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US bid for Chinese tourists with extended visa deal



US President Obama: "It's in the world's best interests to integrate China into the world economy"

The US and China will grant visas valid for up to a decade to visitors between the two countries under a deal announced by US President Barack Obama.

Mr Obama said the move would "benefit everyone," speaking during a high-level summit of Asian business leaders in Beijing, known as Apec.

Visas between the two countries were previously valid for only one year.

China-US relations have been rocky amid increased US presence in the Pacific and concerns over cyber espionage.

But on Monday, Mr Obama told the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) chief executive summit that the US welcomed the rise of a "prosperous, peaceful and stable China".

"We want China to do well," Mr Obama said.

"We compete for business, but we also seek to co-operate on a broad range of shared challenges and shared opportunities."

Under the new visa rules, set to take effect on Wednesday, student visas will be valid for five years, while business and tourist visas will be valid for 10 years.

The deal will not change how long a traveller will be allowed to stay in the US or China, but how long the visas are valid for entry.

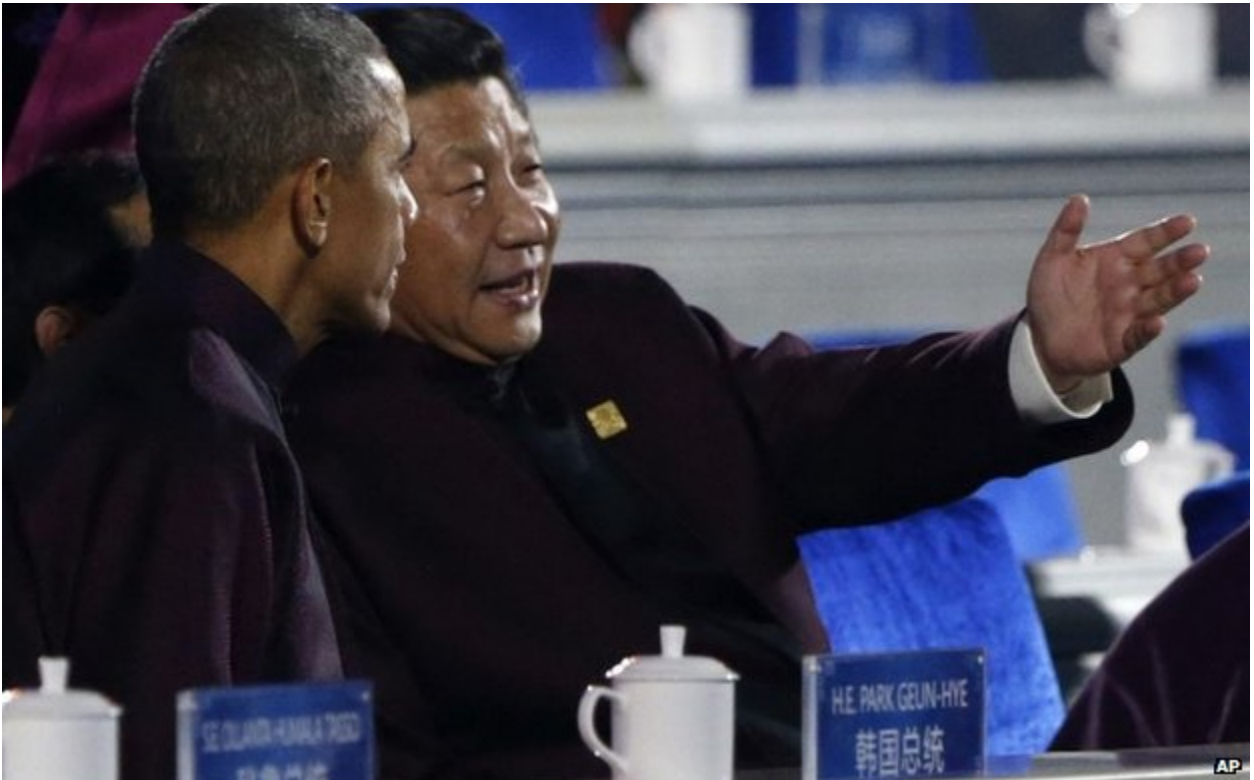
The US will also continue to require an in-person interview as part of the application for a visa.



President Barack Obama said the US would continue to press issues like cyber theft



The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2014 Summit goes on until 11 November



White House officials said they hoped the deal would bring more Chinese visitors and spending to the US.

"Chinese travellers cite ease of visa policies as the second most important factor in deciding where to travel, behind only cost," the White House said in a statement.

"A competitive visa policy is needed to secure our place as the chosen

destination for millions of Chinese travellers."

About 100 million Chinese travelled abroad last year, but less than 2% spent time in the US.

Despite Mr Obama's upbeat message in announcing the visa changes, he reiterated that America would continue to press China on a number of issues including cyber espionage, currency manipulation and human rights.

"We're not going to stop speaking out on behalf of the things that we care about," Mr Obama said.

He and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to meet later in the summit.