

has come across reports about acts of desecration of places of religious and cultural importance to the minority communities in Pakistan including the Hindu community and the reactions of the worshippers concerned who are citizens of Pakistan.

As and when required, the Government has called upon the Government of Pakistan to ensure protection and preservation of religious places in Pakistan, including those belonging to its minorities.

**Raising of quota for Haj pilgrims from India**

1297. SHRI ABDUL WAHAB: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) what is the quota of Haj pilgrims from India as on date;
- (b) whether Government has received various requests from Muslim organisations to raise the Haj quota; and
- (c) whether Government has taken up the matter with Saudi Arabia Government and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) As per the bilateral Haj Agreement signed between Government of India and Saudi Arabia, the quota allocated for Haj-2016 is 1,36,020 with 1,00,020 pilgrims to be sent through the Haj Committee of India and 36000 pilgrims through private tour operators.

(b) and (c) A number of requests have been received from various States/Union Territories/Muslim organisations for increase in Haj quota for Haj-2016. However, the entire quota allocated to Haj Committee of India by the Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Haj-2016 has already been distributed amongst the States and Union Territories on the basis of their respective Muslim population, based on the 2011 Census figures.

from Haj-2013, Saudi Government has reduced the overall Haj quota for pilgrims from foreign countries, including from India, by 20% and for domestic pilgrims by 50% to facilitate the infrastructure work being carried out around the "Haram Sharif". The Government has approached the Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for augmenting the annual Haj quota for India.