



South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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IMPACT OF WAR ON INDIANS IN GULF

The ongoing wars and conflicts in the Gulf region bring uncertainty and hardship to the lakhs of Indians who live, work and dream of a better future.

JOB LOSSES & FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

- Many businesses shut down or suspend operations.
- Indians, especially in private jobs and daily wage work, face layoffs and salary delays.
- Loss of income means trouble paying rent, loans and supporting families back home.



RISING COST OF LIVING

- Prices of food, fuel, and essentials shoot up.
- Budget becomes tight for accommodation, transport and daily needs.
- Savings shrink while expenses rise.



MENTAL STRESS & UNCERTAINTY

- Constant fear of attacks, sirens and instability.
- Anxiety for own safety and for family in India.
- Lack of sleep, stress and depression affecting mental well-being.



DISRUPTED REMITTANCES & FAMILY IMPACT

- Irregular income affects money sent home.
- Families in India face financial hardship in education, healthcare and daily needs.
- Dreams and plans for a better future get delayed.



SAFETY & SECURITY CONCERNS

- Risk of bombings, missiles and regional escalation.
- Movement restrictions and curfews.
- Living in fear and uncertainty every day.



VOICES OF INDIANS IN THE GULF

“We came here to build a better life, but war has taken away our peace and security.”
— Ramesh, Technician, Kuwait

“Work is irregular, expenses are high, and we worry about our families every single day.”
— Shabana, Nurse, UAE

“We just want stability and safety to live and work with dignity.”
— Arun, Electrician, Qatar

(Representative Image)

HOPE FOR PEACE.
PRAY FOR STABILITY.

THEY BUILD, THEY SERVE, THEY SUPPORT. Let's stand with the Indian community in the Gulf in these hard times.

Court Blocks H-1B Visa Fee

SAH Staff Reporter

A federal court ruling striking down the Trump administration's controversial \$100,000 H-1B visa fee has delivered a major victory for Indian professionals and employers across the United States.

On June 8, U.S. District Judge Leo T. Sorokin invalidated the policy, finding that the administration had exceeded its authority by imposing what effectively amounted to a tax without congressional approval. The fee, announced in 2025, would have dramatically increased the cost of sponsoring new H-1B workers, a visa category heavily used by Indian technology professionals, researchers, healthcare workers and engineers.

“The Court finds that the Policy imposes a tax on H-1B petitions without the requisite delegation by Congress,” Sorokin wrote in his ruling, adding that there were no statutory powers authorizing the government to implement a \$100,000 charge on H-1B petitions. He further noted that while the executive branch has broad authority over immigration matters, that authority “is not boundless” and cannot override constitutional or congressional limits. The court declared the policy “unlawful” and “vacated it in its entirety.”

Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi welcomed the judgment, calling it “a welcome rejection of an unlawful policy that threatened America's economic competitiveness.” He said the H-1B program helps drive innovation, supports job creation and strengthens U.S. leadership in critical industries, while warning against barriers that could push talent and investment elsewhere.

The decision was also welcomed by diaspora advocacy groups. Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) said the ruling restores predictability and fairness to the employment-based immigration system.

(Contd. on page 3)

Missiles Strike Gulf Dreams

Bimal Shivaji

For more than a decade, Ramesh's life followed a familiar rhythm. He worked at a petrochemical plant in Oman, sent money home to Andhra Pradesh every month, and dreamed of returning to India after securing his family's future.

That routine ended abruptly in March. As the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran escalated, his employer cut operations and asked him to proceed on unpaid leave. Overnight, the future he had carefully planned became uncertain.

“I never imagined I would have to leave like this,” he says. “Back home, there are very few opportunities that match my experience or salary.”

Ramesh is among millions of Indian expatriates across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries whose lives have been disrupted by a conflict unfolding far from their workplaces but increasingly close to their daily realities.

SAH Exclusive from Oman

While global attention has focused on military developments and oil prices, the human cost is being felt in homes and workplaces from Muscat to Manama, Doha to Dubai.

For decades, the Gulf represented hope for Indian workers. Better salaries and stable employment enabled millions to support families, build homes and educate their children. Today, that promise is under strain.

In Bahrain's capital, Manama, Ashok (name changed), a marketing professional from Chennai, says uncertainty has become a constant companion.

“Everything has become more expensive,” he says. “People worry about their jobs, their future and whether the situation will get worse.”

Rising costs have forced many expatriates to cut spending. For workers supporting families in India, every increase in rent, food or transport expenses means less money sent home.

The emotional toll is equally severe.

In Muscat, some Indian families have already sent spouses and children back to India to reduce expenses and prepare for an uncertain future.

(Contd. on page 3)

NCAIA Celebrates 20th Anniversary

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The National Council of Asian Indian Associations (NCAIA) celebrated its 20th Anniversary Gala on June 6 at the Clarion Hotel in Hanover, Maryland, commemorating two decades of “unity, service, and empowerment.”

Welcoming attendees, NCAIA President Anjana Bordoloi reflected on the organization's journey and accomplishments over the past two decades.

“Tonight is more than a celebration of an organization, it is a celebration of vision, a journey, and a community that has flourished through dedication, service, and unity over the past two decades,” Bordoloi said.

She noted that since its founding in 2006, NCAIA has worked to

unite the diverse Indian American community while preserving cultural heritage, promoting civic participation, encouraging leadership, and building partnerships that strengthen the community's collective voice.

Founder and Chairman of Sikhs of America, USA, Jesse Singh urged community members to remain united and focused on contributing to the nation's future. He said the South Asian diaspora has become increasingly rooted in the United States and should continue building a lasting legacy for generations to come.

“One of the things that I'm seeing nowadays is there's a little backlash on South Asian communities,” Singh said, emphasizing that the response should be unity rather than confrontation.

“We have to overcome by uniting and not by becoming aggressive,” he added.

Singh also cautioned against allowing success to turn into arrogance.

“We should be proud, but we should not get egoistic,” he said, encouraging the community to continue contributing to the country. “We should be doubling our efforts to contribute more to this great nation.”

In her remarks, Lierman highlighted the contributions of

Maryland's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities to the state's economy and social fabric.

“You may know me as the tax collector. I like to call myself the tax refunder,” she joked, explaining her role in overseeing state finances and helping strengthen communities across Maryland.

(Contd. on page 3)



NCAIA leadership along with community leaders celebrating the 20th anniversary with a cake on June 6, 2026, at the Clarion Hotel in Hanover, Maryland. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

Exclusive: Kanwal Rekhi on Entrepreneurship, TiE, Immigration, and India's Future

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

Q Your new book, *The Groundbreaker*, explores innovation, opportunity, and transformation. What inspired you to write it?

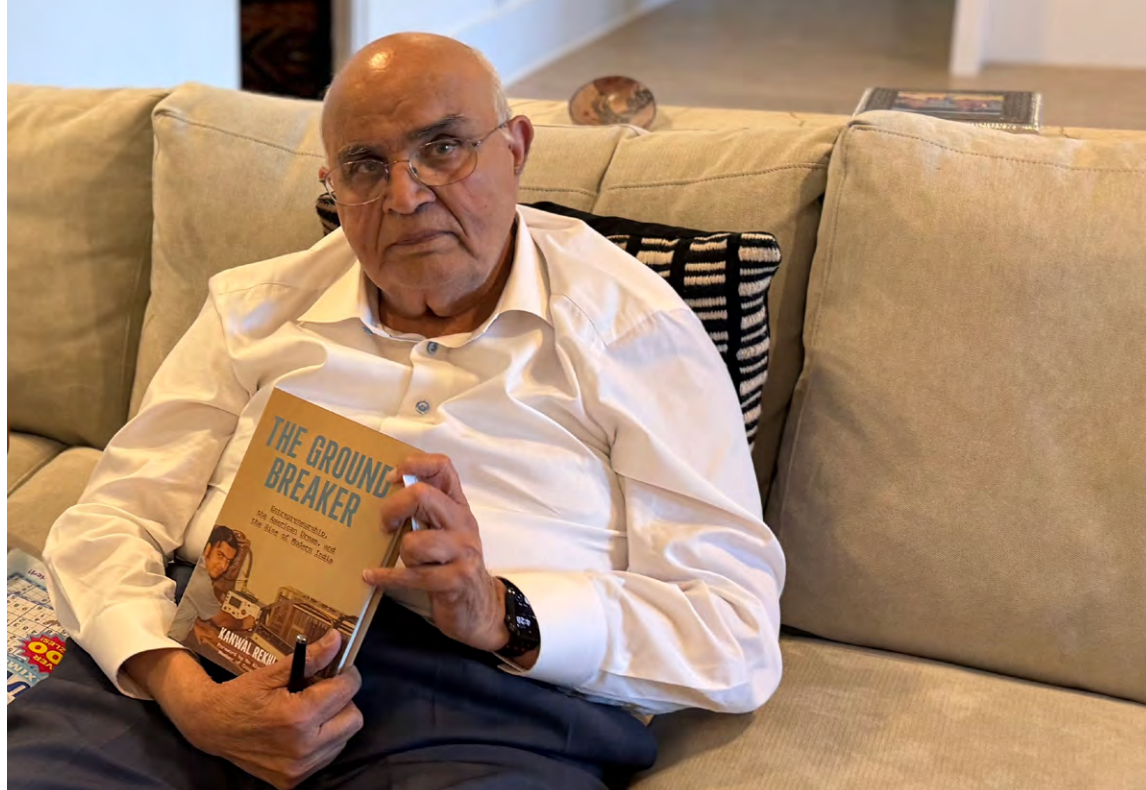
A The project was initiated by my son, Ben Rekhi. Growing up, he knew me only as his father and was unaware of much of my professional journey. Later, after hearing stories and reading about my work, he encouraged me to document my experiences. He felt many aspects of my story had never been told. Ben became the driving force behind the book and helped bring it to life.

Q Tell us about your current visit to Washington, D.C.

A I have been on a book tour since December, covering 13 cities in India before launching the U.S. tour in Dallas. We have since visited New York, Atlanta, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and now Washington, D.C. is special because it is the nation's power center. I have known Congressman Ro Khanna for over two decades through Silicon Valley, and he is joining my book launch here.

Q You rose from a modest background in Kanpur to become the first Indian American founder and CEO to take a venture-backed company public on NASDAQ. How did that journey unfold?

A I grew up in Kanpur and attended a Hindi-medium school. While my spoken English was limited, I was strong in mathematics and written English, which helped me gain admission to IIT Bombay.



Kanwal Rekhi during the exclusive interview with South Asian Herald on June 3, 2026, in Virginia.
(Photo courtesy T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

Those years transformed me and broadened my horizons.

After graduating in 1967, I pursued a master's degree at Michigan Technological University. My early years in America were challenging. I was laid off three times while working in New Jersey and Florida. During that period, I met my future wife, and together we moved to Silicon Valley in 1971.

In the early 1980s, realizing my advancement opportunities were limited, I started a computer networking company. It eventually went public in 1987. I moved from engineer to entrepreneur and CEO largely without mentors or role

models. Today, I remain committed to mentoring entrepreneurs and supporting innovation globally.

Q You co-founded TiE, one of the world's most influential entrepreneurship networks. What inspired its creation, and how has it evolved?

A The idea emerged in the early 1990s after India began liberalizing its economy. In 1991, a group of Indian professionals in Silicon Valley met with N. Vittal, who encouraged us to explore opportunities in India. That led to a regular dinner group where many of us realized

we had built companies without mentors or support systems.

We decided to create an organization focused entirely on helping future entrepreneurs. TiE was founded in 1992 with a simple mission: mentorship, networking, and guidance. We deliberately avoided politics, religion, and cultural divisions. Today, TiE has more than 60 chapters worldwide and continues to play a major role in fostering entrepreneurship across continents.

Q How do you view the contributions of Indian Americans to the United States?

INDIAN AMERICANS HAVE MADE REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTIONS ACROSS TECHNOLOGY, BUSINESS, MEDICINE, ACADEMIA, AND PUBLIC SERVICE. WHILE OTHER IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES HAVE ALSO ACHIEVED GREAT SUCCESS, INDIAN AMERICANS HAVE DONE EXCEPTIONALLY WELL BOTH FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THE COUNTRY.

A Indian Americans have made remarkable contributions across technology, business, medicine, academia, and public service. While other immigrant communities have also achieved great success, Indian Americans have done exceptionally well both for themselves and for the country.

They have also become an important bridge between the United States and India, facilitating the flow of ideas, talent, innovation, and investment. The startup ecosystems of both countries are closely connected today, and organizations such as TiE have helped strengthen those ties.

Read the full interview:
<https://southasianherald.com/exclusive-kanwal-rekhi-on-entrepreneurship-ties-global-impact-immigration-and-indias-rise/>

Immigration Delays Under Fire

SAH Staff Reporter

Indian American lawmakers Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) and Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (D-VA) led 21 House colleagues in sending a letter on June 3 to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Joseph Edlow and FBI Director Kash Patel, expressing concerns over reports that USCIS has implemented "broad adjudication holds" linked to new "enhanced security checks" for applicants seeking immigration benefits.

According to a statement from Rep. Krishnamoorthi's office, the lawmakers cautioned that the reported policy could significantly exacerbate an already substantial immigration backlog, potentially leaving millions of applicants waiting indefinitely for decisions that

affect their ability to "work, travel, and remain" lawfully in the United States.

"It is imperative to thoroughly screen and vet all applicants seeking immigration benefits, but such vetting should not serve as the basis for an indefinite moratorium on adjudications for any class of immigrants," the lawmakers wrote.

The lawmakers requested detailed information regarding the reported adjudication holds, including the number of cases affected, the categories of immigration benefits impacted, the anticipated duration of delays, and whether USCIS and the FBI possess sufficient resources to conduct expanded background checks without creating additional backlogs.

According to the statement, the letter also raises concerns about whether applicants are being informed that their cases have

been paused, how USCIS intends to meet statutory processing requirements, and whether premium processing fees will be refunded when

guaranteed processing timelines are missed because of the reported holds.

"Security vetting is essential, but it must be narrowly tailored, lawful,

and consistent with USCIS's obligation to adjudicate cases on an individualized basis," the lawmakers wrote.



(Photos courtesy: XRepSuhas; @CongressmanRaja)

Fear Stalks Indian Americans

SAH Staff Reporter

The fatal shooting of 28-year-old Telangana native Anshul Kuncha in Philadelphia has reignited concerns about safety and security among Indian-Americans, a community that has grown in size, influence, and visibility across the United States.

Kuncha, who moved to the U.S. nearly four years ago for higher studies and later secured a job with a multinational company, was allegedly lured to a deserted location through a fake pizza delivery order while working a weekend delivery shift. Police are investigating the killing, and authorities have not indicated any motive.

Yet the tragedy has struck a nerve far beyond Philadelphia.

Home to more than 5.2 million people of Indian origin, the United States remains the preferred destination for Indian students, professionals, and entrepreneurs seeking educational and economic opportunities. Indian-Americans are among the country's most successful immigrant groups, with strong representation in technology, medicine, academia, business, and public service.

However, beneath that success story, concerns about discrimination, harassment, and personal safety have been growing.

A 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey by the Carnegie Endowment found that many Indian-Americans continue to encounter bias, online racism, and discrimination. The survey described heightened exposure to discrimination as a defining feature of Indian-American life, with many respondents reporting harassment and prejudice in everyday settings.

Community organizations have also documented a rise in anti-Indian and anti-South Asian rhetoric, particularly on social media. Much of the hostility has been linked to debates over immigration, H-1B visas, outsourcing, and jobs. Researchers tracking online hate have reported sharp increases in racist slurs and hostile content targeting Indians and South Asians.

Religious communities have faced additional challenges. Sikh advocacy groups report a dramatic rise in anti-Sikh hate



(Photo courtesy: ScreenshotX@IndianNewYork)

incidents over the past decade, while Hindu organizations have highlighted repeated vandalism of temples and places of worship in several states. Graffiti carrying anti-Hindu and anti-India messages has appeared at multiple temples, raising concerns within the community.

There have also been a number of high-profile attacks involving Indian-origin students and professionals in recent years. While many of these incidents were criminal acts rather than hate crimes, they have contributed to a growing sense of unease among immigrant families.

The issue is particularly significant for Indian students. Hundreds of thousands are enrolled in American universities, often supported by families that invest their savings in the hope of securing better opportunities abroad. Every violent incident involving an Indian student or professional therefore resonates deeply in India and among diaspora communities.

For many observers, Kuncha's death underscores a broader reality. Indian-Americans continue to thrive economically and professionally, but concerns over safety, discrimination, and belonging remain part of their experience. Whether or not the Philadelphia shooting was motivated by bias, it has become a reminder that success and security do not always go hand in hand.

As investigators work to determine why Kuncha was targeted, his death has prompted renewed discussion about the challenges facing one of America's most successful immigrant communities—and the risks that can accompany the pursuit of the American dream.

reflected on the organization's origins and growth over the past 20 years.

"Twenty years is not just a number," he said. "It is a journey." He described the milestone as a testament to the community's commitment, service, and unity, and evidence of what can be achieved when people come together with "discipline, dignity, and purpose."

Representing the Embassy of India, Second Secretary (Visa) Rajiv Ahuja conveyed greetings on behalf of India's Ambassador to the United States, Vinay Kwatra. He emphasized the importance of the Indian diaspora in strengthening India-US relations.

The Embassy genuinely values this partnership, Ahuja said, describing members of the diaspora as the "living link" and "anchor" of the bilateral relationship.

The event also featured the presentation of a Governor's Citation to Bordoloi by Gurpreet Takhar, chair of the Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs, fellow commissioners, and Christina Poy from the Maryland Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

Missiles Strike...

(Contd. from page 1)

Family apartments have once again become bachelor accommodations.

"The atmosphere has changed," says a long-time resident. "People are trying to save money wherever they can because nobody knows how long this situation will continue."

The logistics sector has been among the hardest hit.

Shiv Kumar (name changed), a Chennai native employed in Dubai, rushed back from India after hearing that conditions were deteriorating. By the time he returned, his job no longer existed.

Shipping and transportation companies have struggled with disruptions to regional trade routes. Some firms have downsized while others have shut down altogether.

For workers who spent years building careers in the Gulf, the sudden loss of employment can be devastating. Many return home only to discover that equivalent jobs are unavailable or offer significantly lower salaries. For Renjit George, a resident of Abu Dhabi originally from Kerala, the crisis has become a family setback spanning two generations.

This month he is preparing to leave after losing his job. His 60-year-old father, who worked at Ras Al Khaimah port, also lost his position as operations slowed.

"Two generations of our family depended on Gulf employment," he says. "Now both of us are looking at starting over."

The consequences extend far beyond the Gulf. Millions of Indian households depend on remittances from family members working overseas.

States such as Kerala, where migration has shaped communities for generations, are particularly vulnerable to any decline in overseas earnings.

Yet despite the uncertainty, many Indians remain determined to stay. Years of hard work have created careers, businesses and communities that cannot easily be abandoned. Across the Gulf, expatriates continue to hold on to a simple hope—that stability will return and the dreams that brought them there will survive.

For them, the war is not merely a geopolitical crisis. It is a story of interrupted ambitions, anxious phone calls home, children waiting for fathers to return, and families wondering whether the future they worked so hard to build is beginning to slip away.

Court Blocks...

(Contd. from page 1)

Khanderao Kand, the organization's chief of policy and strategy, said access to global talent remains critical for technology, healthcare and advanced manufacturing sectors and that major immigration policy changes must be grounded in statutory authority and economic realities. Healthcare leaders

echoed those concerns. Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association, described the ruling as "a victory for patients," noting that international medical graduates play a vital role in addressing physician shortages, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Despite the court victory, the White House is expected to appeal, ensuring the issue remains in litigation.

NCAIA Celebrates...

(Contd. from page 1)

Lierman noted that more than 420,000 AAPI residents call Maryland home and contribute across a broad range of professions, including education, healthcare, technology, and business.

"Your economic impact is extraordinary," she said.

During the gala, Lierman presented Singh with NCAIA's Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing his leadership in founding Sikhs of America and advancing civic advocacy, policy engagement, and cultural awareness nationwide.

She noted that under Singh's leadership, the organization has expanded its presence on Capitol Hill, championed religious freedom, and helped amplify the voices and experiences of Sikh Americans.

"So, today we are proud to recognize Jesse Singh..." she said, describing him as a "bridge between communities."

NCAIA Founder Nagender Madhavaram

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South Asia Notes

Elizabeth RocheAssociate Professor,
O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana

My Neighbor, My Friend

Two visits from Nepal to India in quick succession from the new establishment there. The first (June 1-5) was by Rabi Lamichchane, President of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), the newest political party in Nepal, which, within a four-year span, has made itself a force to reckon with. The second (June 5-7) was by Shisir Khanal, Nepal's new foreign minister.

First, a word about India-Nepal ties. The two have an "open" border, i.e. free movement between nations that share religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic commonalities. Second, the two share a relationship described as "*roti-beti ka rishta*."

"*Roti*" means bread in Hindi; it refers to millions of people of both countries who work in various economic sectors of the other country. "*Beti*" again in Hindi means daughter and refers to the intermarriages between Indian and Nepali families over centuries. All point to a complex web of closeness and interdependence.

Back to the visits. After being blindsided by the political developments in Nepal last September, India has moved quickly to establish links with the RSP. The serenading of Lamichchane – meetings with Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the grand welcome at India's ruling party headquarters – is part of this strategy. Khanal's visit was no less warm. The idea is to create comfort and familiarity that can be leveraged to keep troubles at bay. Given India's troubles with Pakistan, China and to an extent with Bangladesh, ensuring stable ties with Nepal is a no-brainer. Especially when both Lamichchane and Khanal say that they come with none of the political baggage of the past, Nepal's former prime minister K.P Sharma Oli was seen as distinctly anti-India and pro-China.

There are claims over territory – the Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipulekh area. It was the fact that the new Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah recently said that both India and Nepal had encroached on each other's territories. That's a refreshing change; previously, all blame was only on India. Shah's comment that he had engaged the UK and China on this matter wasn't appreciated by India. But during his visit, Khanal cleared the air, saying Kathmandu wanted to resolve matters without external mediation.

What of the future? Voices on the ground in Nepal say PM Shah is concentrating on delivery of promises made to his people – especially in the first 100 days. Meaning domestic priorities take centre stage. On its part, India should devise ways to be seen as a partner in this process. Lamichchane set out some ideas in an Indian newspaper article. The RSP, he said, "is Nepal's new political reality, a young force." Looking forward, he wondered why India and Nepal couldn't link up at the state/provincial level – direct flights between Pokhara and Lumbini in Nepal to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, a digital corridor connecting Kathmandu and Bengaluru and partnerships between India's industrialised states and Nepal. "We want to host institutions like the IIT and AIIMS in Nepal," he said, referring to India's globally renowned engineering and medical training institutions. Nepal seems to be demanding more development-oriented diplomacy. It's something India is familiar with and can deliver.

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

Bangladesh's FM Elected President of 81st UNGA



UNGA President-elect, Khalilur Rahman. (Photo courtesy: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe)

SAH Staff Reporter

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Khalilur Rahman, has been elected President of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, securing a diplomatic victory for Dhaka in a rare contested election and marking Bangladesh's return to the post after four decades.

Rahman defeated Cyprus's Permanent Representative, Andreas S. Kakouris, in a secret-ballot vote at the United Nations headquarters, winning 99 votes to 91 out of 190 ballots cast. The election was unusual for a position that is often filled through regional consensus.

The veteran Bangladeshi diplomat and foreign minister will assume office on September 8, 2026, succeeding the current General Assembly president and leading the world's most representative multilateral body during a period of mounting geopolitical tensions, climate challenges, and growing demands for reform of international institutions.

HE HAS ARGUED THAT THE UNITED NATIONS MUST BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE IN ADDRESSING CONFLICTS, DEVELOPMENT FINANCING GAPS, CLIMATE EMERGENCIES, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES.

Rahman's election is widely being viewed as a significant diplomatic achievement for Bangladesh, enhancing the country's international profile at a time when the United Nations is marking its 80th anniversary and confronting questions about the future of global governance.

In his campaign vision statement, Rahman pledged to focus on restoring

trust in multilateralism, advancing sustainable development, strengthening climate resilience, promoting human rights, improving digital governance, and advancing reforms under the UN80 initiative. He has argued that the United Nations must become more responsive and effective in addressing conflicts, development financing gaps, climate emergencies, and emerging technological challenges.

As President of the General Assembly, Rahman will oversee deliberations on key global issues, including implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action, UN reform efforts, and discussions surrounding the selection process for the next UN Secretary-General. His tenure is expected to place particular emphasis on the priorities of developing nations and the broader Global South, reflecting Bangladesh's longstanding advocacy within the multilateral system.

Homeland Round Up

Rajapaksa Testifies

Former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa testified online in proceedings relating to the 2011 disappearance of Jaffna activists Lalith Kumar Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan. Rajapaksa had previously failed to appear before the Jaffna Magistrate's Court on several occasions, citing security concerns.

Refugees Stranded

Two Lhotshampa refugees who spent 18 years in Bhutan's Chamgang prison were denied entry into Nepal after their release. According to reports, they were also warned not to return to Bhutan, leaving them effectively stranded and highlighting the unresolved plight of displaced Lhotshampa communities.

Kalapani Dispute

Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah reignited debate over the disputed Kalapani-Lipulekh region by raising concerns in Parliament about territorial encroachment involving both Nepal and India. His remarks brought renewed attention to one of the most sensitive issues in bilateral relations between the two neighbours.

Counterterror Offensive

Pakistan's military conducted multiple raids that killed at least 17 suspected militants following a train bombing claimed by the Balochistan Liberation Army that left at least 20 people dead last week. Separately, a security think tank reported a 27 percent increase in militant attacks across the country during May, underscoring mounting security challenges.

Accountability Call

Nepal's National Human Rights Commission called for legislation that would allow authorities to hold former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, the former home minister and the former communications minister accountable for actions taken during the suppression of the September 2025 Gen Z protests. The recommendation has reignited debate over accountability and transitional justice.

Cultural Freedoms

Leading rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra criticised the suspension of a film screening and the violent disruption of a Baul music programme in Sylhet earlier this year. The organisation warned that increasing pressure from conservative groups poses a growing threat to freedom of expression and cultural diversity in Bangladesh.



When Immigration Rules Shift

To the South Asian community living in the United States, nothing could be more important or put them on edge than issues of immigration. It is generally not one of Immigration officers and the midnight knock looking for illegals, but of a community living in anxiety over their own lives in the United States. It could be a student anxious about changes to the Optional Practical Training permit, someone on a H1B visa not knowing if his status is going to be renewed or cut off automatically at two terms and the uncertainty of returning if forced to travel to the home country for something called “stamping.” And of course, there is always that Green Card line, now questions are being raised if the process could be initiated while being on an H1B or a standalone one.

Within the South Asian population are those from India who are generally seen as the most adversely impacted by immigration changes, be it on a F-1 student visa, the H1B and its dependent H4 and the pathways to Green Card (permanent resident) and citizenship. Eyes in India are wide open when media flashes changes or even proposals on just about anything pertaining to the H1B high-skilled visas-- the application fee hike to US\$ 100,000, a wage-based selection process as opposed to a lottery system, social media vetting and non-automaticity of conversion to permanent residency. Anytime a Green Card processing is delayed, it is not just putting hundreds of thousands on longer wait times, but literally left in limbo.

IMMIGRATION IS ONE OF THE TOP CONCERNS OF SOUTH ASIANS, AND IT IS REFLECTED CONSISTENTLY IN SURVEYS, ALONG WITH THE ECONOMY AND EDUCATION. OF LATE, THERE HAVE BEEN CONCERNS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AS WELL. BUT THE COMMUNITY IS EDUCATED ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT ISSUES OF IMMIGRATION ARE A MATTER OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, WHERE NO ONE WILL ALLOW OR TOLERATE ANY INTERFERENCE

In the United States, the South Asians drawn predominantly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have made it to the top in almost every conceivable category by their hard work. For instance, the Indian American community is the largest and perhaps the most influential South Asian group, boasting a median household income well above national and Asian American averages, highly educated, and spread out in the workforce in areas of management, technology, science, and health care, to mention a few. Seen to be in the neighborhood of 5.5 million, with close to 3 million of them eligible to vote, Indian Americans have made a major impact politically as well, having representation at the national, state and local levels.

Immigration is one of the top concerns of South Asians, and it is reflected consistently in surveys, along with the economy and education. Of late, there have been concerns of racial discrimination as well. But the community is educated enough to realize that issues of immigration are a matter of national sovereignty, where no one will allow or tolerate any interference. The community is also politically savvy to know that “all politics is local,” a phrase attributed to Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas “Tip” O’Neill. Just as affected constituents on immigration pressure their members of Congress, those laid off employees through so-called liberal immigration policies look up to their representatives to close the gap.



Opinion

TN Ashok
Senior Journalist and Columnist

When Institutions Fail to Ask Questions

India has seen its share of corporate scandals. From the stock market manipulations of the 1990s to accounting frauds, banking blowups and governance failures, every decade seems to produce a fresh reminder that numbers on paper are only as trustworthy as the systems that verify them.

The allegations against Rajesh Exports may rank among the most disturbing yet.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has accused the company of misrepresenting revenues amounting to roughly ₹15 lakh crore (about US\$175 billion) over several years and has imposed interim restrictions on promoter Rajesh Mehta pending further investigation. The company strongly denies the allegations and insists its financial disclosures were accurate. The facts will ultimately be determined through due process. Yet regardless of the final outcome, the affair has exposed troubling weaknesses in India’s regulatory architecture.

The most uncomfortable question is not what Rajesh Exports allegedly did. It is how such discrepancies, if proven, could remain undetected for years despite layers of auditors, independent directors, institutional investors, stock exchanges, credit rating agencies and regulators.

A modern listed company passes through numerous checkpoints. Annual accounts are audited. Boards review financial statements. Institutional shareholders conduct due diligence. Regulators monitor disclosures. Yet the Rajesh Exports case suggests that a sufficiently complex corporate structure, especially one involving overseas subsidiaries, can still create blind spots large enough to hide alarming inconsistencies.

The issue becomes even more sensitive because public institutions are involved.

India’s largest insurer, the state-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), held a significant stake in the company. Millions of Indians entrust their savings and insurance premiums to LIC because they believe government-backed institutions represent safety, prudence and rigorous oversight. When a company under regulatory scrutiny is also a major public-sector investment, citizens naturally ask whether due diligence mechanisms were adequate.

This is not merely an investment issue. It is a confidence issue. Financial systems function on trust. Depositors trust banks. Policyholders trust insurers. Investors trust disclosures. Once confidence erodes, rebuilding it becomes far harder than preventing the damage in the first place.

The government should therefore treat this episode as a systemic warning rather than an isolated controversy. First, oversight of overseas subsidiaries must become far more rigorous. Companies deriving the bulk of their revenues from foreign entities should face enhanced disclosure requirements, including public filing of subsidiary-level audited financial statements and customer verification mechanisms.

Second, institutional investors such as LIC, public-sector banks and pension funds should establish independent forensic-risk units capable of identifying unusual revenue patterns, related-party transactions and unexplained receivables long before regulators intervene.

Third, auditors must face greater accountability. If massive discrepancies can survive multiple audit cycles, questions inevitably arise about the effectiveness of existing auditing standards and enforcement mechanisms.

Fourth, regulators should deploy artificial intelligence and data analytics to flag anomalies automatically. In an era of real-time digital finance, it should not take years for extraordinary mismatches between reported revenues, cash flows and subsidiary disclosures to trigger scrutiny.

Finally, whistleblower systems need strengthening. Many of India’s biggest financial scandals came to light only because an insider, minority shareholder or investigative journalist asked uncomfortable questions that institutions failed to ask.

The Rajesh Exports controversy should not be viewed as proof that India’s financial system is broken. In fact, SEBI’s intervention demonstrates that regulatory mechanisms can work. The concern is that they often work too late.

India aspires to become a global financial powerhouse attracting trillions of dollars in domestic and international capital. That ambition requires more than economic growth. It requires trust in institutions, transparency in corporate governance and certainty that warning signs will be detected before they become crises.

The lesson from Rajesh Exports is simple: confidence cannot be demanded. It must be earned through vigilance, accountability and relentless scrutiny. The cost of failing to do so is ultimately borne by ordinary citizens whose savings underpin the entire financial system.

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South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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Exclusive: Shekhawat on Culture, Tourism, Viksit Bharat



India's Minister of Culture & Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. (Photo courtesy: X@gssjodhpur)

Rajesh Mehta

In this exclusive interview with *South Asian Herald*, India's Minister of Culture & Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat discusses how India is reclaiming its civilizational legacy, leveraging its cultural assets for economic growth, and positioning culture and tourism as powerful engines of nation-building in the decades ahead and India's advance towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Culture and tourism are increasingly emerging not merely as sectors of governance but as pillars of national development, economic growth, and global influence. At the center of this transformation is Shekhawat, whose ministry is overseeing initiatives ranging from the repatriation of stolen antiquities and the development of global tourism destinations to the revitalization of spiritual heritage corridors and engagement with the Indian diaspora.

One of the most significant achievements in India's cultural diplomacy in recent years has been the return of hundreds of stolen antiquities from around the world. For Shekhawat, these recoveries are about far more than bringing artifacts home. "The return of India's stolen antiquities is about restoring our civilizational memory and reconnecting communities with their cultural inheritance," he says.

"These antiquities are invaluable carriers

of history, identity, faith and knowledge," Shekhawat notes, emphasizing that repatriation is only the first step. Once returned, the artifacts are conserved, researched, and displayed through initiatives such as the Gallery of Confiscated and Retrieved Antiquities at Purana Qila and exhibitions like *The Light and the Lotus*. "As provenance research continues globally, we remain committed to pursuing every legitimate avenue for the return of Indian cultural property wherever it may be found," he adds.

Tourism remains a critical component of India's growth story, and the Ministry's ambitious "One State: One Global Destination" vision seeks to elevate select destinations to world-class standards.

For Shekhawat, India's diversity is its greatest competitive advantage. "India's strength is that every State has something unique to offer the world," he says. The initiative focuses on improving accessibility, visitor amenities, cleanliness, safety, and overall visitor experience. The objective is not only to attract more foreign tourists but also to encourage them to explore regions beyond traditional destinations. "This will help international tourists discover newer parts of India, stay longer and carry back a richer experience," he explains.

Among the most transformative developments in recent years has been the emergence of what many describe as India's "Temple Economy" - a model in which heritage

and spiritual destinations become catalysts for local economic development.

Shekhawat believes this concept reflects a broader understanding of culture itself. "The temple economy reflects an understanding of culture as a living ecosystem rather than a standalone monument," he says.

Historically, India's sacred sites have served as centers of commerce, creativity, learning, and community life. Today, the government is seeking to revive those connections through integrated development of pilgrimage destinations. "When a pilgrimage centre is revitalized, the benefits extend far beyond tourism," he explains. "It generates livelihoods, strengthens local supply chains, increases demand for traditional crafts and cultural products, creates opportunities for hospitality and service sectors, and encourages investment in local infrastructure. Our objective is to ensure that artists, artisans and cultural practitioners become active participants and beneficiaries of growth," Shekhawat says.

As India moves toward 2047, he sees heritage ecosystems playing an increasingly important role in generating employment, supporting MSMEs, and fostering community-led development.

For a country with one of the world's largest and most influential diasporas, cultural diplomacy extends well beyond government institutions. "The Indian diaspora is among our greatest cultural assets and one of our

strongest bridges to the world," Shekhawat says.

Going forward, Shekhawat sees tremendous opportunities in engaging younger generations through digital initiatives, academic partnerships, and cultural entrepreneurship. "We want second- and third-generation members to engage with India as a living source of innovation and cultural knowledge. Every member of the Indian diaspora has the potential to serve as a cultural ambassador," he says.

For Shekhawat, culture and tourism are not peripheral sectors but central pillars of India's long-term development strategy. "Culture and tourism are central to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, serving as both economic engines and the foundation of our national identity," he says.

By investing in cultural infrastructure and strengthening the creative economy, India is pursuing a model in which economic prosperity and cultural continuity advance together.

As the country looks toward 2047, Shekhawat believes culture and tourism will continue to shape India's emergence as a confident, innovative, and globally influential nation. "Our cultural and tourism strength must become a foundation for innovation, national pride and global leadership," he says, "making them powerful engines of both prosperity and nation-building."

Global Tax Ledger

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Tax Reform Beyond Rates: India Fixes Unequal MAT Treatment

A good tax system should be uniform for all similar businesses. India has made a step in that direction by fixing a huge gap in the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) rules for non-resident companies paying tax on a presumptive basis.

To understand why this change matters, we first need to understand what MAT and Presumptive Taxation are.

MAT is a safety net ensuring that companies - even those using deductions and exemptions pay at least some minimum tax based on their book profits.

When a company pays MAT, any excess over normal tax becomes a credit, which can be carried forward up to 15 tax years and used when regular tax exceeds MAT in future years.

Presumptive taxation means the law simply presumes a fixed percentage of the business's revenue to be profit, and tax is charged on that.

Six types of foreign businesses can opt for presumptive taxation in India: shipping companies, airline operators, mineral oil service providers, turnkey power project builders, cruise ship operators, and electronics manufacturing service providers.

Here is where it gets frustrating.

For shipping, airlines, mineral oil, and power projects, the law explicitly said MAT does not apply. They pay presumptive tax, and that's the end of it.

But for the last two - cruise ship operators and electronics manufacturing service providers, nobody wrote that protection in. So technically, after paying presumptive tax, MAT could still show up at their door.

Same structure. Same logic. Completely different treatment.

Think of a US-based shipping company and a UAE-based cruise ship operator - both paying under the same simplified presumptive system. The shipping company was shielded from MAT. The cruise operator was not. This problem has now been solved once and for all.

What has changed from April 1, 2026, with the introduction of the Income Tax Act 2025?

Firstly, Cruise ship operators and electronics manufacturing service providers will now also be excluded from MAT, just like the other four. This includes the business of operating cruise ships and providing services or technology for setting up an electronics manufacturing facility in India to a resident company.

Secondly, the MAT is now reduced from 15% to 14% of book profits, a small but meaningful reduction that lowers the minimum tax burden for companies.

Thirdly, the rules related to MAT credit have also been tightened. Domestic companies shifting to the new tax regime can still use their old MAT credit - but only up to 25% of their tax liability, with the rest carried forward. Foreign companies can use it only when their tax as per normal provisions exceeds the minimum alternate tax, and only to the extent of that difference.

These changes together allow companies to make a smooth transition from the old tax regime to the new one, without losing what they have already paid.

Promoting a sector through policy is one thing. Backing it up with consistent tax treatment is another. India has now done both.

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

Indian Founders Top U.S. Unicorn List

SAH Staff Reporter

Indian immigrants have founded more billion-dollar startup companies in the United States than immigrants from any other country, underscoring the growing influence of Indian entrepreneurs in the American technology and innovation ecosystem, according to a new report released by the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP).

The report found that Indian-born founders have launched or co-founded 96 U.S. unicorns—privately held startups valued at \$1 billion or more—placing India ahead of Israel, which has produced 60 unicorn companies. The United Kingdom ranked third with 47, followed by China with 41 and Canada with 30.

Among the most prominent Indian-founded unicorns are AI search company Perplexity, co-founded by Aravind Srinivas and valued at \$20 billion, data security firm Cohesity, founded by Mohit Aron, and enterprise software companies Glean and Eightfold.ai.

NFAP identified six Indian-born entrepreneurs who have founded two or more unicorn companies, highlighting a growing group of serial founders contributing to the U.S. startup landscape.

The report found that immigrants have founded or co-founded 455 of America's 775 unicorn companies, accounting for 59% of all privately held billion-dollar startups. When companies established by children of

immigrants are included, the share rises to 66%.

Higher education remains a key pathway for entrepreneurial success. Nearly one-quarter of U.S. unicorns have at least one founder who first entered the country as an international student. Overall, 234 former international students have gone on to establish or co-found billion-dollar startups.

NFAP estimated that immigrant-founded unicorns are collectively valued at about \$5 trillion and employ an average of 833 workers each, with most jobs located in the United States. The report said the findings demonstrate the strong link between immigration, innovation and economic growth in America.

Boosting India Saudi Travel

SAH Staff Reporter

Air India and Saudi Arabia's new national carrier, Riyadh Air, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing air connectivity between India, Saudi Arabia, and destinations beyond.

The agreement establishes a framework for future cooperation, including planned codeshare and interline arrangements that would allow pas-

sengers to travel across both airlines' networks on a single booking, subject to regulatory approvals. The partnership is expected to improve connections through the carriers' hubs in Delhi, Mumbai, and Riyadh.

The airlines said the move responds to growing demand for travel between the two countries, driven by business, tourism, and family ties. They will also explore collaboration in areas such as loyalty programs, cargo services, operational support,

and digital technology. Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said India and Saudi Arabia are among the fastest-growing aviation markets and that the partnership would provide travelers with greater choice and improved connectivity. Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas described India as a key market and said the agreement would help strengthen links between the two countries while delivering a seamless travel experience.

The announcement comes as Riyadh Air prepares to launch its inaugural flights, including services to London Heathrow beginning July 1.

Business Round Up

Copper Bet on Wall Street

Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta-owned copper mining company CopperTech Metals Inc, which is domiciled in the United States, has announced that it has publicly filed a registration statement on Form S-1 with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission regarding its proposed initial public offering (IPO) on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

However, neither the number of CopperTech shares to be offered nor the price range of the date of listing for the proposed IPO has been disclosed.

The company plans to list itself on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), under the symbol "CUX," according to the website of the company's IPO lead manager. Citigroup and Cantor have been appointed as joint lead managers for the proposed offering. BMO Capital Markets, RBC Capital Markets, TD Securities, Stifel, William Blair, and Needham & Company are acting as book runners for the proposed offering, with Roth Capital acting as co-manager. Vedanta-owned CopperTech controls 79.42% of Konkola Copper Mines in Zambia.

CopperTech plans to use the proceeds of the IPO to invest in exploration activities across its operational sites and select international jurisdictions to support long-term mineral resource development, beyond expanding copper production at Konkola Copper Mines in Zambia, which is owned by CopperTech.

It intends to build on the existing \$3 billion investment made by Vedanta (UNI)

Tata Drives Into Top Four

Tata Motors will expand globally in the next five years, and with the acquisition of Italian commercial vehicle and powertrain manufacturer, Iveco Group, it will rank among the top four commercial vehicle makers in the world, according to Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran.

Tata Motors is in the process of acquiring the Iveco Group, in an all-cash deal valued at approximately €3.8 billion (around \$4.4 billion USD). This acquisition will create a global commercial vehicle powerhouse with combined annual sales exceeding 540,000 units.

Speaking at the Tata Motors commercial vehicles dealer business planning meet 2026, Chandrasekaran said that the Tata Group's automotive business, which is "both large and globally competitive" is poised to clock revenues of USD 80 billion, as compared to the Tata Group's total revenue of USD 100 billion in 2017. Chandrasekaran also highlighted the proposed acquisition of Iveco, expected to be completed in the second quarter of FY27, subject to regulatory approvals. (UNI)

Hyundai Fuels Green Drive

Passenger car makers Hyundai

Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Friday, while revealing that it would rollout two new dedicated EV models this year, reaffirmed its long-standing partnership with the Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN), committing to making the state its 'Flagship EV Hub for India,' and also jointly announced an exclusive Skill Development collaboration to enhance the global employability of the youth of the state. This initiative will kick off operations in December 2027, a HMIL release said. (UNI)

Rupee Gets RBI Shield

The Reserve Bank of India's latest monetary policy has been welcomed by market experts as a comprehensive package aimed at strengthening India's external position while maintaining a firm focus on inflation management.

According to Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research at Kotak Securities, the policy goes beyond a conventional rate decision and should be viewed as a broader balance of payments strategy. The RBI kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and retained its neutral policy stance, even as it raised its FY27 inflation forecast by 50 basis points to 5.1 per cent. (UNI)

Late Weddings Among Hindi Celebs

Rajiv Vijayakar

After introducing Gauri Spratt to the media on his 60th birthday in 2025, **Aamir Khan** had declared then that there were no immediate plans to settle in matrimony this third time. After Reena Dutta and Kiran Rao (whom Aamir had also married at the age of 40-plus), however. Khan, at 61, has decided to take his latest relationship to the next legal level. Both Gauri and he now feel ready to “formalize the relationship” as they are “deeply committed to each other and view marriage as a natural progression of our partnership,” he has said. The wedding will take place on July 5.

The record in Hindi cinema in terms of age still belongs, however, to actor **Kabir Bedi**. He married his fourth wife, Parveen Dusanj, one day before he turned 70 on 15th January 2016. On his 10th anniversary, the couple went for a second, private honeymoon to Goa. Bedi had even married his third wife, Nikki, at the late age of 46.

Actress **Suhasini Mulay** found love at the age of 60 with physicist Atul Gurtu after a previous extended live-in relationship that had ended in 1990. And speaking of live-in relationships, **Arjun Rampal**, who divorced his first wife Meher Jessica in 2019, has been living with Gabriella Demetriades, a South African model and actress, since the same year, when he was 47. Their first child was also born in that year, and the second in 2023. He has two daughters from Meher.



Aamir Khan and Gauri Spratt. (Photo courtesy: Rajiv Vijayakar, SAH)

TODAY, MOST DIVORCED COUPLES CONTINUE A FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR EXES, EVEN CO-PARENTING THEIR CHILDREN AND SOMETIMES GETTING TOGETHER SOCIALLY. INDEPENDENCE IN EVERY WAY MAY BE A MOTIVATING FACTOR, AND ALSO TIME MAY HAVE PROVED A CERTAIN LEVEL OF INCOMPATIBILITY DUE TO CHANGES IN AGE AND LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Ashish Vidyarthi married fashion entrepreneur Rupali Barua at the age of 57 in 2023. Coincidentally, Vidyarthi was previously married to another Barua—Rajoshi. While they have a son, Rupali was married to a doctor from Assam who had passed away, and they also have a daughter.

Actor **Arbaaz Khan** remarried a year earlier, age-wise, to Sshoor. He was 56 then, while **Milind Soman** remarried at 52 to Ankita Konwar, who calls herself a Triathlete, nature lover and explorer on her Facebook page.

Second chance

As we can see, most of such weddings are second chances, if not beyond. Very often, the latest marriage is the happiest despite

massive age differences—20 years or more. Here again, 80-year-old Bedi leads in the chasm as he is 29 years older than Parveen. But when the soul gets a mate, we guess little else matters. It's all about the right companionship with someone, an emotional resonance.

Today, most divorced couples also continue a friendly relationship with their exes, even co-parenting their children and sometimes getting together socially. Independence in every way may be

love at 52 with Vivek Mehra, a Delhi chartered accountant, at the age of 49. **Urmila Matondkar** married Mohsin Akhtar Mir at 42, and **Preity Zinta** at 41, wed Gene Goodenough at a private ceremony in Los Angeles. Goodenough is Senior Vice-President for Finance at NLine Energy, a US-based hydro-electric power company.

Manisha Koirala married businessman Samrat Dahal at the age of 40, and even divorced him just two years later. **Lisa Ray** also found love in **Jason Dehni** and married him in 2012 in California at the age of 40.

Among the actors, **Sanjay Dutt**, had married actress Richa Sharma in 1987, who passed away nine years later. He then wed actress-model Rhea Pillai, but they divorced a decade later. He finally found happiness at 49, when he married actor Manyata (born Dildawaz Sheikh) in 2008. While he has a daughter with Richa, who lives with her maternal grandparents, he has twin sons through Manyata. Another actor who (re) married late was **Saif Ali Khan**, who wed Kareena Kapoor when he was 42.

Two filmmakers also come in. **Aditya Chopra** wed his second wife Rani Mukerji, at 43, while **Boney Kapoor** married Sridevi at 40. **Himesh Reshammiya**,



Kabir Bedi and Parveen Dusanj (Photo courtesy: Kabir Bedi)



Boney Kapoor and Sridevi (Photo courtesy: Publicity Photo)

a motivating factor, and also time may have proved a certain level of incompatibility due to changes in age and life's circumstances, but all's well that ends well.

Forties and more

Career concentration is another factor. We find many an actress, therefore, marrying on the wrong side of 40. **Neena Gupta**, who had a series of turbulent relationships. She singlehandedly raised Masaba, her daughter, through cricketer Vivian Richards (as he was already married), and later found

composer, singer, actor and now filmmaker, married actress Sonia Kapoor at 45.

And who were the high-profile pioneers of late weddings? **Dilip Kumar**, who married Saira Banu, 22 years his junior, at the age of 44—a first for both—and singer-composer-filmmaker **Kishore Kumar**, whose third and fourth marriages, respectively to actresses **Yogee- ta Bali** and later **Leena Chandavarkar**, were solemnized when he was 47 and 51, respectively.

Truly, in the wedding business, age seems to be just a number!



Weekly Horoscope

JUNE 05 - 11

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KOUSHIK

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ARIES

(Mar 21 to Apr 20)

This week may feel lively and rewarding for Aries natives. Romantic prospects appear bright, with appreciation and affection likely to strengthen relationships. Financial conditions may improve, and profitable opportunities may emerge if you stay alert and practical. Work challenges may test your abilities, but they may also help you prove your strengths and gain recognition.

TAURUS

(Apr 21 to May 20)

Taurus natives may experience a mix of excitement and responsibility this week. Romantic energy may feel intense, bringing attraction and emotional curiosity. Professionally, an important assignment may move you closer to long-term ambitions, while finances may remain stable and secure. Family matters may require calm communication to avoid unnecessary tension at home.

GEMINI

(May 21 to Jun 21)

Gemini natives may experience emotional stability and stronger family support this week. Romantic relationships may feel comforting

and emotionally fulfilling. Professionally, you may focus more on long-term growth and refining your expertise instead of chasing quick results. Health may require better discipline through proper sleep, balanced habits, and stress management.

CANCER

(Jun 22 to Jul 22)

Cancerians may notice positive developments in several areas this week. Long-awaited payments may improve financial confidence, while family support may remain reassuring and emotionally comforting. Professional recognition or opportunities for specialization may increase steadily. Travel plans may lift your mood, and students may benefit from collaborative learning and shared ideas.

LEO (Jul 23 to Aug 23)

Leo natives may discover fresh opportunities for growth and learning in professional life this week. Health may improve steadily, helping you feel stronger and more energetic. Romantic relationships may deepen through care, affection, and meaningful conversations with loved ones. Financial planning may require caution, while delayed property matters may need extra attention and careful review.

VIRGO

(Aug 24 to Sept 23)

Virgo natives may feel energetic and motivated throughout the week. Financial prospects appear promising, with opportunities to strengthen savings and improve long-term stability. At work, your judgment and problem-solving abilities may help you turn difficult situations into achievements. Family relationships may require patience and emotional understanding, while travel plans may need postponement.

LIBRA

(Sept 24 to Oct 23)

Libra natives may feel energetic and confident this week. Professional progress may strengthen your position and help you feel more secure about future goals. Romantic relationships may remain affectionate and emotionally satisfying, though finances may require careful budgeting and smart planning. Family matters may need patience and open communication to maintain peace and understanding.

SCORPIO

(Oct 24 to Nov 22)

Scorpios may enjoy a promising and productive week professionally, with chances for growth and

recognition. Family members may offer strong emotional support, helping you manage responsibilities with greater ease. Financial progress may remain stable, while property investments may show encouraging signs of appreciation. Travel plans may work smoothly, and disciplined study habits may support academic success.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov 23 to Dec 21)

Sagittarius natives may stay focused mainly on career matters this week. Professional performance may improve, bringing confidence and recognition for your abilities. Financial gains may create a sense of progress, while health may require greater attention through proper exercise and balanced eating habits. Romantic matters may remain calm, making this a good period for reflection and emotional clarity.

CAPRICORN

(Dec 22 to Jan 21)

Capricorn natives may shine professionally as past efforts begin delivering positive results. Financial gains may encourage long-term planning and greater security. Family relationships may remain smooth through small compromises and understanding. Health may

require better care and balance, while property investments or relocation plans may receive serious consideration.

AQUARIUS

(Jan 22 to Feb 19)

Aquarius natives may enjoy steady financial stability and gradual progress this week. Singles may explore new romantic possibilities, while couples may focus on understanding each other more deeply. Professional growth may remain consistent, though travel plans may feel demanding due to changing schedules or weather conditions. Property matters may move positively and support future planning.

PISCES

(Feb 20 to Mar 20)

Pisces natives may focus strongly on emotional connections and personal growth this week. Professional life may bring recognition as your hard work and dedication receive appreciation. Romantic relationships may feel passionate and exciting, while family interactions may become warmer and more supportive. Property matters may demand responsibility, but steady efforts may help resolve concerns smoothly.



Soul Talk

Chhavi Upadhyay

Life Coach and Mentor

Rediscovering the Meaning of Dharma

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात्। स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः॥

— Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3 (Karma Yoga), Verse 35

(Roman transliteration is:

Shreyan svadharma vigunah paradharma svanushtitat.
Svadharme nidhanam shreyah paradharma bhayavahah.

Meaning:

"One's own duty (dharma), even if performed imperfectly, is better than another's duty performed well. Better is death in the discharge of one's own duty; another's duty is fraught with fear and danger.")

It is far better to follow one's own dharma imperfectly than to follow another's dharma with perfection. Even death in the pursuit of one's own dharma is more honorable. Another's dharma brings nothing but fear.

This passage features Krishna addressing Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It remains among the most frequently quoted and misunderstood verses in Indian philosophy.

For generations, dharma has been translated as "duty." This single English term has gradually reduced a dynamic concept within our philosophical tradition to something mechanical and externally imposed. Do your duty. Fulfil your obligations. Stay in your lane.

However, this interpretation does not accurately reflect Krishna's message.

The Sanskrit root of dharma is 'dhr', meaning to hold, sustain, or support. Dharma does not refer to externally assigned actions; rather, it signifies what holds an individual together. It represents the essential nature of an entity, sustaining it

in its truest form. For example, the dharma of fire is to burn, the dharma of water is to flow, and the dharma of a human being is to live in alignment with their authentic self.

When Krishna refers to 'swa-dharma', or one's own dharma, he is not instructing Arjuna to fight solely because it is a warrior's assigned obligation. Instead, he conveys a more intimate message: align with your own nature. Do not abandon your authentic self to pursue a path that belongs to another, regardless of how noble that path may seem.

This distinction is significant, as many individuals eventually find themselves living according to someone else's dharma. For example, a professional may build a career based on parental expectations rather than personal truth. Similarly, a woman might shape her life around societal norms instead of her authentic desires. Others may perform admirably in roles that appear appropriate externally but feel unfulfilling internally.

The Gita refers to this as 'para-dharma', or adopting another's path as one's own. Krishna

describes its consequence with precision: 'bhayāvaha', meaning it brings fear. This is not punishment or failure, but rather the persistent unease that arises from living out of alignment with oneself.

The opposite experience is also recognizable. When individuals live according to their own dharma, effort is required. Krishna does not promise ease, but this effort is sustaining rather than depleting. A sense of steadiness persists, even during challenging times. Circumstances may not always be comfortable, yet they feel appropriate. In this state, one is not merely performing a life but genuinely living it. This state exemplifies alignment. It is not characterized by certainty or perfection, but by a quiet sense of being situated where one is meant to be.

Therefore, the more pertinent question may not be the traditional inquiry, 'What is my duty?' Rather, it aligns with Krishna's intended message: What is my true nature, and am I living in accordance with it, or have I adopted another's path and mistaken it for my own?



Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Feeling the Heat? It Might Be Aging You Faster Than You Think

If you’ve ever felt that summer heat is draining your energy, you’re not alone. Feeling tired during hot weather is common, especially during peak summer months. Many people experience low energy, poor concentration, and persistent fatigue even without heavy physical activity.

What we often dismiss as afternoon lethargy is actually the body’s response to heat. When temperatures rise, the body works harder to maintain a safe internal temperature through sweating and increased blood circulation. This process consumes energy and leads to the loss of water and essential electrolytes such

as sodium, potassium, and chloride, which are vital for muscle and nerve function.

Mild dehydration is one of the biggest causes of summer fatigue. It does not always feel like dehydration. Instead, it may appear as sluggishness, irritability, lack of focus, or low mood. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can also increase oxidative stress and inflammation, placing additional strain on the body’s systems.

Emerging research suggests that repeated exposure to intense heat may accelerate biological aging. People who spend long hours outdoors, live in poorly ventilated homes, or are physically vulnerable are especially at risk. Extreme heat does more than

cause discomfort—it can quietly affect long-term health.

Pre-Hydration: Stay Ahead of the Heat

One of the most effective ways to combat summer fatigue is pre-hydration. Waiting until you feel thirsty is often too late. The body benefits most when hydration begins early in the morning and continues steadily throughout the day.

Drink water and electrolyte-rich fluids two to three hours before stepping outdoors or engaging in physical activity. Sip fluids gradually rather than consuming large quantities at once. Water infused with vetiver (khus), fennel seeds (saunf), or cucumber can make

hydration more refreshing and naturally cooling.

At the same time, avoid over-hydration. Drinking excessive amounts of water in a short period can dilute electrolytes and lead to a dangerous condition known as hyponatremia.

Traditional Foods That Cool Naturally

India’s traditional summer foods offer excellent protection against the heat. Curd rice, buttermilk, sattu sharbat, and kokum sherbet help replenish fluids, restore electrolytes, and support digestion.

Kokum sherbet, prepared with soaked kokum, jaggery or sugar, roasted cumin, and a pinch of salt, is both refreshing and cooling. Sattu sharbat made with roasted gram flour, lemon, and black salt provides hydration and sustained energy. Bajra raab, a traditional fermented millet preparation, has long been valued in Rajasthan as a natural coolant that helps the body withstand extreme temperatures.

Choose Seasonal Fruits

Water-rich fruits such as watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, and peaches are excellent summer companions. Rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and natural sugars, they support hydration, immunity, and energy levels while

THIS SUMMER, REMEMBER THAT STAYING COOL IS NOT ONLY ABOUT COMFORT—IT IS ALSO ABOUT PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH, VITALITY, AND LONG-TERM WELL-BEING

helping protect the body from heat-related damage.

Be Careful with Medicines

Summer heat can affect both the body and the medicines you take. Certain drugs, including some prescribed for blood pressure and heart conditions, may increase the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion, or sun sensitivity. Heat can also reduce the effectiveness of medications if they are stored improperly.

Never leave medicines in hot cars or direct sunlight. Store them in a cool, dry place and consult your doctor if you have concerns about how heat may affect your prescriptions.

This summer, remember that staying cool is not only about comfort—it is also about protecting your health, vitality, and long-term well-being.

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

The Ultimate All-In-One Fiesta Rice

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 15 minutes | Servings: 4-6

Arti M. Patel

When it comes to quick, vibrant, and flavor-packed side dishes, this Cilantro Lime Fiesta Rice takes the crown. Perfect as a base for burrito bowls, a side for taco night, or a standalone lunch, this dish is a masterful balance of bright citrus, subtle heat, and savory depth.

By sautéing fresh peppers, tossing in hearty black beans and sweet corn, and finishing with a vibrant burst of lime and fresh cilantro, this rice is a gorgeous celebration of textures and colors that complements any main course.

INGREDIENTS

The Base

- 3 cups Long-grain white rice (such as Jasmine or Basmati), cooked and cooled
- 2 tbsp Neutral cooking oil (such as avocado, canola, or vegetable oil)

The Veggies & Mix-ins

- 1 Jalapeño, seeded and finely diced (adjust to taste)
- 1 cup Colored bell peppers (red, orange, or yellow), diced
- 1 can (15 oz) Black beans, rinsed and drained

- 1 cup Sweet corn (fresh, frozen, or canned)

The Seasonings & Finish

- 1 tbsp Taco seasoning
- ½ tsp Red pepper flakes (optional, for extra heat)
- To taste Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp Fresh lime juice (plus more to taste)
- ½ cup Fresh cilantro, finely chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sauté the Base Veggies

Heat the cooking oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add the diced jalapeños and colored bell peppers. Sauté for 3 to 4 minutes until the peppers are tender-crisp and fragrant.

2. Build the Flavor Profile

Lower the heat to medium. Stir in the drained black beans and sweet corn. Season the mixture evenly with the taco seasoning, salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes. Toss well to ensure the veggies and beans are beautifully coated in the spices.

3. Brighten the Blend

Drizzle a few drops of fresh lime juice directly over the vegetable mixture and stir. This helps



Vibrant Cilantro Lime Fiesta Rice, tossed with sweet corn, savory black beans, and fresh peppers. (Photo courtesy: Arti M. Patel)

deglaze the pan and instantly awakens the spices.

4. Incorporate the Rice

Gently fold in your cooled, pre-cooked rice. Using a spatula, mix thoroughly but gently, ensuring the rice integrates smoothly with the colorful veggie mixture without breaking the grains. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the rice is heated through.

5. The Fresh Finish

Remove the skillet from the heat. Toss in the freshly chopped cilantro and give it one final, gentle fold. Garnish with an extra lime wedge and serve warm.

CHEF’S TIP FOR PERFECT TEXTURE

To prevent your dish from becoming mushy, always let your boiled rice cool completely before adding it to the skillet. For the absolute best results, spread the freshly cooked rice onto a baking sheet and let it cool for 1-2 hours. This allows the starches to firm up, ensuring beautifully distinct, fluffy grains that hold up perfectly during the sauté process.



Roots & Rights



Sonam Chandwani
Managing Partner, KS Legal & Associates

Eligibility vs Selection: The Legal Reality Behind Skilled Migration

Q Is a 65-point system built on youth, high-level English, and top-tier degrees, mathematically useless for securing a skilled visa today?

A The continued projection of a 65-point threshold as the benchmark for skilled migration to Australia creates a serious disconnect between law, policy and reality. On paper, it appears transparent and merit-based. In practice, however, the actual selection environment in many skilled migration systems has evolved far beyond the statutory minimum. What is legally described as an eligibility threshold is often misunderstood

by applicants as a realistic selection threshold. That distinction is where the controversy lies.

From a legal and policy perspective, the government is technically not making a false statement when it says that 65 points qualify an applicant for entry into the pool. The issue is that entry into the pool and actual invitation or visa grant are entirely different outcomes. In several high-demand occupations, invitations are issued only to candidates with significantly higher scores due to quota limits, occupational ceilings, priority-processing categories, employer-sponsorship preferences, and competitive-ranking mechanisms. Therefore, while 65 points may satisfy the minimum

legislative requirement, they may have little practical value in an oversaturated migration environment.

Q What are the administrative and legal consequences for an applicant who meets educational admission criteria but fails to satisfy the statutory 65-point threshold required for skilled migration eligibility?

A Failure to achieve the 65-point threshold renders an applicant statutorily ineligible for skilled migration programs. This minimum requirement functions as an

absolute legal gatekeeper; meeting academic or professional criteria does not supersede this mandatory floor. Consequently, individuals who fall below this benchmark are precluded from submitting a valid Expression of Interest, effectively disqualifying them from the selection pool regardless of their underlying professional merit or educational attainment.

Q What are the most efficacious strategies for candidates to enhance their standing within points-tested migration frameworks to improve their probability of receiving an invitation?

A Applicants frequently seek to improve their migration rankings by optimizing key metrics within

the points-tested framework. Primary strategies include attaining "superior" proficiency in language assessments, accumulating additional years of documented professional experience, or pursuing advanced academic credentials. Furthermore, individuals may secure supplemental points through state or regional nomination programs or by verifying the qualifications of a partner.

While these adjustments can improve an applicant's standing, they often require substantial financial and temporal commitments. Consequently, this process frequently traps candidates within an "aspirational funnel," wherein they are incentivized to continuously refine their profiles to remain viable in an increasingly hyper-competitive, scarcity-driven migration market.



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India Women Triumph in SAFF



The Indian Women's National Football Team Celebrating Winning The 2026 SAFF Women's Championship. (Photo courtesy: X@IndianFootball)

Anirudh Nair

The Indian women's national football team secured its sixth South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Women's Championship title with a 3-1 victory over Bangladesh at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Goa on June 6. Goals from Pyari Xaxa, Sanfida Nongrum, and Lynda Kom were enough to get India over the line and secure its first SAFF Championship title since 2019.

It was a dominant display throughout the tournament for the Blue Tigresses. They opened the competition with an emphatic 11-0 victory over the Maldives. India followed

that up with a 3-0 win over its eventual final opponent, Bangladesh, before facing a tougher test against Bhutan in the semifinal, edging through with a 1-0 victory, before finally finishing off with the 3-1 win in the final against Bangladesh.

This dominant performance comes just months after India suffered a group-stage exit at the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia, where it was beaten by Vietnam, Chinese Taipei, and Japan. The Japanese side handed India an 11-0 defeat. Indian head coach Crispin Chettri guided the team to its first AFC Women's Asian Cup appearance since 2003. However, prior to the tournament,

Chettri was moved into an assistant coaching role, with Costa Rican Amelia Valverde taking over as head coach.

Chettri returned as head coach following the AFC Women's Asian Cup and has overseen a string of positive results, culminating in this SAFF Championship triumph.

"I think this was a challenge for us because we had a lot of younger players, similarly like Bangladesh," Chettri said to Daily Sun after the final.

"But I think our young girls showed character and they deserve to cherish this moment."

Chettri also praised Bangladesh for its

performance in the tournament and highlighted the nation's progress in recent years. Bangladesh won the previous two editions of the SAFF Women's Championship and qualified for the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time this year, where it competed admirably against stronger opposition, including China. Chettri hopes to see similar progress not only from India but from all SAFF nations.

"You always have to believe in a process. What they (Bangladesh) did in 2024, the result was shown in AFC (Women's Asian Cup), how they qualified," he said.

"I'll rather choose to qualify for AFC (competitions) in age groups of U17, U20, and seniors, than winning the SAFF Championship. For us, the SAFF nations, it's more important we be in the AFC right now."



Indian Head Coach Crispin Chettri With The SAFF Women's Championship Trophy. (Photo courtesy: X@IndianFootball)

Who Gets the Better Bargain in the IPL?

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

The 2016 IPL got over on May 31. 1,426 sixes were hit, which is a new record. And once again, this series led to some animated discussions on the role of bowlers in a game that is increasingly looking like baseball. Overall, everyone is feeling sorry for the bowlers when even a 15-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi can hit 65 sixes in 14 matches. In contrast, the great Virat Kohli hit only 25.

But are the bowlers really badly off? If you look at the effort-to-reward ratio in T20 games, the answer has to be a big no. Given below are the reasons why.

Start with the bidding. The base price was Rs 30 lakh (about US\$31,500), and many bowlers fetched only this much. Matheesha Pathirana was bought by KKR for Rs 18 crore (about US\$1.9 million).

And what did they have to do to earn this money? Bowl just four overs per match. The winning team, RCB and the runner-up, GG, played 18 each. Most of the rest played 14, and four played 16. So, an RCB player who played in all matches, bowled the maximum

allowed 18x4=72 overs. That's because a bowler can bowl only four overs in a match.

RCB's highest-paid bowler was Josh Hazlewood, who earned Rs 12 crore (about US\$1.26 million). If you divide Rs 12 crore by 72, you get around Rs 16 lakh per over (about US\$16,800). That's a lot of money. And if a bowler bowls less, the per-over earnings increase; that is, the reward for effort is greater.

This is not all. There is no real expectation in a T20 game that a bowler will take wickets. If he does, and many do, it is a bonus. All a bowler has to do is to keep the runs conceded to about 5 runs per over. That's one dot ball and five singles for a really successful bowler.

So, if you are a really clever bowler, acquired by the team for say Rs 6 crore (about US\$630,000), and if you bowl the full quota of 64 or 72 overs, you can maximise your effort-reward ratio by bowling a stump-to-stump line and a cunning length to keep the runs conceded per over below 7. In other words, consistency is all you need. That's how a player like Ravi Jadeja approaches the game.



(Photo courtesy: X@IPL)

The problem with this is that if even half the bowlers do this successfully, it turns into a low-scoring game. The spectators and TV audiences don't like those. So, there's been an effort by the organisers to level the field by preparing flat wickets on which, as we have seen, even good length and accurate balls can be hit for boundaries.

But that aside, consider the effort-reward ratio of batsmen who get paid far more than bowlers but also have to entertain the crowd by scoring at the rate of at least two runs per ball. They have just a fraction of a second to play their shots and have a very small margin for error because they have to deal with 11 opponents and can be out if their judgement is off by as little as an inch, sometimes even a millimetre.

There is also the fear factor. The fact is that a very hard object weighing five and a half ounces is coming at you at about 125-145 kilometres an hour. Only those who have been hit know what it's like. High expectations. Hair breath error margins. Fear of injury. No, a batter's effort-reward ratio doesn't compare well with a bowler. In fact, it looks bad for batters.

Now you can decide who the smart cricketers are, batters or bowlers.