

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1357

ANSWERED ON:17.08.2012

US VISA FEE

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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether US had raised visa fee in the year 2010 to fund its enhanced costs on securing border with Mexico under the Border Security Act;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with likely input of hike on India;
- (c) whether the said increase in visa fee directly reflects discrimination against the Indian companies;
- (d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (e) whether representations from Indian companies, students and various organizations have been received by the Government in this regard;
- (f) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon;
- (g) whether the Government of India has lodged a complaint of the WTO in this regard; and
- (h) if so, the details thereof and the outcome thereon?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SMT. PRENEET KAUR)

(a) to (d) The United States enacted Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act in August 2010 to raise \$ 600 million for augmenting US Border Security by, inter alia, hiking the fee applicable to H1B and L category visas until 2014. In a legislation enacted in December 2010 termed 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, the period of enhanced fee on H1B and L visa categories was further extended by a year to 2015. The increase in visa fees applies to all foreign companies, which have more than 50 employees and 50% of these are on H1B / L visas.

(e) & (f) Indian IT companies and industry associations like NASSCOM have drawn government's attention to the possible adverse impact of increase in fees for H1B and L category visas on the Indian IT companies. The Government has repeatedly conveyed to the United States Government its concerns over the increase in visa fees and other difficulties faced by Indian IT companies in obtaining US visa for their professionals.

(g) & (h) India has raised this issue with the US on the sidelines of the WTO. India has also raised the issue with US at various trade related forums including at the level of Commerce Secretary in Commercial Dialogue as well as at Ministerial level interaction. The External Affairs Minister raised the issue again with the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the third Strategic Dialogue held in Washington DC on 13 June 2012.