

exchanged their views on matters of mutual interest including on bilateral cooperation; climate change; terrorism; and the international situation. They agreed to work for further enhancement of our Strategic Partnership.

Arrangements for bringing Indian citizens

†2889. SHRIMATI KANTA KARDAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the countries with whom Government has made arrangements for bringing Indian citizens; and

(b) whether Indian citizens residing in the Middle East/Arabian countries also want to return to India and are seeking Government's help in this regard and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) and (b) Assistance for bringing back Indian nationals who are stranded or in a distress situation abroad due to various reasons including diversion of flight; loss of travel document; over stay beyond the visa period; maltreatment by the foreign employer; being stuck in a conflict or disaster affected country/region, etc., forms an integral part of the consular services rendered by Indian Missions and Posts abroad and does not require formal arrangements with foreign countries. Indian Missions and Posts actively follow up any such case, including with authorities concerned in the Governments of foreign countries.

The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indians in foreign countries, including in the Middle East/Arabian countries. Indian Missions and Posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor incidents/cases of Indian nationals getting stranded or being in a distress situation in foreign countries, and extend them all possible consular assistance including helping them to complete their documentation such as issue of Emergency Certificates before they can be repatriated to India.

Further, the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is set up in Indian Missions and Posts abroad for providing assistance to overseas Indian nationals in distress situations, including air passage, on a means tested basis in deserving cases.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.