

(b) Nil.

(c) Does not arise.

Spying Activities by Ex-Military Personnel

7255. SHRI G.S. BASAVARAJ: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that ex-military personnel are involved in spying operations; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken or contemplated to insulate defence establishments from access of ex-military personnel and check espionage activities by them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It will not be in public interest to disclose the details of such cases. Necessary security measures are in force for insulation of defence establishments against espionage. Specific measures in this context include physical security of establishments, measures for safeguarding classified information, verification of antecedents of personnel etc.

Backlog In Issue of Passports In Cochin Passport Office

7256. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a large backlog in the issue of passports in Cochin passport office during the last three months;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to clear the backlog and also to streamline the system?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) to (c). During January-March, 1990, Passport Office Cochin received 42965 applications for fresh passport. Previous balance as on 31st December, 1989 was 20999. During this period, 43366 fresh passports were issued. Balance pending as on 31st March, 1990 was 19679 i.e. less than at the end of the previous quarter. Out of this, police reports were awaited upto one month in about 2400 cases. 919 cases were closed and returned to applicants as per provisions of the Passport Act, 1967.

The following special steps have already been taken recently to ensure that the issue of passport applications is expedited.

- (i) Passport applications are scrutinised at counters and incomplete applications are returned to applicants on the spot, pointing out the deficiencies. Incomplete applications received by post are returned the same day, pointing out the deficiencies.
- (ii) Despatch of the passport applications to the Police/CID authorities within 24 hours of their receipt.
- (iii) Periodical reminders to the Police/CID authorities and constant liaison with these authorities at various levels.
- (iv) Simplification and rationalization of passport procedures.
- (v) Deployment of additional temporary staff and provision of special incentives to staff for working on Sunday and closed holidays.