

Australia emerges as No 1 destination for migrants

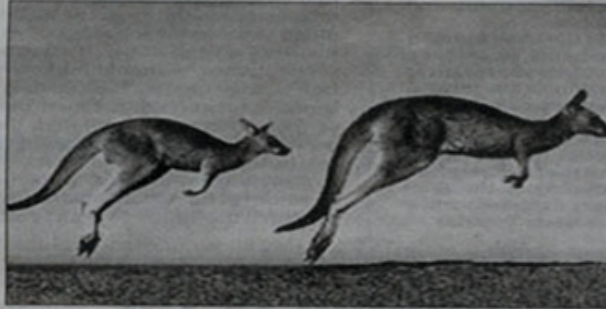
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Some years ago, if you asked a prospective emigrant, where would he like to migrate, the answer would most definitely be the US. But that seems to be changing, the US seems to be getting tough competition from Australia, which is now emerging as an attractive destination for skilled workers to migrate.

According to a survey, Australia welcomed a record number of skilled workers into the country in the 2004-05 migration year.

Of the 120,060 migrants who became permanent residents in Australia during this period — the most since the late 1980s — around 65 per cent (77,880) emigrated through one of the country's many skill streams.

The turnaround came after the sops offered by the government, particularly, to those workers or migrants who wished to settle in regional parts of Australia. This strategy seems to have worked, with the number of skilled migrants sponsored by a state or territory reached an all time high in 2004-05. The number of new-



comers settling in non-metropolitan areas also increased by over 50 percent on the previous year.

Consultants say, that the agreeable weather conditions, increasing work opportunities and sops offered by government has led to many workers to make a beeline for the country. Particularly, the fact that a number of students who study in Australian institutions are offered work permits visas and eventually permanent residency. This has also led to the student traffic to the country going up.

The number of doctors arriving in Australia accounted for the biggest increase in specific workers arriving in the country a 294 per cent increase over 2003-4. Doctors were followed by accountants (48 per cent), nurses (40 per cent) and trade workers (38 per cent).

Australia, followed by Canada, also topped a world's favourite nations. One thousand people in 10 nations were asked to rank criteria, ranging across tourism, immigration, exports, invest-

ment, culture, heritage and people. The survey of 25 nations was compiled by marketing research firms Anholt-GMI.

Australia was new to the survey this year, and it replaced Sweden as the strongest nation brand in the world. New Zealand also appeared in the survey for the first time. Several emigrants quickly compare the cost of living in Australia and the US and feel that it would be easier for a cost conscious individual to stay in Australia. In addition, the number of opportunities and the avenues to earn dollars are said to be more in Australia compared to any other destination. Even some of the NRIs vouch for the fact that Australia is emerging as a destination for several prospective emigrants.

The United States dropped from fourth to eleventh place and Sweden moved down to fifth place. While Canada scored high marks when it came to hospitality, government and living and working, it didn't fare so well when it came to culture.