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Germany extends Green Card validity

New Delhi (PNS): GERMANY HAS extended the validity of its Green Card scheme until 31 December 2004, further pending the formulation of a new visa regime for foreign workers entering the country. Nearly 4,000 Indian Information Technology (IT) professionals were given work permits during 2003, under the two year old scheme, which around 15,000 foreign professionals had availed. The scheme was to expire by the end July but the federal cabinet of Germany approved of an extension to attract foreign IT professionals. Indians are the largest in number of the foreign workers population entering the country. A German embassy spokesman said that for the first time applicants from India and other countries could now apply until the end of 2004 to be able to work in Germany. The new regulation also cancels the earlier fixed number of 20,000 work permits.

"The extension of the scheme is a reflection of the German government's seriousness to meet the existing demand for highly qualified professionals. At the same time, this decision is an interim solution, to bridge the gap till the new immigration law comes into force," he added.

While Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was in Berlin, Commerce Minister Arun Jaitley and the delegation of trade associations of FICCI and CII met the Economic and Labour Minister, of Germany Wolfgang Clement in May this year seeking extension of the scheme. They had been assured of measures to continue the smooth transit of professionals from India and other parts of the world to the EU nation.