



Ministry of External Affairs

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

CONSULAR, PASSPORT AND VISA SERVICES



Consular, Passport and Visa Services

The Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division of the Ministry provides passport services through Central Passport Organization (CPO) and its network of Passport Offices and Passport Seva Kendras; and consular, visa and passport services to overseas Indians/foreign nationals through the Indian Missions and Posts abroad.

Passport Services

In recent years, the issuance of passports has emerged as the most noticeable statutory and citizen service rendered by the Ministry of External Affairs. In the recent years, the Ministry has made many quantitative and qualitative improvements in the delivery of passport services in the country. Indian passports (together with other travel documents such as Identity Certificates for Tibetan refugees, Emergency Certificates for return to India, Police Clearance Certificates and Line of Control Travel Permits in Jammu and Kashmir) are issued by the Ministry of External Affairs through Central Passport Organization and its all-India network of 37 Passport Offices, CPV Division (only Diplomatic and Official passports) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration. This network has been vastly expanded by adding 77 Passport Seva Kendras in PPP mode and functional/upcoming additional 18 Passport Seva Kendras as extended arms of Passport Offices. For Indians living abroad, passports, OCI cards, PIO cards, EC and other miscellaneous consular services, apart from attestation of consular documents, are rendered by 183 Indian Missions/Posts.

Huge Growth in Passport services

Over the past decade, there has been considerable expansion in both the scope and volume of passport related services. During January- December 2014, the Ministry processed an astounding number of approximately 1.01 crore passport and related services applications compared to 86.88 lakhs in 2013, thereby registering an increase of approximately 16% (inclusive of Passport Offices in India and Indian

Missions/Posts abroad). 37 Passport Offices, Headquarters and the Office of the Chief Secretary of Andaman and Nicobar Islands received 87.37 lakh passport service related applications including Police Clearance Certificates, against which 85.07 lakh passports and related documents were issued (inclusive of 2648 Diplomatic passports, 17560 Official passports, 2,595 Surrender Certificates (SC), 7,641 Identity Certificate(IC) and 4,278 Line of Control (LoC) applications). 183 Indian Missions/Posts abroad issued 13.73 lakh passports, EC and other passport related miscellaneous services. Thus, the Government of India, in total, issued 98.80 lakh passport and other related services in a year. This is an all time high and amounts to over threefold increase since 2000. As on 31 December 2014, 5,70,35,943 citizens held valid passports. India today is placed third behind China and the United States in terms of global passport issuance.

The revenue of the Government on account of passport fees has more than doubled since 2010-11. The total revenue expected to be accrued from all passport services in 2014-15 is ` 2100 crore. An amount of ` 560.33 crore was allocated to Central Passport Organization in the financial year 2014-15.

Central Passport Organization

The Central Passport Organization was created in 1959 as a Subordinate Office of the Ministry and is headed by Joint Secretary and Chief Passport Officer, who also acts as Appellate Authority under the Passports Act 1967 and the Head of Department under the Delegation of Financial Powers Rules 1978. The total sanctioned strength of the Central Passport Organization Cadre was 2697 as on 31 December 2014. In addition, 21 posts including 15 Technical and 6 supporting staff were created by the Union Cabinet decision in 2007 to man the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Passport Seva Project.

The Ministry has taken several steps to improve the service conditions of the CPO personnel by restructuring and expanding

of the CPO cadre, to ensure that vacant posts available to them are filled by faster promotion with necessary amendments/downgrading of posts/relaxation in eligibility service in Recruitment Rules. The Ministry notified a modified Productivity Linked Incentive Scheme (PLIS) on 21 March 2013, having retrospective effect, to financially incentivize individual performance measured against pre-set and mutually agreed upon norms. This is a unique scheme for the GOI employees. With a view to recognize meritorious services rendered by CPO employees and thus, contribute to improving governance in the country, Passport Seva Puraskars have been instituted. The Puraskars are given away annually to the selected employees and Passport Offices on Passport Seva Divas, the 24 June of every year.

In total, 5 DPCs were held in 2014 for promotion of (in total 287 officials): DPC for 17 APO to DPO on 9.5.2014, DPC for 108 officials for confirmation (LDC and Office Assistant) on 30 May 2014, DPC for Assistant to Superintendent (downgraded post of PGO) on 25 August 2014 for 49 officials, MACP for 26 officials (Stenographer, LDC and Office Assistant) on 03 September 2014 and DPC for 87 officials from Passport Granting Officer to Assistant Passport Officer held on 10 September 2014.

Physical Infrastructure

Out of 37 Passport offices, 18 are operating from own buildings, 4 are running from Government of India (GOI) buildings and remaining 15 are operating from rented buildings. In line with the policy of the Ministry to shift all Passport Offices to own buildings, efforts are being made to acquire plot of land to construct state-of-art buildings. The Ministry has so far acquired plots of land at 8 places viz. Srinagar, Amritsar, Dehradun, Mumbai, Pune, Bhopal, Guwahati and Jalandhar. The construction work is in progress at Jalandhar and in Amritsar. The occupancy certificate for newly constructed Passport Office building, Mumbai is being obtained. The opening of Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) was focused upon. The PSKs at Shillong and Karim nagar have been opened. The opening of PSKs in Tripura, Sikkim & Manipur is in advance stage. The

sites for opening of PSKs have been identified in Itanagar, Dimapur, Siliguri and Indore.

Successful Implementation of Passport Seva Project

The Passport Seva Programme, an ambitious Mission Mode Project, is being successfully run in Public-Private Partnership mode and as part of the National e-Governance Plan with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as the Service Provider.

After a successful nation-wide rollout during 2011-12, the scheme is currently in the Operations and Maintenance Phase since 14 June 2012 and has completed two and half years of successful operations. Seventy seven Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) with best-in-class amenities have been set up across the country as extended arms of the 37 Passport Offices, thus providing extended reach to passport applicants. A 24 x 7 National Call Centre has been set up which provides real-time status and up-to-date information in 17 languages using a toll free number (1800-258-1800). The Call Centre receives over 22,000 calls per day. The portal <http://passportindia.gov.in> also provides up-to-date real time information. The Project is integrated with the States/UTs' Police system for verification of applicants' personal particulars, with India Post for postal delivery and with ISP Nashik for supply management of passport booklets. An SMS/email alert is sent to applicant as soon as passport is despatched. The Project also provides real time up-to-date information to 183 Missions and Posts abroad as well as the Immigration authorities.

As on 31 December 2014, over 2.24 crore passport service related applications have been processed and over 2.09 crore services have been rendered through the new system. Daily footfall across 77 PSKs is nearly 50,000 citizens.

With the view to secure greater outreach and providing speedier passport services to applicants, in addition to the 77 PSKs in operation, the Ministry is committed to setting up 18 more Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) across the country including the North Eastern States. A PSK each is already functional in Aizwal ,

Gulbarga, Karimnagar and Puducherry in Passport Application Collection Centre Mode. The PSK in Shillong is fully functional since 14 November 2014.

Passport India Portal

An online portal passportindia.gov.in has been created to offer passport services, giving comprehensive and latest information on passport services, appointment procedure, documentation, status enquiry and other related issues, thus enabling anytime anywhere access. This portal is regularly monitored and upgraded to make it more user- friendly and simpler. The portal is bilingual with information displayed prominently in Hindi as well. It is kept updated with Public Notices, Advisories and Press Releases related to passport services developments from time to time.

Noticeable Improvements in service delivery

Thanks to the implementation of the Passport Seva Project, there has been noticeable improvement in passport service delivery in the country. Countrywide during January – December 2014, 21% of normal passports are issued within 3 days; 47% within 7 days; 64% within 14 days; 75% within 21 days and 77% within 30 days (excluding the time taken for police verification). In case of Tatkaal passports, 28% are issued on the same day; 60% within 1 day and 84% within 3 days and 98% within 7 days.

Volume of Applications

- Top 5 States in terms of number of passport applications received were Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, accounting for more than 51% of total applications.
- Top 5 Passport Offices in terms of number of applications received: Hyderabad, Lucknow, Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata
- Top 5 districts in terms of number of applications received (excluding metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai,

Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bangalore and Chennai): Mallapuram, Pune, Thane, Ahmedabad and Khozhikode

- 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.

Police Verification

Police Verification plays an important role in the timely issuance of passports. The Ministry engaged closely with the Police Departments across States/UTs to speed up police verification. The all-India average for the number of days taken to complete the police verification is 42 and about 47% of the PVs get completed within the desired time limit of 21 days. Some States/UTs have consistently maintained low Police Verification processing times. For example, under the new system, Delhi completed police verification in 12 days on an average, followed by Andhra Pradesh (15 days), Goa (16 days) and Chandigarh (17 days each). Constant efforts by the Ministry have resulted in more and more Districts switching over to the preferred District Police Headquarters Verification Model. So far, 528 of the 726 Police Districts have adopted the new system and are working on the District model.

Functional Enhancements /Simplification of Procedures

- As of 31 December 2014, the number of appointment slots released per day is more than 50,000. This is an increase of 30% over last year.
- To address the concerns regarding difficulties in obtaining appointments, the Ministry introduced Online Payment System in July 2013. There has been a noticeable improvement in availability of appointments since then. There are certain categories of applicants and services for which 'walk-in' facility is available.
- To extend the reach of Passport services to remote areas where application volumes are less, additional Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) are being set up. 18 PSKs are

planned to be set up – the PSKs at Aizwal, Shillong and Karminagar have been made operational in 2014.

- The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs' eMigrate System has been integrated with PSP system. It validates Passports submitted by prospective workers seeking employment abroad online from the Passport database. This has resulted in increased security and reduced risk of Passport misuse/identity theft.
- mPassport Seva mobile app, which was launched on Android platform in March 2013, was made available on Windows and Apple iOS platforms. This app provides passport related information including PSK locator, applicable fees, mode of submission and tracking of passport application status on smart phones.
- With a view to simplify passport application submission procedure, it has been decided to accept registered rent agreement as proof of address.
- Ministry has also decided w.e.f. 01 August 2014 to do away with ink signatures on passports and replace these with stamped signatures to save time and manpower.
- The Ministry has also introduced the system of selfattestation of documents replacing the requirement of attestation by gazetted officers.

Passport Melas

To meet increased demand for passport services, 384 passport melas were organized from time to time in the weekends/holidays by Passport Offices for the period in 2014. During these melas, 1.99 lakh passport applications were received.

Passport Seva Camps

With an aim to cater to the ever increasing demand of passports and at reaching out to people located far away from PSKs, Passport Seva camps were organized at multiple locations. The first ever Passport Seva Camp was launched on the 14

December 2013 at Fatehgarh (U.P.). Subsequently, more than 16,000 applications have been received through 61 Passport Seva camps, organized in remote locations for the benefit of citizens. These were held at Agra, Agartala, Allahabad, Amethi, Belgaum, Berhampur, Bhavnagar, Bikaner, Bhimavaram, Bhuj, Cuddalore, Daman, Dhanbad, Gangtok, Gwalior, Gaya, Guntur, Imphal, Itanagar, Indore, Jamshedpur, Kakinada, Karwar, Karimnagar, Kharagpur, Kolhapur, Kota, Kohima, Lakshadweep, Moradabad, Mahabubnagar, Muzaffarnagar, Muzaffarpur, Mysore, Nainital, Nellore, Pathanamthitta, Puducherry, Rourkela, Solapur, Siliguri, Siwan, Shillong, Srinagar, Srikakulam, Udaipur, Virar and Warangal.

Common Services Centres

With a view to address the challenge of digital divide, especially in the rural hinterland, the Ministry in association with M/s CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd. promoted by DeitY, launched on 19 March 2014, online filing of passport related services applications in pilot mode at 15 select CSC locations in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand through the vast network of over one lakh Common Services Centers (CSCs) to take citizen-centric services closer home. The passport related services has been added as part of their bouquet of services. The CSCs facilitate filling and uploading of Passport application form, payment of applicable fee (through debit/credit card or through SBI internet banking/challan mode) and scheduling of appointment for visit to the PSK, at nominal charge not exceeding `100/-. As per the appointment schedule, applicants visit the PSK for completion of application submission process (including collection of digital photographs/biometrics, verification of supporting documents and approval). The services through CSCs are available throughout the week, including during the weekend. More than 37,000 applicants have used these services during the year.

Passport Services Overseas

During 2014, 183 Indian Missions/Posts abroad rendered 13.73 lakh passport and other related services. Two countries, namely UAE and Saudi Arabia contributed

to 33.60% of total services abroad (Location-wise, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Kuwait, Muscat, Doha accounted for 48.33% services). Top ten countries from the perspective of passport services were: UAE, Saudi Arabia, US, Kuwait, Doha, Muscat, Singapore, Bahrain, UK, and Canada. They collectively contributed to 65% of total passport services abroad.

A team comprising representatives of the Ministry, NIC and M/s. TCS, visited Missions in Paris, Tashkent and Dubai to study the technical and logistical challenges involved in integration of Missions/Posts abroad with Passport Seva. Integration is likely to be completed during 2015-16.

Awards & Recognition:

- The Project has received recognition at the highest level in the Government; has been the subject of case studies; and won several awards:-
- Skoch Challenger Award, given away by Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission (March 2014)
- Certificate of Recognition in the area of "Information Security on Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) under NeGP Central Projects" by M/s Elets Technomedia Pvt. Ltd. (March 2014).
- Case study: On the Case: TCS-Indian Passport Office: Transforming public sector services through process reengineering and digitization, Ovum, London (January 2014)
- In January 2014, a research paper titled- High Performance e – Governance websites- A Game changer in efficient Public Service delivery, won the best paper award in National Conference on e-Governance organized by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances(DARPG) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology(DeiTY)
- mBillion Special Mention award for 'mPassport' mobile application, July 2014

- Featured as one of the achievements of UPA Government in the compilation '10 years of Progress and Growth (2004-2014)' (January 2014)
- National Award for e- Governance (Gold) for Outstanding Performance in Citizen-Centric Service Delivery (January 2015)

Passport Seva Divas and Passport Officers Conference

External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the second Passport Seva Divas and a three- day Passport Officers' Conference (23-25 June 2014) in New Delhi. The 24 June is the day on which Passports Act 1967 was enacted, which lays down the foundation of a sound legal framework for issuance of Passports and other travel documents in the postindependent India. Addressing the conference, the Minister exhorted Passport Officers to perform their citizen-centric roles with a sense of seva(service) and not merely as work. The agenda of this Conference was to review Passport Seva Project operation of last year and to set agenda for the next year. In recognition of the outstanding services rendered to citizens, the Minister gave away Passport Seva Puraskars to the selected employees, police authorities and Passport Offices.

Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Under the Passport Seva Project (PSP), the Ministry has put in place a strengthened Grievance Redressal system whereby a National Call Centre with a toll free number (1800-258 - 1800), operating in 17 languages and on 24X7 basis, has been set up to cater to dissemination of information about various services, handling of grievances and citizen feedback, which at present works on a central system platform. Also an email - based helpdesk has been set up which can be accessed by citizens through the passportindia.gov.in portal and where suggestions and grievances can be sent and also monitor its status online. It presently handles approximately 22, 000 calls per day (out of which 48% are in Hindi and 23% in English).

A Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC) has been established in CPV Division under the supervision of the Joint Secretary (Passport Seva Project) and Chief Passport Officer. He is also designated as the Director of Public Grievances for the Ministry. It deals with grievances received through telephone, e-mail and post, as also references from various Government offices such as President's Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Central Vigilance Commission and Parliament Secretariat. In addition, all Passport Offices handle public grievances through the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAM) website of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, in which 8370 grievances were received during the period 01 January 2014 to 31 December 2014, (inclusive of pending 1045 of 2013), out of which 7934 cases have been disposed off. During the period 1.1.2014 to 31.12.2014, 34,402 public grievance petitions (inclusive of 23,423 email related to grievances/enquiries and CPGRAMS as mentioned above) were received, out of which 33,521 have been disposed of. The latest position on their applications, alongwith directions for further action, is posted on this website, which can be easily accessed by the public for its benefit. The number of complaints/grievances have steadily gone down in the last 3 years.

All Passport Offices handle public grievances through the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAM) website of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. Information and Facilitation Counters, Public Grievance Cell and Help Desks have been set up in Passport Offices to assist applicants and to attend to grievances/complaints expeditiously. The complaint/ suggestion boxes are also installed on strategic locations at Passport Offices and Passport Seva Kendras. The names, addresses and phone number of the Public Grievance Officer are also displayed in the Passport Offices. There is a Public Grievance redressal mechanism in all Passport offices to enquire into and redress any complaints from citizens in a timeframe.

Passport Adalats & Melas

Passport Offices hold Passport Adalats regularly to redress the grievances of passport applicants. These Adalats have been very useful in disposing of some 7000 old and complex cases.

With the view to address difficulties faced by citizens in obtaining appointments and to meet increased demand for passport services, weekend passport melas are organized from time to time by Passport Offices. In 2014, 384 Passport Melas (compared to 203 in 2013) were organized from time to time during the weekend/holidays by various Passport Offices during which 1.99 lakh passport applications were processed.

Haj pilgrims: Special Drive

As decided by the Haj Committee of India (constituted under Act of Parliament no. 35 of 2002), only valid passport holders can apply for Haj. It is a matter of satisfaction that the issuance of passports to prospective Haj pilgrims was again a very smooth affair in 2014. Against the allocated Haj quota of 1, 25,000 applications, approximately 3 lakh application forms were received by the Haj Committee by the prescribed deadline. Instructions were issued to all the Passport offices to accord high priority to passport applications of prospective Haj applicants and extend requisite assistance for expeditious issuance of passports to them by means of nominating a nodal office; opening of facilitation counter, reserving appointment slots for such applicants and attending to requests/grievances petitions received from such citizens in a very prompt manner.

Inspection of Passport Offices

Passport Offices in various States are inspected regularly. Apart from this, vigilance inspection of these offices is also done on regular basis. During these inspections, there is exchange of views to improve procedural efficiency. The vigilance inspections concentrate on corruption and malpractice cases in the Passport Offices. After the inspections, Passport Offices are advised to take suitable follow up actions for better operational efficiency to improve the service by clearing pendency and other

bottlenecks in providing better services to the public. Passport Seva Kendras, in operation all over India, are also inspected under the Non-technical Serviced Level Agreements (SLA) on regular basis.

Right to Information Act (RTI)

A Central Public Information Officer and Assistant Public Information Officer have been appointed in every Passport Office to provide information to applicants under the RTI Act. A Central Public Information Officer has also been appointed in the CPV Division. Joint Secretary (PSP) & CPO is the First Appellate Authority in respect of all Passport Offices and also for the CPV Division. From 01 July 2013, CPV Division has been operating a separate section in the Government of India RTI portal for receiving online RTI applications pertaining to Passport Offices and CPV Division. From 17 June 2014, a CPIO portal has been created online in all Passport Offices. From 02 July 2014 onwards, CPV division has started uploading online RTI application received through post. A total of 4948 online and postal RTI applications were received and disposed off by the Division during the period 01 January to 31 December 2014 (out of this 3816 applications transferred to RPOs for action at their end and 984 replies sent from CPV Division). During the same period, 891 postal and online First Appeals were also received and disposed of.

Appeals (u/s 11 of the Passports Act)

The appeal against the decisions of PIAs is a statutory right conferred upon the affected persons u/s 11 of the Passports Act. In 2014, 7 appeal sessions took place in the month of February, March, May, June, August, September, December 2014, whereby 143 appellants attended the proceedings. In pursuance of decision taken during the hearing, 164 Speaking Orders (including ex-parte decisions) were issued.

Manufacturing and Personalization of Travel Documents

All Indian travel documents are manufactured by India Security Press, Nashik. In order to improve the overall quality, functionality and security of Indian passports, various measures have been taken. All Passport Offices, Headquarters and select Missions/Posts abroad have been provided with machine readable passport printers. All Passport Offices issue machine-readable passports as per the guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

For 160 Missions/Posts abroad and Office of Assistant Secretary (Passport) Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Port Blair, Machine Readable Passports (MRP) with ghost image security feature are printed at Central Indian Passport Printing System (CIPPS) of the CPV Division, New Delhi. CIPPS printed 1,62,848 passports during the period 01 January 2014 to 31 December 2014 (inclusive of 3529 for Andaman and Nicobar Islands).

E-Passports

In accordance with ICAO recommendations to incorporate biometric data in the Machine Readable Travel Documents, India has also decided to upgrade its existing passports to electronic category of e-passports. The e-passports provide greater protection against fraudulent practices and tampering. These e-passports also prevent issue of multiple passports to a single person, thus, ensuring high level of security in passport issuance. Indian Security Press (ISP) Nashik, has floated a global PQB for procurement of electronic contactless inlays.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

India served as a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTD) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and has been implementing the ICAO guidelines on MRTD. The ICAO, in terms of Document 9303 as the central reference, has established ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD), on cost sharing basis, to promote a globally inter-operable e-passport validation scheme for electronic travel documents to support ICAO's strategic

objectives to improve civil aviation security. The PKD Board members are nominated by PKD participating countries and appointed by the ICAO Council. India was admitted to ICAO PKD in February 2009.

Joint Secretary (PSP) & CPO participated in the 19th PKD Board meeting held at Paris on 31 March- 01 April 2014, and at Regional Seminar on Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs) and Traveller Identification meeting on 08-10 April 2014 at Tashkent. He also represented India at the 22nd Travel Advisory Group (TAG) - MRTD meeting on 21-23 May 2014 at Montreal and at 20th PKD Board Meeting & IInd Borders Day held in Oslo on 28-30 October 2014. India was also represented by Ministry officials at 10th Symposium & Exhibition on MRTDs, Biometrics & Security Standards in Montreal on 07-09 October 2014.

A public awareness campaign was launched to inform the public that the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has set a deadline of the 24 November 2015 for globally phasing out all non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs). From 25 November 2015 onwards, foreign Governments may deny visa or entry to any person travelling with a non-MRP passport. All handwritten passports with pasted photos earlier issued by Government of India are considered non-MRP passports. All 20-year validity passports will also fall in this category. Indian Government started issuing MRP passports since 2001. All new Indian passports are ICAO-compliant MRP passports. All Passport Offices issue machine-readable passports as per the guidelines laid down by ICAO.

Digitization Project

The project for "creation of image retrievable database" for the passport, visa, OCI and PIO applications in Indian Missions/Posts was awarded to a panel of 3 vendors in June 2012. In the first phase, the digitization of consular documents commenced in 5 and in second phase, in another 34 Missions/Posts, out of which work has already finished or is under progress in 31 Missions/Posts. As on 31 December 2014, nearly 15 crore consular pages have been digitized. Once implemented, this project would lead to

central repository of data, easy retrievability of files and uniformity in all the Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

Parliamentary Committees' visit to RPOs/PSKs

The close interest of the Parliament in Passport services was affirmed by a large number of PQs, examination and inspection/study visits by several Parliamentary Committees:

- a) The First Subcommittee of the Committee of Parliament on Official language made visit to PO, Bhubaneswar on 16 January 2014, to review the implementation of Official language in the Ministry of External Affairs and its offices. The Committee is scheduled to visit PO, Goa, Raipur and Dehradun in January-February 2015.
- b) The First meeting of 2014 of the Consultative Committee for Ministry of External Affairs, was held on 05 December 2014, on the agenda item " Passport Services".

Public outreach

As part of expanding its outreach, the CPV Division is bringing out a half-yearly bulletin "Passport Patrika", containing information on various passport related issues, in association with Service Provider. Media road shows were also organized in many Passport Offices, whereby media was briefed on improvements in delivery of passport services. The Department of Administrative Reforms and PG has included PSP as a case study in its Master Training Programme for JS/Dir/DS level officers of the Government of India.

Visas

Visa Issuance by Missions/Posts abroad

The Indian Missions/Posts abroad issued 4.37 million visas in 2014. The procedure for grant of visas by Missions/Posts has been further simplified, which includes

computerization of the issuance system and outsourcing of visa services, which commenced in 2006. At present the visa work has been outsourced in 64 Missions/Posts abroad.

In order to enhance the security environment of the visa issuance system, Government has decided to introduce biometric enrolment procedure for foreigners seeking visa to visit India in 2012, which was a part of the IVFRT (Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking) project. This is a joint project of MHA, NIC and MEA with MHA being the nodal authority and MEA as the implementing authority in Indian Missions/Posts abroad. The biometric enrolment procedures consist of ten fingerprint and facial biometrics. The implementation of this entire scheme in all the Indian Missions/Posts is expected to be completed by 2015. At present (as on 31 December 2014), IVFRT scheme (without biometrics) has been introduced in 155 Indian Missions/Posts abroad (61 are without biometrics). The introduction of biometrics procedures is related to implementation of IVFRT system in Indian Missions and Posts abroad. The implementation of IVFRT scheme along with enrolment of biometric procedures would enhance the environment of security aspects of visa issuing mechanism besides facilitating movement of genuine foreign visitors to India.

Visa Issuance by CPV Division

The CPV Division issued 7823 visas (as on 31 December 2014) to foreign diplomatic and official passport holders. The CPV Division also issued 7725 visa notes (as on 31 December 2014) to Indian Government officials going to join Indian Missions/Posts on transfer and official engagements.

O u t s o u r c i n g o f V i s a / C o n s u l a r / P a s s p o r t W o r k b y I n d i a n M i s s i o n s / P o s t s

The Ministry introduced outsourcing of visa services in Missions and Posts abroad during 2006-07. Subsequently, passport and consular services were also outsourced. As on now, 64 Indian Missions/Posts abroad have outsourced

passport/visa/consular services and collection work as on 31 December 2014. The objective of outsourcing is to facilitate prompt and efficient visa, passport and consular services to the public.

Visa-Waiver Agreements

India has visa waiver agreements with 60 countries by which diplomatic/official passport holders are exempted from the requirements of visas. In the year 2014, such a visa free agreement was signed with Norway.

Attestation and Apostille Convention Project

The Attestation Cell in the CPV Division of the Ministry has been providing attestation services for authentication of educational, commercial and personal documents of individuals for personal and commercial use in countries abroad. Apart from this, Indian business establishments also need commercial documents attested by MEA for export as well as for other business ventures abroad. Authentication is of two types: Normal Attestation and Apostille Certification. Apostille certification is done when documents are to be used in countries which are members to the Hague Apostille Convention. While Normal Attestation is free, a fee of ` 50/- per document/per page, as the case may be, is charged by way of Postal Order for affixing Apostille stickers.

The work of collection and delivery of documents for attestation/apostille by Ministry of External Affairs has been outsourced to five Companies since July 2012 for a period of 2 years and extended up to 31 March 2015. These companies charge a service fee of ` 22/- (Personal), ` 18/- (Educational) and ` 16/-(Commercial) per document. For period from January to December 2014, Attestation Cell in the CPV Division attested 3,83,651 personal and 1,69,534 Commercial documents and apostilled 3,57,864 documents for use in the Apostille member countries. In addition, 34,305 documents were attested/apostilled at four MEA Branch Secretariats at Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata and Guwahati during this period. The attestation of consular documents is also done by Indian Mission/Post for Indian citizens living abroad.

Consular Matters Extradition and Legal Assistance

The Ministry of External Affairs has been actively pursuing with various countries for negotiating bilateral consular Agreements to provide a legal and institutional framework to combat international terrorism, organized crime including financial frauds and drugs trafficking. These Agreements include Extradition Treaty, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Civil and Commercial Matters and Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

During the period from January and December 2014, six extradition requests- one each from USA, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Australia, Iran and Kenya were received. In addition, India received 32 requests for local prosecution (30 from UAE and 2 from Saudi Arabia). India sent 4 extradition requests- 1 to UK, 2 to Saudi Arabia and 1 to Thailand. Further, India extradited one person to USA and UAE extradited to India one person.

Consular Issues

There are about 28 million Overseas Indians spread over 183 countries across the globe. Out of these, some 10 million people living abroad are estimated to be Indian citizens. The vast majority of these Indian nationals are temporary migrants, including women workers and 90% of them work in the Gulf region. These Indian workers go abroad to make a better living for themselves and their families back in India. However, once they reach abroad, they face a host of problems since working and living conditions abroad may not be according to their expectations.

The prime concern of the Consular Section in the CPV Division relates to looking after the welfare of Indian nationals who are living and working abroad. Besides the above, Consular Section also deals with cases of arrest and deaths of foreigners in India, including provision of consular access to foreign diplomatic missions in India. The Section also coordinates with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs regarding the welfare of Indian nationals abroad. Consular Section also

provides assistance to the general public in finding out the whereabouts and welfare of missing Indian nationals. Issues relating to adoption of Indian children by Persons of Indian Origin, payment of salary dues and death-compensation to the families of deceased Indian workers, issue of PIO/OCI Cards, liaison with the Ministry of Shipping regarding the arrest of Indian crew members and Indian vessels, cases of marriage and divorce of Indian nationals under Foreign Marriage Act, 1969, registration of births and deaths of Indian nationals abroad, etc are also being looked after by the Consular Section.

Indian Missions/Posts abroad advise and guide the Indian community in an impartial manner in a variety of matters affecting the existence of the community as a whole. In order to protect the interests and welfare of Indian nationals abroad, Government of India has set up various bilateral Joint Working Groups on Consular Matters with a number of countries, including Australia, Iran, US, China, Russian Federation, UAE, etc. Apart from this, the Indian Missions/Posts render Consular services viz. attestation of various documents, registration of birth and death of Indian nationals, sending of mortal remains of Indian nationals back to India, registration/solemnization of marriage of Indian nationals, consular access for Indian nationals lodged in foreign jails, serving of summons of Indian courts to Indian nationals etc.

Bilateral Consular meetings

During the period, meetings of Joint Working Groups on Bilateral Consular issues took place with Iran at Tehran on 18-19 May 2014, Australia at Canberra on 25-29 August 2014, Brazil on 16 July 2014 during Prime Minister's visit and at New Delhi with USA on 10 September 2014, Russian Federation on 28 October 2014, Switzerland on 17 November 2014 and Indonesia on 15-16 December 2014. During the meetings, deliberations covered on issues related to consular, visa and passport matters.