

opposite China, in order to meet our strategic and security requirements and also to facilitate the economic development of these areas including Arunachal Pradesh. Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it.

Nuclear Weapon Programmes by Neighbouring Countries

4537. SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware about the development and strengthening of nuclear weapon programmes by our neighbouring countries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether such development would be in consonance with peace keeping measures in this region;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to counter such developments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (e) Government has seen reports about the nuclear weapons programmes in our neighbouring countries. Government continuously monitors all developments having a bearing on India's national security and takes all necessary steps to safeguard it.

Modification in process for application for passports

†4538. DR. YOGENDRA P. TRIVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the process of applying for passport and issuance thereof has been changed from 2012;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the details of this new process and whether any private firm was appointed to issue the passport;
- (d) if so, to whom and the places where its centres are located in Maharashtra;
- (e) whether with this new process, the people and senior citizens would have to wait for hours for their turn by wasting their whole day; and
- (f) the details thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.