

Seventeenth Loksabha

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Title: Urged Union Government to extend an invitation to His Holiness Pope Francis Mar Papa Sovereign of the Vatican city to visit India by year 2020 itself.

**SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA):** Sir, His Holiness Pope Francis, apart from being the Sovereign of the Vatican City, is a global personality and torchbearer of mercy and compassion across the world and is a committed ambassador of the poor and voiceless. It is requested that the Government of India extend a formal invitation to Pope Francis. The last Papal visit to India was of Pope John Paul II from 5-7 November, 1999. It is also noted that his tenure ends soon and a visit of such a personality will only enhance our outlook towards honouring individuals who promote peace and tranquillity.

It is pertinent to note that diplomatic relations between India and the Holy See were established soon after India's Independence in 1948. In 2018, India and the Holy See celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. Since such a cordial and mutually harmonious relation exists, it will only be a signifier of continued friendship and message of peace that will be communicated and endorsed by the visit of the Pope.

The Catholic community, through various organisations and its apex body, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, had approached the Union Government to request and seek permission for the Pope's visit but it did not materialise.

Apart from the Catholic community, a vast section of the people in the country are eagerly waiting for the Papal visit and it will be an encouragement for all those individuals who engage in selfless service in charity, elimination of societal evils and strive towards lofty ideals of mercy.

Recently, the Pope visited Myanmar and according to our information, the Pope is eagerly looking forward to visit India and every other neighbouring nation. It is only that India must extend an official invite to the Pope.

By considering the demand and aspirations of millions of members of the Catholic community and all those who believe in brotherhood and peace, I urge upon the Union Government to extend an invitation to His Holiness Pope Francis Mar Papa to visit India, and if there is no objection to the Government, by the year 2020 itself.

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** श्री एन. के. प्रेमचन्द्रन, श्री के. मुरलीधरन और श्री एम. के. राघवन को श्री कोडिकुन्निल सुरेश द्वारा उठाए गए विषय के साथ संबद्ध करने की अनुमति प्रदान की जाती है ।