



South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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(Photo courtesy: X@GovSherrillNJ)

Lawmakers Demand Detention Answers

SAH Staff Reporter

A week-long hunger strike by nearly 300 immigration detainees at New Jersey's Delaney Hall detention center is rapidly emerging as a test of federal immigration detention policies, drawing intervention from members of Congress, state leaders and immigrant-rights advocates amid allegations of retaliation, excessive force and due process violations.

As pressure grows on federal authorities to address conditions inside the GEO Group-operated ICE facility in Newark, South Asians for America (SAFA) said its leaders spent Memorial Day weekend documenting developments on the ground and supporting calls for accountability.

The standoff intensified when Martin, a Peruvian immigrant detained at Delaney Hall since February and identified as one of the strike's organizers, was transferred

to the Elizabeth Detention Center. Advocates and elected officials described the move as retaliatory, arguing it was intended to isolate a key leader and weaken the protest. Martin's pregnant wife, who has been leading demonstrations outside the facility, reportedly learned of the transfer on Memorial Day morning.

The growing controversy has drawn direct involvement from New Jersey lawmakers.

(Contd. on page 2)

Can the Quad Deliver More?

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) hosted a discussion titled "The Quad Convenes: Priorities, Partnerships and the Indo-Pacific" on May 28 in Washington, D.C., examining the outcomes of the recent Quad foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi and the grouping's future role in advancing security and economic cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.

The panel featured Luke Collin, principal at The Asia Group; Nishank Motwani, vice president at Levenhall and senior fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute; and Tanvi Madan, senior fellow for Foreign Policy at Brookings. The discussion was moderated by Richard M. Rossow, senior adviser and Chair on India and Emerging Asia Economics at CSIS.

Reflecting on the Quad's evolution, Madan said elevating the grouping to the leaders' summit level was a positive step, but stressed that success should ultimately

be measured by its ability to deliver on its original objectives. She noted that ministerial meetings have helped sharpen the Quad's focus on priorities identified by member countries.

Madan pointed to the second Quad ministerial meeting held in July 2025, where an expansive agenda was narrowed to four core areas: maritime security, economic security, technology security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Referring to the recent New Delhi meeting, she said there had been "some movement" on these priorities, while acknowledging that significant work remains.

A major focus of the discussion was critical minerals cooperation. Collin said all four Quad nations recognize that secure access to critical minerals is essential for economic growth and technological competitiveness. He highlighted concerns over the concentration of global supply chains through China, arguing that diversification has become a strategic necessity.

(Contd. on page 3)



From left, Nishank Motwani, Luke Collin, Tanvi Madan, and Richard M. Rossow during the discussion on May 28, 2026, at CSIS Headquarters in Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

Shrey Parikh Smashes Bee Record

SAH Special Correspondent

Four decades after the first Indian-American champion transformed the landscape of competitive spelling in the United States, another South Asian teenager has etched his name into the record books.

Fourteen-year-old Shrey Parikh of Rancho Cucamonga, California, captured the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee title on May 28, defeating fellow finalist Ishaan Gupta of Jersey City, New Jersey, in a dramatic spell-off that showcased the extraordinary depth of South Asian talent in the competition.



(Photo courtesy: Scripps National Spelling Bee)

Parikh won by correctly spelling 32 of 34 attempted words in a 90-second lightning-round spell-off, breaking the previous record of 29 correct words set by 2024 champion Bruhat Soma. Gupta also delivered a remarkable performance, spelling 25 of 29 words correctly, but could not match Parikh's blistering pace and accuracy.

The championship came down to a contest between two South Asian-American students, reinforcing a trend that has defined the modern era of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. With Parikh's victory, contestants of South Asian descent have now won the prestigious competition 31 times in the last 37 years.

Parikh's winning journey culminated with the championship word

"bromocriptine," a complex medical term describing a dopamine-mimicking derivative of ergot. Moments later, he was crowned champion before an enthusiastic audience at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington.

The spell-off itself was a masterclass in linguistic precision. Among the words successfully spelled by the two finalists were torrone, enthymeme, iguape, fais-dodo, cywyddau, pohutukawa, monadnock, émeute, nannofossil, tongkang, Natchitoches, flaith, semele, sawder, campernelle, Nicol, Zamenis, Tharparkar, tlachtli, madoqua, retiarius, balintawak, tessaraconter, taurokathapsia, rapakivi, paroemia, melengket, teraglin, homelyn, chikungunya and bromocriptine.

(Contd. on page 3)

Fight Against Asthma Grows

SAH Staff Reporter

Community leaders, healthcare professionals, advocates, and residents gathered at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst on May 22 to mark National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month and spotlight the growing impact of asthma and other respiratory illnesses across Queens.

Hosted by the Arts4All Foundation in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, the event focused on raising awareness about asthma rates that continue to affect many neighborhoods in the borough. According to organizers, communities including Elmhurst, Astoria, Jackson Heights, Flushing, Jamaica, Hollis, and the Rockaways report some of the city's highest rates of asthma-related hospitalizations and other poor respiratory health outcomes.

"Our Pulmonology Medicine team is committed to delivering the highest-quality care and addressing the rise in chronic asthma," said Alina Moran, Chief Executive Officer of NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst. She praised the hospital's pulmonary specialists for their work in treatment, research, community education, and health equity.

A major highlight of the program was the launch of the Universal Declaration of Asthma Rights, an initiative by the Arts4All Foundation that calls for stronger protections related to healthcare access, education, housing, employment, disability accommodations, and environmental health. The declaration was signed by community members and healthcare professionals and has already attracted thousands of online supporters.

Dr. Sumita SenGupta, founder of the Arts4All Foundation and author of the declaration, said many asthma-related deaths are preventable and urged policymakers to address the environmental and social factors driving the disease. "We must strengthen protections for communities burdened by pollution, poor housing conditions, and health inequities," she said.



(Photo courtesy: Arts4All Foundation)

Purdue Honors Inventor Santokh Badesha

SAH Staff Reporter

Indian-American professor and inventor Santokh Badesha has been appointed a President's Fellow at Purdue University, a recognition of his decades-long contributions to innovation, intellectual property development and digital technologies.



(Photo courtesy: Santokh Badesha via LinkedIn)

Badesha, a distinguished professor in Purdue's Elmore Family School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, was honored for his sustained achievements in idea generation, intellectual property management and technology commercialization.

A resident of Pittsford, New York, Badesha earned his first Ph.D. in chemistry from Punjab Agricultural University in India and a second Ph.D. from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom.

Purdue President Mung Chiang praised Badesha's extensive expertise as an inventor and innovator, saying his experience would further strengthen the university's research and commercialization ecosystem. As President's Fellow, Badesha will work closely with Purdue Innovates and the university's research leadership to enhance technology licensing, expand market impact and create new revenue opportunities from university-developed innovations.

Albany Rolls Out Honors

SAH Staff Reporter

Indian-American journalist T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, founder and Editor-in-Chief of South Asian Herald, was honored on the floor of the New York State Assembly on May 27, 2026, for his contributions to journalism and service to Indian American and the broader South Asian diaspora.

Introducing Jayaraman on the House Floor at the State Capitol in Albany, Jenifer Rajkumar praised Jayaraman as "a man who represents the American dream" and highlighted the growing impact of South Asian Herald, the digital news platform he launched in October 2024. She described the publication as an important voice covering

the South Asian community across the United States and beyond.

Speaker Pro Tempore Pamela Hunter welcomed Jayaraman to the Assembly Chamber and commended his commitment to truth-seeking journalism. Rajkumar also presented him with an official proclamation recognizing his career, journalistic integrity, and public service.

The honor follows similar recognitions from the Virginia State Senate, which commended Jayaraman earlier this year for founding South Asian Herald and amplifying diverse voices. A veteran journalist, Jayaraman has covered the White House, U.S. Congress, United Nations, World Bank, IMF, and the South Asian diaspora.



New York Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar presenting a proclamation to Indian American journalist T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman at the New York State Assembly on May 27, 2026, in Albany, New York. (Photo: SAH)

American Telugu Association

Passion For Our Culture, Compassion For Our People

అమెరికా తెలుగు సంఘం

Presents

19TH ATA CONFERENCE & YOUTH CONVENTION

July 31st – August 2nd
2026

Baltimore Convention Center
1 W Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21201

The American Telugu Association (ATA) will host its 19th Biennial Conference and Youth Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, from July 31 to August 2, bringing together Telugu-speaking families, professionals, students, and community leaders from across North America.

(Photo Courtesy: ATA website)

Lawmakers Demand...

(Contd. from page 1)

Representative Rob Menendez reportedly staged an overnight protest in Delaney Hall's waiting room, remaining there for 16 hours without food or water before gaining access to the facility. He was later joined by Representatives LaMonica McIver, Nellie Pou and Analilia Mejia for oversight visits.

Outside the detention center, SAFA alleged that federal agents deployed pepper spray and pepper balls into crowds of demonstrators. The organization said Senator Andy Kim was struck in the hand by an object and exposed to pepper spray while attempting to calm tensions between protesters and ICE agents.

SAFA New Jersey State Director Parul Khemka and Youth Lead Janitha Veeramachaneni

remained at the site throughout the holiday weekend, providing updates to South Asian and AANHPI communities. Khemka alleged witnessing a mobile medical response nurse being thrown to the ground while trying to protect a woman being dragged by federal agents.

"It is a painful irony that the weekend when we honor those who gave their lives to protect this country and its Constitution is the same weekend we are watching such an abhorrent disregard for due process," Khemka said. "The conditions inside Delaney Hall are no way to treat human beings. Many detainees have been held for months without their cases being processed."

Veeramachaneni said the events unfolding at Delaney Hall challenge fundamental American values.

"As young people, we grew up being taught that America stands for freedom, justice and human dignity," she said. "But what is currently happening at Delaney Hall questions whether those values are being upheld for everyone."

According to SAFA, detainees continue to press four demands: an in-person inspection of the facility by Governor Mikie Sherrill, humanitarian release of elderly and medically vulnerable detainees, fair review of pending immigration cases and habeas corpus filings, and an end to alleged pressure tactics aimed at securing deportation or voluntary departure agreements.

With congressional oversight intensifying and detainees refusing to end their protest, Delaney Hall has become the focal point of a broader debate over immigration detention, due process and human rights in the United States.

India-US Bonds Celebrated in Albany

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

The Consulate General of India in New York, in partnership with New York State Senator Jeremy A. Cooney, hosted a reception in Albany on May 26 celebrating India-US friendship, democratic values, and the growing contributions of the Indian American community.

The event drew state lawmakers, community leaders, university representatives, members of the Indian diaspora, and friends of India. During the gathering, the Consulate thanked Senator Cooney for sponsoring a New York State Senate resolution proclaiming August 15, 2026, as India Independence Day in New York State.

"The purpose of tonight is to celebrate our shared heritage, to celebrate our proud diaspora coming from India, to make sure that we are seen and recognized, and heard," Cooney said. He highlighted the growing presence of Indian Americans across New York and praised efforts to expand recognition of Diwali statewide, stressing that inclusion extends beyond holidays to education, curriculum, and the

sharing of immigrant histories. Cooney also commended Consul General Binaya Pradhan for strengthening partnerships in economic development, innovation, and community engagement. As India approaches its Independence Day celebrations, he urged community members to continue advancing the values of unity, prosperity, and hard work.

State Senator John C. Liu praised the Consulate's outreach and noted the expanding influence of Indian Americans across the United States. Reflecting on his own immigrant experience, Liu said immigrant communities have overcome challenges while making significant contributions to business, academia, politics, and public service.

Consul General Pradhan said the reception marked both the Senate resolution and the upcoming anniversary of India's independence. He thanked Cooney for championing initiatives that recognize India and the Indian American community, noting that the senator had also sponsored a resolution



Consul General of India in New York, Binaya Pradhan speaking at the event on May 26, 2026, at the Albany Renaissance in New York. (Photo courtesy T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

honoring the Indian Constitution last year.

Describing India-US ties as a "global strategic partnership," Pradhan highlighted growing cooperation in technology, trade, investment, education, and research. He

also underscored the contributions of the Indian diaspora, calling it a "meaningful partner" in America's nation-building process and citing studies that show Indian Americans have made significant contributions to US society while benefiting

from the opportunities available in the country.

Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, speaking to *South Asian Herald* praised the resolution and the Consulate's efforts to deepen New York-India relations.

Sam's Legacy Lives On

SAH Staff Reporter



(Photo courtesy: Satyanarayana "Sam" Gunda / addisonlibrary.org)

The Addison Public Library in Illinois dedicated a new makerspace, **Sam's Lab**, in honor of Indian-American entrepreneur and community leader **Satyanarayana "Sam" Gunda**, during its grand reopening celebration on May 31.

The facility pays tribute to Gunda, an engineer, businessman, mentor and longtime Addison resident who passed away in 2020. Library officials said the makerspace reflects his lifelong commitment to education,

innovation and community service, while promoting hands-on learning and creative opportunities for residents.

Born in India, Gunda arrived in the United States in 1971 to pursue graduate studies in electrical engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology. After settling in Addison in 1975, he built a successful career in telecommunications and founded Digital World, a local computer sales and service company. Through his business, he provided jobs and internships to students interested in technology careers.

Gunda was also active in civic life, volunteering with local organizations, mentoring students and advocating for expanded public services, including greater internet access through the library. His philanthropy extended to India, where he helped establish a school and healthcare center in his native village of Yendapally.

Sam's Lab will feature modern equipment such as laser cutters, embroidery machines and advanced printing technologies. The library plans workshops, demonstrations and youth programs to encourage creativity and technological learning, continuing Gunda's legacy of empowering communities through education and innovation.

Can the Quad...

(Contd. from page 1)

"All four countries have realized that they need to diversify and establish separate supply chains," Collin said, adding that Australia's position as a major supplier makes collaboration across the Quad particularly valuable.

Motwani underscored the importance of government support in building resilient supply chains. He cited Australia-based Lynas Rare Earths, which benefited from Japanese investment, and Arafura Rare Earths, which received nearly \$1 billion in Australian government backing. Such investments, he said, provide confidence to industry leaders and encourage further private-sector

participation. On India's role within the Quad, Madan said New Delhi has become increasingly active in security-related initiatives, including the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness program. She argued that strengthening regional resilience must go hand in hand with maintaining a favorable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

Looking ahead, Collin contrasted the narrower policy focus associated with the Trump administration with the broader approach pursued under President Joe Biden. While a more focused agenda may offer clarity, he warned that it could overlook issues important to the wider Indo-Pacific region. He noted that the Biden administration sought to position the Quad as a "global force for good"

capable of delivering practical benefits beyond its member states.

The discussion also addressed economic coercion, trade policy, maritime surveillance, and public perceptions of the Quad. Collin advocated measures such as coordinated tariffs on Chinese minerals, while Motwani emphasized mobilizing private capital for strategic projects. Madan highlighted the challenges of collective action and the importance of individual countries building their own resilience.

The event concluded with audience questions on maritime security, strategic priorities, and the future direction of Quad cooperation, underscoring the grouping's growing significance in shaping the Indo-Pacific landscape.

Shrey Parikh...

(Contd. from page 1)

"This was one of the most exciting finishes we've seen," said Corrie Loeffler, executive director of the Bee. "The spell-off showcased poise under pressure, a mind-boggling command of language and a celebration of excellence."

Adam Symson, president and CEO of The E.W. Scripps Company, praised the champion's composure and preparation, describing Parikh's performance as a testament to perseverance and intellectual excellence.

The victory marked a remarkable progression for Parikh, an eighth-grader at Day Creek Intermediate School. Competing in his third national bee, he tied for 89th place in 2022 and third place in 2024 before ascending to the championship this year.

The final standings further highlighted South Asian excellence. Gupta finished second and earned a \$25,000 prize, while Sarv Dhara-vane of Dunwoody, Georgia, another Indian-American contestant, placed third for the second consecutive year.

The 2026 outcome is the latest chapter in one of the most remarkable success stories in American academic competition. The South Asian spelling dynasty began in 1985 when Balu Natarajan became the first Indian-American champion. The movement gained national attention after Nupur Lala's celebrated 1999 victory and evolved into an unprecedented run of dominance.

Every Scripps champion from 2008 through 2019 was of South Asian heritage, and recent winners have included Harini Logan (2022), Dev Shah (2023), Bruhat Soma (2024), Faizan Zaki (2025) and now Shrey Parikh (2026).

Educators and researchers attribute this sustained success to a combination of strong family support, specialized spelling programs, mentoring networks, community competitions and a culture that celebrates academic achievement. Organizations such as the North South Foundation and various regional spelling circuits have helped create a pipeline that nurtures talented young spellers from an early age.

Parikh's record-setting triumph is therefore more than an individual accomplishment. It is the latest symbol of a remarkable tradition that has made South Asian-American children the defining force in the nation's most famous academic competition.

For now, however, the spotlight belongs to one teenager from California whose mastery of words rewrote the record book and extended a dynasty that shows little sign of slowing down.

South Asia Notes

Elizabeth RocheAssociate Professor,
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India Rolls Out Red Carpet for Min Aung Hlaing

India welcomed a rather unusual guest this week.

Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing's four-day visit began on May 30. It comes about two months after he successfully changed his military fatigues for civilian attire through a parliamentary vote. This after an election — dismissed by critics as a sham — in December 2025/January 2026 that was won by an army-backed party. This naturally made Min Aung Hlaing a shoo-in for president, turning a page on his previous role as the military general who ousted Myanmar's pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's government in a coup in 2021.

Min Aung Hlaing's visit is important for many reasons. For him, the India visit, his first one abroad since donning civilian attire, marks the start of a cautious re-engagement with the world after being shunned for the coup. India, the world's largest democracy, presents him with the appropriate opportunity. (Critics could view this as an exercise in double standards by India. After all, India shuns Pakistan, run by its Army, barely hidden behind a civilian leadership façade. From India's point of view, the difference is stark — Myanmar has never been malevolently opposed to India as Pakistan.)

Since the coup, Myanmar's dependence on China has grown. India gives Min Aung Hlaing an option to hedge his country's bets and not lean on Beijing alone.

For India, security is a major reason to engage Myanmar. The two share a 1,643 kilometres-long border. Indian insurgents have previously been based there and used Myanmar to launch attacks. Keeping Myanmar on its side has been a conscious policy pivot by India since the 1990s, after staunchly backing Suu Kyi in the 1980s. India and Myanmar have conducted joint exercises to destroy insurgent bases several times. With India trying to build ties with new governments in Bangladesh and Nepal, stability on the Myanmar front is key.

Second, India views Myanmar as the connect between its South Asia "Neighbourhood First" and Southeast Asia "Act East" policies. Connectivity projects aiming to link India to Southeast Asia have stalled due to the unrest in Myanmar — i.e. the coup and the fighting between Myanmar troops and ethnic armed groups like the Kachin Independence Army. Hopefully, Min Aung Hlaing's visit will re-energise the connectivity agenda. Myanmar is also indispensable for India's Indo-Pacific strategy, given its strategic location in the Bay of Bengal region.

Third, India has been eyeing the rare earth minerals in Myanmar. The catch: the minerals are in an area along Myanmar's northeast, under the control of the rebel Kachins. Reuters reported last year that India was in touch with the group — a rare instance of it reaching out to a non-state actor. China has near-absolute control over the technology that processes these minerals into magnets, critical to the manufacture of cars, smart phones to modern fighter jets. Last year, Beijing had sharply restricted exports of processed rare earths to major economies, including India, to shore up geopolitical leverage amid its trade war with the United States.

All told, this makes for an interesting visit.

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



(Photo courtesy: X@MEAIndia)

Buddhist Heritage Links India Myanmar

SAH Staff Reporter

Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing visited the Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar's Bodhi Gaya, offering prayers at one of Buddhism's holiest sites and underscoring the centuries-old spiritual and cultural links between India and Myanmar.

The President paid homage at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, revered as the place where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment more than 2,500 years ago. His visit formed part of efforts to strengthen people-to-people ties rooted in the shared Buddhist traditions of the two neighboring countries.

Upon arrival, the Myanmar leader was welcomed by local authorities and officials of the temple management

committee amid heightened security arrangements. He offered floral tributes before the main Buddha statue and spent time in prayer and meditation within the temple complex.

President Min Aung Hlaing also visited the sacred Bodhi Tree, believed to be a direct descendant of the tree under which Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment. He later interacted with senior Buddhist monks and religious scholars, discussing the preservation and promotion of Buddhist heritage and cultural exchanges.

The visit highlighted the enduring civilizational bonds between India and Myanmar, where Buddhism continues to play a significant role in society and culture. Thousands of Myanmar pilgrims visit Bodhi Gaya annually, making it one of the most important

overseas religious destinations for the country's Buddhist community.

Officials said the pilgrimage carried significance beyond diplomacy, reflecting the deep historical and spiritual connections that have linked the peoples of India and Myanmar for centuries. Cultural exchanges, religious tourism and cooperation in preserving Buddhist heritage have remained key pillars of bilateral engagement.

The Myanmar delegation also toured various sections of the Mahabodhi Temple complex before departing for the next leg of the President's visit.

The Mahabodhi Temple, one of the four principal pilgrimage sites associated with the life of Lord Buddha, attracts devotees and visitors from across the world and remains a symbol of Buddhism's global legacy. President Min Aung Hlaing's visit is expected to further reinforce cultural and religious ties between the two nations while promoting greater engagement through shared spiritual heritage.

Homeland Round Up

Pakistan

Pakistan's political landscape remained dominated by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who continues to be held in Adiala Jail. His party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), organized protests across the country demanding his release and relief from rising living costs ahead of the June 5 budget session.

Security concerns intensified after a suicide bombing in Quetta on May 24 targeted a train carrying security personnel and their families, killing dozens. The attack, claimed by the Balochistan Liberation Army, highlighted the persistent insurgency in Balochistan. Counterterrorism operations against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) also continued along the Afghan border.

Economic attention centered on preparations for the FY2026-27 federal

budget, expected to total PKR 17.1 trillion (about US\$60 billion), with tax revenue targets of PKR 15.3 trillion (US\$54 billion). Discussions with the International Monetary Fund continue to shape fiscal policy, including tax reforms and spending controls. The government is targeting 4.1 per cent growth and inflation below 9 per cent.

On the diplomatic front, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif secured renewed Chinese support for key China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects, including upgrades to the Karakoram Highway, Gwadar Port development and cooperation in technology and artificial intelligence.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka received a major boost after the International Monetary Fund approved the combined fifth and sixth reviews of its bailout program, unlocking US\$695 million and bringing total disbursements to about US\$2.4 billion. The economy is projected to grow around 3 per cent in 2026 as the country continues recovering from the 2022 crisis. Inflation re-emerged as a concern,

with Colombo consumer prices rising to 5.5 per cent in May, the highest level in more than two years. Higher fuel costs, electricity tariffs and debt obligations continued to pressure households despite stronger tourism earnings and foreign exchange reserves.

Politically, the government of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake faced increasing scrutiny over the pace of anti-corruption reforms and reconciliation efforts. A nationwide state of emergency declared on May 28 also sparked debate over governance and civil liberties.

The period was marked by Vesak celebrations, with the national festival held in Matara. Meanwhile, the arrest and subsequent bail release of influential monk Pallegama Hemarathana Thero on child abuse allegations generated widespread public discussion on accountability and child protection.

Localized flooding in parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka displaced more than 1,300 people, underscoring the country's continuing vulnerability to extreme weather.



Rubio in India: Beyond the Optics

It was a visit of quite some importance to be written off with the Taj Mahal or the Jaipur Fort. Neither could it be seen as the two countries casting away finally, the ill-will of the last one year as a result of tariffs and sanctions. To see Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s visit purely in terms of atmospherics and optics is too simplistic. Any visit of a top official from any major power is bound to have its share of sideshows. But Secretary Rubio’s India visit did have its bilateral importance, especially in the context of a rough sailing in the recent past. And if a final trade deal is still in the making, there should be relief in the American Ambassador’s statement that it is only “one percent” away.

India and the United States have moved forward on rare minerals, a vital area of cooperation given that those countries having a near monopoly over rare earths, have tended to play hardball in recent months. And Washington has once again expressed interest in selling more energy—read oil—to New Delhi, knowing full well the logistical constraints. Also, the United States would want to wean India away from Russia as well as throw in Venezuela as another option. All these said, the Trump administration knows full well that India will make that call based on calculations that favor its national and strategic interests.

INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE TOO MUCH AT STAKE TO BE WASTED ON THREATS AND RHETORIC. HERE ARE TWO DEMOCRACIES, ONE SOON TO CELEBRATE THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY, THAT CAN SHOW THE PATH FORWARD ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM THAT WOULD INCLUDE SECURITY, ECONOMY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENUINE NATION BUILDING.

Secretary Rubio should have briefed his Indian interlocutors on the recent visit of President Donald Trump to China, which was followed quite closely in this part of the world. What transpired in Taiwan was not necessarily music to the ears of many, but there have been assurances that the Asia Pacific has not been thrown under the bus. Still, India’s issues with China and the broader Indo-Pacific matter deeply and with this comes the future of the Quadrilateral Partnership featuring the United States, Japan, India and Australia that is still waiting for a Leadership Summit date from President Trump. The Quad is too important to be treated casually.

Washington moving closer to China does not downgrade the Quad’s or the Indo-Pacific’s challenges, which, to a large extent, depend on all responsible players playing by the rules of the game. The war in the Middle East and the troubles over the Strait of Hormuz have placed the Pacific in a higher degree of focus and alert. If the shutdown of Hormuz sent shockwaves to the energy-dependent nations, choking navigation lines of transportation in the Indo-Pacific, where more than two-thirds of global trade moves, will be far worse and lead to a conflict situation of unimaginable proportions.

India and the United States have too much at stake to be wasted on threats and rhetoric. Here are two democracies, one soon to celebrate the 250th anniversary, that can show the path forward on issues of importance to the international system that would include security, economy, human rights and genuine nation building.



Opinion

Sridhar Krishnaswami
Senior Journalist and Columnist

From Hormuz to Malacca: Why the Indo-Pacific Matters

It must have been a small measure of relief to the leadership of the Asia Pacific to hear the U.S. Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, assuring allies in that part of the world of Washington remaining committed to the region that had “profound implications for U.S. security and prosperity.”

But those following American foreign policy would be quick to point out that Secretary Hegseth was far more measured on China this year than he was last year when he talked about threats from China and how it was not just building its military forces to take Taiwan but “actively training for it, every day.”

One year is a lot of time and one summit is enough for a turnaround however much Washington may talk about a rightful alarm regarding China’s historic military buildup. “We share a clear-eyed assessment of that security environment and a mutual understanding that a Pacific dominated by any hegemon would unravel the regional balance of power and undermine the equilibrium we all seek to preserve,” the Defence Secretary recently remarked in Singapore.

There is no doubt that President Donald Trump’s recent visit to China and his meetings with his counterpart Xi Jinping have raised not just eyebrows but also alarm in many Asian capitals, perhaps even a let-down. It is not as if the Asia Pacific is worried of a better relationship between Washington and Beijing but that this should not be at the expense of long-standing commitments that underpinned American credibility. And heading that list was Taiwan where at the minimum there was an expectation to reiterate American policies. Instead, President Trump heard some blunt lectures from the host.

Upon leaving China President Trump made matters worse by not only putting the US\$ 14 billion arms package to Taiwan on hold but held it up as a “very good negotiating chip” with China, a position that did not go over well among analysts and lawmakers who were quick to point out the legal obligations behind the Taiwan Relations Act; starting a precedent of allowing Beijing to have a ‘veto’ on weapons sale to Taipei; and generally “cozying up” to Beijing.

“I worry that this administration is being distracted into wars that they’ve started in other parts of the world at the expense of our commitment here in the Indo-Pacific,” Senator Tammy Duckworth, told the media at the Shangri La security conference. “I am concerned that it seems like our president is entering into, you know, policies where he’s doing what Beijing wants him to do,” she added. Secretary Hegseth maintained that there is “no change in our status” on Taiwan.

If the Indo Pacific is attracting added attention in recent times, it is on account of the war in the Middle East with the acrimony and closure of the Strait of Hormuz nearly bringing the world to its knees over energy supplies. There is genuine worry on what would be the consequences should one country take it upon itself to strangle the waterways of the Indo Pacific under dubious claims of exclusivity or simply refuse to comply with established norms of international navigation.

Just as the critical importance of the Strait of Hormuz, there are several chokepoints in the Indo Pacific that will make the standoff in the Hormuz look like a Saturday afternoon picnic. Any major disruptions in the Straits of Malacca and Lombok along with the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Taiwan waterways will spell disaster not just to the Indo Pacific but to the world as a whole. It has to be borne in mind that about 60 percent of all global maritime trade passes through the Indo Pacific on a daily basis. In terms of dollars, it is said that about US\$ 5.3 Trillion flows through the South China Seas with up to US\$ 3.5 Trillions through the Strait of Malacca. And connecting the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, the Strait of Malacca handles close to 100,000 vessels annually.

It is no wonder then that President Theodore Roosevelt is said to have remarked, “The Mediterranean is the ocean of the past, the Atlantic the ocean of the present, and the Pacific, the ocean of the future.”

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South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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From Gujarat to Canada, a Dream Ends in a Coffin

R. Suryamurthy

When Vidhi Megha left her hometown of Borsad in Gujarat four years ago, her family believed they were investing in a future.

Like thousands of Indian parents, they poured their savings into an overseas education that promised opportunity, security and eventually permanent residency. The 22-year-old law student worked part-time, attended classes and was preparing to apply for Canadian permanent residence. She was doing everything right.

Then, on May 15, she was stabbed to death in broad daylight in Canada's Niagara region.

For days, her family could not reach her. They assumed she was busy with studies or work. The truth arrived later through diplomatic channels. Their daughter, who had travelled 12,000 kilometers from home in pursuit of a better life, was dead.

The image is heartbreaking: parents waiting for a call from their child, only to receive arrangements for the return of her body.

Vidhi's killing has shocked India. But it has also reopened an uncomfortable conversation about the human cost of the country's booming overseas education industry.

Every year, more than a million Indian students leave home carrying dreams that are often bigger than their suitcases. Families sell land, mortgage homes and take education loans worth ₹20 lakh to ₹60 lakh (\$23,000-\$70,000) to fund degrees abroad. Canada, the United States, Britain and Australia are marketed as gateways to prosperity.

For most students, they are.

For a growing number, however, the dream is ending in tragedy.

The numbers are sobering. Government data show that more than 800 Indian students have died abroad since 2018. That is roughly one student death every three days. Canada alone accounted for 172 deaths in one recent five-year government review, while the United States recorded 108.

Behind every number is a family shattered by loss.

A mother waiting for a graduation photograph that never arrives. A father still paying off an education loan for a child who will never come home alive. Siblings scrolling through old WhatsApp messages because there will be no new ones.

The recent cases have been particularly painful.

Earlier this year, Saketh Sreenivasiah, a 22-year-old Indian student and IIT-Madras alumnus studying at the University of California, Berkeley, was found dead after going missing in San Francisco. In May, 25-year-old Navya Gadusu was killed in a devastating highway accident in Indiana. In Canada, Gurkirat Singh Manocha from Madhya Pradesh died after a violent assault in British Columbia.

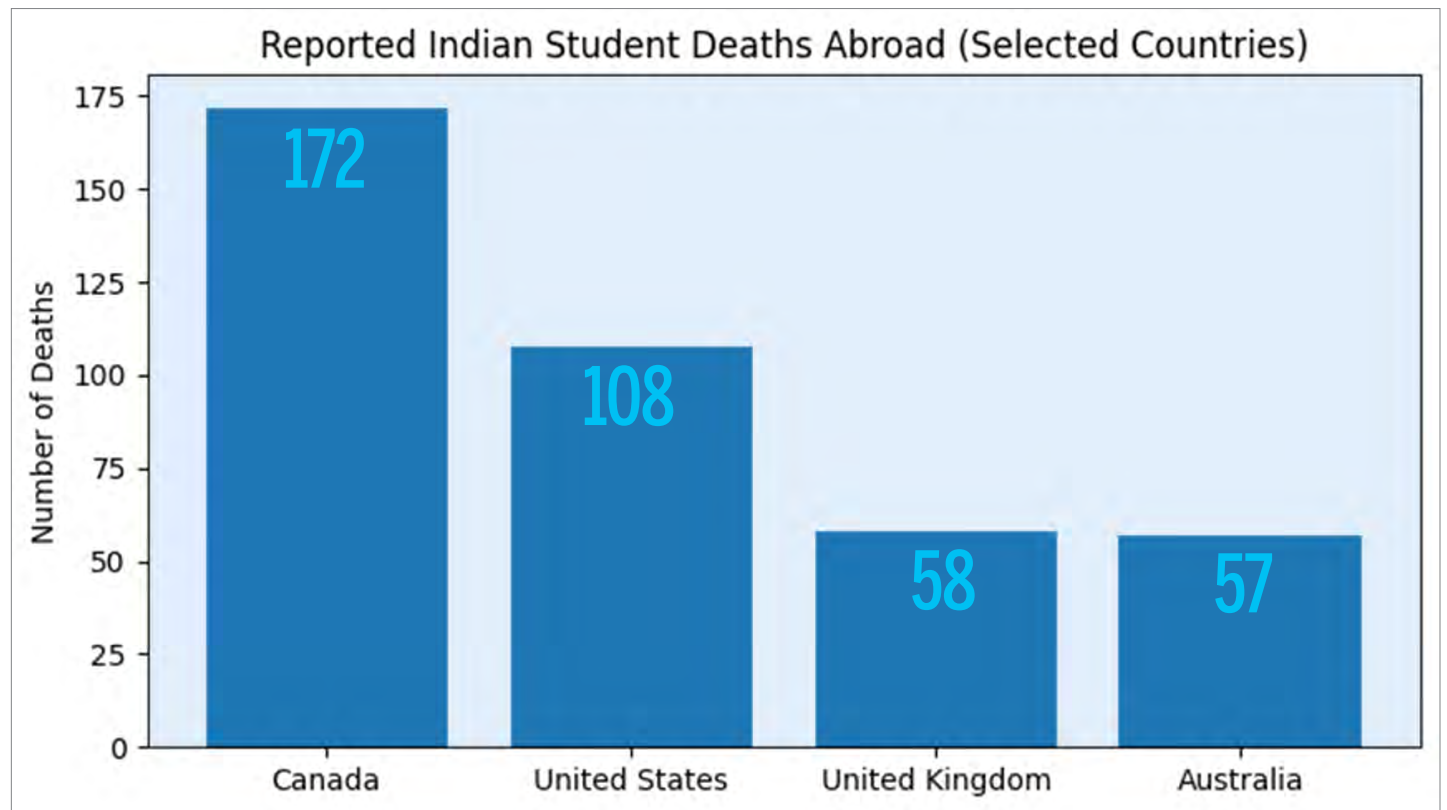
These deaths generate headlines because they are dramatic and shocking. Yet they reveal only part of the story.

Contrary to public perception, violent attacks account for a small fraction of Indian student deaths overseas. Of the more than 800 recorded fatalities, nearly 96 per cent resulted from accidents, medical emergencies, suicides and other non-violent causes.

That statistic may be even more troubling.

It suggests the biggest threat to Indian students abroad is often not a knife, a gun or a hate crime. It is isolation.

Many students arrive carrying enormous expectations. A family that spends ₹40 lakh (\$47,000) on overseas education often sees the



Indian Student Deaths Abroad (All Causes), 2018-2024

Countries shown: Canada (172), United States (108), United Kingdom (58), Australia (57)

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India; data presented in Parliament and compiled from responses to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha questions on Indian student deaths abroad, 2018-2024.

investment as a pathway to financial transformation. Failure is not an option. Returning home without a job can feel devastating. Visa deadlines create anxiety. Rising rents consume savings. Part-time jobs barely cover living expenses.

The pressure is relentless.

Students who once topped classrooms in India suddenly find themselves alone in unfamiliar cities, navigating cultural barriers, academic competition and uncertain immigration rules.

The emotional toll is rarely discussed.

Study-abroad advertisements showcase smiling graduates and skyline photographs. They do not show students working night shifts in warehouses, skipping meals to save money, struggling with depression, or worrying whether they can find employment before their visas expire.

The tragedy of Indian students abroad is therefore not simply a law-and-order issue. It is a human story about ambition, sacrifice and vulnerability.

There is also a cruel reality that begins after death.

Families often spend weeks battling bureaucracy to bring their children home. Repatriating remains can cost several lakh rupees, often thousands of dollars. Police investigations unfold in foreign jurisdictions. Legal systems are unfamiliar. Insurance claims become complicated. Grieving parents must navigate paperwork while coping with unimaginable loss.

For many, justice feels distant and inaccessible.

The Ministry of External Affairs says Indian missions have expanded student outreach, strengthened emergency assistance and increased engagement with student associations. Those efforts are important. Yet the scale of the challenge is growing faster than the support system.

India today celebrates the success of its global student diaspora. Universities abroad rely heavily on Indian enrolments. Countries compete for Indian talent and tuition dollars. International education has become a multi-billion-dollar industry.

But the deaths of students such as Vidhi Megha expose a troubling imbalance. Tremendous effort goes into helping students leave India. Far less attention is paid to protecting them once they arrive.

Vidhi's death is not just another crime statistic from Canada.

It is a reminder that behind every overseas education success story lies a family's faith, savings and sacrifice. Most students will build successful lives abroad. Many will fulfil the dreams that sent them overseas.

But for some families, the return journey is not marked by graduation caps, job offers or permanent residency approvals.

It is marked by a coffin arriving at an airport.

And as India mourns yet another young life cut short, one question lingers: in the rush to export talent and chase opportunity, have we done enough to protect the children who carry those dreams across oceans?



Indian student abroad-AI generated

Finding Love Beyond Loneliness

Rajiv Vijayakar

Should we remain lonely in a world that moves fast around us? Is it wrong or immoral to develop both feelings and relationships when age is catching up? Is it okay to prefer a career over a woman who loves you and whom you love? What price is your forced happiness, when you had a philanderer for a husband? Do you have to toe the line with a son who may or may not love you but wants you to be uprooted only for his selfish needs? How do you deal with a husband who is impotent but cares deeply for you? And what is the result of a fiercely independent and free-thinking girl's debate with an orthodox-to-the-hilt father over settling down? How does a woman feel when she realizes that someone (and life itself) can finally belong to her? Must society be given so much importance that one must suppress one's own desires and happiness? Should we, in the final analysis, take life as it comes,



Swaroop Sampat Rawal and Anupam Kher in *Jaane Pehchaane Anjane...*, a magnificent story of life. (Photo caption: Rajiv Vijayakar, SAH)

welcome its bouquets and brickbats? Or shed the idea that loneliness as a compulsory element must be dispensed with through our choices?

Questions, questions, questions! But all these are wonderfully answered in *Jaane Pehchaane Anjane...*, that lovely play produced

by Anupam Kher Studio and written and directed by Gajendra Ahire.

Admittedly, but for retired bank officer, Sudhir Pathak (Anupam Kher), who has lost his loving wife, every sufferer here is a woman. She is 'exploited' emotionally by men and never allowed basic

happiness and contentment. She is still reasonably cheerful, keeping her sorrows at the back of the mind, until they surface, largely thanks to further buffets life throws at her.

Ahire may have written a script that gender-wise is largely one-sided, but he hits multiple nails on their heads and makes us think all the way home and more. And... while accomplishing that, his masterful script, direction and perceptively organic lines make up guffaw, laugh, chortle and keep smiling!

Yes, this is the 'mature' love story of Pathak and his new acquaintance, Vimla Desai (Swaroop Sampat Rawal), as they come close in their respective lonely and conditioned lives. Vimla is being 'summoned' to the States, where her son now lives. Pathak has a daughter, who is conventional in her thoughts and considers Vimla a needless intrusion in dad's otherwise staid and retired life. Vimla's paying-guest loves a man who

dumps her for better prospects, while her curious and close friend (Meghna Malik) hunts for partners on social media.

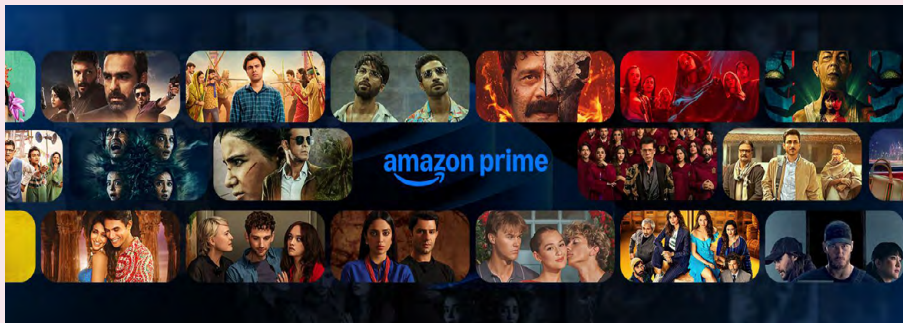
Anupam Kher is doubly brilliant as the earnest, conscience-struck Sudhir, whose idea of a hug is a gentle resting of his head on Vimla's shoulder, and the play's *sutradhar*. Vimla's acerbic tongue hides her basic warm and open nature and many...no, make that *most...* of the best lines go to her. Swaroop Sampat Rawal, returning to live acting after over a decade, is scintillatingly magnificent, matching Kher's fantastic talent. Their chemistry is out of this world!

The support (Maya Sharma, Vikas Rawat in twin negative roles, Shraddha Mandale as Sudhir's daughter and a vegetable vendor, Herman De Souza as the stubborn dad of the free-spirited girl played by Sharma) is no less fabulous.

The sets by Nitin Nerurkar, especially the backdrops, are magnificent. Anu Malik's music is superb, led by the brilliant title-track, and the lyrics by Kausar Munir and the choreography by Chirag Aggarwal only heighten the appeal.

The play will soon come to the US and, in one word, is 'unmissable.'

Entertainment Round Up



(Photo courtesy: X@PrimeVideoIN)

Global Raakh Launch

Prime Video has announced the global hub of its upcoming original series "Raakh," a gripping investigative thriller starring Ali Fazal, Sonali Bendre and Aamir Bashir in key roles on June 12.

The series is directed and executive produced by Prosit Roy, created, written and co-directed by Anusha Nandkumar and Sandeep Saket, with dialogues by Aayush Trivedi. Deepak Dhar, Rishi Negi, Mrinalini Jain and Shyam Rathi have produced the series in association with Endemol Shine India and Bhadipa.

"Raakh" is an investigative drama series that delves into the criminal psyche and the darkness that lurks beneath ordinary life. When two teenagers suddenly disappear without a trace, a happy family is torn apart, and the entire city is thrown into panic. A determined investigating officer launches a nationwide manhunt to uncover the truth, but as he delves deeper into the case, it draws him into a horrifying world of violence and human cruelty. (UNI)

Bengal Cinema Mourns

Renowned Bengali filmmaker Anik Dutta passed away on Wednesday afternoon after he accidentally fell from the rooftop of his residence in the Hindustan Park area of south Kolkata. He was 66. According to sources, Dutta was immediately

rushed to a private hospital in the Dhakuria area following the incident. Hospital authorities later confirmed the director's death. His body is to be taken to SSKM Hospital for post-mortem examination. However, no official statement has yet been issued regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident. An investigation has been initiated.

Dutta had celebrated his birthday just five days ago. On May 22, he shared memories from his past on social media.

Before entering the film industry, Dutta spent nearly two decades in the advertising



(Photo courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anik_Dutta)

world and directed several acclaimed advertisements. He rose to prominence in 2012 with his satirical film "Bhooter Bhabishyat," which also sparked considerable debate at the time.

Over the years, he directed several notable films, including "Aschorjyo Prodeep," "Meghnad Badh Rahasya," "Borunbabur Bondhu," and "Aparajito." His last film, 'Aparajito,' also generated significant controversy and discussion. Dutta was widely known for his left-leaning political views and outspoken public stance on social issues. (UNI)

Warsi-Hirani Reunion

Years after first sharing screen space as a child actor with Arshad Warsi, Veer Hirani's journey has come full circle, marked by a poignant new visual featuring him alongside Warsi once again, this time as an adult collaborator in "Pritam and Pedro."



(Photo courtesy: X@ArshadWarsi)

A recently released visual comparing an old picture of young Hirani and Warsi with a new picture of the two standing together has brought back memories on social media. Titled "Lap Se Laptop Tak," the moment beautifully captures the journey from childhood innocence to a new world full of chaos, humor and companionship.

Filled with humor, nostalgia, and emotion, this photo has become one of the most

talked-about moments of the show's promotional campaign. Viewers are loving this real-life journey brought to life once again on screen. (UNI)

Global Film Break

Sushmiita Siingh has been cast in an upcoming international feature produced by French filmmaker Eric Atlan, marking her next major screen appearance following "Bombay Stories."



(Photo courtesy: Instagram @ Sushmiita Siingh)

The film is structured as a multilingual romantic drama spanning India, France and the United States. The script revolves around an Indian girl who falls in love with an American guy, with a French actor playing the main antagonist, according to Variety India.

Siingh is said to have secured the role after an audition conducted on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival, where she attended for "Bombay Stories" alongside co-stars Mouni Roy and Anupria Goenka.

She will next be seen in a Telugu film with actor Maadhav Bhupathiraju, nephew of actor Ravi Teja. The team has finished shooting two songs so far.

Producer Atlan, a veteran of the French film industry, has made projects such as "Adrenaline," "Les grandes bouches," and "Les démons de Jésus" in the past. (UNI)



Dhanayoga

Sethu Venkataraman
Personal Finance Consultant

Specialized Investment Funds (SIFs): A New Option for Wealthy Investors

India's financial markets gained a new investment vehicle with the launch of Specialized Investment Funds (SIFs). Introduced by Securities and Exchange Board of India, SIFs sit between traditional mutual funds and high-end products such as Portfolio Management Services (PMS) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), offering greater flexibility while remaining within a regulated framework.

How Do SIFs Work?

SIFs are managed by asset management companies (AMCs) and allow fund managers to deploy sophisticated strategies that are generally unavailable in regular mutual funds. These include:

- Long-short equity strategies using derivatives.
- Dynamic allocation between equity, debt and other assets.
- Sector-focused investing.
- Exposure to niche opportunities such as private equity, startups and real estate.
- Use of derivatives not only for hedging but also for generating returns.

Unlike mutual funds that usually offer daily liquidity, some SIFs may have monthly or quarterly redemption windows and lock-in periods.

Who Are They Suitable For?

SIFs are designed for experienced investors with a higher risk appetite and a long-term investment horizon. They are best suited for:

- High-net-worth individuals (HNIs).
- Family offices.
- Sophisticated investors seeking diversification.
- Investors comfortable with market volatility and complex strategies.

They are generally not intended for first-time investors or those seeking predictable returns.

What Is the Minimum Investment?

The minimum investment threshold is **₹10 lakh (\$11,500-12,000)** across all SIF strategies managed by an AMC. The high entry barrier ensures that participants understand the risks associated with these products.

What Does Global Experience Show?

India is not reinventing the wheel. Similar structures have existed for years in financial hubs such as



(Image courtesy of the author)

SIFS ARE NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR MUTUAL FUNDS. THEY ARE BEST VIEWED AS A SATELLITE ALLOCATION FOR INVESTORS WHO ALREADY HAVE A DIVERSIFIED CORE PORTFOLIO AND ARE SEEKING ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF RETURN

Luxembourg, Ireland, Singapore, Hong Kong & the United Kingdom.

Globally, these funds have helped sophisticated investors access private markets, hedge-fund-style strategies and alternative assets. While they have often delivered diversification benefits and attractive returns, performance has varied widely, with success depending heavily on fund-manager skill and market conditions. International experience also shows that higher fees and lower liquidity are common trade-offs.

The Pros

- Access to niche and alternative assets.
- Potentially higher returns than traditional mutual funds.
- Professional management and advanced strategies.
- Better portfolio diversification.
- Ability to profit in different market environments.

The Risks

- Higher management and performance fees.

- Limited liquidity compared with mutual funds.
- Greater volatility and potential losses.
- Complexity that may be difficult for retail investors to understand.
- Dependence on fund-manager expertise.

Should You Invest?

SIFs are not a replacement for mutual funds. They are best viewed as a satellite allocation for investors who already have a diversified core portfolio and are seeking additional sources of return.

For wealthy investors willing to lock up capital, tolerate higher risk and understand sophisticated strategies, SIFs can be a useful portfolio diversifier. However, for most retail investors, traditional mutual funds remain a simpler, lower-cost and more liquid option.

Bottom line: SIFs offer exciting opportunities, but they should be approached as a high-risk, specialist product—not a mainstream investment vehicle.

Business Round Up

Campa Growth Push

Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL) has positioned its Campa soft drink portfolio for its aggressive expansion plans in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in order to grow its revenue multifold by 2030, according to its FY26 annual report.

According to RIL's FY26 annual report, the aim behind the expansion is to emerge as one of the leading branded consumer products companies in the world.

RCPL's gross revenue doubled year-on-year to Rs 22,000 crore in FY26, driven largely by strong growth in staples and beverages. RCPL, the FMCG unit incorporated in 2022, has become central to Reliance's broader consumer business strategy spanning packaged foods, beverages, home and personal care products, according to the annual report. (UNI)

Puducherry SEZ Boost

The Government has notified two new special economic zones (SEZ) in Puducherry to strengthen the country's industrial base, expanding exports and deepening self-reliance in strategic sectors, according to an official statement of the Commerce Ministry.

The proposals were approved by the Board of Approval for SEZ's under the Commerce Department during 137th meeting. Out of these two SEZs, one IT/ITES SEZ will be developed by M/s Oulgaret Municipality at Thattanchavady village in Oulgaret Taluk. (UNI)

Digital India Rise

India is now the fifth most digitalized country in the world, improving from eighth place in 2025, said the State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) report released.

The report released by ICRI-ER-Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE) shows real gains such as improved connectivity, greater harnessing of digital technologies, a strong AI talent pool, and some methodological changes. (UNI)

Korea Trade Talks

The 12th round of India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IK CEPA) upgrade negotiations was held from May 25 to 27, reaffirming both sides' commitment to a balanced and future-oriented trade partnership.

According to the Commerce Ministry, both sides acknowledged India's bilateral trade deficit, which has risen significantly since the IK CEPA came into force in 2010.

In this round, discussions covered key areas including Trade in Goods (TiG), Trade in Services (TiS), Rules of Origin (RoO), Origin Procedures (OP), Investment, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards. It was also decided to establish sub-groups to explore cooperation in areas such as digital trade, supply chains, and strategic industrial cooperation. (UNI)

US Investment Outreach

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held high-level talks with business leaders on strengthening India-US trade and investment ties in New York during his transit through the city. Talks were focused on India-US trade and investment linkages, expanding opportunities for global businesses in India, advancing supply chain resilience, and multi-sectoral cooperation.

Key sectors were financial services, healthcare, digital payments, manufacturing, innovation, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

The discussions also highlighted India's growing attractiveness as a global investment destination.

As per the Commerce Ministry, the Minister held one-to-one meetings with the CEO of Carlyle Group, Harvey Schwartz, the Chairman and CEO of Morgan Stanley, Ted Pick, the Chairman of Warburg Pincus, Charles Kaye, Co-founder and CEO of Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Chintu Patel, and the CEO of Mastercard, Michael Miebach.

The Minister also addressed 50 prominent business leaders from the investment and trade community at a business interaction in collaboration with the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum. (UNI)

Khadi Sales Surge

The sales of Khadi and Village Industries products have reached a historic level of Rs 1,87,105 crore in 2025-26, as per the data shared by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). This marks the highest-ever sales figure.

During the previous financial year 2024-25, the sales stood at Rs 1,70,551.37 crore, and have surged multi-fold from Rs 31,154 crore in 2013-14.

KVIC Chairman Manoj Kumar expressed confidence that sales of KVIC products will cross Rs 2.51 lakh crore in 2026-27. He informed that while the production of Khadi and Village Industry products remained at Rs 26,109 crore in the financial year 2013-14, it surged nearly five-fold, registering a jump of 380 per cent, to reach Rs 1,25,296 crore in the financial year 2025-26. (UNI)



Weekly Horoscope

JUNE 05 - 11

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KUSHIK

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ARIES

(Mar 21 to Apr 20)

This week may bring Aries natives closer to desired goals, especially in business partnerships where profits may improve. Emotional well-being may remain positive, helping you enjoy quality moments with loved ones. Clear communication at work will be important to avoid misunderstandings, while students may benefit from staying focused and cutting distractions. Property matters may move favorably and health may improve through balanced eating habits.

TAURUS

(Apr 21 to May 20)

Taurus natives may feel motivated to improve health and energy levels this week. Financial investments may show promise, though keeping plans private may work in your favor. Work pressure may increase temporarily, requiring patience and discipline, while academic setbacks may help students become more resilient. Family harmony may improve through practical and timely decisions.

GEMINI

(May 21 to Jun 21)

Gemini natives may experience balanced growth in both personal and professional life. A positive mindset may strengthen family relationships and help create a supportive atmosphere at home. Career progress may depend on how effectively you showcase your skills, while financially, steady efforts may keep you on track. Emotional balance may help you respond wisely to changing situations.

CANCER

(Jun 22 to Jul 22)

Cancerians may notice encouraging progress in several areas this week. Pending payments may improve financial stability, while confidence at work may help you manage responsibilities smoothly. Romantic life may feel emotionally fulfilling and family support may remain strong. Students may perform well academically, though travel plans may require flexibility and patience.

LEO (Jul 23 to Aug 23)

Leo natives may enjoy an encouraging week with recognition and

appreciation at the workplace. Financial stability may allow you to make meaningful investments, while family members may offer emotional support whenever needed. Romantic relationships may improve through better understanding and communication. Students may need extra effort to stand out and achieve desired results.

VIRGO

(Aug 24 to Sept 23)

Virgo natives may come across promising professional opportunities and fresh ventures this week. Peaceful behavior at home may strengthen relationships and maintain harmony within the family. Property matters may move smoothly if formalities are handled carefully, while positive lifestyle changes may begin showing visible health benefits. Romantic outings may also strengthen emotional bonding.

LIBRA

(Sept 24 to Oct 23)

Libras may feel guided by intuition while making financial and personal decisions this week. Spending quality time with loved ones may strengthen emotional connections and create a happier atmosphere at home. Professionally, suitable opportunities may bring you closer to career growth or a promotion. Students planning overseas education may need patience and persistence for better results.

SCORPIO

(Oct 24 to Nov 22)

Scorpio natives may focus on bringing more discipline and structure into professional life this week. Financial management may remain stable, helping you handle regular expenses comfortably. A memorable outing with loved ones may strengthen relationships, while property improvement work may finally be near completion. Students are advised to make practical career decisions instead of following others blindly.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov 23 to Dec 21)

Sagittarius natives may display strong leadership qualities and inspire people around them this week. A surprise financial gain may help clear pending dues and

improve confidence. Minor misunderstandings at home may require patience and understanding to maintain harmony. Travel plans may face delays, while students resuming studies may receive positive developments.

CAPRICORN

(Dec 22 to Jan 21)

Capricorn natives may feel encouraged to take important steps toward career growth this week. Financial improvement may bring greater satisfaction and help stabilize other areas of life. Guidance from an elder family member may

help resolve a property-related issue. Students are advised to stay focused, while traveling with loved ones may create happy memories.

AQUARIUS

(Jan 22 to Feb 19)

Aquarians may experience steady growth and productive outcomes this week. Hard work at the workplace may earn appreciation from seniors and colleagues, while financial decisions may strengthen assets gradually. Positive developments at home may increase collective happiness and emotional warmth. Students may find this an

ideal time to apply for internships and career opportunities.

PISCES

(Feb 20 to Mar 20)

Pisceans may feel energetic, optimistic, and enthusiastic throughout the week. Professional recognition may increase as others notice your abilities and dedication at work. Romantic relationships may grow stronger through trust and emotional openness, while overseas travel may bring memorable experiences. Students maintaining discipline and focus may achieve significant academic progress.



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Soul Talk

Chhavi Upadhyay
Life Coach and Mentor

Most Marriages End Years Before the Divorce

Mira, 37, a software engineer thriving in her career, had been consulting me for over two years on her professional decisions. In one session, almost in passing, she said she wanted to end her marriage. Though my guidance had centered on her career, this didn't come as a shock. I had sensed it for a while — a restlessness beneath her ambition, a quiet hollowness she never named.

When I asked her when things had actually changed, she didn't point to a fight or a betrayal. She went quiet, then said: "I think it was the evening I got promoted and didn't bother telling him." This was years before our conversation.

This is what most of us misunderstand about marriages. The papers are signed in a lawyer's office, but the marriage usually ends much earlier—in a kitchen, on an ordinary Tuesday, the day one person stops trying to be understood.

It rarely ends in noise. It ends in small withdrawals. The day you stop sharing your good news. The day he stops asking why, you've gone quiet. The night you both begin

sleeping, facing the wall. Each moment is too small to name, but they accumulate.

And so, in the middle of an ordinary week, a quiet question surfaces: When did we stop talking about anything that actually mattered? For many, a second follows: Am I at peace here, or have I simply gotten used to the distance?

These questions are uncomfortable, which is exactly why we bury them under routine. But they deserve to be asked.

It is not the fighting that ends a marriage. Fighting, at least, is engagement. It is the silence afterwards — when conflict stops feeling worth the effort — that signals the real distance. By the time someone asks whether they should leave, a part of them has often left, quietly, years earlier.

We stay, of course, for reasons that are real. The children. The families. The years invested. These are reasons to remain — but they are not, on their own, the same as connection.

Still, as it's often said, it's not over till it's over. What slips away in small, unnoticed



(Image by Chhavi Upadhyay)

moments can return the same way — gently, one small gesture at a time. It begins with the ordinary things we abandon: asking how their day truly went and staying for the answer, sharing the small news again, sitting in the same room a little longer. Mira did not separate. Once she saw when the distance had

begun, she also saw that the affection underneath had not vanished. It had only gone unattended.

Perhaps the question is not- "whether it's over?" It is: when did I stop paying attention — and what is one small way I could begin again today?

Human Palate Psychology

M. Rajendran

Aloe Vera Sweet from Gujarat – Kuver Paak

This delicacy uniquely blends the qualities of a decadent dessert with an Ayurvedic remedy. Its main ingredient is fresh aloe vera, a plant we typically associate with soothing sunburns—not with creamy, luxurious bites of pure pleasure. It is a once-cherished, now-forgotten Gujarati dish: Kuver Paak.

A sweet made with aloe vera, milk, and nuts. It is believed to have originated from Saurashtra. But let's not get into that debate. Let's focus on preparing this healthy dessert with a unique bittersweet taste. It is considered a heavenly nectar after fasting.

Aloe vera contains polysaccharides that support digestive health, antioxidants that combat inflammation, and compounds that may help regulate blood sugar. (Please recheck with your Dietician/Diabetologist)

Ingredients

- Full cream-fat milk: 1 Gallon (about 2 litres)

- Fresh aloe vera gel (cleaned & strained): 1 cup
- Fresh cream: 1 cup
- Sugar syrup (1-string consistency): 1 cup
- Ghee (clarified butter) to grease & layer
- Chopped almonds, cashews, pistachios to garnish

(Can prepare 15–20 pieces)

Method

- Remove the outer skin from aloe vera leaves, extract the clear gel, blend until smooth, and strain well to eliminate fibers and bitterness.
- In a heavy-bottomed pan, bring the milk to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally.
- Cook over low heat, stirring constantly to avoid curdling, until the mixture resembles dried milk solids (Khoya or Mawa in South Asia).
- Pour the mixture into a clean vessel, add cream and sugar syrup.



(Photo courtesy: Author)

- Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until it thickens and begins to detach from the sides of the pan.
- Grease a flat steel / ceramic / glass plate with clarified butter; spread the hot mixture evenly, and flatten gently with a spatula.
- Pour a layer of clarified butter on top, sprinkle chopped nuts, cool at room temperature, then refrigerate for one hour until firm. Cut into square/diamond/round pieces. Serve cold or at room temperature



Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Air Conditioning How Does It Affect The Skin?

In today's climate-controlled world, air conditioning has moved from being a luxury to becoming almost a necessity, especially in countries like India, where summers are growing increasingly harsh. During heatwaves, when temperatures often cross 40°C, air conditioners feel like a blessing, offering relief from oppressive heat and humidity.

From homes and offices to cars, malls and gyms, people now spend most of their day in artificially cooled environments. While air conditioning

protects us from dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, constant exposure to cooled indoor air can quietly affect the skin, hair and overall wellness in ways many people fail to recognize.

Unlike sunburn or direct heat damage, AC-related skin problems develop gradually. Air conditioners reduce humidity levels in indoor spaces and strip moisture from the air. Over time, this leads to dehydration of the skin and hair. Many people notice dryness, itching, dullness or brittle hair without realizing that prolonged exposure to air conditioning may be responsible.

When the skin loses moisture continuously, it begins to feel tight, rough and flaky. Dry air accelerates trans-epidermal water loss, where moisture evaporates from the surface of the skin. As hydration decreases, fine lines and wrinkles appear more noticeable, while the complexion starts looking dull and tired.

Constant switching between cold indoor temperatures and intense outdoor heat can also weaken the body's natural ability to adjust to temperature changes. Many people experience fatigue, headaches, lethargy or muscle stiffness after

spending long hours in air-conditioned environments. Poor indoor air circulation may further contribute to what is commonly called "sick building syndrome."

Air conditioning can also disturb the skin's natural oil balance. When the skin becomes excessively dry, sebaceous glands often respond by producing more oil to compensate for the loss of moisture. This can lead to clogged pores, blackheads and acne breakouts — commonly referred to as "AC acne." Many people with combination skin experience both dryness and oiliness at the same time, making skincare more difficult.

Prolonged exposure to cold, dry air may also accelerate visible signs of ageing. Reduced moisture affects skin elasticity and firmness, making the skin appear thinner and less supple over time. Wrinkles and sagging can become more pronounced when the skin remains dehydrated for long periods.

The lips are especially vulnerable because they lack oil glands and cannot naturally retain moisture. Continuous exposure to dry indoor air often leads to chapped, peeling and cracked lips.

Fortunately, a few simple precautions can help minimize the

damaging effects of air conditioning. Drink plenty of water, soups and fresh juices to maintain hydration levels. Water-rich foods such as cucumber, watermelon, oranges and strawberries are also beneficial. Antioxidant-rich foods like berries, green tea and leafy vegetables help protect the skin from environmental stress.

Indoor temperatures should ideally be maintained between 23°C and 25°C to avoid excessive dryness. Using a humidifier can restore moisture to the air and improve skin texture over time. Applying moisturizer, lip balm and hand cream regularly helps strengthen the skin barrier and prevent dehydration.

It is equally important to keep AC filters clean to maintain better indoor air quality. Taking occasional breaks from air-conditioned environments also allows the body to adjust naturally to changing temperatures.

The key lies in balance. With proper hydration, humidity control and regular skincare, it is possible to enjoy the comfort of air conditioning without compromising healthy, youthful skin.

Little Ninjas Of Phoenix



(Photo courtesy: Author)

G.Srinivasan

To see children of even less than five years ardently attending the martial art class for the beginners to wrestle with the challenges of living in a complex, multi-cultural modern city in the United States of America is a memorable experience to a septuagenarian who was here on a vacation to spend time with the grandchildren.

Located in Chandler in Phoenix, Arizona Master Shin's world-class Taekwondo centre for imparting martial art skills. A visit to this center, one gets impressed

with the ancient art of Korea of two centuries lineage. It has grown with the deft coaching of masters well-versed in the finest kicking techniques for the diligent pupils, which has a rightful place in Olympic sport.

A casual talk with Master Dongkwan Shin, owner and Head Master Instructor, reveals that he has over two decades in martial arts training with a fifth-degree Certified Kukkiwon Black Belt. He is ably assisted by his American wife and a few debonair young boys from Korea to keep the children of different ages slotted in a particular time span to undergo rigorous training in the traditional attire of spotless white. Children of both genders of variegated

ages find thrills and pride in the dexterity of Taekwondo by applying their focused attention in learning the ropes sans much ado but with obvious zeal. What strikes one is that the instructors, including the Head Master, remain cool and amiable and impart the wards with a consummate mix of discipline and fun so that the children cut their teeth in the martial arts with gusto and seriousness laced with discipline.

Asked what impact his center has spawned on students evincing increasing interest in this new genre of martial arts that are unlike karate or kung fu, Shin explained generations of students have been

transformed by the life-enhancing behavioral changes and patterns triggered by Taekwondo training that place due premium on patience and perseverance in the face of emerging challenges. For children at the inflection point from infancy to a youthful phase, the martial art training helps improve balance and coordination, heighten self-confidence and concentration to stay focused on tasks given. The Head Master, with his characteristic aplomb, observed.

In a competitive world where children must contend with multiple chores in their daily routines, Taekwondo enables them to put up resistance to peer pressure and bullying, fosters athletic skill, self-discipline and a respectful attitude. In the class, the art demands a polite salute at the entry and exit points with heads bowed to the class and also at the end of each exercise the children complete.

It may be the children appear punching much above their weight with their vocal cords constantly on high but in reality, they relish doing this with evangelical zest lest they should never be found wanting to stand up to any combat. This nudging to be ready is what keeps children of all ages participating vigorously in the classrooms and their body language is clear that the callisthenics does do profound changes in their body and mind to keep them bubbling with interest to take up any activity, both physical and mental, without the sense of exhaustion.

Both the master and his wife constantly interact with all the children and if someone is found wanting the help is at hand and the boy or girl is unobtrusively told to do it in the right way. Ultimately, as Master Shin, the training center serves the triple goal of teaching the highest quality martial arts, empowering students with invaluable skills for daily life and contributing to a safe and placid community.

The author is a senior journalist based in Delhi.

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

A Star Is Born, And He's Only 15



"We rise again Stronger" (Photo courtesy: X@Vaibhavsooryava)

Anirudh Nair

IPL 2026 has come to a close, and the Royal Challengers Bengaluru have reclaimed their crown. Unsurprisingly, Virat Kohli was front and center in this victory, scoring a match-winning 75 not out against Gujarat Titans in the final. Even at the age of 37, the icon continues to star as he has for the last 18 years of his career. But it may be time to pass the torch, and there's no better player to take it than Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

What's left to say that hasn't already been said? Still just 15 years old, Sooryavanshi excelled in his sophomore IPL season with the Rajasthan Royals, winning the Orange Cap with a staggering 776 runs at a strike rate of 237.3. He smashed 72 sixes, obliterating Chris Gayle's previous record of 59, set in 2012.

This knack for hitting big was evident during the brief glimpse fans got in 2025, but this season has marked quite the developmental arc for the youngster. As the season progressed, Sooryavanshi deployed a wider range of shots and began picking his moments more carefully, cultivating composure as bowlers started to capitalize on his earlier over-eagerness.

This growth was put to its ultimate test in the Eliminator against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where Sooryavanshi came agonizingly close to scoring the fastest century in IPL history, a record also held by Gayle at just 30 balls. Sooryavanshi was dismissed for 97 off 29 deliveries while attempting to break the record with one final shot.

Still only a teenager, the maturity he has shown, both

physically and mentally, is unlike anything previously witnessed. More remarkably, there is still plenty of room for growth. His performances have even earned praise from Sachin Tendulkar himself, who offered kind words about his batting ability.

"I mean, he is something truly special," said Tendulkar at the Cricinfo Honours event. "Not just the ability to hit the ball, but what also fascinated me was the wrist work that he has. To be able to play in all directions of the ground, you need good wrist work."

With the season he has had, there is little doubt that an India call-up is on the horizon. Sooryavanshi's next goal will be to break Tendulkar's record as India's youngest debutant. With multiple international series scheduled in the months ahead, a 36-year-old record may finally change hands, just as the torch itself is passed.



A 6-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi with his father in 2017. (Photo courtesy: X@DrSanjivGoenka)

Patiala Legacy Endures



Raja Randhir Singh.
(Photo courtesy: osa.asia)

Prabhjot Singh

Few individuals have left as deep an imprint on the Olympic movement in India and Asia as Raja Randhir Singh. An accomplished shooter, sports administrator, and influential advo-

cate for Indian sport, he helped shape some of the country's most significant international sporting achievements.

The late Herb Dhaliwal, among the first Indo-Canadian Members of Parliament and Canada's first Punjabi Cabinet Minister, once recalled meeting Raja Randhir Singh while campaigning for Vancouver's bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics. Dhaliwal, who chaired the bid committee, remembered approaching a "smart Sikh sporting a beautiful Patiala Shahi turban" at an International Olympic Committee gathering.

After learning that Singh was Secretary-General of both the Olympic Council of Asia and the Indian Olympic Association, Dhaliwal sought his support. "Raja Randhir Singh readily promised to support our bid," he recalled. Vancouver ultimately won by a single vote.

The anecdote reflected the respect and influence Singh commanded in international sporting circles. He came from the famed Patiala royal family, whose contributions to Indian sport spanned generations. His grandfather Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, uncle Maharaja Yadavinder Singh, and father Raja Bhalendra Singh all played major roles in advancing the Olympic movement in India.

A five-time Olympian in skeet shooting, Singh helped India secure its first Asian Games shooting gold in Bangkok in 1978. As a sports administrator, he championed India's successful bids for the 1982 Asian Games, the Afro-Asian Games, and the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Known for his colorful turbans, Patiala-style beard, and consensus-building leadership, Singh remained a towering figure in Asian sport. His legacy endures through the institutions he strengthened and the generations of athletes and administrators he inspired.

Sports Round Up

Suruchi-Esha Sweep

India celebrated a one-two in the women's 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup

2026, here in Germany, Suruchi Singh and Esha Singh won gold and silver medals, respectively.

Suruchi Singh, who bagged three individual ISSF World Cup golds last season, topped the podium with 242.1 points after holding her nerve in the elimination stages.

Overall, this was Suruchi Singh's seventh ISSF World Cup medal, which includes an individual gold at the ISSF World Cup Final in Doha last year. (UNI)

Pooja Breaks Records

India's women's high jumper Pooja improved the national and

meet record on the second day of the 22nd Asian U20 Athletics Championships being held in Hong Kong.

On her way to winning the gold medal with a jump of 1.93m, Pooja improved the more than a decade-old national record of 1.92m set by Sahana Kumari in 2012. (UNI)

Lanka T20 Squad

Sri Lanka has announced their squad for the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in England and Wales. The 15-member squad will be led by the seasoned Chamari Athapaththu, who has featured in all the previous nine editions of the tournament.

The squad features plenty of new names from the one that played at the previous edition of the tournament two years ago. (UNI)