



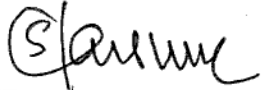
**MESSAGE**

It gives me great pleasure to felicitate all our Passport Issuing Authorities in India and abroad on the occasion of the Passport Seva Divas. As in the previous years, the Ministry of External Affairs, along with the Central Passport Organization, is marking this occasion and renewing our commitment to provide passport and passport-related services to the citizens of India in a timely, reliable, accessible, transparent and efficient manner.

MEA has incorporated greater use of IT and digital systems into its functioning including delivering public services. The Passport Seva Programme (PSP), which is a Mission Mode Project and is being run in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode, has successfully completed a decade of its existence. PSP has 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) and 424 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) functioning as the extended arms of our 36 Passport Offices in the country. We are working closely with the Department of Posts for setting-up new POPSK to take passport services closer to the people in remote places in the country. The Ministry has successfully integrated the passport issuance systems in 70 of our Missions/Posts abroad into the PSP. This has enabled us to deliver passport and passport related services to our diaspora abroad efficiently. It is a matter of immense satisfaction that more than 1.22 crore passports were issued by the Passport Issuing Authorities in India and abroad during 2019.

Digital platform such as the *mPassport Seva* Mobile App for submission of passport applications and the citizen-friendly 'Apply from Anywhere' Scheme have eased the process for submission of passport applications by the citizens. Steps have been taken to make the operation function in a "less paper" environment. With the concerted efforts of both the Ministry of External Affairs and the state police authorities, the average time for police verification has come down to 16 days. We need to continue to identify ways of further simplifying the passport rules and increasing our efforts to provide passport services in a comfortable environment with wider accessibility and reliability.

Our Government is working to build a 'New India' where the benefits of modern technology reach the farthest end of society. I call upon all Passport Issuing Authorities in India and abroad to make conscious efforts to further improve the delivery of passport and passport-related services.

  
(Dr. S. Jaishankar)