

**ROUND TABLE ON  
RIGHT TO WORK OF SPOUSES OF EXPATRIATE  
INTRA-COMPANY TRANSFEREES  
IN INDIA**

**Executive summary and extracts of the discussion**



Hotel Oberoi, New Delhi, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013

For further information:

[contact@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:contact@permitsfoundation.com)

[www.permitsfoundation.com](http://www.permitsfoundation.com)

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#### **Acknowledgement:**

Permits Foundation wishes to thank all the participants for an engaging and constructive discussion.

## Executive Summary

Thirty delegates from the private and public sector met in Delhi to discuss the right to work for spouses of intra-company transferees in India. Mr. N.K. Singh, Member of Parliament, also attended and responded to issues raised by the delegates.

Permits Foundation has been lobbying for a change to visa regulations for spouses in India since 2008.

### Objectives

- to build understanding of the issue globally and in India
- to get feedback from employers, individuals and other stakeholders on the current visa regulations for spouses in India.
- to review what has already been achieved in India and consider the best way forward in discussions with the Government, in terms of the process and fine-tuning of the proposal already submitted.
- to hear how delegates can help build a community of support to move the discussions forward.

### Participants

Accor, Aricent, Bosch, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, Essar Energy, French Embassy, Gemalto, GlaxoSmithKline, Goldman Sachs, Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, KPMG, MD Relocation, Nasscom, NetExpat, PwC, Santa Fe, Schlumberger, Shell, Swedish Chamber of Commerce, UNDP, UNIA/UNLESA, International Finance Corporation and World Bank. Several spouses also shared their experience of difficulties under the current visa regulations.

### Main findings

The delegates were unanimous that spouses of intra-corporate staff should be allowed to work or be self-employed in India. The minimum salary of USD 25000 p.a. that is a condition for an Employment visa was considered too high for these spouses on local contracts, particularly since they often prefer part-time, temporary and consultancy work. Conversion between dependent and employment visas was felt to be cumbersome, especially for temporary projects. Questions were also raised about voluntary work, internships for children and recognition of unmarried partners.

Delegates confirmed that the number of intra-corporate staff assigned to India was small in relation to the total number of people employed and given the significant contribution their organisations make to the Indian economy.

### Conclusion and follow up action

Permits Foundation will work up options to fine-tune its proposals. This could involve flexibility for spouses to do part-time, temporary and consultancy work, with a waiver or pro-rating of the salary condition. Another option would be a clearer definition of intra-corporate transferees or highly skilled staff, effectively creating an additional visa tier, for whom the accompanying spouse would be free to work as in other best-practice countries. The report and follow up proposals will be shared with Mr V. Vumlunmang, Joint Secretary of the Foreigners Division at the Ministry of Home Affairs, who met with Permits Foundation before the Round Table and was interested to receive feedback.

## Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton, Executive Director, Permits Foundation

Twenty years ago, concern about dual careers might only have been discussed at the family table. Nowadays it has become a corporate issue. This is because international companies and organizations need skilled, mobile staff to move around the world to support the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology.



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These international companies and organisations contribute significantly to the economy and employment in the countries in which they operate. And yet the

number of highly skilled staff who are internationally assigned is very small, relative to the number of people employed. We have measured this in a wide range of global organisations. While it can be higher in sectors with a lot of technical specialists, overall the average percentage of intra-corporate transferees is only about 1% of total manpower.

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Here lies both a challenge and opportunity of the dual career issue. Is it a large problem or a small problem? The numbers are certainly small in relation to the total manpower employed. That means it should be easy to solve, but it also means that it can slip off the radar screen. It is a big issue for the families who experience it and it's a growing issue for companies and organisations who see that concerns about dual careers are one of the main reasons why staff turn down an international assignment.

### **Challenges for spouses and partners**

Spouses face many challenges if they want to work in a host country. Whereas the employee moves straight to a job in a relatively familiar organization, the spouse has to look for a new job in an unfamiliar location with the timing dictated by the employee's move. The spouse has to adapt his or her skills to a new market, perhaps learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. There may be questions about diploma recognition. If they pass those hurdles and get a job offer, they may need a work permit. In a number of countries, including India, the uncertainty and difficulty to get a work permit represents a real hurdle for both the spouse and the organization that would be interested to hire them.

## Evidence of the issue

At Permits Foundation, we have conducted two global surveys. The first, in 2008, was a survey of 3000 spouses and partners attached to 200 private and public sector organisations. And in 2012, we surveyed HR managers in 162 organizations. These organizations employ 7.5 million people worldwide, so they really contribute to the economies in which they operate.

The key message for employers is that lack of partner employment adversely affects global mobility of highly skilled international employees. Also, dual careers are becoming more important and employers should do more to support them. The key message for governments is that work permit restrictions have a negative effect on international business. Countries that enable spouses or partners to work are more attractive destinations, for highly-skilled families.



We also learned that being able to work has a positive effect on adjustment to the host location, family relationships and well-being as well as willingness to complete or extend the assignment. This doesn't mean that every spouse wants to work. However, 70-80% of spouses who have a job in the host country say that working has a positive impact on these important indicators. At the same time, 30-40% of spouses who are not working say that not working has a negative effect on the same aspects.

## How does India compare with other countries?

The top group of best practice countries allow the accompanying spouse - in some cases partner and children - to work with any employer or be self-employed for the duration of the assignment. Once the residence process is complete, their resident permit is stamped "free to work".



This now applies in 29 countries worldwide, for certain defined visa categories. For example, it applies in almost all countries in the European Union, with many of them introducing it on implementing the EU Blue Card Directive last year. The Blue Card is a special fast-track permit for highly-skilled people from outside the UE who have an offer of employment to work in a participating Member State. The top group also includes Argentina, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

The middle group of countries is smaller. They still have a work permit for the spouse or partner, but it is issued via a simple procedure. And there is no employment market test or requirement for particular skills or salary level.



The rest of the world, which includes India, requires the spouse to get a work permit, linked to a specific employer, without any concession for already being legally resident as a family member. The work permit often requires special skills or a certain salary level. In some countries there is an employment market-test, whereby the employer has to advertise the job and see if a suitable local person applies.

In India, until two years ago, spouses who were offered a job were required to return to their home countries and re-apply for an employment visa. As a result of our earlier efforts, the application can now be made in India and we will discuss that in detail shortly.

While we still see India in the third group, we recognize that the Government has made an important step in allowing spouses to apply in country for an employment visa.

With 29 countries now allowing spouses and in some cases partners and children to work freely, you can see the clear trend towards best practice. It's a sign that governments are prepared to view business-related transfers differently from permanent immigration, even in countries where immigration is a hot topic. They recognize that for highly-skilled people you can make exceptions. These are countries that want to attract international talent, trade, investment and development, and they recognize the importance of dual careers in doing that.



In terms of our global plans, India is one of the top 10 countries, including other BRIC countries, that our sponsors identified as important destinations for international business and development, where it is not yet easy for spouses and partners to get work permits. We are not talking high numbers. As you know, India is generally recognised as a net exporter of talent. Nevertheless, many international companies and organisations are bringing in a small number of expatriates to support the business and that in turn supports the economy.

## Lisa Silipigno, Career Planning Manager, Schlumberger

Schlumberger has over 120,000 employees. We employ over 140 nationalities in 80 countries. Almost 10% of our employees work outside their home country. 60% tend to move as a family and we find that they are happier and more productive and they stay with the company longer that way.



18% of our workforce are professional women. 4% are Indian nationals, many of whom work outside India. 10% of our population is what we call dual career.

In Schlumberger, there are two types of dual career. The first is where both husband and wife or partner work for Schlumberger. We call it dual career,

Schlumberger. The other type is where one spouse or partner works in another company. We refer to it as an affiliated dual career. Both have unique challenges. A majority of them work in North America, Latin America and Europe and the rest of the world makes up the other half.

In India, Schlumberger has about 100 employees on expat status.

One example involved the transfer of Praveen to India. He is an American citizen. When he arrived on an employment visa, his wife and newly-born son came on an X-visa. After his wife's maternity leave, we offered her the opportunity to come back and work for Schlumberger. Even with the legislation in print, we found several challenges to get a dependent visa converted to an employment visa. As a result, we had to send her back to her home country with her young child for a two-month turnaround and some associated cost. She is successfully working in India today.

From internal surveys, we know that at least 20% of our mobile population would not consider India as a destination for an assignment because they have a spouse who is working and will not be able to follow them.

We see some correlation with seniority and age. Our younger population is more and more dual career. In a few years, this challenge of dual careers will only grow.

### SCHLUMBERGER CASE FILE

"We have an engineer from India. His wife, who is not Indian, had taken extended maternity leave. When she came to India she wanted to work part-time in HSE or as a professional environmentalist in the oil and gas industry. She also tried several other industries and could not find any that could sponsor an employment permit for part-time work. She is a young mother. Although she is happy with her stay in India, she said that she is losing her connections in the industry and her skills are unused which may jeopardize her ability to work back home."

## Lalitha Sokkan, Senior HR Manager, National Coordination India, Bosch

Bosch has 27,000 people working in India, including close to 100 expats. Most expats are from Germany as Bosch is a German company. We are 60 years old and fast developing in India. We started in Kolkatta, now in Bangalore and across India. We have ventured into a lot of new businesses and need to bring in engineering expertise to support them. This is where we face a major challenge.



Lately, we see a tremendous increase in the number of dual careers couples, including women with accompanying husbands.

When potential expat staff come on their information trip, they are keen to take an assignment in India because they find the culture challenging and want to try out new things. The next question is *"Can my spouse work here?"*

Bosch supports dual career people, but we have limitations because of Government of India regulations. Where possible, we try to find an assignment for the spouse within the organization. Obviously, it's not possible for every spouse because they might not fit our industry.

We also want to support spouses to find employment outside Bosch, but there is the challenge of USD 25000 income a year. Not many companies can offer that. You sometimes hear that spouses who want to work in India are not keen on the salary. However, we hear spouses say *"We were working back home and don't want to be idle here. We want to continue working even if it's for a smaller payment."*

We are pleased that Permits Foundation is working with companies and the Ministry to find a solution that will allow accompanying spouses to work in India.

### EXPAT CASE FILE

"I have been in India for more than a year with my husband who was a judo trainer in our home country. I was happy that the company supports spouse mobility by giving an allowance for further education. Since my husband was already doing something in judo, I received an allowance so that he could enhance his skills. One year on, he has trained in martial arts and is looking for employment. He wants to teach martial arts, but no one is willing to hire a trainer with a salary of USD 25000."



**Irene Dabare, Deputy Country Director / Operations, UNDP India.**



As Deputy Director of Operations in UNDP, I am also in charge of getting spouses in India a job the next day. I have had this position for many years and I can say only in one instance I was able to find work for a spouse. Only one, in 9 countries that I worked in and that country was Japan. Only later I learned that you don't need a separate visa for a teacher to work in Japan.

In the last 6 months, we had 4 UN staff refusing assignments in India. We also had two families who shortened their stay and left India all because one of the spouses couldn't find a job after being here for one or two years.

The divorce rate among UN staff is high in countries like Tunisia, Iraq and India, Afghanistan, Libya where spouses can't work. The divorce rate is quite alarming, 60-70% of persons do not make it due to these problems.

#### A letter from UNDP in New York

**On behalf of the UN Chief Executive Board dual career and staff mobility programme, we strongly endorse the work of the Permits Foundation, a partner of this programme.**

We strongly support the introduction of a simple visa system where spouses of UN international professional staff, together with multinational transferees can work in the general job market in India - the same courtesy extended to many Indian expatriates working abroad.

International mobility brings many challenges and the lack of employment for spouses is often the major contributing factor for discouraging family mobility and lack of retention in the country of transfer.

Employment for expat spouses is a win-win situation and, therefore, relaxation of work visa situation can lead to positive outcomes. Further, offering a fair, equitable and inclusive work visa represents the values we support: - keeping families together while meaningfully engaged. It is worth noting that an open work visa is only the first step in gaining employment for spouses. They must also meet the advertised criteria and be suitably qualified for the position. But at the very least, they may compete on a level playing field. We fully support the Round Table process and look forward to a fair, just and positive outcome.

**Jane Adams, Dual Career & Staff Mobility, Global Coordinator, UNDP, New York.**

**Henrietta Bullinger, Chair of United Nations International Association, Delhi**

We are a voluntary organization for spouses of World Bank and UN families. We have a network of spouses who help to ease the move to India. We have also been running a kindergarten for 47 years. We have recently been working actively with UN agencies and the World Bank to understand the situation for spouses because the spouse permit issue is a big issue here in India.

I myself moved here 3 years ago. I gave up a job in Washington DC. I was expecting to continue to work, not full-time, but as a consultant.



That proved to be extremely difficult. In the past, my work has taken me to Africa. But I'm not allowed to work in India and I had to turn down several job

opportunities, consultancies of 3 to 5 weeks, because the offers do not allow me to fulfil the salary qualification of USD 25000 to get an employment visa. I cannot charge 1000 dollars per day for my work; nor would it be advisable to change my official visa to an employment visa, if it was possible, for just for few weeks or months of employment at a time.

Employees with UN agencies and the World Bank are not on diplomat visas or business visas, but on 'O' visas and dependants are not allowed to work.

There are two main issues. The first is changing an official dependent visa to an E-visa. This has become easier since we no longer have to leave the country. We also need a full-time salaried employment opportunity. And we need an employer who can prove that we can do the job and provide us with a letter guaranteeing our good conduct.

Two examples illustrate some of the challenges of spouses applying for a work visa. Both of these are full-time situations.

**UN CASE FILE**

One spouse has been offered a job as a teacher and she is in the processes of changing her dependent visa to an E-visa. Officially, she doesn't have to leave the country, but it is not an easy process. After several weeks, she still doesn't have the E visa and her existing visa might expire any moment. She is extremely frustrated with the present situation. There are lots of copies of various forms. And although she should not have to leave, she might just have to because her dependent visa expires.

We have another example of a spouse who has been offered a fellowship. She is also in the process of changing her visa into an employment visa. But she is not getting an E-visa, but an R-visa, I do not know if that is the right term, a Research-visa, as she is on a fellowship. So she still has to leave the country at her own expense. She doesn't know how long it will take.

Most spouses are not looking for full-time work, but part-time work. We are advised not to give up our dependent visas for E-visas.

We need to look at these situations too. I like Permits Foundation's proposal of best practice. I hope we can support Permits Foundation to secure this best practice in India.



### Twinkle Gogia, Senior Consultant, NetExpat

NetExpat is an organization that supports more than 250 international corporation's expatriate staff and families across the world. I am going to talk about three cases where relocation was not successful due to work permit issues.



In a second case, NetExpat was approached about a potential move of a top US-based engineer. The accompanying spouse was a lawyer and we tried to get her a job in India. Because of the work permit issue, she decided not to move and the expat had to re-locate to India alone, which was a stress for him. He is now doing all he can to manage the job from the USA, with telephone and video-conferences. But the fact that the spouse declined to move to India changed the nature of his job.

The third case was at a major French Multinational that decided to develop a global project in India. One of their French Vice Presidents had been appointed to India for few years. We were approached to find a job for the spouse who was a qualified finance director in France. We were trying to get her a job in India. Unfortunately, when they realized the administrative burden of the work permit process, they decided to decline the offer. It took 3 months for the spouse to pack everything and go back to France where she quickly found a job. Now the French Vice President continues his duty in India but at considerable personal stress.

#### NETEXPAT CASE FILE

The first was a German Vice President who was planned to supervise a major APAC company last year. He was planning to transfer to India with his wife, who had worked as a bio-chemist in Germany. Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty of the work permit, she decided not to move to India which prompted her husband to turn down the job.

Because of his seniority and good standing, the Group company transferred him instead to Singapore. He is doing very well there and his wife has also been able to get a job in Singapore. This is a loss for India.

## Henny, Expatriate Spouse

I am here to share my experience from the point of view of an accompanying expat. I came to India in November 2011. My husband was assigned a job as a Director of a German Multinational manufacturing company. Prior to India, we were both living and working in Malaysia. So when we heard about the move, I immediately looked into my career prospects in India. NetExpat was engaged by my husband's company to help me.



My initial intention was to work for my existing company in India. However, it was not possible due to the stipulated salary of USD 25000 per annum, especially for the roles that I am looking for.

I also talked with NetExpat about starting my own business or SME, but that is even more complicated because of the rules and regulations. Each State has different rules to incorporate a company.

Finally, we came to the option of a business visa and I decided to take a new role of business development for a company from Malaysia. Initially, there was confusion on the requirements for a business visa. The information on the Indian embassy website was different from the immigration website. To add to the complication, different lawyers had different interpretations of the immigration policies. In the end, we submitted and I'm happy to say that I managed to get a business visa.



## **Doris Delessard, Director, Director, MD Relocation Consultancy**

As an entrepreneur who has developed my company from Relocation to Real Estate, I will speak from my experience of SMEs. In order to grow, these companies need business developers. My own company has a mixture of international and Indian staff.

As an SME, you need to have some foreign staff to develop networks among international clients. I would like to take on some expat spouses. But hiring someone on an employment contract and salary of USD 25000 will empty your account. You cannot hire a local business developer for that type of role. Once you have the business, you can also hire local staff as you grow.

## Isabel Chatterton, Manager, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

I empathize with the issue as I have a non-working spouse at home. We should also put ourselves in the shoes of the government and understand their concerns and what impact they expect spouse employment to have for the economy.

An important percentage of our hiring takes place in India. The majority is actually local Indian staff. We bring a few expatriates with international expertise who can help us in supporting India to achieve its economic development goals.



These high-calibre international staff are generally not willing to re-locate without their spouses.

This is the type of story we should convey to the government.

Making a competitive analysis of the impact of spouse employment on the Indian economy would be a daunting task and would take many academics and researchers.

Perhaps we can narrow it down to one or two key indicators and try to show the impact to the government. For example, we could look at job creation and how in developing countries 9 out of 10 jobs are created by the private sector and our companies' contributions to job creation. We can also look at the impact of not bringing spouses on the resulting calibre of international staff.

I am sure all of us will try to contribute data to show the impact."

## Gaurav Makhija, Senior Manager-Tax and Immigration, KPMG in India

(When Kathleen welcomed Mr NK Singh to the meeting, Gaurav gave a brief summary of the discussion.)

Following discussions between the Ministry and the Permits Foundation, some rules were changed in 2011. The new rules allowed the spouse of a foreign national to change their visa status from dependent

visa to employment visa in India itself. One of the key requirements is that the spouse should meet the standard E visa condition of a minimum salary of USD 25000 per annum.



The audience here has pointed out that the rules are not functioning at ground level. There are two primary issues. One is a technical issue and the other one is an administrative issue. The technical issue is that for the conversion to an E visa, the salary has been fixed at USD 25000. So, if a spouse wants to work in India, it is necessary to earn a minimum salary of USD 25000 per annum.

If the spouse has other responsibilities and prefers to work part-time, it may not be possible to earn the minimum salary. So the delegates are suggesting a relaxation of the USD 25000 limit.

The second issue revolves around a lack of understanding of the law at the Foreigner's Registration Office. At times they are not sure as to how to process the application and how to go about the security clearance, when faced with a need to convert the dependant visa to an employment visa.

It is also not clear in the rules what constitutes the USD 25000, for example, whether to include housing rent, food allowances, air tickets, etc. The processing time to convert a visa is between 4 and 6 months as the files have to move between the Foreigners Registration Office and Ministry of Home Affairs. It takes a lot of time to process these files.

So though the rules are there whereby spouses can work in India, more needs to be done. As of now, dependent spouses sometimes still have to go back to their home country to get the visa converted. And even if they go back, they are unable to get a visa if they want to work part-time or are unable to draw a salary of USD 25000.

**Supriyo Gupta, Advisor to Permits Foundation, MD Torque Communications**



Supriyo gave a slide presentation outlining the history and Permits Foundation's progress to date in India, including discussions and reactions of the Ministry of Home Affairs to date, as well as other stakeholders. See attached PowerPoint slides .

**MORE ROUND TABLE VIEWS: SNAPSHOTS OF DISCUSSIONS**



**Gagan Sabharwal, Deputy Director, Nasscom**

We work very closely with the Ministry of Home Affairs in India in drafting these policies. I am here to take your feedback from companies as most of you are Nasscom members.



**Guido Christ, Deputy Director General Manager, Indo German Chamber of Commerce**

We understood that the USD 25000 would not only include the salary but the flights back to Germany and house rent. So, actually the paid out salary can be less. This works in Pune, but it might not work in other locations.

**Lalitha Sokkan**

May I clarify that the rent is normally paid to the primary expat, rather than the spouse.

**Irene Dabare, Deputy Country Director, UNDP**

I would confirm that the number of people we have coming to India is very small. Also there is a level of reciprocity in effect in many other countries. For example, in New York, where our headquarters are, Indian spouses are allowed to work.

When the husband or wife cannot work, it makes life very difficult. India is a big country and a beautiful country and many people want to come here, but there are also lots of hardships coming to India with family. If the spouse visa situation can be looked at I would be very happy.



**R. Suri, VP HR India Operations, Shell**

If I may add why we are doing this. What does it mean for India, if we do not accept some of these requests?

Quite simply the industry we are in, the oil and gas industry would come to a standstill if the right numbers of expatriates do not keep coming in.

The problem is that expatriates turn down opportunities in India because they can choose where they go to work. It is a resource-constrained industry. We lose people and we see how it impacts on the industry and on India. India is a net exporter of talent. In our industry, for every expat, there are 5 Indians developing somewhere else, so it is important to have a sensible and pragmatic response to this issue.

**Lisa Silipigno, Career Planning Manager, Schlumberger**

Schlumberger has been a fundamental helper in the oil and gas industry for the last 80 years. With the advent of this industry we had to bring in expat talent, with great difficulty.

The rate of refusing to go to India is growing as they have dual career issues. In my company maybe the absolute number is small, but overall in the industry it is a very big problem.



**Henrietta Bullinger, Chairperson, United Nations International Association**

Although it is possible to change the visa to an employment visa, many spouses consider short-term consultancies. When looking for jobs for a few weeks here and there, they do not meet the constraints of the E visa. That is hindering international organizations in recruiting and retaining international staff.

*We are talking about few numbers, but very important numbers.*

**Lalitha Sokkan, Bosch**

I would like to add that unmarried expats with partners come on a tourist visa and have to leave after 3 months in India. It is very difficult for them due to the visa regime.



**Jillian Nelson, Global Mobility Services, Goldman Sachs**

It would be helpful to consider unmarried partners, for example where the employee and partner have children, and possibly also children who want to do internships or enroll in college or fellowship programs.

**Doris Delessard, Director, MD Relocation Consultancy Pvt Ltd**

Please don't forget the SMEs. If wives are allowed to work, they can open doors to new networks and help SMEs grow. Growth makes you hire local people. Though we are talking small numbers, it also has strong impact on the country's economy.



**Claudia Alvarez, UN LESA Co-ordinator**

What about spouses who are willing to volunteer? What category of visa do they get? I understand that you are not allowed to volunteer on an O dependent visa.

**Kate de Montjoye, spouse representative**

I also don't understand the logic behind this, particularly in India with huge social needs, if you are not allowed to volunteer and

give back something to this country. In fact, I volunteer for 15 organisations in Delhi and Bangalore.

**Cecilia Rahm, GM, Swedish Chamber of Commerce India**

I agree with the importance of the issue and the concern about part-time work and the USD 25000. We have the same issues in the Swedish community. That is an interesting question on volunteering. How can you tell someone not to do voluntary work?



**N K Singh, Member of Parliament**



Kathleen, thank you for giving me this opportunity to see the dimension of the problem, which is not often in the forefront of either public dialogue or in terms of media attention. There seems to be unanimity that some changes are necessary. I must applaud you that having left your beautiful country as it turns spring, you have chosen India's hottest day to have an

interaction on this subject that may not be hot but, in terms of the participants present here, it is clear that you have a wide-spectrum of people who are engaged on this important issue.

I have worked in the Ministry of Home Affairs before I was the Finance Secretary and before I moved to the Ministry of Finance where I was for the bulk of my career, before working again with the Prime Minister.

I think that the basic issue is the asymmetry. India post 1991 has made enormous changes in terms of liberalizing a whole range of rules and regulations, organizational entity, and has made credible efforts in trying to attract foreign investments and foreign capital.

The broad point is that if we are to remain a very competitive destination, the importance of hiring the highest quality in human talent must be underscored, particularly in sectors that require domain-knowledge and higher levels of skill.

Also the world is changing in terms of both the spouse and the companion or husband. It is now becoming common practice that incomes need to be boosted, quite apart from the employment opportunity. It is now a global phenomenon, also in India, that the number of families where both members are working has increased significantly.

Maybe the changes which India has experienced in other avenues of economic and social management have not been fully reflected in the modernization of visa policies, where the focus has often been from a security viewpoint.



We need to ensure that India remains a globally competitive investment destination, attracting not only large MNCs but also small enterprises and therefore the high-quality of human talent.

The changes of 2011, from what I have been able to read and understand, are significant but there are sub-texts which need greater clarification. The challenge is to ensure that the visa policies and processes are integrated meaningfully in terms of the country's overall economic strategy.



The last question you asked was whether I have any suggestion on how to take this forward and seek greater engagement. On the spur of the moment, there are three thoughts that come to me.

The first is that it would be enormously helpful if there was literature on how important this is from the viewpoint of India's economic and competitive development and how much our competitiveness is being eroded by our inability to attract the highest quality of human

resource and talent. A link between this issue and economic development is an area where there needs to be greater awareness. Some literature in the public domain could be used for media education to bring out the fact that India has many disabilities in terms of being not the most competitive destination in the world. This one is an added handicap.

The second broad idea is the advocacy issue. Maybe Permits Foundation could form a group like the friends of Permits Foundation, who are sympathetic to this issue and understand it, and could be the interlocutors in improving the levels of engagement that have been possible so far.

The third point is to bring your message across not only to the MHA, but to a wider group in terms of advocacy, for example, via the Ministry of oil and natural gas. If the oil sector suffers on this score, the Petroleum Ministry should take it up with the other Ministries. Similarly, if the World Bank and UNDP face this, they should take it to the Department of Economic Affairs who will link you to the Ministry of Home Affairs. When the Ministry Of Home Affairs receives representations from different ministries and institutions, I think then you will be well placed to carry this message forward.