

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) and (b) The Government is aware of difficulties faced by the Indian professionals in obtaining U.S. visas, including denial of visas, increase in visa fees and other procedural difficulties. A report, compiled by the National Foundation for American Policy in November 2011, states that the L-1 visas issued by the U.S. to Indians declined by 28% in U.S. fiscal 2011 compared to US fiscal 2010 while LI visas issued globally (except India) increased by 15%.

(c) and (d) The Government uses every opportunity, including during trade-related meetings, to raise with the U.S. Government its concerns regarding visa difficulties faced by Indian professionals. In his meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in New Delhi on 8 May 2012, the External Affairs Minister conveyed Indian concerns about the continuing difficulties on mobility of professionals, especially for IT companies, and protectionist sentiments in the U.S. with regard to global supply chain in services industry.

Projects of GOI in Sri Lanka

4534. SHRI T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Joint Parliament Delegation to Sri Lanka had taken up with the Sri Lankan Government about various projects being undertaken by Government of India in Sri Lanka;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the team emphasized upon the Sri Lankan Government that steps taken by Government in Sri Lanka should go to Sri Lankan Tamils?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (c) A 12-member Joint Parliamentary delegation, led by the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, during its visit to Sri Lanka from 16-21 April 2012, *inter-alia* discussed the implementation of various Government of India (GoI) assisted projects for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka at its meetings with the President and Ministers of the Sri Lankan Government.

The delegation visited several places, including Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Jaffia, Kankesanthurai, Kalutara and Batticaloa, where projects are being implemented under GoI assistance, including those related to the development of rail and port infrastructure, connectivity and transportation, education, public health, housing, de-mining, vocational training and economic revival. A vast majority of the beneficiaries of these Projects are Tamil speaking.