

(d) whether there is great delay in issue of passport; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government for speedy disposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) to (e) The opening of new passport offices is governed by certain criteria such as the location of existing passport offices, volume of applications from a particular region and recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament for External Affairs that there must be at least 50,000 applications per annum from an area for a new passport office to be opened.

At present, 27 passport offices and 10 passport collection centres are functional all over the country. A passport office at Pune is to be opened shortly. Government has not received any request from any State Government for opening additional passport offices. In fact, Government took the initiative to write to all North-Eastern States with the request to help open Collection Centres in these States.

Government is constantly endeavouring to improve and streamline the existing passport issuing system to ensure that no delays take place. A number of measures have been taken recently to facilitate early issue of passports which, *inter alia*, are computerisation of procedures for receipt and processing of applications despatch of passports by Speed Post in select cities, automatic reissue in the case of expired passports without prior police verification, increasing the validity period of passports to 20 years, opening new Passport Offices and Collection Centres and augmentation of staff strength in the various passport offices.

#### Ravi Beas Water Dispute

\* 121. SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether an agreement was signed by the Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana on December 31st, 1981 for distribution of surplus Ravi Beas Waters;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether this matter has been referred by the Union Government to the Eradi Tribunal for clarification;

(d) if so, whether the meetings of this Tribunal have not taken place for so many years which caused great suffering to the State of Rajasthan;

(e) whether the Union Government are contemplating to implement the decision taken in the inter State meeting held on 29-30 July, and 6 August, 1992; and

(f) if so, the time by which it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

An agreement was signed on December 31, 1981 between the Hon'ble Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan in the presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, allocating the surplus waters of Ravi-Beas system amounting to 21.19 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM) among the three states of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan at 5.21 BCM, 4.32 BCM, 10.61 BCM respectively and on fixed share basis to the State of J&K and Delhi Water Supply at 0.80 BCM and 0.25 BCM respectively, with a provision for variation in case of change. It was also agreed that since Rajasthan was not in a position to utilise its full share, Punjab shall be free to utilise the water surplus to Rajasthan requirement. It was also agreed that the Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal project shall be implemented in a time bound manner so far as the canal and its apurtenant works in Punjab territory are concerned, within a period of 2 years from the date of this agreement so that Haryana is enabled to draw its allocated share of water.

(c) and (d) Ravi and Beas Waters Tribunal headed by Hon'ble Justice Eradi was set up by Central Government on 2.4.1986 and referred the following two matters for verification and adjudication by the Tribunal :

- (1) The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan will continue to get water not less than what they were using from the Ravi-Beas system as on 1.7.1985. Water used for consumptive purposes will also remain unaffected. Quantum of usage claimed shall be verified by the Tribunal.
- (2) The claim of Punjab and Haryana regarding the shares in their remaining waters will be adjudicated by the Tribunal.

The Tribunal gave its interim report in January, 1987. The Tribunal restarted its hearing on further references for clarifications in September, 1987 and continued its hearings upto October, 1988. The Tribunal remained dormant from October, 1988 to June, 1997 for various reasons including prevailing situation in Punjab and resignation of one of the members of the Tribunal on 9.3.1989. Further hearings of the Tribunal have again started with effect from 5.7.97. However, Bhakra Beas Management Board is regulating releases of surplus Ravi Beas Waters to Rajasthan and concerned States on *ad-hoc* basis keeping in view the Inter-State Agreement of 1981.

(e) & (f) Certain Inter-State issues among the States of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan were discussed among the Chief Ministers of three respective States in the meeting held on 29-30 July, 1992 and 6th August, 1992. The decision taken in these meetings were to be further discussed by the Chief Ministers of the three States. Further meetings however could not take place, as such the issues remained unresolved.