

(b) to (d) The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Our Missions and Posts regularly seek consular access to Indian fishermen detained in foreign countries, ensure their welfare and also pursue their early release and repatriation, along with their boats. Given the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of this issue, the Government has put in place several bilateral mechanisms to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and the countries concerned, to promote the safety and security of Indian fishermen.

In case of Pakistan, we have a bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, signed in May, 2008. The Government attaches high importance to the safety and security of the Indian fishermen and makes continuous efforts, including through diplomatic channels, for the early release and repatriation of the Indian fishermen in the custody of Pakistan authorities.

In the case of Sri Lanka, our Mission works closely with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence, the Attorney General's Office and the law enforcement agencies concerned, to secure the release and repatriation of our fishermen. There is a Joint Working Group on Fisheries and a Joint Committee on Fisheries, which take up fishermen's issues for resolution on basis of the bilateral Understanding on Practical Arrangements of October, 2008. In addition, talks are held from time to time between representatives of the Fishermen's Associations in India and Sri Lanka.

In the case of Bangladesh, on receipt of information of the arrest of Indian fishermen, Mission contacts the concerned District Magistrates in India to ascertain their Indian nationality and thereafter pursue with the Bangladesh authorities for their release. For this, Mission seeks consular access from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and contacts local NGOs for their welfare during their imprisonment in Bangladesh.

Trade relations with African and Latin American Nations

1604. SHRI SAMBHAJI CHHATRAPATI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken special initiatives for expanding trade relations with African and Latin American Nations where a lot of potential still exists despite dominance of Chinese goods and if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the details regarding specific jobs Indian Embassies and Missions perform in strengthening trade relations with African and Latin American countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Government has taken various initiatives for expanding trade relations with African and Latin American Nations:—

Trade Relations with African Nations:

Various steps have been taken by the Government to increase exports to Africa. The trade between India and African countries are reviewed regularly, including through bilateral mechanisms like Joint Commission Meetings and Joint Trade Committee Meetings. The 4th India-Africa Trade Minister Meeting was organized in New Delhi on 23rd October, 2015 to boost the India-Africa trade. Negotiations to enter into FTA/PTA/CECPA with COMESA (Regional Economic Community), SACU (Customs Union) and Mauritius (bilateral) are in progress. Promotional events like Trade Fairs/ Buyers Sellers Meet are also organised regularly in African countries under Market Access Initiatives (MAI) Scheme with a view to diversify and boost exports to Africa.

Trade Relations with Latin American Nations:

In order to encourage the Indian private sector, as well as State entities, to develop stronger trade and investment linkages with LAC countries, the integrated "Focus LAC Programme" was launched in November, 1997 which has been extended from time to time. It was last extended up to March, 2019 with the objective to further deepen India's trade ties with LAC region. The 7th edition of India-Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Conclave was organized in Mexico in November, 2016. The Conclave was organized for the first time in the LAC Region to boost the trade relations.

Apart from that the following major initiatives are being taken to enhance India's presence in LAC region:—

- (i) **Expansion of India Chile PTA:**— As a follow up to the Framework Agreement to promote Economic Cooperation between India and Chile, a PTA was signed in March, 2006 which came into force in August, 2007. The existing India-Chile PTA has been expanded which provides more coverage.
- (ii) **Expansion of India MERCOSUR PTA:**— India-MERCOSUR PTA was signed on January 25, 2004 and came into effect from 1st June, 2009 as a follow up of Framework Agreement signed in 17th June, 2003 at Asuncion, Paraguay.
- (iii) **Trade Agreement with Peru:**— The Cabinet has recently approved the Cabinet Note on 18th January, 2017 to hold negotiations with Peru for a Trade Agreement on trade in goods, services and investment. The process of negotiations with Peru on trade agreement has been initiated.

(b) Government of India in coordination with Missions and Embassies abroad encourages and assists private businesses/investors from India to explore the vast economic and commercial potential abroad and increase investments, sending business

delegations, holding various market expansion/trade promotion activities, participation in various exhibitions, trade fairs, etc. Indian Embassies and Missions Act as the interface and nodal point in facilitating bilateral trade relations at the Government to Government, Government to Business, Business and Business levels. They respond to commercial enquires from India and host country; Organize visits of Chamber of Commerce, Export and Trade Promotion Councils; Liaise with local Chamber of Commerce; and Organize Seminar and Workshops to disseminate information regarding Government of India's flagship programmes.

Increased attacks on Indian techies in USA

1605. SHRI VISHAMBHAR PRASAD NISHAD:

SHRI DEVENDER GOUD T.:

CH. SUKHRAM SINGH YADAV:

SHRIMATI CHHAYA VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how the Minister looks at the increasing attacks on Indian techies in the United States of America (USA) recently;

(b) whether the Ministry is aware that two techies from Telangana have been killed during the last one month there;

(c) if so, how the Ministry is going to protect IT and other professionals working there;

(d) whether any consultations have been held with the recently visited congressional group from USA; and

(e) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) In recent weeks, three incidents of physical attack in the United States on Indian Nationals and Persons of Indian Origin have come to the notice of the Government.

(i) On February 22, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a 32-year-old Indian engineer was shot dead by a US national in Kansas City suburb of Olathe. Another Indian national, Alok Madasani, present on the spot was also injured in the shooting. Ian Grillot an American national, who tried to stop the shooting, was also shot and injured during the incident. Both the injured persons have received treatment and since been discharged from the hospital. The accused has been arrested by the Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating it as a case of 'hate crime'.