Optional Practical Training program

Prelims – *Current events of national and international importance.*

Mains (GS II) – *Bilateral relations of India*

Why in News?

A Bill was introduced in the US recently to end the Optional Practical Training program for those no longer engaged in full-time study in the United States.

> *The F-1 Visa (Academic Student) allows you to enter the US as a full-time student at an accredited college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or in a language training program.*

- The OPT program allows students (who are in the US on F1 visas) to work for ***up to 12 months*** in a field related to their area of study.
- **Types**
  - **Pre-completion OPT** - International students are required to be enrolled in a full-time program in the United States for a minimum of one academic year before they can finish their studies.
  - **Post-completion OPT** - It allows the student to work after graduating.
- **Eligibility -** To be eligible for the OPT program, students are required to be enrolled full-time for a minimum of one academic year.
- They must submit their application through their educational institution, which has the authority to endorse them for OPT.
- The application process is managed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
- Students who hold F-1 status are permitted to stay in the United States while participating in OPT employment.

> *Of the 3,31,602 Indian students in the US, around 29% or 97,556 students were on OPT in 2023-24.*

- **Extension for STEM students -** Students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields can extend their OPTs by another 24 months.
- This effectively means that a student in a STEM field can work in the US for *3 years after graduation*.

References

1. The Indian Express | Optional Practical Training program in US
2. Economic Times | Optional Practical Training (OPT) program

