

[19 August, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

of Iraq and for expeditious settlement of their dues by their employers.

- (4) The Indian Embassy in Baghdad has sent its officials to some of the places in Iraq where the Indians are located to enquire after their well-being and safety and to provide them assistance and guidance in case they wish to leave Iraq.

**Facilities for Confidence-Building Measures**

1696. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any efforts have been made or pressure put to persuade India by the US to resume talks at any point of time in the last six months;

(b) the efforts made by India on its own to build Confidence-Building Measures with Pakistan during the above mentioned period; and

(c) whether the same has borne fruit in the recent past?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir. However, the international community, including the United States, have conveyed their support for an end to cross border terrorism and a bilateral dialogue process between India and Pakistan.

(b) and (c) In order to take forward the present process of dialogue, confidence building and cooperation between India and Pakistan, Government, during the last six months, have given a comprehensive set of proposals to Pakistan on a broad range of issues, including military and non-military CBMs; promoting friendly exchanges and cooperation in the fields of art, culture, education, science and technology, youth affairs and sports, media and tourism; for trade promotion, transit, cooperation in fields of agriculture, petroleum and natural gas, information technology, telecommunications, postal services civil aviation, shipping, capital market, etc.

Agreement has been reached to restore the strength of the respective High Commissions to the original level of 110; to upgrade, dedicate and secure the communication link between the DGMOs establish a hotline between the two Foreign Secretaries; conclude an

agreement on pre-notification of flight-testing of missiles; and to take steps to release fishermen and civilian prisoners in each other's custody; to work towards an MoU to institutionalize cooperation between the Narcotics Control Authorities of the two countries. It was also agreed in principle to re-establish the Consulates General in Karachi and Mumbai.

**Proposed rail link between New Delhi and Hanoi**

1697. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:

SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a proposal for rail link to connect New Delhi with Hanoi;

(b) if so, the complete details of the proposal with estimated cost to be incurred on the said proposal; and

(c) whether any agreement has been signed on the proposed rail link by the Indian Government with the Chinese Government during the recent visit of Prime Minister to China, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) During the third Ministerial Meeting of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) in Phnom Penh in June, 2003, the member countries, namely India, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam, agreed to the desirability of a rail link from New Delhi to Hanoi. This idea was also touched upon in the discussions at the 2nd India-ASEAN Summit in Bali in October, 2003.

(b) The Government have commissioned a feasibility study, costing Rs. 35.43 lakhs, by Rail India Technical and Economic Services Ltd. (RITES) to examine the technical feasibility of laying the missing link of about 200 km. between Jiribam in Manipur and Kalay in Myanmar. Laying of missing links and restoration/upgradation of existing rail links in Myanmar-Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam are expected to be covered under the ASEAN Rail Connectivity Program.

(c) No such agreement has been signed with the Chinese Government.