

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3245  
ANSWERED ON:14.12.2005  
VISIT TO PILGRIM CENTRES ABROAD  
Athawale Shri Ramdas

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

(a) The total number of pilgrims who visited pilgrim centres abroad during each of the last three years, year-wise and pilgrim centre-wise; and

(b) The criteria adopted for their selection, pilgrim centre-wise?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (RAO INDERJIT SINGH)

(a) & (b) The total number of pilgrims who visited pilgrim centres abroad as part of the Government assisted pilgrimages during the last three years, year-wise and pilgrim centre-wise and the criteria adopted for their selection, pilgrim centre-wise are as follow:  
Kailash Mansarovar

Year Number of pilgrims

2002	469
2003	316 (Yatra duration was truncated due to SARS epidemic in China.)
2004	537

Applications for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra are invited by the Ministry of External Affairs through an open advertisement issued in January every year in all major national and regional media. Since the number of applicants is always more than the slots available for the Yatra, the Yatris are selected through a computer-generated, gender-balanced random selection process.

**Pilgrim Centres in Pakistan**

Nankana Sahib and other Sikh Shrines

Year Number of pilgrims

2002	50
2003	1000
2004	7500

Katasraj

Year Number of pilgrims

2002	Nil
2003	Nil
2004	163

Hayat Pitaphi

Year Number of pilgrims

2002	Nil
2003	83
2004	121

The visit of pilgrims between India and Pakistan is governed by the bilateral 'Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines - 1974'. This stipulates the number of pilgrim centres, occasions as well as the number of pilgrims for visits between the two countries.

The pilgrims visiting Sikh Shrines in Pakistan is selected on the basis of state-wise quota administered by Ministry of Home Affairs in coordination with the respective State Governments and Gurudwara management committees such as SGPC, DSGMC etc. In respect of others, the names of the pilgrims are provided by the designated religious organizations directly to Ministry of External Affairs as the number of pilgrims involved is small.

No financial assistance is given by the Government. Ministry coordinates with Pakistan High Commission in getting visas for the pilgrims visiting Pakistan under the above protocol. Ministry of Railways arranges special trains for the pilgrims on cost basis as per procedures as and when requested. Arrangements in Pakistan are done by the receiving organizations.

Haj

Year Number of pilgrims

2002	118759
2003	116078
2004	117490

The criteria for selection of pilgrims performing Haj through the Haj Committee of India is based on the pilgrim quota allocated proportionately to each State based on the Muslim population of respective States as determined by the Census of India. In case the applications received from a State are more than the prescribed pilgrim quota, the selection is made by Qurrah (draw of lots). Other pilgrims perform Haj through the registered private tour operators.