

(d) if so, what action the Ministry is taking to reign in other countries to hold SAARC together minus Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) While conveying its decision regarding the SAARC Summit in Islamabad to Nepal, the current SAARC Chair, India conveyed that it remained steadfast in its commitment to regional cooperation, connectivity and contacts but believed that these can only go forward in an atmosphere free of terror. Afghanistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh also stated their commitment to SAARC while conveying their decision to not attend the Summit.

(b) and (c) Finalization of the SAARC Regional Railways Agreement and the SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement, aimed at increasing cross-border and regional connectivity, has been pending due to lack of response from Pakistan.

Member States have repeatedly emphasized the pressing need to enhance regional connectivity in its various forms, for which the above-mentioned agreements are enabling frameworks, for the region to realize its full potential.

(d) Towards enhancing connectivity, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) have concluded a sub-regional Motor Vehicle Agreement. India has also been actively engaging with countries in the region through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) etc. In SAARC, India continues to build on regional cooperation ranging from capacity building to flagship projects, such as South Asian University, with participation of all interested Member States.

People cheated with fake agents

3231. SHRI K. R. ARJUNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that a large number of the unemployed youth, workers etc. including women hailing from Tamil Nadu, are being cheated by the fake agents on the promise of getting job in Gulf countries and in South Asian countries such as Singapore and Malaysia; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps proposed to be taken by Government to stop recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) The Government has been receiving from time to time complaints/grievances from emigrants and their family members/relatives of being cheated by illegal agents. Such complaints are forwarded to concerned State Governments and police authorities urging them to apprehend illegal agents and prosecute them on the basis of complaints. Wherever required such complaints are also referred to Mission/Post abroad for providing relief/rescue.

As per the available records, the number of complaints against unregistered agents received and referred to the State Governments including Tamil Nadu from the year 2012 onwards is as under:—

Year	No. of Complaints for action	Cases referred to State Govt sought	Prosecution Sanction issued	Prosecution sanction
2012	254	240	16	16
2013	272	261	05	05
2014	170	153	08	08
2015	195	101	11	11
2016 (upto 5th December)	230	218	42	42

Government has also issued Standard Operating Procedure on 26th May, 2016 to be followed by States on receipt of complaints. Visual and print media campaign are also launched from time to time besides engaging various NGOs encouraging people to use the services of Registered Recruiting Agents and not to go through Illegal/Fake Agents.

Post of education counsel lying vacant in USA

3232. DR. KANWAR DEEP SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the post of Education Counsel is lying vacant in USA, if so, the reasons therefor; and

(b) whether the Ministry is considering to do away with the post?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) The post of Consul (Education) in Embassy of India, Washington was advertised by Department of Personnel and Training on 01.09.2016 and will be filled as per established procedures.