

Title: Need to ensure safe return of Indian Nationals stranded in Europe due to disruption of air traffic caused by volcanic eruption in Iceland.

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMATHITTA): Respected Madam Speaker. I take this opportunity to invite your kind attention to the pathetic condition of the Indian travelers who are stranded in European airports due to the recent volcanic outbreak. The volcanic eruption at Eyjafyallajokaul Glacier in Iceland since 14<sup>th</sup> of this month has made air traffic impossible in the European countries. The European Aviation Agency – EuroControl indicates that no landings or takeoffs are possible for civilian aircraft in most of the Northern and Central European countries due to the ash spewed out by the volcano. The volcanologists predict that the ash may cause problems to the air traffic for as much as six months.

Madam, Europe is experiencing its greater disruption in air travel since September 11. In terms of closure of airports, this is worse than September 11. Over 70,000 flights are cancelled in and out of Europe so far. As per the current indication, the European airports may remain closed for another one more week. Many of the Indian nationals are stranded in European airports with limited option. Many of them need to travel by ferry from one European country to another; but it requires a Schengen visa. Ten industrialists from my constituency are stranded in Glasgow airport while traveling after attending a conference organized by the Scottish Tourism. Due to the absence of Schengen visa, they cannot move out of the airport.

The Government may give necessary direction to our Missions in the European countries to intervene in this matter and necessary assistance may be provided to those who are stranded in various airports of European countries to come back to India urgently. Thank you, Madam.

MADAM SPEAKER: Shri Rajaiah Siricilla - Not present.

Shri Bishnu Pada Ray - Not present.