Ministry criticizes planned restrictions on visas

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The US plan to trim the length of visas issued to certain Chinese students has drawn criticism from the Chinese government and college campuses.  
The Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that the US and China should both take active measures to facilitate personnel exchanges, which is the basis for Sino-US cooperation.  
Visa facilitation between the two countries is reciprocal and mutually beneficial, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a news briefing.  
"Both countries should create more favorable conditions to facilitate personnel exchanges, rather than the opposite," she said.  
The comments came after the US government announced plans to tighten visas issued to some Chinese students starting on June 11, several media outlets in the United States reported on Tuesday.  
Under the new policy, Chinese graduate students studying high-tech manufacturing, robotics or aviation will receive one-year visas, while other Chinese citizens will have to get clearance from "multiple US agencies" if they are employed by certain companies listed by the US Commerce Department, the Associated Press reported, citing an unnamed US official.  
Chu Zhaohui, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences, said the new move shows that the US is seeking to impede the development of cutting-edge industries that have high-priority goals for the manufacturing sector set by the Chinese government.  
A graduate student at Cornell University who gave only her surname, Yan, said the new policy will be inconvenient and cost her more time and money.  
"I'll have to renew my visa application every year under the new policy," said Yan, who is majoring in electrical and computer engineering.  
A US policy change in 2014 allowed Chinese students to renew visas once every five years instead of annually.  
Shi Yan, of the Chivast Education International consultancy in Beijing, said limiting student visas would also likely hurt US universities.  
"International students have become a big source of cash for US colleges, since they generally pay full tuition, with no discounts," Shi said, adding that they often pay two or three times what local US students pay at many public colleges.  
Rudolf Podgornik, a professor at the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, said there are so many Chinese students studying in those sectors in US universities. "If they limit visas, they may not get enough students."  
China sends more students to the US than any other nation, accounting for roughly one-third of the 1.1 million international students enrolled at US universities in the 2016-17 academic year, according to the Institute of International Education, a nonprofit based in New York.

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