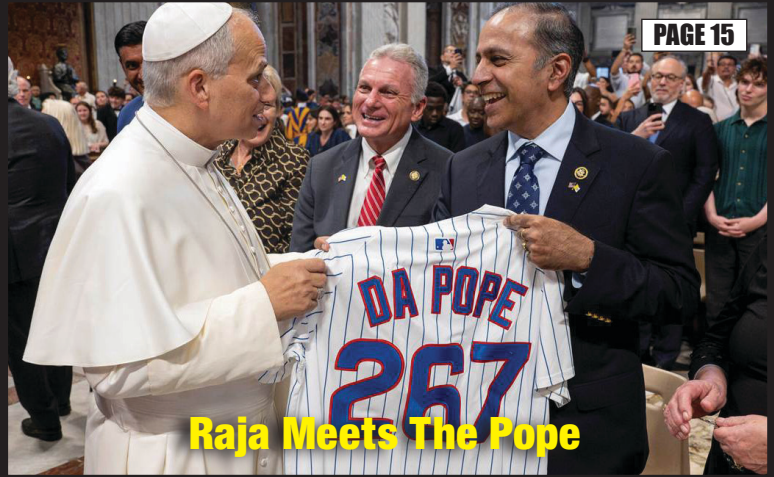




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Moksh Dham hosts 7-Day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha



Gujarati-Americans Give Warm Welcome To Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel

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Hervender Singh
Circulation Manager

Main Office
Editorial & Corporate Headquarters
1655 Oak Tree Road, Suite 155
Edison, NJ 08820-2843
Tel. (212) 675-7515, (718) 784-8555
Fax. (212) 675-7624

E-mails
advertising@newsindia-times.com
editor@newsindia-times.com
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Website
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Chicago Office
8846 Laverne Ave, Skokie IL 60077
Tel. (773) 856-0545
editorial@desitalkchicago.com
advt@desitalkchicago.com

California Office
650 West Vermont Ave., Unit #46
Anaheim, CA 92805

Mumbai Office
Nikita Ajay Pai-Mumbai

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Moksh Dham Hosts Seven-Day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha @Manav Seva Mandir In Bensenville, Ill

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

Moksh Dham successfully hosted a seven-day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha, recited by renowned spiritual leader and Bhagwat Katha orator Pujya Shri Devkinandan Thakur Ji Maharaj, from August 16 through August 22, 2026, at Manav Seva Mandir, Bensenville, Illinois.

The week-long spiritual gathering brought together hundreds of devotees from around Chicagoland for seven days of Bhagwat Katha, bhajans, prayer, Aarti, spiritual learning, seva and Maha-Prasad.

Beyond its religious significance, the Mahakatha became an important community-building and fundraising initiative in support of the Moksh Dham project, which seeks to establish a dedicated and culturally appropriate cremation facility for the greater Chicagoland community of Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist and other Dharmic followers, helping families honor their departed loved ones while preserving their religious and cultural traditions. Moksh Dham Cremations Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(13) organization, is working to establish a dedicated Sanatani cremation facility in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Devotees participate in the traditional Pothi Puja, Pothi Yatra and Kalash Yatra marking the auspicious beginning of Moksh Dham's seven-day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha at Manav Seva Mandir in Bensenville.

The Mahakatha began with the traditional Pothi Puja, Pothi Yatra and Kalash Yatra, honoring the sacred Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapuram. More than 50 devotees participated in the Pothi Puja and Pothi Yatra, and more than 18 devotees joined the Kalash Yatra. The procession traveled around the Manav Seva Mandir premises amid prayers and devotional chanting.

The opening day saw hundreds of devotees arrive, and, according to organizers, attendance remained high each day during the seven-day celebration.

The Katha was conducted daily from approximately 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., followed by Maha-Prasad served to attendees.

The high priest Shri Devkinandan Thakur Ji Maharaj's narration of the divine leelas and timeless spiritual teachings contained in the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapuram, and his discourses emphasized bhakti, Satsang, humility, seva, family values and sincere devotion to Bhagwan. He reminded devotees that the company one keeps gradually influences one's thoughts and character. Satsang can help overcome ego, anger, greed and negativity while guiding a person toward love, compassion, humility and devotion.

Devotees participate in the traditional Pothi Puja, Pothi Yatra and Kalash Yatra marking the auspicious beginning of Moksh Dham's seven-day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha at Manav Seva Mandir in Bensenville.

A central message of the Katha was that Bhagwan values a devotee's sincere and pure heart rather than outward display. He also sought to encourage younger generations growing up outside India to remain connected with Sanatan Dharma and India's spiritual and cultural heritage.

One of the highlights came on the sixth day, when devotees celebrated the sacred Shri Krishna-Rukmini Vivah Mahotsav – when the Manav Seva Mandir reverberated with bhajans,



PHOTO: JATIN TRIVEDI (U-KPHOTOGRAPHY)

Chief Guest Pooja Hegde at the FIA-NYNJCTNE India Day Parade. Also seen in photo President of FIA Sreekanth Akkapalli, NY Governor Kathy Hochul, FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, and Dr. Sudha Parikh.



Devotees participate in the traditional Pothi Puja, Pothi Yatra and Kalash Yatra marking the auspicious beginning of Moksh Dham's seven-day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha at Manav Seva Mandir in Bensenville.

devotional music and joyous expressions of "Radhe Radhe" and "Jai Shri Krishna."

Maha-Prasad was served to hundreds of devotees following the Katha each day, made possible through the donations from community organizations and sponsors.

Moksh Dham expressed appreciation to Swaminarayan Temple, Wheeling; Bapa Mandir; BAPS Temple; Swaminarayan Temple, Itasca; Hanuman Mandir; and Core Roofing, which generously sponsored Maha-Prasad for two days.

The Mahakatha received generous support from its Yajmans and community donors.

Dhaval Patel served as the Mukhya Yajman, while the daily Yajmans included Mafat Patel, Ashok Pandya, Dr. Dave and Pritesh Patel. Numerous individuals, families, businesses and community members also contributed through donations, sponsorships, volunteer service and prayers.

The entire seven-day Mahakatha was organized and administered by the Moksh Dham Sevak Group, whose members worked extensively behind the scenes to coordinate religious programs, volunteers, Maha-Prasad, Yajmans, donors, devotees and daily operations.

The event also produced significant support for the future of Moksh Dham. According to organizers, community contributions exceeded the fundraising expectations established for the Mahakatha.

In addition, the gathering strengthened Moksh Dham organizationally. During the event, the Sevak Group helped welcome seven additional Super Trustees/Trustees and 17 voting members, expanding community participation and long-term support for the project.

The Shrimad Bhagwat Mahakatha concluded on Saturday, August 22, with Aarti, Puja and Guru Seva, as devotees expressed their gratitude to Pujya Shri Devkinandan Thakur Ji Maharaj for seven days of spiritual guidance and inspiration. Moksh Dham thanked all those involved with the success of the program.

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Gujarati-Americans Give Warm Welcome To Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel

BY A STAFF WRITER

Reception co-hosted by Mayor Sam Joshi of Edison Township and Mayor Pulkit Desai of Parsippany-Troy Hills; free and open to the public

Chief Minister of Gujarat Bhupendra Patel pitched the achievements of his state and of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a the 'Garvi Gujarat Global New Jersey' event August 22, 2026, during his week-long visit to the United States and Canada.

Speaking to a crowd of 800 Gujarati-Americans, Chief Minister Patel dwelt on the development journey of Gujarat, with a focus on the years since Prime Minister Narendra Modi served as leader of that state, and went on to become the leader of the India. Modi, he said, established Gujarat as the nation's growth engine, and Gujarat is making a significant contribution to the country's economic development.

The free reception was hosted by the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) together with 18 additional community organizations.

It was co-hosted by two sitting mayors of Gujarati heritage who lead major New Jersey municipalities: Mayor Sam Joshi of Edison Township and Mayor Pulkit Desai of the Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills. Gujarati Americans now serve in elected office at every level of local government.

The program featured cultural performances, remarks from community leaders, and an address by the Chief Minister.

Vishal Harsh, Acting Consul General of India in New York, welcomed the visit as a step in the right direction for promoting bilateral trade between the United States and India. He noted the distinction of celebrating a sitting Chief Minister's visit after 28 years, and expressed his gratitude to the organizers for convening the event on short notice and at a state-of-the-art facility.

Ankur Vaidya, Chairman of the FIA, commended the community effort and thanked all 19 participating organizations for coming together in less than one week to bring the event to fruition. Vaidya was joined by Kunal Joshi, Lav Patel, Harshad Patel, and Sreekanth Akkapalli, along with other supporters of the event, in garlanding the Chief Minister.

Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, senior advisor to FIA, told Desi Talk the event showed the strong support of the diaspora in India's and Gujarat's progress. Dr. Parikh, who is also President of the Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, said he is closely tied to efforts to improve health services, education and women's empowerment in Gujarat



Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel addressing a Gujarati American community reception August 22, 2026, in Carteret, New Jersey.



Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel being greeted on stage by leaders of FIA, including Chairman of FIA President Sreekanth Akkapalli, right, FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya 2nd from right, and Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh shaking hands with the CM, August 22, 2026, at the community reception in New Jersey.



Mayor Pulkit Desai of Parsippany-Troy Hills Township, left, and Mayor Sam Joshi of Edison Township, right, present a garland to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, August 22, 2026



Leaders of FIA holding the garland to welcome Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, center, to the community reception from Gujarati Americans in New Jersey, August 22, 2026.



Section of the audience of an estimated 800 Gujarati American attendees at the August 22, 2026, community reception for Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel in Carteret, NJ.

and India through the many philanthropic endeavors he has undertaken including as Chairman of Life Global USA.

Chief Minister Patel presented the roadmap for a developed Gujarat in the creation of a Viksit Bharat (developed India) by 2027, emphasizing that Gujarat has undertaken policy-oriented planning not only for current development but also keeping the future in mind.

Planning is being done to position Gujarat as a leader in various sectors in the country, Patel said, inviting the Gujarati and Indian communities abroad to participate in the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2027, and to invest in Gujarat, and become partners in the state's journey to Viksit Bharat.



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Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Meets Diaspora, Business Leaders During US Visit

ANI WITH ADDONS FROM DESI TALK

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel began his week-long visit to the United States and Canada by meeting members of the Gujarati diaspora in San Francisco, where he highlighted the state's development plans and sought greater participation from the overseas community in Gujarat's emerging technology and investment sectors.

Patel is leading a high-level delegation during the visit to invite industries and investors from the US and Canada to participate in the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit 2027 and explore opportunities to invest and establish businesses in Gujarat.

During his visit the Chief Minister spoke about how Gujarat has emerged as a growth engine of the country through what he described as holistic development. He linked the state's future goals with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, with the mantra of 'Sauno Saath, Sauno Vikas, Sauno Vishwas and Sauno Prayas'.

Patel said Gujarat is working towards the goal of Viksit Gujarat-2047 and intends to play a leading role in the national development vision. He identified semiconductors, artificial intelligence, data centres and biotechnology as key sectors in which Gujarat aims to establish itself as a global hub.

The Chief Minister also invited members of the Gujarati diaspora, along with industry and business leaders based in San Francisco, to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit 2027. He expressed confidence that the summit would provide another platform for strengthening investment and technological partnerships between Gujarat and global businesses.

The interaction also included a question-and-answer session, during which members of the Gujarati community sought information about the pace and scope of development in Gujarat. Community leaders appreciated the state government's efforts to accelerate development and attract investment.



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in San Francisco.

The Gujarat CM particularly acknowledged the contribution of Gujaratis living in Silicon Valley to areas such as semiconductors, AI technology and innovation. He said the Gujarat government wants to establish a stronger connection between global Gujarati talent and companies and industries operating in the state. He said these partnerships could also help Gujarat advance its development objectives and contribute to the broader goal of Viksit Bharat-2047.

Patel also spoke about the cultural connection maintained by Gujarati families living thousands of kilometres away from their home state. He noted that the community continues to preserve the Gujarati language, festivals, celebrations and traditional values in San Francisco.

Gujarat Chief Secretary M.K. Das, senior secretaries, members of the state delegation and a large number of members of the Gujarati diaspora attended the interaction.

After San Francisco, Chief Minister Patel made a stop in Washington, D.C., where on Thursday August 20, he was welcomed at the Indian Embassy by Am-

bassador Vinay Kwatra, and also went on to meet Walmart Executive Vice President and Global Public Policy and Government Affairs Dan Bryant and discussed a clear roadmap to expand global opportunities for the state's MSMEs and small artisans ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit 2027.

According to a press release, Bryant apprised the Chief Minister about Walmart's Vriddhi program which has trained more than 1.15 lakh MSMEs since its launch in 2019. The company has set a target of training 1.70 lakh MSMEs by 2028, according to a release issued by the Gujarat Chief Minister's Office.

Patel also discussed the possibility of jointly organizing workshops with Walmart and relevant departments of the Gujarat government to identify sector-specific potential among the state's MSMEs and help them access global markets.

The discussions also focused on collaboration between the state government and Walmart over the next three to four months to explore potential global opportunities for Gujarat's MSMEs and small

artisans.

Earlier on August 20, Patel addressed members of the Gujarati diaspora at an event organized by the Vishv Umiya Foundation in Washington, where he presented Gujarat's role as a growth engine for India and held detailed discussions with members of the diaspora on Gujarat's holistic development, financial discipline, new investment opportunities and the growth potential of emerging sectors, including GIFT City, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, data centres and biotechnology.

Chief Minister Patel also visited the Art of Living center in Washington, DC, on Wednesday, August 19, 2026, and met with members of the community. He commended the Art of Living's efforts to take India's traditions of breathwork, meditation and yoga to communities across the United States, and appreciated its work in promoting mental wellbeing and resilience among young people.

For nearly 45 years, the Art of Living has been working across the United States towards its vision of a stress-free, violence-free society, fostering human connection, and the spirit of "One World Family," a press release from the organization said. This work has found expression in landmark initiatives such as the World Culture Festival, hosted by the Art of Living on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in September 2023, which brought together 1.1 million people and participants from more than 180 countries, the press release said.

The Art of Living center in Washington, DC, is a 17,000-square-foot urban sanctuary – walking distance from the White House, and it is planning to expand the premises by an additional 10,000 square feet to accommodate the growing demand for its programs and practices.

"It was an honor to host Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel at the Art of Living Centre in Washington, DC. We wish him continued success in his efforts to serve the people of Gujarat and advance the state's vision of a healthier and more resilient society," said Bhushan Deodhar, from the Office of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Director of the Art of Living Centre in Washington, DC.



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel being welcomed at San Francisco Airport.



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel at the Art of Living Center in Washington, D.C. August 19, 2026.

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Texas Gov. Greg Abbott Takes Aim At Muslim Washing Stations In Airports

BY MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE,
MICHEL BOORSTEIN,

HOUSTON – For years, travelers passing through Texas's two biggest airports have had access to small washing stations for a ritual called wudu, in which Muslims clean their hands, arms, head and feet before the five daily prayers.

Such facilities have become more common in states with the largest Muslim populations, including Texas, where on Wednesday travelers and others popped in and out of washing stations at Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport. The tiled wudu room sits along an airport hall just past a vending machine, with a small sign showing a draped person kneeling.

Public wudu stations are also open at places including the University of Minnesota, the University of Michigan, LaGuardia Airport in New York and O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

Now, amid rising attacks on Muslims by Republican elected officials, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott is making the stations a target. He sent a letter Friday to the heads of the Houston airport and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport that said facilities aimed at serving one religious group are discriminatory against everyone else.

Abbott said he has asked the U.S. Department of Transportation to investigate both airports and warned that his office is "reviewing all grants to any local governmental entities involved in these schemes."

Later that day, DFW announced it had scrapped plans to add additional washing stations in men's and women's restrooms that are available to passersby outside the security perimeter.

Airport spokesman Heath Montgomery wrote in an email that officials "determined the originally anticipated benefit may not be achieved" if the stations were built.

Asked if the decision was a response to Abbott's letter, Montgomery said it was made before the letter was issued, but that airport officials "were aware of his and other public officials' emerging concerns."

Muslim leaders and experts in religious liberties rejected Abbott's claim that the facilities would discriminate against non-Muslims. Several said opposition to the washing stations is the latest example of GOP leaders, perhaps most visibly in Texas, railing against Islam.

"If there is one thing all religious liberty scholars and advocates across the ideological spectrum have agreed on, it is that the Free Exercise Clause forbids government discrimination because of religion," Steven T. Collis, a University of Texas-Austin law professor, said in an email. "Although Gov. Abbott's letter characterized what the airports were providing as discriminating



Copies of the Koran in a women's ablution room in Houston.



The facilities have become more common in states with the largest Muslim populations, including Texas.



A washing station at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston.

in favor of Muslims, this newest saga is actually part of a much broader pattern of state officials targeting Muslims and trying to make Texas an inhospitable place for them."

Asma Uddin, a constitutional law scholar who writes about Islam in America, said the Supreme Court has long ruled that neutrality "does not mean that every religion gets treated exactly equally; it means the government cannot coerce, endorse, or exclude based on religious identity."

The experts noted a range of public services targeted to specific groups, from kosher food served at airports to special low-sensory hours at museums or parks for autistic people. The public-private Texas waterpark chain Hawaiian Falls has

hosted events for Christians including "Modesty Matters" and mass baptisms. President Donald Trump this summer hosted a massive evangelical Christian worship event on the National Mall in D.C.

"We can choose to be coy about it and pretend like there are actually sophisticated ideas or sincere concerns here about discrimination, religious encroachment, public safety or spending," said Imam Omar Suleiman, who leads the think tank Yaqeen Institute outside Dallas. "Or we can embrace the fact that bigotry toward Muslims is alive and well and being fanned, funded and fueled to increase, in Texas and across the country. And people like Governor Abbott are at the center of that phenomenon."

Abbott's office declined to comment Wednesday, referring The Washington Post to social media posts in which he repeated his claim that the washing stations were religious discrimination.

The office also noted a Sunday interview on Fox in which Abbott was asked why he opposes the stations but supports a new state law mandating the posting of a Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in every classroom.

Abbott called the two things "apples and oranges." The biblical commandments, he said, were part of Texas history all the way up until "who we are today," while "other faiths" don't have "the same applications over the course of history of the state of Texas and hence don't need to be recognized."

Suleiman, who uses airport wudu stations when he's traveling, called the washing facilities an important part of making Muslims comfortable and described Abbott's letter as part of a movement looking to curtail that group's religious freedoms.

"Putting one's foot in the nasty sink of a public restroom – often trying to carefully ensure that no part of the body touches some yucky bathroom surface while balancing on one leg – isn't really something Muslims are thrilled to be doing," he said.

There are about 4.6 million Muslims in the United States and about 313,000 in Texas, according to the World Population Review. Muslims have become more visible in American public life in recent years, with milestones including the election of Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D) in New York and the Michigan Democratic primary win of Abdul El-Sayed, who would become the nation's first Muslim U.S. senator if he defeats his Republican opponent this fall.

At the same time, anti-Muslim sentiment has become more public and more pointed.

"The blatant and mainstreaming of Islamophobia is worse than after [the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks]," said Haris Tarin, vice president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, an advocacy group that focuses on policies of interest to U.S. Muslims.

Trump, who has declined to condemn anti-Islam comments from members of his party, last week described Democratic

candidates in the midterm elections as "jihadists." Earlier this month, Rep. Nancy Mace (R-South Carolina) said "every single Muslim holding public office in America is a Trojan horse."

The growth of Muslim communities in Texas is impossible to miss.

The Houston area is now home to Texas's largest Muslim community, with more than 200 mosques and Islamic centers. The Muslim population in the Dallas-Fort Worth area doubled in a decade, and Muslim state lawmakers represent suburban districts in both the Dallas and Houston metro areas.

Houston Mayor John Whitmire released a statement in response to Abbott's letter saying 22 percent of all international travelers departing from Terminal D – where the wudu station is – are flying on airlines based in Muslim-majority countries. "IAH is a global gateway," Whitmire wrote. "The ablution room was created in response to passenger requests and serves a practical need."

Abbott, who is running for reelection, and Attorney General Ken Paxton – a Trump ally who is waging a competitive race for the Senate – have both embraced Islamophobic rhetoric on the campaign trail.

Last year, Abbott designated the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, as a foreign terrorist group. He and Paxton fought to revoke the group's nonprofit status, a move that CAIR has challenged in court.

Abbott has also led GOP efforts to block a residential development planned around a large mosque complex in the Dallas area.

Texas officials denied Islamic schools access to the state voucher program until a judge ordered them not to. At the Texas RNC convention in Houston in June, Republicans added to their platform a provision banning "sharia," or Islamic law, even though sharia law does not apply under U.S. civil law.

At the airport in Houston on Wednesday, (August 18) people came in and out of the wudu rooms ahead of Dhuhr, the midday prayers. A man and woman wearing airport employee tags – she also wore a blue head scarf – slipped into their respective rooms shortly before 1:30 p.m. A mother and her teenage son, traveling home to Toronto after visiting family, said ablution stations are common in Canada.

Ubaid Mian, who manages several airport restaurants, said he uses the prayer and wudu rooms multiple times each day.

"The airport is a place where everybody travels. Diversity should be appreciated," he said, shaking his head at the controversy. Texas "has so many people here who have so many different beliefs. There's no harm in it. It should be respected."

Mian said he would be back at the wudu room to prepare for evening prayer before heading home.

—THE WASHINGTON POST



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Indian American Physicians Hold Leadership Retreat In New York

BY A STAFF WRITER

New York City, August 15, 2026 — The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) convened its national leadership retreat in midtown Manhattan at Utsav Restaurant on August 15, 2026. The retreat brought together AAPI's senior leadership, distinguished speakers, and members from across the country for an afternoon dedicated to discussions on collaboration, strategic vision, and strengthening organizational unity, a press release from AAPI said.

Hosted by AAPI President Dr. Meher Medavaram, the retreat underscored AAPI's commitment to advancing physician leadership, enhancing community engagement, and shaping the future of Indo-U.S. healthcare collaboration.

In her address, Dr. Medavaram said, "As physicians, we are trained to diagnose, treat, and heal. But our responsibility—and our potential—extends far beyond the walls of our clinics and hospitals. Clinical excellence gives physicians credibility. Leadership gives us the opportunity to transform that knowledge into broader impact."

Setting the tone for the Retreat as a way to encourage the young physicians of Indian origin to come forward and take on leadership roles, Dr. Medavaram said, "One of our greatest opportunities



Some of the leaders of AAPI meeting at a retreat in New York City at Utsav Restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, where Dr. Samin Sharma of Mount Sinai was also recognized

today is to develop the next generation of physician leaders—not only in medicine, but in every field where decisions affecting healthcare and our communities are made. We need young physicians to step forward in healthcare policy, advocacy, research, technology and artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, public health, education, media, and civic leadership."

She called upon AAPI members and leaders to "open the doors, create mentorship opportunities, and give younger phy-

sicians a seat at the table. We should encourage them to serve on hospital boards, professional organizations, government advisory committees, research institutions, and community organizations."

Pointing to the younger physicians, Dr. Medavaram said, "Do not wait until you feel completely ready. Step forward. Speak up. Get involved. Leadership is developed through experience, mentorship, and the courage to accept responsibility. Because when we develop young physicians as

leaders beyond medicine, we are not just building the future of our profession—we are building the future of healthcare and our communities."

The retreat included speeches from renowned Indian American physicians, viz., Dr. Samin K. Sharma, Director of Interventional Cardiology at Mount Sinai, who spoke on innovation, clinical excellence, and the evolving landscape of cardiovascular care; Dr. Anil Sharma, Interventional Pain Physician, who offered perspectives on multidisciplinary care and the importance of leadership in shaping patient-centered practice models; and Dr. Padmini Murthy, Global Health leader and Professor Emeritus of Public Health, who emphasized the importance of physician advocacy that enhances effective public health policies, global engagement, and the need for uplifting humanity.

"Healthcare leadership today requires not only clinical expertise but a commitment to global responsibility," she noted, underscoring AAPI's longstanding role in international health initiatives.

The retreat was chaired by Dr. Sunita Polelalle, with AAPI Past President Dr. Dayan Naik serving as Co-Chair.

The afternoon was spent discussing organizational priorities, upcoming initiatives, and the association's expanding national footprint. The retreat also highlighted AAPI's partnerships, including support from Mount Sinai and Ameriprise.

CFO Of Boston-Area Spinal Device Company Sentenced To Four Months In Prison For Kickback Scheme

EXTRACTS FROM DOJ PRESS RELEASE

BOSTON – The Chief Financial Officer of SpineFrontier, Inc., a spinal implant company, formerly based in Malden, Mass., has been sentenced for a kickback scheme to bribe surgeons to use company products in exchange for sham consulting fees.

Aditya Humad, 41, of Cambridge, Mass., was sentenced on Aug. 6, 2026 by U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani to four months in prison, to be followed by one year of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$9,500 fine. In May 2026, Humad pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to violate the anti-kickback statute. Humad was charged in September 2021 along with Dr. Kingsley R. Chin, SpineFrontier's Founder, President and CEO.

Humad conspired to pay and direct the payment of over \$540,000 in bribes to surgeons in the form of sham consulting fees for work they did not perform. Humad conspired to bribe surgeons to use SpineFrontier's products, and in turn, SpineFrontier received millions of dollars in revenue from surgeries the surgeons performed.

Humad conspired with SpineFrontier to enter into contracts with surgeons, agreeing to pay the surgeons between \$250 and \$1,000 per hour for purported consulting for SpineFrontier. In reality, however, Humad directed



SpineFrontier to pay the surgeons for using SpineFrontier's products. Although the surgeon-consulting program was purportedly directed at gathering technical feedback about SpineFrontier's products, Humad used the bribes they paid pursuant to that program to induce surgeons to use SpineFrontier's products in surgeries that were paid for by federal health care programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and the Veterans Health Administration. Additionally, the surgeons frequently spent only a small fraction of their reported time, if any, performing actual consulting.

Humad previously agreed to pay a fine pursuant to a civil settlement agreement, including a fixed amount totaling more than \$150,000 (including interest) and potential additional contingency payments based upon

his annual income.

In May 2025, Chin pleaded guilty to making false statements to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. He was subsequently sentenced in August 2025 by Judge Talwani to one year of supervised release with the first six months to be served in home confinement. Chin was also ordered to pay a fine of \$9,500 in addition to \$40,000 he personally agreed to pay as part of a related civil settlement and \$855,000 that his wholly-owned company agreed to pay as part of the same settlement.

In related criminal prosecutions, in August 2020, surgeon Jason Montone, D.O., 50, of Lawson, Miss., pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Anti-Kickback Statute and obstruction. Medical device distributor John Balzer, 48, of Lenexa, Kan., pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Anti-Kickback Statute and one count of witness tampering. Montone and Balzer are scheduled to be sentenced in September 2026.

In related civil enforcement, in March 2020, five doctors agreed to pay civil settlements to resolve allegations of accepting sham consulting fees in violation of the False Claims Act and Anti-Kickback Statute: Dr. F. Paul DeGenova agreed to pay \$486,985; Dr. Michael Murray agreed to pay \$330,668; Dr. Joseph Shehadi agreed to pay \$323,419; Dr. Agha Khan agreed to pay \$310,843; and Dr. John Atwater agreed to pay \$105,149. In April 2020, Dr. John Carlson agreed to pay \$1.75 million dollars to resolve the same allegations.

L-1B to L-1A Conversion: The 4.5-Year Deadline

Employers Often Miss

IN MEMORIAM

By David H. Nachman, Esq



Michael Phulwani

David Nachman

Ludka Zimovcak

Snehal Batra

An employee who enters the United States in L-1B status and later gets promoted into a managerial or executive role can often go through an L-1B to L-1A conversion. That conversion matters because of how differently the two categories are capped. L-1B status tops out at five years total, while L-1A status allows up to seven. For an employee approaching the L-1B limit, a timely promotion and conversion can be the difference between having to leave the country and gaining two additional years to work toward a green card.

The regulation governing this conversion, 8 CFR 214.2(l)(15), sets a specific condition that's easy to overlook. When someone was initially admitted in a specialized knowledge capacity and is later promoted to a managerial or executive position, they must have been employed in that new managerial or executive role for at least six months before they become eligible for the full seven-year L-1A period. The change in capacity also has to be approved by USCIS through an amended, new, or extended petition filed at the time the change occurred, not retroactively identified years later.

That six-month requirement, combined with normal USCIS processing time, is what creates the practical deadline for an L-1B to L-1A conversion. Since the promotion needs to be documented, the amended petition filed, and six months of managerial employment completed before the employee reaches the five-year L-1B ceiling, waiting until year four or later to address a promotion often leaves too little runway. As a practical matter, employers should identify the promotion and file the L-1B to L-1A amendment around the start of the employee's fourth year in L-1B status, or sooner, to leave enough room for processing and the six-month requirement to be satisfied comfortably before the cap is reached.

It's also worth being clear about what this conversion does and doesn't accomplish. Successfully converting to L-1A status extends how long someone can remain in that nonimmigrant category, but it does not automatically make them eligible for a green card under the EB-1C multinational manager or executive category. EB-1C has its own, separate requirement that the individual worked in a managerial or executive capacity both abroad and in the United States. An L-1A conversion based only on U.S.-side promotion doesn't necessarily satisfy that piece.

There are a few other practical wrinkles worth keeping in mind. Unlike H-1B status, L-1 classifications don't benefit from extensions tied to a pending green card process, so once the L-1A seven-year cap is reached, it's reached. And if an L-1 worker is laid off, their options to remain in the U.S. are limited, and any spouse holding L-2 work authorization loses that authorization as well when the primary worker's status ends. For employees born in countries like India and China, where employment-based green card backlogs are longest, these timing issues carry extra weight since a longer runway in L-1 status can matter more.

FAQs

When exactly should we file the L-1B to L-1A amendment?

As soon as the promotion to a managerial or executive role is identified, and no later than the start of the employee's fourth year in L-1B status, to leave enough time for the six-month requirement and USCIS processing before the five-year cap.

Does converting to L-1A automatically qualify someone for a green card?

No. L-1A status alone doesn't establish EB-1C eligibility. EB-1C requires managerial or executive capacity both abroad and in the United States, which is a separate showing.

What happens if we miss the window and the employee hits the 5-year L-1B cap?

Once the L-1B cap is reached without an approved conversion, the employee generally must leave the country and pursue another visa category or wait out any applicable time abroad before returning in L status.

Does an L-1 worker get extra time if a green card case is pending, like H-1B workers do?

No. L-1A and L-1B are both hard-capped, and unlike H-1B, they don't receive extensions

based on a pending labor certification or immigrant petition.

What happens to a spouse's work authorization if the L-1 employee is laid off?

An L-2 spouse's work authorization is tied to the primary L-1 worker's status. If the L-1 worker's employment and status end, the L-2 spouse's work authorization ends as well.

If you or your family members have questions about how these immigration matters may affect you, please do not hesitate to contact the immigration and nationality lawyers at NPZ Law Group. You can reach us by emailing info@visaserve.com or by visiting our website at www.visaserve.com for more information.

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Department of Homeland Security Proposes Additional H-1B Fee

PRESS RELEASE

-WASHINGTON

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is proposing to establish a \$103,265 fee for all H-1B cap-subject petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption. The proposed fee would be paid at the time of filing and would be imposed in addition to all other applicable fees or payments.

The proposed fee would generate revenue to recover a portion of the federal government's costs for administering the lawful immigration system. These costs include adjudication of immigration benefits, fraud detection and national security vetting, systems modernization, records and fee collection operations, immigration court operations, consular visa processing, labor standards enforcement, and interagency coordination. DHS estimates the proposed fee would generate approximately \$8.8 billion annually, based on a projected annual volume of 85,000 H-1B cap-subject petitions.

"The proposed H-1B fee is intended to recover the costs incurred across the federal government to adjudicate, vet, and support lawful immigration programs that otherwise must be funded by taxpayers," said U.S.



PHOTO: SCREENSHOT FROM X.COM/USCIS

Citizenship and Immigration Services spokesperson Zach Kahler.

Under the proposed rule, the additional fee would not apply to H-1B petitions that are not subject to the cap, such as petitions filed by certain nonprofit research organizations, governmental research organizations, and institutions of higher education. The number of cap-subject H-1B visas (or grants of status) issued annually

is limited to 65,000, with an additional 20,000 for aliens who have earned a master's or higher degree from a U.S. institution of higher education.

For more information, see the notice of proposed rulemaking.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit uscis.gov or follow us on X, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

\$103K H-1B Fee? What Employers Need To Know

BY A STAFF WRITER

-WASHINGTON

The Department of Homeland Security is proposing a new \$103,265 fee on certain H-1B petitions, a major increase that would apply primarily to employers seeking workers through the annual H-1B visa cap.

The proposal is not yet a final rule. It is a notice of proposed rulemaking, meaning the public will have an opportunity to comment before the government decides whether to adopt, change or withdraw the proposal. The Federal Register notice is scheduled for publication Aug. 25, 2026.

Under the proposal, the \$103,265 charge would apply to H-1B cap-subject petitions, including petitions for workers who qualify for the U.S. advanced-degree exemption. The fee would be paid when the employer files the H-1B petition and would be in addition to other existing filing fees and required payments.

In simple terms, the rule would mainly affect employers filing for workers selected under the annual H-1B quota.

Federal law generally limits new H-1B visas or grants of H-1B status to 65,000 each fiscal year. An additional 20,000 are available for workers who have earned a qualifying master's degree or higher degree from a U.S. institution, bringing the commonly cited annual cap total to 85,000.

The proposed additional fee would not apply to many cap-exempt H-1B petitions, including certain petitions involving institutions of higher education, affiliated non-

DHS proposes \$103,265 fee for H-1B cap petitions

Proposal aims to recover costs of administering the immigration system.

IMAGE: ILLUSTRATION

profit organizations, nonprofit research organizations and government research organizations. It also would not generally apply to workers who have already been counted against the cap and are filing certain extensions or job changes.

WHY IS DHS PROPOSING SUCH A LARGE FEE?

DHS says the purpose is to recover part of the federal government's costs of administering the broader legal immigration system.

According to the proposal, the money could support immigration-benefit adjudications, fraud detection, national security screening, information technol-

ogy systems, records management and coordination among federal agencies. It also could help support immigration-related activities involving U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Justice, the State Department and the Department of Labor.

The government calculated the proposed fee by dividing approximately \$8.78 billion in costs it wants to recover by a projected 85,000 fee-paying H-1B petitions. That calculation produced a figure of \$103,264.57, which DHS rounded to \$103,265.

DHS argues that employers filing cap-subject H-1B petitions generally have a greater ability to absorb additional costs than many individual immigration applicants. The department acknowledged in the proposal, however, that the increase is significant and could lead some employers, including small businesses, to file fewer H-1B petitions.

WHO WOULD ACTUALLY PAY THE FEE?

The fee would be paid by the H-1B petitioner, usually the employer, when filing a cap-subject H-1B petition with USCIS.

It would not be a \$103,265 fee charged directly to every H-1B worker already living or working in the United States. It also would not automatically apply to every H-1B extension, transfer or cap-exempt filing.

The key question is whether the petition is subject to the annual H-1B cap.

IS THE \$103,265 FEE ALREADY IN EFFECT?

No.

The proposal is still going through the federal rulemaking process. DHS is asking for public comments, and the final rule could be changed before taking effect.

The notice says comments must be submitted through the federal rulemaking portal and must reference DHS Docket No. USCIS-2026-0298. The proposal provides a 30-day public comment period following publication in the Federal Register.

If the rule eventually becomes final in its current form, it would represent one of the most significant additional costs ever imposed on employers seeking new workers through the annual H-1B cap.

Krishnamoorthi Presents Pope Leo XIV With “Da Pope” Cubs Jersey During Vatican Visit

BY A STAFF WRITER

During a meeting at the Vatican last week, Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), a lifelong Cubs fan, presented Pope Leo XIV with a custom Chicago Cubs jersey, prompting a lighthearted discussion of the recent performance of the Cubs and the Pope's beloved White Sox. The jersey reads “Da Pope” and bears the number 267, marking Leo's place as the 267th Bishop of Rome.

“When I presented Pope Leo the jersey, he immediately reminded me that the White Sox had lost the night before, on Pope Leo Day at Rate Field,” Krishnamoorthi said. “We shared a laugh, and I asked him to spread some of that love to the Cubs and give us a little blessing to help our chances at an all-Chicago World Series. It was wonderful to see that even from the Vatican, the Pope still follows the Sox religiously.”

PHOTOS: COURTESY REP. RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI



Congressman Krishnamoorthi presenting Pope Leo with the “Da Pope” No. 267 jersey.



Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi presenting the jersey to Pope Leo.

Ambassador Ausaf Sayeed's Book On Indian Art And Culture Launched In Chicago



Consul General of India in Chicago Ambassador Somnath Ghosh, center, and author Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, second from right, join guests at the launch of Indian Art and Culture: A Journey Through Time and Tradition at Northwest Suburban College in Rolling Meadows, Illinois.



Community leaders, educators and guests attend the launch of Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed's book Indian Art and Culture: A Journey Through Time and Tradition at Northwest Suburban College.

BY A STAFF WRITER

Consul General of India in Chicago Ambassador Somnath Ghosh formally launched Indian Art and Culture: A Journey Through Time and Tradition, a new book by veteran diplomat, scholar and author Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, at an event Aug. 21 at Northwest Suburban College in Rolling Meadows.

The event brought together community leaders, educators, professionals and cultural enthusiasts from across the Chicago area to celebrate Sayeed's latest literary work, which explores India's artistic, cultural and historical heritage.

Among those attending were Prof. Sampath Ramesh of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management; Naperville Councilman Ashfaq Syed; Streamwood Park District Commissioner Raees Yawer; Syed Shanawaz Khan; Chicago community leader Mir Khan; M.T. AliNiazee, president of Northwest Suburban College; and

other community members.

Ghosh, the chief guest, praised Sayeed for documenting and promoting India's cultural heritage and for drawing on his diplomatic experience in presenting the country's traditions to a wider audience.

“Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed has brought his deep understanding of India and his distinguished diplomatic experience to this important work,” Ghosh said. “Indian Art and Culture beautifully reflects the richness, diversity and continuity of our civilizational heritage and will help introduce India's remarkable cultural traditions to readers across generations.”

During the program, Sayeed discussed the inspiration behind the book and his interest in documenting the traditions and artistic expressions that have shaped India over centuries.

“India's art and culture tell the story of a civilization that has evolved over thousands of years while continuing to inspire the world,” Sayeed said. “This book is an effort to celebrate that remarkable heritage and encourage greater appreciation and understanding of India's cultural

traditions.”

The book takes readers through India's cultural landscape, highlighting its diverse artistic traditions, history and the continuing influence of its heritage. It reflects Sayeed's longstanding interest in cultural diplomacy and in introducing Indian history and culture to audiences in India and abroad.

The gathering also highlighted the role of the Indian American community in preserving cultural traditions and passing knowledge of India's heritage to younger generations.

Organizers thanked attendees and community members for supporting the event, describing it as a celebration of literature, culture, diplomacy and heritage.

Sayeed is a former Indian diplomat whose career included senior assignments representing India overseas. In addition to his diplomatic work, he has written extensively on history, culture, international relations and India's engagement with different regions of the world.

Indian Art and Culture: A Journey Through Time and Tradition is available through Amazon India.

The Washington Post

Why you should never walk barefoot on a hotel carpet

By Andrea Sachs

After 34 years of swiping dirty surfaces, a hotel inspector with AAA is unfazed by the results of her white-glove test. A white-stockings challenge, however, shocked her.

While crawling around the floor of a hotel room, her tights turned a disturbing shade of ick.

"I kept getting on my knees to look under the bed and under things and, at the end of the inspection, I had brown circles on my white pantyhose," said the Virginia-based inspector, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because her job requires that she remain incognito.

TV remotes and light switches regularly appear on lists of the germiest spots in hotel rooms. Carpets, for some inexplicable reason, often get away clean.

The truth, however, will make your plantar skin crawl: Hotel carpeting is a germ trap.



Photo: Adobe

Hotel carpeting is teeming with life

For his research on hotels and hygiene, Charles P. Gerba, a professor of virology at the University of Arizona, has discovered life in carpeting.

Gerba said hotel carpets are often flecked with food debris, dead skin cells and dust that engender mites, bacteria, mold, allergens and other microorganisms.

"Carpets are pretty germey," said Gerba, who never walks barefoot in hotel rooms or hallways.

Guests' in-room habits, such as eating takeout, brushing their hair or scratching an itch, contribute to the carpet litter. Shoes also drag in an array of vile material, including fecal matter picked up from places where dogs and humans do their business, such as sidewalks, parks and public bathrooms. Guests will disperse the excrement and other organic bits on their journey from lobby to hallway to room.

Though many such microbes are benign, a number of scientific studies, including one helmed by Gerba, have discovered potentially dangerous pathogens stuck to shoe bottoms. For instance, the reports have detected methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, a strain of staph bacteria that can cause skin bumps or boils; *Escherichia coli*, commonly known as E. coli, which can lead to gastrointestinal issues such as stomach cramps and diarrhea; and *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff), which can trigger inflammation of the colon.

Sick guests can also contaminate carpets. Gerba cited a norovirus outbreak possibly spread by hotel carpeting. An infected guest threw up on the carpet. Housekeeping vacuumed the bodily fluids, but instead of destroying the virus, the cleaners ended up disseminating it.

"They re-vacuumed with the same vacuum a few days later, and it apparently caused another outbreak," Gerba said.

And if that doesn't keep you up at night in your hotel room, this might: Bed bugs may use the carpet as a highway or rest stop to their final destination - you.

Keep the kids off the carpet

For healthy travelers, medical experts say the risk of falling ill from hotel carpeting is low. But people with weaker immune systems or respiratory issues could be susceptible.

"The airborne debris from walked-on under-cleaned carpets can trigger asthma exacerbations, and for asthmatics the American Lung Association recommends against staying in rooms with carpets in favor of easier-to-clean and less allergen or pollutant-trapping hard flooring," Freestone said.

S. Wesley Long, medical director of diagnostic microbiology at Houston Methodist Hospital, said children could also be vulnerable because they often play on the floor and put their hands and feet in their mouths, transferring the bacteria and pathogens into their systems. In addition, travelers hobbled by popped blisters or other scrapes should not expose their open sores to hotel carpeting.

"If you have a wound on your foot, you don't want to be running around on carpet because your native immunity is broken down, and you have an increased risk of infection," Long said.

For everyone else, hotel carpeting ranks low on the most common ways to contract a bug, far below exposure to a sick individual, poor hand hygiene and contaminated water. However, Long still advises against picnicking on the hotel carpet.

"As long as we keep the stuff on the floor away from our mouths," he said, "that goes a long way toward preventing illness."

"Carpet and rugs can act as a reservoir for shoe dust, dirt, pollen, mold spores, pesticides and other materials that originated from outside," said Primrose Freestone, an associate professor in clinical microbiology at the University of Leicester in England.

Harboring foreign particles is only the half of it. Everyday activities - stretching, crawling, walking, dancing, vacuuming - can stir up the microorganisms embedded in the carpet and release them onto your bare feet or clothing, or into the air. The microbes can be harmless or a health risk, but, for the gross factor alone, guests might want to avoid skin-to-carpet contact.

"You don't 100 percent know if it's clean," said the hotel inspector, who always swaps her street shoes for her "house slippers" whenever she steps inside a hotel room.

Vacuuming doesn't clean

The solution seems easy: Wipe your shoes before entering your hotel room and ensure that housekeeping vacuums daily.

That's still not enough.

For starters, wiping your shoes on a mat won't remove the minute particles. Deeper cleaning is required. In Gerba's study, his team determined that washing your shoes (Rockports in this scenario) in a 12-minute cold cycle using Tide detergent and air drying for 24 hours reduced the number of bacteria on the shoe's exterior by 99 percent.

However, tracking down a laundromat is not a good use of vacation time, and taking your primary pair of travel shoes out of commission for a day isn't realistic. A less onerous option is to disinfect your shoes with an antibacterial wipe or to not wear your shoes inside the room.

Standard vacuuming, meanwhile, isn't hoovering up the detritus ground into the carpeting. To really get the gunk out, the hotel needs to steam clean.

"The challenge is guests are hard on their rooms," said Lori Mukoyama, a principal and global hospitality leader at Gensler, a global architecture, design and planning firm, "and there is not enough time to do these deep cleans."

The vacuums can also become repositories - and disseminators - of pathogens and germs. Gerba said salmonella and E. coli can cling to the brushes and bags. If the accessories are not disinfected or changed regularly, they can spray fecal matter and other particles throughout the hotel.

In a study published in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health, Gerba and his colleagues noted that "environmental surfaces can act as both reservoirs and sources of airborne pathogens due to re-aerosolization during routine activities such as walking or vacuuming."

Gerba's advice: If housekeeping is vacuuming, don't follow in their wake.

Better flooring options

Though carpets are undisputed germ sponges, the flooring style isn't going the way of the lobby cigarette vending machine or pay phone. The textile still serves a purpose, such as muting guest noises.

"Carpet helps absorb sound, reduce footfall noise and create a quieter guest experience in high-traffic areas," said Valentina Castellon, principal and hospitality interior design leader with DLR Group, an international design firm. "While advances in underlayments and acoustic assemblies have improved the performance of hard-surface flooring, carpet continues to play an important role where noise control is essential."

Since the pandemic, when hygiene awareness was at an all-time high, hotel designers say the trend toward hard materials has accelerated. Castellon said luxury vinyl tile, porcelain tile and engineered wood are simpler to clean, more resistant to staining and less likely to retain odors. For a homey touch, hotels may sprinkle some area rugs around the room, which are also germ traps but easier than carpeting to clean and replace or, if you're a guest, walk around or jump over. Travelers averse to carpeting can seek out hotels that incorporate these less fraught materials and decorative styles. Mukoyama said when she visits New York City, she will stay in a capsule room in a micro-hotel, which uses luxury vinyl tiles. Many high-end hotels, such as Four Seasons, feature wood flooring with accent rugs.

Meanwhile, for properties with carpeting, Mukoyama said she will pull out her secret weapon: black socks.

"I don't wear white ones, because I honestly don't want to know," she said.

FIA Chicago (Estd. 1980) Concludes Historic Independence Day Celebrations With Grand Patriotic Parade On Chicago's Devon Avenue-Honorarily Designated "Gandhi Marg"

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

Veterans, diplomats, spiritual leaders, elected officials and community organizations unite to celebrate India@80 and America@250

The Federation of Indian Associations of Chicago (FIA Chicago -Estd. 1980) concluded its historic season of patriotic programs with a magnificent and colorful Grand Independence Day Parade on Devon Avenue, Chicago's celebrated "Little India." that's Honorarily Designated "Gandhi Marg"

The parade was the grand finale of FIA Chicago's months-long commemoration of two historic milestones: the 80th anniversary of India's Independence and the 250th anniversary of American Independence. The organization's patriotic activities began with participation in the Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades and continued with the Tricolor Flag Hoisting in downtown Chicago, the Second Tiranga Car Rally in Schaumburg, the India@80 and America@250 Patriotic Gala, and the Grand Independence Day Parade.

Together, these landmark programs created one of the most memorable chapters in FIA Chicago's 46-year history, celebrating freedom, democracy, sacrifice, cultural heritage, community service and the enduring friendship between India and the United States.

Devon Avenue Becomes a Sea of Patriotism: Devon Avenue was transformed into a vibrant sea of Indian Tricolors, American Stars and Stripes and saffron flags. Patriotic songs, traditional music, colorful floats and enthusiastic chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," "Vande Mataram," "God Bless America" and "Long Live America" filled the prominent commercial corridor.

Families, seniors, youth, veterans, spiritual leaders, business owners and elected officials came together in a remarkable demonstration of unity and national pride. The atmosphere reflected not only the joy of independence but also gratitude toward those who sacrificed their lives to secure and protect freedom and democracy.

A defining feature of the celebration was FIA Chicago's decision to honor decorated military veterans, distinguished public servants and spiritual leaders instead of relying on Bollywood celebrities to attract crowds.

President Hemant Patel said FIA Chicago has demonstrated that a large and patriotic audience can be inspired by honoring individuals whose lives exemplify courage, leadership, sacrifice and service. "Let us promote those who inspire us through their actions—not merely through their acting," Patel emphasized.

Distinguished Guests Lead Flag Ceremony

The formal program began with the national anthems of India and



Flag Ceremony Lead by Distinguished Guests, FIA President, executive committee and trustees on "Gandhi Marg"

the United States, followed by a stirring presentation of "Vande Mataram." Distinguished guests participating in the flag-unfurling ceremony included Grand Marshal Major General N.K. Dhir; Guest of Honor Elad Strohmayer, Consul General of Israel to the Midwest; Smt. Lima Mathew, Consul and Head of Chancery and Community Affairs at the Consulate General of India in Chicago; Puja Shri Devkinandan Thakur Ji Maharaj; Chicago Alderman Debra Silverstein; Lieutenant Colonel Deepak Saxena; Captain Preeti Gupta; Flight Lieutenant Sanjay Sharma; FIA executive and veteran Arvind Ankleshwaria; Illinois State Senator Ram Villivalam; FIA Trustee-Director Dr. Bharat Barai; Parade Chair Smita Shah; Banquet Chair Dr. Santosh Kumar; and Car Rally Chair Sanjay Vora.

Major General Dhir, Dr. Bharat Barai and Smita Shah addressed the gathering, praising FIA Chicago for honoring veterans and presenting India's patriotic and cultural heritage with dignity.

One of the ceremony's most touching moments was the recognition of 90-year-old Mohan Kaka, affectionately known as Mohan Kaka, who has supported FIA Chicago's parade for approximately 30

years. As he has done year after year, Mohan Kaka brought the flagpole by bus and ensured it was properly prepared for the ceremony. President Patel publicly praised Mohan Kaka for his extraordinary dedication, describing his patriotism as an inspiration to younger generations.

Music, Motorcycles and International Friendship: The traditional Dhol-Tasha ensemble from Maharashtra Mandal brought tremendous rhythm and energy to the parade. Motorcyclist Ruthvij Bhatt and his team added excitement by riding with American, Indian and saffron flags.

The presence of Israeli Consul General Elad Strohmayer held special historic significance. Strohmayer and President Patel emphasized the friendship and shared democratic values connecting the United States, India and Israel. The crowd responded with chants of "Long live the friendship of America, India and Israel!"

FIA Trustee Rakesh Malhotra said the Israeli Consul General's participation marked a first in FIA Chicago's parade history and may have been among the first appearances by an Israeli Consul General at an Indian Independence Day parade in the United States.



Distinguished Guests on Stage where they observed and speaking about Independence Day Celebrations.

President Hemant Patel and Trustee Sanhita Agnihotri served as emcees, welcoming the guests and recognizing the floats, businesses, nonprofit organizations, walking groups, performers, volunteers and media representatives.

Active trustees present included Dr. Bharat Barai, Bhailal M. Patel, Kanti N. Patel, Sohan Joshi, Anil Pillai, Ajay Agnihotri, Sanhita Agnihotri, Harish Kolasani,

Rakesh Malhotra, Rashmi Patel, and Nitin Patel.

Months of Preparation and Dedicated Service

President Patel said the parade required months of preparation, careful coordination and countless hours of volunteer service. "A parade is like a large puzzle," he explained. "Every piece must be placed correctly and at the right time. If one important piece is missing, the entire plan can be affected."

Beginning early in the morning, FIA executives Anil Singh, Joy Shah, Rohit Joshi, Amar Upadhyay, Arvind Ankleshwaria and Vira Adimulam led the logistical effort.

They were assisted by volunteers Harish Topiwala, Jai Prakash Shah, Manish Patel, Sanjay Vora, Jitubhai Hingu, Pramod Joshi, Chirag Chavda, Vikas Baxi, Yogesh Patel, Ravi Narumanchi, Devesh Pandit, Sanjay Patel, Nand Garg, Rajendra Thakkar, Harish Kolasani, Vijendar Doma, Satheesan Nair, Harshad Shah, J.D. Digvankar, Karan Sood, Sanjay Bhavsar, Chhaya Bhavsar, Vasanti Patel, Ajit Shah, Vandana Jhingan and Phani Krishnan, along with BAPS, Ekal Vidyalaya and Karni Sena volunteers.

Community Organizations and Businesses Unite

Participating organizations included Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishva Hindu Parishad of America, BAPS, Maharashtra Mandal, Karni Sena, International University of Vedic Wellness, Sardar Patel Foundation, Shree Jalaram Mandir, Hanuman Mandir, Umiya Mataji Mandir, Hindu Women Network, ISKCON, AASOA, Ekal Vidyalaya, Sewa International, Shree Sanatan Sewa Foundation, The India Hub, Moksh Dham, United Senior Pariwar, ICNT and Global Indian Diaspora.

Senior-service organizations included Metropolitan Asian Family Services, Universal Metro Asian Services, Care for Soul, Happy Hearts and RelieCare.

Supporting businesses included Patel Brothers, Flextron, Keystone Mortgage, State Bank of India, Rapid Rasoi, Gokul POS, Regal Jewellers, CK Motor Cars, Shurbhi, Gold Rush and Fasway Printing, along with DJ Chirag Patel, photographer J.K. Shah and decorator Mahul Rami.

Large portraits of Bharat Mata, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maharana Pratap, Swami Vivekananda, Rani Lakshmibai, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Shaheed Bhagat Singh were major parade attractions, helping younger generations learn about India's freedom fighters and national heroes.

ASTROLOGY

This week for you

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

ARIES: This week encourages you to plan wisely. Confidence will help you stay on track. Spending time with family members lifts your spirits. Singles should avoid rushing into relationships. A short getaway can be refreshing. Property investments may offer steady benefits. Stay consistent with your fitness routine. Students should focus on learning practical skills. Manage your time to accomplish.

TAURUS: This week brings satisfying results. Good health helps you handle responsibilities. Financial stability improves. At work, determination will help. Family may need your support. Your love life can become fulfilling. Travel promise enjoyable moments. Protect your valuables. Community work can open doors to ideas. Students should strengthen their habits.

GEMINI: A lively week awaits you. Your enthusiasm will help you stay productive. Financial matters remain stable. Work may demand patience, progress follows. Family's encouragement will keep you motivated. Romance looks favourable. A trip can create memorable experiences. If considering property matters, avoid making hurried decisions. Disciplined students achieve good results.

CANCER: This week may present a blend of opportunities and responsibilities. Finances remain balanced. Professional growth may seem gradual. Family environment strengthens bonds. Love life appears encouraging. Maintaining healthy habits will help. Travel plans require some flexibility. Commercial property investments could deliver returns. Use this period to focus on personal growth. Students may benefit from learning something new.

LEO: Financially, this week may bring developments. Career growth is likely. Family life will offer warmth. Singles may enjoy exciting romantic prospects. Property-related disputes could move forward. Your health remains favourable. A trip with friends may bring adventure. Students are likely to perform well in both individual and team activities. Your social image may also receive a welcome boost.

VIRGO: This week offers opportunities. A healthier lifestyle moves you closer to your fitness goals. Financial planning strengthen your future. Support make work smoother. Family gatherings could help reconnect with relatives. Love may bring pleasant surprises. A spiritual experience may leave you feeling peaceful. Property investments are likely to grow. Creative motivation may feel low. Students may improve their concentration through regular meditation.

LIBRA: This week favours learning. Your dedication will bring rewarding outcomes. Career efforts are likely to gain recognitions. Financial growth may be gradual. Minor family disagreements can be resolved. Your romantic relationship may receive encouragement. Some may celebrate success with a memorable trip. Home renovation look favourable. Students can expand their knowledge by attending events.

SCORPIO: A balanced routine can improve your overall well-being. Wise financial decisions may strengthen your position. Career prospects look promising. Family relationships can improve through. Romance may flourish. Business travel is likely to bring productive outcomes. Opportunities emerge. Students will have access to valuable learning resources.

SAGITTARIUS: This week may bring exciting travel opportunities. Those dealing with concerns could notice improvement. Minor family issues can be resolved. Learning from professionals may benefit your career. Property-related matters appear favourable. Seek expert advice. Meeting people may broaden your perspective. Students who balance studies with personal life are likely to perform well.

CAPRICORN: The week promises steady progress. Your financial position appears stable. Career growth may bring leadership opportunities. Blessings from elders can help clear obstacles. Romance may require patience. Singles could meet someone special. Property-related matters may prove beneficial. Creative talents will shine. Networking opportunities can help you achieve long-term goals. Overall, the week supports growth and success.

AQUARIUS: This week brings exciting possibilities. Strengthening family relationships will bring emotional satisfaction. Students may benefit from guidance. Overseas travel plans could move forward. Business owners should review their strategies. Challenges at work will help. Property investments appear favourable. Be thoughtful in your relationships. Stay curious and embrace experiences.

PISCES: A rewarding week lies ahead. Your professional skills may improve. Financial stability is likely to strengthen. Good health will support your activities. Family interactions may reconnect you with relatives. Romance looks promising as you make efforts. A short trip may refresh your mind. Property opportunities could come. Encouragement will keep your confidence high. Students may achieve success in exams or important academic events.

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Rakshabandhan: It's Practice And Historical Underpinnings

By ARCHANA ADALJA

DOES A RAKSHA TIED TO A WRIST PROTECT ?

As Raksha Bandhan approaches, have you ever wondered if a brother's affection is contingent upon this one single thread tied by the sisters?

Perhaps not. The world has produced many loving brothers and still houses many caring brothers who do not wait for a blessed thread to give them the signal for further action.

And yet, the day is very special, Rakhi or not. It is a reminder of the place where one came from, literally. That, perhaps, becomes the closest bond of blood between siblings, with a recognition that a sibling may be one person whom one has known all one's life, or theirs, making it the longest lasting bond, after the one with parents. Keeping that bond current and live becomes important, then, and blessing it and protecting that bond is natural. That, is the logic behind it, if one ever doubts why a traditional ritual has to be followed.

Beside the logic is the practical reason. This is one day to get rich. And so, one can tie Rakhis to not just real brothers, but to cousins, brother's friends who are almost like brothers, neighbors, even co-workers. In fact, anyone who asks what the threads are on any brother's wrists, can be offered one tied to their wrist for a special cost.

Raksha Bandhan has survived from ancient times, for centuries, stealing away moments of pure goodwill and deep affection for the person standing across, and wishing no harm to come to them.

The bargaining began much later. If a Rakhi was tied, the man (usually) was expected to uphold its worth, and protect the tie-r of it, with every effort, including with life. That is what the folk stories tell us, making one wonder if just tying a Rakhi can create a brother out of nowhere, or from the group around, capable of helping.

The bargaining seems to be reinforced by Hindi films about sisters who asked brothers to uphold the sacred thread. Films began portraying such compelling obligation stories of siblings around the mid twentieth century, predominantly referring to the obligation in films like Chhoti Bahen through its song 'Bhaiya mere rakhi ke bandhan ko nibhana'. Later films picked up this theme and replayed it several times over in different versions.

Regardless, Raksha Bandhan in the twentieth century became symbolic gesture of all the goodwill that a sister felt for the brother. The thread was just a reminder of that.

But, was it how it really began during the Vedic times? Was there really a Rakhi that sisters tied then?

It existed. A different version or versions of it. In ancient times, Raksha or "protection" was a sacred thread or amulet tied by priests, wives, or mothers to protect someone from evil, sickness, or war. In the oldest Hindu traditions, the sacred thread was symbolic of protection. Traditionally, royal priests or Gurus would tie these threads on kings and community members during the full moon of the Shravan month. This was done to bless them with health and safety for the upcoming year.

Evolving over centuries, this tradition has maintained some of the basics. Today, Raksha Bandhan is celebrated with sisters applying a tilak (vermilion and rice grains) on their brothers' foreheads, tying the sacred rakhi thread on their wrists, and performing a aarti to pray for their long life and well-being. Brothers offer sweets, gifts, or tokens of love and promise to protect and support their sisters. Families dress in traditional clothing, gather for festive meals, and share sweets like laddu or barfi.

Modern celebrations have evolved significantly to



Representative photo.

become highly inclusive, moving beyond strictly traditional blood-sibling relationships to celebrate bonds of protection, respect, and companionship.

Many women now tie rakhis to their own sisters, female cousins, or close female friends to celebrate mutual support and lifelong trust. Brands even sell specialized "Sister Squad" rakhis for this purpose. Originally a Marwari tradition, the custom of tying a Lumba rakhi to a sister-in-law (bhabhi) has gained popularity as a symbol of welcoming and protecting women within the family.

Today, people frequently tie rakhis to trusted co-workers, classmates, and neighbors as a gesture of platonic camaraderie, safety, and mutual respect. It is increasingly common for people, including young children, to tie rakhis to societal protectors, such as society security guards, local police officers, or military personnel, regardless of their gender.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN: RAKSHA BANDHAN IN THE SCRIPTURES

The modern festival of tying a Rakhi or Raksha on the wrists has its ancient roots. The Puranas mention the ritual of tying a protective thread or amulet.

Bhavishya Purana includes a conversation where Krishna explains the history, significance, and rules of the protective thread or raksha to King Yudhishtira. It involves narrating the story of the gods losing a 12-year war against the demons, led by Indra, the king of the gods. On the advice of Brihaspati, the divine preceptor, Shachi, Indra's wife, tied a consecrated amulet of thread, a raksha-sutra to Indra's right wrist, fortified with sacred mantras. Empowered by this thread, Indra defeated the demons and recovered his kingdom.

In the Bhagavata Purana, the specific, popular sister-brother ritual of Raksha Bandhan involving Goddess Lakshmi and King Bali is not explicitly mentioned in the original Sanskrit text (Canto 8).

While the Bhagavata Purana text ends with Vishnu stationed as Bali's eternal protector, folk tradition and other texts like the Bhavishya Purana and Vishnu Purana expand the story. Sage Narada advised Lakshmi to seek out King Bali on the full moon day of the Shravana month, Shravana Purnima. Lakshmi visited Bali and tied a protective cotton thread, Raksha Sutra, onto his right wrist, officially adopting him as her brother.

Touched by this sacred gesture, Bali offered her any

gift she desired. Lakshmi revealed her true identity and requested the release of her husband from his vow so He could return home. Bali happily complied, cementing the day as the origin point of the modern Raksha Bandhan festival.

The Skanda Purana focuses on the structural, Vedic roots of Upakarma (changing the sacred thread) and Rishi Tarpanam, alongside protective worship (Vrata) dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi.

In the Prabhas Khanda and Nagarakhanda of the Skanda Purana, the full moon of Shravana is marked as Shravani. It explicitly instructs Brahmins and twice-born (Dvija) individuals to perform the cleansing ritual of changing their old sacred thread (Yajnopavita).

The replacement thread is treated exactly like a Raksha Sutra (protective amulet). It is energized with Vedic mantras to protect the wearer's body, mind, and intellect from evil or negative forces for the upcoming year.

The Skanda Purana also has a story of Lord Shiva describing the Varalakshmi Vrata, which is celebrated around the same period in the month of Shravana. During this puja, women fast and tie a sacred, yellow-knotted thread called the Toradu or Raksha Sutra around their own wrists.

The most famous epic narrative that mirrors the modern Raksha Bandhan is that of Krishna and Draupadi in the Mahabharata.

During the Rajasuya Yajna in Indraprastha, Krishna's index finger was cut and began bleeding. Draupadi immediately tore a strip of silk from her expensive saree and wrapped it tightly around Krishna's bleeding finger to stop the flow.

Deeply moved by her spontaneous affection, Krishna declared the torn piece of cloth to be a sacred Raksha Sutra and vowed to repay the debt of every single thread of that cloth whenever she faced adversity.

Krishna fulfilled this exact protective vow during the Dyuta Sabha when the Kauravas attempted to disrobe Draupadi who prayed to Krishna. He seamlessly extended her saree into an infinite stream of cloth, saving her honor.

Another prominent instance of a Raksha thread in the Mahabharata occurs just before the tragic death of Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, inside the complex Chakravyuha formation.

Queen Kunti, Abhimanyu's grandmother, tied a consecrated, mantra-infused Raksha Sutra around Abhimanyu's wrist to shield him from mortal danger. The protective energy of Kunti's thread was so potent that even the greatest Kaurava warriors could not pierce Abhimanyu's defenses. Duryodhana utilized deceptive tactics to snap the thread from Abhimanyu's wrist and once the Raksha thread fell off, his ultimate vulnerability led to his heroic demise.

In the Narada Purana Poorva Bhaga, Chapter 124, Raksha Bandhan is mentioned in its ancient, foundational form as a Vedic protection ritual associated with Shravani Upakarma, the commencement of Vedic studies.

The text outlines the guidelines for the full moon day of the Shravana month, Shravana Purnima, framing the tying of the protective thread as a critical ritual component of spiritual education and overall well-being.

These epic stories changed how people view the Raksha thread. In the earlier Puranas, it was a formal ritual performed by a priest, Purohit, for a king, or a wife, Shachi, for her husband, Indra. Through Lord Krishna's interactions in the Mahabharata, it evolved into a powerful symbol of unconditional love, mutual duty, and divine protection between siblings and devotees.

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PENNSYLVANIA & MARYLAND
Experienced Front Desk (Day shift) for Choice Hotel in Hagerstown, MD and Housekeeping Couple needed for Marriott in Exton, PA. Good Pay, free accommodation. Call Ken (434) 422 2626
08/07-09/04-SL

NORTHERN INDIANA
Housekeepers Wanted for Franchise Hotels in Northern Indiana Safe location, good pay, accommodation + \$. Call Sureshbhai (901) 674-6105 / Vinny (269) 591-9801
08/21-09/11-JG

KALAMAZOO,MI
Franchise motel (closer to Chicago and Detroit) in Kalamazoo, MI is looking for a single or couple for front desk and housekeeping help. Accommodation provided. Legal status must. Contact Andy: 714-310-8436
08/21-09/18-SD

MOTEL HELP WANTED

ILLINOIS
Need Full time, Live-in Housekeeping Couple in Rockford (near Chicago). Experienced preferred but ready to train. Free accommodation provided. Legal status must. Contact (630) 854 6551
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MOTEL HELP WANTED

GREENSBORO, NC
46 Rooms Independent Motel in Greensboro, NC need Managing Couple (Front desk+ Laundry) and Housekeeping couple. Legal status must. Accommodation provided. Excellent salary. Contact: 919-344-8656, 336-587-5358
07/10-08/28-SD

MICHIGAN & OHIO
Experienced Single / Couple for Front Desk, Night Auditor and Housekeeping help for Franchise Hotels at various locations. Legal must. Good salary with free accommodation. Call 313-467-0051 / email: rakesh7869@aol.com
08/07-09/04-SL

VIRGINIA
Looking for Front Desk employee & Housekeeping employee for a franchise motel in Virginia. Accommodation provided Call: 276-806-3375 Email: p.patel10@yahoo.com
08/21-09/11-SH

WISCONSIN
Looking for a Front desk and Housekeeping couple in Wisconsin. Accommodation will be provided. Attractive wages. Please contact 262-676-9167
08/28-09/18-MS

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LANCASTER, PA
Need Immediately for Front Desk/Night Auditor for Choice franchise hotel in Lancaster, PA. Good pay, free accommodation, no experience required, will train if needed. Call Nick Patel 484-686-3013 During Daytime (9 AM - 5 PM EST)
07/24-08/28-JG

MASSACHUSETTS
Need couple or single for Housekeeping and Front Desk help for Independent Motel in Boston, MA. Ready to train. Accommodation available. Legal must. Call: 781 307 1357
08/07-09/04-SL

NEW YORK
Single/Couple needed for FRONT DESK, NIGHT AUDIT, HOUSEKEEPING at Franchise Hotels. Accommodation provided. Call (973) 903-8552
08/21-09/11-SH

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MOTEL HELP WANTED

ILLINOIS STATE NEAR ST LOUIS
Looking for Front Desk Couple or Single for Franchise Motel . Accommodation will be provided. Good salary. Call Manish: 618-593-5034
08/07-08/28-MS

MICHIGAN
Need Front Desk and Housekeeping help for 60 rooms franchise hotel in Battle Creek, Michigan. Free Accommodation. Fluent English Legal must. Contact Dhara Desai (269) 753 9907 / email : dharadesais@yahoo.com
08/14-09/11-SL

NASHVILLE, TN
Franchise Hotels hiring Front Desk Clerk & Housekeeping Couple. Accommodation provided. Legal status must. Call (615) 594-5454
07/24-09/18-JG

ST.LOUIS MO
Seeking Night Auditor for a franchise Motel. Seeking Motel Manager for an independent motel . For both positions Legal status is required. Good Salary and Accommodation will be Provided. Call 314-497-3292 or 314-330-4621
08/28-09/18-MS

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Call: Nick 201-637-5062 (Contact between 9 AM to 7 PM.)
• Vivian (757) 620-9207 • Hina (201) 936-8762
08/02-TFN-SD

VIRGINIA- MARYLAND & NORTH CAROLINA
Hotels are looking for skilled Asst. Manager, Front Desk, Housekeeping & Laundry attendants. If you are experienced & ready to contribute, Pls call: 540-324-8786
07/10/2026-01/07/2027-SH

PHILADELPHIA & NEW JERSEY
Need Single / Couple Front Desk & Housekeeping help for Franchise Motels in the Philadelphia area, Pittsburgh - PA and Cherry Hill - NJ. Free accommodation provided. Call Ghanshyam Patel (610) 279 0150.
09/26/2026 - 09/18/2026-SL

FLORIDA
Urgent Help Needed
Franchise Multiple Motels in Florida needs experienced live-in manager-Housekeepers couple, Night auditor, Accountant and front desk person and Wyndham,Choice and Hilton experienced GMS. Must be franchised experience. LOOKING FOR FULL TIME DRIVER HELP. Call or Text: B.P 386-566-8761or email:bps1018@gmail.com
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Companionship
Male in 40's height 6 FT, weight 170 lb, very light skin, in shape, educated, non smoker, confidential, do travel etc. safe.
Contact: 2739george@gmail.com

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