

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:133
ANSWERED ON:04.03.2015
KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA
Rai Shri Prem Das;Suresh Shri Doddaalahalli Kempegowda

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India and China have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to allow the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the Nathula Pass in Sikkim and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the expected time-frame for the opening of the new route for the pilgrims of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra;
- (c) the number of pilgrims who travelled to Kailash Mansarovar through the Lipulekh Pass during the last three years and the current year;
- (d) the number of pilgrims expected to be benefited from the opening of the new route; and
- (e) the details of steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to facilitate the Yatra through the new route?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 133 REGARDING "KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA" FOR ANSWER ON 04.03.2015

(a) During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and President Xi agreed to open an additional route for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nathu La. The MoU on Opening a New Route for Indian Pilgrimage (Kailash Mansarovar Yatra) to the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China was signed by External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 18 September, 2014. The MoU has 4 Articles and provides for conducting the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nathula Pass in Sikkim in addition to the existing route through Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand. The route through Nathula will augment the capacity and reduce the hardship enabling many more pilgrims, in particular aged pilgrims, to undertake the Yatra.

(b) During the visit of External Affairs Minister to China in February 2015 Note Verbales were exchanged between the two sides to finalize the modalities for operationalization of the Yatra through Nathu La beginning this year's Yatra season which commences in the month of June.

(c) The number of Pilgrims who travelled to Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the Lipulekh Pass in the last three years is as follows:

Year	Number of Yatris
2012	774
2013	53 (due to natural disaster in Uttarakhand only 1 batch completed the yatra)
2014	906

With regard to number of pilgrims for current year, about 1000 pilgrims are expected to undertake the Yatra.

(d) As per the understanding reached with the Chinese side, 5 batches of 50 pilgrims each are expected to travel through Nathu La in 2015.

(e) Government has worked out with Air India to offer a preferential fare for yatris to travel by air from Delhi to Bagdogra. Facilities for stay as well as acclimatization of yatris travelling through Nathu La are being created. Roads and infrastructure in Sikkim are being strengthened. Government is in constant communication with the Chinese side to improve the facilities in Tibetan Autonomous Region for smooth conduct of yatra. Government has set up a dedicated Kailash Mansarovar Yatra website and an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) to assist the Yatris and address their queries effectively and efficiently. The application procedure has been simplified. Applicants now receive a unique ID and confirmation of submission of application by sms and e-mail. Yatris can also monitor status of their applications online.