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Visa freeze by US Embassy due to coronavirus may ground Indian IT companies

The move, necessitated by the Covid-19 virus outbreak will make it difficult for software exporters to send employees on projects and sales calls to the United States, which generates over two-thirds of the Indian IT industry's revenue. The embassy has said that applicants could reschedule visa interviews once regular consular operations resume.

By *Priyanka Sangani*, ET Bureau | Last Updated: Mar 17, 2020, 03:09 PM IST

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Attorneys had flagged the slowdown in application filings in the US even before the visa suspension was announced.

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PUNE: IT services providers could bear the brunt of the **US Embassy** in India's move to stop issuing immigrant and non-immigrant visas effective Monday.

The move, necessitated by the **Covid-19** virus outbreak will make it difficult for software exporters to send employees on projects and sales calls to the United States, which generates over two-thirds of the Indian IT industry's revenue. The embassy has said that applicants could reschedule visa interviews once regular consular operations

resume.

IT companies are already dealing with the prospect of slower growth, with several key industries like aviation and travel being impacted globally because of the outbreak. Both India and the United States have announced several restrictions on international travel, which will curb the ability of Indian companies to send people abroad.

Companies that had scheduled visa interviews in the forthcoming weeks will have to reschedule, said Poorvi Chothani, managing partner of **LawQuest**, a US immigration firm based in Mumbai. "That means their joining date in the US will be impacted, having a deferred effect on business. Even business travel on B-1 visas has been curtailed," she said.

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Attorneys had flagged the slowdown in application filings in the US even before the visa suspension was announced.

“The cancellations of all visa appointments will have a tremendous impact, not only for applicants stuck overseas but also for employers in the US who will have to make difficult decisions if they are not able to resume their positions soon...,” said Nandini Nair, an immigration attorney at US law firm Greenspoon Marder.

Since there is no clarity yet on when the US embassy and consulates would start processing visas again, there is also fear that this would impact the H-1B application process. This year, the US has implemented a new system where employers have to register prospective [H-1B applicants](#) online, and only once selected by random lottery, do they submit applications for the shortlisted employees.

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