

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) Government of India had taken up the matter of release of Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi from a jail in Pakistan with the UN Security Council Committee. Lakhvi is a listed terrorist under Al-Qaida Sanction Committee pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1989. While taking up the matter, the Government highlighted that the release of Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi constitutes violation of UNSC Sanction regime (*asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo*) and requested the Committee to take appropriate action in the matter. As per the information available to us, the Committee has not been able to take any action due to absence of consensus. As per the guidelines, the Committee takes decision by consensus. Government of India is pro-actively engaged with the Chair and the Members of the 1267 Committee, including People's Republic of China, seeking their support in addressing the issue of terrorism and violation of UN Sanctions regime.

Relation with Russia on nuclear liabilities

1969. KUMARI SELJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the efforts being made to remove differences between India and Russia regarding issues relating to nuclear liabilities; and
- (b) the other steps taken by Government to strengthen relations with Russia in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Civil nuclear liability issues have been addressed, including with Russia. During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2014, a contract was signed between the respective commercial entities for the Kudankulam (Units 3 and 4) projects.

- (b) India-Russia bilateral relations are progressing well, supported by Annual Summits between Prime Minister and the Russian President as well as other bilateral meetings at Ministerial level, elaborate bilateral dialogue architectures involving Ministers, senior officials and other discussions on issues of mutual interests.

Attack on Indian fishermen

1970. DR. T. N. SEEMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of incidents of fishermen being frequently attacked and arrested by Sri Lankan and Pakistani naval agencies during the last two years and the current year along with the number of fishermen arrested by these countries, country-wise;

(b) whether India has taken up the matter with the respective countries, if so, the response of these countries in this regard, and the steps taken by Government to find a mutually agreed long term solution to the issue; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in all coastal States so that passports are issued to these fishermen without difficulty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) From time to time, there have been reports of attack and apprehension of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in Sri Lankan waters. The Sri Lankan side, however, has denied the involvement of Sri Lankan Navy in incidents of attack. As per available information, the number of Indian fishermen apprehended by Sri Lankan Navy in 2013 was 676 and in 2014 it stood at 787. Due to Government's steadfast efforts, all these fishermen were subsequently released and repatriated to India. Since January 2015, a total of 217 Indian fishermen have been apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities. Due to efforts of the Government, 177 of the apprehended 217 Indian fishermen have been released and repatriated. Government remains engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka to secure the expeditious release and repatriation of the apprehended 40 Indian fishermen currently in Sri Lankan custody. As regards Pakistan, as per available information, the number of fishermen believed to be Indian who were detained by Pakistan in 2013 was 349, in 2014 was 249 and in 2015 is 355.

(b) Government attaches the highest importance to the welfare, safety and security of our fishermen. As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy are received, the Government, through diplomatic channels, immediately takes up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities. There are several bilateral institutional mechanisms in place to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and Sri Lanka in resolving the fishermen issues. Government has emphasized upon the need for the Sri Lankan Navy to act with restraint, extend human treatment to Indian fishermen and not to resort to violence under any circumstances. The fishermen's issue has been consistently taken up during bilateral meetings, including at the highest levels, as well as during the recent visits of Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister to Sri Lanka. Government has pointed out that the issue of fishermen is a complex one involving livelihood and humanitarian concerns on both sides and that India and Sri Lanka need to find a long term solution. Government regularly takes up with Pakistani authorities the issue of the early release and repatriation of apprehended Indian fishermen as well as providing regular consular access to them. Government also, on a continuing basis, monitors the status of all such Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails. The India – Pakistan Judicial Committee

consisting of retired judges from both countries visits jails in both countries to ensure humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen, who have completed their prison term. During the recent meeting between PM and the Prime Minister of Pakistan at Ufa (Russia) on 10 July, India has proposed establishment of a mechanism for the release of fishermen and their boats within a period of 15 days by both sides. Government remains engaged with Governments of Sri Lanka and Pakistan to ensure that fishermen on both sides can continue to pursue their livelihood in safe, secure and sustainable manner.

(c) The Passport Offices and the Passport Seva Kendras under them have jurisdiction for rendering passport services to Indian citizens, including fishermen, across the entire country including coastal States.

New private tour operators for Haj purposes

1971. SHRI GULAM RASOOL BALYAWI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that applications were recently invited for registration/empanelment of new private tour operators for Haj purposes;

(b) whether the terms and conditions were later altered/changed through a subsequent Circular;

(c) whether the subsequent change has an effect of favouring the lobby of those private tour operators who are already registered/empanelled and keeping the new applicants away from those activities; and

(d) whether Government is aware that a racket is operating between them and some of the officers of Ministry and the steps being taken to break the nexus?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Yes, in terms of PTOs Policy, 2013-17 duly approved by Hon'ble Supreme Court *vide* its Order dated April 16, 2013.

(b) The terms and conditions as stipulated in the PTO Policy 2013-17 for new PTOs, were not altered/changed.

(c) Not applicable.

(d) The allegation is not supported by facts. The Ministry follows a transparent and fair policy in tune with directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Complaints received are seriously dealt with after cross checks and verification.