

Title : Need to put Tamil speaking officers in embassies of Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Brunei and abolish Visa fee.

SHRI J.M. AARON RASHID (THENI): Sir, I wish to bring a few lines to the notice of this august House regarding the pathetic life of Tamilians who are living in Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Brunei and other countries. They are being harassed by our Indian High Commission people when they go to get their visa. I welcome our Government's decision to give dual citizenship to the Indian origin people who are living in foreign countries. At this moment, whenever our people want to come to their motherland, they are being charged extraordinary fees. If a person wants to have visa, they have to pay 170 or 180 ringgits, that means, more than Rs.2000 in Indian rupees. About ten years back, we may have been poor. But now our country's economy is booming. At this juncture why should we collect this much of visa fees? It should either be reduced or withdrawn.

In respect of many other countries, the Government of India is not collecting visa fees. 30 per cent of the total population of Malaysia are Tamilians. In Singapore, out of their total population, 20 per cent are Tamilians. Similarly, in Brunei, 20 per cent of the population consists of Tamilians. In Sri Lanka also, 25 per cent people are Tamilians. If they want to come to their motherland, they should be given free access.

My request is that the Ministry of External Affairs should put Tamil speaking officers in these embassies. Sir, I have been to Sri Lanka. There also not a single Tamilian officer, whether the First Officer or Second Officer or the Third Officer is working there. They are all Hindi-speaking people. Our Tamil people in those countries do not know Hindi. The old timers do not know Hindi. The new generation people have learnt Hindi. They can speak Hindi and English also. The old timers do not know the other language.

My request is that mainly in Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Sri Lanka you have to put Tamil officers, those who speak Tamil. Such officers can be put in these Embassies and the visa fee should be reduced or it should be abolished.

With these words I conclude. Thank you.