

connect and collaborate with one another. During the visit, six MoUs in the fields of Nanotechnology, Culture, Space, Amendment to Double Taxation Agreement, Youth and Sports and Public Administration were signed.

Security bridges with ASEAN countries

1290. SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is building security bridges with other Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Our partnership with ASEAN is firmly based on cooperation. In this, the foremost is Political and Security Cooperation. India has been working with ASEAN to develop an open, transparent, inclusive and evolutionary regional security architecture which would address both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Mutually, India and ASEAN have also been working towards evolving a regional security architecture in the Asia Pacific Region that hinges on emphasising the peaceful settlement of disputes, finding collaborative solutions to emerging and non-traditional challenges, and support for the centrality of ASEAN. India will continue working with the ASEAN member countries bilaterally as well as multilaterally to maintain peace, stability, growth and prosperity in Asia and beyond.

Fishermen and boats detained by Pakistan

1291. SHRI K. R. ARJUNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has detained more than hundred Indian fishermen and eighteen fishing trawlers on 26th March, 2017;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken up this issue with the Government of Pakistan; and

(d) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) As per the available reports, more than hundred Indian fishermen along with 19 boats were apprehended by Pakistan authorities in the intervening night of 25 and 26 March, 2017.

(c) and (d) Upon receiving the report, Government, through diplomatic channels, raised the issue of detention of these Indian fishermen along with their boats with -Pakistan Government on 27 March, 2017. Pakistan was asked to provide consular access and expedite the release and repatriation of these fishermen along with their boats. There was no immediate response from the Pakistan side.

Subsequently, as per the list provided by Government of Pakistan on 1 July, 2017 under bi-annual exchange of lists of Prisoners between India and Pakistan, it acknowledged custody of 494 fishermen believed to be Indian in Pakistani Jails. Due to persistent efforts of the Government, 77 Indian fishermen were released and repatriated on 10 July, 2017 by Pakistan. Government continues to take up with Pakistan authorities, the matter of early consular access, release and repatriation of the remaining fishermen along with their boats.

Indians in captivity in Mosul, Iraq

1292. SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that till now there are no traces of the Indians who were in captivity in Mosul, Iraq; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Yes, it is a fact that till now there is no trace of the 39 Indians abducted in Iraq in June, 2014.

The safety and security of Indian nationals abroad is a matter of foremost concern and major preoccupation for the Government which has been making every effort and taking all steps to trace the missing nationals since June, 2014. In this connection, our Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil (Iraq) are in regular contact with the local government authorities which have assured of their full cooperation.