

(b) Membership of APEC could facilitate greater trade and investment, reduction in transaction costs, and greater harmonization of standards and soft infrastructure, helping in greater integration with regional production and supply chain networks.

(c) Government of India is engaging with APEC members to positively consider India's candidature.

#### **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**

(a) India has been engaged with the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) since 2004. This engagement was placed on a regular and formal basis with the September, 2008 policy decision of the NSG regarding India. A discussion on India's membership has taken place inside the NSG since 2011. An extensive technical outreach has been carried out in parallel. A formal application for membership was submitted on May 12, 2016 after extensive technical preparations, including a presentation made to NSG members.

(b) Membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) would place India's existing civil nuclear cooperation on a predictable basis and facilitate the enhanced investments, industrial tie ups and technology access required to accelerate augmentation of nuclear power capacity in India. As a member of the Group, India would be in a position to contribute further to global non-proliferation objectives and be part of the rule making process for nuclear commerce.

(c) It is understood that consultations on the issue of India's membership are ongoing within the NSG. The Government continues to engage with all NSG members at appropriate levels for an early decision on India's application for membership of the Group.

#### **Telugu people stranded in Iraq**

968. SHRI DHARMAPURI SRINIVAS:

SHRI T. G. VENKATESH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention is drawn to the matter of Telugu people stranded in Erbil in Iraq as their visa are lapsed, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether any steps have been taken by Government to bring them back to India, if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any representation has been received by the Ministry in this regard, if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to rescue and bring them back to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (d) As reported by the Indian Consulate, Erbil, Iraq, 55 Indian workers were stranded in Erbil, Iraq. The Consulate approached the host Government for repatriation of these Indian nationals who have over-stayed their visas. The issue was taken up by the Consul General during his meetings with the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister of Kurdistan. As a result of these efforts, a group of 19 Indian nationals has travelled back to India on November 10, 2016, without payment of any overstayal penalty. The Consulate is also contacting the remaining 36 individuals to reconfirm their consent to be repatriated to India so that the host Government may be requested to facilitate their repatriation. The Indian Consulate in Erbil has recently received representations from the stranded Indian nationals and one NGO from Telangana.

#### **Setting houses of Hindus on fire in Bangladesh**

†969. SHRI VISHAMBHAR PRASAD NISHAD:

SHRIMATI CHHAYA VERMA:

CH. SUKHRAM SINGH YADAV:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that incidents of setting houses of Hindus on fire and vandalising the temples at Brahmanbaria district in Bangladesh have come before the Ministry, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the details of attacks on Hindus and places of worship of Hindus in Bangladesh during the last three years and whether matter of curbing such incidents and action against vandals has been raised with Bangladesh and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Sporadic incidents of violence against members of the minority community including on their properties and places of worship, have been reported in Bangladesh. These include recent attacks in Brahmanbaria District in which several houses and a few Hindu temples were vandalized.

The primary responsibility for the protection of life and liberty of all citizens of Bangladesh, including minorities, rests with the Government of Bangladesh. India's concerns and sensitivities with regard to such incidents have been conveyed to the Bangladesh Government, including at the highest political levels. Government of

---

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.