

Pakistan consulate to start evening shift from Sunday

Decision taken due to heavy rush for passport renewal

- By Ashfaq Ahmed, Chief Reporter
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Dubai: The Pakistan Consulate General in Dubai will start an evening shift from July 18 to cope with the heavy rush of people applying for renewal of their passports.

The evening shift will be from 4.30pm to 7.30pm. "Applicants can now submit their applications for passports during both the morning and evening shifts," said a statement issued by the consulate.

The consulate will also soon start an appointment system for applicants to help them save time.

"The appointments will be given to applicants, especially families, the elderly and those who cannot afford to come during morning shifts due to their job commitments," said a senior official.

Dedicated phone

He said the consulate will inform the community about a dedicated telephone number for appointments. The consulate is also preparing to launch a website to provide information about the services provided and also to give appointments.

The move will facilitate Pakistani community members who now have to apply for biometric machine readable passports (MRPs) as the consulate has stopped issuing the old manual passports from July 1. The decision has led to a huge rush at the consulate.

The consulate spokesperson advised all Pakistanis to apply for the MRPs to replace their existing manual passport at the time of renewal. However, they can continue to use the old passport until it expires.

The passport sections currently receive applications from 7.30 am to 11 am on working days from Sunday to Thursday. Also, the number of tokens in the morning shift has been restricted to 400.

Bus service

The consulate has decided to start a bus service every fortnight on Fridays for applicants from Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Umm Al Quwain. The schedule will be announced soon and the community members in the respective emirates will be informed through Pakistan social centres and schools.

The consulate spokesperson said that efforts are also under way to reduce the delivery of urgent MRP to three days and normal to two weeks.

Authorities concerned in Pakistan have been requested to reconsider the long procedural requirements in obtaining national identity cards a prerequisite for applicants to apply for the MRP. A courier service for home delivery of the documents including MRP has already been introduced at the consulate.

Currently, it takes around 15 days to get urgent passports and some two to three months to get passports with an ordinary fee. There is no longer a facility for urgent passport issuance the same day. Meanwhile, visitors to the consulate have been complaining of lack of room to accommodate applicants.

"There is no room even to stand in the passport section and people have to stand in queues in the scorching heat," said an applicant.

He said the consulate should expand the facility with more counters and manpower because the current facilities are not enough. Women and children suffer the most as there is no separate seating area for them.

According to a consulate official, an average of 800 to 900 applicants visit the consulate every working day to get various services including passport renewals, national identity cards, attestation of documents and affidavits, in addition to welfare and visa services.

According to a senior consulate officer, the consulate sent a request last year to expand the consulate building to accommodate the huge number of applicants but they are still waiting for the approval.

Fees document

- Urgent machine readable passports (MRP) costs Dh294 for 36-page passport
- Dh594 for 72-page passport
- Ordinary passports cost Dh155 for 36 pages and Dh330 for 72 pages