

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:91
ANSWERED ON:01.03.2000
ARRESTED INDIAN COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS
ASHOK KUMAR PATEL;TUFANI SAROJ

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item appearing in the `Economic Times` dated January 23, 2000 under the caption `hard time for software folk`;
- (b) whether forty Indian nationals working at a US Air Force base as computer programmers in San Antonio, Texas were arrested by the US immigration agents on January 20, 2000;
- (c) whether the officials of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service a federal Government agency also handcuffed and paraded each of these Indian nationals like common criminals;
- (d) whether all of them have valid travel documents as well as H-1 Visas;
- (e) whether the Government have lodged any protest with the US Government in this regard; and
- (f) if so, the reaction of the US Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

- (a) Yes Sir.
- (b) On January 20, 2000, 27 Indian computer professionals working at Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas were arrested and 12 others detained, for alleged violation of their employment terms under their HI-B visas, by working for a company other than the one listed on their labour certificates. They were released the next day after the company that hired them - Frontier Consulting, Inc. executed bonds for their release.
- (c) It is learnt that some of the computer professionals were taken in handcuffs.
- (d) Yes Sir. The employer, M/s Consulting Inc. has informed the Ambassador in Washington as well as the Consul General in Houston that the software professional had valid H1-B Visas for employment in Texas.
- (e) Ambassador of India in Washington D.C, lodged a strong protest with the State Department over the arrest and handcuffing of the Indian nationals by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) authorities in San Antonio and demanded immediate explanation for the action. The matter was also taken up with the INS authorities in Washington as well as with the District Director of Criminal Investigation on the INS in Texas.
- (f) The Assistant Secretary of State Department expressed deep regret on behalf of the US Government at the way the Indian nationals were treated and assured the Ambassador they would be given a fair and humane treatment. He also expressed similar sentiments to representatives of the media in Washington. Subsequently, all charges against the computer programmers have been dropped by INS.