

PIO and OCI

Why in news?

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged the diaspora community to switch from their Person of Indian Origin (PIO) cards to Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards and had extended the deadline for applying for the conversion.

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Who are PIO and OCI?

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- There are over 30 million overseas Indians living abroad and the remittance of close to 69 billion dollars annually by overseas Indians.

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- They can be categorised in three broad categories - NRIs, PIOs and OCIs. A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) is a citizen of India who has temporarily emigrated to another country for six months.

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- PIOs and OCI card holders are not citizens but people who want to stay connected and involved with India more closely.

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- The PIO card was first implemented in 2002 as a benefit to foreign nationals who could establish at least a third generation tie to Indian origin.

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- The OCI card was implemented in 2005, carried more benefits than the PIO card, and is valid for the holder's lifetime.

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- In 2015, the PIO scheme was withdrawn by the Government of India and was merged with the OCI.

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What were the benefits of PIO?

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- A PIO card holder **doesn't need a visa** to visit India.
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- The holder also doesn't require a student or employment visa to acquire employment or academic opportunities in India.
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- The holder was **exempted from registering** at the foreigner regional registration office (**FRRO**) during the duration of stay in India.
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- The holder also **enjoys parity with NRIs** in concern to economic, financial and educational matters like property transfer or acquisition, holding, disposal, investment, admission of children in educational institutions under general category quota for NRIs.
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- Separate immigration counters are provided at all International airports.
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What are the additional benefits of OCI?

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- Apart from the benefits of PIO, the OCI **can attain Indian citizenship** and then live in India for a period of one year including short breaks, if they remain an OCI for 5 years.
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- An OCI cards holder can open special bank accounts in India just like NRIs and make investments.
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- They can also **buy non-farm property** and exercise ownership rights.
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- They **apply for a driver's license and PAN card**.
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- They get same economic, financial and educational benefits like NRIs and they can also adopt children.
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- Both OCI and PIO cannot vote, hold a government job or purchase agricultural or farm land. They also cannot run for public office or travel to restricted areas without permission.
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