Passport Services in 2013: An Overview

Indian passports (together with other travel documents such as Identity Cards for Tibetan refugees, Emergency Certificates, Police Clearance Certificates and Line of Control Travel Permits in Jammu and Kashmir) are issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India through the Central Passport Organization and its **all-India network of 37 Passport Offices, CPV Division** (only Diplomatic/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 **16 Passport Seva Laghu Kendras** as extended arms of Passport Offices. For Indians living abroad, issuance of passports and other related documents is done by **180 Indian Missions/Posts**.

85.13 Lakh Travel Documents Issued: 15% Growth in a Year

During January-December 2013, 37 Passport Offices, Headquarters and the Office of the Chief Secretary of Andaman and Nicobar Islands received 73 lakh passport service related applications including Police Clearance Certificates, against which 71.3 lakh passports and related documents were issued, compared to 62.5 lakh in 2012, thereby registering an increase of approximately 15%. Moreover, 180 Indian Missions/Posts abroad issued 13.83 lakh passports, EC and other passport related miscellaneous services. Thus, the **Government of India, in total, rendered about 85.13 lakh passport services in a year**. This is an all time high and **amounts to over threefold increase since 2000**.

Passport Seva: Successful Implementation

The Passport Seva programme is being successfully run in Public-Private-Partnership mode 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 14th June 2012. **77 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 20,000 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 India Security Press, 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 180 Missions and Posts abroad as well as the Immigration authorities.

As on 31st December 2013, over 1.36 crore passport service related applications were processed and over 1.22 crore services were rendered through the new system. **Daily footfall across 77 PSKs is nearly 35,000 citizens**.

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, **24% passports are issued within 3 days; 60% of normal passports are issued within 7 days and 82% are issued within 14 days (excluding the time taken for police verification). In case of Tatkaal passports, 10% are issued on the same day and 64% are issued within 3 days. If we include police verification time in the end-to-end delivery process, 49% of passports were issued within a month.**

The number of **pubic 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

The Ministry engaged closely with the Police Departments across States/UTs. The all-India average **for the number of days taken to complete the police verification is 49 and about 37% 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 13 days on an average, followed by Andhra Pradesh (17 days), Haryana (19 days), Kerala (27 days), and Chandigarh (27 days). Constant efforts by the Ministry have resulted in more and more Districts switching over to the preferred District Police Headquarters (DPHQ) Model. As on 31st December 2013, **399 of the 724 Police Districts had adopted the new system and were working on the District model**.

Functional Enhancements

A more user-friendly portal **http://passportindia.gov.in** was released in September 2013.

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.

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.

Premium optional SMS Service was introduced in November 2013 all over the country to enable citizens to receive alerts and updates regarding progress of their passport applications and pending actions. This is in addition to systemic free of cost SMS/email intimation.

With an aim at reaching out to people located far away from PSKs, Ministry launched first ever **Passport Seva Camp** on the 14th December 2013 at Fatehgarh. It is yet another innovative citizen-centric measure in taking IT- driven public services closer home.

Passport Applications: Geographical, Demographic and Socio-economic Trends

Volume of applications

Total no. of valid passport holders as on 31 Dec 2013:   5, 19, 29,132

Top 5 States in terms of number of passport applications: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (accounting for more than 55% of total applications)

5 Biggest Regional Passport Offices in terms of applications: Hyderabad, Bangalore, Lucknow, Delhi, Chennai

Top 5 districts in terms of applications (excluding metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai): Mallapuram, Pune, Thane, Ahmedabad, Kozhikode

Application Type

First Time: 63%

Reissue: 26% [Reasons for renewal: expiry, change in particulars and exhaustion in visa pages.]

PCC: 4% [62% PCC were meant for Kuwait]

Tatkaal: 7%

Demographic & Socio-economic Trends

Male/Female Ratio	67/33
Student Applicants	18%
Govt/PSU employees	5%
Graduate and above	25%
10th pass and above	34%
Below 10th standard	40% [only 6 applicants declared themselves as illiterates]
Average Age of applicant	31 years
0-18 age group	15%
19-30 age group	41%
31-45 age group	24%
46-60 age group	13%
Senior citizens (above 60)	6%
Youngest applicant	2 day old
Oldest applicant	116 years
ECR category passports	22%

Passport Services Overseas

Indian Missions/Posts abroad rendered **13.83 lakh** passport and related services. Two countries, namely **Saudi Arabia and the UAE contributed to 43.4% of total services abroad** (**Location-wise, Dubai, Riyadh and Jeddah accounted for 39.4% services**). **Top twelve countries from the perspective of passport services were: Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, Kuwait, UK, Qatar, Oman, Singapore, Canada, Australia, Italy and Bahrain**. They collectively contributed to 87% of total passport services abroad.

Public Grievance Redressal

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 a **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 20, 000 calls per day (out of which 42% are in Hindi and 29% in English). It is a matter of great satisfaction that **Ministry's efforts in improving redressal of public grievances have been appreciated by the nodal agency i.e. the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. In a letter dated 3 December 2013, Hon'ble MoS for Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions has stated:**

*…On the basis of data generated on the online Centralised Public Grievances Redress and Monitoring System, as on 21.11.2013, your Ministry has been found to have **improved significantly in reducing the pendency of public grievances**. I congratulate on this and wish to place on record my appreciation for the **commendable effort** put in by your Ministry in this regard…*

Passport Adalats

Passport Offices held 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**.

Passport Melas

With the view to address difficulties faced by citizens in obtaining appointments and to meet increased demand for passport services, passport Melas were organized from time to time by Passport Offices. **81 Passport Melas were organised from time to time during the weekend/holidays** by 27 Passport Offices. Till 31st December 2013, **32,525 passport applications** were processed during Passport Melas.

Right to Information Act (RTI)

From 1st July 2013, the 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. A total of **4,598 online/postal RTI applications** were received and disposed off by the Division during the period 1st January to 31st December 2013(out of this, 3,298 applications were transferred to RPOs for action). During the same period, **884 First Appeals** were also received and disposed off.

Appeals (u/s 11 of the Passports Act)

The appeal against the decisions of PIAs is a statutory right conferred upon the affected person u/s 11 of the Passports Act. During the year, 7 appeal sessions were held by the Chief Passport Officer in the month of January, April, July, September, October, November and December 2013 covering **267 appeal cases**.

Machine Readable Travel Documents

All Passport Offices issue machine-readable passports as per the guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organization. In order to improve the overall quality, functionality and security of Indian passports, various measures viz. shifting of data page in passport booklets to page no. 2 and observation page from last page to page no. 35, signature & seal of PIA at inner front cover page-facing page 1, **inclusion of secondary "Ghost Image"** (letter screen image) of passport holder drawn with his personal data at data page have been implemented **with effect from 1st April 2013 ("2012 series booklets")**. Pursuant to the signing of the Revised Travel Arrangements between India and Bangladesh signed on 28th January 2013, **it was decided by the Ministry to discontinue issuance of India Bangladesh Passport with effect from 15.11.2013**.

Awards & Accolades

The Passport Seva Project has received recognition at the highest level in the Government; has been the subject of case studies; and won several awards:

- Case study: *On the Case: TCS-Indian Passport Office: Transforming public sector services through process re-engineering and digitization*, Ovum, London (January 2014)

- Featured as one of the achievements of UPA Government in the compilation '*10 years of Progress and Growth (2004-2014)*' (January 2014)

- Finalist (Security in e-Governance), Data Security Council of India Excellence Awards (December 2013)

- The Economic Times Certificate of Recognition (October 2013)

- 'Citation by 'GOVERNANCE Now': 'BIG DATA LEADER' (August 2013)

- 'e INDIA Award of Excellence' (July 2013)

- Mention by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India as one of the 7 best examples of public services delivery (Civil Services Day, 21 April 2013)

- 'Promising Innovation Award' -Regional Rounds of Tata Innovista 2012-13 (March 2013)

- President's address to the Joint Session of Parliament (February 2013)

- Computer Society of India-Nihilent Technologies e-Governance Award for Excellence (December 2012)

New Delhi: 5 April 2014