

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4017

ANSWERED ON:06.08.2014

FACILITIES TO HAJ PILGRIMS

Chhotelal Shri ;Patel Shri Devji Mansingram;Patil Shri Bheemrao Baswanthrao;Premachandran Shri N.K.;Singh Shri Sunil Kumar

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to augment the facilities being provided to Haj pilgrims and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether it has come to the notice of the Government that seats allocated for Haj pilgrimage to certain States remain unutilized and if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to allocate these unutilized seats to other States and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether Private Tour Operators (PTOs) are allegedly fleecing the pilgrims and if so, the stringent guidelines issued in this regard; and
- (e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to bring in uniformity in the fees charged by these PTOs?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GEN- (DR)V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) The Government assists the Haj pilgrims in close coordination with the Haj Committee of India and the Consulate General in Jeddah through, inter alia, (i) provision of accommodation and other logistical support at Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah, (ii) deputation of doctors & paramedics, coordinators, assistant Haj officers, Haj assistants and Khadim-ul- Hujaj to assist our pilgrims during their Haj, (iii) setting up hospitals & dispensaries, providing ambulances and arranging supply of medicines to Hajis in the holy sites in Makkah, Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifa and Madinah, (iv) facilitating air travel from 21 embarkation points in India to Jeddah and back, and (v) training of trainers who in turn train pilgrims before they proceed to Saudi Arabia. It has been a constant endeavour of the Government and the Haj Committee of India to keep making improvements in the arrangements for the Haj pilgrims and provide them with better facilities after taking into account the feedback received from all concerned.

(b) & (c) The Haj quota is allocated among various States and Union Territories pro rata on the basis of their respective muslim population, based on 2001 census figures. In case, the number of Hajj applications received by the State/Union Territory Hajj Committees is less than the allotted quota, such remaining quota is surrendered to the Hajj Committee of India. The surrendered seats are redistributed on pro rata basis among the States/Union Territories with applications in excess of quota allotted to them.

(d) The allocation of Haj quota for qualified PTOs is presently governed by the PTO Policy 2013-17 approved by the Hon'ble Supreme Court vide its judgement of 16 April, 2013 in the Petition for Special Leave to Appeal (Civil) no. 28609/2011. The terms and conditions for registration of PTOs are included in the approved policy. The PTOs which do not meet or fail to comply with the terms and conditions enumerated in the policy are disqualified for allocation of Haj quota.

The arrangements pertaining to accommodation and other facilities in Makkah and Madinah for Haj pilgrims going through PTOs are governed by the Tasreeh agreements signed individually between the PTO concerned and the Saudi authorities, which keep an oversight on the implementation of the terms and conditions of these agreements.

(e) The fees charged by individual Private Tour Operator is based on the quality of services provided to the Haj pilgrims and is driven by the market forces.