

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2894

ANSWERED ON:30.07.2014

DELAY IN PASSPORT ISSUANCE

Ajmal Maulana Badruddin;Kachhadia Shri Naranbhai;Kodikunnil Shri Suresh;Maadam Smt. Poonamben Hematbhai;Mahto Dr. Banshilal;Meinya Dr. Thokchom;Mullappally Shri Ramachandran;Patil Shri Bheemrao Baswanthrao;Raju Shri Gokaraju Ganga;Reddy Shri Mekapati Rajamohan;Sampath Shri Anirudhan;Venkatesh Babu Shri T.G.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether cases of inordinate delay in issuance of new passports and renewal of old ones have come to the notice of the Government, if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor along with the corrective steps taken thereon;
- (b) whether shortage of passport booklets have created huge backlog of applications and if so, the facts thereof along with the action taken to address the issue;
- (c) whether the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) approach adopted by the Government in passport services has achieved the desired results, if so, the details thereof, if not, the reasons therefor along with the proposal, if any, to bring these services back within the Government fold;
- (d) whether cases of malpractices by touts/travel agencies in procuring passports have come to the notice of the Government and if so, the details thereof, State/UT-wise; and
- (e) the stringent action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard along with the steps taken/proposed to be taken to make the passport issuance system more transparent and timely?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD))

(a) The time taken for issue of passports has been progressively reduced in recent years. The process for Passport issuance sometimes becomes longer due to:

- (i) Late receipt of police verification reports beyond the stipulated time of 21 days;
- (ii) Receipt of incomplete police reports;
- (iii) Increase in demand for passport to the tune of 15% in a year; and
- (iv) Shortage of manpower in the Central Passport Organization, to deal with the increasing demand for passport services. The Government has taken several corrective steps to reduce delay in passport issuance. 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. Passport Offices conduct Passport Melas at PSKs on weekends from time to time for meeting high demand of passports. Passport Adalats, on need basis, are also conducted by Passport Offices to redress passport service grievances by dealing with citizens directly. Inspections of PSKs and Passport Offices are conducted from time to time to improve service delivery. Steps have also been taken to fill up the existing vacancies by recruitment through the Staff Selection Commission, fast-track promotion and deputation, wherever applicable. The Government has recently invited applications from suitable candidates to fill up the vacant posts through deputation at the level of Passport Officer, Deputy Passport Officer and Assistant Passport Officer. An indent to fill up vacant posts of Lower Division Clerk has already been placed with the Staff Selection Commission. Pending filling up of vacancies on regular basis, the Ministry has engaged upto 450 Data Entry Operators in the Passport Offices against vacant non-gazetted posts.

(b) Delay and interruption in supply of passport booklets by the manufacturer, the India Security Press (ISP), Nashik, has caused some backlog in passport issuance. It has been impressed upon them to speed up supplies and to maintain strategic reserve in future to avoid shortage in future. The supplies from ISP Nashik at requisite level will be restored by August, 2014.

(c)

(i) The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) approach adopted by the Government has, in fact, resulted in speedier passport service delivery, better accountability, transparency and error-free issuance of passports. At the Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) which are headed by a Government officer, only front-end activities, such as token issuance, initial scrutiny of the application forms, digitization of documents, taking photographs and biometrics are performed by the Service Provider's staff. The core and sovereign functions such as verification of supporting documents, police verification, decision on grant of passports, revocation and impounding of passports, are performed by the Government personnel.

(ii) The Passport Portal (www.passportindia.gov.in) is accessible to anyone, anywhere and anytime. The applicants apply for passport services online, pay Passport Fee also through the Portal and visit the PSK at the appointed date and time. Approximately, one lakh

internet enabled Common Services Centres

(CSCs) in rural areas have been authorized to facilitate online passport application service to citizens at a nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100/-. The objective behind receiving applicants with prior appointment is to reduce waiting time to the minimum.

(iii) Applicants` presence in person at the PSK enables the Passport Issuing Authority to obtain their photograph and fingerprints to prevent the incidence of impersonation.

(iv) The Passport system has interface with the police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. Status of applications can also be tracked through the Passport Portal. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 National Call Centre has been set up to provide requisite information to citizens. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched. 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. An mPassport Seva app is also available to provide passport service related information including tracking of passport application status. For assistance one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800.

(d) & (e) There have been some cases of malpractices by touts/travel agencies. All the Passport Offices have been directed to approach the local police for conducting raids around PSKs/RPOs for nabbing touts operating in the area. The instructions have been reiterated on 17th April, 2014. The RPOs have written to the concerned police officials to conduct raids to eliminate activities of touts. The Passport Portal also carries advisory cautioning the public not to fall prey to machinations of touts who promise speedy service. An advisory has also been posted on the Passport Portal cautioning against dealing with dubious and fraudulent websites claiming `authorisation/recognition` by the Government. The mandatory requirement of personal presence of passport applicants at the PSKs has minimized the activities of touts/travel agencies. The applicants also get full opportunity to see and affirm their personal particulars to be entered in the passport to avoid unnecessary correspondence later. This has made the system more transparent and speeded up passport delivery.