

Performance audit of Passport, Visa and Consular Services

Highlights

- There were significant delays in the issue of Passports. In the 12 selected RPOs/POs, only 19 *per cent* of the passports were issued within the prescribed time. In nine of the selected RPOs/POs only 12 *per cent* passports were issued on time after receipt of police verification reports (PVRs). In 10 of these RPOs/POs even where police verification was waived, 38 *per cent* of the passports were issued after the prescribed time. The Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh stated that submission of PVRs in 21 days is not possible unless a separate cell is created and police verification for passport applications was not a priority item for the State Police. Under the Tatkal Scheme, in 80,725 cases passports were not issued within the specified time though in these cases additional fees of Rs. 872.49 lakh had been charged by RPOs/POs Kozhikode, Bhopal, Ahmedabad, Pune, Lucknow, Kolkata, Bareilly and Chandigarh.

(Paragraph 7.1.2)

- Large number of passports that were returned undelivered were not destroyed by RPOs/POs, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Pune, Bareilly, Delhi, Bhopal, Nagpur, Jammu and Ahmedabad although this was required. RPOs, Delhi and Jammu did not maintain proper records for this category of passports. The absence of proper accounting and timely destruction of these passports could have serious implications including possible misuse.

(Paragraph 7.1.3)

- In RPOs/POs at Bhopal, Delhi, Pune, Kolkata and Lucknow, 244 passports were revoked/impounded after delays ranging from six months to more than eight years from the date of receipt of adverse PVRs. Twenty eight persons had travelled abroad after the receipt of adverse PVRs/issue of impounding/revoking circulars by the RPO/PO. Delay in revocation/impounding of passports provides an opportunity to the concerned persons to continue to misuse their passports, which is against the security interest of the nation.

(Paragraph 7.1.4)

- Lack of adequate control in checking the issue of passports resulted in fake passports being issued by RPO, Delhi to different individuals who impersonated others. This is a matter of serious concern because of its likely impact on the national security.

(Paragraph 7.1.5.1)

- In RPO, Delhi, the software system did not accurately reflect the status of inter-related revoked/impounded passports thereby leaving scope for manipulation and misuse of the passports not shown as revoked/impounded. The cancelled passports were also not accounted for properly leading to the possibility of their misuse.

(Paragraph 7.1.5.2)

- **RPO, Delhi issued 5553 loss circulars against 6683 cases of lost passports during 2001-02 to 2004-05. The non-issue/delay in issue of loss circulars can result in misuse of lost passports with adverse implications.**
(Paragraph 7.1.6.1)
- **Sufficient care was not taken in verification of the antecedents and other particulars of the applicants before issue of clear PVRs.**
(Paragraph 7.1.8.1)
- **During 2000-01 to 2004-05, delays in receiving PVRs occurred in 70 to 82 per cent of the cases, resulting in the issue of passports on 'PVR overdue basis'. Such delays while adversely affecting the genuine applicants, are fraught with risk of passports being issued to ineligible applicants.**
(Paragraph 7.1.8.2)
- **Passports under the Tatkal Scheme were issued on the basis of verification certificates (VCs) given by the officers mostly to unknown persons on the basis of references made by their friends/relatives etc. In RPOs/POs Delhi, Bareilly, Bhopal, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Pune, Chandigarh and Kolkata, out of 1,74,177 cases sent for post police verification during 2000-01 to 2004-05, adverse PVRs were received in 1,930 cases, incomplete PVRs in 19,672 and PVRs were not received at all in 44,191 cases. There was no practice of initiating action against the VC issuing authorities where adverse PVRs were received. Not holding the VC issuing authorities accountable has left the entire system vulnerable to malpractices.**
(Paragraph 7.1.8.3)
- **In RPO, Delhi, in 114 cases of revoked/impounded passports, entries regarding their revocation/impounding were not made in the system. These passports could go unnoticed by the PIAs, immigration officers and other security agencies.**
(Paragraph 7.1.9.1)
- **Blank travel documents (passport booklets, visa stickers etc.) went missing in transit while being supplied to 16 Missions/Posts from the India Security Press, Nasik. The blank travel documents received by 10 Missions/Posts/RPO were found damaged. There was absence of proper accounting of blank travel documents. In 13 Missions/Posts, discrepancies in demand, supply and receipt of the blank travel documents were also noticed. The stock register maintained by the Missions/Posts were deficient on many counts. Poor maintenance of proper records as well as accounting of blank travel documents is a matter of serious security concern.**
(Paragraphs 7.3.1 and 7.3.2)
- **Effective supervision, monitoring and internal controls were lacking in passport matters. This resulted in issue of Indian passports to foreign nationals, issue of 275 fake passports and issue of passports to criminals and terrorists. The MEA did not initiate corrective measures to**

strengthen its internal controls even after the deficiencies and malpractices were brought to its notice.

(Paragraph 7.6)

Summary of important recommendations

- Proper records need to be maintained for receipt, destruction and balance of Returned undelivered (RUD) passports. These passports may be destroyed in the presence of a responsible officer who should certify the fact under his dated signatures. The provisions made in the Passport Manual, 2001 in respect of RUD passports should also be adhered to strictly.
- The MEA should institute efficient internal control system to ensure full compliance with rules in regard to impounding/revoking of the passport and determine accountability for non-compliance.
- Provisions may be made in the system to prevent the issue of a duplicate passport in lieu of lost passports without a specific reference to the related loss circular. A register of cases containing details regarding lost passports, loss circulars and dates of their despatch needs to be maintained.
- The MEA needs to modify the software system so as to show uniform and latest status of a passport wherever it appears in the system.
- Proper records of cancelled passports should be maintained. As these passports can not be issued, these should be destroyed in the presence of a responsible officer who may record a certificate under his dated signatures to this effect.
- The MHA should persuade the state police authorities to create a separate cell to handle police verification of passport related matters within the prescribed time.
- The RPOs/POs need to maintain a record of the revoked/impounded passports, its revocation/impounding circular number, date of its despatch and number of the entry made in the computer system. This record should be reviewed monthly by the concerned RPOs/POs.
- The missing and damaged travel documents should be investigated thoroughly and also immediately reported to the concerned security agencies, MEA, MHA, PIAs and other authorities to avoid their misuse.
- Stock registers should correctly record each receipt, issue and balance of blank travel documents. Physical verification of stock should be conducted as per codal provisions and the discrepancies promptly investigated to rule out any pilferage.