

India opposed the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Board on the grounds that the IAEA, whose mandate is the promotion of peaceful uses of atomic energy is not the appropriate forum to raise such an issue. India also pointed out that in the past Nuclear Weapon States like the U.S., U.K., and China have said that the issue of nuclear testing did not lie within the competence of the Agency.

The issue of nuclear testing was raised in the IAEA Annual General Conference in 1996 when France and China carried out nuclear tests prior to signing the CTBT. India's Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) was also discussed in 1974 at the IAEA.

Renewal of passports of Indian citizens domiciled abroad

*439. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUG-GAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that renewal of passports of Indian citizens domiciled abroad are not attended to for several months and in some cases even for years;

(b) what is the normal time for giving clearance to the Indian Missions abroad for renewal of the passports in the era of fax, internets and E-mails;

(c) whether it is also a fact that such delays in obtaining clearance have led to corrupt practices; and

(d) whether any enquiry has been made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Indian diplomatic missions and posts abroad are empowered to renew passports immediately on receipt of application for the same.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Damage caused by rains and floods

*440. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the States which are affected by recent rains and floods;

(b) the extent of damage caused to lives and property, including crop in those States; and

(c) the details of the relief and rehabilitation provided to these States, State wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) According to reports received from the State Governments, some parts of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim and West Bengal have been affected due to heavy rains, floods, cyclone, landslides in varying degrees during the current South-West Monsoon.

These natural calamities have reportedly claimed a toll of 1388 human lives and damaged 0.94 lakh hectares cropped area and 2.89 lakh houses/huts.

The State Governments are required to undertake relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities out of the corpus of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). The contribution to this Fund is made by the Government of India and the State Governments in the ratio of 3:1. The contribution of the Government of India is released in four equal quarterly instalments automatically. Additional assistance, if any, is provided to the State Governments from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFR) in the wake of calamities of rare severity according to a prescribed procedure.

The Government of India have released the first two quarterly instalments of Centre's share of CRF for the year 1998-99 to all the States. The amount