

# Group Champions Community's Cause on Capitol Hill

By SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM

— CHICAGO

Leaders of the National Indian American Coalition (NIAC) converged on Capitol Hill to engage Republican members of Congress in championing Indian-American causes. Over two days, July 31 and Aug. 1, the NIAC members met with 40 congressmen – including Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia and Chief Deputy Whip Peter Roskam of Illinois.

According to a press release from NIAC, 42 of its leaders from Illinois, Texas, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Virginia and Florida met with lawmakers from 14 states to discuss a wide range of issues, including terrorism, foreign aid to Pakistan and visa. The meetings were part of the Chicago-based NIAC's "Coffee With Congress" program.

Participating lawmakers included Reps. Adam Kinzinger



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eign aid to Pakistan until it completely abandons terrorist activities,” he said.

The NIAC began lobbying Congress cut off foreign aid to Pakistan in June 2011. It supported H.R. 1699 introduced by Poe, and an amendment to H.R. 5836 appropriations bill to cut military aid to Pakistan by half for the 2013 fiscal year.

As part of this campaign, NIAC screened two video clips of 9/11 as well as Mumbai terror on 26/11. The screening was followed by a recorded speech of U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., a naval reserve intelligence officer, who concluded that “foreign aid to Pakistan is naïve at best and counterproductive as worst.”

The NIAC also brought in Stephen Yates, an expert on Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, to speak with the lawmakers. Yates also argued for cutting off foreign aid to Pakistan. “The lone superpower on this planet should not allow itself to be blackmailed ... there are alternate routes for transportation through central Asian countries and U.S. can and should do everything to safe guard Pakistan's nuclear arsenal,” he said.

Poe announced that he will introduce another bill to declare the Haqqani network in Pakistan to be a terrorist organization and to remove Pakistan's status as a non-NATO ally.

Nirmala Sitharaman, spokeswoman for India's Bharatiya Janata Party, was among those who attended the meeting. She told the audience “This aid seems to be misdirected towards encouraging and facilitating terrorist groups in Pakistan, who seem to be moving freely in Afghanistan and also probably targeting India.”

## Chicago Production Company Announces 1st Film

By SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM

— CHICAGO

A comedy that revolves around two close friends, a Muslim and a Hindu, and the ups and downs of their lives as they pursue their studies and take on odd jobs to support themselves will be the first film to be produced by HollyBolly Productions, a new production company in the Chicago area.

Founded on Feb. 1, HollyBolly Productions launched its first film at a July 12 press conference at its office here. Director Mirza Parvez and producer Shehzad Yousuf Ali Rehmani spoke to Desi Talk about the movie and its plot.

“Mumbai Se Chicago” is a humorous look at the challenges and confrontations the two transplants from Mumbai face as they attempt to reconcile work and study in Chicago.

The extrovert of the pair wants to experience the world through casual flirting with young women from diverse ethnicities to learn firsthand how they diverge from his Indian stereotype. His friend attempts to restrain him, which repeatedly leads to funny situations.

There are, likewise, two heroines, both desi girls from Chicago, of whom one is “Americanized,” comes from a broken family and abandons her father upon learning the truth about her identity. The elderly father confides to the extrovert student the responsibility of finding his daughter, an



effort that gradually transforms him. He eventually goes back to Mumbai, while his companion remains in Chicago and marries here.

This love story, with sentimental touches and serious undertones, will be shot entirely in Chicago, mostly outdoors in four landmark locations: Navy Pier, atop and around Sears Tower, the Buckingham Fountain and the narrow strip through Museum Campus stretching out to Adler Planetarium on Lake Michigan with its beautiful view of the cityscape.

Shooting will start from mid-September and is expected to be completed in a month. Production staff is already lined up.

New Jersey cameraman Hyder Bilgrami will use the latest Epic Red digital camera to shoot the two-hour movie. Dialogue will be primarily in Hindi and the film is being targeted at South Asian audiences. Songs will be recorded in India.

A mass marketing campaign through radio, cinemas, schools, etc., will be launched

from mid-August.

HollyBolly is negotiating with two Mumbai stars, but has Chicago talent to fall back on. The producers have already received clips from 3-4 local candidates.

Parvez, who has lived in Chicago for the past eight years, was immersed since childhood in the Mumbai film industry. He was director and writer for Aamir Khan's “Deewanaa Mujh Sa Nahin,” and has worked as assistant writer for Kader Khan on more than 50 films, remixes of Tamil and Telugu movies into Hindi dialogue. He has written the screenplay and dialogues for “Deewanaa” and “Aye Milan Ki Raat,” as well as for TV's “Jai Veer Hanuman.”

Rehmani, who has lived here for 25 years, is the producer of “Chicago Idol,” the annual campuswide singing competition that began two years ago and aired on Zee TV.

HollyBolly has begun casting for “Mumbai Se Chicago” and invites local talent to apply for various roles by auditioning through <http://hollybollyproductions.com/form.html>.

Top, members of the National Indian American Coalition met with Republican lawmakers on Capitol Hill on July 31 and Aug. 1. Above left, South Asia expert Stephen Yates. Above right, Rep. Adam Kinzinger, Republican from Illinois's 11th District, NIAC's Shali Kumar and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor.

Bobby Schilling, Joe Walsh, Randy Hultgren and Bob Dold, all from Illinois; Ted Poe, Pete Olsen and Ron Paul of Texas; Kevin Yoder of Kansas; Reid Ribble of Wisconsin; Phil Gingrey of Georgia; and Chris Gibson of New York. NIAC leaders also held separate meetings with Roskam and Cantor, who pledged to reactivate Republican outreach to Indian-Americans.

“We were quite pleased with the response in Congress. Walsh, Hultgren, Roskam, Schilling and Kinzinger worked very hard to make this a success,” NIAC co-founder Shalabh Kumar told Desi Talk.

Kumar told the lawmakers that Indian-Americans number 3.2 million and have the highest education as well as highest per capita income among ethnic groups. “It is high time that US Congress pays attention to the needs and desires of Indian Americans,” including “the need to cut off for-

## Indian Woman Killed in Illinois Bus Crash

FROM NEWS DISPATCHES

An Indian woman was killed Aug. 2 in a bus crash on a southern Illinois interstate highway.

Aditi R. Avhad, 25, died when the double-decker bus run by Megabus coach lines crashed into a pole on Interstate 55 near Litchfield, Illinois State Police said.

Avhad was reportedly traveling



to Columbia, Mo. State police told NBC News Avhad was sitting above the driver on the second floor of the bus.

A spokesman for the University of Missouri told The Indian Express that she a graduate student at the university in Columbia, which was on the route of the bus. Thirty-eight people, including the driver, were injured in the crash.

The bus was carrying 81 passengers from Chicago to St. Louis, Mo. The cause of the crash is being investigated.