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Bangladesh: Issuance procedure of Bangladeshi passports

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Introduction

The following note describes the issuance procedure for Bangladeshi passports. The note also includes a brief description of the Bangladeshi e-passport introduced in 2019.

The note is based on information collected during an interview conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in November 2018 and from open sources.

Issuance of Bangladeshi passports

The Bangladesh Passport Order of 1973 and the Bangladesh Passport Rules of 1974 regulate the issuance of passports in Bangladesh.¹ Passports are issued by the Department of Immigration and Passports, which is administratively under the Bangladeshi Ministry of Home Affairs.²

Bangladeshi citizens residing in Bangladesh can apply for a passport at one of the 70 official passport issuing offices across Bangladesh, whereas Bangladeshi nationals living abroad can apply for a passport at the Bangladeshi diplomatic missions. All issued passports are printed and personalised in Dhaka, from where the passports are distributed to the offices or missions abroad.³

When applying for a passport, the following documents must be submitted: 1) a properly filled passport application form; 2) a national ID card or birth certificate, containing the applicant's 17 digit personal identification number; 3) one stamp sized photo; 4) two copies of passport sized picture.⁴ The police's passport expedition takes fingerprints and facial image of the applicant.⁵ According to Lifos, the local police of the area where the application is submitted do a follow-up check on the applicant's identity by verifying the personal details submitted in the passport application. The police submits a report before the passport can be issued.⁶

¹ UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 178.

² UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 178.

³ Representative of the Bangladeshi authorities, Dhaka, November 2018.

⁴ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 9; UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 179.

⁵ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 9.

⁶ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 9; UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 180.

The timeframe of obtaining a passport varies depending on the level of urgency. It can take anywhere from 72 hours to 30 days. The applicant has the option of paying extra to speed up the process.⁷

According to the UK Home Office, applicants do not need to provide officials with supporting documentation to receive a passport, rather they can make a self-declaration of name and date of birth.⁸ Furthermore, the prevalence of late birth registrations in Bangladesh can complicate the process of verifying the personal details in connection with the passport issuance. For more information, see *Bangladesh: Birth Registration and birth certificates*. In 2010, the Bangladeshi government established a central database recording issued passports⁹ along with the personal information collected during the passport application.¹⁰

All passports must contain the signature of the holder. The signature can be replaced by a thumbprint if the holder is illiterate.¹¹

Lost passports

A lost passport must be reported to the police who will then annul the passport.¹² When applying for a new passport, the holder must submit a photocopy of the lost, old passport, if possible, preferably together with a police report from the police department to prove it has been lost.¹³

The trustworthiness of Bangladeshi passports

Despite the establishment of a central database that keeps record of all issued passports, Bangladeshi passports are still vulnerable to fraud.¹⁴ There is a system in place, which allows passport applicants to avoid the hassle of going through official procedures. People who want a document can pay an intermediary, a *dadal*, who in turn pays the issuing officer from the Special Branch of the Bangladeshi police to verify the submitted personal details. The verification report is issued regardless of the information being correct or not.¹⁵ Since it is easy to obtain a genuine passport containing incorrect information, counterfeit passports do not occur as often.¹⁶

E-passports

During the NIDC fact-finding mission to Bangladesh in November 2018, the Bangladeshi authorities expressed their ambitions and plans for a new e-passport. The e-passport was planned to contain an array of biometric data: All ten fingerprints,

⁷ UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 180, Department of Immigration and Passport, N/A.

⁸ UK Home Office, November 2014, p. 27.

⁹ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 9.

¹⁰ Representative of the Bangladeshi authorities, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹¹ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 8.

¹² Representative of the Bangladeshi authorities, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 27 May 2015.

¹⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2 February 2018, p. 37.

¹⁵ UK Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 181.

¹⁶ Lifos, 23 February 2019, p. 8.

iris scan and facial image of the holder. Facial image and iris scans are taken during live enrolment at the 70 passport issuing offices. Fingerprints are however, not taken, as the old registered fingerprints are transferred to the new servers. It has not been possible to verify whether all the biometric data was integrated into the new passport.¹⁷ The first Bangladeshi e-passport was released in 2019.¹⁸ The e-passport is valid for 10 years for adults and 5 years for children. The e-passport contains 48 or 64 pages and contact information of the holder.¹⁹

¹⁷ Representative of the Bangladeshi authorities, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁸ Prado, N/A.

¹⁹ Department of Immigration and Passport, N/A; Prado, N/A.

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