

**Evacuation of Indian citizens during the Corona Pandemic**

1364. SHRI SUJEET KUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be please to state:

- (a) how many people were brought back to India during the Corona Pandemic;
- (b) the countries in which India was not able to evacuate during the Corona pandemic along with the reasons therefor and the future plan of action; and
- (c) whether there are any Indian citizens who still need to be evacuated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) to (c) As on 16 September, 2020, more than 14,47,481 stranded Indian nationals have returned to India under the Vande Bharat Mission including from remote areas in the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. As per information provided by the Missions, many people who have registered may no longer wish to return. Moreover, as per latest guidelines of India, passengers are no longer required to register for Air Bubble flights. Most people with compelling reasons have safely returned to their homes by air, land and sea. Since Phase 6 of the Vande Bharat Mission is ongoing with more flights added, including chartered flights and under bilateral Air Bubble agreements with various countries, it is possible for Indian nationals to return at their convenience.

**Expat Quota Bill by Kuwait**

1365. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry is aware of the proposed Expat Quota Bill by Kuwait;
- (b) whether it is a fact that as many as 8 lakh Indians are going to be affected with this Bill;
- (c) whether any consultations at the diplomatic and political level have taken place in this regard; and
- (d) if so, the outcome of the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) Yes.

(b) The draft legislative proposals and reports of concerned host government entities on this subject are still under examination by the Kuwaiti authorities and hence the nature and quantum of the impact on expatriates in Kuwait, including Indian nationals, cannot be conclusively determined at this stage.

(c) and (d) Consultations at diplomatic and political levels are held regularly on the entire gamut of bilateral relations between the two sides. This matter has also been discussed with the Kuwaiti authorities. The Kuwaiti side has expressed appreciation for the contributions of the Indian community in the development of Kuwait.

#### **India's diplomatic relations**

1366. SHRI PRASANNA ACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the countries with whom India does not have diplomatic relations and its reasons; and

(b) how many diplomatic offices are operating in different countries and the number of sanctioned posts including the vacancy position as of now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) India has diplomatic relations with all UN recognized member states.

(b) There are 197 Missions/Posts and 3 Representative offices of India in different countries. The sanctioned Cadre strength of the Indian Foreign Service is 978 against which there are 815 Cadre officers and 49 officers on deputation. The Ministry has placed an indent of 48 with DoPT and UPSC for Civil Services Examinations 2019 and 2020. Vacancies are regularly reviewed and officers appointed. Generally, gaps between the departure of incumbents and the arrival of their successors are kept to a minimum. However, as the posting chains often involve several officers, on some occasions, Missions/Posts abroad face some short-term vacancies. The COVID-19 situation has also led to temporary delays in the movement of personnel. It is not possible to determine the exact number of vacancies since this is a continuous process with some officers demitting charge and others assuming charge in some of our 197 Missions/Posts abroad.

Recently on account of the global pandemic of COVID-19, various countries including India enforced strict lock-downs and restrictions on movement. This has