

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

PRESS NOTE

SCOPE OF OVERSEAS CITIZENSHIP OF INDIA SCHEME EXTENDED

In Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, 2005, the Prime Minister made a statement on the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme to the effect that it has been decided to extend this facility to all overseas Indians who migrated from India after 26th January, 1950, as long as their home country allows dual citizenship under the local laws. He also added that the Government would simplify the application form and format of certificate of registration of OCI and spell out the benefits being given to them.

2. In pursuance of the Prime Minister's statement, Citizenship Act, 1955 has been amended to extend the scope of OCI to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) of all nationalities other than Pakistan and Bangladesh that allow dual citizenship under their local laws in some form or the other. Citizenship Rules, 1956 has been amended to simplify the procedure and application form for grant of OCI registration. Necessary amendments have also been carried out in the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 to spell out the following benefits to registered OCIs:

- Multi-purpose, multiple entry, lifelong visa for visiting India.
- Exemption from registration with Foreigners Regional Registration Officer/Foreigners Registration Officer for any length of stay in India.
- Parity with NRIs in respect of all facilities to the latter in economic, financial and educational fields except in matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural/plantation properties.

3. Such registered OCIs shall not be entitled to the rights conferred on a citizen of India under article 16 of Constitution with regard to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, election to Constitutional offices like President/Vice President/Judges of Supreme Court or High Courts/Members of Parliament or Legislative Assembly/Council or right to vote under Representation of the People Act, 1950.

4. Every registered OCI will be issued a registration certificate which is printed like an Indian passport in different colour and an OCI visa sticker will be pasted in the person's foreign passport. These two documents will have the photograph of the individual and all necessary security features.

5. Applications for grant of OCI will be received by all Indian Missions/Posts outside India and by FRROs/CHIO and OCI Cell in Foreigners Division of MHA in India. An eligible person may apply in the Indian Mission/Post of the country of his/her nationality or in the Indian Mission/Post of any other country if he/she is ordinarily residing in that country. He/she will have to submit proof for his/her parents/grand parents having migrated from India after 26th January, 1950 or having been eligible to be granted Indian citizenship on that date or having been resident of such territories like Goa, Pondicherry, Sikkim which have been

merged with the Indian Union after 15th August, 1947. If he/she is claiming his/her eligibility based on the Indian citizenship of his/her parents/grand parents, he/she will also submit a proof of his/her relationship with such person. The application form will have to be accompanied with a demand draft of US\$ 275 or equivalent in the local currency as application fees. If the application is rejected, US\$ 250 or equivalent in the local currency will be returned to the applicant after deducting US\$ 25 as processing fees.

6. Such persons, who have been registered as PIOs by Government of India and are otherwise eligible for grant of OCI may submit their applications for OCI. The application fees for such persons will only be US\$ 25 or equivalent in the local currency.

7. Arrangements have been made for online submission of applications for grant of OCI. This application form is available on the MHA's website: www.mha.nic.in. The application has two parts, part A & B. An applicant can apply directly online or may download the application form and submit in hand-written format. A maximum of four persons including spouses and at most two minor children can make a joint application while applying online or otherwise. A bar code and a reference number will be generated automatically by the computer as an acknowledgement on submission of online application in Part A. The Part B of the form can be typed after down-loading or hand-written and be submitted along with online submitted Part A and all necessary enclosures to the concerned Mission/Post/Office. After checking all relevant details, the concerned office will issue an acknowledgment and the number mentioned thereon (file number) or reference number can be used for enquiring status in future. Arrangements have been made for online status enquiry on MHA's website.

8. It has been organized such that an application where there is no reporting of criminal case against the individual(s) will be granted OCI within a period of one month whereas in cases where there is/are a report(s) of criminal action, it may take four months. Every case whether granted within one month or four months will be inquired into by the security agencies of the Central Government so that an **OCI certificate acquired on the basis of concealed information or misrepresentation, could be cancelled under the provisions of the Act. Such persons will be blacklisted for entry into India.**

9. Application form, procedure, brochure and FAQs for acquiring OCI have been hosted on MHA's website: www.mha.nic.in. **This Scheme is being operationalized from 2nd December, 2005 when the facility for online application or downloading the application form will be made available from MHA's website.**

10. It has been decided that formal launching of scheme will be done by Prime Minister at Pravasi Bhartiya Divas on January 7, 2006 at Hyderabad by symbolically handing over the first OCI Certificate to a person of Indian origin.

11. It is anticipated that a large number of Indian Diaspora will be benefited by this Scheme for a hassle free travel to their motherland. They will bring economic value and benefits to Indian economy and contribute to the development process.

Ministry of Home Affairs

New Delhi, Agraphayana 11, 1927/ December 02, 2005

OK/RK/PKM