

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 2106**

**ANSWERED ON - 01/08/2025**

**EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF CITIZEN SERVICES**

**2106. SHRI BHARATSINJI SHANKARJI DABHI**

**SHRI CHAVDA VINOD LAKHAMSHI**

**SHRI PARBHUBHAI NAGARBHAI VASAVA**

**SHRI SUKHJINDER SINGH RANDHAWA**

**SHRI CHHATRAPAL SINGH GANGWAR**

**MS KANGNA RANAUT**

**SHRI GODAM NAGESH**

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

**(a) the efforts undertaken by the Ministry for responsive and effective delivery of citizen services;**

**(b) the steps taken by the Government to increase the number of countries providing e-Visa facility;**

**(c) the total number of e-Visas issued since the year 2014 and the increase in number of countries covered under the e-Visa facility;**

**(d) the role of the Ministry in providing assistance to the international pilgrims; and**

**(e) the details of the assistance extended to Haj and Sikh pilgrims?**

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)**

**(a) The Government has taken several steps to ensure responsive and efficient delivery of consular services for Indian nationals abroad, through Indian Missions on priority basis. Grievances are responded through various channels like calls, walk-ins, e-mails, social media, 24x7 Helplines and Open Houses. Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSKs) have been set up at Dubai, Sharjah, Riyadh, Jeddah and Kuala Lumpur to provide assistance to Indian workers abroad. Shelter homes for distressed Indian nationals have also been set up at some Missions/Posts. Mission officials visit immigration offices and labour camps to address the complaints of Indian workers. Financial assistance to distressed Indians, if necessary, is provided through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). During emergency or crisis situations, our Missions/Posts abroad pro-actively help distressed/stranded Indian nationals in terms of providing food, shelter, medicine and helping their return to India.**

**(b) Formulation of the visa related policies is a sovereign matter of the concerned country. However, visa related matters, particularly visa**

**policies intended to improve ease of travel for Indian citizens are taken up by the Government through bilateral mechanisms, including during Consular Dialogues with foreign countries and during High level visits.**

**(c) Total number of e-Visa granted since 2014 to 20.07.2025 are 1,86,31,599. Number of countries being granted e-Visa have increased from 43 in 2014 to 181 in 2025.**

**(d) The Government has implemented various measures to ensure the smooth execution of International Pilgrim Operations. Key components of these initiatives include Administrative Oversight, Consular Assistance, Coordination with local Governments and Medical Facilities.**

**(e) (i) Haj Operations: The Government plays an important role in ensuring the smooth execution of Haj pilgrimage for Indian nationals. It works in close coordination with Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) and Haj Committee of India (HCoI) and Saudi authorities to deliver comprehensive support across all phases of the pilgrimage. This includes providing various services such as medical support, accommodation, transportation, catering, sanitation and utilities through its consulate in Jeddah. The consulate coordinates the smooth arrival and departure of pilgrims and also provides consular assistance to Indian pilgrims throughout their stay in Saudi Arabia in coordination with Saudi authorities. Each year the Saudi authorities announce a Haj**

**quota for India. In recent years, this quota has on an average been set at 1,75,025 Indian pilgrims.**

**(ii) Sikh Pilgrims: Under the India-Pakistan Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines - 1974, the Government facilitates visits of pilgrims between the two countries.**

**An Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the facilitation of Pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, Narowal, Pakistan, was signed on 24 October 2019 in order to fulfil the long-standing demand of the pilgrims to have easy and smooth access to the holy Gurudwara and to operationalise the corridor for the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.**

**The Agreement, inter alia, provides for visa-free travel of Indian pilgrims as well as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders, from India to the holy Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan on a daily basis, throughout the year. To facilitate the visit of pilgrims, a state-of-the-art infrastructure, including a highway from the town of Dera Baba Nanak to Zero Point and an Integrated Check Post (ICP) have been built on the Indian side. The Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor was inaugurated on 9 November 2019. Since its inauguration, the Corridor has been used by over 4,00,000 pilgrims to visit the holy Gurudwara in Pakistan.**

**The Government of India has consistently urged the Government of Pakistan that in deference to the wishes of the pilgrims, it should not levy any fee or charge on the pilgrims who visit Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur through the Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor. Pakistan, however, continues to levy USD 20 on every pilgrim for each visit. The validity of this Agreement was extended for a period of another 5 years in October 2024.**

**Kartarpur corridor operations have been suspended since Operation Sindoor.**

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