

Indian outsourcing industry hits out at US visa bill

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India's outsourcing giants have slammed a United States bill that could double the cost of a work visa in a move seen as targeting high-profile Indian software exporters.

The measure would boost annual US visa costs for India's outsourcing industry by 200-250 million dollars annually, the National Association of Software and Services Companies warned.

S. Gopalakrishnan, chief executive of India's second-largest outsourcer Infosys Technologies, told reporters late Monday he was "saddened and disheartened" by the step and said the sector would lobby strongly against it.

India, which already holds at least 50 percent of the global outsourcing market, has become the world's back office as Western firms set up call centres, number-crunching and software development outlets to cut costs.

But the 50-billion-dollar industry also sends skilled workers to the United States to develop software and direct projects for US clients.

The visa legislation, passed unanimously by the Senate last week, still must be approved by the US House of Representatives and signed into law by US President [Barack Obama](#).

With anti-outsourcing anger stoked by high US unemployment, critics

deride Indian outsourcing firms as "body shops" because they provide Indian professionals to US companies rather than employing Americans.

"We think it (the bill) goes against the notion of free trade and is discriminatory," Wipro, India's third-largest outsourcer, said in a statement.

The measure would raise by more than 2,000 dollars per application the US fee paid by any company with more than 50 people in which over half the workforce has H-1B and L-1 visas earmarked for skilled foreign workers, industry officials say.

Leading Indian [outsourcing](#) companies are expected to be hardest hit by the higher fees, including Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro and Mahindra Satyam.

The bill proposes to use proceeds from the fee hike to pay for the US government's plans to boost border security.

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