

Press Release

MEA completes nation-wide rollout of 77 Passport Seva Kendras for improving passport services

1. With the launch of a Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) at the Regional Passport Office, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi on 14 June 2012, the Ministry of External Affairs has successfully completed setting up and operationalisation of 77 PSKs in the country. The ongoing reforms in delivery of passport services are envisioned under Passport Seva Project - a citizen-centric e-Governance initiative as part of the National e-Governance Plan. The objective was achieved swiftly as the pilot projects had been launched in Bengaluru and Chandigarh in May and August 2010 respectively. After certification of the pilot Project in January 2011 by the Standardisation, Testing & Quality Certification (STQC), the Third Party Audit Agency under the Department of Information Technology, the Project was cleared for launch across the country in June 2011. More than 30 lakh passport related services have been rendered under the new system.

2. Passport services in the NCR can be availed of at the PSKs at Herald House Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg; Shalimar Place; Bhikaji Cama Place; and Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon under the jurisdiction of RPO Delhi. Besides, the PSK at Sahibabad under PO Ghaziabad renders passport services to residents of Noida, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad and adjoining districts. With the operationalisation of PSK at Bhikaji Cama Place, the total handling capacity of the PSKs in Delhi has been increased to 2050 applications per day which translates to more than 4.5 lakh applications a year against 3.5 lakh applications processed in 2011. The Ministry rendered 73.65 lakh passport services in 2011 through Passport Offices in India and Missions/Posts abroad.

3. The Passport Seva Project approved by the Union Cabinet and launched in Public Private Partnership mode with Tata Consultancy Services as partner aims **“to deliver all Passport-related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner & in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and committed, trained & motivated workforce”**.

4. The Ministry is improving governance in Passport Offices by focussing on citizen-centricity, service orientation and transparency. The intended benefits to common man are service provisioning in a transparent manner within defined service levels, closer and larger number of access points for services, easy availability of a portfolio of on-line services with real-time status tracking and enquiry, availability of good public facilities at PSKs and an effective system of grievance redressal.

5. The new measures and procedures have been introduced in the interest of national security to deny issue of passports to ineligible persons and also to those who try to obtain passport service fraudulently on false pretence and particulars. The personnel from the private service provider check the demographic data, scan and upload supporting documents, take the applicants' photograph and biometrics and accept application fees on behalf of the Government. The sovereign and fiduciary functions of verification, granting and issuing of passport are performed by the Government officials. The entire process is online and streamlined including interface with the police authorities for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. It is essential now for the applicants to present themselves at the PSK to enable the Passport Issuing Authority to obtain photograph and fingerprints to prevent the incidence of impersonation. The applicants get full opportunity to see and affirm their personal particulars to be entered in the passport to avoid unnecessary correspondence later.

6. The applicants are required to log on to the website www.passportindia.gov.in; 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) ; note the Application Reference Number (ARN); schedule an appointment and along with print-out of Appointment Slip, original documents and photocopies visit the PSK for submission of application. The photograph and biometrics are captured at the PSK. Status of applications can be tracked through website. For assistance one can call **toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800**.

7. In some sections of the media, reports have appeared of applicants being fleeced by touts and middlemen for uploading applications and arranging appointments. However, the appointment system has been introduced in keeping with the NeGP objective of making Government services accessible to the common man through common service delivery outlets and ensuring efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs. The appointment system ensures avoiding congestion at the PSKs and cutting down waiting time for the applicants. Visit to PSK at a pre-appointed time is designed to help reducing malpractices, enhancing accountability and issuing error-free passports to citizens. It is entirely up to the applicants whether they apply for passport services online on their own or through any internet cafe or through any other person capable of applying online or through any travel agent. The appointments are allotted according to handling capacity of the PSKs. In case, appointments are not available and the passport is required urgently, walk-in facility can be allowed by the concerned Regional Passport officer. The Electronic Queue Management System at the PSK ensures 'first-in-first-out' principle in application processing.

8. An important feature of the new system is that the citizens are assured of the status of passport issuance and they need not visit the PSK/Passport Office again for completion of various formalities/furnishing of documents as was often the case earlier in the old system. Tatkaal applications, in most cases, are handled at the Passport Offices.

9. The Project is intended to also enhance employees' productivity by adopting such measures as skill-enhancement, better career progression and other welfare and motivational measures like Productivity Linked Incentive Scheme. These steps coupled with uniform and well-defined work procedures, availability of support staff provided by Service Provider during working hours, Centralized Application and Database ensuring better availability and uniformity and state of the art infrastructure should lead to better service delivery and higher level of satisfaction for citizens.
