

Senate panel takes notice of complaints against private firm's visa service

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior Rehman Malik has taken notice of complaints against Gerry's Visa Services and sought reports on the matter from the Ministry of Interior, Passport Office and National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra).

"The committee has received a number of complaints regarding Gerry's Visa Service. Considering the complaints, it has been decided to hold an inquiry regarding handing over of passports and other documents to the private company," Mr Malik said in a statement on Tuesday.

He said that as per law no person or company was authorised to hold passport of any Pakistani. "How has a private company been collecting passports of people and keeping them with it?" he asked.

"Moreover the company stores national data on its computers which is not allowed at all. It is a matter of concern... that a private company has national data," Mr Malik, who served as interior minister under the PPP government, said.

He further said that as per international laws and rules of Interpol, passports and other national documents could not be sent by post.

"That is why the Ministry of Interior, director general Passport and Nadra chairman have been directed to submit detailed reports regarding Gerry's Visa Service," he said.

A number of embassies of different countries have hired the company due to which people hand over their passports to the company and after stamping of the visa, or in case of rejection, passports are returned to it.

The company has offices in several cities and people hand over their passports at offices of the company rather than visiting Islamabad to apply for a visa.

Though the company could not be contacted for comments, according to the information available on its website, Gerry's is a pioneer in visa facilitation services and has been working in Pakistan since 1998.

"Our heritage of quality client servicing and delivering the best to the clients have made us the first choice for visa services for a majority of the embassies and consulates today. Our custom-made visa application end-to-end process solutions are exceptional in every aspect.

"We follow a series of highly advanced, precise and streamlined processes to ensure our clients' absolute security and confidentiality," the company claims.

"Due to our unrivalled experience, as well as, the flexibility, scalability, and resilience, we are serving 28 foreign missions and stand as the largest company in Pakistan for visa facilitation services. Another significantly important milestone that advocates our global vision is the client servicing and facilitation for Pakistan High Commission in the UK. Since October 2012 Gerry's is not only providing its services to the travellers to Pakistan in general, but is also facilitating them and, the Pakistani community residing abroad," the website claims.

"Besides the portfolio of client servicing, Gerry's is also the licensee of FedEx, a courier and logistics service operating in Pakistan. It owns and manages various business activities including the operations, offices, fleet and service centres and has strategically located hubs in Pakistan," it adds.