

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:316
ANSWERED ON:24.08.2011
DENIAL OF VISA BY PAKISTAN
Agarwal Shri Jai Prakash

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether visas are not being issued by Pakistan in time to Sikh pilgrims of various States willing to visit Nankana Sahib in Pakistan;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the reaction of the Government thereto and the number of instances in which visas were denied during the last two years; and
- (d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to facilitate visits of the Sikh pilgrims to Nankana Sahib?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (D) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.316 REGARDING 'DENIAL OF VISA BY PAKISTAN' FOR ANSWER ON 24.08.2011

Grant of visa to Indian nationals, including pilgrims, to visit Pakistan is the prerogative of the Government of Pakistan. The number of pilgrims from India to Pakistan, including to Nankana Sahib, is covered by the 'Bilateral Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines-1974'.

A proposal to increase both the number of shrines and pilgrims under the 'Bilateral Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines' has been pursued with the Government of Pakistan for over six years. During the Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan, held on June 23-24, 2011, in Islamabad, both sides agreed to the need for promoting friendly exchanges between the two countries and discussed measures for promoting cooperation in various fields including, facilitating visits to religious shrines. In the Joint Statement issued after Foreign Minister level talks held on July 27, 2011 in New Delhi, the Ministers emphasized promotion of cooperation in various fields, including facilitating visits to religious shrines. Revision of the existing Bilateral Visa Agreement is also being discussed with Pakistan which should, when finalised, help in easing travel between the two countries including for those intending to visit religious shrines in Pakistan, such as Nankana Sahib.

Government is committed to facilitating visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan by liaising with Pakistani authorities for adequate logistics and security arrangements.