

US & CANADA
Newsletter

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US POLITICS

- Lawmakers in both chambers advanced several targeted artificial-intelligence security bills. These included the China FIREWALL Act of 2026 which would bar Chinese-developed foundational AI models from federal government devices and IT procurement, and the CISA Securing AI Task Force Act. Prompted partly by October disclosures of autonomous AI agents being misused across state voter databases and federal portals, the bills seek to establish formal oversight mechanisms and liability standards for frontier AI models.

- President Trump signed an order waiving nearly all Russia-related provisions of the Lindsey O. Graham sanctions law, just two days before new penalties were due to take effect. Signed in September, the law would have imposed tariffs of up to 100% on top buyers of Russian oil and gas, sanctions on foreign banks dealing with Russian state banks, and limits on Russian sovereign debt. The White House said enforcement would impede peace negotiations. Republican Senator Thom Tillis called the move "unconscionable"; Senator John Cornyn said Graham would be appalled; and Chuck Schumer denounced a "deal with the devil." Zelenskyy said the move helped only Russia, while Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev called it historic. The waivers remain in place until the president or secretary of state decides otherwise.

US-INDIA RELATIONS

- After meeting Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in Milwaukee, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said an agreement was in its final stretch but not imminent. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said talks had hit a plateau with little scope for concessions. Goyal said that ties would continue to strengthen across trade, defence and technology whatever political changes occur. Ahead of his Mumbai visit, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington was very close to finalising a deal. Even so, a legal tracker found no signed text, tariff schedule or entry-into-force date as of Oct 12. The 18% rate announced in the February framework was never applied. Most Indian goods instead pay a 10% Section 301 duty in force since July 24.

- At a White House event attended by Vice President JD Vance, Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling announced that the department would stop accepting or processing PERM labour-certification applications from eight employers. They are Microsoft, Adobe, Cognizant, Infosys, TCS, Wipro, HCLTech and Capgemini. PERM is the first step in most EB-2 and EB-3 employer-sponsored green cards. Cognizant had been suspended on Sept 9, while Microsoft and Adobe were reportedly named amid multiple federal investigations. The freeze does not cancel existing green cards or H-1B visas. TCS, Infosys and Wipro said the impact would be minimal. Wipro had 523 PERM approvals in fiscal 2025, TCS had 513 and HCLTech 393, while Infosys had no recorded cases since 2022. Indians hold roughly 70–75% of H-1B visas.

- Rubio visited India after Uzbekistan, arriving in Mumbai on Oct 20 along with Ambassador Sergio Gor and a business delegation. He held talks with Jaishankar and attended a reception marking the 250th anniversary of American independence. On Oct 21, Rubio toured Reliance's Jamnagar refinery, calling India a "refining superpower." India is now the second-largest buyer of Venezuelan heavy crude, much of which is processed at Jamnagar.

DIASPORA NEWS

- The Department of Homeland Security published a proposed rule that would charge universities $70,000 before they could recommend a student for first-time Optional Practical Training (OPT). Subsequent OPT, including the 24-month STEM extension, would cost $30,000. The comment period closed on Nov 9, and the rule would take effect 60 days after finalisation. Universities have advised students to keep following current rules. An October explainer noted that federal courts had blocked two earlier measures, a four-year cap on F-1 stays and the $100,000 H-1B fee. A Massachusetts court halted the F-1 rule on Sept 14, and the government has appealed. Because OPT is the key bridge from study to work visas, Indian students are among the most exposed. Interview-waiver categories were also narrowed from Oct 1, 2025.

- Media profiles tracked a wide slate of Indian-American candidates. Democrat Pooja Sethi sought to become the first Indian-American and first Hindu elected to the Texas Legislature. Pia Dandiya ran in Florida's competitive 22nd district. Amish Shah ran in Arizona's 1st, which Inside Elections shifted on Oct 15 from toss-up to tilt-Democrat. Saritha Komatireddy, a Republican, challenged New York Attorney General Letitia James and trailed in both a Siena poll and her campaign's own poll. Nithya Raman challenged Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. Incumbents Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal, Ami Bera and Suhas Subramanyam sought re-election. Krishnamoorthi and Shri Thanedar had lost their primaries.

- "Diwali at Times Square" drew thousands on Oct 25, with India's Consul General Binay Pradhan in attendance. Organised annually since 2013 by Sammaan For All, the event included a bazaar and a gala honouring diaspora leaders. Aroon Shivdasani received the Sammaan Award. On Oct 29, North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong hosted the first Diwali at the Governor's Residence in Bismarck, lighting the diya with community members. Armstrong praised Indian-Americans' contributions to healthcare, business and community life, saying diversity was the state's strength. He also highlighted trade opportunities in pulses and lentils.

- Palatine police arrested 19-year-old Alexandros Paporakis on Oct 11 after a co-worker reported threatening messages and an eight-page manifesto. Police said the target was a Hindu temple near Aurora, and the attack was called off when the suspect's rifle jammed. Officers found an AR-style rifle, 300 rounds, body armor, a gas can, and items with Nazi symbols and anti-Indian slurs. Paporakis was charged with making a terrorist threat and unlawful rifle possession. The date coincided with the start of a nine-day Hindu festival, in which Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi was among those attending. India's foreign ministry and Ambassador Vinay Kwatra called the plot disturbing. Krishnamoorthi urged the FBI to treat it as a federal hate crime.

CANADA POLITICS

- The sovereigntist Parti Québécois won Quebec's provincial election, making leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon became premier-designate. The party fell five seats short of the 64 needed for a majority. In his victory speech, Plamondon said Francophones' fight to protect their language and culture will succeed once they have their own country. He has also pledged no referendum while Trump is US president. Experts noted that a referendum question must pass the National Assembly,

where he lacks the votes to do. Carney congratulated him, saying a stronger Quebec is at the heart of building a stronger Canada. Polling suggested about 70% of Quebecers opposed independence as of Oct 4. Plamondon had opposed Carney's dollar-for-dollar retaliation against US tariffs, and the PQ also opposes the proposed Toronto-Quebec City high-speed rail line, so friction with Ottawa is therefore expected.

- On Oct 23, Trump signed a proclamation revising the scope of the 50% Section 338 tariffs on Canadian goods, effective Oct 30. Plywood, some paper products, certain machinery and refrigeration equipment, and some packing crates were removed from the list. Customs guidance said 100 more tariff classifications were added, including valves, carpets and waste products. The White House said Canada walked away from a near-final deal and chose to retaliate. Canada's August 22 response matched the US tariffs dollar for dollar, with counter-tariffs on US goods covering $27.6 billion. Prime Minister Carney said then that Washington asked too much and offered too little.

- Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne tabled a ways and means motion on Oct 22, with the budget scheduled for Nov 5. On Oct 27, the Conservatives used a supply day to demand that Carney testify on debt costs. They said interest payments had more than doubled since 2021 and now exceeded the Canada Health Transfer. The Parliamentary Budget Officer warned on Oct 20 that debt is growing at twice the pace of the deficit. Liberal MP Kevin Lamoureux countered that Canada has the G7's strongest fiscal position. The government holds a majority, so the motion was not a confidence matter. Champagne said the government would provide a few details on major policies such as the Canada Strong Fund before the budget.

INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS

- Foreign Minister Anita Anand visited India on Oct 13–14, and met with Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. She said Canada aimed to double its non-US trade over the next decade and seal a comprehensive India trade pact by year-end. Modi is expected to visit Canada in December. On Oct 27, Canada and the UAE signed a comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

- India and Canada completed the fifth round of negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in Ottawa. It covered market access for goods and services, investment, rules of origin, intellectual property and trade remedies. The talks follow the Terms of Reference that Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu signed on March 2, in the presence of both prime ministers. Both sides have committed to concluding by the end of 2026, and a sixth round was expected in New Delhi in early November. The stated goal is to double trade to C$70 billion by 2030, from about C$30.4 billion in 2025. Analysts note that agriculture, sanitary rules and Canada's refusal to open supply-managed dairy, poultry and eggs remain hard bargains.

- India and Canada held a national security adviser-level dialogue in New Delhi, with a joint press release dated Oct 6. It was reportedly the third such dialogue since September 2025. The talks form part of rebuilding security and law-enforcement cooperation after Canada's 2023 allegation of Indian links to the

killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India has rejected that charge.

- Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu led nearly 300 business delegates on visits to Mumbai and Bengaluru. The delegation spanned aerospace, clean technology, energy, IT and agri-food sectors. According to Canadian government fact sheets cited by India's World, the mission resulted in 34 commercial agreements worth nearly C$300 million. Sidhu met Goyal and said the "energy, focus and momentum" were in place to conclude CEPA. He described market diversification as Canada's "Plan A" and noted Canada had just concluded a UAE deal in a record 47 days. He told CBC that India wants Canadian exports from potash to new technology, while Canada wants lower Indian tariffs on some goods. The mission builds on a C$2.6 billion Cameco uranium supply deal signed in March for 2027–2035.

DIASPORA NEWS

- The Conservatives won a majority in British Columbia's snap election, ending the NDP's tenure. Interim leader Lorne Doerkson was set to become premier, leading the province's first Conservative government in nearly a century. David Eby said he would step down as NDP leader but retain his Vancouver-Point Grey seat. Fifteen Punjabi-origin candidates won—12 Conservatives and three NDP members—exceeding the 14 elected in 2024. Conservative Harman Bhangu retained Langley-Abbotsford. Several contests in Surrey and the Fraser Valley featured Indo-Canadian candidates from both parties. Reported totals differ; the figure of 15 appeared in only one source and should therefore be treated as provisional.

- Canada's immigration policy developments in October brought renewed attention to the prospects of Indian temporary foreign workers seeking permanent residency. The government announced plans to fast-track permanent residency for up to 33,000 temporary workers, with Canadian work experience and regional settlement emerging as important considerations. The initiative is particularly relevant to Indian nationals, who constitute a significant proportion of Canada's temporary foreign-worker and international graduate populations. The proposed pathway reflects Ottawa's attempt to manage immigration levels while retaining workers already contributing to the Canadian economy. For the Indian diaspora, the announcement is significant because it could provide greater settlement certainty to eligible workers and families, although eligibility will depend on the final programme requirements.

- Canada's revised Express Entry framework is expected to benefit skilled professionals, particularly doctors, engineers and technology-sector workers, including Indian nationals. The changes, scheduled to take effect from 3 November 2026, provide additional consideration for candidates with relevant professional experience and job offers in high-wage occupations. Indian professionals have historically represented an important segment of Canada's skilled immigrant population, particularly in healthcare, engineering and information technology. The revised framework could strengthen the position of qualified Indian applicants seeking permanent residency and encourage greater recruitment of internationally trained professionals. However, the practical benefits will depend on individual qualifications, Canadian work experience and the specific selection criteria applied under the revised immigration system.