

Liberal British visas to Indians

664.DR. K. V. P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the UK Government has no plans to extend longer and cheaper visas to Indians though such visas are offered to Chinese Citizens; and

(b) if so, whether Government would take up the issue with the British authorities and ask them not to link granting of liberal British visas with the issue of Illegal Indians in UK?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Yes, the Government of India is aware of a two year pilot project by UK for two-year multiple-entry visa scheme for Chinese nationals that was announced in January 2016. A request for extending similar visa facility to Indian nationals was taken up by Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju during the recent visit of UK Minister of State for Immigration – Mr. Brandon Lewis to India on 6th Nov 2017. It was also taken up during the India-UK Home Affairs Dialogue held in London in July 2017. The UK authorities have taken note of the Indian Government's request for a similar visa scheme for Indian nationals. On 20 th Nov 2017, Mr. Brandon Lewis, UK's Minister of State for Immigration, in response to a query (*raised by Mr. Virendra Sharma, a British Member of Parliament of Indian origin*) on extending the visa scheme to India in a House of Commons Debate, said that possibilities of extending the 2-year visa scheme to other countries will be considered on a case-by-case basis after reviewing the performance of the visa scheme for the Chinese.

Passport Seva Kendras in Karnataka

665.SHRI K.C. RAMAMURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has decided to open Post Office Passport Seva Kendras in Bellary, Bidar, Raichur, Shivamogga, Tumakuru, Udipi and Vijayapur head post offices in Karnataka; and

(b) if so, the present status thereof and by when they would become functional and start issuing passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Yes. The Government has announced the opening of four Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) at Belagavi, Devangere,