



INDIA IMMIGRATION - POLICY ALERT

- **Indian Government relaxes e-Visa regime, with an introduction of three sub-categories under this scheme**



With the objective of simplifying the current visa policy and attract more foreign nationals, the Indian Govt. has taken steps forward and introduced new visa categories, alongside changes in a few existing ones.

The Govt. announced “The liberalized visa structure is ready for implementation, and shall include liberalization of the e-Visa scheme, Business, Tourist, Medical and Employment visas. New categories such as Intern Visa and Film Visa have been introduced.”

From April 1, 2017, e-visas have further been divided into three (03) sub categories: (1) **e-tourist visa**, (2) **e-business visa** and (3) **e-medical visa**. The window for application under e-visa scheme has been increased from 30 days to 120 days, and the duration of stay on e-visa has been increased from 30 days to 60 days with dual entry on e-Tourist and e-Business visa and triple entry on e-Medical visa.

Citizens of 161 countries (134 earlier) will be able to get e-visas from 24 airports, up from 16 airports earlier, and three ports at Cochin, Goa and Mangalore, with Mumbai



and Chennai seaports to be added soon. Separate immigration counters and facilitation desks to assist medical tourists have been provided at Indian airports at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Under the e-visa scheme, an applicant receives an email authorizing him or her to travel to India after it has been approved. A print-out of this email shall be sufficient to travel with. On arrival, the visitor has to present this authorization to the immigration authorities who would then allow the entry into the country.

“Multiple entry tourist and business visas of five year validity will now be available to nationals of most of the countries. Ninety four missions having bio-metric enrolment facilities started giving five-year validity tourist and business visa from March 1, 2017. The remaining missions will be providing this facility in due course”, said an Indian Govt. statement, adding that business visa and medical visa will be granted within 48 hours of application upon urgent requests.

• Introduction of two more new visa categories: Intern & Film Visas

Intern Visa

The Indian Govt. has launched a new Intern visa category for foreign nationals who seek to intern in corporations, educational institutions and NGOs.



Following are the criteria to be met for the Intern Visa:

- To be granted immediately after the completion of graduate or post-graduate courses, and the gap between the completion of the courses and the start of the internship should not exceed one year.
- Corporate internships have a minimum annual salary if INR 780,000, though foreign nationals pursuing internships in educational institutions and NGOs are exempt from the minimum salary threshold.
- The Intern Visa shall be issued for the duration of the internship or one year, whichever is shorter. Subsequently, the Intern Visa can't be converted to any other visa category.



A quota of 50 Intern Visas per year has been fixed for each Indian Mission. In countries where the population of foreign nationals of Indian origin is more than 1 million, the quota has been capped at 100 visas per year.

Film Visa



Keen to project India as a viable destination to shoot films and benefitting the foreign filmmakers, another new category of visa, titled Film or (F) visa has also been introduced by Indian government with maximum duration of one-year with multiple entry facility.

Information & Broadcasting ministry has said that the new category of visa to foreign film makers is a step taken by the government of India to ease issues related to their entry into the country. Both the Film Visa and the Film Facilitation Office (FFO) have been aimed to promote India as an attractive filming destination to the world.

• Aadhaar Card becomes mandatory for PAN & ITR filings

The Finance Act, 2017 has made it mandatory for resident taxpayers to quote the Aadhaar (UID - Unique Identification Card) card or enrolment ID of Aadhaar Card number for filing Income Tax Returns (ITR).



It has also been made compulsory to apply for the Income tax Permanent Account Number (PAN) card or to keep the existing PAN active effective 1st July 2017.

It applies to any taxpayer (including an Expat) who is a resident in India for at least 182 days in the preceding year (12 months) and paying taxes in India, would require to apply & obtain an Aadhaar card.

Aadhaar card may become compulsory even for expat families if they have joint bank accounts. Also, the expats who have left the country, but they were resident as mentioned above, should file their taxes before 1st July 2017.