

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:301

ANSWERED ON:22.07.2015

Problems in Getting Passport

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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a large number of applicants seeking passport/renewal of passports are unable to use online method as often server goes down and the process of giving information is complex;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto and the reason behind the said problem;
- (c) the efforts made by the Government for simplifying the said process so that Indian nationals can easily get their passport prepared; and
- (d) the extent of success achieved in this regard as a result of the said efforts?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) (i) It would be incorrect to say that a large number of applicants seeking passport services are unable to use online method as often server goes down and the process of giving information is complex. Effective technical infrastructure is in place to ensure that the Passport Seva system is available for access at all times from any location. The Passport Portal (www.passportindia.gov.in) is accessible to anyone, anywhere and anytime. 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. Under the Passport Seva Project, a robust information system has been created to offer a bouquet of online passport services.

(ii) Comprehensive information relating to passport application procedure, requirement of supporting documents, applicable fees, location of Passport Offices, Passport Seva Kendras, police station jurisdiction is posted on the Portal to make it user-friendly. It is kept updated with Advisories/Notices and Press Releases relating to Passport services developments. Status of applications can be tracked through the Passport Portal.

(iii) An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 National Call Centre has been set up to provide requisite information to citizens.

(iv) The Passport Seva system sends four free of cost SMS to applicants - (i) at the time of dispatch of passport, (ii) in 'returned undelivered' passport cases, (iii) rejection of request for counter delivery cases and (iv) clear Police Verification(PV) report in pre-PV PCC cases or review of PV and clearance by the PIA. In addition, a premium optional SMS Service, on nominal payment basis, has been made available to enable citizens to receive alerts and updates regarding detailed progress of their passport applications and pending actions. The service can be availed from any mobile phone.

(v) mPassport Seva mobile app provides passport related information including PSK locator, applicable fees, mode of submission and tracking of passport application status on smart phones.

(vi) For assistance, citizens can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800.

(vii) The Passport system has interface with the police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports.

(c) The following additional steps have been taken by the Government to further simplify the mechanism of issuing passports:--

I. Police Verification: Police Verification of applicants' particulars plays an important role in timely dispatch of passports. The Ministry as well as the Passport Offices continue to engage closely with the Police Departments across States/Union Territories and with concerned Home Departments to reduce time taken in police verification.

II. The Government has set up 77 PSKs across the country. 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. Greater outreach: The Government is working on setting up 18 more PSKs in addition to the existing functional 77 PSKs across the country. Five of these additional have already been operationalised.

IV. 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.

V. With a view to meet heavy and seasonal demand for passport services, Passport Melas are organized on weekends from time to time by Passport Offices.

VI. Passport Seva Camps: 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.

VII. Passport Adalats, on need basis, are also conducted by Passport Offices to redress passport service grievances by dealing with citizens directly.

VIII. Simplification of procedure: A number of steps have been taken to simplify passport application submission procedure such as acceptance of (a) registered rent agreement as proof of address, (b) self-attested documents replacing the requirement of attestation by gazetted officers, (c) Photo passbooks issued by Scheduled private sector Indian banks and Regional Rural banks also as proof of address and identity. The Government has also liberalised the requirement of acceptance of Birth Certificate of abandoned/orphaned children besides the requirement of NOC by Govt. officials for passport applications.

(d) The online system and establishment of PSKs have facilitated better accountability, transparency and streamlining of passport service delivery. This has also helped in issuing error-free and more secure passports. The time taken in issuing passports has decreased since the introduction of online application system and opening of PSKs. During the period January-June, 2015, 90% passports were issued within 14 days (excluding the time taken for verification) compared to 59% during January-June, 2014.
