

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6508
ANSWERED ON:05.05.2010
CHANGES IN VISA RULES
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Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it has become a difficult task for Indian students going to Australia due to the changes made by Australian Government in the visa rules;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Union Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Indian Government has taken up the issue with Australian Government; and
- (d) if so, the response thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SMT. D. PURANDESWARI)

(a)&(b): On 08 February 2010, the Australian Government announced an overhaul of its general skilled migration programme. Major reforms of the programme are as follows:

- (i) All offshore General Skilled Migration applications lodged before 1 September, 2007 will be withdrawn. It will affect about 20,000 people (including 2400 from India) who will get refund of their visa application charges.
- (ii) The wide ranging Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) stands revoked with immediate effect. In its place, a new and more targeted Skilled Occupations List (SOL) will be developed and reviewed annually. The Critical Skills List introduced in the beginning of 2009 will also be phased out.
- (iii) The points test used to assess migrants will be reviewed to ensure it selects the best and brightest.
- (iv) Certain occupations may be capped to ensure skill needs are met across the board.
- (v) Individual state and territory migration plans will be developed so that they can prioritise skilled migrants of their choice. The new arrangements will give first priority to skilled migrants who are sponsored by an Australian employer. It is going to affect international students who have gone to Australia with the hope of getting permanent residency based on MODL. According to new rules, those international students who hold a vocational, higher education or postgraduate student visa will still be able to apply for a permanent residence visa if their occupation is on the new Skilled Occupations List. If their occupation is not on the new SOL, they will have until 31 December 2012 to apply for a temporary skilled graduate visa on completion of their studies which will enable them to spend up to 18 months in Australia to acquire work experience and seek sponsorship from an employer.

The changes in migration policy are going to impact all foreign nationals seeking migration to Australia including Indian students.

(c)&(d): The matter has been taken up with the Australian authorities by the High Commission of India urging them that there should be flexibility in their policies to deal with the applicants who came to Australia before 08 February 2010 and the students affected by the college closures in view of the special circumstances.