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**Hassle free Visa regime aimed at making travel of foreigners into country pleasant, says
Union Home Secretary**

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The Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba has said that creating a simple and hassle free Visa regime is the government’s objective to facilitate arrival and stay of foreign travelers into the country. Addressing a conference “Streamlining of India’s Visa regime” here today, he highlighted various policy initiatives taken to liberalize the Visa regime, taking into account the concerns and suggestions made by various Ministries and stakeholders, including Ministries of Civil Aviation, Tourism, Health, Higher Education etc.

Emphasizing that India has the potential to become a global hub for Education and Tourism, Shri Gauba called for a change in the mindset at the Field level to make foreigners feel welcomed in the country. A friendly Visa regime is also a part of ‘Ease of doing Business’, he added. He said that at the same time, security should also be strengthened, using technological tools. Citing the recently launched e-FRRO module which provides 27 Visa related services to foreigners, he said it has been very successful and has obviated the need for foreigners to visit FRRO Offices for extending their stay, change of Visa status etc.

e-Visa facility now covers 166 countries and foreigners can obtain online Visa within 72 hours for travel related to Tourism, Business, Health, Medical Attendant and Conference purposes, he added.

The number of e-Visas issued has seen a tremendous growth during the last four years from 5.17 lakhs in 2015 to 21 lakhs this year till 30th November, 2018. The number of Visas issued through e-Visa system is now approximately 40% of the total number of Visas issued and the figure is soon expected to cross the 50% mark, which is an indication of its popularity. “Our e-Visa regime is one of the best in the world,” he said.

Highlighting some of the other Visa liberalization measures, he cited Relaxation introduced in grant of Internship Visa which can be obtained by a student while still pursuing a course in the country without remuneration, Extension of Business Visa beyond five years, Conversion of Visa into medical category in an emergency for a foreigner who is already in the country and Permission for foreigners who are on long duration Visas to attend conferences.

Shri Gauba said suggestions made at the Conference will provide inputs for further reforms in the Visa regime which is an ongoing process. The Conference was attended by Senior Officers from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Civil Aviation, Tourism, Information & Broadcasting, Security Agencies, State Governments and Industry representatives.

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