පාර්ලිමේන්තු ප්‍රකාශන මාලා අංක : 79

ආයතනයේ නම: විදේශ කටයුතු අමාත්‍යාංශය

පාර්ලිමේන්තුවේ රජයේ ගිණුම් පිළිබඳ කාරක සභාව විසින් සභාගත කරන ලද වාර්තා සම්බන්ධයෙන් ස්ථාවර නියෝග අංක 119 (4) යටතේ ගරු ආයතන භාර අමාත්‍යවරයාගේ නිරීක්ෂණ හා ගනු ලබන පියවර පාර්ලිමේන්තුව වෙත ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම

பாராளுமன்ற வெளியீட்டுத் தொடர் இலக்கம்: 79

நிறுவனத்தின் பெயர்: வெளிநாட்டு அலுவல்கள் அமைச்சு

பாராளுமன்றத்தின் அரச கணக்குக் குழுவினால் முன்வைக்கப்பட்ட அறிக்கை தொடர்பாக நிலையியற் கட்டளை இலக்கம் 119 (4) இன் கீழ் நிறுவனங்களிற்குப் பொறுப்பான கௌரவ அமைச்சரின் அவதானிப்புக்களும் மற்றும் அது தொடர்பாக எடுக்கப்படும் நடவடிக்கைகளும் பாராளுமன்றத்திற்குச் சமர்ப்பித்தல்

Parliamentary Series No: 79

Name of the Institution: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Submission of observations of the Hon. Minister in charge of the institutions and steps taken with regard to the reports tabled by the Committee on Public Accounts in terms of Standing Order No. 119 (4)

Parliamentary Series Number : **No. 79**
Name of the institution : **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Part 01: 75.00

	Shortcomings identified by the Committee	**Explanation for the shortcomings and Action taken by the Institution to rectify the shortcomings/current status**
01.	Register on Losses had not been updated and maintained.	The Finance Division of this Ministry maintains the loss register related to the write-off based on information provided by the General Administration and the Overseas Asset Management and Development (OAM&D) Division. The reported losses are being recorded and maintained by updating the register accordingly (**Annexure 1 & 2**). Further, action has been taken to compile all the details of lost-items in common ledger with immediate effect.
02.	Register of Risk was not maintained up to date basis.	The risk Register had been prepared. However, it was observed that due to a communication error, it was marked as "no" (**Annexure 3**). The risk register was submitted to relevant officers.
03.	Answers had not been sent to all the audit queries of the Auditor General within one month after receiving such audit queries.	The information is yet to be collected from the Missions abroad. In most of the instances; delays usually occur in gathering information. However, this matter has been discussed at the Audit and Management Committee meetings held at the Ministry. Currently, required arrangements have been made to respond to the audit queries within one month or submit an interim reply within one month otherwise to request an extension for further period.
04.	The required number of Audit and Management Committee meetings had not been held per year.	Due to the unstable situation that prevailed in the country; the Ministry was unable to hold all 04 meetings which had been scheduled for 2022. However, three meetings were held in 2023 and arrangements have been made to summon the meetings as per the circular requirement in 2024.
05.	The emblem of the state had not been painted on all pool vehicles.	All the vehicles in the Ministry's vehicle pool display a board with the state emblem printed on it.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>06.</td><td>Actions had not been taken on accidents occurred to motor vehicles owned by the government as per the Financial Regulations.</td><td>11 vehicle accidents occurred in 2022 (only in Sri Lanka), and the related full repair costs have been charged from the insurance companies.

As per records. any overseas accident reported by the Sri Lanka Missions/Posts abroad to Overseas Administration and Mission Management Division of the Ministry has been attended to and action has been taken as per the Financial Regulations and the host country regulations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>07.</td><td>Bank reconciliation statements had not been prepared, certified and submitted for audit on the due date.</td><td>Due to the practical difficulties in preparing bank reconciliations for the Ministry's bank accounts, some delays have been reported. Additionally, obtaining physical reconciliation documents from the 61 Sri Lanka Missions/Posts abroad within the 15-day period following each month has also caused considerable delays i.e - delay in receiving original documents from the Sri Lanka Missions/Posts abroad.

However, the Ministry Bank reconciliation is being submitted every month as per the Financial Regulations. The month of June 2024 bank reconciliation statement is already submitted accordingly. (Annexure 4). Instructions have been issued to all Missions/Posts to submit their bank reconciliation statements by the due date via electronic mail. (Annexure 5).</td></tr>
<tr><td>08.</td><td>Inoperative accounts which are coming from the year under view or previous year, had not been settled.</td><td>A few inoperative accounts of the following Sri Lanka Missions remain due to factors beyond the Ministry's control :

<table>
<tr><th>Mission</th><th>Reason for inoperative accounts</th></tr>
<tr><td>Kabul</td><td>Currently, Sri Lanka is not engaging in any diplomatic relations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teheran</td><td>Impose of economic sanctions and other restricted regulations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Abuja</td><td>Close down actions are being processed by the accredited Mission Nairobi</td></tr>
</table>

Actions have been taken to close other inoperative accounts in consultation with the respective Mission abroad. (Annexure 6).</td></tr>
<tr><td>09.</td><td>Balances that are revealed by the findings of Bank Reconciliation Statements and should be</td><td>Due to the time required to collect relevant information about unidentified payments and receipts from specific parties and banks, the adjustment entries could not be recorded within the</td></tr>
</table>

	adjusted, had not been adjusted within a period of one month as per Financial Regulations.	specified month although required information had been requested However, required steps have been taken to gather the necessary information from the relevant division to adjust the statement accordingly. (**Annexure 7**).
10.	The balances in arrears exceeding one (01) year had not been settled.	Due to factors beyond the Ministry's control, such as the deaths of employees, vacancies of posts, and lack of information, there are balances that have been available for more than one year. Measures have been taken to minimize the unsettled amounts. Approval had been requested from the Treasury to write-off the balances in arrears exceeding more than one year.
11.	Action had not been taken as per F.R.571 in relation to dormant accounts.	Due to factors beyond the Ministry's control (legal actions, lack of information, practical problems), a few dormant accounts remain. However, Steps have been taken to clear the dormant accounts. The amounts which are unpaid for more than 2 years transferred to the Government Revenue according to the financial regulations.
12.	The ad hoc sub imprests issued as per F.R 371 had not been settled within one month from the completion of task.	Due to the practical challenges and nature of the task, some incidents have been recorded. However, necessary instructions have been provided to the officials to ensure compliance with the Financial Regulations (FR) and related circular references. **(Annexure 8)**
13.	Ad hoc interim imprests exceeding approved limits as per FR 371 were issued.	Several incidents were reported due to unavoidable circumstances. However, the necessary instructions have been issued to ensure compliance with the FR and circular requirements. The approval had been taken from the General Treasury to increase the imprest limit and accordingly instructions were issued to the relevant Missions/Posts. The treasury approval letter is **Annexure 9.**
14.	The Staff had been recruited/attached exceeding the approved limits.	Maintaining the staff within the approved limit has been difficult because this Ministry is required to retain an adequate number of officers (returned from Mission postings and officers

		to be attached) while attaching some officers to Mission for a certain period of time. In accordance with the approved cadre of the Ministry, there are nine (09) Director General posts and one (1) post has been established for Grade I officers of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service. The percentage of the above approved ten (10) posts is considerably low, 3.8% out of the total approved post of 264 of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service. As Sri Lanka continues to expand its bilateral relations with foreign countries, the scope of this Ministry has also been expanded. Accordingly, strengthening foreign engagement of Sri Lanka and to develop policy decisions; senior Foreign Service Officers have to be appointed as Heads of Department. Further, bilateral and multilateral negotiations with foreign countries and Foreign Missions are a unique task that falls under the scope of this Ministry, hence it is essential that this Ministry appoints senior level Foreign Service Officers in charge of the respective specialized Divisions in order to represent the respective regional work on an equal capacity. Therefore, maintaining such official requirements and other handling of international and domestic affairs without any hindrance; it is essential to appoint **Grade I** officers of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service as the Heads of the Department enabling the departments to carry out diplomatic engagements successfully. Unlike other parallel Services/Ministries in Sri Lanka, the officers of Sri Lanka Foreign Service are not only limited to this Ministry but also assigned to Sri Lanka Missions/Missions abroad. Similarly, due to the lack of sufficient number of posts in this Ministry, it is also difficult to place the officers who report to the duties at the Ministry after completing their tour of duty abroad, in the substantive positions according to the seniority of the Foreign Service. Further, it should be noted that a senior officer who had served as an Ambassador/High Commissioner representing Sri Lanka abroad as the representative of the President and upon returning to Sri Lanka; the officer should at least hold the position as Director General in charge of a Division of the Ministry.

		Immediately below the post of Director General is the post of Director, which is a mid-level (Grade II) post, and an officer who served as an Ambassador/High Commissioner, even recommended by the Committee on High Posts, cannot be appointed to the post of Director. The Ministry is currently negotiating with the Department of Management Services. Since 2019, the Ministry has been requesting the Department of Management Services (DMS) to regularise the above appointments by increasing the approved carder positions for the Grade I officers of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service. A response is yet to be received from the DMS.

Parliamentary Series Number : **No. 79**
Name of the institution : **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Part 02: 57.00

	Shortcomings identified by the Committee	Explanation for the shortcomings and Action taken by the Institution to rectify the same/current status
01.	The institution had failed to identify the sustainable development goals applicable to its scope.	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not implement any projects related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Sri Lanka. The Ministry is part of the National Steering Committee on SDGs chaired by Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister. The Ministry was associated together with Ministry of Finance in the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2023-2027 that reflects Sri Lanka's national development priorities in line with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Ministry will facilitate coordination between the government stakeholders and the UN agencies in support of these priorities, as required. The Ministry also has a coordinatory role in fulfilling reporting obligations in consultation with relevant Government Stakeholders and UN agencies. The Ministry facilitates substantively Sri Lanka's participation at multilateral conferences on SDGs with a view to projecting the progress made by Sri Lanka on SDGs at the international Level. The Ministry also advocates the Sustainable Development Council on international development related to the SDGs.
02.	The targets to be reached to achieve the identified sustainable goals had not been decided.	
03.	The indicators to measure the progress of implementation of sustainable Development Goals had not been set.	
04.	Performance agreements covering the entire staff had not been drafted or entered.	Regrettably, the Ministry was unable to provide Performance Agreements to all staff due to a lack of awareness. However, the Ministry will be taking necessary steps to ensure that these agreements are incorporated into the next performance report, aimed at enhancing the overall performance of the organization.

05.	Out of the training opportunities planned, the extent of training opportunities granted, was less than 50%.	As per the Circular No. 03/2022 dated 26.04.2022 only limited funds can be allocated for the training programmes.
06.	The audit opinion about the accounts of the institution had been a qualified opinion/disclaimed opinion/an unfavorable opinion.	A qualified opinion was reported to the Ministry in 2022 due to non-compliance with regulations and a lack of adequate evidence. However, the Ministry has received an unqualified opinion from the National Audit Office for 2023 (**Annexure 10**).
07.	The directives/recommendations issued by the Committee on Public Accounts had not been implemented.	The directions given by the COPA are related to many divisions as well as Sri Lankan missions abroad. Therefore, it took a longer period than expected to implement those directions. However, after a long process, the Ministry could implement many directions and only one of them is remaining as of today.
08.	All Public officers had not submitted their declarations of assets and liabilities.	According to the Declaration of Assets Liabilities Act No. 01 of 1975 as amended by Act No. 74 of 1988, 183 officers have submitted asset liability declarations in relation to the year 2022.
09.	The necessary action had not been taken to recover the loss caused to the Government by the officers as per Financial Regulation 156 (1).	As per the directives given by the authority, required actions have been taken to recover the loss caused to the Government from the relevant officers. Accordingly, the amount of LKR 1,237,525.97 and LKR 332,561.23 recovered in year 2023 and 2024 respectively.
10.	Surcharges ordered to pay as per FR 119 had not been recovered.	As per the directives given by the authority, required actions have been taken to surcharge from the relevant officers. The amount of LKR 546,112.10 deducted from the payment in 2023 accordingly.
11.	Actions had not been taken to properly transfer the officers who had completed the maximum service period.	This Ministry is prescribed as a popular organization only for OES and Drivers. Officers of those categories were always transferred after the maximum service requirement. A few officers of other categories are retained due to service exigencies.

Hon. M .U. M. Ali Sabry P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms