

atmosphere free from terror, hostility and violence. Onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive atmosphere.

India's engagement with China is multifaceted. In view of the significance of the bilateral relationship, both sides are working towards utilizing their bilateral dialogue mechanisms to promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and enhancing communication at all levels in order to build greater trust and understanding. Both sides share the view that India-China bilateral relationship has an important role to play in the 21st Century in Asia and in the world, and that it serves the shared interest of the two sides to strengthen their Closer Developmental Partnership.

Difficulties faced by Indians in visa process

†4334. SHRI LAL SINH VADODIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that Indian citizens have to face a lot of trouble in obtaining visa for visiting countries like US, Canada, Great Britain, etc;
- (b) if so, whether Government has taken any steps to resolve this issue; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GEN. (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) The Government is aware that all visa applicants for visit to the United States, Canada and the UK are not granted visas. The reasons for non-issuance of visas may be varied and the final decision to grant or deny a visa to the Indian visa applicant vests completely with the foreign Government and their Embassies or Consulates in India. The difficulties faced by Indian visa applicants range from long-duration processing times to charge of exorbitant fees for expedited/priority visas. The documentation requirement and the visa application itself for the US, Canada and the UK is comprehensive, and cumbersome to an extent. However, these decisions rest at the sole discretion of the foreign Government concerned. The fact that some of our nationals try to obtain visas for these countries under various categories with the intention of not returning, could be one of the reasons for these countries to make their visa process comprehensive, requiring substantial information sharing, which is then subjected to scrutiny.

While the Government recognises that the visa policy and procedures are the prerogative of the host country, the Government regularly takes up the difficulties faced by genuine Indian visa applicants with the foreign Governments concerned at appropriate level and platform, including in bilateral meetings and dialogues.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

The Government emphasizes the importance of facilitating movement of tourists, professionals, business travellers, students and other travellers and has conveyed the same to the Governments of the US, Canada and the UK in various dialogues highlighting that stronger people-to-people ties strengthen bilateral relations and promotes mutually-beneficial economic relations.

Suspension of passports of PNB scam accused

4335. SHRI HARIVANSH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has suspended the passports of persons accused in Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam ;

(b) whether any time has been given to them to respond;

(c) if so, whether any response has been received from them, so far;

(d) if not, what is the future course of action proposed to be taken against them; and

(e) whether the Ministry has any clue about the whereabouts of these accused?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GEN. (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Yes. The Ministry suspended the passports of Shri Nirav Deepak Modi and Shri Mehul Chinubhai Choksi in accordance with Section 10A of the Passports Act, 1967, on 16 February, 2018.

(b) to (d) Show Cause Notices were served on Shri Nirav Deepak Modi and Shri Mehul Chinubhai Choksi by the Passport Issuing Authority (PIA) under the Ministry on 16 February, 2018 giving them a time period of one week to respond. Since they failed to respond within the stipulated time period, their passports were revoked by the PIA under the Ministry on 23 February, 2018.

(e) The Ministry has sought the provisional arrest of Shri Nirav Deepak Modi by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, People's Republic of China, for which a request has been submitted to them on 23 March, 2018.

Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade between India and Bangladesh

4336. SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status on the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh; and