

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
QUESTION NO 18.11.2010
ANSWERED ON
PROBLEMS FACED BY HAJ PILGRIMS .

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Shri Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether it is a fact that Indian Haj pilgrims are facing a lot of trouble and inconvenience during the journey to Saudi Arabia;
- (b) if so, the details of difficulties faced by the pilgrims;
- (c) the steps taken by Government to ease the travel problems of Haj pilgrims;
- (d) whether it is also a fact that Indian Hajjis face serious problems for accommodation at Mecca every year;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the reasons for not selecting accommodation for a longer period instead of one year?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) & (b) No, Sir. Haj operations are smoother and streamlined compared to previous years. Some flights were delayed at Guwahati and Jaipur due to technical reasons. However, since, Haj is a mammoth operation and several agencies are involved in managing Haj operations, some pilgrims do face problems.

(c) With two additional embarkation points i.e. Bhopal and Goa, there are total 21 embarkation points for Haj – 2010 from where the pilgrims have proceeded for Haj pilgrimage. Haj Committee of India deposes its staff at all embarkation points to facilitate the pilgrims on their departure and Consulate General of India deposes its staff at Jeddah and Madinah to assist pilgrims on their arrival and departure. It is constant endeavour of the Government to keep making improvements in the arrangements made for the Haj pilgrims and to provide them with better facilities after taking into account the feedback received from all concerned.

(d) & (e) Hundreds of buildings which were hired in past for stay of Indian pilgrims have been demolished by Saudi Authorities as an expansion project of Holy Mosque Area. New projects which are coming in place are Five Star Hotels which are not affordable by Indian pilgrims.

This year the selection process of buildings, which usually starts in March, started only in June due to court cases which affected the functioning of the Haj Committee of India. This three month delay resulted in difficulty in hiring buildings. However, sufficient accommodation has been hired for all pilgrims coming through Haj Committee of India.

(f) Saudi regulations do not permit renting of Haj pilgrims' accommodation for longer period. As per Saudi regulation, building owners have to obtain registration certificate on a yearly basis and licenses are issued to the building owners who fulfill the prescribed rental criteria. As buildings are rented for a small period of Haj season, under the prevailing circumstances, buildings cannot be hired for more than one Haj season.