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Faster Visas for Minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh

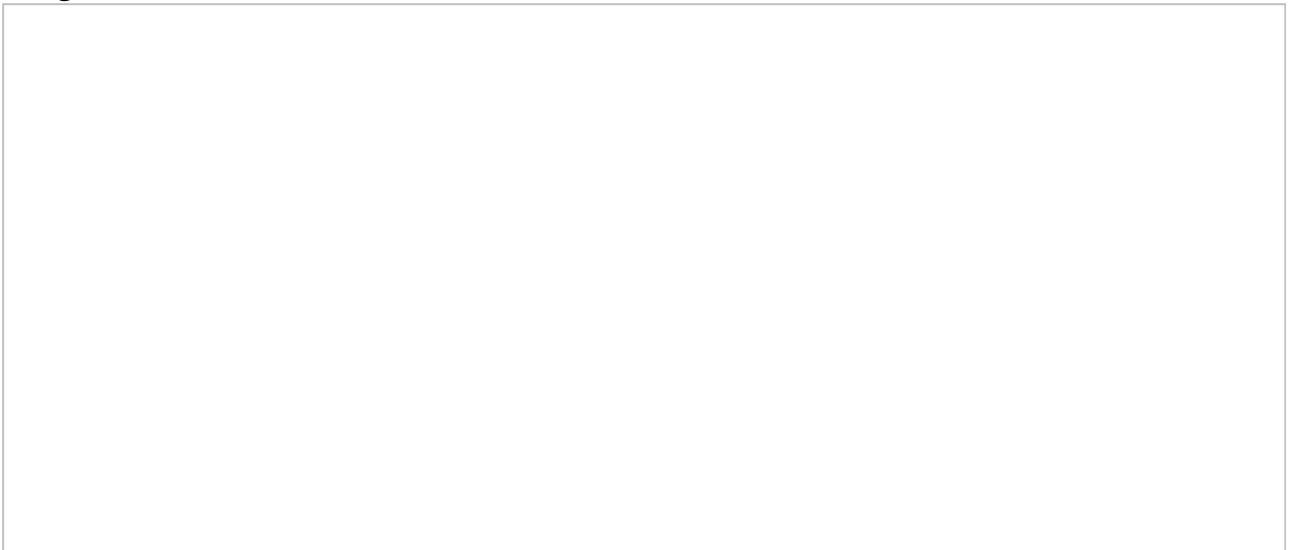
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The Ministry of Home Affairs has further liberalised the process for granting long-term visas (LTVs) to minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

- The visa facility, first introduced in 2011 for persecuted Hindus from Pakistan, was further liberalised by the government in 2014.
- The Ministry has reduced the time limit for security clearance of applicants from 45 days to 21 days.
- The LTVs are precursors to citizenship, based on the report given by the State governments.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which will amend the Citizenship Act 1955 had proposed citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who came to India before 2014.
- The Bill faced resistance from several political and civil groups in Assam which said that the move will pave way for granting citizenship to illegal Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh in Assam in violation of the Assam Accord, 1985.



- Under the Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months and for 11 of the previous 14 years. The 2016 Amendment Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to 6 years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries.
- The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees right to equality.