

UK Immigration Policy

Why in news?

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The UK government had announced changes to its visa policy for non-EU nationals, which will also affect a large number of Indians.

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What are the new rules?

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- Tier 2 route for applying visa is for Intra-Company Transfer of resident from outside European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland, when an overseas employer has offered him/her a role in a UK branch of the organisation

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- Under the new visa rules anyone applying after November 24 under the Tier 2 (ICT) category would be required to meet a higher salary threshold requirement of 30,000 pounds from the earlier 20,800 pounds.

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- For those working as third party contractors, the minimum salary is raised to £41,500.

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- An annual levy of £1,000 on firms for every worker hired from outside the EU.

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What are the advantages?

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- In 2015, UK employers struggled to fill nearly one fifth of the job vacancies as a result of the skills gap.

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- Immigration is not helping to increase the incentive to employers to train and upskill the UK workforce. e.g Ready access to a pool of skilled IT

professionals in India.

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- The proposals would toughen the intra-company transfer route.
- It would make it harder and more expensive for firms to hire talent from abroad.
- The fee levied could be used to skill domestic workers in the UK.

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What are the disadvantages?

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- Indian IT workers accounted for nearly 90% of visas issued under the ICT route, therefore it will affect them greatly.
- New English language requirements when applying for settlement as a family member after two and a half years in the UK will also affect Indians.
- It will affect the growth of Britain's IT and engineering sectors, medium-sized businesses and healthcare sector, which relies heavily on migrant nurses.
- A lot of startup companies might move to nearby hubs like Berlin, Paris or Amsterdam.
- Various sectors are of the view that they should be keeping the resources they have developed and skilled over the years.

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What should India do?

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India should examine the UK-India Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty, to see if the current move is in breach of the core principles of the treaty.

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