

[15 July, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

Inhuman treatment to Indians in Iraq

423. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that there are many Indian who have been ill-treated and subjected to inhuman treatment in Iraq;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the matter has been taken up by Government with the US authorities; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Some of the Indians who have been misled by recruiting agents into taking up jobs in Iraq have complained of abuse and ill-treatment in some of the camps in Iraq. Visits to some of these camps and investigations by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad indicate that their living conditions in the camp are generally satisfactory but face restrictions relating to their movement for security reasons. The Embassy has assisted interested workers in returning to India.

(c) and (d) Cases of alleged ill-treatment and abuse were taken up with the US Authorities in Iraq and US Embassies in New Delhi, Kuwait and Amman. Our Embassy in Baghdad also pursued the matter with the Coalition Provincial Authority. The US authorities conveyed that they will not countenance abuse or exploitation of workers by the private contractors who have contracted Indian workers in Iraq. The US authorities conveyed their concern at the reports of ill-treatment of Indian workers and after investigations have conveyed that the allegation are exaggerated or largely false. The US also provided a list of private contractors who have employed Indian workers in Iraq. Our Missions in Kuwait, Jordan and Iraq are in contract with the contractors for ensuring welfare and well being of the workers.

Recognition of New Government in Iraq

424. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether in Government's opinion any qualitative change has taken place in Iraq with the assumption of Power by an Iraqi Government; and

(b) whether Government are planning to recognize this new regime in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Resolution 1546 which was passed unanimously by the UN Security Council on 8th June, 2004 has endorsed the Interim Government of Iraq as a sovereign body, and recognizes Iraqi peoples' right to freely determine their own political future and to exercise full authority and control over their financial and natural resources.

(b) In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1546, Interim Iraqi Government is the recognized Government of Iraq.

Terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia

† 425. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the terrorists belonging to Al-Qaida and other terrorists outfits stormed a hotel in Saudi Arabia in the last week of May and took hostage several people and killed dozens of them with their firearms;

(b) the details of terrorist outfit which took responsibility of this attack and the number of persons of Indian origin killed in the attack; and

(c) the initiative being taken by Government to protect the persons of Indian origin working in Gulf countries particularly in Saudi Arabia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) On 29 May, 2004, terrorists identified as belonging to Al-Qaida attacked the office of Arab Petroleum Investment Corporation in Al Khobar which was followed by hostage taking in the nearby Oasis Housing Complex. Eight Indians were killed in the incident.

(c) The Government is closely monitoring the security situation in the Gulf countries with particular attention being paid to developments that may have a bearing on security and well being of Indians working there. Our Missions in Gulf countries are in constant contact with concerned local authorities for the safety and security of the Indian community in their jurisdiction. The Missions are in regular contact with Indian communities in their respective countries to render all possible

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.