

## US clarification on...

He added, "So, there's no worry for the next six months to one year, and after that we will see what happens."

Sajai Singh, Partner at JSA Advocates and Solicitors, however, emphasised that while the immediate shock has muted slightly, which seems like a huge relief for now, it is just giving more time for the reality to set in.

"The clarifications tweak the applicability for new H-1B visa applicants, not the existing visa holders or renewals. This means the current H-1B holders can exit and re-enter the US freely without paying the fee, as the fee will apply to the upcoming H-1B lottery cycle.

"However, Indian IT companies that rely heavily on H-1B visas will still face significant cost increases, potentially disrupting business models and revenue streams," Singh said.

Eventually, all this will bring the focus back on hiring local talent in the US to reduce the dependence on H-1B visa holders, Singh said.

"Net-net, there may be a slight delay in the impact. But the impact will be there, requiring reassessment of business strategies. Yes, the immediate shock has slightly diluted, and so it seems like a huge relief. It's just giving more time for the reality to set in," Singh added.

Ganesh Natarajan, Chairman, GTT Data Solutions Ltd and 5F World, said that after the clarifications, it is good that the existing visa holders will not be affected.

The "American Dream" for an aspiring student or first timer, however, will no longer be feasible, he noted.

"Companies in the future will restrict cross-border

travel, and more work will be done through GCCs in countries like India, Mexico, and the Philippines, where talent will be available.

"The current talent model may change substantially if this rule stays. This could benefit countries like India in the long term, but it will take a couple of years for the new work and talent model to crystallise," he said.

Noting that all countries will do what is in the interest of their citizens, Natarajan said, "Indians have to recognise that and build careers with that understanding."

White House official's clarification that H-1B visa fee of USD 100,000 would be applicable only to new applicants offered some relief in Indian tech circles.