



TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

22th September 2025



TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

☎ 9560300770  www.tathastuics.com ✉ enquiry@tathastuics.com

Plot No.B 22, Bada Bazar Road, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-110060

Topics Covered

- H1B Visa
- Uranium unrest
- Breaking the academic paywall
- Can timelines be fixed for Governors
- MiG-21 Fighters
- Baltic Sea
- Bagram Air Base

Page -1 & 8

One-time H-1B visa fee is only for new applicants, says U.S.

It clarifies that the fee will not be applicable for current visa holders; announcement eases fears that had triggered a surge in flight bookings

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A day after U.S. President Donald Trump hiked H-1B visa fees to \$100,000, the White House clarified that the fee will not be an annual feature, but rather a "one-time" payment that will have to be made by companies for fresh H-1B visa applicants, starting with the "next upcoming lottery cycle".

Fears eased

The announcement eased the fears that had triggered a surge in last-minute flight bookings to the United States by Indian H-1B visa holders currently outside the country, after U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick's earlier remarks indicating that the fee would have to be paid every year. However, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt contradicted Mr. Lutnick in a social media post early on Sunday. "To be clear: This is not an annual fee. It's a

Clarity emerges

The White House issued a clarification after an initial announcement on the H-1B visa fee led to panic

■ The \$100,000 fee will be a 'one-time' payment

■ The fee applies only to new applicants. Those applying for renewals or current visa holders need not make the payment

■ U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had initially said that the fee would be applied annually, leading to much of the confusion

Take firm stand: Opposition

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Opposition parties on Sunday took a swipe at the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not taking a firm stand against the

one-time fee that applies only to the petition. Those who already hold H-1B visas and are currently outside of the country right now will not be charged

"strong-arm tactics" of the U.S., over the visa fee hike and U.S. President's India-Pakistan "ceasefire" claims.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 13

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12
EDITORIAL
» PAGE 8

\$100,000 to re-enter."

H-1B, maybe

India's tech workers must reduce their reliance on U.S. jobs

President Donald Trump's decision to charge new applicants for the H-1B highly skilled non-immigrant visa \$100,000, nearly six times the current fee, has caused widespread consternation that not only might the lives of tens of thousands of potential visa applicants in the tech space be impacted, leading to "humanitarian consequences" for families, as mentioned by India's Ministry of External Affairs, but there will also be widespread disruption among major tech companies in the U.S. that rely on hiring skilled workers under this visa. While the number of visas issued in this category has been capped at 85,000 per year since 2004, and allocations are decided through a lottery, reports based on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data suggest that applications for the upcoming fiscal year have dropped to a four-year low of nearly 3,59,000. Indian nationals typically account for 71% of these visas, yet data also suggest that close to 60% of these visa recipients earn less than \$100,000, which, over the longer term, implies that their employers may find it harder to justify hiring such specialised workers from abroad. The External Affairs Ministry's response to the White House action included a reiteration of the fact that "Skilled talent mobility and exchanges have contributed enormously to technology development, innovation, economic growth, competitiveness and wealth creation in the U.S. and India", yet there is limited scope for South Block to apply pressure, diplomatic or political, to get the policy reversed.

However, the fallout for Indian citizens can be contained if there is a proactive approach by the Government to bolster India's infrastructure and undertake necessary reforms to improve the prospects for the Indian tech industry to make even greater strides than it has done so far. This might be achieved by capitalising on opportunities to develop new capabilities in the Artificial Intelligence space and exploring new markets across Asia, including China and Russia, and in parts of Europe, where the transatlantic contagion of nativist protectionism has not yet found willing takers. While the Trump order is set to expire within a year, there is no guarantee that it would not be extended, making it all the more pertinent for policymakers in India to evolve a long-term plan to reduce reliance of Indian tech workers on the shrinking pool of job opportunities in the U.S. economy. As India and other countries adjust to this new reality of the hostility of the Trump White House to welcoming future innovators, job-creators, and tax-payers to their shores, it is the U.S. rather than other nations that will suffer a shortage of scientific and engineering prowess to fuel economic progress.

Page-8

Uranium unrest Resource extraction projects should have the people's consent

The Centre's decision to mine uranium at any cost from Meghalaya, after deliberations with local leaders proved futile, is a troubling benchmark in India's history of resource extraction. Khasi groups have opposed the exploration and extraction of large deposits in Domasiat and Wakhaj since the 1980s. Recently, the Union Environment Ministry issued an office memorandum (OM) exempting the extraction of atomic, critical, and strategic minerals from public consultation. Local groups have already condemned the OM-based route; one associated with the ruling party has called on the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council to use its Sixth Schedule powers to protect tribal rights. OM's are executive instruments that erode procedural safeguards and are issued without independent scrutiny. In this case, the OM reduces stewardship communities to bystanders in decisions with profound consequences for them. This is not the first time that the government has moved with force on the matter of uranium. The Uranium Corporation of India Limited has conducted operations in Parkhand's Singbhum district for decades. While hearings for expansion or new mines were met with protests over radiation exposure and loss of livelihoods, villagers have also alleged that the Corporation issued notices in unfamiliar languages and disregarded objections. For tribal communities, the experience has reinforced the perception that their land remains a 'resource frontier' for the 'Rest of India'.

In its conversations with the local leaders, the state should have respected their refusal, but has instead signalled that 'no' is no longer an acceptable answer. Uranium mining is highly polluting and can irreversibly alter the landscape. This is why free, prior, and informed consent, as under global norms, is essential. If such consent is unavailable, it behooves the same state that instituted the democratic protections to stop treating uranium as the only route to national security or development and to weigh other deposits, substitutes or even power-generating strategies. Now, the communities might consider challenging the OM's validity in courts, banking on precedents such as *Niyangiri* (2013), and invoking protections under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. Second, the Ministry must withdraw its OM; by exempting the mining of several minerals from public consultation, it sets a precedent that can reshape mining governance across India. Finally, if local protests intensify, the Centre should once more respond with dialogue: coercion, while achieving its goal in the short-term, will only breed resentment later. It is obligated not only to maintain order but also to ensure that constitutional protections are realised in practice.

Page-9

Breaking the academic paywall

India has the fourth highest number of PhD graduates globally, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. A number of these students come from regions where universities do not have the resources to subscribe to journals. A PhD student has to read hundreds of papers and books to complete research. How can students, who already suffer resource constraints, and get a stipend of ₹20,000-35,000, be asked to spend \$20-3,000 (₹17,000-2.64 lakh) to access a paper online? This cannot be the norm.

Blocking access to knowledge
In August, the Delhi High Court ordered the blocking of free access sites - SciHub and LibGen. This triggered a debate over the rights of students and the scientific community, particularly in the Global South, in accessing knowledge. The sites were blocked on grounds of copyright infringement, based on a plea filed by three of the biggest academic publishers in the world, which corner 40% of the market.

Academic publishing is a business where publishers do not create content or review its quality. Instead, they benefit from the free labour of the research community, which is paid for by taxpayers or student fees. In short, multi-billion dollar companies are able to block access to scientific knowledge to the vast majority of the world.

So, who is committing the real theft? A 2021 study published by the *Journal of Scientometric Research* found that India accounted for 8.7% of the total download requests on SciHub, amounting to over 13 million, in 2017. Of these, 19% were related to the medical and health sciences. Access to such information allows students and professionals to build on existing knowledge and customise it to their local needs in regions plagued by inaccessibility and deficit in resources.

MSF (Doctors Without Borders)



Parthesarathy Rajendran
Executive Director,
MSF South Asia



Devi Vijay
Professor, IIM
Calcutta

has witnessed the painful health realities of countries in the Global South. Overburdened systems are unable to meet the growing needs of communities that are often underserved in the face of systemic gaps, climate disasters, and violence. Medicine is not absolute; it evolves with the world around us. As our environment changes, our bodies adapt, and organisms evolve, the healthcare sector demands constant innovation, research, and deeper understanding of ground realities to deliver the best practices and treatment plans.

MSF teams, especially those treating patients with drug-resistant TB and antimicrobial-resistant HIV, have seen how disease patterns can evolve and shatter remote communities. For best results, health experts must work on complex treatment plans, customised to the patient's needs, which differ depending on cost, severity of infection, geography, malnourishment, age, and co-morbidities. The fact that two-thirds of TB cases are reported from eight countries, all in the Global South, where patients are struggling to access effective treatments that are at least a few decades old, means fighting these diseases is a matter of equity and justice.

Like medicine, knowledge should never be a luxury commodity. Currently, corporate forces overwhelmingly gatekeep scientific knowledge - whether it is in increasingly corporatised universities, or through corporate-funded research and journals. The primary motive is profits, and the resultant practices are ownership of human knowledge within patents and intellectual property rights. This exclusionary system has a narrow understanding of what knowledge is. Universities have started seeking out researchers who have already published papers in well-known journals instead of seeking research that benefits the most underserved.

Science is already produced as a collective exercise: it must be recognised as such

In addition to advocating for open access, it is also important to recognise the knowledge gathered by grassroots communities. The Global South is otherwise often treated as an exotic field site for researchers from the Global North. There is gross underrepresentation of researchers from the Global South in authorship; they are typically reduced to field assistants, while the so-called 'cerebral' work is relegated to those from the Global North. This is particularly concerning as issues in the Global South are conceptualised under Global North-centric language.

Collective efforts

The Global South is disproportionately impacted by increased protectionism, violence, climate disasters, displacement, inaccessibility, drug resistance, and more. These challenges demand collective efforts from governments, innovators, and health experts. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, 193 member countries of UNESCO, including India, adopted the first international framework on open science, to make science transparent and accessible and enhance international scientific cooperation. However, just a few years later, multi-billion dollar publishers continue to hold knowledge at ransom.

We are producing an artificial scarcity of knowledge, which is otherwise an infinite resource, a commons. Science is already produced as a collective exercise; it must be recognised as such. Even research conducted in the Global South is inaccessible to the people who participate in these studies. As a society, we need to exert pressure on publishers and governments to open channels for easy access to scientific information. If we are to have a fighting chance at facing the health implications of war, climate crisis, drug resistance, and systemic inequities, we must dismantle paywalls and stake claims on knowledge as commons.



Practice Question

Q. “Knowledge should not be a luxury commodity.” In light of recent debates on academic paywalls and access to scientific research, critically examine the challenges faced by students and researchers in the Global South. Suggest measures to promote equitable access to knowledge and innovation. (250 words)

Page-10

Can timelines be fixed for Governors?

Can the Governor withhold assent to a Bill passed by the State legislature based on his own discretion? Why has the Centre said that courts cannot prescribe a timeline for Governors/President to decide on a Bill? What have Opposition-ruled States said on the matter?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

The Supreme Court is currently hearing a Presidential reference made in May 2025 that has sought the opinion of the Court on 14 questions, primarily surrounding the interpretation of Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution.

What is the current reference?

The current reference is a result of a Supreme Court judgment in April 2025 (*The State of Tamil Nadu vs Anj*) that had specified timelines for Governors and the President to act on Bills passed by State legislatures. It had held that if the Governor was to withhold assent or reserve the Bill for consideration of the President, contrary to the advice of the State Council of Ministers, he/she should do so within a period of three months. It further held that if a Bill for which assent has been withheld is again passed by the State legislature, the Governor shall assent to such Bill. It had prescribed a timeline of three months for the President to decide on State Bills reserved for his/her consideration. The court had also held that decisions by Governors and the President on such Bills, including delays beyond the prescribed timelines, will be subject to judicial review.

The government has raised questions regarding the authority of the Court to prescribe timelines when they are not specified in the Constitution.

What does the Constitution say?

Article 200 of the Constitution lays down that when a Bill, passed by a State Legislature, is presented to the Governor for his/her assent, he/she has four alternatives: (a) may give assent to the Bill (b) may withhold assent to the Bill, that is, reject the Bill in which case the Bill fails to become law; (c) may return the Bill for reconsideration of the State Legislature; or (d) may reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.

As held by the Supreme Court in various cases including the *Shamsher Singh* case (1974), the Governor does not exercise his/her discretionary powers while withholding assent for a Bill. He/she is required to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers. The return of any Bill to the State Legislature for reconsideration is also to be done based on ministerial advice. As explained in the *Constituent Assembly* by T.T.

Krishnamachari, this may be done if the Government feels that the Bill needs modifications. The Governor shall assent to such a Bill if it is passed again by the State Legislature.

As far as reserving any Bill for consideration of the President, the Governor must reserve certain Bills like those which reduce the powers of the High Court. He/she may reserve certain Bills based on the advice of the Council of Ministers like those that relate to a subject enumerated in the Concurrent List, to ensure operation of its provisions despite repugnancy to a Union Law. It is only under rare circumstances that the Governor may exercise his/her discretion and reserve a Bill where he/she feels that the provisions of the Bill contravene any of the provisions of the Constitution and therefore, reserve it for the consideration of the President.

The Constitution does not lay down any time limit within which the Governor is required to make a decision with



New rules: Tamil Nadu Governor N. Ravi welcomed by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin during the Republic Day celebrations in Chennai, on January 26. PTI

respect to any Bill presented for his/her assent. The main part of Article 200 states that once a Bill is presented to the Governor, he/she 'shall' declare that he/she assents to the Bill or withholds assent or reserves the Bill for consideration of the President. The proviso to the article adds that the Governor may 'as soon as possible' return the Bill for reconsideration of the State legislature.

What are the recommendations?

The Sarkaria Commission (1987) had stated that only the reservation of Bills for consideration of the President, that too under rare cases of patent unconstitutionality, can be implied as a discretionary power of the Governor. Apart from such exceptional cases, the Governor must discharge his functions under Article 200 as per the advice of Ministers. It further recommended that the President (Central Government) should dispose of such Bills within a maximum period of six months. The Punchhi Commission (2010) had recommended that the Governor should take a decision with respect to a Bill presented for his/her assent within a period of six months.

What are the arguments?

Article 163(1) of the Constitution requires the Governor to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers except in so far as he/she is required by or under the Constitution to act as per his/her discretion. Article 163(2) further provides that if any question arises on whether the matter is a matter which the Governor is required to act as per his/her discretion,

the decision of the Governor in such cases shall be final and shall not be called into question.

The Centre has argued that the Governor enjoys discretion as per the above Article which cannot be inquired into by the courts and consequently no timelines can be fixed. It also raised objections to the three-month timeframe that has been stipulated for the President to decide on Bills which have been reserved. Article 201 that deals with this matter does not stipulate any timeline. The Centre has maintained that any issues between the elected government in a State, the Governor and the President need to be resolved politically within the framework of the Constitution and that the courts cannot be an adjudicator for every such impasse.

However, Opposition-ruled States have argued that the Governors in such States have been selectively delaying assent or reserving Bills, against the advice of the Council of Ministers, for the consideration of the President. They have argued that such deliberate delays cannot be termed as discretion and that it disrespects the popular mandate of the people of the State.

What should be the way forward?

All the issues stated above are in the nature of symptoms. The underlying disease that has plagued our federal set up has been the politicisation of the gubernatorial post. Many political leaders starting from C.N. Annadurai to Nitish Kumar have called for the abolition of the Governor's post in the past. However, as per our Constitutional scheme, there is a need for a nominal head of the State

executive just like the President for the Union executive.

Nevertheless, federalism is also a basic feature of our Constitution and the Governor's office should not undermine the powers of popularly elected governments at the States.

The Court usually exercises restraint while stipulating timelines for action by constitutional authorities where none is provided in the Constitution. However, when there are unreasonable delays, the Court has stipulated timelines in the past like in *K. M. Singh* case (2020) where it laid down a three-month timeframe for Speakers to decide on the Tenth Schedule disqualification.

The Supreme Court has purposively interpreted the words in Article 200 in its judgment in April 2025. It has interpreted that the main part of Article 200 uses the words 'Governor shall' and hence it is not a discretionary power. It relied on its own past judgments including the *Nabam Rebia* case (2006), the recommendations of various commissions as well as the Office Memorandum of the Home Ministry in 2016 to prescribe the timeline of three months for actions by Governors and the President.

The Centre and the Governors should follow the timeline prescribed by the April 2025 judgment to uphold democratic and federal principles. Hopefully, the opinion of the Supreme Court in the Presidential reference would also reiterate this position.

Rangarajan R. is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

Article 200 of the Constitution lays down that when a Bill, passed by a State Legislature, is presented to the Governor for his/her assent, he/she has four alternatives: (a) may give assent to the Bill (b) may withhold assent to the Bill, that is, reject the Bill in which case the Bill fails to become law; (c) may return the Bill for reconsideration of the State Legislature; or (d) may reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.

Article 163(1) of the Constitution requires the Governor to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers except in so far as he/she is required by or under the Constitution to act as per his/her discretion.

Opposition-ruled States have argued that the Governors in such States have been selectively delaying assent or reserving Bills, against the advice of the Council of Ministers.



IAF's iconic MiG-21 fighter to fly into sunset after six decades of service

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force will officially retire its legendary MiG-21 fighter jets on September 26, marking the end of nearly six decades of service for the aircraft widely hailed as the "workhorse" of India's air defence.

A ceremonial flypast and decommissioning event will be held at the IAF base in Chandigarh and will be attended by senior military leaders and veteran pilots who have flown the jet across generations.

Inducted in 1963, the MiG-21 was India's first supersonic fighter, with its maiden squadron – the 28 Squadron at Chandigarh – earning the nickname 'First Supersonics'. Over the years, India inducted



Glorious stint: Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh flew the aircraft in Bikaner recently ahead of its official retirement. FILE PHOTO

more than 700 MiG-21s of different variants, many built domestically by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

The aircraft was the backbone of the IAF till the mid-2000s, playing crucial roles in the 1965 and 1971 wars, the 1999 Kargil conflict, the 2019 Balakot air strikes, and most recently

Operation Sindoor. It was in a MiG-21 that Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman (then Wing Commander) shot down a Pakistani F-16 in 2019 before being captured across the border.

Besides combat successes, the MiG-21 also boosted India's aerospace industry, pushing indigenous manu-

facturing and technological capabilities to new levels.

IAF chief's tribute

In August this year, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, the Chief of Air Staff, paid tribute to the jet with solo sorties from the Nal airbase in Bikaner in Rajasthan.

The IAF, in a post on X, described the MiG-21 as a "warhorse that carried the pride of a nation into the skies" and released a tribute video showcasing its storied history.

As the MiG-21 squadrons are phased out, the IAF's combat strength will dip to 29 squadrons. However, senior officers have hinted that the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A will step in to replace the ageing fighter in the years to come.

Page-16

BERLIN

Russian military plane entered airspace over Baltic Sea: Germany



AFP

Germany's air force on Sunday sent two Eurofighters to track a Russian IL-20m military aircraft that had entered neutral airspace over the Baltic Sea, it said, before handing the escort over to NATO partners in Sweden. NATO's North Atlantic Council will meet on Tuesday to discuss Russia's violation of Estonian airspace. REUTERS



Practice Question

Q. Which of the following countries have a coastline on the Baltic Sea?

1. Poland
2. Germany
3. Sweden
4. Ukraine
5. Finland

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A) 1, 2 and 3 only
- B) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- C) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- D) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only

Page-16

Taliban rule out deal on Bagram air base despite U.S. President's call for its return

Agence France-Presse
KABUL

An Afghan government defence official said on Sunday that a deal over Bagram air base was "not possible", after U.S. President Donald Trump said he wanted the former U.S. base back.

Bagram, the largest air base in Afghanistan, located north of the capital Kabul, was the centre of U.S. operations in their 20 year-war against the Taliban.

Mr. Trump threatened unspecified punishment against Afghanistan if it was not returned – four years after it was abandoned by U.S. troops.



Crucial location: Donald Trump has repeatedly criticised the loss of the Bagram air base, noting its proximity to China. REUTERS

"If Afghanistan doesn't give Bagram Airbase back to those that built it, the United States of America, BAD THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN!!!" the 79-

year-old leader wrote on his Truth Social platform. On Sunday, Fasihuddin Fitrat, chief of staff of Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence, said "some people"

want to take back the base through a "political deal".

"Recently, some people have said that they have entered negotiations with Afghanistan for taking back Bagram air base," he said in comments broadcast by local media. "A deal over even an inch of Afghanistan's soil is not possible. We don't need it."

Later in an official statement, the Afghan government said warned that "Afghanistan's independence and territorial integrity are of the utmost importance".

Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticised the loss of the base, noting its proximity to China.

Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

Bagram Air Base is a major military airfield approximately 40 km north of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul. Originally built by the Soviet Union in the 1950s, it served as the primary hub for US and NATO operations in Afghanistan from 2001 until the withdrawal of US forces in August 2021.

