

India to launch e-passport soon

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 25 January, 2022



Dhaka: India is ready to issue passports embedded with chips containing the holder's biometric data in an effort to boost security and ensure smooth international travel for its citizens.

Sanjay Bhattacharya, Secretary of the Consular, Passport and Visa Division, India's Ministry of External Affairs, recently announced the "next-gen e-passport" will launch "soon," without giving an exact timeline.

Bhattacharya said the passports will comply with the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, a specialised United Nations agency.

According to ICAO, over 100 states and other entities such as the UN currently issue e-passports, with over 490 million such documents in circulation.

E-passports speed up passage through immigration counters at airports and ports and cut the risk of duplication and data tampering.

India has already issued about 20,000 e-passports to diplomats and other officials under a

pilot project that began in 2008. It is now extending that to other citizens.

The External Affairs Ministry has a long-term contract with software maker Tata Consultancy Services, which since 2008 has helped the government transform the delivery of passport-related services by digitising processes.

In a statement, the company said it will "develop innovative new solutions to enable the issuance of e-passports and further enhance the citizen experience using technologies such as biometrics, artificial intelligence, advance data analytics, chatbots, auto-response, natural language processing, and the cloud."

India issued over 10 million passports a year between 2017 and 2019, dropping to 6.8 million in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

- T