



**TRANSPARENCY  
INTERNATIONAL-PAKISTAN**

5-C, 2nd Floor, Khayaban-e-Ittehad, Phase VII,  
Defence Housing Authority, Karachi.  
Tel: (92-21)-35390408, 35390409, Fax: 35390410  
E-mail: ti.pakistan@gmail.com  
Website: www.transparency.org.pk

8<sup>th</sup> April, 2013

Honorable Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry,  
Chief Justice of Pakistan,  
Supreme Court of Pakistan,  
Constitutional Avenue, Islamabad.

**Attn: Human Rights Cell**

**Sub: Prayer for taking SUO MOTO action on Delay in Passport Delivery.**

May it please your Lordship,

My Lord, Transparency International Pakistan wishes to place on record the article appearing in the newspaper 'Daily Dawn' today April 8, 2013. (Annex A). TI Pakistan requests the Honorable Chief Justice to take Suo Moto action on the inordinate delay in providing passports to the Citizen by Passport Office, Ministry of Interior and action against those responsible for the delay and corruption.

Transparency International Pakistan is striving for across the board application of Rule of Law, which is the only way to stop corruption.

An indulgence of the Honorable Court in the matter is prayed for.

Yours Obediently,

Syed Adil Gilani,  
Adviser

Encl: Annex A



## Passports' backlog: Artificial delay

**ACCORDING** to a probe carried out by the interior ministry and the Federal Investigation Agency, the long delay in issuing and renewing passports is largely due to bending of the rules by officials. Hundreds of thousands of applicants are suffering on account of what appears to be a deliberate delay in the bidding process for lamination patches for passports. Those responsible include officials in the interior ministry and the passports' directorate — they had apparently wanted to award the contract to favourites without following the procurement rules. Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court has stayed the awarding of the contract for lamination patches to a US firm as a French contender has challenged the bidding process. Around 700,000 passport applications are pending, affecting Pakistanis from all strata of society.

Students wanting to study abroad are affected, as are businessmen and those who need to undertake emergency travel. The backlog has put overseas Pakistanis in a particularly difficult situation as millions of citizens work abroad. As foreign governments have strict immigration laws, the expiry of a passport can mean job loss and a one-way ticket home. Some missions in the Gulf states have started to manually renew passports, but this is a temporary solution. Besides, manually extending the validity of passports does not solve the problem of first-time applicants. There are also disturbing reports that applications routed through passport 'agents' — a euphemism for touts — are being given priority by officials after applicants pay more than the notified fees. Normal booklets are officially supposed to be issued in 12 days while urgent passports should be ready in five days. But due to the current backlog it is taking up to two months for urgent passports and double that time (and more) for normal booklets, thus making it difficult for passport applicants to make travel plans.

The caretaker set-up needs to resolve this issue on an urgent basis, while it is hoped the IHC will expedite the hearing of the case so that the contract can be legally awarded and the procurement of lamination patches proceeds, keeping in mind the suffering of the public. In the meantime, the interior ministry needs to come up with a plan to clear the backlog as soon as possible; one thing it can do is to crack down on the agents and their accomplices on the inside so that only citizens who lodge their applications through legal channels have their passports issued. Those responsible for creating this artificial shortage and sabotaging what was a relatively efficient system must also be hauled up.