

reduction of gender gap in education, reduction in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 1 per 1000 live births and Total Fertility Rate to 2.1; etc are included in the list of monitorable targets for the Eleventh Plan. The Government's strategy of achieving high growth rate, generating more employment opportunities and strengthening of social infrastructure such as public health and education through implementation of flagship programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) and poverty alleviation by providing wage and self employment, safe drinking water and total sanitation campaign, etc. have impacted the human wellbeing positively and are expected to improve India's MPI & GI further.

#### **Problems of Haj Pilgrims**

1147. SHRI MOHAMMED ADEEB :

SHRI ASHK ALI TAK:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Haj pilgrims face problems every year;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that Haj matters go to higher judiciary almost every year;
- (c) if so, the details in this regard and the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the steps contemplated to make foolproof Haj arrangements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED) :

(a) to (d) The Haj pilgrimage is a complex organizational task undertaken annually by Government of India (GOI) outside its borders. Extensive arrangements need to be made in India as well as in Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage. In recent times, the number of pilgrims seeking to perform Haj through Private Tour Operators (PTOs) is increasing as is the number of PTOs seeking allocation of Haj seats. Only the PTOs that qualify under the Policy are allocated seats. The ineligible PTOs at times resort to petitioning the various Courts of law. However, the Courts, including the Hon'ble Supreme Court, have generally upheld the Policy and the decisions of GOI.

Problems encountered by pilgrims are dealt with in the best possible manner and in consultation with the concerned stake holders. It is the constant endeavour of GOI to keep learning from the experience of successive Haj pilgrimages to incorporate improvements to ensure better facilities for the pilgrims.