“Pay-to-Stay” Immigration Fraud - Indian Students' Arrest in the US

Why in news?

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) arrested 129 Indians for enrolling in a fake university allegedly to remain in America.

What is the case about?

- The foreign students were arrested for enrolling at the University of Farmington.
- The fake university was set up by the DHS's investigating unit as part of the sting operation to bring to light the "pay-and-stay" racket.
- It had no classes, a low tuition fee and gave work permits on the very first of the enrolments of the students.
- It had some 600 students, an overwhelming majority of whom are Indians.

What is the dispute?

- The U.S. maintains that all participants in this scheme knew that the University of Farmington had no instructors or classes.
- They were aware they were committing a crime in an attempt to fraudulently remain in the United States.
- This would, in effect, mean a wilful violation of the immigration laws to stay and work in the United States.
- The External Affairs Ministry, India says that 8 of the individuals who ran this racket are either Indian citizens or Indian-Americans.
- However, most of these students have joined to get their work permits without knowing that this college is not accredited and became victims of this.

Why is it a concern?

- More than a million international students study at US institutions each year, including approximately 196,000 Indian students last year.
- Indian students bring in about $6 billion per annum and also become instrumental in creation of thousands of jobs in the US.
- So the recent event is a black spot in the proud history of India-US

educational exchanges.

What does it call for?

- Students who are eligible to pursue studies at an authorised university in the U.S. should get a further opportunity and not be subjected to summary deportation or humiliation.
- The decisions must not affect the prospects of such students who may apply in future for legal entry.
- The efforts of youth looking for better prospects abroad should begin with due diligence and strictly follow the letter of the law.
- There is a need for better communication to help students identify credentialed institutions that meet the requirements of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

Source: The Hindu, NDTV

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