

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION  
LOK SABHA  
STARRED QUESTION NO. : 52  
(To be answered on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021)**

**FLIGHTS FOR INDIAN EXPATRIATES**

**\*52. SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH**

**Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION**

**नागर विमानन मंत्री**

**be pleased to state:-**

**(a) whether the Government is aware that a large number of Indian expatriates are unable to fly back to their countries of employment due to limited number of flights in operation from India;**

**(b) if so, the details thereof;**

**(c) whether the Government proposes to increase the number of flights to various destinations by entering into air bubble/bilateral travel agreements and if so, the details thereof;**

**(d) whether the Government intends to resume international air travel apart from Vande Bharat Mission and air-bubble agreements; and**

**(e) if so, the details of initiatives taken to increase air travel to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries where a large number of Indian expatriates are employed and if so, the details thereof?**

**ANSWER**

**Minister of State (IC) in the Ministry of CIVIL AVIATION**

**नागर विमानन मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र पक्ष)**

**(Shri Hardeep Singh Puri)**

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**(a) to (e): A Statement is laid on the table of the House.**

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**Statement referred to in the reply to parts (a) to (e) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 52 regarding "Flights for Indian Expatriates" to be answered on 04.02.2021**

**(a) to (c): All efforts have been made to provide maximum connectivity to Indian expatriates desirous to fly back to their respective countries of employment. India has formalised Air Bubble agreements with 24 countries. These Air Bubble agreements provide access directly or through transit facility to more than 100 countries.**

**Despite the entry restrictions, strict health protocols enforced by significant number of foreign countries and limitations on the number of flights, most countries are accessible through these Air Bubble agreements. In addition to the connectivity provided by Air Bubble agreements, the Vande Bharat Mission flights also carry passengers to other foreign countries with whom direct Air Bubble arrangement does not exist. Formalisation of new Air Bubble arrangements is an ongoing process and the Government is taking all necessary steps to facilitate movement of passengers.**

**(d): Resumption of regular scheduled international operation depends on many factors including the normalisation of domestic air travel, behavior of COVID-19 virus globally and entry restrictions imposed on Indian nationals by other countries. While the domestic travel is coming close to its pre-COVID level, the behavior of the Coronavirus and its new strains require close monitoring so that the gains achieved in containing the COVID-19 pandemic in India are not lost. Further, the restrictions imposed by different countries on entry of Indians also imposes air connectivity limitations between India and the partner country.**

**(e): To increase the connectivity to member states of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), India has formalised Air Bubble agreements with all the member states of GCC except Saudi Arabia. Air Bubble arrangements have been formalized with i) Bahrain ii) Kuwait iii) Oman iv) Qatar and v) United Arab Emirates.**

**With respect to Saudi Arabia, India has already proposed an Air Bubble agreement. However, there are, presently, restrictions on carriage of passengers on direct flights from India to Saudi Arabia.**

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