

## **London Mayor moots new work visa for Indian students**

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**London:** London Mayor Boris Johnson has proposed a new Commonwealth work visa for Indian students which will allow them to work for two years after graduating from a British university. This, the Mayor hopes, will help address the sharp decline in foreign students coming to study in the United Kingdom.

As part of proposals he has forwarded to the United Kingdom government, the new two-year Commonwealth work visa would kick-start with India and then be extended to other Commonwealth countries if successful.

“London is indisputably the education capital of the world with more top performing universities than any other city globally. However, current restrictions on overseas students are putting off the brightest Indian minds from coming to study in the capital and it is crazy that we should be losing India’s top talent and global leaders of the future to countries like Australia and the United States,” Mr. Johnson said.

“I hope we can work with London’s universities and government to address this and make sure the capital remains the leading destination for international students,” he said.

India is the third-largest international student market in London, after China and the US. However, the number of Indian students studying at London’s higher education institutions has more than halved over the last five years.

In 2009-10, there were 9,925 Indian students in the British capital, while in 2013-14 there were only 4,790. This comes at a time when the demand for higher education is growing due to India’s economic growth and the expansion of its middle class.

The Mayor and senior academics from some of London’s leading higher education institutions got together at City Hall on Tuesday to address this issue.

A second proposal aimed at reversing the trend of falling numbers of international students includes a work visa for graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for up to two years.

“Although not restricted to nationality, this would be attractive to Indian students for whom STEM degrees are popular. It would also help to meet a critical skills shortage in the U.K. in areas such as life sciences, engineering and technology,” a statement from the Mayor’s office said.

Gordon Innes, CEO London & Partners, the Mayor’s promotional company, added that “at a time when we are facing increasing competition from many other countries, we should make sure we are doing all we can to encourage young people to study here and experience everything London has to offer.”

A major factor behind falling number of Indian students is believed to be the closure in 2012 of the U.K.’s Post Study Work Visa, which gave non-EU students the right to remain in the country for two years after graduation.

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