

(b) whether the issues of civil nuclear cooperation, extradition of British citizen accused in India, counter-terrorism and cyber crimes were discussed; and

(c) whether common approach to deal with the security situation in Iraq and Afghanistan was also deliberated and if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) UK Foreign Secretary visited India on 7 - 9 July 2014. He met EAM on 8 July 2014, during which the two sides discussed progress in bilateral relations across a wide range of sectors as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest. Civil nuclear cooperation, extradition of British citizens accused in India, counter-terrorism and cyber issues were amongst the issues that came up during the discussions. No agreement was signed by EAM and UK Foreign Secretary during the visit.

(c) Views were exchanged on the recent situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both sides emphasized the importance of smooth completion of the electoral process in Afghanistan. They shared their deep concern at the prevailing security situation in Iraq.

New route for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

†2336. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India considers Kailash Mansarovar Yatra *via* Dharchula of Uttarakhand State risky;

(b) if so, whether Government of India is considering to explore new routes for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra; and

(c) if so, the places being explored for new routes, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is organized under a bilateral agreement between the Government of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China through Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand. The Yatra, which starts from Delhi, is completed in 22 days. It involves crossing of mountain passes located at altitudes of as high as 18,500 feet. In some parts, the temperature is at sub-zero level. The Yatra involves long-distance trekking with limited infrastructure. Because of these conditions, very stringent health requirements are set for yatris in order to be qualified for the Yatra. In view of the arduous nature of the Yatra, the Government of India has

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

made effective arrangements for logistics and safety and security of yatris. Ministry of External Affairs appoints one Liaison Officer for each batch who is responsible for the safety and well-being of pilgrims of his/her batch. The Liaison Officer is provided with a satellite phone to stay in touch with Indian authorities concerned and to seek assistance in case of any emergency. A provision of air-evacuation of yatris by helicopter is also made for medical emergency. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Uttarakhand State Government provide security cover and basic medical assistance to yatris on the Indian side.

(b) and (c) The Government of India has been discussing with the Government of the People's Republic of China the issue of opening additional routes to Kailash-Mansarovar. The Chinese side has been citing difficulty in opening alternate routes, including on the ground that it would involve travel over longer distances on their side through difficult terrain, with poor road conditions and lack of proper infrastructure for accommodation and communication.

Meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission

2337. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission is scheduled in future to improve Nepal-India relations; if so, the details thereof;

(b) the other core sectors like hydro-power, road etc., where negotiations are being held; and

(c) whether Government proposes to announce a major economic assistance package for Nepal in the near future, to further strengthen bilateral relations; and if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) The third meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission was held in Kathmandu on 26 July 2014. Co-chaired by the External Affairs Minister of India and the Foreign Minister of Nepal, the Joint Commission is a high level bilateral mechanism to comprehensively review India-Nepal relations, in the areas of political and security issues, trade and investment cooperation, water resources and power, connectivity, developmental assistance and education and culture.

(c) India's economic assistance projects in Nepal *inter-alia* include roads, rail links, integrated check posts, flood control measures, logistic assistance such as buses and ambulances, medical assistance programmes, capacity building and training including