



H-1B fee hike spells gloom for Indian IT ▶ P1



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The American Dream could be fading for Indian students

Students are likely to face an immediate setback from new H-1B rules announced by Trump

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Donald Trump's \$100,000 fee on the H-1B visas that are most sought after by highly skilled immigrants has shocked the global education and talent industry. And for thousands of Indian students, the American dream may be fading.

Apart from the tech industry, Indian students—particularly those from top colleges—are likely to face an immediate setback. Many of them had secured pre-placement offers (PPOs) with US-based firms and were set to begin their full-time roles in 2026. Along with proposals to restrict work options for students and mandate minimum salary thresholds, these changes may also deter other students from considering US.

"I was so excited that I didn't have to go through the pressure of sitting for placements, and I would just easily head to the US with a PPO in my hand after college ends," said a student from one of the older IITs. "Now, I am uncertain whether the company will approve my visa sponsorship, and I am waiting for further clarity, which is making my family and me anxious."

H-1B is a non-immigrant visa used by US employers, mostly tech and research firms, to hire foreign workers in occupations requiring highly specialized knowledge and at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

On Friday, Trump signed the 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Immigration Workers' rules, which require US companies seeking H-1B skilled worker visas to pay \$100,000 per application. The rules make exceptions only for roles deemed vital to national interest. That triggered panic and US companies like Microsoft asked H-1B



The visa rule changes may also deter students from considering US institutes. MINT

visa holders to return by the 21 September midnight deadline. The White House later clarified that the fee won't apply to existing visa holders and will have to be paid only once.

The new fee structure places a signifi-

tional \$100,000 per employee is unsustainable. Larger firms and IT majors are more likely to retain these hires, but they may shift roles to overseas offices in countries with more favourable visa policies, such as Canada, Ireland, Singapore

dents awaiting final placement may see a decline in US-based offers.

The setback will only amplify the challenges for top colleges grappling with slower hiring cycles, reduced offers from the US and global companies, and shifting recruitment priorities amid economic uncertainties.

A higher visa fee isn't the only challenge that Indian students hoping to study or work in the US face.

Republican senator Jim Banks has introduced the American Tech Workforce Act, a legislation which seeks to eliminate or drastically restrict the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, raise salary minimums for work visas, and sharply limit the ability of US employers and universities to recruit and retain foreign STEM talent. The combined moves signal the most severe tightening of America's skilled immigration and student-to-worker conversion pathways in decades.

Students studying in the US typically hold an F-1 visa, which allows them to pursue studies but does not allow employment except under specific programs like OPT. After completing their studies, some F-1 students apply for H-1B visas to transition into skilled work roles in the US.

"The additional fee on H-1B Visa and potential closure of OPT program that allowed students to do internships and trainings post completion of their course in the US has restricted the opportunities for students immigrating for education," said Suchindra Kumar, education analyst at consulting firm PwC.

"A lot of these existing students have large education loans that they planned to repay through salaries from a job in the US. Thus, it is expected to have a cyclical effect as we go along," Kumar said.

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THE H-1B visa is most commonly used by technology companies and research institutions

US firms seeking H-1B skilled worker visas will now need to pay \$100,000 per application

THE new H-1B rules make exceptions only for roles deemed vital to national interest

THE \$100,000 fee won't apply to existing visa holders and will have to be paid only once

cant financial burden on potential employers, making the situation complex for students with PPOs at hand, said Namita Mehta, president and partner at foreign education consultant Red Pen.

"Smaller companies and startups may be forced to withdraw offers, as the addi-

or even India for Indian nationals," Mehta said. "Big Tech companies like Amazon, Microsoft and Google may still absorb the fee for top talent, but they will be far more selective, given the cost of a mis-hire."

According to Mehta, even the stu-