

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4104
ANSWERED ON:19.02.2014
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 and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) 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

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR)

(a) to (d) Government is committed to facilitating visits of Indian pilgrims to Pakistan including Sikh pilgrims visiting Nankana Sahib as provided for under the 'Bilateral Protocol on visit to Religious Shrines-1974' between the two countries. The Government regularly liaises with the concerned Pakistani authorities, including for logistics and adequate security arrangements. From time to time Government has come across reports of delays on the part of the Government of Pakistan in granting visas to the Indian pilgrims visiting Pakistan.

The issue of facilitating visits of pilgrims to religious shrines has been discussed during the Foreign Secretary level talks on promoting friendly exchanges between the two countries. Further, both sides have been pursuing the possibilities of increasing the number of shrines and pilgrims under the 'Bilateral Protocol on visit to religious Shrines-1974'. Under the new Visa Agreement signed with Pakistan on September 8, 2012, a new category of Pilgrim Visas has also been introduced.

Grant of Visas to Indian nationals, including pilgrims, to visit Pakistan is however the prerogative of the Government of Pakistan.