

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) and (b) The Mauritanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has conveyed to our Ambassador in Bamako, Mali, that it was unlikely that such a large group of foreigners would be in illegal custody in Mauritania. Our Embassy is, however, pursuing the matter further with the Mauritanian authorities.

Leasing of area of Gilgit-Baltistan to China

367. DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of a move by the Pakistan to lease a substantial area of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK) to China for fifty years;

(b) whether Government is also aware of massive protests in the Northern Territories of Undivided Jammu and Kashmir State against various projects being constructed by China in this region;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government has taken up this issue with Pakistan during the ongoing Foreign Secretary level talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) Government has not seen any official statement or report by the Government of Pakistan on leasing a substantial area of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) to China. However, under the so called China-Pakistan "Boundary Agreement" of 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 Sq. Kms. of Indian territory in PoK to China. Government remains firm in its resolve to take all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security and territorial integrity.

(b) and (c) According to media reports, in July 2011, hundreds of labourers and contractors protested against non-payment of wages, in front of the office of a Chinese construction company which was upgrading the Karakoram Highway in PoK.

(d) The issue of Jammu and Kashmir is discussed at the Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan.

Present Status of Kargil to Skardu Road

368. DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the proposed reopening of Kargil to Skardu Road to facilitate introduction of Bus Service for the benefit of the people of Ladakh and Gilgit on the lines of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Road;

(b) whether any time-frame has been decided between India and Pakistan for the introduction of this service;

- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the progress made in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) India has proposed to Pakistan for opening of a road link between Kargil and Skardu. During the meeting between Prime Minister and President of Pakistan on September 24, 2008 on the margins of United Nations General Assembly in New York, it was agreed that modalities for the opening of the Kargil-Skardu route would be discussed. Thereafter, the issue has been raised with Pakistan on a number of occasions. However, Pakistan has not yet agreed to open the route.

Exchanging of maps with Bangladesh

369. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has exchanged in the recent past maps with Bangladesh with a view to ceding of Indian territories to Bangladesh;
- (b) if so, the details thereof indicating the features of treaty, if any, already entered with Bangladesh in this regard;
- (c) the details of procedures, if any, pursued by Government including whether consultations with representatives of Indian citizens residing in the territories envisaged to be ceded, which culminated into drawing of the maps prior to swapping the same with Bangladesh; and
- (d) if not, the justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) A Protocol to the Agreement Concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary between India and Bangladesh and Related Matters, 1974, was signed on September 06, 2011 during the visit of the Prime Minister to Bangladesh. The Protocol addresses the outstanding land boundary issues pertaining to the un-demarcated land boundary, exchange of enclaves and territories in adverse possession. It is subject to ratification by the Governments of the two countries and shall enter into force on the date of exchange of Instruments of Ratification. The implementation of the Protocol will result in the exchange of 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh with 51 Bangladesh enclaves in India and preserve status quo on territories in adverse possession.

The Protocol is based on the situation on the ground, takes into account the wishes of the people residing in the areas involved and was prepared in close consultation with the State Governments concerned.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.