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JOURNAL

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With April 2 Deadline Looming, India Refutes Trump's Tariff Reduction Claims



India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – India has refuted President Donald Trump's claim that it had agreed to significantly cut import tariffs on U.S. products, clarifying that no such

commitment has been made. The rebuttal follows statements from Trump, who, in the early days of his second term, suggested that India had agreed to "cut their tariffs way down" due to pressure from his administration.

During a speech, Trump criticized India's tariff policies, describing them as "massive" and "almost restrictive." He asserted, "You can't sell anything into India," and claimed, "They have agreed, by the
Contd. on P21

Tulsi Gabbard: Krishna's Teachings Give Me Peace And Strength

NEW DELHI (ANI) – U.S. Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, is currently in India as part of a multi-nation visit, marking her first trip to the country since assuming office.

On March 17, Gabbard met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi where he presented Gabbard with a vase containing water from the Ganga, collected during the recently concluded Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. He also gifted her a rudraksha bead mala as a gesture of goodwill.

Following the meeting, Gabbard



Contd. on P22

Columbia Student Ranjani Srinivasan Flees To Canada Before ICE Can Arrest Her

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY – Ranjani Srinivasan, a 37-year-old doctoral student in Urban Planning at Columbia University, is currently in Canada after voluntarily leaving the United States. Her decision to self-deport came after her student visa was revoked on March 5 by the U.S. Department of State, citing her alleged involvement in activities supporting Hamas, a designated terrorist organization.

Srinivasan, an Indian national and Fulbright scholar, was not given specific details about the revocation, only a vague reference to "information" that had come to light.

On March 7, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents first visited her apartment, but she was not home. The following night, they returned, and Srinivasan, feeling the pressure of the escalating situation, quickly packed a few belongings, left her cat with a friend, and boarded

a flight to Canada from LaGuardia Airport. Meanwhile, federal agents arrested another Columbia student, Mahmoud Khalil, on campus.

By the time ICE agents returned to her apartment with a judicial warrant, Srinivasan had already left the country. Reflecting on the tense atmosphere, she told The New York Times, "The atmosphere seemed so volatile and dangerous. So, I just made a quick decision."

Contd. on P22



Photo: Ranjani Srinivasan via New York Times.

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Holi Fest Transforms Downtown San Jose Into A Spectacle Of Joy And Unity

India-West Staff Reporter

SAN JOSE, CA – Crowds thronged Discovery Meadow in downtown San Jose as the vibrant hues of Holi filled the air at the city’s first-ever “Holi Fest.” Presented by the Association of Indo Americans (AIA) and Bolly 92.3, the festival drew an estimated 15,000 attendees, celebrating the Indian festival of colors with joy, music, and cultural performances.

Holi, which signifies the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil, was marked by revelers playfully tossing colored powders

leaders. Representatives from the offices of Congressman Ro Khanna, Congressman Sam Liccardo, and state officials also joined the festivities, expressing admiration for the event’s ability to bring the community together.

“We are thrilled to witness such a magnificent celebration of Holi here in San Jose,” said Mayor Mahan. “The colors, the energy, and the spirit of togetherness truly make this event special.” Many officials shared their experiences on social media, posting pictures and messages of appreciation.

The day-long event, which ran from 11



at one another, transforming the venue into a dazzling spectacle. The festival, supported by over 50 Indian organizations across the Bay Area, brought together people of all backgrounds in a jubilant celebration of Indian culture.

Dignitaries in attendance included Deputy Consul General of India Rakesh Adlakha, San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein, Fremont Mayor Raj Salwan, and several city council members and community

a.m. to 6 p.m., featured live music, dance performances, and cultural showcases. The Association of Indo Americans, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting Indian heritage, played a key role in organizing the event.

“Holi Fest was more than just a festival—it was a testament to the vibrant and growing Indian American community in the Bay Area,” said an AIA representative. “We are grateful for the overwhelming support and look forward to making this an annual tradition.”



Irvine, CA Declares March 14 “Holi Day”

IRVINE, CA– The City of Irvine officially proclaimed March 14, 2025, as “Holi Day” to celebrate the vibrant Hindu festival of colors.

Mayor Larry Agran signed the proclamation on March 11, recognizing Holi’s significance in promoting unity, renewal, and cultural appreciation.

By officially recognizing Holi, the city of Irvine “aims to foster cross-cultural understanding and strengthen its diverse community,” it said on its website.

At a meeting in city hall on March 11 when the proclamation was adopted, Indian American city residents were present.

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COMMENTARY

Going Beyond Checkbook Philanthropy: Indian Americans Should Rethink Their Giving Strategies



By **ALEX COUNTS**,
Executive Director,
India Philanthropy Alliance

Like almost any skill, philanthropy can be improved through practice and study. In the same way that Indian Americans have mastered the disciplines of spelling, medicine, hotel management, and coding, as their wealth increases, they can and arguably must become more proficient at impactful giving that brings them satisfaction and indeed, joy. But business as usual is not going to get the job done.

During the last 15 years, Indian Americans broke through from no political representation at the federal level to having some of the leading political figures in the country. The work of Indian American Impact was crucial to driving this progress. On the philanthropic front, the India Philanthropy Alliance, that I lead, has been providing leadership to grow the size, scope, and quality of American private giving to India. The main vehicle has been its annual India Giving Day campaign, which this year culminates on March 14.

While the 36 participating organizations that were selected due to the quality of their work and their trustworthiness are expected to announce some large grants this month, the emphasis of this third campaign is to encourage every Indian American family to participate by donating at least \$100 if that is affordable to them. If we had 100% participation, it would mobilize \$125 million and on a single day roughly double the annual budgets of all three dozen participating organizations. That would I turn allow them to dramatically increase the scale of their



I believe that the principles that underlie the most effective and satisfied givers can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Focusing more on building institutions than on funding projects.
- (2) Giving where the need is greatest (rather than to areas that are easily accessed).
- (3) Measure the metrics that matter most, especially those related to impact, and deemphasize crude measures such as overhead rate.
- (4) Support efforts of nonprofits to work together to accomplish more than any one charity can do alone.
- (5) Support efforts of nonprofits to work creatively with public sector entities.
- (6) Ensure the full inclusion of youth in philanthropic activities to ensure fresh perspectives and sustainability over time.

work to promote education, health care, and livelihoods for low-income Indians while also advancing other worthy causes such as eldercare and animal rights.

But increasing the amount of Indian American giving is only the tip of the iceberg of what is possible. Considering that the community volunteers almost double the number of hours average Americans do, according to a study by Dalberg, the diaspora's understanding of philanthropic processes

and needs is likely to be considerably greater than the typical donor's. This opens the possibility of turning that practical knowledge into the most effective forms of giving as practiced by IGD's National Co-Chairs.

It is important to remember that not only the recipients of philanthropy benefit; the givers do as well. As noted donors Raj Gupta and Deepak Raj wrote recently, "Research shows that people who give the most to charities are, on average, happier, healthier,

and more successful than those who give less, or not at all. We can attest to the fact that our own giving has not only had a positive impact on society but made us better and more satisfied people. Our donations will be one of our most important legacies, along with the families that we nurtured and the businesses that we built and ran."

There are tremendous synergies between potential the growth of big philanthropy (\$100,000 and above) within the Indian American community, the broadening of the network of those who give at least \$100, the maturation of giving strategies to improve effectiveness, and the continued leadership of the community in terms of its embrace of volunteerism.

India and its 30 million strong global diaspora are providing leadership to the world in many ways in recent decades. Yet the world's most populous and diverse country is called to develop and demonstrate new strengths. Philanthropy is one such possibility. If it can be fully grasped and realized, millions will benefit through better funded programs. In addition, a growing number of people will be

drawn to the meaning and satisfaction that can be drawn through turning their empathy into pragmatic and action-oriented partnerships with leading nonprofit institutions.

(Counts is the author of four books including his acclaimed midlife memoir 'Changing the World Without Losing Your Mind' and an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. Previously, he established Grameen Foundation in 1997 and served as its CEO for 18 years.)

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COMMUNITY

CalKIDS Offers Up To \$1,500 In Scholarships For CA Students

India-West Staff Reporter

SACRAMENTO, CA—As college acceptance and financial aid letters begin to arrive, more than 2 million California high school seniors and college students have an opportunity to ease their education costs through the CalKIDS program, the nation's largest child development account initiative. Administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board, CalKIDS provides eligible public school students with scholarships worth up to \$1,500, helping them take the next step toward higher education or career training.

Eligible students can use their CalKIDS Scholarship Accounts for tuition, fees, books, supplies, and computer equipment. Since the program's launch in 2022, approximately \$1 billion in CalKIDS Scholarships have been made available to California public high school students.

Claiming a CalKIDS Scholarship is a straightforward process. Families need the student's Statewide Student Identifier (SSID), a ten-digit number available from their school. Once they have the SSID, students or parents can visit CalKIDS.org to check eligibility and claim their scholarship in just minutes.

Scholarship funds can be used at accredited colleges, universities, trade schools, and career programs across the country. Once enrolled in a higher education program,



students can log into their CalKIDS Account to request a distribution directly to their school for qualifying educational expenses.

"Studies show that students with just \$500 or less set aside for college are three times more likely to attend college and four times more likely to graduate," said Cassandra DiBenedetto, executive director of the ScholarShare Investment Board. "CalKIDS Accounts are more than financial assistance—they're an investment in students' futures, and we want to give every one of these students a reason to believe in their path to higher education."

With roughly 60% of California public school students eligible for a CalKIDS Scholarship and key college decision and financial aid deadlines approaching, now is the time for students and families to check their eligibility and claim their scholarship accounts.

For more information on eligibility, scholarship amounts, and how to claim a CalKIDS Scholarship Account, visit CalKIDS.org.

Record 72,620 Indian Americans Enrolled In Covered California As Program Hits Nearly 2 Million

India-West Staff Reporter

SACRAMENTO, CA — Covered California has reached a record-high enrollment of 1,979,504 people for 2025, with Indian Americans making up a significant portion of the enrollees. A total of 72,620 Asian Indian consumers have signed up for health coverage through the state exchange, contributing to the over 24% (391,960) of total enrollees who identify as Asian American.

The latest figures also show that 13,000 new enrollees for 2025 identify as Asian Indian, reflecting a steady increase in health insurance participation among California's Indian American community.

Statewide, Covered California reported that 345,711 people newly enrolled in health plans, while more than 1.6 million renewed their coverage. This marks the fourth consecutive year of rising enrollment, driven by federal and state subsidies that have made health insurance more affordable.

"The tremendous success during this open enrollment is the payoff from the work California has done for years to maximize the Affordable Care Act," said Gov. Gavin Newsom. "California's uninsured rate has continued to drop as Covered California has made it easier for consumers to find quality coverage at an affordable price."

Since Covered California's launch in 2014, the state's uninsured rate has dropped from



Governor Gavin Newsom

17.2% to 6.4%—the largest decrease in the country during the Affordable Care Act era. More than 6.3 million Californians have received marketplace coverage at some point.

Potential Loss of Subsidies in 2026

Covered California's success has been fueled in part by enhanced federal subsidies introduced in 2021 under the American Rescue Plan, along with a state-funded cost-sharing reduction program. However, these subsidies are set to expire at the end of 2025 unless extended by Congress and President Trump.

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COMMUNITY

Alan Desai's Oral Care Brand, Popwhite, Supports NFL Wives Charity Event



India-West Staff Reporter

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Popwhite, a socially conscious oral care brand, served as a lead sponsor of the Off The Field NFL Wives Association's (OTF) 24th Annual Charity Fashion Show, held here ahead of the Super Bowl.

This year's event, themed "A Legacy of Strength and Resilience," honored the mothers and wives of victims of the recent Bourbon Street attack, highlighting community support and solidarity.

The event featured 50 spouses and partners of current and former NFL players walking the runway in a show of unity. OTF President Tenisha Patterson Brown empha-

sized the event's purpose, stating, "True empowerment goes beyond words. It's about fostering a strong foundation of support that uplifts entire communities." Popwhite owner Alan Desai reiterated the brand's support for meaningful causes. "This event was more than a fashion show—it was a moment to stand together and make an impact," he said.

About: Popwhite is a peroxide-free oral care brand that uses color-correcting technology to brighten smiles without harsh chemicals. Its product line includes toothpaste, oral rinses, and professional-grade prophylaxis paste for dental hygienists. It is vegan, PETA-certified, and made in the US.

For more: www.popwhitesmile.com.

Free Dental Services Camp Brings Smiles To Underserved Communities

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – On February 22, the One World One Family (OWOF) Foundation's LA Chapter hosted a transformative Free Dental Services Camp, delivering essential oral care to those in need. The event took place at Tran's dental facility, showcasing

the power of collaboration among dedicated professionals and organizations committed to community service.

At the heart of this initiative was the Punjabi Dental Society, spearheaded by Chairman Dr. Devinderpal Nagra and President Dr. Ranjeev Salwan. Their team of five skilled dentists, alongside OWOF Dental Coordinator Dr. Viral Ukani, worked tirelessly to ensure that underserved patients received top-notch dental care without any cost.

The event benefited from the support of Dr. Kris Dill, Director of the North-West College Dental Assistant Program, and Dr. Quynh Tran, CEO of Tran's Dental, whose facility and staff of seven provided a welcoming environment for patients. Under the guidance of CNUSD President Dr. Payne Stuart and his bilingual assistant, the camp

smoothly coordinated the arrival of ten adult students per hour to assist in patient care.

Adding to the community spirit, the Gurdwara of Riverside, CA, graciously supplied a nourishing lunch for all participants, ensur-



ing that everyone left not only with brighter smiles but also with full stomachs.

"This initiative is a testament to the power of community service," said Roopa Sharma, President of One World One Family Foundation. "By working together, we can ensure that no one is denied access to basic healthcare needs. Today, we made a real difference—one smile at a time."

Salwan emphasized the importance of volunteer efforts, stating, "These free dental camps are only possible if we have dentists willing to dedicate their time and services to underserved communities." Nagra also extended an invitation to fellow members of the Punjabi Dental Society, which boasts over 7,500 dentists, urging them to join in the mission of uplifting underprivileged populations.

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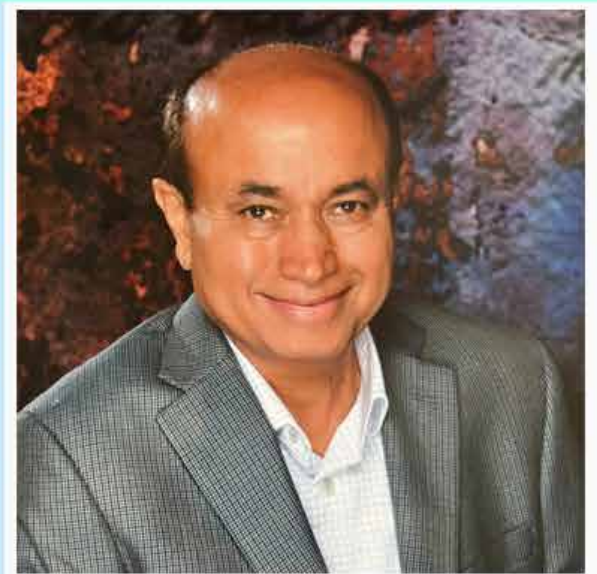
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COMMUNITY

Fremont Mother Urges Congress To Continue Funding Childhood Cancer Research

India-West Staff Reporter

FREMONT, CA – Fremont resident and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) volunteer Manisha Modi Mehta joined 350 other cancer patients, survivors and family members in the nation’s capital for the 15th Annual Alliance for Childhood Cancer Action Days.

The event, organized by the Alliance for Childhood Cancer, of which ACS CAN is a member, brought together advocates from 39 states and the District of Columbia to push for stronger support in the fight against childhood cancer.

On February 28, Manisha met with Representative Ro Khanna’s legislative assistant and other congressional staff to share the story of her son Ronil, who passed away at 14 from an aggressive and difficult to treat brain tumor. She urged Congress to fund childhood cancer programs and ensure childhood cancer research remains a national priority.

“The vast majority of children with cancer, 85% of them, survive five years or more. This is a significant improvement from the five-year survival rate of about 58% from fifty years ago. However, there are certain childhood can-



cers, like the one Ronil had, that still have a poor prognosis. Cancer research is critical to improve treatments that can help patients live longer and better,” said Manisha in a statement.

She and the other participants asked lawmakers to continue funding the Childhood Cancer Survivorship, Treatment, Access and Research (STAR) Act to improve the quality of life of childhood cancer patients, survivors and their

asked lawmakers to support the Accelerating Kids’ Access to Care ACT, which would reduce red tape delays, allowing children with cancer and other complex medical needs who are covered by Medicaid quicker access to time-sensitive care.

Additionally, they urged Congress to continue to make strong investments in the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute to help advance

discoveries in the fight against childhood cancer, among other asks. Eighty percent of the 14,000 newly diagnosed children and adolescents each year rely on research institutions to provide life-saving care, with more than half of newly diagnosed children enrolling in clinical trials.

“Since my son Ronil passed away, I have dedicated my time to raising awareness for DIPG (Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma) and finding avenues for research funding through the Neev Kolte &

Brave Ronil Foundation. I hope our lawmakers understand the important role they play in helping save lives from childhood cancer and that they heed our asks,” she added.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in children ages 1 to 14, and brain cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death. About 9,550 children in the United States under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer in 2025. An estimated 1,050 children under the age of 15 are expected to die from cancer in 2025.

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India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – The UCLA Center for India and South Asia is accepting submissions for the 2024 Sardar Patel Award, which recognizes the best doctoral dissertation on modern India completed at a U.S. university. The award, which carries a \$10,000 prize, honors scholarly excellence in history, social sciences, humanities, education, and fine arts. The submission deadline is April 1, 2025.

Established in 1999, the award continues to uphold the legacy of Sardar Patel, a key leader in India’s independence movement and its first Deputy Prime Minister, known for unifying the nation’s princely states.

Eligible dissertations must have been completed between September 1, 2023, and August 31, 2024, at a U.S.-accredited institution. Applicants must submit a PDF of their dissertation, along with an abstract, a curriculum vitae, and a verification form from their dissertation supervisor or department chair. Submissions must be made online at <https://www.international.ucla.edu/cisa/patel>.

The award recipient will be required to attend a conferral ceremony in Los Angeles and acknowledge the Sardar Patel Association in any related publications. For further inquiries: mohammadi@ucla.edu.

Rohini Bedi Recognized At International Women's Day Gala

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – Fashion designer and entrepreneur Rohini Bedi was honored at the International Women's Day Gala 2025, held at the Taglyan Complex here on March 8. She joined a group of women, including Congresswoman Diane Watson, Natasha Graziano, Cynthia Rothrock, Virgelia Villegas and Sue Wong who were celebrated for their contributions to their respective fields and communities.

With over 30 years of experience in fashion design, Rohini has carved out a niche as a custom bridal and wedding designer. She is the founder of Fashion



by Rohini, an Indian bridal and designer fashion store on Pioneer Boulevard, where she offers clients exclusive Indian couture. Her boutique works with top designers to provide high-end fashion, with services like personalized fittings, alterations, and customizations.

In addition to her work in fashion, Rohini has contributed to the business community as the former president of the Artesia Chamber of Commerce. During her time at the helm, she introduced several initiatives, including evening business mixers, a podcast, and a Business of the Month feature aimed at supporting local businesses. She also played a key role in securing

federal grants for small businesses during the pandemic.

Rohini is also a board member of SAHARA, a non-profit organization that serves survivors of abuse and promotes women's empowerment. Through her involvement, she helps further the organization's mission to assist women on their paths to healing and independence.

Reflecting on her recognition, Rohini said, "It's a privilege to be recognized alongside such inspiring women. Fashion has always been my passion, and empowering others through style and entrepreneurship is what drives me forward."

Deepak Chopra, Meghan's Guru, Suggests Spiritual Guidance To Mend Royal Family Rift

India-West News Desk

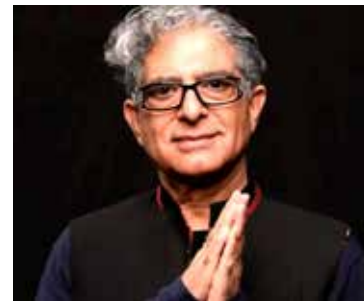
LOS ANGELES, CA – Author and wellness advocate Deepak Chopra believes spiritual guidance could help bridge the divide between Prince Harry, Meghan Markle, and the Royal Family, a rift that deepened following their

interview with Oprah Winfrey and the release of Harry's memoir, Spare, according to the Daily Mail.

During a recent visit to London, Chopra told the Daily Mail that King Charles would play a crucial role in any reconciliation. "It would help if there were close alliances between the royals and spiritual help," he

said, adding that he would welcome the King seeking spiritual advice to mend relations with Harry.

Chopra, 78, has had direct interactions with the couple, not only serving as Meghan's spiritual mentor but also appearing on their first Spotify podcast. He emphasized that releasing antagonistic



emotions is particularly significant for individuals facing health chal-

lenges, as King Charles currently does with cancer. "We know now that all chronic disease is accompanied by three things: inflammation, stress, and depression," Chopra told the Daily Mail. He noted that while genetics play a small role in disease, lifestyle factors—such as diet, social interactions, and emotional well-being—are crucial in managing health.

lenges, as King Charles currently does with cancer.

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PERSONAL PROFILE

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Golden Anniversary



Satish Kumar and Kiran Kumar married in Faridabad in 1974 and recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have two children: Deepika, who resides in Dubai, and Gaurav Kumar, who lives in Simi Valley, California.

Tanishq Expands U.S. Presence With New Stores In Atlanta And Seattle

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – Tanishq, India's leading jewelry brand, has expanded its footprint in the U.S. with the opening of new stores in Redmond, Washington, and Cumming, Georgia, marking a significant milestone in its North American growth. The new locations bring the brand's total U.S. presence to six stores, catering to a growing demand for fine gold and diamond jewelry that blends South Asian heritage with contemporary American tastes.

The Atlanta-area store, located at 580 Peachtree Parkway in Cumming, spans 3,270 square feet and offers more than 5,000 unique designs, from traditional bridal collections to modern, everyday pieces. Atlanta's diverse



and rapidly growing population made it a strategic choice for expansion. The grand opening event welcomed Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan, Consul General of India in Atlanta, along with local dignitaries and custom-

ers eager to explore Tanishq's collection.

In Redmond, Washington—home to a thriving South Asian community—the new 3,640-square-foot showroom offers a similar array of exquisite



jewelry, combining craftsmanship with ethical sourcing. The launch event was attended by Prakash Gupta, Consul General of India in Seattle, and Redmond Mayor Angela Birney.

“Our journey in the U.S. is just beginning, and Atlanta and Seattle are key markets for us,” said Amrit

Pal Singh, Business Head – North America, Titan Company Limited. “We are proud to bring Tanishq's exceptional craftsmanship and trust to additional vibrant and diverse communities, providing a destination for fine jewelry that seamlessly blends heritage and innovation.”

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SAN
South Asian Network

Santhosh Kumar Appointed Chief Information Officer Of Panera Bread

ST. LOUIS, MO – Panera Bread, a leader in the fast casual restaurant industry, has announced the appointment of

Santhosh Kumar as Chief Information Officer, effective February 12. Kumar will report to Interim CEO Paul Carbone and lead the company's



technology organization, overseeing the development, integration, and deployment of technology across more than 2,200 Panera cafes. He will work closely with the Panera Bread leadership team and franchisees to enhance the experience for both team members and guests.

Kumar is a seasoned IT executive with extensive expertise in digital transformation, core application modernization, retail point-of-sale systems, and electronic payment technologies. He joins Panera from United Natural Food, Inc. (UNFI), where he led a multi-year warehouse transformation program and cloud modernization efforts, achieving significant operational efficiencies and cost savings.

Before his tenure at UNFI, Kumar spent nearly 21 years at Dunkin' Brands, where he led the global IT team through various retail and digital innovation initiatives. “Panera Bread has a strong history as a technology leader in the restaurant industry,” said Kumar. “I am proud to join an already outstanding team and to continue Panera's relentless focus on creating the most seamless and efficient experience for our team members and guests.”

Panera operates 2,216 cafes, both company-owned and franchised, in 48 states, Washington D.C., and Ontario, Canada, under the Panera Bread and Saint Louis Bread Co. names.

Bain Capital's \$1 Billion Move To Take Over Kerala's Manappuram Finance



India-West News Desk

BOSTON, MA – American private investment firm Bain Capital is on the verge of acquiring a significant stake in Manappuram Finance, one of Kerala's leading gold loan providers, in a deal valued at approximately \$1 billion. If finalized, Bain could own up to 46% of the company, marking a pivotal shift in its ownership structure.

Currently, Manappuram's CEO and Managing Director, V.P. Nandakumar, and his promoter group hold a 32.25%

stake. Bain plans to secure nearly a quarter of the company through a mix of fresh capital infusion via preferential allotment and a stake purchase from the promoters. The investment firm also intends to launch an open offer for an additional 26% stake, potentially increasing its total shareholding to 46%.

The negotiations, which began in 2024, saw multiple parties express interest in Manappuram Finance. Bain Capital emerged as the frontrunner, but talks were delayed due to disagreements over the deal structure. Bain was

particularly drawn to the company's gold loan business, which accounts for 55% of its total assets under management. However, the promoters resisted selling only this segment, as it would leave them with less profitable divisions such as microfinance, vehicle finance, and housing loans.

In October last year the Reserve Bank of India also placed restrictions on Manappuram's microfinance division but has now

lifted the ban.

V.P. Nandakumar and his family members may transition into non-executive roles. Nandakumar inherited the business in 1986 following his father's passing and transformed it from a small pawnbroking and money lending operation in Thrissur into one of India's largest non-banking financial companies.

Under his leadership, Manappuram Finance has grown into a powerhouse in the gold loan sector, diversifying into other financial services.

Blackstone's \$134 Million Kolte-Patil Deal Expands Its Massive Indian Portfolio



India-West News Desk

PUNE – U.S. investment firm Blackstone will purchase a 40% stake in Indian real estate developer Kolte-Patil Developers in a deal worth \$134 million.

Blackstone entered India 20 years ago and is now one of the country's largest owners of office buildings, data centers, shopping malls, and logistics parks.

Kolte-Patil said on March 13 it will allot a Blackstone entity

14.3% preferential shares in a deal worth 4.17 billion rupees, while its controlling shareholders will sell another 25.7% to the U.S. firm for about 7.5 billion rupees.

According to Indian market regulations, the sale will trigger a so-called open offer for Blackstone to buy up to 26% shares from existing shareholders, Reuters noted.

Kolte-Patil builds residential as well as commercial complexes and has a presence in the cities of Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru.

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Navdeep S.Sachdeva Named To LA Central Area Planning Commission

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – Navdeep Singh (Duncan) Sachdeva has been appointed to the Central Area Planning Commission by Mayor Karen Bass, with the Los Angeles City Council unanimously approving the decision on January 22.

The Central Area Planning Commission plays a pivotal role in shaping the urban landscape of Los Angeles. As one of seven regional commissions, the APC oversees appeals on land use matters, including conditional use permits, variances, and zoning adjustments. In many cases, the APC serves as the final authority, with its decisions influencing housing policies, economic development, and neighborhood planning.

Sachdeva brings a wealth of experience to the commission, having worked for over a decade in real estate asset and portfolio management. His professional background is complemented by extensive civic leadership, including roles with the Los Feliz Neighborhood Council and the Los Feliz Improvement Association. These positions, he said, have equipped him with firsthand experience in community advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and addressing urban planning challenges.

“This role carries a profound respon-



sibility to ensure that land use decisions are made fairly, equitably, and in the best interest of all stakeholders. With my background in real estate and community engagement, I will work to uphold transparency, balance economic development with neighborhood integrity, and contribute to a planning process that reflects the needs of both current residents and future generations,” he said after learning of the appointment.

Shasti Conrad Appointed Associate Chair Of Democratic National Committee

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – Shasti Conrad, Chair of the Washington State Democrats, has been appointed Associate Chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), marking another historic milestone in her political career. Conrad, the first woman of color and youngest person to lead the Washington Democrats, will join U.S. Representative Joyce Beatty and Labor Caucus Chair Stuart Applebaum in the role.

“I am honored and proud to be named Associate Chair of the Democratic National Committee,” Conrad said in a statement. “Our party has an enormous responsibility to provide oversight and accountability to the lawless Trump-Musk Administration. Through our commitment to authentic candidates, popular economic policies, and year-round organizing, Washington state was the only state that did not shift towards the Republicans in 2024. I look forward to using my new role as DNC Associate Chair to help the Democratic Party become more like Washington state and less like Washington, D.C.”

DNC Chair Ken Martin praised Conrad’s appointment, highlighting her political expertise and leadership. “At such a critical moment, we are excited to have experienced, aggressive operatives who are ready to roll up their sleeves and defend Democratic values up and down the ballot,” Martin said.

Conrad’s political career has been defined by groundbreaking firsts. She is the first



South Asian woman to lead a state party organization anywhere in the United States and the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Chair in the contiguous 48 states. Born in Calcutta, she was adopted by a single mother and raised in rural Oregon before earning degrees from Seattle University and Princeton’s School of Public and International Affairs.

Before leading the Washington Democrats, Conrad worked on four presidential campaigns, served in the Obama White House’s Office of Public Engagement, and advised President Obama’s senior team. Her influence in politics has been widely recognized—Seattle Met Magazine named her one of the most influential people in Seattle politics, and the American Association of Political Consultants included her in its “40 Under 40” list.

With her appointment to the DNC’s leadership, Conrad is poised to play a key role in shaping the party’s national strategy heading into the 2026 midterms and beyond.

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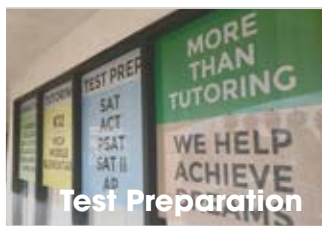


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MAGA Rep. Brandon Gill Links Gujarati Gathering To 'Caste System'

India-West Staff Reporter

DALLAS, TX – Rep. Brandon Gill, a Republican congressman from Texas's 26th District and a staunch supporter of Donald Trump, is facing backlash over an inflammatory tweet criticizing an Indian American community gathering in Dallas.

On March 1, tech analyst Dylan Patel tweeted a photo of a crowd at a Leuva Patidar Samaj volleyball tournament, noting that approximately 8,000 attendees had gathered, representing a community of about 40,000 in the U.S. He described the group as predominantly business owners in the motel and gas station industries.

Gill responded with a tweet that drew immediate criticism: "America is the 'land of opportunity' precisely because we DON'T have a caste system. We cannot sustain America's prosperity and liberty by importing foreign class allegiances. Immigration without assimilation is national and cultural suicide."

Gill's remarks, which framed the gathering as a threat to American values, were quickly condemned by Hindu American Foundation co-founder Suhag Shukla. Responding to the congressman, Shukla tweeted, "Respectfully, the misuse of the word 'caste' and now your tweet are fomenting the type of anti-Indian and anti-Hindu hate that days ago led to real violence. This is over a volleyball 'tournament' at a reunion of an Indian American immigrant community (wrongly termed 'caste') of traditional farmers now contributing to

America as small store and hotel owners creating jobs and paying taxes."

She further challenged Gill's framing of the event, asking, "Would you have said the



Photo: Brandon Gill

same thing if Scot-Irish farming families from West Virginia or Mennonite families from Pennsylvania were meeting up in Dallas? We need our elected leaders to do much better."

Gill, a former conservative student leader at Dartmouth College and an outspoken critic of progressive policies, has positioned himself as a defender of traditional American values. His tweet echoes broader nationalist rhetoric about immigration and assimilation, themes that have been central to former President Donald Trump's political movement.

The controversy comes amid increasing scrutiny of how caste is discussed in the U.S. and growing concerns about anti-Indian and anti-Hindu sentiment. It also underscores ongoing tensions between right-wing politicians and minority communities over identity and belonging in America.

Ami Bera, Dem Physicians Launch Congressional Caucus



India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – The six Democratic physicians in the U.S. House of Representatives officially launched the Congressional Doctors Caucus, a new initiative aimed at promoting the health and well-being of Americans through pragmatic healthcare policy. The caucus will leverage the collective expertise of its members to offer insights on critical health issues and advocate for solutions that improve access, reduce costs, and strengthen care delivery, a press release said.

The group is led by Rep. Ami Bera, M.D. (CA-06), an internal medicine physician, who expressed the caucus's goal of advancing evidence-based solutions in healthcare. "As physicians, we bring firsthand experience with the challenges facing patients and pro-

viders every day," Bera said. "This caucus will harness our collective expertise to advance practical, evidence-based solutions that lower costs, expand access, and strengthen care delivery. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure every American has access to quality, affordable care."

The formation of the Democratic Doctors Caucus marks a significant shift in the political landscape, which has long been dominated by Republican physicians. The GOP Doctors Caucus, established in 2009, boasts over a dozen members, and has been a key player in shaping healthcare policy. However, the new Democratic caucus seeks to challenge this dominance and offer a counter-narrative, especially as healthcare policy faces ongoing attacks from Republican lawmakers.



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ELECTIONS

Saikat Chakrabarti Announces 2026 Challenge To Nancy Pelosi



India-West News Desk

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Saikat Chakrabarti, a progressive political strategist and former chief of staff to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), has announced his bid to challenge 84-year-old former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in the 2026 election cycle. The 39-year-old Indian American, known as one of the principal architects of the Green New Deal, is positioning himself as a candidate for generational change within the Democratic Party.

A Call for New Leadership

In a lengthy post on Elon Musk's social media platform, X, Chakrabarti criticized the Democratic Party's current leadership, arguing that they are ill-prepared to confront the political realities of today.

"Watching U.S. President Don-

ald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk freely unleash chaos in their illegal seizure of government, it's become clear to me that the Democratic Party needs new leadership," he wrote. "I don't understand how D.C.'s Democratic leaders are so paralyzed and unprepared for this moment after living through President Trump's first term—and after Trump and Elon warned us exactly what they planned to do."

While acknowledging Pelosi's legacy, he emphasized the need for fresh perspectives. "I respect what Nancy Pelosi has accomplished in her career, but we are living in a totally different America than the one she knew when she entered politics 45 years ago."

Political Journey and Vision

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, to Indian immigrant parents, Chakrabarti graduated from Harvard Uni-

versity in 2007. He later moved to California, co-founding the tech startup Mockingbird and serving as a founding engineer at Stripe. However, his trajectory shifted in 2016 when he left Silicon Valley to work on Sen. Bernie Sanders' (I-VT) presidential campaign.

Galvanized by Trump's victory, he co-founded Brand New Congress, a political action group aimed at recruiting progressive congressional candidates supported by small-dollar donors rather than corporate interests. This later merged into Justice Democrats, where he played a key role in Ocasio-Cortez's 2018 victory.

After leaving Capitol Hill, Chakrabarti returned to San Francisco, where he has spent the past five years leading New Consensus, a think tank focused on progressive policy solutions.

Vivek Ramaswamy: China And Singapore Are Years Ahead Of US Students



India-West News Desk

CINCINNATI, OH – Despite the backlash and his exiting the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) after criticizing American culture, Vivek Ramaswamy continues to emphasize the rise of mediocrity and the need to address it.

His latest remarks come as the Department of Education faces deep cuts under the Trump administration.

"We can't ignore the educational achievement crisis anymore. Students in China are four years ahead of ours. Students in Singapore are a full five years ahead. Seventy-five percent of U.S. eighth graders aren't proficient in math. Shutting down the failed U.S. Department of Education is a good first step, but it's going to fall on the states to fix the problem," Ramaswamy

said on March 17.

The Ohio gubernatorial candidate has been vocal about the decline in academic standards, arguing that the U.S. education system lags behind global competitors.

Ramaswamy has made education reform a central pillar of his campaign. One of his key proposals? "Get the cell phones out of the schools."

His outspoken criticism of American culture—particularly his claim that the U.S. glorifies mediocrity—sparked backlash in the past within the Republican Party. He specifically pointed to the reliance on H-1B workers in tech, arguing that the U.S. education system fails to produce top-tier engineers. His remarks rankled conservatives, leading to his departure from DOGE on the day of Trump's inauguration.

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Sarva Mangal Family Trust

Shah Happiness Foundation

Manu and Rika Shah Bring Technology and Opportunity to Rural Mexico



In a remarkable act of generosity and vision, Rika and Manu Shah, founders of the Shah Happiness Foundation, partnered with the Creating Care Foundation to donate 177 iPads and Chromebooks to Bachillerato Sabes Potreros, a high school in the rural town of Potreros, Mexico. Potreros, a small farming community of 2,000 people located near León in Guanajuato, is known for its leather craftsmanship, blue agave cultivation, and strong family ties. The donation marks a significant milestone for the school, which has grown from humble beginnings—a single teacher and a table in a community center—into an institution serving students from Potreros and neighboring villages.

The Shah Happiness Foundations donation was part of an effort led by 16 teenagers from Anaheim High School in California, many of whom have deep ties to Potreros through family connections. These teenagers, inspired to make a difference, founded the Creating Care Foundation to help improve educational opportunities in their ancestral hometown. Recognizing the transformative potential of technology, the foundation set out to provide iPads and Chromebooks to students and teachers in Potreros, enabling them to access global resources and enhance their education. Manu and Rika Shah, well-known for their philanthropy, funded 170 of the devices, turning this ambitious dream into reality.



Sarva Mangal Family Trust

Shah Happiness Foundation



On November 28, Laura Jimenez, a representative of the Shah Happiness Foundation, traveled to Guanajuato with members of the Creating Care Foundation to oversee the donation. Upon arrival, the team labeled and prepared the devices for distribution. During her visit, Ms. Jimenez met local volunteers and saw the progress of community projects supported by the foundation, including enhancements to the health center and renovations to a computer lab at the elementary school. The high school itself serves as a beacon of hope, with students balancing farm work and education while excelling in sports, music, and cultural activities.

The donation ceremony, held on November 25, was a momentous occasion for the community. Ms. Jimenez presented the iPads on behalf of the Shahs along with Christopher Diaz, Christine Diaz, Angela García, and Daniel García of the Creating Care Foundation during a civic event that celebrated the students, teachers, and donors. Students expressed heartfelt gratitude and excitement, noting how the new devices would simplify homework, speed up research, and help them apply to universities and colleges.

For those in their final year, the devices represent a critical tool for building a brighter future, while younger students look forward to benefiting from the technology from the outset of their education.

Several teachers from the SABES school helped with the initiative including, Teachers and Coordinator: Ramón Aguilar Blanco, Coordinator of SABES, Alejandro Vargas Cruz, Nelly Ramos Magdaleno, Isidro Jiménez Torres, Osvaldo Vargas González, Alejandra Alvarez Castillo, Guillermo Arroyo Pérez, and Principal: Alicia Ramirez Flores.

Creating Care Foundation appreciated the help of their board members in this project to raise money, acquire the iPads and distribute them in the school in Potrerillos, Andrea Andrade, José Juan Cerda, Irvin Leon, Nicole Reyes, Alondra Vivas, Iliana Salcedo, Klarissa Borges, Jenny Borges, Juan Jimenez, Evelyn Jiménez, and Samantha Martínez.

The collaboration between the Shah Happiness Foundation and the Creating Care Foundation is a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives. The impact of this donation will be felt for years to come, as students in Potrerillos gain access to resources and opportunities previously out of reach.



Sarva Mangal Family Trust

Shah Happiness Foundation

Sight and Sketches: Bringing Clear Vision to Underserved Communities

Southern California – Thousands of underserved individuals, including schoolchildren, are now seeing the world more clearly thanks to **Sight and Sketches**, a groundbreaking initiative providing **free vision care and prescription glasses** to those in need.

Through a **unique combination of advanced technology**, including the QuickSee device and professional vision exams, the initiative has already transformed **over 16,600 lives**, exceeding its original goal for 2024.

A Vision for Change

The program, supported by **Sarva Mangal Family Trust (SMFT)**, began in **October 2023** with a mission to make eye care accessible for all, particularly for **homeless individuals and students in low-income communities**. Sight and Sketches has expanded its reach across **Downey Unified School District elementary and middle schools**, ensuring students receive the care they need to succeed academically and in life.

“**Clear vision is a gateway to opportunity**,” says a spokesperson for Sight and Sketches. “**Because of SMFT’s support, children who previously struggled to see the board in class can now fully participate and excel.**”

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- Total individuals served as of Dec 31, 2024: 16,616
- Prescription glasses provided: 2,976
- Q4 2024 impact alone: 1,692 individuals, 389 glasses
- Technicians trained in advanced QuickSee technology

Global Outreach: Extending Support Beyond Borders

While Sight and Sketches remains deeply committed to underserved communities in the U.S., the organization has also played a crucial role in international humanitarian relief efforts, addressing urgent medical needs in crisis-stricken areas.

Türkiye & Syria Earthquake Relief

Following the devastating Türkiye-Syria earthquake, Sight and Sketches facilitated a collaborative humanitarian effort, connecting the Anekant Community Center (ACC), SMFT, and other donors with a Syrian physician to provide aid to thousands.

The relief efforts included:

Providing Mobility Aid – Shipped three 40-foot containers from India filled with prostheses, wheelchairs, and crutches to help those with mobility impairments.

Mobile Prosthetic Van – Supported the creation of a mobile prosthetic van, allowing trained professionals to travel directly to survivors in need, ensuring proper fitting and training for prosthetic limbs.

Mental Health Support – Helped women and children cope



with trauma by arranging mental health counseling, offering crucial psychological support in the aftermath of devastation.

Malaysia: Advancing Vision Care in Remote Regions

Expanding its commitment to vision health globally, Sight and Sketches led a groundbreaking initiative in Malaysia, focusing on educational workshops and provider training. In collaboration with ACC, the organization worked alongside Malaysia’s Optometry University and medical professionals from a remote region’s main hospital to:

- Train optometrists and ophthalmologists in diagnosing and treating Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)-related visual impairments, a severely overlooked condition.
- Provide hands-on workshops for medical professionals to improve their skills in vision therapy and rehabilitation.
- Address a critical gap in eye care by introducing early intervention methods for patients affected by TBIs.

Overcoming Challenges & Looking Ahead

• Like any ambitious program, Sight and Sketches faced hurdles, including clinic rescheduling due to school events. However, the team adapted swiftly, training new opticians and improving exam efficiency and frame selection to enhance the patient experience.

• In 2025, the organization aims to expand its range of eyeglass styles, colors, and sizes, while continuing to refine its service delivery.

A Message of Gratitude

As the project enters its third year, Sight and Sketches extends heartfelt thanks to SMFT and its board members for their unwavering support. “Your generosity is changing lives. Because of your commitment, underserved kids can now see and achieve their full potential.”

With continued dedication, Sight and Sketches is set to brighten the future for thousands more—one pair of glasses at a time.

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Who Gives the Most to Charity? A Global Perspective on Philanthropy

BY NAVNEET S. CHUGH

Philanthropy is a mirror reflecting the values of a nation, its socio-economic priorities, and cultural motivations. Across the globe, charitable giving varies significantly in both scale and focus. Some nations lead the world in generosity, while others lag behind, often due to economic challenges or differing cultural norms. Let's explore how different countries approach charity, how the U.S. and India compare, and the broader impact of philanthropy on society.

Which Countries Give the Most and Least to Charity?

According to the World Giving Index by the Charities Aid Foundation, the most generous countries include the United States, New Zealand, and Indonesia. The U.S. consistently ranks high, with Americans donating over \$480 billion annually to various causes. In contrast, nations facing economic instability, like Yemen and Venezuela, tend to rank low in charitable giving. The disparities reflect differences in disposable income, cultural emphasis on philanthropy, and trust in institutions.

India, despite its growing economy, is a complex case. While it doesn't rank as high globally, India has seen a surge in philanthropy from ultra-wealthy individuals like Azim Premji and Nandan Nilekani, alongside a robust culture of smaller, community-driven giving rooted in religious traditions like daan (charity) and seva (service).

What Causes Do People Support?

Globally, charitable giving focuses on the following areas:

- **Education:** A priority in many countries, as education is seen as a path to upward mobility and economic growth.
- **Healthcare:** Particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare donations have surged.
- **Religion:** Religious giving remains significant, particularly in countries like the U.S. and India, where faith-based organizations often lead charitable initiatives.
- **Art and Music:** A smaller but impactful portion of donations supports cultural preservation and artistic endeavors.

In the U.S., religion accounts for nearly 27% of all charitable giving, followed by education and healthcare. In India, religious charities also dominate, with temples, mosques, and churches often serving as focal points for philanthropy. However, there is a growing emphasis on education and rural development.

Death Taxes:

A Factor in Generosity

The U.S. levies an estate tax, often referred to as the "death tax," on large inheritances. This tax encourages many wealthy individuals to leave substantial portions of their estates to charity to reduce the taxable amount. High-profile examples include Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, who have pledged the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes.

India, by contrast, abolished its inheritance tax in 1985. While this may simplify wealth transfer within families, it removes a powerful incentive for large-scale charitable giving after death. Reintroducing a gift or inheritance tax in India could channel more wealth into philanthropy, particularly in areas like education and healthcare.

Motivations for Giving:

In Life and Death

Why do people give? The motivations are as diverse as the donors themselves:

- **Altruism:** A genuine desire to improve the lives of others.
- **Legacy:** A way to be remembered and make a lasting impact.
- **Tax Benefits:** Practical incentives that make giving more appealing.

- **Social Pressure:** In some cultures, there is an expectation for the wealthy to give back.

For many, giving during their lifetime provides the opportunity to see the impact of their generosity, fostering a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

Nonprofit Employment:

U.S. vs. India

The nonprofit sector is a significant employer worldwide. In the U.S., approximately 10% of the workforce—one in ten people—works for a nonprofit organiza-

tion. This makes the sector a vital part of the economy and a "mini-government" addressing social needs in areas where public services fall short.

In India, nonprofit employment is less formalized. While millions contribute to the nonprofit sector, particularly through grassroots organizations, the percentage of the workforce involved in formal nonprofit employment is much lower. This reflects the sector's reliance on volunteers and the lack of structured funding mechanisms.

Globally, the U.S. leads in nonprofit employment, demonstrating its robust infrastructure and societal emphasis on organized philanthropy.

A Nation of Givers:

Living Up to JFK's Vision

John F. Kennedy famously said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." The nonprofit sector embodies this ethos, offering individuals a way to give back to their communities and address critical social issues. With one in ten Americans working in nonprofits, this sector has become a cornerstone of civic engagement and service.

In India, a similar spirit of giving exists, deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions. However, formalizing this generosity through policies like reintroducing a gift tax could amplify its impact, channeling more resources into education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation.

Finally

Philanthropy reflects the heart of a nation. While countries like the U.S. lead in both giving and nonprofit infrastructure, there is room for growth and innovation worldwide. India, with its rich tradition of giving, has untapped potential that could be unlocked through policy changes and greater public awareness.

Ultimately, the nonprofit world offers a way to live up to Kennedy's ideal—a path where individuals can contribute to a better future, not just for their country but for humanity as a whole. By fostering a culture of giving, nations can build stronger, more equitable societies, one act of kindness at a time.

POLITICS

India Refutes Trump's Tariff Reduction Claims

Contd. from P1

way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done.”

However, a senior Indian government official responded firmly before a parliamentary panel, stating that no commitments had been made regarding tariff reductions. According to AFP, the official emphasized that India had requested time until September to address the trade concerns repeatedly raised by Washington. Commerce

Secretary Sunil Barthwal reiterated that India's focus is on negotiating a long-term bilateral trade agreement with the U.S., rather than making hasty adjustments to tariff structures.

Earlier, in his speech before a joint session of Congress on March 4, Trump vowed to impose reciprocal tariffs on India starting April 2, citing what he described as “unfair trade practices.” “Other countries have used tariffs against us for decades, and now it's our turn to start using them,” Trump declared.

He pointed to India's high tariffs, claiming, “India charges us tariffs—100 percent. The system is not fair to the U.S., it never was.” He also criticized China and the European Union for similar practices.

This move comes as India's trade surplus with the U.S. has surged over the past decade, reaching \$35 billion for the fiscal year ending in 2024, accounting for nearly 1% of India's GDP. Key sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and textiles—major contributors to this surplus—are expected to bear the



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brunt of the new tariffs.

In response to the escalating tensions, Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal visited the U.S. on March 3 to negotiate trade concessions. However, India did not release an official statement following the visit, which had been preceded by the abrupt cancellation of previously scheduled meetings. Reports indicate that India was open to reducing tariffs on industrial goods like automobiles and chemicals, but it resisted U.S. pressure to lower duties on agricultural and other sensitive sectors.

With the U.S. being India's largest trading partner, any fur-

ther tariff escalation could have significant consequences. India's merchandise trade with the U.S. has grown 8% year-over-year, surpassing \$106 billion in the ten months through January. However, sectors such as chemicals, metals, jewelry, and food products remain vulnerable to the looming tariffs. Analysts from Citi Research have warned that India could face annual losses of up to \$7 billion if the tariffs are implemented.

Despite ongoing concerns over tariffs, the U.S. has secured multi-billion-dollar defense deals with India, underscoring the deepening military ties between the two nations.



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Tulsi Gabbard

Contd. from P1

sat down for an interview where she shared how her spiritual journey and Hindu faith play an integral role in her life. A devout follower of Lord Krishna, Gabbard revealed that Krishna’s teachings to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita provide her with comfort and strength in both the best and worst of times.

“My personal spiritual practice, my relationship with God, is at the center of my life,” Gabbard explained. “In different times of my life, whether serving in war zones or facing current challenges, it is Krishna’s teachings to Arjuna that I turn to for guidance. Those teachings give me strength, peace, and great comfort.”

Gabbard spoke about the significance of living a life in alignment with her faith, saying, “What better way to do that than to be of service to all of God’s children? I do my best every day to live a life that is pleasing to God.”

Her love for India was also evident as she shared



her deep connection with the country. “I always feel at home when I’m here,” Gabbard said, noting the kindness of the people and her fondness for Indian cuisine. “The Dal Makhani and anything with fresh paneer is delicious.”

Gabbard’s visit to India is part of a broader diplomatic tour, and she will be addressing the Raisina Dialogue on March 18, where she will further engage in discussions on U.S.-India relations.

Ranjani Srinivasan Flees To Canada Before ICE Can Arrest Her

Contd. from P1

Her troubles began last year during pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia. Though not a direct participant, Srinivasan was arrested after she was caught in a chaotic clash between protesters and police. She was issued two court summonses for obstructing traffic and failing to disperse, but both charges were dropped without any criminal record. Srinivasan did not disclose these summonses when renewing her student visa, believing the charges had been dismissed and were therefore not relevant. In hindsight, she admitted to NYT, “Maybe that was my mistake,” but emphasized that she would have disclosed the information had she known it was required.



The U.S. Department of Homeland Security later announced that Srinivasan had self-deported using the CBP Home App. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem issued a statement, stating that holding a U.S. visa is a privilege and those advocating violence or terrorism should not remain in the country. The move was part of a broader crackdown by the Trump administration on pro-Palestinian activists, and Srinivasan’s case has sparked concerns among immigration lawyers about the government’s aggressive actions in cases involving political speech.

On March 14, Srinivasan received an email from Columbia informing her that her enrollment had been withdrawn due to her terminated visa status.

PM Modi Joins Truth Social, Trump Reacts

NEW DELHI (ANI) – Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 17 joined Truth Social, the social media platform used by President Donald Trump. Trump later shared the link to Modi’s podcast with Lex Fridman where the Indian is effusive about him.

Modi wrote, “Delighted to be on Truth Social! Looking forward to interacting with all the passionate voices here and engaging in meaningful conversations in the times to come.” In another post, he thanked Trump after he shared the podcast link: “Thank you, my friend, President Trump. I’ve covered a wide range of topics, including my life journey, India’s civilizational outlook, global issues, and more,” Modi wrote on Truth Social.

In the podcast, Modi recalled Trump’s resilience and determination during the US election campaign, even after being shot. He said, “When he was shot during the recent campaign, I saw the same resilient and determined President Trump, the one who walked hand-in-hand with me in that stadium. Even after being shot, he remained unwaveringly dedicated to America. His life was for his nation.”


He also drew parallels between Trump’s “America First” ideology and his own “India First” approach, highlighting their shared commitment to prioritizing their nations’ interests.

Modi also highlighted his first White House visit, when Trump broke formal protocols and personally gave him a tour. “When I visited him in the White House for the first time, there was already a lot written about President Trump in the media. At that time, he was still new to office and the world had a rather different perception of him. Even though I had been briefed in many different ways before meeting him, to my surprise, the very moment I stepped into the White House, he broke all formal protocols right away. And then, he took me on a tour of the White House. As he showed me around, I noticed something striking—he wasn’t holding any notes or cue cards, nor was anyone accompanying him to assist.”

“He pointed things out himself. This is where Abraham Lincoln lived,” Modi said. “He even explained why the courtroom was designed so long. He would point at the table and tell me which President signed here and on what date. I found that incredibly impressive. It showed how much he honored the Presidency and how respectful and deeply connected he was to America’s history.”

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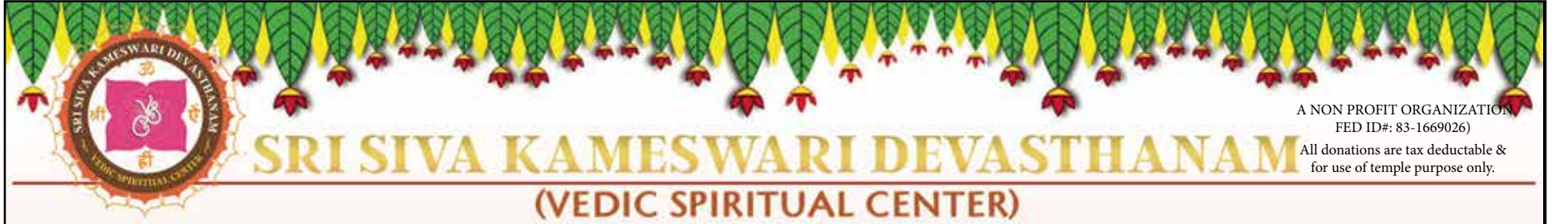
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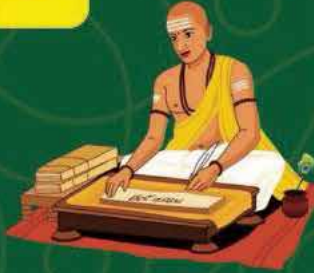
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Table Tennis Ace Ishaan Hingorani Makes His Mark

Ishaan Hingorani, a highly accomplished table tennis player, has consistently demonstrated excellence across various tournaments both in the United States and internationally. His achievements are a testament to his dedication, skill, and determination in the sport.

Hingorani's performance at the US Open Table Tennis Championship in Las Vegas in December 2024 earned him a silver medal in the Harbat Doubles event. This accomplishment added to his impressive list of accolades from previous tournaments, including the US National Championship 2023 in Fort Worth, Texas, where he claimed silver in the U-2600

Singles category. Additionally, Hingorani dominated the ICC Joola Fall Open in Milpitas, where he clinched gold in both the U-2500 and U-2650 events in August 2024. He also won gold in the U-2500 category at the ICC Joola

Spring Open in March 2024, further solidifying

his standing in the table tennis community.

Hingorani's exceptional skills were on display during multiple other ICC Joola tournaments, where he won gold in the U-2500 category at the Autumn Open in October 2023, and again at the Autumn Open in October 2022.

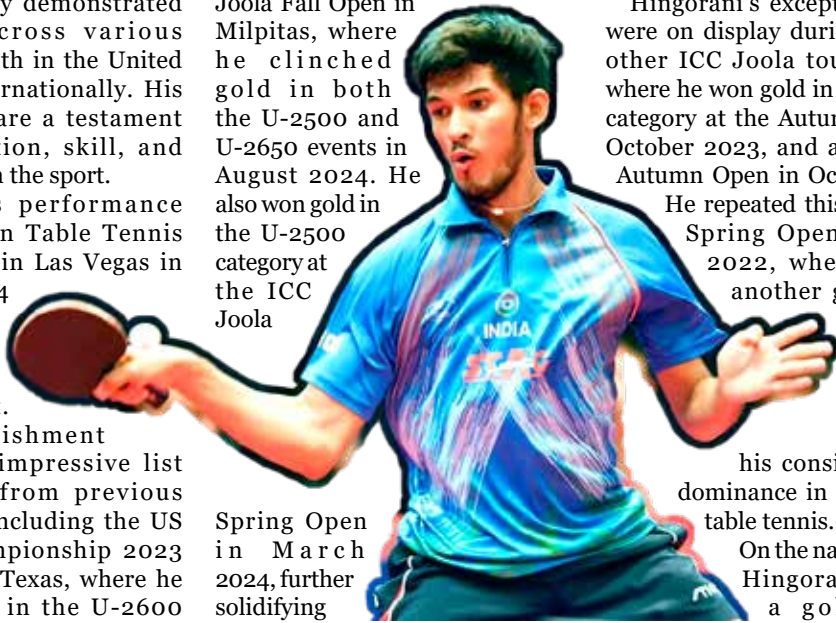
He repeated this feat at the Spring Open in March 2022, where he won

another gold in the U-2500 division. These victories showcase his consistency and dominance in competitive table tennis.

On the national stage, Hingorani secured a gold medal

in the Men's Team event at the National Games India 2022 in Surat. He also earned a bronze medal in the Men's Doubles event at the same tournament. His

In addition to his sporting achievements, Hingorani has pursued academic excellence. He completed his undergraduate degree in Bachelor of Commerce



Ishaan seen mentoring Ved Sheth at the US Olympic Team trials held at West Monroe, LA, in March 2024.



Ishaan Hingorani and his partner (LalrinPuia) won Harbat doubles silver at the US Open table tennis championship held in Las Vegas on 16-21 December 2024.



Silver for Ishaan in a 5-set close match against Nandan Naresh (current US Men's National team member) in the ICC Spring Open at Milpitas, CA on 2nd March 2025.



Ishaan won silver in U-2600 singles in the US Nationals table tennis championship held at Fort Worth, Texas, on July 3-7, 2023.

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performance at the US Open 2021 in Las Vegas included a gold medal in the U-2400 singles and a silver medal in the U-2600 singles. In international competitions, Hingorani marked a significant achievement by winning gold in both the Junior Boys' Team and Junior Boys' Singles Consolation events at the World Junior Circuit Serbian Open in 2017.

Hingorani's table tennis

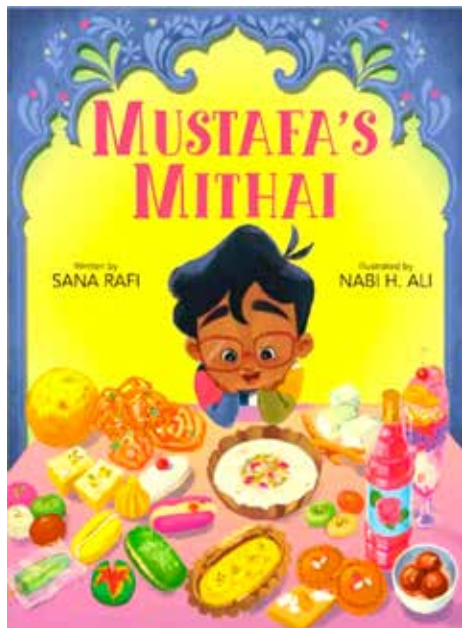
journey also includes significant contributions at the youth level, where he won a gold medal in Youth Doubles at the Khelo India Youth Games in Pune, Maharashtra, in 2019. His success at national ranking championships, such as the National Ranking Table Tennis Championship Central Zone in 2019, where he emerged as a joint winner in the Team's event, further illustrates his versatility and competitive edge. His efforts in the Senior Nationals and Interstate Championships also led to multiple podium finishes, with silver and bronze medals in both Men's Team and Men's Doubles events.



Ishaan won in singles U-2400 Gold and U-2600 Silver in the US Open table tennis championship 2021 held at Las Vegas on December 17-21, 2021.

from New LJ School of Commerce at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, from November 2018 to May 2020. Currently, he is pursuing a Post Graduate Certificate in Management, specializing in Business Analytics, at MITSDE in Pune, Maharashtra, with an expected completion date of March 2025. His academic pursuits are complemented by his certification in the CFA Level 1 program.

Ishaan Hingorani's dedication to both his sport and academics serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes and students alike, demonstrating the power of hard work and perseverance.



Mustafa's Mithai: A Celebration Of Dessert, Friendship, And Life's Sweetest Things

By SANA RAFI,
Illustrated by NABI H. ALI

Penguin Young Readers is set to release Mustafa's Mithai, a heartwarming picture book by Sana Rafi and illustrated by Nabi H. Ali, that explores the sweetness of South Asian desserts and the joy of spending time with loved ones. The book, slated for publication on June 17, is a vibrant celebration of food, culture, and family—perfect for young readers who are drawn to stories about food and tradition, alongside titles like Fry Bread, Thank You, Omu, and Soul Food Sunday.

In Mustafa's Mithai, readers meet Mus-

tafa, a boy who loves celebrating special occasions, but most of all, he loves mithai—South Asian sweets such as barfi, halwa, and laddu. After his Baba's birthday and a visit from his Nani and Nanu, Mustafa feels that the celebrations are over. But when Ammi reminds him that mithai is sweetest when shared and that even an ordinary day can be a reason to celebrate, Mustafa takes matters into his own hands. He organizes a playdate, sharing his love of mithai by finding the perfect sweet for each of his friends and, of course, for his Ammi too.

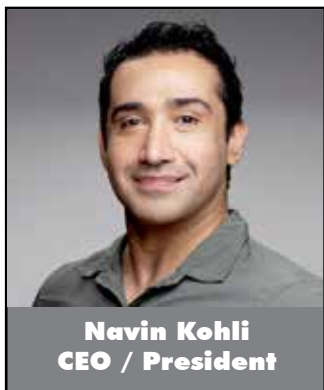
The book's illustrations are as vibrant as the cultural traditions it celebrates, beautifully capturing the joy

and connection that comes from sharing food with those you love. Mustafa's Mithai not only teaches young readers the importance of finding joy in everyday moments but also introduces them to the cultural significance of mithai, with an insightful author's note explaining its historical roots in South Asia.

Sana Rafi is a California-based author with an MFA from Columbia University. She is dedicated to highlighting Muslim and immigrant experiences in her writing.

Illustrator Nabi H. Ali, a Tamil American, brings a wide range of cultures to life through his artwork. His interests extend beyond art, including doll collecting, reading, South Asian mythology, and historical research.

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Sita Singh Wins Gold Medal At Florida Book Awards

India-West News Desk

TALLAHASSEE, FL—Indian American author Sita Singh has been awarded the Gold Medal in the Young Children's Literature category at the 2024 Florida Book Awards for her picture book *Mango Memories*. The recognition highlights Singh's commitment to storytelling that celebrates cultural traditions and family bonds.

Mango Memories tells the story of a young girl in an Indian family who is excited to create her first mango-picking memory. Singh, who grew up in Ahmedabad and now lives in South Florida, draws inspiration from her childhood. Her works, she has said, reflect the oral storytelling traditions passed down by her grandmother.

Singh's first book, *Birds of a Feather*, was chosen for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

The Florida Book Awards, organized by Florida State University Libraries, recognize excellence in books published in the past year. This year, more than 190 submissions were evaluated across 11 categories. Singh and the other awardees will be honored at a ceremony on April 3, here.



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Vijayalakshmi Brings The Grace Of Mohiniyattam To Malibu



India-West Staff Reporter

CALABASAS, CA – At the serene Malibu Hindu Temple, internationally acclaimed Mohiniyattam dancer Vijayalakshmi introduced participants to the beauty of Mohiniyattam, the classical dance form of Kerala. Through a special workshop, on March 1, she aimed to showcase a tradition that, she believes, many in America—including the Indian community—have yet to fully appreciate. “Most people here are familiar with Bharatanatyam, but Mohiniyattam has its own unique grace and power,” Vijayalakshmi explained. “By not knowing about it, they’re missing out on a truly enriching experience.”

This passion for sharing Mohiniyattam’s artistry is what led her to establish the Mohiniyattam Institute in Los Angeles. Her goal? To train dancers of all ages, build a professional troupe, and emphasize the relevance of this ancient dance in the modern world. That’s why the Malibu workshop was open to everyone—regardless of age, background, or dance experience.

Therapy & Empowerment

More than just a dance form, Vijayalakshmi believes Mohiniyattam is deeply therapeutic. “It’s healing, empowering, and allows

women to connect with their femininity,” she shared. The slow, meditative movements, she noted, have similarities to Tai Chi and Qigong—ancient Chinese martial arts known for their restorative effects.

Regular practice of Mohiniyattam, she explained, can help relieve stress while improving mental, emotional, and physical well-being. The dance form’s dramatic storytelling, expressed through intri-

cate hand gestures (mudras) and facial expressions, adds another layer of emotional depth.

“Mohiniyattam isn’t just about tradition,” she added. “Its technique is incredibly versatile, blending seamlessly with contemporary and multicultural music.”

Perfect Traditional Setting

The Malibu Hindu Temple provided the ideal backdrop for the workshop. Rooted in South Indian traditions, the temple has long been a spiritual and cultural hub—much like the temples where classical Indian dance forms, including Mohiniyattam, historically flourished as part of the Devadasi tradition.

“The temple’s atmosphere truly enhanced the experience,” Vijayalakshmi said. “It felt like stepping back in time, while also celebrating the dance’s continuing evolution.”

With this workshop, Vijayalakshmi hopes to spark a lasting interest in Mohiniyattam across the U.S., helping more people discover its beauty, depth, and transformative power.



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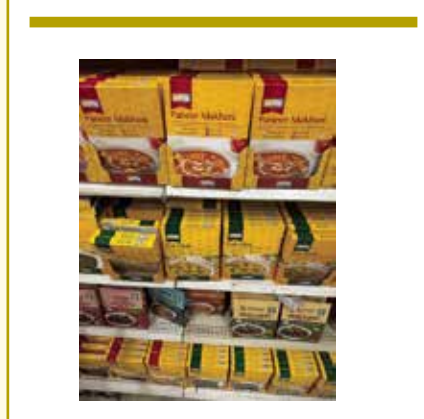
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Indian Music Series Expands In CA With Support From Worah Family Foundation

By BHARTTI KUMAR

IRVINE, CA – Philanthropists Anupama and Mihir Worah are bringing world-class Indian and global music to Southern California through their latest initiative, the Next Wave Series at UC Irvine's Winifred Smith Hall.. Launching in partnership with Dhvani Academy, the series will showcase both established artists from India and emerging talents from the U.S. and Orange County.

The first concert on March 30 will feature vocalist Sanjeev Abhyankar and the Chari sisters, followed by a fusion performance with L. Shenkar (Carnatic) and Rakesh Chaurasia (Hindustani) on April 19. The season will conclude with a performance by sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan on November 1.

Mihir Worah emphasized their vision of enhancing live music experiences for audiences and performers alike. "What you often see is world-class Indian musicians performing in temples, community centers, and high schools, where both the acoustics and facilities are substandard. We are trying to provide state-of-the-

art venues and equipment, so that both artists and audiences have a very special experience."

Beyond music, the Worahs have been active philanthropists since founding the Worah Family Foundation in 2016. Environmental conservation is a key focus, with Mihir highlighting their major support for

the World Wildlife Fund-India (WWF-India). "We feel strongly that protecting the environment and economic progress are not mutually exclusive. WWF-India is extremely aware of the need for harmony between humans and nature, and they are very cost-effective in their conservation efforts."



Their foundation has also played a crucial role in facilitating significant U.S. donations specifically earmarked for WWF-India. "This process has gained strong support both here in Southern California and in Silicon Valley," Mihir noted.

In addition to their work in environmental preservation, the Worahs are deeply committed to education. Anupama serves on the board of Think Together, a California non-profit that provides expanded learning opportunities to over 250,000 students, helping prepare them for college and careers. Their foundation provides financial support for these initiatives, reflecting their dedication to children's academic growth.

Since retiring from their professional careers, the couple has focused more on philanthropy, travel, and their shared passion for music. "Music is a universal language that brings cultures together," Mihir said. "We feel that live music makes our lives so much richer, and we want to bring this experience to the Southern California community."

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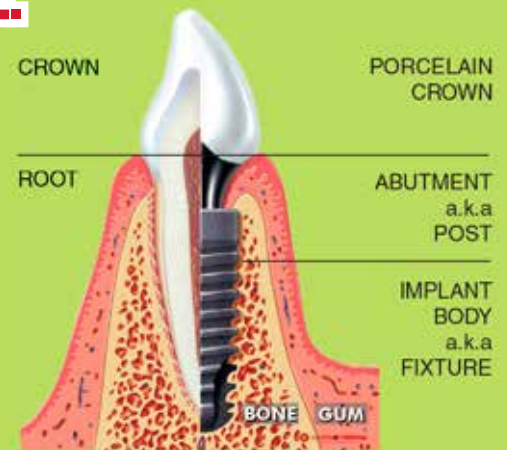
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BHUMI PEDNEKAR'S STAR-STUDED CALIFORNIA WEEKEND

BEVERLY HILLS, CA (ANI)— Bhumi Pednekar gave fans a peek into her exciting weekend, sharing a series of moments on Instagram. On March 17, she posted an album along with a heartfelt note reflecting on her experiences.

"Sunday in La La Land... Went to my first-ever soccer game, and thank god it was the women's team! @weareangelcity, co-owned by the amazing @lilly, you're an inspiration! #GirlsUpliftingGirls," she wrote.

Bhumi also shared her excitement about meeting Jennifer Garner, calling her "an absolute inspiration." She expressed gratitude for being featured in BusinessWorld's 100 Powerful Women list and marveled at the energy of the LA

Marathon, where thousands of runners were cheered on by the city.

Her eventful day included listening to a talented group of young girls perform Mozart symphonies, enjoying lunch with a close friend, and playing with adorable puppies—reminding her of her own pets, Beau and Bruno.

The highlight of the night? An intimate dinner at a cozy Thai restaurant—where she spotted Jay-Z and Beyoncé at the next table. "No pics, but forever saved in my mind," she wrote.

Her post featured moments with Jennifer Garner and Lilly Singh, as well as snapshots from the soccer game and marathon.

Hollywood Darling Mindy Kaling Recalls Days Feeling Like An Outsider

LOS ANGELES, CA – Mindy Kaling has built an impressive career in Hollywood, creating hit shows like *The Mindy Project* and *Never Have I Ever*. But despite her success, the actress, writer, and producer says she often felt like an outsider in the industry's tight-knit comedy circles.

Kaling, 45, recently received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame—an honor cementing her place in entertainment history. But looking back, she admits that in the early 2000s, she struggled with feeling excluded from the "comedy cliques" that dominated the industry.

"I was never part of a comedy clique," Kaling shared on the *Armchair Expert* podcast with Dax Shepard. "I was really jealous, and I had a chip on my shoulder about it. Because in that aughts time [the early 2000s], you were in a clique or you weren't."

Though *The Office*—where she played Kelly Kapoor and worked as a writer—was a major success, Kaling still felt like an outsider. "Maybe people were like, 'Well, she's there,' and maybe you could argue that that was a clique," she said. "But the writing stuff was very competitive. We all had our own private ambitions, our own stuff we wanted to do. We wanted to write the best scripts, kill the table read, have Steve Carell think we were the funniest writer."

She recalled watching other comedy groups rise together, admitting, "I was jealous of Judd [Apatow] and Seth [Rogen] and Jason [Segel], and then there was Amy [Poehler] and Tina [Fey], and Will [Ferrell] doing the ice-skating movie... I felt like the entire aughts was me coming up on a show that I loved but being like, 'Why can't I be in a clique?'" But that sense of exclusion also motivated her. "It really fueled me in a good and bad way, where I was like, 'I don't have Lorne [Michaels], I don't have Judd [Apatow]. I don't have any of these people who are going to do something for me. I gotta do it myself. I'm gonna show them all.'"



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Namit Malhotra's DNEG Wins 8th Oscar With Dune VFX



LOS ANGELES, CA (ANI)- Indian film producer Namit Malhotra's company, DNEG, made history by securing its eighth Oscar in the Visual Effects category. The company was honored for its exceptional work on the Timothée Chalamet and Zendaya-starrer *Dune: Part Two*.

DNEG, a leading visual effects (VFX), animation, and creative technology company, has contributed to some of Hollywood's biggest films. The award was accepted by DNEG VFX Supervisors Stephen James and Rhys Salcombe, along with Production VFX Supervisor Paul Lambert and Special Effects Supervisor Gerd Nefer.

This marks DNEG's eighth Oscar win since 2011. The company previously won for *Dune: Part One* (2022), *Tenet* (2021), *First Man* (2019), *Blade Runner 2049* (2018), *Ex Machina* (2016), *Interstellar* (2015), and *Inception* (2011).

Namit Malhotra, who is also the founder of Prime Focus, is producing the upcoming film *Ramayana*, directed by Nitesh Tiwari and starring Sai Pallavi.

Conan O'Brien At The Oscars: Hilarious Hindi Moment, Wins Hearts And Laughs

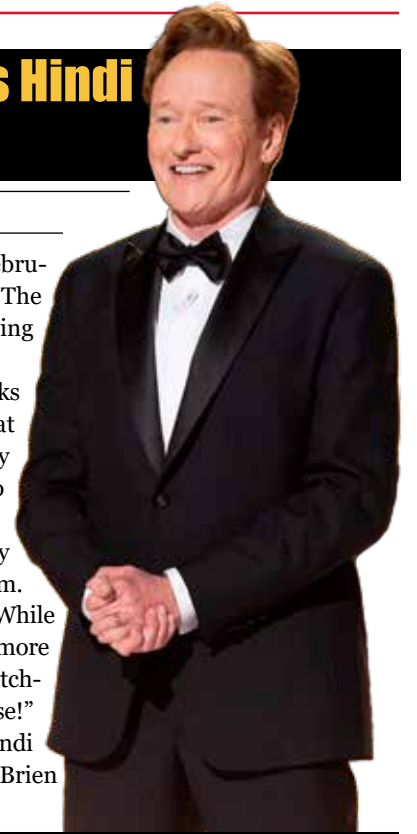
India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, CA – Conan O'Brien kicked off the 2025 Academy Awards on February 2 at the Dolby Theater with a surprising and delightful twist—he spoke Hindi! The late-night legend, known for his quick wit and eccentric humor, kicked off the evening with a warm shoutout to India, much to the audience's delight.

Starting with a cheerful "Namaste," O'Brien then proceeded to sprinkle his remarks with some quirky Hindi. "For those of you watching from India, I would say Bharat ke logo ko namaskar. Waha subah ho chuki hai to mujhe ummeed hai ki aap crispy nashte ke sath Oscars dekh rahe honge" (Greetings to India. It is morning there, so I hope you are watching the Oscars with a crispy breakfast)," he joked.

Known for his quirky humor, O'Brien then jumped into his signature commentary on the Best Picture nominees, delivering his thoughts with his trademark loopy charm.

Of course, O'Brien's attempt at Hindi quickly sparked a flurry of reactions online. While many fans admired his effort, others playfully pointed out that his pronunciation was more comedic than accurate. One user joked, "Good attempt, but frankly, Conan totally butchered the Hindi greeting," while another said, "Conan spoke Hindi like it was Japanese!" Despite the playful critiques, O'Brien made history as the first Oscars host to speak Hindi on stage, earning applause for his endearing attempt. As one fan put it, "Conan O'Brien deserves an Oscar for best attempt at a foreign language!"



Lily Singh, Poorna, Enjoy Oscar After-Party Hosted By Radhika Jones

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA– The Vanity Fair Oscar after-party is always a star-studded affair, and this year's celebration at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills was no exception. Among the many high-profile attendees, comedian and YouTube star Lilly Singh and *Never Have I Ever* actress Poorna Jagannathan stood out, bringing their signature energy and style to the event. Singh took to Instagram to share moments from the glamorous night, posting a group photo with Jagannathan, filmmaker Karan Johar, and actress Nora Fatehi. Captioned "Kitty party at Vanity Fair," the post captured

the spirit of the evening—laughter, camaraderie, and bold fashion statements.

Dressed in a shimmering metallic Rhea Costa gown, Singh exuded confidence, while Jagannathan brought effortless elegance in a chic ensemble. The duo, both known for breaking barriers in their respective fields, shared lighthearted moments as they mingled with Hollywood's elite. The party, held after the 97th Academy Awards, saw a gathering of global stars, including Spanish singer Rosalía, rappers Megan Thee Stallion and Lizzo, fashion designer Tan France, and Vanity Fair editor-in-chief Radhika Jones. The night also celebrated Sean Baker's *Anora*, which dominated the Oscars with five major wins.

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