

trilateral discussions on maritime security. In this context, the 2nd NSA-Level Meeting on Trilateral Cooperation on Maritime Security between India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives were held in Colombo on 8th July, 2013.

(b) External Affairs Minister met the External Affairs Minister of Sri Lanka during the latter's visit to India on 29th January, 2014 and discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations including development projects being undertaken by India and economic cooperation. Government has implemented and continues to implement a wide range of developmental projects for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka, including creation of infrastructure facilities in the areas of housing, education, health, livelihood restoration, economic revival, rehabilitation of harbour and restoration of railway lines.

Visit of PM of Japan

2839. SHRI TARUN VIJAY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the main concerns of India in the area of the maritime security and in what manner the regional security issues would be addressed with the cooperation with Japan in the wake of Japan's PM Shinjio Abe's recent India visit; and

(b) whether Government is planning more steps in the region of maritime security cooperation with East Asian countries too, if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED) : (a) India has, on several occasions, reiterated its position that it supports the freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and unimpeded commerce in accordance with accepted principles of international law, and peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. These principles should be respected by all. India and Japan held the first bilateral dialogue on maritime affairs in New Delhi on January 29, 2013. Issues of mutual interest including maritime security, non-traditional threats, cooperation in shipping, marine sciences and technology were discussed. During Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's recent visit to India on 25-27 January, 2014, the two sides noted with satisfaction the ongoing bilateral exchanges on maritime affairs including counter-piracy activities, participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises as well as sharing of information.

(b) India participates regularly in the meetings of East Asia Summit, ADMM Plus and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, which discuss ways to strengthen regional maritime cooperation.

SIU in RPOs

2840. SHRI T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government is considering to make cadre review on the basis of SIU carried out a long back ago in all Regional Passport Offices (RPO) across the country, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government has fixed any time-frame for the said purpose, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the SIU study was carried out in all regional passport offices about ten years back and Government is considering to conduct a fresh SIU in all regional passport offices because of emergence of Passport Seva Kendras?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED) : (a) to (c) A study by the Staff Inspection Unit (SIU) of the Ministry of Finance was conducted in 2005 on the norms for staffing requirement in the Regional Passport Offices in India. On the basis of manpower assessment of Passport Offices, the study had recommended the sanctioned strength of 2349 posts for the Central Passport Organization. Thereafter the Ministry commissioned the National Institute of Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad in 2006 to suggest comprehensive reforms in the passport issuance system. On the basis of this study, the Ministry obtained Cabinet approval in 2007 for the launch of Passport Seva Project as a "Mission Mode Project" to be implemented in Public Private Partnership mode under the National e-Governance Plan. The Cabinet approved outsourcing of front-end activities; setting up of 77 Passport Seva Kendras; increase in the number of Government employees at various levels to keep pace with the growth of passport demand; introduction of productivity linked incentive scheme for Government employees.

To implement the Passport Seva Project, the Government subsequently