

NRO Account Without RBI Nod

Hindu migrants from across the border may soon get banking & property rights

“We have a responsibility toward Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries ...India is the only place for them“ -that was prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi making a strong campaign pitch.

Now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is working to make good that promise. Hindu migrants from Pakistan here on longterm visas may soon be allowed to open bank accounts and buy residential properties -measures that go a long way in integrating them with the economic system, even without Indian citizenship. If this becomes policy, Hindu migrants will be able to open bank accounts on the basis of their visa and residential permits issued by the Foreigner Registration Office (FRO) or the Foreigner Regional Registration Office (FRRO).

The Modi government has been active on granting citizenship to Hindus from Pakistan (and Afghanistan as well). As ET had reported on May 21, in one year, the NDA government granted citizenship to over 4,000 Hindus from these South Asian countries, four times the number managed by UPA-2 in its five-year term.

Extending bank account and property purchase facilities to Hindus from Pakistan follows RBI's nod on such a policy covering all Pakistani nationals in India who have long-term visas.

The government is keen to extend these facilities to Hindu migrants from Pakistan because it considers these Pakistani nationals victims of persecution, senior government officials familiar with this development told ET on condition of anonymity. The government, they said, may also allow Hindu migrants from Pakistan to open non-resident ordinary (NRO) rupee account without RBI approvals. Under current rules, NRO accounts can be opened with banks and authorised dealers by anyone residing outside India, but in case of Pakistani nationals and entities as well as Bangladeshi entities, RBI approval is required.

The Modi government is considering exempting Hindu migrants from Pakistan from this additional scrutiny. “There are various options on the table. We will examine them and also seek view of the home ministry regarding security concerns,“ a senior official said.

Banks, this official said, will have to file quarterly reports to the home ministry on bank accounts of Pakistani Hindus in India.

“We are hopeful that the home ministry will support the move,“ said another official. Last year, Home Minister Rajnath Singh had said the government will prepare an action plan for the proper rehabilitation of Pakistani Hindu migrants in India.

(The Economic Times)