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

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FIA wishes a very Happy Holi to all its subscribers.

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India Resumes International Flights from March 27

FIA HONORED 6 TRAILBLAZING ACHIEVERS ON ITS 5th ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF IWD



Members of the FIA IWD Committee with Hon. CG Randhir Jaiswal and Dr. Abha Jaiswal with the awardees.

The Federation of Indian Associations and the Indian Consulate celebrated International Women's Day at the Indian Consulate General in New York as part of the ongoing Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrating 75 years of Indian Independence. The Indian Consulate and FIA honored six women who have made prominent contributions in different fields.

The awardees included Hon Dipti Vaid Dedhia- 1st Female Municipal Court Judge New Jersey of south Asian origin, Ms. Sejal Lakhani Bhatt CEO of TechWerxe, Ms. Seema Kumar community

activist, Ms Chaya Pamula, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Ms. Allison Hauser – trailblazer- Ex Director of Girls on the Run NYC and Ms. Priyanka Bhrambhat, founder of Beehively Group, Ex. Director and Group Strategist of Bankkai Group.

The event was attended by Hon. Consul General Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, Hon. DCG Dr. Varun Jeph, FIA President Mr. Kenny Desai, FIA Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya, Vice President Mr. Saurin Parikh, FIA Past President Mr. Srujal Parikh, FIA Jt. Secretary Ms. Smita Miki Patel, and FIA's Ms. Rohi Singh, amongst others.

On the occasion, the Hon. Consular General, Mr. Randhir

Jaiswal, in his speech, mentioned that women's empowerment is now a part and parcel of daily conversations and thoughts. The Indian government has launched several projects like Swachh Bharat, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, and Ujjawal Yojna to provide gas connections across the length and breadth of India to help women come to power, especially in the rural parts of the country. These projects have brought about tremendous change. He gave the example of the state of Haryana, where the women gender ratio has gone up from 826 to 976 in just 5 years. He further went on to add that India has more than 60,000 start-ups and 50% of

them have women as directors. In a lighter vein, he mentioned that the Indian Consulate is a great example of women's empowerment as 70 per cent of the staff are women.

The Hon DCG Dr. Varun Jeph expressed profound appreciation for the indomitable spirit and the achievements of our women. He mentioned that there is no task, no area, no field in which the women have not made a mark for themselves. Their contributions to science, technology, business, academia, and space exploration have been enormous, and they have demonstrated their mettle. They have been instrumental in

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shaping the future of not only India and the USA, but also the rest of the world.

The FIA president, Mr. Kenny Desai, spoke about woman empowerment and said that

NAARI SHAKTI has impacted our culture for several centuries and has played a major role in building and enhancing society. He mentioned that all the six awardees have made their mark at the highest levels and have significantly contributed to the

community at large. He went on to add that women today are challenging gender stereotypes and their diverse representation is instrumental in accelerating the process of creating a gender-balanced world.

FIA Chairman, Mr. Ankur

Vaidya, congratulated the awardees and thanked the Consul General for holding the event. He broadly outlined the important roles that women play in shaping a person's life.

The awardees were felicitated and the trophies were given to



FIA committee with the Honorees



FIA Comittee members with Hon CG Randhir Jaiswal, Dr Abha Jaiswal with the Awardees

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them by the Hon. CG Shri Randhir Jaiswal and his wife, Dr Abha Jaiswal.

In her speech, the awardee, Hon. Judge Dipti Vaid Dedhia, said that the word JUDGE did not fit the persona she was or where she came from, but the quote – You do not have to fit into a mold created by another- stayed with her and in her achievement, she not only broke the mold but created one for herself, which continues to change shape and form as she grows.

Ms. Sejal Lakhani Bhatt said that it has been a prolonged journey for her and that her upbringing, where as a girl she was treated no differently from a boy, made her strong.

Ms. Seema Kumar said that women of South Indian origin have been making progress and breaking barriers in making the world a better place.

In her speech, Ms Priyanka Bhrambhat said that she hoped that women and men would stand together equally to share, nurture, and inspire each other and succeed in pushing down the



ladder so that others may come up. Ms. Allison Hauser said that International Women's Day is not just for today but is ongoing and to be encouraged.

Ms. Chaya Pamula was unable to attend the function due to extremely unavoidable

circumstances, but in her message thanked the Indian Consulate and FIA for the award and said that it motivated her, her co-workers, and next generation trailblazers and changemakers to empower women and children so they can uplift themselves, their families, and their communities.

The presence of every attendee celebrated the achievements of not only the recipients but all the women present at the event. The event encouraged all the other women in our community to contribute their share to society's well-being.



Hon Cg Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, FIA President Kenny Desai, FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, FIA Joint Secretary Smita Miki Patel and FIA committee member Rohi Singh addressing the audience at the event.



DCG DR. Varun Jeph and Padma Shri Dr. Sudhir Parikh addressing the event.



Hon. Dipti Dedhia honored at the event.



Ms. Seema Kumar honored at the event.



Ms. Priyanka Brahmbhatt honored at the event.



Ms. Allison Hauser honored at the event.



Master of Ceremony Ms Aditi Vyas.



Ms. Sejal Bhatt honored at the event.



Ms. Chaya Pamula's representative at the event.



FIA committee members at the IWD event.



FIA- New England Celebrates International Women's Day-2022



Federation of Indian Associations- New England celebrated International Women's Day at the Senior Center in Northborough, MA.

Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) New England celebrated International Women's Day at the Senior Center in Northborough, MA on 8th March with a lot of zeal and enthusiasm. We had huge participation from Veterans & Senior Citizens, including dignitaries of different faiths and cultures as well as members of the Indian community from New England.

Mrs. Shova Sharma, FIA Vice President, along with Attorney General of Massachusetts Ms. Maura Healey's special representative Nicolás Dueñas commenced the event by felicitating all the senior women

with flowers. A gourmet lunch was catered for the senior members of the center and smiles across the room conveyed the message of appreciation and liking!

Ms. Eileen Bogleere, Director Veteran-Senior Center mentioned in her own words 'When you don't know what to expect during a cold day, but are then surprised by lunch and flowers...that makes it a super fund day', with a smile on her face.

Office of Attorney General, Maura Healey sent her words of appreciation and recognition to FIA, for hosting the event on this special day and coming together as a community to recognize distinct women leaders.

Hannah Kane, State Representative, recognized the event hosted by FIA - "I am delighted to wish the FIA, as well as the entirety of the Indian American Community, a very happy International Women's Day. I believe it is critically important to celebrate the cultural, political, and socioeconomic achievements of women and I am very pleased to see the Federation's event. As a strong advocate for the advancement of women and for women's rights, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to shine a spotlight on gender equality and reproductive rights and to give voice to the ongoing need to curtail violence and abuse of women".

Mrs. Shova Sharma, in her address conveyed how community women are coming forward, motivating and uplifting each other. Mrs. Sharma, along with, FIA Event Chair Mrs. Mukta Munjal and FIA volunteers, Geena Virmani and Kajal Dixit, honored distinct women community leaders, including Ms. Jasmin J Oritz, Ms. Chitra. N. Javdekar, Ms. Shefali Kalyani, Ms. Pratibha Shah, and Ms. Eshita Chakrabarti.

FIA, NE executive team has conferred a certificate of appreciation recognizing their achievements.

The highlight of the event was a panel discussion with women from different walks of life, moderated by FIA volunteer,



Honorees honored at the IWD event.

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Neha Kaushal engaging the audience. International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8th across the globe, to spread the message of gender equality, celebrate the achievements and contributions of women in different spheres, and work towards building a society free of all gender biases, stereotypes, gender parity and discrimination.

The discussion included meaning of International Women's Day, overcoming gender bias still prevalent in our society, and women's privileges in developed versus developing countries. The audience loved the insightful discussion and the shared experiences. Shefali Kalyani, founder and owner of non-profit organization, "We Care Charity", mentioned how in her experience in helping the homeless in New

Hampshire, found that men were always kind and compassionate towards women living under similar circumstances. Jasmin J. Ortiz, realtor with Gallagher Real Estate, mentioned how we still have a long way to go to have a society free of gender biases.

The FIA- NE President Mr Abhishek Singh thanked Ms Eileen for allowing them to celebrate the event at the Northborough Senior Centre. He also thanked

Attorney General Ms. Maura Healey and her colleagues Ms. Katherine, Mr Nicolas and the state rep Ma Hannah Kane for their support. Also thanked were Ms Vickey and her team for the sumptuous food that the guests savored and enjoyed. At the end of the event, Mrs. Shova Sharma thanked our esteemed panelists, the senior center staff and all FIA volunteers, who could make this event successful.



FIA New England committee members with the awardees at the event.

SAVE THE DATE



75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

THURSDAY

MAY

12

2022

11:30am to 4:30pm



*Join us to commemorate & celebrate
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FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS NY - NJ - NE



NEW FEATURE ANNOUNCEMENT

In a first-of-its-kind initiative we are excited to provide our readers with a platform to share their stories.

Our subscribers are invited to submit their short fiction, poetry, prose, musings on any topic. Submissions, not exceeding 500 words, can be done at editor@fianynjct.org along with a passport size image in jpeg format.

Stories submitted will be reviewed and published accordingly along with photograph of the contributor.

Non subscribers can also submit by subscribing at <https://fianynjct.org/subscribe-newsletter/>

THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

- All 694 Indian students stuck in Ukraine's Sumy were rescued.
- Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina Thanks PM Modi for rescuing Bangladeshis from Ukraine.
- In the wake of the crisis in Ukraine, the Indian Embassy in Russia says that it sees no security concerns for its students in Russia.
- IC-814 Hijacker, Who Slit Passenger's Throat, Shot Dead In Karachi.
- Polish Offer Of Jets To Ukraine Triggers Warning From Russia.
- During her visit to Silicon Valley, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden praises Indian-American entrepreneur Mr. Ajay Jain Bhutoria.
- Dr. Rakesh Rick Patel, 33, of Indian origin, was killed when carjackers mowed him down after stealing his car in Silver Springs, Maryland.
- Lois Boyd and Manik Mehtani, two American Indians from Virginia, have been charged in a CryptoCurrency Money Laundering Case and face up to 20 years in federal prison.
- Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, said that the US will continue to extend support to India with equipment and other things it needs along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.
- Five Indian students Harpreet Singh, Jaspinder Singh, Karanpal Singh, Mohit Chouhan and Pawan Kumar- were killed in a road accident in Quinte West City, Southern Ontario Canada. India's External Affairs minister S. Jaishankar mourns their death.
- New Jersey votes to halt licences of gas stations tied to Russia's Lukoil.



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A GLIMPSE OF DANCE PE CHANCE



"Russia Invaded Ukraine - Aftermath"

AFTERMATH

Photo: financialexpress

- Russia Seizes Ukraine Nuclear Plant Hours After Attack.
- Russia declares a partial ceasefire in two cities to open humanitarian corridors for civilians.
- Ukrainian airport destroyed in Russian strike: Zelenskyy.
- Ukrainian forces shoot down Russian aircraft on the outskirts of Chernihiv.
- UK injects \$100 million into Ukraine's economy.
- Mastercard and Visa suspend operations in Russia in the latest blow to the country's financial system after the invasion of Ukraine.
- Stock value of Gazprom owner of the natural gas pipeline between Russia and Turkey becomes zero on the international stock exchanges.
- Zelenskyy now says Ukraine won't insist on Nato membership.
- Shell says it will stop buying Russian oil, natural gas.
- The company behind Nordstream 2 operator of the gas pipeline between Russia and Germany fires all its employees and file for bankruptcy in wake of the western sanctions on Russia.
- Talks in Southern Turkey between Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and his counterpart Dmitry Medvedev fails.
- Global oil prices rise to a record high and is creating a spectre of high inflation for India as 70% of its oil and gas is imported and the Indian oil companies adjust their pricing to the global price.
- Steel prices in USA soar upto 21 %.
- The magnitude of the potential economic fallout is unclear, but a foreign conflict could further delay a return to normalcy after two years in which the coronavirus pandemic has buffeted both the global and U.S. economies. American consumers are already contending with quickly rising prices, businesses are struggling supply chains and there are reports about people being pessimistic about their financial outlooks.

(news as of 15th March)

Assembly Elections India

Photo: newsonair

- BJP and its allies sweep Uttar Pradesh scoring 273 seats out of 403.
- AAP with its alliance takes 92 seats out of 117 in Punjab.
- BJP and its Alliance score majority in Uttarakhand getting 47 seats out of 70.
- In Goa BJP gets 20 seats out of 40. 21 needed to form the Government.
- BJP secured 32 seats out of 60. 31 was needed to form the Government in Manipur.
- Major stalwarts bite dust- Captain Amrinder Singh, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi of Congress, Prakash Insh Badal, Sukhbir Singh Badal lose the elections.

USCIB inducts four prominent CEOs into its India Advisory Council

The US India Business Council (USIBC), a premier strategic group comprised of a highly powerful network of senior India-based executives and thought-leaders devoted to boosting trade and investment between America and India, has appointed four prominent executives to its India Advisory Council.

The executives are heads of India operations of 3M, Dell, J&J, and Microsoft. Ramesh Ramadurai, the managing director of 3M India; Alok Ohrie from J&J, Sarthak Ranade from Dell India and Anant Maheshwari from Microsoft India, according to a statement from USIBC.

"We are very pleased to welcome Ramesh, Alok, Sarthak, and Anant to our India Advisory Council. As the newest members of this group, we expect Ramesh,

Alok, Sarthak, and Anant will enable USIBC to raise to new heights its policy leadership in the life sciences, digital technology, and manufacturing sectors," said Atul Keshap, president of USIBC.

Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson, Salesforce India who has assumed the role of IAC Chair said, the council plays a strategic role in the way business and government engage.

"We are delighted to welcome these industry stalwarts to the India Advisory Council and look forward to an engaging and insightful future of nurturing business relationships," Bhattacharya said.

Formed in 2017, The India Advisory Council serves as a premier strategic body for representatives of Indian companies and Indian affiliates of American

companies including CEOs, presidents, managing directors, and chairpersons to collaborate on a forward-looking advocacy agenda in India.

Its members help lead USIBC engagements, meet with senior Indian and US government officials to offer advice, and influence USIBC policy and programme direction to ensure the organization remains the cutting-edge platform for advancing the US-India relationship.

Representing all major sectors, the IAC bolsters USIBC's mission to promote bilateral trade and investment between the US and India and spearheads coordinated advocacy for cross-cutting initiatives including global health, supply chain resiliency, and the energy transition, the statement said.

Biden Nominates Indian American as Envoy to Netherlands

President Joe Biden has nominated Indian American political activist Shefali Razdan Duggal as his envoy to the Netherlands, according to the White House.

Duggal, a 50-year-old Kashmiri immigrant, was raised in Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, and Boston.

The statement was made by the White House, along with numerous other significant administrative and diplomatic positions. According to the White House, Duggal, a mother of two, is a seasoned political activist, women's rights champion, and human rights crusader.

She has been active in the presidential campaigns of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Joe Biden. She is a former Presidential Appointee to the Council of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where she currently serves as a Western Regional Advisor.

Duggal is a member of Human Rights Watch's San Francisco Committee, a member of Wake Forest University's Leadership and Character Council, and a former member of Emily's List's National Board of Directors.

She holds a master's degree in political communication from New York University, as well as a bachelor's degree in mass communication from Miami University.

Photo: tribuneindia



Indian-American appointed as CUNY Law School Dean

The Board of Trustees of The City University of New York recently voted to appoint Sudha Setty, "an exceptional scholar, and experienced and collaborative legal leader," as the dean of the CUNY School of Law, the nation's largest urban public university, she is the first person of Indian descent to lead a CUNY school, according to a Feb. 22, 2022, press release from the university. The appointment will be effective July 1, 2022.

Setty has served as dean of the Western New England University School of Law since 2018, making her the first woman of Indian heritage in the United States to lead an American Bar Association-accredited law school.

She was formerly the assistant dean for faculty development and intellectual life at the institution. She has been a member of the faculty of the school since 2006, and she has been honoured Professor of the Year in 2009, 2016, and 2018.

"Dean Setty boasts a sustained

record of accomplishment as an antitrust litigator, pro bono civil rights counsel, scholar of constitutional law and legal education leader, as well as a pioneering administrator and leader," CUNY Board of Trustees Chairperson William C. Thompson Jr. is quoted saying in the press release.

CUNY is New York's leading public interest-focused law school, and Setty's extensive experience in the area of social justice would enhance the school's offerings, top officials at CUNY said.

Setty is credited with leading the creation of its Center for Social Justice in 2019 in the WNEU School of Law, and expanding racial justice-oriented programming and student support, and led the faculty in adopting a graduation requirement for racial justice coursework. In 2021, Dean Setty co-hosted the inaugural Workshop for Asian-American Women in Legal Academia, drawing over 100 participants to engage in professional

development, scholarship support, and building community, the press release said.

"I am thrilled and honored to serve as the next dean of CUNY School of Law. This law school was founded with the mission of public service, social justice lawyering, inclusiveness and accessibility," said Setty. "In this moment, the nation and the world have recognized what CUNY has known all along: that our society needs more lawyers who are educated with these fundamental values to take on the challenges of today and the future. I look forward to working with all members of the CUNY community as the law school seeks to make the world a fairer, more just, and better place."

Dean Setty specialises in comparative law and is a well-known specialist on constitutional rights and national security. In 2018, she was elected to the American Law Institute and the American Bar Foundation as a fellow.

Holi Festival

Holi is a very popular ancient Hindu socio-cultural, religious, and biological festival that is joyously and colourfully celebrated all over India and in the countries where Indian Diaspora people live in large numbers. Holi comes on Falgun month's Poornima (Shukla Paksha) every year. It is also known as the Festival of Colours, the Festival of Spring and the Festival of Love. The festival signifies the triumph of good over evil. It is mentioned in the Puranas, Daskumar Charita, and by the well-known poet Kalidas during the 4th century reign of Samrat Chandragupta. The celebration of Holi is also mentioned in the 7th century Sanskrit drama Ratnavali. Basically, Holi is celebrated as a 2-day event. On the first day of Holi, a religious ritual is performed in the evening of Phalgun Sud Poornima--lighting a bonfire called Holika and celebrating the victory of good over evil. There is a mythological signifi-

cance to Holi. There are various legends associated with the festival.

Foremost is the legend of Prahlad, Hiranyakshyap, and Holika. King Hiranyakshyap, who considered himself a god and wanted everybody to worship him. His son Prahlad was worshipping Lord Vishnu to get rid of his son, Hiranyakashyap asked his sister Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad on her lap, as she had a boon to enter fire unscathed. But Prahlad was saved by Lord Vishnu and Holika paid the price by losing her life. The tradition of Holika dahan came from this legend, signifying the victory of good over evil. There is also another legend of Radha-Krishna and gopies applying colour and has become a trend on the second day known as "Dhuleti" where young and old children play with

colours
and
water
with

immense enthusiasm and love. The cultural significance is also very vital. Holi helps the people to believe in the virtue of being truthful and honest and also to fight against evil. The timing of the Holi (Feb-March), when the fields are in full bloom and people are expecting a full harvest, make them rejoicing.

The social significance is also incredible. All the people, irrespective of caste or creed, rich or poor, celebrate this colourful, joyous festival, thereby revitalising relationships and strengthening emotional bonds between them, and the secular fabric of our country. Also, it is widely believed that the burning of woods at Holi destroys insects, bacteria, and other harmful elements from the environment and creates a pure atmosphere. The government of India declares the Holi Festival a public holiday. There is a saying among some Rajasthani people that Diwali is to *athe kathe* (anywhere) but Holi is to *Ghare* (means at home). In Gujarat, Rajasthan area Holi is observed at each *maholle* with faith and brotherhood spirit.

In the United States and other countries where Indian Diaspora people live in large numbers, Holi is traditionally celebrated by the temples and large groups of people's associations by firing Holi at open space in their premises, and hundreds of devotees participate in Darshan and then dine together on prasad. In New Jersey, Holi at Dwarkadhish Temple at Parlin and Shri Swaminarayan Temple- Agna Upasana center, Monmouth junction as well as other locations like Gayatri Chetna Center, Piscataway, Sanatan Temple, Parsippany attract huge crowd. It is gratifying to note that local administration graciously helps in managing crowd and traffic

Aside from New Jersey and New York, Holi is celebrated in many other states with a sizable Indian diaspora.



Discrimination against Sikhs has escalated, Rights Expert Tells US Congress

Photo: economictimes

I We've seen Sikhs willing to put their lives on the line in defence of their cities and country, only to be told that uniform and grooming policies prohibit their articles of faith," said the human rights expert in a US Congressional hearing.

"Congress must take action," Amrith Kaur Aakre told members of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties during a recent Congressional hearing on Discrimination and Civil Right. Aakre is the Sikh Coalition's legal director.

"Workplace discrimination harms Sikhs in a range of public and private sector jobs including transportation, entertainment, health care, the military and law enforcement by allowing for the biased interpretation and application of government policies and laws.

"We've seen Sikhs willing to put their lives on the line in defence of their cities and country, only to be told that uniform and grooming policies prohibit their articles of faith," she said.

"We have seen Sikhs ordered to cut their hair for work-related drug testing even when alternative means are readily available.

"And we've seen Sikh first re-



sponders in the fight against COVID-19 pressured to shave their religiously mandated beards instead of being given appropriate, safe personal protective equipment that doesn't interfere with their faith," Aakre said.

Regardless of the details, time and again these policies are interpreted in a way which disproportionately impacts minority communities and our system allows it to keep happening, she said.

"We also receive Sikh travellers' reports of inappropriate demands to remove articles of faith, discriminatory comments by TSA agents and other profiling in our

airports," she told the lawmakers.

"This is a humiliating hindrance for Sikhs and other religious and racial minorities, members of the transgender community and others. And additional discriminatory practices like no-fly list and the lingering effects of the previous administration's Muslim ban continue to perpetuate profiling against too many people," she said.

In response to a query, Aakre stated that TSA profiling of Sikh Americans and other minority groups has long been an issue.

Bias against travellers exists at every stage of the travel process,

beginning with the fact that TSA agents do not receive adequate training on TSA policies or cultural competencies, which is evident from the moment many stigmatised groups arrive at the airport and must undergo behavioural detection before reaching security.

In answer to a follow-up question from Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, she stated that Sikh American youth face high rates of bullying and harassment in our nation's public schools, and that they continue to receive and document countrywide incidents of school bullying.

India Resumes International Flights from March 27

According to the Aviation Ministry, foreign operations must follow the guidelines for international travel starting on March 27, set out by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

I After having recognized the increased vaccination coverage across the globe and in consultation with the stakeholders, the Government of India has decided to resume scheduled commercial international passenger services to/from India from 27.03.2022, i.e. start of Summer Schedule 2022," read a statement from the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Air Bubble arrangements - which allow two countries to operate flights into each other's territories subject to certain conditions - also stand revoked, announced Civil Aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Under this arrangement, special international flights have

been running between India and 37 countries from July 2020. The Bubble arrangement harmed airlines' operations and profits.

Just 3,993 fresh coronavirus infections - the lowest in 662 days - were recorded in India on Tuesday, according to the Union Health Ministry. The

international operations, said the Aviation Ministry, will have to follow the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare guidelines for international travel.

The aviation watchdog, Directorate General of Civil Aviation or (DGCA), had earlier suspended operations on March 2020 in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Mirchi launches streaming App for North American audiences

Mirchi has launched a streaming app for the North American region, with features such as live feeds from 11 places and on-demand audio tales. Other nations will be added soon.

In response to increasing anti-Russian sentiment in the United States following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, lawmakers in New Jersey's largest city moved to cancel the licences of gas stations bearing the name of a major oil corporation located in Moscow.

On Wednesday, the Newark City Council voted 8-0 to suspend all permits for two local Lukoil (LKOH.MM) fuel outlets in order to demonstrate solidarity for Ukraine.

"This is a step on the city side to do what the rest of the world is doing to impose some pressure on Russia to stop this horrific invasion," said Council Member Anibal Ramos, who represents a part of Newark where many Ukrainian-Americans live.

Ramos stated that the final

decision on the resolution would be made by the city's business administration.

The move comes as a slew of Western companies break links with Russian enterprises, while Washington slaps a slew of sanctions on Russia.

It is unclear how the resolution would effect Lukoil, based in Moscow and one of the world's major oil producers. Lukoil North America, a business division, has 230 franchisees in the United States. Franchisees own the stations in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Roger Verma, a Newark franchisee, said on Wednesday that he supports Ukraine, but that a suspension would be disastrous for his company, which employs 16 people.

"I am baffled and confused

how shutting down an American-based small business owner is sending a message to support," Verma said.

#BoycottLukoil was used on Twitter to urge Americans to stop patronizing the gas stations.

"We're not going to help finance the war machine," said retired information technology

specialist Jeffrey Andrew of Maplewood, New Jersey, after protesting at a Lukoil station in nearby Union, New Jersey.

Company officials were not available for comment. The board of Lukoil in Russia on Thursday called for the war to end, media reported.



Microsoft Invest's Rs 15,000 Cr in Hyderabad Data Center

Microsoft will invest Rs 15,000 crore in Hyderabad to build its largest data centre in the country.

On March 7, the Telangana government and Microsoft announced a data centre investment that will be Microsoft's largest data centre region in India. Microsoft will spend over a 15-year period in the new data centre region, which will be split over three sites: Chandanvelly, Ellikatta, and Kottur.

The software behemoth already has its India development centre in Hyderabad, which is the largest outside of its headquarters in the United States. The new data centre in Hyderabad will provide advanced data security and cloud solutions to businesses, start-ups, developers, educational institutions, and government agencies.

The announcement was made in the presence of Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Telangana's Information Technology Minister K.T. Rama Rao, and Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, ITE&C. The event was also attended by Microsoft's Executive Vice President, Jean-Philippe Courtois and Microsoft India President, Anant Maheshwari.

The Hyderabad data centre area is the latest addition to the current network of three data centre regions in India, which include Pune, Mumbai, and Chennai and have been active for more than five years.

K.T. Rama Rao described it as an "iconic event" in Telangana's development. "This will be one of the largest FDIs that Telangana has attracted; Will indirectly support local business growth

and facilitate job creation across IT operations, facilities management, data and network security, network engineering and much more," he tweeted.

Microsoft will provide possibilities for local companies to develop with Microsoft Cloud services in Hyderabad and across Telangana through the data centre area.

Telangana and Microsoft previously signed an agreement that will strengthen the state government's ability to improve citizen service. Given the state's technology-driven economic goal in important areas such as agriculture, healthcare, education, law enforcement, and transportation, the presence of a Microsoft data centre in the region will boost local growth.

A Microsoft data centre region provides a competitive advantage to our digital economy and

is a long-term investment in our country's potential. The cloud is transforming every industry and sector. The investment in skilling will empower India's workforce today and into the future," said Chandrasekhar.

"Microsoft and Telangana go a long way back with Hyderabad hosting one of the largest Microsoft offices in the world and I am happy to see the relationship grow," said Rama Rao.

Maheshwari noted that "The new data centre will augment Microsoft's cloud capabilities and capacity to support those working across the country. It will also support new entrepreneurial opportunities while meeting critical security and compliance needs. The new data centre region is a testament to our mission to empower the people and organizations of India to achieve more," he said.




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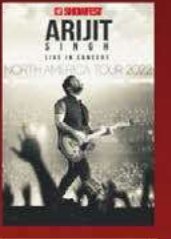
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Rudra -The Edge of Darkness

Cast - Ajay Devgn, Atul Kulkarni, Ashwini Kalsekar, Esha Deol, Rashi Khanna

Director - Rajesh Mapuskar

Streaming - Hotstar

Runtime - 6 episodes (35-50 Minutes)

Language - Hindi

Review- Srishti Narula



After Madhuri Dixit, another major Bollywood star – Ajay Devgn – makes his web series debut. Rudra The Edge of Darkness is an adaptation of the international hit BBC series Luther, which brought the British actor Idris Elba to the forefront.

Ajay Devgn plays a no-nonsense rogue police officer who goes out to grab the bad

guy by tapping into the psyche of the criminals and thinking like them. In the six-part series, most of the criminals are psychopaths, mass murderers, and child killers. A brooding Ajay Devgn delivers credence to the role with his swage. The director has done well to capture his inherent intensity, especially in the interrogation scenes where

he stares at the criminals with his steely gaze, piercing their souls. A few episodes are dragged on, and there is a good chance that many in the audience will leave the series halfway. One must admit, though, that the role of Alia, played by Rashi Khanna, is not well written and is not able to capture her relationship with Rudra. Atul Kulkarni is

mostly wasted in the first four episodes, but comes into his own in the last two and leaves his indelible mark. Esha Deol, in her comeback, does not have much to offer and brings nothing to her threadbare role. Ashwini Kalsekar never disappoints, as usual.

Photo: indianexpress



Photo: aninews



Alia Bhatt's Hollywood Debut Will Be on Netflix

Alia Bhatt is ready to join the cast of Netflix's 'Heart of Stone,' in which she will star with Gal Gadot in her global Hollywood debut.

The film, which will be released worldwide on Netflix this spring, has earned great reviews, with many praising her portrayal as the main character.

Rachel Stone (Gal Gadot) is an intelligence officer who is the only woman standing between her powerful, global peacekeeping organisation and losing its most important and dangerous asset.

Tom Harper is the director of 'Heart Of Stone.' Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder are the authors.

The film is produced by David Ellison, Dana Goldberg, and Don Granger of Skydance, as well as Bonnie Curtis and Julie Lynn of Mockingbird and Gal Gadot and Jaron Varsano of Pilot Wave.

Rishi Kapoor's last film Sharmaji Namkeen to premiere on Amazon Prime

On March 31, the final film of late actor Rishi Kapoor, Sharmaji Namkeen, will be released on Amazon Prime Video. After attending a women's kitty circle, a recently retired male (played by Rishi Kapoor) rediscovers his passion for cooking. Hitesh Bhatia directed the film, which also stars Paresh Rawal, Juhi Chawla, Satish Kaushik, and Sheeba Chaddha.

Sharmaji Namkeen is Rishi Kapoor and Paresh Rawal's first film together playing the same character, and it revolves on the themes of self-discovery and self-realization.

Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment is producing the film in

collaboration with Honey Trehan and Abhishek Chaubey of MaxGuffin Pictures.

"At Excel, we have always focused on offering the most clutter-breaking narratives and bring to life characters that are memorable and heartwarming. 'Sharmaji Namkeen' is a slice-of-life story of an ordinary man and his extraordinary pursuit to find a new meaning in life," said, Ritesh, Co-Founder, Excel Entertainment. He also added that the film is an ode to Rishi Kapoor's stardom, "We are humbled and thankful to work with the legendary actor, the late Rishi Kapoor, for this epic family entertainer, which remains his last on-screen portrayal. The movie is our tribute to his commanding stardom and

charm and we are happy to add another milestone to our robust collaboration with Prime Video."

Last year the makers announced the film's theatrical release coinciding with the late actor's birth anniversary on September 4. Meanwhile, actor

Paresh Rawal stepped into the project to complete Kapoor's incomplete portions after he passed away on April 30, 2020 after battling leukemia for about two years.

Photo: timesofindia



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