

PUBLIC ADVISORY

ON PHASING OUT OF HANDWRITTEN PASSPORTS

Indian citizens living in India and abroad are advised to urgently replace their handwritten passports with machine-readable passports. **A deadline of the 24th November, 2015 for globally phasing out of all non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs) was set up by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).** Thereafter, foreign Governments may deny Visa or entry to any person travelling on a non-Machine Readable Passport.

2. The Government of India has been issuing Machine Readable Passports since 2001. The Passports, however, issued before 2001 and particularly those issued during mid 1990s with a validity of 20 years will fall in the category of non-MRPs. By the end of July 2016, it was estimated that there are approximately 2.10 lakh handwritten passports still in circulation. Approximately 6.20 crore Indians hold valid passports.

3. Indian citizens residing in India and abroad and holding such passports with validity beyond 24th November 2015 are advised to apply for re-issue of their passports immediately in order to avoid any inconvenience in obtaining valid visa or international travel. Needless to mention, travel on ICAO- compliant machine readable passports will facilitate hassle-free and safe journey.

4. All Passport Issuing Authorities have instituted a simple and fast-track procedure for renewal of passports. For more details related to passport services, website – **www.passportindia.gov.in** - or the National Call Centre **(1800-258-1800 - Toll Free)** may be accessed. Indian citizens living abroad should visit the website of respective Indian Mission/Post.

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