

Restatement of the ICHR's Goals and Organisation

The External Review of the ICHR that was completed in March 2011 (Report enclosed as **Annexure-I**) has raised important points concerning the functioning of the Council and has made significant suggestions for improvements. This provides the occasion for re-visioning the goal and functioning of the ICHR, particularly as it is widely recognised that (exceptions apart) the state of the discipline in the country is far from satisfactory.

A point by point response has already been given (cf. **Annexure-I**), which I would now like to elaborate upon. It is now forty years since the ICHR was constituted, and the time has come to fundamentally re-examine its structure and activities in a changed and fast-changing world. The overall goals for which it was set up, *read in today's light*, aimed to

- encourage engagement with History at the broadest conceivable level
- to provide a forum for systematic, open-ended inquiry and debate, with no attempt to reach finality (it should *not* be *perceived* as an institution mandated to produce 'authorised' versions of historical knowledge, but an *autonomous* and *professional* body)
- to stimulate research, with special emphasis on interdisciplinarity and language skills, in fields both old and new, keeping in view the evolving world of History
- to foster international links between India and the world in matters pertaining to the study of History

Quite apart from the importance of the humanities to the intellectual wealth and cultural health of the country as public goods, there are going to be new demands on them in the 21st century. As India begins to make its presence felt in new ways in the emerging international scenario, and as the idea of the nation becomes more complex, getting to understand its history in its diverse dimensions will grow in salience. Besides, the world over there is a renewed interest in India and its history – national, regional and local. It is therefore imperative that we create knowledge resources and expertise to meet these new demands. ICHR must play an important role in this process.

1. Proposed Projects

To achieve its goals the ICHR needs to go beyond the function of providing funds. It was not envisaged as a mere grant giving agency. So **in addition** to its current programmes (now under revision) of research fellowships, providing grants for seminars, workshops, publications and foreign travel to attend seminars and for data collection (these are also being streamlined), it was to initiate crucial projects of its own (which, as the Review Committee has noted, it has already done in a limited way) [cf. para 2.i-iii of the Report – **Annexure-I**].

- My Council in 2011 approved a project to survey and assess the holdings of our **State Archives** as well as **old libraries** and other repositories of materials in regional languages; digitization of some of this material and making it available, along with catalogues of the repositories, on our website as well as in our documentation centre. The results of these surveys will go a long way in building up a public data base which can then be put on-line. This would be of lasting value to all scholars, professional and lay. For this project to succeed, the ICHR will need to work in close collaboration with the recently revived Indian Historical Records Commission – now christened Committee – and the Ministry of Culture, since Archives and Libraries are their concern. At the first meeting of the Indian Historical Records Committee, my suggestion that an appropriate mechanism be put in place for coordination between the MHRD and the Ministry of Culture for such projects was strongly endorsed. Moreover, our proposed project should be seen as part of a national effort required to preserve our historical resources. At present many of our State Archives and old Libraries are in a pathetic state. Last month, **The Hindu** (19 April, 2012) carried a centre page article by a Harvard Ph.D History Scholar titled ‘Our past is being moth – eaten’. Its gist is that ‘India’s archives and libraries are in a state of ruin. We would lose our history and heritage if the government does not act to save them’ (copy enclosed as **Annexure-II**). Clearly, the matter is urgent.
- Another approved project relates to Epigraphy. This is a dying subject. The ICHR intends to organise programmes to impart skills in both scripts and languages in collaboration with the ASI. This would also help other projects of the ICHR.
- In addition, we should like to begin an ICHR Oral History Project, to record folklore, memories, etc., from regions and peoples with a rich oral tradition, which are mines of historical data on knowledge systems and cosmologies (cf. para 3 of Report and ICHR

response - **Annexure-I**). This would be an extension of the ongoing work on oral history at the Guwahati Regional Centre. (The Oral History Project could be undertaken in collaboration with NMML, INTACH, CCK of the Ambedkar University)

- Apart from the ICHR's documentation and translation projects, it is necessary to identify areas/themes on which collaborative research is required. The ICHR would help in putting together a team, and provide it with the infrastructure, for such research (e.g., histories of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim etc.; French/Portuguese/Dutch/Danish enclaves; Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, Ladakh; pre- and post-1947 histories of India). Such projects would involve senior scholars, and young researchers who might be working towards their PhDs. The ICHR would, for this purpose, also collaborate with institutions/individuals from India and abroad.

2. Capacity-building and outreach:

- Capacity-building: In addition to the courses on historiography and research methodology for young teachers and research scholars that the ICHR has been conducting and which have been favourably commented upon by the Review Committee (cf. para 2 vi – **Annexure-I**), it proposes to organise capacity-building programmes with college and school teachers across the country, through Workshops during vacations or post-lecture hours with the collaboration of Central Universities and our Regional Centres.
- Outreach: (i) Extra-curricular programmes in association with school teachers for school students on 'Joys of History', exhibitions, screening of historical documentary films, historical tours, etc. We also need to engage with pedagogical practices in schools and make them more imaginative so as to make the discipline more exciting and meaningful for students.

(ii) An expanded programme of seminars, symposia, book discussion, 'meet the historian' get-togethers, etc., in close association with History Departments of Colleges and Universities in order to draw in history teachers and students into the academic activities of the ICHR both in Delhi and at the Regional Centres.

3. Library and Documentation Centre

The ICHR needs to equip its Documentation Centre and Digital Library with appropriate equipment and personnel (also mentioned in our XII Plan proposals). These two can be made into a National Asset for historians. We need to showcase our rare books collection and Documentation Centre holdings (which are set to grow once our project of source-material procurement—archival and non-archival—gets going). We propose to procure digitized copies of various private collections in India and in repositories abroad in association with the institutions such as the National Mission for Manuscripts, NAI, and the Chicago Project. This collection would include regional language materials, e.g., ‘vernacular tracts’ which are available at the British Library. For this purpose we need to negotiate terms and conditions with these institutions.

4. Website

Although the ICHR has a website this needs to be organised so that it is in keeping with the objectives outlined above. The website should be comprehensive and interactive. This work will be outsourced soon. Meanwhile, discussion with the National Informatics Centre and Services Inc. [NICSI] for hosting our website on their network and server are in progress.

5. Regional Centres

The two existing Regional Centre, one at Guwahati and other at Bangalore are doing commendable work. Their Libraries and Documentation Centres are growing and are being utilised by a substantial number of scholars, professional and lay. Their lecture, seminar and exhibition programmes are well attended and many people have expressed their appreciation for their efforts. These Centres are essential for our proposed new projects, as well as for our outreach programmes, and over time we will need some new personnel. Ideally, we need to have some more such Centres to cover the whole country, one each for the North, West and the East. For the North and West, the Universities of Kashmir and Mumbai have allotted physical space to the ICHR. We have already written to you about the Kashmir Centre for your approval. Here it may be pointed out that setting up such Centres has been recommended by the last two Review Committees (The One-Man Review Committee of November 2005 [para 7.24 **Annexure-III**] and the last Review Committee Report of August 2011 [para 4.i **Annexure-I**]. In view of the increasing number of Universities being set up in different parts of the country, these Centres

need to have an enhanced presence. They can, e.g., run the Refresher Programmes of the UGC for teachers, identified and initiate projects on regional and local historical resources and thereby contribute to what may be termed ‘federalization of knowledge’ within a wider prospective.

6. Organisation

Our efforts to streamline as well expand our activities point to a need for restructuring the ICHR. Its staff and the working environment need modernisation in order to undertake the tasks outlined above. [The Review Committee has strongly underlined the need for recruitment of staff at the headquarters as well as the regional centres in keeping with present-day academic, technical and administrative requirements, with appropriate designations and emoluments (paras 7.i-iii; 10.i) **Annexure-I**. For this a new approach to staff and its functions is essential.

7. Restructuring the ICHR

The Chairman after wide consultation with scholars has prepared a draft proposal for restructuring the ICHR which has been examined by a sub-committee comprising, besides the Chairman and the Member Secretary the following: Professor Hari Shankar Vasudevan, Professor Suranjan Das, Professor Mushirul Hasan, Professor B.P. Sahu, Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, Professor T.R. Ghoble, Professor Narayani Gupta, Professor Rajan Gurukkal.

The Sub-Committee met on 6 March and again on 30 April and 1 May 2012. The last meeting was also attended by Shri A.N. Jha, the Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor, Ministry of HRD and also a Council member. It has come up with certain proposals after going into their financial implications. In this context, before I proceed with the proposals, I should like to point out: a) the Sub-Committee was aware that under the present financial circumstances of the Government new posts are difficult to create; and b) that any restructuring (including up-gradation of existing posts) will have to be uniform for the all the Councils under the MHRD (I had earlier suggested to the Hon’ble Minister that the three Councils should devise a common programme of restructuring and rationalisation, but this never happened)

Proposals:

The ICHR suggests a restructuring and reorientation of the administration based on the following principles

- (i) **The current salary structure of senior staff is to be revised in order to ensure recruitment appropriate to the functions of these officers.** Senior staff is in a position where such staff is called upon to evaluate the work of University Academic staff and provide opportunities to such Academic staff. Applicants for such positions should be appropriately qualified. Yet current salaries are such that application and recruitment is unlikely of those who would be qualified to undertake such functions. This point was raised in an MHRD Note of September 1987 (copy enclosed as **Annexure-IV**) and still remains valid. Indeed it is urgent today.
- (ii) **Revision of the staff structure is required to give greater attention to the growth and development of the Library and its Documentation functions.** The ICHR's Library has grown considerably since the time of its inception. Fresh thought requires to be given to its staffing.
- (iii) **New opportunities exist to enhance and extend the Council's work. Re-designations/Adjustments in job description and salary have to be made in order to ensure the adaptation of the organization to such opportunities.** Sound command of Information Technology is necessary, for instance, for both book publication and other forms of publication (web material, CDs etc.). It is impossible to find adequately qualified persons to take on such tasks for the remuneration that the Council provides. No designations/job descriptions exist that take account of the requirements.
- (iv) **Correction is required of anomalies in salary scales caused by variation in such scales for positions with the same title and basic job description in sister organizations of the MHRD.** In the case of the Indian Council for Social Science Research, for instance, the positions of Asst. Director carry a different scale from those of Asst. Directors of the ICHR.

In the circumstances, the following recommendations are made.

- (i) **Revision of the Grade Pay of the Member Secretary (MS) and Re-designation of the position.** The Member Secretary, ICHR, is the highest executive of the organization and is required to evaluate the work of University History Departments and the output of Research Institutes and to supervise the overall grants and project policies of the Council. The MS is also called upon to interact with equivalent institutions abroad. Yet the Grade Pay of the MS is less than that of a Professor in the University/Research Institutes of the ICSSR. This anomaly requires to be corrected and the MS' Grade Pay should be on par with that of a Professor in a Central University. Given the tasks involved in the position of MS, the position may be re-designated as Director General who will be *ex-officio* Member Secretary. The Director General shall be on deputation from his/her parent organization for not more than 5 years.

- (ii) **Review and re-designation of the position of Director and revision of scale to ensure equivalence with that of Associate Professor in Central Universities.** The ICHR has two positions of Director. One Director is associated with Research and Administration. One Director is associated with Journal, Publication and Library. The tasks associated with research and administration are demanding and cannot be combined as is the case. The Directors may be re-designated as Director (Administration) and Director (Academic) accordingly. Director (Admn.) should be preferably on deputation from one of the public services, but someone who has an understanding of academics, and would act as a facilitator in accordance with the rules and procedure of administration. The other Director (Academic) will be in charge of the academic programmes with a team of Assistant Directors and 6 Research Associates (to be hired on short term basis on fixed salaries of Rs.30,000-35,000 p.m.). They will help with the academic programmes and the management of funding functions on the ICHR [These Research Associates will be in addition to Research Assistants for specific ICHR projects from the ICHR's own budget]. Along with the Director General / Member Secretary and the Chairman, this team will form

a sort of collegium of the ICHR. It will meet once a fortnight to decide on, and monitor the regular programmes of the ICHR, Seminars, Symposia, etc. as also sift applications for grants and fellowship. Efficiently organised the members of this collegium will have time enough to pursue their own researches and studies. This point has been reiterated in the Review Committee's report (para 10.1 **Annexure-I**).

At present, they receive salaries that are the equivalent of Asst. Professors in Central Universities. But in fact Asst. Professors in Universities are placed in the PB4 i.e Associate Professors scale with a lower grade pay after service of eight years. This anomaly requires to be corrected and the salary revised at least to that of Associate Professor in a Central University.

The Sub-Committee strongly recommends a system of lateral movement of academic staff from the Universities be seriously considered by the Ministry.

- (iii) **Out of the 10 positions of Dy. Director available with us, upgradation of two positions of Deputy Director to that of Director with a salary equivalent to that of an Associate Professor in a Central University has been proposed.** Both the work of dealing with the Journal, and the large publication output of the Council require the presence of an officer of the status of Director to deal with this task. Also, the size and functions of the Library of the ICHR are quite different now from that which prevailed at the time of the formation of the Council and the decisions on its staffing. The Committee recommends the re-designation of the positions of Deputy Director (Journal) and Deputy Director (Publication) to meet the demands of this situation. The position of Deputy Director (Publication) may be re-designated as Librarian. The position of Deputy Director (Journal) may be re-designated as Manager (Publication and Sales). Given the demands of the duties, both positions will be treated on par with that of Director and carry the salaries mentioned in (ii) above.

- (iv) **Upgradation of one post of Asst. Director to that of Deputy Director and redesignation of the position as that of Public Relations Officer/Liason Officer** (with some legal expertise). The necessity for greater interaction with the public and the promotion of the projects of the Council requires an officer specially designated to handle these responsibilities. The Council proposes the upgradation of one position of Asst. Director (Editor) to that of Deputy Director and the redesignation of this post as Public Relations Officer.

- (v) **Two positions of Deputy Director to be re-designated without change in salary structure.** The requirements of the Library of the ICHR are considerable and require reinforcement with additional properly qualified staff for the Library. To ensure this, the position of Deputy Director (Library) may be re-designated as Deputy Librarian – carrying the appropriate salary. Again, the importance of digitalization for the Library has to be recognized. The position of Deputy Director (Documentation) may therefore be re-designated as Deputy Librarian (Documentation) – carrying the appropriate salary. It may be emphasized that the re-designation requires no alteration in salary structure.

- (vi) **Other Positions of Deputy Director to remain the same.** The ICHR has a further eight positions of Deputy Director. The tasks and salaries of these will remain the same as previously.

- (vii) **Revision of the salaries of positions of Asst. Director in order to ensure equivalence with those of Asst. Director in the ICSSR.** A difference exists in the salaries for the position of Asst. Director in ICSSR and ICHR. The Committee proposes revision of the salaries so that those prevailing in the ICHR may be the same as those in the ICSSR.

- (viii) **Two positions of Asst. Director to be re-designated to increase the staff of the Library without change in salary structure.** As mentioned earlier, the requirements of the Library of the ICHR are now considerable. To improve the work

of the Library, further staff require to be provided. Ideally, we would like to have a System Administrator for the Library and the rest of the office, one Information Scientist, 2 Senior Information Assistant, 2 Junior Information Assistants, 1 Computer Operator. But for the present we propose to get these functions done through outsourcing. The Council proposes that the position of Asst. Director (Library) may be re-designated as Asst. Librarian – carrying the appropriate salary. Again, to ensure smooth functioning of digital documentation, the position of Asst. Director (Editor) may therefore be re-designated as Asst. Librarian (Documentation Centre) – carrying the appropriate salary. It may be emphasized that the re-designation requires no alteration in salary structure.

- (ix) **Changes to improve promotional avenues for Secretarial and Clerical staff.** A degree of imbalance exists between the number of LDCs (20) and UDCs (6). Promotional avenues are also absent for Secretarial staff. To ensure better prospects the Council proposes that 4 existing posts of LDS be upgraded to that of UDC. 2 posts of Stenographer may also be upgraded to that of Personal Assistant.

All other staff at the Council will remain the same except as follows, where the Council is willing to adjust the financial overheads of changes mentioned above by surrendering the following posts since study has shown that they do not serve a useful function in their current form as permanent positions:

- **Assistant Director (Publication)**
- **Editorial Assistants (2)*.** The surrender of the positions will not affect the work of the Council since the work normally handled by these assistants will be outsourced. One of these two posts is presently filled up.
- **Semi Professional Assistant.** The work of this member of staff will be handled by other existing staff.
- **Lift Operator ***. This post will stand surrendered as and when it falls vacant. The work of this post will be handled by other existing staff.

- **Copy Holder.** The functions of this position as a permanent position are no longer relevant to the Council.
- **Gestetner Operator ***. The functions of this position as a permanent position are no longer relevant to the Council.
- **Post of Daftry *** The functions of this position as a permanent position is no longer required by the Council.

* The posts proposed to be surrendered will become operative as and when the present incumbents retire. The vacant posts in this category can be surrendered with immediate effect (**Annexure V**)

The above surrender of posts will enable the Council to make the changes associated with restructuring without major changes in its budget. It may be stressed that these minimal structural adjustment will be accompanied by important initiatives. This is especially so in the case of the library. Here expertise in the organisation of data and access to materials will require qualified assistants. We shall, in the short run, deal with these problems through outsourcing and short-term project work to be met from appropriate heads of the budget.

A comprehensive statement indicating the proposed restructuring of the ICHR is enclosed as **Annexure-VI**.

A statement indicating the matching savings for the additions / deletions of the posts involved in the proposed restructuring of ICHR is enclosed as **Annexure-VII**.

Premises:

The Review Committee recognised that the most immediate and urgent requirement of the ICHR is, of course, physical space which would be in keeping with to the above-listed tasks (cf. para 8 iii of the Report). As an apex body sponsoring historical research in the country, the ICHR first and foremost requires a building of its own with an architectural aesthetic appropriate to an

institution of learning. We suggest that 35, Ferozeshah Road premises be vacated by other occupants (UGC, ICSSR) and the ICHR be given the right to restructure the building.

- In this restructuring our Library and Documentation Centre, now housed in cramped, leaky, unwelcoming part of the building will be the centre-piece. A proper state of the art conference room and seminar room are essential for our academic activities and reputation. With adequate space we would be able to upgrade our Library and Documentation Centre as among the best in the country and to attract a larger number of students and scholars to it. (At present we have space for only sixteen users at a time.)
- A pleasant and hygienic Cafeteria too is a must.
- So is a bookstall for ICHR publications.

These, along with a regular programme of lectures, seminars, symposia, book discussions, and exhibitions can turn the well-located and accessible premises into a hub of academic activity and scholarly interaction.

- We also need to have a regular Scholars' Guest House. The DDA has some land for us in Dwarka. This could be used for building such a guest house. Accommodation here can be hired out to other academic institutions/universities when available.
- Similar arrangements need to be made in our Regional Centres. (The Gauhati Centre is at present housed in a small part of the University Library. The University has allotted us 2.5 bighas of land for constructing the centre's own building. We have written to the Ministry regarding funds for construction. I suggest that MHRD approach the Ministry of Development of North-East Region for financial contribution).

The Chairman ICHR Professor Basudev Chatterji had presented the proposal before the Hon'ble Union Minister (Ministry of Human Resource Development), Mr. Kapil Sibal as a sequel to the IVth Review Committee Report. The Review Committee had suggested significant modifications in the administrative structure of the ICHR.

The Ministry of HRD has accepted the proposal in principle and efforts are on to obtain Ministry's approval.