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Title: Issue regarding pathetic condition of Indian Youth in Iraq and other Gulf countries.

SHRI PRATAP SINGH BAJWA (GURDASPUR): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, a very shocking news item has appeared in the English daily *The Tribune* of yesterday claiming that many young Punjabis have been duped by travel agents, who call themselves as placement consultants. As a result, these innocent youth have been suffering.

They have been taken to Iraq. The report claims that travel agents induce the youth with assurances of providing them jobs in the American Army Camps located in Baghdad and had promised them that they would be paid US \$ 800 per month. Once in Iraq, much to their chagrin, they have been sent to various construction sites like in Najaf, a town which is almost 160 kilometres from Baghdad.

Most of these boys are being paid just US \$ 300 or lesser per month. I wonder what the officials of the Ministry are doing. Why are they so lethargic and indifferent when such unscrupulous agents, in the guise of placement consultants, are duping a large number of our youth?

There are more than 15,000 Punjabi youths in various jails throughout the world today. We all know the fate of these poor Indians in the Gulf countries where they are forced to work in inhuman conditions. I have no hesitation in saying that the number of such cases are increasing every single day. After taking cognizance of this highly deplorable incident, I would like to know this. What has the Ministry done to immediately protect these Punjabi youth in Iraq? I request the hon. Minister of External Affairs as well as the hon. Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs to pay personal attention toward this highly sensitive issue, and they should go the whole hog in order to protect the Indian youth over there. As the matter is very serious and sensitive, I would request the Minister of External Affairs to make a statement, at the earliest, on the floor of the House.