

14 March 2011-The Department of Foreign Affairs-Office of Consular Affairs (DFA-OCA) said today that maintenance work and equipment upgrades in the ePassport Personalization Center at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) facility are ongoing.

As a result, delays in passport releases are to be expected, especially in Regional Consular Offices (RCO) and at various Embassies and Consulates General. The delay could last for a few more weeks.

It has also coincided with the seasonal increases in passport applications as a significant number of Filipinos are travelling abroad for the summer season.

At present, applicants would have to wait an additional 10 working days before their passports could be released.

"The DFA will work hard to ensure that those with urgent travel, especially overseas workers, are accommodated," Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Jaime Victor Ledda said.

"We would like to request those without immediate travel plans to defer their applications until the situation has normalized. Those with expiring passports who cannot forego their travel may opt to apply for an extension of the validity of their existing passports instead of applying for renewal," he added.

The DFA has been working closely with the BSP, which produces the passport booklets, to resolve the issue and that it is confident that it would be able to reduce the waiting period in the coming weeks.

It also appealed for the understanding of the travelling public, particularly those in the provinces.

"We apologize for the inconvenience caused by the delays. We would like to assure the public that we are exerting our best efforts to resolve the issues as soon as possible," Assistant Secretary Ledda said. END