

Government has seen media reports that on August 10, 2012, over 200 Hindus who had valid travel documents and visas were stopped at Wagah border point in Pakistan and were allowed to cross into India after the Pakistani authorities were able to ascertain that these Pakistanis were travelling to India for meeting relatives or for pilgrimage and would return to Pakistan. It was also reported that these Pakistani nationals themselves stated that they would return to Pakistan.

Government has from time to time come across reports on the problems faced by members of the minority communities in Pakistan. Incidents of persecution and intimidation of the minority communities have also been reported. It is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan to discharge its constitutional obligations towards its citizens, including those from the minority community. While, the Simla Agreement of 1972 between India and Pakistan specifically provides for non-interference in each other's internal affairs, nevertheless, based on reports of persecution of minority groups in Pakistan, Government had taken up the matter with the Government of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan stated that it was fully cognizant of the situation and looked after the welfare of all its citizens, particularly the minority community.

Estimation of growth rate

†*264. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the annual growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country for the year 2012-13 has been estimated to be five per cent by the assessors;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard and whether it is also a fact that the above growth rate is less than the target fixed in this regard;

(c) if so, Government's reaction in this regard;

(d) whether the fall in this growth rate would also have a bearing on industrial and service sectors;

(e) if so, the assessment of the decline in these sectors and whether it is a fact that country's growth largely depends on agriculture; and

(f) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (c) The Approach Paper to the Twelfth Five Year Plan as approved by the National Development Council (NDC) projected an average annual GDP growth rate of 9 per cent during the Twelfth Plan period (2012-17). Subsequent to the approval of the Approach Paper by NDC, there have been important developments in the global economic environment and their impact on the domestic economy is reflected in the growth rate of 6.5 per cent in 2011-12 and the last quarter of 2011-12 registered growth rate of only 5.3 per cent. The global economic situation continues to be uncertain. It will therefore be difficult to stay with the targeted 9 per cent average annual GDP growth rate during Twelfth Plan-period. In this backdrop, the Union Budget for 2012-13, projected India's GDP growth in 2012-13 to be 7.6 per cent (+/- 0.25 per cent). Recently, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) has assessed that the economy is likely to grow at 6.7 per cent during the year 2012-13, while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected the growth rate to be 6.5 per cent during 2012-13.

(d) to (f) With the continuing uncertainties in the global economic environment coupled with certain domestic factors like inflation, high interest rates and supply side bottlenecks, the growth of the industrial and service sectors is also likely to be affected. The growth of the agriculture sector which contributes about 14 per cent to the GDP may also not be on the expected lines because of weak monsoon experienced till now. The compound impact of all these factors may result in registering a lower economic growth rate during the current year. The Planning Commission will take a view on what is feasible in terms of restoring the economy to a rapid growth path and the revised average annual growth target for the Twelfth Five Year Plan will be placed before NDC during the year.

National Council for Senior Citizens in the country

*265. SHRI P. BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided to set up a National Council for Senior Citizens in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the mandate of the said Council and in what way its decisions would be implemented?