

HOW THE US IMMIGRATION PLAN WILL IMPACT INDIA

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United States (US) President Donald Trump unveiled a new immigration plan for his country on Thursday. The idea, in the words of Mr Trump, is to move to a “merit-based, high security plan”. One part of the plan is a crackdown on illegal immigration. This is directly concerned with making America more secure. The other part is to prioritise young, educated and skilled workers over those that seek entry purely as relatives of people in the US. Under the current arrangement, 66% of the Green Cards go to relatives and 21% to asylum seekers and those selected randomly. Only 12% of the 1.1 million Green Cards go to those selected on the basis of skill and merit. Mr Trump wants to elevate this last number to 57%, and possibly even higher.

Mr Trump’s plan is unlikely to get the nod of the Democrats, especially not unless the plan gives some relief to Dreamers — young immigrants brought to the US as children. The total number of Green Cards being allocated is not going to change. Therefore, Indians seeking Green Cards need not be too worried. Indians are anyway among the most educated and highest earning communities in the US.

But does the new plan benefit India? In the past, New Delhi has often lobbied — and continues to do so — to protect Indians from adverse changes in H-1B rules. A country which so strenuously wants its best talents to move to and prosper in another country does not appear to be confident in its ability to provide good jobs and a conducive business environment at home. While Mr Trump’s plan may not cut the Gordian knot of American domestic politics, the question for New Delhi is much bigger and starker. The US is ready to make the maximum use of India’s best, but are we?

First Published: May 20, 2019 08:11 IST

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