



# Expanding e-Governance through Passport Seva Kendra



**P**assport Seva Programme (PSP) is a mission mode programme of the Government of India being run in public private partnership (PPP) mode by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) as part of National e-Governance Plan. It is one of the most noticeable statutory and citizen-centric services being rendered by the Government. M/s Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the Service Provider for the programme.

PSP evolves from the **Digital India drive** of the Government of India which envisions a more effective and efficient service delivery mechanism for the citizens of India. The three pillars of PSP are citizen proximity, process re-engineering, and digital infrastructure. Systemic resources, public-private partnership model, organic change management approach and ecosystem support that facilitate the process.



The applicants apply in the PSP system for passports and related documents online, upload relevant documents, make the payment online, schedule an appointment through a user friendly portal and then visit the designated Passport Seva Kendra or Post Office Passport Seva Kendra.

At the Sewa Kendra, an electronic queue management system (EQMS) works on the principle of first-in first-out (FIFO). It monitors the flow of applicants. Applicants can track the status of their applications through portal, email and SMS services. There is no manual intervention at any stage. The complete process is digitally flown with re-engineered process through a single visit clearance.

Till May, 2014 there were 77 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) working in public-private partnership (PPP) mode. Since then, MEA has undertaken several steps to bring about quantitative and qualitative improvements in the delivery of passport services. 16 new PSKs have been opened in the North East States.

In order to take the passport services to the doorsteps of the citizens, MEA in association with the Department of Posts announced an innovative initiative on 24 January, 2017 to open Passport Seva Kendras at the Head Post Offices (HPO)/ Post Offices (PO) in the country called 'Post Office Passport Seva Kendra' (POPSK).

The objective was to enhance citizen experience and for better governance in delivery of Passports and related services. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and DOP signed an MOU on 31.01.2019 to operationalise the initiative.

There are 93 PSK and 424 POPSK (total- 517) functioning across the country as on 15 October, 2020. 440 of them have been set-up since May 2014. MEA and DOP are working together to open a POPSK in every Lok Sabha Constituency where there is no PSK/ POPSK to ensure that there is at least one. In the process, 488 Lok Sabha Constituencies have been covered till 15 October, 2020.

With the aim to provide a centralized passport issuance platform and application for Indian citizens living abroad seeking Passport-related services, the Integration with Indian Mission/ Post abroad into the Passport Seva Programme commenced in October 2018. Integration has been successfully done in 116 Indian Missions and Posts till 15 October, 2020. Remaining 64 missions and posts abroad will be integrated soon.

To bring in efficiency, transparency and quality in service delivery information and communication technology has been leveraged. The Foundation is laid on three aspects - citizen proximity, process reengineering and a digital ecosystem. All non-sovereign functions are being catered through the manpower resources provided by the service provider.

The process of delivering a passport involves close interaction with the Police Department for verification of the applicant's credentials as regards criminality and citizenship and with India Post for dispatch of printed Passports to the applicants. Police verification consumes major share of the time taken for issuing a passport. To expedite receipt of police verification report from State/ UT police authorities, the process has been automated upto the office of the District Superintendent of Police. "mPassport Police" App has been launched for speedy submission of police verification report (PVR). The mobile application facilitates police officers to digitally submit the PVR.



The Ministry has also integrated India Security Press Nasik for tracking of blank passport booklets and India Post for dispatch of Passports. These enhancements in the passport delivery ecosystem have helped to improve delivery. The PSP has also leveraged the vast network of over 2-Lakh Citizen Service Centres (CSCs) across the rural hinterland. The CSCs facilitate filing and uploading of passport application forms, online payment of applicable fee and scheduling of appointments for visiting to the PSK/POPSK at a nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100/-.

MEA has implemented a robust grievance redressal and feedback mechanism to respond to citizens' queries in a time bound manner and receive feedback for improvements and enhancements. The citizens can submit their feedback, suggestions and grievances through multiple channels viz., CPCRAMS, PSP Portal, Call Centre, eMail, Twitter, Grievance Cell etc. These are closely

monitored, analysed and responded by a dedicated team.

With the launch of POPSKs, the efficiency and effectiveness of passport services have improved remarkably. The PSP processed more than 1.2 Crore in each of the three years viz., 2019, 2018, and 2017. The number of daily appointments in 2019 crossed the figure of 75,000.

Despite increase in workload, the time taken for issuing a passport has come down to an average of 8 days for normal passports in the year 2019 excluding the time taken for police verification.

There is improvement in police verification process too. The average time has come down from 42 days in 2014 to 18 days in 2019. The outreach and innovative programs like Passport Melas and Passport Seva Camps also added value to the eco-system.