

- (c) the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) Yes. The Embassy of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi informed the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on June 05, 2013 that the Saudi authorities had imposed a 50% reduction in the Haj-2013 quota on local (Saudi) applicants and 20% on all foreign Haj pilgrims to facilitate the infrastructure work being carried out around the Haram Sharif and to keep the area safe and secure for the pilgrims.

(b) and (c) MEA took up the matter with the authorities in Saudi Arabia and conveyed its concern on the 20% reduction in our quota and sought reconsideration of the decision. On June 21, 2013, Government of Saudi Arabia affirmed the reduction of 20% quota leaving a quota of 1,36,020 seats for Indian Haj pilgrims for Haj-2013.

Since the Haj-2013 pilgrims of Haj Committee of India (HCOI) had already been selected and partial payments received from them by then, it was decided to effect the 20% reduction (34005 seats) for Haj-2013 from the allocation (45000) of Private Tour Operators (PTOs). Cancellations anticipated by HCOI pilgrims (3605 seats) were transferred to the eligible Haj-2013 PTOs.

Resolution on issue of nuclear disarmament

2058. SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has been abstaining on a series of resolutions relating to treaties on landmines, cluster munitions and arms trade in addition to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution relating to the Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(b) whether such recalcitrance in taking a bold stand on issues of nuclear disarmament is compatible with our continuing advocacy of the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan (RGAP) for a Nuclear Weapons-Free (NWF) and Non-violent World Order (NWO)?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) and (b) India is not a signatory to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention and the Cluster Munitions Convention, both of which were negotiated outside the UN and do not meet India's security interests. India is also not a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty as the final text of the treaty was below our expectations. With regard to the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Nuclear

Disarmament, India abstained on the resolution because of concerns related to the impact of the establishment of such a Group on the UN disarmament machinery, in particular, the Conference on Disarmament which is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. However, in view of the importance attached to nuclear disarmament, India has been participating in the discussions of the OEWG underlining the need for non-discriminatory, global and verifiable nuclear disarmament in a phased manner, as highlighted in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988.

Online submission of passport application

†2059. SHRI PARVEZ HASHMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that it has been provided to submit application for passport only through online process;

(b) whether only prescribed number of applications are being accepted through online process;

(c) despite the fact that the use of technology is a good thing, whether all the people throughout India understand/know this process, and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether proposal to accept application through passport forms is also under consideration, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) The Passport Seva Project, a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan, has been implemented by the Government with a view to comprehensively overhaul passport issuance system. As part of this citizen-centric Project, 77 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) have been set up and operationalised as extended arms of the existing 37 Passport Offices across the country. In the new system, the applicants are required to log on to the passport website www.passportindia.gov.in; create their user ID and assign a password; fill and submit the application form online or download the e-form, fill and upload the same at the portal (applicants may scan and upload supporting documents, if they so desire); schedule an appointment after making payment of passport fee online through debit/credit card or State Bank of India (SBI) net-banking or SBI Challan; note the Application Reference Number (ARN) or take a print-out of Appointment Slip/Challan; and along with ARN, original documents and photocopies visit the concerned PSK for submission of application.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.