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H-1B requests cross 2 lakh, 42% likely to get visas

Out of the total applicants only about 42% will receive visas as US has a ceiling of 85,000 for new H-1B visas a year.

By Priyanka Sangani, ET Bureau | Last Updated: Apr 13, 2019, 06:38 AM IST

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Till last year, 65,000 visas were being issued to bachelor degree holders and an additional 20,000 for petitioners with higher qualifications, including US master degree holders.

Pune: The US Citizen and Immigration Services on Friday said it received 201,011 applications for H-1B temporary work visas for this fiscal since the filing started on April 1, including sufficient petitions to meet the quota of 20,000 for US master degree holders.

Out of the total applicants only about 42% will receive visas as US has a ceiling of 85,000 for new H-1B visas a year. The US has changed norms this year to include 20,000 H-1B visas for US master degree holders in the initial quota of 65,000 visas.

Till last year, 65,000 visas were being issued to bachelor degree holders and an additional 20,000 for petitioners with higher qualifications, including US master degree holders. This year, the proportion of petitioners with advanced degrees getting H-1B visas will be higher.

Indian IT companies, who are among the biggest beneficiaries of the H-1B visa programme, had alleged that the new quota for US master degree holders was partial to US tech firms.

The total number of H-1B visa applications is about 5% higher than last year when USCIS received 190,098 petitions, but experts said applications from India could be fewer this time than the previous year, experts said. "While there is a marginal increase over the last year, it's not a big change in the trend over the last few years," said Poorvi Chothani, managing partner at LawQuest, a global law firm in Mumbai. "Several companies have said that they have dropped filings, so the demand from Indian IT appears to be 20-30% lower."

Visa approvals to Indian companies declined by 49% last year, with only 22,429 H-1B visas granted to the top five IT firms as against 43,957 in 2017, as per a research report by CARE Ratings. The median salaries for these companies were in the range of \$74,000-90,000.

USCIS had on April 5 said it had received enough petitions to reach the congressionally mandated annual 'regular' cap of 65,000.

The agency will continue to accept and process petitions that are otherwise exempt from the cap. Petitions filed for current H-1B workers who have been counted previously against the cap, and who still retain their cap number, are exempt from the FY 2020 H-1B cap.

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USCIS will also continue to accept and process petitions filed to extend the amount of time a current H-1B worker may remain in the US, change in terms of employment for current workers, or to allow current H-1B workers to change employers or work concurrently in a second H-1B position.

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