



# US & CANADA

## *Newsletter*

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## US POLITICS

- The United States, under President Donald Trump, formally withdrew from the [Paris Climate Agreement](#) for a second time, making it one of only a handful of nations outside the pact. The formal exit was part of a broader rollback of US international climate commitments, including departure from the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#). The administration argued that the agreement disadvantaged American workers and energy producers, though critics said the move undermined global climate cooperation and weakened US diplomatic standing. Global climate experts warned that US disengagement could encourage other countries to reduce their own climate commitments, [jeopardizing efforts to meet critical emissions goals](#). The decision triggered political backlash domestically and internationally, intensifying debates about US leadership on climate issues at a time when extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and severity.

- The US Senate [approved a government funding deal](#) (71–29) to avoid a partial shutdown of the federal government but only as a short-term extension. Bipartisan negotiations were shaped by mounting outrage over heightened [Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) (ICE) operations after the killings of two US citizens by federal agents. Senate Democrats approved a two-week DHS funding extension while separate talks on ICE reform and accountability measures continued.

- In late January, [widespread anti-ICE demonstrations](#) erupted across major US cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia, driven by outrage over federal immigration enforcement and the deaths of civilians by ICE officers. Tens of thousands participated in marches, walkouts, and economic actions under slogans such as “[No work, No school, No shopping](#)” to protest deportation policies and demand an end to militarized immigration operations. In Minneapolis in particular, protests followed the aggressive federal deployment as [part of Operation Metro Surge](#), heightening local tensions and leading to the deaths of two protestors. Demonstrators including students, activists, and community groups - called for sweeping immigration policy reforms and accountability for federal agents. These mass actions coincided with [political debates in Congress](#) over DHS funding and ICE oversight, signalling a significant surge in coordinated domestic resistance to federal immigration policy.

- Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as the [112th Mayor of New York City](#), marking a historic milestone as the first Muslim and first Asian American to hold the city's highest office. The ceremony, held at a subway station, was officiated by Senator Bernie Sanders. [Mamdani's transition to City Hall](#) signals a significant shift toward [progressive urban](#) governance in the nation's largest metropolis.

- U.S. [District Court Judge John Gibney](#) issued a landmark ruling stating that Virginia's felon disenfranchisement clause violates the 150-year-old Virginia

Readmission Act. The ruling restricts the state [from stripping voting rights](#) for any crimes established after 1870, effectively restoring potential eligibility to thousands of individuals convicted of modern statutory felonies, such as drug-related offenses. This decision represents a major shift in the [voting rights landscape](#) heading into the 2026 midterm cycle.

- President Trump announced [the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro](#) and his wife, Cilia Flores, following a large-scale U.S. air strike on military sites in northern Venezuela. Maduro was subsequently [transported to a federal court](#) in Manhattan, where he pleaded not guilty to drug and weapons charges. While Republicans defended the move as a [victory for regional stability](#), Democrats decried the attack as a violation of international norms, and the Senate moved to bar further military action without congressional approval.

- The Trump administration renewed its aggressive [push to acquire Greenland](#), threatening a 10% tariff on European nations that refused to accept the annexation plan. These threats sparked [massive protests in Copenhagen](#) and throughout Greenland. International leaders, including those in Denmark, condemned the move as [“geopolitical clickbait,”](#) while polling showed that only 17% of the American public supported the effort to [acquire the territory](#).

- Continuing a policy of isolationism, the United States formally [withdrew from the World Health Organization](#) (WHO). This move coincided with a broader

announcement that the U.S. would withdraw from 66 international organizations, including the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#). The administration cited a “America First” rationale, though health experts warned the exit would leave the U.S. vulnerable during global health crises, such as the rising measles [outbreaks reported in North Carolina](#).

## INDIA-US RELATIONS

- U.S. [Ambassador Sergio Gor](#), a trusted member of President Trump’s inner circle, arrived in New Delhi on January 9, signalling a high-stakes reset for India-U.S. relations. Immediately upon landing, Gor posted on X, [“Great to be back in India! Incredible opportunities ahead for our two nations!”](#)

Gor officially took charge, delivering an [unprecedented arrival speech](#) from the steps of the U.S. Embassy. Addressing a year of friction marked by 50% tariffs on Indian goods, he famously stated, “Real friends can disagree but always resolve their differences in the end.” Gor invited India to [the “Pax Silica”](#) semiconductor initiative and held substantive meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

- U.S. [Secretary of the Army](#) Daniel P. Driscoll arrived in New Delhi on January 25, for pivotal talks aimed at bolstering India-U.S. military synergy. In a high-level meeting with [Chief of Army Staff \(COAS\)](#) General Upendra Dwivedi, Driscoll- the youngest Army Secretary in U.S. history- emphasized expanding “Army-to-Army”

cooperation and operational interoperability as a cornerstone of Indo-Pacific stability.

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and [U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#) intensified their engagement to stabilize a partnership strained by recent trade friction. On January 13, the two leaders held a [high-stakes strategy call](#), aligning on critical minerals, defence technology, and civil nuclear cooperation. Rubio notably congratulated India on [its new SHANTI Act](#), which simplifies nuclear liability- a move seen as a catalyst for American energy investment.

- A high-level [bipartisan U.S. Congressional delegation](#), led by House Armed Services Committee Chairman Michael Rogers and Ranking Member Adam Smith, visited New Delhi. The delegation met with External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh to [advance defence technology collaboration](#) and regional stability in the Indo-Pacific. This visit was seen as a crucial effort to maintain [institutional ties despite the executive-level friction over trade](#).

- Negotiations for a bilateral trade deal remained [“active but elusive”](#) throughout January. The U.S. maintains a 50% tariff on Indian imports- consisting of a 25% reciprocal tariff and [a 25% punitive levy](#) linked to India’s purchase of Russian oil. While U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent [indicated a potential “path” to removing these tariffs](#) if India further reduces Russian energy imports, the month ended without a signature, primarily due to

U.S. demands for access [to India’s dairy and agricultural sectors](#).

- U.S. [Senator Steve Daines visited New Delhi](#) to advocate for the Trump administration’s trade priorities, specifically pushing for favourable provisions for U.S. pulse crop farmers. His meetings with Minister Piyush Goyal and Dr. Jaishankar focused on securing a [“fair and reciprocal” trade deal](#). This visit highlighted the administration’s [“transactional” approach](#), tying strategic defence cooperation to specific trade concessions.

## DIASPORA NEWS

- Indian American philanthropists and education leaders Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon and Ranjan Tandon signed a ₹100 crore (~US\$11.5 million) [Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad](#) (IIMA) to establish the Krishnamurthy Tandon School of Artificial Intelligence. The agreement, formalized in Ahmedabad, highlights the ongoing transnational contributions of Indian diaspora leaders to [India’s higher education and technological capacities](#). The initiative is expected to support research and talent [development in AI, bolstering India’s competitive edge](#) in emerging tech domains. Beyond its academic impact, the MoU exemplifies how Indian Americans leverage professional success and philanthropic capital to shape educational and innovation ecosystems both in the U.S. and India, strengthening trans-Pacific ties in [technology and human capital development](#).

- The Washington State Senate passed [Resolution No. 8674](#) formally honouring India's 77th Republic Day and recognizing the contributions of Indian Americans to the state's social and economic life. The resolution acknowledged the community's impact across sectors such as technology, agriculture, trade, and emerging industries, and praised enhanced cooperation [between India and Washington State](#). It highlighted how Indian Americans have enriched local civic life and advanced bilateral engagement. Such state-level honours reflect the increasing political visibility and influence of [the Indian diaspora in U.S. public life](#), and they help solidify cultural and economic bonds at the subnational level - especially in states with significant Indian American populations.

- The Consulate General of India, Seattle hosted a special event for [World Hindi Day](#), featuring a "Kavi Sammelan" (poetry recital) and cultural performances. Attended by local Indian diaspora members and literary groups, the event aimed at promoting Hindi language appreciation and preserving cultural heritage within the Pacific Northwest community. Such cultural diplomacy efforts underscore how India's missions engage diaspora populations in [the U.S. beyond political affairs](#), nurturing linguistic and artistic connections while fostering community cohesion.

- Indian tech professionals faced a major policy shock as [the H-1B visa system shifted](#) from a random lottery to a wage-weighted selection process. New rules

prioritizing higher salaries and advanced skills, combined with mandatory social media vetting and [the suspension of third-country stamping](#), have created massive backlogs. Reports indicate that [many U.S. consulates in India](#) have essentially run out of visa stamping slots for 2026, forcing thousands of Indian engineers and their families to reconsider travel plans and [creating an "endurance test"](#) for those seeking to maintain legal status.

## CANADA POLITICS

- In response to sustained affordability pressures, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the "[Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit](#)." This new measure, which builds upon the existing GST credit, aims to provide immediate financial relief to over 12 [million low- and modest-income Canadians](#). The plan includes a one-time top-up payment in spring 2026 followed by a permanent 25% [increase in benefit values](#) starting in July. The government also introduced a \$150 million Food Security Fund to support [small businesses and greenhouse](#) production to lower domestic food costs.

- Recent reports from have revealed that senior officials in the Trump administration held at least three "covert" meetings in Washington with leaders of [the Alberta Prosperity Project](#) (APP), a group advocating for the oil-rich province's independence from Canada. The meetings, which reportedly included sessions in a secure room (SCIF), involved discussions regarding a potential [\\$500 billion credit facility](#) to bankroll the province should an

independence referendum pass. APP legal counsel Jeff Rath claimed that U.S. officials are “[extremely enthusiastic](#)” about a free Alberta, even as the White House and State Department officially downplayed the talks as routine meetings with “civil society groups” where no commitments were made.

- Downtown Toronto witnessed a politically [charged anti-immigration demonstration](#) organized by the Canada First Movement, drawing approximately 200–300 participants. The protest focused on opposition to current immigration policies and was met by counter-demonstrators, including groups like [Antifa and community solidarity coalitions](#). Clashes between the two sides led to police intervention; several participants and police officers were wounded, and around eight people were arrested with charges ranging from assault to weapons violations. The event underscored growing social tensions [over immigration, diversity, and national identity](#) in Canada’s largest city, reflecting wider debates within Canadian society about demographic change and public policy.

- Canada’s First Ministers (the Prime Minister and Premiers of the 10 provinces and 3 territories) met in Ottawa [to solidify a “Team Canada” approach](#) toward economic sovereignty. The discussions centred on accelerating strategic investments in [the Arctic and the North](#) to protect Canadian sovereignty. A major outcome was the launch of the Team Canada Trade Hub, designed to coordinate trade diversification efforts and double [non-](#)

[U.S. exports over the next decade](#). The ministers also committed to streamlining project approvals under a “[one project, one review](#)” principle to fast-track major nation-building infrastructure. During the First Ministers’ meeting, Canada reaffirmed its “[unwavering commitment](#)” to its NATO Allies amidst an increasingly unstable global security environment. The joint statement emphasized that protecting the Arctic is no longer just a territorial issue but a collective NATO security imperative, leading to new agreements to accelerate military and technology investments in the Far North.

## INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS

- In a major step toward normalising ties, [India officially added Canada back](#) to its expanded e-Visa scheme. Effective January 6, Canadian passport holders can apply for Indian visas entirely online with a 72-hour processing window. This move marks the end of the restrictive visa era that began in late 2023. The restoration is aimed at [facilitating the “living bridge”](#) of the 1.8 million-strong Indian diaspora and streamlining travel for Canadian executives in the tech and clean-energy sectors.

- During India Energy Week in Goa, India and Canada signed a landmark Joint Statement on Energy Cooperation. Canadian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Tim Hodgson met with his Indian counterparts, Hardeep Singh Puri and Piyush Goyal, [to re-launch the India–Canada Ministerial Energy Dialogue](#) (CIMED). The agreement focuses on securing long-term supplies of Canadian LNG, LPG, and uranium for India, while

exploring Indian investment in Canadian critical mineral projects. [This “investment-first” logic signals](#) a shift away from recent political friction.

- Indian High Commissioner to Canada, Dinesh Patnaik, confirmed that [Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney](#) is set to visit India in early 2026. Speaking on CBC’s Power & Politics, Patnaik noted that the visit - the first by a Canadian PM in years- is aimed at diversifying Canada’s trade partners in the face of high U.S. tariffs. The visit is expected to focus on restarting negotiations for [an Early Progress Trade Agreement](#) (EPTA) and eventually a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to double bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030.

## DIASPORA NEWS

- While Canada slashed overall international student admissions by 7% for 2026, a new [“Graduate-level Exemption”](#) has provided a silver lining for Indian researchers. As of January 1, Indian students enrolled in Master’s and PhD programs at public institutions no longer require a Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL). This allows for expedited permit processing- sometimes as fast as two weeks- and exempts higher-degree seekers from the national student cap, signalling Canada’s pivot toward attracting [high-skilled Indian talent](#) over undergraduate volumes.

- Throughout January 2026, Tamil Heritage [Month](#) was formally recognized across Canada, beginning 1 January with a congratulatory message from Marc Miller,

Canada’s Minister of Identity and Culture. The statement celebrated the Tamil diaspora - one of Canada’s largest outside Asia- for its cultural, economic, and social contributions. It highlighted the role of Tamil Canadians in arts, entrepreneurship, education, and public life, reinforcing the country’s commitment to multiculturalism. Officials also acknowledged challenges like persistent racism and discrimination, reiterating government pledges to promote inclusion under Canada’s anti-racism strategy. Tamil community organizations across Ontario, Quebec, and other provinces held cultural and heritage events throughout the month, strengthening cultural identity and cross-community engagement.

Canada is home to roughly 240,000 people of Tamil origin, making up about 0.7% of the national population, according to the 2021 Canadian census. Of these, about 64% are of Sri Lankan Tamil [origin](#).