

Business Standard

Trump backs curbs on low-skilled migrants

August 2, 2017

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has thrown his weight behind an immigration overhaul aimed at dramatically reducing the number of low-skilled migrants in the US and introducing a merit-based points system.

The proposals would prioritise English speakers for green cards, and would put a cap on the number of refugees able to gain permanent residency at 50,000 a year.

Mr Trump endorsed the proposal in remarks at the White House, flanked by Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue, who drafted the legislation.

The president said the plan would represent “the most significant reform to our immigration system in half a century.”

“Our system does not prioritise the most highly skilled immigrants - just one out of every 15 immigrants to the United States comes here because of their skills,” the White House said in a statement previewing Mr Trump’s remarks.

“On average, one million immigrants are accepted into the United States for legal permanent residency annually, and most of them are low or unskilled workers. This influx is the equivalent of adding more than the population of San Francisco to the country every year.”

Mr Trump said the new system, if approved, would “help ensure that newcomers to our wonderful country will be assimilated, will succeed and achieve the American dream,” while also protecting “struggling American families.”

Critics say that the proposals would result in an actual reduction of wages across the board, by slashing the number of migrants creating jobs.

“High-skilled immigrants are huge economic multipliers,” the libertarian CATO institute said in a recent report claiming every skilled migrant coming to the US creates 1.8 jobs for native-born Americans.

It came as Mr Trump signed a bill to impose new sanctions on Russia.

Two White House officials said that the president signed the bill on Wednesday morning Washington DC time.

The package of stiff financial sanctions against Russia passed Congress with overwhelming support.

However, Mr Trump called the bill “seriously flawed” in a statement.

“By limiting the Executive’s flexibility, this bill makes it harder for the United States to strike good deals for the American people, and will drive China, Russia, and North Korea much closer together,” Mr Trump said in a statement. “The Framers of our Constitution put foreign affairs in the hands of the President.”

“This bill will prove the wisdom of that choice,” he added.

The sanctions were in response to information that Russia meddled in the US elections, however it has denied doing so.

Moscow responded to the sanctions by ordering a reduction in the number of US diplomats in Russia.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly before an official statement.