

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) Passport Offices and Passport Collection Centres are functional at Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nagpur and Aurangabad in the state of Maharashtra. The Passport Office at Pune and the Passport Collection Centre at Aurangabad have been opened in July 1998. There is no proposal yet to open any other Passport Office or Collection Centre in the state of Maharashtra as the need for the same is not felt at present.

(c) The number of applications received for issue of fresh passports and for renewal during the last three years by the Passport Offices in Maharashtra is given below:

Year	Fresh Passport	Renewal
1. Regional Passport Office, Mumbai		
1995	223397	44579
1996	241763	35086
1997	278507	38570
2. Passport Office, Nagpur		
1995	9510	3220
1996	12107	1726
1997	14171	1618
3. Passport Office, Thane (Opened in 1997)		
1997	8491	158

(d) Passports are normally issued within a period of 45 days. Where-ever delays occur, these are due to receipt of negative or incomplete reports from police authorities, discrepancies in documents submitted by the applicants, particularly in respect of applications received by post, lack of response from applicants who are asked to submit additional documents, etc.

(e) There is comparatively little backlog of applications pending at the Passport Offices in the State of Maharashtra. Among the measures taken to expedite processing of passport applications are: computerisation of processing procedures, improved coordination between passport issuing and police authorities, enhancing validity of passport to 20 years, provision for despatch of passport by speed post wherever practical, additional staff to clear the backlog of pending cases, etc.

#### **Clearance to Irrigation Projects**

6182. SHRI CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the irrigation projects such as Inchampalli, Srisailem Left-Canal, Sriram Sagar and other projects are being shelved by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for want of Central clearance; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Union Government to clear these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. Irrigation being a State subject, irrigation projects are executed by the State Governments as per their own priorities. Clearance of pending irrigation projects by the Union Government depends upon the compliance of observation of the various Central Appraising Agencies by the State Governments.

#### **Wind Energy Power Projects**

6183. SHRI C.P. RADHAKRISHNAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government plan to provide the infrastructure status for wind energy power projects in future:

(b) if so, the time by which it will come into effect; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) to (c) Projects for generation of power from wind energy are already covered under the category of infrastructure facility for which there are provisions under the Income Tax Act.

[Translation]

#### **Indian Fishermen in Pakistani Jails**

6184. SHRI SADASHIVRAO D. MANDLIK : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether many Indian fishermen are put in Pakistani jails for many years;

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for their release?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) According to available information, 254 Indian fishermen/crew members belonging to Gujarat and Daman & Diu are believed to be held in custody in Pakistan.

(c) Government are vigorously pursuing the matter relating to their release/repatriation with the Government of Pakistan. In order to secure the early release/repatriation of fishermen it has been conveyed to Pakistan that, in accordance with the understanding reached during the Foreign Secretary level talks in June 1997, Government are ready to hold immediate discussions to confirm/verify the fishermen held in each other's