

The Ministry has also been actively pursuing a policy of purchase/ construction of properties abroad with a view to curtail expenditure on hiring of accommodation for Chancery and residences of India-based officers and staff members.

Indians in Pakistani jails

3664. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI LALIT SURI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian nationals—civilian and defence personnel, separately, according to Government's estimates, at present languishing in Pakistani jails; and

(b) the steps taken during the last two years to seek their release and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) As per available information, 883 Indian civilian prisoners, 245 fishermen and 54 missing Indian defence personnel are believed currently to be in Pakistani Jails.

(b) Government have consistently taken up the issue of release and repatriation of Indian prisoners with the Government of Pakistan through diplomatic channels. As a result, 39 civilian prisoners and 683 Indian fishermen were got released from Pakistan since January, 2001 to 17th April, 2003.

Social Security Cards

3665. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to issue National Social Security Cards to the EPF account holders; and

(b) if so, the purpose of this scheme and the amount involved as an expenditure on this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI VIJAY GOEL) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Employees' Provident Fund Organisation proposes to issue a unique National Social Security Number (NSSN) to the members brought under the purview of the Employees' Provident Fund