

06

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

(2009-2010)

FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[Action Taken on the recommendations contained in the Second Report
(15th Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of
External Affairs for the year 2009-10]

SIXTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

May, 2010/Vaisakha, 1932 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 7th May, 2010
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 7th May, 2010



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI
May, 2010/Vaisakha, 1932 (Saka)

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2009-2010)**

Chairman

Shri Yashwant Sinha*

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| 5. | Ms. Kiran Bhargava | - | Executive Assistant |

* Shri Yashwant Sinha has been nominated as a Member and appointed as Chairman of the Committee w.e.f. 6.1.2010 vice Smt. Sushma Swaraj resigned from the Chairpersonship of the Committee w.e.f. 1.1.2010.

\$ Nominated w.e.f. 2.3.2010 vice Shri Shivraj V. Patil ceased to be the Member of the Committee due to his resignation w.e.f. 21.1.2010

@ Shri Ashwani Kumar ceased to be Member of the Committee consequent upon his retirement from Rajya Sabha w.e.f. 9.4.2010 and re-nominated as Member of the Committee w.e.f. 26.4.2010

Dr. Shashi Tharoor has been nominated to this committee w.e.f. 30.04.2010

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on External Affairs (2009-2010) having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this 6th Report (15th Lok Sabha) on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the 2nd Report (15th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2009-10.

2. The 2nd Report was presented on 3rd December, 2009. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the recommendations/observations contained in the Report were received on 8th March, 2010.

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Action Taken Report at their sitting held on 5th May, 2010. The Minutes of the sitting of the Committee have been reproduced at Appendix-I to the Report.

4. An analysis of the Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the 2nd Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (15th Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI
05 May, 2010
Vaisakha 15, 1932 (Saka)

YASHWANT SINHA,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs

CHAPTER – I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs deals with the Action Taken by Government on the observations/recommendations contained in their Second Report on Demands for Grants (2009-10) of the Ministry of External Affairs which was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 3rd December, 2009

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

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

Recommendation Nos.1,2,5,6,7,8,11,12,13,14,18,20

Total-12

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

Recommendation Nos. 10 and 19

Total-02

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

Recommendation No. 3

Total- 01

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

Recommendation Nos. 4,9,15,16,17

Total-05

3. The Committee desire that final replies to the recommendation/observations for which only interim replies have been given by the government should be furnished within three months of the presentation of this Report.

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

(Recommendation No.3)

5. The Committee took serious note of the situation arising from the non-availability of interpretation facility from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa*. Our dignitaries are asked to speak in English instead of Hindi for only reason that the interpreter does not know Hindi. The Committee were of the view that this was ludicrous situation. They were given to understand that various proposals for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa* had been made but nothing concrete had been achieved so far. The Committee, therefore, recommended that necessary steps should be taken to develop a cadre of interpreters for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa* without any further delay.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“MEA has a small in-house cadre of Interpreters for the major UN languages, who are recruited through the UPSC. These interpreters serve both at headquarters of the Ministry, as well as in some of the Missions and Posts abroad. It is true that MEA's interpreters are not formally trained for interpretation from Hindi to foreign languages or vice versa. However, almost all of the internal interpreters of the Ministry have a working knowledge of Hindi, and they can be used for interpretation between Hindi and the foreign language they have learnt. Moreover, all Foreign Service officers are expected to learn a foreign language, and many of them retain sufficient fluency in their allotted language to be able to interpret for a dignitary in case of need. During their training in the Foreign Service Institute, IFS probationers are imparted classes on the Official Language Policy of Government of India. From this year, a capsule on Hindi language has also been started for IFS trainees. “

7. The Committee had recommended to develop a cadre of interpreters for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa*. It was done in the light of the information available with the Committee about a major exercise undertaken in the year 2003 to assess the availability of interpreters from Hindi language to foreign languages. In that context, the Territorial Divisions, Hindi Section and Missions abroad were asked to identity the availability of

individuals who could be used for interpretation from Hindi to foreign languages but nothing concrete has been achieved so far. The Committee are not satisfied at all with the Government's reply and desire that the Ministry should carry forward the earlier exercise to a logical conclusion.

The Committee are also informed that almost all of the internal interpreters of the Ministry have a working knowledge of Hindi and they could be used for interpretation between Hindi and the foreign languages. The Committee therefore, also desire that an in-house capacity building should be undertaken in the Ministry's existing Interpreter cadre by imparting due training to the existing interpreters to enhance their skills for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages.

(Recommendation No.4)

8. The Committee noted that the funds provided for International publicity to the Ministry and efforts made in this regard were not adequate and there was no match in the actual requirement and funds that were provided. The Committee in their earlier Reports had also stressed upon the need for maximizing publicity efforts through Missions/Posts. While emphasizing the importance of external publicity, the Committee reiterated that adequate funds should be provided to the Ministry for advertising and external publicity and holistic approach should be adopted with the use of traditional as well as modern media for projection of India to the world in a better way.

9. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

"Details of Foreign Journalists hosted under External Publicity (XP) Hospitality:

- Hosted 6 member delegation from Radio Fana, Ethiopia in coordination with All India Radio- April 13-19, 2009
- Hosted Vice President of Xinhua News Agency alongwith two senior editors from Xinhua -19-23, April '09

- Hosted 10 editors from Anglo phone countries viz Nigeria, Lesotho, Zambia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Namibia, Ghana and Uganda- April 18-28 '09 (As a run up to the India Africa Forum Summit)
- Hosted 19 journalists from Anglophone countries viz Ethiopia, Gabarone, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Seychelles, Zambia for training programme (Print and TV journalism) with Jamia Millia- 18 May-5 June '09 (As a run up to the India Africa Forum Summit)
- Hosted 12 editors from Sri Lanka from June 6-13, '09
- Hosted 12 senior editors from Arab countries viz Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria & UAE- June 21-18, 09
- Hosted 6 editors from Bangladesh from Aug 9-16 '09
- Hosted one eminent photographer from Malaysia from 12-20 October '09
- Hosted 8 journalists from Nepal–Dec 11-17 '09
- Hosted 7 editors from China from Jan 14 -23 '10
- Facilitated drawing up a program for seven member group of editors from Sri Lankan Parliamentary Journalists Association.

Launch of India-Africa Connect Website:

External Affairs Minister Shri S. M. Krishna launched the 'India-Africa Connect Website' on August 17, 2009 in New Delhi. The website was jointly developed by XP Division along with IANS and is devoted to promoting relations with our African counterparts, and hosts news, features and essential information on India and African countries, with special emphasis on development cooperation. The website was launched with the aim of facilitating closer cooperation between India and Africa. The website can be accessed at <http://www.indiaafricaconnect.in> and a link is also available on MEA website home page.

Training, Workshops, Conferences and Special Events:

The External Publicity (XP) Division, on recommendations of the concerned Territorial Divisions, organized specialized training programmes and other events for media from neighbouring countries like Afghanistan. 19 journalists (*8 AV and 11 Print*) from 10 Anglo phone African countries were also invited, for a three week specially designed course, in consultation with Jamia Millia Islamia University. The division also hosted journalists from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and from Gulf countries during this period. Meetings for them were organized with senior officials and academics, as well as visits to centres of excellence. The Division also facilitated the placement of correspondents from IANS and PTI in select African countries to enhance mutual understanding and bridge the information gap.

Booklet on General Elections:

To disseminate accurate information about General Elections in April- May 2009, which have been hailed as the world's largest democratic exercise, the Division published a compact and colourful handbook, containing useful statistics and detailing the manner in which elections are conducted in India.

This served as a handy reference for foreign readership and journalists in particular. A web link to the booklet was also placed on the MEA website.

Outreach Activities

The XP Division organized a number of outreach activities to highlight the various contours of India's foreign policy with a view to encourage discussion and debate and to benefit from the view of outside and independent experts. These include:-

(a) A Delegation visit of **Friends of India Group of the UK Conservative party** in July 2009. Apart from meetings with Hon'ble Speaker, Minister of Human Resource Development, Chairman of the Unique Identification Authority and MOS for Rural Development, the delegation was briefed by senior officials of MEA and the National Security Council Secretariat. The delegation also visited Kochi where they had meetings with the State Government and visited the Naval establishment.

(b) A delegation visit of **Liberal Democratic Friends of India Group** from UK in Sep 2009. Apart from meetings with Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha and Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport & Highways, the delegation was briefed by senior officials of MEA, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Security Council Secretariat, Center for Policy Research, and business and industry representatives. The delegation also visited National Defence Academy and Television Institute of India.

(c) A delegation visit of **Slovene Parliamentary Friendship Group** from Slovenia in Nov 2009. Apart from meeting with MOS (PK), MOIA and Mayor of Delhi, the delegation also interacted with FICCI and IBEF and visited few business organizations including a KPO, *Evalueserve* and a biopharma firm, *Jubilant Organosys*. The delegation also witnessed the proceedings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

(d) A visit by **Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar**, Vice Chancellor, Gujrat Vidyapeeth to Slovenia to deliver **lectures on Mahatma Gandhi** and his legacy. He also participated in an International conference on Mahatma Gandhi, held in Slovenia.

(e) **Celebration of the International Day of Non Violence** by our Missions/Posts located in various countries. The programmes included lectures, seminars, conferences, photo exhibitions, film festivals, debates, competitions for school children, cultural shows, etc. The events were organized mostly in association with the Indian Diaspora.

(f) Ongoing research project on **Indo-GCC relations** organized by Gulf Research Centre(GRC), Dubai. The research project involves

experts from GRC and India and the first meeting was held in June 2009 in Dubai and the second in Jan 2010 in Delhi.

(g) A 26-member delegation visit by **PIO journalists** from 15 countries was organized during PBD 2010 in January. In addition to participation in PBD the journalists were briefed by CII, IDSA and Planning commission on India's economy, our security scenario and efforts to fasten inclusive development and economic growth in India. The group also visited Mumbai Stock Exchange and Film City.

(f) A 6- member delegation visit of **Permanent Representatives** of Pacific Small Island Developing States was organized on 23-31 Jan 2010.

The delegation witnessed the Republic Day Parade, attended President's 'At Home' and witnessed Beating Retreat in addition to meetings with EAM, Minister for Environment and Forests and a short briefing by CII on the economic scenario in India. The delegation also visited Kirloskar and Thermax in Pune and ISRO and Infosys in Bangalore and received a briefing from TCIL on the Pan African E Network Project and its relevance for the Pacific Island States.

The XP Division also extended support to various organizations for conduct of seminars, conferences/bilateral dialogues which included:-

(a) The **8th India-Korea Dialogue** on 20-21 May 2009 jointly organized by Indian Council for Research on Economic Relations and Seoul Forum of International Affairs.

(b) **International Seminar** titled 'Society, Culture and Politics' in Karakoram Himalayas on 23-24 July, 2009 organized by Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation.

(c) **International seminar** on 'Peace and Stability in Afghanistan: the Way Ahead' on 6-7 October, 2009 organized by The United Service Institution of India.

(d) **4th Sustainability Summit** organized by CII on 25-26 Nov 2009 wherein JS (PD) had addressed the session on Sustainable Business Opportunities in Emerging Countries.

(e) An **international seminar** titled 'Cooperative Development, Peace and Security in South and Central Asia' organized by CRRID on 1-2 March, 2009 in Chandigarh.

Audio-Visual Publicity

PD Division prepares documentary films aimed at projecting different facets of India. Several documentaries were completed during the year including: -

- (a) Can You Hear Me (a film on Community Radio revolution)
- (b) Through Lens Clearly : Raghu Rai's India
- (c) Indian Elections-A Mammoth Democratic Exercise
- (d) Kashmir Elections 2008
- (e) Spirit of India
- (f) Religious Linkages Between Bhutan & Ladakh
- (g) Watering the Grassroots (a film on microfinance)
- (h) Negotiating Justice (a film on India's Position on Climate Change)
- (i) Cinema with a Purpose (a film on communication of values and tradition through Cinema)
- (j) Mast Qalandar (a film on three Sufi saints)
- (k) Partners in Progress : Indo-US Relations
- (l) India in the Moon (Chandrayan 1)
- (m) Soldiers of Peace (a film on engagement of men in uniform with civilians in peace time)
- (n) Fragments of History (a film on the life of Ms. Subhalakshmi)

Several documentaries produced by the division were **telecast/screened by foreign/Indian TV channels** and in film festivals. The details are as below:-

(a) Documentaries "Timeless India" and "The Jewel in the Lotus" were screened in **Phnom Penh** on 19.03.09 on ITEC Day.

(b) **Sri Lankan TV** channel screened documentary "India Wins Freedom" and "Quit India" on the occasion of India's Republic Day. In addition three other documentaries namely "Sufi traditions of India", "Beating Retreat" and "Bismillah & Benaras" were also telecast in the month of August 09.

(c) Documentaries namely "Indian Elections – A Mammoth Exercise" and "Spirit of India" were telecast on **Doordarshan** in May/July 2009.

(d) Mission in **Bogotá** has screened documentaries produced by PD Division at the Bogotá International Film Festival in October 2009.

(e) Documentaries namely "Commonwealth Games 2010", "The Sky is not the Limit", "Dismantling the Digital Divide"; "Friends for evermore" and "Beyond Tradition" were telecast on **Tanzanian TV** channel 'Smart' in Sep 2009.

(f) Documentary "The Story of Gitanjali" was screened at the recently concluded **IIFC Goa** 2009.

(g) Our Missions/Posts in **Accra, Ho Chi Minh City, Mexico City, Amman, Reykjavik, Tel Aviv, Minsk & Paris** organized film festivals/screening with 35mm Hindi films sent by the division.

India Perspectives

The monthly journal, *India Perspectives* has been the flagship magazine of the Ministry and over the years, it has grown in popularity. The journal focuses on a wide range of subjects varying from India's emergence as a fast growing economy, to its rich cultural heritage, its literature, diverse wildlife and its vibrant film industry, as also the country's prowess in the fields of information technology, healthcare and other related fields of human endeavor. The journal published in sixteen languages, is distributed to readers in all corners of the globe through the Indian Missions/Posts abroad. *India Perspectives* is also available in the electronic format in all its sixteen language editions on the Ministry's website. The journal was distributed for the first time ever at the world's largest Book Fair in Frankfurt and also at the London Book Fair where India was the market focus country as well as at the Turin International Book Fair. The journal was also sent for distribution at the film festivals held at Italy, Russia, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Print Publicity

Projecting India's image through books and publications is an integral part of the XP Division's publicity strategy abroad. Books on Indian economy, foreign policy, art & culture, history & science and technology etc. were supplied to Missions abroad for presentation purpose and use in their libraries. Many of our Missions celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's birthday on 2nd October, 2009 as the International Day of non-violence. The division has supplied books on Mahatma Gandhi to these Missions for distribution on this occasion. Various Journals & magazines were also dispatched to Missions/posts abroad.

The following books/publications were printed by the division during the period:-

- (a) A Coffee table book titled "Himalaya with Lens & Passion" capturing the beauty of Himalayan region by Mr. Ashok Dilwali.
- (b) Printing of booklet on Climate change "The Road to Copenhagen: India's position on Climate Change issues".
- (b) Booklet on Prime Minister's visit to USA & France.

The XP Division also extended financial support to our Missions/posts in Berlin, Slovenia, London, Sofia, Bogotá, and Minsk for bringing out publications such as "**The Story of My Experiments with Truth**", in Slovene language, "**Glimpses of World History**" in Bulgarian language etc.

Brief description of Publicity outreach activities of a few randomly selected Missions as per the general guidelines of the Ministry keeping in view the local requirements of their stations:

1. Washington: Disseminating positive, development related information on India; exhibiting promoting and exposing the rich and vast cultural heritage of India in the US. Through press releases interviews, background briefings, distributing India Perspective magazines, hosting visits of schools and college students to the embassy. Bringing out leather bound executive agenda carrying information on Indian history culture polity etc. Motivating various think tanks in writing op-ed articles. The Mission also upgraded the official website.

2. Kuala Lumpur: The Mission promoted Indian education and also brought out handbook for doing business with Indian companies. The international seminar on the Buddhist heritage of Gujarat was suitably highlighted and helped reinforce Diaspora links to their roots.

3. Colombo: The Mission highlighted the development assistance provided, organized Kadirgamar memorial lecture, distributed India Perspective magazine, publicized the ITEC scholarships, and issued press statements.

4. London: The Mission upgraded the website. Media was encouraged to highlight India's achievements. The inhouse fortnightly publication 'India digest' was regularly brought out.

5. Warsaw: The Mission brought out special supplement on the visit of Polish PM to India. Embassy's newsletter was regularly brought out and summer film festival was organized.

6. Phnom Penh: The Mission arranged publication of Missions' quarterly magazine in Khmer language for free distribution as well as special supplements in local newspapers. It also presented books to major universities.

7. Ottawa: Photo exhibition 'the Sikhs – faith tempered through fire' was organized., Indian classical dance performance was also organized. Books were presented.

8. Prague: Activities included India Week celebrations, Indian film festival. It also established a Bollywood film library with Czech sub-titles, presentation of books and CDs on music dance and films.

9. Tokyo: Festival of India in Japan was organized in 2007. Mission promoted Indian IT companies, tea and culture. The Mission also organized lectures and visits to schools in its outreach activities.

10. Brasilia: The outreach activities included publication of fortnightly newsletter in Portuguese, printing booklet India Brazil relations in

Portuguese and publication of Discover India kits. Indian food festivals were also organized.

11. The Hague: A month-long Festival of India-Amsterdam was held in the Netherlands in November 2008. The mega event was formally inaugurated by Princess Maxima (wife of Dutch Crown Prince) and Government of India was represented by President, ICCR. During the Festival, 127 India-related events were organized across 30 cultural foundations in and around Amsterdam. The events include Indian music concerts, classical and contemporary Indian dance performances, symposium, and seminars on the Indian culture, music, literature and dance. A special volume on India-Netherlands relations titled “Changing Images: Lasting Visions” was published and publicity material were also distributed. The Festival was organized by Festival of India Foundation–Amsterdam (a conglomeration of 30 premier cultural foundations) in partnership with ICCR. “

10. The Committee welcome the external publicity efforts made by the Government. The Committee however, feel that the funds being provided for international publicity are not adequate and there is a vast gap between the actual requirement and the funds that are allocated. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that adequate funds should be provided to fill the gap between the actual requirement and the funds available for advertising and external publicity.

(Recommendation No.9)

11. Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project in Myanmar was an ambitious project to assure better connectivity. The Committee noted that the allocation for the same was substantially reduced during RE 2008-09 stage. The Committee were not convinced with the reply of the Government that the reduction had to be effected due to delay in signing the agreement with the consultant. The Committee were of the opinion that had the Government taken care to sign the agreement earlier, then the need of making drastic cut at RE stage would not have arisen. The Committee had been informed that actual work would start by the end of the year 2009-10. The Committee suggested that the timeframe should be followed scrupulously in respect of the project so that such situation does not recur.

12. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“Kaladan project envisages connectivity between India ports on the eastern sea board and Sittwe Port in Myanmar and then through riverine transport and by road to Mizoram, thus providing an alternate route for North Eastern Indian for the transportation of goods.

Progress made during the Year: Inland Waterways Authority of India, the Project Development Consultant, has updated the DPR of the IWT component after joint visits to the sites along with Myanmar authorities. Due to nature of the terrain two of the bidders also visited the site before they participated in the pre-bid meeting.

The pre-bid meeting was held on 24th Nov, 2009. This was followed by submission of bids by the bidders to IWAI on 1st February, 2010. The technical bids have been opened by IWAI and are being assessed and thereafter the financial bids would be opened. The actual construction work is expected to start after appointment of the main contractor done after selection of the bid.”

13. The Committee are not satisfied with the pace of progress of Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project. The Committee note that the technical bids are being assessed and thereafter the financial bids will be opened. The Committee, therefore, desire the Ministry to expedite the process of completion of bidding process and appointment of contractor to ensure that the actual construction work can begin at the earliest. The Committee would also like to reiterate that the timelines should be adhered to strictly so that no surrenders take place at the end of the year and the possibility of cost and time overrun in the project is minimized.

(Recommendation No.15)

14. The Committee took serious note of inordinate delay and repeated postponement of the launching of Pilot Phase of Passport Seva Project. The project was due for launching in July-August 2009 but revised to 1st October, 2009. The Government had assured that pilot phase would be launched on 13th November, 2009 in two cities i.e. Bengaluru and Chandigarh. But the Committee were surprised to find that inspite of Government’s categorical assurance, the project had not been launched so far. The Committee expressed their strong displeasure that despite assurance given to the Committee, it had not been done. The Committee wanted that this project should be launched without further delay and after due testing and checking of the software and taking into account the feasibility and results, the Government might implement this project on pan-India basis. The Committee further hoped that through this project, the Passport Issuance System in the country would become simpler, speedier, public friendly and delivery oriented. The Committee wanted that the Government should apprise the Committee in this regard.

15. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“The previous pilot launch dates of the project were based on the inputs received from the Service Provider (SP), M/s TCS Limited. However, the Ministry could not adhere to these dates as during testing of the Application Software, critical errors were found. The SP has paid Rs.32 lakhs to the Ministry for delays in terms of the Agreement.

As a passport is of security sensitive nature, the Ministry wanted to resolve all the critical and sensitive errors/issues before launching the Project. So far, four rounds of testing by the Third Party Audit Agency under the Department of Information Technology have been conducted. As of now, majority of the errors have been rectified by the SP. Further, a limited test on the Application Software is planned from February 2010, to reconfirm closure of defects. Also, Index checking, which is core of the issuance system, and PAC (Prior Approval Category) checking are thoroughly examined to ensure that checking is comprehensive.

After the above processes are completed, the Ministry would decide on the dates for pilot launch of the Project.”

16. The Committee had taken note of Ministry’s commitment to resolve all the critical and sensitive errors/issues before launching the Passport Seva Project. But the Ministry has failed in adhering to several proposed dates for launching the project and that process is still going on. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that after due testing and checking of the software and considering the feasibility and results, the project should be launched at the earliest on pan India basis. The Committee also desire that they may be apprised in this regard from time to time.

(Recommendation No.16)

17. Issuance of e-passport was another ambitious project of the Government, which was launched as a Pilot Project In respect of official and diplomatic passports. The Committee were given to understand that this project would be rolled out in general category also by the end of 2009. But the Committee were surprised to find that e-passports would not be mandatory for general public. The Committee were of the view that owing to huge benefits of this service for checking the issuance of fake passports the Government might consider to extend this service to general category as well in a phased manner.

18. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“It is envisaged that issue of e-passports will be extended to the ordinary category of passports subject of supply of the booklets by the India Security Press, Nashik. The tender process for procurement of the electronic chip, to be used in the e-booklets, by ISP is already underway. As soon as the booklets are available, e-passports will be rolled out for ordinary category also. Though all the non-e-passports will not be recalled, whoever applies after that would be issued only e-passport.”

19. The Committee are informed that the issuance of e-passports would be extended to the ordinary category of passports subject to supply of the booklets by India Security Press (ISP) Nasik and availability of electronic chips through tender. The tender process for procurement of the electronic chips is underway. The Committee had desired that e-passport service should be extended to general category in a phased manner. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that all issues related to technical aspects should be taken care of so that issuance of e-passports for general category may start at the earliest and it may be extended to all ordinary category passport holders in due course.

(Recommendation No.17)

20. Cultural diplomacy is an integral ingredient of Ministry's overall diplomatic endeavours. Projection of India's extensive soft power and civilizational strength to the global audience would help India to directly engage with the people and built up a positive image for India. The Committee appreciated the new initiatives undertaken by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) such as holding Indology Conferences, establishment of Chairs and opening up of new Cultural Centres abroad etc. There was an urgent need to spread the arenas of cultural engagement particularly with the countries of Latin America, Africa and South East Asia. The Committee desired that more Cultural Centres should be set up globally besides diversifying the activities of the existing ones. Concerted efforts should be made for promotion of Indian studies and India centric studies in various Universities abroad. Holistic approach should be adopted while utilizing the additional allocation besides formulation of integrated and futuristic plan for effective propagation of India's soft power abroad.

21. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“Chairs Abroad

- The Council invited proposals twice, from all over the world for establishment of Short-term Chair of Indian Studies in leading Universities/Institutions under its ‘Expansion Plan’.
- Initially, the Council approved 23 Chairs (5 Long-Term + 18 Short-Term) under its ‘Expansion Plan’. Later on, the Council approved 19 more Chairs (9 Long-Term + 6 Short-Term) under the plan. Therefore, a total of 42 Chairs are under currently under ‘Expansion Plan’.
- Under its ‘Expansion Plan’, the Council received a proposal from Mexico in Latin America; proposals from Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius and Nigeria in Africa; and proposals from Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore in South East Asia.
- Presently, the Council has signed MoU with Lagos Business School, Abuja, Nigeria for establishment of Short-Term Chair at the institute. The Council has authorized Indian Missions in Singapore and Mauritius to sign an agreement on Council’s behalf for establishment of Chair. Further, the Council had conveyed its, in principle, agreement alongwith the terms and conditions for establishment of Chairs in Mexico, Ethiopia, Kenya, Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia. The host Universities in these countries had been asked to send an agreement based on the terms and conditions forwarded. On finalization and signing of the agreement the Chairs will start functioning.
- Besides the above, Missions in Croatia (UoZ), Denmark (CBS), Slovenia (UoL), Yerevan (YSLU), Greece (AUEB), USA (JMU), Germany (HU), South Korea (HUFS), Canada (UoT), Japan (TU) have signed agreements on Council’s behalf (Total 10). Out of these, 7 Professors have been deputed/designated to Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia, Yerevan, Greece, USA), Germany.
- Missions in Azerbaijan (AUL), Fiji (FIT), UK (KCL), Sri-Lanka (UoC) and Ireland (TCD) have been authorized to sign agreement on Council’s behalf (Total 5).
- MoUs received from Prague (CU), Netherlands (LU), Russia (PU) and Dhaka are (Total 4) are being examined/ negotiated.
- Proposals have been approved in principle and MoUs are awaited/invited from Turkmenistan (Urdu), Iran, Kazakhstan (2), Russia (MGIMO), Netherlands (AU), Sweden, Mongolia, Austria, Portugal, Japan (RU), Bahrain, and New Zealand (Total 13).

Outgoing Cultural Delegations

As part of its regular programme to strengthen relations with countries and promote Indian Culture all over the world through soft power, ICCR regularly sponsors various performing art groups abroad.

Festival Unit was established in the ICCR in 2006 to look after exclusively major Indian manifestations in the form of Festivals of India abroad. During the year, 2006-07 the Council coordinated various events such as film festivals, food festival, exhibitions, seminar and performing art etc. for the major Festivals of India in Brussels which took place from 7 October, 2006 to 26 January, 2007.

After successful conclusion of the Festival of India in Belgium, ICCR organized several festivals such as Festival of India in Japan, Festival of India in Israel, mini festivals in Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. During the year 2009, the Council organized Year of India in Russia.

The Council has planned the following festivals to be organized in the near future:

- 1) **Spain** Planned for June, 2010. A few cultural programmes and an exhibition of Musical Instruments.
- 2) **Iran** An Iranian Festival was organized in India in 2008. Return Indian Festival in Iran was planned for last year but could be held because of non receipt of clearance from the Iranian authorities in time. Now planned for April/ May, 2010.
- 3) **Saudi Arabia**: The MoU for holding reciprocal festivals in Saudi Arabia and India is ready and expected to be signed very soon. We have tentatively scheduled this festival in 2010.
- 4) **Qatar**: As part of the Year long cultural celebrations scheduled in Doha to mark its nomination as the capital of the Arab Culture it has been decided to hold an "Indian Week" in Qatar in April, 2010.
- 5) **Namibia** Planned for April/ May, 2010. Decision on this was taken during Namibian President's visit to India last year. We have proposed dance programme, an instrumental music, yoga demonstration cum lecture, a lecture on Mahatma Gandhi, a small film festival and a photo-exhibition for the Week of India.
- 6) **Brazil** The Sangeet Natak Academy has already done necessary ground work and is coordinating the festival. ICCR would be sending performing art groups after receiving the suggestions from SNA.

- 7) **Mexico** : The Sangeet Natak Academy has already done necessary ground work and is coordinating the festival. ICCR would be sending performing art groups after receiving the suggestions from SNA.
- 8) **New Zealand**: A festival is planned in New Zealand in Second half of the year 2010 to promote awareness about Commonwealth Games.
- 9) **Bangladesh** Proposal for mini festival in Bangladesh is at the exploration stage.
- 10) **Australia**: Likely to be held in the later part of the year.
- 11) **Tanzania**: A festival is proposed to be organized in Dar-es-Salam in mid 2010 to create awareness and publicity for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games.

Outgoing Visitors Programme

Sharing ideas and holding free discussions has been a part of India's Cultural tradition. In keeping with this tradition and as part of its effort to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries, the Council facilitate exchange of scholars, intellectuals, academicians and artistes under the Outgoing Visitors Programme.

Under the programme distinguished Indian intellectuals, scholars, academicians and artistes are funded and facilitated to participate in seminars, symposia, study tours and conferences abroad.

During the period from April, 2009 to December, 2009, the Council sponsored the visit of 50 eminent scholars to the various parts of the world.

Scholarship Division

One of the major activities of ICCR is to administer a large range of scholarship programmes, with a view to building bridges of understanding and developing better appreciation of India in countries around the world. By way of background information, it may be noted that in the current academic year, 2225 scholarship slots have been provided by ICCR under various schemes. While 675 of these were offered to Afghanistan alone, another 500 were granted to African countries. ICCR Scholarships are offered to students from around 90 countries wishing to pursue undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral, professional and fine arts education in India.

At present, there are over 3500 students in India under various scholarship programmes administered by ICCR on its own, or under agency work arrangement. Of these, 1654 are Afghan students. Other nationalities that have a substantial representation on ICCR Scholarship rolls include Nepal (245), Bangladesh (281), Sri Lanka (208), Iraq (83), Maldives

An inter-Ministerial Committee on the Welfare of Foreign Students was constituted in July 2008 under the Chairmanship of DG, ICCR, with the mandate to look into various aspects related to the welfare of foreign students and to recommend measures to improve the conditions they encounter in India. Having intensively interacted with all stakeholders, including the Universities and institutes concerned, the Committee submitted a comprehensive report to PMO later in the year. After PMO's approval, the report was circulated to all concerned for the implementation of the recommendations, and ICCR was tasked with monitoring the progress on this front.

Welfare measures taken by ICCR Offices around the country include (i) the reception of foreign students upon arrival and their exhaustive briefing on Indian customs, religions, culture and way of life through interactive orientation courses; (ii) the decentralization of scholarship payments so that the students do not have to wait for their stipends to come from Delhi; (iii) revision of scholarship rates w.e.f. 1st July 2009; (iv) assistance in opening of bank accounts to facilitate scholarship payments on a quarterly basis and their withdrawal through ATM; (v) assistance and advice for finding accommodation outside the college/university hostel in case of requirement; (vi) organization of language classes wherever possible; (vii) the appointment of International Students Advisors in Universities that host a substantial number of foreign students; (viii) Participation of foreign students in study tours organized by the University/Institute concerned; (ix) organization by ICCR of free Summer/Winter Camps (the last in December 2009) in different parts of the country for foreign students – both ICCR Scholars as well as self-financing students - every year as a recreational and familiarization activity, under the supervision of a Liaison Officer from the Council; (x) the organization of an annual Festival for foreign students to celebrate the International Students Day held on the birth anniversary of India's first Education Minister and the Founding President of ICCR, Maulana Azad, on November 11. (In 2009, our Missions in countries from which we receive a large number of students were provided grants for the celebration of the International Students Day with the participation of India-educated alumni.); (xi) updating of the ICCR Alumni Data Bank with the help of our Regional Offices and our Missions abroad; (xii) financial assistance to needy self-financing students in case of emergency; the opening of several new ICCR Regional Offices in cities like Varanasi and Cuttak, and their location on the campus of the concerned University, thus making it easier for foreign students to obtain assistance and guidance; (xiii) the involvement of foreign students with cultural activities conducted by ICCR HQs as well as by our Regional Offices (for example, foreign students are being regularly invited to the Horizon Series programmes organized in Delhi or elsewhere by the Council) and (xiv) the provision of online information, through the ICCR website, on the various ICCR Scholarship Schemes on offer .

Conferences & Seminars

As a part of Expansion Plan, it was proposed that ICCR would hold six Indology Conferences.. This was planned that the conference would

help to enhance networking between foreign Indologists and also bring new vision to Indological studies. The aim was to invite 20-30 scholars at a reputed local university/education Institute in the capital town. The aim was to identify 6 scholars each from India, host country and the region

To achieve this goal, conferences were proposed at Sofia (Bulgaria), Almay (Kazakhstan), Moscow (Russia), Budapest (Hungary), Prague (Czech Republic), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), and Jakarta (Indonesia).

So far, the Council has successfully organized 2 conferences- in Sofia, Bulgaria (24-26 Sept., 2009) and Almaty (Kazakhstan) (19-20 Nov., 2009). Apart from India and the host country, scholars from neighboring countries also participated in these Conferences. Update on Indology Conference is enclosed.

Apart from this the Council is also undertaking Buddhist Conferences at Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos and Bangladesh .

In addition to this Council is also supporting Nav Nalanda Vihar Mahavihara, Bihar, Calicut Univeristy, Delhi University, JNU, New Delhi, Allahabad University, JMI, New Delhi, IIT etc. for organizing different Seminars/Conferences related to Indian Art and Culture.

The proceedings are aimed to be published in English for better outreach.

OPENING OF NEW CULTURAL CENTRES

Under the 7 point plan, ICCR is establishing a series of Indian Cultural Centres to expand the cultural reach and promote India's "soft power" abroad. Under its proposed expansion plans, the Council is opening Cultural Centres in our immediate neighbourhood, the extended neighbours, P-5 capitals in Africa and Latin America. The following are the places where the Council has already established its Cultural Centres recently:-

Indian Cultural Centre in Bangkok (Thailand):

Honourable President, ICCR inaugurated the newly established Cultural Centre at Jasmine City Building, Bangkok during his visit from 22nd to 24th September, 2009. A director and three India based teachers in the stream of Bharatnatyam, Yoga and Sitar have been deputed to make the Cultural Centre operational.

Indian Cultural Centre in Tokyo (Japan):

Honorable President, ICCR inaugurated the Cultural Centre in Tokyo on 25th September, 2009. The Centre is a part of the new Chancery complex and is equipped with a modern multipurpose hall. Director of the Centre is on MEA strength and two India based teachers in the stream of Yoga and Classical Vocal cum Tabla have been deputed to make the Centre fully operational. Besides, two more local teachers are going to be appointed

shortly by the Centre. Interior decoration of the Centre has already been done by installing equipment, official furniture and musical instruments.

Indian Cultural Centre in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia):

Property for the Cultural Centre in Kuala Lumpur has been leased from 20th July, 2009 and the interior work has been completed. Three teachers in the stream of Tabla, Yoga and Carnatic Music are currently conducting classes in Kuala Lumpur. Moreover, an India-based Director has already taken charge of the Cultural Centre to look after the day-to-day activities of the Centre.

Indian Cultural Centre, Abu Dhabi:

The Cultural Centre at Abu Dhabi was formally inaugurated by Vice-President of ICCR, Prof. Syed Shahid Mehdi, on the 15th of December, 2009. The unused Consular block has been developed as the Cultural Centre. An India-based Director will be joining the Centre in April, 2010.

Indian Cultural Centre, Dhaka (Bangladesh):

In Dhaka, ICCR has provided sanction for complete renovation of the premises at Dhanmodi and Gulshan as well as purchase of new office equipment, furniture and hiring of local staff. The multipurpose facility available with the High Commission in Gulshan, Dhaka area, has been extensively upgraded. The Cultural Centre would be inaugurated by President, ICCR in March, 2010.

In addition, we have been working on proposals for establishing Cultural Centres in Lagos, Ho Chi Minh City, Washington, Sao Paulo, Paris, Yangon, Thimpu, Dar-e-Salaam, Budapest and Mexico. “

22. The Committee appreciate the work undertaken by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in the recent past. Simultaneously, the Committee observe that much remains to be done in future within the ambit of the activities that can be initiated by ICCR. The Committee also note that the Government have not furnished any clear cut response to the Committee’s suggestion regarding adoption of holistic approach while utilizing the additional allocation besides formulation of integrated and futuristic plans for effective propagation of India’s soft power abroad. The Committee would also like to reiterate that concerted efforts should be made for promotion of Indian studies and India centric studies in various universities abroad including Africa and Latin America.

Recommendation No. 20

23. The Committee expressed serious concern over racial attacks on Indians in foreign countries particularly, on Indian students in Australia. The Committee were given to understand that there were 2,40,000 Indians living in Australia out of which 90,000 were students which account for nearly 17 percent of the total International students in Australia. The Committee were further informed that Government of India were planning to regulate the enrolment of agents and registration of students prior to departure to overseas countries. The Ministry had also stated that following the intervention of Prime Minister of India and Minister of External Affairs, the Australian Government had taken up measures to diffuse the situation. The Committee took serious note of this development and observed that had the Australian Government taken such steps in the beginning, the situation would not have been worsened. However, the Committee were relieved to learn that the situation in Australia in this regard was improving. The Committee recommended to the Government to persuade local community and local authorities to prevent such incidents in future. Missions/Posts should also adopt pro-active approach and timely Consular Assistance be provided to the victims.

24. The Ministry of External Affairs in their action taken reply have stated as under:

“According to the 2006 census in Australia, there were 234,000 persons of Indian descent in Australia, of which 147,000 were born in India and 87,000 have Indian ancestry.

This number is estimated to have gone up to about 300,000 currently. India is the third largest source of immigrants after New Zealand and UK and the second largest source of skilled professionals for Australia after UK.

Of these, a growing number of people from the Indian community is taking Australian citizenship. **In 2008-09, out of a total of 86,981 people from more than 185 countries, 9,088 Indian nationals took Australian citizenship.**

In addition to the above, presently there are over 120,000 Indian students in Australia. The number of Indian students has been growing rapidly, especially over the last three years, as may be seen from the data given below :

Indian students enrolments by sector, year to date November 2004-2009

Sector	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Higher Education	17,681	22,045	24,895	26,129	27,318	27,820
VET	1,608	3,791	10,091	26,403	51,087	79,173
Schools	49	53	64	89	110	180
ELICOS	1,027	1,213	2,834	8,552	15,346	12,474
Other (Non-Award Courses, Enabling Courses)	147	167	315	553	719	922
Grand Total	20,512	27,269	38,199	61,726	94,580	120,569

[Source: Deptt. of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations]

Out of the total, the number of Indian students enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses has increased by a staggering 161% in 2007; 93% in 2008 and 55% in 2009. The number stands at present at 79,173 or two thirds of the total number of Indian students.

Almost half the total number of Indian students, with two thirds enrolled in VET courses, are in Victoria, where most of the attacks have taken place in recent months.

Of the rest, about 22,000 are in NSW (*Sydney etc.*) 3000 in South Australia (*Adelaide*) and the rest are in ACT (*Canberra*), Western Australia (*Perth*), Queensland (*Brisbane*), Tasmania (*Hobart*) and Northern Territory (*Darwin*).

INCIDENTS RELATING TO INDIAN NATIONALS

The increase in frequency of assaults on Indians has coincided with the enormous increase in the numbers of Indian students over the last few years. The attacks on Indian students have come to notice for over two years now. In 2007, some Gujarati students were assaulted in Sydney. In 2008 and 2009 there were other instances of assaults on Indian students, including some working as taxi drivers in Melbourne and in Adelaide. Each assault was taken up with the Australian authorities, at the state level by the Consulates General and at the state and federal levels by the High Commission of India.

On 23 May, 2009, a young student studying in Melbourne, **Sravan Kumar Theerthala** was savagely attacked with a screw driver, resulting in serious injuries to his head. This incident was **followed over the next few weeks by a spate of attacks on Indian students in Melbourne.** Some students in other cities, notably Sydney and Adelaide were also attacked. Many of the attacks have been with the intent to rob the victims of cash, i-pods and laptops; some of the attacks were accompanied by racial abuse.

These attacks received extensive coverage in the media in both countries and were followed by demonstrations both in Melbourne as well as Sydney. A state wise break-up of these reported cases is given below:

ACT(Canberra)	-	1
Queensland	-	7
New South Wales	-	13
South Australia	-	4
Victoria	-	105

There was also, on the night of 14th January, 2010, **an incident of arson** in the Cranbourne Nanaksar Taath Gurudwara complex in Melbourne. The arson was in a part of the complex that is under construction. There was no structural damage. The police and fire services were quick to reach the spot and brought the fire under control; they have advised putting extra lighting and surveillance around the Gurudwara complex, which is in a remote and

isolated area. The arsonists have not yet been traced and the investigations are continuing.

The incidents relating to Indian students and nationals in Australia have involved one or more of the following elements: robbery, assault, violence fuelled by alcohol/drugs, racial abuse and juvenile crime. Other contributing factors have been:

1. The nature of the part time work undertaken by the students, who generally **work late hours** (as taxi drivers, waiters and cooks in restaurants, shop attendants, and attendants in car washes, convenience stores and gas stations etc.)

2. Many of the Indian students who have come to study in Australia are **from low income families in India** and arrive without adequate funds. As a consequence, they are often **forced to take any jobs going** to pay for their education and day to day expenses; they generally tend to live in the cheapest accommodation available, which are in **poor neighbourhoods and relatively unsafe areas**, far away from their colleges and places of work. They are also forced, in consequence to take **late night public transport**, which even local Australians avoid late at night owing to the **high risk** of encountering potential assailants looking for solitary passengers to rob and attack.

3. The **infrastructure needed to take care of international students has been lagging behind** the recent exponential increase in numbers that Australia has seen, especially in Melbourne.

4. The substantial increase in number in Indian students has meant **increased 'visibility', especially on the streets and in public transport**, which brings them on to the radar of the economically less well off strata of local society, who have traditionally reacted violently and negatively to changes in the demographic profiles of their neighbourhoods.

5. The increase in the number of attacks has also coincided with **an increase in the level of violent street crimes** in cities such as Melbourne, **especially by juveniles under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**

6. The attacks seem to **often happen on weekends** or holidays when there is excessive consumption of alcohol and taking of drugs by some Australian juveniles

7. **Relatively light sentences are being given to assailants who are under age regardless of the ethnicity of the victims.**

The **profile of attackers** in most of these assaults are of **youngsters in their teens and early 20s, largely under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**

Some of the attacks have been racial in nature.

It must be noted that in Australia a 'racial' attack is defined by what the intention behind the attack is, rather than the race or ethnicity of the assailant or the victim. In other words, the assailant attacked the victim because of his race; under this definition, assaults for the purpose of robbery or assaults not accompanied by any overtly racist action or abuse is classified as 'opportunistic' crime. An attack by a person of one race against a person of another race is not taken suo moto as a racist attack.

RECENT CHANGES IN PATTERNS OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA

The older, more **established Indian community in Australia consists largely of skilled professionals**, such as doctors, accountants, engineers and academics. It has traditionally been seen as **a model migrant community** and lauded for its contribution to the Australian economy, having settled and integrated well, and highly regarded for their industry and skills.

Until now, the **larger Indian community in Australia has been reasonably free from attacks**. While originally, many of the incidents related to Indian students, **recent months have also seen members of the Indian community being affected**. The Indian community has traditionally taken a low profile and prefers to stay out of media attention; the continuing focus by the media in both countries on the attacks has sent ripples of unease in the community, which does not welcome all the negative attention that it is receiving in consequence.

There is a **growing concern** within the community that unless the situation is brought under control and the media exercise some restraint in both countries, the larger community may be caught up in the backlash, also because the **intense media focus and accusations of racism** have drawn adverse reactions from sections of the Australian establishment as well as the larger Australian community.

RELATED PROBLEMS

Besides the obvious law and order problem, the **other issues which have come to the fore include the commercialisation of the Australian international education industry and laxity in monitoring/enforcing compliance of the regulations by the Australian authorities**. The increase in number of students in VET sector is linked to the immigration system of Australia which gave priority to applicants for PR in certain skills where there are significant shortages (*ranging from dentists, computing professionals, lift mechanics, tree surgeons, pastry chefs, cooks, carpenters, hair dressers and community welfare workers etc*).

While the rules are now undergoing changes, **a large number of students have come to Australia through the student visa route aiming to obtain permanent residency (PR)** here with **dubious educational institutions in Australia** and their **dubious agents in India** aiding and abetting the process. Most of the **students have taken heavy loans** to pay for their

tuition and living expenses. The **education agents in India have made false promises** to them reg. permitted work hours, availability of jobs, getting PR easily by doing some courses (*e.g. hair dressing, cookery, hospitality, community welfare etc*) for skills which are in demand for immigration to Australia. These expectations of getting PR may not be met because of changes in the immigration laws.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has introduced measures to strengthen checks on student visa applications to stamp out fraud and ensure that students have the financial capacity to live and study in Australia.

Besides this, the Victorian Government has announced a rapid audit into the operations of Victoria's international education providers. As a consequence of these steps the number of Indian students enrolling in VET sector has fallen and **so far 25 colleges (11 in Victoria, 7 in NSW, 4 in Queensland, 2 in South Australia, 1 in West Australia) have closed down due to either bankruptcy or rapid audit, affecting more than 2,400 Indian students in Australia.** The Australian authorities have made arrangements to reallocate the displaced students to **alternate colleges.**

ACTION TAKEN: MEA

At the Ministerial level, **then EAM Shri Pranab Mukherjee raised the issue with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith during his visit to Australia in June 2008** for the Framework Dialogue. FM Smith informed that the federal Government had taken the initiative to send guidelines on the issue of safety and security of Indian students to the various state governments in Australia. FM Smith also wrote to the state governments to ensure the safety of students. Three months earlier, **then CIM Shri Kamal Nath also raised the issue with Trade Minister Simon Crean during the Joint Ministerial Commission in May 2008.** One of the outcomes was the establishment of a JWG on visa and consular matters to look into some of these issues.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith and Trade Minister Simon Crean also wrote a **joint letter to the State Premiers in 2008** urging the State Governments to take measures to ensure the safety of Indian students. The State Governments agreed to take certain measures such as enhanced night patrolling, special investigative task forces, security cameras and screens for taxi drivers, etc.

Following the attack on 23 May on Sravan Kumar Theerthala in Melbourne and the other attacks that followed shortly thereafter, the matter of the growing number of assaults on Indian students was **taken up in May-June, 2009 at the highest level by Prime Minister, Shri Manmohan Singh with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and by EAM Shri S.M. Krishna, in with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. Then NSA Shri M.K. Narayanan also voiced our concerns when Australian NSA Duncan Lewis visited Delhi in January 2009.**

EAM Mr. S.M. Krishna visited Australia in August 2009. He conveyed our concerns to PM Kevin Rudd and FM Stephen Smith. At the state level, **EAM visited Sydney** and held meetings with then Premier Nathan Rees of New South Wales, prominent Indians and Indian students. EAM visited **Melbourne** on 8-9 August, where, apart from his interactions with Indian community and students including the injured student Sravan Kumar Theerthala, he held meetings with Premier John Brumby of Victoria, and the Victorian Minister of Education, Jacinta Allan. **EAM also visited the Railway Station and surrounding areas of Footscraye and saw for himself the surveillance measures put in place by the local police.**

In the course of his visit, **EAM announced that in order that all Indian students know that there is an open door for them to come and discuss their problems,** the High Commission, the Consulates and the Honorary Consuls would be open on **every Friday, from 11 am till 5 pm,** for any Indian student to walk in, without prior appointment, to meet the **High Commissioner, Consuls General, the designated Student Welfare Officers and Honorary Consuls and discuss their problems and grievances.**

MEA and the High Commission has also unveiled on 12 June 2009, on their respective websites, **Guidelines for Indian students wishing to study in Australia** with advice, dos and don'ts. These Guidelines have been regularly updated.

The matter regarding safety and security of Indian students in Australia has been **repeatedly raised in our Parliament.** A **Public Interest Litigation** in the matter was filed in the Hon'ble **Supreme Court** in June, 2009 leading to an **Order by the Supreme Court to MEA and the High Commission, which resulted in GOI issuing its first Guidelines for Indian students on June 12** outlining advice to students intending to study in Australia. This was **followed on January 5 by an Advisory for Indian students studying in Australia.**

Bilateral working groups have discussed the issues of **regulation of education agents, student welfare, vocational education and training,** and quality assurance in Delhi on 6-7 October.

The issue was again discussed at the last meeting of the **Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue held in New Delhi on 13 October 2009.**

During the **visit of Prime Minister of Australia Mr. Kevin Rudd** to India on 12 November 2009, **our PM conveyed the high priority that Government of India attached to the safety, security and well-being of Indian community in Australia.** Mr Rudd reiterated the Australian Government's commitment to taking all possible measures to protect the safety and welfare of all international students including Indian students.

ACTION TAKEN BY MISSION AND POSTS

The High Commission and the Consulates have taken up the incidents of assaults on students with the Australian authorities for over two years now. The High Commissioner had written in mid-2008 to the concerned Ministers in the Government (*The Hon. Julia Gillard, MP, Deputy Prime Minister; The Hon Robert McClelland, MP, Attorney General and Senator the Hon. Christopher Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship*) to request their assistance in addressing the issue at the federal level and in preventing the recurrence of such events.

The High Commission in Australia and the Consulates General in Melbourne and Sydney each have a Community Welfare and Student Liaison Officer (CWSLO) who is on call 24 by 7, and whose mobile number is on our website as our emergency response number. Any problem involving an Indian student or member of the community, is handled by the CWSLO in coordination with the High Commissioner/Consuls General.

The High Commissioner and the Consuls General in Sydney and Melbourne have **visited several Universities and private colleges in all the major cities** and had discussions with students on the issues faced by them. The students are encouraged to report any incidents in order to enable the High Commission and Consulates to provide any assistance required.

The High Commission and Consulates are also **in regular discussions with students**, major education providers on their Orientation Programs for Indian students, as also with the Indian Community and Associations so that they too may be closely involved in the interactions with the student community and in making them feel welcome.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AT FEDERAL & STATE LEVELS

A Task Force headed by National Security Advisor Duncan Lewis was set up in the office of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to formulate a 'whole of government' approach to the issue and liaise with state governments on the action being taken by them. In Melbourne as well as in Sydney, the police increased patrolling where incidents had occurred. In Melbourne, police presence was stepped up especially around train stations; the number of transit police, including in plain clothes on late night trains taken by students, was increased; the Victoria State Government's Robbery Taskforce was doubled; several offenders were charged. A Community Reference Group for Western Melbourne involving the police and members of the Indian community to facilitate communication on safety issues was established. A hotline was set up for Indian students. Free legal advice and referral for international students was made available at Melbourne. The High Commission and the Consulates General in Sydney and Melbourne directed the State Government's attention to the need for providing more street lighting and CCTV cameras in areas that are prone to such attacks.

Of the various reports and reviews commissioned by the Australian government to look into the several problems being faced by the students, at least two have submitted their reports:

□ **Bruce Baird Review of ESOS Act 2000** : In its interim report, released on 7 Dec., 2009 the Baird Review has highlighted more effective consumer protection and stronger, simpler regulation as two essential reforms needed to strengthen international education. Key observations in the report include the need to toughen the gateway for organisations to register as international education providers (e.g. possibility of requiring education providers to undergo financial viability tests or to provide bank guarantees to address the growing number of operators going broke and closing), support students' access to better information, improve students' tuition protection arrangements and enhance student complaints handling and support mechanisms. The report has also discussed the links between education and migration, and the long-term sustainability of the international education sector. The final report of the Baird Review is likely to come out later this year.

□ **The Senate Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations submitted an inquiry report** on welfare of international students in Australia in November, 2009, recommending, inter alia, that international students be provided up-to-date information; transport concessions for international students be provided by all states, including Victoria and New South Wales and review of the appropriateness of 20-hour limit on working hours.

There have been 8 ministerial level visits from Australia to India in 2009 : Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration & Citizenship (*July 2009*); Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Ms. Julia Gillard (*August-September 2009*); Trade Minister Simon Crean (*September 2009*); Treasurer Wayne Swan (*September 2009*); Foreign Minister Stephen Smith (*October 2009*), Victorian Premier John Brumby (*September 2009*); Queensland Premier Anna Bligh (*October 2009*) and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (*November, 2009*). Many of these were focussed on addressing our growing concerns about the safety and well-being of our students.

The Australian Government has recently set up a high-level Working Group under overall charge of FM Stephen Smith to deal with this issue on an urgent basis.

The Victorian Government amended the *Victorian Sentencing Act 1991* in December 2009 which requires a sentencing court to have regard to whether an offence was committed by hatred of, or prejudice against, a group of people with common characteristics with which the victim was associated or with which the offender believed the victim was associated. Further, the Victorian Government has appointed a retired Supreme Court Judge, the Hon. Geoffrey Eames AM QC to review the adequacy of the

criminal and civil justice system in addressing offences motivated by hatred or prejudice. The findings of the review will be submitted to the Attorney-General in September 2010.

The federal and state government authorities have been prompt in taking action in providing relief to Indian students affected due to the sudden closure of certain colleges, in making them aware of their rights and relocating them in other colleges.

The South Australia government has set up a taxi council, in which the Consulate is a member, to hold regular discussions with taxi drivers, many of whom are students.

On 28 January, the Victorian Government inaugurated a 24 hours International Students Care Service in Carlton Suburb close to the Central Business District of Melbourne, where many of the private colleges are located. The service has 24/7 hotline staffed by trained persons, some of whom also speak Hindi. The Centre provides psychological counselling, legal assistance, assistance with any problem with educational institute, employer or landlord or any other authority. It also provides financial assistance to students for temporary accommodation as well as assistance to take care of medical expenses/ funeral/ transportation of mortal remains. The budget announced for this is \$ 500,000 plus \$ 250,000 to provide legal assistance.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS : JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2010

The issue continues to be taken up very strongly with the Australian Government.

EAM spoke to Australian FM Stephen Smith on 11 January and expressed his serious concern.

EAM also met Australian FM Stephen Smith in London on the margins of Conference on Afghanistan on 27 January 2010 and conveyed that these attacks are particularly worrisome as the individuals from the Indian community appeared to be singled out and it was increasingly difficult to accept these attacks as mere opportunistic crimes devoid of any racial motives. He impressed upon the Australian FM that there has been no visible progress so far into most of the investigations into previous attacks including the fatal murder of Nitin Garg on 02 January 2010. It was the responsibility of the Australian authorities to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to book at the earliest and immediately put effective measures into practice, to prevent any further attacks.

On 5 January, the Ministry has issued an advisory for students coming to Australia.

The High Commission of India in Canberra and Consulates General in Sydney and Melbourne are in close and constant touch with the Australian authorities - both at the federal as well as state level, including the

Ministers, senior officers and the police authorities besides, the Australian Foreign Office, and impressed upon them that such attacks cannot be allowed to happen and the authorities should take stringent measures to stop these attacks.

Following the arson at the Gurudwara, the High Commissioner, accompanied by the Consul General visited the Blackburn Gurudwara in Melbourne on 17 January and addressed the Indian community. The High Commissioner and other officers have also visited Brisbane to meet the Queensland authorities and the Indian community in the wake of the incidents involving Indian taxi drivers there. She has also met the Governor General Mrs. Quentin Bryce to discuss the issue. There have been repeated interactions with the Australian Foreign Office, including with the Secretary, Dennis Richardson, with a view to seeing what further could be done.

The Australian authorities are fully apprised of the gravity of the situation. Both at the state as well as the federal level, they have taken several measures as outlined above, to improve security and surveillance; it can be honestly said that they are making every effort to meet our concerns.”

25. The Committee take note of the initiatives undertaken by the Government of India and the Government of Australia in view of the attacks on Indians particularly the students in Australia. The Committee further reiterate that Missions/Posts in Australia should also adopt pro-active approach and provide timely Consular Assistance to the victims.

CHAPTER – II

RECOMMENDATIONS/ OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation No.1

The Committee note that projected BE of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for the year 2009-10 was about Rs. 7400 crore, but Ministry has been allocated only Rs. 6293 crore. The Committee are of the view that the allocation of funds to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) are inadequate as in the era of globalization, along with the matters related to international affairs and diplomacy, the Ministry has to deal with issues related to political, cultural, economic and environmental affairs as well. The funds provided to MEA should be in tune with the Ministry's multi-dimensional engagement with the world. The Committee, therefore, suggest that sufficient funds for Ministry of External Affairs should be provided to match with India's regional and global aspirations in the era of new architecture of global power. However, at the same time, the Committee would also like to urge the Government for proper and full utilization of the already allocated funds.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry appreciates the observations of the Standing Committee on the inadequacy of the funds allocated to Ministry of External Affairs and its recommendation for enhancement of the same in consonance with the multi-dimensional activities of the Ministry. As regards proper and full utilization of the already allocated funds, it may be stated that it has been the Ministry's endeavour to implement its programmes and schemes in a manner so as to utilize the resources available in an optimum manner. During the current financial year, the utilization of the approved budget is 63.3% till December 2009, which is near to the prescribed norms.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.2

The Committee in their 15th Report (14th Lok Sabha) of MEA on Demands for Grants (2007-08) had commented upon the need to raise the manpower strength of the MEA to cope with the expanding role of the Ministry. In their 20th Report (14th Lok Sabha) of MEA on Demands for Grants (2008-09), the Committee further reiterated that there should be no further delay in the proposed expansion of the cadre strength. The Committee are of the view that keeping in tune with increased arenas of engagements and expanding work-profile of the Ministry, Ministry's strength is inadequate and needs to be augmented at every level. Further, the Committee are of the view that there is immense need to build capacity within the structure of Ministry to deal with evolving multi-dimensional nature of diplomacy and it is equally pertinent to diversify the expertise base and

linguistic base of diplomats and officials with the Ministry. As the Ministry has informed that Cabinet note has been obtained for expansion of services, the Committee desire that the proposal to expand the IFS and related cadres should be implemented at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

In pursuance of the approval by the Union Cabinet in August 2008, for the Expansion of the MEA, the Ministry has taken the required steps to expand the cadre strength. The Union Cabinet had approved an overall increase of 314 officer-level posts and 200 staff level posts in the MEA, to be staggered over a ten-year period. The expansion in every year was to be again approved by the EAM, Finance Minister and Prime Minister. Consequently, the first tranche of 32 officer level posts and 21 staff level posts were created by the Ministry in 2009. The requisite approval for the second tranche, comprising 30 posts of officers and 20 posts of support staff, has been taken in the current financial year. Similar action would be taken in future years to ensure increase in the cadre strength of the Ministry.

In order to build capacity to deal with evolving multi-dimensional nature of diplomacy, the Ministry has placed increased emphasis on mid-career training. New norms on promotions to senior levels in the Indian Foreign Service have been brought into effect since 2008. Under the new norms, mid-career training has been made mandatory for promotions to Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary level in the Service.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.5

The Indian Chanceries, Embassies, Missions and Cultural Centres are the reflection of India to the outside world and to the Indian citizens in foreign countries. The Committee are of the view that there is a need to diversify and increase the number of Embassies and Missions in various regions of the world. More officials and funds should be provided to Missions and Embassies, not only in developed countries but also in countries of Latin America and Africa. In view of the emerging global security scenario, modernization of security apparatus for the Indian establishments abroad is also pertinent. The Committee are of the view that Indian Missions and Embassies should reflect the 21st century technology enabled India to the world, through the effective use of e-governance and the officials be made more efficient, people friendly and delivery oriented. The Committee also desire that a dedicated Officer with adequate knowledge of law of the land should be appointed in each Chancery, Embassy and Mission to look after the matter related to Indian workers in that country so as to ensure timely redressal of their grievances. The Committee further recommend that MEA should issue directions to Missions/Posts to act in close coordination with Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for the welfare of Indian workers abroad and safeguarding the human rights of Indian Diaspora.

Reply of the Government

MEA has been seized of the need to increase India's diplomatic presence in countries of Africa and Latin America. In this context, India has opened new resident diplomatic Missions in Bamako (Mali), Niamey (Niger) and Guatemala City (Guatemala) in 2009, thus strengthening India's representation in both these continents. MEA has also shifted some posts from Missions and Posts in Europe to Indian Missions in Africa, so as to augment India's diplomatic capacities in African countries.

MEA has taken a number of steps in recent years to integrate Information Technology in its working. The entire system of issuance of Passports by various Indian Missions & Posts and by Passport Offices in India is integrated through the PISON network, which allows real-time check on fraudulent practices. MEA's own accounting system is being progressively brought 'on line' through a specialised software developed by NIC, which allows Indian Embassies and Consulates all over the world to send periodic reports about their budgetary situation to the Ministry. Similarly, innovative technological solutions have been developed for ensuring quick and secure transmission of classified communications between headquarters and Missions/Posts.

Whenever officials of MEA are posted to Indian Missions/Posts, they are required to undergo special training courses in the Foreign Service Institute before they can proceed abroad. The training capsules not only equip them to make use of the new technological innovations, but also emphasise the need to project an efficient, people-friendly and delivery-oriented face of the Indian Mission/Post.

Indian Missions and Posts in countries having significant populations of PIO/NRI communities work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) to ensure timely and courteous delivery of services to the Indian communities. In three Indian Missions - in Abu Dhabi, Washington and Kuala Lumpur - special posts borne on the strength of MOIA have been created to cater to the needs of the Indian community. In other countries too, welfare of PIO/NRI communities, especially vulnerable sections like Indian labourers, is an important part of the Indian Mission's mandate.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.6

The Committee are appreciative of the multifaceted diplomatic endeavors of the Ministry. However, in view of the current global scenario and the new challenges in the immediate neighbourhood, it is essential to incorporate new ideas and approaches in conduct of Indian foreign policy. It is possible only when there is a change in the mindset of the persons manning the Ministry, Missions and Posts abroad. A sense of dynamism, welfare and openness will have to be inculcated, while dealing with the outside world. The Committee suggest that to cope with the increased areas of engagement, it is pertinent to redefine the role of the Ministry.

Reply of the Government

New approaches are being incorporated in the training programmes organized by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) for persons manning the Ministry, Missions and Posts abroad. The details are given below:

(i) The training programme of IFS Probationers is geared towards inculcating a sense of dynamism, welfare and openness. Lectures for IFS Probationers are followed up with a question-answer and discussion session where the probationers are encouraged to question the established approaches and express their opinions openly. FSI has also introduced case studies in which Probationers discuss different approaches to specific problems. New modules/lectures on India's heritage, contemporary social development issues and minority rights have been introduced. The Probationers are given an opportunity to learn about grass-root administration and problems faced by rural communities as well as progress made in the field of rural development during their District training. New and upcoming global issues like environment, space, cyber crime and welfare have been included in their curriculum.

(ii) Joint Secretary-level officers are now being imparted mid-career training since 2009 as part of which they have been sent to Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, where management module on Leadership, Managing Change and dealing with Complexity forms an integral component of the programme. They are also exposed to economic and commercial modules with a view to equipping them with knowledge for meeting the challenges of economic diplomacy. The officers are also imparted training for developing skills to handle media.

(iii) In 2009, FSI also organized a training programme for Defence Attaches prior to their postings abroad in order to prepare them for dealing with the outside world with dynamism.

(iv) Section Officers/Assistants/UDCs/LDCs before their postings abroad are given specialized training on a regular basis whereby a spirit of dynamism and welfare is sought to be inculcated, particularly from the viewpoint of promoting the welfare of Indian communities abroad.

(v) A course on Right to Information was organized for the Ministry of External Affairs officers on January 20, 2010, in order to not only acquaint them with the provisions of the Right to Information Act but, more importantly, to encourage a change in their mindset so that they furnish information to citizens unless specifically prohibited under the Right to Information Act.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.7

Under the Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme India's developmental partnership and cooperation is manifested through aid and loans to the developing countries. The developing world is witness to various competing influences. The Committee are given to understand that

many projects are selected inter-alia on the basis of value addition they bring to the community in the aid receiving countries. The Committee also find that aid disbursal to recipient countries is often entangled into bureaucratic hassles and get delayed inordinately. Thus the very purpose of aid is defeated. The Committee are of the view that in this backdrop, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach and evolve a comprehensive Aid Policy to achieve long term strategic objectives of India's Foreign Policy. The Committee also suggest that the disbursal of aid should be quick enough so as to reach the recipient country at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

TC/DP Division's budget allocation under the Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, India's developmental partnership and cooperation is Rs. 151.65 crores which contribute to ITEC, SCAAP Programmes, Aid for developing countries and Aid for Disaster Relief.

Under 'Technical and Economic Cooperation with other countries', TC Division administers two programmes called (i) "Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme and (ii) Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme(SCAAP). The budget provided for these two programmes in the CFY is to the tune of Rs. 85 crores and 9 crores respectively.

The ITEC and SCAAP are today major instruments and flag ship programmes of the Government of India for extending our technical cooperation and assistance to developing countries. These programmes are demand-driven and response oriented. Since its inception, in 1964, ITEC has expanded manifold and today covers 158 partner countries spread across Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and CIS countries.

The ITEC programme focuses on vocational training in a variety of fields such as IT; English language; science and technology; finance, accounts, audit and banking; planning administration, management and governance; crime records;environment;rural development and SMEs. As part of the ITEC programme, India allocates and funds over 5000 training slots every year in more than 200 short, medium and long term courses at 42 institutes of eminence, considered to be the leading facilities in their area of specialization, located in various States, both in the public and private sector.

India is not a 'donor' in the conventional sense and our technical assistance is not 'aid' in the North-South or donor-recipient framework. Indian technical assistance is extended as part of our effort to share our expertise and experience with 158 ITEC partner countries in the spirit of South-South Cooperation.

ITEC has a very wide coverage and has acquired a brand image across the developing world. It is our constant effort to make ITEC programme more user-friendly and to earn the goodwill of developing

countries. Among some of the recent steps taken in this regard are (i) sending/receipt of applications among Indian Missions, TC Division of Ministry and the Training Institutes is done on-line which puts the selection process on fast track; (ii) improve living conditions for participants during their stay in India (iii) upgradation of training facilities and (iv) redesigning of ITEC website. As a result of all these steps, the Ministry has received very positive feedback from the participants on their return to their countries.

In the light of the Committee's recommendations/observations, every effort is being made to ensure timely disbursement of aid/assistance in terms of the prescribed rules and procedures. Aid disbursement, including through cash donations, has improved to reach the recipient countries much faster.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.8

The Ministry has stated that the bulk of its outlays are on projects and programme which are to be implemented in foreign countries. The BE and RE are framed on the basis of the various commitments made at the political level. It is often found that political and security developments in the recipient State influence the progress of the proposed projects. It has also been stated that the Ministry has to deal with sovereign governments and operate in foreign environment where Government of India's effective control is limited. The Committee are not satisfied with this reply of the Ministry. The Committee suggest that Ministry should evaluate all aspects before allocating funds for any particular project since they understand that the preparation of conducive atmosphere for the project is the responsibility of the aid receiving countries which is generally done. Accordingly, time bound action plan should be put in place for its early and efficient execution of the project.

Reply of the Government

The suggestion of the Standing Committee for evaluation of all aspects, such as political and security environment in the recipient foreign country, before allocating funds for any particular project/programme, has been noted by the Ministry for compliance so as to ensure time bound and efficient execution of the projects.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.11

The Committee take serious note of the fact that a steep rise in expenditure is anticipated during the current financial year in various projects in Nepal. The Committee understand that the political situation in Nepal is mainly responsible for this situation. The Committee suggest that Government should hold negotiations with the Government of Nepal with a view to redraw the timelines for completion of the projects. The Committee want that these timelines are strictly followed and efforts should be made to ensure that there is no further cost and time overruns in implementation of these projects.

Reply of the Government

A major reason for enhancement of expenditure is the expansion of bilateral cooperation programmes to strengthen our economic relations with Nepal.

The Ministry has noted the suggestion of the Standing Committee.

The efforts of the Ministry and our Embassy in Kathmandu are to ensure timely implementation of projects. In interactions with the Government of Nepal, the need for timely implementation of projects to avoid cost and time overruns has been regularly emphasised. The need for adherence to timelines for implementation of projects is also taken up in the bilateral institutional mechanisms between India and Nepal.

As Nepal is undergoing a political transition, the situation in the country is complex and fluid, and despite best efforts, sometimes it has not been found possible to adhere to the timelines.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.12

The Committee appreciate India's efforts in construction of Parliament Building in Afghanistan. The Committee consider it a prestigious project which could go a long way in cementing the ties between the two countries besides building a better image of India. However, the Committee are deeply concerned to find that this project is facing huge cost and time overrun. They are of the view that this could have been avoided if Government had taken timely measures. The Committee desire that in order to avoid such a situation in future, the Government should evolve a mechanism which could ensure the completion of the project in a time bound manner.

Reply of the Government

The following steps have been taken to ensure the completion of the project within the stipulated time of 36 months;

(a) Full-fledged team of CPWD comprising technical and supervisory officers and staff has been stationed at Kabul to ensure speedy completion of the project;

(b) Funds are released promptly to CPWD so that there are no delays in the execution of the project; and

(c) A Project Review and Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of Joint Secretary(PAI) has been constituted. The Committee quarterly reviews the project to ensure timely completion of the project as per already fixed targets. The Committee convenes review and coordination meetings as and when required to expedite physical progress of the project and give directions for resolving related issues as well as problems, if any, causing hindrance to the physical progress of works.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.13

The Committee are of the view that India's presence in Afghanistan is significant particularly, in context of the emerging geo-political situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Committee appreciate India's continued engagement and commitment towards rebuilding of Afghanistan. However, the Committee are gravely concerned about the security scenario and safety of Indian citizens and personnel working on Indian/India sponsored projects in Afghanistan. The Committee are of the view that security concerns hamper the efficiency of workforce immensely. Therefore, the Committee urge upon the Government to strengthen its security apparatus and ensure safety of personnel working on Indian projects not only in Afghanistan but also on other projects in various countries as well.

Reply of the Government

The deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan has adversely affected the security environment for Indians working in that country. Government of India (GoI) is in regular touch with the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), which has assured that it will take all the steps necessary to provide security to Indians in Afghanistan. GoA has provided local security for our major projects. Indian nationals registered with our Embassy in Kabul are being regularly advised about the prevailing security scenario in the country through security advisories. These advisories outline the precautions that need to be taken for their own safety and security during their movements within the country for work related activities. In addition, the executing agencies of various projects in Afghanistan are providing security arrangements at project sites.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.14

SAARC Development Fund (SDF) is pivotal in transforming SAARC from declaratory to implementation and emerge as a facilitator. The Committee note with satisfaction that SDF has become operational. Two ambitious projects are under implementation and the third one is to be finalized very shortly. They are given to understand that SAARC would see a slew of new and vibrant regional institutions taking shape. Hence, the Committee hope that SAARC would provide ample opportunities to the countries of the region to become stake holders in each other's development. The Committee further desire that SDF projects are executed in a time bound and efficient manner so that it becomes a vehicle of development within the SAARC.

Reply of the Government

The project on establishment of Trade facilitation Centers for home based garment workers in SAARC countries is being implemented in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. SEWA is negotiating premises/land for setting up the Trade Facilitation Centers-- 'SABAH'- in

each of these countries. The project is worth USD 13.59 million. The Maternal and Child Health Care Project being implemented with Hindustan Latex Limited will cost USD 12.65 million. India has also proposed a new project for providing biomass cooking stoves and solar lanterns for rural households in SAARC countries. The concept paper for this new project has been given 'in principle approval' by the Seventh Meeting of the SDF Board held in Kathmandu on February 1-2, 2010. At this Meeting, Member States, including India, confirmed their support for the nominee of the Government of Bhutan as the first CEO of the SAARC Development Fund. The permanent Secretariat of the SDF is expected to be inaugurated at the 16th SAARC Summit in Bhutan on 28-29 April 2010.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.18

The Committee are of the view that in the era of global integration and evolving nature of geo-politics, there is immediate need for India to diversify its engagement with the world at various levels. The importance of active engagement with the individual countries through bilateral relations and on various multilateral forums and regional groupings cannot be undermined. There is an urgent need to build international coalitions to engage with the countries on the issues of common concerns.

Reply of the Government

The role of SAARC in the next five years is set to expand substantially. With the active engagement of the Government of India in strengthening institutions within SAARC and funding its various activities, the organization will see a slew of new and vibrant regional institutions taking shape – the South Asian University in New Delhi, the SAARC Museum of Textiles and Handicrafts in New Delhi, the SAARC Regional Standards Organisation in Dhaka, SAARC Arbitration Council in Pakistan, the SAARC Development Fund Secretariat in Thimpu, SAARC Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka etc. This process of building new regional institutions and strengthening the already existing ones will no doubt have an impact on the future of the organization. This is also going to be coupled with more regional and sub-regional projects funded and implemented under the aegis of the SAARC Development Fund. With most countries in the region having weak economies, SAARC will attain the contours of the premier regional organization committed to economic betterment of the people in the South Asian region.

India's multilateral economic engagement has continued to expand and deepen at all levels. On peace and global security, development, economic and financial crisis, food and energy security, climate change and other important issues, India was engaged in consultations with other countries through multilateral fora such as India-ASEAN Dialogue, ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, IBSA, BRIC, BIMSTEC, ASEM, IOR-ARC, and G8-G5 Outreach among others.

Multilateral engagement at Prime Minister level included the G8 – Outreach Summit; the first formal Summit of the Leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China [BRIC] in Russia; India-ASEAN Summit and East Asia Summit.

India also participated in various Ministerial meetings in the run-up to the G8-G5 Outreach Summit including the Meeting on Afghanistan, Meeting of Labour Ministers, Agriculture Ministers, Environment Ministers, and Energy Ministers. Conference of G8 and Outreach Ministers on Destabilizing Factors and Trans-national Threats was also attended by India at Secretary-level.

Other major Ministerial level meetings attended by India include those under the format of BRIC, G5 [Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa], IBSA, ACD (Asia Cooperation Dialogue), ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting), BIMSTEC [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation] and IOR-ARC [Indian Ocean Rim – Association for Regional Cooperation].

In the context of global economic and financial crisis, apart from G20, India is also actively participating in the meetings of BRIC Finance Ministers to coordinate positions with Russia, China and Brazil on this important global issue.

As an attempt to give a determined push to the multilateral trade negotiations under WTO, India hosted the WTO Ministerial Conference, in September 2009, bringing together groups from across the spectrum of interests and positions in the Doha negotiations. The signing of India-ASEAN Trade-in-Goods Agreement was another milestone achieved during the current financial year. The next step is for conclusion of negotiations on Trade-in-Services and Trade-in-Investment Agreements in near future, to complete the India-ASEAN FTA.

India having vital stakes in peace and stability in the ASEAN region, including ensuring the security of the sea-lines of the Indian Ocean for smooth flow of raw materials, merchandise and energy supplies, India has been an active participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Trans National Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking was signed at the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in December 2009.

India has been an active member of the G-20. Prime Minister of India has participated in all the three G-20 Summits held to-date, i.e. Washington DC, USA (November 2008); London, UK (April 2009) and Pittsburgh, USA (September 2009). India has also been participating in other G-20 meetings at the level of Finance Ministers, Central Bank Governors and senior officials. India has also been informally coordinating its position on specific issues with like-minded countries in the G-20 framework.

India looks forward to continue working closely with its partners, including in the G-20, to address international economic issues including those concerning the international financial and economic crisis.

India has an Observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and has participated in all Heads of State and Heads of Government Meetings since attaining the Observer status in 2005. Further, Prime Minister attended the SCO Summit held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in June 2009. Invitations to Ministerial level meetings (on Culture, Trade, Disaster Management and Transport) have also been received and appropriate representations sent at the Meetings. We have sought constructive engagement with the SCO member states in areas of mutual interest and will continue to actively participate in SCO activities open to Observer states.

Climate Change

On the issue of climate change, India has been actively engaged with the international community through extensive multilateral, regional and bilateral interactions. India has been among the original signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) signed in 1992 and its Kyoto Protocol (1997). India has been actively participating in the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, the most recent being the 15th COP at Copenhagen in December 2009. The high-level segment of the Copenhagen Conference was attended by Prime Minister on December 18, 2009.

Earlier on September 22, 2009, India was represented by External Affairs Minister at a High Level Event on Climate Change, billed as “Summit on Climate Change”, at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The objective of the meeting was to mobilize the political will and vision needed to reach an ambitious agreed outcome of the on-going multilateral negotiations under the UNFCCC.

In addition, there are a number of major international forums with focus on climate change and related issues, where India has been a member and actively participating in the deliberations. Notable among these are the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF) – comprising 17 major economies of the world; the G-8+5 outreach meetings – consisting of group of eight most industrialized countries and five major developing economies, the G-20 – group of twenty important industrialised and emerging-market countries, the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) – partnership of seven Asia-Pacific countries for development and deployment of clean energy technologies; and the Greenland Dialogue – an informal meeting of ministers/senior officials from select countries for discussion on future climate change action. In addition, there are other multilateral fora such as Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM), East Asia Summit (EAS), Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) etc., which have recently engaged in substantive discussions on climate change and its impact, and where India has been represented at the highest political level.

Bilaterally, India has maintained close dialogue with major countries of the world, including the US, the European Union, China, Japan and others, on the issue of climate change. These interactions are in the nature of both, conveying India's position on the issue of climate change and the on-going UNFCCC negotiations, as well as to explore possibilities of mutually beneficial cooperation in such areas as knowledge sharing, collaborative research and development etc. for clean and renewable energy, climate-friendly technologies and sustainable development. India has recently signed Memoranda of Understanding on cooperation in addressing climate change and related matters with the US, China, Denmark, Italy and Germany. The issue of climate change has also prominently figured in discussions held with EU, Russia, UK, Australia, Canada, and other countries, during recent high-level exchanges.

India has maintained close contact with three other major developing economies – China, Brazil and South Africa – which have a similarity of approach and interests vis-à-vis the issue of climate change, in order to coordinate positions and perspectives at various stages of the UNFCCC negotiations in the run up to and during the Copenhagen climate conference in December 2009. Together, these four countries, now known as the BASIC group, have emerged as our main coalition in climate change negotiations. As a follow-up measure, India hosted a BASIC Ministerial-level consultation in New Delhi on January 24, 2010 to take stock of the Copenhagen outcome and the direction of future negotiations under UNFCCC. Given the collective negotiating advantage that the group offers, we will continue to maintain close coordination within BASIC in the post-Copenhagen phase.

India has also been playing a leading role within the G-77 (group of 130 developing countries) in the climate change negotiations with a view to safeguarding and promoting the interests of developing countries in the emerging climate change regime.

India is constructively engaged and constantly enhancing its engagement with neighbours in South Asia to collectively deal with the challenge of climate change. Today, climate change has emerged as an important element of cooperation in our region, particularly within the framework of SAARC. A SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change was held in Dhaka in July 2008, which adopted the SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change identifying specific areas of possible actions by the SAARC countries. Current chair of SAARC, Sri Lanka, presented on behalf of SAARC a statement outlining a common SAARC position on climate change during COP-15 at Copenhagen in December 2009. The 16th SAARC Summit to be held in Thimphu in April 2009 is proposed to focus on climate change as its central theme. India is providing all possible support to the Bhutanese side in organizing the Summit. In addition, India has also been extending assistance to South Asian neighbours in capacity building to deal with climate change.

India has taken initiative in facilitating international dialogue and discussion on critical climate change issues that are important for developing countries. In this context, in the area of technology transfer, India hosted a high-level global conference on "Climate Change: Technology Development and Transfer" on October 22-23, 2009 in New Delhi in collaboration with the United Nations.

Climate change is an important element of India's diplomatic engagement with the international community. India will remain closely engaged with the global community through multilateral, regional and bilateral interactions and make all possible efforts towards the establishment of a global, rule-based, transparent, and above all, an equitable climate change regime that safeguards the interests of the developing countries and supports their endeavour for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development.

UNSC membership:

India along with Brazil, South Africa, Japan and Germany (called the G-4) has been pressing for expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and for the G-4 countries to become permanent members.

The formal process for an expansion of the Security Council is for a resolution to be adopted by at least 2/3rd majority in the UN General Assembly of the 192 Member-states approving such an expansion. This has to be followed by an amendment of the UN Charter which also needs to be ratified by at least 2/3rd of the member states of the UN including all the five permanent members of the Security Council i.e. UK, USA, France, Russia and China, by their national ratification processes.

In the UN, the question of expansion of the UN Security Council has been under discussions for the last fifteen years or so in an Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) of the UN General Assembly (GA) without any tangible results. In September 2008, India and other G-4 members along with other like-minded countries were able to ensure adoption by the UN General Assembly of a landmark decision (62/557) to commence intergovernmental negotiations on the subject of UNSC reform and expansion in informal plenary of the UN General Assembly following which the negotiations started in March 2009. Three rounds of negotiations took place during March – September 2009 in during the 63rd UNGA session. During these negotiations, the most delegations clearly expressed their preference for an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

At the end of the 63rd UNGA session, India, in concert with other G-4 countries (Brazil, Germany and Japan) and other like-minded African, Asian, Caribbean and Pacific Island states, successfully worked for adoption by the UNGA of a resolution that called for immediate resumption of the negotiations in the 64th UNGA, building on progress achieved in the 63rd Session.

The fourth round of negotiations in the UNGA has started in December 2009 with the first exchange held on 8-9 Dec 2009 and the Second exchange on 19 January 2010. During December 2009, India and other G-4 countries along with South Africa mobilized 138 countries to sign a petition to the Chair of the negotiations, requesting him to present a text on which negotiations could proceed.

In addition to the intergovernmental negotiations at the UN, India continues to be bilaterally engaged with other member states and many countries have assured India of their support for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. However, as described above, the formal process would be through adoption of a resolution in the General Assembly and an amendment to the UN Charter. India continues to press its efforts in this regard.

Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)

A number of international conventions and protocols dealing with different types of terrorist acts exist. However, these are sectoral in nature and there is yet no overarching international legal framework to counter terrorism. To address this gap, India had introduced a draft proposal for a 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' (CCIT) in the UN General Assembly in 1996. Since then, extensive discussions have taken place on the CCIT draft in the UNGA's Sixth Committee and in its Working Group and in an Ad-hoc Committee specifically created to discuss the CCIT.

Since 2002 there has been broad agreement on most provisions of the draft except on two substantive issues, i.e. exclusion of security forces from the ambit of Convention and the Convention's relation to liberation movements. The US and the OIC and Arab countries have opposing positions on these issues. Several proposals have been considered to find a middle ground but none of the proposals has been able to generate consensus.

In September 2009, India has invited Dr. Rohan Perera of Sri Lanka, who holds the Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group of UNGA's Sixth Committee which is discussing the draft of the Convention for consultations on ways to move forward. In the last meetings of the Adhoc Committee held on 9 and 15 October 2009, India strongly called for conclusion of negotiations and adoption of the convention. The next meeting of the Adhoc Committee is expected to be held at UN headquarters in April 2010 where the draft CCIT will be discussed.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.20

The Committee express serious concern over racial attacks on Indians in foreign countries particularly, on Indian students in Australia. The Committee are given to understand that there are 2,40,000 Indians living in

Australia out of which 90,000 are students which account for nearly 17 percent of the total International students in Australia. The Committee are further informed that Government of India are planning to regulate the enrolment of agents and registration of students prior to departure to overseas countries. The Ministry has also stated that following the intervention of Prime Minister of India and Minister of External Affairs, the Australian Government has taken up measures to diffuse the situation. The Committee take serious note of this development and observe that had the Australian Government taken such steps in the beginning, the situation would not have been worsened. However, the Committee are relieved to learn that the situation in Australia in this regard is improving. The Committee recommend to the Government to persuade local community and local authorities to prevent such incidents in future. Missions/Posts should also adopt pro-active approach and timely Consular Assistance be provided to the victims.

Reply of the Government

According to the 2006 census in Australia, there were 234,000 persons of Indian descent in Australia, of which 147,000 were born in India and 87,000 have Indian ancestry.

This number is estimated to have gone up to about 300,000 currently. India is the third largest source of immigrants after New Zealand and UK and the second largest source of skilled professionals for Australia after UK.

Of these, a growing number of people from the Indian community is taking Australian citizenship. **In 2008-09, out of a total of 86,981 people from more than 185 countries, 9,088 Indian nationals took Australian citizenship.**

In addition to the above, presently there are over 120,000 Indian students in Australia. The number of Indian students has been growing rapidly, especially over the last three years, as may be seen from the data given below :

Indian students enrolments by sector, year to date November 2004-2009

Sector	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Higher Education	17,681	22,045	24,895	26,129	27,318	27,820
VET	1,608	3,791	10,091	26,403	51,087	79,173
Schools	49	53	64	89	110	180
ELICOS	1,027	1,213	2,834	8,552	15,346	12,474
Other (Non-Award Courses, Enabling Courses)	147	167	315	553	719	922
Grand Total	20,512	27,269	38,199	61,726	94,580	120,569

[Source: Deptt. of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations]

Out of the total, the number of Indian students enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses has increased by a staggering 161% in 2007; 93% in 2008 and 55% in 2009. The number stands at present at 79,173 or two thirds of the total number of Indian students.

Almost half the total number of Indian students, with two thirds enrolled in VET courses, are in Victoria, where most of the attacks have taken place in recent months.

Of the rest, about 22,000 are in NSW (*Sydney etc.*) 3000 in South Australia (*Adelaide*) and the rest are in ACT (*Canberra*), Western Australia (*Perth*), Queensland (*Brisbane*), Tasmania (*Hobart*) and Northern Territory (*Darwin*).

INCIDENTS RELATING TO INDIAN NATIONALS

The increase in frequency of assaults on Indians has coincided with the enormous increase in the numbers of Indian students over the last few years. The attacks on Indian students have come to notice for over two years now. In 2007, some Gujarati students were assaulted in Sydney. In 2008 and 2009 there were other instances of assaults on Indian students, including some working as taxi drivers in Melbourne and in Adelaide. Each assault was taken up with the Australian authorities, at the state level by the Consulates General and at the state and federal levels by the High Commission of India.

On 23 May, 2009, a young student studying in Melbourne, **Sravan Kumar Theerthala** was savagely attacked with a screw driver, resulting in serious injuries to his head. This incident was **followed over the next few weeks by a spate of attacks on Indian students in Melbourne.** Some students in other cities, notably Sydney and Adelaide were also attacked. Many of the attacks have been with the intent to rob the victims of cash, i-pods and laptops; some of the attacks were accompanied by racial abuse.

These attacks received extensive coverage in the media in both countries and were followed by demonstrations both in Melbourne as well as Sydney. A state wise break-up of these reported cases is given below:

ACT(Canberra)	-	1
Queensland	-	7
New South Wales	-	13
South Australia	-	4
Victoria	-	105

There was also, on the night of 14th January, 2010, **an incident of arson** in the Cranbourne Nanaksar Taath Gurudwara complex in Melbourne. The arson was in a part of the complex that is under construction. There was no structural damage. The police and fire services were quick to reach the spot and brought the fire under control; they have advised putting extra lighting and surveillance around the Gurudwara complex, which is in a remote and isolated area. The arsonists have not yet been traced and the investigations are continuing.

The incidents relating to Indian students and nationals in Australia have involved one or more of the following elements: robbery, assault, violence fuelled by alcohol/drugs, racial abuse and juvenile crime. Other contributing factors have been:

1. The nature of the part time work undertaken by the students, who generally **work late hours** (as taxi drivers, waiters and cooks in restaurants, shop attendants, and attendants in car washes, convenience stores and gas stations etc.)
2. Many of the Indian students who have come to study in Australia are **from low income families in India** and arrive without adequate funds. As a consequence, they are often **forced to take any jobs going** to pay for their education and day to day expenses; they generally tend to live in the cheapest accommodation available, which are in **poor neighbourhoods and relatively unsafe areas**, far away from their colleges and places of work. They are also forced, in consequence to take **late night public transport**, which even local Australians avoid late at night owing to the **high risk** of encountering potential assailants looking for solitary passengers to rob and attack.
3. The **infrastructure needed to take care of international students has been lagging behind** the recent exponential increase in numbers that Australia has seen, especially in Melbourne.
4. The substantial increase in number in Indian students has meant **increased 'visibility', especially on the streets and in public transport**, which brings them on to the radar of the economically less well off strata of local society, who have traditionally reacted violently and negatively to changes in the demographic profiles of their neighbourhoods.
5. The increase in the number of attacks has also coincided with **an increase in the level of violent street crimes** in cities such as Melbourne, **especially by juveniles under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**
6. The attacks seem to **often happen on weekends** or holidays when there is excessive consumption of alcohol and taking of drugs by some Australian juveniles
7. **Relatively light sentences are being given to assailants who are under age regardless of the ethnicity of the victims.**

The **profile of attackers** in most of these assaults are of **youngsters in their teens and early 20s, largely under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**

Some of the attacks have been racial in nature.

It must be noted that **in Australia a 'racial' attack is defined by what the intention behind the attack is, rather than the race or ethnicity of the assailant or the victim.** In other words, the assailant attacked the victim because of his race; under this definition, assaults for the purpose of robbery or assaults not accompanied by any overtly racist action or abuse is classified as 'opportunistic' crime. An attack by a person of one race against a person of another race is not taken suo moto as a racist attack.

RECENT CHANGES IN PATTERNS OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA

The older, more **established Indian community in Australia consists largely of skilled professionals**, such as doctors, accountants, engineers and academics. It has traditionally been seen as **a model migrant community** and lauded for its contribution to the Australian economy, having settled and integrated well, and highly regarded for their industry and skills.

Until now, the **larger Indian community in Australia has been reasonably free from attacks**. While originally, many of the incidents related to Indian students, **recent months have also seen members of the Indian community being affected**. The Indian community has traditionally taken a low profile and prefers to stay out of media attention; the continuing focus by the media in both countries on the attacks has sent ripples of unease in the community, which does not welcome all the negative attention that it is receiving in consequence.

There is a **growing concern** within the community that unless the situation is brought under control and the media exercise some restraint in both countries, the larger community may be caught up in the backlash, also because the **intense media focus and accusations of racism** have drawn adverse reactions from sections of the Australian establishment as well as the larger Australian community.

RELATED PROBLEMS

Besides the obvious law and order problem, the **other issues which have come to the fore include the commercialisation of the Australian international education industry and laxity in monitoring/enforcing compliance of the regulations by the Australian authorities**. The increase in number of students in VET sector is linked to the immigration system of Australia which gave priority to applicants for PR in certain skills where there are significant shortages (*ranging from dentists, computing professionals, lift mechanics, tree surgeons, pastry chefs, cooks, carpenters, hair dressers and community welfare workers etc*).

While the rules are now undergoing changes, **a large number of students have come to Australia through the student visa route aiming to obtain permanent residency (PR)** here with **dubious educational institutions in Australia** and their **dubious agents in India** aiding and abetting the process. Most of the **students have taken heavy loans** to pay for their tuition and living expenses. The **education agents in India have made false promises** to them reg. permitted work hours, availability of jobs, getting PR easily by doing some courses (*e.g. hair dressing, cookery, hospitality, community welfare etc*) for skills which are in demand for immigration to Australia. These expectations of getting PR may not be met because of changes in the immigration laws.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has introduced measures to strengthen checks on student visa applications to stamp out fraud and ensure that students have the financial capacity to live and study in Australia.

Besides this, the Victorian Government has announced a rapid audit into the operations of Victoria's international education providers. As a consequence of these steps the number of Indian students enrolling in VET sector has fallen and **so far 25 colleges (11 in Victoria, 7 in NSW, 4 in Queensland, 2 in South Australia, 1 in West Australia) have closed down due to either bankruptcy or rapid audit, affecting more than 2,400 Indian students in Australia.** The Australian authorities have made arrangements to reallocate the displaced students to **alternate colleges.**

ACTION TAKEN: MEA

At the Ministerial level, **then EAM Shri Pranab Mukherjee raised the issue with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith during his visit to Australia in June 2008** for the Framework Dialogue. FM Smith informed that the federal Government had taken the initiative to send guidelines on the issue of safety and security of Indian students to the various state governments in Australia. FM Smith also wrote to the state governments to ensure the safety of students. Three months earlier, **then CIM Shri Kamal Nath also raised the issue with Trade Minister Simon Crean during the Joint Ministerial Commission in May 2008.** One of the outcomes was the establishment of a JWG on visa and consular matters to look into some of these issues.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith and Trade Minister Simon Crean also wrote a **joint letter to the State Premiers in 2008** urging the State Governments to take measures to ensure the safety of Indian students. The State Governments agreed to take certain measures such as enhanced night patrolling, special investigative task forces, security cameras and screens for taxi drivers, etc.

Following the attack on 23 May on Sravan Kumar Theerthala in Melbourne and the other attacks that followed shortly thereafter, the matter of the growing number of assaults on Indian students was **taken up in May-June, 2009 at the highest level by Prime Minister, Shri Manmohan Singh with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and by EAM Shri S.M. Krishna, in with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. Then NSA Shri M.K. Narayanan also voiced our concerns when Australian NSA Duncan Lewis visited Delhi in January 2009.**

EAM Mr. S.M. Krishna visited Australia in August 2009. He conveyed our concerns to PM Kevin Rudd and FM Stephen Smith. At the state level, **EAM visited Sydney** and held meetings with then Premier Nathan Rees of New South Wales, prominent Indians and Indian students. EAM visited **Melbourne** on 8-9 August, where, apart from his interactions with Indian community and students including the injured student Sravan Kumar Theerthala, he held meetings with Premier John Brumby of Victoria, and the

Victorian Minister of Education, Jacinta Allan. **EAM also visited the Railway Station and surrounding areas of Footscray and saw for himself the surveillance measures put in place by the local police.**

In the course of his visit, **EAM announced that in order that all Indian students know that there is an open door for them to come and discuss their problems**, the High Commission, the Consulates and the Honorary Consuls would be open on **every Friday, from 11 am till 5 pm, for any Indian student to walk in, without prior appointment, to meet the High Commissioner, Consuls General, the designated Student Welfare Officers and Honorary Consuls and discuss their problems and grievances.**

MEA and the High Commission has also unveiled on 12 June 2009, on their respective websites, **Guidelines for Indian students wishing to study in Australia** with advice, dos and don'ts. These Guidelines have been regularly updated.

The matter regarding safety and security of Indian students in Australia has been **repeatedly raised in our Parliament**. A **Public Interest Litigation** in the matter was filed in the Hon'ble **Supreme Court** in June, 2009 leading to an **Order by the Supreme Court to MEA and the High Commission, which resulted in GOI issuing its first Guidelines for Indian students on June 12** outlining advice to students intending to study in Australia. This was **followed on January 5 by an Advisory for Indian students studying in Australia.**

Bilateral working groups have discussed the issues of **regulation of education agents, student welfare, vocational education and training, and quality assurance** in Delhi on 6-7 October.

The issue was again discussed at the last meeting of the **Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue held in New Delhi on 13 October 2009.**

During the **visit of Prime Minister of Australia Mr. Kevin Rudd** to India on 12 November 2009, **our PM conveyed the high priority that Government of India attached to the safety, security and well-being of Indian community in Australia.** Mr Rudd reiterated the Australian Government's commitment to taking all possible measures to protect the safety and welfare of all international students including Indian students.

ACTION TAKEN BY MISSION AND POSTS

The High Commission and the Consulates have taken up the incidents of assaults on students with the Australian authorities for over two years now. The High Commissioner had written in mid-2008 to the concerned Ministers in the Government (*The Hon. Julia Gillard, MP, Deputy Prime Minister; The Hon Robert McClelland, MP, Attorney General and Senator the Hon. Christopher Evans, Minister for Immigration and*

Citizenship) to request their assistance in addressing the issue at the federal level and in preventing the recurrence of such events.

The High Commission in Australia and the Consulates General in Melbourne and Sydney each have a Community Welfare and Student Liaison Officer (CWSLO) who is on call 24 by 7, and whose mobile number is on our website as our emergency response number. Any problem involving an Indian student or member of the community, is handled by the CWSLO in coordination with the High Commissioner/Consuls General.

The High Commissioner and the Consuls General in Sydney and Melbourne have **visited several Universities and private colleges in all the major cities** and had discussions with students on the issues faced by them. The students are encouraged to report any incidents in order to enable the High Commission and Consulates to provide any assistance required.

The High Commission and Consulates are also **in regular discussions with students**, major education providers on their Orientation Programs for Indian students, as also with the Indian Community and Associations so that they too may be closely involved in the interactions with the student community and in making them feel welcome.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AT FEDERAL & STATE LEVELS

A Task Force headed by National Security Advisor Duncan Lewis was set up in the office of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to formulate a 'whole of government' approach to the issue and liaise with state governments on the action being taken by them. In Melbourne as well as in Sydney, the police increased patrolling where incidents had occurred. In Melbourne, police presence was stepped up especially around train stations; the number of transit police, including in plain clothes on late night trains taken by students, was increased; the Victoria State Government's Robbery Taskforce was doubled; several offenders were charged. A Community Reference Group for Western Melbourne involving the police and members of the Indian community to facilitate communication on safety issues was established. A hotline was set up for Indian students. Free legal advice and referral for international students was made available at Melbourne. The High Commission and the Consulates General in Sydney and Melbourne directed the State Government's attention to the need for providing more street lighting and CCTV cameras in areas that are prone to such attacks.

Of the various reports and reviews commissioned by the Australian government to look into the several problems being faced by the students, at least two have submitted their reports:

□ **Bruce Baird Review of ESOS Act 2000** : In its interim report, released on 7 Dec., 2009 the Baird Review has highlighted more effective consumer protection and stronger, simpler regulation as two essential

reforms needed to strengthen international education. Key observations in the report include the need to toughen the gateway for organisations to register as international education providers (e.g. possibility of requiring education providers to undergo financial viability tests or to provide bank guarantees to address the growing number of operators going broke and closing), support students' access to better information, improve students' tuition protection arrangements and enhance student complaints handling and support mechanisms. The report has also discussed the links between education and migration, and the long-term sustainability of the international education sector. The final report of the Baird Review is likely to come out later this year.

□ **The Senate Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations submitted an inquiry report** on welfare of international students in Australia in November, 2009, recommending, inter alia, that international students be provided up-to-date information; transport concessions for international students be provided by all states, including Victoria and New South Wales and review of the appropriateness of 20-hour limit on working hours.

There have been 8 ministerial level visits from Australia to India in 2009 : Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration & Citizenship (*July 2009*); Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Ms. Julia Gillard (*August-September 2009*); Trade Minister Simon Crean (*September 2009*); Treasurer Wayne Swan (*September 2009*); Foreign Minister Stephen Smith (*October 2009*), Victorian Premier John Brumby (*September 2009*); Queensland Premier Anna Bligh (*October 2009*) and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (*November, 2009*). Many of these were focussed on addressing our growing concerns about the safety and well-being of our students.

The Australian Government has recently set up a high-level Working Group under overall charge of FM Stephen Smith to deal with this issue on an urgent basis.

The Victorian Government amended the *Victorian Sentencing Act 1991* in December 2009 which requires a sentencing court to have regard to whether an offence was committed by hatred of, or prejudice against, a group of people with common characteristics with which the victim was associated or with which the offender believed the victim was associated. Further, the Victorian Government has appointed a retired Supreme Court Judge, the Hon. Geoffrey Eames AM QC to review the adequacy of the criminal and civil justice system in addressing offences motivated by hatred or prejudice. The findings of the review will be submitted to the Attorney-General in September 2010.

The federal and state government authorities have been prompt in taking action in providing relief to Indian students affected due to the sudden closure of certain colleges, in making them aware of their rights and relocating them in other colleges.

The South Australia government has set up a taxi council, in which the Consulate is a member, to hold regular discussions with taxi drivers, many of whom are students.

On 28 January, the Victorian Government inaugurated a 24 hours International Students Care Service in Carlton Suburb close to the Central Business District of Melbourne, where many of the private colleges are located. The service has 24/7 hotline staffed by trained persons, some of whom also speak Hindi. The Centre provides psychological counselling, legal assistance, assistance with any problem with educational institute, employer or landlord or any other authority. It also provides financial assistance to students for temporary accommodation as well as assistance to take care of medical expenses/ funeral/ transportation of mortal remains. The budget announced for this is \$ 500,000 plus \$ 250,000 to provide legal assistance.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS : JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2010

The issue continues to be taken up very strongly with the Australian Government.

EAM spoke to Australian FM Stephen Smith on 11 January and expressed his serious concern.

EAM also met Australian FM Stephen Smith in London on the margins of Conference on Afghanistan on 27 January 2010 and conveyed that these attacks are particularly worrisome as the individuals from the Indian community appeared to be singled out and it was increasingly difficult to accept these attacks as mere opportunistic crimes devoid of any racial motives. He impressed upon the Australian FM that there has been no visible progress so far into most of the investigations into previous attacks including the fatal murder of Nitin Garg on 02 January 2010. It was the responsibility of the Australian authorities to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to book at the earliest and immediately put effective measures into practice, to prevent any further attacks.

On 5 January, the Ministry has issued an advisory for students coming to Australia.

The High Commission of India in Canberra and Consulates General in Sydney and Melbourne are in close and constant touch with the Australian authorities - both at the federal as well as state level, including the Ministers, senior officers and the police authorities besides, the Australian Foreign Office, and impressed upon them that such attacks cannot be allowed to happen and the authorities should take stringent measures to stop these attacks.

Following the arson at the Gurudwara, the High Commissioner, accompanied by the Consul General visited the Blackburn Gurudwara in Melbourne on 17 January and addressed the Indian community. The High Commissioner and other officers have also visited Brisbane to meet the

Queensland authorities and the Indian community in the wake of the incidents involving Indian taxi drivers there. She has also met the Governor General Mrs. Quentin Bryce to discuss the issue. There have been repeated interactions with the Australian Foreign Office, including with the Secretary, Dennis Richardson, with a view to seeing what further could be done.

The Australian authorities are fully apprised of the gravity of the situation. Both at the state as well as the federal level, they have taken several measures as outlined above, to improve security and surveillance; it can be honestly said that they are making every effort to meet our concerns.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

CHAPTER – III

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

Recommendation No.10

Government of India has extended humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka through various aid and rehabilitation packages. The Committee expect that the aid will be utilized fully and reaches the targeted population. The Committee are of the view that this is possible only if there is proper monitoring. The Committee urge the Government to take measures to devise appropriate monitoring mechanism which will not only enable the proper distribution of the aid but also ensure rehabilitation and wellbeing of the Internally Displaced People in Sri Lanka.

Reply of the Government

Monitoring and Supervision of Assistance Projects in Sri Lanka

1. There are set procedures and norms of Government of India for Monitoring and supervising the projects taken up by various Ministries and Departments. The Ministry follows these procedures and norms scrupulously.
2. The projects are carefully chosen to have maximum impact on rehabilitation and well being of Internally Displaced People in Sri Lanka.
3. Upon receiving the detailed project proposals, the Ministry scrutinizes and as per prevailing norms approves the proposals. Internal Finance Division scrutinizes the cost estimates in detail and conveys its concurrence.
4. The overall supervision of each proposal is with High Commission of India (HCI), Colombo on the ground. To monitor the project a committee is set up comprising of senior officers of the HCI under overall supervision of High Commissioner. HCI in consultation with Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) monitors the project. Funds are released after monitoring the progress of the project and as required.
5. To implement the project credible implementing agencies are employed. All possible mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the targeted population is benefited.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.19

In the era of increased international flow of professionals and work force, protecting economic interest of its citizens is important for any country. The Committee welcome India's entering into Agreement on Social Security with Belgium. The Committee are of the view that this will secure long term economic interest of Indian citizens. The Committee further take note of Government's efforts for proposed Social Security Agreement with various countries and hope that this endeavour is expedited and India should be able to enter into such agreements with other countries.

Reply of the Government

This recommendation/observation regarding Social Security Agreement with various countries is a matter which falls within the purview of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Vide this Ministry Office Memorandum No.AA/PARL/125/80/09 dated 15th January 2010, the Lok Sabha Secretariat was requested to transmit this Recommendation/Observation to that Ministry for necessary action.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

CHAPTER – IV

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

Recommendation No.3

The Committee take serious note of the situation arising from the non-availability of interpretation facility from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa*. Our dignitaries are asked to speak in English instead of Hindi for only reason that the interpreter does not know Hindi. The Committee are of the view that this is ludicrous situation. They are given to understand that various proposals for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa* have been made but nothing concrete has been achieved so far. The Committee, therefore, recommend that necessary steps should be taken to develop a cadre of interpreters for interpretation from Hindi language to foreign languages and *vice versa* without any further delay.

Reply of the Government

MEA has a small in-house cadre of Interpreters for the major UN languages, who are recruited through the UPSC. These interpreters serve both at headquarters of the Ministry, as well as in some of the Missions and Posts abroad. It is true that MEA's interpreters are not formally trained for interpretation from Hindi to foreign languages or *vice versa*. However, almost all of the internal interpreters of the Ministry have a working knowledge of Hindi, and they can be used for interpretation between Hindi and the foreign language they have learnt. Moreover, all Foreign Service officers are expected to learn a foreign language, and many of them retain sufficient fluency in their allotted language to be able to interpret for a dignitary in case of need. During their training in the Foreign Service Institute, IFS probationers are imparted classes on the Official Language Policy of Government of India. From this year, a capsule on Hindi language has also been started for IFS trainees.

(File No. AA/PARL/125/80/09)

CHAPTER – V

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

Recommendation No.4

The Committee note that the funds provided for International publicity to the Ministry and efforts made in this regard are not adequate and there is no match in the actual requirement and funds that are provided. The Committee in their earlier Reports had also stressed upon the need for maximizing publicity efforts through Missions/Posts. While emphasizing the importance of external publicity, the Committee reiterate that adequate funds should be provided to the Ministry for advertising and external publicity and holistic approach should be adopted with the use of traditional as well as modern media for projection of India to the world in a better way.

Reply of the Government

Details of Foreign Journalists hosted under External Publicity (XP) Hospitality:

- Hosted 6 member delegation from Radio Fana, Ethiopia in coordination with All India Radio- April 13-19, 2009
- Hosted Vice President of Xinhua News Agency alongwith two senior editors from Xinhua -19-23, April '09
- Hosted 10 editors from Anglo phone countries viz Nigeria, Lesotho, Zambia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Namibia, Ghana and Uganda- April 18-28 '09 (As a run up to the India Africa Forum Summit)
- Hosted 19 journalists from Anglophone countries viz Ethiopia, Gabarone, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Seychelles, Zambia for training programme (Print and TV journalism) with Jamia Millia- 18 May-5 June '09 (As a run up to the India Africa Forum Summit)
- Hosted 12 editors from Sri Lanka from June 6-13, '09
- Hosted 12 senior editors from Arab countries viz Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria & UAE- June 21-18, 09
- Hosted 6 editors from Bangladesh from Aug 9-16 '09
- Hosted one eminent photographer from Malaysia from 12-20 October '09
- Hosted 8 journalists from Nepal–Dec 11-17 '09
- Hosted 7 editors from China from Jan 14 -23 '10
- Facilitated drawing up a program for seven member group of editors from Sri Lankan Parliamentary Journalists Association.

Launch of India-Africa Connect Website:

External Affairs Minister Shri S. M. Krishna launched the 'India-Africa Connect Website' on August 17, 2009 in New Delhi. The website was jointly

developed by XP Division along with IANS and is devoted to promoting relations with our African counterparts, and hosts news, features and essential information on India and African countries, with special emphasis on development cooperation. The website was launched with the aim of facilitating closer cooperation between India and Africa. The website can be accessed at <http://www.indiaafricaconnect.in> and a link is also available on MEA website home page.

Training, Workshops, Conferences and Special Events:

The External Publicity (XP) Division, on recommendations of the concerned Territorial Divisions, organized specialized training programmes and other events for media from neighbouring countries like Afghanistan. 19 journalists (*8 AV and 11 Print*) from 10 Anglo phone African countries were also invited, for a three week specially designed course, in consultation with Jamia Millia Islamia University. The division also hosted journalists from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and from Gulf countries during this period. Meetings for them were organized with senior officials and academics, as well as visits to centres of excellence. The Division also facilitated the placement of correspondents from IANS and PTI in select African countries to enhance mutual understanding and bridge the information gap.

Booklet on General Elections:

To disseminate accurate information about General Elections in April- May 2009, which have been hailed as the world's largest democratic exercise, the Division published a compact and colourful handbook, containing useful statistics and detailing the manner in which elections are conducted in India. This served as a handy reference for foreign readership and journalists in particular. A web link to the booklet was also placed on the MEA website.

Outreach Activities

The XP Division organized a number of outreach activities to highlight the various contours of India's foreign policy with a view to encourage discussion and debate and to benefit from the view of outside and independent experts. These include:-

(a) A Delegation visit of **Friends of India Group of the UK Conservative party** in July 2009. Apart from meetings with Hon'ble Speaker, Minister of Human Resource Development, Chairman of the Unique Identification Authority and MOS for Rural Development, the delegation was briefed by senior officials of MEA and the National Security Council Secretariat. The delegation also visited Kochi where they had meetings with the State Government and visited the Naval establishment.

(b) A delegation visit of **Liberal Democratic Friends of India Group** from UK in Sep 2009. Apart from meetings with Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha and Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport & Highways, the delegation was briefed by senior officials

of MEA, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Security Council Secretariat, Center for Policy Research, and business and industry representatives. The delegation also visited National Defence Academy and Television Institute of India.

(c) A delegation visit of **Slovene Parliamentary Friendship Group** from Slovenia in Nov 2009. Apart from meeting with MOS (PK), MOIA and Mayor of Delhi, the delegation also interacted with FICCI and IBEF and visited few business organizations including a KPO, *Evalueserve* and a biopharma firm, *Jubilant Organosys*. The delegation also witnessed the proceedings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

(d) A visit by **Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar**, Vice Chancellor, Gujrat Vidyapeeth to Slovenia to deliver **lectures on Mahatma Gandhi** and his legacy. He also participated in an International conference on Mahatma Gandhi, held in Slovenia.

(e) **Celebration of the International Day of Non Violence** by our Missions/Posts located in various countries. The programmes included lectures, seminars, conferences, photo exhibitions, film festivals, debates, competitions for school children, cultural shows, etc. The events were organized mostly in association with the Indian Diaspora.

(f) Ongoing research project on **Indo-GCC relations** organized by Gulf Research Centre(GRC), Dubai. The research project involves experts from GRC and India and the first meeting was held in June 2009 in Dubai and the second in Jan 2010 in Delhi.

(g) A 26-member delegation visit by **PIO journalists** from 15 countries was organized during PBD 2010 in January. In addition to participation in PBD the journalists were briefed by CII, IDSA and Planning commission on India's economy, our security scenario and efforts to fasten inclusive development and economic growth in India. The group also visited Mumbai Stock Exchange and Film City.

(f) A 6- member delegation visit of **Permanent Representatives** of Pacific Small Island Developing States was organized on 23-31 Jan 2010.

The delegation witnessed the Republic Day Parade, attended President's 'At Home' and witnessed Beating Retreat in addition to meetings with EAM, Minister for Environment and Forests and a short briefing by CII on the economic scenario in India. The delegation also visited Kirloskar and Thermax in Pune and ISRO and Infosys in Bangalore and received a briefing from TCIL on the Pan African E Network Project and its relevance for the Pacific Island States.

The XP Division also extended support to various organizations for conduct of seminars, conferences/bilateral dialogues which included:-

- (a) The **8th India-Korea Dialogue** on 20-21 May 2009 jointly organized by Indian Council for Research on Economic Relations and Seoul Forum of International Affairs.
- (b) **International Seminar** titled 'Society, Culture and Politics' in Karakoram Himalayas on 23-24 July, 2009 organized by Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation.
- (c) **International seminar** on 'Peace and Stability in Afghanistan: the Way Ahead' on 6-7 October, 2009 organized by The United Service Institution of India.
- (d) **4th Sustainability Summit** organized by CII on 25-26 Nov 2009 wherein JS (PD) had addressed the session on Sustainable Business Opportunities in Emerging Countries.
- (e) An **international seminar** titled 'Cooperative Development, Peace and Security in South and Central Asia' organized by CRRID on 1-2 March, 2009 in Chandigarh.

Audio-Visual Publicity

PD Division prepares documentary films aimed at projecting different facets of India. Several documentaries were completed during the year including: -

- (a) Can You Hear Me (a film on Community Radio revolution)
- (b) Through Lens Clearly : Raghu Rai's India
- (c) Indian Elections-A Mammoth Democratic Exercise
- (d) Kashmir Elections 2008
- (e) Spirit of India
- (f) Religious Linkages Between Bhutan & Ladakh
- (g) Watering the Grassroots (a film on microfinance)
- (h) Negotiating Justice (a film on India's Position on Climate Change)
- (i) Cinema with a Purpose (a film on communication of values and tradition through Cinema)
- (j) Mast Qalandar (a film on three Sufi saints)
- (k) Partners in Progress : Indo-US Relations
- (l) India in the Moon (Chandrayan 1)
- (m) Soldiers of Peace (a film on engagement of men in uniform with civilians in peace time)
- (n) Fragments of History (a film on the life of Ms. Subhalakshmi)

Several documentaries produced by the division were **telecast/screened by foreign/Indian TV channels** and in film festivals. The details are as below:-

- (a) Documentaries “Timeless India” and “The Jewel in the Lotus” were screened in **Phnom Penh** on 19.03.09 on ITEC Day.
- (b) **Sri Lankan TV** channel screened documentary “India Wins Freedom” and “Quit India” on the occasion of India’s Republic Day. In addition three other documentaries namely “Sufi traditions of India”, “Beating Retreat” and “Bismillah & Benaras” were also telecast in the month of August 09.
- (c) Documentaries namely “Indian Elections – A Mammoth Exercise” and “Spirit of India” were telecast on **Doordarshan** in May/July 2009.
- (d) Mission in **Bogotá** has screened documentaries produced by PD Division at the Bogotá International Film Festival in October 2009.
- (e) Documentaries namely “Commonwealth Games 2010”, “The Sky is not the Limit”, “Dismantling the Digital Divide”; “Friends for evermore” and “Beyond Tradition” were telecast on **Tanzanian TV** channel ‘Smart’ in Sep 2009.
- (f) Documentary “The Story of Gitanjali” was screened at the recently concluded **IIFC Goa** 2009.
- (g) Our Missions/Posts in **Accra, Ho Chi Minh City, Mexico City, Amman, Reykjavik, Tel Aviv, Minsk & Paris** organized film festivals/screening with 35mm Hindi films sent by the division.

India Perspectives

The monthly journal, *India Perspectives* has been the flagship magazine of the Ministry and over the years, it has grown in popularity. The journal focuses on a wide range of subjects varying from India’s emergence as a fast growing economy, to its rich cultural heritage, its literature, diverse wildlife and its vibrant film industry, as also the country’s prowess in the fields of information technology, healthcare and other related fields of human endeavor. The journal published in sixteen languages, is distributed to readers in all corners of the globe through the Indian Missions/Posts abroad. *India Perspectives* is also available in the electronic format in all its sixteen language editions on the Ministry’s website. The journal was distributed for the first time ever at the world’s largest Book Fair in Frankfurt and also at the London Book Fair where India was the market focus country as well as at the Turin International Book Fair. The journal was also sent for distribution at the film festivals held at Italy, Russia, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Print Publicity

Projecting India's image through books and publications is an integral part of the XP Division's publicity strategy abroad. Books on Indian economy, foreign policy, art & culture, history & science and technology etc. were supplied to Missions abroad for presentation purpose and use in their libraries. Many of our Missions celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's birthday on 2nd October, 2009 as the International Day of non-violence. The division has supplied books on Mahatma Gandhi to these Missions for distribution on this occasion. Various Journals & magazines were also dispatched to Missions/posts abroad.

The following books/publications were printed by the division during the period:-

- (a) A Coffee table book titled "Himalaya with Lens & Passion" capturing the beauty of Himalayan region by Mr. Ashok Dilwali.
- (b) Printing of booklet on Climate change "The Road to Copenhagen: India's position on Climate Change issues".
- (c) Booklet on Prime Minister's visit to USA & France.

The XP Division also extended financial support to our Missions/posts in Berlin, Slovenia, London, Sofia, Bogotá, and Minsk for bringing out publications such as "**The Story of My Experiments with Truth**", in Slovene language, "**Glimpses of World History**" in Bulgarian language etc.

Brief description of Publicity outreach activities of a few randomly selected Missions as per the general guidelines of the Ministry keeping in view the local requirements of their stations:

1. Washington: Disseminating positive, development related information on India; exhibiting promoting and exposing the rich and vast cultural heritage of India in the US. Through press releases interviews, background briefings, distributing India Perspective magazines, hosting visits of schools and college students to the embassy. Bringing out leather bound executive agenda carrying information on Indian history culture polity etc. Motivating various think tanks in writing op-ed articles. The Mission also upgraded the official website.

2. Kuala Lumpur: The Mission promoted Indian education and also brought out handbook for doing business with Indian companies. The international seminar on the Buddhist heritage of Gujarat was suitably highlighted and helped reinforce Diaspora links to their roots.

3. Colombo: The Mission highlighted the development assistance provided, organized Kadirgamar memorial lecture, distributed India Perspective magazine, publicized the ITEC scholarships, and issued press statements.

4. London: The Mission upgraded the website. Media was encouraged to highlight India's achievements. The inhouse fortnightly publication 'India digest' was regularly brought out.

5. Warsaw: The Mission brought out special supplement on the visit of Polish PM to India. Embassy's newsletter was regularly brought out and summer film festival was organized.

6. Phnom Penh: The Mission arranged publication of Missions' quarterly magazine in Khmer language for free distribution as well as special supplements in local newspapers. It also presented books to major universities.

7. Ottawa: Photo exhibition 'the Sikhs – faith tempered through fire' was organized., Indian classical dance performance was also organized. Books were presented.

8. Prague: Activities included India Week celebrations, Indian film festival. It also established a Bollywood film library with Czech sub-titles, presentation of books and CDs on music dance and films.

9. Tokyo: Festival of India in Japan was organized in 2007. Mission promoted Indian IT companies, tea and culture. The Mission also organized lectures and visits to schools in its outreach activities.

10. Brasilia: The outreach activities included publication of fortnightly newsletter in Portuguese, printing booklet India Brazil relations in Portuguese and publication of Discover India kits. Indian food festivals were also organized.

11. The Hague: A month-long Festival of India-Amsterdam was held in the Netherlands in November 2008. The mega event was formally inaugurated by Princess Maxima (wife of Dutch Crown Prince) and Government of India was represented by President, ICCR. During the Festival, 127 India-related events were organized across 30 cultural foundations in and around Amsterdam. The events include Indian music concerts, classical and contemporary Indian dance performances, symposium, and seminars on the Indian culture, music, literature and dance. A special volume on India-Netherlands relations titled "Changing Images: Lasting Visions" was published and publicity material were also distributed. The Festival was organized by Festival of India Foundation–Amsterdam (a conglomeration of 30 premier cultural foundations) in partnership with ICCR.

(File No.AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.9

Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project in Myanmar is an ambitious project to assure better connectivity. The Committee note that the allocation for the same was substantially reduced during RE 2008-09 stage.

The Committee are not convinced with the reply of the Government that the reduction had to be effected due to delay in signing the agreement with the consultant. The Committee are of the opinion that had the Government taken care to sign the agreement earlier, then the need of making drastic cut at RE stage would not have arisen. The Committee have been informed that actual work will start by the end of the year 2009-10. The Committee suggest that the timeframe should be followed scrupulously in respect of the project so that such situation does not recur.

Reply of the Government

Kaladan project envisages connectivity between India ports on the eastern sea board and Sittwe Port in Myanmar and then through riverine transport and by road to Mizoram, thus providing an alternate route for North Eastern Indian for the transportation of goods.

Progress made during the Year: Inland Waterways Authority of India, the Project Development Consultant, has updated the DPR of the IWT component after joint visits to the sites along with Myanmar authorities. Due to nature of the terrain two of the bidders also visited the site before they participated in the pre-bid meeting.

The pre-bid meeting was held on 24th Nov, 2009. This was followed by submission of bids by the bidders to IWAI on 1st February, 2010. The technical bids have been opened by IWAI and are being assessed and thereafter the financial bids would be opened. The actual construction work is expected to start after appointment of the main contractor done after selection of the bid.

(File No.AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.15

The Committee take serious note of inordinate delay and repeated postponement of the launching of Pilot Phase of Passport Seva Project. The project was due for launching in July-August 2009 but revised to 1st October, 2009. The Government had assured that pilot phase would be launched on 13th November, 2009 in two cities i.e. Bengaluru and Chandigarh. But the Committee are surprised to find that inspite of Government's categorical assurance, the project has not been launched so far. The Committee express their strong displeasure that despite assurance given to the Committee, it has not been done. The Committee want that this project should be launched without further delay and after due testing and checking of the software and taking into account the feasibility and results, the Government may implement this project on pan-India basis. The Committee further hope that through this project, the Passport Issuance System in the country will become simpler, speedier, public friendly and delivery oriented. The Committee want that the Government should apprise the Committee in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The previous pilot launch dates of the project were based on the inputs received from the Service Provider (SP), M/s TCS Limited. However, the Ministry could not adhere to these dates as during testing of the Application Software, critical errors were found. The SP has paid Rs.32 lakhs to the Ministry for delays in terms of the Agreement.

As a passport is of security sensitive nature, the Ministry wanted to resolve all the critical and sensitive errors/issues before launching the Project. So far, four rounds of testing by the Third Party Audit Agency under the Department of Information Technology have been conducted. As of now, majority of the errors have been rectified by the SP. Further, a limited test on the Application Software is planned from February 2010, to reconfirm closure of defects. Also, Index checking, which is core of the issuance system, and PAC (Prior Approval Category) checking are thoroughly examined to ensure that checking is comprehensive.

After the above processes are completed, the Ministry would decide on the dates for pilot launch of the Project.

(File No.AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.16

Issuance of e-passport is another ambitious project of the Government, which is currently launched as a Pilot Project In respect of official and diplomatic passports. The Committee are given to understand that this project will be rolled out in general category also by the end of 2009. But the Committee are surprised to find that e-passports will not be mandatory for general public. The Committee are of the view that owing to huge benefits of this service for checking the issuance of fake passports the Government may consider to extend this service to general category as well in a phased manner.

Reply of the Government

It is envisaged that issue of e-passports will be extended to the ordinary category of passports subject of supply of the booklets by the India Security Press, Nashik. The tender process for procurement of the electronic chip, to be used in the e-booklets, by ISP is already underway. As soon as the booklets are available, e-passports will be rolled out for ordinary category also. Though all the non-e-passports will not be recalled, whoever applies after that would be issued only e-passport.

(File No.AA/PARL/125/80/09)

Recommendation No.17

Cultural diplomacy is an integral ingredient of Ministry's overall diplomatic endeavours. Projection of India's extensive soft power and civilizational strength to the global audience will help India to directly

engage with the people and built up a positive image for India. The Committee appreciate the new initiatives undertaken by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) such as holding Indology Conferences, establishment of Chairs and opening up of new Cultural Centres abroad etc. There is an urgent need to spread the arenas of cultural engagement particularly with the countries of Latin America, Africa and South East Asia. The Committee desire that more Cultural Centres should be set up globally besides diversifying the activities of the existing ones. Concerted efforts should be made for promotion of Indian studies and India centric studies in various Universities abroad. Holistic approach should be adopted while utilizing the additional allocation besides formulation of integrated and futuristic plan for effective propagation of India's soft power abroad.

Reply of the Government

Chairs Abroad

- The Council invited proposals twice, from all over the world for establishment of Short-term Chair of Indian Studies in leading Universities/Institutions under its 'Expansion Plan'.
- Initially, the Council approved 23 Chairs (5 Long-Term + 18 Short-Term) under its 'Expansion Plan'. Later on, the Council approved 19 more Chairs (9 Long-Term + 6 Short-Term) under the plan. Therefore, a total of 42 Chairs are under currently under 'Expansion Plan'.
- Under its 'Expansion Plan', the Council received a proposal from Mexico in Latin America; proposals from Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius and Nigeria in Africa; and proposals from Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore in South East Asia.
- Presently, the Council has signed MoU with Lagos Business School, Abuja, Nigeria for establishment of Short-Term Chair at the institute. The Council has authorized Indian Missions in Singapore and Mauritius to sign an agreement on Council's behalf for establishment of Chair. Further, the Council had conveyed its, in principle, agreement alongwith the terms and conditions for establishment of Chairs in Mexico, Ethiopia, Kenya, Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia. The host Universities in these countries had been asked to send an agreement based on the terms and conditions forwarded. On finalization and signing of the agreement the Chairs will start functioning.
- Besides the above, Missions in Croatia (UoZ), Denmark (CBS), Slovenia (UoL), Yerevan (YSLU), Greece (AUEB), USA (JMU), Germany (HU), South Korea (HUFS), Canada (UoT), Japan (TU) have signed agreements on Council's behalf (Total 10). Out of these, 7 Professors have been deputed/designated to Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia, Yerevan, Greece, USA, Germany.

- Missions in Azerbaijan (AUL), Fiji (FIT), UK (KCL), Sri-Lanka (UoC) and Ireland (TCD) have been authorized to sign agreement on Council's behalf (Total 5).
- MoUs received from Prague (CU), Netherlands (LU), Russia (PU) and Dhaka are (Total 4) are being examined/ negotiated.
- Proposals have been approved in principle and MoUs are awaited/invited from Turkmenistan (Urdu), Iran, Kazakhstan (2), Russia (MGIMO), Netherlands (AU), Sweden, Mongolia, Austria, Portugal, Japan (RU), Bahrain, and New Zealand (Total 13).

Outgoing Cultural Delegations

As part of its regular programme to strengthen relations with countries and promote Indian Culture all over the world through soft power, ICCR regularly sponsors various performing art groups abroad.

Festival Unit was established in the ICCR in 2006 to look after exclusively major Indian manifestations in the form of Festivals of India abroad. During the year, 2006-07 the Council coordinated various events such as film festivals, food festival, exhibitions, seminar and performing art etc. for the major Festivals of India in Brussels which took place from 7 October, 2006 to 26 January, 2007.

After successful conclusion of the Festival of India in Belgium, ICCR organized several festivals such as Festival of India in Japan, Festival of India in Israel, mini festivals in Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. During the year 2009, the Council organized Year of India in Russia.

The Council has planned the following festivals to be organized in the near future:

- 1) **Spain** Planned for June, 2010. A few cultural programmes and an exhibition of Musical Instruments.
- 2) **Iran** An Iranian Festival was organized in India in 2008. Return Indian Festival in Iran was planned for last year but could be held because of non receipt of clearance from the Iranian authorities in time. Now planned for April/ May, 2010.
- 3) **Saudi Arabia**: The MoU for holding reciprocal festivals in Saudi Arabia and India is ready and expected to be signed very soon. We have tentatively scheduled this festival in 2010.
- 4) **Qatar**: As part of the Year long cultural celebrations scheduled in Doha to mark its nomination as the capital of the Arab Culture it has been decided to hold an "Indian Week" in Qatar in April, 2010.

- 5) **Namibia** Planned for April/ May, 2010. Decision on this was taken during Namibian President's visit to India last year. We have proposed dance programme, an instrumental music, yoga demonstration cum lecture, a lecture on Mahatma Gandhi, a small film festival and a photo-exhibition for the Week of India.
- 6) **Brazil** The Sangeet Natak Academy has already done necessary ground work and is coordinating the festival. ICCR would be sending performing art groups after receiving the suggestions from SNA.
- 7) **Mexico** : The Sangeet Natak Academy has already done necessary ground work and is coordinating the festival. ICCR would be sending performing art groups after receiving the suggestions from SNA.
- 8) **New Zealand:** A festival is planned in New Zealand in Second half of the year 2010 to promote awareness about Commonwealth Games.
- 9) **Bangladesh** Proposal for mini festival in Bangladesh is at the exploration stage.
- 10) **Australia:** Likely to be held in the later part of the year.
- 11) **Tanzania:** A festival is proposed to be organized in Dar-es-Salam in mid 2010 to create awareness and publicity for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games.

Outgoing Visitors Programme

Sharing ideas and holding free discussions has been a part of India's Cultural tradition. In keeping with this tradition and as part of its effort to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries, the Council facilitate exchange of scholars, intellectuals, academicians and artistes under the Outgoing Visitors Programme.

Under the programme distinguished Indian intellectuals, scholars, academicians and artistes are funded and facilitated to participate in seminars, symposia, study tours and conferences abroad.

During the period from April, 2009 to December, 2009, the Council sponsored the visit of 50 eminent scholars to the various parts of the world.

Scholarship Division

One of the major activities of ICCR is to administer a large range of scholarship programmes, with a view to building bridges of understanding and developing better appreciation of India in countries around the world. By way of background information, it may be noted that in the current academic year, 2225 scholarship slots have been provided by ICCR under various schemes. While 675 of these were offered to Afghanistan alone, another 500 were granted to African countries. ICCR Scholarships are

offered to students from around 90 countries wishing to pursue undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral, professional and fine arts education in India.

At present, there are over 3500 students in India under various scholarship programmes administered by ICCR on its own, or under agency work arrangement. Of these, 1654 are Afghan students. Other nationalities that have a substantial representation on ICCR Scholarship rolls include Nepal (245), Bangladesh (281), Sri Lanka (208), Iraq (83), Maldives

An inter-Ministerial Committee on the Welfare of Foreign Students was constituted in July 2008 under the Chairmanship of DG, ICCR, with the mandate to look into various aspects related to the welfare of foreign students and to recommend measures to improve the conditions they encounter in India. Having intensively interacted with all stakeholders, including the Universities and institutes concerned, the Committee submitted a comprehensive report to PMO later in the year. After PMO's approval, the report was circulated to all concerned for the implementation of the recommendations, and ICCR was tasked with monitoring the progress on this front.

Welfare measures taken by ICCR Offices around the country include (i) the reception of foreign students upon arrival and their exhaustive briefing on Indian customs, religions, culture and way of life through interactive orientation courses; (ii) the decentralization of scholarship payments so that the students do not have to wait for their stipends to come from Delhi; (iii) revision of scholarship rates w.e.f. 1st July 2009; (iv) assistance in opening of bank accounts to facilitate scholarship payments on a quarterly basis and their withdrawal through ATM; (v) assistance and advice for finding accommodation outside the college/university hostel in case of requirement; (vi) organization of language classes wherever possible; (vii) the appointment of International Students Advisors in Universities that host a substantial number of foreign students; (viii) Participation of foreign students in study tours organized by the University/Institute concerned; (ix) organization by ICCR of free Summer/Winter Camps (the last in December 2009) in different parts of the country for foreign students – both ICCR Scholars as well as self-financing students - every year as a recreational and familiarization activity, under the supervision of a Liaison Officer from the Council; (x) the organization of an annual Festival for foreign students to celebrate the International Students Day held on the birth anniversary of India's first Education Minister and the Founding President of ICCR, Maulana Azad, on November 11. (In 2009, our Missions in countries from which we receive a large number of students were provided grants for the celebration of the International Students Day with the participation of India-educated alumni.); (xi) updating of the ICCR Alumni Data Bank with the help of our Regional Offices and our Missions abroad; (xii) financial assistance to needy self-financing students in case of emergency; the opening of several new ICCR Regional Offices in cities like Varanasi and Cuttak, and their location on the campus of the concerned University, thus making it easier for foreign students to obtain assistance and guidance; (xiii) the involvement of foreign students with cultural

activities conducted by ICCR HQs as well as by our Regional Offices (for example, foreign students are being regularly invited to the Horizon Series programmes organized in Delhi and elsewhere by the Council) and (xiii) the provision of online information, through the ICCR website, on the various ICCR Scholarship Schemes on offer .

Conferences & Seminars

As a part of Expansion Plan, it was proposed that ICCR would hold six Indology Conferences.. This was planned that the conference would help to enhance networking between foreign Indologists and also bring new vision to Indological studies. The aim was to invite 20-30 scholars at a reputed local university/education Institute in the capital town. The aim was to identify 6 scholars each from India, host country and the region

To achieve this goal, conferences were proposed at Sofia (Bulgaria), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Moscow (Russia), Budapest (Hungary), Prague (Czech Republic), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), and Jakarta (Indonesia).

So far, the Council has successfully organized 2 conferences- in Sofia, Bulgaria (24-26 Sept., 2009) and Almaty (Kazakhstan) (19-20 Nov., 2009). Apart from India and the host country, scholars from neighboring countries also participated in these Conferences. Update on Indology Conference is enclosed.

Apart from this the Council is also undertaking Buddhist Conferences at Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos and Bangladesh .

In addition to this Council is also supporting Nav Nalanda Vihar Mahavihara, Bihar, Calicut University, Delhi University, JNU, New Delhi, Allahabad University, JMI, New Delhi, IIT etc. for organizing different Seminars/Conferences related to Indian Art and Culture.

The proceedings are aimed to be published in English for better outreach.

OPENING OF NEW CULTURAL CENTRES

Under the 7 point plan, ICCR is establishing a series of Indian Cultural Centres to expand the cultural reach and promote India's "soft power" abroad. Under its proposed expansion plans, the Council is opening Cultural Centres in our immediate neighbourhood, the extended neighbours, P-5 capitals in Africa and Latin America. The following are the places where the Council has already established its Cultural Centres recently:-

Indian Cultural Centre in Bangkok (Thailand):

Honourable President, ICCR inaugurated the newly established Cultural Centre at Jasmine City Building, Bangkok during his visit from 22nd to 24th September, 2009. A director and three India based teachers in the stream of Bharatnatyam, Yoga and Sitar have been deputed to make the Cultural Centre operational.

Indian Cultural Centre in Tokyo (Japan):

Honorable President, ICCR inaugurated the Cultural Centre in Tokyo on 25th September, 2009. The Centre is a part of the new Chancery complex and is equipped with a modern multipurpose hall. Director of the Centre is on MEA strength and two India based teachers in the stream of Yoga and Classical Vocal cum Tabla have been deputed to make the Centre fully operational. Besides, two more local teachers are going to be appointed shortly by the Centre. Interior decoration of the Centre has already been done by installing equipment, official furniture and musical instruments.

Indian Cultural Centre in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia):

Property for the Cultural Centre in Kuala Lumpur has been leased from 20th July, 2009 and the interior work has been completed. Three teachers in the stream of Tabla, Yoga and Carnatic Music are currently conducting classes in Kuala Lumpur. Moreover, an India-based Director has already taken charge of the Cultural Centre to look after the day-to-day activities of the Centre.

Indian Cultural Centre, Abu Dhabi:

The Cultural Centre at Abu Dhabi was formally inaugurated by Vice-President of ICCR, Prof. Syed Shahid Mehdi, on the 15th of December, 2009. The unused Consular block has been developed as the Cultural Centre. An India-based Director will be joining the Centre in April, 2010.

Indian Cultural Centre, Dhaka (Bangladesh):

In Dhaka, ICCR has provided sanction for complete renovation of the premises at Dhanmodi and Gulshan as well as purchase of new office equipment, furniture and hiring of local staff. The multipurpose facility available with the High Commission in Gulshan, Dhaka area, has been extensively upgraded. The Cultural Centre would be inaugurated by President, ICCR in March, 2010.

In addition, we have been working on proposals for establishing Cultural Centres in Lagos, Ho Chi Minh City, Washington, Sao Paulo, Paris, Yangon, Thimpu, Dar-e-Salaam, Budapest and Mexico.

(File No.AA/PARL/125/80/09)

NEW DELHI
5th May, 2010
Vaisakha 15, 1932 (Saka)

YASHWANT SINHA,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HELD ON 5TH MAY, 2010**

**The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1600 hrs. in Committee
Room 'E', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.**

PRESENT

Shri Yashwant Sinha – Chairman

**MEMBERS
LOK SABHA**

2. Shri Anto Antony
3. Shri Pradeep Majhi
4. Shri Zafar Ali Naqvi
5. Shri Rajendrasinh Rana
6. Kunwar Rewati Raman Singh
7. Smt. Supriya Sule
8. Shri Bhisma Shankar alias Kushal Tiwari
9. Shri Shashi Tharoor

RAJYA SABHA

10. Dr. Karan Singh
11. Shri Ashwani Kumar
12. Shri Shreegopal Vyas
13. Shri Bharatkumar B. Raut
14. Shri Arjun Kumar Sengupta
15. Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan
16. Shri H.K. Dua

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri U.S. Saxena - Joint Secretary
2. Shri R.K. Jain - Director
3. Dr. Ram Raj Rai - Additional Director

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

3. XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX

4. The Committee then took up for consideration the draft Report on Action Taken by Govt. on the recommendations contained in the 2nd Report (15th Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2009-2010. The Chairman invited the Members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report. The Members suggested some minor modifications.

5. The Committee then adopted the draft Report and authorized the Chairman to finalize the Action Taken Report incorporating the suggestions made by the Members and present the same to Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

XXX Minutes in respect of other matters kept separately.

Appendix II

(Vide Para 4 of Introduction of Report)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN THE SECOND REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (15TH LOK SABHA)

		20
(i)	Total Number of Recommendations	
(ii)	Recommendations/Observations, which have been accepted by the Government.	
	Recommendation Nos.1,2,5,6,7,8,11,12,13,14,18,20	
		Total-12
		Percentage: 60%
(iii)	Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government replies.	
	Recommendation Nos. 10 and 19	
		Total-02
		Percentage: 10%
(v)	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.	
	Recommendation No. 3	
		Total- 01
		Percentage: 5%
(vi)	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.	
	Recommendation Nos. 4,9,15,16,17	
		Total-05
		Percentage: 25%