

# Embassy of the United States

## PRESS RELEASES

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### **The U.S. Embassy Announces a New Visa Processing System**

**New Delhi | September 5, 2012**

The United States Embassy in India today announced it is implementing a new visa processing system throughout India that will further standardize procedures and will simplify fee payment and appointment scheduling through a new website at [www.ustraveldocs.com/in](http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in). Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs, Julia Stanley, announced at a press conference here today that beginning September 26, 2012 U.S. visa applicants will be able to pay application fees via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) or with their mobile phones. They can also pay in cash at more than 1,800 Axis bank branches.

For the first time, applicants will be able to schedule their appointments online or by phone. The new system will also allow companies and travel agents to purchase multiple fee receipts for group travel, and it accommodates the scheduling of group and emergency appointments.

Visa applicants will be able to have their questions answered via telephone, email, or online chat. Call center agents in Noida and Hyderabad will answer questions in Hindi, English, Punjabi, Gujarati, Tamil, and Telugu. Call centers will be open 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on Sunday. The numbers are (91-120) 660-2222 or (91-22) 6720-9400 in India or 1-310-616-5424 in the United States. Applicants can email in English or Hindi at [support-india@ustraveldocs.com](mailto:support-india@ustraveldocs.com), or they can chat with us directly from our website ([www.ustraveldocs.com/in](http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in)) during call center hours.

One important change is that under the new system, applicants will have to make two appointments. Prior to their visa interviews, applicants will have to visit an Offsite Facilitation Center (OFC) to submit their fingerprints and a photo. Located apart from the Embassy and Consulates in Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai, the OFCs will reduce congestion at U.S. consular facilities and speed applicant processing. Most applicants will need to visit an OFC only once.

In March, the U.S. Mission in India introduced the Interview Waiver Program (IWP) that allows applicants who meet certain criteria to be considered for waivers of personal interviews. Under the IWP and our new processing system, an increasing number of applicants will be able to complete all visa requirements without having to visit a U.S. Embassy or Consulate at all.

The U.S. Department of State continually strives to improve consular services to meet increased visa demand in India. In 2011, consular officers in India processed

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nearly seven lakh nonimmigrant visa applications, an increase of more than 11 percent over the previous year. Presently, applicants wait fewer than ten days for visa interview appointments and spend less than one hour at U.S. consular facilities in India.

For information about the visa application process, please visit <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/>. To receive regular updates, follow the U.S. Embassy on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/India.usembassy](http://www.facebook.com/India.usembassy).

AS PREPARED

Remarks By Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs Julia Stanley

Press Event: New Visa Processing System for India

September 5, 2012

- Namaste and good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today, and thank you to our team from Stanley.
  - The United States is committed to providing all visa applicants with an efficient, transparent, and standardized application process.
  - Worldwide, the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs is instituting significant changes to the visa application process under the Global Support Strategy program. This program will be implemented in India on September 26.
  - It is our goal to make our visa process as efficient as possible to meet the increased demand for U.S. visas worldwide. In March, we launched the Interview Waiver Program in India, which allows certain qualified applicants to renew their visas without coming in for an interview.
  - Today, it is my pleasure to introduce a new visa processing system that will streamline appointment scheduling, simplify fee payments, and provide new delivery options.
  - First, we would like to introduce our brand new website, available in English and Hindi, that will answer all your questions about how to apply for a U.S. visa. Through the website, visa applicants will be able to fill out application forms, find out what documents are required, pay visa application fees, schedule an appointment for biometrics collection, and schedule an interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. You can access the website at [www.ustraveldocs.com/in](http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in).
  - Applicants can also contact us via telephone, email, or online chat. Our call center agents can answer questions in Hindi, English, Punjabi, Gujarati, Tamil, and Telugu. There are no fees for calling the call center.
  - Under our new system, we have more payment options available. Applicants will have the option of paying their visa application fees by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) or with a mobile phone. They will also be able to pay in cash at over 1,800 Axis and Citibank branches. The new system allows for bulk
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purchases of fee receipts, an important benefit for companies and travel agents. Within one hour of payment, applicants will receive an SMS message letting them know that their receipt has been activated, and they can proceed with scheduling their appointments.

- Appointments can be scheduled through our new website or by calling the call center. We are offering appointments by phone for the first time. The new global appointment scheduling system will offer group and expedited appointments.
- One important difference from our current system is that first-time applicants will need to schedule two appointments; one for fingerprint collection, and one for a consular interview. Fingerprints will be collected at an Offsite Facilitation Center (OFC) prior to the visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
- For many first-time applicants, this will mean two appointments on two separate days. We are working to shorten this to one day, but at this point, we cannot say with certainty when that will happen.
- The OFCs will be located in convenient locations separate from the Embassy or Consulates to reduce congestion and to speed applicant processing.
- The good news is that most applicants will only need to submit their fingerprints at the OFC one time. Applicants who are renewing their visas will probably be able to skip this step. Over time, we expect the number of applicants who do not need to visit our premises to grow markedly.
- Our processing improvements also affect the delivery of documents. Under our new system, passports, visas, immigrant visa packets and other documents will be delivered to 33 document pick-up locations across India within a week at no charge. Applicants will be asked to choose a delivery location when they schedule their appointments. Using our website, they can track the progress of their visa application. When their documents are ready for pick-up, they will be notified via email and/or SMS.
- Of course, some things won't change. Our visa application fees will remain the same worldwide; an American consular officer will still conduct the interview at the Embassy or Consulate; and our adjudication standards have not changed. Applicants must still meet the requirements for the appropriate visa class, whether they are traveling as tourists, business people, or students. We will continue to issue 10-year, multiple-entry visas to all those who qualify.
- We are committed to an efficient visa process for all visa applicants worldwide. Presently, visa applicants in India wait fewer than ten days for their appointments, spend less than one hour at our consular facilities, and typically have their visas in hand within a week of their interviews.
- We expect that our new system will further increase the efficiency and transparency of our visa processing, standardizing the process for all visa applicants worldwide. We expect that fewer applicants will need to visit our OFCs, Embassy and Consulates to renew their visas in the future.
- As the U.S.-India relationship continues to grow, we look forward to

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supporting and strengthening the people-to-people ties between our two countries by facilitating travel with secure and efficient visa processing.

Thank you.

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