

Exclusive: Iran War Tests Global Mobility Resilience

Anand Patel

The Iran war and broader Middle East instability are forcing governments, airlines, travelers and mobility-service providers to confront a new reality. Cross-border movement can no longer be treated as a predictable paperwork process. In a more volatile world, mobility depends on resilience, route awareness, digital readiness and trusted service delivery.

In an exclusive conversation with D.C. Dispatch, *South Asian Herald's* special podcast, Head of Americas at VFS Global, Amit Sharma, said geopolitical disruptions can create setbacks. But he argued that long-term travel demand remains strong. With a footprint spanning nearly 70 governments and 150 countries, Sharma said VFS Global's role is no longer limited to processing applications. It is also about helping mobility systems remain resilient, accessible and trusted in times of disruption.

Middle East Conflict and Travel Resilience

Sharma described the current Middle East situation as a serious

but temporary disruption, not a long-term collapse in mobility. "This is a very resilient industry," Sharma said. "The COVID experience is still not far behind us." He recalled that 2019 was a peak year for travel. Then 2020 brought the sector to a near standstill.

For Sharma, the current Middle East disruption is serious but recoverable. "From the industry perspective, this geopolitical situation is a temporary issue," Sharma said. "There is still travel happening, and a lot of people are still traveling across the globe."

Planning Ahead in a Volatile World

The most immediate lesson for travelers is simple. Plan early and verify information often. During a war or regional crisis, travel rules can change quickly.

Routes can also change without much warning. "We always tell travelers to be fully aware of the destination they are going to," Sharma said. "Plan your travel in advance."

He warned that information can become outdated fast. "In times like these, information changes rapidly," he said. (Contd. on page 2)



Head of Americas at VFS Global, Amit Sharma, in an exclusive conversation with D.C. Dispatch, *South Asian Herald's* special podcast, on April 22, 2026, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: South Asian Herald)



Law Enforcement protecting guests during the shooting incident at the WHCA Dinner on April 25, 2026, at the Washington Hilton, in Washington DC. (Photo courtesy: Diyar Kurda, Rudaw Media Network)

Indian American Lawmakers Condemn WHCA Dinner Shooting

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

Indian American lawmakers have strongly condemned the shooting at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC, during the annual White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) dinner on April 25, 2026, while commending the swift response of law enforcement and emphasizing that "political violence" is never justified.

President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance, Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, cabinet officials, lawmakers, celebrities, and journalists were in attendance when the incident occurred.

"Law Enforcement has requested that we leave the premises, consistent with protocol, which we will do, immediately," the President said in a social

media post, adding that the First Lady, Vice President, and all Cabinet members were in "perfect condition."

He also noted that he had spoken with officials overseeing the event and that it would be rescheduled within 30 days.

In his statement on April 26, Trump, who attended the dinner for the first time as President, said, "It comes with the territory, and if you want to do a great job... take a look at what's happened to some of our greatest presidents. It doesn't happen to people that don't do anything... It's not going to deter me."

Following the incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated, "Relieved to learn that President Trump, the First Lady and Vice President are safe and unharmed following the recent security incident at a Washington DC hotel."

He added, "Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned," and extended his best wishes for their continued safety and well-being.

Representative Suhas Subramanyam, who was present at the event, recounted his experience, saying, "I was walking down the escalators from the lobby when, at the bottom of the escalators, 2 security people with guns were running through and yelling 'watch out for crossfire.'"

"I got behind a pillar with another person then left out a back exit while hearing more commotion and police," he added, while thanking the Secret Service, Capitol Police, DC Metropolitan Police, and other law enforcement agencies for their rapid response.

Representative Ro Khanna said, "I am grateful to law enforcement for protecting everyone at the WHCA Dinner," adding that his thoughts were with the Secret Service agent who was injured. "Political violence is completely unacceptable. There is no place for it in our country," he said.

Representative Ami Bera echoed similar sentiments, praising law enforcement for their "swift actions" and expressing relief that those in attendance were safe. "Tonight was about celebrating the First Amendment and our free press," he said. "We can never allow violence or intimidation to infringe upon that fundamental freedom."

Representative Pramila Jayapal said she was "very grateful" to law enforcement for quickly securing the venue and protecting lives. "Violence is never the answer," she added.

Representative Shri Thanedar also expressed appreciation for the Secret Service and other security personnel who acted "swiftly," adding, "I am keeping all those in attendance in my thoughts: political violence is never acceptable."

New York Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar told *South Asian Herald*, "Political violence is an attack on democracy itself, and we must condemn it with total moral clarity." (Contd. on page 3)

RSS Leader Hosabale Highlights Indian Diaspora's Global Role

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Chief Secretary Dattatreya "Dattaji" Hosabale said that Indians across the world have consistently contributed to nation building in their host countries.

Speaking at a discussion titled "India's Global Vision and Role in the Emerging

World," Hosabale joined author and former academic and State Department official Prof. Walter Andersen, and foreign policy scholar Walter Russell Mead of the Hudson Institute and The Washington Post.

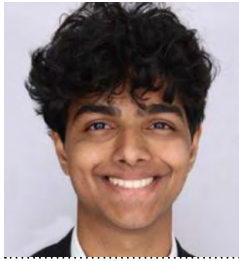
The event was hosted by the Indian American Community of DMV in collaboration with UHJT, Rajdhani Mandir, VHPA, Indo Jewish Organization, US-India

Security Council & American Hindu Coalition. The RSS leader said that Indian communities abroad have maintained strong relationships with their host societies and, drawing on cultural and civilizational values, have lived in peace while contributing to the welfare of those countries.

Hosabale emphasized that India must evolve into a "self-confident" and "prosperous society," supported by a united and harmonious population rooted in its cultural ethos and civilizational values. He said such a foundation would enable India to play an influential global role through sustained engagement with other nations and societies. (Contd. on page 11)



From left, Walter Andersen, Dattatreya Hosabale, and Walter Russell Mead, during the community event on April 23, 2026, at Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, in Virginia. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)



South Asia Notes

Rudransh Singh

Undergraduate student of International Affairs and Economics at George Washington University (GW'28).

(Photo courtesy: Rudransh Singh)

Reflections From the IMF–World Bank Spring Meetings 2026

Walking into the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings this year, I expected to hear about inflation, growth forecasts, and policy frameworks. What I did not expect was how much of the conversation would center around uncertainty, not as a temporary phase, but as the defining feature of the global economy, something that felt far more real than anything I had studied in the classroom.

As a student of international affairs and economics, I have studied global shocks in textbooks. But hearing policymakers like IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speak about “persistent uncertainty” made those ideas feel far more real. The tone across panels was clear. The world is no longer dealing with isolated crises, but with continuous disruptions, from geopolitical conflict to energy shocks and fragile supply chains.

What struck me most was the shift in how globalization itself is being understood. In class, we often learn about efficiency and comparative advantage as the foundations of global trade. At the meetings, however, the conversation had clearly evolved. Policymakers spoke about moving from “just in time” systems to “just in case” ones, prioritizing resilience over pure efficiency.

Sitting in those sessions, it became clear that globalization is not ending. It is being reshaped by risk.

One moment that stayed with me was a discussion on the impact of the war in the Middle East. While headlines often focus on geopolitics, the conversations here unpacked the deeper economic ripple effects, including rising energy prices, inflationary pressure, and the strain on countries with limited fiscal space. What stood out was

how uneven these impacts are. Some economies may benefit from higher oil prices, while others, especially energy importing and tourism dependent countries, face significant challenges. It reinforced something I have been thinking about more recently. Global crises are rarely shared equally.

Another insight I found particularly interesting was how constrained policymakers feel today compared to the past. With global public debt rising and inflation still a concern, governments have less room to respond aggressively to shocks. Several speakers emphasized the need for targeted and temporary policies, rather than broad subsidies. From a student perspective, this added nuance to how I think about policy trade offs. It is not just about what governments should do, but what they realistically can do given fiscal limitations in today’s constrained economic environment.

Beyond macroeconomic discussions, I was also drawn to conversations around technology, particularly artificial intelligence. There is a lot of optimism about AI’s potential to boost productivity, but what I heard at the meetings was more grounded. The challenge is not just building advanced systems. It is implementing them effectively. For many countries, especially developing ones, the costs of integrating AI into existing systems remain a major barrier. This raised an important question in my mind. Will technological progress narrow global inequalities, or widen them further?

At the same time, what gave me a sense of optimism was the continued emphasis on cooperation. Despite geopolitical tensions, there was a strong recognition that countries cannot navigate these challenges alone. Whether it was coordination

between institutions like the IMF and World Bank or broader calls for collective action, the idea that global problems require shared solutions came through consistently.

From a personal standpoint, attending the Spring Meetings was more than just an academic experience. It was a reminder of why I chose to study international affairs & economics in the first place. Being in rooms where these conversations are happening, where decisions can shape economies and livelihoods across the world, made the field feel tangible in a way that no classroom ever could.

It also made me reflect on my own role going forward. As students, we often engage with theories and models, but spaces like this highlight the importance of applying those ideas in complex, real world contexts. The challenges discussed at the meetings, including economic instability, inequality, and technological disruption, are not abstract problems. They are issues that will define our generation.

My biggest takeaway was that the global economy is not becoming simpler. It is becoming more complex, more interconnected, and more uncertain. At the same time, this uncertainty also creates an opportunity to rethink existing systems, strengthen resilience, and move toward a more balanced and sustainable approach to growth in the near future.

Lastly, if there is one thing I will take away from this experience, it is this. Uncertainty does not mean inaction. If anything, it demands better thinking, stronger cooperation, and more intentional leadership.

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

Diaspora Round Up

VAISAKHI CELEBRATED IN NEW YORK, DIASPORA LEADERS HONORED

SAH Staff Reporter

The festival of Vaisakhi was marked with a large community celebration in New York this week, as members of the Indian-American diaspora gathered to commemorate the spring harvest festival and the founding of the Khalsa.

The event, organized by the American Punjabi Society in partnership with the Consulate General of India in New York and Nassau County authorities, drew a cross-section of community leaders, officials and residents, underscoring the growing visibility and influence of the Punjabi diaspora in the United States.

India’s Consul General in New York, Binay Srikant Pradhan, attended the event alongside Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman and prominent community figures, including Harry Singh Bolla and Garry Sikka.



(Image Source X@India in New York)

Organizers said the event highlighted the Punjabi community’s expanding footprint in the New York metropolitan region, where it has established strong cultural, economic and civic ties over the decades.

A key feature of the event was the recognition of individuals and groups for their contributions to public life.

Honorees included members of local gurudwara committees for their role in community service, law enforcement personnel for their work in public safety, and community leaders for their advocacy and philanthropic initiatives.

In his address, Pradhan emphasized the continued relevance of Sikh teachings rooted in compassion, equality and selfless service, often referred to as *sewa*. He said these values resonate beyond religious and national boundaries, shaping both community cohesion and broader social engagement. He also pointed to the Punjabi diaspora’s contributions to nation-building efforts in India and its growing role in strengthening economic and cultural linkages between India and the United States.

The celebration concluded with cultural performances showcasing Punjabi music and dance, reflecting a blend of tradition and contemporary diaspora identity.

Community leaders said such events not only preserve cultural heritage but also reinforce a shared sense of belonging among younger generations of Indian-Americans, at a time when diaspora engagement is becoming an increasingly important pillar of India-U.S. relations.

Exclusive: Iran War Tests...

(Contd. from page 1)

“You want to make sure that what you read yesterday is still relevant today.” Travelers, he added, should check routes, airspace conditions, government rules and visa requirements before departure.

“Please know your destination well,” Sharma said. “Be aware of the routes and be aware of the rules and regulations that governments are introducing.”

From Occasional Shock to Constant Disruption

Sharma said the travel industry is now operating in a world where disruption is more frequent. “The frequency of disruptions has certainly changed over the last few years,” he said. “You might once have expected a

disruption once in 50 years, then once in 20 years. Now, every year, your model or way of operating could face disruption.”

That reality requires organizations to stay ahead of customer expectations. They cannot wait for a crisis to arrive. “At VFS, we always try to stay a step ahead,” Sharma said. “We do not want to be reactive to expectations, but to proactively understand what people expect from us.”

Decentralizing Access for the Indian Diaspora

The conversation also focused on VFS operations in the United States. Sharma said the Indian diaspora is large, geographically spread out and increasingly expects convenient service. “The Indian diaspora in the U.S. is increasing,” Sharma said. “It is a very widespread diaspora.” Under the renewed India services arrangement, VFS expanded

its U.S. footprint to add new locations to cater to the increasing demand. “We were previously present in about six locations,” Sharma said. “Since the new contract came into effect, those six locations have expanded to 18.” He said Saturday operations were added after feedback from applicants. “Saturday was added based on feedback from the diaspora,” he said. “They did not want to take a day off to apply for a passport, OCI or visa.”

Digitization as the Future of Mobility

Sharma said digitization is becoming central to mobility as governments and travelers look for faster, simpler and more accessible processes. He pointed to e-visas as one example of how the system is changing. “Many governments have launched products like e-visa, where you don’t need to have a sticker visa in your passport,” he said. “You are able to apply online and get an electronic

confirmation.” He added VFS Global already works with more than 10 governments on e-visa solutions. For VFS, that shows digital mobility is no longer optional. It is becoming part of the core offering.

VFS has also invested heavily in artificial intelligence. Sharma said the company has a dedicated AI center in Dubai and has already begun integrating AI into some live processes. “We have tried to integrate AI into the live process that we have,” he added, but stressed that AI must be used carefully, especially because visa and immigration systems handle sensitive personal data.

He said travelers increasingly expect to complete more steps through phones and digital platforms. “Most of the things we do today are done from our phones,” Sharma said. “Customers would feel a great sense of satisfaction if they could do everything on the phone.”

Indian American...

(Contd. from page 1)

Whether directed at elected officials, journalists, public servants, or anyone exercising their constitutional freedoms, it is never justified and never acceptable.”

Rajkumar thanked law enforcement officials for their swift and courageous action to protect lives, adding “I am especially praying for the Secret Service agent who put himself in harm’s way and was injured while defending others from danger.”

FBI Director Kash Patel, emphasized after the incident that “We saw the best of American leadership, adding “I am proud to work for President Trump who so strongly backs law enforcement across this country - and proud to lead this agency that works 24/7 to keep Americans safe.”

Describing them as “brave,” he thanked the law enforcement and interagency partners for acting quickly and protecting their fellow Americans.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on April 26 that what was intended to be a “fun night” celebrating free speech was “hijacked” by a “depraved crazy person” who sought to “assassinate” the President and harm senior administration officials.

“I was with President Trump and the First Lady

backstage after we were quickly ushered to safety by Secret Service. President Trump was truly fearless, but as he said last night, this political violence needs to end,” she said, thanking law enforcement and acknowledging the agent who was injured while responding to the threat.

In the aftermath of the incident, the President called for enhanced security measures, including the construction of a secure ballroom within the White House complex.

“What happened last night is exactly the reason that our great Military, Secret Service, Law Enforcement and, for different reasons, every President for the last 150 years, have been DEMANDING that a large, safe, and secure Ballroom be built ON THE GROUNDS OF THE WHITE HOUSE,” he said in a separate statement.

He added that such an incident could have been prevented if the facility, currently under construction, had already been completed, emphasizing that it would include the highest level of security features within the White House grounds.

Trump also criticized a legal challenge to the project, describing it as “ridiculous,” and urged that it be dismissed to avoid delays in construction.

Tech Trade Drive US India Momentum

SAH Staff Reporter

The inaugural U.S.-India Forum at University of California, San Diego has laid out an ambitious, forward-looking roadmap for bilateral cooperation, with policymakers, industry leaders and strategists signaling that artificial intelligence, trade alignment and regional security will define the next decade of engagement.

Hosted by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, the two-day summit positioned the partnership as entering a more consequential phase—one that is expected to move beyond broad strategic intent into targeted execution across technology ecosystems and supply chains.

USISPF Chairman John Chambers indicated that collaboration in emerging technologies—particularly AI, semiconductors and digital infrastructure—will likely dominate the bilateral agenda in the coming years.

Participants across panels suggested that joint investments in AI-driven healthcare, financial systems and manufacturing could deepen integration between the two economies, while also shaping global standards. Industry executives from firms such as Google and Qualcomm pointed to expanding research partnerships and talent mobility as immediate next steps.

USISPF President Mukesh Aghi said the relationship is expected to increasingly hinge on “trusted technology networks,” with academia-industry collaboration emerging as a central pillar.

Trade Deal Timeline Seen as Critical Inflection Point

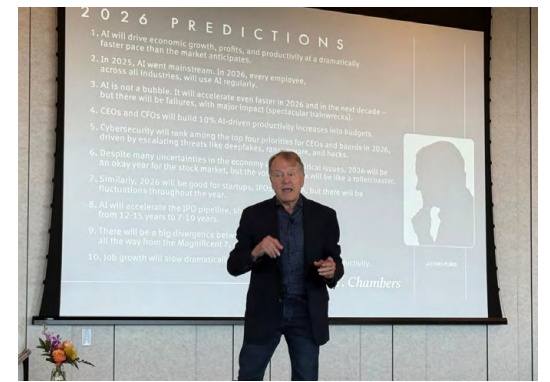
Even as long-term optimism dominated, trade negotiators flagged a narrow window to avoid friction. Mark Linscott warned that the coming months could prove decisive, with the possibility of new tariffs under Section 301 shaping the urgency of talks.

Officials and analysts at the forum indicated that concluding an interim agreement would likely stabilize the trade environment and unlock broader economic cooperation. Failure to do so, they cautioned, could introduce cost pressures and slow momentum in key sectors such as electronics and pharmaceuticals.

Diplomatic Momentum Expected to Accelerate

The forum also underscored expectations of faster diplomatic movement following the early tenure of U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor. Participants suggested that ongoing initiatives—from trade negotiations to technology frameworks—are likely to gain pace over the next year.

India’s inclusion in initiatives such as Pax Silica was cited as an example of how strategic alignment could evolve into institutionalized cooperation, particularly in securing semiconductor supply chains and digital infrastructure.



(Photo courtesy: X@USISPF)

Regulatory Clarity on Digital Assets Emerges as Priority

On financial innovation, policymakers and industry experts signaled that digital asset regulation will require closer coordination between Washington and New Delhi. Urjit Patel highlighted the need for predictable frameworks to ensure market stability, while executives from global crypto firms called for harmonized standards to enable cross-border innovation.

The consensus emerging from the discussion’s points to a future where fintech and digital currencies become a formal pillar of bilateral engagement, rather than a peripheral concern.

The presence of senior figures such as Milind Deora, Richard R. Verma and Tim Roemer reflected a widening stakeholder base, with private sector leadership expected to play a larger role in shaping policy outcomes.

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India's Olympiad Pipeline Gains Momentum, Opens New Frontiers in STEM

SAH Staff Reporter

India's Mathematical Olympiad Program is increasingly being seen as a launchpad for the country's next generation of scientific talent, with recent international success reinforcing its growing global relevance and future potential.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted India's strongest-ever showing at the European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad, where a four-member team of schoolgirls secured a sixth-place global ranking — a result that is being interpreted as more than just a medal tally.

Shreya Mundhra led the contingent with a historic gold medal, while Sanjana Chacko secured silver and Shivani Bharat Kumar won bronze. Shrimoyee Bera was also part of the team, contributing to what officials describe as a landmark performance for India in one of the world's most demanding mathematics contests.

Beyond individual honors, the achievement is drawing attention to the depth and design of India's Mathematical Olympiad Program — a system that now engages nearly 600,000 students annually through a multi-layered selection process spanning regional, state, and national stages.



Photo courtesy: X@DDNews

Those who advance are trained at elite camps, including at the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education under the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, where participants are exposed to advanced mathematical thinking and problem-solving frameworks that often exceed standard academic curricula.

Experts say this pipeline is quietly evolving into a strategic national asset. Olympiad training emphasizes abstraction, logical precision, and creativity under pressure — skills that align closely with emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and high-end data science.

The recent performance has also spotlighted a broader shift: increasing participation and success among girls, suggesting a gradual expansion of India's STEM talent base. Policymakers and educators see this as critical to sustaining long-term innovation capacity. Looking ahead, the implications extend well beyond competitions. A growing Olympiad ecosystem could strengthen India's presence in global research institutions, feed into advanced technology sectors, and support domestic ambitions in innovation-driven growth.

At the same time, the rising scale of participation reflects a cultural change — one where excellence in problem-solving and mathematics is gaining wider recognition among students and families.

While challenges such as equitable access and resource distribution remain, the trajectory is clear. With a robust pipeline and rising global benchmarks, India's Mathematical Olympiad Program is no longer just producing medal winners — it is shaping a generation poised to influence the future of science and technology.

South Asia Notes



Elizabeth Roche
Associate Professor,
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The Other Maritime Choke Point In Asia

It's been two months since the start of the US-Israel war in Iran. It's a war that has underlined the importance of geography in keeping the global commons — in this case the Straits of Hormuz — open to all. Iran, fighting an asymmetric war against a militarily and technologically superior US-Israel combine, has seized on geography to impose a cost on the US. This has impacted global oil flows affecting many.

This move has strategists, analysts et al scouring the maps looking for similar vulnerabilities. One that stands out is the Straits of Malacca.

This narrow channel is a natural waterway between the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Indonesia. Its 1,000 kms long and connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans besides the South China Sea. Estimates suggest that almost half of all global seaborne trade and roughly one third of the world's crude oil passes through this route. It's a trade lifeline for Japan, South Korea and China.

In 2025, more than 102,500 ships, mostly commercial vessels, transited through the Malacca Strait, according to the Straits Times. Any rerouting will tie up global shipping capacity in knots, add to shipping costs and potentially affect energy prices.

China, Asia's largest economy, has been watching the power play between the US and Iran in the Straits of Hormuz. And no doubt learning lessons. China has long been wary of its Malacca vulnerabilities. And this is why it has been developing ports and other infrastructure in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar over years now. For instance, crude oil can be transported via Pakistan's China built Gwadar port to Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province.

There are reported plans for an \$8 billion refinery with potential Saudi Arabian and UAE investment at Gwadar. This will transform Gwadar into a regional energy hub. These plans maybe in their infancy now but given the Hormuz example, China is likely to double down on implementing them. Gwadar has already given China crucial access to the Indian Ocean.

For India too, the Malacca Straits is important as over 55 per cent of its east bound trade moves through it. The Indian Navy conducts coordinated patrols with regional partners and increased the frequency of port visits. However, a proposal for India to join the Malacca Strait Patrol has made incremental progress. Singapore formally acknowledged it for the first time last year but other countries are yet to sign off on it.

Homeland Round Up

SRI LANKA—IMF BACKING

Sri Lanka has secured continued backing from the International Monetary Fund after high-level talks in Washington this month, with officials praising the country's reform momentum under its bailout program.

A delegation led by Central Bank Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe met IMF leadership on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings, where Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and Deputy Managing Director Kenji Okamura commended Colombo's policy discipline.

The IMF highlighted progress under the Extended Fund Facility, including cost-reflective energy pricing and fiscal reforms, even as Sri Lanka grapples with the economic fallout of Cyclone Ditwah.

Officials said the reassurance of support is critical as the island nation attempts to stabilize its recovery and maintain investor confidence.

LANKA—GROWTH OUTLOOK

Sri Lanka's post-crisis recovery is expected to slow in 2026, with global lenders warning of moderating growth and rising inflation.

Recent assessments by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank project GDP growth easing to between 3.6% and 4.0%, down from about 5% last year.

Inflation is forecast to edge up to around 5.2%, driven largely by higher energy prices feeding through the economy. However, reconstruction

spending following last year's cyclone damage is expected to provide some support to growth.

The outlook underscores the fragile nature of Sri Lanka's recovery, still heavily dependent on reforms and external financing.

PEACE WALK

A government-backed religious pilgrimage aimed at promoting unity is drawing attention across Sri Lanka, as monks and devotees traverse historic Buddhist sites.

The "Walk for Peace" procession, which began in Anuradhapura and is heading toward Colombo, carries sacred relics and a sapling from the revered Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi.

The initiative includes cultural exhibitions and is linked to the government's "Clean Sri Lanka" campaign, blending spiritual symbolism with civic messaging.

Officials say the march is intended to foster reconciliation and national cohesion in the wake of recent economic and environmental crises.

ENERGY CRUNCH

Bangladesh is facing a deepening energy crisis as global supply disruptions tied to Middle East tensions squeeze fuel availability and push up costs.

The government has raised domestic fuel prices to curb subsidies, leading to widespread strain on households, transport operators and industry. Long queues at fuel stations have begun to ease, but inflationary pressures remain acute.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina proposed forming a bipartisan parliamentary committee to address the crisis, signaling

mounting political urgency. Economists warn that prolonged supply shocks could ripple through supply chains and slow economic activity.

BANGLADESH—IMF

Bangladesh's economic outlook is turning more cautious, with multilateral lenders flagging slower growth and persistent inflation risks.

The International Monetary Fund expects GDP growth of about 4.7% in FY2026, easing further to 4.3% the following year, while inflation could climb to around 9.2%.

A more pessimistic assessment from the World Bank pegs growth at 3.9%, citing rising poverty, banking sector stress and external headwinds linked to the Middle East.

Inflation, hovering near 8–9%, continues to erode purchasing power, adding pressure on policymakers ahead of key fiscal decisions.

NEPAL GROWTH

Nepal's economy is expected to slow sharply in the coming fiscal year, reflecting both domestic instability and external shocks.

The World Bank projects growth of just 2.3% in FY2026, down from 4.6% a year earlier, citing the fallout from Middle East tensions and lingering effects of domestic unrest.

The International Monetary Fund has also downgraded its outlook, warning of rising inflation, weaker external balances and pressure on remittances and tourism.

As an energy-import-dependent economy, Nepal remains particularly exposed to global price swings.

Editorial



New Thinking In The Indo Pacific

When Japan announced that it was lifting curbs on the export of lethal weaponry, even to a small group of nations and perhaps extended to others under special circumstances, it was a powerful message to the Indo Pacific and beyond. It was not just a question of Tokyo wanting to flex its military muscles but in coming to terms with an international and regional environment that was increasingly getting hostile and unpredictable.

In an immediate context, the war against Iran showed to Japan its dependency on the Middle East and for crude oil. The intermittent closure of the Strait of Hormuz only made matters worse for Tokyo's oil flow was up in the air. Talking of asking Japanese mine sweepers to go about cleaning the seabed of the Hormuz was easy; not many were thinking of whether Japan could actually do it given its domestic constitutional constraints.

Lifting export curbs on lethal equipment does not mean Japan is rushing to fill the international market with weapons or opening up its hardware cart open for regional shopping from eager customers. In a sense Tokyo made it known that it could be a more meaningful player on its own and in the context of important alliances with the United States and specifically the four-nation grouping like the QUAD that includes Australia, the United States, and India. Adding depth and width in an alliance goes a long way in deterring adversaries who are always fishing in the troubled waters of the Indo Pacific, not just in the South China Seas.

TOKYO'S FUTURE POSTURING IN THE INDO PACIFIC AND BEYOND WILL BE ANCHORED ON WHAT IT SEES AS A BEST FIT, NOT BECAUSE CHINA OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY PERSISTING WITH RUBBING IN THE GUILT FACTOR OF JAPAN NOT HAVE SUFFICIENTLY ATONED FOR THE MISTAKES OF THE IMPERIAL ERA. MANY IN THE REGION BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO MOVE ON.

The bottom line in East Asia was also for all to see: three nuclear powers of China, Russia and North Korea, each menacing Japan for different reasons. The regional environment was getting dicey enough to trigger a debate in Japan as to whether the country should even think of the nuclear option, something unthinkable for many years given the horrible atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Today the government of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is witnessing a lively debate on whether to throw out the 1947 Pacifist Constitution along with its Article 9 that denied any offensive posturing.

Over the years the conservatives in the Liberal Democratic Party have subtly and directly discarded other aspects of Japan's policies like breaching the 1 percent of GDP spending on defense pushing it to 2 percent of GDP by 2027. Whether Japan fully re-writes its Constitution remains to be seen for there is a strong opinion within the country against such a move, some of the apprehension being on getting dragged into affairs that is not in the national interests.

Tokyo's future posturing in the Indo Pacific and beyond will be anchored on what it sees as a best fit, not because China or any other country persisting with rubbing in the guilt factor of Japan not have sufficiently atoned for the mistakes of the Imperial era. Many in the region believe it is time to move on.



Opinion

Sridhar Krishnaswami
Senior Journalist and Columnist

Alliances and Allies Under Pressure

The ongoing fracas over a purported internal e-mail of the Pentagon suggesting that friends of America ought to be punished for not supporting war efforts in Iran has once again triggered a discussion of allies and alliances, individually and collectively and the relevance to American foreign policy.

In the immediate context the reference to "punish" is for Spain by suspending it from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for its stance over Iran. The counter from NATO has been that there is nothing in the Charter for a member to be suspended or expelled. On a different matter, the Pentagon mail is also supposed to have suggested reviewing Washington's position on Britain's claim on the Falklands in the south Atlantic.

The refrain of the Trump administration has been that allies, especially in the NATO, have not done "enough" in the war efforts with countries like Britain maintaining that it has allowed and even participated in strikes against Iranian sites targeting the Strait of Hormuz; and along with France has maintained of a willingness to keep the Hormuz open after a lasting ceasefire or at the end of the conflict.

But to President Donald Trump, the NATO is a "One way street... We will protect them, but they will do nothing for us." And his Defense Secretary was even more blunt. "We are not counting on Europe, but they need the Strait of Hormuz much more than we do, and might want to start doing less talking and having fewer fancy conferences in Europe and getting a boat. This is much more their fight than ours. Europe and Asia have benefitted from our protection for decades, but the time for free riding is over."

President Trump's views on the NATO and other allies in the Asia Pacific are well known: basically, it is one of America's partners getting a free ride, the free loader status pinned without taking into account the host country contributions. And what infuriates Washington more is the argument of allies that they are willing to be a part of an exercise within the confines of international law; or that participation must be seen in the context of national interest.

Britain, for instance, has argued that blockade of Iran's ports is not in London's interest. And as far as the current war in the Middle East, a general argument has been made

THE SCENARIOS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE PLAYED OUT OVERNIGHT, BUT A CAUSE FOR SOME DEEP THINKING IN THE STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL WORLDS.

that the scope of NATO is limited to Europe and the Atlantic and does not extend to the Strait of Hormuz. The pressure on allies and alliances raises a larger question whether nations are reading the messages from Washington as a signal for them to go about on their own. For instance, there is an open fear and discussion in Europe and Asia of the United States depleting its munitions stockpile and in a worst-case diverting supplies and future orders to the Middle East. As it is questions are being raised on American naval deployments in and around the Persian Gulf with three aircraft carriers straddling the waters along with their massive accompaniments.

This being the case does the United States have the sufficient wherewithal to defend Taiwan in case China decides an invasion? A country like Japan has already expressed apprehensions on being dragged into a conflict over Taiwan; and now could feel more fidgety if Washington is unable to stretch itself to beyond one theatre. All of this gives the right wing in Tokyo to flex its political muscle to get rid of the 1947 Constitution so that Japan can be a "normal" nation and in the process exhaust all options including the nuclear route.

The same thing is said of Germany, aptly put in an Editorial in the *Guardian*. NATO was famously "intended to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down. With the US threatening exit and Russia knocking at the door, other members are mostly urging Germany upwards – even if the popularity of Alternative für Deutschland, and its sympathy for Moscow, may give some pause for thought."

The scenarios are unlikely to be played out overnight, but a cause for some deep thinking in the strategic and political worlds.

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



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(Photo created with AI)

The New Remittance Route

Faster, cheaper, digital—India's UPI changes the game globally

R. Suryamurthy

On a winter evening in New Jersey, software engineer Rohan Mehta pauses between meetings to send money to his parents in Ahmedabad. What once meant logging into bank portals, entering multiple codes, and waiting hours—sometimes days—now takes less than a minute. He opens an app, enters a UPI ID, taps twice, and it's done.

"My mother gets the message before I close the app," he says.

This quiet shift—from friction to immediacy—captures the essence of India's digital payments revolution, one that is now reshaping how its vast diaspora stays financially connected to home.

For decades, sending money to India was a chore. Transfers came with high fees, opaque exchange rates, and delays that stretched into days. For migrant workers in the Gulf or students in Europe, even small remittances carried a heavy burden—in time, cost, and uncertainty.

That experience is rapidly changing, driven by the rise of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), launched in 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India. Built as a simple, interoperable platform, UPI allows instant bank-to-bank transfers using a mobile phone—no account numbers, no complex details, just a virtual payment address.

Its simplicity has proven transformative, especially for Indians living abroad.

"Earlier, I sent money once a month," says Priya Nair, a nurse in Dubai. "Now, if my father needs something, I send it instantly. It feels like I'm closer."

India remains the world's largest recipient of remittances, with

over 30 million Indians living overseas. For many families, these flows are lifelines—funding education, healthcare, and daily expenses. What UPI has changed is not just speed, but behavior: money now moves in real time, responding to need rather than schedule.

And the scale of this system is staggering.

In January 2026 alone, UPI processed 21.7 billion transactions, handling roughly ₹28.33 lakh crore (about \$340 billion) in value in a single month. Today, it accounts for 81% of all retail digital transactions in India and nearly 49% of global real-time payment volumes, making it the largest system of its kind in the world—a position acknowledged by institutions such as the IMF. Remarkably, this ecosystem has been built in under a decade.

For the diaspora, these numbers translate into something tangible: reliability. A system that works at such scale at home is increasingly dependable across borders.

At the core of this transformation is a broader digital framework often described as the JAM Trinity—bank accounts, Aadhaar-based identity, and mobile connectivity. Together, they have brought hundreds of millions into the formal financial system, ensuring that money sent from abroad

lands directly in accessible bank accounts.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has described this architecture as a turning point in financial inclusion. For diaspora families, that shift is visible in everyday moments: school fees paid instantly, medical emergencies handled without delay, and household expenses managed in real time.

The impact is particularly pronounced among migrant workers in the Gulf. In cities like Dubai and Doha, where remittances form a major share of household income back home, digital payments are gradually replacing long queues at exchange houses.

"Before, I had to stand in line and pay fees," says Abdul Rahman, a construction worker in Qatar. "Now I send money from my phone. My wife gets it in seconds."

India's push to link UPI with international payment systems is accelerating this shift. The platform is already connected or operational in countries such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Bhutan, Nepal, and France, with more corridors under discussion. These efforts aim to make cross-border transfers faster and cheaper—an outcome with direct implications for diaspora communities.



(Logo courtesy: NPCL)

IN JANUARY 2026 ALONE, UPI PROCESSED 21.7 BILLION TRANSACTIONS, HANDLING ROUGHLY ₹28.33 LAKH CRORE (ABOUT \$340 BILLION) IN VALUE IN A SINGLE MONTH. TODAY, IT ACCOUNTS FOR 81% OF ALL RETAIL DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS IN INDIA AND NEARLY 49% OF GLOBAL REAL-TIME PAYMENT VOLUMES, MAKING IT THE LARGEST SYSTEM OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD—A POSITION ACKNOWLEDGED BY INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE IMF. REMARKABLY, THIS ECOSYSTEM HAS BEEN BUILT IN UNDER A DECADE.

French President Emmanuel Macron has acknowledged the scale of India's system, noting its ability to handle billions of transactions each month—an achievement unmatched globally.

Yet the real story lies beyond infrastructure.

In a village in Kerala, an elderly mother receives money from her son in Canada almost instantly. In Punjab, a farmer gets support from a relative abroad during the sowing season without waiting days. In Bengaluru, a student pays tuition using funds sent from London within seconds.

These are small, everyday transactions. But together, they signal something larger: the shrinking of distance.

UPI has also changed how diaspora Indians engage with home. Frequent, smaller transfers—once avoided due to fees and delays—are now common. Supporting family businesses, responding to emergencies, or even making charitable contributions has become easier

and more immediate.

Challenges remain. Cross-border interoperability is still evolving, and currency conversion costs can erode value. Older users may take time to adapt. Security concerns persist, though regulators such as the Reserve Bank of India have strengthened safeguards, including mandatory two-factor authentication.

Even so, the direction is clear. In less than ten years, India has built a payments ecosystem that not only serves its domestic population but is increasingly shaping global financial flows.

For the diaspora, the change is both practical and deeply personal.

Money sent home is rarely just a transaction. It is care, obligation, reassurance—a way of staying present across continents. By making that exchange faster, simpler, and more reliable, India's digital payments revolution is doing more than moving money.

It is bringing people closer—one transaction at a time.

Investor Exit Rights Get Boost

R. Suryamurthy

In a ruling that underscores India's increasingly arbitration-friendly stance, the Supreme Court of India has dismissed a challenge to the enforcement of a foreign arbitral award involving put option rights, reinforcing investor confidence in cross-border transactions.

A bench of the apex court on April 22 rejected a Special Leave Petition in Gokul Patnaik v. Nine Rivers Capital Limited & Ors., effectively upholding earlier decisions that favored enforcement of the award. The move signals that foreign arbitral rulings—particularly those seated in global hubs such as Singapore—will face minimal judicial interference in India.

The dispute traces its origins to arbitration proceedings administered by the Singapore International Arbitration Centre, where the tribunal ruled in favor of Nine Rivers Capital Limited. The award was subsequently affirmed by the Singapore International Commercial Court, strengthening its legal standing.

When the successful party sought enforcement in India, the Delhi High Court recognized the award under the New York Convention, which governs cross-border enforcement of arbitral decisions. The petitioner's challenge before the Supreme Court was dismissed, with the bench finding no infirmity in the High Court's reasoning.

Legal experts say the ruling sends a strong signal to global investors wary of enforcement risks in India. By backing the validity of put options—contractual clauses allowing investors to exit investments at a predetermined price—the judgment lends greater certainty to private equity and foreign direct investment structures.

The decision also reiterates the judiciary's consistent position that foreign awards can only be resisted on narrow grounds, such as violations of fundamental public policy. This “pro-enforcement bias,” analysts note, aligns India more closely with international arbitration norms.

The ruling is also seen as reinforcing Singapore's position as a preferred seat for India-linked disputes, given the convergence between Singaporean and Indian courts in upholding arbitral outcomes.

Nine Rivers Capital Limited was represented in the matter by a team from Nishith Desai Associates, led by Viral Mehta and supported by Mohammad Kamran, Chitransh Vijayvergia and Shru-ti Dhonde.

With the dismissal of the petition, the case brings to a close a prolonged litigation cycle, offering reassurance to foreign investors that Indian courts will uphold international arbitration awards with limited scope for disruption.



Global Tax Ledger



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India's Data Centre Tax Break: A Strategic Signal to the U.S. and UAE

India has quietly introduced one of the most consequential tax incentives in global digital infrastructure—yet it has barely registered in global boardrooms.

With effect from April 1, 2026 India has introduced a new tax exemption for foreign companies that use domestic data center services—a provision embedded in the Income-tax Act, 2025.

The mechanics are straightforward: foreign companies earning income in India by procuring services from a “specified data center” which is owned and operated by an Indian company and set up under an approved scheme as to be notified by Government of India, will be fully exempt from Indian income tax on that income until March 31, 2047. Nearly two decades of tax certainty are available to any qualifying foreign company that sets up its data infrastructure in India.

With this step, India is not merely granting tax exemptions but also removing a layer of uncertainty that has historically made lawyers rich and investment committees cautious. For American tech companies, this change is more

significant than it might seem. Previously, determining whether a U.S. firm's income was taxable in India depended on whether it had a “permanent establishment” in the country. This issue required a lengthy interpretation of the India-U.S. Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. However, India now seems to be replacing the uncertainty of litigation with clearer policy guidelines.

The Gulf angle deserves equal attention. With its low-tax environment in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the UAE has invested heavily in data infrastructure with a clear goal of becoming a global digital hub. India's new exemption is clearly aimed at attracting this kind of investor.

While the exemption seems to be attractive, it is not unconditional.

Foreign companies are not allowed to own or operate data infrastructure—a deliberate move to ensure that core assets remain in Indian hands. Where services touch Indian customers, transactions

must be routed through domestic reseller entities.

In addition, only those foreign companies that are specifically recognized by the Government of India and that comply with prescribed reporting and documentation requirements can avail the benefit.

These conditions are not hindrances; they are the architecture of a policy designed to attract foreign capital without foreign control—a distinction that will resonate differently in Washington than in Dubai, but that both should respect.

This is more than just a footnote for the CFO of a major U.S. cloud provider looking at the infrastructure strategy. For the investment committee of a Gulf sovereign fund evaluating its next digital infrastructure play, this deserves a line on the agenda.

India has put its offer in writing, and the ink is set to dry for the next two decades. The only question is now who moves first.

Business Round Up

Jan Dhan Surge

India's flagship financial inclusion program, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, has entered a phase of deeper usage, with total deposits crossing Rs 3.07 lakh crore as of April 2026, according to data shared by BLS E-Services, a major Business Correspondent (BC) network.

The number of Jan Dhan accounts rose to 58.06 crore as of April 8, 2026, up from 55.28 crore a year ago and 52.01 crore in 2024, indicating both expansion and rising activity. Deposits have grown steadily from Rs 2.34 lakh crore in April 2024 to Rs 2.62 lakh crore in April 2025 before reaching the current level.

The data highlights the expanding role of BC networks in driving last-mile banking access and deposit mobilization, particularly across rural and semi-urban regions, strengthening the financial inclusion ecosystem. (UNI)

RIL Profit Growth

Reliance Industries Ltd reported a strong FY26 performance,

with consolidated profit after tax rising 18.3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 95,610 crore, driven by growth in digital services and retail. Annual revenue stood at Rs 11,75,919 crore, up 9.8 per cent, while EBITDA rose 13.4 per cent to Rs 2,07,911 crore.

However, quarterly performance showed some pressure. Profit for the January–March quarter fell 8.1 per cent year-on-year to Rs 20,616 crore, largely due to weakness in energy businesses. Revenue for the quarter rose 12.9 per cent to Rs 3,25,290 crore, supported by growth across oil-to-chemicals, digital and retail segments. (UNI)

Adani Green Q4

Adani Green Energy Ltd reported a 34 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 514 crore for the March quarter.

Total income increased 14 per cent to Rs 3,727 crore, while revenue from power supply rose 16 per cent to Rs 3,094 crore, aided by higher generation and improved plant performance.

The company, however, wrote off Rs 52 crore linked to its exit from a 434 MW wind power project in Sri Lanka.

For FY26, net profit declined marginally by 0.7 per cent to Rs 1,987 crore despite total income rising 11 per cent to Rs 13,819 crore. The annual performance was impacted by one-off items including refinancing costs; project exits and damages.

Adani Green added 5.1 GW of renewable capacity during the year, taking its operational portfolio to 19.3 GW. (UNI)

Paytm Bank Exit

The Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the banking license of Paytm Payments Bank Limited with immediate effect, citing serious regulatory and governance concerns, and will initiate winding-up proceedings.

In its April 24, 2026 order, the RBI said the bank's operations were detrimental to depositors and public interest, and that it had failed to meet licensing conditions. The action bars the entity from undertaking any banking activity.

The central bank assured that the bank has sufficient liquidity to repay depositors in full upon liquidation.

The move follows earlier curbs, including a ban on onboarding new customers since March 2022 and restrictions on deposits and wallet top-ups imposed in 2024. (UNI)

Seafood Export High

India's seafood exports touched a record Rs 72,325.82 crore (USD 8.28 billion) in FY26, with volumes reaching 19.32 lakh metric tons, according to provisional data from MPEDA.

Frozen shrimp remained the key driver, contributing Rs 47,973.13 crore and accounting for over two-thirds of export earnings. Shrimp shipments rose 4.6 per cent in volume and 6.35 per cent in value.

The United States remained the largest market at USD 2.32 billion, though exports declined due to tariff impacts. (UNI)

Amazon India Invests

Amazon India announced an investment of over Rs 2,800 crore (around USD 300 million) to enhance safety, health and financial well-being of its workforce while expanding its logistics network.

The investment will support initiatives such as Project Ashray, Sushruta and Samriddhi, aimed at improving workplace safety, healthcare access and financial security.

It will also expand logistics infrastructure and scale up its quick

commerce service, Amazon Now. The company plans to leverage AI and machine learning for route optimization and efficiency.

The move aligns with Amazon's broader commitment to invest over USD 35 billion in India by 2030. (UNI)

Engineering Export Record

India's engineering exports hit a record USD 122.43 billion in FY26, growing 4.86 per cent, according to EEPC India.

The United States remained the top destination, with shipments rising 2.3 per cent to USD 19.60 billion. However, exports to West Asia and North Africa declined sharply due to geopolitical disruptions.

Shipments to UAE and Saudi Arabia fell significantly, while March exports to the region plunged over 50 per cent amid supply chain disruptions and the Strait of Hormuz crisis.

Despite this, growth in markets such as Germany, UK, China and Vietnam highlighted diversification trends. (UNI)

Aamir Khan's Singing Was The Highlight Of The Magical *Ek Din 'Mehfil'*



The Ek Din team: Composer Ram Sampath, Director Sunil Pandey, Junaid Khan, Sai Pallavi, Singer Meghna Mishra, and Aamir Khan.
(Photo courtesy: Rajiv Vijayakar)

Rajiv Vijayakar

It was a unique introduction to the film's music score, which is already available online. Aamir Khan's production, *Ek Din*, was intended to be his son Junaid Khan's first release, according to the actor. But at the venue, Junaid laughingly told me that it was not so. The music was celebrated at a musical mehfil (gathering) recently at PVR Lido in Mumbai.

The younger Khan had made his debut (after doing stage) in *Maharaj* on OTT in 2024, followed by *Loveyapa* (2025). The new film, directed by Sunil Pandey, has music by Ram Sampath. Also present were the technical teams of the movie, led by co-producer Aparna Purohit, cinematographer Manoj Lobo, and writers Sneha Desai and Spandan Mishra. Singer Meghna Mishra was also present along with them.

Also present was Aamir Khan's sister, Nikhat Khan, who made her acting debut in 2019 with *Mission Mangal*, Akshay Kumar's home production, and has been quite prolific since. Singer Sona Mohapatra, who is the wife of the film's composer, was also present.

The mehfil kicked off, albeit 90 minutes behind schedule, with some storytelling on the stages of falling in love—infatuation, commitment, and heartbreak—by a host of energetic storytellers, accompanied by performances of songs from the film. The stories had nothing to do with the film, per se, as far as is known to us. Then came three performances by the winners of the singing contest (held by the producers and music company Zee Music Company), who regaled the audience with their renditions of the film's songs.

But the highlight was Aamir himself singing the title track with composer Ram Sampath on the piano and singer Meghna Mishra. Mishra has sung two songs in the movie, including the title track's female version.

Aamir has been taking music lessons from a lady he terms as 'Didi' who was present in the crowded audience, for the last 30 months, and prayed that he would not let her and the audience down with his singing. And he did not.

Sampath made it a point to stress a key to the music's appeal—lyricist Irshad Kamil, who was traveling and could not be present. And Arijit Singh, who has sung on five of the six tracks, was also missed by Aamir.

THE HIGHLIGHT WAS AAMIR HIMSELF SINGING THE TITLE TRACK WITH COMPOSER RAM SAMPATH ON THE PIANO AND SINGER MEGHNA MISHRA. MISHRA HAS SUNG TWO SONGS IN THE MOVIE, INCLUDING THE TITLE TRACK'S FEMALE VERSION.

The concert concluded with an introduction of the lead pair (Sai Pallavi fumbled as she addressed the audience endearingly in broken Hindi, stating that she was not prepared for being told to speak) and the team.

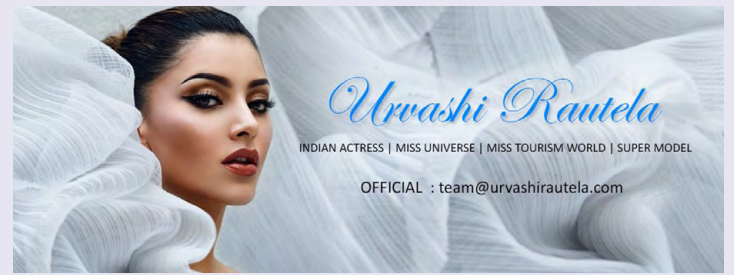
The film's music reminds me of the gossamer (and the un-trendy) score of Aamir's breakthrough film, *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), though it has its own stamp. If luck is with the team, the impact will be the same 38 years later, as this film is also a romance and also has six songs that are lyrically and musically rich, yet contemporary. And in the current hotchpotch concoctions of songs, it is, by its very nature, again totally against 'trends.'

Entertainment Round Up

Urvashi Rautela Dubbing

Actress Urvashi Rautela has commenced dubbing for a lavishly mounted big-budget film, reportedly pegged at an ambitious Rs 1,000 crore, signaling that the project is swiftly advancing towards its final stages of post-production.

The film also stars Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar alongside Rautela. The project, already generating considerable buzz due to its star-studded



(Photo courtesy: X@Urvashi Rautela)

cast, is now rapidly moving into its final stages with post-production underway.

Rautela is known for her glamorous screen presence and con-

stantly evolving acting chops. She has also shared glimpses from the dubbing studio, clearly demonstrating her hard work in perfecting her role. (UNI)

Actor Boxing First

Breaking the boundaries between real and reel, actor Pulkit Samrat stunned everyone with a fierce live boxing match with professional boxer Neeraj Goyat at the trailer launch of "Glory."

This high-energy face-off was not just a promotional stunt but a real, powerful contest that stunned the audience and grabbed the attention of the industry. Displaying rigorous preparation, discipline



(Photo courtesy: X@NetflixIndia)

and passion, Samrat not only entered the ring with full confidence but also matched Goyat shoulder to shoulder.

With this achievement, Samrat has become the first Indian actor to engage in a live boxing match with a professional boxer, marking a historic moment for Indian cinema. Globally, he now joins a select group of actors like Tom Hardy and Jake Gyllenhaal to achieve this feat, becoming only the third actor in the world to achieve this feat. (UNI)

Prem Comeback



(Photo courtesy: X@Sooraj Barjatya)

Veteran filmmaker Sooraj Barjatya has unveiled his next film 'Yeh Prem Mol Liya' signaling a

return to the tender, family-oriented storytelling that has long been synonymous with his cinema.

The musical family entertainer will star Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari Wagh and is set to release in theatres on November 27, 2026.

Rajshri Productions and Mahavir Jain Films are jointly producing the film. After winning the National Award for "Uunchai," Barjatya returns with another family entertainer.

With this film, Rajshri's iconic character 'Prem' returns to the big screen after 12 years. This time, Khurrana will be playing the role for the first time, making it

special with his simple and mischievous style. Wagh will be seen alongside him in the film for the first time. Her simplicity, strengths and beauty epitomize the unique qualities of Rajshri's heroines. Their on-screen chemistry will be a treat to watch.

After nearly 12 years, Barjatya and Himesh Reshammiya are collaborating again. They previously collaborated on 'Prem Ratan Dhan Payo.' At a time when Hindi cinema is dominated by action, horror and historical films, Rajshri is returning with its signature film, a true family entertainer. (UNI)

Dark Tale Revealed

South Indian film megastar Yash has spoken about his upcoming film "Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups," disclosing that the project goes far beyond conventional action and ventures into a deeply emotional and shadowy narrative space.

Yash says that if the scale of the film is large, every scene

should have a different flavor. "Every sequence needs to have a different style and flavor." For him, action isn't just about spectacular stunts, but rather an experience to be felt. Yash said that "Toxic" isn't just an action spectacle, it's also a deep dive into emotions.

He said, "Why do we watch movies? Because we can't experience every emotion in our own lives. Through films, we live someone

else's life, understanding their pain and struggles." With this philosophy, the film attempts to capture the darkest and most complex aspects of human emotions.

Directed by Geetu Mohandas, the film stars Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, Rukmini Vasanth, and Tara Sutaria. *Toxic* is scheduled to release on June 4, 2026. (UNI)

Epic Retelling

The makers of "Mahavatar Parashuram" have unveiled the film's first poster, offering an arresting glimpse into what promises to be a grand retelling of the legend of Lord Vishnu's sixth incarnation, Parashurama.

After the grand success of Hombale Films and Kaleem Productions' "Mahavatar Narasimha,"

the next big film is in the offing. The makers have shared the first glimpse of the film with an exciting poster, which promises to be a visual spectacle.

Ever since watching "Mahavatar Narasimha," fans have been excited for the sequel. Now, the makers have officially announced the film with a visually stunning poster. The film's tagline reads, "Where patience ends,

Parashurama's axe begins!" This line alone is enough to convey the film's powerful impact.

The makers are all set to present the story of Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, in a grand and impactful way. The film will depict how Lord Vishnu incarnated to end the tyranny of corrupt and arrogant kings who had abandoned the path of righteousness. (UNI)



Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Contact on Instagram @shahnazhusain_official

Travel beauty tips for your summer holidays

Summertime is here, it's time for beach days, pool parties, travel and vacations. Summer holidays are synonymous with sunshine and outdoor adventures. As heat and humidity rise, oil glands get hyperactive. Oily patches, rashes, pimples, sunburn, roughness, patchiness – they all make an appearance in this season.

Whether you're planning a beach getaway, a scenic mountain retreat, or simply enjoying staycations with friends and family, looking and feeling your best can make all the difference.

To help you shine from the inside out, here are some tips that may help your hair and skin "holiday-ready"

1. Prep your skin for the sun

Preparing your skin for the sun before prolonged exposure is an important step for the

skin that we too often forget. One of the best ways to prepare your skin for the sun is to engage in numerous short exposures. Skin that hasn't been exposed to the sun for a long time is even more vulnerable to the first UV rays it is exposed to.

The more your skin is exposed to the sun, the more it dries out. And as it dries out, it becomes more vulnerable to UV rays, so nourish your skin with a good moisturizing cream to construct its protective layer. Although moisturizing cream does not protect skin from the sun, it can help limit its ravages.

2. Mind your diet

The foods you eat could help your skin stay protected from the harmful effects of the summer sun's strong UV rays. The first meal of the day can prep and protect your healthy summer glow when you are on vacation.

Include peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, spinach, squash, broccoli, mangos,

apricots, kale, peas, tomatoes and melon in your diet that are rich in beta-carotene and other carotenoids.

The carotenoids found in red, orange, and yellow peppers not only provide excellent antioxidant properties, but they also contain 11 times more beta-carotene than green peppers. Foods that are rich in carotenoids add an orange tinge to your skin, which gives you a natural glow.

A combination of vitamins E and C protects the skin against UV damage. It is suggested that daily consumption of dietary polyphenols may provide efficient protection against the harmful effects of solar UV radiation in humans.

3. Travel Packing

Whether you're planning a beach getaway, a city escape, or a countryside retreat, Comfortable and versatile clothing is essential for a stress-free summer vacation. Focus on versatile pieces that can be worn in multiple ways. Lightweight T-shirts and

tanks take up little space in your suitcase, making it easy to roll them up and pack four or five of one color to use throughout the trip. It ensures that you can focus on your vacation rather than your attire, allowing you to relax and enjoy your trip.

Don't forget to pack a few key accessories like a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and comfortable sandals to complete your look. What is important is that you are comfortable in them in all your hours of travel.

4. Take care of your Hairs

Just like skincare, your hair needs special attention when you're travelling. Moving from one climate to another can confuse your hair. Humidity, dry air, or extreme temperatures can cause frizz, dryness, or even breakage.

Changes in climate, water quality, and exposure to sun, humidity, or pollution can take a toll on your hair. The serum is the best way to keep your hair hydrated and conditioned during travelling. Hair serums help to protect your strands from sun damage and make them look sleek and shiny. Serum correctly can help to protect your hair from skin problems that occur while on a vacation.

When packing, opt for travel-sized bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and styling products that suit your hair type. A leave-in conditioner or serum can be a lifesaver to combat dryness and frizz. Don't forget essentials like a wide-toothed comb, microfiber towel, and silk scrunchies to minimize breakage.

(The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called herbal queen of India)



STUFFED ASH GOURD FRITTERS

In the kitchens of West Bengal, while the hot debate of who will rule the state for the next five years is crunched. A dish that lives in the margins of rural West Bengal and Bangladesh — unrecorded, unhurried- is quietly passed from hand to hand.

I first encountered it while working for a West Bengal-based publication, and what struck me most was how deeply it belonged to people on the move. Bengali migrants carried it with them like a memory, holding tight to mustard's fierce, heady bite rather than the milder poppy seeds that define cooking further west.

It surfaces during the monsoon, when rain drums on tin roofs, or at celebrations that call for something tender and real. The star is ash gourd — once grown on those very rooftops, earning its name "chal kumro" — coaxed through resourceful hands into a festive side dish, humble enough for everyday rice and dal, rich enough to warrant a pool of golden ghee.

Human Palate Psychology

M. Rajendran

Bengal's Forgotten Mustard Crunch!



Ingredients — Serves 4

Produce

• 300–500g ash gourd, peeled and cut into

thick half-moons. It should be partial slits.

• 4–5 green chillies, chopped
• 1 small onion, chopped (optional)

Paste & Aromatics

- 2 tbsp mustard seed paste (soaked and ground)
- 2 tbsp grated coconut or poppy seeds

Spices

- ½ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp nigella seeds
- ½ tsp sugar
- Salt to taste

Batter

- 1 tsp besan (gram flour)
- 1 tsp rice flour
- 1 tsp plain flour
- Water, as needed
- Pinch each of turmeric, chilli, and salt

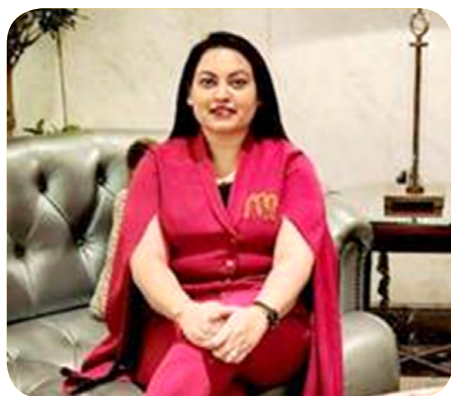
For Frying

- Mustard oil, as needed

Preparation Steps

1. Boil ash gourd pieces on a slow-medium flame for about 10 minutes.
2. Drain well and marinate with salt, turmeric, and chilli powder.
3. Heat 1 tbsp mustard oil in a pan. Temper nigella seeds, onion, and chillies, then stir in mustard paste, coconut or poppy seeds, spices, and sugar. Cook until the mixture thickens to a filling consistency.
4. Generously stuff the filling into the slits of the ash gourd, pressing lightly to seal.
5. Dip each piece in spiced batter and deep-fry in hot mustard oil until golden and crisp.
6. Serve hot alongside steamed rice and a drizzle of ghee.

(Photo created with AI)



Weekly Horoscope

01ST MAY - 07TH MAY

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KUSHIK

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(Photo: tongstocker1987 / Freepik)

ARIES (Mar 21–Apr 19)



Love: Knight of Swords

Mood: Three of Wands

Career: Eight of Cups

Career reflections may guide you to reassess long-term goals and align efforts more meaningfully. A pending deal may reach closure, boosting confidence and financial outlook. Academic focus may improve with timely support. Family advice may offer clarity in personal matters. Romantic interactions may deepen understanding and emotional comfort. Health routines may remain consistent.

Lucky Number: 6 • Lucky Color: Maroon

TAURUS (Apr 20–May 20)



Love: Strength

Mood: Three of Cups

Career: The Lovers

Creative thinking at work may help you handle responsibilities efficiently and earn appreciation. Financial choices may require thoughtful planning before commitments. Academic pursuits may bring encouraging results. Reconnecting with a family member may bring emotional warmth. Romantic energy may feel supportive. Travel plans may refresh your perspective. Health routines may need renewed discipline.

Lucky Number: 1 • Lucky Color: Pink

GEMINI (May 21–Jun 20)



Love: Two of Swords

Mood: The Hanged Man

Career: Nine of Wands

Professional responsibilities may keep you engaged, but your adaptability may help you manage tasks effectively. Financial gains from past efforts may begin to show. Academic progress may feel steady. Family celebrations may uplift your mood. Romantic bonds may remain harmonious. Property matters may move forward positively. Health stability may continue with disciplined habits.

Lucky Number: 11 • Lucky Color: Orange

CANCER (Jun 21–Jul 22)



Love: The Sun

Mood: The Magician

Career: Knight of Swords

Professional recognition may come your way as your consistent efforts get noticed. Financial authority may improve, helping you make confident decisions. Academic focus may need steady effort. Family time may strengthen emotional bonds. Respecting a partner's perspective may enhance harmony. Travel opportunities may be smooth. Health may improve with regular routines.

Lucky Number: 4 • Lucky Color: Peach

LEO (Jul 23–Aug 22)



Love: The Lovers

Mood: The Sun

Career: Temperance

Career growth may appear promising as opportunities for advancement emerge. Financial negotiations may work in your favour if

handled patiently. Academic performance may improve gradually. Family interactions may require thoughtful engagement. Romantic matters may need careful handling. Property-related progress may bring relief. Health may remain stable with balanced habits.

Lucky Number: 7 • Lucky Color: Golden

VIRGO (Aug 23–Sept 22)



Love: Judgement

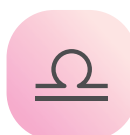
Mood: The World

Career: The Emperor

Professional diligence may keep you ahead in competitive situations. Financial gains from past investments may strengthen stability. Academic success may open new possibilities. Family life may feel harmonious with meaningful conversations. Supporting someone close may bring satisfaction. Property matters may need attention. Health may remain stable with preventive care.

Lucky Number: 22 • Lucky Color: Cream

LIBRA (Sept 23–Oct 22)



Love: Seven of Cups

Mood: The Devil

Career: Page of Swords

Consistency at work may help you meet expectations and maintain reliability. Financial opportunities may strengthen your long-term plans. Academic efforts may show gradual improvement. A short trip with family may arise unexpectedly. Romantic developments may add excitement. Health may benefit from routine discipline. Social decisions may require balanced judgment.

Lucky Number: 2 • Lucky Color: Silver

SCORPIO (Oct 23–Nov 21)



Love: Four of Coins

Mood: The Tower

Career: The Empress

Clearing pending tasks may bring professional clarity and renewed focus. Financial stability may improve through careful planning. Academic challenges may require structured effort. Being sensitive to family emotions may maintain harmony. Romantic connections may deepen with trust. Travel plans may proceed smoothly despite minor delays. Health efforts may show positive results.

Lucky Number: 3 • Lucky Color: Dark Red

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22–Dec 21)



Love: The Magician

Mood: King of Wands

Career: Two of Coins

Work responsibilities may increase, but steady efforts may help you manage them effectively. Financial decisions may remain stable with careful planning. Academic restructuring may improve outcomes. Supporting a family member may strengthen bonds. Romance may heal through understanding. Travel may refresh your outlook. Health may improve with consistent effort.

Lucky Number: 8 • Lucky Color: Purple

CAPRICORN (Dec 22–Jan 19)



Love: The Chariot

Mood: Three of Swords

Career: The Hermit

Professional determination may help you overcome challenges and stay ahead. Financial gains from secure sources may bring stability. Academic progress may boost confidence. Family responsibilities may keep you engaged. Romantic commitments may strengthen. Social interactions may need clarity. Health may improve with disciplined routines and active habits.

Lucky Number: 9 • Lucky Color: Brown

AQUARIUS (Jan 20–Feb 18)



Love: The Star

Mood: The Hanged Man

Career: Four of Coins

Efforts to impress seniors may bring recognition or rewards. Financial improvements may follow consistent performance. Academic

success may enhance confidence. Family developments may bring joy. Expressing emotions in love may lead to positive outcomes. Travel plans may finally materialise. Property matters may move towards resolution. Health may benefit from routine care.

Lucky Number: 17 • Lucky Color: Beige

PISCES (Feb 19–Mar 20)



Love: Seven of Coins

Mood: The Devil

Career: Four of Cups

Professional insights may prove accurate, strengthening your credibility. Financial opportunities may arise through new ventures. Domestic matters may require prompt attention for balance. Academic changes may work in your favour. Romantic patience may be essential. Travel or relocation may bring fresh energy. Health may improve with renewed consistency.

Lucky Number: 3 • Lucky Color: Yellow

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RSS Leader...

(Contd. from page 1)

In his remarks, Andersen said that given the broad presence of the RSS across Indian society, the organization is likely to remain a “stabilizing influence” in the country.

Reflecting on its evolution, he noted that the RSS began as a small unit in Nagpur and has expanded significantly, with a presence across all states and Union Territories and tens of thousands of participants.

Andersen said the RSS today plays an influential role not only in politics but also across various sectors of Indian society through its affiliates. Recalling his early research, he said he had been told the RSS would become a “major factor” in Indian politics, a prediction that shaped his academic work. “And I’m glad I did,” he noted adding that ever since then, the RSS has grown tremendously.

He identified several factors behind the organization’s growth, including its emphasis on a core belief system that gives individuals a sense of purpose beyond themselves, its commitment to a politically and socially unified India, and the opportunities it provides for demonstrating loyalty to its ideals.

Andersen also discussed the RSS approach to nation building, noting that while it did not directly participate in India’s independence struggle in the same way as some other groups, it focused on building a cadre of workers. These individuals were trained to foster a “sense of self confidence” and a “common brotherhood,” which he described as essential to strengthening national unity.

“And the idea was to project a brotherhood that would enhance self confidence in themselves, as well as loyalty to India,” he said, adding that these were seen as prerequisites for a successful movement toward independence.

He further noted that the RSS has maintained internal cohesion over decades, attributing this to its shared “core ideology,” which he described as “patriotism.” At the same time, he acknowledged that the organization will face future challenges as India continues to evolve rapidly, suggesting that its long-term success will depend on its ability to adapt and respond to emerging societal needs.

Russell Mead, in his remarks, stressed the global importance of a “vibrant, developed, harmonious, strong” India rooted in its long history, philosophy, culture, and faith. He said India’s rise would have far-reaching implications beyond tourism or economic growth, reshaping global dynamics.

“A strong, fully developed, self-confident, outward looking India, in touch with itself and its values, sends a message to our friends in China...” he said, adding, “It says this without fighting, without war. Indeed, if India reaches the state, the chance of war in Asia goes down dramatically, because the Chinese will understand this is going to be a fact of life.”

Russell Mead said that a peaceful and prosperous Asia would be the most stable path forward for the world. He added that faster economic and social development in India could reduce the likelihood of conflict in the region.

“And the faster India achieves this level of growth, the shorter the period of potential conflict is, the less chance there is a war,” he said. “I believe that India’s growth, India’s fulfillment of its destiny, isn’t just good for Indians, it is critically important for all of humanity.”

Immigration Slowdown Threatens U.S. Growth

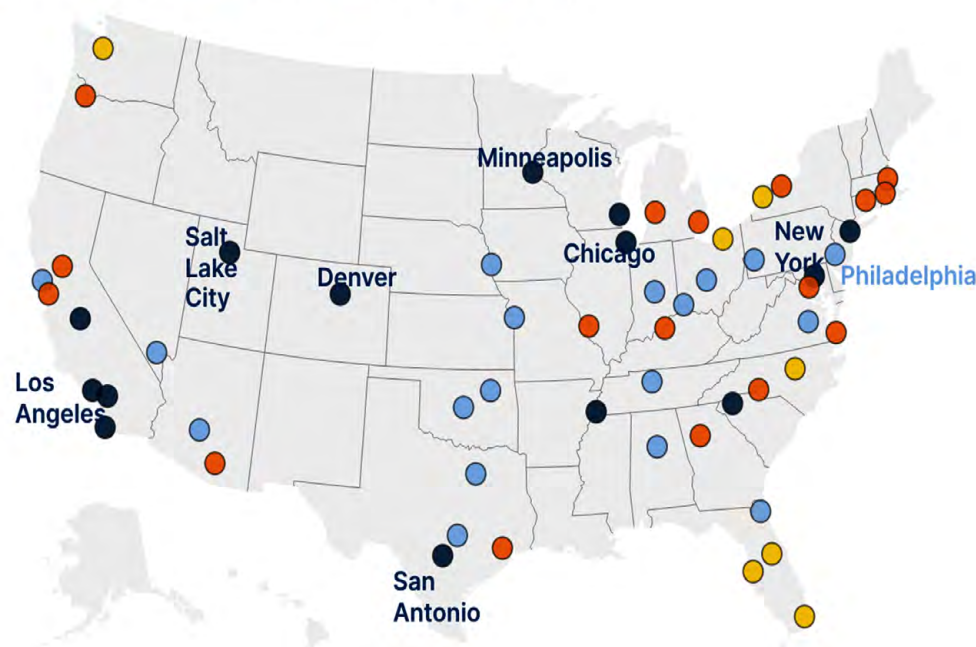
Percent decline in international migration between 2023-24 and 2024-25

56 major metro areas

Hover over map to view statistics

Percent immigration reduction

■ 60% or greater ■ 50-60% ■ 40-50% ■ 30-40%



Source: William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census Bureau population estimates vintage 2025, released March 26, 2026

Brookings Metro

(Image courtesy: Brookings)

R. Suryamurthy

A sharp deceleration in immigration to the United States is beginning to translate into hard economic signals, even as the issue becomes the subject of an intensifying legal battle that could reshape mobility for millions—including the country’s influential South Asian diaspora.

A recent analysis by the Brookings Institution shows that immigrants accounted for a dominant share of population growth in major U.S. metropolitan areas over the past decade, in some cases driving more than 80% of net gains. That engine is now slowing. Annual immigration inflows, which averaged around one million in the 2010s, dipped sharply during the pandemic and have only partially recovered, leaving a measurable drag on urban growth and labor supply.

The economic implications are quantifiable. The U.S. labor force growth rate, which hovered near 1% annually in the early 2000s, has slowed to roughly half that pace in recent years, with immigration declines accounting for a significant portion. In innovation-heavy regions—Silicon Valley, Seattle, Boston and New York—foreign-born workers make up between 30% and 50% of the STEM workforce. A sustained drop in inflows threatens to constrain output in sectors that contribute disproportionately to GDP growth, including artificial intelligence, biotech and advanced manufacturing.

This slowdown coincides with a high-stakes legal contest over immigration policy, spanning work visas, asylum rules and the interpretation of birthright citizenship. Court rulings expected this year could redefine eligibility criteria and processing norms. For South Asians, the exposure is acute: Indian nationals alone receive roughly 70% of H-1B visas annually, while students from India and neighboring countries form one of the

largest international cohorts in U.S. higher education, particularly in STEM disciplines.

The knock-on effects are already visible. U.S. universities derive billions of dollars in tuition revenue from international students, and any disruption in enrolment flows could strain institutional finances and research output. At the same time, visa backlogs—especially for employment-based green cards affecting Indian professionals—have stretched into decades, creating a bottleneck that limits job mobility and long-term settlement.

Forward-looking indicators suggest a gradual rebalancing of global talent flows. Canada admitted more than 400,000 permanent residents annually in recent years, with a significant share coming from South Asia, while Australia has expanded skilled migration quotas. Surveys of prospective migrants indicate rising preference for these destinations, citing clearer pathways to residency and fewer policy uncertainties.

The broader macroeconomic risk for the United States is structural. With fertility rates below 2.1, immigration is the primary driver of long-term population growth. Without a rebound in inflows, projections point to a tighter labor market, upward wage pressures and potential constraints on economic expansion.

For the South Asian diaspora, the outlook is increasingly defined by diversification. In the near term, legal uncertainty and processing delays will persist. Over the longer horizon, talent may disperse more widely across competing economies, reshaping global innovation networks and weakening the historic concentration of South Asian professionals in the United States.

The data underscores a pivotal shift: immigration policy is no longer peripheral but central to economic competitiveness—and its outcome will determine not just who enters the U.S., but where the world’s fastest-growing talent pool ultimately lands.

From Motels to Microsoft: Diaspora Rise

The South Asian diaspora, anchored by a 5 million-strong Indian-American community, continues to exert a disproportionate influence on the U.S. economy. Though only 1.5% of the population, its footprint spans taxation, corporate leadership, innovation, and small business ownership.

Key data points highlight the scale of impact:

- **Tax Contribution:** Indian-Americans contribute an estimated 5–6% of total U.S. federal income taxes, amounting to roughly \$250–\$300 billion annually, far exceeding their population share.
- **Corporate Leadership:** Executives of Indian origin lead 16 Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft and Google. These firms collectively generate close to \$1 trillion in annual revenue and employ around 2.7 million people in the U.S.
- **Startup Ecosystem:** Indian entrepreneurs have co-founded at least 72 U.S. unicorn startups, with a combined valuation of approximately \$195 billion, reinforcing their role in high-growth innovation sectors.
- **Hospitality & Small Business:** Indian-Americans own over 50% of U.S. motels, forming a critical backbone of the \$700 billion hospitality industry, which supports 4 million jobs. They also control 35–50% of convenience stores nationwide.
- **Education & Skilled Workforce:** Around 270,000 Indian students enroll in U.S. universities each year, contributing more than \$10 billion annually and supporting roughly 93,000 jobs. Many transition into high-skilled sectors such as technology, finance, and healthcare.
- **Scientific Contribution:** Indian-Americans are linked to 13% of U.S. scientific publications, underscoring their role in research and development.
- **Consumer Power:** Across the broader South Asian diaspora, the community accounts for 29% of Asian-American buying power, representing about \$381 billion in economic influence.
- **Income Advantage:** Indian-American households report average incomes nearly double the U.S. national median, driving strong consumer spending and investment activity.

Analysts say these figures position the South Asian diaspora as a central driver of U.S. economic growth, even as immigration and skilled visa policies remain under increasing political scrutiny.

London Marathon 2026: South Asian Figures Who Stood Out



Subas Gurung after completing the 2026 London Marathon.
(Photo courtesy: @subasgrg406/Instagram)

Anirudh Nair

The 2026 London Marathon, which took place on April 26, witnessed yet another milestone year in terms of participation and individual records. An estimated 59,000 runners participated in this edition, marking a record turnout for the London Marathon.

The biggest headline of the event, however, came from Kenya's Sabastian Sawe, who broke the world record for the fastest time to complete a marathon, finishing in under two hours with a time of 1:59:30.

In terms of South Asian participants, the number was high as always, but one name that stood out in this edition was Nepal's Subas Gurung. Born in 1997, Gurung is an athlete and Gurkha officer who already holds the Nepali national record for completing a half marathon. He completed the London Marathon in 2:23:36, finishing 54th overall in the mass event, the highest among all South Asian participants.

Despite the impressive result, Gurung had aimed for more and took this as a learning experience for the future.

"Sometimes Plan A doesn't go as expected," Gurung said in an Instagram post after the marathon. "I went out ambitious 10km

in 32:20, halfway in 68:25, holding target pace until 30km. After that, the body had other plans. The struggle was real, the pace dropped... and that's the marathon."

He further noted, "Grateful for the lessons, the energy, and the fight to the finish. This is just the beginning."

Many run the marathon to push themselves beyond their limits, but there are also many who put in that effort for another cause. One of these is former England U-19 and Yorkshire cricketer Azeem Rafiq. He ran the London Marathon for the 'Children Not Numbers' charity, a group that focuses on improving the livelihoods of children in Gaza.

Rafiq has been outspoken about his experiences with "racism" as a cricketer with Yorkshire and has continued to be a voice for minorities around the world. He dedicated this marathon to his father, who passed away last year and had been key in helping him through those tough times while fighting Yorkshire Cricket.

Ten runners also ran for the British Asian Trust, a nonprofit organization that aims to develop sectors such as education, child protection, and mental health in South Asian countries. The participants impressively raised over £50,000 (~\$67,500) for the Trust, showcasing that sport can be a powerful tool to help those in need.



The British Asian Trust at the 2026 London Marathon.
(Photo courtesy: @thebritishasiantrust/Instagram)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi plays football with young footballers in Gangtok, Sikkim. (Photo courtesy: UNI)

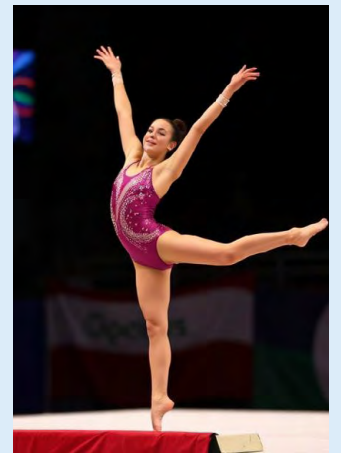
Sports Round Up

Gymnastics Nationals in Odisha

The Junior and Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships 2026-27 will be held at Kalinga Stadium from April 25 to May 3, with over 600 gymnasts from 25 states, three Union Territories and services set to compete. Organized by the Odisha Gymnastics Association in collaboration with the Gymnastics Federation of India and supported by the state government, the event will feature men's and women's artistic disciplines across team, all-around and apparatus categories in junior and senior sections.

Officials said the return of the championships to Odisha reflects the state's growing sports

infrastructure and focus on grassroots development. Performances at the meet will play a key role in selections for upcoming international events, including the Asian Championships and Commonwealth Games. Leading gymnasts such as Pranati Nayak and Asish Kumar are expected to participate alongside emerging talent. (UNI)



(Photo created with AI)

India bags gold at ISSF Junior World Cup

Divyanshu Dewangan and Shambhavi Kshirsagar clinched gold in the 10m air rifle mixed team event at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Cairo, setting a junior world record total of 499.9. The Indian duo topped the podium ahead of Chinese Taipei, while France took bronze.

The pair had earlier led qualification with 632.0. Another Indian team failed to reach the final, finishing seventh. In the men's 25m rapid fire pistol, Sameer ended seventh despite finishing second in qualification.

India's tally rose to 12 medals — four gold, five silver and three bronze — the highest among participating nations. A total of 284 shooters from 25 federations are competing, with India fielding the largest contingent of 71 athletes. (UNI)

India eyes 2038 Asian Games bid

India has expressed interest in hosting the 2038 Asian Games, marking a potential return of the continental event for the first time since 1982. The proposal was discussed during the Olympic Council of Asia executive board meeting in Sanya, China.

India previously hosted the Games in 1951 and 1982, both in New Delhi. With the 2026, 2030 and 2034

editions already allocated, the focus has shifted to 2038. The move aligns with India's broader ambition to host the 2036 Olympics.

Officials said discussions also centered on strengthening sports development and regional cooperation. India has recently secured hosting rights for multiple global events, including the 2030 Commonwealth Games and the 2028 World Athletics Indoor Championships, signaling an aggressive push to position itself as a major sporting hub. (UNI)

LA Olympic cricket venue eyes IPL link

The cricket stadium for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics could eventually host Indian Premier League exhibition matches, according to Kolkata Knight Riders CEO Venky Mysore.

Construction has begun at Pomona's Fairplex site, with the venue set to host Major League Cricket

matches this year. The modular stadium will expand from a 5,000-seat capacity to 15,000 by 2028. It will also serve as the home ground for the Los Angeles Knight Riders franchise.

Mysore said discussions around taking IPL teams abroad have been ongoing, though scheduling challenges remain. With the United States seen as a key growth market, officials believe the expansion of cricket infrastructure could boost viewership and commercial prospects. (UNI)