

- (v) The State/Union Territory Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around the Protected Areas.
- (vi) Hunting of wild animals is prohibited and trade thereof is regulated under strict supervision.
- (vii) The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to strengthen the enforcement of law for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.
- (viii) Strict vigil is maintained by officials of State Departments of Forests and Wildlife.

Indian citizens rescued from Iraq

*428. SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Indian citizens trapped, abducted in Iraq in the last two months;
- (b) the efforts made by Government to facilitate their entry into India;
- (c) the names of the countries which helped India in the operation; and
- (d) the number of persons remained to be rescued; and those who do not propose to leave Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ):

(a) An estimated 22,000 Indian nationals were in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict. This included 500 in Baghdad, 2,300 in Najaf, 1,000 in Karbala, 3,000 in Basra, 15,000 in Kurdistan and about 200 in other cities. Some Indians got trapped in the conflict areas following sudden attacks and capturing of several cities in northern and central Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) beginning 8 June.

A group of 46 nurses working in a local hospital in the city of Tikrit got stuck due to the conflict, but were safely brought back to India in a special Air India flight on 5 July.

Another group of 41 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul have been taken captive by an unidentified group.

(b) Our Embassy in Baghdad is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government authorities and Iraqi Red Crescent Society for the safe return of our nationals from Iraq.

On 19 June, the Government suspended emigration clearance to Iraq, until further notification and advised Indian nationals to avoid all travel to Iraq. The Government issued travel advisories on 15 June, 24 June and 28 June advising Indian nationals to leave Iraq by commercial means. Our nationals living in areas affected by the ongoing armed conflict

were advised to stay indoors as far as possible and to remain in contact with our Embassy in Baghdad for necessary guidance and updated information on the evolving security situation. Those Indian nationals, who did not have travel documents or needed other consular services, were advised to seek assistance from our Embassy in Baghdad.

24-hour helplines established at our Mission in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs continue to remain operational to assist our nationals in Iraq and their family members in India.

Special camp offices set up in Basra, Najaf and Karbala continue to remain operational assisting Indian nationals in Iraq. Our Mission in Baghdad and the camp offices have been strengthened through deployment of 25 officials. These field offices are proactively contacting the remaining Indian nationals and companies where they work, offering their services for the facilitation of our nationals to leave Iraq by providing air tickets as well as assistance with travel documents, immigration and departure facilities. The details of these helplines have been well publicized through the media.

Our Embassy has been providing all necessary assistance to Indian nationals, including provision of travel documents, air tickets and arranging special flights.

The Government of India has been closely monitoring the security situation in Iraq. The safety and security of Indian nationals in Iraq remains a matter of foremost concern and major preoccupation for the Government.

(c) The Government has been in regular touch with the countries in the region to assess and review the situation in Iraq.

(d) The group of 41 Indian nationals in Mosul taken captive by an unidentified group still remains to be rescued. The Government is making every effort and taking all steps to secure their release as well.

The Government is directly in touch with Iraqi Government through our Embassy in Baghdad to facilitate safe return of our nationals from Iraq. As of 3 August, over 4,900 Indian nationals have been provided assistance for travelling back to India. This includes air tickets to over 3,900 Indian nationals.

Street Vendors in NCT of Delhi

429. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has made any survey to find out the number of street vendors, both fixed and mobile vendors in the NCT of Delhi;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, whether it would make a survey to address their problems;