

IACF Celebrates 25th Anniversary Unity Dinner With Civic Leaders



India-West News Desk

MILPITAS, CA – The Indo-American Community Federation hosted the 25th anniversary of its annual Unity Dinner on April 3, bringing together nearly 400 community leaders and public officials at the India Community Center here.

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The evening opened with a panel discussion on artificial intelligence, focusing on societal impact, jobs, governance, security, trust, and the role of business and local government in shaping responsible AI. Moderated by Tas Jalali, the panel included Moinul Khan of Aurascape, Krishnan Chellakarai of Gilead Sciences, former Fremont Mayor Lily Mei, and Sunnyvale City Councilmember Murali Srinivasan.

The program also featured the inaugural Public Sector Leadership Awards, recognizing six leaders across areas including transformation, innovation, service delivery, operations, cybersecurity, equity, and public service.



Milpitas Vice Mayor Chantel Walker presented the Transformational Leader of the Year award to Khaled Tawfik of the City of San Jose and the Equity, Accessibility and Community Impact award to Beverly Greene of VTA. Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein presented the Innovation and Service Delivery Excellence award to Ahsan Baig of AC Transit and the Operational Excellence and Reliability award to Derek Calhoun of BART. Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa presented the Cybersecurity, Risk and Resilience Leadership award to Tas Jalali of AC Transit and the Rising Leader in Public Service award to Nicole Guttridge of the City of Elk Grove and MISAC president.

The formal program began with the national anthems of India and the United States. [India travel guide](#)

Consul Abhishek Kumar Sharma of the Consulate General of India in San Francisco addressed the gathering, followed by remarks from Milpitas Mayor Carmen Montano, Fremont Mayor Raj Salwan, Union City Mayor Gary Singh, Newark Mayor Mike Hannon, Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor, and Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein. Singh was also recognized for his efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.



Nearly three dozen public officials attended, including city councilmembers, county supervisors, assemblymembers, and representatives from the offices of Sen. Dave Cortese and members of Congress Sam Liccardo and Ro Khanna, presenting commendations on behalf of their offices. Alameda County District Attorney Ursula Jones Dickson and Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen spoke about efforts to address hate and crime.

Ambassador Shefali Razdan Duggal was also honored as the Pride of Kashmir during the program, joined on stage by IACF founder Jeevan Zutshi and Uphaar Kotru, national president of the Kashmiri Overseas Association.

The keynote address was delivered by former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who spoke about immigrant identity and civic pride. "We are all immigrants who came to America from somewhere. We are as American as anyone is. Let us take pride in our roots and be great Americans," he said. A recorded message from Rep. Ro Khanna highlighted the work of Jeevan Zutshi and the organization's role in fostering community connections.

Founded in 1993 by Jeevan Zutshi, the organization was established to encourage Indo-Americans to engage more fully in civic life and to build bridges across communities through dialogue, participation, and public service. It's Unity Dinner, launched in 2002, has become a signature platform for community engagement.

The evening concluded with dinner and music.

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