

Chinese warning over Balochistan

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that China has warned India over Balochistan;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that the said warning came because China is making huge investments in Balochistan; and
- (d) what actions have been taken by Government to counter the Chinese warning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (d) India has expressed concerns, including at multilateral fora, about human rights violations in Baluchistan. However, no structured dialogue with China has taken place on this issue.

Retrenched Indian workers in Saudi Arabia

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that Saudi Arabia had promised to fly back the retrenched Indian workers who want to come back;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that Government of Saudi Arabia has promised to try and find jobs for retrenched Indian workers; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Following reports of difficulties faced by a section of Indian workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia primarily in two major Saudi companies namely Saudi Oger and the Saad Group, the Government had taken up the matter with the Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi authorities agreed to extend all possible assistance to the affected Indian workers of these companies including waiver of fines on *Iqama* (resident permit) related violations, providing exit visas and one way return tickets to India. Presently, the process of repatriation is nearing completion and 4830 Indian workers have returned so far.

(c) and (d) The Saudi authorities are also facilitating transfer of sponsorship, wherever possible, of the affected workers from their present company to other

companies on *gratis* basis. A significant number of affected workers have also availed transfer of sponsorship to other companies.

Bilateral talks with Pakistan

†820. SHRI NARESH AGRAWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is considering to resume bilateral talks with Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) Following the talks between the National Security Advisers of India and Pakistan in Bangkok on December 6, 2015, which focused inter alia on peace and security, terrorism and tranquility along the Line of Control, and also following the express assurance by Pakistan to take steps for expediting the Mumbai terror attacks trial underway in Pakistan, India and Pakistan had agreed to a Composite Bilateral Dialogue during the visit of External Affairs Minister to Islamabad to attend the fifth Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process on Afghanistan, on December 9, 2015. Foreign Secretaries of the two countries were mandated to finalize the modalities of the Dialogue.

However, the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries could not take place in the wake of Pathankot Air Base terrorist attack on January 2, 2016 and subsequent intensification of cross border terrorism aimed at India and emanating from Pakistan. The Government has clearly stated that Pakistan needs to create a conducive environment free of violence and terrorism for addressing all bilateral matters through a peaceful bilateral dialogue.

Shortage of manpower in Indian Missions

821. SHRI A. VIJAYAKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is severe shortage of manpower in Indian Missions abroad;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.