

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;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.