

TIRUCHELVAM ASSOCIATES  
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

IMMIGRATION DIVISION UPDATE IN THE CONTEXT  
OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

As of now and as you may already be aware, owing to Sri Lanka's present lockdown situation, no one is permitted entry into Sri Lanka by Air or Sea, unless they have been specifically authorised by the Government to do so. As such, all Commercial and Passenger flights into Sri Lanka have been suspended until further notice and the country remains under curfew until further notice.

This note has been prepared to provide an update on the status quo of the Department of Immigration and Emigration ("DOIE") and address some of the key areas of concern we note clients may be having in light of the current situation in the country.

## **1. DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION**

### **Line Ministry Changes**

The Government of Sri Lanka has recently removed the DOIE from the purview of the Ministry of Defence and has now taken steps to transfer the purview of same to the Ministry of Mahaweli, Agriculture, Waterways and Rural Development. This change may (on a future date) result in certain new policies being introduced to the overall immigration system currently in effect.

### **Update on the present status quo | Immigration**

We wish to bring to your notice that owing to the prevailing situation in Sri Lanka, the Government has put in place the following measures:

Temporary Extension of Visas until the 12th of May 2020 (Which will most likely continue to be automatically extended should the present status quo continue)

The regulators of the DOIE have at this point of time decided to temporarily extend all Visas (scheduled to expire during this period) in Sri Lanka up to the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. In consideration of this measure, the DOIE has urged all such Foreign Nationals (whose Visas are set to expire during this period), **NOT** to visit the visa division of the DOIE to have their visa extended in light of the aforementioned mechanism now in place for automatic extension.

Instructions on how to pay for the said extension will be communicated on a later date once the situation in Sri Lanka resolves itself.

Please see link below for further information: [Instructions from the DOIE](#)

[http://www.immigration.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=342&lang=en](http://www.immigration.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=342&lang=en)

#### Renewing of Existing Residence Visas (Temporary Extension in view of a Line Ministry Application)

In the event a Line Ministry is unable to finalise its Recommendation to renew an applicant's residence visa before the scheduled expiry of same (owing to the delays experienced due to the present situation), the DOIE will be willing to temporarily extend the said Visa until the Recommendation is Issued by the Line Ministry.

#### Documents Required:

1. Original Passport
2. Duly finalised DOIE Visa Application Form

\*It should be noted that the DOIE will not return the applicant's Passport and will instead issue an official acknowledgement which may be used as proof of temporary extension (the duration of the temporary extension shall be discretionary). The Passport may be collected from the DOIE once the Line Ministry Recommendation has been issued and presented to the DOIE together with the usual application for extension.

## **2. UPDATE ON STATUS OF LINE MINISTRY RECOMMENDATIONS - RESIDENCE VISA RENEWALS**

### **Department of Commerce (DOC) - presently under the purview of the Ministry of Finance.**

We understand that the DOC is willing to accept Residence Visa applications once the Curfew restrictions imposed by the Government have been lifted and the situation settles (Most likely by the end of April / beginning of May 2020 barring any unforeseen complications arising).

Until such time no applications will be entertained by the DOC.

### **Board of Investment Sri Lanka (BOI)**

We are informed that the BOI will not be accepting applications for new and/or the renewal of existing Residence Visas at this point of time. We are further informed that the BOI will

only begin accepting applications once the situation in Sri Lanka resolves itself and barring any unforeseen complications arising.

**ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS AVAILABLE: WHERE THE RENEWAL APPLICATION HAS BEEN DELAYED.**

We note that in the event any Line Ministry applications for residence visa renewals are delayed, we may then approach the DOIE for the purpose of obtaining temporary extensions for Residence Visa renewals (as per the verbal instructions received from the DOIE), until such time the DOC issues its recommendation.

**NOTE:**

1. *Any reference to any laws and regulations/directives/circulars/government press releases etc are as at the date of the issue of this document*
2. *The contents of this document should not be considered as legal advice and is provided for information purposes only. If you require legal advice on any specific matter for purposes of decision making, do feel free to contact us.*

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