

York, during February 2011 and the USA insisting upon the position that "family members of Consular officials do not enjoy diplomatic immunity";

(b) the gist of reply received from the US Foreign Office, to the "strong protest" lodged by our Consulate in New York; and

(c) whether Government would ensure "diplomatic immunity" for our staff and their family members so that incidents like shabby treatment given to our consular staff in Singapore during December, 2011 is not repeated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR) : (a) The privileges and immunities available to officials posted to our Consulates abroad are set out in the relevant clauses of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The privileges and immunities under the Convention are available to the Consular Officers themselves, but not to the family members. Under the relevant clauses of the Vienna Convention, the family members are however extended certain facilities *i.e.* exemption from all dues and taxes, personal or real, and exemption of all customs duties, taxes and related charges on articles for the personal use of the Consular Officer or members of his family forming part of his household, including articles intended for his establishment.

(b) The US State Department in its reply had indicated that they were guided by the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations on the issue of immunity to officers and their family posted in our Consulates abroad. The US State Department further appreciated the seriousness of the matter and offered its good offices in the effort to seek information and to address concerns raised.

(c) No such incident in Singapore in December 2011 has come to the notice of the Government. However, the Government is committed to ensuring that privileges and immunities provided for under the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations are not denied in any way to the Indian diplomatic and consular staff and their family members by any foreign state.

Joint military operation against piracy activities

984. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be please to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that India and European Union have joined hands for launching joint military operations in the Indian Ocean against piracy activities; and

(b) if so, the details of India developing synergy with the EU?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED) : (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.