

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
DEPARTMENT FOR PROMOTION OF INDUSTRY AND INTERNAL TRADE
RAJYA SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2772.
TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, THE 19TH MARCH, 2021.**

INCONVENIENCE DUE TO HOLDING OF VCS IN PUBLIC HOURS

2772. SHRI IRANNA KADADI:

Will the Minister of **Commerce and Industry** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the difficulties/inconvenience being faced by the common people on regular basis due to very frequent video conferencing/virtual meetings (VCs) during public contact hours by the senior officers of the Ministry with subordinate offices, especially with officers of Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO);
- (b) if so, the reasons for holding such meetings during public contact hours; and
- (c) the remedial steps taken by Government to avoid holding such meetings during public contact hours?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(SHRI SOM PARKASH)**

- (a) to (c):** The Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation (PESO) is a subordinate organisation under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. PESO administers and ensures safety compliance under various acts such as the Explosive Act 1884, Petroleum Act 1934, Inflammable Substances Act, 1952 and rules made thereunder, in order to enforce safety regulations to safeguard the public from potential hazards, prevent accidents in hazardous premises, transportation, storage and handling activities.

During the pandemic of COVID 19, a well-planned and coordinated emergency response had become essential to effectively address issues arising out of the unprecedented situation. Considering the gravity and magnitude of challenges, the Government constituted the Empowered Groups of Officers to provide effective solutions by synchronizing efforts cutting across various Ministries/Departments. Travel restrictions were in place and therefore video conferencing/ virtual meetings (VCs) and reviews became the norm across Departments and Ministries of Government of India and State Governments for effective, coordinated response. As has been seen, VC has emerged as an effective way of review of work targets and ensured timely delivery of work outputs.

During this time, adequate production and supply of medical oxygen to the hospitals in the country also became a critical requirement for Covid management and was being monitored by the Empowered Group of Secretaries on a regular basis. Regular VCs enabled effective monitoring of production and stock of oxygen throughout the country, thereby ensuring availability of medical Oxygen in hospitals, logistical support, expediting installation of oxygen storage vessels in the hospitals, ensuring availability of oxygen cylinders in the market etc. In this context, PESO was able to demonstrate commendable work.

The weekly reviews with various organisations, including PESO, and stakeholder consultations over VCs is the new norm in a pandemic affected world, that improves efficiency of work, without incurring costs and disruptions caused due to frequent physical meetings that involve travel. Periodic VC-supported reviews are expected to continue to enhance good governance and reduce compliance burden on the stakeholders. As such, periodic VCs with PESO continue in order to regularly monitor oxygen manufacturing and supply, improve transformation of manual services to paperless licensing systems, introduce reforms to improve safety standards, reduce pendency of applications, etc.
