

PRESS NOTE

SUBJECT : MERGER OF PIO CARD SCHEME WITH OCI CARD SCHEME

The Government of India had introduced Persons of Indian Origin Card (PIO Card) Scheme 2002 for the benefit of a foreign citizen (other than a citizen of Pakistan and Bangladesh) who at any time held an Indian passport OR either of his / her parents or grandparents or great grandparents was born in and permanently resident in India and other territories that became part of India OR he/she is a spouse of a citizen of India or a Person of Indian Origin.

The PIO card issued to such persons was valid for a period of 15 years from the date of issue subject to the validity of the foreign passport. Further such cardholder was exempted from requirement of registration with FRRO if his/her stay on any single visit to India did not exceed 180 days, and if it did, he/she had to get himself/herself registered within 30 days of expiry of 180 days with the FRRO concerned.

The PIO cardholders settled abroad had been demanding from the Govt. of India since long to enhance the validity of PIO card from 15 years to lifetime so as to place them on par with foreign citizens of Indian origin holding Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Card Status.

Following the announcement made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in his address to the Indian American community at Madisson Square, New York on 28/09/2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued Gazette Notification dated 30/09/2014 amending the PIO Card Scheme whereby the validity of PIO Card was enhanced from 15 years to lifetime and consequently doing away with the requirement of registration with FRRO if the stay on any single visit to India exceeded 180 days.

Secondly, following the announcement made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India during the PBD Convention 2015 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat, the Ministry of Law and Justice issued Gazette Notification on 06/01/2015 promulgating the Citizenship (Amendment) Ordinance, 2015 whereby the PIO Card Scheme has been merged with the OCI Card Scheme. Consequently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued two Gazette Notifications on 09/01/2015, the first rescinding the PIO card Scheme 2002, and the second u/s 7A(2) of the Citizenship Act, 1955 **specifying that all the existing PIO Cardholders shall be deemed to be OCI Cardholders w.e.f. 09/01/2015.**

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As a follow up to this development, the Ministry of Home Affairs has informed all the FRROs in India and the Indian Missions abroad that they should not issue any fresh PIO Cards w.e.f. 09/01/2015, and the PIO applications received before or after 09/01/2015 be returned to the applicants with directions to apply for OCI Card.

Foreign Citizens of Goan origin holding PIO Cards residing in Goa or elsewhere in India, so also the Goan Diaspora across the world, may take note of the above decision of the Government of India. Those who had applied for PIO Card, are advised to apply for OCI Card on the same fee prescribed for PIO Card no sooner they have received back their applications from FRRO or the Indian Mission, as the case may be.

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