

[19 August, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The formal request for the extradition of Warren Anderson was sent to the United States Government in May, 2003 to stand trial in the criminal case concerning the Bhopal Gas Leak Tragedy. In June, 2004, the United States Government informed that it has examined the request and concluded that the request cannot be executed because it does not meet the requirements of certain provisions of the Extradition Treaty between India and the United States.

(c) and (d) The US response has been conveyed to the concerned investigating agency.

Pendency of Passports

1688. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government would consider to reduce the pendency experienced in processing passport applications;

(b) the number of applications pending in passport offices of Kerala with office-wise details; and

(c) whether Government would also consider to strengthen the district-wise facilities for the speedy disposal of passport applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes. It has always been the endeavour of the Government to reduce pendencies in processing the passport applications.

(b) The number of applications pending in the three passport offices in Kerala as on 31st July, 2004 is as given below:

Passport Office	Number of applications pending
Cochin	4,898
Kozhikode	29,954
Trivandrum	3,654

(c) With a view to taking the passport services closer to the doorsteps of the applicants, the Government introduced the Decentralisation Scheme for receipt of passport applications to district level. Under this

scheme, passport applications are received at district headquarters in the District Passport Cells (DPCs) set up in the office of District Magistrate or Superintendent of Police as per discretion/decision of the State Government. The DPCs receive the passport applications and after scrutinizing them and having the police verification in respect of applicant carried out, forward the applications to the concerned passport office for further processing and issuance of passports.

Threats to Pakistan High Commission in India

1689. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that Pakistan High Commission in India is under threat;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether other foreign embassies/High Commissions are also under threat; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by Government for their protection?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Pakistan High Commission, *vide* its Note Verbale dated July 19, 2004, had conveyed that they have received a worldwide alert advice from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in view of enhanced threat perception following action by Pakistan against some terrorist groups. They had requested that appropriate steps may be taken to upgrade security alertness around their Mission and personnel.

(c) and (d) There is a regular exchange of information on security between foreign embassies/High Commissions located in India and this Ministry/security agencies. Whenever there is an assessment based on general or specific information of enhanced security threat *vis-a-vis* a particular target, adequate security cover, including static security, is provided. Government's monitoring mechanism continuously assesses the security scenario, issues security alerts and upgrades security cover depending on the threat perception. Embassies/High Commissions concerned are also advised to take preventive steps and other measures commensurate with the level of threat perception.