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Seattle Consulate With Prakash **Gupta As CG Opens Doors**

India-West News Desk

SEATTLE, WA - India's sixth diplomatic mission in the US based here and providing services to Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming is now working and active. The office is situated at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel, 411 University Street, Seattle.

Prakash Gupta has joined

the office as its first Consul General. He is a career diplomat, who has served in various capacities in Beijing, Shanghai, the Indian Mission to the United Nations in New York, and in Jakarta. His most recent assignment



The new Consul General Prakash Gupta.

in New Delhi included his stewardship of India's tenure at the UN Security Council (2021-22) and he was pivotal in piloting the International Day of Yoga Resolution at the

First Made-In-India Bicycle Launched In Walmart

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC -Walmart on December 19 announced that the first made-in-India bicycles will be available at selected stores in the US market just ahead of the Christmas holidays.

The initiative is part of Walmart's commitment to triple exports to \$10 billion annually by 2027.

Hero Ecotech, one of India's bicycle manufacturers has designed a "cruiserstyle" bicycle for Walmart carrying the Concord brand



Ambassador Sandhu at a local Walmart.

available in both adult-sized men's and women's versions adding to the company's

growing bicycle offerings. The cruisers

Thousands Attend Darbar-E-Khalsa In Southern California



Devotees thronged the Pomona Fairplex grounds in a spirit of unity.

By SIMRIN SINGH

POMONA, CA – It was a crisp but sunny morning at the Pomona Fairplex grounds,

where a melodious recitation of Asa Di Vaar rang through the cavernous carpeted hall to the outdoor food stalls at this year's Darbar-Contd. on P12

'Indian Matchmaking's' Sima Taparia's Mantra For Successful Marriage -Giving, Sharing, Caring

By REENA RATHORE

CERRITOS, CA - When longtime matchmaker Sima Taparia embraced the opportunity to star in the Netflix series, "Indian Matchmaking," she could not foresee the fame that would follow. The Mumbaikar who has worked full-time matching couples for the last 18 years, became an overnight celebrity leading to a wave of clients after the show premiered

It's easy to swipe right, but in real life, it's not quite as easy to get it right. In the age of dating apps, Taparia guides clients in the U.S. and India in the arranged marriage process, offering an inside look at the custom in a modern era. After the first



Contd. on P32 Sima "aunty" Taparia was in the Southland.

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Bhindi Jewelers Hosts Glittering Reopening Of State-Of-The-Art Glendale Boutique

India-West Staff Reporter

GLENDALE, CA - The familyowned luxury jewelry store, Bhindi Jewelers, hosted a grand reopening titled, A Timeless Legacy, to celebrate their newly renovated showroom, here on December 14.

The red carpet event was held at the store located inside the Glendale Galleria. The event was attended by many of the family's closest friends and celebrity clients including Mario Lopez (Access Hollywood), musician Shavarsh 'Shavo' Odadjian, and actor-singer Jaime Camil (Jane the Virgin).

Guests enjoyed champagne and hors d'oeuvres while buying jewelry and timepieces. They also took photos and gave interviews discussing their relationship with the Bhindi brand as well as the family and explored the store that is now a state-of-the-art boutique, meticulously designed with sophisticated men's jewelry, and delicate, everyday jewelry for women.

Mario Lopez said, "These are great guys, my wife and I have been coming here for years and we're appreciative they invited us." Lopez also shared a message for the Bhindi family, "Keep up the great



The Glendale showroom primarily focuses on watches, and The Bhindi Glendale team in front of their newly renovated a third of the space is occupied by Rolex





and Sanat.

From left: The Bhindi family - Ron, Vinod, Ashwin, Dhanesh Ashwin and Ron Bhindi, operating owners of the Glendale showroom, posed with client and friend, Mario Lopez.

work. We will be coming here for years to come."

The Glendale showroom has doubled its square footage and added an immersive Rolex space. Compared to its other locations, this Bhindi store primarily focuses on watches, with about a third of the space occupied by Rolex. Bhindi proudly became an Official Rolex Jeweler in 1998 and has a strong dedication to the success of

this partnership. They have an inhouse Rolex-trained watchmaker - an innovation that transformed them from a watch retailer to a full-service watch haven.

Bhindi Jewelers first put down

roots in Artesia, CA's "Little India", in 1984 when Vinod, Jayent, and Dhanesh decided to move to Southern California. The familyowned business has a beautiful legacy of jewelry-making that dates back 26 generations.

The newest generation consists of the founding trio's sons: Sanat, Ronil, Hitesh, Ketan, and Ashwin Bhindi, all of whom are certified gemologists from the Gemological Institute of America. As the next generation of jewelers, the team has been thoroughly trained in the traditional ways of jewelry design as well as the manufacturing of unique hand-crafted items, the owners said.

Asked at the Glendale showroom reopening how it feels to be here, Ashwin Bhindi responded, "It feels fantastic. It's been a long journey, three years in the making and we can finally call it home."

The festivities continued for two more evenings, where more guests were able to attend and celebrate the beautiful new space with the Bhindi Team. The Bhindi family also said it was a wonderful moment for them to "show their appreciation to their loyal customers."

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COMMENTARY

The Biden administration has just announced a plan to build 31 new tech hubs across the country. Seasoned biotech exec and entrepreneur Grace Colón lays out a blueprint for turning cities into booming life science centers like Boston and San Francisco.

By Grace E. Colón



Leaders from Baltimore, New York, and Phoenix recently an-

Bring On More Centers Of Biotech Success. Here's How

nounced plans to turn their cities into biotech innovation hubs that rival Boston and San Francisco.

It's easy to see why politicians would want to emulate these hotbeds. The life sciences attract the kind of skilled workers and high-paying jobs that can ignite any regional economy.

Of course, creating such a nerve

center is easier said than done. I've spent most of my adult life in biotech hubs, from my graduate-student days at MIT in Cambridge, MA to working for major pharmaceutical companies, biotech startups, and venture capital firms on both coasts. I've learned what works, and what doesn't. The first step for local leaders is to identify existing institutions that can anchor the project.

North Carolina's Research Triangle, for example, is based around three universities: UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, and NC State. In the 1990s, Research Triangle became a center for outsourced contract research and clinical trials, drawing on analytical and statistical expertise from the local universities. Today, the Research Triangle is the fourth biggest lifescience hub in the country.

The second step is to eliminate regulatory and financial barriers to innovation. Greater Boston, which includes Cambridge, was already home to MIT and Harvard when the Cambridge City Council voted in 1977 to permit and regulate DNA experimentation. Until then, would-be entrepreneurs had been nervous about how this cutting-edge field would be treated by the legal system.

The ensuing explosion in bioscience activity continues to this day — so much so that Massachusetts accounts for about 15% of new drug development in the United States and 7% of the global total.

In addition, cities and states can remove obstacles to innovation by

providing tax breaks, loans, and grants to help companies get off the ground.

Of course, not every would-be biotech nexus will have the same needs. Policymakers must determine what kinds of enticements are right for their local economies.

But perhaps the most critical ingredient for building an innovation hub is a skilled workforce. That requires policies that support a robust talent pipeline.

Specifically, academic institutions and companies need to engage with a diverse array of potential life-science students early in their lives. My own interest in biotech might not have come about had I not been invited, at 16, to participate in a program for high schoolers at MIT. As a girl growing up in Puerto Rico, this opportunity opened new doors.

To recruit talent for the long term, businesses need to welcome individuals of all backgrounds. Multiple studies have shown that companies with diverse executive teams on average significantly outperform those without.

Lawmakers should also work toward a national funding package for regional biotech R&D. This funding would connect and support researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors so that groundbreaking ideas are free to flourish in more communities across the country.

The best path to biotech success will be different for each city. But by building on institutional strengths, investing in workers, and knocking down barriers to success, there's no reason more of them can't get there.

(Colón, Ph.D., has over two decades of biotechnology and entrepreneurship experience. The former president and CEO of InCarda Therapeutics, Inc., she currently serves on the boards of the MIT Board of Trustees and several early-stage life science companies. This piece originally ran in The Hill.)

LETTERS

Non-Partisans Of America: Politically Homeless

The two-party political culture in America has fanatically divided the American polity making the nonpartisans politically homeless. In a mode of anger and vengeance, one can harm himself more than others. Each party struggles to be in power, even at the cost of national interest. Centrifugal social forces activated by rep democracy keep up the divisive stress on the society. There is no centripetal force in government design, or otherwise operation, to protect and promote the national interest.

Under the present political culture, America is hemorrhaging.

Moreover, there has been noticeable erosion in the American public character during the last few decades. In democracy, it is the public character that keeps the quality control of elected officials and governmental operations. Lacking quality is obvious in many of our elected officials.



Public character is destroyed with no or little liberty, or, with too much liberty and individualism at too young an age without appropriate guidance and discipline. Here it is too much liberty. Children brought up with too much liberty miss out on certain human values that generate a sense of responsibility and social cohesion. Eventually, it has an adverse effect on political climate.

Still valid is the old saying: "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost something is lost; when character is lost, everything is lost".

Fair solution to America's internal political problems can be generated only by non-partisan mindset. The Congress and the President are urged to rise to the occasion and save the nation with a non-partisan mindset, giving national interest the highest priority.

From T.S. Khanna, Alamo, CA

Americans Tired Of The Primary Election Process

While the year may be coming to an end, Republican presidential hopefuls are only ramping up their 2024 campaigns as they try to clinch the GOP frontrunner spot from former President Donald Trump. Voters continue to be doubtful about votes being counted accurately in the primaries or in the 2024 presidential election.

The skepticism among voters comes after years of former President Donald Trump falsely blaming his 2020 loss on election fraud. Trump supporters say nothing will be fair in next election because the last election was rigged, and they don't trust any of them at this point. Though the candidates have been campaigning around the clock since the beginning of the year, primary elections will be over by Super Tuesday – six months

before the nomination process.

Since the incumbent faces only token opposition in the presidential primary, voters expect President Joe Biden will be nominated again, despite his low job approval numbers. Many feels like there's got to be someone better out there, but they don't think another Democrat is going to unseat Joe Biden, since the nominating system as inherently flawed.



People want a change of direction from the candidates who spend 90% of their time attacking each other and the other 10% of the time raising money. It's all about money, who can get the most money from PACs and Super PACs, that donate to candidates or spend millions of dollars on their behalf.

If you can't raise millions of dollars then you can't get on the ballot. Our media likes it this way because the parties spend hundreds of Millions of dollars a year on campaign advertisements.

It's a stinking mess, and both parties are equally to blame. The point is nobody trusts our election process anymore. They have made it too easy to cheat with widespread mail in ballots, drop-off ballot boxes, and un-

secure, unaccountable handling procedures, etc. and pretty much rig their own primaries for their "approved" candidates. People doubt the primary elections as well as the presidential general election.

Many countries hold elections, but nobody spends as money and

time as Americans. Once the election is over, all campaign promises will be forgotten, and politicians go back to business as usual. This has got to change. Primaries should be eliminated or restricted to the first three months of the election year and not a year before.

From Girish Modi, Decatur, GA

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CNN Business Names Nadella CEO Of The Year



India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY — CNN Business has named Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella as the CEO of the year. "It was the year of artificial intelligence, and no Big Tech company leaned into the trend like Microsoft," it said.

In 2023, the company's CEO Satya Nadella made a multi-billion dollar investment in AI, commercialized and added AI tools like ChatGPT into its suite of products before rivals, and "stunned industry onlookers with his ability to handle a crisis quickly, calmly and thoughtfully," CNN said.

"Under his leadership, the company is

re-emerging as a tech innovator after years of riding the success of Windows. Wall Street has noticed, too: Microsoft's stock is up 55% this year," it pointed out.

For 2023, Nadella's decisions have heavily impacted and influenced the direction of AI, the most significant innovation to come from Silicon Valley in decades, CNN Business said. Others in the race, were Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

Born in India, Nadella came to the US in the late 1980s to pursue a master's in computer science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, later receiving an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Wayfair CEO Niraj Shah: Work Longer And Harder



India-West News Desk

BOSTON, MA – Wayfair CEO Niraj Shah has ignited a storm of criticism after encouraging employees to embrace extended work hours and seamlessly integrate work and personal life in his end-of-year message.

The company, boasting a workforce of approximately 15,000, announced its return to profitability

Shah's message, as reported by CNN, stated, "Working long hours, being responsive, blending work and life, is not anything to shy away from. There is not a lot of history of laziness being rewarded with success." The CEO urged employees to strive for a "blend

and balance" between personal and professional efforts, emphasizing that "winning requires hard work."

Additionally, Shah called on Wayfair staff to approach company spending as if it were their own and negotiate prices accordingly.

The CEO's directives have sparked discontent on social media, with numerous users calling for a collective resignation of all Wayfair employees. One outraged user tweeted, "Every single employee at Wayfair should quit after that email from Niraj Shah." Another had a humorous response, stating, "Agreed! But they should absolutely steal anything not nailed down first!"

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"Dear Parents, Do Not Fill Out FAFSA & CSS Until You Fully Understand The Very Complicated Rules of Financial Aid and IRS Tax..."

How to avoid the deadliest mistakes in applying for college financial aid?



Parents, do you fit in any of the financial situation below:

- High Income with High Assets
- High Income with Normal Assets
- Low Income with High Assets
- Didn't get or only got some financial aid after you submitted FAFSA/CSS

Parents, when you fill out FAFSA "as is", for sure, you cannot get college financial aid.

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 before filling out FAFSA/CSS.

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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 financial aid from UC's and saved \$120,000 for four years.



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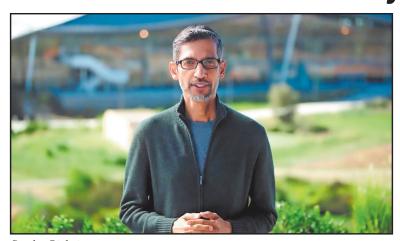








It Was Not The Right Way To Do It: Pichai On Layoffs



Sundar Pichai

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) – After almost a year when Google announced the decision to cut 12,000 jobs, Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai has said that the decision to inform employees affected by the layoffs was "not the right way to do it".

At an all-hands meeting held on December 12, Pichai was asked about the decision to lay off so many employees, reports Insider.

"It has been almost one year since we made the difficult decision to reduce our workforce. What impact did this decision have on our growth, P&L, and morale?" an employee asked Pichai.

In response the CEO said, the layoffs had a "clear big impact on morale. It's reflected in the comments in Googlegeist and the feedback". Googlegeist is the company's internal survey, which measures employee satisfaction on topics such as leadership, product focus, and compensation.

"This is difficult for any company to go through. At Google, we haven't had a moment quite like that in 25 years," Pichai said.

"It became clear if we didn't act, it would have been a worse decision down

the line. It would have been a major overhang for the company. I think it would have made it very difficult in a year like this with such a big shift in the world to create the capacity to invest in areas," he added.

Executives were also asked whether they had any thoughts on how the layoffs were handled, and Pichai admitted that the company did not handle the cuts as well as it could have. Pichai stated that notifying all concerned employees at the same time, regardless of time zone, was not a good idea, the report mentioned.

"Clearly it's not the right way to do it. I think it's something we could have done differently for sure," he said. He added that immediately removing access to laid-off employees' work accounts was "a very, very difficult decision". Google has made numerous smaller, more targeted waves of layoffs since January in areas such as recruiting, Google News, and Google Assistant.

Byju Subsidiary Sued In California For Non Paymentheadline

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (IANS) – The US educational non-profit organization Code.org has sued Byju's subsidiary Whitehat Jr here, over failing to pay its dues.

In the lawsuit filed in a California district court, Code.org alleged that WhiteHat Jr, which Byju acquired for \$300 million in 2020, continued to use its coding education platform but did not pay the remaining fee as part of a licensing contract, reports TechCrunch.

According to the lawsuit, WhiteHat Jr paid its 2022 licensing fee but then informed Code.org that it would be unable to make the remaining scheduled payments under the \$4 million, four-year deal.

Byju's has yet to comment on the report or the lawsuit. The company is founded by Indian entrepreneur, investor and educator Byju Raveendran and his wife Divya Gokulnath.

Byju's paid \$300 million in cash to acquire



Sundar Pichai.

WhiteHat Jr in August 2020. Karan Bajaj, the founder of WhiteHat Jr, then received one of the largest exits in India's startup ecosystem because of the transaction. Meanwhile, Byju's was planning to rebrand coding platform WhiteHat Jr as 'Byju's Future School' with an expanded offline presence, reports claimed in September.

Earlier, TechCrunch had reported that the Bengaluru-headquartered firm was in discussions to shut down Whitehat Jr.

Starbucks India To Open 1,000 Stores By 2028

India-West Staff Reporter

MUMBAI - Tata Starbucks on January 9, said its goal was to

Tata Consumer Products Limited that launched in 2012, Tata Starbucks now operates in over 390 stores across 54 Indian cities, with approximately 4,300 employees.

Laxman Narasimhan, CEO of Starbucks, during his visit to India.

operate 1,000 stores in India by 2028, which would translate to one new store opening every three days. The strategy focuses on skilling local partners for jobs, opening new stores that serve customers with an elevated experience, and promoting Indian-origin coffee to Starbucks customers around the world, the company said.

Through a 50:50 joint venture between Starbucks Coffee Company and

To achieve its target of 1,000 stores by 2028 the company will double its workforce to approximately 8,600 partners as it plans to enter Tier 2 and 3 Indian cities, expand drive-thrus, airports and its 24-hour store footprint to serve customers where they are, the company informed.

During his visit to India in the first week of January, Laxman Narasimhan, chief executive officer, of Starbucks said, "Over the past 11 years, the Indian market has grown to become one of Starbucks' fastest-growing markets in the world. With a growing middle class, we are proud to help cultivate the evolving coffee culture while honoring its rich heritage. With our trusted business partner, Tata, and our green apron partners, we are well-positioned to capture the limitless opportunities as we open one store every three days in India and further our aspiration to become truly global."



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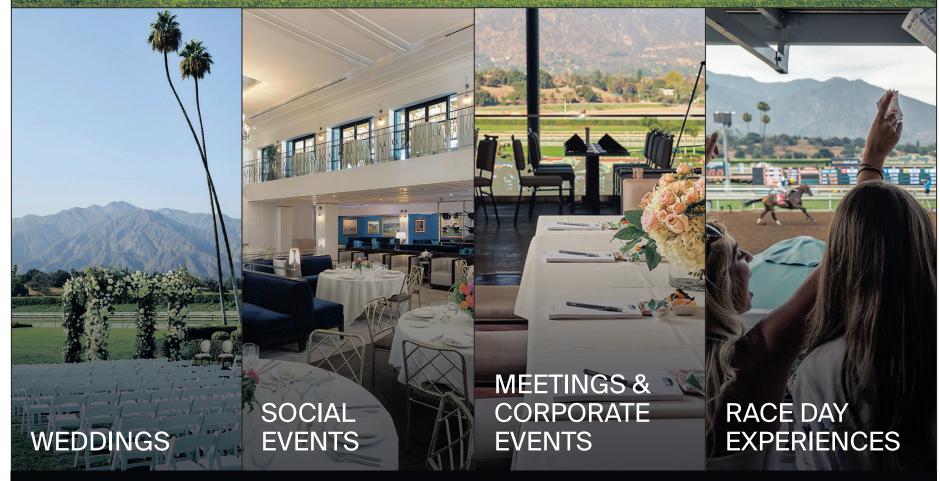


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350 Workers Laid Off At Badri Kothandaraman Led Enphase

FREMONT, CA (IANS) -American energy technology company Enphase, based here and led by Badri Kothandaraman, is laying off 10 percent of its global workforce, impacting approximately 350 contractors and employees.

According to Enphase President and CEO Kothandaraman, the move is to streamline operations by ceasing contract manufacturing operations in two locations in the US and resizing other contract manufacturing sites.

"We have decided to reduce our global workforce by approximately 10 percent, impacting approximately 350 contractors and employees. In addition, we will continue our hiring and travel freeze through 2024 and cut discretionary spending on several other fronts," he said in a message to employees.

Kothandaraman took full accountability for the decision.

"I understand this is difficult for all of us, especially when it impacts our valued colleagues and friends who are departing. We will treat our departing colleagues with the utmost respect and empathy, provide them with severance packages, engage in consultation where



Enphase CEO Badri Kothandaraman.



required, and support them with their transitions," he wrote.

Headquartered in Fremont, California, Enphase develops and manufactures solar micro-inverters, battery energy storage, and EV charging stations primarily for residential customers.

The company has shipped more than 48 million microinverters to 2.5 million solar systems in more than 140 countries. Kothandaraman said that over the last 12 months, the solar market has seen a lot of turbulence worldwide.

In the US, high-interest rates have caused a significant drop mand, while "California's NEM 3.0 transition continues to create further uncertainty".

"These challenges have caused our topline revenue to decrease. In response, we must right-size the company and get our non-GAAP operating expenses to be within a range of \$75 million to \$80 million per quarter in 2024,"

said the CEO. The company's worldwide mi-

cro-inverter contract manufacturing operations currently have a combined capacity of approximately 10 million units per quarter.

"We are planning to reduce that capacity to approximately 7.25 million units per quarter to be closer aligned to the expected demand. To that end, we are ceasing operations at our contract manufacturing locations in Timisoara, Romania and Wisconsin, United States, and resizing our other contract manufacturing sites," Kothandaraman announced.

First Made-In-India Bicycle Launched In Walmart



with more than 90% of raw materials sourced from India.

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Taranjit Singh Sandhu, shared a photo of a blue-colored bicycle and wrote, "Make in India, Make for the World! Delighted to witness the launch of Walmart USA first made in *India* bicycles, manufactured by #HeroCycles.



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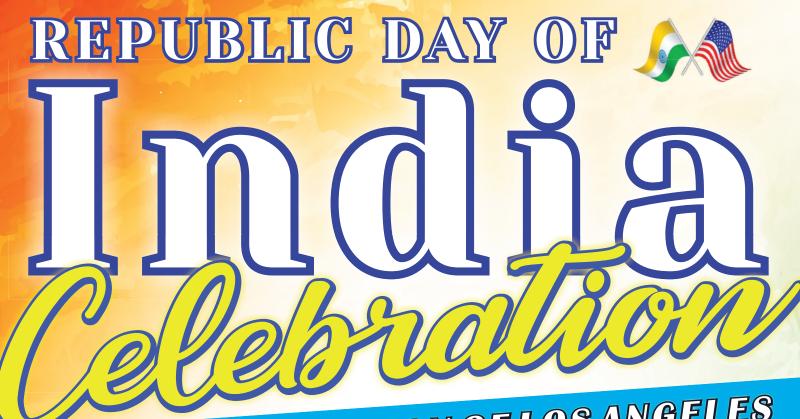
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INDIA WEST JANUARY 2024 – P11



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Thousands Attend Darbar-E-Khalsa In Southern California

Contd. from P1

E-Khalsa celebration put on by the International Institute of Gurmat Studies (IIGS).

The event, which takes place annually on December 25, brought together tens of thousands from

Khalsa community hundreds of years ago. "For years, Darbar-E-Khalsa has given our community a place to gather during the holidays to remember our great tenth Guru and the principles he stood for," Kaur said. "The beautiful





around the world to celebrate the 357th Prakash Utsav, or birthday, of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji, the tenth Sikh Guru.

Regular participant and volunteer Nimarta Kaur said the annual function is meaningful for local Sikhs because it gives them a place to get together and remember Sri Guru Gobind Singh who created the day allows people to reconnect, sing God's praises, engage in seva (selfless service) and get in the Khalsa spirit."

Throughout the day, visitors had the chance to interact with members of the community, shop at the Khalsa Bazaar, partake in Langar, and most importantly, sit with other Sikhs to listen to and sing



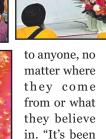


Shabad Kirtan - peaceful praises of the Divine from Sikh scriptures.

At Darbar-E-Khalsa, a diverse range of local youth groups and Kirtan raagi jathas from around the world are given time to sing Kirtan for the Sikh congregation. This year, a total of 21 raagi groups and more than 450 kids from different gurdwaras across the state had the opportunity to perform. A highlight was a joint performance by five different raagi jathas that came together to sing Gurbani.

"Seeing the Sikh community unite en masse makes Darbar-E-Khalsa one of my favorite events of the year," volunteer Aashna Singh said. She said she appreciates that Darbar-E-Khalsa's doors are open





neighbors and class-

ing to see my

heartwarm-

mates learn about and interact with the Sikh community through food and kirtan."

In addition to listening to Kirtan, people who attend Darbar-E-Khalsa are invited to eat snacks and langar. Volunteers from gurdwaras in the Southern California area come together to provide food and refreshments for thousands throughout the entire day.

Singh said the dedication of volunteers who come together to put this massive event together is a clear example of how the Sikh community can work together to serve others. Darbar-E-Khalsa also provides a space for shop owners and vendors to sell items at the Khalsa Bazaar. Some stalls include Sikh art and paintings, Punjabi clothes, jewelry and books. Additionally, community outreach groups have booths to educate the community about current Sikh initiatives.

After the Kirtan program wrapped up inside with Ardaas, children and other participants met outside for the Khalsa parade and a display of Gatka, Sikh martial arts.

Community members expressed inspiring Sikh slogans in unison, such as "Deg Teg Fateh" and "Bole So Nihal!" Spirited devotees walked together to respectfully send off the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, via helicopter, with prestige and reverence, signifying the end of the program.

Revolutionary thinker and IIGS founder Capt. Kanwar Harbhajan Singh, endearingly referred to as "Bhapa ji," came up with the idea for Darbar-E-Khalsa 37 years ago to give the Sikh American community a place to come together and remember Sri Guru Gobind Singh, who established the Khalsa in 1699.

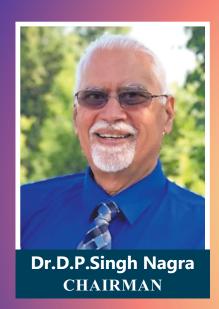
His focus was always on Sikh vouth. His foresight is an investment that continues to pay off.



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INDIA WEST JANUARY 2024 – P13

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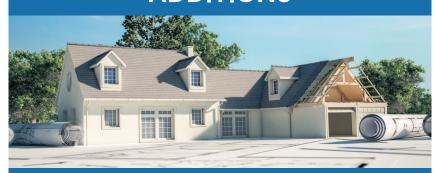


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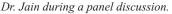
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Sachin Jain Named To Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships Board







Dr. Jain with his extended family.

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans announced on December 18 the appointment of Sachin Jain to the organization's Board of Directors.

Sachin is a 2004 Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow who received his MD/MBA from Harvard University and is now the CEO of SCAN Group and SCAN Health Plan. With a background in medicine and healthcare management, the addition of Sachin promises to enhance the Fellowship's mission to support outstanding immigrants

and children of immigrants as they pursue higher education in the United States.

"Sachin Jain's commitment to healthcare and his dedication to supporting immigrants align perfectly with our mission at the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships. His lived experience as a Fellow and his expertise will be invaluable as we continue to identify and empower the next generation of exceptional New American leaders," Daisy Soros, the president of the Fellowship, explained.

Sachin, is a respected "thought leader in the healthcare industry," and has a remarkable track record in advocating for equity and accessibility in healthcare services, the foundation said.

SCAN's revenues top \$4.8B and the organization serves more than 300,000 members. Since joining SCAN in 2020, Sachin has launched a range of new products—including SCAN Affirm (HMO), the first ever LGBTQ+ health plan product and SCAN Inspired (HMO), the first health plan designed specifically for women—and expanded its operations into Arizona, Nevada, Texas, and New Mexico. SCAN has also launched four subsidiary medical groups intended to support seniors through

the full range of inflection points in the aging process. In a little over three years, SCAN's total revenues have grown by more than \$1.5B.

His passion for innovation and his commitment to addressing societal challenges resonates with the ethos of the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships, the statement said.

"As the son of immigrants and as a 2004 Fellow, I am excited to contribute my experience and passion to an organization dedicated to empowering the next generation of leaders and innovators among immigrant communities," Jain said.

Before joining SCAN, Sachin was the president and CEO of CareMore

Health and Aspire Health from 2015-2020. There he developed the first scaled clinical program in the world focused on loneliness and social isolation. Prior to Care-More, Sachin was the chief medical information & innovation officer at Merk & Co and was also an attending physician at the Boston VA-**Boston Medical**

Center and a member of the faculties at Harvard Medical School and Harvard Business School. Previously, he held leadership roles in the Department of Health and Human Services focusing on Medicare and Medicaid services.

The fellowship provides meritbased funding for New Americans, immigrants, and children of immigrants, who are poised to make significant contributions to U.S. culture, society, and academia. Each year, we award 30 Fellows up to \$90,000 to pursue their professional passions across a breadth of disciplines at the graduate institutions of their choice.



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INDIA WEST JANUARY 2024 – P15

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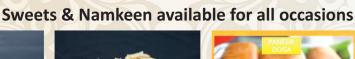




















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P16 – JANUARY 2024 INDIA WEST

COMMUNITY

Veteran Journalist Ashok Tandon Meets Community In Artesia, CA

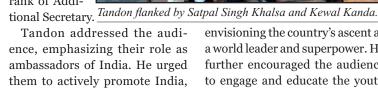
India-West Staff Reporter

ARTESIA, CA - On December 28, 2023, a special meet and greet with Ashok Tandon, a seasoned Indian journalist and political commentator, took place at the Yantra Kitchen restaurant, here.

Kewal Kanda, Vice President of GOPIO-Int'l, introduced Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Khalsa during the gathering, highlighting his

longstanding acquaintance since college days, with Tandon.

Tandon has been a media advisor to Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, since 2014, and has previously served as the in-charge of Media Relations in Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayee's PMO, holding the rank of Addi-



A gathering of supporters and friends

to dispel misconceptions about India's progress.

The event featured the launch of Tandon's book "Reverse Swing: From Colonist to Cooperation," which was launched by Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh.

The evening concluded with a lively question-and-answer session with Ashok Tandon, who graciously answered numerous questions from the engaged audience. The afternoon served as a platform for meaningful discussions and reflections on India's global standing and the collective role of the Indian diaspora.

Ram Das Sikh Mission of America.



The event was proudly sponsored by Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Khalsa, an ambassador of Sikh Dharma and the chairman of Guru



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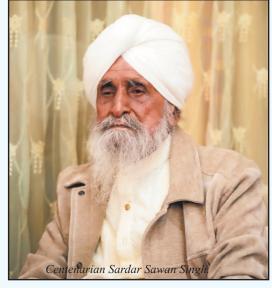
Sawan Singh Turns 100!

India-West Staff Reporter

ORANGE,

CA - Sardar Sawan Singh Gogia, retired school principal and a long-time resident here, turned 100 on December 23.

A self-made and self-educated person, he is known in the community for



his knowledge evidenced by the fact that he has written and published 11 books after retirement.

Despite his blindness due to glaucoma, he remains very active and ambulatory, his large family which resides around Southern California said. Gogia celebrated his birthday with family and friends at the Sikh Center of Orange County in Santa Ana.

Cal State Long Beach Names Shivani Bothra To Jain Studies Chair

India-West Staff Reporter

LONG BEACH, CA - The De-

partment of Religious Studies at California State University, Long Beach has appointed Dr. Shivani Bothra as assistant professor and the Bhagwan Suvidhinath Endowed Chair in Jain Studies.

Bothra's work focuses on non-violence, modernization, and women in the Jain tradition.

The position was named after the 9th Tirthankara who, in the Jain tradi-

tion, is someone who conquered the cycle of rebirth and became a spiritual teacher to others. The creation of this position was generously funded by Dr. Jasvant Modi and the Shah Foundation on behalf of Raksha and Harshad Shah. Speaking on the current state of the world, Modi said he "would like to see belief in non-violence [and] if there is a difference of belief, respect other people."

Bothra is excited about her new

position and will be teaching several classes not only on Jainism, but about the role of non-violence



Dr. Shivani Bothra.

in world religions. "The embrace of Jain Studies by the Department of Religious Studies at California State University, Long Beach is a testament to the profound impact of Jainism, standing as a formidable pillar in the study of religions. It unfolds an unparalleled philosophy, affirming the unity of humanity and underscoring the paramount importance of harmonious coexistence among all beings," she said.

Seattle Consulate Opens Doors

Contd. from P1

United Nations. He was also part of the planning preparations for India's hosting of the successful G20 Summit in New Delhi.

Born in 1978, Gupta is a postgraduate and gold medalist in English Literature, married to Neha Prakash with a 15-year-old daughter. He is fluent in Mandarin, English, and Hindi and beginnerlevel Bahasa Indonesia.

Indians are the second largest

foreign-born population after Mexicans in Washington state. Some cities such as Bothell East, Mill Creek East, and Redmond, are more than 20 percent Indian. And the greater Seattle area has the sixth-largest Indian population in the U.S., Seattle University's RoundGlass India Center said while hosting a reception for Gupta.

The five other Indian consulates are in San Francisco, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, and New York.

Lives Through Music

India-West Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA - The Music Matters Project, a non-profit organization founded

by 10th Grader Mishka Aswani here, is making waves with its commitment to providing underprivileged children in India with the gift of music.

Mishka's passion for music drove her to launch this initiative, aiming to offer youngsters the transformative experience of playing musical instruments.

Inspired by her own introduction to the piano in 4th grade as part of her school's music curriculum, Mishka believes in the

unique power of music to enhance children's lives. On a recent trip to India to visit her extended family, Mishka discovered the absence of a music program at her mother's elementary school. This revelation prompted her to delve deeper into the state of music education in Indian schools, revealing the virtual nonexistence of such programs.

Motivated by this discovery, the Music Matters Project is currently on a mission to donate musical instruments to schools across India. The organization strategically targets schools with a significant population of students aged 7 to 14, recognizing this age

range as the most receptive to learning musical instruments. The focus is on reaching children who lack access to such resources. Mishka has witnessed the positive impact



10th Grader Mishka Aswani.

of the project through videos and images shared by the Music Matters Project team in India and teachers from recipient schools. The enthusiasm displayed by students in engaging with the donated musical instruments underscores the profound effect of music on their lives.

The Music Matters Project is not merely providing instruments; it is creating opportunities for children to discover the joy and potential for growth that music brings. This cause exemplifies the belief that music knows no boundaries and has the power to create a positive impact on lives.

LA Teen Aims To Transform NY To Host India-Pak 2024 T20 World Cup Game

WEST INDIES & USA 2024

NEW DELHI, (IANS) – With the 2024 Men's T20 World Cup set to be jointly held in the West Indies and the US, India could be facing off against Pakistan in the group stage of the tournament at the pop-up stadium in Long Island, New York.

A report in The Guardian said the International Cricket Council and local organizing committees will be signing on the full schedule, with the tournament to be held from June 4-30.

The Eisenhower Park on Long Island, which may host the India-Pakistan game, will

have a temporary 34,000-seater cricket stadium, and cater to the huge number of Indian and Pakistani origin people in downtown Manhattan.

"Some changes to the schedule are still possible, but England and Australia will play all their group games in the Caribbean. It is understood that England's games both in their initial, five-team group and, should they qualify from that, in the Super 8 round will all be in the British tourist hotspots of Antigua, Barbados and St Lucia, but the Australians will visit some of the region's other venues, in St Vincent, Guyana and Trinidad," said the report.

It further said the ICC inspectors have been visiting the Caribbean venues over the last fortnight, finishing in Guyana this week. "Though they found that some improvement and expansion are still necessary they have uncovered no significant issues. The venue for the final has not been confirmed but it is likely to be in Barbados, which has previously hosted the finals of the 2007 50-over World Cup and the 2010 T20 event," added the report. India hasn't

won the Men's T20 World Cup since lifting the trophy in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2007. They reached the final in the 2014 edition of the tournament in Bangladesh but lost to Sri Lanka by six wickets in the title clash.

England are the defending champions of the tournament, having won the 2022

Men's T20 World Cup in Australia, beating Pakistan in the final at the MCG. In the tournament, 20 teams will be divided into four groups of five each for the first round. The top two teams from each group will qualify for the Super Eight stage. In Super Eight, teams will be split into two groups of four each, with the top two sides from two groups entering the semi-finals.

Hosts West Indies and USA, as well as Australia, defending champions England, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh have already qualified for the competition.

Ireland, Scotland, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Nepal, Oman, Namibia, and Uganda will participate in the tournament after earning qualifications via their respective regional qualifying tournaments.





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P18 – JANUARY 2024 INDIA WEST





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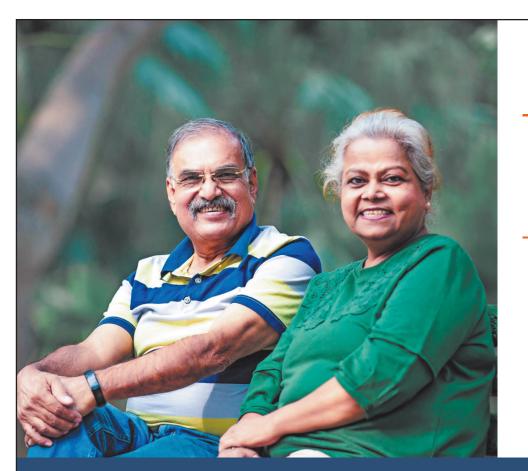


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JANUARY 2024 – P19





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Trafficking and Crime Victims Assistance Program (TCVAP)

A cash aid and social services program for those who aren't citizens and are victims of crime who need immediate support.

Cash Assistance Program for immigrants (CAPI)

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Visit **BenefitsCal.com** for more information on CalFresh, CalWORKs, General Relief, and Medi-Cal benefits. Visit **Dpss.lacounty.gov** or call their toll free number (866)-613-3777 to get additional information.

You can also reach out to **Saahas for Cause** if you need assistance in applying for any of the Public Benefits programs. Email us at **info@saahasforcause.org** or call us at **(562)-446-4705**

Fullerton Couple Followed For 16 Miles | Illegals On Detained Plane From Artesia, Robbed And Assaulted

India-West News Desk

FULLERTON, CA - In a disturbing incident that unfolded here, Drs. Vijay and Jyotika Wali, a couple residing in the area, became victims of a brazen robbery and assault on the evening of December 22. The shocking events were captured on surveillance footage and shared on social media by their daughter, Dr. Priyanka Wali.

The ordeal began when the Kashmiri Pandit couple went jewelry shopping in Artesia's Little India neighborhood, as revealed in the video uploaded by Dr. Priyanka Wali. Surveillance footage from the store shows the couple leaving in their white Tesla at 6:54 p.m. A black Honda Odyssey with tinted windows is seen following them.

Upon arriving home in Fullerton at 7:47 p.m., the duo noticed that the Honda Odyssey, along with another white vehicle, was still tailing them. Security footage from their residence captured the chilling moments when the suspects approached the couple.

Approximately a minute after parking, one suspect targeted Jyotika, stealing her purse, which contained valuable jewelry and ancestral heirlooms, according to Dr. Priyanka Wali. Simultaneously,







another person assaulted Vijay throwing him against the car and knocking him to the ground before

Drs. Vijay and Jyotika Wali.

fleeing the scene.

The stolen items' value is yet to be determined, and the Fullerton Police Department has confirmed its active investigation into the incident. However, they have not released any suspect descriptions

Priyanka Wali, taking to social media, emphasized the organized nature of the crime, pointing out that her parents had been fol-

lowed for over 16 miles. She also highlighted that the perpetrators were heard speaking Spanish during the assault, adding a layer of complexity to the ongoing investigation.

Vijay is an Emergency Medicine Physician at Anaheim Regional Medical Center. Jyotika is an internist with Providence Affiliated Physicians, St. Jude.

Were Gujarati, Headed To **US:** Gujarat Police

AHMEDABAD - Following the grounding of a Nicaragua-bound Airbus A340 in France over suspected human trafficking, officials have revealed that more than 60 passengers from Gujarat, were on board, seeking to enter the US illegally.

The individuals reportedly agreed to pay immigration agents between ₹60 lakh to ₹80 lakh, with promises of assistance in crossing the US-Mexico border after reaching Nicaragua via Dubai, Gujarat officials said.

The incident sheds light on a growing trend, as data from the US Customs and Border Patrol indicates a significant surge in illegal entry attempts into the US by Indians.

In the fiscal year 2023, a total of 96,917 Indians attempted to enter the US illegally, marking a 51.61%increase from the previous year. Notably, 41,770 of these attempts were made via the Mexican land border, according to CBP data.

Police in Gujarat said it has unearthed a large-scale operation involving illegal transportation of Indian citizens to the United States.

It was revealed that a flight from Dubai, which halted for refueling at the Vitry Airport in France, was found carrying 303 passengers, including 260 Indian nationals.

Notably, 96 of these passengers were identified as residents of Gujarat. Most of them have studied till 8th-12th grade and are from Mehsana and Ahmedabad.

The investigation brought to light a complex network of agents facilitating such illegal migration.

The journey, routed from Ahmedabad to Dubai and then to Nicaragua, cost each person between Rs 60 lakh to Rs 80 lakh. The investigation also revealed that the agents were paid \$1,000 to \$3,000 just for crossing the American border.

The investigation also delved into the financial transactions for the flight tickets and the process through which visas were obtained. It was found that these individuals' passports lacked the necessary stamps.

The inquiry extends to uncovering the agents involved in the racket, the process of obtaining Dubai visas, and the financial transactions behind these operations.

The CID Crime has also called 55 of these individuals for questioning after obtaining statements following visits to their homes. This has led to the identification of approximately 15 agents involved in this illegal immigration racket.



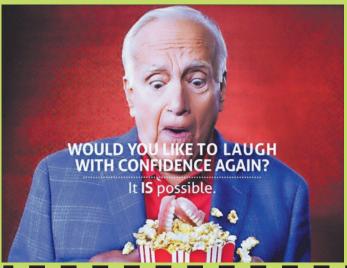
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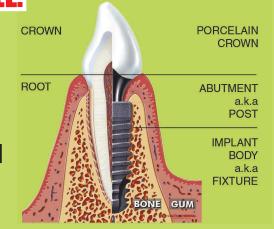
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CA Temple Vandalized, Police Investigating It As Possible Hate Crime

NEWARK, CA (IANS) – A prominent Hindu temple was vandalized by pro-Khalistan elements, leaving the members of the community in shock.

The walls of Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in the Bay Area here were spray painted on December 22 with graffiti targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and eulogizing Khalistan leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

"Based on the content of the graffiti, it is believed that the defacement was a targeted act, and the vandalism is being investigated as a possible hate crime," police said in a statement.

The State Department quickly condemned the vandalism stating, "We condemn the vandalism of Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple in California. We welcome efforts by the Newark Police Department to ensure that those responsible are held accountable."

Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents California's 17th Congressional District located in Silicon Valley, in a social media post strongly condemning the "defacing" of the temple said, "Freedom to worship is at the heart of American democracy. Those who committed this act of vandalism must be held accountable."

Adding that he was heartened that the community had come together to stand up against hate and remove the graffiti. "This community action is answering wickedness with goodness," he said.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi termed the act as "despicable" and said he strongly condemns it. He too appreciated the community rallying in support of the mandir. "We must stand united against bigotry in all its ugly forms. Those who did this vandalism must be held accountable," he said.

Rep. Shri Thanedar, who has founded the Congressional Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jain Caucus, expressed his "profound condemnation of the disgraceful act of vandalism." In a statement, he said he denounces "such attacks of intolerance and call for a thorough investigation into this heinous crime."

"Whatever happened last night was a clear act of vandalism and violence against the Indian community," Chintan Pandya, a member of the temple, told CBS News.

He said the incident is "concerning" as it is the first time the temple has seen something like this since its opening almost two years ago. "It is not safe for the community," Pandya said, adding that the temple leaders will have a special meeting to discuss the incident.

"People who put those symbols and names up...what they are promoting is a separate state of Khalistan... So, if those people who did this want that, that's something that I think most Americans, most Indians, most Hindus don't want," Mihir Meghani, co-founder of Hindu American Foundation, told CBS News.

Meghani said the Indian American community in the Bay Area is growing, and these political issues are now becoming a part of the division here. The Consulate in San Francisco strongly condemned the defacing of the temple. "We strongly condemn the defacing of SMVS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir at Newark, California with



anti-India graffiti," the Consulate posted on X. "This incident has hurt the sentiments of the Indian community. We have pressed for quick investigation and prompt action against the vandals by the US authorities in this matter," the Consulate said.

This July, the Consulate General of India in San Francisco was vandalized and set on fire by what news reports called "pro-Khalistan protesters." On March 19, Sikh separatists also broke several windows. A few embassy workers were injured in the attack.

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA) said a thorough and urgent action is needed to address growing Hinduphobia in the region. "Freedom of religion means little when sacred spaces that are meant to be an oasis of peace and calm, are vandalized with no consequences. We are sad but not shocked — authorities, media, and other groups have regularly downplayed or ignored the growing #Hinduphobia in the region," CoHNA said.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Newark Police Detective Sgt. Yama Homayoun at (510) 578-4920 or Yama.Homayoun@newark.org.

India Designates Goldy Brar, Alleged Killer Of Moosewala, A Terrorist

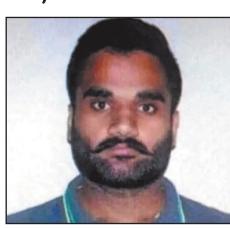
NEW DELHI, (IANS) – The Union Ministry of Home Affairs on January 1 declared Canadabased gangster Satinderjit Singh, popularly known as Goldy Brar, a "designated terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Brar had claimed responsibility for the murder of popular Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala in May last year.

In an official notification, the Centre said Satwinder Singh alias Goldy Brar, the son of Shamsher Singh and Preetpal Kaur born on April 11, 1994, who presently lives in Canada's Brampton, is associated with Babbar Khalsa, the pro-Khalistan terrorist group.

It said Brar, backed by a crossborder agency, is involved in multiple killings and "professes radical ideology, figured in making threatening calls to pronationalist leaders, demanding ransom and posting the claims of killings on different social media platforms".

It also said that Babbar Khalsa International is listed as a terrorist organization.

The notification said that Brar



drones from across the border and supplying thereon for carrying out killings, besides supplying sharpshooters.

His associates have been conspiring to disrupt peace, communal harmony, and law and order in Puniab through nefarious designs.

is also involved in the smuggling

of high-grade arms, ammunition,

and explosive materials through

spiring to disrupt peace, communal harmony, and law and order in Punjab through nefarious designs, including sabotage, raising of terror modules, carrying out targeted killings, and other anti-national activities.

It also said that a Red Corner notice has been issued against Brar by the Interpol Secretariat General, France. At the same time, and a non-bailable warrant has also been issued against him dated December 12, 2022.



New Jersey Township Swears In First Indian American Woman Mayor

MONTGOMERY, NJ (IANS) – Neena Singh has become the first Sikh and Indian American woman to be sworn in as Mayor of Montgomery Township in the US state of New Jersey. She was administered the oath of office by Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman at the Montgomery Township Reorganization Meeting on January 4.

Singh, who has lived in Montgomery for 24 years, was unanimously selected to serve as Mayor by her fellow Township Committee members. "It's an enormous privilege to be sworn in by trailblazer Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman as the first elected Sikh woman Mayor in New Jersey and the first Indian American woman Mayor," said Neena Singh. "What

energizes and motivates me is the spirit of service. I strongly believe we all have a responsibility to give back, and I am blessed to do so in a town that reflects America's diversity," said Singh, whose priorities for 2024 are public safety and health. Having previously served as Deputy Mayor and Township Committeewoman, Singh was nominated to the position by outgoing Mayor Devra Keenan and committeewoman Patricia Taylor Todd.

As an executive officer at STAND Central NJ, a grassroots non-profit, she worked not only on engaging and educating voters but also on empowering them to participate in the democratic process.

"Neena Singh embodies a commitment to public service. She has

made her life's work fighting for social justice, economic opportunity, and human rights for all. I'm confident she'll bring her experience and passion for the township to her term as Mayor," Watson Coleman said in a statement.

In her new role, Singh will

preside at meetings of the Township Committee and will have the power to appoint subcommittees with the Committee's consent. In addition, she will also have the power to make proclamations concerning holidays and events of interest in the township and to exercise the ceremonial power of the township.



New Jersey State Senator Vin Gopal sent a congratulatory video, calling Singh a "role model" for South Asian girls across the state, My Central Jersey news outlet reported.

"For every young South Asian girl growing up not just in Montgomery but across New Jersey, they're going to have a true role model to look up to," Gopal said.



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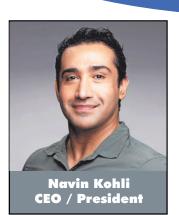
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Minita Sanghvi Announces Run For NY State Senate



India-West Staff Reporter

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY – Saratoga Springs Finance Commissioner and Minita Sanghvi, a Democrat, has announced her candidacy for the 44th State Senate District in New York's Capital Region.

The district, which includes Saratoga County, Niskayuna, and the City of Schenectady, is currently represented by Republican incumbent Jim Tedisco, who had represented a different district for decades before choosing to run in the 44th District after redistricting. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly 6,000 in the district and President Biden beat Donald Trump by 12 percentage points in 2020.

Born to a conservative family of entrepreneurs and innovators in India, Sanghvi was taught by her parents to work hard, stand up for others, and serve her community, a statement from her office said. After earning a degree in accounting and an MBA, and working in advertising, Sanghvi immigrated to the United States in 2001 because America offered

her the opportunity to be herself and pursue her dream of getting married and raising a family.

After working as an Assistant Manager at Walmart, in corporate marketing, and starting her own business, Sanghvi found her passion in educating college students and has been teaching business at Skidmore College for nearly ten years.

While raising a young son with her wife, Megan, Sanghvi earned the trust of her neighbors in 2021 and was elected to serve as the Saratoga Springs Finance Commissioner. She has been called the "voice of reason" by the council for her problem-solving approach.

If elected, Sanghvi will be the first openly gay and first woman of color to represent New York's 44th State Senate District, and the first openly gay woman in the New York Senate. "I believe in protecting rights and freedoms for all residents, no matter where they live or what political party they belong to," said Sanghvi. "I'll protect women's access to health care, defend LGBTQ rights, and ensure everyone has an equal shot at the same American Dream this country has given to me.

Policy Maker Khydeeja Alam| Vivek Ramaswamy: Veda New Chief Of California's **APIA Commission**



India-West Staff Reporter

SACRAMENTO, CA - The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA) has appointed Pakistani American Khydeeja Alam as its new Executive Director. She was sworn into office by Robert Rivas, Speaker of the California State Assembly at the State Capitol here, surrounded by family and friends.

The commission plays a crucial role in advising the Governor and Legislature on the views, needs, and concerns of the state's population of over six million Asian and Pacific Islander Americans.

Alam's appointment has been welcomed across the board with bureaucrats, officials and politicians extending their congratulations and support. One of the key focus areas for CAPIAA under Alam's leadership will be to educate, raise awareness, and advocate for the rights and safety of AAPI communities.

As Executive Director, Alam will spearhead efforts to maximize outreach efforts with Asian and Pacific Islander American communities, including informational campaigns about public and private programs that benefit community interests, and addressing issues of access and cultural language sensitivity within state agencies, departments, and other commissions. Most importantly, Alam will bring visibility around the work the commission continues to do on behalf of California's AAPI communities. Alam will also play a pivotal role in aiding policymakers and state agencies by identifying the needs and issues of AAPI communities, developing appropriate responses, and implementing programs to address these concerns effectively.

Chanting Video Goes Viral

DAYTON, OH (ANI) - The Kerala Hindus of North America gifted a copy of the 'Rig Vedam' to the parents of presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, here.

A viral video shows Vivek's father conducting a ceremonial pooja for the ancient text before passing it on to his son. Ramaswamy, in turn, is seen reciting the Aikyamatya Suktham.

Speaking at 'The Family Leader' forum organized by The Daily Signal platform, in November last year, the Indian American entrepreneur drew parallels between the teachings of Hinduism and Christianity, expressing his intention to promote shared values for the benefit of the next generation.

Ramaswamy said, "May faith is what gives me my freedom. My faith is what led me to this presidential campaign...I am a Hindu. I believe there is one true God. I believe God put each of us here for a purpose. My faith teaches us that we have a duty, a moral duty to realize that purpose. Those are God's instruments that work through us in different ways, but we are still equal because God resides in each of us. That's the core of my faith".

The Ohio-based biotech entrepreneur also drew parallels between Hindu and Christian faiths and said that these are the 'shared values' of God, and he will stand for those shared values.

"I went to Christian High School. What do we learn? We learned the 10 commandments. We read the Bible. Scriptures class.



God is real. There is one true God. Don't take his name in vain. Respect your parents. Don't lie. Don't steal. Don't commit adultery. What I learned at that time is that these values are familiar to me. They don't belong to Hindus. But they don't belong to Christians either. They belong to God. And I think these are the values that have undergone this country," Ramaswamy said.

38-year-old Ramaswamy is a native of southwest Ohio. His mother was a geriatric psychiatrist and his father worked as an engineer at General Electric.

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JANUARY 2024 PROGRAMS

Lobri (Bbogi) & Makara Sankranti Celebrations

Saturday 13th, January 2024

06:30 AM - Lohri Celebrations (Bhogi Manta)

09:30AM - 12:30 PM - Sri Goda Ranganatha Swamy Kalyanam

02:00 PM - 06:00 PM - Tiruppāvai-Yajña (Godha-Vaibhavam)

07:00 PM - Bhogi Pallu Priests will bless all the children with Bhogi Pallu, Aarati, and Veda Ashirvachanam. All are invited to bring their children for this ceremony on this special day of Bhogi!

Sunday 14th, January 2024

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07:30AM - 09:00AM - Samoohika Surya Namaskarams 10:00AM - 12:30PM - Ayyappa Abhishekam & Padi Puja and Bhajans Cultural Programs

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM Violin Mridangam



Shreya Kalyanaraman



Naveen Basavanhally

6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Bharata Natyam



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21st Sunday, January 2024

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05:45 PM: Sri Rama Parivara Abhishekam

06:30 PM: Rama Naama Sankeertana & Bhajans

(by Veda Circle & Ladies Bhajan TeamLead by Sri Pandit Shiva Rama Krishnan Ji)

08:00 PM: Arati followed by dinner prasad.

Huge NY Puppet Display Attacks Modi On Assassination Plot

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY — A large Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi puppet riding a convertible down Fifth Avenue here and chilling on the street in front of Trump Tower, carried a banner declaring, "I could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and get away with it, OK?"

The Trump Tower location seems intentional and an echo of Donald Trump who in 2016 had said at a campaign stop at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, "I could stand in the

middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK?"

The puppet display or stunt, comes from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh organizations after US officials unsealed an indictment charging Indian national Nikhil Gupta and an unnamed Indian government official in the foiled plot to assassinate Khalistani extremist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil.

"These groups came together in a show of unity and strength to highlight a disturbing and press-



ing issue: the alleged strategy of the Indian government in assassinating and intimidating US citizens of Indian descent, as well as other activists living abroad. The audacity of this act in a foreign nation and its implications for international relations and human rights have raised significant alarms," Hindus for Human Rights said in a statement.

Sunita Viswanath of Hindus for Human Rights said, "The point we make is deadly serious. American lives are not chips in trade deals. It's high time

President Biden acknowledges this reality and communicates unequivocally to both American citizens and Prime Minister Modi that our lives matter and are to be protected." Safa Ahmed of the Indian American Muslim Council highlighted the urgency of the situation: "We find ourselves asking who is next and what will it take for our government to intervene? America needs to stand up not just for its citizens but also for the principles of democracy and human rights across the globe."

Donald Trump Jr Does Not Want Haley As Veep

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY – With buzz over Nikki Haley's candidacy the talk of her becoming the GOP vice presidential nominee of Donald Trump, who continues to lead in all public opinion polls, has grown but it is not going down well in many circles.

The son, Donald Trump Jr., has doubled down on not having her on the ticket. "I wouldn't have her and I would go to great lengths to make sure that that doesn't happen," he told Newsmax's Eric Bolling in a recent interview. "Nikki Haley wants

never-ending wars. She's a puppet of the establishment in Washington, DC. She's the new favorite candidate of the billionaire class because they want control— no different than academia and Harvard and using their billions to exercise influence," he said.

Haley's rise has caught the attention of the former president, who has recently quizzed people outside his campaign for their impressions of Haley, reported Politico. But the opposition to her is real in right-wing circles. Politico



also reported that Steve Bannon, at a conservative conference, said that the GOP hierarchy would try to push Trump to pick Haley, but she embraced "Fox News-laundered neoliberal neocon policies that MAGA finds unacceptable."

Trump's allies also recall Haley's expediency in her relations with him. She backed Marco Rubio in the primaries, then made nice and was named UN ambassador by Trump after he was elected and then with an eye on the polls, exited the role.

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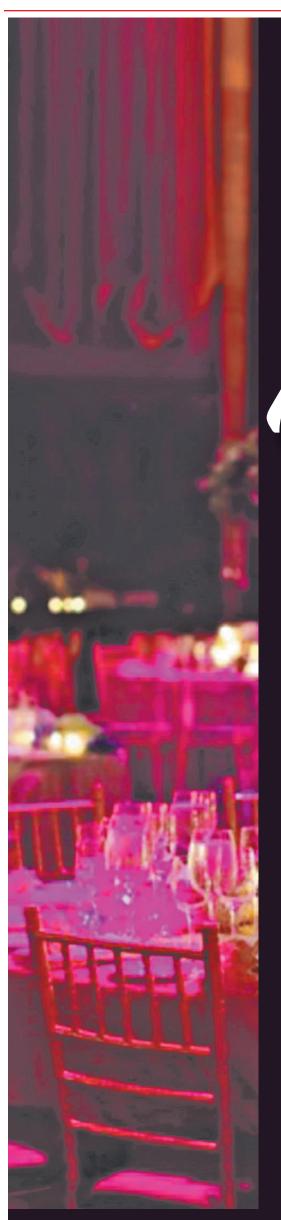
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Trinidad's First PM Of Indian Descent Basdeo Panday Dies



NEW DELHI (IANS) - Basdeo Panday, the first Indian-origin Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago who once said, "If you see me and a lion fighting, feel sorry for the lion", has passed away at the age of 90.

A lawyer, trade unionist, economist, actor, politician, and former civil servant, Panday wore many hats and was the fifth Prime Minister from 1995-2001 after the Caribbean nation gained independence in August 1962. Panday died on the New Year surrounded by his family, according to a statement by his daughter Mickela Panday.

"With deep sorrow, we would like to share that our loving husband and father, Basdeo Panday passed away on 1st January 2024, surrounded by his family," Mickela wrote on Facebook, informing about her father's demise. "In life and death, he was a fighter. He passed with his boots on, keeping everybody around him on their toes with his wit and humor. He will live on in all of us, remembered as a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, leader, and friend." Mickela added that her father was an inspiration to his family and everybody who knew him and that they will continue to celebrate his life and treasure the times spent with him.

A 2005 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman recipient, Basdeo Panday is survived by his wife Oma Panday, and their four daughters.

Born on May 25, 1933, in a rural village in Princes Town, he studied at New Grant Government Primary School and later Presentation College, San Fernando where he obtained his Cambridge School Certificate.

Moving to England, he undertook a Diploma Course in Drama from the London School of Dramatic Art in 1960 and earned a degree in law in 1962 from the Inns of Court of Law. He co-founded three political parties, including the United National Congress (UNC), whose electoral base was primarily

He first entered Parliament on September 15, 1972, as an Opposition Senator, and subsequently became a Member of the House of Representatives, representing the Couva North constituency. In 2005, Basdeo Panday was arrested in a case related to an airport construction contract and was accused of corruption.

However, with supporters claiming the accusations were politically motivated, the corruption charges were dropped.

Mourning his demise, Trinidad and Tobago President Christine Kangaloo, said in a statement that "Panday was a giant of a man who led this country with passion and compassion". Indians make up around 38 percent of the Trinidad and Tobago population and the approximate population of Indians in the country as of 2023 is 5.60 lakh.

According to government data, India contributed about 143,000 indentured workers to Trinidad between 1845 and 1917 with a vast majority of them coming from northern India, mainly from the erstwhile districts of the United Provinces and Bihar.





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Suhas Doubles Down On Abortion Rights As **GOP Wants Him Banned** From Places Of Worship



ASHBURN, VA - The Loudoun County Republican Committee here recently called for congressional candidate Suhas Subramanyam to be "denied access" to houses of worship in Northern Virginia due to his commitment to defending reproductive rights.

Swiftly and angrily, the candidate responded, "Millions of Virginians of every political and religious background support a woman's right to choose, and I'm proud to have championed reproductive rights for years in the General Assembly. To suggest that I or any other pro-choice Virginian should be banned from practicing our faith is outrageous and contrary to the values of our commonwealth and our country."

The first Indian American, South Asian, and Hindu ever elected to the General Assembly of VA, doubled down on his beliefs saying, "I will continue to proudly practice my faith and celebrate the diverse religious traditions in Virginia's 10th District, and I will not back down from my commitment to defending every woman's reproductive right from the right-wing extremists who are relentlessly pursuing a nationwide abortion ban."

The Loudoun County Republican Committee posted its statement on Facebook and was in response to Subramanyam's call for mifepristone access to be protected, "as right-wing MAGA activists once again take their push to ban abortion nationwide to the Supreme Court."

Subramanyam, a two-term state delegate won his first election to the VA state senate in November but on Nov. 16 announced his candidacy for the 10th Congressional District, to succeed Rep. Jennifer Wexton, who is retiring.

 $JANUARY\,2024-P29$





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Ready To Look Into Plot: Modi Breaks Silence, Reaffirms Ties With US

NEW DELHI (ANI) – Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has, for the first time responded to charges of the US of an Indian link to an alleged foiled assassination plot against India-designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, and stated he will "look into" any evidence, adding that "few incidents" would not affect US-India ties.

He also said, "There is strong bipartisan support for the strengthening of this relationship, which is a clear indicator of a mature and stable partnership."

"Security and counter-terrorism cooperation has been a key component of our partnership," he said. "I don't think it is

appropriate to link a few incidents with diplomatic relations between the two countries," PM Modi added.

In an interview with the UK-based newspaper Financial Times, he said, "If a citizen of ours has done anything good or bad, we are ready to look into it. Our commitment is to the rule of law."

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who was declared a 'designated individual terrorist' by the Government of India on July 1, 2020, has been actively exhorting Punjab-based gangsters and youth over social media to fight for the cause of the independent state of Khalistan, NIA investigations have shown.



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Pannun has been under the NIA lens since 2019 when the anti-terror agency registered its first case against him. Modi raised concerns over extremist activities and said, India was "deeply concerned about the activities of certain extremist groups based overseas," adding "These elements, under the guise of freedom of expression, have engaged in intimidation and incited violence," he told the Financial Times.

Randhir Jaiswal, Former New York CG Named Foreign Affairs Spokesperson



NEW DELHI (ANI) – The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi has passed on the baton to Randhir Jaiswal, who assumed the charge as official MEA spokesperson on January 3.

Jaiswal previously recently served as Consul General in New York and was praised for being actively involved in the repatriation of Indian Americans during the pandemic and how the mission adjusted to the unprecedented global health crisis.

Jaiswal, an officer of the 1998 batch of the Indian Foreign Service has served in Portugal, Cuba, South Africa, and at India's permanent mission to the UN in New York.

Earlier in October, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi was appointed India's next Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

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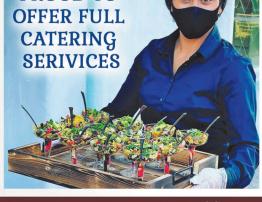
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Sima Taparia's Mantra For Successful Marriage - Giving, Sharing, Caring

Contd. from P1

season, Taparia gained instant popularity as Sima Aunty, with her catchphrase, "Hi, I am Sima Taparia from Mumbai," generating traction on social media.

The Emmy-nominated show, executive produced by Oscar-nominated Indian American director/producer Smriti Mundhra, debuted its third season in 2023.

"Everyone in 190 countries is watching the show, they are liking it and that's a proud moment for India. Everyone is saying 'Simaji, you have put India on the world map.' Everybody's saying, 'Oh! This is how arranged marriage happens and this is how the Indian values are," Taparia told India-West, "It was trending number one and wherever you go they know who Sima Taparia is. They love her, they respect her which is what I have wanted since childhood. I got love and respect from the world and fame and recognition were just the byproducts, but I was not working for that. I was passionate about my work."

Mundhra previously worked with Taparia on "A Suitable Girl," the 2017 documentary exploring the institution of arranged marriages in India. In the film, the lives of three women, Ritu – Taparia's daughter – Dipti, and Amrita,

who are educated, financially stable, and raised with a mix of traditional and contemporary values in the urban cities of Mumbai and New Delhi, take a dramatic turn when the pressure to settle down and get married hits.

"Smriti and we are family related. She came with her father, and mother for her match and when she saw my way of working, she found it very interesting and thought of making a documentary," Taparia recalled.

After the film earned rave reviews, Mundhra decided to further explore the timehonored tradition of matchmaking

and reached out to Taparia.

"I never dreamt anything about the show. After 'A Suitable Girl' got awarded at Tribeca, they planned to make a reality show on the untouched topic of arranged marriage which is not there anywhere in the world except in a few countries, in-



cluding India," Taparia said. "They said we want you because I'm a matchmaker and we want to show the world the reality. I'm a typical Indian lady with Indian values and what you see on the show is who I am so I'm very proud that I'm spreading my Indian values to the

world, to all the youngsters in all the colleges... the Indian values are vanishing. Now, I mean, to a certain extent, the youngsters say that since Seema aunty is saying so it must be that you have to adjust, you have to compromise since you will get only 60 percent which now they're understanding and now they're saying they want to do arranged marriage."

Everybody who she works with has different criteria and circumstances. But Taparia does not mince words as she reminds these hopeful singles that marriage and compromise go hand in hand, and they need to find common ground, be flexible, and dilute their ego.

"I tell them you have to compromise in every way. Don't you compro-

mise in your office or your house or anywhere; I just tell them when we are at the airport and the flight is late, what do you do? You just sit there, either read a magazine or work on your laptop, have coffee... you have to do it because you cannot rush the pilot and say, 'Please

take me soon.' Everywhere, from offices to schools to colleges, you compromise... then why not in our family life, in our married life? If we compromise then only life will go smoothly," Taparia reasoned.

She went on to add that the institution of marriage has existed for thousands of years but "it's diminishing because the youth today have a lot of exposure, they have financial independence, they have a career, so they don't want to listen to anybody."

"I give them only one advice: giving, sharing, taking, and caring, these four things if we follow then the problem of divorce and depression will not come," Taparia continued while theorizing that balancing your personal life and family life is the key. "If you follow this then you will you not have any problems but if you are running from that then of course you'll have the problems in life."

One of the biggest misconceptions is that an arranged marriage equals a forced marriage but that could not be further from the truth, said Taparia, adding "We give the options, and you meet them and when it's okay then you can proceed. Nothing is done forcefully."

Unlike generic dating apps, the beauty of matchmaking, she added,

Raj Sharma - Owner

Contd. on P33



Sima Taparia's Mantra For Successful Marriage - Giving, Sharing, Caring

Contd. from P32

lies in the fact that it caters to specific needs thereby lending a human touch. Taparia's role as a matchmaker is quite professionalized and she conducts a thorough vetting process after creating a profile and learning about their pre-requisites. That includes doing a deep dive into their lifestyle and family values by meeting candidates and their families in their own homes when possible since she has clients in the U.S., U.K. Dubai, and Hong Kong, among other countries.

"I meet them, I scan them, I ask the criteria and then I filter them because people go by my goodwill. They have confidence in me," Taparia said. "I treat them as my son and daughter. That is very, very important. This is not a business. Recently, I went to a person's house in Jaipur just to see his way of living and how their parents are talking, etc. Naturally with that only I can match some other family, right? By just passing the biodata, nothing will happen."

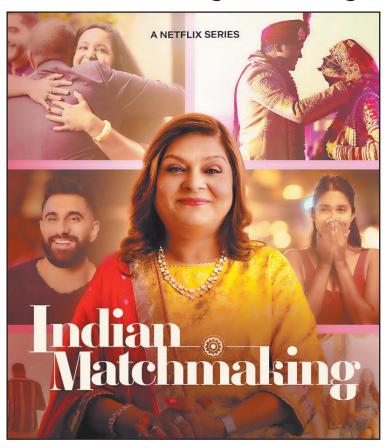
Taparia, who had an arranged marriage 40 years ago, initially started setting people up as a hobby and the success led her to create a business out of it, with support from her husband, whom she described as her "pillar of strength" and her two daughters one of her as Netflix solely wanted to

whom was featured in "A Suitable Girl" and is settled in Dubai. She is looking for potential matches for her second daughter and will happen when its "destined."

"Since childhood, I had a unique ability to talk to people and connect with them. I was good at remembering relationships, or rishtas and so in 2005 I thought of doing matchmaking which is very important in India and would be a great help to the community...people who are hunting for the matches they can take my help and it'll become easy for them," Taparia said. "From a very conservative Marwadi family, I started this and my husband and my daughters guided me and helped me step by step."

She insisted that the show is unscripted and the singles who are featured are serious about commitment and are encouraged to be themselves. "The production company screens candidates. It's not easy to come on this show. In this reality TV, everything is real and no dialogue is given to us. In the show, I'm just like how I am in real life and the only difference is that cameras are following us. Everything is from the heart," Taparia told India-West.

However, the low success rate of these alliances does not "bother"



showcase the arranged marriage system, Taparia stated.

"It didn't promise that in 5 months you are going to match somebody. You tell me how is it possible to match people only in five months?" Taparia commented. "But already two or three people have been finalized." Her advice

to those looking to enter long-term relationships is to be patient and keep their expectations in check.

"I always tell them that you will not get 100 percent on your checklist you see what you're getting is 60 percent. In India, we also see families and all, but that trend is not there in the U.S.,"

Taparia shared, adding that Indian Americans hope to continue meeting potential matches for a year or two before deciding, a scenario she does not approve.

"I tell them 'No, you cannot go on for so long. You have to decide in five-six meetings whether it's a yes or no.' In the U.S and abroad, I've seen that they are pickier as compared to India and so I tell them to lower their expectations if they want success, else they'll go on meeting people and continue going on dates. They are understanding the concept now," Taparia told India-West. "Their criteria ranges from education to wavelength to compatibility."

As she is adjusting to the attention, Taparia is "grateful" for all the love and hopes to expand her reach and serve a wider audience.

"Becoming an overnight celebrity is not easy. It's all hard work, passion and god's grace. Gratitude, gratitude, gratitude to God...and I never dreamt or anybody never dreamt that the show will rock the world," an ecstatic Taparia said. "Currently, I cater to only Indians... Hindu Indians and if God is willing, I can spread my wings and can cater to other communities also. I am there to help people and if someone gets success, I will get blessings in return."

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YOUR CAREER HOROSCOPE FOR 2024

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Aries professionals can anticipate a stable start to the year, with promising success in September and October leading to growth. While challenges may surface in August, the overall outlook favours career advancement. Opportunities for business ventures and overseas travel between April and September add an extra layer of positivity.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

For Taurus individuals, hard work becomes the key to career growth in 2024. Financial stability and recognition are on the horizon. Caution is advised with expenses, but March-April and December bring opportunities for career advancements, making it a favourable year for Taurus professionals.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Financial stability and recognition are in the cards for Geminis in 2024. March-April and December offer chances for overseas travel and career advancements. Managing conflicts with partners requires caution. Businessmen can expect a fruitful year with a focus on financial management.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Saturn and Venus set the stage for a positive career start for Cancer individuals. Growth is promised in May and June, with challenges in July to August followed by favourable advancements in October to November. Overall, 2024 looks to be a year of positive developments and growth in the job sector for Cancer professionals.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Saturn's presence in the seventh house signals growth in business and partnerships for Leos. Opportunities for foreign travel emerge, and advancements in the job are expected in March-April and December. Caution is advised in August to avoid conflicts with colleagues.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Saturn in the eighth house brings stability and progress for Virgos. Job changes and advancements are likely in May-June and August. Challenges may arise in July, but success in the career is promised from October to November. Libra (September 23 - October 22)
Financial prosperity is on the horizon for Libra in 2024. Starting a business in the first half of the year is favorable. Challenges in March-April and caution

is favorable. Challenges in March-April and caution about rivals in May-June give way to progress from August to December, ensuring a successful year.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Stability reigns for Scorpios in 2024, favouring the existing job. Job changes and promotions are possible between August and October. Financial rewards accompany some challenges, but overall, a promising year with success after a job change.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Ups and downs characterize Sagittarius' career in 2024. Mental stress may arise between April and August, but a new job opportunity and favourable months in September, November, and December contribute to overall career success.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

A promising start for Capricorns in 2024. Success in the career is highlighted, with significant progress from January to March and July to August. Financial stability is ensured, gradually maturing by the end of the year.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Saturn's aspect brings success in Aquarius' efforts. Active months in February-March and August-September indicate positive outcomes. Overseas travel opportunities may arise, providing an excellent year for career success.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Mars and the Sun bring success to Pisces' career at the start of the year. Financial considerations and expenses are balanced, with gains in the career. Crucial periods in March-April and August-September offer overseas travel opportunities, while caution is advised in communication.

These astrological insights offer a glimpse into the potential career paths for each zodiac sign in 2024. Remember, individual experiences may vary, and it's essential to approach astrological predictions with an open mind, seeking professional guidance for personalized advice.

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