



## Tightening Student Visa Norms

**For Prelims:** [Visa](#), [Remittances](#), [University Grant Commision](#), [GIFT City](#), [Vienna Convention](#)

**For Mains:** Impact of Foreign Education Policies on Domestic Education Systems, India's Soft Power and Global Influence

[Source:TH](#)

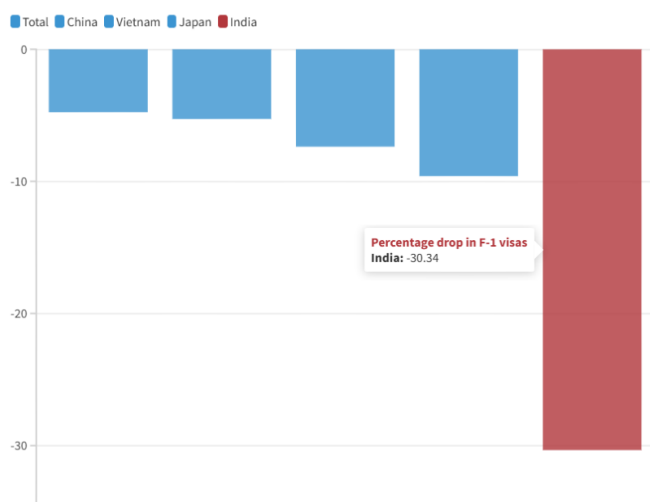
### Why in News?

Indian students are facing a sharp drop in [visa](#) issuances and increasing visa revocations in the US, alongside tightening visa norms in Australia, disrupting academic plans and career aspirations.

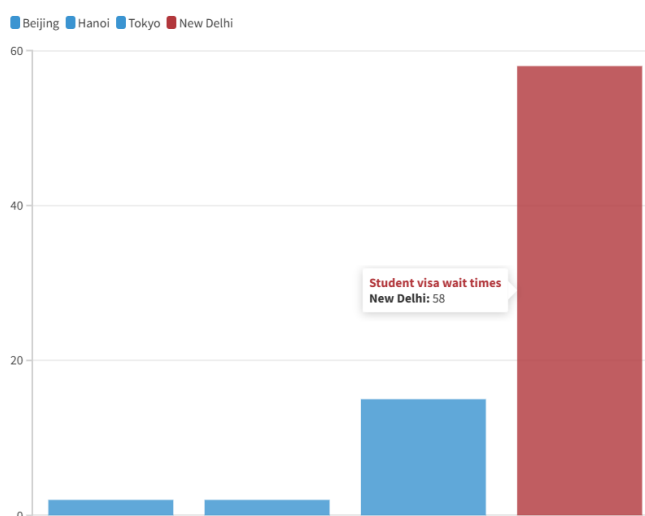
### What are the Concerns Regarding Indian Student Visas?

- **Sharp Decline in Visa Issuance:** In February 2025, the **US recorded a 30% drop (590 to 411 visas) in F-1 student visas issued to Indian nationals** compared to February 2024.
  - This decline is disproportionately higher than the **global average decrease of 4.75%**, and significantly steeper than the drops for other top countries such as China (5.2%), Japan (9.6%), and Vietnam (7.4%).
  - Visa wait times are also significantly longer for Indian students, **averaging 58 days in Delhi**, compared to just **2-15 days in East Asian capitals**.

Percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued in February 2025 compared to February 2024



Student visa wait times (in days) for the capitals of countries mentioned in Chart 1



- **Surge in Visa Terminations and Revocations:** According to a survey by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), 50% of international students whose US visas were

revoked in early **2025 were Indian nationals.**

- The revocations were largely driven by the US State Department's AI-based **"Catch and Revoke" programme**, which monitors social media and police databases, raising concerns over fairness, transparency, and diplomatic fallout.
- **Legal and Financial Hardship:** Students facing revocation must undergo complex legal procedures to restore their **SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) status.**
  - Many have filed lawsuits, but the costs are prohibitive, and delays can cause students to lose academic terms, jobs, and scholarships.
- **Targeted Visa Scrutiny:** Reports suggest Australia has increased visa scrutiny for applicants from five Indian states Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
  - This has sparked fears of profiling and unfair generalisations against Indian applicants from these regions.

## What are the Potential Implications of Indian Student Visa Issues?

- **Weakening of India's Soft Power:** India, along with China, is one of the **two largest sources of international students** but is facing setbacks due to a decline in US visas and stricter norms in Australia.
  - These disruptions weaken [India's soft power](#) and global presence in key fields like AI, climate science, and biotechnology.
- **Risk to India's Demographic Dividend:** With **65% of India's population under 35**, access to **global education** is crucial for skill development. Visa curbs and revocations hinder opportunities, impacting long-term productivity and innovation.
- **Decline in Remittances:** In 2024, India received a record USD 129.1 billion in [remittances](#), driven partly by **Indian students in advanced economies.**
  - Stricter visa norms could reduce student migration and remittances, potentially impacting India's economy.
- **SEVIS Removals:** Unlike visa revocations, which prevent re-entry into the U.S. but do not automatically terminate a student's legal status, SEVIS removals bring swift and severe consequences, including the loss of employment eligibility and complications for dependents like spouses and children.
  - Middle-class aspirants relying on loans or savings are most affected, experiencing both economic and emotional distress.
- **Human Capital Drain and Redirection:** The shift away from traditional destinations (U.S., Australia) toward emerging hubs like the Nordic countries and South Korea, alters the trajectory of India's global talent flow.
  - This re-routing affects network building, diaspora influence, and strategic industry placements, particularly in [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics \(STEM\)](#), healthcare, and research.
- **Pressure on Domestic Higher Education Infrastructure:** As international avenues shrink, demand for quality institutions in India is expected to rise sharply.
  - This may strain already limited **Tier-I universities (IITs, IIMs, AIIMS)** and push the [University Grant Commission](#) and [All India Council for Technical Education \(AICTE\)](#) to fast-track capacity building and accreditation reforms under [National Education Policy, 2020](#).

## What Strategies Can Mitigate Indian Student Visa Challenges?

- **Leveraging Diplomatic Instruments:** The [Vienna Convention on Consular Relations \(1963\)](#) empowers Indian missions to protect the interests of Indian citizens abroad. This legal provision should be more actively used to assist students facing visa issues.
  - Strengthen the [Emigration Act, 1983](#) to bring student visa consultancies under its ambit, making registration, accountability, and penalties enforceable for false promises or forged documents.
- **Emergency Student Safety Net:** Set up an **Overseas Education Protection Fund (OEPF)** under the MEA to assist students facing visa revocation, tuition loss, or forced deportation.

- **Enhance Domestic Higher Education:** India should incentivize **top-tier foreign universities** to set up campuses or offer joint-degree programs, as per the 2022-23 Union Budget, which allows world-class institutions to operate in [GIFT \(Gujarat International Finance Tec-City\) City](#).
  - Simultaneously, Indian universities, under NEP 2020, should adopt reforms like **dual-degree programs, international faculty exchange**, and establish Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) to create a world-class education ecosystem.
- **Digital Registry for Students:** India should create a voluntary digital student registry for real-time visa tracking and embassy support.
  - Indian embassies can develop an **AI-based system**, similar to the US "Catch and Revoke" program, to monitor students' digital profiles and social media for **early alerts on visa risks**.
- **Regulating Education Consultancies:** India must tighten regulations on education consultancies by enforcing **stricter registration, audits, and penalties** for fraud, ensuring students are not misled.
  - The Ministry of Education should launch awareness campaigns and provide a verified list of reputable consultancies to reduce scams.

**Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the implications of tightening visa norms for Indian students. What measures can the Indian government take to address these challenges?

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