

(e) if not, the action Government has taken against those responsible for not accepting such applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

(b) Submission of passport applications by post/courier is not authorized. Passport applications need to be submitted in person or through authority letter at the Passport Offices, or in person at the District Passport Cells (DPCs) or at authorized Speed Post Centres (SPCs).

(c) Yes. The Ministry issued orders in September, 2009 discontinuing the acceptance of passport applications through post.

(d) The following, *inter alia*, were the reasons:—

(i) The Ministry have set up DPCs at the district headquarters, which are manned by the police personnel, where passport applications can be submitted in person. At present, there are 463 district Passport Centres. In Himachal Pradesh, DPCs are functioning in all the 13 district headquarters.

(ii) Similarly, 1095 SPCs, which are manned by the personnel of the Department of Posts, have been set up, where passport applications can be submitted in person.

(iii) Only less than 10 percent of applications were being received through post by various Passport Offices. Most postal applications received were found to be filled improperly and submitted without proper/prescribed documents.

(iv) At the Passport Office, DPC and SPC, scrutiny of applications for completeness is done at the counter before an application is accepted and applicants can rectify omissions and errors, if any. Original documents are also verified, which cannot be done in the case of postal applications.

(v) Most of the applications received by post were found to be incomplete or wrongly filled up. In all such cases, additional/correct information needed to be called for from the applicants, with consequential delay in issue of passport.

(e) Not applicable.

Special envoy on Kashmir

802. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Organisations of Islamic Conference (OIC) has appointed special envoy on Kashmir;

(b) the number of nations that join together to constitute OIC;

(c) would this move on the part of Pakistan not amount to internationalise the issue of Kashmir;

- (d) when was an announcement made in U.N. recently; and
- (e) the effective steps taken by India to counter this move of Pakistan and what has been the extent of effect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

- (b) OIC has 57 member States and 5 observer States.
- (c) Pakistan plays a proactive role in the OIC to take advantage of its presence at OIC to do so.
- (d) The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir met on September 28, 2009 on the sidelines of 64th UN General Assembly session in New York and announced the appointment of OIC's Special Envoy on Kashmir.
- (e) Yes. The matter is invariably raised at bilateral level and in meetings with group of OIC member States.

The Government of India has issued a strong rebuttal in response to the OIC resolution stating that "It is regrettable that the OIC has commented on India's internal affairs. We condemn and reject this. Inherent in OIC's statements and actions on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is a complete inability to understand India's position. Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and it is our firm position that the OIC has no locus standi in matters concerning India's internal affairs."

Assistance to Sri Lanka

803. SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has expressed its readiness to provide further assistance to Government of Sri Lanka for the war displaced persons housed in the refugee camps of northern province of Sri Lanka;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the reaction of the Sri Lankan Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) and (b) Government of India attaches high priority to the welfare and rehabilitation of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Northern Sri Lanka. An amount of Rs. 500 Crores has been announced by Government for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Northern Sri Lanka. Several steps have been taken in this connection. Since October, 2008, 2.5 lakh family packs were sent to the IDPs as part of the relief and humanitarian assistance. A 60-member emergency field hospital operated in Sri Lanka for six months till September, 2009 and treated more than 50,000 patients. India has sent four demining teams and 2600 tons of shelter material for resettling the IDPs in their original areas of habitation. We are extending