

H-1B to Stay Intact

Why in news?

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US administration has clarified that there is no plan to tighten the H-1B visa norms.

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How did the issue evolve?

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- H-1B is a gateway for the U.S. to attract highprofile educated white-collar workforce with expertise in the fields of “Science, Technology, Education and Management”.

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- The “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services” (USCIS) is reviewing the H-1B visa programme, and will come up with changes later this year.

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- It was widely speculated that the Trump administration was planning to discontinue the provision for the extension of H-1B visas beyond 6 years.

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- This created uncertainty and panic among the Indian-American community that constitutes a major chunk of the “H-1B” beneficiaries (over 7.5 lakh).

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- Industry bodies, immigrant associations, Indian Embassy and even some U.S. lawmakers too protested and sought clarification from the administration.

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- Hence, in a subsequent announcement to assuage anxieties, Trump administration clarified that it has no intention to curtail the H-1B extensions.

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- Notably, after six year on H-1B, visa holders are put on extension, which is when they apply for Permanent Residency (Green card), which is one-step behind full citizenship.

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Can the administration alter H-1B?

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- USCIS is indeed said to be contemplating many regulatory changes to promote Trump's "Buy American, Hire American" policy.

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- While some minor changes to H-1B are also under consideration, it is unlikely to affect the migrant numbers and their work provisions.

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- Significantly, Trump administration can change only some aspects of the H-1B programme through executive action and the rest needs congress approval.

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- Notable among the H-1B provisions governed by the executive are "work permit for spouses of H-1B holders and the lottery system for beneficiary identification".

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Source: The Hindu

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