CHAPTER-II
Time for Passport Issuance

The Ministry initiated a comprehensive reform of the Passport Issuance System with a view to curtail the time taken for issuance of passports significantly and equip the CPO to deal with the rapid growth in demand for passports in the coming years.

Under Section 5(2) of the passport act, 1967, the Passport authority may make such inquiry, as deemed necessary, prior to the issue of passport. Hence issuance of passport is broadly classified under three categories of police verifications viz., no police verification, post police verification and pre-police verification cases. Cabinet approved the following timelines in rendering passport issuance services to citizens:

- Issuance of new passport not requiring police verification- all services in three working days
- Issuance of new passports requiring post police verification –all services in three working days
- In cases requiring pre-police verification, services in three working days plus time taken for police verification
- In case of Tatkaal or emergency passport service to be rendered on the day of application itself.

The objectives of PSP (clause 3.2 of RFP vol.-I) and the desired service levels (clause 6.2 of RFP vol.-I and clause 2.1 (b) of MSA) reflected the approval of Cabinet in respect of the timelines in rendering passport issuance services to citizens.

Specific audit findings related to time taken for the above services are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs:

2.1   Delay in giving appointment at the PSKs

As a first step in passport application, citizen fills-in his/her details in the website, http://www. passportindia.gov.in and chooses the preferred city and PSK location irrespective of his current/permanent address. Currently, while booking the appointment online, the next available date of appointment gets automatically

displayed in the portal and the applicant selects that date to visit the PSK along with the Application Reference Number (ARN) print generated online.

On scrutiny of published annual data of PSP ending for the year ended December 2014, it was observed that the appointment availability to visit a PSK as on 31 December 2014 varied from one day to 68 days. In 12 cases citizens had to wait for more than a month to visit a PSK as mentioned in the table below.

Table 2.1

Time taken for getting Appointment in PSKs

Appointment Time	No. of PSKs
less than 3 days	38
3-10 days	12
11-30 days	17
31-60 days	09
more than 60 days	03

The Ministry in its reply (November 2015) stated that the appointment availability as on 31 August 2015 was varying between 1 to 45 days. It further stated the current position i.e., as on 31 October 2015 is that out of 77 PSKs, the appointment availability at 73 PSKs is between 1-7 days, at 3 PSKs it was between 8-15 days and at 1 PSK it was 19 days.

Progress reported by the Ministry indicated that position had improved over a period of time, but it is yet to meet the standards set by the Ministry, i.e., complete the process of issue of passport in three working days' time. Moreover at certain places like Imphal (30 days), Gangtok (24 days) and Varanasi (24 days), the waiting period for giving appointment was still very high.
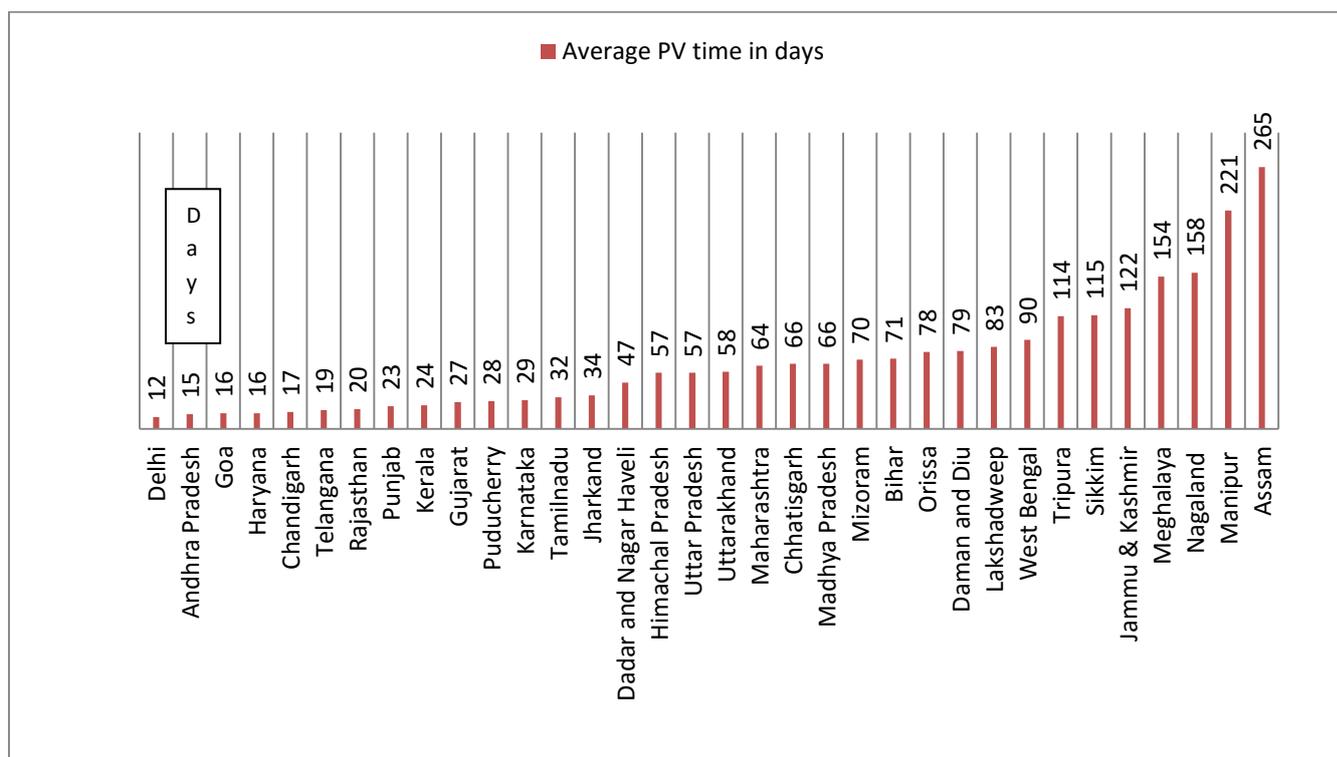
2.2 Police Verification Process

Under Section 5(2) of the passport act, 1967, the Passport authority may make such inquiry, as deemed necessary, prior to the issue of passport as discussed above. As per Request for Proposal (RFP) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) instructions, Police verification report was required to be received within 21 days from the date of receipt of request for police verification.

2.2.1 Average Police Verification time

The chart given below depicts the state/UT wise average time taken for police verification, based on the published annual data of PSP for the year 2014.

Chart 2.1 : Average time for Police Verification

■ Average PV time in days

Source: Annual Data 2014

Out of total 35 states/UT, in only seven states[*]/UT, recorded average police verification time was less than prescribed 21 days and in 28 states/UTs this time was more than 21 days. Out of 28 states/UTs mentioned above, in seven states (Tripura, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Assam) average police verification time was more than 100 days. Further, 100 *per cent* police verifications were not carried out in any State/UT within 21 days. The national average police verification time in 2014 was 42 days. The police verification time has shown a decrease of seven days over the national average of 2013.

The Ministry stated that in states/UTs/districts where the electronic connectivity with the PSP existed, the delay in police verification report was less and in those states/UTs/districts where there was no electronic connectivity with the PSP, the delay in police verification report was more. It further stated (July 2015) that as per January to June 2015 data, the all India average for the number of days taken to complete police verification is 36 days as compared to 42 days in 2014 and
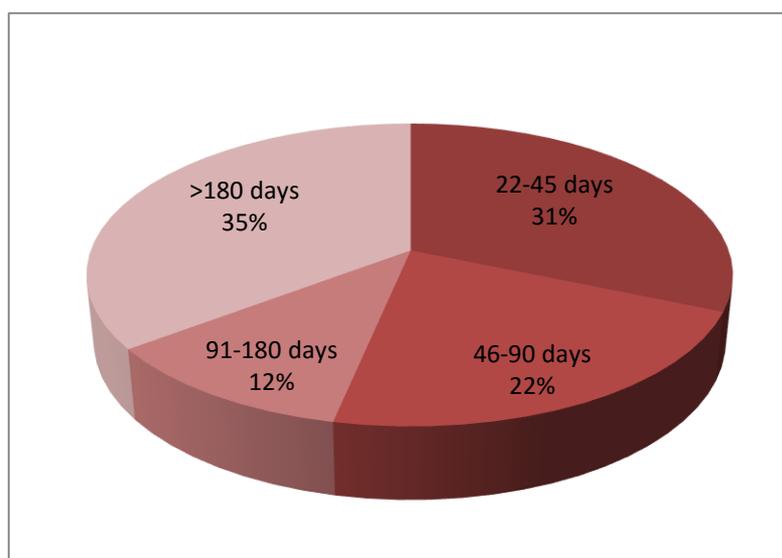
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[*] Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Rajasthan and Telangana (less than 21 days)

49 days in 2013. The Ministry also informed that that online integration with police authorities have already been done up to district level/than a level. Out of 730 police district, 673 districts have already been integrated online with PSP thus 98.05 *per cent* of police verification are now being submitted using online model of police verification. However, it did not reply to the specific points raised in para above regarding PVR pendency of more than 21 days and more than 180 days in different states. Further, the pace of improvement of police verification time from 49 to 42 and from 42 to 36 days was still behind the prescribed level of 21 days.

2.2.2 Age-wise analysis of pending PVRs

Audit also scrutinised the dashboard[1] data of PSP as on 31 August 2015 to assess current position of pending PVRs. Out of total 7,73,254 PVRs pending, 3,74,398 PVRs (48 *per cent*) were shown as pending for clearance for more than the prescribed limit of 21 days. The age-wise analysis of pending PVRs of more than 21 days (3,74,398) is shown in the chart below.

Chart 2.2: Age-wise analysis of pending PVRs

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[1] Dashboard data of PSP shows the current position of that date depicting passport data of the previous days evening closing for the whole country. It is dynamic and keeps on changing every day. The reports coming in the dashboard has been designed for monitoring of the project by the Ministry.

The chart 2.2 depicted that out of 3,74,398 pending PVRs (pending for more than 21 days), 1,32,320 PVRs (35 *per cent*) were pending for more than 6 months.

It is thus apparent that delay in police verification of the applicants was one of the key hurdles in realisation of the basic objective of the PSP to deliver passports to the citizens in time.

The Ministry (November 2015) did not give any specific comment to the audit observation.

> *Recommendation: The Ministry may analyse the reasons for interstate variations in delay and put in place a system for monitoring along with Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure that PVR is done within 21 days as envisaged in the scheme.*

2.3   Pendency in printing of passports at the passport offices

As per norms, the service time taken by the MEA for processing a normal passport application was three working days (excluding Police verification time) under the Passport Seva Project, which included processing of application, printing and lamination of passport and its dispatch.

The printing, lamination and dispatch of the passports were done in RPOs with which the PSK was attached. Further, as per clause 6.3.1 (point 13 of Process "B"-back-end processing) of RFP Volume-I, Pendency at Passport offices were to be tracked and all the applications that were not processed within the defined service levels were to be automatically sent to central back office i.e. Central Passport Printing Facility (CPPF) situated in Delhi for printing, lamination and dispatch.

We, however, noted that as per the practice adopted by the Ministry, on the basis of status of printing pendency at each passport office, printing slots were opened from time to time for printing of pending passports at CPPF as conveyed to the concerned passport offices. The Ministry advised the passport offices to forward pending passports to CPPF for printing as per available slots with them which meant that the printing of pending passports was undertaken in CPPF only when forwarded by the RPO.

The Ministry was requested (March 2015) to provide data regarding time taken across the RPOs for printing and dispatch of the passports, including an age-wise

analysis for the year 2014. However, this information was not provided by the Ministry. In its absence, printing pendency data obtained from centralised data for all the PSKs for the period 1 July 2015 to 9 July 2015 was culled from the MIS.

A test check of the pending records for a period of seven working days (01.07.2015 to 09.07.2015) indicated pendency for printing of passports in the RPOs Kolkata (eight days[2] load) Lucknow (four days), Cochin (six days), Ahmedabad (four days) and Delhi (three days) based on their installed capacity of printers.

Without providing reasons and details of pendency pointed out in Audit, the Ministry stated (November 2015) that the current pendency position (31 October 2015) was 58,800 in all RPOs, which was reckoned to be just 1.5 days' load. The reply of the Ministry is not convincing because in some RPOs, pendency was higher than the 1.5 days' load as mentioned above.

Recommendation: The Ministry may analyse the reasons for pendency in certain RPOs and take necessary steps to mitigate them.

2.4   Pendency in delivery of Passports by India Post department

The final step in the passport application process was the delivery of passport to the applicant by the Postal Department. Information was called for from MEA (August 2015) regarding the time taken for delivery of the passports by the postal department for the year 2014 across the RPOs. However, this was not provided by the Ministry.

In the absence of this information, data extracted from the MIS maintained under the PSP dashboard was test checked. As per the data available in the MIS as on 13 August 2015, a total 62,26,516 passports were shown as dispatched for the year 2015 under Passport SLA Parameter module while only 34,48,793 passports were shown as delivered to the concerned applicants. Out of 27,77,723 undelivered passports, the status of only 39,337 passports were shown in the dashboard of the Ministry. No information was available in respect of 27,38,386 passports which were dispatched but were neither shown as delivered nor shown as not delivered. In absence of completed details, proper conclusion could not be drawn in Audit.

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[2]   Working days load- means the printers capacity installed in the RPOs running at their maximum capacity in a day.

The Ministry stated (November 2015) that after printing of passports, there were two more steps i.e. quality check and actual dispatch. As on 31 August 2015, the overall number of passports to be dispatched was 89,360, which is the culmination of 2.5 days of pendency at quality check and dispatch. It further stated that steps were being taken to update the pendency status in the system so that correct figures were reflected in the reports and continuous efforts were being made to improve it.

The Ministry did not inform the present status of pendency in delivery of passports by the India Post Department, obtained from data of MIS and specific action initiated for cutting down on postal delays. Moreover, the fact remains that the Ministry did not have status of delivery for 27.38 lakh dispatched passports which is significant and is a matter of concern.

2.5 Overall Delay in issue of Passports

Passports are issued in two categories i.e., Normal and Tatkaal. Though the objective of PSP was to issue passport under the specified timelines, analysis revealed that the same was not achieved till now. Audit analysis of the published annual data of PSP for 2014 for normal and Tatkaal passport is given in the following paragraphs.

2.5.1 Normal Passports

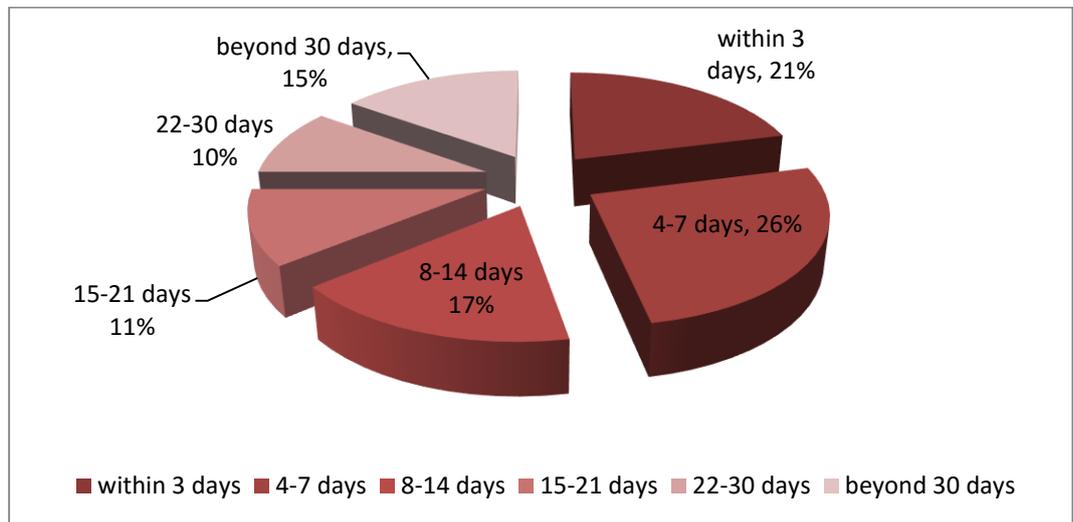Normal passports are issued under three categories, as shown below:

Table 2.2 Categories in issue of Normal passports

S. No.	Issue of fresh Passports	Examples	Prescribed time
1.	No police verification	Government servants if they produce identify certificates	3 working days
2.	Post Police Verification	Re-issue of passports in which personal particulars are same	3 working days
3.	Pre-Police Verification	Other than the above	3 working days' time + time taken for police verification (21 days)

Source: Request For Proposal (RFP)

Scrutiny of published annual data 2014 of PSP relating to the categories 'No' and 'Post' Police verification revealed the time taken for the issue of normal Passports as shown in the chart:

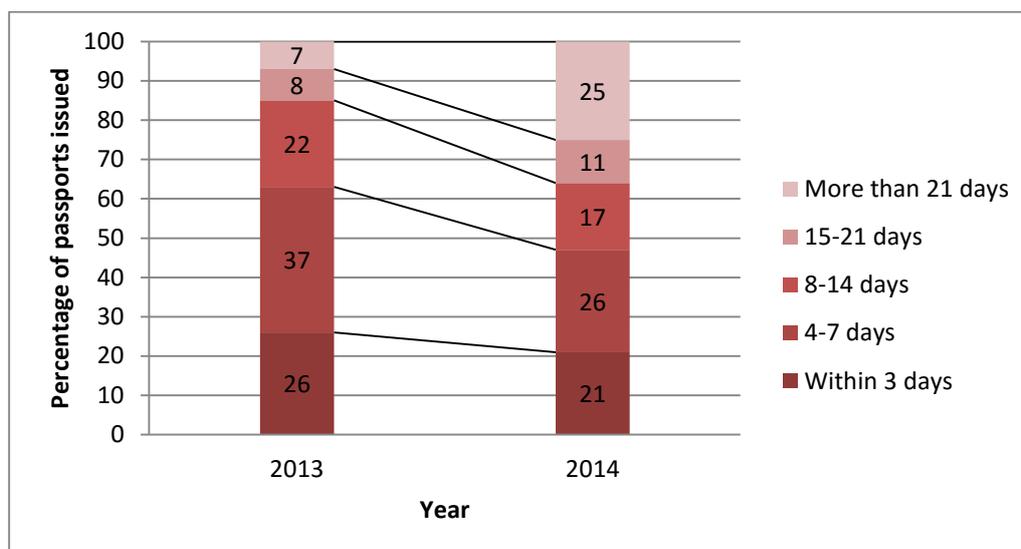**Chart 2.3: Time for issuance of Normal Passports**

Source: Annual Data 2014 provided by MEA

The above chart depicted that only 21 *per cent* of passports were issued within the prescribed timeline of three working days while, 15 *per cent of* passports were issued beyond 30 days. Test check of the data also revealed that PSK at Kolkata took average passport issuance time of 28 days.

Further, published annual data 2014 of PSP revealed the comparison in the issue of normal passports for the year 2013 and 2014 as shown in the chart below:

Chart 2.4: Comparison of issue of normal passports

The above chart depicted that in 2014, only 21 *per cent* of passport were issued within 3 days as compared to 26 *per cent* issued in 2013. Similarly in 2014, 25 *per cent* of passports were issued after 21 days as compared to seven *per cent* issued in 2013. Further scrutiny of published annual data (2014) revealed that the overall average time for issuance of passports had increased from nine days in 2013 to 16 days in 2014.

The Ministry in its reply (November 2015) stated that the average passport issuance time was 16 days in 2014, which improved to 13 days till 31 October 2015. The fact remained that against the benchmark of three days Ministry was still taking 13 days.

2.5.2   Analysis of Issuance time of Normal Passports in Delhi

In order to find out the time taken by applicants to get a passport in Delhi, records of RPO Delhi were analysed. The appointment availability as of 31 March 2015 of PSK Herald House was 24 days, PSK Gurgaon was 24 days, PSK Shalimar Place was 31 days. Thus, an applicant had to wait nearly a month for getting an appointment at PSK.

Test check of the archived database of RPO Delhi (PSKs-Herald House, Shalimar place and Gurgaon) for the period October 2014 to June 2015 revealed that the average time for issue of passports in Delhi was 52 days from the date of booking of appointment to the date of dispatch of passport. But, as per the Ministry's published annual data for 2014 in respect of PSKs of Delhi, average passport

issuance time for normal passports was 21 days and average time for police verification was 15 days. Thus, total time taken in order to get passport in respect of Delhi was 36 days (21+15) in 2014 which was reduced to 27 days (13+14) during January to June 2015. Audit further noticed that the difference in data was due to the fact that while working out the time taken, Ministry had excluded the time taken for getting an appointment in PSK. Exclusion of this period was not justified as ultimately time taken for getting appointment also delays the overall process of obtaining passport.

The Ministry in its reply (November 2015) stated that the inclusion of appointment wait time into the average passport issuance time was practically not feasible. The appointment was scheduled by the applicants based on their readiness such as documentation, convenience and travel urgency.

The reply of the Ministry is not acceptable because when the availability of appointment to PSK was only between 24-31 days, even if citizens were ready there was a compulsory waiting. Since the system allotted the next available appointment date automatically, there was no alternative/option for the applicant to choose a particular date and time based on his convenience.

2.5.3   Tatkaal Passports

As per the RFP, Tatkaal passports had to be issued on the same day (only if the PSK was situated in a city which also has a RPO and the application is granted by one P.M. on that day).

As per the published annual data of PSP, it was noticed that in case of passports issued under the Tatkaal category, the average issuance time in 2014 was 4 days. The total number of tatkaal passports issued in 2014 were 5,68,871. The details of time taken in issue of Tatkaal passports during 2014 are given in the table below:

Table 2.3: Time taken for issuance of Tatkaal Passports

Time taken for issue of passport	Percentage of passports issued
Day of submission of application	28 *per cent*
Within 1 day	60 *per cent*
Within 3 days	99 *per cent*
Within 30 days	100 *per cent*

Source: Annual Data 2014 provided by MEA

The table 2.3 depicts that 28 *per cent* of the tatkaal passports were issued on the day of submission of application and 60 (28+32) *per cent* passports were issued within a day. Thus, the objective of quick service and delivery of passports within one day was not fulfilled in 40 *per cent* cases. Further, scrutiny of published data of PSP showed that the average time taken in this category in 2014 increased in 8 (Ranchi, Chandigarh, Visakhapatnam, Jaipur, Kolkata, Jammu, Ghaziabad and Guwahati) out of 37 RPOs as compared to 2013. The highest average passport issuance time of 36 days in this category was recorded by RPO; Ranchi followed by Chandigarh where the average time was 23 days.

The Ministry stated (November 2015) that the period of next day in Tatkaal passports is only the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) set by the Ministry in RFP. The reply of the Ministry is not acceptable as it was the laid down objective of PSP in the issuance of passports and included in the decision of the Cabinet.

Conclusion

Delivery of passport services to citizens in a time bound manner within the prescribed framework was one of the objectives of the passport issuance process. We observed that Ministry could not achieve the prescribed service standards for any of the stages of passport services i.e. from application of passport to delivery of passport. There were considerable delays in getting appointments at Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs), delay in police verification process and pendency at the postal and printing stages, which resulted in delay in issue of normal and Tatkaal passports. As a result, against the objective of issuing passport in 24 days (3+21), the national average for issue of normal passport was 71 days in 2014.