

[2 March, 2006]

RAJYA SABHA

However, on 2 January 2006, the Spokesman of the Pakistan Army, Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan, rejected the reports that Pakistan security forces had used poisonous gas in operations in Balochistan.

(c) Government remains fully vigilant and will take all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security and national interests.

### **Regional passport office at Kohima**

1034. SHRI T. R. ZELIANG: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to set up a Regional Passport Office at Kohima;

(b) if so, the action taken thereon; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No Sir.

(b) Not applicable;

(c) It has not been possible to open a new Passport office in Kohima due to a variety of reasons including lack of requisite volume of demand for passport warranting opening of a new passport office and also due to manpower constraints.

### **Arrest of Fisherman**

1035. SHRI LEKHRAJ BACHANI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was any agreement, settlement or understanding for not arresting of Indian fisherman (especially from Gujarat) by Pakistan and *vice-versa*;

(b) whether in spite of that Pakistan is repeatedly arresting the Indian fishermen and their vessels and property;

(c) the number of Indian fishermen in Pakistan jails; and

(d) whether Government propose to arrive on any agreement on the lines of agreement with Sri Lanka on this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) No, Sir. During Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan held at New Delhi on December 27-28, 2004, it was agreed to intimate the arrest of fishermen immediately, grant consular access within three months from the date of their arrest and repatriate them on completion of sentence and nationality verification.

(c) According to available information, there are about 386 fishermen in Pakistani jails who were arrested between September 2005 and February 2006.

(d) India has an understanding and commitment with Sri Lanka to treat cases of straying fishermen of both countries in a humane and compassionate manner. There is also an understanding that while the captain and the fishing vessel can be detained during the period of legal process, the crew can be released.

Government propose to pursue the issue of early release of Indian fishermen and their boats and humane treatment to them in custody with Pakistani authorities.

### **Troops reduction in Jammu and Kashmir**

1036. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether on the side lines of the recent SAARC Summit in Dhaka, Prime Minister made it clear to the Pak Foreign Minister, that there was absolutely no question of any troop reduction or demilitarization in Jammu and Kashmir unless cross border terrorism and infiltration comes to a complete halt;

(b) if so, whether the precise scenario, facts and figures pertaining to continuing terrorism and infiltration across the borders and line of control in Jammu and Kashmir were brought before the Pak Foreign Minister; and

(c) the reaction and response of the Pak Foreign Minister thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) During the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka on 12-13 November 2005, Prime Minister met Pakistani