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BI-WEEKLY

Issue: 78



Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE. 501(C)3. The Largest Non-Profit Grassroot Umbrella Organization in the Eight-state of NY-NJ-CT-NE



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Indian-Origin Professor to Lead "Best and Brightest" Scientists in Texas



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Indian-American Creates History, Becomes President of Harvard Law Review

FIA Honored at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations in India

The Federation of Indian Associations' President Kenny Desai attended the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations on January 7 in Ahmedabad. 'Beyond Boundaries: BAPS North America Day' was recognized on that day. Mahant Swami Maharaj, dignitaries from all over the world, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's motivation for individual

spirituality, Hindu mandirs, humanitarian work and interfaith cooperation in North America were celebrated throughout the occasion.

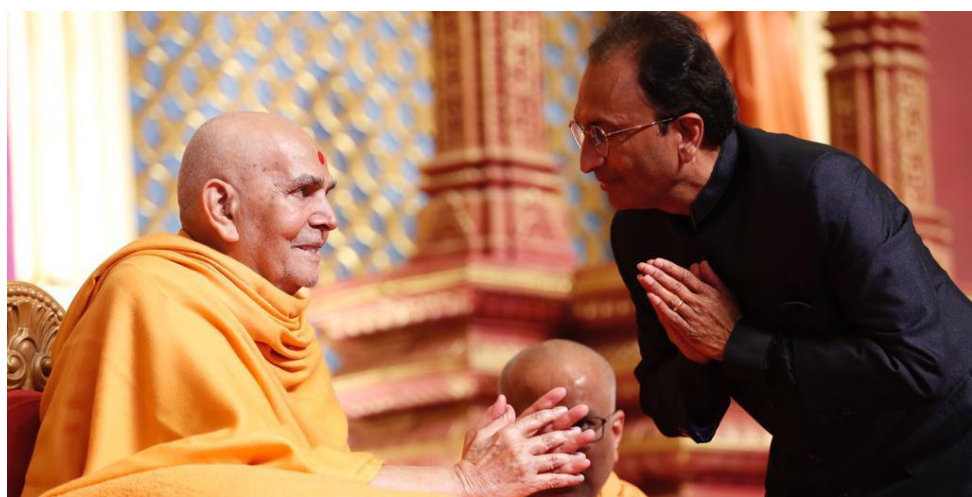
Mahant Swami Maharaj, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami Maharaj, and Vivekchand Swami Maharaj blessed FIA President Kenny Desai for his work in the USA's healthcare, real estate, venture capital and financial services. The FIA has grown the Indian diaspora through

nurturing, promoting and protecting Indian culture and values.

Addressing the assembly Kenny Desai said, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj led many to path of spirituality and motivation through temples. His simplicity and magnificence have inspired many and his work helped preserve our culture. He was forever the driving force for BAPS, who spread the message of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is

one family)."

"I feel as though I have taken my parents on a pilgrimage by attending the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. I acknowledge Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence amongst us and express gratitude to all the volunteers and staff members, who have put in countless hours to make this event a success", he further added.



Kenny Desai honored at the centenary celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj



NASA Astronaut Raja Chari Nominated to Key Post in US Air Force

Hon. Raja Chari, US Astronaut, who also graced the FIA's annual Indian tricolor flag hoisting event at Times Square has been nominated to Key Post in US Air Force.

Indian-American Astronaut Raja J Chari has been nominated by President Joe Biden for the appointment to the grade of Air Force Brigadier General. The nomination was

announced on 26 January and will have to be confirmed by the Senate, which approves all senior civilian and military appointments, according to the US Defence Department.

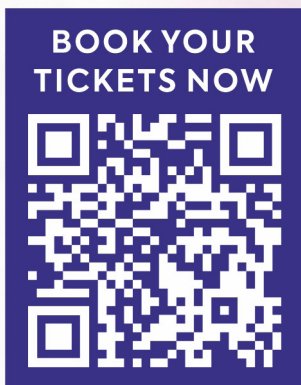
Raja Chari is currently serving as the Crew-3 commander and astronaut, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Johnson Space Center, Texas.





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H-1B Registrations for 2024 to Open on March 1

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released the dates of H-1B visa registration for 2024. The registration will start on March 1 and end on March 17, 2023. The immigration department said that petitioners and representatives will be able to finish and submit their registrations during this time using its online H-1B registration system - myUSCIS.

Each registration submitted for the FY 2024 H-1B will receive a confirmation number and it is possible to track registration using the number, the immigration

department said. "This number is used solely to track registrations; you cannot use this number to track your case status in Case Status Online," the agency said.

"Prospective H-1B cap-subject petitioners or their representatives are required to use a myUSCIS online account to register each beneficiary electronically for the selection process and pay the associated \$10 H-1B registration fee for each registration submitted on behalf of each beneficiary," the department said in a statement.

US employers and agents, who register as registrants, use registrant accounts and can open new accounts

starting on February 21. "Petitioners submitting their own registrations (US employers and US agents, collectively known as "registrants") will use a "registrant" account. Registrants will be able to create new accounts beginning at noon Eastern on February 21," the agency added.

Representatives may add clients to their accounts at any time, but both representatives and registrants must wait until March 1 to enter beneficiary information and submit the registration with the \$10 fee, the department said, adding that if it receives enough registrations by March 17, it will randomly

select registrations and send selection notifications via users' myUSCIS online accounts.

"(And) If we do not receive enough registrations, all registrations that were properly submitted in the initial registration period will be selected. We intend to notify account holders by March 31," it added.

For the FY 2024 H-1B cap season, the US Department of Treasury has approved a temporary increase in the daily credit card transaction limit from \$24,999.99 to \$39,999.99. "This temporary increase is in response to the volume of previous H-1B registrations that exceeded the daily credit card limit," it said.

Parveen Chopra's Wellness & Spirituality Website Launched at Indian Consulate

A new wellness and spirituality web magazine started by Parveen Chopra, founding editor of *The South Asian Times*, was launched on January 21 at the Consulate of India in New York.

Chopra, who has rich experience in body-mind-spirit journalism, summed up the webzine's unique content mix in his speech at the launch, "We tap the world's religious and spiritual traditions for wisdom as well as draw from the latest medical and scientific research to present content for our readers to be fully productive and successful and yet be healthy, happy and centered." He added that every article they post on *alotusinthemud.com* must pass the litmus test of usefulness -- something that the readers can benefit from to better their lives.

Launching the website, Consul General Randhir



Jaiswal congratulated Chopra for the initiative, which he called as "another slice of India in America, promoting wellness through yoga, right food habits, etc, and from which people should take benefit".

Unique interactive features of the site, Chopra said, include short meditations with soothing music, personality quizzes, and space for visitors to share their experiences of healing and personal or spiritual growth.

At the launch event, a video introducing the webzine explained that 'Lotus in the mud' is a key concept in Hinduism and

Buddhism, signifying that we may get caught up in problems, but we have the inherent capability to emerge as full bloom lotuses in body, mind and spirit.

Guest speakers at the launch included Nitin Ajmera, Chairman of the Parliament of the World's Religions (via a video message); Reverend Tom Goodhue, Executive Director Emeritus of Long Island Council of Churches; Arvind Vora, founder of Shanti Fund that promotes Gandhi's ideals among school children in Suffolk County; and Dr Bhaswati Bhattacharya, a licensed physician affiliated with

Cornell Medical College and author of 'Everyday Ayurveda' published by Penguin Random House.

Supporters gracing the event included Anil Bansal, former FIA President, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist Mohan Wanchoo, Kamlesh Mehta, Chairman of *The South Asian Times*, Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja, Editor-publisher of *The Indian Panorama*, John Di Leonardo, Founder of Humane Long Island, Real Estate Tycoon Darshan Singh Bagga, and Julian Lines, President of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center in upstate New York.

US Mission in India Announces New Initiative to Cut Visa Wait Time

The United States announced new visa initiatives for Indians, including special interviews for first-time applicants and greater strength of visa staff across the country to reduce wait times for first-time visa applicants.

As part of this initiative, the United States opened consular operations across the country to accommodate applicants, who require in-person visa interviews.

"On January 21, the US Mission in India launched the first in a series of special Saturday interview days, as part of a larger effort to reduce wait times for first-time visa applicants. The United States Embassy in New Delhi and Consulates in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad all opened consular operations on Saturday to accommodate applicants, who require in-person visa interviews," the US Embassy said in a

statement.

"In the coming months, the Mission will continue to open additional slots for appointments to take place on select Saturdays," the statement added.

"Between January and March 2023, dozens of temporary consular officers from Washington and other embassies will arrive in India to increase processing capacity," the statement added.

"The US Mission in India released more than 250,000 additional B1/B2 appointments. Consulate General Mumbai also extended its weekday operating hours to make space for additional appointments," the statement added.

Consulate General Mumbai currently adjudicates the most visa applications in India and is one of the largest visa operations in the world, the embassy said.

"As travel restrictions have been lifted, the US Mission to India has made it a priority to facilitate legitimate travel and adjudicated over 800,000 non-immigrant visas in 2022, including record numbers of both student and employment visas. In every other visa category, interview wait times in India

are at pre-pandemic levels or lower," the US Embassy said.

"By this summer, the US Mission in India will be at full staffing, and we expect to be processing visas at levels from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic," the embassy added.



SUBSCRIBERS' SECTION

The Whale

"Brandon Fraser plays Charlie, a morbidly obese online teacher, who is dying. He suffers from a cognitive heart disorder, doesn't have medical insurance, and refuses to go to the hospital to avoid paying bills. Is he waiting for his end, most probably yes! He struggles to get up, walk, sleep, and bend because of his physical condition, and the viewer is left shaken at the sad, helpless, and reclusive life he leads confined in his small apartment.

Liz, a nurse played by

Hong Chau, is his only friend. One is drawn by her empathy and love for him. She gets him groceries and sandwiches, beseeches him to seek medical help. She scolds, mothers, and protects him, their relationship is moving.

The only bright thing in Charlie's life is his estranged daughter, Ellie, who lives with her mother.

What is the movie about? It's about loneliness and despair, but also about positivity and finding the good in people. It's about Brandon Fraser's

helpless tear-filled eyes, his troubled breathing, and the wheezing that makes you tear up, but it's also about that gentle smile that wants to see good in people, the love that is projected each time he talks to his daughter, telling her she's amazing. It's about trying to find out the reason behind his condition, being angry at his state, how can a man eat himself to death?

The Whale is a slow movie that makes you shed a few tears and that asks you to think about it even after you've left the movie hall.

It's about Brandon Fraser's brilliant acting, Samuel Hunter's poignant story, that the director Aronofsky is able to put together in a compelling narrative, that can be difficult to watch for some. Yet some scenes stay with you, the supporting characters leave a mark that makes you realise that none of them are black or white, they are merely living their lives, impacted by other people and events.

Watch it because it's definitely Oscar worthy.

THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

India's Greatest Architect Dr. B.V. Doshi Dies Aged 95

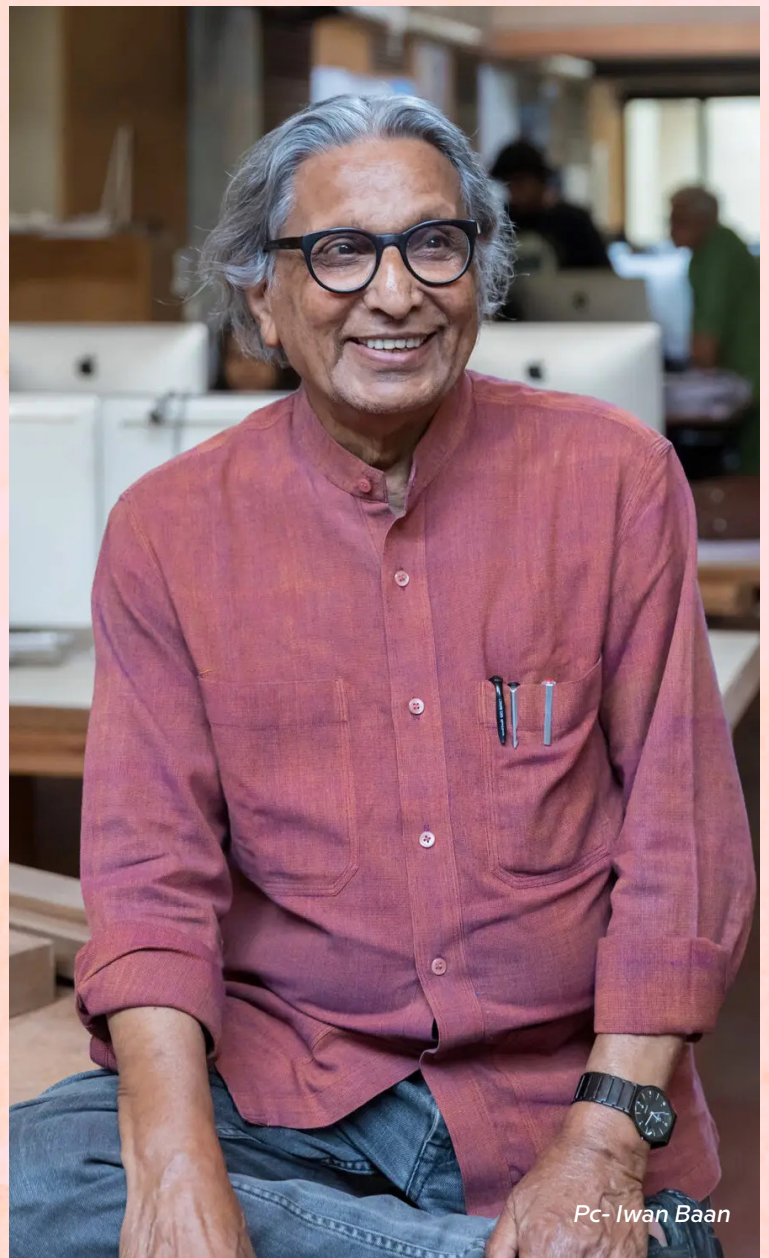
The legendary architect, educator, and visionary Balkrishna Vitaldas Doshi passed away peacefully on January 24, 2023, at his home.

In addition to receiving the Padma Bhushan in 2020, Doshi is the first Indian to have received both the Royal Gold Medal and the Pritzker Architecture Prize in their lifetime.

“Loving husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. No one loved life more than him, ‘Anand Karo’ - Celebrate Life as he would always say. He had so many people that he loved dearly and who loved him back. He will leave for his onward journey from our residence Kamala House,” his family said in a statement.

Condoling his demise, PM Narendra Modi tweeted, “Dr BV Doshi Ji was a brilliant architect and a remarkable institution builder. The coming generations will get glimpses of his greatness by admiring his rich work across India. His passing away is saddening.”

“Prof Doshi’s body of work reflects his lifelong quest for modern architecture rooted in the Indian context. He has shaped the direction of architecture through both his practice and teaching. His buildings combine modernism with vernacular, informed by a deep appreciation of the traditions of India’s architecture, climate, local culture and craft. The School of Architecture building at CEPT University is one of the finest examples of not just his own approach to architecture, but also of the great tradition of modern architecture in India. CEPT University, and I personally, deeply mourn his loss,” said Dr. Bimal Patel, president of CEPT and the architect behind the Central Vista Redevelopment project.



Pc- Iwan Baan

Raja Krishnamoorthi Appointed as Ranking Member on Strategic Competition between US, China

Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi was appointed to serve as Ranking Member on the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

“I’m grateful to Leader Jeffries for appointing me to serve as Ranking Member on the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party,” said Congressman Krishnamoorthi.

“I look forward to working with my colleagues in both parties on this committee to counteract the CCP’s escalating aggression and ensure that our nation is prepared to overcome the economic and security challenges that the CCP presents to our country,” said Krishnamoorthi. He also laid stress on anti-Asian hate and violence that are on the rise.

“It’s essential that this committee focuses its vital work on protecting all Americans from the threat posed by the CCP, while avoiding dangerous rhetoric that fuels the types of xenophobia that have endangered members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community,” he added.



NEWSMAKERS

Indian-Origin Professor to Lead 'Best and Brightest' Scientists in Texas

The Texas Academy of Medicine, Engineering, Science and Technology (TAMEST), an organisation that brings the state's finest scientists and researchers to enhance research, innovation, and business in Texas, has chosen Ganesh Thakur, an American professor of Indian origin, as vice president.

During his two-year term as vice president, he will help coordinate and guide the board of directors with strategic planning, programmes and communication. He will eventually be named the president of the organisation in 2025.

"Texas is home to some of the most brilliant minds in the world, and

I'm honoured and excited by this opportunity to strengthen collaboration and advance innovation across the state in fields critical to our continued

treasurer.

"TAMEST is a scientific and biomedical intellectual engine for the state, and I am passionate about its mission to benefit public

instrumental in positioning the University as a strategic partner to the energy industry," said Ramanan Krishnamoorti, UH Vice President of Energy and Innovation.

"His extensive knowledge and expertise will be of great benefit to TAMEST and the state of Texas. I sincerely congratulate him on this well-deserved appointment," he added.

"We fully support Dr. Thakur's involvement in this key leadership position which is critical to advancing innovation across our state. He has an incredible passion for teaching and collaboration which will be a great asset to the TAMEST," said Joseph W. Tedesco, Elizabeth D. Rockwell Dean of the Cullen College of Engineering.



PC-ndtv

growth and development," said Dr. Thakur, who has been a member of the organisation since 2016, most recently serving as

good and business," he added.

"Dr. Thakur's leadership, passion and cutting-edge research have been

Dr. Nirav Shah Appointed Second-in-Command at CDC

Epidemiologist Dr. Nirav D. Shah, who is of Indian origin, has been named Principal Deputy Director at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, making him the organization's second-in-command.

Shah will assume the new role, second in leadership under US CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, in March.

His appointment as Principal Deputy Director comes as part of a planned, broader overhaul of that agency announced by the US CDC Director in August of last year.

Maine Governor Janet Mills in a statement said: "I take comfort, as Maine people should, in knowing that the US CDC - and the American people at large - will soon become the beneficiaries of his leadership. Dr. Shah, on behalf of the people of Maine, thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"I'm thankful for the opportunity that Governor Mills and Commissioner (Jeanne) Lambrew provided me to serve the people of Maine," he said.

"In my new role, I will be honoured to serve not just Maine, but the entire nation and carry forward

the good work that we have done here. As I prepare for this next step, I thank the people of Maine for taking

care of me, as I've always asked them to take care of each other," he added.



PC-economictimes

Padma Awards for 2 Indian Mathematicians from US, Canada

Two mathematicians from Indian origin received the prestigious Padma Awards, one of India's highest civilian honours.

S.R. Srinivasa Varadhan has been honoured with the Padma Vibhushan and Sujatha Ramdorai received the Padma Shri for their stellar contributions in

the field of science and engineering.

Varadhan is currently a

professor at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. In 2008, the Indian

government awarded him the Padma Bhushan.

Ramdorai is currently a Member of the Scientific Advisory Council to the PM of India and a Member of the National Innovation Council. She is the first Indian to win the prestigious International Centre for Theoretical Physics Ramanujan Prize in 2006.



PC- nripulse

East Brunswick School Senior Earns Coveted Patent at Young Age

Srikar Srinivasan is one of New Jersey's youngest patent owners while just being a senior at East Brunswick High School. Srinivasan, who is only fourteen, was awarded a US patent in March 2020 for his automatic pet paw washer and dryer. He has since finished the innovation's prototype and is working to market it.

Srinivasan was inspired to develop the automatic pet paw washer and dryer by years of tedious efforts

to wash his dog's paws after each walk.

Srinivasan said, "Any creative person will realize that the only practical answer to a problem is to come up with one yourself...my motivation for developing this product came from a place of simplicity." The product cleans, washes, and dries all four paws within three minutes.

He said, "I find that running a small business while still in high school can be a challenge.

Balancing the demands of schoolwork and extracurricular activities with the responsibilities of owning and operating a business can be difficult. It can be especially challenging to find the time and energy to devote to the business after a long day at school and varsity sports soon after. Additionally, as a high school student, I tend to have limited resources and experience, which can make it harder to effectively run and grow my business. However, with

hard work, dedication, and support from friends and family, it is possible for me to successfully run a small business while still in high school."



PC-tapinto

Indian-American Creates History, Becomes President of Harvard Law Review

A second-year Indian-American law student Apsara A. Iyer at Harvard Law School has been elected president of the prestigious *Harvard Law Review*, making her the first woman from the community to hold the position in the publication's 136-year history.

Iyer said in *The Crimson* report that as Law Review president, she aims to "include more editors in

the process of reviewing and selecting articles and upholding the publication's reputation for "high-quality" work." "I think that right now I'm just focused on making sure we keep the lights on and everything going," Iyer said.

Iyer's distinguished predecessors in the role include Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and former President Barack Obama. Iyer's immediate predecessor Priscila Coronado said the

publication is "extremely lucky" to have Iyer at the helm.

"Apsara has changed the lives of many editors for the better, and I know she will continue to do so," Coronado said. "From the start, she has impressed her fellow editors with her remarkable intelligence, thoughtfulness, warmth, and fierce advocacy." *The Crimson* said that Iyer's interest in understanding the "value of cultural heritage" led her to work

in the Manhattan District Attorney's Antiquities Trafficking Unit that tracks stolen works of art and artifacts.



PC-indianexpress

Pramila Jayapal to Serve in Top Post of US Immigration Panel

Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been named Ranking Member of the powerful House Judiciary Committee's panel on Immigration, making her the first immigrant to serve in a leadership role for the subcommittee.

"As the first South Asian woman elected to the US House of Representatives and one of only two dozen naturalised citizens in Congress, I am honored and humbled to serve as the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement," said Jayapal.

"I came to this country when I was 16, alone,

and with nothing in my pockets. After 17 years on an alphabet soup of visas to become a US citizen, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to live the American Dream, a dream that is out of reach for too many immigrants today," she said.

"It is extremely meaningful to me that I will now be in this position to better move the needle and recenter our broken immigration system around dignity, humanity, and justice. As I step into this role, I would also like to thank Representative Lofgren for her years of dedicated leadership on the Subcommittee, and look forward to continuing to work with her," Jayapal

said.

As the House Judiciary Committee gets to work, it is, unfortunately, becoming clear that the Republican leadership of the committee has no intention of engaging in good faith solutions to reform our immigration laws, said the Indian American lawmaker from Washington State.

"In the minority, Democrats will have to be an opposition party that stands up to the most extreme ideas of the GOP and protects our values. However, in this role, I also see promise for bipartisan work with a number of more moderate Republicans, who themselves

understand the need to restore our country as a beacon of hope," she said.



Pc-ndtv

Indian-American Girl Among 'World's Brightest' Students

Natasha Perianayagam, an Indian-American schoolgirl, was named to the "world's brightest" students list for the second year in a row by the US-based Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, based on the results of above-grade-level tests taken by over 15,000 students from 76 countries.

Perianayagam, 13, attends New Jersey's Florence M Gaudineer Middle School. She also took the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) test as a Grade 5 student in Spring 2021.

Her results in the verbal and quantitative sections levelled with the 90th percentile of advanced Grade 8 performance, which catapulted her into the honors list that year.

This year, she was honored for her exceptional performance on the SAT,

ACT, School and College Ability Test, or similar assessment taken as part of

the CTY Talent Search, the university said in a press release on Monday.

According to the university release, Perianayagam was among the 15,300 students from 76 countries who joined CTY in the 2021-22 Talent Search year.

"This is not just recognition of our students' success on one test, but a salute to their love of discovery and learning, and all the knowledge they have accumulated in their young lives so far," said CTY's Executive Director Dr. Amy Shelton.

"It is exciting to think about all the ways in which they will use that potential to discover their passions, engage in rewarding and enriching experiences, and achieve remarkable things -- in their communities and in the world," she added.



Pc-ndtv

5 Indian-Americans Among Finalists of Prestigious High School Competition in US

In a prominent science and math competition for US high school seniors, five Indian-American teenagers were among the 40 finalists competing for more than \$ 1.8 million in prizes.

Regeneron Science Talent Search, which is now in its 82nd year, celebrates and rewards young scientists focused on a wide range of topics that range from space race, AIDS

epidemic to climate change, according to a press release issued by the Society for Science and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals.

The five Indian-American include Siddhu Pachipala from Texas, Lavanya Natarajan and Ishika Nag from Florida, Neel Moudgal from Michigan and Ambika Grover from Connecticut.

The finalists were chosen based on their projects' scientific rigour and their

potential to become world-changing scientific leaders, the press release said.

The finalists were selected by a national jury of professional scientists from a pool of 300 scholars, announced earlier this month, it said.

According to the press release, finalists will participate in a week-long competition in March 2023, during which they will undergo a rigorous judging

process that goes beyond their own research to encompass other scientific disciplines and compete for more than \$ 1.8 million in awards.

They will also have an opportunity to interact with leading scientists and share their research during a virtual "Public Day" event on March 12.

Grammy for Gurbani: Album with 3 Shabads Wins Award

Guruja Kaur Khalsa of the *White Sun* has won the Grammy Award for her chants in the album 'Mystic Mirror'.

Khalsa won Best New Age Album for 'Mystic Mirror' at the 65th Annual Grammy Awards Premiere Ceremony in Los Angeles. The album features shabad from the Guru Granth Sahib.

"We just won a GRAMMY for our album "Mystic Mirror" in the New Age, Ambient or Chant Category. We want to thank the @

recordingacademy not only for the beautiful awards ceremony, but also for all the amazing work they do on behalf of music creators," wrote @WhiteSunMusic.

While on stage, Guruja said: "Thank you so much to the Academy; I'm going to cry. Thank you to everyone who helped create this album, thank you to our producers. Standing with you guys is such a privilege and honour. With that comes more responsibility to bring love and kindness to Planet Earth."

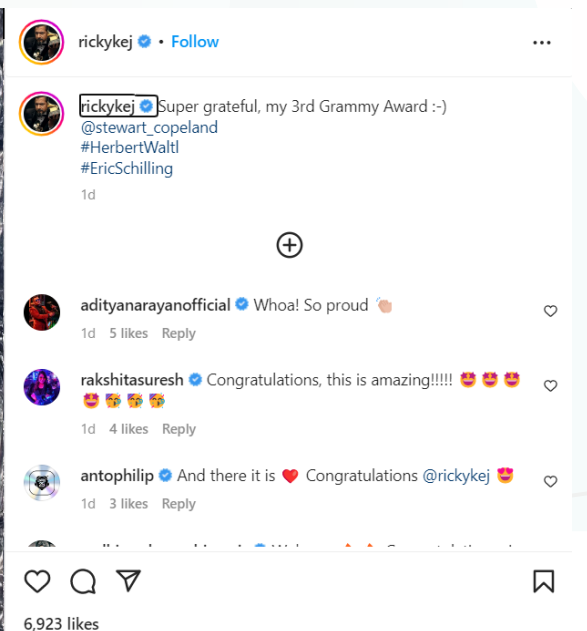


Ricky Kej Wins 3rd Grammy Award

Ricky Kej from India took home the Grammy for his album *Divine Tides* this year.

In the Best Immersive Audio Album category, his album was nominated. He received the honor jointly with *The Police's* legendary drummer Stewart Copeland.

Kej is the only Indian to hold three Grammy Awards owing to this accomplishment.



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FRAUD ALERT THE GRANDPARENT SCAM

FRAUD ALERT: THE GRANDPARENT SCAM

Grandparent scams have been on the rise in recent weeks within Middlesex County. Recently on January 23, 2023, South Plainfield PD arrested two individuals for scamming an elderly victim for \$6,000 because he thought his grandson needed bail money. After receiving the payment, the scammers requested an additional \$5,000.

This is a common tactic for the grandparent scam. The caller will pose as a grandchild and explain in a frantic-sounding voice that her or she is in trouble. They will allege there was an accident, an arrest, or a robbery. The caller may also pose as an attorney or law enforcement calling on behalf of a grandchild in trouble.

To protect yourself and others from this scam, consider the following:

- Do not get flustered, take time to think. The scammer will make the situation seem urgent to pressure you.
- Do not confirm any personal or financial information. Scammers fish for facts to utilize to their benefit. If the caller says, "It's me, Grandpa!," don't reply and say your grandchild's name.
- Verify who is calling (offer to call back using the phone number you have for that person). Scammers will use programs to appear as if they call from a trusted number.
- Call someone you trust or police for an opinion about the call. Scammers will say they don't want anyone to know because they are embarrassed.
- Do not send any cash, wire money, or provide numbers from gift cards or cash-reload cards to a person claiming to be a grandchild. Trust bank employees that warn you that you may be a victim of a scam.

Please call 9-1-1 or your local police department if you believe you are being victimized. If you sent money to a suspected scammer via Western Union, call the company's fraud hotline at 800-448-1492. If you used MoneyGram, call 800-926-9400. If the transfer has not yet been paid, they may be able to stop the transaction and refund your money.

A - 359746



★★★★★

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A - 359746



Kuttey

(Action Thriller/2023/Cinema Release)

CRAZY DELIGHTFUL RIDE WITH KUTTEY, KHOKEY AUR DHOKEY !

Director Aasmaan Bhardwaj
Music Vishal Bhardwaj
Lyrics Gulzar
Cast Naseeruddin Shah, Konkana Sen Sharma, Tabu, Kumud Mishra, Arjun Kapoor, Radhika Madan, Shardul Bhardwaj

When a film has names like those above to its credit, I would say, "Naam hi kaafi hai!"

Disclaimer:

This review comes from an avid Vishal Bhardwaj fan, and while this film is not directed by him, some of the loyalty and love rubs off on even his son and the ever-precious VB-Gulzar combo.

Plot

There are two cops who land up in a dirty mess, and they don't mind playing dirty to get out of it, not that they were clean to begin with.

In a crazy race, they are joined by others, each trying to dodge or stab the other, each one driven by greed or need.

While bullets and cuss words fly to and fro, ethics and morality are not the only casualty.

Analysis

Aasmaan Bhardwaj makes a promising debut and

delivers a film that is quite a delight to watch, though not without shortcomings.

Let's talk about the good things first.

Right from scene one, it's a virtual treat of fine actors that are a pleasure to watch, irrespective of the length of the role. Let's accept that the star cast of the film is the biggest ace up the sleeve of the director.

They are a bunch of fine actors who would hold the story and your attention even when the screenplay doesn't give them much to bite on.

So, you have Naseeruddin Shah (such a pleasure to watch even in just two scenes), Konkana Sen Sharma, Anurag Kashyap in a cameo (God knows why he loves playing such immensely dark characters, but he does play them quite well), and even Ashish Vidyarthi.

Tabu, Arjun Kapoor, and, to my pleasure, Kumud Mishra have the meatiest roles.

Tabu, once again shines

in a character with dark tinge. There's not a single moment of her screen space that she lets your attention diverge.

Kumud Mishra is good. He had the maximum number of shades to his character, and he smoothly and effortlessly conveys them all.

Arjun Kapoor is an actor who, for some reason, has always managed to be deprived of people's admiration, no matter how sincere his efforts are. Even this time, this guy deserves some credit for holding down the fort alongside the likes of Tabu and Kumud Mishra. I liked him as much as I did in *Finding Fanny*, *Ki and Ka*, *Sandeep* and *Pinky Faraar*, or *India's Most Wanted*. Please show him some love, guys.

Radhika Madan and Shardul Bhardwaj lend good support.

Dialogues are an interesting mix. Some are deep, metaphoric, and the context is tacit. Most are laced with dark

humour and embellished with choices of cuss words. The music is good and catchy.

Though I loved the album, I expected the music to go through the roof since it's his son's debut.

The ever-favourite foot tapping "dhan te dan" didn't find enough presence in the film to our dismay. In this era of remixes, they could have encashed it more, and we would have been happier.

What the film falls short of is novelty value. The story of a pack of greedy hounds backstabbing each other for a heist doesn't sound fresh. The film also has a few incredulities and loopholes to its credit. Though I felt slight lags, the overall duration is crisp at 1 hour 52 minutes.

Shortfalls apart, the film was entertaining and engrossing. Along with the actors and the music, I think it was a good package overall.

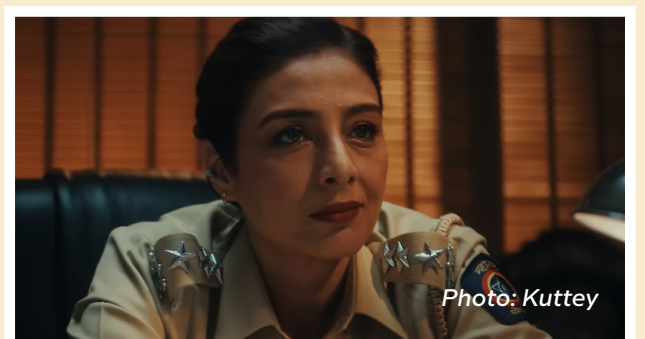


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Pathaan

(Cinema Release/Spy Action Thriller)

SRK HAI NA ... KAAFI HAI!!!

Cast Shah Rukh Khan,
John Abraham,
Deepika,
Dimple Kapadia,
Ashutosh Rana



Slight spoiler alert!

When you have people's hearts clamouring for their much-starved dose of SRK, what do you expect?

Of course, we'll lap it up lock, stock, and barrel.

And yes, I agree: SRK's dimpled charm, his not so common "action avatar," and his once-upon-a-time so rare "bare torso" was like dew to parched hearts. And we had our fill.

To throw in as a bonus, we have a BLAZING Tiger cameo in YRF's spy universe.

And to top it all, you have a fiery John who drew as many wolf whistles and claps despite being the baddy.

So yes, *Pathan* has umpteen moments of ear-piercing whistling and clapping. They are the soul of the cinema experience, especially when watching such masala action thrillers. They not only amp up adrenaline rush but also help you in taking in your stride those logic defying, gravity defying and sometimes even shoddily done action scenes.

When people around you are enjoying it so much, you are

like... jaane de yaar, let's enjoy the moment instead of nit picking.

As expected, *Pathaan* rides high on its star power, action, and stunts. Story, logic, and narrative were definitely not on their agenda. After all, they had SRK telling them, "Main Hoon Na!"

Pathaan takes you on a roller coaster ride. You have those highs when you are soaking in all the SRK charm and enjoying the fast-paced sequences one after the other with a great background score, but there are also the lows when a part of you is cursing the director, "Couldn't he have come up with something better when he had the best at his disposal?"

The film remains largely engaging. There are many moments when you are really enjoying yourself and smiling. There are moments when you join in the whistling and clapping and get lost in the collective euphoria. The post-credits scene had me heartily chuckling. Don't miss it!

SRK is awesome as ever and carries the film like a true hero.

John is brawny and fantastic.

Salman is adorable in his cameo.

Dimple looks smart and super

chic.

Deepika looks fit, stylish, but too caked up and bronzed. Wish I could say more about her.

But there's a long list of complaints for the makers and director. The biggest grouse of all...

You brought us SRK after 4 years, and all the time we see him either being beaten to pulp, being double crossed or being rescued. Why should a spy be mushy, emotional, and taken for a ride? Why the hell can't you give us our hero as a calculative shrewd man who foresees, plans, dodges deception and beats the villain to pulp?

Does it need research for the filmmakers to realise that in this genre, we like our heroes as victorious and not just in the climax. We want that all the time... is that clear? Reminded me of a similar fiasco in *Shamsher*.

Wish they had a better newer story, better action, especially the VFX one, better narrative, wish Deepika didn't seem to try too hard, wish they had used some degree of logic, wish some scenes didn't look like spoofs on Star Trek.

The film is nowhere close to the

Tiger series or even War.

Back stories failed to rev up an emotional connection.

Fancy dance steps and lots of style, yet leaves you craving for choreography with a soul.

Sizzling hot heroine but wish it could be said for her chemistry with our hero.

It's important to mention here that there seemed nothing lacking on part of the actors. They have given ample films to prove their mettle in these departments. It is the script that failed to support their calibre.

Despite their best efforts and team, I wonder how *Bollywood* consistently fails to deliver what they are capable of. Perhaps in a race to ape *Hollywood* and *Tollywood*, they are leaving behind what they were damn good at.

Nevertheless, the film is worth your time and money if you like *Bollywood* style action masala thrillers. Plenty of action, style and pace.

SRK alone makes it totally worth the while. He is truly the King when it comes to charm and charisma.

BASANT PANCHAMI IN DAYALBAGH



ऋतु बसन्त आये सतगुरु जग में, चलो चरनन पर सीस धरो री ।

“With the auspicious season of Basant, Most Benevolent, Supremely Merciful Satguru manifested on this earth, Let us all bow our heads in homage at His Holy Lotus Feet.”

In the month of maagh, January/February, the auspicious day of Panchmi (the fifth day of the lunar fortnight in the Hindu Calendar), which is popularly known as Basant Panchmi, is considered as a blessed and sacred day among Hindus and is welcomed as a harbinger of joy and exuberance. With the passing of the winter season, as soon as the season of Basant commences, there is an infusion of new energy in animals as well as birds, human beings, and vegetation. Saints too have compared the time for the manifestation of the Supreme Lord of All Creation on this earth with the most majestic of all seasons—Basant.

देखो देखो सखी अब चल बसन्त । फूल रही जहँ तहँ बसन्त ॥

“Let us, dear friend (fellow spirits) rush to get the blissful vision of Basant, Basant which is flowering with joy and bliss here, there and everywhere.”

The Basant season is of special significance for Dayalbagh, the headquarters of the Radhasoami Faith situated in the city of Agra. For the satsangis of the Radhasoami Faith, the auspicious day of Basant is one of extreme happiness and Bliss as on this sacred day, February 15, 1861, the first Revered Leader of the Faith, Param Purush Puran Dhani Huzur Soamiji Maharaj, revealed for the first time the Divine message of the salvation of all creation and mercifully opened the doors of Satsang to the general public.

घट में खेलूँ अब बसन्त । भेद बताया सतगुरु संत ॥

“I revel in the joy and Bliss of Basant internally within the depths of my soul, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, All benevolent, Sant Satguru has revealed the secret.”

On the auspicious day of Basant Panchmi, on January 20, 1915, the fifth Revered Leader of the Radhasoami faith, Sir Sahabji Maharaj, laid the foundation of Dayalbagh, the headquarters of Radhasoami Satsang by planting a Mulberry seedling. Along with this, the foundation of a new Satsang culture was also laid. At Dayalbagh, Education and Culture or a Way of Life commenced in the form of a very beautiful and delicate plant, on January 1, 1916, with a Model School popularly known as Radhasoami Educational Institute (REI). This plant slowly and gradually grew into the vast tree that it is at present, in the form of a University, the impact of which can be felt not only on different parts of the country, but also on countries abroad. The fragrance of this tree named Dayalbagh Educational Institute, is spreading in all four directions.

आज आई बहार बसन्त । उमंग मन गुरु चरनन लपिटाय ॥

“Today, the beauty, glory, joyous splendor of Basant is here, With their minds filled with exuberance and Bliss, the disciple devotees embrace in adoration the Holy Lotus Feet of Ever Merciful Sant Satguru.”

The day of Basant is of extreme importance to the satsangis of Radhasoami Faith. This year is the 205th Samvat of Radhasoami Faith. This day is celebrated with much enthusiasm and pleasure by all satsangis as they sing and praise the Glory of Ever Merciful Radhasoami Dayal. Before the arrival of Basant, the preparations for its welcome begin well in advance. From very small children to adults and seniors-- there is no limit to the enthusiasm and zeal. All get fully involved in the cleaning and decoration of houses, mohallas, in fact the entire Dayalbagh. Because of the collective efforts of all, one can get a glimpse of the most beautiful vision and luster of Dayalbagh on the auspicious occasion of Basant. The Festival of Basant is celebrated by satsangis with rituals steeped in the spirit of immense love and devotion, by expressing a deep sense of gratitude in the Holy Lotus Feet of their Beloved Sant Satguru with intense Faith in Radhasoami Dayal. With complete love and devotion, joy and Bliss, they pass this day in offering aarti, worship and meditation, feel Blessed and exult in their good fortune.

मोहमिलि गए रा-धा-स्व-आ-मी पूरे संत । अब बाजत हयि में धुन अनन्त ॥

“I have found the All-Gracious, Ever Merciful Supreme Being, the only True Ra-Dha-Sva-Aah-Mi Satguru Sant

In my heart the melodious eternal sound current reverberates in everlasting Bliss.”

On the occasion of Basant, in Dayalbagh, a variety of programmes like baby Show, Fancy dress Show, Gymnastics and different Sports events are organized. In all these programmes, children, youth and all brothers and sisters actively participate with enthusiasm and zeal.

आज आया बसन्त नवीन । सखी री खेलो गुरु संग फाग रचाय ॥

“Today Basant has arrived anew

Fellow devotee spirits, let us celebrate the joy and Bliss of spring with our beloved Sant Satguru.”

On the auspicious occasion of Basant, in Dayalbagh and in Satsang colonies all over the country and abroad, the most glorious and attractive decorative lighting is displayed at night. For this candles and oil lamps (diyas) which can cause pollution, are not used. LED lights, powered by solar energy are used for this lighting decoration.

Closer to home in North America, Basant is celebrated with great zeal, amongst the followers of the Radhasoami Faith. “Everyone looks forward to the Basant New year celebrations here - the energy, love, enthusiasm, and spiritual bliss are at a high and it’s great to see everyone come together!”, says a follower from San Francisco. The Toronto and Calgary chapters organize cultural programmes, involving children, youth, and elders, encompassing the history and values that the festival embodies. Basant is celebrated by the Atlanta chapter by organizing various events such as friendly games for people of all ages and cultivating a culture of sustainability through community farming.

Besides the congregational celebrations, the followers in North America view this auspicious occasion as one of many opportunities around the year to contribute to the local community. The chapter in New York recently hand knitted warm hats for kids associated with the local YMCA, while the Chicago chapter volunteers with non-profit organizations such as Feed My Starving Children. Each chapter strives to enhance the wellbeing of the community around them by embodying the ideals of universal brotherhood and service to mankind.



दयालबाग का प्राचीन मुबारक कुआँ



Michael Jackson's Nephew Jaafar Jackson to Play 'King of Pop' in Biopic

The late pop singer Michael Jackson will be portrayed by his 26-year-old nephew, Jaafar Jackson, in the biographical movie "Michael," the Lionsgate studio said on 30 January. "Michael" will explore "the complicated man who became the King of Pop," Lionsgate said in a statement. The film will include "all aspects" of his life and his most noteworthy performances that set him on the path to becoming an icon in the musical world," it said. In an official announcement, John

Branca wrote, "We are thrilled to announce Jaafar Jackson as Michael Jackson in the upcoming biopic directed by Antoine Fuqua. It is especially significant that one of the most iconic figures in history will be brought to life by his own nephew, and Jaafar has been working extremely hard to get ready for his role." Taking to Instagram, Jaafar confirmed the news in a post that read, "I'm humbled and honoured to bring my Uncle Michael's story to life. To all the fans all over the world, I'll see you soon."



PC- timesofindia

Michael Disco Joins AGBO as President of Film

Anthony and Joe Russo's entertainment business AGBO has chosen Michael Disco as head of film. Disco is one of the producers of the upcoming DC movie *The Flash*. "Michael Disco has an incredible track record

for creating feature films that have entertained global audiences for years," said Russo-Otstot in a statement. "He has a keen understanding of genre and will, no doubt, aptly foster our ambitious global franchises on the AGBO slate. On the flip side, Michael's stellar reputation and work

in the independent space make him the perfect champion for the emerging visionaries we strive to support through Gozie Agbo. We are thrilled to welcome him into the AGBO family." In his new position, Disco will be in charge of the film department's creative direction as

AGBO, which prides itself on being artist-led, continues to encourage dynamic collaborations and unique storytelling. He will manage the creative and business strategy for AGBO's film-related endeavours and report to the company's chief creative officer, Angela Russo-Otstot.



PC- ALEX J. BERLINER/ABIMAGES

Diljit Dosanjh Joins the Upcoming Comedy 'The Crew'

When Rhea Kapoor and Ektaa Kapoor revealed that Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan, and Kriti Sanon would be joining forces for their comedy film "The Crew," the internet went crazy.

Diljit Dosanjh, an actor and singer, has now been added to the ensemble cast, as per the makers!

Producer Rhea Kapoor, AKFC Production, gushed about Diljit joining the film. She said, "We are thrilled to have Diljit join the cast considering his discerning eye for quality projects. This film has always had a special destiny, it's unlike any entertainer you have seen before. The cast and I are excited to provide audiences with an exciting and memorable cinema experience."



PC- thequint



Samantha Ruth Prabhu to Star in 'Citadel'

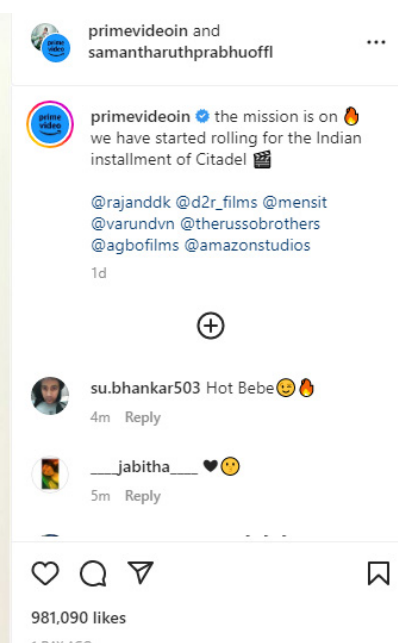
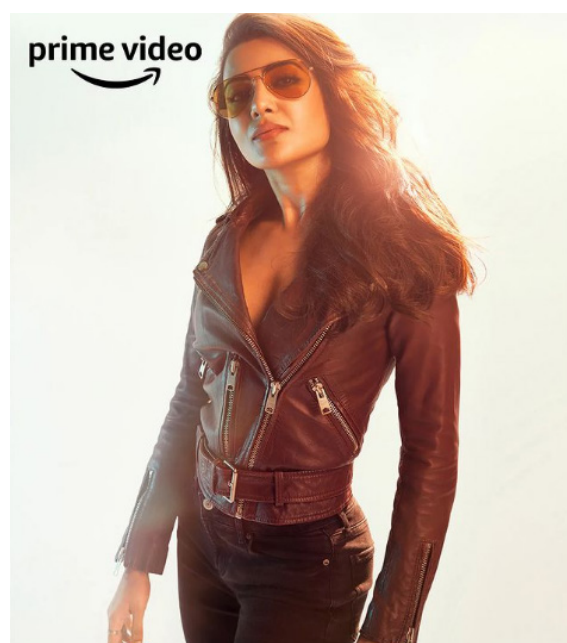
The producers of the Indian adaptation of "Citadel" made it official that Samantha Ruth Prabhu would play the role of the project's female lead.

Welcoming Samantha on board, Aparna Purohit, head of India Originals, Prime Video, said, "We are absolutely thrilled to be working with Samantha once again. She made her streaming debut with *The Family Man* Season Two, on Prime Video, and is one of the most talented artists in the industry today. We can't wait for audiences to see her on-screen in a brand-new avatar, along with Varun and the incredibly talented ensemble cast we have on board for this series."

"The canvas for the Indian instalment of *Citadel* is larger than life but the treatment and texture is retro, rooted and quirky. The series is being shot extensively across India and

international locales. With Raj & DK steering this ship and a terrifically talented cast, we are confident that the series is going to be nothing short of a spectacle," Aparna added.

Samantha also shared the update on her social media. She said, "When Prime Video and Raj and DK approached me with this project, I decided to take it up in a heartbeat! After working with this team on *The Family Man*, it is homecoming for me. The Citadel universe, the interconnected storylines between the productions across the globe, and most importantly, the script of the Indian instalment really excited me. I am thrilled to be a part of this brilliant universe conceptualised by the Russo Brothers' AGBO. I am also looking forward to working with Varun for the first time, on this project. He is someone who is full of life and cheers when you're around him."



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