

The terrorist attacks of September 11 in the United States have only served to expose Pakistan's links with international terrorism, and groups that practice violent and obscurantist ideologies. The international community is strongly supportive of India's determination to defeat terrorism. The strong consensus in the international community today, is that there is no justification whatsoever for terrorism and that this must be eradicated wherever it exists.

Indian mission in rented premises

534. SHRI R. P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Missions in some countries like Brazil, China, Botswana, Qatar etc. have been continually paying high rents for tenanted premises although they had bought/were in possession of big land plots between 10 to 36 years back to build embassy structures but no construction activity has been undertaken despite considerable costs incurred on consultants etc.; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the details of each such tenanted property/ purchased or gifted land, showing rental outgo over the years/time frame fixed for construction and the proposals with their present status?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the Government of India has acquired plots of land in Brazil, China, Botswana, Qatar as also in other countries for construction of Embassy complex. These plots of land were acquired indifferent points of time depending upon the availability of suitable plot of land/local laws as also number reciprocal exchange. The construction projects on these plots acquired by the Government are undertaken in a phased manner keeping in view :

- (i) economic viability of the project taking into account the cost of construction *vis-a-vis* the rental structure, and
- (ii) the cost of renting building in a particular country compared with other countries where plots of land have also been acquired.

A number of projects had been short-listed for early implementation based on the above criteria and some of the major projects executed in the past 15 years include Chancery-cum-Embassy complex projects in Colombo, Islamabad, Kuwait, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, New York, Abu Dhabi and Berlin.

The Embassy complex construction projects in China, Qatar and Botswana are at advanced state of processing. Financial approvals have been obtained for

the Qatar Embassy complex and Botswana Embassy Residence projects. The conceptual layout plan for the Chancery building in Beijing has been finalized. The economic viability of the Brasilia Embassy complex is yet to be established, the main reason being high cost of construction and relatively low rentals.

The annual rental liability on renting of building in Beijing, Doha, Botswana and Brazil is Rs. 5.17 crores, as against the total annual rental liability of hiring of buildings for India Missions of Rs. 142.16 crores.

Hindus and Sikhs stranded in Afghanistan or Pakistan

535. DR. MANMOHAN SINGH:
SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:
SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Hindus and Sikhs of Afghanistan still stranded in Afghanistan or Pakistan; and

(b) the steps being taken to grant visas to enable these unfortunate persons to migrate to India?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

(a) Afghanistan has been in the grip of prolonged conflict for over last two decades and on account of this a large number of Afghan nationals, including Afghans of Indian origin have been living in India. In addition, we have also received information that 275 Afghan Sikhs/Hindu families from Afghanistan are presently in Pakistan with an intention of travelling to India. Government is examining these requests to travel to India sympathetically and keeping in view the humanitarian grounds. A significant number of applications have already been cleared for grant of visa. Government have also waived visa fee for these applicants.

(b) In keeping with our traditional policy of friendship towards the people of Afghanistan, all Afghan nationals, including those of Indian origin, who came to India with valid travel documents/passports are being allowed to stay unhindered; they are currently being granted annual visa extensions.

Government is also working actively, alongwith other countries for restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan so that conditions could be created conducive to early return of these families to their homes.