

**Oil exploration in South China sea**

4532. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether plans of India and Vietnam for joint exploration in South China sea has been widely protested by China;

(b) if so, whether Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Videsh Limited (OVL) has sought clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs;

(c) if so, whether the blocks identified for exploration in the South China sea belongs to Vietnam; and

(d) if so, the reaction of Government on such deals with Vietnam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) Sovereignty over areas of the South China Sea is disputed between many countries in the region. India is not a party to this dispute. As two developing countries with growing energy needs, India and Vietnam have been cooperating in the oil and gas industry to enhance their energy security. China, which is a party to the South China Sea dispute, has raised its concerns on India's hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation projects in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam. Government has clearly conveyed that such activity by Indian companies is purely commercial in nature and that ONGC's decisions are taken entirely on techno-economic criteria. Sovereignty issues must be resolved peacefully by the countries which are parties to the dispute in accordance with international law and practice.

**Rejection of sea**

4533. DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has expressed concern over the rejection of visas in both H1B and LI categories for Indians while it has gone up for other countries;

(b) whether the sharp increase in rejection in H1B category and the rate of rejection in LI category rose to 28 percent in 2011;

(c) if so, the details thereof and whether Government has complained to US about the increase in the rate of rejection of US visas for Indian professionals; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?