

China becoming top aid donor to Nepal

2798. SHRI PALVAI GOVARDHAN REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the Ministry's reaction to China pipping India and becoming the top aid donors to Kathmandu;

(b) what are the reasons for India's Official Development Assistance to Nepal plummeting by over 50 per cent in 2014-15; and

(c) what diplomatic, political and economic measures the Ministry is proposing to be a major player in Nepal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI M. J. AKBAR): (a) Media Reports based only on that portion of the foreign aid which is channelized through the budget of Nepal, do not show the complete picture. The Government of India provides significant grant assistance for several projects and schemes, including scholarships and training, which are not reflected in the budget of the Government of Nepal. India remains a leading donor to Nepal.

(b) India continues to be fully committed to Nepal's socio-economic development. The disbursement of actual aid to Nepal depends on utilization of the available amount and progress achieved in numerous projects under implementation with GoI assistance in Nepal. The development assistance extended to Nepal in 2014-15 was INR 420 crores, and that in 2015-16 was INR 300 crores. Four lines of credit totaling INR 11,203.5 crores have been extended to Nepal so far. More assistance can be examined once these amounts are utilized.

(c) Government of India is committed to further strengthen and expand India-Nepal Cooperation through regular bilateral exchanges and developmental assistance. We are extending all assistance in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Nepal, for peace, stability and socio-economic development of the country.

Help to Indians stuck in Syria

2799. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many Indians are still stuck in Syria and other war affected countries;

(b) how many Indians have been rescued from these countries during the last two years; and

(c) what measures have been taken to bring the Indians who are still stuck in Syria and other war affected countries, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI M. J. AKBAR): (a) to (c) The Government of India regularly and closely monitors the evolving security situation in the Middle East, including in Iraq, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan and Syria. The safety and security of our nationals in these countries is a matter of foremost concern. The Government has made extensive efforts to enable the evacuation of Indian nationals from war-affected countries, as per details given below:

Our Embassy in Baghdad has facilitated the return of over 7,000 Indian nationals to India till date, by providing them assistance with travel documents, immigration and departure facilities and air tickets. The Government had setup special camp offices in Erbil, Najaf, Karbala and Basra, to facilitate efficient evacuation. We have established 24 hour helplines to assist our nationals in Iraq and their concerned family members in India. The Mission is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government to ensure the safety and security of the remaining Indian nationals in Iraq. A group of 39 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul continues to be in captivity. The Government is making every effort to secure their release.

3,771 Indians have been evacuated from Libya so far. These evacuations were facilitated through land, air and sea, with the assistance of countries neighbouring Libya. An estimated 1650 Indians still remain in Libya. We keep a close watch on the situation in Libya and our Mission continues to make efforts to persuade the remaining Indian nationals to return to India.

The Government conducted Operation 'Raahat' in March-April 2015 for the evacuation of Indian nationals from Yemen. Under this operation, we evacuated 6,710 persons from Yemen, including 4,748 Indians and 1962 foreign nationals. The Hon'ble External Affairs Minister regularly reviewed the arrangements made in this regard and the Minister of State went personally to Djibouti to supervise evacuation operations. We established a 24 hour control room and helplines in our Embassy in Sana'a and a camp office at Djibouti. We also received the help of Indian Railways and the concerned State Governments to provide hospitality and transport for Indians arriving from Yemen in Mumbai and Kochi, all the way up to their home towns.

The Government of India arranged the evacuation of stranded Indian nationals in South Sudan in July, 2016 through two specially organised Indian Air Force aircraft, through an operation titled "Sankat Mochan", supervised by the Minister of State for External Affairs. Through these flights, 153 Indian nationals could return to India. Our Embassy in Juba set up 24x7 helplines and provided assistance by facilitating the issue of travel documents and liaising with the local immigration authorities to facilitate

efficient evacuation. We continue to be in close contact with authorities in South Sudan to ensure the safety and security of the remaining Indian nationals in that country.

As per available information, there are an estimated 150 Indian nationals in Syria. Most of them have come in recently to execute projects being undertaken by Indian companies. None of them have made a request for any assistance to be evacuated to India.

The Government continues to keep a close watch on developments in strife-torn countries, issue advisories whenever required and engage the authorities in these countries to enable safe evacuation of Indian nationals.

Inclusion of Cuttack under HRIDAY

2800. SHRI NARENDRA KUMAR SWAIN: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be please to state whether the Ministry consider to include Cuttack city of Odisha under the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) launched by Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (RAO INDERJIT SINGH): There is no such proposal for consideration.

Coordination of talks between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen

2801. SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state whether Government has coordinated any talks between fishermen of India and Sri Lanka during the last one year, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (Retd.) V. K. SINGH]: External Affairs Minister and the Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare have invited the Sri Lankan Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development for talks on the fishermen issue. Both countries are also encouraging talks between the Fishermen Associations prior to the meeting between the Ministers.

Increase in Indian women working in Gulf countries

2802. SHRI R. VAITHILINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been an increase in the number of Indian women working in Gulf countries over the last three years, if so, the details thereof;

(b) the nature of jobs being offered to these women; and