

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1740
ANSWERED ON:03.12.2014
PASSPORT ISSUANCE PROCEDURE
Kataria Shri Rattan Lal

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken any steps for making the process of getting passport transparent and easy;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is also trying to ensure to make the passport issuing process foolproof so that no anti-national element can misuse it and if so, the steps taken in this direction;
- (d) whether a racket of middlemen involved in making passports on fake address has been allegedly exposed recently;
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken against those found guilty;
- (f) whether any scheme is pending with the Government with regard to providing exemption to children, Government officers and old people from police verification while acquiring passport; and
- (g) if so, the details thereof and the status of the proposal at present?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) With a view to make the process of getting passport transparent and easy, the Government has implemented Passport Seva Project (PSP) as detailed below :-

i. Seventy seven Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) have been set up and operationalised as extended arms of the existing 37 Passport Offices across the country. A list is annexed.

ii. The Passport Portal, www.passportindia.gov.in, is web-based and can be accessed by anyone, anytime and anywhere. The citizens are free to apply online and obtain appointments themselves or seek the assistance of anyone else to obtain appointments. The applicants are required to log on to the Passport Portal; create their user ID and assign a password; fill & submit the application form online or download the e-form, fill & upload the same at the portal (applicants may scan and upload supporting documents, if they so desire); schedule an appointment after making payment of passport fee online through debit/credit card or State Bank of India (SBI) net-banking or SBI Challan; and along with a print-out of Appointment Slip/Challan, original documents and photocopies, visit the concerned PSK for submission of application.

iii. The online appointment system has been introduced to minimize waiting time for applicants. Appointments are allotted by the computerised system as per handling capacity of the PSK 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.

iv. The entire process is online and streamlined including interface with the 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 website or through mPassport Seva. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 National Call Centre has been set up to provide requisite information to citizens in 17 languages. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched. For assistance, one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800.

v. With a view to address the challenge of digital divide in the country, especially in the rural hinterland, the Government in association with M/s. CSC e-Governance Services India Limited {which is promoted by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY)}, has facilitated online filing of passport applications, through the vast network of over one lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs). The CSCs facilitate filling and uploading of Passport application form, payment of applicable fee and scheduling of appointment for visit to the PSK, at nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100/-. As per the appointment schedule, the applicants visit the PSK for completion of application submission process. The services through CSCs are available throughout the week, including during the weekend.

vi. 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. This ensures transparency and error-free issuance of passports.

vii. Walk-in facility has also been allowed to citizens having Application Registration Number (ARN) to enable them to apply for Tatkaal service, issue of Police Clearance Certificate (PCC), deletion of Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) status, inclusion of name of spouse in the passport and issue of new booklets where pages have been exhausted. Senior citizens above 60 years, minors below 15 years whose parents hold valid passports, differently-abled persons, Central/State government employees and their spouse/dependent minor children having ARN have also been permitted walk-in facility.

viii. Amenities in every PSK include photocopying, food and beverage, public phone booth, baby care room, newspapers and television in a comfortable air-conditioned environment while the applicants obtain passport services.

ix. The Project is supported by state-of-the-art technology infrastructure which enables end-to-end passport services to be delivered with enhanced security. A complex algorithm has been built in to highlight cases of possible duplication and suppression of information by the applicant.

x. Security has been given special attention in the Project. The accountability of the employees as well as the Service Provider's personnel, in respect of any task performed in the PSP system, is ensured through three-level authentication comprising Biometric log-in, User ID/Password and Digital Signatures.

xi. The PSP system also has the potential of integration with other e-governance initiatives of the Government.

xii. 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.

xiii. 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.

xiv. In order to provide closer and speedier passport services to people located far away from PSKs, Passport Seva Camps are organised at various locations.

xv. Aadhaar Card and registered rent agreement are also now accepted as proof of address. It has also been decided w.e.f. 1st August, 2014 to do away with ink signatures on passports and replace these with stamped signatures to save time on issuance of passports. The Government has also introduced the system of self-attestation of documents replacing the requirement of attestation by gazetted officers.

xvi. A Productivity Linked Incentive Scheme has been implemented with the aim of increasing productivity of the Central Passport Organisation officials.

(c) (i) As per Government instructions, passports to Indian citizens are issued as per the provisions of the Passports Act 1967 and the Passport Rules 1980 as amended from time to time. Prior to issuing a passport, the Passport Issuing Authority establishes the applicant's citizenship, identity and the absence of criminal record as mandated by the Passports Act. This requires verification of personal particulars of applicants and background check of their criminal antecedents. Thus, the Government takes appropriate safeguards, so that passports are not issued to anti-national or undesirable elements.

(ii) The passports under the normal category where the police verification report is required are issued only after receipt of clear police verification report. The cases in which the fresh passport applications are submitted with verification certificates or re-issue cases with or without verification certificate, are issued on post-police verification basis subject to 'no adverse' information found in the system during the processing of the applications. Where the passports are issued on post-police verification basis, the genuineness of verification certificates are checked through telephone, fax and e-mail before issuance of passport. In case of receipt of non-genuineness of verification certificate or adverse police verification report afterwards, a show cause notice is issued to the applicant. In case of non-receipt of reply from the applicant within the prescribed time limit, the passport is impounded/revoked under the Passports Act 1967 and with intimation to the all check posts/immigration authorities.

(d) & (e) Some cases of passport applications submitted along with fake supporting documents including that of address have come to the notice of the Ministry a few months ago. In these cases, the applicants had submitted fake 'Identity certificate' of a nationalized bank along with fake address proof such as Voter ID cards. The matter was immediately taken up with the concerned law enforcement authorities. All the passports obtained on the basis of fake documents, have been revoked. The matter, including the role of middlemen is under investigation by local police.

(f) & (g) As per the extant provisions, exemption from police verification is available to (i) Government officers, subject to production of Identity Certificate issued by their respective offices and (ii) children up to the age of 18 years. Senior citizens aged 65 years and above, are issued passports on post-police verification provided one of their children has a valid Indian Passport. No scheme for further exemptions to the above 3 categories is pending with the Government.