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**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
NEW DELHI**

**REPORT ON DEMANDS FOR GRANTS – 2023-24- OF THE MINISTRY
OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

The Committee on External Affairs headed by Shri P.P.Chaudhary presented their Twentieth Report on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2023-24, today *i.e.* 21.3.2023.

**SOME OF THE IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS
ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

1. Roadmap for enhancing MEA's Capacities and Capabilities urged

1.27 The Committee have noted that despite its challenging mandate in making India into a leading power and influential entity among the nations of the world, MEA remains one amongst the least funded Central Ministries and its revised budget hover around just 0.4 per cent of the total budgetary allocation of the Government of India since 2020-21. Keeping in view the magnitude and extent of

India's diplomatic outreach and foreign policy objectives, the Committee continue to feel that an allocation of at least 1 % out of the overall Budget of the GoI to the Ministry is reasonable and achievable. The Committee, hence, have desired that the Ministry should strive to enhance its financial resources in line with its diplomatic responsibilities globally. However, the increased allocation *per se* without the capacity to utilize the amount would be meaningless. The Committee, have therefore, urged the Ministry to work out a roadmap for enhancing its capacities and capabilities, whether it is in the form of structural change in the Ministry or a complete revamp of its organizational structure. Based on the roadmap prepared, a detailed proposal may be placed before the Ministry of Finance. Steps taken in this regard may be communicated to the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 1)

2. Online Dashboard for monitoring of projects to be operationalised at the earliest

1.48 The Committee have found that a high level mechanism is in place in the Ministry to monitor the implementation of development partnership programmes and weekly reviews are being done by the officials at different levels. It is further understood that the Ministry is planning to establish a Contract and Procurement Management Unit. As a part of that, an online dashboard is being built to see with the click of a button how far the project has progressed, even in the last 48 hours. The Committee are extremely happy to see the efforts to mark all projects on line and monitor their implementation in a manner which links well with how the budget is spent on these projects. The Committee have desired that the online dashboard is made operational and the Contract and Procurement Management Unit is set

up in the Ministry at the earliest and the progress in this regard is intimated to the Committee.

(Recommendation No.7)

3. Cadre review of MEA to be completed at the earliest.

2.13 The Committee have noted that India's Diplomatic Service is perhaps the most short-staffed in comparison to many other countries whose economy and stature is much leaner than that of ours. The total strength of 4888 is distributed across different cadres of the Ministry such as the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), IFS General Cadre, Branch B, Stenographers Cadre, Interpreters Cadre, Legal & Treaties Cadre, among others. The cadre strength of Indian Foreign Service Officers is only 1011 which is just 22.5% of the total strength. Out of IFS 'A' cadre, 667 are posted at our Missions abroad and 334 are manning the headquarters in Delhi which at present has 57 divisions. The Committee feel that we have far too less number of IFS "A" Officers than actually required to represent India's interests at the Headquarters and at our Missions abroad, including various multilateral agencies. The Committee are of the view that with the profound changes taking place in the Foreign Policy, it is imperative that the cadre strength of the Ministry commensurate with India's expanding international stakes. To work towards global leadership as envisaged and for executing foreign policy strategy effectively across countries, our missions must be staffed with highly skilled/trained diplomats. With the felt need of having Missions in all the UN member countries, there is an increased requirement of manpower in the diplomatic cadre. The Committee, have therefore, desired that the Ministry should get their cadre review done at the earliest to build

capabilities for shouldering the expanded mandate while enriching the capacity of its existing personnel. The Committee have further desired that this review should primarily be based on a comparative analysis of the strength of the diplomatic corps of our country with major developing countries, countries in the neighbourhood and China.

(Recommendation No.9)

4. Funding Requirement for G20 related programmes to be planned in advance

2.24 The Committee have noted that out of the allocation of Rs 320 crore in 2022-23 for G20 India's Presidency Summit, the expenditure incurred so far under this Head is Rs 92.59 crore and an amount of Rs 990 crore has been provisioned in the BE 2023-24. The Committee understand that the BE 2023-24 allocation is not adequate based on current estimations and projections and G20 Secretariat/MEA would seek additional outlay for implementation of G20 meetings during the course of FY 2023-24. Being aware of the magnitude and scale of events/programmes planned all over the country during India's G20 Presidency, the Committee expect timely availability of funds for effective implementation of events and programmes scheduled for the current year. The Committee, have therefore, desired that the Ministry should remain vigilant and keep close and diligent watch on the trend of expenditure while holding G20 meetings/events and make careful regular analysis for funding requirements so that a realistic projection of anticipated expenditure is arrived at well in advance and the Ministry can get the desired funds from the Ministry of Finance well on time to meet all the expenses in this regard.

(Recommendation No.11)

5. Formal Training for Officials involved in G20 Events

2.25 The Committee have noted that the G20 Presidency is India's most high profile international endeavour ever. It is also a unique opportunity to present a face of leadership, diversity, success and our development template to the world. The Committee feel that in order to showcase the best of India to the world, and to live up to India's vision of becoming 'Viswa Guru' each and every personnel to be engaged from the stakeholder organisations for G20 programmes need to be groomed appropriately. Hence, the Committee have desired that formal training for all the officials involved in the upcoming events should be held at regular intervals, in addition to inter-ministerial training and familiarisation programmes held by the G20 Secretariat. As citizen engagement and large scale public participation through various 'Jan Bhagidari' activities are also being planned and conducted across the country, follow up training for the officials of all line Ministries as well as the Protocol Officers of States should also be conducted so that the decentralized activities and programmes are brought in alignment with the G20 initiatives and programmes. Further, no stone should be left unturned in creating awareness among the citizens about the mission and vision of G20 to be upheld as a country before the visiting delegations.

(Recommendation No. 12)

6. Modalities for Training Diplomats of Global South to be worked out at the earliest.

2.43 The Committee have further noted that as announced in the Global South Summit, Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) would be conducting training programmes for Diplomats of the Global South under

Global South Young Diplomats Forum. This, the Committee understand, would open up our training programmes to all the 134 countries of Global South. Since courses and programmes for foreign diplomats are a way to build bridges of friendship with other countries, the Committee have desired that our footprint as member of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT) is increased in coming years. The Committee have further desired that the modalities for training Diplomats of the Global South should be worked out at the earliest so that the training could commence from the first quarter of FY 2023-24.

(Recommendation No. 15)

7. Resident Indian Missions to be opened in the remaining countries at the earliest.

2.57 The Committee have noted that an amount of Rs 3528.85 crore has been allocated in the BE 2023-24 under the Head ‘Embassies and Missions’ which is even lesser than the BE 2022-23 outlay of Rs. 3769.06 crore. The Ministry has stated that the allocated funds seem to be adequate to ensure the smooth operation of Missions and Posts abroad. The Committee have also been apprised that proposals for expanding India’s diplomatic presence in important partner countries including in the neighbourhood, the Latin Americas and Caribbean region, the Pacific Island region and Europe are under process. In the opinion of the Committee, opening of resident Indian Missions in these countries is in line with the broad foreign policy vision of the Government to maximise India’s presence abroad in the most optimal manner and to achieve our foreign policy objective of building a conducive environment for India’s growth and development through partnerships with friendly countries. The Committee, have therefore, urged the Ministry to

expedite the process involving logistics, deployment, and creation of infrastructure as well as coordination and liaison with the host Governments so that resident Indian Missions are opened in these countries at the earliest.

(Recommendation No. 16)

8. Government asked to complete the Integration of all Indian Missions/Posts into the Global Passport Seva Project

2.58 The Committee have noted that 181 Indian Missions/Posts have so far been integrated into the Passport Seva Programme through the Global Passport Seva Project (GPSP). This integration, the Committee understand, will enable centralised passport issuance for our citizens in India and Diaspora abroad. The Committee have desired that the process of integration of the remaining Missions/posts in to the GPSP applications should be completed at the earliest for smooth, expeditious and transparent delivery of passport services. The status of integration may be communicated to the Committee within three months.

(Recommendation No. 17)

9. Evaluation of the functioning of Indian Missions/Posts to be a continuous process

2.59 The Committee have noted that the Performance Evaluation and Monitoring System (PEMS) 2.0 portal which is a centralized online monitoring mechanism to evaluate the functioning of Missions/Posts abroad on an

annual basis, was launched in 2021 followed by the launch of PEMS 3.0 questionnaire in May 2022. Out of 188 Missions/Posts evaluated through the PEM 3.0 questionnaire, 184 Missions/Posts have taken further action on the basis of remedial actions suggested by the Ministry after the Final Evaluation while 4 Mission/Posts are in the process of submitting their responses. The Committee have desired that these four Missions/Posts should be pursued to submit their further action taken report expeditiously so that the responses received from them are evaluated for further improvement in their performance. The Committee have further desired that evaluation of the functioning of Indian Missions/Posts should be a continuous process and it should be the endeavour of the Ministry to bring about qualitative improvements in their performances through upgradation of the questionnaire and physical inspection, if required.

(Recommendation No. 18)

10. Early launch of e-Passport Project desired

2.90 The Committee have noted that the Ministry's Flagship Programme, e-Passport Project is facing several challenges which include, complex technical infrastructure and participation of multiple stakeholders, technical limitation of PSP version 1.0's ability to take on the additional load, etc. The Committee understand that the Ministry is now proposing to launch only the pilot of the project in the first stage. Once the PSP Version 2.0, which has the technical ability to take on the additional load is launched, e-

Passport will be rolled out in stages at all passport offices across India and at Missions/Posts abroad. The tentative date for Go-live for PSPV 2.0 is 7 July 2023. The Committee have desired that the Ministry should maintain close coordination with all the stakeholders and get the technical concerns resolved for smooth/ early launch of the e-Passport Project. The progress in this regard may be communicated to the Committee.

(Recommendation No. 21)

11. Early launch of mPassport Police App in all the States/UTs stressed

2.91 The Committee have noted that mPassport Police App for the expeditious submission of Police Verification Report (PVR) has been launched in 24 States/UT. In States/UT where the App has been launched, the PVR is received within 3-5 working days. Since the use of the mPassport Police App reduces the overall issuance time for passports, the Committee have urged the Ministry to pursue the remaining States/UTs vigorously so that the mPassport Police App is launched by them without further delay. The Ministry and its Passport Offices may also extend all the needed assistance in terms of infrastructure and technical expertise/training to the police Departments of these States/UTs for its early launch in all the States and UTs in the country.

(Recommendation No. 22)

12. Integration of DigiLocker with Passport Seva Programme to be disseminated widely

2.92 The Committee have understood that the integration of the Passport Seva Programme with DigiLocker in 2021 is a major digital transformation

in the delivery of Passport Services in India. DigiLocker, a key initiative under Digital India is a platform for issuance and verification of documents/certificates in a digital way thereby eliminating the use of physical documents. Since the integration of Passport Seva Project with DigiLocker, a total of 16,69,335 applicants have utilized the facility. The Committee understand that the DigiLocker facility has helped in reduction of paper work and verifying the documents in the source database, which in turn results in expeditious delivery of passport services to the citizens and hence, have urged the Ministry to disseminate awareness regarding the DigiLocker facility on a country-wide basis.

(Recommendation No. 23)

13. Opening of PoE offices in migration hot spots urged

2.100 The Committee have noted that the Protector of Emigrants (PoEs), responsible for granting emigration clearance to the intending emigrants performs the functions assigned to them under the Emigration Act, 1983. Presently, there are 14 offices of the PoE located at Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Rai Barelli, Patna, Bengaluru, Guwahati and Ranchi. The Ministry has also stated that the setting up of new PoE offices in the States of Tripura, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gujarat and Uttarakhand is underway, in consultation with the State authorities concerned. In view of the fact that large number of blue collar workers, nurses, DSWs, etc. migrate abroad for employment every year, the Committee have desired that the process of setting up new PoE offices should be completed at the earliest for facilitating and providing protection to the intending migrant workers as well as emigrants. The

Committee have also urged the Ministry to identify the migration hot spots in the country and open PoE offices in such locations.

(Recommendation No. 25)

14. Adequate Allocation for Indian Diaspora

3.27 The Committee have noted that for the matters relating to overseas Indians an amount of Rs. 13.21 crore has been allocated under the Sub Head 'Welfare of Overseas Indians' and Rs. 37.00 crore under another Sub Head 'Engagement with Indian Diaspora' in the BE 2023-24. The allocation under these two Sub Heads has been brought down as compared to RE 2022-23. For the BE 2023-24, the allocations under Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children and Awareness Campaigns, etc. have also been brought down. The Indian Diaspora comprising of over 18 million PIOs and 13 million NRIs, spread across the globe is one of the largest overseas community of any country and comprises a diverse range from laborers/workers, traders, political leaders, professional and students etc., The Committee, have hence desired that the Working Group constituted for the evaluation of various Schemes and Programmes for the welfare of the Indian Diaspora should review the adequacy of financial allocations made under each programme and make appropriate recommendations under intimation to the Committee so that a smooth and timely implementation of schemes/programmes for the welfare of overseas Indians is done through efficient and optimum utilization of the same in the post-COVID world.

(Recommendation No. 26)

15. Migration of Workers to be monitored.

3.31 The Committee have also noted that the Ministry is making efforts to establish a system to regulate migration to such countries where greater

possibility of exploitation is felt as well as to countries where skills and talents are needed. The Committee have desired that this exercise may be completed at the earliest so as to obviate exploitation of Indian migrant workers abroad.

(Recommendation No. 30)

16. Engagements with the Diaspora community and collaboration efforts to be strengthened

3.34 The Committee have noted that the Government has undertaken several initiatives such as, Vaishwaik Bharatiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit, Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) and Pravasi Bhartiya Academic and Scientific Sampark (PRABHASS) to facilitate active engagement of leading Diaspora academicians and scientists to the scientific and technological development of India, tap the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs internationally and bring on board the Global Indian S & T community. Further, the Department of Science and Technology is working towards announcing VAIBHAV fellowships programme for collaboration projects identified under the VAIBHAV initiative. Under the GIAN Scheme, 2163 collaboration projects have so far been approved and 1716 projects have been completed. The PRABHASS initiative has also resulted in a few collaborations. The Committee welcome these initiatives as they serve the purpose of enhancing India's educational, scientific and technological capacities. The Committee acknowledge that such engagements would result in more collaboration projects with academicians and scientists from the Diaspora community. The Committee, have therefore, urged the Ministry to deepen its engagements with the said community and strengthen its

collaboration efforts with an outcome oriented approach and enhance its scientific, technological, educational and economic capacities using Indian talent abroad.

(Recommendation No. 33)

17. Utilisation of Indian Diaspora as a ‘resource’ recommended

3.35 The Committee have always felt the need to sensitize the Indian Diaspora on the crucial role played by them in India’s soft power diplomacy and in exercising economic and political influence in their host countries so as to build up and strengthen the existing relationship between their home and host country. The Committee, have therefore, recommended that the Ministry and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which supplements its efforts to leverage the Indian Diaspora in soft power projection, should come out with a blueprint to utilise the Indian Diaspora as a ‘resource’ in projecting India’s soft power, culture and values abroad.

(Recommendation No. 34)

18. Modalities for trade in Indian rupees to be finalized at the earliest

4.60 The Committee have noted that the Budgetary Allocation under ‘Aid to Sri Lanka’ has been reduced since 2020-21 as implementation of projects had been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic followed by unprecedented economic crisis in that country. The economic crisis has also posed a challenge in terms of disbursement and utilization of funds as well as currency crunch in the country. The Committee further note that the

Government is trying to put in place an institutional framework for settlement of trade in Indian Rupee so that even in the absence of hard currency, trade may not be disrupted. In the opinion of the Committee, such a mechanism which facilitates trade in Indian rupee would be beneficial, not only for Sri Lanka but for other countries in the neighbourhood as well, that are facing economic crisis. The Committee, have therefore, urged the Ministry to finalize all the modalities, in consultation with other Departments and Agencies concerned, at the earliest in this regard. The Progress made to advance the prospects of trade settlement with partner countries in Indian Rupee, especially in countries of our neighborhood may be communicated to the Committee within three months.

(Recommendation No. 44)

19. Early introduction of Online ITEC degree programme urged

4.80 The Committee have noted that ITEC has been one of the world's longest running structured capacity building programme and has now evolved as an important strand of India's Development Partnership. For the current Financial Year, 188 courses are approved to be offered to ITEC partner countries and during the last three years 161 countries and 18 Secretariats have been benefitted from ITEC programmes. In respect of customised courses, 63 in-person/physical courses and 19 e-ITEC/ virtual courses have been approved for partner countries. The Ministry has also stated that it is trying to graduate to full-fledged online degree programmes. The Committee are further happy to note that ITEC programmes have gained popularity and the positive feedback from participants on the ITEC website and social media is testimony to it. ITEC being an integral part of India's development

partnership, the Committee desire that new training modules catering to the specific requirements of partner countries should be evolved to make the programme more relevant and impactful. The Committee have also urged the Ministry to work out the modalities for a full-fledged ITEC online degree programme in collaboration with the various stakeholders so that the same is introduced at the earliest. The feedback from participants in the training programme may also be incorporated in the training modules to the extent possible.

(Recommendation No. 47)

20. India's ranking in soft power projections be improved by augmenting funding to ICCR

5.28 The Committee have found that the Ministry of External Affairs, India's Missions abroad and ICCR constitute the triangle within which the task of projecting Indian culture through public and cultural diplomacy is fulfilled. All activities of ICCR including those conducted through its extended arms like Indian Cultural Centers, the Chairs of Indian Studies in Foreign Universities, and the foreign students' scholarships programme, are conducted in close coordination with MEA and Indian Missions/posts in the country concerned contributing substantially towards overall formulation of India's foreign policy. The Committee understand that the ICCR is fully funded by MEA through Grants-in-Aid as the promotion of soft power and cultural diplomacy cannot be based on profit generation. As regards budget grants given to ICCR, the Committee observe that an allocation of Rs. 345.21 crore has been made in BE 2023-24 against the BE and RE 2022-23

of Rs. 320 crore. This enhanced allocation in BE 2023-24 to the tune of 25.21 crore has been made on account of expanding research & academic activities, expanding scope of cultural diplomacy under ICCR as well as the revision in scholarship rates, cultural hospitality norms, etc. However, the Committee are not sure about the adequacy of the allocation especially in view of the new initiatives of ICCR like ‘Gyan-Setu’ for connecting Culture through Knowledge, ‘Gen-Next Programme’, Blog competitions, etc. in addition to the revision in scholarship rates and cultural hospitality norms. Moreover, the soft power and cultural diplomatic activities being undertaken by other countries are way above ours despite India aspiring to be a very strong soft power player in the years ahead. The Committee, have therefore, reiterated their stance on augmented funding to ICCR to enable sponsoring pro-active and effective conduct of our country’s soft power and cultural promotion. The Committee have also recommended that an assessment be made by the Ministry to find where our country stands in the global ranking of soft power projections as compared to major developed and developing countries.

(Recommendation No. 50)

21. MEA to take the lead in Developing Research Culture

6.18 The Committee have noted that the Policy Planning and Research (PP&R) Division of MEA collaborates with its network of autonomous bodies like ICWA and RIS; think tanks and academic institutions for the purpose of policy planning and research in foreign affairs and for creating

policy products and policy recommendations. Policy formulation, whether it is foreign policy or domestic, economic or social policy, depends on research inputs from a range of actors. The Committee, however, find that not much stress has been laid on research in the country. The Committee, have therefore, desired that the MEA should take the lead in developing research culture through its PP&R Division, create more think tanks and directly interact with universities in the country. The current interaction and collaboration with think tanks and universities should also be scaled up exponentially with proper assessment of funding requirement for research and provisioning of adequate Budgetary Allocation for the same.

(Recommendation No. 57)

22. More collaboration with Policy Planning Divisions of other countries desired

6.20 The Committee have desired that the Ministry should maintain closer interaction and more collaboration with the Policy Planning Divisions of other countries, particularly developed countries and continuous efforts for absorption of the outcome of such collaborations in India's foreign policy making/goals, may be made. As the PP&R Division is also our window for interaction with the Policy Planning Divisions of other countries, it should be reinforced with sufficient manpower and adequate resources.

(Recommendation No. 59)

23. New Budget Head for research funding to universities recommended

6.21 The Committee have laid great emphasis on the role of research inputs on foreign policy as well as on economic, social, scientific and technological issues, etc. The Committee understand that apart from ICWA and RIS, the Ministry is collaborating with research institutes, think tanks and has also started outreach to universities through its Policy Planning Division. In the opinion of the Committee, research in the field of funding requirement, allocation and spending is one area the MEA needs to work upon. The global trends in this regard would enable the Ministry to make a realistic assessment of our present needs and what we lacked. The Committee are also of the view that universities possessing the academic expertise and talent are most suited to carry out research in this field and have desired that the Ministry should move towards direct interaction with universities and provide appropriate funding for research. For this purpose, the Committee have recommended that the Ministry should open/create a new Budget Head for research funding to universities in the country.

(Recommendation No. 60)