

Indian Passports : Recent Developments & its impact !!

Kolkata/Partha Roy: A special Session on "Indian Passport : Recent Development" was organised by Calcutta Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata on 2nd May 2023 to spread awareness amongst Indian Passport holders on evolving changes in issuance of passport as well as evolving strength of Indian Passport and its increasing positive image globally.

Shri Ashish Middha (IFS), Regional Passport Officer, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India addressed the special session. Ashish Middha explained various steps initiated by Government of India to ease issuance of passport to any applicant of passport without compromising security issues. Middha mentioned anyone can get passport approximately within three weeks if all relevant & correct documents are submitted while applying.

Middha added all passports are governed by The Passport Act of 1967 and its subsequent amendments. The present Passport Act 1967 came into force on June 24, 1967 which is now celebrated as Passport Seva Divas.

Middha mentioned verification of documents has been modified with self-verification process while submitting



application for passport by any applicant. Middha also mentioned in recent development police verification system of the applicant has been liberalised. Passport applications are generally processed in Ordinary and Tatkal mode with different applications fee structures and processing time.

Another recent development is anyone can apply for passport from any place but relevant pre police verification will be carried out on the address mentioned in relevant documents.

Indian Passports are issued through network of 36 Passports (POs), 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs), 428 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs), 190 Indian Missions/Posts abroad. All passport offices issues machine readable passports as per the guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation

(ICAO). Indian passport ranks 85th on the Henley Passport ranking in 2023 with easy access to 59 countries, a few places higher than 2022 when the Indian passport was ranked 87. But the number of countries Indian passport holders can go easily has decreased by one. In 2022, there were 60 countries where the Indian passport allowed easy access.

The biggest change this time for the Indian passport has been losing visa-free access to Serbia. Starting January 1, 2023, Indian passport holders now need to apply for a visa to enter Serbia unlike earlier which allowed visa-free travel to the country for 90 days. Increasing migration has been cited as the reason.

Earlier, Shri Kishan Kumar Kejriwal, President of Calcutta Chamber of Commerce while welcoming the august gathering mentioned issuance and

Delivery of Passport services have seen considerable improvement in recent years as it is time bound and a lot more organised owing to automation and successful public-private partnership. Shri Kejriwal mentioned issuance of e-passport with embedded chips as announced by Finance Minister in Union Budget of 2022-23 will qualitatively improve data management and tracking of issued passports.

Shri Kejriwal also announced formation of Calcutta Chamber of Commerce's ladies wing under leadership of Smt. Manjula Jain.

Shri Hari Shankar Halwasiya Senior Vice President of Calcutta Chamber of Commerce mentioned ease of issuance of Passport will facilitate foreign travel by Indians from every of section society whether for work, Business or leisure while giving vote of thanks.

Indian Passports come in Navy Blue, White, Maroon, and Orange

colours. Indian Passports have four different categories which can be identified by its colour of cover (jacket): Navy Blue (Regular), White (Government Official but non Diplomatic), Maroon (Diplomatic status holders and top ranking Government official), Orange (ECR Holders). Indian Passport with navy blue cover jacket is issued for regular travel as well as business related and leisure travel.

The ECR (Emigration Check Required) category basically applies to the unskilled labour force across the country, who apply for work-related visas in foreign countries.

The use of passports was introduced to the British Raj after the First World War. The Indian Passport Act of 1920 required the use of passports, established controls on the foreign travel of Indians, and foreigners travelling to and within the Presidencies and Provinces of British India.

Mamata B Amartya S

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has asked state ministers to begin a sit-in outside Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's residence in