

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 464
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.12.2022**

ATTACKS ON GURDWARAS IN AFGHANISTAN

464. SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV:

SHRI RAVINDRA KUSHWAHA:

SHRI BIDYUT BARAN MAHATO:

SHRI RAVI KISHAN:

SHRI DHAIRYASHEEL SAMBHAJIRAOMANE:

SHRI SANJAY SADASHIVRAOMANLIK:

SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:

SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the frequent attacks on Temples/Gurdwaras in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other foreign countries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of people killed and injured in these attacks during the last three years;
- (c) whether Pakistan or Pakistan sponsored terrorist organizations are responsible in any way for these attacks;
- (d) whether the Government has raised the issue with foreign Governments and taken steps towards protection of Indians in Pakistan and Afghanistan;
- (e) if so, the details along with the outcome thereof; and
- (f) the steps taken/being taken by the Government for welfare of Indian diaspora?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a) to (f) In case of Pakistan, there have been reports of frequent instances of vandalism and desecration of places of religious worship belonging to the minority communities. Incidents reported in the last three years include the vandalism and desecration of Gurudwara Nankana Sahib, Gurudwara Shri Guru Harkishen Sahib in Sindh, statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Shiv Mandir in Mirpur Mathelo, Hindu temple in Tharparkar, Shri Mari Mata Mandir in Karachi, Sant Mohan Das temple in Larkana, Hindu temple in Hyderabad, and theft of gold idol in Sant Baba Jairamdas Samadhi Ashram in Shikarpur, Sindh.

Based on reports of persecution of minority groups in Pakistan, Government has raised all such cases with the Government of Pakistan calling upon it to take steps to protect and promote the safety, security and well-being of its minority communities and their places of religious worship. Pakistan has also been asked to take immediate measures to expeditiously bring the perpetrators of such despicable and heinous acts to justice. It is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan to discharge its obligations towards its citizens, including those from the minority community.

As regards to Indians in Pakistan, all necessary assistance is provided through our High Commission in Islamabad. Government attaches high importance to the issue of Indian prisoners held in Pakistan custody. As per the lists exchanged on 01 July 2022, Pakistan acknowledged the custody of 49 civilian prisoners and 633 fishermen who are Indians or believed-to-be Indians. As soon as cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats by Pakistan are reported, immediate steps are taken by the Indian Mission in Islamabad towards seeking consular access from the Pakistan Government. All possible assistance, including legal assistance, is extended to the fishermen for their early release and repatriation, along with the release of their boats. Government consistently takes up the matter of welfare, safety and security of Indian fishermen in Pakistan, pending their release.

As a result of persistent efforts, India has been successful in securing the release and repatriation of more than 2700 Indian prisoners from Pakistan's custody since 2014. India has sought early consular access and release and repatriation of the remaining Indians in Pakistan's custody.

In case of Afghanistan, there were attacks at Gurudwara Har Rai Sahib in Kabul in March 2020, and Gurudwara Dashmesh Pita Sahib Sri Gobind Sahib Ji in Kabul on 18 June 2022. The attacks led to the loss of life of around 25 people and injured around 11 people, including one Indian national. India strongly condemned both the cowardly terrorist attacks which targeted the innocent civilian population.

In view of the rapid deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan, especially after 15 August 2021, a 24 x 7 Special Afghanistan Cell was set up in the Ministry of External Affairs to facilitate repatriation of Indians. Thereafter, under Operation Devi Shakti, Government of India evacuated a total of 669 people, including 448 Indian nationals in seven flights. All Indian nationals who had sought repatriation to India were evacuated. Further, e-visas were issued promptly to the Afghan Sikh community members to enable them to travel to India.

The Government has established a robust institutional framework to ensure the welfare, safety and well-being of Indian migrants living overseas. The e-Migrate system, MADAD portal, Indian Community Welfare Fund, Pravasi Bhartiya Beema Yojana, Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras, Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras Helplines at Indian Missions and Posts, open house programs organized by the Missions and Posts, Shelter Homes etc. are some of the important mechanisms to expeditiously assist Indian migrants abroad. In addition, the Government has signed Labour, Employment and Cooperation agreements with major destination countries including the Gulf countries and holds Joint Working Groups meetings to ensure redressal of grievances and protection of rights of Indian workers.

The Government continues to attach highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indians in foreign countries.
