

extend it for sixty more days, in view of time required for relocation of Indian workers there;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the efforts being made to ensure that Indian nationals are not put to harassment or forcible evacuation by them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) On 17 January, 2017, the US Department of Homeland Security's amendments to its regulations relating to certain employment-based immigrant and nonimmigrant visa programs came into force. The amendments which were notified on 18 November 2016, *inter alia*, provide for a 'grace period' of up to 60 days for certain high skilled nonimmigrant workers (E-1, E-2, E-3, H-1B, H-1B1, L-1, O-1 or TN classifications) when their employment ends before the end of their authorized period, so that they may more readily pursue new employment and an extension of their non-immigrant status.

(c) and (d) The Government has not received any feedback which reflects the need for further extension of this grace period.

(e) Government of India is keeping a close watch on the developments that may have a bearing on the Indian nationals in the U.S. and will do everything possible to safeguard their interests and welfare.

Passport offices at district level

3205. MIR MOHAMMAD FAYAZ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to open new regional passport/passport offices at district level in various State of the country including Jammu and Kashmir; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Yes. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Department of Posts (DOP) have decided to utilize the Head Post Offices (HPO) in the various States as Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) for delivering passport related services to the citizens of the country. The pilot projects for this joint venture between MEA and DOP was inaugurated on 25 January, 2017 at

the Post Offices at Mysuru in Karnataka and at Dahod in Gujarat. The Government has decided to scale up this programme by opening a total of 86 POPSK in the country including one, each at Leh and Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir. The list is given in the Statement. [Refer to the Statement Appended to the Answer to USQ No. 3203 (Para (a) and (b))]. Out of these 86, POPSK at 17 locations have started operations at Udhampur, Asansol, Bikaner, Dahod, Jamshedpur, Kavaratti, Kota, Muzaffarpur, Mysuru, Palampur, Pathanamthitta, Purnea, Raiganj, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Salem and Vidisha till 25th March, 2017.

The Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Posts are working closely for the early operationalisation of the POPSK at Leh. There are 38 Passport Offices / all over the country including one each at Jammu and Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction of Bipartisan Bill in US Congress

3206. SHRI ANIL DESAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a Bipartisan Bill was reintroduced in the US Congress to make companies that move call centres overseas ineligible for grants or guaranteed loans from Government, a move aimed at curbing the transfer of jobs to countries like India;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) what steps Government is taking to provide alternative jobs to Indians who are sure to lose jobs after the Bill is passed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Yes. A bipartisan Bill titled "the U.S. Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act of 2017" was reintroduced on 2 March 2017 by Democrat Congressman Gene Green and Republican Congressman David McKinley. The Bill inter alia proposes:-

- (i) To require Secretary of Labour to maintain a list of all employers (with 50 or more call centre employees) that decide to relocate a call center overseas;
- (ii) 120-days advance intimation by such employers before relocating a call center and penalty for violations;
- (iii) To make such companies ineligible for Federal grants or guaranteed loans; and
- (iv) To require disclosure of the physical location of business agents engaging