INDIA POST

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DEAL PRETTY CLOSE

'Deal pretty close': Trump on India-US trade agreement

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said that India wants to conclude a trade agreement with the United States and indicated that the two countries were close to reaching a deal, while suggesting that the final arrangement would differ significantly from earlier trade agreements.

Speaking to reporters during an Oval Office interaction alongside Vice President JD Vance, Trump responded to a question about whether Washington and New Delhi were approaching an agreement.

"They want to make a deal. We're going to make a deal pretty close," Trump said.



US President Donald Trump

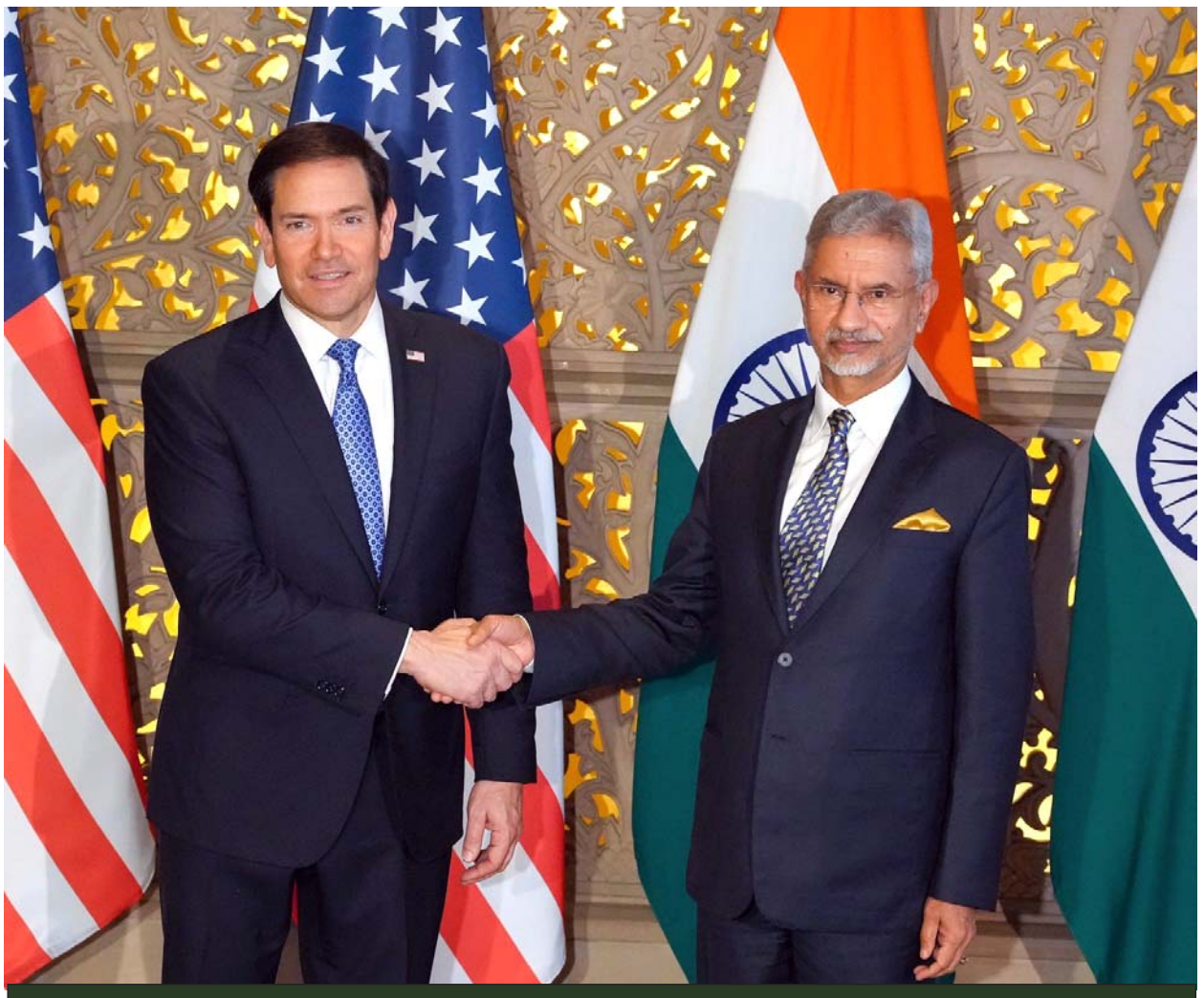
"Yeah, that's going to be a much different kind of deal than we've made," he added.

The remarks came as Secretary of State Marco Rubio was visiting India and holding discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, placing the President's comments against the backdrop of high-level diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

Trump did not elaborate on what would make the proposed agreement different from previous arrangements.

He also did not specify a date for concluding negotiations or identify the remaining issues preventing a final agreement.

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External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, in Mumbai on October 20. *(@SecRubio X/ANI Photo)* **Details story on page 5**



A4H endorses Steve Hilton for California Gov.

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Yash on Nitesh Tiwari's 'Ramayana'

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Temple Attack: 105 US Lawmakers call for FBI Probe

WASHINGTON: As many as 105 US lawmakers have urged the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate an alleged attempt to carry out a mass shooting at a Hindu temple in Illinois.

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INDIA POST SURVEY

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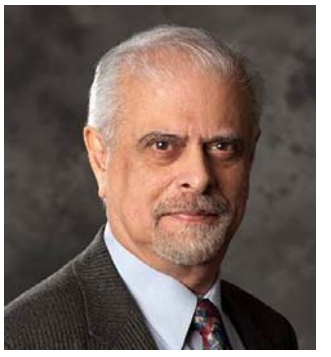
This week's question

Will Ukraine get better support after Midterm elections?

Last week's result

Will the Saudi alliance be able to contain Houthis?

YES 96% NO 4%



IND-AM Engineer Azad Madni wins John Fritz Medal

WASHINGTON: Indian-American engineer Azad M. Madni, a University Professor at the University of Southern California (USC), has been awarded the 2026 John Fritz Medal, often called the 'Nobel Prize of Engineering'.

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'I may be killed, but I will return': Sheikh Hasina

WASHINGTON: Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared that she is determined to return to her country despite the possibility of being arrested, tortured or killed, saying she cannot remain away while her supporters and ordinary Bangladeshis continue to suffer.

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To empower the Indian Diaspora and make their voice strong and effective in countries of their adoption. RJ Media conglomerate offers a credible, professional and complete package of news, opinion, entertainment, networking and information.

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Nitesh Tiwari's 'Ramayana'



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A4H endorses Steve Hilton



A4H dedicated to strengthening the political voice of Hindu Americans and Pro-Hindus, has endorsed Steve Hilton in his candidacy for Governor of California **8**

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DEAL PRETTY CLOSE

'Deal pretty close': Trump on India-US trade agreement

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US President Donald Trump

Speaking to reporters during an Oval Office interaction alongside Vice President JD Vance, Trump responded to a question about whether Washington and New Delhi were approaching an agreement.

"They want to make a deal. We're going to make a deal pretty close," Trump said.

"Yeah, that's going to be a much different kind of deal than we've made," he added.

The remarks came as Secretary of State Marco Rubio was visiting India and holding discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, placing the President's comments against the backdrop of high-level diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

Trump did not elaborate on what would make the proposed agreement different from previous arrangements.

He also did not specify a date for concluding negotiations or identify the remaining issues preventing a final agreement.

The President's comments nevertheless suggested that Washington expected progress in talks that have been closely watched by businesses, exporters and investors in both countries.

India and the United States have been negotiating a bilateral trade arrangement aimed at expanding market access and addressing longstanding differences over tariffs, agricultural products, industrial goods and regulatory barriers.

Trade negotiations have acquired additional significance under Trump's second administration, which has made tariffs and reciprocal market access central elements of American economic policy.

The administration has argued that trading partners must offer American businesses greater access to their markets while reducing barriers affecting US exports.

For India, the negotiations carry implications for major export sectors, including pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, textiles, electronics and information technology-related services.

American companies have also sought greater opportunities in India's expanding consumer market and manufacturing sectors.

The President's latest remarks did not indicate whether negotiators had resolved differences over specific sectors or reached agreement on tariff reductions.

Nor did he announce any new investment commitments, market-access concessions or implementation timetable.

The comments came during an Oval Office event primarily devoted to the administration's efforts to combat fraud involving federal government programs.

Trump and Vance announced new incentives for individuals reporting suspected misuse of taxpayer funds and discussed the administration's broader economic priorities. *IANS*

India and the United States have been negotiating a bilateral trade arrangement aimed at expanding market access and addressing longstanding differences over tariffs, agricultural products, industrial goods and regulatory barriers

Expect our partners to show zero tolerance toward terrorism: EAM Jaishankar

MUMBAI: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar appreciated visiting US Secretary Marco Rubio laying a wreath at the Taj Hotel's 26/11 Memorial while emphasizing that India remains clear on its right to defend itself against terrorism and expects its partners also to show zero tolerance toward terrorism.

Addressing the 'Freedom 250' reception in Mumbai to mark the 250th anniversary of US independence in the presence of Rubio and US Ambassador Sergio Gor, EAM Jaishankar spotlighted that the world order is clearly in transition, and countries are responding accordingly.

"Secretary Rubio, all of Mumbai, and indeed all of India, appreciate your laying a wreath today at the Taj Hotel's 26/11 Memorial. India also welcomes this administration's decision to extradite Tahawwur Hussain Rana, who was one of the key culprits. We are clear on our right to defend ourselves against terrorism and expect our partners to show zero tolerance toward terrorism as well," said EAM Jaishankar.

"As we mark this anniversary together, it is natural to reflect on the way ahead. The world order is clearly in transition, and countries are responding accordingly. Each one of us will naturally pursue our national interests. In such an era, expanding our convergence is key to deepening our ties," he added.



U.S. Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri at the Freedom 250 reception, in Mumbai on October 20. *(ANI Video Grab)*

The External Affairs Minister mentioned the "new opportunities" in India-US partnership in the fields of trade, investment, technology, and energy, that await both nations and engaging regularly and identifying common interests will certainly help provide a pathway.

He said that both countries also have a shared stake in strengthening peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

"Our ties have indeed come a long way. History records that many Americans were supportive of India's struggle for independence. *IANS*

History of 21st century being written in this region: Rubio in India

MUMBAI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, the history of the 21st century is being written "in this region", asserting that the partnership between Washington and New Delhi is shaping what the century will look like.

Addressing the 'Freedom 250' reception in Mumbai to mark the 250th anniversary of US independence, Rubio emphasized on engaging more with India, given that it is the world's most populous nation and a strong geopolitical partner.

"If you think about the story and the history of the 21st century, it's being written in this region and it's being written right now. One day someone will write a book about the history of the 21st century. And there will be a chapter in there about the other regions in the world, but the 21st century will be defined, for better and for worse, by what happens in this region. We know that. We can sense it. We can feel it," said Rubio.

"I truly believe the relationship between the United States and India is defining, in many ways in a positive way, what the 21st century can look like," he added. *IANS*

US probes Singham-linked groups; funding in India, Europe protests under scanner

WASHINGTON: India's street protests over electoral rolls are being amplified by groups and figures now under US congressional scrutiny over funding from American tech tycoon Neville Roy Singham, though no evidence has emerged that they fund or direct the protests.

A Fox News Digital investigation by Asra Q. Nomani, published recently, said it had identified "101 organizations across 9 countries --including the US -- that are coordinating, organizing or amplifying protests in Europe."

India appears twice in the report. It said Progressive International "explicitly grouped the current protests in France, Spain, India and Albania in an Oct. 16 briefing and asked how the 'new rebellions' could acquire organized political power."

Its list also includes "Indian Alliance Paris -- INTERNATIONAL / DIASPORA: France-based organization connecting French and Indian protest messaging. Partnered with the People's Forum in Manhattan." The report does not argue that the network is driving protests in India.

Progressive International has also posted from Delhi. "We write from the barricades of Jantar Mantar, where the Government of India has deployed armed forces against citizens protesting mass disenfranchisement and defending their right to vote," it said on X on October 12.

Vijay Prashad, who heads Tricontinental, paired the cities in an Oct 18 post: "Paris-New Delhi-Buenos Aires / Let fury have the hour, anger can be power."

India appears twice in the report. It said Progressive International "explicitly grouped the current protests in France, Spain, India and Albania in an Oct. 16 briefing and asked how the 'new rebellions' could acquire organized political power"

BreakThrough News covered the Indian protests on October 12, 13 and 16. On October 13, it reported that "'Unparalleled and unprecedented' police repression was seen in India this weekend."

Fox said BreakThrough News, CodePink and the Party for Socialism and Liberation are "funded and supported by Neville Roy Singham, an American-born tech tycoon who lives in Shanghai."

In July 2026, the House Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Jason Smith, subpoenaed BreakThrough News, Prashad's Tricontinental and the People's Forum. Smith led the House delegation that met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Mumbai this week.

In April 2025, Senator Chuck Grassley asked the Justice Department whether the People's Forum and Code Pink should register as foreign agents, writing: "Evidence suggests that The People's Forum and Code Pink have been funded and influenced by Mr. (Neville Roy) Singham and the communist Chinese government."

The New York Post and CBS News have reported, citing unnamed sources, that a federal grand jury in Manhattan is investigating Singham. No charges have been filed, and the Justice Department has not confirmed the probe. The New York Times first detailed Singham's funding network in 2023.

The documented links amount to coverage, amplification and solidarity.

The protests erupted over a voter-roll revision that, the Guardian reported, "has stripped 130m names from India's electoral roll," with protesters demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. *IANS*

'I may be killed, but I will return': Sheikh Hasina

WASHINGTON: Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared that she is determined to return to her country despite the possibility of being arrested, tortured or killed, saying she cannot remain away while her supporters and ordinary Bangladeshis continue to suffer.

Addressing a Washington-based press conference virtually, Hasina said the dangers surrounding her return would not prevent her from going back to Bangladesh. She left Bangladesh following the collapse of her government in August 2024.

"How risky it is, I don't care. I have to go back," Hasina said.

The former Prime Minister, who has been living in India since her removal from power, thanked the Indian government and people for receiving her and providing refuge during a period of political upheaval.

"Well, thanks to Indian government, and the people, all party, they received me just like 1975," she said, recalling the period when she and her sister survived the assassination of several members of their family.

Hasina said she understood that returning to Bangladesh could expose her to imprisonment or violence, but argued that political responsibility required her to stand alongside her supporters.



Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

She recalled several earlier episodes in her political career when she returned to Bangladesh despite threats to her safety.

These included her return in 1981 after years abroad following the assassination of her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and other family members in 1975.

She also referred to her decision to return during the political emergency in 2007, when she faced criminal allegations.

Hasina accused Bangladesh's current political leadership of using criminal proceedings against her and members of the Awami League to suppress political opposition.

She disputed the legitimacy of the cases and maintained that allegations against political leaders should be resolved through fair judicial proceedings.

However, she did not announce a confirmed date for her return.

Her son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, subsequently told journalists that no date had been fixed and that an announcement would be made closer to the time.

In a broader appeal to Washington, Hasina urged the United States to support democratic institutions, political pluralism and inclusive elections in Bangladesh rather than favor any particular leader or political party. *IANS*

105 US lawmakers seek FBI probe into Illinois Hindu temple attack

WASHINGTON: As many as 105 US lawmakers have urged the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate an alleged attempt to carry out a mass shooting at a Hindu temple in Illinois as a possible federal hate crime, warning of growing threats against Indian-Americans and other South Asian communities.

The bipartisan congressional appeal was led by Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, who was worshipping with his family at the Sri Venkateswara Swami (Balaji) Temple in Aurora when the alleged attack was attempted on October 11.

In a letter to FBI Director Kash Patel, the lawmakers called for a comprehensive investigation into the incident, including whether racial and religious hatred motivated the suspect and whether others helped plan or encourage the alleged attack.

The signatories include all Indian-American members of Congress, the entire Illinois House Democratic delegation and Senators Dick Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Andy Kim and Chris Van Hollen.

According to prosecutors, 19-year-old Alexandros Paporakis, a resident of Palatine, Illinois, drove to the temple intending to carry out a shooting but fled after his rifle malfunctioned.

Authorities said he was arrested later that day after a coworker alerted police to his alleged plans to return.

Prosecutors allege that Paporakis, who identified himself as a neo-Nazi, had prepared an eight-page white supremacist manifesto describing violence against people of Indian descent at a Hindu place of worship.

Investigators recovered a rifle, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, body armor and white supremacist imagery, according to the congressional letter.

The suspect has been charged with making a terrorist threat and unlawful possession of weapons. The allegations have not been established in court.

"The alleged combination of targeted racial hatred, a religious setting, and preparations for mass violence demands a comprehensive federal response," the lawmakers wrote.

They acknowledged the FBI's reported assistance to local investigators. The letter also raised concerns about increasing online hostility towards Indians, Hindus, Sikhs and other South Asian communities. *IANS*

Delhi-Born engineer quits corporate world after personal loss, becomes author of 14 books

WASHINGTON: A friend's sudden death at 35 pushed Delhi-born engineer Monica Saigal to quit her corporate career and start writing, a choice that has since produced 14 books, the Northern Virginia author said.

"I always wanted to write since I was about five years old," Saigal told IANS. But she grew up in what she called "a very conservative, you know, Delhi Punjabi household, and our choices were doctor, lawyer, engineer, or marry rich."

"So I always like to say I'm one of the original three idiots. I became the engineer with two master's degrees," she said.

Saigal was born in Delhi and was six when her family moved to Bahrain, where it stayed for close to 30 years. The family later returned to India, and she earned her engineering degree from BMS in Bangalore.

She came to the US in 1991 for graduate study, first at Lynchburg College in Virginia and then at George Washington University. She remembers arriving in a freezing January, having "never seen snow before," and finding small-town Virginia startlingly quiet after "the craziness of being in India where all your senses are wide awake all the time."

There was no Indian grocery store in Lynchburg. She recalled borrowing cardamom from the wife of the lone Indian professor on campus.

"I always wanted to write since I was about five years old," Saigal told IANS. But she grew up in what she called "a very conservative, you know, Delhi Punjabi household, and our choices were doctor, lawyer, engineer, or marry rich."

She later worked at Ernst & Young and then at Hewitt Associates in Northern Virginia. A close friend in Cleveland, a German American, kept urging her to write. Saigal kept saying she would do it after retiring.

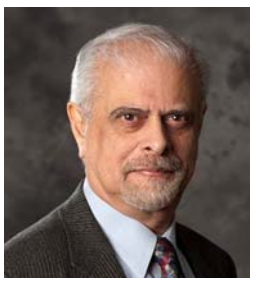
Then came a phone call from the friend's husband. At 35, the friend had fallen on a sidewalk, hit her head and died.

"Her question kept ringing in my mind, you know, what makes you think you're going to be old enough to retire?" Saigal said. *IANS*

Mumbai-raised Engineer Azad Madni wins John Fritz Medal

WASHINGTON: Indian-American engineer Azad M. Madni, a University Professor at the University of Southern California (USC), has been awarded the 2026 John Fritz Medal, often called the 'Nobel Prize of Engineering'.

Established in 1902, the medal honors leaders whose work has advanced human progress. Past recipients include Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Claude Shannon, Gordon Moore, Andrew Viterbi and Elon Musk, USC's Viterbi School of Engineering said.



Azad M. Madni

Madni, executive director of USC's Systems Architecting and Engineering Program, was recognized for pioneering contributions to transdisciplinary systems engineering, the university said.

His citation recognizes his "pioneering advances in transdisciplinary systems engineering through exploitation of disciplinary convergence, augmented intelligence, green learning, and interactive storytelling in virtual worlds".

"Professor Madni's pioneering work has helped transform how we design complex systems, and this extraordinary honor is a fitting recognition of the innovation, imagination, and impact that have defined his illustrious career," said USC President Beong-Soo Kim.

Gaurav Sukhatme, interim dean of the Viterbi School, noted that the school's namesake, Andrew Viterbi, received the medal in 2011.

"Professor Madni's recognition continues this remarkable legacy of engineering innovation at USC," Sukhatme said.

Madni grew up in Mumbai, where he attended St. Mary's High School and studied science at St. Xavier's College.

He has said that President John F. Kennedy's 1962 speech on going to the Moon inspired him to pursue aerospace. He came to the United States in 1965 to study engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he earned his bachelor's (1968), master's (1971) and doctoral (1978) degrees. *IANS*



IND-AM Republican candidate gets Vance's backing on controversial ad

WASHINGTON: Indian-American Vivek Ramaswamy, the Republican candidate for Ohio governor, received strong backing from Vice President JD Vance, rebuking fellow Republicans for "whining" about a Ramaswamy campaign advertisement featuring the mother of his Democratic rival Amy Acton.

Vance, speaking at a press conference in Cincinnati on the administration's anti-fraud drive, said: "Whether the ad was appropriate or not is not really my concern."

"I'm a little bit disgusted when I see Republicans across the country who are whining more about that advertisement than they are about what the Congressional Democrats and other Democrats want to do to the United States of America," Vance said in reply to a question.

Some Republicans have distanced themselves from the advertisement.

Vance said the real question for voters was a different one. "Do you actually think that Amy Acton is unfit to serve as governor of the state of Ohio? I do," he said. *IANS*

IND-AM big money runs 3 to 1 Republican as community votes Democratic

WASHINGTON: The best-known Indian-American political donors are giving about three dollars to Republicans for every one to Democrats in the 2026 midterm cycle, federal campaign finance records show, even as the community votes heavily Democratic.

A review of Federal Election Commission filings for 11 prominent donors found about $10.8 million in direct gifts to Republican committees and groups, against about $3.3 million to Democrats.

About $7.1 million of the Republican total is in three checks to the pro-Trump super PAC MAGA Inc, from Asha Jadeja Motwani, Krishna Tripuraneni and Anjani Sinha. *IANS*



Americans4Hindus endorses Steve Hilton for California Governor; Dr. Romesh K. Japra extends support at San Jose Community Rally

DR ABHILASH MAROJU





SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA: Americans4Hindus (A4H) a bipartisan political action organization dedicated to strengthening the political voice of Hindu Americans and Pro-Hindus, has endorsed Steve Hilton in his candidacy for Governor of California.

The organization's support was highlighted during the Little Saigon Community Rally held in San Jose on Sunday, October 18, 2026, where Dr. Romesh K. Japra, Founder & Chairman of Americans4Hindus, participated alongside the A4H leadership team and addressed the gathering in support of Hilton's gubernatorial campaign.

The rally brought together community leaders, supporters, and residents from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating the importance of grassroots political engagement and stronger connections between candidates and California's multicultural communities.

Dr. Romesh K. Japra Highlights Steve Hilton's Leadership and Community Engagement



During the gathering, Dr. Japra expressed support for Steve Hilton's candidacy and emphasized the importance of leadership that listens to communities, understands their concerns, and encourages their participation in shaping California's future.

Dr. Japra's proposed statement for the organization's official release:

"Steve Hilton's candidacy represents an important opportunity for Californians to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of our state. We appreciate his willingness to connect with diverse communities, listen to their perspectives, and recognize the importance of their participation in public life.

"Americans4Hindus believes that strong leadership begins with understanding the people it serves. We are pleased to endorse Steve Hilton for Governor of California and look forward to strengthening our engagement with his campaign.

"Our organization remains committed to ensuring that Hindu Americans and Pro-Hindus have a meaningful voice in the democratic process and that their contributions to California's economic, cultural, and civic life are recognized."

Cont'd on page 12



Bridgewater Commons to Celebrate the Festival of Light with Diwali @ The Commons, Saturday, October 24

South Asian culture will be celebrated with traditional and modern music and dance performances, crafts, and giveaways

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP, N.J.: An expanded line-up of high-energy performances will headline Diwali @ The Commons, Bridgewater Commons' annual celebration of the South Asian Festival of Lights, on Saturday, October 24 from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Presented by Open Road Auto Group in partnership with Renascent Media, the vibrant Center Court celebration will feature live music, traditional and Bollywood dance, fashion, and an interactive audience finale, all set against festive Diwali décor curated by Atharv Events.

Making their Diwali @ The Commons debut, Kalashri School of Dance, Jyotsna Bollywood Dance Academy, and Om Guha will showcase traditional and Bollywood choreography, including an inventive fusion of classical dance, hip-hop, and rap. New Jersey-based fashion brand Pinkaari will also present a special runway showcase. Returning favorites include Madhukar Kshirsagar. The live performance program features:

Ganesh Kauthuvam - An opening Bharatanatyam performance by Naatya Mayura Institute of Bharatanatyam, invoking Lord Ganesha's blessings to begin the celebration.

Bollywood Singing & Flute with Live Instruments - Madhukar Kshirsagar Group presents a live musical performance blending Bollywood vocals, flute, and instruments.

From Old to New Bollywood - Bina Menon and Kalashri School of Dance take audiences on a journey through

Bollywood across generations, blending classical influences with popular movie music and dance.

Kids' Bollywood Dance - A colorful, high-energy performance by the young dancers of Jyotsna Bollywood Dance

Academy, choreographed by Mitali Roy.

Sitar & Tabla - A live Indian classical instrumental performance by Om Guha and accompanying tabla artist.

Semi-Classical Meets Hip-Hop - Jayshree Srikanta and Dance X Studio present a contemporary fusion of Indian semi- classical dance and hip-hop.

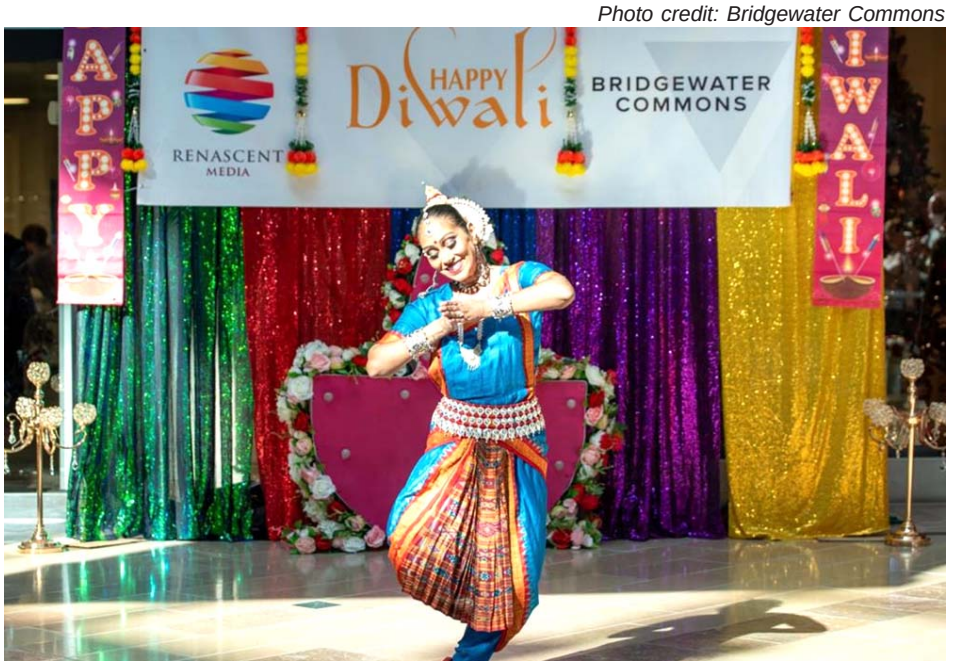
Diya Dance - Naatya Mayura Institute of Bharatanatyam presents a traditional Bharatanatyam performance celebrating the light and spirit of Diwali.

Sustainable Fashion Show by Pinkaari - A special runway presentation featuring Pinkaari's sustainable fashion, celebrating Indian textiles, traditional craftsmanship, and contemporary style. Founded by designer Sonal Gadhavi, the New Jersey-based brand champions handcrafted design and supports traditional artisan communities.

Adult Bollywood Dance - A vibrant Bollywood performance by Jyotsna Bollywood Dance Academy, choreographed by Mitali Roy.

Bollywood Dance Mix - A lively

Photo credit: Bridgewater Commons



Live performances of traditional and Bollywood dances are a highlight of Bridgewater Commons' Diwali celebration

Bollywood performance by Naatya Mayura Institute of Bharatanatyam.

Contemporary Rap Performance - Baba KSD brings a modern musical element to the celebration with a live rap performance.

Ramleela: Homecoming of Lord Ram - Navrang Dance Academy presents a special interpretation of Lord Ram's homecoming, connecting the performance to the traditions and significance of Diwali.

Grand Finale - Group Dance & Audience Participation - Led by Varsha Naik of Navrang Dance Academy, performers come together for a high-energy finale inviting the audience to join the celebration.

"Diwali has become a cherished annual tradition at Bridgewater Commons, bringing together families and friends of all backgrounds to celebrate the Festival of Lights, and this year the performances are bigger and better than ever," said Tom Kovacic, Marketing and Business Development Director at Bridgewater Commons. "We are proud to continue this tradition with Renascent Media and to welcome Open Auto Group as the presenting sponsor of this joyful event."

Guests can also enjoy complimentary mehndi, live painting and kids' activities by Medha Art Studio, an art and craft workshop by Soulful Creations World, product sampling, and participating brands throughout Center Court.

The celebration is brought to life by Aisha's Wedding Decor with festive Diwali décor, creating a colorful and immersive Festival of Lights experience for guests at Bridgewater Commons. "For more than 50 years, Open Road Auto Group has embraced our community and celebrated the rich cultural diversity of our region," said Joseph Billotti, Vice President, Open Road Auto Group, one of the region's largest automotive dealership groups. "Our sponsorship of Diwali @ The Commons reflects that commitment and marks the start of what we hope will be a lasting partnership with Bridgewater Commons."

Renascent Media, a woman-owned, full-service multicultural advertising, marketing, media, and experiential agency, will once again partner with Bridgewater Commons to produce and promote the annual Diwali celebration. With nearly two decades of experience connecting brands with South Asian and multicultural audiences, Renascent Media develops culturally relevant campaigns, events and community experiences that bring brands and diverse audiences together.

"Diwali @ The Commons is about bringing people together and sharing the richness, beauty and spirit of Diwali with the wider community," said Tanvi Prenita Chandra, Founder and President of Renascent Media. "Our partnership with Bridgewater Commons has given us a wonderful platform to share South Asian culture with a broad and diverse audience. Each year, we work to make the celebration more engaging and inclusive by bringing together traditional and contemporary performances, local talent, businesses and brands to create an experience that celebrates our heritage while connecting communities."

Diwali, widely known as the Festival of Lights, is celebrated across India and by communities around the world, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. Guests are encouraged to join the celebration in traditional and festive attire.

Bridgewater Commons launched its South Asian cultural celebrations in 2022 with Bollywood dance spectaculars featuring more than 40 performers and drawing hundreds of guests to Center Court. The Festival of Lights celebration has since become an annual tradition.

For detailed story visit
www.indiapost.com

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Chapal Rani: The forgotten performer who challenges our ideas of gender and identity

In his latest book, author and queer activist Sandip Roy revisits the extraordinary life of a Bengali folk theatre performer whose story reveals how people can live beyond conventional ideas of gender and sexuality, long before they have the language to describe them

VINAYA PATIL

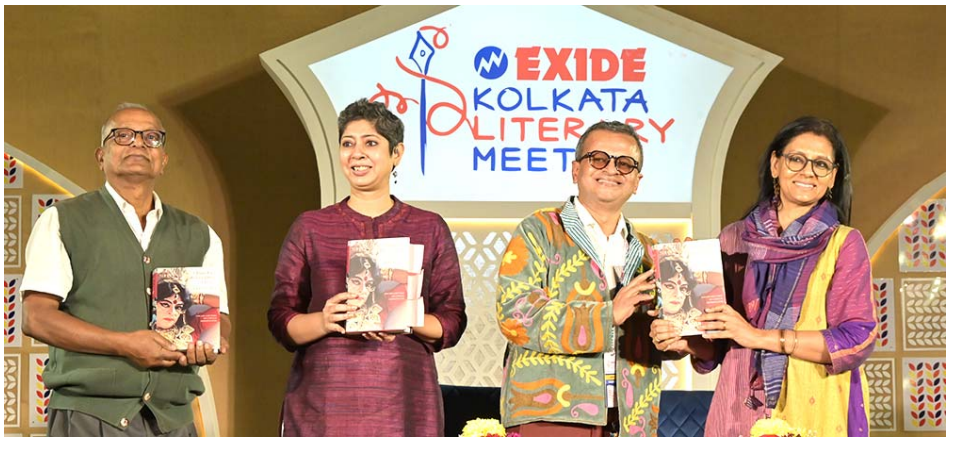
For decades, Chapal Rani occupied an uneasy space between the spotlight and obscurity. Once celebrated for playing female characters in Bengal's travelling folk theatre tradition of Jatra, he eventually found himself pushed out of the profession that had defined his life. His story is one of artistic brilliance, social prejudice and a deeply personal search for authenticity.

In the book Chapal Rani, the Last Queen of Bengal, author Sandip Roy returns to this forgotten figure to explore not only the fading world of Bengali folk theatre but also the complicated relationship between gender, sexuality and identity. At the heart of the book is a question that remains relevant today: can someone live a queer life without necessarily identifying with the vocabulary or politics of the queer movement?

For Roy, who has observed LGBTQ+ activism in India and the United States over the years, Chapal Rani's life offers a compelling answer.

"I came to the process with my own sort of fixed ideas about gender, identity, and all of that," Roy says, reflecting on the experience of researching and speaking with his subject. "But the process of talking to him really shook up those ideas a lot."

A star of Jatra, and a profession lost



Jatra, a popular form of Bengali folk theatre, traditionally relied on male performers to portray women. The reasons were both social and practical. Women were often discouraged from travelling for months with theatre troupes, while the absence of microphones and amplifiers meant performers needed powerful voices to reach audiences that could number thousands.

"Among the men who excelled in female roles, some acquired the honorific Rani, or queen, becoming celebrated performers in their own right. Chapal Rani, born Chapal Bhaduri, was among the best known of them," explains Roy.

But the arrival of more women performers and the introduction of amplification gradually changed the landscape. By the 1960s and 1970s, audiences increasingly preferred women in female roles, and performers such as Chapal found their place in the theatre world shrinking.

Roy recounts a particularly painful episode in which Chapal was performing when someone booed him. "The humiliation drove him off the stage and marked the beginning of his disappearance from public life," Roy tells the India Post, adding, "He lost more than a job. Because he was so closely identified with female characters, he struggled to transition into male roles. His distinctive voice and mannerisms, which had once made him an exceptional performer, became obstacles to finding other work."

Eventually, Chapal survived by performing as Hindu goddesses at markets and in poor neighborhoods, depending on small payments from passers-by. Living with his sister, who was also an actress, he remained largely outside the public eye.

His fortunes began to change in the 2000s, when publisher Naveen Kishore encountered him and photographed him transforming himself into female characters. The photographs introduced his work to new audiences, while a documentary helped bring his life story into wider circulation. His story subsequently inspired theatrical productions and a feature film Arekti Premer Golpo, starring Rituparno Ghosh, in which Chapal appeared as an older version of himself.

As LGBTQ+ activism gained visibility in India, Chapal's life also began to attract attention for another reason: he had lived outside conventional gender and sexual expectations long before the contemporary movement had come to recognize him as a figure of interest.



Chapal Rani, the Last Queen of Bengal - Book Launch

A queer life without the label

Did Chapal himself think of his life in terms of queer identity? Roy is careful to distinguish between the language used to describe a life, and the life itself.

"He didn't care for these labels," Roy says. Chapal had been in a long-term relationship with a man he met when he was around 18 or 19. The relationship lasted approximately 20 years, Roy explains, although his partner married and had children. Chapal himself chose not to marry, despite his sister's encouragement.

In Roy's account, this decision was not simply a rejection of marriage as an institution. Chapal recognized that marrying a woman would mean asking her to participate in a life that did not reflect his desires. 'I can get married. But what about this woman? I don't want to ruin the life of some woman,' Chapal would argue.

For Roy, this is an important distinction. Chapal may not have used the contemporary language of sexual identity, but he understood something fundamental about himself and the life he did not want to lead.

Roy also warns against making assumptions about the sexuality of other Jatra performers simply because they played women. Some married and had children; others did not. The historical record does not allow easy conclusions about their private lives.

Chapal's story, however, offers a rare personal account of a man who chose not to conform to conventional expectations, even without the support of a formal identity or political movement.

Beyond Western frameworks

Roy's engagement with Chapal also prompted him to reconsider a familiar criticism of LGBTQ+ activism in India: that queer identities and the movement for equal rights are imported from the West.

Having edited a magazine focused on South Asian LGBTQ+ experiences and followed the movement in both India and the United States, Roy is familiar with the theoretical frameworks through which questions of gender and sexuality are often discussed.



Chapal, however, had little awareness of these debates. He did not know about Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized consensual same-sex sexual activity until the Supreme Court read it down in 2018.

For detailed story visit
www.indiapost.com

Americans4Hindus calls for urgent international intervention to protect Sri Lankan Hindu facing death sentence in Saudi Arabia

A4H Urges Diplomatic Action, Due Process, and Protection of Fundamental Human Rights

DR ABHILASH MAROJU

FREMONT, CALIFORNIA: Americans4Hindus (A4H) expresses grave concern over reports that Anojan Sivarasa, a 24-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu engineer, has been sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia following a social media comment involving religious beliefs

According to information published by the International Commission for Human Rights and Religious Freedom (ICHRRF) on October 12, 2026, Sivarasa was arrested on July 1, 2026, following a Facebook comment allegedly considered offensive to Islamic religious beliefs. Reports indicate that he subsequently deleted the comment and issued an apology.

He was initially sentenced to five years in prison and fined three million Saudi riyals. On September 17, 2026, an appellate court reportedly increased the sentence to death.

These developments raise serious concerns regarding freedom of expression, religious liberty, proportionality of punishment, and access to fair legal proceedings.

Statement from Dr. Romesh Japra, Founder and Chairman of Americans4Hindus

Dr. Romesh Japra, Founder and Chairman of Americans4Hindus, expresses deep concern over the reported death sentence imposed on Anojan Sivarasa and urges immediate humanitarian and diplomatic intervention to protect his life. He emphasizes that freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and human dignity are fundamental rights that must be respected universally. Dr. Japra calls upon the United States, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, and relevant international human rights institutions to work constructively toward preventing an irreversible tragedy, ensuring due process, and securing a peaceful and humane resolution.

A4H Calls for Immediate Humanitarian and Diplomatic Action

Americans4Hindus respectfully urges the Government of Saudi Arabia to halt any execution proceedings, reconsider the reported sentence, and ensure that Sivarasa receives appropriate legal representation and protection under applicable international human rights standards.

A4H also encourages the Government of Sri Lanka to pursue all available diplomatic and consular channels to protect its citizen and seek his release and safe return.

Furthermore, A4H appeals to the United States Government, the United Nations, and international human rights organizations to engage through appropriate diplomatic mechanisms to help secure a just and humanitarian outcome.

Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Must Remain Universal

Americans4Hindus firmly believes that respect for religious beliefs and traditions must coexist with the protection of fundamental human rights.

No individual should face an irreversible punishment solely for peaceful expression, even when that expression is considered offensive.

This appeal is not directed against any religion, nationality, or community. It reflects A4H's commitment to protecting Hindu communities while upholding the universal principles of justice, compassion, religious freedom, and human dignity.

A4H calls for urgent international cooperation to protect Anojan Sivarasa's life, ensure fair treatment, and pursue his release through peaceful diplomatic engagement.

For detailed story visit
www.indiapost.com

Diwali on Oak Tree Road to Illuminate New Jersey's Indian Business District on October 25

A spectacular Ramleela presentation, classical dance, Bollywood entertainment, exciting giveaways and community festivities will bring the Festival of Lights to Oak Tree Road

ISELIN, N.J.: Oak Tree Road, one of New Jersey's most vibrant South Asian shopping and cultural destinations, will come alive with the colors, sounds and spirit of **Diwali on Sunday, October 25, 2026**, as Renascent Media presents Diwali on Oak Tree Road, a free community celebration taking place from **1 p.m. to 10 p.m. at 1376 Oak Tree Road, Iselin, NJ, in the parking lot of Raj Jewels**.

Presented as part of #OakTreeStories, a community initiative by Renascent Media, the celebration will feature a special Ramleela performance by Pandit Satya Narayan Charka and classically trained dancers, live music, Bollywood entertainment, cultural performances, festive experiences and exciting giveaways throughout the day.

Following the enthusiastic response to the recent Bollywood Jamming Road Show on October 10, which attracted large crowds and brought together community leaders, local businesses and families, Diwali on Oak Tree Road will continue the momentum of #OakTreeStories, transforming the heart of New Jersey's Indian business district into a vibrant destination for cultural celebration, community engagement and festive shopping.

A Spectacular Celebration of Culture and Tradition

One of the major highlights of the event will be a special Ramleela presentation by Pandit Satya Narayan Charka, featuring classically trained dancers, bringing to life the story of Lord Ram and the timeless traditions associated with Diwali. The performance will celebrate the beauty of Indian storytelling, classical dance and cultural heritage, offering audiences of all generations an opportunity to connect with the significance of the Festival of Lights.

The festivities will also feature live musical entertainment, energetic Bollywood performances, cultural presentations and plenty of exciting giveaways throughout the day, creating a joyful atmosphere for families and visitors of all ages.

Guests will have an opportunity to explore Oak Tree Road's diverse restaurants, jewelry stores, fashion boutiques and specialty businesses while enjoying a day filled with entertainment, celebration and community spirit.

Celebrating Oak Tree Road and Supporting Local Businesses

More than a cultural celebration, Diwali on Oak Tree Road aims to bring renewed attention to one of the region's most iconic South Asian business districts, encouraging visitors to shop locally, discover neighborhood businesses and experience the vibrant cultural identity of Oak Tree Road.

One of the major highlights of the event will be a special Ramleela presentation by Pandit Satya Narayan Charka, featuring classically trained dancers, bringing to life the story of Lord Ram and the timeless traditions associated with Diwali

"Oak Tree Road is more than a shopping destination. It is the heart of our community, where generations of stories, traditions, businesses and dreams come together," said Tanvi Prenita Chandra, Founder and President of Renascent Media. "Through #OakTreeStories, our vision is to bring new energy to this iconic district, celebrate our rich cultural heritage and create meaningful opportunities for businesses and communities to connect. What better occasion than Diwali to bring everyone together, spread joy and light, and celebrate the spirit that makes Oak Tree Road so special."

The celebration reflects Renascent Media's continued commitment to creating platforms that connect businesses, brands, artists and communities through culturally meaningful experiences.

Continuing the Vision of a Cleaner, Greener, Stronger Oak Tree

The event also builds upon Renascent Media's recently launched "Cleaner o Greener o Stronger Oak Tree" initiative, introduced during the October 10 Bollywood Jamming Road Show.

The initiative promotes community participation in neighborhood beautification, environmental awareness and local business engagement. Recent efforts included a community cleanup drive with local student volunteers, greenery initiatives and the artistic transformation of a public bench, unveiled during the October 10 celebration in the presence of Woodbridge Township officials.

For detailed story visit
www.indiapost.com

Americans4Hindus endorses Steve Hilton for California Governor; Dr. Romesh K. Japra extends support at San Jose Community Rally



Cont'd from page **8**

Dr. Japra also emphasized that meaningful political representation requires sustained relationships between community organizations, elected officials, and candidates seeking public office.

Steve Hilton's Campaign and Community Outreach

Steve Hilton's participation in the Little Saigon Community Rally provided an opportunity to engage with local residents and community representatives as he continued his campaign for Governor of California.

The event highlighted the role of community dialogue, civic participation, and the importance of understanding the priorities of California's diverse population.

A proposed acknowledgment for Steve Hilton, subject to confirmation by his campaign, reads:

"I sincerely appreciate Dr. Romesh K. Japra and Americans4Hindus for their endorsement and support. California's strength comes from its hardworking families, entrepreneurs, and diverse communities. I value the opportunity to connect with Hindu Americans and other communities who care deeply about the future of our state. I look forward to continuing these conversations as we work toward a stronger California."

Americans4Hindus Strengthens Political Engagement

The endorsement of Steve Hilton reflects Americans4Hindus' continued efforts to build constructive relationships with political candidates and leaders across party lines.



Under the leadership of Dr. Romesh K. Japra, A4H has worked to expand political awareness, encourage community participation, and strengthen the representation of Hindu Americans in public affairs.

Through its political engagement initiatives, leadership development programs, and growing network of state chapters, Americans4Hindus continues to promote its central mission:

Empowering American Hindus & Pro-Hindus Politically.

About Americans4Hindus (A4H): Americans4Hindus is dedicated to empowering Hindu Americans through political education, leadership development, strategic endorsements, and community mobilization. Americans4Hindus continues to expand its national presence by building alliances, empowering communities, and advancing democratic engagement across the United States

For further information or media inquiries, please contact: Americans4Hindus (A4H): Email: contact@americans4hindus.org, Website: www.americans4hindus.org

"We are not just participating - we are shaping the future. From school boards to the U.S. Congress, American Hindus are ready to lead." - Americans4Hindus.





TechBiz POST

Google Cloud down in London multiple online services affected

NEW DELHI: Google Cloud services in London experienced network disruptions on October 20, following a power-related incident, affecting multiple services and prompting reports of outages across several online platforms, including British digital banking app Revolut.

Google confirmed that multiple services were experiencing issues in its Europe-west2 region, which is based in London. The company said the disruption began around 7 am British Summer Time (BST) and was linked to a power event affecting its Europe-west2-b zone.

In an update on its Cloud Status page, Google said the power incident had been mitigated, adding that partial recovery of infrastructure services was expected within 30 minutes, followed by the restoration of remaining services. However, the company said its engineering team was continuing to investigate the broader disruption and apologized to affected customers.

The outage triggered reports of service disruptions across several platforms. Revolut, the UK-based online banking company, reported issues affecting multiple services, with thousands of customers reporting problems accessing its services.

Revolut said customers' money and data remained safe and that it had been working to resolve the issue since it was identified in the morning. The company also apologized to customers for the inconvenience caused.

Halifax also acknowledged reports of problems with its mobile application and website. In a response to a customer on social media platform X, the bank said it was aware that some customers were experiencing difficulties and was working to restore normal services. It advised customers that they could still contact the bank by telephone if required.

Halifax did not confirm whether its service disruption was directly linked to the Google Cloud incident. *IANS*

Digital gold could unlock up to $700 billion in latent demand



NEW DELHI: Digital gold could unlock up to $700 billion in latent demand from a market currently valued at $45-55 billion, a recent report said.

The report from Boston Consulting Group and the World Gold Council said the digital gold market is projected to reach $160-170 billion by 2031, growing at roughly 27 percent annually, under a five year base case. *IANS*

For detailed story visit **www.indiapost.com**

Rubio to hold talks with Reliance on importing more crude from Venezuela



Reliance Industries Executive Director Anant Ambani and his wife Radhika Merchant pose for a group picture with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, U.S. Ambassador to India Sergio Gor and other dignitaries at Reliance Industries' refinery, in Jamnagar. *ANI*

MUMBAI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US would hold talks with Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) on more crude imports from Venezuela for processing at the company's refinery in Jamnagar.

The issue assumes importance as the US has taken over the oilfields in Venezuela, which produce heavy crude that cannot be processed at most refineries. The Reliance refinery on the Gujarat coast has the technological configuration to process this heavy crude.

Rubio started his three-day visit to India after landing in Mumbai and met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the Gateway of India.

His discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Mumbai covered trade negotiations, energy cooperation, technology partnerships, critical minerals, and policy issues related to Russian and Venezuelan crude imports.

The issue assumes importance as the US has taken over the oilfields in Venezuela, which produce heavy crude that cannot be processed at most refineries

India and the US are expected to move ahead in cooperation in trade, energy, investment, defense, and critical technologies.

This is Rubio's second visit to India in 2026. He has recently stated that a comprehensive trade deal between the two nations is almost complete, raising the possibility that it could be signed during his visit.

President Donald Trump had last week waived potential tariffs that were initially aimed as a punitive measure against India for purchasing Russian crude oil.

Trump has passed an executive order waiving the 100 per cent tariff on the top five importers of Russian oil, which would have included India as it is the second largest purchaser after China.

Rubio has said the effort to finalize a trade deal was a factor in the decision to waive those tariffs. The US Secretary of State had defended India last week and referred to the country as an important ally.

Rubio said: "You've got countries like India, for example, that have voluntarily diversified their energy portfolio, but are still getting a substantial amount of energy from Russia because it's hard to pivot from one day to the next."

"But they're also an important ally and partner of the United States," he remarked. *IANS*

TechBiz Post
www.indiapost.com

PM Modi highlights agrivoltaics' potential to boost rural incomes ahead of global conference

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared an article by Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, which highlights the potential of agrivoltaics to strengthen farmers' incomes by combining solar power generation with agricultural activity.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister said the technology could provide farmers with an additional source of revenue, lower energy costs and support crop productivity, describing it as an important avenue for advancing rural prosperity.

Notably, India will host the seventh AgriVoltaics World Conference here from October 21 to October 23 under the theme 'Powering the Global South'.

In the article, Joshi and Chouhan said agrivoltaics -- also known as AgriPV -- offers farmers an opportunity to generate clean electricity while continuing cultivation on the same land, helping diversify incomes and strengthen resilience against uncertainties in agriculture.

The government was planning further measures under the next phase of the PM-KUSUM scheme to accelerate solar power generation through the creation of a dedicated space for agrivoltaics, building on progress already made in solarizing agricultural irrigation, according to the government.

They noted that nearly 86 percent of India's farmers are small and marginal landholders and said agrivoltaics could help them benefit from both agricultural production and the clean-energy transition.

According to the ministers, the model can generate additional income from electricity sales, reduce dependence on diesel and purchased power, and create favorable microclimatic conditions that help protect crops from heat stress, drought, excessive solar radiation and hail.

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister said the technology could provide farmers with an additional source of revenue, lower energy costs and support crop productivity, describing it as an important avenue for advancing rural prosperity

They also stated that wider adoption of agrivoltaics could stimulate rural employment through installation, maintenance and agricultural services linked to solar infrastructure.

They stressed that successful deployment would require suitable crop selection, adequate irrigation and nutrient management, as well as designs that preserve sufficient sunlight for cultivation.

Coordination among agriculture and energy departments, state governments, research institutions and local bodies would also be critical, they said. *IANS*

Over 100 Japanese firms establish GCCs in India as AI innovation hubs

NEW DELHI: More than 100 Japanese companies have established or expanded Global Capability Centers in India, with the centers' focus shifting from back office work to strategic capabilities such as artificial intelligence (AI), engineering, digital innovation, product development, cybersecurity and advanced analytics, as per recent report.



The report from real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield said the evolution reflects a broader change in Japanese global operations in which GCCs are evolving into strategic capability hubs that help Japanese enterprises accelerate digital transformation, address talent shortages and drive enterprise-wide innovation.

"This is no longer a story of outsourcing," said Arpita Srivastava, Managing Director, APAC Tenant Representation & GCC Advisory, adding that Japanese companies are not coming to India simply to reduce costs.

"They are building strategic capability centers that create business value, drive innovation and support global transformation initiatives. India offers access to highly skilled engineering and digital talent, while providing the scale, infrastructure and ecosystem needed to support long-term growth," she added.

The report added that India's deep STEM talent pool, estimated at 2.5 to 2.8 million graduates annually is a key draw.

A mature business environment supported by world-class office infrastructure, technology clusters and a robust investment ecosystem is driving the shift.

India is emerging as a strategic innovation partner, enabling Japanese enterprises to build future-ready capabilities and accelerate technology-led growth. *IANS*

India's nuclear plan dedicated to peaceful purposes: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI: India's nuclear program is dedicated to peaceful purposes and not warfare, Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh has said, reaffirming the vision that has guided the country's nuclear journey since its inception.

In an exclusive conversation on the sidelines of 'Bloomberg Economy Forum 2026', the minister said nuclear energy would play an increasingly important role in meeting India's future energy requirements, including the growing demand for reliable electricity to support Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data centers.



Jitendra Singh

Recalling the vision of Homi Bhabha, the architect of India's nuclear program, Jitendra Singh said India had consistently pursued nuclear energy for peaceful applications and national development. The commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear technology, he said, remains central to the country's approach as it expands its capabilities to meet emerging developmental and technological needs.

The minister said India's nuclear energy ambitions must be viewed in the context of its long-term development goals and clean energy commitments. With the country targeting 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047 and Net Zero emissions by 2070, nuclear energy is expected to complement other sources of power by providing a continuous and reliable supply of clean electricity.

Linking nuclear energy with the next phase of technological growth, Jitendra Singh said the expansion of Artificial Intelligence and data centers would require dependable sources of electricity capable of meeting their substantial and continuous energy needs. Nuclear energy, he said, would supplement India's other energy programs and contribute to meeting the power requirements of an increasingly technology-driven economy. *IANS*

Decentralization of National SARAS Mela reflects govt's wider development approach

NEW DELHI: The decentralization of the National SARAS Mela reflects the government's commitment to fostering inclusive development by bringing national platforms closer to local producers and consumers across India, an official factsheet said.

The new Vijayawada edition of National SARAS Mela marks the first National SARAS Mela outside Delhi-NCR, bringing together women entrepreneurs from 34 states and UTs. The event runs from October 13, 2026 to October 31, 2026 at Punnami Ghat, Vijayawada.

The mela supports women-led enterprises, encourages rural entrepreneurship, and aligns with the broader trend of hosting events like BRICS and G20 meetings at regional levels, the statement said.

The SARAS Melas organized under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana Centre's National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) connect rural women entrepreneurs with wider markets, buyers, and business opportunities.



Around 1,500 women SHG entrepreneurs and Lakhpati Didis are showcasing their products through more than 650 stalls. The Mela features regional textiles, handicrafts, natural and processed foods, and other rural products, along with an India Food Court, cultural showcases, and dedicated learning spaces.

The platform strengthens DAY-NRLM's efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods and supports the Lakhpati Didi vision of income growth.

Dedicated pavilions offer opportunities for business learning, institutional support, and enterprise development, the statement said. Digital platforms like eSARAS extend market access beyond physical events, helping rural women take their products to wider markets.

A total of 117 National SARAS Melas and annual sales exceeding Rs 200 crore have been recorded till date. States and Union Territories also organize a minimum of two State-level SARAS Melas a year, bringing the national average to around 50 events annually.

"SARAS Melas also promote the vision of Vocal for Local and Atmanirbhar Bharat. They give consumers a direct way to discover rural products and meet the women entrepreneurs behind them," the statement noted. *IANS*

Consumer demand fails to pick up in China despite deep festive discounts: Report

NEW DELHI: The '2026 Mid-Autumn Festival', traditionally one of China's biggest consumption seasons, reported some of the weakest sales in years as consumers largely stayed away from holiday spending, according to a report in Nepal's Hamrakura news portal.

What made this year's collapse particularly striking was that heavy discounts, promotions and price cuts failed to attract buyers. Chinese consumers have become increasingly cautious about spending amid concerns over slower economic growth, weak income expectations, employment pressures and the lingering property market slowdown. Analysts have repeatedly pointed to weak domestic demand and falling consumer confidence as major challenges facing China's economy, the report states.

For years, the 'Mid-Autumn Festival' consumption was driven by corporate gifting, business networking, and social expectations. This year, many consumers rejected expensive gift boxes and chose either cheaper alternatives or no purchase at all. Sales of high-end mooncake gift boxes reportedly plunged while consumers increasingly preferred affordable or loose-packed mooncakes, according to the report.

Another major factor behind weak sales was a growing crisis of confidence in product quality. Multiple viral incidents circulated online showing mooncakes that appeared alarmingly substandard. Consumers reported finding screws, metal nuts, blades, and nails inside mooncakes.



The incidents reignited public debate over food safety standards, manufacturing oversight and quality control. Consumers who once bought mooncakes as festive gifts increasingly began questioning whether these products were worth purchasing at all.

China's largest electric vehicle giant, BYD, also found itself at the center of a social media storm during the festival. Workers criticized the company's 'Mid-Autumn Festival' benefits package after receiving what many viewed as inexpensive gifts consisting of a small number of mooncakes and drinks. Some employees publicly complained that a company generating billions in revenue should provide better holiday benefits. The complaints highlighted concerns about declining workplace morale and reduced spending power among ordinary employees.

Beijing has spent several years attempting to revive domestic consumption through various stimulus measures, including subsidies. Yet, the latest 'Mid-Autumn Festival' highlighted a deeper structural problem.

While the government has encouraged spending, many households remain worried about jobs, housing prices, and future income prospects. Weak consumer confidence has limited the effectiveness of policy support. *IANS*

Apple India's revenue crosses Rs 1 lakh crore in FY26, profit jumps 66 pc

NEW DELHI: Apple India Private Limited's revenue crossed the Rs 1 lakh-crore mark for the first time in the financial year ended March 2026, as the company recorded a sharp acceleration in both sales and profitability amid growing demand for premium smartphones in the country.

Filings submitted by Apple India to the Registrar of Companies, accessed through business intelligence platform



AltInfo, show that revenue from operations rose 31 percent year-on-year to Rs 1,03,853 crore in FY26, compared with Rs 79,060 crore in FY25. The growth was significantly higher than the 18 percent increase recorded in the previous financial year.

The company's net profit grew at an even faster pace, surging 66 percent to Rs 5,311 crore in FY26 from Rs 3,196 crore a year earlier. In FY25, Apple India's profit had increased by 16 percent. *IANS*

In Brief

Trump blames migrants for unrest in Europe

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has blamed immigration for the unrest sweeping parts of Europe, warning that France and Italy risk further instability unless their governments tighten border controls, even as French authorities have attributed much of the recent violence to radical groups amid protests over education and rising living costs.

Speaking to reporters at the White House recently, before departing for a campaign rally in Kansas, Trump said he had repeatedly warned French President Emmanuel Macron against allowing large numbers of migrants into the country.

The President argued that European governments had failed to protect their borders and were now facing the consequences of their immigration policies.

"I told Emmanuel (Macron), you should close up your borders," Trump said, referring to conversations with the French leader.

He said he had warned Macron several years ago that France was making a mistake by allowing large-scale immigration.

Trump also extended his criticism to Italy, linking protests in both countries to immigration and suggesting that Europe faced a broader challenge to its political and social stability.

The remarks came as France experienced widespread demonstrations and episodes of violence following weeks of protests over deteriorating school conditions, rising living costs and declining purchasing power. *IANS*

The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register on October 8 (document 2026-20660) by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, would set "$70,000 for initial OPT

Indian students face $70,000 OPT fee under US plan



WASHINGTON: Indian students hoping to work in the United States after graduation could see their universities charged $70,000 each for Optional Practical Training under a Department of Homeland Security proposal, a plan that is not yet in effect and is open to public comment until November 9.

The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register on October 8 (document 2026-20660) by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, would set "$70,000 for initial OPT; and $30,000 for any subsequent OPT" for each F-1 student through a Student and Exchange Visitor Program-certified institution.

The subsequent fee would apply to the 24-month STEM OPT extension. A student who uses both pre-completion and post-completion OPT would face a total of $100,000, the document says, compared to $70,000 if the entire OPT period is after graduation.

It is not in effect yet. It is a notice of proposed rulemaking. Comments must be received by November 9, under docket ICEB-2026-0100 on regulations.gov. DHS must review comments before issuing any final rule, and no implementation date has been set.

The fee would be paid by the institution before a designated school official recommends a student for OPT. But DHS "acknowledges that the schools may pass the financial obligation of this proposed fee onto F-1 non-immigrant students, all students, or employers."

Schools could seek a refund if the student does not receive an OPT employment authorization document.

The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register on October 8 (document 2026-20660) by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, would set "$70,000 for initial OPT; and $30,000 for any subsequent OPT" for each F-1 student through a Student and Exchange Visitor Program-certified institution

DHS says the fee would "reduce the rampant fraud and abuse of OPT", protect US workers and ease the burden of OPT investigations. It says the fees are intended to discourage students from using OPT "to market themselves to employers seeking to bypass H-1B caps, fees, and prevailing wage requirements."

DHS uses 2024 figures of 194,554 OPT and 95,384 STEM OPT participants.

DHS projects annualized transfers of $12.8 billion as a primary estimate (3 percent discount rate), and 10-year transfers of $109.4 billion.

Indians are the largest group of international students in the United States, and OPT is the usual bridge from a US degree to an H-1B job. *IANS*

Kirit Somaiya writes to FRRO, Home Ministry, seeks cancellation of actor Imran Khan's OCI card

MUMBAI: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kirit Somaiya has written to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in Mumbai, urging authorities to oppose a writ petition filed by Imran Khan before the Bombay High Court and continue proceedings related to a Look Out Circular (LOC) against him.

In his letter dated October 18, 2026, addressed to Somaiya Vinayak Munde, FRRO Mumbai, Somaiya referred to a writ petition filed by Imran Khan, described in the letter as a US national and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder. The petition, numbered 36271 of 2026, challenges a Leave India Notice dated October 14, 2026.

Somaiya stated that he had previously submitted complaints to Mumbai Police officials, the Gamdevi Police Station, the Foreigners Regional Registration Office and the Immigration Division of the Bureau of Immigration regarding Khan's participation in a political protest in Mumbai on October 10.

He wrote on X, "I wrote to FRRO & Home Ministry, that OCI card of Imran Khan must be cancelled"

According to the letter, Somaiya learnt from media reports and videos that Imran Khan had participated in an agitation at August Kranti Maidan, Mumbai, organized by the group Hum Bharat Ke Log.

"On Saturday, 10th October, 2026, I learnt from news reports and from videos circulating in the media that Mr. Imran Khan Pal, a national of the United States of America holding an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card, had participated in the agitation held at August Kranti Maidan, Mumbai by the group Hum Bharat Ke Log in support of the CJI's agitation against the Chief Election Commissioner of India," the letter reads. *ANI*

Indian-American voters stir Texas, New York races, as early voting heats up

WASHINGTON: An Indian-American man's post saying he voted for Democrat James Talarico in Texas, citing "xenophobia, racial resentment", has drawn hundreds of thousands of views on social media, as more than 500 Indian Americans rallied behind Representative Tom Suozzi in New York.

The post on X account (user name: Vasant Bhatt) had about 857,000 views, 7,300 likes and 3,000 replies within seven hours of being posted.

"I just cast my ballot for James Talarico. As a second-generation Indian American, I am thoroughly disgusted by the xenophobia, racial resentment, and increasingly brazen attacks on my identity," the post read.

"My family has contributed to the American story through hard work, sacrifice, and an unwavering belief in the opportunities this nation promises. I am every bit as American as anyone else, and I will not tolerate being treated as a perpetual foreigner in the country I call home," the post said.

"I implore every eligible Texan to get out and vote. This election is about the kind of state and country we are prepared to defend-and the principles we refuse to surrender," it added.

The post drew a pile-on from right-wing accounts. Patrick Casey, a conservative commentator, attacked it in a post that drew about 32,000 views and said the author had once interned for Republican Senator Ted Cruz.

"I just cast my ballot for James Talarico. As a second-generation Indian American, I am thoroughly disgusted by the xenophobia, racial resentment, and increasingly brazen attacks on my identity"

Talarico is the Democratic nominee for the US Senate in Texas.

Texas has one of the largest Indian-American populations in the country, concentrated in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas.

The episode comes as Republican rhetoric on immigration and H-1B visas has become a theme in several races, and as some Indian Americans, who have long leaned Democratic, have been courted by both parties.

In New York, more than 500 Indian Americans gathered in Uniondale to back Suozzi's re-election bid.

Community leader Varinder Bhalla compared Suozzi to former Representative Stephen Solarz, a longtime champion of ties with India in Congress, the outlet reported.

Suozzi, a Democrat, represents New York's 3rd District on Long Island, home to a sizeable Indian-American community.

The 2026 AAPI Voter Survey found Indian-American voters backing Democratic Senate candidates 66-18, though its Indian-American sample is small.

Early voting is under way in Texas ahead of the November 3 election.

Indian-American turnout is being watched closely in suburban districts where margins are narrow and where both parties have run targeted outreach in Hindi, Gujarati and Telugu. Both parties have sought to energize Asian-American voters, the fastest-growing group of eligible voters in the US, ahead of a midterm that will decide control of Congress. *IANS*

US charges 28 noncitizens in voting case

WASHINGTON: Federal prosecutors in California recently announced criminal charges against 28 lawful permanent residents accused of illegally registering to vote in American elections, with 11 arrested in a coordinated statewide operation that has intensified a dispute between the Trump administration and California officials over voter eligibility.

The Justice Department said the defendants, all foreign nationals holding green cards, were charged with offences including fraudulent voter registration and making false statements in applications for US citizenship.

The arrests were carried out under an operation called "Operation Protect the Vote", involving all four federal prosecutors' offices in California.

According to the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, the defendants allegedly declared themselves American citizens on voter registration forms despite lacking US citizenship.

The Justice Department said the defendants, all foreign nationals holding green cards, were charged with offences including fraudulent voter registration and making false statements in applications for US citizenship

Prosecutors said several subsequently cast ballots in US elections and later denied having registered or voted when applying for naturalization.

The allegations have not been proven in court.

Lawful permanent residents are authorized to live and work in the United States but are generally prohibited from voting in federal elections. Voting unlawfully or making false declarations about citizenship can carry serious criminal and immigration consequences.

Federal prosecutors said the charges include making false statements in naturalization applications and fraudulent voter registration. Each offence carries a statutory maximum penalty of five years in federal prison.

The 11 people, arrested 19 October, were expected to make their initial appearances in federal court later in the day. Prosecutors said no pleas would be taken during those proceedings.

The arrests came amid a separate confrontation between the federal government and California over voter registration records ahead of the November elections.

Federal authorities provided California officials with a list of individuals on October 13 and requested that their mail-in ballots be set aside pending verification of citizenship. *IANS*

US: Indian national Rajinder Kumar returned to Oregon jail to face manslaughter charges

WASHINGTON DC: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has returned 32-year-old Indian national Rajinder Kumar to Oregon state custody to face trial for manslaughter and reckless endangerment in connection with a fatal highway crash.

Following his transfer to the Deschutes County Jail, federal authorities confirmed that deportation proceedings against Kumar will remain on hold until his criminal trial in state court concludes.

In a recent post on X, ICE said that Kumar had been indicted in Deshutes County, Oregon, on two counts of first-degree manslaughter and other related charges stemming from the fatal accident.

The post said, "ICE transferred Rajinder Kumar, a criminal illegal alien from India, to Oregon state custody to face prosecution in connection with the deaths of two newlywed Americans. Kumar has been indicted in Deschutes County, Ore., on 2 counts of first-degree manslaughter and other related charges stemming from a deadly November 2025 tractor-trailer accident. "

ICE said that after his local arrest, it had lodged "an immigration detainer with the Deschutes County Jail, but in April 2026, Deschutes County released Kumar from custody without honoring ICE's detainer."

The agency added, "ICE officers subsequently located and arrested Kumar at large earlier this year."

ICE said, "Following the conclusion of state criminal proceedings, ICE will pursue Kumar's immigration case consistent with federal law."

According to the official website, ICE ERO Seattle acting Field Office Director Julio S Hernandez said, "Two Americans lost their lives, and their families deserve accountability. ICE worked closely with law-enforcement partners to ensure Kumar is returned to state custody to answer for the serious charges against him"

He added, "This coordinated action protects the public, supports the victims' families, and ensures that an individual accused of these crimes does not evade justice. ICE will continue using every lawful tool available to protect the American people from criminal activity committed by illegal aliens" *ANI*

Immigration Post
www.indiapost.com

Microsoft President warns Trump's H-1B, green card crackdown could drive tech talent out of US

WASHINGTON: Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith has warned that US President Donald Trump's crackdown on H-1B visas and green cards for highly skilled foreign workers could push top technology talent to other countries and undermine the competitiveness of the American tech sector for decades.

Speaking with POLITICO on the sidelines of the International AI Summit in Dublin, Ireland, Smith raised concerns over the administration's move to restrict permanent residency applications for skilled foreign employees at Microsoft and seven other companies.

"I think we should all be worried about sending - intentionally or inadvertently or otherwise - signals that send the most talented next wave of AI [or] SI software engineers to other countries, rather than the United States," Smith said.

His remarks came less than a week after US Vice President JD Vance announced that Microsoft and seven other companies would be barred from seeking green cards for skilled foreign workers amid an investigation into alleged visa fraud.

Rejecting the allegations, Smith described Vance's claims against Microsoft as "completely off base" and said the vice president had not been accurately informed about the company's immigration figures.

Smith said the "vast majority" of Microsoft's green card applications were for long-time employees rather than new hires, attributing the applications to lengthy backlogs in the permanent residency process.



Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith

"I think we should all be worried about sending - intentionally or inadvertently or otherwise - signals that send the most talented next wave of AI [or] SI software engineers to other countries, rather than the United States," Smith said

He also rejected allegations that Microsoft paid foreign-born employees less than their American counterparts.

"It doesn't matter whether you came on a visa or you're an American worker, everybody has the same compensation system," Smith said,employees performing comparable work were covered by the same compensation structure.

The Microsoft executive further said the company hired more than 9,000 US-born workers last year, arguing that its domestic recruitment record had been overlooked in the administration's criticism.

Smith also highlighted the contribution of immigrants to American technological advancement, noting that five of the six recipients honored by Trump with national technology and science medals had come to the United States as immigrants.

"Think about what those five individuals have done for the well-being, even the wealth and standard of living, of Americans across the country. Let's not put that at risk," he said.

Microsoft had earlier defended its hiring practices in a statement issued on October 8, saying the vast majority of its US employees were Americans. The company said that of approximately 6,000 H-1B applications submitted in the previous fiscal year, 80 percent were intended to extend or change the status of existing employees.

The controversy coincided with Trump's presentation of the National Medal of Technology and Innovation to Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Satya Nadella, an Indian-origin executive who previously held an H-1B visa.

While criticizing the immigration crackdown, Smith praised the administration's efforts to address AI safety, including export controls imposed on Anthropic AI models. *ANI*

US ends automatic work-permit renewals, green card backlog draws 63 lawmakers

WASHINGTON: Indian H-4 spouses and green card applicants in the US now face the risk of losing their jobs while waiting on work-permit renewals, after a Department of Homeland Security rule ending automatic extensions took final effect, even as lawmakers press the government to clear a growing green card backlog.

The final rule, published in the Federal Register on October 14 (FR Doc 2026-20955), "reaffirms and finalizes" an interim rule DHS issued on October 30, 2025. It ends "the practice of automatically extending the validity of employment authorization documents" for people who have filed on time to renew them in certain categories.

Until last year, many renewal applicants could keep working for up to 540 days while their applications were pending.

DHS said the change "enhances benefit integrity and prioritizes the proper vetting and screening of aliens before granting a new period of employment authorization."

The categories most watched by Indian families are H-4 spouses of H-1B workers and people with pending applications to adjust status to permanent residence. Indians make up the bulk of both groups, because of the long country-cap queue for employment-based green cards.

Extensions for students on STEM Optional Practical Training and the "cap-gap" extension are not affected.

Separately, 63 members of Congress, led by Representatives Yvette Clarke and Raul Grijalva, have urged US Citizenship and Immigration Services to speed up pending green card applications, saying lawfully present immigrants are losing healthcare coverage while they wait.

DHS said the change "enhances benefit integrity and prioritizes the proper vetting and screening of aliens before granting a new period of employment authorization"

On the $100,000 H-1B fee, the legal fight continues in California. Judge Haywood S. Gilliam Jr. of the Northern District of California vacated the policies implementing the fee on September 30. The administration appealed to the Ninth Circuit on October 9.

A joint case management statement is due in the district court on October 20, and a case management conference is set for October 27. Indian nationals have historically been the largest group of H-1B beneficiaries. *IANS*

Americans4Hindus

(A non-partisan Super PAC and Hybrid PAC)

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Pakistan among top 10 countries hit by global food crisis: Report

NEW DELHI: Pakistan is among the ten countries carrying the largest share of the global food crisis, a report has said.

According to an analysis by Profit by Pakistan Today, economic pressures, climate shocks and declining access to assistance are driving worsening food insecurity.

It further highlighted that 266 million people across 47 countries and territories are facing acute hunger, roughly double the number recorded a decade ago.

"About 177 million, or two-thirds of those affected, are concentrated in ten countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, South Sudan and Syria," it added.

Pakistan's inclusion reflects the absolute number of people affected rather than the proportion of its population facing hunger.

Moreover, about 10.6 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity across 51 rural areas, with vulnerable communities particularly exposed to climate-related shocks.

The report also showed that the share of households experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity rose to 24.35 percent in 2024-25 from 15.92 percent in 2018-19, an increase of 8.43 percent that leaves nearly one in four households affected.

Severe food insecurity more than doubled over the same period, increasing to 5.04 percent from 2.37 percent, suggesting that around one in twenty households now faces the most serious level of food-access challenges.

In addition, consumption data show average monthly per-capita intake declined across key food categories, including wheat, rice, pulses, meat, eggs and milk, between the two survey periods.

"While vegetable ghee consumption increased by about 81 percent," Profit said. *IANS*

wellness POST

One can be said to be perfectly healthy in body and mind only if no part of the body or mind makes itself felt. A part makes itself felt only when there is something wrong with it. You know that you have a head only when it aches.
Sri Atmananda (1883 - 1959)

US' Texas sues Gerber, Nestle over baby food products with toxic heavy metals

WASHINGTON: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has sued baby food manufacturer Gerber and its parent company Nestle USA, alleging that they misled parents about the safety of products containing potentially dangerous levels of arsenic, lead and other toxic heavy metals.

The lawsuit announced recently, accuses the companies of making false and misleading claims about the purity and safety of Gerber baby food despite internal testing that, according to the state, revealed elevated concentrations of toxic substances in certain ingredients.

The legal action was brought under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, which prohibits businesses from making false or misleading representations to consumers.

According to the Attorney General's Office, Gerber marketed its products as safe, rigorously tested and recommended by pediatricians, while failing to adequately disclose the presence of heavy metals.

The state alleges that between 2017 and 2019, Gerber used 67 batches of rice flour containing arsenic at concentrations more than nine times the federal limit for bottled drinking water.



The legal action was brought under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, which prohibits businesses from making false or misleading representations to consumers

Testing also allegedly found cadmium concentrations in carrots reaching 17 times the bottled-water limit, while sweet potatoes contained lead concentrations nearly 10 times that benchmark.

These comparisons involve drinking-water standards rather than regulatory limits specifically established for each baby food ingredient.

The lawsuit further alleges that Gerber rarely tested its products for mercury and, during much of the period under examination, tested selected ingredients rather than finished foods consumed by infants.

"Gerber promised parents its food was safe and rigorously tested. Its own tests showed toxic metals in the food," Paxton said in a statement announcing the lawsuit.

"When a company makes promises about what parents feed their babies, I will hold it accountable to ensure those promises are kept," he added.

The Attorney General's Office said arsenic, lead and mercury are neurotoxic substances that can pose serious health risks, particularly to infants and young children whose brains and nervous systems are still developing.

The state also cited testing conducted by an Alaska laboratory in 2021, which it said identified two samples of Gerber rice cereal exceeding the federal arsenic limit applicable to that product. *IANS*

Ayush patent filings in India surge eightfold over decade

NEW DELHI: Ayush related innovation and intellectual property activity in India has surged over eightfold over the past decade with 4,077 patent applications filed and 711 patents granted between FY15 and FY26, an official statement said.

Annual filings rose from 63 applications in FY15 to 590 in FY26, marking a growth of about 836.5 percent, according to data from the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Filings peaked at 606 in FY 2022-23 before dipping to 299 in FY 2023-24 before recovering to 590 by FY26, the statement from the Ministry of Ayush said. Annual patent grants also increased substantially, from three in FY16 to 204 in FY24.



Natural persons accounted for 2,113 applications, or 51.9 percent of total filings, and 398 grants, while educational institutions contributed 995 applications and 88 grants. Together, natural persons and educational institutions accounted for 76.3 percent of total filings.

Corporate and other entities accounted for 700 applications and 176 grants, while small entities and startups contributed 144 and 125 filings, respectively

"The substantial growth in Ayush-related patent filings and grants reflects the increasing focus on research, innovation and intellectual property in the Ayush sector," said Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State for Ayush and Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare. *IANS*

India needs 2.9 million more hospital beds by 2035 to match global benchmark: Report

NEW DELHI: India will need an additional 2.6 billion sq. ft. of healthcare real estate by 2035, as the country needs nearly 2.9 million incremental hospital beds to align with global healthcare infrastructure benchmarks, a recent report said.

The report from CBRE South Asia said the country currently has nearly 1.6 hospital beds per 1,000 people, well below the global average of 3.3 per 1,000, and that India's total healthcare real estate footprint would need to expand substantially from an estimated 2.1 billion sq. ft. in 2025 to close the gap.



"The requirement presents a significant opportunity for developers, investors and healthcare operators to create purpose-built and scalable healthcare assets across markets," the report said.

Healthcare investment is increasingly shifting towards specialized facilities, day-care formats and acquisition-led expansion. Southern states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka have higher existing healthcare infrastructure relative to their non-communicable disease (NCD) burden.

Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand have low bed density relative to non communicable disease burdens, while Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have stronger infrastructure and household incomes, supporting further expansion of specialized healthcare facilities and medical ecosystems.

"Healthcare is emerging as one of India's most consequential real estate opportunities, not simply because demand for care is increasing, but because the country needs a far deeper and more distributed physical healthcare network," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman and CEO, India, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa, CBRE.

"Built-to-suit (BTS) structures can play an important role in addressing this requirement by providing operators with specialized, purpose-built clinical infrastructure aligned with their operational and regulatory needs," he said.

This would allow healthcare providers to direct more capital towards clinical services, medical equipment and technology, while offering property owners greater income visibility through long-term leases, he added. *IANS*

Measles outbreak in Bangladesh claims seven more lives, death toll rises to 1,196

DHAKA: As Bangladesh grapples with an unprecedented measles outbreak, seven children died from measles-like symptoms in Bangladesh in the 24 hours until 8 am on 18 October, raising the total number of fatalities from the ongoing outbreak to 1,196.

All seven fatalities have been classified as measles-suspected deaths in Bangladesh, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). With the latest fatalities, the total number of suspected measles fatalities rose to 1,092, while the number of confirmed deaths remained the same at 104, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

As many as 1,254 suspected measles cases were reported in Bangladesh in the 24 hours till 18 October morning, raising the suspected cases to 213,244. During the same period, 65 new confirmed cases were reported, raising the total number of confirmed cases in the country to 23,122. *IANS*



Realty Tidbits

DDA begins bookings for 2,516 LIG flats in Narela

NEW DELHI: Online booking for 2,516 Low Income Group (LIG) flats in Delhi's Narela under the Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) Awas Nivesh Yojana 2026 will commence on the auspicious occasion of Dussehra.

Under the guidance of Delhi Lieutenant Governor Sardar Taranjit Singh Sandhu, the DDA has introduced the scheme to provide affordable housing to citizens, offering a flat 25 percent discount on the flats, with tentative prices starting at Rs 14.95 lakh, according to a press release.

The flats will be allotted on First Come, First Serve (FCFS) basis, with the entire registration and booking process being conducted online to ensure transparency and convenience for applicants.

The scheme offers flats in Pockets 3 and 6 of Sectors G2-G6 in Narela. Of the total 2,516 flats, 1,020 are located in Pocket 3, while the remaining 1,496 are in Pocket 6. The approximate plinth area of each flat is 49.90 square meters, including common areas.

Following the 25 percent discount, the tentative price of flats in Pocket 3 is Rs 15.01 lakh, while those in Pocket 6 are priced at Rs 14.95 lakh.

Narela is emerging as a promising residential destination, supported by planned transport infrastructure, educational institutions, sports facilities and other civic amenities. The area's development potential is expected to receive a boost from the upcoming Delhi Metro station on the Rithala-Narela-Kundli Metro Corridor and a proposed Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) station.

Road connectivity through Urban Extension Road (UER)-I, UER-II and GT Karnal Road is also expected to improve accessibility to the area, the release said.

Narela is also set to benefit from an upcoming Education Hub in Sector G2-G6, where land has been allotted to several universities. *ANI*

Rising household costs undermine economic mobility, push Americans to delay major life decisions: McKinsey

NEW DELHI: Rising living costs are the biggest barrier to economic mobility for 60 percent of Americans, while nine out of ten say food and grocery expenses are putting pressure on their household finances, according to a report by the McKinsey Institute for Economic Mobility.

For detailed story visit ***www.indiapost.com***

NRI investments in India: The essential checklist

HARINI BALASUBRAMANIAN



NRIs make up a significant share of investors in India's property market across residential and commercial segments. Many NRIs invest in properties in India mainly because of favorable foreign investment policies, retirement needs and strong growth of the sector, which drives high demand and the potential for higher returns. Buying a property while residing abroad is not an easy task. It calls for proper due diligence. Here's a guide for NRIs planning to purchase a property in India, with a focus on legal, financial and various aspects of the journey.

What attracts NRIs to the Indian real estate market?

The share of NRI investors in Indian real estate has nearly doubled over the past decade. NRIs' growing interest is gradually shaping the property market today. Many NRIs prefer luxury homes, which has driven growth in the luxury segment across top markets such as Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai. There are many factors influencing the growth of NRI investments in real estate. Firstly, the sector is seeing healthy growth, with the idea of home ownership fast gaining popularity. By purchasing a property, an NRI can look forward to high returns and rental yield, especially in a fast-developing location. Many NRIs look towards their home country to settle after retirement. The sector sees a growth in retirement homes and other housing options across cities.

Important checks for NRIs

Due diligence - Every property buyer should prioritize due diligence. Legal checks, including title verification and a physical inspection, must be done. Hiring a lawyer can be especially helpful for NRIs.

Visit the property location - Conducting a physical check of the property is part of the due diligence process. Finalizing a property only by looking at the photos can lead to unexpected results. Like all real estate investments, the location of the project should be attractive and offer good connectivity.

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Track the market trends - Being aware of the market trends will put NRI buyers in a better position to negotiate real estate deals without relying on brokers or third parties. It will help them know about the current property rates and buyer sentiments, enabling them to make better decisions.

Assess property prices - Prices quoted by developers abroad are typically higher than those quoted to domestic buyers. Moreover, discounts may not be available. Hence, buyers should be financially prepared to deal with the purchase costs. Evaluating the payment plans and choosing what suits one's budget is a smart move.

Engage Power of Attorney (POA) - Most NRIs get a representative to manage their real estate deals in their home country through Power of Attorney (POA). This is a legal and safe way to handle property transactions and prevent fraud and other property-related problems.

Stay cautious about Marketing: Many Indian developers conduct roadshows abroad. NRIs should not be entirely convinced by impressive presentations and glossy brochures. They should have someone trusted visit the property's site and check the ground realities.

Opt for a home loan: It is good for NRIs to choose a home loan for buying a house, even if it is a small amount. It will reduce their financial burden by minimizing the upfront costs. Not only that, it will save them from risks as banks conduct due diligence on their part. They will verify whether the developer owns the land on which the project is coming up and whether required approvals have been obtained. *www.housing.com*

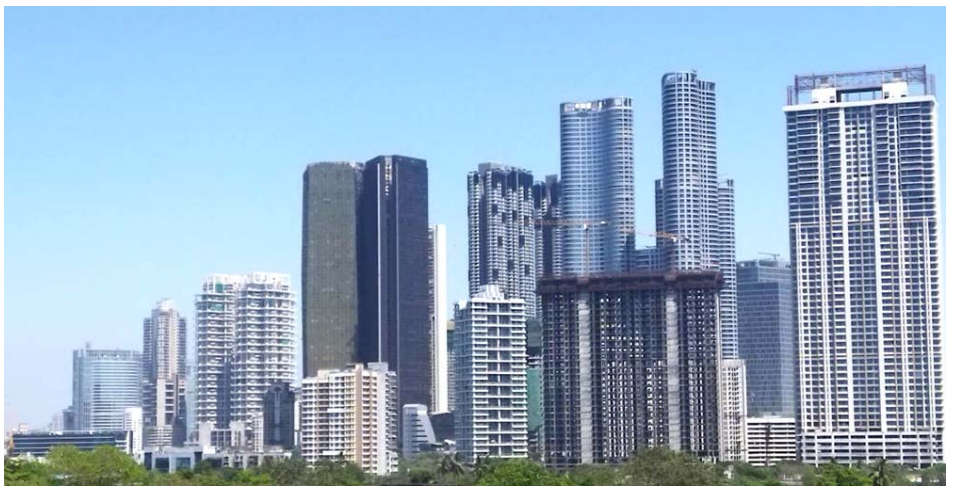
For detailed story visit
www.indiapost.com

Indian real estate sees $1.3 billion private equity investment in Q3: Report

NEW DELHI: Private equity (PE) inflows into Indian real estate stood at $1.3 billion in Q3 2026, down 33 percent quarter-on-quarter, as investors remained cautious amid geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainties, a recent report said.

A report by Savills India, excluding $167 million of asset acquisitions by REITs or InvITs during the quarter, YTD (January-September 2026) PE inflows reached $4.5 billion, 16 percent higher than the corresponding period in 2025.

In Q3 2026, the hospitality segment emerged as the leading recipient of PE inflows, accounting for 26 percent of total investments, supported by rising consumption and continued investor interest, it added.



Industrial and logistics made a strong comeback after a brief lull, securing the second-largest share at 22 percent, driven by sustained demand from e-commerce, manufacturing and supply-chain expansion.

"Private equity investment in Indian real estate has remained resilient in 2026, with YTD inflows reaching $4.5 billion, despite a more cautious global investment environment. The growing participation of domestic investors is particularly encouraging and reflects the increasing depth of India's real estate market," said Sumeet Bhatia, Managing Director, Research & Consulting, Savills India.

Moreover, the residential segment followed with a 15 percent share.

Office and data center investments, which had led PE activity in recent quarters, took a back seat in Q3, accounting for 14 percent and 8 percent, respectively, the report said.

Separately, a report has showed that institutional deal activity in India broadened in the third quarter of 2026 with 696 transactions worth $36.9 billion recorded across mergers and acquisitions, private equity and public markets

Excluding initial public offerings and qualified institutional placements, 608 M&A and PE transactions were recorded worth $23.1 billion with volumes rising 8 percent quarter on quarter even as values declined 36 percent, the report from Grant Thornton Bharat said. *IANS*

Rising household costs undermine economic mobility, push Americans to delay major life decisions: McKinsey

NEW DELHI: Rising living costs are the biggest barrier to economic mobility for 60 percent of Americans, while nine out of ten say food and grocery expenses are putting pressure on their household finances, according to a report by the McKinsey Institute for Economic Mobility.

The report said affordability pressures are affecting people's ability to plan for the future, pursue education, change jobs and make long-term investments, potentially limiting their chances of improving their economic position.

The research, based on a survey of 30,000 Americans, found that two-thirds identified greater financial security as their top aspiration, regardless of race, income or where they live.

"By far, the rising cost of living was the number one thing people cited-60 percent of Americans said that's the thing getting in the way of them achieving their dreams," JP Julien, a partner at McKinsey, said in the report.

Food and groceries emerged as the most widely reported source of household financial pressure, ranking ahead of housing, fuel, healthcare and education costs.

The report also highlighted differences across life stages. Young adults were more focused on careers and income and were more likely than other respondents to identify mental health as a barrier to progress. Parents were particularly concerned about the cost of living and opportunities for their children, while people approaching retirement prioritized saving for the future.

The report also found that community connections were linked to a greater sense of control over one's future.



People who felt strongly connected to their communities were twice as likely to say they had a say in the direction of their lives and three times as likely to feel in control of their future.

"The reality is that affordability pressures change how people imagine their future," Diana Ellsworth, a senior partner at McKinsey, said, adding that rising costs can make people hesitant to change jobs, pursue education or make other long-term investments.

The report called for action to make essential expenses, including housing, food and childcare, more affordable, while ensuring families have sufficient income. It also stressed the need for more reliable pathways into good jobs and opportunities for career progression.

McKinsey said employers, educators and policymakers could support economic mobility through skills-based hiring, paid training, apprenticeships, flexible work arrangements and stronger community institutions. *ANI*

The Festive Boom: Is It Still There? Let's Decode Gurgaon's Real Estate Market

NEW DELHI: Every festive season, we see a familiar trend in real estate. Buyers start exploring properties, developers introduce attractive offers, and conversations around owning a home or making an investment gain momentum. But as we enter the festive season of 2026, an important question deserves attention: Is the festive boom still driving Gurugram's real estate market, or are buyers becoming more selective?

In my view, the festive sentiment is very much alive, but the market is evolving. Today, buyers are looking beyond discounts and launch offers. They want to understand the value of their investment, the credibility of the developer, and the long-term potential of the location.

As Mr. Manav Sharma, Director - Sales at Urban Plus Infrabuild Pvt. Ltd., observes:

"The festive boom in Gurugram's real estate market is no longer just about attractive offers or seasonal sentiment; it is increasingly about confidence, value and informed decision-making. As buyers become more conscious of where and how they invest, the focus is shifting towards projects that offer the right combination of location, developer credibility and long-term potential." *India PR Distribution. ANI*



Alia Bhatt's obsession with sister Shaheen's social media content

Actress Alia Bhatt confessed that she is obsessed with sister Shaheen Bhatt's social media content.

Shaheen used social media to provide netizens with insight into her lunch diaries and the day that followed.

Her post included her posing in a restaurant, waiting for her food, along with a goofy selfie, and other pix of her beautiful surroundings.

"Lunch and other things (sic)," read the caption of the post.

Alia took to the comment section and wrote, "Obsessed with your content".

Reciprocating the love, Shaheen penned, "@aliaabhatt Obsessed with you."

Alia and Shaheen's mother, veteran actress Soni Razdan, pitched in saying, "I thought you were sticking to a healthy (strict) eating plan".

Shaheen replied to her mother's query with, "@sonirazdan Of course I was, I don't know what you're talking about." *IANS*

YASH ON HIS DECISION TO CO-PRODUCE NITESH TIWARI'S 'RAMAYANA'

Actor Yash has opened up about what convinced him to come on board for the much-anticipated film "Ramayana" as a co-producer.

At the pre-launch event of "Ramayana" in Hyderabad, Yash opened up about his decision to collaborate with Namit Malhotra on the ambitious cinematic project.

Recalling his conversations with Malhotra in Los Angeles, Yash said the producer's vision for Indian cinema played a key role in convincing him to join the project. He remembered Malhotra expressing his aspiration to see the Indian film industry reach greater heights, saying, "I want our industry to be placed at that level. That is the day I'll be happy."

Urging audiences across industries to come together in support of the film, the 'Toxic' actor added, "I request you from my side-all my well-wishers, fans, every cinema fan: Telugu industry, Kannada industry, Tamil industry, Malayalam industry, Hindi industry-for once, let's come together if you like the film. Let's come together and show the world."

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, "Ramayana" is produced by Namit Malhotra's Prime Focus Studios in collaboration with Yash's Monster Mind Creations. The film stars Yash, Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Ravi Dubey, and Rakul Preet Singh.

"Ramayana: Part One" is scheduled to release in cinemas worldwide on 5 November 2026.

Recently, Yash spoke about the significance of Ramayana, stressing that the epic transcends the boundaries of any single film industry. *IANS*

TOP TEN
HINDI FILM SONGS

1 Tera Mera Rishta: **Awarapan 2**
2 Parvati: **Hanuman Ansh**
3 Vaaroon Forever: **Mirzapur The Movie**
4 Gehra Hua: **Dhurandhar**
5 Maine Tere Hi Bharose: **Hanuman Ansh**
6 Saiyaara: **Saiyaara**
7 Barbaad: **Saiyaara**
8 Tum Hi Ho: **Aashiqui 2**
9 Sanson Ki Mala: **Mirzapur The Movie**
10 Arz Kiya Hai: **Coke Studio Bharat**



Mahhi Vij on post separation from Jay Bhanushali, 'not open to all'

Actress Mahhi Vij was seen blushing as fellow Bigg Boss 20 contestant Qazi Touqeer playfully questioned her about her love life and whether someone could approach her.

During their conversation, Qazi asked Mahhi whether anybody could approach her. Responding to him, the actress said, "No, can't approach me. Not open to all."

Qazi then tried to get her to elaborate, suggesting that she might be open to a select few people. He teased her about having chosen three or four people and asked whether someone could propose to her.

Mahhi was seen smiling and blushing throughout the exchange as Qazi continued to poke fun at her.

He also wondered how many options she had, hinting that her reactions might suggest there was someone special or that she had been receiving attention. Mahhi, however, did not confirm being interested in anyone.

Uditi, who was around them during the conversation, said probably her special one is seeing the show. *IANS*



Harshita Gaur:

Dussehra in Delhi has charm of its own

Actress Harshita Gaur, known for portraying Princey in Waiting Hai, Dimpy Pandit in Mirzapur and Sanyukta in Sadda Haq, has recalled her memories of Ravan Dahan in Delhi and said Dussehra in the National Capital has a charm of its own.

As a child, she would often play Sita in the plays organized during Dussehra, making the festival a cherished part of her childhood and her early connection with Indian traditions.

Harshita said in a statement: "Dussehra in Delhi has a charm of its own, especially when you look back at it through childhood memories. I remember the excitement around the huge Ravan effigies and how the entire city came alive during the festive season."

She added: "As a kid, I used to play Sita in the plays that would happen in school or on our society grounds during Dussehra, and those memories have stayed with me. Going out with family, being part of the celebrations and experiencing that sense of togetherness made the festival so special."

Dussehra celebrates the triumph of good over evil.

Looking back, the actress said that the memories stay forever.

"Today, when I look back, it's these simple moments that I cherish the most. The memories stay with you long after childhood."

Beyond acting, Harshita's love for Indian culture finds expression in her passion for dance and Kathak, an art form that celebrates rhythm, expression and storytelling.

On the work front, the actress was last seen in Mirzapur: The Movie is a gangster drama film directed by Gurmeet Singh. It stars Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal, Divyenndu, Jitendra Kumar and Ravi Kishan. It acts as an interquel set during the first season of the Amazon Prime Video television series Mirzapur.

In the OTT front, she was seen in Waiting Hai, a crime drama directed by Sameer Vidwans It stars Divyenndu, Bhuvan Arora, Kumud Mishra, Harshita Gaur and Sunita Rajwar. *IANS*

TIGER SHROFF FIRING: THE 'BAAGHI' ACTOR WAS NOT THE PRIMARY TARGET



In a shocking update in the actor Tiger Shroff firing case, the initial questioning of the accused has revealed some significant information that the 'Baaghi' actor was not the primary target.

It has reportedly been revealed during the investigation that the accused actually had another Bollywood celebrity in mind. However, as per the reports, when the accused were unable to easily reach their initially planned target, they decided to target Tiger Shroff instead.

The accused reportedly learned through social media reels shared by Tiger's fans that he did not have police protection at that time and keeping this in mind, they decided to target him.

During the preliminary questioning, it has also been revealed that the attack on Tiger was intended to spread fear in the industry.

Tiger had a narrow escape after three motorcycle-borne men opened fire at him in the Juhu area of Mumbai. The three accused were arrested at Kota railway station in Rajasthan within hours of the incident.

Several members of the film industry, including Amaal Mallik, Mika Singh, Vidyut Jammwal, Shatrughan Sinha, and Ravi Kishan have raised their concern following the incident. *IANS*



SAMANTHA ON WATCHING 'MASTERCHEF' WITH HER MOTHER AS A KID

Mom-to-be Samantha Ruth Prabhu has turned host for the cooking reality show, 'Celebrity MasterChef Tamil'. As the show reaches the audience, Samantha shed light on her long history with the show.

The 'Yashoda' actress revealed that she used to watch 'MasterChef' with her mother during her childhood. Samantha further admitted that she always wished to be a part of the show.

She shared, "It's definitely an extra-special moment for me. When I was little, 'MasterChef' was like a family event. My mom and I would always watch 'MasterChef' together, and it was our bonding time. So, many years later, to be a celebrity judge on 'Celebrity MasterChef Tamil' is something I never imagined. I never, ever thought this would happen. So, it's extremely special."

"I've always wanted to be part of a show that offers wholesome family entertainment on television. And this is the perfect show for me. I'm extremely happy to be a part of it," she went on to add. *IANS*

10 KURTA IDEAS FOR MEN TO MAKE A STATEMENT THIS DIWALI



NEW DELHI: Diwali is not just a festival of lights. It is a celebration of family, tradition and togetherness and, of course, dressing up. Every year, as homes light up with diyas, invitations start pouring in and festive calendars fill up with card parties, pujas, dinners and celebrations, one question inevitably comes up: What are the best outfits to wear this Diwali?

For men, the answer doesn't always have to be complicated. A well-designed kurta set can strike the perfect balance between traditional Indian elegance and contemporary style. Whether you prefer understated black, festive jewel tones, intricate embroidery or a statement-making kurta with a dupatta, the right ensemble can transform your entire Diwali look.

And this year, men's ethnic wear is anything but predictable.

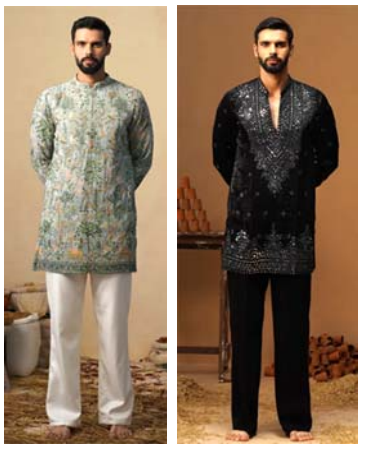
From contemporary short kurtas to richly embroidered festive sets, the modern Indian wardrobe has evolved far beyond the conventional kurta-pyjama. Designer kurtas for men now bring together heritage craftsmanship, contemporary silhouettes, statement colors and luxurious fabrics, making them equally suitable for an intimate Diwali puja and a glamorous festive party.

If you're looking for inspiration, here are 10 kurta ideas for men to consider this Diwali, featuring some of the standout styles from Kalpraag, one of India's most distinctive destinations for men's ethnic wear.

1. Make an Entrance in Black: Saathi Black Short Kurta Set

https://kalpraag.com/collections/tamasha/products/saathi-black-short-kurta-set

There is something timeless about an all-black festive outfit.



If your personal style leans towards understated sophistication rather than loud festive dressing, the Saathi Black Short Kurta Set is an excellent place to start.

Crafted in black georgette, the short kurta features an artistic embroidered composition of a majestic horse and a graceful zebra beneath a flourishing tree, a visual representation of harmony between two distinct spirits. It is paired with matching straight pants, creating a clean contemporary silhouette. The beauty of this outfit lies in its versatility. Black allows the embroidery to take center stage without making the overall look overwhelming.

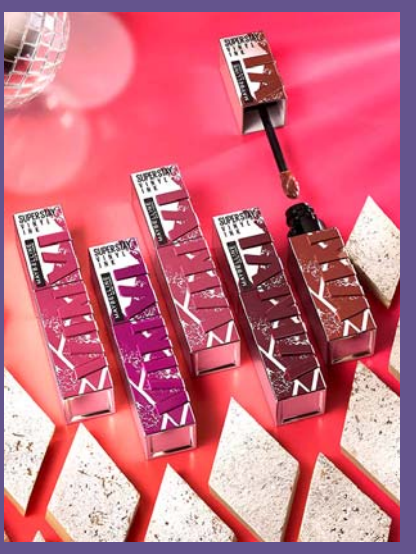
Wear it with black or metallic loafers, a sleek watch and minimal accessories for a sophisticated Diwali dinner. For a more traditional look, Kalpraag also offers the option to swap the pants for a dhoti, Patiala or churidar.

Best for: Diwali parties, cocktail evenings, festive dinners and evening celebrations. *VMPL. ANI*

For detailed story visit ***www.indiapost.com***

MAYBELLINE NEW YORK BRINGS ON FESTIVE SHINE WITH KIARA ADVANI AND ITS FIRST-EVER INDIA-EXCLUSIVE LIMITED COLLECTION

MUMBAI: This festive season, Maybelline New York is giving India's love for mithai a beauty twist with the launch of its first India-exclusive limited-edition collection, Super Stay Vinyl Ink Mithai. Inspired by the treats that make every celebration in India, a little sweeter, the collection features five bold lipstick shades- Berry Barfi, Cherry Ras, Rose Rabdi, Gulabi Dusk and Nutty Halwa bringing a touch of mithai-inspired smudge proof shine that lasts through your festive season.



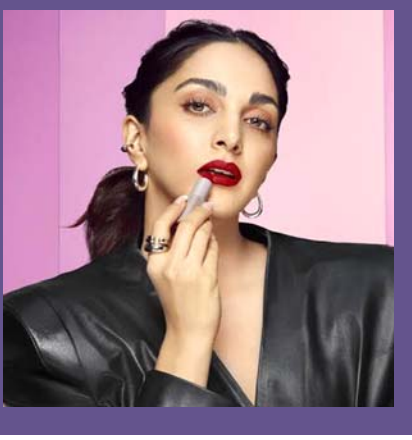
At the heart of the campaign is Maybelline New York brand ambassador Kiara Advani, celebrating the many little moments that make the festive season what it is: getting dressed up, catching up with friends and family, indulging in one more piece of mithai and heading straight from one celebration to the next.

YouTube link: youtu.be/R7KvCYwCY3sdJMFKdFkFD

With its mithai-inspired shades and signature Super Stay Vinyl Ink formula, the collection is made for a season when the plans keep coming and the lipstick needs to keep up. The campaign will also feature exclusive slice-of-life moments with Kiara across social media.

The festive fun continues with the Maybelline New York tribe featuring Leisha Patidar, Rida Tharana, Ishani Mitra and Ambika Nayak (Kayan). Representing different cities across India, each bring their own regional take on festive beauty, with different looks, personalities and ways to celebrate, showing that there is no one way to do festive glam.

Maybelline New York's Brand Ambassador Kiara Advani said, "I think what I love most about Indian festivities is that there's never just one celebration. It's a whole season of dressing up, getting ready, meeting people you love, eating far too much mithai and making plans on the go. I had so much fun bringing that energy into this campaign, especially because it celebrates these little moments that make the festive season feel so special. And I love that the Super Stay Vinyl Ink Mithai Collection brings that same festive spirit to beauty, with shades inspired by some of our favorite mithais and a lipstick that can keep up with all those never-ending celebrations." *NewsVoir. ANI*



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Philosophy

Get rid of the creator of heaven and samsara

No one living in traditional way has been freed from samsara

H.W.L. POONJA

If you practice you will only become fatigued. When you are fatigued, you throw away everything. At that instant you are free. To get rid of everything is freedom. Everything that you do suggests "Get rid of me." To get rid of desires is freedom, freedom from the function of the mind.



H.W.L. Poonja

The function of the mind is desire, so get rid of the desire. Get rid of the desire for samsara. Get rid of the desire to enjoy other worlds, like heavens. Get rid of that. Get rid of the creator of heaven and samsara. Get rid of him also.

After that, get rid of this renunciation. Reject all of these; then renounce this renunciation itself. Then this is freedom. Everything you do is only to get rid of desire.

You enter an educational institution for studies. Eventually all the students reject this institution; they don't want to stay there all the time. After getting a degree, though the professors may be very good, you don't want to keep sitting there. You have entered only to reject it. Everything you do suggests "Get rid of us."

Even the body will be happy when you get rid of it. All that you are doing is returning home, which is a very safe place. And where there is no mind there is no form. Everything, every time, even every breath wants to find and have peace. Even each inhalation needs rest for a moment. Before the exhale it takes a rest, in between.

Nobody wants to work. Not even the breath wants to work. The breath enters emptiness for some time before entering again into functioning. We must touch emptiness whatever we do. We can't do without this empty moment. We ignore this moment because it is so readily available.

You are not to do anything. It happens between thought and thought also, when the mind takes a rest. Two thoughts cannot happen at the same time. Think. Stop. Next thought.

I don't think anyone living in the traditional way has been freed from samsara. Take the case of the Buddha. He rejected all the traditions. He tried all the traditions; he found they did not bring him the thing that he wanted. He tried, but then he said he could not arrive at the essence, at enlightenment. H? sat under the tree and found the essence by himself.

Abandon all traditional dharmas and you will arrive at the true dharma.

We all accept that we are in the waking state with body, feelings, thoughts, objects. Let us move towards the sleep state. In the last second before sleep, what do you do? What do you do to reject all these things and enter into sleep? Nothing.

Unless one abandons everything one cannot sleep. How does one enter into slee?? One is interested in falling asleep. That may be, but you also have to reject all these things, even your wife who is next to you in bed. You love your wife, but still you reject her. Why do you reject all these beautiful things of life, and all this samsara?

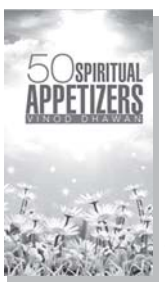
What has happened when you go to sleep? Are you not more happy in deep sleep than in the daytime? So the entering into sleep is the simultaneous rejection of the waking state.

What is there during the sleep? Who is awake? Are you happy or unhappy in deep sleep? Very content.

Excerpted from 'Wake Up and Roar'. The 116th birth anniversary of Poonjaji was observed on October 13

50 SPIRITUAL APPETIZERS

Vinod Dhawan



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Jac O'Keeffe

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Air Power and National Security:

Strategic choices the Indian Air Force needs to make

C UDAY BHASKAR

The chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, who superannuates at the end of October, flew his last fighter-jet sortie on an indigenous LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) Tejas on Oct 12.

A distinguished pilot who has flown more than 5,000 hours in different aircraft, Singh is also an accomplished test-pilot who validated the Tejas at HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) in Bengaluru in the critical design phase .

Air power is a critical element of India's comprehensive military strength, and Air Chief Marshal AP Singh has often drawn attention to the challenges the nation must address if this capability is to safeguard national security.

The air chief used his final public appearances to state the obvious, and to state it in a candid and constructive manner.

Air power is a critical element of India's comprehensive military strength, and Air Chief Marshal AP Singh has often drawn attention to the challenges the nation must address if this capability is to safeguard national security

On October 7, on the eve of the 94th anniversary of the Indian Air Force, he said the service was moving in the right direction, but the pace needed to be faster. On October 8, Air Force Day, at Hindon, he said what conflicts around the world have made clear: air power is the primary means of protecting national interests.

Narrowing the Inventory Gap

Between these two statements lies the abiding challenge to Indian air power today. ACM Singh hands over the IAF to Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, who will lead a force that has proved its operational worth but is structurally depleted. Fighter squadron strength, sanctioned at 42 for a two-front contingency, is down to 29-30 squadrons after the MiG-21 retirement.

At his annual press conference on October 3, Singh said plainly: delays hurt, and the IAF needs 36-40 fighters every year just to arrest the decline.

The LCA Tejas Mk-1A is the textbook case. The IAF has a contract for 180 aircraft - 83 ordered in February 2021 for Rs. 48,000 crore, first delivery due March 2024, plus 97 more cleared in September 2025 for Rs. 62,370 crore. Not a single aircraft from that first batch has been delivered yet. HAL has roughly 27 airframes ready, but has been waiting on engines.

That brings in the second vulnerability. The Tejas depends on the GE F404-IN20 from the United States. The first engine under the 2021 order arrived only in March 2025. HAL has now received 14 in total, after four more in September 2026, with a further 12 promised by December.

On October 7 Singh's comment was telling: "We have come to a way forward, and now we are waiting for HAL to complete whatever has been promised." This lapse was highlighted earlier in February 2025 when the slow pace of induction of the Tejas was flagged by him and he exhorted HAL to adhere to the delivery schedules that had been promised.

This is not just a supply-chain glitch but a potential strategic risk. At a time of geopolitical tension with Washington over tariffs and technology controls, dependence on a single US engine line for the backbone of the Indian fighter fleet creates uncertainty. It also underscores why co-production of the more powerful GE F414 in India for Tejas Mk-2 and AMCA, with a stated 80 per cent transfer of technology, should not be allowed to slip.

The other inventory gap that merits attention is helicopters. ACM Singh spoke mainly about fighters, but the helicopter gap is as stark, for both the IAF and the Army.

The Indian armed forces fly one of the world's largest rotary fleets on paper, but it is ageing and accident-prone in the light utility segment. The French-derived Chetak/Cheetah fleet is of 1960s vintage and should have been retired a decade ago. Their replacement, the Ka-226T and HAL's Light Utility Helicopter, has moved at glacial pace.

(The writer is an Indian Navy veteran and President, Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi) South Asia Monitor

For detailed story visit
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UDUPI PALACE

SOUTH INDIAN CUISINE



Udupi Palace is a South Indian vegetarian BYOB restaurant. My friend and I had dinner there shortly after I returned from south India. We were greeted warmly and the ambiance is pleasant. The menu is so enticing that we ordered too much food but it was almost as good the next day.
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Pakistan's Hangor-Class Fires its first missile. Can it shift the maritime balance in South Asia?

SHERZIMAH AKBAR

Pakistan's first Hangor-class submarine has crossed an important threshold by moving from acquisition and induction toward operational use. On September 27, PNS/M Hangor conducted its maiden live-weapon firing in the North Arabian Sea, successfully engaging a designated long-range target with an anti-ship cruise missile. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf witnessed the firing and highlighted the submarine's combat capability and its importance for Pakistan's maritime deterrence.

The test does not mean Pakistan has suddenly closed the naval gap with India. India retains a larger and more diversified fleet, a broader naval-industrial base, and an expanding anti-submarine warfare capability. But the firing is important because it provides the first visible indication that Pakistan's Hangor program is moving from procurement toward operational use. That shift could challenge India's maritime superiority to exercise in the Arabian Sea.

From Acquisition to Operational Use

Pakistan is acquiring eight Hangor-class submarines in cooperation with China. Four are being built in China and four in Pakistan under a technology-transfer arrangement. The first submarine, PNS/M Hangor, was commissioned in China in April 2026 and arrived in Karachi in June.

The September firing matters because it shows the platform being tested with one of its principal weapons rather than simply being delivered to the fleet. Pakistan has also continued to invest in the wider program. In June, the government approved Rs10.15 billion in additional funding for the Hangor Project under the Revised Armed Forces Development Plan 2030.

But a successful missile firing should not be confused with full combat readiness. Submarines depend on trained crews, maintenance, logistics, communications, intelligence and surveillance, and the ability to operate as part of a wider force. The larger question is whether Pakistan can sustain an operational submarine force once more Hangor boats enter service.

India Holds the Larger Naval Advantage

The Hangor program should not be viewed against India's continuing naval expansion, as India still holds the larger Navy advantage. India completed its six-submarine Project 75 program with the commissioning of INS Vagsheer in 2025. New Delhi is also pursuing Project 75(I), which envisages six additional conventional submarines equipped with air-independent propulsion, modern weapons and advanced sensors. India is also strengthening the capabilities needed to detect submarines. Its Mahe-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft program is adding new vessels equipped for underwater surveillance and anti-submarine warfare. INS Malvan was commissioned in July 2026, while Mangrol was delivered to the Indian Navy in August. Both are part of an eight-vessel program.

India's broader naval buildup also extends beyond submarines. New Delhi continues to expand indigenous shipbuilding, maritime surveillance and surface combatants. Therefore, Pakistan's new submarines are entering a competition in which India is strengthening both its ability to operate at sea and its ability to locate underwater threats.

Pakistan's Bet Is Sea Denial

Pakistan does not need to match India ship for ship to affect how India operates. The more relevant concept is sea denial. Instead of trying to control large areas of the sea, a sea-denial force seeks to make an adversary's operations more difficult and riskier. Submarines are particularly suited to this role because their value comes partly from uncertainty: an adversary must account for a platform it cannot easily see.

Pakistan has been moving in this direction for some time. Earlier in 2026, it tested the Taimoor air-launched anti-ship cruise missile as well as other naval strike systems. The combination of submarine, surface, and air-launched weapons points toward a layered approach in which Pakistan seeks to threaten an adversary's maritime forces without trying to establish command of the sea. Hangor fits naturally into that approach.

An operational Pakistani submarine fleet could force India to devote more resources to anti-submarine warfare, surveillance and force protection. Indian commanders would have to account for the possibility of submarines operating in areas where surface forces might otherwise have greater freedom of maneuver.

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The test does not mean Pakistan has suddenly closed the naval gap with India. India retains a larger and more diversified fleet, a broader naval-industrial base, and an expanding anti-submarine warfare capability

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OILING GLOBAL POLITICS

President Donald Trump's decision to temporarily waive planned sanctions and tariffs on countries buying Russian oil represents a significant shift in American policy. The decision has especially eased pressure on India but it has also raised questions about Washington's consistency in dealing with Russia and the war in Ukraine.

Oil supply disruptions in the Middle East, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, have increased concerns about global energy costs. Allowing more Russian oil and fuel to reach markets could help ease supply shortages and contain prices. Lower fuel prices matter to American consumers, businesses and voters ahead of the November 2026 midterm elections. US officials have suggested that penalties could be restored if circumstances warrant it.

However, it remains uncertain whether easing sanctions will produce meaningful Russian concessions.

India is a major American trade and strategic partner. Washington's earlier threat of tariffs of up to 100% on countries buying Russian oil risked damaging bilateral trade negotiations. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent statement on India-US trade deal was close to finalization and India's energy requirements were part of the administration's calculations.

Russia remains a major oil producer. Punishing every major buyer can make supplies more expensive without necessarily stopping Russian exports. United States therefore faces a choice between maximizing economic pressure on Moscow and maintaining adequate global energy supplies. Moscow may earn additional revenue and gain greater freedom to sell its energy abroad. This could weaken the pressure Western governments intend to exert over the war in Ukraine. Critics of Trump's decision argue that it risks rewarding Russia without securing a clear concession.

India can argue that its energy purchases are driven by national interests rather than obligation to follow Washington's preferences. China, another major buyer of Russian oil, also benefits from reduced pressure. However, China has recently competed aggressively for available Russian crude, making supplies tighter for Indian refiners.

Ukraine and supporters of stronger sanctions may worry that easing restrictions gives Moscow financial breathing space while the war continues. This could create friction between Washington and Kyiv and raise questions about how firmly United States intends to maintain economic pressure on Russia.

India should avoid assuming that either American pressure or American concessions will remain permanent. India should continue purchasing oil from multiple suppliers, including Russia, the Gulf and other producing countries. Seek predictable tariff arrangements rather than relying on temporary exemptions. Maintain cooperation with the US in defense, technology and trade while preserving India's independent relationship with Russia. Explain transparently that India's oil decisions are based on affordability, supply security and the interests of its population.

Trump's Russian-oil U-turn illustrates the complicated relationship between energy, economics and international power. His administration must balance pressure on Moscow, the cost of fuel for Americans, trade negotiations with India and the broader strategic competition involving China.

For India, the episode reinforces an important lesson. International partnerships are valuable, but national energy security cannot depend on the changing preferences of any single foreign government.

The ultimate test will be whether Washington's temporary flexibility leads to a more stable arrangement with India, and meaningful progress toward peace in Ukraine, or, whether it creates another cycle of threats, exemptions and diplomatic uncertainty.

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Kutch
THE WHITE DESERT OF INDIA

Virtually an island that resembles the shape of a tortoise, Kutch is an erstwhile princely state of India holding onto its grandeur nature from the past. Kutch is probably one of the most beautiful, yet surreal places in India with the vast expanses of the white salt desert. The place comes to life during the winters when the Rann Festival is held during December-February when there are huge camp settlements with cultural programs, functions and adventure activities like hot-air ballooning.

Kutch is also among the largest district of India with a very low population density. Also, Kutch lies on the India-Pakistan border and you can see parts of Pakistan from Kutch. Kutch is also famous for crafts and embroidery works, the Flamingo and Wild Ass Sanctuaries. Bhuj is an ideal starting point to visit the Rann of Kutch. Beautiful beaches of Mandvi near Bhuj are also totally worth visiting during your trip to Kutch. Don't miss to see the ancient town of Dholavira.

PLACES TO VISIT IN KUTCH

Great Rann of Kutch: The Great Rann of Kutch, is a large area of salt marshland, is located in the District of Kutch, in the western state of India, Gujarat. The vast expanse is situated in the Thar Desert and is formed of salt marshes. Sunsets at the Great Rann of Kutch are a treat to the eyes after exploring the region.

Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary: Located 100 km away from Bhuj, the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the largest periodical saline wetlands in the world. Colloquially known as the "Flamingo City" this is the largest wildlife sanctuary with a vast expanse of about 7505.22 sq. km.

Dholavira: Known as a remarkable excavation site during the Indus Valley Civilization, Dholavira was one of the most developed cities roughly 4500 years ago. It was a flourishing Harappan site between 2650 and 1450 BCE.

Kutch Museum: The oldest museum of Gujarat, the Kutch Museum boasts of its collection of the extinct Kutchi Script and ancient coins. Tribal artifacts are also a part of the museum along with many other kinds of objects on display exhibits of embroidery, paintings, arms, musical instruments, sculpture and precious metalwork.

Kutch Bustard Sanctuary: Popularly known locally as the Lala Prajan Sanctuary, Kutch Bustard Sanctuary's primary aim is to conserve the Great Indian Bustard. It is located in Jakhau village in Naliya Taluka, Gujarat. Among many other different varieties of wildlife that can be found within the reserve, there are three different kinds of Bustards in the sanctuary.

Mandvi Beach: Situated in the Kutch region of Gujarat, Mandvi Beach is a pristine and tranquil seashore which is one of the most popular holiday destinations in the region. In addition to being a laidback beach location, Mandvi Beach is popular for its camping and water sports facilities.

Shopping in Kutch: Kutch is famous for its Great Rann of Kutch, an enormous white salt desert that lies within the boundaries of Thar desert. The endless white fields of salt is truly a wonder India is blessed with. As much as we know Rann Of Kutch for its great salt desert, it is also known for its artistic handicrafts. Most of the small villages in the Kutch district are engaged in the craft business, preparing some of the finest artifacts that are put on sale during the Rann Utsav.

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