

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 1378

ANSWERED ON- 06/02/2026

EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS AMID THE IRAN CRISIS

1378. SHRI SURESH KUMAR SHETKAR

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether lessons have been drawn from previous evacuations such as Operation Ganga and Operation Kaveri and if so, the reason for the absence of similar speed, clarity and scale in the Iran crises;**
- (b) whether the Government has taken responsibility for anxiety caused to families of Indian nationals due to lack of transparent, real-time communication on evacuation timelines, flight details and safety protocols, if so, the details thereof;**
- (c) whether the Government is considering to put the information regarding the total number of Indians evacuated so far, those still stranded and the projected timeline to bring back all remaining nationals in public domain;**

(d) whether the Government agrees that dependence on commercial airlines during an airspace closure exposed structural weaknesses in India's evacuation framework; and

(e) whether a permanent rapid-response evacuation mechanism is being institutionalised, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a to e) Government of India approaches each evacuation scenario based on its specific features. This has enabled it to safely evacuate Indians in the most challenging situations like ongoing armed conflicts, closure of air space, cessation of routine flights etc. Operation Ganga and Operation Kaveri stand testimony to the robustness of the drill that has been worked out for this purpose. In Iran too, 'Operation Sindhu' was successfully carried out in June 2025 to evacuate Indian nationals from conflict zones. A total of 4415 Indian nationals (3597 from Iran and 818 from Israel) were evacuated using 19 special evacuation flights (including 3 IAF C-17 aircraft) as routine flight services were not available on account of ongoing hostilities. India was one of the first countries to undertake such rapid evacuation operations despite the complexities involved. The opinion expressed in the question comparing different evacuations is not borne out by facts.

Government accords the highest priority to the safety, security and well being of Indian nationals abroad. The Government closely monitors emerging adverse situations abroad and issues advisories, as required, to caution Indian nationals to avoid unnecessary travel, follow safety guidelines issued by the local authorities and remain in touch with Indian Missions. Various communication mechanisms are in place for Indian nationals to reach Indian Missions/Posts, including email, multilingual 24x7 emergency numbers, social media, toll-free helplines & WhatsApp numbers. In the beginning of the ongoing protest in Iran, advisories were issued on 5th January and 14th January 2026 to caution Indian nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Iran, exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations and closely follow Mission's website and social media handles to stay updated and connected.

At present, around 9,000 to 10,000 Indian nationals are residing in Iran, including students, workers, seafarers, etc. The Indian embassy is in continuous contact with the representatives of the Indian community. In the current scenario, Government has not yet undertaken an evacuation operation as commercial flight operations are continuing and Iranian airspace remains open. Government is continuing to monitor the situation.

With a view to swiftly responding to crisis situations faced by overseas Indian nationals, the Ministry established a dedicated wing named the 'Rapid Response Cell (RRC)' in 2021. Apart from evacuation operations, RRC has been actively involved in providing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) support to partner countries including provision of relief supplies, deployment

of trained manpower for HADR operations and other rehabilitation efforts by following a whole-of-government approach.

RRC coordinates evacuation operations involving relevant stakeholders including local mission, IAF, Indian Navy, Ministry of Civil Aviation, etc. During evacuation, 24x7 Control Rooms are operated at headquarters and abroad to provide information and assistance to Indian nationals.

Ministry is also developing a digital emergency response solution for use during planning & execution of evacuation operations. The solution provides a platform to the stranded Indian nationals to register with basic and real-time information along with current location and seek assistance during crisis situations. The solution was utilized on pilot basis during evacuation operations in 2025.
