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1. US Appeals Court Refuses to Stay Order Cancelling H-1B Visa Fee Hike

The U.S. Court of Appeals has refused to grant an interim stay on a lower court's order that struck down the Trump administration's decision to increase the annual H-1B visa fee to US\$100,000 (approximately ₹96 lakh).

i. Court's Observations

- A three-judge bench of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston dismissed the U.S. Government's appeal.
- The court agreed with the arguments made by groups from 20 U.S. states challenging the fee increase.
- The judges observed that the issue is not whether the U.S. Congress can delegate the power to raise visa fees to the President, but whether Congress had actually done so.
- Therefore, the court declined to stay the lower court's order that invalidated the visa fee hike.
- The decision is viewed as a major setback for the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.
- The H-1B visa program allows U.S. companies to recruit highly skilled foreign professionals with competitive salaries. Thousands of Indian IT professionals work in the U.S. under this program, and outstanding performers may eventually become eligible for a Green Card (permanent residency).
- Under the "America First" employment policy, President Trump had ordered a steep increase in H-1B visa fees in September last year.
- The annual H-1B visa fee was increased from US\$2,000–5,000 to US\$100,000, effective from September 21 last year.
- Groups representing 20 U.S. states challenged the increase in the federal court in Boston, Massachusetts, arguing that the Trump administration had usurped Congress's authority over immigration policy and taxation.
- On June 8, the court ruled that increasing the H-1B visa fee without Congressional

approval was unlawful and cancelled the fee hike.

ii. Bill Introduced in the U.S. Senate Against H-1B Visas

- A private member's bill opposing the H-1B visa program has been introduced in the U.S. Senate.
- The bill was introduced by Senator Tim Sheehy, a Republican representing Montana.
- According to the bill:
 - The H-1B program was originally created to address shortages of highly skilled professionals.
 - However, it is now allegedly being used to hire lower-paid foreign workers instead of qualified and hardworking Americans.
 - The program should not be allowed to undermine the rights of American workers.
- The bill proposes:
 - Suspending the issuance of H-1B visas for three years.
 - Reintroducing the program later with stricter regulations and higher standards.
 - Imposing an annual H-1B visa fee of US\$100,000, as proposed by President Trump.

2. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Resigns Over NEET Paper Leak

- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned, taking responsibility for the NEET question paper leak controversy.
- His resignation followed continuous protests by students and youth led by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) in Delhi.
- After the Central Government accepted all the demands of the protesters, including Pradhan's resignation, the 36-day-long protest in Delhi was withdrawn.

3. Typhoon "Nowl" Approaches South China and Hong Kong

- Normal life has been disrupted in South China and Hong Kong as Typhoon Nowl approaches the region.
- It is the third typhoon to strike China this month.
- The storm is moving through the northeastern part of the South China Sea at a speed of

140 km/h.

- It is expected to make landfall in Guangdong Province on Sunday (July 26).

4. Houthi Rebels Attack Saudi Aramco Oil Facilities

- Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen carried out aerial attacks targeting two Saudi Aramco oil facilities.
- i. Last Monday, the Houthis announced that they would block Saudi-linked ships passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Subsequently, they attacked two oil tankers carrying Saudi oil through the Red Sea last Thursday.
- ii. The Bab-el-Mandeb Strait handles approximately 12% of global maritime trade and 25% of global container shipping. Houthi threats have significantly disrupted shipping through this strategic waterway.
- iii. In response, the Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes on military targets in Hodeidah, Yemen, which were considered threats to commercial shipping. The Houthis claimed responsibility for targeting Aramco oil refining and storage facilities in the Saudi port cities of Yanbu and Jizan along the Red Sea.
- iv. Due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the U.S.-Iran conflict, Saudi Arabia has diverted a large portion of its oil exports to the Yanbu Port on the Red Sea.

5. India Wins First Medal at the Commonwealth Games

- Para powerlifter Jandu Kumar won India's first medal at the Commonwealth Games.
- The Games are being held in Glasgow, Scotland.
- Jandu Kumar lifted 190 kg to win the bronze medal in the para powerlifting event.
- This marked India's first medal at the current Commonwealth Games.

6. The Bucharest University of Economic Studies awarded an Honorary Doctorate to President Droupadi Murmu.

- i. Murmu recalled that exactly 100 years ago, in November 1926, Rabindranath Tagore visited Bucharest and delivered a speech at the National Theatre.
 - She noted that the Romanian people had deeply appreciated Indian philosophy and

thought even at that time.

- ii. Romania's national poet Mihai Eminescu studied the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita extensively during his student years.
 - These works profoundly influenced his later writings.
 - President Murmu said this reflects India's philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—the belief that the whole world is one family.

7. The ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed UNESCO's decision.

- i. The decision was taken during the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, held in Busan, South Korea. Sarnath has become India's 45th World Heritage Site.
- ii. Sarnath is one of the most sacred sites associated with Lord Buddha. UNESCO recognized its outstanding historical and cultural significance. Prime Minister Modi said that Buddha's message of wisdom, compassion, and harmony continues to inspire the entire world.