

[3 March, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

International Airport between Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India and Hyderabad International Airport Limited.

In addition, 12 commercial agreements were signed in presence of the Prime Minister of Malaysia at the India-Malaysia Business Forum jointly organised by Confederation of India Industries (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Indians in Pakistani Jails

347. SMT. SUKHBUNS KAUR :
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Indians, including those Armed Forces personnel declared missing during Indo-Pak wars of 1965, 1971 and the Kargil War, are still in Pakistani Jails;

(b) if so, the number of such Indians and the Army Personnel in Pak Jails as on January 1, 2005; and

(c) the steps taken and being taken to confirm their identity and to get them released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) As of January 1, 2005, according to available information, around 900 Indian civilian prisoners, over 650 fishermen and 54 Prisoners of War (POWs) are believed to be in custody in Pakistan. Pakistan Government has been consistently denying existence of any Indian POWs in Pakistan.

(c) During the Foreign Secretary Level Talks between the two countries on June, 27-28, 2004 in New Delhi, India proposed to work for the reciprocal release of all prisoners who have been granted Consular Access, whose nationality has been confirmed and who have completed their sentences. The two sides agreed to initiate steps for early release of civilian prisoners.

The issue of release of Indian prisoners was again taken up during the Foreign Secretary level talks between India & Pakistan held in New Delhi on September 4, 2004 as well as during higher level discussions, such as during the visit to India by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on November 23-24, 2004. The issue of release of all Indian fishermen along with their

boats was also raised by External Affairs Minister, Shri K. Natwar Singh, during his recent bilateral visit to Pakistan from February 15-17, 2005.

During the Foreign Secretary level talks held at Islamabad on December 27-28, 2004 it was decided to grant consular access to all the prisoners held in each other's country within three months from the date of their arrest, and repatriation would be done immediately after completion of sentence and nationality verification.

Subsequently, Pakistan has provided consular access to approximately 100 civilian prisoners and 650 fishermen in January and February 2005. The process of release and repatriation would follow confirmation of nationality and completion of sentences.

Government, through diplomatic channels, have also been consistently taking up the issue of early release of Indian POWs believed to be in Pakistan's custody since 1971-72. However, Pakistan Government has been consistently denying existence of any Indian POWs in Pakistan. The matter was also taken up during the meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Prime Minister of Pakistan on November 24, 2004.

Election in Iraq

†348. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN:
SHRI ABU ASIMAZMI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how the Indo-Iraq relations would be in the new scenario of the fresh political situation arisen in Iraq after the elections;

(b) whether Government have vindicated the elections, recently held in Iraq;

(c) if so, whether Government would give recognition to the new government in Iraq in the new context and if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether in the view of Government the new election in Iraq is the first phase towards the restoration of democratic process there; and

(e) if so, the initiative taken by the Indian Government of the protection of human rights in Iraq?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.