

Making DD's Urdu channel mandatory for cable operators

2474. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Doordarshan's ambitious plan to project Urdu culture and its heritage to the large Indian Diaspora has taken off in terms of viewer's demand, if so, the details thereof;

(b) the amount of investment that has been incurred to launch DD's Urdu channel globally including Middle East, South Asia, Europe, Central Asia and Africa;

(c) the number of cable operators that has subscribed to the channel;

(d) whether the ministry is considering making the channel mandatory for cable operators for making it popular among the audience; and

(e) by when, it would become mandatory?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) Prasar Bharati have informed that Doordarshan has launched an exclusive channel in Urdu on 15.8.2006. The satellite channel has its footprint in the countries in Indian sub-continent, South-East Asia and Middle East (Gulf).

(b) Prasad Bharati have informed that till date approximate expenditure on hardware and software is Rs. 10.99 crores.

(c) It is a free to air Channel. Therefore, no formal subscription by the cable operator is required.

(d) and (e) As on date the Urdu channel has not been notified for compulsory transmission by cable operators in their networks. There is a suggestion to make Urdu channel compulsory for all cable operators to telecast. However, no time frame can be given.

Record of Injustice against PIO's

†2475. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether record of the incidents of injustice meted out to the People of Indian Origin is maintained in our embassies;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

(b) the name of the countries in which objections have been raised on their customs;

(c) the names of the countries in which they are not being allowed to worship;

(d) the names of the countries in which their places of worship have been demolished during the last three years;

(e) the name of the countries in which the complaints of insult of God and Goddess have been received; and

(f) the steps taken by Government with regard to above (b) to (e) alongwith the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) As per information available, most of the Indian Missions are maintaining records of problems faced by people of Indian origin.

(b) to (f) A statement is enclosed.

Statement

Country-wise record of injustice against people of Indian origin

Malaysia

Some temples have been demolished by authorities in Malaysia during the last three years because these were situated on government land or property papers were not in order.

Fiji

There have been few incidents of desecration of temples, churches and mosques in Fiji. The incidents were more in the nature of burglary and vandalizing by private individuals.

Denmark

(i) Mr. Ripudaman Singh, a Sikh Danish national on 24th May, 2004 visited the US Embassy in Copenhagen to seek visa for US where his sister resides. Before entering the Embassy he handed over his kirpan and cellphone to the authorities. The security officials at the Embassy called the Danish police who charged Mr. Singh for carrying a dagger with

length exceeding 7 cms. As permitted under Danish law. Mr. Singh did not sign the guilty warrants and decided to contest the matter in court. The City Court in Copenhagen, in its judgement dated 14th April 2005 imposed a fine of Danish Kroner 3000 (US\$ 500/-) on Mr. Ripudaman Singh for carrying a kirpan.

The matter was taken up by the Ministry of External Affairs with the Danish Ambassador in New Delhi and also by the Indian Embassy in Copenhagen with the Danish authorities. The Danish Ambassador stated that Danish law forbade their citizens from carrying knives of more than a specified length and no special dispensation was permitted for religious purposes. The Danish Ministry of Justice also informed our Embassy on July 1, 2005 that 'on grounds of principle, the Ministry of Justice generally does not comment on a specific case which was to be tried in court. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice was not in a position to reverse the orders of a court'.

(ii) The Danish Newspaper 'JYLLANDS POSTEN' had published on September 30, 2005 cartoons depicting the Holy Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist. This had led to protest across the world, particularly from Muslim countries. Protests also took place in India. Protests have spread across the world, with deaths reported in Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Protests have taken place in several parts of India on the issue.

At the beginning of October 2005 itself, immediately after the publication of these offensive cartoons, Government of India had conveyed its strong sense of outrage to the Danish Government, both through its Ambassador in New Delhi and through our Ambassador in Copenhagen. While expressing India's distress over such lack of sensibility to the religious sentiments of people, the Indian side urged that the newspaper should express its apologies and the Government should ensure that such actions did not recur.

The Danish paper issued a press statement on 30th January, 2006 apologizing to the Muslim World. The Prime Minister of Denmark issued a statement on 31st January 2006 emphasizing that in Denmark they attached fundamental importance to the freedom of expressions, which was a vital and indispensable part of a democratic society, and added that in his personal opinion, he deeply respected the religious feelings of other people and would, consequently had never himself chosen to depict religious

symbols this way. He further stated that he was deeply distressed by the fact that these drawings had been seen as defamation of the Prophet Mohammed and Islam as a religion by many Muslims. He emphasized that the Danish Government condemns any expression, action, or indication that attempts to demonize groups of people on the basis of their religion or ethnic background.

Australia

(i) The 'Australian Financial Review' newspaper on 27th May 2002, published a cartoon of Lord Ganesha.

(ii) The 'Diplomat' magazine in its June-July 2004 carried an illustration of Lord Vishnu holding cigards, bomb, laptop, etc. in his hands.

(iii) The 'DNA' magazine in its July 2005 issue had published an objectionable image of Goddess Laxmi.

The High Commission/Consulate General of India in Australia and the Indian community objected to the depictions referred to (e) above. The Australian Financial Review and the DNA apologized over these depictions.

Greece

(a) The pictures of Hindu deities used by a wine company in Athens in their advertisement. The Poster was prepared by the manufacturer of Southern comfort Whisky in the USA and displayed in a bar in Athens.

Our Embassy in Greece had taken up this issue with the establishment concerned. The owner as well as the manufacturer of the product has withdrawn the poster. The manufacturer has also publicly apologized for bringing out the poster.

Kazakhstan

The ISKCON devotees in Kazakhstan received a court order on 20 November 2006 stating that all houses constructed on the disputed property they were occupying were illegal and were to be demolished. On 21 November 2006 local authorities, accompanied by the police came to the site of the ISKCON commune. The police cordoned off the area and bulldozers were used to demolish the houses. To the best of our knowledge the ISKCON devotees who were living in the commune in Kazakhstan are not Indian citizens.

It appears that the ISKCON followers in Kazakhstan are involved in a legal dispute with Kazakh authorities regarding the premises on which they live and worship in the Karasai district of Almaty province. As per authorities in Kazakhstan the ISKCON devotees have contravened local laws by changing land use from agricultural to that for living and worshipping. The Kazakh authorities had approached local courts and obtained eviction orders. The authorities have also informed the Human Rights Department of the OSCE that the issue revolves around a property dispute and has no religious/ethnic connotations.

The ISKCON Temple in Moscow operated from 1989 till 2004. Subsequently, the Temple was moved with the consent of the Temple authorities to a new site in June 2004. Later following a ruling by the Moscow Prosecutor General's Office that the order of the Moscow City Government allotting the new property for the ISKCON Temple was not legal, the allotment was cancelled in October 2005.

It is understood that the Moscow City Government has decided to allocate an alternative plot of land for the Temple.

PBBY for workers abroad

2476. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have started Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana to extend insurance benefits to workers working abroad.

(b) if so, the details of the scheme;

(c) the number of Indians roughly covered or going to be covered under the above Yojana;

(d) whether his Ministry maintains statistics of Indians abroad, State-wise; and

(e) if so, the number of people belong to Andhra Pradesh staying abroad who have been covered or proposed to be covered under this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir.