

Subash Chandra Nembang, Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament. She also met with the Leader of Opposition in the Legislature-Parliament The Hon. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and leaders of other political parties. The two Foreign Ministers also co-chaired the third meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission. The Joint Commission reviewed a range of issues including political and security issues, economic cooperation and infrastructure, trade and transit, power and water resources, culture, education and media. Both sides expressed happiness at the reactivation of the Joint Commission after a gap of 23 years. Both sides also signed an MOU on the installation of 2,700 shallow tube-wells in the Terai region.

Recruitment of contract labour

3876. SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the method adopted in selecting and recruiting the contract labour in Indian Embassies and other diplomatic missions all across the globe;
- (b) the benefits and monthly pay available to such contract labourers and whether there are any service period restrictions to get such benefits from Indian Missions;
- (c) whether the Ministry came to know of any inhuman handlings of such contract employees in Indian Diplomatic Mission located at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and the correctional steps taken thereafter; and
- (d) whether they are eligible for the stipulations ensured for the workers being engaged by foreign private companies or persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH] : (a) Indian Missions/Posts abroad do not engage "Contract Labour". However, locally recruited staff to serve as receptionists; interpreters, local clerks, chauffeurs and messengers are employed in all Indian diplomatic Missions/Posts around the world. Recruitment of these local employees is governed by relevant rules and regulations approved by the Ministry. In accordance with these rules, recruitment is carried out through advertisement of vacancies in local newspapers and on the basis of tests/interview of the applicants by the concerned Mission/Post.

- (b) Such locally recruited employees are paid salary and allowances as applicable to different levels of employees in accordance with the approval of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Indian Missions/Posts make contribution towards social security and medical insurance wherever such contributions are mandated by local laws. Terminal gratuity is paid to a local employee who has put in a minimum of ten years of service,

if the concerned Mission/Post is not contributing to social security. Free return passage to India is granted to those locally recruited employees who have put in 25 years of service.

(c) Any inhuman handling of such employees has not been brought to the notice of this Ministry including with regard to Consulate General of India located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

(d) Local employees in Indian Missions/Posts abroad are not governed by stipulations for workers engaged by foreign private companies or persons. Services of local staff are subject to terms and conditions contained in the employment contract prescribed by the Ministry of External Affairs, local laws as and where applicable and Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1963 and Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963.

Setting up of international maritime boundary

3877. DR. K. P. RAMALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Sri Lanka are considering to set up an International Maritime Boundary Line between India and Sri Lanka, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether Government has received widespread protest against this move from the State of Tamil Nadu, if so, the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Under the 1974 Agreement on the boundary in historic waters between India and Sri Lanka and the 1976 Agreement on the maritime boundary between the two countries in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal the International Maritime Boundary Line between the two countries has been demarcated. However, writ petitions have been filed on the issue of Katchatheevu Island in various courts.

Strengthening of ties with Nepal

3878. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Nepal have agreed to review the ties between the countries, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether in this direction both the countries have agreed to update the treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950 to implement bilateral investment promotion and protection on agreement (BIPPS); the details thereof?