

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3046
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.03.2018

STRICT LAWS BY NEW ZEALAND FOR SKILLED WORKERS FROM ABROAD

3046. SHRI K.C. RAMAMURTHY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that New Zealand has also toughened their laws for skilled workers from abroad;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and how they are impacting Indian skilled workers;
- (c) the manner in which the Ministry is looking at these developments, first by US then Australia and now New Zealand, which are detrimental to our skilled workers; and
- (d) whether any discussions at the diplomatic and political level took place in this and if so, the details thereof ?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(GEN. (DR) V.K. SINGH (RETD))

(a) & (b) The changes in immigration laws brought about by the New Zealand Government in 2017 are aimed to link skill categorization of foreign workers to minimum salary thresholds. The changes are not likely to affect mid-skilled or skilled categories. The period of stay of lower skilled workers has been capped at three years during which they have the opportunity to raise their skills and move to salaries that meet the thresholds for skilled worker category. The changes will not affect those who have already been granted permanent residency.

These decisions of the New Zealand Government are unlikely to affect the Indian workers adversely. Instead the number of people of Indian origin has continued to increase in New Zealand with more workers coming to skilled jobs, particularly in the ICT sector. The changes in the immigration laws are uniformly applicable to all the foreigners irrespective of their nationality.

(c) & (d) The Government continues to remain engaged with concerned countries towards safeguarding the interests of Indian skilled workers. The announcement made by the Australian government in April, 2017 for abolition of the existing 457 visa category in a phased manner and its replacement with a more stringent 'Temporary Skills Shortage Visas' programme is likely to affect the Indian workers. The matter has already been taken up with the Australian government at various levels including at the highest level. The Government is also aware that there are proposals under consideration in the US to reform the H-1B and L-1 visa programmes. However, so far, no comprehensive changes have been made. The Government of India remains in close contact with the United States Administration and the United States Congress on all issues relating to the movement of Indian skilled professionals.
