

Residents of J&K in foreign prisons

2127. SHRI K. SOMAPRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per the information available with the Ministry, the number of residents of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in foreign prisons as of 15th July, 2019 is 22, if so, the details of steps taken by Government to rescue them;

(b) whether any legal aid has been given to these prisoners and its details thereof, and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) to (c) As per the information available with the Ministry, the number of residents of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in foreign prisons as of 15.07.2019 was 22. The number of residents of J&K as on 31.01.2020 has come down to 9. This has been possible due to sustained and proactive efforts of the Government.

The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indians in foreign countries, including those in the foreign jails. Indian Missions/Posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor the incidents of Indian nationals being put in jail in foreign countries for violation of local laws or alleged violation of local laws. As soon as the information about detention/arrest of an Indian national is received by an Indian Mission/Post, it gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access to the detained/arrested Indian national to confirm his Indian nationality and ensure his welfare. In some countries where pro bono lawyers are available, the Mission arranges legal assistance to the Indian prisoners. Government of India also provides initial legal assistance to distressed Indian nationals in deserving cases.

Steps taken by our Missions include requesting local authorities for speedy trials, seeking remission of sentence, providing advice and guidance in legal and other matters, ensuring fair and humane treatment in foreign jails, issue of emergency certificates and repatriation to India of those who are released.