

Indians in foreign jails

948. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Indian citizens working abroad and languishing in jails there;

(b) the reasons for their punishment; and

(c) the action taken by Government to get innocent persons released from jails?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) It is estimated that 4.5 million Indians are working and living abroad and approximately 7000 Indians are reportedly in foreign jails.

(b) The reasons for their imprisonment include—violation of labour laws, illegal stay, illegal immigration and civil and criminal offences.

(c) Indian Missions/Posts provide all possible assistance to Indian nationals in foreign jails. This assistance includes—getting them released wherever possible, meetings with these Indian nationals, ensuring that there is no miscarriage of justice, facilitating speedy trials and enabling proper living conditions and treatment in the prisons.

Payment of high rentals by Indian Missions

949. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Indian Missions in other countries are paying phenomenally high rentals for the chancery office buildings etc. while the plots of lands leased there, are lying vacant for varying periods extending, reportedly, even up to forty four years and the financial allocations made therefor have been surrendered repeatedly year after year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of revised phased programmes drawn up to speed up the process of construction of own buildings, wherever feasible and the monitoring mechanism set up, if any, to complete these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) It is a fact that the Ministry has acquired plots of land at certain stations abroad, but construction of own properties on such plots of land has not been possible due to various reasons and thereby the Ministry continues to pay high rentals for Chanceries and residences at such stations. Details of these plots and proposed construction projects with their present status are enclosed at Statement (See below). The Ministry had identified the stations with high rentals. Missions in Beijing, Dhaka, Kathmandu, Moscow, Muscat and Tashkent figure among the stations where the Ministry has plots and is paying high rentals for leased properties.

Though the Ministry endeavoured earnestly to implement the construction proposals, certain projects could not progress for a variety of reasons beyond the control of the Ministry. However, the Ministry has intensified its efforts to develop Embassy Complexes in plots of land acquired by the Government for construction of Chanceries and residences and substantive progress has been made during the last two years whereby the projects have moved to satisfactory levels of planning and execution.

The Foreign Secretary chairs a committee for monitoring construction projects and a sub-committee headed by Additional Secretary (Human Resources) meets on a weekly basis to review the progress of construction projects. The progress reports are also reviewed by EAM.

The Ministry is also in the process of constituting a separate Division, which will deal with Projects specifically. This will further ensure that the implementation of projects, which are on the anvil, is expedited.

Statement**Status of Construction Projects on Plots of Land available with Indian Missions abroad**

| Station & year of allotment of land | Project | Present Status |
|---|---|--|
| Abuja 1990 | Construction of Chancery and Embassy Residence | Foundation stone laid by PM on December 5, 2003. Contract with M/s. C.P. Kukreja Associates, Architects signed on January 9, 2004. Cost estimate of project under consideration of financial authorities. |
| Beijing 1989 | Construction of Chancery and Residences | Contract signed with M/s. Raj Rewal Associates as Architect-Consultant. Financial approval obtained in July 2003. Local contracts signed by Mission in March 2004. Plans are with local bodies for approval. |
| Brazilia 1985 | Chancery, Embassy Residence and Officers Residences | Design of M/s. Paranhos selected on September 30, 2003. Contract with Architect being signed by Mission. |
| Dar-Es-Salaam 1998 | Construction of Chancery | Selection of architect by Project Design Selection Committee, chaired by Foreign Secretary, being finalised. |
| Dhaka 1993 and 2000 | Construction of Chancery and Residences | Concept design of five short-listed architects received on May 31, 2004 and being examined. Selection of architect to be finalised by Project Design Selection Committee. |
| Doha 1977. Plot was withdrawn. A new plot is yet to be allotted | Construction of Chancery and Embassy Residence | Approved by Ministry of Finance in January 2003. Unfortunately, delay has occurred because local Government has shifted the site of land allocated to India. New plot is yet to be allotted. |

| 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|--|---|
| Islamabad 1982 Payment for additional land towards amalgamation of plot made in 1980. Possession given in February 2003. | Construction of Residences | Contract signed with M/s. Sachdeva Architects. Property team visited Islamabad in May 2004 to revise design concept. Architect is complying with the requirements projected by the concerned local bodies. |
| Kabul 1987 | Construction of Chancery and Residences | Design Concept has been finalised by CPWD. CPWD is working on preliminary design and preliminary cost estimates to enable the Ministry obtain financial approval. |
| Kathmandu 1980 | Construction of Chancery and Residences | Contract signed with M/s. Akshaya Jain and Raka Chettraverty as Architects in April 2004. Based on the additional inputs of the Mission, the consultants are preparing preliminary design and preliminary cost estimates. |
| Moscow 1989 | Construction of Residences and School | Contract signed with M/s Consulting Engineering Services Ltd. Cost estimate being processed for Cabinet approval. |
| Muscat 1991 | Construction of Chancery and Embassy Residence | Contract signed with M/s Babbar & Babbar as Architect-Consultants. Tender documents for award of construction contract under consideration. |
| Paramaribo 1992 | Construction of Indian Cultural Centre | Design Brief being finalised in consultation with the Mission. |
| Port Louis 2000 | Construction of Chancery Complex | Short list of architects approved by Ministry. Inputs for design brief received from Mission, but site of land has been shifted by local Government. |
| Tashkent 1989. Vacant possession given in April 2004 | Construction of Embassy Residence, Chancery and Residences | Contract signed with Mr. Romi Khosla as Consultant. Final design and cost estimates submitted by Architect being examined. |

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|---------------------------|---|---|
| Trinidad & Tobago 1991 | Construction of Cultural Centre | Financial approval obtained in May 2003. Revised drawings being finalised by local architect. |
| Warsaw 1988 | Construction of Chancery and Residences | Contract signed with M/s Sachdeva Eggleston as Architects. Financial proposal being processed in consultation with competent authorities. |

Joint working group to counter terrorism

950. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and Tajikistan have agreed to set up a joint working group to counter terrorism; and

(b) if so, the details of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) India and Tajikistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding on January 30, 2003 for setting up a Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism. The Agreement provides a framework for counter terrorism cooperation between the two countries including, *inter-alia*, by way of sharing of information and experience, cooperation in preventing terrorist financing, drug trafficking and organised crime as also through capacity building.

Passports issued by RPO, Bangalore

951. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passports newly issued in Karnataka by the Passport Office, Bangalore from January to December, 2003;

(b) the number of passport applications pending, till date, in the above office;

(c) whether Government are aware that a large number of people simply take passports but not utilising it; and