

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2352
TO BE ANSWERED ON 16.12.2024

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE HAJ PILGRIM

2352 # SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN:

Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that before the year 2022 there was a provision of providing 2100 Saudi Riyals to every Haj pilgrim in lieu of Indian rupees deposited by them which was discontinued in the year 2023; and

(b) whether any fraud has been observed with Haj pilgrims in the cases of currency exchange after the discontinuation of this system?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIREN RIJJU)

(a): Prior to Haj-2023, all outgoing Haj pilgrims through Haj Committee of India (HCoI) were provided with foreign exchange (2100 Saudi Riyals) in cash at the Embarkation Points, irrespective of their actual requirements, before their departure to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), for meeting the personal expenses during their stay in KSA. This foreign exchange (or forex) was provided by HCoI after collecting equivalent amount of Indian Rupees from the respective pilgrims. However, this arrangement was done away with in 2023 in order to grant flexibility to the pilgrims to take forex as per own needs and requirements without mandating any specific amount.

Further, Government of India has collaborated with State Bank of India (SBI) during Haj-2023 and 2024, i.e., the largest bank of the country and a D-SIB (Domestic Systemically Important Bank) with the largest network even in remote areas, to facilitate availability of forex closer to the pilgrims' domiciles through the branches of SBI, as per their individual requirements, at competitive rates. Forex cards were also provided to pilgrims, thereby reducing the chances of loss & theft during travel. Forex was facilitated to all pilgrims at designated branches of SBI as well as at different Embarkation Points (EPs). However, even the above collaborative and facilitative arrangement with SBI had not been mandatory for the pilgrims and pilgrims have had the flexibility to obtain forex from a source of their choice. For Haj 2025, the Ministry is expanding the scope of this facilitation to other D-SIBs as well to enable wider reach.

(b): No such cases have been reported to this Ministry.
