



South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

Vol. I | Issue No. 6 | May 21-27, 2026 | National Edition | southasianherald.com | Follow us on



Sarpreet Singh in action against Ireland. (Photo courtesy: www.photosport.nz/ RNZ)

→ Story in the sports page

Diaspora Stars Chase World Cup Dream

Sikh Hero Awards Celebrate Service, Leadership And Diaspora Unity

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The 2026 Annual Vaisakhi Gala and Sikh Hero Awards hosted by Sikhs of America Inc. on May 17 at the Gathering Place in Maryland brought together community leaders, professionals,

and members of the South Asian diaspora for an evening focused on service, leadership, and intercommunity solidarity.

Welcoming attendees, Chairman of Sikhs of America Jesse Singh described the gathering as a “very humbling experience”

and reflected on the contributions of Sikh Americans as the United States approaches its 250th anniversary.

A video presentation screened during the gala traced the journey of Sikh Americans across generations, highlighting contributions in farming, public service, business, health care, and national service. The presentation described Sikh Americans as “a vibrant thread in this great nation’s story,” adding that Sikhs of America represented “a heartbeat of unity, culture, and service.”

Singh said the awards ceremony aimed to recognize individuals whose achievements and community work could inspire younger generations. Introducing the honorees, Sukhpal Singh Dhanoa said the evening was dedicated to “extraordinary individuals who quietly uplift humanity without seeking applause.” (Contd. on page 6)



Clockwise, Sardar Bahadur Singh, JJ Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh Kang, and Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora being honored on May 17, 2026, at the Gathering Place, in Maryland. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

Sherpa Duo Smash Everest Records

SAH Staff Reporter

Two veteran Nepali climbers scaled new heights on Mount Everest on May 16, setting fresh world records and reinforcing the Sherpa community’s enduring legacy in high-altitude mountaineering.

Kami Rita Sherpa, widely known as the “Everest Man,” reached the summit of the world’s tallest mountain for a record 32nd time at 10:12 a.m., surpassing his own previous mark on the 8,848.86-metre peak.

Earlier in the morning, Lakpa Sherpa achieved her own milestone by summiting Everest for the 11th time at 9:30 a.m., extending her record as the woman with the highest number of ascents of the Himalayan giant.

The twin achievements sparked celebrations across Nepal’s mountaineering community, with officials and expedition organizers hailing the climbers’ endurance, discipline and unmatched expertise in navigating one of the world’s most dangerous environments.

(Contd. on page 6)



(Photos courtesy: X@ShahBalen)

Sikh Gala Highlights Interfaith Outreach And Pakistan Sikh Representation

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The annual Vaisakhi Gala and Sikh Hero Awards organized by Sikhs of America Inc. in Maryland on May 17 also emerged as a platform highlighting interfaith engagement, South Asian diaspora solidarity, and Sikh representation in public life across borders.

One of the evening's notable honorees was Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, Pakistan Punjab's Minister for Minority Affairs and Member of the Provincial Assembly. Organizers recognized Arora for advancing Sikh representation in Pakistan's public sphere and promoting religious tourism linked to Sikh heritage sites.

The organizers also highlighted his role in the Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act 2018, legislation that enabled legal registration of Sikh marriages in Pakistan.

Addressing the gathering, Sajid Tarar, founder of Muslims of America, praised the event for bringing together members of different faiths and communities under one roof.

"The message of unity and service was strongly delivered," Tarar



Clockwise, Jesse Singh, Kanwaljit Soni, Sajid Tarar, Sukhpal Singh Dhanoa addressing the gathering on May 17, 2026, at the Gathering Place in Maryland. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

said, noting the presence of Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and Muslims from both Indian and Pakistani backgrounds.

He also commended Arora's remarks advocating "love, harmony and peace," and concluded by quoting 13th-century poet Rumi: "The wound is the place where the light enters you."

During the event, Virender Singh and Dhanoa received special citations from Chairman Jesse Singh for their contributions

in journalism and seva. President of Sikhs of America Kanwaljit Soni also addressed attendees, emphasizing the importance of preserving Sikh identity while strengthening engagement with the broader American society.

Speakers repeatedly underlined that the awards initiative was intended not only to celebrate personal achievement but also to encourage collective pride and community cohesion within the Sikh diaspora.

EmpowerHer Business Festival Celebrates Women Entrepreneurs

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The Global Economic Foundation's "EmpowerHer Business Festival," held on May 17 in Chantilly, Virginia, drew more than 700 participants and showcased the growing influence of women entrepreneurs in Northern Virginia. Over 40 women-owned and women-led businesses participated, alongside cultural performances, karaoke, raffles and family activities.

Anita Dehkan, CEO of Titan-Proz and one of the organizers, said the festival celebrated women's achievements and encouraged empowerment and mutual support. Dhananjay Kumar, founder and chairman of the India Cultural

and Spiritual Center (ICSC), spoke about the need for humanity to overcome destructive competition and social divisions, while ICSC president Vishwas Shirgaokar highlighted the role of music and arts in reducing stress.

Festival Director Indira Kumar said former World Bank professionals Kumar and Shirgaokar are now focused on education and community service. Sponsor Mickey Oudit of Cosmos Air Purification supported the initiative, while participants included scientist Tulasi-kumari Kanipakala, Sister Jenna, Karishma Sharma, Arunasri Donthi, and Dhivya Sankaran.

Details here: <https://southasianherald.com/empowerher-business-festival-celebrates-women-entrepreneur/>



From left, Ravindranath Vempati, Vishwas Shirgaokar, Indira Kumar, and Dhananjay Kumar during the EmpowerHer Business Festival on May 17, 2026, in Chantilly, Virginia. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

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Branch Offices: 44335 Premier Plaza
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BALAGAN ARUMUGASWAMY, CPA

Ancient Practice, Modern Global Healing

R. Suryamurthy

As dawn breaks over the Himalayan deserts of Ladakh, thousands are expected to unroll yoga mats against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks. In the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, government buildings, parks and university campuses are preparing for mass yoga sessions, while in Hyderabad, organizers are attempting record-breaking synchronized demonstrations of Bhujangasana, or Cobra Pose.

Across India — and increasingly across the world — preparations are intensifying for the 12th International Day of Yoga on June 21, an event that has evolved from a symbolic observance into one of the world's largest wellness movements.

Led by India's Ministry of Ayush, this year's preparations include nationwide countdown campaigns, community yoga programs, digital outreach initiatives and large-scale public demonstrations designed to draw millions into a shared practice rooted in ancient Indian philosophy but now embraced globally as a modern pathway to health and balance.



(Image courtesy: Ministry of Tourism, GoI)

What began in 2015, after the United Nations adopted India's proposal to recognize June 21 as International Day of Yoga, has expanded into a worldwide phenomenon observed in more than 190 countries. Indian embassies, wellness groups and yoga communities from Tokyo to Toronto, São Paulo to Singapore, are preparing sunrise sessions, meditation workshops and public events aimed at promoting physical and mental well-being.

The significance of Yoga's global rise lies not only in its cultural origins but in the changing realities

of modern life. In a world marked by rising stress, anxiety, sedentary lifestyles and lifestyle-related diseases, many people are increasingly turning to yoga as a low-cost, accessible form of preventive healthcare.

Health experts say the appeal of yoga today goes far beyond physical flexibility. Scientific studies increasingly associate regular yoga practice with reduced stress levels, improved cardiovascular health, better sleep, enhanced emotional resilience and support in managing chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift dramatically. Lockdowns and mental health pressures pushed millions toward home-based wellness routines, meditation apps and breathing exercises, helping yoga move from boutique studios into mainstream daily life.

Indian officials say this year's International Day of Yoga will place special emphasis on inclusivity and mass participation. Schools, universities, workplaces and rural communities are being encouraged to integrate yoga into everyday routines. In remote parts of India, including border regions and high-altitude settlements, outreach programs are being organized to ensure broader access.

At a recent inter-ministerial meeting in New Delhi, Prataprao Jadhav, India's Minister of State for Ayush, described yoga as "a people's movement promoting a healthy lifestyle," calling for coordinated national and international participation.

The Ministry of External Affairs is also working through Indian missions abroad to expand global engagement. Sibi George, Secretary (West) in the ministry,

said yoga was gaining worldwide recognition as a tool for "health, wellness and inner balance."

Preparations are also deeply symbolic. At Kanha Shanti Vanam near Hyderabad, thousands recently gathered for a 50-day countdown event featuring a mass yoga demonstration aimed at entering the Asia Book of Records. Diplomats and participants from countries including Brazil, Vietnam, Australia and Canada joined physically and virtually, underlining yoga's transformation into a shared global language of wellness.

For many participants, the attraction lies in yoga's simplicity. It requires little equipment, can be practiced almost anywhere, and combines movement, breathing and mindfulness in a way that resonates across cultures and age groups.

As June 21 approaches, India is not merely preparing for another international event. It is preparing to showcase how an ancient practice, once confined to ashrams and spiritual traditions, has become a global response to the pressures of modern living — offering millions a search for calm, balance and resilience in an increasingly restless world.

Britain Gears Up For IDY 2026

SAH Staff Reporter

Preparations for the International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2026 celebrations in the United Kingdom have formally begun, with the High Commission of India in London initiating plans to widen participation and strengthen the event's global outreach.

The High Commissioner of India to the UK this week chaired a meeting with officials and staff at the High Commission to review preparations and chart out the roadmap for this year's observance of the annual event, celebrated

worldwide on June 21. According to officials, discussions focused on developing innovative outreach initiatives aimed at increasing public engagement across the UK and promoting yoga as a tool for physical well-being, mental health and social harmony.

The meeting also explored ways to deepen collaboration with local communities, educational institutions and wellness organisations to ensure broader participation in the celebrations. Officials said the planned activities would align with the wider cultural diplomacy objectives of the India-UK partnership,



(Photo courtesy: X@HCL_London)

underlining yoga's growing global appeal as an ancient Indian practice that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. This year's celebrations are also expected to reflect themes of sustainability, holistic wellness and community well-being, in line with the

international emphasis on healthier and more balanced lifestyles.

The International Day of Yoga, adopted by the United Nations in 2014 following a proposal by India, has evolved into one of the world's largest wellness movements, with mass yoga sessions and cultural

events organised annually across continents.

Further details regarding venues, public programmes and registration for IDY 2026 events in the UK are expected to be announced by the High Commission in the coming weeks.

Chile Yoga Countdown

SAH Staff Reporter

The countdown to the 2026 International Day of Yoga began in Chile with a curtain-raiser event organized by the Embassy of India in collaboration with Somos India in the coastal town of Algarrobo.

The event brought together nearly 70 yoga practitioners, wellness enthusiasts and members of the local community, reflecting the growing popularity of yoga and Indian wellness traditions in the South American nation.



(Photo courtesy: X@Indiainchile)

India's Ambassador to Chile, Abhilasha Joshi, inaugurated the program and highlighted yoga's role in promoting holistic well-being and harmony.

Describing yoga as "India's timeless gift to the world," the envoy said the ancient practice continues to foster balance between mind, body and nature while encouraging healthier lifestyles across cultures.

The event featured a combination of meditation, sound healing and outdoor yoga sessions designed to promote relaxation and physical wellness.

Participants first attended a Nada Yoga and sound healing session, where meditative acoustic vibrations created a calming atmosphere. The program later moved to Playa Pejerrey, where attendees took part in a

beachfront yoga session overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Several participants described the experience as both rejuvenating and spiritually uplifting, with the oceanfront setting adding to the sense of tranquility and connection with nature.

Organizers said the successful turnout in Algarrobo underscored yoga's expanding reach in Chile and the broader Latin American region.

The Embassy of India and its local partners are expected to host additional wellness and community events across Chile in the lead-up to the International Day of Yoga celebrations in June 2026, aimed at strengthening cultural ties and promoting awareness about the benefits of yoga.

Buddha's Sacred Relics Stir Spiritual Fervor

R. Suryamurthy

In the icy winds sweeping across Ladakh's barren mountains, elderly women wrapped in thick woolen robes fingered prayer beads while whispering Buddhist chants. Young monks stood beside tourists, soldiers and villagers from remote Himalayan settlements, all waiting patiently for a rare spiritual moment — a glimpse of the sacred relics of the Tathagata Buddha.

For fourteen days, Ladakh transformed into a vast spiritual gathering ground where devotion, culture and identity converged beneath snow-covered peaks.

The Sacred Exposition of the Holy Buddha Relics concluded this week in Leh after drawing more than 118,000 devotees, making it one of the largest spiritual gatherings ever organized in the Union Territory. Pilgrims travelled across difficult mountain terrain from isolated villages, monasteries and border regions to offer prayers before relics believed to embody the spiritual presence of the Buddha.

At the Dharma Centre in Choglamsar, where the closing ceremony coincided with the annual Monlam Chenmo — Ladakh's Great Prayer Festival dedicated to world peace and universal happiness — thousands of monks in crimson robes filled the air with rhythmic chants. Traditional Cham mask dances unfolded against the dramatic Hima-



(Photo courtesy: PIB)

layan backdrop as devotees gathered for the final prayers.

For many, the experience was deeply emotional. Elderly pilgrims prostrated repeatedly before entering the prayer hall. Families carried children through packed crowds while young monks documented the occasion on mobile phones. Some devotees quietly wept after offering prayers. The arrival of the relics in Leh on April 29 had triggered scenes rarely witnessed

in the remote Himalayan region. Thousands of residents dressed in traditional attire lined the roads from Leh airport to Jivetsal, showering flower petals and offering ceremonial greetings as the sacred convoy passed.

The exposition formally opened on May 1, coinciding with the 2569th Buddha Purnima celebrations, and was inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, whose visit underscored New Delhi's growing emphasis on promoting Ladakh's Buddhist

heritage and spiritual tourism. The relics remained on display in Leh for nine days before being taken to Karsha Gonpa in Zaskar, allowing devotees from some of the region's most inaccessible settlements to seek blessings.

Pilgrims and visitors arrived not only from across India but also from Buddhist-majority nations including Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Scholars, diplomats and Buddhist leaders mingled with local residents, lending the exposition the character of a global Buddhist congregation.

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena described the exposition as a symbol of cultural harmony and spiritual awakening, praising residents for their patience and discipline despite long hours in queues and harsh weather conditions.

Behind the spiritual grandeur lay a massive logistical exercise. The Indian Army, Indian Air Force, ITBP, Ladakh Police and Buddhist organizations worked together to manage crowds and ensure smooth movement across the mountainous terrain.

As the sacred relics prepare to return to the National Museum in New Delhi, the chants have faded from Leh's prayer grounds.

But for many in Ladakh, the spiritual resonance of those fourteen days will linger long after the relics leave the mountains.

From Kitchens To Boardrooms: SAARC's New Push For Women's Jobs

SAH Staff Reporter

South Asian nations are preparing to chart a new regional strategy to transform care systems and boost women's participation in the workforce, as member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation move toward what officials describe as a long-term economic and social shift for the region.

The push follows the conclusion of a two-day ministerial dialogue, "TransformCare South Asia: Transforming Care Systems for Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment in SAARC," which ended on May 14 with participating

countries agreeing to develop a regional action framework focused on care infrastructure, financing and women's employment.

Organized jointly by the SAARC Secretariat and UN Women, the dialogue marked the first time the care economy was formally elevated as a strategic area of regional cooperation in South Asia.

Officials and policymakers said the proposed roadmap could reshape labor markets across the region, where women continue to face barriers to employment due to unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

South Asia has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world, and experts

at the forum warned that without large-scale reforms in childcare, eldercare and social protection systems, the region risks slowing economic growth and widening inequality. UN Women estimates discussed during the meeting suggested that narrowing gender gaps in workforce participation could raise South Asia's GDP by as much as 51 percent in the coming years.

"Coordinated action to transform care systems can unlock greater choices and opportunities for women across South Asia," said Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S VISIT TO CHINA COMES AT A CRITICAL GLOBAL MOMENT, WITH TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS PLACING ENORMOUS WEIGHT ON US-CHINA RELATIONS. BOTH NATIONS UNDERSTAND THAT STRATEGIC STABILITY AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE OVERSHADOWED BY TARIFFS, SANCTIONS, OR POLITICAL THEATRICS.

She said investments in the care economy would not only create jobs but also expand women's access to education, public life and leadership opportunities that are often constrained by unequal care burdens.

Regional officials expect the proposed care economy framework to focus on expanding affordable and accessible care services, improving conditions for paid care workers and mobilizing blended financing to scale investments across member states.

A key outcome of the dialogue was the preparation of a zero draft Action Plan for Transforming Care Systems in South Asia, which is expected to guide future cooperation among SAARC countries.

Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary-General of SAARC, said the region's future growth would increasingly depend on how governments address care responsibilities.

"The care economy is not a niche social issue," Sarwar said. "It is an economic imperative, a demographic necessity, and above all, a moral calling."

The initiative is also expected to deepen collaboration among governments, women's organizations, academia and the private sector as countries confront shared challenges including demographic shifts, labor migration, climate pressures and entrenched gender norms.

Under the TransformCare Investment Initiative, UN Women has been working with South Asian governments since 2024 to provide technical support, policy guidance and financing strategies for care sector reforms. The program is backed by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea.

Gunakar Bhatta, vice-chair of Nepal's National Planning Commission, said the region must now move beyond commitments and begin implementing practical reforms.

"Investing in care services is not a cost, but a growth strategy that creates jobs, strengthens families, and accelerates inclusive development across South Asia," Bhatta said.



(Photo Courtesy: SAARC Secretariat)

Editorial



A Summit To Remember?

When history books are written on China and the United States, invariably, the two-day visit of President Donald Trump to Beijing will figure prominently for the simple reason that it was one of those summits taking place after a gap of some nine years. What historians and policy pundits will be asking is a basic question: what did President Trump achieve and what did he come away with?

Prior to the start of the visit, trade, tariffs, and Iran were presumed to be the hot topics of discussion, perhaps Taiwan and here too a broad reiteration of known positions. But what came out in the end was something totally different. Saying that it was a “fantastic” visit with billions of dollars’ worth of goodies in the bag is not cutting much ice in the absence of confirmations from Beijing.

What has sharpened the debate is because the read outs of the White House and Official China have been markedly different and, in many ways putting the emphasis on what may or may not have been said on Taiwan and in the process raising questions of commitment. Even inadvertently, was Taiwan put under the bus and, by extension the Indo-Pacific?

For a country that has made no bones of the fact that Taiwan is a core unresolved issue, China has for years made it known that it seeks the reunification of the “renegade” province, militarily if necessary. And this is what President Xi Jinping pointedly put across to his visitor: that if the Taiwan issue is “mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict, pushing the entire China-US relationship into a highly perilous situation.”

Just what exactly transpired between the two leaders will not be known for a long time to come, but President Trump has given sufficient indications that Taiwan is an issue that President Xi really feels very strongly about. The problem for Washington is that while officially it stands by a One China Policy, it also has strong unofficial relations and, through the Taiwan Relations Act, sends billions of dollars of “defensive” weapons.

UNTIL NOW, THE QUESTION HAS ALWAYS BEEN IF WASHINGTON WOULD GO TO THE DEFENSE OF TAIWAN IF ATTACKED BY THE MAINLAND; AND PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS ADDED FUEL TO AN ONGOING FIERY DEBATE BY SAYING THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT LOOKING TO TRAVEL 9500 MILES TO FIGHT A WAR WITH CHINA AND THAT BOTH TAIPEI AND BEIJING SHOULD “COOL IT.”

Until now, the question has always been if Washington would go to the defense of Taiwan if attacked by the Mainland; and President Trump has added fuel to an ongoing fiery debate by saying that the United States was not looking to travel 9500 miles to fight a war with China and that both Taipei and Beijing should “cool it.” President Trump has also said he is putting on hold a US\$ 14 billion arms package to Taiwan as some sort of bargaining chip with China.

Washington has given Beijing a veto on arms supplies, something that American Presidents have not allowed in the past. Taipei has expectedly responded sharply, maintaining that the island nation “will never be sacrificed or traded away.” President Xi and his wife have been invited to the White House on September 24. Hopefully, nothing sours on Taiwan, arms package, Iran and tariffs to jeopardize the visit.



Opinion

R. Suryamurthy
Senior Journalist and Columnist

BRICS Cannot Afford Another Symbolic Summit

When India hosts the 18th BRICS Leaders’ Summit in September, the meeting will take place against the backdrop of a rapidly fragmenting global economy. Tariffs, sanctions, export controls and technology restrictions are steadily replacing the old assumptions of open globalization. Economic policy is increasingly shaped not by efficiency, but by geopolitics.

That changing environment gives BRICS both an opportunity and a crisis of purpose.

Across much of the Global South, frustration with Western dominance over global finance, trade governance and technology standards has deepened sharply. Many emerging economies increasingly view international institutions not as neutral systems of cooperation but as mechanisms disproportionately shaped by Western strategic interests.

Yet BRICS itself remains politically divided, institutionally shallow and strategically inconsistent. India’s presidency, therefore, arrives at a defining moment for the bloc.

The recent BRICS foreign ministers’ meeting in New Delhi exposed that contradiction clearly. The failure to produce a joint declaration was not a routine diplomatic disagreement. It revealed how expansion has made BRICS simultaneously larger and less cohesive.

The grouping now contains democracies and authoritarian systems, energy exporters and manufacturing powers, Western partners and Western-sanctioned states. China views BRICS as part of a broader post-Western transition. Russia increasingly sees it as diplomatic insulation against isolation. India supports multipolarity but resists anti-Western alignment. Brazil and South Africa continue balancing strategic autonomy with economic pragmatism.

This is not a coherent alliance. It is a coalition of overlapping dissatisfactions.

But that dissatisfaction is precisely what now gives BRICS relevance.

The rise of sanctions regimes, industrial subsidies, carbon tariffs and technology controls has convinced many developing economies that globalization itself is becoming politically selective. The concern is not merely ideological. Countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America increasingly fear becoming trapped inside rival economic blocs dominated either by Washington or Beijing.

This is why the September summit cannot remain trapped in symbolic rhetoric about multipolarity or exaggerated talk of “de-dollarization.” BRICS does not need revolutionary slogans. It needs strategic realism.

The debate around reducing dollar dependence illustrates the gap between political messaging and economic reality. Despite years of rhetoric, no BRICS member possesses the institutional credibility or financial depth necessary to replace the dollar system. China’s yuan remains constrained by capital controls and geopolitical distrust. India has little interest in a Chinese-centered financial order. Russia’s urgency is driven largely by sanctions pressure.

What BRICS is actually constructing is not a replacement for the dollar, but insurance against overdependence on it.

That distinction matters.

The summit should therefore focus on practical financial resilience: local-currency settlements, alternative payment systems and mechanisms that reduce vulnerability to sanctions and external shocks. These may appear incremental, but they reflect a larger strategic shift underway across the emerging world — the search for economic flexibility in an increasingly polarized international system.

India is uniquely positioned to push BRICS toward that pragmatic direction.

Unlike China or Russia, New Delhi is not attempting to build a rigid geopolitical bloc. India deepens ties with the United States and Europe while simultaneously positioning itself as a leading voice of the Global South. It participates in Western-led technology and investment networks while criticizing unequal global governance structures.

That balancing strategy is often described as ambiguity. In reality, it reflects how many middle powers now intend to navigate a fractured world.

The danger for BRICS is that it gradually transforms into a reactive anti-Western platform dominated by geopolitical grievances rather than economic coordination. Such a shift would weaken the grouping internally because several members remain deeply dependent on Western markets, finance and technology.

India must resist that drift.

The summit should instead focus on areas where BRICS can exercise genuine influence: supply-chain resilience, infrastructure financing, digital public infrastructure, energy transition investment and South-South industrial cooperation. These are precisely the sectors where developing economies feel most vulnerable as globalization becomes increasingly securitized.

Disclaimer: Views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of South Asian Herald.

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Voice of the Diaspora

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

PUBLISHER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Nandini Selvam

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Jothsna Kethar

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER
Michael Hess

BRAND STRATEGIST
Meena A Thota

ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR
Rajiv Vijayakar

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

R. Suryamurthy
Prabhjot Singh
Prasad Kunduri
Parveen Chopra
Rajesh Mehta
Angela Chitkara
Matthew Rees

COLUMNISTS
Dr. Sridhar Krishnaswami
TN Ashok

SAH TEAM
Anand Patel
Pooja Bhardwaj
Priti Thakur
Anirudh Nair

Swetha Venkataramani
Supriya Doshi
Viksha Adhinarayanan

ADVERTISEMENTS
info@southasianherald.com

EDITORIAL
editor@southasianherald.com

READER’S RESPONSE
readersofsah@gmail.com

MAIN OFFICE
2001 L Street, NW, Suite 500-50520
Washington DC 20036
Office: +1 (202) 848 6464
www.southasianherald.com

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Beyond Surgery and Scans, India Offers Something More

R. Suryamurthy



At 3 a.m. on a humid April morning, 11-year-old Amina from Somalia lay awake in a Delhi hospital room staring at the ceiling lights while her mother softly recited prayers beside her bed.

For months, the child had struggled with a complex cardiac disorder that doctors back home could neither fully diagnose nor treat. Her father had already sold a small patch of farmland to pay for consultations in Nairobi and Dubai. Europe was impossible. The estimated cost of surgery there was more than USD 120,000 — an amount that sounded less like a medical bill and more like a lifetime sentence of debt.

Then came a WhatsApp message from another Somali family.

“Go to India,” it said. “They saved my son.”

Forty-eight hours after landing in New Delhi, Amina was inside an operation theatre surrounded by surgeons, machines and monitors in one of India’s rapidly expanding medical tourism hospitals. Three weeks later, she was learning to walk again in the recovery ward, clutching a stuffed elephant gifted by a nurse.

Across India’s crowded airports, hospital corridors and Ayurvedic retreats, thousands of similar stories now unfold every week — stories of desperation, survival, migration and healing that are quietly transforming the country into one of the world’s largest medical and wellness tourism hubs.

The transformation is staggering in scale.

India’s medical tourism market, valued at nearly USD 8.7 billion in 2025, is projected to surge beyond USD 16 billion by 2030 as global healthcare systems buckle under rising costs, ageing populations and chronic staff shortages.

More than 507,000 foreign nationals travelled to India specifically for medical treatment in 2025, according to official estimates, while millions more arrived for wellness therapies, preventive care and recovery treatments linked to Ayurveda and Yoga.

The patients come carrying fear, hope and increasingly, spreadsheets.

From Baghdad to Dhaka, from Nairobi to London, families compare treatment costs online before boarding flights to India. The arithmetic is brutal but simple.

A heart bypass surgery costing more than USD 100,000 in the United States can often be performed in India for USD 10,000 to 15,000. Knee replacements that may cost USD 50,000 in Western countries are available for nearly one-tenth the price. Cancer therapies, fertility treatment and organ transplants — often financially ruinous elsewhere — are drawing patients into India’s growing network of internationally accredited hospitals.

The country now has over 69,000 hospitals, nearly 1.2 million registered doctors and more than 1,299 NABH-accredited healthcare facilities. India ranks 10th globally in the Medical Tourism Index, while cities such as Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have emerged as international

healthcare corridors. At Delhi airport, the shift is visible in the arrival queues.

Families from Bangladesh wheel elderly parents through immigration counters carrying plastic folders stuffed with scans and prescriptions. Iraqi patients arrive with translators. African families huddle near hospital representatives holding placards in Arabic, French and Swahili.

For many, India is no longer merely an option. It is the last affordable option.

Bangladesh alone accounted for more than 325,000 medical visitors to India in 2025, making it the country’s largest source market, followed by Iraq, Uzbekistan, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Oman and Kenya.

But India’s healthcare rise is about more than low-cost surgery.

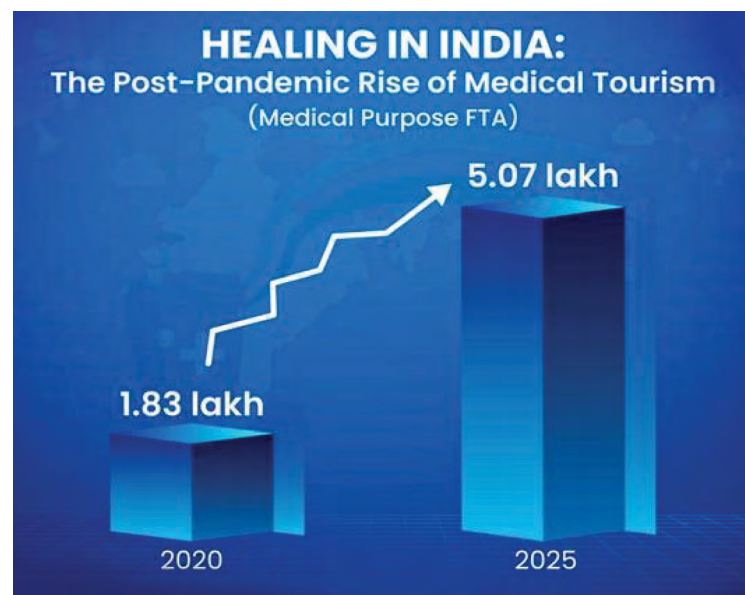
Near Kerala’s backwaters, luxury wellness retreats now host foreign patients recovering from chemotherapy, spinal surgery and stress-related illnesses. Days begin with yoga at sunrise and end with herbal therapies rooted in centuries-old Ayurvedic traditions.

At one such center, 62-year-old Margaret Collins from Manchester sat wrapped in a cotton shawl after a post-cancer recovery program.

“In Britain, everything felt clinical,” she said. “Here, healing feels human.”

That emotional dimension is becoming central to India’s healthcare branding.

The government’s “Heal in India” campaign seeks to fuse advanced medicine with holistic wellness, presenting India not



only as a place for surgery, but as a destination for recovery of body and mind. Officials believe that in a world increasingly exhausted by stress, burnout and lifestyle diseases, India’s ancient healing systems could become as economically valuable as its hospital infrastructure.

The government introduced a dedicated AYUSH Visa in 2023 to facilitate foreign visitors seeking Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, Unani and naturopathy treatments. Around 27 insurance companies now offer more than 140 policies covering AYUSH therapies.

The broader global wellness economy is booming. The worldwide Medical Value Travel market, valued at roughly USD 115.6 billion in 2022, is projected to touch nearly USD 286 billion by 2030.

India wants a large share of that future. Under the Union Budget 2026-27, the government proposed five Regional Medical Hubs — integrated healthcare clusters combining hospitals, research institutions, rehabilitation facilities and AYUSH centers.

Authorities are also digitizing the patient experience through an upgraded Medical Value Travel portal where foreign patients can compare hospitals, arrange treatment plans, book services and access telemedicine consultations before and after travel.

Yet beneath the optimism lies a harder reality.

India’s own policy papers acknowledge that the sector suffers from uneven regulation, inconsistent pricing, unorganized facilitators and poor global awareness of Indian accreditation systems.

Patients have occasionally reported inflated charges, exploitative

middlemen and confusion over treatment packages. The government has admitted that unless hospitals and facilitators become more transparent and standardized, India risks damaging the very trust on which medical tourism depends.

Competition is intensifying too.

Thailand markets luxury recovery. Singapore sells precision medicine. Turkey has become a major cosmetic surgery destination. Malaysia aggressively targets Muslim medical travelers.

India’s advantage lies elsewhere — in its ability to combine scale, affordability and emotional care.

The National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism describe India’s ambition as becoming a destination for “holistic healing”, blending modern medicine with traditional wellness systems. In crowded hospital cafeterias across Delhi and Chennai, that vision already feels real.

You see Bangladeshi mothers sharing tea with Kenyan families. Iraqi patients learning breathing exercises from yoga instructors. Translators moving between Arabic, Bengali, Russian and English.

And sometimes, late at night, after surgeries are over and monitors fall silent, exhausted relatives step outside hospital buildings and call home with the words they had feared they might never say.

“The operation worked.”

For families who arrive carrying desperation in plastic bags and borrowed money in hidden pockets, India is becoming more than a healthcare destination.

It is becoming a place where survival itself is being outsourced across borders.



(All photos courtesy: PIB)

Sikh Hero...

(Contd. from page 1)

Introducing the honorees, Sukhpal Singh Dhanoa said the evening was dedicated to “extraordinary individuals who quietly uplift humanity without seeking applause.”

“These are people who serve the community when nobody is watching, those who protect Sikh values while contributing positively to society,” Dhanoa said, noting that the honorees represented fields ranging from public service and education to business, health care, and humanitarian work.

Among those honored was Sardar Bahadur Singh, founder of One Beat Medical Group, who was recognized for charitable work in health

care, education, and community development initiatives in India, including hospitals and eye care centers.

JJ Singh, who represents Loudoun County in the Virginia House of Delegates, was honored for civic leadership and efforts to encourage community participation in democratic processes. Entrepreneur Sardar Baldev Singh Kang received recognition for contributions in hospitality, manufacturing, and industrial development.

British MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, who addressed the gathering through a video message, was recognized for advocating equality, inclusion, and democratic values in international politics.

The evening also featured live entertainment by artist Pooja, while the U.S. national anthem was performed by Vindhya.

Sherpa Duo...

(Contd. from page 1)

In a statement issued after the successful ascents, officials described the feat as a reflection of the Sherpa community’s deep cultural and spiritual connection with the Himalayas.

“The contribution of the Sherpa community to mountaineering history is extraordinary and unparalleled,” the statement said. “They guide climbers from around the world with courage, knowledge and dedication, while regarding the mountains with deep reverence.”

The Sherpa community, long regarded as the backbone of Himalayan expeditions,

has played a critical role in Nepal’s global mountaineering reputation. Their expertise in high-altitude climbing, route fixing and rescue operations has helped thousands of international climbers reach Everest’s summit over the decades.

Tourism and expedition officials said the latest records are expected to further strengthen Nepal’s standing as the world’s premier mountaineering destination and boost confidence in the country’s guiding industry.

Congratulatory messages poured in from across the globe for the two climbers and their expedition teams, with many describing them as symbols of resilience and the true heroes of the Himalayas.



Dhanayoga

Sethu Venkataraman
A personal finance consultant

Global Fixed Income Investing for Indians and NRIs

This article explores the landscape of global fixed income investing specifically tailored for Indian and Non-Resident Indian (NRI) investors. It delves into the perspectives and choices available in the global fixed income market, while also highlighting the liberalized remittance avenues that facilitate such investments. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding the dynamics of global fixed income assets is crucial for investors seeking diversification and stability in their portfolios.

Introduction

Global fixed income investing has gained traction among Indian and NRI investors as they seek to diversify their portfolios and mitigate risks associated with domestic markets. With the liberalization of remittance policies, investors now have more avenues to explore international fixed income opportunities. This article aims to provide insights into the various choices available, the benefits of global fixed income investments, and the regulatory framework governing remittances.

Benefits of Global Fixed Income Investing

- Diversification:** Investing in global fixed income allows investors to spread their risk across different geographies and sectors.
- Currency Exposure:** Global investments can provide exposure to foreign currencies, which can be beneficial in a volatile domestic currency environment.
- Stable Returns:** Fixed income securities typically offer more stable returns compared to equities, making them an attractive option for risk-averse investors.
- Inflation Hedge:** Certain fixed income instruments, such as inflation-linked bonds, can help protect against inflation.

Choices for Indian and NRI Investors

1. International Bonds
Investors can consider investing in international bonds issued by foreign governments or corporations. These bonds can be accessed through mutual funds or

diversified portfolio of international fixed income securities. These funds are managed by professional fund managers and can provide exposure to various markets.

4. Sovereign Gold Bonds

While not a traditional fixed income investment, sovereign gold bonds issued by the Federal governments can provide fixed interest along with capital appreciation linked to gold prices, offering a unique investment avenue.

Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS)

The Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS) allows Indian residents, including NRIs, to remit a certain amount of money abroad for various purposes, including investments. Under the LRS, individuals can remit up to USD 250,000 per financial year for investments in global fixed income securities. This scheme has simplified the process of investing abroad and has opened up numerous opportunities for Indian and NRI investors.

Key Features of LRS

- Annual Limit:** The remittance limit is set at USD 250,000 per financial year.
- Permissible Transactions:** Funds can be used for investments in foreign securities, real estate, and other approved avenues.
- Documentation:** Investors must comply with the necessary documentation and reporting requirements as stipulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Conclusion

Global fixed income investing presents a valuable opportunity for Indian and NRI investors looking to diversify their portfolios and enhance their financial stability.

Jio Eyes \$4 Billion IPO

Reliance Industries Ltd-owned Reliance Jio Platforms Ltd is expected to file the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) for its proposed initial public offering (IPO) within the next fortnight, or as early as next week, with a likely stock market debut by July, according to investment officials.



(Photo courtesy: @reliancejio)

Jio's IPO valuation is estimated at around \$180 billion (approximately Rs 15 lakh crore). The company is expected to raise nearly \$4 billion (around Rs 33,000 crore) by offering an initial 2.5 per cent stake through the public issue.

Reliance Industries has reportedly secured regulatory approval to initially list only a 2.5 per cent stake in Reliance Jio. Earlier regulations required companies to dilute at least 5 per cent equity during listing. If successful, Jio's offering would become India's largest-ever IPO. The current record is held by Hyundai Motor India, which raised \$3.3 billion (about Rs 27,000 crore) in October 2024.

Following listing, Jio is expected to emerge as one of the most valuable companies on Indian stock exchanges. The company plans to deploy nearly Rs 25,000 crore (about \$3 billion) from the proceeds towards reducing corporate debt and expanding its artificial intelligence (AI) and telecom network infrastructure.

Jio has appointed leading global investment banks including Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan Chase, along with domestic financial institutions such as Kotak Mahindra Capital

and Axis Capital, to manage the mega IPO.

However, Reliance Industries is reportedly considering changing the IPO structure from an "offer for sale" (OFS) model to an issue comprising entirely fresh shares in order to accommodate concerns raised by existing investors.

Some early investors, who were hoping to partially exit their holdings, were said to be dissatisfied with Reliance's earlier decision not to maximize the company's IPO valuation.

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani is believed to be cautious about aggressive pricing, aiming to protect retail investors from the risk of negative listing gains and potential losses.

In 2020, Jio Platforms had raised over \$20.5 billion (around Rs 1.7 lakh crore) from 13 global investors in exchange for roughly 33 per cent equity, at valuations ranging between \$57 billion and \$65 billion (approximately Rs 4.7 lakh crore to Rs 5.4 lakh crore).

Major global investors including Meta Platforms, Alphabet and KKR had invested in the company as Mukesh Ambani positioned Jio Platforms as the centerpiece of Reliance's technology and AI ambitions.

Other prominent investors include General Atlantic, Silver Lake and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. Meta currently holds a 9.9 per cent stake in Jio Platforms, while Google owns 7.7 per cent. (UNI)

CRYPTO

Indian Industry Calls for Clearer Crypto Rules

The United States Senate Banking Committee cleared the Digital Asset Market Clarity Act, advancing what is being described as the most comprehensive cryptocurrency legislation in American history and triggering reactions across global digital asset markets.

The bill, if enacted into law, will formally define which digital assets fall under the jurisdiction of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and which come under the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), ending years of uncertainty over regulatory authority in the sector, a financial analyst said.

The proposed legislation also addresses regulation of stablecoins, protections for decentralized finance and bankruptcy safeguards for crypto customers. Following the committee's approval, both Bitcoin and Ethereum registered gains in the market. The bill must still pass a full Senate

floor vote before being sent to the President for final approval.

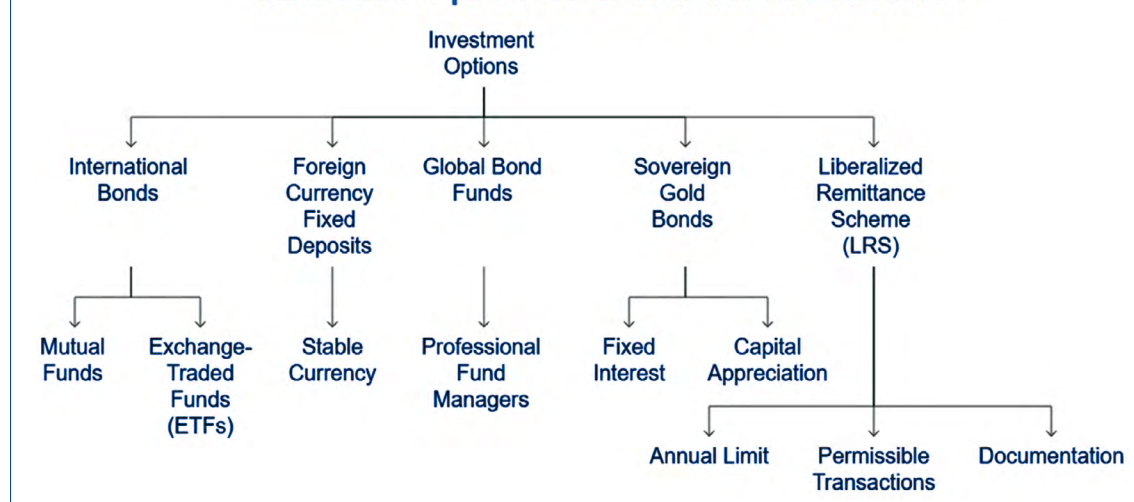
Indian cryptocurrency industry leaders said the development carries significance beyond the United States market.

Ashish Singhal, co-founder of CoinSwitch, said the bill addresses a major structural issue that has affected the global crypto ecosystem.

"The CLARITY Act is a significant moment for the global crypto industry because it finally attempts to address one of the ecosystem's biggest unresolved challenges — regulatory clarity around digital assets. Despite over 40 per cent of Americans already having exposure to crypto, the industry has largely operated without a clearly defined legislative framework for nearly a decade," Singhal said.

Nischal Shetty, founder of WazirX, said the absence of regulatory clarity in the US had directly affected market growth. (UNI)

Investment Options for Indian and NRI Investors



Understanding Global Fixed Income

Global fixed income refers to debt securities issued by governments, corporations, and other entities outside of an investor's home country. These investments can provide a steady income stream and are often considered safer than equities. For Indian and NRI investors, global fixed income assets can serve as a hedge against currency fluctuations and economic downturns in their home country.

exchange-traded funds (ETFs) that focus on global fixed income.

2. Foreign Currency Fixed Deposits

Banks offer foreign currency fixed deposits that allow investors to earn interest in foreign currencies. This option can be appealing for those looking to hold cash in a stable currency.

3. Global Bond Funds

Global bond funds pool money from multiple investors to invest in a

With the liberalized remittance avenues provided by the LRS, investors can easily access international markets and explore a variety of fixed income options. As the global economy continues to evolve, staying informed about investment choices and regulatory frameworks will be essential for making sound investment decisions.

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

Who's The New Top Gun?

Rajiv Vijayakar

Dilip Kumar, Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan are just three names that come to mind when we think of clear-cut Numero Unos who were long-lasting. Since the 1990s, the three Khans—Aamir, Salman and Shah Rukh—were the Reign Men. Aamir, the choosy one, starred in the first 100 crore grosser (*Ghajini*) and then some of cinema's highest grossers, including *Dangal* (2016).

Shah Rukh Khan grew to be King Khan, having unleashed a bevy of blockbusters, which were, with few exceptions, all romantic movies. These include *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, still running in a Mumbai theatre for the 11.30 a.m. show uninterruptedly since 1995!

Salman Khan, star of the biggest hit of the entire 1980s—*Maine Pyar Kiya* and of the 1990s—*Hum Aapke Hain Koun!...*—resurrected himself after a lull with incredible

success from 2009's *Wanted* and could do no wrong for almost a decade more. His fans increased so much in quantum that his worst or most unsuccessful film netted a minimum Rs. 100 crore.

Following these big three were Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn and the youngest of the lot—Hrithik Roshan. Much was expected of Varun Dhawan and Kartik Aaryan, but their records did not match expectations. Ayushmann Khurrana also had a series of successes and hits, but lacked the X factor that defined superstardom. And Shahid Kapoor decided to focus on performance-oriented cinema



(Photos courtesy: Publicity Photo)

and not the blockbuster kind that enhanced market rankings.

The Two 'R's!

After the pandemic, a lot changed. Post-*Dangal*, Aamir Khan's *Secret Superstar* was ho-hum, and *Thugs of Hindostan* and *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022) were disasters. Salman acted in dated actioners that did nothing to add to his stardom after the magnificent trio of *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), *Sultan* (2016) and *Tiger Zinda Hai* (2017). Flops ruled.

After *Chennai Express* (2013), Shah Rukh too had a prolonged



(Photos courtesy: Publicity Photo)



(Photos courtesy: Publicity Photo)

low phase. If he thundered back with *Jawan* and *Pathaan* in 2023, *Dunkee* poked a hole in the new fabric. The prolific Kumar and Devgn continued to have a balanced hit-flop ratio. Hrithik Roshan was choosy and had a hit streak until *War* (2019), but later, *Vikram Vedha* and *War 2* proved catastrophic, while *Fighter* was just a

The social media started going to town on how the era of the three Khans had ended and the same was the case with Hrithik. They were kinder to Akshay and Ajay, who were steadier but never Number One material. If Akshay had *OMG 2*, *Sky Force*, *Housefull 5*, *Kesari Chapter 2*, *Jolly LLB 3* and now *Bhooth Bangla* as pluses, he also had mishaps like

Raksha Bandhan, *Bachchan Panday* and *Sarfira*. If Ajay had *Raid 2*, *Shaitaan* and *Drishyam 2*, debacles like *Bholaa*, *De De Pyaar De 2* and *Son of Sardaar 2* balanced them.

The audiences decreed that change was a must now and the mantle of the New Big Things has fallen on Ranbir Kapoor after *Brahmastra*, *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar* and, above all, when *Animal* roared. His *Ramayana* and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Love & War* are now coming. And Ranveer Singh, never considered serious competition despite some major successes, slalomed home with the *Dhurandhar* franchise, and is now doing an apocalypse film, *Pralay* and Bhansali's *Bajju Bawra*.

Let us watch the interesting race now.

Entertainment Round Up

Pushkar Jog Wins Hearts At Cannes Debut



(Photo courtesy: X@jogpushkar)

Actor Pushkar Jog made an impressive and poised debut at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival 2026, earning admiration in one of cinema's most prestigious global stages.

Cannes is attended by prominent stars and prominent figures from around the world. Amidst this international glitz, Pushkar Jog distinguished himself and marked a significant moment for Marathi cinema.

Sharing his experience, the 40-year-old actor said, "Walking the Cannes red carpet for the first time is truly a dream come true. It's a huge honor to stand among talent from around the world and represent my country and Maharashtra."

It wasn't just the red carpet, but Jog's simplicity and pride in his roots that won hearts. The joy and gratitude reflected in his social media posts moved fans. His journey from Marathi cinema to the global stage was widely appreciated.

Jog made his Bollywood debut with "Human Cocaine." He has appeared in films like "Baap Manus," "Ti Ani Ti," and "Musafir," along with his stint

on Bigg Boss Marathi. He has gradually built a strong connection with audiences. Now, his Cannes debut marks a new chapter in his career, establishing him as a global face of Marathi talent. (UNI)

Chanda Patel Dazzled At 79th Cannes With Global Premiere Of 'Tera Mera Nata'



(Photo courtesy: Instagram @chandapatel0)

Gujarati producer-director Chanda Patel once again brought pride to Indian cinema and culture on the international stage with her striking appearance as well as by presenting her directorial "Tera Mera Nata" at the prestigious 79th Cannes Film Festival.

Patel looked no less than a royal figure in a stunning designer outfit in ivory and pastel shades at the event.

Patel, who promotes emotional and culturally relevant stories, is steadily making her mark in the industry. Her film has been receiving praise for its emotional story and heartwarming narrative. The film's premiere at Cannes also became a proud moment for Indian regional cinema.

Patel's continued presence at Cannes is a testament to the fact that Indian producers and filmmakers are now establishing a strong presence on the global stage. Her graceful presence on the red carpet and her representation of India was a highlight of this year's festival. (UNI)

Manipuri Film 'Joseph's Son' To Be Screened At The Cannes Film Festival

Haobam Paban Kumar's Manipuri feature film 'Joseph's Son' will be screened at Palais G on Sunday at at Marche du Film 2026 of Cannes Film Festival 2026.

The National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) has presented a premier selection of Indian regional cinema at Marche du Film 2026 in the ongoing 79th Cannes Film Festival which is taking place from May 12 to 23, 2026 in France.

Film Society of Manipur said the Marché du Film is the business wing of the Cannes Film Festival and the world's largest international film market. Held annually in May at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes, France, it gathers over 15,000 industry professionals to network, finance, and negotiate the distribution and production rights for thousands of films.

The market brings together sales agents, buyers, producers, distributors, and streaming platforms to broker multi-million-dollar deals that shape global cinema. Hundreds of film institutions and national pavilions representing nearly 90 countries set up booths to showcase their domestic film industries and promote co-productions. Over 1,200 market screenings take place across dozens of dedicated screening rooms, allowing buyers to watch completed

features, documentaries, and projects still in development.

The curated slate of National Film Development Corporation of India productions and co-productions to be showcased through market screenings at the Palais includes Haobam Paban Kumar's Joseph's Son, Nending Loder's Galo film- Karken and Kenny Basumatary's Bodo film- My Three Sisters.

These films will be presented for worldwide rights opportunities, including theatrical release, VOD (Video on Demand)/OTT licensing, as well as satellite and airborne rights. Through these films, the NFDC aims to find global partners for the theatrical release and VOD/OTT distribution of stories from Northeast India. (UNI)

'Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business' Set For Exclusive Screening At Cannes' Marché du Film

Actor-director Anshuman Jha's film "Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business" is set for an exclusive screening at the Marché du Film Market, the industry section of the Cannes Film Festival.

The film is currently being prepared for international distribution ahead of its official world premiere this year. Backed by German production company Webfilmland Productions and is one of the select Asian action films at Cannes.

Anshuman Jha's second directorial venture is being billed as the world's first animal-loving vigilante franchise. The film is expected to attract the attention of major distributors and studios worldwide, including Toho, Kino, and The Joker Films.

Set in Indonesia, "Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business" is being touted as one of India's most raw

and powerful hand-to-hand action films. The film pushes the boundaries of the genre with its realistic and powerful action choreography and storytelling.

It is also the first official co-production between India and Indonesia. It stars Sunny Pang (Headshot, Havoc), Dan Chupong (Ong-Bak), Adil Hussain (Life of Pi), Sarah-Jane Dias (Angry Indian Goddesses) and Jha (LSD, Chauranga). (UNI)

Shillong To Host 'World's Longest-Running' Tribute To Bob Dylan

India's renowned rockstar Lou Majaw, who has been celebrating legendary singer Bob Dylan's birthday in Meghalaya's capital Shillong for over five decades, will host the world's longest-running tribute to Nobel laureate in Shillong for the 55th edition of 'Bob Dylan Day' on May 23 and 24.

The event is being organized by Mawjam Event Network, in association with the Lou Majaw Foundation, which was started by legendary musician Lou in 1972. This un-broken celebration in the Meghalaya capital began in 1972 from a small private celebration among close friends to an annual event that draws Dylan fans from across the country and the world.

"Bob Dylan taught us that a song can be a newspaper, a prayer, and a protest. For 55 years, we have sung his songs not to imitate, but to remember why we sing at all," Majaw said.

This year's Bob Dylan's milestone celebration will run across two days and multiple venues in Shillong. (UNII)



Weekly Horoscope

MAY 22 - 28

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KOUSHIK

(Astrologer | Tarot Reader | Numerologist | Vastu & Feng Shui Consultant)

support@askmanisha.com • www.askmanisha.com • +91 9650015920

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(Photo: tongstocker1987 / Freepik)

Aries (March 21 – April 19)



Love: The Tower
Mood: Judgement
Career: Ten of Coins
Career developments may take center stage, offering opportunities to strengthen your long-term stability. Financial decisions may remain favorable if handled thoughtfully. Emotional shifts in relationships may lead to meaningful clarity. Family interactions may require patience, while travel plans may demand better organization for smooth execution.
Lucky Number: 2 • Lucky Color: Yellow

growth may come through new opportunities or additional responsibilities. Family life may feel supportive and comforting. Professional tasks may test patience, requiring consistent effort. Travel plans may bring excitement, while property matters may appear promising.
Lucky Number: 5 • Lucky Color: Green

Virgo (Aug 24 – Sept 23)



Love: The Magician
Mood: King of Coins
Career: Four of Swords
Professional challenges may require calm thinking and strategic action. Financial stability may remain intact with controlled spending. Relationships may benefit from reassurance and thoughtful communication. Family life may feel peaceful. Travel possibilities may arise, offering a change of pace. Health may stay stable with attention to minor concerns.
Lucky Number: 17 • Lucky Color: Off White

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)



Love: Page of Cups
Mood: The Hermit
Career: King of Wands
Business prospects may show encouraging movement, helping you regain confidence in your plans. Family support may uplift your spirits and strengthen bonds. Financial gains may arise through practical choices. Romantic matters may require gentle handling. Travel may feel slightly demanding but could bring valuable experiences and connections.
Lucky Number: 1 • Lucky Color: Red

Libra (Sept 24 – Oct 23)



Love: The Tower
Mood: Ace of Wands
Career: Nine of Coins
Career ambitions may push you toward exploring new ventures or collaborations. Financial matters may improve with careful planning. Family responsibilities may require your emotional support. Romantic expectations may need adjustment for harmony. Travel planning may bring joy, though property decisions may benefit from delay and deeper evaluation.
Lucky Number: 3 • Lucky Color: Brown

Gemini (May 21 – June 21)



Love: The Empress
Mood: The Hierophant
Career: Two of Swords
Decision-making in professional matters may improve, helping you overcome earlier confusion. Financial stability may continue with mindful spending. Emotional connections may deepen through understanding and space. Family interactions may feel lighter with shared moments. Travel opportunities may emerge, though property-related matters may require patience.
Lucky Number: 8 • Lucky Color: Purple

Scorpio (Oct 24 – Nov 22)



Love: The Hermit
Mood: The Devil
Career: The Fool
Confidence in professional interactions may help you express ideas effectively. Financial balance may require monitoring expenses. Relationships may benefit from calm reflection and steady effort. Family matters may settle with maturity. Travel may bring exciting beginnings, while property decisions may offer favorable outcomes.
Lucky Number: 7 • Lucky Color: Maroon

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)



Love: Ace of Swords
Mood: The Devil
Career: Two of Coins
Clarity in personal and professional matters may guide you toward better choices. Work responsibilities may increase but could bring recognition. Financial dealings may need careful evaluation. Honest communication may strengthen relationships. Health routines may demand discipline, while travel plans may offer a refreshing break from routine.
Lucky Number: 18 • Lucky Color: Magenta

Sagittarius (Nov 23 – Dec 21)



Love: Seven of Wands
Mood: Two of Coins
Career: The Tower
Health and energy may support you in handling a busy schedule. Financial stability may continue with practical planning. Emotional connections may feel stronger and more meaningful. Professional pressure may increase, requiring patience and adaptability. Travel to meaningful places may bring peace, while property matters may show progress.
Lucky Number: 6 • Lucky Color: Pink

Leo (July 23 – August 23)



Love: Seven of Wands
Mood: The World
Career: Eight of Coins
Personal happiness may take priority, encouraging you to focus on emotional wellbeing. Financial

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)



Love: Two of Cups
Mood: The Fool
Career: The Magician
Communication skills may help you gain support in professional matters. Financial decisions may need caution to avoid small setbacks. Emotional bonds may strengthen with openness. Family interactions may feel warm and supportive. Travel experiences may bring fresh perspectives, while property opportunities may emerge for some.
Lucky Number: 2 • Lucky Color: Grey

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)



Love: Three of Coins
Mood: The Moon
Career: Five of Wands
Work responsibilities may increase, testing your ability to manage multiple tasks. Financial investments

may require careful assessment. Family guidance may help you make balanced decisions. Romantic matters may benefit from privacy. Travel plans may take shape gradually, while property or funding matters may require persistence.
Lucky Number: 22 • Lucky Color: Orange

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)



Love: The Chariot
Mood: Five of Swords
Career: The Hanged Man
Professional focus may help you maintain steady progress despite delays. Financial planning may support long-term stability. Emotional connections may deepen through consistent effort. Family advice may guide important decisions. Travel plans may face minor changes, while property opportunities may appear favorable with patience.
Lucky Number: 11 • Lucky Color: Cream

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Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Natural Cleanser For Summer

The scorching summer heat can take a toll on your skin, leading to dehydration, sunburn, and breakouts.

Cleaning your face properly during the summer months is essential to keep your skin fresh, healthy, and free from issues like excess oil, sweat, and clogged pores.

Owing to its hydrating, cooling properties and low-calorie value. The natural ingredients like coconut water, cucumber juice, mint, and rose water offer excellent, soothing, and hydrating options for cleaning facial skin, reducing summer tan and oiliness.

Coconut water

Packed with nutrients like potassium,

magnesium, and antioxidants, coconut water is a natural skin-care booster.

Coconut water is a natural, hydrating cleanser suitable for all skin types, including sensitive skin, thanks to its antibacterial, antimicrobial, and nutrient-rich properties.

Using fresh, pure coconut water as a natural cleanser helps hydrate, fight acne with antimicrobial properties, and balance skin PH.

The face can be washed daily with coconut water to refresh and cleanse. It helps to remove oil and other impurities. It can also be mixed with Multani mitti into a paste and applied to the face. Wash it off when it dries. It is ideal for reducing oiliness and clarifying oily skin.

Cucumber juice

Cucumber juice is a natural, hydrating, and mildly astringent cleanser that soothes inflammation, tightens pores, and reduces puffiness. With up to 95% water, cucumber juice helps replenish lost moisture, keeping your skin soft, supple, and refreshed. It is especially beneficial for dry skin and helps improve overall skin texture and elasticity.

It effectively removes excess oil and dirt while being gentle on sensitive skin. It can be used on its own, mixed with ingredients like honey or yoghurt, or frozen into ice cubes. Cucumber juice may be applied daily on the skin around the eyes, washing

off with plain water after 15 minutes. It helps to reduce dark circles around the eyes.

Mint water

Mint leaves have a chemical called astringent, which helps in removing dirt from your skin and cleaning the clogged pores.

Mint leaves can lock moisture into your skin by tightening your pores. You can also hydrate your skin by drinking lemon and mint-infused water, a refreshing drink that can be consumed daily.

Mint water, consumed or applied topically, offers significant skin benefits, including acne reduction, inflammation soothing, and pore tightening due to its high antioxidant and antibacterial properties. It acts as a natural toner, hydrating skin to reduce premature ageing signs. Drinking it daily aids in flushing toxins, promoting a radiant complexion

Rose water

When it comes to natural skin-care, rose water for face—or gulab jal as it's fondly known in India—has earned a timeless spot on vanities across generations.

It's especially handy during harsh summers when your skin needs that extra TLC. You can directly spray rose water on clean

skin. A swipe of rose water twice a day will keep your skin away from any acne, inflammation, irritation, or redness.

Mix a few drops into your moisturizer for an added hydration boost.

Take a few drops of Rose water on a clean tissue or cloth and use it to wipe your face. It helps remove excess dirt, oil, and pollution from your face, and it also instantly hydrates and makes you feel fresh.

The best part is that it suits all skin types, including sensitive skin and acne conditions. Due to its cooling effect, rose water is ideal for Indian summers as a skin cleanser and freshener. For oily skin, mix rose water with witch hazel in equal quantities and apply it to the face after cleansing.

Mixed with rice powder, it forms an ideal scrub for cleansing the pores of oily skin. Mixed with multani mitti into a paste, it forms an ideal cleansing pack.

Regular use of rose water will keep the skin free of extra oil and prevent acne and pimples.

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

Cannes

World Cup Fever At Cannes Film Festival

Faizal Khan

With the FIFA World Cup only weeks away, football frenzy has gripped the Cannes Film Festival. Two documentaries about football are a key highlight of the official selection at the Cannes festival, which has a strong tradition of programming movies on football to coincide with major tournaments.

At the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, which kicked off on May 12, a new feature documentary on the historic quarter-final match between Argentina and England at the 1986 Mexico World Cup is part of the Cannes Premiere section of the festival. The famous Argentina-England match took place at the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City, the venue of the opening match of the 2026 World Cup beginning on June 11. The FIFA World Cup this year is jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

'The Match' directed by Argentine filmmaker Juan Cabral and Santiago Franco revisits the two goals scored by the then Argentina captain Diego Maradona -- the controversial 'Hand of God' goal and the "miracle" goal -- to defeat England and proceed to the semi-final.

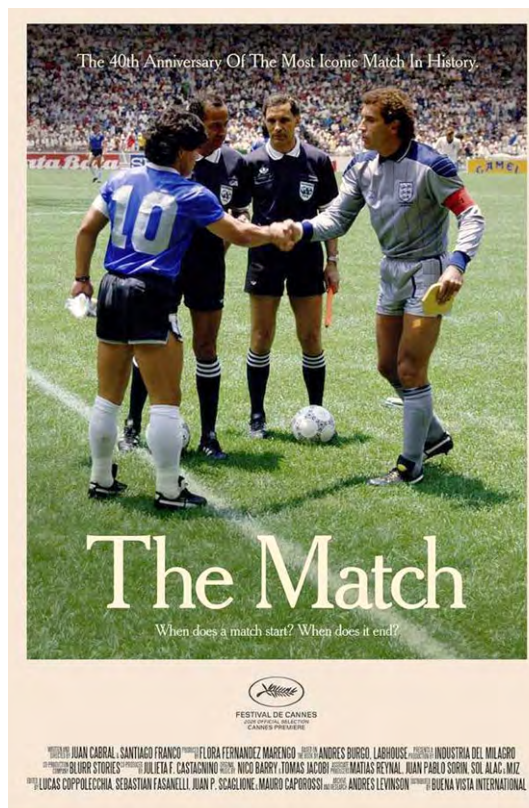
The Argentina-England match was played only four years after the two

countries went to war with each other on the question of ownership of the Falkland Islands. Argentina would go on to win the 1986 World Cup defeating Germany 3-2 in the final, also played at the same Azteca stadium in Mexico City.

The second film on football at the festival is about the legendary French and Manchester United footballer Eric Cantona, which is part of the Special Screenings section of the Cannes festival. 'Cantona' directed by English filmmakers David Tryhorn and Ben Nicholas explores Cantona's playing days in the English Premier League at the Manchester United where he rose to claim legendary status. The film probes the relationship between Cantona and the then Manchester United Manager Alex Ferguson.

The Cannes festival had previously premiered movies based on football, like 'Diego Maradona' by the Oscar-winning Indian-origin British director Asif Kapadia in 2019; 'Maradona by Kusturica,' a documentary by Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica in 2008; and 'United Passions: The Birth of the World Cup' based on the origin of the global football governing body FIFA in 2014.

This year, 'The Match' and 'Cantona' focus on two of the finest footballers of 20th century--Maradona and Cantona. 'The Match' is narrated by the 1986



(Photo Courtesy: UNI)

England World Cup team's striker Gary Lineker and Argentine player Jorge Valdano, who also played in the famous 1986 match between the two countries.

"There are several matches around history, but the 1986 World Cup match between Argentina and England is one of the most iconic ones," says Cabral, who along with co-director Franco spent years researching the fine details of the historic quarterfinal in Mexico City.

'The Match,' which relies heavily on archival material gathered from different sources, explores the fierce rivalry between Argentina and England on the football field, which reached the boiling point following the Falklands War in 1982.

'Cantona' throws light on the explosive French player who was considered unmanageable because of

'THE MATCH,' WHICH RELIES HEAVILY ON ARCHIVAL MATERIAL GATHERED FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES, EXPLORES THE FIERCE RIVALRY BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND ENGLAND ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD, WHICH REACHED THE BOILING POINT FOLLOWING THE FALKLANDS WAR IN 1982.

his indiscipline and hatred for conformity.

"Eric Cantona's career presented a rare opportunity to us as filmmakers, not simply because his five years at Manchester United transformed English football, but because of how he lived out his beliefs in his career," say Tryhorn and Nicholas.

"At a time when sport, and public life in general, has less and less room for big, unorthodox personalities, the story of a player who refused to compromise who he wanted to be and how he wanted to play feels genuinely timely," add the directors.

"To repay the faith shown in him by Alex Ferguson, he must hold back the madness within and completely quench the flame that guides him."

Cantona played for Manchester United from 1992 to 1997, becoming notorious for his assault on a spectator with a karate-style kick. He was suspended from playing football for eight months following the incident. (UNI)



Beyond the Mat

Mitabh Saud

Communication expert, certified yoga and meditation teacher

Your Body Knows More Than The Pill

We now live in a world where the OTC drug market is estimated at USD 180 billion, with painkillers, cold tablets, digestive aids and sleep pills flying off shelves - proof that we reach for pills far more quickly than we reach for our body's own intelligence.

Is it possible to live without a common OTC drug?

The answer is NO.

Not because it's impossible, but because the modern world has trained us to see the body as a device, our everyday discomforts as system errors and pills as the fastest way to "fix" them.

This is the truth we rarely admit: the body has not become weaker - our relationship with it has. We trust external solutions more than internal signals. We silence discomfort instead of understanding it. And slowly,



(Photo created with AI)

without noticing, we outsource our well-being to whatever comes in a blister pack.

Yet the body remains what it has always been: a small universe shaped by the same forces that shape the world outside. The steadiness of earth forms our bones. The fluidity of water moves through our blood. The fire of digestion transforms our food. The air animates our breath. And the vastness of space gives the mind room to rest.

When these elements are in balance, we feel aligned. When they drift, the body speaks - acidity, fatigue, irritability, heaviness, restlessness. These are not malfunctions. They are messages.

Modern life makes those signals easy to miss. The long hours, the screens, the irregular routines - all of it pulls us away from our natural rhythm. And when the inner world feels crowded, the pill becomes the fastest escape. But the pills not only soften the symptom, they soften the message too

However, the good news is that we all are biologically designed to handle the city lifestyle with a little mindfulness. A warm meal on a cold day. Five minutes of sunlight between tasks. A slower breath before sleep. A quieter evening to cool the inner fire. These are not grand rituals. They are small acts of alignment.

We cannot escape city life. We cannot avoid professional hazards. But we can learn the art of living without the pills.

When you understand that your body knows more than the pill, you begin to trust its signals, honour its intelligence and return - slowly, steadily - to the rhythm you were built for.

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



(Photo created with AI)

"Babumoshai" in a Hospital Ward

K.S. Palachandran

There are moments in life when cinema spills quietly into reality.

I was reminded of one such moment recently, listening to a teenager speak about surviving a rare disease with nothing but grit and optimism. It took me back three decades—to a crowded hospital in Mumbai, where hope was in short supply and oxygen cylinders even scarcer.

My brother-in-law lay waiting for a lung operation that kept getting postponed. Anxiety hung in the air. But in the next bed was a man who didn't seem to belong to that gloom.

He was in his thirties. Cheerful. Talkative. Almost annoyingly alive.

We chatted. He joked. Said he was a Gujarati from Kenya. When I asked about his illness, he laughed it off. "Nothing serious," he said.

The next day, I saw him on a stretcher—headphones on, humming, even dancing in a seated shuffle. Later, he told me he had just enjoyed a feast—sweets, juices, everything he loved.

Why only today, I asked.

His answer hit like a blow.

Both his kidneys had failed. Dialysis every three days. That "feast" was a rare allowance.

And yet, there was no trace of self-pity.

If anything, he seemed grateful.

The following day, his foot was bandaged. "Minor injury," he brushed it aside. He challenged me to a game of chess.

By the fourth day, reality turned brutal. His leg had been amputated below the knee. Gangrene.

I braced for despair.

Instead, he smiled.

"I've already ordered a Jaipur foot," he said casually, as if discussing a delayed parcel.

In that sterile ward, amid fear and failing bodies, he was something else entirely.

A real-life Babumoshai—echoing the spirit of Anand, where Rajesh Khanna immortalized the line: life isn't about length, but depth. Where even in the face of death, there was laughter, mischief, warmth.

Except this wasn't a script.

No background music. No retakes.

Just a man—dialysis-bound, diabetic, amputated—refusing to surrender his joy.

He didn't fight his condition dramatically. He simply... outlived it, moment by moment, with an almost defiant normalcy.

That encounter stayed.

Years later, whenever life felt overwhelming, I would think of that face—the man who had every reason to collapse, yet chose to smile.

Problems shrank. Perspective returned.

Some people don't just inspire you in the moment. They recalibrate how you measure difficulty itself.

In a forgotten hospital ward, I had met one.

Not a hero on screen.

But a Babumoshai in real life.



Column

G. Srinivasan

Senior journalist based in Delhi.

Savoring Hyderabad in Arizona



(Photo Courtesy: ITLU website)

birthday, we were out for a dinner to enjoy the evening and the choice of our Indian cuisines for a change here.

The decision fell on the recently launched ITLU Pure Indian Vegetarian restaurant in Chandler, serving traditional Indian dishes in a delectable fashion with a focus on rustic, bucolic-style cooking in this so-called desert city that has the richness of rural charm nestled against hills in the silhouette. The ambience within the sparsely decked-up eatery is not only pleasant but also homely with youthful bearers taking order from the visiting family or individuals. The items include a wide range of options from appetizers, dosas, tiffin, main courses and other popular ones like naan, Irani Chai and variegated paneer products that stimulate the tastes.

In dosas, the variety ranges from ghee roast and Mysore masala to Bombay Masala, tiffin like idli and vada and main courses such as Chana masala, paneer butter masala, and curry leaf gobi mildly roasted and rinsed in tasty cooking oil. As one gets immersed in the dishes, one gets to recall ITLU as a popular vegetarian chain of hotels in Hyderabad which has branched out a separate ITIU USA in Chandler, Arizona on the northeast corner of Dobson and Germann roads in December 2025. Interestingly, the owner of the Chandelier location is not specifically named in the public profile as it is described as a new independent venture. 'ITLU truly loves U' is the signboard that one is greeted by on entry into the dining hall, which is veritably validated by the experience inside the fledgling restaurant.

ITLU in Telegu means "Yours Truly" and the menu items served here such as Idli (a traditional favorite items in all South Indian restaurants) with Podi (powdered with mirch and dal) and aromatic sambar and chutney (cocunut and tomatoes). ITLU carries the genuine "Telegu Kitchen" specialties popular in Andhra/Telangana sans the wonted hot spiciness, and each item one devours leaves a pleasant savor that lingers longer even as one gets out of the place. For gourmets and gourmandizers the place is worth converging to have an evening to enliven and get exhilarated by a plateful of one's preferred cuisines.

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

Dining out for a change or on a family occasion to celebrate is now passe with the diaspora population anywhere they are settled as eating and enjoying the fare laid out on the table hold their own lure for the Indians. Whether they are techies or professionals like doctors settled here in a wonderful wilderness like Phoenix (Arizona), the place has multiple hotspots of tourist interests, particularly to their parents or relatives who visit them once in a while. So be it with me and my wife when we come here for a sojourn to bask in the affections of our dear and near and grandchildren! So, on my seventy-third

South Asian Players To Create History at FIFA World Cup



Tahsin Jamshid (right) for Qatar U17 against India U17. (Photo courtesy: of X@FootballIndia01)



Niall Mason (center) in training with the Qatar national football team. (Photo courtesy: X@QFA_EN)

Anirudh Nair

South Asian nations may not be heading to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, but South Asian representation will still be present at the illustrious competition for the very first time. New Zealand have named Sarpreet Singh in their final squad, making him the first player of South Asian descent set to feature in the tournament.

Born in Auckland to Indian parents, Sarpreet Singh has already built an impressive résumé. After coming through the ranks at Wellington Phoenix, Singh secured a move to German giants Bayern Munich in 2019. He became a regular for Bayern's second team and impressed then-manager Hansi Flick enough to earn a couple of first-team appearances, picking up Bundesliga and DFB-Pokal winners' medals during the 2019/20 season.

He has now returned to his boyhood club, Wellington Phoenix. Still only 27,

Singh will be one to watch at the World Cup as he makes history for the South Asian community.

He may not be the only South Asian representative at the tournament this year. Qatar have named Tahsin Jamshid and Niall Mason in their preliminary World Cup squad.

Jamshid, born in Qatar to Malayali parents in 2006, has already emerged as a highly promising talent. He made his senior debut for Al-Duhail at just 17 years old and later made his international debut the same year, becoming the first player of Indian origin to represent Qatar. If Jamshid makes the final squad, he will also be Qatar's youngest player at the World Cup.

Mason, meanwhile, brings more experience and has only recently completed his international switch to Qatar. Born in England to an American father and Indian mother, Mason was eligible to represent all three nations but ultimately chose Qatar after playing

in the country since 2021 and having spent part of his youth there.

At the youth level, Mason developed through the academies of Real Madrid, Blackburn Rovers, Southampton, and Aston Villa. Currently with Qatar SC, he is still awaiting his first international cap, but given his experience and exposure, he looks like a strong contender to make Qatar's final World Cup squad.

In the past Vikash Dhorasoo (France / Mauritian-Indian Descent) had represented the French National Team. He was a part of the famous French squad that reached the World Cup Final in 2006, where they finished as runners-up to Italy.

With the expansion of the tournament to 48 teams, a South Asian nation may soon qualify for the World Cup finals. Until then, seeing members of the South Asian diaspora represented on football's biggest stage is a monumental step forward for the global South Asian community.

"We're Ready!"

SAH Staff Reporter

The official mascots representing the three host nations of the 2026 FIFA World Cup have been unveiled, each embodying the culture, spirit and sporting identity of their respective countries ahead of football's biggest tournament.

Canada's mascot, Maple the Moose, is portrayed as a globe-trotting creative personality inspired by the country's multicultural identity and vast geography. A goalkeeper with a passion for

music, art and street style, Maple symbolizes resilience, leadership and individuality while connecting with communities across Canada.

Representing Mexico is Zayu the Jaguar, a character rooted in the jungles of southern Mexico and designed to reflect the country's heritage and traditions. An agile striker on the pitch, Zayu combines athletic flair with cultural pride, embracing Mexican dance, food and customs while promoting unity and celebration.

The United States will be represented by Clutch the Bald Eagle, an adventurous and energetic midfielder inspired by the country's diversity and sporting culture. Clutch is depicted as a fearless leader who motivates teammates and unites people through optimism and teamwork.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will begin on June 11, at Mexico City's Estadio Azteca, while the final is scheduled for July 19, at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. The tournament will feature 48 teams for



(Photos courtesy: FIFA website)

the first time, expanded from 32 nations, making it the largest World Cup in history. Several countries, including Uzbekistan and Jordan, are set to make their FIFA World Cup debut after qualifying for the expanded tournament.

Sports Round Up

Acrobatic Dances Asian Championship

In a defining moment for the evolution of dance sport in Asia, the World Federation of Acrobatic Dances and Dance Sports, and National Federation of Acrobatics and Dance Sport India, recently hosted the WFADS Asian Championship Cup 2026 in Delhi, that marked the large-scale introduction of Acrobatic Rock and Roll and Acro Swing. The event witnessed participation from nearly 100 international athletes representing Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Mongolia, Vietnam, China and India.

A total of over 120 athletes representing various states across the country took part in the event, coming from Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh among others.

Notably, the event served as the official selection platform for country's athletes, and in its second half, there was the Asian Championship, where top talent from across Asia competed on a prestigious continental stage. (UNI)

Smith Clinches Karnataka Open Singles Title

Top seed Keegan Smith of the United States capped off a commanding week of tennis by defeating fourth seed Philip Sekulic 6-2, 7-5 to lift the men's singles title at the Karnataka Open, while Indian pair Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha and Saketh Myneni clinched the doubles crown with a straight-sets victory at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium.

In the singles final, Smith made a mixed start after dropping serve in the third game, allowing Sekulic an early foothold in the contest. However, the American responded immediately with a break in the fourth game, shifting momentum back in his favor. From there, Smith tightened his baseline game and added further breaks in the sixth and eighth games to take the opening set comfortably 6-2.

The second set was more evenly contested, with both players holding serve through the first six games. Sekulic drew first blood with a break in the seventh game, briefly seizing control of the set. But Smith once again showed composure under pressure, breaking back instantly in the eighth game to restore parity.

The Australian stayed alive in the contest, saving a championship point in the tenth game with a strong service hold. Yet Smith's consistency in long baseline exchanges and his ability to capitalize on key points proved decisive. The top seed broke Sekulic in the 12th game to seal the match 7-5 and secure the title in straight sets.

With the victory, Smith earned USD 9,500 and 50 ATP ranking points, while Sekulic collected USD 5,500 and 25 ATP points for finishing runner-up after a competitive campaign. (UNI)

Arjun Maini Outpaces Verstappen

India's Arjun Maini delivered an impressive performance, driving for the Haupt Racing Team (HRT) Ford Performance, in Qualifying 2 for the 24 Hours of Nürburgring, finishing ahead of four-time Formula 1 World Champion Max Verstappen on the timesheets in one of the most competitive GT3 fields in world motorsport.

Competing in the headline SP9 category, Maini clocked an 8:11.278 lap in the #64 Ford Mustang GT3 during the second qualifying session at the Nürburgring Nordschleife. The Indian driver ended the session fourth overall in SP9, ahead of Verstappen's Mercedes-AMG GT3 entry, which posted an 8:11.614 lap.

The result came in a packed 161-car field at the iconic endurance classic, which features more than 20 classes; one of the most diverse grids in global motorsport. This year's edition also marks the event's largest starting grid in over a decade. (UNI)



(Photo courtesy: X@fifaworldcup 2026)