

Frequently Asked Questions relating to Conference Visa

Introduction

Several queries have been raised about the procedure to be followed for obtaining a Conference Visa for attending international conferences, seminars, workshops etc. in India.

Frequently asked questions with regard to the above issue and replies thereto are outlined below for information, guidance and compliance of all concerned:

Q.1 Who are eligible for a Conference visa?

Answer: A Conference visa is granted to a foreigner:

- (i) whose sole objective of visiting India is to attend a conference / seminar or workshop being held in India ;
- (ii) who holds a valid passport, and a re-entry permit if that is required under the law of the country of nationality of the applicant;
- (iii) who is not a persona-non-grata to the Government of India;
- (iv) who is not considered an undesirable person and is not the subject of a negative list or any warning circular or other restrictive list; and
- (v) who is a person of assured financial standing (the production of a return ticket and availability of sufficient money to spend during his stay in India may be considered sufficient for this purpose).

Q.2 What is the procedure for grant of Conference Visa?

Answer : (i) Indian Missions are authorized to issue Conference visas to delegates on production of an invitation to a conference/seminar/workshop being organized in India by a Ministry or Department of the Government of India, State Governments or UT Administrations, Public Sector Undertakings, Central Educational Institutions, Public Funded Universities (list of such institutions are available on the website www.education.nic.in and the websites of the University Grants Commission and Association of Indian Universities), or an organization owned and controlled by the Government of India or any State Government / UT, United Nations or its specialized

agencies. Missions will process the cases for grant of visas and after satisfying themselves, grant visas to the participants of such events except in cases indicated below under sub para (iii).

(ii) If the conference/ seminar/ workshop is sponsored by an NGO or a private institution, the Mission should scrutinize the background of the NGO/private institution and grant visa to the participants except in cases indicated in sub-para (iii) below. If the Mission concerned has any doubt about the background of the sponsoring NGO/private institution, the matter may be referred to MEA and MHA for verification of the background of the NGO/private institution concerned.

However, in respect of all international sports events, the organizer shall submit the proposal for holding the international sports event to the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports for prior clearance and the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports shall refer the proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs with their recommendations. Visa for the participants of international sports event shall be issued by the Indian Missions/Posts subject to production of clearance of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, political clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs and security clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

(iii) Missions will be required to make a prior reference to the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs before granting conference visas to foreigners participating in conferences/ seminars/ workshops etc. in India only in the following cases:-

- (a) Participants from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, foreigners of Pakistani origin and Stateless persons; and
- (b) Participants of conferences/seminars/workshops who are required to visit 'Restricted' or 'Protected' areas in India, or areas affected by terrorism, militancy and extremism etc. viz. Jammu & Kashmir and the North Eastern States (other than the States of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland).

In the above cases, Ministry of External Affairs will examine the proposal along with the Ministry of Home Affairs and grant clearance within four weeks. Clearance will be conveyed to the Missions and organizers of the conference.

Q.3 What is the procedure for obtaining clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs for the conference/seminar/workshop?

Answer: Following procedure will be observed for seeking prior security clearance for the International conference/seminar/workshop (event) from the Ministry of Home Affairs:

- (i) Only such events, which from the stand point of parameters as mentioned in sub-para (iii) in reply to Qn.2 above require MHA's security clearance, should be forwarded by the Ministries/Departments of the Central Government, State Government, PSUs etc. to the Ministry of Home Affairs at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the event.

However, in respect of all international sports events, the organizer shall submit the proposal for holding the international sports event to the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports for prior clearance and the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports shall refer the proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs, with their recommendations, for security clearance at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the event.

- (ii) If the event includes participants from the countries for which prior 'security clearance' is required, as mentioned in answer to Q.2 above, details in the following format should be sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the event so as to enable adequate time to process the requisite security clearance.

Sl. No.	Name of applicant	Father's / Husband's Name	Nationality	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Pass-port Number	Date & Place of Issue	Date of Expiry	Address
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- (iii) The request for holding international conferences requiring security clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division) in terms of the parameters as mentioned in answer to Question no.2 will be submitted by private organizers – be it an NGO

or a private institution to the Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division) for requisite clearance within the prescribed time frame i.e. at least 60 days prior to the commencement of the event along with the complete details of the participants from the Prior Reference Category countries i.e. Afghanistan, China, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Foreigners of Pakistani origin and Stateless persons in the format given in sub-para (ii) above.

- (iv) Participants from Pakistan are required to apply for visa at High Commission of India in Islamabad 'on line'. While submitting the proposals for security clearance to the Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division), the Unique ID (File no.) of the visa application in respect of participants from Pakistan who have applied for visa at HCI Islamabad may invariably be furnished along with the application. Clearance in respect of participants from Pakistan will be given by the Ministry of Home Affairs only 'on line'.
- (v) All such proposals requiring clearance as mentioned above should be addressed to the Section Officer (CC), Foreigners Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Jaisalmer House, 26, Mansingh Road, New Delhi – 110011.

In view of the revised procedure for grant of conference visa as explained above, clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs for holding an event from security angle would be required only in respect of cases covered above. No security clearance would be granted by MHA for any event which is not covered above.

Q.4 What is the duration of the Conference visa?

Answer: Conference visa will be issued for the duration of the conference and the travelling time. However, the delegates coming to attend conference etc. in India can combine tourism with attending the conference. Missions can, at their discretion, grant visas for the required period. Such visa shall not exceed maximum validity of Tourist Visa, i.e. 6 months subject to usual conditions applicable for grant of the Tourist visa.

Visas to participants covered in the categories mentioned in sub-para (iii) of answer to Q.2 will not be granted for a duration

longer than that may be specified by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs or the minimum period required.
