

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 399
ANSWERED ON- 28/11/2024

PASSPORT AND CONSULAR SERVICES FOR INDIAN TRAVELLERS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

399. SHRI R. GIRIRAJAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether Government has initiated any special passport and consular services for people travelling to foreign countries especially the Arab, UAE and Middle East, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the total number of persons from Tamil Nadu travelled to foreign countries especially the Arab, UAE and Middle East in the last five years;
- (c) the steps taken by Government to mitigate the problems faced by the Indians travelling and working in foreign countries; and
- (d) whether Government has taken steps to establish facilitation centres for providing services for Haj pilgrims from Tamil Nadu, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) The Government has a uniform procedure to provide Consular Services and for the issuance of passport to all the Indian citizens travelling to foreign countries irrespective of their place of travel.
- (b) State-wise data of Indians travelling to foreign countries is not available.
- (c) The Government has taken several steps to mitigate the problems faced by the Indians travelling and working in foreign countries through Indian Missions on priority basis. Grievances are responded through various channels like calls, walk-ins, e-mails, social media, 24x7 Helplines and Open Houses. As required, these issues are taken up with the employers and the

host government as the case may be, for requisite action. Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSKs) have been set up at Dubai, Sharjah, Riyadh, Jeddah and Kuala Lumpur to provide assistance to Indian workers abroad. Shelter homes for distressed Indian nationals have also been set up at some Missions/Posts. Mission officials visit immigration offices and labour camps to address the complaints of Indian workers. Financial assistance to distressed Indians, if necessary, is provided through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). During emergency or crisis situations, our Missions/Posts abroad pro-actively help distressed/stranded Indian nationals in terms of providing food, shelter, medicine and helping their return to India.

(d) The Government has implemented various measures to facilitate services for Haj pilgrims. Key components of these initiatives include administrative branch offices, located in Makkah and Madinah, which serve as centralized hubs designed to address the grievances of pilgrims. These offices act as a one-stop center, providing essential support and resolving issues efficiently. To further streamline operations, several functional desks are available 24/7, including the Coordination Desk, Building Welfare Desk, Haram Task Force Desk, and Haj Group Organiser's Desk. These desks are staffed 24/7 to ensure continuous assistance and smooth management of pilgrimage activities. In addition to physical support, digital resources such as the Haj Suvidha App have been launched to disseminate crucial information and address grievances, while toll-free numbers and 24/7 helplines are also in place to offer real-time assistance. To ensure comprehensive support, personnel from various sectors are deployed, including medical and administrative staff, as well as representatives from the Indian Consulate. State Haj Committees also contribute by sending officials, known as Khadim-ul-Hujjaj, to accompany pilgrims from their respective states, providing personalized assistance throughout the journey.

Medical facilities are a critical part of the support structure, with dedicated healthcare resources available in both Makkah and Madinah. In Makkah, there are hospitals with 40-bed, 30-bed, and female-exclusive 30-bed capacities, along with 14 branch dispensaries. In Madinah, a 20-bed dispensary and two additional branch dispensaries are available, while a dispensary is also set up at the Jeddah Haj Terminal for added convenience.

This comprehensive framework ensures efficient service delivery and support for Indian pilgrims throughout the Haj season.
