

and Pakistan to establish a gas pipeline to meet the energy crisis; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) India and Iran had constituted a Joint Committee in May, 2000 to study all aspects of supply of Iranian gas to India, including different modes of transportation, route options and related political, security, economic and technical issues. The Committee has been continuing with its mandated work. Work related to feasibility studies is in progress.

There is no structured mechanism of talks with Pakistan on the issue of gas pipeline. India has security concerns regarding any pipeline transiting through Pakistan. There is also the issue of overall context of trade, transit and economic relationship.

Expansion of Security Council

963. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the emergence of hegemonic domination and attempts to impose a unipolar world, there is a need to re-structure United Nations and expand the Security Council by including developing democratic countries and non-aligned countries; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to work with China and non-aligned countries together to restructure the United Nations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) The UN is nearly sixty years old and the structure of the Security Council reflects the realities at the time of the founding of the UN. The membership of the UN today is nearly four times since its inception in 1945. In keeping with the expansion in the membership of the UN, and in order to better reflect the contemporary realities, there is a need for the reform of the UN system including an expansion of the Security Council. In this framework, India has consistently and actively stressed the urgent need for the reform and the restructuring of the UN Security Council. The necessity to have a larger representation of the developing countries including some developing countries as permanent members in an expanded Security Council has also been emphasized by us.

[22 July, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

(b) This question has been under discussion at the United Nations for several years. There are several complex issues involved: the size of an expanded Council, criteria, balanced representations, etc. With regard to these issues, there is a certain commonality between the non aligned countries and developing countries including China. Discussions are continuing in the UN involving all these countries.

Exploitation of Indian labourers in Iraq

964. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:

SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Indian labourers and other workers are held captive and exploited in Iraq;

(b) if so, since when and what are the details in this regard;

(c) the action taken by Government to rescue the stranded Indian workers; and

(d) the reason for the delayed response to the crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) It has come to Government's notice in recent months that a number of Indian nationals are employed in various places in Iraq. Their number is estimated to be around 5000. Enquiries by Indian Missions in Iraq and Kuwait have indicated that such persons are employed by companies who have got contracts from the US Government. Enquiries by our Missions indicate that there are no known captives among them. A small number of workers who complained of exploitation was assisted by our Mission in returning to India.

(c) and (d) Whenever cases of stranded Indian workers in Iraq came to the attention of the Government, our Missions in Iraq and its neighbouring countries established contact with the employers and the Indian workers and arranged for their repatriation to India. Delays in repatriation in some cases were due to the prevailing security situation and time involved in obtaining transit visas for Indian workers from the neighbouring countries.