

of Friendly Exchanges in various fields, were held in the last week of July and first half of August. During discussions on Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields, wide-ranging proposals were made for promoting friendly exchanges and cooperation in the fields of art, culture, archaeology, education, science and technology, youth affairs and sports, media and tourism. It was agreed that implementation of the programmes would be undertaken through mutual coordination. India also made a series of proposals for trade promotion, transit, cooperation in the fields of agriculture, petroleum and natural gas, banking, information technology, telecommunications, postal services, civil aviation, shipping, capital market, etc. between the two countries. A meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, to review the overall progress, is scheduled to be held in India on September 5-6, 2004. It would be preceded by a meeting between the two Foreign Secretaries on September 4, 2004.

Government of India has an elaborate bilateral dialogue structure with USA comprising more than 15 institutional dialogues covering a broad range of issues of mutual concern and interest, including strategic issues, defence, combating international terrorism, peacekeeping, science and technology, health, trade, space, energy and environment. In the area of Trade and Commerce, India and USA have a Bilateral Economic-Dialogue, which has five components—finance, and investment; commercial dialogue; trade policy; energy; and environment. A Cabinet level dialogue takes place in the Bilateral Forum on Finance and Investment. The Working Group on Trade and Policy also exists for interaction between Commerce and Industry Minister and the US Trade Representative. The Commerce and Industry Minister also interacts with the US Commerce Secretary under the India-US Commercial Dialogue. The Government of India attaches high importance to its relations with the US on all issues mentioned above. The bilateral dialogue, including the dialogues enumerated above, has a provision for interaction at regular intervals and is ongoing.

Indian Hostage Episode

†1671. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of Indian hostage episode in Iraq Government t

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

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would issue a list of those countries where the lives of Indian labourers or workers are in danger;

(b) what measures Government are taking to avoid the recurrence of the problem like Indian hostage episode in Iraq; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Government has not issued a list of countries which are dangerous for Indian workers.

(b) Taking into consideration the situation that might develop in foreign countries from time to time, the Government would consider advising Indian nationals against travel to such countries, suspending emigration clearance and facilitating the return of Indian workers, if required.

(c) Due to deteriorating security situation in Iraq, where three Indian drivers have been taken hostage, a travel advisory was issued advising Indian nationals not to visit Iraq for the time being, emigration clearance has been suspended and the cooperation of Governments of Kuwait and Jordan has been sought for preventing the movement of Indian nationals across their borders to Iraq.

U.S. Deputy Secretary's statement regarding India

1672. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has made anti-India statements in Islamabad on his recent visit there;

(b) whether he discussed violation of human rights in Kashmir with Government as he claimed in Islamabad; and

(c) whether it is an interference in internal affairs of India by USA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Government of India is not aware of any anti-India statement made by US Deputy Secretary of State during his recent visit to Islamabad.

(b) The issue of human rights was not discussed during any of the official meetings that US Deputy Secretary of State had in New Delhi.