



IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY NEWS RELEASE

UNVEILING “BIOPASS” – SINGAPORE’S FIRST BIOMETRIC PASSPORT

The design and security features of “BioPass”, Singapore’s first biometric passport were unveiled by Mr Wong Kan Seng, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Home Affairs at the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) this morning.

Features of BioPass

2. BioPass comes with enhanced secure features which will help to ensure that the Singapore passport remains as a highly secure travel document.

What’s new

3. The most noticeable new features of BioPass are:

- (i) The inclusion of International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) e-passport logo on the front cover of the passport; and
- (ii) The polycarbonate data page containing the bio-data of the passport holder.

Polycarbonate data page

4. A contactless integrated-circuit chip is embedded in the polycarbonate data page. The chip can be read electronically to confirm the identity of the passport's holder.

5. The enhanced security features incorporated on the new data page include:

(i) The use of Optical Variable Ink for the words "Republic of Singapore" found at the top of the page. The words would exhibit a shift in colour from magenta to green when viewed from different angles.

(ii) Two multiple laser images (MLIs) on the right of the page. The first MLI bears an interchangeable image of the lion head against the passport number, while the second MLI reflects the passport holder's photographs. Since 1991, MLIs have been incorporated in our NRIC which have proven to be effective deterrents against tampering and forgery.

(iii) A kinegram has also been embedded on the data page, partially covering the passport holder's photograph and personal particulars.

A kinegram is a sophisticated security feature that employs the use of laser beams and colour waves to create images. It will help to ensure that any attempts to tamper with the passport holder's photograph can be easily detected.

Inside cover

6. The important notes for the passport holder's information have been moved from the first page of the passport to the inside front cover. An additional note has also been included to remind the passport holder of the need to handle BioPass with extra care in view of the embedded chip.

Visa pages

7. The design concept of the visa pages follows that of the current passport with the Singapore skyline, with the addition of the Esplanade.

Compliance with ICAO's standards

8. Most importantly, BioPass will comply with the standards set by ICAO. It will incorporate facial and fingerprint features as the biometric identifiers and carry a validity of five years. The passport number for BioPass will be its inventory control number, instead of the current approach of using the holder's NRIC number. This unique inventory number will also make it easier to share information on lost and stolen Singaporean passports as part of the global effort to curb passport abuse.

*(Note: Details on the design of BioPass can be found at **Annex A**.)*

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Implementation plan – Phase 1

9. Starting from 29 April 2006, ICA will commence Phase 1 of the BioPass implementation plan, where certain groups of Singapore citizens will be among the first to carry the Singapore biometric passport. More details can be found in DPM Wong Kan Seng's speech at the event.

Note to Singaporeans

10. Singapore citizens carrying valid machine-readable passports currently enjoy visa-free entry to US. All our passports issued locally from 2 January 1991 are machine-readable.

Frequently Asked Questions

11. A set of Frequently Asked Questions can be found at **Annex B**.

END OF NEWS RELEASE

Immigration & Checkpoints Authority
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ANNEX A



Picture (i) – Front cover of BioPass with ICAO logo.

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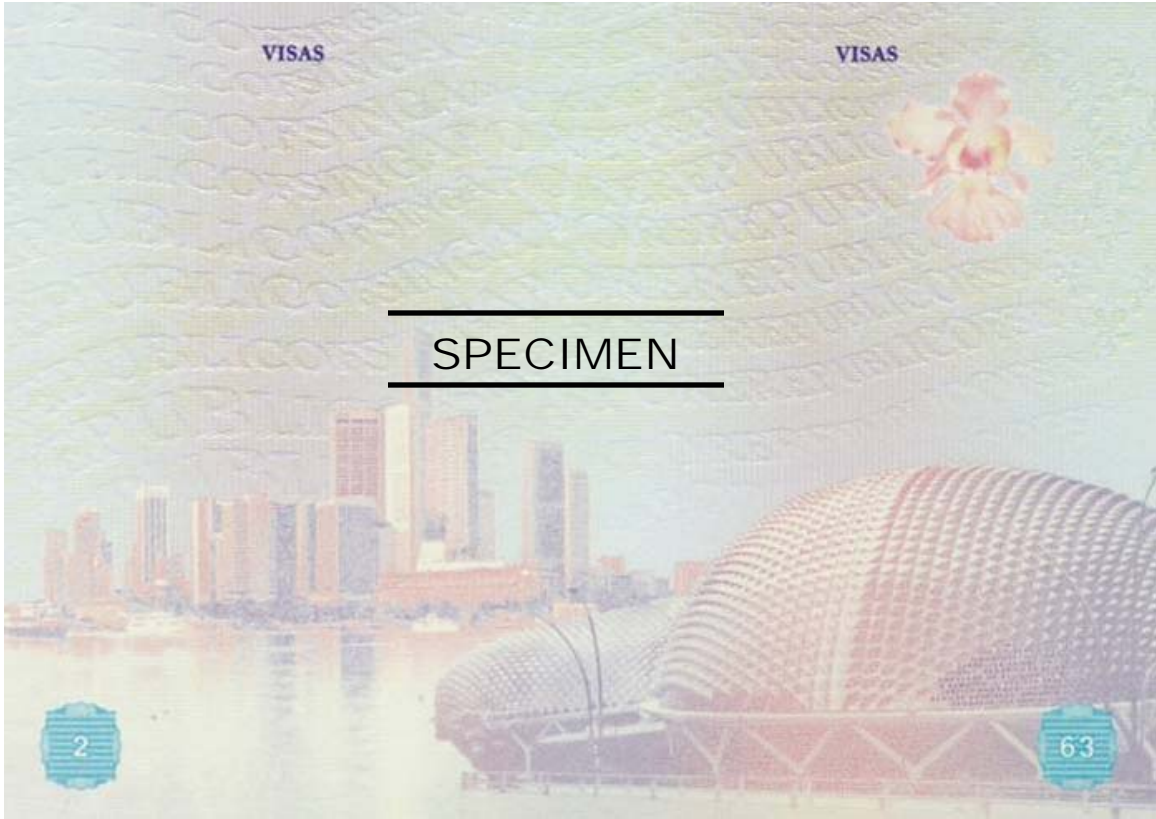
IMPORTANT NOTES

1. This passport is the property of the Singapore Government and may be withdrawn at any time. It should not be mailed or allowed to pass to an unauthorised person. It should be kept in a safe place when not in use.
2. The possession of this passport does not exempt you from having to comply with the rules and regulations of any country or from having to obtain a visa when required.
3. If you ~~lose your passport~~ report the loss immediately to Immigration & Checkpoints Authority or to the nearest Singapore mission abroad and to the local police. ~~If you recover your passport~~ If you recover your passport after a new one has been issued, you must surrender the recovered passport to Immigration & Checkpoints Authority for cancellation within 14 days. Failure to surrender such a recovered passport is an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment or both.
4. When abroad, please register yourself with the nearest Singapore mission so that you may be contacted in the event of an emergency. You are requested to inform the mission prior to your departure from the country.

This passport contains a chip and antenna embedded
in the data page.
PLEASE HANDLE WITH CARE.

Signature of bearer

Picture (ii) – Inside front cover of BioPass



Picture (iv) – Visa pages

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE BIOPASS

Q1: Who is eligible to apply for a Singapore biometric passport (BioPass) and why?

A1: Certain groups of individuals will be among the first to carry the Singapore biometric passport. These groups, including Government officials and SIA crew, will help ICA to uncover and address any as-yet undetected issues early before the full implementation of the BioPass. We have taken a careful and calibrated approach for the BioPass as this is the first time Singapore is issuing biometrically-enabled passports. An important consideration is that our passport policies should not cause undue inconvenience to Singaporeans travelling overseas.

Q2: Are there any conditions attached to the BioPasses issued to them?

A2: Phase 1 holders of the BioPass would be asked to give regular feedback on their usage experiences with the BioPass to ICA.

Q3: I need to make a trip to the US soon. Can I apply for the BioPass?

A3: Singapore is taking a phased approach for the introduction of our BioPass. Singaporeans cannot apply for the BioPass in Phase 1 of the implementation of the BioPass. In Phase 1, only certain groups, including Government officials and SIA crew, will be issued with BioPasses.

All Singapore citizens carrying valid machine-readable passports already enjoy visa-free entry to the US. There is no need for Singapore citizens to hold a BioPass for this. It is only after the US-set deadline of 26 Oct 2006 that countries under the Visa Waiver Programme, including Singapore, have to introduce biometric passports.

Q4: Will my existing non-biometric Singapore passport be recognised by foreign authorities, especially by the US? Will I face problems with the US immigration authorities if I don't hold a BioPass?

A4: Singapore citizens carrying valid machine-readable passports will continue to be recognised by foreign authorities including the US. Such passport holders already enjoy visa-free entry to US and thus, there is no need for such passport holders to hold BioPasses. All our passports issued locally from 2 January 1991 are machine-readable.

Nonetheless, we would like to highlight that the grant of entry into a foreign country is the prerogative of the foreign immigration authority concerned, based on the country's assessment criteria. Hence, possession of a valid passport does not always guarantee entry to the foreign countries.

Q5: When will the public be eligible to apply for BioPass?

A5: After phase 1, ICA will look into the full implementation of BioPass. By August 2006, all new passports will be BioPass. More details will be released then.

Singapore citizens carrying valid machine-readable passports currently enjoy visa-free entry to US. All our passports issued locally from 2 January 1991 are machine-readable.

Q6: How can BioPass holders take care of their passports?

A6: All passports should be accorded proper respect and care. As the BioPass contains a chip and antenna embedded in the data page, BioPass holders are advised to treat the BioPass like any portable electronic device i.e. by ensuring that it does not become wet, bent or mutilated.

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