

HR Law Hotline

November 02, 2006

LONG-TERM VISAS FOR FOREIGN CEOS AND BUSINESS TRAVELLERS PROPOSED

The Indian government may soon offer a multiple-entry visa with an initial validity period of five to 10 years to foreign CEOs employed in India and business travellers from 18 specified countries. This proposal, coupled with a proposal by the Ministry for Tourism for the visa-on-arrival facility for tourists, has received the nod from the Ministry of Home Affairs following the in-principle approval by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Sixteen countries have so far been named for inclusion in the tentative list, with the proposed additions of the US and the UK to bring the initial number of approved countries to 18. The 16 countries are Japan, France, Germany, New Zealand, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland, South Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil.

At present, the available visas for business persons and employed professionals are (i) a multiple-entry visa for business travellers with an initial validity period up to a maximum of five years, and (ii) a multiple-entry employment visa, valid initially for one year or for the duration of the contract period, respectively. Both such visas are extendable in India, subject to the necessary approvals. While business travellers may be able to seek multiple-entry visas for a validity period of five to 10 years under the relaxed visa norms, the proposed longer-term employment visa appears to be limited only to those foreign employees who are at the level of CEOs.

While the plans to introduce the liberalised visa regime are reportedly at an advanced stage, the concerned ministries are examining diplomatic and security-related issues, and determining the final list of approved countries before the proposals are finalized for government approval.

In an era of increasing cross-border transactions and the international mobile executive, the Indian government appears to be demonstrating its continuing commitment to globalisation by its willingness to consider the relaxation of the present visa norms.

- Rina Kamath

Source: *The Economic Times*, November 2, 2006

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