

## India announces immediate medical visas for SAARC

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**Singapore:** In a bid to promote medical tourism business in India, Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi announced that medical visas for patients from SAARC countries would be granted immediately. The recent approval for sanction of visas is thought to boost the medical tourism and help showcase India's medical expertise to the rest of the globe.

"Not getting a visa is a real deterrent for patients, especially the ones who are critical. That is the primary reason why lots of them have been going to Thailand and Singapore for care instead," said Mr Zakariah Ahmed, principal advisor on International Patient Care for Global Hospitals Group.

"This is a welcome move by the government that can foster the medical services industry," said Dr Amar Agarwal, chairman of Dr Agarwal's Group of Eye Hospitals, "Lot of patients can now have access to quality medical care offered in India."

Dr Prathap C Reddy, chairman of Apollo Hospitals Group, said, "This will give a huge boost to medical tourism in India, which, we at Apollo, have been aggressively propagating in promoting India as a 'global health destination.'"

This initiative by the Indian government is thought to advance healthcare especially to the critical care patients as they do not have to wait in queue for visas.

About 30 per cent of the patients from SAARC countries arrive at the Apollo Hospitals are mostly from Bangladesh. India processes about 2,000 applications from Bangladesh per day," says Mr Jithu Jose, general manager, International Patient

