### Voice of the Indian American Community



### From January H-1B Holders Will Be Able To Renew Visas In US

NEW YORK, NY (IANS) – In a move likely to benefit Indian professionals, 20,000 H1B specialty occupation workers will be able to renew their visas in the US beginning from January next year, according to State Department officials.

This development comes months after the White House announced a pilot program for domestic renewal of certain categories of H-1B visas.

The visa renewal pilot program is one of multiple measures the State Department is looking to add or continue to drive down wait times for travel to the US, Bloomberg Law reported, citing officials.

It would allow H-1B holders to renew their visas by mailing them



to the State Department rather than travel outside the US and face uncertain wait times to secure an appointment at a US consular of-

er fice before returning.

"We really need to get proof of concept that it works before we *Contd. on P26* 

### Manu And Rika Shah Endow Chair In Chapman University's B-School



Chapman University's President Daniele C. Struppa with Manu and Rika Shah.

India-West Staff Reporter ORANGE, CA – The Shah Happiness Foundation has made a generous gift to establish The

Shah Family Endowed Chair in

Innovativeness at Chapman University's George L. Argryos College of Business and Economics. This philanthropic initiative aims to stimulate innovation, education, *Contd. on P2* 

Contd. on P29

### Californian Jhansi Reddy's Daughter-In-Law Wins Assembly Seat

HYDERABAD (IANS) - Mamidala Yeshaswini Reddy is just 26 and has made a sensational electoral debut defeating political heavyweights in the recently concluded Telangana Assembly elections including the minister for panchayat raj Erraballi Dayakar Rao, a six-time MLA and onetime MP.

Yashaswini's entry into the poll fray itself was dramatic. It was her mother-in-law Hanumandla Jhansi Rajender Reddy who was an aspirant for the Congress ticket from Palakurthi.

Indian American Jhansi is known in the constituency for

philanthropic activities in the erstwhile Warangal district. Her husband Hanumandla Rajender Reddy is a doctor, and the family owns and runs California-based Raj

Properties and Group. Jhansi is the founder and president of the US-based Women Empowerment Telugu Association. State Congress chief A. Re-

vanth Reddy wanted Jhansi to



Yashaswini is 26 years old. Photo: YouTube screengrab.

contest on the party ticket. She had even started campaigning. However, a few days before the nomination process commenced, *Contd. on P15* 

### Community Celebrates Garba's Heritage Tag In Times Square



Excited Indian Americans at Times Square, New York.

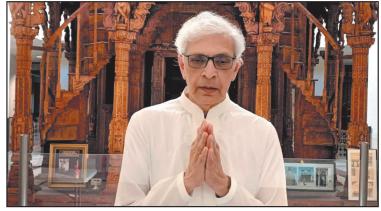
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### Drs. Jasvant & Meera Modi Donate \$800K To CSUN

India-West Staff Reporter

NORTHRIDGE, CA – California

significant step towards educating others about Jainism's teachings of nonviolence, non-possessiveness,



Jaswant Modi has been a major benefactor of Jain Studies.

State University, Northridge has announced a donation of \$800,000 by Dr. Jasvant Modi, a retired gastroenterologist and philanthropist, and his wife Dr. Meera Modi.

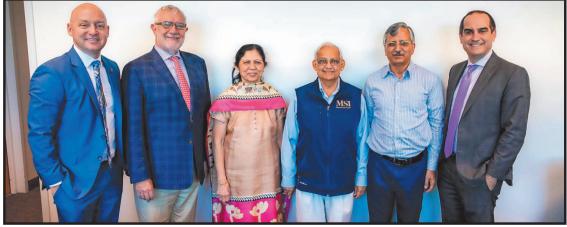
The funds are designated to support the Bhagvan Ajitnath Endowed Professorship in Jain Studies within the Department of Religious Studies, College of Humanities. This landmark gift marks a significant step in promoting the understanding of Jainism, a major but less understood religion from early India, the Modis said.

"I am proud of my heritage and the key principles Jainism embodies," said Dr. Jasvant Modi. "Establishing a professorship at CSUN is a and plurality." The endowed professorship will focus on teaching the religions of Southeast Asia, with a special emphasis on Jainism. The Modis' gift is not only a testament to their commitment to higher education and Jain studies but also serves as an inspiration for the Jain community, a press release said.

Jasvant Modi was born in Godhra, India in 1951, and completed his medical education at B.J. Medical College. He immigrated to the US in 1975 and proceeded to complete his residency in Chicago.

The couple has developed four small hospitals, which have become vital support systems for their respective communities.

### COMMUNITY Chapman University's B-School



Manu and Rika Shah with the Chapman leadership Contd. from P1 The end

and research at the intersection of high-tech thinking and low-tech industries, a press release said.

The Shah Family Endowed Chair will play a pivotal role in fostering innovative thinking through a dedicated full-semester course titled "Creativity and Innovation — Corporate Entrepreneurship." Additionally, the endowed chair will actively engage in research and service activities, investigating the successful application of high-tech thinking to low-tech industries.

Matt Parlow, Chapman's executive vice president, and chief advancement officer expressed satisfaction with the partnership, stating, "We couldn't be more pleased that such esteemed business leaders are partnering with Chapman in this endeavor." The endowment also includes plans to provide internships to Chapman students, creating a collaborative bridge between academia and industry. These internships will offer hands-on experience, reflecting the transformative journey of the Shahs in the surfacing industry and the founding of their company, M S International, Inc. (MSI).

Henrik Cronqvist, dean of Argyros College, highlighted Manu Shah's approach at MSI, stating, "What Manu did at MSI was apply high-tech thinking and innovativeness to a low-tech stone industry." The endowment aims to express the Shah family's commitment to education, innovation, and social impact.

The Shah Family Endowed Chair will organize events featuring local and national leaders who have successfully applied high-tech thinking to low-tech industries, providing students with invaluable learning opportunities. The initiative will culminate in an annual awards program, The Shah Family Awards for Innovativeness, recognizing leaders in this domain.

Chapman President Daniele C. Struppa expressed excitement about providing students with exposure to advanced technology in traditional sectors.

The endowed chair aligns with the Shahs' longstanding dedication to turning dreams into reality, exemplified through their significant impact with the Shah Happiness Foundation. Founded in 1975, MSI, their company, is a leading supplier of North American flooring, countertop, wall tile, and hardscaping products.

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CENTURY 21



### COMMENTARY Towards A Brighter Tomorrow: India's G20 Presidency And The Dawn Of A New Multilateralism

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. It is a moment to reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future.'

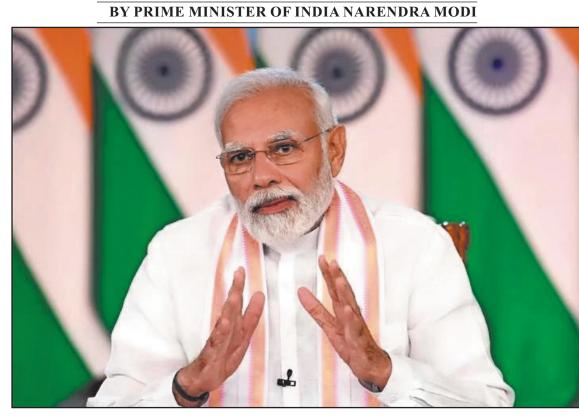
As we undertook this responsibility last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress.

Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to humancentric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve - the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it.

Inclusive, ambitious, actionoriented, and decisive-these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles.

Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80% of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit,' convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place



in shaping the global narrative. Inclusivity also infused India's domestic approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democ-

racy. Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader devel-

opmental aims, aligning with G20's mandate.

At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education,

gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India

India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative.

was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository,

a significant stride in global

technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complimentary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly. In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), the world can benefit from our ageold sustainable traditions.

Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries

require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030.

Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasised the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order.

Gender equality took centre stage in the Declaration, culminating in the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development.

The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118adopted documents, a marked rise from the past.

During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war.

I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalized multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere.

As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come.



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### **Ektaa Center Achieves Milestones In A Packed Fall Season**

**India-West Staff Reporter** 

IRVINE, CA – Southern California's Ektaa Center experienced a remarkable and bustling Fall season this year, with a series of events that showcased India's rich arts and culture, fostering inclusivity and collaboration. Kicking off the season was the highly successful fifth iteration of the Ragaspirit Festival on September 24, at the Irvine Barclay Theatre. Renowned music icons Anup Jalota, Abhijit Banerjee, and Taranath Bhattacharya captivated

the audience with their performances and lighthearted interactions.

On October 14 in a commitment to its vision and mission of inclusion, Ektaa Center also represented India at the popular Irvine Global Village held at the OC Great Park.

Breaking new ground, Ektaa Center marked a historic first with the Pacific Symphony's Fall festival at the Renee & Henry Segerstrom Hall in Costa Mesa on October 21. The festival featured the debut of upcoming composer Aashray Harishankar's piece in Ragam Chakravakam/Ahir





Ektaa Board, the Diwali Committee, Irvine city and Orange County officials.



Irvine Police Chief Michael Kent lights the lamp at the Diwali fest as Mayor Farah Khan looks on.

Large crowds and audiences

All Photos: Jaspreet Singh

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The Ektaa Center Board.

Bhairav, performed by the 50-piece Symphony and accompanied by talented young musicians from the Diaspora.

The 9th annual Diwali Fest took place on October 28, at the OC Great Park, attracting over 6000 attendees, including city and county officials. Supported by Lexus, the festival showcased India's arts and culture through music and dance performances

by over 100 community participants and featured offerings from popular restaurants, caterers, and vendors.

Under the Ektaa umbrella, the South Asian Senior Association, led by Board member Preeti Singh, has been providing essential services to elders in the community during and beyond the pandemic. The association's Diwali gathering in November at the Lakeview Senior Center here was a sold-out success. Ektaa Center presented Malavika Sarukkai's Anubandh as part of the prestigious Irvine Barclay Theatre's 2023-24 Dance series on November 18 which was an unforgettable evening celebrating the vibrancy of Indian dance and culture.

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### COMMUNITY **Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles Holds Heart Warming Fundraiser**

#### **ByANAND SUBBARAMAN**

LONG BEACH, CA - Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles (CMLA) on December 2, held its 17th annual fundraiser at the expansive Jordan High School auditorium, here. The theme of this evening of giving back, food, and entertainment, was 'Krishna Leela' - the Divine Play and Joy of Lord Krishna. The entertainment segment - a series of dance dramas enacting various aspects and events of Lord Krishna's life was performed and offered entirely by CMLA community members.

Swami Ishwarananda, the spiritual head of CMLA and a director of Chinmaya Mission West, addressed the audience at the top of the program. He shared information about Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth (aka Chinmaya University), the first institution to be granted permanent "deemed university" status by the Government of India to teach a curriculum based on Vedantic principles of instruction.

He then explained the significance of the evening's program: We are constantly anxious and stressed about our lives - regrets about the past, stress about the present, and anxiety about the future. All these are just aspects of Maya, the divine play or illusion that we are ensnared in. Swamiji said that with the correct understanding of our true Self as being none other than a part of the Universal Awareness - an understanding achieved through surrender and devotion to the Lord - we can free ourselves from Maya. Lord Krishna demonstrates through his varied activities that one can participate in the divine play and yet have mastery over ourselves.

Babu Pillai, Chairman of the Foundation Committee of CMLA, then shared that as a charitable organization, about 80% of CMLA revenue is plowed back into the community through services and activities, with a mere 20% going towards maintenance and occupancy expenses. This is in remarkable contrast to several leading charities that have more than 50% overhead.

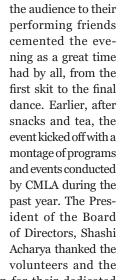
The entertainment program then started, to the glee of the audience. Even though the dances and dramas that followed were performed by CMLA members - about 150 in all - rather than professional dancers and actors, the audience was treated to a polished and sophisticated presentation. The participants were expertly guided by Ruchi Lamba, a Kathak and Kuchipudi dancer and teacher in the LA area, who choreographed and scripted the performance.

It was clear from the crisp presen-

tation that a great deal of practice and rehearsal went into the production. Different aspects of Lord Krishna's life were presented - his birth, childhood in Gokul includ-

ing the beloved tale of stealing butter, defeat of the dreaded serpent Kalia, lifting of Govardhan mountain, consorting with the Gopis and Radha, saving Draupadi from humiliation by the Kauravas and finally the famed discourse of Bhagavad Gita. Through skillful use of background projection, elaborate and dazzling cos-

tumes, lively narration, music, and graceful dance, the audience was enthralled. The enthusiastic cheers, applause, and shout- outs from



CHINMAYA MISSION

LOS ANGELES

membership for their dedicated contributions to the event.

The organization provides a systematic and thorough education

on Vedanta philosophy, culture, and traditions to the Indian diaspora, especially children and youth, through its flagship Bala Vihar program. Every Sunday there are religion, language, music, and Vedic chanting classes, as well as philosophy discourses at the spacious Mission center "Rameshwaram" in Tustin, and at several satellite centers in Southern California.

CMLA also has a very significant outreach program for members to serve the communities they live in. In the past year, CMLA students helped needy children in their area providing school supplies, food, hygiene kits, and clothing to children in partnership with the Santa Ana School District, Second Harvest, SEWA, CHOC Hospital.









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### **Our Suggestions:**

1. If your family income is over \$300,000 and you only have one child or two children four years apart---you should focus on saving taxes by setting up a Family Foundation. 2. For the rest of the families, please don't fill out FAFSA with an "as is" financial situation. You should listen to a financial aid professional's audio to understand the basic rules of Financial Aid, then position your family's net income MAGI & net assets accordingly



TAX PLANNING

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**ENGLISH AUDIO** Michael Chen

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(Bill Clinton)

### **Sucessful Cases:**

### Case 1: Family Income over \$300,000

An engineer's family, after exercised its stock options (RSU), had income over \$400,000. After setting up a Family Foundation, they saved \$50,000 in taxes and can use this \$50,000 for their retirement and for college.

### Case 2: High Income with Normal Assets

An IT engineer's family had a W-2 income around \$200,000. As most parents, they never thought they would qualify for financial aid, through our FinAid tax planning, they have reduced \$100,000 net AGI income. Each year they receive \$40,000 financial aid and also \$34,000 tax refund.

### Case 3: Low Income with High Assets

A business owner with 5 rental properties had filled out FAFSA on their own and their application for finan cial aid was rejected. After getting planning, help and guidance from us, their child received \$30,000 financia l aid from UC's and saved \$120,000 for four years. 日常統同



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### IALA Announces New Team For 2023-2024 Term

#### India-West Staff Reporter

NORTHRIDGE, CA — The India Association of Los Angeles (IALA) said in a press release it had unanimously elected Sunil Agrawal as its President and had formed a 17-member executive committee for the year 2023-2024.

Agrawal, an esteemed IT consultant, brings more than two decades of community service experience to the role. He previously served as President in 2018-19 and Chairman in 2019-202. Agrawal has made significant contributions to the community, including hosting premieres of movies such as "The Kashmir Files," "The Vaccine



Sunil Agrawal, IALA President.

The new Executive Committee.



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War," and "The Elevator" in Los Angeles. Additionally, he organized the widely acclaimed "Koun Banega Ramayan Expert" events in 2006 and 2008, engaging thousands of children across the USA. As a founding trustee of the Dharma Civilization Foundation since 2012, the press release said, he continues to play a pivotal role in shaping cultural initiatives.

The newly elected executive committee includes Pramesh Shah as the Executive VP, Kiran Kamboj as Secretary, Dhara Patel as Joint Secretary, Rajni Thakkar as Treasurer, Robin Paik as VP of Finance, Hezal Shah as VP of Cultural Affairs, Navdeep Singh as VP of Publicity, Sam Sidhu as VP Public Relations, Ramesh Brahmarouthu as VP Youth Affairs, Dr. Bama Sridhar as VP Health, and as Executive Members: Rajesh Khandelwal, Vasu Pawar, Manisha Makwana, Mohinder Kaur, and Promilla Sahni.

Since 1999, IALA has been organizing the India Independence Day Mela, drawing over 10,000 attendees, predominantly from the Indian community. This celebration provides a platform for community talent to showcase their skills in front of thousands. Past events have been graced by the presence of esteemed individuals, including Congressmen, the Indian Ambassador, and other dignitaries.



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### **Texas Court Tells TCS To Pay \$210 Million In Trade Secret Case**

BUSINESS

DALLAS, TX (IANS) – Indian tech giant TCS has been asked by a jury in Dallas, Texas Federal court, to pay \$210 million to US IT Services Firm DXC (formerly CSC) for alleged misappropriation of source code to develop TCS Bancs, its software platform.

The jury explained that by infringing upon CSC's proprietary platforms, TCS had accessed a trade secret. However, TCS had maintained that it respectfully disagreed with the jury's advisory verdict. It further stated that the matter would be decided by the court. It had ordered further briefing from parties.

The jury maintained that TCS had willfully and maliciously mis-

appropriated both source and confidential documentation by improper means.

The lawsuit in this regard was filed in 2019. It was alleged that TCS allegedly stole DXC's trade secrets to develop competing life insurance software.

Further, it was alleged that TCS misused confidential information about DXC's Vantage-One and Cyberlife software for managing life insurance and annuity policies to create its own platform. It charged that the employees of TCS assigned to develop the Bancs platform faced challenges in finding solutions for calculating a rate of return in a particular insurance context.







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It further alleged that TCS employees copy-pasted DXC's source code when they faced difficulties developing their own software.

The lawsuit has also provided exchanged emails between TCS employees that they found a solution in the Vantage software.

Later, a TCS employee allegedly copied and pasted the actual Vantage source code pertaining to this calculation, and resulting Vantage calculations, into an email and sent it to his TCS colleagues.

This comes as a setback for TCS, as the US Supreme Court confirmed a punitive damages award of \$140 million in Epic Systems case for unauthorized access of its web portal previously.

### Apple IPhone Maker Foxconn To Invest \$1.5 Billion In India



NEW DELHI, (IANS) – Contract manufacturer Foxconn plans to invest \$1.54 billion in India, as the country doubles down on local manufacturing. In a stock exchange filing, Foxconn said that the investment will help it fulfill "operational needs."

The company, however, did not provide further details. Foxconn is the main assembler of Apple iPhones, and both companies are keen to move away from China and create alternative supply chains.

Foxconn already has an iPhone factory in Tamil Nadu, which employs 40,000 people and has signed an agreement to invest Rs 1,600 crore in a new electronics components unit in the state that will create 6,000 jobs.

The company has also announced that it will be investing an additional Rs 3,300 crore in its manufacturing facility in Telangana. This will take the total investment of the company in the state to more than Rs 4,550 crore.





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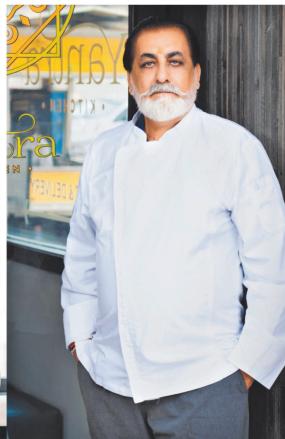
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### **BUSINESS**

#### **By REENA RATHORE**

INGLEWOOD, CA - As the world continues to find ways to beat plastic pollution that is contaminating the environment, new companies such as Terramer are ramping up production of bioplastics to curb its impact.

Established in 2019, the Southern California-headquartered technology company is seeking to relieve the pressure on the environment by developing an innovative and sustainable substitute for petroleum-based plastics. It has developed hemp-based polymers that are fully compostable within days to months leaving no trace of toxins or microplastics behind. And that's what drew Ravi Bhatia, who works with startups in the advisory space and is principal/chief investment officer at Verano Capital Partners, to the company.

A chance meeting in August 2022 with Alex Mond, president and CEO of Terramer, and Karen Mond, chief financial officer, set in motion the beginning of a longterm relationship. He was soon welcomed to the company's board of advisors and is now an integral part of the team.

"Terramer is revolutionizing the plastics industry. We are a cross between agriculture, ag tech, clean tech, consumer packaged goods, supply chain, manufacturing, and then anything to do with packag-



Ravi Bhatia, Indian American principal/chief investment officer at Verano Capital Partners.

ing, whether it's food packaging or, cutlery, straws, plates, bags, you name it, they can do everything," Bhatia told India-West. "They make the resin which is then used to make the plastics. The resin is made from hemp plants and other plants. So, we are 100 percent plant-based, like completely 100 percent plant-based."

While their straws and cutlery are heat resistant, making them ideal for cold or hot beverages, they have created the world's first hempderived film for grocery bags, trash bags, dog waste bags, etc., per the company. The lineup also features a flexible biodegradable film used for thermoforming containers, plates, and packaging. Before launching his fund and pivoting to help companies scale their businesses, Bhatia graduated with a business economics degree and built a career in tech. He grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and is passionate about the environment, sustainability, social impact, and impact investing and believes in giving back through his philanthropic efforts.

Operational since 2021, Terramer has raised over \$3 million, completed several rounds of research and development, filed 4 provisional patents, and recently received LOIs and

POs from the likes of SoFi Stadium (buy-back program and corporate sponsorship), Taylor Nonwovens, and World Gym.

Revenues are "expected to be at least \$25 million in 2023 - based on sales already recorded - but could reach \$1 billion following discussions with numerous private and public sector customers, including Custom Pak and King Plastics," per Bhatia, who also underscored that the company is applying for Renewable Identification Numbers and Low Carbon Fuel Standard credits.

Terramer's products have piqued the interest of several companies, including fast-food giants McDonald's and Burger King.



The proprietary products include a range of strong and durable items.

Its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility is located in Illinois and is scheduled to be operational by 2024. In the meantime, it is collaborating with production facilities in Texas, Chicago, and Orange County, CA – with another one coming up in Guadalajara, Mexico – to create its products which are available for sale to customers, manufacturers, or distributors.

Terramer, which is going from Series A to Series B, is seeking to raise \$10 million-plus and up to \$30-\$50 million over time in equity and/or debt, Bhatia stated.

Plastics, which constitute an important component of modern lives, are filling landfills at a staggering rate because recycling doesn't always happen. "Less than 10 percent of plastic is recycled so landfills are getting used up...We have more products and so more packaging is needed," said Bhatia. "There's Styrofoam packaging, plastic surround wrap... and none of that is biodegradable or reusable...Some of it goes to India, China, Africa, and other countries, but we don't know where it ends up. Most likely it probably just gets burned..."

Another upside to moving away from plastics or their reduced usage, he said, is the potential for a reduction in healthcare and recycling costs as well as soil conversation.

"Anything that you heat that's in a plastic container that plastic is also going into your food or beverage...and over time that ends up making our organs bad because we are basically poisoning ourselves," he emphasized.



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### **POLITICS**

### Trump On Debate: Vivek Wins Because He Thinks I'm Great



WASHINGTON, DC (ANI) -Heaping praise on his Republican rival, former President Donald Trump termed Vivek Ramaswamy the winner of the fourth GOP debate. It was a predictable reaction with the Indian American largely seen as auditioning to an audience of one: Trump.

Having dropped precipitously in the polls, Vivek Ramaswamy has been making loud statements and attacking opponents, especially Nikki Haley, and has been termed by another GOP presidential aspirant Christ Christie as a "blowhard." Pundits and rivals have said that the Indian American with his unwavering support of Trump, even those that are seen as antidemocratic have been echoed by him to land a spot in Trump's inner circle and maybe even on the ticket as Trump has not yet announced who will be running mate.

"So many people are asking what I thought of history's lowest rated 'presidential' debate, and how would I rate the players. It's so easy to be a critic, but who on this subject would be better than me," Trump posted on Truth Social on December 9.

Trump posted, "Birdbrain looked different and lost, but I give her second place," he quipped, referring to Nikki Haley. "Vivek WINS because he thinks I'm great," Trump added.

However, despite the former president's praise, Ramaswamy has faced scrutiny over his performance in the debate earlier this week, in which he called Haley a "fascist" and claimed Christie's "version of foreign policy experience was closing a bridge from New Jersey to New York," The Hill reported.

Republican strategist Scott Jennings said that most people do not like the "below-the-belt punches". He noted that while Ramaswamy may have tried to act in the style of Trump, it did not work for him.

### Yashaswini Wins Assembly Seat

#### Contd. from P1

Indian authorities rejected her application for Indian citizenship.

Hyderabad district collector informed her that her request for Indian citizenship cannot be considered as she has not resided in India continuously for a year immediately preceding the date of application.

With no prior political background, Yashaswini entered the poll fray. With a B.Tech in electronics and communication, she pursued her education in Hyderabad. Hailing from Nagarkurnool district, she left for the United States after marriage.

In the affidavit submitted by Yashaswini while filing her nomination, she declared that she is office manager in Raj Properties and Group. Her husband H. Rajaram Mohan Reddy is a finance manager in the same firm. She declared her and her husband's movable assets at Rs 55 crore.

In a direct contest, Yashaswini defeated Dayakar Rao by a huge margin of over 47,000 votes. This was a huge shock to 67-year-old Erraballi Dayakar Rao, who had quit TDP in 2016 to join TRS (now BRS). Erraballi had never lost an election in his four-decade-long



political career. He was confident of another win as the Congress fielded a political novice.

Addressing an election rally in the constituency, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi praised Yashaswini for her ambition and enthusiasm. She also mentioned the bond between Yashaswini and her month-in-law and also numerous works undertaken by the family to serve people.



### **ELECTIONS**

### Shivinder Singh Running For Yorba Linda City Council

**India-West Staff Reporter** 



YORBA LINDA, CA – Local business owner Shivinder Singh has announced his candidacy for Yorba Linda City Council, vowing to champion a platform that prioritizes the preservation of Yorba Linda's unique identity.

Singh, who now serves as the Chair Pro Tem of The Yorba Linda Planning Commission, says he is "a dedicated family man" and "committed to serving his community."

Shivinder's platform prioritizes the protection of local control, property rights, equestrian rights, parental rights, public safety, economic growth, transparency, accountability, and the promotion of community engagement through education.

### Suhas Subramanyam Announces Congressional Run From Virginia

India-West Staff Reporter



ASHBURN, VA – Delegate and Senator-elect Suhas Subramanyam on November 16 announced his candidacy for Congress from Virginia's 10th District. The 37-year-old is making his bid for federal office after just winning a state Senate seat. The November 7 elections had turned the state legislature blue, which commentators say has led to incumbents like Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton more willing to step down. She is doing so for health reasons and Subramanyam hopes to fill the seat.

After earning his law degree at Northwestern University, Suhas served as a White House technology policy advisor to President Obama.

In a statement he said, "The Republican leadership in the House has been unapologetic about their MAGA agenda, undermining our democracy, trying to ban all abortion – no exceptions – nationwide, and slashing Social Security and Medicare. Their extremism and political games have done nothing to bring down costs or make things better for Northern Virginia families. The threat is real, and it's urgent. This community is where my family immigrated, my kids were born, and my wife and I got married, we must elect someone in Virginia's 10th District who puts that community, not the MAGA agenda, first. I know I am the proven leader for the job."

He is married to Miranda Peña Subramanyar. They currently reside in Ashburn with their 2 daughters.

### Ohio State Senator Niraj Antani Joins Race For Congress

India-West Staff Reporter



BATAVIA,OH – Republican State Senator Niraj Antani on November 14 announced his run for Congress from Ohio's 2nd Congressional District where incumbent Brad Wenstrup has said he will be retiring from Congress.

Antani is the first Hindu and Indian American State Senator in Ohio history and the youngest Hindu and Indian American state or federal elected official in the US, a press release from the politician's office pointed out.

"Now, I am running for Congress to be a warrior for our community's values and fight against those who seek to wreak havoc on us. I will stand steel-spined for the policies that benefit our community and strongly oppose those who kowtow to those against us," he said in a statement.

Ohio's 2nd Congressional District spans 16 counties across about 150 miles in southern Ohio. The district's partisan voter index leans significantly Republican.

The Republican primary in Ohio will take place on March 19, 2024. Antani is serving his first term in the Ohio Senate, having previously served three terms as State Representative in the House. He is a graduate of Ohio State University.



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#### **POLITICS**

### 'Foreign Policy' Profiles Raja Krishnamoorthi As Congressional Voice On China

#### India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – The leading publication on world affairs with scholarly and analytical writing, 'Foreign Policy' has profiled Illinois Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi's leadership of the Congressional Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the US and China along with Congressman Republican Mike Gallagher, the Chair of the China Committee.

The committee was formed in February of this year for the specific purpose of investigating and developing policies to address America's economic, technological, and security competition with the Chinese Communist Party. With his selection as Ranking Member, Congressman Krishnamoorthi became the first South Asian to ever lead a U.S. Congressional Committee.

The magazine wrote, "In short, this is the beating heart of Congress's policy agenda on China, giving Gallagher and Krishnamoorthi outsized voices on what most in Washington consider the new, defining U.S. foreign-policy challenge. What the committee sets its sights on next is a good indication of where U.S. policy will go."

Pointing out that this was one of

the rare bi-partisan relationships on the Hill, it pointed to two reasons, "The first is the scale of the threat from China, at least in the sense of how 95 percent of Washington sees it—something most Republicans and Democrats, if not the rest of the world, agree on."

The second, the magazine said, "is *The Foreign Policy report featured this illustration by Oriana Fenwick.* the fact that both Gallagher and policy wonks...Both are seasoned Corps vetera

Krishnamoorthi are from politically safe districts and are genuine

policy wonks...Both are seasoned members of the House Intelligence Committee. Gallagher, a Marine Corps veteran, also earned his Ph.D. in international relations from Georgetown."





**India-West News Desk** 



Ajit Pai.

WASHINGTON, DC – America's Public Television Stations (APTS) has announced the election of former Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai to a threeyear term as an at-large member of the APTS board of trustees, effective February 26, 2024.

Pai, who chaired the FCC from 2017 to 2021, during the Donald Trump administration and was often derided online mostly for undoing the net neutrality rules, is now a partner at Searchlight Capital Partners, a global investment firm.

Pai in his statement said, "I have long recognized the value of public television, from my childhood affinity for Sesame Street through my tenure at the FCC." Pai is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago Law School.

In January 2017, newly inaugurated President Donald Trump designated Pai as FCC Chairman. He was the first Asian-American to hold the office. Later that year, Pai was nominated to serve another term (while remaining Chairman of the FCC). After almost a dozen years at the agency, Pai returned to the private sector. TURNKEY CONSTRUCTION SOLUTIONS

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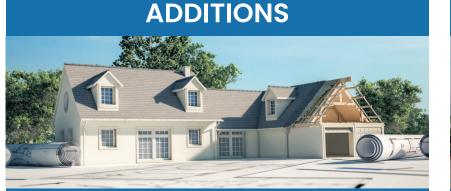


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#### **POLITICS**

### Another Hindu Caucus Launched – This Time A Republican One Backed By Shalli

WASHINGTON, DC(IANS)-Republican lawmakers have launched a Congressional Hindu Caucus that will be the second but largest yet for championing causes and issues related to Hindu Americans.

"Today I am so excited to announce the official launch of the Congressional Hindu Caucus in the US Congress," Elise Stefanik, who is the fourth ranking member of the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives, said on November 15 at an event organized by Shalabh "Shalli" Kumar.

Kumar shot to fame in the India-US world when he launched a campaign in 2013 to lobby US authorities to grant a visa to Narendra Modi, then chief minister of

Gujarat, reversing their decision to rescind it over the riots in the state. Although Kumar fell out of fa-

vor with Modi very soon, he had moved on to find a new person and cause to support: Donald Trump.

"This caucus will support legislation and issues important to Hindu Americans," Kumar said at the launch of the Congressional Hindu Caucus. This is the second congressional caucus launched to represent Hindu Americans, who are largely India -descent Americans who are increasingly choosing to identify themselves by their religion rather than then their country of origin. But it also touts itself as a representative of Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities.

The first caucus, which is chaired by first-term Democratic Congressman Shri Thanedar. ran into controversy off the block as Sikh Americans, who run a well-funded lobbying effort of their own, challenged its claim to represent them. It hasn't generated much support among lawmakers either. Stefanik's Hindu caucus is off to a good start in comparison. She read out a list of 10 or so fellow Republican lawmakers who, she said, had volunteered to join the caucus but were not all present.

One of them was Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis. She came to the event to personally convey her regrets at not being

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able to attend. "I have a growing Indian community in my district," she said when asked by this reporter for her reason for joining the caucus.

"We have a Hindu temple which I go to annually to celebrate, whether it's Diwali or some of the other holidays. And I really built a great relationship with the Hindu community and want to be able to help particularly now because of the very strategic time relationship between the US and India."

Increasingly now, several community members have wanted to be identified as Hindu Americans, which grants them constituency claims over Hindus from the Caribbeans, Nepal, Bangladesh and American converts. Their numbers are estimated to be, as claimed at the launch event, at around 6 million, which is at the least 1.5 million more than the number of Indian Americans, which is a widely accepted estimate.

### **CA Assemblymember Kalra** Named Chair Of Judiciary Committee

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

SACRAMENTO, CA-Assemblymember Ash Kalra (D-San Jose) has been named Chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary by Speaker Robert Rivas.

The Assembly Committee on Judiciary's primary jurisdictions include family law, product liability, tort liability, Civil Code, and



Evidence Code. Kalra had most recently served as Chair of the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee for the past five years.

"At a time when California must be vigilant in protecting civil rights, fostering a just legal system, and ensuring everyday consumers are protected, it is an honor to serve as Chair of Judiciary Committee. Having served on this committee for the past seven years under Chairs Stone and Maienschein, I am grateful for their leadership and ready to hit the ground running," Kalra said in a statement.

Kalra has a law degree from Georgetown University and was a Deputy Public Defender for Santa Clara County for 11 years. As a public defender, he represented indigent clients in both felony and misdemeanor matters.

He was first elected in 2016, becoming the first Indian American to serve in the California Legislature in state history, and was re-elected to his fourth term in 2022.

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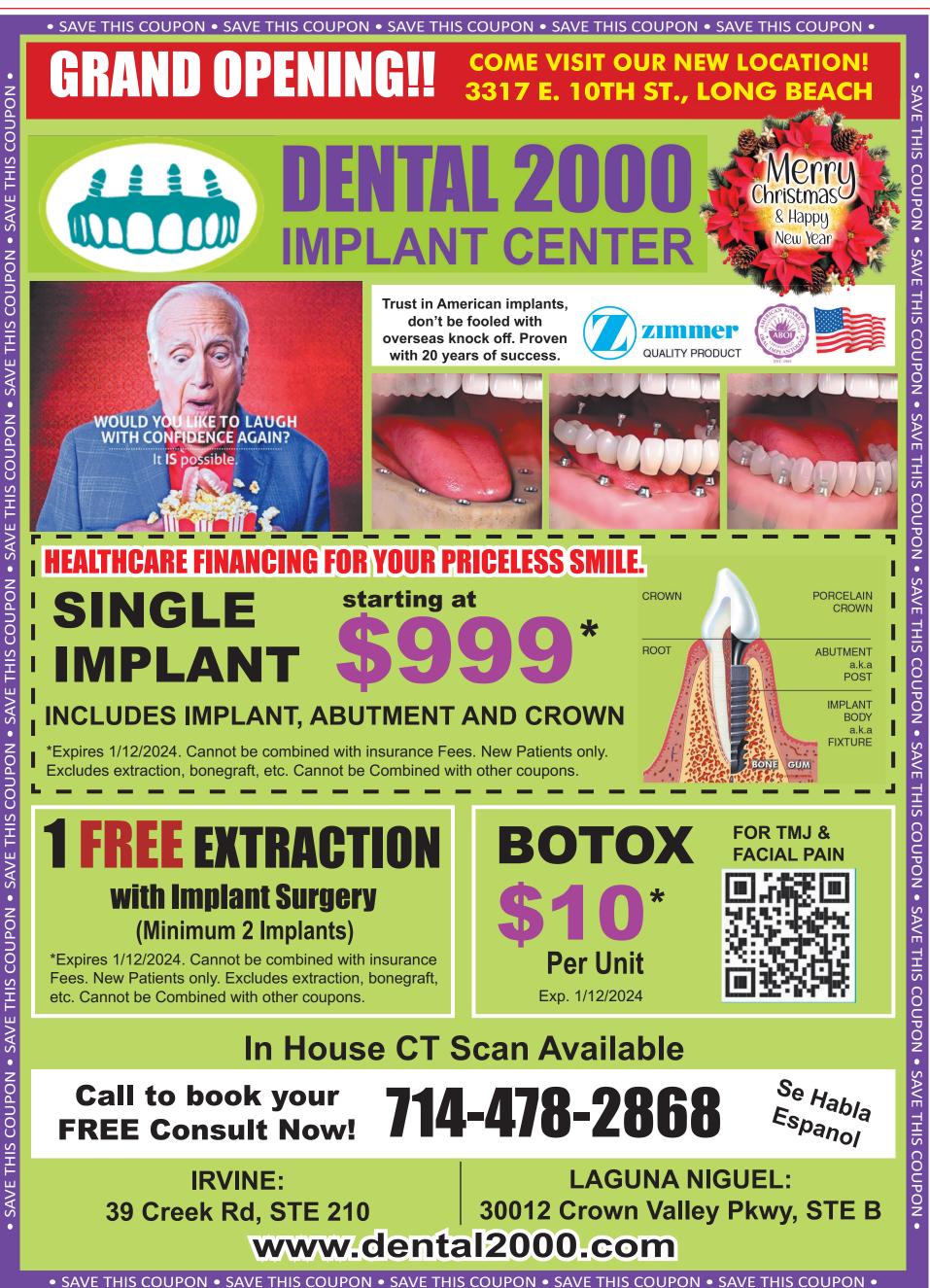
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### CRIME

VACAVILLE, CA

(IANS) - A nursing

home chain and its Indi-

an American owner have

agreed to pay \$45.6

million in entering a

consent judgment with

the US Department of

Justice to resolve al-

legations that they paid

kickbacks to physicians

nia district court.

Prema Thekkek and the six

skilled nursing facilities (SNFs)

owned through her Vacaville com-

pany, Paksn Inc, submitted false

claims to Medicare, the DOJ al-

leged in a settlement agreement

filed on November 15 in a Califor-

According to the DOJ, Thekkek

and her facilities violated the Anti-

Kickback Statute, which prohibits

offering or paying remuneration

to induce the referral of items or

services covered by Medicare, Med-

icaid, and other federally funded

From 2009 to 2021, the six

SNFs - under the direction and

control of Thekkek and Paksn

- systematically entered into

medical directorship agreements

with physicians that purported

to provide compensation for

health care programs.

### **Fremont Police Arrest Man For Stabbing Two Indian Students**

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

FREMONT, CA - In the aftermath of the harrowing incident that unfolded on November 17, at around 4:47 p.m., Fremont police officers using surveillance footage and witness interviews have posi-

tively identified the perpetrator as 28-year-old Miguel Angel Villareal of Fremont.

He is being held at the Santa Rita Jail without bail on a charge of first-degree attempted murder.

Hours of intensive search efforts culminated in Villareal's arrest

without incident, police said. Fremont PD said the Crimes Against Person(s) Unit has taken charge of the investigation.

Villareal, with a history peppered with arrests for robbery, battery causing serious bodily injury, resisting an officer, and drug-related offenses, currently awaits arraignment on two counts of Penal Code 187(a)/664 - Attempted Murder scheduled for November 22, 2023.

The violent attack occurred near Fremont Hub at 4:30 p.m., targeting three friends-Syed Shadan

ul Haq, Khalid Bin Masood Yafai, and Mohammad Abdul Basur Sufiyan-all from around Hyderabad in India and new engineering studies in the U.S.

Yafai and Haq were attacked while waiting for Sufiyan, who had stepped into a nearby store



to purchase soft drinks. Haq, who was stabbed in the chest, managed to escape the stabber while a horrified Sufiyan called 911.

Police responded swiftly to the incident which took place in the 4100 block of Walnut Ave. Upon arrival, officers initiated immediate medical assistance and the two victims were rushed to San Jose Regional Medical Center Hospital's Trauma Unit.

Yafai, the one most severely physically affected including a wound close to the liver, is still in hospital after at least two surgeries.



CA Nursing Home Chain Owner To

Pay \$45.6 Million In Kickbacks Case

administrative services but were vehicles for the payment of kickbacks to induce the physicians to refer patients to the SNFs.

The defendants hired physicians who promised in advance to refer many patients to the SNFs, paid physicians in proportion to the number of their expected referrals and terminated physicians who did not refer enough patients.

On one occasion, a Paksn employee told Thekkek that two physicians were being hired because "they are promising at least 10 patients for \$2000 per month".

To this Thekkek responded, "good job. Make sure they give patience every day. (W)We can also expand to other buildings with them, if possible".

On another occasion, an employee informed Thekkek that the defendants previously had paid a certain doctor "\$1,500 each month and he only sendus 2 patients. so, we didn't pay him anything from January onwards".

"The administrators and beneficiaries of the Medicare Program expect that providers will make decisions based

on sound medical judgment, not their personal self-interest," told US Attorney Martin Estrada for the Central District of California. "As this case demonstrates, our office will take decisive action to address allegations that medical providers are paying or receiving improper financial benefits that could impact care provided to patients."

Under the settlement, in addition to entering a \$45,645,327.25 consent judgment, the defendants will make scheduled payments to the US of at least \$385,000 over the next five years.

That payment schedule was negotiated based on the defendants' lack of ability to pay, a DOJ release said.

The settlement stems from a whistleblower complaint filed in 2015 by Paksn's former Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer, Trilochan Singh.



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### IMMIGRATION

#### INDIA WEST

### H-1B Visa Renewal

Contd. from P1



can extend it to a larger group," Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Julie Stufft told reporters on November 27.

"This is a huge change for folks who live here and previously would have had to leave the US," she added. Due to heavy visa backlogs, some H-1B workers have pursued workarounds such as traveling to nearby countries with fewer backlogs to secure appointments.

According to Stufft, the domestic renewal option would help consular offices in those countries and India. The average wait time to secure a visa appointment for travel to the US fell to 130 days last year, a drop of 70 days from fiscal year 2022. The State Department considers acceptable wait times to be closer to 90 days.

### **Bipartisan Bill Introduced To Eliminate Green Card Cap**

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

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressional representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi and Pramila Jayapal have introduced a bill to eliminate the Green Card country cap.

Joining the two Democrats is Republican Rich McCormick (GA).

The December 1 bipartisan legislation aims to eliminate the 7% per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas and increase the 7% per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15%.

It wants to change the employment-based visa system, which grants permanent residence or "green cards" to individuals contributing to U.S. economic growth and competitive advantage. Currently, this system, while initially merit-based, allocates visas based on the country of the intended immigrant's birth, leading to significant backlogs and delays, Krishnamoorthi said in a statement.

Krishnamoorthi emphasized the importance of ending countrybased discrimination in the im-



Indian American Reps. Pramila Jayapal and Raja Krishnamoorthi.

backlogs, unable to fully contribute to the nation. H.R. 6542 intends to create a more efficient and secure immigration visa process, allowing American employers to prioritize merit over birthplace when hiring immigrants. The bill also addresses the prolonged wait times faced by approximately 95%

phased-in system, building upon the bipartisan EAGLE Act, aims to alleviate backlogs for those facing extended waiting periods.

Like the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act, the bill includes provisions to phase out the per-country cap for employment-based immigrant visas. It also proposes a transition period and seeks to strengthen the H-1B temporary visa program, ensuring

a comprehensive approach to immigration reform.

The Immigration Visa Efficiency and Security Act of 2023 represents a collaborative effort to reshape the U.S. immigration landscape, promoting fairness, efficiency, and economic prosperity. As the legislation progresses, it marks a significant step toward addressing longstanding challenges within the immigration system.



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### Forbes Has Kamala Harris, Bela Bajaria **On World List Of Powerful Women**

NEW YORK, NY - Vice President Kamala Harris and Netflix's Chief Content Officer Bela Bajaria have secured spots on Forbes list of the 100 Most Powerful Women in the World for 2023.

Apart from the two Indian Ameri-

cans, others on the list from India include Nirmala Sitharaman, India's finance minister, in the 32nd position in the politics and policy category. Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Technologies, was in the 60th position for technology, Soma Mondal, CEO of the Steel Authority of India, was at number 70 in the business category, and Entrepreneur Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw in the 76th position for business.

Vice President Harris, who continues to make history, maintained her impressive position at number three





Netflix's Chief Content Officer, Bela Bajaria, emerged as a powerhouse in the media and entertainment category, clinching the 67th position on the prestigious list. Born in London and having spent her formative years in Britain and Zambia, Bajaria moved to Los Angeles at the age of 8. With her extensive experience, she has been steering Netflix's content strategy globally since 2020, and in January 2023, she assumed the role of Chief Content Officer. In this capacity, Bajaria oversees the streaming giant's diverse portfolio, which includes globally acclaimed series such as Lupin, Bridgerton, The Queen's Gambit, and Cobra Kai.

### **State Dept Recognizes Nikhil Dey As Anti-Corruption Champ**

WASHINGTON, DC (ANI) - Indian social activist Nikhil Dey has been named an International Anti-Corruption Champion by the US State Department.

The co-founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Dey's work led to transparency and

anti-corruption reforms in India, helping Rajasthan pioneer public policies to increase transparency and accountability.

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan is a people's organization that works with workers and farmers in the villages of Central Rajasthan. It was set up by the people of the area in 1990 to strengthen participatory democratic processes so that ordinary citizens could live their lives with dignity and justice. The organization was born out of a struggle for community land held illegally by a landlord.

The International Anti-Corruption Champion Awards recognize people who work to promote accountability and transparency.

State Secretary Antony Blinken



said the State Department is committed to countering corruption and promoting integrity as a foreign policy priority and core national security interest.

As many as 11 International Anti-Corruption Champions for 2023 were recognized.

The honorees are Stanislau Ivashkevich of Belarus, Jean-Claude Mputu of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Arturo Torres of Ecuador, Nikhil Dey of India, Ali (Mukhammedali) Toktakunov of Kyrgyz Republic, Marc N. Kollie of Liberia, Veronica Mihailov-Moraru of Moldova, Vladimir Novovic of Montenegro, Annette Planells of Panama, Francisco Belo Simoes da Costa of Timor-Leste, and May De Silva of Seychelles.





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#### P28 – DECEMBER 2023

### INDO AMERICA

### FBI Chief Says Aggressively Probing San Francisco Consulate Attack

NEW DELHI (ANI) -FBI Director Christopher A Wray who is in India, on December 12 emphasized the need to take the "partnership and cooperation" with India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) to the next level to deal with the constant evolving challenges and threats of terrorism, and informed that his agency was "aggressively" investigating the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco.

Wray, leading a highlevel FBI delegation, visited the NIA headquarters earlier in the day and held

extensive discussions with NIA Director General Dinkar Gupta and senior officials of both agencies.

The FBI Director, who is on a three-day visit to India, also discussed a host of issues, including the acts and activities of terroristorganized criminal networks, ongoing investigations in the US in the attack on the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, investigation of cyber-terror and cyber-crimes of various kinds highlighted the NIA.

Wray said "Terror incidents like



The Security officials met in Delhi.

9/11 and the Mumbai attacks have changed how nations respond to terror threats," observed the FBI Director, emphasizing on the need to take the partnership and "cooperation between the FBI and the NIA to the next level to deal with the constantly evolving challenges and threats of terrorism."

Wray added that increasingly, cybercrimes are being committed to fund terrorism," and stressed "this evolution of the cyber-threat needs a joint response towards the investigation of cyber-threat cases." As part of its continuing investigations into the attacks on the Consulate in San Francisco, the NIA on November 22 raided 14 places spread across the districts of Moga, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur, Mohali and Patiala in Punjab, and Kurukshetra and Yamunanagar in Haryana. The crackdown led to the seizure of digital data containing information related to the accused persons, along with other incriminating documents.

### Sports Illustrated CEO Sacked, Manoj Bhargava New Interim Head



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) – The publisher of Sports Illustrated has sacked the magazine's CEO Ross Levinsohn, after the magazine published articles bylined by non-existent writers and AIgenerated profile pictures.

The board of directors of The Arena Group terminated the employment of Levinsohn and named Manoj Bhargava as interim Chief Executive Officer late on Dec. 12. Bhargava is the founder of the energy drink brand 5-hour Energy and majority investor of The Arena Group.

"This follows actions last week, in which the company terminated the employment of operations president and COO Andrew Kraft, media president Rob Barrett, and corporate counsel Julie Fenster," the company said in a statement. The AI scandal sparked severe criticism of media coverage and outrage from the magazine's staff, reports Futurism.

"Effective immediately, Ross Levinsohn will be leaving the company and his role as CEO," Grady Tripp, the company's senior vice president of people, wrote in an email to staff.

"This follows the recent departure of three senior executives last week." The Arena Group has brands like Sports Illustrated, TheStreet, Parade, Men's Journal, and Hub Pages.

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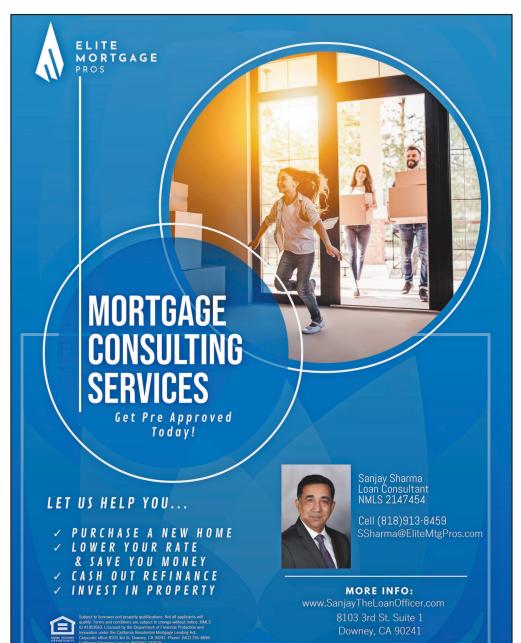
**INDO AMERICA** 

### **Community Celebrates Garba's Heritage Tag In Times Square**

roads

Contd. from P1 NEW YORK, NY (ANI) – The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) NY-NJ-CT-NE along with support from a host of community organizations and

the Consulate General of India NY, held a commemorative Garba celebration at the 'Cross-





World', Times Square.

Intangible Cultural Heri-

The celebration was to mark

the inclusion of Garba as an



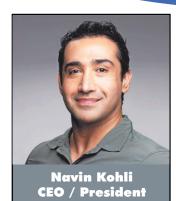
considered to be among the oldest forms of group dance and the longest dance festival spanning



the nine nights of Navratri, is a very popular group folk dance form in key states of India including Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

> The Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE (FIA) extended an open invitation to the entire community to join in the celebration at Times Square, which was supported by the Consulate General of India, NY. Free transportation, complimentary refreshments and participation certificates were provided for all performing attendees. The vivid colors of the attire of attendees added to the atmosphere of excitement.

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### Mumbai US Consulate Issues Record Visitor Visas

MUMBAI, (IANS) - The US Consulate-General in Mumbai set a record for issuing Visitor Visas with reduced waiting time and a 'special Saturday' of interviews for a staggering 2,023 applicants, an official said here.

The consulate held additional Saturday interviews to cater to the unprecedented demand for US Visitor Visas, and the number commemorated a landmark year for visa processing in India.

In 2023, the US Embassy processed over 1.20

million non-immigrant visas of which the Mumbai US Consulate alone handled over 400,000 – a record. Plus, this summer the US Mission to India issued a record number of nearly 90,000 student visas who will be joining different universities and educational institutions in the US.

US Consul-General in Mumbai Mike Hankey lauded his team's weekend efforts saying the US values the enduring relations with India and work diligently to promote prosperity, inclusion, and security between the two countries. "Today's special Saturday represents our sustained commitment to utilize innovative solutions to further reduce visitor visa wait times in the year ahead," Hankey said.



Mike Hankey.

INDO-AMERICA

### **Piyush Goyal Visits Fremont Tesla Factory**

FREMONT, CA (IANS) - Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on November 14 visited Tesla's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility here, at a time when the India is reportedly considering a request from Elon Musk-run electric car company to lower tariffs for imported electric vehicles (EVs).

Goyal posted on X that it was "extremely delighted to see talented Indian engineers and finance professionals working at senior positions and contributing to Tesla's remarkable journey to transform mobility".

"Also, proud to see the growing importance of auto component suppliers from India in the Tesla EV supply chain. It is on its way to double its components imports from India. Missed Elon Musk's magnetic presence and I wish him a speedy recovery," the Union Minister added.

The Tesla owner, however, apologized to

Goyal for not being able to meet him as he was unwell.

"It was an honor to have you visit Tesla! My apologies for not being able to travel to California today, but I look forward to meeting at a future date," Musk replied.

Goyal and Musk were scheduled to meet during the Minister's US visit, months after the SpaceX and X owner met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the US, and revealed he was keen to make significant investments in India.

According to a latest Financial Times report, citing sources, the automaker has asked the Indian government for an initial tariff concession that would offset India's steep customs duties of 70 per cent for cars under \$40,000 and 100 per cent for cars above \$40,000.

"Their view has always been that they need some tariff concessions at least in the

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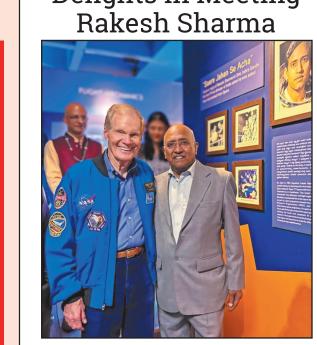
interim period. It would have some kind of sunset clause," one of the officials was quoted as saying in the report. Tesla had asked for the concession as a condition for con-

VANCING NEEDS!

structing a plant in the country. The reduced tariffs would apply to all EV manufacturers. The officials stated that the reduced rate under consideration would be 15 per cent for EVs of all prices, but that the policy had not yet been agreed upon within the government, the report men-

tioned. In September, reports surfaced that Tesla is planning to build a factory for battery storage in India and has submitted a proposal for the same to the government.

NASA's Bill Nelson PLATINUM WEST FUNDING Building Lasting Relationships For Over 30 Years **Delights In Meeting** 



BENGALURU (ANI) - National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator Bill Nelson expressed delight at meeting students at the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), and the first Indian to fly to space, Rakesh Sharma on November 29.

Nelson, who is on a visit to India posted, "It was a great honor to speak with students in Bengaluru today with Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian to fly to space. His story lit up the room! To the Artemis Generation in India and beyond. Work hard, dream big, and reach for the stars. The universe is the limit!"

Rakesh Sharma on April 2, 1984, flew aboard the Soviet rocket Soyuz T-11 launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic.

He spent 7 days, 21 hours, and 40 minutes in space and took India to become the 14th nation to travel to outer space. Sharma's work was mainly in the fields of biomedicine and remote sensing.

He is remembered for his iconic response from space. When the then PM of India, Indira Gandhi asked Sharma how India looked from outer space, Sharma said "Saare Jahaan Se Achcha".

Nelson during his visit has emphasized that India is a leader in space and has met with space officials to deepen bilateral cooperation across a broad range of innovation and research-related areas, especially in human exploration and Earth sciencease.

Nelson's visit to India will fulfil a commitment as part of the US and India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology initiated by President Joe Biden.

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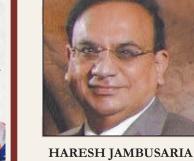
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### ENTERTAINMENT

### Deepika Padukone **Attends Academy** Museum Gala In LA

LOS ANGELES, CA (IANS) Deepika Padukone attended the Academy Museum Gala, here. She s the first Indian star to be invited o the prestigious event.

The Academy Museum Gala, held on December 3, is the second bigest stage after the Oscars which is rganized by the same board. Earlier this year Deepika was een on the stage at the Oscars to

present the Indian song act. Deepika took to Instagram Stories, where she shared a string of pictures dressed in a dark purple velvet floor-sweeping gown with a plunging neckline. She completed her look for the event with statement diamond jewelry, which ac·

Natalie Portman, Lupita Nyong'o Ke Huy Quan and Meryl Streep vere among the many other stars arpet

athaan' and thik Roshan and An 'Kalki 289 Amitabh Bache

### 'Never Have I Ever' Star Gets Married

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

LOS ANGELES, CA - Anirudh Pisharody, famed for his role in 'Never Have I Ever,' recently celebrated his union with college sweetheart Jill V Dae in a picturesque ceremony at Castello Odescalchi di Bracciano, a medieval lakeside castle in Rome.

Media reports and social media posts said the wedding seamlessly integrated diverse cultural traditions, with a Chinese tea ceremony, Indian rituals, and a Western ceremony.

Jill wore a Vera Wang gown for the occasion, while Anirudh was debonair in a Dior ensemble, complemented by a Cartier watch for the white wedding.

Anirudh and Jill's love story



commenced at their college grocery store's parking lot in November 2014. Their paths crossed again at the actor's Halloween weekend party. It was only several months

later, that Anirudh mustered the courage to ask Jill for a date. In the summer of 2019, Anirudh Pisharody proposed at Hearst Castle in California.

### **Richa, Ali's Debut Production Selected For Sundance**

SALT LAKE CITY, UT (IANS) -Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal's maiden production venture, "Girls Will Be Girls" is the only Indian film to be premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in the World Dramatic Feature category, a remarkable feat for their debut as producers.

Richa said: "Ali and I embarked on this production with a vision to tell unique stories. We couldn't be more thrilled." Ali added, "This project is a labor of love, and the recognition at Sundance is a

testament to the dedication and passion of our entire team." "Girls Will Be Girls" is one of just 16 films chosen to participate in the competition section of the festival.

Directed by Shuchi Talati, the film is a compelling story set in a boarding school in a small Himala-

yan hill town. The cast includes multi-award-winning Malayalam film actress Kani Kusruti, Jitin



in lead roles.







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### **ENTERTAINMENT**

### Vir Das Wins Emmy, Dedicates It To India

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY – A day before the 51st International Emmy Awards Gala, India's comedian Vir Das posted a video on Instagram in which he said, 51st International Emmy Awards Gala "The universe is a full circle. So just wanted to say thanks and that if anyone out there is ever in the dark, stay till sunlight, and know that love will find you and the universe will carry you." Vir Das has been called a "terrorist" for his political jokes and has had several FIRs served.

On November 20, it seemed his



Karishinabeautysalon@ginan.com r www.karishinabeautysalon.com



work was validated and he could rise from the attack made on him when he won the International Emmy for his comedy special 'Vir Das: Landing' in the Best Comedy category and shared the award with popular British teen sitcom 'Derry Girls' season three. He received his award at the New York Hilton Midtown, at a glittering ceremony.

Vir posted a series of pictures expressing his happiness. He wrote, "For India. For Indian comedy. Every breath, every word. Thank you to the @iemmys for this incredible honor."

He also posed with Akash Sharma and Reg Tigerman.

As soon as he posted the photos, fans flooded the comment section with congratulatory messages.

Vir Das told the media, "I have immense gratitude...This one is for my team and for Netflix without whom this wouldn't have been possible. This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, and to win this accolade for my fifth special with Netflix feels like a culmination of passion, perseverance,

and the undying support of people around the globe who have given so much love to

"Vir Das: Landing".

He added, "This award is not just a recognition of my work but a celebration of the diverse stories and voices from India. Stories that make us laugh, reflect, and, most importantly, unite. This one is for India, for Indian comedy and for the community of artists at large." His third standup special 'Vir

Das: For India' had also received a 2021 International Emmy.

Co-Indian nominees Shefali Shah and Jim Sarbh who did not win in their acting categories, congratulated him on this big win. Shefali posted a picture of Vir and wrote, "CONGRATULATIONS @virdas. You make us so proud." Sharing Vir's picture with his Emmy trophy, Shefali wrote, "@virdas U WON THIS FOR ALL OF US."

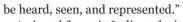
Shefali was nominated in the Best Actress category for her performance in the web series 'Delhi Crime Season 2' which streams on Netflix. Jim Sarbh was nominated for Best Actor for his role in 'Rocket Boys'.

### Emmy: Ektaa Kapoor Gets Directorate Award

NEW YORK, NY (ANI) – On November 20, Ektaa Kapoor was honored with the prestigious Directorate Award at the 51st International Film Awards, marking a historic moment for the accomplished Indian filmmaker. She cel-

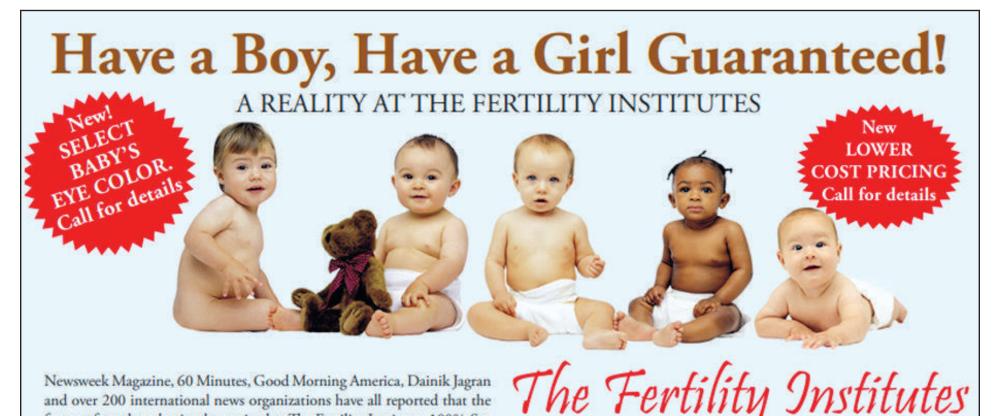
ebrated the milestone by sharing a video on social media with the caption, "India, I'm bringing home YOUR Emmy @iemmys."

In achieving this recognition, Ektaa Kapoor has etched her name as the first Indian woman filmmaker to receive the award, a testament to the unique and impactful contributions she has made to the entertainment industry. With decades of prominence as one of the most successful producers, Ektaa's victory extends beyond a personal triumph, symbolizing acknowledgment of her unconventional and groundbreaking work. Her consistent delivery of content resonates with a diverse and Expressing her gratitude for this momentous achievement, Ektaa Kapoor remarked, "I'm delighted to receive the prestigious Emmys Directorate Award! It brings me immense joy and happiness to be honored on a global scale like this. I've always wanted to tell stories because they give me a chance to



A pivotal figure in Indian television since founding Balaji in 1994 with her parents, movie star and producer Jeetendra Kapoor and media executive Shobha Kapoor, Ektaa Kapoor has been credited with transforming India's television landscape. She pioneered an entire genre of television content, contributing significantly to India's satellite television boom. Under the Balaji banner, she has created and produced more than 17,000 hours of television and 45 films.

Ektaa's banner has been responsible for producing several iconic TV shows, including 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi,' 'Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii,' 'Kasautii Zindagii Kay,' and 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain,' among others. Her influence and innovation have left an indelible mark on the Indian entertainment industry, and this international recognition further underscores her impact on a global scale.



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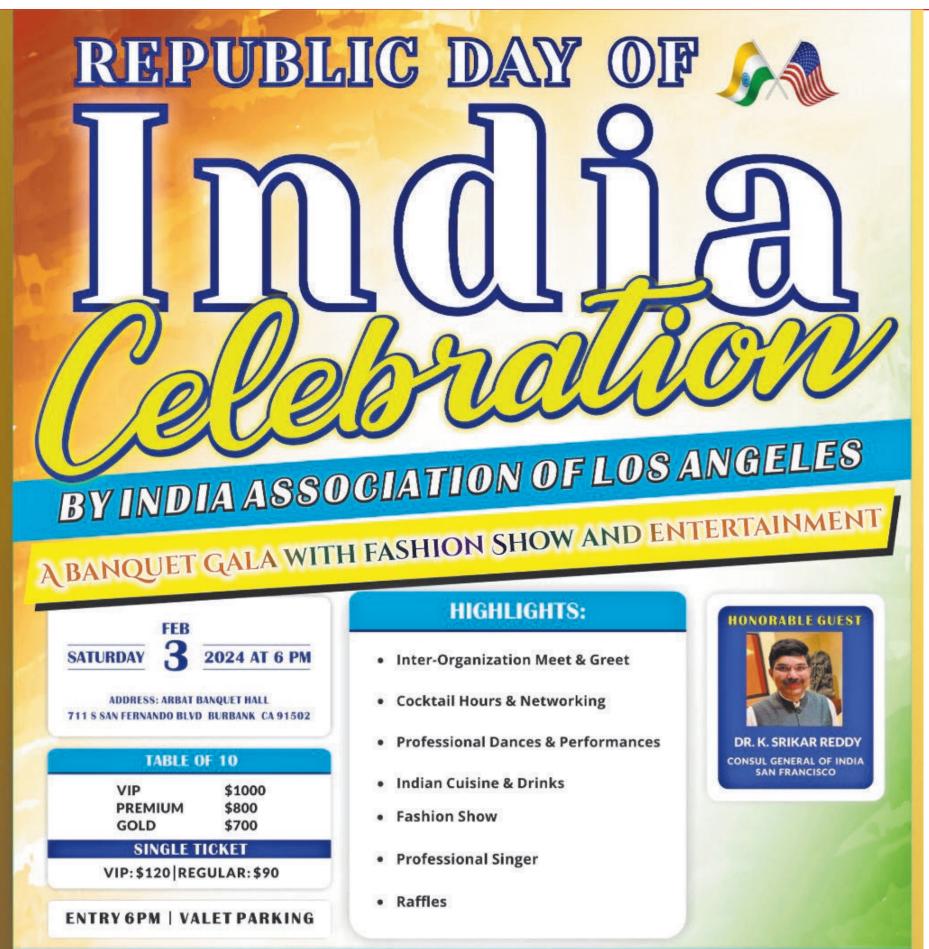


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