

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3197
ANSWERED ON:23.03.2005
EASING OF VISA NORMS BY US
Patil Shri Balasaheb Vikhe

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

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- (a) whether in a significant easing of visa rigours the U.S. has extended the validity of visa clearances for certain key categories including students, exchange visitors, temporary workers, intra-company transferees, and tourist and business travelers;
- (b) if so, the extent to which India will be benefited by this relaxation of U.S. visa norms;
- (c) whether new visa holders in these categories will not require a new visa when the original one expires; and
- (d) if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (RAO INDERJIT SINGH)

(a) Visa applications for persons to study or work in certain sensitive scientific and technical fields in U.S. are subject to an interagency clearance in Washington, DC, called Visas Mantis. Visas Mantis clearance process has been used to screen against the illegal transfer of technology. Once the clearance process is complete and a visa is issued, the individual may apply for admission at a U.S. port of entry. The U.S. Department of State, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, has extended the validity of Visas Mantis clearances for the F (student), J(exchange visitors), H (temporary workers), L (intracompany transferees) and B(tourist and business) categories of visas.

(b) Indian visitors to U.S. covered under Visa Mantis programme would benefit from this relaxation.

(c) & (d) This relaxation would mean that if the original visa has expired and a new visa application is filed to return to the previous study or work program in the United States, another Visas Mantis clearance may not be required. However, the U.S. consular officers would have the discretion, if warranted, to request a Visas Mantis clearance during any visa adjudication. International students (F visas) who have received a Visas Mantis clearance and been issued a visa will benefit from having that clearance be valid for up to the length of the approved academic program, to a maximum of four years. If a student changes academic programs, the clearance will no longer be valid and a Visas Mantis review would be required should the applicant reapply for a new visa. Temporary workers (H visas), exchange visitors (J visas) and intracompany transferees (L visas) can receive a Visas Mantis clearance valid for the duration of their approved activity to a maximum of two years. If the nature of the visa holder's activity in the United States changes, the clearance will cease to be valid and a new Visas Mantis review would be required should the applicant reapply for a new visa. Business visitors (B-1 visas) and visitors for pleasure (B-2 visas) can receive a Visas Mantis clearance valid for one year, provided that the original purpose for travel, as stated in the visa application, has not changed on subsequent trips.