

Changi Airport to soon go passport-free

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Singapore : Starting 2024, Singapore's Changi Airport will introduce automated immigration clearance, which will allow passengers to depart the city-state without passports, using only biometric data.

"Singapore will be one of the first few countries in the world to introduce automated, passport-free immigration clearance," Communications Minister Josephine Teo announced during a parliament session on September 18, during which several changes to the country's Immigration Act were passed.

Biometric technology, along with facial recognition software, is already in use to some extent in Changi Airport at automated lanes at immigration checkpoints.

However, the upcoming changes will "reduce the need for passengers to repeatedly present their travel documents at touch points and allow for

more seamless and convenient processing," Teo said.

Biometrics will be used to create a "single token of authentication" that will be employed at various automated touch points - from bag drops to immigration clearance and boarding - eliminating the need for physical travel documents like boarding passes and passports.

However, passports will still be required for many countries outside of Singapore that do not offer passport-free clearance, Teo stressed.

Often ranked the world's best airport and also one of the busiest, Singapore's Changi Airport serves more than 100 airlines that fly to 400 cities in around 100 countries and territories worldwide.

It handled 5.12 million passenger movements in June, crossing the 5 million mark for the first time since January 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic struck.

The airport is a destination in itself and currently has four terminals.

It is set to expand, adding a fifth to cater to the growing number of travellers.

Changi Airport is projecting a return to pre-pandemic levels of passenger and air traffic and expressed hopes that the upcoming biometric system will help make passenger flows smoother.

"Our immigration systems must be able to manage this high and growing volume of travelers efficiently and provide a positive clearance experience, while ensuring our security," Teo said.