

CHAPTER II : MINISTRY OF CULTURE

Academic Activities of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata

Highlights

- The Institute had not laid down any policy for selection of research topics and documenting the basis for their selection, keeping in view the objectives laid down in its Memorandum of Association (MoA). A number of selected research topics were unrelated to these objectives.

(Paragraph 2.9.3.1)

- The Institute had not framed any bye-laws specifying the criteria, methodology and documentation process to be adopted by Selection Committees for selection of research Fellows.

(Paragraph 2.9.3.2)

- The Institute had an inadequate monitoring and review system because of which, it could not ensure that the research Fellows complied with the terms of their agreements with the Institute and completed their projects on time.

(Paragraph 2.9.3.3)

- The publication of research projects reports was inordinately delayed. Only 23 out of 58 completed reports had been published till July 2011.

(Paragraph 2.9.3.4)

- The Institute had no policy, laying down the criteria for selection of issues for discussion at seminars and symposia organised by it as well as those organised in collaboration with other institutions.

(Paragraph 2.9.4.1)

- The Institute had not ensured optimal utilization of information technology for its library and had not made the library accessible to the public, as envisaged in its objectives. Following the audit objection, the Institute announced the availability of its library sources to the general public through its website.

(Paragraph 2.9.5)

- **The Institute failed to make any addition to the museum's original collection of 22 objects since its establishment in 2006.**

(Paragraph 2.9.6)

Recommendations

- ❖ *The Institute may frame bye-laws in terms of the provisions of the Memorandum of Association and correlate their annual action plans with the budget estimates.*
- ❖ *The Institute may frame guidelines for selection of projects based on its objectives. The process of selection of projects may be documented to ensure transparency.*
- ❖ *The Institute may formulate bye-laws specifying the criteria, methodology and documentation process for transparent selection of research Fellows.*
- ❖ *The Institute may put in place an effective system for monitoring and reviewing the research projects to ensure that the research Fellows comply with the terms of the agreements with the Institute and complete their projects on time,*
- ❖ *The Institute may consider taking assistance of outside expert for reviewing the quarterly progress reports in case it is not feasible for the Director to review all the progress reports in addition to his/her administrative duties.*
- ❖ *The Institute may frame guidelines for timely publication of research outputs and dissemination of its publications.*
- ❖ *The Institute may widen the circle for distribution of its publications so that its research outputs are utilized by more people and purchased publications do not lie idle.*
- ❖ *The Institute may evolve a system for selection of issues for discussion at seminars and symposia and identifying the objectives to be achieved through the same. Proceedings of the seminars and symposia may be well documented and disseminated to the concerned persons, institutes and organisations*
- ❖ *The Institute should follow Government rules and regulations regarding payment of allowances to its Fellows and avoid incurring expenditure on items disallowed by them.*
- ❖ *The Institute may take steps to ensure optimum utilization of*

information technology to make its library user-friendly.

- ❖ *The Institute should take effective action to collect more writings, photographs, audio and video materials etc. that throw light on the life, ideas and activities of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.*

2.1 Introduction

The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (Institute), Kolkata is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India (Ministry). The Institute was set up in January 1993, as a Society



under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961 at the joint initiative of the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal. The Institute was to act as a centre for research and learning, focusing on various issues related to developments in Asia, with special emphasis on their links with India, on secularism and universal brotherhood and on the life and works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

2.2 Objectives of the Institute

The main objectives of the Institute as defined in its Memorandum of Association are:

- to be a centre for research and learning with focus on (i) social, cultural, economic and political/administrative developments in Asia, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, with special emphasis on their links with India (ii) the life and works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad;
- to organize, undertake, conduct, encourage and promote study and research in the field of secularism and universal brotherhood;
- to foster academic contacts within India as well as in other countries through exchange of personnel and research material;
- to establish and maintain a library of books, periodicals and other materials having a bearing on the secular tradition of Modern India

with special reference to social, cultural and political movements and events from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards; to make available to the public in a suitable place, the collection of papers and library sources for study and research; and

- to establish and maintain a museum at the former residence of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Kolkata.

Besides, the Institute is also entrusted with the responsibility of promoting activities relating to the North-Eastern Region (NER) of India for which the Ministry provides separate grants.

2.3 Organizational set-up

The Institute is run by a Society, as stated earlier and is headed by the Governor of West Bengal who is its President. The Society runs the Institute through an Executive Council (EC), headed by a Chairman who is nominated by the Ministry. The EC has full powers and authority to do all acts, matters, things and deeds which may be necessary or expedient for the Society. The Director of the Institute, who is the Member Secretary of the Society as well as the EC, is responsible for the administration of the affairs of the Society and the Institute, under the overall guidance of the Chairman.

2.4 Scope of Audit

The Institute is audited under Section 14(1) of the Comptroller and Auditor General's (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971. Performance audit of the academic activities of the Institute, covering the period from 2005-06 to 2010-11 was conducted from March to July 2011.

2.5 Audit objectives

Performance audit of the academic activities of the Institute was carried out to ascertain whether:

- the Institute had an effective planning mechanism to attain its objectives;
- the Institute had a sound financial management system;
- the Institute carried out its academic activities efficiently and effectively in an economic manner; and
- an effective internal control and monitoring mechanism existed in the Institute.

2.6 Audit criteria

The audit criteria were derived from the following:

- Memorandum of Association (MoA) of the Institute;
- Rules and Regulations of the Institute;
- Rules as given in the General Financial Rules (GFR) 2005 and orders issued by the Government of India from time to time and
- Minutes of meetings of the Society, the EC and other committees of the Institute.

2.7 Audit methodology

The performance audit commenced with an entry conference with the Director and other officials of the Institute in February 2011, wherein the audit scope, objectives, criteria and methodology were discussed. The audit methodology consisted of detailed scrutiny of research projects, publications and seminars, selected through simple random sampling. The sample consisted of all the 41 internal research projects (100 *per cent*), 24 out of 79 external research projects (30 *per cent*), 17 out of 66 publications (25 *per cent*) and five out of 21 seminars (24 *per cent*). Audit observations were discussed with the Director at an exit conference held in August 2011. Detailed replies of the Institute were received in December 2011 and have been suitably incorporated in the report. The draft report was referred to the Ministry in December 2011; their reply has not been received (July 2012).

2.8 Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the cooperation and assistance extended by the Institute during the course of this performance audit.

2.9 Audit findings

2.9.1 Planning for academic activities

Planning is essential for optimal utilization of resources towards attainment of the Institute's objectives. The Institute had not been preparing annual plans since its inception. It was found that the Institute had prepared its first annual action plan only for the year 2010-11. The plan included details about organisation of seminars/workshops, expansion of the museum, publication of books etc. The plan also included details regarding field trips by Fellows, related to existing research projects. However, the action plan did not dwell on the number and specific areas of new research projects to be undertaken

during the year. Moreover, the annual action plan was prepared in May 2010 while the budget for the year 2010-11 had been prepared and sent to the Ministry in September 2009. This shows that the plan was not correlated with the budget.

2.9.2 Financial management

The Institute is fully funded by the Government of India. The year-wise grants-in-aid received and expenditure incurred during the period 2005-11 is shown in Table-1.

Table-1

Year	Grants received				Expenditure			
	Plan	Non-Plan	NER	Total	Plan	Non-Plan	NER	Total
2005-06	250.00	40.00	9.00	299.00	222.72	49.04	10.04	281.80
2006-07	260.00	55.00	20.00	335.00	260.01	55.00	20.00	335.01
2007-08	400.00	45.50	46.56	492.06	400.00	65.00	46.56	511.56
2008-09	450.00	88.00	55.00	593.00	450.00	88.00	55.00	593.00
2009-10	560.00	105.60	18.00	683.60	530.00	105.65	38.00	673.65
2010-11	465.01	80.18	60.00	605.19	442.84	81.19	61.44	585.47
Total	2385.01	414.28	208.56	3007.85	2305.57	443.88	231.04	2980.49

(₹ in lakh)

- As per Rule 32(ii) (a) of the Rules and Regulations of the Institute, the EC has the power to make and frame bye-laws for the preparation and sanction of budget estimates, the sanctioning of expenditure, making and execution of contracts, the investment of the funds of the Institute and the sale or alteration of such investment, and account and audit. The Institute, however, had not framed such bye-laws. Thus, the procedures for budgetary control were inadequate as would be evident from the subsequent paragraphs.
- In terms of Rule 48(a) (iii) of the Rules and Regulations of the Institute, the Finance Committee has the duty to scrutinise the budget estimates of the Institute and to make recommendations to the EC for its approval. The Institute prepared budgets during 2005-11 with the approval of the Director but these were neither scrutinized by the Finance Committee nor approved by the EC.
- Rule 26 (ii) of the GFR 2005 as well as conditions of sanction of grants released by the Ministry stipulate that expenditure is to be incurred for the purpose for which it is sanctioned. Audit observed that the Institute had diverted Plan expenditure of ₹ 52.08 lakh during 2005-11 to the heads 'Non-Plan' and 'North-East'. The Institute had neither obtained

approval from the Ministry for such diversions of funds nor had the Ministry ever pointed out such diversions.

- Rule 26 (i) of GFR 2005 stipulates that expenditure should not exceed budget allocations. Audit, however, observed that under 72 out of 238 expenditure sub-heads (30 *per cent*), the Institute incurred ₹ 349.63 lakh in excess of the budget (RE) provisions (148 *per cent* variation) during 2005-11. Out of these, under 13 sub-heads, the Institute incurred ₹ 37.33 lakh, although there were no budget provisions for the same.

The Institute stated (June 2012) that it had initiated the process of framing bye-laws for better functioning and management.

Recommendation

The Institute may frame bye-laws in terms of the provisions of the Memorandum of Association and correlate their annual action plans with the budget estimates.

2.9.3 Management of Research Activities

The Institute conducts research projects by appointing internal and external Fellows. Internal Fellows carry out the work in the Institute while external Fellows carry out the research projects outside. External Fellows are funded by the Institute and internal Fellows are paid



scholarships. The duration of the research projects is three years in the case of internal Fellows and six months to five years in the case of external Fellows. On completion of the research projects, the Fellows submit research reports for approval, after which the same are published as priced books. The Institute gets royalty from the publishers for the books sold.

The position of research projects conducted during 2005-11 is given in Table-2.

Table-2

Year	Ongoing projects (opening balance)	Additions of projects	Projects completed	Ongoing projects (closing balance)	Expenditure incurred on projects (₹ in lakh)	Average expenditure per project* (₹ in lakh)
2005-06	33	23	1	55	27.22	0.62
2006-07	55	4	8	51	37.46	0.71
2007-08	51	11	6	56	46.27	0.86
2008-09	56	21	17	60	89.94	1.55
2009-10	60	17	17	60	80.55	1.34
2010-11	60	11	3	68 [#]	103.00	1.61

[#] At the end of July 2011, 62 projects were ongoing

*Expenditure/average of opening and closing ongoing projects

The average expenditure on the projects increased from ₹ 0.62 lakh to ₹ 1.61 lakh during 2005-11.

2.9.3.1 Selection of research topics

As stated earlier, the Institute conducted research in the following areas:

- Social, cultural, economic and political administrative developments in Asia, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, with special emphasis on their links with India;
- Secularism and universal brotherhood;
- Life and works of Maulana Azad; and
- North Eastern Region (NER).

The number of research projects conducted during 2005-11 in different areas is shown in Table-3.

Table-3

Nature of project	Field-wise number of projects				Total number of projects
	Asian developments	Life and works of Maulana Azad	Secularism	NER	
External	20	4	11	44	79
Internal	25	2	8	6	41
Total	45	6	19	50	120

The Institute selected research topics on the basis of research proposals submitted by the applicants. Audit observed that it had not laid down any policy for selection of research topics and documenting the basis for selection of the topics, keeping in view the objectives of the Institute. In the absence of

the same, there was a risk of selecting research topics unrelated to the Institute's objectives.

Out of the 65 approved research project proposals selected for audit scrutiny, 16 project proposals, as detailed in the **Annex-I**, seemed to be unrelated to the Institute's objectives as described below:

- Out of 30 project proposals under 'Asian developments', 11 proposals seemed to have no links with India. For example, the project proposals on 'Zionism and the State of Israel: a critical study', 'From Siberia to Kazakh steppes: re-exploring regional histories of Eurasia' and 'Religion and politics in Bangladesh: 1971–2004', were sought to be taken up under 'Asian developments' but the impact of these issues on India was not visible in them;
- out of 11 project proposals taken up under 'Secularism and universal brotherhood', in two proposals, i.e. 'Contemporary scenario of Bihar politics: a political economy approach' and 'Politics of indebtedness of indigenous people: issues, policies, actions and consequences - study of Purulia district', no relation with secularism was found;
- in three out of four project proposals on the 'Life and works of Maulana Azad', no linkage was established with the life and works of Maulana Azad. For example, the project proposal on 'The culture of history' and 'Role of the Bengali press in the Bengal renaissance of the 19th century and in the national movement of the 20th century' seemed to have no links with the life and works of Maulana Azad.

In July 2006, the President of the Society had appointed a Review Committee on the functioning of the Institute. This committee, in its interim report, had also emphasised (December 2009) that the original objective of establishing the Institute was to understand the Indian perspective of Asia and South Asia. It had also pointed out that some of the Fellows were concentrating on the study of Asia on their own terms, without linking their studies to India. It recommended that the academic programmes might sharply focus on the concerns of India.

The Institute stated (August 2011) during the exit conference and in its reply in December 2011, that Audit had misinterpreted the objectives in the MoA. It explained that researches were carried out on various developments of Asian countries which might or might not be necessarily linked with India. The Institute further stated that it was adequate that the Selection Committee recognized the value of the subjects for India.

The Institute's reply was, however, against its own objectives.

2.9.3.2 Selection of research Fellows

The Institute selects internal Fellows on the basis of newspaper advertisements while the external Fellows are selected on the basis of research proposals along with the bio-data submitted by them. As per practice, a Selection Committee comprising all the EC members and two external experts select the Fellows. It was observed that:

- As per Rule 32 of the Rules and Regulations of the Institute, the EC has the power to make and frame bye-laws regarding the powers, functions and conduct of business by Advisory Boards or Committees. However, the Institute had not framed any bye-laws specifying the criteria, methodology and documentation process to be adopted by the Selection Committees for selection of research Fellows.
- Out of 41 Fellows for internal research projects, two were selected for three projects without any newspaper advertisement. In five cases, Fellows whose applications were received after 14 to 61 days from the last date for receipt were selected.
- To make the selection process transparent, the basis of selecting the Fellows should have been documented. Audit observed that the bases of selecting the Fellows were not being documented by the Selection Committees. Instead, only the names of the selected Fellows were mentioned. Thus the selection process of the Fellows lacked transparency.
- In one case, the Institute invited (May 2007) applications from candidates having Ph.D. in Economics or Management or having publications of equivalent standard for appointment as research Fellows but selected (February 2008) a candidate who had neither a doctoral degree nor any publication. Accepting the facts, the Institute clarified (April 2011) that the candidate was selected for his exceptionally distinguished record. However, the minutes of the Selection Committee did not contain any comment or justification relaxing the qualifying criteria based on the Fellow's 'distinguished' record.

The Institute stated (June 2012) that it was working towards initiating the process of framing the bye-laws, keeping in view the ambit of the areas as recommended by Audit.

2.9.3.3 Monitoring of research projects

The terms and conditions of appointment of Fellows provide for submission of quarterly progress reports, as well as the dates of completion of the projects and submission of final manuscripts. During the period 2005-11, the Institute had 58 completed projects, 34 incomplete projects and 28 (18 internal and 10 external) other projects, which were not due for completion as of July 2011. The following deficiencies regarding monitoring of research projects were noticed.

- Out of 58 completed projects (17 internal and 41 external), only 19 (16 internal and three external) projects (33 *per cent*) were completed within the scheduled time. Of the remaining 39 projects which were delayed, 23 projects were completed after delays ranging between approximately one to seven years (as of July 2011). The delays were mainly in respect of external projects (38 projects).
- Out of 34 incomplete projects (six internal and 28 external), eight (four internal and four external) projects involving expenditure of ₹ 20.25 lakh were lying incomplete as the research Fellows had left without submitting the final reports. Of the remaining incomplete projects, 11 projects were delayed by approximately one to nine years (as of July 2011).
- To ensure the quality and timely completion of projects, regular monitoring and review are essential. As per the terms and conditions for appointment, the Fellows were required to submit quarterly progress reports to the Institute. The Director reviewed the quarterly progress reports. Audit observed that in 14 out of 24 external research projects selected for scrutiny, the terms and conditions included a clause regarding discontinuance of Fellowships in case of non-submission of progress reports but the time frame for submission of the progress reports was not stipulated. In the absence of such stipulations, the Institute was not in a position to enforce the terms and conditions.
- In respect of 41 internal projects, 76 out of 329 quarterly progress reports were not submitted. Out of 253 such reports, 182 were submitted late. Out of these 182 reports, 151 were submitted within three months from the due date of submission of quarterly progress reports, while delays in the case of 31 reports ranged between three and 17 months. Audit observed that out of a total of 253 progress reports, the Director had reviewed only 37 reports while the rest of the reports (216) were not reviewed and were simply filed. Failure to

review the reports was fraught with the risks of the projects not progressing in the right direction and their delayed completion.

The Institute took no action such as sending reminders or warnings or holding up of funding and discontinuation of Fellowship against the defaulting Fellows for late submission and non-submission of their quarterly progress reports.

Thus the Institute had an inadequate mechanism for monitoring the progress of the projects, which adversely affected their timely completion. Consequently, the research projects taken up for fulfilment of the Institute's objectives were delayed and the academic fraternity was deprived of the output in respect of these areas.

The Institute stated (December 2011) that a mechanism for proper implementation and monitoring of projects was being devised.

2.9.3.4 Publication of research work

The Institute's MoA provides for undertaking publication of books, monographs, periodicals and papers incorporating the results of research. After receipt of final reports from the Fellows, the Institute sends the same to Reviewers. After their vetting,



these reports are sent to publishers as approved by the Publication Committee of the Institute. Publication can also be got done directly by Fellows through publishers of their choice, with due acknowledgement to the Institute in the published research reports. In the case of research reports published by itself, the Institute has to purchase a specified number of copies (100 to 175) which are to be distributed free of cost to reputed Universities, Institutes, Indian Missions etc.

Being a premier institution in the area of research, the Institute should have published its research outputs and studies in a transparent and time-bound manner. Audit observed that the Institute had been undertaking publication of its research outputs since 2000-01. A total of 66 research project reports had been published till July 2011. At the instance of Audit, the Institute prepared (June 2009) guidelines for publication which, included peer review of the final reports submitted by the Fellows, selection of publishers, terms and conditions for publications etc. Scrutiny of records, however, showed that there were

several deficiencies in the area of publication of research projects as described below:

- The Institute had not prescribed any time frame for publication of the completed research projects.
- Only 23 out of 58¹ completed project reports were published. The Institute took one to 28 months in entering into agreements with the publishers for publication of these 23 project reports.
- The remaining 34 completed project reports were not published even after time lags of one month to over five years from the dates of completion.
- The process of selection of publishers was not documented, thereby compromising transparency.
- In 14 out of 17 test-checked cases, no time schedule for publication was incorporated in the agreements with the publishers. The dates of receipt of published copies of books varied between 22 and 646 days from the dates of agreements with the publishers.
- In accordance with the objectives of fostering academic contacts through exchange of research materials, the Institute distributed copies of books purchased from the publisher free of cost to reputed Universities, Institutes, Indian Missions etc. A test check of 17 projects revealed that the Institute had purchased (June 2006 to March 2011) a total of 2264 copies of publications of research outputs of these projects, but 88 *per cent* of the total stock (2003 copies valuing ₹ 6.24 lakh) remained undistributed as of July 2011.

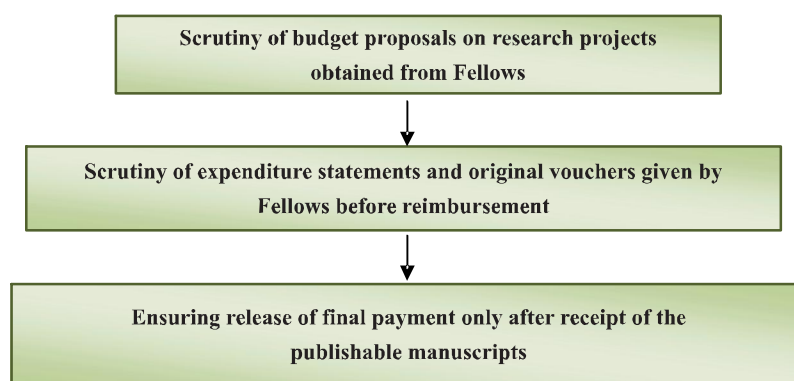
The Institute attributed (June 2011) the delay in publication of research projects mainly to: (i) research reports submitted by the Fellows not being traceable (ii) review processes by the Reviewers and modification processes by the Fellows remaining incomplete and (iii) Publication Committee meetings not being held regularly. The reasons given revealed that the Institute did not have a proper system for storage of research papers which was a serious failure which had led to papers not being traceable. The reasons further indicated lack of effective monitoring of the processes leading to the publication of research reports. The system of mandatorily purchasing a specified number of copies of books from publishers needed a relook as the Institute was unable to distribute most of the copies. The Institute, however,

¹ One project being a documentary film was not required to be published.

assured (December 2011) that guidelines for publication were being revised in the light of the audit observations.

2.9.3.5 Internal control on external research expenditure

The Institute exercised internal control on research expenditure, for which it had adopted the procedure shown below:



Test check of records of 24 out of 79 external projects selected randomly, brought out the following instances of violations of the above procedure:

- Project grants of ₹ 4.23 lakh were approved without obtaining budget proposals from research Fellows in three cases. In 10 cases, approved grants of ₹ 51.85 lakh were revised without recording any reasons and without altering the head-wise allocations.
- Expenditure of ₹ 3.26 lakh was reimbursed in excess of the approved grants in four cases.
- Interim payments of ₹ 31.82 lakh were released before receipt of progress reports in violation of project terms and conditions in seven cases.

Thus, the internal control mechanism of the Institute was inadequate for monitoring project expenditure. The Institute stated (December 2011) that the audit observations would be taken care of with the streamlining of the monitoring mechanism.

Recommendations

- *The Institute may frame guidelines for selection of projects based on its objectives. The process of selection of projects may be documented to ensure transparency.*
- *The Institute may formulate bye-laws specifying the criteria, methodology and documentation process for transparent selection of research Fellows.*
- *The Institute may put in place an effective system for monitoring and reviewing the research projects to ensure that the research Fellows comply with the terms of the agreements with the Institute and complete their projects on time.*
- *The Institute may consider taking assistance of outside expert for reviewing the quarterly progress reports in case it is not feasible for the Director to review all the progress reports in addition to his/her administrative duties.*
- *The Institute may frame guidelines for timely publication of research outputs and dissemination of its publications.*
- *The Institute may widen the circle for distribution of its publications so that its research outputs are utilized by more people and purchased publications do not lie idle.*

2.9.4 Fostering academic contacts

The Institute organizes seminars and symposia on its own as well as in collaboration with other Institutes with the objective of fostering academic contacts within India and abroad, as laid down in its MoA. These seminars and symposia provide opportunities for exchange of personnel and research materials.



The position of seminars organized during 2005-11 is given in Table-4.

Table-4

Year	Seminars organised by the Institute				Seminars organised in collaboration			
	NER		Other than NER		NER		Other than NER	
	Number	Amount (₹ in lakh)	Number	Amount (₹ in lakh)	Number	Amount (₹ in lakh)	Number	Amount (₹ in lakh)
2005-06	0	0	1	7.42	1	1.00	8	12.20
2006-07	0	0	1	19.38	1	2.00	0	0
2007-08	3	8.15	0	0	2	3.53	4	15.49
2008-09	2	6.90	3	22.22	0	0	5	13.38
2009-10	1	1.96	3	22.04	4	6.65	5	18.66
2010-11	2	23.68	5	22.62	4	9.50	14	54.56
Total	8	40.69	13	93.68	12	22.68	36	114.29

2.9.4.1 Selection of issues for seminars and publication of proceedings

The Institute selects the topics of the seminars on the basis of proposals submitted by the Fellows or collaborating Institutions. The seminar proceedings are normally published and circulated among the research Fellows and other participants. It was observed that the Institute had no criteria for selection of issues for discussion at seminars or symposia and the objectives sought to be achieved by holding these were not documented. The Institute did not publish the proceedings of nine out of 21 seminars organised by it. In respect of collaborative seminars, the Institute received only four published proceedings in respect of 48 seminars. This indicated that the Institute did not have a proper system for publishing seminar proceedings and following up with collaborative institutions for receipt of the same.

In its reply as well as during the exit conference, the Institute stated (August 2011, December 2011) that some of the seminar proceedings had no merit for publication but were useful in other ways. Regarding collaborative seminars, the Institute stated (June 2012) that the publications of proceedings of collaborative seminars were at the discretion of the organising institutions.

Audit is of view that even if the proceedings of some seminars were not published, they should have been documented for internal use of the Institute. Since the Institute released grants for the collaborative seminars, it should have insisted that the proceedings were forwarded to it even though the same may not have been published by the collaborating bodies.

2.9.4.2 Seminar expenditure

Grants released by the Ministry to the Institute have a condition that allowances should be so regulated as not to exceed the corresponding allowances sanctioned to Government employees. Further as per GFR 209(6) (iv) (a) all grantee institutions which receive more than 50 *per cent* of their recurring expenditure in the form of grant-in-aid, should ordinarily formulate terms and conditions of service of their employees which are, by and large, not higher than those applicable to similar categories of employees in Central Government. In exceptional cases, relaxation may be made in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.

In terms of the Ministry of Finance's order of October 2008, participation in conferences/seminars/study tours and presentation of papers etc. abroad in cases where invitations are directly received by the officers by name, by virtue of their expertise in a particular field, are to be treated as personal visits, for which the officers would have to proceed on leave. Visits of the above nature are to be allowed only if 100 *per cent* funding support is provided by the organisers. Scrutiny revealed that the Institute, in violation of the aforesaid order, provided financial assistance of ₹ 7.10 lakh to five Fellows, who attended seminars abroad, during the period from August 2009 to July 2010 on direct invitations from the organisers. No relaxation as required under the Rule mentioned above, had been obtained from the Ministry of Finance regarding this matter.

Recommendations

- *The Institute may evolve a system for selection of issues for discussion at seminars and symposia and identifying the objectives to be achieved through the same. Proceedings of the seminars and symposia may be well documented and disseminated to the concerned persons, institutes and organisations.*
- *The Institute should follow Government rules and regulations regarding payment of allowances to its Fellows and avoid incurring expenditure on items disallowed by them.*

2.9.5 Maintaining the library

The Institute's library had a collection of 13327 books as on 31 March 2011. During 2005-11, it procured 5498 books valuing



₹ 85.69 lakh and 533 journals valuing ₹ 73.39 lakh. Audit observed the following shortcomings in the maintenance of the library:

- Computerisation of library information is essential for proper maintenance of a library. Audit observed that the library information software (LSEase²), installed at a cost of ₹ 2.60 lakh had several constraints such as limitation of data entry, limitation of search field, link with other databases, single tasking, non-availability of year-wise reports etc. The software failed to generate information relating to issued and returned books. Besides, it did not provide subject-wise views of the library's collection, making it difficult for readers to search for books on specific subjects.
- The MoA envisages that the Institute should make its library sources available to the public for study and research purposes. However, the Institute took no initiative to make its library accessible to the public. Consequently, access to the library was limited to 33 to 58 Institute Fellows and officials during 2005-11. The Review Committee constituted by the Institute (as mentioned earlier in paragraph 2.9.3.1) also recommended making of the library's sources accessible to the public. Thus, the objective of the Institute to extend library facilities to the public was not fulfilled.
- General Financial Rules 2005 provide that for libraries having not more than 20,000 volumes, complete physical verification of books should be done every year. Audit observed that physical verification of library books had not been done since April 2006. Resultantly, the actual number of books present in the library could not be ascertained by Audit.

The Institute contended (December 2011) that access to the library was restricted as this was not a general public library. The Institute's reply was contradictory to its objective of making its library sources available to the public. Following the audit objection, the Institute announced (2012) the availability of its library sources to the general public through its website.

Recommendation

The Institute may take steps to ensure optimum utilization of information technology to make its library user-friendly.

² An indigenous library software developed by LIBSYS Corp.

2.9.6 Maintaining the museum

The Institute's MoA stipulated the establishing and maintaining of a museum at the former residence of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Kolkata with the objective of highlighting his life and works as a distinguished national leader and thinker. The



Institute took over (September 2005) possession of the said building and opened a museum there in November 2006. Audit noted the following:

- The Institute failed to make any addition to the museum's original collection of 22 personal belongings of Maulana Azad viz. the Bharat Ratna award, his reading glasses, caps, trousers, cigarette case etc., which were acquired in October 2004. Although the Review Committee appointed (July 2006) by the Institute (mentioned earlier in paragraph 2.9.3.1) had recommended that efforts should be made to procure valuable materials from different parts of India, no such efforts seemed to have been made. It had also recommended that the museum should have not only the items belonging to Maulana Azad but also writings, photographs, audio and video materials that throw light on the life, ideas and activities of Maulana Azad. No such additions had, however, been made by the Institute.
- The Institute took no initiative to increase public awareness about the museum. Audit observed that only 398 visitors had visited the museum during January 2007 to July 2011.

Thus, the objective of setting up the museum, as envisaged in the MoA, remained mostly unfulfilled due to lack of effective action on the part of the Institute.

The Institute informed (December 2011) that an initiative had been taken for publicity of the museum. The Institute also stated (June 2012) that it had formed an internal sub-committee for the museum, to look into its affairs.

Recommendation

The Institute should take effective action to collect more writings, photographs, audio and video materials etc. that throw light on the life, ideas and activities of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Conclusion

The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies was created as a centre for research and learning on developments in Asia from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, with special emphasis on their links with India and to promote study and research on secularism and universal brotherhood and on the life and works of Maulana Azad. Audit observed that a number of research project proposals on developments in Asia seemed to be unrelated to India. Similarly, some of the project proposals on secularism and the life of Maulana Azad were not related to these areas. The Institute did not have any policy to facilitate transparent selection of research Fellows. It had an inadequate monitoring and review system, because of which it could not ensure that the research Fellows complied with the terms of their agreements with the Institute and completed their projects on time. Publication of research reports was inordinately delayed. The library of the Institute was not initially accessible to the public. Following the audit observation, the Institute announced (2012) the availability of its library sources to the general public through its website. Annual physical verification of library books had not been carried out since April 2006. Proper efforts were not made to increase the collection of the museum since its establishment by the Institute.

Annex-I

(Refers to paragraph 2.9.3.1)

Statement showing details of 16 research project proposals not linked with the objectives of the MoA

Sl. No.	Title of the Project	Objective under which the project was taken up	Institute's justification	Audit comments
1.	Zionism and the state of Israel : a critical study	Asian developments	Zionism and its critics are the heart of Israeli position which required attention of India. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of Israeli position on India not brought out in the project proposal.
2.	Israel leadership and negotiations in context of Arab Israel conflict 1990 onwards	Asian developments	Israeli position was required attention of India. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of Israeli position on India not brought out in the project proposal.
3.	Contemporary scenario of Bihar politics: a political economy approach	Secularism	Project is on secularism at state level. Hence linked with 3(i)(e) of MoA	Project proposal is on politics of Bihar. No link with secularism.
4.	The heartland debate in central Asia	Asian developments	Study on the consequences of Soviet disintegration which were crucial to Indian foreign policy. Hence linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of consequences of Soviet disintegration on India not brought out in the project proposal.
5.	Politics of indebtedness of indigenous people : issues, policies, actions and consequences - study of Purulia district	Secularism	Project is on secularism at regional level. Hence linked with 3(i)(e) of MoA	Project proposal is on socio-economic and geopolitical status of indigenous people of Purulia district and not on secularism.
6.	Evolution of Russian foreign policy, orientation towards the central Asia region (1992-2002) - the first decade	Asian developments	Study on the consequences of Soviet disintegration which were crucial to Indian foreign policy. Hence linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of consequences of Soviet disintegration on India was not brought out in the project proposal.
7.	From Siberia to Kazakh steppes: re-exploring regional histories of Eurasia	Asian developments	Study on the consequences of Soviet disintegration which were crucial to Indian foreign policy. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of consequences of Soviet disintegration on India was not brought out in the project proposal.
8.	Addressing the challenges of human security in Afghanistan	Asian developments	Afghanistan's current status is a fundamental concern of India's foreign policy. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of Afghanistan's current status with respect to India was not brought out in the project proposal.
9.	West Bengal since partition 1947	Life and works of Maulana Azad	Maulana A.K. Azad was crucial to post partition politician linked with Bengal hence Project was on ideas of Maulana Azad. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Project proposal is on the political position of Bengal since Partition but not on the life and works of Maulana Azad.

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Sl. No.	Title of the Project	Objective under which the project was taken up	Institute's justification	Audit comments
10.	The debates on the Israeli state and society in transition, setting new paradigms in the state and nation building processes	Asian developments	Project touches the Palestinian question, which is crucial to India's relations with West Asia. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of the Palestinian position on India not brought out in the project proposal.
11.	The Caucasus ulcer: changing dynamics of crime-terror interaction in the trans-Caucasus in post 9/11 era	Asian developments	Terrorism in the Caucasus is linked with terrorism in Kashmir. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of terrorism in the Caucasus on Kashmir/India not brought out in the project proposal.
12.	Reflection of political ideas on Chinese literature in post 1949 period	Asian developments	The change in China's relations with India was reflected in the attitude of writers and required study. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of changes in China's relationship with India was not brought out in the project proposal.
13.	Religion and politics in Bangladesh : 1971 - 2004	Asian developments	The importance of developments in Bangladesh for India is self evident. Hence, linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of developments in Bangladesh on India was not brought out in the project proposal.
14.	Role of the Bengali press in the Bengal renaissance of the 19th century and in the national movement of the 20th century	Life and works of Maulana Azad	Maulana Azad was influenced by the intellectual traditions of Bengal in his youth, hence linked with Maulana Azad's life and works. Hence linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	The project proposal was on the role of Bengali press in the Bengal renaissance and not on the life and works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
15.	Central Asia: geopolitics, security and regional stability	Asian developments	Study on the consequences of Soviet disintegration which were crucial to Indian foreign policy. Hence linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	Impact of the consequences of the Soviet disintegration on India was not brought out in the project proposal.
16.	The culture of history	Life and works of Maulana Azad	Study of the development of India's cultural policies - which was linked to the life and ideas of Maulana Azad, who was the India's first Minister of Culture. Hence linked with 3(i)(a) of MoA	The project proposal was for a study of the development of India's cultural policies and not on the life and works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.