

## Novo Technology leads Guyana's biometric border upgrade

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GUYANA has tapped Trinidad and Tobago-based Novo Technology to design and install a nationwide border management overhaul, including biometric eGates at its main airport and a next-generation electronic passport system.

The contract covers all ports of entry and consulate offices abroad, replacing the country's machine-readable passports with biometric-enabled documents and integrating facial-recognition checks into immigration processing. The system is already operational at Cheddi Jagan International Airport, where travellers can complete pre-immigration forms online and clear the automated gates in under 20 seconds.

The upgrade positions Guyana to join the International Civil Aviation Organization's global Public Key Directory, potentially easing visa applications for its citizens and granting access to automated border control in more than 180 countries.

The project includes collaboration with Toppan Security, a consortium partner providing advanced passport chip technology and manufacturing. Officials say the transition to biometric ePassports and automated gates will strengthen border security, speed traveller processing, and align Guyana's immigration systems with those used in countries from Estonia to Argentina.

'The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is embarking on a pivotal journey of digital transformation, having successfully implemented a sophisticated border management system that features advanced eGates technology and a next-generation ePassport infrastructure. This initiative exemplifies the nation's steadfast dedication to innovation and the enhancement of its immigration services,' a release from Novo stated.

'In this endeavour, Guyana has collaborated with Novo Technology, a Trinidad and Tobago company and a regional leader in border security and identity management. Novo was selected to design, install, and launch a modern border management and next generation ePassport Issuance System. This system is meticulously integrated with automated electronic gates employing high-accuracy facial recognition technology, as well as a forward-thinking ePassport issuance framework,' it stated.

Novo, an associate company of One Caribbean Media, has completed installation of the new border management system across all ports of entry, with Cheddi Jagan International Airport as a flagship site. The ePassport issuance system is now operational both domestically and at Guyanese consulates worldwide.

Travellers are already seeing results: pre-arrival digital immigration forms and eGate processing times averaging 15 to 20 seconds, with the same efficiency applied at departure.

'This significant initiative not only advances national security but also enhances citizen services, representing a crucial step in Guyana's commitment to modernising governmental services,' Novo stated.

On October 12 last year, Guyana's president Irfaan Ali shared on his Facebook page key features of the installed eGates, which include autonomous immigration processing capable of conducting worldwide passport security checks. This ensures validation to ICAO standards and paves the way for future integration of Guyana's e-ID and facial recognition technology for identity verification utilising advanced algorithms.

The new ePassport, supported by Toppan Security's SOMA chip operating system, stores biometric and biographic data, enhancing both national security and global trust in Guyana's travel documents. The system is integrated into one of the world's top Automated Biometric Identification Systems (ABIS).

Toppan Security, formerly HID, plays an essential role as a consortium partner by providing chip technology and ePassport booklet manufacturing.

Glen Ramdhani, executive chairman of Novo Technology, said, 'The introduction of the new ePassport signifies a substantial advancement in Guyana's technological landscape. Through innovative technology, Guyana is not only enhancing the security of its travel documents but also making commendable progress in establishing a world-class border management system with eGates technology. This government initiative reflects a significant investment aimed at improving the quality of life for its citizens.'

Toppan's design team worked with Guyana's Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Data Management Authority to define the new passport's aesthetic and security features. The company has delivered similar solutions in Estonia, Bahrain, Malta, Tanzania, Ireland and Argentina.

'The new ePassport will securely store both biometric and biographic data for the citizens of Guyana, enhancing national security and fostering global trust in the integrity of the country's travel documents. This comprehensive implementation positions Guyana to join the prestigious International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Public Key Directory (PKD), a robust network consisting of 180 countries, facilitating the sharing and access to traveller data contained within passport chips,' Novo stated.

Joining ICAO's PKD would allow Guyanese travellers to benefit from faster visa processing, access to eGates worldwide, and smoother immigration procedures. President of Toppan Security Jean-Pierre Ting said, 'We are honoured to

support this forward-looking initiative by delivering a secure, high-integrity ePassport solution for the people of Guyana, thereby reinforcing the country's modernisation efforts and enhancing its presence on the global stage.' Novo's collaboration is set to accelerate Guyana's digitisation drive, overcoming recent challenges.

#### **Guyana's digitisation push**

According to BiometricUpdate, Guyana was unable to begin issuing biometric e-ID cards as planned last year. The delay stemmed from difficulties integrating two national ID systems- specifically, Veridos (the supplier) has been struggling to merge the digital ID system with the existing passport database.

The US\$35.4 million contract with the German ID document maker was expected to be completed last year, but Veridos had trouble integrating the country's digital ID card system with the passport database, Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo said in June.

'A lot of focus has been on integration-and so that's the hardest thing to do: the integration to make sure that we can work separately, but the platforms can talk to each other and share information. Once you get that right, the rollout of the card is easy,'Jagdeo said.

In January, Guyana's government pledged an additional US \$4.8 million for the chip-based e-ID program, on top of last year's US \$3.75 million budget. The national rollout is now expected within the next 12 months. The cards will eventually be mandatory for all citizens and foreigners, required for banking and employment, and integrated into Guyana's 'Smart Country' surveillance system to track non-nationals in real time.

'At any given moment, we will know about all the people who are in our country, who are not Guyanese, wherever they are from and we will have their biometrics,'he said.

The IDs, issued by the National Digital Identity Authority, will require applicants to present a birth certificate, proof of residence, and biometric data.

The e-ID program is a central part of Guyana's "Digital Guyana" strategy, a five-year plan to reshape public service delivery. Key projects include a Citizens Portal for passport, driver's licence, and ID applications; access to health and education records; business registration; and tax filings. The portal will link to financial institutions to improve access in underserved communities.

The initiative will be rolled out within the next five years, according to Ali. One of the key projects is a one-stop government services platform named Citizens Portal, which will allow citizens to apply for passports, driver's licences, ID cards, access health and education records, register businesses and file taxes. The Citizen Portal will be integrated with financial institutions, allowing faster access to services to underserved communities.

Other initiatives include a sovereign AI cloud to store national data domestically, with global-standard encryption and responsible AI governance. Guyana's 2025 budget rose 20.6% to US \$6.6 billion to support the nationwide digital transformation.

#### **About Novo Technology**

'Novo Technology, a distinguished division of Novo International based in Trinidad and Tobago, is a powerhouse in advanced identity management systems. With over 18 years of unparalleled excellence, Novo has transformed various government services, including social programmes, ePayments, digital onboarding, and border security initiatives. Novo's unmatched expertise and innovative solutions set it apart in the industry, driving remarkable efficiency and security in government operations,' it stated.

'Novo is at the forefront of shaping the future of identity management with bold innovation and unwavering confidence. Novo has recently completed the implementation of an advanced border control system featuring state-of-the-art eGates, along with a new Border Management System that seamlessly integrates with Guyana's customs at its international airport and border crossings,'it stated.