

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1432
ANSWERED ON:30.07.2003
PROTEST LODGED BY PASSPORT OFFICERS
AJAY CHAKRABORTY

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the officers in the Regional Passport Offices all over the country observed a protest day by working an extra day on May 31, 2003, a Saturday to press for their demands; and

(b) if so, the details of their demands and the Government's reaction thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH)

(a) & (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in parts (a) & (b) of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1432 to be answered on 30.07.2003.

As part of the strike threat issued by the All India Passport Employees Association (AIPEA), some of its members observed a protest day by working on Saturday, May 31, 2003. The AIPEA is an association of non-gazetted employees of the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and does not have officers of the CPO on its membership.

2. The AIPEA has gone on strike on several occasions since its recognition in 1998. The agitation in May, 2003 had its origin in the refusal of the AIPEA to allow transfer of its members on the basis of orders issued in April, 2003. The AIPEA added several other demands subsequently relating to cadre review, departmental promotion committee meetings, formation of a Departmental Council, foreign postings, uniform office procedure, provision of uniforms, transfer matters, passport printing work, revision of recruitment rules and regularization of casual workers. Action had been taken or is being taken in these areas. There are also issues, which require consideration by other Ministries/Departments. On a number of areas, action is pending on the part of AIPEA.

3. In certain areas, such as cadre review and uniform office procedure, the attention of the office-bearers of AIPEA had been drawn to the fact that it would be difficult to make progress on these two matters unless the passport employees met the Staff Inspection Unit (SIU) productivity norms established by the Ministry of Finance. The AIPEA has consistently not accepted the SIU norms. This has been a major factor leading to considerable pendencies in the issue of passports in almost all Passport Offices and the resultant dissatisfaction of the passport seeking public.

4. In regard to transfer matters, the AIPEA has been insisting on transfers only within limited zones, which are highly unviable. This has resulted in overstaffing in some Passport Offices as well as understaffing in other Passport Offices. This factor has also led to a further increase in pendencies in issue of passports. It may be mentioned that in the case of the Regional Passport Office in Ahmedabad there are only 82 employees against the sanctioned strength of 134. As a result of this severe shortage of staff and the non-acceptance of SIU norms by the AIPEA, the pendency in the issuance of passports is more than 90,000 in RPO Ahmedabad.

5. On a number of occasions in the past AIPEA has given assurances to the Ministry that all pendencies would be cleared in a specific time frame and maintained at zero level. However, this has not happened and pendencies are instead increasing. The AIPEA has also linked the clearance of pendencies to the grant of financial incentives. It may be further mentioned that AIPEA in disregard of the Conduct Rules has gone on strike and go-slows and other forms of agitation. In addition to such action taken by AIPEA being illegal, the agitations of AIPEA have also severely hampered the work of Passport Offices and has resulted in falls in the output of Passport Offices, dissatisfaction among the passport seeking public, and projected the Passport Offices in a negative light to the general public. The activities of the AIPEA have not been helpful to the public seeking passports when the possession of passport is a basic right for all citizens of the country. The Government have nevertheless consistently taken a positive and constructive approach in its dealings with AIPEA as a result of which, the agitation in May, 2003 was called off by the AIPEA on May 31, 2003. The Government have now instituted a system of regular dialogue with the AIPEA with a view to expeditiously resolving outstanding issues.