



Passport Revocations of Goans

For Prelims: [Overseas Citizenship of India \(OCI\)](#), [PIO](#), [Passport Act of 1967](#), [Citizenship](#)

For Mains: [Citizenship](#), [Portuguese Rule](#), [Role of Indian Diaspora](#)

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Why in News?

Recently, a **memorandum** issued by the [Ministry of External Affairs \(MEA\)](#) has led to the **revocation of passports** of more than 100 people from Goa in the past few months.

- These people, who may not have known about the memorandum, are accused of **hiding important information** when they tried to surrender their passports after becoming citizens of Portugal.

Why are the Passports Being Revoked?

- **Goan's Portuguese Connection:**
 - Goa is a former [Portuguese colony](#), which was under Portuguese rule for approximately 450 years, **from 1510 to 1961**.
 - According to **Portuguese law**:
 - Those born in Goa **before 19th December 1961** (the day Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule) **and two future generations** have the option to register as Portuguese citizens.
 - Many Goans have transcribed their births in the **Central Registry in Lisbon** and acquired Portuguese citizenship.
 - A Portuguese passport provides **visa-free entry** to several countries, including the UK and the [European Union](#).
 - The allure of **overseas employment** and educational opportunities has driven Goans to seek Portuguese citizenship.
- **The 2022 Memorandum of MEA:**
 - The MEA issued a **memorandum** on 30th November 2022, specifically addressing the "surrender of Indian passport on account of acquisition of foreign nationality by an erstwhile Indian citizen."
 - The memorandum categorizes cases related to passport surrender certificates, and one particular category has resulted in the revocation of passports for some Goans.
 - Under **section 10 (3) (b) of the [Passport Act of 1967](#)**, passports obtained by hiding the fact of having another country's [citizenship](#) can be cancelled even if they were not used for travel.
 - Before this MEA memorandum, **passport authorities used to impose a penalty for surrendering an Indian passport** and issuing a surrender certificate, which was declared invalid by a 2020 Kerala [High Court](#) judgment, stating that **passport authorities cannot impose penalties but can only prosecute for violations of the**

Passports Act.

▪ Revocation of Pasport and Issue of OCI Card:

- **Dual Citizenship:** Since India does not allow [dual citizenship](#). Therefore, Goans acquiring official Portuguese passports must relinquish their Indian citizenship.
- **OCI Status:** The **revocation of Indian passports** has left these individuals unable to apply for [Overseas Citizenship of India \(OCI\)](#).
 - A '**surrender certificate**' issued by passport-issuing authorities has so far been a requirement for those who want to apply for **OCI cards**.
 - However, on account of the **revocation of their passport**, these **individuals couldn't avail this option**.
 - Current memorandum of MEA, instructing passport authorities to issue '**revocation certificates**' instead of **surrender certificates** in cases where Indian passports were obtained by concealing information.
 - This will allow Indian nationals from former Portuguese territories who acquired Portuguese citizenship to apply for [Overseas Citizenship of India \(OCI\)](#).
- OCI status **permits foreign citizens** of Indian origin to live and work in India indefinitely.

Portuguese Rule in Goa

- Goa, situated on the west coast of India, was a Portuguese colony from **1510 to 1961**.
- The small coastal area was **conquered by Afonso de Albuquerque** and became a vital trade hub for the Eastern spice trade.
- Remarkably, Goa served as the capital of the entire Portuguese Empire east of the Cape of Good Hope for 450 years.
- In the 1940s, as India moved closer to independence from British rule, the fight for freedom in Goa began.
- Finally, on 19th December 1961, more than four centuries after its colonisation, Goa was freed from Portuguese rule.

What is Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Card?

▪ About:

- The concept of OCI was introduced in response to demands for **dual citizenship** by the [Indian diaspora](#), particularly in developed countries.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** defines an OCI as a person who:
 - was a [citizen of India](#) on or after 26th January 1950; or
 - was eligible to become a citizen of India on 26th January 1950; or
 - is a **child or grandchild of such a person**, among other eligibility criteria.
- According to **Section 7A of the OCI card rules**, an applicant is not eligible for the OCI card if he, his parents, or grandparents have ever been a **citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh**.
- The Government of India via the [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act, 2015](#), merged the **Person of Indian Origin (PIO) category with the OCI category in 2015**.

▪ Historical Background:

- The **OCI Card scheme** was launched during the [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas](#) in 2005.
- It was introduced as an **acknowledgement** of the persistent emotional attachment of the Indian diaspora to their country of origin and to acknowledge role of diaspora in nation's development.

▪ Benefits of the OCI Card:

- Multiple entry, multi-purpose lifelong visa to visit India.
- Exemption from registering with the **Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO)** regardless of the duration of their stay.
- Parity with Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in financial, economic, and educational fields.

▪ Limitations and Restrictions:

- They do not have the right to vote.

- They cannot purchase agriculture or farmland.
 - All activities except **research work** for which special permission is required from the Indian Mission/Post/ FRRO concerned.
 - Holders **cannot participate** in elections or hold public office, reflecting the government's stance on maintaining clear boundaries between citizenship and overseas citizenship.
- **Current Scenario:**
- The OCI card scheme has been a key element of the Indian government's effort to deepen its relationship with its diaspora.
 - As of March 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs had issued over 3.5 million OCI cards.
 - The vast majority were issued to foreign nationals in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

| A PERSON OF INDIAN ORIGIN (PIO) | PIO VS OCI | OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA (OCI) |
|--|------------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Means a foreign citizen (except a national of Pakistan, Afghanistan Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal) ➤ A foreign citizen whose one of the parents/ grandparents/ great grandparents was born and a permanent resident of India ➤ Who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO | | <p>A foreign national, who was eligible to become citizen of India on 26.01.1950 or was a citizen of India on or at anytime after 26.01.1950 or belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15.08.1947 is eligible for registration as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). Minor children of such person are also eligible for OCI. However, if the applicant had ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, he/she will not be eligible for OCI.</p> |
| <p>BENEFITS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PIO card holders do not require a visa to visit India for a period of 15 years from the date of issue of the PIO card. 2. They are exempted from registration at FRRO/ FRO if their stay does not exceeds 180 days. In case if the stay exceeds 180 days, they shall have to register with FRRO/ FRO within the next 30 days 3. They enjoy parity with NRIs in economic, financial and educational benefits 4. All future benefits that would be exempted to NRIs would also be available to the PIO card holders | | <p>BENEFITS</p> <p>OCIs are entitled to a multipurpose, multiple entry, lifelong visa allowing them to visit India at any time, for any length of time and for any purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Exempted from police reporting for any length of stay in the country ➤ Have also been granted all rights in the economic, financial and education fields in parity with NRIs except, the right to acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties |

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the role and impact of the Indian diaspora on India's socio-economic development and its influence on India's foreign policy. How has the diaspora contributed to India's soft power and global standing?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. With reference to India, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. There is only one citizenship and one domicile.
2. A citizen by birth only can become the Head of State.
3. A foreigner once granted citizenship cannot be deprived of it under any circumstances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries. Comment with examples. (2020)

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