

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Yes. Prime Minister attended the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) meeting in Russia on 16 June, 2009.

(b) At the BRIC Summit, the Leaders of the four countries reviewed the current state of global economic and financial crisis and discussed the forthcoming G8 and G20 Summits. The Summit adopted a Joint Statement of BRIC Leaders and a Joint Statement on Global Food Security.

(c) BRIC Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors will meet before the Pittsburgh G-20 Summit in September 2009 and examine the further steps to be taken to intensify cooperation in the BRIC format on economic matters, to seek implementation of those decisions of G-20 Summits which are of interest to developing countries, and to pursue reform of the present structures of the international financial system and of global governance.

Passport for Haj pilgrims

41. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether International Passport has been made compulsory for all Haj pilgrims from this year onwards;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the applicants for issue of temporary country specific passport are exempted from police verification;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Government proposes to open special passport counters across the country;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the efforts that Government is making to ensure that opportunity for Haj is not lost because of passport and Hajis face no difficulties in undertaking the sacred journey?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) and (b) Government of India is aware that in accordance with the decision of the Saudi Government all Haj pilgrims will have to travel on International Passport for Haj-2009 onwards.

(c) Yes.

(d) to (g) Government has issued new policy guidelines to all the Passport Offices after consultation with the National and State Haj Committees to ensure that no Haj pilgrim faces any hurdles in obtaining his/her passport to undertake the pilgrimage All Passport Offices have been instructed that the Haj passports should be handed over to the Haj pilgrims/Haj Committee within the due date stipulated by the Committee to ensure that no Hajis face any difficulty in undertaking the sacred journey.