

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2323  
ANSWERED ON:17.12.2003  
SAFETY OF INDIAN STUDENTS ABROAD  
SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL);VINAY KUMAR SORAKE

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the angry protests by Indian students at the Indian Embassy in Moscow over its callous attitude towards students;
- (b) if so, the reasons for delay in extending a helping hand to Indian students during the recent fire incident; and
- (c) the fresh steps proposed to be taken by the government to ensure support to the Indian students studying in various countries?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH)

(a) & (b) A number of Indian students called on Indian diplomats and Ambassador at the Embassy of India in Moscow on 27 November 2003 to apprise them of the difficulties being faced by the students who were affected by the fire which broke out in Hostel number 6 of the People's Friendship University (PFU) in Moscow on 24 November 2003. This meeting continued the process of regular interaction between Embassy of India and Indian students in Moscow in the context of the tragic accident, which began with the visit of two senior Indian diplomats to the site of the incident in the forenoon of 24 November itself, a few hours after the fire accident.

Only twelve (12) Indian students, out of one hundred and thirty (130) enrolled with the University, were living in Hostel no. 6 where fire broke out. Our Embassy in Moscow had been in regular touch with the affected students and their relatives or friends from the very first day of the accident. Despite the difficulties presented by the chaos after fire, scattering of the victims to unspecified and farflung hospitals in a vast city, and the problem in communicating with Indian students many of whom do not register themselves with the Indian Embassy in Moscow, the Embassy took active steps to contact the affected students, locate six hospitalized Indian students and two others, who were missing. The sad news about the death of one of the missing students was conveyed to next of her kin in Pune on 25 November by the Embassy as soon as the information was confirmed by Russian authorities. The body of the other missing student was finally found and recognized in a mortuary by close relatives and friends of the deceased, with whom our Embassy in Moscow had been in constant and close touch. Their travel to Moscow for performing the last rites is being facilitated by the Embassy.

Ambassador of India visited the PFU hostel to meet Indian students. Diplomats of our Embassy in Moscow were stationed at hospitals, where six affected Indian students were recovering, to liaise with local authorities and to attend to the needs of these students. Embassy officers continue to visit those Indian students who are still recovering. The Embassy also facilitated communication of the affected students with their parents and extended help in organising passports/ visas for those who wished to go to Moscow for looking after their wards.

Monetary relief, equivalent to USD 1,000/- per student, was provided to the affected students for meeting immediate needs by the Embassy out of a voluntary fund set up by the officials of the Embassy and some members of the Indian community in Moscow. The Embassy also immediately took up with the University authorities the matter of expeditious disbursement of relief announced by them and will continue to liaise with them for the smooth settlement of claims of the affected students.

The Indian Embassy in Moscow made special arrangements for food requirements of the Indian students, who had lost their belongings and shelter in the fire. The Embassy remains engaged with the concerned Russian authorities and the Indian students to ensure that the affected persons have as smooth a rehabilitation as possible.

(c) Government provides all necessary help and assistance to ensure the security, safety and welfare of Indian students abroad and when required, also takes up the matter with the concerned local authorities.