



# Diplomatic Passport

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## Why in News?

Recently, the topic of **diplomatic passports** has been in the news, particularly in relation to the power regarding the issuance and revocation of diplomatic passports.

- A **passport is an official government-issued document** that serves as a form of identification and travel document **for individuals who wish to travel internationally.**

## What is a Diplomatic Passport?

- **About:**
  - Diplomatic passports are issued to individuals **representing a country** on official diplomatic missions or government business.
  - They are used by diplomats, government officials, and sometimes their **immediate family members.**
  - These passports are a **form of identification** and carry certain **legal privileges** and immunities under **international law**, such as immunity from arrest, detention, and certain legal proceedings in the host country.
- **Eligibility:** In India, the **Ministry of External Affairs'** Consular, Passport & Visa Division issues diplomatic passports, also known as '**Type D' passports**, to individuals falling into **several categories:**
  - Government-appointed individuals and officers working under branches A and B of the **Indian Foreign Service (IFS)** traveling abroad for official business
  - Select individuals on official travel, including union ministers and **Members of Parliament (MPs).**
- **Revoking Power:**
  - The **authority to revoke** a diplomatic passport lies with the **passport authority.**
    - However, the government can revoke a diplomatic passport **only after a court order** to that effect.
  - Under the **Passport Act of 1967**, a **diplomatic passport may be revoked** if the holder is in wrongful possession, obtained it through **suppression of material information**, if the passport **authority deems it necessary for India's interests**, or if the holder has been convicted or is facing criminal proceedings in India.
- **Difference Between Passport and Visa:**

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Feature	Passport	Visa
Issuing Authority	Ministry of External Affairs of India	Embassy or Consulate of the foreign country
Purpose	Proof of Indian citizenship and identity for international travel	Permission to enter a specific foreign country
Validity	10 years	Varies depending on type, country, and purpose
Requirement	Mandatory for all Indian citizens traveling abroad (with exceptions)	Varies depending on the country (visa-free agreements exist)

## International Law Covering Diplomatic Passports

- **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations:**
  - This convention outlines the **rules for diplomatic law, including the privileges and immunities** of diplomatic passport holders.
- **Operational Visa Exemption Agreements:**
  - It allows diplomatic passport holders to visit these countries without a visa for **stays up to 90 days, provided their travel is not for private purposes.**
  - India has operational visa exemption agreements with 34 countries, including **Germany**, for holders of diplomatic passports.

## Types of Passport:

Passport Type	Validity	Colour	Issued To
Ordinary (Type P)	10 years for adults, 5 years for minors	Blue	All Indian citizens
Official	Same as an Ordinary passport	White	Government officials
Diplomatic	Five years or less	Maroon	Diplomats, senior government officials, their dependents
Emigration Check Required (ECR)	Same as Ordinary passport	Orange	Indian citizens who haven't completed 10 <sup>th</sup> -grade education
Emergency Certificate	Short validity	-	Indian citizens abroad in exigencies (Single journey to India when the passport is lost/expired)