

(d) the main features of the law likely to be enacted; and

(e) the time by which this is likely to be enacted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) (a) to (e) An Information Technology Bill is proposed to be introduced in the Parliament.

The salient features of the proposed Bill are as follows:-

- The Bill provides that, unless otherwise agreed, an acceptance of contract may be expressed by electronic means of communication and information shall not be denied legal effect, validity or enforceability solely on the ground that it is in the form of an electronic record.
- The Bill provides for use of electronic record signed with secure digital signature both in the Government, public and private. The offences of computer crime like unauthorised access to computer data network, tampering with computer source document etc. have also been defined in the Bill.
- The Bill proposes amendments in the existing Acts such as Indian Evidence Act, 1872; the Indian Penal Code, 1860; RBI Act and the Bankers Book Evidence Act, 1891.

[Translation]

### Gujral Doctrine

\*359. SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present Government is following the doctrines enunciated in the "Gujral Doctrine"; and

(b) if so, the extent to which the doctrine is followed?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) and (b) The 'Gujral Doctrine' was based on our well known and articulated objectives of foreign policy. It was basically an initiative aimed at emphasising India's role and policy in South Asia in a more friendly and cooperative mould and to be more accommodative to our neighbours in view of our size and resources. The 'Doctrine' was a continuation of our basic objectives and aims in foreign policy in reaction to the situation as obtained in our neighbourhood. We continue to seek friendly, good and neighbourly cooperation and mutually beneficial relations with all our neighbours.

[English]

### Passport Office

\*360. DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA :

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have prepared an action plan for the modernisation and expansion of existing passport offices/collection centres;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the new locations identified by the Government for opening passport offices and collection centres; and

(d) the time by which these offices are likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) to (d) It has been Government's constant endeavour to expand and modernise the network of passport offices and collection centres throughout the country keeping in mind the increasing demand for passport services and need to provide prompt and efficient service to the public.

2. 28 passport offices and 12 passport collection centres are currently functional all over the country. The opening of new passport offices is governed by certain criteria such as the location of existing offices, volume of applications from a particular region and regard to the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament for External Affairs that there must be at least 50,000 applications per annum from an area of a new passport office to be opened. Government has taken a decision in principle to open 10 more collection centres which would become operational as soon as requisite arrangements are in place in co-ordination with the concerned State Governments.

3. A list of the Passport Offices and collection centres currently existing as well as those collection centres proposed is given in the Statement enclosed.

4. Government has also undertaken to computerise the passport offices in a phased manner. Of the 28 passport offices, 15 located at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Chandigarh, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kozhikode, Lucknow, Mumbai, Trichy and Trivandrum have so far been computerised. A comprehensive computerisation programme is also being implemented which envisages installation of latest computer hardware and application software and satellite-based communication which would link all the 28 passport offices in

India to a Central Processing Cell to be established in New Delhi. This programme is expected to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the passport offices and improve the quality of services provided to passport applicants.

### Statement

#### Existing Passport Offices, Collection Centres and Proposed Collection Centres

##### Passport Offices

S.No.	Location of the Passport Office	Area of Jurisdiction
1	2	3
1	Ahmedabad	The State of Gujarat & Union Territory of Diu
2	Bangalore	The State of Karnataka
3	Bareilly	31 districts of U. P.
4	Bhopal	The State of Madhya Pradesh
5	Bhubaneshwar	The State of Orissa
6	Calcutta	The State of West Bengal, Sikkim and Tripura
7	Chandigarh	11 districts of Punjab, 14 districts of Haryana, State of Himachal Pradesh and U. T. of Chandigarh
8	Chennai	14 districts of Tamil Nadu and U.T. of Pondicherry
9	Cochin	5 districts of Kerala and U.T. of Lakshadweep
10	Delhi	N.C.T. of Delhi and 5 districts of Haryana
11	Ghaziabad	4 districts of U.P.
12	Guwahati	The States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur
13	Hyderabad	18 districts of Andhra Pradesh
14	Jaipur	The State of Rajasthan
15	Jalandhar	6 districts of Punjab
16	Jammu	6 districts of Jammu & Kashmir
17	Kozhikode	6 districts of Kerala
18	Lucknow	36 districts of U.P.

1	2	3
19	Mumbai	6 districts of Maharashtra and the U.T. of Daman and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
20	Nagpur	14 districts of Maharashtra
21	Panaji	The State of Goa
22	Patna	The State of Bihar
23	Pune	6 districts of Maharashtra
24	Srinagar	8 districts of Jammu & Kashmir
25	Thane	5 districts of Maharashtra
26	Trichy	15 districts of Tamil Nadu
27	Trivandrum	3 districts of Kerala
28	Vishakhapatnam	5 districts of Andhra Pradesh

##### Existing Collection Centres

S. No.	Location of the Centre	State
1	Agartala	Tripura
2	Aizawl	Mizoram
3	Amritsar	Punjab
4	Aurangabad	Maharashtra
5	Dardhanga	Bihar
6	Imphal	Manipur
7	Kohima	Nagaland
8	Madurai	Tamil Nadu
9	Mangalore	Karnataka
10	Ranchi	Bihar
11	Shillong	Meghalaya
12	Shimla	Himachal Pradesh

##### Proposed Collection Centres

S. No.	Location of the Centre	State
1	2	3
1	Agra	Uttar Pradesh
2	Allahabad	Uttar Pradesh
3	Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu
4	Gulbarga	Karnataka

1	2	3
5	Gurgaon	Haryana
6	Itanagar	Arunachal Pradesh
7	Pondicherry	UT of Pondicherry
8	Surat	Gujarat
9	Tirupati	Andhra Pradesh
10	Vijayawada	Andhra Pradesh

#### Commuted Pension

3863. SHRI AJAY KUMAR S. SARNAIK : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have not accepted the recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission to restore the commuted pension after 12 years instead of 15 years;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to review this recommendation; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The V Pay Commission on commutation of pensions recommended an increase in the commutation limit from 1/3rd to 40% and restoration of commuted pension after 12 years. The Government accepted enhancing the commutation limit but maintained status quo regarding restoration period as no decision had been taken on retirement age. With enhancement of retirement from 58 to 60 years, the Government would study the implications and take appropriate decision.

#### National Planning

3864. SHRI BASUDEV ACHARIA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether nation's planning has been failed to solve the problem of safe drinking water, elementary education, health, poverty eradication even after 50 years of independence;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to solve the problems on priority basis:

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) 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) and (b) In the last fifty years, there has been considerable improvement in all the sectors, even though the spread of benefits has been constrained by a faster growing population. The incidence of rural poverty has declined from 56% in 1973-74 to 37 per cent in 1993-94 as per the official estimates of poverty. Near self sufficiency in food production has been achieved. The literacy rate has increased from 18.33% in 1950-51 to 52.2% in 1990-91. The Crude Death Rate (CDR) has declined from 25.1 in 1951 to 8.9 in 1996. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined from 146 in 1951 to 72 in 1996, life expectancy rose from 32 years in 1947 to 61.1 years in 1991-96. National programme for combating major public health problems were evolved and implemented.

(c) to (e) Poverty alleviation and improvement of basic amenities received special attention in Plans. In 1996, the Basic Minimum Services (BMS) programme was launched for attainment of certain objectives within a specified time frame in seven specified areas including safe drinking water and health services. During the current year, Planning Commission has prepared Special Action Plans (SAPs) to be given emphasis in the Ninth Five Year Plan in five areas viz. (i) Food and Agriculture; (ii) Physical Infrastructure; (iii) Health, Education, Housing and Drinking Water; (iv) Information Technology; and (v) Water Resources Policy. Well specified targets with fixed time frames have been laid down for these sectors.

#### Kuwait Returnees

3865. SHRI RUPCHAND MURMU : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of claims of people for handing over the belongings of deceased Indian nationals abroad are not handed over to the claimants in time;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether such claims are not settled even though the belongings have been sent to Consular Division of Ministry of External Affairs by our Embassies abroad; and

(d) the details of above claims in so far as the claims relate to the belongings sent from our Embassy in Kuwait for the year 1995 and onwards?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) and (b) Government is not aware of a large number of pending cases. The normal practice is for the belongings