

(c) The above call to Pakistan is a reflection of the growing conviction of the international community that Pakistan must put a permanent end to cross-border terrorism originating from its soil.

(d) Issues relating to terrorism are discussed regularly with friendly countries, including the G-8 countries.

Illegal flights of Kazakhstan Airlines

1690. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Aero of Kazakhstan made several flights into India illegally on a forged permission;

(b) if so, the details of the probe in the matter;

(c) whether other embassies are involved too; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) Sir, an agency viz. M/s Sam Aviation, used to obtain permission to operate the flights of the foreign company viz. M/s GST Aero of Kazakhstan as their Indian principal. It was brought to notice of the Ministry by the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 28th March, 2002 that the suspect operator under the name of M/s GST Aero was trying to approach Indian authorities on or around 22nd March, 2002 and apply for flights on behalf of the Embassy on the Embassy's forged notes verbale.

(b) The matter is still under investigation of the concerned Indian authorities.

(c) The Ministry has no information about the involvement of any Embassy in such flights.

(d) Does not arise.

Transit route from Agartala to Kolkata through Bangladesh

1691. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open transit route for goods and passengers from Agartala to Kolkata through Bangladesh; and

[1 August, 2002]

RAJYA SABHA

(b) The other steps Government are going to take to minimise the tough and lengthy journey by road from Agartala to Kolkata via Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The Government of India has repeatedly proposed to the Government of Bangladesh to provide facilities for transit of goods and passengers to the north eastern States, including Tripura. The Government of Bangladesh has not yet agreed to grant transit facilities. The Governments of India and Bangladesh have signed an Agreement on 10 July 2001 to start a bus service between Agartala and Dhaka. Discussions are underway with Government of Bangladesh to make the bus service operational. Once it becomes operational passengers travelling from Agartala to Dhaka would be able to proceed to Kolkata through the existing Kolkata-Dhaka bus service.

(b) The road from Agartala to Kolkata (1700 km) passes through the States of Tripura, Assam Meghalaya and West Bengal involving National Highways No.44,40,37,31,31C and 34. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has launched a programme for the improvement of the riding quality of all the existing National Highways including the highways mentioned above. The improvement of riding quality under this programme is likely to be completed within next 2-3 years. Further, 4 laning of a length of about 616 km of the above mentioned route from Agartala to Kolkata is included in East-West Corridor of National Highway Development Project, which is being implemented by National Highways Authority of India. This project is likely to be completed by December 2007.

Withdrawal of MFN Status to Pakistan

1692. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering a proposal to withdraw MFN status to Pakistan in view of the latter's continued support to cross border terrorism against India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the decision is likely to be taken and finally announced?