

[19 August, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) According to information received from the US Embassy in New Delhi, under the new rules for grant of visa announced by the US Government, all persons intending to visit USA are required to visit US Consular Offices for biometric registration that involves electronic fingerprints and digital photograph at the time of issue of visa. The measures have come into force with effect from July, 2004. However, the applicants below 14 years and above 79 years and diplomatic and official passport holders visiting USA on an official visit do not require such biometric registration. The application of these rules is universal and not India specific.

(c) No.

(d) It is understood that US consular missions in more than 150 countries have introduced biometrics in visas.

#### **Indian labourers in gulf countries**

†1678. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that number of Indian labourers and employees are living in slave-like conditions in the Gulf countries;

(b) whether some of mason labours, truck drivers are working under the contractors;

(c) if so, the number of such labours in the Gulf countries; and

(d) whether Government have provided any facility to them for their return to native place at their own will?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No specific case involving slave-like living conditions of Indian labourers and employees working in Gulf countries has come to the notice of the Government. However, there are cases of non-implementation of employment contract of Indian workers including those relating to non-payment of delayed payment of the dues of the Indian workers.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) Yes.

(c) There are approximately 3.5 million Indians in the Gulf countries and majority of them are workers.

(d) In most cases, there are no problems regarding return of Indian nationals to India. However, if required, the Indian Missions/Posts take up the cases with the local authorities and the employers and provide every possible assistance to those workers who want to return to India.

**Racial discrimination against Indian nurses abroad**

†1679. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that a discrimination is being made against Indian nurses and women in the foreign countries on the racial basis and they are also being deprived of promotions;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have discussed the matter with foreign countries, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

**Indo-China Trade Talks**

†1680. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any talk with regard to increase in trade have taken place recently during Indo-China talks;

(b) whether there is any scheme with regard to reopening of Indo-China silk route; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir. The second meeting of

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.