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Passport Fees Revised for the First Time in Fourteen Years

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WHY IN NEWS

With effect from July 1, 2026, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) revised passport fees for the first time in about 14 years, raising the fresh 36-page ordinary adult passport from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500.

The revision is a small but instructive window into the economics of citizen services: how the state prices a document that millions need, and how it balances cost recovery against accessibility. It also sharpens a distinction candidates routinely blur, that between a passport as a travel document and citizenship as a legal status.

THE NEW FEE STRUCTURE

The revision applies to applications submitted on or after July 1, 2026; those who applied and paid before that date pay the old rates. The changes cover both booklet sizes and both the normal and Tatkal (fast-track) channels.

PASSPORT TYPE	OLD FEE	NEW FEE (FROM JULY 1, 2026)
36-page ordinary, adult (18+), normal	Rs 1,500	Rs 2,500
36-page ordinary, adult, Tatkal	Rs 3,500	Rs 5,000
60-page booklet, normal	Rs 2,000	Rs 3,500
60-page booklet, Tatkal	Rs 6,000	Rs 6,000

The revision follows an amendment to the passport rules and marks the first fee change in roughly 14 years, a period over which processing, printing and Passport Seva delivery costs rose steadily while fees stayed flat.

THE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

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The Passports Act, 1967

Passports in India are issued under the **Passports Act, 1967**, which empowers the government to issue, refuse and revoke passports and travel documents. The Act is the **statutory** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/statutory/>) backbone; the fee schedule sits in the subordinate passport rules, which is why a fee change can be effected by amending the rules rather than the Act itself.

Who Issues Passports

The **Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division** of the MEA is the issuing authority. Delivery on the ground runs through the **Passport Seva Programme**, the digital backbone that links Passport Seva Kendras, Post Office Passport Seva Kendras and online application and appointment systems. It is a widely cited example of e-governance and public-private partnership in citizen services.

Passport Versus Proof of Citizenship

A crucial clarification: a passport is a **travel document** that facilitates international movement and is often accepted as identity proof, but it is not conclusive proof of citizenship. Citizenship is governed by the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, which lays down acquisition and termination of Indian citizenship. Confusing the two is a common error; the passport certifies the holder's ability to travel, while citizenship status flows from the Citizenship Act.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

The central policy question is cost recovery versus accessibility. A fee frozen for 14 years drifts far below the real cost of secure printing, biometrics and a nationwide service network, so periodic revision is fiscally reasonable and keeps the programme self-sustaining rather than subsidised from general revenue. At the same time, a passport is increasingly a gateway to education, employment and migration opportunities, and a sharp rise can weigh on lower-income and first-time applicants, especially students and migrant workers.

The way forward lies in **calibrated** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/calibrated/>) pricing rather than freeze-then-shock revisions: smaller, periodic indexation avoids abrupt jumps; concessional slabs already exist for minors, senior citizens and certain categories and can be reviewed for adequacy; and continued digitisation, faster turnaround, more kendras and seamless online delivery, is what ultimately justifies the fee in the citizen's eyes. Transparent communication of what the fee funds helps maintain public trust in the service.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Government policies and interventions; e-governance applications, models and citizen-service delivery; the role of statutory bodies and executive rule-making; issues of access and equity in public services.

Prelims pointers:

- Passports are issued under the Passports Act, 1967.
- The CPV Division of the MEA is the issuing authority; Passport Seva is the delivery backbone.
- A passport is a travel document, not conclusive proof of citizenship; citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Fresh 36-page adult passport: Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 (normal); Tatkal Rs 3,500 to Rs 5,000, effective July 1, 2026.

Mains question: “Pricing citizen services requires balancing cost recovery against equitable (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/equitable/>) access.” Discuss with reference to the recent revision of passport fees and the wider e-governance delivery model in India. (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Effective date: July 1, 2026; applies to applications submitted on or after this date.

First revision in about 14 years, by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

36-page adult passport: Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 (normal); Tatkal Rs 3,500 to Rs 5,000.

60-page booklet: Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,500 (normal); Tatkal Rs 6,000.

Statute: Passports Act, 1967; fee change effected via amendment to the passport rules.

Issuing authority: Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division of the MEA.

Delivery: Passport Seva Programme (e-governance backbone).

Key distinction: A passport is a travel document; citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Sources: *Ministry of External Affairs* (<https://www.mea.gov.in/>), *Passport Seva* (<https://www.passportindia.gov.in/>), *The Federal* (<https://thefederal.com/>)

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