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Reverse brain-drain may affect the US: Study

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WASHINGTON: More than one million skilled immigrant workers, including engineers, doctors and researchers compete for 120,000 permanent US resident visas each year and this imbalance may fuel a reverse brain-drain from America affecting the country, a new study has said.

The situation is even bleaker as the number of employment visas issued to immigrants from any single country is less than 10,000 per year with a wait time of several years, the report by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation said.

"The United States benefits from having foreign-born innovators create their ideas in this country," said Vivek Wadhwa, Wertheim fellow with the Harvard Law School and executive in residence at Duke University.

"Their departures would be detrimental to US economic well-being," he said.

The earlier studies documented that one in four engineering and technology companies founded between 1995 and 2005 had an immigrant founder.

Indian immigrants founded more companies than the next four groups from the United Kingdom, China, Taiwan and Japan combined.

Researchers found that these companies employed 450,000 workers and generated USD 52 billion in revenue in 2006.

The key finding from this research is that the number of skilled workers waiting for visas is significantly larger than the number that can be admitted to the US.

This imbalance creates the potential for a sizable reverse brain-drain from the United States to the skilled workers' home countries, the Foundation said.

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