

'US Immigration Bill can lead to \$30 billion/year loss to India'

The bill bans outplacement of H1 or L1 visa holders if they form more than 15 per cent of a firm's US workforce



New Delhi: The Indian economy could lose \$30 billion annually, with the IT industry being the hardest hit if the Immigration Bill under consideration in the US Congress becomes a law, Indian American Advisory Council of House Republican Conference of US Parliament has said.

The IAAC, which advises US House of Representatives on India related issues, stated the 'US Immigration Bill S744' calls for significantly cutting down on outsourcing of work for certain visa holders that is mostly used by Indian firms and professionals.

"If the bill becomes a law, then India's GDP gets reduced by about \$30 billion a year. On top of that, employment situation will be badly hit. Direct impact will be 10 million Indian IT Professionals will no longer have any work and 500,000 in the US," IAAC Chairman Shalabh Kumar told PTI.

He said most of the Indian IT professionals are either working on H1B or L1 visas.

H1B Visa allows US companies to employ foreign professionals and L1 allows employee of an international company to temporarily transfer an employee to a parent branch or subsidiary of the same company in the United States.

The bill bans outplacement of H1 or L1 visa holders if they form more than 15 per cent of a firm's US workforce. It also limits the proportion of H1B and L1 visa workers relative to a firm's total US employees to 50 per cent by financial year 2017, starting October 2016.

"About 98 per cent bill is focussed on providing relief to 20 million Hispanic Americans. Democrats want them to give citizenship that will give them huge vote bank. If Democrats get that part of the bill passed, they will gain at least 10 senate seats and take control of the house," Kumar said.

He said the clause that adversely impacts India's interest was added in the bill following complaints by some American corporations and a poll campaign slogan -- Say No to Bangalore and Yes to Buffalo-- used by Barack Obama in 2009.

"US mid-term Elections are due in November and the bill can be taken up anytime soon. It will not take more than 3 days if Democrats and Republican mutually agree to it. The Indian government is left with no time but to strongly raise its voice and set up official channels in US without delay," Kumar said.

He claimed that India does not have a significant mindshare among US Parliamentarians and the effort made by it on the issue may not enough to make any impact.

"For US Parliamentarians, India related issues are small. There are about 2 million eligible Indian origin people that can vote but we have hardly seen more than 30 per cent of them voting. India has no time now. It has to make its voice heard," Kumar said.