

India's demand for passports to soar: Mukherjee

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee Saturday said that the annual demand for passports is likely to go up to eight million by 2010.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating a regional passport office in this Sikh holy city, Mukherjee said that five million passports were issued all over the country last year. He said the number stood at just 2.2 mn passports in 2001.

The new passport office here will cater to six Punjab districts. These are Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur, Faridkot, Ferozepore and Muktsar.

The new passport office will issue over 100,000 passports every year and will take off the load from the regional passport office in Jalandhar, 100 km from here.

In 2007, the two passport offices in Chandigarh and Jalandhar issued over 350,000 passports.

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, who was also present on the occasion, demanded that a visa centre for Pakistan and other countries be opened in Amritsar to facilitate the travel of people.

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