

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3623
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.01.2019

DELEGATION TO PALESTINE

3623. SHRI R. DHRUVA NARAYANA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is any proposal to send a delegation to Palestine in the coming months;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps being taken to maintain relationships with Palestine?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) & (b) No.

(c) Support to Palestinian cause has always been on top of our foreign policy. We continue to maintain our relationship with Palestine through regular high-level exchanges to convey our steadfast political support to Palestinian cause. We are also extending financial support for Palestinian nation building through capacity building, project assistance and budgetary support.

In September 2017, India supported Palestine for membership of the Interpol. We supported the resolution on the 'Status of Jerusalem' in the UN General Assembly on 21 December, 2017. Recently, India voted in favour of a resolution on 'Protection of the Palestinian civilian Population' in UNGA on 13 June, 2018 as well as on resolution on "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian territory.

For the first time in history, President and Prime Minister visited Palestine in the last four years. President visited Palestine in October 2015 and Prime Minister visited on 10 February 2018. President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas visited India in May 2017. External Affairs Minister visited Palestine in January 2016. The first ever Ministerial level Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Palestine was held in Ramallah in November 2016. These high-level meetings helped to diversify our bilateral engagement with Palestine into several areas that include Education, Health, Sports, Agriculture, Information & Communication Technology, Youth Affairs, Security, etc.

Our capacity building initiatives involves training of Palestinian nationals for long and short term courses in leading Indian educational institutions in sectors such as finance, management, rural development and information technology under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship Programmes. During the visit to Palestine, Prime Minister announced doubling of ICCR scholarship for Palestinian students from 50 to 100. India and Palestine commenced annual youth exchange of 50 member youth delegation since May 2017, which has been enhanced from 50 to 100 from 2018 during the PM's visit.

So far, India has extended the project assistance to Palestine to the tune of about US\$ 72.1 million which includes the announcement of US\$ 42.1 million during the

standalone visit of PM to Palestine in February, 2018. The major projects being undertaken at present include construction/ setting up of Institute of Diplomacy, India-Palestine Technology Park, Hospital, Women Empowerment Center, Printing Press and Schools in Palestine. We have also extended a budgetary support of US\$ 30 million. India has also been contributing annually to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The contribution has been enhanced from US\$ 1.25 million to US\$ 5 million per annum from 2018.
