

**1. Pause on US student visa interviews: Why lens on social media****Introduction**

The Donald Trump administration has asked US embassies around the world to stop scheduling appointments for student visas as it expands scrutiny of applicants' social media posts.

The pause on interviews will likely slow down student visa processing, and could impact American universities that are heavily reliant on international students for revenue.

**Trump administration view**

The Trump administration has been cracking down on some of America's most elite universities, including Harvard and Columbia. It has accused these institutions of allowing antisemitism on campus.

However, the Trump administration has repeatedly spoken about cancelling student visas, scrapping permanent residency status ("green cards") and scrutinising the social media history of foreign visitors in the context of backlash over Israel's war in Gaza. (Protests against the war had swept several campuses last year.)

**US student visas**

The US offers three types of student visas — F-1, M-1, and J-1. An F-1 visa is required for international students to attend an academic institution such as a high school or college. An M-1 visa is for students in vocational or technical training programs at recognised schools. A J-1 visa is needed for exchange program students.

In the Financial Year 2024, the US issued 4,00,737 F-1, 6,322 M-1, and 3,22,820 J-1 visas, according to State Department data. The number of international students in US institutions touched an all-time high of 1.13 million in the 2023-24 academic year, according to the annual Open Doors report.

**India on top of list**

According to the Open Doors report, 71.5% of international students who enrolled in the US between 2023 and 2024 were from Asia.

India was the biggest source – 3,31,602 students from India enrolled in US universities and colleges, an increase of 23% over the previous year.

China was in second position with 277,398 students, a 4% decline compared to the previous year, according to the report. South Korea, which sent 43,149 students to the US, was in third place.

Europe sent 90,600 students to the US, making up 8% of the overseas student population.

### **The likely impact**

The pause is temporary and only applies to new visa interviews. Already scheduled visa interviews will not be cancelled.

However, the order will likely cause delays in student visa processing, according to experts. Estimated appointment wait times at US embassies around the world currently range from days to months. A backlog of appointments or more intensive vetting could extend this further.

There is also concern that expansive vetting of social media posts could discourage international students from coming to the US. During the 2023-2024 academic year, international students contributed approximately \$43.8 billion to the US economy through tuition and fees, and living expenses.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## **2. Gaza's Human-Made Hunger Crisis: UNRWA Official Explains**

### **Aid Blockade Led to Worsening Hunger**

Gaza faced a total blockade for nearly three months, severely limiting food and humanitarian aid. During this period, famine-like conditions emerged.

Jonathan Fowler from United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), the largest aid agency in Gaza, says the situation has now turned into a "human-made hunger crisis".



Mothers are rationing pieces of bread to feed children. Even before the ceasefire (Jan 19–Mar 18), the aid entering Gaza was insufficient. After the ceasefire ended on March 2, almost no aid entered for 11 weeks, worsening food insecurity.

### **Using Food as a Weapon Violates International Law**

Blocking aid is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, specifically Article 54 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits starving civilians as a military tactic.

### **Aid Deliveries Far Below Minimum Requirement**

While Israel claimed 665 aid trucks entered Gaza on May 26, the minimum needed is 500–600 trucks per day. The World Food Programme called this number "a drop in the bucket".

In the past, some trucks were required to arrive half-empty, limiting the actual aid delivered.

### **Why UN and UNRWA Refused to Work With GHF**

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), supported by the US and Israel, created centralized collection points for aid.

UNRWA refused to cooperate because:

- It violates humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence.
- It excludes vulnerable people who can't reach aid points.
- It increases forced displacement, pushing people into unsafe "safe zones".

### **Gaza: Deadliest Place for Aid Workers**

Gaza is now the most dangerous place in the world for aid workers:

- Over 400 aid workers killed, including more than 300 UNRWA staff.
- Many aid workers lost family members and continue working under severe emotional and physical stress.
- There have been frequent attacks on hospitals, schools, and shelters, violating humanitarian law.

### **Israeli Laws Have Disrupted UNRWA Operations**

Two Israeli laws, passed in October 2024, have hurt UNRWA's work:

1. Bans UNRWA operations in Israel's sovereign territory, affecting schools and clinics in East Jerusalem.
  - o Around 800 students lost access to education.
  - o Clinics serving 70,000 Palestinians face closure.
2. Bans contact with Israeli officials, affecting coordination for evacuations and safety in Gaza and the West Bank.

### **UNRWA's Current Role in Gaza**

UNRWA continues to operate in Gaza with:

- 12,000 local staff (compared to 300 in the rest of the UN).
  - Warehouses and mobile clinics, providing healthcare in refugee tents.
  - 'Back to Learning' program for over 20,000 children, offering basic education and emotional support.
  - Sanitation workers cleaning camps and collecting trash.
- UNRWA provides services but does not run refugee camps.

### **How UNRWA Handles Accusations of Bias**

Some have accused UNRWA of ties to Hamas, but:

- The agency follows strict neutrality policies.
- Out of 30,000 staff, only 19 were accused last year.
- UNRWA suspended those involved and handed cases to UN investigators.
- Most accusations lacked evidence; only nine staffers were terminated after internal review.

### **India and the Role of Global Support**

Fowler urges countries like India to support:

- International law and multilateral systems.
  - The decisions of the UN and International Court of Justice.
- He warns that without global cooperation, the world could become more unstable.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

### 3. Mizoram First State to Achieve Full Functional Literacy

#### First Fully literate State



Mizoram was officially declared as a fully literate state. With this achievement, Mizoram became the first state in India to attain full literacy.

Mizoram had crossed the full literacy mark, i.e., above 95% literacy rate (to be considered equivalent to Full literacy) as defined by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India.

#### First administrative unit to declare full literacy

Earlier, on 24.06.2024, Ladakh became the first administrative unit to declare full literacy.

#### Goa became second

Government declared the State of Goa to be officially fully literate. This makes Goa the second state of the country to cross the nationally prescribed 95% benchmark for full literacy.

#### New India Literacy Programme

ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram or New India Literacy Programme (NILP) is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented from 2022-2027. The scheme, aligned with NEP 2020, targets adults (aged 15 years and above) who couldn't go to school. The scheme has five components- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Basic Education, Vocational Skills and Continuing Education.

The vision of the ULLAS Scheme is to make Bharat - Jan Jan Saakshar and is based on the spirit of Kartavya Bodh and is being implemented on volunteerism.

Under ULLAS scheme more than 1.77 crore learners (neo literates) have appeared in the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT) till now across the country. More than 2.37 crore learners and 40.84 lakh volunteer teachers have been registered on the ULLAS Mobile app.

#### Towards a Fully Literate India by 2030

With Mizoram and Goa leading the way, India's goal of achieving full literacy by 2030 under NEP 2020 is steadily progressing.

These success stories serve as inspiring examples of community-driven development and educational inclusion, laying the foundation for a truly Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

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