

New e-Visa for Afghanistan nationals

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In news- As the Taliban has seized power in Afghanistan, India has introduced a new category of e-visa for Afghan nationals to fast-track their applications for entry into India.

Key updates-

- The new category of electronic visa is called “**e-Emergency X-Misc (Miscellaneous) Visa**” introduced to fast-track visa applications for entry into India.
- These visas will be **valid for six months only** and will be granted only after security clearance.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** reviews visa provisions in view of the current situation in Afghanistan.
- **India does not have a refugee policy** and grants shelter to foreigners facing persecution in their countries on a case-to-case basis.
- According to **MHA’s visa policy**, foreign nationals applying for a visa for a purpose, which is not specifically covered under any visa category, may be granted ‘X-Misc’ Visa for appropriate duration.
- Such a visa may be **granted only with single entry and for the specific duration taking into account the purpose of visit.**
- They are granted in general either independently or in conjunction with other visa categories such as to a dependent child of a medical visa applicant.
- If the visa is granted for a period of stay exceeding 180 days, the foreigner will have to register himself/ herself with the FRR0/ FRO

concerned within 14 days of arrival.

- This visa will be **non-extendable and non-convertible to any other type of visa.**
 - However, **in the case of Afghanistan, the e-visa facility was not extended to the nationals of that country until now.**
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- India has in the past granted long duration visas to Afghan nationals of all religions facing persecution in that country, but a Stay Visa/ Residential Permit for one year at a time is granted by FRR0/ FR0 to such Afghan nationals on a case-to-case basis with prior approval of the MHA.
 - This is, however, available only to those facing persecution and not to economic immigrants.
 - These permits are also State/UT specific with movement of such Afghans being restricted to the State/UT where they are permitted to stay.
 - **Afghanistan already falls under the Prior Reference Category (PRC) countries** for grant of visa to India.
 - This means that to visit India for any purpose, an Afghan national **has to take clearance from MHA.**
 - Other foreigners in this category include those from **Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, foreigners of Pakistani origin and stateless persons.**