



South Asian Herald

Voice of the Diaspora

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BORN AMERICAN

SAH Special Correspondent

The US Supreme Court's decision reaffirming birth-right citizenship has brought relief to thousands of South Asian immigrant families while shifting the next phase of the immigration debate from the courts to Congress.

In a 6-3 ruling, the Court struck down President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to deny automatic citizenship to many children born in the United States

to undocumented immigrants and temporary visa holders, reaffirming the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of citizenship by birth.

The judgment carries particular significance for Indian professionals, the largest recipients of H-1B skilled worker visas, many of whom remain caught in decades-long employment-based green card backlogs. The ruling removes uncertainty over the citizenship of their US-born children, offering greater legal certainty to families awaiting permanent residency.

Indian-origin lawmakers welcomed the verdict as a reaffirmation of constitutional protections. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said the Court had made clear that constitutional rights cannot be changed by executive order, while Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said the ruling upheld the Fourteenth Amendment's promise that anyone born in the United States is an American citizen. Congressman Suhas Subramanyam said the decision protected immigrant families from

executive overreach, and Congressman Ro Khanna described it as an affirmation of the rights of children born to immigrant families.

South Asian advocacy groups said the ruling would particularly benefit Indian immigrants navigating lengthy visa queues. Indian American Impact called it a landmark victory for families facing prolonged immigration uncertainty, while the Hindu American Foundation said it upheld constitutional rights and protected

America's diverse immigrant communities.

While President Trump has urged Congress to pursue legislation restricting birthright citizenship, constitutional experts say the ruling preserves one of the country's longest-standing legal guarantees. For South Asian immigrants, it secures the citizenship rights of future generations, even as broader issues such as green card backlogs and comprehensive immigration reform remain unresolved.



(Photo courtesy: AI Generated)

US Visa Wall Gets Higher

R. Suryamurthy

Indian professionals hoping for permanent residency in the United States have suffered another setback after the U.S. State Department's July 2026 Visa Bulletin declared the Employment-Based Second Preference (EB-2) category unavailable for Indian applicants for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The move reflects the exhaustion of India's annual EB-2 visa quota amid exceptionally high demand, halting green card approvals for thousands of highly skilled workers, including technology professionals, engineers, doctors and researchers. The category is expected to reopen only in October with the start of the new fiscal year.

The bulletin also brings bad news for applicants under the Employment-Based First Preference

(EB-1) category, where the final action date has retrogressed to October 15, 2022. Officials warned that EB-1 could face further retrogression—or even temporary suspension—if India's annual allocation is exhausted before September.

Meanwhile, India's Employment-Based Third Preference (EB-3) category remains severely backlogged, with final action dates stuck at January 1, 2014, leaving many applicants facing waits exceeding a decade.

China, while also experiencing delays, remains significantly ahead. Chinese EB-2 applications are being processed with a final action date of September 1, 2021, while EB-3 stands at December 22, 2021—nearly eight years ahead of India's EB-3 queue. Most other countries continue to enjoy

“Current” status for EB-1 and EB-2 visas.

The widening gap stems from the U.S. per-country cap, which limits each nation to roughly seven percent of employment-based immigrant visas regardless of demand. As the largest source of H-1B professionals, India has accumulated decades of pending green card applications.

The July bulletin also declared India's unreserved EB-5 investor visa category unavailable after its annual quota was exhausted. With demand remaining exceptionally high, the State Department warned that further retrogressions are possible before the fiscal year ends, underscoring that meaningful relief for Indian applicants is unlikely without legislative reform of the per-country quota system.

Maryland Cabinet Joins Lt. Gov. Miller in Honoring South Asian Herald Founder

SAH Special Correspondent

Lieutenant Governor of Maryland Aruna Miller and several state cabinet members have commended South Asian Herald Founder and Editor-in-Chief T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, Ph.D., for his contributions to journalism and his efforts to amplify the voices of Indian Americans and the broader South Asian diaspora in Maryland and across the United States.

In recognition of his work, Lt. Governor Miller presented Jayaraman with a Governor's Citation on June 25 at her office in the Maryland State Capitol in Annapolis.

Joining Lt. Governor Miller, cabinet members Maryland Secretary of State Susan Lee, Maryland

Secretary of Health, Dr. Meena Seshamani, Maryland Secretary of General Services, Atif Chaudhry, former Maryland Secretary of Higher Education, Sanjay Rai, and Chair of the Maryland Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs (GCSAA) Gurpreet Takhar also acknowledged Jayaraman's contributions in separate statements to *South Asian Herald*.

The citation states: “That on behalf of the citizens of this State, in recognition of your extraordinary contributions to the field of journalism, where you have uplifted generations of immigrants and members of the South Asian diaspora who have helped strengthen communities and shape the fabric of our nation.” (Contd. on page 4)



Lieutenant Governor of Maryland Aruna Miller presenting the Governor's Citation to T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, on June 25, 2026, at the State Capitol, in Annapolis, Maryland. (Photo courtesy: Rachel Sawicki)

Exclusive: Aruna Miller on Maryland, Immigration, and India Partnership

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

In an exclusive interview with *South Asian Herald*, at her office in the State Capitol, Annapolis, on June 25, Maryland Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller reflects on the Moore-Miller ticket's Democratic primary victory and outlines the administration's vision for a second term.

Miller made history in 2022 as the first immigrant elected to statewide office in Maryland and the first South Asian and Indian American woman elected Lieutenant Governor in the United States.

During a wide-ranging candid interview, Miller discusses the growing influence of the Indian American and broader South Asian communities in Maryland, the importance of representation in public service, the state's partnership with India, and the impact of federal immigration policies on the economy and higher education.

She also shares Maryland's efforts to foster interfaith unity, support immigrant communities, and build a more inclusive and prosperous future for all residents.

Q Congratulations on the Moore-Miller ticket's victory in Maryland's June 23 gubernatorial primary. How are you

feeling following the win, and what does it mean to you and your team?

A We are incredibly grateful to the voters who believed in us and once again placed their trust in our team. We're excited about the road ahead as we work toward November, and we're hopeful the voters will give us another opportunity to serve. We don't take anything for granted, and we'll continue working as hard as we can. I also want to congratulate all the candidates who made it through the primary.

Q You and Governor Moore recently hosted Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra in Annapolis. Could you discuss the significance of that meeting and Maryland's growing partnership with India?

A Our partnership with India will continue to grow. It's a partnership between the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy, and we're proud of that relationship. As an Indian immigrant serving alongside Governor Moore, he understands how important this partnership is – not just to me, but to all Marylanders. It presents tremendous opportunities to strengthen our ties economically, academically,

and culturally. Both countries have so much to gain. We had an excellent meeting with Ambassador Kwatra, who invited Governor Moore and me to lead a trade mission to India. We're exploring that opportunity, and I look forward to returning to India to help bring more jobs and investment to Maryland while also encouraging Maryland companies to invest in India.

Q Maryland is home to a growing Indian American community, as well as a broader South Asian population. How do you view the contributions these communities have made to the state's economic growth and cultural diversity?

A Maryland is the most diverse state in the Mid-Atlantic region, and we're very proud of that. We have more than 500,000 AAPI residents, and while they represent a relatively small percentage of our population, their contributions far exceed their numbers. Whether in STEM careers, entrepreneurship, or businesses of every size, the AAPI community – including Indian Americans – plays a vital role in driving Maryland's economy. I'm incredibly proud of their contributions and the richness they bring to our state.

Q You have broken barriers as the first South Asian and Indian American elected to statewide office in Maryland. Could you share your personal journey and discuss the South Asian representation across the state?

A The Indian American community is increasingly stepping into public policy and public service. We're seeing more individuals serving throughout our administration, running for office, and winning elected positions. In this past election cycle, for example, Amar Mukunda defeated longtime State Senate Majority Leader Nancy King in the Democratic primary. That's something you don't see every day, and he is likely to become the first South Asian state senator in the Maryland General Assembly. When I first ran for office, people would often tell me, "I've never seen someone who looks like you run for public office." That representation inspired people to get involved. They began volunteering, paying attention to public policy, sharing the concerns of their communities, and eventually asking themselves, "Why can't I run for office one day?" That's how meaningful change happens. Representation truly matters. When Governor Moore and I took office, we assembled the most diverse cabinet in Maryland's history, with 50 percent



Lieutenant Governor of Maryland Aruna Miller during the exclusive interview with South Asian Herald on June 25, 2026, at her office in State Capitol, Annapolis.
(Photo courtesy: Rachel Sawicki, SAH)



Lieutenant Governor of Maryland Aruna Miller at her office in State Capitol, Annapolis, on June 25, 2026. (Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

women and 50 percent people of color serving as cabinet secretaries. We firmly believe that diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

Q As an immigrant who made history in public service, how do you assess current federal immigration policies, and what impact are they having on Maryland and its communities?

A Look, Vishnu, you came to this country seeking opportunity. My parents came here for the very same reason. The America I know is one where a young girl who didn't speak a word of English can grow up to become the Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Maryland. That's the America I believe in—one that embraces immigrants, creates opportunities, and tells people they can achieve anything they set their minds to. Unfortunately, what we're seeing today from the current administration is a very different approach. Immigrants are being portrayed as the reason others lack opportunity, and I simply don't believe that's true. If anything, immigrants have created jobs, strengthened our economy, and contributed as entrepreneurs, small business owners, and technology leaders. What concerns me even more is the disregard for due process. If the government believes someone is undocumented, there is a legal process that must be followed. You cannot simply detain individuals without respecting their constitutional rights.

Q How are current federal immigration policies affecting H-1B visa holders, international students, and Maryland's higher education institutions and economy?

A The proposal to impose a \$100,000 fees on employers hiring H-1B visa holders hurts our economy. We're effectively driving away some of the brightest and most talented people who want to contribute to this country. If we turn them away, many other nations will gladly welcome them. The same is true for international students. They contribute enormously to our higher education system, both academically and economically. Today, many are increasingly hesitant about coming to the United States, which not only affects university revenues but also diminishes the diversity and talent that have long strengthened our institutions. That ripple effect is deeply concerning. Here in Maryland, Governor Moore is not backing away from these challenges. We're focused on growing and diversifying our economy. While Maryland once relied heavily on the federal government, we're now investing in what we call our light-house sectors – artificial intelligence, life sciences, quantum computing, and aerospace. These industries represent Maryland's future, and we're making strategic investments to help them grow and create more high-quality jobs.

Q There has been growing concern over anti-Hindu incidents and anti-immigrant rhetoric across the country. What steps is the State of Maryland taking to protect immigrant communities and ensure they feel safe and welcomed?

A It's unfortunate to see our country becoming increasingly divided, with one

community being pitted against another. That's deeply concerning. One of my first priorities as lieutenant governor was establishing Maryland's first-ever Interfaith Council because I recognized the need to bring communities together. We traveled across the state, bringing together leaders from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and many other faith communities. The focus has been on the overwhelming majority of values we share—how we can strengthen our state, support our most vulnerable residents, and serve as trusted partners within our communities. When people feel afraid or uncertain, they often turn to their places of worship for comfort and guidance. That's why it's so important that we hear directly from faith leaders about the concerns their communities are facing and work together to address them. We're also celebrating the rich diversity of Maryland by recognizing religious and cultural holidays at Government House, including Eid, Hanukkah, Vaisakhi, Diwali, and many others. Those celebrations send a clear message that every community belongs and is valued in Maryland.

Q Following the primary victory, you said, "Together we have made real progress here in Maryland, but the job's not done." Could you elaborate on what you meant by that and the priorities you believe still need to be addressed?

A Progress doesn't have a final destination. The road to progress is always under construction. While we've made significant achievements over the past

three-and-a-half years, we know there's still much more work to do. We want to ensure Maryland remains affordable for every resident, especially as federal policies under the Trump-Vance administration have driven up costs. Working alongside our partners in the Maryland General Assembly, we've advanced more than \$300 million in measures to help address skyrocketing energy prices and provide relief to ratepayers as quickly as possible. We also recognize that when our country faces wars overseas and tariffs increase, the cost of living rises as well. The prices of everyday necessities go up, and that's something we're committed to addressing.

Q Affordability remains a major concern for many Maryland families. How is the Moore-Miller administration addressing that issue?

A Affordable housing is a major focus for our administration. During this legislative session, we passed Transit-Oriented Development legislation because we know that when Marylanders have convenient access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other opportunities, it improves both quality of life and affordability. As a transportation engineer, I've always believed that building infrastructure means building pathways to opportunity. Transit-Oriented Development is about bringing housing and opportunity closer together. Housing and transportation are the two largest household expenses for most families. When you reduce transportation costs by connecting people more efficiently to where they need to go, you make life more affordable for Marylanders.

Why South Asians Are at Higher Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Asian American Health Initiative

Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is a growing health concern in South Asian communities like Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepali, and Sri Lankan. Research shows that South Asians are more likely to develop T2DM than many other groups at younger ages, at lower body weights, and remain undiagnosed (46% of Asians with diabetes are unaware of it). T2DM happens when the body has trouble using insulin, a natural chemical that moves sugar from the blood into the body's cells for energy. As a result, too much sugar stays in the blood.

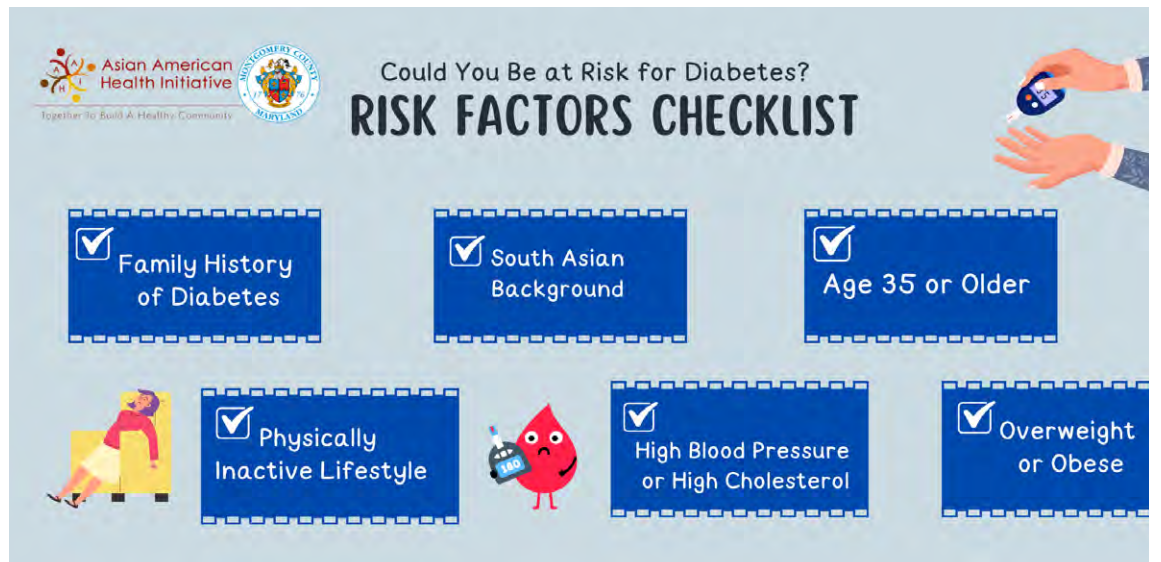
Diabetes often runs in South Asian families. If your parents, siblings, or close relatives have diabetes, your risk is higher. South Asians can develop diabetes even if they look thin or have a normal weight because South Asians tend to store more fat around their internal organs. This fat makes it harder for the body to use insulin and can lead to diabetes over time. Before developing T2DM, people almost always have prediabetes. This means blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet

high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. Most people with prediabetes have no symptoms. The good news? If prediabetes is found and treated early through lifestyle changes or medication, you can prevent developing T2DM completely.

Many traditional South Asian meals include nutritious ingredients such as vegetables and legumes like lentils. However, eating large portions of white rice, naan, paratha, fried foods, sweets, and sugary drinks raises blood sugar levels. Small changes can help. Try adding more vegetables to meals without overcooking them, choosing whole grains, and cutting back on sugary drinks and desserts. Whole grains such as brown rice, whole wheat for chapati/roti, broken wheat (*dalia*), quinoa, barley (*jau*), and millets (*bajra* or *ragi*) offer more fiber and help keep blood sugar levels steady.

Diabetes often develops slowly. Early symptoms may include:

- Feeling very thirsty or hungry
- Urinating often
- Feeling tired or having low energy
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing cuts or wounds
- Unexplained weight loss



(Photo courtesy: AAHI)

- Heavy sweating when eating, even with mild foods

If left untreated, diabetes can cause nerve damage (tingling or numb feet), vision loss, kidney disease, heart disease, and stroke. Finding diabetes early and managing it well prevents these health problems.

Adults age 35 and older should ask their doctor about diabetes screening, especially if they have a family history of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or a history

of diabetes during pregnancy. Diabetes can be found through simple blood tests like an A1C test or a fasting blood sugar test.

Diabetes Risk Checklist

- South Asian
- Family history
- Age 35+
- High blood pressure or cholesterol
- Physically inactive
- Overweight or obesity
- Diabetes during pregnancy

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) at Montgomery County DHHS encourages community members to get screened and make healthy lifestyle choices. Residents can learn about local diabetes prevention and management programs through DHHS, Holy Cross Health, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and MedStar Montgomery. Talk with your healthcare provider about screening and available community resources.

Maryland Cabinet Joins Lt. Gov. ...

(Contd. from page 1)

The citation also recognizes Jayaraman for having “protected and defended” journalism, the “bedrock of democracy,” and by serving as a “trusted messenger, asking hard questions, seeking answers, and reminding us that truth-telling should never be silenced.”

“With honor, we are pleased to confer upon you this Governor’s Citation,” it states.

Reflecting on the recognition, Miller said, “Journalism is essential to a strong democracy, and Vishnu has dedicated his career to telling stories that inform, connect, and uplift communities.”

She noted, “As a fellow immigrant, I know how important it is for the South Asian community to see its stories told with accuracy and care,” adding, “I congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition and thank him for his continued commitment to the communities he serves.”

Secretary of State Susan Lee noted, “Over the years, Vishnu’s excellent reporting and work have been integral in highlighting the contributions and achievements of Indian Americans and the broader South Asian community in Maryland,” adding “This recognition is well deserved and reflects the meaningful impact of his journalism and community-focused work.”

Following the presentation of the citation, Secretary of Health Dr. Meena Seshamani congratulated Jayaraman at the State Capitol.

Secretary of General Services, Atif Chaudhry, noted “T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman has emerged as a leading

voice for the South Asian American community in Maryland and across the nation. I congratulate him on receiving the Governor’s Citation, presented by Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, in recognition of his outstanding service and contributions to the diaspora.”

Former Secretary of Higher Education Sanjay Rai described Jayaraman as a “globally recognized” journalist who has spent several years highlighting the “remarkable contributions” of South Asians at the local, state, and national levels.

“Through his thoughtful reporting, he has also highlighted the many opportunities and challenges facing the South Asian community,” Rai said. “Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller’s citation is a timely and well-deserved recognition of his outstanding journalistic contributions and his steadfast commitment to elevating the voices and achievements of the South Asian community.”

GCSAA Chair, Gurpreet Takhar, called the honor a “well-deserved” recognition from the Moore-Miller administration.

“Through his outstanding leadership as Editor-in-Chief of South Asian Herald, Jayaraman has created a trusted platform that keeps our community informed, connected, and inspired,” Takhar said. “His commitment to highlighting the achievements of South Asians including Indian Americans across America, while providing timely coverage of important global and community news, has made a lasting impact.”

Takhar also praised Jayaraman’s dedication to “strengthening” the community “through journalism” and wished him continued success.

Indian Americans Key to U.S. Growth: Bethany Morrison

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman

Underscoring the importance of the Indian American community in the United States, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Bethany Morrison described it as a “vibrant community” that has “contributed immensely” to the nation’s growth.

As the United States marks its 250th anniversary this year, Morrison said the Indian American community is an integral part of the country’s story.

Speaking at the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) Capitol Hill Day on June 23 at the U.S. Capitol, Morrison said she was fortunate to join the Trump administration in January and was especially pleased to be assigned to India and South Asia.

“I asked for it,” Morrison said, adding that she views the U.S.-India partnership as one of America’s most important relationships, a sentiment she said has been echoed repeatedly by Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

She also recalled President Donald Trump’s 2019 speech in Houston, where he highlighted the contributions of the Indian



Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Bethany Morrison, addressing the gathering on June 23, 2026, at the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC.

(Photo courtesy: T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman, SAH)

American community and emphasized the importance of U.S.-India cooperation in areas including trade, defense, and energy.

According to Morrison, Indian American leaders at major U.S. companies such as Microsoft, Google, IBM, and Adobe are playing a significant role in advancing the nation’s economic growth. “It’s undeniable,” she said.

Morrison also pointed to Indian Americans serving in senior positions across federal agencies, including the FBI and the National Institutes of Health, as well as Second Lady Usha Vance, as examples of the community’s influence on public policy and the nation’s future.

Reflecting on her recent visit to India alongside Secretary Rubio, Morrison described it as an

“intense trip” that produced “tangible results” aligned with the priorities of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump.

“It was result-oriented. We’re not measuring by meetings, we’re measuring by results,” she said.

Discussing the interim reciprocal trade framework announced by the United States and India in February 2026, Morrison said it was designed with the “intention” of ultimately concluding a historic trade agreement between the two countries.

“We are very, very close,” she said, adding that the agreement would open India’s 1.4 billion-person market to U.S. goods on terms that are “reciprocal and mutually beneficial.”

Morrison also reaffirmed the administration’s goal of expanding bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, saying the effort is being pursued with a “real sense of urgency.” She described 2025 as a “historic year” for U.S.-India trade relations.

“We rose bilateral trade for goods to 149 billion, that’s more than 20 million increase from 2024. US exports to India alone rose by 9.8%,” she said.

On investment ties, Morrison noted that Indian companies continue to increase their presence in the United States. She highlighted the recently concluded SelectUSA Investment Summit, which she said generated \$20 billion in announced investments from India, including \$1.1 billion in immediate commitments.

“That was actually the largest announcement in Select USA’s history,” she said.

Editorial



The Ugly Face of Bigotry

What happened in Frisco, Texas, cannot be dismissed as a random act or something perpetrated by fringe elements bordering on lunacy. The incidents that were highlighted as the lead item in the *South Asian Herald* last week are a wake-up call not just to the Indian or the South Asian communities but to America as a whole and what it stands for. Deeply disappointing in the developments at Frisco is that hostility has moved from social media and street corners to city council meetings where anti-India and anti-immigrant rants seem to be quite ordinary discourses in what are supposed to be debates on serious issues.

Outrageous still was an individual ripping apart the Flag of India to chants of anti-India slogans as if to imply the city's and state's problems can all be laid at the doorsteps of the Indian Americans who have come to be a part of the area's high-tech boom. For a long time, South Asians have been at the receiving end of abuses, only because they have done well by taking advantage of what is legitimately before them. The Indian American community has done exceedingly well in education thanks to the priority placed by family on the need to do well at the foundation stages in order to succeed in life.

To translate all this into some kind of an "invasion" or "cultural takeover" is just to miss the point. Fortunately for every bigot or redneck, millions of Americans truly believe in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society that has gone on to build a powerhouse in the comity of nations and as an example for others to emulate. But somehow, in an emotional moment, all this seems to have been given a pass; and some of the blame has to be taken by lawmakers for whipping up the bogey of "foreigners" somehow altering what America should or ought to be. For every group of legislators who condemn the "disgusting acts of racism," there are others who seem to care more about their vote bank and keep flagging extraneous issues as the source of the problem.

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The need of the hour is to find a way out of a difficult situation that seems to be spiraling out of control thanks to the deepening political divide between Republicans and Democrats. This is not the time to get into an esoteric debate of the fine differences between bigotry and racism, which is unlikely to solve the problem. Some stress that one way would be to toughen the Hate Crime laws; but many would argue that laws alone are not enough. A larger and saner discussion is required: that the search for a solution to the problem of millions of illegals cannot take the route of focusing on those here legally, or that somehow the H1Bs, the highly skilled visas, and the Practical Training Permits given to foreign students are the source of all the problems that face the country.



Opinion

G.Srinivasan
Senior Journalist and Columnist

From WTO to Spaghetti Bowl

Multilateralism is dead or in moribund state, but long live multilateralism is the new name of the game in geopolitical theatre nations are playing in full throttle, particularly the trade majors of the rich world and to a certain extent emerging economies including India. As of today, the world is riven and driven by the proliferation of the so-called Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between and among trading nations that they no longer come to believe in the rules-based world trading system so painstakingly built and bolstered in the post-war through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later in its second avatar the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the mid-1990s.

Sadly, trade fragmentation narrows opportunities for up-and-coming economies to find their feet in capturing markets for products in which they traditionally enjoyed competitive advantage. Way back in 1995 the celebrated economist Jagdish Bhagwati in a parody candidly criticized the "infatuation with FTAs by the U.S" as being paradoxically a futile and fruitless bid in promoting freer and more open global trade. He rightly excoriated that too many crisscrossing FTAs would permit nations to adopt discriminatory trade policies and prune the economic gains of trade.

He pertinently saw the entanglements of scores of FTAs with assorted rules, tariffs, and institutional arrangements as a "spaghetti bowl." Countless empirical studies confirmed the Spaghetti Bowl effect's veritable cost on countries' trade volumes and competitiveness. It is revealing to note that since the start of the 11 nations Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGAT), India's exports to ASEAN have gone from 18.11 billion dollars in 2009-2010 to 38.96 billion dollars in 2024-25, while in stark and substantive contrast, India's imports from ASEAN have zoomed from 25.8 billion dollars in 2009-10 to a whopping 84.16 billion dollars in 2024-25. Similar is the case with Japan and South Korea, where in the latter case India's exports to Korea have risen from 3.73 billion dollars in 2010-2011 to 5.92 billion dollars in 2024-25, whereas India's imports from Korea have rocketed from 10.46 billion dollars to 21.06 billion dollars in the comparable periods.

Keio University researchers in Japan studied as many as 132 countries and found that, although trade volumes were positively correlated with FTAs, the upshot was a heavy and

**IN FINE, FTAS ARE AN EXPEDIENT MEASURE AND
NO ANSWER TO INDIA'S FAILURE TO MARKET
AND PROMOTE PRODUCTS BY INNOVATIVE
APPROACHES.**

costly administrative burden flowing from the multiplicity of FTAs putting paid to the use of FTAs' preferential tariffs!

That India has of late been stitching several FTAs is widely known, particularly in the second coming of Donald Trump as the President of the United States when he unleashed a virtual war to make tariffs a weapon to penalize nations that run an adverse trade balance with the world's trade major, which includes India too. India had concluded as many as 16 FTAs from as far back as 2000 with Sri Lanka to the one concluded with New Zealand on December 22, 2025, and the European Union on January 27, 2026. To top it all is the declaration on February 7, 2026, that the U.S and India have zeroed in on a Framework for an Interim Agreement for reciprocal and mutually beneficial Trade Agreement, full details of which are yet to be out, although India faced the tariff tantrums of Trump from February last year as he turned truculent in his bid to Make America Great Again (MAGA). That the United States remained great as a unipolar power and earlier too when the world had a bipolar bloc with the erstwhile Soviet Union and its satellite nations ruling the roost became history after 2008 when the global financial meltdown struck the global economy with the world's power structure splintering as China too began muscling in the meantime!

In fine, FTAs are an expedient measure and no answer to India's failure to market and promote products by innovative approaches. FTAs only complicate matters by rules of origin (ROO) technicalities, heavy compliance cost, open trade distortion slant, and exclusion of small and medium enterprises that could otherwise take part in the export gambit with gusto when rules remain simple and practical. It is also impractical to expect trading partners of FTAs to invest in India or vice versa, as in the case of the United States seeking humongous sums.

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



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From Boston Harbor to Big Tech: South Asians and America's Journey



(Photo courtesy: AI generated)

R. Suryamurthy

In one of history's great ironies, America was discovered because a European explorer was looking for India.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed westward in search of a shorter sea route to the riches of India—its spices, textiles and trade. He never reached the subcontinent. Instead, he stumbled upon an unknown continent to Europeans and changed the course of world history.

More than five centuries later, as the United States marks the 250th anniversary of its independence, that historical accident offers a powerful reminder: India and the broader South Asian region have been intertwined with America's story from the very beginning.

Long before Silicon Valley CEOs, Indian-American lawmakers and South Asian entrepreneurs became symbols of modern America, the subcontinent was already influencing the forces that created the United States itself.

The tea that ignited the Boston Tea Party came through the British East India Company. The imperial practices perfected in Bengal became cautionary tales for American revolutionaries. The wealth extracted from India helped finance the British Empire that the thirteen colonies eventually rebelled against.

Today, 250 years after the American Revolution, the descendants of the very region Columbus sought to claim have become one of the most influential communities in the United States—leading technology giants, shaping public

policy, driving scientific innovation, and increasingly defining the future relationship between Washington and South Asia.

This is not merely an immigration story.

It is a story about how a region once viewed by the West as a distant colony became an indispensable pillar of American economic, technological and political power.

THE SUBCONTINENT IN AMERICA'S FOUNDING STORY

The traditional American independence narrative rarely mentions South Asia.

It should.

The British East India Company, whose monopoly over tea sales enraged American colonists, stood at the centre of one of the most consequential events leading to the Revolution—the Boston Tea Party of 1773.

For many American revolutionaries, India represented a warning.

They saw how the East India Company had transformed Bengal into a source of immense wealth through political control and economic exploitation. Thinkers such as Thomas Paine argued that Britain's conduct in India demonstrated what unchecked imperial power could become.

Even militarily, the Indian subcontinent shaped the wider struggle. Britain was simultaneously fighting costly wars against the Kingdom of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, forcing London to divide resources across continents. The story of American independence, therefore, was never

exclusively American. It was part of a larger global contest in which India played a largely forgotten role.

AMERICA BECOMES A CLASSROOM FOR INDIAN NATIONALISTS

As the nineteenth century progressed, the influence began flowing in the opposite direction.

American thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau drew inspiration from Indian philosophy. Decades later, Mahatma Gandhi would cite Thoreau's writings on civil disobedience as an important influence on his own political thought.

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago and delivered a speech that transformed American perceptions of India. His opening words—"Sisters and Brothers of America"—received a standing ovation and introduced millions of Americans to Indian spiritual traditions.

The United States soon became an important platform for Indian nationalism.

Lala Lajpat Rai toured America seeking support for India's freedom movement. The Ghadar Party, founded in California in 1913, mobilized Indian immigrants against British rule and transformed the American West Coast into a centre of anti-colonial activism.

By the time India achieved independence in 1947, American democratic ideals had already left a profound imprint on Indian political thought, while Indian intellectuals and activists had spent decades engaging American society.

THE COMMUNITY THAT OUTPERFORMED EVERY EXPECTATION

The real transformation began after America's immigration reforms of 1965.

When highly skilled migrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal began arriving in larger numbers, few predicted they would become one of the most successful immigrant groups in American history.

Today, South Asians account for less than 2 percent of the U.S. population but exercise influence that far exceeds their demographic weight.

Indian Americans alone number more than 5 million.

Their median household income exceeds \$150,000 annually—among the highest of any ethnic group in America.

Nearly 80 percent hold bachelor's degrees or higher.

South Asians are disproportionately represented in medicine, engineering, finance, academia and entrepreneurship.

Their success is not confined to individual achievement.

It has reshaped entire sectors of the American economy.

THE CEOS RUNNING CORPORATE AMERICA

No immigrant community has had a more visible impact on modern corporate America.

At a time when technology defines geopolitical power, some of the world's most influential companies are led by executives of South Asian origin.

Sundar Pichai oversees Google and its parent company Alphabet.

Satya Nadella leads Microsoft.

Arvind Krishna heads IBM.

Shantanu Narayen runs Adobe.

Together, these firms influence everything from artificial intelligence and cloud computing to cybersecurity and digital communications.

Their combined market value runs into trillions of dollars.

The irony is difficult to miss.

The descendants of people once governed by British colonial rule now lead companies that define the digital infrastructure of the modern world.

FROM ELLIS ISLAND TO CAPITOL HILL

Political influence followed economic success.

The election of Vice President Kamala Harris marked a historic milestone for South Asian representation in American politics.

Today, lawmakers such as Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Ami Bera play influential roles in debates over technology, trade, national security and foreign policy.

South Asians are increasingly found not only in boardrooms but also in the institutions where American power is exercised.

THE NEXT 25 YEARS

As America enters its second quarter millennium, the South Asian story is entering a new phase.

The first generation came seeking opportunity.

The second built wealth and influence.

The third is beginning to shape institutions.

India is expected to become one of the world's three largest economies within the next decade. South Asian Americans already occupy key positions in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, clean energy and advanced manufacturing—the industries likely to define the global balance of power in the twenty-first century.

At the same time, more than 300,000 Indian students study in American universities, while thousands of entrepreneurs, scientists and investors move between the United States and South Asia each year.

The relationship is no longer simply about immigration.

It is about co-creating the future.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Columbus sailed in search of India and accidentally found America.

Today, America's future may be shaped in part by the descendants of the very people he was trying to reach. That is not merely a historical irony. It is one of the defining geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century.



Dhanayoga

Sethu Venkataraman
Personal Finance Consultant

Managing Debt for Financial Freedom

Debt is an integral part of modern life. Whether it is buying a home, purchasing a vehicle, funding higher education, starting a business, or even financing a vacation, borrowing has become commonplace. Used wisely, debt can help build wealth and improve quality of life. Used carelessly, it can become a major source of financial stress and limit long-term prosperity.

Understanding Good and Bad Debt

Not all debt is the same. The key is to distinguish between debt that creates value and debt that erodes wealth.

Good debt finances assets that appreciate or generate income. Examples include a home loan for a rental property, a business loan that expands operations, or an education loan that enhances future earning potential. Such borrowing, when managed prudently, can strengthen your financial position.

Bad debt, on the other hand, finances depreciating assets or short-lived consumption. Credit card debt used for discretionary spending, loans for luxury cars, or borrowing to fund vacations often create liabilities without generating future income. High interest costs can quickly turn these into long-term financial burdens.

The Cost of Unmanaged Debt

Excessive debt affects more than finances. It creates stress, reduces financial flexibility, and can derail long-term goals. Constant repayment pressure, late payment charges, and rising interest costs

often leave families trapped in a cycle that becomes increasingly difficult to break.

As a rule of thumb, keep your debt-to-income ratio below 40 per cent. If monthly debt repayments consume a larger share of your income, it is time to reassess your borrowing and spending habits.

Practical Ways to Reduce Debt

A disciplined approach can significantly accelerate debt repayment.

First, consider monetising investments that earn less than the interest you pay on borrowings. Holding an investment yielding 3 per cent while servicing credit card debt at 18 per cent rarely makes financial sense.

Next, dispose of idle assets such as unused jewellery or other valuables and direct the proceeds towards reducing high-cost debt.

As your salary or business income grows, increase your savings instead of your lifestyle. Channel every increment towards faster debt repayment.

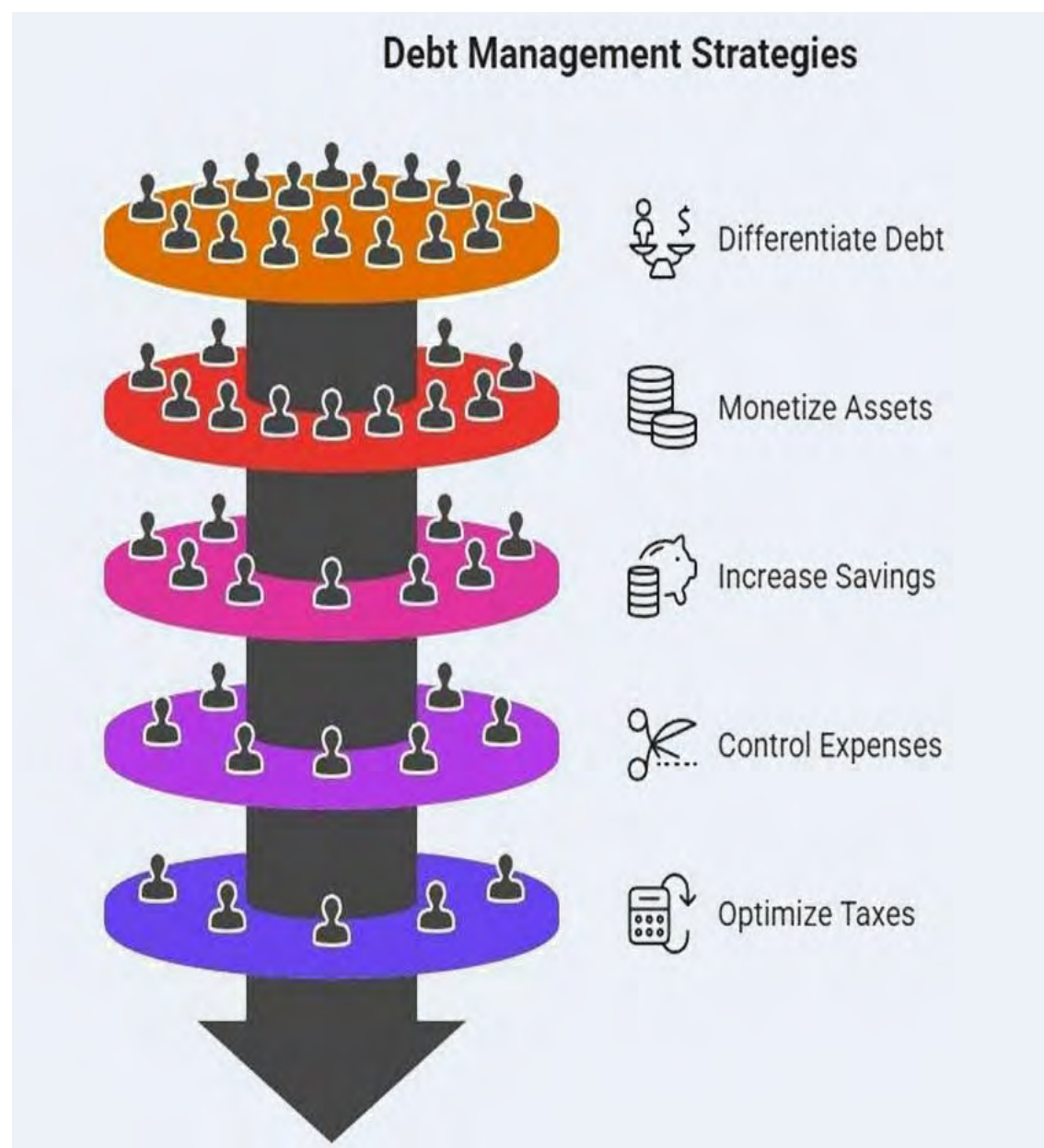
Equally important is controlling expenses. Track spending carefully, eliminate unnecessary expenditure, and redirect the resulting surplus to outstanding loans.

Review your tax planning as well. Legitimate tax optimization strategies can generate additional savings that may be used to reduce debt.

Maintain adequate liquidity for emergencies, but avoid keeping excessive idle cash while paying high interest on loans. If possible, refinance expensive borrowings with lenders offering lower interest rates or better repayment terms.

warning that airlines are moving from a growth-driven phase to one focused on protecting margins amid mounting operating costs.

ICRA has revised its domestic passenger traffic growth forecast for FY2027 to 3-6 per cent from an earlier estimate of 6-8 per cent, while trimming international traffic growth projections for Indian carriers to 0-3 per cent from 8-10 per cent. It now expects the industry's net losses to widen to Rs 36,000-



Finally, examine major household expenses such as housing, transport and food. Even modest savings across these categories can substantially improve your repayment capacity.

Managing the Risks

Even good debt carries risks. Job loss, business setbacks, poor health or disability can disrupt repayment plans. Adequate health and life insurance therefore become essential components of responsible debt management. Borrow only after considering your ability to service repayments under adverse circumstances.

Lessons from Real Life

Consider three common situations. Ramesh steadily repaid

his home loan by making regular additional payments, building valuable equity and achieving financial security ahead of schedule.

Priya accumulated large credit card balances through lifestyle spending. Only after consolidating her debt, preparing a disciplined budget and seeking professional guidance did she regain financial control.

Suresh borrowed heavily to expand his business, but unforeseen market changes affected revenues, leaving him unable to service the loan. His experience underscores the importance of balancing ambition with prudent risk assessment.

The Bottom Line

Debt is neither inherently good nor

bad; its impact depends on how it is used and managed. Borrowing that creates productive assets can accelerate wealth creation, while borrowing for consumption can weaken financial stability.

The path to financial freedom lies in disciplined spending, strategic debt reduction, and careful risk management. Working with a competent personal finance advisor can help you develop a customised debt repayment strategy, optimise cash flows, and build a stronger financial future with greater peace of mind.

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

India's Airlines Brace for Profit Squeeze as Costs Outpace Traffic Growth

SAH Staff Reporter

India's aviation sector is heading into FY2027 with strong passenger demand but weakening profitability, as rising fuel costs, a weaker rupee and geopolitical disruptions threaten to outweigh gains in traffic growth, according to separate assessments by ICRA and Crisil Ratings.

The two rating agencies have lowered their outlook for the industry,

warning that airlines are moving from a growth-driven phase to one focused on protecting margins amid mounting operating costs.

ICRA has revised its domestic passenger traffic growth forecast for FY2027 to 3-6 per cent from an earlier estimate of 6-8 per cent, while trimming international traffic growth projections for Indian carriers to 0-3 per cent from 8-10 per cent. It now expects the industry's net losses to widen to Rs 36,000-

38,000 crore (\$4.2-4.4 billion), compared with an estimated Rs 32,000-34,000 crore (\$3.7-4.0 billion) in FY2026. Crisil projects aggregate operating profits of domestic airlines to decline 10-15 per cent to Rs 16,000-17,000 crore (\$1.9-2.0 billion) this fiscal from around Rs 19,000 crore (\$2.2 billion) last year. The agency attributed the decline to higher aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices, rupee depreciation and longer flying routes caused

by airspace restrictions.

"The surge in global fuel prices following the onset of the conflict has increased the operating cost of airlines significantly. Even with the expected moderation in fuel prices, they will remain above the levels of last fiscal. Coupled with currency-related pressures, this will push up the overall cost per available seat kilometre (CASK, excluding forex) to Rs 4.8-5.0 per km this fiscal," said Deputy Chief Ratings Officer, Crisil

Ratings, Manish Gupta.

Fuel accounts for 40-50 per cent of airline operating costs, while a weaker rupee has inflated dollar-denominated expenses such as aircraft leases and maintenance.

Despite the cost pressures, passenger demand remains resilient. Domestic traffic reached 15.64 million passengers in May, up 11.3 per cent year-on-year, with passenger load factors nearing 89 per cent, according to ICRA.

However, both agencies cautioned that unless fuel prices ease and geopolitical tensions subside, India's airlines could face another year of shrinking margins despite carrying record numbers of passengers.

The Voice That Defined Generations

Rajiv Vijayakar

She was blessed by no less than Lata Mangeshkar. Technically, her voice has been around since 1980—*Thirkat ang in Payal Ki Jhankaar*, composed by Rajkamal and written by Maya Govind, was her first recorded song, when she was just 13 years old.

Alka Yagnik, in a career of 40-plus years, has sung it all. Her mother Shubha used to be an Indian classical singer. From the age of six, Yagnik began singing for All-India Radio, Kolkata. In 1976, her mother brought her to Mumbai to become a child singer, but an impressed composer Laxmikant(-Pyarelal) told her that she could wait or start out as a child singer now and probably lose out later when her voice matured, as happened with the majority of ‘child singers’ who never went anywhere.

Now a winner of two National awards and many more encomiums and honors, the multi-lingual singer began to train under Kalyanji-Anandji, while her first major and adult recording was for Rajesh Roshan, *Hum tum rahenge akele*, very interestingly in a film called *Hamari Bahu Alka*. But her true breakthrough song was *Mere angne mein* from *Laawaris* (1981) under Kalyanji-Anandji. And in 1988, with Laxmikant-Pyarelal’s cult *Ek do teen char* from *Tezaab* and the songs of Anand-Milind’s *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, she hit it big.

Now a voice that has lip-synched songs for artistes from Sharmila Tagore and Hema Malini to Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt and recorded with Kishore Kumar, Mahendra Kapoor and even Asha Bhosle all the way to Sunidhi Chauhan and Arijit Singh, her voice has transcended generations of composers as well. Shankar(-Jaikishan) and Khayyam have recorded with her and so have today composers Pritam and Sandesh Shandilya.

Yagnik has stayed away from



(Photo courtesy: Instagram / Alka Yagnik)

public appearances since she was diagnosed with a rare hearing disorder almost two years ago. But she personally received the Padma Bhushan, India’s third-highest civilian honor, from President Droupadi Murmu on June 23, and though she walked on to the stage with some assistance, she left the venue in a wheelchair.

“Thank you for your love, concern and countless good wishes. I have seen the concern surrounding a video from the ceremony and

would like to assure everyone that I am well and progressing positively in my recovery,” she wrote on social media. She revealed that she had been exhausted after engagements connected to the prestigious honor.

Yagnik has been battling Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SNHL), a form of hearing impairment triggered by a viral attack. The delicate structures inside the inner ear, particularly hair cells within the cochlea and even the auditory

nerve that carries sound signals to the brain, become damaged. The condition may affect one ear or both and can develop gradually or occur suddenly. With her, the hearing loss was reportedly linked to a viral attack.

Being at her peak in that phase of Hindi cinema when duets were predominant, Yagnik got comparatively less solos to her credit. But we mention some of the standout ones here: *Usska naam hai piya* from *Paap*

Devataa, *Subah hui* from *Woh Tera Naam Tha*, *Gali mein aaj chand nikla* from *Zakhm* and the six solos she had in *Umrao Jaan*.

Alak Yagnik’s other landmarks in Hindi cinema

1. *Saat sahelian khadi khadi / Vidhaata*
2. *Aye mere humsafar / Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*
3. *So gaya yeh jahaan / Tezaab*
4. *Gali Gali mein / Tridev*
5. *Dekha hai pehli baar / Saajan*
6. *Aisi deewangi / Deewana*
7. *Tu na jaa mere Badshah / Khuda Gawah*
8. *Tu mere saath saath / Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman*
9. *Waada raha sanam / Khiladi*
10. *Baazigar o baazigar / Baazigar*
11. *Ghunghat ki adh se / Hum Hain Rahi Pyaar Ke*
12. *Choli ke peeche / Khal-Nayak*
13. *Churake dil mera / Main Khiladi Tu Anari*
14. *Tip tip barsa pani / Mohra*
15. *Main to raste se jaa raha tha / Coolie No. 1*
16. *Jaati hoon main / Karan Arjun*
17. *Ankhiyan milaon / Raja*
18. *Tum mile / Criminal*
19. *Baahon ke darmiyaan / Khamoshi*
20. *Pardesi pardesi / Raja Hindustani*
21. *Main koi aisa geet gaaoon / Yes Boss*
22. *Chhamma chhamma / China Gate*
23. *Aati kya Khandala / Ghulam*
24. *Tum paas aaye / Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*
25. *Odh li chunariya / Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya*
26. *Kaho naa pyaar hai / Kaho Naa...Pyaar Hai*
27. *Udd jaa kaale kaawan / Gadar—Ek Prem Katha*
28. *Bole chudiyan / Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...*
29. *Bakhuda tumhi ho / Kismat Konnection*
30. *Agar tum saath ho / Tamasha*

Entertainment Round Up

Dada’s Biopic Delayed

Former India captain and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly has disclosed that his upcoming biopic, starring Rajkumar Rao as the cricketer icon, will now be released in April rather than December 2026, as previously speculated.

“The film will actually be released in April. About 75 per cent of the shooting has already been completed. The remaining 25 per cent will be shot in England. We are likely to shoot at Lord’s, The Oval and Yorkshire in July. After that, post-production will take quite some time. So, the

release has been pushed to April,” revealed Ganguly. (UNI)

Myth Meets Mystery

Anirudh Pisharody has wrapped up the production of “Chronos,” an ambitious independent thriller that sees the “Never Have I Ever” star share the screen with Tongayi Chirisa in a gripping tale where ancient mythology collides with contemporary suspense.

The film is directed by Gianinni Semedo Moreira and was shot against the picturesque backdrop of Greece. The film follows a father who, when his family disappears on a Greek beach, is lured by an ancient device to a hidden island trail. Partnered with a fallen god of time and hunted by the goddess

of fate, he must reach Olympus before the gods erase the people he loves, reports DEADLINE. Eleni Sotiropoulou and Lisa Morrell are also set to star. (UNI)

Millie Eyes Bollywood

“Stranger Things” famed Millie Bobby Brown has revealed that a Bollywood film is something she would gladly sign up for, saying she has long dreamed of visiting India and would welcome the chance to work in the country’s vibrant film industry.

“Absolutely. I’ll never say no. India is on my bucket list. I really, really want to go,” she shared enthusiastically to Variety India. Far from being daunted by Bollywood’s trademark song-and-dance routines, Brown said she would relish the experience. Asked whether she would be prepared for elaborate

dance sequences, Brown responded with excitement, saying she loves to dance. She also shared that although she is willing to explore any genre, comedy is particularly close to her heart, adding that she considers herself naturally funny and would love to showcase that side of her personality on screen. (UNI)

Inside Mollywood

Acclaimed Malayalam film Mollywood Times, which offers a behind-the-scenes look at the Malayalam film industry and its complex realities, will begin streaming on July 3.

Written by Ramu Sunil and directed by Abhinav Sunder Nayak, the film is produced by Ashiq Usman under the banner of Ashiq Usman Productions.

The film revolves around Vineeth Madhavan, an aspiring filmmaker determined to make a debut feature that earns a lasting place in the history of Malayalam cinema. His pursuit of that dream unfolds amid industry politics, creative conflicts, professional setbacks, and deeply personal struggles, offering an insightful portrayal of the realities behind filmmaking.

Naslen plays the lead role, while the ensemble cast includes Sharafudheen, Vineeth Sreenivasan, Sanjeeth Prathap, Prasanth Alexander, Jagadish, Chandu Salimkumar, and Gopika Ramesh in pivotal roles. Basil Joseph also makes a special appearance. (UNI)



Monthly Horoscope

JULY 2026

BY ASTROLOGER MANISHA KUSHIK

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Aries (Mar 21–Apr 20)

July puts you in a stronger position professionally, allowing you to take charge of situations that may have felt uncertain recently. Your confidence can help you make progress, but avoid reacting too quickly to criticism or workplace politics. A family member may turn to you for guidance on an important matter. In relationships, choosing the right words at the right time will make all the difference. Financially, the month remains steady, though major property decisions may require additional thought. Pay attention to recurring health concerns rather than putting them off.

Taurus (Apr 21–May 20)

A desire for new experiences could inspire travel plans or a welcome change of routine. Family celebrations, gatherings, or important milestones bring warmth and happiness to your home life. If you are single, conversations about commitment or marriage may begin moving in a positive direction. Financial matters remain stable, although risky investments may not produce the results you hope for. A chance meeting or unexpected connection could leave a lasting impression on your heart. Students and young professionals' benefit from keeping their long-term goals firmly in focus.

Gemini (May 21–Jun 21)

Your ability to connect with people opens important doors this month. Conversations, meetings, and networking opportunities may lead to promising professional developments. Those working in technology, communications, media, or creative industries are especially well-positioned to benefit from new learning opportunities. Financially, smart decisions and additional income sources can improve your outlook. Friends and colleagues are likely to value your advice and support. A new romantic interest could develop unexpectedly and gain momentum faster than anticipated.

Cancer (Jun 22–Jul 22)

July encourages you to protect your time and energy more carefully. While helping others comes naturally to you, setting healthy boundaries will prevent unnecessary stress. Work responsibilities may increase, requiring better organization and patience. A financial obligation or expense may need closer attention than usual.

Encouraging news at home brings emotional comfort and helps strengthen family relationships. Those hoping for greater emotional connection or companionship may receive a welcome sign that they are moving in the right direction.

Leo (Jul 23–Aug 23)

Preparation becomes your greatest advantage this month. Whether you are presenting ideas, negotiating, or making important decisions, being well-informed gives you a clear edge. Your efforts are likely to attract positive attention from supervisors or influential people. Financially, the outlook remains encouraging, with some Leos finding opportunities to increase earnings. Relationships benefit from patience and understanding. Travel plans may come together unexpectedly and provide a refreshing break from routine. Avoid letting temporary frustrations affect important decisions.

Virgo (Aug 24–Sep 23)

July brings a renewed sense of confidence and direction. Professional matters begin to feel more manageable, especially as cooperation improves with colleagues and decision-makers. Financially, thoughtful planning can lead to long-term gains, particularly in investments or property-related matters. Family life offers comfort, even if minor disagreements arise from time to time. Health improvements are likely when you stay consistent with positive habits. In relationships, reliability and genuine effort will speak louder than dramatic gestures.

Libra (Sep 24–Oct 23)

Communication plays a central role this month. Speaking up may be necessary in both professional and personal situations, but diplomacy remains your strongest asset. Financial responsibilities could require adjustments to spending habits, making practical decisions especially important. A matter involving a child or younger family member may need more of your attention. Career progress continues steadily, provided you avoid becoming discouraged by temporary delays. Honest conversations help strengthen relationships and clear up misunderstandings.

Scorpio (Oct 24–Nov 22)

You may find yourself reflecting on what truly matters and making changes that better align with your

goals. While not everyone immediately understands your decisions, your determination will ultimately earn respect. Work becomes more engaging as you explore new approaches or responsibilities. Property matters may move slower than expected, requiring patience. Financial discipline remains important if you are planning a major purchase or investment. Emotionally, you may need more personal space than usual, and loved ones are likely to respect that.

Sagittarius (Nov 23–Dec 21)

Recognition for your hard work is likely to arrive this month. Professional accomplishments may boost both confidence and visibility. Property-related decisions appear favorable, and some may move forward with a purchase, sale, or investment. Family concerns can be addressed successfully through guidance rather than pressure. A relationship that has fallen into a predictable routine may benefit from fresh energy and shared

experiences. Taking initiative remains the key to progress, especially when others are slow to act.

Capricorn (Dec 22–Jan 21)

Positive change begins to take shape, especially when you remain open to new possibilities. Your practical mindset helps you resolve lingering issues and create opportunities for future growth. Financial matters appear stable, allowing you to focus on saving, investing, or planning ahead. Efforts to improve your health and fitness may finally start producing noticeable results. Family relationships remain supportive, while romance benefits from greater trust and understanding. Travel may bring both enjoyment and valuable new perspectives.

Aquarius (Jan 22–Feb 19)

July rewards patience, persistence, and originality. If you have been working hard behind the scenes, recognition may finally come your way. Family gatherings

or reunions bring a welcome sense of connection and belonging. Creative ideas and innovative thinking help you stand out professionally. Financial opportunities expand when you recognize your own potential and act on it. Health matters show signs of improvement, helping you feel more energized and optimistic about the future.

Pisces (Feb 20–Mar 20)

Clear thinking and effective communication help you move forward with confidence this month. Workplace relationships improve as misunderstandings are resolved and expectations become clearer. Your efforts are likely to gain attention from people in positions of authority. Financially, the results of earlier decisions begin to work in your favor, bringing greater stability. Spiritual practices, reflection, or time spent in peaceful surroundings help restore balance. Family and romantic relationships flourish when you remain genuine, present, and open-hearted.



Soul Talk

Chhavi Upadhyay
Life Coach and Mentor

Confusion Is Loud, Intuition Isn't

Once saw a friend take forty minutes to decide what to order at a restaurant. She read the menu three times. She asked the waiter what he recommended. She asked the table what we were having. She narrowed it down to two dishes, then four, then back to two. By the time she finally ordered, she looked exhausted.

Halfway through her meal, she put down her fork and said, almost to herself, "I knew I wanted the pasta the whole time."

I think about that moment often because it's such a small, harmless version of something most of us do with the wider choices in our lives.

We call it confusion. But often, it isn't.

Confusion has a particular texture. It's loud. It's busy. It feels like many voices talking at once — what your parents would say, what's practical, what you're

afraid of, what other people have done, who you used to be, who you think you should be. All of them, talking over each other, in your head.

Intuition sounds nothing like that. It's usually one voice. Quiet. It doesn't argue or defend itself. It just says the thing, simply, often before you've finished asking the question.

The trouble is, intuition is often the first thing we hear and the last thing we trust. It speaks once, gently, then steps back. Confusion arrives a moment later, much louder, and convinces us that the quiet voice couldn't possibly have been right because it didn't show its working.

Most of us were raised to trust the loud voices—the ones with reasons, with pros and cons lists, with an air of responsibility. So, when intuition speaks in a single sentence with no footnotes, we dismiss

it as just a feeling — as if feelings were unreliable, and analysis was somehow more honest.

But analysis can lie. It can dress up avoidance in the language of prudence. Intuition rarely lies, because it has nothing to gain from lying. It's just telling you what it knows.

Here's a small test. When you ask yourself a difficult question, notice what arrives in the first two seconds. That fast, almost reflexive answer — before the mind organizes itself — is usually intuition. Everything after, all the but what about and on the other hand, is usually confusion talking you out of what you already knew.

Intuition won't hand you a five-year plan. It gives you the next step — small, specific, immediate. It trusts you to take it and find out the rest as you go.

So, the next time you feel confused, get quiet. Not to think harder. To think less. Ask the question once and notice what arrives before the noise does.

You might find you weren't confused at all. You just hadn't permitted your self to trust the quiet voice that answered first.

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



Beyond the Mat

Mitabh Saud*Communication Expert, Certified Yoga and Meditation Teacher.*

Concentration Is a Con Artist

Recently, while listening to a podcast on space science, someone on the panel described Elon Musk's contribution and state of mind as "Zero per cent noise."

The zero per cent noise state - or the flow state, as we commonly call it - is something we all experience. When we're working on a project we love, reading something that pulls us in, or solving a problem that lights up the brain, time dissolves.

Flow doesn't happen by accident. It needs the right subject, the right mood, the right environment. And while we don't need to live in that state all the time to survive, the uncomfortable reality is that the ability to enter deep focus on demand is what separates the good from the great.

So how is this relevant for a yoga column?

Yoga is not just a health practice. Beyond the familiar asana and pranayama lie six other limbs that shape how we think, behave and direct our attention. Among them is *Dharana*, the sixth limb - the practice of cultivating concentration. Patanjali defines it as binding the mind to a single point. In modern language, it is the mental training that makes flow possible.

And we need that training more

than ever. The average mind today is highly distractible, and our digital environments have collapsed attention spans. Research from UC Irvine shows that the average screen-focus duration has dropped to 47 seconds - a dramatic fall from 2.5 minutes in the early 2000s. Concentration is no longer a spiritual ideal - it is a skill we need if we want to thrive.

Two simple practices can help rebuild it. First, a playful one - a modification to meet the urban need - poop meditation. Stick a bindi or draw a small dot on the wall opposite your toilet. Instead of scrolling, simply gaze at the dot. A minute or two of steady visual focus each morning quietly strengthens attention.

Second, Nadi Shodhana before bed. Close your right nostril, inhale through the left; switch sides and exhale. Then inhale through the right, switch, and exhale through the left. A few rounds calm the nerves, improve sleep, and sharpen concentration the next day.

The con artist will keep playing the game unless you rig the playing field - the mind - and it's your game to lose.

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Indian-American Nonprofit Bridges Minnesota and Rural India

Vijendra Agarwal

For the past decade, Minnesota-based nonprofit Vidya Gyan has expanded educational opportunities for young people while recognizing academic excellence on both sides of the globe. Since 2015, it has worked closely with its sister organization, Vidya Gyan India, to improve learning outcomes in rural government schools through initiatives focused on reading, writing and holistic student development.

Marking its tenth anniversary and celebrating a "Dynamic Decade of Impact," the organization introduced the inaugural VIDYA Scholarship for outstanding graduating seniors from public high schools across Minnesota's Twin Cities. The awards were presented at Milan Hindu Mandir in the presence of students, families, community leaders and supporters.

The Sanskrit word *Vidya* signifies education, knowledge and learning. It also stands for Vision for Inclusive Development of Young Aspirants, reflecting the organization's mission to nurture future leaders through education and character.

The first scholarship cohort comprised ten exceptional students heading to some of America's leading universities. They were selected for academic excellence, leadership, resilience, community service and a commitment to creating positive change. Applicants were required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.8 and submit an essay on either applying the principles of *Dharma* in today's world or describing a time they chose what was right over what was easy.

The essays impressed the selection committee with their maturity, originality and integrity, making the final choice highly competitive. Each recipient received a \$500 scholarship and a

Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Beat the Heat Without Melting Makeup

It may be the last leg of summer, but the relentless heat-wave continues to test both skin and makeup. Regardless of your skin type, heat, sweat, and excess oil can cause makeup to melt, fade, and lose its fresh finish.

While sunshine may seem inviting, prolonged heat can leave skin dehydrated, dull, and prone to perspiration. The key is to heat-proof your makeup with lightweight, long-lasting products that stay put throughout the day.

Waterproof essentials are a must. Waterproof eyeliner, mascara, kajal, and concealer resist sweat and humidity, while a lip pencil helps prevent lipstick from feathering, keeping your look intact with fewer touch-ups.

CHOOSE LIGHTWEIGHT FORMULAS

In extreme heat, maintaining your skin's balance is more important than heavy coverage. Replace powder products with lightweight creams, liquids, and gels that blend seamlessly

into the skin. Liquid makeup provides breathable, sweat-resistant coverage, while cream formulas work well for dry skin if lightly set with powder.

Start with an oil-free gel moisturizer containing lightweight humectants to hydrate without clogging pores. Waterproof eye makeup will keep your eyes looking fresh all day, even in high humidity.

PERFECT YOUR APPLICATION

Summer makeup is all about thin, even layers. Heavy foundation is more likely to melt and settle into fine lines, so choose a lightweight, long-wearing formula that hydrates without feeling greasy.

Apply makeup with a beauty sponge dampened with cold water rather than a brush. This creates a thinner, more natural-looking layer that adheres better to the skin. Building coverage gradually helps makeup last longer.

TOUCH UP THE RIGHT WAY

Avoid applying fresh makeup over melted makeup. First, remove excess oil with blotting papers or

a tissue to restore a clean surface. Then refresh your look with a light application of makeup if needed.

Carry a compact touch-up kit with blotting papers and a mini setting spray. A quick spritz during the day revives makeup without making it look heavy or cakey.

CHOOSE LIP STAINS

Lip stains are ideal for hot weather because they provide lightweight, long-lasting color without the heaviness of traditional lipstick. They absorb into the lips, resist smudging, and often last through meals and drinks with minimal fading.

For added shine, layer a lip balm or gloss over the stain. When it's time to remove it, use micellar water, an oil-based makeup remover, or even olive oil.

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



(Photo courtesy: Vijendra Agarwal)

Certificate of Achievement.

Vidya Gyan simultaneously launched the scholarship program in rural India, recognizing ten outstanding eighth-grade students from government schools. The scholarships will support their education through Grades 9-12, subject to continued academic performance, while providing mentorship and encouragement during their formative years.

The twin initiatives underscore Vidya Gyan's belief that talent exists everywhere and that opportunity, guidance and mentorship can unlock lasting potential.

Reflecting on the milestone, the organization's co-founders said, "Whether in rural India or here in Minnesota, we have learned that young people flourish when someone believes in their potential. The VIDYA Scholarship reflects our

commitment to encouraging talented students who will become thoughtful leaders and responsible citizens."

As Vidya Gyan enters its second decade, it aims to continue building bridges between Minnesota and rural India by investing in young leaders whose learning, service and character promise to make a lasting difference.

Roots & Rights



Sonam Chandwani
Managing Partner, KS Legal & Associates

What H-1B Workers Can Legally Do

A person holding H-1B status is generally permitted to own or invest in a business in the United States. However, the immigration framework distinguishes between passive ownership and the active performance of services. In my view, if the individual conducts all operational activities while physically present in his or her country of citizenship and does not perform work for that enterprise while in the United States, the arrangement is less likely to conflict with H-1B restrictions. Nevertheless, the issue is highly fact-specific because U.S. immigration authorities focus on where services are rendered and whether the individual is engaging in unauthorized employment. Careful structuring and documentation are advisable to ensure compliance with applicable immigration laws and regulations.

Organizations employing foreign nationals commonly utilize several visa categories depending upon the nature of the role and the employee's qualifications. The H-1B classification is generally used for speciality occupations requiring specialized knowledge. The L-1 category facilitates intra-company transfers of executives, managers and employees possessing specialized knowledge. The O-1 visa is available to individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary ability in their respective fields. TN status is used for eligible Canadian and Mexican professionals under applicable trade arrangements. E visas are frequently utilized for treaty traders and investors, while J-1 classifications are employed for exchange visitors participating in approved training and cultural programs. Certain employers also sponsor permanent residence through employment-based immigrant categories where long-term retention is contemplated.

Q Can I start a US-based online company while on H-1b as long as I operate/work on it while in my home country of citizenship?

A You can own a U.S. company as a passive investor, but you cannot actively work for, manage, or perform any operational tasks for it while on an H-1B unless that company is your official H-1B sponsor. Even if you are outside the U.S., performing active work for your own business risks violating your visa status and creating significant legal and tax complications; therefore, you should consult an immigration attorney to ensure your activities remain strictly passive.

Q Could you please provide information regarding the standard visa classifications any organization utilizes for international employees?

A U.S. organizations typically sponsor international employees using non-immigrant work visas such as the H-1B for specialty occupations requiring a degree, L-1 for intracompany transfers of managers or specialized experts, and O-1 for individuals with extraordinary abilities. Other specific categories include the TN visa for Canadian and Mexican professionals, the E-series for treaty traders and investors, and the J-1 or H-3 for trainees and exchange visitors. These processes generally require the employer to file a petition with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to demonstrate that the candidate meets the specific eligibility criteria for the role, and in some cases, employers must also obtain labor certification from the Department of Labor to ensure the hiring does not adversely affect local wages.

Q I have an urgent professional commitment that requires me to be in the United States. Could you please advise on the procedure for requesting an expedited visa interview appointment?

A To request an expedited visa interview for urgent professional travel, you must first schedule the earliest available regular appointment within the official visa portal to satisfy the system's prerequisites. Once this booking is secured, you may access your profile dashboard to submit an "Emergency" or "Expedite" request, providing a comprehensive justification for the necessity of your travel. It is imperative to append verifiable documentation, such as a formal letter from your organization, which substantiates the urgency of the commitment and outlines the potential for significant commercial, financial, or operational detriment should your attendance be precluded. Upon review, if the consular section deems your request meritorious, you will receive an electronic notification authorizing you to reschedule your appointment to an expedited time slot.

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Skillet Mexican Street Corn (Esquites)

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



Smoky skillet-charred street corn topped with crumbled Cotija cheese. (Photo courtesy: AI-generated)

Arti M. Patel

Bring the vibrant flavors of open-air markets straight to your table with this Skillet Mexican Street Corn. Commonly known as Esquites, this dish captures all the smoky, creamy, and tangy elements of traditional corn-on-the-cob in a crowd-pleasing, easy-to-serve skillet style.

By deeply charring sweet corn and tossing it with fresh peppers, a zesty spiced crema, and crumbly cheese, you get an irresistible combination of textures and a beautiful depth of flavor in every spoonful.

INGREDIENTS

The Produce & Base

- 2 tbsp Cooking oil (such as avocado, canola, or vegetable oil)
- 3 cups Sweet corn kernels (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- ½ cup Red bell pepper, finely diced
- ½ cup Green bell pepper, finely diced
- 1 Jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped (adjust to taste)

The Dressing & Finish

- 3 tbsp Mayonnaise
- 1 tsp Sriracha (or to taste)
- 1 tbsp Fresh lime juice
- ½ tsp Red chili powder (adjust

CHEF'S TIP FOR DEEP CARAMELIZATION

The secret to authentic street corn flavor lies in the single layer technique. Keeping the corn completely still in a highly heated pan allows natural sugars to caramelize, giving you that perfect smoky flavor without overcooking. If using frozen or canned corn, ensure it is thoroughly patted dry before adding to the skillet to maximize the char and avoid steaming.

for desired heat)

- ½ tsp Chaat masala (for a tangy, savory South Asian twist)
- To taste Salt
- 1 cup Cotija cheese, crumbled (or Queso Fresco / Feta substitute)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sauté the Peppers

Drizzle the cooking oil into a large skillet or wok and place over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the diced red and green bell peppers along with the jalapeños. Sauté for 3 to 4 minutes until they are tender and lightly

blistered. Remove the cooked peppers from the skillet and set them aside in a small bowl.

2. Char the Corn

In the same hot skillet (adding an extra drop of oil if needed), add the corn kernels. Spread them out into a single, even layer across the pan. Let the corn cook undisturbed for 2 to 3 minutes to achieve a deep, golden-brown char on the bottom. Flip or stir the corn, re-spread into a single layer, and repeat the process until the kernels are beautifully caramelized on all sides.

3. Create the Creamy Glaze

Turn off the heat or reduce to low. Stir the cooked peppers back into the skillet with the caramelized corn. Add the mayonnaise, salt, red chili powder, chaat masala, sriracha, and fresh lime juice directly to the warm pan. Mix everything thoroughly to coat the kernels evenly in a velvety, spiced glaze.

4. Garnishing and Serving

Transfer the street corn mixture to your serving dish. Top generously with the crumbled Cotija cheese. Garnish with an extra pinch of chili powder or a lime wedge if desired, and serve immediately while warm.

Cape Verde's Historic World Cup Run

Prabhjot Singh

Cape Verde, a nation of just 525,000 people, has produced one of the most remarkable stories of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, reaching the Round of 32 in its tournament debut without winning—or losing—a single group-stage match.

The island nation drew all three Group H fixtures to qualify for the knockout rounds, becoming the smallest country by population ever to advance beyond the group stage of the men's World Cup. With fewer residents than Wyoming, the least-populated U.S. state, Cape Verde has surpassed the achievements of other small football nations on the sport's biggest stage.

The achievement also makes Cape Verde the first World Cup debutant to remain unbeaten throughout the group stage since Senegal's memorable run in 2002.

Their historic campaign was sealed with a goalless draw against Saudi Arabia after earlier holding pre-tournament favorite Spain to a 0-0 stalemate and battling Uruguay to a 2-2 draw, scoring their first-ever FIFA World Cup goals in the process. The three draws were enough to secure second place in Group H.

Spain topped the group with a 1-0 victory over Uruguay, courtesy of Alex Baena's 42nd-minute strike before more than 45,000 spectators, including King Felipe VI. The defeat eliminated Uruguay, marking its second consecutive



(Representative Image)

group-stage exit after also failing to progress in 2022.

Saudi Arabia also advanced to the Round of 32, while Spain recovered from its frustrating opening draw against Cape Verde to finish first in the group after defeating Saudi Arabia 4-0 and edging Uruguay.

Cape Verde's emergence has become one of several unexpected storylines at a World Cup that has seen smaller nations challenge established powers. What initially appeared to be a straightforward

group turned into one of the tournament's most competitive, with Cape Verde and Saudi Arabia keeping qualification scenarios alive until the final round of matches.

Elsewhere on Friday, Belgium routed New Zealand 5-1, while Iran and Egypt drew 1-1. Iran also completed the group stage unbeaten without registering a victory, drawing all three matches after earlier stalemates against Belgium and New Zealand.

Among the tournament's dominant performers, Mexico and

France finished the group stage with perfect records, winning all three matches. Colombia also had the opportunity to complete a flawless campaign heading into its final Group F match against Portugal.

Before kick-off in Friday's matches, players and fans observed a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the two successive earthquakes that struck Venezuela earlier in the week.

For Uruguay, the campaign ended with just two points—two fewer

than it managed at the 2022 World Cup—and behind tournament debutant Cape Verde. The two-time world champion last reached the knockout stage in 2018, advancing to the quarterfinals before losing to France.

Cape Verde's fairy-tale journey now enters its biggest chapter. The World Cup debutant will face defending champion Argentina in the Round of 32 in Miami Gardens, Florida, on July 3, seeking to extend one of the tournament's most improbable runs.

A Campaign of Promise, a Finish of Frustration

Anirudh Nair

The kind of cricket the Indian team has played in the last four-five years....that gap has narrowed and I just feel now at this moment, especially in T20 cricket, it's just about whichever team is having a good day is going to win the match."

This is what Smriti Mandhana said before India's do-or-die group game against Australia at the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup. Unfortunately for her and India, Australia were the ones who had the better day on June 28, beating India by six wickets to knock them out of the T20 World Cup in England, extending India's wait for their first Women's T20 World Cup triumph.

The expectations were incredibly high heading into the competition after India sealed the ODI World Cup on home soil in 2025. But the T20 game still is a different beast altogether, which India are yet to master. India finished third in their group of death, beating Pakistan, Netherlands and Bangladesh but falling short of giants South Africa and Australia. Minor moments, such as Radha Yadav



Indian fans at India vs Pakistan game in Edgbaston, Birmingham. (Photo courtesy: Anirudh Nair, SAH)

dropping South Africa's Marizanne Kapp twice, India's middle order's inability to step up, and the inexperience of the bowling lineup on the international stage, defined India's finish at this T20 World Cup.

"If I have to pinpoint on certain things in the entire tournament, I think we really need to think about our bowling and our fielding," said Indian head coach Amol Muzumdar after the Australia fixture.

"If you look at our bowling attack, it's been very inexperienced as far as international cricket is concerned. I've said this before, give us 18 months and this attack will be a different one."

There were still some positives from India at this World Cup. Sree Charani's monumental rise continued as she picked up 13 wickets, sitting on top of the wickets chart at the end of the group stages. Shafali Verma firmly established herself as key all-rounder. Deepti Sharma became Women's International Cricket's all-time leading wicket-taker and Harmanpreet Kaur rolled back the years as the tournament progressed, showing that even at 37 she has a lot more to offer.

Despite the elimination, this is one of India's better T20 World Cup campaigns. But progress still needs to be made if India deserve to be T20 world champions. Mandhana may be right about the gap being narrowed, but a gap still remains.