

(c) India's total trade with ASEAN countries in 2017-18 was US\$ 81.33 billion, which is 10.57% of India's overall trade. Value of exports was US\$ 34.20 billion and imports were US\$ 47.13 billion. India had a trade deficit of US\$ 12.93 billion with ASEAN countries in 2017-18.

Relation with neighbouring countries

2416. SHRI ELAMARAM KAREEM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that our bilateral relations with neighbouring countries got worse during the last five years;

(b) whether Government is aware that some of our neighbouring countries which were previously dependent on India for their basic needs are depending on other countries at present; and

(c) whether our stand against some nations have resulted in deterioration of our trustworthiness for countries like Nepal and Bhutan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) No.

(b) Government accords highest priority to India's relations with our neighbouring countries. Our engagement is focused on greater connectivity, stronger cooperation and broader contacts. High level visits to all countries in the neighbourhood, in many cases after a gap of several years have imparted a new energy to our ties. We have resolved many long pending issues, extended timely assistance in times of need and distress and expanded our development cooperation in terms of range, quality and quantum of commitments as well as pace of implementation. Overall, our approach and the sincerity of our efforts are receiving growing support from our partners in the region.

(c) India's age-old and multifaceted ties with neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan stand firmly on their own. Our relations are founded on mutual trust, goodwill and understanding, and have witnessed sustained progress in a wide range of sectors.

Detention for illegal entry into USA

2417. SHRI NARAYAN LAL PANCHARIYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Indian citizens have been detained by Immigration and Customs

Enforcement of US Administration for illegal entry into the USA during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has provided any assistance to such Indian citizens; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reason therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) The U.S. Government does not release a comprehensive list, by nationality, of aliens detained for entering or staying in the U.S. without valid documents.

(c) and (d) Government of India does not encourage illegal migration of Indian citizens into other countries. From time to time, detentions of alleged Indian nationals for violation of U.S. immigration laws are reported or come to the notice of the Government. In such cases, our Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. take up the matter with appropriate authorities and render all possible assistance to the detained Indian nationals, including by visits to detention centers. Detainees who seek asylum in the U.S. often avoid contact with our Mission or Consulates and refuse to accept their assistance while their request for asylum is under consideration. Indian Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. also facilitate issue of travel documents to undocumented Indians after due verification of nationality, to enable their return to India.

Protection of rights of Indian citizens in foreign countries

2418. SHRI G.C. CHANDRASHEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to establish a system for protecting the rights of Indian citizens in foreign countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with MoUs signed in this regard with each country;

(c) whether the terms and conditions in the visa are being violated by the external agencies due to which, Indian citizens are facing difficulties to continue their employment;