

60,000 people from Gujarat in Israel, working on evacuation plan: Centre

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POINTING OUT that the Union government was working on an evacuation plan, Union Minister of State for Communications, Devusinh Chauhan, on Tuesday said there were more than 60,000 people from Gujarati origin in Israel.

"India is also worried about its citizens in Israel. There are at least 60,000 people from Gujarat in Israel. The number would be higher if the entire nation is taken into consideration... Steps are being planned to evacuate some of them back to India," Chauhan told mediapersons on the sidelines of an event organised by RSS-affiliated *Panchjanya*.

"There are many families (in Israel) whom I personally know about. They are natives of Manavadar in Saurashtra and I had visited their homes in Israel in 2009. They had showed me their bunkers, which they used during any attack. The daughters of some of the families serve in the Israeli military," he added.

Chauhan said that Israel "had a right to protect its citizens" who had come under attack from armed Hamas fighters. "I believe that no citizen of any country can bear witness to an incident where a terrorist organisation attacks and kills innocents, including women and children, in an inhuman manner. When Israel has stood by India during 1962 war or the Kargil war, it is imperative that India stands by friendly nation like Israel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already con-



Union Minister of State for Communications, Devusinh Chauhan, in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. @devusinh

veyed India's support to Israel," he added.

The Israel-Palestine conflict was also discussed during the *Panchjanya* event held at Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India at Gandhinagar.

Shehzad Poonawala, BJP national spokesperson, who participated in one of the discussions at the event, said: "When unarmed Israelis are attacked, measured statements cannot be given. The act has to be clearly condemned. You have to decide if you are with the attackers or with the terror victims and India needs to speak out in one voice in this issue."

Hitting out at the Congress without naming it, Poonawala said, "The party whose two leaders were killed in terrorist incidents, passes a resolution and stands with the terrorists." The

resolution of Congress' Working Committee on Monday had reaffirmed its support to the Palestinian cause without mentioning the attack carried out by Hamas on Israel.

When Kapil Mishra, vice-president of Delhi BJP, asked the audience – largely consisting of students – how many of them knew about what has happened in Israel, only a few hands went up. "Israel is dealing with it now, but India has been dealing with this terror and ideology for over 1,500 years. There is no other option, but to understand this danger and fight against it," Mishra told the gathering.

"After such a terror attack, if Congress does not know on which side of history they should stand, then I have no hesitation in saying that it is digging its own grave," he added.