

**People from Rajasthan in jails of Pakistan**

†498. SHRI OM PRAKASH MATHUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether people hailing from the districts of Rajasthan like Jaisalmer, Barmer and Ganga Nagar situated along international border have inadvertently crossed over to Pakistan during previous decades and currently languishing in prisons over there, if so, the number thereof;

(b) whether many of them have been released by Pakistan Government and whether there are any instances where problems are being faced in bringing them back as they have already been declared dead; and

(c) whether the Central Government have taken any concrete steps to bring them back, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (c) As per the list provided by the Government of Pakistan on July 1, 2017 under bi-annual exchange of lists of Prisoners between India and Pakistan, there are 52 civilian prisoners believed-to-be Indian in Pakistani jails. Details pertaining to the state, that they may be belonging to, have not been provided.

Government consistently takes up with the Pakistan authorities the matter of early release and repatriation of all the Indian prisoners as well as providing regular consular access to them. Due to Government's persistent efforts five civilian prisoners have been released by Pakistan in 2017, so far. This includes Shri Surja Ram S/o Teko Ram from Rajasthan, who was released and repatriated on June 22, 2017.

**Issue of H-1B and L1 visa with USA**

499. SHRI N. GOKULAKRISHNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Congress of United States of America (USA) had not passed any Bills that could put curbs on issuing H-1 B visas to Indian IT professionals;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether it is also a fact that there was no sword hanging over Indians employed under H-1B or L1 visa categories;

(c) whether Government is conducting a dialogue with the USA at a very high level regarding this issue; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) In the current (115th) Congress, the following six Bills relating to H-1B and L-1 visa programmes have been introduced by individual congressmen and senators.

- (i) The "Protect and Grow American Jobs Act" introduced by Congressman Darrell Issa on 5 January, 2017.
- (ii) The "H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act of 2017" introduced by Senators Chuck Grassley and Dick Durbin on 20 January, 2017.
- (iii) The "High-Skilled Integrity and Fairness Act of 2017" introduced by US Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren on 24 January, 2017.
- (iv) The "H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act of 2017" introduced by Congressmen Bill Pascrell Jr. on 2 March, 2017.
- (v) The "American Jobs First Act of 2017" introduced by Congressman Mo Brooks on 28 April, 2017.
- (vi) The "Stopping Trained in America Ph.Ds. From Leaving the Economy (STAPLE) Act of 2017" introduced by Congressmen Erik Paulsen and Mike Quigley on 25 May, 2017.

The above Bills seek to amend the various provisions relating to the grant of H-1 B and L-1 visas. However, so far none of these bills have been passed and no comprehensive policy changes have been made.

(c) and (d) The Government of India remains closely engaged with the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Administration on this issue. There is positive recognition in the US of the contributions made by Indian skilled professionals to the growth and development of the U.S. economy as well as in helping the U.S. retain its competitive edge and innovation advantage.