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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tough days ahead for international students in US: Will OPT and visa duration be curtailed?

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Two major concerns loom for international students, particularly the large contingent of Indian students: first, that a Trump administration might once again attempt to curtail the two-year extension of practical training available to STEM students. Second, there is the possibility of a shortened visa tenure, which would add both administrative challenges and financial burdens.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

31 out of 50 states voted for Trump, including 5 that chose Biden in 2020

17 out of 19 states that Democrats retained, they lost vote share

ELECTORAL VOTE: **292** (297 to win)

POPULAR VOTES: **71.9m**

224 (66.9m)

★★★★★

All 7 swing states are likely to turn Republican, first time in 24 years

\$16.6 Trump spent per vote, Harris spent \$24

78yrs Trump will be US's oldest incoming prez

DON-2: BACK WITH A BIGGER BANG On the eve of voting, a top US paper's lead headline said 'Tightest Contest In Decades Grows Tighter At Finish'. Many felt it might be difficult to declare the winner on Wednesday. They were wrong, **US has rolled out the red carpet for Trump** and given Kamala Harris the blues. He's **only the second person ever and the first in over 100 years** to be president for two non-consecutive terms. With Republicans wresting control of the Senate and SC under Conservative control, he returns to the White House stronger and could reshape America

DON IS AMERICA'S MOST WANTED!

First Republican To Win Popular Vote In 20 Yrs, With Latino, Black Boost

Chidambaram Rajghanta / **News**

Washington: In the greatest comeback in American political history, Donald Trump is returning to the White House for a second term with a victory for the ages.

The Republican candidate defeated Democratic nominee and incumbent vice president Kamala Harris 202-224 in the electoral college in an epic rebound, clinching two consecutive terms.

X-factor: Elon set to be Trump's Musketeer

Trump's bid came against

WHAT TRUMP'S TRIUMPH MEANS FOR THE WORLD

What will the next 4 years be like? If he keeps his word, he will depart from several US policy consensus, and each departure, given America's power, can have major consequences

TRADING TENSIONS: He called himself Mr. Tariff in his first term, he wants to be Master Tariff this time. Trump wants a 60% tariff on all Chinese imports into US, and 100% duty on Chinese cars. And he wants all tariffs, applicable to whichever other country is selling goods to US, to be raised to 20%. This is turbocharged protectionism, if Trump goes through with even a part of it, multilateral trade will be hit, because other major economies will raise tariffs.

First Lady, Second Time: Melania's Back in The Pecking Order



PM cheers 'my friend Donald'; Trump I.O bonhomie fuels hope

Sachin Parashar / **Times of India**

For India, Donald Trump's return to White House isn't just an acceptable but a desired outcome of the US presidential election, given Trump I.O's perceived strategic convergence of interests with India and his close rapport with Narendra Modi.

The PM congratulated "my friend" Trump, first through a post on X before calling him up. According to govt sources in New Delhi, Trump downed that the conversation was among the first that he had

PM Modi with Prez Trump in Anandhad in 2019

Had a great conversation with my friend, President @realDonaldTrump, congratulating him on his



On the other hand, Trump mentioned in a June podcast that students graduating from US colleges should receive green cards to remain in the country. However, his campaign later clarified that this would apply only to "thoroughly vetted" graduates who would not undercut American wages or displace American workers. In this context, his remark is seen by many as a mere talking point.

Indian students in US 2022/23 2021/22 % change

Total 268,923 199,182 35%

Enrolled in OPT 69,062 68,188 1.30%

Source: *Open Source Reports*

Currently, the OPT (Optional Practical Training) program offers the only post-graduation work opportunity for international students in the US, allowing them to gain work experience for one year after graduation. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students can extend this period by an additional two years, making it three years in total. This program was recently upheld by the US Supreme Court in October 2023.

[Complete coverage-Trump vs Harris for US president](#)

According to the Open Doors Report for 2022-23, there were 270,000 Indian students in the US, with nearly 69,000 participating in OPT programs. The extended period of OPT is viewed by some, especially Trump's hardline supporters, as harmful to American interests, potentially taking jobs away from US citizens. The idea of cutting back the OPT program first emerged in the Trump administration's 2020 spring agenda, though soon after, several House Republicans advocated for stability in the program. The question remains: what comes next?

"Dismantling the OPT pathway would disrupt individual careers and also erode the innovation pipeline that fuels American technological leadership," says Ashwin Sharma, an immigration attorney.

ALSO READ

[Trump 2.0: Key contenders eyeing top roles in his second term](#)

While any policy change could be legally challenged, immigration attorney Cyrus Mehta notes that a Trump administration could still introduce difficult hurdles and delays to obtaining OPT.

Currently, international students may stay in the US as long as they are engaged in studies, under an "admission for duration of status" policy, with no fixed expiration. In 2020, the Trump administration proposed to limit student visa durations to four years—and in some cases, just two years—to curb overstays.

When this was proposed, Rajiv S. Khanna, an Arlington-based immigration attorney, commented, "For Indian and other international students, the proposed fixed tenure creates a problem. A four-year cap is definitely shorter than a PhD or even a bachelor's degree course, as students may opt for an extra semester. For students already here, applying for extensions would increase expenses and, more importantly, add an additional element of uncertainty."

The question remains whether this proposal will be reintroduced.