China issues over 98m chipped passports in five years

China has issued more than 98 million e-chip passports, which contain the personal information of the bearer, the Ministry of Public Security said Saturday.

Since chipped passports were launched in March 2012, 6.6 million were issued that year alone and the annual average rate of issuing new passports grew by 20 percent.

The ministry estimates that it will have issued in excess of 100 million e-chip passports by the end of April.

At present, smart cards have replaced the paper permits issued to Hong Kong and Macao residents commuting between the Chinese mainland and the two regions, said the ministry.

The ministry has simplified procedures and delegated power to local administrations aiming to provide convenience to people who made such application.

In 2016, 79 million residents of the Chinese mainland held chipped passports for exit or entry, 30.6 percent of the residents who travelled outside the mainland.