

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1888
ANSWERED ON 14.12.2023

HAJ SLOTS FOR WOMEN WITHOUT MAHRAM

1888. SHRI DHARAMBIR SINGH:
DR. UMESH G. JADHAV:

Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the recent allocation of more than 4000 Haj slots for Women Without Mahram (WWM) signifies changing societal dynamics and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the steps taken by the Government to promote women's empowerment in this context especially among women belonging to Minority Communities; and
- (c) the details of number of beneficiaries from Karnataka?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) & (b): the Lady without Mehram (LWM) category was introduced in Haj 2018 by the Government of India and since then there has been an emphasis on encouraging more and more women to apply under this category. In 2023, a historical high of more than 4000 women successfully applied under LWM category.

Traditionally, a major deterrent for increased participation of Muslim women was their dependence on an accompanying male haji, i.e. mehram for performing this sacred religious pilgrimage. This restriction was done away by Government of India by allowing ladies of forty five (45) years of age or above to apply without Mehram for Haj in 2018 wherein provision was made for eligible women to perform pilgrimage under LWM category in groups of four (4).

In Haj-2023, for the first time, the Government of India allowed single eligible women also to apply for Haj -2023 under the LWM category. This step resulted in an all time high participation with more than 4000 successful women applicants in Haj 2023, leading to greater confidence, personal freedom and increased social mobility. These initiatives have also acted as positive enablers for gender inclusivity and women empowerment.

In addition to encouraging applications under the LWM category, the following measures have been taken administratively to enable further ease and convenience of pilgrims under the LWM category:-

- i. Simplification of the process of registration of Application of any single eligible Lady Pilgrim, who intends to apply under the LWM category.
- ii. Dedicated Flights were operated from designated Embarkation Points with Lady Khadim-ul-Hujjaj on board to aid and assist ladies during their Air Travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).
- iii. Dedicated Buildings were provided for lodging only Lady Without Mehram Category Hajis. Dedicated lady coordinators, Haj Officers, Haj Assistants and Khadim ul Hujjaj were deployed for the safety and security of these lady pilgrims and their belongings. In addition, lady doctors, nurses and paramedics were deployed in these buildings to look after the health and hygiene issues.
- iv. Special buses were arranged for transport of LWM Category pilgrims during their stay, wherever required, in Saudi Arabia.

(c): Out of a total of 7,120 pilgrims who proceeded on Haj from Karnataka in 2023 through Haj Committee of India, a total of 119 were under the LWM Category.
