

Withdrawal of Haj subsidy

461. SHRI SAMBHAJI CHHATRAPATI: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether withdrawal of Haj subsidy by Government would hit the poor Muslims hard;

(b) if not, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has any plan to make Haj pilgrimage affordable for the poor; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI):

(a) to (d) Haj pilgrimage for the Indian Pilgrims is conducted either through Haj Committee of India (HCoI) or through the Haj Private Tour Operators (PTOs). Haj expenses are incurred on air travel of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, their accommodation and travel in Makkah and Madinah and other miscellaneous expenditure incidental to the Haj pilgrimage. Haj Committee of India, a Statutory body under the Ministry of Minority Affairs is responsible for making arrangements for air travel, accommodation and local transport of pilgrims in Saudi Arabia in coordination with Consulate General of India, Jeddah and M/o Civil Aviation. It works on the principle of No Profit No Loss and charges the pilgrims the actual amount to be incurred on their travel, accommodation and some misc. expenditure incidental to Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. Indian Haj pilgrims are provided quality facilities and services commensurate with the charges paid by them in conformity with the rules and regulations of Saudi Government. Air travel cost depends on the lowest price discovered for each embarkation point through competitive bidding in which several airlines of Saudi Arabia and India participate. To ensure that there is minimum financial burden on Haj pilgrims even after removal of Haj subsidy on air travel of the pilgrims, for Haj 2018 option has been given to the pilgrims to opt either for their basic embarkation point or the nearest economical embarkation point on the basis of actual airfare of Haj 2017.

Utilisation of buddhist quota for other minority communities in Maharashtra

462. SHRI MAJEED MEMON: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to increase the current quota of Merit-cum-Means Scholarship for students from minority communities pursuing professional and technical courses for the State of Maharashtra from 5797 students as per the recommendations of Government of Maharashtra, if so, the details thereof;