

indicate at this stage the number of persons below the poverty line as per the National Sample Survey Organisation Survey of 1983.

(b) and (c). Does not arise.

U.S. Propaganda about Area Along Siachin Glacier Near Ladakh

6679. SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any map published in United States of America show the area along the Siachin Glacier sector near Ladakh to be belonging to Pakistan; and

(b) if so, the action taken by Government to counter the false United States propaganda ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KHURSHEED ALAM KHAN) : (a) and (b). Certain maps published by US Department of State have shown incorrect depiction of the line of control in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Government has taken up the matter with the US Government on various occasions.

Proposal for Separate Deptt. of Non-Resident Indians

6680. SHRI P. A. ANTONY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up a separate department to look after the interests of non-resident Indians; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KHURSHEED ALAM KHAN) : (a) and (b). A Division has been set up to coordinate work relating to Non-resident Indians.

Vayudoot Service between Calcutta and Darjeeling and Digha

6681. SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the growing number of tourists in Darjeeling and Digha of West Bengal;

(b) whether Government propose to introduce a Vayudoot service from Calcutta to Darjeeling and Digha to cope with the problem; and

(c) if so, when ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT) : (a) to (c). Darjeeling and Digha do not have aerodromes and are at a distance of approx. 30 Kms and 78 Kms from Bagdogra and Calcutta respectively, which already have adequate airlinks. There is no proposal at present to link Darjeeling and Digha with a Vayudoot service.

[Translation]

"Thar Desert"

6682. SHRI KAMLA PRASAD RAWAT : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Thar Desert is spreading as per the views of the expert on environmental protection of Thar Desert and the Advisor to the U. N. Environmental Programme;

(b) if so, whether this desert is spreading due to the felling of desert trees by the villagers and the absence of fodder arrangements there;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to make fuel wook and fodder available to the villagers at cheap rates; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN) : (a) and (b). According to the studies of the Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur, no conclusive scientific evidence is available to show that the Thar Desert is spreading. The opinions differ primarily because of terminological controversy. The studies, however, underline the fact that xeric conditions within the Desert have accentuated due to over exploitation of vegetation and land resources for meeting fuel and fodder requirements.

(c) No, Sir,

(d) It is not feasible.