

US Shutdown - US-Mexico Border Wall Issue

Why in news?

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The U.S. federal government partially shut down recently on the backdrop of the issue over constructing a border wall between the U.S. and the Mexico.

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What is a shutdown in U.S.?

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- The U.S. government shuts down if the Congress does not pass -

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1. Appropriation bills (appropriating federal funds to government departments, agencies, programmes)

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2. Continuing resolutions (appropriations legislation allowing funding on a formula based on the previous year's funding)

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- It also happens when the President fails to sign such bills or resolutions into law.

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- The consequence is that certain parts of the government shut down and the staff that are deemed "non-essential" are sent on temporary unpaid leave.

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- Only "essential" staff, such as those who deal with national security or public safety, continue to work.

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- Unpaid workers receive pay retroactively after the shutdown ends.

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- Shutdowns occur the most frequently when Congress and the President take

stands that are mutually hostile.

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What is the recent case?

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- The continental border between the U.S. and Mexico stretches for nearly 2,000 miles.

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- The land border reaches across four states - Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas.

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- The entire border between U.S. and Mexico extends from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.

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- A Department of Homeland Security report estimated that 170,000 people successfully entered the U.S. illegally from the southern border in 2015.

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- There were approximately 5.6 million "unauthorized immigrants" from Mexico by 2016, according to data from the Pew Research Center.
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- The U.S. President Trump first proposed a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border when he announced his presidential candidacy in June 2015.
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- Recently, Trump wants Congress to approve \$5 billion for the project, but Democrats are offering only \$1.3 billion for border security.
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- Hence, a shutdown was triggered after the U.S. President was refused funding for his border wall by the Congress.
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- He also threatened to call a national emergency and urged to build the wall very quickly, even though the legality of such a step is uncertain.
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- Thus, the federal government partially shut down on December 22, 2018 and if it were to last beyond January 12, 2019, it would be the longest shutdown in the United States history.
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What is the consequence?

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- There are no official figures on how many workers have been furloughed or on a temporary leave.
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- There are estimates that around 800,000 workers have been furloughed in the shutdown happened previously in U.S. (2013)
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- A recent report on the current shutdown reveals that less than half [of the 800,000 impacted in 2013] are on unpaid leave, while more than half are working without pay.
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- Also, the report said that, those who work can expect compensation after the funding is restored, but furloughed workers have no such guarantee.
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- As of now, only essential work like mail delivery and law enforcement was being performed.
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- Operations in nine federal government departments, including Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Treasury had been hit and agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and NASA had been impacted.

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Source: The Indian Express

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