

UPKEEP OF INDIAN EMBASSIES

Proposal To Control Expenditure

ACCOUNTANT-GENERAL MAY BE APPOINTED

From Our Special Representative

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THE colossal expenditure, ever on the increase from year to year, which India, despite her present economic condition has been incurring in connection with the upkeep of her embassies abroad, has for some time now been the subject of severe criticism not only in Parliament but also outside it.

In the budget estimates of 1950-51, a sum of Rs. 3,39,99,000 has been allotted for expenditure on Indian embassies, High Commissioners' offices, legations and consulates, the delegation to the United Nations and special diplomatic expenditure.

Out of this, the High Commissioner's establishment in the United Kingdom alone has been allotted Rs. 47.31 lakhs. The amount earmarked for the Indian Embassy in the United States is Rs. 16.84 lakhs, which together with the cost of the information services there of Rs. 8.15 lakhs, makes a total of Rs. 24.90 lakhs.

The Embassy in Russia is allotted Rs. 7.37 lakhs, while the establishments at Karachi, Lahore and Dacca of the Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan have been allotted Rs. 11.96 lakhs.

India's contribution to the United Nations and other special diplomatic expenditure take away a sum of Rs. 51.98 lakhs.

COST OF EMBASSIES

The amounts earmarked for Indian embassies in other countries are: China Rs. 5 lakhs; Persia Rs. 6.28 lakhs; Nepal Rs. 1.92 lakhs; Afghanistan Rs. 4.17 lakhs; France Rs. 5.84 lakhs; Egypt Rs. 4.56 lakhs; Burma Rs. 7.21 lakhs; Brazil Rs. 4.43 lakhs; Belgium Rs. 3.23 lakhs; Czechoslovakia Rs. 3.13 lakhs; Turkey Rs. 5.62 lakhs; Italy Rs. 3.08 lakhs; Argentina Rs. 3.88 lakhs; Indonesia Rs. 3.53 lakhs, and Holland Rs. 3.11 lakhs. The cost of the Indian delegation to the United Nations is Rs. 7.72 lakhs; the Indian Liaison Mission in Japan Rs. 3.56 lakhs and other legations and consulates Rs. 39.35 lakhs.

The establishments of High Commissioners have been allotted as follows: South Africa Rs. 1.65 lakhs; Australia Rs. 2.04 lakhs; Canada Rs. 5.85 lakhs; Ceylon Rs. 1.95 lakhs; British East Africa Rs. 2.28 lakhs; British West Indies Rs. 1.40 lakhs; Mauritius Rs. 1.20 lakhs; Fiji Rs. 0.78 lakhs and Malaya Rs. 2.95 lakhs. These include expenditure on information services wherever they exist.

Critics have often raised the issue whether India, with all her present economic stress, could afford to spend such a vast amount on her foreign contacts. Objection has often been raised to the grant of a freehand to some of the embassies and High Commissionerships abroad to spend money as they liked in various directions. Pointed references have been made to the various schemes that were allowed to be carried on at India's London establishment.

DR. MATTHAI'S PROPOSAL

The Government of India, evidently, have themselves realised the need for some sort of control over the finances of embassies and other establishments abroad, as the former Finance Minister, Dr. John Matthai, had, during the last budget session of Parliament, referred to a proposal in that direction.

The Comptroller and Auditor-General, Mr. Narahari Rao, it is learnt, proposes shortly to visit the various embassies abroad to decide what steps should be taken to exercise a check on current expenditure abroad. It is possible that an Accountant-General may be appointed to exercise control over external expenditure.