

How the US elects its president

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You vote for a candidate and the candidate with the most votes wins. It, however, does not work like that in the US. There the electoral college decides the winner.

Each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia has electoral votes equal to the number of representatives it has in the Senate and the House of Representatives, which depends on the population of the state. Big states have more representatives -- California has 54 electoral votes.

With the exception of Nebraska and Maine, if a candidate wins a state, he or she gets all the electoral votes the state has. This makes it imperative for a candidate to win states rather than getting the most votes.

Nebraska and Maine split their electoral votes. They give one electoral vote each to the winner of each of the congressional districts in them and the rest to the state's popular vote winner.

With 538 electoral votes on offer, a candidate needs half of this plus one -- 270 -- to start choosing the curtains for the White House.

To mention a few examples, Hillary Clinton in 2016 beat Donald Trump by 2,868,686 votes, but it did not matter since she got only 227 electoral votes to Trump's 304.

Perhaps the "worst victim" of this system in living memory is former vice-president Al Gore.

Gore had beaten George W Bush by 5,438,995 votes in the 2000 election, but he had lost Florida by just 537 votes.

Bush winning Florida was all that mattered. It gave him 271 electoral votes to Gore's 266.

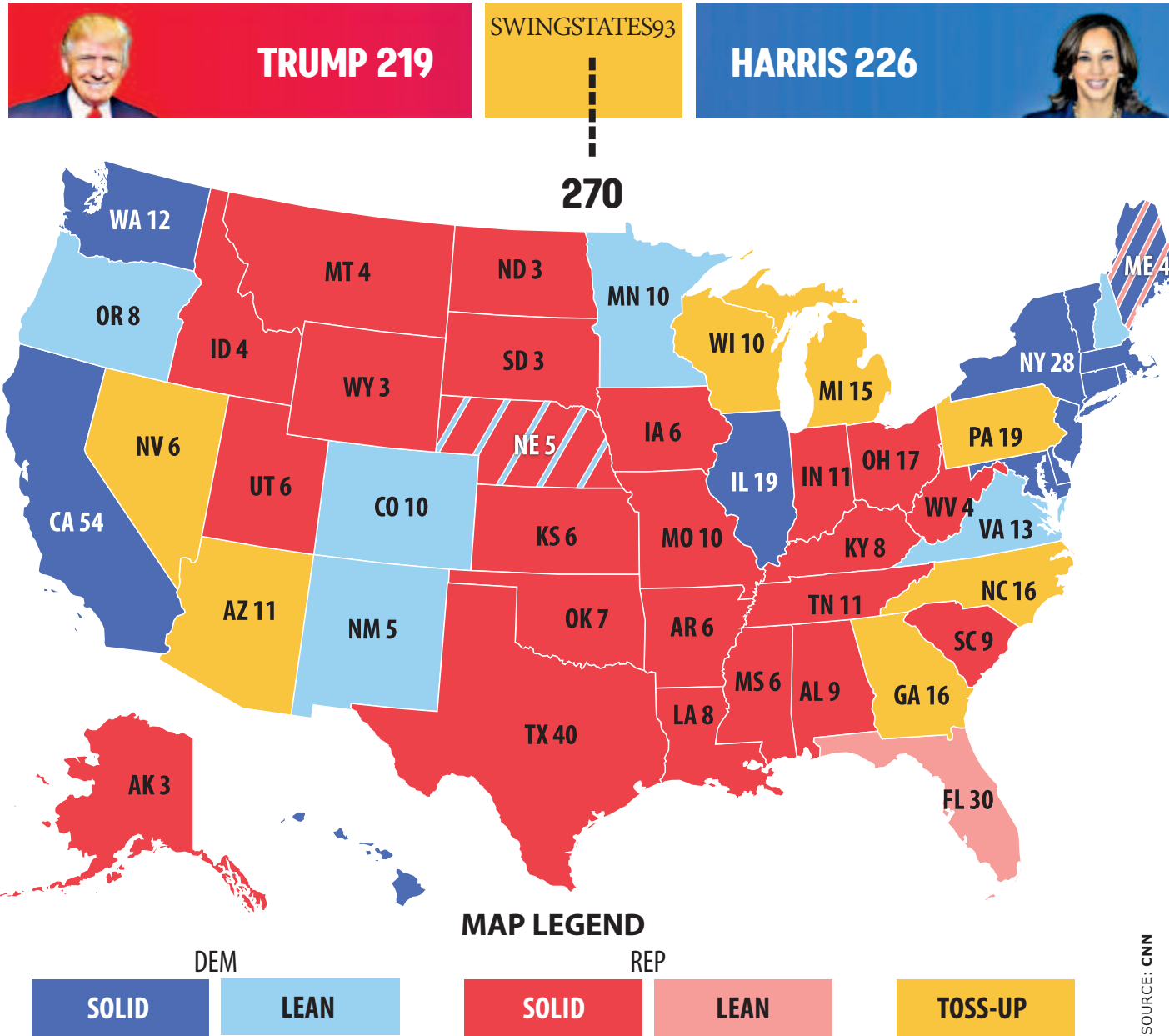
Traditionally, California, with 54 electoral votes, and New York, with 28, go for democrats (blue). Texas, with 40 electoral votes, along with some smaller states like Oklahoma, with seven; Alabama, with nine; and Kentucky, with eight, usually go republican (red).

What a candidate needs to do is sure up his or her base states

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ROAD TO 270 ACCORDING TO OPINION POLLS



Bangla will be on New York City's ballot papers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

In today's US elections, New York City ballots will feature Bangla, making it one of the four languages available alongside English for voters.

"We are required to service four other languages besides English. They are Chinese, Spanish, Korean and Bengali as the Asian languages," said Micheal J Ryan, executive director, Board of Elections, NYC.

New York City is legally obligated to support language access for diverse communities at certain polling sites.

The inclusion of Bangla on ballots is part of a broader commitment to address language barriers, initiated by a 2013 legal settlement following a lawsuit on language accessibility.

The lawsuit highlighted the need for language support in areas with significant South Asian populations, particularly in Queens, where Bangla was first introduced on ballots.

The city's effort aligned with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, ensuring comprehensive language assistance for minority communities.

Myanmar junta chief to visit China for first time since coup

AFP, Beijing

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing will travel to key ally China this week, both countries said yesterday, in his first known trip there since seizing power in a 2021 coup.

China is a major ally and arms supplier of the junta and analysts say Beijing also maintains ties with Myanmar ethnic armed groups which hold territory along its border.

Some of those groups have seized territory from the junta in northern Shan state, disrupting traffic along a vital trade highway to China.

Min Aung Hlaing will travel to the southwestern city of Kunming tomorrow to attend a two-day summit of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) -- a group including China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

A statement from the Myanmar junta yesterday said Min Aung Hlaing "will meet and discuss with government officials of the People's Republic of China on the friendship between the governments and people of the two countries, to develop and strengthen economic and multi-sectoral cooperation".

The trip comes as Myanmar's military struggles to quell armed resistance from various ethnic minority armed groups and "People's Defence Forces" which rose up to oppose its power grab.

China also confirmed that the leader of Myanmar would attend the summit.

US to make history either way

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supporters. "If we get everybody out and vote, there's not a thing they can do."

Harris said she was "feeling good" and gave a thumbs-up as she boarded her plane to her first event of the day in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Republican Trump, a convicted felon, has promised a "landslide" as he seeks a sensational return to the White House, while Democrat Harris said "momentum" was on the side of her bid to be America's first woman president.

But the polls suggest a deadlock nationally, and also in the seven swing states where the winner is expected to be decided.

The world is anxiously watching as the outcome is set to have major implications for conflicts in the Middle East and Russia's war in Ukraine, and for tackling climate change, which Trump has called a hoax.

US democracy could also be tested as Trump is expected to reject the result if he loses, raising the prospect of political chaos, civil unrest and violence.

After many dramatic twists, including two bids to kill Trump and Harris's shock late entrance, the race is coming down to Pennsylvania, the most fought-over battleground state.

Trump and Harris will hold duelling rallies in the industrial city of Pittsburgh, highlighting how Pennsylvania is the single biggest swing state prize under the US Electoral College system.

Harris will spend the whole day campaigning in the state, culminating in a rally in Philadelphia featuring singer Lady Gaga. Trump will travel from North Carolina to Pennsylvania and then Michigan.

Both sides say they are encouraged

by early turnout, with over 78 million people having voted already, around half of the total number of ballots cast in 2020.

The closeness of the 2024 White House race reflects a divided United States, as it chooses between two candidates whose visions could scarcely be more different.

Former president Trump has doubled down on his dark and violent rhetoric in his pursuit of a second term which would make him the first convicted felon and the oldest major party candidate ever elected.

Vice President Harris, 60, has meanwhile made an astonishing rise to the top of the Democratic ticket after President Joe Biden dropped out of the race in July.

Harris is hoping abortion is a key issue that can hurt Trump, especially with woman voters, while Trump has focused on migrants and the economy and dubbed political opponents the "enemy from within."

Trump said this weekend that he "shouldn't have left" the White House after he lost his 2020 reelection bid to Biden, and then tried to overturn the results, culminating in the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol.

After months of building tensions, the states of Oregon, Nevada and Washington, have activated the National Guard in case of trouble.

Harris, after some more encouraging recent polls, told a noisy rally in Michigan on Sunday that "we have momentum -- it's on our side."

Harris also courted the large Arab-American community in Michigan that has denounced the US handling of the Israel-Hamas war, saying she would do "everything in my power to end the war in Gaza."

Pennsylvania holds the key

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If every state aside from the battlegrounds votes as expected, that would give Vice President Harris 226 electoral votes and Trump 219. The swing states have 93 votes.

Among those seven battlegrounds, Pennsylvania, the most populous and with 19 electoral votes, stands out as the most likely state to determine whether Kamala Harris or Donald Trump is the next president.

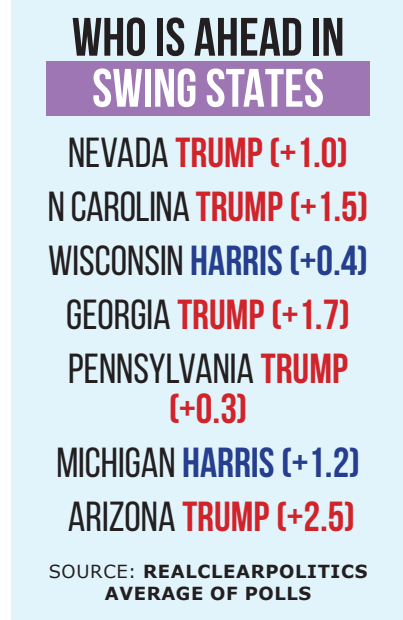
Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin had served as a "blue wall" for Democratic candidates for a generation. But, in 2016, Trump narrowly carried all three, fueling his upset victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Four years later, Joe Biden won the presidency after reclaiming Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania for Democrats, while also notching surprising victories in Georgia and Arizona, two states that had historically voted Republican.

WHY IS PENNSYLVANIA SO IMPORTANT?

The simplest answer is that the state has 19 electoral votes, more than any other battleground. According to some projections, the candidate who wins Pennsylvania has upwards of a 90 percent chance of winning the White House.

If Harris loses Pennsylvania, she would need to carry either North



Carolina or Georgia -- two states that have voted Democratic a total of three times in the last four decades -- to have any chance of prevailing.

Conversely, if Trump loses Pennsylvania, he would need to win either Wisconsin or Michigan, which have only voted for a Republican once since the 1980s -- for Trump eight years ago.

Trump win may shift the focus

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in the reform agenda. "That type of emphasis on relationship will not be of particular interest if Trump comes to power," he told The Daily Star.

Trump's track record as president previously suggests he sees relations with other countries as relatively transactional.

"I don't think he will be interested in framing a relationship around the US helping rebuild Bangladesh," Kugelman said.

If Trump wins, he will have a friendly and workable relationship with Bangladesh, but the lance would be a bit narrow. It will focus on great power competition and ensure that Bangladesh does not become dependent on China.

"Trump will have a commercial relationship as far as it ensures US interests. He would continue that Bangladesh exports to the US, but he may move away from the assistance for reforms that the current administration is providing."

Bangladesh exports more than \$10 billion worth of products in a year.

Trump would be keener on trade

relations than on values including human rights, democracy and labour rights, Kugelman added.

Previous track record suggest that Trump is anti-immigrant and if he implements the same policy as he pledged to the voters, the Bangladeshis, alongside other immigrants, living there without proper documents will face consequences, said M Humayun Kabir, a former Bangladesh ambassador to the US.

"This may negatively affect the Bangladeshis," he told the correspondent.

The US is a top destination for higher studies for Bangladeshi youths.

In the 2022-23 academic year, nearly 14,000 Bangladeshis went to the US for studies.

The rising trend may be reversed if there's a strict immigration policy under the next presidency, he added.

The US has been the number one donor for the Rohingya crisis, said Kabir, also the president of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

As Trump wants to reduce global humanitarian support, the Rohingya funding too may be affected if he is

elected.

More importantly, Trump does not like the idea of climate change, which is the opposite of the Biden administration.

"Thus, Bangladesh being at the forefront of climate change could see reduced funding for climate actions. This will also create a crisis globally."

Human rights and democracy are core foreign policy agendas for the US -- whoever is president there.

Therefore, if Bangladesh goes the right way and improves its governance and human rights situation, not only the US, but other countries will be comfortable working with the authorities here. Foreign companies will also be coming here.

Asked if Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' friendship with some of the top Democrats will have any implications under the Trump administration, Kabir said the US foreign policy is based on state relations rather than personal friendships.

In the case of the victory of Kamal Harris, the US-Bangladesh relations will continue as it is now.

"It can even get better," Kabir added.

Reforms only after a strong consensus

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said the reforms should be done with an aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

"We must work together with the new generation, prioritise the aspirations of the people to build a democratic, just, and equitable Bangladesh. Our commitment is to ensure a nation free from discrimination, where no one faces inequality based on gender, religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, or any other identity. All constitutional reforms must be made with this objective in mind."

He said people must remain vigilant about how the constitution is being interpreted, whether it is being interpreted correctly or misinterpreted.

The constitution is a document that is interpreted by people. Even the court interprets it, and the court can also make mistakes. The chief justice himself may err, he said.

Addressing the event, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik criticised frequent changes in the form of the government.

"We formed 11 different types of governments in 52 years. Problems may arise in running a state, but the way we changed the form of the government is like changing a car because a tyre got punctured," he said.

Malik said it was a manifestation of the nation's immaturity regarding state operations.

"If we face any issue, we seek a solution only by changing the form of government. No one in the world does that, but it has become ingrained in us. And we think it is the only solution," he said.

Eminent historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain said the current government has no right to amend the constitution since it was not elected. This government can only recommend amendments that have to be made by an elected government.

"There is no provision for an interim government in the constitution. We got an unelected government after ousting the autocratic regime."

The court validated the current government under the doctrine of necessity.

Prof Anwar alleged that although

the supreme court is the custodian of the constitution, it failed to play its role. "The court followed the government's order and has been doing so."

He opined that prime ministers should not serve more than two terms.

Speaking at the programme, Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon said the debate over whether to amend the constitution or write a new one was dividing the nation.

"If any amendment is made or the constitution is rewritten, who will approve it? The last parliament? That's not possible. The future parliament? What if it does not approve it? So, it'll only widen the split," he said.

He also said a consensus should be reached through discussions with political parties that the amendments will be made when they are voted to power.

Among others, Bangladesh Democratic Lawyers' Association President Subrata Chowdhury, General Secretary Zahidul Bari, senior lawyer Mohiuddin Abdul Kader, and SMA Sabur spoke at the programme.

Monnujan's nephew killed

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beating. At one stage, members of the joint forces rescued him and took him to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Asked about the motive behind the beating, the police officer said, "Primarily, we think it was due to pent-up public anger over various activities of the previous government. We will know more after investigation."

According to law enforcement sources, an anti-narcotics drive was conducted in the area from early morning to 10:00am yesterday.

Sensing the presence of law

enforcers, Rupam tried to escape. Then locals caught him and beat him up. Later, members of joint forces rescued him and took him to KMCH.

The body was kept at the KMC morgue.

Police are yet to file a case in this regard.

According to police sources, there are four cases against Rupam.

On August 24, 2022, the narcotics control department arrested him with 18 yaba pills in Daulatpur.

On December 7, 2014, two people including Rupam were arrested by Rab with 395 yaba pills from Panigati village of Digholia upazila.

Iran slams US deployment of B-52 bombers in region

AFP, Tehran

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei yesterday criticised what he called the United States' "destabilising presence" after the deployment of B-52 bombers in the region.

"We have always believed that the presence of America in the region is a destabilising presence," said Baghaei told a news conference in response to a question about the deployment, adding that it "will not deter (Iran's) resolve to defend itself".