

INDIAN VISAS- HIV TEST NO LONGER REQUIRED FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS

Foreign nationals coming to India will no longer have to sign an undertaking regarding their HIV status in their visa forms, the Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV and AIDS said Friday, describing the move as 'very heartening'.

Navneet S. Tewatia, coordinator of the forum, said: 'The ministry of health and family welfare had, in 2002, issued a notification that the mandatory testing for HIV by foreign nationals coming to India should be removed from the visa forms, but it was not enforced.'

'On Sep 17 this year, however, the ministry of external affairs issued a fresh notification on the same to all its embassies and consulates saying there are no travel or residency restrictions for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) coming to India. There were reminders sent after that as well,' Tewatia told IANS.

With this move, India has put itself in the company of countries like the United States and China which lifted travel restrictions, inviting applause from the PLHIV community and human rights organisations, he added.

'This is a very heartening news and we especially want to highlight it ahead of the World AIDS Day, which is on Dec 1,' Tewatia said.

The Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV and AIDS (FPA) is a group of parliamentarians working to steer political response to AIDS in coordination with UNAIDS.

J.D. Seelam, MP and member of the FPA, said: 'We welcome this move heartily since across the world there are ambiguities about India's stand on travel regulations based on HIV status.'
