

[26 August, 2004]

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also meet, as necessary, to review the situation and take appropriate decisions. This mechanism remains in force until the crisis ends. It needs to be pointed out that no two hostage situations are entirely similar and different responses may be required depending upon specific circumstances to reach the objectives of Government policy.

India's policy towards West Asia

2448. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been a paradigm shift in India's policy towards the West Asia; and

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

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) & (b) The objective of the Government is to give a fresh thrust to India's traditional ties with the countries of West Asia. In this context, Government will remain committed to fully supporting, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a homeland of their own. It is also committed to participating in all endeavours aimed at bringing stability to Iraq and for ensuring the well being of the Iraqi people. Government will build upon the traditionally strong relations with the countries of West Asia which are based on cultural affinities, economic interaction and a vibrant Indian expatriate community.

Norms for U.S. citizenship

2449. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.S. Administration has set very rigorous norms for the immigrants who intend to adopt the U.S. citizenship;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) The rules for acquisition of US citizenship by naturalisation require that the applicant:

i. must be 18 years of age;

- ii. must be lawfully admitted to the US for permanent residence and possess an I-551 Alien Registration Card;
 - iii. has resided continuously as a lawful permanent resident in the US for at least 5 years;
 - iv. has been physically present in the US for at least 30 months out of the previous 5 years;
 - v. has good moral character and has resided within a State/ District for at least 3 months; and
 - vi. must owe allegiance to the Constitution of the USA.
- (c) Norms of acquisition of citizenship of a country fall within the internal domain of that country and it is not for a foreign government to comment on it.

BIMSTEC Summit

2450. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the benefits derived by India in the recently held BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok;
- (b) whether any Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) has been signed in the Summit;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) in what manner would it help the Indian industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) The Prime Minister attended the First Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit in Bangkok on 31 July, 2004. The Summit identified six priority sectors of cooperation, each with a "lead country": technology (Sri Lanka), transport and communications (India), energy (Myanmar), tourism (India) and fisheries (Thailand). Increased cooperation in these sectors among the BIMSTEC member countries would benefit all the member countries. BIMSTEC provides an effective link between South Asia and Southeast Asia with significant potential for deeper economic interaction and integration. It also provides us with a