

Visa application received at Indian Consulates in UK, USA and Canada

1259. SHRI PARSHOTTAM KHODABHAI RUPALA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of visa application that have been received by our Consulates in US, UK and Canada within last three years, and the number of applications that were denied and the number of applications of Indian origin people;

(b) whether our Consulates in US, UK and Canada have received letters from MPs of these countries on our visa matters;

(c) if so, the action that has been taken by our Consulates; and

(d) the action that has been taken by Ministry on the fact that Canada and USA Consulates in India is not responding letters of our MPs, even though our Consulates are honouring the letters of their MPs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) The desired information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

(b) and (c) Whenever letters of recommendation are received from elected representatives, they are duly acknowledged by our Missions. However, the grant of visa is subject to our extant rules and regulations.

(d) It is the sovereign right of every State to grant or decline a visa to a foreign national. Such decisions are taken on the basis of national laws.

Visa benefits to citizen of Pakistan

1260. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of grant of liberalized visa to Pakistan citizens;

(b) the status of setting up a hot-line to expedite the process;

(c) the fool-proof action plan to ensure that anti-national elements do not seek benefit under the above project; and

(d) the status of signing a new agreement between the two countries, that would ensure better people to people contact in both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) Visas to Pakistani nationals are issued subject to fulfilment of requirements as per the Visa Manual.

In pursuance of the decision taken during the India-Pakistan Home/Interior Secretary level talks held at New Delhi on 28-29 March, 2011, the second meeting of the Joint Working Group was held at New Delhi on October 13-14, 2011, to examine the modalities for streamlining the visa procedures and to finalize the draft of the new Bilateral Visa Agreement with a view to easing travel for the nationals of either country desiring to visit the other. The two sides finalized the draft text of the Bilateral Visa Agreement. In the Home/Interior Secretary level talks held in Islamabad on 24-25 May, 2012, both sides welcomed the finalization of the Visa Agreement and agreed to sign it at an early date. The Pakistan side informed that some internal approvals were under process and the Agreement will be signed once they are in place.

Construction of hospital in Sri Lanka

1261. SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of India is constructing a 500 bedded hospital at Dickoya in Sri Lanka; and

(b) if so, when was this project conceived, date of approval, date of commencement of work and the estimated cost?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) and (b) The proposal to construct a 150-bed hospital in Dickoya, near Hatton in the Central Province of Sri Lanka under India's bilateral development assistance programme was conceived in October, 2002 to help improve the standards of medical facilities in the Central Province (upcountry region) of Sri Lanka where Indian Origin Tamils (IOTs) are living. In February, 2003, Government of India nominated the Hospital Services Consultation Corporation Ltd., a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Family Welfare and Child Welfare, as the consultant for the project. In January 2010, the Committee on Non-plan Expenditure approved the project to be undertaken at a total cost of Rs. 47.27 crores. After the tender process, the civil works related to the project was awarded to the lowest bidder, M/s. Green Valley's Shelters Pvt. Ltd., and the work on site started in February, 2011.