

Asomaning Marian (UKBA International Group)

From: VSD DPA - FOI Enquiries
Sent: 10 November 2010 9:32 AM
To: 'request -'
Subject: FW: FOI 14815

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Document.pdf (1 MB)

Dear Mr Freeman

Please find attached the UK Border Agency's response to your FOI request.

Yours sincerely,

Ms M Asomaning | UK Border Agency www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas
To view this document you need to use the Adobe Acrobat Reader

Mr Freeman

By e-mail: request-28794-
6bf72549@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: FOI-14815#150969/MA

Dear Mr Freeman,

Freedom of Information Request (our ref.14815): Internal Review

I write further to Ms Akinyemi's letter of 21 September concerning the internal review of our response to your Freedom of Information (Fol) request regarding a copy of the request the Deputy Director of the International Group submitted to Meg Hillier and a copy of Meg Hillier's approval of the suspension on Tier 4 applications in North India, Nepal and Bangladesh. I apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

As you are aware the submission includes information on the issuing of student visas from North India, Nepal and Bangladesh. As part of the internal review the UK Border Agency confirmed that section 31 (1) (e) of the Freedom of Information Act. This considers Law Enforcement and the operation of immigration controls. We have applied this exemption to part of paragraph five and I now enclose a copy of the submission with the appropriate redaction.

This completes the internal review process by the Uk Border Agency.

If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your Fol request, you have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Ms M Asomaning
Visa Services Directorate



To: Lin Homer

From: Glyn Williams
Director Visa Services

14 January 2010

TEMPORARY PAUSE ON T4 APPLICATIONS IN NORTH INDIA, NEPAL AND BANGLADESH

Issue

1. Stopping accepting T4 applications in certain locations to allow Posts to clear backlogs, curtail a surge and pre-empt a closing down sale before the Review findings are implemented.

Recommendation

2. You agree to this operational measure and inform Ministers.

Timing

3. You agree in week beginning 18 January so we can have measures in place and work with stakeholders, from 1 February.

Background

4. The three countries which have experienced the biggest growth in T4 applications compared with student visas in 2008 are India, Nepal and Bangladesh, where the total intake for 2009 was 138,000 compared with 56,000 in 2008. Since the peak in September, the 3 VACs in N India have taken 13,500 applications compared with 1800 in the same period in 2008. It is a similar story in Bangladesh and Nepal. Historically there is usually a much bigger slow-down after the Summer peak; demand is still running at 50% of September levels despite the introduction of the 28 day rule for maintenance. North India VACs have received 18,000 requests for biometrics appointments in January. In January 2009 Delhi had 1000 student applications, a figure exceeded in a single day in Delhi last week. Student numbers from Nepal are 11 times greater than last year.
5. Delhi now has 16,500 cases in its working queue (which includes Nepalese applications), [REDACTED] The current turnaround time for student applications in Delhi is 21 working days. In Dhaka the queue is 5000 cases, with a 22 day turnaround. Student intake in Bangladesh is seven times greater than in 2008. They received 10,000 appointment requests in 2 days in January.
6. There is no sign of a let up and a significant possibility that things will get worse as applicants seek to beat the tightening which we expect the Review to bring. The Review has received prominent media coverage in the 3 countries.



7. The application rates in Mumbai and Chennai have not seen comparable increases in the last quarter. The quality of student there tends to be relatively better.

Argument

8. Of course there are control issues associated with these applications which the Review is seeking to address. However that is not the primary driver here. Basically the current levels are unsustainable operationally (unless we accepted them as permanent and increased staff numbers accordingly). The pressure on staff is extreme, having had no real respite since the Summer. Summer relief staff have now left Posts. The region wants a breathing space so that they can:-
- clear the pending cases (by inviting colleges to consider withdrawing offers to students who speak no English)
 - clear the other student backlogs
 - start the new CAS system from 22 February with a clean slate
 - avoid a Review-linked closing down sale
 - also focus on the growing number of Gurka applications in Delhi
9. To achieve this they propose to stop accepting T4 applications from 1 February in the locations named. They would continue to operate in S India but if there was significant displacement, the pause would have to be extended there too.
10. The pause should apply to all categories of T4 applications in the VACs concerned. By 1 February most if not all of the current intake of university students should be through the system. The region already operates an informal priority scheme for universities using trusted agents, direct points of contact and the British Council. These could be used to mitigate any urgent university applications on an exceptional basis.
11. The pause in S China has worked well. Post have eliminated most of the pending applications there, many of which were withdrawn and some refused.

How to end the pause

12. It is important we have an exit strategy for the pause. The two impending milestones are the introduction of CAS checker from 22 February and the implementation of the Review. If the latter took effect from say early March it would make sense to re-open then, thus avoiding any late surge. If the Review were delayed into say April and we were uncomfortable with an extended pause we should consider re-opening after CAS is introduced (which should in itself slow things down) but monitor closely application levels for sign of a closing down sale. Delhi are concerned that a pause of 1 month may not be enough to clear backlogs but it is important to envisage a time-limited commitment at this stage.
13. It is possible we shall have to adopt similar measures in other countries though at present volumes are stable.

Handling and Stakeholder management

