

Global Immigration alert

April 2025

India

India suspends the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme for Pakistani nationals

Executive summary

The government of India has suspended the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) for Pakistani nationals and announced several measures impacting Pakistani nationals, following the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, a town in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key developments

On 23 April 2025, India announced the suspension of the SVES visa for Pakistani nationals. The SVES applies to individuals who fall under 24 specific categories, including diplomats, dignitaries, judges, parliamentarians, businessmen, journalists and sportsmen. Consequently, Pakistani nationals are no longer permitted to travel to India under the SVES visa. All existing SVES visas issued to Pakistani nationals have been canceled with immediate effect, and Pakistani nationals currently in India on an SVES visa have been ordered to exit the country within 48 hours.

India has also implemented the following measures:

- The Integrated Check Post at the Attari Border has been closed with immediate effect. Individuals who entered India with valid endorsements through this check post are required to return through the same route before 1 May 2025.
- All defense, military, naval and air advisors in the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi have been declared "persona non grata" and ordered to leave India within one week.
- India has recalled its own advisors from the High Commission of India in Islamabad, Pakistan. These positions in the respective High Commissions are now considered annulled, and five support staff of the Service Advisors will also be withdrawn from both High Commissions.

- The overall strength of the High Commissions will be reduced from 55 to 30, with further reductions to be implemented by 1 May 2025.

Impact on employers

These developments reflect intensifying ongoing tensions and security challenges in the region and affect companies in India that employ Pakistani nationals. Employers may remain informed regarding the ongoing situation.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.



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