

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4325
ANSWERED ON:21.04.2010
HIGH TECH PASSPORTS
Shanavas Shri M. I.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is planning to introduce high-tech passports, with an electronic chip inlaid on their front cover;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether there will be an increase in the passport fee subsequently;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to make available such passports at a fee which is affordable to people with lower income; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) & (b): In accordance with the ICAO guidelines to incorporate biometrics data in the Machine Readable Travel Documents, India has decided to upgrade its existing passports to electronic category i.e. e-passports. Accordingly a pilot project for issue of e-passports in the category of Official and Diplomatic e-passports was launched on 25th June 2008. Based on the experience gained through the pilot phase of issuance of e-passports in the diplomatic and official categories, the issuance of e-passports in the ordinary category has been taken up by the Government. The e-passports have an embedded electronic contact-less chip containing relevant data about the passport holder.

(c) to (f): Since the e-passports have enhanced security features, the cost is likely to be higher than that of the existing ones. However, the fees to be paid by the applicants for issue of the e-passports will be determined only after all input costs are assessed.