

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3827

ANSWERED ON:20.03.2013

PASSPORT SERVICES

Kumar Shri P.;Nirupam Shri Sanjay Brijkishorilal ;Sivasami Shri C.;Thamaraiselvan Shri R.;Venugopal Shri P.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether passport service is being handled on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) basis;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the terms and conditions for the purpose;
- (c) whether the Government is considering not to renew the PPP mode once its term is over and bring back the services fully under its own control and if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether there have been complaints from the general public about the efficiency of the private service provider; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken /being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR)

(a) & (b)

(i) Despite constant improvements in the Passport Issuance System and liberalized measures to make the system more transparent over the years and due to the rapid increase in the number of passport seekers besides increasing expectations from citizens vis-à-vis delivery of services to the citizens by the Govt, it was realized that it would not be possible to meet the demand without revamping the system. Keeping this in mind, the Ministry embarked on an ambitious e-governance initiative as part of National e-Governance Plan - the Passport Seva Project (PSP) - a Mission Mode Project which aims "to deliver all Passport-related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner & in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and committed, trained & motivated workforce".

(ii) As a first step in designing the PSP, MEA engaged the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) for studying the existing system of Passport issuance in India and the global best practices and for making suitable recommendations on establishing a redesigned system that could fulfill the above objective.

(iii) On receipt of a detailed report from NISG, the MEA obtained approval of the Union Cabinet on 6th September 2007, inter alia to

- (i) outsourcing of delivering front-end passport services,
- (ii) establishing 77 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) across the country,

(iii) creating a centralized IT system linking all PSK's, RPO/POs's, Police and Postal Department and

(iv) permitting the private partner to levy a Service Charge for each service.

(iv) Following a two bid process, M/s. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) were selected as Service Provider in May 2008 for implementation of Passport Seva Project. A Master Service Agreement (MSA) was signed by the MEA with TCS on 13th October 2008. TCS would recover its cost through Service Charge per passport based on volumes and subject to 27 stringent service delivery levels. These service delivery levels encompass various parameters such as external and internal efficiency; external, internal and technical effectiveness; environment and ambience and customer relations. The achievement and sustenance of these service levels requires a holistic approach to service delivery and optimization across technology, business process and people on a continuous basis. This IT driven Project is run with over 3,000 persons deployed from the private Service Provider and 2,500 officials from the MEA. The Project runs on the Build-Own-Operate- Transfer model wherein the initial investments are by the private partner. There is minimal investment from the Government.

(v) The MSA includes clauses relating to governance schedule, use and control of PSKs, security and safety, terms of payment, taxation, breach, rectification and termination, protection and limitations, data protection, confidentiality, audit, access and reporting, intellectual property, trademarks/publicity, severability & waiver, dispute resolution, change control, exit management and terms of payment. The responsibilities of Service Provider include the following :

- a. All hardware, software, networking & PCs of the entire Passport system as specified in the RFP and the MSA.
- b. Physical Infrastructure for all PSKs including interiors thereof, as specified in the RFP.

- c. Data Centre (DC), Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) and Central Passport Printing Facility (CPPF) setup
- d. Maintenance and operations of all the above
- e. Staff for all private counters at PSKs
- f. Technical staff for supporting PSK, PO, DC, DRC, CPPF
- g. Training on the application software, training on general computer skills, soft skills, and customer service & delivery
- h. Change management and communication strategy & implementation
- i. Obtaining ISO (9001, 27001, 20000) certifications for the Passport System
- j. Compliance with the Service Level Agreements (SLAs)
- k. Call Centre & grievance handling.

(vi) The pilot project was launched at four PSKs in Karnataka in May 2010. Subsequently, three more pilot PSKs were launched in Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Ambala in August 2010. Following requisite certification by the Third Party Audit Agency - Standards, Testing & Quality Certification (STQC), an organisation under the Department of Information Technology - in January 2011, a roll-out plan was firm up jointly by the Ministry and the Service Provider – the TCS. By 14th June, 2012 all the 77 PSKs were set up and operationalised in the country. The STQC has issued Compliance Verification Report in mid-June 2012 and Operation & Maintenance Phase of the Project has since commenced for six years from the date of Go-Live i.e. up to 11th June 2018 as per terms of the MSA. As on 28th February, 2013, 71.7 lakh passports were issued and 3.6 lakh miscellaneous passport services were rendered under the new system.

(vii) Only front-end activities, such as token issuance, initial scrutiny of the application forms, acceptance of fee, scanning of the documents, taking photos and biometrics are performed by the Service Provider's staff. The sovereign and fiduciary functions such as verification of documents, police verification, decision on grant of passports, revocation, impounding of passports, printing and dispatch of passports, are performed by the Govt personnel.

(viii) The entire process is online and streamlined including interface with the Indian police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. Status of applications can be tracked through the Passport Portal www.passportindia.gov.in. For assistance one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800. Applicants' presence in person at the PSK enables the Passport Issuing Authority to capture their photograph and fingerprints to prevent the incidence of impersonation. The applicants also get full opportunity to see and affirm their personal particulars to be entered in the passport to avoid unnecessary correspondence later. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 call centre has been set up to provide requisite information to citizens in 17 vernacular languages. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched.

(ix) The benefits of the Project to the citizens are service provisioning within defined service levels, closer and larger number of access points for services, availability of a portfolio of on-line services with real-time status tracking, an effective system of grievance redressal and strict adherence to 'First-In-First Out' principle in rendering of services. The number of public dealing counters has been increased from the erstwhile 350 to 1610 in the new system and public dealing hours have gone up from 4 hours to 7 hours a day.

(c) The Agreement with TCS to operate and maintain the Passport Seva System is valid till 11th June 2018 with provision for its renewal for further two years. The Government, therefore, is in no position at present to indicate any future course of action as regards renewal or cancellation of the Agreement.

(d) & (e) A Project of this magnitude where nearly 30,000 passport applications are processed daily by the personnel manning the PSKs and many more thousand citizens are attended to by Call Centres, cannot be without operational relations challenges. In terms of the MSA, TCS is bound to provide services in compliance with 27 stringent Service Level Agreements. A Grievance Redressal mechanism is in place as part of the Programme Governance Structure. Whenever a complaint is received, it is redressed forthwith in consultation with the Heads of PSKs, RPOs and TCS. The Government has clearly delineated the role of TCS staff in the System for its smooth functioning. TCS has also been conducting training and orientation programmes from time to time to inculcate good work ethics in the staff. The Government is also working on a set of instructions for the CPO and TCS personnel besides standardization of documents required for processing passport applications to minimize complaints in this regard and to improve service delivery.