

2. The online appointment system has been introduced to reduce congestion at PSKs and minimize waiting time for applicants. Appointments are allotted according to handling capacity of PSKs and are based on electronic queue management system. 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.
3. The entire process is online and streamlined including interface with the Indian police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. Status of applications can be tracked through the passport website or through mPassport Seva. For assistance, one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800.
4. Applicants' presence in person at the PSK enables the Passport Issuing Authority to capture their photograph and fingerprints to prevent the incidence of impersonation. The applicants also get full opportunity to see and affirm their personal particulars to be entered in the passport to avoid unnecessary correspondence later. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24×7 National Call Centre has been set up to provide requisite information to citizens in 17 languages. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched.
5. In order to address digital divide in this regard in the country, the Government is considering redefining the role of District Passport Cells/Speed Post Centres and co-opting Common Service Centres to provide more access points to apply for passport services online.
6. A limited number of passport applications are also accepted physically at District Passport Cells.

Basis of quota for Haj pilgrimage

†2060. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the basis on which quota of Haj pilgrims for the States are fixed, the details thereof;

(b) the quantum of financial assistance provided by the Central Government during the last four years, Haj pilgrim-wise; and

(c) whether requests have been received from the States and the public representatives from there for increasing the quota of Haj pilgrims, and if so, the details of action taken by the Ministry?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) Allocation of Haj seats to each State/Union Territory is done by the Haj Committee of India (HCOI) in proportion to the population of Muslims in the State/U.T. *vis-a-vis* the national population of Muslims as per 2001 Census.

(b) Government of India (GoI) does not provide any financial assistance directly to the Haj pilgrims. However, GoI assists the Haj pilgrims in close coordination with (HCOI) through (i) provision of accommodation and other logistical support at Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah, (ii) deputation of Doctors and Paramedics, Coordinators, Assistant Haj Officers, Haj Assistants and Khadim-ul-Hujjaj to assist our pilgrims during their Haj, (iii) setting up hospitals and dispensaries, providing ambulances and arranging supply of medicines to Haj is in the holy sites in Makkah, Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifa and Madinah, (iv) facilitating air travel from 21 embarkation points in India to Jeddah and back, and (v) training of trainers who in turn train pilgrims before they proceed to Saudi Arabia.

(c) Yes. At present, Census 2001 figures are used for allocation of Haj seats to each State/UT as Census 2011 figures are yet to be released by the Census Commissioner.

Snooping by China

†2061. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that China is snooping on several countries including India;

(b) if so, the type of espionage being carried out by China against India, and since when it is being done; and

(c) whether Government has lodged protest with the Chinese Government in this regard and the steps taken by Government to check espionage by China, and the outcome of the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (c) Government has been pursuing a well coordinated and multi-pronged approach to tackle espionage activities by Indian and foreign nationals including from China such as strengthening vigilance on the borders to prevent infiltration and illegal cross border activities, gearing up the intelligence machinery to interdict foreign agents, close interaction and coordination between different agencies

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.