

(b) the discussions held in this regard during the recent conference in Russia and the action plan formalised with the President of Pakistan; and

(c) the circumstances which necessitated the change in the decision that no discussion would be held with Pakistan until it takes appropriate action in the wake of 26/11 incident occurred in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Government will take all such steps as are necessary to safeguard the country's interests.

(b) and (c) Subsequent to the Prime Minister's Statement in Parliament on 9th June 2009 that it is in our vital interest to try again to make peace with Pakistan, Prime Minister met the President of Pakistan on the sidelines of the SCO-BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg on 16th June, 2009 and conveyed India's expectation that the Government of Pakistan will honour its commitments to take strong and effective action to prevent the use of Pakistani territory for terrorist attacks on India.

Ill treatment to PIOs in UK

†1386. SHRI PRABHAT JHA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that the people of Indian origin living in United Kingdom (U.K.) are being treated like culprits;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/being taken by Government to prevent the discriminatory behaviour with Indians living permanently in U.K. and other countries of the world?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Amendments to H-1B Visa procedure

1387. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of amendments made to the H-1B Visa procedure by US Government recently;

(b) whether it is a fact that the amendments would badly hit Indian IT professionals;

(c) whether it is also a fact that out of 65,000 probable Visas to US, only 45,000 people have applied so far;

(d) if so, whether any consultations with the US officials have been carried out not to insist on amendments; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) The provisions of 'Employ American Workers Act' of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act impose restrictions on hiring foreign workers with H-1B visas by US firms receiving bailout money under the Troubled Assets Relief Programme (TARP). Companies that have received federal bailout money are mostly banks, insurance companies and auto companies. The new guidelines require that a company receiving TARP funds and applying for workers under H-1B must operate as an "H-1B dependent company". That means it should attest to actively recruiting American workers, not displacing American workers with H-1B visa holders; and not replacing laid off American workers with foreign workers. The H-1B dependent companies are those which have 15% of their workforce carrying H-1B visas.

(b) According to NASSCOM, the H-1B visa restrictions may not affect employees of Indian outsourcing companies as they do not receive any TARP support.

(c) Yes.

(d) and (e) Visa issue being a sovereign function of a foreign Government, Government of India has been sensitizing the US Government on the need to expand the allocation of H-1B visas which may be availed of by Indian professionals.

Introduction of e-passport system

1388. SHRI Y.P. TRIVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the e-passport system is being introduced by Government in order to prevent the misutilization of passport;

(b) whether this would be introduced for the administrative officers, on a trial basis;

(c) if so, by when it would be introduced; and

(d) if not, whether Government is contemplating in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

(b) to (d) A pilot project for the issue of e-passports in the category of officials and diplomatic passports has already been launched on 25th June, 2008.

Indian Embassy in Australia

1389. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the Indian Embassy in Australia had received a number of complaints from Indian students over the last two years;