No In-person Interviews for H-1B, L-1 Visas till '22-End

Our Bureau

Pune: The United States has done away with the need for in-person interviews for H-1B, L-1 and certain other non-immigrant visas through December 31, 2022, the Department of State announced on Thursday. The move is aimed at reducing the time taken to process visas and facilitate easier travel into the US.

The move will help Indian applicants for an H-1B visa, many of whom were unable to travel last year as consulates had temporarily shut down on account of the pandemic. Indians are the largest recipients of H-1B visas, accounting for nearly 70% of all visas issued annually.

"The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in profound reductions in the Department's visa processing capacity. As global travel rebounds, we are taking these temporary steps to further our commitment to safely and efficiently reduce visa wait times while maintaining national security as our priority. We made this determination with the concurrence of our Department of Homeland Security partners," the relevant US department said in a statement.

The waiver will also apply to other visa categories like students (F and M visas) and individuals with extraordinary ability or achievement (O visas), among others.

There has been a drop in demand for H-1B visas in the past year on account of travel restrictions and with most companies continuing to work remotely on account of the pandemic. The US conducted a record third visa lottery in order to meet the annual quota of 85,000 H-1B visas.

"The Department of State recognises the positive impact of temporary work visa holders on the US economy and is committed to facilitating non-immigrant travel and reducing visa wait times," said the statement.

Food Aggregators, Etailers Gear up to Get Past Omicron

Pranav.Balakrishnan
@timesinternet.in

Bengaluru: Consumer internet firms in the ecommerce, food delivery and quick commerce space are reiterating the need for caution as cases of the new Covid-19 variant, Omicron, rise steadily in the country.

These companies have started relying on measures they had taken during the second wave earlier this year, though they have yet to undertake any drastic changes in their operations. However, they are closely monitoring the evolving situation, industry executives said.

Flipkart, majority owned by Walmart, is taking additional safety measures for its warehouse and logistics teams, while Amazon India is conducting business as usual, for now.

A seller on online retail platforms told **ET** that ecommerce companies have not communicated about any major re-arrangements on operational matters yet. Food delivery firms such as Zomato and Swiggy are also keenly following the case graph, sources told ET.

Flipkart said that maintaining its operations involves conducting large-scale awareness sessions on Covid-19 safety protocols at its fulfilment, sortation centres and delivery hubs for over 100,000 supply chain employees across the country. "We are continuing to follow these measures and have rolled out an audit process to constantly improve our safety protocols. We have rolled out initiatives such as Safekart and Suraksha to reiterate our Covid-19 safety protocols among lakhs of our employees and offer benefits such as free doctor teleconsultations, instant credit, etc," the company said in a statement. It is also working closely with the central and state governments on Covid-19 guidelines, it said.

A spokesperson for Amazon India said it had implemented a series of preventative health measures for employees, associates, and partners at its sites since the beginning of the pandemic. This includes adherence to social distancing norms, use of face masks, and daily temperature screenings in its operations sites.

Spokespersons for Swiggy and Zomato declined to comment.

Primarc Pecan Retail, which partners multiple brands, is working with clients to ensure there is enough stock in warehouses in case there is another lockdown, said chief executive officer Ankur Dayal.

For full report, go to www.economictimes.com

ON GUARD

Flipkart taking additional safety measures for its warehouse and logistics teams

Co conducting awareness sessions on Covid-19 safety protocols at its fulfilment centres

Amazon has implemented a series of preventative health measures for employees, associates, and partners at its sites

This includes adherence to social distancing norms, use of face masks, and daily temperature screenings

Apple's App Store Broke Competition Laws: Dutch Watchdog

The Netherlands' top competition regulator said on Friday Apple broke the country's competition laws and ordered changes to its App Store payment policies. Apple's practice of requiring app developers to use its in-app payment system and pay commissions of 15% to 30% on digital goods purchases has come under scrutiny from regulators and lawmakers around the world. The Dutch investigation into whether Apple's practices amounted to an abuse of a dominant market position was launched in 2019. —**Reuters**

Startups, Tech Cos are on the Hunt for Financial Pros Now

Sneha Shah & Rica Bhattacharyya

Mumbai: Earlier this week, Piramal Enterprises appointed former global private equity head for India at KKR, Rupen Jhaveri, as its new group president, responsible for business development, strategy, M&A, capital allocation and corporate finance. Jhaveri, who spent 13 years at KKR and was part of several marquee transactions, will help Piramal build its alternatives business.

Like Jhaveri, over two dozen financial professionals working with private equity or venture capital funds, investment banks, Big Four professional services firms and other corporates have taken up roles in new-age digital companies as well older firms which have had aggressive inorganic growth plans in the last 6-12 months.

Some of the recent moves include Puneet Renjhen, who joined the Mahindra Group as head M&A from Avendus Capital; Pranay Shetty, who joined Sharechat as head of corporate development from BNP Paribas; Niraj Sangharajka, who moved from KPMG to Allcargo Logistics; Meetali Jain, head of corporate development at Cars24 who joined from Bank of America Merrill Lynch; Kunal Swarup to Zomato as head of corporate development from Kotak Investment Banking; Ashish Mukkirwar, who joined Glenmark Pharmaceuticals as group VP — Strategy from Moelis & Co, among others, according to data from executive search firm Native.

Executive search firms said there is a 30-40% increase in demand for senior-level professionals (directors and partners) in M&A and strategy roles at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated disruption across sectors and large conglomerates as well as startups are responding to the changes through mergers, consolidations and new investments.

"There is a huge surge in demand for senior people in strategy, project management and M&A roles in the last six months – especially post waning of the second wave of the pandemic," said Munira Loliwala, AVP-Engineering Staffing & RPO Solutions, Teamlease Digital.

The speed-to-market strategy has led to M&A becoming one of the popular business strategies for corporate companies and is expected to gain momentum in the coming year.

"There is a 30% increase in demand for such talent at the senior level," said K Sudarshan, managing director, EMA Partners India.

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Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6th Floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008. invites E-tender as per details given as follows. **Executive:** Sr.DEN/N/BCT **Tender Notice No. & Date: BCT/21-22/236 dtd. 22/12/2021 Work and Location:** Virar - Jora-Vasan Sec. **(i)** (UP & DN Line) - TRR(P) = 8.612km & TSR = 29.543km (By PQRS = 26.398km & by Manual = 3.145km) **(ii)** (DN Line) - CTR(P)-17.242 km (By PQRS = 16.211 km & By Manual = 1.031 km) **(iii)** TTR (TWS+WCMS)=56, (CS+CMSC)=10 **(iv)** TFR=16.543km. (Composite Tender Engg. + S&T work) - (Re-invite-1) **Approx. Cost of Work in Rs.: Rs. 9,99,52,777.72 EMD Rs.: 649800/- Date & Time of Submission: On 18.01.2022 till 15.00 hrs. Date & Time of Opening: On 18.01.2022 till 15.30 hrs.** 621
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