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### SPECIAL MENTIONS

#### Improper arrangements to bring back the Haji Pilgrims

**श्री रमाशंकर कौशिक** (उत्तर प्रदेश): महोदय, मैं आपकी अनुमति से बड़े अफसोस के साथ इस सदन के समक्ष यह सत्य रखना चाहता हूँ कि इस बार हज यात्रा में केन्द्रीय सरकार, विदेश मंत्रालय और विभिन्न प्रदेशों की हज कमेटियों और हमारी केन्द्रीय हज कमेटी ने अपने दायित्व की पूर्ति वहां पर नहीं की जिसके फलस्वरूप हजारों हज यात्री जो हज यात्रा के लिए गए थे, उन्हें बड़ी कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा । उनके रहने की व्यवस्था के संबंध में यहां से बहुत से अधिकारीगण जाते हैं जिनको हज असिस्टेंट कहा जाता है । विभिन्न प्रदेशों की हज कमेटियों द्वारा सेवादार के नाम से या खादिम के नाम से जो लोग होते हैं, उनको भी सरकारी खर्च पर वहां भेजा जाता है । इसके अतिरिक्त केन्द्रीय सरकार की तरफ से भी हज असिस्टेंट भेजा जाता है । उनका दायित्व होता है कि वह वहां पर हज यात्रियों की जो आवश्यकताएं हैं, उन हज यात्रियों को जो जानकारी देनी हैं, उनको जो लाने और ले जाने की सुविधा प्रदान करनी है, उसके बारे में सब कुछ बताएं । लेकिन महोदय, इस बार ऐसा हुआ है कि हज यात्रियों को अपने कैम्प ढूंढने में भी पूरा-पूरा दिन खर्च करना पड़ा लेकिन उन्हें अपना कैम्प नहीं मिला । हमारे जो हज असिस्टेंट सरकारी स्तर पर गये थे, जो हज कमेटियों के खादिम या सेवादार वहां गये थे, उनकी तरफ से कोई भी सूचना या जानकारी हज यात्रियों को नहीं दी गयी । श्रीमन्, उनको वापस लाने के लिए जो अव्यवस्था केन्द्रीय सरकार की ओर से, विदेश मंत्रालय की ओर से हुई, वह बहुत आश्चर्यजनक है । जिन लोगों को 24, 25 और 26 तारीख की फ्लाइट्स से जाना था, जिनको सूचना दी गई थी कि आपको इन तारीखों पर जाना है, उन तारीखों पर कोई फ्लाइट की व्यवस्था नहीं थी और उनको 29 तारीख को ही भेजा जा सका । हवाई अड्डे पर वे हज यात्री पड़े रहे, सड़क पर पड़े रहे, किसी प्रकार की कोई व्यवस्था नहीं की गई थी और उन्हें पूरी जानकारी भी प्राप्त नहीं हुई कि किस प्रकार से उन्हें कब जाना है, कैसे जाना है । इसी प्रकार से 1 से लेकर 7 अप्रैल तक वहां निरंतर आपाधापी रही, सैकड़ों हज यात्री सड़कों पर पड़े रहने के लिए मजबूर हुए । हवाई अड्डे वाले उन्हें खदेड़ देते थे और उन्हें सड़कों पर पनाह लेनी पड़ती थी । ऐसी दुर्दशा और इतनी कुव्यवस्था केन्द्रीय सरकार की ओर से और हमारी हज कमेटियों की ओर से

हुई, यह बहुत ही निंदनीय और अफसोसनाक बात है। मैं आपके माध्यम से सरकार से निवेदन करना चाहूंगा कि वह इन सारी परिस्थितियों पर पूरे तरीके से विचार करे और अब भी जो हज यात्री वहां फंसे पड़े हैं, उनको तत्काल वापस लाने की व्यवस्था करे। साथ ही आगे के लिए जो हज असिस्टेंट और जो हमारी विभिन्न हज कमेटियां हैं जैसे सेंट्रल हज कमेटी है, वे अपने दायित्वों को पूरे तरीके से निभाएं। ऐसे लोगों को वहां भेजा जाए जो वहां जाकर उनकी मदद कर सकें, उनके मददगार साबित हो सकें। वे सिर्फ सैर-सपाटे के लिए न जाएं या हज यात्रा करने के लिए न जाएं बल्कि उनकी जिम्मेदारी हो और उस जिम्मेदारी को वे निभाएं। श्रीमन्, हमेशा से यह व्यवस्था रही है कि हज असिस्टेंट या हज कमेटी के ज़रिए जो लोग वहां भेजे जाते हैं, उनमें से कुछ चिकित्सीय सेवा या चिकित्सीय बातों को जानते हैं जिन्हें बीमार लोगों को सुविधा पहुंचाने की दृष्टि से भेजा जाता है लेकिन इस बार ऐसी कोई व्यवस्था वहां नहीं थी। हज़ारों हज यात्रियों को वहां भारी कष्ट हुआ है, सरकार इन सारी बातों पर विचार करे, धन्यवाद।

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Kindly allow me. I am only associating with what the hon. Member has said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Then I will have to allow other party Members also. Shri K. Rahman Khan.

SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN (Karnataka): Sir, I fully associate with Mr. Kaushik's statement. This time the Haj pilgrims have suffered a lot.

Sir, you will remember that I had raised the issue of Haj chartered flights. The Government of India and Air India had chartered Haj flights with 20-year old aircraft. They were not airworthy. There was an apprehension about the safety of the pilgrims. This appeared in the press also. We appealed to the Minister of Civil Aviation to look into the matter. Articles regarding signing of various leasing contracts appeared in the press. It was said that the company from whom they had leased the aircraft had taken the aircraft from some other company, and there was no accountability about the airworthiness of the aircraft. As a result, the flights got delayed. The time-schedules given to the Hajis were not adhered to by the airlines. The same situation obtained at the Jeddah airport also, and the flights did not take off as per schedule. The flights had not taken off for three to four days. There was no arrangement there. Sir, it is known that the Jeddah Airport during this period handles lakhs of pilgrims and they do not allow even a half-a-day's interval in the flight schedule. In such an event, they were not able to allow any

facilities to the Hajis for three to four days. The pity is that, in spite of our warning that there was going to be chaos, if the same leasing system was approved. The Minister of Civil Aviation had assured us that he would look into the matter and would also discuss it with the MPs. He had agreed that there was a loophole in the leasing system. Air India is in collusion with Midas Company, from whom they have taken the aircraft on lease. They were giving \$450 per pilgrim, which is apparently a high amount. Only two or three people were short-listed from out of the tender. All this had been said in the House, but nothing has been done. I have been asking for constituting a House Committee to go into the subsidy of Rs.125 crores being given to Air India to meet its losses. It is not because of the Haj pilgrims. They charge from the Government of India per Haji Rs.29,000 to Rs.30,000 as air-fare, whereas, the Haji is told that the actual fare is only Rs.22,000. Air India takes Rs.8,000 to Rs.9,000 as handling charges. Taking all these things into account, there is a need to probe in detail as to how the aircraft were taken by Air India on lease. I would request the Civil Aviation Ministry, through you, Sir, to probe into this matter. I also request the Chairman to refer this matter to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Civil Aviation for a detailed probe on this issue. Thank you.

**श्री संजय निरुपम (महाराष्ट्र) :** महोदय, दो-तीन प्रश्न जो हमेशा मेरे मन में उभरते हैं, यहां रख रहा हूं। हज यात्रियों की व्यवस्था में हमेशा कुछ न कुछ दोष होता है। यहां पर यह पहली बार चर्चा नहीं हो रही है, सदन में और सदन के बाहर भी हमेशा चर्चा होती रहती है। मेरे मन में जो सवाल उठते हैं वे यह हैं कि आखिर हज यात्रियों की जिम्मेदारी सरकार क्यों ले? यह तो धर्मनिरपेक्ष देश है ...**(व्यवधान)**... थोड़ा धीरज रखिए। यह तो धर्म निरपेक्ष देश है और हम लोगों को बहुत ज्यादा धर्मनिरपेक्षता सिखलाई जाती है, बात-बात पर सैक्युलरिज्म पढ़ाया जाता है। इस देश से हज के लिए डेलिगेशन जाता है, कभी ननकाना साहिब के लिए तो डेलिगेशन नहीं जाता, कभी कैलाश मानसरोवर के लिए तो कोई डेलिगेशन नहीं जाता और कभी वेटीकन सिटी के लिए तो कोई डेलिगेशन नहीं जाता। जो सब्सिडी हज यात्रियों को दी जा रही है, ऐसी सब्सिडी इस देश में हिन्दू तीर्थ यात्रियों के लिए नहीं दी जाती, वैष्णोदेवी जाने वाले हिन्दू तीर्थ यात्रियों के लिए नहीं दी जाती। ...**(व्यवधान)**... सरकार को ऐसी जिम्मेदारी लेनी ही नहीं चाहिए।...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nirupam..*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Nirupam..*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Nirupam..*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Nirupam... That is a

different issue. The issue pertains to Improper arrangement to bring back Haj is. *...(Interruptions)...* No, no, no, no.

श्री संजय निरुपम : \*

MR. CHAIRMAN: You raise it as a separate issue. What you are saying is outside of this question.

श्री संजय निरुपम : \*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record because what you are saying is out of focus of this subject.

श्री राजूभाई ए. परमार (गुजरात): एनडीए की मीटिंग में *...(व्यवधान)...*

श्री संजय निरुपम : \*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record. No, please. This is out of focus of this subject. You give a separate notice. No. *...(Interruptions)...* No. *...(Interruptions)...* No.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the issue raised by Mr. Rama Shanker Kaushik regarding improper arrangements to bring back Haj pilgrims is a very important issue since it is agitating the minds of the whole country as well as Members of this august House. Whatever shortcomings we have found during our previous experiences should be taken as a lesson. They should not be repeated. If it is necessary, the Civil Aviation Ministry should depute some high official to the concerned area and find out what the ground reality is and what was the cause for improper arrangements. Hereafter the Haj pilgrims should not feel that inadequate and improper arrangements have been made by the Government of India. Being a secular country, we the people, whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains or any other, we are born Indians, we will live as Indians and we are going to die as Indians. That is why even the NDA's manifesto has clearly given the assurance to the minorities that the rights of the minorities will be protected at any cost. The DMK, which I have the honour of belonging to, in its own election manifesto, has given the same assurance to the people belonging to the minority communities that the rights of the minorities shall be protected. In that sense, if any section feels

that improper arrangements have been made, I think, we should not take it as 'one of the issues' but should take it as important and see that it is not again repeated in this country. With these words, I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

+श्री मोहम्मद सलीम (पश्चिमी बंगाल): सभापति महोदय, हज के बारे में इस बार जो असुविधा हुई है इससे पहले कभी किसी मुल्क के हज यात्रियों को इतनी कठिनाइयों का सामना नहीं करना पड़ा। इस राज्य सभा में, खासकर के हज यात्रा शुरू होने से पहले ही आपने इजाजत दी थी, हाफ एन ऑवर डिस्कशन हुआ था, रहमान खान साहब और हम सब लोग बोले थे कि पहले ही स्कैण्डल, स्कैम हो रहे हैं। लेकिन सरकार की जो जिम्मेदारी थी, वह जिम्मेदारी नहीं निभाई और हज यात्रियों को पैसा दिया जाता है, सब्सिडी से मतलब यह नहीं कि किसी के खर्च से हाजी जा रहे हैं, बाजार में ट्रेवल एजेंट को जितना रुपया देना पड़ता है, हज कमेटी, जो स्पॉन्सर्ड बाई गवर्नमेंट ऑफ इण्डिया है उसको, किसी भी ट्रेवल एजेंट और ट्रेवल ऑपरेटर्स को ज्यादा रुपया देकर हज यात्रियों को जाना पड़ा और उसके बावजूद भी जिस तरह से उनके साथ पेश आया गया, यह सिर्फ प्लेन चार्टरिंग का मामला नहीं है। एक तरफ तो कही जाती है सब्सिडी की बात, लेकिन मंत्री से लेकर, अफसरों तक यह कोशिश होती है कि हज डेलीगेशन में कौन, किसके खास आदमी को डालें। हज असिस्टेंस में कौन किस तरह अपने रिश्तेदारों को डाले और हजारों हाजियों की परेशानी, उसके बारे में कोई नजर नहीं है। मैं फिर दोहराता हूँ दिसम्बर महीने में यहाँ एक मांग उठाई गई थी। राज्य सभा को प्रोब करना चाहिए पार्लियामेंट्री कमेटी से क्योंकि हजारों, करोड़ों का मामला है। हजारों रुपये देकर हाजी जाते हैं और सरकार सिर्फ हज डेलीगेशन भेज दे, हज असिस्टेंस भेज दे उसके बावजूद वहाँ भी रहने की ठीक जगह, एयरपोर्ट पर नहीं मिले ऐसे स्कैण्डल इस बार हुए हैं। इंडियन हाजियों के लिए, ऑपरेटर्स के लिए जो कांट्रेक्स दिया गया, वहाँ हमारे हैंडलिंग एजेंट जो एयर इंडिया की तरफ से वहाँ रखे गए उन्होंने लुफ्थांसा को बेच दिया और हमारे इंडियन हाजियों को एक दिन-दो दिन ठहरना पड़ा, पीने का पानी नहीं मिला। पूरी दुनिया के सामने हज डेलीगेशन की गवर्नमेंट जिम्मेदारी लेती है जो हाजी जाते हैं, यह एक मजहबी मामला है, उसके बावजूद वे एक मुल्क के एम्बेसडर के रूप में जाते हैं। हमारे मुल्क का चेहरा देखने को मिलता है। पूरी दुनिया के सामने हमने दिखाया कि किस रह से इंडियन गवर्नमेंट और हज कमेटी इंडियन हाजीज को, इंडियन सिविलियन्स को ट्रीट करती है। महोदय, गुडविल मिशन में सरकारी लोग, सरकार के खास लोग गए थे,

उनसे भी आप पूछिए तो मालूम होगा कि कितनी बदइतजामी थी इस बार हज के मामले में। अभी भी हाजी घूम रहे हैं। कल भी हमारे पास आए थे कि उनका बैगेज ही नहीं पहुँचा। तीन-चार दिन रुकने के बाद भी उनके पास जो सामान, जो ज़मज़म पानी लेकर आते हैं, कुछ उनके साथ नहीं आ पाया और ऐसा सैकड़ों के साथ हुआ है। सरकार के जो हमारे यहाँ एक्सटर्नल अफेयर मिनिस्टर हैं वे भी मौजूद हैं, स्टेट एक्सटर्नल मिनिस्टर हैं वे भी मौजूद हैं और हम दिसम्बर से पार्लियामेंट के चीख रहे हैं उसके बाद भी इतनी बदइतजामी हुई है। सरकार हमें कहे और हमारे माध्यम से पूरे देश को कहे कि सरकार की जो जिम्मेदारी है क्या सरकार ने वह जिम्मेदारी निभाई है?

**THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):** Sir, the Government takes seriously its responsibility both at the stage of making arrangements and certainly at the stage of implementation. I take very seriously what the hon. Members have said by way of observations, comments and also criticisms. There are three parts of it, really. One is the selection, who are chosen to go as Hajis and who are chosen to go to help the Hajis, etc. All State Governments are consulted. Members of Parliament too send their recommendations. To the maximum possible extent, hon. Members' recommendations are also accommodated. As hon. Members are aware, we have made efforts to increase the number of Hajis by almost 25 per cent. Nevertheless, the difficulties remained and the difficulties are raised from the host country. We have to work with the host country. The host country, at that particular period of time, receives hajis from all over the world. There are limitations in this regard.

So far as the selection is concerned, I don't claim anything, but we do consult the State Governments and work on their recommendations, as also on the hon. Members'. It is my experience that it is not a perfect system. I accept that. It is not a perfect system. Can it be improved? Yes, it can be improved. Can it be made perfect? No, it cannot be made perfect. That is the reality because there is a very personal element; so many persons want to go, but we have a limited number available.

The second aspect is this. Once you have reached there, what are the arrangements? The hon. Member, Shri Kaushik, has pointed out that the arrangements are not satisfactory. I can assure him that if any specific instance is brought to our notice, we will look into it. The fundamental limitation remains that we are in the hands, at that stage, of a host

Government who allocates us the block space as to where the hajis from country, A or B or C, will stay. If inconvenience has been caused to any particular haji or yatri, we can look into it. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, what about the third aspect?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I am coming to the third aspect which relates to the return of the hajis. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ABDUL GAIYUR QURESHI (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I do not want to intervene. I had been to haj this year. With your kind permission, and with the permission of the hon. House, I want to tell you that the hon. Foreign Minister has not been properly informed by the Authorities about the arrangements for residence there in Mecca and Madina. Actually, it is the Haj Committee which selects the houses, and those houses are allotted to the hajis. It is not the Government which allots the houses. It is actually the price which is the main deciding factor. The prices are competitive. And they want to buy the cheapest possible houses. That is why they are located at a distance of two or three miles from Haram Sharief; everywhere, in Mecca and Madina. So, that is the problem. I had gone there, but I had gone there only on a private tour. I did not go there through the Haj Committee. I, of course, went to the Indian Mission and found all that.

As far as the hospitals are concerned, I would say, "Please compliment the doctors." The doctors were very, very efficient. A lot of people were suffering with throat problem, cold and cough, and they were treated in a very efficient way by the doctors there. We should not, I think, blame them because I had seen them treating the people.

As far as residence is concerned, I think, it is the worst residence which is available to the hajis who go through the Haj Committee. As far as the khuddamaan-e-hajjaj, the persons who are to assist the hajis, are concerned, about that, I think, the hon. Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, has also not been properly informed because it is the State Government which selects the khuddamaan-e-hajjaj. For example in my State, Madhya Pradesh, there are seven people. They are selected by the State Government, but the final approval is given by the Central Committee. The Central Committee itself chooses the persons for assisting the hajis, and I tell you, very honestly, as far I am concerned,--I have seen it-- they do not care for the

hajis at all; they are busy doing their own pilgrimage. Actually, they do not assist the hajis at all. So, you have to keep a vigil and put a check on them because it is actually supervised by the Government. You said, "It is not our job. We do not appoint the Haj Committee." Let there be an autonomous body. Let there be a body from Parliament or any other agency to deal with this problem. But when it is a Government-sponsored programme, when you take the responsibility, then you have to ensure that there is no problem for the hajis there.

As far as the airport is concerned, I tell you that the lounge is littered with hajis. It is not full with hajis, but it is littered with hajis, and there is no proper arrangement there. Sir, all this I am submitting because I know the hon. Minister; he is a very serious person; he would not make a wrong statement, but he has been given wrong information. He has been fed with wrong information; that is why he is stating that in the House. I do not understand this.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Thank you very much.

SHRI ABDUL GAIYUR QURESHI: Sir, I never stand up without any proper information at my command. But, actually, I am an eye witness to it. I recently went to Haj. I was myself a Haji this year.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I am very grateful to the hon. Member because he is only mentioning what I have been saying. There are two aspects of it. I am always ready to learn more than what I know. Perhaps, you are right that I have not been well-informed on the subject. But that does not come in between. He only underlines what I am saying. But so far as the choice of the Khuddamaan - e- hajjaj is concerned, it is the concerned State Government that chooses them. We have no say in the matter. Of course, the Steering Committee of the Haj arrangements chooses them. Yes; we will take greater care next time. Regarding the choice of the location where the Hajis are put up, when I said, the Government of the host country decides, I only meant that it is subject to what price we can pay. We do not have the same monetary munificence, as some other nations have. Therefore, we have to choose sites which are at some distance.

I was on the question of the return of the Hajis. This is an area where I, myself, am not satisfied. The Government is fully seized of the



[20 April, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

matter. So far as the whole arrangement of chartered planes etc. is concerned, the Government has already appointed a Group of Ministers to go into it and review the whole thing. In retaliation to the return of this particular Haj Group, there are some aspects which are not to the satisfaction of even the Ministry of External Affairs. We are in touch with the Ministry of Civil Aviation. We have told them to find out how that was permitted to happen.

Ordinarily, the capacity of the Jeddah Airport is to handle 50 flights per day, and there were as many as 250 flights that were required to be handled. It is not possible for that airport to deal with that kind of a rush.

Secondly, one of the aircraft that had been chartered was delayed by 48 hours, or, more, on account, I am told, of developing a defect. We are enquiring as to why that aircraft was chartered, in the first instance.

Thirdly, and most unfortunately, at that very time, Air India had to curtail its flights. We are in touch with the Ministry of Civil Aviation as to why the curtailment took place at that time; why this could not be delayed so that the return of the Hajis could have been facilitated. I accept the observation that has been made by hon. Members regarding the arrangements made for the return of the Hajis. The arrangements were not even to the satisfaction of my Ministry. We are looking into as to what went wrong and we can assure you that we will do the best possible we can, with regard to such matters.

### **Consequences due to crash in Sensex**

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, over the last few days, we have been discussing many important issues like price rise, the brutal attack on the students of Jamia Milia, and the match-fixing issue. But during this period, something else was happening, across the seven seas, in the West. A storm was brewing. And the eye of the storm was the share market in New York. Now, we have not yet experienced the full blast of it. It is, probably, yet to come. I hope it does not come. Already, you can see the evidence of its impact in different cities; in the different capitals of Asia, and within India also. I feel this is something which has to be taken into account both by the Government and also by the Parliament, at large.