

The reasons behind the guidelines according to government officials, range from 'India is for Indians first and the new guidelines will help protect our jobs' to 'it will lead to better security'.

Morris, however, argues (on www.the-nri.com, an online magazine targeted at NRIs): "Such salaries (US \$25,000) are generally confined to IT-sector jobs or management roles. Far from imposing a reasonable floor that will discourage low-level immigrants from coming and taking jobs that should rightly be filled by the aam aadmi, the rule limits employment visas to only elite and highly qualified workers (who, incidentally, could probably make the same money anywhere and thus aren't likely to stay long)."

One sector that has been hit adversely by the new rules is the NGO or development sector, which saw a host of foreigners work at low salaries. Flora Saint-Sans, a German citizen and Country Director of Knowledge Must, a New Delhi-based company that offers cultural and career guidance and training to students, professionals and organisations coming to India, says, "If one wants to work in the development sector, India is one of the most interesting places to be in. Although the salaries aren't as high, the exposure and opportunities available in India aren't available anywhere else." After the guidelines have come into place, Knowledge Must mostly works with interns who arrive in India on trips scheduled as part of their curriculum, as opposed to professionals from all fields.

Jaume Sanllorente, a 36-year-old former journalist from Barcelona, who founded non-profit organisation Mumbai Smiles, says he is concerned about both,



the development sector in India and the foreigners working there. "A good citizen with a decent job can have a minor salary but is more productive to the country than another one, who may be earning far more."

Sanllorente started the NGO after a trip in Mumbai when he discovered that an orphanage operating in a city slum was shutting down.

He has so far, through the NGO, helped 250 Indians land a job. "It is funny how, after having provided so many jobs, I

still face problems every time I have to renew my visa. No one has ever asked me to submit information about the job positions I am creating. If the FRRO cannot keep track of someone who is creating job opportunities, how are they going to protect jobs?"

American citizen Mattie Ross (name changed on request), was working in the Corporate Social Responsibility wing of a top Indian bank as part of a fellowship in India. She was quite certain she would have to leave India since she was earning only a little

over Rs 2 lakh a year. Luckily, her boss agreed to raise her salary to Rs 12 lakh per annum to keep her in the country. "I was extremely lucky," she says. "A lot of foreigners who want to work here are looking less at income and more at professional experience. Income is not always the main motivation because comparative incomes in India are pretty low."

JAUME SANLLORENTE
Founder of NGO Mumbai Smiles

Raising the salary of foreign staff may not always be a good option. Karl, who requested that his last name not be published, got a job as project director of a fellowship programme in India. He was offered Rs 70,000 per month last year, and given a visa by the consulate in the US. But on arriving in New Delhi, he was asked to return. After much negotiation, his company has now raised his monthly salary to Rs 1 lakh. "This hasn't pleased many of his Indian colleagues. I

can understand the problem they have with the decision but what can I do?" he asks.

However, despite Karl earning Rs 1 lakh, unlike what was decided when he took up the job, he has to incur all his travel and miscellaneous expenditure himself. "This effectively means that I still earn the same amount," he says.

Meanwhile, Chaney is in his Andheri apartment. His two bays, (one cleans the home, the other makes him meals) are just leaving. The cook says she has made the day's chapatis, while the other giggles and says, "Bye".

Showing them out, he turns around to ask, "Why does the Indian government think only having well-paid foreigners are beneficial? It is only through the intermingling of people from all sections of a society, can a truly global society emerge."

THE HANDBOOK

A guide to different types of visas

One can enter India through various visas.

TOURIST VISA:

Can be granted for more than six months, depending on the applicant's nationality.

X (ENTRY) VISA:

Only available to a foreigner of Indian origin, spouse and children of a foreigner of Indian origin or citizenship, family of a foreigner on any other long-term visa.

EMPLOYMENT VISA:

Issued to foreigners who are working in India, for an organisation registered in India. According to a new rule, applicants must earn at least US \$25,000 a year to be eligible.

STUDENT VISA:

Granted to people who wish to study in India.

BUSINESS VISA:

Available for those who wish to explore business opportunities in India.

CONFERENCE VISA:

Issued to delegates who want to attend a conference in India; offered by an Indian government organisation.

JOURNALIST VISA:

Available only to journalists, it is known to be difficult to get.

RESEARCH VISA:

Issued to professors and scholars.

MEDICAL VISA:

For those seeking medical treatment in India.

TRANSIT VISA:

Visitors staying in India for less than 72 hours can obtain a Transit visa.

Flora Saint-Sans, a Delhi-based German citizen and Country Director of Knowledge Must says India is one of the hottest places to be in for foreigners who wish to work in the development sector. PIC/ RAJEEV TYAGI

