

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:237

ANSWERED ON:22.07.2015

Issue of Passports

Nayak Shri B.V.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the system of issuance of passports has been revised in the recent past and if so, the time-frame laid down for the issue of passports as of now;
- (b) the redressal mechanisms in place for complaints and grievances under the system;
- (c) whether steps are taken to streamline the functioning of the extended network of 77 Passport Seva Kendras and 16 Passport Seva Laghu Kendras; and
- (d) whether cases of irregularities and delay in obtaining passports continue to be received and if so, the action taken in this regard ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) Under the Passport Seva System, the Government has endeavoured to streamline passport services, including processing time taken in acceptance, issuance and dispatch of passports. Under this System, the Government has envisaged the following 'desired service levels' excluding the day of submission of passport application:

- (i) 3 working days in case of normal passports in 'No' or 'Post-Police verification' cases;
- (ii) 3 working days plus the time taken for police verification in fresh passport cases requiring 'Pre-Police verification' and
- (iii) one working day in case of Tatkaal passports subject to production of requisite documents.

(b) (i) Under the Passport Seva Project (PSP), the Government has put in place a strengthened Grievance Redressal system whereby a National Call Centre with a toll free number (1800-258-1800), operating in 17 languages and on 24X7 basis, has been set up to cater to dissemination of information and handling of grievances. Also an e-mail based help desk has been set up which can be accessed by citizens through the www.passportindia.gov.in portal.

(ii) There is a Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC) established in the CPV Division of the Ministry under the supervision of the Joint Secretary (Passport Seva Project) & Chief Passport Officer. The Cell deals with grievances received through telephone, e-mail and post, as also references from various Government Offices such as President's Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Central Vigilance Commission and Parliament Secretariat.

(iii) All the Passport Offices handle public grievances through the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) website of the Government. Information and Facilitation Counters, Public Grievance Cell and Help Desks have been set up in Passport Offices to assist applicants and to attend to grievances/complaints expeditiously. The complaint/suggestion boxes are also installed at Passport Offices and Passport Seva Kendras. Passport Adalats, on need basis, are also conducted by Passport Offices to redress passport service grievances by dealing with citizens directly.

(iv) To understand the citizen sentiments and to receive the feedback emanating from social media, especially generation-Y, Passport Seva program has a provision to capture inputs from Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Youtube. Every Passport Office and the HQs of the Ministry (CPV Division) has Twitter/Facebook handler's account and grievances are attended to regularly through these means as well.

(c) The following steps have been taken to streamline the functioning of the extended network of 77 Passport Seva Kendras (all operational) and 18 additional Passport Seva Laghu Kendras, now known as Passport Seva Kendras, (five of these have been made operational) as part of the Passport Seva Project (PSP), a Mission Mode Project, implemented by the Government with a view to comprehensively overhaul passport issuance system:

(i) Provision of modern features such as: (a) Increased network and capacity (b) anywhere, anytime access by anyone (c) state-of-the-art infrastructure (d) a 24 x 7 National Call Centre and e-mail based helpdesk (e) integration of PSP network with Police and India Post and (f) a toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched.

(ii) The online appointment system has been introduced to minimize waiting time for applicants. Appointments are allotted according to handling capacity of PSKs and are based on electronic queue management system. 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.

(iii) The Government has (a) introduced online payment of passport fees or optionally through SBI Challans at the time of filing the application; (b) upgraded Passport Portal to make it more user-friendly; (c) launched mPassport Seva app. A premium optional paid

SMS service is also available.

(iv) The facilities and amenities at the PSKs, include photocopying, food and beverage facilities, public phone booth, information kiosks, baby care room, newspapers and magazines and television. All the PSKs are air-conditioned. The Electronic Queue Management System ensures the 'first-in-first-out' principle in application processing.

(v) In order to speed up passport issuance, Walk-in facility has been allowed for certain categories of services/ citizens having Application Registration Number (ARN) to enable them to apply for Tatkaal services; issue of Police Clearance Certificate (PCC); deletion of Emigration Check Required (ECR) status; inclusion of name of spouse in passport and new booklets where pages have been exhausted. Senior citizens (above 60 years); minors below 15 whose parents hold valid passports; differently-abled persons; central/state government servants and their spouse/dependent minor children, have also been permitted walk-in facility.

(vi) With a view to address the challenge of digital divide, especially in the rural hinterland, the Ministry in association with CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd. (which is promoted by the Department of Electronics and IT), has facilitated online filing of passport applications, through the vast network of over one lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs) across rural hinterland. Effective technical infrastructure is in place to ensure that the Passport Seva system is available for access at all times from any location.

(d) I. The Government is aware that in some cases, there is delay and irregularity in issuance of passport. The process for Passport issuance sometimes becomes longer due to:

(i) Delays in receipt of police verification reports within the stipulated time of 21 days;

(ii) Receipt of incomplete police reports;

(iii) Increase in demand for passport to the tune of 30% in the last three years; and

(iv) Shortage of manpower in the Central Passport Organization, to deal with the increasing demand for services for meeting the "desired service levels".

II. As regards delay in passport issuance, the Government has taken several corrective steps. As police verification of personal particulars and antecedents of applicants is critical to Passport issuance, Passport Offices keep in touch with Police to expedite Police Verification reports (PVRs). The efforts have shown results as PVRs in Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana and Telangana are now being received within 3 weeks. As on 1st July, 2015, out of 728 total police districts in the country, 654 districts have moved to the preferred DPHQ model.

III. Passport Offices conduct Passport Melas at PSKs on weekends from time to time for meeting high demand of passports.

IV. In order to provide closer and speedier passport services to people located far away from PSKs, Passport Seva Camps are being organized at various locations in the country.

V. The Ministry has circulated a detailed compilation of instructions for the guidance of Central Passport Organisation (CPO) officials as well as the staff of the Service Provider to speed up acceptance of documents and processing of passport applications, to avoid irregularities in issuance of passports.

VI. Inspections of PSKs and Passport Offices are conducted from time to time to improve service delivery.

VII. Steps have also been taken to fill up the existing vacancies by recruitment through the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), fast-track promotion and deputation, wherever applicable. Pending filling up of vacancies on regular basis, the Ministry has engaged about 450 Data Entry Operators in the Passport Offices against vacant non-gazetted posts. About 10 retired CPO officials have also been engaged in various Passport Offices as Consultants on contractual basis to mitigate shortage of staff.

VIII. In order to enhance the output and speed up passport issuance, the Government has implemented Productivity Linked Incentive Scheme (PLIS) to incentivise better performers. The Government has also instituted a system of awards to outstanding employees to recognise their efforts and contribution to good service delivery.
