

(a) whether Government is aware of increasing incidents of Pakistani residents 'getting lost' in Himachal Pradesh, a few of them visiting on ground of tourism, visiting their relations who are staying permanently in the State, and doing pilgrimage;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that National Security Agencies have raised the apprehensions that the Pakistani nationals with ulterior motives might be using a peaceful State like Himachal Pradesh for hiding purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government to foil such attempts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) Government of Himachal has reported an instance of a Pakistani national named Sunny Singh who visited Himachal Pradesh but could not be located. The matter is being looked into.

(c) While Central and State agencies maintain strict vigil to guard against the State being used by foreigners for ulterior motives, no such apprehension has been expressed so far.

(d) To foil such attempts, the State Police has sensitized all the District Police Chiefs to maintain sharp vigil in this regard.

#### **Permission to multinational companies in retail sector**

\*24. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has proposed to permit multinational companies in the retail sector in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government has analyzed the likely negative impact on small retail vendors in the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) to (d) The existing policy allows for 51% FDI in only single brand retail subject to specified conditions. Government has received suggestions

from associations/trade bodies for allowing FDI in multi brand retail. The objective is to enhance the operational efficiency of back-end infrastructure in the retail sector, reduce wastage in the agricultural sector, enhance benefit to producers, integrate the retailer in the value chain, and benefit consumers through greater competition. Towards this end, the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion has released a Discussion Paper on the subject of 'Foreign Direct Investment in Multi-Brand Retail Trading', with the aim of generating informed discussion on the subject and obtaining the views and comments of various stakeholders. The impact on small traders, the possible strategy to protect interests of small traders in the unorganized sector and the likely impact on the capacity building of storage of food grains, fruits and vegetables etc. have also been examined in the discussion paper. The discussion paper is available in the public domain. The comments received thereon are presently being examined by an Inter-Ministerial Committee in the Department of Consumer Affairs. The committee will examine and analyze the responses and provide necessary inputs for proposed policy action. Government has yet to take a final view.

**Delay in completion of EW corridor project**

\*25. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the East-West (EW) Corridor Project has been delayed to a large extent in North East;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for the delay;

(c) the present status of EW Corridor and steps Government has taken to overcome such constraints and complete the project in time;

(d) whether Government is aware that large scale corruption has been reported in the plantation of trees and land acquisition for the EW Project in Assam; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI R.P.N SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Out of a total length of 670 km of E-W Corridor in the State of Assam, 225 km has been completed. Out of the balance 445 km, 5 works totaling length of 115 km in North Cachar hills have been