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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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Rajasthan Day Celebrated at the Indian Consulate - New York



INDIA-US 2+2 DIALOGUE: RAJNATH SINGH, EAM JAISHANKAR LIKELY TO BE IN WASHINGTON DC IN APRIL

Blinken and Austin were both in India for the 2+2 annual conference in 2020, but there was no 2+2 last year due to Covid and other factors.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar are expected to be in Washington DC in the second week of April for the 2+2 conference with their counterparts in the United States, which might be critical given the tensions in Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific.

This is for the talks between Antony Blinken, the Secretary of

State, and Lloyd Austin, the Secretary of Defence. Both Blinken and Austin were in India for the 2+2 annual conference in 2020, but there was no 2+2 last year due to Covid and other factors.

Last year, the dates were considered, and the US favoured late November to early December, but Parliament got in the way. Two senior ministers who are members of the cabinet's security committee would have missed four to five days of work.

The 2+2 meeting is typically a chance for signing key agreements like the BECA or the Ba-

sic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, which facilitates discussion of geospatial information. It is one if the three core agreements and all three are done. Because the meeting was not conducted last year, there is already talk about the next big thing.

India conducts 2+2 meetings with Japan, Australia and Russia. The encounter with the Russians is due in the summer months.



THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

- *S Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, expressed his delight at meeting the Indian community in Munich on Sunday, February 20, 2022, and described their feelings for the country as "heartwarming."*
- *Harpreet Kaur Chandi, a British Indian, is the first woman of colour to reach the South Pole on her own.*
- *Amazon has filed a lawsuit against two companies for allegedly creating false product reviews. The lawsuits seek to shut down two major fake review brokers, AppSally and Rebatest.*
- *Daleep Singh, an Indian-American economic advisor, is driving the Biden administration's efforts to impose punitive sanctions on Russia for its conduct in Ukraine.*

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"Russia Invaded Ukraine - Aftermath"

After weeks of escalation, Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February 2022. The attack was condemned by most of the International Community.

AFTERMATH

- Amidst the continuous attack and the advancement of Russian forces into Ukraine, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for help from the international community.
- President Biden warned President Vladimir Putin of Russia that more sanctions would follow if he did not withdraw his forces and engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.
- Canada, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States unveiled a series of sanctions against Russia targeting banks, oil refineries, and military exports.
- The United States and its allies moved to block certain Russian banks' access to the SWIFT international payment system. "We commit to ensuring that selected Russian banks are removed from the SWIFT messaging system," the White House said in a statement released on Saturday. "This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally," it added.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin appealed for immediate cessation of violence.
- Meanwhile after Russia alerted its nuclear forces the first round of talks were held but Russia says it's too early to draw any conclusions
- On Monday, Russia's political and economic isolation grew as its soldiers faced fierce opposition in Kiev and other towns in Ukraine's worst assault on a European state since World War Two.
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine kills 352 civilians, including 14 children.
- Ukraine Appeals For "Immediate" EU Membership: "I'm Sure It's Possible."
- Switzerland, in a surprising move, turning away from its historic stand of neutrality, surprised everyone after it adopted the EU's sanctions against Russia on February 28. The Swiss sanctions include freezing assets of Russian President Vladimir Putin and banning Russian flights from Swiss airspace.
- In a statement, Switzerland said, "Russia's unprecedented military attack on a sovereign European country was the deciding factor in the Federal Council's decision to change its previous stance on sanctions."
- Latest satellite images show a 64 kilometres long convoy of the Russian army north of Ukraine capital Kyiv.
- Canada bans crude oil imports from Russia amid Ukraine invasion.
- India abstains from voting at the United Nations Human Rights council on the Ukraine crisis.
- India To Send Four Ministers for Evacuation Ops.
- Indian Student is killed as the Russian army shelled the second city of Ukraine, Kharkiv. India in it's advisory has asked the citizens to urgently leave Kyviv.

(news as of 1 March)

Photo: cbsnews,apnews



Rajasthan Day Celebrated at the Indian Consulate – New York

The Indian General Consulate and the Jaipur Foot Association USA celebrated the Language and Cultural Heritage of Rajasthan within the premises of the Indian Consulate on the International Mother Language Day. It was celebrated as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' marking 75 years of Indian Independence.

The function was attended by the Hon. Consul General Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, Hon Deputy Consul General Mr. Varun Jeph, Chairman of Jaipur Foot USA and a very prominent community leader Mr. Prem Bhandari, FIA President Mr. Kenny Desai and FIA Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya – to name just a few.

The Hon CG mentioned in his speech that Bangladesh was the first country to initiate the celebration of International

Mother Language Day, subsequently it was approved at 1999 general conference of UNESCO and since the 21 February 2000 has been observed throughout the world.

He highlighted the fact that the people of India, irrespective of their mother tongue, are in some way or the other connected with the diverse and rich languages and dialects spoken across the country.

Mr. Prem Bhandari who is also the International Convenor for the Akhil Bhartiya Rajasthani Bhasha Manyata Sangharsh Samiti, underscored the importance of the mother language in a person's life and its impact on children's upbringing and development. Through this platform he appealed to the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to include Rajasthani and Bhojpuri languages in the 8th Schedule

of the Indian Constitution and also that the Chief Minister of Rajasthan Mr. Ashok Gehlot should make Rajasthani the 'Raj Bhasha' of the state.

He also announced that a Jaipur Foot Camp will be organized on 14th April 2022, sponsored by Dr Subhash Jain- a well-known U.S. based physician, in Jodhpur's Khichan Village.

The camp will provide free of cost Foot Fitments, callipers, wheelchairs, tricycles and other health related equipment – to not only the needy from Rajasthan but from any state of India.

The audience were enthralled by Rajasthani dance and music and later got to savour the local cuisine from Rajasthan.

Photo: techilive



US Waives In-Person Interview for Many Visas for Indians till December : Report

Students (F, M, and academic J visas), workers (H-1, H-2, H-3, and individual L visas), and cultural and extraordinary ability (O, P, and Q visas) are among those eligible for the waiver, according to news agency PTI.

A senior American diplomat informed Indian community leaders that the US had waived in-person interview procedures for many visa applicants, including students and employees, at its diplomatic missions in India until December 31.

"This is much-needed support to visa applicants. This would be very helpful to our friends and immediate family members and remove a lot of their concerns and remove inconveniences," Ajay Jain Bhutoria, South Asian Community Leader and US President Joe Biden's Advisor for Asian Americans, said after his meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for South Central Asia, Donal Lu.

Mr Bhutoria touched on the subject of visas at his Friday meeting with Lu in Silicon Valley, California.

According to Donal Lu, the US Department of State is authorised to waive in-person interview requirements for certain applicants and their qualified dependents in certain non-immigrant visa classes through December 31, this year.

Applicants for these visa classes must have previously been awarded any type of US visa, have never been rejected a US visa, and have no indication of ineligibility or possible visa ineligibility to be eligible for the expanded interview waiver programme.

They must also be citizens or residents of the country in which they are applying, according to the State Department.

According to a notice posted on the US Embassy's website, the US embassy in New Delhi and its consulates in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai will release more than 20,000 additional waiver (dropbox) appointments for Spring 2022 to allow qualified applicants to take advantage of the new interview waiver authority.

During the meeting, Mr Bhutoria discussed with Donal Lu to increase people-to-people relationships between the US and India. He stressed the importance of both the US and India working closely together in South Central Asia.

"Both India and the US are strong democracies and share democratic values and provide leadership in the Asia Pacific region," he said.

They also emphasised the In-

dian American diaspora's significant contribution to digital economic growth, startups, and the establishment of enterprises and corporations, as well as helping to the expansion of the US economy.

At the afternoon event, Assistant Secretary Lu, Mr. Bhutoria, and Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna met with Afghan community leaders and political officials to explore refugee resettlement in Afghanistan.

During the meeting, Donal Lu highlighted recent immigration changes, recognising the tremendous opportunities that US work and study offer and the important contributions of international visitors to US communities, campuses, and the economy, the Department of State has streamlined visa processes for many applicants while continuing to protect national security, a media release said.



The FIA Fraternity in the USA mourns the untimely death of the legendary composer and singer Bappi Lahiri

Bappi Lahiri was a special guest at the Federation of Indian Associations India Day Parade

The Federation of Indian Associations Fraternity joins Indian Americans as well as the global Indian community in mourning the untimely demise of the highly talented veteran, legendary singer and composer, Bappi Lahiri, at the age of 69 at Criticare hospital in Mumbai on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. Bappida, a multi-talented musician, has revolutionized Bollywood music by incorporating increasingly popular Disco music into films. Regarded as the king of disco dance music, Bappida also transformed Mithun Chakravorty into the iconic disco dancer. He synthesized as a pioneer of Disco music. His funky foot stomping music had Indian falls in love with disco and had an entire country dancing to his popular tunes in 1970's and 80's – the peak of his career.

As a versatile singer and composer and lively nature Lahiri's music transcended boundaries. In his 48 years of career as a music director and

singer Bappida created over 5000 songs and participated in 500 films. Besides Hindi he also contributed in Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi other language films. Bappida was born on November 27, 1952 in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal as Alokesh Lahiri to a family of classical music singers. His father, Aparesh Lahiri, and



mother, Bansari, recognised his penchant for music and groomed him enthusiastically. At the age of 3, he started playing Tabla. At the age of 19, he moved to Mumbai. He was also encouraged and helped by his maternal uncle,

Kishore Kumar.

Bappida was fond of the legendary singer Elvis Presley. He was fascinated by Presley's wearing a golden chain, so when Bappida reached stardom as a versatile singer and composer, he also started wearing very heavy golden chain and lots of jewellery.

Photo: indianexpress

He was very popular as a versatile stage performer, mesmerising listeners and encouraging them to dance with his music.

"Chalte Chalte mere ye geet Yaad Rakhna Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna" became his signature

song. His lifting music in Sharaabi, Namak Halal and other scores of films will be cherished by his lovers for a long time.

The Federation of Indian Associations had the distinct honor and proud privilege of having Bappida and his family grace the FIA's world-famous India Day Parade in 2001 during the presidency of Subhash Dalal, displaying his patriotism and regaling the vast audience. He was ecstatic at the Grand Marshal's dinner.

He was cremated at Pavanhans Shamasan, Santacruz Mumbai on February 17th 2022. His son Bappa, who lived in Los Angeles, USA arrived with his family and performed last rites. Many Bollywood celebrities visited his residency.

Bappida is survived by his wife Chitrani, son Bappa and daughter Rema.

FIA conveys heartfelt condolences to Bappida's family and pray Almighty God to withstand such a huge loss. We also pray Got to bless his soul forever. Om Shanti.

India, UAE sign Trade Agreement

India and the United Arab Emirates signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that covers products, services, and digital commerce, among other things, and would allow 90 percent of India's exports to enter the UAE duty-free.

The CEPA is expected to benefit around \$26 billion in Indian goods that are now subject to a 5% import charge by the UAE, India's third-largest trade partner after the United States and China.

The bilateral trade deal is India's first in the area, as well as the country's first comprehensive trade agreement in a decade.

"It is expected that the CEPA will lead to increase in bilateral

trade from the current \$60 bn to \$100 bn in the next 5 years," the government said in a statement after the India-UAE Virtual Summit attended prime minister Narendra Modi and the crown prince of Abu Dhabi HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

"HH @MohamedBinZayed and I believe that the India-UAE CEPA signed today will be a game-changer in our economic ties," PM Modi tweeted after the virtual summit.

Indian exporters would get access to the considerably bigger Arab and African markets as a result of the agreement.

In 2019, India was the UAE's largest export destination and second-largest trading partner,

as well as the eighth largest investor, with almost \$11 billion in total foreign direct investment.

"Both nations are entering a golden era of economic & trade cooperation with the signing of India-UAE CEPA," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal tweeted.

The accord is likely to benefit India's labour-intensive and employment-generating industries the most, including gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, furniture, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and autos.

Overall, the UAE is eliminating duties on almost 97 percent of its tariff lines, which corresponds to 99 percent of India's exports in

value terms. Separately, zero tax on a further 9% of the trade value on items including electronics, chemicals and petrochemicals, ceramics, and machinery is expected to be implemented in the next 5-10 years.

Photo: indiablooms



Meet Anna Menon, a SpaceX engineer who will be a part of the new space mission

Anna Menon is a Lead Space Operations Engineer at SpaceX and the wife of Indian-origin physician Anil Menon.

Anna Menon, a SpaceX engineer, will be part of a special space mission planned by US billionaire Jared Isaacman, who sent the world's first all-private space crew into orbit last year.

According to a SpaceX statement, Anna Menon, the wife of Indian-origin physician Anil Menon, is a Lead Space Operations Engineer at SpaceX, where she manages the development of crew operations and works in mission control as both a Mission Director and crew communicator.

Isaacman, the founder and CEO of American payment processing company Shift4 and the commander of the Inspiration4 mission, announced the Polaris Programme, which he described as "a first-of-its-kind effort to rapidly advance human space-flight capabilities while continuing to raise funds and awareness for important causes on Earth." Up to three human spaceflight flights will be part of the programme, which will demonstrate new technology, undertake substantial research, and culminate in the maiden flight of SpaceX's

Starship with humans on board.

Polaris Dawn is the name of the first mission, which will launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Menon is a Medical Officer and Mission Specialist. Because the Polaris Dawn mission involves several first-time goals, the Polaris Program recruited a crew of professionals who are well acquainted with one another and have a foundation of trust upon which they can build as they face the mission's obstacles. In addition to Isaacman, the crew comprises Menon, Scott Poteet, a seasoned member of Isaacman's team, and Sarah Gillis, a SpaceX employee.

Anna Menon has managed the deployment of Dragon's crew capabilities, assisted in the creation of the crew communicator operator job, and created crucial operational solutions to vehicle crises like a fire or cabin depressurization throughout her time at SpaceX. Anna worked in mission control for Demo-2, Crew-1, CRS-22, and CRS-23, among other cargo and crew Dragon flights. She spent seven years at NASA as

a biomedical flight controller for the International Space Station before joining SpaceX.

Photo: english.mathrubhumi



She is a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force, and she was chosen by NASA in December of last year, along with nine other people, to be astronauts for future missions.

Anna likes hiking, piloting tiny aircraft, and salsa dancing in addition to her lifelong enthusiasm for space. Her biggest love, however, is her family, which includes her husband Anil, son James, and daughter Grace. Anil Menon, 45, is the son of Ukrainian and Indian immigrants who grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

He served as SpaceX's first flight surgeon, assisting in the

launch of the company's first humans into space on NASA's SpaceX Demo-2 mission and establishing a medical organisation to support the human system on future missions. He previously worked for NASA as a crew flight surgeon on a number of voyages to the International Space Station.

The Dragon mission, according to SpaceX, will take advantage of Falcon 9 and Dragon's peak capabilities, flying higher than any previous Dragon mission and attempting to achieve the highest Earth orbit ever flown.

"Dragon and the Polaris Dawn crew will spend up to five days in orbit, during which the crew will attempt the first-ever commercial spacewalk, conduct scientific research designed to advance both human health on Earth and our understanding of human health during future long-duration spaceflights, and be the first crew to test Starlink laser-based communications in space, providing valuable data for future space communications systems necessary for missions to the Moon, Mars, and beyond," the company said. PTI YAS RS AMS AKJ AMS

R. Praggnanandhaa stuns World No 1 Magnus Carlsen in Airthings Masters chess

R. Praggnanandhaa, a young Indian Grandmaster, startled world's number one Magnus Carlsen in the eighth round of the Airthings Masters, an online quick chess competition.

Praggnanandhaa triumphed with black pieces in 39 moves in a Tarrasch variant game early on Monday, ending Carlsen's three-game winning streak.

After eight rounds, the Indian

GM is in for 12th place with eight points. His stunning triumph over Carlsen after a mediocre run in the earlier rounds, which comprised a single victory over Lev Aronian, two draws, and four defeats.

He drew Anish Giri and Quang Liem Le, but lost against Eric Hansen, Ding Liren, Jan Kryzstof Duda, and Shakhriyar.

Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi, who lost the world championship match against Norway's world

number one Carlsen a few months ago, leads the rankings with 19 points, followed by Ding Liren and Hansen (both on 15 points).

In the preliminary rounds of the Airthings Masters, a 16-person online quick competition, a player receives three points for a victory and one point for a tie. In the preliminary round, there are seven more rounds to go.

Photo: thehindu



Indian Students Scammed in Montreal as 3 Universities go Bankrupt

CCSQ, M College, and CDR College in Canada are accused of collecting millions of dollars from Indian students under the guise of tuition payments before declaring bankruptcy.

Over 2,000 Indian students, who face an unclear future after three Montreal institutions declared bankruptcy last month, have urged that the Canadian government intervene to provide them with justice.

Before collapsing, the CCSQ College, M. College, and CDE College had received millions in tuition fees from these students.

The pupils, many of whom have relocated to be with friends or family in distant places, claim they have been duped. They are holding protests to draw attention to their condition.

On Feb. 16, concern was visi-

Photo: indiawest

ble on the faces of several of the afflicted pupils and their supporters as they chanted banners for justice at a demonstration in the Toronto suburb of Brampton.

They raised slogans pleading with the Canadian government to intervene and assist them in finishing their studies from other universities. They requested that those who were reaching the end of their courses be allowed to complete on the basis of their previous credits. Many complained they are running out of money since they are not permitted to work for 20 hours per week, as overseas students are.

Manpreet Kaur, a student from Longowal in Punjab, claimed she

had paid more than \$14,000 in annual fees to M. College and was looking forward to starting her early childhood education lessons in January until the college went bankrupt.

"When I landed in Canada on Oct. 9, I was told that since the college couldn't find enough students the classes would start in January. But on Jan. 6, students got an email about the college going bankrupt. It smacks of a scam," said Manpreet who finished her master's in computers in India before coming to Canada.

Vishal Rana, a student from Karnal who was studying at CCSQ college to become medical office specialist, said, "I had just

four months left of my 16-month course when the college suspended studies. I don't know where to go." Rana had paid \$24,000 in fees.

Harwinder Singh, who came from Pehwa in Haryana to study a two-year business management course at M. College, said, "I deposited \$21,500 for this course and I have finished only six months of my course. I am surviving on some money I saved while working. I don't know what will happen."

Gurkamaldeep Singh, a student from Moga, said he would have finished his business management course from M. College by June. "Now my biggest worry is whether I have to redo my course. We are told that the government has given the colleges to find buyers so that studies can resume." Gurkamaldeep said the students should be allowed to complete the remaining part of their courses at other institutions. "We should give us course completion letters so that we can join other colleges and also apply for work permits in order to survive," he said. The shutdown of these colleges has impacted around 700 students who were engaged in online classes from their homes in India.



Pichai Announced \$100 Million Fund

Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Alphabet and Google, has announced the creation of a new \$100 million Google Career Certificates Fund to train a competent workforce for high-paying, high-growth occupations in disciplines such as data analytics, IT support, project management, and user experience design.

The objective, according to the Indian American, is for 'Social Finance' to reach over 20,000 American employees.

"This investment in America's future has the potential to drive \$1 billion in wage gains," Pichai

said on Feb.17. To far, about 70,000 Americans have earned Google Career Certificates.

"They are available to anyone, no college degree required. Seventy-five percent of graduates report seeing a positive impact on their career within six months, including a raise or a new job," Pichai added.

At an event with Alejandra Castillo, the US assistant secretary of commerce for Economic Development, and the CEOs of Social Finance, Merit America, and Year Up, he unveiled the fund.

"A sense of purpose and optimism is what brought me to

America nearly 30 years ago. And it's what drew me to Google and its mission to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful," said Pichai.

Google's digital skills initiative has also aided in the training of 8 million Americans across all 50 states. "We'll invest Google capital and Google.org grants and provide our Career Certificate program. We'll connect students to an employer consortium of more than 150 companies who are looking to hire workers with these skills," Pichai noted.

It's all designed around stu-

dent success, and they will receive all of this at no upfront cost, "and will only pay it back once they find a job earning at least \$40,000 a year".

Photo: entrepreneur



Twitter's Parag Agarwal goes on Paternity Leave

Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal, 37, will be on paternity leave for "a few weeks" to attend to the birth of his second child, according to the microblogging network.

During his leave, Indian-American Agrawal, who became Twitter CEO in November of last year and is the executive sponsor of the company's internal parents' network, wants to be "connected" with the company's senior team.

"It's a personal decision, and we created a parental leave program (supporting up to 20 weeks of flexible leave) that is customizable for that reason," Laura Yagerman, head of corporate communications at Twitter, told The Verge. While Agrawal is on leave, the firm has

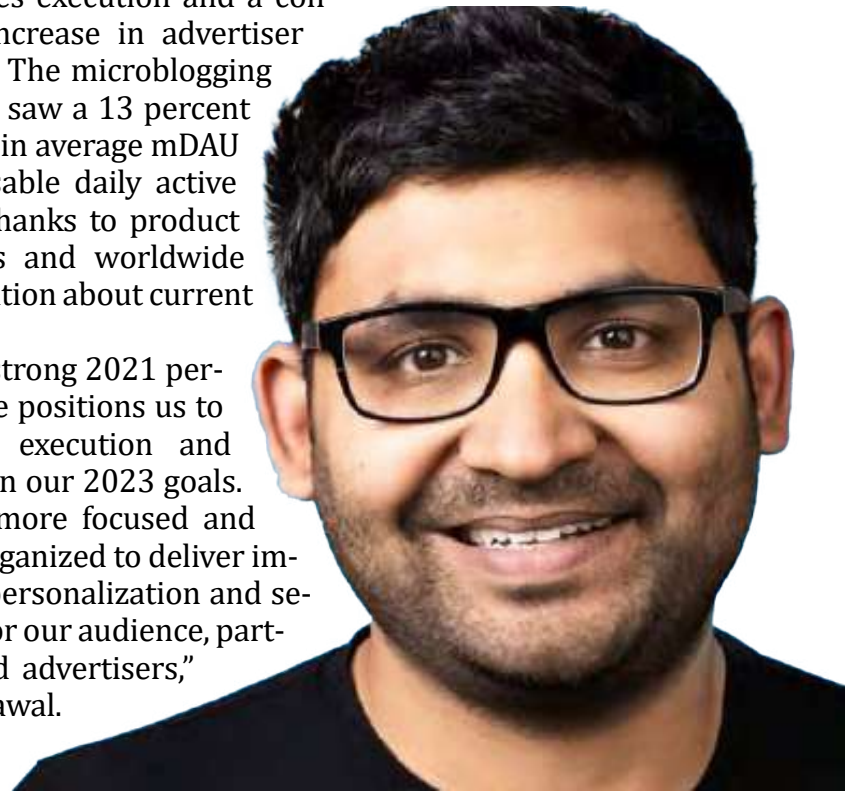
yet to select an interim CEO to oversee day-to-day operations. According to the World Policy Analysis Centre's most recent statistics, the average paid maternity leave is 29 weeks and the average paid paternity leave is 16 weeks in the world.

After the births of his children in 2015 and 2017, Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's CEO, took a two-month paternity vacation. When his wife, tennis star Serena Williams, gave birth to their baby in 2017, Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian took 16 weeks of paternity leave. Twitter, under new CEO Agrawal, posted robust results for its Dec. quarter of 2021, as revenue reached \$1.57 billion (with ad revenue of \$1.41 billion) — both up 22 per cent (on-year) — driven by ongoing

revenue product improvements, solid sales execution and a continued increase in advertiser demand. The microblogging platform saw a 13 percent increase in average mDAU (monetisable daily active users), thanks to product upgrades and worldwide conversation about current events.

"Our strong 2021 performance positions us to improve execution and deliver on our 2023 goals. We are more focused and better organized to deliver improved personalization and selection for our audience, partners, and advertisers," said Agrawal.

Photo: groundreport



Centre tells SC: Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi & Mehul Choksi returned Rs 18,000 crore to banks

The government notified the Supreme Court on Wednesday that Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Mehul Choksi have repaid Rs 18,000 crore to banks.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta made the submission to a bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar that is hearing a batch of petitions challenging certain amendments to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the scope of the Enforcement Directorate's powers in cases related to the law, NDTV reported.

The entire amount of fraud in the money laundering cases currently before the Supreme Court, according to Mehta, is Rs 67,000 crore. The solicitor general also informed the court that the Enforcement Directorate was inves-

tigating 4,700 money laundering cases.

Mehta's figure of Rs 18,000 crore is roughly 5,000 crore higher than what banks had recovered from fraudsters up to July of last year.

On December 21, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Lok Sabha that Indian banks have collected Rs 13,109 crore from fugitive business people such as Modi and Mallya by selling their assets.

"The latest recovery was Rs 792 crore from the sale of assets belonging to Vijay Mallya and others on July 16, 2021," she had said. Modi is accused of duping the Punjab National Bank of more than Rs 13,000 crore. Choksi, who

is Modi's uncle, is also a prime accused in the case. Meanwhile, Mallya owes Rs 9,000 crore to a consortium of banks led by the State Bank of India in a fraud case involving the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines. *Photo: India TV News*



Gangubai Kathiawadi

Cast - Alia Bhatt, Ajay Devgan, Vijay Raaz, Jim Sarbh, Seema Pahwa, Shantanu Maheshwari

Creator - Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Prakash Kapadia, Utkarshini Vashishtha

Director - Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Streaming - Theatres

Language - Hindi

Runtime - 2h 32m



Photo: DNA India

Gangubai Kathiawadi, a film by Sanjay Leela Bhansali hit the theatres last week to a mixed response.

The film is a visual treat – as you would expect from a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film. When it comes to grandeur and aesthetics Sanjay L Bhansali is a master of its craft. The film is based on S Hussain Zaidi's and Jane Borge's book – Mafia Queens of Mumbai. The story takes time to build up as it narrates the rise of Ganga to

power and fame from a timid small-time girl from Gujarat, who – an ardent fan of Dev Anand – lands up in a brothel instead of a studio.

The film has powerful dialogues and moments which leaves quite an impact on the audience. Mostly its Alia Bhatt's film throughout and she has done more than ample justice to the Character. This is one of the best performances of her career.

Ajay Devgan in an extend-

ed cameo leaves an impact. Shantanu Maheshwari as the love interest of Ganga gives an impressive performance. Vijay Raaz is outstanding as the trans madame and one wishes there was more of him. Seema Pahwa as the in charge of the brothel is good as she steps away from family-oriented roles. Jim Sarbh as a Journalist who supports Gangubai in her times of duress is effective.

Review - Srishti Narula



The Fame Game

Cast - Madhuri Dixit, Sanjay Kapoor, Manav Kaul

Creator - Sri Rao

Director - Bejoy Nambiar and Karishma Kohli

Streaming - Netflix

Language - Hindi

Runtime - 8 episodes

Photo: indianexpress

Madhuri Dixit's oomph and dancing have always overshadowed her acting skills. Plus, her TV appearances as a celebrity judge didn't help. I would watch her, marvel at the way she had maintained herself and flip the channel. Therefore, The Fame Game wasn't on my priority list.

My verdict: Madhuri was the showstopper of this show. Notwithstanding her ageless beauty, gorgeous costumes, this time my focus was more on the ease at which she effortlessly portrayed different roles as Anamika Anand, the ageing superstar, sole breadwinner, admirable mother, a weary wife, battered daughter and

the public's diva.

Tautly scripted and directed, this series is definitely binge worthy. It has excellent production values, not surprisingly as it is a Dharma production. There are very few moments when the audience's attention strays. The series is interspersed with flashbacks, with the primary cast members revealing their back stories, and thereby making it interesting.

Sanjay Kapur and Suhasini ably support Madhuri as her husband and mother respectively. The former appears wooden but gets into the groove and throws a punch or too. What does one say about the dreamy Manav Kaul? Do

you remember Mcdreamy from Grey's Anatomy? He's all that, with his sad and deep eyes, gentle presence that draws you to share his angst. Good looks help!

The young actors, Muskaan Jafferi as Madhuri's daughter, and Gagan Arora, her obsessive fan hold their own, and are impressive.

As most of us have watched innumerable series, one can guess the story line. There are some flaws too. What is irritating is that like most series, there are no conclusions, things are always open ended. By the time the second season is aired, one has a hazy memory of the previous one. Why



can't we have closures.

What is great to note is that middle aged actors are being given opportunities to air their talent once again with meaty roles. As Madhuri Dixit once said, "Age is just a number, and your talent will never fail you. It has no expiry date." Madhuri, you are so right.

Review - Sonia Date

Photo: Tricolour Films India/YouTube

'Rocketry: The Nambi Effect' is all set to be released on July 1

'Rocketry: The Nambi Effect,' R. Madhavan's long-awaited directorial debut, is now set for a worldwide theatrical release on July 1. The film was shot in various languages at the same time, including Hindi, Tamil, and English, and will also be released in Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada.

Madhavan not only plays the lead role of Nambi Narayanan, but he also directed, produced, and wrote the film. The biographical drama will follow the life of Indian scientist Nambi Narayanan, a former ISRO scientist and aerospace engineer who was embroiled in a spy controversy, and will reveal the truth behind the mystery.

The film features a strong cast that includes noted international artists Phyllis Logan, Vincent Riotta, Ron Donachie, as well as Simran, Rajit Kapur, Ravi Raghavendra, Misha Ghoshal, Gulshan Grover, Karthik

Kumar, and Dinesh Prabhakar. Superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Suriya will make cameo cameos in the film.

The trailer for the film has already grabbed the audience's curiosity, and it has taken the internet by storm. Touted to be Madhavan's biggest movie yet, fans are awaiting his return to the big screen after three years, especially given his never-seen-before avatar, a press release said. The film was shot on a massive scale in India, France, Canada, Georgia, Serbia, and Russia.

Sam CS, an Indian composer, composed the soundtrack. TriColour Films, Varghese Moolan Pictures, and 27th Investments are producing 'Rocketry: The Nambi Effect.' In India, UFO Moviez and AGS Cinemas are handling distribution, while Yash Raj Films and Phars Film Co will handle worldwide distribution.

In a beautiful wedding ceremony, Farhan and Shibani exchange vows

Photo: Instagram/faroutakhtar

Farhan Akhtar, a prominent actor, director and producer, married Shibani Dandekar, his long-time partner, on February 19 at Javed Akhtar's Sukun farmhouse in Khandala, on the outskirts of Mumbai.

Farhan's father, Javed Akhtar, recited a poem he had written particularly for the occasion. Farhan wore a black tuxedo, while Shibani wore a red-and-cream wedding gown. They read vows that they had written on their own.

After the wedding, Shankar Mahadevan sang a song for the newlyweds. The artist sang the title song from Farhan's directorial debut film, 'Dil Chahta Hai,' which had the audience rocking.

The wedding was attended by

Farhan and Dandekar's friends from the industry, including actors Hrithik Roshan, Saqib Saleem, Rhea Chakraborty, filmmaker Farah Khan, Farhan's sister Zoya Akhtar, directors Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and Ashutosh Gowariker, Farhan's creative and business partner, Excel Entertainment co-founder Ritesh Sidhwani, music composers Shankar Mahadevan, Ehsaan Noorani and Loy Mendonsa among others.

Shibani had earlier posted a photo of her wedding shoes on Instagram. "Let's do this," she stated over a photo of her red shoes.

Farhan, 48, married for the second time. Adhuna Bhabani, a hairdresser and the creator of BBlunt, is his first wife and

the mother of his two children, Shakya (22) and Akira (15).

Farhan and Shibani originally met on the set of Farhan's 2015 reality programme 'I Can Do It,' which he hosted. Soon after, the two began dating and made their first public appearance as a pair at Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone's wedding reception.

Shibani, who was raised in Australia and Africa, was born in Pune and appeared in Farhan's sister Zoya Akhtar's 2015 film 'Roy,' starring Ranbir Kapoor.

Shibani began her career as a musician. She and her two sisters formed the band D-Major before becoming a model and reality show participant. She was also a television host for the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup, which was held in England and Wales.



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