

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.195
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.02.2016

COUNTERS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS IN PASSPORT OFFICES

195. SHRI SALIM ANSARI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken any steps that will fast-track the process of passport applicants, if so, details in this regard;
- (b) whether it is a fact that there are no counters for senior citizens in passport offices causing lot of hardship in getting the applications processed by senior citizens; and
- (c) if so, what steps Government proposes to take to have special single-window counters for senior citizens in Delhi and other parts of the country?

ANSWER

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

- (a) The Ministry has been taking various steps to fast-track and simplify the process of passport issuance. These include:
 - Under the new Passport Seva Project system, citizens apply for passport services online through the Passport Portal and visit the PSK, headed by a Government officer, at the appointed date and time. Front-end activities, such as token issuance, initial scrutiny of the application forms and acceptance of fee where applicable, scanning of documents, taking biometrics and photos, are performed by the Service Provider's staff. The sovereign functions of verification, granting, issuing, revocation and impounding of passports are performed by Government officials.
 - The entire process including payment of passport fee through debit/credit card and State Bank of India net-banking and allotment of appointments is online.
 - The Electronic Queue Management System at the PSKs ensures 'first-in-first-out' principle in application processing.
 - 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 SMS/e-mail alert is sent to applicant as soon as passport is dispatched to the applicants by Speed Post. The mPassport Seva is also available for providing passport service related information. An optional Premium SMS Service has also been introduced.

- For assistance one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 call centre have been set up to provide requisite information to citizens in 17 vernacular languages.

With a view to further fast-track and simplify passport application submission procedure, the following steps have been implemented during last two years:-

- (i) First time applicants who furnish Aadhar, Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), PAN Card and an affidavit in the format of Annexure-I under normal Passport Application will get faster service without any additional fees, subject to validation of Aadhar and other documents, if required from their respective databases. The passports under this liberal dispensation will be issued on Post-Police Verification basis.
 - (ii) Applicants are facilitated to choose any appointment date from the earliest five available working days for scheduling/rescheduling an appointment. Hitherto, System used to offer only one available date to applicant for seeking appointment for Passport related services.
 - (iii) The Ministry has also launched mPassport Police App for speedy submission of Police Verification Report. The app would facilitate the field level verification officers to directly capture the PV report into the system digitally. With the launch of this App, the need to download and print the physical Personal Particular Form and Questionnaire would no longer be required resulting in paperless end-to-end digital flow of the PV process, further reducing the time required for completion of PVR, within the desired time limit of 21 days.
 - (iv) Acceptance of Birth Certificate in respect of abandoned/orphaned children liberalized for providing passport services.
 - (v) Liberalization of the requirement of NOC by Government officials for passport applications.
 - (vi) Acceptance of registered rent agreement as proof of address.
 - (vii) Doing away with ink signatures of PIAs to optimize use of manpower.
 - (viii) Acceptance of Photo passbooks issued by Scheduled Indian banks and Regional Rural banks in addition to the ones issued by Scheduled Public Sector banks, as proof of address and identity.
 - (ix) Acceptance of self-attested documents instead of attestation by a Gazetted Officer.
- (b) & (c) Although there are no separate counters for senior citizens in the Passport Offices/Passport Seva Kendras, senior citizens are always attended to with due courtesies. In the Passport Seva Kendras, the citizens are served on the basis of an electronic queue management system. There is a provision of a separate service que for senior citizens who are provided with a special facilitatory token “S” which enables them to get priority and expeditious service at all counters. This special dispensation is also extended to sick, differently-abled, women with infants and other special-need applicants.
