

civil servants are periodically organised in concerned Indian institutions, in consultation with the Afghan authorities and UNDP.

(c) and (d) The training of Afghan civil servants is meant to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of the Government of Afghanistan, so that it is able to address the governance and development challenges after many years of war and conflict. As per the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between India and Afghanistan in October, 2011, India has offered its experience of governance and technical assistance in setting up a permanent, career-based civil service in Afghanistan, suitable for Afghan realities.

The Indian assistance in capacity building of Afghan civil servants has been greatly appreciated not only by the Government of Afghanistan, but also by the international community. The training of Afghan civil servants in India has also helped to strengthen the already friendly relations between the two countries, and earned goodwill for India within Afghanistan.

Contract for exploring South West Indian ocean

2518. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) has signed a contract with the International Seabed Authority to explore 10,000 sq. km of seabed in the South West of Indian Ocean;

(b) whether the Directorate of Naval Intelligence had expressed concern that COMRA's access could have strategic implications for India's security;

(c) whether it is a fact that it is our failure to be more proactive in better utilizing mining exploration rights in the Indian Ocean, thereby giving space for other countries; and

(d) if so, the response of the Ministry thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) Government is aware that the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has approved the plan of work for exploration of polymetallic sulphides by China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA). ISA is an institution established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) mandated for governance of areas lying beyond national maritime jurisdictions of States. The Chinese plan of work for exploration in the southwest Indian Ocean Ridge is in an area beyond the national jurisdiction of any State. It will be carried out under the regulatory framework adopted by ISA for polymetallic sulphide exploration. Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's national interest and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it.