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COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(2017-18)

SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fifteenth Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2017-18]

TWENTIETH REPORT

सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

February, 2018 / Magha, 1939 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 8 February, 2018
Laid on the table of Rajya Sabha on 8 February, 2018

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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1.	Shri P. C. Koul	–	Joint Secretary
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* Vacant *vice* Dr. Karan Singh due to his retirement from Rajya Sabha on 27 January, 2018

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 Twentieth Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fifteenth Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2017-18.

2. The Fifteenth Report was presented to the Parliament on 20 March, 2017. The Action Taken Replies of the Government on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received on 20 December, 2017.

3. The Committee considered and adopted this Report on action taken at their Sitting held on 6 February, 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 Fifteenth Report of the Committee on External Affairs is given at Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI
6 February, 2018
17 Magha, (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 Fifteenth Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for 2017-18 which was presented to Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 20 March, 2017.

2. The Action Taken Notes have been received from the Ministry of External Affairs on all the 43 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorized as follows: -

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

Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42 & 43 **Total- 32**

(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 the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration:-

Recommendation No. 30, 31 and 33 **Total- 03**

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

Recommendation Nos. 8, 12, 14, 15, 23, 25, 34 and 38 **Total- 08**

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)

<u>Statement under Direction 73-A</u>

5. The Committee had noted that Direction 73-A of the Directions by the Speaker makes it incumbent upon the Minister concerned to make a statement in Lok Sabha regarding the status of implementation of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Report of a Parliamentary Committee within six months of the presentation of the said Report in Parliament. The stipulated period of six months in case of the Eleventh Report had expired on 1 November, 2016. During the course of the Oral Evidence of the representatives of the Ministry on 16 February, 2017 the Foreign Secretary assured the Committee of the full commitment of the Government towards implementing the Recommendations of the Committee. It would be pertinent to mention here that the Statement by the Minister in respect of the Sixth Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants 2015-16 which was presented way back on 28 April, 2015 was also yet to be made. The Foreign Secretary, during his oral evidence on 28 March, 2016, offered similar guarantees but there had been no subsequent action.

The Committee had found the continued non-compliance of the Ministry with the requirements of Direction 73-A disturbing. In light of this inordinate delay as also past experience, the Committee were also not inclined to accept the assurance given by the Principal Witness regarding the full commitment of the Government towards implementing their recommendations. They had therefore desired that the Statement under Direction 73-A in respect of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Eleventh Report of the Committee as also all other pending Statements in respect of Recommendations / Observations of other Reports of the Committee be made in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session without fail.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that as per Direction 73A by the Speaker, Lok Sabha and Direction 33 dated 28.09.2004 of Chairman, Rajya Sabha, it is incumbent upon the Minister concerned to make a statement in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the status of implementation of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Report of a Parliamentary Committee within six months of its presentation in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The Minister made statements on the status of the implementation of the 6th and 11th Reports of Standing Committee on Demands for Grants for the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as per details below:

Report No.	Report Subject	Dates of Laying in Lok Sabha	Dates of Laying in Rajya Sabha
6th	Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 6th Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for the year 2015-16	12.04.2017	12.04.2017
11th	Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 11th Report (16th Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for the year 2016-17	12.04.2017	12.04.2017

The delay in making the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Standing Committee is regretted. Assurance given by Foreign Secretary to the Committee regarding Ministry's commitment to implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee is reiterated.

7. The Committee note that after their prodding in the form of a Recommendation, the Ministry has complied with the mandatory requirement under Direction 73-A of Speaker, Lok Sabha of making a Statement in the Parliament in respect of two of their Reports *i.e.* the Sixth and Eleventh Reports. The Committee can however, derive no consolation from this piecemeal compliance by the Ministry. Statements under Direction 73-A are yet to be made in respect of several Reports which pre-date the two Reports mentioned above. As per the Committee's records, Statements are still pending with respect to nine of their Reports. The Committee while expressing their strong disapproval of this inordinate delay on the part of the Ministry, exhort it to do the needful in the first week of the Second Half of the ongoing Budget Session. The Committee hope that the Ministry will live upto their expectations at least now.

(Recommendation No. 2)

Need for a robust budgetary Planning Process

8. The Committee had noted from the statements made by the Ministry that it did not have a formal mechanism of arriving at detailed expenditure plans at Unit level. Individual

Heads of Divisions and Spending Units were making an assessment of their fund requirements and expenditure needs as an ongoing exercise albeit, in regular consultation with the Financial Advisor. The Committee had found the existing state of affairs in the Ministry very worrying. The critical absence of a formal mechanism for the purpose at Unit levels was clear in the financial projections of the Ministry, year after year. For example, in Fiscal 2014-15 the Ministry sought a sum of Rs. 19754.83 crore. It was allocated a significantly less BE of Rs. 14730 crore. This was further scaled down to Rs. 12620 crore at RE stage. The actual expenditure during the year was Rs. 12203.57 crore. During Fiscal 2015-16 the Ministry sought an allocation of Rs. 20034.62 crore. It was again allocated a substantially lower BE of Rs. 14966.83 crore, which incidentally was almost equal to the BE of Fiscal 2014-15. The same figure was retained at RE stage. The actual expenditure, however, was about Rs. 494 crore less, at Rs. 14472.96 crore. During the ongoing Fiscal i.e. 2016-17 the Ministry had sought Rs. 22966.89 crore. It was allocated Rs. 14662.66 crore at BE. This was reduced to Rs. 13426.00 crore at RE stage. At the end of third quarter of the Fiscal, the Ministry had been able to spend only Rs. 8950.03 crore, leaving a massive amount of Rs. 4476.00 crore unspent. From the information furnished to the Committee it was also observed that during the month of January, 2017 a sum of Rs. 604.18 crore had been posted as expenditure. However, this did not include spending from Missions / Posts.

It was clear that the allocations sought by the Ministry were not based on realistic requirements or on its capacity to absorb and utilize funds year after year. It had been consistently missing its BE targets leading to substantial reduction at RE stage.

The Committee had strongly felt that there was a pressing need for the Ministry to develop a well-defined and focused budgetary planning process, so as to ensure that allocations sought are arrived at keeping in view, achievable plans and projects and the absorption capacity of various units under the Ministry. The system followed so far has only led to cuts and criticism. The Committee had recommended that necessary steps be taken to address this issue, without any further loss of time, so that the financial requirements for fiscal 2018-19 were arrived at in a more scientific and focused manner, factoring all requirements of funds in a realistic fashion. In this context, the Committee had also requested the Ministry to consider the concept of Zero Based budgeting while drawing their future fund projections.

9. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that it accepts the Hon'ble Committee's observation that there is scope for improvement in the process by which budgetary demands are prepared and projected at the Unit level. The mismatch between fund demands and actual utilisation is largely on account of our technical assistance and development cooperation schemes, projects and, programmes being implemented abroad. One reason for the high projections is that the fund demands sometimes include programmes, projects and schemes that are in the planning stage or under

discussion with the concerned beneficiary foreign government and, the fund requirements for such initiatives are included in the budgetary demands in anticipation of their finalisation, so as to avoid any interruption in implementation later, due to funds not being available because they were not projected and hence not allocated.

At times, the timeframe for the finalisation and execution of such initiatives may become longer than expected because of extraneous factors such as, delay in approvals or land acquisition on the part of the beneficiary government, or adverse local conditions such as security concerns, political instability, change of regime, unfavourable weather, geological surprises at the work front etc. Such unforeseen circumstances, causing delay in project implementation and thus a slowdown in fund utilisation, makes the budgetary demands appear to be unrealistic in hindsight. Conversely, favourable implementation conditions not being able to be fully utilised because funds were not projected and, therefore not allocated, would also cause delays. Therefore, for realistic and optimal budget planning, a balance has to be struck between the two scenarios, which has been tilted towards making higher demands.

However, accepting the Hon'ble Committee's observations, the Ministry has taken steps to rationalise budgetary demands and to make them more realistic. A system of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings, chaired at the level of either Foreign Secretary or the Financial Advisor, has been put in place, where not only is an assessment made of expenditure achieved against demands made, but the project execution timelines are also evaluated, including possible challenges and hindrances that may cause delays. With this mechanism of high-level oversight and monitoring, the Unit-level preparation of funds demands has seen marked improvement with more outcome-oriented and accurate projections being made. Two instances of the Ministry's focus on making realistic budgetary demands based on pace of expenditure and physical progress of projects may be seen in (i) RE demands of FYs 2016-17 and 2017-18 and (ii) first supplementary demand for grants in FY 2017-18, as follows:

(i) In RE 2016-17, Ministry sought 18% more funds than its BE allocation. In RE 2017-18, Ministry sought 19.5% more funds than its BE allocation. Compared to this, Ministry's demands at RE stage in previous years were much higher:

FY	BE Allocation	RE Demand	% Increase Demanded
2013-14	11719.00	16585.19	41.52 %
2014-15	14730.39	17729.59	20.36 %
2015-16	14966.83	20018.03	33.75 %
2016-17	14662.66	17317.29	18.10 %
2017-18	14798.55	17693.78	19.56 %

(ii) Ministry's request for funds in the first supplementary demand for grants in FY 2017-18 was also only Rs. 601 crore, compared to Rs 4835.43 crores sought at this stage in FY 2016-17.

In terms of budget utilization, it is submitted for the Hon'ble Committee's consideration that the Ministry has made all efforts to utilize the funds allocated to it, and has shown robust expenditure in the past 17 years, as shown below:

(In Rupees Crores)

Financial Year	BE	RE	BE & RE Difference	Actuals	Diff. in RE & Actuals	% of RE Utilization	Diff. in BE & Actuals	% of BE Utilization
2000-01	2625.72	2720.72	*+ 95.00*	2488.85	*- 231.87*	91.48 %	*-136.87*	94.78 %
2001-02	2883.39	2830.00	*- 53.39*	2624.55	*- 205.45*	92.74 %	*- 258.84*	91.02 %
2002-03	3238.34	3200.00	*- 38.34*	3253.79	*+ 53.79*	101.68 %	*15.45*	100.47 %
2003-04	3410.00	3410.00	*0.00*	3344.53	*- 65.47*	98.08 %	*- 65.47*	98.08 %
2004-05	3640.69	3885.00	*+ 244.31*	3756.16	*- 128.84*	96.68 %	*115.47*	103.17 %
2005-06	3928.00	4182.00	*+ 254.00*	4089.67	*- 92.33*	97.79 %	*161.67*	104.11 %
2006-07	3695.05	4095.05	*+ 400.00*	3949.68	*- 145.37*	96.45 %	*254.63*	106.89 %
2007-08	4433.60	4783.00	*+ 349.40*	4572.39	*- 210.61*	95.60 %	*138.79*	103.13 %
2008-09	5062.00	6868.42	*+ 1806.42*	6746.35	*- 122.07*	98.22 %	*1684.35*	133.27 %
2009-10	6293.00	6333.00	*+ 40.00*	6290.78	*- 42.22*	99.33 %	*- 2.22*	99.96 %
2010-11	6375.00	7120.00	*+ 745.00*	7154.54	*+ 34.54*	100.49 %	*779.54*	112.23 %
2011-12	7106.00	7836.00	*+ 730.00*	7872.77	*+ 36.77*	100.47 %	*766.77*	110.79 %
2012-13	9661.97	10062.00	*+ 400.03*	10120.70	*+ 58.70*	100.58 %	*458.73*	104.75 %
2013-14	11719.00	11793.65	*+ 74.65*	11807.34	*+ 13.69*	100.12 %	*88.34*	100.75 %
2014-15	14730.39	12620.00	*- 2110.39*	12148.82	*- 471.18*	96.27 %	*- 2581.57*	82.47 %
2015-16	14966.83	14966.83	*0.00*	14540.64	*- 426.19*	97.15 %	*- 426.19*	97.15 %
2016-17	14662.66	13426.00	*- 1236.66*	12753.37	*- 672.63*	94.99 %	*- 1909.29*	86.98 %
2017-18	14798.55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average Utilization Rates						97.54 % of RE Allocation *and* 101.76 % of BE Allocation		

10. The Committee had pointed towards the absence of any formal mechanism of arriving at detailed expenditure plans at Unit level in the Ministry thereby resulting in a mismatch between budgetary requirements and expenditure. The Committee had specifically observed that the allocations sought by the Ministry were not based on realistic requirements or on its capacity to absorb and utilize the funds and, consequently, it had been consistently missing its BE targets, leading to substantial reduction at RE stage. Feeling the need for developing a well defined and focused budgetary planning process, the Ministry was asked to consider the concept of Zero Based budgeting. The Ministry has accepted the observations of the Committee regarding the scope for improvement in the process by which budgetary demands are prepared at the unit level but it has also submitted that the mismatch between funds demands and actual utilization is largely on account of its technical assistance and development cooperation schemes, projects and programmes being implemented abroad where certain extraneous factors come into play which are beyond its control. While understanding these restrictive conditions, the Committee would still desire that the Ministry should take proactive steps to secure all sorts of clearances before committing itself financially to a project. Further, the Ministry has submitted that it has taken steps to rationalize budgetary demands and to make them more realistic. However, it is still not clear whether any formal mechanism for the purpose at the Unit level has been worked out. Therefore, as recommended by the Committee, a mechanism should be developed so that budgetary demands are projected at the unit level, because without enforcement at the base level the results will not be forthcoming in this regard. The Committee would also like to know the endeavour of the Ministry to adopt Zero Based budgeting while drawing their future funds projections as suggested by the Committee. The Committee desire that complete information should be furnished in both cases at the final reply stage, without fail.

(Recommendation No. 6)

Low Budgetary Allocation

11. The Committee had noted that against the projected demand of Rs. 23830.95 crore by MEA, only an allocation of Rs. 14798.55 crore had been made at the BE stage during the year 2017-18. Surprisingly, the percentage of the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs against the total allocation of the Government of India had been reduced to 0.68% as

compared to 0.74% in 2016-17 and 0.84% in 2015-16. The proposed allocation was only 62.09% of MEA's budget demand. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary had expected that if, the Ministry's spending record made a good case, then the Ministry of Finance would be open to looking at additional funds at the RE stage. The Ministry's assurance of improving its spending record was very timely. The Committee had hoped that during that fiscal the Ministry would make the most of that opportunity in the first half of 2017-18. The Committee had desired that the Ministry should thereafter pose the question of its financial requirements to the Ministry of Finance in a more forceful way by quoting its continuously decreasing share of allocation from the Government's coffers. The Committee had also urged the Ministry of Finance to provide the required allocation at the RE stage during 2017-18. The Committee had desired that the Ministry should explore all possibilities of funding from other Government of India Ministries. as development partnership work integrates the portfolios of several Ministries that could partly fund these through their own resources, in the pursuit of collective Government of India objectives. The Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome of such efforts of the Ministry.

12. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, had stated that it would like to submit to the Hon'ble Committee that with more focused efforts towards a more robust and steady spending pace, expenditure in the first quarter of FY 2017-18 stood at 26.33% as against 19.6% in FY 2016-17. As advised by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will continue to liaise with Ministry of Finance for additional allocation at the RE stage, as required, to address the realistic needs of various spending units. As desired by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will also actively explore possibilities of funding from other Government Ministries to harness our joint resources availability for the realisation of collective Government of India objectives.

13. In their recommendation, the Committee had asked the Ministry to improve its spending record so as to press for more budgetary allocation at the RE stage. However, in its reply the Ministry has simply submitted about an improvement in their spending pace by virtue of which the expenditure in the first quarter of FY 2017-18 stood at 26.33 percent, as against 19.6 percent in FY 2016-17, when the reply had been submitted in the month of December, 2017. The Committee understands that by the time the Action Taken Replies were submitted, the details about the performance in two more quarters, along with the demand and allocations made at RE stage for the year 2017-18, could have been easily made available to the Committee. The Committee strongly decry this tendency of the Ministry of not furnishing all the details available, on the date of submission of replies to the Committee, so that they could assess the financial performance of the Ministry. The Committee may also be

informed about the outcome of the steps taken to explore the possibilities of funding from other Government Ministries, to harness our joint resources availability for realization of collective Government of India objectives.

(Recommendation No. 7)

<u>Classification of the Budget into 'Scheme' and 'Non-Scheme'</u>

14. The Committee had noted that the Plan and Non-Plan classification had been discontinued from FY 2017-18 and the budget classification would then only be in terms of Revenue and Capital Heads and 'Scheme' and 'Non-Scheme' Heads. For the FY 2017-18 Rs. 6894.03 crores had been allocated as Scheme and Rs. 7904.52 crores as Non-Scheme. The Committee were pleased to note that with the incorporation of all the expenditure for aid and technical and cooperation assistance under the 'Scheme' classification, one of the major concerns raised by the Committee, from time to time, had been partially addressed. It was expected that the 'Scheme' head would see better appreciation for budget requirements and allocations for project-related international commitments. However, the Committee had not received any explicit assurance about insulating the 'Scheme' from unpredictable budgetary cuts. The Committee had felt that the Ministry should prevail upon the Ministry of Finance, that unlike other Ministries of the Government of India, the expenditure under 'Scheme' under MEA was meant exclusively for international aid commitments and therefore, its sanctity should be upheld in the budgetary exercise. If that does not happen, the Committee were not sure to what extent this new classification would translate into addressing the constant budgetary woes of the Ministry. The Committee had desired that the Ministry should take up this matter with Ministry of Finance at the highest level to ensure that needful was done without any further delay.

15. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Scheme and Non-Scheme framework of the budget facilitates a more holistic appreciation of India's aid and technical assistance cooperation programs aimed at foreign countries, while doing away with the earlier distinction of Plan and Non-Plan expenditure. It is expected to better aid our development partnership budgetary allocations, monitoring and enable an integrated and holistic view of resource outlays of the Ministry's schemes and projects.

The Ministry is also making efforts to strengthen its focus on better expenditure patterns, particularly for foreign aid and technical assistance projects, so as to insulate our international commitments from budgetary cuts. The Ministry will continue to impress upon Ministry of Finance, the need for adequate and realistic budgetary provisioning.

16. The Committee had observed that under the new system, the expenditure under 'Scheme' Head was meant exclusively for international aid commitments and, had

desired that its sanctity should be upheld in the budgetary exercise. In the light of changed situation the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should take up the matter of the budget allocation related to 'Scheme' with the Ministry of Finance at the highest level to insulate the unpredictable budgetary cuts under this Head. In its reply, the Ministry has summed up the likely positive impact of this classification on the budgetary exercise and, about its endeavour to impress upon the Ministry of Finance, to provide adequate and realistic budget allocations. The Ministry of External Affairs was supposed to prevail upon the Finance Ministry that 'Scheme' is meant for international aid commitments and therefore should not be subjected to budgetary cuts. However, it appears that these persuasions have been made in routine manner and, have not been made with the objective to insulate the international aid commitments under the new classification. The Committee, therefore, firmly desire that exclusive negotiations should be taken up at the highest level in the matter of maintaining the sanctity of 'Scheme' head with the Ministry of Finance and to apprise the Committee about the outcome.

(Recommendation No. 11)

Meeting manpower requirements of Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs)

17. The Committee had noted that in order to expand the Passport related services, the Government had decided to utilize Head Post Offices (HPOs) in various States as Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs). As part of this exercise, two pilot projects at Mysuru, Karnataka and Dahod, Gujarat had been operationalized and, a decision to scale up that programme by opening 56 more POPSKs had been taken. The Committee in their past Reports had consistently recommended an expansion of Passport facilities and, would welcome any measure aimed at easing Passport bottlenecks. However, while welcoming the measure to open up POPSKs, the Committee were apprehensive that Passport granting and verification functions in these POPSKs, would be performed by employees of the Postal Department holding analogous posts, rather than by the officials of the Central Passport Organizations (CPO). It was understandable if the available space and logistical convenience of the HPOs were to be used for penetration of Passport Services and those positions were being manned by CPO Officials. In that case, the entire Government workforce in POPSKs would comprise of trained personnel of the Postal Department.

Even if, as the Ministry had stated, officials of the DoP would be imparted sufficient training, the Committee had reason to believe that they could not be expected to become sufficiently prepared in managing Passport related matters, especially with granting and verification issues. The Committee were aware that even long serving officials in Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) face many difficult situations every day and have to take help from their back offices, and, there were, therefore, concerns about how officials of the Postal Department could be given such an important responsibility after a short period of training.

The Committee felt that the Passport was a very important document and it is important that it goes through hands that can exercise discretion learned through experience. The security challenges of outsourcing Passport activities to personnel beyond the organization also needed to be factored in. The Committee, therefore, had liked that POPSKs should be preferably manned by the Officials of the CPO (apart from the vendor) and that the Ministry should embark upon a recruitment drive to tide over manpower inadequacies, to meet additional deployment in the POPSKs. Alternatively, the Committee had opined that the Department of Posts employees should be trained extensively, to acquire requisite proficiency and professional skills, so that the quality of service as well as security concerns are suitably addressed.

18. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that after the successful implementation of the joint decision of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts (DoP) to utilize Head Post Offices (HPO) for rendering passport services from HPO premises, the Ministry has now decided to further expand the network of Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs), with plans to open 86 POPSKs in the first phase. Of these, 59 POPSKs have been operationalised as on 05 December 2017. The Ministry has also announced opening of another 149 POPSKs in the second phase. The Government intends to open POPSKs in such a manner that there is a Passport Kendra available within a radius of 50 kms of every HPO.

When this initiative was conceptualized, it was decided that the Department of Posts would provide the space in HPOs and the manpower for performing the sovereign verification and granting functions. In compliance with the Hon'ble Committee's observations, the Ministry has now decided that the sovereign functions of verification and granting of passports will be performed by the officials of Central Passport Organisation (CPO).

19. The Committee are pleased to note that pursuant to their Recommendation, the Ministry has now decided that the Sovereign function of verification and granting of passports will be performed by the officials of Central Passport Organization (CPO). As per the reply of the Ministry, 59 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs) have been already operationalized and, it plans to open another 149 POPSKs in the second phase. The Government has an ambitious plan to open POPSKs in such a manner that there is a Passport Kendra available within a radius of 50 Kilometer of every Head

Post Office (HPO). However, the Committee are perturbed about the availability of adequate manpower for these POPSKs as there are already a large number of vacant positions of Granting Officers within Central passport Organization (CPO). Further, the Ministry has also not furnished any reply on the steps taken with regard to embarking upon a recruitment drive to tide over manpower inadequacies to meet such additional deployment in the POPSKs. The Committee would, therefore, desire to be informed about the steps being taken to manage this new arrangement of Passport issuance.

(Recommendation No. 14)

Decentralized funding for Advertising and Publicity

20. The Committee had noted that the Major Head 'Secretariat-General Services' catered to Ministry's Secretariat, foreign and domestic travel expenses, public diplomacy and Press relations and the Protector General of Emigrants. Under that Head, BE 2017-18 had been kept at Rs. 423.58 crores which is Rs. 21.27 crores more than BE 2016-17. The Committee have also noted that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry was 8702, but the actual strength as on date was only 7193. In view of the pressing manpower requirements, the Ministry should draw out a time-bound work plan to fill the vacant posts through all available methods. The Committee had also noted, that no allocation for Advertising and Publicity under the Head 'Protector General of Emigrants', had been made. The Ministry had reasoned that there was a separate budget for 'Awareness Campaign/Media Plan' which catered to advertising and publicity initiatives for the Overseas Indian Affairs Division and Overseas Employment Division. The Committee were of the considered opinion that despite a centralized budget for advertising, it was imperative to have an allocation for the use of Protector of Emigrants (PoEs) offices throughout the country. At a time when fraudulent practices related to emigration were on the rise, the PoEs should possess funds to publicise the importance of safe migration, through local media and, provide relevant information to help emigrants in case of difficulty. There was a strong rationale for a decentralized advertisement and media campaign. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry allocate separate funds to Advertising and Publicity under the PGoE in future.

21. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply has stated that to fill the sanctioned strength appropriate indents have been placed with the Union Public Service Commission and the Staff Selection Commission. In addition to direct recruitment, Ministry is also addressing its manpower requirements through deputations from other Central Services, appointment of Consultants from Academia, which increases specialization within the Ministry and, the augmentation of local posts in Missions/Posts abroad.

The Media campaign on Safe and Legal Migration for Overseas Employment (**सुरक्षित जाओ प्रशिक्षित जाओ**) advises prospective migrant workers proceeding for overseas employment, particularly in the Gulf and South East Asian regions, to avoid fraudulent and illegal recruitment agents, approach registered recruitment agents, obtain job-specific training, and contact the Indian Embassy on arrival in the foreign country.

The 40-second advertisement on Safe and Legal Migration of Indian Migrant Workers for Overseas Employment was launched in Hindi in March 2017, as well as eight regional languages as detailed below:

Doordarshan	1 March to 30 April 2017
All India Radio	3 March to 30 April 2017
NFDC	7 March to 17 May 2017
Lok Sabha TV	9 March to 12 April 2017
Doordarshan	18 May to 17 September 2017
All India Radio	12 May to 13 September 2017
NFDC	20 May to 19 September 2017
Lok Sabha TV	17 July to 11 August 2017 and 30 days of Winter Sessions of Parliament

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. The media campaign has been aggressively pursued through the Ministry's social media platforms, Missions/Posts abroad, Regional Passport Offices, MEA Branch Secretariats, Protector of Emigrants offices, community radio stations, and interviews on AIR and Doordarshan. State Governments have also been requested through the State Division of the Ministry, to install these hoardings in prominent places both, in State Capitals, as well as in towns and districts and, to release the audio and TV advertisements provided by the Ministry in local channels, cable TV, social media platforms etc. widely and throughout the State at their own cost. Resident Commissioners of State Governments based in Delhi have also been requested to disseminate information through their print and electronic media and other channels. CDs with the advertising material in Hindi and regional languages were distributed during the States' NRI Ministers Meeting held in May 2017 chaired by External Affairs Minister, with the request to run the advertisement at their own cost in regional languages.

As part of Videsh Sampark series, to inform the State Governments about Government of India's policies, programmes, schemes and priorities in the crucial areas of passport, consular and diaspora issues, and, to discuss ways in which partnership can be strengthened, a high-level senior officials delegation led by Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the Videsh Sampark event held in Hyderabad on 13th May 2017. On the occasion, State Government of Telangana launched the Telugu version of the 40-second advertisement in digital cinema theatres, to have a wide impact and to reach young potential migrants.

Funds of Rs. 2.5 cr allocated at BE 2017-18 stage under the Awareness Campaign budget head have been almost fully utilized, and the Ministry will consider additional fund allocation at RE 2017-18 stage, within the overall RE 2017-18 budgetary ceiling.

To take forward the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, the Ministry will discuss with the OE Division, their firm and realistic funds requirements for the 'Advertising and Publicity' budget head under PGoE and, allocate adequate funds, commencing from FY 2018-19.

22. While noting that no allocation had been made in the Budget for Advertising and Publicity, under the Head 'Protector General of Emigrants (PGoE), the Committee had recommended that the Ministry should allocate separate funds for advertisements, for the use of Protector of Emigrants (PoEs) offices throughout the country. The Committee do not find any seriousness or commitment of the Ministry because, in its reply, the Ministry has stated that it will discuss with the OE Division, their firm and realistic funds requirements for 'Advertising and Publicity' and, allocate adequate funds, commencing from FY 2018-19. During the whole year 2017-18 they have not found it proper to make allocation to PoEs for that purpose. Moreover, as the new financial year is round the corner, budget requirements of the Division for 2018-19 must be finalized at this time. It was desirable on the part of the Ministry to have shared with the Committee whether any provision for Advertising and Publicity has been made in the budgetary demands or not. In view of the growing imperative of allowing PoEs to initiate localized information campaign on safe migration, the Committee would once again desire that the Ministry should allocate separate funds to 'Advertising and Publicity' under the Head PGoE.

(Recommendation No. 16)

Development Partnership Administration (DPA)

23. The Committee had noted that Development partnership was a key instrument in India's foreign policy and, the scope of assistance had seen considerable expansion in the past few years. At the same time, the quantum of budgetary allocation under this head had been less than predictable and, the Committee had feared that such a situation might have left us red-faced at times before our aid partners. As per the Ministry, allocations for new projects were made subject to the funds available within the overall budgetary provisions made by the Ministry of Finance. It would not be far-fetched to say that it is not the Ministry of External Affairs, but the Ministry of Finance which is the arbiter of India's aid assistance

at a macro level. When the Ministry was asked about the steps taken in the direction of insulating the aid programme from the budgetary cuts, it offered a very vague reply. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary had also submitted that incorporation of that major head under the 'Scheme' did not render it immunity from budgetary cuts. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should explore the feasibility of setting up of an autonomous (within the Ministry) aid disbursal body on the lines of USAID. It was felt that our aid programme might not be as big as that of the US, but we can definitely disburse funds with pre-defined policy objectives.

24. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that our Development Partnership is based on the needs of the partner countries and our foreign policy priorities which are assessed in close coordination with the concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry. Specific proposals are progressed on the basis of assessment made by factoring in the political relationship with the respective countries.

A Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was established in 2012 within the Ministry, essentially in line with the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee to set up a specialized Unit to spearhead India's Aid and Technical Assistance programs and projects in line with our overall foreign policy objectives and, based on needs assessment of our partner countries. The DPA comprises of DPA-I, DPA-II and DPA-III Divisions, each headed by Joint Secretary-level officers and consisting of experts, advisors and specialists from other Line Ministries, in addition to officers from the Ministry itself. DPA's projects and programmes have not faced any serious constraints vis-à-vis budget allocations.

25. The basic intent of the Committee, while recommending an autonomous aid disbursal body on the lines of similar international bodies elsewhere, was to ensure a reasonable amount of budgetary certainty for various development partnership projects being run by India. In its reply, the Ministry has stated that Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was established with the envisaged purpose and further, its projects and programmes have not faced any serious constraints *vis-à-vis* budget allocation. However, it is a matter of fact that the budget allocation under this head has been less than predictable and, is non-commensurate with our rising footprints. The very purpose of having a Development Partnership Administration is defeated when we are not able to insulate it from budgetary cuts. The Committee would therefore, deem it important that the funding of Development Partnership Administration should be made more predictable through establishment of internal

autonomous aid disbursal body in order to make it an effective tool for ushering developmental diplomacy.

(Recommendation No. 19)
Aid to Nepal

26. The Committee were pleased to note that budgetary allocation under 'Aid to Nepal' had been increased to Rs. 375.00 crores in BE 2017-18 from that of Rs. 320.00 crores at RE 2016-17. Under the aid programme, various projects like the construction of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the India-Nepal Border, cross border road links, Terai Road Project, post earthquake reconstruction work, etc., were being implemented. There were legal issues in respect of five packages under the Terai Roads Project and the matter was under arbitration. It was felt that the Ministry should be willing to resolve the matter amicably. The Committee were of the considered opinion that problems related to project implementation in Nepal were more of a political nature rather than legal or technical. Morever, India ought to increase the pace of its development assistance in Nepal. The Committee had, therefore, desired that MEA should provide the desired funds at RE 2017-18 stage as per progress and utilization trend. Projects should not be held up due to non-availability of funds and, additional funds would be required based on progress in implementation of the ongoing projects. The Committee were also of the opinion that India primarily suffered from a problem of perception in Nepal, rather than that of projects. The Committee had, therefore, desired that the Ministry should negotiate the political question of Madhesis in a more nuanced manner, so as to be more mindful of perceptions in the Nepal Valley. The Committee had also noted that post-earthquake reconstruction work is not picking up due to lack of support from the international community. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that India should strictly adhere to various timelines related to post-earthquake reconstruction work to ensure its completion in a mission mode.

27. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Budget allocation under 'Aid to Nepal' budget was optimally and fully utilized in FY 2016-17. The enhanced allocation in FY 2017-18 is also being utilized at a steady pace. All GoI-assisted development projects in Nepal, including the India-Nepal Rail Links, the Integrated Check Posts, the Transmission Lines, various civil construction projects, etc. are being proactively implemented. Projects are not held up due to non-availability of funds, and wherever required, additional funds are sought based on implementation progress.

28. While noting that in Nepal, India was primarily suffering from a problem of perception rather than of projects, the Committee had recommended a more nuanced approach towards Madhesis so as to balance the perceptions in the Nepal Valley. However, in its reply, the Ministry has not included any mention of its approach

towards the Madhesi question. Similarly, it has also failed to address the concerns raised by the Committee on post earthquake reconstruction work. The Committee are perturbed to note that the Ministry is still furnishing incomplete replies, despite being told not to in the past. The Committee expect the Ministry to refrain from ignoring the important portions of the Recommendations in the future. Further, the Committee would desire an updated reply at the subsequent action taken stage.

(Recommendations No. 20)

Housing Project under Aid to Sri Lanka

29. The Committee had noted that Aid to Sri Lanka had been reduced to Rs. 125 crore due to a lower requirement of funds as the Housing Project was nearing completion. Phase II and III of the Housing Project was being implemented under an innovative owner-driven model where the Government of India only arranged technical support and financial assistance. The projected Budget requirement for 2017-18 was Rs. 305 crore with an estimated expenditure of Rs. 80.60 crore for the Housing Project. The Committee had also observed that total utilization during 2016-17 (as on 10 February, 2017) was just Rs. 6.99 crore. Therefore, there was definitely a mismatch between the Ministry stating that the Housing Project was nearing completion by using only Rs. 7 crore during 2016-17 and then projecting a demand of Rs. 80.60 crore for the same for the next year. The Committee had sought a clarification and desired the Ministry to be more realistic in projecting budgetary demands in future.

The Committee were of the understanding that in order to expand its foothold in the neighbourhood it is imperative that India did not restrict its aid / assistance mainly to soft infrastructure projects. Therefore, it was imperative that the Government should aggressively explore business opportunities in areas like ports, city gas distribution, road building, railways and airports in Sri Lanka.

30. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that as submitted to the Hon'ble Committee, the Indian Housing Project was launched in 2010 in Sri Lanka with an overall commitment of Rs. 1372 crore to build 50,000 houses. A Pilot Project involving construction of one thousand houses was launched in November 2010 and was completed in July 2012. The second phase which envisaged construction or repair of 45,000 houses in the Northern and Eastern Provinces under an innovative owner-driven model was launched in 2012 and is reaching completion. As on 31 July 2017, construction of 44,434 houses has been completed. Work on 270 houses earmarked for people affected by the Sampur power project is also expected to start soon. Ministry is taking all possible efforts to minimize the number of written-off cases, where work had started but could not be completed for various reasons. The number of such cases has come down from around 945 in 2016 to 276 currently. As the second phase of the Project is nearing completion, the

budget forecast and allocation was reduced in FY 2016-17, and expenditure was Rs. 25.11 crores.

The third phase of the Project involves construction of 4000 houses for estate workers in the Central and Uva Provinces, through an innovative community-driven approach. Work on 1134 houses in the first stage, for which land has been identified and allocated, started in October 2016. At that time, it was expected that the construction work will progress soon and accordingly a projection of Rs. 80.60 crores was made. However, work could not progress at a faster pace because of difficulties in land clearance, slope modification and other preparatory work, since the houses are to be constructed in hilly terrain which is otherwise a tea plantation. It is expected that out of Rs. 80.60 crores initially projected, around Rs. 25 crores could be spent in FY 2017-18. Land identification and preparatory work for the second lot of 2866 houses is currently underway. This involves multiple Ministries and Departments within the Government of Sri Lanka. The land is held by the Plantation Companies on long lease from the Government of Sri Lanka, which is to be released and individual ownership deeds given to beneficiaries. Depending on the progress in the land allocation, Ministry will project a revised forecast for the future. During his visit to Sri Lanka in May 2017, the Prime Minister had announced an additional 10,000 houses for Indian-origin Tamils in the upcountry region. Thus, implementation of the third phase of the project is contingent on the Government of Sri Lanka making land available for construction. Since the Ministry is aggressively pursuing the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka, budgetary provisions were made for FY 2017-18, which would be reviewed at the RE stage as per progress in the project.

On the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to aggressively explore business opportunities in areas like ports, city gas distribution, road building, railways and airports in Sri Lanka, it is submitted that pursuant to sustained efforts by the Ministry, an overarching MoU for Cooperation in Economic Projects was signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to India on 26th April 2017. The MoU helps to formalise the modalities of implementation of various infrastructure projects undertaken by India in Sri Lanka and has set firm timelines for their implementation. The Government of Sri Lanka has since issued a Letter of Intent to the Government of India for developing an LNG-based power plant in Kerawalapitiya in Sri Lanka. Two meetings of the Joint Working Group dealing with LNG issues have been held so far with a view to establish an LNG terminal/Floating Storage Regasification Unit in Colombo/Kerawalapitiya. Discussions are ongoing in other areas of economic cooperation.

31. The Committee had noted a mismatch between the Ministry's statement that the Housing Project in Sri Lanka is nearing completion thereby utilizing only Rs. 7 crore during 2016-17 and its further projection of a demand of Rs. 80.60 crore for the project in 2017-18. In its reply, the Ministry has clarified that for 2017-18, these

budgetary provisions have been made for the third phase of the project on which the Ministry is aggressively pursuing the land availability matter with the Government of Sri Lanka. It has further stated that this budget would be reviewed at the RE stage as per the progress of the project. The replies of the Ministry were forwarded to the Committee in the third week of December 2017, which is well past the Revised Estimates cycle. It was therefore, imperative on the part of the Ministry to provide updated figures as per the Revised Estimates figures. The Committee would therefore, desire that the Ministry should be proactive in matters of providing financial reporting and feedback to the Parliament particularly in such important issues.

(Recommendation No. 21)

India's ties with Maldives

32. The Committee were pleased to note that under 'Aid to Maldives' an amount of Rs. 75.00 crores had been provided at BE stage of 2017-18 and allocation under 'Loans and Advances' had been enhanced to Rs. 170.00 crores. The Ministry had stated that the allocation during 2017-18 would be used for construction work at the Institute of Security & Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES), additional facilities in the Composite Training Centre and final payment for Costal Surveillance Radars. Given the precarious political situation in Maldives, it was important that India should leave a mark on the average citizen of Maldives by delivering rapidly on aid / assistance. The Committee had also noted that the last tranche of USD 25 million had been put on hold by India. An allocation of Rs. 170.00 crores during 2017-18 had been envisioned for various capacity building and infrastructure measures and the Committee had desired that with that allocation, the final tranche should also be disbursed under renewed diplomatic engagement with Maldives.

33. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that efforts are underway to ensure the development partnership projects in Maldives are implemented expeditiously. All commitments towards technical aid and financial assistance including disbursal of outstanding loans, are considered in consultation with the Government of Maldives and based on their priorities. The construction of the Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES) started in December 2016 after the Maldivian side handed over an encumbrance-free site to the project agency and the implementation of project is progressing as per schedule since then. The project to renovate the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male has been completed. The construction of Ministry of Defence Building and

extension of the Composite Training Centre would be taken up by the Government of Maldives, as per their schedule.

34. The Committee had recommended that the final tranche of USD 25 million should be disbursed to Maldives under renewed diplomatic engagement. With no mention being made about its disbursal by the Ministry in its reply, it is the understanding of the Committee that the same has not been disbursed on account of recent developments in India-Maldives relations. In view of the current trend of India – Maldives relations, the Committee opine that India needs to release the amount and continue with other developmental projects in Maldives to generate goodwill among the people in Maldives. At an appropriate moment, the Government may also look into initiating a diplomatic outreach, in the interests of India's position in the Indian Ocean Region.

(Recommendation No. 22)

<u>Aid to Myanmar</u>

35. The Committee had noted that the allocation under 'Aid to Myanmar' had been reduced from Rs. 400 crores to Rs. 120 crores at RE 2016-17 Stage due to non-awarding of works related to road component of the Kaladan project, the Trilateral Highway Project and the Kalewa-Yargi Road. The Ministry had stated that the tendering process could not be completed due to various reasons including the bids received being at high variance from the estimated cost of work. The Committee had desired that the Ministry should strictly ensure that works were awarded in the first half of 2017-18, and, a strict timeline was followed for completion of the project without repetition of similar issues. The Committee had been informed that the waterway component of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project is scheduled to be ready by March, 2017. The Committee had hoped that due progress had been made on the ground. The Committee also desired that the evaluation of the road between Paletwa and Zorinpui should be expedited and construction work started immediately.

36. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that tenders for construction of 69 bridges, including approach roads in the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa section of the Trilateral Highway has been awarded in October 2017. The tender for construction/upgradation of Kalewa-Yargi Road section of the Trilateral Highway will also be awarded in December 2017. As regards the road component under Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project, the work has been awarded and the Contract Agreement signed with the contractor in March 2017. Construction activities are currently underway at the

project site in Myanmar. The original waterways component of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project has also been completed.

37. The Committee had recommended that the works related to the Kaladan Project, Trilateral Highway Project and Kalewa-Yargi Road are awarded in the first half of 2017-18, and a strict timeline is followed thereafter. As per the reply of the Ministry, most of these works could be awarded only in second half of 2017-18. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Ministry to prevent the cascading effect of the delay and thereafter to follow a strict monitoring mechanism for timely completion. The Ministry has also failed to mention the progress of the road project between Paletwa and Zorinpui as desired by the Committee. They would, therefore, once again urge the Ministry to desist from furnishing incomplete replies and furnish complete status report in each case.

(Recommendation No. 23)

<u>Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme</u>

38. The Committee had noted that the training of foreign nationals in various civil and defence training programmes was an integral part of India's developmental cooperation. The Committee had welcome the enhanced allocation of Rs. 220.00 crores under this head for BE 2017-18 against the BE and RE of Rs. 180 crores during 2016-17. The Committee had been continuously recommending a structural review of the ITEC programme in their previous Reports. But such a review was never done and, the exercise had been limited to some courses / institutions being dropped and, new courses being introduced. Then, the Ministry had stated that in view of the recommendation of the Committee, they were considering various modalities for conducting a comprehensive review of the ITEC programme. The Committee had desired that after quick finalization of the modalities, the review should be carried out without any further delay. The Committee had also noted that around 41 experts in various fields were on deputation to partner countries in areas of Forensic Science, Ayurveda, Rice Production, etc. The Committee did not find the numbers of deputed experts sufficient in view of the number of countries and the fields of variation of the ITEC programme. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Ministry should increase the number of experts on deputation under the ITEC programme for a better sharing of Indian expertise with the developing world.

39. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that ITEC is an important component of India's Development Partnership programme towards capacity building, which has evolved and grown over its long existence since 1964. It is continuously evolving to meet the needs of the partner countries and India's foreign policy priorities. New courses are being offered every year, keeping in view the needs and requests of partner

countries and, the present day requirements in specific areas. Existing courses are also reviewed comprehensively on the basis of feedback received from participants, training institutes and the nominating Governments in terms of course content, management, faculty and overall performance of the institute.

Based on the recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry has initiated the process of framing modalities for a comprehensive review of the ITEC Programme. The review will be undertaken expeditiously after the finalisation of the modalities.

Deputation of Indian experts to partner countries under ITEC programmes is initiated on the basis of requests received from our partner countries. The Ministry after due internal consultation, examines all such requests exhaustively and thereafter deputes experts. Our Missions also sensitize the partner countries on the deputation of India experts under ITEC.

40. The Committee had *inter-alia* recommended that the Ministry should carry out a complete review of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, without any further delay. As per the reply of the Ministry, the review will be undertaken expeditiously on finalization of the modalities. The Committee are perplexed to note that no visible progress has been made in implementing this important Recommendation, even after the lapse of a considerable amount of time. It may be pertinent to mention that during the examination of DFG (2017-18), the Ministry had apprised the Committee that it was in the process of framing modalities. The Committee observed that it has taken an unusually long time for finalization of the modalities. They would therefore, desire that a fixed timeframe should be adopted to carry out the review process. Similarly, on the issue of increase in number of experts under ITEC in its programme, the Ministry should also undertake concrete measures on its part and apprise the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 28)

Welfare Schemes for Overseas Indians

41. While analysing the budgetary allocations during the BE of 2017-18, the Committee had noted a pattern wherein, budgetary allocation to most schemes/programmes administered by the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), had been progressively reduced. The Committee were not convinced by the argument put forth by the Ministry that the allocations across all budget heads were assessed in line with their utilization till the end of third quarter of the financial year. The Committee had noted that the budgetary cuts had been more harshly effected on the Overseas Schemes than, with the

rest of the heads under the Ministry. Similarly, the Committee were not convinced with the justification of the Ministry that these lower allocations were borne out of the synergy between MEA mainstream and the Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) Divisions. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that due priority and financial sanctity be given to welfare schemes related to the Overseas Indians by the Ministry and, it should ensure that sufficient budgetary allocations were made to these schemes at RE stage. The focus on welfare measures of Overseas Indians should not be allowed to wither under the merged entity.

42. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Ministry has noted the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation for compliance, and adequate budgetary allocation will be made for schemes and programmes aimed at overseas Indians in RE 2017-18, based on the projected funds requirements and utilization trends.

43. The Committee had recommended that due priority and financial sanctity must be given to welfare schemes related to Overseas Indians by the Ministry and sufficient budgetary allocations are ensured to them at the RE stage. However, the Ministry has not provided any details of the allotment made to these schemes at the RE stage but it has simply replied that adequate budgetary allocation will be made for schemes and programme aimed at Overseas Indian in RE 2017-18. Non-availability of RE figures for all the Recommendations of the Fifteenth Report has been the common thread in the replies submitted by the Ministry. Without such disclosures, it is not possible for the Committee to have a clear perspective on the performance of the Ministry during the ongoing fiscal year. The Committee therefore, desire that an updated reply is furnished to them at the action taken stage.

(Recommendation No. 29)

Feedback Mechanism for Pravasi Indians

44. The Committee were happy to note that the Ministry had shown renewed commitment to continuously engage with the Diaspora through new endeavours. This was quite important in view of the diverse needs of our Diaspora. The Committee had noted that 10 Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Conferences were initiated in 2016 which provided platforms on which domain experts among the Diaspora could engage directly with policymakers and stakeholders in India. The Committee had desired that the ambit and reach of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz should be expanded for a wider reach-out to young Diaspora children.

The Committee, however, had noted that NRIs and PIOs settled abroad are the primary focus of the Ministry's policies and programmes and, it was not giving proportionate attention to problems / grievances of ordinary workers who go abroad for employment and contribute to India in a huge way through remittances. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should take expeditious steps to remove that general perception and show a renewed commitment to the welfare of ordinary Indian workers in Gulf countries. The Committee had also desired that a mechanism in the Indian Missions/Posts in the Gulf countries should be created to gather feedback from Pravasi Indians regarding ways and means of approaching their common problems and grievances.

45. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Ministry is committed to engage with all segments of the Indian Diaspora with a particular focus on welfare of emigrant workers. Salient efforts in this regard include:

a) PBD Conferences: Ministry will be organizing ten PBD Conferences during the intervening period between the PBD held in January 2017 and the next PBD to be held in January 2019, with participation of eminent overseas speakers, policy makers and stakeholders, to have a better understanding of various issues related to the Indian Diaspora. Recommendations emerging from these Conferences will be factored in while formulating policies and programmes for overseas Indians.

b) Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz: The second edition of the 'Bharat Ko Janiye' Quiz scheduled during 2017-18 is being organised with a view to further strengthen engagement with and widen the outreach to young overseas Indians and to encourage them to know more about their country of origin. The quiz is open for two distinct categories of participants: PIOs and NRIs, aged between 18 and 35.

c) Education/fee related: OCI Card holders, being foreign nationals, were not allowed to compete for general seats for medical courses in India. Their demand to be treated at par with Indian students for admission in medical courses was taken up with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Due to Ministry's efforts, since December 2016, OCI cardholder students have become eligible to appear in the NEET along with resident Indian students for all type of quotas. Likewise, children of Indian Workers in Gulf countries were not eligible for admission to undergraduate courses in India under the DASA scheme. The matter was taken up with the Ministry of Human Resources and Development, which has made them eligible for the same the FY 2016-17 academic session. In March 2017, MHRD increased the tuition fee for undergraduate courses from US$ 1600 per annum to US$ 8000 per annum for such students admitted under the DASA scheme, which created resentment. Following the Ministry's intervention, the fee has been reduced to US$ 2000 per annum.

d) Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY): The PBBY is a mandatory scheme for all ECR category workers going to ECR countries. The scheme has been revamped and the revised scheme has become effective from 1st August 2017. The revised scheme provides an insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs in case of accidental death or permanent disability and a few other benefits at a nominal insurance premium of Rs. 275 and Rs. 375 for a period of two and three years respectively. The salient features of the revised scheme are as follows:

- Maximum sum for which insured under the Scheme is Rs.10.00 lakhs in the event of accidental death or permanent disability leading to loss of employment while in employment abroad, irrespective of change of employer/location of insured person

- Certification of accidental death or permanent disability by Indian Missions and Posts abroad shall be accepted by the insurance companies

- Medical insurance cover including injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases enhanced to Rs. 1,00,000/- (up to Rs. 50,000 per hospitalization)

- Repatriation cover for medically unfit/premature termination of employment: Actual one-way economy class air fare to the nearest international airport in India.

- Family Hospitalization in India enhanced to Rs. 50,000/-

- Maternity benefit to women emigrants enhanced to Rs. 35,000/-

- Return economy class air fare to the nearest international airport attendant in case of emigrant's accidental death or permanent disability.

- Legal expenses on litigation related to emigrant's overseas employment enhanced to Rs. 45,000/-

- Provision for Online renewal of PBBY policy.

e) Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF): The ICWF has been set up in Indian Missions and Posts abroad to enable them to meet contingency expenditure for carrying out various on-site welfare activities for overseas Indians in distress on a means-tested basis. The ICWF guidelines have been revised with the approval of the Cabinet to include two additional areas covering Community Welfare and Improvement in Consular Services, which were made effective from 1st September 2017. The revised guidelines are expected to provide Indian Missions and Posts greater flexibility in swiftly responding to requests by Indians abroad in distress or in emergency situations and in undertaking other welfare activities.

46. The Committee had exhorted the Ministry to show a renewed commitment to the welfare of ordinary Indian workers in the Gulf by regularly taking feedback from

them. In its reply, the Ministry has only reproduced the outline of various schemes for engagement with Indian Diaspora and, has omitted out this important part of the recommendation regarding welfare of ordinary Indian workers, based on the feedback obtained from them. In the Committee's opinion, the Ministry's engagement with the diaspora will remain incomplete till the weakest amongst them has the capability of being served with dignity. In the Committee's opinion, it is, therefore, imperative for the Ministry to develop a mechanism to take regular feedback from Indian workers in the Gulf and to improve their outreach and service delivery accordingly.

(Recommendation No. 30)

Revamp of Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)

47. The Committee had noted that the Ministry was in the process of closing the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) due to it having a very low subscription base. Simultaneously, the Ministry was working towards expanding the scope of strengthening mandatory Insurance scheme called Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY). The Committee were aware that MGPSY was a wider and comprehensive social security measure as it also covered savings for return and resettlement and pension in old age, and free life insurance in case of both natural and accidental death. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that while revamping the PBBY the Ministry should not only cover natural death but should also include beneficial measures of the MGPSY and make it an integrated package incorporating the mandatory subscription of the former and wider social security features of the latter.

48. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) did not get an encouraging response from its inception for a variety of reasons. The closure of the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana had, therefore, become unavoidable due to lack of response from the intended beneficiaries and to obviate avoidable recurring expenditure on maintaining and record keeping for the scheme. The scheme has been closed with the approval of the Cabinet w.e.f 1st April 2017. Meanwhile, the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), a mandatory insurance scheme aimed at welfare of emigrant workers who need Emigration Clearance for overseas employment, has been revamped for the benefit of Indian migrant workers w.e.f. 1st August 2017. The revised scheme provides an insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs in case of accidental death or permanent disability and a few other benefits at a nominal insurance premium of Rs. 275 and Rs. 375 for a period of two and three years respectively. The salient provisions of the revised scheme are as follows:

a) Maximum sum for which insured under the Scheme is Rs.10.00 lakhs in the event of accidental death or permanent disability leading to loss of employment while in employment abroad, irrespective of change of employer/location of insured person

b) Certification of accidental death or permanent disability by Indian Missions and Posts abroad shall be accepted by the insurance companies

c) Medical insurance cover including injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases enhanced to Rs.1,00,000/- (up to Rs. 50,000 per hospitalization)

d) Repatriation cover for medically unfit/premature termination of employment: Actual one-way economy class air fare to the nearest international airport in India.

e) Family Hospitalization in India enhanced to Rs. 50,000/-

f) Maternity benefit to women emigrants enhanced to Rs. 35,000/-

g) Return economy class air fare to the nearest international airport attendant in case of emigrant's accidental death or permanent disability.

h) Legal expenses on litigation related to emigrant's overseas employment enhanced to Rs. 45,000/-

i) Provision for Online renewal of PBBY policy.

49. The Committee had recommended that while revamping the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), the Ministry should incorporate the good features like savings for return and resettlement, pension in old age and free life cover for both natural and accidental death in the Scheme. However, it is discernible from the reply of the Ministry that no such features have been incorporated and PBBY only covers accidental death or permanent disability leading to loss of employment while in employment abroad. In the Committee's view, non-coverage of natural death not only narrows down the ambit of the scheme but also renders it cumbersome for claims. As the case is, it is far difficult for the family of the deceased migrant to get the certificate for accidental death, than it is for ordinary death. When a worker dies during the course of the employment, the employer would be loathe to admit it as accidental death and would definitely label it as natural death to avoid legalities. Even in cases where such certificates are to be issued by the Embassy, the family of the deceased would be

required to adduce certain kind of proof of accidental death. There is always going to be some amount of red-tapism in the process. In order to obviate these difficulties, the Committee would reiterate that the revamped PBBY should cover both natural as well as accidental death and incorporate other features like savings for return and resettlement and pension in old age.

(Recommendation No. 31)

Know India Progamme (KIP)

50. The Committee had noted that KIP was the flagship programme of the MEA to reconnect young persons of Indian origin with their roots. Further, the allocation at BE 2016-17 was Rs. 1.5 crores which was retained at the same level at RE stage. The allocation has been reduced to Rs. 0.9 crores at BE 2017-18. The Ministry proposed to organize a similar number of programmes, with the same number of participants in 2017-18 as in 2016-17 with a considerably reduced allocation. The Ministry had furnished a vague reply on the modalities of organizing the Programme in 2017-18 with the help of reduced allocation. The Committee were apprehensive about how six KIPs with a total of 240 participants, could be held through an allocation of Rs. 0.9 crore when, it had utilized Rs. 1.75 crore for six such programmes during 2016-17. The claims of the Ministry to get additional allocations in the course of FY 2017-18 were not supported by past allocations. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry should make strong and sustained efforts to obtain additional allocation to organize the eight proposed KIPs during the year 2017-18.

51. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that like in FY 2016-17, during FY 2017-18 also, the Ministry would be organizing six editions of the Know India Programme (KIP) and one edition of the Bharat ko Jaaniye Yatra.

The schedule of KIPs to be organized during 2017-18 has been announced with the first edition held in September 2017 with about 40 young Indian diaspora members. The Ministry will allocate additional funds in RE 2017-18 stage, as required, based on funds utilization trend.

52. In view of the inadequate allocation at BE 2017-18, the Ministry was specifically asked to make strong and sustained efforts to obtain additional allocation to organize the proposed Know India Progammes (KIPs) during 2017-18. Regretfully, the Ministry has failed to apprise the Committee about its efforts to obtain additional funds as its reply states that it will allocate additional funds in RE 2017-18 stage, as required based on funds utilization trend. It is inexplicable that even when these replies were forwarded to the Committee in December, 2017, the Ministry has failed to incorporate the RE figures for Know India programme (KIP). The Committee desire

to know when the RE were finalized. The Committee would also desire the Ministry to adhere to full financial disclosure and to desist from furnishing incomplete replies to the Committee in future.

(Recommendation No. 32)

Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC)

53. The Committee had noted that a revamped SPDC had been launched from academic year 2016-17 which expanded the scheme to children of Indian Workers in ECR countries. The Committee were hopeful that such a measure would go a long way in the welfare of Indian workers abroad. The Committee also welcomed other features of the revamped scheme such as increase in number of scholarships, raising the income criteria and award of scholarship on the basis of admission already sought. The Committee were, however, unhappy to note that the allocation under the scheme had been reduced from Rs. 6.00 crores in 2016-17 (BE) to Rs. 4.00 crores in 2017-18 (BE), those budgetary cuts had been effected at a time when the expanse and scope of the scheme had been considerably widened. They, therefore, had recommended that the Ministry should make all efforts to seek additional funds during the course of the year so as to ensure that a more meaningful direction was given to this project.

54. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that due to the overall budgetary constraints faced by the Ministry, which had its impact on curtailment of funds for FY 2017-18 being only 62.90% of its demand, Rs. 4 crores was initially allocated against the demand of Rs. 7.50 crores for the SPDC budget head at the BE stage. However, the Ministry will give priority to additional resource allocation under this head at the RE 2017-18 stage, based on utilization pattern, within the overall RE 2017-18 budget ceiling. The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is noted for compliance in future as well.

55. The Committee had expressed their unhappiness at the reduction effected on the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC) Scheme, by the Ministry and, had recommended to ensure additional funds during the course of the year. However, they have hit the same road block as in other recommendations. The Ministry in its reply has simply committed itself into giving priority to additional resource allocation in RE 2017-18, without sharing the RE figures for this scheme. The Committee, therefore, have no choice but to conjecture on the implementation status of this scheme. The Committee would strongly desire the Ministry to furnish up-to-date figures to them in future, so as to enable them to effectively perform their oversight functions.

(Recommendation No. 33)
Awareness campaign/Media Plan

56. The Committee were unhappy to note that the allocation under the head, 'Awareness campaign/Media Plan' had been reduced from Rs. 5.54 crores in 2016-17 (BE) to Rs. 2.5 crores in 2017-18 (BE). The budget had been more than halved at a time when renewed efforts were required to spread awareness about safe and legal migration by warning people about fraudulent Recruitment Agents (RAs) active in the country. The Committee did not approve the reduction effected in such an important area of emigrant welfare. In the opinion of the Committee it reflected a lack of purpose/clarity within the Ministry to tackle issues concerning our workers who go out to work overseas. The Committee were also perturbed to note that the Ministry had not undertaken any campaign about safe and legal migration in print media during 2016-17. In view of the larger and long lasting outreach of the print media, the Committee had recommended that print media should also be made an integral part of the Ministry's awareness campaign/media plan and funds should be enhanced during the year as per requirement to achieve that.

57. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Media campaign on Safe & Legal Migration for Overseas Employment (सुरक्षित जाओ प्रशिक्षित जाओ), advises prospective migrant workers proceeding for overseas employment to countries, in particular to the Gulf and South East Asian regions, to avoid fraudulent and illegal recruitment agents; approach registered recruitment agents; obtain job-specific training and contact the Indian Embassy on arrival in the foreign country.

The 40-second advertisement on Safe and Legal Migration of Indian Migrant Workers for Overseas Employment was launched in Hindi in March 2017 in Hindi and eight regional languages as detailed below:

Doordarshan	1 March to 30 April 2017
All India Radio	3 March to 30 April 2017
NFDC	7 March to 17 May 2017
Lok Sabha TV	9 March to 12 April 2017
Doordarshan	18 May to 17 September 2017
All India Radio	12 May to 13 September 2017
NFDC	20 May to 19 September 2017
Lok Sabha TV	17 July to 11 August 2017 and 30 days of Winter Sessions of Parliament

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. The media campaign has been aggressively pursued through the Ministry's social media platforms, Missions/Posts abroad, Regional Passport Offices, MEA Branch Secretariats, Protector of Emigrants offices, community radio stations, and interviews on AIR and Doordarshan. State Governments have also been requested through the States Division of the Ministry to install these hoardings in prominent places both in State Capitals as well as in towns and districts and to release the audio and TV advertisements provided by the Ministry in local channels, cable TV, social media platforms etc. widely and throughout the State at their own cost. Resident Commissioners of State Governments based in Delhi have also been requested to disseminate information through their print and electronic media and other channels. CDs with the advertising material in Hindi and regional languages were distributed during the States' NRI Ministers Meeting held in May 2017 chaired by External Affairs Minister, with the request to run the advertisement at their own cost in regional languages.

In addition to undertaking a media campaign, the Ministry has launched an outreach program titled the 'Videsh Sampark' series, in partnership with State Governments, for generating awareness in the States on issues relating to overseas Indians and consular/passport services, grievance redressal and welfare and protection of overseas Indians. In the Outreach Conference stakeholders such as State Government Officers including Police Officers representatives of Media, Industry, academicians, Registered Recruitment Agents (RAs) and Manpower Agencies, NGOs working in the field of migration etc. are invited to participate. The Outreach Conference has thematic sessions and these sessions focus on issues such as (a) managing the migration cycle: safe and legal migration for overseas employment, (b) engagement with overseas Indian community, (c) welfare and protection of Indian nationals abroad, and (d) issues pertaining to passport services. As part of Videsh Sampark, a high-level senior officials delegation led by Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the Videsh Sampark event held in Hyderabad on 13th May 2017. On the occasion, State Government of Telangana launched the Telugu version of the 40-second advertisement in digital cinema theatres to have a wide impact and to reach the young potential migrants.

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. Funds of Rs. 2.5 crores allocated at BE 2017-18 stage under the Awareness Campaign budget head have been almost fully utilized, and Ministry will consider additional fund allocation at RE 2017-18 stage within the overall RE 2017-18 budgetary ceiling. State Governments have also been requested to funds the campaign from their own resources.

58. In view of the larger and more enduring outreach of the print media, the Committee had recommended that print media should also be included in the Ministry's plans for awareness campaigns/Media outreach. However, the Ministry's reply is silent on such an important portion of the Recommendation. The Committee

would therefore, reiterate the need for including print media for a better awareness campaign/Media Plan.

In their Recommendation, the Committee had also disapproved the reduction of budgetary allocation under 'Awareness Campaign/Media Plan'. The Committee's reservations prove correct on hindsight as the Ministry has nearly utilized its allocated funds of Rs. 2.5 crores (BE) under this head. It is difficult to envisage a sustained and vigorous media campaign on safe migration during the remaining part of the year without availability of adequate funds. The Ministry's submission about getting additional funds at RE 2017-18 also does not inspire much confidence in view of the previous cuts effected at RE stage. Once again the Ministry has failed to provide its RE projections for 2017-18. In view of the above, the Committee would reiterate the need for realistic planning on the part of the Ministry in order to achieve maximum results from available resources. The Committee would also like to know the exact response of the State Governments in regard to funding the campaign from their own resources.

(Recommendation No. 36)

Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)

59. The Committee had noted that Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana aimed at enhancing the skill set of potential emigrant workers in select sectors and job roles in line with international standards, to facilitate overseas employment. However, no real progress had been made in the implementation of that scheme as no demand had been raised till December, 2016 by the implementing agency i.e. the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). As a result the allocation was reduced to zero during the RE stage of 2016-17 from an allocation of Rs. 10.00 crores at the BE stage. Then, in January, 2017 MSDE had made a request for release of Rs. 10 crores. The Committee had desired that a restoration of funds to the BE 2016-17 level should be made so that the fund of Rs. 10 crore was released to MSDE during 2016-17. An allocation of Rs. 10 crore had been made for 2017-18 also. The Committee, however, observed that only 16 centres had been identified and in many States no centre has been identified at all. The Committee had desired that while identifying the centres a balanced view should be taken and it should incorporate all the States from where labour is exported. The Committee had been critical about non-implementation of such an important scheme of the Ministry in previous Reports and once again they had been confronted with the same facts of zero utilization. In this respect, the Committee had recommended that the MEA should take up the matter of non-

implementation at the highest levels in the MSDE and ensure an early roll-out of that ambitious scheme.

60. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the fund allocation for implementation of the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana for FY 2017-18 is Rs. 10 crores. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is responsible for implementation of the scheme and has informed that thirteen India International Skill Centres (IISCs) are operational out of the sixteen identified IISCs. MSDE is working towards opening additional centres during FY 2017-18. The operational IISCs include Domestic Work, Retail, Tourism & Hospitality, Capital Goods, Healthcare, Construction, Automotive and Security. The Ministry is assisting MSDE in identifying professions that are in demand and in location analysis of future IISCs.

61. In their instant Recommendation, the Committee had desired that restoration of funds for Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana at BE 2016-17 allocation of Rs. 10 crore should be made so that this amount is released to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) during 2016-17 itself. However, the Ministry's reply makes no mention regarding that allocation. If the allocation had not been restored, then 2016-17 would have registered zero utilization yet again for such an ambitious scheme of the Government. The Committee would want the Ministry to come clear on its budgetary performance. Though an allocation of Rs. 10 crores has been made for 2017-18, the implementation of this flagship scheme is palpably slow. The Committee would, therefore, desire that the matter related to slow progress of the scheme should be taken up with the MSDE at the highest level and the actual outcome is derived from the scheme at the earliest.

(Recommendation No. 38)

Legislative Reforms

62. The Committee had noted that the proposal for revision of Emigration Act, 1983 had been under consideration with the erstwhile MOIA since 2009 through a new Emigration Management Bill (EMB). The EMB could not be finalized despite persistent recommendations from the Committee in that direction. The Ministry was still in the process of considering all aspects of International Migration in its totality in consultation with various stakeholders to evolve a comprehensive emigration management framework. The Committee had recommended that work relating to setting up of a Committee of stakeholders should be expedited and the Ministry should fix a timeframe to complete the groundwork for the preparation of a new Emigration Management Bill.

63. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that it is submitted that a Committee has been constituted to undertake a comprehensive examination of the Emigration Management framework and for drafting the Emigration Management Bill.

64. While exhorting the Ministry to finalize the draft Emigration Management Bill (EMB), the Committee had asked the Ministry to fix a timeframe to complete the groundwork. As per the reply of the Ministry, a Committee has been constituted to undertake a comprehensive examination of the Emigration Management framework. The Ministry has not mentioned any time frame for this which is not in keeping with the Committee's recommendation. As this legislative proposal has already suffered undue delays, the Committee are of the firm opinion that no credible progress on EMB can be achieved without a fixed time-frame. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that consultations of the Committee should be completed within a timeframe so as to ensure expeditious introduction of the EMB in the Parliament.

(Recommendation No. 39)

States Division

65. The Committee had noted that the States Division was set up in 2014 with the objective of facilitating trade, investment, tourism, academic and other external linkages of States and Union Territories. Further, the Division supports and facilitates hosting of events organized by the States by coordinating with various Foreign Missions in India as well as Indian Missions and Posts abroad. However, the Committee were unhappy to note that budgetary utilization under the heads 'States Facilitation Abroad' and 'States Facilitation and Knowledge Support' had not been satisfactory in 2016-17. There had been nil expenditure in those heads till the end of January, 2017 and accordingly the allocations had been considerably reduced at the RE stage. The Committee had recommended that the Division should expand its activities to achieve its objectives in a realistic way and the Ministry should ensure that funds allocated under this head were optimally and fully utilized.

66. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that the Ministry allocated funds to 177 Missions/Posts, five MEA Branch Secretariats, eleven RPOs and 22 Passport Offices in December 2016. Since only three months were left in FY 2016-17, specific activities were not able to be conceptualized. In FY 2017-18, Rs. 10.91 crores have been allocated to Indian Missions and Posts abroad and Rs. 31.5 lakhs to MEA Branch

Secretariats, Regional Passports Offices and Passport Offices. Missions and Posts have been informed to conceptualise events, and guidelines have been issued to undertake activities.

67. The Committee had recommended that the States Division should expand its activities to achieve its objectives and it should be ensured that funds allocated are optimally and fully utilized. The Committee had also noted that budgetary utilization under the heads 'States Facilitation Abroad' and 'States Facilitation and Knowledge Support' has not been satisfactory in 2016-17. The Committee expect that for 2017-18 funds have been passed on well within time to the Indian Missions/Posts and to Branch Secretariats, Regional Passport Offices and Passport Offices so as to enable them to plan and undertake State specific activities. The Committee would like to be apprised about the outcome of such State-specific activities in terms of the investments/rise in tourist footfalls.

(Recommendation No. 43)

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

68. The Committee had noted that the budgetary allocation for ICCR during 2017-18 (BE) had been kept at Rs. 233.14 crore. The Ministry had stated that since the actual allocation was less than the projected demand of Rs. 273.39 crore, the ICCR would be forced to scale down its activities. However, when it came to full utilization of the allocated budget, ICCR was always found off the mark. The Committee were unhappy to note that ICCR was unable to fully utilize its budget during 2014-15 and again in 2015-16 the gap between allocation and utilization was worryingly wide. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the ICCR should further streamline its machinery to ensure that it did not lag behind in the utilization of funds. Further, the Committee had desired that in view of lacklustre utilization, the ICCR should try to maintain its demand at a reasonable level. The Committee had also desired that the ICCR should explore further avenues for generating extra-budgetary resources in relation to various programmes and property it was holding in its command.

69. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its Acton Taken Reply, has stated that ICCR's funds demands are prepared on the basis of ICCR's Plan of Action for a given FY, which is approved by its Statutory Bodies. There are various reasons for the overall expenditure being less than the sanctioned budget in FYs 2014-15 and 2015-16, as follows:

a) A major share of funds were received in September 2014 and July 2015 respectively.
b) ICCR implements several scholarship programmes on behalf of other Ministries, which are reimbursed after the expenditure is incurred and Utilization Certificate is submitted along with accounts of expenditure and authenticated paid vouchers. In

the meantime, ICCR utilizes its own funds to implement these programmes. This restricts planning and expenditure on ICCR's own activities. The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee for further streamlining ICCR's functioning to ensure proper utilization of allocated funds is noted for compliance, and ICCR has shown improvement in its expenditure in FY 2016-17. The total annual expenditure of ICCR was Rs. 193.37 crores, against Rs. 185.37 budget allocated in RE 2016-17. Allocation for FY 2017-18 is Rs. 233.14 crores, of which ICCR has utilized Rs. 72.08 crores till 31st July 2017. ICCR has also taken the following measures for further discipline in its financial management:

- <u>Systemic Changes:</u> A separate bank account has been opened for receiving agency funds, internal audit mechanism has been strengthened, and guidelines are being framed for implementation of programmes.
- <u>Use of technology in streamlining and improving financial discipline:</u> ICCR has taken digitization in a mission mode. Nine programmes have been identified to be on-boarded on Direct Benefit Transfer portal, efforts are under way to streamline a mechanism for real-time monitoring of expenditure incurred at ICCR's Regional Offices and Culture Centre, a Scholarship Portal has been developed to track processes involved and expenditure incurred from the first step of Admissions till a student finishes his/her study course in India. The portal is called ICCR Scholarship Admissions to Alumni (A2A).
- <u>Strengthening monitoring and reporting systems:</u> ICCR has introduced monthly monitoring of fund utilization vis-à-vis the approved Plan of Action, and monthly monitoring system and reporting from ICCR's Regional Offices in India and Culture Centres overseas.

70. The Committee had desired that Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) should explore further avenues for generating extra-budgetary resources in relation to various programmes and property it is holding. Once again, the Ministry has furnished an incomplete reply by failing to make any mention of this part of the recommendation in its reply. In view of the global trend of the receding role of State and strengthening of the market forces, it would be desirable that total dependency on Government funds is shed. Though institutions like ICCR will be continued to be nurtured by the Government, albeit within the available resources, it is important that it comes out of this dependency syndrome. The Committee would, therefore, reiterate that alternate sources of generating extra-budgetary resources should be explored by the ICCR without delay.

CHAPTER – II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation No.1)

The Committee note that Direction 73-A of the Directions by the Speaker makes it incumbent upon the Minister concerned to make a statement in Lok Sabha regarding the status of implementation of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Report of a Parliamentary Committee within six months of the presentation of the said Report in Parliament. The stipulated period of six months in case of the Eleventh Report expired on 1 November, 2016. During the course of the Oral Evidence of the representatives of the Ministry on 16 February, 2017 the Foreign Secretary assured the Committee of the full commitment of the Government towards implementing the Recommendations of the Committee. It would be pertinent to mention here that the Statement by the Minister in respect of the Sixth Report of the Committee on Demands for Grants 2015-16 which was presented way back on 28 April, 2015 is also yet to be made. The Foreign Secretary, during his oral evidence on 28 March, 2016, offered similar guarantees but there has been no subsequent action.

The Committee find the continued non-compliance of the Ministry with the requirements of Direction 73-A disturbing. In light of this inordinate delay as also past experience, the Committee are also not inclined to accept the assurance given by the Principal Witness regarding the full commitment of the Government towards implementing their recommendations. They, therefore, desire that the Statement under Direction 73-A in respect of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Eleventh Report of the Committee as also all other pending Statements in respect of Recommendations / Observations of other Reports of the Committee be made in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session without fail.

Reply of the Government

As per Direction 73A by the Speaker, Lok Sabha and Direction 33 dated 28.09.2004 of Chairman, Rajya Sabha, it is incumbent upon the Minister concerned to make a statement in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the status of implementation of Recommendations / Observations contained in the Report of a Parliamentary Committee within six months of the presentation to the Lok Sabha and to the Rajya Sabha. The Minister made statements on status of implementation of 6th and 11th Reports of Standing Committee on Demands for Grants for the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as per details below:

Report No	Report Subject	Dates of Laying in Lok Sabha	Dates of Laying in Rajya Sabha
6th	Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 6th Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for the year 2015-16	12.04.2017	12.04.2017
11th	Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 11th Report (16th Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on External Affairs on Demands for Grants for the year 2016-17	12.04.2017	12.04.2017

The delay in making the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Standing Committee is regretted. Assurance given by Foreign Secretary to the Committee regarding Ministry's commitment to implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee is reiterated.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No.2)

The Committee note from the statements made by the Ministry that it does not have a formal mechanism of arriving at detailed expenditure plans at Unit level. Individual Heads of Divisions and Spending Units make an assessment of their fund requirements and expenditure needs as an ongoing exercise albeit, in regular consultation with the Financial

Advisor. The Committee find the existing state of affairs of budget Ministry very worrying. The critical absence of a formal mechanism for the purpose at Unit levels is clear in the financial projections of the Ministry year after year. For example, in Fiscal 2014-15 the Ministry sought a sum of Rs. 19754.83 crore. It was allocated a significantly less BE of Rs. 14730 crore. This was further scaled down to Rs. 12620 crore at RE stage. The actual expenditure during the year was Rs. 12203.57 crore. During Fiscal 2015-16 the Ministry sought an allocation of Rs. 20034.62 crore. It was again allocated a substantially lower BE of Rs. 14966.83 crore, which incidentally is almost equal to the BE of Fiscal 2014-15. The same figure was retained at RE stage. The actual expenditure, however, was about Rs. 494 crore less at Rs. 14472.96 crore. During the ongoing Fiscal i.e. 2016-17 the Ministry sought Rs. 22966.89 crore. It was allocated Rs. 14662.66 crore at BE. This was reduced to Rs. 13426.00 crore at RE stage. Till the end of third quarter of the Fiscal, the Ministry has been able to spend only Rs. 8950.03 crore, leaving a massive amount of Rs. 4476.00 crore unspent. From the information furnished to the Committee it is also observed that during the month of January, 2017 a sum of Rs. 604.18 crore has been posted as expenditure. However, this does not include spending from Missions / Posts.

It is clear that the allocations sought by the Ministry are not based on realistic requirements or on its capacity to absorb and utilize funds year after year. It has been consistently missing its BE targets leading to substantial reduction at RE stage.

The Committee strongly feel that there is a pressing need for the Ministry to develop a well-defined and focused budgetary planning process so as to ensure that allocations sought are arrived at keeping in view achievable plans and projects and the absorption capacity of various units under the Ministry. The system followed so far has only led to cuts and criticism. The Committee recommend that necessary steps be taken to address this issue without any further loss of time so that the financial requirements for fiscal 2018-19 are arrived at in a more scientific and focused manner, factoring all requirements of funds in a realistic fashion. In this context, the Committee would also like the Ministry to consider the concept of Zero Based budgeting while drawing their future funds projections.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry accepts the Hon'ble Committee's observation that there is scope for improvement in the process by which budgetary demands are prepared and projected at the Unit level. The mismatch between funds demand and actual utilisation is largely on account of our technical assistance and development cooperation schemes, projects and programmes being implemented abroad. One reason for the high projections is that the funds demands sometimes include programmes, projects and schemes that are in the planning stage or under discussion with the concerned beneficiary foreign government, and the funds requirements for such initiatives are included in the budgetary demands in anticipation of their finalisation, so as to avoid any interruption in implementation later, due to funds not being available because they were not projected and hence not allocated.

At times, the timeframe for the finalisation and execution of such initiatives may become longer than expected because of extraneous factors such as delay in approvals or land acquisition on the part of the beneficiary government or adverse local conditions such as security concerns, political instability, change of regime, unfavourable weather, geological surprises at the work front etc. Such unforeseen circumstances, causing delay in project implementation and thus a slowdown in funds utilisation, makes the budgetary demands appear to be unrealistic in hindsight. Conversely, favourable implementation conditions not being able to be fully utilised because funds were not demanded and therefore not allocated, would also cause delays. Therefore, for realistic and optimal budget planning, a balance has to be struck between the two scenarios, which has been tilted towards making higher demands.

However, accepting the Hon'ble Committee's observations, Ministry has taken steps to rationalise budgetary demands and to make them more realistic. A system of Quarterly Budget Management Meetings, chaired at the level of either Foreign Secretary or the Financial Advisor, has been put in place, where not only is an assessment made of expenditure achieved against demands made, but the project execution timelines are also evaluated, including possible challenges and hindrances that may occur to cause delays. With this mechanism of high-level oversight and monitoring, the Unit-level preparation of funds demands has seen marked improvement with more outcome-oriented and accurate projections being made. Two instances of the Ministry's focus on making realistic budgetary demands based on pace of expenditure and physical progress of projects may be seen in (i) RE demands of FYs 2016-17 and 2017-18 and (ii) first supplementary demand for grants in FY 2017-18, as follows:

(iii) In RE 2016-17, Ministry sought 18% more funds than its BE allocation. In RE 2017-18, Ministry sought 19.5% more funds than its BE allocation. Compared to this, Ministry's demands at RE stage in previous years were much higher:

FY	BE Allocation	RE Demand	% Increase Demanded
2013-14	11719.00	16585.19	41.52 %
2014-15	14730.39	17729.59	20.36 %
2015-16	14966.83	20018.03	33.75 %
2016-17	14662.66	17317.29	18.10 %
2017-18	14798.55	17693.78	19.56 %

(iv) Ministry's request for funds in the first supplementary demand for grants in FY 2017-18 was also only Rs. 601 crore, compared to Rs 4835.43 crores sought at this stage in FY 2016-17.

In terms of budget utilization, it is submitted for the Hon'ble Committee's consideration that the Ministry has made all efforts to utilize the funds allocated to it, and has shown robust expenditure in the past 17 years, as shown below:

(In Rupees Crores)

Financial Year	**BE**	**RE**	BE & RE Difference	**Actuals**	Diff. in RE & Actuals	**% of RE Utilization**	Diff. in BE & Actuals	**% of BE Utilization**
2000-01	2625.72	2720.72	+ *95.00*	2488.85	-*231.87*	91.48 %	*-136.87*	94.78 %
2001-02	2883.39	2830.00	- *53.39*	2624.55	-*205.45*	92.74 %	-*258.84*	91.02 %

2002-03	3238.34	3200.00	*- 38.34*	3253.79	*+ 53.79*	101.68 %	*15.45*	100.47 %
2003-04	3410.00	3410.00	*0.00*	3344.53	*- 65.47*	98.08 %	*- 65.47*	98.08 %
2004-05	3640.69	3885.00	*+ 244.31*	3756.16	*- 128.84*	96.68 %	*115.47*	103.17 %
2005-06	3928.00	4182.00	*+ 254.00*	4089.67	*- 92.33*	97.79 %	*161.67*	104.11 %
2006-07	3695.05	4095.05	*+ 400.00*	3949.68	*- 145.37*	96.45 %	*254.63*	106.89 %
2007-08	4433.60	4783.00	*+ 349.40*	4572.39	*- 210.61*	95.60 %	*138.79*	103.13 %
2008-09	5062.00	6868.42	*+ 1806.42*	6746.35	*- 122.07*	98.22 %	*1684.35*	133.27 %
2009-10	6293.00	6333.00	*+ 40.00*	6290.78	*- 42.22*	99.33 %	*- 2.22*	99.96 %
2010-11	6375.00	7120.00	*+ 745.00*	7154.54	*+ 34.54*	100.49 %	*779.54*	112.23 %
2011-12	7106.00	7836.00	*+ 730.00*	7872.77	*+ 36.77*	100.47 %	*766.77*	110.79 %
2012-13	9661.97	10062.00	*+ 400.03*	10120.70	*+ 58.70*	100.58 %	*458.73*	104.75 %
2013-14	11719.00	11793.65	*+ 74.65*	11807.34	*+ 13.69*	100.12 %	*88.34*	100.75 %
2014-15	14730.39	12620.00	*- 2110.39*	12148.82	*- 471.18*	96.27 %	*- 2581.57*	82.47 %
2015-16	14966.83	14966.83	*0.00*	14540.64	*- 426.19*	97.15 %	*- 426.19*	97.15 %

2016-17	14662.66	13426.00	- *1236.66*	12753.37	- *672.63*	94.99 %	- *1909.29*	86.98 %
2017-18	14798.55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average Utilization Rates						97.54 % of RE Allocation *and* 101.76 % of BE Allocation		

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No.3)

While specifically analysing the budget allocation and utilization by the Ministry of External Affairs during 2016-17, the Committee find that it is still left with an amount of Rs. 4476.00 crore to spend in the last quarter. This is slightly more than the 33% spending restrictions stipulated by the Ministry of Finance in its Guidelines on prudent spending. The Committee, as stated previously, have also found that a sum of Rs. 604.18 crore has been shown as spent during January, 2017 by the Ministry. However, this excludes spending by Missions and Posts. The Committee urge the Ministry to improve their financial management and spending track record so as to ensure that there is no repeat of such instances in future. The Committee also hope that Ministry would at least not breach the 15% March spending restriction of the Ministry of Finance during this fiscal. While on this subject, the Committee would also like to comment on one important point for the future guidance of the Ministry. The absence of timely reporting of financial performance becomes an impediment in the way Parliament and Parliamentary entities discharge their responsibilities of supervision. The Committee wonder as to why even in this age of cutting edge ICT solutions, the financial reporting and feedback of the Government still depends on obsolete methods that have outlived their utility long back. At the click of a mouse, the Ministry should be able to place up to date facts and figures about its performance before Parliament and its entities while also ensuring that it is able to monitor and evaluate its performance on a real time and continuous basis. The Committee would like to be apprised of the Ministry's endeavours in this direction and their outcome.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry accepts the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation for improving financial management and spending pattern of the Ministry to avoid last quarter expenditure beyond the 33% ceiling and March expenditure beyond the 15% ceiling. Guided by the advice of the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry has instituted Quarterly Budget Management

Meetings, which assist in monitoring and supervising the Ministry's financial management. Three meetings have been held in FY 2017-18 in April, July and September 2017. The Ministry has seen 26.33% expenditure in the first quarter of FY 2017-18 of its BE 2017-18 allocation, which was higher than the 19.6% expenditure in the first quarter of FY 2016-17. The Ministry has made all efforts to continue a steady pacing of expenditure throughout the financial year, so as not to breach the last quarter and last month expenditure ceilings.

The Ministry notes the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee to evolve technology-based real-time financial reporting mechanisms. As mandated by the Ministry of Finance, the Public Financial Management System or PFMS, has been implemented by the Ministry. Further, an updated version of the Integrated Mission Accounting System or IMAS, has been developed and is being rolled out in phases across Missions and Posts abroad. The Ministry is planning to link IMAS 2.0 with PFMS to ensure seamless, real-time reporting and monitoring of financial data.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 4)

The Committee have noted that the Ministry has taken various administrative and financial measures, pursuant to the decision to merge the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the Ministry of External Affairs, and all the administrative, establishment and Secretariat functions of the erstwhile MOIA have been merged with the existing set up of MEA. The Committee also observe that two schemes of erstwhile MEA which were not running very well have been closed and other schemes have been rationalized. The format of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas has also been revised to eliminate repetitiveness. The Committee hope that, given this smooth merger of the two entities, the Ministry will work with renewed vigour to justify this step of the Government and ensure that the interests of Overseas Indians are accorded due priority under the merged entity. The Ministry should also fully appreciate its responsibility for the welfare of India's valuable diaspora which has its own contributions to make in executing the country's foreign policy objectives.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

Reply of the Government

The Ministry accepts the Hon'ble Committee's observation and reiterates that high priority is accorded to India's engagement with overseas Indians and their interests. The Ministry is conscious of its responsibility to harness the valuable role and potential of the Indian Diaspora in contributing to India's development efforts and objectives.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 5)

The Committee note that the Government has made a significant departure from the traditional budgeting process. The presentation of budget has been preponed from the usual end-February to 1 February. This in the opinion of the Committee will obviously provide regular funds to the Ministries from day one of the fiscal and the Vote on Account funding for initial months of a fiscal would now be a thing of the past. While expressing their appreciation of this measure the Committee would like the Government to ponder over the system it is going to put in place for real time reporting to Parliament and its entities on financial matters in the aftermath of this initiative. This is essential as even in the old system, which had the advantage of one extra month, physical and financial performance feedback of the last quarter was never made available for budgetary scrutiny.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry acknowledges the need for real-time financial reporting to the Parliament, as observed by the Hon'ble Committee. On its part, as mandated by the Ministry of Finance, the Public Financial Management System or PFMS, has been implemented by the Ministry. Further, an updated version of the Integrated Mission Accounting System or IMAS, has been developed and is being rolled out in phases across Missions and Posts abroad. The Ministry is planning to link IMAS 2.0 with PFMS to ensure seamless, real-time reporting and monitoring of financial data.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 6)

The Committee note that against the projected demand of Rs. 23830.95 crore by MEA, only an allocation of Rs. 14798.55 crore has been made at the BE stage during the year 2017-18. Surprisingly, the percentage of the budget of the Ministry of External Affairs against the total allocation of the Government of India has been reduced to 0.68% as compared to 0.74% in 2016-17 and 0.84% in 2015-16. The proposed allocation is only 62.09% of MEA's budget demand. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary expected that if the Ministry's spending record makes a good case, then the Ministry of Finance would be open to looking at additional funds at the RE stage. The Ministry's assurance of improving its spending record is very timely. The Committee hope that during this fiscal the Ministry will make the most of this opportunity in the first half of 2017-18. The Committee desire that the Ministry should thereafter pose the question of its financial requirements to the Ministry of Finance in a more forceful way by quoting its continuously decreasing share of allocation from the Government coffers. The Committee also urge the Ministry of Finance to provide the required allocation at the RE stage during 2017-18. The Committee desire that the Ministry should explore all possibilities of funding from other Government of India Ministries as development partnership work integrates the portfolios of several Ministries that could partly fund these through their own resources in the pursuit of collective Government of India objectives. The Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome of such efforts of the Ministry.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry would like to submit to the Hon'ble Committee that with more focussed efforts towards a more robust and steady spending pace, expenditure in the first quarter of FY 2017-18 stood at 26.33% as against 19.6% in FY 2016-17. As advised by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will continue to liaise with Ministry of Finance for additional allocation at the RE stage, as required, to address realistic needs of various spending units. As desired by the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry will also actively explore possibilities of funding from other Government Ministries to harness our joint resources availability for realisation of collective Government of India objectives.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 7)

The Committee have noted that the Plan and Non-Plan classification has been discontinued from FY 2017-18 and the budget classification will now only be in terms of

Revenue and Capital Heads and 'Scheme' and 'Non-Scheme' Heads. For the FY 2017-18 Rs. 6894.03 crore has been allocated as Scheme and Rs. 7904.52 crore as Non-Scheme. The Committee are pleased to note that with the incorporation of all the expenditure for aid and technical and cooperation assistance under the 'Scheme' classification, one of the major concerns raised by the Committee from time to time has been partially addressed. It is expected that the 'Scheme' head will see better appreciation for budget requirements and allocations for project-related international commitments. However, the Committee have not received any explicit assurance about insulating the 'Scheme' from unpredictable budgetary cuts. The Ministry should prevail upon the Ministry of Finance that unlike other Ministries of the Government of India, the expenditure under 'Scheme' under MEA is meant exclusively for international aid commitments and therefore its sanctity should be upheld in the budgetary exercise. If that does not happen, the Committee are not sure to what extent this new classification would translate into addressing the constant budgetary woes of the Ministry. The Committee desire that Ministry should take up this matter with Ministry of Finance at the highest level to ensure that needful is done without any further delay.

Reply of the Government

The Scheme and Non-Scheme framework of the budget facilitates a more holistic appreciation of India's aid and technical assistance cooperation programs aimed at foreign countries, while doing away with the earlier distinction of Plan and Non-Plan expenditure. It is expected to better aid our development partnership budgetary allocation, monitoring and enable an integrated and holistic view of resource outlays of the Ministry's schemes and projects.

The Ministry is also making efforts to strengthen its focus on better expenditure patterns, particularly for foreign aid and technical assistance projects, so as to insulate our international commitments from budgetary cuts. The Ministry will continue to impress upon Ministry of Finance the need for adequate and realistic budgetary provisioning.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 9)

The Committee have noted that the budgetary allocation for International Conferences/ Meetings has been kept at Rs. 0.10 crore at the BE 2017-18 Stage. During 2016-17 also the allocation had been a mere Rs. 0.15 crore. The Ministry has contended that the allocation under this head is of a representative nature only as the expenditure is for small-scale events which had not been provisioned for by the concerned Territorial or nodal division. The Ministry does not fund any conference in entirety, instead only offering some support to encourage the principal organizers. On the face of it the budgetary allocation of Rs. 0.10 crore during the year appears insufficient. However, the Committee would prefer to go by the logic extended by the Ministry about symbolic funding as a catalyst for the events in question. The Committee would, however, recommend that there should be a formal mechanism to evaluate the outcome of such conferences.

Reply of the Government

The Hon'ble Committee's recommendation that there should be a formal mechanism to evaluate the outcome of Conferences funded by the Ministry has been noted for compliance. In this context it is also submitted for the Hon'ble Committee's consideration that a review of a conference/seminar is undertaken immediately after its conclusion by the Ministry.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 10)

The Committee have noted that the sanctioned strength of the Central Passport Organization (CPO) is 2697 while the actual strength is 2157. It is a matter of surprise to the Committee that 540 posts remain unfilled as on date and the Ministry has not drawn up a concrete strategy to tide over the situation, apart from routine measures like filling vacancies through promotions/departmental examination, direct recruitment through Staff Selection Commission or deployment of Data Entry Operators. It must have been clear to the Ministry by now that these routine measures have not yielded concrete results, or else the deficit would not have risen to 540 vacant posts. There is a shortage of Granting Officers (GO).

The situation looks more worrying in light of the fact that as per the Ministry, acute shortage of personnel in the CPO is a major challenge faced in the expansion of the Passport Seva Project (PSP). The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry to draw a concrete strategy urgently to fill vacant posts in the organization without any further delay. The Committee also recommend that work related to the integration of Missions/Posts abroad with the Passport Seva Portal be expedited.

Reply of the Government

It is submitted for the Hon’ble Committee’s information that the meetings of the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) have been held for the promotion of all grades in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) cadre for the year 2017-18, and employees who had qualifying service as per respective Recruitment Rules have been recommended for promotion. However, the DPC for promotion of Senior Superintendents to Assistant Passport Officer could not be held due to the matter being *subjudice* before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. The outcome of the DPC for promotion of Superintendents to Senior Superintendents has been kept in abeyance due to a stay by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on a petition filed by some Superintendents in the CPO.

The recommendations of the Hon’ble Committee have been noted for urgent filling of vacant posts of Granting Officers. To overcome the shortage of staff at the Assistant Superintendent and other non-gazetted levels, the Ministry will continue to work towards meeting the manpower shortage by filling up the posts through promotions and by conducting Limited Department Examinations regularly.

The Ministry has also noted the recommendations of the Hon’ble Committee that the work related to the integration of Missions and Posts abroad with the Passport Seva Portal should be expedited. The Ministry is working with the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) for this purpose.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 11)

The Committee have noted that in order to expand the Passport related services the Government has decided to utilize Head Post Offices (HPOs) in various States as Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs). As part of this exercise two pilot projects at Mysuru, Karnataka and Dahod, Gujarat have been operationalized and a decision to scale up this programme by opening 56 more POPSKs has been taken. The Committee in their past Reports had consistently recommended an expansion of Passport facilities and would welcome any measure aimed at easing Passport bottlenecks. However, while welcoming the measure to open up POPSKs, the Committee are apprehensive to note that Passport granting and verification functions in these POPSKs will be performed by employees of the Postal Department holding analogous posts, rather than by the officials of the Central Passport Organizations (CPO). It was understandable if the available space and logistical convenience of the HPOs were to be used for penetration of Passport Services and these positions were being manned by CPO Officials. In this case, the entire Government workforce in POPSKs will comprise of trained personnel of the Postal Department.

Even if, as the Ministry has stated, officials of the DoP will be imparted sufficient training, the Committee have reason to believe that they cannot be expected to become sufficiently prepared in managing Passport related matters, especially with granting and verification issues. The Committee are aware that even long serving officials in Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) face many difficult situations every day and have to take help from their back offices, and there are, therefore, concerns about how officials of the Postal Department can be given such an important responsibility after a short period of training.

The Passport is a very important document and it is important that it goes through hands that can exercise discretion learned through experience. The security challenges of outsourcing Passport activities to personnel beyond the organization also need to be factored in. The Committee, therefore, would like that POPSKs should be preferably manned by the Officials of the CPO (apart from the vendor) and the Ministry should embark upon a recruitment drive to tide over manpower inadequacies to meet additional deployment in the POPSKs. Alternatively, Department of Posts employees should be trained extensively to acquire requisite proficiency and professional skills so that the quality of service as well as security concerns are suitably addressed.

Reply of the Government

After the successful implementation of the joint decision of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Posts (DoP) to utilize Head Post Offices (HPO) for rendering passport services from HPO premises, the Ministry has now decided to further expand the network of Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs), with plans to open 86 POPSKs in the first phase. Of these, 59 POPSKs have been operationalised as on 05 December 2017. The Ministry has also announced opening of another 149 POPSKs in the second phase. The Government intends to open POPSKs in such a manner that there is a Passport Kendra available within a radius of 50 kms of every HPO.

When this initiative was conceptualized, it was decided that the Department of Posts would ill provide the space in HPOs and the manpower for performing the sovereign verification and granting functions. In compliance with the Hon'ble Committee's observations, the Ministry has now decided that the sovereign functions of verification and granting of passports will be performed by the officials of Central Passport Organisation (CPO).

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 13)

The Committee have been informed that in BE 2017-18, Rs. 260.00 crore has been allocated for South Asian University which includes Rs. 28 crore as contributions, Rs. 200.00 crore for creation of capital assets and Rs. 32 crore for rents, rates and taxes. The Committee are deeply concerned about the slow progress of the construction work of the University and desire that the work related to Package II of the construction plan should be expedited and the actual work on Package III be started without any further delay. The Committee also desire to be apprised about progress made in this regard on a regular basis. The Committee have been perturbed by the non-payment of its assessed share of contribution by Pakistan ever since the University started functioning in 2010. Upon taking up the matter at the 53rd Meeting of the SAARC Programming Committee, Pakistan has responded finally by saying that efforts are underway to expedite the payment. The Committee are of the opinion that the matter has lingered on unduly for long and Pakistan should be given a fixed timeframe to comply with its contribution stipulations failing which a final call needs to be taken with regard to the decision taken in the Governing Board meetings of SAU in Dhaka.

Reply of the Government

Construction of Package-II of the South Asian University's campus project began in June 2016. This package consists of five buildings (one faculty building, three blocks of staff housing, and a faculty club and guest house), with a tendered cost of Rs. 401.58 crores. The construction work of this package is in full swing, with 24% of the work completed within one year, i.e. by July 2017, despite some delay in the initial stages due to water logging in the excavated areas, restrictions imposed by the Delhi Government on construction activity due to high pollution, as well as supply shortage of some raw material due to restrictions imposed by the Uttar Pradesh Government.

The tender for construction of Package-III of the project has also been awarded. This package consists of seven buildings (administration building, library, Institute of South Asian Studies, three faculty buildings and utility center), with a tendered cost of Rs. 579.10 crores. Work for this package also began in January 2017 and is in full swing.

Construction of both packages is being regularly monitored with detailed fortnightly reports on the progress discussed with the Project Consultant. The expected time frame for completion of Package-II is December 2018 and of Package-III is January 2020, following which the University plans to shift to the new campus. As desired, the Hon'ble Committee will be kept regularly informed of the construction status.

The matter of non-payment of its assessed share of contribution by Pakistan has been taken up further to the 53rd SAARC Programming Committee Meeting. Pakistan conveyed vide its Note Verbale dated 21st February 2017 that efforts were under way to expedite the case for making the payment. The matter has also been taken up by our High Commission in Islamabad vide its Note Verbale number ISL/162/1/2017 dated 2nd August 2017. The matter would also be taken up in the next Governing Board meeting of South Asian University.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 16)

The Committee have noted that Development partnership is a key instrument in India's foreign policy and the scope of assistance has seen considerable expansion in the past few years. At the same time, the quantum of budgetary allocation under this head has been less than predictable and the Committee fear that such a situation might have left us red-faced at times before our aid partners. As per the Ministry, allocations for new projects are made subject to the funds available within the overall budgetary provisions made by the Ministry of Finance. It would not be far-fetched to say that it is not the Ministry of External Affairs, but the Ministry of Finance which is the arbiter of India's aid assistance at a macro level. When the Ministry was asked about the steps taken in the direction of insulating the aid programme from the budgetary cuts, it offered a very vague reply. During deliberations, the Foreign Secretary has also submitted that incorporation of this major head under the 'Scheme' does not render it immunity from budgetary cuts. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should explore the feasibility of setting up of an autonomous (within the Ministry) aid disbursal body on the lines of USAID. Our aid programme may not be as big as that of the US, but we can definitely disburse funds with pre-defined policy objectives.

Reply of the Government

Our Development Partnership is based on the needs of the partner countries and our foreign policy priorities which are assessed in close coordination with the concerned Territorial Divisions of the Ministry. Specific proposals are progressed on the basis of assessment made by factoring in the political relationship with the respective countries.

A Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was established in 2012 within the Ministry, essentially in line with the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee to set up a specialized Unit to spearhead India's Aid and Technical Assistance programs and projects in line with our overall foreign policy objectives and based on needs assessment of our partner countries. The DPA comprises of DPA-I, DPA-II and DPA-III Divisions, each headed by Joint Secretary-level officers and consisting of experts, advisors and specialists from other Line Ministries in addition to officers from the Ministry itself. DPA's projects and programmes have not faced any serious constraints vis-à-vis budget allocation.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 17)

The Committee observe that India has been providing aid to neighbouring countries in a sustained manner but the budgetary allocation for aid to Bangladesh during the RE stage of 2016-17 was reduced by Rs. 75.00 crore due to a smaller payment for land acquisition and delay in receiving firm proposals from Bangladesh for Small Development Projects (SDPs). With vast experience in providing developmental assistance to various countries, the Committee expect that the Ministry will pro-actively secure proposals and clearances from Foreign Governments. The partner countries should be impressed upon not to hold up things from their side. The Committee would also desire that work relating to the Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link should be expedited without any further delay and funds should be allocated and made available as per requirement for its progress.

Reply of the Government

a) Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link Project: The implementation of this project has commenced, with project personnel mobilized at the project sites, field survey completed and designs finalized. While some land has been acquired, the acquisition of the remaining land is under way on both the Indian and Bangladeshi sides. Requisite funds have been made available. While civil construction work on the Indian side has been awarded, tenders are being prepared for the portion on the Bangladeshi side

b) Small Development Projects: Following close consultations with the Government of Bangladesh, the Ministry has been able to secure the detailed project proposals for three SDPs in the cities of Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet in Bangladesh. Thereafter, through intensive negotiations, the Ministry has concluded the enabling MoU and these SPDs are now well placed for implementation. Funds have been sanctioned for release for these three projects as per the physical milestones achieved. The second instalment of funds for these projects will be released in FY 2017-18.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 18)

The Committee are aware that a large portion of India's development assistance is deployed for Aid/Loans and Advances to Bhutan and budgetary allocations are provided from both Plan and Non-Plan Heads. The Committee have noted that the aid component has seen a reduction of Rs. 730.63 crore and the loans and advances component was reduced by Rs. 1045.24 crore on a year to year basis. The main reason for reduction in the allocation is lesser financial requirement as most projects have already passed their peak construction activity. The Committee note that the physical progress for Punatsangchhu-I, Punatsangchhu-II and Mangdechhu is 79.8%, 72.8% and 83.5%, respectively. Once the peak construction activity is over, it becomes doubly imperative for the Ministry to ensure that there are no slip-ups. The Committee are pleased to note that HEPs in Bhutan are not facing any shortage of funds and the timely flow of funds has been appreciated by the Royal Government of Bhutan at the highest levels.

The Committee have also noted that India will be providing developmental assistance to Bhutan through a Joint Venture model in the Kholongchhu Hydro Electric Project. At present, pre-construction activities are going on at the project site. The Committee would desire that they should continue to be informed about the progress of the project.

Reply of the Government

All GoI-assisted Hydro-Electric Projects (HEPs) in Bhutan are being continuously reviewed and monitored by the respective Project Authorities comprising senior officials of GoI and the Royal Government of Bhutan.

In the Punatsangchhu-I HEP, physical progress as of July 2017 is 82.96%. So far, GoI has released Rs. 7419.3 crores to the Punatsangchhu-I Project Authority including Rs. 150 crores in FY 2017-18.

In the Punatsangchhu-II HEP, physical progress as of July 2017 is 71.40%. So far, GoI has released Rs. 5103.723 crores to the Punatsangchhu-II Project Authority including Rs. 150 crores in FY 2017-18.

In the Mangdechhu HEP, physical progress as of July 2017 is 86.24%. So far, GoI has released Rs. 4020.637 crores to the Mangdechhu Project Authority including Rs. 53.97 crores in FY 2017-18.

In Kholongchhu HEP, the signing of the Concession Agreement is being pursued while pre-construction activities at the project site are being undertaken.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 19)

The Committee are pleased to note that budgetary allocation under 'Aid to Nepal' has been increased to Rs. 375.00 crore in BE 2017-18 from that of Rs. 320.00 crore at RE 2016-17. Under the aid programme, various projects like construction of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the India-Nepal Border, cross border road links, Terai Road Project, Post earthquake reconstruction work, etc., are being implemented. There are legal issues in respect of five packages under the Terai Roads Project and the matter is under arbitration. The Ministry should be willing to resolving the matter amicably. The Committee are of the considered opinion that problems related to project implementation in Nepal are more of a political nature rather than legal or technical. Morever, India ought to increase the pace of its development assistance in Nepal. The Committee, therefore, desire that MEA should provide the desired funds at RE 2017-18 stage as per progress and utilization trend. Projects should not be held up due to non-availability of funds and additional funds will be required based on progress in implementation of the ongoing projects. The Committee are also of the opinion that India primarily suffers from a problem of perception in Nepal, rather than that of projects. The Committee would, therefore, desire that the Ministry should negotiate the political question of Madhesis in a more nuanced manner so as to be more mindful of perceptions in the Nepal Valley. The Committee have also noted that post-earthquake reconstruction work is not picking up due to lack of support from the international community. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that India should strictly adhere to various timelines related to post-earthquake reconstruction work to ensure its completion in a mission mode.

Reply of the Government

Budget allocation under 'Aid to Nepal' budget was optimally and fully utilized in FY 2016-17. The enhanced allocation in FY 2017-18 is also being utilized at a steady pace. All GoI-assisted development projects in Nepal, including the India-Nepal Rail Links, the Integrated Check Posts, the Transmission Lines, various civil construction projects, etc. are being proactively implemented. Projects are not held up due to non-availability of funds, and wherever required, additional funds are sought based on implementation progress.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 20)

The Committee have noted that Aid to Sri Lanka has been reduced to Rs. 125 crore due to a lower requirement of funds as the Housing Project was nearing completion. Phase II and III of the Housing Project is being implemented under an innovative owner-driven model where the Government of India only arranges technical support and financial assistance. The projected Budget requirement for 2017-18 is Rs. 305 crore with an estimated expenditure of Rs. 80.60 crore for the Housing Project. The Committee also observe that total utilization during 2016-17 (as on 10 February, 2017) is just Rs. 6.99 crore. Therefore, there is definitely a mismatch between the Ministry stating that the Housing Project is nearing completion by using only Rs. 7 crore during 2016-17 and then projecting a demand of Rs. 80.60 crore for the same for the next year. The Committee seek a clarification and desire the Ministry to be more realistic in projecting budgetary demands in future.

The Committee are of the understanding that in order to expand its foothold in the neighbourhood it is imperative that India does not restrict its aid / assistance mainly to soft infrastructure projects. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government should aggressively explore business opportunities in areas like ports, city gas distribution, road building, railways and airports in Sri Lanka.

Reply of the Government

As submitted to the Hon'ble Committee, the Indian Housing Project was launched in 2010 in Sri Lanka with an overall commitment of Rs. 1372 crore to build 50,000 houses. A Pilot Project involving construction of one thousand houses was launched in November 2010 and was completed in July 2012. The second phase which envisaged construction or repair of 45,000 houses in the Northern and Eastern Provinces under an innovative owner-driven model was launched in 2012 and is reaching completion. As on 31 July 2017, construction of 44,434 houses has been completed. Work on 270 houses earmarked for people affected by the Sampur power project is also expected to start soon. Ministry is taking all possible efforts to minimize the number of written-off cases where work had started but could not be completed for various reasons. The number of such cases has come down from around 945 in 2016 to 276 currently. As the second phase of the Project is nearing completion, the budget forecast and allocation was reduced in FY 2016-17, and expenditure was Rs. 25.11 crores.

The third phase of the Project involves construction of 4000 houses for estate workers in the Central and Uva Provinces through an innovative community-driven approach. Work on 1134 houses in the first stage, for which land has been identified and allocated, started in October 2016. At that time, it was expected that the construction work will progress soon and accordingly a projection of Rs. 80.60 crores was made. However, work could not progress at a faster pace because of difficulties in land clearance, slope modification and other preparatory work, since the houses are to be constructed in hilly terrain which is otherwise a tea plantation. It is expected that out of Rs. 80.60 crore initially projected, around Rs. 25 crores could be spent in FY 2017-18. Land identification and preparatory work for the second lot of 2866 houses is currently underway. This involves multiple Ministries and Departments within the Government of Sri Lanka. The land is held by the Plantation Companies on long lease from the Government of Sri Lanka, which is to be released and individual ownership deeds given to beneficiaries. Depending on the progress in the land allocation, Ministry will project a revised forecast for the future. During his visit to Sri Lanka in May 2017, Prime Minister announced an additional 10,000 houses for Indian-origin Tamils in the upcountry region. Thus, implementation of the third phase of the project is contingent on Government of Sri Lanka making land available for construction. Since the Ministry is aggressively pursuing the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka, budgetary provisions were made for FY 2017-18, which would be reviewed at the RE stage as per progress in the project.

On the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation to aggressively explore business opportunities in areas like ports, city gas distribution, road building, railways and airports in Sri Lanka, it is submitted that pursuant to sustained efforts by the Ministry, an overarching MoU for Cooperation in Economic Projects was signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to India on 26th April 2017. The MoU helps to formalise the modalities of implementation of various infrastructure projects undertaken by India in Sri Lanka and has set firm timelines for their implementation. The Government of Sri Lanka has since issued a Letter of Intent to the Government of India for developing an LNG-based power plant in Kerawalapitiya in Sri Lanka. Two meetings of the Joint Working Group dealing with LNG issues have been held so far with a view to establish an LNG terminal/Floating Storage Regasification Unit in Colombo/Kerawalapitiya. Discussions are ongoing in other areas of economic cooperation.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 21)

The Committee are pleased to note that under 'Aid to Maldives' an amount of Rs. 75.00 crore has been provided at BE stage of 2017-18 and allocation under 'Loans and Advances' has been enhanced to Rs. 170.00 crore. The Ministry has stated that the allocation during 2017-18 will be used for construction work at the Institute of Security & Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES), additional facilities in the Composite Training Centre and final payment for Costal Surveillance Radars. Given the precarious political situation in Maldives, it is important that India should leave a mark on the average citizen of Maldives by delivering rapidly on aid / assistance. The Committee also note that the last tranche of USD 25 million has been put on hold by India. An allocation of Rs. 170.00 crore during 2017-18 has been envisioned for various capacity building and infrastructure measures and the Committee desire that with this allocation the final tranche should also be disbursed under renewed diplomatic engagement with Maldives.

Reply of the Government

Efforts are underway to ensure the development partnership projects in Maldives are implemented expeditiously. All commitments towards technical aid and financial assistance including disbursal of outstanding loans are considered in consultation with the Government of Maldives and based on their priorities. The construction of the Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies (ISLES) started in December 2016 after the Maldivian side handed over an encumbrance-free site to the project agency and the implementation of project is progressing as per schedule since then. The project to renovate the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male has been completed. The construction of Ministry of Defence Building and extension of the Composite Training Centre would be taken up by the Government of Maldives as per their schedule.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 22)

The Committee note that the allocation under 'Aid to Myanmar' has been reduced from Rs. 400 crore to Rs. 120 crore at RE 2016-17 Stage due to non-awarding of works related to road component of Kaladan project, Trilateral Highway Project and Kalewa-Yargi Road. The Ministry has stated that the tendering process could not be completed due to various reasons including the bids received being at high variance from the estimated cost of work. The Committee desire that the Ministry should strictly ensure that works are awarded in the first half of 2017-18, and a strict timeline is followed for completion of the project without repetition of similar issues. The Committee have been informed that the waterway component of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project is scheduled to be ready by March, 2017. The Committee hope that due progress has been made on the ground. The Committee also desire that the evaluation of the road between Paletwa and Zorinpui should be expedited and construction work started immediately.

Reply of the Government

Tenders for construction of 69 bridges, including approach roads in the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa section of the Trilateral Highway has been awarded in October 2017. The tender for construction/upgradation of Kalewa-Yargi Road section of the Trilateral Highway will also be awarded in December 2017. As regards the road component under Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project, the work has been awarded and the Contract Agreement signed with the contractor in March 2017. Construction activities are currently underway at the project site in Myanmar. The original waterways component of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project has also been completed.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 24)

The Committee have noted that the allocation under the Head ‘Aid for Disaster Relief’ is Rs. 25.00 crore in the BE stage of 2017-18. During 2016-17 aid to disaster relief was given to DPR Korea, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ecuador and a utilization of Rs. 19.54 crore has been made up to January, 2017. The Committee would recommend that allocation under the head should be enhanced in future so as to ensure that it is commensurate with India’s rising international profile. The requirements of the funds under this head are not amenable to forecast and therefore it is imperative that it has sufficient allocation to facilitate immediate relief measures from India’s side.

Reply of the Government

During FY 2016-17, an allocation of Rs. 25 crores was made under the head ‘Aid for Disaster Relief’, from which utilization was Rs. 23.30 crores. This budget head caters to expenditure towards providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. As the Hon’ble Committee has noted, because of the inherent unpredictability of the nature of such expenditure, it is difficult to predict the exact quantum of budget required under this head. However, allocation is reviewed during the year as per requirements and if require, the initial budgetary allocation is enhanced at the RE stage.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 26)

The Committee have taken note of the allocation under the Head 'Aid to Afghanistan'. This was Rs. 520.00 crore at BE 2016-17 stage and was reduced drastically to Rs. 315.00 crore at the RE stage. An allocation of Rs. 350.00 crore has been made in BE 2017-18. The Committee are concerned to note that the budget allocation has been decreased in view of the slow progress made in respect of different projects due to delay by the host Government in statutory clearances, handing over of encumbrance-free land, etc. The Committee desire that the pace of progress of the ongoing projects should be stepped up by better engagement with the host Government. The Committee also desire that the lessons learnt and the experiences gained with regard to severe security, political and logistical constraints faced during project execution in Afghanistan should also be used appropriately at every stage starting from conceptualization till implementation in India's developmental assistance in other countries as well.

Reply of the Government

Due to the adverse security conditions, uncertain access and transit, lack of skilled workforce, non-availability of construction material locally, severe logistical constraints and huge import content of key constructions products, project execution has been challenging in Afghanistan. However, the Ministry has gained requisite experience to address these challenges and is making all efforts towards expeditious implementation of its developmental projects.

Owing to the slower than anticipated implementation of projects, annual budget allocation has been decreased to ensure effective and timely utilization of allocated funds. In FY 2017-18, the Ministry has made vigorous efforts to step up the pace of implementation of various ongoing projects in Afghanistan, such as the supply of wheat, infrastructure development and capacity building projects, including Special Scholarship Scheme and Agricultural Fellowships; the Afghanistan National Agriculture Sciences and Technology University, and Small Development Projects. All these projects are being implemented by actively engaging the host Government.

With the lessons learnt and experience gained in dealing with the challenges faced in the past, the methods of implementation are being constantly reviewed and adopted to achieve better performance and delivery.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 27)

The Committee have noted that the separate budget head for Chabahar Port was created in FY 2014-15 and the allocation is to meet the capital expenditure, recurring expenditure, bank guarantee and purchase of port equipment for Chabahar port in Iran. As Rs. 150.00 crore has been allocated under this head at the BE stage of 2017-18, the Committee desire that the Ministry should make every effort to expedite the project and ensure that the allocated funds are optimally and fully utilized.

The Committee also note that separate budget heads for Mauritius and Seychelles were opened in FY 2016-17 and initial allocations of Rs. 445.00 crore and Rs. 55.00 crore were made during the first Supplementary Demands for Grants. By making separate heads for aid to these two countries, India has accorded them high priority. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should ensure that funds allocated under this head are optimally and fully utilized and simultaneously show good progress on the ground.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry is making all efforts to expedite the implementation of the Chabahar Port project. In this context, discussions were held between the Indian Minister of Road Transport, Highways and Shipping and his Iranian counterpart on 6th August 2017 in Tehran, Iran, during which ways to expedite the implementation of the Chabahar Port project were discussed.

The India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL), which is a consortium of Kandla Port Trust and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, is implementing the Chabahar Port project. IPGL has made progress with regard to the procurement of equipment for the Chabahar Port. Discussions are on-going regarding commencement of port operations between IPGL, the Port and Maritime Organisation of Iran, and the Iranian company Arya Banader. Funds earmarked under the ‘Aid to Mauritius’ and ‘Aid to Seychelles’ budget heads are realistically projected and the Ministry is making all efforts to ensure their optimum utilization with timely achievement of project milestones. In Mauritius, many infrastructure projects, including Metro Express, new Supreme Court Building, supply of Education-Tablets, Social Housing and new ENT Hospital are being implemented by the Government of Mauritius with India’s special economic package.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 28)

While analysing the budgetary allocations during the BE of 2017-18, the Committee have noted a pattern wherein budgetary allocation to most schemes/programmes administered by the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) had been progressively reduced. The Committee were not convinced by the arguments put forth by the Ministry that the allocations across all budget heads were assessed in line with their utilization till the end of third quarter of the financial year. The Committee have noted that the budgetary cuts have been more harshly effected on the Overseas Schemes than with the rest of the heads under the Ministry. Similarly, the Committee are not convinced with the justifications of the Ministry that these lower allocations are borne out of the synergy between MEA mainstream and the Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) Divisions. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that due priority and financial sanctity must be given to welfare schemes related to the Overseas Indians by the Ministry and it should ensure that sufficient budgetary allocations are made to these schemes at RE stage. The focus on welfare measures of Overseas Indians should not be allowed to wither under the merged entity.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry has noted the Hon’ble Committee’s recommendation for compliance, and adequate budgetary allocation will be made for schemes and programmes aimed at overseas Indians in RE 2017-18, based on the projected funds requirements and utilization trends.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 29)

The Committee are happy to note that the Ministry has shown renewed commitment to continuously engage with the Diaspora through new endeavours. This is quite important in view of the diverse needs of our Diaspora. The Committee have noted that 10 Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Conferences were initiated in 2016 which provided platforms on which domain experts among the Diaspora could engage directly with policymakers and stakeholders in India. The Committee would desire that the ambit and reach of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz should be expanded for a wider reach-out to young Diaspora children.

The Committee, however, note that NRIs and PIOs settled abroad are the primary focus of the Ministry's policies and programmes and it is not giving proportionate attention to problems / grievances of ordinary workers who go abroad for employment and contribute to India in a huge way through remittances. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should take expeditious steps to remove this general perception and show a renewed commitment to the welfare of ordinary Indian workers in Gulf countries. The Committee also desire that a mechanism in the Indian Missions/Posts in the Gulf countries should be created to gather feedback from Pravasi Indians regarding ways and means of approaching their common problems and grievances.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry is committed to engage with all segments of the Indian Diaspora with a particular focus on welfare of emigrant workers. Salient efforts in this regard include:

f) PBD Conferences: Ministry will be organizing ten PBD Conferences during the intervening period between the PBD held in January 2017 and the next PBD to be held in January 2019, with participation of eminent overseas speakers, policy makers and stakeholders, to have a better understanding of various issues related to the Indian Diaspora. Recommendations emerging from these Conferences will be factored in while formulating policies and programmes for overseas Indians.

g) Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz: The second edition of the 'Bharat Ko Janiye' Quiz scheduled during 2017-18 is being organised with a view to further strengthen engagement with and widen the outreach to young overseas Indians and to encourage them to know more about their country of origin. The quiz is open for two distinct categories of participants: PIOs and NRIs, aged between 18 and 35.

h) Education/fee related: OCI Card holders, being foreign nationals, were not allowed to compete for general seats for medical courses in India. Their demand to be treated at par with Indian students for admission in medical courses was taken up with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Due to Ministry's efforts, since December 2016, OCI cardholder students have become eligible to appear in the NEET along with resident Indian students for all type of quotas. Likewise, children of Indian Workers in Gulf countries were not eligible for admission to undergraduate courses in India under the DASA scheme. The matter was taken up with the Ministry of Human Resources and Development, which has made them eligible for the same the FY 2016-17 academic session. In March 2017, MHRD increased the tuition fee for undergraduate courses from US$ 1600 per annum to US$ 8000 per annum for such students admitted under the DASA scheme, which created resentment. Following the Ministry's intervention, the fee has been reduced to US$ 2000 per annum.

i) Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY): The PBBY is a mandatory scheme for all ECR category workers going to ECR countries. The scheme has been revamped and the revised scheme has become effective from 1st August 2017. The revised scheme provides an insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs in case of accidental death or permanent disability and a few other benefits at a nominal insurance premium of Rs. 275 and Rs. 375 for a period of two and three years respectively. The salient features of the revised scheme are as follows:

- Maximum sum for which insured under the Scheme is Rs.10.00 lakhs in the event of accidental death or permanent disability leading to loss of employment while in employment abroad, irrespective of change of employer/location of insured person

- Certification of accidental death or permanent disability by Indian Missions and Posts abroad shall be accepted by the insurance companies

- Medical insurance cover including injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases enhanced to Rs. 1,00,000/- (up to Rs. 50,000 per hospitalization)

- Repatriation cover for medically unfit/premature termination of employment: Actual one-way economy class air fare to the nearest international airport in India.

- Family Hospitalization in India enhanced to Rs. 50,000/-

- Maternity benefit to women emigrants enhanced to Rs. 35,000/-

- Return economy class air fare to the nearest international airport attendant in case of emigrant's accidental death or permanent disability.

- Legal expenses on litigation related to emigrant's overseas employment enhanced to Rs. 45,000/-

- Provision for Online renewal of PBBY policy.

e) Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF): The ICWF has been set up in Indian Missions and Posts abroad to enable them to meet contingency expenditure for carrying out various on-site welfare activities for overseas Indians in distress on a means-tested basis. The ICWF guidelines have been revised with the approval of the Cabinet to include two additional areas covering Community Welfare and Improvement in Consular Services, which were made effective from 1st September 2017. The revised guidelines are expected to provide Indian Missions and Posts greater flexibility in swiftly responding to requests by Indians abroad in distress or in emergency situations and in undertaking other welfare activities.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 32)

The Committee have noted that a revamped SPDC has been launched from academic year 2016-17 which expands the scheme to children of Indian Workers in ECR countries.

The Committee are hopeful that such a measure will go a long way in the welfare of Indian workers abroad. The Committee also welcome other features of the revamped scheme such as increase in number of scholarships, raising the income criteria and award of scholarship on the basis of admission already sought. The Committee are, however, unhappy to note that the allocation under the scheme has been reduced from Rs. 6.00 crore in 2016-17 (BE) to Rs. 4.00 crore in 2017-18 (BE), these budgetary cuts have been effected at a time when the expanse and scope of the scheme has been considerably widened. They, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should make all efforts to seek additional funds during the course of the year so as to ensure that a more meaningful direction is given to this project.

Reply of the Government

Due to the overall budgetary constraints faced by the Ministry which had its impact on curtailment of funds for FY 2017-18 being only 62.90% of its demand, Rs. 4 crores was initially allocated against the demand of Rs. 7.50 crores for the SPDC budget head at the BE stage. However, the Ministry will give priority to additional resource allocation under this head at the RE 2017-18 stage, based on utilization pattern, within the overall RE 2017-18 budget ceiling. The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee is noted for compliance in future as well.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 35)

The Committee have noted that the Ministry has launched this scheme in 2007 under which Indian women deserted by their overseas spouses can obtain financial assistance for access to counseling and legal services. However, the Committee are unhappy to note that the allocation under the scheme has been drastically reduced from Rs. 25 lakh in 2016-17 to Rs. 2 lakh in 2017-18. Further, only assistance to one woman was provided in 2016-17. The Committee are completely puzzled as to what sort of worthwhile assistance to distressed women can be rendered through a paltry allocation of Rs. 2.00 lakh. The Ministry has submitted that it is considering inclusion of existing schemes for legal and financial assistance to Indian women under the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). The Committee while welcoming this step however feel that the scheme requires a complete review and sufficient allocation for inclusion of desired legal assistance and provision of boarding, lodging and other assistance to such distressed Indian women. This is necessitated by the fact that the corpus of ICWF varies from one Mission/Post to the other and at times it may prove to be insufficient in cases where the number of distressed women rises up. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a complete and thorough review of this scheme should be effected to expand the ambit of the scheme beyond initial legal assistance, enhancing the amount provided under this scheme and to make it applicable worldwide and not merely in 13 countries.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry continues to guide and counsel distressed Indian women who have been cheated, abused or abandoned and takes up their grievances with the Indian Missions/Posts abroad and with concerned foreign Embassies based in Delhi as also with the concerned Indian authorities, as required.

Since January 2016 to 31st July 2017, the Ministry has addressed 1473 grievances regarding marital disputes. A database of Organisations, NGOs and lawyers dealing with NRI marital disputes registered/empanelled with Indian Missions and Posts abroad has been created and posted on the Ministry's website. Efforts are ongoing to have, to the extent possible, such NGOs and organisations empanelled with all Missions and Posts abroad. Besides posting comprehensive guidelines and FAQs on the Ministry's website, MEA has provided inputs for the 'Standard Operating Procedures' to the Ministry of Women and Child Development on:

a) Impounding//Revocation of passports of estranged NRI spouses;

b) Extradition processes;

c) Legal and financial assistance to Indian Women deserted by their NRI/PIO spouses.

With the approval of the External Affairs Minister, an Expert Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Justice Arvind Kumar Goel to identify legal and regulatory challenges faced by Indian nationals married to overseas Indian nationals and to suggest amendments in existing Acts/Legislations as well as recommendations for new policies, laws and regulations. The deliberations of the Expert Committee are in the final stages.

The Cabinet's approval has been obtained to merge the current scheme with the ICWF to assist distressed Indian women who have been cheated, abused or abandoned by their NRI/PIO spouses. Under the revised scheme, the amount to assist the distressed Indian women has been increased, its scope has been widened, it has been made applicable world-wide, funds disbursement have been made at the disposal of Missions and Posts abroad; and provision of boarding, lodging and other assistance has been covered.

Out of the nine applications, only one application was considered by the Inter-Ministerial Committee as the distressed Indian women came back to India soon after filling their applications and some filed their cases in India. It was observed that women who seek legal assistance have been finding it easier to file their cases in India rather than in the foreign country of their spouse. In some cases, after approaching the Indian Missions or Posts for counselling, the women did not file legal proceedings and returned to India. The budget allocation for FY 2017-18 was accordingly reduced to Rs. 2.00 lakhs as the allocation during FY 2016-17 could not be utilized as anticipated. The Ministry will make efforts to have more efficient expenditure in FY 2017-18, based on the feedback from Missions and Posts abroad.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 36)

The Committee note that Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana aims at enhancing the skill set of potential emigrant workers in select sectors and job roles in line with international standards, to facilitate overseas employment. However, no real progress has been made in the implementation of this scheme as no demand has been raised till December, 2016 by the implementing agency i.e. the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). As a result the allocation was reduced to zero during the RE stage of 2016-17 from an allocation of Rs. 10.00 crore at the BE stage. Now, in January, 2017 MSDE has made a request for release of Rs. 10 crores. The Committee desire that a restoration of funds to the BE 2016-17 level should be made so that the fund of Rs. 10 crore is released to MSDE during 2016-17. An allocation of Rs. 10 crore has been made for 2017-18 also. The

Committee, however, observe that only 16 centres have been identified and in many States no centre has been identified at all. The Committee desire that while identifying the centres a balanced view should be taken and it should incorporate all the States from where labour is exported. The Committee have been critical about non-implementation of such an important scheme of the Ministry in previous Reports and once again they have been confronted with the same facts of zero utilization. In this respect, the Committee would recommend that the MEA should take up the matter of non-implementation at the highest levels in the MSDE and ensure an early roll-out of this ambitious scheme.

Reply of the Government

The fund allocation for implementation of the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana for FY 2017-18 is Rs. 10 crores. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is responsible for implementation of the scheme and has informed that thirteen India International Skill Centres (IISCs) are operational out of the sixteen identified IISCs. MSDE is working towards opening additional centres during FY 2017-18. The operational IISCs include Domestic Work, Retail, Tourism & Hospitality, Capital Goods, Healthcare, Construction, Automotive and Security. The Ministry is assisting MSDE in identifying professions that are in demand and in location analysis of future IISCs.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 37)

The Committee are unhappy to note that the allocations for the Heads ‘Repatriation of Indian Destitute’ and ‘Evacuation of Indian due to war/civil disturbance’ has been kept at a mere Rs. 0.01 crore apiece during 2017-18 (BE). The Committee are of a considered opinion that such a small allocation will never be able to do justice with the actual requirements of providing timely succour to our nationals stranded on foreign shores. A small amount of Rs. 0.01 crore will be insufficient to address the cases of numerous Indian workers who are rendered destitute in the Gulf countries due to a variety of reasons. Similarly, in cases of multiple wars/civil disturbances, funds of the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) will not be able to cater to the huge requirement of funds needed to coordinate the rescue/relief operations. In view of the above, the Committee recommend that the allocation under these two heads should be enhanced to a realistic level in the course of the year.

Reply of the Government

It is submitted that whenever cases for repatriation of Indian nationals come to the notice of Indian Missions and Posts abroad, all possible assistance, including providing air passage to stranded overseas Indians in deserving cases is extended under the Indian Community Welfare Fund. In case of mass evacuation of Indians from foreign countries due to war or civil disturbances, the Ministry coordinates and facilitates the required arrangements, including financial assistance from ICWF, in consultation with various GoI Ministries and Agencies. The Ministry has also prepared a Protocol to deal with emergency situations abroad.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 39)

The Committee have noted that the States Division was set up in 2014 with the objective of facilitating trade, investment, tourism, academic and other external linkages of States and Union Territories. Further, the Division supports and facilitates hosting of events organized by the States by coordinating with various Foreign Missions in India as well as Indian Missions and Posts abroad. However, the Committee are unhappy to note that budgetary utilization under the heads 'States Facilitation Abroad' and 'States Facilitation and Knowledge Support' has not been satisfactory in 2016-17. There has been nil expenditure in these heads till the end of January, 2017 and accordingly the allocations have been considerably reduced at the RE stage. The Committee recommend that the Division should expand its activities to achieve its objectives in a realistic way and the Ministry should ensure that funds allocated under this head are optimally and fully utilized.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry allocated funds to 177 Missions/Posts, five MEA Branch Secretariats, eleven RPOs and 22 Passport Offices in December 2016. Since only three months were left in FY 2016-17, specific activities were not able to be conceptualized. In FY 2017-18, Rs. 10.91 crores have been allocated to Indian Missions and Posts abroad and Rs. 31.5 lakhs to MEA Branch Secretariats, Regional Passports Offices and Passport Offices. Missions and Posts have been informed to conceptualise events, and guidelines have been issued to undertake activities.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 40)

The Committee have been informed that under the Government of India (Allocation of Business Rules) 1961, the subject of 'Management of Haj Pilgrimage, including administration of the Haj Committee Act, 1959' has been shifted to the Ministry of Minority Affairs with effect from 1 October, 2016. The shifting of this subject has been a long standing request from MOMA and the MEA has submitted that it has been a well coordinated and smooth exercise. The Committee are aware that the Haj Portfolio entails a number of coordinations and arrangements at the levels of Embassy in Saudi Arabia and Consulate in Jeddah and therefore, they would specifically desire that the quality and efficiency of the support structure is not compromised even after MEA being divested of the formal responsibility. The Committee would also desire that a comprehensive status Report on effects of the transfer should be furnished to the Committee at the action taken stage.

Reply of the Government

Immediately after the transfer of work related to management of the Haj Pilgrimage, including administration of the Haj Committee Act 1959, from MEA to the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA), one Joint Secretary from MoMA and Executive Director, NAWADCO was nominated by MoMA for inclusion in the delegation led by Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs to Saudi Arabia for Haj negotiations. The Joint Secretary, MOMA was also associated with the Haj Air Travel Committee constituted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and other Committees constituted by MEA for Haj arrangements.

In March 2016, two officers of MoMA were attached with the erstwhile Haj Division of MEA for understanding the process of Haj management and for smooth transfer of work from MEA to MoMA. DoPT was also requested by the MoMA to create 24 posts at different levels for manning the Haj Division in MoMA. Subsequently, a meeting was held on 27 June 2016 under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary in which the following was decided:

a) Haj related work be transferred from MEA to MoMA w.e.f. 01 October 2016. Proposal for amendment in the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules 1961 be moved accordingly;
b) Development of the Action Plan by the new Haj Committee be handled by MEA (till the work is transferred while fully associating MoMA;
c) Officers of the Haj Cell, MEA be continued with Haj related work for a period of 6 months after the transfer of work (i.e. upto 31.03.2017) so as to ensure continuity and smooth transition;
d) In view of (iii) above, the Haj Cell in MoMA may continue to function preferably from ISIL Building, Bhagwan Das Road where officers of MEA handling Haj matters are presently located. Thereafter also, for continuity, it would be desirable that the Haj Cell functions from the same premises;
e) Since this year's funds for Haj have already been allocated by MEA, MoMA may move the proposal, as required, for additional allocation of budget towards additional expenditure on officers and staff; and
f) MoMA to take necessary steps to expedite creation of posts including that of Joint Secretary so as to ensure that officers and staff for Haj related work are in position before 31.03.2017.

Action on the decisions of meeting of Cabinet Secretary have been taken, as under:

a) Haj related work has been transferred from MEA to MoMA w.e.f. 01.10.2016.
b) Change in the GOI (Allocation of Business Rules) has been notified on 01.10.2016
c) After transfer of work from MEA to MoMA, Haj Division is continued to function from the existing premises at ISIL Building, Bhagwan Das Road, New Delhi.

d) 6 Officers working in the Haj Division were given on loan basis to MoMA to be continued to work in the Haj Division till 31.03.2017. All the officers and staff of MEA working in the Haj Division have since been relieved by MoMA.
e) Separate Budget for Haj related works in the Haj Division and at CGI, Jeddah has been allocated in the Budget of MoMA for the year 2017-18.
f) DoPT has approved creation/transfer of 24 posts at different levels for the Haj Division, MoMA.
g) All the works related to Haj 2016 was handled by MEA till 30.09.2016 and the expenditure of CGI, Jeddah on Haj 2016 has been met from the budget of MEA.

Consequent to transfer of work, MoMA has initiated various actions for timely and smooth conduct of Haj 2017. Action Plan for the Haj 2017 approved and various actions are being taken accordingly by the Haj Committee of India (HCoI) and CGI, Jeddah.

a) Haj Review Meeting was held on 7th November, 2016 and initial mandate for the management of Haj 2017 has been given to HCoI and CGI, Jeddah. The meeting was Chaired by Secretary (Minority Affairs) attended by the Secretary (ER) and other officials from MEA, M/o Civil Aviation, M/o Health, Chairman, Vice Chairmen and CEO, Haj Committee of India and officials of Air India. Valuable inputs of MEA were taken for finalising the action plan for Haj 2017.
b) The Annual Bilateral Haj Agreement for Haj 2017 between India and Saudi Arabia for the year 1438H (2017) has been signed 11th January, 2017 during the visit of a High Level Delegation led by Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Minority Affairs to Saudi Arabia. Ambassador of India in Saudi Arabia and CGI, Jeddah were part of the delegation and facilitated in concluding the meeting effectively.
c) As per the Annual Bilateral Agreement signed between India and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Haj 2017, a quota of 1,70,025 pilgrims (1,25,025 seats for Haj Committee of India and 45,000 seats for Private Tour Operators) has been allocated as against the quota of 1,36,020 pilgrims (1,00,020 seats for Haj Committee of India and 36,000 seats for Private Tour Operators) during previous year.

d) HCoI made announcement for Haj 2017 on 15.12.2016. Total 4,48,268 applications were received. Total number of Haj application filed through digital format (online/ Mobile app) are 1,29,196 for Haj-2017. HCoI distributed 1,23,700 seats as per the Muslim population of States/ UTs as per 2001 Census. Rest seats were reserved for Mehram category, Khadim-ul-Hujjaj and Central Government discretionary quota.

e) The Ministry has also launched a new website for Haj namely www.haj.gov.in on 20th December, 2016. Haj Committee of India has launched an android based mobile application on 02.01.2017. Application for Haj can be made and payment can also be made directly on the app. The Guidelines, Application and E-payment modules are available on the app.

f) PTO Policy for the Haj 2017 has been finalised. 800 Application from PTOs for registration and allocation of Quota received and scrutinised by a duly appointed Independent Chartered Accountant Firm. Out of total 800 PTOs, 299 PTOs under Category I and 362 PTOs under category II were found eligible. Haj quota of 31500 seats has been distributed to 299 category I PTO and 13500 seats has been distributed to 270 Category-II PTOs.

g) Government is sending 598 officers/ staff to Saudi Arabia for assisting the CGI, Jeddah in management of Haj 2017. Out of the above, 3 are Coordinators, 59 are AHOs, 191 are HAs, 170 are Doctors and 175 paramedical staff.

h) A budget of Rs. 78 crore has been made in the Budget of MoMA for the Haj related expenditure of CGI, Jeddah. All the proposals of CGI, Jeddah for Haj arrangements in Saudi Arabia has been approved by the MoMA.

i) Medicines worth Rs. 2.8 crore for Haj 2017 has been procured through M/s HLL, a PSU of M/o Health & Family Welfare. These medicines have been supplied to CGI, Jeddah.

j) M/o Civil Aviation has finalised the tender for air charter operations from 21 Embarkation Points (EP) for Haj 2017. These EPs are Ahmedabad, Aurangabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Gaya, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mangalore, Mumbai, Nagpur, Ranchi, Srinagar and Varanasi.

k) The first Haj air charter flight departed on 24.07.2017.

l) The Ministry has constituted a Committee on 31.01.2017 to review the Haj Policy 2013-17 and to suggest framework for Haj Policy 2018-22. This Committee comprises of Shri Afzal Amanullah, IAS (Retired), former Secretary to Government of India and former Consul General, Consulate General of India, Jeddah, Justice S.S. Parkar, Retired Judge of Bombay High Court, Shri Qaiser Shamim, IRS (Retd), former Chairman, Haj Committee of India, Shri Kamal Faruqui, noted Chartered Accountant & Muslim Scholar, and Shri J. Alam, Joint Secretary, in-charge of Haj, Ministry of Minority Affairs. The Report of the Committee is awaited.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 41)

The Committee have noted that the ICWF is maintained at the level of Missions/Posts through contributions by NRIs and other Indian workers and it is collected and kept with accounts which are helped by the Missions so that they are in a position to dispense aid. The ICWF fund is being used to dispense help in cases ranging from repatriation of the destitute, evacuation of Indians due to war/civil disturbance and providing legal counseling and assistance to Indian workers in the Gulf. The Committee are pleased to note that the ICWF has been created in 86 Missions/ Posts and 14.56 crore has been collected under the ICWF in the Gulf Region where most of the assistance work would be required. The Committee recommend that modalities of sanctioning funds should be worked out by the Ministry and that periodic audits of the ICWF should also be initiated at the earliest. The Committee would also like to ask the Ministry to consider whether there is any need of maintaining a sub-head of legal counseling/assistance to Indian workers in Gulf region at MEA headquarters, if they are assisted through ICWF.

Reply of the Government

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is audited as part of the audit of the concerned Indian Mission/Post on a regular basis. The ICWF is primarily funded through levying of ICWF charge on various consular services rendered by Indian Missions and Posts abroad. Under the extant guidelines, initial legal assistance is permitted in deserving cases on a means-tested basis. The scope of legal assistance has been broadened under the revised

ICWF guidelines that were approved by the Cabinet and became operational on 1st September 2017.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 42)

The Committee are aware that Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a new Delhi based autonomous policy research institute under the MEA that specializes in issues relating to international economic development with special focus on trade, investment and technology. The Research inputs provided by RIS feed into foreign policy formulation by the Policy Planning & Research (PP&R) Division and other parts of the Ministry of External Affairs. The profile and outreach of India within the international community is undergoing rapid transformation and, therefore, it is imperative that the RIS is at the vanguard for shaping India's views and opinions on subjects like G-20, Free Trade Agreements, IBSA and South-South Cooperation. The Committee would, therefore, desire that the RIS should step up its research output in terms of policy papers for internal use of the Ministry and there should be more synergy between the RIS and PP&R Division for providing actionable points.

Reply of the Government

The Hon'ble Committee's recommendation that RIS should step up its research output in terms of policy papers for internal use of the Ministry and there should be more synergy between the RIS and PP&R division has been noted for compliance, and it is submitted that PP&R Division of MEA and RIS shall work together for closer coordination and synergy in their work.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 43)

The Committee have noted that the budgetary allocation for ICCR during 2017-18 (BE) has been kept at Rs. 233.14 crore. The Ministry has stated that since the actual allocation is less than the projected demand of Rs. 273.39 crore, the ICCR would be forced to scale down its activities. However, when it comes to full utilization of the allocated budget, ICCR was always found off the mark. The Committee are unhappy to note that ICCR was unable to fully utilize its budget during 2014-15 and again in 2015-16 the gap between allocation and utilization was worryingly wide. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the ICCR should further streamline its machinery to ensure that it does not lag behind in the utilization of funds. Further, the Committee desire that in view of lacklustre utilization, the ICCR should try to maintain its demand at a reasonable level. The Committee also desire that the ICCR should explore further avenues for generating extra-budgetary resources in relation to various programmes and property it is holding in its command.

Reply of the Government

ICCR's funds demands are prepared on the basis of ICCR's Plan of Action for a given FY, which is approved by its Statutory Bodies. There are various reasons for the overall expenditure being less than the sanctioned budget in FYs 2014-15 and 2015-16, as follows:

c) A major share of funds were received in September 2014 and July 2015 respectively.
d) ICCR implements several scholarship programmes on behalf of other Ministries, which are reimbursed after the expenditure is incurred and Utilization Certificate is submitted along with accounts of expenditure and authenticated paid vouchers. In the meantime, ICCR utilizes its own funds to implement these programmes. This restricts planning and expenditure on ICCR's own activities. The recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee for further streamlining ICCR's functioning to ensure proper utilization of allocated funds is noted for compliance, and ICCR has shown improvement in its expenditure in FY 2016-17. The total annual expenditure of ICCR was Rs. 193.37 crores, against Rs. 185.37 budget allocated in RE 2016-17. Allocation for FY 2017-18 is Rs. 233.14 crores, of which ICCR has utilized Rs. 72.08 crores till 31st July 2017. ICCR has also taken the following measures for further discipline in its financial management:

- Systemic Changes: A separate bank account has been opened for receiving agency funds, internal audit mechanism has been strengthened, and guidelines are being framed for implementation of programmes.
- Use of technology in streamlining and improving financial discipline: ICCR has taken digitization in a mission mode. Nine programmes have been identified to be on-boarded on Direct Benefit Transfer portal, efforts are under way to streamline a mechanism for real-time monitoring of expenditure incurred at ICCR's Regional Offices and Culture Centre, a Scholarship Portal has been developed to track processes involved and expenditure incurred from the first step of Admissions till a student finishes his/her study course in India. The portal is called ICCR Scholarship Admissions to Alumni (A2A).
- Strengthening monitoring and reporting systems: ICCR has introduced monthly monitoring of fund utilization vis-à-vis the approved Plan of Action, and monthly monitoring system and reporting from ICCR's Regional Offices in India and Culture Centres overseas.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

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. 30)

The Committee have noted that the Ministry is in the process of closing the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) due to it having a very low subscription base. Simultaneously, the Ministry is working towards expanding the scope of strengthening mandatory Insurance scheme called Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY). The Committee are aware that MGPSY is a wider and comprehensive social security measure as it also covers savings for return and resettlement and pension in old age, and free life insurance in case of both natural and accidental death. The Committee, therefore, recommend that while revamping the PBBY the Ministry should not only cover natural death but should also include beneficial measures of the MGPSY and make it an integrated package incorporating the mandatory subscription of the former and wider social security features of the latter.

Reply of the Government

The Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) did not get an encouraging response from its inception for a variety of reasons. The closure of the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana had, therefore, become unavoidable due to lack of response from the intended beneficiaries and to obviate avoidable recurring expenditure on maintaining and record keeping for the scheme. The scheme has been closed with the approval of the Cabinet w.e.f 1st April 2017. Meanwhile, the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), a mandatory insurance scheme aimed at welfare of emigrant workers who need Emigration Clearance for overseas employment, has been revamped for the benefit of Indian migrant workers w.e.f. 1st August 2017. The revised scheme provides an insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs in case of accidental death or permanent disability and a few other benefits at a nominal insurance premium of Rs. 275 and Rs. 375 for a period of two and three years respectively. The salient provisions of the revised scheme are as follows:

j) Maximum sum for which insured under the Scheme is Rs.10.00 lakhs in the event of accidental death or permanent disability leading to loss of employment while in employment abroad, irrespective of change of employer/location of insured person

k) Certification of accidental death or permanent disability by Indian Missions and Posts abroad shall be accepted by the insurance companies

l) Medical insurance cover including injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases enhanced to Rs.1,00,000/- (up to Rs. 50,000 per hospitalization)

m) Repatriation cover for medically unfit/premature termination of employment: Actual one-way economy class air fare to the nearest international airport in India.

n) Family Hospitalization in India enhanced to Rs. 50,000/-

o) Maternity benefit to women emigrants enhanced to Rs. 35,000/-

p) Return economy class air fare to the nearest international airport attendant in case of emigrant's accidental death or permanent disability.

q) Legal expenses on litigation related to emigrant's overseas employment enhanced to Rs. 45,000/-

r) Provision for Online renewal of PBBY policy.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 31)

The Committee have noted that KIP is the flagship programme of the MEA to reconnect young persons of Indian origin with their roots. Further, the allocation at BE 2016-17 was Rs. 1.5 crore which was retained at the same level at RE stage. The allocation has been reduced to Rs. 0.9 crore at BE 2017-18. The Ministry proposes to organize a similar number of programmes, with the same number of participants in 2017-18 as in 2016-17 with a considerably reduced allocation. The Ministry has furnished a vague reply on the modalities of organizing the Programme in 2017-18 with the help of reduced allocation. The

Committee are apprehensive about how six KIPs with a total of 240 participants can be held through an allocation of Rs. 0.9 crore when it has utilized Rs. 1.75 crore for six such programmes during 2016-17. The claims of the Ministry to get additional allocations in the course of FY 2017-18 are not supported by past allocations. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should make strong and sustained efforts to obtain additional allocation to organize the eight proposed KIPs during the year 2017-18.

Reply of the Government

Like in FY 2016-17, during FY 2017-18 also, the Ministry would be organizing six editions of the Know India Programme (KIP) and one edition of the Bharat ko Jaaniye Yatra.

The schedule of KIPs to be organized during 2017-18 has been announced with the first edition held in September 2017 with about 40 young Indian diaspora members. The Ministry will allocate additional funds in RE 2017-18 stage, as required, based on funds utilization trend.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 33)

The Committee are unhappy to note that the allocation under this head has been reduced from Rs. 5.54 crore in 2016-17 (BE) to Rs. 2.5 crore in 2017-18 (BE). The budget has been more than halved at a time when renewed efforts are required to spread awareness about safe and legal migration by warning people about fraudulent Recruitment Agents (RAs) active in the country. The Committee do not approve the reduction effected in such an important area of emigrant welfare. In the opinion of the Committee it reflects a lack of purpose/clarity within the Ministry to tackle issues concerning our workers who go out to work overseas. The Committee are also perturbed to note that the Ministry has not undertaken any campaign about safe and legal migration in print media during 2016-17. In view of the larger and long lasting outreach of the print media, the Committee recommend that print media should also be made an integral part of the Ministry's awareness campaign/media plan and funds should be enhanced during the year as per requirement to achieve this.

Reply of the Government

The Media campaign on Safe & Legal Migration for Overseas Employment (सुरक्षित जाओ प्रशिक्षित जाओ) advises prospective migrant workers proceeding for overseas employment to countries in particular to the Gulf and South East Asian regions to avoid fraudulent and illegal recruitment agents; approach registered recruitment agents; obtain job-specific training and contact the Indian Embassy on arrival in the foreign country.

The 40-second advertisement on Safe and Legal Migration of Indian Migrant Workers for Overseas Employment was launched in Hindi in March 2017 in Hindi and eight regional languages as detailed below:

Doordarshan	1 March to 30 April 2017
All India Radio	3 March to 30 April 2017
NFDC	7 March to 17 May 2017
Lok Sabha TV	9 March to 12 April 2017
Doordarshan	18 May to 17 September 2017
All India Radio	12 May to 13 September 2017
NFDC	20 May to 19 September 2017
Lok Sabha TV	17 July to 11 August 2017 and 30 days of Winter Sessions of Parliament

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. The media campaign has been aggressively pursued through the Ministry's social media platforms, Missions/Posts abroad, Regional Passport Offices, MEA Branch Secretariats, Protector of Emigrants offices, community radio stations, and interviews on AIR and Doordarshan. State Governments have also been requested through the States Division of the Ministry to install these hoardings in prominent places both in State Capitals as well as in towns and districts and to release the audio and TV advertisements provided by the Ministry in local channels, cable TV, social media platforms etc. widely and throughout the State at their own cost. Resident Commissioners of State Governments based in Delhi have also been requested to disseminate information through their print and electronic media and other channels. CDs with the advertising material in Hindi and regional languages were distributed during the States' NRI Ministers Meeting held in May 2017 chaired by External Affairs Minister, with the request to run the advertisement at their own cost in regional languages.

In addition to undertaking a media campaign, the Ministry has launched an outreach program titled the 'Videsh Sampark' series in partnership with State Governments for generating awareness in the States on issues relating to overseas Indians and consular/passport services, grievance redressal and welfare and protection of overseas Indians. In the Outreach Conference stakeholders such as State Government Officers including Police Officers representatives of Media, Industry, academicians, Registered Recruitment Agents (RAs) and Manpower Agencies, NGOs working in the field of migration etc. are invited to participate. The Outreach Conference has thematic sessions and these sessions focus on issues such as (a) managing the migration cycle: safe and legal migration for overseas employment, (b) engagement with overseas Indian community, (c) welfare and protection of Indian nationals abroad, and (d) issues pertaining to passport services. As part of Videsh Sampark, a high-level senior officials delegation led by Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the Videsh Sampark event held in Hyderabad on 13th May 2017. On the occasion, State Government of Telangana launched the Telugu version of the 40-second advertisement in digital cinema theatres to have a wide impact and to reach the young potential migrants.

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. Funds of Rs. 2.5 crores allocated at BE 2017-18 stage under the Awareness Campaign budget head have been almost fully utilized, and Ministry will consider additional fund allocation at RE 2017-18 stage within the overall RE 2017-18 budgetary ceiling. State Governments have also been requested to funds the campaign from their own resources.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

CHAPTER V

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

(Recommendation No. 8)

The Committee have noted that under the head 'Embassies and Missions' an allocation of Rs. 2460.58 crore has been made during 2016-17 (BE) and it was increased to Rs. 2514.01 crore at the RE stage. Now during 2017-18 (BE), the budgetary allocation has been kept at Rs. 2528.56 crore. This allocation is not adequate and the Ministry will be required to resort to prudent and innovative utilization of existing budgetary resources in order to operate within the limits of overall budget constraints. The Committee would expect the Ministry to ensure that the Missions / Posts follow the letter and spirit of various canons of financial propriety, and in order to realize this, greater emphasis should be placed on the monitoring mechanism at the level of the Headquarters. In this regard, the Committee have noted that the number of inspections of the Missions/Posts have been drastically reduced in 2016-17. The Committee would recommend that the Ministry should carry out periodic inspections of the Missions / Posts for critical evaluation of their function and financial efficiency. The feedback from the public and press should also be appropriately used for improvement in working of Missions/Posts.

The Committee have also noted that at present there are a total of 68 countries where there is no resident Mission of India and they are being covered through concurrent accreditation from neighbouring Missions. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that an expeditious decision to open up Missions / Posts in these countries should be taken based on India's geo-political priorities, intensity of bilateral engagement and reciprocal arrangement with the country concerned.

Reply of the Government

The Government of India is expanding ties with countries based on its assessment of various relevant factors. A proposal to open new resident diplomatic Missions, including on reciprocal basis in countries which have resident diplomatic Missions in India, is currently under active contemplation.

In 2016-17, in addition to the ongoing inspections of Missions and Posts, the Ministry's Directorate General of Inspections (DGI) introduced an online dynamic two-way interface system, called Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS), by which the responses of Missions and Posts were evaluated against a set of objectives in identified areas to measure performance. All Missions and Posts were evaluated in 2016-17 with this mechanism. PEMS provided an objective, transparent and participatory process for selection of Missions and Posts for on-site inspection by a DGI team. The DGI also took into account feedback and inputs from the concerned Territorial Divisions in the Ministry and media reports before undertaking the on-site inspection.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 12)

The Committee have been informed that the budgetary allocation for Nalanda University during 2016-17 (BE) was Rs. 200.00 crore, which was reduced to Rs. 100.00 crore at the RE stage. The allocation at the BE of 2017-18 has been pegged at Rs. 200.00 crore. The Committee are unhappy with the very slow pace of progress of the project, which is of significant historical as well as current international importance for India. The work related to award of tenders has moved very slowly in the past and now the Committee expect that with the splitting up of the construction work into different packages and the constitution of the Governing Board the project will see a rapid progress. The Committee are encouraged by the Ministry's strong statement that no further major delays are likely to occur in the construction project. The Ministry is desired to put up a strict monitoring mechanism in order to stay true to its claim. In view of less than generous contributions from other member countries, the Committee would also desire that other countries including China and Australia may be persuaded to step up financial contributions in the University and for more inflow of students for specific courses started there.

Reply of the Government

The Nalanda University Campus Construction Project is being supervised by the Architect Consultant for the project M/s Vastu Shilpa and the Project Management Consultant (PMC) M/s Mecon Ltd which is a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Steel. However, as advised by the Hon'ble Committee for setting up a strict monitoring mechanism in order to ensure the quality and timely completion of the construction project, the University is in the process of constituting a Committee, consisting of two experts from Civil Engineering and Electrical Engineering fields respectively, one expert from the State Government of Bihar and one from the Ministry of External Affairs. This Committee will be mandated with the task of overseeing the construction project in addition to the Architect Consultant and the PMC.

As regards the monetary contribution from other countries which have signed the MoU on the establishment of Nalanda University, it is submitted that in terms of Article 3 of the MoU "the funding for the establishment and operations of the University will be on a voluntary basis". Therefore, contributions received from other countries such as Australia, China, Thailand, and Lao PDR were purely voluntary. However, in compliance with the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, the Ministry will make efforts to solicit further contributions from other countries that have signed the MoU and are in a position to make contributions.

With regard to the increase in the number of students, it is submitted that Nalanda University is a residential University and the availability of sufficient accommodation facilities is also a factor for the intake of students. Presently, students are accommodated in temporarily hired buildings which do not have adequate facilities. Since Rajgir is a small town and availability of good residential accommodation is very limited, the University has to operate with these capacity constraints. Efforts are underway for timely completion of the construction project, including the residential component.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 14)

The Committee have noted that the Major Head 'Secretariat-General Services' caters to Ministry's Secretariat, foreign and domestic travel expenses, public diplomacy and Press relations and Protector General of Emigrants. Under this Head, BE 2017-18 has been kept at Rs. 423.58 crore which is Rs. 21.27 crore more than BE 2016-17. The Committee have also noted that the sanctioned strength of the Ministry is 8702, but the actual strength as on date is only 7193. In view of the pressing manpower requirements, the Ministry should draw out a time-bound work plan to fill the vacant posts through all available methods. The Committee have also noted that no allocation for Advertising and Publicity under the Head 'Protector General of Emigrants' has been made. The Ministry has reasoned that there is a separate budget for 'Awareness Campaign/Media Plan' which caters to advertising and publicity initiatives for the Overseas Indian Affairs Division and Overseas Employment Division. The Committee are of the considered opinion that despite a centralized budget for advertising it is imperative to have an allocation for the use of Protector of Emigrants (PoEs) offices throughout the country. At a time when fraudulent practices related to emigration are on the rise, the PoEs should possess funds to publicise the importance of safe migration through local media and provide relevant information to help emigrants in case of difficulty. There is a strong rationale for a decentralized advertisement and media campaign. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry allocate separate funds to Advertising and Publicity under the PGoE in future.

(Recommendation No. 14)

Reply of the Government

To fill the sanctioned strength appropriate indents have been placed with the Union Public Service Commission and the Staff Selection Commission. In addition to direct recruitment, Ministry is also addressing its manpower requirements through deputations from other Central Services, appointment of Consultants from Academia, which increases specialization within the Ministry, and augmentation of local posts in Missions/Posts abroad.

The Media campaign on Safe and Legal Migration for Overseas Employment (**सुरक्षित जाओ प्रशिक्षित जाओ**) advises prospective migrant workers proceeding for overseas employment, in particular in the Gulf and South East Asian regions, to avoid fraudulent and illegal recruitment agents, approach registered recruitment agents, obtain job-specific training, and contact the Indian Embassy on arrival in the foreign country.

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NFDC	20 May to 19 September 2017
Lok Sabha TV	17 July to 11 August 2017 and 30 days of Winter Sessions of Parliament

As a result of concerted efforts, the geographical reach of the intended message for the target audience has considerably widened and increased. The media campaign has been aggressively pursued through the Ministry's social media platforms, Missions/Posts abroad, Regional Passport Offices, MEA Branch Secretariats, Protector of Emigrants offices, community radio stations, and interviews on AIR and Doordarshan. State Governments have also been requested through the States Division of the Ministry to install these hoardings in prominent places both in State Capitals as well as in towns and districts and to release the audio and TV advertisements provided by the Ministry in local channels, cable TV, social media platforms etc. widely and throughout the State at their own cost. Resident Commissioners of State Governments based in Delhi have also been requested to disseminate information through their print and electronic media and other channels. CDs with the advertising material in Hindi and regional languages were distributed during the States' NRI Ministers Meeting held in May 2017 chaired by External Affairs Minister, with the request to run the advertisement at their own cost in regional languages.

As part of Videsh Sampark series to inform the State Governments about Government of India's policies, programmes, schemes and priorities in the crucial areas of passport, consular and diaspora issues, and to discuss ways in which partnership can be strengthened, a high-level senior officials delegation led by Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the Videsh Sampark event held in Hyderabad on 13th May 2017. On the occasion, State Government of Telangana launched the Telugu version of the 40-second advertisement in digital cinema theatres to have a wide impact and to reach the young potential migrants.

Funds of Rs. 2.5 cr allocated at BE 2017-18 stage under the Awareness Campaign budget head have been almost fully utilized, and Ministry will consider additional fund allocation at RE 2017-18 stage within the overall RE 2017-18 budgetary ceiling.

To take forward the Hon'ble Committee's recommendation, Ministry will discuss with the OE Division their firm and realistic funds requirements for the 'Advertising and Publicity' budget head under PGoE, and allocate adequate funds, commencing from FY 2018-19.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 15)

The Committee note that the budgetary allocations for Training have been increased to Rs. 13.24 crore in 2017-18 (BE) from Rs. 11.07 crore during 2016-17 (BE). In terms of budgetary utilization, the Committee are unhappy to note that there was an unspent balance of Rs. 1.73 crore in the FSI's budget during 2015-16 and the actual utilization during 2016-

17 under the full 'Training' head till January, 2017 is only Rs. 2.90 crore. On the one hand the Ministry has been complaining about inadequate budgetary allocation and on the other it is not able to utilize the available allocation even for training purposes. The Committee would, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should exercise due fiscal prudence on matters of budget utilization allocated for training personnel. With the change in the funding mechanism wherein funding for country-specific courses would henceforth be met from the FSI training budget, the Committee expect that the FSI would be able to fully utilize its funds during 2017-18.

Reply of the Government

The funds allocated for training activities of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) include expenditure on the annual Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD), regular basic training courses and in-service training programmes for Indian Foreign Service Officers etc. The allocation during FY 2016-17 was increased from Rs. 11.07 crores in BE stage to Rs. 12 crore at the RE stage, primarily to meet additional anticipated expenditure under the Office Expenses and Other Administrative Expenses heads. However, expenditure was not as per expectations, due to reasons that are detailed below:

Particulars	BE 2016-17 Allocation	RE 2016-17 Allocation	FY 2016-17 Expenditure	Unspent Funds	Remarks
Minor Works	2,00,00,000	2,00,00,000	1,83,53,353	16,46,647	Rs. 58 lakhs sanctioned for swimming pool renovation could not be utilized due to CPWD undertaking re-tendering. Work has started in FY 2017-18.
Information Technology	30,00,000	30,00,000	6,23,956	23,76,044	A proposal for purchase of 41 laptops for IFS 2016 Officer Trainees, at an estimated cost of Rs. 22 lakhs, did not materialize in FY 2016-17. This purchase was effected in FY 2017-18.

Office Expenses	5,46,00,000	4,36,00,000	3,75,01,840	60,98,160	The proposed installation of CCTV for about Rs. 30 lakhs, and a proposal for purchase of furniture and other peripherals for the proposed computer lab for about Rs. 20 lakhs, could not materialize in FY 2016-17 due to functional and technical reasons. Implementation of an audit observation regarding payment of service tax on catering, house-keeping and hiring of vehicles, resulted in a saving of about Rs. 11 lakhs during FY 2016-17.
Other Administrative Expenses	3,29,00,000	5,32,00,000	4,92,23,236	39,76,764	Some bills/invoices for transport and hotels were received after FY 2016-17 closing.
Professional Services	2,00,000	2,00,000	32,120	1,67,880	No major professional services were availed in FY 2016-17.
Total	**11,07,00,000**	**12,00,00,000**	**10,57,34,505**	**1,42,65,495**	

In FY 2017-18, FSI will carry out the following training programmes:

a) Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees – 2017 Batch from December 2017 onwards

b) Mid-Career Training Programme (MCTP) Phase-I for DS/US level officers from 21st August to 1st September 2017

c) MCTP Phase-II for Director-level officers from 9-13 October 2017

d) MCTP Phase-III for JS-level officers

e) Training Programme for First-time HOMs from 4- 8 September 2017

f) Training programme for IFS B Grade-I officers

g) Promotion-related training programme for PPS level officers

h) Training for Defence Attaches-designate from 11-15 September 2017

i) Training for Commercial Representatives in November 2017

j) Training for officers from Cabinet Secretariat in February 2018

The estimated expenditure for these programmes is around Rs. 3 crores, which is 13.2% higher than the expenditure incurred during FY 2016-17.

In addition, FSI proposes to carry out the following additional courses in FY 2017-18:

a) Promotion related training for all cadres up to the level of SOs/PSs;
b) 03 additional MTSs Training (50 participants each);
c) 03 Typing Test for newly recruited ASOs;
d) Induction Training for Stenos;
e) 41st, 42nd, & 43rd Know India Programmes;
f) Special Training Programme for ICCR Officials;
g) Induction Training for Direct Recruited ASOs (New recruits);
h) About 16 batches of IVFRT/IMAS training courses;
i) Special course for CARICOM Diplomats in November 2017;
j) Special course for Afghan Diplomats in December 2017;

Hence, FSI envisages expenditure of the entire budget allocated to them in BE 2017-18. Ministry will consider additional allocation at RE 2017-18 stage based on expenditure of FSI.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 23)

The Committee note that the training of foreign nationals in various civil and defence training programmes is an integral part of India's developmental cooperation. The Committee welcome the enhanced allocation of Rs. 220.00 crore under this head for BE 2017-18 against the BE and RE of Rs. 180 crore during 2016-17. The Committee has been continuously recommending a structural review of the ITEC programme in their previous Reports. But such a review was never done and the exercise had been limited to some courses / institutions being dropped and new courses being introduced. Now, the Ministry has stated that in view of the recommendation of the Committee, they are currently considering various modalities for conducting a comprehensive review of the ITEC programme. The Committee desire that after quick finalization of the modalities, the review should be carried out without any further delay. The Committee have also noted that around 41 experts in various fields are on deputation to partner countries in areas of Forensic Science, Ayurveda, Rice Production, etc. The Committee do not find the numbers of deputed experts sufficient in view of the number of countries and the fields of variation of the ITEC programme. The Committee would, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should increase the number of experts on deputation under the ITEC programme for a better sharing of Indian expertise with the developing world.

Reply of the Government

ITEC is an important component of India's Development Partnership programme towards capacity building, which has evolved and grown over its long existence since 1964. It is continuously evolving to meet the needs of the partner countries and India's foreign policy priorities. New courses are being offered every year keeping in view the needs and requests of partner countries and the present day requirements in specific areas. Existing courses are also reviewed comprehensively on the basis of feedback received from participants, training institutes and the nominating Governments in terms of course content, management, faculty and overall performance of the institute.

Based on the recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee, the Ministry has initiated the process of framing modalities for a comprehensive review of the ITEC Programmer. The review will be undertaken expeditiously on finalisation of the modalities.

Deputation of Indian experts to partner countries under ITEC programmes is initiated on the basis of requests received from our partner countries. The Ministry after due internal consultations, examines all such requests exhaustively and thereafter deputes experts. Our Missions also sensitize the partner countries on deputation of India experts under ITEC.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 25)

The Committee note that under the Head 'Aid to African Countries' the allocation at BE 2016-17 was Rs. 290.00 crore which remained the same at RE stage. BE 2017-18 allocation has been pegged at Rs. 330.00 crore. The Committee also note that India's engagement with Africa is based on a consultative model of cooperation, sharing of developmental experience and is focused on addressing the priorities and needs of the African countries. Such priorities and needs have been expressed during the three editions of the India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS-I, II and III) held in 2008, 2011 and 2015. The Committee desire that the lessons learnt on the basis of challenges faced in the execution of the projects covered under IAFS-I and II should be incorporated in the plans of IAFS-III projects. The Committee also desire that a monitoring mechanism to monitor these projects should also be established at the level of the African Union on priority basis. The Pan African e-Network Project (PaeNP) is a prime example for utilization of technology advancements for sharing India's expertise in the fields of education and health. The Committee expect that the deadline related to the Phase-I of the project in March, 2017 will be adhered to by the Ministry and they also recommend that Phase-II should be started at the stipulated time i.e. April, 2017.

Reply of the Government

Under IAFS-III, the emphasis is on completion of existing projects of IAFS-I and II. Project implementation is being monitored regularly. The Ministry has also engaged the African Union regarding monitoring mechanism of projects.

The operational Pan Africa e-Network Project (PAENP) was to be handed over to the Africa Union in July 2014. However, at the request of the African Union, due to lack of their preparedness, support to the network was extended for two years within the approved overall budgetary provision of Rs. 542.90 crores. During the IAFS-III held in October 2015, India announced continuation of operational support to the project for a further period of five years.

Phase-I of PAeNP was completed on 30 June 2017. The Ministry reviewed the project with on-site visits by the Financial Adviser and the Territorial Division in Ghana, Senegal and Ethiopia. After discussions with various stakeholders in India and in African countries, it was decided that Phase-II of the project would be web-based instead of satellite-based. MeitY has also evaluated the project through an evaluation committee and recommended that HD video communication may be used for various tele-medical and tele-educational purposes. Accordingly, in FY 2018-19, the Ministry will be launching Phase-II of the project under the names 'e-Vidya Bharati' and 'e-Aarogya Bharati' as a pan-Africa web-based education and medicine services project, connecting Indian education institutions and hospitals with African countries. The project cost is envisaged at Rs. 190 crores per year, i.e. about Rs. 950 crores for five years. TCIL has been selected as the implementing agency for the Phase-II of the project, and it has submitted a Detailed Project Report to the Ministry, which is under review.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 34)

The Committee have noted that this scheme is aimed at enhancing the soft skills of potential emigrants in terms of culture, language, tradition and local rules and regulations of the destination countries. In view of the fact that a large number of emigrants from India belong to the semi-skilled category of workers and they are not aware about rules and regulations of the host countries, the scope and ambit of the scheme should be widened by highlighting it in the media. The Committee are also of the considered view that such a training would go a long way in tackling the root of exploitation and harassment of workers in the Gulf countries. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry work to add more centres for these courses and enhance the allocation under the scheme as per the need in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) entered into a MoU in July 2016 for implementation of the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana. While MSDE is looking after the technical top-up training, MEA's responsibility is towards the Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) Programme which is aimed at enhancing the soft skills of potential emigrant workers. Out of the sixteen Centres identified, thirteen India International Skilling Centres (IISCs) are operational and MSDE is working towards opening more IISCs. A PDOT training manual and a handbook for participants has been developed by MEA. The scheme has not faced funding constraints.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

(Recommendation No. 38)

The Committee have noted that the proposal for revision of Emigration Act, 1983 has been under consideration with the erstwhile MOIA since 2009 through a new Emigration Management Bill (EMB). The EMB could not be finalized despite persistent recommendations from the Committee in this direction. The Ministry is still in the process of considering all aspects of International Migration in its totality in consultation with various stakeholders to evolve a comprehensive emigration management framework. The Committee recommend that work relating to setting up of a Committee of stakeholders should be expedited and the Ministry should fix a timeframe to complete the groundwork for the preparation of a new Emigration Management Bill.

Reply of the Government

It is submitted that a Committee has been constituted to undertake a comprehensive examination of the Emigration Management framework and for drafting the Emigration Management Bill.

[File No. AA/Parl/125/75/2017]

NEW DELHI
6 February, 2018
17 Magha,1939 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Committee on External Affairs

APPENDIX-I

MINUTES OF THE TENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (2017-18) HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY, 2018

The Committee sat on Tuesday, the 6 February, 2018 from 1600 hrs. to 1630 hrs. in Committee Room 'B', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Shashi Tharoor – Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Prof. (Dr.) Sugata Bose
3. Prof. Richard Hay
4. Shri Raghav Lakhanpal
5. Shri P.R. Senthil Nathan
6. Shri A. Anwhar Raajhaa
7. Shri Vishnu Dayal Ram
8. Smt. Supriya Sule
9. Shri Sharad Tripathi

Rajya Sabha

10. Shri D. Kupendra Reddy
11. Shri D. P. Tripathi

Secretariat

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

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

3. The Committee took up for consideration the draft Report on action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fifteenth Report on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2017-18.

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

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Report incorporating the suggestions made by the members and present the same to Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

Appendix II

(*Vide Para 4 of Introduction of Report*)

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

(i) Total Number of Recommendations - 43

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

Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42 & 43

Total-32
Percentage: 74.41%

(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. 30, 31 and 33

Total- 03
Percentage: 6.97 %

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

Recommendation Nos. 8, 12, 14, 15, 23, 25, 34 and 38

Total- 08
Percentage: 8.60%