troupes/groups for performance in various parts of the world, the ICCR is not making much efforts regarding the promotion of contemporary Indian art. The steps taken so far by ICCR to promote contemporary art are not sufficient and up to the desired level. Whatever little recognition Indian contemporary art has received is only through private galleries. The Committee reiterate that to promote Indian contemporary art, to give exposure to Indian art and culture world wide and also to organise festivals and other activities and to exhibit Indian arts at least in key cities of the world, ICCR should come up with

some specific action plan. The Committee, therefore, desire that more attention should be given to promote our contemporary art and the ICCR in collaboration with Indian Missions abroad should make sincere efforts in this regard.

(Recommendation No.15)

H. PUBLICITY

Recommendation No. 34 (Para No.6.72)

50. The Committee felt that the impression created by the Indian films has tremendous which no other area can achieve easily. They, therefore, recommended that the Council in collaboration with the External Publicity Division of the Ministry should make efforts to get the rights for sponsoring more and more Indian popular films abroad, giving suitable sub-titles in major languages.

51. Reply of the Government is as under:

“In pursuance of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Council has started the production of films from within its meagre resources. The first film commissioned by ICCR in pursuance of Committee's recommendation is "New Delhi the Book Capital of the World". The film will highlight the importance of books in our national life in the context of rising literacy and their popularity and influence among young Indians. The film is expected to be completed by March, 2004 and shall be shown on television channels across the world, besides a special screening in New Delhi. Much as ICCR would like to undertake production of films on culture related themes, we require the support of the esteemed Parliamentary Standing Committee for provision of additional budgetary resources from its parent Ministry i.e. Ministry of External Affairs. Hon'ble President, ICCR has already made a request to Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs. A response is awaited. If additional funds are made available, the Council is in a state of readiness to produce films on such interesting subjects as "Calligraphy Art of India", "Culture in the times of Information Revolution", "Temple Art of India", "Evolution of Indian civilization from Ashoka to Atal", "Theatre forms of India", "Evolution of Hindi Poetry", "Urdu Gazals" and number of other subjects.”

52. As per the reply of the Government, in pursuance of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Council

has started the production of films within its meagre resources. However, the Committee are of the opinion that production of films in itself is a complicated, time consuming and expensive task and the Committee said nothing which suggested that ICCR should start producing films itself. In any case, the Committee are happy to note that the council is producing a film with its limited resources. The Committee also extend their full support to get additional budgetary resources to produce films on selected interesting subjects. If sufficient budget is made available to the Council easily it may also prove to be an intelligent move. However, for the time being it will be wise on the part of the Council to get the rights for sponsoring Indian popular films/documentaries abroad. Our film industry and advertisement agencies are producing huge amount of useful films and documentaries and so many films/documentaries are also readily available which can be used for the purpose. The Committee reiterate that ICCR may try to select these readily available films which can reflect our tradition and rich cultural heritage globally and manage to get the rights of these films with sub-titles into major languages. This is the easiest way to create impression worldwide in a short span of time and may prove to be useful in rapid promotion and dissemination of our culture across the globe.

(Recommendation No.16)

I. COORDINATION WITH AGENCIES

Recommendation No. 36 (Para No. 7.6)

53. The Committee noted that the ICCR was an autonomous organization administratively attached to the Ministry of External Affairs. While the Committee appreciated the work being done by ICCR in promoting India's rich cultural heritage globally, they were of the firm opinion that there was still a lot of scope to revamp and reorient the Council's functioning in keeping with the changing circumstances the world over. The Committee felt that ICCR or for that matter no other organization could work in isolation. Cultural diplomacy had to be a basic and significant element in our foreign policy and for achieving this objective ICCR should identify organizations and institutions which may supplement its efforts in strengthening its activities. The Committee did not agree with the Ministry that coordination between the different Government Departments was beyond the purview of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee strongly felt that to

achieve the objectives of ICCR and also to enhance its activities, there was need for an increased coordination and greater involvement of different wings of Government of India. The Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information & Broadcasting, Human Resource Development (Departments of Culture and Education) and also Commerce need to have a coordinated and combined effort in that direction.

54. The Government replied straight-away that

“The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is an inter-ministerial subject, the Ministry is examining the matter.”

Recommendation No. 37 (Para No. 7.7)

55. During the Examination at the subject Committee expressed that, the Cultural Diplomacy was the responsibility mainly of the Ministry of External Affairs, it was they who should act as the nodal Ministry. The Committee therefore, recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs should form a Coordination Committee which may include senior officers of the Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information and Broadcasting, Human Resource Development (Department of Culture and Education) and Commerce as its Members. The Committee expressed hope that with the active involvement of various Ministries of the Government of India, the ICCR would be able to formulate in real terms comprehensive action plans for strengthening and promoting its activities within the country as well as abroad. Apart from affording adequate opportunities to understand, plan and implement various ideas, the Coordination Committee could function as a think tank for ICCR to enable it to become a more effective instrument for India's cultural diplomacy.

56. The Government only said that

“Kindly refer to response to recommendation no. 36.”

57. The Committee are not satisfied with the reply of Government that the recommendation is a inter-Ministerial subject and the Ministry is examining the matter. The Committee believe that there is lot of scope to revamp and reorient the council's functioning in keeping with the changing circumstances the world over. The identification of organisations and institutions, which may supplement the efforts towards strengthening our cultural Diplomacy, is not a difficult task. The Committee are of the opinion that to achieve the objectives of ICCR and also enhance its activities, an

increased coordination and greater involvement of different wings of Government of India is the need of the hour. The Committee reiterate that the Ministry of External Affairs should make all out efforts to form a coordination Committee as early as possible, which may include representative from the Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information Technology, Human Resources Development (Department of Culture and Education) and Commerce as its members. This co-ordination Committee according to them should get together to work out annual plans for the purpose. Without the help of other Ministries/Departments it is not possible to achieve the goal. ICCR is representing India in promoting Indian culture & civilisation abroad. Hence, It is all the more necessary to coordinate with other Ministries in properly projecting India. Since all Government departments abroad are under the purview of Indian Missions, it is easier to coordinate with them. As Many State capitals of the World have Indian Tourist Offices, ICCR can coordinate with these offices for promoting culture as well. Only such steps can bring about and ensure a symbiotic unity and all separate units working together can really lift our cultural diplomacy. The Committee are also hopeful that Ministry of External Affairs have by now initiated suitable steps in this direction and the Ministry will leave no stone unturned as far as the effective projection of our cultural heritage is concerned.

(Recommendation No.17)

Recommendation No. 38 (Para No. 7.8)

58. The Committee pointed out that against the sanctioned staff strength of 351 in different categories, the present working strength of the Council was only 252. The Ministry had themselves admitted that this had adversely affected the working of ICCR. The Committee, therefore, urged the Government to fill up the vacant posts immediately, particularly those at the operational levels, so that the work of the Council was not adversely affected. Keeping in view the Council's proposals to open more Regional Centres in the country and Cultural Centres abroad and also the likely increase in the workload of the Council, the Committee suggested that the Ministry might review the sanctioned staff strength of the Council in different categories. The Committee felt that inadequate staff, lack of promotional avenues and ineffective cadre management was bound to have an adverse impact on the morale of the staff resulting in poor efficiency. The

Committee, therefore, desired that to motivate the staff to work with zeal and to the best of their ability, adequate incentives should be given to them by way of opening more promotional avenues, particularly at operational and supervisory levels and in postings abroad.

59. The Government in their reply said that,

“The difference between the sanctioned staff strength and the working staff strength of the Council has been enlarged over the years due to the fact that no direct recruitment had taken place since the year 1996 at the level of Assistant Programme Officer (Section Officer) and below. Prior to 1996, the Council was making recruitment to these grades by way of nominations received from the Staff Selection Commission. Subsequently, Staff Selection Commission has taken a policy decision not to nominate candidates to the autonomous bodies. While the Council has been pursuing the matter with the Staff Selection Commission, the Council has now proposed an overall restructuring of the ICCR Cadre in consultation with the Cadre Cell, MEA. Moreover, the Council is also in the process of re-framing its service rules in order to give more promotional avenues to the staff of the Council.”

60. Regarding inadequate staff strength, the Council has candidly accepted that at the level of Assistant Programme Officer (Section Officer) no direct recruitment had taken place since 1996 because Staff Selection Commission had declined to nominate candidates to the autonomous bodies. The Council has also informed the Committee that it is still pursuing the matter with Staff Selection Commission. The Committee are sorry to note that only after the passage of seven long years, the Council has now proposed an overall restructuring of the ICCR cadre in consultation with Cadre Cell, Ministry of External Affairs. Further, the Council is also in the process of reforming its service rule in order to give more promotional avenues to the staff of the Council. The Committee feel that fulfillment of the staff strength, opening of more promotional avenues and incentives to raise the morale of the staff should be among the top priorities of the Council and the least the Council can do is to fulfill its sanctioned staff strength immediately.

(Recommendation No.18)

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation No. 2

The Committee also feel that ICCR has not been interacting to the desired extent with the people who are actively involved in the field and who can tell them more from their experiences what really is needed to be done. In the opinion of the Committee the ICCR must adopt a multifaceted approach. For this purpose, it is of utmost necessity that the functioning of the ICCR should be fine-tuned to meet the present day growing needs with a view to improving and upgrading its activities by inviting views and suggestions from artistes and eminent personalities in the field. It would certainly help the ICCR to function effectively and respond to the changing demands and priorities in the conduct of our cultural diplomacy. (Para No. 1.7)

Reply of the Government

In keeping with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendations, additional publicity efforts are being made through the Media with a view to making the Council's activities better known. The General Assembly and Governing Body of the ICCR has recently been reconstituted. While reconstituting these statutory bodies, all efforts were made to include leading personalities in the fields of art and culture with a view to obtaining their advice and recommendations for further improving the activities and effectiveness of the Council.

Furthermore, on recommendation of the Governing Body, meetings with the Zonal Cultural Centres in different parts of the country are being planned to learn from their experiences in the field.

The Council is also assisted by a number of Expert Committees comprising eminent personalities who advise regarding selection of artistes for empanelment and deployment abroad.

Recommendation No. 9

The Committee find that a large number of proposals for opening cultural centres abroad are under consideration of the Ministry for the last several years but due to non-availability of funds and difficulty in creation of posts for the new centres, they have not come to any decision so far. Besides, South-East Asia and Latin American countries have been neglected in this respect. In Europe too,

except UK and Germany, not much attention has been given to other important countries like France, which has proximity with UNESCO. The Committee view that there should be kind of regional balance globally while deciding to open a cultural centre abroad. Keeping in view the importance of cultural diplomacy in the modern age and changing world scenario, the Committee recommended that, more Cultural Centres need to be opened preferably in South-East Asia, Latin America and in countries where a sizeable Indian community resides.

(Para No. 4.14)

Reply of the Government

The Council is processing the requests received from our Missions abroad for the opening of new cultural centres.

Recommendation No.11

Non-availability of funds and difficulty in creation of new posts for the centres are stated to be the main reasons for not opening more Cultural Centres abroad. Since cultural diplomacy has gained significant importance today the Committee strongly feel that such constraints should not come in the way of projecting India's cultural heritage and fostering close cultural linkages abroad.

(Para No. 4.16)

Reply of the Government

The Governing Body of the ICCR in its meeting held on 21st January, 2004 decided that performance audit of the Indian Cultural Centres abroad as well as of the Regional Offices in India should be undertaken. The Committee will submit its report to the Ministry of External Affairs with a request to forward the same to the Ministry of Finance.

Recommendation No.12

The Committee find that the persons heading the Cultural Centres abroad face functional difficulties as they are not given diplomatic status in some of the countries. In some countries they are on a diplomatic list of the Missions only. The Committee feel that unless a person heading the cultural centre is given a diplomatic status, he is not taken seriously and is not effective enough in strengthening and promoting cultural activities of the centre. The Committee, therefore, suggest that the Director or head of the centre should be given a diplomatic status. Such person may not necessarily be a diplomat. He may be a person well conversant with the art, culture and our traditional heritage and

capable of achieving the aims and objectives for which the Council was established.

(Para No. 4.17)

Reply of the Government

All the Directors of the cultural centres abroad have been given diplomatic status and they are functioning under the administrative control of the respective Mission.

Recommendation No. 16

The Committee observe that ICCR's schemes of offering scholarships to foreign students play a significant role in generating goodwill and better understanding of India. Over the last more than 50 years, when the ICCR was in existence, the Council has imparted training to a large number of foreign students under this scheme. Today several such students/persons are occupying important positions in their countries. Such students can be seen as good friends of India as after learning and living here, they obtain firsthand knowledge of India's rich cultural traditions, understanding of India's political, socio-economic systems etc. and can actually contribute in different ways to our image abroad.

(Para No. 6.20)

Reply of the Government

Indian Diplomatic Missions abroad have been advised from time to time to develop a data base of scholars who have studied in India. These scholars are invited for meetings and social get-togethers on events like International Students Day. The Missions has further been advised to record information about positions held by them in their respective countries upon their return from India.

Recommendation No. 17

However, the Committee feel that keeping in view the changing world scenario and development in our economic and political strategies, the scholarship programmes of the Council should be formulated to make it specific and targeted to our foreign policy objectives. Several courses are being offered by the Council to the foreign scholars in various Universities of the country. The Committee desire that courses such as "India Study programme" as has been started by the University of Hyderabad should be introduced which has attracted quite a number of students from the west. The council could use this mode for promoting Indian studies in a more structured way in collaboration with various Universities of the Country. For starting the "Study India programmes", many of our Universities, like Jamia Milia University, could be asked to provide course content and other support for preparing such courses.

(Para No.6.21)

Reply of the Government

During the current academic year one scholar was also sponsored for the "India Study Programme" at the University of Hyderabad. As desired, the University of Hyderabad has been asked to provide course contents so that other universities like Jamia Millia Islamia can be addressed in the matter for formulating similar courses.

Recommendation No. 21

The Committee appreciate the scheme introduced by ICCR, under which on the completion of the course, the students can go and open schools in their own countries in the field of dance and music. After five or six years they can come back for a reorientation or mid-career training. They can again go back and propagate further Indian dance and music to upgrade the skills. The committee desire that the scheme should be encouraged and ICCR should provide logistic support to the scholars for opening schools in their countries.

(Para No. 6.25)

Reply of the Government

The Council in consultation with various agencies such as Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Kathak Kendra, Triveni Kala Sangam is arranging Orientation

Programmes for foreign teachers of Indian performing arts. Necessary assistance to foreign artistes propagating Indian performing arts and encouraging them to open schools in their respective countries is also being given.

Recommendation No. 24

The Committee note that ICCR organizes visits of performing artistes/troupes to various parts of the world for performances under the ambit of bilateral cultural exchange programmes as well as in response to the recommendations received from Indian Missions abroad with the objective of depicting different performing art forms of India in various parts of the world. However, the Committee find that the Council does not have cultural agreements with all the countries and also many of the bilateral exchange agreements which are agreed upon for two years remain unfulfilled and unexplored. Moreover, the Council does not renew the cultural exchange programmes agreements periodically, as required and even where cultural exchange programmes are valid, full implementation of their provisions is rarely achieved. The Committee are not at all satisfied with such a state of affairs. The Committee recommend that the reasons for non-fulfillment of the cultural exchange agreements be identified and in the light thereof the Council should make all out efforts to ensure that bilateral cultural exchange agreements do not remain unfulfilled. The Council must also go in for bilateral cultural exchange agreements with various countries of the world.

(Para No.6.43)

Reply of the Government

Noted for future planning. Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Culture signs CEPs on behalf of the Government of India, not ICCR. ICCR is only an implementing agency.

Recommendation No. 26

The Committee feel that the Council gives preference to certain eminent artistes/troupes/groups based in some selected cities while representing India abroad in cultural performances and programmes. Junior and up-coming artistes are not being given adequate opportunities while making selection for performances abroad. Also regional representation of artistes/folk dancers, etc. particularly from North-Eastern States, West Bengal and other remote areas are not given fair chance to perform abroad. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the criteria for selecting artistes/troupes for performing abroad should be

made more transparent. Also, while selecting artistes/groups for sponsoring to perform abroad, junior upcoming artistes from various regions of the country, particularly from remote areas should also be included in the list in addition to the established and outstanding musicians, dancers or groups, so that India's true traditional art performances could be represented abroad. The Committee would also like the ICCR to make efforts to get the cultural programmes sponsored by private parties so that its financial burden could be reduced and more artistes/troupes could be sent abroad.

(Para No.6.45)

Reply of the Government

It is noted for future programmes.

Recommendation No. 27

The Committee also recommend that the Ministry, particularly the Indian Missions abroad, should collaborate with organizations of regional groups in foreign countries e.g. Telugu Association, Marathi Association, etc. in organising cultural shows by ICCR in various countries. These Associations/groups, if involved by the Council, will be a great help in promoting Indian art and Culture abroad. The Committee also recommends that more number of theatre groups should be sent abroad.

(Para No.6.46)

Reply of the Government

It is noted for future programmes.

Recommendation No. 28

The Committee find that the Council's Distinguished Visitors Programme is an extremely useful programme under which it facilitates exchange of scholars, intellectuals, academicians and artistes. Such exchanges provide ample opportunities of sharing ideas through discussions and meetings. The Committee therefore recommend that more emphasis be given to this programme, keeping in view the new trends and priorities of our foreign policy objectives.

(Para No.6.47)

Reply of the Government:

The recommendation has been noted for future compliance.

Recommendation No. 29

The committee note that ICCR publishes a number of journals to spread its cultural message. Though these journals are very useful and informative in

nature, the Committee feel that these are not accessible to the common man. The Committee recommend the ICCR to publish a single and comprehensive publication which can be an effective instrument for carrying information about India's art and culture to the targeted readership. Each issue may carry, apart from cultural information, profiles of achievers in diverse fields of art and culture and with authoritative knowledge in the respective field of specialization. The committee are of the opinion that such a single publication by ICCR will be more effective voice of the rich Indian cultural heritage, which needs to be given exposure with great thrust. A video -CD edition of the publication may also be brought out by the Council and made available to the media in the country as well as abroad. The committee further recommend that necessary steps may be taken to make the Council's publications commercially available to the common man, but at an affordable price.

(Para No.6.56)

Reply of the Government

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations' Hindi magazine "Gagananchal" and English magazine "Indian Horizons" are being recast in accordance with the recommendation of the Standing Committee. Necessary steps are also being initiated to publish the internet / VCD edition, as also for making the publications commercially available to common man at an affordable price.

Recommendation No. 30

The Committee also desire the Council to design and print meaningful posters to disseminate India's cultural philosophy. Such posters may be displayed at the regional centres of the Council and also at our Missions and Cultural Centres abroad. This will further strengthen India's cultural relations with the rest of the world. (Para No. 6.57)

Reply of the Government

The Council has invited several well-known designers to submit concepts for posters for effectively disseminating India's cultural philosophy.

Recommendation No. 31

The lectures delivered by our founding fathers, eminent personalities and intellectuals at the Council's "Memorial Lecture", Seminars, etc. are available with the Council in book forms. But the committee have an impression that they are badly produced and not maintained properly. They, therefore, recommend that necessary steps be taken by the Council to preserve and produce these lectures in a presentable form. Such publications can be given to distinguished visitors and distributed in the universities for the benefit of students and others.

(Para No.6.58)

Reply of the Government

It has been decided to upload lectures delivered by our founding fathers, eminent personalities and intellectuals as well as memorial lectures etc. on ICCR's web site. This will enable general public to access and print them in a presentable form. A limited number would also be brought out for presentation to distinguished visitors and distribution of copies to universities for the benefit of students and others.

Recommendation No. 32

The Committee note that the number of Indian writers, poets, musicians, scholars and artistes whose visits are facilitated by the Council to participate in international seminars and conferences of cultural interests has been coming down gradually over the last few years. The Committee desires that the Council should take initiative to encourage and facilitate Indian writers, scholars, musicians, etc. to take part in the organization of international seminars and conferences held abroad by giving them more incentives, as these persons leave a positive impact of our efforts to strengthen cultural relations and mutual

understanding between India and other countries of the world through these programmes. The Council should also co-sponsor seminars abroad in association with other organizations. The Committee would like the Council to act as the nodal agency for implementing all the cultural activities in association and in co-ordination with other Government agencies and private groups/agencies engaged in cultural activities so as to ensure optimal results.

(Para No.6.66)

Reply of the Government

The Council has sponsored 10 eminent writers to attend 'Writer's Conference of SAARC Writers' held at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Council also committed to cosponsors 9 international seminars from April 2003 to March 2004.

Recommendation No. 33

The Committee note that the Council sponsors exhibitions of Indian art and crafts to foreign countries and also receives exhibitions from abroad for exposition in India. However, the Committee understand that the Council has created very few exhibitions of its own and depends more on other sources to lend exhibitions for sponsoring abroad. The Committee desire that the council should create more exhibition of its own depicting Indian tradition, heritage and different art forms for exhibiting abroad. They also recommend that the post of trained curators should be created in ICCR so that the paintings, etc. could be saved from damage. The Committee hope that the basement of the Nehru Centre, London would be renovated and a small gallery for exhibiting Indian art there would be set up soon.

(Para No.6.71)

Reply of the Government

Keeping the recommendation of Standing Committee on External Affairs, the Council has decided and kept the following points in our Plan of Action for 2004-05 in respect of Exhibition Section:

1. To acquire two permanent exhibitions;
2. To host four major exhibitions every year in New Delhi;
3. To send four exhibitions outside India annually covering 5-6 countries in each time;
4. To continue commissioning of busts/statues of important National Leaders for installation abroad.

Recommendation No. 35

The Committee note that ICCR has a large library with Maulana Azad's personal collections, rare manuscripts and a lot of books which have detailed marginal notes from Maulana Azad's own study. But these collections are not in good shape and are poorly maintained. The Committee desire that necessary measures should be initiated to preserve and maintain the Council's Library, which has very rare collection of valuable heritage left by its founding father and other by using the latest technology. The Committee recommend that the ICCR should also establish a Research Cell-cum Archives Unit to study and preserve the works and profiles of distinguished and eminent personalities, scholars, writers and artistes in diverse fields. The Committee hope that the new comprehensive web-site being created by ICCR, featuring the latest technologies of international standard will be completed soon.

(Para No.6.78)

Reply of the Government

Preservation of documents has been undertaken in parts. Reprographic preservation of manuscripts has been completed by the Council. Digitization of manuscripts, a pilot project, has been started & expected to be over by March 2004. During this phase we shall digitize 10 manuscripts in Urdu, Arabic & Persian language. So far as the Chemical Preservation is concerned, Shri S.S.Sohoni, Vice-President, ICCR & Dr. Madhup Mohta had visited Asiatic Society Library in Mumbai. This shall be initiated when the Conservation unit is opened in the new building. The Council is planning to have a Research Cell-cum Archive in the new building (Africa House). It can not be started immediately due to the constraint of space at Azad Bhavan Library.

CHAPTER III

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

Recommendation No. 7

The Committee note that the regional centers are responsible for coordinating arrangements with the concerned State Governments and local cultural institutions for the Council's activities. They are also responsible for organizing shows of performing art groups, welfare of foreign scholars, organization and participation in non-performing arts such as seminars, symposia and conferences organized in that region, providing logistic support during the visits of distinguished visitors, making arrangements for incoming and outgoing exhibitions and sending books/musical instruments for presentation to the Indian Cultural Centres or Missions abroad.

(Para No. 3.8)

Reply of the Government

Needs no reply.

Recommendation No. 8

However, the Committee are not satisfied with the functions being performed by the regional centers as they have been simply doing the work of coordination in organizing shows of performing art groups, arranging incoming and outgoing exhibitions and giving logistic support during the visits of distinguished visitors. They are not even allowed to go in for talent hunt and hardly have any interaction with the people engaged in various activities in the region. The Committee feel that continuous interaction of this kind is absolutely necessary for improvement in the working of regional centers in the country. Based on the interaction with the people of the region in the field and also from the incoming as well as outgoing groups, etc., reports should be presented to the headquarters with suggestions to improve the functioning and activities of the respective regional center. The Committee also desire that regional centers of ICCR should prepare a comprehensive data bank giving information about the local artistes/groups/theatres in the form of cassettes/CD Roms. Such data could be made available at all the regional centers in the country as well as Cultural Centres abroad. It will work as a ready reckoner for organizing cultural activities in India and abroad.

(Para No. 3.9)

Reply of the Government

The statutory bodies of the Council comprises personalities in different fields of art and culture. In order to further improve and strengthen the functioning of the Regional Centres of the Council, the Council is constituting " Advisory Committees" for each of the existing and proposed new Regional Centres. Each such Committee would comprise of people from diverse field of culture in the region and General Assembly member from the region. The Advisory Committees will give its recommendations to further strengthen the activities of the Council. With regard to the recommendation of the Standing Committee to remove regional imbalance while opening the new regional centers, a detailed proposal would be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council.

Recommendation No.14

The Committee are constrained to observe that in spite of their repeated recommendations, there has been virtually no increase in the annual grants of the Council in real terms, though the same have been increased from Rs.42.43 crore in 2002-03 to Rs.54.50 crore in 2003-04. The committee are of the view that even the proper maintenance of the existing level of activities of the Council would justify a further increase in the budgetary allocations of ICCR. However, they feel that the Ministry of External Affairs have not been able to present the case of ICCR properly and forcefully and the Ministry of Finance have also not realized the importance of cultural diplomacy. The committee strongly feel that the financial allocation being given to the Council is not at all sufficient for the gamut of its activities and for achieving its objectives fully. ICCR was established to act as India's premier institution for promoting India's cultural heritage, fostering cultural exchange and strengthening cultural ties with the countries of the world. For better projection of India's image abroad and also for the increased activities and projects of the Council, financial constrains should not come in its way. The Committee would like to emphasize that nothing else can project our country in the world in a stronger way than our culture and heritage. Therefore, the committee recommend that the budgetary allocations for ICCR should substantially be augmented so that it could achieve its desired objectives.

(Para No. 5.7)

Reply of the Government

A comparative statement of figures of BE, RE proposed by ICCR and RE approved by MEA during the last 3 years is given as follows:

(Figure in crores)

Year	BE	RE proposed by ICCR	Approved RE
2001-02	40.00	41.62	41.62
2002-03	42.43	44.31	42.00
2003-04	54.50	59.36	54.50

It could be seen from the above that there has not been much variation in the Revised Estimates projected by ICCR and actual allocation approved under RE during the FY 2002-03. Council was also permitted to utilize unspent balance of Rs. 1.88 crore carried forward from the previous financial year on their request as a special case, in addition to the provision of Rs. 42.00 crore approved in RE-2002-03.

MEA has been vigorously taking up the cause of ICCR during its budgetary discussions with MOF. In this regard it may be mentioned that Ministry projected, duly supported with detailed justification, an enhancement of Rs. 435.51 crore at RE-2003-04 (non-plan) and Rs. 715.95 crore in BE 2004-05 in non-plan Section. However, MOF instead of providing additional funds reduced Ministry's allocation for the CFY by Rs. 110 crores. The BE 2004-05 has been capped at Rs. 2772.69 crores against Ministry's projection of Rs. 3475.95 crores. Despite reduction in BE 2003-04 by Rs. 110 crores, no proportionate cut has been made in the original allocations of ICCR for the FY 03-04 whereas the allocated amount to other spending Division/Schemes have been proportionately reduced.

From the above it may be noted that MEA is well aware of the importance of cultural diplomacy and would continue to endeavour to allocate funds to ICCR to the extent possible within the overall ceiling of BE/RE for the Ministry approved by MoF so as to ensure that financial constraints should not come in the way of projecting our country in the world in a stronger way by ICCR to achieve its desired objectives.

Recommendation No. 22

The Committee are happy to note that the Council has started a programme to prepare a comprehensive data base of its scholars. The Committee desire that information about the positions held by foreign students in

their respective countries after availing the scholarships, should also be included in it. The Committee hope that the computerised data base will be completed expeditiously.

(Para No. 6.26)

Reply of the Government

All efforts are being made to expeditiously complete the computerization of the students' database. As mentioned in ATR for recommendation No.16 the Indian Diplomatic Missions have also been advised to update and record information about foreign scholars who returned to their respective countries after completion of their courses in India.

CHAPTER IV

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

Recommendation No. 1

During the examination of the subject, the Committee have visited the Headquarters of ICCR and its regional Cultural Centres in various parts of the country. The Committee feel that the ICCR has not quite fulfilled the vision and mission with which it was launched 53 years ago. Although the Committee appreciate the work ICCR is doing, yet keeping in view the increasing role of cultural diplomacy, an extensive campaign needs to be done through media and other sources to spread the rich Indian cultural heritage all over the world, which will not only strengthen our diplomatic relations with other countries but also expand the horizon of our great artistes and exponents.

(Para No.1.6)

Reply of the Government

ICCR has consistently endeavoured to fulfill the mandate of the organization for promoting cultural relations and international understanding since its inception in 1950. The range and scope of its multi-faceted activities has progressively been increased. Starting from a budget of meagre amount, the Council's budget during the financial year 2003-2004 is Rs. 54.50 crores. This reflects the increase in the level of the Council's activities which are designed to fulfil this mandate.

Apart from the traditional activities of the ICCR, which the Hon'ble Committee is aware of, the Council has embarked in recent times on innovative programmes such as promoting human resource development, specially in the field of Information Technology, in Cambodia. A proposal to establish a prominent Museum of Asian Textiles accompanied with a training component is also being implemented.

Recommendation No. 3

Cultural diplomacy is a powerful tool for furthering diplomatic interests in commercial, political and strategic fields. Keeping this important aspect in view, the Committee are of the opinion that the ICCR has been doing a good job in the field of cultural diplomacy. But there is need to further increase the scope and

intensity of its activities with innovative policies and programmes in the ever-changing circumstances. Its policies and programmes will have to be specific, pointed and purposeful. The Committee feel that ICCR's approach is conventional and unprofessional and as such, the ICCR has not been able to go beyond propagating the stereotyped image of our country. The Committee would, therefore, like to impress upon the Government to accord cultural diplomacy the highest importance. Since ICCR is the nodal agency under the Ministry of External Affairs for cultural promotions, the Committee would urge the ICCR to intensify its efforts in external projection. Apart from our efforts in sustaining our traditional ties with some specific Asian countries, the ICCR should widen its area of activity and strive hard to achieve a stronger cultural presence all over the world.

(Para No.2.4)

Reply of the Government

ICCR has 15 Cultural Centres in different parts of the world for promoting its aims and objectives. The most recent Centre established was in Dushanbe (2002). Financial and administrative approval for obtaining two additional Centres and a SubCentre has been obtained. Accordingly, Cultural Centres in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Suva (Fiji) along with a Sub-Centre in Laotoko (Fiji) are in the process of being opened. Proposals for opening additional Cultural Centres in other parts of the world including USA, China, Iran etc. are being considered.

In so far as activities are concerned, the Council is diversifying the range of its activities to project contemporary trends in Indian culture. Innovative projects like establishing Computer Kiosks in Cambodia for imparting IT education are also being undertaken.

Recommendation No. 4

The Committee are also of the opinion that it is not sufficient for the ICCR to merely draw up ambitious projects for cultural promotion. What is needed is the effective implementation of these projects. To achieve its objectives, the ICCR has to work in unison with the civil society, the Indian diaspora who have been the strongest promoters of Indian culture in foreign countries. Therefore, the Committee strongly feel that the ICCR needs to change its mantle, reorient its activities in such a way that it is able to cope with the changing requirements in cultural diplomacy and actively involve the Indian diaspora in all its drives for cultural promotion. This way, the image of our country can be projected in a better perspective and at the same time the creative energies and the subtle

strength of these people could also be utilized in the most efficient and productive manner.

(Para No.2.5)

Reply of the Government

The Council is consistently engaged in cooperating with the Indian Diaspora overseas in organizing its activities. On many occasions sponsorships are obtained from the Indian Diaspora for organizing ICCR events.

Recommendation No. 5

The Committee note that ICCR has planned to open more regional centers in different parts of the country viz. Jaipur, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar and North-eastern Region. However, the Committee find that certain key regions of the country like Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir have been ignored. Hardly any attention has been given to Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir who have contributed significantly to the country's culture and the latter attracts a large number of tourists. Besides, to remove the regional imbalances, certain regions need to be strengthened.

(Para No. 3.6)

Reply of the Government

The statutory bodies of the Council comprises personalities in different fields of art and culture. In order to further improve and strengthen the functioning of the Regional Centres of the Council, the Council is constituting "Advisory Committees" for each of the existing and proposed new Regional Centres. Each such Committee would comprise of people from diverse field of culture in the region and General Assembly member from the region. The Advisory Committees will give its recommendations to further strengthen the activities of the Council. With regard to the recommendation of the Standing Committee to remove regional imbalance while opening the new regional centers, a detailed proposal would be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council.

Recommendation No. 6

The Committee also find that the Chief Secretary of Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa have been requested to nominate officers from the concerned State Governments with whom the Council could coordinate the opening of Regional Offices, The Committee hope that the matter would be pursued earnestly with the concerned authorities and the proposed regional centers would be opened soon. The Committee also recommend that regional

centers in Srinagar, Bihar and other parts of the country which have rich cultural traditions should be opened at the earliest. (Para No.3.7)

Reply of the Government

The matter with regard to opening of new regional centers is being pursued earnestly. The Council has received positive response from the concerned State Governments for Council's proposed regional centers in the North-East and Jaipur. The Council is hopeful to receive such positive responses from the other State Governments. With regard to opening of regional centers in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country, a detailed proposal will be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council.

Recommendation No.10

As recommended in their 12th Report presented on 17th December, 2003 the Committee desire that the Cultural Centre at Washington should be opened without any further delay. The Committee desire that setting up of a centre at Kathmandu should be given sincere consideration.

(Para No. 4.15)

Reply of the Government

The proposal with regard to the premises to house the Indian Cultural Centre, Washington is being processed by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Recommendation No.13

The Committee find that ICCR's budget has recorded only marginal increases over successive years while there was constant pressure on it to increase the scope and intensity of its activities. If inflationary trends are taken into account, ICCR's budget, in real terms, has been actually reduced over the last few years. It is also noted that the Council has visualized a number of innovative activities, projects and it also intends to promote more aggressively India's culture abroad and provide a better national and international profile for its activities. Furthermore, there are a number of proposals awaiting the establishment of cultural centres abroad. But all those projects could not be taken up by the Council due to lack of additional financial resources.

(Para No. 5.6)

Reply of the Government

ICCR projected a revised estimate for 2003-04 for Rs. 58.86 crores as against this projection an allocation of Rs. 54.50 crores (which was the Budget

Estimate figure) has been given. The net increase in actual allocation of ICCR during the two years 2002-03 and 2003-04 has been Rs. 12.88 crores which is way above the normal inflationary trends, whereas during the same period Ministry's non-plan budget allocation has been reduced in RE by Rs. 38.34 crores and Rs. 110.00 crores respectively. Additionally, MEA has also been incurring expenditure from its capital outlay on behalf of ICCR for construction/purchase of properties for use by cultural centers abroad, in addition to payment of grants-in-aid which is not indicated separately. For the establishment of new cultural centers abroad, allocation of additional funds from Capital Outlay of the Ministry will be considered to meet ICCR's requirement for purchase/construction of cultural centers.

Recommendation No.15

Furthermore, the Committee would like to point out that ICCR has not been working in tandem with the civil society of various countries of the world which leaves it high and dry and somewhat lonely in the matter of raising resources. The Committee have no doubt that ICCR could substantially augment its resources if it starts involving the civil society globally and the Indian Diasporas in those countries. The Committee also suggest that to reduce the budgetary constraints of the Council, the Ministry should explore the possibility of coordinating trade and culture as there are several Fortune 500 companies of Indian origin and their resources can be tapped. Greater coordination between business and culture would certainly be helpful in meeting the budgetary constraints.

(Para No. 5.8)

Reply of the Government

Efforts are being made in this regard. Many of the reputed Hotels are giving accommodation to the Council at discounted rates for boarding/lodging of various cultural groups/distinguished visitors coming to India. A donation of Rs. 10.00 lacs was received from Jammu & Kashmir Bank during the year 2001-02 towards hosting of "International Festival of Indian Literature" at Neemrana (Haryana).

Recommendation No. 18

The Committee note that under the scholarship programme of the Council, scholarships are offered to foreign students in different courses. It is only the foreign students who come here and not the other way round. The Committee

understand that ICCR does not make any arrangement under its schemes for the Indian students who wish to go for studies in the Universities abroad. The Committee desire that ICCR should bring under its schemes the programme of sending Indian students abroad for studies to Universities, like Harvard University and other who may, perhaps, be willing to offer a couple of scholarships for the Indian students.

(Para No. 6.22)

Reply of the Government

ICCR administers 16 Scholarship Schemes on behalf of various Government Departments. These Schemes provide for scholarships to be offered to foreign students. The Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development looks after work relating to Indian students studying abroad. Since our Scholarship Schemes are not linked to foreign universities, it is unlikely that they would entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students.

Recommendation no. 19

The committee are constrained to note that utilization of scholarships offered to foreign students is constantly very low, although, the ICCR has stated that, it is working towards optimizing utilization of scholarships being offered. Even during the year 2003-2004 ICCR offered 1093 scholarships out of which only 606 students have joined their respective courses. The reasons cited by the ICCR for non-utilisation of scholarships, viz. decision of the scholars not to pursue studies in India after making application or to opt for some scholarship schemes in another country or the scholar's inability to pay international fare which is not covered by scholarship scheme, is not satisfactory at all. The Committee, therefore, suggest that a system should be evolved whereby if seats offered for scholarships for a particular course remain unutilized, waitlisted candidates should be offered the scholarship.

(Para No. 6.23)

Reply of the Government

During the academic year 2003-2004 placements were offered to 779 scholars against 1093 available slots. The slots are earmarked for different countries as per specific bilateral agreements and allocations made by a Special Committee. The Council has been allocating unutilized slots from certain countries to reserve candidates of countries who have fully utilized their given

slots.

Recommendation No. 20

As regard the student's inability to pay international airfare, the committee find that the air fares offered have been increased from 3 to 30 for each country. The committee desire that the number of air fares being offered be increased substantially covering not only Central Asia but also other parts of the world. The Committee also hope that the ICCR would take steps to provide suitable hostel facilities to foreign students and ensure their comfortable stay in the country so that they may not feel home sick and could cope with the new environment. It should also be ensured that the students receive their financial dues as per their entitlement in time. The Committee also recommend that the amount of scholarships being paid to the scholars should be reviewed biannually.

(Para No. 6.24)

Reply of the Government

The question of offering additional airfares to foreign scholars would be considered in the context of availability of sufficient funds. . Regarding the comfort of the students, various universities have been asked to present proposals for assistance in developing hostel facilities. Special arrangements to deliver financial dues and entitlements in time have also been made. Scholarship dues were last revised by the Finance Committee in June, 2001.

Recommendation No. 23

The Committee are of the opinion that the Council's programme of establishing chairs and deputing Visiting Professors abroad to educate foreign university students in Indian studies and other related subjects, is very meagre but useful as it influences the perception of foreign students about India and assists them to understand India's position on various issues in the right perspective. The Committee find that there are presently only sixteen Chairs and Professorships which are functional worldwide under the aegis of ICCR. They desire that more Chairs should be established under this programme and the number of Professors being sent abroad to teach Hindi and other Indian languages, particularly where a large number of persons of Indian origin reside, should be increased substantially.

(Para No. 6.29)

Reply of the Government

Presently, the Council is maintaining 17 Chairs and Professorships

worldwide under the aegis of ICCR. Efforts are being made to establish a Chair in Malaysia.

Recommendation No. 25

The Committee have received the impression that ICCR is focussing more on performing arts and is sending a number of troupes/groups for performances in various parts of the world, but contemporary art has not been sufficiently promoted by the Council. In the Committee's view whatever recognition the Indian contemporary art has achieved, has been more through private galleries or otherwise rather than through the efforts of the Council. In order to promote contemporary Indian art, to give exposure to the Indian art and culture worldwide and also to organise festivals and other activities, permanent presence of Indian art is a must at least in key cities of the world. The Committee desire that the Council, in collaboration with Indian Missions abroad, should make sincere efforts in this regard. (Para No.6.44)

Reply of the Government

We are now participating in more and more festivals organized abroad.

Recommendation No. 34

The Committee feel that the impression created by the Indian films is tremendous which no other area can achieve easily. They, therefore, recommend that the Council in collaboration with the External Publicity Division of the Ministry should make efforts to get the rights for sponsoring more and more Indian popular films abroad, giving suitable sub-titles in major languages.

(Para No.6.72)

Reply of the Government

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Council has started the production of films from within its meagre resources. The first film commissioned by ICCR in pursuance of Committee's recommendation is "New Delhi the Book Capital of the World". The film will highlight the importance of books in our national life in the context of rising literacy and their popularity and influence among young Indians. The film is expected to be completed by March, 2004 and shall be shown on television channels across the world, besides a special screening in New Delhi. Much as ICCR would like to undertake production of films on culture related themes, we require the support of the esteemed Parliamentary Standing Committee for provision of additional budgetary resources from its parent Ministry i.e. Ministry of

External Affairs. Hon'ble President, ICCR has already made a request to Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs. A response is awaited. If additional funds are made available, the Council is in a state of readiness to produce films on such interesting subjects as "Calligraphy Art of India", "Culture in the times of Information Revolution", "Temple Art of India", "Evolution of Indian civilization from Ashoka to Atal", "Theatre forms of India", "Evolution of Hindi Poetry", "Urdu Gazals" and number of other subjects.

Recommendation No. 36

The Committee note that the ICCR is an autonomous organization administratively attached to the Ministry of External Affairs. While the Committee appreciate the work being done by ICCR in promoting India's rich cultural heritage globally, they are of the firm opinion that there is still a lot of scope to revamp and reorient the Council's functioning in keeping with the changing circumstances the world over. The Committee feel that ICCR or for that matter no other organization can work in isolation. Cultural diplomacy has to be a basic and significant element in our foreign policy and for achieving this objective ICCR should identify organizations and institutions which may supplement its efforts in strengthening its activities. The Committee do not agree with the Ministry that coordination between the different Government Departments is beyond the purview of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee strongly feel that to achieve the objectives of ICCR and also to enhance its activities, there is need for an increased coordination and greater involvement of different wings of Government of India. The Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information & Broadcasting, Human Resource Development (Departments of Culture and Education) and also Commerce need to have a coordinated and combined effort in this direction.

(Para No.7.6)

Reply of the Government

As the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is an inter-ministerial subject, the Ministry is examining the matter.

Recommendation No. 37

Cultural Diplomacy being the responsibility mainly of the Ministry of External Affairs, it is they who should act as the nodal Ministry. The Committee therefore, recommend that the Ministry of External Affairs should form a

Coordination Committee which may include senior officers of the Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information and Broadcasting, Human Resource Development (Department of Culture and Education) and Commerce as its Members. The Committee hope that with the active involvement of various Ministries of the Government of India, the ICCR will be able to formulate in real terms comprehensive action plans for strengthening and promoting its activities within the country as well as abroad. Apart from affording adequate opportunities to understand, plan and implement various ideas, the Coordination Committee could function as a think tank for ICCR to enable it to become a more effective instrument for India's cultural diplomacy.

(Para No.7.7)

Reply of the Government

Kindly refer to response to recommendation no. 36.

Recommendation No. 38

The Committee note that against the sanctioned staff strength of 351 in different categories, the present working strength of the Council is only 252. The Ministry have themselves admitted that this has adversely affected the working of ICCR. The Committee, therefore, urge the Government to fill up the vacant posts immediately, particularly those at the operational levels, so that the work of the Council is not adversely affected. Keeping in view the Council's proposals to open more Regional Centres in the country and Cultural Centres abroad and also the likely increase in the workload of the Council, the Committee suggest that the Ministry may review the sanctioned staff strength of the Council in different categories. The Committee feel that inadequate staff, lack of promotional avenues and ineffective cadre management are bound to have an adverse impact on the morale of the staff resulting in poor efficiency. The Committee, therefore, desire that to motivate the staff to work with zeal and to the best of their ability, adequate incentives should be given to them by way of opening more promotional avenues, particularly at operational and supervisory levels and in postings abroad.

(Para No.7.8)

Reply of the Government

The difference between the sanctioned staff strength and the working staff strength of the Council has been enlarged over the years due to the fact that no

direct recruitment had taken place since the year 1996 at the level of Assistant Programme Officer (Section Officer) and below. Prior to 1996, the Council was making recruitment to these grades by way of nominations received from the Staff Selection Commission. Subsequently, Staff Selection Commission has taken a policy decision not to nominate candidates to the autonomous bodies. While the Council has been pursuing the matter with the Staff Selection Commission, the Council has now proposed an overall restructuring of the ICCR Cadre in consultation with the Cadre Cell, MEA. Moreover, the Council is also in the process of re-framing its service rules in order to give more promotional avenues to the staff of the Council.

CHAPTER V

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

NIL

**NEW DELHI;
December, 2004
Agrahayana, 1926 (Saka)**

**Laxminarayan Pandey,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs.**

APPENDIX I

MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON 15th DECEMBER, 2004

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1700 hrs.

PRESENT

Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey – Chairman

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Prof. S.P.Singh Baghel
3. Shri Narayan Chandra Borkatky
4. Shri P.C. Gaddigoudar
5. Shri S.K. Kharventhan
6. Shri Nikhil Kumar
7. Shri Dinsha Patel
8. Dr. (Col.) Dhani Ram Shandil
9. Shri Damodar Barku Shingada
10. Shri Madhu Goud Yashki
11. Shri Suresh Prabhu

MEMBERS

Rajya Sabha

12. Shri P.K. Maheshwari
13. Smt. Prema Cariappa
14. Dr. Karan Singh
15. Shri Jana Krishnamuthy K
16. Smt. Jaya Bachchan
17. Shri S.M. Laljan Basha

Secretariat

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Joint Secretary
2. Shri U.S. Saxena - Director
3. Shri Shiv Kumar - Under Secretary

At the outset the Chairman welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee. The Committee then took up for consideration the draft Action Taken Report on the recommendations contained in the 13th Report (13th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on "Working of Indian Council of Cultural Relations with special reference to Cultural Centres abroad". The Chairman invited Members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report.

2. The Members suggested certain modifications and desired that those be suitably incorporated in the body of the Report.

3. The Committee then authorized the Chairman to finalise the Action Taken Report and present the same to Parliament. The draft Report was then adopted.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX II

(Vide Introduction of Report)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE THIRTEENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (13TH LOK SABHA)

I.	Total Number of Recommendations	38
II.	Recommendations/Conclusions which have been accepted by Government	
	Recommendations Sl. Nos. 2,9,11,12,16,17,21,24,26,27,28,29,30,31, 32, 33, 35	
	Total	17
	Percentage	44.75%
III	Recommendations/Conclusions which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government replies	
	Recommendations Sl. Nos. 7,8,14, 22	
	Total	4
	Percentage	10.5%
IV	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee	
	Recommendations Sl. Nos. 1,3,4,5,6,10,13,15,18,19,20,23,25,34,36,37,38	
	Total	17
	Percentage	44.75%
V	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited	
	Recommendations Sl. Nos. Nil	
	Total	Nil
	Percentage	Nil

APPENDIX III

STATEMENT OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sl. No.	Para No.	Ministry	Observations/Recommendations
1.	9	External Affairs	The Committee feel that the Ministry have not taken their recommendation in its proper perspective. While the Committee have been insisting on strengthening our cultural relations and spreading our rich cultural heritage worldwide, ICCR is merely working on few countries without any visible plan of action to this effect. The Committee are of the view that establishing a computer Kiosk for spreading IT Education, opening a museum of Asian textiles and cultural centres in one or two countries will not suffice. The larger goal of ICCR can not be achieved by these occasional steps. Promotion of culture is a continuous and ongoing process and hence ICCR needs to engage itself into the larger perspective of this continuous cultural promotion globally.
2.	10	-do-	The Committee once again wish to strongly stress on the fact that apart from consideration of proposals for opening new cultural centres in order to become an effective instrument of cultural promotion, the ICCR will have to come up with dynamic plans and novel ideas, which can widen its areas of activity such as there should be frequent cultural exchanges with our neighbouring countries as we share a common cultural heritage and political history, special thrust needs to be given to direct people to people contact through food festivals, art and crafts exhibitions, literary exchanges etc. All these can go a long way in effectively portraying our rich and composite cultural heritage.
3.	13		The Committee in their recommendation had stated that the ICCR in order to achieve its objectives, had to work in unison with the civil society, the Indian diaspora who have been the strongest promoters of Indian culture in foreign

			<p>countries. This way the image of our country could be projected in a better perspective and at the same time the creative energies and subtle strength of these people could be utilised in the most efficient and productive manner. To this, the Ministry have replied that the Council is consistently engaged in cooperating with the Indian Diaspora overseas in organizing its activities and on many occasions sponsorships are obtained from the Indian Diaspora for organizing ICCR events. The Committee are not convinced with the reply put forward by the Ministry. The Committee feel that whatever little initiatives have been taken by ICCR to engage Indian Diaspora in its activities, these are not up to desired level. In fact, there are many regional groups worldwide such as the Telegu Association, Marathi Association, Punjabi Association, Gujarati Association etc. which are better organised, more active in cultural promotion. These groups are doing a commendable job in the preservation of their regional cultural identity. The Committee reiterate that Ministry of External Affairs and particularly our Embassies/Missions must keep in touch with such groups. The ICCR, on its part should make much vigorous efforts to involve such groups and utilize their potential in its drive for cultural promotion.</p>
4.	18	-do-	<p>The Committee had expressed their view that hardly any attention had been given to Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir who had contributed significantly to the country's culture as they attract a large number of tourists. Along with the removal of regional imbalances, these regions need to be strengthened. However, the Committee are dismayed to note that the proposal to open new regional centres has not even been initiated in the last seven months and a detailed proposal is still to be processed for consideration of the statutory bodies of the Council and desire that it should be expedited.</p>

5.	19	-do-	<p>The Committee are aware that States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have rich Buddhist Cultural Heritage and World famous Buddhists sites and monuments. They attract a large number of Buddhist Pilgrims and tourists from the East-Asian countries. In many Universities abroad, there is a department of Buddhist Studies. The Committee suggest that these states have immense potential for spiritual Tourism and ICCR can encash this for intensive promotion of our diverse culture. A large number of settlers in Mauritius, South Africa, West-Indies and Suriname belonged to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and their links to their roots can also help in Cultural diplomacy. Regional Centres in these States will definitely help in achieving our goal. Similarly, opening a Regional Centre in Jammu and Kashmir will respect the sentiments of the people of that state.</p>
6.	20	-do-	<p>The Committee are partially satisfied with the reply of Government that the Council is constituting "Advisory Committees" for each of the existing and proposed new cultural centres, These Advisory bodies will advise and recommend for further strengthening the activities of the Council. To the Committee, this signals a welcome development. However, at the same time, the Committee are apprehensive of the fact that these Advisory Committees may, in effect, turn into defunct advisory bodies because they might take their own sweet time to give their recommendations. Thus, the task of opening as well as strengthening the activities of the regional centres may be stretched too far. The Committee strongly recommend that this process must be completed at the earliest.</p>
7.	27	-do-	<p>The Committee are dissatisfied and note that inspite of repeated recommendations for the last several years on the urgent need to finalise the proposal regarding the setting up of Cultural Centre in Washington, the Ministry have failed to acquire the selected property and the deal has once</p>

			<p>again slipped out from their hands. It is only due to the extremely bureaucratic, rigid and cumbersome procedures and inept handling by the Ministry that the matter has once again come back to square one. The Committee feel that there is a need to review the very working of the Ministry to this effect so that opportunities do not continue to be lost like it happened in the present case. The Committee in their First Report (14th Lok Sabha) had also expressed their deep anguish over the lapses committed by the Ministry in establishment of Cultural Centre in Washington and recommended that the Cultural Centre in Washington should be established at the earliest. The Committee again reiterate that immediate action should be initiated on the project on top priority so that a Cultural Centre is opened in Washington at the earliest and hope that it will be in place by the end of 2005.</p> <p>The Committee further desire that the process to open the Cultural Centre at Iran, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia and also in China should be expedited.</p>
8.	30	-do-	<p>In a written reply to a question whether non- availability of adequate fund restricted ICCR to increase its activities and programmes in the country as well as abroad, the Ministry itself had stated that the ICCR's budget recorded only marginal increase over successive years. If inflationary trends and rise in cost of living were also taken into account, ICCR's budget, in real terms, actually stood reduced over the last few years. However, subsequently in their action taken reply to the Committee's observation on budget, the Ministry of External Affairs have stated that the net increase in actual allocation of ICCR during the two years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 has been Rs. 12.88 crores which is way above the normal trends. The Committee feel that such a reply is self- contradictory and should be avoided in future.</p>
9.	31	-do-	<p>The Committee note that Ministry of</p>

			<p>External Affairs have also been incurring expenditure from its capital outlay on behalf of ICCR for construction/purchase of properties for use by the cultural centres abroad, in addition to payment of grants-in-aid which is not indicated separately. The Committee further note that for the establishment of new cultural centres abroad, allocation of additional funds from capital outlay of the Ministry is to be considered by the Ministry to meet ICCR's requirement for the purchase/construction of cultural centre. The Committee expect that paucity of funds which had been a major impediment in previous years will no more be there and through this new arrangement ICCR will be able to meet its future requirements and the target set for the purchase/construction of cultural centres will be achieved without any difficulty.</p>
10.	34	-do-	<p>The Committee note that the Ministry in general and the Council in particular have not made any progress in the matter of raising resources by working in close coordination with civil society and this keeps the Council high and dry as far as the budget is concerned. Getting mere discounts from hotels or donation of Rs. 10.00 lakh are not sufficient to achieve global objectives. The Committee are unable to understand as to why the Ministry/ ICCR are not exploring the possibilities of seeking coordination with important public and private companies of Indian origin and getting sponsorships for their cultural programmes in India and abroad to raise their resources. Even the advertisements of ICCR in Newspapers could be sponsored which will considerably reduce its financial constraints. Coordination, cooperation and intermingling of trade and culture is the order of the day and need of modern age. The Committee are of the view that in line with this trend, the Ministry should without any hesitation explore the possibility of coordinating trade and culture and benefit from it immensely.</p>

			Further efforts should also be made to involve the civil society globally and Indian Diaspora in various countries in this cause. This, in the opinion of the Committee, is certainly one of the better options available to the ICCR to overcome their budgetary constraints.
11.	37	-do-	The Committee had expressed their desire that the ICCR should bring under its schemes the programme of sending Indian students abroad for studies to universities like Harvard University and others who may, perhaps, be willing to offer a couple of scholarships for the Indian students. But ICCR has stated that their scholarship schemes are not linked to the foreign universities and it is unlikely that they would entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students. The Committee are surprised to note how the ministry makes such a hypothetical assumption that foreign universities will not entertain any request for grant of scholarships to Indian students – without practically making any efforts in approaching foreign universities in this regard. Many of the foreign universities have full-fledged Oriental Studies Divisions and Departments of Indology - imparting education of Hindi, Sanskrit and Buddhist studies etc. The Committee are of the strong opinion that ICCR/Ministry can co-ordinate with these departments for obtaining scholarships for Indian students in foreign universities. Many Non-Resident Indians settled abroad have also been patronising and propagating Indian art/culture and music. ICCR can seek the assistance of these people for more vigorous projection of our culture abroad. The Committee further reiterate that ICCR/Ministry must make efforts to get scholarships for Indian students in foreign universities and for this purpose, if required, the help of the Ministry of Human Resource Development may also be taken.
12.	40	-do-	The Committee regret to note that the scholarship allocations meant for certain

			<p>countries have not been optimally utilized. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the scholarship slots earmarked for scholars from a particular country should preferably go to that country and unutilized slots do not go to reserve candidates of other countries who have fully utilized their given slots. For this, the Committee recommend that ICCR should evolve such a system whereby if scholarship slots offered for a particular country remain unutilized – waitlisted candidates from that country should, in the first instance, be offered the scholarships and only in the event of waitlisted candidates not being available, the unutilized slots should be allowed to go to reserved candidates of those countries who have fully utilized their given slots. Further, the Committee are of the considered opinion that the number of seats as also the amount of scholarship being offered to students from the countries having maximum number of Persons of Indian Origin need to be increased so that the number of students coming to our country go up who in turn may act as brand ambassadors for promoting Indian culture abroad.</p>
13.	43	-do-	<p>The Ministry have stated that the question of offering additional airfares to foreign scholars would be considered in the context of availability of sufficient funds. However, the Committee feel that efforts should be made to provide some additional funds for this purpose which in turn will go a long way to enhance our bilateral goodwill globally. The Committee reiterate that the number of airfares may be increased substantially covering central Asia as well as other parts of the world. The Committee also reiterate that the ICCR should take appropriate steps to provide suitable hostel facilities to foreign students for their comfortable stay in the country to avoid their home sickness and easy adjustment with new environment. As the Ministry have overlooked the Committee's view about the review of scholarship, the</p>

			Committee would like to remind the ICCR that scholarships being paid to the scholars should be reviewed biennially.
14.	46	-do-	The Committee still hold the opinion that the council's programme of establishing Chairs and deputing visiting Professors abroad to educate foreign university students in Indian studies and other related subjects are not at all satisfactory. Visiting Chair and Professors abroad play an important role in educating foreign university students, enlightening and influencing the mind of foreign students about India and assisting them to understand India's position on various issues in the right perspective. By maintaining only 17 Chairs and professorship in whole world under the aegis of ICCR can not fulfill the vision and Mission of India's cultural diplomacy. Therefore, the Committee reiterate that more Chairs should be established under the programme and the number of professors being sent abroad to teach Hindi and other Indian languages, particularly where a large number of persons of Indian origin reside should also be increased substantially.
15.	49	-do-	The Committee are of the view that while much attention is being paid on performing arts and to send a number of troupes/groups for performance in various parts of the world, the ICCR is not making much efforts regarding the promotion of contemporary Indian art. The steps taken so far by ICCR to promote contemporary art are not sufficient and up to the desired level. Whatever little recognition Indian contemporary art has received is only through private galleries. The Committee reiterate that to promote Indian contemporary art, to give exposure to Indian art and culture world wide and also to organise festivals and other activities and to exhibit Indian arts at least in key cities of the world, ICCR should come up with some specific action plan. The Committee, therefore, desire that more attention should be

			given to promote our contemporary art and the ICCR in collaboration with Indian Missions abroad should make sincere efforts in this regard.
16.	52	-do-	As per the reply of the Government, in pursuance of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Council has started the production of films within its meagre resources. However, the Committee are of the opinion that production of films in itself is a complicated, time consuming and expensive task and the Committee said nothing which suggested that ICCR should start producing films itself. In any case, the Committee are happy to note that the council is producing a film with its limited resources. The Committee also extend their full support to get additional budgetary resources to produce films on selected interesting subjects. If sufficient budget is made available to the Council easily it may also prove to be an intelligent move. However, for the time being it will be wise on the part of the Council to get the rights for sponsoring Indian popular films/documentaries abroad. Our film industry and advertisement agencies are producing huge amount of useful films and documentaries and so many films/documentaries are also readily available which can be used for the purpose. The Committee reiterate that ICCR may try to select these readily available films which can reflect our tradition and rich cultural heritage globally and manage to get the rights of these films with sub-titles into major languages. This is the easiest way to create impression worldwide in a short span of time and may prove to be useful in rapid promotion and dissemination of our culture across the globe.
17.	57.	-do-	The Committee are not satisfied with the reply of Government that the recommendation is a inter-Ministerial subject and the Ministry is examining the matter. The Committee believe that there is lot of scope to revamp and reorient the council's functioning in keeping with the changing circumstances the world over.

			<p>The identification of organisations and institutions, which may supplement the efforts towards strengthening our cultural Diplomacy, is not a difficult task. The Committee are of the opinion that to achieve the objectives of ICCR and also enhance its activities, an increased coordination and greater involvement of different wings of Government of India is the need of the hour. The Committee reiterate that Ministry of External Affairs should make all out efforts to form a coordination Committee as early as possible, which may include representative from the Ministries of External Affairs, Tourism, Information Technology, Human Resources Development (Department of Culture and Education) and Commerce as its members. This co-ordination Committee according to them should get together to work out annual plans for the purpose. Without the help of other Ministries/Departments it is not possible to achieve the goal. ICCR is representing India in promoting Indian culture & civilisation abroad. Hence, It is all the more necessary to coordinate with other Ministries in properly projecting India. Since all Government departments abroad are under the purview of Indian Missions, it is easier to coordinate with them. As Many State capitals of the World have Indian Tourist Offices, ICCR can coordinate with these offices for promoting culture as well. Only such steps can bring about and ensure a symbiotic unity and all separate units working together can really lift our cultural diplomacy. The Committee are also hopeful that Ministry of External Affairs have by now may have initiated suitable steps in this direction and the Ministry will leave no stone unturned as far as the effective projection of our cultural heritage is concerned.</p>
18.	60	-do-	<p>Regarding inadequate staff strength, the Council has candidly accepted that at the level of Assistant Programme Officer (Section Officer) no direct recruitment had taken place since 1996 because Staff Selection Commission had</p>

			<p>declined to nominate candidates to the autonomous bodies. The Council has also informed the Committee that it is still pursuing the matter with Staff Selection Commission. The Committee are sorry to note that only after the passage of seven long years, the Council has now proposed an overall restructuring of the ICCR cadre in consultation with Cadre Cell, Ministry of External Affairs. Further, the Council is also in the process of reforming its service rule in order to give more promotional avenues to the staff of the Council. The Committee feel that fulfillment of the staff strength, opening of more promotional avenues and incentives to raise the morale of the staff should be among the top priorities of the Council and the least the Council can do is to fulfill its sanctioned staff strength immediately.</p>
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