

Centre will clamp down on illegal immigration industry: Jaishankar

HUMANE VIEW. Opposition MPs criticise government for not sending plane to bring back deportees from the US

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While maintaining that India is engaging with the US to ensure that deportees are not mistreated on their flight back to the country, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has called for strong government crackdown on illegal immigration as well as steps to ease visas for legitimate travellers.

On the deportation of 104 illegal Indian immigrants by the Trump government, in a statement in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, the Minister said, "On the basis of information provided by returning deportees about the agents and others involved, law enforcement agencies will take necessary preventive and exemplary actions."

The Centre's acceptance



TOUGH TALK. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar addressing Rajya Sabha during the Budget session, on Thursday

of the Trump regime's decision to send back deportees in a US military plane, with their hands and feet in shackles, drew flak from the Opposition.

Congress MP Randeep Surjewala asked if the gov-

ernment was aware that the deportees were handcuffed and that up to 7.50 lakh Indians in the US had reportedly been identified as illegal immigrants who are to be deported.

He also sought informa-

tion about the number of Indians who had been placed in deportation centres in the US and the number of immigrants who had received consular access.

Jaishankar, in his statement, pointed out that the standard operating procedure for deportation by aircraft used by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, effective from 2012, provides for the use of restraints.

"However, we have been informed by ICE that women and children are not restrained. Further, the needs of deportees during transit, related to food and other necessities, including possible medical emergencies are attended to. During toilet breaks, deportees are temporarily unrestrained if needed in that regard," he said.

We are, of course, engaging with the US Government to ensure that the returning deportees are not mistreated in any manner during the flight, Jaishankar added.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Opposition MPs quizzed the government on why it had not sent its own flight to bring back the deportees. Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale said in Parliament, "We are the fifth largest economy in the world and soon we will become 'Vishwa Guru'. But, our citizens are being shackled when countries like Colombia, which doesn't even figure in the top 10, can send an aircraft and bring their citizens back with dignity. What stops our government from sending an aircraft? We don't have a shortage of it."