

Visit of Foreign Minister to Pakistan

2456. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether he visited Islamabad from July, 19 onwards;
- (b) if so, the issues discussed with Pakistan during the visit;
- (c) the outcome thereof, indicating the Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding signed there; and
- (d) the steps taken and being taken by Government in the light thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (d) External Affairs Minister visited Pakistan from July 19 to 23, 2004 for the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting. On the margins of the SAARC meeting, EAM called on President General Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Husain, Senior Minister Shaukat Aziz, and Foreign Minister Kasuri of Pakistan. During these meetings, the two sides, *inter alia*, discussed issues related to SAARC, reviewed bilateral relations, and discussed the progress in the process of the Composite Dialogue that began in February 2004. They expressed satisfaction at the wide range of contacts taking place at governmental and non-governmental levels between India and Pakistan. Both sides reiterated the importance of continuing the dialogue in an atmosphere free from violence and to tackling the scourge of terrorism.

Fishermen in Pakistan custody

2457. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are aware that the six fishermen employed in the Sultanate of Oman were reported missing and later learnt to have been under the custody of Pakistan Government; and
- (b) whether Government have initiated any steps so far for their release from Pakistan, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

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RAJYA SABHA

(b) Government, through diplomatic channels, have taken up the matter of their release and repatriation with Pakistan.

**Extension of Tawaghat-Gunji road to facilitate Kailash
Mansarovar pilgrims**

†2458. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to extend Tawaghat-Gunji road, presently under construction, upto Sialekh to facilitate the travel of Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims coming from various parts of the country and abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the steps Government are taking to make this path convenient on the lines of path available through China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) Government have undertaken the construction of a road linking Ghatiabgarh and the Lipulekh Pass, which includes the section from Tawaghat to Gunji. The construction of the road has been presently held up due to environmental objections arising from its routing through the Asokote Wild Life Sanctuary. The matter is pending with the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Power project in Bhutan

2459. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a power project is to set up in Bhutan as part of Indo-Bhutan cooperation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is going to help India in any manner; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (d) Hydro-power generation has been identified as one of the core areas of cooperation

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.