



US & CANADA

Newsletter

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US POLITICS

Harris and Trump lock horns in high stakes campaign

Kamala Harris has been the flavour of the month in August, following her unexpected nomination as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency following the withdrawal of President Joe Biden. Harris also announced Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota as her choice for running mate via social media on August 6th. The official anointment, as it were, took place during the Democratic National Party Convention which was held from August 19 to August 22, 2024 in Chicago, Illinois.

The convention, as far as such events go, was the usual raucous affair, designed to reinvigorate the party faithful. It was replete with endorsements by a galaxy of political luminaries from former presidents Bill Clinton to Barack Obama to other pillars of the Democratic Party, and popular entertainment personalities who have traditionally supported the Democrats. It provided Harris the opportunity to make up for her late start in the race and The momentum was reflected in spiralling donations to the campaign with Harris raising over \$261 million in August, more than double that of the Trump campaign which collected \$130 million. Overall, the Harris campaign chest swelled to \$404 million, with Trump trailing at \$295 million.

The Trump campaign was caught floundering by the sudden switch in candidate on the Democratic side, something Trump keeps bemoaning about, every now and then. While he is Teflon coated when it comes to making outrageous comments, the same cannot be said of his running mate, J.D. Vance, who has provided much fodder for trolls and memes. A

highlight for the Trump campaign in August was the endorsement of Robert F. Kennedy Jr, maverick scion of the Kennedy dynasty, who had also been running for President as an independent (after first contesting for the Democratic nomination). This was reportedly in return for an assurance from Trump that he would find a place in his Administration, if elected. Another prominent endorsee was former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, who had stood for the Democratic nomination for President in 2020.

Harris has also been courting and obtaining endorsement from Republicans who are anti-Trump. In a significant show of support more than 200 Republican staffers who previously worked for former US President George W Bush and George HW Bush published a letter of support for Harris, warning of the dangers of another "chaotic" Trump administration.

The polls have shown a tight race between Harris and Trump, with some data suggesting that Harris has a slight lead in the key battleground states of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan while remaining neck and neck with Trump in Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina and Arizona. The importance of these states cannot be overstated. In 2020, Biden won by over 7 million votes, but it was the narrow wins in Georgia, Arizona and Wisconsin that gave him the necessary numbers in the Electoral College to propel him to the Presidency. Polling after the second debate on 10th September will give a better idea of where each candidate stands in the hustings.

INDIA-US RELATIONS

- With the India-US 2+2 dialogues which have generally been annual affairs not apparently taking place this year,

presumably because of the election season in the US, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh embarked on a packed 4-day visit to the US, starting 23 August 2024. During the course of his visit, he held bilateral talks with US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and met with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. The PIB press [release](#) noted that wide-ranging discussions on bilateral defence cooperation, industrial collaboration, regional security and other international issues took place in the meeting with Austin. The specific areas touched upon included the progress made in operationalising the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness Quad initiative and the ongoing Indian participation in the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) to which India shall deploy Indian Navy personnel in CMF's Combined Task Force 150 headquarters in Manama, Bahrain by 2025. The progress in the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) for establishing a Defence Innovation bridge between the two countries was deemed to be satisfactory, with the upcoming INDUS X Silicon Valley Summit in September 2024 expected to witness announcements of several key initiatives.

The agreements signed in the course of this visit were the Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA) between India and US and the Memorandum of Agreement between India and US regarding the Deployment of Liaison Officers in various US Combatant Commands.

According to a press [release](#) from the US DoD, the SOSA aims to provide reciprocal priority support for goods and services that

promote national defense between the two countries. It would help both nations acquire necessary industrial resources from each other to address unexpected supply chain disruptions and meet national security needs. Under this non-binding arrangement, both countries would commit to supporting each other's priority delivery requests for critical national defence resources, to the extent possible. The U.S. would provide such assurances under its Defense Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS), while India would establish a government-industry Code of Conduct wherein Indian firms would voluntarily agree to prioritize U.S. support requests.

For the US, SOSAs are crucial for the DoD to enhance interoperability with U.S. defence trade partners, especially given the expanding global supply chain. These arrangements help establish working groups, improve communication, streamline processes, and proactively address potential supply chain issues in various scenarios. They also aid in developing investment strategies for redundancy and security.

Other engagements of the RM included an [interaction](#) with the senior leaders of the US defence industry at a round-table organised by US India Strategic Partnership Forum in Washington DC, and a visit to the Naval Surface Warfare Centre (NSWC) at Memphis, Tennessee. With the Large Cavitation Channel (LCC) at NSWC at Memphis, Tennessee being one of the world's largest and most technically-advanced water tunnel facilities for testing submarines, torpedoes, naval surface ships

and propellers and, with India intent on expanding its defence industry, the RMs [visit](#) there was to explore the establishment of a similar facility in India.

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has selected two of its Gaganyaan [astronauts](#) to participate in the Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) in collaboration with NASA. The shortlisted candidates are shortlisted Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair. Group Captain Shukla will be the prime mission pilot and Group Captain Nair will be the backup. The astronauts will begin their training in August 2024 for the mission expected to take place in October 2024 for a period fourteen days. According to an ISRO press [release](#), “during the mission, the Gaganyatri will undertake selected scientific research and technology demonstration experiments on board the ISS as well as engage in space outreach activities. The experiences gained during this mission will be beneficial for the Indian Human Space Program and it will also strengthen human space flight cooperation between ISRO and NASA.”

- Former Foreign Secretary and Indian [Ambassador](#) designate Vinay Mohan Kwatra arrived in Washington and is expected to present his credentials to President Biden shortly. He succeeds Taranjit Singh Sandhu who served as Ambassador till 31 January 2024.

- In his [remarks](#) at an event in Delhi, Richard Verma, former US Ambassador to India, and current Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, reflected

on his time as Ambassador in Delhi, and highlighted the positives of the US-India partnership, describing it as one of progress and promise. He underscored the importance of joint efforts in health, technology, and space exploration.

- The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi hosted the first U.S.-India Cancer Moonshot [Dialogue](#) on August 5-6, focusing on cancer research collaboration between the two nations. The event, held at the National Institute of Immunology, featured remarks from U.S. Ambassador Eric Garcetti and a lecture by Nobel Laureate Dr. Jim Allison. Participants included senior officials from U.S. and Indian government agencies, private sector leaders, NGOs, and researchers. The dialogue aims to strengthen biomedical research cooperation and develop innovative cancer treatments, emphasizing AI-enabled innovation, novel therapeutics, and holistic cancer care.

DIASPORA NEWS

The Indian American community was [present](#) in respectable numbers at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The presence of over 30 delegates and 40 elected officials from the Indian American community underscored their significant role. With an estimated 700,000 eligible Indian American voters in key battleground states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, their votes can make a significant difference. To many Indian Americans, Harris, being of half Indian parentage, is viewed as a symbol of the American dream and someone who

understands the challenges and aspirations of immigrant communities. Indian American actress and comedian Mindy Kaling hosted the third night of the Democratic National Convention.

CANADA POLITICS

Voter dissatisfaction gets reflected in opinion polls

The Liberals, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the helm, continue to decline in the national polls, with the most recent survey, conducted from August 14 to 18, 2024 by Abacus data, showing the Conservatives leading by 17 points nationally. Conservative supporters said their vote is more about disliking PM Trudeau and the Liberals than liking Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives.

Taking cognizance of voter dissatisfaction with both parties, the Canadian Future Party, a new federal political entity, was officially launched in Ottawa in August 2024. This party positions itself as a centrist option for voters dissatisfied with both the Liberals and Conservatives. Interim party president Tara McPhail said the new party is a place for Canadians like her who are "politically homeless."

INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS

- Indian students in Canada are feeling the heat after the Canadian government made changes in the Post-Graduation Work Permits. Whilst those who were issued permits before 28 August 2024 aren't affected, starting 1 September, only students at public or

high-standard private institutions can get work permits after graduation. Also, only spouses of students enrolled in master's, doctoral, and professional programs will be allowed to get open work permits. The government is working on other measures to reduce the temporary resident population to 5% of Canada's total population in three years. In April 2024, this figure stood at 6.8%

DIASPORA NEWS

After the Southern border of the US, Indian migrants are now crossing over the border with Canada into the United States in record numbers, according to news reports. According to US border patrol figures, 5,152 undocumented Indians entered the US from Canada on foot in June, surpassing the numbers from Mexico. Many of them are assisted by relatives already resident in these two countries. In 2023, nearly 97,000 undocumented Indian migrants were "encountered" nationwide, including more than 30,000 at the Canadian border. The surge in numbers has also been tied to the presidential elections and an expected tightening of immigration restriction if Trump were to come back to power.

Migrants have also been using the using the UK's transit visa free facility for travellers to the US and Canada to claim asylum in the UK while in transit. While the US has sought a more rigorous visa screening process by Canada, the UK has proposed that all Canada-bound Indian nationals should obtain transit visas for stopovers.