

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, August 10, 1988/Sravana 19,
1910 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Haj Pilgrims

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*202. SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI:

SHRI MANVENDRA SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Haj
pilgrims had returned to their homes dis-
appointed due to inadequate arrangements
for their pilgrimages;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government propose to
conduct an enquiry into the matter; and

(d) if so, by what time?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (PROF.
K.K.TEWARI): (a) Government have asked
the Central Haj Committee and the
concerned State Haj Committees to
intimate the number of pilgrims who were
unable to avail of the charter flights from
Delhi between July 16 and 19 1988. From
estimates available the number of
disappointed pilgrims was relatively small.

(b) to (d). The Government have already
initiated an enquiry into the matter and this
is expected to be completed shortly.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI: Mr. Speaker, Sir,
this matter has attracted the attention of
the whole of country. Hajis were beaten in
Delhi and there have been quarrels also.
They had to rush from Haj committee to
airport but had to return. Even then Gov-
ernment's reply is that they were making
enquiry as to how many passengers were
left behind. They said that the number such
passengers was relatively small, which had
come to their notice. I want to know the
reasons for which at the last moment two
special flights were arranged with the per-
mission of Government of Saudi Arabia.
What were the reasons for not arranging
them before hand and concerned passen-
gers could not be at their residence about
the flights by which they had to go.

PROF. K.K. TEWARI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as
I have told you that we have initiated an
enquiry into it and according to our infor-
mation, most of the pilgrims left behind,
were sent by chartered flight. There was
some confusion due to which the flight was
delayed, when we came to know about the
confusion and problems arising due to it,
then the Government of India requisitioned
three flights and the pilgrims were sent by
the flights of Air-India. You are aware that
all this work is done through Haj Commit-
tee and it is for them to see that how many
pilgrims have already left for Haj, what is
their total number and how many pilgrims
are left behind. They are supposed to have
these figures. We asked for a report from
them and I would like to reiterate that the
number of pilgrims left behind was very
small. It is not that a large number of pil-
grims have to face disappointment.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI: I had asked that the Report concerning the pilgrims left behind should have been made available in the House by now. You are saying that there was some confusion and entire source of information was Haj Committee due to which, this confusion occurred. Would you like to tell that is it not a fact that the Haj Committee consists of such people who are politically motivated and belong to only one party? They do not bother about the Haj Pilgrims. All these things happen. Will the hon. Minister take the responsibility of providing information to the pilgrims well in advance about their scheduled flights etc., so that they should not have to go to the air-port again and again and can be saved from the exploitation by politically motivated members of Haj Committee?

PROF. K.K. TEWARI: Sir, I have already stated that enquiry is being made into it, so that in future such problems or incidents do not occur. As soon as the report is received, we will take all the steps so that such incidents do not occur again and no one is put to inconvenience.

The second question asked by the hon. Member was that the actions of Haj Committee are political and it is mainly constituted by the members of one political party. This is totally baseless. This is a statutory committee and its members are very devoted type of people who have belief in Haj and this committee has been constituted for the facility of the Haj pilgrims. It is totally baseless to say that this committee is politically motivated and actions are taken with any political considerations and I would like to reiterate that we will take necessary steps on the receipt of the report, so that such things do not occur again in future. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SALAHUDDIN: I would like to ask the hon. Minister that Hajjis were called from Bihar for going to Zeddah by second "Akbar" ship and the papers sent, also showed the same information. But those 252 Hajjis were stopped on arrival at Bombay and told that they have not to go by that ship. In their place, Hajjis from Kashmir were sent. I wrote a letter to the then

Minister immediately but I have not got any reply till now. I would like to know clearly that why those Hajjis, who were scheduled to go by second ship "Akbar", were stopped and Hajjis from other state were sent. Let me have reply to this please.

PROF. K.K. TEWARI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question is very clear. The present question is about the pilgrims who were scheduled to go by a flight from Delhi. If the hon. Member wants the information, he should give another notice.

[English]

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: The hon. Minister has said that there was a slight confusion in the arrangements. But I would like to mention that there was total confusion in the arrangements particularly at Delhi and there was no such confusion at any time in the previous years. Another thing which the hon. Minister has said is that they appoint only such people on the Haj Committees who are interested in Haj. Sir, the chairperson of the Central Haj Committee has never done any Haj and she has been the Chairman for the last three years. How can such a person understand the problems of the Hajjis and can be expected to do anything for the people who are proceeding on their Haj?

I would certainly like the Hon. Minister to conduct this enquiry not only locally, but at three places, Central Haj Committee, Bombay and UP Haj Committee at Lucknow and that you will find that the things are revealing.

PROF. K.K. TEWARI: I am happy that the hon. Member has approved of our activities regarding Haj pilgrimage in the earlier years. Only this year, as I said, there were some problems and that is why the Government has ordered an enquiry and once the enquiry report is available to us, we will take all possible measures to remove all such irritants in future.

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: Normally, a lady is never a Chairman of such Committees anywhere.

SHRI ATATUR RAHMAN: The Hajis who come to Delhi normally do not have any place to stay here. Can the Minister in future organize some sort of a system for temporary accommodation of the Hajis in Delhi, or would he think of bringing in the system of building up guest houses for Hajis? That would be a very good expression of goodwill.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO): I would like to submit to the hon. Members that this is not an activity which is conducted by Government directly. All this is done by the Central Haj Committee and the State Haj Committees wherever they have been constituted. Everything needs to be done through them and it is well known that we do not do anything directly. We can certainly pass on the information, pass on the suggestion to the Haj Committee, help them in whatever manner possible to enable them to do their duties properly and if something goes wrong we will look into it and tell the Parliament, tell Members how it has gone wrong, why it has gone wrong and see what can be done to see that it does not go wrong again. This is all that the Government can do. We can do the work of a catalyst and helper but we cannot take on the direct responsibility of conducting this activity. This is not possible. This is what I would like to submit to the Hon. Member. Subject to this, whatever suggestions come, we take them and pass them on to the Haj Committee, discuss with them and if they find that the suggestions are good and feasible and they can be implemented, then they will certainly do it. And we will see that some help which is needed by them in order to do these good things, is also rendered to them. This will be the position of the Government, Sir.

Help from Canadian Nationals to Terrorists in Punjab

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*203. **SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY:**
SHRI SURESH KURUP:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Minister of State for External Affairs during his recent visit to Canada brought to the notice of the Canadian Government that there was definite proof in possession of Government of India to show that some Canadian nationals were helping terrorists in Punjab; and

(b) if so, the outcome of the talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (PROF. K.K. TEWARI): (a) From time to time Government has drawn the attention of the Government of Canada to the strong evidence of assistance provided by some Canadian nationals for terrorist activities in Punjab. This matter was discussed during the recent visit of the Minister of State for External Affairs to Canada.

(b) The Canadian Government confirmed that it would continue to cooperate with the Government of India in combating the international dimensions of terrorist activities directed against India.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY: Sir, the answer given by the Hon. Minister is too general to make out anything concrete from it. During the tour of the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Shri Natwar Singh, to Canada a PTI dispatch stated that, he says, "We have identified people who send money to the terrorists in Punjab". On the basis of this concrete announcement by the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs what action did the Government of India ask the Government of Canada to take against those people whom the Minister has identified himself? I would like to have a concrete answer for this.

PROF. K.K. TEWARI: Sir, during the visit of Mr. Natwar Singh to Canada, he had discussions with his counterparts there and whatever evidence he was able to collect about the Canadian nationals of Indian origin, we have passed on this information to them. It is an on-going process. They are cooperating with us and I must say that in recent two years the Canadian Government has extended cooperation to us, and shared information with us. So, whatever