

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1938
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.03.2016**

PILGRIMAGE TO RELIGIOUS PLACES ABROAD

1938. SHRI KAPIL MORESHWAR PATIL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of pilgrims who visited various religious places in foreign countries during each of the last three years, till date;**
- (b) the details of financial/ transportation/ food/ lodging/ organisational assistance/subsidies provided to the pilgrims;**
- (c) the estimated number of pilgrims likely to visit the said places during the coming year; and**
- (d) the steps being taken for providing adequate facilities/making arrangements for them?**

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]**

(a) to (d) Information has been compiled and placed at Annexure.

PILGRIMAGE TO RELIGIOUS PLACES ABROAD

The number of Pilgrims who visited various religious places in foreign countries during each of the last three years, till date; (a)	The details of financial/transportational/ food/ lodging/ organizational assistance/ subsidies provided to the pilgrims (b)	The estimated number of pilgrims likely to visit the said places during the coming year; (c)	The steps being taken for providing adequate facilities/making arrangements for them? (d)								
<p><u>Saudi Arabia – (HAJ)</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="109 475 181 507">Year</th> <th data-bbox="199 475 309 539">No. of Pilgrims</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="109 576 181 608">2013</td> <td data-bbox="199 576 309 608">– 1,35,938</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="109 611 181 643">2014</td> <td data-bbox="199 611 309 643">- 1,35,914</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="109 646 181 678">2015</td> <td data-bbox="199 646 309 678">- 1,35,868</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>[Pilgrims proceeding for Haj are allowed to visit holy cities of Makkah, Madinah and Mina/ Arafat/Muzdalifah on Haj visa. Pilgrims also go to Madinah to offer 40 prayers. These places have religious significance as per Islamic customs.]</i></p>	Year	No. of Pilgrims	2013	– 1,35,938	2014	- 1,35,914	2015	- 1,35,868	<p>The expenditure towards Haj is borne by the pilgrims themselves. Ministry of External Affairs coordinates arrangements for Haj pilgrimage in consultation with the Haj Committee of India and the Consulate General of India, Jeddah. Every year, MEA sends deputationists (Coordinators, Assistant Haj Officers, Haj Assistants, Doctors and paramedical staff) for rendering assistance to the Haj pilgrims. Every year, CGI, Jeddah arranges for temporary tents in Mina, sets up branch Haj Offices and dispensaries in Makkah and Madinah, provides medicines, ambulances, other local transport etc. for the Haj pilgrims. The Consulate General of India, Jeddah makes arrangement for food in Madinah in 2014 and during pre-Haj period in Madinah in 2015.</p> <p>Ministry of Civil Aviation supervises the Air charter operations during Haj period and deploys officials in Saudi Arabia to assist in embarkation and disembarkation of pilgrims. There is no financial aid/ grant given directly to Haj pilgrims. However, Ministry of Civil Aviation gives subsidy to Airlines on Haj air travel . The details of subsidy provided to the Airlines on Haj Air travel during the last 3 years are as under:</p>	<p>Estimated number of Hajis likely to visit in Haj-2016 will be known by second week of March 2016 after signing of annual bilateral Haj agreement.</p>	<p>To provide better facilities and amenities for Haj pilgrims, several initiatives have been undertaken. These include: improvement of amenities for Haj pilgrims in buildings in Makkah and Madinah; strengthening of medical services for Haj pilgrims, streamlining of air travel arrangements for Hajis by ensuring effective management of timely arrival and departure of flights, online submission of Haj application form to Haj Committee of India and providing e-payment option to pilgrims, provision of local sim cards; provision of travel by metro train in Mashaer region for pilgrims going through HCOI ; 24 X 7 helpline, toll free number and use of Whatsapp and SMS for providing timely information; use of Mobile phone Application- “Indian Hajis Accommodation Locator” with information for Indian pilgrims; speedy and effective online complaint management system; strengthening of transport arrangements for Hajis accommodated in Azizia.</p>
Year	No. of Pilgrims										
2013	– 1,35,938										
2014	- 1,35,914										
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	<u>Year</u>	<u>Expenditure towards subsidy (Rs. crores)</u>															
	-																
	2013	680.03															
	2014	577.07															
	2015	530.00	(approx)														
<p><u>China – (Kailash Manasarovar Yatra)</u></p> <p>2013 – 53 yatris 2014 - 906 yatris 2015 – 999 yatris</p> <p><i>[Kailash Manasarovar Yatra (KMY) is known for its religious value, and cultural significance. It is undertaken by hundreds of people every year. Holding significance for the Hindus as the abode of Lord Shiva, it holds importance for the Jains and the Buddhists. The pilgrimage to these sites is undertaken by Indian citizens for religious purposes during the period June to September each year.]</i></p>	<p>Ministry of External Affairs organizes the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra in cooperation with the State Governments of Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Sikkim along with Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam Limited (KMVN), and Sikkim Tourism Development Cooperation (STDC) make logistical arrangements including accommodation, food, and transport on the Indian side for the Yatra.</p>			<p>In 2015 a total of 999 Yatris had travelled on both Lipulekh, and Nathu La routes for this Yatra. This year it is expected that the number of pilgrims visiting Kailash Manasarovar during June to September 2016 may exceed that of the previous year.</p>	<p>Government of India takes various steps to facilitate the Yatra which include a dedicated website to further simplify and expedite the registration and selection process, communication with Yatris, and a helpline based on Interactive Voice Response System which provides information in Hindi and English to the Yatris. Medical tests are also conducted for Yatris to ensure their fitness for high altitude endurance. Provision for air-lift of Yatris by helicopter is also available in coordination with concerned agencies in case of emergency. One Liaison Officer is appointed for each batch. The Liaison Officer stays in touch with Indian and Chinese authorities concerned and seeks assistance in case of any emergency for the safety and well-being of Yatris. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) provides security cover and basic medical assistance to Yatris on the Indian side. Facilities are upgraded on a continuous basis along the entire route of the Yatra.</p>												
<p><u>Pakistan</u></p> <p>Out of maximum permitted number of pilgrims as per “Bilateral Protocol” for a particular pilgrimage, based on available information the approximate number of pilgrims who visited Pakistan in the last three years is as follows :</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name of Pilgrimage</th> <th>2013</th> <th>2014</th> <th>2015</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Katasraj – Mahashivaratri & Ganesh Chaturthi</td> <td>205</td> <td>139</td> <td>327</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Baisakhi</td> <td>1250</td> <td>2150</td> <td>3000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name of Pilgrimage	2013	2014	2015	Katasraj – Mahashivaratri & Ganesh Chaturthi	205	139	327	Baisakhi	1250	2150	3000	<p>Arrangements in Pakistan are coordinated by High Commission of India, Islamabad with the Government of Pakistan and other local authorities. From Pakistan’s side the visit is coordinated by their Evacuee Trust Property Board including the stay, food, transportation and security.</p>			<p>It is estimated that a similar number of pilgrims, as in preceding years, is expected to visit Pakistan this year as well.</p>	<p>High Commission of India, Islamabad deputed consular teams to accompany the pilgrims during their stay in Pakistan for facilitation and necessary consular assistance.</p>
Name of Pilgrimage	2013	2014	2015														
Katasraj – Mahashivaratri & Ganesh Chaturthi	205	139	327														
Baisakhi	1250	2150	3000														

Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji	365		1000
Barsi of Maharaja Ranjit Singhji	202	500	316
Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev	2400	3000	3000
Hayat Pitafi	-	83	180
Total	4422	5872	7823

In addition to these scheduled pilgrimages, Indian pilgrims also visit religious shrines in Pakistan, outside the Protocol as private visitors without Government's involvement and hence, details regarding such visits are not available with Government.

[Visits to each other's religious shrines between India and Pakistan are conducted under the 'Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines-1974'. Fifteen religious shrines located in Pakistan are open for visits by Indian pilgrims. Every pilgrimage has a prescribed quota of maximum pilgrims that could partake in the pilgrimage and period of time in an year when the pilgrimage could be scheduled(details as follows):

Hindu Pilgrimage to Pakistan

Katasraj Feb/March 200 Pilgrims

Katasraj Nov/Dec 200 Pilgrims

Hayat Pitafi Feb/March 400 Pilgrims

Sikh Pilgrimage to Pakistan

Baisakhi April 3000 Pilgrims

Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji

May/June 1000 Pilgrims

Barsi of Maharaja Ranjit Singhji

June/July 500 Pilgrims

Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak

Nov 3000 Pilgrims]
