

17

**COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2016-17)**

SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

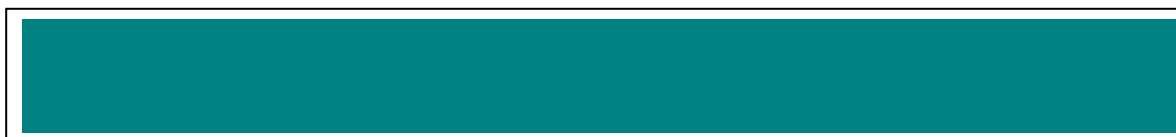
[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report (16th Lok Sabha) on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation']

SEVENTEENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 2017 / Bhadrapada, 1939 (Saka)



SEVENTEENTH REPORT
COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2016-17)

(SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report (16th Lok Sabha) on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation']

Presented to Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha on 31.08.2017



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

August, 2017 / Bhadrapada, 1939 (Saka)

COEA NO. 130

Price: Rs.

© **2017 by Lok Sabha Secretariat**

Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha
(_____ Edition) and printed by

CONTENTS

PAGE

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE (2016-17).....	(ii)
INTRODUCTION.....	(iii)
Chapter I Report.....	1
Chapter II Observations /Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.....	16
Chapter III Observations / Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's Replies.....	22
Chapter IV Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.....	23
Chapter V Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Final Replies of the Government are still awaited.....	29

APPENDICES

I. Minutes of the Seventeenth Sitting of the Committee held on 24.8.2017.....	33
II. Analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations / Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report of the Committee on External Affairs (16 th Lok Sabha).....	35

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2016-17)

1. Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chairperson

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Sirajuddin Ajmal
3. Shri Gurjeet Singh Aujla *
4. Prof. (Dr.) Sugata Bose
5. Shri Ranjit Singh Brahmpura
6. Shri Arka Keshari Deo
7. Shri Feroze Varun Gandhi
8. Shri Rahul Gandhi
9. Prof. Richard Hay
10. Shri Anant Kumar Hegde
11. Shri Raghav Lakhanpal
12. Shri Venakateswara Rao Magananti
13. Shri Jose K. Mani
14. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
15. Shri Vishnu Dayal Ram
16. Shri Mohammad Salim
17. Prof. (Dr.) Mamtaz Sanghamita
18. Shri P.R. Senthilnathan
19. Shri Ram Swaroop Sharma
20. Smt. Supriya Sule
21. Shri Sharad Tripathi

Rajya Sabha

22. Shri Raj Babbar
23. Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi
24. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
25. Shri Chunibhai Kanjibhai Gohel
26. Smt. Kanimozhi
27. Shri C.M. Ramesh
28. Shri Amar Singh
29. Dr. Karan Singh
30. Shri R.K. Sinha
31. Shri D. P. Tripathi

Secretariat

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Shri P. C. Koul | — | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai | — | Director |
| 3. | Smt. Jyochnamayi Sinha | — | Additional Director |
| 4. | Shri Janmesh Singh | — | Under Secretary |

* Shri Cheddi Paswan, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha had resigned from the membership of the Committee *w.e.f.* 22.11.2016. Vacancy arose *w.e.f.* 29.11.2016 due to his resignation and Shri Gurjit Singh Aujla has been nominated to the Committee *w.e.f.* 31.3.2017.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on External Affairs (2016-17) having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Seventeenth Report (16th Lok Sabha) on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation'.

2. The Twelfth Report was presented to the Parliament on 2 August, 2016. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 7 April, 2017.

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Action Taken Report at their Sitting held on 24 August, 2017. The Minutes of the Sitting of the Committee have been given at Appendix-I to the Report.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report of the Committee on External Affairs (16th Lok Sabha) is given at Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI
...August, 2017
.... Bhadrapada, 1939 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Committee on External Affairs

CHAPTER – I REPORT

This Report of the Committee on External Affairs deals with the Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Twelfth Report on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation' which was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on 2 August, 2016.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 19 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorized as follows: -

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

Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16 & 17

Total- 8

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

NIL

Total-0

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

Recommendation Nos. 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15 & 19

Total- 7

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

Recommendation Nos. 3, 4, 9 & 18

Total- 4

3. The Committee desire that final replies to the comments contained in Chapter-I and Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.

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

(Recommendation No. 1)

Low strength of India's diplomatic corps

5. The Committee in their Twelfth Report had noted that the IFS cadre is one of the smallest in terms of cadre strength as compared to other All India and Central Services, with a current sanctioned strength of 912. If we consider the total pool of diplomatic officers in our Missions/Posts abroad and at Headquarters including those from feeder Services and other Ministries and Services, the country has a pool of about 2700 officers who can serve diplomatic functions. The size of India's diplomatic corps is far smaller than that of China and Japan and about one eighth of USA's diplomats. The Committee had expressed their grave concern noting the fact that there were only 770 IFS Officers against the sanctioned strength of 912. The Committee were of the considered view that the size of India's diplomatic corps is inadequate considering the tasks and challenges before the Ministry and nation.

The Committee had found that the Ministry has not been adhering to clause 6(3) of the Indian Foreign Service Recruitment, Cadre, Seniority and Promotion Rule, 1961 which lays down that the Central Government shall at the interval of every two years re-examine the strength and composition of the IFS cadre. In fact, the last cadre review of the IFS was carried out in 2004 and it has been 12 years since a review took place. The Committee had felt that the Ministry must reflect a more serious attitude and prevent any further deterioration in the already modest numbers facing India's diplomatic corps. The Committee had therefore, strongly recommended that the Ministry take urgent notice of the low strength of the IFS cadre as well as that of the total diplomatic corps of the country as compared to the strength of other prominent countries and the need for manpower augmentation to handle India's growing profile and aspirations at the global stage and to initiate remedial measures at the earliest. To begin with, The Committee had recommended that the Ministry fill the gap between the sanctioned strength and the current strength of the IFS cadre as well as that of other diplomatic officers through periodic cadre review as stipulated under Service Rules. The Committee had further desired that the Ministry undertake the long delayed cadre review immediately and also ensure that in future there is no failure in conducting periodic cadre reviews as stipulated under the Service Rules.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it has undertaken an exercise to review the cadre strength of Indian Foreign Service and subordinate cadres of the Ministry and a reviewed proposal on MEA Expansion Plan, based on functional requirement of the Ministry, has been submitted to Department of Personnel & Training and Department of Expenditure. Meanwhile, the Ministry is indenting for recruitment of IFS officers as per its requirement through UPSC. The Ministry has revised the guidelines for recruitment of

Consultants from academia and private sector on contract basis, as per existing GOI norms. Deputation from other Ministries/ Departments and the Armed Forces is to continue to be a mode of recruitment in the Ministry.

7. The Committee had expressed their concern over the low number of India's diplomatic corps as compared to the strength of diplomats in several countries of the world and recommended that the Ministry take urgent remedial measures like conducting regular cadre review of IFS and subordinate cadres and manpower augmentation considering the tasks and challenges before the Ministry. In its reply, the Ministry has submitted that a reviewed proposal on MEA Expansion Plan based on functional requirement of the Ministry has been submitted to the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) and Department of Expenditure. Meanwhile the Ministry is indenting for recruitment of IFS officers as per its requirement through UPSC. The Ministry has also stated that it has revised the guidelines for recruitment of consultants from academia/private sector and has also been taking officers on deputation from other Ministries/Departments and Armed Forces. The Ministry, however, has neither conveyed the details of the steps taken to fill the gap between the sanctioned strength and the actual strength of IFS cadre nor about the outcome of the Cadre review and the action plan thereon. The Ministry has also failed to give any assurance about carrying out regular periodic cadre review as stipulated under Service Rules. In the opinion of the Committee, with such a low strength of our diplomatic corps India is not able to exploit the true potential of its foreign policy. In short the reply of the Ministry failed to address the various aspects contained in the Recommendation of the Committee. While deprecating this inadequate response of the Ministry, the Committee desire a holistic reply on the matter immediately. The Committee would also like to emphasise that all-out efforts should be made to augment the numbers of the diplomatic corps by conducting regular cadre reviews, lateral entry and broadening the recruitment net such as through facilitating the entry of NRIs. These reforms should all be undertaken in a time-bound manner.

(Recommendation No. 2)
Expansion plan of the Ministry

8. The Committee had observed that the Ministry has been recruiting 30 to 35 IFS Officers every year by indenting these vacancies through the UPSC. In order to tide over the shortage of

manpower, the Ministry has embarked upon an Expansion Plan covering a period of 10 years from 2008 to 2018 which provides for the creation of 514 posts in the Ministry. Till date, 309 posts have been created under the Plan after operationalization of six tranches which includes 187 posts of IFS and 122 posts at the staff level. However, The Committee had noted that despite the Expansion Plan, the critical gap between our diplomatic requirements and available manpower still remains. Furthermore, with only two years left for the Expansion Plan to conclude, The Committee desired that the timeline for creating the remaining 205 posts be strictly adhered to. The Committee had viewed the Expansion Plan as a beginning to plug the existing gap, but it does not factor in the emerging requirements of the Ministry for which The Committee had been pressing hard through their earlier Reports and which will need further intake at a greater scale and speed.

The Committee had further noted that the Ministry has started working on a long term successor plan to the ongoing Expansion Plan known as the Expansion Plan 2.0. Under the MEA Expansion Plan 2.0, the Ministry will assess its requirements in 2020, 2025 and 2030. For the Committee, the plan is the culmination of its exhortations to the Ministry for engaging in a *de novo* exercise of assessing its present available manpower. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry initiate the exercise of assessing its manpower requirements under the MEA Expansion Plan 2.0 with due diligence by factoring in diverse future scenarios. In view of the fact that this will entail a lengthy process of consultations and financial approvals, adequate planning must be invested in without delay. The Committee had wanted to be apprised about the blueprint of the Expansion Plan 2.0 along with the implementation schedule.

9. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that as recommended by the Committee, the Ministry has assessed present availability of manpower as well as its requirement for personnel in the coming years and has formulated a revised proposal for MEA Expansion Plan which has been shared with Department of Personnel & Training and Department of Expenditure for their views. Since the approval beyond the sixth tranche of the previous MEA Expansion Plan was not granted, it has been proposed that the uncreated posts of previous MEA Expansion plan be absorbed into the current plan. Thereafter, the proposal will be submitted to the Union Cabinet for approval.

10. The Committee had analyzed the progress of the Expansion Plan of MEA covering a period of ten years and had observed that 205 posts were still to be created with hardly two years remaining. Simultaneously, a long term succession plan was also under consideration. The Ministry was asked to initiate the exercise of assessing its manpower requirements with due diligence under the MEA Expansion Plan by factoring in diverse scenarios. The Committee understand that the Ministry has assessed the manpower requirement in a fresh manner and a new MEA Expansion Plan has been prepared and shared with the

Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) and Department of Expenditure to elicit their views. While taking note of the prospective action on the anvil with regard to the manpower requirement of the Ministry, the Committee are disappointed to note that approval beyond the sixth tranche of the previous MEA Expansion Plan was not granted. This has led to a significant 205 posts not being filled up during the ongoing plan and getting staggered to the next decade. This is a situation that the Ministry of External Affairs can ill afford in the present human resource crunch. Given the criticality of the matter to the Ministry's future capabilities to fulfil the country's diplomatic endeavours, the Committee would exhort the Ministry to take up this matter at the highest level so that it is resolved without any further delay and without prolonging the process any further.

(Recommendation No. 5)

Lateral Entry from other Ministries/Departments

11. The Committee had noted that the ongoing Expansion Plan of the Ministry has provisions for lateral entry for Government of India Officers drawn from other Ministries/Departments and that at present 66 deputationists are working in the Ministry. The Committee had felt that the Lateral Entry route is a very viable option for augmenting the capacity of the Ministry till it develops manpower capacity of its own.

The Committee were also aware that the Ministry of External Affairs is the executing agency for a number of projects overseas. The Committee had recommended that the Ministry should bring in more officers with experience in the field of project management to suitably execute and man these projects on a long-term basis. Further, The Committee had desired that the duration of deputation of these officers in the Ministry of External Affairs may be explored through consultations with the concerned Ministries/Departments and if required, the necessary relaxation of rules may also be obtained for their continuation beyond the period ordinarily permissible under the rules.

12. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that it has been taking officers on deputation from other Ministries/ Departments with expertise in project monitoring and management in different sectors to fulfill the functional requirements of the Ministry.

13. In view of the fact that MEA is the executing agency for a number of overseas projects, the Committee had specifically recommended that more officers with experience in the field of project management should be brought on deputation into the Ministry and

extension of the period of deputation of these officers should also be explored in consultation with the concerned Ministries/Departments. Regrettably, the Ministry in its reply has simply stated its recruitment policy, without showing any commitment to meet the Committee's concerns in this regard. Such a casual approach on the part of the Ministry is not appreciated by the Committee and in future the Ministry should refrain from giving vague and incomplete replies. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the Ministry should come out with a clear cut policy for bringing more officers with experience in the field of project management on a long-term basis and, if required in the public interest, ensure their continuation even after relaxing the rules and apprise the Committee accordingly.

(Recommendation No. 6)

Enhancing the number of consultants and their role

14. The present gap between existing manpower resources and actual requirements is a matter of serious concern for the Committee. Though the present cadre of the Ministry is intellectually endowed to fulfill their diplomatic responsibilities, The Committee had felt that it may still be sufficiently supplemented by bringing in more talent from the private sector and academia. The Committee were pleased to note that the Ministry has now started recruiting people from outside government and nine people from the academic world are likely to be contracted by the Ministry. The Committee had recommended that the Ministry should encourage hiring more experts from academia and the private sector and that their deployment should be spread out through important Divisions. These experts may be picked from diverse specific fields such as area studies, foreign languages, public relations, nuclear energy, international law, environmental studies, climatology, trade & commerce, security, etc. and their terms of employment and remuneration should be competitive in order to attract the best talent in the market. In this regard, the Committee had also desired that the Ministry of External Affairs explore the possibility of recruiting eminent scholars into Foreign Service, from amongst those who complete their studies abroad on scholarship for higher studies.

The Committee had felt that there may be times when specialized expertise is required on various issues and in-house support for this may not be available with the Ministry. In order to make up for shortfalls, the Committee had strongly recommended that the role of consultants be suitably enhanced to increase the information base and expertise of the Ministry in handling emerging and challenging issues in the field of geopolitics, environmental/commercial diplomacy.

15. In its reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that the Ministry presently engages consultants including professionals with several years of experience, experts from private sector

and academia and legal experts in key areas of functioning of the Ministry such as project management, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, international law, consular and disarmament related work.

16. Much like some other Recommendations, the Ministry in its reply has merely restated the facts about the engagement of consultants in the Ministry which are already in the knowledge of the Committee. The Ministry has not mentioned anything about the specific steps to be taken to enhance the role of consultants with a view to increasing the information base and expertise of the Ministry in handling emerging and challenging issues in the field of geopolitics, environmental or commercial diplomacy. The Ministry is also completely silent on the matter of exploring the possibility of recruiting eminent scholars into Foreign Service, including from amongst those who complete their higher studies abroad on scholarship . The Committee find the reticence of the Ministry on these very important issues disturbing and desire that the role of consultants should be enhanced by encouraging hiring of experts from varied specific fields and deploying them in all important divisions of the Ministry as recommended by the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 10)

Training budget

17. The Committee had noted that the Ministry has received an unchanged budgetary allocation of Rs. 8.53 crores for training during the years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Committee were constrained to note that in spite of according high priority to training and capacity building in principle, the Ministry has not been able to utilize even the full allocation earmarked under this heading during the last three years, as the actual expenditure was Rs. 6.42 crores, Rs. 6.27 crores and Rs. 6.82 crores respectively. Such a poor expenditure pattern does not augur well for our ambitious programmes for training and capacity building lined up by the Ministry. The Committee were of the view that the training budget of the Ministry is already meagre and underutilization of this existing budget further undermines capacity addition at the Ministry. The Committee were not convinced by the arguments put forth by the Ministry that it has resorted to certain cost cutting and innovative measures for training. Even with the rationalization of training modules, the Committee would have found it more prudent, had the Ministry conducted some additional courses or brought in some good resources for capacity building, rather than keeping the allocated money unspent. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry take necessary measures to fully utilize their budgetary allocations for improving capacity, status and the performance of the Institute.

18. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that FSI has taken note of the recommendation of the Committee to enhance utilization of the allotted funds.

19. While noting the underutilization of the budget for training purposes by the Ministry, the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should take necessary measures to fully utilize its budgetary allocations in order to improve its capacity, as well as to enhance the status and the performance of Foreign Service Institute (FSI). However, the Ministry in its reply has merely stated that the Recommendation has been noted to enhance utilization of the allotted funds and it has failed to provide the details of any tangible steps taken in that direction. The Committee desire that the Ministry should undertake specific measures to ensure that the budget allocation for training does not go unspent and it is utilized for improving capacity, status and the performance of FSI. The Committee should be apprised of the results of the efforts made by the Ministry in this context at the earliest.

(Recommendation No. 11)

Imparting English language training to IFS Officer Trainees

20. The Foreign Service Institute provides training to IFS Officers at both post recruitment and mid-career levels. The initial training and orientation of new recruits to the IFS is crucial for grooming them into future diplomats and to accordingly equip them with the necessary skill sets. Newly recruited IFS Officers have a three month foundation course at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration (LBSNAA), nine months' training at FSI and a three month or longer desk attachment in the Ministry before proceeding abroad for language training. The training at FSI consists of basic skills, diplomatic training and attachments outside FSI. Considering the relatively short period of nine months which is available at the FSI, the Officer Trainees (OTs) ought to be imparted intensive training on a wide variety of aspects related to their future role as career diplomats. The Committee had desired that the training module be revisited and updated periodically, guided by the best practices in diplomatic training worldwide. The Committee were given to understand that the Ministry was working to upgrade training for all categories of officials in consultation with all stakeholders, which would be ready before starting the training for 2016 batch of the IFS. The Committee had desired the Ministry to do the needful without any delay, under intimation to them.

Today English has emerged as the lingua franca of international diplomacy and naturally, a lot of emphasis should be placed on developing communicative skills in English language. While the expansion of recruitment to less conventional segments of society has broadened the bases of the IFS and created a diplomatic corps that more truly represents the social diversity of India than in the past, this aspect has been neglected. The Committee had observed that many IFS trainees are usually equipped only with an average English language proficiency and lack oral

fluency and, in some cases, written communication skills. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary acknowledged that the Ministry has not focused on it so far, but there are certain challenges which require attention. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that adequate measures for imparting written and oral English language proficiency particularly for Officer Trainees hailing from non-English backgrounds should be initiated at the earliest.

21. In its Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of External Affairs has stated that training in English language is imparted to IFS Officer Trainees who require such classes, as part of their induction training.

22. **On the basis of information given by the Ministry that it was working to upgrade the training for all categories in consultation with all the stakeholders, the Committee had asked the Ministry to take necessary action without any delay. But in its reply, the Ministry is silent on the status of the upgradation process and its implementation. The Committee were categorical in pointing out that adequate measures ought to be taken to impart written and oral English proficiency to the Officer Trainees hailing from non-English-speaking backgrounds. However, the reply of the Ministry simply states the provision for such remedial training being available on demand. Had the results from existing practices been satisfactory, it would not have spurred the Foreign Secretary to acknowledge that the issue required some attention. The Committee can infer that the current pattern of imparting English language training to Officer Trainees is not yielding desired results. It is inexplicable how this reply, which is contrary to the stand taken before the Committee during their examination, has now been submitted by the Ministry. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should apprise the Committee about the status of upgradation of the training process for all the categories and also seriously introspect on the shortcomings of English language proficiency among the Officer trainees and the extent to which this handicaps our diplomatic corps in the performance of its duties.**

(Recommendation No. 13)

Enhancing the scope of training

23. The Committee observed that the Ministry had modified its training programme by adopting a new Training Framework (TF) in 2013 which incorporates and formalizes many incremental changes brought in training content and methodology over the years. Various changes have been, made in the training methods which now incorporate on-site Mid-career Training Programme (MCTP) phase II, Non-mandatory training, linking of training to postings abroad,

providing training at all levels and cadres etc. While the Ministry has changed the basic architecture of training by adopting a new framework, issues related to the quality of young officers are still debatable. The Ministry has consistently argued that even when there is an imperfect recruitment system, flaws can be evened out through proper training of new recruits. On the contrary, The Committee were of the view that even when the Ministry has maintained that it has enriched the training modules of the OTs in recent years, the quality of a number of our young officers is still unsatisfactory. While we still grapple with the issue of improving the recruitment system for new Officers, the Ministry must introspect about existing shortcomings in the training structure and ways to rectify them. During deliberations, the Committee were apprised that candidates from a wide variety of socio-economic and educational backgrounds are now joining the IFS. Some of these candidates have held previous employment before joining the IFS. Therefore, there is a need to modify the training programme depending on the background of the candidates involved so that the best in them can be brought out in their future careers as diplomats. The Committee had suggested that the Ministry initiate a system of differentiated training and evaluation wherein the focus should be on individual officers, achieving a benchmark in identified fields through more personalized interventions. The training needs would vary according to the pre-existing skill sets of individual OTs.

Social media has emerged as a viable platform for the dissemination and sharing of information. Therefore, the Committee had recommended that training modules in the field of social media should be designed by the Ministry and that all officers be trained on the nuances of using it in public diplomacy and for promotion of India's international objectives.

24. The Ministry of External Affairs, has stated in its Action Taken Reply that training programmes for officers at all levels are customized as per requirement of the Ministry and are constantly evaluated.

25. In their Recommendation, the Committee had advocated a system of differentiated training and evaluation, taking into account the varied requirements and skill sets of the trainees. The Ministry in its reply has maintained that training programmes for officers at all levels are customized as per requirement of the Ministry. There seems to be a contradiction between what was recommended by the Committee and the explanation given by the Ministry reiterating the current training practices. If the Ministry was not amenable to the ideas enunciated by the Committee, it could have given some sound reasons in defence of the current training practices. The Committee strongly feel the need for customized training not only in relation to the requirements of the Ministry but also to improve the pre-existing skill sets of individual officer trainees. Further, the Committee had also suggested

that the Ministry design training modules in the field of social media. The Ministry has once again failed to show any credible action taken in this regard. Therefore, the Committee deprecate this cavalier approach towards their Recommendations and reiterate that a training module in the field of social media is imperative for the IFS officers to be well versed in the art of tapping social media for diplomacy and this should be worked out without delay.

(Recommendation No. 14)

Language proficiency

26. The Committee had felt that proficiency in a foreign language is integral to the role and responsibility of a diplomat and no Foreign Service establishment can work without a substantial number of diverse foreign language speakers within its ranks. The Ministry has a provision for imparting foreign language training to Officer Trainees (OT) and their confirmation in service depends on passing the compulsory Foreign Language examination conducted by the School of Foreign Languages. There is also a provision for IFS Officers to learn an additional language during the course of their career which is known as Optional Foreign Language (OFL). The Committee were constrained to note that the linguistic base of India's diplomats is largely limited to the five UN languages only and roughly 35 percent of the Officers posted abroad are serving in their respective language zones. Moreover, out of around 770 IFS Officers in service, the number of Officers with proficiency in a foreign language is only 569. It may easily be inferred that around 200 IFS Officers are not equipped with any of foreign language and the Committee were disappointed by this dismal state of affairs. There is considerable anecdotal evidence of Indian Ambassadors in Arabic-speaking countries being handicapped by their lack of knowledge of Arabic, and similar examples in a variety of countries, Indian diplomats being unable to appear on television discussions in the countries to which they are accredited because of a lack of fluency in the local language, and so on. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry take urgent measures to conduct an assessment of current language needs and enhance the linguistic base of the Ministry by providing intensive foreign language training and periodic refresher courses. The Ministry should also ensure that there are no IFS Officers without training and proficiency in foreign languages, at a level that permits them to function effectively in the countries where that language is spoken. In view of the low alignment of foreign postings with the language proficiency, The Committee had desired that a policy that mandates to aligning at least 50 percent of the postings with foreign languages should be initiated by the Ministry. The Committee had also strongly recommended that, where it is necessary to assign an officer to a country whose language he or she does not know, an intensive one-month training should be provided to the officer in the language, culture, society, customs and political situation of the country of posting before he/she is posted abroad.

27. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that in order to further widen the pool of officers trained in foreign languages, the Ministry has started imparting training in Compulsory Foreign Language to all officers of IFS Branch B promoted to IFS, as per provisions of Rule (19) (1) of Indian Foreign Service (Recruitment, Cadre, Seniority & Promotion) Rules, 1961. IFS officers are also undergoing training at interpreter level in major foreign languages. In addition, the Ministry provides for undertaking periodic refresher courses for officers who go back to their language stations. Periodic foreign language classes are held in Missions/Posts for officer and officials of all levels to familiarize them with language spoken in their country of posting.

28. While observing the unsatisfactory levels of proficiency of IFS Officers in foreign languages, the Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry take urgent measures to conduct an assessment of current language needs and enhance the language base of Ministry by providing foreign language training and periodic refresher courses. But the Ministry has once again given a vague and incomplete reply and failed to properly take the Committee's Recommendations into account. The Ministry has enumerated some of the steps taken to improve language proficiency amongst its officers *viz.* imparting foreign language training to IFS promotees, imparting interpreter level training, offering some refresher courses and holding periodic foreign language classes in Missions/Posts. The remedial steps listed by the Ministry are general in nature and do not meet the Recommendation of the Committee. In their Recommendation, the Committee were very categorical in asking the Ministry to undertake an assessment of current language needs, ensuring that there is no IFS officer without training in a particular foreign language, aligning at least 50 percent of the postings with foreign languages, providing urgent remedial training for diplomats assigned to countries other than those of their language specialisation, etc. The Ministry has not taken even a single step in this direction and the Committee have no choice but to decry the casualness with which Ministry has been taking the Committee's Recommendations. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take earnest action as enumerated above in order to improve the overall language proficiency of IFS cadre and apprise the Committee about the same.

(Recommendation No.15)

Interpreter's cadre

29. The Committee were constrained to note that the Interpreter cadre of the Ministry is limited to just 33 personnel covering seven languages. The Committee were not able to find any justification for the gross understaffing of such a critical department of the Ministry at a time when the country is poised to make a giant leap ahead through enhanced global engagements and higher number of foreign visits by dignitaries. More often than not, the work of the Ministry is classified in nature and therefore, it leaves no ground for overreliance on hired interpreters/translators. The Ministry had informed the Committee that language skill of many IFS officers are being used professionally. The Committee had in the past taken exception to the arrangement of IFS officers playing the role of interpreters as it compromises the actual performance of our officers as well as the job of interpretation. Therefore, the Committee had strongly recommended that the interpreter's cadre in the Ministry should be strengthened significantly by increasing manpower and simultaneously investing in their capacity building programme.

30. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that Ministry has initiated action to send officers of the interpreters' cadre for short-term courses to upgrade their language skills and long-term courses for upgrading interpretation skills to international institutions of repute. Ministry's experience with IFS officers as trained interpreters in Chinese language has been positive. Hence, the Ministry is of the view that imparting high level training to IFS officers in important foreign languages is in the overall interest of the Ministry and the Government.

31. **The Committee were perturbed to learn that the interpreters' cadre in the MEA was grossly understaffed and had recommended to strengthen it by increasing the manpower and capacity building programme. For capacity building of the cadre the Ministry has taken some steps but no step has been taken on the Committee's Recommendation to augment its manpower. The Committee have a clear view that if the cadre remains understaffed then nothing concrete will come out of upgrading their skills intensively. At this juncture a sufficient number of interpreters is required who can be extensively deployed at various locations. It is, therefore, imperative that an adequate number of personnel is appointed at these levels. The deployment of IFS officers as interpreters can at best serve as a stop gap arrangement.**

(Recommendation No.19)
Ambassadorial postings

32. The Committee had observed that the Ambassadorial appointments are not being made through a designated body unlike other foreign postings of the Ministry, which are handled through the Foreign Service Board. Moreover, there are delays in appointment and in the absence of a designated policy for appointment of Ambassadors and High Commissioners; they are done with the approval of the Hon'ble President in keeping with India's priorities, requirements in a particular Diplomatic Mission and overall suitability of the Officer, including experience, seniority, regional and professional expertise. The Committee were concerned to note that the space for non-career ambassadors has considerably shrunk and at present there are only two non-career Ambassadors whereas in the past there had been a number of highly illustrious Ambassadors who were not drawn from the IFS and who served their posts with distinction. The Committee were of the considered view that more eminent persons who have excelled in the field of community affairs, Diaspora issues, Foreign Policy, area studies, literature, journalism, etc. should be considered for appointments as Ambassadors/High Commissioners. There is an urgent need to import diversity into the appointment of Ambassadors to bring it in consonance with India's rapidly rising profile globally and for suitably projecting our foreign policy interests. The Committee had also recommended that the appointment of Ambassadors be made through a designated body with representation of non-official experts as well. Furthermore, The Committee had desired that knowledge of the local language of the country of accreditation should be made a desirable qualification for being appointed Ambassador there.

33. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that recommendation of the Committee has been noted. However, this is beyond the mandate of the Ministry.

34. In response to the Committee's Recommendation on the appointment of non-career Ambassadors and High Commissioners, the Ministry has replied that the same has been noted. Simultaneously, it has also been stated that this is beyond the mandate of the Ministry. The Committee are of the firm opinion that appointment of Ambassadors and High Commissioners should either be made by, or based on recommendations by the MEA and that it is therefore the Ministry's responsibility to evolve a coherent selection policy for these appointments. Therefore, the Committee strongly reiterate that the Government should take credible action to consider eminent persons outside the Foreign Service for such appointments. Where such appointments go beyond its mandate, the Ministry should

discuss the instant Recommendation with the competent authority for the purpose, so that a decision on the Recommendation of the Committee does not remain in limbo due to jurisdiction issues.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation No. 1)

The Indian Foreign Service is our dedicated diplomatic service representing India at various international fora. The IFS cadre is one of the smallest in terms of cadre strength as compared to other All India and Central Services, with a current sanctioned strength of 912. If we consider the total pool of diplomatic officers in our Missions/Posts abroad and at Headquarters including those from feeder Services and other Ministries and Services, the country has a pool of about 2700 officers who can serve diplomatic functions. The size of India's diplomatic corps is far smaller than that of China and Japan and about one eighth of USA's diplomats. It is a matter of grave concern for the Committee that there are only 770 IFS Officers against the sanctioned strength of 912. The Committee were of the considered view that the size of India's diplomatic corps is inadequate considering the tasks and challenges before the Ministry and nation.

The Committee find that the Ministry has not been adhering to clause 6(3) of the Indian Foreign Service Recruitment, Cadre, Seniority and Promotion Rule, 1961 which lays down that the Central Government shall at the interval of every two years re-examine the strength and composition of the IFS cadre. In fact, the last cadre review of the IFS was carried out in 2004 and it has been 12 years since a review took place. The Committee had felt that the Ministry must reflect a more serious attitude and prevent any further deterioration in the already modest numbers facing India's diplomatic corps. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry take urgent notice of the low strength of the IFS cadre as well as that of the total diplomatic corps of the country as compared to the strength of other prominent countries and the need for manpower augmentation to handle India's growing profile and aspirations at the global stage and to initiate remedial measures at the earliest. To begin with, The Committee recommend that the Ministry fill the gap between the sanctioned strength and the current strength of the IFS cadre as well as that of other diplomatic officers through periodic cadre review as stipulated under Service Rules. The Committee further desire that the Ministry undertake the long delayed cadre review immediately and also ensure that in future there is no failure in conducting periodic cadre reviews as stipulated under the Service Rules.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry has undertaken an exercise to review the cadre strength of Indian Foreign Service and subordinate cadres of the Ministry and a reviewed proposal on MEA Expansion Plan, based on functional requirement of the Ministry, has been submitted to Department of Personnel & Training and Department of Expenditure. Meanwhile, the Ministry is indenting for recruitment of IFS officers as per its requirement through UPSC. The Ministry has revised the guidelines for

recruitment of Consultants from academia and private sector on contract basis, as per existing GOI norms. Deputation from other Ministries/ Departments and the Armed Forces is to continue to be a mode of recruitment in the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 2)

The Committee observe that the Ministry has been recruiting 30 to 35 IFS Officers every year by indenting these vacancies through the UPSC. In order to tide over the shortage of manpower, the Ministry has embarked upon an Expansion Plan covering a period of 10 years from 2008 to 2018 which provides for the creation of 514 posts in the Ministry. Till date, 309 posts have been created under the Plan after operationalization of six tranches which includes 187 posts of IFS and 122 posts at the staff level. However, The Committee had noted that despite the Expansion Plan, the critical gap between our diplomatic requirements and available manpower still remains. Furthermore, with only two years left for the Expansion Plan to conclude, The Committee desire that the timeline for creating the remaining 205 posts be strictly adhered to. The Committee view the Expansion Plan as a beginning to plug the existing gap, but it does not factor in the emerging requirements of the Ministry for which The Committee have been pressing hard through their earlier Reports and which will need further intake at a greater scale and speed.

The Committee further note that the Ministry has started working on a long term successor plan to the ongoing Expansion Plan known as the Expansion Plan 2.0. Under the MEA Expansion Plan 2.0, the Ministry will assess its requirements in 2020, 2025 and 2030. For the Committee, the plan is the culmination of its exhortations to the Ministry for engaging in a *de novo* exercise of assessing its present available manpower. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry initiate the exercise of assessing its manpower requirements under the MEA Expansion Plan 2.0 with due diligence by factoring in diverse future scenarios. In view of the fact that this will entail a lengthy process of consultations and financial approvals, adequate planning must be invested in without delay. The Committee want to be apprised about the blueprint of the Expansion Plan 2.0 along with the implementation schedule.

Reply of the Government

As recommended by the Committee, the Ministry has assessed present availability of manpower as well as its requirement for personnel in the coming years and has formulated a revised proposal for MEA Expansion Plan which has been shared with Department of Personnel & Training and Department of Expenditure for their views. Since the approval beyond the sixth tranche of the previous MEA Expansion Plan was not granted, it has been proposed that the uncreated posts of previous MEA Expansion plan be absorbed into the current plan. Thereafter, the proposal will be submitted to the Union Cabinet for approval.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 7)

The Committee feel that a well-trained local cadre is vital for enhancing the efficiency of Missions/Posts as they are familiar with local conditions, language and customs. The cost of hiring is the local cadre much lower than an India-based employee. The Committee are pleased to note that at present around 2,200 local employees work in India's various Missions/Posts abroad and strengthening of the local cadre has been an integral part of the Ministry's Expansion Plan 2.0. However, the Committee are also aware that they cannot substitute for the regular diplomatic staff in being responsible for our foreign policy interests and in terms of maintaining confidentiality in official matters. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that keeping in view the diplomatic sensitivities involved, the role of the local cadre should be confined to manning the service delivery arms of various Missions/Posts except in exceptional circumstances. The Committee would further desire that a concrete policy guideline for hiring the local cadre, meeting their training needs and making provisions for appropriate wages should be worked upon by the Ministry at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

Local staffs in Missions and Posts abroad are engaged in service delivery arms including consular, passport, visa, trade promotion, cultural cooperation related activities. Recruitment policy, pay scales and training needs of local cadre are continuously evaluated and revised as per the requirement of the Ministry and in keeping with the local conditions where the Missions/Posts are located.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 8)

The feeder cadre which includes Under Secretaries, Section Officers, Private Secretaries, Assistants, Cipher Assistants, Personal Assistants, Stenographers, UDCs and LDCs comprise a major part of the human resources of the Ministry. They are the backbone of the Ministry in terms of carrying out miscellaneous tasks and The Committee had found it imperative that there should be a well laid out and properly implemented promotion policy for them. At present, upto 22.5 percent of the posts in IFS (A) are being filled by the members of IFS (B) through induction/promotion as part of the MEA Expansion Plan. Accordingly, 12 posts have been identified for departmental promotions from the feeder cadre within the Ministry every year. In this respect, the Committee would desire that promotional avenues for the feeder cadre should be further broadened for ensuring seamless career growth and as a means of tapping the full human resources potential available. The Committee would also recommend that the timeline for filling up the posts through promotions be strictly adhered to.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry attaches utmost priority to promotional aspirations of feeder cadres, for proper utilization of human resources available to the Ministry. Promotions are carried out in timely manner following the due procedure.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 10)

The Committee note that the Ministry has received an unchanged budgetary allocation of Rs. 8.53 crores for training during the years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Committee are constrained to note that in spite of according high priority to training and capacity building in principle, the Ministry has not been able to utilize even the full allocation earmarked under this heading during the last three years, as the actual expenditure was Rs. 6.42 crores, Rs. 6.27 crores and Rs. 6.82 crores respectively. Such a poor expenditure pattern does not augur well for our ambitious programmes for training and capacity building lined up by the Ministry. The Committee are of the view that the training budget of the Ministry is already meagre and underutilization of this existing budget further undermines capacity addition at the Ministry. The Committee are not convinced by the arguments put forth by the Ministry that it has resorted to certain cost cutting and innovative measures for training. Even with the rationalization of training modules, the Committee would have found it more prudent, had the Ministry conducted some additional courses or brought in some good resources for capacity building, rather than keeping the allocated money unspent. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry take necessary measures to fully utilize their budgetary allocations for improving capacity, status and the performance of the Institute.

Reply of the Government

FSI has taken note of the recommendation of the Committee to enhance utilization the allotted funds.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 12)

The Committee consider training an important aspect of capacity building for any organization and that it should be imparted to all our IFS personnel. The Committee were pleased to note that training has become a regular feature of not only IFS Officers, but other cadres of the Ministry as well. At present, training courses of varying durations are conducted for promotees to IFS (A), various cadres of IFS (B), multi-tasking Staff/chauffeurs, deputationists from other Ministries/Departments, Officials of the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and local staff. Regretfully, The Committee had noted, however, that there is no provision for training

Officials/Staff of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the Cultural Diplomacy arm of the Ministry. The Committee were of the opinion that the ICCR being at the vanguard of our cultural diplomacy, it should be ensured that opportunities for training are made available to its officials/staff. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that urgent steps should be taken to impart training to personnel of the ICCR on a regular basis.

Reply of the Government

This recommendation is noted for implementation.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No.16)

The Committee are concerned at the deterioration in the quality of recruits to the Indian Foreign Service. This is happening at a time when the lure and appeal of the Civil Services Examination has increased tremendously and the number of applications is rising steadily. The Committee observe that in the past, only the candidates who were able to secure the highest ranks in the Civil Services Examination were able to enter the IFS. It has come as a matter of surprise to the Committee that today even low ranked candidates are able to enter the IFS. This development is both a symptom and a reason for the erosion of prestige in the IFS. The Committee are of the opinion that the IFS being the premier service of the country and its officers being responsible for handling multiple responsibilities of diplomacy, it is imperative that only the best candidates are selected from a wide pool of human resource available in the country. No. doubt, the relative charm of the IFS has waned with the increased accessibility of foreign travel in recent years and the Ministry has acknowledged that people in the top 10 may not necessarily opt for Indian Foreign Service. In fact, the IFS toppers in 2014 and 2015 were ranked 24th and 14th, respectively in the overall CSE merit list. Similarly, the last person to have made it to the IFS from the General/Unreserved category was ranked 114th in the CSE, 2015. The Committee are not fully convinced by the arguments of the Ministry that the present system of recruiting officers to the IFS through CSE is yielding suitable well qualified candidates who could be nurtured to be successful officers through proper training. The Committee have already made their view clear on the issue of recruitment in the preceding chapters and they would like the Ministry to be open-minded about the quality of recruits. The argument that rising uncertainties of living abroad and other extraneous factors prevent top rankers from opting for the IFS are not convincing. The Committee would desire that the Ministry look into the reasons for the ebbing stock of IFS *vis-a-vis* other services. Accordingly, urgent steps should be initiated to make the IFS more attractive and remunerative as a career choice for Civil Service aspirants.

Reply of the Government

Ministry is constantly upgrading its training policy to match the requirement of the new recruits and also sensitizing senior officers including the Heads of Missions, to mentor the new recruits to enable them to match the high standards required in the Service.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No.17)

The field of diplomacy is witnessing important emerging areas like economic, commercial, political, cultural, and environmental diplomacy, all of which are gaining rapid currency. The nature of global engagements has undergone a sea change and there is today an added emphasis on trade and investment, multilateral economic relations, developmental partnership, etc. Besides, there is a need for calibrated responses to new global challenges like disarmament, climate change, counter-terrorism, cyber security, etc. The Committee find it imperative for the Ministry to augment capacity in the relevant fields without disturbing the existing equilibrium between the domain experts and generalists. This is a very old debate in Public Administration and Human Resource Management which is unlikely to be resolved at this juncture. The Committee are of the considered opinion that the Ministry should suitable enhance the scope of mid-career training to equip officers to develop expertise in specific fields based on their educational background. It is inevitable that a certain amount of specialization would emerge but it would not be a prudent idea in the Committee's view to confine officers to a particular domain rotated to ensure a wider pool of officers with a certain amount of specialized domain knowledge instead of exclusive specialization. As a means to achieve this, IFS officers should be incentivized by providing additional increment for research work on relevant subjects related to diplomacy, trade & commerce, international relations, disarmament, energy security, climate change, etc.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry encourages functional specialisation in areas of economic, commercial, technology, disarmament and security related issues. Opportunities are provided from time to time to officers to undergo specialised short term courses in reputed institutions in India and abroad. This has also been built into the posting policy of the Ministry wherein IFS officers are posted to stations where they could develop domain expertise in these areas.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

CHAPTER III

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

NIL

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE REITERATION

(Recommendation No. 5)

The Committee note that the ongoing Expansion Plan of the Ministry has provisions for lateral entry for Government of India Officers drawn from other Ministries/Departments and that at present 66 deputationists are working in the Ministry. The Committee feel that the Lateral Entry route is a very viable option for augmenting the capacity of the Ministry till it develops manpower capacity of its own.

The Committee are also aware that the Ministry of External Affairs is the executing agency for a number of projects overseas. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should bring in more officers with experience in the field of project management to suitably execute and man these projects on a long-term basis. Further, The Committee desire that the duration of deputation of these officers in the Ministry of External Affairs may be explored through consultations with the concerned Ministries/Departments and if required, the necessary relaxation of rules may also be obtained for their continuation beyond the period ordinarily permissible under the rules.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has been taking officers on deputation from other Ministries/ Departments with expertise in project monitoring and management in different sectors to fulfill the functional requirements of the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 6)

The present gap between existing manpower resources and actual requirements is a matter of serious concern for the Committee. Though the present cadre of the Ministry is intellectually endowed to fulfill their diplomatic responsibilities, the Committee feel that it may still be sufficiently supplemented by bringing in more talent from the private sector and academia. The Committee are pleased to note that the Ministry has now started recruiting people from outside government and nine people from the academic world are likely to be contracted by the Ministry. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should encourage hiring more experts from academia and the private sector and that their deployment should be spread out through important Divisions. These experts may be picked from diverse specific fields such as area studies, foreign languages, public relations, nuclear energy, international law, environmental studies, climatology, trade & commerce, security, etc. and their terms of employment and remuneration should be

competitive in order to attract the best talent in the market. In this regard, the Committee also desire that the Ministry of External Affairs explore the possibility of recruiting eminent scholars into Foreign Service, from amongst those who complete their studies abroad on scholarship for higher studies.

The Committee feel that there may be times when specialized expertise is required on various issues and in-house support for this may not be available with the Ministry. In order to make up for shortfalls, the Committee would strongly recommend that the role of consultants be suitably enhanced to increase the information base and expertise of the Ministry in handling emerging and challenging issues in the field of geopolitics, environmental/commercial diplomacy.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry presently engages consultants including professionals with several years of experience, experts from private sector and academia and legal experts in key areas of functioning of the Ministry such as project management, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, international law, consular and disarmament related work.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 11)

The Foreign Service Institute provides training to IFS Officers at both post recruitment and mid-career levels. The initial training and orientation of new recruits to the IFS is crucial for grooming them into future diplomats and to accordingly equip them with the necessary skill sets. Newly recruited IFS Officers have a three month foundation course at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration (LBSNAA), nine months' training at FSI and a three month or longer desk attachment in the Ministry before proceeding abroad for language training. The training at FSI consists of basic skills, diplomatic training and attachments outside FSI. Considering the relatively short period of nine months which is available at the FSI, the Officer Trainees (OTs) ought to be imparted intensive training on a wide variety of aspects related to their future role as career diplomats. The Committee desire that the training module be revisited and updated periodically, guided by the best practices in diplomatic training worldwide. The Committee are given to understand that the Ministry is working to upgrade training for all categories of officials in consultation with all stakeholders, which would be ready before starting the training for 2016 batch of the IFS. The Committee desire the Ministry to do the needful without any delay, under intimation to them.

Today English has emerged as the *lingua franca* of international diplomacy and naturally, a lot of emphasis should be placed on developing communicative skills in English language.

While the expansion of recruitment to less conventional segments of society has broadened the bases of the IFS and created a diplomatic corps that more truly represents the social diversity of India than in the past, this aspect has been neglected. The Committee observe that many IFS trainees are usually equipped only with an average English language proficiency and lack oral fluency and, in some cases, written communication skills. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary acknowledged that the Ministry has not focused on it so far, but there are certain challenges which require attention. The Committee, therefore, recommend that adequate measures for imparting written and oral English language proficiency particularly for Officer Trainees hailing from non-English backgrounds should be initiated at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

Training in English language is imparted to IFS Officer Trainees who require such classes, as part of their induction training.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 13)

The Committee observe that the Ministry has modified its training programme by adopting a new Training Framework (TF) in 2013 which incorporates and formalizes many incremental changes brought in training content and methodology over the years. Various changes have been, made in the training methods which now incorporate on-site Mid-career Training Programme (MCTP) phase II, Non-mandatory training, linking of training to postings abroad, providing training at all levels and cadres etc. While the Ministry has changed the basic architecture of training by adopting a new framework, issues related to the quality of young officers are still debatable. The Ministry has consistently argued that even when there is an imperfect recruitment system, flaws can be evened out through proper training of new recruits. On the contrary, The Committee are of the view that even when the Ministry has maintained that it has enriched the training modules of the OTs in recent years, the quality of a number of our young officers is still unsatisfactory. While we still grapple with the issue of improving the recruitment system for new Officers, the Ministry must introspect about existing shortcomings in the training structure and ways to rectify them. During deliberations, the Committee are apprised that candidates from a wide variety of socio-economic and educational backgrounds are now joining the IFS. Some of these candidates have held previous employment before joining the IFS. Therefore, there is a need to modify the training programme depending on the background of the candidates involved so that the best in them can be brought out in their future careers as diplomats. The Committee suggest that the Ministry initiate a system of differentiated training and evaluation wherein the focus should be on individual officers, achieving a benchmark in identified fields through more personalized interventions. The training needs would vary according to the pre-existing skill sets of individual OTs.

Social media has emerged as a viable platform for the dissemination and sharing of information. Therefore, the Committee recommend that training modules in the field of social media should be designed by the Ministry and that all officers be trained on the nuances of using it in public diplomacy and for promotion of India's international objectives.

Reply of the Government

Training programmes for officers at all levels are customized as per requirement of the Ministry and are constantly evaluated.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 14)

The Committee feel that proficiency in a foreign language is integral to the role and responsibility of a diplomat and no Foreign Service establishment can work without a substantial number of diverse foreign language speakers within its ranks.

The Ministry has a provision for imparting foreign language training to Officer Trainees (OT) and their confirmation in service depends on passing the compulsory Foreign Language examination conducted by the School of Foreign Languages. There is also a provision for IFS Officers to learn an additional language during the course of their career which is known as Optional Foreign Language (OFL). The Committee are constrained to note that the linguistic base of India's diplomats is largely limited to the five UN languages only and roughly 35 percent of the Officers posted abroad are serving in their respective language zones. Moreover, out of around 770 IFS Officers in service, the number of Officers with proficiency in a foreign language is only 569. It may easily be inferred that around 200 IFS Officers are not equipped with any of foreign language and the Committee are disappointed by this dismal state of affairs. There is considerable anecdotal evidence of Indian Ambassadors in Arabic-speaking countries being handicapped by their lack of knowledge of Arabic, and similar examples in a variety of countries, Indian diplomats being unable to appear on television discussions in the countries to which they are accredited because of a lack of fluency in the local language, and so on. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry take urgent measures to conduct an assessment of current language needs and enhance the linguistic base of the Ministry by providing intensive foreign language training and periodic refresher courses. The Ministry should also ensure that there are no IFS Officers without training and proficiency in foreign languages, at a level that permits them to function effectively in the countries where that language is spoken. In view of the low alignment of foreign postings with the language proficiency, The Committee desire that a policy that mandates to aligning at least 50 percent of the postings with foreign languages should be initiated by the Ministry. The Committee also strongly recommend that, where it is necessary to assign an officer to a country whose language he or she does not know, an intensive one-month training

should be provided to the officer in the language, culture, society, customs and political situation of the country of posting before he/she is posted abroad.

Reply of the Government

In order to further widen the pool of officers trained in foreign languages, the Ministry has started imparting training in Compulsory Foreign Language to all officers of IFS Branch B promoted to IFS, as per provisions of Rule (19) (1) of Indian Foreign Service (Recruitment, Cadre, Seniority & Promotion) Rules, 1961. IFS officers are also undergoing training at interpreter level in major foreign languages. In addition, the Ministry provides for undertaking periodic refresher courses for officers who go back to their language stations. Periodic foreign language classes are held in Missions/Posts for officer and officials of all levels to familiarize them with language spoken in their country of posting.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No.15)

The Committee are constrained to note that the Interpreter cadre of the Ministry is limited to just 33 personnel covering seven languages. The Committee are not able to find any justification for the gross understaffing of such a critical department of the Ministry at a time when the country is poised to make a giant leap ahead through enhanced global engagements and higher number of foreign visits by dignitaries. More often than not, the work of the Ministry is classified in nature and therefore, it leaves no ground for overreliance on hired interpreters/translators. The Ministry has informed the Committee that language skills of many IFS officers are being used professionally. The Committee had in the past taken exception to the arrangement of IFS officers playing the role of interpreters as it compromises the actual performance of our officers as well as the job of interpretation. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the interpreters cadre in the Ministry should be strengthened significantly by increasing manpower and simultaneously investing in their capacity building programme.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has initiated action to send officers of the interpreters' cadre for short-term courses to upgrade their language skills and long-term courses for upgrading interpretation skills to international institutions of repute. Ministry's experience with IFS officers as trained interpreters in Chinese language has been positive. Hence, the Ministry is of the view that imparting high level training to IFS officers in important foreign languages is in the overall interest of the Ministry and the Government.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 19)

The Committee observe that the Ambassadorial appointments are not being made through a designated body unlike other foreign postings of the Ministry, which are handled through the Foreign Service Board. Moreover, there are delays in appointment and in the absence of a designated policy for appointment of Ambassadors and High Commissioners; they are done with the approval of the Hon'ble President in keeping with India's priorities, requirements in a particular Diplomatic Mission and overall suitability of the Officer, including experience, seniority, regional and professional expertise. The Committee are concerned to note that the space for non-career ambassadors has considerably shrunk and at present there are only two non-career Ambassadors whereas in the past there had been a number of highly illustrious Ambassadors who were not drawn from the IFS and who served their posts with distinction. The Committee are of the considered view that more eminent persons who have excelled in the field of community affairs, Diaspora issues, Foreign Policy, area studies, literature, journalism, etc. should be considered for appointments as Ambassadors/High Commissioners. There is an urgent need to import diversity into the appointment of Ambassadors to bring it in consonance with India's rapidly rising profile globally and for suitably projecting our foreign policy interests. The Committee also recommend that the appointment of Ambassadors be made through a designated body with representation of non-official experts as well. Furthermore, The Committee desire that knowledge of the local language of the country of accreditation should be made a desirable qualification for being appointed Ambassador there.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation of the Committee has been noted. However, this is beyond the mandate of the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

CHAPTER V

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

(Recommendation No. 3)

The Committee observe that Officers of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) are recruited through an open competitive examination called the Civil Services Examination (CSE) conducted every year on an all India level by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The Committee have been informed that the number of direct recruits in a year is directly linked to the number of retirements that year. The Ministry at present recruits 30 to 35 IFS Officers every year by indenting these vacancies through the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)/UPSC which includes 8 additional vacancies created every year under MEA Expansion Plan for 2008 and 2018. The Committee understand that the CSE assesses the overall knowledge and general aptitude of the candidates through a set of written papers and a personality test/interview. The Committee also understand that the Civil Services is undoubtedly one of the most competitive and best conducted examinations in the world. The Ministry feel that the Officers recruited through this examination have the right aptitude to be moulded through proper training that meets requirements of IFS. The Committee, however, feel that under the existing scheme of the examination, the aptitude of the candidates for Foreign Service is not being properly assessed. In the opinion of the Committee, it is a major lacuna as the skills required of a career diplomat is qualitatively different from those demanded by other services. It is, therefore, imperative that only candidates with the right calibre and aptitude who are suited to represent India internationally are recruited to the IFS.

With a view to ensure that selected candidates match the profile for a career diplomat, The Committee were of the considered opinion that the Ministry and DoPT should examine all possible options such as conducting a separate examination for the foreign service or introducing an additional paper or according more weightage to the interview/personality test. On the issue of conducting a separate examination for the IFS, the Committee were made to understand that it will constrict the pool of potential candidates. Therefore, The Committee have reached an understanding that it may not be a worthwhile idea to conduct a separate examination for the foreign service in view of the fact that it may constrict the catchment area of potential candidates and it may also be difficult for any examination to match the popularity of the CSE. However, The Committee have found it prudent to effect adjustments in the present system of examination to make it in consonance with the job requirements of a career diplomat without compromising on the wider pool of candidates offered by the CSE. The Committee have suggested that for selecting suitable candidates, it should be imperative that candidates are also assessed by parameters such as international aptitude, curiosity about the world, knowledge or demonstrated interest in foreign affairs, communication skills in English and foreign languages etc. After due deliberation, The Committee have arrived at some viable solutions and accordingly, the Committee recommend that

an additional paper for testing the aforementioned aptitude/knowledge be introduced by the UPSC and that this should be made obligatory for candidates opting for the IFS. Other candidates may be given the option of not appearing for this paper but passing this paper should be mandatory for all candidates opting for the IFS. Further, the Committee would like that the scope of the personality test should be enhanced suitably for candidates opting for IFS and they should be assessed for qualities which are considered sine qua non in a diplomat. The interview board while conducting the personality test may also be asked to indicate whether the particular candidate who has opted for IFS is recommended for IFS or not. In other words, a candidate may be allotted IFS if he/she is in the merit list, has cleared the additional paper and obtained a recommendation from the Interview Board.

The Committee are aware that the Ministry has already given inputs regarding additional papers for the Foreign Service and additional weightage to be given to the personality test. Furthermore, the B.S. Basawan Committee that looked into revamping the Civil Service Examination will be submitting its Report by 11.8.2016. Our Committee would desire that the aforementioned recommendations of the Basawan Committee are communicated to the DoPT/UPSC at the earliest for their consideration. The action taken in this regard should be communicated to the Committee.

Reply of the Government

Ministry's views on this matter were conveyed to B.S. Baswan Committee constituted by the Union Public Service Commission to look into the format of the Civil Services Examination. The recommendation of the Committee has, therefore, been referred to UPSC and DOPT for consideration.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 4)

The Committee are concerned to note that the present scheme of Civil Services Examination (CSE) where a candidate is required to pass a paper in an Indian language is a major impediment for NRIs to appear for the examinations. The Committee are of the opinion that wards of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are capable of representing India's interests globally in an effective and convincing way by virtue of their exposure and multi-cultural experience abroad. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that NRIs should be given an opportunity to appear in the CSE by waiving the Indian language provision for those who have completed more than fifty percent of their schooling abroad. However, the selected candidates should be required to gain working knowledge of at least one Indian language during the probationary period. The Committee would specifically desire the Ministry to pursue the matter with the DoPT with utmost urgency. Proficiency in a foreign language other than English should however be required as a substitute for an Indian language.

Reply of the Government

Ministry has already conveyed its views on this matter to B.S. Baswan Committee constituted by the Union Public Service Commission to look into the format of the Civil Services Examination. This recommendation of the Committee, therefore, has been referred to Department Personnel & Training and the Union Public Service Commission for consideration.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No. 9)

The Committee observe that the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) established in 1986 has evolved over the years and is now involved in imparting training at all levels in order to develop competency and skills including to diplomats posted abroad. As the FSI is involved in providing training to a wide variety of people with diverse training needs, the Committee would desire that the Institute incorporate the latest training methods and procedures by following the best international practices. The Committee further desire that the Ministry undertake periodic appraisals and ensure requisite capacity building in the Institute through long term planning. The Committee had felt that there is an urgent need to strengthen the FSI to bring it up to international standards. The Committee have a clear view that this cannot be done merely by sending a few people abroad for training; good resource people from different parts of the world must be brought into the FSI. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry make provisions for bringing reputed international experts, particularly from diplomatic training Institutes of major countries, from diverse fields including economic and environmental diplomacy, to conduct various training modules and make it a world-class institution.

Reply of the Government

Further strengthening of FSI is one of the priorities of the Ministry. In addition to deploying senior IFS officers, officers on deputation from other Ministries with prior experience in designing and conducting training courses and consultant with experience in academics have been engaged in FSI. Modern pedagogical methods such as customized case studies, gaming, role-play and group discussions are being used for IFS Officer Trainees and other officers in the Ministry. Bringing international faculty to FSI is under active consideration of the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

(Recommendation No.18)

The Committee observe that apart from the IFS, the Ministry's workforce comprises of the feeder cadre which includes Group B Assistants, LDCs as well as Interpreters and Stenographic services. Besides, there is a substantial workforce with the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which are subordinate offices functioning

under the Ministry: The Committee are perturbed that the Ministry has not taken concrete action on the recommendations contained in the Tenth Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission which inter-alia had asked the Departments to examine the issue of promotions. The Committee deem this a major failure on the part of the Ministry. Therefore, they recommend that the Ministry should make the existing policy more robust by exploring ways for enlarging the quota for promotions. On the issue of the Expansion Plan of the Ministry, the Committee believe that the interests of the Ministry would be best served if a significant number of IFS officers are sourced from the existing workforce belonging to the feeder cadres as they are well versed with official procedures, and augmented by lateral entry from outside government, including from sectors such as academia and the private sector. The Committee would also desire that sufficient exposure and training facilities should be made available to officers who are promoted to the IFS or enter the service laterally, in order to ensure that their overall orientation and standing is at par with the Direct Recruits. The Committee also recommends that sufficient provisions for their integration, language training and evaluation should be factored into the promotion policy.

Further, The Committee recommend that adequate avenues for promotion and career growth should also be made available to the Officers/Staff of Central Passport Office (CPO) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). The Committee also observes that at present there is no provision for posting officials of the Passport Offices in Missions/Posts abroad while a host of passport/visa related matters are being handled by the Embassies. The Committee view it as wastage of human resources that trained workforce capable of handling these requirements is not posted abroad. The Committee would, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should start posting officials of the Passport Offices abroad to man the consular sections of various Missions/Posts.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation of the Committee has been noted. This is being examined in the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/146/2016]

NEW DELHI
...August, 2017
.... Bhadrapada, 1939 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Committee on External Affairs

APPENDIX-I

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2016-17) HELD ON 24 AUGUST, 2017

The Committee sat on Thursday, the 24 August, 2017 from 1600 hrs. to 1650 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Shashi Tharoor – Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Prof. Richard Hay
3. Shri Raghav Lakhanpal
4. Shri Venkateshwara Rao Magananti
5. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
6. Shri Mohammad Salim
7. Dr. Mamta Sanghamita
8. Shri Sharad Tripathi

Rajya Sabha

9. Shri Raj Babbar
10. Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi
11. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
12. Shri Chunnibhai Kanjibhai Gohel
13. Dr. Karan Singh
14. Shri D.P. Tripathi

Secretariat

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Shri P.C.Koul | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai | - | Director |
| 3. | Smt. Jyochnamayi Sinha | - | Additional Director |

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the members to the Sitting of the Committee.
3. The Committee took up for consideration the draft Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation'.

4. The Chairperson invited the members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report. The members suggested some minor modifications. After deliberations, the Committee adopted the draft Report with these minor modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Action Taken Report incorporating the suggestions made by the members. It was also decided that since Parliament is not in Session, the Chairperson may present the Report to the Hon'ble Speaker under Direction 71A of the Directions by the Speaker with a request to permit the printing, publication and circulation of the Report under Rule 280 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and the authenticated copy of the Report may be placed before the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha for his kind information. Subsequently, the Report will be presented to both the Houses of Parliament after commencement of the next Session.

6. The Chairperson also conveyed his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the Members for their cooperation and valuable contribution during the term of the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX-I

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2016-17) HELD ON 24 AUGUST, 2017

The Committee sat on Thursday, the 24th August, 2017 from 1600 hrs. to 1650 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Shashi Tharoor – Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Prof. Richard Hay
3. Shri Raghav Lakhanpal
4. Shri Venkateshwara Rao Magananti
5. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
6. Shri Mohammad Salim
7. Dr. Mamta Sanghamita
8. Shri Sharad Tripathi

Rajya Sabha

9. Shri Raj Babbar
10. Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi
11. Shri Swapan Dasgupta
12. Shri Chunnibhai Kanjibhai Gohel
13. Dr. Karan Singh
14. Shri D.P. Tripathi

Secretariat

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Shri P.C.Koul | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai | - | Director |
| 3. | Smt. Jyochnamayi Sinha | - | Additional Director |

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the members to the Sitting of the Committee.
3. The Committee took up for consideration the draft Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twelfth Report on the subject 'Recruitment, structure and capacity-building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid-career entry and in-service training and orientation'.

4. The Chairperson invited the members to offer their suggestions, if any, for incorporation in the draft Report. The members suggested some minor modifications. After some deliberations, the Committee adopted the draft Report with minor modifications.

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Action Taken Report incorporating the suggestions made by the members. It was also decided that since Parliament is not in Session, the Chairperson may present the Report to the Hon'ble Speaker under Direction 71A of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha with the request to permit the printing, publication and circulation of the Report under Rule 280 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and an authenticated copy of the Report be placed before the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha for his kind information. Subsequently, the Report will be presented to Parliament during the next Session.

6. The Chairperson also conveyed his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the Members for their cooperation and valuable contribution during the current term of the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX II

(Vide Para 4 of Introduction of Report)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE TWELFTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (16TH LOK SABHA)

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

Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16 & 17

**Total- 08
Percentage: 42.10%**

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee does not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies:-

NIL

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

Recommendation Nos. 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15 & 19

**Total- 07
Percentage: 36.84%**

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

Recommendation Nos. 3, 4, 9 & 18

**Total- 04
Percentage: 21.05%**