

Refusal for entry in Canada for people serving in Indian Forces

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

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Canada has been refusing entry to Indians who are serving and/or had served in forces like Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), etc.;

(b) whether it is also a fact that in recent time a similar refusal was widely reported in the press;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government has taken up this issue with Canada; and

(e) if so, their reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (e) Government is aware that Shri Tejinder Singh Dhillon, former CRPF official, was denied entry in Canada on 20 May, 2017 by officials of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) despite having a valid Canadian visa. The denial report by CIC official made negative references to CRPF and inter alia accused the organization of having committed "widespread and systemic human rights abuses".

The Government of India strongly took up the matter with Government of Canada both in Ottawa and New Delhi and conveyed that such a characterization of a reputed force like the CRPF was completely unacceptable. The Canadian High Commission issued a statement on 23 May, 2017 regretting the incident. The statement said that the language used in the denial report issued by the CIC "does not reflect the Government of Canada's policy towards India or any particular organization, including the Central Reserve Police Force of India. The Central Reserve Police Force plays an important role in upholding law and order in India". The statement further said that Canada values its relationship with India, based on shared values of democracy, pluralism, human rights and rule of law. The Canadian High Commission also provided fresh visa and tickets to Shri Dhillon for his travel to Canada.

Threat of Indians losing jobs abroad

501. SHRI BASAWARAJ PATIL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any new laws of United States of America (USA), Europe, and Australia are putting hurdles for Indians in getting jobs in those countries; and

(b) whether there is any threat of losing job for Indians in these countries due to these new laws?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) No new law which creates hurdles for Indians in getting jobs in the US, has been passed by the US Congress. In April, 2017, President Trump issued an Executive Order titled "Buy American and Hire American" which states that in order to create higher wages and employment rates for workers in the US, and to protect their economic interests, it shall be the policy of the executive branch to rigorously enforce and administer laws governing entry into the United States of workers abroad.

The UK Government introduced certain changes to its work visa regime in November, 2016 and April, 2017. The changes include increase in salary thresholds and levy of charges such as Immigration Health Surcharge and Immigration Skills Charge. These changes have made it difficult for skilled professionals to obtain a work visa for the UK.

In April, 2017, Australia announced phased abolition of 457 visa category for skilled workers. It will be replaced with the 'Temporary Skills Shortage Visas' programme starting March 2018, providing for a short-term visa for up to two years and medium term visas of up to four years depending on the occupation. English language proficiency requirement has been made stringent. As the number of professions in the eligible Occupation List is curtailed, it will impact the number of jobs available under 'Temporary Skills Shortage Visas' programme.

These changes/proposed changes are not India specific and their impact will be assessed in due course.

Decline in number of Indian workers in Gulf countries

†502. SHRI JAVED ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Indian workers working in Gulf countries, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain for the last three years, year-wise;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.