

# Herald Cafe



GOAN BAND UZO IGNITES THE MUSIC SCENE WITH 'KALLZANT PETTLA UZO'



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, NAGOA CELEBRATES SÃO JOÃO

## US study plans on hold: Policy shifts reshaping student choices

Visa restrictions and policy changes under the Trump administration have deterred many international students from choosing the USA. Despite its strong academic and career prospects, more students from Goa are opting for Europe and more

Elsa Angel Rose

The unexpected and sudden pause in visa appointments (for now resumed), increased scrutiny and vetting of social media profiles, fears over the proposed reduction or cancellation of OPT (Optional Practical Training) duration (though not yet officially approved), and deportations for minor reasons are among the numerous uncertainties created by the current USA government, prompting many students aspiring to study in the USA to consider alternative countries. Students are now navigating through a complex landscape in their pursuit of global education and professional growth.

### Sudden visa halt and increasing deportations

There was a halt in visa appointments from May 27, 2025, to June 18, 2025. From the next day onwards visa process started but with a new policy requiring applicants to make their social media profiles public for screening, which caused a lot of concern and worry among applicants about their freedom of expression. "I received a slot for my US visa interview, but I didn't end up going. This visa appointment halt has got me thinking whether I should attend the interview," said Divya Patel, a student admitted to a university in Italy. Deportations that are happening for minor offences are also a major concern. "One of my friends who is planning to go to the USA in 2026 has deleted all his tweets. People are definitely being more cautious," said Divya.

Sonia Shetke, a student preparing to study abroad, said, "It is a huge investment that we make, and I would not want such uncertainty concerning my stay in the country." Debanshu Chowdhury, another student admitted to a foreign



university, said, "I was planning to go to the US to pursue my PhD, but that plan fell through because there were massive funding cuts at all the universities, so they didn't take any foreign nationals as PhD scholars. They only hired from within the country." Divya adds, "The visa halt made me really conscious of the random policy changes that might come. It would cost around INR 1.5 cr for 2 years of my education, so that's a lot of money at stake for such uncertainties."

### Fear over OPT changes

In the USA, Optional Practical Training (OPT) is for 3 years for STEM programmes, and for others it is one year. The USA wants to reduce the OPT duration to 1 year or less for all programmes. The OPT is a temporary work authorisation for F-1 (Student Visa) international students, allowing them to gain practical experience in their field of study. During the OPT duration,

they are supposed to work, and within this duration, their employer company will apply for H-1-B visas (work visa) on their behalf.

"The situation has reached a level where the directors and deans of universities are sending personal emails to applicants, stating that they are working things out with the Trump administration about the OPT part," said Shyam Manavat, a global career counsellor.

Divya said, "Only once a year, the company I am employed at will apply for an H-1B visa on my behalf. As a STEM student in my entire three years of OPT, I had three chances to apply for an H-1B visa, one attempt in each year. Exhausting the OPT and not getting an H-1B visa can be difficult. As there are limitations on the number of H-1B visas that can be issued. If you end up exhausting the OPT, then you will have to come back to India."

She further adds, "Once you are in India, it is difficult to apply again for an H-1B visa because you are not in the USA, and the company would not be interested in investing much in you. It is easier for the companies to hire a fresher who is in the USA."

### Goan students favour UK and Europe over US

The most preferred locations for students in Goa is the UK and Europe. Shyam shared, "Goans who have Portuguese passports will mostly prefer Europe. Apart from academics, the presence of family and relatives is very important, and parents find it really comfortable to send their children to these countries due to such ties." According to Shyam, hardly 10 - 15 percent students go to the USA from Goa, or a maximum of 20 percent. The numbers have seen a sudden drop from this as well, recently, due to the recent uncertainties in government policies.

"I had applied to universities in Europe as well as the UK. I finalised on Europe. The major reason why I opted out of the US is because of the uncertainties caused by the Trump administration," said Divya. A UK master's degree is also a one-year course; students feel that this offers them a shorter duration of studying and less investment in studies. "Credit transfers provided by European universities are also attractive to students, wherein they get to do a few semesters in one country, and rest in other countries within the European Union," said Shyam.

### The American edge in higher education



Lucrative earning potential, broader career options, strong academic research environment attract students to this global powerhouse. The USA has more than 3000 universities, which is tremendous, compared to universities in any country in the European Union, which have hardly 15 - 20 universities. "The USA has more investments in research and development, and they are diversified when it comes to the industries for R&D. The dominance of American companies is there in almost every field. The USA does not have language barriers like countries in Europe or Asia," said Shyam. "I would probably try for my PhD in the US. I just feel that the US is quite vast when it comes to its research resources," said Sonia.

### SWIPE RIGHT

#### Miley Cyrus teams up with Naomi Campbell in new video

Miley Cyrus has been channelling her inner Naomi Campbell and now the supermodel herself joins Miley in the music video



for her new single, 'Every Girl You've Ever Loved'. The collaboration brings runway energy, with both stars striking fierce poses and showcasing their walk in a glamorous finale. The track is part of Miley's upcoming visual album, 'Something Beautiful', set to premiere on Disney+ on July 16. "My journey began with Disney, and for this project, one I've poured my heart and soul into, now finding its home here feels like a full-circle moment," Miley shared. 'Every Girl You've Ever Loved' joins other tracks on the album including 'End of the World' and 'Easy Lover'.

#### Robert De Niro brings daughter Gia to 'Meet the Wiggles'

Robert De Niro recently shared that he and his two-year-old daughter, Gia, enjoy watching 'The Wiggles' together every day. The Oscar-winning actor and his



partner, Tiffany Chen, took Gia backstage to meet the beloved children's group before their concert in New York City. De Niro, 81, was photographed holding Gia as they posed with the band, capturing a heart-warming moment between father and daughter. In a clip shared by The Wiggles on Instagram, De Niro and Gia are seen shaking hands with the performers and playfully engaging with the group's signature fun. The visit was a touching behind-the-scenes moment, as De Niro, best known for his iconic film roles, stepped into the world of children's entertainment, creating joyful memories with his youngest daughter.



Actress Ananya Pandey celebrated their nephew River's first birthday with a sweet Instagram story cuddling the birthday boy. He is the son of Ivor McCray and social media influencer Alanna, Ananya's cousin.

## Story Mirror Sahitya Award: Purnima Desai wins for Marathi poetry

Celebrated Goan poet and writer Purnima Desai has been recognised with the Story Mirror Sahitya Award 2025 for her acclaimed Marathi poetry collection 'Vasant Bahar'. Known for her multilingual work, she continues to leave a lasting impact on the Indian literary scene

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Margao-based acclaimed Goan poet and writer Purnima Desai was recently honoured with the prestigious StoryMirror Sahitya Award 2025, securing 2nd Rank Readers' Choice in the Marathi language category for her poetry collection, 'Vasant Bahar'. The book features 74 poems centred around love, longing, joy, sorrow, the beauty of rain, and reflections on life's ups and downs," says Purnima. The awards ceremony was held at Title Waves Bookstore in Bandra, Mumbai, and was attended by authors and poets from across India. She adds, "StoryMirror Sahitya Award is



**POETRY THAT SINGS:** Many of Purnima's poems have been turned into songs by renowned Goan composer Ajay Naik, resulting in the audio album 'Swarpurnim', available on YouTube. Her poetry blends classical imagery with personal insight, capturing themes such as rain, longing, resilience, and joy. Speaking about her love for writing poetry, she says, "I've always been drawn to poems, something about them speaks to me. I love poems because of its simplicity. They are not just words on a page, they are feelings and memories."

a unforgettable recognition and I am thankful to them for appreciating my contribution to literature and creativity." Writing in Marathi, Konkani, Hindi, and



English, Purnima has published three books of poetry in Marathi, 'Vasant Bahar', 'Chaitra Poornima', and 'Ek Tara'. Her literary contributions were also acknowledged with the Lakshvadi Award by Pradnya Sahitya Manch, Pune.

### CREATIVE BEYOND THE PAGE

Apart from being a poet, Purnima is also a lyricist, scriptwriter, actress, producer, and director. She has directed five short films, including the award-winning 'Eke Daryadekar' (Konkani) and 'Baddi Gaddi' (Hindi), social issue-based works like 'Shane' (on the theme 'Save the Girl Child') and 'Change of Heart'. She has also acted in acclaimed Konkani and Marathi films such as 'Zuze', 'Ram', 'Wizmit', and 'Rainy Day'.

### NURTURING NEW VOICES

Purnima is the founder of Hasat Khelet Kavya, a multilingual poetry platform launched in August 2023. The group meets monthly, hosts competitions and workshops, and supports emerging poets. The platform encourages inclusivity, with participants from various linguistic backgrounds, including Tamil. "So far we had over 22 meets which includes reciting of short stories, poems, quotes on given picture, competitions etc. Many writers are associated with platform and they

### WORLD RECORD ACHIEVEMENT

Purnima was also recently honoured by the Diamond Book of World Records for her participation in the Vishwa Vikram Kavya Sammelan, a non-stop Marathi poetry recitation event. Organised by Sahitya Sampada in Pen-Raigarh, Maharashtra, the event earned record recognition. Purnima presented three original works: 'Majhiya', 'Mi Pahilya' and 'Sonpani', all from her anthology of poems, 'Ek Tara'.

all participate with great enthusiasm. Most of our participants' poems, quotes, short stories are presented on Radio Puneri at Pune," says Purnima.

### UPCOMING BOOKS

Currently, she is working on two new poetry books, one in Konkani and one multilingual collection. Her continued collaboration with Ajay Naik aims to bring more of her poetry into musical form.

