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India, China Hit Hardest, Immigration Declines Sharply

WASHINGTON, DC -Legal immigration to the United States has dropped sharply in the first eight months of 2025, with India and China among the hardest hit as the Trump administration tightened visa policies, The Washington Post reported.

The State Department issued about 250,000 fewer visas from January to August 2025 than during the same period in 2024, according to the report. Overall approvals for permanent resident and temporary visas fell by 11 per cent, based on official data released in early March, the daily said.

The decline covers visas for students, workers, and family members of US citizens and legal residents. Tourist visas also declined during the same period.

India and China saw some of the steepest declines. Visas for their nationals fell by about 84,000, the report said. The drop was driven largely by fewer student, worker, and family-related visas.

International students were among the worst affected. Student visas fell by more than 30 per cent in the first eight months of 2025. Exchange visitor visas also declined sharply, dropping by nearly 30,000.

Visa approvals for permanent residency, or green cards, also decreased. The largest declines were seen in visas for workers, certain relatives, and nationals from countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Officials and analysts linked the decline to a combination of policy changes and administrative factors. These include a travel ban on 19 countries, a temporary pause on student visa interviews, and expanded vet-

Contd. on P8



SRK's Knight Riders Get Own Venue In Pomona

India-West News Desk

POMONA, CA – The Knight Riders Group has unveiled its first permanent home ground in the United States, making it the first IPL-owned franchise to secure a dedicated venue outside of India. The facility, named the Knight Riders Cricket Field, is located at Fairplex here and will serve as the home base for the Los Angeles Knight Riders (LAKR).

The move marks a shift for Major League Cricket (MLC), which previously operated without designated home grounds, requiring teams to rotate through venues in Oakland, Dallas, and Lauderhill. The new stadium is expected to host LAKR matches during the 2026 season, currently scheduled for June and July.

Contd. on P12

Covina Couple Arrested In \$5.2M Medicare Hospice Fraud Case

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA– Amelou Gill, 70, a registered nurse, and her husband Gladwin Gill, 66, a psychologist, were arrested April 2 on federal charges alleging a multi-million-dollar Medicare fraud scheme involving hospice care, authorities said. Health Insurance

The couple was arrested at their residence in their palatial home in the city of Covina, in early morning enforcement action, authorities said.

According to federal prosecutors, the couple owned and operated St. Francis Palliative Care in Anaheim according to CA Post, where they submitted more than \$5.2 million in fraudulent claims for services that were either not medically necessary or were not provided. Medicare paid approximately \$4 million on those claims.

Investigators allege that the couple paid illegal kickbacks to obtain patient referrals and enrolled individuals who were not terminally ill in hospice programs.

“The defendants charged in this takedown allegedly turned hospice care into a cash producing operation, resulting in more than \$50 million in losses to taxpayers,” Inspector General T. March Bell of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General said. “The magnitude of the losses underscores a deliberate abuse of the authority and trust afforded to health care providers.”

Authorities also say that the proceeds from the scheme were used for personal expenses, including mortgage payments, car payments,

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AAPI Survey Reveals Deep Disapproval Of Trump and Admin. Policies

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – A comprehensive new study released by AAPI Data and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research reveals a deepening divide between the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community and the Trump administration.

The report, based on data collected in early 2026, depicts a population increasingly concerned about the high cost of living, skeptical of military intervention, and largely opposed to current immigration enforcement strategies.

According to the findings, Donald Trump's job



approval among AAPI adults stands at just 30%. This dissatisfaction is rooted in a perception that his policies are exacerbating financial and social stressors.

A staggering 73% of AAPI adults believe Trump has hurt rather than helped the cost of living, while 69% say the same regarding health care costs. These economic anxieties are pervasive, with half of the community citing the cost of groceries, housing, and taxes as major sources of stress.

The study highlights a significant generational and partisan divide.

Younger AAPI adults under the age of 30 are particularly critical, with 79% stating that the president has negatively impacted their cost of living, compared to 62% of

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CA's Maitri Marks 35 Years, Gala Raises Over \$1 Million For Domestic Violence Survivors

India-West News Desk

PALO ALTO, CA – Maitri marked its 35th anniversary by raising more than \$1 million at its annual gala, funds the organization says will directly expand services for survivors of domestic violence and strengthen long term prevention efforts.

The March 28 event, held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel here, brought together community leaders, supporters, and advocates in a show of solidarity for survivors. Organizers said the funds will go toward critical programs that provide immediate safety and longer-term support, including housing assistance, legal advocacy, counseling, and community outreach.

“These are not abstract programs. These are lifelines,” said Board President Sameer Ladiwala. “These are the services that help a survivor move from fear to safety, from uncertainty to stability, from isolation to the beginning of a new life.”

Founded in 1991, Maitri has grown from a small volunteer effort into a key resource in the Bay Area for individuals, particularly from South Asian communities, facing domestic violence, emo-

tional abuse, and family conflict. Executive Director Rama Dharmarajan reflected on that trajectory, noting the organization's beginnings as a single phone line operated out of a kitchen. “Today, we are a trusted, community rooted, culturally responsive institution standing with survivors,” she said. “This transformation is a direct result of our team, our collaborators and the commitment of this community.”

Gala Co Chair Aarti Johri said the scale of support reflected growing awareness around the issue. “This is a milestone anniversary, and seeing both longtime supporters and so many first time attendees gives me confidence that the community recognizes the need and trust's in Maitri's work,” she said.

The evening blended advocacy with cultural programming, in-

cluding a performance by rising star singer Abby V and an operatic presentation by vocalist Avantika. A film highlighting survivors' experiences and the impact of domestic violence on children underscored the urgency of the cause.

Organizers also recognized the contributions of staff, volunteers and founders who have shaped Maitri's 35-year journey.

Photos By: Manjunath Iyengar



The popular singer Abby V, who electrified the audience



President Ladiwala and Executive Director Dharmarajan



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COMMENTARY

Hormuz Crisis Hits Economy Across World: Report

Washington, April 5 (IANS) The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has triggered a widening global economic shock as energy markets reel from supply disruptions, according to a report.

The Iran war's impact on global energy flows is intensifying, with the effective shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz disrupting oil, gas and critical supply chains across continents, according to The Washington Post.

The strategic waterway, through which about 20 per cent of the world's oil passes, has become the focal point of the crisis, with Iran restricting maritime traffic in response to US-Israeli strikes.

The disruption is already rippling through global markets.

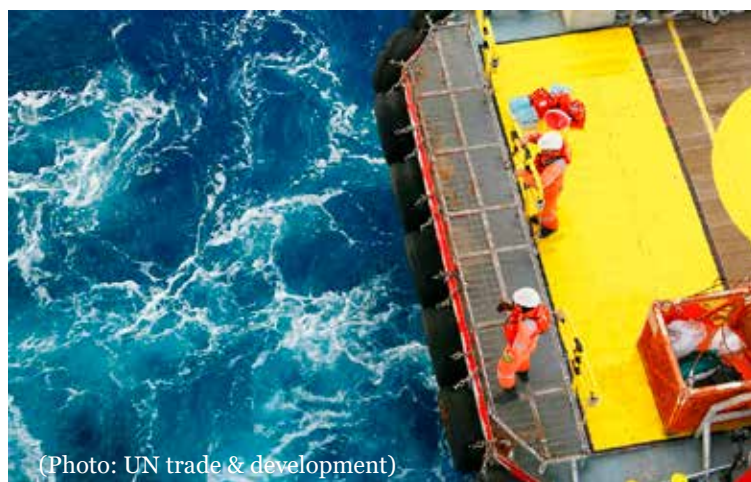
Energy prices are rising, supply chains are tightening and

governments are preparing for prolonged shortages, with analysts warning that the economic impact could worsen significantly if the conflict continues, The Washington Post reported.

India, heavily dependent on energy imports, has moved quickly to secure supplies.

New Delhi has purchased oil from Iran for the first time in years, marking a significant shift after avoiding Iranian crude due to US sanctions, according to CNN. India has also imported 44,000 metric tons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from Iran, with shipments arriving at the port of Mangalore, the report said.

Oil prices could surge to \$170 per barrel if the disruption lasts three months, while a prolonged six-month conflict could push the global economy into recession,



(Photo: UN trade & development)

according to estimates cited by The Washington Post.

Supply shocks are not limited to energy.

The blockage is also affecting fertiliser shipments, petrochemicals and industrial inputs, with shortages already hitting Asia

and expected to spread to Europe and the United States in the coming weeks.

Petrochemical plants in countries such as India and China are facing shortages of raw materials used in manufacturing a wide range of products, including plas-

tics, textiles and consumer goods, The Washington Post reported.

Agriculture is also at risk.

Fertiliser prices have surged sharply, with some inputs rising by around 50 per cent since the conflict began, raising concerns about future crop cycles and food inflation.

Shipping disruptions are compounding the crisis.

Thousands of vessels and containers remain stranded in the Gulf, affecting global trade flows and creating shortages of refrigerated containers needed for agricultural exports, according to industry analysts cited by The Washington Post.

As a result, several countries have introduced fuel rationing and conservation measures, while others are exploring alternative supply routes and emergency reserves to mitigate the impact. (IANS)

Birthright Citizenship Case Sparks Concern Among Indian H-1B Families



years while waiting for green cards. They build careers and raise fami-

such a policy would work.

They asked how officials would

determine a child's citizenship at birth. They also asked if parents' immigration status would need to be checked in each case.

The government said the system would rely on "objectively veri-

lies. Their children are often born in the US and treated as citizens under the current law.

The government's argument challenges that long-standing practice.

Sauer said the phrase "subject to the jurisdiction thereof" should be read as requiring allegiance tied to lawful residence.

He said the rule should not apply to those who are in the country only temporarily.

Several justices questioned how

fiable" immigration data.

That suggests visa status could decide whether a child is a citizen.

Lawyers opposing the administration warned that the move would overturn settled law.

They pointed to the 1898 ruling in United States v. Wong Kim Ark. That case held that most children born in the US are citizens, regardless of their parents' status.

They said the Constitution creates a clear rule. "Everyone born here is a citizen alike," counsel

told the court.

For Indian families, the stakes are high.

H-1B visa holders often face long delays in getting permanent residency. During that time, their US-born children enjoy full citizenship rights.

A change in the law could create uncertainty. It could affect access to education, jobs and government benefits.

The court also discussed whether any ruling would apply only in the future.

The government said its policy would be prospective. But challengers warned that the logic could put the status of many people in doubt.

The administration argued that current rules act as a "pull factor" for illegal immigration.

The 14th Amendment, adopted in 1868, grants citizenship to all persons born in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction. (IANS)

WASHINGTON, DC— The Supreme Court case on birthright citizenship has raised concerns among Indian professionals on H-1B visas and other temporary permits.

The Trump administration told the court that children born to "temporary visitors" may not automatically be US citizens.

Solicitor General John Sauer said the Constitution requires

"direct and immediate allegiance" to the United States, not just birth on its soil.

He argued that children of people on temporary visas do not meet that test.

That position could affect thousands of Indian families. Indians form the largest group of H-1B visa holders in the US.

Many live in the country for

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TECHNOLOGY CLASS: BRIDGING GENERATIONS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



Technology has become an integral part of everyday life, and Saahas for Cause's **Intergenerational Technology Class** was developed to help community members navigate the **digital world with confidence**. The program brings together participants **across generations**, creating a collaborative learning environment that benefits both seniors and younger community members.

In 2025, the program served more than **270 participants through sessions conducted across two counties—Los Angeles County and Orange County**. The intergenerational model allows seniors to receive hands-on, personalized support while youth participants gain **leadership experience, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the challenges older adults face in accessing technology**. This exchange strengthens community connections and promotes mutual learning across age groups.

Over the past year, participating seniors have gained greater **confidence and independence in using technology**. The program covered essential digital skills such as managing devices, using cloud storage, communicating through platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, and navigating online services.

Seniors also learned about internet safety, privacy settings, health and fitness apps, artificial intelligence, and digital media tools, enabling them to **stay connected, informed, and engaged in their daily lives**.

Beyond technical instruction, the Intergenerational Technology Class has helped **reduce social isolation among seniors by encouraging ongoing engagement, communication, and participation in community activities**. Many seniors have become **more independent** in managing online services, accessing health and wellness resources, and staying informed through digital media.

Through this initiative, Saahas for Cause continues to advance **digital inclusion and lifelong learning, demonstrating how technology can serve as a powerful bridge between generations and strengthen the community as a whole**.

Saahas technology classes are conducted **twice a month** to help community members build digital skills and confidence. Sessions are held on the **first Thursday of each month at the Northwood Community Center in Irvine, CA** and on the **last Saturday of the month at the Artesia Public Library in Artesia, CA**. For more information or to register for an upcoming class, please reach out to us.



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www.Saahasforcause.org



COMMUNITY

UCLA Program Highlights Women's Heart Health In South Asian Community

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – The UCLA South Asian Heart Program recently hosted a well-attended “Lunch and Learn: Strong Hearts, Strong Women” event at the Luskin Conference Center, bringing together physicians, community leaders, and community members to address the growing burden of cardiovascular disease among South Asian women.

The program focused on raising awareness, promoting prevention, and advancing culturally tailored care for a population known to face disproportionately high rates of cardiometabolic disease. Experts emphasized that South Asians carry unique risks for conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and metabolic syndrome, making targeted education, early screening, and research essential.

Dr. Dale Abel, Chair of Medicine at UCLA, opened the event with remarks highlighting the increasing prevalence of cardiometabolic disorders and the urgent need to deepen scientific understanding in high-risk groups such as South Asians. He pointed to the complex links between diabetes, metabolism, and cardiovascular disease, setting the tone for a discussion

centered on both research and real-world impact.

Dr. Eve Glazier, an internist and host of the “Medically Speaking” podcast, welcomed attendees and underscored the importance of culturally relevant health communication. She noted that effective outreach must consider language, diet, lifestyle, and long-standing community habits to truly make a difference.

Wellness expert Dr. Amy Shah followed with practical, evidence-based strategies aimed at prevention and long-term health. Her talk focused on nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and sustainable behavioral changes, particularly for women balancing multiple responsibilities. She stressed that small, consistent changes can significantly reduce cardiovascular risk over time.

Dr. Priscilla Hsue, Chief of Cardiology at UCLA, addressed the elevated cardiovascular risk in South Asian populations and the lack of adequate representation in clinical studies. She called for more inclusive research and community-engaged science to better understand disparities and improve outcomes.

A panel discussion brought together UCLA physicians from car-



Dr. Dale Abel

diology, endocrinology, nutrition, and internal medicine, including Dr. Vijaya Surampudi, Dr. Anuradha Seshadri, Dr. Priscilla Hsue, Dr. Fatima Hayat, and Dr. Tanaz Moin. Panelists answered questions on diet, exercise, hormonal health, and navigating reliable medical information, creating an open and interactive environment that encouraged audience participation.

Dr. Ravi H. Dave, Director of the UCLA South Asian Heart Program and Jivrajka Family Foundation Chair, shared updates on the initiative's growth and long-term vision. He outlined efforts to build a comprehensive model that integrates clinical care, research, education, and community outreach to



From Left: Drs. Vinod and Jayashree Jivrajka, Hemali Dave, Dr. Ravi Dave

Dave, and drew a largely South Asian female audience, reflecting both the need for and the impact of culturally tailored health programs.

Organizers described the gathering as part of UCLA's continuing

improve cardiovascular outcomes.

Adding a broader perspective, Netflix Chief Content Officer Bela Bajaria expressed support for the initiative and highlighted the role of cross-sector partnerships in expanding public health awareness and education.

The event was co-hosted by Dr. Renu Jivrajka and Hemali

commitment to advancing equitable cardiovascular care and empowering communities through knowledge. The UCLA South Asian Heart Program, launched in 2025 within the Division of Cardiology, brings together a multidisciplinary team dedicated to addressing heart health disparities in this high-risk population.

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COMMUNITY

Ervad Zarrir Bhandara Honored For 600 Lifesaving Blood Donations

India-West News Desk

ORANGE, CA—The Consul General of India in Los Angeles, Dr. K. J. Srinivasa, felicitated Ervad Zarrir Bhandara during Jamshedi Navroze celebrations at the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC), recognizing his three decades of humanitarian service and milestone in blood donation.

Bhandara completed his 600th platelet and plasma donation to the American Red Cross on February 24, marking nearly 30 years of sustained contribution. His donations make him among the most prolific donors in the Indian diaspora.

“Ervad Bhandara embodies the very essence of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the belief that the world is one family,” Srinivasa



said at the event. “From his early days of service at Mother Teresa’s ‘Asha Dan’ in Mumbai to his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, he has consistently placed service before self.”

Bhandara’s record of service extends across sectors and geographies. In India, he was a fifth-degree black belt

in karate and trained units of the Maharashtra Police under Hanshi Viaspy Kapadia, while mentoring young students. In Southern California, he has supported community initiatives, including hosting consular camps at his former restaurant, Woodlands, and offering spiritual care to critically ill patients during the pandemic.

SoCal High School Senior Manveer S. Anand Wins \$50,000 Edison Scholarship

India-West News Desk

FULLERTON, CA – During a surprise campus visit on March 23, Edison International presented Sunny Hills High School student Manveer Singh Anand with a \$50,000 scholarship. Anand was elated when he was joined by family and educators for the announcement, which is part of a series of regional presentations designed to honor high-achieving students.

The Edison Scholars program provides financial support to students pursuing technical degrees to solve complex problems. Anand, who also speaks Punjabi, intends to major in ‘Applied Mathematics,’ focusing his academic career on ‘humanitarian logistics.’

He aims to develop predictive



models and algorithms that can assist shelters, food banks, and community kitchens in optimizing their resources. By applying mathematical frameworks to these organizations, he hopes to reduce food waste while expanding the

reach of local aid.

While the formal announcement of all recipients is pending, the ‘Edison Scholars’ program has begun honoring students like Anand in person to highlight their achievements and future academic plans.

IPA Announces 7th Annual Youth Essay Competition

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – The India Philanthropy Alliance, the U.S.-based coalition of nonprofit organizations focused on India, has officially announced the launch of its 7th Annual Youth Essay Competition.

This year’s competition centers on the theme ‘#YouthWithPurpose’ and aims to highlight the role young people play in creating a better future for India and the world through critical thinking and problem-solving.

The entries will be evaluated separately in middle school and high school categories by a panel of nonprofit professionals. Approximately ten standout essays will be selected for publication on the

official organization website, giving students the chance to share their ideas with a “broad audience” and connect with organizations working toward “meaningful change.”

Winners in each category will have the opportunity to present their ideas at a national gathering of philanthropists, business leaders, and nonprofit executives. Furthermore, winners will be able to direct a \$1,000 grant to a charitable organization of their choice, while runners-up will be able to direct a \$500 grant to a selected nonprofit.

The deadline for submissions is July 1, 2026, and winners will be notified in early September.

For submissions and more information: <https://www.indiaphilanthropyalliance.org/2026-youth-essay>.

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IMMIGRATION

Urging Self-Deportation, US Offers Cash, Flights, Images Of Taj Mahal As Incentives

India-West New Desk

WASHINGTON, DC -The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is promoting a voluntary self-deportation initiative offering undocumented immigrants free flights and a \$2,600 payment to leave the country.

The campaign, shared on X, features stylized images of landmarks including India's Taj Mahal, along with visuals representing China and Colombia, the three countries with significant undocumented populations in the US.

The initiative, known as "Project Homecoming," was launched in 2025 by the Donald Trump administration.

DHS describes it as "a safe and dignified way for individuals who lack a legal basis to remain in the US to



return to their country of origin or another country of legal eligibility," with federally funded travel and a financial incentive provided upon voluntary and permanent departure.

Promoting the program, DHS said: "You can go home with a fresh start! Receive a FREE flight home and a \$2,600 exit bonus when you use CBP Home to self-deport."

As of 2022, an estimated 725,000 undocumented Indian immigrants were living in the United States, making them one of the larger undocumented groups in the country.

In November 2025, former DHS Secretary Kristi Noem said "1.6 million self-deportations" had taken place since President Trump assumed office, citing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

California Bill SB-995, Masuma Khan Justice Act, Aims For Detention Reform

India-West News Desk

ARTESIA, CA- California State Senator Sasha Renee Perez (25th District), with South Asian Network as co-sponsor, has introduced Senate Bill 995, known as the Masuma Khan Justice Act.

The bill is named after Masuma Khan, a 64-year-old resident of Altadena, California, who was de-

tained during a routine USCIS immigration check and held for over a month at the privately operated California City Detention Facility run by CoreCivic.

South Asian Network, in partnership with Public Counsel, litigated her case and secured her release. According to the organization, Khan was held under conditions that included mold-

food, unclean drinking water, lack of access to required medication, and exposure to cold temperatures.

"I experienced fear and lasting trauma that no one should have to experience," Khan said of her detention.

The new bill requires private detention facilities to undergo periodic inspections and evaluations by state agencies to ensure



compliance with health and safety standards. Senator Perez said the bill "allows us to hold these facilities accountable when they don't."

Shakeel Syed, executive director of South Asian Network, said detainees from South Asia have reported "freezing temperatures,

expired food, and not meeting meal needs such as vegetarian or halal... denial of medications and treatment and extremely unsafe and unsanitary living conditions."

The bill includes provisions related to oversight of detention facilities and detainee conditions.

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BG Family Law

India, China Hit Hardest, Immigration Declines Sharply



Contd. from P1

ting requirements, including social media checks, the daily said.

Staffing cuts at the State Department also reduced processing capacity. Fewer consular appointments and longer wait times were reported at several

high-demand locations.

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said, "President Trump was elected with a resounding mandate to put American citizens first, and every policy decision he's made has reflected that priority." (IANS)

IMMIGRATION

Low Profile Counsel Smita Ghosh At Center Of Challenge To Trump Citizenship Order

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – As the US Supreme Court hears arguments in a closely watched challenge to President Donald Trump's effort to restrict birthright citizenship, a low profile but influential figure has emerged at the center of the legal fight.

Smita Ghosh, Senior Appellate Counsel at the Constitutional Accountability Center, has played a key role in shaping the arguments against the administration's executive order, which seeks to narrow the scope of the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of citizenship to those born on American soil.



Ghosh is the lead author of the "Brief of Scholars of Constitutional Law and Immigration," a central filing in the case, *Trump v. Barbara*. The brief draws on historical

precedent, including an 1844 case, to argue that the Constitution does not permit citizenship to be limited based on the immigration status of a child's parents. Her work has helped anchor the broader legal challenge now before the court.

In post argument analysis, Ghosh noted that several justices appeared skeptical of the administration's position, particularly its attempt to reinterpret long standing constitutional protections. The case carries sweeping implications. Roughly 250,000 children are born each year in the United States to undocumented parents, and the court's decision could determine

their legal status.

Ghosh's path to the nation's highest court reflects a blend of academic depth and practical experience. She holds both a Juris Doctor and a PhD in American legal history from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where she was recognized as an Annenberg History Fellow and a Benjamin Franklin Fellow. She later taught immigration and separation of powers law at the Georgetown University Law Center.

Her legal career spans civil rights advocacy and private practice. She has worked at NAACP Legal Defense and Educational

Fund and in private law firms, and served as a Supreme Court Fellow at the US Sentencing Commission. She also clerked for a federal judge, gaining experience in constitutional litigation from within the judiciary.

Despite her central role in one of the most consequential constitutional battles in recent years, Ghosh has largely remained outside the public spotlight. Colleagues describe her as a careful legal strategist whose scholarship and courtroom advocacy have made her a pivotal figure in the fight over the future of birthright citizenship in the United States.

Judge Blocks Deportation Of Subramanyam Vedam

India-West News Desk

PHILADELPHIA, PA – A federal immigration judge has blocked the deportation of Subramanyam Vedam, a 64-year-old man who spent over four decades in prison for a murder conviction that was recently overturned. Judge Adam Panopoulos ruled on April 2 that Vedam, who was taken into Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody last year, proved he is rehabilitated and poses no

threat to public safety.

The judge noted that Vedam "has grown as a person" and "began to dedicate himself to enriching other people's lives and ultimately his own through academic study and enrichment," highlighting his work to improve literacy among fellow inmates.

The legal battle centers on a 1980 case involving the death of Thomas Kinser in State College. Vedam, known as Subu, was brought to the U.S. from Mumbai

as a nine-month-old infant in 1962 and was nearly a naturalized citizen at the time of his 1982 arrest. Last year, a Centre County judge overturned his first-degree murder conviction after discovering that prosecutors had failed to disclose FBI ballistics evidence during his original trials. District Attorney Bernie Cantorna declined to pursue a third trial, calling it "a compelling circumstantial case" but noting that "44 years is a sufficient sentence for a murder

committed by someone who was nineteen years old."

Despite the murder charge being dropped, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security sought to deport Vedam based on past drug distribution and theft offenses. In a statement to The Associated Press, the department said that "having a single conviction vacated will not stop ICE's enforcement of the federal immigration law."

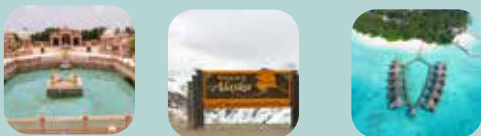
During a remote hearing from the Moshannon Valley Process-

ing Center, DHS lawyer Tammy Dusharm argued that Vedam's history made him ineligible to remain in the country, stating, "I find it fairly incredible that it would appear that every single time he sold drugs, he did so to an undercover officer."

Vedam, who has consistently maintained his innocence regarding the Kinser shooting, told the court, "I was young and stupid and did a lot of dumb things back then," but insisted he had changed.

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Oracle's Brutal Overnight Layoffs Affect 12,000 In India

India-West News Desk

AUSTIN, TX – Cloud giant Oracle, based in Texas, has initiated a massive global restructuring, executing a wave of layoffs characterized by chilling efficiency and suddenness. While the company is reportedly cutting between 20,000 and 30,000 roles globally—roughly 18 percent of its workforce—the impact has been felt most acutely in India, where an estimated 12,000 employees have been terminated.

The layoffs were executed with surgical precision. Starting as early as 6:00 AM, employees across the globe received “cold” automated emails informing them that their roles had been eliminated effective immediately.

The communication left no room for transition. “Today is your last working day,” the email read, further warning staff that access to computers, email, and internal files would be deactivated within minutes. To prevent data



staffing needs. By leveraging AI tools, the company claims smaller teams can now deliver the output previously required of large engineering groups, rendering thousands of “legacy” roles redundant.

In India, the severance process has been described as a complex ultimatum. While Oracle is offering a package including 15 days salary per year of service, notice pay, leave encashment, and a two-month salary top-up, these benefits are reportedly contingent upon the employee agreeing to “resign voluntarily.” Individual accounts – mostly on social media – vary.

“It’s a stark reminder of how quickly stability can vanish,” said one affected staffer on LinkedIn. “What started as a normal workday turned into a scramble for new opportunities before the morning coffee was even cold.”

(with IANS inputs)

leakage, Oracle strictly prohibited the downloading or copying of any confidential information as workers were locked out of their professional lives.

For India’s tech hubs, the scale of the exit is staggering. The cuts span the entire corporate hierarchy, claiming the jobs of software engineers, program managers, cybersecurity leads and cloud specialists.

The brutality of the cuts appears to be a strategic pivot. Oracle executives have indicated that deepened investments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cloud infrastructure have shifted their

US Move To Curb Offshore Call Centers Will Affect India, An Outsourcing Hub



WASHINGTON, DC – The Federal Communications Commission has launched a sweeping proposal to push call center jobs back to the United States, tighten customer service standards, and crack down on illegal robocalls linked to overseas operations.



For India, an outsourcing hub, the move signals potential disruption in the global business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, which has long relied on U.S. corporate contracts. Any shift toward onshoring could affect employment patterns and service delivery models.

The move, approved by the Commission this week, opens a formal rulemaking process to address growing consumer complaints about offshore call centers and rising fraud risks.

FCC Chairman Brendan Carr said Americans are increasingly frustrated when customer service calls are routed abroad. “Too often, foreign call centers have meant confusing service, delayed support, and even security risks,” he said. “It is time for this offshoring to end.”

The proposal seeks public comment on measures to encourage companies to bring call center operations back to the U.S. It also explores requiring call center workers to be “proficient in American Standard English” and better trained to handle customer issues.

According to the FCC, nearly 70 percent of U.S. companies have outsourced at least one department overseas in recent decades. While this shift reduced costs, regulators say it has created persistent problems for consumers, including communication barriers and delays in resolving complaints.

The Commission also flagged national security and data privacy risks. Overseas call centers often handle sensitive financial and personal data, which can be vulnerable to misuse. “Bad actors often leverage the training and infrastructure

of legitimate call centers to defraud Americans,” the FCC said.

The new proceeding proposes several regulatory options. These include allowing consumers to request transfer to U.S.-based agents, requiring companies to disclose the location of call centers, and mandating that certain sensitive interactions be handled domestically.

Another key focus is robocall fraud. The FCC is examining whether financial penalties such as fees or bonds could be imposed on entities linked to illegal robocalls originating abroad. The goal is to “take the profit out of those operations,” Carr said.

Commissioner Anna M. Gomez said the effort is rooted in consumer concerns. “Consumers rely on customer support lines to solve the problems they experience with communications services,” she said, adding that the FCC must gather input from both consumers and service providers before finalizing rules.

Commissioner Olivia Trusty highlighted broader risks posed by evolving technology. She warned that scammers are using “new, sophisticated ways to exploit vulnerabilities in communications networks,” undermining trust and slowing innovation.

The FCC said the telecommunications sector consistently ranks among the lowest in customer satisfaction surveys, making reform urgent.

The proposal does not immediately impose new rules but begins a consultation process that could lead to binding regulations in the coming months. (IANS)

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PERSONAL PROFILE

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Arizona's Kal Somani To Acquire Rajasthan Royals In Record \$1.63 Bln Deal

India-West News Desk

NEW DELHI – A U.S.-based consortium led by technology entrepreneur Kal Somani will buy the Rajasthan Royals for \$1.63 billion (approximately ₹13,500–₹15,290 crore), according to several media reports.

The deal, subject to approval from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), is expected to take effect after the 2026 IPL season. The valuation makes Rajasthan Royals the first IPL franchise to be valued at over \$1 billion.

Somani, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, has more than 15 years of experience across artificial intelligence, data privacy, ed-tech, and sports technology. He is the founder of IntraEdge, Truyo, and Academian, and has been involved in initiatives related to artificial intelligence governance.

The investor group backing Somani includes Rob Walton, heir to the Walmart fortune and owner of the Denver Broncos, and the Hamp family led by Sheila Ford Hamp, owner of the Detroit Lions.

The franchise was previously owned by Emerging Media Ventures, led by British-Indian businessman Manoj Badale, who acquired the team for \$67 million



ahead of the IPL's inaugural 2008 season. Somani has been associated with the Rajasthan Royals since 2021 as an investor.

His other sports-related investments include co-ownership of the Motor City Golf Club and stakes in ventures such as the TGL Golf League and TMRW Sports. The consortium linked to the acquisition also has interests in Paarl Royals in South Africa's SA20 league and Barbados Royals in the Caribbean Premier League.

According to reports, the Somani-led group emerged as the winning bidder amid competition from several entities, including

the Aditya Birla Group, Serum Institute's Poonawalla, and the Mittal family, led by ArcelorMittal CEO Aditya Mittal. A competing bid involving a multinational conglomerate partnered with U.S. investor David Blitzler was also in contention.

Reports also indicated that the Rajasthan Royals board had earlier declined a \$1.7 billion offer from Columbia Pacific Capital Partners due to concerns over execution.

Blackstone Inc. has also explored potential investments in IPL franchises, including Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru. (With IANS Inputs)

Infosys Expands Cloud And AI Offerings With US Company Acquisition

India-West News Desk

BENGALURU – In a move to bolster its footprint in the financial services sector, Infosys announced a definitive agreement on March 25 to acquire Stratus, a U.S.-based technology solutions provider specializing in the property and casualty insurance industry.

This strategic acquisition is designed to accelerate AI-powered digital transformations for global insurers by integrating Stratus's domain expertise with the expansive technological ecosystem of Infosys.

Headquartered in New Jersey, Stratus brings a specialized workforce of over 450 experts and a reputation as a leading Guidewire Software partner. The firm's capabilities span the entire insurance lifecycle, including policy, billing, and claims management, as well as complex cloud migrations and data analytics. With a delivery network reaching across the U.S., Canada, and India, Stratus has established itself as a critical partner for insurers seeking to modernize legacy systems through advanced platforms like Databricks and Mi-

crosoft Fabric, a press release said.

The synergy between the two

companies aims to marry Stratus's high-touch consulting model with the

scale of Infosys Topaz and Infosys Cobalt, the firm's flagship AI and cloud offerings. Kannan Amaresh, Global Head of Insurance at Infosys, noted that the P&C segment is currently at the forefront of AI adoption, driven by a pressing need for automated claims and sophisticated risk modeling. By absorbing Stratus, Infosys enhances its ability to deliver these intelligent systems at a global scale.

Echoing this sentiment, Stratus CEO Chuck Fillizola emphasized that joining Infosys allows his team to operationalize AI across the insurance value chain while maintaining a human-centered approach to consulting. The transaction is expected to close during the first quarter of fiscal year 2027, pending standard regulatory approvals and closing conditions. This acquisition marks a clear intent by Infosys to dominate the high-growth niche of insurance technology, positioning itself as a differentiated partner for complex, cloud-led industry transformations.

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Tesla Eyes India Energy Storage Market, Challenges Ambani And Adani

India-West News Desk

NEW DELHI — Tesla is preparing to enter India’s industrial energy storage market, signaling a new phase of competition with conglomerates led by Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, even as the country accelerates its transition toward cleaner power, according to a Reuters report.

The move would expand Tesla’s footprint in India beyond electric vehicles, which the company began selling in August. Reuters reported that the plan surfaced through a job listing on Tesla’s website seeking a business development lead to drive its industrial energy storage strategy in the country.

Tesla already operates its Megapack energy storage business in global markets, supplying large scale battery systems to utilities and industrial clients. The job posting indicates the selected candidate will be tasked with shaping Tesla’s entry into India’s utility scale storage



segment and executing a broader market expansion plan, Reuters said.

The development sets up a direct challenge to energy ambitions pursued by Reliance Industries and the Adani Group, both of which are investing heavily in storage technologies to support renewable energy

growth. India has set a target of reaching 500 gigawatts of non fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030, up from more than 262 gigawatts at the end of 2025. Achieving that goal will require advanced storage systems to capture surplus power, stabilize the grid, and curb emissions.

To accelerate adoption, the government is offering fiscal incentives aimed at encouraging private investment in energy storage infrastructure, creating an opening for new entrants such as Tesla.

SRK’s Knight Riders Own Venue Set To Host Olympics

Contd. from P1

Beyond league play, the venue is also set to host cricket matches for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games, marking the sport’s return to the Olympics after 128 years.

Co-owner and Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan said, “Seeing the Los Angeles Knight Riders have a home of their own is incredibly exciting. The USA is a great sporting market

with passionate fans, and we hope this field becomes a place where people come together to celebrate the game and support the team.”

Knight Riders Sports CEO Venky Mysore noted that establishing the Pomona base is a “major milestone,” describing Los Angeles as a critical market for the brand’s global ambitions. The partnership with Fairplex, a site traditionally used for the LA County Fair,

concerts, and conventions, aims to position Southern California as a future center for American cricket. Walter M. Marquez, President and CEO of Fairplex, told ESPNricinfo that the organization is eager to present one of the world’s largest sports on their campus through this collaboration.

The establishment of the California venue further expands the Knight Riders’ inter-

national reach. Since its 2008 inception in Kolkata, the group has acquired franchises in the Caribbean (Trinbago Knight Riders men’s and women’s teams), the UAE (Abu Dhabi Knight Riders), and the United States.

The move to a fixed address in Southern California is intended to help the franchise build a local identity and a consistent training environment.



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Kia Reinvents Its Flagship: 2027 Telluride Debuts With First-Ever Hybrid, X-Pro Trims

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – For the 2027 model year, the Korean automaker has officially introduced the second-generation 2027 Telluride, headlined by a first-ever turbocharged hybrid powertrain and a significantly more capable X-Pro off-road variant.

Kia officials were quick to point out that they needed to do neither. Since its debut, the Kia Telluride has been a juggernaut in the three-row SUV segment, often commanding long waitlists and sweeping “Best of” awards. With a steadily growing market share in the competitive three-row SUV segment, Kia had no immediate pressure to radicalize the Telluride. Instead, they chose to evolve.

While some competitors have stuttered, Kia officials said the company is staying the course, reinforcing its commitment to a diversified, cleaner future. That mentality comes at a pivotal moment for the U.S. auto industry with many in Detroit applying the brakes on their ambitious EV and hybrid rollouts. Faced with



a federal administration that has pivoted sharply toward favoring oil and coal—slashing EV tax credits and rolling back decades of emissions standards—legacy players are largely retreating.

Kia, however, expects to be the leader of the pack when the market inevitably corrects. By investing in the 2027 Telluride Turbo Hybrid, the company is positioning itself to join the rest of the global market as it marches toward electrification.

Designed and engineered spe-

cifically for the North American market, the all-new Telluride arrives with a more chiseled, “mountain-inspired” exterior and a cabin that bridges the gap between mainstream utility and genuine luxury.

Efficiency Meets Muscle

The Telluride Turbo Hybrid pairs a 2.5-liter turbocharged engine with a 1.65-kWh lithium-ion battery and electric motor. The result is a combined 329 horsepower and 339 lb.-ft. of torque.

MPG combined, offering a massive total driving range of up to 637 miles. This marks a significant leap in efficiency for a vehicle of this size, addressing one of the few historical critiques of the previous generation’s fuel economy.

Traditionalists need not worry; the standard gasoline-only 2.5-liter turbo engine has also been upgraded. It now produces 274 horsepower and 311 lb.-ft. of torque, a nearly 50 lb.-ft. increase over the outgoing V6. Whether opting for the Hybrid or the ICE version, the Telluride remains a capable hauler, with towing capacities rated at 4,500 lbs and 5,000 lbs, respectively.

The Interior

The interior of the 2027 Telluride has undergone a “digital-first” transformation. A massive curved display housing dual 12.3-inch panoramic screens dominates the dashboard, running Kia’s latest Connected Car Navigation Cockpit. This system supports over-the-air updates, wireless Apple CarPlay, and Android Auto.

Kia is also leaning heavily into passenger comfort. New available front relaxation seats feature power leg rests, while the driver can enjoy an Ergo Motion seat with a built-in massage function. In the second row, captain’s chairs are now available with power operation and climate control. Even the third row gets an upgrade with available heating, ensuring every occupant feels like a priority.

The vehicle’s physical footprint has grown as well. With a longer wheelbase and increased overall length, the Telluride now offers class-leading second-row legroom and more cargo space behind the third row, totaling 22.3 cubic feet, even when the SUV is at its full eight-passenger capacity.

X-Pro Off Roading

Recognizing the growing trend of “overlanding,” Kia has doubled down on the X-Pro trim. While the previous X-Pro was largely an

aesthetics package, the 2027 version is a legitimate dirt-dweller. It features an elevated 9.1 inches of ground clearance, wider all-terrain tires, and a new Electronic Limited Slip Differential.

To help drivers navigate tricky terrain, Kia introduced the Ground View Monitor, which provides a composite view of the area directly beneath the vehicle at low speeds. This is paired with an off-road status screen that tracks pitch, roll, and steering angle, making the Telluride as tech-savvy on a trail as it is on the highway.

Safety and Smart Tech

The 2027 model is targeting the IIHS Top Safety Pick+ rating, bolstered by 10 standard airbags, including a new front-row center airbag designed to prevent passengers from colliding with each other during a side impact.

The suite of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) is more comprehensive than ever. Highlights include:

- Highway Driving Assist 2: Assists with lane changes and maintains distance.
- Digital Key 2.0: Allows owners to use a smartphone or Apple Watch as a key.
- Rear Occupant Alert: Uses radar sensors to detect even the slight movement of a child or pet left in the rear seats.

In a move to entertain the modern family, Kia has integrated Entertainment and Data Services, allowing passengers to stream Netflix, YouTube, and Disney+ directly to the vehicle’s screens while parked. Sports fans can even customize their digital dashboards with themes from all 30 NBA teams.

Pricing

The 2027 Telluride is already beginning to populate American showrooms. The gasoline-powered LX trim starts at \$39,190, while the top-tier X-Pro SX-Prestige reaches \$56,790. The much-anticipated Turbo Hybrid models carry a premium, starting at \$46,490 for the EX trim and topping out at \$57,590.

Assembled in West Point, Georgia, the 2027 Telluride is a clear statement of intent from Kia: they intend to keep their crown as the king of the family SUV.

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Fresno Trucking Business Owner Gets 14 Months For PPP Loan Fraud

India-West News Desk

FRESNO, CA – A local business owner who exploited federal COVID-19 relief programs to purchase real estate has been sentenced to over a year in federal prison. On March 25, U.S. District Judge Jennifer L. Thurston sentenced Gurjeet Bath, 37, of Fresno, to 14 months in prison for theft of government property. In addition to his prison term, Bath was ordered to pay a \$100,000 criminal fine.

FBI Sacramento Special Agent in Charge Sid Patel noted that Bath fabricated records to steal more than \$825,000 in federal funds meant to keep businesses afloat during a national crisis. Patel confirmed that the FBI and the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General will continue pursuing everyone who treated pandemic relief as a personal bank account.

Court documents reveal that between 2020 and 2021, Bath orchestrated a scheme to defraud the Paycheck Protection Program, a federal initiative designed to help small businesses

retain employees during the height of the pandemic. Bath, who operated two trucking companies alongside family members known as G.S. Bath Inc. and Complete Transportation Solutions, submitted three separate loan applications totaling more than \$1 million. To secure the funds, Bath admitted to fabricating employee records to make his companies appear larger than they were and inflating wages to increase the amount of loan eligibility.

While the Paycheck Protection Program was intended to cover payroll and essential operating costs, investigators found that Bath used the stolen federal funds as a personal slush fund. Rather than supporting workers, he utilized the money to purchase two parcels of agricultural land in Fresno County. U.S. Attorney Eric Grant stated that during a time when legitimate businesses were struggling to survive, this defendant chose to exploit a program designed to keep workers employed. Grant added that while Bath has since pleaded guilty and repaid the stolen funds, that does not erase the harm caused.

Brampton Kingpin Sidhu Pleads Guilty To Cross-Border Drug Empire



India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – A Brampton man described as the mastermind behind a sophisticated international drug trafficking syndicate has pleaded guilty in a Los Angeles federal court, admitting to orchestrating the distribution of massive quantities of narcotics across the North American border.

Guramrit Sidhu, 62, entered a guilty plea to one count of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, a charge reserved for high-level leaders of professional drug

organizations. Sidhu, who was extradited from Canada in October 2024 to face a 23-count federal indictment, admitted to overseeing a network that moved approximately \$17 million worth of methamphetamine and cocaine into Canada during a single five-week period in late 2022.

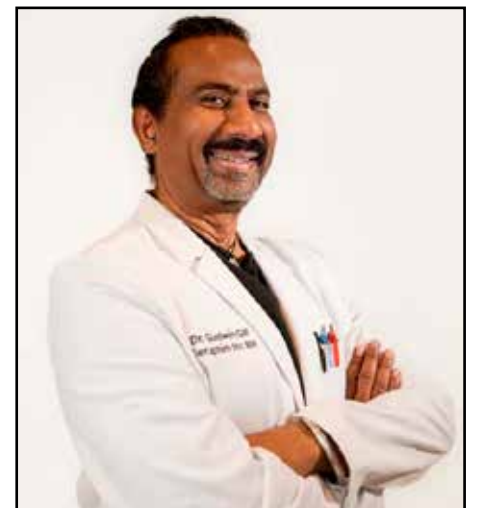
According to federal prosecutors and court documents, Sidhu's organization operated by purchasing bulk narcotics in the United States and arranging for their transit into Canada using long-haul semi-trucks. The operation was noted for its disciplined tradecraft; Sidhu allegedly provided couriers with specific "tokens," such as serial numbers on currency bills, to verify the identity of individuals during high-stakes handovers.

Between September and October of 2022, law enforcement intercepted eight separate loads managed by Sidhu, totaling 523 kilograms of methamphetamine and 347 kilograms of cocaine. Once the trucks reached their destinations in Canada, Sidhu and his co-conspirators would retrieve the illicit cargo for further distribution within the Canadian market.

The investigation into Sidhu's enterprise was an expansive international effort involving the FBI, the Los Angeles Police Department, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, alongside authorities in Mexico. Sidhu is the seventh defendant to plead guilty in a case that originally targeted 19 individuals linked to the smuggling ring. While his subordinates have received prison terms ranging from two to nine years, Sidhu's role as the organization's leader carries far more severe legal consequences.

United States District Judge John A. Kronstadt has scheduled Sidhu's sentencing for July 9.

\$5.2M Medicare Fraud Case



Contd. from P1

travel, and other costs. Officials said the funds supported a lifestyle that included regular travel and other discretionary spending. On line they posted several pictures of themselves at various events with celebrities and politicians.

"The Southern California region is a high-risk environment for hospice-related fraud," said Akil Davis, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office, adding that such schemes impact taxpayers and healthcare systems.



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South Asians Rally Outside Supreme Court Over Birthright Citizenship Case

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – The South Asian American Justice Collaborative (SAAJCO) on April 1, joined hundreds of community members, advocates, and partners outside the U.S. Supreme Court as the Justices heard oral arguments in the birthright citizenship case.

“The energy today was powerful,” said Chirag Shah, Program Manager at SAAJCO. “People showed up because this is about something fundamental. It’s about recognizing that when one community is impacted, we all are, and that’s why we organize together.”

SAAJCO also submitted an amicus brief in the case, highlighting the long history of South Asian communities in the United States and pushing back on the notion that South Asians are “forever foreign.” The brief outlines the harms communities would face if the executive order is upheld.

“Two things stood out today. Justice Sotomayor rightly raised the denaturalization of South Asians after *Thind* and whether changes to birthright citizenship could be applied retroactively. Reading new condi-

tions into the Fourteenth Amendment is already deeply concerning. While the government offered assurances about limiting its scope, those limits may not hold over time. This administration has not thought

through how far-reaching the implications are,” said Kalpana V. Peddibhotla, Executive Director of SAAJCO.

“Second, the government relied on the idea of ‘temporary visitors’ to argue that

birthright citizenship should turn on domicile. That directly implicates families who have lived here for years or decades on H-1B visas, in asylum, and in other statuses due to green card backlogs.”

“The Court raised concerns about the administrative burdens that would ensue if this Order is upheld. For South Asians, the second largest growing immigrant demographic, that means many babies would be denied citizenship at birth,” said Anisa Rahim, Legal Director of SAAJCO. “Many South Asian countries will not automatically confer citizenship on those babies affected by the Order, rendering them stateless.”

The Southern California based South Asian Network also joined community organizations from across the country. As an Amicus curiae of SAAJCO

and Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, Shakeel Syed, Executive Director said, “South Asian Americans together with Asian

Americans and Pacific Islanders have for generations defended constitutional principles and are proud of the contributions

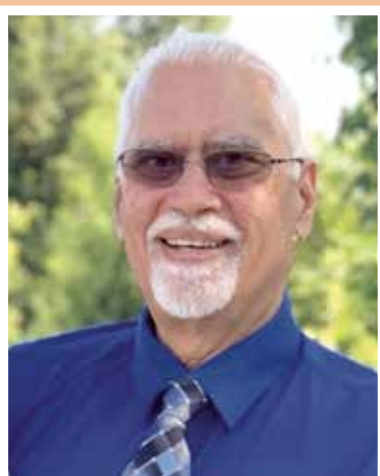
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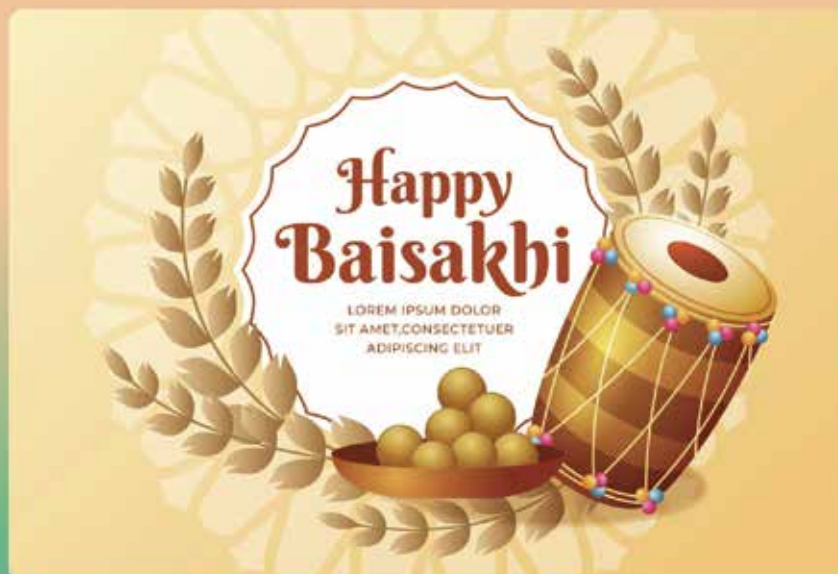
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POLITICS

Next On Trump's Firing Line: Tulsi Gabbard?

India-West News Desk

WASHINGTON, DC – President Donald Trump has reportedly consulted with cabinet members about the potential dismissal of Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, citing significant friction over her stance on the ongoing conflict with Iran.

Sources briefed on these private discussions indicate that Trump has expressed growing frustration with Gabbard, particularly after she failed to distance herself from former counterterrorism chief Joe Kent. Kent recently resigned in a high-profile exit while leveling sharp criticism at the administration's decision to enter a war with Iran. According to The Guardian, Trump has disclosed these frustrations to senior administration officials and spe-

cifically asked whether he should move forward with replacing her.

This internal tension surfaces during a period of high-profile turnover within the executive branch. The president's deliberations regarding Gabbard follow the recent removal of Kristi Noem as Secretary of Homeland Security and the April 2 firing of Attorney General Pam Bondi.

Gabbard's military background, including a 2004 deployment to Iraq and service in Kuwait, has often informed her cautious approach to Middle Eastern intervention. This perspective has increasingly clashed with the more hawkish positions held by other top officials like Pete Hegseth and Marco Rubio.

The president's displeasure reportedly intensified following Gabbard's testimony



on Capitol Hill regarding worldwide threats. The Guardian reports that this refusal to align with the administration's narrative angered Trump.

Despite the internal debate, now spilling into the open, Trump has also in the past signaled a degree of tolerance for Gabbard's independence. He recently noted that while her thought process differs from his and she may be softer on the issue of Iranian nuclear capabilities, he still views her as available to serve.

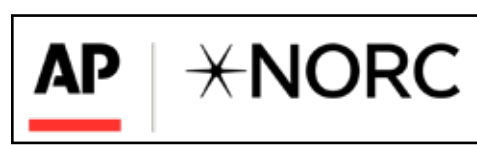
AAPI Survey

Contd. from P1

those aged 60 and older. This economic pessimism has led to a historic low in long-term outlooks; only 29% of AAPI adults believe today's youth will achieve a better standard of living than their parents.



Immigration remains a flashpoint of contention. "We're also



seeing opposition to policies that may not involve violence or violations of due process, but still involve things like banning immigrants from entire countries where there is a history of visa overstays or deporting immigrants who are married to U.S. citizens," said Karthick Ramakrishnan, founder and executive director of AAPI Data told the Associated Press.

While the administration has prioritized border security and deportations, 61% of AAPI adults feel these actions have done more harm than good – a figure significantly higher than the 42% reported among the general U.S. population. Furthermore, 67% of respondents believe the administration has gone "too far" in its efforts to deport immigrants living in the U.S. illegally.

On the global stage, the community is voicing strong opposition to American interventionism. Approximately 71% of AAPI adults believe the administration has gone too far in using the U.S. military to intervene in foreign countries. This sentiment is nearly universal among Democrats (89%) but is also shared by a notable 34% of AAPI Republicans.

The poll also reflects a lack of personal affinity for the administration's leadership. Favorability ratings for Donald Trump, JD Vance, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and Marco Rubio hover around 20% within the AAPI community, consistently trailing their ratings among the general public.

Conducted between February 2-9, 2026, the study surveyed 1,197 AAPI adults in multiple languages. With a margin of error of 4.6 percentage points, the results suggest that as the 2026 midterm cycle approaches, the AAPI electorate remains a formidable and largely critical bloc regarding the administration's current trajectory.

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06:30 PM - 08:00 PM - Bhajan
08:00 PM - Kanjak Pujan & Aarti
08:30 PM - Dinner prasad

“ पहले माँ की पूजा, सब कुछ उसके बाद,
आपके साथ सदा रहे माँ का आशीर्वाद ”

“Pehle Maa ki Pooja, Sab Kuch Uske Baad,
Aapke Saat Sada Rahe Maa Ka Ashirwad”

Note: Kanyaa Poojan will be done before Aarati and prasad will be served after aarati



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Akshaya Tritiya Celebrations

Sunday 19th April, 2026
Maha Lakshmi Abhishekam & Lakshmi Kubera Homam



Join us in the Celebration of Akshaya Tritiya:

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PROGRAM SCHEDULE

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7:30 PM: Kubera Mahalakshmi Homa followed by dinner Prasad

Lakshmi Abhishekam and Lakshmi Kubera Homam
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Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti Celebrations

Tuesday 21st April, 2026 @ 07:00 PM
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Siva Kameswari Temple warmly invites everyone to join in the celebration of Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada Acharya's Jayanthi on Tuesday 21st April, 2026.



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM: Adi Shankara Abhishekam & Sahasra Bilvarchana, followed by Aarati and Dinner Prashad

Sri Adi Shankara Abhishekam
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Every Tuesday	Lord Hanuman Abhishekam	7:00 PM	Every Saturday	Navagraha Abhishekam	11:45 AM
Every Thursday	Shiridi Sai Baba Abhishekam	7:00 PM	Every Sunday	Satsang Bhajan Keertan	10:30 AM
Every Thursday	Guru Gajanan Maharaj abhishekam	7:00 PM	Every Sunday	Vallabha Ganapati abhishekam	10:30 AM
Every Friday	Siva Kameswari Abhishekam	7:00 PM	Every Sunday	Rahu Kalabhishekam	6:00 PM

Temple Visiting Hours: Weekdays - 08:00 AM - 11:45 AM & 05:30 PM - 08:45 PM • Weekends - 08:30 AM - 01:45 PM & 04:30 PM - 07:45 PM

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ELECTIONS

Nithya Raman Addresses Environmental Justice As She Vows To Plant More Trees

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – As Nithya Raman ramps up her mayoral campaign in Los Angeles, her latest campaign pitch places extreme heat and climate inequality at the center, warning that rising temperatures are already shaping life and death outcomes across the city.

It also comes as President Donald Trump has run amok, dismantling every environmental policy and progress made over the decades.

In a recent campaign video released as Los Angeles roils under intense heat conditions, Raman outlined a plan to cool the city by significantly expanding tree cover and shade, particularly in the neighborhoods hit hardest by rising temperatures.

Her proposal includes planting 100,000 trees and expanding access to cooling spaces across the city. “I’ll make sure every Angeleno has a safe place to cool down when temperatures spike,” she said, adding, “I’ll plant 100,000 trees and build shade in the hottest parts of LA.” She pointed to stark disparities across the city, saying, “Look at a map of temperatures in LA on a hot day like today. In LA, your zip code determines your temperature.” She is on the mark on that. Various studies have shown that the wealthier a neighborhood is, the leafier it is likely to be.

Wealthier areas, she noted, benefit from tree-lined streets, parks, and shade, while other parts of the city are left exposed. “In low-income neighborhoods, you’ll find miles



of bare asphalt. No trees, no shade,” she said, adding that temperatures in these areas can run “5 to 10 degrees hotter than others.”

Framing the issue as one of environmental justice, Raman described the temperature gap as “life-or-

death,” emphasizing the dangers of prolonged heat exposure. She warned that heat stroke can carry a fatality rate of 50 to 80 percent if untreated.

She also tied today’s heat disparities to decades of urban planning decisions. “For decades, Los Angeles built warehouses and freeways in working-class neighborhoods. But no parks, no trees. Now those same communities are the hottest places in the entire city,” she said.

Raman stressed that the burden of extreme heat falls disproportionately on vulnerable populations, including “low-income Angelenos, Black and Latino families, thousands of unhoused residents trying to survive on these hot streets.”

Calling extreme heat the most immediate climate threat facing Los Angeles, she argued that solutions already exist. “Heat deaths are preventable,” Raman said. “I’m running for mayor because staying alive during a heat wave shouldn’t depend on your zip code.”

Rini Sampath Becomes First South Asian On DC Mayor Ballot

WASHINGTON, D.C. -Rini Sampath, has become the first South Asian person to secure a place on the ballot for Mayor of Washington, DC, marking a milestone in the city’s political history.

Sampath, who was born in Theni, Tamil Nadu, and moved to the US at the age of seven, said the moment carried personal and broader community significance.

“It’s so meaningful to me to be the first South Asian person to make the ballot for DC Mayor. I moved to the United States when I was seven years old in pursuit of the American dream, and I’m in this race to make sure that dream actually works for DC residents,” she said.

Her campaign confirmed that more than 4,500 people signed her petition to qualify for the ballot.

According to campaign material, Sampath is a 31-year-old government contractor who has lived in the US capital for over a decade. She has positioned her campaign around basic civic services and governance reforms.

“As Mayor, my priority will be to make sure our city lives up to its basic commitments to our residents: Fill the potholes. Stop the catastrophic wastewater spill in the Potomac. Lower prices. Improve 911 wait times,” she said, outlining her agenda.

Sampath has also framed her candidacy as that of an outsider. “I’m not a politician. I’m not backed by any special interest groups. I’m a federal contractor who spent my career improving government programs and citizen services,” she said. “We need someone new.



We need to go back to basics and fix our roads and sidewalks and city services.”

Her personal story features prominently in her campaign narrative. She describes her roots as central to her public service motivation. “My grandfather has always been a driving force for me and a source of inspiration,” she said. She also credited her father’s decision to move the family to the United States, saying it shaped her outlook on opportunity and responsibility.

Washington, DC operates under a mayor-council system, where the mayor serves as the chief executive of the District. The Democratic primary is often decisive in the city, given the party’s strong voter base. (IANS)

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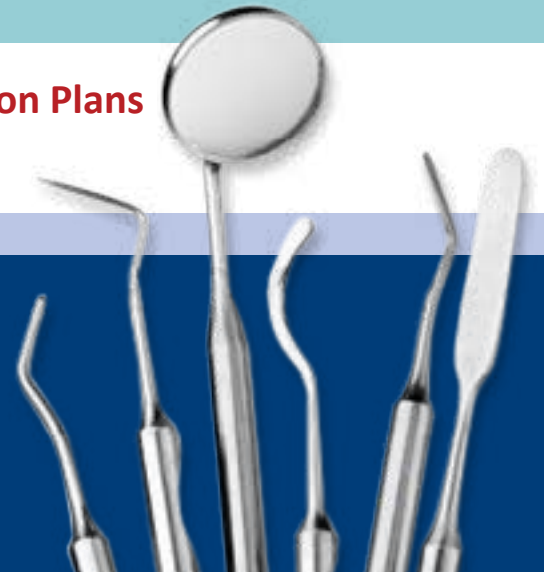
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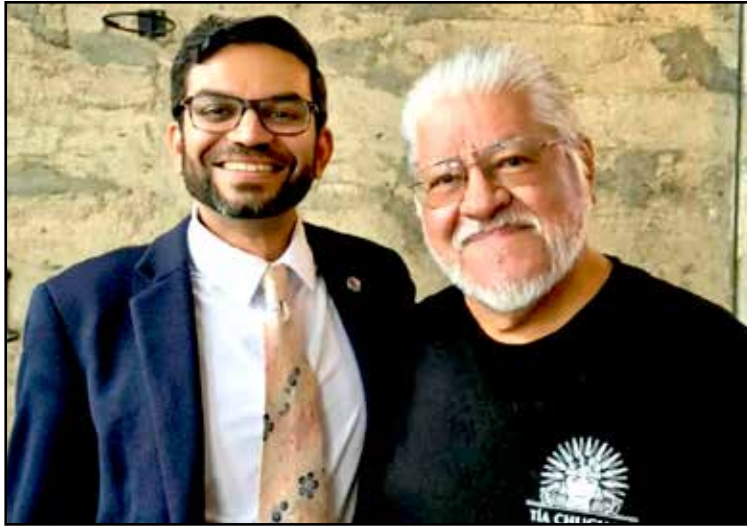
ELECTIONS

Ankur Patel Secures Backing From Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez

India-West News Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA – Educator and community advocate Ankur Patel has received the endorsement of former Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis J. Rodriguez in the race for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board, District 4.

Patel, a longtime public-school educator, is running on a platform centered on classroom investment, teacher support, and strengthening trust between schools and local communities. His campaign emphasizes keeping resources within public schools rather than



diverting funds to external vendors or corporate interests. Announcing his endorsement, Rodriguez framed the election as a clear ideological choice. “I endorse Ankur Patel for LAUSD School Board, District 4,” Rodriguez said in a statement. “This is an election with two clear choices, a tired old vision of what education has become, like what Nick Melvoin represents, or a vision for an educational system that engages and elevates every student in the district, such as that held by Ankur Patel. We need real educators truly vested in our children, in our future, not business people who treat schools

as businesses. Vote for Ankur Patel.”

Rodriguez, a prominent American author, poet, and activist, served as Los Angeles Poet Laureate in 2014 and is widely recognized for his contributions to contemporary Chicana literature.

Like him, Patel has also articulated a broader vision for education rooted in early intervention and student support. He has argued that schools play a critical role in shaping life outcomes, particularly for vulnerable youth.

The endorsement adds to Patel’s campaign momentum in a closely watched LAUSD District 4 contest.

Vaingankar Denounces Racist Attacks, Threats After Loomer Posts

India-West News Desk

PRINCETON JUNCTION, NJ – Congressional candidate Jay Vaingankar has alleged that he and his campaign were targeted with racist attacks and threats following social media posts by conservative activist Laura Loomer.

In a statement released April 6, Vaingankar, who is running for Congress in New Jersey’s 12th District said Loomer and her supporters criticized him after he posted a campaign video in Hindi. “Over the weekend, Trump confidante Laura Loomer and her far-right allies attacked me by name

in a series of racist posts calling me ‘un-American’ and accusing my campaign of putting ‘America Last’ – all because I posted a video reaching out to voters in Hindi,” Vaingankar said.

He added that the online attacks were followed by a surge of threatening messages. “Within hours, I was flooded with messages and comments filled with death threats, racial slurs, and calls for me to be deported and stripped of my birthright citizenship,” he said.

Vaingankar, 28, linked the incident to broader political tensions, stating that such actions were aimed at silencing outreach efforts

to diverse communities. “Extremists like Loomer want to intimidate anyone who doesn’t fit a narrow definition of who belongs in this country,” he said.

Highlighting the demographics of New Jersey’s 12th Congressional District, Vaingankar said the region reflects significant linguistic and cultural diversity. “One in every three residents is foreign-born, and two in five households speak a language other than English,” he said, adding that this diversity “represents the best of America.”

Vaingankar, who described himself as the son of Hindi-speaking parents and a Spanish speaker,



said his campaign prioritizes engagement with underrepresented communities. He noted support from organizations including the

AAPI Victory Fund and the Indian American Impact Fund.

“I’m proud to use my language skills to connect with diverse communities that are too often left out of our politics,” he said.

He also said the threats would not deter his campaign. “The racist threats by extremist MAGA agitators like Loomer won’t scare me into stopping now,” Vaingankar said, adding that the election would focus on issues such as rising utility costs and healthcare expenses.

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ELECTIONS

Justice Democrats Backs Saikat Chakrabarti To Replace Nancy Pelosi

India-West News Desk

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Justice Democrats has endorsed former co-founder Saikat Chakrabarti in a closely watched congressional race in San Francisco, giving a boost to a candidate seeking to reshape the city’s political landscape with a more progressive platform.

Chakrabarti, who previously served as the first chief of staff to Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, had initially entered the race with plans to challenge longtime Democratic leader Nancy

Pelosi. Pelosi’s subsequent retirement has opened the field, setting up a competitive contest that is drawing national attention.

The endorsement from Justice Democrats, the group known for backing progressive challengers to establishment Democrats, is seen as a significant moment in Chakrabarti’s campaign. While Ocasio-Cortez has not yet weighed in on the race, the backing of the organization he helped found could strengthen Chakrabarti’s standing among progressive voters and donors.



Chakrabarti’s background in technology and activism has be-

come a central theme of his campaign. Ryan Grim wrote on the site, “Chakrabarti, meanwhile, has the personal capacity to mostly self-fund his campaign. Chakrabarti was the second engineer at Stripe, and his stock options made him an extremely rich young man. Repulsed by the wealth inequality he saw around him, he quit Stripe before he was fully vested—an extraordinarily rare move—and volunteered for the first Bernie Sanders campaign, becoming a key

player in the organization’s distributed volunteer operation.”

The race is widely viewed by political observers as a contest between competing visions for the Democratic Party. Chakrabarti represents a more movement-driven liberalism, while his main rival, state Sen. Scott Wiener, is seen as embodying a more institutional approach to governance.

Candidate and Supervisor Connie Chan is the other candidate who is facing fundraising challenges potentially limiting her competitiveness.

Sonia Devgan Kacker Enters CA Congressional Race



India-West News Desk

VENTURA, CA – Dr. Sonia Devgan Kacker, a board-certified family physician with 26 years of medical practice in Ventura County, has announced her candidacy for California’s 26th Congressional District, with a campaign focused on healthcare, small business support, and evidence-based policymaking.

Kacker, a Democrat, has professional roots in Ventura County that span over two decades. An alumna of Stanford University and the University of California, Irvine, she began her career as a staff physician, later serving as

Medical Director, and went on to become the owner of a medical center.

Kacker’s policy platform emphasizes healthcare access and affordability, including lowering prescription drug costs. On economic issues, she has highlighted support for small businesses, advocating for simplified regulations, more affordable healthcare options for employers, and workforce development through partnerships between community colleges and local industries.

She has also underscored the importance of data-driven governance, supporting science-based approaches to public health and

climate policy, as well as responsible technology development. “As an urgent care physician and small business owner, I see firsthand how decisions in Washington affect patients, employees, and families here in CA-26,” she said. “I’m not a career politician—I solve problems for a living.”

California’s 26th Congressional District, which has several contenders from the Democratic party, spans Ventura County and parts of Los Angeles County including the cities of Oxnard, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Moorpark, Santa Paula, Agoura Hills, and Westlake Village. The primary is on June 2.

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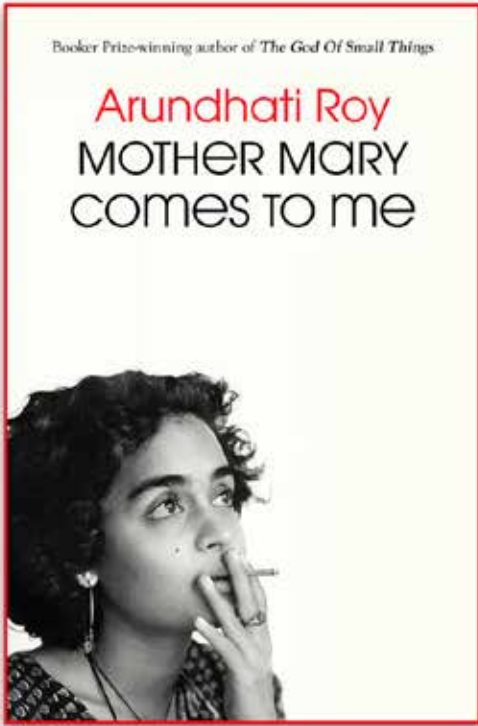
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BOOKS

Arundhati Roy Wins US Book Critics Award



India-West News Desk

NEW YORK, NY- Author Arundhati Roy has been awarded the National Book Critics Circle prize for her memoir, 'Mother Mary Comes to Me'.

A ceremony for the 2025 publishing year winners was held at the New School in Manhattan, here, on March 26.

Nan Graham, publisher-at-large for Scribner, accepted the award on Roy's behalf. "She is the bravest woman I know, and she loves people who help her find readers, and that is you," told the audience, adding, "An award makes a book last longer, and I am so grateful to you for making this book last longer."

Autobiography committee chair Grace Talusan noted that the award recognizes works that illuminate "the beautiful, painful truths about being human," describing Roy's work as an

intimate journey that captures her evolution from an architecture student to a writer while tracing her relationship with her mother.

Arundhati Roy's 'Mother Mary Comes To Me' was in contention for the award with other finalists including Geraldine Brooks' 'Memorial Days', Beth Macy's 'Paper Girl', Hanif Kureishi's 'Shattered', and Miriam Toews' 'A Truce That Is Not Peace.'

Concluding the evening, NBCC President Adam Dalva addressed the current media climate, stating that the awards serve as a defiant continuation of a mission to "think freely" at a time when "the very concept of the free press is under attack." Dalva asserted that criticism allows for the kind of deliberation that feeds creatively and practically into culture and politics.

Boston Author Rajani LaRocca Has A Contemporary 'Ramayana' Retelling

India-West News Desk

BOSTON, MA -Rajani LaRocca, a Newbery Honor-winning author and practicing primary care physician, will release her first young adult novel, 'Such Great Heights,' this August.

The book presents a contemporary retelling of the Hindu epic 'Ramayana,' shifting focus to a modern interpretation of Sita. The story follows Siya, a high school sophomore on a competitive mock trial team, as she navigates the aftermath of her mother's death in a car accident four years earlier. The narrative explores themes of grief, identity and truth, raising the question of whether truth holds value if it is not believed. LaRocca was born in India, raised in Kentucky, and now lives in the Boston area, where she practices medicine. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, she writes for young readers across genres, including novels and picture books in both prose and verse. Her previous work includes the novel in verse Red, White, and Whole, which received a Newbery Honor, the Walter Award and was named a Washington Post Best Children's Book of the Year. In a starred review, ALA Booklist said the novel "will change" readers, while BookPage described it as "a sensitive coming-of-age story with all the makings of a new middle grade classic."

Her other titles include Mirror to Mirror, which National Book Award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson called "a thoughtful and deeply moving story in verse," and Sona and the Golden Beasts, which received starred reviews from Kirkus Reviews, Booklist and School Library Journal for its storytelling and world-building.

The release of 'Such Great Heights' comes amid continued interest in reinterpretations of classical narratives, particularly those that bring diverse cultural perspectives to established stories.



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HOLLYWOOD

Hrithik Roshan, Ryan Gosling Talk Sci-Fi, Acting, And Aliens



MUMBAI- Hrithik Roshan, who was last seen in 'War 2', recently had a tete-a-tete with actor Ryan Gosling. He suggested the idea of hanging out together with their respective alien characters, Rocky and Jaadu.

The actor spoke during the promotions of Ryan Gosling's upcoming film 'Project Hail Mary', and heaped praise on the film, which is adapted for the screen from the eponymous novel by Andy Weir.

During the conversation, the Bollywood superstar told Ryan, "You have Rocky and I have Jadu. We'll hang at Church gate of Bandra. That sounds great. By the way, I just met Rocky. I met him and I taught him some of our... On behalf of all your fans here in

India, namaste and we are really looking forward to your film. Thank you so much. I hear you've read the book. Oh my god, I read the book and it's incredible".

He further mentioned, "I actually read the book and then I saw the trailer. Then I made an Instagram post about it and I said that it's the best sci-fi book I've ever read in my life. The movie better live up to it. That was the second thing I said. No pressure. The third thing I said was that Ryan acts and embodies the part unbelievably well".

Hrithik then spoke about a scene from 'Project Hail Mary'

which stayed with him. He shared, "There is this one scene where they're forcing you to go to space and you just don't want to go. On the page it's said that he tears up and I caught myself thinking as an actor I was like how would an actor play that? Would I actually cry or would I hold it in? What's going to be the sweet spot? I was wondering, did you have a thought while approaching that scene?".

Responding to the same, Ryan said, "You know it was interesting that was one of the last, you know, we shot, so it took five years to make the film and then I was like a hundred days alone on camera. It was one of the most difficult films I've ever made and probably will ever make. It took a bigger chunk out of me than any movie I've ever done".

"So, I was so broken down by the whole process of making this that I was just shattered anyway in that scene. And then I'm acting opposite Sandra Huler, who is one of the greatest actors alive. She played it with such beautiful emotion, you know, there wasn't a harshness to it. There was so much pure emotion in the way that she played it that it just wrecked me. I didn't have to act", he added. (IANS)

Zack Snyder Applauds Huma Qureshi's Talent

MUMBAI- Acclaimed Hollywood filmmaker Zack Snyder has heaped praise on Indian actress Huma Qureshi, calling her "one of the most amazing actors" he has had the pleasure of working with on 'Army Of The Dead.'

Snyder shared a picture of Huma, who played Geeta Rannan in the 2021 post-apocalyptic zombie heist film directed by him.

He wrote: "@iamhumaq — one of the most amazing actors I've had the pleasure of working with on Army of the Dead. Talent, presence, and pure brilliance on screen."

Huma, who made her Hollywood debut with 'Army Of The Dead', took to the comment section and wrote: "You the best ... boss man."

'Army Of The Dead' is based on a story Snyder created. The film features an ensemble cast consisting of Dave Bautista, Ella Purnell, Omari Hardwick and Ana de la Reguera.

It follows a group of mercenaries who plan a Las Vegas casino heist during a zombie apocalypse. Snyder conceived the idea for 'Army Of The Dead' as a spiritual successor to his 2004 debut film 'Dawn of the Dead.'



Snyder has directed or produced a number of comic book and superhero films, including '300' and 'Watchmen' as well as the Superman film that started the DC Extended Universe, 'Man of Steel', and its follow-ups, 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice' and 'Justice League.'

Meanwhile, Huma is all set to be seen in 'Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups'.

Written by Yash and Geetu Mohandas it has been simultaneously shot in Kannada and English, with dubbed versions planned in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and several other languages. (IANS)

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Never Done It, No One Has Heard Me Do It: TM Krishna On Viral Claims Of Replacing 'Rama' With 'Allah' In His Music

By NIMMI RAGHUNATHAN

The recipient of a long list of honors, including the Magsaysay Award and the 2024 Sangita Kalanidhi, which exploded into headlines, not all good, T.M.Krishna is a star who shines beyond the confines of his arena. He is like a Rajnikanth or Shah Rukh Khan – you don't have to have watched a single Tamil or Hindi film to know who they are.

Krishna is a man with as many voices as society has grievances.

Brahmin by birth, he does all he can to make Dalit voices heard. From a wealthy, well-connected family, he is prone to questioning privilege. He is a thinker and writer given to semantics and quarrels with the way things are spelled.

Brimming with unquestioned talent and virtuosity in the hoary Carnatic music tradition, he keeps finding ways to tug and pull classical music into contemporary spaces. To the usually spiritually laden classical music stage, he sets to tune literature, environmental causes, and works of social reformers.

He has also reinvigorated or deconstructed – depending on your point of view – the concert format. He is likely to sing a Thillana, usually done closer to the end of a concert, bang in the middle. Instead of the rat-a-tat 10-12 songs that are the norm, he might give the audience a leisurely, highly technical, and deep exposition of, say, 3 ragas.

For his critics, mostly upholders of tradition, Krishna is a thorn. The trouble for



those he critiques is that his audible activism comes with a musical brilliance that cannot be denied. Fans keep pouring in, and the youth are lapping it up.

Bucking the system also means speaking truth to power. His progressive views, which have stirred the political pot, have drawn the ire of the right wing. Rejecting their attempts to label him anti-national, Krishna now has a new book, 'We, the People of India: Decoding a Nation's Symbols,' in which he revisits the histories and debates behind the flag, anthem, emblem, motto, and Preamble, and reflects on what it means to be Indian.

Krishna was in Southern California recently to perform at the *Indian Fine Arts Academy, San Diego, when he spoke with **India-West** about his book and more.

Personable, with the easy assurance and fluency of someone who has lived in the public eye since being declared a prodigy at 12, the now 50-something maestro can tug at you when he pauses, almost retreating into himself as he searches for words to express the human condition. Given his wide-ranging interests and keen intellect, the conversation could easily have gone deeper and stretched longer into the evening, but here are some edited excerpts:

Q: What surprised you most while working on your new book?

A: The reason I wrote this book is because of the present environment of hate and the normalization of "othering" people. I wanted to understand the emotive landscape at the time we became independent, and to compare it with where we are today: was the idea of India always utopian? In many ways, it is a dialog between the past and the present. So, a lot of things surprised me. For instance, almost nothing has been written about the national emblem or motto. Even basic questions, such as how they were adopted, had no clear answers. But perhaps the most striking realization was the sheer honesty and integrity of the people who participated in the freedom struggle and in the making of the Constitution. People from across ideological spectrums came together with a shared belief in the importance of inclusion. That, to me, is

extraordinary. Today, people from that period are casually demonized. It is deeply misplaced.

Q: What has been lost between aspiration and reality?

A: The spirit of fraternity. The belief that we can disagree and still respect one another as human beings; the freedom to be who you are and to express that without judgment. That was the aspiration. We also wanted to be a confident and self-reliant nation, not an oppressive replication of colonial powers. The Four Lions, facing the cardinal directions, symbolize the Buddha's teachings of spreading justice and dignity. But sadly, we have become triggered and angry lions.

Q: The hate business is big in the US now. Are there any parallels with India?

A: A lot. This is happening everywhere, and America is just part of a larger global phenomenon of bigotry and parochialism. That's why I think we are all struggling, because it has a kind of transnational resonance. But you know what surprises me? Let me put this out, since we're having this discussion. And I make this generalization with care, great care. (Pauses) When I meet Indians here...what I don't understand is, when you're able to recognize what happens when you are attacked as a minority... how is it that the same NRI doesn't have the same sensitivity to see what is happening to minorities in India? You see yourself as a victim, so how is it that you don't extend the same empathy? It's the same frame, just

Contd. on P25

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with a different vocabulary.

Q: You have suggested that the Indian anthem could be sung in different languages.

A: The fact is, every language has its own resonance, in vocabulary, in sound, in musicality. If we accept an anthem as something that is meant to create cohesiveness, then people need to feel it emotionally within themselves. And your language is in which you best express the subtleties of what you feel. So, if every person – Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil – were singing this song, I think they would have a far more personal relationship with the anthem. I don't think the political world understood that a unified melody can unify a diverse set of languages. You actually bring those languages together by tying them through sound. Jana Gana Mana is not just lyrics; it is also a melody, something that lives instrumentally and collectively.

Q: Your Twitter bio reads, "musician, author, activist(:) sing, write, speak, and remain silent." You are not silent.

A: I'd forgotten I put that there! I think compared to 15 years ago, I'm relatively silent! I hope I've learned to speak only when I feel I have something substantial to say. I've learned that sometimes you don't need to respond. Silence gives you time to reflect, and occasionally, there's more nuance to your own thought than before. The most important part of silence, I think, is listening.

Q: Would the world be a better place if people with fame and clout used their voices?

A: Well, I think it's essential that people who have privilege, not necessarily fame, speak. It's important that they don't speak for others, but rather for themselves and to people like them. Who am I to speak for a Dalit, a woman, or someone who truly understands struggle? Those of us with privilege can't fall back on excuses of threats,

losing opportunities, or money. If I'm not willing to take that risk, then something's simply wrong. People readily align with the majority, choosing what benefits them, and then say they're not political. But it is political, and we have to be political, but in a way where empathy is the foundation.

Q: How difficult is it to be empathetic at this level? Do you get emotional? Despondent? What happens?

A: All of it. There are mornings when I just feel helpless, I'm not going to make a difference, I'm just one person. It's a great sadness. And there is the conflict. You feel that sadness, but you recognize you're fortunate to even be able to feel that, because you are lucky you're not being beaten, or told you don't belong in the country. Of course, then something small and lovely will happen, and it lightens the day. We really underestimate the power of those small things that go beyond the immediacy of tomorrow. So yes, it feels like a pendulum in some ways.

Q: Why do you think your popularity has not dimmed despite being so political?

A: (Laughing) A very good question! Maybe that's why people are more upset with me! I would like to believe I'm a pretty decent musician. I've had people say different things to me. One set said they stopped listening to me because of my politics. Others had stopped engaging with Carnatic music but have come back because of what they heard from me. Then there are those who know absolutely nothing about music but come to my concert because of my politics. There are also those who disagree completely with my politics but will come for the music. I think everyone has their entry and exit points. But I will say this: in the last 15 years, the people who engage with me are incredibly diverse because I perform in very, very diverse places. Maybe that has somehow kept it going!

Q: A criticism is that you take this Bhakti music and transpose Krishna and Rama's names for Allah or Jesus. What are you trying to do?

A: I have NEVER done it in my life. It's an outright lie that has been going on in social media for the last decade that I've taken a Tyagaraja Kirtana and replaced the name of Rama with Jesus. Nobody's EVER heard me sing this. The lie has now been repeated so many times people believe it. Do I sing songs on Allah? Jesus? Buddha? No god? Yes, I do. Do I sing Tyagaraja Kirtanas, Dikshitar? YES! I believe Carnatic music does not belong to any one religion or section of society. It needs to have the vocabulary, the resonance, even the agnostic and atheistic natures of a diverse society. I sing songs that talk about issues of today. All these different voices coexist in my musical expression. I think Carnatic music must reflect the times it lives in, not just be something from 200 years ago.

Q: Why haven't you refuted the claims?

A: I did at first, they don't want to listen.

Q: Bhakti to you is...

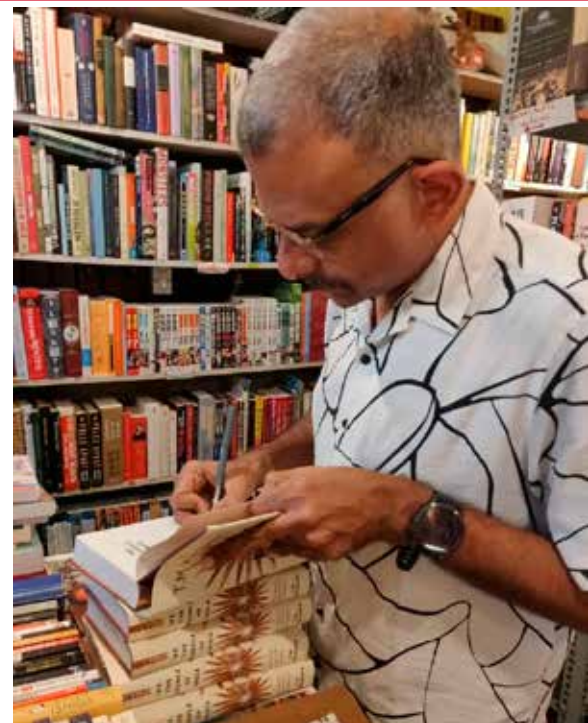
A: I can't define Bhakti in a better way than what I just did now to you. I refuse to make bhakti a narrow notion of one manner of believing in one thing. What you are experiencing is habitual pleasure, which you call bhakti. In its true sense, it cannot have borders of any sort. I think of it as an all-encompassing idea of humanity.

Q: You have basically deconstructed how a Carnatic concert should be. Boredom, defiance, exploration...?

A: No, it's not like you get up one morning and say, 'I'm going to throw this out the window.' That would be frivolous. I believe I asked the question, 'If I do not sing in the manner that we are used to listening to, does the art form collapse or exist?' The answer obviously is that it exists. Then there can be different ways in which the art form can be expressed. That's what drove me organically, to try and just change the way I felt about the music.

Q: How have you been shaped by all the controversy you have dealt with?

A: Ideological differences and debates are perfectly fine, but personal attacks are inexcusable. It is not fun. You worry about not being at home, your children, colleagues, and students. There have been moments when it has gotten to me. 2024 was one such year. I sought help because I was struggling to cope with it. But even in the midst of all that negativity, there are new perspectives that emerge: it has shaped



how I think about when to respond and when to remain silent.

Q: How does your wife cope with your activism?

A: Sangeetha is a musician too, and we are completely in sync. We believe in this; we are partners in thought and action. But sometimes my family becomes collateral damage. What do I do? Does that mean I step back from everything and just don't do anything?

Q: Have they ever asked you to stop speaking?

A: Absolutely never. Not my two daughters, who are completely engaged with our work. Nor my students, who are like family too. And my co-artists... so many have been threatened not to sit on stage with me, but they have, and I have incredible respect for them. I know they've been under pressure, even though they may not tell me the details.

Q: Are you an insider or an outsider in all this?

A: Both. I do believe being inside is very, very important. Action is needed within that specific world that you occupy, as well as in the larger idea world. These two have to be in conversation for any kind of evolution. Also, being an insider is important because I love this music. This is my life. I cannot be without Carnatic music.

Q: What's the story with your shirts, the florals and colors?

A: Sangeetha calls it my phase! I went through brocades and kurtas. Now I like cotton. I just pick up any shirt that feels interesting, wear it, go out in it, and perform in it. I don't need a separate wardrobe for my concerts. It's made my life simpler.

Quick Takes:

Ishta devata:

My favorite ideas are from The Buddha, Upanishads, Ambedkar, and Krishnamurti

Favorite composer:

Muthuswamy Dikshitar

What you treasure most:

To be able to breathe freely

Favorite US city:

I like academic towns. Cambridge, MA

When you relax, you:

Watch brainless thrillers or murder mysteries

A fun thing your kids have told you about you: I don't know how to have fun!

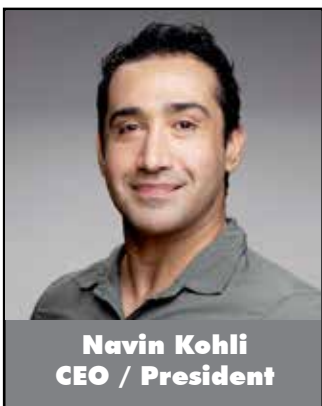
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Kalki Koechlin On The Craft Of Cinema And The Power Of Choice



By MANISHA KOSHY

For Kalki Koechlin, reinvention has never been a strategy; it's been instinct. Whether moving between theatre and cinema, indie and mainstream, or languages and cultures, she has built a career on curiosity rather than calculation. Known for her work across independent and mainstream cinema,

from 'Dev D' to 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara,' to winning the National Award for 'Margarita with a Straw,' Koechlin has long carved a space for herself as an actor drawn to unconventional narratives.

With 'Her Song,' her first international feature, that instinct finds a new expression: one that demanded not only emotional depth, but a complete reworking

of voice, rhythm, and identity.

At its core, 'Her Song' is an intimate, cross-cultural narrative set in a quiet European village, weaving together themes of memory, identity, and displacement. The independent feature opened in early March at the Cinequest Film Festival in the heart of Silicon Valley. It follows Olivia, a Franco-American novelist played by Koechlin, as she navigates personal transitions while writing about her grandmother's escape from Nazi-occupied Paris.

The film brings together an eclectic international creative team, including screenwriter-director John M. Keller and veteran filmmaker James Ivory, whose long association with India adds a unique resonance to the project.

In this exclusive conversation with **India-West**, the actor talked about her latest journey:

At the heart of 'Her Song' was a

unique linguistic challenge. Koechlin performed in French while adopting an American accent, a duality that demanded precision and required a complete vocal transformation.

"I actually practiced speaking French with a pen in my mouth," she says, laughing. "We had several sessions just to decide what kind of French accent would suit the film."

For Koechlin, performance begins beyond analysis. "I suppose observing people is the first step of transforming into characters. I do like to observe. But I tend to use physicality and muscle memory to get into character. The intellectual approach only gets me so far, then I want to actually try things," she told **India-West**.

She revisited performances by Julia Roberts, tuning into rhythm and cadence, before carrying that work into real interactions on set. As she refined her accent, she turned to executive producer Eric Gruendemann. "I kept telling him, 'Talk to me, talk to me,'" she recalls. "And then I just began mirroring his accent. Voice is so closely tied to identity. The moment you shift your accent, you shift how people see you, and how you see yourself."

Contd. on P25

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Kalki Koechlin On The Craft Of Cinema And The Power Of Choice

Contd. from P1

The Quiet Power of Small Stories

The production was deliberately small, a far cry from the sprawling sets of Bollywood. “I’ve worked on films with very big setups,” Koechlin told **India-West**. “But here, we were a tiny team, barely 15 people at times.”

That scale fostered a deep sense of community, where even the villagers became part of the process. The slower rhythm also shaped the storytelling, offering a counterpoint to the frantic pace of contemporary media.

“With the world feeling like it’s on fire, this film slows down,” she reflects. “It looks at how we repeat cycles, how we make the same mistakes, and still offers hope. Today’s digital ecosystem pushes you into a kind of fight-or-flight mode. It’s lovely to work on something that allows you to breathe.”

Beyond the Noise

Koechlin is thoughtful about the evolving landscape of storytelling and the pressure of the “instant impact” era. “There’s a lot of good that’s come out of OTT: more opportunities, more diverse roles. But people can switch off so quickly, so there’s a tendency to make everything immediately engaging.” Still, she remains committed to slower narratives. “I believe in stories that unfold over

time. Audiences need to allow that, to sit with something.”

A Career Without a Fixed Pattern

Looking back, Koechlin resists the idea of a clear trajectory. “It’s very hard to see a pattern in my filmography,” she says. “I’ve tried everything: commercial cinema, indie films, theatre, spoken word.”

The contrasts are stark. “One moment you’re traveling in a train with three trunks, the next you’re in a five-star hotel.” However, her relationship with time has shifted. “I’m getting better at slowing down and deciding what I want to spend my time on—mainly because I’ve become a mother. I want to be with my daughter. I don’t just jump onto every passing bus anymore. I wait for the right moment.”

As she shared with **India-West**, while ‘Her Song’ is her first international project, she is measured about its significance. “I don’t think it’s a turning point ar-



blur boundaries. “Sometimes people expect me to be an expert in everything. I can share my opinion, but decisions should be made by people with real expertise. I wish people would focus on my expertise, which is acting.”

Redefining Success

If there is one idea that anchors her journey, it is choice. “Success, for me, is having

choice,” she told **India-West**. “The choice to do what I want and also the choice to not do anything. When you’re starting out, you say yes to everything. But over time, you realize freedom lies in being able to say no.”

The Actor and the “Brand”

Koechlin is candid about the modern pressures of visibility. “Yes, we are expected to be more brands than artists, and yes, I struggle with that,” she admits. At the same time, she acknowledges its necessity. “That version of me has helped me survive when acting work has been very slim.”

Yet, the expectations can

choice,” she told **India-West**. “The choice to do what I want and also the choice to not do anything. When you’re starting out, you say yes to everything. But over time, you realize freedom lies in being able to say no.”

Koechlin continues to resist long-term mapping. “I don’t think in terms of plans. I just want to keep doing work that excites me.” With *Her Song*, she reaffirms a deeper truth: that the most meaningful artistic journeys are guided not by strategy, but by curiosity. In an industry defined by speed, her insistence on slowing down may be her most radical act yet.

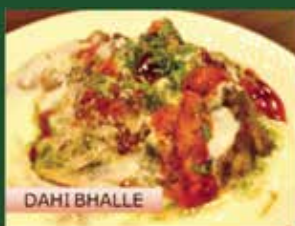
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Museum Exhibit: A CA Wildfire Inspires The Transformation Of The Saree Into A Fine Art Canvas

By REENA RATHORE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The saree has always been more than mere fabric. Flowing, versatile, and timeless, it is a storyteller. Six yards of silk, both beautiful and practical, have threaded through ancient civilizations, colonial histories, and modern lives, quietly shaping the cultural and emotional landscape of South Asia. On March 29, San Francisco's Asian Art Museum opened "Unstitched: A Celebration of the Saree," a new exhibition in which this enduring garment steps into an entirely new role: a canvas for fine art.

Developed in collaboration with EnActe Arts, the exhibition centers on "Journey and Exile," curated by California-based artist Vara Ramakrishnan. Working under this shared theme, over forty of India's most celebrated artists, including Seema Kohli, Thota Vaikuntam, Thota Tharani, and Laxman Aelay, have transformed silk sarees into works that blend tradition, imagination, and personal narrative.

The inspiration, Ramakrishnan told India-West, was born from crisis. During the 2020 California fires, as evacuation loomed, she made a series of instinctive choices



about what to save. She packed family photographs, jewelry, and every sari she owned. She did not save a single painting from her studio.

"That moment shifted something for me," Ramakrishnan, executive director of Lara Lakshmi Art Foundation, recalled. "When I unpacked later, I realized that the objects I had instinctively protected were the ones that carried meaning, memory, and continuity. The sari became the natural vessel for art because it is already embedded in lived experience. It is not just seen, it is worn, inherited, and carried across generations."

That moment of reckoning became the foundation of the exhibition.

"Unstitched: A Celebration of the Saree," comprises three distinct components: reimaged sarees;

a fashion show curated by EnActe Arts; and a historical and craft-focused exhibit on the breadth and diversity of the saree tradition, curated by Pia and Neel Ganguly.

The Asian Art Museum has been working to deepen its relationship with South Asian communities, to create what Ramakrishnan describes as "a sense of shared ownership" between the institution and the audiences it has not always reached.

"The exhibit creates a moment of visibility and recognition," Ramakrishnan, who is also among the artists, said. "For diaspora communities, especially younger generations, seeing the sari centered in a museum setting affirms its place in contemporary cultural life. It is not only a traditional garment, but something that continues to evolve. The sari itself reflects

diaspora identity. It has traveled, adapted, and been reinterpreted. In that sense, the exhibit mirrors the experience of migration and transformation.

Ramakrishnan gave her artists a single conceptual starting point – 'Journey and Exile' – and asked them to develop their own interpretation before ever touching the fabric. What followed was, by her account, strikingly personal.

"One of the most moving interpretations came from an 83-year-old artist who explored birth as the first exile," she told India-West. "He reflected on the separation from the mother at the moment of birth, something he is still contemplating decades later."

Others moved outward rather than inward into mythology, migration, language and spiritual narrative. Some imagined journeys across time and geography, blending the landscapes of India and California into a single, seamless vision.

"The saree became part of the theme on occasion. It is a garment that has traveled across continents and taken on new meanings in different contexts," Ramakrishnan said.

Rather than imposing a rigid curatorial framework, she allowed the exhibition to evolve organically.

Artists from across different geographies, generations, and practices were brought into the fold, many of them returning to textile and fabric work after years away, drawn back by the immediacy of the idea. "The response from artists and collaborators suggested that the saree as a medium for fine art is something people were ready to explore," she stated. "It was less about curating to a predefined diversity and more about allowing a network of artists to gather around a shared idea."

The project came together in a matter of months, with artists working under tight timelines on an unforgiving medium. "Once pigment is absorbed, it cannot easily be corrected or layered. Many artists found it more challenging than watercolor," Ramakrishnan said. The saree also introduced a conceptual dimension unique to the medium, she said, noting that it is not a flat surface. Some sections are immediately visible when worn, while others stay folded, revealed only in motion. Artists had to consider how their work would unfold on the body and every piece still had to remain wearable. "These are not static pieces," Ramakrishnan said. "They are meant to be lived in and passed on."

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Ayesha Thapar, Srijith Gopinathan

India-West News Desk

CHICAGO, IL – The James Beard Foundation has announced several Indian American culinary leaders and establishments as finalists for the 2026 Restaurant and Chef Awards. The honors recognize what the Foundation characterizes as “exceptional talent and leadership within the independent restaurant industry.”

The new nominations highlight a significant presence of Indian cuisine in the upper echelons of the U.S. culinary scene.

In the category of National Outstanding Restaurateur, the foundation recognized Srijith Gopinathan and Ayesha Thapar of the California-based Cal-India Collective. The hospitality group, which operates Ettan, Copra, Eylan, and Little Blue Door across Palo Alto, San Francis-

co, Menlo Park, and Los Altos, is known for blending contemporary plating with traditional Indian flavors. While Gopinathan is credited with the group’s culinary direction and luxury hospitality standards, Thapar has been instrumental in shaping the identity and expansion of the collective’s multiple concepts.

Also in the Outstanding Restaurateur category are Meherwan and Molly Irani of the Chai Pani Restaurant Group. The duo, whose flagship Asheville, North Carolina location previously won a James Beard Award in 2022, also operates the Botiwalla brand. According to the company, Meherwan Irani focuses on evolving American perceptions of Indian street

food, while Molly Irani, serving as chief culture officer, manages the group’s workplace standards and restaurant operations.

In the national Best New Restaurant category, Tamba in Las Vegas has been named a finalist. Originally launched on the Strip in 2004, the restaurant was recently reintroduced in Town Square under the leadership of Chef Anand Singh. The contemporary concept is noted for combining traditional Indian cooking with modern live-fire techniques, utilizing specialized equipment such as the tandoor and Josper charcoal oven to produce its coastal-inspired menu.

The winners of the 2026 awards

Lyric Opera of Chicago on June 15. The festivities will also include the Impact Awards on June 14,

a category established in 2025 to honor those working toward a more sustainable and equitable food system. Other major honors to be presented during the Chicago event include the Lifetime Achievement and Humanitarian of the Year awards.

RECIPES

Kesar Pista Kunafa Phirni With Shaved Chocolate

Ingredients:

For the phirni:

- ¼ cup Royal Basmati rice
- ¼ cup milk (for grinding rice)
- 1-liter full cream milk
- 3–4 tbsp warm milk + 8–10 strands saffron (soaked and crushed)
- ½ cup sugar (adjust to taste)
- ½ tsp cardamom powder
- 1 tsp kewra water (optional)
- 2–3 tbsp chopped pistachios

For the kunafa layer:

- 2 cups kunafa noodles or fine vermicelli
- 2–3 tbsp ghee, 2–3 tbsp powdered sugar

For garnish:

- Slivered pistachios, Dried rose petals, Shaved chocolate

Preparation

1. Prepare the rice base:

Wash the basmati rice thoroughly and soak it in water for about 30 minutes. Drain completely, then grind the soaked rice with a little milk to form a smooth paste. This paste will act as the thickening agent for the phirni.

2. Cook the milk:

Soak the saffron strands in warm milk for about 10 minutes to release their color and aroma. In a heavy-bottomed pan, pour in the full cream milk, then add the saffron-infused milk and the rice paste. Bring to a gentle boil, stirring continuously to prevent lumps. Cook on medium heat, stirring frequently, until the mixture thickens to a rabdi-like consistency.

3. Flavor and finish the phirni:

Once thickened, add sugar, cardamom powder, kewra water (if using), and chopped pistachios. Stir well and cook for a few more minutes until everything is combined. Turn off the heat and let the phirni cool completely. Keep in mind that it will thicken further as it cools, so maintain a slightly pourable consistency while hot.

4. Prepare the kunafa layer:

Heat ghee in a wide pan. Add the kunafa noodles (or fine vermicelli) and roast on medium heat until golden brown and crisp. Transfer to a bowl and let cool. Once cooled, sprinkle powdered sugar and toss well to coat evenly.

5. Assemble the dessert:

In individual serving cups or glasses, add a layer of crunchy kunafa at the bottom. Top with a generous portion of cooled kesar pista phirni. Repeat the layers—kunafa followed by phirni—and finish with a final layer of kunafa for added crunch. Garnish with slivered pistachios, dried rose petals, and shaved chocolate. Serve immediately for a warm contrast, or chill for a refreshing dessert. *(Authentic Royal)*



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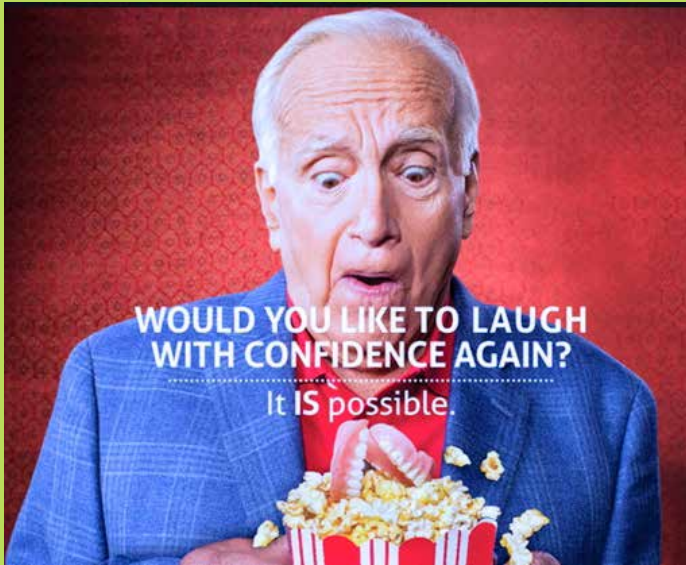
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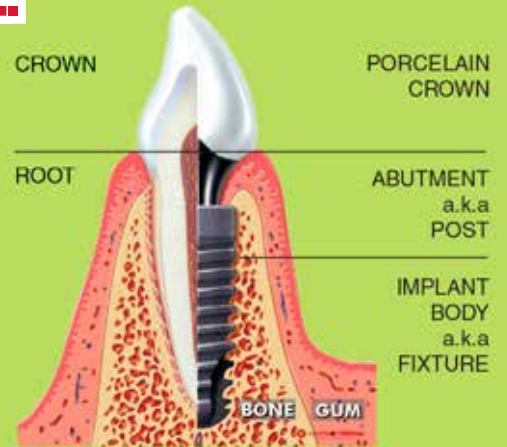
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