



COVID 19 Relaxation on Travel

Background

Government of India (GOI) has regularly come out with travel advisories and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) relating to visa on account of outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic¹.

With the announcement of further extension of lockdown in India, GOI² has made few changes. As per latest restrictions and FAQs:

Extension of Visa of stranded foreign nationals in India

- All foreign nationals, who are stranded in India and whose visas have expired or would be expiring during the period from 01.02.2020 (Midnight) till the date on which prohibition on international air travel of passengers from India is lifted by the GOI, would be extended for a period up to 30 days from the date of lifting of such prohibition without any cost, after making online application by the foreigner without levy of overstay penalty.

Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs) for movement of persons stranded in India

- Only those persons shall be allowed to travel to the destination countries:
 - who are citizens of that country;
 - who hold visa of at least one year duration of that country; and
 - green card or OCI card holder.

- SOPs cover movement of Indian nationals only in case of medical emergency or death in the family.
- Such persons will apply to Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) or to any agency designated by MoCA for this purpose.
- The cost of travel will be borne by travellers.

SOPs for movement of Indian Nationals stranded outside the country

- Such persons will register themselves with the Indian Missions in the country where they are stranded.
- Priority will be given to compelling cases in distress, including migrant workers/ labourers who have been laid off, short term visa holders faced with expiry of visas, persons with medical emergency/ pregnant women/ elderly, those required to return to India due to death of family member, and students.
- The cost of travel will be borne by travellers.

Other points

Visa free travel facility granted to OCI card holders, has been kept in abeyance till prohibition on international travel of passengers from/to India.

Our comments

In the recent past the Government of India has made consistent efforts to curb the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Allowing international movement and their quarantine were required for persons who have been stranded in India / outside India.

It is suggested that foreign nationals as well as Indian national refer to GOI advisories being regularly issued, before planning any international travel.

1. For details, please refer: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2020/04/KPMG-Flash-News-COVID-2019-impact-on-Indian-immigration.pdf>

2. For details, please refer: <https://boi.gov.in/content/advisory-travel-and-visa-restrictions-related-covid-19-0#>

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