

Soon, you can renew H1B in US

REUTERS

Washington, 22 June

The Biden administration will make it easier for Indians to live and work in the United States, using this week's state visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help some skilled workers enter or remain, according to three people familiar with the matter.

A small number of Indians and other foreign workers on H1B visas will be able to renew those visas in the US, without having to travel abroad, one of the sources said, part of a pilot program that could be expanded in coming years.

Indian citizens are by far the most active users of the US H1B program and made up 73 per cent of the nearly 442,000 H1B workers in fiscal year 2022.

"We all recognize that mobility of our people is a huge asset to us," said another US official. "And so our goal is to approach that in a sort of multifaceted way. The State Department already has been working very hard to find creative ways to make changes to things."

A State Department spokesperson declined to comment on questions about which visa types would qualify or the timing of the pilot launch. Plans for a pilot programme were first reported by *Bloomberg Law* in February.

"The pilot would begin with a small number of cases with the intention to scale the initiative over the following one to two years," the spokesperson said, while declining to define small.

The steps could change and are not finalised until they are announced. The White House declined to comment.

Each year, the US government makes 65,000 H1B visas available to companies seeking skilled foreign workers, along with an additional 20,000 visas for workers with advanced degrees. The visas last for three years and can be renewed for another three years.

The companies using the most H1B workers in recent years include the Indian-based Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services as well as Amazon, Alphabet and Meta in the US, according to US government data.

The ability for some of the temporary foreign



NEXT
CHAPTER IN
INDIA-US
TIES

Consulates to open in B'luru, Ahmedabad

The US will open two new consulates in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad while India will establish a mission in Seattle to boost people-to-people relationships, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the White House on Thursday. A senior White House official had earlier said the US issued a record 125,000 visas to Indian students last year. Indian students are set to become the largest foreign student

community in the United States with a 20 per cent increase last year alone, the senior administration official said. "The United States intends to open new consulates in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. India is likewise welcoming the 2023 opening of its consulate in Seattle and look forward to also announcing a new consulate in the United States," the official said. **PTI**

workers to renew visas in the US would free up resources for visa interviews in consulates abroad, the spokesperson said.

The pilot program would also include some workers with L1 visas, which are available to people transferring within a company to a position in the US, one of the sources said.

A separate initiative to clear a backlog of visa applications at US embassies in India is finally showing signs of progress, according to another one of those sources, and is expected to be figure into the discussions between the two countries'

delegations in Washington this week.

India has long had concerns with the difficulty its citizens face in receiving visas to live in the United States, including technology industry workers. More than 10 million jobs stood open in the United States at the end of April, according to the Labor Department.

Some H1B visa holders in the US have been among the thousands of tech workers laid off this year, sending them scrambling to find new employers within a 60-day "grace period" or return to their home country.