

Special policy for SAARC countries

†946. SHRI DARSHAN SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is contemplating any special diplomacy regarding relations with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries; and

(b) if so, whether it would be able to rein in the increasing influence of China in the realm of the diplomacy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) India's engagement with its neighbours is increasing both bilaterally and through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). SAARC leaders were invited to attend the Swearing-in Ceremony of the Prime Minister of India in May, 2014. Discussions were held with the leaders to enhance and strengthen future cooperation.

India attaches particular importance to its relations with SAARC countries and is engaged in several mutually beneficial projects within the framework of SAARC. India's proactive approach has assisted the region and its people in its social and economic development. India will continue to take further initiatives in this regard.

China is not a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It is one of nine SAARC Observers and as such plays no direct role in SAARC.

Indian citizens trapped in Iraq

†947. SHRI ISHWARLAL SHANKARLAL JAIN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether terrorists have taken hostage of Indian citizens in Iraq;

(b) whether the Government of India is in contact with Iraqi Government and officials to help its Indian citizens entangled in Iraq;

(c) whether Government of India has set up any control room or started any helpline for information and contact of families of Indian entangled in violence affected areas of Iraq;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.