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Title: Need to set up the Dera Baba Nanak-Kartarpur Corridor.

SHRI PRATAP SINGH BAJWA (GURDASPUR): Mr. Chairman, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in the 'Zero Hour' today. I wish to apprise this august House of the need to set up the Dera Baba Nanak – Kartarpur Corridor, a long-pending demand of the Sikhs throughout the world.

Dera Baba Nanak in India and Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan is separated by just a distance of two miles across the international border and is closely connected with the life of Guru Nanak Dev ji, who was the first Sikh Guru. Kartarpur Sahib is where the revered Sikh Guru spent the last seventeen years of his life. An Islamic grave, a Hindu *samadhi* and a Sikh *angitha* dedicated to this revered Guru are located in the compound, a co-existence of shrines that is unique to Kartarpur Sahib.

Historically, Kartarpur Sahib has been a popular pilgrimage site for the Sikhs, particularly those visiting Dera Baba Nanak. However, post-partition its access has been restricted for Indians. Due to its proximity to the border, many Sikhs through the specially created platform on the Indian side called 'Shaktisthal' to catch a glimpse and hear the *kirtan* from Kartarpur Sahib.

Currently, only a few Indians get special permits to visit Kartarpur Sahib and then they have to travel a long route via Wagha border. Construction of the Dera Baba Nanak – Kartarpur Corridor is a matter close to the hearts of Indian Sikhs and Sikhs worldwide. They want an arrangement so that the devotees can pay obeisance at this historical Shrine of Kartarpur Sahib by entering the Pakistani territory through a special corridor, without a visa or passport and return on the same day.

In 1999, the Government of Pakistan had agreed to this corridor and even offered to construct the infrastructure on its territory. However, since then, there has been little progress in this matter.

I would urge the Ministry of External Affairs to take up this matter with the concerned authorities in Pakistan and create a roadmap for the setting up of this corridor. Thank you.

SHRIMATI BOTCHA JHANSI LAKSHMI (VIZIANAGARAM): Kindly allow me to speak from here.

MR. CHAIRMAN : All right.