

Authentication of documents by Foreigners Branch, Home & Hill Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal prior to apostille/attestation by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India legalizes the original documents /true copies issued in India, so that these documents are accepted in foreign countries for VISA, immigration and other related purposes.

This legalization of documents by MEA, are of two types:

1. Apostille and 2. Attestation

India is member country of Hague Apostille Convention (held on 5th October, 1961). As per this convention, legalization of documents or apostille in one country is acceptable in other member countries.

1. **Apostille** is done for personal documents in connection with an applicant who is willing/aspiring to go abroad, as well as some other specific purposes. These documents may include Birth Certificate/Death/Marriage Certificate, Affidavits, Power of Attorney, Medical Certificate, Police Clearance Certificate, and educational documents like degree, diploma, matriculation and secondary level certificates.
2. **Attestation** is another process of legalization of documents done by MEA, for all other countries which are not the member of Hague Apostille Convention, and where apostille is not accepted.

Now, both these types of legalization of documents, i.e. Apostille and Attestation by MEA, require authentication of documents from the respective issuing authorities. As per delegated power by MEA to the State Governments, the Home Department of the concerned State conducts the authentication of documents i.e. verification of genuineness as well as seal and signature of documents, from the document issuing authorities, mostly within the State. MEA can attest / apostille the document only after pre-authentication of that document by State authorities.

Conventionally, this verification and authentication process is quite lengthy. Online portal for verification will hasten the process.

Online Portal for Authentication: - With a view to making the whole process more applicant-friendly and less time consuming, the Foreigners Branch is introducing the online portal so that aspiring Indians may get their authentication done at ease. The portal is designed in such a way that the applicant can submit the application online, pay the fees online to some of the Document issuing authorities, with whom the payment procedure is integrated.

After completion of the verification the candidate has to visit the Foreigners Branch only once for endorsement on the original document.