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

Advisory council says 10 million Indian IT Professionals could lose work if the Bill is passed

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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 (IAAC) 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% 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% by financial year 2017 ,starting October 2016.

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 three days if Democrats and Republican mutually agree to it," 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 be 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% of them voting. India has no time now. It has to make its voice heard," Kumar said.