

Criticism of visa fees unfounded, official says

We are treating their citizens the way our citizens are treated — Al Minhali

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Dubai: Canadian visitors will no longer benefit from visa on arrival facility in the UAE, officials have announced.

Until now, Canadians were among the 33 nationalities that benefited from visa on arrival in the UAE free of charge. However, from January 2, they would have to pay up to \$250 (Dh917.50) for a 30-day visa, which is non-renewable.

Senior authorities told Gulf News that the move comes following Canada's refusal to reciprocate visa on arrival for UAE citizens and the long-standing dispute over it. The divide widened following a row between the two countries over commercial flight landing rights.

Brigadier Nasser Al Awadi Al Minhali, Acting Director-General of the Federal Naturalisation and Residency Department, said that criticism of the price of the visas was unfounded, adding that they corresponded to visa prices imposed on citizens of other countries.

Reciprocity

"Previously, Canadians would be given visas upon arrival. The UAE had been asking for Canada to reciprocate that move and it refused. So we are treating their citizens the way our citizens are treated," he said.

Asked under what circumstances the situation could be reversed, he said the decision would be taken by the foreign ministry. About 25,000 Canadians live in the UAE. The visa cost would be an additional burden for those who have relatives and friends come over frequently. The UAE Embassy in Canada asks visa applicants to send their complete application to them at least 15 working days before the departure date.

A Dubai immigration official said: "If you would like to apply a visa for a Canadian citizen, it would cost Dh620 for the visa, Dh40 for medical charges and a refundable deposit of Dh2,000. The person who applies needs to have a salary of Dh10,000 and above or Dh9,000 plus accommodation."

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