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Sonya Christian To Head **CA Community Colleges**

India-West Staff Reporter

SACRAMENTO, CA - The California Community Colleges Board of Governors has announced the unanimous selection of Kern Community College District Chancellor Sonya Christian as the next permanent chancellor to lead the largest and most diverse system of public higher education in the nation.

The announcement comes following an extensive and nationwide search over the past seven months. Christian is a historic choice, becoming the first woman and the first person of South Asian heritage to be appointed as permanent chancellor.

"Dr. Christian is one of our nation's most dynamic college leaders, with a demonstrated record of collaboration and results



Dr. Christian is the first woman Chancellor of CA's community college system.

in the Central Valley," said Governor Gavin Newsom. "She understands what is needed to deliver on record levels of higher education investment to make real improvements

MIT Prof. Hari Balakrishnan Wins 2023 Marconi Prize



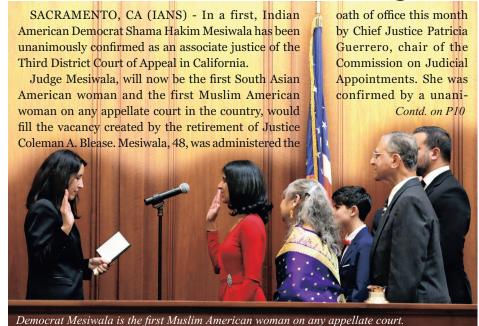
Professor Hari Balakrishnan.

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - Indian American Professor Hari Balakrishnan has been awarded the 2023 Marconi prize for his fundamental discoveries in wired and wireless networking, mobile sensing, and distributed systems.

Balakrishnan is the Fujitsu Professor in MIT's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and a principal investigator in the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.

"Hari's unique contributions have shaped the course of research and discovery in multiple fields, saved lives, and enabled users to have better experiences with network-based services," Vint Cerf, chair of the Marconi Society and 1998 Marconi Fellow, said. "His focus on scientific excellence that creates positive impact at scale, along with his humanitarian contributions, Contd. on P10

Shama Hakim Mesiwala Sworn In As CA Judge



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With Kal Penn Emceeing, Indian American Couple Gets Married In Taco Bell's Metaverse

By BHARTTI KUMAR

PACIFICA, CA - Every Indian American couple plans their wedding with bits of tradition fitted into contemporary themes and venues. They want it to be a fairy tale event.

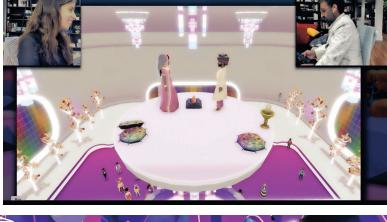
Venture capitalist Sheel Mohnot and attorney Amruta Godbole of San Francisco, CA had their own unique version on February 24. They had an unconventional wedding and reception at 'Decentraland', a virtual reality browser platform.

Selected from 300 couples who had applied to the Taco Bell metaverse wedding contest, the duo customized their space. Mega lovers of Mexican food and Taco Bell fare, the vegetarian duo made the wedding day, their own.

The ceremony took place at the oceanfront location of the 'Pacifica' restaurant, considered to be the most beautiful property of the fast food chain and where the two had met on one of their first dates.

Actor Kal Penn said he was honored to emcee and officiate at the wedding. His avatar had a striking red jacket and a hat with tacos all around. The bride was in a soft





drew excitement, and The metaverse gala

pink lehenga while the groom wore a traditional sherwani, riding in on a virtual elephant.

Under a mandap and a virtual 'agni' the Bay area-based couple pledged their love with the typical inside jokes and promises. Godbole averred in her speech that it was worth going through the formalities of downloading and filling forms to have a novel special event.

There were one-minute speeches from the groom's brother Rishi, and the bride's sister Sonia. Friend Tyler and aunt Seema shared their fond sentiments and raised the virtual glasses to toast.

The cinnamon cake tower stood out. The Taco bell bouquet toss the nacho fountain attracted the virtual avatars who ran for it like it was a spa. Tall Taco trees were lit up with colorful lanterns.

reception had all the Taco Bell fare such as tacos, quesadillas and nachos set up on tables as adornments. The first dance by the

couple was followed by more entertainment from the DJ.

Avatars who participated in the festivities, arrived in Indian outfits, with most men in white jackets printed with Taco Bell food items and some in various sauce-like packets as their shirts.

Stream chats were lit with guests asking if it was a legit and real wedding. Answer: yes. Many seemed enthralled, calling it 'super cool.'

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OPINION

<u>In Peril</u>

Technology Being Exploited To Undermine Democracy

By ASAD MIRZA

A recent disconcerting report based on an investigation carried out by 30 global media outlets, including the Guardian and DeSpiegel, claims to have exposed a team of freelance units based in Israel, which disrupt elections and manipulate public opinion using disinformation campaigns.

Undercover reporters recorded a group of covert cyber influence specialists as they pitched their services for seeking fresh business, which involve using disinformation campaigns, false intelligence, hacks, and blackmail to promote their client's interests. The group, which calls itself 'Team Jorge', claims to have worked on dozens of presidential elections around the world and charges multimillion-dollar fees.

Undercover journalists who carried out the investigation included Gur Meggido (The Marker), Frederic Metezeau (Radio France), and Omer Benjakob (Haaretz).

The journalists were part of a collaborative investigation called 'Story Killers', which was coordinated by 'Forbidden Stories' -- an international consortium of investigative journalists that pursue the work of journalists who have been killed or work under threat.

As reported, the covert units or contractors, used the pseudonym 'Team Jorge' headed by Tal Hanan, who previously worked as an Israeli special force's operative, and was apparently caught in an undercover sting operation by the journalists posing as potential clients.

However, Tal Hanan denies any wrongdoing. But he allegedly told the reporters that his unit's services were available to intelligence agencies, political campaigns, and private companies and that many European, African, American as well as Central and South American clients had already used them around the globe.

Their modus operandi is said to involve creating thousands of fake social media profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, Gmail, Instagram, and YouTube. These fake accounts, which allegedly used profile pictures from real social media accounts, were also linked to credit cards and could be used to create thousands of bots that sent mass messages.

In one secretly filmed meeting quoted by the Guardian, Hanan is seen boasting that at present his team is now involved in one election in Africa, besides two other teams in Greece and the UAE. Boasting further, he said that his team has so far delivered



33 presidential-level campaigns globally, 27 of which were successful.

Hanan also reportedly boasted to the undercover reporters that he could hack the email and messenger services of election campaigners and send messages to their contacts designed to damage their campaign.

The investigators found that Team Jorge's tech toolbox included "a platform of influence" called

Advanced Impact Media Solutions or AIMS, which Hanan claims to have sold to the intelligence services of more than 10 countries. The AIMS software is designed to create convincing avatars for social media campaigns. Avatars, or bots, use stolen photos of real people, operate on any social media platform, and can be connected to functioning Amazon and Bitcoin accounts. They also appear to have a longstanding presence online, including Gmail accounts and trite comments on celebrity YouTube videos, to give investigators the impression they are real people.

In this regard Hanan told reporters that they relied successfully on imitating human

Though nowadays most online accounts require phone number and email address verification to keep out bots like those

Their modus operandi is said to involve creating thousands of fake social media profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, Gmail, Instagram, and YouTube. These fake accounts, which allegedly used profile pictures from real social media accounts, were also linked to credit cards and could be used to create thousands of bots that sent mass messages.

> Keeping abreast of social media platforms checks, AIMS relied on residential proxies to reroute internet traffic from bots through peoples' homes, so it appeared authentic, to avoid detection and shutdowns by social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. This made it difficult for social media platforms to identify a coordinated disinformation campaign.

deployed by AIMS.

But to overcome that

there are websites

available, which have

been set up specifi-

cally to allow one-off

SMS-verification ser-

vices, for 50 cents or

less. Many accounts

such as Gmail and

WhatsApp --- can be

registered with "veri-

fied" phone numbers.

Apparently, Team

Jorge used a service

called SMSpva.com

for phone number

verifications.

Verification and analysis of the recorded conversations by reporting partners Le Monde and the Guardian identified clusters of avatars, including those seen in Hanan's pitch presentations, that appeared to have been used for coordinated Twitter campaigns. Reporters found over 1,700 Twitter accounts connected to 21 AIMS-related campaigns, whose networks had produced tens of thousands of tweets.

In December last, during an in-person meeting with undercover reporters, Team Jorge showed off a new capability of AIMS: Artificial intelligence tools to generate fake news using specified key words, tone, and topic.

The identities of Team Jorge members were shrouded in secrecy, but reporters managed to piece together some background information on some members of the clandestine group. Some of it lines up with claims Team Jorge made about team members in calls with journalists.

One team member described his other colleagues as former senior information officers, former senior financial information and warfare experts, and psychological warfare specialists, all with intelligence services background.

Hanan indicated that he had orchestrated lobbying operations in the US despite not registering as a "foreign agent", as required by law. He said he worked via consultants and companies that are already registered and told reporters he had recently set up a public relations firm called Axiomatics to promote Team Jorge with "existing lobby groups".

During calls with undercover reporters, Team Jorge went into specifics about the technology they say the group uses to swing elections. They added that they have six offices and employ at least 100 people, emphasizing that they draw on the backgrounds of colleagues with experience in the intelligence services. This pushes Team Jorge's activities far beyond the realm of public relations strategies that are commonly deployed in elections. As far as the financial pickings are concerned, Team Jorge told the reporters they would accept payments in a variety of currencies, including crypto currencies such as Bitcoin, or cash. He said he would charge between 6 million euros and 15 million euros for interference in elections.

The information gleaned by the investigative reporters points to one rather disconcerting fact, that there are people out there and they would be there in future too, who would always be ready to interfere in other country's internal affairs and ready to subterfuge the democratic institutions. But the bigger question is shall we just ignore them calling it scaling another frontier in the technology advancement or shall we start a campaign to ban such illegal and undesirable activities which may one day be able to destabilize the whole global democratic system?

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Fundraiser For Turkey, Syria Quake Survivors Raises \$165,522







India-West Staff Reporter

NORWALK, CA - A fundraiser for survivors of the Turkey and Syria earthquake was held on February 19, at the Sanatan Dharma Temple, here. Hosted by the Anekant Community Center, the event surpassed its initial goal, raising \$165,522.

It was possible with the support of large donors Tarsadia Foundation (\$51,000), MSI Charitable Trust (\$25,000), Anonymous from Atlanta (\$17,000), and from Wadher Family

Foundation, Aparigrah Foundation, Ashok & Madhu Patel of Dallas, Dr. Bharat Patel, Drs. Shubha and Sanjiv Jain, Chimanbhai Patel (\$5,000) each as well as several others who were moved by the plight of the victims.

ACC has already contributed \$5000 to Sight & Sketches a local nonprofit to assist with the transportation of survivors from rubble to safety and food; it has also donated 130 sleeping bags. ACC announced it was also working with the Diwaliben Trust in India to put together a consignment of

medicines and MSI was helping in its transportation from Mumbai to Turkey. It is also coordination with the Bidada Sarvodaya Trust to help survivors with prostheses.

The event highlighted the devastation in the quake region. Shrenik Shah made a presentation with photos, CNN images, and NBC news videos. The presentation by Sneha Anand of Chicago included a video showing the impact of MSI Charitable Trust in the community. Hassan Twiet, a teacher of Syrian heritage, discussed the concept

of humanity and expressed sincere thanks to the community for coming together at a time of dire need. Turkish Consul General Sinan Kuzum sent a message of gratitude and appreciation.

The event began with the Jain Navkar Mantra, and the Hindu Gayatri Mantra, a minute of silence for those who had lost their lives in the natural disaster and there were remarks by ACC board member Dr. Nitin Shah, Bhikhu Patel, Manu Shah and Mahesh Wadher. Food and a musical program was also featured.

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Karthik Subramaniam Wins National Geographic 'Pictures of The Year' Award

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) - Indian American Karthik Subramaniam, a software engineer based here, has won the 2023 National Geographic 'Pictures of the Year' award, beating over 5,000 entries.

Subramaniam's photo, which is titled 'Dance of the Eagles', shows a trio

of bald eagles battling for a spot on a branch in Alaska's Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, a press release by the magazine said.

He titled the image as a homage to a fictional dragon war in George R.R. Martin's novel, 'A Dance with Dragons'. "Wherever there's salmon there's going to be



The award winning picture.

chaos," Subramaniam told the magazine that this was his motto as he camped out near the shore of the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, waiting for action. The engineer-turned-hobbyist photographer said he stayed, watching as bald eagles swooped in and out of the fishing grounds in Haines, Alaska.

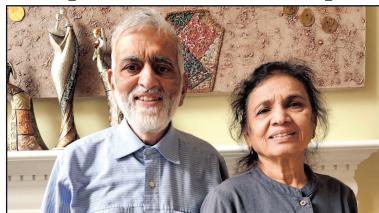
The area hosts the largest congregations of bald eagles in the world every fall, when around 3,000 arrive in time for the salmon run.

The photo was selected from nearly 5,000 entries across four categories: Nature, People, Places and Animals. Subra-

maniam has been photographing landscapes and his travels for years.

He started experimenting with wildlife photography in 2020, grounded by the pandemic in his San Francisco home. The photo will be featured in the May issue of National Geographic magazine.

Indian American Couple's Gift Helps GA College Set Up Jain Professorship



Donors Dr. Shailendra and Rajkumari Palvia.

India-West News Desk

MILLEDGEVILLE, GA - The Georgia College & State University here, has announced the establishment of the "S & R Palvia Endowed Veetraag Vigyaan Professorship in Jain Studies." Thanks to a generous gift of \$250,000 from Dr. Shailendra and Rajkumari Palvia, the endowed professorship will allow the Georgia College Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Liberal Studies (PALS), "to facilitate the infusion of Jain perspectives in courses like philosophy, religion, literature, history, and art," the university said.

Dr. Eric Tenbus, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences said, "The gift to endow a professorship in Jain Studies is a wonderful opportunity for Georgia College students to further explore the diverse religious cultures of the wider world and to learn about the similarities and differences between various religious traditions, all with the understanding that the world is becoming a smaller place and that we in higher education have an obligation to encourage our students to seek out knowledge and understanding from across the vastness of human civilization. That is at the core of a liberal arts education."

Jainism is an ancient religion, originating in India. Its three core

pillars are "Ahimsa," meaning nonviolence towards all living beings; "Anekantwad," invoking respect for all perspectives on any issue; and "Aparigraha," seeking satisfaction with limited possessions.

Dr. Sunita Manian, Chair of PALS said, "PALS already embodies the core tenets of Jainism in its courses: Anekantwad is the basis of our liberal arts commitment to embrace the study of various perspectives: domestic and global, contemporary and historic. Courses in Animal Ethics and Social Justice embody the philosophy of Ahimsa, as it applies to human and non-human animals. And Aparigraha is the foundation of courses in Environmental Ethics, Food Ethics, and Climate Change,"

The initial gift from the Palvia family is complemented by the commitment of an annual gift of \$10,000 from the Jain Community of America. The Endowed Professor will administer these funds to provide faculty development and student learning opportunities to faculty in PALS, the larger GCSU community and across the University System of Georgia. Opportunities will include on campus events, as well as faculty and student travel to India. In the next 3 years, the Jain Community of America will raise an additional gift to permanently fund the program, the university said.

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Nadim Junejo, HAB Bank Manager In LA, Passes Away

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA - Nadim Junejo, the branch manager of HAB Bank in downtown Los Angeles, passed away on January 27. Known to all for his kind and quiet demeanor, he had an unwavering belief in the good of humanity and wanted nothing more than to support his community, the family said. Pakistani American Nadim immigrated to America in the 80s, creating a home for himself and his family – at first in New York, and then in New Jersey. The family later moved to California where



they have resided since 2005. He worked at HAB bank for 25 years. Nadim is survived by his wife Samira, his daughter Serena, as well as his mother, siblings, nieces, and nephews all of whom miss him dearly.

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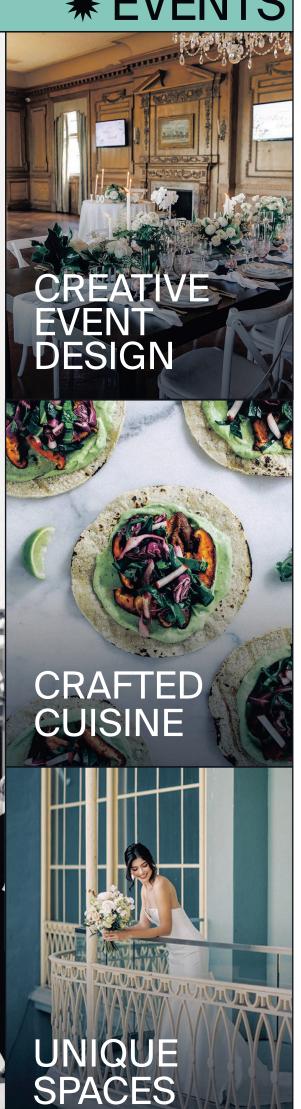


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Ajay Banga To Lead World Bank

Contd. from P.

announced last week that he would be leaving his post early.

Malpass caused a furor last September when he appeared to question the causes of climate change, leading to calls for his resignation from prominent climate activists, including former Vice President Al Gore. Malpass later apologized and clarified his remarks.

The Biden administration was prepared to seize upon his departure to encourage the World Bank to be more aggressive in using its lending facilities to fund projects to fight climate change. "Ajay Banga is uniquely equipped to lead the World Bank at this critical moment in history," Biden said in a statement.

"He has spent more than three decades building and managing successful, global companies that create jobs and bring investment to developing economies, and guiding organizations through periods of fundamental change," he added.

"As a renowned executive, Banga has led a global organization with nearly 20,000 employees, advocated for diversity and inclusion, and

delivered results," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. "His efforts have helped bring 500 million unbanked people into the digital economy, deploy private capital into climate solutions, and expand economic opportunity through the Partnership for Central America," she added.

"This guy is the right person, at the right place, at the right time," said David Beasley, head of the World Food Program and a former Republican Governor of South Carolina, adding, "He's a get-itdone kind of leader." By tradition, the US gets to nominate the head of the World Bank and European members reserve the right to pick the head of the International Monetary Fund. But leaders from the developing world have been questioning this arrangement and calling for a non-American to be selected as head of the World Bank. Other countries can still nominate their own candidates for the World Bank's board to consider. The US is the bank's largest shareholder.

In Banga, who's 63, born in Pune and the son of an Indian Army

officer, the Biden administration appears to be nodding to those concerns. "Raised in India, Ajay has a unique perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing developing countries, and how the World Bank can deliver on its ambitious agenda to reduce poverty and expand prosperity," Biden said.

The Biden administration had installed another Indian American. Gita Gopinath, as the number-two at the IMF in 2021. That position also historically goes to a US citizen.

During his international career, Banga has done everything from introducing Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken in India to managing Citigroup's overseas credit card operations. He took the top job at Mastercard in 2010 and left at the end of 2021. He is currently the vice-chairman at General Atlantic, a private equity firm.

The White House wants the World Bank to leverage public funds to attract more private investment for climate projects. It also wants to give the developing world more access to basic banking and lending services.

Dr. Sonya Christian

Contd. from P1

to the lived reality of our students. I look forward to continuing to partner with Dr. Christian to ensure our community colleges are engines of equity and opportunity."

"On behalf of the 1.8 million students at the California Community Colleges, our faculty, staff, and the Board of Governors, we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Sonya Christian as the newest chancellor," said Board of Governors President Amy M. Costa in a statement. "The California Community Colleges proudly serves as the first for millions of Californians--first-generation students, first post-secondary institution attended, and we are pleased to continue that tradition with our first woman to lead the system as permanent chancellor."

In July 2021, Christian was named the sixth chancellor of the Kern Community College District, where she implemented a call to action with a focus on advancing student success and closing achievement and equity gaps.

"I am honored to be selected to lead the most important system of higher education in the country and grateful to the Board of Governors for their confidence," Christian said. "We continue to face many challenges, but I truly believe our greatest challenges enable us to do our greatest work. We are called to design the most vibrant, resilient, and effective learning environment ever. We are called do this work at scale, not eventually, but now. And we will work with a shared vision that keeps students first."

Christian spearheaded a statewide coalition in 2015 that led to securing philanthropic funding for

makes him a perfect choice for the

The Marconi Prize, widely considered to be the top honor within

the field of communications technology, is given annually to "inno-

vators who have made significant

contributions to increasing digital inclusivity through the advance-

ment of information and commu-

Balakrishnan's research has fo-

cused on improving the reliability,

nications technology".

Marconi Prize," Cerf said.

the 20-college Guided Pathways demonstration project in California, leading to a \$150M state investment in Guided Pathways and broad adoption of the framework throughout the college system.

While at Kern Community College District, Christian led the charge to strengthen organizational effectiveness to better serve students, faculty, and staff.

Under her leadership, the Kern district established the California Renewable Energy Laboratory, an innovative coalition of public and private partners seeking to create a secure and stable energy future.

Christian started her career in higher education as a mathematics faculty and later as division chair, then dean of science, engineering, allied health and mathematics at Bakersfield College. She served as an administrator at Lane Community College in Oregon for several years before returning home to Kern Community College District in 2013 after being selected as the 10th president of Bakersfield College. Christian earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kerala in Kerala; her master of science in applied mathematics from the University of Southern California; and her doctorate from the University of California, Los Angeles.

She will begin her duties on June 1, 2023, and replaces Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley, who stepped down in August after leading the community college system for nearly six years..

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 116 colleges serving 1.8 million students per year.

MIT Prof. Wins 2023

Marconi Prize

Shama Hakim Mesiwala New CA Judge

Contd. from P1

mous vote of the three-member commission, which included Chief Justice Guerrero, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and Acting Presiding Justice Ronald B. Robie. She has served as a Sacramento County Superior Court judge since 2017 and was a commissioner there in 2017.

Mesiwala is the co-founder of the South Asian Bar Association of Sacramento and the president of the Schwartz/Levi Inn of Court. She served as the Americans with Disabilities judge for the Sacramento County Superior Court Hall of Justice and created the first Indian Child Welfare Act courtroom in Northern California. Armed with a Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, Davis School of Law, Mesiwala also teaches appellate advocacy as an adjunct professor in the same university.



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performance, and efficiency of computer systems, with special emphasis on networking, mobile computing, and distributed systems.

Contd. from P1

At present, his research focuses on networking, sensing, and perception for sensor-equipped mobile devices connected to edge and cloud services, and on designing architectures for more resilient networked systems.

His research in networking has led to better communication pro-

tocols for mobile devices communicating over the internet, such as the techniques he developed to understand and improve the performance of data transport over wireless networks.Between 1999 and 2004, Balakrishnan led the development of Cricket, an indoor location system using a novel approach to distance estimation using ultrasonic and radio signals.

Balakrishnan received his PhD in 1998 from the University of California at Berkeley's Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department, which named him a distinguished alumnus in 2021.

He also earned a B.Tech in 1993 from the Indian Institute of Technology at Madras, which named him a distinguished alumnus in 2013.

He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2015 and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2017.

Eagles Hire Sean Desai As Their Defensive Coordinator

India-West Staff Reporter

PHILADELPHIA, PA - Sean Desai has been named the next defensive coordinator for the Philadelphia Eagles, the team announced. He will replace Jonathan Gannon, who was hired as the head coach of the Arizona Cardinals two days after the Eagles' lost 38-35 in the recent Super Bowl.

"His overall knowledge of football and football IO is extremely high," Head Coach Nick Sirianni said of Desai. "Great detail. He's a really sharp coach. I'm excited that he's on our staff."

Desai served as the Seattle Seahawks' associate head coach-defense in 2022. The Seahawks reached



the playoffs as a Wild Card despite finishing second in the league in both

snaps and games started by rookies. Sirianni added that while the addi-

tion of Desai presents a mystery for opposing offenses to prepare for this upcoming season, he liked some of the similarities to what the team has done that have been successful. 2023 will be Desai's 11th season as a coach in the NFL. He started his coaching career at Temple (2007-10), where he was a graduate assistant for the defense and special teams while earning his doctorate in educational administration.

He entered the NFL ranks in 2013 as the quality control coachdefense for the Bears, working with the defensive backs/linebackers/ special teams. Desai was named Bears' safeties coach in 2019 and was promoted to defensive coordinator in 2021. As the son of

immigrants, Desai was the first Indian American coordinator in NFL history. Desai was the assistant director of football operations at the University of Miami in 2011 after spending five seasons at Temple University where he also served as an adjunct professor, teaching in the master's and doctoral programs in education administration.

He earned the nickname "Doc," because of his doctorate in educational administration, with an emphasis on higher education.

Desai has his undergraduate degree in philosophy and political science, with a minor in biology, from Boston University and a master's degree in higher and postsecondary education from Columbia University.

American Airlines Bans Arya Vohra For Urinating On Passenger

FORT WORTH, TX (IANS) -American Airlines has banned the Indian passenger, who had urinated on a fellow passenger while drunk on a New York-New Delhi flight. The accused, identified as 21-year-old Arya Vohra, a student at a US university, has been banned by the airline. The airline said in a statement that it will not allow him on board in the future.

The statement further said that the American Airlines flight AA292 from John F Kennedy International Airport to Indira Gandhi International Airport was met by local law enforcement upon arrival due to a disruptive customer. The flight landed at 9.50 p.m. on March 4.

"Upon aircraft arrival, the purser informed that the passenger was heavily intoxicated, and was not adhering to crew instructions on board. He was repeatedly arguing with the operating crew, was not willing to be seated and continuously endangered the safety of the crew and aircraft. "After disturbing the safety of fellow passengers, finally urinated on a passenger seated on seat 15G," the airline said.



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SMAP Celebrates Life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Long Beacĥ





The well received play on Maharana Pratap.

The Dhol Tasha team

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Councilman Nitesh Patel honoring the organizers with certificates of recognition.

India-West Staff Reporter

LONG BEACH, CA - The Shivaji Maharaj Antarrashtriya Parivar (SMAP) on February 25 celebrated the Maratha leader's anniversary at the Jordan High School auditorium here. The event was attended by a nearly full house despite the inclement weather.

The event started with traditional lamp lighting followed by the Marathi drum beats called Dhol Tasha. It was a very well-coordinated drum beat by a group of over 50 people ranging from children to adults and loved by the audience. While Dhol Tasha beats were going on, a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was taken on a Palkhi in the hall.

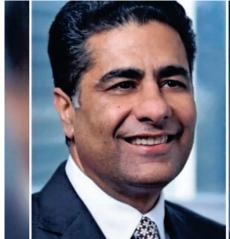
SMAP President Ashok Madan, founder Vijay Patil, and committee members spoke about the importance of Shivaji Jayanti. Cerritos High School student and SMAP Youth President, Anika Patil updated the audience about the two clubs that were established in Mountain House High School, CA, and Seymore Highschool, CT. La Palma city councilmember Nitesh Patel delivered the keynote speech and urged everyone to maintain Indian traditions.

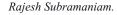
In memory of his late son Ankur, Ajoy Dube, a community leader presented cash awards to five students who took part in essay writing about Chhatrapati Shivaji. He announced that he will offer these awards every year from now on.

The highlight of the event was a play on stage on the life of Maharana Pratap. Beautifully choreographed and presented by Los Angeles Films Theater and Arts, it kept the whole auditorium in rapt attention. The amateur actors had taken time off from their schedules to practice and make the wonderful presentation. The audience also enjoyed the Kathak and Garba dances choreographed by Aarti Manek and Surekha Modi.

The celebration included the republication of 10 historic books written by Itihasacharya V.S. Bendrey. His granddaughter is in the process of republishing all 60+ books authored by him.

Punit Renjen, Rajesh Subramaniam Named To Biden's Export Council





India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC - Two Indian Americans Punit Renjen, Rajesh Subramaniam will be members of US President Joe Biden's Export Council, the White House said. The President's Export Council serves as the principal national advisory committee on international trade.

Renjen serves as Deloitte Global CEO Emeritus. Renjen during his tenure as CEO developed and executed a global strategy that resulted in Deloitte becoming the leading professional services organization in the world and being recognized as the strongest



Punit Renjen.

and most valuable commercial services brand, Subramaniam is President and CEO and a member of the Board of Directors of FedEx Corporation, one of the world's largest transportation companies. He has previously held various leadership roles in operations and marketing across the FedEx portfolio of operating companies.

Subramaniam serves on the board of directors of FedEx Corporation, the Procter & Gamble Company, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's China Center Advisory Board, FIRST. U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum, and the U.S.-China Business Council, and is a member of the U.S.-India CEO Forum.

YouTube CEO Neal Mohan Wants To Help Creators Make More Money

NEW DELHI, (IANS) - Googleowned YouTube's new boss Neal Mohan on March 1 wrote his first letter to creators, supporting their success and helping them make more money, along with building for the YouTube of the future.

Mohan, who replaced YouTube's long-time CEO Susan Wojcicki last month, said they are providing more opportunities for

creators outside of ads by expanding "our subscriptions business, investing in shopping, and continually improving our paid digital goods offerings".

"More than six million viewers paid for channel memberships on YouTube in December 2022 -- an increase of over 20 per cent from the prior year," Mohan said.

This year, Mohan said he will meet even more creators in person and hearing "how we can support them on YouTube".



"Creator feedback is a key part of how we develop products, like a feature that lets creators reach new audiences by adding language tracks to their videos," he noted.

Mohan said the company is investing in the features and experiences that will make YouTube a great home for viewers and creators now and in the future, from doubling down on streaming and connected TV to unlocking unparalleled creative potential.

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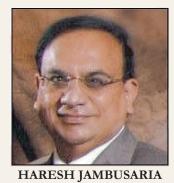
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H-1B REGISTRATION PERIOD FOR FY 2024 STARTS ON MARCH 1, 2023 AT 12:00 NOON (ET) AND GOES THROUGH MARCH 17, 2023, AT 12:00 NOON (ET) P14 - MARCH 2023



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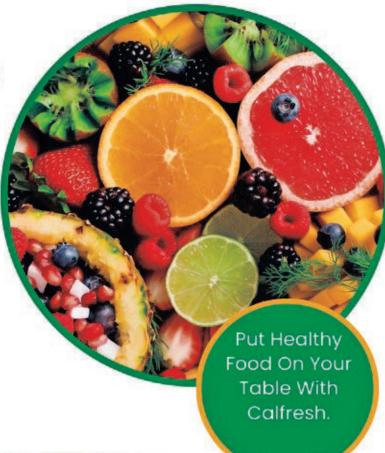


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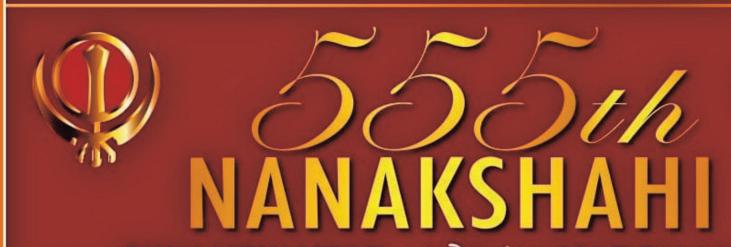
American Rescue Plan Act (2021)

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INDIA WEST MARCH 2023 – P15

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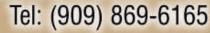


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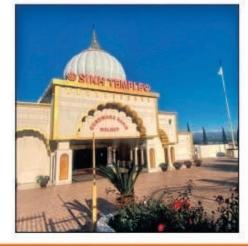
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Kirtan Bibi Kamalpreet H	(aur ji 6:30 - 7:00
Dhadi Jatha	7:00 - 7:30
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FTX Fraud: Nishad Singh Pleads Guilty

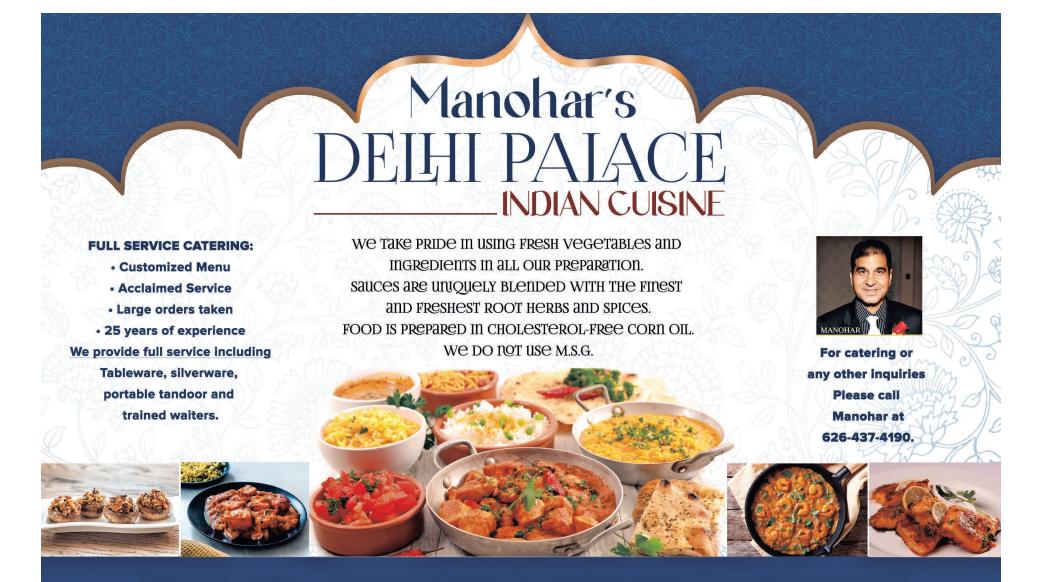
SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) - Nishad Singh, the former director of engineering at collapsed crypto exchange FTX, has finally pleaded guilty to criminal charges and was currently cooperating with the US prosecutors in the alleged billiondollar scam at the crypto trading platform run by



former CEO Sam Bankman-Fried who is also facing a trial. Singh pleaded guilty to six conspiracy charges, including co

Singh pleaded guilty to six conspiracy charges, including conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and conspiracy to violate federal campaign finance laws.

Bankman-Fried, along with Gary Wang, co-founder of FTX, and Caroline Ellison, the former head of FTX's sister hedge fund Alameda Research, have all pleaded guilty in the ongoing case. According to the SEC, Singh created software code that allowed FTX customer funds to be diverted to Alameda Research, a crypto hedge fund owned by Bankman-Fried and Wang, despite false assurances by Bankman-Fried to investors that FTX was a safe crypto asset trading platform. "We allege that this was a fraud, pure and simple: while on the one hand, FTX touted its supposed effective risk mitigation measures to investors, on the other Singh and his co-defendants were stealing customer funds using software code Singh helped create," said Gurbir S. Grewal, Director of the SEC's Division of Enforcement. Moreover, as FTX neared collapse, Singh withdrew \$6 million from FTX for personal use, including the purchase of a multi-million-dollar house. In a parallel action, the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission also announced charges against Singh. "Today's guilty plea underscores once again that the crimes at FTX were vast in scope and consequence," said Damian Williams, US attorney for the Southern District of New York.



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6:00 PM- 7:00PM:
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10:00 AM – 12:00 AM: Sri Rama Abhishekam and Janmotsava Celebrations of Lord Rama's Birth)

4:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Shri Bhadrachala Sita Rama Kalyana Mahotsavam (Bhakta Ramadasa Navaratna Keertana Kalyanotsavam)

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM: Discourse Srimad Valmikiya Ramayana (Hindi) • 8:30 PM: Dinner Prasad

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<u>Tesla Crash</u>

Dharmesh Patel Pleads Not Guilty, Hearing On March 20

India-West News Desk

PASADENA, CA - The Southern Californian who was accused of deliberately driving his Tesla off a California cliff with his wife and children inside, has pleaded not guilty to attempted murder.

Dharmesh A. Patel, 41, has been charged with "attempted first-degree murder and child abuse, as well as enhancements for great bodily injury and domestic abuse".

Patel has tapped a prominent California attorney, Joshua Bentley, to defend his case, and has a preliminary hearing scheduled for March 20.

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ney Steve Wagstaffe said that statement from Patel's wife as well as witness accounts from other motorists and video of the roadway gave enough evidence to frame charges against him.

A San Mateo judge had ordered to hold Patel without bail at the Maguire Correctional Facility, citing the danger he poses to his family.

Patel's car was traveling south on State Route 1 on January 2

when it went over a 250-foot cliff at Devil's Slide, south of the Tom Lantos Tunnels, and flipped and landed on its wheels near the water's edge.

Firefighters had to cut the vehicle to pull Patel's two children -- a seven-year-old girl and a four-year-old boy -- from the vehicle. The daughter suffered a serious injury, while the boy escaped with just bruises.

The couple was pulled out of

the vehicle's windows.

Investigators are yet to establish Patel's motive behind the act.

"We're looking into what led up to this. Was there depression or anything else? It wasn't just that he was trying to kill them, he was trying to kill himself too," Wagstaffe had said in a late January press conference.

Patel has been ordered not to contact his wife or their children.

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Very Special To Touchdown In India With Secretary Blinken: Vedant Patel

NEW DELHI (ANI) - Born in Ahmedabad, Vedant Patel moved to the US when he was very young and created history last September by becoming the first Indian American to hold the daily State Department press briefing. He has been articulating the US viewpoint on some complex international issues and said he is "just really thrilled" to be at the State Department working for Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Patel recalled the "very special feeling" he had as he touched down in Delhi with Secretary Blinken ahead of the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting on March 2.

"I think that is one of the spe-

cial things about the United States is that the opportunities that it has for people, for immigrants, for people of different backgrounds, the opportunity to do things like speak on behalf of the Administration, speak on behalf of the State Department. Being born in India, it was certainly a very special feeling to touchdown in Delhi with the Secretary of State, coming off that plane that says the United States of America back to the country that I was born in, and getting to come back as an American diplomat with the Secretary. It's a very special feeling," Patel said.

Talking about his journey, Patel

said he has earlier worked for US President Joe Biden in the White House as well as on his campaign.

"I moved to Washington DC in late 2016 after I had been working for a member of Congress at the time and continued working in the government and political field and spent some time working for another member of Congress. And then I joined President Biden's election campaign in the 2020 cycle very early on, and then had the opportunity to join the administration at the White House and spent about the first year-and-a-half of the Biden administration at the White House and then had the opportunity



to join the State Department as well," he added.

Earlier he had worked as Communications Director to Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and Communications Director

to Congressman Mike Honda. Patel is a graduate of the University of California, Riverside, and received an MBA from the University of Florida. He is originally from San Jose, CA

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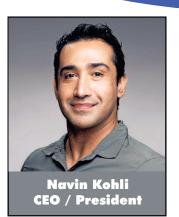
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Kamala Harris Polling Poorly With CA Voters



NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - A majority of voters are unenthusiastic about Vice President Kamala Harris' potential presidential run in 2024, shows a new poll.

According to The Telegraph, Biden's Indian-origin second-in-command has struggled to gain traction among Democrats nationwide amid her poor public approval ratings.

But what shocks more is that most of these voters are from California -- a Democratic bastion and Harris' home state.

Between February 14 and 20, a poll conducted by the Berkeley Institute of Government Studies and The Los Angeles Times asked 7,512 registered voters about Harris running for President if Biden decided not to seek a second term.

It found that 59 percent of registered voters were hesitant about Harris seeking the country's highest office.

Some 18 percent said they were "not too enthusiastic" about the idea, and a clear plurality of 41 percent said they were "not

enthusiastic at all".

Only 16 percent said they would be "very enthusiastic" about Harris taking on the role, while 21 percent said they would be "somewhat enthusiastic". Four percent of those surveyed gave no oninion

Bringing some cheer to Harris, 56 percent of Democrat voters said they would be keen on Harris' candidacy.

But what was an immediate dampener was that about 40 percent of Democrats in her home state did not want to see her run in 2024.

A few Democrats have privately expressed concerns that Harris could prove a liability for the party, citing her struggles as a communicator, The Telegraph report stated.

They also think that Biden, 80, is too old to run for a second term by the end of which he would be 86. The latest poll also found Biden's approval rating improving in California, with him holding a 57 percent yes and a 39 per cent no in the state.

Nikki Haley Starts Arduous Campaign

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - Nikki Haley has kicked off her against-all-odds campaign for the Republican Party's presidential nomination with visits to two key states portraying herself as a "badass" woman who can get things done.

However, she will first have to get her party's nomination, which seems a monumental task given the big lead of former President Donald Trump.

In the latest Fox News poll, she was tied for the third place with former Vice President Mike Pence at 7 percent, while Trump polled 43 percent and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is yet to announce his run, 28 percent.

Against these odds, as the

first to take on Trump with her campaign launch on February 15, Haley began her long trek towards getting the party nomination with campaign stops in New Hampshire starting the next day and in Iowa the next week.

Iowa will be the first state to hold the intraparty election to choose its candidate and New Hampshire the second just under a year from now and a candidate's showing in those states could determine the future.

The third will be her home state, South





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Carolina, which brought her national attention as the first woman to become its governor.

While campaigning with voters builds a base, perhaps more important is money in US politics: \$6.6 billion was spent in the 2020 presidential election.

And so, Haley begins her high-profile fundraising at a Wall Street event with tickets ranging between \$3,300 and \$6,600, the maximum allowed by the Federal Election Commission, that is hosted by three top finance executives in New York, CNBC reported.

The cable station identified the hosts as Gautam Chawla, a vice chair at Barclays; Joseph Konzelmann, a partner at private equity giant TPG, and Evan Baehr, who runs a venture capital firm.

From New Hampshire, Vikram Mansharamani, who had run for the Republican nomination for the Senate giving him insights into state politics, said: "Haley had a spectacular reception in New Hampshire. Wherever she went, there were overflowing crowds of people trying to spend time with her and to hear her message. In today's highly polarized political environment, her unifying message should resonate."

With his deep connections across his state, Mansharamani, who is a businessman, author, and a former lecturer at Harvard, hosted an event "to help introduce her to a diverse group of New Hampshire voters that included leading activists, government and business leaders, philanthropists, and

engaged citizens".

Haley said at one of her stops in the state that if the party wanted to win, it should "start focusing on new generational leadership and the best way to do that is to put a 'badass' woman in the White House", according to the Concord Monitor.

At another town hall meeting, she was introduced by retired Army General Don Bolduc, who became the party's Senate candidate last year and is considered a part of the party's hard right.

Haley's "compassion and her empathy and her complete dedication to public service, putting herself last and everybody else first, I think is what we need in this country and that is why I am supporting her", he told the Monitor.

In a campaign stop in Iowa, she gently took on Trump in whose cabinet she had served and who is the candidate to beat, calling him "my friend".

"I think he was the right President at the right time", she said, according to the Iowa Capital Dispatch.

"But we, as dire a situation as this is, as much as all the media and everybody wants to talk about the past, we need to leave the status quo in the past," she added in an apparent reference to Trump's obsessive belief that he was the real winner of the 2020 election.

According to the Dispatch, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds has not endorsed Haley, but she introduced her at an event saying: "I'll tell you, one mistake that most people make when challenging this lady right here is underestimating her."

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Inspired By Trump, Vivek Ramaswamy Running For President

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - A second Indian American, Vivek Ramaswamy, has joined the fray for the Republican Party's presidential nomination taking on former President Donald Trump as well as Nikki Haley with a campaign focused on culture wars.

The conservative entrepreneur made the announcement for a longshot bid in a video and on a talk show on Fox News cable channel. He took on affirmative action, the "woke" left's culture agenda, the burgeoning bureaucracy and the "new culture of fear" that he said has "completely replaced our culture of free speech in America."

Ramaswamy, whose family is from Palakkad in Kerala, is the cofounder of two technology companies and a financial management firm, as well as the founder of a pharmaceutical company, which made him a multimillionaire at age 37. According to Politico, he has a net worth of \$500 million which can fund his campaign.

Ramaswamy made his mark as a writer of two bestsellers that blasted what he calls the "woke" culture. He is appealing to the same crowd as Trump that sees the US being undone by liberal



Vivek Ramaswamy.

policies and the power of what they see as an elite.

"Faith, patriotism and hard work have disappeared, only to be replaced by new secular religions like 'Covidism', 'climatism' and gender ideology," Ramaswamy said in his video. He stressed his opposition to affirmative action programs for minorities that have some similarities to the reservations in India.

"The American dream means you believe in merit, that you get ahead in this country, not on the color of your skin, but on the content of your character and your contributions," he said.

He also took on the "cancel culture" that targets people opposing

the politically correct dogmas exposing them to media attacks and even punitive actions that he called the "culture of fear".

Trump, who Ramaswamy says inspired him, will run his presidential campaign on these premises, which have been adopted by other Republicans like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is expected to be the front-runner to challenge the former President.

With Trump and more entrenched Republicans expected in the race besides Haley, Ramaswamy told Politico about his maverick campaign, "You know, maybe all of this is ill-advised, and I'll fall flat on my face." But he added: "I don't think that's going to happen."

Paradoxically for a campaign based on culture wars, Ramaswamy said in his video that he is running to be a national unifier to revive "the Pluribus Unum from many, one" which is the American motto found on the national seal.

"I have a dream that we can be one people" although "we have obsessed so much over our diversity and our differences, that we've forgotten all the way we're really just the same as Americans," he said.

Darshana Patel To Run For California State Assembly

SAN DIEGO, CA (IANS) - Indian American Democrat Darshana Patel announced her bid to run for the California State Assembly District 76 in 2024.

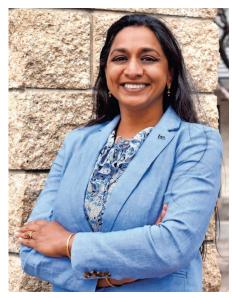
Patel, 48, said she will not be seeking a third term as California's Poway Unified School District board president.

The San Diego resident's campaign has earned early endorsements from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna.

"As the daughter of immigrants who struggled to realize the American Dream. I know the chall

Dream, I know the challenges that families can face during hard times. If not for great public school teachers and college scholarships I would not be where I am today," Patel, who moved to California as a teen, said launching her campaign.

"I am running for State Assembly because I want to make sure that every person has the opportunity to succeed and thrive, and because I can use my experience as a scientist, elected school board member, and a civic leader to make a difference in their



Darshana Patel.

lives," she added.

Patel said in her campaign announcement that she wants to keep communities safe, invest in public education, protect the environment, and improve and expand quality healthcare access for Californians.

The election will be an openseat contest, as incumbent Assembly member Brian Maienschein will be terming out.

Patel is a B. A. in Biochemistry at Occidental College and a Ph.D. in Biophysics from the University of California, Irvine.



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Hate Crime: After Jews, Sikhs Among Most Targeted

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - A total of 1,005 hate crimes related to religion were reported in 2021 in the US with Sikhs being among the most targeted religious groups, according to statistics revealed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Incidents related to religion comprised 14.2 percent of incidents, the Hate Crime Statistics revealed.

The largest categories of religion-based crime included anti-Jewish incidents at 31.9 percent followed by anti-Sikh incidents



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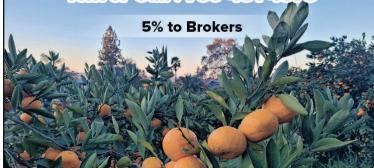
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While anti-Muslims accounted for 9.5 percent of religion-based hate crimes, anti-Catholic incidents accounted for 6.1 percent.

Overall, law enforcement agencies reported 7,262 total incidents and 9,024 victims, demonstrating that hate crimes remain a concern for communities across the country.

The overall number of agen-

11,834, from 15,138 in 2021, so data cannot reliably be compared across years.

According to the 2021 data, 64.8 percent of victims were targeted because of the offender's bias toward race/ethnicity/ancestry, which continues to be the largest bias motivation category.

Anti-Black or African American hate crimes continued to category, with 63.2 percent of all single-bias incidents in 2021.

Additionally, anti-Asian incidents represented 4.3 percent of incidents reported in 2021, the statistics revealed.

Together, incidents related to sexual orientation and gender identity represented 19.7 percent of all single-bias cases reported in 2022.



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In A First, Seattle Passes Caste Discrimination Ban

SEATTLE, WA (IANS) - Seattle has become the first US city to ban caste discrimination, pushing back against opposition by several organizations. The City Council on February 21 approved the legislative measure sponsored by Councilor Kshama Sawant, a member of the Socialist Alternative party.

The legislation, modeled after laws against racial bias, seeks to ban caste-based discrimination in jobs, housing rental, and sales and in public places like hotels, restaurants, and stores.

It pitched some Hindu organizations, which opposed it, against an assortment of leftist groups, civil rights groups and a union that linked it to broader civil rights and socio-economic issues in the US.

The legislation was passed after heated discussions when the public was allowed to comment on it.

A National Public Radio reporter, Lilly Ana Fowler, tweeted from the Council chamber that things "calmed down after a bit of chaos" before the vote with "lots of shouting with people holding signs that say 'stop gaslighting Dalits' while others hold signs saying, 'Shouting lies



does not make them true".

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), which spearheaded the opposition, said the legislation would promote prejudice against South Asians.

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF), said: "Seattle has taken a dangerous misstep here, institutionalizing bias against all residents of Indian and South Asian origin, all in the name of preventing bias. When Seattle should be protecting the civil rights of all its residents, it is actually violating them by running roughshod over the most basic and fundamental rights in US law,

all people being treated equally."

Despite the criticism by the Hindu groups, the legislation does not mention any religion or ethnic group. Caste discrimination as a cultural and social phenomenon is practiced in India and other countries, even beyond South Asia, by members of many religions including Christianity and Islam.

Another organization, Hindus for Human Rights-USA, supported the Seattle anti-caste legislation. Sawant said: "We know that caste discrimination has been growing in the US across many industries, including technology, construction,

restaurants and the service industry, and in domestic work."

Making a leap of logic, the socialist asserted that the legislation "is also linked to the larger working-class fight against the ongoing brutal layoffs in the tech sector". She added that British colonialism used the caste system in its policy of divide and rule.

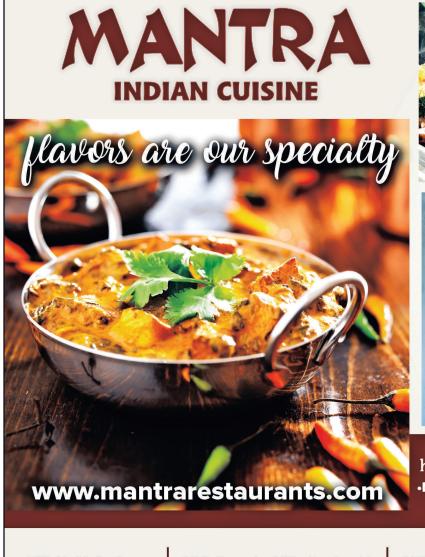
US Dalit rights activist, Thenmozhi Soundarajan said: "Caste is a feminist, queer, and workers' rights issue, and the time has come to ensure that discrimination, bias, and worker exploitation on the basis of caste is not only illegal, but will be properly enforced throughout the city."

Equality Labs, of which she is the executive director, is heading the movement for legislation across the country "to add caste as a protected category".

Similar anti-caste discrimination measures have been adopted by the California University System and Brandeis and Brown universities, while Harvard included an anti-caste discrimination clause in a contract with graduate students.

California State Civil Rights
Department has filed a suit in
a federal court alleging caste
discrimination at Cisco against a
Dalit engineer by others of Indian
origin in the leading technology
company. HAF filed a countersuit
against the department asserting that it discriminates against
Hindus by singling them out for
"special monitoring".

The Seattle legislation was supported by a union representing student employees of the University of Washington, the Washington unit of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Indian American Muslim Council, the Ambedkar Association of North America, and the Ambedkar International Centre.











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The stress and anxiety of living through a global pandemic can be ovewhelming. Many people have experienced symptoms of PTSD and depression. An estimated 53 million cases of major depressive disorders and 76 million cases of anxiety disorders are seen globally. The mental health effects of the pandemic are likely to be long-lasting, and it is important to seek help if you are struggling to cope.

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Duped, City Of Newark Scraps Agreement With Nithyananda's 'Kailasa'

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - Having been duped, a US city has scrapped a sister-city agreement with the fictional nation of "Kailasa" that the fugitive godman Nithyananda's outfit claimed was recognition by Washington.

"Based on deception, the (sister-city) ceremony was groundless and void," Newark Press Secretary Susan Garofalo said in a message on March 2.

"As soon as we learned about the circumstances surrounding Kailasa, the City of Newark immediately took action and rescinded the sister-city agreement on January 18," she added. Despite Newark revoking the agreement, the make-believe "government of Kailasa" continues to post it on its website with the claim, "The United States of America recognizes the United States of Kailasa (USK) and signs a bilateral agreement." The Newark caper illustrates how easy it is for groups to manipulate municipal and state bodies taking advantage of their lack of international sophistication to unwittingly make them appear to confer legitimacy on their causes, even when they are at odds with official US positions.

"USK's" Newark effort was a part of the disinformation campaign claiming legitimacy for the



"nation" set up by Nithyananda, who fled India in 2019 while facing charges of rape and abduction.

The agreement with Newark was signed on or around January 11 at a ceremony at which Newark's Mayor Ras Baraka and other city leaders were present. A picture on the "USK" website showed Baraka signing the since the revoked agreement with a woman with a turban and a pendant on her forehead and wearing several necklaces while another similarly dressed woman in their trademark attire looked on.

There have been other instances of cities and states stepping into controversies involving India. Last year, the Connecticut General Assembly influenced by Khalistanis

issued a citation "in recognition of the 36th anniversary of the declaration of Sikh independence" while the town of Norwich in the state declared April 29 as the "Sikh Declaration of Independence Day". At least six cities have passed resolutions condemning India's Citizenship Amendment Act that speeded up citizenship for non-Muslims fleeing persecution to India. But in 2021, a Chicago City Council resolution critical of India was defeated. Speaking afterward, Mayor Lori Lightfoot set the standards for local bodies wading into international matters." What I say sitting here as Mayor of Chicago is I'm not going to get ahead of the (President Joe) Biden administration," Lightfoot said.

India Benefits From Ukraine War Scoring Cheap Oil From Russia

CHENNAI, (IANS) - In the case of oil imports, India till now is on a firm path of sourcing the product cheaply from Russia since the latter's invasion of Ukraine.

This is much against the wishes of the western powers who want to bring down the Russian economy by curbing its oil revenue.

However, the Indian government has categorically said that it would source what it needs from where the price is advantageous.

The government also said its three oil marketing companies are not buying crude from Russia but only the private companies are the ones who are buying, refining, and shipping out.

According to reports, India's exports of petroleum products shot up to \$78.58 billion for the period April 2022 to January 2023, from \$50.77 billion shipped out during the previous year corresponding period.

Fueled by the imports of crude oil, India's imports from Russia went up by about 384 per cent to \$37.31 billion during April 2022-January 2023.

As a result, Russia became India's fourth largest import partner up from 18th position in 2021-22. The soaring oil imports from Russia have prevented India from paying for the commodities in Rupees.

Reduction in oil production from Russia, if not met by a corresponding increase in production from other producers or demand moderation, will reduce the overall supply relative to demand and may strengthen the crude oil prices.

Moody's in a research report last March said ONGC, Oil India, Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd have invested in upstream oil and gas assets in Russia. According to Moody's import bans and international sanctions on Russia may constrain the future cash flow-generating capacity of these assets and lead to impairment losses for the companies. Indian companies, however, have not announced an exit from their Russian investments. An immediate impairment in the value of investments will be limited, especially in the current oil price environment.



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Deepika To Be A Presenter At The Oscars

MUMBAI, (IANS) - Actress Deepika Padukone is one of the chosen few from the world who will be presenting an award at the Oscars 2023 ceremony.

Deepika joins the likes of Emily Blunt, Samuel L. Jackson, Dwayne Johnson, Michael B. Jordan, Janelle Monae, Zoe Saldana, Jennifer Connelly, Riz Ahmed, and Melissa

McCarthy among a few others to be part of this honor.

The 95th Oscars will air live on ABC on March 12.



The list also includes Dwayne Johnson, Michael B. Jordan, Riz Ahmed, Emily Blunt, Glenn Close, Troy Kotsur, Dwayne Johnson, Jennifer Connelly, Samuel L. Jackson, Melissa McCarthy, Zoe Saldana, Donnie Yen, Jonathan Majors and Questlove.

Sharing the post, the actress simply wrote, "#oscars#oscars95." In no time, netizens flooded Deepika's comment section with congratulatory wishes. "Can't wait to watc,h you Deepu," actress

Neha Dhupia commented.

"Boom," Deepika's sister Anisha Padukone commented. Deepika's husband Ranveer dropped clapping emojis in the comment section.

Her name was also shared on The Academy's Instagram handle.

On the work front, Deepika will next be seen in 'Fighter' starring Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor. The film is directed by Siddhant Anand. She will also be seen in 'Project K', alongside Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.

Antetokounmpo, NBA Star Praises Ranveer Singh

SALT LAKE CITY, UT (IANS) - Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, who recently played in the 2023 NBA All-Star Celebrity Game for Dwayne Wade's team, received words of appreciation from Greek-Nigerian basketball player Giannis Antetokounmpo, who also coached the winning team of Wade.

Ranveer, who has been the brand ambassador for NBA India since 2021, represented India and joined the likes of Marvel superhero Simu Liu, wrestler The Miz, star of the movie 'Glass Onion' Janelle Monae, rap-



per 21 Savage, and many other celebs and entertainers at the 2023 NBA All-Star Celebrity Game. In a video shared by Ranveer's fan club, Giannis can be heard saying, "You got to hit the people with the speech you give them before the game, you said be bold, be brave and I loved that. He (Ranveer) said 'Be Bold, Be the Moment, Be Courageous. Let's go win'. I loved it, I loved it."

He added, "The tenacity our team had today if this guy (Ranveer) was not on our team, we wouldn't have it. He brought energy to our team. It was our soul, you know, he is the fire that keeps our building warm at night, he was the fire to that."

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Resident Hotel Manager Los Angeles Resident Manager Hotel needed, 3-5 Franchise Brand Experience required. Accommodation Provided. Email: Imtheguy10@aol.com

Motel Manager/Front Desk Associate Resident Motel Manager needed for 62 Room Motel in Santa Cruz, CA. Single/Couple. Fluent in English, Computer Skills Experience. Email Resume: motelsantacruz@ gmail.com or call: 831-332-7179

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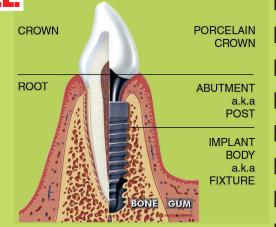
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