

PRESS RELEASE

Subject: Exempting the cruise tourists arriving with e-visa from the requirement of biometric enrolment.

To make India attractive to Cruise passengers and to promote cruise tourism in the country, Ministry of Home Affairs has at the request of Ministry of Shipping, exempted cruise tourists arriving with e-visa from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three years i.e. till 31.12.2020. This will facilitate in expeditious immigration clearance of cruise passengers with e-visa enabling them to spend more time on shore. Exemption of biometric on arrival of cruise is an important deciding criteria for cruise lines to include a destination in their itinerary.

2. The Ministry of Shipping has been working towards providing customer friendly & hassle free logistic process for embarking and disembarking of passengers through a simplified immigration clearance procedure. As per the schedule of arrivals of the cruise ships for the current cruise season 2017-18 & 2019-20, many of the cruise ships coming to India are mega ships with 2000-4000 passengers on board. E-Visa has been in place in the five major ports in India i.e. Mumbai, Mormugao, New Mangalore, Cochin & Chennai. Most of the cruise passengers are expected to arrive on E-Visa. Biometrics of the passengers were required at port of first arrival for immigration clearance. With the existing facilities in the cruise terminals at 5 major ports, the immigration procedure was taking more than the internationally accepted norm of clearing all cruise passengers in maximum 90 minutes.

3. This simplified immigration clearance procedure is in a series of steps to attract and to enhance cruise passenger experience at the major ports. Earlier, the standard operating procedures to handle cruise was revised and is being implemented uniformly at all ports. In November, 2017 major ports reduced their tariffs for 3 years by 42 – 67% to make it attractive for cruise lines to visit India. Major ports now charge a single comprehensive uniform rate of USD\$ 0.35 per GRT.