

INDIA WEST

Vol. V, No. 5 • September 11, 2026

www.indiawest.com



Anti-South Asian Slurs Surge 109% in US

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – Anti-South Asian hate rose significantly online between January 2023 and December 2025, with anti-South Asian slurs increasing by 109%, according to a new report by Stop AAPI Hate.

The September 2026 report, 'The State of Anti-South Asian Hate', also found that 48% of South Asian adults said they experienced a hate act in 2025 because of their race, ethnicity or nationality.

Stop AAPI Hate said South Asian communities continue to face high levels of hate both online and in everyday life. The report linked the heightened hostility to growing anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, along

with a backlash against the increased visibility of South Asians.

Anti-South Asian slurs in online spaces associated with targeted violence rose from 22,996 in January 2023 to 48,033 in December 2025, accounting for 66% of all anti-Asian slurs in those spaces. The slurs "jeet" or "pajeet" accounted for 55% of all anti-Asian slurs.

South Asians also accounted for 71% of all anti-Asian threats of violence recorded between August 2024 and December 2025, making them the most frequently threatened Asian regional group in those online spaces.

Stop AAPI Hate's national survey found that the share of South Asian adults reporting a hate act rose from 43% in 2023 to 54% in 2024 before remaining high at 48% in 2025. Harassment was the most common type of hate reported.

The report also found that 55% of South

Asian adults said they or another Asian American or Pacific Islander person in their community had been affected by changing immigration policies or anti-immigrant sentiment.

Online spaces were the most common location where South Asian adults experienced hate, at 49%, followed by public streets, parks, parking lots or public transit at 40%, and businesses at 34%.

Reports submitted to Stop AAPI Hate's reporting center included accounts from Indian people in several parts of the US. An Indian woman in Texas described racial and anti-immigrant abuse by a customer at her workplace. An Indian woman in Georgia said a woman at a fast-food restaurant called her and others "murderers" and "rapists," threatened to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, to have them deported

Contd. on P17

SAHARA Raises \$1.1 Million To Advance Community Work

India-West News Desk

COSTA MESA, CA – The South Asian Helpline And Referral Agency (SAHARA) celebrated a remarkable evening of generosity and community at its 35th Annual Gala, held on August 30 at the Hilton Costa Mesa here, where 280 guests gathered in support of the organization's mission.

The evening raised \$1.1 million, made possible through the collective extraordinary generosity of donors anchored by a \$500,000 matching gift from Manu and Rika Shah on behalf of The Shah



Happiness Foundation. Through his presentation, Manubhai also

amplified the message of women's empowerment.

Contd. on P10

Tragedy In Bay Area: One Woman Stabbed, Another Run Over; Mutual Friend Suspected



Kerala who were killed in separate incidents in the San Francisco Bay Area within hours of each other, with relatives claiming a mutual friend

is responsible for both fatalities.

The victims have been identified as Anjana Hari, 35, and Ann Mary Mathew, 40. Media reports

Contd. on P16

India-West News Desk

MILPITAS, CA – Authorities in California are investigating the deaths of two women from

Surge In Indian American College Applicants



India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – While international applicant numbers from India plummeted by 15 percent during the 2025–26 admissions cycle, Indian American students surged ahead as one of the fastest-growing domestic applicant demographics in the United States.

According to the Common Application's end-of-

Contd. on P10

Sachin Jain Teams Up With Costco To Offer Medicare

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – SCAN Group CEO and SCAN Health Plan CEO Dr. Sachin H. Jain is part of an expanded partnership between the nonprofit insurer and Costco Wholesale to offer Medicare plans to older adults. The companies will offer Medicare Advantage products in two states and a Medicare supplement in a third, SCAN Health Plan said. They are also planning to work together on additional benefits, subject to regulatory approval.

Contd. on P12



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Los Angeles Consulate Hosts Flag Hoisting Ceremony



India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – The Consulate General of India in Los Angeles commemorated India's 80th Independence Day with a flag-hoisting ceremony at its newly established premises, bringing together members of the Indian diaspora, Indian citizens and friends of India.

The August 15 program opened with Vande Mataram, the national song of India. Consul General Dr. K. J. Srinivasa then hoisted the Tricolor, following which attendees wearing flag pins handed out by the consulate, joined

in singing Jana Gana Mana, the Indian national anthem.

Srinivasa addressed the gathering of community leaders who represented groups across far flung Southern California and was also marked by its diversity. He read President Droupadi Murmu's

independence day message, which reflected on India's journey since independence and highlighted the strength of its democracy and the contributions of citizens from all sections of society to nation-building.

Srinivasa also highlighted India's development, including its digital transformation, growing investor confidence, renewable energy initiatives, healthcare expansion, entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities. The ceremony concluded with community members recollecting and sharing anecdotes about India over fragrant Indian chai and snacks.

AIA Swades's San Jose India Day Parade Headlined By Taapsee Pannu Sees Huge Turnout

India-West News Desk

SAN JOSE, CA – More than 25,000 people gathered in Downtown San Jose on August 15 for AIA SWADES 2026, which featured an India Day Parade with more than 80 floats and marching groups and participation from over 50 Indian American organizations.

Organized by the Association of Indo Americans (AIA), the day-long celebration marked India's 80th Independence Day with cultural performances, community activities and a parade showcasing India's regional diversity and heritage. Organizers described it as the largest India Day celebration in California.

The parade featured groups representing Indian states, cultures, traditions and community organizations from across the Bay Area. Highlights

included an 80-foot India and USA Flag Walk, the Tiranga Walk, music and cultural performances.



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Bollywood actress Taapsee Pannu served as the Grand Marshal, with thousands of people lining the parade route to welcome her.

The celebration also brought together elected officials and community leaders, including Consul General of India Dr. Srikar Reddy, San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, Congressman Sam Liccardo, Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen and California Assembly members Ash Kalra and Patrick Ahrens. More than 40 elected officials attended the event.

Youth participation was another focus of the celebration. More than 100 children took part in classical and film dance performances, while art, chess and essay competitions provided additional activities for children and families.

The festivities continued with a free Day & Night Mela featuring Indian food, shopping, cultural entertainment, family activities and live performances. The evening program, Vijay Bharat, featured dances representing different Indian states and traditions.

AIA said the event brought together families, cultural groups, businesses, community organizations and elected officials to celebrate Indian heritage and the Indian-American community's connection to the United States.

The organization thanked participating organizations, volunteers, sponsors, performers, city partners and media partners for supporting the event.

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SURVEY

Indian American Voters Lean Democratic As US Midterms Draw Closer

WASHINGTON, DC- Indian American voters are showing strong enthusiasm for the US midterm elections and a clear preference for Democratic congressional candidates, according to a new national survey.

The 2026 Asian American Voter Survey found that 92 per cent of Indian American registered voters planned to vote in November.

Seventy-four per cent said they were absolutely certain they would cast a ballot, while another 23 per cent were fairly certain.

Indian Americans also recorded the highest increase in enthusiasm among the major Asian ethnic groups surveyed. Forty-three per cent said they were more enthusiastic than usual about voting, while 22 per cent were less enthusiastic and 32 per cent reported about the same level of interest. The community showed a strong preference for Democratic candidates in both Senate and House contests.

Sixty-six per cent of Indian-American voters supported

Democratic Senate candidates, compared with 22 per cent who preferred Republicans. Seven per cent favored another party.

In House races, 66 per cent of Indian Americans backed Democratic candidates, compared with 18 per cent for Republicans and 9 per cent for another party. Among Indian Americans expressing a House preference, 60 per cent said they strongly supported their chosen candidate.

The survey also found a largely negative view of President Donald Trump among Indian-American voters. Seventy-four per cent viewed Trump unfavorably, including 56 per cent who held a very unfavorable opinion. Twenty per cent viewed him favorably, including 7 per cent who held a very favorable opinion and 13 per cent who viewed him somewhat favorably.

Indian Americans were more likely than other major Asian-American groups to prefer casting their ballots in person.

Fifty-five per cent said they planned to vote at a polling place, while 34 per cent preferred voting by mail and 8 per cent planned to use a ballot drop-off location.

Three-quarters of Indian-American respondents said they had discussed politics with family members or friends during the previous year. Nineteen per cent had attended a protest, march, demonstration or rally, while 20 per cent had attended a local government meeting, including a city council or school board session.

The wider survey found that 90 per cent of registered Asian-American and Pacific Islander voters planned to participate in the midterms, up from 84 per cent in 2022 and 86 per cent in 2018.

Democrats led across the broader electorate surveyed. Sixty



242 respondents, while the Senate preference finding was based on 148 Indian-American respondents.

Interviews were conducted by telephone, web and online recruitment between June 3 and July 27. The survey used sampling quotas by ethnicity and weighting based on voter characteristics.

US midterm elections are held halfway through a president's four-year term, with all 435 House seats and about one-third of the Senate contested, making the vote an important test of support for the governing party.

The survey was conducted by Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote and AAPI Data. The organizations estimate that 16 million Asian-American and Pacific Islander citizens are eligible to vote in 2026, including 1.6 million who became eligible after 2022.

(IANS)

COMMENTARY

India's Afghanistan Ties Have Spanned Soviet War, Taliban Rule And Diplomatic Shifts

By JAYANTA BHATTACHARYA

NEW DELHI-Afghanistan has seen an apparent "increase" in India's pragmatic engagement with the Taliban authorities in recent months, as the regime marks five years of rule in Kabul this month.

India's diplomatic ties with Afghanistan have endured through decades of conflict and political upheaval. The Indian Embassy in Kabul kept the Tricolor flying even during the tumultuous period that followed the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

The Soviet withdrawal, which began in 1988 and was completed in 1989, ended a decade-long conflict that had profound regional and global consequences. The then Soviet Union had intervened to support a Communist-led government in Kabul but faced strong resistance from insurgent mujahideen, a coalition of guerrilla groups

trained and armed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), with assistance from the US and other countries.

Details of the covert operation involving the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's ISI were later chronicled by Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, who headed the ISI's Afghan Bureau, in the book 'Afghanistan: The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower', co-written with British soldier and author Mark Adkin. The long war strained the Soviet economy and contributed to Cold War tensions, earning the conflict the nickname "Soviet Union's Vietnam".

Deposed Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah took refuge in a United Nations compound housing the Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP). He remained

there for four years after a failed attempt to flee, until the Taliban took over Kabul for the first time in 1996 and executed him.

Ahead of the Taliban takeover, India closed its embassy in Kabul in September 1996 on the advice of Afghan ministers and officials, many of whom were withdrawing to the comparative safety of the northern mountains.

After the end of the Taliban's first regime, India re-established diplomatic relations with the new Afghan government, provided aid and participated in the country's reconstruction efforts.

On July 7, 2008, a suicide bomber detonated a car laden with explosives at the entrance of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, killing 59 people, including four Indian officials and a local driver. More than 150 people, including five personnel of the Indo-Tibetan

Border Police (ITBP), were seriously injured. Despite the attack, the mission continued its work.

The embassy was forced to close again in 2021 as the Taliban returned to Kabul amid the withdrawal of US-led forces after two decades of military presence in Afghanistan. India reopened its mission in 2025, marking a significant step in restoring high-level diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan and strengthening its involvement in the country's future.

Pakistan-backed Afghan fighters have historically been hostile towards India. During the mujahideen era, Pashtun leaders such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf expressed hostility towards India, while many of their fighters spoke of the "Kashmir war". Some Afghan fighters were among terrorists apprehended or killed in Jammu

and Kashmir.

On the other hand, Tajik and Uzbek commanders such as Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum welcomed humanitarian assistance from New Delhi.

Even under the Taliban, its leadership turned away from Pakistan before India stepped up its outreach. This largely stems from the long-standing Pashtun grievance over the Durand Line, drawn by British diplomat Sir Henry Mortimer Durand in 1893. Pashtuns contend that the border unfairly divided areas where they form a majority.

Pakistan's treatment of the Taliban as a "big brother" has also added to tensions between the two sides, with Islamabad increasingly being viewed by the Taliban leadership as an impediment to governance rather than a supportive partner.

INDIAWEST
Voice of the Indian American Community

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COMMUNITY

UCSC Student Dies After Car Plunges Off Cliff Into Ocean



India-West News Desk

SANTA CRUZ, CA - A 19-year-old University of California, Santa Cruz student died after a vehicle went off West Cliff Drive and plunged into the ocean near the Steamer Lane surf break early August 13, authorities said.

The crash was reported to Santa Cruz Regional 911 at about 12:50 a.m. Emergency crews arriving at the scene found one person had escaped the vehicle with minor injuries, while another occupant remained trapped inside the submerged car.

Four ocean rescue swimmers entered the water, reached the vehicle and pulled the trapped occupant to safety. The victim, identified as UC Santa Cruz student Alli Renee Singh, was taken to a nearby hospital, where she died from her injuries, according to the

Santa Cruz Fire Department.

Singh's aunt, Monica Singh-Strohmeier, confirmed her death in a social media post and asked for privacy as the family mourns.

"Alli was a thriving 19-year-old in the midst of starting her 3rd year at UC Santa Cruz," Singh-Strohmeier wrote. "She was a very smart, beautiful and loving young lady and will be missed by all who crossed her path."

Singh enrolled at UC Santa Cruz in June 2024 and was studying psychology.

"We were heartbroken to learn that the victim was a UC Santa Cruz student," university spokesperson Scott Hernandez-Jason said. "Our deepest condolences go out to the student's family and friends during this difficult time. We are providing support resources to those affected by this tragedy."

The Santa Cruz Police Department said the driver was female and the surviving passenger was male. The circumstances of the crash remain under investigation, and police have not released additional details. The crash occurred near Steamer Lane, a well-known Santa Cruz surf break along West Cliff Drive.

UCLA Podcast Spotlights Chennai Woman Auto Drivers

LOS ANGELES, CA – A three-part UCLA podcast is telling the story of Mohana Sundari, a Chennai woman who became an auto-rickshaw driver and later helped organize women working in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

"Autoqueen Trilogy," produced by Re:Work at the UCLA Labor Center, follows Mohana's life from childhood and family life through marriage, motherhood, financial hardship and personal loss to her work organizing women workers.

Re:Work is led by Veena Hampapur, new media narrative strategist at the UCLA Labor Center, and Saba Waheed, the center's director.

Women remain a small minority among Chennai's auto drivers. Of roughly 100,000 auto-rickshaws in the city, only about 400 are driven by women, according to the UCLA Labor Center.

Mohana said she herself did not realize how many women were in the profession until she connected with other drivers.

"People are shocked to learn there are so many of us, and I have been in this profession for years

without realizing how many women have been driving autos," she said.

the formation of VPMS.

Mohana, who does not use a surname in keeping with local cultural convention, grew up in Chennai. Her mother managed the family finances while her father was her primary caregiver. As a child, she rode bicycles and climbed mango trees with neighborhood boys.

Mohana and other union members have advocated for women-only pickup points at metro stations and legal protections through VPMS. The union is also expanding its work to other informal and gig-economy sectors.

Mohana conducts financial-literacy and other skills workshops and helps union members seek jobs or loans. In 2024, she and her colleagues won first place at Coop 2024, a cooperative entrepreneurship competition, receiving a cash prize and yearlong mentorship.

"I didn't study. That's OK. After that, I tried to do a lot of business, but I couldn't do that either," Mohana said. "But if I can provide a livelihood for many women through this union, I believe that will fulfill everything."



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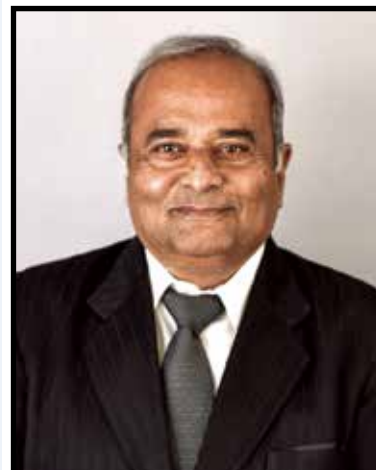
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Jai Ho 2026 Celebrates Culture, Community And Freedom

India-West News Desk

TORRANCE, CA – The Sri Panchamukha Hanuman Temple hosted Jai Ho 2026, its fourth annual celebration of India’s Independence Day, bringing the community together for a day of culture, entertainment and fellowship.

This year’s celebration was particularly significant as the City of Torrance recently proclaimed August 15 as India Independence Day in the city. The event was attended by Torrance Mayor Sharon Kalani, Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce President Donna Duperron and Consul Kulwant Singh of the Consulate General of India in Los Angeles.

With a large outdoor stage, more than 350 participants and a diverse lineup of programs, Jai Ho 2026 highlighted the richness and diversity of Indian culture. Music, dance, fashion, food and entertainment filled the day.

One of the highlights was a fashion show featuring traditional Indian attire representing different parts of India.



Mayor Sharon Kalani also took part in the show, walking the stage in traditional Indian attire and drawing an enthusiastic response from the audience.

Another centerpiece was the cultural presentation ‘Salute,’ which combined dance, acting and storytelling to honor the heroes

who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and peace in India and around the world. The presentation highlighted the courage and sacrifice behind the freedoms enjoyed today.

The celebration also featured Youth Impact Awards recognizing young individuals, as well as an Indian Army Veteran Award honoring the service and sacrifice of a veteran.

Consul Kulwant Singh recognized the intent behind Jai Ho: bringing people together, celebrating culture, honoring the nation and creating a meaningful community experience.

Beyond the stage, Jai Ho offered a carnival atmosphere with more than 30 vendor booths, food, raffle giveaways, popcorn and cotton candy. A large obstacle course was also a popular attraction among children.

California Assembly Adopts Resolution Celebrating Diwali



India-West News Desk

SACRAMENTO, CA -The California State Assembly has adopted a resolution recognizing Diwali and expressing its “deepest respect” for Indian Americans and the Indian diaspora in California and around the world.

House Resolution 137 recognizes Diwali, which will be celebrated this year on November 8, and encourages Californians to participate in the festival’s celebrations. Assemblymembers Darshana Patel and Ash Kalra introduced the measure on August 13.

The resolution was adopted following consideration by the Assembly Committee on Rules and drew support from a broad group of co-authors from across the Assembly.

It describes Diwali, also known as Deepavali, as a festival of major significance to Indian American and South Asian American communities. Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains celebrate the festival in the United States and around the world.

According to the resolution, the word Diwali means “a row of lamps.” It describes the festival as one of the world’s oldest holidays, bringing together families, friends and communities in celebration.

The resolution highlights generosity, unity, joy, appreciation and reflection as central themes of Diwali. It notes that the traditional lamps symbolize “the defeat of darkness and the victory of light” and are part of celebrations that bring families together and strengthen community ties.

Different Diwali traditions, the resolution says, reflect the triumph of good over evil and emphasize overcoming struggles, embracing positivity and humility, and maintaining kindness in the face of personal challenges.

The Assembly also noted that Diwali will be celebrated this year by Indian American and South Asian American communities across the diaspora. For many, the festival also marks the beginning of a new year.

“For those who celebrate, Diwali is a time to commit to knowledge, growth, and happiness,” the resolution states.

The measure also describes Diwali as an opportunity for reflection and highlights the values of wisdom, kindness and personal transformation associated with the festival.

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COMMUNITY

Santa Clara Univ Appoints PBS's Fred De Sam Lazaro, Journalist In Residence

India-West News Desk

SANTA CLARA, CA – Santa Clara University will become the new home of the Under-Told Stories Project, the documentary journalism initiative founded by veteran PBS NewsHour correspondent Fred de Sam Lazaro.

The move comes as de Sam Lazaro takes on a new role at the university as its inaugural Journalist in Residence. His three-year appointment begins September 1, and he will also join Santa Clara's Department of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences as a professor of the practice.

The Under-Told Stories Project features documentary reports on some of the world's pressing issues, along with educational materials and discussion questions for educators. Its digital archive contains more than 300 documentary reports and related resources.

De Sam Lazaro will work with Santa Clara faculty to bring material from the archive into the undergraduate curriculum. The project's reporting is also featured on PBS NewsHour.

The appointment will give students opportunities to work di-



the University of Michigan.

For de Sam Lazaro, the Under-Told Stories Project is closely tied to his own professional identity. He said its work seeks to increase awareness and understanding of human suffering and poverty, while focusing on solu-

rectly with de Sam Lazaro through journalism and digital storytelling classes, workshops and the university's journalism program. He will also collaborate with the Miller Center for Global Impact and involve students in reporting projects covering the process from research and pre-production through fieldwork and completion. De Sam Lazaro has spent 40 years in journalism and has reported from more than 70 countries. His career includes multiple CINE Golden Eagle Awards, several Emmy nominations, a Peabody Award and three honorary doctorates. He has also been a Kaiser Media Fellow and a Knight-Wallace Fellow at

tions where possible. He also said the project's journalistic approach reflects Santa Clara's Jesuit commitment to social justice and poverty alleviation, with an emphasis on stories that illuminate human dignity and advance the common good.

"I am thrilled to embed at Santa Clara, work directly with students, and bring under-reported stories to the forefront," de Sam Lazaro said. His work at the university will begin with a series of reports from Southern Africa. He is scheduled to cover stories in South Africa and Namibia involving global health and immigration.

Amna Nawaz, co-anchor and

co-managing editor of PBS NewsHour, also welcomed the appointment, pointing to de Sam Lazaro's

long record of reporting from remote villages and communities that are often overlooked.

USC Taps Anijo Mathew To Lead Iovine And Young Academy



India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – Designer and entrepreneur Anijo Mathew took over as dean of the University of Southern California's Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy on August 1.

Mathew joins USC from the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, where he served as dean since 2022 and has been a professor since 2008. Founded in 2013 with a gift from music industry veterans and Beats co-founders Jimmy Iovine and Andre "Dr. Dre" Young, the academy brings together technology, design and business through undergraduate and graduate programs focused on innovation.

Students and faculty tackle complex problems through a project-based learning model, and many students launch or commercialize startups before graduating. For Mathew, the opportunity to help shape one of USC's newer professional schools was a major draw.

"With IYA, I have the opportunity to create a new legacy, because IYA is in its tweens," Mathew said. "It's an incredible opportunity to reimagine what the path forward looks like."

Born in Kottayam, India, Mathew grew up in Muscat, Oman, before returning to India at age 14. After training as an architect, he co-founded one of Mumbai's first digital design firms. He later earned a Master in Design Studies from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and a doctorate in Design Computing from The Open University in the United Kingdom.

His research has focused on design-led corporate innovation and technology-driven urban experiences. In 2015, he founded Vamonde, a Chicago-based startup that used augmented and virtual reality to create digital storytelling experiences for cities around the world.

From 2019 to 2021, Mathew served as head of the Department of Art and Design at the College of Architecture, Art and Design at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. He has also lectured at Harvard Business School, the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and Illinois Tech's Stuart School of Business. Mathew takes over the academy as artificial intelligence, extended reality and robotics continue to reshape industries and higher education.

"We are at the cusp of this incredible transformation, and we need to train our students to be prepared for that time," Mathew said.

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THE ALL-NEW 2027 KIA SELTOS TAKES SMALL SUV EXPECTATIONS HIGHER



Exterior Design: The Authentic Modern SUV

The new Seltos takes styling cues from the flagship Telluride SUV to carve out its own legacy as a small SUV that embodies a dynamic and energetic persona. Amberdaytime running lights frame the front fascia, while bold angles and clean linescombine with flush door handles to deliver a strong distinctive presence. At its core, the 2027 Seltos is designed for versatility. It's longer, wider, and boasts a wheelbase that's 2.4 inches greater than its predecessor.

Standard wheels are 16-inch alloys, and the Seltos X-Line S comes with larger 18-inch alloy wheels, with all-black 19-inch wheels on the X-Line SX and X-Line EX HEV. The X-Line trim also features unique bumpers and side sills with Piano Black trim and dark gun metal accents. New colors include Terrain Brown, Frost Blue and Snow White Pearl with a distinctive black roof. Ground clearance has increased from 7.5 inches to an available 8.1 inches.

Interior Design: Functionally Sophisticated

The larger exterior dimensions of the new 2027 Seltos result in a more spacious cabin while the upright greenhouse allows for exceptional outward visibility. Inside, the interior features a wide horizontal layout, creating a clean, spacious feel. A squared-off steering wheel, open center console design, and clean lines visually connect the Seltos to the Telluride. The interior is modern simplicity meets technology integration, highlighted by an availableearly 30-inch total combined panoramic display that combines the infotainment system and digital cluster into a single panel.

Drawing inspiration from the Telluride and EV9, the Seltos HEV is available with a stalk-mounted shifter and push-button start. This is an ergonomic shift controller that moves right to where your hand naturally rests at the steering wheel. In doing so, the center console is left open, with plenty of space for water bottles, phones, and other small items.

In addition to its striking exterior, the X-Line comes with an exclusive monotone black interior with SynTex upholstery and the Telluride's uniquely styled mesh headrests which blend bold design and enhanced comfort. The X-Line seats also boast standard four-way lumbar support and the X-Line Prestige Package includes front driver Relaxation Seat.

The longer wheelbase and increased overall length create a more spacious cabin, delivering best-in-class passenger volume of 103.5 cu-ft. Headroom, hip room, and shoulder room have also increased, along with a class-leading 39 inches of second-row legroom, providing greater comfort for all passengers.

Cargo capacity has also improved, with a class-leading 64.2 cu-ft. maximum cargo space behind the first row and best-in-class total interior volume of 131.3 cu-ft. The new Seltos also features a foldable luggage board and new flexible Kia Add Gear attachment points that offer drivers more storage solutions for their next adventure.

Tech Suite: Functionally Connected

The all-new Seltos has thoughtful technology designed for daily life, highlighted by the digital dash display. It includes a standard 12.3-inchdigital touchscreen display and is available with a 12.3-inch instrument display and 5-inch climate display panel. The ccNC setup features over-the-air3 update capability. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are standard across all trims.

The available Kia AI assistant allows for a more natural conversation, and can be initiated simply by saying, "Hey, Kia...". Kia Connect allows consumers to use their compatible smartphones to send remote commands such as lock, unlock, cool, heat and start the vehicle.

The 2027 Seltos is available with Entertainment and Data Services, which can support streaming for Disney+, Netflix, and YouTube on certain trims. There are also available display themes for some of Disney's© most iconic brands, which will be introduced throughout 2026. Display themes are also available for all 30 NBA teams, as well as themes to celebrate Kia's sponsorship of the FIFA World Cup 2026™.Available Kia myQ Connected Garage offers convenient garage access that lets you remotely manage and control your garage door through your Kia touchscreen display. Experience all the new ways to stay connected and entertained with these upcoming features and more, all available in the Kia Connect Store.

To help devices stay charged, the cabin features a total of five standard USB-C ports. The front-row ports are nestled between the center console and the climate controls and include a media port and two charging ports. The rear-seat charging ports are integrated into the first-row seatbacks for easy access.

Seltos Powertrains: Three Ways to Adventure

The Seltos is the only CUV in the segment to offer three powertrain optionsstarting with the 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine paired with Kia's Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT). For those seeking lively pickup, the turbocharged 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine develops 190 horsepower with standard advanced Multi-Mode AWD system. This engine routes power through an 8-speed automatic transmission with manual control. The 2.0L powertrain is offered with front-wheel drive or an available advanced Multi-Mode AWD system. Depending on trim, 8.1 inches of ground clearance, the Seltos bolsters its capability within the segment.

Rounding out the lineup is a hybrid powertrain, which is a first for the Seltos. An advanced 1.6-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine is paired with a 6-speed dual clutch transmission designed to enhance both performance and efficiency. Front-wheel drive HEV improves driving efficiency while available e-AWD, Kia first on a HEV SUV, provides more power with on-demand all-wheel drive capability to provide a more rewarding driving experience. More information on the Seltos HEV will become available later this year. Official fuel economy figures for these versatile powertrains will be available closer to their respective on-sale dates.

Seltos ADAS: Elevated Peace of Mind

The all-new 2027 Seltos comes with a comprehensive list of standard and available Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) bringing features typically found in more upscale SUVs. This includes new-to-Seltos features such as standard Forward Collision Avoidance (FCA) Assist with Junction Turning, standard Front and Reverse Parking Distance Warning, and newly available Side Parking Distance Warning with Reverse Parking Collision Avoidance. The Seltos now offers an optional 360° Surround-View Monitor, as well as Kia's Blind-Spot View Monitor, which presents a video feed display of the left or right blind spot area on the digital display when the corresponding turn-signal is activated. This Blind Spot View Monitor and 360° Surround-View Monitor are optional on the X-Line trim.

The list of standard ADAS features includes Lane Keeping Assist, Lane Departure Warning, Driver Attention Warning with Leading Vehicle Departure Alert, High-Beam Assist, Intelligent Speed-Limit Warning, and Forward Collision Avoidance Assist with pedestrian and cyclist detection. It also comes standard with Lane Following Assist 2. Available ADAS features include Intelligent Speed-Limit Assist, Blind-Spot Collision Avoidance Assist, Rear Cross Traffic Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Avoidance and Safe Exit Warning, which is designed to provide an alert to occupants if it detects another vehicle approaching as they are exiting the vehicle.

Seltos Availability

The all-new 2027 Kia Seltos 2.0L and 1.6Tareon-sale now, with the HEV expected to arrive later this year.



COMMUNITY

SAHARA Raises \$1.1 Million at its 35th Annual Gala

Contd. from P1

“We are especially grateful to Manu and Rika Shah for their extraordinary matching gift, which inspired guests to give generously, effectively doubling the impact of countless contributions,” said Vibhuti Bhuta, Board President of SAHARA. “Their generosity will enable SAHARA to strengthen the critical services that so many individuals and families rely upon while advancing our bold vision of expanding programs and extending our reach throughout Southern California.”

The evening with the theme “Seeds of Hope, Stories of Courage” presented an inspiring program highlighting SAHARA’s

Mr. and Mrs. Hamir. “We are deeply grateful to every guest, sponsor, donor, volunteer, and community partners who made this evening such an extraordinary success. We are truly appreciative of our community partners such as Advancing Justice SoCal, Legal Aid Foundation of LA,



work, the lives impacted by its mission, and the importance of continued investment in the organization. Guests were treated to an unforgettable experience that included a vibrant cultural dance performance by Rangashree Dances of India, an engaging and interactive presentation by a renowned mentalist, Adrian Saint and a curated silent art auction featuring a lifelong collection of beautiful paintings generously donated by

and South Asian Bar Association, and many more for their pro bono services that help us take our mission forward,” said Executive Director Marisol Sanchez. “

SAHARA, in a statement, extended its heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of the event, which is a testament to the power of a community united around a shared vision of hope, healing, and lasting impact.

It said it remains energized by the momentum generated through this year’s Gala and invited the community to stay engaged through volunteering, advocacy, participation in outreach and group activities, and continued philanthropic support. “Together, we are planting the seeds of hope and cultivating stories of courage that will transform lives for generations to come,” it noted.

Indian American College Applicants

Contd. from P1

season report released on August 20, the number of Indian American applicants rose six percent to reach a record 40,949 – more than doubling from nearly 18,500 in 2016–17 and outpacing Chinese American applicants, whose numbers grew just one percent to 26,296.

This domestic surge highlights a striking divergence in the admissions landscape: the number of Indian American applicants continues to expand rapidly even as applications from students residing in India experience contraction.

The report revealed that international applicants from India dropped from roughly 16,900 in the previous cycle to 14,424, reversing nearly a decade of continuous growth that had previously positioned India to overtake China as the leading international source country on the platform.

The drop in Indian international students was significantly sharper than the two percent decline recorded for China, which tops the international spot with 18,435 applicants.

In fact, Common App noted that the overall 11 percent fall in Asian international applicants was primarily driven by this 15 percent drop from India.

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Saahas for Cause Hosts Safety Workshop to Empower South Asian Communities

LOS ANGELES — Safety starts with knowing what to do when a situation takes an unexpected turn. This summer, Saahas for Cause brought that message directly to Indian and Nepali families across Los Angeles County through two hands-on community safety workshops in Artesia and Norwalk.

The need is real. South Asian families are not immune to hate incidents, harassment and other safety concerns, yet many people may be unsure how to recognize a potentially dangerous situation, intervene safely or report a hate crime. Saahas for Cause is working to close that gap with practical education and resources.

On July 31 in Artesia, the **“Empowering Our Community: Safety & Hate Crime Awareness Workshop”** focused on self-defense, recognizing escalating situations, bystander intervention and hate-crime awareness. Participants learned practical techniques, discussed how to respond safely and received resource cards. A pre- and post-workshop assessment showed increased knowledge and confidence.

The effort continued August 30 in Norwalk with **“Staying Safe and Informed in the Community,”** combining self-defense training with bystander intervention and de-escalation skills. Participants also received free safety alarms and informational booklets to take home.

Both sessions ended on a calm note—with yoga in Artesia and mindfulness meditation in Norwalk—reinforcing the organization’s broader goal: building communities that are not only safer, but more informed, confident and connected.

For Saahas for Cause, community safety is more than a conversation. It is about putting knowledge, resources and confidence into the hands of families so they can look out for themselves—and for one another.

For more information: (562) 526-2508 | info@saahasforcause.org



Anil Chakravarthy To Succeed Shantanu Narayen As Adobe CEO

SAN FRANCISCO, CA- San Jose-based software company Adobe has announced that Anil Chakravarthy will become its next president and chief executive officer, succeeding veteran leader Shantanu Narayen.

Chakravarthy currently serves as president of Adobe's Customer Experience Orchestration business and worldwide field operations. He will also join the company's Board of Directors, effective Dec. 1, 2026.

Narayen will transition to executive chair, working closely with Chakravarthy to ensure a smooth leadership transition and support Adobe's ongoing transformation.

"Adobe's opportunity ahead is limitless with our track record in creating new market categories and world-class products. Anil is an experienced transformational leader who leads with values, integrity and a deep knowledge of our business. He has a proven record of building and delivering category-defining products that serve our broad range of customers," Narayen said.

"I could not be more confident that Anil is the right person to lead Adobe's growth in an AI-driven era and look forward to working closely with him in my new role as executive chair," he added.

Chakravarthy said he is energized by the opportunity to fuel growth and drive Adobe's leadership in the next era of agentic software for creativity, productivity and customer experience.

"Adobe has a history of building the future — not just through our technology, but through our people and our commitment to customers. Thanks to Shantanu's exceptional leadership in transforming Adobe's business model over the decades, we are well positioned to achieve Adobe's next chapter of growth," Chakravarthy said.

Chakravarthy joined Adobe in January 2020 as executive vice president and general manager leading the Digital Experience business. In September 2020, he



took on the additional responsibility of leading Adobe's worldwide field operations serving enterprise customers with the full portfolio of Adobe's products, including creativity and productivity.

In December 2021, he was promoted to president of Digital Experience and worldwide field operations. Before joining Adobe, Chakravarthy served as CEO of Informatica, a global leader in enterprise cloud data management, for four years. (IANS)

Vinay Kwatra Rings Nasdaq Bell To Celebrate India-US Partnership



India-West News Desk

NEW YORK- The India-US economic relationship featured at Nasdaq, one of the world's largest stock exchanges, on September 2 as Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra rang the exchange's opening bell.

The ceremony was attended by Atul Keshap, president of the US-India Business Council and former US Ambassador to Sri Lanka.

Nasdaq, in a post on X, welcomed Kwatra as "a champion of the deepening partnership between two of the world's largest democracies" and said it was honored to have him at the opening bell.

The exchange also referred to the "enduring connection between India and the world's most innovative markets", saying the bond between the two continues to drive global progress and shape the future of finance. Kwatra, in a post on X, said: "It's a pleasure to ring the opening bell at Nasdaq this morning to mark the growing strength and promise of the India-USA partnership."

He added that India was undergoing "a significant economic and technological transformation, driven by a strong entrepreneurial spirit". "The companies listed here are one of the great pillars of that partnership," the envoy said.

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PERSONAL PROFILE

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- Inventory control and management.
- Formation of Partnerships and Corporations.
- Other advisory services.

SCAN Partners With Costco

Contd. from P1

The planned benefits include a new pharmacy experience, Medflex over-the-counter benefits, vision and audiology services, according to SCAN.

The partnership marks Costco's first comprehensive partnership with a Medicare plan, SCAN Group said. The Wall Street Journal reported that Costco was preparing a limited rollout of Costco-branded Medicare plans through its partnership with SCAN Group.

"For the millions of older adults who rely on Medicare Advantage, the future of the program depends on strong partnerships that make healthcare more accessible, more connected and more seamlessly integrated into everyday life," Jain said.

"Older adults want healthcare that is easier to navigate, more responsive to their needs and rooted in organizations they trust," he said. Jain added that the expanded partnership with Costco would provide a foundation to explore new ways to help people stay healthy and independent while delivering



the quality, value and service both organizations are known for.

SCAN Health Plan currently offers Medicare Advantage plans in six states. Its plans serve nearly 460,000 members across 33 counties in California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, New Mexico and Washington.

Jain worked in leadership roles at the US Department of Health and Human Services, where he was Senior Advisor to the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Jain graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College with a BA in government and earned his MD from Harvard Medical School and MBA from Harvard Business School.

California's Fruit Fly Fight: The Tiny Invaders That Can Ruin Your Backyard

By FATEMA BALDIWALA

LOS ANGELES, CA – If you think the biggest danger to that perfectly ripe mango sitting in your kitchen is your family fighting over the last piece, think again.

California has another mango-loving enemy and this one is much smaller, harder to see and considerably less polite.

Invasive fruit flies are threatening California's farms, backyard gardens and the state's enormous agricultural economy. The California Department of Food and Agriculture, or CDFA, is asking residents to join the fight because, as officials emphasized during an Aug. 18 virtual briefing, preventing the spread of these pests is a job that requires everyone.

The message was simple: Don't pack a pest.

And, perhaps even more importantly for Californians with relatives who lovingly mail boxes of homemade treats from across the country: Please don't mail us a mango.

Tiny flies have huge consequences. California grows an astonishing variety of food. Why do not you take advantage of

this problem about 250 types of fruits and vegetables. Invasive fruit flies can attack many of them by laying eggs underneath the skin of the fruit.

Once the larvae hatch, they feed inside the fruit, destroying it from the inside out.

"Flies are winning? Of course not,"

said Victoria Hornbaker, director of CDFA's (California Department of Food and Agriculture) Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division. "They continue to come, but we are winning!"

That optimism is backed by an enormous detection, inspection and eradication operation.

California's 2023 outbreak was the most widespread invasive fruit fly outbreak in CDFA's like I say

small and century-long history. Quarantines were established in affected communities, sometimes preventing residents from moving or sharing homegrown produce.

The economic stakes are enormous. A major infestation could potentially cause billions of dollars in agricultural losses, drive up food prices and threaten one of California's signature industries.

In other words, that innocent-

looking fruit fly is not merely an annoying guest at your picnic. It can become an agricultural economic disaster with wings.

If you are wondering how these flies get here? The answer is, unfortunately, sometimes we bring them.

California is a gateway state. Millions of people travel through its airports, ports and highways, and packages arrive from all over

the country and world.

Jordan Petersen, deputy agricultural commissioner/sealer for the Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures, explained that California's enormous amount of travel and commerce creates additional pathways for invasive pests.

"California is very diverse," Petersen said. "There is a lot of movement. We have the LA ports and we are a hub of industry."

California's geography and global connections make prevention especially important.

"Fruit flies do not understand borders," Petersen noted. "That is why it is very important [to remember that] prevention is much better than treatment once an invasive fruit fly has infiltrated our country."

A traveler may unknowingly bring fruit home from another state. A relative might send a care package containing mangoes or guavas. Someone ordering fruit online may not realize that a pest could be hiding inside.

And the pest doesn't necessarily arrive in the fruit looking

Contd. on P14



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ENVIRONMENT

California's Fruit Fly Fight

Contd. from P13

suspicious. That is why California employs some very serious fruit detectives.

Beagles and Labrador dogs are your patrol agents. Dogs are part of the fight.

Specially trained canine teams at airports and inspection stations can sniff out agricultural pests hidden in luggage and packages. According to officials, the dogs are rewarded with treats when they successfully alert inspectors.

So while humans are debating whether to bring home one more souvenir, a highly trained beagle may be thinking: I smell a mango.

California also operates 16 border inspection stations for commercial and passenger vehicles to help prevent pests from entering the state.

Packages can also be inspected. If a prohibited shipment is discovered, officials have several enforcement options, including refusing entry, destroying the material or using treatments such as deep freezing to eliminate the threat.

What happens when an invasive fly is detected? This is where the response gets surprisingly sophisticated.

If an invasive fruit fly is detected, officials do not simply swat it and move on.

They investigate.

Traps are placed in the area. Depending on what is discovered, additional traps may be deployed. Inspectors collect fruit and cut it open to look for larvae.

If an infestation is confirmed, officials can establish a quarantine zone to prevent the pest from spreading.

Special treatment stations may also be placed in trees. The stations are designed to attract the flies, which feed on the treatment and die.

Officials can also remove susceptible fruit around the area where a female fly or larvae have been found, preventing the next generation from emerging.

It is essentially an agricultural version of stopping a problem before it becomes a neighborhood-wide disaster.

For homeowners, one of the most important messages from the briefing was to pay attention to what is happening in the backyard. It's called the rotten fruit clue.

If fruit is unusually damaged, rotten or otherwise suspicious, residents should not simply toss it into the compost pile and forget about it.

CDFA asks residents to report

suspected invasive fruit fly activity by calling 1-800-491-1899.

Officials recommend placing suspicious or infested fruit in a plastic bag, tying it tightly and put-

ting it in the regular black trash-not the green waste bin. The reason is simple: You don't want to give the larvae a free ride into the next generation.

If you are wondering if climate change and drought could be contributing to the problem. The answer is an emphatic YES,

Climate change can expand the range in which invasive species are able to survive and reproduce.

That means California's pest-prevention work could become even more important as environmental conditions change.

There is good news, though, we can learn from past successes.

Officials pointed to the success-

ful eradication of a Caribbean fruit fly infestation that led to a roughly 75-square-mile quarantine involving Montebello and Alhambra in 1985.

It is a reminder that early detection and aggressive action can work.

The same principle applies today: find it early, contain it quickly and prevent it from spreading.

Huong Dang of the Orange County Agricultural Commissioner's Office put the responsibility in particularly clear terms.

"It affects your crop, your neighbor, your city and your county and the whole state," Dang said.

That may sound dramatic for an insect smaller than your fingernail, but California's agricultural system is interconnected. What happens in one backyard can potentially affect an entire community.

Hornbaker offered perhaps the simplest advice of all to California residents:

"When you travel, do not bring back fruit."

And she thanked residents who help detect pests and prevent them from entering California.

Abraham Lopez-Zuniga, CDFA emergency response team lead,

had an even catchier version:

"Do not pack a pest."

That is advice worth remembering the next time someone asks you to squeeze a few mangoes into your suitcase.

The larger lesson is that agricultural protection does not happen only at a government inspection station. It happens at airports, shipping facilities, farms, nurseries, supermarkets and even in our backyards.

California residents can help by buying plants and produce from licensed, reputable retailers and nurseries, following quarantine rules, reporting suspicious fruit and avoiding the temptation to transport fresh fruit across state or international borders.

The next time a relative says, "I'm sending you some fruit from back home," you may want to appreciate the sentiment while politely suggesting they send something that doesn't have a peel.

Because when it comes to invasive fruit flies, the safest souvenir is the one that doesn't come with a hidden passenger.

The bottom line? California is winning the battle, but officials can't do it alone. The tiniest pest can create a very big problem, and every resident can help keep it from taking flight.



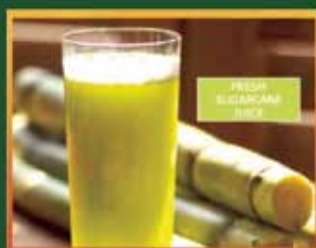
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CRIME

Tragedy In Bay Area

Contd. from P1

say the suspect arrested following the first death is 32-year-old Anila, who could also be a suspect for the second death.

Neither the Milpitas Police Department nor the San Jose Police Department has publicly released the names of the victims or the suspect, nor have law enforcement officials formally confirmed that the two homicides are linked.

According to family members and media reports, the three women were long-time friends who had spent the previous evening together, attending an Onam celebration before going to a theater to watch a film.

The initial incident occurred shortly after noon on August 28 at the Mill Creek Apartments on Dixon Landing Road in Milpitas. Officers responding to a 12:01 p.m. report of a hit-and-run in the complex's parking lot found a woman suffering from severe injuries. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Witnesses reported seeing a blue SUV flee the parking lot immediately after striking the victim. Milpitas police later located a damaged blue SUV matching the witness descriptions in a nearby parking lot and subsequently arrested a 32-year-old Milpitas resident. Relatives confirmed that Anjana was the victim struck in the collision.

Approximately two hours later, San Jose police responded to a report of suspicious circumstances at a residence on the 700 block of Linda Vista Street. Officers discovered an unconscious woman inside the home who died shortly thereafter.

The San Jose Police Department's Ho-

micide Unit determined the victim had suffered at least one stab wound and classified the case as a homicide. Investigators indicated that the victim and the suspect were

known to each other and that an adult female suspect was quickly identified, though her identity has not been officially disclosed.

Ann's family identified her as the woman killed inside the San Jose home. According to relatives, Ann's husband, Pallathra Jacob, came back home after learning of Anjana's death in Milpitas and discovered his wife inside with fatal stab wounds.

Motives for both attacks remain under investigation. Family members noted that Anila had recently lost her job, while Ann had secured employment and a work permit roughly two weeks prior to the incident. Law enforcement has not confirmed whether employment status or financial strain played any role in the attacks.

Anjana had lived in California since 2021, working as a teacher for nearly six years. She is survived by her husband, Vijeesh, a software engineer, and their daughter.

Ann had resided in the United States for a decade and is survived by her husband and two daughters, aged 12 and 5.



Accused 32-year-old Anila Baby was arrested and is being held without bail.



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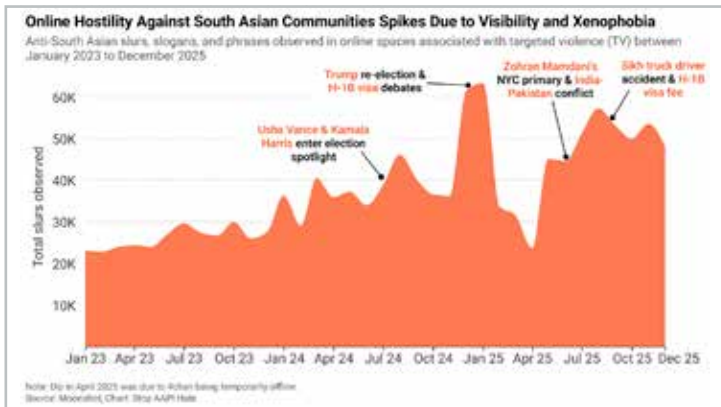


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Anti-South Asian Slurs Surge 109% in US

Contd. from P1



to India, and threw food at their feet. She said they were all US citizens.

An Indian man in Virginia said a stranger approached him at a Thai restaurant, used slurs against him and told him he would have to “go home.” The person also threatened him and said he would wait for him and his friend outside the restaurant.

The report found that 61% of South Asian adults were also targeted for another aspect of their identity in addition to their race, ethnicity or nationality. Religion, immigration status and class were the most commonly targeted additional identities.

The hate incidents had mental, physical, financial and social impacts, with half of South Asian adults reporting negative effects on their health.

The report included the story of Arun, a South Asian rideshare driver in New York, who described being followed and physically

attacked by another driver after honking. The driver also made racist remarks about his background. Arun said he felt traumatized afterward and experienced neck and back pain, dizziness and memory loss, for which he was seeing orthopedic and neurology specialists.

The report said a dominant theme in online posts was the xenophobic narrative of an Indian “invasion” or “great replacement,” portraying Indian people as taking jobs away from white people. It also said debates over H-1B visas fueled substantial increases in anti-South Asian slurs.

Stop AAPI Hate said its findings were based on online monitoring by Moonshot from 2023 to 2025; its January 2026 national survey of 306 South Asian adults conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago; and firsthand accounts reported to its reporting center in 2025.

Gujarat Chemical Firm Founder Sentenced To Jail, Faces Deportation

India-West News Desk

BROOKLYN, NY – Bhavesh Lathiya, founder of Surat-based Raxuter Chemicals, has been sentenced to 54 months in federal prison for smuggling and distributing chemicals used to manufacture fentanyl, U.S. authorities said.

Lathiya, whose full name is Bhavesh Ranchhodbhai Lathiya, is a resident of Surat, Gujarat. He is also known as Bhavesh Patel, Bhavesh Bhai and Bhavesh Lathiya.

Lathiya, 37, pleaded guilty in April 2026 to smuggling and distributing fentanyl precursor chemicals while knowing they would be used to manufacture fentanyl. He was sentenced September 2 by U.S. District Judge Pamela K. Chen in Brooklyn and ordered to forfeit \$24,560. He will be deported after completing his prison sentence, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York.

Lathiya and Raxuter Chemicals supplied more than 50 pounds of precursor chemicals to the United States and Mexico, prosecutors said. The chemicals included materials needed to manufacture fentanyl through commonly used production methods.

The company used international mail and package carriers to ship the chemicals. Prosecutors said Lathiya used false labels and customs documents to try to keep the



shipments from being detected.

In one case, a package shipped by Raxuter Chemicals and delivered to an address in the Eastern District of New York on or about June 29, 2024, was listed as containing Vitamin C. It actually contained 1-boc-4-piperidone, a List I chemical used in fentanyl production, according to court filings.

Lathiya also discussed the sale of fentanyl precursor chemicals with an undercover Homeland Security Investigations officer during video calls on Oct. 2 and Oct. 15, 2024, prosecutors said.

During the calls, the undercover officer told Lathiya that customers in Mexico were satisfied with an earlier shipment and the amount of finished product it produced. Lathiya agreed to sell 20 kilograms of 1-boc-4-piperidone and suggested labeling it as an antacid.

On or about Nov. 23, 2024, Raxuter Chemicals and Lathiya shipped about 20 kilograms of the chemical to the Eastern District of New York. The package was labeled as an antacid, according to prosecutors.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel, have increasingly used fentanyl precursors supplied by companies operating in countries including India and China, according to U.S. authorities.



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Suhas Subramanyam: FBI Monitored My Calls



WASHINGTON, D.C.- Indian-American Congressman Suhas Subramanyam has said the FBI and US Justice Department informed him that his telephone conversations with a senior Virginia state lawmaker were monitored as part of a federal investigation, calling the surveillance “deeply concerning” and its timing “extremely suspicious.”

Subramanyam, a Democrat representing Virginia’s 10th Congressional District, said September 3 that the monitored conversations were with Virginia State Senator Louise Lucas, who serves as President Pro Tempore of the state Senate.

“The FBI and DOJ recently informed me that my phone con-

versations with State Senator and President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas were being monitored as part of their investigation into Senator Lucas,” Subramanyam said. “This is deeply concerning.” The Congressman said the wiretap took place between March and May, a politically consequential period in Virginia.

“The timing of this wiretap and investigation is extremely suspicious,” he said. “The tap took place between March and May, which was at the peak of campaigning for the redistricting referendum in Virginia.”

Subramanyam also linked the timing to congressional efforts to question US Attorney General Pam Bondi over the investigation

involving Jeffrey Epstein.

“This was also while the Oversight Committee was calling on Pam Bondi to testify on the Epstein investigation,” he said. “This should concern anyone who believes in a real Department of Justice that serves the American people and not a singular President.”

Subramanyam accused the Trump administration of using the Justice Department against political opponents. “Trump’s DOJ has become his own personal law firm, with his former personal attorney carrying out vendettas on Trump’s political enemies,” he said. “They have politi-

cally investigated multiple states’ Attorneys General and the former FBI director. Now they admit they have surveilled conversations by a sitting Democratic Congressman.”

The Justice Department and FBI did not immediately respond to Subramanyam’s allegations about the motivation for the surveillance.

His statement does not say that Subramanyam himself was the target of the investigation. Instead, he said his conversations were monitored “as part of their investigation into Senator Lucas.”

Subramanyam vowed that the episode would not deter Democrats

from challenging the administration.

“If this surveillance was done to scare us and to get Democrats to stop pushing back against Trump’s political overreach, they are mistaken,” he said. “We will not back down. We will continue our investigations into this President and his corrupt administration.”

Subramanyam, who was born in Bengaluru and raised in the United States, was elected to Congress from Virginia in 2024. A lawyer and former technology policy adviser in the Obama administration, he previously served in the Virginia General Assembly. (IANS)

Salwan Named US Mayors Committee Vice Chair

FREMONT, CA-Fremont Mayor Raj Salwan has been appointed Vice Chair for Parks of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment & Sports Committee.

Salwan said he plans to use the new role to learn from what other cities are doing, explore new partnerships and funding opportunities, and bring those ideas back to Fremont.

He also hopes to make Fremont more of a destination by showcasing places that residents enjoy, attracting visitors, supporting local businesses and highlighting what



ber 2024. He grew up in Fremont and has spent more than 18 years in city government, serving as a Human Relations Commissioner, Planning Commissioner, City Councilmember and Vice Mayor.

A small business owner and father of three, Salwan studied biological sciences at the University of California, Irvine, before earning his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Tuskegee University.

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First Professional Badminton City Franchise League Formed In US

India-West News Desk

RIVERSIDE, CA – A former professional badminton athlete from India, Akshay Are, has launched what he says is the first city-franchise professional badminton league in the US, seeking to give the sport a professional foothold in a country where it has long lacked a major domestic league.

Are, who played badminton professionally for a decade and holds an MBA from UC Riverside's Gary Anderson School of Management, unveiled the American Badminton Premier League (ABPL) August 28 before a packed audience at UC Riverside's AGSM Business Auditorium.

The inaugural ABPL lineup will feature eight city franchises: the New York Shuttlers, Chicago Rushers, Dallas Slingers, Houston Chargers, Seattle Gliders, Atlanta Dashers, Bay Area Strikers and L.A. Smashers. The Los Angeles franchise is a nod to the city hosting the 2028 Olympic Games.

"The wait for professional badminton in America is over," Are told the audience. "This sport has a billion fans worldwide and elite athletes who've had nowhere to go in this country. That changes today."

Badminton has been an Olympic sport since 1992 and is played widely around the world, but the sport has had limited opportunities at the highest competitive levels in the United States. The country has not had a professional city-franchise league, an NCAA Division I badminton program or athletic scholarships for the sport.



Are said the ABPL is intended to help fill that gap by creating a professional platform for athletes and building a stronger competitive structure for badminton in the U.S.

The launch brought together athletes, supporters and guests connected to USA Badminton. The league also has particular significance for the Indian American community, where badminton is widely played and international stars including Saina Nehwal and P.V. Sindhu have become household names.

Are is also leading the Bring Back Badminton campaign, which seeks to restore badminton's status as an NCAA Emerging Sport for Women. The sport lost that designation in August 2009 after failing to meet the NCAA's threshold of 40 participating schools.

The ABPL has not yet announced its commercial partners, organizational leadership or inaugural player roster.

Pragg Scripts History In US As First Grand Chess Tour Winner

ST LOUIS, MO – Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa made history by becoming the first Indian to win the Grand Chess Tour, beating Fabiano Caruana 15-13 in the final, here.

It was a great result for Pragg as he recovered from an early deficit to fight back in the final of the grand finale of the tournament, in which players are tested in all three formats of the game — classical, rapid and blitz.

The Indian star, who is supported by the Adani Group, lost 3-9 in Classical chess and then bounced back in the Rapid section, winning it 8-0 before being held 4-4 in the Blitz version, finishing 15-13 overall to claim the title in the event in which each win earns six points, a draw gets three in classical, while in Rapid Chess, a win gets four points and two for a draw. In Blitz, each win is worth two points and a draw one point.

In the final standings, Pragg finished with 15 points overall, taking the top spot ahead of Fabiano Caruana, while fellow American Wesley So claimed the third spot by beating Germany's Vincent Kermer in the third-place playoff.

The top spot and victory in the final earned



Praggnanandhaa \$200,000 (Rs 1.90 approx) while Caruana received \$125,000 for finishing second. Wesley So ended with \$75,000 for third place while Vincent Keymer claimed \$50,000 for his fourth-place finish.

The 21-year-old Pragg had reached the final by outplaying Keymer 19-9 in the first semifinal

while Caruana got the better of Wesley So 18-12 in the second.

Pragg, who became a Grandmaster at the age of 13 in 2018, has a rating of 2750 and is ranked 12th in the Classical section of the FIDE Rankings in the latest list of August 2026.

Praggnanandhaa topped the 2026 Grand Chess Tour season, which culminated with the grand finale at the Saint Louis Chess Club from August 21-28. The 21-year-old Indian from Chennai had finished among the four highest-ranked full-tour players after the regular season and thus contested the knockout tournament for the GCT title.

The field had finished in the following order, with Praggnanandhaa finishing as Seed No. 1, Wesley So emerging as Seed No. 2, Seed No. 3 Fabiano Caruana, and Seed No. 4 Vincent Keymer. The top three finishers received invitations to the 2027 Grand Chess Tour. (IANS)

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Strengthen Your Legs With The Triangle Posture -Trikonasana

Trikona means triangle. Tri means three and kona is an angle. As the āsana resembles three-armed triangles made by the trunk and the limbs, it has been named Trikonāsana.

Technique

- Stand with your feet comfortably apart.
- Slowly raise both arms sideways till they are horizontal.
- Exhale and slowly bend to the right side. Place the right hand just behind the right foot.
- Keep the left arm straight up, in line with the right arm.
- Turn the left palm forward.
- Turn your head and gaze at the tip of the left middle finger.
- Remain in the posture for 10–30 seconds with normal breathing.
- As you inhale, slowly come up.
- Repeat for the left side.

Benefits

- Prevents flat foot.
 - Strengthens calf, thigh and waist muscles.
 - Makes the spine flexible and improves lung capacity.
- 

A Word of Caution

- Avoid this posture in case of slipped disc, sciatica, or after undergoing abdominal surgery.
- Do not go beyond your limits or overdo the lateral stretch.
- If one cannot touch the feet, one can reach for the knees instead. (AYUSH, Govt. Of India)



Half Camel Posture -Ardha Ustrasana Helps Blood Flow

Ustra means camel. The final version of this āsana resembles the hump of a camel. In this version, only the first stage (half) of the āsana is being practiced.

Technique

- Sit in *Viśrāmāsana*.
- Come to *Dandāsana*.
- Fold your legs and sit on your heels.
- Keep the thighs close and big toes touching.
- Place the hands on the knees.
- The head and back should be straight.
- This is *Vajrāsana*.
- Stand on your knees.
- Place the hands on the waist with fingers pointing downward.
- Keep the elbows and shoulders parallel.
- Bend the head back and stretch the neck muscles; inhale and bend the trunk backwards as much as possible. As you exhale, relax.
- Keep the thighs perpendicular to the ground.
- Remain in the posture for 10–30 seconds with normal breathing.
- Return with inhalation; sit in *Vajrāsana*.
- Relax in *Viśrāmāsana*.

Note

- If you can reach the heels, you can place your hands on them and bend backwards. This is called Ustrāsana.



Benefits

- Relieves constipation and back pain.
- Increases blood circulation to the head and cardiac region.

A Word of Caution

- In case of hernia and abdominal injuries, arthritis, vertigo, and pregnancy, please avoid doing this āsana. (AYUSH, Govt. Of India)

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The Firm Posture – Bhadrasana

Bhadhra means firm or auspicious.



Technique

- Sit erect with the legs stretched out straight in front.
- Keep the hands beside the hips. This is Dandāsana.
- Now put the soles of your feet together.
- Exhale and clasp your hands together over your toes. Pull your heels as close as possible to the perineum region.
- If your thighs are not touching or are not close to the floor, place a soft cushion underneath the knees for support. This is the final position.
- Stay here for some time.

Benefits

- Keeps the body firm and stabilizes the mind.
- Keeps the knees and hip joints healthy.
- Helps to relieve knee pain.
- Acts on the abdominal organs and releases any tension in the abdomen.
- Benefits women by relieving abdominal pain often experienced during menstruation.

A Word of Caution

- Avoid this practice in case of severe arthritis and sciatica.
- (AYUSH, Govt. Of India)

India's Coconut Story Is Bigger Than Just Coconuts



NEW DELHI – India is not just a major coconut-growing country. It is the world's biggest producer of the tropical staple, putting the humble coconut at the center of a growing agricultural and export story.

India accounts for 31.24 per cent of global coconut production and 17.90 per cent of the world's coconut cultivation area, ranking third globally by area.

The country added about 2,175 hectares to its coconut-growing area across several states during 2025-26, according to an official factsheet.

India produced more than 20.3 billion coconuts in 2024-25 from 2.19 million hectares, with average productivity reaching 9,249 nuts per hectare.

And while coconut is often closely associated with Kerala, the numbers tell a more interesting story.

Kerala has India's largest coconut cultivation area, covering nearly 754,000 hectares and producing about 5.15 billion nuts. Tamil Nadu, however, takes the lead in overall coconut production, while Andhra Pradesh records the country's highest productivity, followed by West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

The coconut business is also moving well beyond the traditional whole nut.

India's export basket increasingly includes value-added products such as virgin coconut oil, coconut milk and activated carbon, giving the versatile crop new uses and potentially new markets.

So, from coconut oil and milk to industrial products, India's coconut economy is proving that there is a lot more to the humble coconut than meets the eye. (IANS)

Pomegranate: The Fruit With Multiple Health Benefits

The pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), also known as *Dadima* in Ayurveda, is a nutritious fruit traditionally valued for its digestive and therapeutic properties. The fruit, juice and rind have been used in traditional practices to support digestion, manage digestive discomfort and maintain oral health. In Ayurvedic practice, *Anar* is also valued for its astringent properties and is considered suitable for use in various dietary and health conditions.

Indigestion

10 ml. juice of fruit, 1 gm. black salt or fried jeera powder with honey or sugar to hold inside mouth for some time before food.

Bleeding piles

10 ml. juice of fruit with sugar twice a day.

or 10 gm. powder of dry fruit rind with equal quantity of sugar twice a day.

Diarrhoea/Dysentery

10 ml. decoction of fruit skin thrice a day.

Fruit may be eaten in plenty.

Hyper-acidity

10 ml. juice of fruit twice a day. Even the fruit may be eaten.

Bad breath

Gargling with the warm decoction prepared from fruit skin 3-4 times a day.

Acne

Paste of seeds should be applied to affected part twice daily.

(Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, India. The information provided here is based on traditional Ayurvedic practices and is intended for general informational purposes only.)



RECIPE

Cilantro Lime Rice Samosa Cups



Ingredients:

- 1 pack (8.5 oz) Royal® Microwaveable Cilantro Lime Rice
- 24 square wonton wrappers • 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp butter • 1 onion, diced • 1 carrot, diced
- 1 cup potato, diced • 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp ginger, minced • 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin • 1 tsp garam masala
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper • 1/2 tsp each salt and pepper
- 3/4 cup reduced-sodium vegetable broth • 1/2 cup peas
- Tamarind chutney, for serving
- Chopped cilantro, for garnish

Preparation

- Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- Place a wonton wrapper in each cup of two 12-cup muffin tins. Gently press each wrapper into the cup shape and brush lightly with oil.
- Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until golden brown.
- Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat.
- Cook the onion, potato, carrot, garlic, and ginger for 3 to 5 minutes, or until they start to brown.
- Stir in the coriander, cumin, garam masala, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until fragrant.
- Stir in the vegetable broth and bring to a boil.
- Cook for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.
- Add the rice and peas, and cook for another 3 to 5 minutes, or until heated through.
- Spoon the rice samosa filling into the baked wonton cups.
- Top with a dollop of tamarind chutney and a sprinkle of chopped cilantro.



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Sonia Gandhi Memoir To Chronicle Six Decades Of Love, Loss And Life In India

India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY – Sonia Gandhi, one of the most prominent figures in India's Congress party, will revisit the personal tragedies, political upheavals and family ties that shaped her life in a memoir due out this fall, including her decades inside the Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty and her own reluctant path into public life.

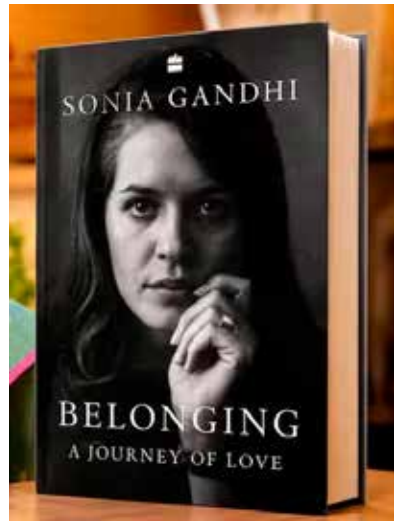
Alfred A. Knopf announced August 18 that 'Belonging: A Journey of Love' will be published November 10. In the book, Gandhi reflects on how her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi brought her from a small town in Italy into one of India's most powerful political families, and how the assassinations of her mother-in-law, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and her husband transformed her life.

"Much has been written about my family," Gandhi said in a statement released by Knopf, "but few narratives were able to reach into the truth of their motivations, their actions and even their very human failings." She described the memoir as a tribute to the humanity of the family and said it offers her perspective on six decades of social and political change in India.

Gandhi was 19 and studying English in Cambridge, England, in 1965 when she met Rajiv Gandhi. He was the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and the son of Indira Gandhi, who would become the country's first woman prime minister. Sonia Gandhi moved to India in 1968 after marrying Rajiv.

Knopf describes the memoir as an account of her adjustment to a new country and family, including learning Hindi, wearing saris and raising her two children with Rajiv in New Delhi. Rajiv was working as a commercial airline pilot when they married and initially had no plans to enter politics.

That changed after a series of family tragedies. Rajiv's younger brother, Sanjay Gandhi, died in a plane crash in 1980. Four years later, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her security guards. Ra-



jiv succeeded his mother as prime minister despite Sonia Gandhi's concerns about his entering politics.

Seven years later, Rajiv was assassinated by a suicide bomber while campaigning for a return to power. The loss ultimately contributed to Sonia Gandhi's own entry into politics, although she initially resisted repeated calls for her to take on a public role.

"It was heartbreak and loss that threw me into the public world of politics," she said. "Up till then I had guarded my privacy fiercely."

Gandhi eventually became president of the Indian National Congress, holding the position longer than any other person. After the Congress-led coalition won the 2004 general election, she declined the party's offer to become prime minister and instead led the Congress through the coal-

ition government that remained in power for a decade.

Her party was defeated in the 2014 general election, when Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party came to power.

In the memoir, Gandhi also writes about the difficulty of revisiting a life she had largely kept private. She said that stepping back from politics allowed her to look at her experiences differently, with themes of "love and loyalty" emerging from her childhood in Italy through her years as Rajiv Gandhi's wife and Indira Gandhi's daughter-in-law.

The Nehru-Gandhi family remains active in Indian politics. Gandhi's son, Rahul Gandhi, is the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, while her daughter, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, is also a Congress member of the lower house. Sonia Gandhi is currently a member of the Rajya Sabha, Parliament's upper house.

Knopf describes 'Belonging' as both a personal account and a perspective on India's political and social transformation since independence, with Gandhi drawing on more than six decades of experiences in the country she ultimately came to call home.

Shashi Tharoor To Headline JLF Los Angeles

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – Shashi Tharoor will be among the featured speakers at a Jaipur Literature Festival Los Angeles event examining the changing global balance of power and the evolving role of the United States.

The program, titled "What is the New World Order?", will take place September 15 at the ASU California Center Broadway, here. It is being presented as a preview of the 2027 Jaipur Literature Festival Los Angeles, a planned weeklong international edition of the literary festival.

Tharoor, an author himself and a four term Member of Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram, will take part in a keynote conversation with Kal Raustiala, director of the UCLA Ronald W. Burkle Center for International Relations.

The discussion will look at how the United States is reassessing its role in global affairs as it marks 250 years of independence. Topics will include the country's changing approach to free trade, global health, climate regulation, democracy and international peace, as well as what shifts in U.S. influence could mean for other powers, including India.

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ARTS

When Stones Begin To Dance: A Carlsbad Studio Brings 'An Untold Saga' To Life

India-West News Desk

ESCONDIDO, CA – What might happen if the dancers carved into the walls of India's ancient temples could step out of stone and move among us?

That question animated 'An Untold Saga,' a world premiere presented by RDM Studio on August 2 at the Grand Ritz Theater here, where nearly 400 people gathered for an evening that placed the centuries-old vocabulary of Odissi inside a contemporary theatrical landscape.

The production, the Carlsbad based RDM Studio's fourth curated work, was performed by Artistic Director Nilanjana and her ensemble. Rather than treating classical dance as something confined to a historical frame, 'An Untold Saga' used Odissi as a starting point for exploring the meeting of sculpture, mythology, devotion and human experience.

Odissi was particularly suited to the idea. Known for its sculptural poses, lyrical movement and close ties to the temple traditions of Odisha, the form can make the dancer appear almost carved from stone

before releasing that stillness into movement. That quality became central to the theatrical premise: figures inspired by India's temples seemed to emerge from the past and acquire new life onstage.

The production was directed by Sukalyan Bhattacharya, who brought together choreography, lighting, multimedia and theatrical movement. His approach allowed the produc-



tion to move beyond a conventional dance recital, creating a work in which stagecraft was part of the storytelling.

Yet beneath the modern presentation was an older artistic inheritance.

It was conceived by Nilanjana's guru, Mitra Purkayastha, as a tribute to her own guru, Muralidhar Majhi. The production therefore carried more than a story from one generation to another. It carried a lineage of artistic training and interpretation — from guru to disciple, and eventually onto an American stage.

With 3,000-Dhotis An Asia Record Is Set



KOCHI – In Kerala, a mundu is usually worn, folded and draped. This Onam, nearly 3,000 of them have been spread out instead and turned into a giant pookkalam.

At Kochi's Forum Mall, Ramraj Cotton has given one of Kerala's most familiar garments an unusual festive makeover, creating a 30-foot-diameter 'Mundukalam' using mundus in a variety of colors.

The giant installation has earned a place in the Asia Book of Records as Asia's largest pookkalam made using mundus.

Instead of the flowers traditionally used to create Onam's colorful floral carpets, the 'Mundukalam' uses carefully arranged pieces of fabric to form an elaborate design. The result is a striking installation that has been drawing visitors to the mall.

The idea brings together two familiar symbols of Malayali life: the white mundu, worn by generations of Keralites, and the pookkalam, the flower carpet that appears outside homes across the state during Onam.

Pookkalams are created as families prepare to celebrate the festival, with flowers arranged in increasingly intricate patterns. The tradition is associated with prosperity, togetherness and the annual return of Mahabali, the legendary king at the heart of Onam celebrations.

The 'Mundukalam' keeps the familiar circular form and festive spirit of the pookkalam, but swaps petals for fabric — giving an age-old tradition a distinctly contemporary look.

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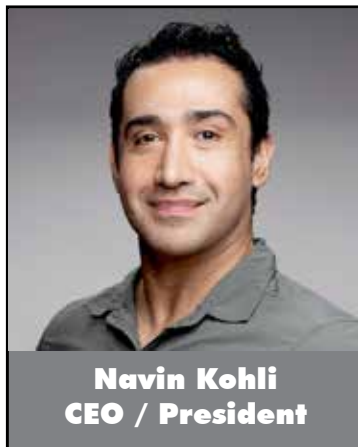
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HOLLYWOOD

'The Cycle Of Love' Brings A Remarkable Indian Love Story

NEW YORK, NY – A documentary about an Indian street artist's extraordinary bicycle journey from Delhi to Sweden for love premiered in New York, bringing a real-life story of caste, culture and human connection to an American audience.

'The Cycle of Love' follows P.K. Mahanandia, a 23-year-old artist born into a poor Dalit family, and Lotta von Schedvin, a 19-year-old Swedish woman who travelled to India in 1977.

The film had its New York red-carpet premiere at the Directors Guild of America Theatre in Manhattan. It was directed by Orlando von

Einsiedel, whose credits include 'The White Helmets,' 'Virunga' and 'The Lost Children.'

Mahanandia was working as a street artist in Delhi when he met von Schedvin after she asked him to draw her portrait. Their meeting sparked a romance that crossed borders and social barriers.

After von Schedvin returned to Sweden, Mahanandia set out to join her. He travelled about 6,000 miles by bicycle, crossing nearly a dozen countries before reaching Sweden.

The documentary is based on the love story of Mahanandia and von Schedvin, their daughter and producer Emelie Ma-

hanandia von Schedvin said. Rather than offering a detailed account of her father's life, the director chose to explore the broader meaning of the couple's journey.

"He wanted to focus on the love story of our parents and meeting other people from different cultures and things on the way, the journey from India to Sweden," she said.

The production team encountered people from different



countries and backgrounds along the route, with many of those unscripted exchanges becoming part of the film.

"Even though you don't speak the same language, you can always speak the language of heart," Emelie said. "We've maybe come from different religions and things, but we all come from a religion of love."

Chirag Benedict Lobo plays Mahanandia, while Mina Dale portrays von Schedvin. Lobo said the encounters with people along the journey reinforced the film's message that love can transcend divisions.

"Everyone else that you see in the film, they're all real life people sharing their thoughts about life, faith, forgiveness, love, destiny," he said. Dale, who is from Norway, travelled to India for the first time for the production. The actors worked without scripted dialogue and filmed in locations where the actual events took place. Geographic Reference "Everything was improvised. There were no lines at all," she said. "We travelled and we were in the places where the actual events happened."

Indian actor and producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas is among the film's executive producers. The documentary comes from the Academy Award-winning team behind 'The White Helmets,' 'Virunga' and 'Learning to Skateboard in a Warzone (If You're a Girl).' Producers include Emelie and Karl Mahanandia von Schedvin, Harri Grace and Chloe Leland. (IANS)



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LIFESTYLE

How Onam Followed Me From Palakkad To The Bay Area

By GOPAN MADATHIL

Every August, my childhood home in Palakkad transformed. Jasmine mixed with the smell of wet earth, new clothes appeared in the cupboards, and flower petals slowly took over the courtyard. Somewhere nearby, someone was invariably discussing the Onam Bumper Lottery before the food was even cooked.

Three decades after trading Kerala's monsoon rains for the Bay Area's hikes, picnics and long summer evenings, I find that Onam has followed me here. The setting has changed, but certain memories return with surprising clarity. A pookkalam at a Bay Area community celebration can suddenly take me back to my mother kneeling in our Palakkad courtyard. A Sadya can bring back the taste of the fried potatoes she used to offer me so I would stop complaining about the rice.

Onam is Kerala's harvest festival, celebrated over 10 days during Chingam, the first month of the Malayalam calendar. It marks the harvest and the end of the southwest monsoon, but growing up, it felt less like a festival on the calendar and more like a season of its own: a school holiday, cricket matches, new clothes, family visits, flowers, music, games and food.

At the center of it all was the story of King Mahabali, whose annual return is traditionally associated with a time of prosperity and equality. As a child, I accepted the story without question. Living thousands of miles away, I have come to appreciate what it represented: the idea that prosperity means little unless it is shared. The Onam break was also one of the first big holidays after school reopened in June. By then, quarterly exams were over

and cricket fever had taken hold. The monsoon might interrupt a match, but it rarely stopped us from trying again.

The other great obsession was shopping. Onam sales appeared everywhere, offering discounts on everything from household appliances to school uniforms. My father believed this was the one time of year when our family budget could really stretch. New clothes, or Onakkodi, became part of the excitement. I received them from my parents and cousins, and getting dressed in something new was as much a part of Onam as anything else.

That feeling still comes back when I see children dressed up for Onam events in the Bay Area. Their clothes may be bought at a California store rather than a Kerala market, but the excitement is recognizable.

So is the pookkalam.

At home, my mother would prepare the ground with a thin layer of cow dung paste before arranging flower petals into increasingly elaborate patterns over the 10 days. She also made small clay figures called Thrikakarappan, representing Mahabali and Vamana. I would help her, and whenever rain appeared, we would rush outside to move the figures to safety before they dissolved.

Today, when I see children in California carefully arranging flowers for a pookkalam, I think of that little ritual of running outside with my mother. The flowers have changed; the memory has not.

Onam also brought Kerala's cultural traditions into the open. Thiruvathirakali, performed in a circle around a traditional lamp, was part of celebrations at temples and community halls. In different parts of the state,

there were distinctive traditions such as Thirissur's Pulikali, with performers painted as tigers, and Onathallu, the traditional martial art associated with my home district of Palakkad.

Village games such as vadamvali, Uriyadi and Talappanthukali brought everyone together. That communal spirit is perhaps what I notice most at Onam celebrations here. The games may take place on an American school field or community center lawn rather than in a Kerala village, but the instinct is the same: get people outside, make them laugh and turn strangers into participants. Then there is the Sadya, the grand meal served on a banana leaf. I was the odd one out in my family. While everyone else happily ate rice with its many accompaniments, I preferred roti. My mother had a solution: fried potatoes. She would quietly promise me a special serving if I sat through the meal. It worked every time.

And then came payasam. I could always find room for that.

Even now, a Bay Area Sadya can transport me straight back to those meals. But what I miss is not simply the food. It is the noise around it—the conversations, cousins moving in and out, people eating together and nobody being in quite as much of a hurry as usual.

There is one Onam experience I never had in Kerala: Vallam Kali, the spectacular snake boat races. I watched them on television, fascinated by the synchronized rowing and fierce competition, but never made it to the backwaters to see one in person. It remains one of those pieces of Onam that belongs more to my imagination than my memory.

What I remember most clearly, however, is family. When I asked friends in the Bay

Area what they missed about celebrating Onam in Kerala, their answers were remarkably similar. They missed cousins, relatives and the easy togetherness that came from having an entire extended family nearby. Distance makes you realize how much of a festival is created by the people around you.

That is also why celebrating Onam in America feels different, but not necessarily less meaningful. Over the years, friends have become family. Community gatherings have filled in for neighborhood celebrations. A backyard can become a courtyard; a community center can become a village temple ground. We recreate what we can, and sometimes create something new.

This year, I will celebrate Onam in Boston with my cousins. There will be a Sadya, conversations and, I suspect, plenty of memories of Kerala woven into the day.

Thiruvonam falls on August 26, 2026, but Bay Area celebrations continue through August and into September. And perhaps that is fitting. Onam has never really been about completing a set of rituals on a particular day.

It is about making time for one another.

A restaurant Sadya can give you the dishes, but a community celebration gives you the people. And ultimately, that is what I remember most from Palakkad—and what I have come to value most in the Bay Area.

Onam was never just about what was placed on the banana leaf. It was about who sat around it. Happy Onam! May your pookkalam stay bright, your payasam keep coming, and your conversations last well beyond the last banana leaf. *(Madathil hails from Palakkad, known as the granary of Kerala, and has been calling California home for the past 30 years.)*

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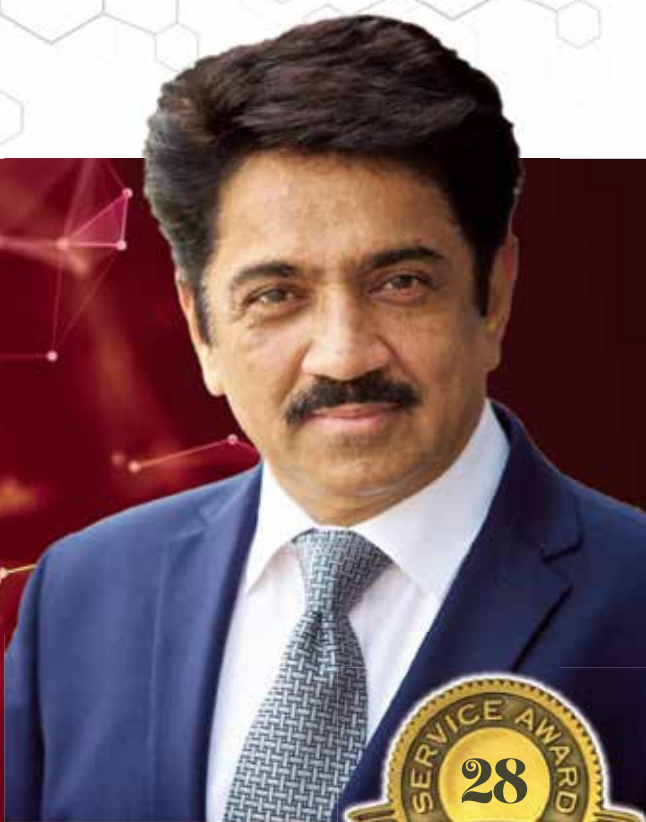
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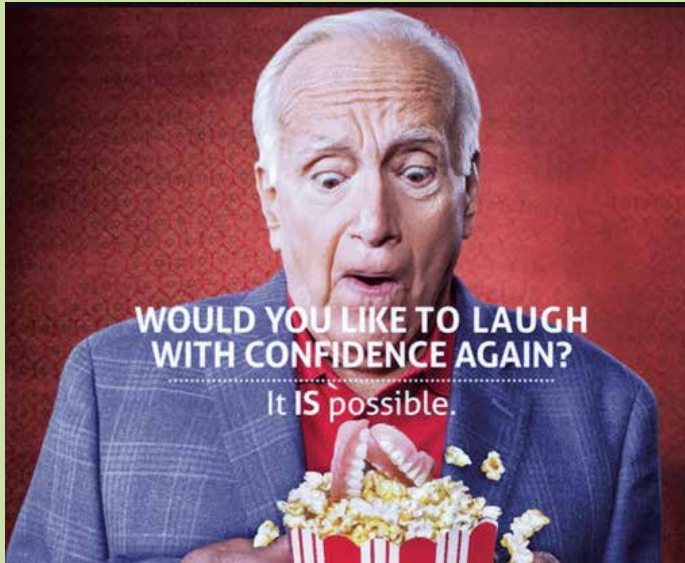
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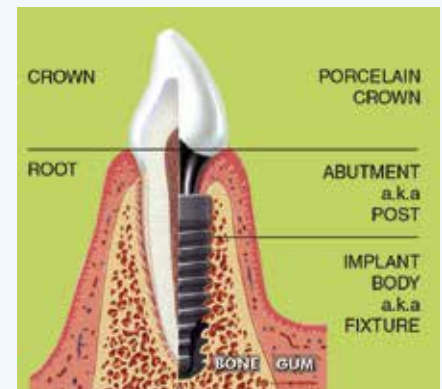


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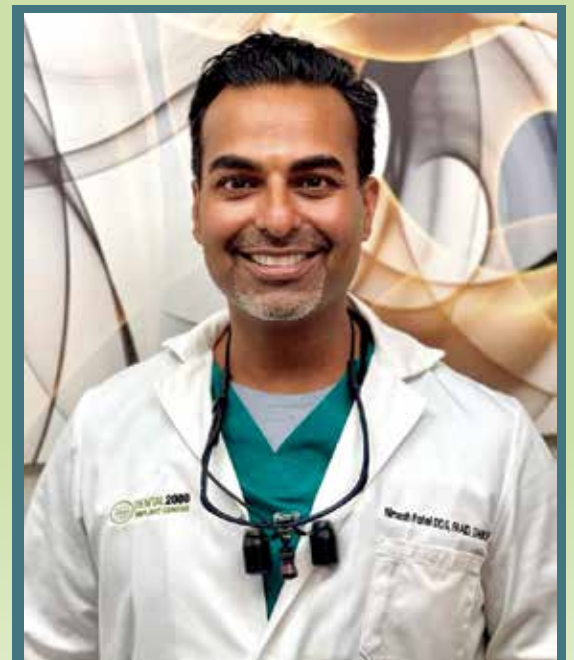
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