



Congressman Suhas Subramanyam delivering his keynote remarks at the 2026 Impact Summit, on April 20, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

## Suhas Subramanyam Highlights Authenticity at IA Impact Summit

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

Indian American Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10) underscored the importance of authenticity, representation, and grassroots engagement in politics, urging aspiring candidates to embrace their identities and connect directly with voters.

Delivering keynote remarks on April 20, in Washington DC, at the 2026 Impact Summit titled “We Belong,” Subramanyam said “I didn’t win it by running away from being who I am, which was Indian American and South Asian and even Hindu. I ran very much as someone who was proud to be those things. One of the things that I’ve noticed being on Capitol Hill is that the general public and voters really appreciate authenticity. So, if you are planning to contest in an election be yourself.”

Subramanyam emphasized that voters are more likely to “respect” candidates who are “authentic.” Urging aspiring candidates to remain true to themselves, he stressed, “you don’t run or hide from who you are.” He cautioned that voters can quickly sense inconsistency in a candidate’s values or identity, adding that such perceptions could cost them support. “And so don’t hide who you are,” he said.

Highlighting his long association with the organization, Subramanyam noted, “Anytime there’s an IA Impact summit, I try to be there. Impact has been with me since the very

beginning.” He added that he arrived early to attend a previous panel discussion and expressed admiration for the speakers, saying, “I’m just so impressed with all of them.”

Reflecting on the summit’s theme, “We Belong,” he said, “And I’ll tell you that a lot of people have told me many times that I don’t belong in Congress. I don’t belong in this country. I don’t belong in many places that I am.” He underscored that the theme affirms a broader message of inclusion, stating that “We absolutely belong.”

Subramanyam noted that leaders from Congress, state legislatures, and executive offices participate in such forums to engage with attendees, reinforce that they “very much belong,” and help “inspire another generation.”

Recalling his early years, he said he had not initially considered a career in politics. “I was told that talking about politics was not polite,” he said. His outlook changed during his time in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina struck. “That’s when I decided to drop my pre-med, which my parents didn’t love, and major in philosophy, which they didn’t love either,” he added.

That decision, he said, set him on a path toward public service. He later worked on Capitol Hill and, after stepping away, found himself drawn back. “And I felt like public service,” he noted, describing the experience as a defining influence on his career.

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## Indian Embassy Marks Spring Festivals, ICCR Foundation Day in Washington

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The Embassy of India in Washington, D.C., commemorated the Spring Festivals of India and the 77th Foundation Day of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) on April 19, 2026, at India House, bringing together members of the Indian diaspora for an evening celebrating culture, heritage, and community.

Welcoming attendees, India’s Ambassador to the United States, Vinay Kwatra, described spring as a season symbolizing renewal, positivity, and celebration. He said the gathering reflected those values, emphasizing that the occasion was not merely a calendar event but a celebration of shared cultural heritage and togetherness.

“Today, I am especially happy to see so many young people here. You are at the beginning of your journeys, full of potential and promise. It is important that while you move forward, you also remain connected to your cultural roots and heritage,” he said. “Our traditions, our culture, and our values are priceless. They define who we are. The younger generation carries this forward, and it is essential that this connection remains strong.”

also installed thousands of busts and statues of Indian icons in more than 160 countries to honor excellence and cultural contributions.

The event featured remarks from several community leaders representing diverse traditions within the Indian diaspora.

Dr. Harbhajan Ajrawat, speaking on behalf of the Sikh community, described Vaisakhi as both a harvest festival and a deeply spiritual occasion. “When we celebrate Vaisakhi, we are celebrating the universe. We are celebrating and extending our gratitude to the universe that has given us those harvests,” he said.

He also highlighted its historical significance, noting that in 1699 Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa, a collective rooted in “courage, equality and selfless sacrifice,” calling the moment both “historical” and “transformational.”

Sheetal Kothari, representing Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, spoke about the organization’s focus on inner transformation through “wisdom, meditation, selfless service.” She described her association with the mission as “cultural, spiritual, and personal,” and credited the teachings of Shrimad Rajchandra for making Jain



Indian Ambassador to the United States, Vinay Kwatra, addressing the gathering on April 19, 2026, at India House, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

Ambassador Kwatra also highlighted the global achievements of the Indian diaspora, noting that their contributions continue to enhance India’s standing worldwide.

“Your achievements bring immense pride. Whether in the United States or elsewhere, your contributions strengthen India’s global presence,” he said, adding, “In every interaction we have, your accomplishments are acknowledged with pride. You represent not just yourselves, but also the strength and potential of India.”

A video presentation showcased the work of ICCR in promoting India’s cultural heritage internationally. The organization engages global audiences through music, dance, art, yoga, languages, traditional knowledge, crafts, and cuisine. With 38 cultural centers worldwide and 11 offices in India, ICCR facilitates cross-cultural exchange and learning. It has

philosophy accessible and relevant, particularly to younger generations.

Dr. Ali Akbar Sohagpurwala reflected on the diversity of spring festivals in India and expressed a sense of nostalgia. “I miss celebrating them in India. It’s very different when you celebrate back home, and then when you do here. I wish we could go back home every year to celebrate them,” he said.

Abdullah Abdullah, a founding member of the Aligarh Alumni Association, emphasized the importance of community-building through cultural engagement. He noted the growth of the South Asian community since the 1970s and said, “Now there are lots of organizations representing various part of India, and events like these provides a vital opportunity, to know each other and celebrate our diverse heritage.”

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# Global Innovations in Robotic Surgery Take Centre Stage at Miami Awards



KS International Innovation Awards 2026 event in Miami. (Photo courtesy by Vattikuti Foundation)

SAH Staff Reporter

In a sign of how rapidly surgical science is being reshaped by technology, the Vattikuti Foundation this week concluded the KS International Innovation Awards 2026, spotlighting advances that are steadily redefining the way complex procedures are performed across the world.

Held annually, the awards—instituted in 2015 in memory of Krishnaswamy Subrahmaniam—have evolved into a key global platform for recognizing breakthroughs in robotic-assisted surgery. This year's edition brought

together a diverse pool of surgeons, researchers and innovators, reflecting the widening scope of the discipline.

Winners were selected after a rigorous evaluation by an international jury that included David Neal, Rajeev Kumar and Sherry M. Wren, who assessed entries for originality, clinical relevance and real-world applicability.

Among the top recognitions, Federico Piramide was awarded in the Technology Track for using immersive virtual environments to enhance surgical planning, while Federico Lavagno secured top honors in the Procedure Track

for a minimally invasive nephroureterectomy technique. Indian surgeon Kalayarasan Raja of Jawaharlal Institute of Post-graduate Medical Education and Research was named runner-up for a complex robotic hepatectomy approach. The People's Choice Award went to Atanu Kumar Pal of Aster Medcity.

Speaking on the broader implications, Abhinav Vattikuti, vice president of the Foundation, said the scale and diversity of current innovation marked “a decisive shift” in how robotic surgery is being imagined and deployed globally, highlighting the growing convergence of technology, data and clinical expertise to address real-world challenges.

Echoing this, Mahendra Bhandari, CEO of the Foundation, said the changes underway were “not incremental” but signaled a fundamental reworking of the surgical continuum—from planning and execution to recovery. The larger challenge, he added, lies in ensuring that these advances translate into safer procedures, better outcomes and wider access across varied healthcare settings.

As robotic surgery expands beyond niche applications, the awards underscore a clear trend: innovation is no longer confined to the operating room—it is reshaping the entire ecosystem of care.

# Austin Mandir Groundbreaking Begins

SAH Staff Reporter

The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha held a traditional bhumi puja, or land sanctification ceremony, for a new Hindu temple in Austin, drawing Indian-American community members, officials and local leaders.

The ceremony marks the formal blessing of the site before construction begins on the mandir, a project community members say reflects the rapid growth of Central Texas' Hindu population.

hubs for promoting harmony and ensuring our shared heritage continues to thrive in a global context,” he said.

The ceremony featured Vedic chants led by BAPS swamis, symbolic ground-breaking rituals involving community members and dignitaries, and a presentation outlining the temple's future role in cultural outreach and youth engagement.

Sessions' presence underscored local support for the project, organizers said, as Austin's Indian-



BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha leaders with Consul General Manjunath and U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions. (Photo courtesy: X@India in Houston)

India's Consul General in Houston, D.C. Manjunath, and U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions attended the event and participated in the rituals.

Speaking at the gathering, Manjunath said spiritual centers play a key role in preserving cultural traditions and strengthening community ties among the Indian diaspora.

“Centers like these are more than just buildings; they are vital

American community continues to expand alongside the city's emergence as a major technology hub.

Community members said the temple will provide a dedicated space for worship, volunteer activities and social services, addressing a long-standing need in the region.

Construction on the mandir is expected to begin in the coming months, following the completion of preliminary formalities.

# India Growth in Focus at Georgia Tech

SAH Staff Reporter

India's rising economic profile and its expanding partnership with the United States took center stage at Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business, where India's Consul General in Atlanta addressed undergraduate international business students this week.

Speaking to a packed classroom, the diplomat outlined how the India-U.S. relationship has evolved beyond traditional diplomacy into a broad-based economic

and technological alliance, driven by trade, innovation and strategic cooperation.

The Consul General said India's recent growth has been underpinned by structural reforms and flagship economic programs, pointing to the country's rapid “digital empowerment” as a key driver of inclusion and efficiency. He noted that India's use of technology in governance and public services has helped streamline processes and expand access across sectors.

Highlighting trade and investment, the envoy said bilateral commerce continues to grow, supported by improving ease of doing business and expanding opportunities for U.S. firms in India. He also described India as an emerging hub for innovation, citing its digital-first approach and expanding role in global technology ecosystems.

On the global stage, the Consul General said India is increasingly seen as a reliable partner in supply chains and a stabilizing force in the international economic order.

Beyond macroeconomic trends, the diplomat offered students an overview of the consulate's role in fostering ties between India and the southeastern United States, including facilitating cultural engagement and supporting commercial partnerships.

The session concluded with a question-and-answer segment, with students raising issues ranging from global market volatility to geopolitical strategy. Faculty members said the discussion provided practical insights into doing business in one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.

# NYC Tech Talks

SAH Staff Reporter

India's push for technology sovereignty and self-reliance took center stage at a high-level roundtable convened by the Consulate General of India in New York in partnership with IIT Bombay and the IIT Bombay Heritage Foundation.

Titled “Shaping India's Future through Emerging Technologies,” the event brought together academic leaders, policymakers and diplomats to discuss how innovation-driven growth can underpin India's long-term development goals.

Delivering the keynote, Shireesh Kedare, director of IIT Bombay, outlined a strategic roadmap centered on homegrown innovation. He stressed that building domestic capabilities in critical sectors would be essential to achieving the government's “Viksit Bharat” vision of a developed India by 2047.

Among the speakers, Shih-Fu Chang, dean of engineering at Columbia Engineering, offered perspectives on the rapidly evolving



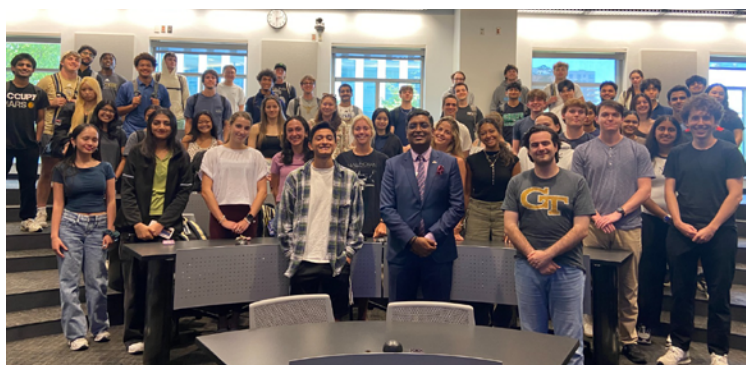
(Photo courtesy: X@India in New York)

global engineering landscape and the role of academic collaboration in shaping future technologies.

India's Consul General in New York, Binaya Srikanta Pradhan, highlighted the growing depth of India-U.S. technology partnerships, noting that collaboration in areas such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors and clean energy is becoming increasingly central to bilateral ties.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks from Upendra Bhandarkar, dean of alumni and corporate relations at IIT Bombay.

Participants said the roundtable served as a bridge between India's premier academic institutions and the global technology ecosystem, with discussions focusing on how emerging sectors could shape India's trajectory on the world stage.



Consul General Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan with students. (Photo courtesy: X@India in Atlanta)

## Suhas Subramanyam Highlights Authenticity at IA Impact Summit

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Discussing his first electoral campaign, Subramanyam said, “The first time I ran, I didn’t know where to start.” Although he had prior campaign experience, he said he initially doubted his electoral prospects in a district with a significant Indian American population. “And we’ve never elected an Indian American or South Asian in Virginia before, certainly not the state or federal level,” he pointed out.

He added that early skepticism extended even within the community. “So when I was starting, a lot of people, the Indian Americans, thought that I was going to lose. And so many of them didn’t even vote for me, or they voted for other candidates who were South Asian when I was running,” he said. “I actually lost the South Asian vote when I ran, and I think I’ve lost it a couple of times because other South Asians want to split the vote, but I won all the other communities.”

Subramanyam highlighted the role of IA Impact in supporting candidates, noting that he drew on its resources during his campaign. He credited Aruna Miller, who was then associated with the organization, as a key mentor.

“When I was running, I worked a lot with a lot of the leadership at the time, a woman who’s now in high places, Aruna Miller, was the Director at Impact Fund, and she’s now the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, but she helped me a lot, and she was a great mentor,” he said.

Offering practical advice to prospective candidates, Subramanyam emphasized the importance of direct voter outreach. He encouraged them to knock on as many doors as possible and to “work really hard.”

Reflecting on his own campaign efforts, he said he knocked on approximately 10,000 doors in Loudoun County, Virginia. Years later, he continues to encounter residents who remember those interactions at local grocery stores and farmers markets.

He noted that sustained community engagement played a significant role in his eventual election to Congress, pointing to extensive door-to-door outreach and participation in community events as key factors in building voter connections.

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(Continued from page 1)

Anjana Bordoloi, representing the Assamese diaspora and the Assam Association of North America, highlighted efforts to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Assam and India’s Northeast. She noted the region’s richness in both “cultural heritage” and “natural resources.”

Salva Jayaraman, co-founder and chief operating officer of Business Integra, speaking on behalf of the Indian American Business Impact Group and southern India, attributed the success of Indians in the United States to resilience. He said it stems from the “pain” they have endured and thanked the Embassy for its continued support of the diaspora’s growth and achievements.

Delivering the vote of thanks, Community Affairs Minister Jagmohan underscored the significance of spring festivals across India, including Holi, Vaisakhi, Bihu, Ugadi, and Vishu. “Spring is a season of renewal across various cultures in our side of the world,” he said, adding that these traditions reflect unity and reinforce a sense of shared identity within the diaspora.

At the celebrations, Savita Jain, Director of Public Relations at JAINA, served as emcee. The cultural program featured a musical performance by singer Anika Saikia, who presented popular film songs and paid tribute to Asha Bhosle. Members from Kalanidhi Group and Rupohi Group performed Kuchipudi dance and Bihu dance respectively.

# Jenifer Rajkumar Introduces Ethics and Transparency Reform Package

SAH Staff Reporter

New York Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar has introduced a broad package of “good government, ethics, and transparency” legislation aimed at strengthening oversight and reinforcing public accountability. The measures are designed to ensure that government serves the “people,” not the “powerful.”

According to a statement from her office, the legislative package targets practices that have contributed to declining public trust, including “no-bid contracts, relationships between contractors and public officials, unauthorized contractors receiving public money, undisclosed lobbying pressure, and big-money influence from corporations doing business with the government.”

The proposal follows a series of “scandals and improprieties” linked to government contracting, amid growing public demand for greater accountability. The statement noted that the bills seek to expose “insider dealings, strengthen safeguards around public contracting,” and reaffirm that the use of taxpayer funds is a public trust.

**“I HAVE PERSONALLY SEEN HOW CORRUPTION AT THE STATE AND CITY LEVELS STALLS GOVERNMENT AND STANDS IN THE WAY OF HELPING PEOPLE. THAT IS WHY I AM PROUD TO INTRODUCE THIS ANTI-CORRUPTION PACKAGE. NEW YORKERS ARE SICK OF BACKROOM DEALS, INSIDER INFLUENCE, AND A GOVERNMENT THAT TOO OFTEN SERVES THE WELL-CONNECTED INSTEAD OF THE PUBLIC.”**

Assemblywoman Rajkumar said, “I have personally seen how corruption at the state and city levels stalls government and stands in the way of helping people. That is why I am proud to introduce this anti-corruption package. New Yorkers are sick of backroom deals, insider influence, and a government that too often serves the well-connected instead of the public.”

She added that the legislation addresses the “loopholes and hidden dealings” that allow misconduct to persist, including no-bid contracts, undisclosed conflicts of interest, unauthorized vendors, opaque lobbying practices, and political contributions tied to government business.

“I am fighting to restore trust in government, because public service must always belong to the people,” she said.

The package includes several key measures:



NY Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar.  
(Photo Courtesy: Assemblywoman’s office)

One bill, A10881, seeks to limit the use of no-bid contracts by establishing clear and narrowly defined conditions under which they may be issued. Another measure, A10461, would require New York City contractors to disclose any personal or professional relationships with public officials.

A third bill, A10462, aims to prevent payments to unauthorized contractors under New York City agreements. It would require that all vendors and subcontractors be properly vetted and approved before receiving public funds. The package also includes A9559, which focuses on lobbying transparency. The bill would require lobbyists to disclose their positions on specific legislation, including amendments and appropriations.

Another measure, A826, addresses a campaign finance loophole involving businesses that receive city contracts. Existing law limits contributions from such firms to \$400 if contracts exceed \$5,000. However, contracts structured on a retainer basis are sometimes recorded at nominal amounts, such as \$1 or \$0, when the final cost is not yet determined. This has allowed firms with potentially lucrative agreements to make larger political donations. The bill would apply contribution limits to any contract with the potential to exceed \$5,000.

## Harvard Honors Sayani



Versatile actor Sayani Gupta has been named the South Asian “Person of the Year” by the Harvard University South Asian Association, an annual honor recognizing individuals whose work has significantly influenced global perceptions of South Asian talent and identity. (Photo Courtesy: Sayani Gupta x account)



## South Asia Notes

**Elizabeth Roche**

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## To New Beginnings...

After a reset in ties with Bangladesh, India is aiming to rework its relations with Nepal during a visit by Prime Minister Balendra Shah. There are no dates yet for the visit, but India has already begun preparations, given the importance of ties, especially given the depth of people-to-people ties and the open border between the two countries.

Shah took office as prime minister last month after the Gen Z uprising ousted the K.P. Sharma Oli government in September last year. An interim government headed by Sushila Karki, a former chief justice, held power in the interim.

In several ways, the transition in Nepal mirrored the changes in Bangladesh, not least because the change in Bangladesh, too, was youth-driven. But New Delhi wasn't as lucky with the Bangladeshi interim government as it seems to have been with the Nepalese one. Ties were strained considerably on many counts, including India giving shelter to the ousted Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Hindu minorities being targeted in Bangladesh. It has taken considerable patience and effort to set ties on an even keel again.



(Photo created with AI)

**AT 35, SHAH IS THE YOUNGEST NEPAL PRIME MINISTER. INDIA WILL NEED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE FACT THAT NEPAL'S POLITICS IS NOW YOUTH-DRIVEN, AND IT MUST FASHION ITS STRATEGY ACCORDINGLY TO RE-ESTABLISH ITSELF AS NEPAL'S PARTNER OF CHOICE.**

Consolidation of India-Nepal ties after a period of drift is also of vital importance. At 35, Shah is the youngest Nepal Prime Minister. India will need to be sensitive to the fact that Nepal's politics is now youth-driven, and it must fashion its strategy accordingly to re-establish itself as Nepal's partner of choice.

As the leader of a youthful country, 16- to 25-year-olds make up approximately 20.8 per cent of Nepal's population, with 40.68 per cent in the 16–40-year bracket – Shah will have to show results to his people – and fast. Notice that barely a month in office, he has cracked down on corruption among the old generation of politicians. His first cabinet meeting unveiled an ambitious 100-point reform agenda underlining his determination to curb corruption, overhaul public institutions and modernise state delivery of public services.

That Shah is likely to make his India visit before China will be noted with satisfaction. But India must be ready to step up its economic partnership with Nepal. An aspirational Nepalese youth will be looking for jobs and a better quality of life. India must show itself as a willing partner to achieve these goals. Especially since China, with deeper pockets, is determinedly making inroads into India's periphery – including Nepal and Bangladesh.

(Views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of South Asian Herald)

## South Asia Round Up

### Freedom250 Campaign Launched in Delhi



(Photo courtesy: X@US Embassy in India)

The United States kicked off its #Freedom250 celebrations in India with a vibrant launch event in the capital, led by Sergio Gor, U.S. Ambassador to India and Special Envoy to South and Central Asia.

The initiative featured specially designed auto-rickshaws displaying images of the U.S. President and iconic American symbols, marking the start of a nationwide outreach campaign.

"Thrilled to kick off the #Freedom250 celebrations from New Delhi... previewing vibrant autos... to mark the start of this special journey," Gor said at the launch.

The campaign, which will travel across multiple Indian cities, commemorates 250 years of American independence while highlighting the growing strength and dynamism of U.S.-India ties. Organizers said the initiative will combine cultural engagement and public outreach to deepen bilateral connections.

### No More Pensions for MPs

In a sweeping move to curb political privileges, the Parliament of Sri Lanka earlier this year voted overwhelmingly to abolish pensions for Members of Parliament, marking one of the most consequential governance reforms under President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

The legislation, titled Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Act, No. 5 of 2026, was passed with 154 lawmakers in favor and just two opposed in the 225-member House. The law repeals the nearly five-decade-old Parliamentary Pensions Law No. 1 of 1977, ending pension entitlements for current, former and qualifying MPs, and halting payments already in effect.

The reform fulfils a key election pledge by Dissanayake's National People's Power government, which campaigned on reducing elite benefits amid lingering public anger over Sri Lanka's economic crisis. Previously, legislators qualified for lifetime pensions after only five years of service, in stark contrast to ordinary public servants. Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakkara defended the move, saying public trust had eroded over whether lawmakers deserved such benefits.

While widely welcomed as a step toward fiscal discipline, critics including opposition leader Sajith Premadasa warned the decision could discourage broader political participation.

The repeal remains in force and is seen as a defining early measure in the government's anti-corruption drive.

### Balen's 100-Day Blitz: Can Nepal Keep Up?



(Photo courtesy: X@Balendra Shah)

Nepal's new government led by Balendra Shah has rolled out an ambitious 100-day governance program, positioning it as a performance benchmark for rapid reforms, even as early signs point to execution challenges.

Approved within days of the cabinet's formation, the 100-point roadmap focuses on anti-corruption, depoliticization, digital service delivery and youth-centric reforms. The plan mandates strict timelines – ranging from 24 hours to 100 days – for each deliverable.

Key measures include investigations into the assets of top politicians since the 1990s, reopening of stalled corruption cases, and mandatory public asset declarations by ministers, a step already initiated. The government has also moved to depoliticize campuses and bureaucracy by banning party-affiliated student unions and restricting political activity among civil servants. On service delivery, the program promises doorstep

access to passports, citizenship certificates and driving licenses through a proposed "Government Courier Service." Social measures include enforcing 10% free beds in private hospitals and launching women-only "Blue Bus" transport services.

However, progress remains uneven. By mid-April, only a handful of targets had been completed, with delays attributed to bureaucratic resistance and resource constraints. Analysts say the coming weeks will test whether the reform-heavy agenda can translate into tangible governance gains.

### Trump Praises Sandhu



(Photo courtesy: Truth Social)

US President Donald Trump congratulated Taranjit Singh Sandhu on his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, highlighting his long diplomatic career and contribution to strengthening bilateral ties. Trump said Sandhu "has always shown deep commitment to strengthening the US-India relationship" and wished him success "in leading Delhi's progress and furthering global ties."

Reacting to President's post, Sandhu said, "I was merely performing my job, and it is definitely a matter of satisfaction and happiness that President Trump, in his tweet, acknowledged that. He also said that, "We were able to successfully, under the guidance of PM Modi's leadership, convert the relationship into a partnership."

A 1988-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Sandhu brings over 35 years of experience in global diplomacy. He served in key postings, including Washington, DC, Moscow, and Frankfurt, and represented India at the United Nations. As Ambassador to the United States from 2020 to 2024, he played a pivotal role in advancing defense, technology and trade cooperation with India. Sandhu retired in 2024 and was appointed Delhi's Lieutenant Governor in March 2026.

### Bhutan Tourism Gets Rail Boost



(Photo courtesy: X@IRCTC)

Positioning Bhutan as the centerpiece of a new cross-border travel circuit, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched the "Bharat-Bhutan Mystic Mountain Tour", targeting growing demand for curated Himalayan experiences among Indian travelers.

The 13-night, 14-day itinerary, departing May 5 from Delhi's Safdarjung Railway Station, combines luxury rail travel with guided road journeys into Bhutan, offering structured access to a destination known for its tightly managed tourism model. The tour is operated aboard the Bharat Gaurav Deluxe AC Tourist Train, IRCTC's premium service designed for all-inclusive travel.

Bhutan accounts for nearly half the itinerary, with six days dedicated to Thimphu, Punakha and Paro. Travelers will visit key cultural landmarks such as Tashicho Dzong, Punakha Dzong and the Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest), alongside curated local experiences. Entry into Bhutan is facilitated via Hasimara in West Bengal, followed by a road transfer to Phuentsholing, where IRCTC manages immigration formalities.

The Indian segment functions as a precursor, covering Guwahati, Shillong and Cherrapunji, including visits to the Kamakhya Temple and Meghalaya's waterfalls, before the onward journey to Bhutan.

The train accommodates around 150 passengers across AC I, II and III classes, with boarding available from multiple north Indian cities including Ghaziabad, Kanpur, Lucknow and Varanasi.

The package is priced between ₹1.16 lakh (\$1,390) and ₹1.41 lakh (\$1,690) per person, depending on class. The cost includes rail travel, three-star hotel stays, vegetarian meals, sightseeing, insurance and tour management.

The launch reflects IRCTC's broader push to position rail tourism as a premium, experience-led segment, while leveraging Bhutan's appeal as a high-value, low-volume destination increasingly sought after by Indian tourists.

Editorial



# The Global Economy Impacted By A War

It does not take a genius to figure out that in an inter-dependent world, a conflict or a full-fledged war in any part of the world will have its ripple effects. And what has been happening in the Middle East had economic disaster written all over it from the moment the first bombs and missiles landed on Iran.

Now into the second month, Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors have been sufficiently rattled as evidenced from the alarms raised at the 2026 Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington DC. The warning could not have been more blunt: that the international system may be in for a global recession if energy and supply disruptions continue to drag on because of the conflict.

The IMF pegged the growth outlook for the United States at 2.3 percent, down by 0.1 percentage point from January; a slower economic growth for the Eurozone of 1.1 percent which is already reeling under high energy prices in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, still showing no serious signs of ending.

But the worst affected are the emerging market economies, especially the developing ones in South Asia, that are being whipped by the squeeze of energy supplies on the one hand and dwindling remittances of its labor force residing in the war-torn areas. These economies appear to be trapped from all sides: no social cushion from within only to be compounded by the near certain lack of ready funding from international organizations hamstrung by lack of ready donors from the developed world.

**ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL DEMANDS OF IRAN FOR A LASTING CEASEFIRE AND PEACE IS THAT OF WAR REPARATION WITH ONE ESTIMATE PUTTING THAT FIGURE AT AROUND US\$ 270 BILLION. DOWN THE LINE AN ESTIMATE WILL BE ARRIVED AT ALONG WITH WHO IS GOING TO GIVE WHAT, INCLUDING A GENEROUS ASSISTANCE FROM INTERNATIONAL LENDING AGENCIES.**

The forecasts for the future do not paint a rosy picture. Far from it. The most optimistic growth of 3.1 GDP growth for 2026 is contingent on the price of oil staying stable at around US\$ 82 a barrel; global growth falling to 2.5 percent if oil tops US\$ 100 a barrel; and a worst-case scenario of 2 percent growth in the face of supply disruptions which would then be a "close call for global recession."

Even more heart rending is that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has estimated that more than 32 million people could be plunged into poverty as a result of the Iran war, a "triple shock" involving energy, food and weaker economic growth. The impact will be uneven across regions.

"You will see an enduring impact, especially in the poorer countries, where you push people back into poverty. That's the most heartbreaking element. The people being pushed into poverty are very often the people who used to be in poverty, got out of it, and are now being pushed back," says Alexander De Croo, administrator of UNDP.

One of the principal demands of Iran for a lasting ceasefire and peace is that of war reparation with one estimate putting that figure at around US\$ 270 billion. Down the line an estimate will be arrived at along with who is going to give what, including a generous assistance from international lending agencies. But in all the economic price tags, the architects of destruction and construction invariably forget the human dimension of a conflict and the lost dreams of young souls that simply cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

Opinion



**Mahendra Ved**

Senior Journalist and Columnist

# TRPs Over Tragedy: The Business of War Coverage

Nothing about the bride or groom matters, goes an Indian saying, if the priest performing the marriage is fed well. War in the drawing room via TV and social media posts has come to be that, no matter how its victims suffer. It is exciting entertainment.

The advent of television was long ago, but watching a conflict on television, in your drawing room or bedroom, began a little over 35 years ago, to be precise, on January 17, 1991. The experience was like watching a movie's first day, first show, in the years gone by. An entire world awaited reporting by Peter Arnett on CNN from the Al-Rasheed Hotel in Saddam Husain's Baghdad.

That the much-hated and targeted dictator had ensured Arnett's presence facilitated unparalleled, albeit heavily censored, reportage didn't matter to the viewers, not even to those who defeated Iraq, but missed killing Saddam. Arnett won fame and the Pulitzer Prize, but was also criticized over reports on civilian casualties caused by US bombing. It had led to accusations that he was a conduit for Iraqi propaganda. No empathy for the victims beyond a few tears and tch-tch-tch expression of agony. Parallels can be drawn between 1993 in Iraq and 2026 in Iran.

The war has since been part of the global television fare. The footage, supposedly distributed free globally to media outlets, ensures that only that version, by and large, is carried as 'truth.' The other side only makes 'claims.' Social media and various streams have only added to this imbalance.

A little-known Hindi TV channel recently showed its anchor tearing his hair, actually, before the camera and audiences, yelling why India was 'ignored' by all sides, especially the USA, for the role of playing a mediator. His anger betrayed the level to which some of the TV channels have descended to get eyeballs. India has 908 private satellite TV channels, of which approximately 393 deal in news and current affairs channels, catering to diverse audiences in dozens of languages.



(Photo created with AI)

Mercifully, as it happens before cricket tournaments, wide-screen 'smart' television sets and advanced over-the-top (OTT) services dealing exclusively with the ongoing conflict have yet to be advertised.

During the earlier round of the Gulf conflict, and much less so, in India's very own four-day "Operation Sindoor" against Pakistan, visuals of the flight of drones and missiles became strong reminders of the mythical. Arrows and maces multiplying on silent chanting by the warriors who fought the battles in Lanka in the Ramayana serials, and at the 18-day Mahabharat fought at Kurukshetra. The parallels from the two epics were there to see, perceive, and enjoy.

However, it would be unfair to single out the Indian TV channels or, for that matter, the parallels between the mythical arrows and the drones and missiles of today. The penchant for watching a war in progress, and the war itself, no matter the loss of innocent lives, hospitals and school children included, and the destruction of ancient cultural heritage, is actually universal.

*(Views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of South Asian Herald)*

## South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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# Hashmi, Jayapal Highlight Surge in AAPI Hate and Immigration Challenges

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

At a time of rising concern over hate crimes and immigrant rights, Virginia Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi underscored the deep connections between anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-Asian hate, calling for greater awareness and collective action.

“We are at a moment when conversations about immigrant rights and [Asian American and Pacific Islander] AAPI safety can't be separated, because they are so deeply connected,” Hashmi said during the closing plenary session titled “Immigrant Rights and Fighting Hate,” at the 2026 Impact Summit, on April 20, in Washington DC.

Hashmi, the first Muslim woman elected to statewide office in the United States and the first South Asian American elected statewide in Virginia, pointed to data documenting more than 13,000 incidents of anti-Asian hate in recent years. She noted that nationally, over half of AAPI adults reported experiencing hate or hate-related crimes in the past year.

She emphasized that hate is not isolated but is shaped by broader political and social forces. “It's fueled by the same anti-immigrant rhetoric and the policies that are targeting so many of our immigrant communities. And we've seen this pattern throughout American history,” she said, citing examples such as exclusion laws targeting Chinese Americans and the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. “We're seeing it again now in heightened and more aggressive forms,” she added.

Hashmi noted that portraying immigrants as threats reinforces the perception of AAPI communities as perpetual outsiders, regardless of how long they have lived in the United States. “But, for many of our families, it's generational,” she said.

Highlighting advocacy efforts, she pointed to coalitions such as the Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights, which brings together organizations across racial and ethnic



Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Ghazala Hashmi, and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) speaking at the closing plenary at the 2026 Impact Summit, on April 20, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)



lines to advocate for dignity, equity, and quality of life. These groups have been active in defending birthright citizenship, challenging voter suppression, and promoting policies that protect families.

Hashmi also pointed to growing political representation among AAPI leaders in Virginia. “I'm really delighted to share that in Virginia, we have growing political power,” she said, recalling that she was once the only AAPI member in the Virginia Senate. She noted that subsequent elections brought in leaders such as Suhas Subramanyam, Kannan Srinivasan and Saddam Salim.

She also highlighted the formation of an AAPI caucus in 2020 in response to rising anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic. “What began with just four members is now a caucus of 10, and that's the result of the work that so many of you have been engaged in,” she said.

Reflecting on her own political journey, Hashmi referenced the conference theme “We Belong” and recalled skepticism she faced during her 2019 campaign. She recalled people telling her “You're not going to win. No one's going to vote for someone with a name like this, Ghazala Hashmi, of all names,” adding “So that inspired me to have a

tagline during that campaign, “Ghazala Hashmi is an American.” She said the message resonated widely, particularly with young people who struggle with questions of identity and belonging.

Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal also addressed the session, reflecting on her outreach during the 2024 presidential election. “I was traveling through swing states like Pennsylvania and Michigan with IA impact during the 2024 presidential election, working to do everything that we possibly could to prevent the reality that we are all now living in today,” she said.

Jayapal noted that immigration was a central concern in many campaign discussions, particularly fears about policy changes and threats to legal pathways. “It is a deeply painful time to be an immigrant, to be in a mixed status family, and if some in our Indian American community felt that Indians would be spared, I think we've all seen that is far, far, from the truth,” she added.

She also highlighted instances of rhetoric targeting Indian Americans, including criticism of Vivek Ramaswamy based on religion, as well as derogatory remarks about H1B workers. “We are dealing constantly with the toxic, xenophobic, racist rhetoric that

questions our patriotism and tells us to go back to our own country no matter how long we may have lived here,” she said.

“All of this has led to more danger, more exclusion, more hate crimes against so many of our community members across the country,” she added.

Jayapal also discussed a new initiative, Resistance Lab, which provides virtual training on nonviolent strategies to respond to threats to democratic institutions. Over the past year, the program has conducted 14 sessions and trained more than 30,000 participants across all 50 states. Executive Director of ACLU Minnesota, Deepinder Mayell, said recent developments in his state reflect broader national trends. He described what he called an unprecedented use of executive authority, citing reports of racial profiling, and the targeting of protesters.

“We started seeing immigration actions that look like nothing we have seen before, reports of racial profiling, community harassment, excessive force, and then the targeting of protesters and observers, wild use of pepper spray, indiscriminate pointing of semi-automatic weapons, the deployment of tear gas in residential neighborhoods,” he said.

Manjusha Kulkarni, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate, spoke about the need to transform “collective pain to collective power,” citing recent incidents of anti-AAPI hate in Texas and Virginia. She noted that such incidents led her to launch the organization in 2020.

“And these are the type of incidents that caused us to start stop AAPI hate back in 2020 we saw that with the COVID-19 pandemic that thousands of our community members were experiencing anti-Asian hate at that time,” she said, adding that the issue has since expanded and is affecting AAPI communities in “new and really horrific ways.”

Civil rights attorney Sunu Chandy also spoke at the session, which included a cultural performance by the University of Maryland's Indian classical dance team, UMD Moksha.

## Indian American Leaders Celebrate SAH Inaugural Edition



Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Ghazala Hashmi



Congressman Suhas Subramanyam



Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal



From left, New Jersey Assemblyman Balvir Singh; Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Ghazala Hashmi; Virginia State Senator, Kannan Srinivasan; Councilwoman Sangeeta Doshi of Cherry Hill, New Jersey; and Editor-in-Chief of South Asian Herald, T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, with the South Asian Herald inaugural print edition on April 20, 2026, in Washington DC. (All photos courtesy: South Asian Herald)

# IMF Urges South Asia to Use Fiscal Buffers Prudently



Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the Asia and Pacific Department, on April 16, at the press briefing of the Asia-Pacific Department during the Spring Meetings 2026, in IMF, Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged South Asian nations to deploy their fiscal buffers judiciously, emphasizing that countries such as India have demonstrated “prudent” fiscal management.

“I think they [South Asian nations] have to use their buffers very wisely. Countries like India have been very prudent on fiscal. They have accumulated buffers. They have to allow price signals to work and use their buffers in an efficient way because if this shock intensifies, they will need the buffers,” said Director of Asia Pacific Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the Asia and Pacific Department, IMF, in response to a question from South Asian Herald on policy measures to mitigate the impact of prolonged volatility in global commodity markets amid the conflict in Iran.

Srinivasan, who was joined by Deputy Director Thomas Helbling at the press briefing, on April 16, at IMF 2006 Spring Meetings, underscored the importance of targeted support measures. He stressed that assistance should be directed toward the most vulnerable populations and viable businesses. “Expand your buffers in such a way that you give it to those who really need it,” he added.

Addressing the impact of the conflict on remittances, Srinivasan noted that flows have remained “pretty strong,” reflecting the continued presence of workers from India and other Asian countries in the Middle East.

“So, they’re still there. So, remittances have held up quite strongly. And one part of me tells me that given infrastructure needs to be built back again in these countries, I think remittances are likely to stay strong. That’s my gut feeling,” he said.

On India’s economic outlook, Srinivasan said the IMF has marginally raised its growth forecast by 0.1 percentage point, citing strong momentum entering 2026. He also pointed to tariff reductions from 50 percent to 10 percent and tax reforms implemented last year as contributing factors.

“So that gives a fillip to the economy activity in addition to the tax reforms, which they’ve done last year,” he said, cautioning that an escalation or prolonged duration of the energy shock could disrupt growth. “But if this intensifies, it’ll get worse for all countries, including for India. So that’s something which you have to watch out for,” he added.

Srinivasan noted that Asia entered 2026 on a relatively strong footing, with resilient growth despite the impact of U.S. tariffs and heightened global uncertainty. However, the region’s dependence on fossil fuels and exposure to

conflict-affected areas for key commodities could amplify the negative effects of the ongoing energy shock.

“The shock is raising inflation, weakening external balances, tightening financial conditions, and narrowing policy space,” he said.

Regional growth is projected to moderate from 5 percent in 2025 to 4.4 percent in 2026 and 4.2 percent in 2027. “Advanced Asia is expected to slow as domestic demand stays soft. Emerging Asia remains a main growth engine, but the momentum is set to moderate with broad-based decelerations in China, India, and the ASEAN,” he added.

Srinivasan outlined three key risks facing the region. First, a more severe or prolonged energy shock could have uneven impacts across Asia-Pacific economies. Second, countries heavily dependent on imported energy are particularly vulnerable. Third, risks are heightened in economies with limited fiscal space, weaker energy buffers, or reliance on remittances, tourism, or fertilizer imports, a concern for parts of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Pacific Island nations.

On Nepal, Srinivasan said the IMF will continue close collaboration to support policymaking through surveillance and capacity development. Regarding Sri Lanka, he noted that despite its heavy reliance on imported energy, the country has made progress in rebuilding fiscal buffers over the past three years. Revenue as a share of GDP has doubled since the crisis, placing Sri Lanka in a better position to deliver targeted fiscal support.

In contrast, he observed that Bangladesh continues to face challenges on the revenue front. “It’s on the lower side,” he said, noting that revenue collection has declined over the past three years. He called for comprehensive reforms, including fiscal and revenue measures, financial sector rehabilitation, and exchange rate adjustments.

Srinivasan emphasized the need for stronger social safety nets across Asia to protect vulnerable populations without relying on “generalized subsidies.” He also highlighted the importance of boosting domestic demand and deepening regional integration to enhance resilience to external shocks.

Additionally, he urged investment in “alternative energy sources, energy efficiency, and power grids” to reduce long-term dependence on fuel imports.

“So, the near-term task is to absorb the shocks while preserving price signals and policy credibility. The medium-term task is to build a more resilient, more balanced, and more inclusive growth model,” he said.

## ‘INDIA’S GROWTH IS MORE THAN TWO TIMES...’



(Photo courtesy: Screenshot@IMF)

“We would see economies that have strong fundamentals, have the dynamism like India does, they will be performing better. Look at India today. India’s growth is more than two times higher than the average global growth. That comes because of the strength of fundamentals. So, we do not see a scenario under which there would be a dramatic development. Of course, there is one issue that we need to be very watchful, and it is financial stability. That for now seems to be holding relatively well. Let it be that way in the future. I can add to this. Asia is very severely impacted because of the dependency of imports, but we see Asia once again demonstrating that good performance historically is helping. That story of relentless pursuit of good policies and building strong institutions is what we see in Asia,” said IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, on April 15, during the IMF Press Briefing on the Global Policy Agenda, Spring Meetings 2026, in Washington DC.

## ‘EMERGING MARKETS ARE MORE STRESSED’



(Photo courtesy: SAH File Photo)

“The emerging markets are more stressed in some ways because they already start from a more complicated fiscal and debt situation than some of the more developed world. But please don’t think that the developed world won’t get impacted. Whichever way you think about this conflict—and everyone’s trying to figure out the length of it and the scale of impact and damage on energy facilities—it depends where that goes. But whatever you do, you’re going to get some degree of high inflation and some degree of lower growth. That’s going to happen across the system. And that’s really what is the challenge you’re describing today, in addition to the humanitarian crisis of people in countries who are impacted directly by the conflict.” World Bank President, Ajay Banga said during his address at the Atlantic Council before the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings 2026.

# India's CEA Urges Agile Fiscal Policy

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

India's Chief Economic Advisor Anantha Nageswaran emphasized the need for flexible and forward-looking policymaking as global economies navigate overlapping structural shifts, during a panel discussion at the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings 2026 in Washington, DC.

Speaking on April 16 at a session titled "Rethinking Macro Policy Frameworks for a Transforming, Shock Prone World," Nageswaran joined global economic leaders to examine whether traditional macroeconomic policy frameworks remain effective amid rapid and overlapping structural changes.

The discussion explored how fiscal, monetary, and external sector policies are being tested by shifting global dynamics, including demographic transitions, climate change, geoeconomic fragmentation, and the rise of artificial intelligence.

Highlighting India's economic outlook, Nageswaran noted that demographics continue to provide a structural advantage. He described the country's demographic profile as a "tailwind" that supports fiscal revenue growth, particularly when combined with ongoing formalization of the economy.

Addressing the growing attention around artificial intelligence, he cautioned against overestimating its immediate impact on labor markets. Referring to recent market developments, he said, "I think we probably are justified in thinking that much of the hype and the fears about AI could be overstated, and the impact on the labor market might take a long time to play out,



India's CEA Anantha Nageswaran (extreme right) speaking at the panel discussion during the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings 2026, on April 16, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

which is in a way good thing giving more time for emerging economies like India, which has a huge job creation responsibility for it to play out."

On climate change and the global energy transition, Nageswaran pointed to the fiscal challenges associated with shifting away from fossil fuels. He noted that significant upfront investments will be required for renewable energy infrastructure, while traditional revenue streams from fuel taxation may decline over time. As a result, he suggested that the transition could act as a fiscal burden in the near term, although it may eventually become beneficial in the long run.

Turning to geopolitics, Nageswaran said rising global tensions are likely to increase

government spending on security and strategic reserves. He highlighted the need for countries to build buffers in essential commodities such as crude oil, metals, and food staples, noting that such measures will add to fiscal pressures.

In this context, he underscored the importance of a more dynamic approach to policymaking. "Policy making has to become entrepreneurial in nature," he said, adding that "We should be prepared to make mistakes and not make the best, the enemy of the good in decision making. And we should be prepared to reverse them if they are reversible."

Nageswaran also outlined how India has sought to balance economic support with fiscal discipline in the post-pandemic period. He noted that India's public

debt-to-GDP ratio has declined by seven percentage points since the COVID-19 pandemic, in contrast to a global increase of about ten percentage points.

"We have therefore managed to consolidate public finances by reorienting the quality of expenditure. The ratio between revenue and capital expenditure used to be between 88 and 12," he said. "Now 22% of it is capital expenditure, which naturally has a higher multiplier, and only 78% is revenue expenditure."

He highlighted the use of technology-driven welfare delivery systems, particularly direct benefit transfers, as a key reform that has improved efficiency and reduced leakages in government spending. Additionally, he pointed to fiscal prudence as a factor in lowering

India's risk premium, noting that the spread between India's 10-year borrowing cost and U.S. Treasury yields has narrowed significantly over the past decade.

Looking ahead, Nageswaran identified the effective utilization of the demographic dividend as a central priority for emerging economies. He stressed that investments in education and skill development, especially in areas less vulnerable to automation, will be critical to sustaining growth.

He also highlighted a less discussed but increasingly important concern. "The moment we speak of demographic dividend, our minds turn to education and skilling, but we don't pay attention to the mental and emotional health dimensions which these technologies are now extracting a heavy toll out of," he said.

He added that addressing these broader social challenges will be essential to maintaining long-term productivity and fiscal stability. "Therefore, when we talk of fiscal policy and demographic dividend, it is about all these dimensions, and if we take care of them it will ensure growth is sustained, fiscal buffers are maintained, and enabling us to handle the tradeoffs," he added.

The panel also featured Laura Alfaro, Chief Economist of the Inter-American Development Bank; Olivier Blanchard, Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Philip Lane, Chief Economist of the European Central Bank; and Sarah Hunter, Chief Economist at the Reserve Bank of Australia. The session was moderated by Christian Mumssen, Director of the IMF's Strategy, Policy, and Review Department.

# India's Digital Energy Push at WB Meetings

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

At the 2026 World Bank Group Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C., India's Secretary of Finance for the Department of Economic Affairs, Anuradha Thakur, delivered keynote remarks at the "Smart, Connected, Customer-Centric: The Future of Energy with the India Energy Stack" on April 16.

In her speech, Secretary Thakur underscored the urgency of the global energy challenge, noting that hundreds of millions of people across the developing world still lack access to reliable electricity, while utilities operate under severe financial stress.

She highlighted India's remarkable transformation — from over 300 million people without electricity a decade ago to approximately 275 GW of renewable capacity today, representing more than 52 percent of total installed power

capacity — as proof that ambition, institutional reform, and the right digital architecture can fundamentally reshape an energy system.

The Secretary highlighted how the rapid growth of rooftop solar is transforming power sectors worldwide, but it also presents a structural challenge: utilities must now manage grids with millions of individually connected systems, altering how power flows are operated and priced.

Addressing this requires more than a technical fix, she pointed out noting it demands a policy and institutional response in which "energy data, financial transactions, and grid operations" can be managed seamlessly and at scale. This is the gap the India Energy Stack is designed to fill, providing open digital public infrastructure that connects "utilities, regulators, consumers, and service providers," under a single interoperable platform.

In one of its most tangible demonstrations, she noted that Indian farmers can now sell surplus solar power directly to businesses in another state, settled in real time through a mobile phone — a new economic relationship made possible by the right digital architecture.

The India Energy Stack holds significant promise as a replicable framework for developing and emerging economies worldwide. Because the IES is built on open standards rather than proprietary technology, countries at different stages of energy sector development can adapt its core principles

to their own institutional and regulatory contexts, according to a senior World Bank official.

The event signals that global energy challenges will be addressed not only through "hardware and infrastructure investment," but through the "intelligent digital architecture" that governs how energy is "accessed, financed, and traded" — and that India's experience offers the world a compelling and adaptable starting point, the official added.

The session brought together senior leaders including Executive Director for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Sri Lanka at the World Bank Group, Parameswaran Iyer; Global Director of the World Bank's Energy Practice, Demetrios Papathanasiou; Director General of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Ashish Khanna; Executive Director of REC, Prince Dhawan; and CEO and Co-founder of Networks for Humanity, Sujith Nair.



India's Secretary of Finance for the Department of Economic Affairs, Anuradha Thakur, addressing the gathering on April 16, 2026, at The World Bank in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: SAH)

# Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Teaser Is Out



A poster of Pati Patni Aur Woh Do. (Photo courtesy: Teaser Video Grab)

Rajiv Vijayakar

The makers of *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do*, T-Series and BR Studio production, have dropped the teaser of their comedy drama, promising a rollercoaster of laughter, confusion and full-blown chaos.

Revisiting the classic drama of the 'Pati-patni-aur-woh' dynamic, the teaser of *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* serves as a nostalgic dive into the universe of "patis" (husbands), leading to the latest film with a new twist. Ayushmann Khurrana leads the madness as the flustered Prajapati Pandey, whose life quickly unravels when he finds himself caught between not one, not two, but three women, played by Sara Ali Khan, Wamiqa Gabbi and Rakul Preet Singh. As the confusion snowballs into an all-out comedy of errors, Vijay Raaz enters as a cop, dialing up the chaos even further.

*Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* is directed by Mudassar Aziz is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Renu Ravi Chopra and Krishan Kumar and creatively produced by Juno Chopra. This 'joyride of emotions' is set to hit the big screen on May 15.

The madness truly began almost 50 years ago with the BR Films' 1978 classic, *Pati Patni Aur Woh*, which featured Sanjeev Kumar and Vidya Sinha as the married couple and Ranjeeta as the other woman. Parveen Babi, then

working on the banner's *The Burning Train*, made an end-cameo appearance. Based on a story by Prakash Chopra (wife of B.R. Chopra) and scripted by Kamleshwar, the film, produced and directed by B.R. Chopra, had music by Ravindra Jain and lyrics by Anand Bakshi.

In that relatively conservative era, the film featured among the top 10 hits of that year (spearheaded by four Amitabh Bachchan superhits *Muqaddar Ka Sikander*, *Don*, *Trishul* and *Kasme Vaade*) and its music was also a hit.

The reboot of the original for the new era appeared in 2019 with 'story' credited to Kamleshwar and screenplay-dialogues and direction by Mudassar Aziz. Kartik Aaryan, Bhumi Pednekar and Ananya Panday starred with Kriti Sanon doing a cameo role similar to Babi's. The film was an average success. And now we find a franchise happening, just like *Don*.

## Rebooted Films in the Millennium:

- **Don (1978-2006) Success. Now a franchise with Don 2 (2011)**
- **Victoria No. 203 (1972-2008). Disaster**
- **Judwaa (1997-2017) Hit**
- **Coolie No. 1 (1995-2021 on OTT)**

## Adland Gets Loud: Advertising Rocks Is Back

As industry festivals become more experience-driven, Advertising Rocks is carving out a distinct space at Goafest 2026 — not just as entertainment, but as a reflection of the advertising world's evolving creative identity.

Now in its fourth edition, the music platform is emerging as a cultural fixture within the festival, spotlighting talent that often remains hidden behind campaign decks and client meetings. For many in the industry, it offers a rare chance to step into the spotlight — not as marketers, but as performers.

Open to solo and duet acts, the competition will unfold across multiple rounds, culminating in a live finale at the Goa event. Shortlisted participants will also gain complimentary access to the festival; a move aimed at making the experience more inclusive and participatory.

Each category will feature four finalists, with winners decided through a mix of jury scores and audience voting — a format designed to balance credibility with crowd energy. Cash prizes add to the stakes, with ₹50,000 (about \$600) for

the solo winner and ₹1,00,000 (\$1,200) for the duet winner, alongside runner-up awards.

For Subhash Kamath, former CEO of BBH India and curator of the platform, the growing scale of Advertising Rocks reflects a deeper reservoir of untapped talent. He expects stronger participation this year, noting that the industry has long had a rich musical undercurrent waiting for the right stage.

That broader creative shift is central to how organizers view the initiative. Mohit Joshi, co-chair of the organizing committee, sees the platform as an extension of the industry's ethos — where creativity flows beyond professional boundaries into personal expression.

Co-hosted by the Advertising Agencies Association of India and The Advertising Club, Goafest 2026 will take place from May 20 to 22 at Taj Cidade De Goa Horizon.

With registrations open until April 30, Advertising Rocks is shaping into more than a competition — a signal that the business of creativity is increasingly about lived experience, not just ideas on paper.



(Photo courtesy: Organizers)

## Entertainment Round Up

### AI Powers Bhakti

Combining faith, storytelling and latest technology, T-Series has announced its entry into AI-driven content with the launch of its first AI-powered series, 'Maa Vaishno Devi Aur Unki Adbhut Gatha.'

The series based on the story of Maa Vaishno Devi released on digital platform, giving devotees a new experience of global reach. Based on the divine journey and miracles of the goddess, this series marks a major shift in the way mythological and devotional

stories are told in the digital age. All episodes have now been released on the T-Series Bhaktisagar YouTube channel, making the content instantly available to viewers worldwide.

With this, T-Series is strengthening its presence in the AI-led content space and integrating artificial intelligence into mainstream storytelling. The use of AI is expected to enhance visual storytelling, recreate mythological stories on a grand scale, and bring a new, immersive experience to audiences, especially young, digital-first audiences. (UNI)

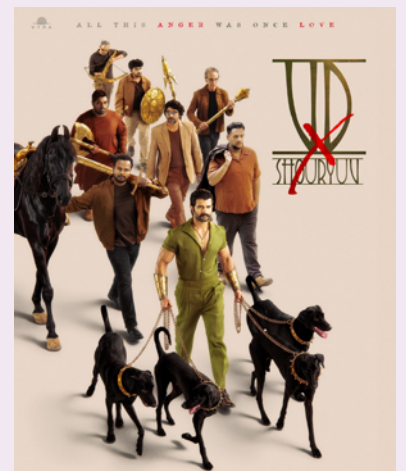
### Deverakonda's Global Roar

Vijay Deverakonda has joined forces with Shouryuv for a new project that signals a big scale, and a bold step towards global cinema.

The announcement poster shows Deverakonda walking ahead with four dogs tied with chains, while 6-7 men walk behind him. This poster is not just an announcement of a film, but it is about creating what is possible only when all these come together.

The team has also released a theme song titled "That's a Roar." The song is about never giving up, no matter what challenges life throws at you. It shows how a person, despite facing pain, struggle, and setbacks, decides to stand up again and move forward. It says that you don't need fame or name to be strong; true strength lies in never giving up. When you take even a small step in difficult times, that is your true "roar."

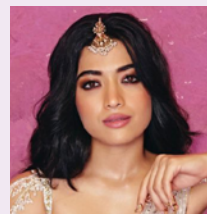
This project is set in a parallel mythological universe, a world that feels ancient yet is



(Photo courtesy: X@Vijay Deverakonda)

entirely fantastical. It's familiar yet fresh and original. It captures the spirit of mythology but refuses to be confined by its limitations. (UNI)

### Rashmika's Action Avatar



(Photo courtesy: X@Rashmika Mandanna)

Actress Rashmika Mandanna is pushing her physical limits for her upcoming action drama, "Mysaa," by undergoing intensive martial arts training in Bangkok as part of her preparation for the film.

Mandanna is embarking on the most challenging phase of her career with her upcoming pan-India action drama. The film's intense visuals have already generated considerable buzz, but now Rashmika's off-screen efforts are raising expectations even further.

Directed by debut director Ravindra Palle and produced by Unformula Films, "Mysaa" features Mandanna

playing a tribal Gond girl, a role that requires both emotional depth and immense physical strength. With stunts being created under the supervision of international action director Andy Long, the film is poised to set a new benchmark for female-led action in Indian cinema.

After listening to the film's script, she made a big decision: to fully prepare herself physically and mentally for the role. To make the action look authentic and powerful, she has gone to Bangkok, where she is participating in an intense stunt and combat bootcamp. Her daily routine there is quite demanding.

She trains for approximately eight hours every day, learning advanced stunt techniques, hand-to-hand combat, and high-speed action coordination from experts from around the world. Her training photos reveal a different side of Mandanna: extremely focused and fearless, a stark contrast to her softer roles. (UNI)

### DeepVeer Expand Family

Celebrated actors Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone announced on Sunday that they are set to welcome their second child. The Instagram post showcased their little one, Dua, clutching a positive pregnancy test, adding a charming personal touch to the reveal. There was no elaborate announcement, no long caption, just three evil eye emoticons.

On September 8, 2024, Deepika and Ranveer had announced the birth of their first baby girl with an adorable post on Instagram. In a joint post, the couple wrote, "Welcome baby girl. 8-9-2024. Deepika & Ranveer (sic)."

Having shared several years together, Padukone and Singh exchanged vows



(Photo courtesy: X@Deepika Padukone)

in Italy in 2018. In 2024, they marked a new chapter with the arrival of their daughter, Dua.

Professionally, Ranveer is riding high on the massive success of *Dhurandhar 2*, which continues to dominate the box office even a month after its release.

Padukone also has an exciting slate ahead. Up next, she will star opposite Shah Rukh Khan in "King," under the direction of Siddharth Anand. Additionally, she will be seen sharing the screen with Allu Arjun in "AA22xA6," a venture helmed by Atlee. (UNI)



## Beyond the Mat

**Mitabh Saud**

Communication expert, certified  
yoga and meditation teacher

Contact on Instagram @mitabhsaud

## Yoga As You Don't Know It

Let's be honest, yoga on social media often looks like a circus - handstands on cliffs, backbends that seem to defy everyday physics.

I understand the intention: inspire people, spread wellness. But most of us are too busy wondering if our bodies can withstand those poses and quietly file yoga under "nice to watch, not for me."

Here's the truth from someone who works a regular 9 to 5 for a living and teaches yoga for passion - nobody truly begins yoga because they saw a glamorous pose. People start because something in their life feels off. Stress. Sleep. Focus. Health. They want to feel steadier and clearer, not become a poster image.

That's why this idea of yoga beyond the mat matters. It's not about flexibility. It's about functionality. It's about how ancient yogic principles quietly shape the way you think, respond and recover. And yes, I'll use my own life as

proof, because nothing tests your "inner peace" like a full workday, peak hour traffic and an inbox that multiplies overnight.

Most people know yoga through two things: Asana and Pranayama. Movement and breath. Useful, yes, but only one slice of a much larger system. Patanjali outlined eight limbs of yoga and only one of them involves bending your body. The rest have nothing to do with touching your toes. They are about how you live, how you think and how you show up in the world.

Yama and Niyama shape how you deal with people, pressure and your own habits. Pratyahara teaches you to unplug from the noise. Dharana and Dhyana train your attention so your mind stops sprinting ahead of you. Samadhi reminds you that clarity is not a luxury reserved for monks. It is a skill.

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore these limbs in ways that fit real life. No cliffs. No contortions. Just yoga you can actually use.

## Round Up

### EPIC ROMANCE RETURNS

The upcoming romantic epic "Love & War," featuring Ranbir Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal and Alia Bhatt are scheduled to hit the theatres worldwide on January 21, 2027.

Made on a grand scale, the film is Sanjay Leela Bhansali's most ambitious romantic drama to date. With its grand story and emotional depth, the film is poised to become one of India's greatest love sagas and one of the greatest romantic films in Indian cinema.

Directed by Bhansali, known for his nuanced storytelling and stunning visual world, the film is expected to offer a perfect blend of both scale and depth. The movie set for release in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. (UNI)

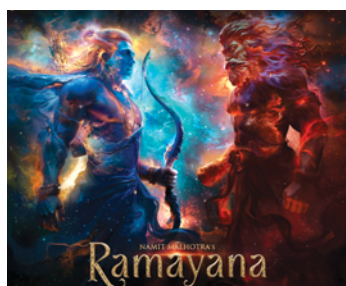


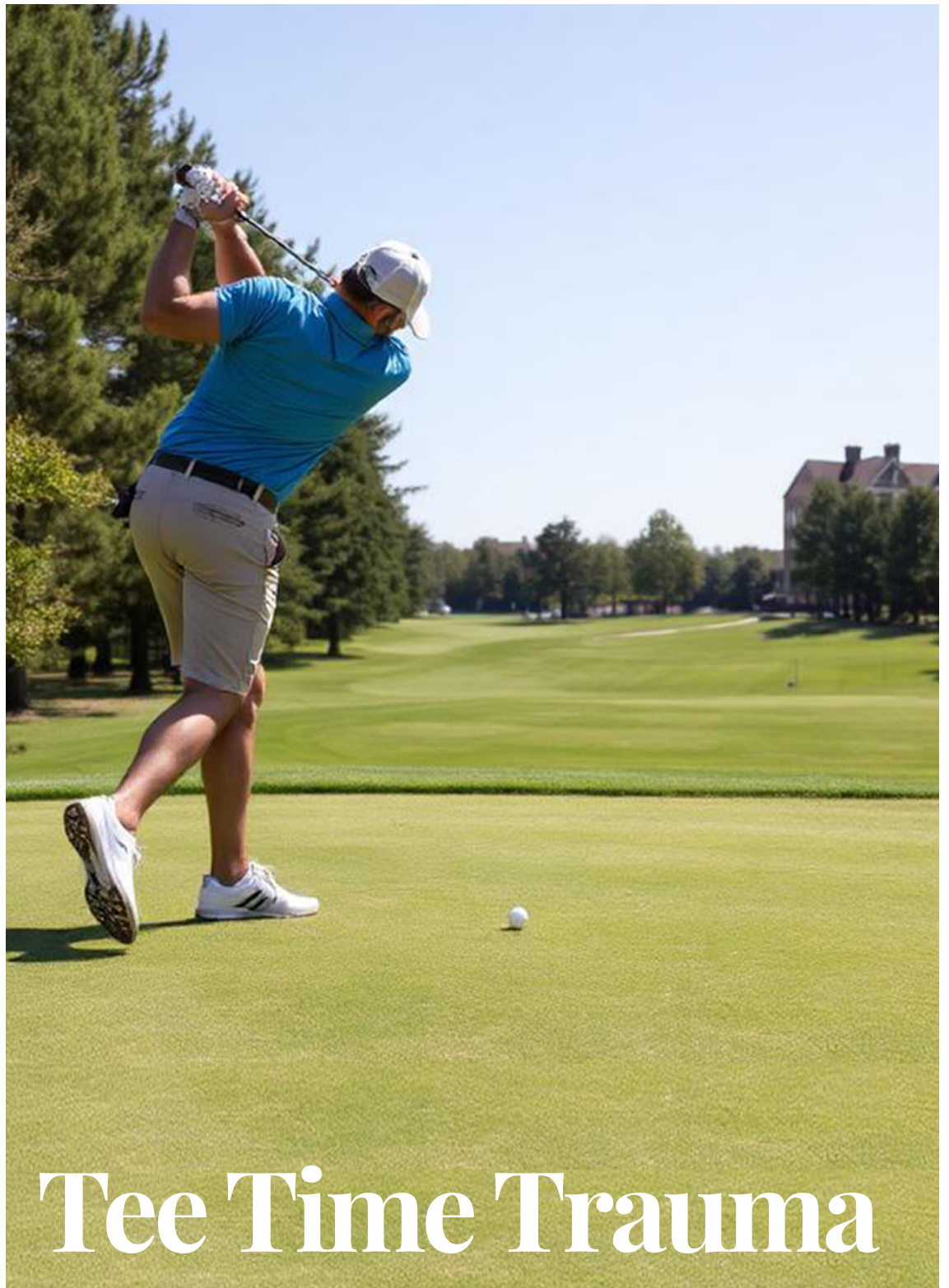
Photo courtesy: X@malhotra.namit

### RANBIR ENTERS TIME LIST

Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor has found a place in Time magazine's 100 'most influential' list. Over time, Ranbir Kapoor has emerged as one of India's finest actors. With his artistic flair, his big-screen presence, and epics like "Ramayana" and "Love and War," he is taking Indian cinema to a global stage.

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced in collaboration with Namit Malhotra's Prime Focus Studios, eight-time Oscar winner DNEG, and Yash's Monster Mind Creations, "Ramayana" is emerging as one of India's most ambitious cinematic projects, crafted on a truly global scale. Amidst the growing flurry for the film, Kapoor's look as "Ram" has provided a first glimpse into this grand world. While the film is being considered India's answer to global cinema, it also helped him land a spot on Time Magazine's "100 Most Influential People" list of 2026.

"Ramayana" brings India's epic to the international stage. Kapoor plays the pivotal role of Lord Rama. (UNI)



## Tee Time Trauma

K.S. Palachandran

My first day in government service began with hope, ambition... and a moustache that could have commanded a battalion.

Fresh from Calcutta, I arrived at the New Delhi Secretariat clutching my appointment letter like it was a visa to adulthood. I was sent to meet Retd. Col. A.K. Bakshi. Outside his room sat a liveried peon who examined me as if I were a doubtful parcel. After a long wait, I was ushered in.

The Colonel was magnificent—starched, spectacled, and armed with a handlebar moustache that looked battle-hardened. He asked questions about my education, family, and possibly my past lives. I answered sincerely, which I later realized was my first administrative mistake.

I was then handed to a section head—a babu with a monocle, speaking in a tone that could tranquilize wildlife. Just

as I began understanding nothing, the phone rang. He jumped up: "Yes sir, yes sir." Clearly, the moustache was calling.

Soon I was summoned again.

"Do you play golf?" the Colonel asked.

"No, sir."

"Saturday. Six a.m. Golf Course."

Saturday morning arrived like punishment. At 5 a.m., even my bones refused duty. After a heroic face splash and a bus ride that ignored all known stops, I reached late—already doomed.

At the golf club, a man asked, "What's your handicap?"

I proudly assured him all my limbs worked perfectly. His laughter suggested I had failed again.

Then I was told the Colonel was "in a bunker near the 4th hole."

A bunker? Had war resumed? Before I could plan a rescue, he had shifted to the 5th hole. By now, I suspected he was part rabbit.

When I found him, he was striking a tiny white ball placed on something called a "tee." Tea, I thought, was for drinking, not violence.

"Birdie," someone announced.

I was alarmed. Were we now targeting birds?

Soon came talk of eagles, holes, strokes, and putting. I nodded wisely, understanding absolutely nothing. A senior gentleman complimented the Colonel on hiring a "smart caddy." The Colonel smiled. I reconsidered my career.

Hungry, I went to the clubhouse, only to discover breakfast cost more than my future salary. Hunger retreated respectfully.

Hours later, I was told the Colonel was "in the 12th hole." By then, I had abandoned all rescue efforts.

When he finally emerged, cheerful and intact, I suggested we meet next time in an office—preferably one without bunkers and endangered birds.

He laughed. His friends laughed. Even the moustache seemed amused.

I left wiser, poorer, and deeply suspicious of golf—and government service.



# Weekly Horoscope

## 24TH APRIL - 30TH APRIL

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KOUSHIK

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(Photo: tongstocker1987 / Freepik)

### Aries (March 21 – April 19)



Love: Three of Coins  
Mood: Strength  
Career: The Hermit

A promising opportunity may allow you to showcase your abilities. A pending deal may progress, improving confidence and finances. Academic focus may strengthen long-term plans. Honest conversations in love may feel relieving. Health may require disciplined effort. Family matters need tact. Travel could face slight delays, while social visibility remains high.  
Lucky Number: 11 • Lucky Color: Blue

### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)



Love: Seven of Wands  
Mood: The Hanged Man  
Career: Two of Coins

A positive shift may uplift your mindset. A long-awaited change may finally take shape. Work may feel demanding yet productive. Property matters may support financial stability. Romance appears encouraging. A social misunderstanding may resolve smoothly. A short trip may refresh you. Delayed gains may test patience, but progress remains likely.  
Lucky Number: 8 • Lucky Color: Yellow

### Gemini (May 21 – June 20)



Love: The Magician  
Mood: The Moon  
Career: Judgement

Professional efforts may begin yielding visible results. Recognition may boost your confidence. Romantic interactions may feel lively & engaging. Work travel may prove beneficial. Finances may stabilize, supporting better planning. Property matters may move positively. Family support may remain strong. Avoid comparisons and maintain focus through mindful breaks.  
Lucky Number: 4 • Lucky Color: Green

### Cancer (June 21 – July 22)



Love: The World  
Mood: Knight of Coins  
Career: Knight of Swords

Steady progress may define your week as efforts begin to show results. Financial improvement may allow small comforts. Family interactions may bring warmth. Supporting a younger member may strengthen bonds. Social time may uplift your mood. Property or vehicle plans may move ahead. Emotional balance may help avoid complications.  
Lucky Number: 7 • Lucky Color: White

### Leo (July 23 – August 22)



Love: Temperance  
Mood: Four of Swords  
Career: Three of Wands

Opportunities may open up, encouraging you to trust your instincts. Creative ideas may support

professional growth. Additional income sources may improve finances. Romance may deepen, while singles may consider commitment. Students may gain clarity in decisions. Travel may feel refreshing. Health may remain stable with an active routine.  
Lucky Number: 3 • Lucky Color: Orange

### Virgo (August 23 – Sept. 22)



Love: The Tower  
Mood: Three of Coins  
Career: Three of Swords

Work may require careful handling as scrutiny increases. A financial inflow may ease responsibilities. A leisure trip may bring relaxation. You may manage a family event efficiently. Romance may feel comforting and stable. Students may perform well. Health may improve with better habits. Social engagements may uplift your mood.  
Lucky Number: 6 • Lucky Color: Pink

### Libra (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)



Love: Knight of Cups  
Mood: Temperance  
Career: Strength

A rewarding phase may bring positive professional outcomes. New opportunities may encourage consistency. Financial comfort may allow small indulgences. Romantic bonds may deepen emotionally. Travel may turn out to be enjoyable. Social interactions may support you. Property decisions may need caution. Balancing creativity with practicality may help you stay grounded.  
Lucky Number: 9 • Lucky Color: Blue

### Scorpio (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)



Love: Chariot  
Mood: Devil  
Career: The Fool

Workplace progress may gain momentum as efforts get noticed. Financial matters may require attention. Family discussions may need patience. Romance may improve with warmth and understanding. Mindful practices may support emotional balance. Students may benefit from focus. Financial stability may remain steady with discipline.  
Lucky Number: 2 • Lucky Color: Purple

### Sagittarius (Nov. 22 – Dec 21)



Love: Wheel of Fortune  
Mood: Two of Swords  
Career: Seven of Coins

Your positive approach may help resolve professional challenges. Financial planning may begin showing results. Family celebrations may bring joy. Travel may introduce interesting connections. Social life may become active. Health may improve gradually. Maintaining balance may help you stay productive and focused throughout the week.  
Lucky Number: 14 • Lucky Color: Red

### Capricorn (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)



Love: The Tower  
Mood: Hierophant  
Career: Five of Cups

A focused mindset may help you complete tasks successfully and gain recognition. Property options may look promising. Romance may bring positivity. Financial discipline may ensure steady progress. Family time may reduce stress. Students may find supportive opportunities. A structured routine may help maintain stable health and energy.  
Lucky Number: 1 • Lucky Color: Green

### Aquarius (Jan. 20 – Feb. 18)



Love: The Sun  
Mood: Three of Swords  
Career: Two of Cups

Career planning may take priority as you refine future goals. Business decisions may require

discretion. Travel may bring an unexpected romantic connection. Family support may remain strong. Health may need dietary awareness. Social interactions may need caution. Property or financial matters may progress positively.  
Lucky Number: 22 • Lucky Color: White

### Pisces (Feb. 19 – March 20)



Love: Knight of Wands  
Mood: Seven of Cups  
Career: Three of Coins

An ongoing task may slow slightly, requiring patience. Clear communication may help manage expectations. A new income source may support finances. Maintaining harmony at home may require diplomacy. Health may improve with mindful habits. Romance may fluctuate but can stabilize with effort. Overseas opportunities may develop.  
Lucky Number: 7 • Lucky Color: Yellow

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# ICC Investigates Fixing Allegation in Canada's T20 World Cup Campaign



The TD Cricket Arena at the CAA Centre in Brampton, Ontario that hosts the Canadian National Cricket Team and the Global T20 Canada tournament. (Photo courtesy: Abhinav Dixit)

Anirudh Nair

Despite walking away with zero points, the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup had been one to remember for the Canadian national team. Going toe to toe with giants South Africa and New Zealand, with youngsters like Yuvraj Samra making history, Canada had a bright future on the horizon. But with one allegation, this campaign and the future of Canadian cricket are in jeopardy.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) released a documentary on YouTube on 'the fifth estate' channel, titled "Corruption inside Cricket Canada: Allegations of organized crime infiltration," on April 17. The 43-minute-long documentary dives into the many allegations of corruption against Cricket Canada and its officials, such as president Amjad Bajwa, former CEO Salman Khan, and board member Rana Imran.

Regarding the T20 World Cup, the documentary featured an allegation against Canada's captain, Dilpreet Bajwa, which the ICC's anti-corruption unit (ACU) is currently investigating. Bajwa, despite primarily being a batting all-rounder, came in to bowl Canada's fifth over in the game against New Zealand.

The Kiwis were sitting at 35/2, chasing 174, and Bajwa started his over with a no-ball, followed that with a wide, and gave away 15 runs in that over. New Zealand had lost two wickets in the previous two overs, and Bajwa's introduction may have been detrimental, as the 'Black Caps' chased down the target with nearly five overs to spare, with no further wickets lost.

The allegation came from an 'insider' in Cricket Canada, who refused to reveal his identity due to fears of "danger to his safety." The source also alleged that Bajwa was made

captain prior to the 2026 T20 World Cup in order "to fix or spot-fix matches."

The ACU is conducting a second investigation as well, regarding a recorded phone call involving former head coach Khurram Chohan, where he claimed that board members at the time pressured him to select certain players for the national team.

"The ACU is aware of the program broadcast by CBC," said Andrew Ephgrave, the interim General Manager of the ICC's Integrity Unit, in a statement to ESPNcricinfo.

"Consistent with its established operating procedures, the ACU is not in a position to comment on the substance of any allegations contained within it," he added. "Governance matters in relation to ICC Members are considered by the ICC, where they fall under its jurisdiction, in accordance with the ICC's standard constitutional processes."

## Race Tech Tie-Up

SAH Staff Reporter

Global automotive supplier Marelli has signed a two-year agreement to become the technical partner of Toyota Racing in the

FIA World Endurance Championship, the companies said.

The partnership will see Marelli support Toyota's Hypercar program, with a focus on advancing powertrain systems and energy management



(Photo courtesy: Marelli)

technologies—areas increasingly central to endurance racing as teams push for greater efficiency and performance.

Both companies described the collaboration as a strategic alignment aimed at accelerating innovation through shared expertise. Motorsport, they noted, continues to serve as a testing ground for technologies that often find their way into commercial vehicles.

As part of the deal, Marelli branding will feature on Toyota's race cars, team garage infrastructure, and official digital platforms, underscoring the visibility of the collaboration across the championship.

Riccardo De Filippi, head of Marelli Motorsport, said the alliance reflects a shared commitment to innovation and technical excellence. He added that combining Marelli's experience in endurance racing with Toyota Racing's competitive ambitions would help deliver results both on track and in broader automotive development.

Marelli, which employs about 40,000 people globally across more than 150 sites, positions the partnership as part of its push toward next-generation mobility solutions.

## Sports Round Up

### Chasing 2:59

Five male Indian quarter milers have clocked an impressive time of below 46 seconds in 2026 and all of them are ready to battle it out at the upcoming World Athletics Relays in Gaborone, Botswana, said spokesperson of Athletics Federation of India (AFI) Adille Sumariwalla while addressing an online media briefing.

"Going by the current performance of the male quarter milers we can expect a better time than the national record of 2:59:05 seconds," said Sumariwalla who is also the vice president of world athletics.

The Indian men's 4x400m relay team set an Asian and national record of 2:59:05 seconds at the 2023 Budapest World Athletics Championships in Hungary. The national team also advanced to the medal round.

Since 2023 the 4x400m relay team members have had mixed luck in the World Relays, but are ready to showcase their potential at the global relay carnival on May 2 and 3 in Gaborone.

During the one-day first International Invitational Relay Competition and third National Open Relay Competition held earlier in March in Chandigarh, the quartet of Manu TS, Amoj Jacob, Dharmveer Choudhary and Rajesh Ramesh combined well to post a time of 3:01.43 seconds. The performance improved Indian team global ranking to 16 in the men's 4x400m relay on Road to Gaborone. (UNI)

### Juniors Chase Asia Berths

Aspiring athletes aiming to earn a ticket to next month's Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Hong Kong will have to achieve the AFI (Athletics Federation of India) qualification standards during the three-day age group competition in Karnataka from April 24 to 26.

The AFI announced selection criteria for the upcoming Asian meet.

India's top athletes are expected to compete in the three-day 24th National Junior Athletics Federation Competition in Tumkur, Karnataka from April 24 to 26, to showcase their potential and cement their place in the national squad. The Asian U20 Athletics Championships will be held in Hong Kong from May 28 to 31. (UNI)

### Dhaka Test Gamble

Pakistan have picked four uncapped players in their 16-member squad for their upcoming Test series against Bangladesh, starting May 8 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka.

Led by Shan Masood, Pakistan have handed maiden Test call-ups to Abdullah Fazal, Amad Butt, Azan Awaiz and Ghazi Ghorri for the two-match red-ball series. While the first Test will be played from May 8-12 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, the second match will be played from May 16-20 at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Fazal and Awaiz, both left-handed batters, have been rewarded for consistent performances in domestic cricket, while Butt, a seasoned bowling all-rounder, brings experience from a first-class career that began in 2015. Wicketkeeper-batter Ghorri, though uncapped in Tests, has already featured in ODIs, having made his debut against Bangladesh last month.

The squad also retains a strong core of experienced players, including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Shaheen Afridi, Noman Ali, Sajid Khan and Salman Ali Agha, as Pakistan look to strengthen their position in the ongoing ICC World Test Championship cycle, where they are currently placed fifth.

Bangladesh, meanwhile, sit eighth in the standings, adding further context to the importance of the series for both sides. Ahead of the tour, Pakistan's red-ball preparations will begin with a training camp in Karachi from April 27 to May 1 for players not involved in the Pakistan Super League. The Pakistan Cricket Board has also confirmed the coaching staff for the tour, with former captain Sarfaraz Ahmed taking over as head coach, supported by Asad Shafiq as batting coach and Umar Gul as bowling coach.

Pakistan squad for Bangladesh tour: Shan Masood (captain), Abdullah Fazal, Amad Butt, Azan Awaiz, Babar Azam, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Ghazi Ghorri, Noman Ali, Sajid Khan, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi. (UNI)