

PAGE 3

**Dr. Anil Nanda: Practicing
Medicine With Humility**

PAGE 6

**NASA's Man For Leading America
Back To The Moon**

PAGE 14

**Kala Utsav
In Chicagoland**

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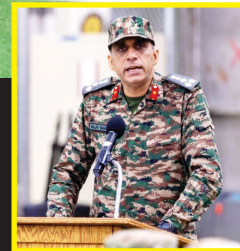
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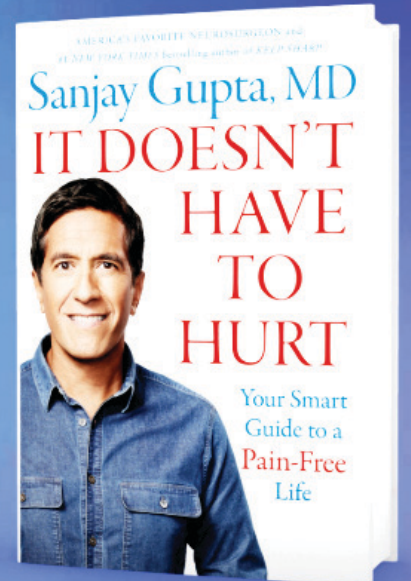


PAGE 16

**US-India
Yudh Abhyas 2025**



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PAGE 8

**Dr. Sanjay Gupta's
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Neurosurgeon Dr. Anil Nanda Cautions Against Overconfidence Among Physicians

BY ARCHANA ADALJA

While it is natural to feel confident and rewarded at the success in treating a patient with a demanding and serious illness, it is important to not become conceited and maintain a humility because there are equal chances of a treatment failing and a physician making a mistake, said Dr. Anil Nanda. Nanda, MD and MPH, has been the Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at Rutgers, New Jersey, and a member of the RWJ Barnabas Health Medical Group. He was speaking on Punditry and Poignancy in Healthcare at a recent conference. Organized in Puttaparthi, the district headquarters of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences in Andhra Pradesh, the global conference on Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare marked the hundredth birth anniversary of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Emphasizing Punditry as expertise in a particular medical field, and Poignancy as a mix of feelings of humility, sympathy and sadness, Nanda said striking a balance between the two while focusing on patient care is an imperative for medical professionals.

Recalling he attended a summer course at the age of fourteen in Brindaban with Sathya Sai Baba, Nanda acknowledged his gratitude to the Baba for giving his life a direction.

Beginning his talk with listing roots of modern medicine in ancient Indian and Greek practices, Nanda referred to the legendary story of Shiva cutting off Ganesh's head and of Zeus's headache being cured by opening his skull. Going to hospital was considered having only a fifty percent chance of survival a hundred years ago. Today, that has turned around, he said.

Coming to the title of his talk, Nanda said it was easy to become arrogant in the realm of medicine, with physicians boasting about numerous procedures performed by them or publishing many academic papers. "I think physicians and medical professions have this sense of toxic doubtlessness sometimes. I'm right, this is the only way to do it, there's no other way to do it. An important thing to remember that punditry can be dangerous," Nanda said.

Nanda stressed the need for humility in the midst of confidence. Punditry in medicine often arises from overconfidence and hasty generalization, leading to a toxic form of doubtlessness, he said. It is crucial that we remain aware of how dangerous this can be, he said, and added, "Punditry works sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't and I think we have to look at our own skill set."

Pointing out historical incidents of



PHOTO-VIDEOGRAB FROM YOUTUBE

"Punditry and Poignancy in Healthcare, a talk by Dr. Anil Nanda at the Global Conference on Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare held on June 28-29, 2025 in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

medical punditry, Nanda listed customs during the Roman period, the Middle Ages, and the 19th century, and of treatments like lobotomy surgeries for women, and treatments for George Washington and King Charles as examples of punditry. These historical events were evidence of not all medical practices being effective and of punditry gone wrong, he said.

Quoting Osler's famous statement that humanity's three great enemies are fever, famine, and war, Nanda said parallels in literature, such as Apollo's arrows raining down on the Greeks in the Iliad resonate with the challenges faced in medicine today.

Giving an example of punditry, Nanda reminded the audience of the lockdowns during the Covid-19 which were enforced to save lives but which also created economic and educational setbacks. It is time to consider if lockdowns were justified, or if that decision was erroneous, he said.

If punditry of lockdowns was questionable, there were examples of positive punditry such as use of rose water discovered by Andrew Pare, Joseph Lister's advocacy for carbolic acid, Florence Nightingale's data visualization techniques like pie charts, advances made by Marie Curie and Harvey Cushing, Nanda said, adding even once common medical procedures get rejected with time.

A sense of accomplishment after performing a complicated procedure successfully is natural, Nanda said. "As I reflect on my own experiences, such as successfully operating on a large skull base meningioma, I find a sense of accomplishment. Yet, I am reminded of the importance of humility," Nanda said.

However, medical field requires

continuous learning and self-evaluation, Nanda said. Punditry can have its merits alongside its pitfalls, and confidence and humility both are essential for medical professionals, he said. Striking a balance between patient safety and informed medical practices is of utmost importance, he stated.

Medical professionals often come face to face with situations that test resolve and understanding of patient care. Illustrating this with an example of his performing a procedure for spinal cord tumor, Nanda said he removed the tumor after a long and strenuous operation, but the patient was not able to move legs. "For those of us in medicine—whether as nurses or physicians—such complications are often accompanied by sleepless nights spent questioning our choices and capabilities," he said. The particular case turned out positive after a few days when the patient began to walk, he added.

But not every case ends well. Nanda here spoke of a case involving patients treated for trigeminal neuralgia receiving tenfold dose of radiation, resulting in devastating consequences. "Such events remind us of the profound responsibility we bear as healthcare providers," he said.

Looking at such cases, it is highly desirable and necessary to have open communication in the operating room, Nanda said. Hierarchies should not prevent anyone—nurses and surgeons alike—from voicing concerns that could avert critical mistakes, Nanda said. "If you think something wrong is happening, you have to speak out because you may prevent a fatal mistake. And therein lies the balance between poignancy and punditry," Nanda said.

He then spoke about his book on implications of medical errors and the moral imperatives faced by physicians. Nanda went on to reemphasize the importance of learning. We must ask ourselves how we can improve processes and prevent mistakes, rather than placing blame on those involved, he said.

"I think our moral dilemma as physicians is how we address mistakes, how we look back at the root cause analysis and say what could we have done differently? Do not accuse berate and criticize. Instead say how could we do this differently? How can we make a difference?" Nanda said.

Nanda said a balance can be struck between the poignancy that arises from human error and the punditry that often accompanies public discourse on medical failures. "Ultimately, it is our duty to continually question ourselves: How can we do things differently? What steps can we take to make a positive impact on our patients?" Nanda stated. He said such reflections were guiding lights to finding purpose and a path forward in healthcare.

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Inside The Trump Team's Conflicting Efforts To Mend Ties With India

BY PRANSHU VERMA

With the relationship between the United States and India at its lowest point in decades, Washington's inflammatory language toward New Delhi is deepening the crisis, according to people familiar with the matter, and complicating efforts to repair ties.

Peter Navarro, one of President Donald Trump's longest-serving and most trusted advisers, has gone on the attack, making increasingly charged statements about India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Russia's conflict with Ukraine is "Modi's war," Navarro told Bloomberg News last Wednesday; New Delhi has become a "laundromat for the Kremlin," he said the next day on X, allowing it to evade Western oil sanctions; on Sunday, he went on Fox News and said Indian "Brahmins are profiteering" from the conflict, an apparent reference to a Hindu caste.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio and United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, meanwhile, have attempted to resolve the diplomatic standoff with New Delhi. Rubio and Greer went to the Oval Office recently to present Trump with a proposed Indian trade deal, but the president rejected it, according to three people familiar with the matter, speaking to The Washington Post on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive political discussions.

One of the people familiar said the centerpiece of the proposal was an Indian offer to significantly reduce its tariffs on U.S. goods, which would represent a major concession from New Delhi in the countries' long-running trade dispute. Trump, however, has declined to approve trade deal options unless India commits to scaling back its purchases of Russian oil, two of the people familiar said.

"India buys most of its oil and military products from Russia, very little from the U.S.," Trump said Monday on Truth Social. "They have now offered to cut their Tariffs to nothing, but it's getting late," he added, referring to the U.S.-India economic relationship as "a totally one sided disaster!"

In a statement to The Post, White House deputy press secretary Anna Kelly said, "President Trump and Prime Minister Modi have a respectful relationship, and teams from both the United States and India remain in close communication on the full range of diplomatic, defense and commercial priorities in our strategic partnership."

"India must do more to sufficiently address U.S. [trade] concerns," the State Department press office said in a statement, adding that "this administration is working as one team to protect American workers and secure U.S. interests."

Navarro and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative did not respond to a request for comment.

The escalating rhetoric from the president and his senior economic adviser has led to deepening anger and confusion in India, where businesses are already straining under the weight of U.S. tariffs, which Trump ratcheted up to 50 percent last month to punish the country for buying oil from Moscow. Navarro's attacks in particular could trigger an increase in anti-American sentiment in India, former U.S. and Indian officials and political analysts warned, with potentially lasting consequences.

"This is not a situation which the current decision-makers in India are used to," said Pankaj Saran, India's former deputy national security adviser. "It's going to have a cost."

Modi, who spent years cultivating personal ties with



President Donald Trump shakes hands with Modi at the White House in February.

Trump and highlighting the overlap in their nationalist agendas, has responded to the falling-out by courting the United States' main geopolitical rivals. In China this week for the first time in seven years to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, Modi was seen smiling with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and hugging Russian President Vladimir Putin.

When Modi and Xi met on the sidelines, "they reaffirmed that the two countries were development partners and not rivals," according to a readout from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). "Their relations should not be seen through a third country lens," the statement added, in what seemed a clear nod to how the summit would be viewed in Washington.

At home, Modi has adopted a posture of defiance. The day after Trump announced the increased tariffs, Modi said he was willing "to pay a heavy price" for not accepting a U.S. trade deal that would hurt farmers, dairy workers and fishermen, who together make up a majority of the Indian workforce. On the country's Independence Day, Modi emphasized national self-reliance: "It is a great misfortune when dependency becomes a habit," he said.

Modi's office and the MEA did not respond to a request for comment.

While Trump has long criticized India's heavily protected economy, tensions with Modi reached new heights this spring after a short-lived military confrontation between India and Pakistan. Trump has repeatedly claimed credit for brokering a ceasefire between the two nuclear archrivals – an affront to India, which maintains that all issues with Pakistan are handled bilaterally.

The extent of U.S. involvement in the ceasefire negotiations remains unclear. But Modi's refusal to acknowledge any role by Trump, who has publicly campaigned for the Nobel Peace Prize, has irritated the White House, according to analysts and former U.S. and Indian officials.

"Due to his focus on peace, President Trump was able to successfully broker a ceasefire in the escalating conflict between India and Pakistan in May," Kelly, the White House spokeswoman, said in her statement to The Post.

As trade talks stalled, Navarro emerged as the administration's most strident critic of India. He called the country the "maharaja of tariffs" and said its purchases of Russian oil were prolonging the war in Ukraine. "If India wants to be treated as a strategic partner of the U.S., it needs to start acting like one," he wrote Aug. 18 in the Financial Times.

The adviser's criticisms have "really rubbed New Delhi the wrong way," said Chietig Bajpae, a senior research fellow for South Asia at Chatham House, adding it could

push New Delhi to reduce cooperation with Washington in key areas such as defense.

A U.S. official with knowledge of the situation, speaking to The Post on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive issues, said there is a recognition within the administration that Navarro's comments are "unhelpful" but that he is "not actually involved" in negotiations with India.

The State Department has been tasked with trying to stabilize the relationship, two of the people familiar with the matter said, but the extent of its influence was unclear. On Monday, the U.S. Embassy in India posted on X that the "partnership between the United States and India continues to reach new heights – a defining relationship of the 21st century," a message that drew immediate scorn from experts and politicians.

"Seems out of touch with reality," wrote Derek Grossman, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

Sujeet Kumar, a member of Parliament from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, was more blunt:

"On the one hand, you talk of our enduring friendship; on the other hand, officials in DC are speaking filthy almost daily," he said on X.

By focusing on India's Russian oil purchases, analysts said, the White House had chosen an especially thorny issue, one complicated by history and the intricacies of global trade.

India became a major purchaser of oil from Moscow only after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, lured by discounted prices – and spurred on by Western allies keen to stabilize world energy prices. Russian oil "is going to be selling at bargain prices, and we're happy to have India get that bargain," then-U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said in November 2022.

Since 2023, India has been the top buyer of Russian seaborne crude, according to the ship-data-tracking firm Kpler. The discounted oil has created a windfall for Indian refiners, especially Reliance Industries, the conglomerate owned by Asia's richest man and Modi ally, Mukesh Ambani, which has earned almost \$6 billion in extra profits, the Financial Times reported last month.

India buys oil from Russia "because they receive a huge discount," said Petras Katinas, an energy analyst at the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air. "You cannot fully solve this issue."

The Trump administration is "treating Russian oil and trade as two separate issues," the U.S. official said, "but obviously there's goodwill involved here, and [India's] continued purchases of Russian oil isn't helping."

New Delhi has given no public indication that it plans to reduce its Russian oil purchases. Hardeep Singh Puri, the country's oil minister, wrote in the Hindu newspaper this week that "India has not broken rules" and has "kept global prices from spiraling."

In August, Katinas noted, India bought 24 percent less Russian oil than it had the previous month, and increased its oil imports from the United States by 129 percent compared with July. But he cautioned it was "too early" to draw any firm conclusions.

In the meantime, anti-American sentiment is growing in India. Ramdev, a celebrity yoga entrepreneur and prominent Modi backer, called last week for Indian citizens to boycott American brands in response to Trump's 50 percent tariffs.

"Not a single Indian should be seen at the counters of Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Subway, KFC or McDonald's," he said. "If this happens, chaos will ensue in America."

-THE WASHINGTON POST

A Democratic Dark Horse Visited Pennsylvania. Workers' Message Was Simple

By SALENA ZITO

Members of the United Auto Workers gathered in a U in a hotel conference room not far from Dana Inc.'s facility in Montgomery County. Most of them have worked at the 105-year-old auto parts plant for years.

Their guest: Ro Khanna, a California Democrat known as a policy maven on the left - and whose name is often thrown around as a potential dark horse presidential contender. From the head of the table, he had a clear view to gauge everyone's reactions to his questions about their lives, how they see the world, and what they expect from the party.

The congressman is known for representing Silicon Valley, but his roots are here in Southeast Pennsylvania, where he was born and raised. Originally, he was set to tour the manufacturing plant; when his team was unable to get company permission, the UAW members who work there - many of them Democrats, many of them not - decided they still wanted to chat. Many were eager to tell him where Democrats have lost their way when it comes to appealing to the working class.

So they took the meeting to a nearby Marriott.

Zac Richards was the only open Republican and Trump supporter in the room - if anyone else was, they did not admit it, perhaps out of politeness. He has 15 years at Dana as a machine operator. He's also secretary of the bargaining committee of the plant's union and vice president of the local union.

"When I was younger and started working with people here at Dana, they kind of told me to vote Democrat for the union, and that's what I did," he said. He pulled the lever for Obama twice - but in 2016, like many working-class Democrats, he started migrating toward Republicans. "I believe that they've gone pretty extreme to the left," he said, pointing to a blind eye at the border, support for trans athletes playing in women's sports, and the stridency of the party's abortion rhetoric.

Khanna was not shy about engaging with Richards, he said, peppering him with questions and probing for common ground across the aisle.

"He kind of asked me if I'd be in support of free college and Medicare-for-all, and I did not support either of those issues," Richards said. Some debates broke out during the chat, but it stayed civil.

Going to middle-of-somewhere places is something Khanna told me he has been doing for years - nine years to be exact - frequently visiting cities like Allentown in the Lehigh Valley and Johnstown in Cambria County at least three times.

"It is important to visit places like Bucks and Cambria counties, places that have not had economic prosperity. And for that I say 'shame on us' as a nation that we did not do better by those communities for



Rep. Ro Khanna in March.

decades," he said. "You cannot have a nation half prosperous and half in economic decline. And I think a lot of people who voted for President Trump said, 'Look, for 40 years, 50 years, we've been seeing our kids have less opportunity. The system isn't working. We've got to blow the system up.'"

If the Silicon Valley congressman is running for president, he is not saying, and he denied any connection between his visits and any ambitions to be on a national ticket in 2028. But he says if his party isn't able to convince voters in Pennsylvania, they need to rethink both their message and purpose. Pennsylvania, with its 19 electoral votes, is one of the must-win swing states, and within Pennsylvania, the area including Bucks and Montgomery counties is one of the most important swing areas ... which brings us back to his back-and-forth with the union men and women here offering him their worldview.

Jim Hutchinson, president of UAW Local 644, was sitting with the other attendees including Richards during the roundtable. Hutchinson is a Democrat who the party has not lost, and he worked tirelessly last year knocking on doors to help Democrats Kamala Harris and Sen. Bob Casey win the state. They didn't.

"I do understand that social issues break off a good amount of voters and certainly voters in my plant," Hutchinson



Supporters cheer as Donald Trump walks off stage at rally in Erie, Pa., in 2023.

said.

What he appreciated about Khanna was his humility. In a week when California Gov. Newsom was generating headlines with all-caps posts satirizing Trump and skewering Republicans, Khanna was quietly emphasizing that he wanted to listen to voters where they were.

"And this isn't the first time I met him," Hutchinson said. "I met him in June in Allentown. I think what I like about him is that he thinks it is important to recognize and respect other people's concerns, whether we agree with him or not."

Bucks County is of a piece with Erie, Luzerne, Cambria and Northampton counties, all of which are treated as bellwethers. The political rule of thumb here is that if you are running for president of the United States, you need to win three out of five of them to have a shot at carrying the state.

Winning Bucks County was something Democrats had done for decades, until November when Trump narrowly won the county by just under 300 votes. He lost in 2020 by 17,345 votes. In July of last year, registered Republicans began outnumbering Democrats in the county by just 264. By Election Day, the margin had soared to 4,437, and it's still rising: the September numbers from the Pennsylvania Department of State show the Republican advantage has more than doubled since the election to 9,815.

"I want to listen," Khanna said. "I want to understand, 'What did we do wrong? What are we not getting? Why are we disconnected? What can we do better?' And I really have come at it not with, like, 'Hey, here's my plan,' but have them tell me what would make a difference."

What he has heard so far, he said, is that voters want to hear a real vision and road map for what is going to create good-paying jobs or how people are going to be able to afford a house or how their kids will be able to make a living. What they tell him is pretty simple, he said: "We just want economic independence and economic vision, and we don't want to be judged, and we want to be respected for what we've done to build this country."

There's plenty of tension between companies headquartered in Khanna's district and workers in the state where he grew up. Artificial intelligence, self-driving cars, advanced robotics and renewable energy all are driving fears that jobs in a wide range of fields will soon be replaced or undercut. The congressman has spent much of his career negotiating a path forward that would benefit both sides, even penning a book on the topic. One of its themes was finding ways for people to participate in the economy without leaving the communities where they were raised and where their families still live.

"Now I happen to understand this stuff about technology, and people look at me talking about some of the future jobs and our kids having those jobs and say we're open to that," he said. "But what

they want to know is that you get that our communities have been screwed and that we don't see ourselves in the economic future."

That process starts with respect. He always stresses his immense gratitude for the people who built America before his family even came here and for the people who fought in the wars, labored in the coal mines, forged the steel and made America a superpower.

"I think that that is so important for the Democratic Party to understand the anger there, to understand why they feel abandoned by our party and to understand and to articulate a sense of true patriotism, which is not about mouthing the words; it's not about calling it economic patriotism," he said. "They can sense it in my bones when I speak to them - that I'm filled with gratitude and the chances Pennsylvania gave me."

Longtime Democratic strategist and pollster John Anzalone - who recently conducted a poll with Republican pollster Tony Fabrizio that found Democrats' popularity at its lowest point in three decades with a whopping 63 percent of voters holding an unfavorable view of the party - said Khanna's listening tours may not get him a lot of views on social media but that they matter.

"It's the heart of working-class America, and it is gritty in a time where I think most politicians just think about middle-class America in the service industry," he said.

Personal trips to places that "might feel uncomfortable" for Democrats, he said, are a better use of time than engaging in debates over message-testing at the national level. He pointed to the summer Democratic National Committee meeting in Minnesota, where members watched a polling presentation that argued "tough on crime" messaging is less powerful than "serious about safety."

"One of the things that we see in focus groups is that voters don't believe that Democrats listen anymore," he said. "And so we've got to get back to listening and being the party of working-class families."

A genuine interest in what ordinary Americans have to say is where it starts. As Newsom soaks up the spotlight mimicking Trump's social media style, Democrats would be wise to remember that Trump paired his own prolific posting with numerous visits to Pennsylvania, not just in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia but also in Johnstown, Erie, Luzerne and at a McDonalds drive-through window in Bucks County.

"You cannot just be Mr. All-Caps on X to win over voters; you have to be willing to take tough questions and have voters kick the tires when you are in town, as Khanna did in Bucks County," Mike Mikus, a Pennsylvania-based Democratic consultant, said. "When a candidate is kept in a bubble, voters notice."

-THE WASHINGTON POST

NASA Appoints Indian American As Associate Administrator

By A Staff Writer

The nation's top space agency announced September 3, 2025, it has selected exploration-focused Indian American as its Associate Administrator. Acting NASA Administrator Sean P. Duffy named Amit Kshatriya, a 20-year NASA veteran, to the agency's top civil service role.

Kshatriya was most recently the deputy in charge of the Moon to Mars Program in the Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate (ESDMD) at NASA Headquarters in Washington, the press release from NASA said. In this role, Kshatriya was responsible for program planning and implementation for crewed missions to the Moon through the Artemis campaign in preparation for humanity's first mission to Mars.

Kshatriya is one of only about 100 people in history to serve as a mission control flight director.

Promoting Kshatriya to NASA's top ranks puts America's return to the Moon through Artemis at the very core of our agency, NASA said, adding that the move "exemplifies President Donald J. Trump and Duffy's seriousness about returning Americans to the Moon and before China."

"Amit has spent more than two decades as a dedicated public servant at NASA, working to advance American leadership in space. Under his leadership, the agency will chart a bold vision to return to the Moon during President Trump's term," said Duffy. "Amit's knowledge, integrity, and unwavering commitment to pioneering a new era of exploration make him uniquely qualified to lead our agency as associate administrator. With Amit we'll continue to push the boundaries of what's possible."

Kshatriya's promotion also signals how the Trump Administration sees the commercial space sector as an American economic engine, the agency said. "By putting a proven leader at the top, NASA is set to partner even more closely with America's booming space industry,



Amit Kshatriya

PHOTO: COURTESY NASA



Earth's closest neighbor plays a pivotal role in the study of our planet and beyond.

PHOTO: NASA.GOV

grow the space economy, and ensure the future of exploration is built in the United States."

According to the biography given by NASA, Kshatriya began working at the space agency in 2003. During his career there, he has worked as a software engineer, robotics engineer, and spacecraft operator primarily focused on the robotic assembly of the International Space Station.

From 2014 to 2017, he served as a space station flight director, where he led global teams in the operations and execution of the space station during all phases of flight.

From 2017 to 2021, he became deputy, and then acting manager, of the ISS Vehicle Office, where he was responsible for sustaining engineering, logistics, and hardware program management.

In 2021, he was assigned to NASA Headquarters as an assistant deputy associate administrator for ESDMD, where he was an integral part of the team that returned a spacecraft designed to carry humans to the Moon during the Artemis I mission.

Kshatriya holds a bachelor of science in mathematics from the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California, and a master of arts in mathematics from The University of Texas at Austin.

He was born in Brookfield, Wisconsin, but considers Katy, Texas, to be his hometown. A son of first-generation Indian immigrants to the United States, Kshatriya and his wife are parents to three children.

Decorated with the NASA Outstanding Leadership Medal for actions as the lead flight director for the 50th expedition to the space station, Kshatriya also is the recipient of a Silver Snoopy, an award astronauts bestow for outstanding performance contributing to flight safety, for his actions as lead robotics officer for the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services Dragon demonstration mission to the orbiting laboratory.

"He brings unparalleled operational and strategic experience to NASA's executive leadership team," according to NASA.

FDA's Vinay Prasad Wants More Clinical Trials Into Whether People Should Get Multiple Respiratory Vaccines Together

By Dan Diamond, Rachel Roubein, Lena H. Sun

The Food And Drug Administration Is Scrutinizing The Common Practice Of Giving Coronavirus And Flu Shots Together, Signaling A Reversal Of Years Of Federal Guidance And A Broader Crack-down On Administering Multiple Vaccines At The Same Time.

Vinay Prasad, the FDA's top vaccine regulator, recently announced that his team will require new clinical trials before allowing pharmaceutical companies to claim that coadministering multiple respiratory virus vaccines is safe and effective – a plan that was dismissed by outside experts as unnecessary and potentially counterproductive.

The shift under Prasad, which he described as part of a new "evidence-based philosophy," could have implications that go beyond fall respiratory vaccination season and potentially reverse long-standing guidance that encourages Americans to get multiple vaccines at the same time.

He wrote in a memo last week that FDA officials "cannot affirm" the safety and efficacy of administering mul-



Vinay Prasad, FDA's Director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

PHOTO: FDA.GOV

multiple vaccines for coronavirus, flu and other conditions such as RSV at the same time. In recent years, federal agencies embraced multiple shots in one visit as a way to increase protection against respiratory viruses with no serious downsides.

Andrew Nixon, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services, said the FDA will soon announce a new framework on Prasad's changes.

Pfizer had been negotiating with FDA as it sought federal approval for its updated coronavirus shots, and Prasad's new stance put millions of manufactured doses at risk, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to detail sensitive discussions. Pfizer last week issued a letter to physicians that withdrew its prescribing information for providers saying they could administer its coronavirus vaccine with other shots, noting that the language was not FDA-approved.

The FDA's memo does not prevent pharmacies and doctors from providing coronavirus and flu vaccines in the same visit, medical experts said. But they worried that the scrutiny and rhetoric coming from top medical

-CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Vote Common Good Endorses Sanjyot Dunung For Illinois' 8th Congressional District

BY A STAFF WRITER

Indian American Sanjyot Dunung, Congressional candidate for Illinois 8th District, received the endorsement of Vote Common Good, a leading national organization mobilizing faith-driven voters toward candidates who it evaluates as prioritizing the common good.

This endorsement, in addition to the recent ASPIRE (Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Rising & Empowering Political Action Committee (ASPIRE PAC), her campaign announced May 28 (www.sanjyotforcongress.com), this new Vote Common Good endorsement marks a significant moment for Dunung's campaign as it continues to gain momentum among voters seeking commonsense solutions, responsible change, and shared common values, a press release from the candidate's office said.

"Sanjyot is precisely the kind of leader our movement seeks to uplift. Her commitment to people, her passion for community service, and her vision for an America where all voices are heard align perfectly



Sanjyot Dunung, right, speaking to a constituent during her campaign for Congress from Illinois' 8th Congressional District.

with our mission," Robb Ryerse, political director of Vote

Common Good, is quoted saying in the press release. "We believe she will champion policies that serve not only Illinois' 8th District, but the common good of all Americans."

Vote Common Good selected Dunung after a review of her campaign priorities, community engagement, and vision for 21st-century governance.

"I'm passionate about building bridges across our communities by focusing on our shared values," said Dunung. "I am deeply honored to receive the endorsement of Vote Common Good. Their work reminds us all that politics is, at its heart, a moral calling—a call to care for our neighbors and to build a society where every person can thrive. I am committed to representing the people of Illinois' 8th District with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering dedication to the public good."

Dunung is the daughter of Indian immigrants and was raised in Des Plaines, Ill. A small business owner, Dunung has three sons. She is a social scientist and educator, who has served on Biden's foreign policy working group focused on international trade and serves on the Boards of National Small Business Association and Truman Center for National Policy.

FDA's Vinay Prasad Wants More Clinical Trials Into Whether People Should Get Multiple Respiratory Vaccines Together

-CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

regulators would discourage a practice that can increase vaccination rates.

"For many, this inconvenience of having to return for a second visit just to get the other vaccine, will deter them from getting that other vaccine," said L.J. Tan, chief policy officer for Immunize.org, an immunization advocacy organization. "Access to vaccination suffers."

Under HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., federal health agencies have upended how they approach coronavirus vaccination. The FDA last week narrowed approval of updated coronavirus shots to high-risk groups, including those 65 and older and people with underlying conditions that elevate their risk of severe disease.

The Biden administration embraced doubling flu and coronavirus shots as a strategy to boost coverage earlier in the coronavirus pandemic.

"This is why God gave us two arms – one for the flu shot and the other one for the covid shot," Ashish Jha, then the nation's coronavirus coordinator, told reporters in September 2022.

But Prasad, who became prominent as a critic of the mainstream public health pandemic strategy, denigrated this strategy as lacking evidence and cited Jha's comments as an example of why Donald Trump returned to the White House.

"Ashish Jha should remember that God gave people two arms," Prasad wrote on X in November 2024, one week after the presidential election. "One to vote for Donald Trump, and the other one to give thumbs up to RFK Jr. His Non-Evidence-Based, pro-corporate conduct as White House covid czar is the reason the backlash exists."

STUDIES SAY EXISTING TACTIC IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE

Studies support the safety of getting both the flu and coronavirus vaccines at the same time, according to

federal documents and outside experts. One CDC study showed that people who received a flu vaccine and coronavirus vaccine at the same time were slightly more likely to have reactions including fatigue, headache and muscle ache than people who only got a coronavirus vaccine, but those reactions were mostly mild and went away quickly.

According to data posted on the CDC website as of Aug. 18, flu, covid-19 and RSV vaccines "may be coadministered (given at the same visit)" and there is no minimum wait period between shots.

Dan Jernigan – who used to oversee vaccine safety at the CDC and resigned last week to protest what he described as efforts by Kennedy to politicize the vaccine recommendation process – said the federal government has not identified serious issues with coadministering coronavirus and flu shots. If there were serious side effects, Jernigan said, evidence would have emerged by now from the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System that closely monitors coronavirus vaccines.

In 2021, the World Health Organization concluded based on preliminary data that coadministration does not interfere with the effectiveness of either the coronavirus or influenza vaccine; that the amount of reactogenicity, or side effects, is acceptable; and that coadministration is tolerable for those who choose to get the vaccines at the same time.

Since then, more research has been conducted backing the WHO's findings, said Tan of Immunize.org, who also co-authored a March paper extensively reviewing studies of coadministering flu and coronavirus vaccines.

WHY DID THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION REVERSE COURSE?

Prasad detailed the Trump administration's latest vaccine shift in a memo outlining his decision to limit approval of Pfizer's coronavirus shot to high-risk groups. He wrote that administering several vaccines at the same time "offers the theoretical benefit" of boosting vaccination rates for the respiratory virus season. But, he wrote,

there were potential downsides, arguing that doing so could decrease the shots' effectiveness and complicate vaccine safety data.

He did not cite new studies supporting the change, but rather asserted that the design and scale of past studies have been insufficient.

Prasad called for companies to conduct randomized controlled trials on administering the coronavirus, RSV and flu shots.

"The burden of proof is not on manufacturers to be able to do something that clearly has been done millions of times safely," Jha, the covid czar under Biden, said in an interview. "The burden of proof is on people who are calling this into question, given the long-standing track record we have of coadministration of vaccines."

Jesse Goodman, a Georgetown University professor of medicine who previously served as the FDA's top vaccine regulator, said such studies would be costly and burdensome – and are "unlikely to provide important new information."

Pfizer declined to comment. But the company issued a letter to health care providers saying that certain batches of its coronavirus vaccine contain "unapproved prescribing information inside the cartons," indicating that the company had been seeking to add the coadministration of the shot to the label.

Prasad's move could lay the groundwork for the federal government to change its recommendations around vaccines for the respiratory virus season, several medical experts said.

A policy shift about coadministration could come from the FDA or CDC's vaccine advisory panel, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Kennedy recently purged the members of the influential panel and replaced them with his own picks, several of whom have criticized coronavirus vaccine policy.

-THE WASHINGTON POST

What Sanjay Gupta Learned After Years Studying Chronic Pain And The Brain

By TRISHA PASRICHA, MD

Sanjay Gupta has spent much of his career treating people in pain. But the neurosurgeon and CNN medical journalist recently witnessed firsthand how it can upend your own life: His mother broke her back, and he became her caregiver. The experience taught him that pain hijacks your entire identity, and it hijacks the identity of the whole family. Pain, he saw, can create a sense of powerlessness compounded by the medical community, which often struggles to understand and treat chronic pain. But Gupta also knew that it didn't have to be this way.

About 20 percent of the American population lives with chronic pain – more than 50 million people. But so much of the conversation around chronic pain has centered on opioids and addiction, Gupta said. In his book, “It Doesn't Have to Hurt,” Gupta explores what the latest science tells us on how to help relieve pain. He emphasizes that pain begins in the brain and that we should pay attention to our bodies.

Gupta, a staff neurosurgeon at Emory Clinic in Atlanta, came to appreciate that pain was unlike any other experience or symptom. It's a uniquely personal experience, and maybe – he told me – that was the entire point behind why it is so notoriously difficult to understand and treat. I spoke to Gupta about our brain's endogenous opioid system, which produces natural painkillers such as endorphins; how foam rolling can actually relieve and prevent pain, and why the placebo effect can be a good thing.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: One of the trickiest conversations I have with my patients with chronic pain is when they've been told by 10 doctors that their pain is “all in your head.” And there's this tension between not wanting anyone to feel like they're making this up – which is not at all true – but also recognizing that all pain starts and ends in the brain.

A: Totally. To best prevent and have the best chance of treating chronic pain, you have to treat the brain first. An acute pain experience can turn into a chronic pain experience if you let that loop of pain cycle over and over again. But if the brain decides the pain doesn't exist, it doesn't exist. And I realize that's a provocative thing to say within the pain world.

Q: What role does the brain play in pain perception?

A: It's like scrolling a social media feed – you're scrolling, scrolling, and then something really incendiary pops up. You have to decide: Is this real? Is this fake? Your brain is doing that constantly. And if you're in a very inflamed state – because of your mood, whether you exercised,

what else is happening in your life – everything's going to hurt. But I could bang your thumb with a hammer on a Tuesday and you would have one sort of pain experience – and I could do the same thing to you on a Wednesday and it could be a totally different pain. It's kind of awesome to see that variability within a human, let alone ... like all the seven, 8 billion other humans on the planet.

Q: It's difficult to not have a so-called objective measure of pain that captures that well. If a patient comes in and says, “My pain is 10 out of 10,” and they look fine – they're eating, they're not crying – a lot of doctors might say, “Go home. I think you're OK,” right? That's very hard for patients to navigate.

A: I think the patient has to be the North Star. You have to trust the patient. There's some people who believe we shouldn't even try to objectify and measure pain because it is such a personal experience. You can measure cholesterol or the size of a tumor. Pain is a biopsychosocial phenomenon that defies a lot of those measurements. But it's an opportunity. Chronic pain never occurs in isolation. It always comes with baggage attached. And you have to address the baggage as much as the pain.

Q: Is it possible to tap into the brain's own endogenous opioid system for better pain relief?

A: Yes. So when you give an opioid pill, you're going to get a certain half-life, you're going to get side effects. With your own endogenous opioid system, it turns on and off on a dime without any of that. It's really wondrous what the body can do. I went through an experiment myself when I was working on the book around what's known as the MORE therapy: the mindfulness-oriented recovery enhancement therapy. What struck me about the data that's now coming out of the University of California at San Diego is that when people with chronic pain start meditating in that program, they may have no pain.

A meditation session has the capacity to give the same pain-relief as five milligrams of oxycodone.

Q: Most people who end up living with chronic pain cannot identify one clear-cut event that started it – like a fall or car accident. Only about a third of people have that inciting event. That means most people have no idea what caused it.

A: I talk to a lot of gastroenterologists like you who deal with this specifically. IBS often doesn't have any clear-cut sort of cause. One of the things gastroenterologists really emphasized to me was that a lot of patients worry that something toxic is happening inside their body. “I have this pain, and it means that something bad has happened.”

Q: Right, like eating – or this food – must be harming me because I'm hurting.

A: Exactly. And they told me they often find that when you explain to people that this was not harming you – that there wasn't this toxic force inside their body, that this was a gut-brain axis phenomenon – it actually relieved a lot of anxiety. Same thing with fibromyalgia.

Q: You say foam rolling can help prevent pain. It wasn't something that had really crossed my mind that way before.

A: I'm kind of like you. I didn't have a lot of knowledge of foam rolling, but as I talked to so many different people for the book, it kept coming up over and over again. As we get older, the myofascia – which is basically this thick envelope of tissue that surrounds all your organs and all your muscles – it gets stiff. Two things result. One is that you could have pain just from that. You feel achy as the myofascia becomes increasingly stiff. But also, if you do have an injury, your muscles will tend to swell. And if they're swelling against a really stiff

myofascia, that is more painful. So simply foam rolling on some regular basis can go a long way. But it can be a little bit painful to foam roll.

Q: Yes. I discovered this. I thought, “This cannot be right.”

A: Well, usually it's most painful in people who've not done it before, but once you start to do it regularly, you're just basically loosening up this connective tissue that I think a lot of people ignore. We focus a lot on muscles. We may strengthen tendons even. Obviously, bone health is really important, but the myofascia is a neglected part of our body's interconnected system. And it's highly innervated, which is why it hurts a little bit when you're foam rolling.

Q: Do you foam roll before you exercise? Or should we do it whether we're exercising or not?

A: I do it every day. I have it in my closet when I'm getting ready in the morning, it only takes a few minutes for me. Sitting at my desk right now, I have no aches and pains.

Q: What about tools like acupuncture? Despite the fairly good data, there's still a vocal group of people who say, “No, it's a placebo.”

A: Absolutely. Look, expectations and experience are inextricably linked. If you expect something to hurt, it will hurt. And if you don't think it's going to hurt, you can do almost anything to the human body – within reason – and it won't hurt. I think it is fair to say, just as a broad statement, that our endogenous opioid system is the placebo effect.

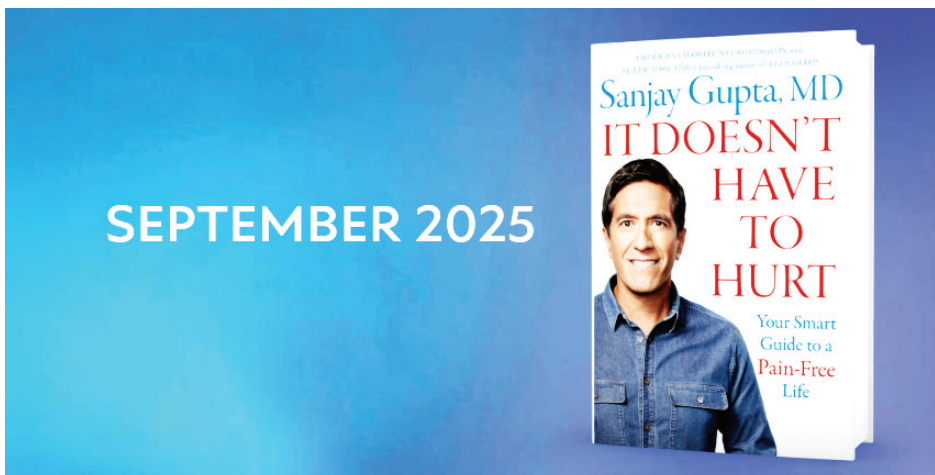
Q: I've heard that it can be harnessed through something as simple as looking at photos of your partner or connecting to them in some way. When we just say “try holding the hands of someone you love” – that can sound a little woo-woo to people. But when you think about these tools in terms of what that's doing neurochemically, it's incredibly powerful and the studies really back that up.

A: It's funny that you use the term woo-woo, because I think that's always in the chat. I mean, I'm a neurosurgeon, you're a gastroenterologist, and we're sitting here having this conversation about things that have classically fallen into that woo-woo bucket, you know? But I do think that the endogenous opioid system is at the heart of all of this and it's a beautiful thing to consider. That it's within all of us. And if I am diving into things that are traditionally

thought of as woo-woo as a Western-trained neuroscientist, then hopefully that leaves an impact on people – that, “Hey, this guy is looking at this with an open mind and trying to explain not just the what, but the why behind it.”

-THE WASHINGTON POST

PHOTO: PROFILE PHOTO ON FACEBOOK @SANJAYGUPTAMD



Book jacket of Dr. Sanjay Gupta's latest publication.



PHOTO: THE WASHINGTON POST

"It Has Been A One-Sided Disaster... They Have Now Offered To Cut Their Tariffs To Nothing": Trump On US-India Business Ties

With the Indian goods facing a steep 50 per cent tariffs in US imposed by his administration, President Donald Trump has claimed that business relationship between the two countries for many decades has been "totally one sided", "one-sided disaster" and also that "they have now offered to cut their tariffs to nothing, but it's getting late".

In a post on Monday, Sept. 1, 2025, on his social media handle Truth Social, Trump said India has charged US "such high tariffs, the most of any country, that our businesses are unable to sell into India". "What few people understand is that we do very little business with India, but they do tremendous amount of business with us. In other words, they sell us massive amounts of goods, their biggest 'client,' but we sell them very little – Until now a totally one sided relationship, and it has been for many decades. The reason is that India has charged us, until now, such high Tariffs, the most of any country, that our businesses are unable to sell into India," he said.

"It has been a totally one sided disaster! Also, India buys most of its oil and military products from Russia, very little from the U.S. They have now offered to cut their Tariffs to nothing, but it's getting late. They should have done so years ago. Just some simple facts for people to



U.S. President Donald Trump holds a 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) hat as he attends the commencement ceremony at West Point Military Academy in West Point, New York, U.S., May 24, 2025.

ponder!!!" he added.

Trump announced 25 per cent tariffs on India in July amid negotiations for a BTA between the two countries. He later announced 25 per cent secondary tariffs for In-

dia's import of Russian oil with 50 per cent tariffs coming into effect from August 27.

Meanwhile, US Embassy in India on Monday has emphasized the enduring bond between Washington and New Delhi, describing it as a defining relationship of the 21st century, reflecting the broader framework of cooperation beyond economic ties.

"The partnership between the United States and India continues to reach new heights — a defining relationship of the 21st century. This month, we're spotlighting the people, progress, and possibilities driving us forward. From innovation and entrepreneurship to defense and bilateral ties, it's the enduring friendship between our two peoples that fuels this journey. Follow the hashtag and be a part of #USIndiaFWDforOurPeople," US Embassy said in a post on X.

It shared a quote by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio who called the friendship between the peoples of India and the US to be the bedrock of cooperation.

"The enduring friendship between our two peoples is the bedrock of our cooperation and propels us forward as we realise the tremendous potential of our economic relationship".

-ANI

"Will Get This Solved": US Treasury Secy On India-US Tensions

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent expressed confidence that India and the US will resolve trade friction between them, as he believed that New Delhi's values are much closer to Washington than to China and Russia.

In an interview with Fox Business, Scott Bessent, however, downplayed the significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, calling it "largely performative."

"This is a longstanding meeting, it's called the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and I think it's largely performative," Bessent said. "I think at the end of the day, India is the most populous democracy in the world. Their values are much closer to ours and to China's than to Russia's."

"I think at the end of the day, two great countries will get this solved. But the Indians have not been great actors in terms of buying Russian oil and then reselling it, financing the Russian war effort in Ukraine," he told Fox Business.

Bessent's remarks come amid the rising friction between Washington and New Delhi due to the 50 per cent tariffs imposed on Indian goods, which include a 25 per cent penalty for buying Russian oil.

On the other hand, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro attacked India, targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Speaking with reporters, Navarro lambasted PM Modi for what he termed "getting in bed with the authoritarian", describing the meeting as shameful.

He also pressed that India needs the US, Europe and Ukraine and not Russia, urging New Delhi to stop purchasing discounted crude oil from Moscow.

PM Modi, in his address at SCO, stressed the need to boost connectivity between the members to boost trade.

"India has always believed that strong connectivity not only boosts trade but also opens doors to growth and trust," PM Modi said. Russian President Putin said that dialogue within the SCO helps lay the foundation for a new Eurasian



U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent speaks to reporters at the U.S. Capitol as Republican lawmakers struggle to pass U.S. President Donald Trump's sweeping spending and tax bill, on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., U.S., June 27, 2025.

security system, replacing outdated Eurocentric and Euro-Atlantic models.

"The SCO is steadily increasing its influence in addressing international issues. National currencies are being used more widely in mutual settlements for trade among SCO countries. The pace of development of cooperation within the SCO is impressive," said Putin.

Additionally, Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to uphold fairness and justice while addressing the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO.

"We must promote a correct historical perspective on World War II, and oppose the Cold War mentality and block confrontation and bullying practices," Xi said.

-ANI

India Minister Says Country Hopes To Clinch US Trade Deal By November



India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal takes part at the panel discussion "Trade: Now what?" during the World Economic Forum 2022 (WEF) in the Alpine resort of Davos, Switzerland May 25, 2022.

India hopes to conclude a bilateral trade agreement with the United States by November, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said at an investor conference in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Trade negotiations with the European Union are progressing and relations with China are "returning to normal" as border tensions ease, Goyal said in a virtual address.

India has already finalized trade agreements with Mauritius, Australia, EFTA, the UK, and the UAE, he said at another event.

The United States is India's largest trading partner, but relations have become strained amid disputes over tariffs and New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

Washington imposed a 50% tariff on key Indian exports from August 27.

-ANI

White House Pushing PM Modi Closer To Russia And China: Former Trump Advisor John Bolton

Former US National Security Advisor John Bolton on Thursday (local time) lambasted US President Donald Trump for pushing Prime Minister Narendra Modi closer to Russia and China in the backdrop of 50% tariffs imposed on India, ruining decades of hard work by the previous US administration.

In a post on X, Bolton stated, "The White House has set US-India relations back decades, pushing Modi closer to Russia and China. Beijing has cast itself as an alternative to the US and Donald Trump."

He slammed Trump's tariff policy, asserting that it has "shredded" decades of Western efforts to align India away from its Cold War ties with the then Soviet Union (Russia) and address the growing threat from China.

In a series of posts on X on Monday (local time), Bolton accused Trump of jeopardising strategic gains with his

economic approach, while also suggesting that the policy has handed Chinese President Xi Jinping an opportunity to reshape the geopolitical landscape in the East.

"The West has spent decades trying to wean India away from its Cold War attachment to the Soviet Union/Russia, and cautioning India on the threat posed by China. Donald Trump has shredded decades of efforts with his disastrous tariff policy," Bolton stated in one of his posts.

"Donald Trump's unwillingness to consider diplomatic moves in a larger strategic context has given Xi Jinping an opportunity to reset the East," another post read. John Bolton is a former American government official who served as national security adviser (2018-19) to Donald Trump in his first stint as US President. He later resigned from his position over differences with Trump on the

administration's foreign policy at that time.

His remarks come at a time when New Delhi is facing global uncertainties due to heightened economic tensions following the US imposition of a 50 per cent tariff on Indian imports, which was supplemented by an additional 25 per cent due to New Delhi's purchase of Russian crude oil.

The comments also followed the conclusion of the 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council summit in Tianjin, China, during which Prime Minister Modi held bilateral engagements with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the summit.

-ANI

India-Germany Agree On Gratis Visas For Student Exchanges, Eye New Indopacific Mechanism

India and Germany have agreed on gratis visas for short-term school and college visits to promote student exchanges and education ties, as well as establishing a new bilateral consultation mechanism on the Indo-Pacific region, the Ministry of External Affairs stated on Wednesday.

In a press release following the visit of the German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Johann Wadephul, to India, the MEA stated that during the delegation-level talks with External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, the two sides reviewed the multifaceted Strategic Partnership, expressing satisfaction with progress in trade and investment, defence and security, technology, science and innovation, green and sustainable development, education, and people-to-people ties.

The EAM also conveyed India's appreciation for Berlin's solidarity and strong support in the fight against terrorism.

Discussions also covered recent developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the situation in the Middle East, and other regional and global issues of mutual interest.

"EAM and Foreign Minister Wadephul reviewed the entire gamut of our multifaceted Strategic Partnership and expressed satisfaction at the progress in diverse sectors, including trade & investment, defence & security,



Germany foreign minister Johann Wadephul with PM Narendra Modi.

technology, science and innovation, green and sustainable development partnership, education and people-to-people ties.

The two sides agreed on gratis visas for short-term school and college visits between our countries to further promote student exchanges and education ties," the MEA stated in the release.

"The two sides also discussed recent developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the situation in the Middle-East, cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as other regional and global issues of mutual interest. Both sides are also working towards the establishment of a new bilateral consultation mechanism on the IndoPacific region. EAM conveyed the Government of India's appreciation for the German government's solidarity and strong support to India in the fight against terrorism," it read.

Wadephul also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and met Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi. During his meeting with the Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Wadephul, accompanied by a high-level business delegation, reflected on the rapidly expanding economic partnership between India and Germany, the MEA stated.

-ANI

India Cuts Consumption Tax To Spur Domestic Demand

By NIKUNJ OHRI

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman decided on Wednesday to cut taxes on hundreds of consumer items ranging from soaps to small cars to spur domestic demand in the face of economic headwinds from punishing U.S. tariffs.

The goods and services tax (GST) panel approved lowering taxes on the so-called common man items and simplifying their structure, Sitharaman, who heads the panel that includes ministers from all states, told a late night press conference.

GST was criticised for its complicated structure and numerous tax categories. To simplify this, the panel approved the two-rate structure of 5% and 18%, instead of four currently that also include tax bands of 12% and 28%.

Sitharaman said the panel approved cuts in consumer items such as toothpaste and shampoo to 5% from 18%,



Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks to the Economic Club of New York in New York City, U.S., October 21, 2024.

and on small cars, air conditioners, and televisions to 18% from 28%.

She said GST will be exempted on all individual life insurance policies and health insurance.

The panel also approved a higher tax of 40% on "super luxury" and "sin" goods such as cigarettes, cars with engine capacity exceeding 1500 cc, carbonated beverages, the minister said.

The move to reduce the consumption tax was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech to the nation on August 15.

After the cuts were approved on Wednesday, Modi said "the wide ranging reforms will improve lives of our citizens and ensure ease of doing business for all, especially small traders and businesses".

The new rates will come into effect on September 22, the first day of the Hindu festival of Navratri.

-REUTERS

Road trips are getting cleaner and quieter as RVs go electric

By By Kyle Stock

Bob Anderson - physician, pilot, executive - is nothing if not a perfectionist.

He's owned his fair share of recreational vehicles and disliked each of them uniquely. There was the Earth Roamer (anemic axles, in his opinion), the \$350,000 Newmar land yacht (complex emissions technology) and a 25-foot Airstream trailer (lots of propane). Yet Anderson, 81, keeps buying camping rigs. And he's hoping the next one will be his last. This fall, he'll take delivery of a Lightship AE.1 Cosmos, an RV as similar to an Airstream as a Tesla Roadster is to a Pontiac Firebird. What separates the Lightship from the rest of Anderson's letdowns is its propulsion system and design: The rig has two electric motors, so it can drive itself while hitched to the vehicle towing it, and the entire top half tucks down for better aerodynamics while underway. With these two hacks, the vehicle towing the Lightship will feel virtually no weight most of the time. On the interstate, Anderson's hybrid pickup truck will theoretically get its standard 27 miles per gallon, rather than the 12.5 miles it manages with the Airstream behind it. "It's going to change everything in the RV world," Anderson says. This year may well be an inflection point for the RV industry, when serious alternatives are emerging to the gas-guzzling rigs chugging between national parks. In addition to the Lightship, the Pebble Flow - another towable camper with an electric drivetrain - will hit the road. Meanwhile, a host of electric vans will finally be stamped out in high volumes, most notably Volkswagen's ID. Buzz, the latest iteration of the brand's storied bus. Even incumbent Thor Inc., which is to RVs what Apple is to smartphones, is putting the final touches on its first hybrid rig.

"It's certainly a huge milestone," says McKay Featherstone, head of global innovation at Thor Inc. "People can finally go and buy these things and experience this technology." Last year, Americans bought 637,000 RVs, many of which burned a gallon of gas every six to 15 miles traveled. These rigs will stay on the road for about 200,000 miles, belching copious amounts of carbon dioxide. Electric RVs promise to make the summer road trip vastly cleaner, more convenient and quiet. Among other things, electric models will help the RV industry shake off what the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association refers to as a "Covid hangover." The group is forecasting a slight increase in total US sales this year, in part because of the growing number of electric options. "The vibes, if you will, are good," says spokeswoman Monika Geraci. "And there does seem to be an appetite there." In a Venn diagram of folks who love camping and folks who are climate-concerned, there's quite a bit of overlap. That may partially explain why, of the roughly 58 million American households that go camping every year, only 12 million of them own an RV.

Yet it's not like RV drivers don't care about the climate. "Obviously, these people love the outdoors," explains Featherstone at Thor, "and that does translate into people who want a lighter footprint." In fact, some of the same people who long avoided camping rigs and their sizable clouds of emissions are now at the helm of RV startups. These folks could never find a camper green enough for their liking, so they set out to make one. Lightship was launched by two Tesla alumni after a disappointing RV journey. Co-founder Toby Kraus says the company is getting plenty of interest from RV newbies who strive to keep a low carbon footprint, but the company has been surprised at the number of orders from everyday drivers and who don't care about the climate benefits. Anderson is one of the latter: He pays little mind to his personal carbon footprint. What thrills him is the idea of spending less money on gas and having an RV that doesn't have to churn a combustion engine to run the air conditioning and refrigerator

A. In that regard, Lightspeed is borrowing a page from the Tesla playbook. "The reason Tesla was successful is not because it was sustainable," Kraus explains. "It's because the product was awesome. It was clean tech by Trojan Horse." With the glow of ambient light tucked behind ceiling fabric, the interior of the Lightship Ae.1 feels like the first-class cabin of a commercial jet. An induction cooktop is built into the counter, a heat pump quietly cycles air and everything on the rig is controlled by an app. Lightship plans to eventually sell smaller, more affordable models, but its launch vehicle costs a heady \$250,000. The Pebble Flow parks a little further down market with its founders edition priced at \$175,000. Co-founder Bingrui Yang spent much of his career working at Apple on the iPhone and, aesthetically, the rig travels the same lane. With a bed that folds up against the wall and Starlink internet service, the interior is geared for Zoom calls as much as napping in nature, reflecting the rise of remote work. his is the right time for this product," Yang says.

The market is also shifting in ways that may further favor electric models. Since 2021, the average age of US RV customers has dropped from 53 to 49, while the share of the market making more than \$100,000 a year climbed from 29% to 33%. "It's not your grandma and grandpa anymore," Geraci says. "It's a different consumer, and they're looking for more technology." While expensive, the new electric towables change the standard RV economics; because they can propel themselves much of the time, they can be towed with less horsepower and pair nicely with electric vehicles, machines for which towing has been Kryptonite due to range issues. There are also alternatives on the horizon to the hulking, three-bedroom motor coach. These vehicles make up one out of every 10 RVs sold, yet they get some of the worst gas mileage of any non-commercial vehicle, hoovering up a gallon of gas every six or seven miles. Thor is putting the finishing touches on a hybrid vehicle - dubbed simply "Test Vehicle" - that doesn't look markedly different from its gas-burning products.



But refinements in design make it about 20% more aerodynamic. The 210 kilowatt-hours of battery power under the hood along with a gas generator for charging give it somewhere around 500 miles of range. On long trips, it will burn roughly half as much fuel as a similar-sized internal combustion rig and offer even better range on short jaunts. Thor will start taking orders in the fall and producing the vehicles by year-end. Still, there's a huge chunk of the camper market for whom even a towable is too much. Last year, Americans bought 8,300 camper vans as well as an untold number converted minivans and commercial vans to handle s'mores and sleeping duty. These folks also have a bevy of new choices. In the first half of the year, Americans bought 2,500 ID.Buzzes. Many of those rigs will be pressed into minimalist camping service, and aftermarket shops are helping kit them out. That includes Peace Vans in Seattle, which counts both Macklemore and Pearl Jam drummer Matt Cameron as clients. For the Buzz, the company built three different camping configurations. Owner Harley Stitner expects to complete about 1,000 retrofits in the next few years. Sam Shapiro launched Grounded RVs after six months on the road in 2020 en route to a job at SpaceX. "Before that, I don't think I'd ever even been in an RV," he says. "There's this irony of having this experience to embrace nature, yet you're sitting there at a campground running a combustion engine, creating exhaust, making noise." At its factory in Detroit, Grounded is essentially taking the chassis of an electric General Motors BrightDrop van, topping it with the shell of a Class B motorhome and adding its own solar array and battery management software. The rigs can travel about 300 miles on a charge. As with other electric campers, buyers will pay a premium: \$195,000, nearly double what a gas-burning rig of the same size runs. Last year, Grounded shipped 15 of its machines; this year, it's aiming for 50. Roughly half of Grounded customers are RV rookies. "They've been waiting for something like this to come along," Shapiro says. "So many of our customers have said they never want to own a gas-powered vehicle again."

Reps. Khanna And Massie Bring Survivors Of Epstein Abuse To Capitol Hill To Call For Release Of All Secret Files

By JAMIE TARABAY, CHRIS STROHM
AND JIMMY JENKINS

Survivors of deceased financier Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking ring called on Congress to pass legislation requiring the Trump administration to release all unclassified material gathered in a federal investigation of the operation, including information on clients who abused underage girls.

Flanked by Republican Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Democrat Ro Khanna of California, survivors and their lawyers charged that the federal government has protected people complicit in Epstein's crimes by keeping files secret. Even the survivors' attorneys have been barred from sharing some documents, they said.

"Jeffrey Epstein received greater protection than any of the victims for years," Brad Edwards, an attorney for some of the survivors, said during a press conference at the US Capitol on Wednesday. "While we have seen the documents, you haven't. And when you see the documents, you will be appalled."

Massie, who has frequently sparred with Trump, and Khanna have launched a campaign to deploy a seldom-used procedural maneuver known as a discharge petition to force a House vote on releasing the material against the opposition of Republican party leaders.

"The perpetrators are being protected



Congressman Ro Khanna, D-California, speaking at the press conference on Capitol Hill, surrounded by some of the Epstein abuse survivors, September 3, 2025.

because they are rich and powerful," Massie said during the press conference.

If the two lawmakers can gain the backing of a majority of House members, they can bypass House Speaker Mike Johnson, who ordinarily controls what legislation comes to a vote. All House Democrats support the discharge petition. Massie said only two more Republican lawmakers need to sign on in order for the legislation to advance.

"The truth needs to come out, and the government holds the truth," said Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, one of the handful of Republicans who has signed the discharge petition.

"We have to fight like hell for those who are enduring sexual abuse and are living in a prison of shame," Greene said. "All of the fault belongs to the evil people that do these things to the innocent."

House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer, an ally of President Donald Trump, has subpoenaed the Justice Department for the documents but critics including Khanna and Massie say the committee's approach has shielded much of the files from public view.

Trump has continued to be pressed about his previous relationship with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019 as he faced sex-trafficking charges.



Representative Thomas Massie, a Republican from Kentucky, center, during a news conference outside the US Capitol in Washington, DC, US, on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2025.

The president has acknowledged he had a personal relationship with Epstein long ago and attended social gatherings with him but has denied knowing anything about his sex-trafficking operation. Trump has called controversy over the Epstein files "a big hoax."

The oversight committee conducted closed door testimonies of former government officials including former Attorney General William Barr, with only brief statements to describe their depositions. Massie has derided the panel's work as "smoke and mirrors."

-BLOOMBERG

Jasveen Sangha Aka "Ketamine Queen" Pleads Guilty To Federal Drug Charges, Including Selling Fatal Dose To Actor Matthew Perry

By A STAFF WRITER

A San Fernando Valley woman who had agreed to plead guilty on August 18, 2025, to federal criminal charges, including that she provided the ketamine that ultimately resulted in the overdose death of actor Matthew Perry in October 2023, entered her formal guilty plea September 3, 2025, in a California court.

Jasveen Sangha, 42, a.k.a. "Ketamine Queen," of North Hollywood, is a dual citizen of the United States and the United Kingdom, has been in federal custody since August 2024.

Upon entering her guilty plea, Sangha faces her sentencing hearing – which is expected to occur in the coming months – a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison on the drug-involved premises count, up to 10 years in federal prison for each ketamine distribution count, and up to 15 years in federal prison for the count of distribution of ketamine resulting in death or serious bodily injury, a Justice Department press release said.



Jasveen Sangha

According to her plea agreement, Sangha worked with Erik Fleming, 55, of Hawthorne, to knowingly distribute ketamine to Perry, a successful actor and author whose struggles with drug addiction were well documented, the Justice Department noted in its press release of Aug. 18. In October 2023, Sangha and Fleming sold Perry 51 vials of ketamine, which were provided to Kenneth Iwamasa,

60, of Toluca Lake, Perry's live-in personal assistant.

Leading up to Perry's death, Iwamasa repeatedly injected Perry with the ketamine that Sangha supplied to Fleming. Specifically, on October 28, 2023, Iwamasa injected Perry with at least three shots of Sangha's ketamine, which caused Perry's death.

After learning from news reports of Perry's death, Sangha called Fleming on Signal to discuss how to distance themselves from it, the Justice Department said. That day, Sangha updated the settings on the Signal apps to automatically delete her messages with Fleming. She further instructed Fleming to "Delete all our messages."

Two days after Perry's death, Fleming left Sangha a voicemail on Signal and texted, "Please call . . . Got more info and want to bounce ideas off you. I'm 90% sure everyone is protected. I never dealt with [Perry]. Only his Assistant. So the Assistant was the enabler. Also they are doing a 3 month tox screening . . . Does K stay in your system or is it immediately flushed out[?]."

In her plea agreement, Sangha also admitted to selling four vials of ketamine to victim Cody McLaury in August 2019. McLaury died hours later from a drug overdose.

Sangha also admitted in her plea agreement to possessing with intent to distribute various drugs at her North Hollywood residence. In March 2023, law enforcement searched the residence and found 1.7 kilograms of pressed pills containing methamphetamine, 79 vials of liquid ketamine, MDMA (Ecstasy) tablets, counterfeit Xanax pills, baggies containing powdered ketamine and cocaine, and other drug trafficking items such as a gold money counting machine, a scale, a wireless signal and hidden camera detector, drug packaging materials, and \$5,723 in cash.

She further admitted to using her North Hollywood residence to store, package, and distribute narcotics, including ketamine and methamphetamine, since at least June 2019.

According to news reports, Sangha's sentencing hearing is scheduled for December 10.



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Kala Utsav 2025: Celebrating India's Culture, Diversity, And Artistic Heritage In Chicago

By BHAILAL M PATEL

The Consulate General of India, Chicago, hosted its annual flagship cultural showcase, Kala Utsav 2025, at the end of August in the Yellow Box Theatre in Naperville, Illinois, drawing a crowd of more than 500 attendees. The event brought together community leaders, artists, dignitaries, and members of the Indian diaspora in a celebration of India's rich cultural legacy.

Kala Utsav has become a much-anticipated tradition in the Midwest, serving as a cultural bridge where diversity meets unity, and art becomes a powerful expression of togetherness. Through classical, folk, and contemporary performances, the evening paid tribute to the timeless spirit of India—an enduring bond between tradition and modernity.

The event kicked off with the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Consul General of India in Chicago



PHOTOS: FACEBOOK INDIAN IN USA, CONSULATE OF INDIA IN CHICAGO

India's Consul General in Chicago Somnath Ghosh with special invitees at the Kala Utsav inauguration in Naperville, Ill. August 31, 2025.

sion, emphasizing that Indian culture and philosophy—rich legacies of world heritage—must be nurtured, preserved, researched, and integrated into education. It identifies cultural competency as a key student outcome and recognizes the power of the arts in enhancing both cognitive and creative capacities.

Through its Chicago edition, Kala Utsav not only showcases performances but also reflects India's long-term commitment to cultural education, creativity, and global cultural exchange.

PERFORMANCES THAT LIT UP THE STAGE

The audience was treated to a rich tapestry of performances that captured the cultural expanse of India: Bharatanatyam – Nrithya Sangeeth School of Performing Arts, Odissi Classical – Aikyam ODC Chicago, Bhangra – Bhangra Rhymes Chicago, Mohiniyattam Classical – Bharathanjali School of Dance, Kathak Fusion – Team Laya, Maharashtra Mandal of Chicago, Semi-Classical / Creative



Above and below: the various dance performances at Kala Utsav 2025, in Naperville, Ill., displaying India's rich mosaic of art and culture.

Somnath Ghosh, joined by Ward 10 Alderwoman Shweta Baid and Gautam Bhatia, Naperville Township Trustee. In his opening address, Consul General Ghosh extended heartfelt gratitude to dignitaries, members of the diplomatic community, Indian American organizations, ethnic media, and friends of India for their continued support.

He emphasized the Consulate's ongoing commitment to promoting Indian languages, culture, films, and art in universities and institutions across the region. "Kala Utsav alone cannot encapsulate the depth of India's cultural heritage, but it serves as an important platform to spotlight young talent and emerging artists," he remarked. He further announced the Consulate's plans to collaborate with local organizations to strengthen cultural ties and create more opportunities for cultural exchange. Highlighting India's extraordinary diversity, he reaffirmed that unity in diversity remains the country's greatest strength.

Other dignitaries who also addressed the gathering included Baid, Bhatia, and Saba Haider, and Bhavini Patel. They lauded the Consulate's initiative in foster-



ing community engagement through cultural diplomacy.

Initiated in 2015 by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSE&L), Ministry of Education (MoE), Kala Utsav is designed to foster and showcase the artistic talent of students at the Secondary Stage. It involves a comprehensive process of identifying, exploring, practicing, evolving, and presenting student talent at multiple levels—school, district, state, and national. It embodies the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat, where students

not only perform but also immerse themselves in India's diverse art forms.

Kala Utsav also helps strengthen community ties by promoting collaboration between students, artists, artisans, and cultural institutions. Importantly, it provides an inclusive platform, ensuring equal opportunity for students from all sections of society to express their abilities in a joyful, creative, and supportive environment.

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further reinforces this vi-

Dance – Bengali Association of Greater Chicago, Patriotic Dance – Shirzar Dance Company, Haryanvi Folk Dance – Bolly Bhangra, Bharatanatyam – Soorya Dance School, Regional Folk Dance – Utarakhand Association of Chicago, Folk Dances of Tamil Nadu – Nalinapadam, Kathak Classical – Taal Dance Company, Cinematic Folk – Team Ghunghur

The evening's seamless flow was anchored by Anindita Anaam, who served as the emcee.



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US, Indian Armies Begin Yudh Abhyas 2025 In Alaska

By SGT. 1ST CLASS IAN MORALES

Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 11th Airborne Division and Indian Army officially opened Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2025 during a ceremony at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Sept. 2, marking the start of two weeks of combined training designed to enhance interoperability, readiness, and cooperation between the two nations' land forces.

The bilateral exercise, now in its 18th iteration, will take place Sept. 1-14 at Fort Wainwright, the Yukon Training Area and Donnelly Training Area, Alaska. Sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific Command, Yudh Abhyas 25 includes U.S. Army Soldiers, primarily from the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment "Bobcats," 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Arctic) and a comparable Indian Army contingent of the 65th Infantry Brigade.

"Together, we sharpen our skills for peacekeeping, humanitarian response and combat operations because we know that the challenges of the future will demand cooperation across borders," said Col. Christopher Brawley, commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Arctic), 11th Airborne Division. "When our soldiers trained side by side, we demonstrate to the world that our partnership is strong, enduring and prepared to meet any challenge."

Yudh Abhyas, which means "Preparing for War" in Hindi, began in 2004 as a counterinsurgency training exchange. Over the years, it has evolved to include brigade-level command post exercises and field training exercises focused on conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats, as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

This year's exercise includes a brigade combat team command post exercise linked with a bilateral field training exercise. Training events will incorporate artillery live-fire exercises, academic exchanges, cultural events and combined tactical operations in Alaska's challenging terrain and climate.

The exercise's objectives include enhancing bilateral readiness and interoperability, developing coordination between brigade and battalion staffs, integrating operational enablers, and refining air-to-ground



Senior leaders from the Indian Army and U.S. Army's 11th Airborne Division stand shoulder to shoulder during the opening ceremony of Yudh Abhyas 25 at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Sept. 2, 2025. Exercise Yudh Abhyas 25 highlights the long-standing defense partnership between the Indian Army and U.S. Army, building joint readiness for future challenges in the Indo-Pacific.



U.S. Army Col. Christopher Brawley, commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Arctic), 11th Airborne Division, speaks during the opening ceremony of Yudh Abhyas 25 at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Sept. 2, 2025.



U.S., Indian Armies Begin Yudh Abhyas 2025 in Alaska. Brigadier Rajiv Sahara, commander of the Indian Army, 65th Infantry Brigade, speaks during the opening ceremony for Yudh Abhyas 25 at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Sept. 2, 2025.



Brigadier Rajiv Sahara, commander of the Indian Army, 65th Infantry Brigade, speaks during the opening ceremony for Yudh Abhyas 25 at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Sept. 2, 2025.

integration doctrine. It also supports U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's strategy to strengthen regional partnerships and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"Exercises such as Yudh Abhyas create the ideal environment to test concepts, refined procedures and most importantly, learn from each other's experience," said Brigadier Rajeev Sahara, commander of the Indian Army, 65th Infantry Brigade. "I thank our American hosts as the partnership continues to be invaluable to us."

Since its inception, Yudh Abhyas has expanded beyond its original counterinsurgency focus to address modern challenges faced by both nations' militaries. Recent iterations have included training in high-altitude environments, humanitarian operations, and joint responses to crises such as natural disasters.

The exercise also provides opportunities for cultural exchange, sporting events, and professional development workshops. U.S. and Indian soldiers will work together in planning, execution, and after-action review phases, building mutual understanding and trust at all levels.

Yudh Abhyas alternates annually between India and the United States. This year the exercise is held in the United States, and next year's iteration is scheduled to return to India.

For the United States, Alaska offers a strategically significant training ground due to its proximity to key Arctic and Indo-Pacific air and sea corridors. For Indian soldiers, it provides a venue to train in cold-weather conditions with U.S. forces experienced in Arctic operations.

The exercise supports U.S. Army Pacific's five main priorities: campaigning, transformation, lethality, partnerships, and people. It also reflects the broader U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership, which includes a series of joint exercises, defense trade initiatives, and personnel exchanges aimed at enhancing combined capabilities.

-(THIS ARTICLE WAS RELEASED BY THE US ARMY @ARMY.MIL SEPT. 2, 2025)

USCIS Moves Closer to Wage-Based H-1B Lottery:

What Employers and Applicants Should Know

IN MEMORIAM



Michael Phulwani



David Nachman



Ludka Zimovcak



Snehal Batra

The H-1B visa program is again at the center of proposed regulatory changes. On July 17, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sent a draft rule titled “Weighted Selection Process for Registrants and Petitioners Seeking To File Cap-Subject H-1B Petitions” to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB completed its review on August 8, 2025, clearing the way for USCIS to publish the rule for public comment in the Federal Register.

If enacted, this would mark a fundamental shift in how H-1B cap registrations are selected – moving away from a random lottery toward a system that prioritizes higher wage levels.

What the Proposed Rule Would Do

While the final text has not yet been released, the expectation is that USCIS will revive and reintroduce a rule first proposed in January 2021, which was later blocked in federal court and withdrawn.

Under that framework, H-1B cap registrations would be ranked based on the prevailing wage level offered for the position:

- Level IV (highest wage) would be considered first, followed by
- Level III, then
- Level II, and lastly
- Level I (entry-level positions).

If more registrations are submitted at one wage level than there are available visas, USCIS would then apply a lottery within that level.

The rule would apply to both the regular H-1B cap and the advanced degree exemption (U.S. master’s or higher degree holders).

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Why This Matters

The change would represent a major departure from the current random lottery system. Key implications include:

- Reduced chances for entry-level workers. Many recent graduates in F-1 OPT or STEM OPT typically qualify at wage level I. Under the proposed system, these cases would likely have the lowest chance of selection.
- Advantage for higher-paid positions. Employers offering wage levels II-IV would see stronger odds of success, especially in competitive industries.
- Impact on startups and nonprofits. Organizations unable to pay higher salaries may find it much harder to secure H-1B visas for talented foreign nationals.
- Broader workforce effects. The change could alter the pipeline of skilled foreign workers, particularly in technology and research, where many entry-level hires come from U.S. universities.

Background and Context

- The 2021 wage-based rule was struck down by a federal judge and later rescinded by the Biden Administration.
- The second Trump Administration is expected to push forward aggressively with this policy, meaning timing may favor implementation before the next H-1B registration season.

By David H. Nachman, Esq

- The second Trump Administration is expected to push forward aggressively with this policy, meaning timing may favor implementation before the next H-1B registration season.
- In March 2025, the H-1B selection rate was 35.7%, with more than 216,000 applicants unselected. A wage-based system would likely make those odds even steeper for lower-level filings.

Concerns and Criticism

Critics argue that salary does not equal talent. Many of the world’s most innovative minds began their careers earning entry-level wages. A wage-based system risks excluding highly qualified individuals – including recent U.S. graduates – who could otherwise make significant contributions to the economy and society.

What Employers and Applicants Should Do

- Monitor the Federal Register. Once the proposed rule is published, there will be a public comment period. Employers, schools, and industry groups should consider submitting feedback.
- Plan ahead for March 2026. If the rule is finalized in time, H-1B registration strategy may need to focus on offering higher prevailing wages or rethinking hiring plans.
- Explore alternatives. Options such as the O-1 visa, TN (for Canadians and Mexicans), or employment-based green card categories may become more important if H-1B access narrows.

Final Thoughts

If implemented, this rule could fundamentally reshape the H-1B program by prioritizing wages over randomness. While intended to reward “higher-skilled” positions, it may unintentionally shut out bright new graduates and startups. At NPZ Law Group, we are closely tracking these developments. Our team advises employers and foreign nationals on navigating H-1B strategy, compliance, and alternative visa options.

Contact Information

If you or your family members have any questions about how immigration and nationality laws in the United States may affect you, or if you want to access additional information about immigration and nationality laws in the United States or Canada, 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 calling us at 201-670-0006 extension 104. We also invite you to visit our website at www.visaserve.com for more information.

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Divorced Desi Woman Worries About Talking About Her Dating Life

By SAHAJ KAUR KOHLI

Dear Sahaj: As a divorced woman dating in my late 40s, how do I show up authentically when desi family and friends ask about it? This is a no-brainer when I speak to my non-desi friends here. ... However, the thought, "What will people say" hounds me at other times.

– Divorced

Divorced: I wrote a book called "But What Will People Say?" for a reason. I understand the implications of cultural judgment and how damning it can be.

You are in control of how much you disclose to family and friends. Showing up authentically doesn't mean oversharing; it means being rooted in your truth even if you choose to share less. This might look like having a short, confident response ready, changing the subject without apology or only opening up to those who respond with curiosity, not criticism.

You can even find creative ways to neutralize the conversation. You can be playful ("If they're talking about me, at least I'm keeping the community entertained.") or matter-of-fact ("I'm dating and getting to know new people.") or you can be curious ("Why do you think it surprises people when women date after divorce?").

You don't owe anyone an explanation or justification for your relationship choices. It's tempting to keep modifying your story for acceptance, but every time you do, you subtly teach yourself that their approval matters more than your truth. Instead of playing this defensively, frame the narrative in ways that honor your path and allow you to feel ownership of your journey. This may sound like: "This stage has been freeing. I'm making choices that feel right for me." Or even: "I'm figuring out what I want in partnership and life. It's been empowering." This will also let you stand firm if someone pushes by saying, "I appreciate your concern, but I'm happy with my choices."

In some cases, authenticity doesn't mean transparency. You're entitled to your privacy, so explore what it means for you to answer questions in a way that's honest and self-protective, without molding yourself to their comfort



PHOTO: @SAHAJKAURKOHLLI.COM

or out of fear of "log kya kahenge."

Dear Sahaj: My parents are immigrants from Hong Kong and can be toxic when it comes to how I feed my family. I am a mom to a rising second grader and would like our entire family to be more plant-forward. My son likes my vegetarian-leaning meals.

However, my parents constantly pester me and tell me that he isn't "getting enough nutrition" from legumes like lentils and chickpeas. Or even tofu. Why? Because growing children need to have balanced meals. I constantly remind them that Buddhists are vegan and manage to live full, healthy lives. They, on the other hand, believe that Buddhists are just "built differently." Sorry? They're normal humans, just like me?

It's not that they're UNFAMILIAR with cuisines outside Cantonese and other Chinese food – I grew up in the '80s and '90s and was eating my fair share of North American

things. It's just that there's not enough meat.

– Plant Forward

Plant Forward: What you're dealing with isn't really about lentils, tofu or even nutrition. Rather, it's about deep-rooted generational beliefs.

It sounds like your parents may associate meat with status, strength or abundance in some way. It's also possible they feel like you are challenging their parenting approach that is rooted in a food-as-love culture. It may not be rational, but that's why finding a way to build a bridge rather than screaming at each other on different sides of the issue may be an important approach. You want to use language that connects your shared values. This may sound like: "I agree that he needs a balanced meal! That's why I make sure he has a variety, like grains, vegetables, fruit, beans and nuts."

You may consider acknowledging their concern so they feel heard and then offering simple, relatable reassurance. For example, if they are constantly focusing on "nutrition," use this as a way to educate and address their fears. This might sound like, "You keep saying he's not getting nutrition, but what is it you are actually worried about?" They may say something about his growth or strength, and you can educate and reassure: "Lentils have iron just like beef." Or: "These foods give him strength. Tofu and beans have the same building blocks as meat, just like how fish and pork are different but still make you strong."

Maybe there's also a way to have your parents be involved in the food preparation by having them help make the lentils, so you can show them how you add flavor to it or asking them to make the soup your kid loves together – but with tofu instead of pork. You may even share with them how the pediatrician is reporting on your son's growth and strength to help calm their nerves.

And if they keep circling back, prepare a statement you can repeat to hold your boundary. This may sound like: "I know you care, and I appreciate that. I'm not changing this approach right now."

Sahaj Kaur Kohli is a therapist and the creator of Brown Girl Therapy.

–THE WASHINGTON POST

My Partner Ignored A Friend's Racist Joke. Is Our Relationship Toast?

Q: Every year, my partner's family goes on vacation to a location that's extremely White – I'm talking like 5 people of color per 100 people. Oftentimes, as the only POC, the beach town can feel isolating because everyone already knows each other, knows the same people, grew up in the same area and has similar upbringings (upper-middle class, White and from the Northeast).

When we go out to town, I've heard people say wildly racist things in public. And recently, someone close to my partner made a joke that was clearly derogatory toward South Asians. As the only South Asian in the group, I immediately clocked it, but my partner didn't even bother to

call this family friend out on it or correct him. I've expressed my dismay to my partner about it and am worried that if we end up having children together, they'll feel the same way I do when we go on vacation to this location: isolated and alone.

I am interested in raising my children in a diverse area with other South Asians, so they can be exposed to my culture and interact with people of similar backgrounds. My partner, however, would prefer to live near his parents and family – a place where there are few POC in general. At the beginning of our relationship, my partner seemed accepting of my culture and was open to trying the food, watching Bollywood movies together and asking


questions. Now, I feel as if he's done a 180 and isn't receptive to the possibility of even having children with 'ethnic' names or raising them in a diverse area. I've told him I am happy to attend his yearly vacations sometimes but that I need to assert my boundaries, possibly going every other year instead. He sees this as a rejection of his own culture. However, I do regularly see both his parents, siblings and friends outside of these vacations and maintain good relationships with them. Is there a way to compromise on these fundamental issues, or is this relationship toast?

– Wishing for the Best, Preparing for the Worst

A: This is not just about vacations or where to live. This is about whether your partner can stand with you in difficult moments, respect your cultural needs and identity, or see the impact on your future family. He is minimizing racism by not speaking up or acknowledging your discomfort; this will inevitably create a deep rupture in your relationship, if it hasn't already. If he sees your boundary-setting as a personal rejection, it suggests he hasn't fully reckoned with the racial and cultural dynamics you're naming. That's not something that goes away on its own. What you are feeling right now is

–CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

ASTROLOGY



This week for you

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

ARIES: This week brings an opportunity to finalise a deal that could boost your business growth. Family members may encourage your career plans and even offer valuable suggestions. Your partner is likely to show understanding and help you work through any challenges. At the same time, erratic work hours may leave you feeling drained, so a well-balanced diet rich in protein and nutrients is essential. Students may feel proud as their efforts bring favourable results.

TAURUS: Positive lifestyle adjustments may be on your mind, and expert advice from a nutritionist can prove helpful. At home, avoid unnecessary debates, especially on financial matters, to keep the atmosphere light. With consistent communication, misunderstandings with your partner can be cleared. Students must not let peer pressure shake their confidence. Socially, adding variety to your routine may lift your spirits and keep boredom away.

GEMINI: Your innovative thinking and enthusiasm may earn admiration at work this week. Health looks promising as long as you eat balanced meals and stay hydrated. Financial rewards and recognition may soon follow your consistent efforts. Family coordination is important; this will allow you time for self-care. If you are unable to give attention to your partner, tension may rise in the relationship. Students may find guidance from mentors and parents beneficial in shaping their academic goals.

CANCER: Your determination and hard work can lead you toward success. However, past investments may not deliver expected gains, causing a temporary financial crunch. This is the week to balance personal priorities with family responsibilities. Romantic matters may progress to a deeper stage, bringing joy. Beginning a yoga practice may improve your energy levels, and by weekend, you may feel rejuvenated. Dedication can also bring students encouraging results.

LEO: Meditation or yoga may bring calmness and clarity into your life. Friends and family may motivate you to pursue your ambitions wholeheartedly. Your persistent efforts could lead to a promotion or salary hike. Younger natives may get exposure through business-related projects. Love life seems promising, with delightful moments shared with your partner. Students confused about their career choices may benefit from expert advice. A visit to a spiritual place may also bring peace of mind.

VIRGO: At work, fresh strategies may help you take on prominent assignments. To remain secure financially, it's wise to avoid risky investments this week. Couples may enjoy pleasant times together, while singles may find the courage to confess their feelings. Offering assistance to friends or relatives over the weekend may strengthen bonds. Students aiming for overseas education may find encouraging

opportunities. Regular exercise may help you achieve long-term fitness goals.

LIBRA: Financially, the week looks stable, giving you confidence. A thoughtful gesture or gift from a loved one may brighten your days. While dealing with family concerns, staying composed and listening to elders can resolve matters smoothly. On the health front, intensifying your workouts may push you closer to fitness targets. Those looking to purchase property should carefully verify documents. Students can achieve good progress with dedicated efforts and timely action.

SCORPIO: Certain family situations may require you to make tough choices, but handling them with diplomacy can keep harmony intact. On the romantic front, a short getaway with your partner may prove enjoyable. A sudden inheritance or monetary gain may come your way. Health remains strong with regular workouts and meditation. Students may perform well in their assessments, and involvement in social causes could earn admiration from peers.

SAGITTARIUS: Gaining your partner's trust through genuine care and effort may strengthen the relationship. A surprise gift or gesture could bring more closeness. Your cheerful outlook can spread positivity at home, ensuring harmony. Exploring unconventional fitness techniques might give better-than-expected results. For students, this week appears productive, with motivation pushing them to complete tasks successfully.

CAPRICORN: Your analytical approach may make you a strong contender for significant work opportunities. Financially, there are indications of gains, and wise investments may improve your position further. Offering practical solutions during family matters may earn you respect. Health could improve after minor issues, restoring energy and confidence. Students may find this a supportive phase to focus fully on studies and achieve their goals.

AQUARIUS: Strong finances may encourage you to make smart decisions and grow your assets. Home improvements or family news may add cheer. Exciting experiences are likely in your love life. Adopting simple lifestyle changes could boost overall wellness. For students, this period is excellent to apply for internships and gain practical exposure.

PISCES: Romantic bonds may strengthen this week, bringing warmth and happiness. On the other hand, differences with siblings or relatives over family matters may arise, so maintaining calmness is essential. Prioritising your mental peace will prevent unnecessary stress. A disciplined fitness routine and nutritious meals may quicken recovery from any health concerns. Students should avoid disputes to maintain good relations with teachers and peers.



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Scrolling Too Long While On The Toilet? You Could Be Risking Hemorrhoids

SABRINA MALHI

Prolonged smartphone use on the toilet could be linked to a higher risk of hemorrhoids, not because of increased straining, but because of how much longer people sit, according to research published Wednesday.

A cross-sectional analysis of 125 patients undergoing screening colonoscopies found that smartphone users in the group spent significantly more time on the toilet, according to the study published in PLOS One from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. About 37 percent of people who were part of the study and reported using smartphones on the toilet spent more than five minutes per bathroom visit compared with 7 percent of nonusers.

After adjusting for age, sex, body mass index (BMI), fiber intake, physical activity and straining, smartphone use was associated with a 46 percent increased risk of hemorrhoids.

Chethan Ramprasad, one of the study authors who specializes in gastrointestinal motility, said hemorrhoids are often overlooked because they are “not taken as seriously,” even though millions of dollars of health care expenditure go to treating hemorrhoids.

“No one really wants to talk about something that’s in their anus rectum, but this is incredibly human,” Ramprasad said.

Trisha Pasricha, the senior author of the study, is the Ask a Doctor columnist for The Washington Post. She was not involved in the reporting of this article.

WHY IS SITTING ON THE PHONE WITH YOUR TOILET A PROBLEM?

Phones are now a bathroom companion for most people. A 2022 study found that 65 percent of Americans said they use their phones on the toilet. Researchers said the distraction leads to longer toilet sessions, which leads to the increased risk of hemorrhoids.

Straining, which has been historically considered a



PHOTO: THE WASHINGTON POST

major factor, was not significantly associated with hemorrhoids in the study group, which researchers say suggests that time spent sitting on the toilet may be a more important risk factor.

Many gastroenterologists have long warned against sitting on the toilet for prolonged periods of time. The study authors say “sitting on a standard toilet seat, without any support to the pelvic floor, disproportionately increases pressure in the hemorrhoidal cushions. As this pressure persists over time, these cushions may become engorged and thereby develop into appreciable hemorrhoids.”

Most people surveyed as part of the study did not realize their phones were prolonging their toilet visits, underscoring a gap between perception and actual behavior.

Hemorrhoids are swollen or inflamed veins located in the anus and lower rectum and can be caused by several factors including pregnancy, low fiber intake, chronic constipation or diarrhea and being overweight. While not cancerous, hemorrhoids can be uncomfortable, painful and are sometimes accompanied with bleeding.

And nonsurgical treatment of the ailment is costly. Research from 2014 found that about 1.4 million people insured by their employers sought hemorrhoid care that year costing \$770 million. And nearly half of people older than 50 will have hemorrhoids at some point in their life, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases recommends maintaining a fiber-rich diet, staying hydrated, exercising regularly and avoiding long periods of sitting on the toilet to help reduce the risk.

WHAT MEASURES CAN YOU TAKE TO PREVENT HEMORRHOIDS?

Jessica D. Dahmus, assistant professor of medicine at the Penn State College of Medicine and a gastroenterologist with Penn State Health who was not involved in the survey, said she recommends her patients spend only five to 10 minutes on the toilet and avoid bringing their cellphones into the bathroom.

She also said increasing a person’s fiber can help minimize constipation which can prevent the straining that can lead to hemorrhoids.

The recommended daily intake is 25 grams for women and 30 grams for men, but most Americans fall short, Dahmus said.

Research published in 2017 from the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine found that only about 5 percent of the population meets the daily recommendation for fiber intake.

Experts say fiber-rich foods include beans, lentils, whole grains, berries and leafy greens, which can help soften stool and bowel movement, reducing pressure on rectal veins.

Sabrina Malhi is a national health-care reporter covering infant, maternal and public health. She was the author of the Coronavirus Updates newsletter and previously served as president of the South Asian Journalists Association.

-THE WASHINGTON POST

Advice Column

My Partner Ignored A Friend’s Racist Joke. Is Our Relationship Toast?

-CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

enough to bring up a larger, more serious conversation. One around his own willingness to put in the work to understand and educate himself on these dynamics, as well as his role within them. Simply put: Your partner has privilege – and therefore, influence and power – in ways you don’t. If he’s not willing to confront that, and use it, then how can you confidently feel safe in the relationship? Even more, the way I see it, also as a South Asian partnered to a White man, your future kids are going to be raised in a society that reflects your partner’s cultural values and norms – by default. So being intentional about how and where your kids get to see and engage in our cultural values and norms is not

just a “nice to have” ... it’s necessary and important. Be very direct with your partner about this: “For me, it’s nonnegotiable that our kids are raised in a diverse community and exposed to my culture through (name specific traditions or factors). Can you see yourself fully on board with that?” Your relationship is probably “toast” if he continues to dismiss racism, if he refuses to engage when you’re hurt or if he’s unwilling to raise kids in a way that honors both your cultures. It makes sense that giving your children a name that honors your history and cultural background is important to you. I’m curious to whom these names are considered “ethnic.” This might seem innocuous, but that word choice alone centers Whiteness and is a part of the problem. Partnership requires

both people to sometimes go beyond their comfort zones. If you feel like you’re constantly compromising on core values while he interprets your needs as rejection or unimportant, can that be a fulfilling relationship for you long-term?

Being with someone of another culture or background should be an expansive experience, not a restrictive one. If you are the only person stretching, your resentment will only continue to grow ... and that is not sustainable. One activity you can do together is take some time to each write out what’s nonnegotiable about family, culture and raising children. Then come together and compare the list. Is there overlap? Is there enough room to build a life together?

Of course intertwining your lives will

require compromise, but please don’t mistake compromise for sacrifice. It’s only a compromise if both of you are willing to meet in the middle somewhere. Giving something up while your boundaries are being dismissed is a sacrifice. There are some things – such as safety and belonging – that cannot and should not be up for negotiation in a relationship.

In a world that is already unkind, othering and discriminatory to people with marginalized identities like you, you truly deserve intimate relationships that are soft, safe, affirming and inclusive.

Sahaj Kaur Kohli is a therapist and the creator of Brown Girl Therapy.

-THE WASHINGTON POST

Param Sundari Is Decent Mix Of Feel-Good Tropes With Novelties

BY RAJIV VIJAYAKAR

An App that finds the perfect soulmate for anyone: something like this can revolutionize the world and make a fortune for its designer. A man named Shekhar (Abhishek Banerjee) designs something like this, and tempts our hero, Param (Sidharth Malhotra) into investing a fortune in it.

But Param's long-suffering dad (from all of Param's ambitious but harebrained moneymaking schemes) will no longer be conned by his son. The tycoon, Parmeet Sachdev (Sanjay Kapoor) will now invest in it only if it is proven that it works. And so Param must search (within a week) for his own soulmate on the App! If he does succeed, dad will give him the sum.

Desperate to get the money and becoming a success at something, Param opts to download his profile on the App and soon discovers that the soulmate is a homestay owner in far-off Kerala: a girl whose name is Sundari (Janhvi Kapoor). She teaches Mohini Attam on the side, and has a sister, Ammu (Inayat Verma). Unofficially (as in verbally), however, she is betrothed to childhood friend Venu (Siddhartha Shankar), the son of Bhargavan Nair (Renji Panicker), a kind of a village head. Venu is at present away. But Param does not know all this.

Param reaches Kerala and sees and interacts (as houseguest) with Sundari. He is besotted by her soon enough, but keeps his feelings to himself. Slowly, Param and Sundari come close and both feel something for each other. In between there are several issues happening—Venu reappears and while Sundari is now confused, Param feels guilty and feels that he is “using” Sundari emotionally. And then something happens with respect to the App as well!

The story is a mix of the over-familiar and the fresh. However, director Tushar Jalota and his co-writers (he is one of them too) definitely have a raw touch to their work. The wrong man in the right place formula has been used in love triangles from the 1990s, and this wrong man is often the goody-goody one (from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai to the recent Ankhon Ki Gustakhiyan) and so is the case here.

The sequence where the younger sister drills sense into Sundari, which however proves short-lived, and the airport sequence with a difference from many such earlier pre-climaxes are two more concessions to formulaic storytelling devices. In the final analysis, in this modern-day throwback-to-Chennai Express-with-a-deviation, the only novelties are the exposure to the cultural exhibitions of the region, with some riveting sequences like that of the ring and the pet elephant, Param's first morning jog, the parantha sequence and the two occasions where the lead pair climb a tall coconut tree, each for a valid reason!

It is these few fresh drops in this bottle of old wine that makes the final viewing pleasant and relaxed, though personally, I found the prolonged church scenes not very wholesome in that background. That said, the end is also quite quirky and even whacky.

A major plus here is the lead pair. Sidharth Malhotra has never looked better, and acts with care, though he should have curtailed his wannabe-Shah Rukh Khan habit of his earlier films, that seems to have returned with a feel-good drama genre that is familiar fare for SRK even beyond Chennai Express and Kuch Kuch Hota Hai.

Janhvi Kapoor again shows her solid bankable prowess in what is essentially a good but not really meaty role. She is especially standout in the first 30 minutes where she is interacting as a homestay owner with Param. As a pair, their chemistry is terrific.

Param's inseparable associate is essayed by another



Sidharth Malhotra and Janhvi Kapoor in Param Sundari

reliable performer, Manjot Singh. Siddhartha Shankar as Venu is competent within his character's limitations, but Inayat Verma as Ammu and Renji Panicker as Bhargavan Nair are very effective. Abhishek Banerjee does not have much to do, but the other actors portraying Keralites, including the ladies, are impressive.

That brings me to the sore thumb: Sanjay Kapoor as Parmeet is supremely miscast and disappoints big time with his mediocre hamming. This is where a truly accomplished actor, like maybe Varun Badola or Sharad Kelkar, would have worked wonders.

The cinematography by Santhana Krishnan Ravichandran (doubling up in a shopkeeper's cameo) is brilliant and picturesque while Manini Mishra and Sharanya Menon do a fantastic job of the production design.

Manish Pradhan's editing could have been improved the film had he scissored out at least 20 minutes from the 136-minute movie whose graph moves from high to low and back many a time.

Sachin-Jigar's songs, while lacking a long shelf-life, mostly go well with the flow of the film, and the lyrics by Amitabh Bhattacharya also shine especially in Pardesiya, Sun mere yaar ve and Chand kaagaz. The duo's background score is effective, though I felt that the thematic riff could have been less utilized.

A passable one-time watch, the film does rise slightly above the average because of the terrific chemistry between the lead pair. And I would like to see more of Sidharth and Janhvi as a team.

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