



Immigration News Highlights

2024-19, 7 May 2024



The KPMG team regularly monitors recent developments across the globe in the Immigration space and publishes them as Immigration News Highlights. Please find the key developments that occurred over the last week enumerated below. [Click here to find all issues of the Immigration News Highlights on the GMS Flash Alert: Immigration page.](#)

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[Americas](#)

[Asia Pacific](#)

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Americas

Cuba

Cuba lifts visas for Chinese nationals

The Cuban government has announced that it has launched a visa-free policy for Chinese citizens starting this month, and direct flights between the two countries are expected to resume on 17 May 2024.

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United States

USCIS reminds certain employment-based petitioners to submit the correct required fees

USCIS has updated its Frequently Asked Questions on the USCIS Fee Rule to help certain employment-based petitioners understand how to submit the correct required fees.

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United States

[US Embassy in India prioritizing student visa processing](#)

US immigration authorities have made an announcement stating that the United States Embassy and Consulates in India have placed priority on processing student visa applications. The consular team is committed to accelerating the visa processing for Indian students who aspire to pursue their studies in the US. This decision has been implemented in response to a direct order from US President.

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Asia Pacific

Australia

[Registrations for New Pacific Engagement visa of Australia to open](#)

The Australian government has announced a new visa program called the Pacific Engagement visa, which will allow 3,000 nationals from the Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste to register for permanent residence in Australia starting from 3 June. To be eligible, applicants must meet certain requirements, including being between the ages of 18 and 45, having a job offer in Australia, meeting health and character requirements, and holding a valid passport.

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Bahrain

[New tourist levy on hotel accommodations](#)

The Ministry of Tourism introduced a new tourist levy of BHD3 per room per day on hotel accommodations—effective 1 May 2024.

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China

[China extends business visa duration for mainlanders traveling to Hong Kong \(SAR\), China](#)

The Chinese government has extended the business visa duration for Mainlanders traveling to Hong Kong (SAR), China and Macau from 7 to 14 days. This change will take effect on 6 May 2024, and Mainland residents can submit their applications at any immigration management window of public security organs across the country.

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China

[Visa-free travel for Georgians to China launched](#)

Chinese authorities announced that starting from 28 May 2024, Georgian citizens will be able to travel to China visa-free and stay for up to 30 days. This is a reciprocal gesture following Georgia's decision to grant visa-free travel to Chinese citizens in September 2023, as part of a strategic partnership between the two countries.

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Indonesia

Indonesia introduces new bridging visa

The Indonesian government has implemented a new "bridging visa" policy to simplify the process of renewing residence permits for foreigners. This policy allows foreigners to renew their permits without having to leave the country. The bridging visa is valid for 60 days and can only be obtained within Indonesia.

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Morocco

Morocco & Azerbaijan sign visa exemption agreement for holder of ordinary passports

Morocco and Azerbaijan have signed a visa exemption agreement for ordinary passport holders, allowing citizens of both countries to travel between Morocco and Azerbaijan for tourism purposes without a visa. The agreement was signed during the 15th OIC Summit in Gambia.

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South Korea

Tourist visa applications for South Korea can be mailed in by Filipino citizens

Korea's Visa Application Center (KVAC) has announced that Filipino applicants can now receive their tourist visa application forms called C-3-9 by mail starting from 1 May 2024. The applications must be sent via KVAC's partner courier service, W Express, and a fee of PHP1900 must be paid to benefit from the visa application courier services.

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Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka extends visa-free entry for nationals of seven countries

The Sri Lankan government has announced that it will maintain the existing US\$50 fee for a 30-day visa for foreigners visiting the country. However, citizens of China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Japan will be eligible for visa-free travel and an e-Visa fee waiver until 31 May 2024. To avail this scheme, visitors must choose the 30-day single-entry eVisa option.

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Syria

Syria launches electronic visa

The Syrian government has introduced an electronic visa system, which allows foreigners to apply for visas online, eliminating the need to visit a Syrian embassy or consulate abroad. The electronic visas were made available starting from 1 May 2024.

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Tajikistan

Tajikistan expands visa free travel to 25 countries

Tajikistan government announced that it has expanded its visa-free travel policy to allow citizens from 25 countries to enter the country without a visa for a 30-day stay, starting from 1 May 2024.

Additionally, citizens of 16 foreign countries aged 55 and over can now enter Tajikistan visa-free for up to 14 days.

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United Arab Emirates

UAE simplifies Passports, Emirates IDs and Residency Permits process

The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security has announced a streamlined process for passport issuance, Emirates ID cards, and residency permits for expats. The new process reduces the number of steps from four to one, eliminating unnecessary fields and making it easier for customers. This initiative is part of the UAE's Zero Government Bureaucracy program, which aims to simplify government procedures.

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Europe and Africa

European Union

EU will no longer issue multiple-entry visas to Ethiopians

The European Union Council has implemented temporary restrictions on visa provisions for Ethiopian nationals, including single-entry visas, payment of Schengen visa fees for diplomatic and service passport holders, and a 45-day processing time. Ethiopians must submit all required documents and are no longer exempt from evidence document requirements. Multiple-entry visas are also prohibited for Ethiopians.

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Finland

Finland implements automated decisions for citizenship applications

The Finnish Immigration Service announced that it has started issuing automated decisions for certain applications, including those for study permits, citizenship, and residence permit renewals, as part of its efforts to automate the immigration system. Applications submitted after October 2023 and citizen applications filed after 2 May 2024, are eligible for automated decisions. Additionally, residence permits for study purposes filed after April 25 can be renewed automatically.

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Germany

Germany will double the number of annual work visas for Western Balkans to 50,000

German government announces that it will grant 50,000 work visas annually to citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia starting from 1 June 2024, under the Western Balkans Regulation. This is an increase from the previous number of visas granted and aims to provide privileged access to the German labor market for citizens of these six countries.

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Greece

Visa on arrival extended to 5 additional Greek islands for Turkish tourists

The Greek authorities have announced that from 30 April, Turkish tourists have been able to visit five additional Greek islands - Leros, Lemnos, Kalymnos, Kastellorizo, and Symi - with a visa upon arrival. The visa will cost EUR60 and will be valid for a stay of up to seven days, with the option for a single entry. The visas on arrival will be issued at the designated port throughout the year.

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Italy

Italy opens new visa application centres in Thailand & Cambodia

Italy has inaugurated two visa application centres – one in Thailand and the other in Cambodia. The visa application centre in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, opened on 22 April 2024, whereas the one in Bangkok, Thailand, opened on 25 April 2024.

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Norway

Norway updates travel advice to Iran

The Norwegian government has updated its travel advisory for citizens traveling to Iran, citing the current security situation in the country. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no longer advises citizens to return to Norway, it still recommends exercising caution and closely monitoring the national security situation in Iran.

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