

WAFAQI MOHTASIB (OMBUDSMAN)'S SECRETARIAT ISLAMABAD

INTRODUCTION

For the past few months people have been facing great hardship in the issuance of passports. There were extra-ordinary delays, and people with urgent need like patients going abroad for treatment, students seeking admission in foreign universities, some wanting work visas and many others with genuine needs, were going from pillar to post to get their passports. Thousands had paid urgent fees but had been waiting for months without success.

2. The acuteness of the problem remained un-addressed by the government agencies and a crises situation emerged. This situation was exploited by vested interests and passport offices in the country. These elements provided passports to those who paid extra, and thousands of applicants were forced to provide illegal gratification. The "tout" mafia which had been prevalent for many years took full advantage of this acute shortage, and started making millions from the distress of the common citizen, patient, students etc.

3. As the situation worsened over weeks and months, both the press and the electronic media highlighted the plight of people in their programmes and features. Some glimpses of the press and electronic media coverage are placed in Annexure.

4. When government agencies failed to take any corrective measures to provide any relief, Honourable Wafaqi Mohtasib was compelled to take a Suo Moto notice of this situation which had affected thousands of people in various parts of the country and abroad.

5. Therefore exercising powers under Article 18 of the Establishment of Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Order, 1983 (President's order No.1 of 1983), the Honourable Wafaqi Mohtasib constituted an inquiry committee comprising of the following members:-

- 1) Justice (R) Muhammad Raza Khan, Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Islamabad. (Former Chief Justice Peshawar High Court)
- 2) Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat. (Former Chief Secretary KPK & Sindh)
- 3) Mr. Wasim Kausar, Advisor, Regional Office, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Lahore. (Former I.G Police)
- 4) Mr. Shah Mahboob Alam, Associate Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Member/ Secretary. (Former D.G Intelligence Bureau)

6. The terms of reference (TORs) of the Committee were:-

- a) To inquire into the allegations about the mismanagement, corruption, and lack of managerial control in the MRP system.
- b) To probe into the causes of alleged delays in the awarding of contracts of the passport material.
- c) To trace the overall deficiencies in the passport issuance system of the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports.
- d) To recommend reforms and a course of action for streamlining the MRP system within the shortest period through removal of systemic deficiencies, neglect, mismanagement, and corruption in the department.

7. The Committee was asked to submit its report within three weeks.
8. The Committee met and decided on its methodology for this task. This involved interviews with key decision-makers in the Ministry of Interior and Directorate General Immigration and Passport. Presentations regarding TORs were asked of D.G. Immigration & Passport and administrative ministry, Interior Division. In the meanwhile D.G. Passport and Secretary Interior got transferred. So the perspectives of former and current Secretary Interior and D.G. Passport were obtained in a series of meetings with the committee. Midway through the proceedings, one important member Justice (R) Muhammad Raza, Advisor, (former Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court) was transferred to become Federal Secretary Law. In his place Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Advisor (former Chief Secretary KPK and Sindh) was made Chairman of the Enquiry Committee.
9. It was also decided by the committee that Regional Passport Offices would be visited by one member in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi to study the situation on the ground, the processes involved in obtaining a passport, the hardships faced by the common man. The visits were conducted to assess deficiencies and unnecessary red tape and thereby generate suggestions for process reengineering that would help alleviate the hardship of passport applicants as far as possible.
10. The committee requested Pakistan Embassies abroad, particularly countries with large Pakistani communities, to provide feedback on this issue. These are placed in Annexure. This large segment of our population – 9 to 10 million Pakistanis are living abroad and the committee elicited their problems and proposals. Thus some valuable input and feedback was made available to the committee.

11. The committee considered the following issues in light of the TORs:-
- i) The extent of maladministration, corruption and mismanagement.
 - ii) Causes of delays in the awarding of contracts for passport materials.
 - iii) Overall deficiencies in the issuance of passport system
 - iv) Reform for streamlining the system and removal of deficiencies, corruption and mismanagement in the department.

FINDINGS

The Committee as a first step called Mr. Zulfiqar Ahmed Cheema, D. G. Immigration and Passport for a briefing and his views on the TORs. A copy of his briefing is placed in Annexure. A summary of his briefing and contentions is given below:-

- (a) The delays in the issuance of Passports had affected lacs of passport applicants both in Pakistan and abroad and had emerged as a national crisis. In the first tender of 2009, a contract for 10 million laminated patches for five years duration was finalized. Due to manifold increase in demand of passports, supplies were exhausted within three years. Therefore, the Directorate of Passports approached Interior Division in June 2011 for the awarding of fresh tender. Despite reminders, the Interior Division responded in July 2012 and a protracted process ensued for the tenders. The undue delay allowed corrupt elements within the Department and outside to fleece people by demanding illegal gratifications to expedite issuance of passports. This dire situation could have been avoided if the D.G. Immigration & Passport had exercised the power given to him in the contract to extend for

another three years period or to acquire a supply of another five million laminates on the same terms and conditions.

- (b) The process of the awarding of fresh tender for laminate patches was adversely affected by the changes in specifications and composition of the Purchase Committee, deficiencies in the tender documents, prequalification process, departure from PPRA Rules on advertisement, and later, one of the bidders went to the Islamabad High Court against the tender process and was granted a stay order.
- (c) To alleviate the hardships, the Directorate had recently placed an order for 300,000 laminate patches from the existing supplier. An additional quantity of 1.5 million laminate patches were being procured for which a summary had been moved for approval by the Prime Minister.
- (d) While, Directorate of Immigration & Passport generated revenues to the tune of Rs. 13 billion annually, it depended on Finance Division for funds and had no financial powers to arrange supplies on its own.
- (e) It was important that those applicants who had paid the urgent fee for passports, but were not provided it within five days as prescribed, ought to be refunded the differences as the Department failed in its obligations.
- (f) Among the existing deficiencies, the new D.G. (I&P) pointed out lack of funds and powers, manpower shortage due to ban on recruitment, poor selection of officers/staff for foreign posting, lack of training, IT system

needing replacement, and inadequate production facility to cater to the increase in applications.

- (g) By way of corrective measures, D. G. (I & P) had introduced priority for the patients, students and those seeking visa for employment etc. He had started a crackdown on “touts” in various offices to check the menace of corruption.

The Committee met Khawaja Siddique Akbar, Ex-Secretary, Interior Division (now Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister) and discussed the TORs and got his views regarding the causes of delays in awarding of the contract, on corruption and mismanagement and suggestions for rectification of deficiencies in the passport issuance system. In substance, he was of the view that the delays were the result of criminal negligence and corruption by elements from top to bottom. Therefore, a thorough probe by NAB was required to fix responsibility and prosecute the culprits. By way of reforms and to prevent such situations in the future, he articulated his proposal for the establishment of an Immigration and Passport Authority. A copy of the draft Ordinance for this authority was obtained and is placed in Annexure. Mr. Shahid Hameed, Former Additional Secretary, Interior, who had been associated with the process of tender was also present and explained the difficulties in the awarding of contract and supported the idea of an authority which should be independent, empowered and responsible, like NADRA, which would ensure smooth operations for the issuance of passports in future.

Later, the Committee had a thorough discussion with Mr. Javed Iqbal, the present Secretary, Interior, who had taken over just a few days previously. He endorsed the position given in the presentation of the D. G. Immigration and

Passport, and supported legal action against people involved in corruption and maladministration by the relevant agencies i.e. NAB/FIA. As a long term solution, the establishment of Immigration & Passport Authority was a viable option which he fully endorsed.

MEETING WITH EX-D.G (I&P)

The committee met ex-D.G Immigration and Passport, Mr. Wajid Bukhari, to seek his input on the issues contained in our TOR. He explained that he had approached the Ministry of Interior in mid 2011 to initiate tendering process for purchase of laminated patches. After great deal of efforts, the Ministry allowed the tender proceedings after a year. Later on the whole process was piloted by Ministry of Interior and there were instructions that no tenders would be awarded without the approval of the Ministry of Interior. He felt that this process was actually delayed in the Ministry despite his repeated and periodic reminders. Among the causes of delay he pointed out the following factors:-

- i. The Security Printing Press had drastically reduced issuing of booklets owing to outstanding bills to the tune of Rs.600 to 700 millions, which had not been released by the Finance Division;
- ii. Against daily demand of 15000 booklets, the Directorate received only 5000 booklets per day. It was only through his hectic personal efforts that he managed to get Rs.200 millions from Finance Division for payment to the Security Printing Press;
- iii. He also pointed out the induction of the Chairman of FBR in the process of change of specifications and its scrutiny which was indeed extra ordinary as one cannot visualize the role of FBR in determining specifications for the laminated patches ;

The D.G informed the committee that during his tenure of 5 years, he was able to increase revenues from Rs. 5 billion to Rs. 14 billion and the number of passport issued increased from 5 million to 13 million.

He also claimed that he had increased the number of passport offices from 34 to 85 during his tenure. He had no objection to the holding of probe by FIA/NAB and fully supported the idea of creation of an authority on the pattern of NADRA for issuance of passport.

VISIT TO PASSPORT OFFICE

Mr. Shah Mahboob Alam, Secretary of the Committee, paid a visit to the office of DG of Immigration and Passport, Islamabad on 25th April 2013, where he was briefed by Mr. Zulfiqar Cheema, DG (I& P), Mr. Maqbool Ahmad Gondal, Project Director MRP, Mr. Asim Fawad Mirza, Manager Finance and Mr. Salman A. Chaudhry, Manager Logistics. During this visit some of the relevant original records revealing the chronology of events contributing to the delays in the issuance of the Passports were analyzed.

From perusal of the relevant documents the following facts were noticed:-

- The months – long delays in issuance of Passport are mainly due to shortage of passport laminates, which resulted in an unprecedented backlog of passports.
- No procurement planning was evident, as this process normally takes about 6 to 8 months. This issue, however, could have been resolved by D.G. (I & P) himself as he was authorized to do so; but for unknown reasons, he referred the case to M/o Interior in June 2011, seeking

decision whether the contract with M/s Opecs of USA, is to be renewed or a fresh tender is to be issued for the purchase of laminates.

- Since this issue was referred to the Ministry, and in the absence of any approval, several reminders were issued to the Ministry of Interior, to proceed in procuring the passport laminates. According to the available record, the Ministry responded as late as on 20.07. 2012.
- D.O. Letter was written by D.G. (I& P) to the Ministry of Interior on 09.02.2012 followed by reminders for expeditious action.
- D.G. (I & P) floated tender in daily Dawn, News and Jang 17.08.2012 and later, in "The Economist International" on 01.09.2012 giving closing date for tender as 02.10.2012. Since there were differences in the dates of this tender, PPRA objected, and another notice was published on 06.09.2012 in the press, with a new last date of submission of bids as 02.10.2012. In view of the above, Transparency International Pakistan (TIP) took exception as it was a deviation from PPRA rules.
- After a delay of almost two months, the tenders advertisement was reissued on 07.11.2012 and last date of submission for requirements for prequalification was fixed as 11.12.2012. Four out of five companies who participated in this bid were prequalified.
- The DG (I&P) was authorized to supervise the pre-qualification process, but the Minister reportedly supervised the entire prequalification process on 24.01.2013. The Secretary Ministry of Interior, approved the prequalification on 13.02.2013 and constituted a "Committee" for technical specifications on 20.02.2013, which approved the tender specifications on 01.03.2013.

- Tenders were supplied to four prequalified bids by E-Mail on 05.03.2013 for the submission of bids within three days, i.e. by 08.03.2013. Reportedly, this was done on the directive of the M/o Interior, which points to a violation of PPRA rules. Since tenders opening for international bidding require a minimum of 30 days to waive off this condition, the Managing Director PPRA was contacted to reduce the response time, but this request was turned down.
- It may be mentioned that the Committee observed that after the appointment of Mr. Zulfiqar Cheema as D.G. (I&P), a positive visible change was observed in the working of the Passport Department. The new D.G. has initiated disciplinary action against those reputed to be corrupt and inefficient. He had so far suspended about 35 officers and staff from his Department.
- The committee member, on his visit, observed the conspicuous absence of Passport agents from the vicinity of the main Passport Office in Islamabad. It was also learnt that the Department had now launched a crackdown with the help of the police to apprehend those elements who had been financially fleecing passport applicants and were in co-hostwith the officers and staff of the Department.

The following anomalies were noticed in the awarding of contract for the supply of laminated patches:-

- Captain (R) Farid a BS-18 Officer was appointed on 13.01.2013 as Deputy Project Director and Mr. Maqbool Gondal, Project Director was sidelined from the Procurement Committee. The new Deputy Project

Director was entrusted with all the functions pertaining to procurements.

- Incidentally, one day before the issuance of tender, the D.G. (I& P) is reported to have been informed by the Ministry of Interior that technical specification of the tenders were to be shown to Mr. Ali Arshad Hakeem, Chairman NADRA and Mr. Shahid Hameed who headed the Committee to approve Technical Specifications. The Committee changed the original technical specification of 25 microns to 16 microns, which was made by only one company. This can be seen as a departure from PPRA Rules and could be termed as “mis-procurement”.
- An attempt was also made by the Technical Committee to add the condition of lamination machine to be provided by the suppliers as part of the technical specifications. This equipment was offered by one Company only, as free and complimentary, with the order for the supply of laminated patches. This would have compelled the Department to purchase future laminating machines from the same company, which produces patches of 16 microns. The laminating machines, if purchased from others sources, would not have worked with these specifications, and this change would have favoured only one party.
- Unusual haste was noticed to open tenders on 8th March and later, on 11th March 2013 which were coincidentally close to the expiry of the Government. This departure from PPRA Rules was consequently

objected to by three Companies, who insisted on a 30 days mandatory time period.

- **KARACHI VISIT**

- Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan, Additional Secretary, Wafaqi Mohtasib's Secretariat, Regional Office, Karachi was deputed to visit the Passport Office Karachi. The highlights of his report are as follows:-
- A detailed meeting was held with Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Talpur, Acting Director/ Incharge of the Passport Office, Karachi, and Mr. Khalid Musharraf Zubairi, Incharge Technical Officer. After discussions and review of the whole process following important points came to light which are main cause of public complaint:-
 - (i) Huge backlog of about 150,000 passports overdue for delivery.
 - (ii) Cumbersome process of submission of applications, processing and delivery. Three stages of public interface causing inconvenience.
 - (iii) Over crowdedness due to centralization of passport office, catering for four districts of Karachi with daily public turnout of approximately 5000 to 6000 persons.
- At present the process of issuance of passports is centralized at Islamabad. Books are printed at the Pakistan Security Printing Corporation (PSPC) delivered to Karachi office which is sent to Islamabad by TCS. Passports are printed at Islamabad and then again mailed back through TCS to Karachi Office for delivery. This process can be shortened if the provincial hubs are allowed to print the passports at their offices and issued from there. This will reduce the

time and cost and can be delivered to the public in lesser time than is taken at present.

- (a) Firstly, deposit of fees is allowed in only two branches of NBP (PP Office Saddar and Awami Markaz Branch). This needs to be changed and public be allowed the facility of payment of fees in any branch of NBP. This is possible by having online connection of all NBP branches with the Passport Office servers. This will eliminate the role of agents to a greater extent.
- (b) Secondly, more offices need to be opened in all the districts of Karachi so that the people do not have convergence at one premises. This will provide convenience to the public and make the workload manageable for the staff of these Passport Offices.
- (c) Thirdly, local Police and FIA be directed to take strict actions against the agents loitering outside the office and also take to task those officials conniving with these elements.
- (d) A full fledged Director Passports should be posted as soon as possible so that a responsible tier which is missing since long may be added to create better administrative control, and to reduce the burden from the existing Deputy Director working as Acting Director.
- For long term remedy, the Passport Office should be converted into an independent Passport Authority on the patron of NADRA to generate its own resources and to use them for printing of passports. This will improve its efficiency and effectiveness in the service delivery. At present, it is dependent on budgetary allocations and releases,

which are often delayed affecting adversely the performance of the Agency.

REPORTS RECEIVED FROM FOREIGN MISSIONS

Pakistani Missions abroad were also asked to send gist of complaints faced by the overseas Pakistanis, at their places of posting. Details are placed in Annexure. The following Foreign Missions responded and the gist of their complaints are as under:-

1. **London:** Dissatisfaction and resentment amongst the Pakistani diaspora exist and due to inordinate delay in issuance of their passports. The UK based Pakistanis are facing the following problems:-
 - (i) Unable to travel to Pakistan or aboard.
 - (ii) Impeded to apply for extension of their UK resident permits.
2. **Abu Dhabi:** Delay in the delivery of passports both urgent and normal is affecting the contractual relationship of Pakistani employees with their companies.
3. **Shanghai:** Chinese authorities issued visas only for the duration of validity of passports. Due to difficulties/delays in obtaining MRPs in Pakistan, Pakistanis living in the Consular jurisdiction of Shanghai are facing serious problems.
4. **Canberra:** There are excessive delays in printing of MRPs. Maximum delivery time prescribed for a normal MRP is 12 days, whereas it's been more than four months since the last normal MRP was received in this Mission. This mission has a backlog of 563, normal MRPs. Even deliveries of Urgent MRPs, with prescribed maximum delivery time of

five days, have not been done for the last seven weeks. 2013 urgent MRP cases are pending with the Mission.

5. **Doha**: Pakistani citizens in Doha, Qatar are facing difficulties due to non-receipt of urgent and normal MRPs from Pakistan as it is taking extraordinary process time for the applicants. The Mission has a backlog of over 4500 MRPs since 5th December 2012. Similarly, more than 3,000 MRPs were sent to Islamabad after receiving urgent fee from the applicants. The matter was raised with concerned authorities and reminders were sent, by the mission to expedite issuance of MRPs. However, so far approximately only 300 urgent passports have been processed and sent to this Mission.
6. **Jeddah**: The Consulate General is continuously receiving reports about the delay in delivery of passports in both categories – ordinary as well as urgent. In case of ordinary applications submitted beyond 26.11.2012, no passport has been printed so far. With regard to the passports of other categories which were due to be delivered on 20.02.2013, those have not been received as yet. If this persists, the applicants will face serious consequences in terms of financial penalties for not having Iqamas due to delay in submission of valid passports.
7. **Riyadh**: Pakistani expatriate community in the Kingdom is very much dependent on their passports for processing all formalities relating to their stay, Iqamas, children, education, medical facilities etc. In the absence of a valid passport their stay is rendered illegal in the

Kingdom. At present, around 26000 ordinary or urgent passports are awaited by applicants at Riyadh as well as similar number in Jeddah.

8. **Muscat:** Currently, the size of our community residing in Oman has crossed over to 234,000. Majority of Pakistani nationals were not holding Machine Readable Passports and were facing serious difficulties for their travel within GCC countries for employment, business, recreation and performance of Hajj/Umra purposes. Since the start of our MRP operations, during the year 2011-2012, the Mission has issued a total of 53,522 passports. The issuance of MRP passports from the Mission has given little respite to large number of Pakistan nationals. On daily average basis, 250 to 350 applicants visit the Mission to acquire MRP related consular services. The delay in receiving passports with urgent fee or normal fee is another problems faced by Pakistan nationals. As per procedure adopted by Immigration & Passport Directorate, the delivery time for normal passport is 25 days and for urgent passport delivery time is 12 days. Since July 2012, the Mission is facing serious difficulties in receiving passports as per procedure adopted by Immigration & Passport Directorate. We have not received ordinary passport since December 2012, which is causing serious difficulty for our nationals.
9. **Bahrain:** There are about 60,000 Pakistanis living in Bahrain and are remitting substantial amount to Pakistan in the shape of foreign exchange. A large number of Pakistanis have established their own businesses in Bahrain and many Pakistanis are holding executive positions in different multinational banks and companies. They have to

travel frequently to different countries in connection with their business. Most of the countries do not allow entry on manual passports. Due to delay in delivery of MRP, these Pakistanis are facing problems in travelling and sometimes their jobs are at stake.

10. **Bradford**: Prolonged delay in delivery of MRPs is the biggest problem. The urgent passports are being received from Pakistan after approximately 35-45 days as against the stipulated period of 5 days while normal passports are taking 50-70 days as against the stated period of 12 days. This is causing serious problems for the Overseas Pakistanis who are in urgent need of Passports.
11. **Toronto**: The urgent cases were delayed by two months while ordinary passports were received as late as six months compared to previously 10 and 21 days.
12. **Los Angeles**: The receipt of Machine Readable Passports from Islamabad is often delayed for months, resulting in inconvenience, complaints and frustration by the applicants, which is usually vented at the missions abroad.
13. **Kuwait**: Pakistanis are facing problems in international travelling due to non-delivery of MRP on due date. Similarly, non-delivery of MRP on due date hampers smooth renewal of Residence Permits of Pakistanis in Kuwait.
14. **Rome**: The stipulated delivery time for passports on an urgent and normal basis is 5 days and 12 days respectively. The actual time being taken is approximately two months and four months respectively. As of today (26th April 2013), a total of 3762 passport applications have been

processed by the MRP Section of this Mission which has not been received back. This figure represents the backlog of MRP passports being faced by this Mission.

15. **Vancouver, Canada:** The Machine Readable Passport (MRP) system was installed at this Consulate General in October 2012 but so far no staff member has been posted to this Mission to run this system. This Mission's continued inability to issue MRPs is causing grave difficulties for the Pakistanis applying for renewal of passports. Currently only Consulate General in Toronto is processing MRPs. The applicants frequently complain and express frustration over having to travel to Toronto in case they need a Machine Readable Passport. It may be mentioned here that travel from Canadian western provinces to Toronto is not only time taking but is very expensive and hence difficult to afford for most of the working class families with modest income. A number of countries including Saudi Arabia and UAE no longer issue visas on manual/hand written passports. Pakistanis desirous of performing Hajj or Umrah are especially affected by this as they are left with no choice but to go to Toronto to apply for an MRP.

VIDEO PROGRAMS/DISCUSSION/NEWS OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

PEMRA was asked to send Video Clips/Reports aired by TV Channels, to this Office and in response it sent the recording of following Video Programs/Discussions/News regarding this issue faced by the people. The details are placed in annexure.

1. Khabar Naak, Geo News, dated 02.03.2013

2. Aaj Kamran Khan K Sath, Geo News, dated 13.03.2013
3. Aaj Kmrn Khan K Sath, Geo News, dated 14.03.2013
4. Passport News, Express News, dated 12.04.2013
5. Passport News, Dawn News, dated 03.04.2013
6. Hasb-e-Hal, Dunya News, dated 04.04.2013
7. Hasba-e-Hal, Dunya News, dated 05.04.2013
8. Bottom Line, Aaj News, dated 06.04.2013
9. Hasb-e-Hal, Dunya News, dated 07.04.2013
10. Passport News, PTV News, 11.04.2013
11. Passport News, ARY News, dated 12.04.2013
12. Hasb-e-Hal, Dunya News, dated 14.04.2013

PRESS CLIPPINGS

It may be worth mentioning that the problem of delay in issuance of passports was widely covered by the information and electronic media, which was highlighted by Geo TV, Express News and others. List of newspapers, reports and TV coverage is attached as Annex.

CONCLUSIONS

Serious anomalies were noticed in the awarding of contract which point to undue and extraneous factors impacting on the decision makers at various levels to help a party. Changes were made in specifications, in the composition of the

technical committee and in the dates for submission of tender documents, in clear departure from the PPRA Rules.

The resultant shortage allowed elements in the department and outside to mint money. Hence, poor citizens were deprived of millions of rupees through illegal and corrupt practices. No urgency was felt at any level to alleviate the hardship or take remedial measures in time. This shows an alarming apathy and callousness on the part of key decision makers.

Among the causes of delay was an unnecessary and purposely protracted process of awarding of contract. Frequent changes in the specifications and composition of the technical committee coupled with lodging of suit in the Islamabad High Court and its stay order can be easily cited to support the above assessment. A lot of hardship and resultant corruption could be prevented if the DG (I&P) had exercised his option allowed in the previous agreement. i.e. to renew contract for additional 3 years for the supply of additional five million laminates on the same terms and conditions.

The following stark deficiencies came to the notice of the committee:-

- i. The Directorate of Immigration & Passport generated revenues worth Rs. 13 billion annually without financial powers to procure materials. It had to approach the Finance Division through its administrative ministry (Interior Division) each time for purchase of material and supplies.
- ii. Due to the Ban imposed, the Directorate was unable to hire additional man power to meet the ever increasing demand for passports.

- iii. It had an outdated I.T system which needed replacement; furthermore, there was an absence of trained and specialist staff for its smooth operations.

The Committee decided to take a macro view of the whole issue – Systemic failures, deficiencies, and to develop reform proposals for the way forward. The areas of weakness, in institutions and processes are clearly identified for improvement through a feasible reform agenda. Though, through discreet inquiries and feedback from staff, criminality of some elements was evident, establishing intents, connecting people to crime, processing sufficient evidence for white collar crimes requires special expertise and legal mandate. The committee's findings and recommendations regarding individuals in this context, could involve it with NAB/ FIA and Court proceedings which was not considered appropriate for the Mohtasib Office.

The committee was mindful that the whole issue of the award of contract was subjudice, with the Islamabad High Court. Therefore examining areas and delving into the role of some individuals was left for the court to decide. The committee concerned itself with the institutional roles, failures, gaps and to suggest ways to deal with these effectively for the future to prevent such avoidable crisis. It is a matter of profound satisfaction that all key institutional heads i.e. Secretary Interior, and D.G (I&P), both former and current endorse these proposals and a consensus is critical for proper implementation.

The Committee is of the view that above recommendations would provide a robust response to the situation, alleviate the sufferings of people affected by providing some immediate relief, and prevent development of such crisis in future.

These proposals are cost effective, feasible and actionable given the widespread agreement by key institutional players.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee, after due deliberations, has the following recommendations.

1. There is clear evidence of corrupt practices involving elements at various levels. It requires a thorough probe by NAB to establish criminality and prosecute the real culprits. This proposal is fully supported by the former as well as the present Secretary Interior and DGs.
2. The Establishment of a Passport and Immigration Authority on the pattern of NADRA, as supported by the Directorate and Interior Division, is a durable and feasible solution. A Board of Directors of this Authority should include officer not below BS-21 belonging to Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Overseas Pakistanis and Finance. It must be autonomous, financially and administratively empowered and be able to work on professional lines. The level of revenues can make it self-sustaining and in fact allow surpluses to the Govt. The main features of NADRA should help fine tune the draft ordinance.
3. The committee was of the firm view that those applicants who had paid urgent fees, but were not provided passports within the prescribed period deserve refund of the difference. The Interior Division in consultation with Finance Division should immediately work out a

simple procedure of refund. This is the minimum, which the troubled people deserved for their undue and acute hardship.

The Committee would like to place on record its profound satisfaction and sincere appreciation for the cooperation extended by all the stakeholders, institutions involved; i.e. Secretary Interior and Director Generals (I&P), both former and current incumbents.