

Racial attack on students

†477. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA : Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that racial attacks against Indian students are still continuing in Australia;
- (b) whether some students belonging to the State of Haryana are also among the victims of these attacks in Australia;
- (c) if so, the number thereof along with the details of the districts of Haryana to which they belong to; and
- (d) the measures taken by Government for protection of Indian students in Australia?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI) : (a) 84 incidents of attacks on Indians including students have come to the notice of the Government since May, 2009. The possibility of some of these attacks being racial in nature has not been ruled out by the Australian Government.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Two persons belonging to the State of Haryana have reportedly been attacked in recent months. Shri Rajesh Kumar, a student from Yamuna Nagar, Haryana was a victim of petrol bomb thrown at his residence in Sydney on 25th May, 2009. Another Indian national, Shri Baljinder Singh from Haryana, was attacked in Melbourne on 24th May, 2009.

- (d) Details of steps taken by the Government is given in the enclosed Statement.

Statement

Details of steps taken by Government to protect Indian Students in Australia

The issue of attacks on Indian students in Australia has been taken up at the highest level in a telephonic conversation, when the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd called our Prime Minister immediately after his assumption office, our concerns at the attacks on Indian students were conveyed to him suitably. The Prime Minister made a reference to this in the course of his reply to the debate in the Parliament on the motion of thanks for the President's address to the joint sitting of both houses. The Minister of External Affairs has also conveyed our deep concerns to his counterpart in the Government of Australia.

2. It has been conveyed to the Australian Government that such attacks should not be allowed to happen and that it is the responsibility of the Australian authorities to ensure the well-being and security of our students in Australia. Our High Commissioner and Consuls General in Australia are in constant touch with the Australian authorities both at the federal as well as State level, including the Ministers, senior officers and the police authorities, besides the Australian Foreign Office, the Universities and the students.

3. The Government of Australia has in response to these demarches, strongly condemned these attacks. The Australian authorities have conveyed their firm commitment to ensuring the safety and security of Indian students in Australia. When the matter came up in the Australian Parliament, the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Australian Prime Minister as well as the Leader of the opposition and several Members of Parliament denounced the attacks and called for immediate steps to ensure the safety and security of Indian students studying in Australia. Premier of the Victoria State has further promised that the State would do everything in its power to track down the perpetrators of these cowardly acts and bring them to justice.

4. Some of the steps taken at the instance of the Government of India are as follows :

- (i) Launch of a police operation specifically to investigate the incidents of attacks on students.
- (ii) The provision of a 24 hour hotline (in Hindi and English) by a Community Reference Group to provide support, information and advice to Indian students who are victims of crime.
- (iii) Representations have been made to the concerned State Governments in Australia concerning the experiences of students including study and stay.
- (iv) The setting up of a Police Community Reference Group to improve communications between the police and the student community.
- (v) This Police Community Reference Group has had several meetings.
- (vi) Stressing the need to bring in basic and essential infrastructural changes for more police presence at sensitive areas like railway stations and also late in the night.
- (vii) Constant monitoring of the well being of Indian students including those who have been hospitalized and looking after their treatment.
- (viii) The Australian Government has also stated that it was considering the possibility of the amending the existing law to enlarge the definition of offence to include "inciting violence against people for their race, religion or ethnicity and violence against individuals and for inciting violence against individuals on the basis of the individual's race, religion, ethnicity or nationality." The proposed amendment would strengthen the police response to the attacks against Indian students. It has also been contemplated to amend the existing legislation to provide for enhanced sentence for racism related offences.

5. On 23rd June 2009, a delegation led by Secretary, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Government of Australia, called on the Hon'ble Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs. Government of India's deep concerns over the matter were conveyed to the Australian delegation. In response to some suggestions made by the Indian delegation, the Australian side undertook to consider the following :

- (i) Registration of Education Agents;
- (ii) Ensuring quality of education provided at private educational institutions;
- (iii) Steps to ensure that Education Agents provide necessary pre-departure briefing to Indian students properly, on the basis of the latest advisory booklet published by the Australian Education Department for international students;

(iv) Steps to prevent exploitation of Indian students by unscrupulous employers who underpay them and employ them beyond the maximum prescribed 20 hours a week.

6. A delegation of educational providers from Australia met Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs on 6th July, 2009. Various measures to address the problems related to safety and security of Indian students were discussed in these meetings. It was decided to set up a Joint Working Group to recommend to the two Governments measures required to regulate the activities of Education Agents in India and design appropriate pre-departure orientation programmes.

7. The matter was also taken up with the Australian Minister for Immigration and Citizenship during his call on the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs on 22nd July, 2009.

8. The High Commission of India in Canberra and Consulates General in Sydney and Melbourne will continue to extend all possible assistance. An advisory for students going for studies to Australia has been put on the website of this Ministry.

Work on Narmada Project

*478. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry is aware of the slow-speed of work on Narmada Project (SSY) in the State of Gujarat; and

(b) the details regarding height of the Dam as on 31 March, 2009 and of the water made available for irrigation and other purposes as on 31 March, 2009?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is an inter-State multipurpose water resources project on the river Narmada in Gujarat. The project envisages construction of Unit-I (Dam & Appurtenant works), Unit-II (Main Canal) and Unit-III (Hydro Power) works. Progress of the Unit-I works of SSP is given as under :-

The project authority started the construction works of main dam in April, 1987 and was programmed to be completed by the end of January, 1998 as per the Revised Implementation Schedule (RIS) of February, 1990.

However, the construction work on spillway blocks of the dam remained held up for long, due to litigation in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. In October, 2000 with the final verdict of the Hon'ble Court in favour of project, the spillway portion could be raised upto elevation level (EL) 110.64 metre by June, 2004, thereby making it possible to derive partial irrigation and power benefits from the Project.

Further permission to raise the height of dam in spillway portion from EL 110.64 metre to EL 121.92 metre as per approved design was accorded by Narmada Control Authority (NCA) on 8th March, 2006. After getting clearance from NCA, project authorities started the construction works on spillways portion of the dam in March, 2006 and achieved Elevation Level of 121.92 metre (crest level of spillway) in December, 2006, which is the present height of the dam as on 31.3.2009.