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and the spectrum of services under this contract include accepting documents on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Afghanistan, attestation/ apostile services, biometric data collection and value-added services like translation.

It is to be noted that BLS International has been engaged by the Punjab government for providing citizen services through "Sewa Kendras". There are over 2,100 fully functional "Sewa Kendras", covering 22 districts of Punjab, which had a footfall of 8 million in the last one year. The Afghanistan contract came following the successful implementation of the e-governance model in Punjab.

Speaking to *The Sunday Guardian*, Shikhar Aggarwal, joint MD of BLS International, said that the "Sewa Kendras" are offering citizen services under the largest e-governance model, which is in tune with the Digital India initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "One can just walk down to the nearest 'Sewa Kendra', which is like a one-stop solution for rendering various applications and documents renewal services related to birth and death certificates, bus passes, electricity bill payment, marriage registration, arms licence, identify card services and affidavit attestation, GST services, payment of property tax, etc, on a nominal charge, fixed by the state government," he said. The company is in talks with other states where such services could be provided.

The company is a partner for visa processing services for over a decade to 29 Diplomatic Missions worldwide. Last year, the company was awarded the contract by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Spain, with a value of Euro 175 million to provide visa outsourcing services to the Embassy of Spain worldwide. It is the first Indian company to secure a visa outsourcing contract from a major European Union nation. There are 124 visa application centres with the latest being in New York, to support the embassies and consulates of Spain around the world.

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### Indian company will provide citizen services in Afghanistan

By NAVTAN KUMAR | New Delhi | 11 November, 2017

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**A**n Indian company has bagged a prestigious contract for providing citizen services in Afghanistan.

The company—BLS International—has entered into a contract with the Embassy of Afghanistan in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for providing citizen services through registration of Afghan citizens. Under the agreement, the company will open application centres in UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia for the Embassy of Afghanistan.

Registered citizens can exercise a wide range of rights such as to property, privacy, freedom of movement and obtaining passport, a person's eligibility to vote and free choice of place of residence, as well as access to social services like education, health care and retirement pension.

This is the first Indian company which has been engaged for providing these e-governance related services outside the country. The Afghanistan government is creating a database of its nationals in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) nations and the spectrum of services under this contract include accepting documents on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Afghanistan, attestation/ apostille services, biometric data collection and value-added services like translation.

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