

THE DIASPORA

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BI-WEEKLY

Issue: 84



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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**US Appoints
Indian-American as
Evoy for Global Women's
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**Indian Ambassador
Hosts Summit
Reception**

BJANA, Indian Consulate-NY & Bihar Foundation East Coast Celebrates Buddha Jayanti in NJ



The Bihar Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA), a 47-year-old organization in NJ, USA, in partnership with the Indian consulate in New York, and the east coast chapter of the Bihar Foundation, conducted successful celebrations of Buddha Jayanti on May 6th at the Buddha Vihar, Princeton, NJ.

Buddha Jayanti, one of the most important Buddhist holidays, commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Gautam Buddha. The event was attended by dignitaries from the consulates of India, Nepal, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka, as well as members of the Indian Diaspora from various Indian Community Organizations.

On this occasion, Bihar Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar mentioned in his message to BJANA communities in the USA, about the teachings and ideals of the Buddha, which will enlighten us and guide us on the right path.

Nitish Kumar has appreciated the efforts we are taking to preserve the glorious history, rich cultural heritage, language, and traditions of our region

in the USA. He is also confident that this celebration will help us rise above all man-made divides and spread peace, happiness, and prosperity in both countries.

The event was attended by Indian Counsel General Randhir Jaiswal, who extended his warmest greetings and best wishes to all the Buddhist followers who celebrate Buddha Purnima. He congratulated BJANA and the Bihar Foundation for leading the Indian community and people from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam to celebrate Buddha Jayanti together. He emphasized that the teachings of Buddha continue to inspire and guide us toward a path of peace and harmony.

The event was attended by the Consul General of Nepal, Bishnu Prasad Gautam, and the Consul General of Vietnam, Dinh Phuong Mai. They addressed the attendees about Buddha's enlightenment and the teachings that can bring happiness and peace in life.

BJANA president Anurag Kumar welcomed the attendees and thanked everyone for being part of this celebration. The event started with the

parikrama of the Lord Buddha statue and a performance by kids in the form of dance and Buddha's teachings.

On behalf of FIA, Executive Vice President Dr. Avinash Gupta and FIA Trustee Srujal Parikh congratulated and thanked BJANA, the Indian Consulate, and the Bihar Foundation for organizing Buddha Divas at the grand location of Bidhha Vihar and getting all communities together. Alok Kumar, chairman of the Bihar Foundation East Coast Chapter, in his message emphasized the importance of teachings from the life of Buddha and focused on inner peace, kindness, and compassion.

Sanjeev Singh, vice president of BJANA, expressed his sincere gratitude to the executive team, volunteers, and members of the community who helped make this event a success. Additionally, Singh thanked Dr. S. Siddharth, the principal secretary to the chief minister of Bihar, and Kumar Ravi, the commissioner of Patna, for their invaluable assistance in making this event a success.

FIA Holds 2nd Parade Council Meeting

FIA held its 2nd Parade Council meeting on May 10, 2023, at Akbar Restaurant in Edison, New Jersey along with the executive committee, comprising Dr. Avinash Gupta, Saurin Parikh, Smita Miki Patel, Haresh Shah, Mahesh Dubal, and Priti Patel.

The meeting started with a brief

video presentation of Mission Life, the theme for this year's India Day Parade, which symbolizes individual and collective action for protecting and conserving the environment.

Updates were given by the committee chairs on the progress so far, which included the logistics for the parade, floats, culture, and other

committees that go on to make the India Day Parade a success.

Ankur Vaidya, Chairman-FIA Board, said that the goal is to make the India Day Parade a success story for the Indian Diaspora in the US, thus making all the Indian community proud.



PC- Vijay Shah, Freelance US Media

NYPD'S First South Asian female Captain: Pratima Maldonado

Indian origin, Pratima Bhullar Maldonado was born in Punjab and spent her childhood till 9 and then immigrated to Queens, New York. Mother of four Maldonado is promoted as the Captain of New York Police Department. She is the first South Asian Woman to get promoted to the position of Captain and now she is running 102nd Police Precinct in South Richmond Hill, Queens.

According to the NYPD report, the department has 33,787 members and 10.5% of them are Asian. Supporting this she added, "I feel extremely proud. It's good to show other up and coming Asian, South Asian females that if you work hard enough you too can climb the ladder of success."

She was the daughter of a taxi-driver in New York. She remembered her late father and told CBS that, "My dad actually drove a taxi for many years. He supported us. He was a hard worker. He passed away in 2006, before I became a cop. He would have been so proud right now."

Further, she added that it's like coming back home, she spent around 25 years in the same place and felt

fortunate to set an example for all the females out there. She said, "It feels like coming home. I spent more than 25 years of my life in this precinct when I was growing up," Maldonado told CBS News. "Going to the same temple that I did as a child, and now as a captain, I love it,"

As an Indian everyone feels a common language barrier and were



PC: Manorama online

side-lined due to the speech and intonation of Indian dialect present while communicating in foreign countries. About this she says, "There are language barriers, people who can't speak the language, English is a second language. I've seen that first-hand growing up here,"

Maldonado's ground-breaking achievements' journey was not smooth. About that she shared some of the hurdles she faced in her career. She said that, "Getting out there and working, and protecting people that are cursing you out sometimes and not appreciating what you're doing, but you still got to do what you got to do,"

But, by her example women of Indian origin in foreign countries like America should not feel that they are bound by some barriers, one has to just be dutiful towards their job and then no one can stop you. She motivated by sharing her experience by adding that, "It's a big responsibility. I want to be a better and positive example, not only for my community, for other females, kids that see us every day. Because that would change their perspective of how they view law enforcement,"

President Biden to Host PM Modi June 22 During State Visit

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be welcomed by President Joe Biden next month as part of Modi's visit to the United States, which will also include honors at an elaborate White House state dinner.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on May 10 that Modi's June 22 visit "will affirm the deep and close partnership between the United States and India and the warm bonds of family and friendship that link Americans and Indians together."

Biden and Modi will focus on their countries' commitment to a free and secure Indo-Pacific region, as well as on their partnerships in technology, including in the areas of defense, clean energy and space, Jean-Pierre said.

India's Ministry of External

Affairs put out a statement echoing Washington's views about the June 22 visit.

"The visit will underscore the growing importance of the strategic



Image tweeted by @PMOIndia

partnership between India and the United States as the two nations collaborate across numerous sectors," the MEA statement said. "The leaders will have the opportunity to review strong bilateral cooperation in various areas of mutual interest, including technology, trade, industry, education, research, clean energy, defense, security, healthcare, and deepening people-to-people connections," the Government of India said.

"Prime Minister Modi and President Biden will also explore ways to strengthen India-US collaboration in pluri-lateral and multilateral fora, including in the G20. They would reflect on their shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and discuss opportunities to expand and consolidate the Quad engagement," MEA added.

Indian Ambassador Hosts Summit Reception

On May 3, 2023, the Indian Ambassador to the United States, Taranjit Sandhu, gave a reception at India House for a select group of business leaders and dignitaries attending the 2023 SelectUSA Investment Summit to honor the India-US Economic Partnership. More than 3,000 people attended the summit to promote foreign direct investment, which was held May 1-4, 2023, at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland. Participants included economic development organizations from US states and territories and business investors from more than 70 foreign markets. Up to this point, the Summit has supported almost 60,000 employment across the US and its territories and \$80 billion in investment initiatives.

Sandhu welcomed Governor of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, Governor of Guam, Lou Leon Guerrero, Governor of the Northern Mariana Islands, Arnold Palacios, Speaker of the Northern Mariana Islands, Edmund Villagomez, Cabinet Secretaries from Maryland, Delaware, New Mexico, Louisiana, and North Carolina, Assistant Secretary



of Commerce for Global Markets and Director General of the US and Foreign Commercial Service, Arun Venkataraman and other dignitaries at the reception.

Welcoming guests to India House, Ambassador Sandhu noted, "They say repetition is a reflection of conviction. So last year, we had a similar reception. And this time our conviction of-course continues, that we celebrate the bonds between our industry and our people-to-people ties. And this year is even more special because we have more than 220 Indian companies, which are participating in this Summit. I'm told it's the largest ever delegation."

Sandhu told the gathering that the

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), was releasing its signature report "Indian Roots, American Soil" detailing the presence of Indian companies in different US States. "And they bring strength, resilience, and competitiveness to the United States. They create jobs, support local communities, build capacities, technical know-how, and create virtuous cycles of prosperity," he added.

Executive Director of SelectUSA, Jasjit Singh, emphasized that the relationship is "Far deeper than just a Summit or one event. The importance I think is reflected in some of these numbers – total FDI from India to the United States in 2021 was \$14.4 billion, creating 72,000 jobs. Yes. \$254 million in research and development and \$1.7 billion in goods export."

Singh thanked the investors and further said "You have just found the largest consumer market. This is a culture of innovation. We have abundant natural resources. We have deep capital markets, and we have a stable regulatory environment for you. And we have policies that underscore that this is the time for you to invest in America."

THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

Donald Trump's Big Praise for Presidential Bid Rival, Vivek Ramaswamy

Vivek Ramaswamy, an Indian-American businessman, received praise from former US President Donald Trump for performing well in the most recent CBS YouGov Republican Primary poll.

Vivek Ramaswamy has said that he will run for president in 2024. Along with other candidates, he will compete in the Republican presidential primary against Donald Trump and fellow Indian-American Nikki Haley.

In a statement, Donald Trump stated he likes Vivek Ramaswamy as he has only nice things to say about him and all the work carried out by the Trump administration.

"I am pleased to see that Vivek Ramaswamy is doing so well in the most recent Republican Primary Poll, CBS YouGov," Donald Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social.

"He is tied with Mike Pence, and seems to be on his way to catching Ron DeSanctimonious. The thing I like about Vivek is that he only has good things to say about "President Trump," and all that the Trump Administration has so successfully done - This is the reason he is doing so well. In any event, good luck to all of them, they will need it!" he added.

"We've celebrated our "diversity" so much that we forgot all the ways we're really the same as Americans, bound by ideals that united a divided, headstrong group of people 250 years ago. I believe deep in my bones those ideals still exist. I'm running for President to revive them," tweeted Ramaswamy in a video announcing his intention to run for president.

He reiterated that this was not just a political campaign, "but a cultural movement". "Faith, patriotism and hard work have disappeared. Wokeism, climatism and gender ideology have replaced them. We hunger for purpose yet cannot answer what it means to be an American. We long for that answer," he added.

In a CBS News/YouGov survey of likely Republican primary voters, Ramaswamy was slightly ahead of former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley.



G7 Finance Chiefs Warn of Global Uncertainty as US Debt Crisis Looms

Finance ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) affluent nations warned of increased global economic instability as they concluded a three-day meeting overshadowed by a standoff over the US debt ceiling and the consequences from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Their gathering in the Japanese city of Niigata came as worries over a US default fuelled uncertainty over the global outlook, already clouded by stubbornly high inflation and US bank failures.

"The global economy has shown resilience against multiple shocks, including the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and associated inflationary pressures," the leaders said in a communique after the meeting.

"We need to remain vigilant and stay agile and flexible in our macroeconomic policy amid heightened uncertainty about the global economic outlook."

"Clearly, distress in the world's biggest economy would be negative for everyone," World Bank President David Malpass told Reuters on the sidelines of the G7 meeting the same day. "The repercussions would be bad to not get it done." On the banking troubles, the communique said policymakers would tackle "data, supervisory, and regulatory gaps in the banking system".

The G7 finance leaders set a year-end deadline for launching a new scheme to diversify global supply chains in their communique. The new scheme envisages the G7 offering aid to low- and middle-income countries so that they can play a bigger role in supply chains for energy-related products, such as by refining minerals and processing manufacturing parts.



US Appoints Indian-American as Envoy for Global Women's Issues Office

Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, an Indian-American, was approved by the US Senate to serve as Ambassador-at-Large for the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues. She was proposed for this position by President Joe Biden, and she was confirmed earlier this week by a vote of 51 to 47.

"Dr Geeta Rao Gupta was confirmed by the US Senate as the Ambassador-at-Large for the Office of Global Women's Issues. @StateDept looks forward to her efforts to promote women and girls' rights through US foreign policy," tweeted The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues.

Peter Yeo, Senior Vice President for the UN Foundation, said Gupta's appointment underscores US commitment to gender equity at a time when women's basic human rights and welfare are at risk around the world.

"Dr Gupta is a deeply admired leader with extensive experience in the priority areas of the Office of Global Women's issues, said Michelle Milford Morse, Vice President of the UN Foundation's Girls and Women Strategy. This is a critical role for US global leadership, and Dr Gupta will fulfil it with great distinction," he said.

The State Department said in a tweet that it "looks forward to her efforts to promote women's and girls' rights through US foreign policy."

Gupta was closely involved with a number of UN organizations and initiatives. For the 3D Programme for Girls and Women of the UN Foundation, she served as Executive Director.

On the boards of InterAction and the Moriah Fund, she also serves as counsel for the UNAIDS Global Coalition on Women and AIDS.

The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality was co-chaired by her when she was in that capacity.



Indian-Americans Join the Biden Campaign National Advisory Board

Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval, Congressman Ami Bera and Ro Khanna are three of the 50 important political officials who have been chosen to the Biden Harris campaign's national advisory council.

Khanna serves as co-chair of the Congressional India Caucus, and Bera is the Indian-American in the US Congress with the longest tenure. The first Indian- and Tibetan-American to be elected mayor of an Ohio city is Pureval.

"The Democratic Party is fortunate to have an incredible slate of passionate and compelling leaders, all of whom are united behind the Biden-Harris 2024 campaign," campaign spokesperson Kevin Munoz said.

"They are representative of the broad, diverse coalition of voters who came together in 2020 to deliver President Biden and Vice President Harris a historic victory, and we are so grateful for their dedication to help this campaign prevail over the MAGA extremist agenda and help President Biden finish the job for the American people."

"The stakes of this election couldn't be higher," Biden said. "Our freedom and democracy are on the line. I'm grateful to this group of diverse and dynamic leaders who will help us win the battle for the soul of America and finish the job for the American people," he said.

This initial group represents a cross-section of leaders in the party who reflect the Biden coalition's diversity across many facets, with more members likely to come on board as the campaign builds and grows, the campaign stated.

"Successful campaigns are always innovating and finding new ways to get their message in front of voters and accomplish the ambitious goals we set for ourselves," said Munoz.

"The Democratic Party is fortunate to have an incredible slate of passionate and compelling leaders, all of whom are united behind the Biden-Harris 2024 campaign," he said.



Community News

Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple Holds Grand Bhoomi Pooja Ceremony for 25 ft Idol in a Landmark Event

The Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple & Cultural Center marked a momentous milestone on May 14 with the Bhoomi Pooja for the highly anticipated 25 ft Hanuman Temple. The event witnessed an overwhelming gathering of devotees, community members, and esteemed guests, symbolizing the unity and devotion of the community.

In a remarkable highlight, the event was graced by the presence of the Consul General of India in New York, Hon. Randhir Jaiswal, who honored the ceremony with his esteemed presence. His presence added a special touch of reverence to the occasion, further enhancing its significance.

The 11.2-acre site, which will house an authentic Hindu temple and cultural center, aims to cater to the spiritual needs of the community while cultivating a divine atmosphere. With the inclusion of the Samuhika Parivara Devatha Samuham, the temple will provide a comprehensive spiritual experience for devotees of various deities.

Notably, the temple is one of the first granite Hindu temples in the USA designed to last multiple generations. The built-up area spanning over 65,000 square feet will encompass a 20,000+ square feet cultural and community center equipped with modern amenities, including smart classrooms for cultural and spiritual education.

The project is being executed in multiple phases. The recently completed Phase 1, the Sai Jnana Mandir, features a beautifully designed prayer hall, spacious classrooms, and a fully functional commercial kitchen. This phase has already received a Prana Pratishtha, infusing the sanctum with divine energy and blessings.

Phase 2A of the project showcases a magnificent 25 feet Hanuman idol, gracefully enclosed in a glass enclosure. This iconic idol will serve as a centerpiece of devotion and a symbol of strength, courage, and devotion to Lord Hanuman.

Phase 2B of the project will encompass the construction of a Garbha Gudi (sanctum sanctorum), a Cultural Center / Kalyana Mandapam (marriage hall), and a cafeteria. These additions will further enhance the temple's offerings and provide a space for cultural celebrations, spiritual gatherings, and community events.

The project has garnered tremendous support from over 10,000 donors and devotees who have contributed to its realization. Their unwavering dedication and commitment have been instrumental in making this divine and spiritual project possible.

The Chairman of Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple Suryanarayana Maddula, expressed his deep gratitude to all 2000+ devotees who attended the event, contributing to its grand success. He emphasized his lifelong commitment to serving the temple and its devotees, vowing to continue his service until his last breath.

The Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple & Cultural Center welcomes and invites everyone to be a part of this noble undertaking. By extending their support, individuals can play an active role in nurturing a divine and spiritual haven for generations to come.



SUBSCRIBERS' SECTION

Saas Bahu aur Flamingo

Disney Hotstar

Dimple Kapadia spearheads a drug cartel in a fictitious back of beyond desert town. A 'banjaaran' who, like the proverbial phoenix, rises from the ashes to become a woman of power and substance.

The series is all about women—badass ones, vengeful, sexy, earthy, intelligent, lustful, gun brandishing and ambitious ones. Dressed in Indian attire, chunky jewelry, kohl rimmed eyes, and tattoos, they catch your attention with their fearless demeanor. Dimple is ably supported by her two daughters-in-law and a fierce daughter who holds the key in making Flamingo, a drug that has cocaine. This is their trump card, grown in their backyard or, in this case, laboratory.

Her two sons have no role in shaping this 500 crore turnover empire. It's heartening to see how Indian stories have come of age where the men have less dominant

roles in the screenplay. Hurray for women empowerment! Dimple has rival gangs waiting to see her crumble, and a wily policeman from Mumbai is sent to investigate. And the difficult task of choosing her heir.

The landscape is stark, with thorny bushes in the vast expanse of the Rann region echoing the lives of the characters—unrelenting, harsh, and devoid of color. The series has everything going for it. It has a different story line and strong actors, but it isn't riveting. In

simple language, it's a dish that has something missing. I can't quite put a finger on it; maybe there are too many spices in it. Some parts are sluggish, there are twists and turns, and humor is provided by the older son, played impressively by Ashish Verma.

Can you give it a miss? Not if you are a fan of Dimple or you have a palette for quirky fare that may look attractive. Just be careful that after finishing the last spoon, you may realize that it wasn't what you expected.

- Sonia Date



PC- Saas Bahu aur Flamingo Trailer



Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's Grandson Arun Gandhi

May 2, 2023, saw the loss of a bright and historic light with the sudden passing of Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, Arun Gandhi.

Born to Sushila and Manilal Gandhi at Phoenix Ashram outside Durban in the Natal province of South Africa on April 14, 1934, Arun was the second of their three children and their only son. Arun grew up in the Phoenix Settlement established by his grandfather, Mohandas Gandhi.

In the decade of the 1970s, Arun and his wife Sunanda engaged in many social activities and organizations working for the betterment of the rural poor; they also helped find good adoptive homes for over a hundred orphan girls and boys in India, France, and Sweden. During this time, Arun and

Sunanda travelled extensively in Europe. Arun and Sunanda moved to the US in 1986, initially in Oxford, Mississippi, then in Memphis, Tennessee, and finally in Rochester, New York. Arun established the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Non-violence in Memphis, and then in 2007 he moved it to Rochester. Arun lived in Rochester, NY, till 2023 and spread his grandfather's message of non-violence and peace throughout America, Europe, Asia, and African countries.

Arun's health deteriorated in 2021 and slowly worsened during the COVID pandemic. He arrived in India at the beginning of February 2023 in very poor health. He had made up his mind to shift to India and settle in Kolhapur at the Sunanda Gandhi Girl's Home he helped establish. He arrived at the girl's home on February 28, but his

health steadily declined, and his end came in the early dawn of May 2, 2023. Arun was cremated on the farmland at Washi village on the outskirts of Kolhapur on the evening of May 2, where his family will build a boy's home and a skill education school in his memory.

"It was my privilege to have a positive and fruitful discussion with Arun ji about my idea of a Sister City program between Quincy, MA, the birthplace of America's Founding Father John Adams, and New Delhi, where Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation of India, spent a lot of his time till his final days, a while ago, and to have him as a great supporter of my journey for global peace." Secretary General Kumu Gupta, Global Peace Secretariat.

May his soul rest in peace. Om Shanti.

- Kumu Gupta

NEWSMAKERS

Krishna Ramachandran Takes the Wheel at Blue Shield's Health Revolution

Krishna Ramachandran has been named senior vice president of Health Transformation and Provider Adoption at Blue Shield of California, to oversee the nonprofit health plan's bold initiative to redefine health care.

In this role, Ramachandran, an alumnus of Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, India, is responsible for leading partnerships and innovations to improve healthcare quality for members, bring tools and support that benefit providers, and promote health equity and healthier communities throughout California, according to a company release.

"At Blue Shield of California, our goal is to come together with a diverse group of providers to improve the quality of patient care for our members while lowering healthcare costs to ensure that all Californians have access to the care they deserve,"



PC- chicagobusiness

stated Peter Long, executive vice president of Strategy and Health Solutions at Blue Shield.

"Krishna's experience, talent and leadership will help us make that a reality for our members and communities throughout the state."

"California is a big, beautiful state rich with diverse people, geography, and cutting-edge technology," said Ramachandran. "It is thrilling for me to step into this role and continue the trailblazing work Blue Shield of California has started to support healthcare providers and transform the system to make it worthy of family and friends and sustainably affordable."

Ramachandran brings more than 20 years of experience to Blue Shield, offering unique leadership experience in technology, provider, and health plan organizations, according to the release.

Indian-American Appointed as New Dean of Cornell University

Indian-American professor and IIT Delhi alumni Vishal Gaur has been named the Anne and Elmer Lindseth Dean of the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management in Cornell University. Gaur, who is the Emerson Professor of Manufacturing Management and professor of operations, technology and information management, will begin his role from July 1, a University statement said.

"Vishal has demonstrated his outstanding commitment to the Johnson School time and again, as a distinguished scholar, as an award-winning educator and especially as an effective leader. I couldn't be more pleased that he'll lead the school into its next phase," Cornell SC Johnson College of Business Dean, Andrew Karolyi, said.

Gaur's research focuses on data-driven analysis of problems in supply chains, retailing, e-commerce and

marketplace operations. He created a method for benchmarking inventory turnover performance of firms, and his current projects involve the reduction of food waste and supply chain risk, according to the University

statement. "The Johnson School is a leader in graduate business education and scholarship. I am really excited to work towards the mission of the school," Gaur said in a statement.



PC-shiksha

Joe Biden chooses Indian-American Woman for Key Advisory Role

United States President Joe Biden has named Indian-American Neera Tanden as his Domestic Policy Adviser to help him craft and implement his domestic policy agenda.

"I am pleased to announce that Neera Tanden will continue to drive the formulation and implementation of my domestic policy, from economic mobility and racial equity to health care, immigration and education," President Biden said.

"Tanden will be the first Asian-American to lead any of the three major White House policy councils in history," President Biden said.

"As Senior Adviser and Staff Secretary, Neera oversaw decision-making processes across my domestic, economic and national security teams. She has 25 years of experience in public policy, has served three Presidents, and led one

of the largest think tanks in the country for nearly a decade," President Biden said.

"Shewasakeyarchitect of the Affordable Care Act and helped drive key domestic policies that became part of my agenda, including clean energy subsidies and sensible gun reform. While growing up, Neera relied on some of the critical programs that she will oversee as Domestic Policy Adviser, and I know those insights will serve my Administration and the American people well. I look forward to continuing to work closely with Neera in her new role," he said.



PC- wikipedia

White House Brings in Medha Raj as Chief of Staff of Its Climate Policy Office

The White House has named Indian American Medha Raj as the new Chief of Staff for its Climate Policy Office, the Washington Post said in a report.

Raj formerly worked for the National Security Council as an Advisor to the Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary. She was also the Chief of Staff for the White House task force on Afghan refugee settlement, Operation Allies Welcome Task Force.

She joins the government from the Biden 2020 campaign, where she was the Digital Chief of Staff, a critical role at a time when campaigning was virtually exclusively virtual owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with Raj, The White House climate office has brought in new staffers to work on transportation emissions, clean energy infrastructure, agriculture, and other issues, Politico

reported on May 10. The Indian American will replace Maggie Thomas who has been named Special Assistant to the President for climate,

it reported.

President Joe Biden established the office in 2021 by an executive order, signaling the seriousness with which his administration will address the climate crisis at home and abroad. The office organizes the policy-making process and ensures that choices and programs across the board are compatible with the President's stated aims and are being pursued effectively.

With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 which included about \$370 billion in clean energy and climate investments in 10 years, the office has a huge say on policy and government actions related to among other things, the White House said, resilience to the impacts of climate change; conservation of lands, waters, oceans, and biodiversity; environmental justice; and spur economic growth.



Forbes Midas List 2023 Ranks Indian American Fifth

Forbes, in collaboration with TrueBridge Capital Partners, released the Midas List of 2023, which included the top 100 worldwide venture capital investors, including Navin Chaddha, 52, managing director of the Mayfield fund.

Chaddha was ranked fifth, higher than any other Indian-origin figure on the list. As the managing director of Mayfield Fund, he supervises the firm's venture practice and has invested in 18 companies that have gone public, including Lyft,



PC-Forbes

Poshmark, and developer tools supplier HashiCorp.

Among the web3 apps in which Chaddha has begun investing are the blockchain software company Alchemy, which has survived the cryptocurrency shakeup, and the spectacularly unsuccessful bitcoin exchange FTX.

"I partner with entrepreneurs who want to change the way people work, live and play. I invest in people first and markets second," Forbes quoted him as saying.

Punit Renjen Elected to SAP Supervisory Board

Punit Renjen, an Indian-American executive, was elected as a new member of SAP's supervisory board at the annual general meeting of shareholders on May 11 with a 99.21% shareholder vote.

On the appointment, Renjen said, "I am very thankful for the trust SAP shareholders put in me. I am looking forward to working with talented colleagues around the world to ensure SAP strengthens its position as an enterprise application leader in

the cloud."

The 61-year-old most recently served as the global CEO of Deloitte and retired in 2022. Under his leadership the firm's revenues increased from \$35 billion to more than \$59 billion in just seven years.

The handing over process from the current chairman, Prof Dr Hasso Plattner to Punit Renjen has started, SAP said in an official statement. Plattner, a co-founder of the business, will step down from the SAP Supervisory Board when his current

term ends.

"We believe that Punit Renjen is an excellent candidate who, with his outstanding expertise, his many years of experience in a global company, and his valuable knowledge of many industries, represents a gain for SAP and our Supervisory Board. And we all find him to be an extremely suitable and capable candidate to take over my role as chairperson of the Supervisory Board in the future," said Plattner.

Indian American Elected to Prestigious NC University board

The University of North Carolina Board of Governors has elected Swadesh Chatterjee, an Indian American businessman, entrepreneur, and community leader, for a four-year term.

By resolution of the North Carolina House on May 3, Chatterjee, 75, along with five other individuals—Dr. Pearl Burris-Floyd, C. Philip Byers, R. Gene Davis, Jr., H. Terry Hutchens, and J. Alex Mitchell—were chosen for terms beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2027.

The Chancellor's Global Leadership Council is comprised of successful international business leaders, policy experts, creative entrepreneurs, and philanthropists who provide strategic financial support for UNC's global mission. Chatterjee, the chief executive officer of Swadesh Chatterjee & Associates, Inc., is a vice chair on this council.

The GLC is made up of graduates and friends who are affiliated with various institutions and units, are directly involved in global concerns, or have substantial regional experience

and interests.

Chatterjee, who operated an industrial instrumentation company in North Carolina, is one of the co-founders and past presidents of TiE Carolinas, a group of businesspeople whose primary goal is to develop and assist fledgling entrepreneurs. He sits on the board of various pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, and other life science companies in the US, Europe, and India.

Religious Events

Ved Mandir



1 Ved Mandir Dr, Milltown, NJ 08850 Ph: (732) 821-0404
Open Every day - 7:00 AM to 7:30 PM
AARTI TIMES
Morning Aarti - 7:00 AM, Evening Aarti - 7:00 PM
Everyday Online Session by Mandir Priests
5:00 PM To 7:00 PM

Sri Venkateswara Temple (Balaji Mandir)



1 Balaji Temple Drive, Bridgewater, NJ-08807, Ph: (908) 725-4477
Mon - Fri: 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM & 4:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Saturday, Sunday & National Holidays: 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM
Every Sunday : Vishnu Sahasranama : 8:30 AM - 9:15 PM
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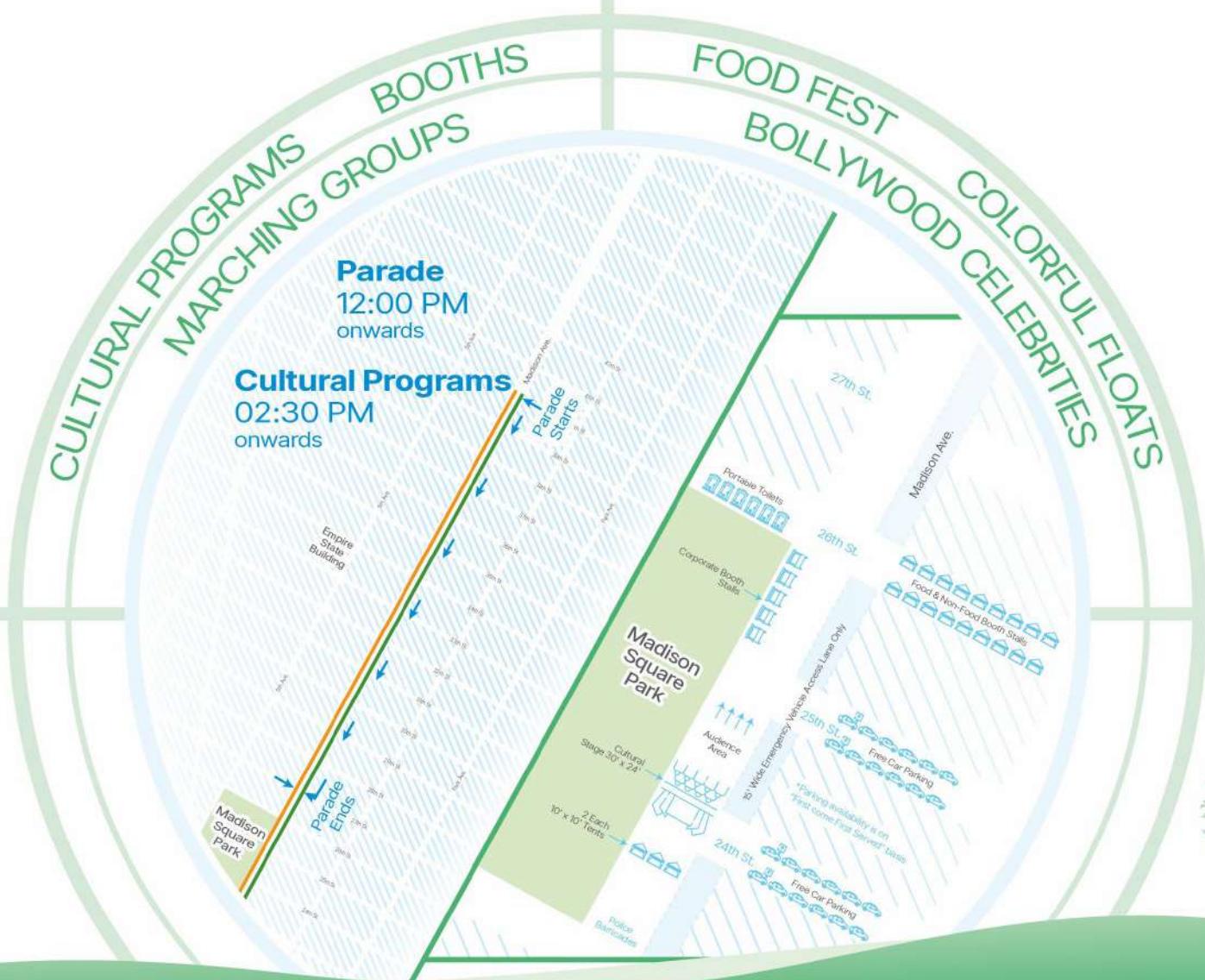
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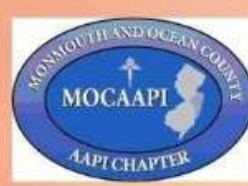
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The Kerala Story

(2023/ Drama/ Cinema Release)

A story marred by bad storytelling!

Written By Suryapal Singh, Sudipto Sen, Vipul Amrutlal Shah
Director By Sudipto Sen
Cast Adah Sharma, Yogita Bihani, Sonia Balani, Siddhi Idnani



Photo: The Kerala Story

The intense hype, the accusations and defenses flying to and fro, and the extremely polarized reviews are bound to make anyone curious.

Well, how you see the film will totally depend upon your perspective and how clinically you segregate the different aspects of the film—intention, quality, and story. I was more invested in the latter.

Plot

The film begins with Fatima/ Shalini, allegedly a trained terrorist, in the custody of the UN after having been caught somewhere in Afghanistan.

She regales her story from the days when she stepped into her nursing college.

The story focuses on the network of ISIS, which aims to lure gullible girls from other religions to convert so that they can then be exploited for nefarious purposes.

She tells how she was brainwashed and then trapped into conversion.

Her journey takes us from Kerala to Columbo to Afghanistan, probably on the way to Syria, before she gets caught by the UNPKF while she is trying to escape the clutches of the terrorists.

Analysis

The film wastes no time getting on point.

Religion rules the first half, and there's nothing veiled about it.

The terrorist networks masterminding the honey trap and the religious brainwashing are shown in such detail that it seems tiresome, stretched, and too brazen.

The second half thankfully paces the story better but is harsher as it now focuses on Shalini's plight as Fatima. The ruthlessness, the fanaticism, and the horrifying circumstances of women in Talibani Afghanistan have been dwelt upon.

The cinematic analysis of the film is simple and straight. It's a crudely made film, and it is uncomfortably loud. A subpar screenplay and direction prevent an emotional connection with the protagonist and somehow dilute the impact.

Some subtlety and finesse would have done it a lot of good. It does leave you unsettled, though, and the second half is slightly disturbing.

The film focuses on how terrorist organizations use religious fanaticism to brainwash people.

The numbers might be debatable, but how ISIS indoctrinates and uses people, be they from Islam or any other religion, is known to all.

The horrifying condition of women in areas under their control is known to all. What has been portrayed is the sum total of all the terrifying stories we have read in news columns from time to time.

As I would like to see it, the film is a scathing attack on religious conversions that are done with malafide intention to deploy women for ISIS.

To be in complete denial that this happens would be unfair.

But it should not instill any negative emotion in a mature audience against any religion. As I said before, it's all about perspective.

Having said that, I do feel that with better treatment, the film would be more impactful.

After all, "how you say it" is as important as "what you say". And that's where the film falters.

Personally, I can neither defend the way the film handles the subject nor dismiss what it tries to say.



Shadow and Bone Season 2

(Netflix Series / Fantasy)

A pale shadow of itself!

Creator Shawn Levy

Teleplay Vanya Asher

Cast Jessie Mei Li, Archie Renaux, Freddy Carter, Amita Suman, Kit Young, Sujaya Dasgupta, Patrick Gibson

NETFLIX

Photo: Shadow & Bone Season 2

Series Synopsis

In a world cleaved in two by a massive barrier of perpetual darkness, a young soldier uncovers a power that might finally unite her country. But as she struggles to hone her power, dangerous forces plot against her. Thugs, thieves, assassins and saints are at war now, and it will take more than magic to survive.

Season 2 Synopsis

On the run, after the showdown with Kirigan, Alina and Mal find new allies—and face heartrending choices—in their quest for more mythical amplifiers.

Shadow and Bone season 2 didn't impress me like season 1. I know my review will be from a book reader's POV. I'll try to balance it out with the point of view of the TV fans. I'd say, on the whole, season 2 felt incredibly rushed to the point where

it ate up the points from the six books and tried to digest them. So, as a book reader, my disappointment is immeasurable, and as an audience member of the show, I would say it ranges from average to below average. Let's do a dive into the positives and negatives.

Positives:

Production Design: You've got to admire the production design that went into recreating the Grisha Verse on the small screen. The rich production values enhance the grand feel.

The cinematography: It aids the production design in making this an immersive visual experience. It helps in getting transported to this world visually.

Negatives:

Teleplay: The series tries to cram in five books in 1 season. It just whizzes past those events in a frenzy. It's like someone wrote the teleplay after reading the summary of all the books and decided to cram in all the events.

Characters:

The crows were so boring this season. I mean, connecting Alina and these characters seemed like a good idea in season 1. But the Six of Crows and Alina become mundane and boring. It's unbelievable that they made Darkling a cliché villain.

Action sequences: They were so lazily choreographed and laughable after a point that I was like, "What am I even watching?" The battle in the final episode highlights this problem.

Overall, Season 2 is a massive disappointment.



Michael Douglas bags Honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival

This month, Hollywood actor Michael Douglas will add to his long list of honors when the Cannes Film Festival bestows upon him an

honorary Palme d'Or. The festival's organizers announced that they would pay tribute to the two-time Oscar winner during the festival's opening

ceremony on May 16 in recognition of "his brilliant career as well as his engagement for cinema."

Douglas, 78, is known for a wide-ranging career that includes films such as *The China Syndrome*, *Basic Instinct*, *Falling Down* and *Behind the Candelabra*, all of which have been screened at Cannes. "It is always a breath of fresh air to be at Cannes, which has long provided a wonderful platform for bold creators, artistic audacities and excellence in storytelling," Douglas, also known for *Wall Street* and *Fatal Attraction*, said in a statement.

"From my first time here in 1979 for *The China Syndrome* to my most recent premiere for *Behind the Candelabra* in 2013, the festival has always reminded me that magic of cinema is not just in what we see onscreen but in its ability to impact people all around the world."



PC- Festival_Cannes/Twitter

John Travolta & Katherine Heigl's New Rom-Com: That's Amore!

The romantic comedy *That's Amore!*, written and to be directed by two-time Academy Award winner Nick Vallelonga, has signed John Travolta and Katherine Heigl.

"We could not be more excited to announce *That's Amore!* as the first title on PPP's slate," said CEO Tamara Birkemoe. "This film's unparalleled star power and endearing, romantic charm is a testament to the quality of films that PPP will continue to present to buyers at forthcoming film markets."

Through his Vallelonga Productions, Vallelonga will produce alongside Cassian Elwes of Elevated Films, Brenda Emmett & Vince Emmett of American Troubadours, and Cassian Elwes. Along with Tamara Birkemoe and Mark Damon of the recently established global sales brand Palisades Park Pictures, David Polemeni will executive produce the movie, which will be presented to foreign buyers during the 2023 Cannes Film Festival. Elwes will co-represent U.S. rights with PPP.

Two-time Academy Award nominee cinematographer Dante

Spinotti, Academy Award-winning production designer Gianni Quaranta, three-time Academy Award nominee

editor Steven Rosenblum, and costume designer Betsy Heimann are all on board.



PC-economictimes

Janhvi Kapoor to Star in Patriotic Thriller 'Ulajh'

The creators of the upcoming patriotic thriller "Ulajh" revealed that actress Janhvi Kapoor will play the lead. The film, which also features Gulshan Devaiah and Roshan Mathew, is produced by Jungle Pictures and directed by National Award winner Sudhanshu Saria.

Set in the prestigious and intriguing world of Indian Foreign Services (IFS), 'Ulajh' follows the journey of a young IFS officer, played by Kapoor, from a prominent family of patriots who becomes embroiled in a dangerous personal conspiracy while on a career-defining assignment far from her home turf.

"When I was approached with the script of 'Ulajh' it instantly attracted me because as an actor, I am constantly looking for scripts that make me break out of my comfort zone and portraying a character based in the celebrated world of the Indian

Foreign Services was just that," the actor said in a statement.

The script of "Ulajh" is penned by Saria and Parveez Shaikh, with dialogues by Atika Chohan. Rajesh Tailang, Meiyang Chang, Sachin Khedekar, Rajendra Gupta and Jitendra Joshi also round out the cast of the film.

"In Janhvi Kapoor, the film has found its beating heart and it's going to be a treat for audiences to watch her spar with thespians like Rajesh Tailang and Sachin Khedekar, maverick actors like Gulshan Devaiah, Roshan Matthews

and Meiyang Chang. We have a rollercoaster of a ride planned for our audience and I can't wait to start rolling cameras on 'Ulajh,'" the director added.

Amrita Pandey, CEO Jungle Pictures, said the aim of the banner is to develop, create films and team up with people, who have a fresh and distinct voice to captivate and entertain the audience.

"Having Sudhanshu on board for a film like 'Ulajh' is a perfect fit. His creative sensibilities are unmatched, he has added nuances and layers to each character which has made the story so gripping.

"Getting together such a talented ensemble cast, in the unexplored world of IFS has been an invigorating experience. We also have a team of celebrated and experienced writers and technicians who are contributing to the film, making it an incredible team effort," Pandey said.



PC- indianexpress

Alia Bhatt Becomes Gucci's First Indian Global Brand Ambassador

Gucci, an Italian luxury fashion company has named Alia Bhatt as its first Indian brand ambassador for the world. Bhatt made her debut at the Met Gala in New York City just before the announcement.

"I'm honored to represent the house of Gucci not only in India but at a global stage. Gucci's legacy has always inspired and intrigued me and I'm looking forward to the many sartorial milestones we create together @gucci,"

she wrote in her Instagram caption.

As per reports, Bhatt will make an appearance at Gucci's upcoming Cruise 2024 showcase in Seoul, South Korea. The show will be staged at the Gyeongbokgung Palace on May 16, 2023, marking 25 years of the opening of the first Gucci store in Seoul.

Harry Styles, Dakota Johnson, Hanni from the K-pop group NewJeans, and other celebrities are among Gucci's pool of international brand ambassadors.



PC- Instagram

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