

Immigration impact of COVID-19 pandemic: India, China and Hong Kong

April 2, 2020

As is the case in the United States, the COVID-19 global pandemic has had significant impact on the immigration rules/procedures for countries around the world. This includes China, India and Hong Kong and we have identified the most recent changes in the information below.

India Update

The Indian government has been promptly taking actions to control the spread of Coronavirus.

- Effective March 23, 2020 until April 14, 2020: Due to the spike in the number of positive cases, the Indian government has announced a Lockdown in several Indian states (**including, Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, Mumbai, Bengaluru etc.**) Several travel restrictions have been imposed to several states, and public places have been shut down.
- Effective March 23, 2020 until April 14, 2020, no international commercial flights are permitted to take off from any foreign airport to India.
- Effective March 23, 2020, no incoming scheduled international commercial passenger aircraft are permitted to land and disembark passengers in India.
- Effective March 25, 2020, domestic flights are suspended.
- Visa-on-arrival for Japanese and South Korean nationals is suspended.
- Effective March 13, 2020, **ALL** Indian visa services (other than diplomatic, official, UN/international organization, employment, project visas, in-country registration, visa extension, and other visa related formalities) **are suspended until April 15, 2020**. The suspension timeframe may and can be extended depending on the status of the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- Effective immediately, foreign nationals who are unable to leave India due to the imposition of travel restrictions during the validity of their visas can apply for visa extension online via the e-FRRO portal.
- Visas which have expired or are set to expire between March 13, 2020 (at midnight) and April 30, 2020 (at midnight) will be extended to April 30, 2020 (midnight) free of charge. Foreign nationals in this situation will be able to exit India without levying a penalty for overstay.
- Effective immediately, foreign nationals are not permitted to visit the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) or Foreigners Registration Office (FRO) without a prior appointment until further notice.
- Effective immediately until March 31, 2020, entry is suspended for arrivals from Afghanistan, Philippines and

Malaysia.

- Visas of all foreign nationals who are already in India remain valid. They may contact the nearest FRRO/FRO through e-FRRO module for extension/conversion etc. of their visa or grant of any consular service.
- All employment visa holders and their dependents who are currently in India on their employment and dependent visas respectively are also in valid status. However, if a dependent of an employment visa holder is not presently in India, their visa in this instance will stand suspended until April 15, 2020.
- OCI cardholders in India are in valid status. However, OCI cardholders who are outside India cannot travel to India until April 15, 2020.
- Any foreign national (including OCI cardholder) who intends to travel to India for compelling reasons may contact the nearest Indian Mission for a new visa.

Impact on Visa and Immigration Services:

- During this epidemic prevention and control period, foreigners who are staying in Mainland China are entitled to have their **Visas or Residence Permits automatically extended for 2 months to allow for delays in the reapplication**. In Shanghai, the permit is only extended automatically up to April 27, 2020, for now. This extension also applies to the Z-visa application process. The labour bureau has also confirmed that there are no punitive actions due to any delay caused by bureau or medicals centers being closed during this time of crisis. With the newly instated arrival ban for foreigners, we are expecting these measures to be further extended.
- New work permit applications can still be submitted through the standard online application process. Original, face to face document verification for most applications is currently not needed. However, additional changes are expected in the coming week, due to the newly stated arrival ban.
- For new residence permit application, physical presence at the local bureaus is still required.
- The medical centers in most cities have advised that foreigners can only conduct their check-up after 14 days of having arrived in the city. Similar to check-ins at hotels and service apartments, this is regulated through a location track search on the mobile phone.

Impact on Destination Services:

- At present, anyone not required to stay at a government quarantine facility is required to undergo a 14-day home-stay or compound quarantine upon arrival. Each compound management or neighborhood community bureau is entitled to draw up their own regulation on this topic.
- **Hubei province has also lifted its lockdown and transportation measures** and social and economic life is gradually returning. Wuhan itself will re-open from the lockdown on April 08, 2020.
- Hygiene masks continue to be mandatory for most locations while outside.

Mainland China

Arrival Procedures

- In view of the COVID-19 virus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, National Immigration Administration has issued a statement to announce that China will temporarily block the ARRIVAL of all foreigners

to China, no matter from which destination.

- Effective March 28, 2020, **entry for Non-Chinese nationals will be DENIED, even to those holding existing Chinese visas and work and resident permits.** All port visa services will be suspended for the time being, including transit visas, special economic zone visas, APAC Business Travel Card permits, and cruise ship visa exemption. **The statement has described this as a temporary measure but did not provide any further guidance on the length of period.**
- Entry with diplomatic, courtesy or C-Visa will not be affected.
- All foreign nationals coming to China for necessary economic, trade, scientific or technological activities or out of emergency humanitarian needs may still apply for a visa at the China embassy or consulate. Entry for these foreign nationals with visas issued after this announcement will not be affected.
- For full copy of the statement click [here](#).
- There are reports of long and complex arrival procedures for those still arriving. Different cities have implemented different regulations at the airport, but in general, there are delays of several hours upon arrival before being able to proceed.
- Additionally:
 - As of March 23, 2020, China has confirmed that all passengers arriving at major city airports will undergo a compulsory “nucleic acid test” for COVID-19.
 - **Beijing:** at present, all international flights to Beijing are diverted to 12 regional airports in order to conduct the appropriate tests. All new arrivals in Beijing, no matter from which destination, are also required to undergo a mandatory 14-day central quarantine stay at a government approved hotel, and their own cost. Due to clusters of positive test results, family members may be separated to single rooms when at the quarantine facilities. Children 14 and older may also be in their own single room.
 - **Shanghai:** As of March 26, all incoming arrivals, no matter from which destination, will need to undergo a mandatory test and then need to undergo a 14-day quarantine, either at home, or a government approved facility. Transportation from the airport will be provided to the arrivals home, or the quarantine center.
 - **Guangdong Province:** All new Chinese arrivals in Guangdong, no matter from which destination, are now required to undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine stay at a government approved hotel, and their own cost.

Hong Kong

- **Travel Ban: Effective March 25, 2020,** the HK government implemented an inbound travel ban on all Non-Hong Kong residents coming from overseas and regions via plane. This travel ban will remain in place until April 08, 2020 and is subject to review. More information can be found on the Hong Kong government website.
- **Compulsory quarantine for arrivals: Effective March 19, 2020,** a 14-day compulsory quarantine is imposed on all persons arriving in Hong Kong. All persons are issued with a GPS tracking bracelet and are required to observe strict self-quarantine at home or other suitable accommodation. Offenders are liable on prosecution to a maximum penalty of imprisonment for six months and a fine of HK\$25,000.
- **Immigration:** On March 23, 2020, the Immigration Department is still processing visa renewals and new HKID applications. However, they have suspended all new work visa applications with no timeline shared for review or

resumption of service. More information can be found on the Hong Kong government website.

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