

The Government has established 24x7 helpline functional in the Indian Missions/Posts in these countries; and issues advisories whenever required.

Whenever there has been serious threat to the safety and security of Indian nationals in strife-torn countries, the Government has made extensive efforts to enable the evacuation of Indians. For instance, our Embassy in Baghdad has facilitated the return of over 7,000 Indian nationals to India, by providing them assistance with travel documents, immigration and departure facilities and air tickets. The Government set up special camp offices in Erbil, Najaf, Karbala and Basra, to facilitate efficient evacuation.

Over 3,700 Indians have been evacuated from Libya. These evacuations were facilitated through land, air and sea, with the assistance of countries neighbouring Libya.

The Government conducted Operation 'Raahat' in March-April 2015 for the evacuation of Indian nationals from Yemen. Under this operation, 6,710 persons were evacuated from Yemen, including 4,748 Indians and 1,962 foreign nationals.

153 Indian nationals were evacuated from South Sudan in July 2016 with the help of two Indian Air Force aircrafts in an operation named "Sankat Mochan".

Majority of over 1000 Indian nationals, who were staying in Syria, returned following the travel advisory issued by the Government in 2012.

The Government maintains a close watch on the developments in these countries and engages local authorities in these countries for safety and security of the Indians there.

(d) The State Governments concerned were requested to provide all necessary assistance to rehabilitate the returnees and to ensure their well being under the existing State/Central Government Schemes. For the Indians evacuated from Yemen, the Indian Railways and the State Governments concerned extended support to provide hospitality and transport to their home towns.

Non-availability of MPLADS funds in time

†*102. SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that non-availability of funds under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) leads to delay in timely completion of work, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether any new measures have been taken by Government to make funds available on time and if so, the details thereof?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI D.V. SADANANDA GOWDA): (a) No, Sir. Release of funds under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) at the Central Government level as well as at the District level is governed by the provisions contained in the Guidelines on MPLADS.

Para 4.2 of the Guidelines on MPLADS stipulates that at the time of the constitution of Lok Sabha, and election of a Rajya Sabha Member, the first instalment of ₹ 2.5 crore is released to the District Authority without any documents. In the subsequent years, the first installment of MPLADS funds is released subject to submission of provisional Utilisation Certificate (UC) of the previous year for at least 80% of expenditure of the first instalment of the previous year. The second installment is released on submission of Monthly Progress Report (MPR) reflecting unsanctioned balance of less than ₹ 100 lakh and unspent balance of less than ₹ 250 lakh with the District Authority along with the Utilisation Certificate (UC) of the previous financial year and Audit Certificate (AC) of the year prior to the previous year. As soon as the requisite documents and certifications are received, the funds are released by the Central Government.

Funds under the MPLADS are non-lapsable, both at the end of the Central Government and at the end of the District Authorities. Members of Parliament can recommend works upto their full annual entitlement without linking with actual release of funds and District Authorities are required to undertake immediate sanction and implementation of the eligible works so recommended.

(b) A new integrated MPLADS website, developed on state-of-the-art Microsoft technology platform with built in security features is under implementation. This new website provides single point of reference for all stakeholders including Members of Parliament and District Authorities. Since 1st April, 2015 all MPLADS funds releases are being made only through this website.

Government through the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation continuously emphasizes on expeditious utilisation of funds and timely submission of required documents and certifications for further release of funds.

Vacant posts of Vice-Chancellors in universities

*103. SHRI K. K. RAGESH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of posts of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) or other key positions currently lying vacant in various Central universities; and