

New rules to limit tourist visa misuse

Foreigners travelling to India on tourist visas have to give a two-month gap before they re-enter the country

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New Delhi: Foreigners travelling to India on tourist visas have to give a two-month gap before they re-enter the country, according to new government rules aimed at avoiding "misuse" of the tourist visa.

"It has come to the notice of the government that there has been abuse, misuse of tourist visa. With a view to curb the abuse, misuse of the tourist visa, [new] instructions have been issued imposing restrictions," according to a latest home ministry circular issued last week.

The new rules make a two-month gap mandatory between two visits for foreign nationals holding tourist visas with multiple entry facility.

However, the circular adds: "If any foreign national is required to visit the country again within a period of two months of his last departure [in emergency situations], [he or she] should obtain special permission from the mission concerned.

"It may be considered on merits of each case."

The new visa rules allow foreigners — who after initial entry into India plan to visit another country on account of neighbourhood tourism related travel and re-enter India before finally exiting — to have two or three entries.

"But [this is] subject to their submission of a detailed itinerary and supporting documentation [ticket bookings]."

Sole objectives

India issues tourist visas to a foreigner who does not have a residence or occupation in the country and whose sole objective of the visit India is recreation, sightseeing and casual visits to meet friends and relatives. The government disallows other activities other than recreation on tourist visa.

"No other activity is permissible on a tourist visa. The tourist visa is non-extendable and non-convertible," the order says.

A person holding a tourist visa cannot indulge in any business project and "if a person holding tourist visa is found to be involved in business activities or found working, action may be taken for visa violation".

Foreigners who return regularly to India for onward medical treatment have been exempted from the two-month gap.

"For persons coming for medical treatment, there is a separate category of medical visa. Foreign nationals coming for medical treatment will have to come only on medical visa and not on tourist visa."

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