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IN CHICAGO



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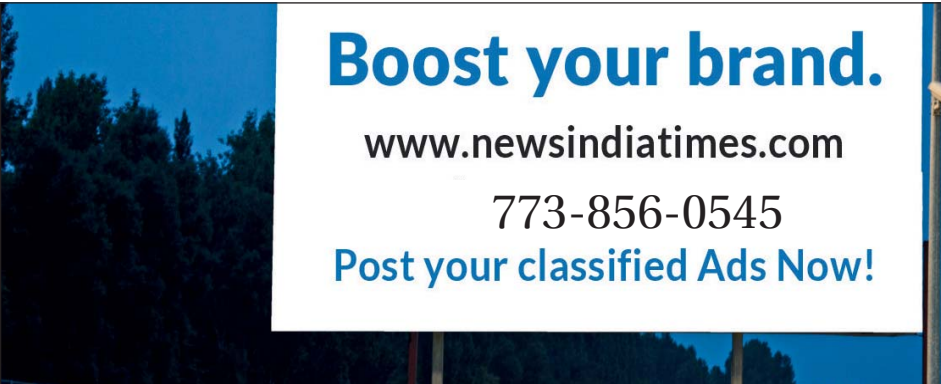


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Indian American Congressmen Krishnamoorthi, Khanna, Subramanyam Urge Secretary Rubio To Strengthen U.S. Response To Catastrophic Floods In Nepal

FROM PRESS RELEASE

On Friday, Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08), Ro Khanna (CA-17), and Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10), joined by 27 of their colleagues, in urging Secretary of State Marco Rubio to use every available resource to support ongoing search-and-rescue efforts following the catastrophic flash floods in Nepal and to ensure the safety and recovery of American citizens and others affected by the disaster.

As of September 4, the death toll from the flash floods had surpassed 1,300 people, and at least 4,000 people remained missing, including at least 75 U.S. citizens.

"We support the Department's announcement of \$500,000 in assistance through its global award with Catholic Relief Services to support emergency shelter, relief items, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)



A man looks at the "green miracle house" as it stands amid debris after surviving flash floods and a mudslide in Trishuli, Nuwakot district, Nepal, September 1, 2026.

assistance, as well as the \$3.6 million in humanitarian assistance announced on August 29," the lawmakers write. "Nonetheless, given the unprecedented loss of life and countless missing persons, we urge the Department to do much more."

The lawmakers requested that the State Department:

1. Provide daily updates to family members of those missing and Congress as rescue efforts continue.
2. Deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to flood-affected communities.
3. Coordinate with the interagency and private sector to utilize high-altitude assets and thermal/infrared drones to search for missing persons and share aerial imagery with partners.
4. Engage Nepali and PRC disaster authorities and international partners to ensure full coverage and access across search areas.
5. Ensure rapid delivery of disaster assistance and provide additional reconstruction support.

Real Estate Professionals in Chicagoland Hold AI-focused Meeting On Innovation & Meditation

BHAILAL M. PATEL

The Association of South Asian Real Estate Professionals (ASARP) hosted an innovative program titled "Agentic AI and Meditation" in Des Plaines, Illinois September 3, 2026.

Industry leaders explored how technology, ethical judgment, human relationships and mindfulness can shape the future of real estate.

The distinctive evening brought together technology experts, real estate leaders and community members to explore artificial intelligence's growing influence on the real estate profession, at the same time, emphasizing ethics, personal well-being, sound judgment and clarity of mind.

The evening was emceed by Anjali Mohanty, an ASARP Executive Board member, who welcomed attendees and guided the program with warmth and professionalism.

ASARP President Sunita Kakarlapudi delivered the opening remarks, emphasizing the organization's commitment to education, innovation, professional advancement and meaningful engagement within the real estate community.

Pradeep B. Shukla, ASARP Chairman, framed the evening around the complementary concepts of "Artificial Intelligence and Inner Intelligence."

Opening on a lighter note, Shukla imagined Agentic AI receiving the ultimate real estate assignment: coordinate the buyer, seller, REALTOR®, lender, inspector, appraiser, attorney and title company—and somehow persuade everyone to respond on time.

After analyzing the assignment, the AI supposedly "abandoned the transaction and entered meditation mode."

Shukla explained that Agentic AI differs from conventional generative AI. Rather than merely responding to individual prompts, Agentic AI can work toward objectives, formulate plans and perform sequences of connected tasks. These capabilities may assist real estate professionals with market analysis, property identification, market-



Members from Left to Right: Front Row: Chris, Arun Mani, Kate Sax, Bhailal Patel, Pradeep Shukla, Kanti Patel, Tushar Patel, Rajesh Patel.

Second Row: Prakash Mohanty, Nick Verma, Harsha Shukla, Niti Shah, Jyothi Pallapothu, Sunita Kakarlapudi, Mark Gross, Anjali Mohanty, Shantanu Kamra, Ashish Patel, Upesh Shah, Vinita Shah, and Nimesh Jani.

ing, document review, transaction coordination, deadline management and client communication.

At the same time, he emphasized that technology must remain "our assistant—not our conscience," particularly as the industry confronts privacy concerns, fair-housing risks, deepfakes, wire fraud, impersonation and manipulated documents.

The first featured technology presentation was delivered by Tushar Patel, CEO of IT Expert System and Expert Management Group.

Patel explained Agentic AI and the transition from systems that merely answer questions to intelligent technology capable of understanding objectives, coordinating actions and assisting with complex workflows.

For real estate professionals—whose daily responsibilities involve managing people, information, documents, deadlines and financial decisions—the implications are significant. Patel encouraged attendees to look beyond AI as a writing or research tool and consider how intelligent systems may reshape productivity, business operations and client service.

Harsha Shukla introduced guest speaker Kate Sax, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer of Mainstreet REALTORS®.

Sax brought an important national, legal and professional perspective to the discussion. She challenged attendees to move beyond asking, "Are we using AI?" and instead consider the more meaningful question:

"What changed because we use it?" Her message was especially relevant to a relationship-driven profession. AI should not replace relationship-building; when properly used, it can create more time for it. By reducing administrative work, accelerating research and improving preparation and follow-up, technology can allow professionals to devote greater attention to conversations, negotiations and personalized client service.

Sax also addressed the risks accompanying the AI revolution. Because REALTORS® handle identities, financial information, transaction documents and time-sensitive communications, increasingly sophisticated phishing, impersonation and fraudulent payment instructions require disciplined verification practices.

Her concluding message was clear:

Arun Mani, Founder and CEO of Blue Leopard Ventures, discussed the intersection of technology, leadership, productivity and personal awareness. In a world where machines are becoming increasingly capable of processing information, the most valuable professional resources may be attention, discernment and clarity.

The presentations culminated in a guided meditation, allowing attendees not merely to hear about calmness and focus but to experience them.

The program was attended by ASARP leaders and community members, including incoming President Nick Verma; Kanti Patel; Rajesh Patel; Niti Shah; Treasurer Nimesh Jani; Director Jyothi Pallapothu; newly appointed Advisory Board member Shantanu Kamra; Mark Gross of CSSI; and Chris, a military veteran, together with other guests and real estate professionals.

The evening concluded with dinner, refreshments, professional networking and fellowship, allowing the conversations generated by the presentations to continue informally.



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Chicago's First Hindu Temple, ISKCON Chicago, Celebrates Sri Krishna Janmashtami with Historic Midnight Maha Arati

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

Forty-five sponsoring families simultaneously offer arati to Sri Sri Kishore Kishori during a celebration of devotion, unity and service

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Chicago celebrated the auspicious festival of Sri Krishna Janmashtami with a day of worship, kirtan, cultural programs, devotional service and spiritual fellowship, culminating in a Midnight Maha Arati featuring 45 sponsoring families. Thousands of visitors came for darshan and prayers.

Devotees, families and visitors from throughout the Chicagoland area gathered at the temple in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood to celebrate Janmashtami, one of the most sacred and joyous festivals in the Vaishnava tradition.

At ISKCON Chicago, home of the presiding deities Sri Sri Kishore Kishori, the temple came alive with prayers, flowers, lamps, food offerings and acts of selfless service.

The festivities began early with Mangala Arati and continued until after midnight. Continuous Hare Krishna kirtan filled the temple with joyful chanting, music and dancing, while families and visitors enjoyed cultural presenta-



ISKCON Chicago celebrates Janmastami.

tions, children's activities and devotional performances.

The temple resounded throughout the celebration with the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

The Deity Department was led by Premarasa Devi Dasi and Lila Manjari Devi Dasi, together with their dedicated team which worked on the special Janmashtami outfits, altar decorations, flower arrangements, worship services and

organization of the Abhishek ceremonies.

One of the most cherished traditions of the evening was the Abhishek, the ceremonial bathing of the Lord with sacred ingredients. The Deity Department and Abhishek teams coordinated the program, allowing participating families to make their offerings.

The large-scale Midnight Maha Arati was offered directly from the temple floor by 45 sponsoring families. As midnight approached, the temple filled with enthusiastic chanting and anticipation. At the sacred hour considered by devotees

to mark Lord Krishna's appearance, the curtains opened to reveal an elaborately adorned Sri Sri Kishore Kishori, and the principal Maha Arati began on the altar.

Simultaneously, the 45 sponsoring families offered glowing arati lamps from individually designated positions on the temple floor. Dozens of glowing lamps moved before the Deities as the temple resounded with the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra, ringing bells, devotional music and jubilant chanting.

Gajendra Moksha Das and his team was responsible for planning and coordinating the Midnight Maha Arati.

Another important feature of the festival was the distribution of prasadam—sanctified vegetarian food prepared and first offered to Lord Krishna. Volunteers worked behind the scenes to prepare, transport and serve prasadam to the large number of guests.

Devotees served in Deity worship, altar preparation, decorations, flower arrangements, Abhishek coordination, prasadam preparation and distribution, guest reception, registration, crowd management, cultural programming, cleaning and many other essential services.

ISKCON Chicago has served the Chicagoland community for more than five decades, under the umbrella of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness which was founded in New York in 1966.

MUSIC

Singer, Entrepreneur, Animal Rescuer - Meet Lalitha Munshaw

NIDHI KATHURIA, SARA JAHAN FILMS, SPECIAL TO DESI TALK

There are singers who fit neatly into a genre, and then there is Lalitha Munshaw — a voice that moves easily between classical ragas, ghazals, Sufi verses, Bollywood melodies, bhajans and folk without ever sounding out of place in any of them. A trained Hindustani classical vocalist and the founder of Red Ribbon Entertainment and Re n Raga Studios, Munshaw sat down with ITV Gold for a candid conversation about music, family and the causes closest to her heart, ahead of her performances in the U.S.

Munshaw's musical foundation lies in the Agra gharaana of Hindustani classical music, a rigorous tradition she trained in for years before it opened the door to everything else she sings today. But long before formal training entered the picture, there was her father. He was not a trained musician himself, she said, yet he was the one who first put music in her hands and in her heart — teaching her, among other things, the timeless prayer "Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam, sabko sanmati de Bhagwan." In her telling, he remains her first guru — not in technique, but in spirit.

It was also her father who took her from Ahmedabad to Bombay, a move that would define her career. There, he introduced her to music composer Kalyanji Anandji and singer Anup Jalota, connections that gave a young Munshaw her earliest real exposure to the professional



Lalitha Munshaw with Sri Sri Ravishankar.

music world. That leap — from a home in Gujarat to the heart of India's film and music industry — became the turning point that eventually led her to sing for films, cut devotional albums, and perform on concert stages across India and around the world, at times drawing crowds of up to 20,000 people at private parties, corporate shows, public festivals and government events.

Her range on record reflects the same range she described in conversation. She has sung garba during Navratri, recorded the devotional "Gan Ganpatay Namo

Namah," and even compiled a ghazal album that reads like a who's who of contemporary playback singing — with artists including Arijit Singh and Sonu Nigam among the voices who came together for the project.

In 2008, Munshaw launched her own record label, Red Ribbon Entertainment, dedicated to promoting Indian music around the globe. She went on to set up Mumbai-based recording studios, Re n Raga, which she says have hosted recording sessions for major films including Singham, Mary Kom, Gangs of Wasseypur and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani. It's a rare arc — vocalist to label founder to studio owner — built, as she described it, on the same discipline her early training instilled in her.

But ask her what she considers her true calling, and Munshaw doesn't point to a stage or a studio. It's rescuing animals. Her love for strays and abandoned pets runs deep, and it turned personal recently with the loss of her own pet, whom she'd named Elvis Presley. She speaks of him gently, without dwelling on the grief — he isn't gone, she says, simply living on in her heart, present with her still. That blend of resilience and warmth ran through the entire conversation — an artist equally at home discussing riyaz and studio balance sheets as she is talking about the pet she couldn't save but will never stop loving. Singer, entrepreneur and someone who clearly believes in giving back, Lalitha Munshaw's journey continues to evolve, on and off the stage. We wish her the very best for her upcoming performances and everything that lies ahead.

New Indian Consul General in Chicago Welcomed by Parikh Worldwide Media

By A Staff Writer

CHICAGO — Parikh Worldwide Media and ITV Gold have welcomed Dr. M. Anand Prakash as the new consul general of India in Chicago, expressing support for continued engagement between the consulate and the Indian American community across the Midwest.

The media organization, under the guidance of Chairman Dr. Sudhir M. Parikh, a Padma Shri recipient, said it looks forward to working with the consulate on community outreach, public information and initiatives aimed at strengthening India-U.S. ties.

Parikh Worldwide Media operates several Indian American publications, including News India Times, Desi Talk Chicago, Desi Talk New York/New Jersey, The Indian American and Gujarat Times, along with the ITV Gold television network.

The organization said it is prepared to assist the consulate with media outreach, coverage of official announcements, consular programs, cultural events, business forums and visits by Indian government officials and delegations.

It also said its media platforms and community network could help strengthen communication between the



PHOTO: CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA CHICAGO

Dr. M. Anand Prakash assumed charge as the new Consul General of India in Chicago, succeeding Ambassador Somnath Ghosh.

consulate and Indian American organizations, business leaders, elected officials, religious institutions, cultural groups and members of the news media throughout the Midwest.

Bhailal M. Patel, executive vice president of Parikh Worldwide Media LLC and ITV Gold, said he looks forward to supporting the consulate's outreach and community engagement efforts.

Patel has lived in the Chicago area since 1973 and has been involved in journalism, civic affairs, cultural organizations and community service for more than five decades. He is a co-founder, trustee and past president of FIA Chicago, president of the Illinois chapter of the National Indian American Public Policy Institute, a trustee of Manav Seva Mandir and managing broker of American Star Realty.

Patel also acknowledged outgoing Consul General Ambassador Somnath Ghosh, citing his engagement with Indian American organizations and community members during his tenure in Chicago.

He wished Ghosh success in his next diplomatic assignment and said he looks forward to meeting Prakash and working with the consulate during his tenure.

Prakash assumes charge at the Chicago consulate as the mission continues to provide consular services and maintain ties with Indian American communities across the Midwest.



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Living To Tell The Tale Of 9/11

By A Staff Writer

It's been 25 years since the tragic day September 11, 2001. Since then, 9/11 has become one of those events imprinted in the minds of everybody, at least in North America. We know exactly where we were when we came to know and saw the attacks on the World Trade Center, when the buildings came down, when horrific pictures of people tumbling down, amazing newscasts of first responders going into the dangerous spaces to rescue whomsoever they could.

Desi Talk asked one Indian American who was saved by the skin of their teeth and lived to tell the tale.

Dr. Ronac Mamtani (in his own words):

Where were you on that day?

I was a senior at Cornell, still trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. My father is a physician, and when I was younger I assumed I would probably become one too. Interestingly, he was the person who encouraged me to look into other careers. He had seen medicine changing and worried that the relationship between doctors and patients was becoming 'transactional' - almost a relationship between 'providers' and 'consumers'. He wanted me to make my own decision about medicine rather than simply follow him.

Cornell had an "Urban Semester Program" that allowed students to spend time in New York City and explore different careers. I was good with numbers and interested in economics, so I ended up doing an internship at Merrill Lynch in the World Financial Center, located right next to the Twin Towers.

My first day was September 10, 2001.

September 11 was my second (and last) day.

I still have my Merrill Lynch name tag from that internship. I have kept it



Ronac Mamtani, MD MSCE



The North Tower is shown burning after American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the tower at 8:45 a.m. on 9/11/2001.



A man takes a photo at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum near the Tribute in Light in Lower Manhattan, New York, September 9, 2015.

all these years. When I look at it now, it is strange to think about the young person wearing it. I had gone to NYC thinking I was exploring one possible career. Within 24 hours, I began thinking about an entirely different one.

What do you recall about that moment when planes began hitting the WTC?

I remember pieces of that morning rather than a clean sequence of events.

I had been paired during orientation with another intern - a young man from France. I wish I could remember his name. We were sitting in a cubicle doing training courses. I remember thinking the office seemed unusually quiet. At some point I wondered, where is everybody? Then I remember seeing debris falling outside. An announcement told us to stay where we were. I was a college student on my second day in a professional office, so my natural reaction was to follow the rules.

The French intern thought different-

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September 11, 2001: A Morning We Will Never Forget

September 11, 2001, began as a pleasant, ordinary late-summer morning. Our daughter had breakfast and left for school, and we were getting ready to start our day. A little before 9:00 a.m., we turned on the television and saw reports that a plane had struck one of the Twin Towers in New York City. Soon after, we watched in disbelief as a second plane hit the other tower. The scenes of chaos and confusion were deeply disturbing.

Our greatest concern was for our son, Ronac, who was an undergraduate at Cornell University and was doing an elective on Wall Street, not far from the Twin Tow-

ers. We had no way to reach him and became increasingly anxious and worried as the hours passed.

Our landline phone finally rang. It was Ronac. The relief was indescribable. He said, "Ma, you've probably heard the news about the Twin Towers in New York City. I am OK." He had managed to find a pay phone to call us and let us know he was safe. There were many people waiting in line before him and after him, each hoping to make that precious call to a loved one. He told us he had to run to reach his dorm because there was widespread fear and limited transportation.

As grateful as we were to hear his voice and know

that he was unharmed, our thoughts were also with the thousands of people caught in the disaster. Watching the horrifying scenes unfold on television, we could only imagine what those who were injured, trapped, or searching for loved ones must have been experiencing.

More than two decades later, we still remember the emotions of that morning with remarkable clarity: the shock of witnessing history, the anguish of not knowing, and the overwhelming relief of hearing a loved one's voice.

Jaishree and Ravinder Mamtani
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Living To Tell The Tale Of 9/11

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ly. He said we should leave. We got into an elevator. I remember how crowded it was. When we finally reached the ground floor, there were crowds of office workers looking upward.

I looked up and saw smoke coming from one of the towers.

And this sounds ridiculous now, but my first thought was that there had been a small office fire. My mind didn't have a reference for what I was seeing.

Then a plane came over us – this was the second plane. I'll never forget the sound of that engine. For a second, I remember wondering whether there was an airport on top of the WTC. That is how little I understood what was happening. Your brain looks for an ordinary explanation because the real one is unimaginable.

The French intern told me we needed to run – so I ran. After that, I mostly remember panic and dust.

Did you feel a sense of terror or calm, and how did you get out of the building?

I would not describe myself as calm, and I certainly would not describe myself as brave. In fact, someone I had known for barely a day had much better instincts than I did. We had been told to remain where we were. He was the one who convinced me to leave. When everyone was staring at the burning towers, he was the one who told me to run.

I do not remember his name, and I wish I did. Every September 11th, I think about him, I wonder where he is and what his life became. And I wish I could thank him. Maybe, somehow, he will read this.

Eventually, I made my way from lower Manhattan to the Upper East Side, where I was staying at Olin Hall at Weill Cornell Medical Center.

I could not reach my parents for hours. Phones were not working normally, and of course they had no idea whether I was safe. I was finally able to reach them in the early evening.

I also remember the Metro North train ride home to upstate NY afterward. I felt people looking at me differently. I was a young brown man, and in those first hours after the attacks, I wondered whether some people thought I looked like someone they should fear. Of course, I don't know what anyone was actually thinking, so I don't want to overinterpret. I only know what it felt like to me at the time.

But even this memory was overshadowed by something bigger.

I kept thinking about the people who had not been able to get out.

The official death toll from the attack was nearly 3,000 people. While thousands were able to evacuate - firefighters, police officers, and other first responders were moving in while others were trying to escape.

I kept wondering what the people who



PHOTO: PROVIDED

Dr. Ronac Mamtani with his children at UPenn's basketball court.

were trapped must have been feeling.

That sense of vulnerability stayed with me.

What effect did the tragedy have on your own life - in the short term and in the long term?

It changed the direction of my life. I don't want to make it sound as though becoming a doctor had never crossed my mind before 9/11. My father was a physician, and I had grown up around medicine. But I was genuinely exploring other careers, and finance was one of them.

After 9/11, something became much clearer to me.

I had just seen people at their most vulnerable. I kept thinking how helpless they must have felt and how desperately they must have wanted somebody to help them.

I realized I wanted to dedicate my life doing something where, when people are frightened and vulnerable, I could be useful to them.

A few weeks later, my supervisor at Merrill Lynch called. He told me how relieved he was that I was okay. I told him I would not be returning to finance.

I applied to medical school.

My application essay was largely about 9/11 and how the experience had affirmed my decision to pursue medicine.

I remember one of my first medical school interviews afterward, at Downstate – in Brooklyn. The interviewer, a psychiatrist of Indian origin, questioned whether the story in my essay was actually true.

At the time I was deeply offended. This was something that I had just lived through, something that had affected me profoundly, and suddenly I felt as though I had to prove it had happened.

But 25 years later, this is not the part of the story I spend much time thinking

about.

I ended up going to Stony Brook, in Long Island NY. I received outstanding medical education. And I met my wife there.

Somehow, this terrible day redirected my professional life, but the path it put me on also ultimately led me to the person with whom I built my family.

Today as you look back- do you feel a sense of fulfillment and do you feel that 9/11 is still the driving force in your life? how and why?

I don't know that I'd use the word fulfillment when talking about 9/11. I think the better word for me is gratitude. I am grateful that I got out. Grateful for that young intern. And I am very aware that many people standing only a short distance away did not have the same outcome.

Today, I am the section Chief of Genitourinary Medical Oncology at Penn. I care for patients with bladder cancer. I train young oncologists. I lead a research program focused on generating real-world evidence in oncology and how we can learn from the experiences of patients outside clinical trials. I have also been fortunate to receive an endowed professorship, the David J Vaughn MD Professorship in Genitourinary Oncology.

I am proud of those things, but they are not really how I think about the connection to 9/11.

The connection is much simpler.

It is the patient sitting in front of me.

A cancer diagnosis can make a person feel incredibly vulnerable. One day you are living your life. Then suddenly, you hear a word like 'cancer', and your whole world changes.

I cannot always take their fear away and do not always have the answers to the questions my patients ask.

But - I can be there, help them un-

derstand what is happening, help them make decisions, and help them feel that they are not alone.

That is probably the closest connection between the young person I was on 9/11 and the physician I am today.

And there is one part of my career that I find particularly ironic.

Some of the patients I care for are firefighters and other first responders from 9/11.

I am very careful about saying that a particular individual's cancer was caused by a particular exposure. But many responders experienced enormous exposure to dust, smoke, combustion products and other pollutants during rescue and recovery efforts.

There is something very moving to me about sitting across from one of those patients.

25 years ago, when I was frightened, I was running away from that scene.

They were running toward it.

And now, sometimes, I have the privilege of taking care of them.

You are now 25 years older and have two children of your own. What life-lessons can you teach them and others - about how to live their lives, and what courage, responsibilities, commitments etc. all of us should adopt?

I think one of the biggest lessons is that life rarely follows the plan you make for it.

Sometimes something terrible happens and there is no lesson that makes it OK.

But, we do get to decide what we do afterwards.

I also want my children to understand that courage does not mean being fearless.

I was afraid on 9/11 and so I ran.

The courage I remember that day belonged to other people- firefighters, police officers, emergency workers and ordinary people who helped strangers

And, on a much smaller scale, it belonged to a young French intern who ignored the instinct to wait and told another confused college student (me) – "we need to go".

I have spent 25 years not knowing his name, but I have never forgotten what he did.

If I could say something to my children about how to live, it would probably be this: be the person who notices when somebody else needs help.

You may never know what effect a small decision has on another person's life.

That intern probably had no idea that the person running beside him would one day become a cancer doctor, have a wife and two kids, train other physicians, and still be thinking about him a quarter of a century later.

And every 9/11, I still wish I could tell him- Thank you.

DHS Proposes New \$103,265 H-1B Fee — Separate From (and On Top Of) the \$100,000 Proclamation Payment

IN MEMORIAM

By David H. Nachman, Esq



Michael Phulwani



David Nachman



Ludka Zimovcak



Snehal Batra

On August 24, 2026, DHS announced a proposed rule that would add a new \$103,265 fee to all H-1B cap-subject petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was published in the Federal Register on August 25, 2026. This is not the same as the \$100,000 fee created by last year's presidential proclamation, and if finalized, some employers could end up owing both.

What the Proposed Fee Actually Covers

The new fee would be paid at the time of filing, in addition to every other applicable fee, and is intended to fund costs across the entire federal immigration system, not just USCIS. DHS projects the fee would generate approximately \$8.8 billion a year based on an assumed 85,000 cap-subject filings, with revenue shared among USCIS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, the Executive Office for Immigration Review at the Justice Department, the State Department, and the Department of Labor.

How This Differs From the \$100,000 Proclamation Fee

The table below highlights the key differences between the two.

	\$100,000 Proclamation Fee	Proposed \$103,265 Fee
Legal Basis	Presidential Proclamation 10973, under INA sections 212(f) and 215 (a) (entry restriction authority)	Proposed rule under INA section 286(m) and (n) (USCIS fee-setting and cost-recovery authority)
Current Status	Vacated by a federal district court in June 2026; government's appeal pending at the First Circuit; not currently being collected	Only a proposed rule as of August 24, 2026; not yet in effect
Who it applies to	H-1B petitions requiring a beneficiary abroad to obtain a visa through consular processing	All H-1B cap-subject petitions, regardless of where the beneficiary is located
If both applied	Would be owed in addition to the proposed fee, if the Proclamation payment is reinstated	Proposed to be owed in addition to the Proclamation payment, per the proposed rule

Who Would Have to Pay It

The proposed fee would apply only to cap-subject H-1B petitions, including those filed under the 20,000-person advanced degree, or master's, exemption. It would not apply to cap-exempt petitions, such as those filed by nonprofit research organizations, governmental research organizations, or institutions of higher education. Employers planning to file new cap-subject H-1B petitions for the FY 2027 cap season and beyond would be squarely affected if this rule is finalized as proposed.

What Happens Next

This is a proposed rule, not a final one. Public comments are due by September 24, 2026, and DHS could revise the fee amount or scope based on comments received before any final rule is published.

Employers should not assume the \$103,265 figure is locked in, but should also not assume the proposal will simply disappear, given DHS's stated intent to move forward with cost recovery across the immigration system.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the \$103,265 fee in effect right now?

No. This is only a proposed rule. It would need to go through the public comment period, ending September 24, 2026, and a final rule before it could take effect.

Would employers have to pay both this fee and the \$100,000 Proclamation fee?
Potentially. The proposed rule states that the new \$103,265 fee would be separate from the \$100,000 Proclamation payment. However, the Proclamation payment is currently not being collected due to ongoing litigation.

Does this fee apply to cap-exempt H-1B petitions?

No. DHS proposes to exempt petitions filed by nonprofit research organizations, governmental research organizations, and institutions of higher education, consistent with how those petitions are already treated as cap-exempt.

To be continued on Page 16

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The Unpredictable Gift Of An Ordinary Delay: Remembering 9/11

By BHARGAVI KULKARNI

Bhargavi Kulkarni reflects on the 25th anniversary of 9/11 through a first-person perspective regarding an everyday delay that altered her family's fate. A twenty-minute delay caused by watching Monday Night Football prevented Sachin Kulkarni from being on the 95th floor of WTC Tower 1, while a close colleague tragically arrived on time.

The morning began like any other Tuesday at our home in Central New Jersey. Before that day, everything in our lives was strictly scheduled. Sachin always lived by the clock, hating to be behind schedule for any train, bus, or work meeting. But because he stayed up to watch Monday Night Football the night before, he overslept. When he reached the station, he chose to let a crowded commuter train pass so he could wait for one with an empty seat. That ordinary delay changed our lives.

He worked on the 95th floor of Tower 1. He usually competed with his desk neighbor to see who could get to the office first. Because of his delayed start, Sachin was running about twenty minutes behind his usual routine.

While I sat at home holding our ten-month-old son, the television showed the first tower on fire. The phone lines across the region were completely jammed, so there was no way to get through. For several hours, I had no way of knowing if he had made it to his desk on time.

Eventually, he managed to reach me.

He had emerged from the station just as the disaster was unfolding, and once he got through the gridlocked networks, he called to let me know he was safe. The relief was immediate, but it was quickly



PHOTO: REUTERS/MIKE SEGAR

A single white flower is left on one of the panels containing the names of the victims of the attacks on the first day that the 9/11 Memorial was opened to the public at the World Trade Center site in New York, September 12, 2011. The area is opening to the public the day after the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

paired with grief. His desk neighbor had arrived at work on time. While he stood on the street below, he was exchanging short text messages with his colleague, who told him he was stuck and needed help. Then the messages stopped. His company lost nearly 300 people that day, and the loss of his colleagues changed the reality of the life we came home to.

He finally made it back to Central New Jersey late that evening, carrying the heavy confusion of what he had witnessed in the city. The immediate aftermath did not offer time to pause or process the shock. The very next day, his focus had to shift to business survival. He left early with a colleague to drive

through the night toward Boston, tasked with retrieving and rebuilding whatever remained of his company's IT infrastructure.

That entire week became a blur of logistical urgency against a backdrop of national lockdown. He remembers every concrete detail of that journey — the precise highway turns, the midnight food breaks, and the surreal quiet of the roads.

Over the years, the shadow of that morning remained part of our household, but it was not something we openly dissected. Sachin has always preferred not to speak about the events of that day. Whenever friends or family bring up the subject, he remains present but chooses

not to participate. The memories are kept private.

However, the passage of time forced us to engage with the legacy of the event in other ways. I have taken many out-of-town visitors to the outdoor memorial at Ground Zero over the decades. I have stood by the reflecting pools and found his colleague's name etched in the bronze. However, I have never been able to bring myself to go inside the museum. The outdoor memorial allows for open air and moving forward, while the museum feels too close to the suffocating silence of those hours spent waiting at home.

Our family grew again in 2004 when our daughter was born. Looking at both of our children, it is impossible not to realize that our entire family's future — e very milestone, graduation, and routine dinner over the past two decades — only exists because of a twenty-minute delay.

Experiencing a near-miss like that removes the illusion of control. It completely reordered how Sachin views time. The man who used to get anxious over tight schedules and work deadlines learned to relax. Today, he rarely wears a watch. If a coworker falls behind or a schedule slips, he no longer carries the stress of it. If we miss a train now, we simply wait for the next one.

Looking back twenty-five years later, my reflection centers on how completely unpredictable life is. A football game and a missed train are simple, random things, but they are the reasons our lives continued. Twenty-five years later, I still thank Monday Night Football.

Survival is a humbling reminder that we cannot plan tomorrow. We only have the moments right in front of us, and a responsibility to live them fully in honor of the people who were simply on time.

25 Years Later, City's 9/11 Records Being Opened To Public; Also 9/11 Declared "Day Of Remembrance And Service"

By A STAFF WRITER

On September 8, just ahead of the 25th anniversary of the horrific September 11th terrorist attacks, Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani announced the release of more than 170,000 pages of City records documenting the government's response to the attacks and their aftermath, as well as the settlement of two lawsuits brought by 9/11 Health Watch, ending a multi-year legal battle over records concerning air quality and health concerns following September 11.

Across several mayoral administrations, first responders, elected officials and families of victims of 9/11-related illnesses have demanded the release of these records, a press release from the Mayor's office said. The FY27 budget includes \$34 million to create and maintain the public records portal.

The portal, available now at nyc.gov/sept11docs, fea-



PHOTO: REUTERS/CARLO ALLEGRI

People walk through the Oculus transportation hub at the 9/11 Memorial site in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., August 31, 2020. Picture taken August 31, 2020.

tures an initial release of approximately 170,000 pages of records concerning health concerns, air quality and the City's response to September 11th. The records include the frequently referenced Harding Memo, the "68 boxes" of records that were not located until 2025, and a collection of records concerning World Trade Center 7.

Earlier, on Sept. 4, the city also declared Sept. 11th an official "Day of Remembrance and Service."

"Through this Executive Order, we are calling on New Yorkers to honor their memory through service and deep reflection," said Mamdani.

The Executive Order directs the administration to designate time that day for a moment of silence in honor of those who were killed in the attacks and those who suffered health consequences in the years since. City agencies are also encouraged to hold memorial ceremonies, educational programming and other activities to honor those lost, their families and the first responders who answered the call.

Coalition Of Indian American, Other Lawmakers Lead Roundtable To Combat Rising Hate Against South Asian Americans

By A STAFF WRITER

Federal, state, and local elected officials discuss strategies to prevent hate-motivated violence and strengthen the response to hate crimes

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) and a coalition of South Asian lawmakers today led a national roundtable with state and local South Asian elected officials focused on rising hate and discrimination targeting South Asian American communities and concrete steps policymakers can take to combat hate and prevent violence.

The roundtable brought together Representatives Pramila Jayapal, Ami Bera, Suhas Subramanyam, and Shri Thanedar, along with state and local elected officials from across the country, Indian American Impact, and Stop AAPI Hate. Participants discussed what South Asian communities are experiencing, the forces driving hate, and strategies to strengthen prevention, reporting, and response.



Roundtable discussion on Capitol Hill to stem rising hate crimes against South Asian Americans.

"Today's roundtable brought together South Asian leaders from across the country to confront the rise in hate, harassment, and violence our communities are seeing and focus on what we can do about it," Krishnamoorthi said. "This is

about protecting South Asian Americans, but it is also about making clear that no American should be made to feel they do not belong because of where they were born, how they worship, or what their name sounds like. That is why I have been

working to strengthen our response to hate crimes, including through the Hate Crimes Commission Act, so we can better understand what is driving this hate and prevent violence before it happens."

Earlier this year, Krishnamoorthi reintroduced the Hate Crimes Commission Act with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Representatives Grace Meng and Nydia Velázquez. The legislation would establish a bipartisan commission to examine what is driving hate crimes, including the role of social media and technology, assess barriers to complete reporting, and identify successful prevention and response strategies. It would also require a Government Accountability Office audit of federal hate-crime data to improve the accuracy and reliability of information on hate crimes nationwide.

The roundtable included state and local elected officials from North Carolina, New Jersey, Virginia, California, Michigan, Texas, and Pennsylvania, as well as Indian American Impact Executive Director Chintan Patel and Stop AAPI Hate Co-Founder Manju Kulkarni.

Congressman Ami Bera Reintroduces Legislation To End Tuberculosis Worldwide

By A STAFF WRITER

On September 2, 2026, U.S. Congressman Dr. Ami Bera, D-California, along with Rep. María Elvira Salazar, R-Florida, co-chairs of the House Tuberculosis Elimination Caucus, reintroduced the End Tuberculosis Now Act of 2026. This bipartisan legislation seeks to strengthen U.S. efforts to prevent, diagnose, treat, and ultimately eliminate tuberculosis (TB) worldwide. A group of seven bipartisan representatives joined as original cosponsors.

"Tuberculosis is preventable, treatable, and curable, yet it continues to take far too many lives around the world," said Dr. Bera is quoted saying in the press release. "The End Tuberculosis Now Act of 2026 ensures the United States remains a leader in this fight by focusing on proven approaches: investing in better diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines and making sure our global health programs are accountable for results. I'm especially grateful to John Green, RESULTS, and TB advocates across the country for their tireless work to raise awareness, build support, and move us closer to ending TB once and for all."

Rep. Salazar echoed Bera's comments noting, "Tuberculosis has challenged humanity for centuries. It should not define the centuries ahead."

RESULTS, an advocacy organization for global health crises such as TB, malnutrition, and AIDS, was among the leaders in influencing this legislation in Congress.

"RESULTS is deeply grateful to Rep. Bera and Rep. Salazar for their unwavering commitment to the fight against TB, and for championing this legislation," said Dr.



Congressman Ami Bera, D-California.

Joanne Carter, Executive Director of RESULTS. "Communities around the world are leading the fight against TB, and we now have a range of powerful new tools ready to deploy. The U.S. government has already set bold targets for ending TB globally, and this bill provides the frame-

work for how we actually get there. Our volunteers across the country are ready to support Congress to get this bill enacted into law."

The End Tuberculosis Now Act of 2026 modernizes U.S. global TB programs to focus resources on finding, treating, and preventing tuberculosis, particularly in countries and communities with the highest burden of the disease.

The legislation would expand access to TB diagnosis, treatment, and prevention, including active case finding, rapid diagnostics, treatment for drug-resistant TB, and preventive treatment for people at high risk of infection; Accelerate research and development of better tools to fight TB, including new diagnostics, drug therapies, vaccines, and other technologies, while strengthening health systems and laboratory capacity; Set clear goals and strengthen accountability for U.S. programs, including working by 2030 to reduce TB incidence by 80 percent and TB deaths by 90 percent from 2015 levels, diagnose and begin treatment for 90 percent of TB and drug-resistant TB cases, achieve a 90 percent treatment success rate, and provide preventive treatment to 30 million people.

Since 2022, Representative Bera has led bipartisan efforts in the House of Representatives to eliminate tuberculosis. Bera has made the case that investing in prevention, detection, and eradication efforts abroad is also an investment in the health and security of Americans at home, and is a commonsense way to keep Americans safe and defend America from future public health threats.

Companion legislation in the Senate was introduced in the 119th Congress by Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

ASTROLOGY

This week for you



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

ARIES: A harmonious atmosphere at home may bring comfort. Take good care of your well-being. At work, your abilities may be put to the test, allowing you to prove yourself. A short break or weekend outing may help you refresh your mind. Those waiting for possession of a booked property may receive encouraging news. Building new professional connections can also add value to your social circle.



TAURUS: Your dedication can help you move steadily. Finances are likely to remain manageable. A change within the family may require patience. A solo journey could offer you peace. Your confidence may make social interactions easier. Students can benefit from collaborative learning. Maintaining a constructive attitude can bring satisfying results.



GEMINI: Giving proper attention to your fitness can help. Professional responsibilities may require precision. Students may discover fresh ideas and experience encouraging progress. Expanding your circle can open interesting possibilities. Instead of rushing into travel plans, use this period to organise a more comfortable trip. Financially, strengthening your resources may prove beneficial.



CANCER: Warm conversations may bring greater closeness to your romantic life. A morning walk can keep you active and refreshed. Professionally, developing a specialised skill may improve your growth. Property-related matters may encourage you to explore further opportunities. Your ability to adapt can work in your favour. Travel may bring relaxation and enjoyable experiences. Students can gain from exchanging notes and learning together.



LEO: A balanced approach can help you manage your resources effectively. The support of family members may bring satisfaction. It's wise to review property matters. Your connections with people around you may become warmer. A quick break could help restore your enthusiasm. Students can improve their performance. Confidence and an optimistic mindset can guide you through the week successfully.



VIRGO: Romance may bring affectionate moments. Family relationships may benefit from patience. Your career could bring changing circumstances, but your abilities can help you handle new responsibilities effectively. Exploring suitable property opportunities may prove worthwhile. Travel plans may need some flexibility. Students can make good use of this period by completing assignments and focusing on important projects without distractions.



LIBRA: Your relationships may feel warmer making this a pleasant period of companionship. Financial progress may remain steady. A calm approach can help maintain harmony within the family. An unexpected journey may add excitement to your routine. Property decisions may require careful timing. Creative ideas can emerge. Students may benefit greatly from maintaining communication with mentors.



SCORPIO: Your financial position may remain stable. Couples may experience emotional intensity. A property may begin to look promising. Travel arrangements move forward. Your quick thinking can help you handle different social situations with ease. Students should follow a disciplined study routine. Consistency can gradually bring the results you desire.



SAGITTARIUS: Look after your well-being. Healthy meals can help you feel more energetic. Family bonds may grow stronger when you invest time. On the romantic front, patience can help. An overseas journey may bring exciting experiences. Your creative abilities could shine brightly. Property management may demand your attention. Students can achieve by following an organised study method.



CAPRICORN: Financial gains may give you confidence to plan for ambitions. Paying attention to your physical needs can support wellness. Existing relationships may benefit from commitment. Buying a property or improving your current home may remain on your mind. A family trip could create memorable moments. Participating in meaningful activities may bring personal satisfaction. Students can gain practical knowledge through internships.



AQUARIUS: A family gathering can provide an opportunity to share thoughts and understand each other better. Property-related plans may require evaluation before taking the next step. Your social presence may attract attention. The value of your assets may show gradual improvement. Travel plans may need to remain flexible. Students can benefit from reviewing their current progress.



PISCES: A practical approach can help you manage financial matters and explore new possibilities. Giving priority to your health can make you feel more balanced. Romance may bring exciting developments. Property matters may require attention, but consistent effort can help you move towards a solution. Planning a break may offer the relaxation you need. Taking part in volunteering can help you build connections and enjoy a sense of belonging.



NRS PAY Showcases Retail Solutions at AARA Retailers Tradeshow '26



NRS PAY CEO Elie Katz, first from left, joined members of his team at the AARA Retailers Tradeshow '26, held Sept. 2 at the New Jersey Convention & Expo Center in Edison, New Jersey

By A Staff Writer

EDISON, N.J. — NRS PAY showcased its payment-processing technology and retail business services at the AARA Retailers Tradeshow '26, held Sept. 2 at the New Jersey Convention & Expo Center in Edison.

NRS PAY CEO Elie Katz attended the event with members of his team, who demonstrated the company's point-of-sale equipment, payment solutions and other services designed for convenience stores and independent retailers.

The trade show was organized by the

Asian American Retailers Association, or AARA, and brought together retailers, vendors, suppliers and service providers from across the industry. Exhibitors presented products and technologies aimed at helping store owners improve operations, payment processing and customer service.

The event also provided retailers with an opportunity to meet industry representatives, explore new products and learn about emerging trends in the convenience and retail sectors.

NRS PAY was among the exhibitors highlighting technology and business solutions for retailers during the daylong industry gathering.

IMMIGRATION

DHS Proposes New \$103,265 H-1B Fee - Separate From (and On Top Of) the \$100,000 Proclamation Payment

By David H. Nachman, Esq

-Continued From Page 13

Does the fee apply differently to the regular cap versus the master's cap exemption? No. The proposed fee would apply to all H-1B cap-subject petitions, including those filed under the 20,000-person advanced degree exemption.

Can employers respond to this proposed rule?

Yes. DHS is accepting public comments through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at regulations.gov, referencing DHS Docket No. USCIS-2026-0298, through September 24, 2026.

If you or your family members have questions about how this or other immigration and nationality 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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Indian National Among “Worst” Of ICE’s “Operation Rotten Apple” Arrests In New York; Another Indian-Origin Man De-Naturalized

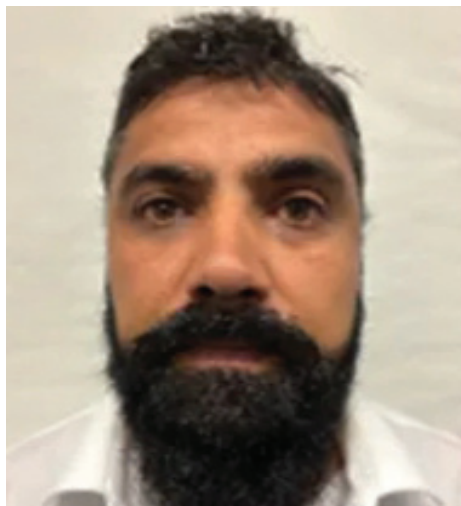
By A STAFF WRITER

On Tuesday, September 1, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Markwayne Mullin hosted a press conference in New York City, announcing the success of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Operation Rotten Apple.

Describing some of them as the “worst” illegal aliens arrested in Operation Rotten Apple, DHS listed 10 individuals, providing their photos, who were from different countries of origin. They included Palvinder Singh, “an illegal alien from India, whose criminal history includes a conviction for rape in Germany,” the press release said.

The operation, which took place from July 27 to August 29, resulted in the arrests of 2,197 illegal aliens across the state of New York, a press release from DHS said.

“Thanks to the hard work of the men and women of ICE and our federal partners, Operation Rotten Apple did what



Palvinder Singh, an illegal alien from India, whose criminal history includes a conviction for rape in Germany.

sanctuary politicians in New York City and the state of New York refuse to do: made the Empire State safer,” said Secretary



Gurmeet Singh

Mullin. “Over the course of this operation, we arrested murderers, rapists, pedophiles, drug traffickers, and violent as-

sailants. And we did it with no help from Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul,” Mullin asserted, warning, “... we won’t let sanctuary politicians stand in our way. If you’re a state or local politician, your best bet is to cooperate with us so we can all make America safe again.”

A day before that, on August 31, US Attorney General Todd Blanche posted on X that an Indian national had been de-naturalized, in effect, his US citizenship had been revoked, on grounds that he lied or hid certain facts during the naturalization process.

“This convicted rapist from India is no longer a U.S. citizen,” AG Blanche posted on X. “Gurmeet Singh concealed a rape and kidnapping during the naturalization process, and a federal court has now revoked his citizenship,” he added.

AG Blanche went on to say, “@TheJusticeDept took this case across the finish line, and we will continue to move expeditiously on denaturalization referrals. ... Fraudulently obtained citizenship WILL NOT protect criminals from justice.”

FBI Director Kash Patel Announces Alleged Fraudster Manjit Singh Bedi Nabbed In India

By A STAFF WRITER

FBI Director Kash Patel, announced the capture of an individual of Indian origin listed on FBI’s Most Wanted Fraudsters list, September 5, 2026. Following is the text posted by Director Patel – “CAPTURED: Another FBI Most Wanted Fraudster. This is the 5th Most Wanted Fraudster captured since the creation of the new list three months ago – and yet another high value target captured overseas. Subjects captured so far have been responsible for a combined over \$2 billion in fraud and were on the run for almost 4,000 days collectively prior to arrest. MANJIT SINGH BEDI – on the run for nearly a year – was arrested for allegedly defrauding the U.S. of at least \$600k in SNAP funds from approximately 2024 to 2025 – orchestrating a scheme out of a grocery store he operated here in the U.S. Bedi was just arrested in India and was believed have fled there sometime last year. FBI is actively working to secure his return to the United States. Bedi is charged with a series of offenses including wire fraud, SNAP benefits fraud, and more.”

Patel thanked law enforcement partners, the Department of Justice, the White House Fraud Task Force, “and more who continue to work with us on this historic initiative under the leadership of” President Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance.

Two days earlier on September 3, the Justice Department had issued a “Wanted” order with an award of \$150,000 for information leading to Bedi’s arrest and conviction.

Bedi, 65, of Tacoma, Washington, was added to the



Poster on X.com@FBI DirectorKash

FBI’s new Most Wanted Fraudsters list along with two other cases from the FBI Tampa and Los Angeles field offices, on the warrant for his arrest.

Bedi was wanted for his alleged involvement in a benefits fraud scheme that defrauded the U.S. government of at least \$600,000 between March 2024 and June 2025. Bedi operated a small grocery store in Tacoma, Washington, called Asian Grocery Store. He purportedly sold food to participants of the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) through their EBT cards.

“However, instead of selling participants food, Bedi is alleged to have swiped their cards and given them cash, keeping half of the proceeds for himself. After being indicted for wire fraud and SNAP benefits fraud, Bedi was allowed to appear in court without being arrested. He was ordered to give up his passport and remain in Washington state. However, Bedi soon drove across the border to Canada and then fled to India,” the September 3 press release said.

Bedi is a naturalized U.S. citizen.

On May 21, 2026, a federal arrest warrant was issued for Bedi in the U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, Tacoma, Washington, after he was charged with violations of conditions of supervision.

The FBI launched the Most Wanted Fraudsters list with 8 individuals on June 4, 2026, a new wanted list dedicated to publicly identifying individuals charged with defrauding the American people.

The charges contained in the indictment are only allegations. A person is presumed innocent unless and until he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The Washington Post

Why some passengers touch the plane before boarding

By Hannah Sampson



Photo: Generated via Adobe Express (powered by Adobe Firefly)

Every time Michelle Tucker flies, she reaches out and gives the plane a little tap, tap, tap as she boards.

“Like you give a dog a little pat on the head,” said Tucker, 51, who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. “We now have the connection.”

A nervous flier, Tucker picked up the habit from her husband of 26 years, who double taps the plane. Their teenagers do the same. So do untold numbers of fellow travelers who touch, tap and pat the aircraft as they prepare to hurtle across the sky at 38,000 feet.

Many of them have shared the habit on social media, finding kindred spirits amid fellow plane touchers who are pleased to discover they aren’t alone. Commenters say they tell the plane “you got this” or wish it a safe flight; they may even say a prayer as they rest their hand on the surface.

“It’s a simple gesture - and a very human one,” said Patrick Smith, a commercial airline pilot and founder of the Ask the Pilot blog, in an email. “Let’s face it, even the most frequent flier contemplates his or her mortality on some level when stepping aboard a plane. That friendly tap is a gesture of luck and reassurance.”

Tucker, who writes the family travel blog *Staying Blonde*, joked in a TikTok about “protecting everyone on this flight” with the taps. She said the gesture serves as part superstition and part routine to calm herself down before a flight.

“Our bodies, I don’t think, are made to understand flying through the air,” she said. Uneasy fliers often embrace rituals when they travel, wearing certain clothes, eating specific foods or uttering precise phrases, Nathan Feiles, a New York-based psychotherapist and fear of flying specialist, said in an email.

Feiles has seen and worked with people who touch the plane’s exterior as they board. He said the action can be a superstition that gives travelers a feeling of control or a way to foster trust and connection with the plane, like petting a horse before climbing on.

“It’s almost like saying ‘we’ve got each other, I’m trusting you,’” he wrote.

For some, he said, touching the plane’s side might just be a way to participate in a social media trend - albeit one embraced by people who have flown safely.

Britney Wilson, 45, a marketing agency founder who lives near Nashville, puts her hand on the plane and says a prayer for the pilots, crew and passengers as she

walks on board.

She prays for safety, good behavior in the cabin and grace.

“Just real quick and I try to be discreet so I don’t freak anybody out,” she said. If she’s flying Southwest, she aims for the heart icon right next to the door.

“I think they did it on purpose. They could have put that heart anywhere,” she said. “It’s like, high five the heart.”

Travel adviser Katherine Dale, 55, of West Bend, Wisconsin, posted a video on TikTok set to the “Mission: Impossible” theme song confessing that she must touch the plane before boarding.

“In my head, touching the plane means we’re going to get there safely,” she wrote in an email. “I know my hand isn’t actually keeping the plane in the sky, but I’m not willing to test the theory!”

She said it’s been a routine as long as she can remember, and one that she’s passed down to her children.

Samantha Stogner, a 25-year-old dance teacher who lives outside Phoenix, has been tapping planes for good luck for ages. She compiled a video showing her touching more than a dozen jets.

Stogner said in an email that the practice might have become a compulsion that she feels like she has to do - but she likes to think “it helps put good energy” into the universe for her flight.

“Simply a tap and touch of good luck and energy I am hoping to receive on the flight,” she said.

Feiles, the psychotherapist, said preflight rituals can be useful if they help someone feel better about flying. But, he said, some can be harmful, especially if they lead someone to dwell on what could go wrong as a form of mental or emotional preparation.

“Many times, preflight rituals can actually be emotionally overwhelming, all-consuming and cause dread,” he wrote. “Just because something is a ritual doesn’t mean it’s always something that feels good.”

For the plane’s part, Smith, the pilot, said there is no problem with a little pat on the way in.

“I’m known to do it myself - though in my case it’s more of a fist-bump,” he wrote.

Reviving The Legacy Of Mashru And Patan Patola Through Technology And Innovation

BY AMAR SHAH, FOUNDER, LIFE GLOBAL

For centuries, Patan Patola and Mashru textiles have stood among India's finest handloom traditions, admired worldwide for their exceptional craftsmanship, intricate designs, and timeless elegance.

Yet these centuries-old crafts face growing challenges, including declining artisan participation, limited infrastructure, and changing market demands. Recognizing the need to preserve this priceless heritage while creating sustainable livelihoods, Life Global, in partnership with Gramshree, has launched an initiative that blends traditional artistry with modern technology and innovation.

Today, the focus extends beyond preservation. The project is building a sustainable ecosystem where heritage craftsmanship can flourish alongside technology, design innovation, and professional training.

A major milestone has been the digitization and systematic documentation of traditional weaving techniques. More than 150 Patola layouts and 200 Mashru designs have been carefully catalogued, creating a permanent technical archive that safeguards generations of artisan knowledge. This digital resource enables artisans to maintain exceptional quality while introducing contemporary designs that appeal to global markets.

The initiative is also advancing research in placement-based and adornment-oriented Patola weaving, ensuring motifs are engineered with remarkable precision for modern garments. By combining traditional skills with technical innovation, artisans can preserve authenticity while meeting evolving consumer expectations.

The program currently supports a dedicated community of more than 80 artisans in Patan, connected to a wider network of over 35,000 artisans across India.



PHOTOS: LIFE GLOBAL

Women displaying Patola design sarees.



An artisan with his weaving machine

Importantly, it has opened the doors to first-generation weavers, including many women, enabling them to learn a craft that was once limited to hereditary artisan families. Through structured training, mentorship, and hands-on experience, participants gain valuable skills that create long-term economic opportunities for their families.

AN ARTISAN WITH HIS WEAVING MACHINE

Looking ahead, Life Global and Gramshree envision establishing a Centre of Excellence for Patan Patola and Mashru Weaving. This world-class facility will bring together master artisans, young learners, researchers, and designers under one roof, creating a continuous chain of learning, innovation, and craftsmanship. It will preserve museum-quality weaving traditions while encouraging creativity, research, and product development for international markets.

One significant challenge remains the availability of adequate infrastructure. The highly specialized double-ikat weaving process requires considerable space for yarn preparation, dyeing, alignment, and weaving. Existing facilities limit production capacity and training opportunities for new artisans.

To address this need, Life Global and Gramshree are working with government agencies, philanthropic partners, and supporters to establish a centralized weaving campus that will provide modern infrastructure while preserving the authenticity of these remarkable crafts.

The vision is clear—to transform Patan into a globally recognized center for heritage textiles, where tradition and technology work hand in hand. By preserving artistic excellence, empowering artisans, and embracing innovation, Life Global is ensuring that the timeless legacy of Mashru and Patan Patola continues to inspire future generations while creating sustainable livelihoods for communities across Gujarat.

India Couture Week 2026: Indian Textiles, Modern Silhouettes Shine In Arpita Mehta, Kunal Rawal Showcases

Designer husband-wife duo Kunal Rawal and Arpita Mehta presented contrasting yet complementary visions of desi couture at India Couture Week 2026.

Rawal unveiled his collection, 'Rawalgarh' featuring over 140 menswear looks through impeccable craftsmanship. Arpita's 'Ceremonial' reinterpreted with effortless elegance celebration wear for the modern woman through India's rich textile heritage.

Speaking after the show, Rawal said the collection was built around storytelling, creating an immersive world called "Rawalgarh."

Bollywood actor Sara Ali Khan attended Kunal Rawal's showcase, while Anshula Kapoor, sister of actor Arjun Kapoor, who wore a custom Arpita Mehta lehenga for her mehendi ceremony in July, was also among the guests at the show.

"From the music to the choreography to the aesthetic of the collection. We tried to take cues from the storytelling of our world this time, which we've named Rawalgarh. We're trying to bring in a little bit of fun... It was a world about music, about love, about fashion and energy," he said.

The show opened with performers portraying protectors of Rawalgarh, setting the tone for a theatrical presentation that blended fashion with music and choreography. It was followed by models performing action-filled movements to show the comfort and flexibility of



PHOTO: ANI

the outfits.

The collection featured different looks across, with colours moving from soft ivory and dusty pink to rich jewel tones. Rawal used traditional Indian textiles like

chikankari, Banarasi, brocade and tissue silk, giving them a modern touch with lighter fabrics, hidden pockets, detachable details and tailored designs inspired by performance wear.

Celebrating 15 years of his label, Rawal stayed true to his signature textured designs while giving Indian menswear a fresh update. The collection included cropped bandhgallas, deconstructed sherwanis and modern occasionwear designed for comfort as well as style. Through Rawalgarh, the designer combined Indian craftsmanship with contemporary fashion, creating outfits for men of all shapes and sizes.

Rawal said his growing fascination with India's textile traditions and handcraft techniques continues to shape his work.

"I started my career with menswear and contemporary fashion, but along the way I've fallen in love with handloom, hand embroidery and the crafts of India," he said.

The designer highlighted his efforts to reinterpret traditional crafts such as Banarasi brocades, chikankari, handcrafted mukaish work and French knots for contemporary menswear.

"I believe men are enjoying what they wear finally. Men are also using clothes to emote the way everyone else does. Through that, we are being able to explore some really exciting new crafts," he added.

-ANI

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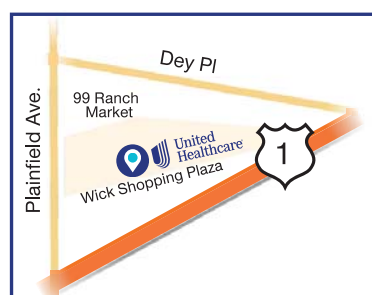
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