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The Good News Hiding Beneath America's Falling Test Scores

By JAY MATHEWS

The latest report on U.S. public schools has the usual bad news. The Education Scorecard put out by research centers at Harvard and Stanford universities says reading and math scores have been in steady decline since 2013.

Why bother to even mention it? Because something important is changing. Resourceful teachers are creating a different trend, rumbling almost unnoticed beneath the test score disappointments.

I first noticed this 30 years ago when I created a new kind of top high schools list, mostly to promote a book I had written. I called it the Challenge Index. I was inspired by what I was seeing in low-income public schools where students were getting college-level courses in math, English, science and history and taking the final exams despite the dumbing down common in many high schools.

The list provided a ratio for each school: the number of these tough final exams given each year, mostly by the College Board's Advanced Placement program, divided by the size of each school's graduating class. The first time I did it, only 1 percent of high schools - just 243 of them - gave more of the exams than the number of graduating seniors.

But that number kept growing. Newsweek magazine and then The Post were publishing the latest Challenge Index list annually, and over time the number of schools giving more exams than they had seniors increased. By 2019, the Challenge Index included nearly 12 percent of U.S. high schools.

Something else changed, too. In 1998, the top 20 schools served mostly children from affluent families, such as Richard Montgomery High in Rockville, Maryland, or North Hollywood High in California. Two decades

later, the top of the list included mostly low-income schools, many of them charter schools such as the KIPP schools founded by Dave Levin and Mike Feinberg or the IDEA schools started by JoAnn Gama and Tom Torkelson.

According to the College Board, the growth has been huge, though largely little noticed. Just 94,000 students from low-income families took AP exams in 2003. By 2025 the number was nearly nine times as large - 845,000. In 2003, 11.6 percent of AP students came from low-income families. By 2025 that number was 27 percent.

I found clues of this transformation at Garfield High School in Los Angeles, where I watched the work of classroom magician Jaime Escalante, who was celebrated in the film "Stand and Deliver." I noticed there were many other teachers at that school who lacked Escalante's charisma but found ways to accustom students to longer school days and more demanding lessons.

Throughout the country, more and more teachers helped students build skills that produced good scores on AP tests, as well as college-level exams like International Baccalaureate. Many students told me that even when they failed to pass AP or IB exams, they still learned more by struggling with the challenge.

It has taken a while for educators and parents who feared pushing kids too hard to appreciate this. Some principals told me they could make their courses just as demanding as AP. Often this proved untrue. Teachers found it difficult to make final exams as hard as AP's.

Most schools erected barriers to taking AP. At Garfield, students making C's in their ninth and 10th-grade classes were encouraged to try AP. But in wealthy Westchester County, New York, where I spent much time, C students were barred from college-level courses. I still found students who rebelled against that. One Westchester student with a mediocre record decided to take AP U.S. history on her own. She got the textbook, borrowed friends' assign-

ments and passed the test, the College Board being happy to give its demanding tests to whoever would pay the fee.

Darren Johnston at Carmel High School in California told me he and his colleagues had to fight to remove barriers to AP enrollment for ordinary students. But the results were clear: After four years, the number of AP students had increased by 50 percent and the school's passing rate on the exams improved.

A 2008 study by Texas researchers Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin and Barbara Dodd debunked the theory that AP students do better in college only because they are naturally better students. The study showed that in English, calculus, biology and history, students with low SAT scores who received only twos on their AP exams, below the passing level of three on the exams' five-point scale, did better in those subjects in college than students with similar SAT scores who did not take AP.

Chloe Kilzi, then a senior at Issaquah High School in Washington state, told me she felt lucky, despite weak grades in science and math, that her school encouraged her to take AP physics and AP calculus BC. At her previous school in Chicago, she would have needed good grades and teacher recommendations, a common bar to AP participation. She went on to study engineering physics in college.

American schools continue to suffer from the tendency to tolerate mediocrity. Compromises are sometimes seen as the only way to get through the day. But the steady movement of demanding college courses into high school is changing attitudes, making American schools in many places better than they were.

Jay Mathews was a Washington Post reporter and columnist from 1971 to 2022. His books include "An Optimist's Guide to American Public Education."

-SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

Skokie Preserves Its Present For The Future: Community Seals 2025 Time Capsule To Be Opened In 2050

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

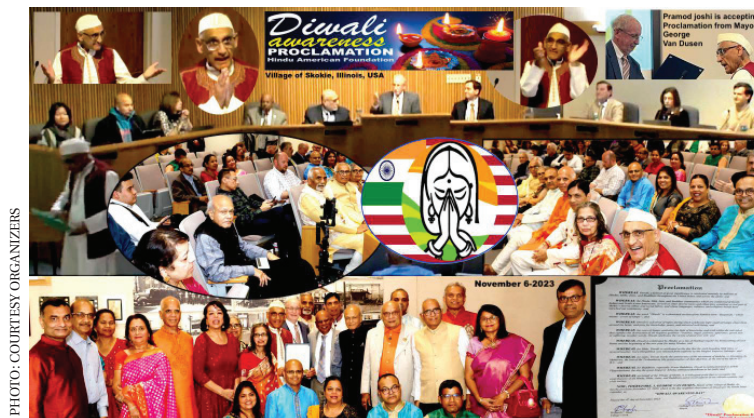
Village's Historic Project Captures the Spirit, Diversity, and Heritage of One of America's Most Inclusive Communities

What will life in Skokie look like to residents in the year 2050? What stories, traditions, technology, and community values will future generations discover about the people who lived here in 2025? Those questions inspired the Village of Skokie and several of its leading civic institutions to create the 2025 Skokie Time Capsule, a remarkable historical project that preserves today's community for tomorrow's residents.

On June 7, 2026, the new Time Capsule was officially sealed during a special community ceremony and will remain unopened until 2050, providing future generations with an extraordinary glimpse into everyday life in one of America's most culturally diverse and welcoming communities.

The project represents a collaborative effort by the Skokie Heritage Museum (part of the Skokie Park District), the Skokie Historical Society, and the Skokie Public Library, continuing a tradition that began a quarter century ago.

A Legacy That Began with the Millennium: The Time Capsule initiative traces its origins to the year 2000, when Skokie celebrated the arrival of a new millennium by sealing its first community Time Capsule. That original capsule was filled with hundreds of contributions from



Indian community made unforgettable history.

local schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, community leaders, and residents who wanted to leave behind a record of life at the dawn of the 21st century.

Unlike many time capsules that remain buried for a century or longer, organizers deliberately chose a 25-year timeline. They recognized that rapidly changing technology—including VHS videotapes stored inside the capsule—might become impossible to view if left unopened for too many decades.

Their foresight proved valuable. In August 2025, the Millennium Time Capsule was ceremonially opened at

the Skokie Public Library. Community members gathered to revisit photographs, memorabilia, documents, and restored VHS recordings that vividly captured life in Skokie twenty-five years earlier.

The ceremony featured a nostalgic video presentation, reflections from civic leaders, and displays of items that reminded residents how much the village had changed while preserving the values that continue to define the community. Inspired by that successful opening, organizers immediately launched an effort to create a new capsule representing Skokie in the mid-2020s.

A Community-Wide Effort: The newly sealed 2025 Time Capsule reflects contributions from nearly every corner of the village. Residents, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, businesses, civic groups, and cultural organizations all participated by selecting objects that represent today's Skokie.

Among the many items placed inside are: The Village's newly adopted official seal. A miniature version of Skokie's new municipal flag. Letters written to residents of 2050, Artwork created by local students. Children's predictions about the future. Campaign materials from the 2025 local elections. Restaurant menus showcasing today's culinary diversity. Photographs documenting neighborhoods and landmarks expected to evolve over the next 25 years. Examples of current technology and modern cultural trends.

Organizers also thoughtfully included several care-

-CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

More Than 50 Indian-American Organizations Honor Consul General Somnath Ghosh With Community Farewell

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

SCHAUMBURG, Ill.: The Indian American community came together to celebrate India's Consul General in Chicago Somnath Ghosh, who will be leaving Chicago and moving to Malaysia on his next diplomatic assignment as High Commissioner.

The farewell reception honoring Consul General Ghosh was held July 19th, and was much more than a ceremonial send-off, but rather a heartfelt celebration of nearly four years of diplomatic leadership that brought the Consulate General of India in Chicago and the Indian-American community closer than ever before.

More than fifty community organizations representing cultural, religious, educational, professional, civic, business, youth, and charitable institutions joined together to express their appreciation for what they saw as Ghosh's outstanding service. Community leaders praised Ghosh's approachable personality, accessibility, humility, and commitment to strengthening the partnership between the Government of India and the Indian diaspora across the Midwest.

Since arriving in Chicago in October 2022, Ghosh has served as the principal



Community leaders and members of 55 organizations honor Consul General Shri Somnath Ghosh at a farewell hosted by National India Hub in Schaumburg.

physicians, engineers, researchers, educators, business leaders, nonprofit organizations, and elected officials while expanding opportunities for bilateral cooperation between India and the American Midwest.

Throughout his tenure, Ghosh consistently emphasized that the Indian diaspora serves as one of India's greatest global ambassadors. His participation in community events reflected his belief that every Indian-American organization contributes to strengthening India's international image and fostering goodwill between the world's two largest democracies.

and his willingness to engage with organizations of every size. Whether attending a major Independence Day celebration, a Republic Day reception, a temple anniversary, a youth leadership program, a business conference, or a charitable fundraiser, he consistently demonstrated his commitment to serving both India and its overseas community.

Several community leaders observed that his tenure coincided with an important period in India-U.S. relations. Expanding economic cooperation, increased educational exchanges, technological innovation, healthcare partnerships, and

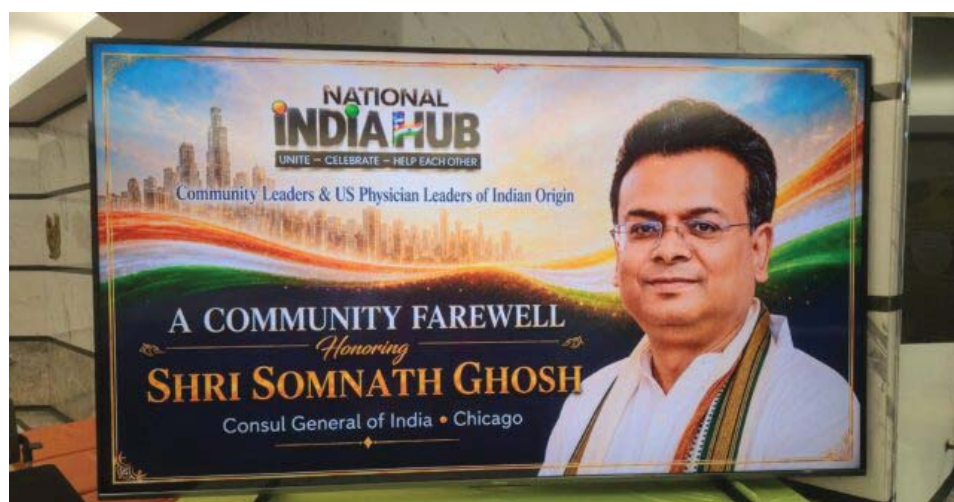
social service organizations. Community leaders noted that this spirit of cooperation will remain one of the defining legacies of his tenure.

In his farewell address, Ghosh expressed sincere gratitude to the Indian-American community for its unwavering friendship, trust, and support. He spoke warmly about the hospitality shown to him and his family and described Chicago and the Midwest as a place that would always occupy a special place in his heart.

Reflecting on his years in Chicago, Ghosh praised the accomplishments of Indian-Americans in fields ranging from medicine and engineering to entrepreneurship, public service, academia, science, technology, finance, and philanthropy. He emphasized that the success of the Indian diaspora continues to strengthen India's global reputation while contributing significantly to the economic, cultural, and civic life of the United States.

He also encouraged community members to continue working together to deepen India-U.S. friendship, preserve India's rich cultural heritage, and inspire younger generations to remain connected to their roots while making meaningful contributions to American society.

The Government of India's recently appointed Ghosh as the next High Commissioner of India to Malaysia. Community



Massive poster in the hall at India Hub where the farewell event for India's Consul General in Chicago Somnath Ghosh was held.

representative of India for seven Midwestern states to promote India's diplomatic, economic, educational, technological, and cultural interests. During this period, he participated in hundreds of community programs, official ceremonies, business forums, university engagements, interfaith gatherings, and cultural celebrations, earning admiration from organizations representing every segment of the Indian-American community.

As a distinguished officer of the 1997 batch of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Ghosh brought extensive diplomatic experience to Chicago. Under his leadership, the Consulate strengthened its engagement with Indian students, entrepreneurs,

The event brought together an impressive gathering of community leaders, including Harish Kolasani, Chhabra Singh, Indermohan Kumar Tadi, Jayanti Oza, Haribhai Patel, Pragya Madhure, Smita Shah, Usha Bhaskar, Nimish Jani, Hemant Patel, Arvind Ankleswaria, Krishna Bansal, Meghna Bansal, Sunil Shah, Dipti Shah-Desai, Richa Chand, Keerthi Kumar, Prasad Athanikar, Sohan P. Joshi, Hasmukh Patel, Bhailal M Patel and many other distinguished representatives of Indian-American organizations from across the Midwest.

Throughout the evening, speaker after speaker reflected on Ghosh's leadership



Consul General Shri Somnath Ghosh with Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed and community leaders at the National India Hub farewell program.

growing people-to-people connections created new opportunities for collaboration. The Consulate General played a vital role in facilitating these relationships while continuing to provide efficient consular services to thousands of Indian nationals and members of the Indian-American community.

Community members felt one of Ghosh's greatest strengths was his ability to bring diverse organizations together. His encouragement of collaboration helped foster stronger relationships among cultural associations, professional organizations, youth groups, faith-based institutions, business chambers, and

leaders expressed confidence that he will continue to serve India with the same professionalism, integrity, and vision that earned him widespread respect throughout the American Midwest.

Representatives of participating organizations presented commemorative mementos, exchanged warm embraces, and gathered for group photographs celebrating a memorable chapter in the history of the Indian-American community.

The participation of more than fifty organizations in the event demonstrated that, despite representing diverse regions, languages, faiths, and professions, the community came together.

FIA Chicago Summer Picnic Brings Community Together Ahead Of Bharat Independence Day Celebrations

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

Following a successful season of Memorial Day, America's Independence Day, and International Day of Yoga celebrations, the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA-Chicago Estd 1980) hosted its annual Summer Picnic on July 19, 2026 bringing together community leaders, volunteers, sponsors, and representatives of numerous Indian-American organizations for a memorable day of fellowship, networking, music, and family entertainment.

Blessed with beautiful sunshine and comfortable 81-degree weather, the picnic reflected FIA Chicago's enduring mission of promoting unity, friendship, and cooperation among Indian-American organizations throughout the Midwest. Since its establishment in 1980, FIA Chicago has served as one of the region's leading umbrella organizations, working to preserve India's cultural heritage while strengthening civic engagement and community collaboration.

President Hemant Patel welcomed attendees and highlighted FIA Chicago's commitment to bringing together diverse organizations on one platform. He noted that the organization proudly represents the broader Indian-American community while promoting the rich traditions, values, and heritage of Bharat. He also invited everyone to participate in FIA Chicago's upcoming Bharat Independence Day celebrations and patriotic events.

One of the afternoon's most enjoyable highlights was a lively musical program featuring FIA Executive Committee member and talented vocalist Vira Adimulam, whose performances delighted the audience. Guests were pleasantly surprised when President Hemant Patel joined the program by singing several popular Hindi songs, revealing a musical talent that many had never seen before.



FIA trustees, executive committee members, sponsors, volunteers, and representatives of numerous Indian-American organizations gather for a group photograph during the successful FIA Chicago Summer Picnic.



Hindi and Telugu melodies added to the festive atmosphere and encouraged audience participation.

The picnic also served as an outstanding networking opportunity where community leaders exchanged ideas, strengthened friendships, and discussed future collaborative initiatives.

Among FIA leadership attending the event were Trustees Bhailal M. Patel, Kanti N. Patel, Anil Pillai, Dr. Rashmi Patel, and Raj Patel, along with Executive Committee members Anil Singh, Rohit Joshi, Joy (Dipen) Shah, Bhavesh (Bob) Patel, Arvind Ankleshwaria, Yashaswini

Desai, and Vira Adimulam.

Community leaders representing numerous organizations—including Brahm Samaj, MokshDham Cremation Inc., United Senior Pariwar, Jain Mandir, ShreeSanatan Sewa Foundation, VHP of America, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, Hindu Women's Network, Andhra Association, International University of Vedic Wellness, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Seva International, Maharashtra Mandal, Hanuman Mandir, Divine Hindu Parivar, and Akhil Bhartiya Purva Sainik Seva Parishad—also participated, demonstrating the unity and diversity of the Indian-American community.

Sponsors and community partners added further value to the gathering. Representatives from MAFS, UMAS, Care For Soul, and ReliaCare interacted with attendees while sharing information about services benefiting senior citizens and families.

During the program, FIA Trustee and MokshDham Founder Dr. Rashmi Patel updated attendees on the progress of the MokshDham funeral home project. President Hemant Patel also shared the vision and ongoing community service initiatives of the ShreeSanatan Sewa Foundation.

Vice President Rohit Joshi kept everyone entertained by organizing an enthusiastic Antakshari competition that encouraged participants of all ages to showcase their singing talents.

Food remained another major attraction. Executive Committee member Yashaswini Desai and Vasanti Patel, wife of President Hemant Patel, coordinated meal preparation with the support of dedicated volunteers. Continuing a popular FIA tradition, Vice President Joy (Dipen) Shah, owner of Rapid Rasoi, generously sponsored delicious Pav Bhaji that received widespread appreciation from attendees. Executive Committee member Arvind Ankleshwaria captured memorable moments throughout the day as the event photographer.

Skokie Preserves Its Present For The Future: Community Seals 2025 Time Capsule To Be Opened In 2050

-CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

fully selected artifacts from the original Millennium Time Capsule, creating a symbolic bridge connecting two generations of Skokie residents. Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion; One of the most meaningful contributions came from Pramod Joshi, a member of Skokie's Fine Arts Commission and the Board of the Skokie Community Caucus. Joshi donated a collage documenting important milestones in the recognition of the Hindu-American community in Skokie.

His contribution includes photographs from the Village's Diwali Awareness Day Proclamation (2023) and Hindu Heritage Month Proclamation (2025), along with a copy of his speech delivered at Village Hall highlighting the history, culture, and contributions of Hindu Americans.

These materials serve as an enduring record of Skokie's commitment to recognizing and celebrating the traditions of all communities. Additional contributions collected during Skokie's internationally acclaimed Festival of Cultures further demonstrate the village's extraordinary

nary multicultural character. Together, these artifacts tell the story of a community where diversity is not simply acknowledged—it is embraced as one of Skokie's greatest strengths.

More Than Preserving Objects: For museum professionals and historians, the Time Capsule represents much more than a collection of physical objects. Museums traditionally preserve the past by protecting historical artifacts. A Time Capsule, however, captures the present before it becomes history.

It asks today's residents an important question: "What defines us right now?" The answers can be found inside the capsule—not only through documents and photographs, but also through everyday objects that future generations may find fascinating. Recognizing the uncertainty of rapidly changing digital technology, organizers intentionally emphasized preserving physical items that are more likely to survive intact over the next quarter century.

Although digital photographs and electronic media have also been carefully archived, the capsule focuses heavily on tangible artifacts capable of withstanding

the passage of time. Looking Toward 2050: For the next twenty-five years, the 2025 Time Capsule will remain securely stored at the Skokie Public Library, awaiting its opening in 2050.

When that day arrives, future residents will discover how today's generation lived, worked, celebrated, learned, and envisioned the future. They will see what technologies were considered cutting-edge, what issues mattered most, what foods people enjoyed, what traditions united the community, and how one suburban village proudly embraced people from every culture, religion, and background.

The project stands as a lasting gift from today's residents to tomorrow's generations—a reminder that history is created not only through major events but also through the everyday lives, dreams, traditions, and shared values of ordinary people.

As Skokie continues to evolve into one of the nation's most vibrant multicultural communities, the 2025 Time Capsule ensures that its rich heritage, inclusive spirit, and remarkable diversity will remain preserved for generations yet to come.

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Students From India, China, South Korea Could Be Hardest Hit By New DHS Restrictions

BY MYLES MILLER, LIAM KNOX AND
ALICIA A. CALDWELL

The Trump administration is scrapping a decades-old policy that allows international students and exchange visitors to remain in the US for as long as their studies last, replacing it with a four-year limit that will require many of them to seek federal permission to stay.

According to the new rule being published Friday, students and scholars coming to the US on F and J visas after the rule takes effect will be required to reapply to stay after that period, regardless of whether they've finished their degree, plan to enroll in graduate school or seek work experience related to their studies.

The change could throw the visa approval process into chaos at its busiest time of year, threatening to dampen fall enrollment and discouraging many international students from applying in



Students walking in Harvard Yard.

student visa issuances last summer.

The new rule also complicates students' ability to stay and work after graduating on a temporary work authorization like Optional Practical Training, which the Trump administration has sought to curtail or eliminate. --

'MAGNET FOR FRAUD'

In May, then-acting Director of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Todd Lyons announced a broad fraud investigation involving F-1 students employed under the OPT program, which lets foreigners on a student visa work in the US for as long as three years after graduation if they have a degree in an approved science, technology, engineering or mathematics field.

Lyons, who resigned in May, said OPT has "become a magnet for fraud," adding that authorities have identified 10,000 foreign students employed at businesses suspected for fraud.

Fanta Aw, president of the US international education group NAFSA, called the rule change a

The rule change will also limit students' ability to transfer between institutions and halves the grace period for visa holders to prepare to leave the country. Beyond the impact on students, it limits foreign journalists in the US on I visas to staying for about eight months, unless they receive an extension.

Trump administration officials say a fixed deadline will curb visa fraud and overstays, and eliminate the blurred boundaries between nonimmigrant student visas and legal immigration pathways that they see as a national security risk.

Last fall, the overall number of foreign students in the US sank by 1.4%, driven by a 17% drop in new international students that helped reverse a decade of largely steady growth. A recent survey showed even steeper declines in new foreign enrollment this spring, foreshadowing a potential nosedive in the fall.

The new DHS rule could exacerbate the decline since it comes around the peak period for visa processing, as students prepare to arrive on campuses in the fall. In the early months of the Trump administration, the State Department paused all student visa interviews, creating a hefty backlog that many blame for a 36% drop in



Students walk on the campus of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S., April 15, 2025.

the future.

Under the rule, students already in the US and holding F or J visas – a population that totaled about 1.5 million in 2025 – will have four years from the effective date of the rule to reapply, regardless of when they arrived or the duration of their program.

Anyone needing more time – including most doctoral candidates and physicians in lengthy residencies – will have to file a formal extension request with US Citizenship and Immigration Services, provide biometrics and pay a fee, instead of relying on their schools to manage their status.

Visa holders who overstay the four-year restriction could be exposed to three- and 10-year bans on returning to the US.

Students from India, China and South Korea are expected to be hardest hit by the rule change. It comes as the Trump administration has repeatedly targeted international students in its pressure campaign to reshape higher education, seeking to narrow a pipeline that funnels global talent – and billions of dollars in tuition revenue – to US universities.

Currently, student visas, unlike most other nonimmigrant visas, are valid for the entire duration that a student maintains their status by enrolling in a minimum number of course credits and avoiding legal trouble.



Rajika Bhandari

"a misguided and unnecessary policy shift that injects uncertainty, bureaucracy, and fear into a system that has long worked effectively."

"International students and exchange visitors are already the most monitored nonimmigrant populations in the United States," she wrote in a statement, adding that the group planned to "vigorously explore every available avenue to challenge this harmful and shortsighted rule."

SELLING POINT

Between the new visa duration limits and threats to OPT, the Trump administration is going after what for many international students is a major selling point of a US degree: a pathway to further research, and the possibility of a job that leads to more permanent residency.

Rajika Bhandari, an international education consultant, said that's especially true for students from Asia and those in graduate STEM programs.

"They're not just thinking, can I get a visa to come? It will be more about playing the long game," she said. "The duration of stay change has probably not fully sunk in yet among the common Indian consumer, because it's so nuanced. But it will, and it has a profound impact."

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US Senators Unveil Sweeping Russia Sanctions Bill; Name India Among Nations Facing Possible Tariffs

By REENA BHARDWAJ

A bipartisan group of US senators has unveiled a long-awaited bill imposing sweeping sanctions on Russia, naming India among five countries that could face tariffs for continuing to buy Russian oil. Capitol Hill. Photo: Dreamstime

The legislation, dubbed by some colleagues the "Lindsey Graham Russia

Accountability Bill," was formally announced on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, July 15, by Senators Richard Blumenthal and Jeanne Shaheen, along with Republicans Roger Wicker, Katie Britt, and more than a dozen other lawmakers from both parties.

On July 10, just days before the death of Sen. Graham, U.S. Senators Wicker (R-MS), Blumenthal (D-CT), Graham (R-SC), and Shaheen (D-NH) had released the following statement:

"We are proud to announce that we have reached an agreement with the Trump Administration to move our updated Russia sanctions legislation forward. We are very pleased with this significant progress and expect to roll out the legislation very soon. **As Russia intensifies its slaughter of civilians, it is imperative that the legislative and executive branches work together to create tools to exact a heavy price on those who buy Russian oil and natural gas, fueling the Putin war machine.**"

The current bill comes promptly after the death of Senator Lindsey Graham, who spent nearly two years negotiating the measure and whom colleagues repeatedly credited as its driving force.

Senator Blumenthal, the lead Democratic sponsor, said the bill goes far beyond tariffs, imposing full blocking sanctions on large parts of Russia's economy, its energy and financial sectors, its defense industry, oligarchs, business-people, and Russian President Vladimir Putin himself.

Separately, the bill authorises the administration to impose tariffs, set at a rate above zero but capped well below full value, on countries identified as the largest buyers of Russian oil. Blumenthal named five: China, India, Slovakia, Hungary, and Azerbaijan.

A related provision targets buyers of Russian natural gas, though it exempts countries importing less than 15 per cent of their gas from Russia if they are already reducing purchases, a carve-out that shields most European allies.

Senators were clear that the actual rate has not been decided and will be set by the US Trade Representative, not fixed in the bill itself.

Blumenthal said he expected it would be set high enough "to discourage China, India, and other major purchasers of Russian oil and gas strongly," but declined



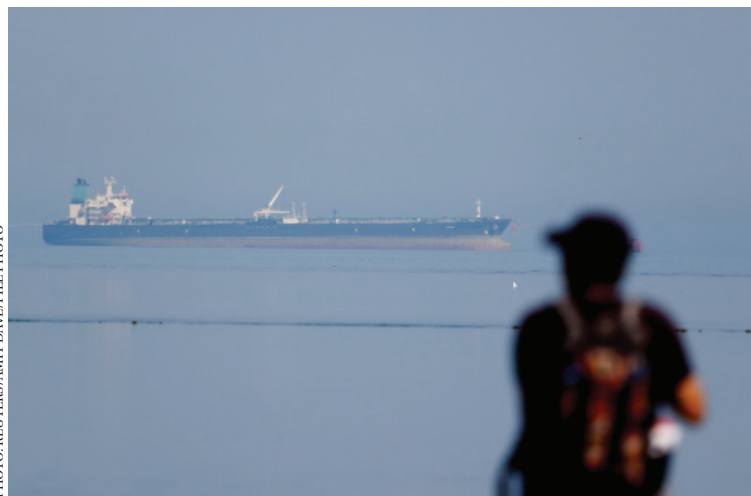
Capitol Hill.



The late Sen. Lindsey Graham giving his victory speech after the South Carolina primary June 9, 2026.



Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal.



A tourist watches the MT Desert Kite oil tanker carrying Russian oil at Narara Marine National Park in the Arabian Sea, Gujarat, India, March 11, 2026.

to give a figure.

The bill also includes waiver authority, along with reporting requirements to Congress if tariffs are later lowered.

Senator James Risch, chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he had pushed for

a separate provision cracking down on Russia's "shadow fleet" tankers used to evade existing sanctions and keep exporting oil.

Lawmakers stressed that the bill has been significantly narrowed from earlier versions, which reportedly could have applied tariffs to as many as 63 countries.

Blumenthal said the current draft focuses on a "very discreet number" of five oil and five gas buyers, with some overlap, a change he said reflected input from the Trump administration, which he said has now endorsed the bill in writing.

Senators said they hoped the redesign would win over House Democrats who had criticized the bill's broader, earlier version. The announcement carried an emotional undertone, with senator after senator invoking Graham's memory.

Senator Wicker, who served alongside Graham for over three decades, called it "Lindsey Graham's greatest achievement."

Senator Ted Cruz said Graham had personally negotiated the bill's terms directly with President Trump before his death and urged colleagues to honor him by passing it "overwhelmingly."

Senators argued that the bill's timing is urgent, pointing to what they described as Ukrainian battlefield gains and continuing Russian strikes on civilian areas.

Several said they expect the Senate could act before the end of August and that they had received assurances from the Senate Major-

ity Leader that a vote will proceed once sufficient support is secured.

Asked about President Trump's suggestion that sanctions on Iran or Hezbollah could be added to the bill, Blumenthal said senators would prefer to move the current text forward rather than reopen negotiations, though he did not rule out separate legislation later.

India has so far resisted Western pressure to curb its purchases of discounted Russian crude, which have surged since 2022 and now account for a significant share of its oil imports.

New Delhi has previously defended the trade as a matter of energy security and consumer affordability, arguing that it also helps keep global oil prices stable.

The bill must still clear procedural hurdles in the Senate and pass the House of Representatives before reaching President Trump's desk.

Earlier, a White House official told ANI that the Trump administration has signaled its backing for the sweeping Russia sanctions bill.

Responding to a query from ANI on whether Trump would support the bill and whether India could face fresh penalties for buying Russian crude, a White House official said, "President Trump supports the bill."

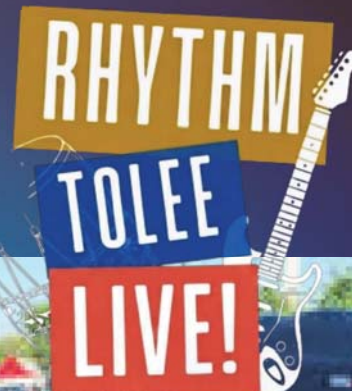
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Indian American Astronaut Anil Menon, Crewmates Arrive At International Space Station

By A STAFF WRITER

NASA astronaut Anil Menon, along with Roscosmos (Russian Federation) cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina, arrived safely at the International Space Station Tuesday, July 14, 2026, bringing the orbiting laboratory's crew to 10 for about the next two weeks.

A July 14 press release from NASA noted that the trio of American and Russian astronauts launched aboard the Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft at 10:47 a.m. EDT (7:47 p.m. local time) from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. After a three-hour, two-orbit journey, the spacecraft docked at 1:52 p.m. with the station's Prichal module.

The new arrivals were welcomed by the space station Expedition 74 crew: NASA astronauts Jessica Meir, Jack Hathaway, and Chris Williams; ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Sophie Adenot; and Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Kud-Sverchikov, Sergei Mikaev, and Andrey Fedyayev.

During his stay aboard the station, Menon will conduct scientific research and technology demonstrations aimed at advancing human space exploration and benefiting life on Earth, NASA said in the



The Soyuz rocket launches to the International Space Station with NASA astronaut Anil Menon and Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina onboard, Tuesday, July 14, 2026, at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

PHOTO: NASA/BILL INGALLS



NASA astronaut Anil Menon and Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina, Soyuz MS-29 prime crew members, pose for a portrait at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Russia.

PHOTO: GCTC

press release.

He will continue research to refine in-space production of semiconductor crystals to enable the large-scale manufacturing of components needed for high-performance computers, artificial intelligence, and improved medical devices.

Menon also will perform ultrasound

using augmented reality and artificial intelligence methods that could eliminate the need for medical support from Earth on future space missions. He will be a test subject helping researchers understand how blood flow is affected in space to protect future astronauts. He also will test bioprinting vascular constructs in

microgravity to improve understanding of the aging process to advance therapeutic developments.

Expedition 75 is scheduled to begin on Sunday, July 26, following the departure of Williams, Kud-Sverchikov, and Mikaev, as they conclude an eight-month science mission aboard the orbital outpost.

More Than Half-Way To Goal Of \$65,000 Raised For Family In Skydiving Death Of Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam

By A STAFF WRITER

The donation site gofundme.com has received more than \$38,000 to date, from donors around the country to meet the needs of the family of Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam, a young (28) software engineer in Massachusetts, after he was killed in a July 12, 2026 skydiving accident.

Following the hashtag- "# In Loving Memory of Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam: Support for His Family" — more than 777 people have sent monies ranging in amount from \$10 to \$1,000, according to the account, <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-for-mani-chandra-tejas-family-y8ceu>, set up by a cousin Naga Annam.

"It is with profound sadness that we share the heartbreaking loss of our beloved cousin, ****Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam****, who tragically passed away on ****July 12, 2026****, in a skydiving accident in Orange County, Boston, MA," the site says.

Gaddam was enrolled at Jumptown Skydiving at Orange Municipal Airport, Orange, Mass.



Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam, 28, of Boston.

PHOTO: GOFUNDME.COM

According to the Northwestern District Attorney's office, in a post on July 13:

"On Sunday at approximately 4 p.m., first responders were dispatched to Jumptown Skydiving in the town of Orange following a report of a serious skydiving accident.

A preliminary investigation indicates that

Mani Chandra Teja Gaddam, 28, of Boston, fell to the ground from a height of approximately 30 feet when a sudden and unexpected gust of wind interfered with his parachute. He was transported to Athol Hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased.

The accident remains under investigation by the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Northwestern District Attorney's Office, the Massachusetts State Police Crime Scene Services Section, the Orange Police Department, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will determine the cause and manner of death".

The story behind the young man is moving and representative of what families in India, and possibly other countries, go through and sacrifice, to see their children succeed and thrive in America.

We learn from the account given on the gofundme site that "Chandra was an exceptionally bright, kind, and hardworking young man with a passion for learning and embracing new challenges."

"His family made countless sacrifices throughout his life, moving from Vijayawada to Hyderabad to support his education and investing their savings to help

him achieve his dreams."

"Through his dedication and their unwavering support, he graduated from Northeastern University, MA and had recently begun his professional career."

Following his passions, Chandra or Mani as he is called by family members and friends, the young professional had recently earned his ****A License**** in skydiving "and was excited to continue exploring the sport he loved and the adventures that lay ahead."

Chandra's sudden death "has left his family devastated, both emotionally and financially. We are raising funds to help ease the financial burden during this incredibly difficult time, including funeral and related expenses," the gofundme site says.

"Every contribution, no matter the amount, will make a meaningful difference and help support the family that gave everything to help him build a brighter future," it adds.

"If you're unable to contribute, please consider sharing this fundraiser. Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and prayers as we remember and honor Mani Chandra Teja," the family entreats.

ASTROLOGY



This week for you

E-mail: psharma@premaastrologer.com Contact No -01147033152/40532026

ARIES: Family interactions become more enjoyable. Recovering overdue payments improve situation. Matters of the heart may not progress. Avoid allowing stress to dominate your thoughts. Travel may provide a refreshing break. Think carefully before getting involved in any property matter. Spending quality time with close friends can uplift your mood and create memorable moments.

TAURUS: Financial opportunities may come. Standing beside your partner will deepen affection. Small adjustments can enhance overall wellness. Depending on others could leave you dissatisfied. An unplanned trip may suddenly become part of your schedule. Renovation plans may take shape. Avoid dwelling. Someone close may seek your guidance.

GEMINI: The presence of children can fill your surroundings with happiness. Financial planning can strengthen security. An unexpected romantic development may add excitement. Your dedication to staying fit is likely to produce results. Take a break from routine pressures. Real estate matters appear favourable. Avoid taking impulsive actions. Organization of time can improve learning outcomes.

CANCER: Give more attention to family matters. Business gains may remain steady. You may find yourself evaluating the future of a personal relationship. Guard against jealousy. Travelling with someone whose company you don't enjoy could reduce the fun. Property owners may attract genuine buyers willing to offer a reasonable deal. Bold ideas can bring positive developments. Students may benefit from adopting a disciplined routine.

LEO: Your involvement can inspire younger members. A financial position allow you to reward those working with you. A sudden attraction toward someone may catch you. Focusing on physical wellness can boost your energy. Solo journeys may present challenges. Relocating to may prove. Lingering personal concerns deserve immediate attention. Staying active will help maintain enthusiasm and momentum.

VIRGO: Being overly controlling could spark unnecessary disagreements. Sensible spending habits will help. Thoughts of romance may keep you occupied. Valuable health advice can prove beneficial. Those dreaming of overseas travel may find suitable opportunities emerging. Verify all property-related documents carefully. Delaying personal matters may only increase difficulties later. Optimism and decisive action will help you overcome challenges.

LIBRA: Your skills attract appreciation. Flexibility will help maintain harmony. Unexpected expenses require planning. Social gatherings introduce romantic possibilities. Avoid becoming concerned about minor health issues. Remain patient while driving. Property matters require vigilance. Kindness will leave an impression. Students can make significant progress through online learning platforms.

SCORPIO: Mutual respect will strengthen relationships. Your financial position remains secure. A romantic proposal may not receive the response you anticipated. Do not slow your ambitions. A relaxing holiday with loved ones can help restore balance. Property decisions should be approached carefully. Creative thinking and productive efforts may bring rewards.

SAGITTARIUS: Family tensions can be resolved. Before investing money, examine the long-term prospects. Romance can become rewarding. Those dealing with health concerns are likely to notice improvement. Travel plans may lead you to breathtaking destinations. Securing funds for a business venture may prove easier. Make room in your schedule for enjoyable social activities and personal interests.

CAPRICORN: Strengthening family bonds will require open discussions. Financial assistance or a loan may help. Your intelligence and attractive personality may draw someone's attention. Consistency in fitness routines can deliver health benefits. Travel plans may not fully meet your expectations. Family disagreements involving inherited assets should be handled tactfully. Careful judgment will help prevent unnecessary misunderstandings.

AQUARIUS: Adjusting to changes may take time. Financial support could help you pursue ambitions. Your partner is likely to be affectionate. Healthy habits will contribute to overall fitness. Review weather conditions before travelling. Opportunities in the property market may allow you to secure a good deal. Timely support will be appreciated. Dedication to studies can improve performance.

PISCES: Advice from elders can provide valuable direction. Financial decisions help prevent avoidable losses. Affectionate gestures from your partner can make this a memorable week. Looking after your health will help you overcome minor discomforts. Travel may introduce excitement. Those considering real estate investments should evaluate commercial prospects. Self-reflection can lead to meaningful personal growth.

THIS WEEK WITH Dr. SUDHIR PARIKH



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Memphis Gynecologist Sanjeev Kumar Sentenced To 20 Years For Adulterating Medical Devices And Health Care Fraud

By A Staff Writer

Performed more than 15,000 biopsy procedures with adulterated devices on Medicare and Medicaid patients

In January of this year, Sanjeev Kumar, 45, was found guilty by a federal jury of 18 counts of adulteration of medical devices, 16 counts of misbranding medical devices, and 6 counts of health care fraud.

On July 8, 2026, Kumar was sentenced by Chief United States District Judge Sheryl H. Lipman to 240 months in prison with two years of supervised release. D. Michael Dunavant, United States Attorney

for the Western District of Tennessee, announced the sentence.

Evidence presented at the trial demonstrated that Kumar was a Mayo-trained gynecologic oncologist who operated Poplar Avenue Clinic, a women's health clinic in Memphis, Tennessee.

Single-use devices used to perform the hysteroscopy with biopsy procedure to diagnose endometrial cancer, which had specific methods to disinfect for re-use, were not followed by Kumar, according to the evidence presented.

Kumar routinely failed to subject the reusable devices to vital reprocessing steps between patient use thereby endangering patient safety, the press release said. The single use devices, even if they

had been correctly reprocessed, had to be labeled as such; and Kumar did not label them. Kumar used adulterated medical devices in more than 15,000 hysteroscopy with biopsy procedures on Medicare and Medicaid patients between September of 2019 and April of 2024.

Kumar purchased less than 200 new hysteroscopes and 3 of the 6 single use graspers of a certain type he purchased in 2019 were still in use in the office in April 2024. Thousands of women were subjected to hysteroscopies with biopsy using the dirty devices, prosecutors proved.

Kumar billed more than \$41 million for the hysteroscopy with biopsy procedures between September 2019 and April 2024. He netted more than \$4.8 million for this

procedure from Medicare and Medicaid alone. That amount does not include any hysteroscopy with biopsy procedures performed on patients with private health care insurance.

A separate hearing to determine restitution has been set on October 2, 2026.

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG), the United States Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigations (FDA-OCI), the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Co-Conspirators Sentenced To 3 Years And Over 11 Years In Prison For Defrauding Thousands Of Investors

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE

A Nevada man and a Canadian and British national were sentenced today to 36 months in prison and three years of supervised release, and 136 months in prison and three years of supervised release, respectively, for participating in a scheme to defraud thousands of investors of tens of millions of dollars between 2018 and 2022.

According to court documents, Neil Suresh Chandran, 54, a foreign national residing in Nevada and California, created companies that he falsely claimed were about to be purchased by a consortium of billionaires at extraordinary valuations. Chandran and others solicited more than \$45 million from over 10,000 investors based on these false representations.

Bryan Lee, 60, of Las Vegas, was the nominee owner and sole officer of ViMarket, a company controlled by Chandran, which received millions in investor funds. Lee knew the funds came from individual investors and

knew that the representations made to those investors were false. Nonetheless, Chandran and Lee used investor funds for their own personal benefit, purchasing luxury cars and real estate.

"Neil Chandran and Bryan Lee deceived thousands of investors, exploited their trust, and stole their money," said Assistant Attorney General A. Tysen Duva of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "Those who deceive investors, lie, and steal will be investigated and prosecuted. These two fraudsters deserve the sentence imposed. Their victims suffered because of their greed."

"Schemes to defraud individual investors like the one carried out by Bryan Lee and Neil Suresh Chandran are personal crimes that have devastating consequences to the victims' lives that last long after the crime is committed, and the money is spent," said U.S. Attorney Lesley A. Woods for the District of Nebraska. "It takes a particularly cold and calculating criminal to perpetrate these schemes and to continue to lie to victims to keep the scheme alive. Individuals who defraud victims in Nebraska and elsewhere will be held accountable under

federal law."

"Chandran and Lee treated investor funds as their own personal piggy bank, using the money to purchase multiple houses and dozens of luxury vehicles," said Assistant Director in Charge Darren Cox of the FBI Washington Field Office. "Their sentences reflect the commitment of the agents and prosecutors who fought for justice for the thousands of investors whom the defendants swindled out of millions."

In April 2026, Chandran pleaded guilty to mail fraud and Lee pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud.

The FBI investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Adam L.D. Stempel, Anna Forgie, and Tian Huang of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section; Chelsea Rooney and Adrienne Rosen of the Criminal Division's Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section; and Assistant U.S. Attorney Don Kleine for the District of Nebraska prosecuted the case.d.

FBI Issues "Wanted" Call For Nitish Kaushal, Alleging He Is An "Armed And Dangerous" Transnational Criminal

FROM FBI WANTED POSTER

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, has issued a wanted notice for 26 year-old Indian national Nitish Kaushal, who it says, "is wanted for his alleged involvement in a transnational criminal organization engaged in, among other things, acts involving murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, extortion, weapons trafficking, money laundering, and human smuggling."

"This organization, known as the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Organized Crime Group (the "Bhagwanpuria OCG"), originated in the Punjab state of India and operated in the Central District of California and elsewhere," the announcement says.

"Kaushal is alleged to have carried out acts of violence on behalf of the Bhagwanpuria OCG, including, but not limited to, kidnappings and assaults," the FBI adds.

On June 25, 2026, a federal arrest warrant was issued for Kaushal in the United States District Court, Central District of

California, Los Angeles, California, after he was charged with Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Conspiracy," the 'wanted' poster says.

Warning that Kaushal, "SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND DANGEROUS AND AN ESCAPE RISK" the FBI said, "If you have any information concerning this individual, please contact your local FBI office, the nearest American Embassy or Consulate, or you can submit a tip online at tips.fbi.gov."



PHOTO: FBI.GOV

Nitish Kaushal.

Association Of Indians In America New Jersey Chapter Celebrates Autism Awareness And America's 250th Anniversary

By A Staff Writer

The Association of Indians in America (AIA) New Jersey Chapter successful Autism Awareness Fundraiser and Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of American Independence on Sunday, July 12, 2026, at the APA Hotel and Conference Center in New Jersey.

The event was chaired by Dr. Bharti Palkhiwala, and brought together community leaders, elected officials, healthcare professionals, advocates, artists, and supporters from across the region.

The event kicked off with National Anthems of the United States and India, sung by twins Tejas and Shreyas Gokul.

The event's theme was "Shining a Light on Liberty and Inclusion" through advocacy and support for Autism Awareness.

Among the high-profile guests present were Congressman Frank Pallone, and also Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, president of the Global Association



PHOTOS: SACHIN RAVINDRAN / ITV GOLD

Leaders of the Association of Indians in America, New Jersey Chapter, and high profile guests pose for a photo at the AIA July 12 event on Autism Awareness and America's 250th anniversary, including Congressman Frank Pallone, D-NJ, and Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, President of the Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and Chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media/ITV Gold.



Congressman Frank Pallone speaking at the AIA-NJ event about autism and the services available to address the condition.



Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, President of GAPIO, Chairman of PWM/ITV Gold, addressing the audience at the AIA-NJ July 12 event.



Founding member and past president of AIA-NJ Uma Swaminathan speaking at the July 12, 2026 event.

of Physicians of Indian Origin, GAPIO, and chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media and ITV Gold.

Dr. Parikh, a member of the Board of Trustees of AIA spoke of the importance of Autism awareness and early intervention to seek and help provide proper care.

Congressman Pallone focused on the importance of understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD, and the need for continued support for individuals and families affected. He highlighted ongoing governmental initiatives, research efforts, and public policies designed to improve services for those living with autism.

Dr. Bimal Ramani a spiritual scientist and best-selling author of "Be a Super Human" defined ASD and demonstrated alternative methods of coping, healing and acknowledgement.

Founding Member and Past President of the AIA New Jersey chapter Uma Swaminathan, dwelt on America's 250th Anniversary and on the journey of Indian immigrants who arrived during the 1950s and 1960s.

She spoke of AIA's founding in New Jersey nearly six decades ago, praising the pioneers whom she named – Dr. Manoranjan Dutta and his wife, Kanak Dutta; Dr.



Dr. Bharti Palkhiwala, chair of the AIA event July 12, 2026.



Dr. Arun Palkhiwala addressing the AIA July 12, 2026 event.

Tapas Sen and his wife, Sondra Sen; Dr. Roshan Chaddha and his wife, Mary Ellen Chaddha; along with Dr. Kashi Swaminathan and Uma Swaminathan and Dr. Ram Gnanadesikan and his wife Dr. Mridula.

Current AIA New Jersey Chapter President Koshek Swaminathan gave his perspective as a second-generation Indian American and the son of founding-members Uma and Dr. Kashi Swaminathan. He shared memories and adventures from growing up within the AIA family and participating in its programs and conventions

across the country.

National President of the AIA Nilima Madan was present as were AIA New York Chapter members. World Vegan Vision's PR Director Nitin Vyas also addressed the audience and appreciated the vegan food at the event organized by Meena Waran.

Other community leaders included Dr. Ramani, former Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula, past National President Govind Munjal and his

wife Suman Munjal, Gobind Bhatija, Madhavan Nair, Sharad Shah, Ashok Bhatt, and Dr. Arun Palkhiwala.

The cultural program included a dance performance by Abhinaya Ashwin; a short play on autism by local artists led by Jayesh Mehta; and musical entertainment by the Jack Lowery Band and the Gypsy Funk Squad.

For membership contact - koshek@gmail.com or usuma1373@gmail.com.

Getting a "Photo Only" RFE? Here's What USCIS's New Photo Policy Is Actually Doing to Cases

By David H. Nachman, Esq

IN MEMORIAM



Michael Phulwani



David Nachman



Ludka Zimovcak



Snehal Batra

Back in December 2025, USCIS tightened how long it can reuse an old photo on file, cutting the reuse window down to 36 months for most filings. At the time, that seemed like a fairly technical, back-office change. Months later, the real-world effect is becoming clear: applicants across a wide range of case types are opening their USCIS accounts to a Request for Evidence that essentially says one thing: come get a new photo taken.

What This RFE Actually Looks Like

Unlike a typical RFE asking for additional documents or evidence about eligibility, this one is narrow and procedural. It tells the applicant to appear at a USCIS Application Support Center for a new photograph because the one on file no longer meets the updated age requirement. Notably, this is showing up even on case types that historically didn't involve much back-and-forth with USCIS, including OPT work permit applications, where students are discovering the RFE only after they've already submitted everything they thought they needed.

Why the Appointment and the RFE Are Two Separate Things

This is the part that trips people up. Receiving the RFE doesn't automatically come with an appointment date. USCIS typically sends the actual Application Support Center appointment notice separately, sometimes days or weeks later, which means a case can sit without any visible progress in between. The case does not move forward on its own after the ASC visit either. If an RFE was issued, the applicant still has to go back into their account and respond to it, generally by submitting proof the appointment was completed, even after showing up and getting photographed. Skipping that last step is a common and entirely avoidable way to stall a case that's otherwise ready to move.

The Premium Processing Wrinkle

For anyone who paid for premium processing hoping for a fast turnaround, this RFE resets the clock. The premium processing timeline pauses the moment the RFE goes out and only starts running again once USCIS has the completed response in hand, whatever the underlying case type. Applicants juggling a tight timeline, whether it's an OPT start date, an upcoming trip, or an employer waiting on a decision, should treat the ASC notice as something to act on immediately rather than something to get to eventually.

Frequently Asked Questions

I got the RFE but no appointment notice yet. What should I do?

Check your online USCIS account regularly. The appointment notice is usually sent separately and can arrive after the RFE itself, so there may be a gap before you see a scheduled date.

Does going to the ASC appointment automatically resolve the RFE?

No. You typically still need to respond to the RFE directly, usually by submitting proof that the appointment was completed, even after the photo has been taken.

Can I schedule the ASC appointment myself ahead of time?

No. These appointments are issued directly by USCIS once an adjudicator determines a new photo is required; applicants cannot request one proactively.

Does this RFE stop my premium processing clock?

Yes. Premium processing timelines pause once an RFE is issued and resume only after USCIS receives a complete response.

If you've received a photo-related RFE or ASC notice and aren't sure how to respond, our attorneys are available to help.

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India Unveils 'SHANTI' Agenda In High-Stakes Bid For UNSC Seat

By ARCHANA ADALJA

The Race for the UNSC: India Launches 'SHANTI' Campaign to Fix a 'Fractured Global Order'

-UNITED NATIONS

India has launched a high-stakes campaign for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028–29 term, navigating a competitive electoral field that includes 57 – nation voting bloc. At the same time, New Delhi continues its long-term bid for a reformed Security Council that would include India among the Permanent Members on the Security Council in light of its global standing.

Presenting a definitive six-point agenda to reform what he called a deeply fractured global order, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, officially announced the bid on Monday, July 13, 2026, at the UN Headquarters in New York before an audience of international diplomats.

The campaign, titled SHANTI, Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity, comes at a time of severe global gridlock, said Jaishankar speaking at the launch, and highlighting the critical contradiction in modern global affairs as a "profound paradox".

"Never before has the world possessed such immense capabilities to advance human welfare at this scale. At the same time, we are witnessing levels of conflict, violence and instability that threaten even those who may be very far away."

Jaishankar emphasized that the UN needs to lead the way through today's global instability, making the upcoming Security Council elections highly critical.

Arguing in support of India's candidacy for the seat, Jaishankar stated that India's bid rests on a forward-looking vision and a proven international track record.

"One part of that is our vision of the priorities that the world and the United Nations must address," Jaishankar said. "The other is a track record which enables the international community to make its own judgment."

Jaishankar detailed six strategic priorities in support of the campaign, aligning India's vision with targeted, practical proposals.

Amplifying the Global South. India seeks to bring the specific concerns of developing nations directly into peace and security decisions. "The Global South must play a



India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, speaking at the UN on India's SHANTI initiative.

greater role in determining our common future," Jaishankar emphasized, adding that a reformed Council requires this bloc at the table.

Reformed Multilateralism. Jaishankar listed India's consistent call for a more democratic, representative, and effective UN framework, which will focus on dialogue, cooperation, and bridging deep institutional differences among member states.

Future-Ready Peacekeeping. As one of the UN's largest troop contributors, India is championing a technologically enabled, better-equipped, and realistically mandated peacekeeping force, Jaishankar reminded. This includes a strict focus on core objectives and an elevated role for women peacekeepers.

Human-Centric AI Governance. India plans to promote an inclusive, secure vision for Artificial Intelligence aimed at the public good. However, Jaishankar stated, India remains "...equally determined to counter its misuse and threats to international peace and security."

Maritime Security. India will advocate for a free, open, and rules-based maritime order aligned with international law (UNCLOS). The focus will remain on securing the safe flow of global commerce, combating piracy, and leading regional disaster relief missions, he said.

Combating Terrorism. India is pushing for sustained global efforts to block terror financing. Highlighting the need for accountability, Jaishankar called for "...a transparent sanctions regime with objective and evidence-based proposals" for listing terrorist groups.

This campaign marks India's bid to return to the UNSC for a ninth term as an elected non-permanent member,



Scenes from the meeting at UN held by India to launch its SHANTI initiative for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

having last served during the 2021–22 cycle. The elections for the 2028–29 term will take place in June next year, and India faces a highly competitive race, with both India and Tajikistan vying for the single vacant seat allocated to the Asia-Pacific Group category. To win the seat, India must secure a two-thirds majority, at least 129 votes if all 193 UN member states vote, via a secret ballot in the UN General Assembly next year.

While India holds massive geopolitical weight, Tajikistan has secured an early head start by locking in the formal endorsement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a powerful 57-member voting bloc.

To counter this, India has mobilized an early, aggressive outreach campaign. Just before arriving in New York, Jaishankar toured several Gulf nations, including Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, to leverage strong bilateral ties and win over OIC members. India is similarly intensifying its outreach to Caribbean and African nations to ensure a diverse, global coalition of votes.

The competition is expected to intensify at upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summits, where both India and Tajikistan will actively lobby for Central Asian and Eurasian votes.

However, India remains a strong contender. India has already locked in early support from global powers and regional allies, including the United States, Austria, Fiji, and Sri Lanka.

Following the launch, Jaishankar also had a high-level, private bilateral meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in the afternoon to discuss these multilateral priorities.

"In Close Contact With Friends, Family": Consulate General Of India In San Francisco On Utah Stabbing

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco on Wednesday July 15, 2026, expressed grief over the stabbing of an Indian national in Utah, saying it is in close contact with the victim's family and is extending all possible consular assistance.

In a post on X, the Consulate said, "The Consulate General of India in San Francisco is deeply saddened by the tragic stabbing incident involving an Indian national in Utah. The Consulate is in close contact with the friends and family and stands ready to provide all possible consular assistance. We remain engaged with local authorities and will continue to monitor the matter closely."

According to the court documents cited by The New York Times, the victim, identified as Syed Sohail Uddin, an Indian-origin Muslim worker, sustained multiple

stab wounds in an attack at the Valley Fair Mall in Utah on Monday, July 13 evening, leaving the victim hospitalized with multiple stab wounds.

Quoting court documents, the Times reported the suspect explicitly confessed to police that he was attempting to assassinate the victim because of his Islamic faith.

Before launching the assault, the perpetrator Peter Michael Larsen interrogated the worker about his identity.

According to Luna Nunez, a coworker who later visited the victim in the hospital, the interaction began with tense questions. Larsen asked the worker "where he was from, his name and if he was Muslim."

Immediately following the exchange, Larsen drew a knife and began stabbing the man repeatedly. The violence only

ceased when courageous mall bystanders rushed the scene, pinned Larsen to the ground, and seized his weapon, reported The New York Times.

Uddin, a man of Indian origin, is currently fighting for his life. Adnan Mohammed, Uddin's boss and close family friend, described the harrowing extent of the injuries, noting that Uddin had wounds all over his body and a trauma team was closely monitoring his heart. Reflecting on the sheer survival of his friend, Mohammed stated it was a "miracle" that Uddin was still alive.

The ripple effects of the violence have left the local community gripped by fear. In the wake of the attack, Mohammed expressed the profound emotional toll the event has taken on his sense of safety, especially after witnessing the aftermath and encountering online vitriol, reported

The New York Times.

"I'm a father, and I feel unsafe for my kids to be here," Mohammed shared. "It's terrifying for me and my family. It's traumatising. I saw a lot of blood."

Salvador Mendez, an employee at the nearby Lids hat store, recalled the chilling moment law enforcement escorted the suspect out of the building. Mendez noted that the assailant was covered in blood and cast a terrifying gaze toward onlookers.

"I've just never seen anyone look at me that way," Mendez said, adding that "he looked at us with hatred."

Larsen was booked into the Salt Lake County Metro Jail on Monday evening on suspicion of attempted murder.

-ANI

The Washington Post

E.U. tells Caribbean nations: Stop selling citizenship or we'll require visas

Widlore Mérancourt

The European Union is giving five nations in the Eastern Caribbean two years to end their lucrative citizenship-by-investment programs or lose visa-free travel to the bloc, their leaders say.

The nations - Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia - generate significant revenue through their programs. Foreigners who invest in their economies, buy real estate or pay their governments directly gain passports that allow visa-free travel to more than 140 countries and territories, including much of Europe. Costs begin at \$200,000.

Each of the five received a letter from Brussels last month advising that new E.U. rules make the existence of such programs grounds for suspending visa-free access, according to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. The bloc gave them until June 1, 2028, to phase out their programs.

Their prime ministers are coordinating a “collective response,” they said in a statement. After meeting last week in Dominica, they are planning “a high-level mission to Brussels” at the “earliest appropriate opportunity” to meet with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President António Costa and other senior E.U. officials.

E.U. officials did not respond to requests for comment.

The bloc has long been wary of citizenship-by-investment programs. Critics say insufficient vetting of applicants can enable money laundering and terrorist financing and increase the risks of identity fraud and illegal immigration.

Several E.U. member states offer residence-by-investment programs that can lead to citizenship. President Donald Trump last year introduced a \$1 million “Trump gold card,” available within weeks, promising a direct path to U.S. citizenship “for all qualified and vetted people.” (As of May, one person had been approved, the Department of Homeland Security said in a legal filing.)

“Investment migration is a well-established global practice, not a Caribbean peculiarity,” Didacus Jules, director general of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, told The Washington Post. “More than half of the world’s states offer some form of access to residence or citizenship through investment.”

The European Commission acknowledged in December that the five nations had taken steps “to strengthen due diligence and information-sharing,” but said the programs “continue to raise concerns due to high volumes, short processing times and low rejection rates.”

Together, the five have issued more than 100,000 passports, according to the commission. Prospective citizens generally are not required to be present in the

country to apply; only Antigua and Barbuda requires them to ever visit. Passports are typically issued within a year, and rejection rates are typically in the single digits.

Such programs have long suffered a “bad image,” said Jean-François Harvey, an attorney whose multinational firm specializes in business immigration.

Harvey Law Group serves more than 100 clients seeking Caribbean citizenship each year. Some want to live there, Harvey said, “but the vast majority ... want a second citizenship for estate and tax planning, and for safety.”

Hugh Jorgensen, program lead for corrupt money flows at Transparency International, said such programs can also be exploited by criminals. The main risk, he said, is that “what is being sold is not the actual citizenship in the country itself, it’s what the citizenship offers in getting access to other countries.”

Citizens of the five nations enjoy visa-free travel to the Schengen area, which includes 25 of the 27 E.U. member states. The majority of applicants to at least four of the five in 2024 came from countries for whom the bloc requires visas (Grenada released only partial data), the commission reported. They included China, Syria, Iraq and Nigeria.

Criminals can use citizenship by investment to “launder their proceeds in these countries, or simply escape their own jurisdiction where they are facing criminal charges or



Photo by: Adobe

Citizenship by investment generates nearly 60 percent of the country’s non-tax revenue, the U.S. State Department reported in 2023.

The program is “a critical pillar of Antigua and Barbuda’s non-tax revenue base,” Browne’s office said, “and it cannot simply be abandoned without viable, concrete, and credible replacement revenues being made available.”

The E.U. Court of Justice ruled last year that selling citizenship amounted to the “commercialisation of the grant of nationality,” violating the principle of sincere cooperation and undermining legal order, and the commission revised its rules to add such programs as grounds for suspending visa-free travel. (Malta, the only E.U. member to offer such a program, subsequently ended it.)

Several countries, including the United States, have tightened rules for passport holders from the five nations. The Trump administration in January suspended immigrant visa processing for citizens of the five nations, among dozens of others, saying officials had deemed them to be at “high risk of U.S. public benefits reliance.”

The U.S. “has long highlighted the vulnerabilities of CBI programs and continues to work in cooperation with countries in the Eastern Caribbean with CBI programs to identify and address vulnerabilities in their processes and help strengthen their vetting systems,” a State Department spokesperson told The Post.

The spokesperson noted that the countries over the past two years have approved legislation establishing security and due-diligence standards, including biometric screening and residency requirements and a regional regulator to enforce the rules

“While CBI programs may generate economic growth through foreign direct investment,

at risk being arrested,” Jorgensen said. “Many countries have tried these in the past and brought them to a conclusion because it’s not worth the risk,” he said. “This is not a long-term economic solution.”

Harvey said his firm turns away applicants who have undisclosed criminal convictions or are unable to explain the source of their funds. “At least a dozen times a year, we refuse clients because we’re not comfortable representing them,” he said. “Sometimes, clients have a bad profile.”

Jules, of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, defended the integrity of the five nations’ programs.

“Investment migration, in its various forms, is a widespread and legitimate instrument of economic policy,” he said in written responses to The Post’s questions. The region’s programs “are distinguished less by what they offer than by their fiscal significance for small island developing states - and, increasingly, by the depth of the regulatory architecture that governs them.” He noted that citizenship by investment in the Eastern Caribbean predates the visa deal with the Schengen area. The programs were established, he said, “as sovereign economic development tools to attract investment, diversify economies, and generate non-tax revenue.

Visa-free access has enhanced their attractiveness, but it is not the foundation upon which they were built.” Revenue from the programs made up an average of about 6.5 percent to the nations’ gross domestic product between 2019 and 2023, according to the International Monetary Fund. Dominica’s program generated more than 30 percent of its GDP in 2022. The money has funded “critical investments in climate resilience, disaster recovery, infrastructure, housing, healthcare, education, and fiscal stability,” the prime ministers said. “Against this backdrop,” they said, any changes “must take full account of the economic realities and development vulnerabilities of small island developing states,” and support “the creation of sustainable alternative sources of financing.” The office of Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne was first to make the E.U. warning public.

enforcement and accountability tools remain critical components of countering corruption and illicit finance by criminal actors,” the spokesperson said.

The Department of Homeland Security and the Caribbean Community signed a biometric data-sharing agreement this month aimed at strengthening screening of program applicants. U.S. officials said the deal would more closely align Caribbean vetting practices with U.S. border security standards and help authorities identify potential security threats.

Citizens of the five nations, all members of the Commonwealth, historically enjoyed visa-free travel to the United Kingdom. But in 2023, the U.K. Home Office said it would require Dominican nationals to obtain visas due to concerns about the country’s program, and in March, announced the same for Saint Lucians.

Canada imposed a visa requirement on Antigua and Barbuda in 2017. Officials said they had monitored the “integrity of Antigua and Barbuda’s travel documents” and determined the country “no longer meets Canada’s criteria for a visa exemption.”

The U.K. in 2022 abolished its “golden visa” program, citing concerns it was exploited by individuals linked to corruption, illicit finance or broader national security risks.

Jules said the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States takes security concerns seriously, but that they are not unique to citizenship by investment.

“They are risks all countries must manage within their immigration, financial and border security systems,” he said. “The appropriate response is ... to ensure that robust safeguards are in place to identify, mitigate, and manage them. That is precisely what Member States have done.”

Tributes Pour In As Playback Singer S. Janaki Laid To Rest With Full State Honors

Tributes poured in for playback singer S. Janaki after the veteran singer passed away on Saturday, July 11, 2026.

Born on April 23, 1938, S Janaki recorded more than 48,000 songs in over 20 languages during a career spanning six decades, earning numerous national and state honours, including the Padma Bhushan. Her death marks the end of an era in Indian music, leaving behind a timeless legacy that continues to resonate across generations.

Celebrities from the South film industry of India extended their condolences and tributes across social media platforms, remembering her rich legacy and contribution to the world of music.

Actor Trisha Krishnan penned an emotional note, remembering the late singer.

"Carrying your name in one of my most special films will forever be one of the greatest honours of my life. But knowing you and being loved by you is something I'll cherish forever. Thank you for your hugs, your kindness, your laughter and for always reminding me that the greatest artists are the humblest souls. Your voice will live forever. Rest peacefully Janaki Amma. I will miss you terribly," Trisha wrote.

Superstar Rajinikanth extended his homage on X, praying for the departed soul.

"May her soul, who delighted generations of people with her honey-sweet voice, attain peace. #JanakiAmma," he wrote.

Actor-filmmaker Rishab Shetty mourned the passing of the veteran singer, noting how her voice touched millions across generations. The actor wrote, "Deeply saddened by the passing of S. Janaki Amma. Her voice was a timeless legacy that touched millions of hearts across generations. Rest in peace, #SJanaki Amma."

Actor Chiranjeevi expressed deep shock as he mourned her passing on social media. He remembered how she largely contributed to his career with her music.



"The news of Janakamma garu's passing has deeply shaken my heart. In my cinematic journey, she lent her unparalleled voice to countless unforgettable songs. It was her voice that breathed life into the many emotions we brought to life on screen. Behind so many songs that audiences fondly remember from my career lies Janakamma garu's sweet voice. Every time those songs play, those days... those memories... come alive once again before my eyes," a part of his tweet read.

Remembering S. Janaki, the actor-politician, wrote, "The song will forever keep resounding. Where shall I seek that love, Mother? An inconsolable sorrow exists for many. My deepest condolences to them all."

Singer Rajesh Krishnan spoke to the media and paid his tributes, saying, "We truly have lost a legend...she's always there in our memories. I had the opportunity of singing a few lovely duets with her and also to be a co-

judge...she was really a child despite her learnedness and talent. She was very encouraging and simple."

Film producer Boney Kapoor also offered his final tributes to S Janaki and wrote, "The voice that gave life to countless emotions has fallen silent, but its echo will resonate for generations. Deeply saddened by the passing of legendary playback singer S. Janaki Amma—the timeless Nightingale of South India. For over six decades, she touched millions of hearts with a voice that could express joy, love, devotion, longing, and sorrow with unmatched grace. Her songs transcended languages, generations, and borders, becoming an inseparable part of India's musical heritage. India has lost one of its greatest musical treasures."

On the other hand, politicians also joined the line of tributes for the veteran singer, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Droupadi Murmu, Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay, Leader of Opposition (LoP) Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and YSR Congress

Party president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Legendary playback singer S Janaki, fondly known as the "Nightingale of South India," passed away at the age of 88 at Apollo Hospital in Mysuru after suffering age-related health complications.

She had been admitted to the hospital in the early hours of the day after her health deteriorated. As per the Apollo BGS Hospitals, Mysuru, press release, she was admitted on July 11 at 12:49 pm.

"Despite intense medical care and continuous monitoring by a multidisciplinary team, she suffered a cardiac arrest during the course of treatment," reads the press release.

She was laid to rest with full state honours on Sunday in Mysuru, Karnataka.

-ANI

Samantha Ruth Prabhu Celebrates As 'Maa Inti Bangaaram' Becomes First Woman-Led Telugu Film To Cross Rs. 100 Crore

Lead star Samantha also celebrated the moment on Instagram, noting how her film has helped change the perception about films led by women. She stated that changes can only happen when someone is willing to take a risk.

"Before the release of Maa Inti Bangaram, I remember obsessing over one thing: were people even talking about the film? Were the assets we were putting out reaching people? Did they know this film existed?" she wrote, before adding how an exhibitor remarked, "Why would anyone watch a heroine film? If she's in a big hero's film, fine. People know her for the glamour. But a film led by a heroine? Who will come? Nobody."

She went on to share hopes that her film 'Maa Inti Bangaram' marks the beginning of something bigger.

"I think real change only happens when someone is willing to take a risk. Most of the time, those risks don't pay off. Every once in a while, they do. For us, this one did. And I hope this is the beginning of something bigger. I hope that the next time someone calls an exhibitor in a B or C centre and asks about a female-led film, the answer isn't an instant no. Maybe it's, 'Let's see.' Because the truth is, we will never really know," she added.

Along with her post, Samantha also shared a video showing her joyfully watching the film's collections.

Many reacted to the milestone, congratulating the actor in the comment section.

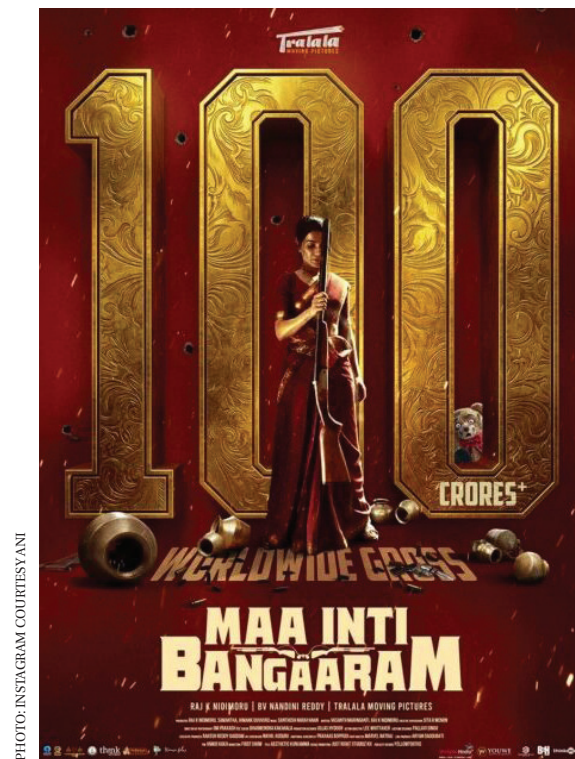
Kajal Aggarwal wrote, "Huge congratulations! You and your team deserve all this and more @samantharuthprabhuoffl."

Stars like Rakul Preet Singh, Dia Mirza, and Tisca Chopra also showered love in the comments.

'Maa Inti Bangaaram' follows a woman who arrives in a traditional household as the new daughter-in-law – composed, obedient, scrutinised. What the family doesn't know is what she's hiding.

When the past she buried refuses to stay buried, she must protect the very people who don't fully trust her, without ever letting them see who she really is, read a press note.

Produced by Raj Nidimoru, Samantha and Himank Duvvuru, the film is helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Nandini Reddy.



Picture of Maa Inti Bangaaram posted on social media by Samantha Ruth Prabhu.

-ANI

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