

Comprehensive immigration reform - Part I

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od); and, with some exceptions, it does not allow portability. The new H-2C program is a two-year program renewable for another two years. It is capped at 250,000 annually, and sunsets five years after regulations are issued. Portability is allowed after three months, with exceptions for earlier transfers allowed under certain circumstances. An attestation is required for both visas, with employers having to meet certain US worker requirements. Dual intent is allowed in both visas and derivative status is available for both as well. The bill's worker protection provisions include a complaint-driven procedure in which the DOL and the Department of Justice's Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) will investigate claims and provide for mediation, and in certain instances hearings and further appeals. Employer groups and unions can petition for these workers. The bill also creates a commission to review the impact of the program and a report on wage determinations. Petition and filing fees for each worker are on a sliding scale, based

on the number of the employer's employees.

The Bush Administration on January 7, unveiled its immigration proposal. The Administration's reform proposal is centered on an uncapped temporary worker program intended to "match willing foreign workers with willing US employers when no Americans can be found to fill the job." The program would grant program participants temporary legal status and authorize working participants to remain in the US for three years, with their participation renewable for an unspecified period. Initially, the program would be open to both undocumented people as well as foreign workers living abroad (with the program restricted to outside of US at some future, unspecified date). American employers must make reasonable efforts to find US workers. Under this proposal, participants would be allowed to travel back and forth between their countries of rights". The proposal also includes incentives for people to return to their home countries and calls for increased workplace enforcements as well as unspecified increase in legal immigration.

...to be continued

Advani - Hurriyat talks set agenda for LS poll in Kashmir

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nation with the Jammu region a major issue in the Parliamentary elections. It signals that he will contest, come what way. In that event, one would be witness to an interesting spectacle of partners in the coalition government openly clashing with each other. Small wonder that he has already protested against the exclusion of Jammu from the talks. He is determined to drive home the point. As for the Abbas faction of the Hurriyat Conference, it may be too early to even think of contesting the elections. All its constituents are skating on

thin ice. One thing is, however, very clear that, sooner or later, if they, or the other faction, led by veteran Syed Ali Shah Geelani, or any outfit, be it the Jamaat-e-Islami or the dominant Yasin Malik faction of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, want to speak on behalf of the people of the state, they would have to pass the electoral test. There is no other way they can prove that they are the "true representatives" of the state. That underlines the importance of the coming Lok Sabha polls and any such battles that may follow.

Courtesy: Daily Excelsior

Upakar helps needy Indian students

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for outside vendors and services, events or publicity.

Narasimhan said that Upakar initiated this year a new award called "Community Ambassador Award" to recognize an Indo-American who inspired community service programs to benefit the greater society. The Community Ambassador Award honors an individual who plays a leadership role in service to their community outside of their own career. He said that Dr. Kumar calls

the prospective recipient a "Social Entrepreneur" who does community service through a non-profit organization. The recipient would be recognized and the organization in which he or she works would be given \$5,000. Besides, the recipient will be invited all expenses-paid to the annual banquet where he or she would be the keynote speaker. The recipient will also have an opportunity to speak to the press about his or her work and about his or her non-profit organization.

He said each year an organization or a foundation would be approached for a grant \$10,000 towards this award. This year Fannie Mae Foundation has given this grant.

For more information about scholarships and Community Ambassador Award, please write to Upakar, 2428 Silver Fox Lane, Reston, VA 20191; e-mail at upakarfoundation@hotmail.com, log on to www.upakar.org or call Narasimhan at (703) 405-7655.

Fares kept intact in interm budget

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there is no proposal to increase freight and passenger fares. Projecting a 3 percent growth in passenger traffic and 20-million-tonne increase in freight traffic, the budget estimates put the gross traffic receipt at Rs. 44,482 crore for 2004-05, an increase of Rs. 1,877 crore over the revised estimates of 2003-04.

It budgets ordinary working expenses at Rs. 32,960 crore for the next financial year and proposes to give current dividend of Rs. 3,305 crore to government along with Rs. 300 crore of deferred dividend.

The 17 new series of fast trains linking state capitals with Delhi will be named as Sampark Kranti Express.

The first such train will be from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Bangalore (Yashwantpur) and

would be flagged off on February 8.

The trains will have value-added features -- non-stop run beyond the state, dedicated staff throughout the run and public address systems.

The Rs. 20,000-crore outlay for connecting remote and backward areas in the next five years would be called "Remote Area Rail Sampark Yojana."

Kumar said Railway Protection Force (RPF) was gearing up to take over the additional responsibility of escorting trains and providing security in passenger areas from July 1 this year.

Under Technology Mission on Railway Safety, 14 projects have been approved as a joint effort among ministries of Railways, HRD and Industries.

Giving details of the financial

performance in 2002-03, Kumar said freight loading at 518.74-million-tonne surpassed the revised target of 515 million tonne.

The current dividend of Rs. 2,665 crore and Rs. 50 crore of deferred dividend have been paid, he said, adding operating ratio in the current year was put at 92.3 percent as against the budgeted 94.4 percent.

Freight loading during the current year was enhanced to 550 million tonne and growth in passenger traffic was put at three per cent.

The current dividend of Rs. 2,968 crore and deferred dividend of Rs. 300 crore were being paid this year, he said adding the plan outlay for the current year was increased by Rs. 1,000 crore and fixed at Rs. 13,918 crore in the revised estimates.

India shines at FIA's R-Day banquet

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Dorothy Brown, Clerk of Cook County Circuit Courts, who was the chief guest, paid tributes to the contributions of Indians for the progress of this country. "I am committed to diversify my office. Many Indians work in my office. We respect our cultures," she added.

A great supporter of technology, she said that her office received the national recognition as one which was technologically very advanced.

She said: "We aim at efficient customer service; we provide efficient training for employees; we believe in accountability; and we meticulously manage our \$120-million budget."

Dorothy Brown, who is seeking re-election, appealed to all Indians to vote for her in

the elections and help her win the race.

Introducing Dorothy Brown to the audience, Harish Bhatt, chairman of the event, said that her office employed about 2,300 people among whom many were Indians. She also managed the biggest budget and received several awards for her achievements.

Frank Avila, a Democratic candidate for Commissioner of Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, and Melissa Beans, who is running for 8th Congressional District, also addressed the audience seeking their support in their elections.

Neelima Mithila, who is the top SAT scorer among all Indian students, was recognized and awarded a check of \$1,000. Ruth Varghese was

also presented a plaque for her contribution to the Indian culture.

Ruth Varghese and her students presented several enjoyable patriotic, spiritual, classical and semi-classical dances. The others who participated in the cultural events included Midwest Federation Christian Group, Students of University of Illinois, and children from the Telugu Association of Greater Chicago.

Santosh Verghes and Rita Modi sang several solo songs and duets.

Earlier, Vir Doshi, treasurer of FIA, welcomed the gathering. Dr. Ram Gajjela, secretary of FIA, proposed a vote of thanks.

Keerti Kumar Ravoori and Hetal Patel were the masters of ceremonies.

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