Fiscal Shutdown in U.S.

What is the issue?

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- Democrats have successfully obstructed the “spending Bill” in the US senate.
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- This was done to force the Trump administration to protect undocumented child immigration from deportation.
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What is the status of the current spending bill?

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- USA’s “Spending Bill” is an agglomerated “Appropriation Bill” for drawing money for various budgetary allocations.
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- Unlike in parliamentary democracies, the failure of an Appropriation Bill doesn’t lead to the fall of the government in presidential systems such as US.
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- To become a law, any bill in the US will have to pass through both houses of the Congress namely – “Senate” and the “House of Representatives” and then get the assent of the president.
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- While the current Spending Bill sailed through the Congress with a 230-197 vote, it was blocked in the senate due to Democrat Senators.
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- Notably, congress has been struggling since October to pass this spending Bill, which is being held hostage due to the child immigration issue.
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How does the U.S. senate work?

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- The US senate has 100 seats and any bill needs a majority (which is 50% + 1) of the total votes casted to get passed.
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- The “Republican Party” (Trump’s party) currently holds 51 seats in the senate, while the “Democrat Party” holds 47 and 2 is held by independents.
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- But unlike in India, there is no anti-defection law in the US and also as long as senators are engaged in debates, the bill can’t be put to vote.
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- Since Senate has only a limited number of working days, many a times some senators have resorted to obstructionist debates to block bills.
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- This practice of blocking bills is called “fillibustery” and to break this jinx a guillotine motion was commissioned.
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- To guillotine a debate, a three-fifth majority of those present and voting is needed, which accounts to 60 if the house votes in full attendance.
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- If guillotine doesn’t succeed, then a bill eventually lapses with the Senate session, which is what happened to the current spending bill.
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What are the implications?

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- The government was till recently being funded by temporary arrangements since the new fiscal year began in October.
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- The current stalemate means that the government will now face a complete shutdown due to lack of funds, which has happened only thrice since 1995.
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- This means most “non-essential” federal workers will be put on leave, and only those dealing with public safety and national security, would continue work.
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- Nearly 1 million people would not receive regular pay checks, and businesses involved with the government would also stand to lose revenue.
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- Also, due to reduced taxes, the exchequer stands to lose $6.5bn a week, and also potentially devastating ramifications for the national economy looms.
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- Despite this pressing situation, Mr. Trump seems to be continuing his

aggressive posture against the Democrats on the immigration issue.
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.Source: The Hindu

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