

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1349

ANSWERED ON:21.03.2012

NORWAY CHILD ISSUE

Khairi Shri Chandrakant Bhaurao; Namdhari Shri Inder Singh; Panda Shri Prabodh; Rao Shri Sambasiva Rayapati; Siricilla Shri Rajaiah

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the officials of Norway's Child Welfare Services` had forcibly taken the custody of two children aged 1 and 3 years of NRI couple in last May and had put them in foster care and have not returned the children to their parents even after 10 months;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government has taken up the matter with the Norway Government to release the children immediately; and

(d) if so, the reasons behind the said children not being released so far and the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SMT. PRENEET KAUR)

(a) & (b) Two young Indian children were taken away from their parents residing in Stavanger, Norway by the Norwegian Child Welfare Service (CWS) of the Stavanger Municipality and placed in emergency foster care since May 2011. The reasons for this action as given by Child Welfare Services of the Stavanger Municipality of Norway included `fear of possible violence against the children` and `lack of adequate parental care`.

(c) & (d) The Ministry of External Affairs strongly took up the matter with the Norwegian Government in Oslo and with the Norwegian Embassy in India, including at Ministerial levels. The External Affairs Minister spoke to his Norwegian counterpart on January 23, 2012 to urge the early return of the children to India to enable them to be brought up in familiar surroundings under the loving care of their extended family which would be in their best long-term interests. The External Affairs Minister sent Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, as his Special Envoy to Norway from February 26-29, 2012 to follow up on the matter. He met the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway; the Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion; and other concerned officials and urged them to resolve the issue expeditiously by taking a humane approach and to send the children back to India so that they could be brought up in their own ethnic, religious, cultural, spiritual and linguistic milieu and social environment.

On February 28, 2012, after talks with the children's uncle, who has been in Stavanger since February 3, 2012, the Child Welfare Service of Stavanger Municipality mentioned that they were ready to award the care of the children to their uncle. The District Court in Stavanger is scheduled to hear the case and decide on this on March 23, 2012.