

Tech Firms Brace for Next Phase of H-1B Changes



(Photo courtesy: AI Generated)

R. Suryamurthy

Fresh FY2026 employer data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) suggests that America's technology sector continues to depend heavily on high-skilled foreign workers despite tighter immigration scrutiny and an uncertain economic environment. But while this year's approvals underline the resilience of the H-1B program, employers are already preparing for a far more consequential test in FY2027 as regulatory and policy

changes threaten to reshape hiring strategies.

The USCIS employer dataset shows Amazon leading all employers with 4,831 approved H-1B petitions during FY2026, followed by Infosys (3,195), Tata Consultancy Services (2,885), Cognizant Technology Solutions (2,657), Apple (2,381), Microsoft (2,273), Google (1,903), Meta (1,606), JPMorgan Chase (1,261), and Capgemini America (1,203).

The rankings reinforce a familiar pattern: U.S. technology giants and Indian IT services

companies remain the largest users of the skilled-worker visa program. Their continued presence at the top suggests that demand for software engineers, artificial intelligence specialists, cloud architects, cybersecurity professionals and semiconductor engineers has remained largely intact despite layoffs across parts of the technology industry over the past two years.

However, the FY2026 numbers may represent the final year before structural changes begin altering employer behavior. (Contd. on page 8)

Mango Diplomacy Opens Trade Doors

SAH Staff Reporter

India is stepping up efforts to expand its footprint in the U.S. food market, using one of its most iconic exports—the mango—to build new commercial partnerships and boost agricultural trade with Texas, one of America's fastest-growing consumer markets.

A two-day Mango Festival, organized by the Consulate General of India (CGI) in Houston in collaboration with the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and supported by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), concluded on July 3 after drawing strong participation from consumers, importers, retailers, and business leaders.

Held at the Consulate premises and Keemat Grocers on Houston's Hillcroft Street, the festival showcased premium Indian mango varieties alongside processed mango products and India's



(Photo courtesy: X@cghou)

globally recognized Basmati rice, positioning them as export-ready products for the U.S. market.

While visitors sampled India's "king of fruits," the larger objective extended beyond food promotion. The event served as a business engagement platform connecting U.S. importers, distributors, retailers, and food service companies with India's

agricultural export ecosystem, reflecting New Delhi's broader strategy of diversifying agricultural exports and expanding market access in North America.

Texas has emerged as a key destination for Indian food products, driven by a rapidly growing South Asian population, increasing consumer interest in international

(Contd. on page 8)

Jayapal Signals Immigration Push

SAH Special Correspondent

Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal is expected to intensify her advocacy on immigration, voting rights and affordability in the weeks ahead, using the momentum of the United States' Independence Day celebrations and the lead-up to the country's 250th anniversary to reinforce her progressive policy agenda.

Through a series of public posts on X over the past week, Jayapal has signaled that immigration will remain at the center of her political messaging as debates over border security, naturalization and voting rights continue to dominate national politics.

The Washington Democrat, one of the few naturalized U.S. citizens serving in Congress, has repeatedly drawn on her own journey from India to the United States to underscore what she describes as the enduring role of immigrants in shaping the country. Her remarks came after she addressed a July 4 naturalization ceremony in Seattle, where 252 people from 55 countries became U.S. citizens.

Jayapal has indicated that she will continue pressing for policies aimed at protecting immigrant communities, expanding access to citizenship and ensuring what she describes as dignity and equal rights for immigrants. She has also framed the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary as an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of generations of immigrants while defending America's democratic institutions.

At the same time, the congresswoman is expected to sharpen her criticism of President Donald Trump's administration and Republican lawmakers, particularly on immigration enforcement,



(Photo courtesy: X@RepJayapal)

voting rights and economic issues. Recent posts suggest she will continue arguing that the administration has prioritized immigration crackdowns over addressing rising household costs and housing affordability.

Voting rights are also likely to remain a major focus. Jayapal has accused Republicans of attempting to restrict ballot access through legislation such as the SAVE Act and has pledged to oppose measures she says could disenfranchise millions of eligible voters.

On the legislative front, Jayapal is expected to promote the Fresh Bucks for Fresh Produce Act, a bill modeled on Seattle's Fresh Bucks program that seeks to make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable for low-income families. She has presented the proposal as part of a broader effort to address food insecurity and rising grocery prices.

Beyond national policy debates, Jayapal is also expected to continue highlighting community events and civic engagement in Seattle, balancing local outreach with her national advocacy on immigration and economic issues.

Her recent messaging points to a strategy that combines her personal immigration story with progressive policy priorities, positioning immigrant rights, economic affordability and democratic participation as central themes as Congress heads into a politically charged second half of the year.

Indian Rhythms Echo at Carnegie

SAH Staff Reporter

Nearly 400 dancers from across the United States brought the rich diversity of Indian performing arts to the iconic Carnegie Hall, as the All-Indian Dance Festival 2026 transformed the historic Stern Auditorium into a celebration of India's classical and folk traditions.

The festival featured 387 performers before a capacity audience of about 2,800 people, showcasing a wide spectrum of dance forms that reflected India's cultural heritage while highlighting the vibrancy of the Indian diaspora in the United States.

The event was organized through a partnership between the Consulate General of India in New

York, Philadelphia-based dance institution Three Aksha, and artistic director Viji Rao, who curated the production.

Addressing the audience, Binaya Srikant Pradhan said the festival reflected the depth, diversity and enduring legacy of Indian culture. He thanked the performers, dance schools and families for their commitment to preserving and promoting India's artistic traditions across generations of the diaspora.

The festival brought together leading dance academies and cultural organizations from across the region, presenting both classical and regional folk-dance traditions. Participating groups included Three Aksha under Viji

(Contd. on page 8)

Planting a Legacy at 250



(Photo courtesy: FIA New England)

SAH Staff Reporter

The Foundation of Indian Americans (FIA) New England hosted a celebration in Northborough, Massachusetts, on June 27 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence. The event brought together hundreds of community members, veterans, elected officials, and families for a day highlighting patriotism, cultural heritage, and community service.

According to a statement from FIA New England, the centerpiece of the celebration was the launch of the organization's "250 Fruit-Bearing Trees Initiative," an environmental project in which each tree symbolizes one year of the nation's independence. The first tree was planted by 95-year-old Frank Brown, a World War II U.S. Navy veteran, longtime Northborough businessman, and

the original owner of Brown's TV.

A key moment of the event was the recognition of local veterans. Brown, who also participated in last year's celebration, was honored for his military service and long-standing contributions to the community. Organizers also recognized Max Strickland, a U.S. Navy veteran who serves as Adjutant of American Legion Post 234 and Senior Vice Commander for District 4, as well as veteran Richard B. Nieber.

"I fought for this country many years ago, and it is a blessing to see this July 4th celebration today," Brown said. "Planting these trees is not just about honoring the past — it is about giving something alive and lasting to the future generation."

Organizers also acknowledged the Northborough Police Department, including Lieutenant Steve, for helping ensure the safety and smooth coordination of the public event.

As part of the celebration, children released 250 silver foil balloons, one representing each year of American independence, in a symbolic tribute. The cultural program featured performances by the Ekta, Lana & Padmani Dance Group, followed by a musical concert by Arun Verma and Priti alongside singer Arun Rashtogi. Their patriotic performances received a standing ovation from attendees.

The event was attended by several community leaders and dignitaries, including Massachusetts State Representative Kate

Donaghue, who served as chief guest. Other attendees included Dr. Anahita Dua, Bhruhu Pange, Ram Gupta, Subu Kota and Vicky Kota, Sandeep Asija, and Ravi Sarin and Sudha Sarin.

On behalf of the Office of Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, Citations of Special Recognition were presented to Lana Israel and Kadian A. James in recognition of their community service and leadership.

FIA New England President Abhishek Singh said: "America's 250th Independence Day is not just a milestone — it is a reminder of our responsibility to serve, to give back, and to build a stronger future. The 250 trees we plant today are a living legacy for generations to come."

Community leader Subu Kota described the event as "what true patriotism looks like — honoring veterans, engaging youth, celebrating culture, and giving back to the environment."

Dr. Anahita Dua, Director of the Peripheral Artery Disease Center at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, added: "The Indian American community is proud to contribute to America's progress through service, innovation, and civic engagement. Today's celebration, including the planting of 250 fruit-bearing trees, is a meaningful symbol of our commitment to giving back and building a stronger future together."

The program opened with the U.S. National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Preanshi Charnalia. Emcees Jyoti Singh and Irena King guided the afternoon's program of tributes, cultural performances, and ceremonial events. The celebration concluded with a community meal prepared and served by Chef Hardayal Singh.

GSF Celebrates 11 Years of Service

SAH Staff Reporter

The Global Seva Fund (GSF) celebrated its 11th Anniversary Gala alongside America's 250th Birthday Celebration on June 28, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Dulles in Herndon, Virginia. The event brought together community leaders, elected officials, faith leaders, business executives, philanthropists, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters for an afternoon focused on service, unity, and community engagement.

According to GSF, the event honored America's 250-year legacy of "freedom, opportunity, diversity, and hope" while marking the organization's 11 years of commitment to "community service, education, philanthropy, and humanitarian outreach." The organization said the celebration reflected its mission of uniting communities through compassion and service.

During the gala, GSF received several recognitions, including a Governor's Citation from the Office of Maryland Governor Wes Moore, as well as congratulatory letters from Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger, Congressman Suhas Subramanyam, and the Ambassador of India to the United States, Vinay Kwatra.

The chief guests were Anupama Sharma and Anil Sharma, CEO of 22nd Century Technologies, the event's Diamond Sponsor. The celebration also welcomed representatives from Rajdhani Mandir, Sant Nirankari Mission, BAPS, NCAIA, GOPIO, Karuna Charity, the South Asian Business Council of Virginia, interfaith organizations, and other community leaders.

(Contd. on page 9)

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Humanitarian Honor for Nita Ambani

Founder and Chairperson of the Reliance Foundation, Nita Ambani, received the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) Humanitarian Award on July 2, 2026, during the organization's annual convention in Tampa, Florida, from July 2 to 5.

According to AAPI, the recognition represented more than a ceremonial honor, signaling the beginning of what it described as a new phase of Indo-American collaboration.

In a statement, AAPI highlighted Ambani's contributions across rural healthcare, women's empowerment, education, sports, arts, and disaster relief in India, noting that her work has earned global recognition. The organization said her participation in its 44th annual convention underscored shared priorities in healthcare and public service.

Accepting the award, Ambani praised AAPI's contributions to healthcare and the Indian American community.

"AAPI represents the finest of Indian-origin medical leadership in the United States. Your



(Photo courtesy: AAPI)

dedication to healing, service, and global health inspires millions. I am honored to receive this recognition from an organization that continues to strengthen the bridge between India and the United States," she said.

She emphasized the role of people-to-people ties in strengthening the relationship between India and the United States.

"The relationship between India and the United States has always been strengthened by people — by professionals, by innovators, by physicians like

those in AAPI. This collaboration is a testament to what our two nations can achieve when we unite knowledge with purpose," she added.

The convention also marked the closing days of AAPI President Dr. Amit Chakrabarty's tenure. Reflecting on his time in office, he described the experience as both professionally and personally meaningful.

"Leading this organization has been more than a role; it has been a calling, a privilege, and a bond with people who trusted

me enough to let me serve them... This farewell is tender, but it is also powerful, because it comes from a place of having given everything," he reflected.

During the convention, Ambani also proposed expanding collaboration between AAPI and the Reliance Foundation through a strategic partnership designed to combine AAPI's global medical expertise with the foundation's extensive grassroots network across India.

According to AAPI, the proposed collaboration would focus on rural and community healthcare, preventive and integrative medicine, women's and children's health, telemedicine and digital health, medical education and training, and disaster response and humanitarian assistance.

Highlighting the potential of the initiative, Ambani said: "India's health challenges and opportunities are vast — and together, AAPI and the Reliance Foundation can create scalable solutions that uplift women, children, and underserved communities. Our partnership is rooted in compassion, innovation, and a shared belief that healthcare must reach every corner of society."

AAPI said the proposed alliance has the potential to become a significant Indo-American healthcare collaboration, bringing together medical expertise and community-focused initiatives. The organization said early discussions have identified shared values, complementary strengths, and a mutual commitment to creating sustainable impact.

According to the statement, formal proposals, pilot programs, and collaborative frameworks are expected in the coming months. Both organizations have also committed to ensuring that any future partnership remains community-centered, evidence-based, and aligned with national healthcare priorities.

"As the AAPI convention 2026 begins, one thing is clear" said Dr. Chakrabarty. "The Humanitarian Award was not just an honor — it was a catalyst. It sparked a vision of what India and the United States can achieve together when compassion meets expertise, and when two powerful institutions unite for the greater good. This is more than a partnership. It is a promise — one that could reshape the future of global health."

INS Sudarshini Joins U.S. Navy 250 Celebrations in New York

SAH Staff Reporter

The Indian Naval Sail Training Ship (INS) Sudarshini sailed into the Port of New York and New Jersey flying the Indian tricolor to participate in the United States International Naval

Review 250 and Sail4th 250 celebrations held around the July 4 Independence Day festivities.

The three-masted barque took part in the iconic Parade of Sail on the Hudson River, representing India's maritime heritage as part of the United States' semi

quicentennial celebrations marking 250 years of American independence.

The New York port call marks a significant milestone in INS Sudarshini's "Lokayan 2026" deployment, a 10-month transoceanic voyage undertaken by the

Indian Navy to promote international maritime cooperation and strengthen ties with partner navies across the world.

According to the Indian Navy, the ship's participation in the celebrations highlights the growing maritime partnership between

India and the United States while reinforcing long-standing naval cooperation between the two countries.

Before arriving in New York, INS Sudarshini visited Norfolk and Baltimore, where it participated in the opening phases of the commemorative events and attracted visitors during public engagements. (Contd. on page 9)

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
- Heavy sweating when eating, even with mild foods

Asian American Health Initiative
Together To Build A Healthy Community

Could You Be at Risk for Diabetes?

RISK FACTORS CHECKLIST

- ☒ Family History of Diabetes
- ☒ South Asian Background
- ☒ Age 35 or Older
- ☒ Physically Inactive Lifestyle
- ☒ High Blood Pressure or High Cholesterol
- ☒ Overweight or Obese

SCAN ME

Interested in our **FREE** Diabetes Prevention Workshop?

Use this link "<https://forms.office.com/g/XcOs5n1FZr>" or scan the QR code to reserve your spot!

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 In-

itiative (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 Med-Star Montgomery. Talk with your healthcare provider about screening and available community resources.

(Photo courtesy: AAHI)



South Asia Notes

Elizabeth Roche*Associate Professor,
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India, Japan Fortify Ties Amid Slide in US Interest in Asia

This week India and Japan sat down for their 16th annual summit with India hosting Japanese Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae for the occasion.

The India-Japan Summit is taking place in interesting times – where flux, upheaval and chaos are the norm. Multipolarity seems to be the game in town but without a visible order and no surety of the rules to play by.

Speaking at the G7 Summit in Evian, France, last month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined the need for “strong partnerships” given the interconnected world we live in. “But partnerships can succeed only when they are built on trust. Today, the most strategic asset is not minerals, technology, or markets – it is mutual trust. The trust that technology and supply chains will be used for global good, not as weapons.

The trust that development opportunities will not be limited to a few countries only. Trust that global institutions will fulfil the aspirations of all countries,” Modi had said. If asked about two years ago who these remarks could be aimed at, one could have safely assumed China. But today, coming on the back of Washington’s indiscriminate tariffs, blatant disregard for international law and unilateralism, what Modi said could as easily apply to the US.

This is where and why the India-Japan partnership becomes important. Bilateral trust between India and Japan seems particularly strong against the backdrop of how the US has slipped down the list of reliable partners for both India and Japan. Adverse global conditions in fact strengthen the logic for India and Japan to lean more on each other. The takeaways from the India-Japan summit were therefore not surprising – cooperation in advanced technology – AI, semiconductors and defence.

AS SOME COMMENTARIES HAVE POINTED OUT, INDIA AND JAPAN BOOKEND THE INDO-PACIFIC – INDIA ON THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND JAPAN IN THE OPPOSITE CORNER, ALONG THE PACIFIC. BOTH HAVE MUCH MORE STAKES IN THE INDO-PACIFIC THAN THE US AND WILL HAVE TO DO MORE TOGETHER, IN THIS CONTEXT, TO BALANCE AN AGGRESSIVE AND EMBOLDENED CHINA.

Energy was also on the talks table. With Takaichi admitting she was a protégé of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is credited with coming up defining the concept of the Indo-Pacific, there was a reinforcement of the idea during the Modi-Takaichi meet. Similarly, with the Quad which brings together US, Japan, India and Australia. Why this is important is simple: both India and Japan are in Asia, the US isn’t. Washington has also made it clear that its priorities are in the Western Hemisphere.

As some commentaries have pointed out, India and Japan bookend the Indo-Pacific – India on the western edge of the Indian Ocean and Japan in the opposite corner, along the Pacific. Both have much more stakes in the Indo-Pacific than the US and will have to do more together, in this context, to balance an aggressive and emboldened China. Bringing on board more like-minded Asian countries would be useful to showcase to Beijing that it isn’t only India and Japan who are wary of a unipolar Asia.

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

Cheers for America, Caution for Trump

Mahendra Ved

India’s official observance of the 250th anniversary of the United States’ independence (July 4, 2026) was diplomatically warm but deliberately restrained.

Unlike some close US allies such as Britain, France, Australia and Japan, which marked the occasion in different symbolic ways, with high-profile commemorative events or landmark illuminations, India chose a relatively understated approach. It limited itself primarily to official messages and diplomatic engagement.

There were no ‘national’ celebrations in the largest democracy over a landmark event in a country that provided inspiration and support during the freedom struggle against the British and is now home to 4.5 million diasporas, chasing their “American dream” and playing a significant role in this country of their choice.

At the public level, intellectuals wrote, mainstream media made differing editorial comments, and social media was critical. But by and large, they all drew a line between America, the nation, and President Donald Trump and his administration.

Indeed, Trump’s mercurial ways and the perception that the US is realigning its Asia policy and moving away colored the Indian public mood. Whatever the official stance, India

sees itself as a target in the as-yet-unresolved tariff disputes and a ‘victim’ in the ongoing Gulf and Ukraine conflicts, often accused of not serving the American/Western standpoints.

The centerpiece of India’s observance was Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s message to Trump, the head of state, but as much to the American people. “On behalf of 1.4 billion Indians, I extend my warmest congratulations to President Trump and the people of the United States on the historic 250th anniversary of your Independence.”

He added that the two nations shared more than a strategic partnership; the relationship rests on democracy, the rule of law, and faith in the potential of their peoples. He stressed shared institutions and long-term strategic cooperation rather than any military or ideological themes.

Showing respect without symbolism, New Delhi appears to convey genuine goodwill, respect for America’s historic milestone and confidence in bilateral ties.

His message is noteworthy in that it reveals India’s priorities, including consolidating people-to-people ties and friendship as “a force for global good.” The anniversary came amid ongoing negotiations on trade, technology, defense cooperation, and supply chains. But India did not highlight issues such as defense, China, Indo-Pacific strategy or terrorism on which differences have emerged, in perception, if not in action.

The US is India’s largest strategic and economic partner outside Asia. Hence, Modi’s message reaffirmed continuity in bilateral ties despite political changes in Washington and the latter’s changing geopolitical and geostrategic priorities.

The restrained nature of India’s observance reflected not a decline in the importance of the United States, but a decline in confidence in the predictability of the Trump administration.

In sum, the Modi government appears to have distinguished between America as a strategic partner and Trump as a negotiating counterpart. The first continued to merit warmth; the second required caution – extreme caution – given his changing priorities and goal-posts. He knows India cannot afford to be scalded by the fury of a ‘friend’ whose worldview is constructed by business transactions, through his favorite word – ‘deal.’

That distinction also helps explain why India’s official rhetoric continued to emphasize shared democratic values and long-term partnership even as trade disputes and tariff threats dominated day-to-day diplomacy.

It also mirrors a broader international trend: many U.S. allies sought to preserve institutional ties with Washington while expressing concern about the style and substance of Trump’s second-term policies.

South Asia Eyes Shared Marine Governance

SAH Staff Reporter

South Asian countries are expected to move towards closer cooperation on the management of commercially important marine fin fish as policymakers, fisheries experts and researchers meet in the Maldives to chart a regional response to mounting threats from overfishing, climate change and illegal fishing.

The two-day SAARC Regional Consultation Meeting on Commercially Important Marine Fin Fishes, which opened in Malé last week, is expected to lay the groundwork for a more coordinated regional fisheries management framework, including joint research, policy harmonization and institutional cooperation among member states.

The consultation, jointly organized by the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), the Maldives’ Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources and Bangladesh-based development organization Shushilan, comes at a time when South Asia’s marine resources are under increasing pressure from rising demand for seafood, shrinking fish stocks, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, habitat degradation and warming oceans.

Officials participating in the meeting said strengthening regional cooperation has become increasingly important as several commercially valuable

fish species migrate across national maritime boundaries, making unilateral conservation measures less effective.

One of the key outcomes expected from the consultation is the development of a roadmap for sustained regional collaboration on marine fisheries, including greater scientific data sharing, coordinated stock assessments, capacity building and joint policy initiatives aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fish stocks.

SAARC Agriculture Centre Director Md. Harunur Rashid proposed the creation of a specialized regional marine fisheries management platform under the Centre’s coordination, saying such a mechanism could help member countries jointly address common challenges and improve governance of shared marine resources. If endorsed, the platform could become the first dedicated institutional mechanism within SAARC focused exclusively on marine fisheries cooperation.

Maldives State Minister for Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources Mohamed Muththalib said the fisheries sector remains central to food security, employment and economic resilience for many South Asian countries. He stressed that regional cooperation would be essential as climate change increasingly affects marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods.

Bangladesh Maritime University Professor Md. Abdul Wahab, delivering the keynote address, urged member

states to strengthen scientific collaboration to tackle overexploitation of fish stocks, illegal fishing and marine habitat degradation. He said coordinated management would improve the region’s ability to conserve marine biodiversity while supporting sustainable economic growth.

Representing the SAARC Secretariat, Director (ARD & SDF) Tanvir Ahmad Torophder called for deeper collaboration in fisheries management, seafood value addition, regional research and greater participation of women in the fisheries sector, indicating that future cooperation could extend beyond conservation to include trade, processing and livelihood development.

The consultation is also expected to identify priority areas for joint research and technology exchange, including stock monitoring, ecosystem-based fisheries management and climate adaptation measures.

Experts say any consensus emerging from the meeting could provide momentum for wider regional cooperation at a time when South Asian countries are seeking to strengthen blue economy initiatives while balancing conservation with food security and export growth.

Marine fisheries support millions of livelihoods across South Asia and contribute significantly to nutrition, coastal employment and foreign exchange earnings. With shared fish stocks increasingly vulnerable to environmental and human pressures, delegates say the meeting could mark the beginning of a more institutionalized regional approach to managing one of the region’s most valuable natural resources.

Editorial



The Future of the American Ideal

The 250th anniversary of constitutional democracy in the United States of America is indeed a cherished moment, not just in a humble realization of the distance travelled but also in a deep thought of what lies ahead. To put it in another way, it is a time for Celebration and Reflection—the world’s oldest and running democracy that has been a beacon of hope not only to its people but for others around the world yearning for freedom and democracy. Many political systems, like India for instance, have borrowed ideas from America with the beginning words in the Constitution’s Preamble, We The People, resonating far and wide and in the process dinnning home a simple message: absolute power lies with the people, not Kings, Queens or the Ruling Class.

The American journey through the years has not been easy especially in making sure that principle of liberty, equality and justice really mattered to everybody. And it was not easy to spread democracy in a country that started off with ideals only for “white people”; but through blood, sweat and tears slavery was abolished and civil rights expanded including the right to vote for women. And even this day there is the constant reminder that perhaps America has some distance to travel in addressing social and political inequalities with critics pointing to tampering with the right to vote such as redistricting and amendments to election laws at the states level being proofs thereof. In spite of all deficiencies, America is still looked up to as a land of opportunity in almost any given field; the millions of immigrants who have gained and contributed their might a real testimony.

IN THE MIDST OF ALL THAT JUBILATION IN CELEBRATING A MILESTONE, THERE IS ALSO SOUL SEARCHING ON WHETHER AMERICA AS A GLOBAL SUPER POWER HAS REALLY BEEN LIVING UP TO ITS IDEALS OR SOMEHOW GOT TOO WRAPPED UP IN THE IDEOLOGICAL CLOAK TO FORCE CHANGES IN FAR AWAY LANDS. AND SOME OF THESE ATTEMPTS TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE HAS LED TO COSTLY WARS LEADING TO DEATHS AND DESTRUCTION IN WHICH AMERICA TOO HAS PAID A COSTLY PRICE. THE INVOLVEMENT IN KOREA, VIETNAM, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND NOW IRAN HAS RAISED A DIFFICULT QUESTION: HAS ANYTHING BEEN LEARNT BY WAY OF LESSONS? STILL, IN ALL THE MISGIVINGS OF POLITICAL DIVISIVENESS, THERE IS HOPE OF A BETTER WAY OF LIFE.

In the midst of all that jubilation in celebrating a milestone, there is also soul searching on whether America as a global super power has really been living up to its ideals or somehow got too wrapped up in the ideological cloak to force changes in far away lands. And some of these attempts to bring about change has led to costly wars leading to deaths and destruction in which America too has paid a costly price. The involvement in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and now Iran has raised a difficult question: has anything been learnt by way of lessons? Still, in all the misgivings of political divisiveness, there is hope of a better way of life.

The challenges for an old matured democracy like that of America is essentially twofold: strengthening institutions from within so as to reap the full benefits of the revolutions in technology and globalization for all its people; and to provide leadership to the world in a way that puts an accent on competition and good judgement, not on confrontation and a blind belief that the other side must be wrong. Contributions of America to the world is not for the short term, but in a realization that the challenges of 2026 and beyond are not that of 1776.



Opinion

Sridhar Krishnaswami
Senior Journalist and Columnist

Jubilation and Anxiety at 250

The searing heat in some parts of the country did not stop the fireworks or the celebration as America stepped up to a historic milestone of 250 years. A land whose story finds the role of immigrants playing a prominent part, South Asians naturally were part of the excitement.

A community that is one of the fastest growing in the United States has come a long way to around six million today making a mark not just in technology, business, medicine and space but also in politics through representation in the House of Representatives and at State levels.

The road to success was not through luck or fluke but by the dint of hard work and overcoming obstacles like racism and bigotry. Today South Asians have the unique distinction of having top tech giants as household names; Indian/South Asian cuisine and Yoga now seem to be a part and parcel of everyday life.

The slow but rapid ascendancy of the South Asian community, especially the Indian-Americans, was not without envy that transformed itself to the fanning of racist feelings in the 1970s and 1980s in parts of the country. Roaming around as “dot busters”—a reference to the Indian women wearing that bindi on her forehead—these rednecks just about terrorized otherwise friendly neighborhoods, but soon found that this could not shake the resilience of the community or of a nation that was generally warm to foreigners.

But at 250 years of showing the world the strengths of a democracy, despite all its faults and shortcomings, there is a feeling in some quarters that perhaps America is slipping back to the ways of the past. In a political system where divisiveness has reached alarming and ugly levels, immigrant groups are seeing a deliberate attempt to keep away folks from coming to the land of opportunity in a legal way.

At one time no other embassy or consulate had people lining up at wee hours of the morning for a visa; today there are no such lines. Some of it can be fobbed off to a streamlining process through online appointments and interviews; but this cannot mask the fact that there is a systematic attempt to drop the numbers for visas in many categories, students and high skilled applicants being specially marked for attention.

There is some legitimate concern of the ballooning number of illegals in the United States with some estimates putting

THERE IS SOME LEGITIMATE CONCERN OF THE BALLOONING NUMBER OF ILLEGALS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH SOME ESTIMATES PUTTING IT AROUND 13 MILLION OR EVEN MUCH HIGHER THAN THAT. AND SOUTH ASIANS, ESPECIALLY INDIANS, HAVE A FAIR SHARE OF THAT FIGURE, PERHAPS EVEN BEING IN THE TOP TEN CATEGORY.

it around 13 million or even much higher than that. And South Asians, especially Indians, have a fair share of that figure, perhaps even being in the top ten category. But to lump every legal aspirant into a potential illegal or somehow getting tough at the source is going to solve the problem at entry is a stretch. For instance, America stands to lose billions of dollars annually through lost admissions in colleges and universities. And this is just for a start.

Time and again the H1B, or the high skills visa, has been singled out for restriction or even call for outright abolition. And there are always individuals and groups that have claimed that H1Bs put Americans out of jobs and in the poorhouse. But every time Big Business has risen to the occasion been pointing out the benefits of the high skilled visas and in all the gains for the country, going beyond dollars and cents. Still the noise on the H1B will not go away, and unlikely to.

The anxiety is more during an election year and it hardly matters how immigrant groups are going to pressure their elected representatives or aspirants. And this year the stakes have become higher as President Donald Trump has linked the debate on immigration to communism saying “There is a resurgence of the communist menace in our land including from new comers to our country who embrace ideas totally opposed to our way of life.”

Hopefully this is not a return to the days of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the “Red Scare” of the 1950s that mercifully faded but not before taking its toll. The last thing America needs looking into the future is another spell of paranoia that takes the focus away from the real challenges.

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



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India Seeks Bigger Slice of the \$2.7 Trillion Defense Market



(Photo courtesy: AI generated)

R. Suryamurthy

When India launched Operation Sindoor, the military operation achieved more than its immediate strategic objectives. It also provided a live demonstration of the country's growing arsenal of indigenous missiles, air-defense systems, electronic warfare platforms and anti-drone technologies—an opportunity that defense manufacturers rarely get outside a conflict.

For New Delhi, the operation could prove to be as significant commercially as it was militarily.

Government officials and industry executives say interest from overseas buyers has picked up following the operation, with several countries seeking information on Indian-made weapon systems that were deployed during the campaign. While export contracts typically take years to negotiate, Operation Sindoor has strengthened India's credentials at a time when the global arms market is undergoing its biggest transformation in decades.

The numbers illustrate how rapidly the sector has evolved. India's defense exports have surged from just ₹686 crore (US\$80 million) in 2013-14 to a record ₹38,424 crore (US\$4.5 billion) in 2025-26, representing growth of more than 5,500% in just 12 years. Defense equipment manufactured in India is now exported to more than 80 countries, and the government has set an ambitious target of ₹50,000 crore (around US\$5.8 billion) in annual defense exports by 2029.

The export momentum coincides with a dramatic expansion of domestic manufacturing. India's

defense production reached ₹1.78 lakh crore (US\$20.8 billion) in fiscal 2025-26, more than doubling from ₹84,643 crore (US\$9.9 billion) in 2020-21 and recording annual growth of 15.6% over the previous fiscal year. The country's defense budget has meanwhile climbed from ₹2.53 lakh crore (US\$29.6 billion) in 2013-14 to ₹7.85 lakh crore (US\$91.8 billion) in the 2026-27 Budget, with capital expenditure alone touching ₹2.19 lakh crore (US\$25.6 billion).

The backdrop could hardly be more favorable.

Global military spending has entered a sustained upward cycle driven by Russia's war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, tensions between Israel and Iran, instability in the Red Sea, and intensifying strategic rivalry between the United States and China. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), worldwide military expenditure reached a record US\$2.7 trillion in 2024, marking the steepest annual increase since the Cold War, with spending expected to remain elevated through the decade.

The nature of military procurement has also changed.

The Ukraine conflict exposed serious shortages in missile, artillery and ammunition production among traditional suppliers, while the wars in West Asia highlighted the growing importance of integrated air-defense systems, drones, counter-drone technologies and electronic warfare. Governments are increasingly looking for suppliers capable of delivering equipment quickly, at competitive prices and in sufficient quantities.

Perhaps more importantly, military buyers now place greater value

on systems that have been tested in combat rather than only in controlled trials.

Operation Sindoor has therefore given Indian defense manufacturers something that marketing campaigns cannot replicate—battlefield validation.

Indigenous systems including the Akash surface-to-air missile, BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, anti-drone technologies, airborne surveillance platforms and electronic warfare systems featured prominently during the operation. Defense analysts say the experience mirrors the trajectory followed by Israeli defense companies, Turkish drone manufacturers and South Korean artillery producers, whose exports accelerated after their systems demonstrated operational effectiveness during conflicts.

India hopes to follow a similar path.

Unlike many established exporters, the country is simultaneously expanding production capacity while global demand continues to rise.

Government figures show that nearly 65% of India's defense requirements are now met through domestic production, compared with import dependence of around 65-70% a decade ago. The transformation has been underpinned by procurement reforms, higher indigenous content requirements, positive indigenization lists covering more than 5,000 defense items, liberalized foreign investment rules and greater participation by private industry.

The manufacturing ecosystem has expanded rapidly. India now has 16 Defense Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), around

500 licensed defense manufacturers and nearly 17,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) supporting the sector. The number of industrial licenses issued for defense manufacturing has more than tripled—from 258 in 2015 to 834 by March 2026—reflecting growing private-sector confidence.

Two dedicated Defense Industrial Corridors are expected to play a pivotal role in sustaining production growth. The Uttar Pradesh Defense Industrial Corridor has attracted investment commitments of ₹42,057 crore (US\$4.9 billion), while the Tamil Nadu Defense Industrial Corridor has secured commitments worth ₹32,699 crore (US\$3.8 billion). Together, they are developing integrated manufacturing clusters for aerospace, missiles, armored vehicles, electronics and precision engineering.

The government is also investing heavily in innovation to ensure India moves beyond licensed production into advanced defense technologies.

Funding for defense research has more than doubled from ₹13,716 crore (US\$1.6 billion) in 2014-15 to ₹29,100 crore (US\$3.4 billion) in 2026-27. Since 2022, 25% of the defense R&D budget has been earmarked for industry, start-ups and academia, encouraging wider private-sector participation in military innovation.

The Innovations for Defense Excellence (IDEX) program has emerged as a key driver of that ecosystem. By March 2026, it had engaged 676 start-ups, MSMEs and innovators, signing 551 design and development contracts. DRDO has also transferred more than 2,180 technologies to industry and

opened advanced testing facilities to private companies, while more than 41,000 vendors supplying nearly 270,000 products have been registered on the Srijan DEEP digital platform, strengthening domestic supply chains.

The expansion in manufacturing is already translating into larger procurement programs. India signed defense contracts worth ₹2.09 lakh crore (US\$24.5 billion) during fiscal 2024-25, followed by contracts worth ₹1.82 lakh crore (US\$21.3 billion) in 2025-26. The long-term order pipeline provides manufacturers with greater certainty to invest in capacity expansion and technology upgrades.

India's defense diplomacy is reinforcing those commercial ambitions. Defense partnerships with the United States, France, Russia, Japan, Australia, the European Union and Gulf countries are increasingly focused on co-development, co-production and technology transfer rather than conventional arms purchases. Simultaneously, India's growing role in the Quad, Indo-Pacific maritime security initiatives and partnerships with Southeast Asian countries is opening new avenues for defense exports.

For many countries across Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, India offers an attractive proposition: combat-tested equipment at competitive prices, backed by a large industrial base and fewer geopolitical restrictions than some traditional suppliers.

Despite the progress, India still accounts for only a small share of the global arms trade, which continues to be dominated by the United States, France and Russia. However, analysts believe the current geopolitical environment presents an opportunity that may not have existed even five years ago. As Western manufacturers struggle with production backlogs and Russia prioritizes domestic military requirements, many governments are actively searching for alternative suppliers capable of delivering sophisticated systems on shorter timelines.

Whether India can convert growing international interest into sustained export orders will depend on maintaining quality, scaling production, meeting delivery schedules and continuing to demonstrate operational effectiveness. If those conditions are met, Operation Sindoor could be remembered not only as a defining military operation but also as the moment India's indigenous defense industry established itself as a credible player in the global arms market.

For a country that was once among the world's largest importers of military hardware, the shift is profound. Defense manufacturing is increasingly becoming more than a strategic necessity—it is evolving into a high-technology export industry capable of generating skilled employment, driving innovation and enhancing India's geopolitical influence in an era of intensifying global competition.

Tax Dept Clears NRI Doubts

R. Suryamurthy

With the July 31 deadline for filing income tax returns approaching and many Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) seeking clarity on the impact of the new Income Tax Act, 2025, the Income Tax Department has issued a detailed set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), assuring taxpayers that the transition to the new law will not alter the existing rules governing tax residency or key NRI tax benefits.

The clarification comes amid growing queries from overseas Indians who feared that the new legislation, which comes into effect from April 1, 2026, could affect their tax status, return filing obligations and eligibility for concessional tax treatment.

The department said the new law is largely a restructuring of the existing Income Tax Act, 1961, and does not introduce substantive changes to the principles determining whether an individual qualifies as a resident, non-resident or not ordinarily resident (NOR).

One of the biggest concerns during the current tax return filing season has been whether the new Act changes the residency tests that determine an NRI's tax liability in India. The FAQs make it clear that the existing thresholds remain intact.

Under the Income Tax Act, 2025, an individual will continue to qualify as a resident if they stay in India for 182 days or more during the relevant tax year, or for 60 days or more along with an aggregate stay of 365 days or more during the preceding four years.

The department also confirmed that the

long-standing relaxation available to Indian citizens leaving India for overseas employment or working as crew members on Indian ships continues unchanged. Likewise, the special provisions applicable to Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin visiting India remain intact, including the modified 120-day threshold applicable to those earning more than Rs 15 lakh, excluding foreign-source income.

The FAQs also seek to remove uncertainty over the implementation timeline of the new law.

The department clarified that all tax years beginning before April 1, 2026—including the current assessment cycle—will continue to be governed entirely by the Income Tax Act, 1961, even if reassessment proceedings are initiated after the new legislation comes into force.

In other words, taxpayers filing returns this year need not apply any provisions of the new Act while determining their residential status or tax liability.

The clarification is significant because residential status determines the scope of taxable income in India. Residents are generally taxed on their global income, while NRIs are taxed only on income received, accrued or deemed to accrue in India.

The department further said that the deemed resident provisions introduced under the 1961 Act have been carried forward without change. Indian citizens earning more than Rs 15 lakh, excluding foreign-source income, who are not liable to tax in any other country because of residence or domicile, will continue to be treated as deemed residents.

Similarly, the conditions governing Not



(Photo courtesy: AI generated)

Ordinarily Resident (NOR) status have also been retained, ensuring continuity for individuals whose tax residency changes over time.

The FAQs also reassure overseas taxpayers that the special tax regime available to NRIs remains largely untouched.

Concessional tax rates on specified investment income and long-term capital gains, exemptions available on reinvestment of foreign exchange assets, continuation of tax benefits after an NRI becomes resident, and the option to choose normal taxation instead of the concessional regime have all been retained under the new Act.

Importantly, the Income Tax Department confirmed that the exemption from filing an income tax return for certain NRIs—where total income consists only of specified investment income or long-term capital gains and tax has been deducted at source—continues

under the Income Tax Act, 2025 without any material changes.

The FAQs also clarify that the exemption on interest earned from Non-Resident External (NRE) accounts remains linked to residential status under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), not income-tax residency, preserving the existing framework.

Officials said the objective of the FAQ is to ensure a smooth transition to the new law by dispelling misconceptions that had surfaced since Parliament enacted the Income Tax Act, 2025.

For millions of NRIs filing returns during the current season, the message is clear: the new tax code may have a new structure, but the rules determining tax residency and the principal tax benefits available to overseas Indians remain substantially the same.

For more information click here.

India Opens Markets

SAH Staff Reporter

India has thrown open its listed equity market to all individuals residing outside the country, expanding a key investment route that was previously available mainly to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), in a move aimed at attracting broader foreign capital and deepening domestic financial markets.

The change, notified under the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) (Third Amendment) Rules, 2026, allows any “individual person resident outside India” to buy and sell shares of listed Indian companies on recognized stock exchanges under the portfolio investment route.

The reform significantly widens the pool of potential investors by extending direct access to foreign retail and high-net-worth individuals across the world, while retaining safeguards designed to prevent portfolio investments from becoming controlling stakes.

Under the revised framework, an individual overseas investor can hold less than 10 per cent of the paid-up equity capital of a listed company. The combined holding of all such overseas individual investors

ANALYSTS EXPECT THE MOVE TO IMPROVE MARKET LIQUIDITY, DIVERSIFY THE OVERSEAS INVESTOR BASE AND ATTRACT LONG-TERM FOREIGN CAPITAL AS INDIA SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION AS A GLOBAL INVESTMENT DESTINATION.

is capped at 24 per cent, unless shareholders approve a higher limit.

If an investor breaches the 10 per cent threshold, the excess holding must be divested within five trading days. Otherwise, the investment will be reclassified as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), requiring compliance with India's FDI regulations and restricting further purchases under the portfolio route.

Industry experts said the amendments represent one of the most significant liberalization measures under India's foreign exchange framework in recent years, broadening participation in Indian equities while maintaining regulatory oversight.

Analysts expect the move to

improve market liquidity, diversify the overseas investor base and attract long-term foreign capital as India seeks to strengthen its position as a global investment destination. The measure also complements the government's broader efforts to simplify foreign investment rules and improve ease of doing business.

The reforms, however, leave key safeguards intact. Investments remain subject to sectoral foreign investment caps, pricing guidelines and national security provisions. Transactions involving investors from countries sharing a land border with India, or where the beneficial owner is from such a country, will continue to require prior government approval in applicable cases.

The Reserve Bank of India has simultaneously updated payment and reporting regulations to align with the amended rules. Overseas investors can fund investments through inward remittances or eligible repatriable accounts, while Authorized Dealer banks will follow revised reporting procedures.

Legal and advisory firms said the changes strike a balance between widening access to India's capital markets and preserving safeguards against concentrated ownership, positioning the country to attract a larger share of global retail investment flows.

Business Round Up

Forex Kitty Shrinks

India's foreign exchange reserves dropped \$5.654 billion to \$666.933 billion during the week ended June 26, as per the RBI data. The drop in the reserves came after it rose by \$963 million to \$671.63 billion in the earlier week ended June 19, 2026.

Notably, before the onset of the Iran War, the forex kitty expanded to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion during the week ended February 27. Forex went through challenges like several weeks of a drop as the rupee came under pressure and the RBI had to intervene in the forex market through dollar sales.

As per the RBI data, for the week ended June 26, foreign currency assets, which form a major component of the reserves have decreased \$150 million to \$541.067 billion. The data further showed that the value of gold reserves declined \$5.394 billion to \$102.536 billion during the week, special drawing rights (SDRs) were down by \$89 million at \$18.558 billion. India's reserve position with the IMF was also down \$21 million to \$4.772 billion at the end of the reporting week, the data said. (UNI)

Services Lose Steam

India's services sector expanded at a slower pace in June as softer domestic demand, weaker client interest and a pause in

hiring weighed on business activity, according to the HSBC India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey released.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell to 57.4 in June from 59.8 in May. While the reading remained well above the 50-mark that separates expansion from contraction, it marked the weakest pace of growth in the sector in 17 months.

The moderation was largely driven by the slowest rise in new business inflows in more than two-and-a-half years. Survey respondents said competitive pricing, stronger e-commerce demand, higher customer bookings and improved local tourism supported activity. (UNI)

India's Solar Edge

India emerged as one of the world's lowest-cost major solar power markets in 2025, and ranked third globally in installed solar power capacity, fourth in wind power and fourth in total renewable energy capacity, as per the report released by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

As per the report, the levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) from solar PV in India stood at \$35 per megawatt hour (MWh) in 2025, compared with \$36 per MWh in China and \$37 in Brazil, and the global weighted average was significantly higher at \$44 per MWh. (UNI)

A Dream Finally Finds Its Melody

SAH Staff Reporter

South Asian Herald's Entertainment Editor, Rajiv Vijayakar, has entered a domain he has dreamt of working in since he was a teenager: of composing music. Life took him to a different path for decades, but he continued to create tunes of his own, either composing poetry he read or occasionally completing the lyrics after creating a *mukhda* (face or introductory lines of a song) he had thought of. He never got the opportunity to train formally in music but has been exposed to film and other light music from childhood. As a journalist, he also got to interact in-depth with music creators of all hues.



Viplove Rajdeo, Rajiv Vijayakar, Ankurr R. Pathak and Tanvi Asher (in the forefront) at the recording of Sai Baba tere charnon se. (Photo courtesy: Rajiv Vijayakar)

Sai Baba tere charnon se, a soothing, easy-on-the-lips devotional dedicated to the saint from Shirdi in Maharashtra, has been released by Times Music Spiritual on 2nd July, a Thursday (which is Sai Baba's Day). Vijayakar has written and composed the song. It is rendered by Annkur R. Pathak, an upcoming singer who, coincidentally, had approached Vijayakar around 2010 on Facebook for tips on how to make it in Mumbai! This was revealed to Vijayakar by Pathak after the recording.

Vijayakar's dream was converted into reality under the supervision of the Dharma Productions' team of Azeem Dayani (Music Supervisor of all their films) and Tanvi Asher, who supervised the programming, arranging and recording of the song at Viplove Rajdeo's Studio by Viplove himself. Vijayakar and Dayani plan to work together again.

Mango Diplomacy...

(Contd. from page 1)

cuisines, and expanding retail distribution networks. Officials believe such outreach initiatives can help convert consumer demand into long-term commercial partnerships.

"The positive response from the Houston community reflects the growing interest in India's high-quality agri-products and a deepening India-Texas commercial connect," the CGI said in a statement, thanking Keemat Grocers and ITPO for supporting India's trade promotion efforts.

Officials said the momentum generated by

"I love to compose tunes on thoughts as I am inspired by all the music I have heard from all eras," says Vijayakar. "I shied away from a professional entry as there were highly-trained legends around. But with the opening up of independent music and more opportunities to create, I decided to enter this field, however late."

Vijayakar reveals that this song is, in fact, his second to release. "My first song was *Zindagi jeene wale*, also recorded in my voice by my old friend and the legendary icon, composer Raju Singh, who is one of the sweetest souls you will encounter in showbiz. He has done it all—remixes, TV serial title songs, film music, non-film Hindi and Punjabi albums, and background scores for over 200 films in many languages. He arranged and recorded the song purely as a supportive and encouraging dear friend and compelled me to sing it too."

Here are some comments sent by music celebs to Vijayakar.

Of them all, Vijayakar values the first-ever and vital comment, which came from *Bhajan Samrat Anup Jalota*: "Beautiful song. Loved it." "Anup sir is a legend in this very field! His words are like an award!" said Vijayakar.

"Just heard this. Well written. Well composed. Well sung. Congratulations Rajiv ji Jo bhi maango mil jaata hain. Sai Baba ji Ki jai" stated composer Anu Malik. "Sounds divine and surrendering" remarked Oscar-winning composer M.M. Keeravani.

Pritam said, "The bhajan is very nice, but I also found your *Zindagi jeene wale* very nice too!" Daboo Malik adds, "Outstanding!"

Top lyricist Irshad Kamil stated, "Heartiest Congratulations Rajiv ji, Best Wishes for the new creative zone." Ace background score composer Julius Packiam (*Ek Tha Tiger*, *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* and more raved, "Loved it Sir Simple and Superb melody and lyrics Great recall factor."

Singer Kavita Krishnamurthi Subramaniam wrote, "Very nice Bhajan. Enjoyed listening to it. Nicely composed and written. Sung well too."

Leading singer Shreya Ghoshal is performing in Australia and her mother, Sarmistha Ghoshal, stated, "Beautiful. Singer's voice and expressions are good. I will make Shreya hear it!" Gauri Yadwankar, ex-head honcho of Times Music, described the song as "Awesome" while filmmaker Umesh Mehra called it a "Beautiful composition."

the festival is expected to encourage greater engagement between Indian exporters and American buyers, particularly in premium fruits, processed foods, and value-added agricultural products.

Going forward, the Consulate plans to continue using community-focused trade events to strengthen economic ties between India and the United States. APEDA is expected to play a central role by facilitating connections between U.S. importers and Indian exporters, providing supply chain support, and expanding the availability of authentic Indian agricultural products in American supermarkets and food service channels.

NachNation under Uma Karmakar Kapoor, and Abhinaya Tharangini Academy of Kuchipudi Dance led by Krishnaveni Gurrupu. Independent artist Lahari Abbaraju also presented a featured performance.

Organizers described the festival as one of the largest celebrations of Indian dance to be staged at Carnegie Hall, bringing together hundreds of young and accomplished performers on one of the world's most prestigious cultural stages.

Indian Rhythms...

(Contd. from page 1)

Rao, Notes n' Beats School led by Veena Pandiri, Nrithya Samarpanam led by Gayathri Sudhakar, the Odisha Society of the Americas under Rashmi Rajaguru, Nupoor Dance School led by Radhika Joshi, Rhythm Dancers led by Thrupthy Kotian, Bharathakala Naaty Academy led by Subathra Sudarshan,

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Tech Firms...

(Contd. from page 1)

Technology companies are accelerating investments in generative AI, advanced semiconductor design, automation and quantum computing, areas where domestic talent shortages continue to persist. As competition for specialized expertise intensifies, employers are expected to rely increasingly on global recruitment while simultaneously expanding U.S.-based hiring and workforce development programs.

Indian IT services companies face a more complicated outlook. Although firms such as Infosys, TCS, Cognizant and Capgemini continue to secure thousands of approvals, they are steadily increasing local hiring, expanding American delivery centers and investing in workforce training to reduce dependence on overseas deployments. That transition is expected to accelerate if immigration rules become more restrictive or compliance costs rise further.

Industry observers also expect employers to closely monitor potential changes in prevailing wage requirements, adjudication

standards and future H-1B regulations. Any tightening of eligibility or increases in hiring costs could favor large technology companies with deeper financial resources while placing greater pressure on consulting firms that depend on large-scale mobility of skilled workers.

Geographically, California and Texas are likely to remain the principal destinations for H-1B professionals as investments in AI infrastructure, cloud computing and semiconductor manufacturing continue to expand. At the same time, financial services, healthcare technology and advanced manufacturing are emerging as important sources of future visa demand beyond the traditional software industry.

The FY2026 employer data therefore tells only part of the story. It confirms that demand for global technology talent remains robust today, but the more significant question is whether employers can sustain that momentum as evolving immigration policies, rising compliance costs and an increasingly competitive global talent market redefine how—and where—they recruit highly skilled workers in FY2027 and beyond.



(Photo courtesy: India in New York)



Soul Talk

Chhavi Upadhyay
Life Coach and Mentor

Manifest the Feeling, Not the Fantasy

There is a moment many of us know well. You settle in with a clear purpose — a vision board, perhaps, or just a quiet confidence in what you desire. You have put in the effort. You are clear on what you are asking for — a particular role, a specific salary, a certain kind of relationship, or a life that, from the outside, seems to reflect all your hard work and dreams.

This clarity feels like progress. And in many ways, it is.

But before you start manifesting, it is worth pausing to ask: do you truly know that what you are asking for is meant for you? Or could it be that you are aspiring to someone else's life and calling it your own dream?

A client came to me some time ago, feeling frustrated about a career that had hit a standstill. He had spent nearly two years manifesting a specific goal — a senior leadership role at a particular type of organization — inspired by a former colleague who seemed to have it all. The title, visibility, salary, and respect all seemed like the destination worth reaching for.

He was specific, focused, and consistent. By every measure of conventional manifestation practice, he was doing it right.

What he had not accounted for was what he later discovered about that colleague's actual life. The role came with relentless travel, a team in constant crisis, a culture that demanded availability at all hours, and a private life that had quietly eroded under the weight of it all. The visibility was real. So was the cost.

He had been manifesting a highlight reel — the version of that life visible from the outside, with no way of knowing that the full version included things he would never have chosen.

This is the misunderstanding at the heart of how manifestation is most commonly practiced today.

The Law of Attraction is not a catalogue. You are not placing a precise order and waiting for delivery. You are tuning a frequency. And if that frequency is rooted in comparison — in wanting what someone else has, in asking to become someone else's version of success — then the signal you are sending is not abundance. It is lack. It is the feeling of not being enough, pointed outward and called a goal.

By the law's own logic, that frequency can only return more of what it came from.

We do not actually want the things we think we want. We want what we believe those things will make us feel.

We do not want the job title. We want purpose, recognition, and ease. We do not want the salary figure. We want security — the feeling of breathing freely. We do not want a specific person. We want love, trust, and the feeling of being truly known.

The shift is simpler than it sounds. Before you name what you want, ask yourself what it is meant to make you feel. Security. Vitality. Love. Abundance. Freedom. Then manifest that feeling and leave the form open.

The most precise wish is rarely the wisest one. Precision in manifestation is not about the object. It is about the feeling underneath it.

Know what you are really asking for. Name the feeling, not just the form — and trust that what arrives will be yours in a way that someone else's never could have been.

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

Indian Americans...

(Contd. from page 2)

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the Global Seva Fund Excellence Awards, which recognized individuals for their contributions and service to the community. The recipients included Darshana and Dr. Arun Varshneya, who received the GSF Excellence in Philanthropy & Entrepreneurship Award; Anu and Manish Saraf, honored with the GSF Excellence in Philanthropy Award; and Anjali and Mayank Gupta, recipients of the GSF Excellence in Community Service & Entrepreneurship Award.

The South Asian Business Council of Virginia (SABCV) also presented Global Seva Fund founders Shashi Chopra and Ravi Chopra with its Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of their more than five decades of "dedicated community service and humanitarian leadership."

The program highlighted GSF's ongoing initiatives and future projects while featuring cultural performances by AT Dance Factory, Jhanak Dance Academy, Kuchipudi dancers led by Guru Malika Ramaprasad, and

Bhangra Steps Academy. The performances celebrated the community's cultural heritage and added to the festivities. The event concluded with a patriotic cake-cutting ceremony commemorating America's 250th anniversary, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthems of the United States and India, reflecting the shared values of democracy, diversity, and friendship between the two countries.

INS Sudarshini...

(Contd. from page 3)

The sail training vessel is expected to remain engaged in Sail4th 250 activities, including cultural exchanges and professional interactions with participating navies, before continuing the next leg of its global voyage.

Commissioned in 2012, INS Sudarshini has represented India at numerous international sailing events and goodwill missions, serving as a platform for naval diplomacy, maritime training, and cultural outreach. Its participation in the U.S. celebrations reflects the expanding scope of India-U.S. maritime engagement and people-to-people ties.



Unscripted Stories

Pavan Kaushik
Communications Expert and Author

Be A Friend To Your Son



(Photo courtesy: AI-generated)

The bond between a father and a son is very different from that between a mother and a son. A mother is nurturing, emotional, and protective, while a father often prepares his child to face life's challenges with courage and resilience. Yet there comes a stage when a son no longer wants his father to guide him merely—he wants him to be his friend.

One evening, my son asked me to accompany him to watch Chhichhore. Going to a movie with your grown-up son is a special experience. It is a silent indication that your relationship has evolved beyond authority and discipline.

The movie carries a powerful message for parents who unknowingly place performance pressure on their children. In the story, a young boy, burdened by expectations and disappointed by failure in a competitive examination, attempts suicide. Though he survives, the film's emotional impact is deeply disturbing.

As I watched, a question kept troubling me: "Am I also one of those parents who put unnecessary pressure on their child?"

The answer came almost immediately—no. My son and I have always shared a relationship built on trust and openness. As he grew older, I consciously gave him space to think, analyze situations, make decisions, and learn from his experiences. Advice was offered, but never imposed.

Children certainly need guidance and protection—protection from harmful influences, unhealthy habits, and poor choices. Parents must remain watchful, but not controlling. Children should always feel that their family stands firmly behind them, regardless of success or failure. They must know they have a safe place to return to whenever life becomes difficult.

Unfortunately, many children grow up surrounded by fear. Fear of teachers, fear of report cards, fear of disappointing parents, and often, fear of their fathers. In trying to meet expectations, they begin to measure their worth by others' approval.

When fear becomes the foundation of parenting, communication suffers. Children stop sharing. They hide mistakes, conceal report cards, tell lies, and slowly begin living two separate lives—one visible to parents and another hidden from them.

I am not suggesting that children should be left completely free. They need discipline, values, and direction. But these must come through conversation, understanding, and trust—not fear.

Throughout my parenting journey, I often reflected on my own childhood. I remembered the mistakes I made, the dreams I had, and the guidance I wish I had received. Perhaps I did not have the childhood I deserved, but I wanted my children to have the opportunities, encouragement, and support that I had missed.

After the movie ended, my son bought popcorn and cold drinks, and we headed home. I handed him the car keys and sat beside him while he drove.

As we moved through the city traffic, I asked him softly, "Do you ever feel any performance pressure from me or your mother?"

He laughed.

"Dad, it was just a movie. Relax. I know how to find windows when doors are closed. I simply wanted to watch a good movie with you."

His answer reassured me.

Parenting is not about controlling children; it is about building confidence and trust. The day your son or daughter begins treating you like a friend, do not feel your authority has diminished. Feel proud that your relationship has matured.

As we drove on, I gently reminded him to watch the cars coming from both sides. He smiled. I knew exactly what he was thinking:

"Fathers never change. And never make your father sit beside you when you're driving."

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Beauty Basics with
Shahnaz Husain

Pet Hair Care During Monsoon

Monsoons are the time when your pets develop hair and skin issues due to the moisture in the air, humidity and the heat wave. It is, therefore, essential to ensure a thorough and regular grooming session, which will help them survive the season without any issues. For instance, keeping them dry should be the first step to ensure healthy skin and hair.

Keeping your pets clean and healthy will also be beneficial for your hygiene.

I suggest some of the best practices that you can

incorporate regarding grooming routine that would ensure your pet does not have to face any issues related to hair and skin:

KEEP YOUR PETS DRY

Make it a point to keep the fur of your pet dry; ensure that after a morning walk or when there's moisture in the air, or your pet's fur seems damp, dry it with towels.

Using a hair dryer on a low setting to dry off their fur is the best way to ensure no moisture is left.

Focus on areas like skin folds, paws and underbelly.

Invest in good-quality rain gear for your pet as they too require

protection against the rain. Also, ensure there is no stagnant water in the surroundings where your pet lurks, and keep the environment around them comfortable and clean.

AVOID DAMP BEDDING

Keep your pet's bedding dry and ensure there's no moisture to avoid any infections. Place a plastic sheet under the bed or use waterproof bedding.

During monsoons or extreme humidity, reduce their outdoor activities, as it may lead to dampness that would settle in their fur, leading to fungal infections.

Regular cleaning and changing of bedding will ensure that your pet is able to stay dry and their fur is healthy in the monsoon season.

REGULAR CHECK

Treat your pet like a child and regularly check them for dampness, especially after walks when it is incessantly raining.

Regularly check for any signs of skin irritation or redness. If you see them scratching excessively, then consult a vet.

Keep a regular check to ensure they do not have any fleas or ticks.

Excessive panting and lethargy can be more than just a passing phase. These point to dehydration. Ensure that they have access to clean drinking water at all times.

Consider providing boiled drinking water to your pet to ensure they stay away from any waterborne diseases, especially during summer.

Keep antifungal powder and tick and flea repellents handy to ensure that your pet is free of pests.

GROOMING ROUTINE

Regularly brush the fur of your pet. This helps dislodge loose fur, prevents matting and enhances air circulation, improving their coat.

Keep their fur trimmed, especially during monsoon. This will protect the fur from dampness and matting.

Use specially formulated antifungal shampoos. It will help prevent fungal infections.

Dirt and muck from the ground easily get stuck in the paws; therefore, I suggest regularly cleaning them with antiseptic after every walk to ensure their hygiene. Additionally, you can invest in good-quality pet boots to protect their paws during monsoons.

REGULARLY CLEAN THEIR EARS.

Your pet is like a best buddy that loves you unconditionally, and you should also ensure their life is comfortable and well taken care of. In the same light, ensure you feed them a balanced and healthy diet, inclusive of fiber, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids for healthy skin and coat. Proper hydration is required to avoid dehydration.

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The Ramayan Reimagined

SAH Staff Reporter

At a time when stories are increasingly consumed on digital screens, Bay Area artist Pragati Sharma Mohanty is inviting audiences to slow down and reconnect with one of humanity's oldest traditions — visual storytelling.

Her exhibition, *Daughter of the Earth*, presents a contemporary interpretation of the Ramayan through more than 75 paintings, sculptural installations, divine totems and a 100-foot handwritten Sanskrit manuscript. The exhibition is the culmination of six years of artistic research and experimentation, drawing from multiple versions of the ancient epic while exploring how timeless narratives continue to resonate in the modern world.

Rather than conventionally illustrating the Ramayan, Mohanty creates immersive visual worlds that weave together mythology, architecture, symbolism, nature and design. Her works encourage viewers to look beyond the surface, uncovering layers of meaning embedded in every composition.

Central to the exhibition is Mohanty's signature artistic style, which she calls "Maximalist-Miniaturism." Combining the intricate detail of Indian miniature painting with the richness and complexity of maximalist art, each canvas is densely layered with architectural motifs, flora, fauna and symbolic imagery. From a distance, the works appear as complete compositions; on closer inspection, they reveal hundreds of intricate details and interconnected narratives.

The exhibition also features large-scale paintings from the *Ramayan Reimagined* series, sculptural installations inspired by mythology, handcrafted divine totems, mixed-media artworks and an interactive handwritten Sanskrit manuscript that



(Photo courtesy: Pragati Sharma Mohanty)

stretches nearly 100 feet.

According to Mohanty, the project reflects the enduring power of visual and oral storytelling.

"At a time when stories are increasingly consumed through screens, I turn to one of humanity's oldest traditions — visual and oral storytelling," she said in an artist statement. "My work explores how ancient narratives survive, transform and find new meaning when they are retold through contemporary artistic languages."

The exhibition also celebrates India's rich storytelling heritage, where epics such as the Ramayan have long been preserved through paintings, manuscripts, sculpture, architecture, textiles and oral traditions. Rather than recreating the past, Mohanty sees her work as continuing a living artistic tradition that has evolved across centuries, cultures and languages.

Born in India and now based in the San Francisco Bay Area, Mohanty brings an interdisciplinary perspective to her practice. She studied architecture at the Government College of Architecture in Lucknow before earning a degree in industrial design from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. Her background informs a creative process that blends historical research, hand painting, digital planning, mixed media, laser-cut elements and traditional craftsmanship.

Beyond her own artistic practice, Mohanty has spent more than two decades teaching Indian folk and traditional art through Pragati Art School, helping preserve these traditions while introducing them to new audiences.

With *Daughter of the Earth*, Mohanty demonstrates that even in an age of digital storytelling, ancient epics continue to inspire fresh artistic conversations. By reimagining the Ramayan through contemporary visual language, she offers audiences an immersive reminder that stories endure not because they remain unchanged, but because each generation discovers new ways to tell them.

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Sonam Chandwani
Managing Partner, KS Legal & Associates

Expired Passport, Valid Visa

International travel to the United States is often accompanied by misconceptions regarding the legal significance of a U.S. visa and its relationship with the passport in which it is affixed. Many travelers assume that the expiry date printed on a U.S. visa determines the last day they are permitted to remain in the United States. Others believe that a valid visa automatically becomes ineffective once the passport in which it appears has expired. Both assumptions are legally incorrect and frequently give rise to avoidable confusion.

A U.S. visa is an entry document that permits its holder to seek admission into the United States during the period of its validity. It does not determine the duration for which an individual may lawfully remain in the country. The period of authorized stay is determined by the inspecting officer of U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the port of entry after considering the traveler's purpose of visit, the applicable visa category and the accompanying documentation. This authorized period is reflected in the traveler's admission record. Consequently, an individual who enters the United States before the visa expires may lawfully remain in the country even after the visa's printed validity has ended, provided the authorized period of stay has not expired. Conversely, the mere fact that a visa remains valid does not entitle an individual to remain in the United States beyond the period authorized upon admission. It is therefore the authorized period of stay, and not the visa's expiration date, that determines whether a person's presence in the United States is lawful.

Equally misunderstood is the legal effect of passport expiry on the validity of a U.S. visa. As a general rule, the expiry of a passport does not invalidate a valid U.S. visa affixed to that passport. Where the visa remains valid, undamaged and has not been revoked or cancelled, a traveler may ordinarily travel by carrying both the expired passport containing the valid U.S. visa and a separate valid passport issued by the same country. Both passports should be presented at the time of airline check in and upon arrival before the U.S. immigration authorities. The visa should remain affixed to the expired passport and should not be removed or transferred unless specifically required by the competent authorities. It is also advisable that the personal particulars in both passports correspond and, where there has been a change in name or other identifying details, appropriate documentary evidence should be carried to establish continuity of identity.

Q Does the expiration date printed on my U.S. visa indicate the mandatory departure date from the United States?

A The expiration date indicated on a U.S. visa does not determine the mandatory departure date from the United States, as the visa functions strictly as a travel document authorizing the holder to request admission at a U.S. port of entry within its period of validity. Upon entry, the authorized duration of stay is determined solely by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer and is formally documented on the traveler's electronic Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record). Accordingly, a foreign national may legally remain in the United States beyond the expiration of the visa stamp, provided the period of stay authorized on the Form I-94 remains valid and all terms of admission are maintained.

Q What is the procedure for international travel when a U.S. visa remains valid but the associated passport has expired?

A To travel internationally with a valid U.S. visa that is still inside an expired passport, you must carry and present both your old and new passports together. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will accept the valid visa stamp in your expired passport as long as it remains intact and undamaged. When presenting these documents at the port of entry, several specific criteria must be met to ensure a smooth admission. First, both the expired and the new passport must have been issued by the same country and must indicate the same nationality. Second, both documents must be of the same passport type; for instance, you cannot pair an old diplomatic passport with a new regular tourist passport. Finally, it is crucial that you do not attempt to detach, peel, or transfer the visa sticker from the expired passport into your new one, as doing so will immediately ruin the security features and permanently invalidate the visa.

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India Eyes Visa Overhaul to Boost Tourism

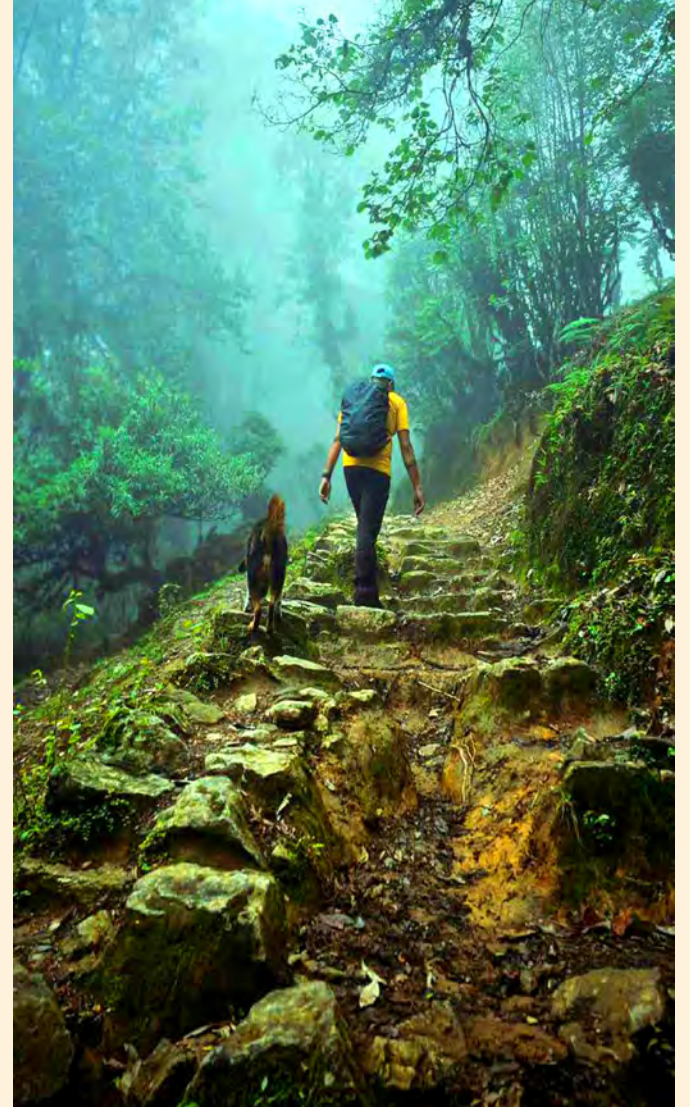
SAH Staff Reporter

India could witness a fundamental overhaul of its tourism entry regime if the Centre adopts a series of sweeping visa reforms proposed by NITI Aayog, including the phased introduction of Tourist Visa-on-Arrival (VoA), longer-duration multiple-entry visas and a simplified digital visa architecture aimed at sharply boosting foreign tourist arrivals over the coming years. The recommendations form part of the government's broader strategy to make tourism a major engine of economic growth, according to the policy think tank's latest report.

The report, *Unlocking Growth in Tourism and Hospitality Sector: Recommendations for Non-Financial Regulatory Reforms*, argues that while India has focused extensively on improving tourism infrastructure and easing regulations for businesses, the country's restrictive visa framework continues to remain one of the biggest barriers preventing it from competing with leading global tourism destinations. It says reforms to visa policy could unlock a significant increase in international arrivals, tourism receipts and repeat visitation.

The urgency stems from India's relatively modest performance despite its vast tourism assets. The country recorded nearly 20.6 million international arrivals in 2024, including Non-Resident Indians, but actual Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) stood at just 9.95 million, generating around USD 35 billion in tourism receipts. By comparison, Turkey earned USD 56.3 billion, Thailand USD 42.7 billion, and Saudi Arabia USD 42 billion, underscoring the significant headroom for growth if barriers to travel are reduced.

According to the report, visa liberalization has become one of the most effective policy tools for expanding tourism worldwide. Between 2008 and 2023, the proportion of travelers requiring traditional visas before departure declined from 77 per cent to 47 per cent, while electronic visas expanded six-fold. Research cited in the report suggests restrictive visa regimes can reduce inbound travel by almost 70 per cent, whereas visa facilitation measures can increase tourist arrivals



(Photo courtesy: NITI Aayog)

by as much as 25 per cent.

India, however, continues to lag behind many competing destinations. It scores 38.14 on the UN Tourism Visa Openness Index, below both the global average of 40 and the Asia-Pacific average of 46. Regional competitors have adopted far more liberal entry policies, with Malaysia scoring 80.48, Sri Lanka 67.07, Thailand 58.66 and Indonesia 53.16. India currently offers visa-free access only to Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives, while Visa-on-Arrival is limited to nationals of Japan, South Korea and the UAE, leaving most visitors dependent on pre-approved visas.

Looking ahead, the report proposes a phased rollout of Tourist Visa-on-Arrival beginning with countries already covered under India's e-Visa program. Eligibility would be determined using objective criteria such as contribution to India's inbound tourism, reciprocal treatment of Indian passport holders, diaspora linkages, passport strength and migration and security risks. The proposed system would combine digital pre-authorisation with on-arrival processing, enabling immigration authorities to maintain security screening while

substantially reducing travel friction.

The reforms also envisage introducing longer-validity multiple-entry tourist visas, rationalizing multiple visa categories into a simpler framework and upgrading digital application platforms, payment systems and multilingual support services. Together, these measures are intended to encourage repeat travel, attract higher-spending international visitors and strengthen India's competitiveness in leisure, business and medical tourism.

The report argues that visa policy should evolve from being merely an immigration instrument to becoming a strategic economic lever. If implemented alongside wider regulatory reforms in the tourism and hospitality sector, the proposed changes could significantly reshape India's position in the global tourism market, helping convert its vast cultural and natural assets into sustained growth in visitor arrivals, foreign exchange earnings and employment over the next decade.

Seven-Up for Australia

Anirudh Nair

It had to be Australia. The tournament's most successful side reaffirmed its dominance by defeating England by seven wick-

ets in the final of the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup at Lord's on July 5, reclaiming the title with 17 balls to spare and securing a record-extending seventh T20 World Cup crown.

After electing to field, captain

Sophie Molineux's decision paid immediate dividends as Australia's disciplined bowling and trademark fielding strangled England's batting lineup. Lucy Hamilton struck early by dismissing Amy Jones, while Annabel Suther-



Australian team players celebrating with the Women's T20 World Cup trophy. (Photo courtesy: Anirudh Nair, SAH)

land removed tournament leading run-scorer Danni Wyatt-Hodge during the powerplay.

Alice Capsey briefly threatened before Molineux bowled her, and Kim Garth trapped Heather Knight leg-before, leaving England under pressure. Captain Nat Sciver-Brunt anchored the innings with a measured half-century, while Freya Kemp injected late momentum with an unbeaten 44 off 28 balls. Their 50-run partnership lifted England to a competitive, though below-par, 150/4.

England's hopes received an early boost when Lauren Bell dismissed Georgia Voll, but the advantage proved short-lived. Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield quickly wrested control, combining aggressive strokeplay with effortless strike rotation to add a match-defining 100-run partnership. Australia raced to 62 runs in the powerplay, placing England permanently on the back foot.

Mooney followed her semi-final heroics with another fluent half-century off just 38 balls before falling leg-before to Sophie Ecclestone. Litchfield narrowly missed her own fifty, departing for 48 to

Charlie Dean, but by then the contest had effectively been decided. A brief moment of controversy arose when Ecclestone appeared to catch Ellyse Perry, only for the decision to be overturned after review ruled the ball had touched the ground. The reprieve proved inconsequential as Ash Gardner struck the winning boundary in the following over.

The victory once again underlined Australia's extraordinary pedigree on the global stage. Seven titles in ten editions have cemented their status as the benchmark in women's T20 cricket, with their composure, tactical discipline and depth proving decisive in another major final.

For England, the defeat ended an otherwise impressive home campaign. An unbeaten run to the final had raised hopes of a fairy-tale finish before a sell-out crowd of 28,987 at Lord's, but Australia exposed the gulf that still exists at the highest level. Despite the disappointment, England's run to the final represents significant progress under their revamped leadership and offers optimism ahead of the next World Cup cycle.

Breaking Sachin's Record

Anirudh Nair

Well history has finally been made. 15-year-old prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has made his international debut in the second T20I of the five-match series against England at Manchester on July 4.

At 15 years and 99 days old, Sooryavanshi has become the youngest international cricketer for India, breaking Sachin Tendulkar's nearly 36-year-old record, and the second youngest from full member nations, just behind Pakistan's Hasan Raza.

Sooryavanshi has dominated headlines across 2026, first with a jaw dropping ICC U19 World Cup campaign, finishing as the tournament's top scorer and best player, winning the title, and then most notably in his sophomore IPL season with the Rajasthan Royals,

where once again finished as top scorer and smashed a whopping 72 sixes, the most by any player in the competitions history. These efforts saw him named in the squad for India's T20I series against Ireland and England in the two islands.

The maiden appearance was not a matter of if, but when, as Sooryavanshi was slated to receive his international cap in the Ireland series, with the men in green considered steps below world champions on paper. Unbelievably, Ireland stunned India to win the series 2-0, their first ever win over them, and Sooryavanshi was made to wait till England for that debut. After another wait following the first T20I in Durham, Sooryavanshi was finally named in the starting XI of the second T20I at Old Trafford. Unfortunately for the youngster, the debut was quite unceremonious as he scored a measly 14

runs and India were beaten by four wickets, still shaking off the Ireland blues.

That isn't to say there were not any promising moments from Sooryavanshi. The left hander stylishly smashed his Rajasthan teammate and England's bowling spearhead, Jofra Archer with a classy, angled sweep over fine leg's head for six. The promise is ever present and with three games to still go in this series, Sooryavanshi definitely has a lot more to offer.

"He's got that unflinching attitude where he's fearless," said Indian captain Shreyas Iyer in the post-match presentation about Sooryavanshi's debut.

"The way he approaches his game, it's just sensational to watch and the way he bats in the nets, I think there's something to learn out of him, the way he plays his fearless cricket."

With the three defeats in the four games following the T20 World Cup triumph, and the one exception being a rained-out



Vaibhav Sooryavanshi speaking to Indian legend Ravi Shastri prior to the game. (Photo courtesy: Anirudh Nair, SAH)

fixture, India are in a desperate situation to find their form. With one of the most exciting talents the game has seen in years, on top of

his game, at India's disposal, the men in blue can still bounce back hard as Sooryavanshi defines the generation to come.

Boomers Return to Perth



Bryce Cotton is presented with his Australian Boomers jersey by Dean Vickerman, Associate Head Coach of the Boomers, ahead of his national team debut at the FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers in Perth. (Photo courtesy: Basketball Australia)

Pooja Bhardwaj

Australia's national men's basketball team, the Boomers, will play two home fixtures in Perth as part of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Basketball World Cup Asian Qualifiers, according to a July 1, 2026, statement from the Western Australian government.

The matches, secured by the Cook Labor Government through Tourism WA, mark the final stage of Round One of the qualifiers for the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup. The Boomers will face Guam on Friday, July 3, and the Philippines on Monday, July 6, at RAC Arena.

According to the statement, the 12-man squad includes six-time National Basketball League (NBL)

Most Valuable Player and former Perth Wildcats star Bryce Cotton, who is set to make his Australian debut. The team also features current and former Wildcats players Keanu Pinder, Ben Henshall and Elijah Pepper, along with Perth-raised players Alex Condon and Wani Swaka Lo Buluk. Basketball Australia said the squad is completed by Taran Armstrong, Josh Bannan, Mitch Creek, Angus Glover, Jack McVeigh and Tyrese Proctor.

Cotton described his first national team selection as a meaningful milestone, saying he did not take the opportunity lightly and was grateful to represent a country that had embraced him "from day one."

The government said the series marks the Boomers' first

appearance in Perth in nearly seven years and the first time Western Australia has hosted FIBA World Cup Qualifier games. The two fixtures will be the only opportunity for Australian fans to watch the Boomers play at home during the Third Window of the qualifiers.

Western Australian Tourism Minister Reece Whitby said the team's return to Perth was "a fantastic moment for Western Australia," highlighting the strong local representation in the squad. He said hosting the matches at RAC Arena would strengthen the state's reputation as a world-class events destination while attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and generating jobs across the tourism and hospitality sectors.