

**Special policy for SAARC countries**

†946. SHRI DARSHAN SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is contemplating any special diplomacy regarding relations with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries; and

(b) if so, whether it would be able to rein in the increasing influence of China in the realm of the diplomacy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) India's engagement with its neighbours is increasing both bilaterally and through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). SAARC leaders were invited to attend the Swearing-in Ceremony of the Prime Minister of India in May, 2014. Discussions were held with the leaders to enhance and strengthen future cooperation.

India attaches particular importance to its relations with SAARC countries and is engaged in several mutually beneficial projects within the framework of SAARC. India's proactive approach has assisted the region and its people in its social and economic development. India will continue to take further initiatives in this regard.

China is not a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It is one of nine SAARC Observers and as such plays no direct role in SAARC.

**Indian citizens trapped in Iraq**

†947. SHRI ISHWARLAL SHANKARLAL JAIN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether terrorists have taken hostage of Indian citizens in Iraq;

(b) whether the Government of India is in contact with Iraqi Government and officials to help its Indian citizens entangled in Iraq;

(c) whether Government of India has set up any control room or started any helpline for information and contact of families of Indian entangled in violence affected areas of Iraq;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

- (d) the number of Indians apprehended to be entangled in Iraq;
- (e) whether the efforts are being made by Government of India for their release; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) A group of 41 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul were taken captive by an unidentified group.

Another group of 46 nurses working in a local hospital in the city of Tikrit got stuck due to the conflict. They were abducted to Mosul on 3 July by an unidentified group. On 4 July, they were released and a special Air India flight was arranged on the same day to bring them back to India.

(b) Our Embassy in Baghdad is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government authorities to assist our nationals currently in Iraq.

(c) Our Mission in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs have established 24 hour helplines to assist our nationals in Iraq and their concerned family members in India. We have also set up special camp offices in Basra, Najaf and Karbala and strengthened our Mission in Baghdad through the addition of 25 staff members.

The contact details of our camp officers in Iraq cities, available on the websites of our Embassy in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs, are as follows:

**(1) Najaf**

+964 771 6511190

+964 771 6511181

+964 771 6511179

E-mail: controlroomnajaf@gmail.com

**(2) Karbala**

+964 771 6511183

+964 771 6511180

+964 771 6511176

E-mail: controlroomkarbala@gmail.com

**(3) Basra**

+964 771 6511185

+964 771 6511182

+964 771 6511178

E-mail: controlroombasrah@gmail.com

**(4) 24 hour help line in Baghdad**

+964 770 444 4899

+964 770 484 3247

+964 771 6511189

+964 771 6511193

E-mails:

amb.baghdad@mea.gov.in

hoc.baghdad@mea.gov.in

cons.baghdad@mea.gov.in

edubaghdad@yahoo.com

**(5) 24 hour help lines in Ministry of External Affairs.**

+91 11 2301 2113

+91 11 2301 7905

+91 11 2301 4104

E-mail: controlroom@mea.gov.in

The details of these helplines have been well publicized through the media.

(d) 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.

(e) and (f) The camp offices set up in Basra, Najaf and Karbala and our Embassy in Baghdad are proactively contacting Indian nationals and companies where they work,

offering their services for the facilitation of our nationals to leave Iraq by offering air tickets as well as help with immigration and departure facilities. Government is making all efforts and taking all steps to secure the release of 41 Indian nationals who have been taken captive in Mosul.

The Government is facilitating return of Indian nationals in commercial carriers from Baghdad, Najaf and Basra. Over 3,000 Indian nationals have left for home with the assistance of our Embassy in Baghdad and the camp offices. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is being used to provide assistance to Indian nationals in Iraq.

#### **East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone**

948. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of India is aware that China has recently unveiled 'East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone' which is aimed at changing the *status quo* over the Senkaku Islands and requires aircrafts flying over these Islands to provide identification information to China in advance and maintain two-way radio communication, or face 'emergency defensive measures';

(b) if so, Government of India's position on this; and

(c) whether airlines originating in India and overflying this zone are being advised to ignore this or recognize this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (c) On 23 November 2013, the Government of the People's Republic of China announced the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). The Government has made efforts to underscore the importance of freedom of over flight and civil aviation safety in accordance with the recognized principles of international law and the relevant standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

#### **Improved system for passports**

949. DR. KANWAR DEEP SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the time-frame laid down for the issue of passports under the revised system;