

## Media Information

Colombo, May 06, 2024

### **VFS Global statement on Sri Lanka E-Visa**

VFS Global is a trusted partner to 67 client governments. It operates over 3,300 visa application centres in 151 countries and has processed over 285 million applications since its inception in 2001.

Headquartered in Zurich and Dubai and backed by majority shareholder Blackstone, along with the Swiss-based Kuoni and Hugentobler Foundation and EQT, VFS Global is committed to creating value for all stakeholders and leading in responsible, innovative solutions making government services more effective and efficient.

As the world's leading outsourcing and technology service specialist, VFS Global embraces technological innovation including Generative AI to support governments and diplomatic missions worldwide. The company manages non-judgmental and administrative tasks related to applications for visa, passport, and consular services for its client governments, increasing productivity and enabling them to focus entirely on the critical task of assessment.

A technology-driven company, VFS Global continuously transforms its business model with secure and efficient processes, market offerings and advanced technologies including AI/Analytics. With a responsible approach to technology development, adoption and integration, the company prioritizes ethical practices and sustainability while serving client governments. VFS Global enhances cross-border mobility for global citizens through highly secure, reliable, efficient, and innovative technology solutions.

Data security is fully embedded in the design and functioning of its processes. The company fully adheres to the highest international standards, such as ISO 27001:2013, UK Cyber Essentials Plus, Spain National Cybersecurity Framework, Germany IT Grundschutz, etc. VFS Global has robust systems and controls in place and complies with various data localisation, privacy, and data protection laws, including GDPR.

VFS Global is also certified under ISO/IEC 27701:2019, an extension to ISO 27001 by TUV SUD, showing its adherence to the requirements and guidelines for a Privacy Information Management System (PIMS), and its responsibilities as a PII processor, in compliance with European GDPR.

## **VFS Global in Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka since 2004, VFS Global has been facilitating the visa application process for 23 governments including the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Schengen countries such as France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Austria, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Malta, and Greece. VFS Global operates six visa centres located in Colombo and Jaffna and employs over 123 Sri Lankan nationals. Since 2004, VFS Global Sri Lanka has processed over 3.2 million applications.

## **Launch of the new Sri Lanka E-Visa platform**

The Department of Immigration & Emigration (DI&E) has signed a tripartite contract with GBS Technology Services & IVS Global FZCO being the prime contractor and VFS Global being the technology partner for the Sri Lanka government's new E-Visa solution. [www.srilankaevisa.lk](http://www.srilankaevisa.lk).

VFS Global manages non-judgmental and administrative tasks related to the application process only. The decision to grant or reject the visa is at the sole discretion of the Department of Immigration and Emigration.

It currently employs a total of 66 Sri Lankan nationals and the number is expected to increase to over 100 Sri Lankan nationals shortly.

VFS Global has experience offering its digital E-Visa platform to 12 governments including Thailand, Dubai, Equatorial Guinea, Azerbaijan, Suriname, amongst others.

As part of the digital transformation and modernisation of the visa system, the government of Sri Lanka decided to adopt VFS Global's digital platform for its E-Visa and Visa-on-Arrival process. The objective is to make the process seamless to aid increased tourism and investment opportunities.

Travellers (visa applicants) can choose from 17 non-resident visa categories ranging from one month to 10 years. The process is online, which brings convenience to applicants. Additionally, travellers can use the dedicated contact centre that provides 24/7 support in five languages namely English, Tamil, Russian, Mandarin/Cantonese and German. This will be expanded to other languages based on the requirement.

The solution is offered through a user-pay model, at no cost to the government. All investments related to technology, infrastructure and staff are borne by the company.

The total service fee approved by the Cabinet is US\$ 18.50 across all visa categories. Payment processing charges and applicable local taxes are in addition to the service fee.

The government benefits from increased efficiencies and transparency in managing the complete process and improved resource utilisation.

### Key features and highlights of the new Sri Lanka's new E-Visa platform

Particulars	Features	Description
<b>Enhanced User Experience</b>	Intuitive Website	A modern website that is designed with intuitive navigation to make it simple to use for applicants. It has comprehensive FAQs, information on all visa categories, documents requirements, visa fees and the guides users through the application process.
	Data Extraction	Information from Uploaded documents like passports are extracted using Artificial Intelligence to auto fill the application form, making it simple for users.
	International Payment Gateway	An integrated payment gateway facilitates secure payment processing for users from all parts of the world.
	Photo Editor	A tool provided to assist applicants in uploading their photo to ensure it meets the required specifications.
	Responsive Website across devices	The website is optimized for all devices including desktop, mobile and tablet, ensuring accessibility and usability across different screen sizes.
	Multilingual	Apart from English, the Sri Lanka E-Visa website will be made available in 4 languages – Tamil, Russian, Mandarin/Cantonese and German.
<b>Increased platform offerings to GOSL</b>	Robust and Scalable	Capability to support the new eVisa scheme launched by GOSL, which includes new Non-Resident and Resident visa categories having advanced and integrated application solutions to capture applicant data through enhanced tools and transmission of applicant information to the immigration systems for better visa decision making.
	Dynamic	Ability to introduce new services integration such as insurance, tourism services, etc complimenting the Visa process
<b>Security and Data Protection</b>	GDPR Compliance	The solution is GDPR compliant, ensuring stringent data protection norms and a comprehensive Information Security Management System.

	ISO/IEC 27001:2013	All the locations are certified against the international security gold standard of ISO/IEC 27001:2013, which means a high level of assurance throughout our information security processes.
	Data Purging	Data purged as per the data purging policy.
<b>Customer Service</b>	24x7 Multilingual Call Centre	A multilingual call center operates 24X7 to aid users in 5 languages supporting 190 countries.
	Online Chatbot	An online chatbot offers immediate support to applicants, addressing queries and aiding during the application process.
	Live Chat with Agents	Real-time assistance is available through live chat with customer service agents, enhancing user experience and resolving issues promptly.
<b>Cloud-Based Hosting</b>	Enhanced Performance	Cloud-based data hosting enhances website performance, ensuring faster response times and improved user experience.
	Capability to Increase Efficiency	The scalability of cloud hosting allows for efficient resource allocation, optimizing performance as demand fluctuates.
	Real time Monitoring	Real time monitoring to ensure 100% uptime.
<b>Quality Control</b>	Back-office quality check	All applications including uploaded documents are quality checked by a back-office team based in Sri Lanka operating 24X7 to ensure that the information provided by the applicant is verified before the same is sent to Immigration for decision making.
<b>Comprehensive visa categories</b>	17 categories of visas	Offering 17 categories of visas across tourist, business, transit and gratis visas, ranging from a 4-day visa to 10-year visa for Sri Lanka
<b>Ability for the Government to track and trace</b>	Tracking travellers in Sri Lanka	The platform takes critical information from the applications and transmits the same to the Government including passport copies, photographs, phone number, email ID, length of stay in Sri Lanka, departure date etc. This enables the Government to contact and track the travellers when they are in Sri Lanka as required.
<b>Promoting Sri Lanka Globally</b>	Marketing Sri Lanka	Gaining instant access to over 3,500 touchpoints worldwide. Promoting Sri Lanka globally to increase destination awareness and market Sri Lanka as a preferred destination across 151 countries through a targeted marketing plan. This includes offering visibility in Visa Application Centres, online and offline marketing, social media marketing, B2B marketing including roadshows in various countries and engagement with the local travel trade in top source markets.

<b>Creating employment opportunities in Sri Lanka</b>	Hiring Sri Lankan nationals	Job opportunities created for 66 Sri Lankan nationals to manage back-office operations in Colombo. To hire over 100 local staff in line with each phase of launch.
<b>No Cost to Government</b>	User Pay model	The solution is provided at no cost to Government and is based on a user pay model. All individuals applying for the visa pay a service fee. All investments including build & operate of eVisa platform, technology (including developing multiple integration), infrastructure, staff, etc are borne by the company.

**Tourism Promotion**

VFS Global is committed to promoting Sri Lanka globally through a detailed marketing plan working closely with Sri Lanka Tourism. This is to achieve growth in inbound arrivals from the source markets utilising its global network as per the vision of the government to achieve 5 million tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka.

The promotion of Sri Lanka tourism will be comprehensively carried out through the new E-Visa platform. VFS Global will leverage its extensive network and will predominantly target India, Russia, the UK, Germany, China, Australia, France, the USA, Canada, Maldives, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and Japan which contribute to approx. 80% of tourist arrivals.

Plan includes:

1. Roadshows and travel trade engagements in key locations to highlight Destination Training & Webinars, B2B newsletters and promotion of new itineraries.
2. Media Engagements promoting Sri Lanka via trade travel media, public relations and promotions in B2B Trade magazines.
3. Promotion through VFS Global digital platform and the Visa Application Centres.
4. Publicity through Display Advertising, Digital Standees, Roll-ups, Brochure/ Flyer placements and on corporate websites.
5. Social media marketing and online advertising to increase destination awareness and visibility.

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