(b) General Advisory dated 5th July, 2012 regarding procedure for online registration and facilitating walk-in applicants.

(c) Haj Advisory dated 12th September, 2012.

(d) Public Notice advising the citizens to desist from dealing with touts.

(e) Notification dated 28th September, 2012 regarding Passport Fees applicable effective from 1st October, 2012.

Simplification in issuing of passports

†1410. SHRI DHIRAJ PRASAD SAHU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has simplified the process of issuance of passport;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (c) The process of issuance of passports including submission of application for passport is being simplified under the ongoing Passport Seva Project. In order to meet growing demand of passports and to improve the efficiency of passport issuance system, the Government had appointed the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad – an agency under the Department of Electronics and Information Technology to conduct an independent study of the system. The NISG after a comprehensive study, submitted a detailed Project Report and recommended launch of Passport Seva Project (PSP) in Public-Private-Partnership mode, envisaging *inter-alia,* setting up of 77 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) across the country, based on the number of passport applications received from various districts under each Passport Office. The Passport Seva Project, one of the 27 Mission Mode Projects under the National e-Governance Plan, aims at delivering all passport related services to the citizens in a timely, more transparent, accessible, comfortable and reliable manner. Under the PSP, the pilot Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) were launched in Bengaluru and Chandigarh in May, 2010 and August, 2010 respectively. All the planned 77 PSKs have been made operational across the country by mid-June, 2012. The Project has

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

been awarded the requisite certification by Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate, under the Department of Electronics and Information Technology.

Applicants need to apply on line through the portal (www.passportindia.gov.in) and visit the PSK at the appointed date and time. Staff from the Service provider check the demographic information, 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 passports are performed by the Government officials. The entire process is on-line and streamlined including interface with the Police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. The Electronic Queue Management System at the PSK ensures 'first-in-first-out' principle in application processing.

The PSK provides a comfortable ambience and amenities including photocopying, food and beverage facilities, public phone booth, baby care, newspapers and magazines and television in an air-conditioned waiting lounge. As the number of public dealing counters have been increased from the erstwhile 350 to more than 1600 in the new system and also the public dealing hours have gone up from 4 hours to 7 hours a day, the applicants do not have to wait long for submission of passport applications. Senior citizens and differently abled applicants are given priority tokens in the PSKs.

The benefits of the Project to the citizens are service provisioning within defined service levels, closer and larger number of access points for services, availability of a portfolio of on-line services with real-time status tracking, an effective system of grievance redressal and strict adherence to 'First In-First Out' principle in rendering of services.

Enforcement of Thirteenth Amendment of Sri Lanka

1411. DR. E. M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has continued the stand of enforcing Thirteenth Amendment of Sri Lanka for the entire country benefiting all the nine provinces and more specifically Tamil minority dominated North, East, Central and hilly regions;