

and implement counter terrorism initiatives and investigations It was agreed to discuss mutually acceptable options for a peaceful negotiated settlement of ail issues between India and Pakistan, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

Passport applications in Jharkhand

‡1689. SHRI **AJAY** MAROO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passport applications received each year during the last three years in Jharkhand and the total number of passports issued;

(b) the period within which the passports are generally issued after receiving the application;

(c) whether Government proposes to expedite the procedure of issuing passports; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) The number of passport applications received each year during the last three years and the total number of passports issued in Jharkhand are as under:

Years	Total number of passport Applications received	Total number of passports issued
2003	24,262	10,249
2004	19,661	15,975
2005	22,127	22,815

(b) Passports are issued after receiving clear Police Verification Reports, in Jharkhand, which take usually 3-4 weeks and thereafter passports are issued. Passports are also issued expeditiously under the Tatkal Scheme on post-police verification basis.

(c) and (d) The Government has been continually taking a number of steps to speed up the issuance of passports including:

(i) Introduction of high-speed passport printers for enhancement of output.

‡Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

- (ii) Grant across the counter, *i.e.* scrutiny of application at the acceptance stage so as to avoid objections related to passport applications.
- (iii) State police authorities are requested from time to time to expedite issuance of Police Reports, which are required for issuing passports, and
- (iv) Simplification of the passport issuance procedures from time to time.

Number of diplomatic representations

1690. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that among the world's major nations, India's diplomatic representation abroad is restricted to 114 of the 192 member-States of the UN;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is a fact that recently a plan has been formulated to open 24 new missions, some in countries where there are already embassies; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the present status of its implementation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) and (b) India has resident diplomatic representations in 115 member-States of the United Nations as on date. The list of such member-States is enclosed as Statement.

(c) and (d) It has been decided to open an Indian Embassy in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Consulates General/Consulates in Phuentsholing (Bhutan), Songkhla (Thailand), Juba (Sudan), Guagzhou (China) and Karachi (Pakistan). No decision has been taken so far to open more Mission abroad.