Joe Biden reboot for fairer immigration policy

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BENGALURU: A Joe Biden-led US administration is expected to make immigration rules fairer, changing the environment for Indian IT services companies into something that's more stable than under Donald Trump. During the election campaign, Biden had come across as pro-skilled immigration, had supported the expansion of the number of highskilled visas, and the elimination of the limits on employment-based visas by country.
Vivek Wadhwa, distinguished fellow at Carnegie Mellon University's college of engineering at Silicon Valley, said Biden will not create any new barriers and will revise the immigration rules to make them fairer. Trump had a very destructive agenda for his second term, he said.

Kamala Harris, he noted, is from Silicon Valley and understands the needs of tech companies for top talent. "Biden will act in a fair and reasonable way. This is a big plus for Indian and American companies. We are getting a major upgrade to American leadership and restoring its ethics and values. This will be a good thing for India as well," he said.

Trump had taken a number of measures that had made it more and more difficult for Indian IT services companies to get US long-term work visas. American tech companies, however, were not as constrained in accessing these visas. Indian IT services companies need these visas to service American customers, who constitute 50-60% oftheir revenue (see graphic), and have been trying to overcome the visa constraints by hiring local Americans.
Alex Nowrasteh, director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute's Centre for Global Liberty and Prosperity, said one can expect Biden to reopen the American immigration system sometime in 2021. "The government will again start to process H-1B visas, student visas, and employment-based green cards from abroad. Biden might keep a few Trump-era regulations to make the H-1B visa more expensive, but it will practically go back to pre-Trump normal," he said.
The Trump administration had moved to do away with the H-1B lottery system and replace it with a system that will grant the visas to those who pay the highest wages. Some believe the Democrats will not pursue this. IT industry body Nasscom, which has been critical of the US's antiimmigration measures, said it is looking forward to working with the new US administration to find solutions to the STEM (science, technology, engineering & math) skills gap, and enable America to be more competitive.
Nasscom noted that its member companies have an important history in the US. They work with over three-quarters of the Fortune 500 companies in the US, providing them vital technology services and helping them innovate, compete, and grow. "A key challenge the sector faces is the lack of required STEM talent in the US, clearly highlighted by the high degree of overall unemployment on one hand, and more than half a million job vacancies in computer occupation on the other," it said.