

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1639

ANSWERED ON:03.12.2014

HAJ PILGRIMAGE

Dubey Shri Satish Chandra;Godse Shri Hemant Tukaram;Sigriwal Shri Janardan Singh

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether International Passport has been made compulsory for all Haj pilgrims from this year onwards and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether applications for issue of temporary country specific passports are exempted from police verification and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Haj pilgrims are facing difficulties because of alleged mismanagement between the provision of submission and processing of applications for Haj pilgrimage and if so, the reasons therefor and the corrective steps taken in this regard;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to open special passport counters across the country for the convenience of Haj pilgrims and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the various steps taken by the Government to make the Haj pilgrimage hassle-free?

Answer

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

- (a) Yes, The Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made International Passport mandatory for all Haj Pilgrims since 2009.
- (b) No.
- (c) No, sufficient time is given for submission of Haj Application Forms (HAF) to applicants. After submission, the Haj Committees of State/Union Territory does data entry of all the applications received. The above information is also incorporated in the booklet on Haj Guidelines issued to Haj Pilgrims along with the HAF.
- (d) No. However, CPV Division of the Ministry of External Affairs issued special instructions to all the Regional Passports Offices (RPOs) to accord high priority for issuance of passport to prospective Haj applicants during Haj season.
- (e) The Government has taken following steps in close coordination with Haj Committee of India and Consulate General of India in Jeddah to make the Haj pilgrimage hassle free:
 - (i) Providing of accommodation and other logistical support at Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah.
 - (ii) Deputing a total of 545 Doctors & Paramedics, Coordinators, Assistant Haj Officers and Haj Assistants to assist Hajjis during Haj 2014.
 - (iii) Setting up of temporary Hospitals & Dispensaries, providing ambulances and arranging supply of medicines to Hajjis in Makkah, Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifa and Madinah.
 - (iv) Facilitating Air travel from 21 embarkation points in India to Jeddah and Madinah and back.
 - (v) 'Training of trainers' programme introduced to enable trainers to train the pilgrims before they proceed to Saudi Arabia.
 - (vi) Provision of free Saudi local SIM card to pilgrims at the time of embarkation.
 - (vii) Providing catering facilities in Madinah.
 - (viii) Making arrangement of local trains for traveling in Mashaer region (Mina-Arafat-Muzdalifa-Mina).
 - (ix) Providing timely information through SMS.