Trump's policies threaten India-US travel market

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Dhaka: Airlines are cutting flights between India and the US amid declining demand driven by tighter visa rules and ongoing trade tensions.

The Trump administration’s recent imposition of a $100,000 fee on new H-1B visa applications has dealt a significant blow to this crucial travel market.

India accounts for nearly 75pc of the 85,000 annual H-1B visas issued by the US. Industry experts warn the new visa policy may reduce travel by Indian professionals and their families, impacting India-US routes significantly.

This visa tightening follows the US’s imposition of 50% tariffs on many Indian exports, adding to bilateral strains.

As a result, airlines are expected to operate 27% fewer seats between the two countries in January compared to last year, with Air India leading cuts by nearly 40pc.

Middle Eastern carriers like Emirates and Qatar Airways are also experiencing reduced passenger flows on India-US connecting flights.

Operational challenges are mounting as US airlines avoid Russian airspace and Air India is barred from Pakistani airspace, complicating direct routes.

Air India recently suspended Washington flights due to aircraft retrofits.

Passenger occupancy on India-US flights has sharply declined since March, following increased US immigration enforcement.

Data shows a 15pc drop in Indian travelers to the US in August, marking the third consecutive monthly decline.

Industry officials warn these trends could cause a lasting structural shift in a market long considered stable, especially if Indian tech talent hiring decreases due to visa restrictions.

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