

Difficulty in getting police verification for passport

981. DR. R. LAKSHMANAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even after taking more and more measures people are finding it difficult particularly in getting police verification, to obtain Passport;

(b) if so, the details of complaints received in this regard and also various other aspects in getting passport; and

(c) the details of steps proposed to be taken by Government to streamline the process of getting Passport and bringing the harassment at the hands of Police to a considerably lower level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Attention of the Ministry has been drawn at times that the people have found it difficult to get police verification for obtaining a passport. The main reasons for delay are (i) resource and man power constraints in the Police Department, (ii) non-production of documents by the applicants in support of their address etc., to the police at the time of verification; and (iii) applicant being not present at the residence when the police visits for the purpose of verification.

The nature of complaints received includes delay in issuance of passport, delay in police verification, demand for additional documents at the Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) and verification of documents submitted by the applicants.

(c) The Ministry has taken various steps to streamline the process of getting passport. Ministry has successfully connected significant number of District Police Headquarters (DPHQ) digitally into Passport Seva System. As on date, 698 Police Districts out of total 731 Police Districts have been connected with Passport Seva System digitally. In addition, the Ministry has recently launched mPassport Police Application for speedy submission of Police Verification Report. The application has the capability to capture passport applicant's personal particulars and photograph and transmit the same electronically to concerned stakeholders. In order to further ease and expedite the PV process, the number of questions asked in the questionnaire has also been reduced from 12 to 9 for police verification.

Passport Officers remain in touch with the district police authorities to expedite police verification and also take up the issue of delayed police verifications with the concerned State Governments requesting them to accord high priority to the submission of police verification reports.

To reduce the number of days taken for issuance of fresh Passports, the Ministry of External Affairs has made two major changes on 26.01.2016 that have expedited the process for first time passport applicants as well as made it more convenient to secure an online appointment at the local PSK. As per these changes, the first time passport applicants who furnish Aadhaar Card, Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), PAN Card and an affidavit of non-criminality in the prescribed format, will get faster service, without payment of additional fees, subject to successful online validation of Aadhaar. The passports under this liberal dispensation will be issued on Post-Police Verification basis.

Indian bus driver torched in Australia

982. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether an Indian bus driver was torched in Brisbane, Australia recently, if so the details thereof;
- (b) how many other persons/passengers were injured in the bus and whether it was an act of terrorism and whether any enquiry report received from the Australian Government;
- (c) whether the issue was taken up with the Australian Government to provide compensation/relief to be given to his nearest relative; and
- (d) if so, what is the compensation/relief provided to the Indian national driver, who was well known singer, and also by the Indian Government, with details?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Yes. The tragic incident took place in Brisbane, capital of Australian State of Queensland, on 28 October, 2016 when Shri Manmeet Sharma *alias* Alisher, a 29 years old Australian citizen of Indian origin hailing from Punjab, was killed by an assailant, who apparently has a long history of mental illness, by throwing a highly inflammable substance, leading to his death from severe burns, while he was on duty driving a Brisbane city bus.

(b) As per reports, there were 11 passengers in the bus at the time of the attack, who were rescued by a taxi driver passing by. Motive for the attack is still under investigation but preliminary interrogation has indicated mental illness of the assailant as the probable cause.

(c) and (d) Government of India has called for a thorough investigation so that justice is delivered to the bereaved family. On 30.10.2016, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi telephoned Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, the Prime Minister of Australia