

Complaints from Haj pilgrims

*187. SHRI AHMAD SAEED MALIHABADI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 1.25 lakh Haj pilgrims proceed for Haj every year from India under the management of Haj Committee of India;

(b) whether Government is aware of the large number of complaints from Haj pilgrims regarding unsatisfactory travel and accommodation arrangements for them at Mecca and Medina;

(c) if so, the remedial steps Government would take to remove the grievances of Haj pilgrims;

(d) whether Government proposes to accept the demands of the Muslim community to establish a Haj Corporation in place of the Haj Committee of India; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Yes, Sir. 125,000 Haj seats were allocated to Haj Committee of India annually since 2010 and around the same number performed Haj.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Some complaints were received during Haj-2012. Issues raised therein were dealt with promptly in consultation with the stake holders concerned. A comprehensive remedial system is in place to redress complaints of pilgrims. An on-line system has also been introduced effective this year at the Consulate General of India, Jeddah to address complaints. The entire Haj process was planned carefully and problems envisaged and appropriate remedies were built into the preparations for Haj-2012. It is the constant endeavour of Government of India to keep learning from the experience of all stake holders in successive Haj pilgrimages and make improvements with a view to provide the pilgrims with better facilities.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Pollution problem in Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) plants

*188. SHRI A.V. SWAMY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government for improvement, in the light of the Centre for Science and Environment's green rating findings of steel sector;

(b) whether Government could come out with an independent White Paper on the status of pollution problem in the five major integrated plants of SAIL with time-line to shut down age-old production equipments, especially at Rourkela;

(c) the steps taken to address the poor health and safety records of steel sector, especially of contract workers, and on concerns of the affected local community on pollution and rehabilitation;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Centre for Science & Environment, a Delhi based NGO has recently come with a Green Rating Project (GRP) report on the environmental performance of 21 Indian iron and steel plants. Ministry of Steel has looked into this Report in consultation with the steel plants. The report has been taken with a positive spirit by the steel sector for improvement in their environmental performance.

(b) Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has a well structured and robust environment management system in place at all its plants. A multi-pronged strategy takes care of the short and long term schemes for pollution control. These include compliance to statutory norms, benchmarking with respect to national and international best practices, phasing out of obsolete technologies and ushering in new, cleaner and energy efficient technologies. SAIL is spending more than Rs.5000 crore exclusively on environmental protection measures in its ongoing modernization/expansion plan. The modernization/ expansion plan of SAIL including that at Rourkela Steel Plant addresses the vital issues of elimination of technological obsolescence by phasing out technologies and equipment resulting in adoption of clean technologies.

(c) and (d) Indian Steel Plants are committed to provide a safe and healthy work environment for the employees including contract workers. A number of measures like compliance to all statutory rules and regulations, development and adherence to safe operating and maintenance practices, training programmes and workshops for all level of employees including contract workers etc. are in vogue. Further, occupational health is one of the thrust areas in the steel companies. All the integrated plants have well established Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

centres primarily entrusted with preventive, promotive and curative functions. Periodic health checkups are conducted with emphasis of early detection and intervention for work related health problems. The steel plants have also taken a number of steps to comply with the laid down standards and norms at and around the steel plants addressing thereby the concerns of local communities.

- (e) Does not arise in view of (c) and (d) above.

Committee on Direct Cash Transfers

*189. SHRIMATI GUNDU SUDHARANI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the terms of reference given to a High Powered National Committee on Direct Cash Transfers constituted recently;

(b) to what extent, the proposed transfer would reduce corruption and pilferage;

(c) whether it is a fact that Aadhaar is proposed to made mandatory for getting the benefit; and

(d) in what manner, the Ministry is planning to implement the scheme when Aadhaar has not been issued to majority of the population?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The National Committee on Direct Cash Transfers would engage in providing an overarching vision and direction to enable direct cash transfers of benefits under various Government schemes and programmes to individuals. The National Committee on Direct Cash Transfers is mandated to engage in following tasks:

- (i) Provide an overarching vision and direction to enable direct cash transfers of benefits under various government schemes and programmes to individuals, leveraging the investments being made in the Aadhaar Project, financial inclusion and other initiatives of the Government, with the objective of enhancing efficiency, transparency and accountability.
- (ii) Determine broad policy objectives and strategies for direct cash transfers.
- (iii) Identify Government programmes and schemes for which direct cash transfers to individuals can be adopted and suggest the extent and scope of direct cash transfers in each case.