

and over US\$ 5 trillion trade passes through the sea lanes in this region. Over 55% of India's trade passes through South China Sea. Peace and stability in the region is of great significance to India. India undertakes various activities, including cooperation in oil and gas sector, with littoral states of South China Sea.

The Tribunal constituted under Annex VII to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in the arbitration instituted by the Republic of Philippines against the People's Republic of China delivered its Award on July 12, 2016 clarifying issues concerning maritime entitlements in the South China Sea.

Government's position on this issue and the ruling is clear. The authority of Annex VII Tribunal and its award is recognized in Part XV of the UNCLOS itself. India's own record in this regard is well known. India supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS. India believes that States should resolve disputes through peaceful means without threat or use of force and exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability. As a State Party to the UNCLOS, India urges all parties to show utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which establishes the international legal order of the seas and oceans.

**Difficulty for passport applicants from Nagaland and
Jammu and Kashmir**

2015. SHRI D.P. TRIPATHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that passport applicants in Delhi from Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir have to go through additional multiple counters in the passport office to submit their applications, if so, the reasons therefor; and

(b) whether any decision has been taken to make the process easier for the applicants from the above mentioned States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) No. The passport applicants in Delhi from Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir do not have to go through additional multiple counters to submit their applications. The requirements for all applicants are the same throughout India.

(b) Does not arise.