

AS INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA

Bill No. 350 of 2019

THE NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE FUND BILL, 2019

By

SHRI RAJENDRA AGRAWAL, M.P.

A

BILL

to provide for the constitution of a National Pilgrimage Fund for the benefits of pilgrims in the country and for all matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventieth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the National Pilgrimage Fund Act, 2019.
- (2) It extends to the whole of India.
- 5 (3) It shall come into force on such date, as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Short title,
extent and
commencement.

Definitions.	<p>2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise, requires,—</p> <p>(a) "appropriate Government" means in the case of a State, the Government of that State and in all other cases, the Central Government;</p> <p>(b) "Authority" means National Pilgrimage Fund Authority established under section 9;</p> <p>(c) "Fund" means National Pilgrimage Fund constituted under section 3;</p> <p>(d) "pilgrim" means a person who undertake journeys to some sacred places as an act of religious devotion; and</p> <p>(e) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act.</p>	5
Constitution of National Pilgrimage Fund.	<p>3. (1) The Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette constitute a Fund to be known as the National Pilgrimage Fund to harness the deposits from individuals towards meeting their religious goals and provide such benefits to those individuals as deemed necessary.</p> <p>(2) The Fund shall be credited,—</p> <p>(a) the deposits from the devotees in their pilgrim account as mentioned under section 6;</p> <p>(b) contributions from the Central Government and State Governments; and</p> <p>(c) such other sums as may be received by way of donation, constitution or assistance or otherwise.</p>	10
Contribution to fund open to subscribers of all religions.	<p>4. The contribution to the Fund constituted under section 3 shall be open to devotees across all religions who are Indian citizens and who intend to invest periodically in their pilgrim account as mentioned under section 6 to meet their needs at the time of undertaking pilgrimages.</p>	20
Nature of Deposits.	<p>5. The Fund constituted under section 3 shall be in the form of time deposits intended to provide individual multiple options to save money in recurring and fixed deposits in the pilgrim accounts as mentioned under section 6 with multiple exit options from one to twenty years having such rate of interests as may be decided by the Authority.</p>	25
Pilgrim Accounts.	<p>6. Every deposit under the Fund constituted under section 3 shall be made under pilgrim accounts to be opened at all Public and Private Commercial Banks, Foreign Banks, Urban and Rural Cooperative Banks, Small Finance Banks and such Non-Banking Financial Institutions (Deposit Taking) as may decided upon by the Authority.</p>	30
Incentives.	<p>7. Every pilgrim who invests in the Fund shall be provided the following incentives:—</p> <p>(a) complete package options for various pilgrimages in India such as Char Dham Yatras and Jyotirlingas;</p> <p>(b) discounts in travel tickets, accommodation and lodging facilities;</p> <p>(c) health insurance of pilgrims going to difficult religious places like Amarnath Yatra and Vaishno Devi; and</p> <p>(d) such other incentive as deemed necessary by the Authority.</p>	35
Exit Load.	<p>8. Subject to the provisions of this Act, any pilgrim may withdraw all his savings under the pilgrimage account before maturity period, but with an exit load as may be decided upon by the Authority.</p>	40
Establishment of National Pilgrimage Fund Authority.	<p>9. (1) The Central Government shall establish an Authority to be known as the National Pilgrimage Fund Authority for the purpose of management, regulation and oversight of the Fund constituted under section 3.</p>	

(2) The Authority shall consist of,—

(a) Secretary, Union Minister of Tourism, Chairperson, *ex-officio*;

(b) two Joint-Secretaries to the Central Government to be nominated by the Central Government, members *ex-officio*; and

5 (c) five other members two of whom shall be women having experience of not less than fifteen years in tourism sector to be appointed by the Central Government in such manner as may be prescribed.

(3) The Central Government shall appoint such number of officers and staff as it considers necessary for the functioning of the Authority.

10 (4) The salary and allowances payable to and terms and conditions of services of the members, officers and staff of the Authority shall be such as may be prescribed.

10. The Authority shall,—

(a) ensure that deposits are collected from pilgrims in an accessible manner;

(b) ensure sound investment of deposits into the Fund;

15 (c) ensure regular pay-out to the pilgrims at maturity period;

(d) uphold the interests of the pilgrims at all times;

(e) formulate various schemes under the Fund to allow pilgrims to choose options suitable to them; and

(f) perform all such functions related to management of Fund as may be prescribed.

20 11. Notwithstanding anything contained in section 10, the Authority may, with the approval of the Central Government, invest such amount from the Fund across all designated schemes in creating public infrastructure in such manner as may be prescribed to meet the national goals for development.

25 12. The Authority shall develop accountability mechanisms for the proper utilisation of the fund *inter alia* including:

(a) re-insurance of all deposits under the Fund at the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (DICGCI);

(b) auditing and furnishing of annual returns of the Funds; and

(c) comply with all such accountability norms as may be prescribed.

30 13. The Central Government, from time to time, after due appropriation made by Parliament by law in this behalf, provide requisite funds for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

35 14. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may make such order or give such direction, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for the removal of the difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be made after expiry of three years from the date of commencement of this Act.

40 15. The provisions of this Act and of any rules and orders made thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force.

16. (1) The Central Government may, by notification in Official Gazette make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

45 (2) Every rule made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before Parliament, while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of

Functions of
National
Pilgrimage
Fund
Authority.

Usage of Fund
for public
Infrastructure.

Accountability
Mechanisms.

Central
Government
to provide
funds.

Power to
remove
difficulties.

Overriding
effect.

Power to
make rules.

the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both the Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule. 5

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

India has been home to almost all the religions of the world. Its rich culture and vibrant diverse population has made pilgrimages a destined once-in-a-lifetime opportunity aspired to be undertaken by all. However, huge expenditure involved in undertaking religious obligation makes it difficult for them to pursue their pilgrimage options. According to the statistics of National Sample Survey Organisation, religious travel is estimated at almost four times the share of business-related travel, and over seven and a half times the share of education-related travel.

Individuals save over their lifetimes to be able to undertake religious pilgrimages. Yet, they are constrained by lack of accessible, safe and sustainable savings products targeted towards helping them save for undertaking such obligations. On a macro-economic level, such savings represents a pool untapped funds that can be duly tapped to create public assets. Similar Funds have been established in countries such as Malaysia that have reaped substantial benefits.

Therefore, it is desirable to nudge individuals towards a sustainable method for actively building a corpus for undertaking pilgrimages. The need is to promote tourism, prevent excessive out-of pocket expenditure while undertakings pilgrimages and provide easily operational liquidity to all such tourists.

The Bill, therefore, seeks, to establish a National Pilgrimage Fund where subscribers from all religions can save money in different schematic deposits and withdraw them as and when required with interest as well as incentives on their travel. It also provide for establishment of a National Pilgrimage Fund Authority that looks after the administration of the fund and ensures suitable accountability mechanisms to protect the interest of subscribers.

Hence this Bill.

NEW DELHI;
October 25, 2019.

RAJENDRA AGRAWAL

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 3 of the Bill provides for constitution of a National Pilgrimage Fund to meet the financial requirement of persons going on pilgrimage. Clause 7 provides for incentives to the pilgrims to complete package options for various pilgrimages in India such as Char Dham Yatras and Jyotirlingas and discounts in travel tickets, accommodation and lodging facilities, etc. Clause 9 provides for establishment of a National Pilgrimage Authority to manage, regulate and oversight the Fund. It also provides for appointment of experts from tourism sector as members, officers and staff to the Authority. Clause 14 makes it obligatory for the Central Government to provide requisite funds for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. The Bill, if enacted, will involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. It is estimated that a sum of rupees hundred crore may involve as recurring expenditure per annum.

A non-recurring expenditure of about rupees fifty crore is also likely to be involved.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 16 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. Rules will relate to matters of detail only, the delegation of legislative power is of a normal character.

LOK SABHA

A

BILL

to provide for the constitution of a National Pilgrimage Fund for the benefits of pilgrims in the country and for all matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(Shri Rajendra Agrawal, M.P.)