

# KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

JULY 2026

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM

EDITOR@KHAASBAAT.COM

813-758-1786

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Photo: Nima Film (nimafilm.com)



## SAVE THESE DATES!

Here are some important dates you want to note down on your calendar for later in the year.

**TAMPA BAY AREA**  
**INDIA FESTIVAL OCT. 31**  
More than 10,000 people are expected at the 37th India Festival organized by the Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay.

**CENTRAL FLORIDA (ORLANDO)**  
**GUJARATI SOCIETY TO HOLD DIWALI NOV. 14**  
The Gujarati Society of Central Florida will be holding its annual Diwali dinner on Nov. 14 at Renaissance Orlando (SeaWorld).

**SOUTH FLORIDA (PEMBROKE PINES)**  
**DIWALI CELEBRATIONS NOV. 21**  
The Festival of Lights is organized by the Indian Regional and Cultural Center (IRCC).

For more information on each event, please see page 15



**TAMPA**  
**SANATAN MANDIR**  
**HONORS**  
**DR. AKSHAY**  
**DESAI**

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# WHO'S WHO

Khaas Baat is a monthly publication that has been in circulation since August 2004. Issues are direct mailed to subscribers and also are available at South Asian grocery stores and restaurants. It presents exclusive, informative and relevant news about the Indian American community in Florida to its readers.

**EDITOR/PUBLISHER: NITISH S. RELE, M.A. IN JOURNALISM**  
**ASSOCIATE EDITOR: SHEPHALI J. RELE, M.A. IN JOURNALISM**  
**CREATIVE DIRECTOR: TIM LANCASTER**

**Khaas Baat, 8312 Windsor Bluff Drive, Tampa, FL 33647**  
**Phone: 813-758-0518 • e-mail: editor@khaasbaat.com**

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## EVENTS

### TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

**JULY 1: GSTB SENIOR DAY;** organized by Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; \$10 for GSTB members, \$15 for non-members; lunch and entertainment; for any questions, text (813) 476-1867.

**JULY 2-5: AAPICON 2026;** 44th annual AAPI Convention & Scientific Assembly; Tampa Marriott Water St., 505 Water St., Tampa; to register or for details, visit <https://aapiconvention.org/>

**JULY 14: HANUMAN CHALISA;** second Tuesday of month; Vishnu Mandir Tampa, 5803 Lynn Road; 7 to 9 p.m.; for information, call Deo Gajadhar at (813) 817-9714.

**JULY 15: ICC SENIORS GET-TOGETHER;** India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; free seminar, lunch and entertainment; only for 65 years and older; for information, text email address along with your name to Bhikhu Nayi at (631) 560-2718 to receive details about seniors gathering every month; or call Mahesh Modha at (813) 476-1540.

**JULY 18: GUJARATI COMEDY NIGHT WITH KISHOR KAKA;** presented by HIT Entertainment; performers are Smit Pandya and RJ Harshil; Chamberlain High School, 9401 N. Blvd., Tampa; 6:30 p.m.; \$25; for information, call Bhavik Modi at (813) 557-4555.

**JULY 18: TAMPA BAY RATH YATRA CELEBRATIONS;** Sanatan Mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., Tampa; begins at 3 p.m.; call (813) 221-4482 or visit [www.sanatanmandirtampa.org](http://www.sanatanmandirtampa.org)

**JULY 18: TAMPA JAGANNATH RATH YATRA;** Sri Ayyappa Society of Tampa, 6829 Maple Lane, Tampa; 11 a.m. onward; visit [www.floriyanonprofit.org](http://www.floriyanonprofit.org)

**JULY 25: "GUJJUBHAI NEE EXCHANGE OFFER;"** play presented by Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay; directed/enacted by Siddharth Randeria; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 8 p.m.; \$15 members, \$50 non-members; for information, visit <https://www.gujaratisamajtampabay.com/>

### INVERNESS/CRYSTAL RIVER

**JULY 29-AUG. 1: GURU POORNIMA;** grand celebration at Shirdi Sai Florida Center, 4707 S. Pleasant Grove Road, Inverness; details to be announced; visit [www.shirdiusa.com](http://www.shirdiusa.com) or call (352) 860-2181.

### ORLANDO

**JULY 1: SPIRITUAL LEADER VISIT;** Sadhu Vaswani Mission head Didi Krishna; Maa Durga Sri Sai Baba Temple, 11414

## SIGNIFICANT DATE

**JULY 16: JAGANNATH RATH YATRA**

S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando; 6 p.m.; for information, call (407) 574-8044.

**JULY 5: JHULAY LAAL BAHARANO AND MATA KI CHOWKI;** Maa Durga Sri Sai Baba Temple, 11414 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando; 5 p.m.; kirtan program by Sagar Sakhrani from India; sponsored by Assan and Priya Shadadpuri; for information, call (407) 574-8044.

**JULY 5: GUJARATI COMEDY NIGHT WITH KISHOR KAKA;** performers are Smit Pandya and RJ Harshil; presented by Gujarati Society of Central Florida; Laxmi Narayan Mandir, 269 S. Klondike Ave., Orlando; 5 p.m.; \$10 members, \$30 non-members (dinner included); purchase tickets at [www.gujaratisocietycfl.com](http://www.gujaratisocietycfl.com)

**JULY 23: "GUJJUBHAI NEE EXCHANGE OFFER;"** play presented by Gujarati Society of Central Florida; directed/enacted by Siddharth Randeria; Olympia High School, 4301 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando; 6:30 p.m.; \$25 members, \$50 non-members; purchase tickets at [www.gujaratisocietycfl.com](http://www.gujaratisocietycfl.com)

### DAYTONA BEACH

**JULY 26-28: SUNSHINE EXPO 2026;** organized by Asian American Store Owners Association (AASOA); tradeshow for attendees from multiple industries such as gas stations, convenience stores, liquor, smoke and vape shops; Ocean Center Convention Center, 101 N. Atlantic Ave., Daytona Beach; call Vipul Patel at (321) 271-7072 or visit [www.aasoa.com](http://www.aasoa.com) to register.



### JACKSONVILLE

**JULY 28-AUG. 2: GURUPURNIMA WITH PUJA DEEPAKBHAI;** spiritual discourses and self-realization ceremony with Pujya Deepakbhai Desai; free; Hyatt Regency - Jacksonville Riverfront, 225 East Coastline Drive; to register, visit <https://tiny.dbvi.org/gpreg>

### SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)

**SEPT. 26: LEGACY: TRIBUTE TO BHARAT RATNA PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR;** organized by Association of Performing Arts of India; several sitarists, percussionists, vocalists and violinists to perform in concert; Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 201 Southwest Fifth Ave., Fort Lauderdale; 6 p.m.; purchase tickets at [browardcenter.org](http://browardcenter.org)

**Disclaimer: Event details are subject to change. Please check with local organizers. Event submissions are free, e-mail information to editor@khaasbaat.com by the 20th.**

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### JULY 2026 EVENTS

FRIDAY JULY 3 2026	Sankashti Chaturthi Ganesh Pooja, Group Havan	6:00-8:00PM
FRIDAY JULY 10 2026	Ekadashi & Aarti	8:00PM
SATURDAY JULY 11 2026	Pradosh Vrat Group Shiva Pooja, & Aarti <i>(Sponsorship opportunities available call temple coordinator)</i>	6:00-8:00PM
SUNDAY JULY 12 2026	Shree Jhulay Laal Bhajan	5:00-6:00PM
FRIDAY JULY 18 2026	Jagannath Rath Yatra Celebration	3:00-7:00PM
FRIDAY JULY 24 2026	Devshayani Ekadashi & Aarti <i>(Beginning of the sacred Chaturmas)</i>	8:00PM
SATURDAY JULY 25 2026	Mata Ki Chowki <i>Sponsored by Hari &amp; Shashi Arora</i>	5:00-8:00PM
SUNDAY JULY 26 2026	Gujarati Bhajan	5:00-7:00PM
WEDNESDAY JULY 29 2026	Guru Purnima - Bobala Yatra - Ashadha Purnima Guru Pooja, Pakhi Yatra & Special Satsang <i>Major temple celebration</i>	6:00-8:30PM
THURSDAY JULY 30 2026	North Indian Shravan Month Begins Special Shiva Worship join us in Shravan Mondays schedule on 6:00PM to 8:00PM Group Shravan Shiv Abhishek Puja	6:00-8:00PM

### WEEKLY EVENTS

- EVERY MONDAY - 6:30PM**  
• SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA
- EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00PM**  
• SUNDERKAND PATH  
• HANUMAN CHALISA
- EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00PM**  
• SADGURU & SHIRDI SAI BABA  
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**VIRAL INFECTIONS**

By **DR. VENKIT IYER, MD, FACS**



Recent news media have been full of stories and concerns about viral infections with high mortality. Hanta and Ebola viruses attract much of the attention. Covid-19, which was the scare of a lifetime, seems to have taken a back seat. Influenza and common cold have been lingering around forever. Political circles are concerned about measles and vaccination protocols.

**Hanta virus**

It is transmitted through rodents or their droppings when the virus is inhaled by humans. Recent news was related to infections that occurred in a cruise ship, with several

Americans on board. Famous actor Gene Hackman's wife died of Hanta in her house last year. Patients develop flu like symptoms and fever, which can go on to become lethal in about 38% of them. Treatment is mostly supportive care since there is no specific antiviral medication. Preventing rodents, rats and mice from entering your house, and pest control measures are important. If their droppings are found, they must be sanitized with bleach or other disinfectants before sweeping them but while wearing a mask.

**Ebola virus**

This deadly viral infection is most common in African countries, with Democratic Republic of Congo being the center of new outbreak. This infection is spread by direct body contact or contact with body fluids. Symptoms are muscle pain, fever, fatigue, headache and diarrhea. Severe forms lead to hemorrhage and multi-organ failure resulting in high mortality. Vaccine was available for the previous strain, and it is being developed for the newer strain. Treatment is

mostly supportive care and monoclonal antibodies. Prevention is most important by quick isolation, quarantine, wearing gloves, handwashing, hand sanitizers, avoiding all body or body fluid contacts, and vaccinations.

**Covid-19**

The deadly pandemic killed millions of people in a short time just five years ago but seems to have faded now. This was an air-borne infection, transmitted by inhalation of the virus when an infected person coughed or sneezed. It started as flu-like symptoms with coughing and sneezing, fever, muscle ache and abdominal discomfort. Many died from serious complications since it was a new infection with no treatment at the time. But science came to rescue with rapid discovery of vaccines and antiviral medications. It also led to historic discovery of gene-based vaccines instead of the previous immune serum-based vaccines. Prevention included avoiding crowds, wearing masks, handwashing and vaccinations.

**Mosquito-borne viral infections**

They are endemic in many countries and require precaution when traveling to those areas. Some of the mosquito-borne viral infections are dengue, chikungunya, zika, yellow fever, West Nile encephalitis and other forms of encephalitis. They cause severe joint pain, neurological changes, hemorrhagic manifestations, headache and fever. Avoiding mosquito bites at all costs include use of insect repellents, long-sleeved clothes, tightly closed windows, doors and wire screens and use of mosquito nets. Vaccinations are available for some infections. Mosquitos can transmit other types of infections such as Malaria too.

*Con't on page 6*

## SRI SAI BABA TEMPLE

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# GURU POORNIMA

## Celebrations

JULY 29, 2026 TO AUGUST 1, 2026

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July 29, 2026 to August 1, 2026

JULY 29, 2026 – WEDNESDAY	JULY 30, 2026 – THURSDAY	JULY 31, 2026 – FRIDAY	AUGUST 1, 2026 – SATURDAY
10:30 AM Abhishek for Sai Baba and Dattatreya	10:00 AM Kalasha pooja	6:00 PM Sri Sudarshana homa poornahuti, Balipradana	9:00 AM Kalasha Pooja
5:00 PM Ganga Pooja, Yaga Shala Pravesha, Ganapati Pooja, Punhyaha vachanam	11:00 AM Abhishek for Baba special		9:30 AM Maha Ganapati Homa, Navagraha Homa and sai baba & dattatreya homa.
6:00 PM Deva-Nandhi, kalashathupana, Maha Pooja	5:30 PM Sri Sai sahasranama Archana samuhika		10:30 AM Poornahuti
	6:30 PM Prakara utshava for sai baba Bhajan		11:00 AM Special Abhishekha
			2:00 PM Samuhika saisacharitha parayana
			6:00 PM Samuhika satyanarayana pooja

**DAILY SCHEDULE**

- 8:00 AM Subrabhata Seva
- 8:30 AM Kakada Aarthi
- 12:00 PM Madhyana Aarthi
- 5:00 PM Dhoop Aarthi
- 7:30 PM Shej Aarthi

**SEVAS & OFFERINGS**

- Aarchana \$11
- Abhishekha \$31
- Sahasranama Archana \$31
- Pushpa Seva (Flower) \$51 and above
- Annadana Seva \$51 and above
- Sankalpa Seva \$151 (Includes everyday Pooja Sponsorship)
- Pradana Seva \$501 (Includes all day Pooja Seva and Sponsor will get a silver deity of Baba.) ONLY FOR THE FIRST 20 DEVOTEES
- Homa Seva \$51
- Samuhika Satyanarayana Pooja \$51

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**NOTE TO DEVOTEES**

Sankalpa Seva: If you are unable to attend please request temple to send prasadam to mailbox.

Archana Seva: Please provide your family names and gotra details to temple priest or at the office.

Let us come together in devotion and gratitude to our Sadguru Sai on this auspicious occasion of Guru Poornima.

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## USCIS POLICY SHIFT ON ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS SPARKS CONTROVERSY AND UNCERTAINTY

By KHUSHBU PATEL and DILIP PATEL



In a significant development, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced a new policy on May 22, 2026, that characterizes adjustment of status as “extraordinary relief,” effectively permitting applicants to bypass the traditional consular visa process in certain circumstances. This policy memorandum (PM-620-1099) marks a notable departure from longstanding practices.

### Historical Context and Policy Background

Historically, there was an understanding — supported by legislative history and court interpretations — that foreign nationals seeking permanent residency in the U.S. should generally not be required to leave the country unless extraordinary circumstances exist. Over decades, Congress and the courts have expanded the scenarios under which adjustment of status is available, emphasizing family reunification, employment, and humanitarian considerations.

Traditionally, USCIS and its predecessor agencies exercised discretion based on a variety of factors, including the applicant’s ties to the U.S., moral character, and overall equities. The new policy, however, aims to shift the focus toward a broader assessment of “totality of circumstances,” potentially limiting the exercise of discretion and emphasizing the importance of applying for immigrant visas abroad when feasible.

### Details of the New Policy and Its Scope

The May 22 memo applies specifically to adjustment of status applications based on family, employment, diversity visas, special immigrant categories (EB-4), trafficking and crime victims, asylees, and certain parolees are considered discretionary and hence subject to the new policy.

USCIS directs officers to evaluate all relevant factors — adverse and positive — when exercising discretion. This includes weighing violations of law, fraud, misconduct, and attempts to circumvent the normal consular process against positive factors such as family ties, community integration, moral character and economic contributions. The policy emphasizes that applicants must demonstrate “unusual or outstanding equities” to offset any adverse circumstances.

### Implementation and Potential Rollback

Since the policy’s release, reports have surfaced indicating inconsistent implementation on the ground. Some USCIS field offices are reportedly no longer asking questions related to the memo during interviews, and approvals have been granted in cases where interview questions about the policy were posed.

Further, recent press reports suggest that USCIS may be rolling back the policy, with a spokesperson stating that the memo “will not prevent any alien from obtaining a green card who legitimately and properly qualifies.” However, no official clarification has been issued.

### Legal and Practical Implications

The policy’s emphasis on discretion and totality of circumstances introduces a new layer of complexity into the adjustment process. Immigration officers are instructed to consider factors such as violations, fraud, misconduct, and attempts to avoid consular processing as adverse, while family ties and economic contributions are viewed favorably. This shift could lead to increased requests for additional evidence, denials, and interviews centered on these discretionary factors.

Practitioners advise clients to prepare documentation highlighting positive discretionary factors—such as family relationships, community involvement, and economic contributions—while being prepared to address adverse factors. If an application is denied, options include seeking a motion to reopen or reconsider, although the denial itself cannot typically be appealed.

### Impact on Specific Client Populations

The policy also raises concerns about its implications for various categories of applicants. For instance, individuals who relied solely on an adjustment-based employment authorization document (EAD) and have not maintained

nonimmigrant status may face higher scrutiny. The policy highlights the importance of maintaining lawful status or, at minimum, considering alternative nonimmigrant statuses with dual intent, such as H-1B, to reduce risks.

Moreover, the memo’s focus on the totality of circumstances may disadvantage applicants with prior violations or misconduct, especially if adverse factors outweigh positive equities. This could negatively affect those with criminal histories or past immigration violations.

### Broader Policy and Legislative Considerations

The new approach appears to align with congressional intent to limit adjustment of status within the U.S., particularly for categories with strict nonimmigrant intent or departure requirements. Still, it is a departure from the historically broad discretion granted to USCIS officers and may raise questions about consistency and fairness.

Lawmakers and advocacy groups are closely monitoring USCIS’s implementation, with some calling for congressional oversight and legislative amendments to clarify or limit the policy’s scope.

### Conclusion: A Time of Uncertainty

The May 22 policy memorandum signifies a potential paradigm shift in how adjustment of status cases are adjudicated. While USCIS has asserted that the policy is consistent with congressional intent and legal principles, the lack of official guidance and reports of inconsistent application have created uncertainty.

For questions or concerns relating to the new policy memo, it is important to consult an immigration attorney.

**Dilip Patel of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, a board-certified expert on immigration law, can be reached at (813) 222-1120 or email [dilip.patel@bipc.com](mailto:dilip.patel@bipc.com)**

## VIRAL INFECTIONS

*Con’t from page 4*

### Other viral infections

Many other viral infections are prevalent in our society. With caution and preventive steps, they can be reduced. Sexually transmitted viral infections include HIV/AIDS and HPV. Safe sex precautions, avoiding needle sharing, taking vaccinations and medications are important. Hepatitis can be reduced by avoiding body fluid contacts, needle sharing and safe dietary precautions. Common cold and influenza have been around forever. Common sense precautions should be taken and vaccinations when available. Gastrointestinal viral infections include food poisoning, norovirus and rotavirus. Hot freshly cooked vegetarian meals can help avoid the virus.

### Value of vaccinations

It is a well-established scientific fact that vaccinations help to avoid or reduce severity of viral infections. Childhood vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) is effective with minimal side effects. In fact, all childhood jabs as per protocol are to be observed. Polio and smallpox vaccinations have nearly eradicated those infections. HPV and hepatitis vaccinations are saving many lives and cancers. Yearly flu vaccine helps to reduce the severity of the disease. Those who are immune-compromised, elderly or have risk factors should consider prophylactic injections against RSV, shingles and pneumonia as per advice of primary care physicians.

**Dr. Venkit S. Iyer, MD, FACS, is a retired general and vascular surgeon. He has authored six books: “Decision making in clinical surgery” first and second editions; “Aging well and reaching beyond,” “The Clinic,” “Geriatrics Handbook” and “Iyer’s story book for children.” They are available through Amazon or from the author. His website [venkitiyer.com](http://venkitiyer.com) has necessary links and contact information.**

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## OVERLOOKED AUDI S5 A LOVELY BLEND OF PERFORMANCE, COMFORT

Test-drive stories by NITISH S. RELE [motoringflorida@gmail.com](mailto:motoringflorida@gmail.com)

Sedan or hatchback due to its liftgate design? The debate rages on about a designation for the Audi S5 but really it doesn't matter. The small performance car with luxury features is a blast to drive whether you are cruising the highway or taking a stroll down city streets. You are looking at 0 to 60 in just 4.3 seconds with speed topping at 155 mph. It's what some call a "hot rod version of the A5."

Redesigned just last year, the incredibly agile Audi S5 continues mostly as is for 2026 with a 3.0-liter intercooled and turbocharged V-6 engine under the hood. The powertrain blasts off 362 horsepower @ 6300 rpm and 406 pounds-feet of torque @ 4000 rpm. A 7-speed Stronic transmission along with the recognized quattro all-wheel drive delivers peace of mind in any road situation or weather condition.

A five-link independent suspension with sport adaptive air makes driving over rough roads more than tolerable yet keep the body in check through quick-transition turns. The electromechanical power-assist steering is razor sharp with a substantial on-center feel. Drive modes include comfort, dynamic plus, balanced, efficiency and individual.

The coupe-like sedan sporting a black grille with metal-look surround up front is flanked by matrix-design and animated LED headlights and eight digital daytime running light signatures. Step into the roomy cabin and you will realize that the fairly new MMI infotainment interface is now 14.5 inches while the curved digital display screen is 11.9 inches. Piano black/aluminum accents and carbon micro-twill inlays lend a rich ambiance throughout. Eight-way power front heated/cooled Nappa leather seats have large side holsters, holding you in place quite well. Fold down the rear seat to eke



**AUDI S5 PRESTIGE**  
**Tires:** 245/35R20  
**Wheelbase:** 114 inches  
**Length:** 190.3 inches  
**Height:** 56.5 inches  
**Width:** 82.6 inches  
**Fuel capacity:** 14.8 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:** 20/29/23  
**Weight:** 4,288 pounds  
**Base price:** \$63,300  
**Price as tested:** \$75,075  
**Web site:** [www.audiusa.com](http://www.audiusa.com)

out a laudable 37.5 cubic feet of space. Head and leg room is more than adequate for adults. Other niceties include three-zone auto a/c, power tail gate, tilt/telescopic steering column and sun roof, black cloth headliner, and manual rear window shades. The \$7,600 Prestige package comes with digital OLED tail lamps, head-up display, heated rear seats, Bang & Olufsen sound system, panoramic glass roof, top-view camera and dashcam.

We believe that for too long the S5 has been spared by potential buyers of performance cars. It's about time this Audi with its excellent gearbox, top-notch interior and solid chassis gets its due. It truly is a perfectly balanced package of performance and luxury.

## HONDA PRELUDE RETURNS AFTER 25 YEARS TO DELIVER AN IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE!

The icon is back – as a hybrid! When it was first released in 1978 and thereafter, the Prelude was touted as a technological wonder – four-wheel steering, VTEC engine, torque-vector system, pop-up headlights ... and more. Fast forward to 2001 and the boxy front-wheel-drive sports coupe was discontinued. This year, the sixth-gen Prelude has returned with a wide stance, sharper and lower nose and a 'double bubble' roof to convey a sleek appearance. And a powertrain that is peppy and fun to rev!

Under the hood sits a 2.0-liter direct-injection inline-4 cylinder engine that makes 200 horsepower @ 6000 rpm and 232 pounds-feet of torque @ 2000 rpm. Transforming the ride into a hybrid are two electric motors and a lithium-ion battery to show off impressive fuel economy figures. It is coupled with a direct-drive transmission, i.e., a single-speed reduction gear. A

new Honda S+ Shift offers quick gearshift responses, simulating an 8-speed manual but via steering wheel paddle shifters. A fully independent suspension is handled via a MacPherson strut but the rear gets a multi-link system. And leading the Prelude to its destination is the electric power steering with variable ratio. Pick your drive modes from comfort, GT, sport and individual.

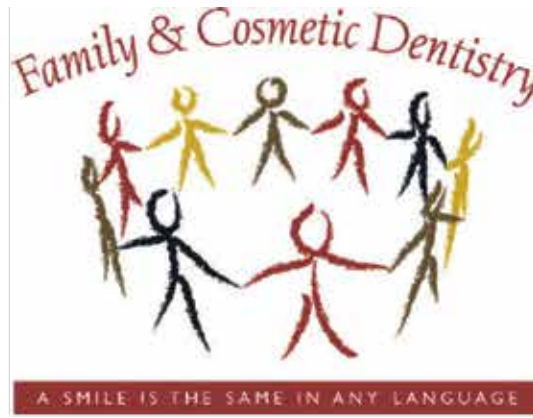
A black chrome grille louver flanks slim horizontal LEDs while blue accents deck up the lower center of front/rear fascias as well as the Brembo brakes. The indigo theme continues in the pleasing cabin with blue stitches on the thick-rimmed flat steering wheel, leather seats, dashboard and doors. And you won't miss the italic Prelude embossed on front seat backrests and lower dash. The driver faces a huge 10.2-inch digital cluster and a 9-inch



**PRELUDE**  
**Tires:** 225/40R19  
**Wheelbase:** 102.3 inches  
**Length:** 178.4 inches  
**Height:** 53.4 inches  
**Width:** 74 inches  
**Weight:** 3,261 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 10.6 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:** 46/41/44  
**Base price:** \$42,000  
**Price as tested:** \$43,650  
**Web site:** [www.honda.com](http://www.honda.com)

infotainment screen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, Google built-in and an eight-speaker Bose stereo system. Other goodies include dual auto a/c, six-way driver and four-way passenger seats, sport pedals, 60/40 split rear seat, push-button start, black headliner, wireless phone charger and an overhead sunglass holder.

Sharing some of the pocket-rocket Civic Type R's chassis, braking and steering components, the return of the Prelude is to be lauded. Though the liftback lacks a much-needed manual, the cool fuel-sipping car delivers a level of performance and style that's unbeatable for the money. Besides, who wouldn't want to sign up for a Honda, which has a reputation for building durable and dependable rides!



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**Happy 4th of July!**

**DON'T CHECK THE BOXES**

By **DOMINIC MORENO KARTADJOEMENA** and **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE**



“Common knowledge” suggests that every student who gets into a top university completes The Checklist: a summer program; internship; published research; an NGO; winning competitions related to your major; President of your class ...

It doesn't work!

Dominic will be attending Harvard next year. Please take heed to what he has to say about college admissions:

“After receiving news that I will be spending the next four years at the best educational home for me, I looked again at The College Checklist and noticed that I barely ticked any of those boxes.

“Summer program? Never did one. Internships? Nada. Published research? Nope.

Starting an NGO that saves thousands of underprivileged people? Nah, my little organisation helped maybe 30 students. Competitions? I quit doing Olympiads because I didn't like doing them. School captain? Decided not to run for it.

“What I learned during my college applications process was something that should have been obvious from the start. College applications are wholly, completely human, and attempts to subvert or game the process don't succeed. All applications are read by people, who later present your application to a bigger team of people. As a team, they debate and discuss different applicants to decide whom they want to accept. Each admissions officer reviews thousands of applications every year and can easily suss out ‘checklist checkers.’ To them, receiving a genuine, human application is like a breath of fresh air.

“After my acceptance, I spoke with my Harvard admissions officer a bit. She told me that she liked how she could see authenticity in my profile. She looked at what I was doing and could tell ‘he's not just doing it for his resume, not doing things just to impress us.’ They really liked seeing from my essays – and even from my list of activities – that there was intrinsic motivation rather than a need for extrinsic validation.

“In fact, here's a quote from her acceptance email: ‘My colleagues and I think your compassion, thoughtful questioning and intrinsic motivation would be a terrific addition to the Harvard community.’

“So, what did I do? Let's start with why I did what I did.

“I think what made the most difference in my personal growth was always being questioned by my college consultant. Although my classmates didn't really chat with their consultants, there was a lot of reflection involved throughout my process. When I first brought up a potential new activity, the first response was always ‘why are you doing this?’ For a bit, that messed with my head, but always being questioned about why I did things forced me to think on my own. I started doing things only when I understood why I wanted to do them. That led to seeing the connections among my interests and discovering new ones as well. There is always a common link between what you like, but sometimes it's buried. Everything in my profile, I can easily name why I liked doing it and why I continued doing it.

“How did that reflect in my application? It feels confusing looking at everything separately, but colleges look at everything together. I led Garuda Hacks, organising the largest hackathon in this part of the world, but I also I wrote a screenplay for a short film. With my friends, I co-founded an organization that helps students understand how to pursue internships, and while I'm definitely a liberal arts student, I'm deeply interested in Chemistry. And French.

“My closest classmates were very supportive, not competitive, which meant that we helped each other a lot. My school was also very supportive. But my parents ... they trusted me, in the best sense of the word.

“My parents never pushed things on me. It was never ‘you should join this club or this competition.’ They didn't push. They would just listen. They were curious, and they tried to understand me. My parents trusted my judgment, and that gave me more trust in myself, more confident that I could make the right decisions instead of worrying about making a mistake or following what everyone else was doing. By their not pushing me, my resume ended up being me, not a resume.

“My advice? Scrap the Checklist. Return to the simple truth that is buried by all of those convoluted college tips: build a resume that shows you. The one thing that always impresses admissions officers? Authenticity. Be Genuine.”

**Robert Levine is the founder and CEO of University Consultants of America, an independent educational consultancy assisting students around the world with applications to colleges, universities and graduate schools. For more information, call University Consultants of America, Inc. at 1-800-465-5890 or visit [www.universitycoa.com](http://www.universitycoa.com)**

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# ASTROLOGY

## JULY FORECAST

By PANKAJ KOHLI



**ARIES / Mesha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (March 21-April 20) Mars Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika (1st Part) Mars Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika (1st Part)** One remains active, mentally alert, and eager to move plans forward. Mercury's retrograde motion advises caution in communication, travel, contracts and important discussions. Delayed matters may return for review and resolution. Family and domestic responsibilities increase as the month progresses, requiring patience and understanding. Professionally, focus on strengthening active projects rather than taking unnecessary risks. Financially, your situation may improve through proper planning and disciplined decision-making.

**TAURUS / Vrushabha (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (April 21-May 21) Venus Sign - Stars covered Krittika (last 3 parts), Rohini, Mrigashira (first 2 parts)** Financial matters may require attention and review of past actions that brought success. Avoid impulsive costs or committing to major events in life. Professional growth may seem slow initially but improves steadily. Family support should always be available, though patience is needed in relationships. Property and domestic matters are more inclined to bring comfort. Long-term planning produces better results than taking short-term risks.

**GEMINI / Mithuna (Air sign, ruling planet is Mercury) - (May 22-June 21) Mercury Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra & Punarvasu (first 3 parts)** This is a month of reassessment and focusing on personal growth. Mercury retrograde in your sign encourages reviewing decisions, plans and relationships. Past opportunities may reappear. Communication requires better planning in order to avoid misunderstandings. Financial prospects improve gradually. By month-end, confidence and clarity help one to move forward with greater certainty.

**CANCER / Kataka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha** The month begins with introspection, reflection and the will to resolve unfinished matters. As days pass, mental energy improves, confidence and popularity increase as well. Professional efforts attract recognition, and personal initiatives gain support. Financial prospects strengthen steadily. Emotional balance remains important. This is a favorable month for rebuilding confidence and pursuing meaningful goals.

**LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part)** Planets in your sign enhance charm, popularity and personal appeal. Friends, networking and influential contacts may bring in new opportunities. Some plans may face delays, requiring patience and flexibility. Avoid ego-driven decisions, they may misfire. Professional progress comes through proper planning and execution. Careful preparation now supports stronger results in the coming months.

**VIRGO / Kanya (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Mercury) (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Mercury Sign – Stars covered Uttara Phalguni (last 3 parts), Hasta, Chitra (first 2 parts)** Career and professional responsibilities remain top priority. Mercury's retrograde status may create delays, revisions or administrative challenges. Stay organized and avoid rushing to take irrational decisions. Support from colleagues and professional contacts can be seen. Financial matters remain stable when one sticks to a well-thought-out plan. This month calls for evaluation and planning, reviewing and preparing future strategies.

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## JULY FORECAST

Cont'd from page 14

### **LIBRA / Tula (Air sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)**

**Venus Sign – Stars covered Chitra (last 2 parts), Swati, Vishakha (first 3 parts)** Learning, travel, legal matters and future planning are highlighted. Try and not delay any projects as they may be beneficial as this is a positive time for gains. Professional growth seems possible, bringing opportunities that may be beneficial. Financial improvement is possible through patience and practical decisions for some. Maintain an open mind and avoid illogical expectations.

### **SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)**

**Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha** Shared finances, investments and obligations require careful management. Mercury retrograde may delay settlements or important discussions. Emotional intensity needs proper control. Gradually, optimism increases through travel, learning and finding professional growth opportunities. Focus on restructuring rather than expansion. Practical planning creates greater security and future stability.

### **SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)**

**Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part)** Partnerships and important relationships remain central. Unfinished discussions may return, requiring patience and diplomacy. Professional agreements should be reviewed carefully before commitment. Financial matters benefit from realistic expectations and long-term planning. Cooperation and trust become valuable assets. Balanced decisions strengthen both personal and professional relationships.

### **CAPRICORN / Makara (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Saturn) - (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)**

**Saturn Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shravana, Dhanistha (first 2 parts)** Work, health and routine responsibilities demand steady attention. Mercury retrograde may bring revisions and scheduling

changes. Progress remains gradual but reliable. Partnerships become increasingly supportive later in the month. Financial matters remain stable through disciplined management. Consistent effort helps create lasting results and professional credibility.

### **AQUARIUS / Kumbha (Air sign, ruling planet is Saturn) – (Jan. 21-Feb. 19)**

**Saturn Sign - Stars covered: Dhanishta (last 2 parts) Satabhisha, Purva Bhadra Pada (1st 3 parts)** Creativity, self-expression and personal interests receive attention. Past projects or relationships may reappear for review. Avoid unnecessary financial speculation. Responsibilities increase as the month progresses, requiring organization and discipline. Professional growth remains steady through practical planning. Balance enjoyment with responsibility for the best outcomes.

### **PISCES / Meena (Water sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Feb. 20-March 20)**

**Jupiter Sign - Stars covered: Purva Bhadra Pada (last part) Uttara Bhadra Pada, Revathi** Home, family and emotional well-being remain significant themes. Domestic plans may require patience due to delays or changing circumstances. Creativity, confidence and personal expression improve gradually. Professional opportunities emerge through skills and practical knowledge. Financial matters strengthen steadily. Clear communication supports harmony in relationships.

**For detailed horoscope analysis and chart reading, courtesy Pankaj-Astro Jyotish, call Pankaj Kohli at (905) 910-1441 or e-mail Pathofastrology@gmail.com**



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## A R T

## MAKING A LIVING VS. CREATING A LIFE. ARE WE INVESTING IN WEALTH BUT NEGLECTING CULTURE?

By **BRINDA PAMULAPATI**



We are living in an age where financial literacy is highly valued. Young people discuss stocks, retirement accounts, real estate and investment strategies with remarkable confidence. We encourage them to build wealth, plan for the future, and take advantage of compound growth. These are important lessons that can provide financial security and independence.

But as we become increasingly focused on making a living, are we paying enough attention to creating a life?

Much of modern success is measured in numbers.

We track net worth, market performance, property values and investment returns. While these metrics are useful, they tell only part of the story. A fulfilling life is built on more than financial assets. It is also shaped by culture, traditions, relationships, creativity and community.

Culture is not simply entertainment. It is the collective expression of who we are. It lives in our art, music, literature, architecture, languages, festivals, food and customs. It connects us to our history and gives meaning to our daily lives.

Today, artificial intelligence can generate images, compose music, write stories and imitate artistic styles. Yet AI learns from culture; it does not create culture from lived experience. If artists, musicians, writers, educators and artisans are no longer valued, the source from which creativity flows begins to shrink. Future generations may not even realize what has been lost because they will never have experienced it.

The same can be said of traditional foods. Many of us grew up enjoying recipes passed down through generations. These dishes carry memories of family gatherings, celebrations and everyday life. If we never introduce them to our children and grandchildren, they will not know to ask for them. And if they do not know to ask for them, how will they ever experience the joy they bring? Appreciation begins with exposure.

Culture is also preserved through the way we live with one another. Family gatherings, hospitality, storytelling, shared meals and simple conversations are not accidental parts of life. They are traditions that have been practiced and refined over generations. The warmth of welcoming guests into our homes, serving others and spending time together creates bonds that no technology can replace.

If these practices disappear, future generations may not consciously reject them. They may simply never experience them. A society can become wealthier while becoming poorer in human connection. Financial success can provide comfort, but relationships, culture, and shared experiences provide belonging.

At the end of the day, quality of life is not determined by what a stock portfolio may be worth a few years before we die. It is determined by how we spend our days. It is found in the music we listen to, the books we read, the traditions we preserve, the meals we share, and the people with whom we spend our time.

The question is not whether we should invest in wealth or culture. We need both. Financial investments help us make a living. Culture helps us create a life. The richest society is not the one with the largest portfolios, but the one that understands the value of both.

**Brinda Pamulapati, owner/managing director, of Venvi Art Gallery in Tallahassee, can be reached at (850) 322-0965 or visit [www.VenviArtGallery.com](http://www.VenviArtGallery.com)**



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# SAVE THESE DATES!

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT DATES FOR CELEBRATIONS LATER IN THE YEAR.

## TAMPA BAY AREA INDIA FESTIVAL OCT. 31

Organized by the Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay, the daylong 37th India Festival will be held from 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 31, at the Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 U.S. 301 N. More than 10,000 people are expected to attend. As always, booths in the Expo Hill will offer clothes, jewelry, arts and crafts, photo studio and home décor/furniture and more. There also will be numerous eateries selling delicacies such as samosas, bhel puri, chicken curry and dosas. In the entertainment area, performers will be adorned in colorful attire for categories of dance competition in various age groups – garba, raas, folk and bhangra. Several closed-circuit TV monitors will be set up so people can shop and eat while watching the dances. This year's India Fest chair is Ravi Patel and can be reached at [indiafestchair@gmail.com](mailto:indiafestchair@gmail.com) For information, visit <https://indiafesttampa.com/>



Photo: Nima Film ([nimafilm.com](http://nimafilm.com))

## CENTRAL FLORIDA (ORLANDO) GUJARATI SOCIETY TO HOLD DIWALI NOV. 14

The Gujarati Society of Central Florida will hold its annual Diwali dinner at Renaissance Orlando (SeaWorld) on Nov. 14. Early bird tickets start at \$75 per person. For information, call Chirag Patel at (407) 797-9407 or visit [www.gujaratisocietycfl.com](http://www.gujaratisocietycfl.com)

## SOUTH FLORIDA (PEMBROKE PINES) DIWALI CELEBRATIONS NOV. 21 IN PEMBROKE PINES

The Indian Regional and Cultural Center (IRCC) will celebrate the 14th Diwali Festival of Lights, from noon to 10 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, at a new venue: Charles F. Dodge City Center, 601 City Center Way, Pembroke Pines. Performances will include Bollywood/folk dances, showcases Indian clothing, jewelry, dance, music, art and cuisine. Rangoli competitions are also planned. For tickets and information, including sponsorship opportunities, vendor booths, donations and volunteering, visit <https://irccflorida.org/>



*Disclaimer: Event details are subject to change; please check with local organizers.*

## CATARACT AWARENESS MONTH: UNDERSTANDING, PREVENTION, TREATMENT

By Dr. ARUN C. GULANI



June was recognized as Cataract Awareness Month, a vital period dedicated to educating the public about cataracts — a leading cause of vision impairment among the elderly, yet often treatable with timely intervention. This month, health organizations and eye care professionals unite to highlight the importance of early detection and the effective treatments available for those affected.

I have in my previous columns (KhaasBaat) described my “cloudy” concept of cataract, the importance of awareness and the fact that modern technology today can allow cataract to be an excuse to custom designer surgery and provide you the best vision for the rest of your life.

### What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the eye’s natural lens, which lies behind the iris and the pupil. The lens works like a camera lens, focusing light onto the retina for clear vision. It also adjusts the eye’s focus, allowing us to see things clearly both up close and at a distance. As we age, the proteins in the lens can clump together, starting to cloud a small area of the lens. Over time, the cataract may grow larger and cloud more of the lens, making it harder to see.

### Risk factors

While the most common cause of cataracts is aging, various other risk factors can accelerate their development: diabetes, excessive exposure to sunlight, smoking, obesity, high blood pressure, previous eye injuries or surgeries, prolonged use of corticosteroid medications and excessive alcohol consumption.

### Most common symptoms

Cataracts start small and initially have little effect on your vision. Symptoms might include blurry sight, colors that seem faded, trouble with vision at night, glare and halos around lights and frequent changes in prescription glasses.

If you experience any of these symptoms, it’s crucial to see an eye care professional.

### Prevention tips

While not all cataracts are preventable, certain actions might reduce your risk:

- \* Wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim to block ultraviolet sunlight.
- \* Quit smoking and reduce alcohol consumption.
- \* Maintain a healthy weight and diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- \* Manage health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure.
- \* Get regular eye examinations, especially as you age.

### Advancements in treatment and lens implant technology

Cataract surgery has undergone significant advancements, making it one of the safest and most effective surgeries performed worldwide. The procedure generally involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial lens called an intraocular lens (IOL). Today’s IOL options include:

- \* Monofocal lenses, which provide clear vision at one distance only (usually set for distance vision).
- \* Multifocal lenses, which can reduce the need for reading glasses by providing clear vision at multiple distances.
- \* Toric lenses, designed to correct astigmatism as well as cataracts.
- \* Accommodating lenses, which can move or change shape inside the eye, allowing focusing at different distances.
- \* Adjustable and combined lens implant technologies.

Additionally, new generation and innovative cataract surgical concepts like LenzOplastique® and further allow custom-designing of vision with advanced diagnostics, technology and artistic surgical skills.

AI-based advances in lasers and phacoemulsification make the surgery easier and predictable to include a smaller incision. This smaller incision often requires no stitches, reduces risks, and speeds up recovery time.

Conclusion: Cataract Awareness Month is not just about spreading awareness; it’s about encouraging action. It serves as a reminder for individuals to care for vision as they age. Early detection through regular eye exams can lead to effective management and treatment of cataracts, allowing individuals to enjoy clear vision longer. Let this month be a reminder to prioritize your eye health, for clear sight is a crucial part of a high-quality life.

So, don’t wait for your cataract to “mature;” please go see your eye doctor and insist on it being taken care of as an avenue toward your best vision potential.

**Arun C. Gulani, M.D., M.S., is director and chief surgeon of Gulani Vision Institute in Jacksonville. He can be reached at [gulanivision@gulani.com](mailto:gulanivision@gulani.com) or visit [www.gulanivision.com](http://www.gulanivision.com)**

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## TAMPA SANATAN MANDIR PLAQUE DEDICATION HONORS DR. AKSHAY DESAI'S LEGACY

Story provided by NARESH VISSA



Family, friends, and community leaders gathered at Sanatan Mandir, Tampa, for a heartfelt Plaque Dedication and Memorial Service honoring the life and legacy of St. Petersburg's Dr. Akshay Desai (1958–2019), a geriatrician, Universal Health Care CEO, community leader, and steadfast supporter of Hindu causes in the Tampa Bay area.

The evening began with devotional Gujarati bhajans, followed by a Satyanarayan Katha and a special plaque dedication ceremony. In a touching moment, Seema Desai and her daughter, Priyanka, unveiled the memorial plaque, which will serve as a lasting tribute to Dr. Desai's contributions to the community and the temple.

Among those in attendance were family members, close friends, and prominent community leaders, including Dr. Rakesh Sharma, Jugal Taneja and many longtime associates of Dr. Desai. A large gathering of well-wishers filled the temple to pay their respects and celebrate his enduring impact.

Several speakers shared personal memories and reflections on Dr. Desai's life. Dr. Kiran Patel, Dr. Sharma and Dr. Jay Chokshi spoke warmly of his leadership, generosity and unwavering commitment to community service.



Dr. Patel described Dr. Desai as a pillar of the Indian-American community whose dedication to both the Hindu faith and civic engagement helped strengthen and unite generations of families in Tampa.

The memorial concluded with prayers and dinner, leaving attendees inspired by Dr. Desai's example of service, humility and devotion to community.

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## TAX PLANNING

### REDUCING IRS AUDIT RISK FOR SMALL BUSINESSES



By **TEJAL DHRUVE, CPA**

When business owners think about risk, they often focus on market pressures or operational challenges. An IRS audit usually isn't top of mind — but it can be costly, disruptive and time-consuming. Although some taxpayers are randomly selected for an audit, many audits occur because the IRS has identified certain patterns or inconsistencies. Understanding where these risks typically arise can help you limit your business's exposure.

#### Five Key Audit Risk Areas

The following risk areas can result in additional IRS scrutiny:

- 1. Inconsistent or unreported income.** Drastic shifts in revenue from one year to the next can prompt IRS attention, especially when they conflict with industry trends or economic conditions. Income mismatches identified through thirdparty reporting — including 1099 forms and paymentplatform data — may lead to followup inquiries. Accurate records are critical when income fluctuates significantly.
- 2. Excessive or unusual deductions.** Deductions that appear disproportionate to income or far outside industry norms may raise IRS concerns. Only expenses that are “ordinary and necessary” for business operations are deductible. Personal expenses — including personal vehicle use, clothing and nonbusiness travel — are common audit issues. Careful records are especially important for meal, travel and vehicle-related deductions.
- 3. Repeated business losses.** Consistently reporting losses may signal that a business isn't operated for profit. While legitimate losses occur — particularly during startup phases or economic downturns — ongoing losses should be supported by strong documentation, financial planning and a clear profit motive.
- 4. Weak recordkeeping practices.** Incomplete or disorganized records increase both audit risk and audit difficulty. Missing receipts, inconsistent financial statements or unclear bookkeeping practices can jeopardize deductions. Digital accounting tools make it easier and more defensible than ever to maintain accurate, well-organized records.
- 5. Worker misclassification.** Misclassifying employees as contractors can result in back payroll taxes, penalties and interest. The key factor is the degree of control the business exercises over how the work is performed, not how the worker is paid or labeled.

#### Staying Ahead of Audit Risk

No business is immune to audit risk, but consistent reporting, accurate records and informed guidance can significantly reduce exposure — and put your business in a better position if you are audited. Contact the office to help your business stay compliant, identify potential issues early and respond effectively if the IRS requests information.

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## 2026 GMC SIERRA DENALI ULTIMATE IS A UTILITARIAN WORKHORSE!

Test-drive story by NITISH S. RELE [motoringflorida@gmail.com](mailto:motoringflorida@gmail.com)

Basically, it is a souped-up version of the twin from the other stable, Chevy Silverado. And just like its sibling, the GMC Sierra Denali 1500 4WD Crew Cab Ultimate truck is equipped with a 6.2-liter engine. This ensures that the solidly built full-size pickup delivers quick acceleration from any speed, ample passing ability and accurate handling/balance. The four-wheel-drive system can be driven in auto, 2WD, 4Hi or 4Lo modes depending on road/weather conditions.

The V-8 engine, mated to a 10-speed auto transmission, cranks out 420 horsepower @ 5600 rpm and 460 pounds-feet of torque @ 4100 rpm. Handling the suspension is an independent coil-over shock front and a solid axle rear. The power rack-and-pinion electric power steering has a solid and communicative feel, making the truck easy to place at sharp curves. GM's Dynamic Fuel Management system deactivates up to four of the eight cylinders for fuel savings. Tow capacity is an amazing 9,200 pounds. And yes, you can turn on the hands-free driver assistance Super Cruise while trailering too on select highways. The six-position Multipro tailgate comes handy as a table, an extension or a step to load items onto the lightweight carbon-fiber bed. And 12 fixed tie-downs each have a capacity to withstand 500 pounds of weight.

The robust Sierra boasts a mammoth bright and multi-dimensional grille with eye-catching Vader chrome accents, surrounded by LED headlights with C-shaped elements. The rear also shows off C-formed LED features within the tail lamps and integrated dual exhaust tips. Our 5' 8"-foot box offers 63 cubic feet for stowage. Step into the airy interior and the driver will face a large 12.3-inch diagonal digital cluster. The infotainment touch



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**Web site:** [www.gmc.com](http://www.gmc.com)

screen is a sweeping horizontal 13.4-inch instrument panel. It includes built-in Google Assistant, maps, etc., if you are a fan, along with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. A 15-inch head-up display ensures that driver's eyes are fixed on the road with info directly in the line of sight to keep distractions to minimum. The Alpine Umber interior implies you get full-grain leather appointments for the seats, instrument panel and center console, and lest we forget, a microsuede headliner! And absolutely stunning open-pore Paldao wood on doors and center console. Other notable features include dual auto a/c, 16-way power heated/cooled massage front seats, two glove boxes, 12-speaker Bose stereo, 60/40 rear-fold seat, leather-wrapped steering column, power side steps/sun roof, etc. Indeed, the Sierra is a well-designed workhorse that delivers a no-frills ride, even off the beaten path. It boasts an outstanding performance, plentiful tow capacity and a gigantic classic but high-tech cabin.



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