

H-1B visas issued each year to all companies to bring in foreign workers into the US. In last few years it has been observed this annual quota gets filled up within few days from 1st April as soon as the allocation for the year starts. This is because the quota limit set at 65,000 creates artificial shortages without considering demand and supply forces. On the other hand, L-1 visa category allows for intra-company transfers of specialist workers. The L-1 category does not have any quota assigned to it. However, as informed by the NASSCOM, during the last few years, there has been very high rejection for Indian origin employees and, therefore, the two visa categories act as trade barrier.

(b) Yes, Sir. Under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of World Trade Organisation (WTO), services can be traded internationally in four different ways, known as the four modes of supply. The 'Movement of Natural Persons' *i.e.* 'Mode 4' is one of the four ways through which services can be supplied internationally. Mode 4 refers to the presence of persons of one WTO member in the territory of another for the purpose of providing a service.

(c) The Government of India continues to engage the US Administration for better access of its IT professionals. H-1B and L-1 visa issues, including increase in visa processing fees, high rejection rates and other difficulties faced by the Indian services companies, have been raised with the US Government at various levels including by the PM with the US President in December 2015 and recently by the Finance Minister with the US Trade Representative on April 13, 2016. The Department of Commerce has raised this issue with the concerned US authorities highlighting the negative impact of the hike in visa fee, particularly on Indian IT Companies. In this regard, a letter was written by the Hon'ble CIM to Ms. Penny Pritzker, Commerce Secretary, USA and to Ms. Caroline Atkinson, Deputy National Security Advisor, USA, on 4th December, 2015, wherein it was requested not to incorporate such discriminatory and punitive measures into legislations without due process of Notice and Comment, as it would seriously impede the on-going efforts to take the India-US bilateral trade and investment relationship forward. Also, concerns about the above visa fee hike and other related issues were raised during the Indo-US Trade Policy Forum meeting held in Washington DC in October, 2015. India has also taken up the matter on US visa fee hike in the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

**'Start up India' programme to boost digital entrepreneurship**

1940. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has initiated the 'Start up India' programme to boost digital entrepreneurship at grassroot level, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is a fact that many youth are computer illiterate in the country, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government for providing affordable computer knowledge, particularly to the un-employed youth?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) Startup India is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India on 16th January, 2016, which is aimed at building a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation and startups in the country that will drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities. With this Action Plan the Government envisages to accelerate spreading of the Startup movement from digital/technology sector to a wide array of sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, social sector, healthcare, education, etc.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DietY) is implementing (i) Scheme for IT Mass Literacy (National Digital Literacy Mission) to make one person in every household in the country. E-literate was approved in March, 2014 with an outlay of ₹ 97.02 crore over a period of 18 months extended up to 31.3.2016 which aims to train 10 lakh persons and (ii) a scheme entitled 'Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (DISHA) to make 42.5 lakh persons digitally literate in selected households throughout the country with a budget outlay of ₹ 380 crore over a period of 4 years which has been approved on 09.12.2014 under Digital India.

Both these Schemes are being implemented concurrently. So far, under both the Schemes, around 56 lakh candidates have been registered, 40.42 lakh candidates have been trained and approximately 17 lakh candidates have been certified. 1916 organizations are working as Training Partners under these Schemes.

#### **UK tightening norms for Indian workers**

1941. SHRI ANIL DESAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has told Britain that by tightening norms for skilled foreign workers (Indian workers) it was mixing up Intra Company Transfers (ICTs) with immigration which could affect bilateral ties, if so, the reaction of the UK Government;

(b) whether Indian tech firms which are worried that the tighter norms for foreign skilled workers would chip away at their bottom line; and

(c) what steps the Ministry is taking to settle the issue amicably and expeditiously resolved?