

**Passport Laghu Seva Kendras**

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

(a) whether Government proposes to open any Passport Laghu Seva Kendras (PSLK) in Tamil Nadu during the next three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) At present, 92 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) are operating across the country as extended arms of the 37 Passport Offices, thus providing extended reach to passport applicants. The list is given in the Statement-I. [Refer to the Statement Appended to the Answer to SQ 65 (Part (a))] The 93rd PSK is scheduled to be inaugurated at Siliguri on 17 February, 2018.

The Ministry in association with the Department of Posts has decided to open 251 Passport Seva Kendras at the Head Post Offices (HPO)/ Post Offices (PO) in the country called 'Post Office Passport Seva Kendra' (POPSK). The list of these 251 POPSK is given in the Statement-II. [Refer to the Statement Appended to the Answer to SQ 65 (Part (a))]. 60 POPSK are functional as on 3 February, 2018 including two in Tamil Nadu at Salem and Vellore.

12 more POPSK would be set-up in Tamil Nadu at Cuddalore, Dindigul, Kanyakumari, Namakkal, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, Tiruppur, Tiruvannamalai, Viluppuram and Virudhunagar. The Ministry intends to complete the requisite formalities for these locations at the earliest.

The Government intends to open POPSK in the HPO in the country in such a manner that Passport Seva Kendra facility is available to citizens within a radius of approximately 50 kms.

**Opening of ICP at Nepal border**

660. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a single agency for construction of Integrated Check Post (ICP) is under consideration given the lack of coordination between the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) under Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA);

(b) the reasons for rescheduling the opening of ICP at Raxaul (Bihar), Birgunj (Nepal) to March 2017;

(c) how many deadlines have been missed for its construction; and

(d) the reasons for the construction of MEA funded mirror border facilities at Raxauls (Bihar), Birgunj (Nepal) and Jogbani (Bihar), Biratnagar (Nepal) border being inordinately delayed and by when these ICPs would be fully operational?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) The Government of India has constituted the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) under the LPAI Act 2010, with the mandate to develop Integrated Check Posts (ICP) on the international land border of the Country. The LPAI functions as a statutory body under Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs with representation from various central ministries including Ministry of External Affairs. The implementation of ICPs at Birgunj and Biratnagar in Nepal is being undertaken by Ministry of External Affairs in coordination with the Government of Nepal and other relevant agencies. Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs closely coordinate on construction of Integrated Check Posts.

(b) ICP Birgunj will be completed in February 2018 and ICP at Biratnagar is targeted to be completed in December 2018.

(c) and (d) There was some delay in the construction of ICPs in Nepal as it took the Government of Nepal time to provide encumbrance free land, as well as due to disruption caused by earthquake and non-availability of construction material.

#### **Support for Palestine**

661. SHRI C. P. NARAYANAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's policy towards Arab countries;

(b) whether it continues to uphold a policy of friendliness towards them;

(c) whether it supports Palestine state and the resolution adopted by UN in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIM. J. AKBAR): (a) India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations with Arab