

>

Title: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs laid a statement regarding status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 15th Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants (2007-08) pertaining to the Ministry of External Affairs.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, we take up item no. 22. Shri Anand Sharma will make a statement now.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): Sir, I beg to lay copies of the statement in English and Hindi on the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 15th Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants (2007-08) pertaining to the Ministry of External Affairs.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs examined the Demands for Grants of the MEA for the year 2007-08 and laid its Fifteenth Report in the Lok Sabha on 26th April, 2007. The Report included 18 recommendations on which Action Taken Replies were submitted to the Committee on July 24, 2007. Now, I am laying on the Table of the House the progress made in implementation of the recommendations of the Committee, as required under Hon'ble Speaker's direction.

We are grateful to the Committee in recommending the need for additional funds for the Ministry to carry out more effectively the expanded activities of the Ministry in pursuance of our dynamic foreign policy. Ministry has submitted Revised Estimates of Rs. 5758.49 crores in RE-2007-08. The proposed enhancement of Rs. 1324.89 crores is 29.88% of BE-2007-08. For the financial year 2008-09, the proposed budget estimate is Rs. 7295.95 crores which is 64.56% more than BE 2007-08 of Rs. 4433.60 crores and 26.70% more than proposed RE 2007-08 of Rs. 5758.49 crores.

* Laid on the Table and also placed in Library, See No. LT 7552/2007

We thank the Committee for appreciating the Ministry's initiatives to improve the quantitative evaluation of the outcome of activities which are amenable for such quantification. The Ministry has decided to strengthen the reportage in the Outcome Budget by engaging the services of an independent consultant to develop indicators and assess the impact and efficiency of implementation of major infrastructure projects with outlays exceeding Rs. 100 crores in the neighbouring countries. A Management Information System (MIS) is being developed by the Ministry to provide greater control over resources to enhance coordination and efficiency in our activities.

The Committee had observed that India's relations with Africa need to be upgraded at various levels especially as a partner in Africa's economic development. I wish to inform that India's engagement with Africa in recent months (since April 26, 2007) has considerably intensified. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh paid an official visit to Nigeria from October 14-16, 2007 which was described as a 'landmark' by the Nigerian Government. During the visit, India and Nigeria agreed to establish a strategic partnership which would cover bilateral political, economic, trade, security, cultural, education, S&T and international dimensions. India offered US \$ 100 Line of Credit to Nigeria to expand cooperation in infrastructure, agriculture, food-processing and other areas identified by the Nigerian Government.

Earlier, External Affairs Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, paid an important visit to Ethiopia in July 2007 during which the two countries agreed to enhance economic and business linkages to expand India's participation in the infrastructural development of Ethiopia and expand the scope of our cooperation in capacity building, education, health care and other areas. He also inaugurated a pilot project in tele-education and tele-medicine which is intended to connect 53 nations of the African Union through a satellite and fiber optic network and provide tele-education and tele-medicine services from India. I also paid bilateral visits to South Africa, Mozambique, Angola and Uganda during May-July 2007 when we decided to enhance our multi-sectoral engagement with these countries in oil, mining, industry, agriculture, infrastructure and other sectors; LOC of US \$ 50 million as first tranche to Uganda, US \$ 20 million to Rwanda for establishment of a hydro-electric project by BHEL and US \$ 122 million as first tranche to Ethiopia for development of sugar sector were given during this time. Some of my other Ministerial colleagues such as Ministers for Science and Technology, Social Justice and Empowerment, Shipping, Road Transport and Highways and MOS for Agriculture Kantilal Bhuriaji paid visits to South Africa, Mauritius, Uganda and Rwanda during this period, which resulted in strengthening of our bilateral ties with these countries.

India's cooperation with the North African countries also has been considerably expanded. India has invested about US \$ 1.5 billion in the Sudanese oil, power and transport sectors and provided concessional credit of US \$ 100 million and a

grant of US \$ 10 million to Sudan for mutually agreed projects. Indian companies have made large investments in joint ventures in the phosphate sector in Morocco. External Affairs Minister visited Libya from May 26-28, 2007 and called on the Libyan leader Col. Gaddafi and other leaders; the two countries decided to raise the level of economic and commercial cooperation in investments, energy and infrastructure sectors.

From the African continent, President of Comoros, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Abdalli Mohammed Sambu, Vice President of Nigeria, H.E. Dr. Good Luck Jonathan as Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi visited India to participate in the 4th International Conference on Federalism held at New Delhi from November 5-2007. MOS for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Mr. Issac Musumba visited New Delhi from September 15-17, 2007 as Special Envoy of the President of Uganda. I personally hand over an invitation from President Museveni to PM to attend the CHOGM held in Kampala from November 22-25, 2007.

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, along with FICCI, organised an India Africa Hydrocarbon conference and exhibition in New Delhi from November 6-7 2007 which was attended by 8 ministerial delegations, 100 delegates from 26 African countries, CEOs of major oil companies and others. The conference generated a lot of interest for cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector and business meetings were organised to take follow up action.

I also wish to inform the House that the Indian Council for Cultural Relations' (ICCR) activities have seen a significant expansion, both in India and abroad in recent months. Two new Centres of ICCR have been opened at Kabul and Kathmandu in keeping with our expanding bilateral ties with these neighbours; the Cultural Wing of our Mission in Beijing is proposed to be expanded and there is a proposal to set up a Regional Centre at Dhaka. New Regional Offices of ICCR are being opened at Varanasi and Pune in December 2007. The year-long Festival of India in Japan is concluding in December 2007 and preparations are underway to organize the Year of Russia in India in 2008.

The progress made in the implementation of the recommendations is detailed in the Annexure which is laid on the Table of the House. I would not like to take the valuable time of the House to read out all the contents but would request that this may be considered as read.

15.37 hrs.