

(e) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) The provisions of 'Employ American Workers Act' of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act impose restrictions on hiring foreign workers with H-1B visas by US firms receiving bailout money under the Troubled Assets Relief Programme (TARP). Companies that have received federal bailout money are mostly banks, insurance companies and auto companies. The new guidelines require that a company receiving TARP funds and applying for workers under H-1B must operate as an "H-1B dependent company". That means it should attest to actively recruiting American workers, not displacing American workers with H-1B visa holders; and not replacing laid off American workers with foreign workers. The H-1B dependent companies are those which have 15% of their workforce carrying H-1B visas.

(b) According to NASSCOM, the H-1B visa restrictions may not affect employees of Indian outsourcing companies as they do not receive any TARP support.

(c) Yes.

(d) and (e) Visa issue being a sovereign function of a foreign Government, Government of India has been sensitizing the US Government on the need to expand the allocation of H-1B visas which may be availed of by Indian professionals.

#### **Introduction of e-passport system**

1388. SHRI Y.P. TRIVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the e-passport system is being introduced by Government in order to prevent the misutilization of passport;

(b) whether this would be introduced for the administrative officers, on a trial basis;

(c) if so, by when it would be introduced; and

(d) if not, whether Government is contemplating in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

(b) to (d) A pilot project for the issue of e-passports in the category of officials and diplomatic passports has already been launched on 25th June, 2008.

#### **Indian Embassy in Australia**

1389. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the Indian Embassy in Australia had received a number of complaints from Indian students over the last two years;