

## Indian techies hit by recession in US

Less than three weeks ago, Saurabh (name changed) relocated along with his family from Edison, the Indian neighbourhood in New Jersey, to Silicon Valley in California as he switched jobs. Before moving, he put his house, which he had bought last year, on sale and leased an apartment at his new work place.

One fine morning, two weeks after he moved with bag and baggage to Silicon Valley, he was quietly handed the pink slip by his boss in his chamber along with about two dozen of his colleagues. Saurabh, who has two kids to support, is jobless again.

'It is very difficult, these days. There are no jobs available,' Saurabh told IANS, requesting that his name and the name of the company not be disclosed. So did others interviewed for this report.

Luckily enough, he has a permanent residency visa, which is more popularly known as the Green Card, because of which he can stay in this country and search for a new job. But many of his colleagues do not even have that luxury. They are getting ready to go back home as they can't live in this country on an H-1B visa if they don't have a job.

'Even retaining a job is a luxury these days,' said Manish Gupta who works with another multinational company in mid-town Manhattan. Some of his friends have already left for India after they received the pink slip last month.

While there is no official figure about the number of Indian Americans who have lost their jobs, in the US pink slips are being handed out in hundreds and thousands.

Anand Kumar, software professional, who works with a Swiss multinational in New York City, was informed by his HR department that his salary has been slashed by 10 percent from the next pay cheque. Still he says he is ok. 'That is fine. At least I have my job so far,' he said.

Stories of pink slips and losing jobs abound among the Indian American community here. In fact, this seems to be the only topic of conversation when two techies meet or at any of their social gatherings.

The reports that the economic meltdown will continue has made a large number of Indian American software professionals - who account for a majority of those holding the most sought after H-1B visa - edgy.

'People are being fired even from companies which were earlier considered safe. These are tough days,' said Rakesh Tyagi, who lost his job last week. He was working with a chemical company in Buffalo, in upstate New York. Rakesh, who came to the US just before the 2001 twin-tower attack, said the situation then was not as bad as it is now.

When contacted, officially none of these companies are willing to talk about job loss, but even a small chat with those working there indicates the grim scenario.

'Nothing is certain. We are now living on a day to day basis,' said Ashutosh Sen. Several of his friends and colleagues have lost jobs in the past one month. 'Hardly a day passes when I do not

hear this story,' he said.

*Lalit K Jha* ( © IANS / India eNews)