

(b) if so, the reason for the Indian Embassy being a silent spectator to the difficulties of Indian students in Australia;

(c) whether any explanation has been sought from the Indian Embassy in Australia in this regard; and

(d) the steps proposed to examine the functioning of the Indian Embassy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Yes.

(b) The Indian High Commission in Canberra and the Consulates General of India in Sydney and Melbourne have not been silent spectators to the difficulties of Indian students in Australia. Well aware of the difficulties faced by Indian students, they have been constantly taking up the complaints and concerns with all the authorities concerned in Australia at the federal and State Government level as well as with the universities, educational institutions and related University Associations in Australia, seeking to address the problems.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Death sentence to Sarabjit Singh

1390. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan's Supreme Court has dismissed the appeal of Sarabjit Singh, an Indian seeking a review of a death sentence;

(b) if so, whether Government of India proposes to take up the matter with Government of Pakistan; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) to (c) We have seen reports that the Pakistan Supreme Court has turned down a review petition regarding the death sentence awarded to Sarabjit Singh. We have consistently urged the Government of Pakistan to take a sympathetic and humanitarian view in the case. It is our hope that they will find it possible to do so.

Repatriation of people from Pakistan

†1391. SHRI OM PRAKASH MATHUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether many civilians from border districts of Rajasthan such as Jaisalmer, Barmer and Ganganagar had crossed the Pakistan border during the past many decades owing to human error and they are confined in the jails there; if so, the number of such civilian;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) out of those confined, a number of persons have been released by Government of Pakistan but due to declaring them dead by the State Government of Rajasthan, problem is being faced to repatriate them;

(c) whether any firm step has been taken by the Central Government to repatriate them, if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Pakistan has produced 54 prisoners to our High Commission in Islamabad for consular access. Of these the national status of 27 prisoners has been confirmed and 6 belong to Rajasthan (1 from Jaisalmer and 5 from Barmer). It is believed that there are 167 other Indian nationals in Pakistan jails, who have been produced for consular access. In the absence of consular access, it is not possible to confirm national status or the district of origin.

(b) Pakistan has not released any of those prisoners whose national status is confirmed.

(c) and (d) Government has been taking up issues concerning all Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails with the Government of Pakistan including at the highest levels. A judicial committee comprising of retired judges from India and Pakistan had been set up to ensure immediate consular access, expeditious release and humane treatment of prisoners in either country. The committee has held three meetings till date and has visited jails in both India and Pakistan to meet prisoners. Government continues to urge the Government of Pakistan to view the issue of prisoners in custody from a humanitarian angle and facilitate their earliest possible repatriation.

Chinese infrastructure in Himalayas

†1392. SHRI PRABHAT JHA:

SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether development of infrastructure such as construction of railway lines run-ways etc. by China in the Himalayan region has posed a serious threat and danger to the ecology of the area besides that of melting of glaciers there;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any committee or commission has been set up by Government to assess the extent of damage likely to be caused to India on account of melting of glaciers in the Himalayas;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the measures being taken to counter the situation;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.