

18

**COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(2017-18)**

SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations contained in the Thirteenth Report on the subject 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Diaspora']

EIGHTEENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

January, 2018 / Pausa, 1939 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 5.1.2018
Laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 5.1.2018



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

January, 2018 / Pausa, 1939 (Saka)

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE (2017-18).....	(ii)
INTRODUCTION.....	(iii)
Chapter I Report.....	1
Chapter II Observations /Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.....	21
Chapter III Observations / Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's Replies.....	33
Chapter IV Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.....	34
Chapter V Observations / Recommendations in respect of which Final Replies of the Government are still awaited.....	36

APPENDICES

I. Minutes of the Eighth Sitting of the Committee held on 3.01.2018.....	43
II. Analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations / Recommendations contained in the Thirteenth Report of the Committee on External Affairs (16 th Lok Sabha).....	45

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2017-18)

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on External Affairs (2017-18) having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Eighteenth Report (16th Lok Sabha) on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirteenth Report on the subject 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Diaspora'.

2. The Thirteenth Report was presented to the Parliament on 23 November, 2016. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 28 November, 2017.

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Report on Action Taken at their Sitting held on 3 January, 2018. 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 Thirteenth Report of the Committee on External Affairs is given at Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI
3 January, 2018
13 Pausa, 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 Thirteenth Report on the subject 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Diaspora' which was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on 23 November, 2016.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 13 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorized as follows: -

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

Recommendation Nos. 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13 **Total- 07**

(ii) **Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do 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 No. 6 **Total- 01**

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

Recommendation Nos. 1,2,5,8 and 9 **Total- 05**

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)

Need for a policy to enhance soft power diplomacy

5. The Committee had noted that Soft Power is the ability of a country to achieve foreign policy objectives through cultural attraction rather than through force, coercion or indeed large deployments of money. While culture and history are at the centre of this approach, various political, economic and technological factors are equally significant. India is endowed with enormous soft power resources in the form of a vibrant culture, our art, artifacts, tangible and intangible heritage, practices like Yoga, meditation, Indian TV and cinema, information and technology exports, our democracy, our pluralism and a thriving diaspora. In spite of having vast soft power resources at its disposal, it came as a matter of regret for the Committee that we as a country had not been able to put these resources to adequate use in matters of foreign policy. The Committee was aware that the Government and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) had made concerted efforts to promote India's soft power, its values, traditions, literature, languages, philosophy, art forms through a variety of mediums including electronic and print publications, live performances etc. Through those efforts, the image of India overseas had seen a major overhaul from that of "a land of snake charmers" to one of an emerging knowledge hub and IT superpower. Still, there were missing links regarding India abroad, and in certain cases there was the prejudice of prevailing stereotypes. The Committee had found that we had been lagging behind in cultural diplomacy and that lacuna should be removed at the earliest. It is widely believed that India's soft power until now has functioned independently of Government policies and that the world's reckoning of our soft power is by default rather than by design. The Committee was of the view that the Government had been able to leverage our country's soft power only in a fragmented way without the backing of a cohesive policy or commensurate financial resources. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry formulate a comprehensive and well-structured policy delineating India's soft power resources and their articulation abroad. The Ministry of External Affairs and the ICCR should extensively and in a sustained manner employ the resources at their disposal to propagate an image of India that augments our natural historical appeal, empowering our diplomacy and foreign policy.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that Committee's recommendation, which emerged out of discussions with the Committee in two sittings regarding formulating a comprehensive and well-structured policy on India's Soft Power Projection is accepted. It is apprised that ICCR is working with MEA to draft a policy paper on the same.

7. The Committee had expressed their concern over the fact that despite having a rich repertoire of soft power resources, India has not been able to deploy them adequately for appropriate diplomatic dividends and there has been a policy vacuum in leveraging soft power diplomacy. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry formulate a comprehensive and well-structured policy delineating India's soft power resources and their articulation abroad. In its reply, the Ministry has agreed on the need for formulating a comprehensive and well structured policy on India's soft power projection and submitted that ICCR is working with the Ministry to draft a policy paper in this regard. It is difficult for the Committee to countenance that the Ministry is actually serious in formulating the policy because, from the reply it appears that even after a lapse of one year, drafting process is yet to start. In view of the state of India's soft power diplomacy any further delay in rectifying the situation is not desirable. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Government should finalize a comprehensive policy on leveraging our soft power diplomacy expeditiously through consultations with other stakeholders.

(Recommendation No. 2)

Measuring the effectiveness of India's Soft Power

8. The Committee had noted that the concept of soft power has acquired currency not only in the field of academics but also in the field of international relations and diplomacy. Though soft power is an intangible component of a State's power and it is difficult to measure its definite impact, a study could establish the linkages between our soft power and tangible outcomes in the field of diplomacy. Such a study could point towards the ways in which India could leverage its soft power; without such a linkage, soft power will remain a mere non-operational concept in India's diplomatic doctrine. The Ministry had also

conceded that it is worthwhile to explore devising an objective method of assessing effectiveness of soft power capabilities and their tangible foreign policy outcomes, such as through the development of a 'soft power matrix'. The Committee was of the opinion that soft power, while very useful in itself, is only one possible instrument for enhancing our global role, and should be accompanied by an appropriate use of hard power. As such, the Committee had deemed it desirable for the Ministry to study the tangible foreign policy outcomes of soft power and to devise, thereafter, a blue print for deploying it more effectively in the future. In itself, soft power carries no currency unless it is contextually driven and guided by certain objectives. As stated above, the Committee had also recommended that the Government should develop a 'soft power matrix' at the earliest, in order to measure the effectiveness of India's soft power.

The Ministry had stated that there was substantial scope for the improvement of India's image in neighbouring States. Even while fully endorsing the idea that we cannot fix all our problems with our neighbours through soft power engagement alone, the Committee had felt that some amount of soft power might be beneficial in improving our relations with our neighbours. Going by India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, the Committee had also recommended that India should selectively exercise its soft power in neighbouring states for better diplomatic traction.

9. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the Committee's recommendation with regard to (i) undertaking a study to establish the linkages between our soft power and tangible outcomes in the field of diplomacy and (ii) develop "Soft Power Matrix" to measure outcomes of initiatives undertaken for India's Soft Power Projection is accepted. ICCR is initiating work on the same.

As regards the 'Neighbourhood First' policy, the Committee's recommendation that "India should selectively exercise its soft power in neighbouring states for better diplomatic traction" is accepted and the same has been shared with the concerned Territorial Divisions for further action.

10. The Committee had asked the Ministry to study the tangible foreign policy outcomes of soft power through a “soft power matrix” along with achieving better diplomatic traction through selective exercise of soft power in India’s diplomatic neighbourhood. The Committee are unhappy to note that even after a year from the date that the Report was forwarded to the ICCR, the Council is still in the process of initiating work in that direction. The development of a “soft power matrix” should not have taken this much time, particularly when it was brought to the Committee’s notice at the time of examination of the subject, by the ICCR, that the Council was already conducting a performance review of its functioning to understand how its efforts over the years have translated into tangible foreign policy returns. The Committee, therefore, deem it necessary to reiterate that the work to develop a “soft power matrix” should be completed without wasting any more time.

As regards selective exercise of soft power in neighbouring States, the Ministry has informed that it has shared the Committee’s recommendation with concerned Territorial Divisions for further action. In Committee’s opinion, forwarding the recommendation to the concerned Territorial Division does in no way constitute any action taken on the part of the Ministry. The Ministry should follow up with these Divisions about the actual action taken by them and to communicate the same to the Committee. The Committee, therefore, would desire that the Ministry should furnish complete replies in future and also the details of actual action taken by each Territorial Division regarding the selective use of soft power in neighbouring States as recommended by the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 4)

Budgetary requirements of ICCR

11. The Committee had noted that the ICCR is the nodal organization for the projection of India’s soft power abroad, and ever since its establishment in 1950, it has emerged as the principal governmental organization for our cultural engagement with the world and for promoting our culture in all its magnificence through various activities. The Committee were, however, disappointed to note that budgetary support granted to the ICCR had not been adequate. A budget of Rs. 192 crores was allocated to ICCR in BE 2015-16, a sum that

was retained at the same level in RE 2015-16. During BE 2016-17, the budgetary allocation was enhanced to Rs. 215.80 crores. Despite an increase of 12.40%, the amount was still insufficient if the allocation is compared to the other similar government-supported organizations engaged in the dissemination of culture for their respective countries across the world. By the Ministry's own admission, ICCR was being forced to resort to juggle its limited resources to make do with the meagre budget and it would notionally require at least Rs. 500 crore to meet the financial needs associated with its expanding mandate. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the budget of the ICCR should be sufficiently increased as such a move will go a long way in assisting us in leveraging our country's soft power and all its vast potential.

The Committee had also noted that during the budget exercise, the gap between RE demand and allocation was not much. It pointed to the fact that at present there was no institutional capacity within the ICCR for ingesting huge funds. Such a situation did not sit well with the continuous (and necessary) demands for enhanced budgetary allocations. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that to enable a more realistic planning, the ICCR should also ramp up its institutional capacity to utilise in the best possible manner any enhanced allocation.

12. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the Recommendation of the Committee is accepted and action is being taken by the Finance Division of MEA. ICCR on its part has established a smooth coordination process with all the Territorial Divisions. During BE 2016-17, the budgetary allocation has been enhanced to Rs. 215.80 crores. The delays related to the release of agency funds were addressed through regular meetings chaired by AS (FA) with the Territorial Divisions and ICCR representatives. This helped facilitate the smooth release of the agency funds, as a result of which the ICCR has shown improvement in its expenditure profile for the financial year 2016-17. However, while Rs. 215.80 crores was allocated, the allocation was brought down to Rs. 185.37 at RE stage, whereas ICCR's total annual expenditure was Rs. 193.37 crores (subject to reconciliation and audit). The MEA has allocated Rs. 233.14 crores to ICCR for financial year 2017-18. ICCR has also put in various systems in place for

streamlining the financial management within ICCR, and is working with the MEA to revamp its institutional capacity to utilise the enhanced budget. A proposal for the creation of additional relevant posts and recruitment is also under process. The ICCR has also initiated the use of technology to further streamline and improve its financial discipline through the following:

- a) Since expenditure incurred at ICCR's Regional Offices and Culture Centre are not tracked in MEA's IMAS, ICCR is developing its own independent Integrated Accounting System in order to monitor releases, expenditure and accounting in real time.
- b) ICCR has developed a Scholarship Portal to track processes involved and expenditure incurred from the first step of Admission till a student finishes his/her course in India. A portal called "ICCR Scholarship Admissions to Alumni (A2A) Portal" will address the collection of Utilisation Certificates online, which would assist in the timely submission of the same to Agencies in order to process releases at their end.
- c) A total of nine ICCR programmes have been identified for on boarding through the Direct Benefit Transfer portal, which tracks details of beneficiaries under these nine schemes and monitors fund transfers through electronic systems.
- d) All payments are now made electronically.

13. In view of the fact that the ICCR is the nodal organization for the projection of India's soft power abroad, the Committee had expressed concern over inadequate budgetary support granted to the organization. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Government sufficiently enhances ICCR's budget. Simultaneously, ICCR had been exhorted to ramp up its institutional capacity to utilise the budget. In its reply, the Ministry has stated that the Finance Division of MEA is taking requisite action but no substantial change has been reported in the actual budgetary situation. It is disconcerting to note that the BE allocation of Rs. 215.80 crore for 2016-17 was brought down to Rs. 185.37 crore at RE stage and MEA has allocated only Rs. 233.14 crore to ICCR for financial year 2017-18. The Committee

opine that such a miniscule increase is not going to make any substantial change in the ICCR's budgetary profile and its ability to fulfill its expanding mandate. Hence, the Committee would once again like to impress upon MEA the need to provide adequate budgetary support to the ICCR and to enhance its institutional capacity. Without such measures, the cause of India's soft power diplomacy will continue to suffer.

(Recommendation No. 5)

Human Resources Management in ICCR

14. The Committee had noted that the ICCR was facing massive shortages in manpower and clubbed with inadequate budgetary support, the organization's role and work was hugely limited. The Committee were surprised to note that seats were lying vacant both at the level of the headquarters and field offices-- against three posts of Deputy Directors General (DDGs), that time only one post was occupied. All the three posts of Directors were vacant. Similarly, against 251 sanctioned posts of ICCR cadre at various levels, only 178 posts covering the Headquarters (HQ) in Delhi, Regional Offices (ROs) and Indian Cultural Centers (ICCs) abroad were filled. Even the ICCR's engagement of 96 personnel at various levels in the organisation as outsourced support as well as an additional 8 consultants proved to be inadequate. It was ironic to the Committee that at a time when the ICCR had embarked upon an expanded mandate, it remained handicapped in terms of manpower. It was the Committee's contention that without adequate human resources, the demands of the ICCR for enhanced budget will not be adequately justified. It was concerning to the Committee to learn that despite the Finance Ministry's sanctioning of 44 posts for the ICCR, those posts could not be filled as the Council did not have its recruitment rules in place. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the ICCR should expedite steps to fill its existing vacant posts and only thereafter seek sanction for more posts from the Finance Ministry.

The Committee had urged the ICCR to take exceptional care in ensuring that the necessary processes were in place to select and appoint the most appropriate candidates to head its cultural centers overseas. To the Committee, the candidate's ability to connect with the countries in which they are located was imperative.

The Committee was aware that given the nature of work in the ICCR, a successful candidate must possess a strong understanding and passion for Indian culture, as well as a strong suite of organization and communication skills. As such, the Committee desired that it should be ensured that not only were the most eligible candidates selected to various posts, but that they were also given the right orientation and training to handle their work responsibly and productively. The Committee had also recommended that the ICCR should set up a search panel to suggest names of eminent persons from various fields of culture who were eligible to fill the vacant seats of Directors at ICCs.

15. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Committee's recommendation is accepted. To apprise the Committee presently, ICCR and Administration Division of MEA are working together towards strengthening ICCR's manpower situation. Following steps have been taken so far:

- a) MEA has ensured deputing a Senior IFS officer to the post of Director General, who will be responsible to take the new vision forward and streamline the necessary processes in coordination with the MEA.
- b) The post of one more DDG was filled in January 2017, which was lying vacant since September 2015.
- c) Senior DPC was conducted and ICCR officers were promoted to Director level, thereby ensuring that posts of Directors are filled.
- d) Action has been initiated to fill 38 vacancies in ICCR cadre by Direct Recruitment at staff level through various recruitment agencies.
- e) The Committee's recommendation with regard to filling the posts of Directors at Indian Culture Centres has been taken seriously. Search Committee was set up for selection of eminent persons from various fields of culture for filling the posts of Directors at ICCs. Selection is being done in two phases. Candidates selected in the first round are in the process of being deployed to those ICCs where the post has been lying vacant for a longer period of time.
- f) ICCR has submitted a proposal for the creation of 200 new posts to strengthen ICCR's structure at different levels.

- g) The possibilities for strengthening the Regional Offices by raising the level of Regional Directors and supplementing their roles with more staff are currently being studied.
- h) Training for existing ICCR personnel with FSI has been planned.

16. While noting the massive shortages in manpower faced by ICCR, the Committee had recommended expeditious steps to fill the vacant posts in the organization. Towards this end the Ministry has replied that it has initiated action to strengthen ICCR's manpower situation by ensuring the placement of a Senior IFS Officer at the post of DG, posting of one DDG and promotion at Director level. Some initiatives have been taken to fill 38 vacancies in ICCR cadre by direct recruitment at staff level through various recruitment agencies but no timeline has been mentioned for this recruitment drive and also for filling the posts of Directors of ICCs. As such, the Committee would like to be apprised of the current status of the recruitment process at staff level, as well as for the selection of Directors for ICCs. Simultaneously, the Committee should also be informed about the status of creation of the 200 new posts mentioned in the Action Taken Reply, for which, again, no timelines have been mentioned by either ICCR or the MEA.

(Recommendation No. 6)

Safety issues of African students in India

17. The Committee had noted that the ICCR provided 24 scholarships annually in various fields to students from various parts of the world for graduate, postgraduate, doctoral and post-doctoral courses. Out of those, 8 scholarships were funded through its own budget and 16 scholarship schemes were being managed by the ICCR under funding from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of AYUSH. The Committee had also noted that this growing agency work (for administering scholarship schemes) and untimely release of funds for implementing the same was an important factor in crippling the ICCR. The Committee was distressed to note that in the past few years, funds spent by the ICCR on agency work were reimbursed in the following Financial Year. However, that was made part of ICCR's budget allocation for the next FY and not reimbursed as an additional amount that was spent. The Committee did not approve of such an approach on the part of the

Ministries concerned as they added to the financial woes of an already funds-starved ICCR. The Committee had, therefore, desired that the Ministry of External Affairs should abide by the view taken by the Foreign Secretary regarding advance payment of 75 percent of the money to the ICCR on account of Agency work. The Committee had also desired that other Ministries should accept the same arrangement as a pre-condition to any agency work.

Given the large financial outlay under its scholarship programme and its long-term impact on India's soft power, the Committee was of the opinion that special attention should be paid to the welfare and well being of foreign scholars while they are in India. Incidents like the one that took place in Noida, involving an attack on African students, should not be allowed to be repeated by facilitating better coordination with the concerned State Governments. It was also held imperative that the culprits behind these attacks should be brought to book.

By virtue of awarding scholarships to a wide array of foreign students, the ICCR has managed to create a pool of scholars around the world, many of whom have distinguished themselves in various walks of life. The Committee had opined that those individuals could prove to be long term assets in promoting our image abroad as India's de facto cultural brand ambassadors in their own countries. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the work related to the establishment of an ICCR Alumni Groups should be expedited and a status report in that regard be furnished to the Committee.

18. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the Committee's recommendation is accepted. The Committee has been informed that since the past three years, several steps have been taken to streamline the entire Scholarship Programme. Some of the steps worth mentioning include:

- a) Streamlining of the fee structures for colleges and institutes under State and Central Universities *vis-à-vis* ICCR's Scholarship.
- b) On recommendation of the three-member committee chaired by Prof Sunaina Singh, VC Nalanda University, the screening and empanelment of good quality institutes

- (on the basis of various criteria – educational facilities, courses, faculty, residential facilities...) is currently underway. This exercise will help weed out poor quality institutes/colleges and empanel those faring better on the pre-defined criteria instead.
- c) Guidelines for implementing the Scholarship Programme have been revisited and collated.
 - d) ICCR and MEA's Finance Division are closely working with the Territorial Divisions with regard to the timely release of agency funds for the execution of the Agency's Scholarship programme. There has been some improvement.
 - e) The entire management of the Scholarship Programme would henceforth be on a digitized platform, connecting the Applicant, Missions, Territorial Divisions, Finance Division, ICCR Head Quarter (Delhi) and ICCR's Regional Offices through the A2A (Admissions to Alumni) ICCR Scholarship Portal, which has been developed for this purpose. The Portal is proposed to be launched by September 2017. The Scholarship Portal would also address aspects related to financial management with Regional Offices and Territorial Divisions.

19. The Committee had specifically observed the anomalies in payments made by ICCR on account of Agency Work and asked about the provision of advance payment of 75 percent of the money to ICCR for such work but the Ministry has only mentioned about some improvements and not responded to this suggestion of the Committee which was also in consonance with the views of the Foreign Secretary in this regard. Similarly, the Ministry has also omitted any response to the concern of the Committee over the incidents of attacks on African students and action taken towards the welfare and well being of foreign scholars studying in India. Incidents of this kind not only sully the image of India abroad, but they also have a tendency to neutralise whatever little relative advantage we have in the African Region for cultural diplomacy. In this situation, the Committee note with concern that sporadic incidents of violence against students from Africa have occurred in various parts of the country. The Committee would, therefore, reiterate that sufficient steps should be taken by the Government to ensure safety and security of African students in coordination with concerned State Governments. In addition, the Committee should also be informed

about the initiatives taken by the Ministry to resolve the issue of reimbursement of payments made by ICCR for Agency Work for administering scholarship schemes.

(Recommendation No. 8)
Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs)

20. The Committee had noted that in order to promote the awareness and appreciation of India's rich cultural heritage abroad, the ICCR currently operates 37 Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) across the globe. The ICCs are a principal instrument of India's institutional cultural outreach abroad and project our soft power in a wide number of ways. These Centres are located in countries where we have significant strategic, economic, political and cultural interests, as also countries with large communities of Indian origin. The Committee was surprised to note that despite these parameters in place, we still do not have a Cultural Centre in the entire Gulf Region. The Committee had therefore, recommended that a Cultural Centre should be opened in the Gulf in view of India's strong and sustained strategic and cultural ties with the region. The Committee had also recommended that stalled projects in Washington, Paris and Hanoi should be executed without further delay. While the Committee fully understood that acquiring Government property abroad was a complicated exercise involving legal and extra-legal factors, the type of inordinate delay as in Washington could not be countenanced. The Committee had felt that it should, therefore, be ensured that a mechanism is established so that such delays do not hamper future projects.

It had been stated that the ICCR is currently exploring the possibility of establishing Regional Cultural Centres abroad in select cities which could cover a group of countries in the region instead of any single country alone. The Committee had asked the ICCR to tread with caution in that regard, given the serious limitations of manpower in the organization. So far, human resources have proved to be an issue when it came to the ICCs, both in terms of quality and quantity. Catering to a wider geographic region involving several countries and cultures would not be an easy proposition in these circumstances. The Committee had, therefore, desired that such a decision should not be implemented in haste and proper consideration should be given to all relevant factors. The Committee had also desired that

the findings of the Performance Audit of the ICCs should be communicated to the Committee at the action taken stage.

21. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the policy decision to acquire / construct Indian Culture Centres abroad lies with ICCR. Once the decision is taken and conveyed to the Global Estate Management (GEM) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, the project preparation begins with selection of property on the basis of requirements projected by ICCR, in consultation with the concerned Mission / Post. After following all necessary steps, the Centre is handed over to ICCR / Mission or Post abroad, on its completion. Culture Centre in Hanoi was inaugurated last year and is now functional. Works on ICC projects in Washington and Paris are on. ICCR is examining the possibility of opening Culture Centre in Gulf in consultation with the Missions and the relevant Territorial Division. The Committee's recommendation that the ICCR may exercise caution with regard to opening Regional Culture Centres has been taken note of and accepted.

22. On the basis of the role played and vital functions performed by the Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) abroad, the Committee had *inter-alia* recommended to open one such Centre in the Gulf and to expedite the work in the Cultural Centres at Washington, Paris and Hanoi. The Committee are pleased to note that the Cultural Centre in Hanoi has finally been made functional and hopes that the Ministry will draw from its experience from this project's completion to expedite the ICC projects in Washington and Paris. The Committee are constrained to note that even after the lapse of one year since the presentation of the Report, the Ministry is still dilly-dallying on the issue of opening a Cultural Centre in the Gulf. It is frustrating for the Committee to note that despite making a clear case for the opening of such a Centre on account of the region's rich cultural ties with India and significant diaspora presence, and with all necessary parameters having been met, the Ministry is still at the stage of examining the possibility of opening a Cultural Centre in the Gulf. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry take immediate steps in the matter to expedite the project.

(Recommendation No. 9)

Empanelment of Artists

23. The Committee had noted that sending Indian Cultural troupes outside the country is an important part of the activities of the ICCR. These troupes perform in countries across the world and such performances play a significant role in projecting our soft power. It was, therefore, important that artists of quality and distinction in any art form should be given opportunities to showcase their talent overseas. The Committee had observed during visits to Regional Offices of the ICCR that empanelment of artists was often not guided by a pronounced policy, particularly in terms of the inclusion of unique art and dance forms on the verge of extinction. It was also noted that a large number of empanelment applications were pending both at the level of the Regional Offices (ROs) and the Headquarters. Such a trend was not reassuring for our long term soft power ambitions and therefore, the Committee had desired that all matters related to the empanelment of artists should be resolved expeditiously and the entire system made more transparent. The Committee had also recommended that a performance audit of the functioning of ICCR's Regional Offices (ROs) should be undertaken by the Ministry urgently in order to ensure that the quality of the artists who get empanelled and seek to perform outside India is of the highest order.

24. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the Recommendation of Committee was noted and action has been taken on the same. ICCR carried out empanelment process in January and February 2017 wherein the experts' committees screened all the pending applications for empanelment. It was decided that the second round of empanelment will be conducted soon. ICCR is currently in the process of reviewing its empanelment policy to include more genres, as well as younger and newer artists who are received more enthusiastically by foreign audiences. ICCR is also in the process of empanelling the choreographers who would be able to produce choreographies and productions based on contextual demands overseas.

25. While observing the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the ICCR's handling of empanelment related matters, the Committee had recommended expeditious resolution of the matter and emphasized the need to make the procedure more

transparent. On the basis of the reply furnished by the Ministry, it seems that all the pending applications for empanelment have been screened but no mention has been made about the policy opted for empanelment, nor on the number of empanelments made from each region. The Committee should be apprised about the outcome of the screening. The Committee consider it important to emphasize that proper empanelment is the first step towards showcasing our rich cultural legacy abroad. As it is intrinsically related to soft power diplomacy, the Committee restate their desire that the Ministry should publish a transparent policy regarding the empanelment of artists at the earliest. In addition, it should also be ensured that a consultation with the artist fraternity is organized before any such policy is finalized.

Finally, it is a matter of regret for the Committee to note that the Ministry has failed to respond to their recommendation on the need for performance audit of the functioning of ICCR's Regional Offices. It is perplexing that the Ministry has omitted any mention in its response to such an important part of the recommendation. As has been noted earlier in this report as well, the Committee, while regretting this lack of response on the part of the Ministry, desire that it should be ensured in future that the Ministry furnishes only complete and comprehensive replies.

(Recommendation No. 10)

Imperative for diversifying tools of cultural diplomacy

26. The Committee had noted that cultural diplomacy should also embrace the culture of ideas, showcase India's democracy and diversity and avoid being seen as propaganda. For that reason it was held imperative that speakers and experts from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines be identified to be sent abroad to address foreign audiences, thereby showcasing India's pluralism and freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. In addition to music and dance, India's soft power should also embrace the attraction of words and ideas, including contemporary and classical literature, thereby projecting India to those wishing to know more in depth about the country and its culture.

27. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the recommendation is noted. Most of the matters related to literature are handled by the Ministry of Culture and the XP Division of MEA.

28. The Committee had recommended that the repertoire of India's soft power should be further widened by including dedicated speakers and by diversifying the themes so as to include India's pluralism, freedom of expression, freedom of press and also contemporary and classical literature. It is disappointing that the Ministry has not initiated any action on this recommendation besides noting it and adding that most of the matters related to literature are handled by the Ministry of Culture and XP Division of MEA. It was imperative that while furnishing the reply, the concerned Ministry/Division should have been consulted. The entire purpose of Action Taken Replies is defeated when they do not enunciate any action taken. Therefore, the Committee desire that the Ministry should forward this matter to the other Ministry and Division referred to and resubmit a consolidated reply on the action taken on the recommendation of the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 13)

Role of diaspora in Soft Power

29. The Committee had noted that the Diaspora is an indispensable partner in promoting our country's soft power. We are fortunate to have a large diaspora across the globe that has preserved Indian customs as living traditions. As per the Ministry, the ICCR has encouraged its Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) and our Missions abroad to actively engage with the diaspora, which has emerged as a focal point during recent high level foreign visits. It was, therefore, imperative that India's soft power is projected through these communities. The reach of the diaspora is not only wide in terms of its geographic coverage, but also in terms of its influence in the economy and society of host countries. The Ministry has been partnering with established cultural and academic institutions of the diaspora with scholars, eminent Indians, professionals and experts. It had appeared to the Committee that such programmes were largely driven by the initiative of the local Mission or the particular Indian Cultural Centre. Therefore, the Committee had recommended that instead of this short-term, ad-hoc approach, the Ministry of External Affairs should develop a blueprint for

engaging meaningfully with the Diaspora in leveraging our soft power abroad through a broader and more systematic policy.

In addition, the Committee had also found that the Gulf Region is not only important to India from an economic and strategic perspective, but also as home to a large number of Indians, especially migrant workers. Unlike other regions of the world where the Indian diaspora has cultivated considerable clout, the position of migrant workers in the West and the Gulf is not strong. This requires better collaboration and coordination in all possible ways as they may be the best messengers of India's soft power in that part of the world. The Committee therefore, considered it essential that special focus should be laid on disseminating soft power under the 'Link West' policy through the diaspora in that region.

30. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Action Taken Reply, has stated that the report is factually correct from the OIA-1 Division's perspective. It is apprised that the Indian Missions and Posts in the Gulf region are pro-actively engaged in the projection of India's soft power in countries of the region through various initiatives including in the promotion of Indian culture, "Make in India" initiatives etc. in close collaboration with the resident Indian community and local chambers of business and industry. Furthermore, there are specific Diaspora Engagement Programmes such as Know India Programme, Study India Programme etc. to familiarize those interested with Indian art and culture, heritage, history, economy and overall development.

The overseas Indian community is growing and stands at nearly 31.25 million overseas Indians living abroad – 13.4 million NRIs and 17.85 million Persons of Indian Origin. They are settled in virtually every corner of the world and every country. In recent years, the Indian community abroad has also moved to new destinations outside India, and into new professions and fields. Wherever they are, Indians migrating abroad have taken with them the essence of India, its culture, cuisine, healing powers of Yoga and Ayurveda, the beats of Bollywood, all of which continue to have a deep impact on the local landscape which they live in. Indian migrant workers, students and professionals abroad are, therefore, integral elements of India's soft power.

The Indian diaspora, especially in developed countries in the Western hemisphere and in South East Asia, have risen to positions of power and influence in various spheres of life – politics; business; science & technology; R&D; the arts and culture; etc. They are making their voices heard, and they speak up for India, on issues of concern to the country of their origin. Recognising their contributions in foreign countries, not just to their local economies, but also in promoting a positive image about India, the Ministry is now engaging with the Diaspora in a more sustained and regular manner, especially on issues which are of significance to the Government. The 10 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conferences initiated in 2016 provided platforms on which domain experts among the Diaspora could engage directly with policymakers and stakeholders in India. Similarly, the Indian Missions abroad are also engaging with the Diaspora in a more regular manner, seeking their insights, suggestions and discussing their problems. Through these regular dialogue mechanisms, the Government is also able to leverage the Indian Diaspora on issues of concern to us.

At the same time, the young Indian Diaspora is of special significance in the context of soft power. The Ministry is engaging with the young overseas Indian community through programs such as the Know India Programme, the *Bharat Ko Janiye* Quiz and the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children. The Ministry has also launched pages and groups on social media platforms, especially Facebook, to connect with various young Indian Diaspora members worldwide.

The Ministry has noted the Committee's comment that efforts to engage with Indian diaspora are largely driven by the Indian Missions/Consulates or the Indian Cultural Centres. The Ministry would like to comment that since the Indian Missions, Consulates and Cultural Centres, are extensions of the Ministry itself, these are the best and most appropriate platforms through which we can leverage our soft power abroad. At the same time, the Missions/Consulates are working closely with other stakeholders such as the Indian community organizations; local Municipalities and foreign Governments; corporate sector; universities; Indian student bodies; organizations promoting Indian culture and heritage, to promote India's culture abroad. By doing so, the Ministry and Missions are able to maximize

the resources at hand and ensure that our efforts to leverage soft power are more sustainable in the long run.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards conferred by the Government on overseas Indians, recognizing their achievements in various fields, including art and culture, also serve the purpose of motivating the Diaspora to continue their efforts in cultural promotion.

31. The Committee had noted that the diaspora is an indispensable partner in promoting India's soft power but it has not been adequately leveraged so far for want of necessary thrust and planning. Therefore, the Committee had recommended drawing up a blueprint for engaging meaningfully with the diaspora. In its reply, the Ministry has enumerated various steps taken to engage with Indian diaspora where the major role appears to be played by the concerned Indian missions/consulates or the Indian Cultural Centres. The Committee also understand that these are extensions of the MEA and the associated implementing agencies, but wants to emphasize that the basic thrust and direction ought to be given by the Ministry itself. At present, the Ministry's efforts of projecting India's soft power appear to be inadequate. It is in this context that the Committee had recommended that the Ministry draw up a blueprint in this direction. This blueprint will envisage different thrust areas for different parts/countries of the world, incorporating the varying profiles of the diaspora. Then this blueprint can be adequately implemented at the level of the respective Missions/Posts. Only such a nuanced understanding of our intervention requirements will translate into concrete results involving the influence of our diaspora. The Committee would, therefore, reiterate that such a blueprint for engaging meaningfully with the diaspora should be formulated by the Ministry at the earliest.

CHAPTER – II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation No.3)

The Committee observe that apart from using conventional means of soft power in the form of culture and heritage, India has started importing new elements into its repertoire of soft power. It is an articulation of the Ministry's conceptualization of Indian culture as a dynamic concept. The Committee are pleased to note that the Ministry has been trying to go beyond Nye's formulation of soft power by shifting focus from the 'tools' in hand to 'approaches and methods' of using soft power. The Government's initiative to showcase India's soft power to the world by successfully organizing the International Yoga Day on 21st June across the globe was an expression of this approach. Such an approach will definitely go a long way in stamping India's enduring image in the minds of people across continents. With the changing nature of global engagements, the manner in which we present our image overseas should also be flexible.

But in order to achieve this, a great deal of ground work will need to be done and a mere change in phraseology will not be adequate. It is informed that at present, on an average, only 60 Missions are sending Annual Action Plans to the ICCR. In the Committee's opinion, this is a major handicap in adequate planning and in the leveraging of our soft power resources. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that in order to mainstream soft power projections, each Mission should necessarily submit its Annual Plan to the ICCR and soft power projections should be a definitive agenda item at annual HoMs/Regional HoMs Conferences.

The Committee note that the Ministry has considered Development Partnerships as an effective means to project soft power. But in a number of cases, while announcements are made at the highest levels, funds are not available in time. The Committee in earlier Reports had expressed anguish over such delays in disbursements, in project execution and in the lack of effective monitoring, and here again the Committee would strongly reason that Development

Partnerships should be handled carefully because they have the potential to create a favourable image of India overseas.

The Committee would, therefore, recommend that these partnerships should be handled with utmost diligence along with the expeditious release of funds for the equally expeditious execution of projects.

The Committee also recommend that India being the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, we should propagate his values and philosophy through embassies in all parts of the world in a sustainable manner in the long term. In a world divided by strife and conflict, the path of non-violence and peace lit by Mahatma Gandhi decades ago could awaken nations around the globe to India's message once again. In addition, Gandhian values of environmental consciousness, "small is beautiful" and moral living have once again become relevant to global public discourse. There could be no better time to revive interest in the Father of our Nation.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation is accepted. In this recommendation the action points are recognized for three Divisions of the Ministry.

- a) Annual Action Plan: It is apprised that as far as Annual Action Plans for Soft Power Project is concerned, ICCR has initiated the action with the Missions. (*Action by ICCR*).
- b) HoMs/Regional HoMs Conferences: Soft Power Projection has been made a mandatory agenda item for discussions at annual HOMs/ Regional HOMs Conference wherein various Divisions involved in the process participate and brainstorm. (*Action by ICCR, Administration, XP and ED Division*)
- c) Development Partnership: Committee's recommendation is accepted. The main focus of development assistance has been the countries in our neighbourhood, South-East Asia and Africa. India is also expanding its development assistance reach to distant areas as the Caribbean, Latin America, Mongolia, Pacific Island Countries, etc. The

main instruments of India's development assistance include Infrastructure and Development projects, Technical Consultancy, Disaster Relief and Humanitarian aid, as well as capacity-building programmes for civilian and military training under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). Implementing development projects abroad sometimes witness challenges, including political uncertainty, security concerns, unpredictable site conditions, delays in land acquisition, statutory approvals, lack of skilled manpower; frequent changes in scope of work , etc. In order to avoid delays in implementation of projects, several steps including close supervision/monitoring of work by the project management consultants; regular review through multiple monitoring mechanisms, including review committee, bilateral working committee etc., facilitation of clearances, approvals and security by Host Governments as well as coordination of implementation are being taken. These mechanisms would be further strengthened.

- d) Values of Mahtma Gandhi: ICCR accepts Committee's recommendation to propagate values of Mahatma Gandhi through embassies in a suitable manner.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.4)

The ICCR is the nodal organization for the projection of India's soft power abroad, and ever since its establishment in 1950, it has emerged as the principal governmental organization for our cultural engagement with the world and for promoting our culture in all its magnificence through various activities. The Committee are, however, disappointed to note that budgetary support granted to the ICCR has not been adequate. A budget of Rs. 192 crores has been allocated to ICCR in BE 2015-16, a sum that was retained at the same level in RE 2015-16. During BE 2016-17, the budgetary allocation has been enhanced to Rs. 215.80 crores. Despite an increase of 12.40%, the amount is still insufficient if the allocation is compared to the other Government supported organizations world over which are engaged in the dissemination of culture for their respective countries. By the Ministry's own admission, ICCR is being forced to resort to juggle its limited resources to make do with the meagre

budget and it will notionally require at least Rs. 500 crore to help it meet its expanding mandate. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the budget of the ICCR should be sufficiently increased as such a move will go a long way in assisting us in leveraging our country's soft power and all its vast potential.

The Committee have also noted that during the budget exercise, the gap between RE demand and allocation is not much. It points to the fact that at present there is no institutional capacity within the ICCR for ingesting huge funds. Such a situation does not sit well with the continuous (and necessary) demands for enhanced budgetary allocations. The Committee would therefore, recommend that in the interests of more realistic planning, the ICCR should also ramp up its institutional capacity to utilise in the best possible manner any enhanced allocation.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation of the Committee is accepted and action is being taken by the Finance Division of MEA. ICCR on its part has established smooth coordination with all the Territorial Divisions. During BE 2016-17, the budgetary allocation has been enhanced to Rs. 215.80 crores. The delays in release of agency funds were addresses by regular meetings chaired by AS FA) with the territorial Divisions and ICCR. This helped in getting the agency funds released in time as a result ICCR has shown improvement in its expenditure in financial year 2016-17. Though Rs. 215.80 crores was allocated, however the allocation was brought down to Rs.185.37 at RE stage, whereas ICCR's total annual expenditure was Rs.193.37 crores (subject to reconciliation and audit). MEA has allocated Rs.233.14 crores to ICCR for financial year 2017-18. ICCR has also put in various systems in place for streamlining the financial management within ICCR. ICCR is working with MEA to revamp its institutional capacity to utilize the enhanced budget. Proposal for creation of posts and recruitment is under process. ICCR has also initiated use of technology in streamlining and improving financial discipline:

- e) Since expenditure incurred at ICCR's Regional Offices and Culture Centre are not tracked in MEA's IMAS, ICCR is developing its independent Integrated Accounting System in order to monitor releases, expenditure and accounting in real time.
- f) ICCR has developed a Scholarship Portal to track processes involved and expenditure incurred from the first step of Admission till a student finish his/her course in India. A portal called ICCR Scholarship Admissions to Alumni (A2A) Portal will address collection of Utilization Certificates online, which would assist in timely submission of the same to Agencies in order to process releases at their end.
- g) A total of nine ICCR programmes have been identified to be onboarded on Direct Benefit Transfer portal, which tracks details of beneficiaries under various these nine schemes and monitor fund transfers through electronic systems.
- h) All payments made electronically.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.7)

The Committee are aware of budgetary constraints faced by the ICCR and its crippling effect on desired outcomes. It is, therefore, imperative that some fresh thinking outside the box should be invested in making the programmes of the ICCR financially sustainable. Across the world, the trend has been for Governments to withdraw from direct spending on culture. The Committee are pleased to note that ICCR has started entering into Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in some of our Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) to address resource and manpower crunches. The Committee desire that the ICCR should enter into institutional partnerships with reputed and select cultural organizations from across the world in order to avail of reciprocal arrangements related to hosting of troupes and programmes. Such partnerships would go a long way in easing the logistics of the ICCR in the face of growing budgetary cuts.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation is accepted. ICCR is expanding the scope of including more partners for delivering its mandate. The partnerships vary from counterpart foreign

organizations to State Governments in India, other line Ministries, related autonomous bodies, think tanks, Universities in India and overseas. Partnerships are being utilised for:

- a) Running the Culture Centres overseas.
- b) Sharing the cost of Indian Studies Chairs (With Universities overseas)
- c) Executing the Programme (Festivals, Conferences, Seminars...)

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.10)

Cultural diplomacy should also embrace the culture of ideas, showcase India's democracy and diversity and avoid being seen as propaganda. For this reason it is imperative that speakers and experts from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines be identified to be sent abroad to address foreign audiences, thereby showcasing India's pluralism and freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. In addition to music and dance, India's soft power should also embrace the attraction of words and ideas, including contemporary and classical literature, thereby projecting India to those wishing to know more in depth about the country and its culture.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation is noted. Most of the matters related to literature are handled by the Ministry of Culture and the XP Division of MEA.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.11)

The Committee understand that culture is a wide field that encompasses a number of Ministries/Departments. In such a scenario it is inevitable that the mandate of one organization will overlap with that of another. At least in the field of culture it is almost impossible to conceive a water tight compartmentalization of responsibilities between the ICCR/MEA and other line Ministries. On various aspects related to culture the MEA/ICCR must work with the Ministries of Culture, Tourism, Human Resource Development, AYUSH etc. For example, the Ministry of Culture's primary mandate in terms of bilateral cultural relations is in the context

of formulating Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs) with countries abroad and ensuring its implementation with the help of various implementing agencies (ICCR being one of them). While the Committee agree with the Ministry's contention that duplication should be avoided through a clearer definition of roles, at times it becomes difficult to define them in isolation with one other. During oral deposition the Foreign Secretary admitted that despite coordinated efforts among Ministries where the DG, ICCR and Secretary, Culture meet and discuss issues, there remain gaps in coordination. It is imperative that all concerned Ministries find ways to work together, particularly in light of limited resources. The Committee would, therefore, strongly recommend that much more emphasis be given to the issue of coordination among various line Ministries in order to achieve the highest order of functional efficiency, and that a Co-ordinating Committee of Ministries dealing with cultural diplomacy be established to meet not less than once in two months. A field like Cultural Diplomacy requires that various Ministries/Departments do not operate in silos. In order to achieve this, the Committee's proposal aims to create a fixed mechanism for effective coordination between MEA/ICCR and other line Ministries involved in the task of dissemination of culture and goodwill to people outside India. All should work together to strengthen the soft power diplomacy of the country.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation is noted. As has been highlighted in ICCR/MEA's responses earlier to the Committee, ICCR strongly feels that there should be greater clarity of role amongst the Ministries which should be inducted in the "Rules of Business". It is further informed that:

- a) ICCR has signed MOU with Ministry of Culture and carries out meetings with officers of Ministry of Culture from time to time.
- b) ICCR's Governing Body chaired by President ICCR comprises of Secretaries (or their representatives) from the MEA, Ministry of Culture, Ayush, HRD, Commerce and Tourism who together play major role in terms of Soft Power Projection overseas. Governing Body meetings are held twice a year to discuss various matters.
- c) It is proposed that a Coordination Committee chaired by Director General, ICCR with Joint Secretaries from the Ministries dealing with cultural diplomacy as members is set up at functional level, which can meet atleast quarterly.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.12)

The Public Diplomacy Division had been merged with the External Publicity Division in January, 2014 to form a new entity called External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division. Before the merger, the erstwhile Public Diplomacy Division complemented the ICCR in showcasing our soft power resources and in building an understanding and appreciation of India's foreign policy. Following the merger, the functions of the two Divisions have been coalesced to a significant level and the Committee are afraid that the long term requirements of public diplomacy may stand subordinated to the expediency of providing a platform for external publicity and responding to the urgent and immediate requirements of the news of the day. While being in favour of working towards achieving synergy, the Committee would specifically recommend that it should be ensured that the matters related to public diplomacy are not given short shrift under the new entity. In particular, since the Joint Secretary (XP) is bound to be preoccupied principally with urgent matters, a senior official should be appointed under him tasked solely with stewardship of India's public diplomacy activities.

Reply of the Government

Following the merger of the erstwhile Public Diplomacy Division with the External Publicity Division, the post of Director (XPD), was specifically created to steward India's public diplomacy activities under the overall supervision of Joint Secretary (XP). Director (XPD) is assisted by four Deputy Secretary/Under Secretary level officers in this work, viz., OSD (PD), who oversees the work of procurement and distribution of publicity-oriented printed material such as books & publication of MEA's flagship bi-monthly magazine 'India Perspectives', Under Secretary (PD), who oversees the work of audio-visual publicity, Under Secretary (Digital Diplomacy), who oversees the work of digital diplomacy including publicity through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc., and Under Secretary (XP), who looks after the work of other outreach activities such as the 'Distinguished Lecture Series'.

Publicity activities of the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division mainly fall into the following categories:

- a) Public diplomacy outreach efforts through audio-visual means.
- b) Public diplomacy through procurement and commissioning of publicity-oriented books and magazines.
- c) Publication of the Division's flagship bi-monthly magazine 'India Perspectives'
- d) Publicity through digital diplomacy including social media.
- e) Public diplomacy through other outreach activities such as 'Distinguished Lecture Series' by retired diplomats/serving officers at the central universities and renowned educational institutions of India.

Ever since the merger of the two Divisions, XPD Division has ensured that the matters related to public diplomacy are given utmost importance at all times and the momentum of India's public diplomacy activities is continued further with greater impetus. An analysis of the work output of the unified External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division compared with that of the erstwhile Public Diplomacy Division prior to 2014, would present a clearer picture in this regard.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.13)

The Diaspora is an indispensable partner in promoting our country's soft power. We are fortunate to have a large diaspora across the globe that has preserved Indian customs as living traditions. As per the Ministry, the ICCR has encouraged its Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) and our Missions abroad to actively engage with the diaspora, which has emerged as a focal point during recent high level foreign visits. It is, therefore, imperative that our soft power of India is projected through these communities. The reach of the diaspora is not only wide in terms of its geographic coverage, but also in terms of its influence in the economy and society of host countries. The Ministry has been partnering with established cultural and academic institutions of the diaspora with scholars, eminent Indians, professionals and experts. It appears to the Committee that such programmes are largely driven by the initiative of the local Mission or the particular Indian Cultural Centre. Therefore, the Committee would

recommend that instead of this short-term approach, the Ministry of External Affairs should make a blueprint for engaging meaningfully with the Diaspora in leveraging our soft power abroad through a broader and more systematic policy.

The Gulf Region is not only important to India from economic and strategic perspectives, but also as home to a large number of Indians, especially migrant workers. Unlike other regions of the world where Diaspora has considerable clout, the position of migrant workers in the West and the Gulf is not strong. This requires better collaboration and coordination in all possible ways as they may be the best messengers of India's soft power in that part of the world. The Committee therefore, consider it essential that special focus should be laid on disseminating soft power under the 'Link West' policy through the diaspora in that region.

Reply of the Government

The report is factually correct from the OIA-1 Division's perspective. It is apprised that the Indian Missions and Posts in the Gulf region are pro-actively engaged in projection of India's soft power in countries of the region through various initiatives including promotion of Indian culture, Make in India initiatives etc. in close collaboration with the resident Indian community and local chambers of business and industry. Furthermore, there are specific Diaspora Engagement Programmes such as Know India Programme, Study India Programme etc. to familiarise with the art and culture, heritage, history, economy and development of India.

The overseas Indian community is growing and stands at nearly 31.25 million overseas Indians living abroad – 13.4 million NRIs and 17.85 million Persons of Indian Origin. They are settled in virtually every corner of the world and every country. In recent years, the Indian community abroad has also moved to new destinations outside India, and into new professions and fields. Wherever they are, Indians migrating abroad have taken with them the essence of India, its culture, cuisine, healing powers of Yoga and Ayurveda, the beats of Bollywood, all of which continue to have a deep impact on the local landscape which they live in. Indian migrant workers, students and professionals abroad are, therefore, integral elements of India's soft power.

The Indian Diaspora especially in developed countries in the Western hemisphere and in South East Asia have also risen to positions of power and influence, in various spheres of life – politics; business; science & technology; R&D; the arts and culture; etc. They are making their voices heard, and they speak up for India, on issues of concern to the country of their origin.

The Ministry is engaging with the Diaspora in a more sustained and regular manner, especially on issues which are of significance to the Government. The 10 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conferences initiated in 2016 provided platforms on which domain experts among the Diaspora could engage directly with policymakers and stakeholders in India. Similarly the Indian Missions abroad are also engaging with the Diaspora in a more regular manner, seeking their insights, suggestions and discussing their problems. Through these regular dialogue mechanisms, the Government is also able to leverage the Indian Diaspora on issues of concern to us.

The young Indian Diaspora is of special significance in the context of soft power. The Ministry is engaging with the young overseas Indian community through programs such as the Know India Programme, the *Bharat Ko Janiye* Quiz and the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children. We also launched social media platforms, especially Facebook, to connect with various young Indian Diaspora members worldwide.

The Ministry has noted the Committee's comment that efforts to engage with Indian Diaspora are largely driven by the Indian Missions/Consulates or the Indian Cultural Centres. The Ministry would like to comment that since the Indian Missions, Consulates and Cultural Centres, are extensions of the Ministry itself, these are the best and most appropriate platforms through which we can leverage our soft power abroad. At the same time, the Missions/Consulates are working closely with other stakeholders such as the Indian community organizations; local Municipalities and foreign Governments; corporate sector; universities; Indian student bodies; organizations promoting Indian culture and heritage, to promote India's

culture abroad. By doing so, the Ministry and Missions are able to maximize the resources at hand and ensure that our efforts to leverage soft power are more sustainable in the long run.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards conferred by the Government on overseas Indians, recognizing their achievements in various fields, including art and culture, also serve the purpose of motivating the Diaspora to continue their efforts in cultural promotion.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

CHAPTER – III

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

NIL

CHAPTER – IV

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

(Recommendation No. 6)

The ICCR provides 24 scholarships annually in various fields to students from various parts of the world for graduate, postgraduate, doctoral and post-doctoral courses. Out of these, 8 scholarships are funded through its own budget and 16 scholarship schemes are being managed by the ICCR under funding from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of AYUSH. The Committee have noted that this growing agency work (for administering scholarship schemes) and untimely release of funds for implementing the same is an important factor in crippling the ICCR. The Committee are distressed to note that in the past few years, funds spent by the ICCR on agency work were reimbursed in the following Financial Year. However, this was made part of ICCR's budget allocation for the next FY and not reimbursed as an additional amount that was spent. The Committee do not approve of such an approach on the part of the Ministries concerned as they add to the financial woes of an already fund starved ICCR. The Committee would, therefore, desire that the Ministry of External Affairs abide by the view taken by the Foreign Secretary regarding advance payment of 75 percent of the money to the ICCR on account of Agency work. The Committee would also desire that other Ministries should accept the same arrangement as a pre-condition to any agency work.

Given the large financial outlay under its scholarship programme and its long term impact for India's soft power, the Committee are of the opinion that special attention should be paid to the welfare and well-being of foreign scholars while they are in India. Incidents like the one which took place involving attacks on African students should not be allowed to be repeated through better coordination with the concerned State Governments. It is also imperative that the culprits behind these attacks should be brought to book.

By virtue of awarding scholarships to a wide array of foreign students, the ICCR has managed to create a pool of scholars around the world, many of whom have distinguished themselves in various walks of life. In the Committee's opinion, these individuals can prove to

be long term assets in promoting our image abroad as India's de facto cultural brand ambassadors in their own countries. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the work related to establishment of ICCR Alumni Groups should be expedited and a status report in this regard be furnished to the Committee.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation is accepted. Committee is informed that since past three years several steps have been taken to streamline the entire Scholarship Programme. Some of the steps worth mentioning include:

- a) Streamlining of fee structures of colleges and institutes under State and Central Universities vis-à-vis ICCR's Scholarship.
- b) On recommendation of three-member committee chaired by Prof Sunaina Singh, VC Nalanda University screening of and empanelment of good quality institutes (on the basis of various criteria – educational facilities, courses, faculty, residential facilities...) is currently underway. The exercise will undertake weeding of poor quality institutes/colleges and empanelling those faring the best on above criteria.
- c) Guidelines for implementing the Scholarship Programme have been revisited and collated.
- d) ICCR and MEA's Finance Division are closely working with the territorial divisions with regard to release of agency funds in time for execution of Agency's Scholarship programme. There has been some improvement.
- e) Entire management of Scholarship Programme would henceforth be on a digitized platform, connecting the Applicant, Missions, Territorial Divisions, Finance Division, ICCR Head Quarter (Delhi) and ICCR's Regional Offices on A2A (Admissions to Alumni) ICCR Scholarship Portal which has been developed for the purpose. The Portal is proposed to be launched by September 2017. Scholarship Portal would also address aspects related to financial management with Regional Offices and Territorial Divisions.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

CHAPTER V

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

(Recommendation No. 1)

Soft Power is the ability of a country to achieve foreign policy objectives through cultural attraction rather than through force, coercion or indeed large deployments of money. While culture and history are at the centre of this approach, various political, economic and technological factors are equally significant. India is endowed with enormous soft power resources in the form of a vibrant culture, our art, artefacts, tangible and intangible heritage, practices like Yoga, meditation, Indian TV and cinema, information and technology exports, our democracy, our pluralism and a thriving diaspora. In spite of having vast soft power resources at its disposal, it comes as a matter of regret for the Committee that we have not been able to put them to adequate use in matters of foreign policy. The Committee are aware that the Government and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has made concerted efforts to promote India's soft power, its values, traditions, literature, languages, philosophy, art forms through a variety of mediums including electronic and print publications, live performances etc. Through these efforts, the image of India overseas has seen a major overhaul from that of a land of snake charmers to one of an emerging knowledge hub and IT superpower. Still, there are missing links regarding India abroad, and in certain cases there is the prejudice of prevailing stereotypes. The Committee find that in all these decades we have been lagging behind in cultural diplomacy and this lacuna should be removed at the earliest. It is widely believed that India's soft power until now has functioned independently of Government policies and the world's reckoning of our soft power is by default rather than design. The Committee are of the view that the Government has been able to leverage our country's soft power only in a fragmented way without the backing of a cohesive policy or commensurate financial resources. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry formulate a comprehensive and well-structured policy delineating India's soft power resources and their articulation abroad. The Ministry of External Affairs and the ICCR should extensively and in a sustained manner employ the resources at their disposal to propagate an image of India that augments our natural historical appeal, empowering our diplomacy and foreign policy.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation, which emerged out of discussions with the Committee in two sittings regarding formulating a comprehensive and well-structured policy on India's Soft Power Projection is accepted. It is apprised that ICCR is working with MEA to draft a policy paper on the same.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No. 2)

Today the concept of soft power has acquired currency not only in the field of academics but also in the field of international relations and diplomacy. Though soft power is an intangible component of a State's power and it is difficult to measure its definite impact, a study could establish the linkages between our soft power and tangible outcomes in the field of diplomacy. Such a study could point towards the ways in which India could leverage its soft power without such a linkage, soft power will remain a mere non-operational concept in India's diplomatic doctrine. The Ministry has also conceded that it is worthwhile to explore devising an objective method of assessing effectiveness of soft power capabilities and their tangible foreign policy outcomes, such as developing a 'soft power matrix'. The Committee are of the opinion that soft power, while very useful in itself, is only one possible instrument for enhancing our global role, along with appropriate use of hard power, and it should where possible be used in conjunction with the latter. The Committee would deem it desirable for the Ministry to study the tangible foreign policy outcomes of soft power and to devise, thereafter, a blue print for deploying it looking ahead. In itself, soft power carries no currency unless it is contextually driven and guided by certain objectives. The Committee would also recommend that the Government should come out with a 'soft power matrix' at the earliest, in order to measure the effectiveness of India's soft power.

The Ministry states that there is substantial scope for the improvement of India's image in neighbouring States. Even while fully endorsing the idea that we cannot fix all our problems

with neighbours through soft power engagement alone, the Committee feel that some amount of soft power may be beneficial in improving our relations with our neighbours. Going by India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, the Committee would also recommend that India should selectively exercise its soft power in neighbouring states for better diplomatic traction.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation with regard to (i) undertaking a study to establish the linkages between our soft power and tangible outcomes in the field of diplomacy and (ii) develop "Soft Power Matrix" to measure outcomes of initiatives undertaken for India's Soft Power Projection is accepted. ICCR is initiating work on the same.

As regards 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Committee's recommendation that "India should selectively exercise its soft power in neighbouring states for better diplomatic traction" is accepted and the same has been shared with concerned Territorial Divisions for further action.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No. 5)

The ICCR faces massive shortages in manpower at present and clubbed with inadequate budgetary support, the organization's role and work is hugely limited. The Committee are surprised to note that seats are lying vacant both at the level of the headquarters and field offices-- against three posts of Deputy Directors General (DDGs), at present only one post is occupied. All the three posts of Directors are vacant. Similarly, against 251 sanctioned posts of ICCR cadre at various levels, only 178 posts covering the Headquarters (HQ) in Delhi, Regional Offices (ROs) and Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) abroad are filled. Even when the ICCR has engaged 96 personnel at various levels as outsourced support and 8 consultants, this has proved to be inadequate. It sounds ironic that at a time when the ICCR has 41 embarked upon an expanded mandate, it remains handicapped in terms of manpower. It is the Committee's contention that without adequate human resources, the demands of the ICCR for enhanced budget will not be adequately justified. It is not reassuring that when the Finance Ministry sanctioned 44 posts for the ICCR, these posts could not be filled as the Council did

not have its recruitment rules in place. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the ICCR should expedite steps to fill already vacant posts and only thereafter seek sanction for more post from the Finance Ministry.

The Committee urge the ICCR to take exceptional care in ensuring that the most appropriate persons are appointed to head the cultural centres overseas. Their ability to connect with the countries in which they are located is imperative.

The Committee are aware that work in the ICCR requires a person's ability to handle culture and asks for attendant skills and aptitude along with knowledge. It should, therefore, be ensured that not only are the most eligible candidates selected to various posts, but also that they are given the right orientation and training to handle their work responsibly and productively. The Committee also recommend that the ICCR should set up a search panel to suggest names of eminent persons from various fields of culture who are eligible to fill the vacant seats of Directors at ICCs.

Reply of the Government

Committee's recommendation is accepted. To apprise the Committee presently ICCR and Administration Division of MEA are working together towards strengthening ICCR's Manpower situation. Following steps have been so far ensured:

- a) MEA has ensured deputing Senior IFS officer at the post of Director General who would take the new vision and streamlining process forward in coordination with the MEA.
- b) Post of one more DDG was filled in January 2017, which was lying vacant since September 2015.
- c) Senior DPC was conducted and ICCR officers were promoted to Director level, thereby ensuring that posts of Directors are filled.
- d) Action has been initiated to fill 38 vacancies in ICCR cadre by Direct Recruitment at staff level through various recruitment agencies.

- e) Committee's recommendation with regard to filling the posts of Directors at Indian Culture Centres has been taken seriously. Search Committee was set up for selection of eminent persons from various fields of culture for filling the posts of Directors at ICCs. Selection is being done in two phases. Candidates selected in the first round are in the process of being deployed to the ICCs where post has been vacant for long.
- f) ICCR has submitted proposal for creation of 200 new posts to strengthen ICCR's structure at different levels.
- g) Strengthening the Regional Offices by raising the level of Regional Directors and supplementing with more staff is currently being studied.
- h) Training for existing ICCR personnel with FSI has been planned.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No.8)

In order to promote the awareness and appreciation of India's rich cultural heritage abroad, the ICCR currently operates 37 Indian Cultural Centres (ICCs) across the globe. The ICCs are a principal instrument of India's institutional cultural outreach abroad and project our soft power in a wide number of ways. These Centres are located in countries where we have significant strategic, economic, political and cultural interests as also countries with large communities of Indian origin. The Committee is surprised to note that despite these parameters in place we still do not have a Cultural Centre in the entire Gulf Region. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a Cultural Centre should be opened in the Gulf in view of India's strong and sustained strategic and cultural ties with the region. The Committee also recommend that stalled projects in Washington, Paris and Hanoi should be executed without further delay. While the Committee fully understand that acquiring Government property abroad is a complicated exercise involving legal and extra-legal factors, the type of inordinate delay as in Washington cannot be countenanced. It should, therefore, be ensured that a mechanism be established so that such delays do not hamper future projects.

It has been stated that the ICCR is currently exploring the possibility of establishing Regional Cultural Centres abroad in select cities which could cover a group of countries in the region instead of any single country alone. The Committee ask the ICCR to tread with caution in this regard, given the serious limitations of manpower in the organization. So far, human

resources have proved to be an issue when it comes to the ICCs, both in terms of quality and quantity. Catering to a wider geographic region involving several countries and cultures would not be an easy proposition in these circumstances. The Committee would, therefore, desire that such a decision should not be implemented in haste and proper consideration should be given to all relevant factors. The Committee would also desire that the findings of the Performance Audit of the ICCs should be communicated to the Committee at the action taken stage.

Reply of the Government

a) Policy decision to acquire / construct Indian Culture Centres abroad lies with ICCR. Once, the decision is taken and conveyed to the Global Estate Management (GEM) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, the project preparation begins with selection of property on the basis of requirements projected by ICCR, in consultation with the concerned Mission / Post. After following all necessary steps, the Centre is handed over to ICCR / Mission or Post abroad, on its completion. Culture Centre in Hanoi was inaugurated last year and is now functional. Works on ICC projects in Washington and Paris are on. ICCR is examining the possibility of opening Culture Centre in Gulf in consultation with the Missions and territorial division. Committee's recommendation that ICCR may exercise caution with regard to opening Regional Culture Centres has been taken note of and accepted.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

(Recommendation No. 9)

Sending Indian Cultural troupes outside the country is an important part of the activities of the ICCR. These troupes perform in countries across the world and such performances play a significant role in projecting our soft power. It is, therefore, important that artistes of quality and distinction in any art form should be given opportunities to showcase their talent overseas. The Committee have observed during visits to Regional Offices of the ICCR that empanelment of artists was often not guided by pronounced policy, particularly in terms of the inclusion of unique art and dance forms on the verge of extinction. It was also noted that a large number of empanelment applications were pending both at the level of the Regional Offices (ROs) and the Headquarters. Such a trend is not reassuring for long term soft power ambitions and therefore, the Committee desire that all matters related to the

empanelment of artists should be resolved expeditiously and the entire system made more transparent. The Committee also recommend that a performance audit of the functioning of ICCR's Regional Offices (ROs) should be undertaken by the Ministry urgently in order to ensure that the quality of the artists who get empanelled and seek to perform outside India is of the highest order.

Reply of the Government

Recommendation of Committee was noted and action has been taken on the same. ICCR carried out empanelment process in January and February 2017 wherein the experts committees screened all the pending applications for empanelment. It was decided that the second round of empanelment will be conducted soon. ICCR is currently in the process of reviewing its empanelment policy to include more genres, younger and new artists who are received more enthusiastically by the foreign audience. ICCR is also in the process of empanelling the choreographers who would be able to produce choreographies and productions based on the contextual demands overseas.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/21/2016]

NEW DELHI
3 January, 2018
13 Pausa, 1939 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Committee on External Affairs

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS (2017-18) HELD ON 3 JANUARY, 2018**

The Committee sat on Wednesday, 3 January, 2018 from 1600 hrs. to 1755 hrs. in Committee Room 'B', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Shashi Tharoor – Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Gurjeet Singh Aujla
3. Prof. (Dr.) Sugata Bose
4. Shri Arka Keshari Deo
5. Prof. Richard Hay
6. Shri Raghav Lakhanpal
7. Shri Jose K. Mani
8. Shri P.R. Senthil Nathan
9. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
10. Shri Vishnu Dayal Ram
11. Shri Mohd. Salim
12. Prof. (Dr.) Mamta Sanghamita
13. Smt. Supriya Sule
14. Shri Sharad Tripathi

Rajya Sabha

15. Shri P. Bhattacharya
16. Shri D. Kupendra Reddy
17. Dr. Karan Singh

Secretariat

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Shri P.C Koul | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Dr. Ram Raj Rai | - | Director |
| 3. | Shri Janmesh Singh | - | Under Secretary |

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the members to the Sitting of the Committee.

3. The Committee took up for consideration the following draft Reports on : (i) Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirteenth Report on the subject 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Diaspora' (ii) XXXXXX

XXXXXX XXX

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

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Reports on Action Taken incorporating the suggestions made by the members and present the same to Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

(Vide Para 4 of Introduction of Report)

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

- (i) **Total Number of Recommendations 13**
- (ii) **Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.**
- Recommendation Nos. 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13.
- Total-07
Percentage: 53.84%**
- (iii) **Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies.**
- Recommendation Nos. NIL
- Total-00
Percentage: 00**
- (iv) **Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration.**
- Recommendation Nos. 6
- Total- 01
Percentage: 7.69 %**
- (v) **Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.**
- Recommendation Nos 1, 2, 5, 8 and 9
- Total- 05
Percentage: 38.46%**