#### Voice of the Indian American Community

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P-S-A-M-M-O-P-H-I-L-E gets Dev Shah \$50K US Spelling Bee championship.

Keeping up the dominance of the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee in the US by Indian American children, 14-year-old Dev Shah from Florida has won the competition by correctly spelling the word "psammophile".

ANNAPOLIS, MD (IANS) - He carried home the trophy and the \$50,000 prize at the finals held on June 1 night in National Harbor, MD, after he spelled the word for an animal or plant that thrives in sandy soil. Of the 231 national contestants, the 11 finalists left standing in three days of grueling competition, 10 were of Indian origin. After nine were eliminated, Shah went into the final round against 14-year-old Charlotte Walsh from Arlington, Virginia, beating her with a bathypitotmeter (a device for measuring water temperature and current) before clinching the award by spelling the final word correctly.

Shradha Rachamreddy and Surya Kapu tied for third place with a \$15,000 prize.

According to the Scripps website, Dev Shah's hobbies include reading, playing tennis, mastering the cello and solving math problems with his friends. His favorite athlete is tennis ace Roger Federer, and his favorite movie is "La La Land."

Shah is a class 8 student from Largo. Schistorrhachis, aegagrus, and were among the words he spelled correctly through 15 rounds reaching the top.

Thousands of students from around the US and some foreign countries compete in local and regional competitions before the field is narrowed to 231.

Since Balu Natarajan won it in 1985, 21 Indian-origin children have followed him, monopolizing it from 2008 to 2018. Harini Logan was the winner last year resuming the Indian lead, after a 2021 win by a non-Indian.

# Rahul Gandhi To Bay Area Audience: India Going Through Political Storm

#### **By VRINDA AGARWAL**

ahul Gandhi, prominent Indian politician and former President of the Indian National Congress began his week-long "Mohabbat ki dukaan" tour of the U.S at a recent event hosted by The Center for South Asian Studies at UC Santa Cruz's Silicon Valley Campus. During his address, Gandhi touched upon various aspects of Indian politics, the power of people's connection, and his vision for the future.

SANTA CRUZ, CA - Gandhi began by highlighting the political landscape pre-2014, emphasizing that the instruments and tools that existed back then to shape public opinion and engage voters were no longer available in the current era.

Drawing from his recent Bharat Jodo Yatra across India, Gandhi shared his profound experiences of witnessing the desire for love, affection, and connection among the citizens. He emphasized that this yearning for human connection and empathy transcends political boundaries and is a fundamental aspect of the Indian society. Gandhi viewed his yatra as a testament to the power of human bonds and believed that such mass mobilization for an extended period could effectively bind people together for a common cause.

However, he also made it clear that his Bharat Jodo Yatra, which aimed to unite the nation, was not conceived as an electoral tool. Gandhi's approach was to focus on fostering unity among people rather than using it as a means to garner votes. This perspective, he argued, was instrumental in the yatra's success, as it genuinely resonated with the people and allowed for authentic connections to be formed.

During his speech, Gandhi proudly highlighted the success *Contd. on P26* 



Rahul Gandhi speaking at a meeting in New York. (Photo: Mohammed Jaffer-Snapsindia)



#### PFOPLE-

# 14-Year-Old California Engineering Whiz Recruited By SpaceX

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) -Kairan Quazi, a 14-year-old boy, is about to embark on a new role as a software engineer at Elon Musk's SpaceX. Quazi, based in San Francisco, is a graduate of Santa Clara University's School of Engineering. In a LinkedIn post, he announced that he will be joining SpaceX's Starlink team. "Next stop: SpaceX!" exclaimed Quazi, who successfully navigated a highly transparent, technically challenging, and enjoyable interview process. backed cyber intelligence start-up. Impressively, Quazi enrolled at Las Positas Community College at the age of just nine. He has earned an Associate of Science degree in Mathematics with the highest distinction.

"At first, when I started at Santa Clara University, people were quite intrigued," he shared. "But after a few days, I think the novelty wore off and many realized that I'm just a regular person." During his time at Las Positas, Quazi also worked as a STEM tutor and became one everything," he shared in his post. According to media sources, Quazi's parents mentioned that he was speaking in full sentences by the age of two.

"By third grade, it became evident to my teachers, parents, and pediatrician that the traditional education system wasn't the right fit for my accelerated learning ability," Quazi explained. "Some may think I'm missing out on a conventional childhood mindset, but I don't believe



"I will be joining the coolest company on the planet as a Software Engineer on the Starlink engineering team. It's one of the few companies that didn't use my age as an arbitrary and outdated measure of maturity and ability," he proudly added.

According to his LinkedIn bio, this prodigious talent has gained hands-on experience in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) through a multi-year co-op at a Fortune 100 technology company and a summer internship at a VC- of the most sought-after members of the tutoring staff.

"I went from being a rebellious third-grader to feeling intellectually validated," Quazi expressed.

Quazi highlighted that his career trajectory changed when he had the opportunity to work on generative AI with Lama Nachman, the Director of the Intelligent Systems Research Lab at Intel Labs.

"In a landscape where many prestigious Silicon Valley companies said 'no,' having one leader say 'yes' and one door open changed that's true. I don't think it would make sense for someone with my capabilities to be confined to graduating middle school right now. I have the ability to tackle rigorous graduate-level work and engage in prestigious co-op experiences. Joining SpaceX as a software engineer aligns perfectly with my aspirations. I don't believe anyone with extraordinary abilities should feel trapped," he confidently added.

Quazi expressed his gratitude to his mentors at Santa Clara Univer-



Kairan Quazi has been hired by SpaceX

sity and Intel, who provided him with opportunities to transcend his age. "I am forever grateful for recognizing my value, trusting in my abilities, and investing in my personal growth. I am thrilled to carry these invaluable lessons into my professional career," Quazi expressed. "I am packing my rain boots and eagerly awaiting July!"

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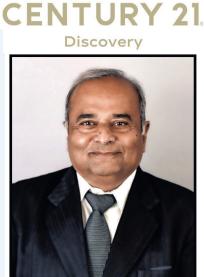
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#### **OPINION**

#### Cross-Currents In The Islamic World

#### By D.C. PATHAK

In recent years the international scene has been conditioned by new geopolitical trends that were affecting all regions, particularly West Asia, Indo-Pacific and Eurasia. India now a major power influencing global events, had stakes in these parts of the world.

The post-Cold War years in which the US-led unipolar order prevailed for quite some time, the fall-out of the 'war on terror' that essentially turned out to be prolonged combat between the US-led West and the Islamic radicals and the reappearance more recently, of the polarization between US on one hand and the China-Russia axis, on the other - following the Ukraine-Russia military confrontation - have been the major developments that are shaping the current geopolitics.

India is required to keep close track of the changing alignments within the so-called Islamic world more so in West Asia. This country has more Muslims than what their number was in Pakistan - the entity created through the partition of India on religious grounds in 1947.

Independent India maintained cordial relations with the Arab world particularly the Gulf countries although Indo-Pak relations had turned sour on multiple counts. We must have a deep understanding of the cross currents in West Asia to maintain and strengthen India's friendships in the region in the future.

From India's point of view Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran are the three Muslim countries that hold the key to West Asia's stability and friendly disposition towards this nation.

#### DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy's inputs for policy formulation remain of course important like before. The three pivotal countries of the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) region mentioned above, are the principal witnesses of the crosscurrents flowing through the Islamic world for some time now and it is important for India to embrace them in friendship. Saudi Arabia chairing the powerful Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) - the 57-member block m of Muslim countries - had traditionally had an equation of friendship fin with the US run on an extremely ap strict framework of fundamentalist Islam, the Saudi regime has, the through the OIC platform, endorsed the idea of Muslims all over back

the world is regarded as Ummah and justified the logic of this forum voicing concern over any problem that the Muslim community might be facing anywhere.

Pakistan a key member of OIC, had with its large army lent military support to Saudi Arabia for the latter's security and that could be one reason why Pakistan was able to get OIC to raise the issue of abrogation of Article 370 relating to Kashmir, by the Indian Parliament. It is also, however, true that the Saudi kingdom while being aware of Indo-Pak conflicts, has moved towards establishing friendship with India.

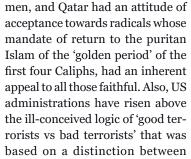
A significant development impacting Saudi Arabia's approach to international relations was the rise of Islamic radicals in the Muslim world in the wake of the US-led 'war on terror' launched first in Afghanistan and then in the Iraq-Syria belt. This made Saudi Arabia more vulnerable to attacks from radicals because of the country's known alliance with the US.

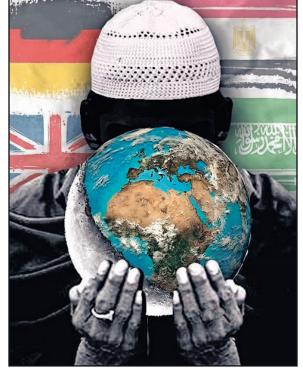
The return of the Taliban Emirate in Kabul in 2019, the failure of US-backed Islamists to oust the Assad regime in Syria and the growing importance of China in the region on account of the Sino-Pak axis - an 'adjustment' was already worked out by Pakistan between Taliban-dominated Afghanistan and China - are the major recent developments shaping the West Asian scene.

#### NO REJECTION

A powerful voice in OIC has been taking the line that Islamic radical groups should not be rejected just because they were ideologically opposed to the US-led West.

Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Ye-





Islamic extremists who remained on the right side of the US and the radicals of Taliban, Al Qaeda and ISIS who looked upon the US as their prime enemy.

It was perhaps realized that both these groups could foster faithbased terrorism that was a huge danger to the democratic world led by the US.

The successor Biden administration has also been circumspect about supporting Islamic fundamentalist regimes. There is a realization in the Saudi camp that violence in the name of religion by invoking Jehad, cannot be upheld in present times.

Saudi Arabia and its close partner UAE have also made the balancing move of not getting caught in the emerging Cold War kind of polarization between the US on one hand and the China-Russia combine on the other.

#### EGYPT

Publisher

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Graphic Designer

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Egypt with its long civilizational history has a key position in the Arab world and has been the largest trading partner of India in Africa. It is home to the Muslim Brotherhood founded by the Egyptian thinker Hasan Al Banna in 1928 to oppose the nationalist and pro-left regime of Gen. Nasser and establish an Islamic rule based on the mandate that the 'Quran is the best Constitution'.

Following the 'Arab Spring' of 2011 that compelled the military to

depose President Hosni Mubarak and a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood - Mohammad Morsi became the first elected President of Egypt in 2012. The 'Arab Spring' was fronted by liberals, but its real strength came from Muslim Brotherhood known for its large organization and influence.

As Muslim Brotherhood started exercising an overbearing influence on all facets of governance including the judiciary and even armed forces, the military in a 'counter-revolution' in 2013, removed Morsi from office, banned Muslim Brotherhood, and rounded up thousands of activists of different ideological

backgrounds.

Gen. Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi the new President put Morsi on trialthe latter dying in 2019 in court. Muslim Brotherhood advocated an Islamic rule that was not in conflict with the West and Morsi's rise to power was therefore appreciated by the US administration.

Egypt-US relations have, however, been friendly during Al Sisi's rule too. Egypt's friendship with India has been further strengthened after the 2015 meeting of Prime Minister Modi with President Al Sisi in New York. Al Sisi was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi this year and the occasion marked the elevation of relations to a strategic level.

Egypt is firmly against radicalization and cross-border terrorism and the two countries have affirmed zero tolerance towards terrorism. Egypt is thus a key ally of India in the Muslim world.

UAE does today what Saudi Arabia would do tomorrow- the launch of I2U2 in 2021 and the subsequent Chinese mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023 somewhere prove the point. Iran's hostility towards Saudi Arabia is the outcome not only of the historical legacy of the Shia-Sunni conflict resulting from the Kharijite revolt against Caliph Ali but also of the added complication of the two countries differing in their approach to the US.

#### FAITH BASED

I2U2 - described in some quarters as the Quad of West Asia - is a multi-lateral forum comprising Israel, India, the US, and UAE that was formed at the meeting of the four foreign ministers in the fall of 2021, for economic and technological cooperation.

India's strategy of developing bilateral friendships with Israel, Iran, and the UAE-Saudi Arabia duo, helped to bridge the faithbased gulfs that had been the hallmark of West Asia's history. The rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia worked out by China should be seen in the backdrop of these two West Asian countries being the largest trading partners of China, the shared hostility of Iran and China towards the US and the willingness of Saudi Arabia to reduce the arc of confrontation facing the country because of its past political alignments.

It is good to see India handling the Muslim world in general and West Asia with great finesse, strategic merit and consideration of India's own security and economic interests. Without giving any quarters to Pakistan, India has enhanced its outreach to Islamic countries and developed strategic friendships in the Gulf and elsewhere steering clear of the faith-based or political divides among them.

The NSA has established a strong grid with his counterparts from major powers including the US and Russia and strengthened the goodwill of the international community for India.

Also, India's moves to keep strategic partnership with the US on a special footing without letting this come in the way of close bonds with Russia, have proved extremely fruitful and kept India on top of the situation as far as international relations were concerned.

(Pathak is a former Director of India's Intelligence Bureau.)



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# Neeraj Senthil, Top UC Davis Undergrad Earns Patent, Cuddles Babies, Teaches In Schools

#### **By JULIA ANN EASLEY**

DAVIS, CA - What is typical for Neeraj Senthil of Sunnyvale, CA, is extraordinary.

Between maintaining A+ grades as a biomedical engineering major, earning a provisional patent, and co-authoring a research paper at the University of California, Davis, his weekly activities have included cuddling sick babies at the university's medical center and teaching math at local schools.

Senthil will be awarded the University Medal as the top graduating senior when thousands celebrate earning a bachelor's degree at five commencements at the Golden 1 Center in Sacramento from June 16 to 18. He will receive the medal — for excellence in undergraduate studies, outstanding community service, and the promise of future scholarship and contributions to society and be awarded a Bachelor of Science degree on June 17. "I try," he said, with characteristic humility. "It's an attitude with which I approach a lot of things."

Senthil said his parents, who immigrated from India, gave him "the greatest blessing" of not pushing him in any one direction for his education and career. "They just wanted me to apply myself," he said. "That's why I was able to explore so many different paths."

Senthil, who holds a third-degree black belt in kickboxing, recounted three experiences that influenced his direction: teaching martial arts to children with neurodiversity; leading others as he rose through the ranks of the Boy Scouts to become a junior assistant scoutmaster; and taking rigorous science courses in high school.



Starting at UC Davis in fall 2019, Senthil sought out research opportunities and was working in the Immuno-modulatory Biomaterials Laboratory until that November. "I found a lab that was prepared to take me with little more than curiosity and hard work," he said.

Since then, Senthil has continued to work on two main projects in the lab. The first is developing an injectable system to correct the immune imbalance that propagates rheumatoid arthritis. The second is working toward targeted drug therapy by capitalizing on vomocytosi — a process by which a

fungal pathogen can escape intact from immune cells without damaging most of them.

In his independent project for the lab, Senthil developed an image analysis algorithm to more quickly and accurately quantify vomocytosis. He has a provisional patent for this invention, presented it at the 2021 annual meeting of the Biomedical Engineering Society, or BMES, and is first author on a research paper in review with an academic journal.

In his junior year, Senthil became a Goldwater Scholar as a winner of the nation's premier undergraduate award of its type in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering. He also interned at CytomX Therapeutics, a biopharmaceutical company that focuses on novel drug delivery strategies for oncology therapeutics, and Genentech, a leading biotechnology company, both in the San Francisco Bay Area. He earned the Genentech Outstanding Student Award for his work.

As director of research development for the campus chapter of BMES since 2021, Senthil helped more than 50 new students looking for research internship opportunities and organized nine lab tours to expose students to the variety of opportunities on campus. After more than a year of remote studies due to the pandemic, Senthil said he threw himself into activities with greater human connection. That included teaching.

Courses he took through the CalTeach Mathematics and Science Teaching Program, or CalTeach/MAST, led to teaching internships and then volunteer teaching at schools in Davis. After working in research and development at a pharmaceutical company, Senthil plans to pursue a career as a pediatric doctor and researcher focused on immunomodulatory therapeutics — those that selectively stimulate or suppress the immune system — to treat various disorders.

To become more familiar with the hospital setting, Senthil has volunteered weekly with the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department at UC Davis Children's Hospital in Sacramento. There, he supervises playroom activities, provides bedside support for patients in isolation and holds infants when their families cannot be with them.

"He is now able to comfort even the most vulnerable newborn," said Wendi Imagine, who supervises Senthil. "In this area, Neeraj has excelled." Senthil said the variety of activities not only keeps his days interesting, but also serves as an antidote to the frequent failures and dead ends inherent in scientific research. "Having a lot of these activities puts things in perspective," Senthil said. "It makes me more of a holistic human being."



heart.org

#### **PEOPLE**

# Table Tennis Player Subham Kundu Making A Name For Himself In US, Mentoring Next Gen

#### **By REENA RATHORE**

MILPITAS, CA – It is never too early to begin working on your dreams. Subham Kundu remembers the first time he saw table tennis players in action; he was just 5 and was visiting a neighborhood club in Kolkata, India, with his father. He was instantly drawn to the game.

"I was so amazed to see how fast they were moving from one corner to another of the TT table and how fast they were playing. Eventually, I started going there to learn, and I still remember, after my practice sessions, I used to sit in a corner and watch them play. I used to love the typical sound of the TT ball while they used to practice and I still love it," Kundu told India-West.

By the time he turned 9, he had started playing professionally, both at the state level and national championships. After a brilliant 15-year run in India, Kundu moved to the U.S., bringing along with him not just his winning streak but also his drive to nurture the next generation of players.

He had a hugely successful outing at the 2021 U.S. Open, finishing in the Top 8 in the 30 and Over Men's Singles category, and winning a gold medal in the U-3800 Doubles category where he was paired with Vishal Sivakumar, 12, whom he had been mentoring for the past two years. The professional

athlete, alongside shaping his career in the U.S., is mentoring kids at the table tennis club at the India Community Center in Milpitas which has produced some of the

country's top table tennis stars and has served as a launchpad for several U.S. Olympians.

Describing the U.S. Open – which featured participants from across the world – as "one of the biggest tournaments in my career," Kundu said: "It was also a huge success for me as under my mentorship and help, a bunch of young talents from ICC won medals in this prestigious tournament."

Inspired by his dad, a soccer player, Kundu noted the impact



Professional table tennis player Subham Kundu (left) won gold in the U-3800 Doubles category at the 2021 U.S. Open.

table tennis has had on his life, saying the game has helped him build resilience to overcome tough situations in order to be successful.

"I consider table tennis to be my lifeline. It teaches you a lot of life lessons - mental strength, physical endurance, strategic thinking, making real-time decisions under pressure, bouncing back from a difficult situation, and most importantly, respecting your opponent," the young sportsman told **India-West**.



Kundu is also mentoring kids at the ICC Table Tennis Club in Milpitas, CA, which has produced some of the country's top table tennis stars and has served as a launchpad for several U.S. Olympians.

Kundu's first significant win was a bronze in the U-14 Singles. After a string of wins, in 2001 and 2003, he was recognized as the 'Best Sportsman Of The Year' by Telegraph. He won a bronze in the U-21 category at the nationals and brought home multiple gold, silver and bronze medals representing the Indian Railways (2008-2011) and the Central Government Agency, CAG.

In the U.S., he won a silver (doubles) and a bronze (singles) at the 2022 Joola Global Champion-

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sep 23 / Oct *8 Days* \$3595 ship. He was part of the national coaching team as a mentor in the national training camp for the prestigious Pan American Championships in 2022.

Recalling how his association with ICC came to be, Kundu said he first met Rajul Sheth, director of sports and recreation at ICC, in India during a tournament and was invited to visit and train with the ICC Olympians. "My first trip to ICC was in the summer of 2013. I *Contd. on P10* 

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#### **PEOPLE** -

# Cracking The Code: SP Hinduja's Love Affair With America

It was the cold war era, and India and the US were poles apart. But the thought that never used to leave SP Hinduja was the immense possibilities and opportunities if only the world's largest and the oldest democracies could come together. For, convergence in approach defined SP Hinduja, late Chairman of the multi-billion dollar transnational conglomerate. He always believed and worked silently to be the converging bridge between his mother country and his family's host countries with the US certainly topping the charts.

INDIA WEST

SP, as he was fondly called, always had the US high on his agenda. He was a great admirer and believer in the US's R&D efforts to push envelopes into technology frontiers. What is developed and adopted in America eventually becomes the benchmark for the world to follow, was his innate belief. California, the well-known established land of startups and cutting-edge technologies, according to him, came closest in reality to the definition of "Vaikuntha"- the Vedic word which literally means "the place with no hindrance or obstacles". No wonder, SP Hinduja was the first business tycoon of Indian origin to invest in various start-ups through venture capitalists in the 80s and 90s.

SP Hinduja spearheaded the Hinduja Group's moves to acquire Gulf Oil from Chevron Inc. in 1984. It was the largest and the first big-ticket acquisition of a globally renowned brand overseas by a business group of Indian origin. He saw great opportunities in the early 90s to develop offshore service capabilities to serve the American HMOs and Health Insurance giants' backend processing needs which India could service more efficiently.

Today, Hinduja Global Solutions is a listed Indian entity with delivery centres across the world including the North Americas. In 2008 he led from the front in over a billion dollar acquisition of Houghton Chemicals, a leading metalworking fluids and speciality chemicals company. It later merged with another global leader to form Quaker-Houghton, an NYSE-listed entity.

SP was renowned for his '99.99' reputation among the leaders of America's biggest financial institutions. A phone call by him to the biggest banks was enough to execute multiple-million transactions whether for issuing guarantees, bid bonds, or opening letters of credit. Paperwork always followed after the execution of the verbal instructions of SP.



SP Hinduja with former Vice President Al Gore and Indian PM Narasimha Rao



SP Hinduja with former First Lady Hillary Clinton, also seen Dr Bhupi Patel and Indu Patel (center)



SP Hinduja (Nov. 28, 1935 - May 17, 2023)

No other Indian business leader was as respected by global financial institutions as SP - such was his reputation for acceptance by them because he lived his father's principle 'word was a bond'.

Healthcare systems of America always remained his special interest. SP Hinduja, like his father, believed that Healthcare and Education are the two most significant universal human rights. Indefatigably he knocked on institutions like Massachusetts General Hospital, Johns Hopkins, University of Columbia, etc and even managed to convince them to have a special association with the Hinduja Group's Not-For-Profit tertiary care Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai.



Hinduja Brothers with former President George H.W. Bush



SP Hinduja with Michael Jackson



It was in deference to his extraordinary zeal and compassion to impact humanity at large, and the friendly relations he forged, that stalwarts like John Buchannan agreed to share the then advanced medical technologies like Gamma Knife, etc for the first time with India.

Furtherance of Indian culture was SP Hinduja's life mission. That's why he reposed faith in an institution like Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan and helped find its roots in the US as well. He created endowments across many Universities and Institutions to establish research platforms- from Tropical diseases and medicine (endocrine lab) to Indic Philosophy. In the rarest of the rare honour to SP Hinduja, the man extraordinaire, the US Congress is on record to honour the Hinduja Foundation's contributions.

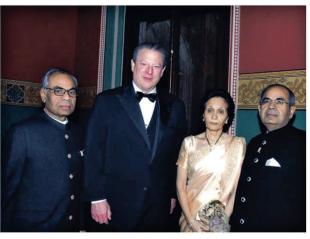
Silently but most impact-fully, without seeking any limelight, SP Hinduja was instrumental in the waiver of the US sanctions slapped against India post-1997 nuclear tests and the successful completion of the Indo-US Nuclear Accord in 2005. These were actions borne out of his pure love for the two great countries.

Not very many know, SP Hinduja along with his brothers, Gopichand, Prakash, and Ashok, funded, dubbed and released over 1200 Indian films globally. Likewise, many Hollywood movies were released in India by them. SP was a cinema buff and was always interested in getting the best of cinematic techniques and technology from Hollywood to Bollywood, the moniker for the Hindi Film Industry. He used to often engage with great American thinkers, and story writers and commissioned a script for a film titled 'Cracking the Code' aimed to inspire answers to the mind-boggling questions of life and death, which he wanted to produce.

An unfinished task of a genius, perhaps!



SP Hinduja and his brother with former President Barack Obama, also seen eminent Industrialist Rahul Bajaj (left)



SP Hinduja and his brother with former Vice President Al Gore



SP Hinduja and his brother with Michael Jackson

#### COMMUNITY

# Mental Health Awareness Event By 'Saahas For Cause' Draws Huge Response

#### **India-West Staff Reporter**

CERRITOS, CA – On May 7, at the Cerritos Sports Complex/Don Knabe Community Regional Park, Saahas For Cause as a part of the LA County Department of Mental Health's 'Take Action LA' initiative held its 'Chak de SoCal' event.

The event received an overwhelming response with almost 300 attendees including adults, youth, performing artists, therapists, and experts in mental health. Everyone became an integral part of the event which had been custom-designed creatively so the message of mental health was addressed and included the entire family unit.

The morning started with a youth cricket workshop organized by SCYCA - Southern California Youth Cricket Association in collaboration with Saahas. At registration, all youth participants received fun swag items that included a custom logo hat, water bottles, and a backpack. Snacks and beverages were provided to the youth during breaks at the workshop.

While the youth enjoyed learning about the basics of cricket, adults and seniors were engaged in various creative and informative activities hosted by experts in various fields. Music for the Mind workshop by Prashant Sarnaik, Calming Clay by Gunjan Kale, Face-painting by Bhuvana Dinakaran, Healing Henna by Binal Naik, Applied Natya (Dance) Therapy by Dr. Dimple Kaur, HeARTistic canvas art by Prerna Kulkarni, Informational Dance therapy session by Apra Bhandari were some of the creative stations that shared their knowledge and expertise with the guests and kept them entertained.

Along with creativity, art, and entertainment, Pragnesh Ray and his team with Heartfulness Meditation gave out informational brochures and demonstrations about Brighter Minds, a unique program designed for young children and youth. A team of therapists was on site and also shared a lot of resources for mental health. Saahas youth volunteers also handed out mental health resource cards and other informational material, and brochures to the guests.

In the presence of several dignitaries and elected officials, Saahas For Cause was also presented a certificate of recognition by Mayor Monica Manalo of the City of Arte-



sia. Food for the event was catered by Rangeen Kitchen and RTs Kitchen. Throughout the event, there were drink and juice samples of Acaiveda - Health & Wellness Foods.

Saahas aims to normalize the acceptance of mental health issues and focus on prevention. Chak de SoCal was a unique family event for mental health awareness and was accepted with open hearts and minds by the community. It was also successful in symbolizing peace and harmony in the community through the presence of a diverse audience from various age groups and leaders from different areas.







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#### COMMUNITY

# After 2 Days In Russia, Air India Passengers Land In SFO

#### India-West News Desk

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - Air India on June 8 said that all San Franciscobound passengers who had been stuck in Russia for two days after engine trouble had forced an emergency landing, had arrived safely after the airline had picked them up with a replacement aircraft. State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel had earlier said there were less than 50 U.S. citizens on the flight.

While apologizing, to the 216 passengers and 16 crew members on board, the airline also said it

will fully refund the ticket fare to every passenger. "We will fully refund the fare for the journey and, in addition, provide a voucher for future travel to the passengers on Air India," senior airline executive Rajesh Dogra said while apologizing to the passengers.

On June 6, Air India flight AI173, from Delhi to San Francisco, was forced to divert and make an emergency landing at Magadan airport due to a technical issue with one of its engines.

"All our passengers are being extended maximum on-ground



assistance with clearance formalities and provided other necessary support," it said. "Air India thanks government agencies, regulatory authorities, our staff and partners involved in supporting our endeavor to bring our passengers to SFO as soon as possible and in providing them care while they waited in Magadan, Russia," it added.

U.S., European, and Japanese carriers have stopped flying over Russia while Air India continues to do so despite the Ukraine war and the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines 370.

# Subham Kundu Making A Name For Mentoring Next Gen

#### Contd. from P6

trained under Massimo Costantini who was then the head coach at ICC and is also known as one of the best coaches in the world. I also trained with Olympians Timothy Wang and Lily Zhang. I visited ICC a few more times in 2015, 2016 and 2018 upon invitation. I was given an offer to play for the club as a full-time athlete in 2018 and I accepted," he explained.

Moving to the U.S., he said, gave him an opportunity and a much bigger platform to showcase his talent and further evolve as a player. But it also meant leaving behind the comforts of a well-established career.

"That was the toughest decision in my sporting career - on the one hand, ICC was offering me an opportunity to compete with the best in multi-national events. On the flip side, I was an established player in the Indian TT circuit with the Central Government of India sponsoring my costs," he told **India-West**. "I finally decided to follow my dream and passion with TT."

It's a full-circle moment for Kundu who said he believes in sharing his learnings with young talent in the U.S., and wants to nurture them and catapult their career to the next level. "When I see them receiving medals on a victory podium, I reminisce about my old days and get the motivation to work even harder to make them even better," he said.

The India Community Center has a structured program called Talented Kids Program to help players realize their full potential. And Kundu said he is helping modernize this program by introducing technology and analytics to tailor specific training regimens for them.

"The popularity is growing and we can see that with the growing number of participants along with patrons, sponsors and spectators at national tournaments. Given the competitive nature and quality of players, it requires a decade-long strenuous preparation focusing on physical fitness, mental toughness, increased skill level and game strategy to make it to the top," he noted. "On an average, professional players like us, and some of the TKP wards, invest 40-50 hours a week in addition to physical fitness and game planning."

His ultimate dream, Kundu said, is to put a spotlight on the sport and be recognized as its brand ambassador.

"I want to continue to pursue my personal goals: to compete against the best and win laurels for ICC and the nation. And it is my vision to ensure players from ICC not only represent but win medals for the U.S. at the Olympics. My life's dream will be fulfilled when the national anthem of the U.S. is played at the 2028 Olympics to honor a table tennis victory," Kundu told **India-West**.

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#### COMMUNITY

#### By A Staff Reporter

CERRITOS, CA - Punjabi actress Kimi Verma will host on July 29 at the Sheraton Cerritos here, an "Empowerment Beauty Pageant." The titles that participants will vie for: Miss India Global USA, Mrs. India Global USA, Miss Punjaban USA and Mrs. Punjaban USA

Verma said in a statement, that the event, "is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, personal enhancement, and the development tools to help them thrive in work and in life while



Kimi Verma

carrying forward their heritage." The pageant invites all to participate with no height or weight

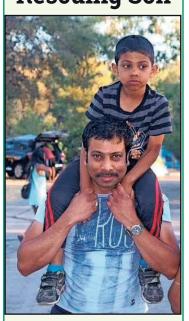
restrictions. "We believe a finance and taxes. positive uplifting personality should not be limited because of this," her statement said, adding, "divorced, separated, widowed women can apply. We believe it is ok to have a different way of thinking and not be afraid to stand out. We believe all women are champions, true individuals, unstoppable in forging ahead to achieve their goals."

All participants will receive training on speaking on stage, diet and health, make-up tips, hair and skin care, pointers on public confidence as well as information on

"We aim to create a safe space for participants as they strive for success and to represent the South Asian community with pride. Empowering women is essential to the health and socioeconomic development of families, communities, cities, and countries. When women feel safe, fulfilled, and productive, they can contribute their skills to the workforce and raise healthier and happier children. For sustainable development goals of society, empowering women is the most important step," Verma said.

For information: 530-650-2777.

## **Man Drowns** In CA Beach While **Rescuing Son**



SANTA CRUZ, CA (IANS) -An Indian American father of two, who brought his family for a vacation here, died while rescuing his 12-year-old son from a riptide.

Srinivasa Murthy Jonnalagadda, who did not know how to swim, was enjoying himself with his family at Panther State Beach in Santa Cruz County when rescue agencies had to be dispatched just after 6 pm on May 29.

"Unexpectedly a large wave came and knocked his son down and subsequent large waves began to drag him into the ocean," a GoFundMe page read. He ran to save his son when he realized that the child was struggling to get out of the water. While Srinivasa was able to rescue his son with help from a bystander, he was unfortunately dragged into deeper waters by the riptide as his family screamed and helplessly watched him drown.

Emergency personnel who rushed to the site were able to retrieve Srinivasa and CPR was initiated on him, following which he was boarded onto a California Highway Patrol helicopter and taken to the hospital.

He was pronounced dead at Stanford Hospital. According to Kion 46 news channel, Srinivasa was rescued by members of multiple law enforcement agencies, including State Parks, Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, and Santa Cruz Fire.

GoFundMe has called for donations to assist Srinivasa's family with immediate expenses such as funeral costs, medical bills, and other unforeseen financial obligations.

To donate: https://www. gofundme.com/f/help-support-the-family-of-srinivasa

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INDIA WEST

# HEALTH South Asians Have Poor Heart Health. Learn CPR. Become A Life Saver.

#### By Dr. JOSEPH C WU and **Dr. SIMON H STERTZER**

Joseph C. Wu, MD, Ph.D., is the President-Elect, American Heart Association, Director, Stanford Cardiovascular Institute, and Simon H. Stertzer, MD, is Professor of Medicine & Radiology, Stanford University School of Medicine

Close to 24 million people proudly identify as members of the diverse and valued Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI)

community in our country.

They've played and continue to play an integral part in the growth and history of the United States, starting - quite literally - by connecting the country with their instrumental role in building the Continental Railroad. They have been soldiers during wars overseas and fighters for equal rights on American soil.

They are healthcare professionals and technology experts and entrepreneurs: In 2020, the U.S.

Census identified 612,184 Asianowned businesses that employed 5.2 million people – the highest among all U.S. minority groups.

All reasons to stand tall, most

certainly. Yet when it comes to cardiovascular health - most specifically, learning CPR and having the confidence to per-

form this potentially lifesaving procedure - we fall woefully short. Take a look at these sobering



American

Heart

• In a survey of AAPI individuals, only 26 percent reported feeling confident enough to perform Hands Only CPR.

This easy-to-learn form of cardiopulmonary resuscitation requires only Association. two steps - call 911 and push hard

and fast – and can be just as effective as conventional CPR. • Just under 70 percent of



Dr Joseph C. Wu, MD, Ph.D.

respondents reported that fear of hurting the person who needed CPR would prevent them from attempting it.

• Only 46 percent of respondents, not even half, said they would attempt CPR at all if they saw the need.

Knowing this potentially lifesaving procedure and having the confidence to perform it are imperative if we want to save ourselves and each other. This leads to this other heart-related whammy: Compared to other ethnic groups, individuals from South Asia have a higher proportional mortality rate from ischemic (coronary artery) disease.

One reason undoubtedly is that 1 in every 20 non-Hispanic Asian adults smokes cigarettes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Smoking raises the risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and cancer - three of the leading causes of death among Asian Americans.

More disturbing news: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who suffer cardiac arrest outside a hospital setting are less likely to receive bystander CPR - which, even in the general population, is less than half.

We in the AAPI community are smart. We're strong. We have the wherewithal to change these statistics. That starts with doing all we can to enhance our own heart health. To stop smoking or not even start. To eat fewer processed foods and more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. To incorporate more movement into our lives.

And, equally as important, to accept the challenge of the American Heart Association to Be the Beat for our families, our friends, and for total strangers by learning Hands-Only CPR.

Granted, CPR won't save every life. Sadly, only about 10 percent of the 350,000 people who suffer cardiac arrest outside of a hospital setting survive it. But if you are or you know one of those survivors, isn't knowing this procedure worth it? Especially when you consider that performing CPR during cardiac arrest can Contd. on P14



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#### - HEALTH ------

Contd. from P13

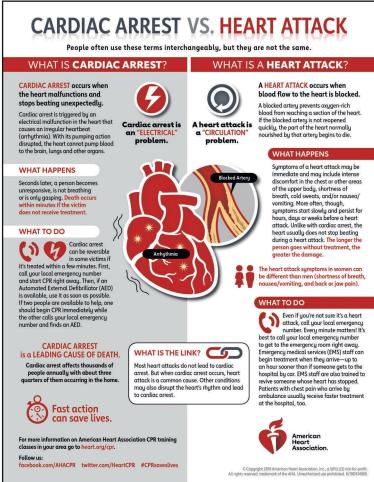
double or even triple a person's chance of survival.

That makes increasing awareness of the importance of bystander CPR "extremely important throughout the AAPI community," said Michelle A Albert, M.D., M.P.H. FAHA, American Heart Association volunteer President. "It is time to do better and shift the numbers so that every single household in America has at least one person who, at minimum, knows Hands-Only CPR."

Which brings us back to Be the Beat. This fun name with serious implications calls on us all to find songs with 100 to 120 beats per minute, which is the AHA-recommended rate to perform chest compressions during CPR. The organization has even teamed with the Elevance Health Foundation to create a Don't Drop the Beat playlist.

Most of us will recognize at least some of the songs: "Stayin' Alive" by the BeeGees. "One Dance" by Drake, Wizkid, Kyla. "Off the Wall" by Michael Jackson. "Ring of Fire" by Johnny Cash.

Each beat equals one compression: Deep, quick, and by the time the song ends, first responders answering your 911 call will quite possibly be there to take over. You can step aside, knowing you gave



For more information on American Heart Association CPR training classes in your area go to heart.org/cpt. Follow us: facebook.com/AHACPR twitter.com/HeartCPR #CPRsaveslives your all to help save a life. You granted hope to an individual, to a family, to a community – be they AAPI or otherwise, you were there.

> And you knew what to do. Wu is the President-Elect,

American Heart Association, Director, Stanford Cardiovascular Institute, and Simon H. Stertzer, MD, Professor of Medicine & Radiology, Stanford University School of Medicine.

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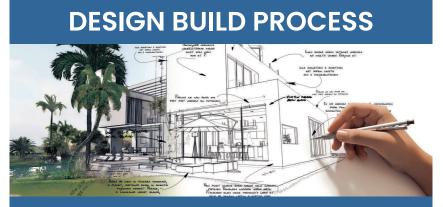
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**LEGISLATION** 

# With Overwhelming Support, CA Senate Passes Contentious Caste Bill

SACRAMENTO, CA (IANS) - The California Senate passed by 34-1 vote a bill that would make discrimination based on caste illegal in the state. California would become the first state to protect castes if the state Assembly passes the bill and Governor Gavin Newsom signs it into law.

Introduced by Senator Aisha Wahab in March, SB 403 adds caste as a protected category to an existing law, the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which provides that all people in the state of California are entitled to the

full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all



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Supporters for and against the Bill have been vocal about their positions. business establishments.

The development comes just weeks after the California Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously passed SB 403 in April.

It also follows the Seattle City Council's historic legislation banning caste discrimination earlier this year. The resolution moved by Indian American Kshama Sawant was approved by the Seattle City Council by six to one vote.

Wahab, the first Afghan American, and Muslim elected to the California state senate, represents the 10th District -- home to a diverse Asian population.

While introducing the Bill, she had said that caste-based prejudices exist in the US, and expanding the understanding of discrimination is necessary given the growing diversity in the country.

In California, caste discrimination occurs across industries, including technology, education, construction, restaurants, domestic work, and medicine, according to civil rights organization Equality Labs, one of the proponents of the bill.

"On behalf of all Dalit Californians and casteoppressed people around the world, we are ecstatic that the California Senate has passed SB403



off the Senate floor," Thenmozhi Soundararajan, a Dalit activist, and the founder of the caste equity organization Equality Labs, wrote in a tweet.

"This is a win rooted in years of Dalit feminist organizing, and we are just getting started in making the state safe for our entire caste-oppressed community. We know that we have a long journey ahead of us with this bill, but we have made history with this vote and are proud to look forward to working with the California Assembly on this historic bill!" Soundararajan.

A lot of Hindu groups in the US have expressed strong opposition to SB 403, which would specifically add "caste" to California's non-discrimination policy. Many of them fear that codifying caste in public policy will further fuel instances of Hinduphobia in the US.

"SB 403 unfairly maligns, targets and racial profiles select communities on the basis of their national origin, ethnicity, and ancestry for disparate treatment, thereby violating the very laws it seeks to amend, the Unruh Civil Rights Act. It further violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the US and California State Constitutions," The Hindu American Foundation had said in a statement.

#### **LEGISLATION**

# NY Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar's Bill To Make Diwali A School Holiday Passes

#### **By ARUL LOUIS**

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) - The New York State legislature has passed a Bill to make Diwali a school holiday in the city in a final scramble before it adjourned.

Both the Senate and the Assembly voted for the Bill before they ended their session early June 10 morning, and it now goes to Governor Kathy Hochul for her expected

#### signature to make it law.

Introducing the bill, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar said, "It is long past time to honor" the "vibrant cultural heritage" of the South Asian, Indo-Caribbean, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist communities by making Diwali a school holiday.

"As the first Hindu-American and South Asian-American woman elected to the state office in New York, I take special pride in

advocating for new American communities, including those that celebrate Diwali," Rajkumar said. Two earlier attempts to pass the legislation in 2021 and 2022 failed. The Bill overcame



Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar celebrates passing of the Bill with community members.

a last-minute hurdle after the Bill's sponsors, Rajkumar and State Senator Joseph Adabo, dropped a proposal to have Diwali replace the Brooklyn-Queens Day holiday and leave it to the discretion of the city. Diwali may instead replace an obscure holiday, Anniversary Day, to maintain the required 180 days of class required every year.

New York Mayor Eric Adams has supported the legislation, unlike his predecessors, as has Schools Chancellor David Banks.

In an earlier acknowledgment of the significance of Diwali, New York City suspended in 2006 a parking regulation for Diwali, putting it on par with other religious holidays.

CA Bill Allowing Sikhs To Ride Without Bike Helmets Passes In Senate



Several Sikhs have said they are happy with the no helmet Bill making progress.

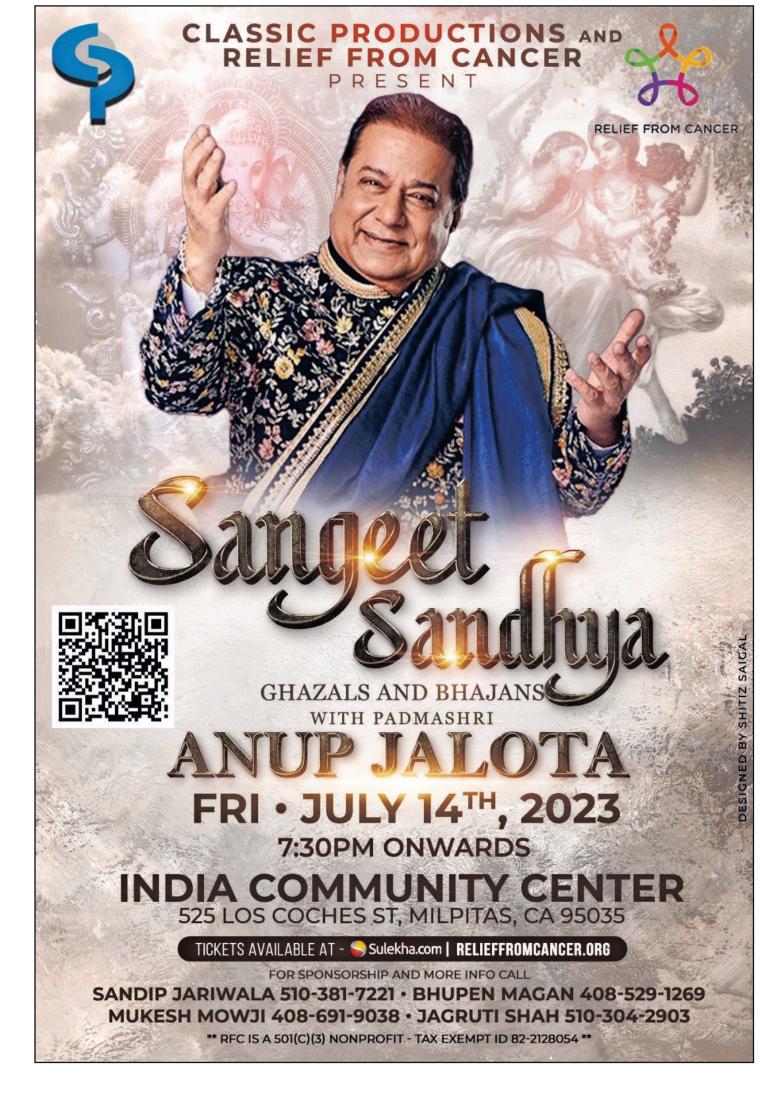
SACRAMENTO, CA (IANS) - Senators in California voted in favor of a bill that exempts Sikhs from wearing a safety helmet when riding a motorcycle.

"Freedom of religion is a core foundation of this country. We, as Americans, have the right to freely express our religion and I believe that right should equally extend to everyone. Any law that limits the ability to express one's religion, goes against what this country is all about," Dahle said in a statement after presenting the bill on the Senate floor.

According to 2021 American Community Survey estimates, 211,000 Sikhs live in California, which is nearly half of all Sikhs living in the US.

The State Senate was told that as of now, no helmet exists in the market that will accommodate a turban or a patka, but according to members of the Sikh community, a turban is a good enough protection. Currently, 18 states and Washington D.C. have a universal helmet law for all riders. 29 states require helmets for specified riders, generally riders under a certain age (usually 18 or 21).

Only Illinois, Iowa, and New Hampshire have no motorcycle helmet laws. Among the supporters of the bill were the Legendary Sikh Riders, the Sikh Legends of America, and the Sikh Saints Motorcycle Club.



**ELECTIONS** -

# As President, Nikki Haley Would Ban Abortion

#### **India-West News Desk**

WASHINGTON, DC - Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley has for the first time openly taken a position on abortion and even then, hedged her bets. On May 24, the media reported, she said she would sign a federal abortion ban into law if she were president, but... said it was unlikely to happen as there weren't enough Republican members of Congress to pass it.

The Hill reported that she said, "No one has been honest" about how difficult a ban would be to achieve, while speaking in Manchester, N.H. "It would take a majority of the House, 60 senators and a president to sign it," she said. "We haven't had 60 Republican senators in 100 years."

Haley also threw her support for the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v.



Nikki Haley campaigning in Iowa.

Wade, which had secured abortion rights on a federal level. "Now it's back in the states

where it belongs," The Hill reported she said on May 24.

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## Ramaswamy Now Pledges To Pardon Indicted Trump If Elected



Vivek Ramaswamy

WASHINGTON, DC (IANS) – It has been noted by political talking heads that with Donald Trump polling ahead for the Republican Party's 2024 presidential nomination, others in the fray, who have no chance of winning, sing his praises so there is a chance of being included in the cabinet in the event Trump does win.

Several politicians from Arizona to Florida sent out strong statements in Trump's favor after the Department of Justice (DOJ) charged Trump with a 37-count indictment, accusing the former President of risking sensitive security secrets after leaving office in 2021.

Trump is the first former American President to face federal charges, which include willful retention of national defense information, conspiracy to obstruct justice, withholding a document or record, corruptly concealing a document or a record, concealing a document in a federal investigation, a scheme to conceal, and making false statements and representations.

Vivek Ramaswamy, also running for the GOP nomination has now vowed to "promptly" pardon indicted former President Donald Trump if elected to the White House next year. "It would be much easier for me to win this election if Trump weren't in the race, but I stand for principles over politics. I commit to pardon Trump promptly on January 20, 2025, and to restore the rule of law in our country," he tweeted.

Trump had praised fellow candidate Ramaswamy after the political newbie polled even with former Vice President Mike Pence in a survey last month.

In an interview to The New York Post, Ramaswamy also heaped praises on Trump, saying that the former president "sets a high bar".

Asserting that there are also serious legal questions about the President's power to declassify documents, Ramaswamy called the move by the DOJ in charging Trump as "hypocritical".

Apart from Ramaswamy, fellow Republican candidate and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis slammed the indictment, saying that there had been what he called double standards in issuing charges.

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#### **ELECTIONS**

# Bera, Khanna Join Biden Campaign National Advisory Board



California Reps. Ro Khanna and Ami Bera have given their support to Joe Biden.

#### India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC - The Biden-Harris 2024 reelection campaign has announced the formation of its National Advisory Board, which will comprise 50 leading voices in the Democratic Party.

Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi will serve as chairperson of the Advisory Board. Indian American Congressmen from California, Ami Bera, and Ro Khanna have been named to the board which includes several Senators including Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker, and Raphael Warnock as well as a clutch of Governors that includes Gavin Newsom, Kathy Hochul, and Wes Moore. Among the Mayors, is the Mayor of Cincinnati Aftab Pureval, who was born in India.

Board members will participate in regular media interviews, assist with fundraising efforts and events, leverage their networks and platforms to amplify the campaign's message to voters, and engage directly with voters through grassroots efforts and events in key battleground states.

This initial group represents a crosssection of leaders in the Party who reflect the Biden coalition's diversity across many facets, with more members likely to come on board as the campaign builds and grows, the campaign said.

# Pramila Jayapal Backs Barbara Lee In California Senate Race



Liberal Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has thrown her weight behind Barbara Lee.

#### India-West News Desk

SACRAMENTO, CA - Congressional Progressive Caucus Chairwoman Pramila Jayapal has endorsed Rep. Barbara Lee in the contest for the seat that is expected to be vacated by Senator Diane Feinstein's seat.

"Barbara is a champion for justice who has been a persistent progressive voice in the U.S. House, and I know she'll fight for our shared progressive values in the U.S. Senate," Jayapal said.

"As a woman of color, I know representation matters and I'm excited for Barbara to bring her voice and her lived experience as a Black woman to the chamber so all of us can have a seat at the table. I'm proud to endorse Barbara Lee for U.S. Senate," she added. Others in the race are current reps Katie Porter and Adam Schiff. While Feinstein, 89, has said she will not seek reelection, polls have shown that the electorate want her out. In the corridors of Congress too there have been strong rumblings that she should leave.

"I am so grateful to have earned the trust and support of Congresswoman Jayapal," Lee said in a statement. "She is one of the strongest voices for justice in Congress and it's been my honor to fight alongside her for a more progressive future for all," she added. "I'm running this campaign to bring this fight to the U.S. Senate and on Day One, I'm ready to use my experience and record of results to move California and our country forward."

The California Senate primary is set for March 5, 2024.



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#### **POLITICS**

# As Covid Response Coordinator Ashish Jha Leaves, President Joe Biden Says He Has "Relied" On Him

Indian American physician Dr. Ashish Jha who led the US government's Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts, will leave the administration by the end of this month, a statement by President Joe Biden said.

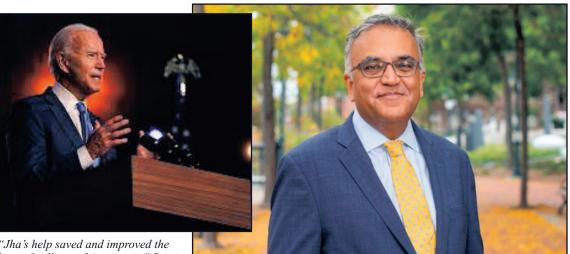
Jha, 52, will return to his previous post as dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University after spending 14 months as the White House Covid-19 Coordinator beginning in March 2022.

"For the last year, I have relied on Dr. Ashish Jha to help me do just that as the White House Co-

WASHINGTON, DC (IANS) - vid-19 Response Coordinator. As one of the leading public health experts in America, he has effectively translated and communicated complex scientific challenges into concrete actions that helped save and improve the lives of millions of Americans," President Biden said in a statement.

"I extend my deepest thanks to Ashish and his family. We are a stronger and healthier nation because of his contributions to public service," Biden added.

Jha's departure comes after the Biden administration ended the Covid-19 public health



lives of millions of Americans," President Biden said in a statement.

Indian-American White House Covid response coordinator to step down. emergency on May 11.

Jha will resume his leadership at Brown beginning July 1 with a focus on transforming public health education, research, and practice.

He said his return offers an opportunity to employ insights from the nation's pandemic response as educators across the school focus on training the next generation of public health leaders. "We are in a world drastically altered by the Covid-19 pandemic. For all we have accomplished to reduce illness and save lives, Covid-19 has exposed the weaknesses in our public health and healthcare systems," Jha said

in a university statement.

"I look forward to returning to Brown to continue our groundbreaking work transforming public health education, research, and practice to convert these weaknesses to strengths."

In his first 18 months as dean, Jha introduced a series of highimpact initiatives, championing an expansive portfolio of research and education priorities, and recruiting world-class faculty with expertise in global health, information disorders, health policy reform, and pandemic preparedness and response.



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#### **POLITICS**

# Geeta Rao Gupta Confirmed As Envoy For Global Women's Issues

#### India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC - President Joe Biden's nominee for Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State, on May 10, was confirmed by the US Senate. Due to partisan politics, the office has lain vacant for close to two years. Gupta, former Executive Director of the 3D Program for Girls and Women at the UN Foundation, is known as a global leader on gender equity and women's economic security.

On the Senate floor, Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) had repeatedly highlighted the need for an ambassador dedicated to advancing the rights of girls in the U.S. and around the world and slammed Republicans' obstruction, blocking the confirmation of Gupta.



Geeta Rao Gupta.

Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) , also worked to ensure the unlocking of the nomination, a press release from the Democratic politician's office said.

Gupta has a Ph.D. in Psychology from Bangalore University and a Master of Philosophy and Master of Arts from the University of Delhi.

She has been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University and served as co-Chair of the Gender-Based Violence Task Force of the World Bank. Before that, Dr. Gupta served as Deputy Executive Director, Programs at UNICEF. Earlier, she was a senior fellow at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and served as president of the International Center for Research on Women.

# White House Names Californian Chief Of Staff Of Its Climate Policy Office

#### India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC - The White House has named Indian American Medha Raj as the new Chief of Staff for its Climate Policy Office, the Washington Post said in a report.

Raj was previously in the National Security Council where she was an Advisor to the Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary.

While there she was also Chief of Staff, Operation Allies Welcome Task Force, the White House task force dedicated to Afghan refugee settlement.

She comes to the administration through the Biden campaign of 2020 where she had served as the Digital Chief of Staff, a key role at a time when the campaigning was almost entirely virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with Raj, The White House climate office has brought in new staffers to work on transportation emissions, clean energy infrastructure, agriculture, and other issues, Politico reported . The Indian American will replace Maggie Thomas who has been named Special Assistant to the President for climate, it reported. With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 which included about \$370 billion in clean energy and climate investments in 10 years, the of-



Medha Raj.

fice has a huge say on policy and government actions related to among other things, the White House said, resilience to the impacts of climate change; conservation of lands, waters, oceans, and biodiversity; environmental justice; and spur economic growth.

A graduate of Georgetown University and an MBA from Stanford University, Raj worked on the Buttigieg campaign, from August 2019 to March 2020. She also served in the office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, now the Ambassador to India, and on California Governor Gavin Newsom's campaign in 2018.

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#### INDO-AMERICA ———

## Every One In Five Student Visa In | Rahul Gandhi To Bay Area Audience 2022 Issued In India: Eric Garcetti

NEW DELHI (ANI) - The 7th Annual Student Visa Day was held by the US Mission in India, with consular officers conducting interviews for Indian Student Visa applications. Speaking at the embassy, US Ambassador Eric Garcetti noted that more Indians come to the US as students than from any other country. Garcetti stated, "Last year, India became number 1, and I don't see that changing ahead in the future. I see that relationship at the very top of how we articulate our values of welcoming not just Americans to higher education but opening that door to people worldwide." He highlighted that one out of every five US student visas was issued in India in 2022, surpassing the proportion

#### of the Indian population in the world.

Indian students make up over 21% of the international student population in the US, with nearly 200,000 Indian students studying during the 2021-2022 academic year. Garcetti congratulated the students as they prepared to join the growing community of Indian students pursuing education in the US. Additionally, approximately 35% of Indian students on F1 status are engaged in Optional Practical Training. In 2022, Indians received the highest number of H&L employment visas (65%) and F1 student visas (17.5%) worldwide. Furthermore, over 1.2 million Indians visited the US in 2022, making them one of the largest groups of international visitors.



During his NY stop Gandhi met with Mayor Eric Adams.

Contd. From P1 of the Indian National Congress in the recent Karnataka elections. Reflecting on the current political climate in India, he acknowledged that the country is going through a political storm. Nevertheless, he expressed confidence that this storm would eventually pass. He firmly believed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party, had significant vulnerabilities and that the notion of its invincibility was a fallacy. He stated, "I don't, for a moment, believe that the BJP cannot be defeated."

Highlighting the pain inflicted by the BJP's policies,

Gandhi pointed out the adverse impact on farmers, the poor, tribals, Dalits, and small and medium businesses across the country. He called attention to the need for a united Opposition to counter the BJP's divisive politics and policies. Gandhi revealed that efforts to forge Opposition unity ahead of the 2024 elections were progressing favorably. He stressed the importance of presenting a viable alternative vision to the BJP, similar to the principles that underpinned the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Dr. Anjali Arondekar, Professor in the Department of Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz, moderated the event and expressed her appreciation for the platform that allowed for discussions about the perils and possibilities of democratic futures in an increasingly divided and authoritarian India. She commended Gandhi's focus on economic and social justice, connecting the Silicon Valley community with the larger Indian society.

Kamil Hasan, a noted philanthropist who attended the event, praised Gandhi's intelligence, articulation, and compassion for the marginalized. He expressed his belief that Gandhi could potentially serve as a capable Prime Minister, given his commitment to social justice and his genuine concern for the welfare of the diverse Indian populace. However, Hasan also noted that Gandhi evaded some pointed questions, leaving room for improvement in direct and transparent communication.

Dr. Anuradha Luther Maitra, UC Santa Cruz Foundation Board Trustee, viewed the event as an UCSV (University-Community Silicon Valley) initiative that channeled the ancient Greek agora-a public space that facilitates conversations vital to democracy. She hoped that Gandhi gained insight into the projects supported by the Indian diaspora, which demonstrated a connected planet to Indians (especially those who say: "You don't live in India, you don't really understand"), to people of Indian heritage (so many more can start thinking and acting on similar lines), indeed to the world (so they can join this effort for reasons of shared humanity).

Rahul Gandhi's address in the Bay Area provided an engaging perspective on the shifting political landscape in India and stressed the importance of genuine human connections. Gandhi expressed confidence in the Congress party's ability to defeat the BJP and outlined his vision for an alternative political future. As India prepares for the 2024 elections, the challenge now lies in translating these aspirations into tangible actions that can shape the country's destiny.

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# INDO-AMERICA Canada: India Top Source Of Foreign Interference

TORONTO, (IANS) - Prime Minister Justin Trudeaus National Security Adviser Jody Thomas has said that India is among the top sources of foreign interference in Canada.

"When I talk about foreign interference and economic security, I'm now talking about a number of state actors and non-state proxies," Jody Thomas said at a conference organized by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

"This includes Russia, Iran and India. That said, the actor that comes up most on these issues, and it's no surprise to anybody, is China," she was quoted as saying in Toronto Star.

University of British Columbia professor Vina Nadjibulla told Toronto Star that it was "striking" that Thomas listed India along with the three other countries -- a move that could hit the close India-Canada ties.

The NSA's remarks came months after the Liberals highlighted India as part of their Indo-Pacific strategy and as a priority for establishing closer economic and scientific ties.

"The relationship we have diplomatically with India is improving rapidly, but I think we would be kidding ourselves if we were not to acknowledge some of the diaspora politics and local issues here



in Canada, which will have a significant impact," Nadjibulla said.

According to The Star, "federal agencies have indirectly warned in recent years of India exerting improper influence in Canada, but rarely by name".

On the contrary, India has raised strong protest with the Canadian government against radical Khalistani elements organizing referendums in the North American nations and meddling in India's domestic affairs, particularly the farmers' protests.

Despite exhortation from India to act, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has failed to act against a new wave of Khalistani activism in Canada.

This is because Trudeau heads a minority government that is backed by the New Democratic Party (NDP), headed by Jagmeet Singh, a Khalistani

> Canadian National Security Adviser Jody Thomas has been strident in her criticism of India.

seats in parliament, whose support is critical for the survival of the Trudeau government. Singh has been called out time and again

sympathizer.

Singh's NDP has 24

on Twitter for attempting to meddle in Indian affairs, especially after he "raised concerns" over the crackdown in Punjab against Waris Punjab De' chief and Khalistan sympathizer Amritpal Singh.

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According to India Narrative, Singh has long been suspected of attempts to link Khalistani and Kashmiri separatism from his perch in Canada. He is apparently connected with prominent Khalistani and Kashmiri separatist groups based in different countries of Europe, according to media reports.

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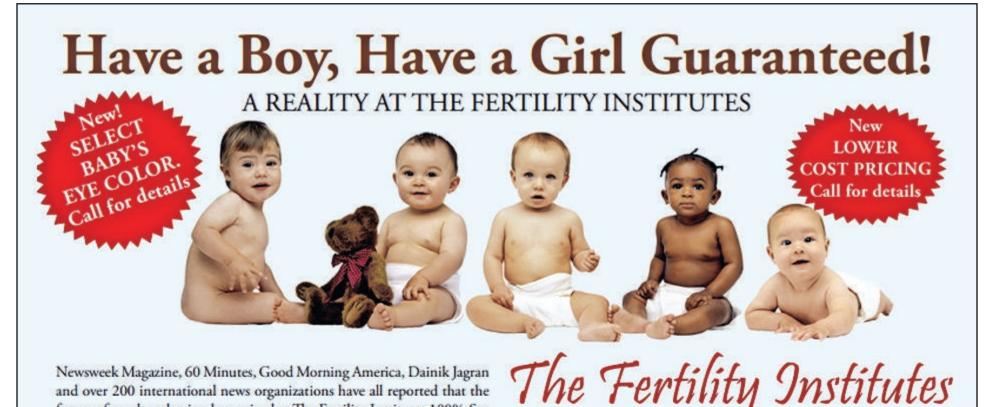


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#### CRIME

# Arrested Neo Nazi Teen Sai Kandula Wanted To Kill Biden, Seize Power

WASHINGTON, DC (IANS) - A teeenager, Sai Varshith Kandula, has been charged with threatening to kill President Joe Biden and wanting to "seize power."

The 19-year- rammed a rented truck into the White House barriers on the night of May 22. Officials are looking into the "mental health component" of the attack.

U.S. Park Police identified the driver as Sai Varshith Kandula, 19, of Chesterfield, Missouri. Kandula appeared in D.C. Superior Court on May 23 afternoon,

where he was determined to be a flight risk and a "significant risk to the community."

Kandula is currently charged with one federal count of depredation of property of the U.S. more than \$1,000. He is expected to be transferred to federal court for a hearing. Park police said he was initially taken into custody on charges that included assault with a dangerous weapon and threatening harm to the president, vice president or family members.

"There were no injuries to any

Secret Service or White House personnel and the cause and manner of the crash remain under investigation," the Secret Service tweeted. No weapons, ammunition or explosives were found in the truck, according to court documents s.

According to the court documents, at about 9:35 p.m. local time, a U.S. Park Police officer witnessed the truck drive

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#### onto a sidewalk, "sending multiple pedestrians running from the scene." Moments later, the driver of the U-Haul slammed into the Lafayette Square barriers, backed up, and slammed into them again, the court documents state.

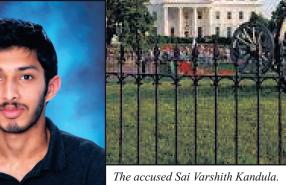
The officer approached the U-Haul and saw the vehicle's hood "smoking" and "liquids leaking from the undercarriage," the documents said. The officer then witnessed the suspect, identified as Kandula, walking around to the back of the U-Haul, and pulling out a flag with a Nazi swastika and a backpack, the documents state.



searched him, finding a Missouri driver's license, according to the court documents.

When later interviewed by Secret Service agents, Kandula said that he had flown from St. Louis to Washington, D.C., on a one-way ticket, arriving at 8 p.m., Monday, according to court documents. In the interview, he made threats against President Biden, saying that he had intended to "get to the White House, seize power, and be put in charge of the nation," the documents said.

He also stated that he had planned the attack for six months, according to the documents. The source said the FBI was involved



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# Dharmesh Patel Blames Tesla Car But Wife Says He Tried To Kill Them

#### India-West News Desk

PASADENA, CA – Indian-American Dharmesh Patel, has denied that he intentionally drove his family off a cliff on the Pacific Coast Highway on January 2, saying that the Tesla car he was driving malfunctioned. His claim has been denied by his wife, Neha who was a passenger in the car along with their two children.

Dharmesh A. Patel, 41, of Pasadena, was charged with attempted first-degree murder and child abuse in February to which he pleaded not guilty.

Patel told investigators that the sensor on his Model Y electric car indicated it had low tire pressure as he was driving his wife and two children on the Pacific Coast Highway on January 2 this year.

He further told the investigators that he was trying to stop to check the tires when the vehicle tumbled down the cliff overlooking the ocean, court documents released on May 18 said.

His wife contradicted his statements. "He's depressed. He's a doctor. He said he was going to drive off the cliff. He purposely drove off," Neha is reported to have told the rescuers at scene. Patel, a radiologist at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in Los Angeles, was transported to San Mateo County jail after his release from the hospital where he was treated for "serious lower body injuries".

His wife and two children, aged four and seven, also sustained serious injuries.

Patel told investigators he and his family were on their way to Montara, a beach town where his brother lived, adding he stopped at three gas stations because Tesla's dashboard sensors kept indicating the tire pressure was low.

He added while he was on the Pacific Coast Highway, the car "began to feel different.

Patel also said his wife had been "irritated" just before the crash because she didn't want to stop by his brother's house.

He also told officers he was not on any medication or under the influence of drugs or alcohol at



Dharmesh Patel

the time of the crash.

"When asked if he felt depressed, he related he was not really depressed, he just felt down because times were bad in the world (with) the war and the drugs," California Highway Patrol Officer Aaron Sapien wrote in the documents.

According to witnesses, the



Tesla crash: Indian-American blames car for plunging off cliff; wife denies. (Photo:Facebook / Neha Patel).

Tesla didn't show signs of slowing down before it plummeted off the cliff and the police report also does not indicate a malfunction.

San Mateo District Attorney

Steve Wagstaffe said in January the Tesla was not in self-driving mode when it plunged into the rocky beachside bluff. If convicted of murder charges, Patel could get a life sentence in prison.

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#### **SPORTS**

# Monank Patel To Lead Team Cricket World Cup Qualifier

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) – Team USA on May 25 announced a 15-member squad and named Monank Patel as their captain for the 2023 ICC Mens Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe, which is to be played from June 18-July 9.

USA will be entering the qualifying tournament to determine the last two spots for the main event in India in October-November on the back of securing the top position in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier Playoff held in Namibia in April this year.

Aaron Jones will act as deputy to Patel while the squad also features left-arm pacer Abhishek Paradkar, with Ian Holland unavailable for the tournament due to his county championship commitments with Hampshire in England.

However, pacer Ali Khan, who led the wicket-taking chart with 16 scalps, including a stunning haul of 7/42 in the key clash against Jersey, will miss the first two matches of the Cricket World Cup Qualifier for USA against West Indies and Nepal on June 18 and 20 respectively.

Khan had received a demerit

point in the final game at the Qualifier Playoff after having animated exchanges with Jersey players, which meant that he would miss the next two games that USA played irrespective of the format.

Also, he had previously accumulated three demerit points. The total four demerit points over a 24-month cycle have been converted to a two-match suspension as per article 7.6 of the Code. USA are placed alongside 1975 and 1979 World Cup winners West Indies, hosts Zimbabwe, Netherlands, and Nepal in Group A.

Each side will play the other teams in their group once with the top three from each group progressing to the Super Six stage. In the Super Six, they will play the sides they did not meet in the group stage.

All points won in the group stage will be carried over to the Super Six stage apart from those gained against the teams that fail to make it to the Super Six stage. The two top teams after the Super Six stage will contest the final and will both progress to the main ODI World Cup event in India. For the first time in this tournament, DRS will be used for all matches from the Super Six stage onwards.



USA Squad: Monank Patel (captain), Aaron Jones (vice-captain), Abhishek Paradkar, Ali Khan, Gajanand Singh, Jasdeep Singh, Kyle Philip, Nisarg Patel, Nostush Kenjige, Saiteja Mukkamalla, Saurabh Netravalkar, Shayan Jahangir, Steven Taylor, Sushant Modani, Usman Rafiq



#### **ENTERTAINMENT**

wash myself in any way. I felt like I

got to just be my full authentic

Indian self, and I was not the

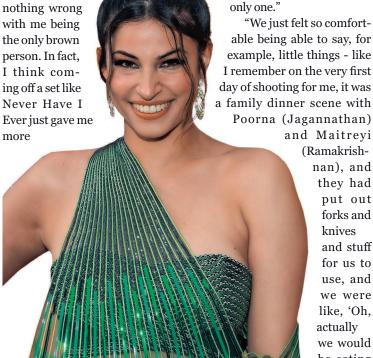
# 'Never Have I Ever' Amped Up Richa Moorjani's Confidence

LOS ANGELES, CA (IANS) -Actress Richa Moorjani, who is popularly known by her character name Kamala from 'Never Have I Ever', has heaped praise on the show's set for not only boosting her faith in herself but also for always

making her feel like she was truly welcome. "First of all, I was not the only brown person, and I was playing an Indian character with an Indian name who was allowed to have a slight Indian accent, but the comedy's not about her accent. It's just part of who she is," Moorjani told People.

Moorjani wrapped up filming in August 2022, and she immediately traveled to Calgary, to film the fifth season of 'Fargo' for six months, which she calls an "incredible experience."

"There was nothing wrong with me being the only brown person. In fact, I think coming off a set like Never Have I Ever just gave me



confidence walking onto another set where I didn't have other brown people," she shares.

"I just felt more comfortable than I might have felt in the past coming off of a set where I was a lead character and always made to feel like I belonged."

Show creators Mindy Kaling and Lang Fisher were conscious of giving their cast a voice on set, and Moorjani says the freedom of not having to check even a small part of her true self made the biggest difference. "I didn't feel like I had to, for lack of a better word, white(Ramakrishnan), and they had put out forks and knives and stuff for us to use. and

we were like, 'Oh, actually we would be eating with our

hands if it's Indian food," Moorjani reminisced.

The authenticity didn't stop there. "We don't wear shoes in the house. So, from that day onwards (after we mentioned it), no actors ever wore shoes in the set house. even if they were guest actors," Moorjani said. She added: "It became a thing written into the script."

As for what the final season holds for Kamala, Moorjani said that she thinks audiences will be "happy" - something she and Kamala are always in pursuit of, reports People.

represented and reflected

as who we are inside our house and how we feel in-

side. There's a balance ... "

# Poorna Jagannathan On **Breaking Asian Stereotypes**



She added: "We are always such side characters and are always like the stereotypical Indian characters with absolutely no dimensions. But suddenly we have shown like 'Never Have I Ever'."Drawing a parallel with her character of Nalini, Poorna said that she herself is an "immigrant mother" and the show tells a lot about what "it means to be an immigrant, mother, what it means to struggle, joy, as a woman to have desires and sexuality. What an amazing feeling to step into these characters' shoes that has a fully lived life as an actor but also as a South Asian woman."



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## Deepika Padukone On TIME Cover

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY - Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone has been featured on the cover of TIME Magazine. With this, Deepika joins the elite club of global figures like Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, and several other personalities who've featured on the noted magazine.

It was in 2022 when Deepika was named in 'The Time100 Impact Award' for her achievements in cinema and work in mental health advocacy. The article on the star begins with, "Deepika Padukone never set out to take India to the world. She wanted the world to come to India," and points to the irony of how despite not hankering for Hollywood she has become an international star nevertheless. "Indian cinema has transcended borders and Indians are everywhere, so the fame goes wherever you go," she is quoted as saying, quietly explaining her stardom.

The magazine documents several of her international projects: Hollywood appearances, the Oscar presentation, and being the brand ambassador for several high-profile labels like LV, Levi's, Adidas, L'Oreal, and Tissot. But it also talks about the difference she is making by being open about her mental health and working with a foundation to help others.

On the acting front, Deepika's latest release 'Pathaan' with Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan turned out to be a blockbuster. She is now gearing up for her next 'Fighter', where she will be seen starring alongside Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor. She will also be seen in 'Project K' starring Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.



# Padma Lakshmi To Leave 'Top Chef'



#### India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA - Padma Lakshmi after 17 years and 19 seasons is leaving 'Top Chef,' the long-running and popular cooking contest show on Bravo. The 52-year-old star on June 2, announced her move on her social media handles.

"After much soul searching, I have made the difficult decision to leave Top Chef. Having completed a glorious 20th season as host and executive producer, I am extremely proud to have been part of building such a successful show," Padma who has host and judge wrote.

"I feel it's time to move on and make space for Taste the Nation, my books, and other creative pursuits," she added. NBCUniversal meanwhile said, "Padma Lakshmi leaves behind an incredible legacy on Bravo's Top Chef. Her impact on the Emmy, James Beard, and Critics' Choice Award-winning series is undeniable. We are grateful to Padma for being a consummate host, judge, and executive producer...."

## Diljit And Taylor Swift Were 'Touchy'

LOS ANGELES, CA (IANS) – Actorsinger Diljit Dosanjh slammed news reports and social media accounts claiming he got "touchy" with American singer Taylor Swift at a restaurant in Vancouver.

The report read: "BREAKING: Vancouver patrons were in for a surprise when they saw two of their favorite stars dining together at Cactus Club Cafe Coal Harbor on Monday night. Multiple sources confirmed that Taylor Swift and Diljit Dosanjh were laughing and being 'touch touch'." Diljit retweeted the news report that there's "something called privacy." The tweet was in Punjabi. He has now been deleted. However, screenshots of his tweet are doing the rounds. Taylor Swift and Matty Healy, who began dating in May this year, have reportedly broken up.



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#### **ENTERTAINMENT**

# Rahat Mahajan's Film 'The Cloud Messenger' Wins At LAAPFF

#### India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA - Rahat Mahajan's debut feature film 'Meghdoot/The Cloud Messenger,' recently won a Special Jury Mention at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

The jury said that the film was a, "truly unprecedented cinematic experience." It said, "With every frame, Mahajan's vision took us on a mesmerizing journey, bridging the gap between the ethereal heavens and the earthly realm. This meticulously crafted film weaves a tapestry of enchanting storytelling, crafting new folklore, and igniting our imagination with its fresh and innovative approach."

'The Cloud Messenger' is about two starcrossed lovers who meet across time, space, and ancient myth in a visually stunning, ro-



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mantically ravishing journey through the cosmic cycle of life and death.

"Mahajan's creation stands as an unforgettable testament to his artistic brilliance and the power of visual storytelling," the jury added. The film has received rave reviews from critics and accolades at several prestigious festivals Mahajan said, including The International Film Festival of Rotterdam, BFI London Film Festival, Melbourne IFF, Singapore IFF, and São Paulo IFF.

Mahajan's first short film 'Memoirs of an Apple' won the first prize at the IDPA film festival in 2006 and was aired on Indian national television. Shortly after, he started working in the Bombay film industry, starting out as an assistant director under the tutelage of Vishal Bhardwaj and ultimately spearheading Visual Promotions for several acclaimed feature films including Kaminey, Ishqiya and Udaan. The director, cinematographer, editor, screenwriter, and producer has a bachelor's degree from St. Xaviers College, Mumbai, and an MFA from the ArtCenter College of Design in Los Angeles.

> Ranveer Singh To Enter Hollywood?

MUMBAI (ANI) - If reports are to be believed, Ranveer Singh has signed for representation with Hollywood talent agency William Morris Endeavor (WME).

WME also represents Ryan Reynolds and Dwayne Johnson. This update has left fans excited,

making them wonder if he is stepping into Hollywood.

Ranveer was launched by Yash Raj Film in 2010 with Band Baaja Baaraat, and since then he has been enthralling fans with his versatile acting skills. In a career spanning 13 years, he time and again worked with Sanjay Leela Bhansali and delivered hits like Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela, the costume drama Bajirao Mastani, and the historical romance Padmaavat.

More recently, Ranveer won critical acclaim as Indian cricket legend Kapil Dev in the sports biopic 83 and will next be seen in director Karan Johar's romantic comedy Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani.

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