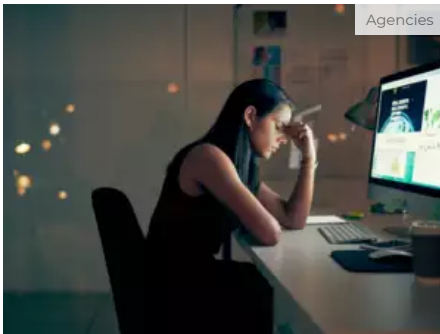


Amid travel & visa curbs, Indian students in US cancel homecoming plans over fears of no re-entry

By Prachi Verma & Neil Ghai, ET Bureau | Last Updated: Mar 28, 2025, 07:45:00 AM IST

Synopsis

While the US Department of State has not imposed a ban on travel for students, colleges are nevertheless advising their international students to not leave the country, said another expert. In 2024, the US administration rejected 279,000 F-1 visa applications, or 41% of the total student applicants. F-1 visa is issued to international students for studying in the US. The fear is that this year more F-1 visa applications will be rejected.



Indians studying in the US are rethinking plans to travel back home during holiday breaks as they grapple with the uncertainty created by the Trump administration's immigration policies. Some colleges have even warned students that tightening norms could delay their return, according to experts.

The new US administration under President [Donald Trump](#) is likely to make visa and immigration laws more stringent, a move that could impact international students, including those from India.

Riya Mehta, a master's student at University of Southern California, was set to make a trip to India for her sister's wedding in Jaipur. She dropped the plan fearing a ban on re-entry to the US.

Sameer Vyas, a PhD scholar at Purdue who was planning to visit his ailing grandmother in India, cancelled the trip fearing similar trouble.

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The two post-graduates are among the scores of [Indian students](#) who are giving up travel for relaxation and family reunion amid policy confusion. “Colleges like Brown, Cornell, MIT, Columbia and Yale have cautioned students and staff to not travel outside the US,” said a study abroad expert.


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Study abroad consultants in India are also advising international students to stay cautious.

What's the Hol(e)d-up

Over **331,000** Indian students enrolled in US in 2023-24 academic year



India surpassed China in 2024 as US' leading source country for students



F1 visa rejections a growing concern



Several tech-savvy parents have taken to social media platforms to share this concern and are urging students in the US to refrain from social or political activism, including online, amid increased scrutiny.

“A few of the Ivy League colleges have advised students to reconsider international travel,” said Piyush Kumar, regional director, IDP Education. “Students are a bit concerned about the current situation due to a lot of noise that has been created around this.”

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Rajiv Khanna, managing attorney at Immigration.com, said international students are facing a heightened risk landscape under the current enhanced vetting policies.

“We’re seeing an intensification of scrutiny at ports of entry... The recent executive order mandating ‘extreme vetting’ signed in January explicitly opens the door for more rigorous background checks and potentially longer processing times,” said Khanna.

STEM courses
most sought-
after for Indians

Some of the most
favoured states:
California, Texas
New York, Illinois
and Florida

BCCL

Adarsh Khandelwal, cofounder of [Collegify](#), said “Some universities are advising international students to reconsider non-essential travel. But this isn’t a sweeping ban; it’s a cautious approach. Colleges are trying to shield their students from the unpredictable visa uncertainties, policy changes, and procedural delays.”

However, despite the uncertainties, the US remains the biggest attraction for Indian students wanting to pursue higher education, especially for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) courses, said the experts.

Aditya Shanker Raghuwanshi, chief executive of Masterclass Space, said he’s advising students to put off their India trip

till the situation normalises.

Past patterns show that such episodes of political or health emergencies tend to generate a lot of stress and postponement of academic plans among international students.

“Some students are choosing to stay back voluntarily due to personal considerations or concerns about travel uncertainties,” said Manisha Zaveri, joint managing director of Career Mosaic.

(Some names have been changed on request)