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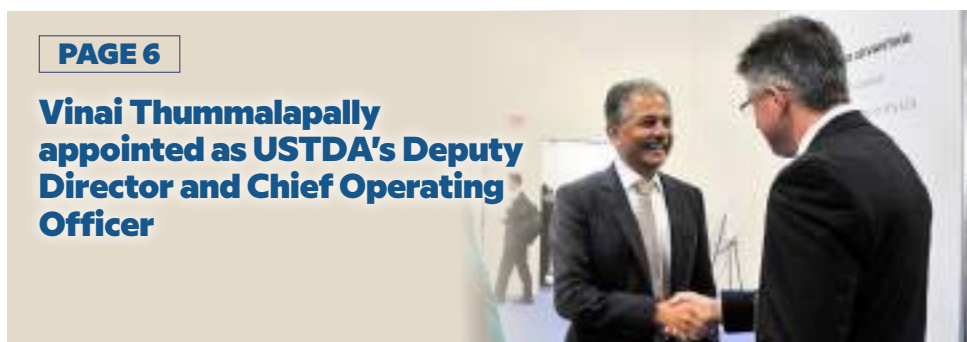


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FIA Organized the Second Edition of Soup Kitchen in The USA and India.

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Vinai Thummalapally appointed as USDA's Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer



FIA receives India's Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award



FIA NY-NJ-CT was recognized for its service to the community and India.

On the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the Federation of Indian Associations received the prestigious

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman. The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award is the highest award bestowed on a non-resident Indian, a Person of Indian Origin; or an organisation or institution founded and run by non-resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who have made a significant contribution in furthering a better understanding of India abroad, and support for India's causes and concerns in a tangible way, through community work abroad, welfare of the local Indian community, philanthropic

and charitable works.

"We are very proud, humbled and thankful to be the recipient of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman," President of FIA Anil Bansal said. "It is the recognition of hard and selfless work of so many people in the FIA family. This award is for the exceptional and meritorious contribution to India, the Indians for social and humanitarian causes. We at FIA have been totally dedicated to serving the interest of India and Indian diaspora in the USA. I have no doubt that under the new leadership of Ankur Vaidya, we will expand our footprint and activities immensely in future. This award certainly gives us the encouragement and

incentive to reach for the stars. Thanks India, our motherland, and Jai Hind."

"It is truly a moment of pride for FIA and for me to witness this prestigious recognition bestowed upon FIA," Chairman Ankur Vaidya said. "I take this opportunity to thank the founders and patriarchs, some of them are on our board, who dedicated a lifetime in serving the community through the organization and when told of the news had tears of joy," Vaidya said, adding, "The timing has a cryptic hint in it having lost Ramesh Patel to COVID when we had already rolled our sleeves to prepare for the golden jubilee grandeur celebration.

We still continued and faced the worst times in history, we managed with the motivated team and Ramesh Patel's spirit and soul to show us light and inspiration, the magic worked. I know he would be ecstatic," Vaidya added.

One of the most prestigious groups in the Indian community is the Federation of Indian Associations. It is made up of over a million strong and dynamic Asian-Indians who provide vital grassroots support and assistance.

Since its inception in 1970, the FIA has grown into a laudable organisation that has served as a powerful voice and mobilizer for the community.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets with CEOs from the United States and invites them to invest in India.

During her meetings with the top CEOs of American companies, the foreign minister also met Milind Pant, Indian American CEO of Amway

Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Finance Minister, attended the G20's 4th Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting on October 13 in Washington, DC. The FMCBGs addressed global economic changes, global commons, assistance to weak nations, and international taxes.

The minister stated that securing equitable vaccinations for everyone is a big task for recovery, and that our policy aims should be to maintain assistance, improve resilience, increase productivity, and implement structural changes. The finance minister emphasised the importance of the UNFCCC in moving climate change negotiations forward, as well as the fact that failure to meet current international ob-

ligations on climate finance and technology diminishes our collective efforts. She requested that future conversations be guided by climate justice.

Sitharaman thanked the OECD for its support for the accord outlined in the statement on a two-pillar approach. This agreement supports in addressing the tax problems posed by the digitization of the economy, as well as dealing with Base Erosion and Profit Shifting concerns.

Sitharaman attended a Roundtable which organized by USIBC and Follow CII in Washington. Many CEOs and business leaders from different fields like Insurance, private equity, technology, pharma attended the event.

She also met with Curtis L. Buser, CFO of OneCarlyle, in Washington, D.C., as part of this,

to discuss a range of opportunities in India. Sitharaman also met with B. Marc Allen, Boeing's Chief Strategy Officer. The conversation centred on skill development, research and development, manufacturing automation, innovation, and the aerospace sector. The

business leaders congratulated India government in steering the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic and also mentioned to have growth in investment opportunities in India.

Photo: ANI



Nirmala Sitharaman meets with OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann.

Anita Anand the Indian-origin Canadian has been appointed as the Defence Minister of Canada.

Anita Anand mentioned that her top priority is to make everyone feel safe in the armed forces.

Photo: The Hindu

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, has reshuffled his cabinet just after coming into power in September 2021. In that Anita Anand on Tuesday was appointed as the new Defence Minister of Canada. According to CTV News, a 39-member Cabinet was sworn in at the Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

Anita Anand replaced Harjit Sajjan as the defence minister. She also managed the vaccine procurement effort during the COVID-19 pandemic and served as the country's procurement minister.

Anand told reporters that her

top priority is to make everyone feel safe in the armed forces. Notably, Sajjan was criticised for his handling of military sexual misconduct, reported CTV News. "My top priority is to make sure that everyone in the Armed Forces feels safe and protected and that they have the support that they need when they need them, and the structures in place to ensure that justice is served."

Prime Minister also quoted in the news that "We have a team of familiar faces and new faces that are ready to put all their strengths, all their hard work towards delivering for Canadians in the coming years."



Ms. Anand, during a press conference after swearing-in of a new cabinet.

FIA Organized the Second Edition of Soup Kitchen in The USA and India.

FIA organized a virtual welcoming meet with Dr. Varun Jeph, Deputy Consul General of India, New York. Plans on developing the Indian-American relations are on the key list.

The Federation of Indian Associations organized its second edition of "Diwali Soup Kitchen-Spreading Lights of Happiness". The FIA initiative is a complimentary meal provision to tri-state recognized soup kitchens who serve meals to those in need. The meal drive started from 15th October and will last till 30th October. All over 10000 plus

meals will be distributed by Federation of Indian Associations. Some of the Soup Kitchens with which they will be working are "The Salvation Army"-New York, "Trenton Soup Kitchen"-New Jersey, "Open Doors Shelter"-Connecticut, "Eva's Soup Kitchen"- New Jersey, "Diversity Plaza"- New York.

In India the soup kitchen was organized at Manav Mitra Man-

dal, Motera, Ahmedabad on 24th October 2021. Over there 500 food meals were distributed by the volunteers. In the US the soup kitchen was organized at Norwalk, Connecticut on 22nd October 2021 and at Trenton Soup Kitchen on 21st October 2021. Many individuals like governmental officials, volunteers the sponsors participated in the event in the different locations

in USA and India. The humble participations from the volunteers made the event grow and it will amplify in the coming years. FIA is contributing to serve the tri-state community during the auspicious time of the festival of lights. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, FIA has been actively engaged with the community in assisting at different services.

Soup Kitchen in USA



Trenton Soup Kitchen and Soup Kitchen in Norwalk

Soup Kitchen in Westbury, NY

Soup Kitchen in India



Diwali : The King of Indian Festivals

CHANDRAKANT TRIVEDI

Diwali, also known as Deepavali is India's most popular festival celebrated by Indians all around the globe. The festival of lights is celebrated religiously, socially, culturally and traditionally by the young and old, and the rich and the poor alike. On this occasion, the lighting of the lamps signifies and symbolizes the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is celebrated to mark the return of Lord Rama after 14 years of exile, and his victory of the demon Ravana.

The festival comprises five consecutive days of celebrations, with each day having its unique tradition and significance. As per the Hindu lunar calendar, Diwali falls on the last three days of the month of Ashwin, and the first two days of the month of Kartik. (Between October and November).

This sequential celebration starts from Dhanteras (Day 1), Kali Chaudas, also known as Narak Chaturdashi (Day 2), Diwali (Day 3), New Year Day (Day 4), and Bhai Duj (Day 5).

Diwali is a public holiday in India as well as in countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, where large populations of Hindus have settled for many centuries and generations. People offer prayers for health, wealth and prosperity to Goddess Lakshmi and other Gods. Traditionally, Diwali can be compared to Christmas in terms of the spirit of the celebration; exchanging gifts, arranging fam-

ily reunions, visiting holy places, performing pujas, distributing sweets, wearing new clothes, and lighting diyas, fireworks, and creating an atmosphere of love, respect and cordiality. All marketplaces are filled with shoppers buying all kinds of things including, gold, silver and sweets.

Though the festival of Diwali is widely associated with Goddess Lakshmi, there are regional connections to Lord Rama and Sita, Vishnu, Krishna, Durga, Kali, Dhanvantari, etc.

Diwali is celebrated by a vast majority of Hindus, Jains and Sikhs, throughout India and abroad.

The 5 Days of Diwali

Each of the five days have religious pujas and worship of a particular God or Goddess.

On the first day of Dhanteras, most of the Hindus perform Lakshmi Poojan, wishing for prosperity. Entire family participates in the puja.

On the second day, known as Kali Chaudas or Narak Chaturdashi, a section of the community worships Mahakali to eliminate

the bad elements troubling them in their happiness and prosperity. A special puja is performed at night. This is a favorite day of the Tantriks.

The third day of Diwali, which falls on Amavasya (no moon day) in the month of Ashwin, is the zenith of the festival. On this day, people perform pujas, respect elders, visit temples, and family gatherings. Those with business perform Chopda Pujan, by keeping accounting books for the new year. In the evening, people burst fireworks and celebrate with fun, food and festivities.

The fourth day of Diwali is the New Year Day of Vikram Samvat, particularly in the Gujarati community worldwide. On this day as well, people wear new clothes and visit temples with their families. A large Annakoot is arranged at most temples. BAPS and other Swaminarayan mandirs, Vaishnav mandirs and all other Sanatan Dharma temples host Annakoot darshan and many serve maha prasad. In the U.S., many BAPS temples have Annakoot of over 1,500 varieties of food items displayed in front of the deities.

After darshan the food items in the Annakoot are distributed as prasad.

The fifth day is Bhai Duj, which celebrates the selfless bond of love, sacrifice and well wishes between brothers and sisters. Normally, brothers visit sister's homes, enjoy a meal and give gifts to the sisters.

Diwali in the U.S.

The rapid growth and success of the Indian American community has added a new dimension to the significance of Diwali in this country. The New York chapter of the Associations of Indians in America (AIA), hosts an annual Diwali celebration at the South Street Seaport in New York City. The event was initiated in 1987 under AIA president Rohit Vyas. Since then, the event has evolved into a daylong cultural, religious and social extravaganza with food, music, dance, vendors and fireworks. Many elected officials as well as prominent members of the Indian American community attend the event.

The U.S. Federal Government as well as local governments have recognized the importance of Diwali. For the past few years, U.S. presidents, whether Democrats or Republicans, have hosted Diwali gatherings at the White House with religious chanting, lamp lighting and festivities. In 2016, the U.S. Postal Service commemorated Diwali with a Forever stamp.

This year, FIA as part of an ambitious community outreach program is working with 10 Soup Kitchens around the locations in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont and New Hemisphere.



Facebook will pay a \$4.79 million fine for favouring foreigners on H-1B visas over US citizens.

Facebook should post job openings more widely, accept electronic resumes and applications from all applicants, and coach its staff on anti-discrimination policies.

According to the Justice Department 'In a case that turns on its head the common perception of foreigners suffering employment bias in the U.S., Facebook is to pay a fine of \$4.75 million for discriminating in favor of foreign workers on H-1B visas – largely used by companies employing Indian workers – and against American citizens and permanent residents.

The department said Oct. 19 that Facebook, headquartered in Menlo Park, Calif., will also pay up to \$9.75 million to the workers it had discriminated against under a settlement it made with it and the Labor Department.

"This settlement is an important step forward and means that U.S. workers will have a fair chance to learn about and apply

Photo: Lynsey Addario/Getty Images

for Facebook's job opportunities," Labor Department's Indian American Solicitor Seema Nanda said.

The Justice Department said that the fine and the backpay were the largest "that the Division ever has recovered in the 35-year history of the INA's (Immigration and Naturalization Act) anti-discrimination provision."

The voluntary settlement by Facebook brings the Justice Department's lawsuit, which was brought in December during the final few days of former President Donald Trump's administration, to an end.

The Department said, the foreign workers were hired under the permanent labor certification program (PERM) that would make them eligible for permanent resident status or green cards.

"Companies cannot set aside certain positions for temporary visa holders because of their citizenship or immigration status. This settlement reflects the Civil Rights Division's commitment to holding employers accountable and eradicating discriminatory employment practices," said Kristen Clarke, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division Assistant Attorney General.

Facebook said that although it strongly believed that it met the federal government standards for the PERM program, "We've reached agreements to end the ongoing litigation and move forward with our PERM program, which is an important part of our overall immigration program."

Around 65% H-1B visa holders are Indians. According to the Justice Department, Facebook made it difficult for U.S. citizens

Photo: ommcom News



and those with the right to work in the United States by forcing them to apply only by mail for those positions, although foreigners were able to apply electronically.

Associated Press adds from Washington: The department's civil rights division said the social network giant "routinely refused" to recruit, consider or hire U.S. workers, a group that includes U.S. citizens and nationals, people granted asylum, refugees and lawful permanent residents, for positions it had reserved for temporary visa holders.

"In principle, Facebook is doing a good thing by applying for green cards for its workers, but it has also learned how to game the system to avoid hiring U.S. tech workers," said Daniel Costa, director of immigration law and policy research at the liberal-leaning Economic Policy Institute. "Facebook started lobbying to change the system more to its liking starting back in 2013 when the comprehensive immigration bill that passed the Senate was being negotiated."

According to Facebook, it had approximately 63,400 full-time workers worldwide at the end of the April-June quarter this year, with 3,000 ongoing job opportunities.

A \$4.75 million fine and \$9.5 million in back compensation are insignificant for a firm worth \$1 trillion with roughly \$86 billion in revenue last year. However, the news comes at a moment when Facebook is under increasing public scrutiny.



File photo of Indian and American employees working out of the Facebook offices in Hyderabad, India, Dec. 1, 2010.

Vinai Thummalapally appointed as USTDA's Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer

Vinai Thummalapally was named Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the United States Trade and Development Agency by President Joe Biden on October 18.

Thummalapally will serve as Acting Director of USTDA until a director is appointed by the Senate. According to a USTDA press release, the Indian American formerly served as U.S. Ambassador to Belize and as the executive director of SelectUSA, a U.S. Department of Commerce project that supports job-creating company investment into the United States.

"The U.S. Trade and Development Agency has a global reputation for excellence, results, and setting the standard for American economic engagement overseas," said Thummalapally. "It is an honor to lead this agency and its exceptional team of profession-

als. I share their commitment to USTDA's mission of creating U.S. jobs through exports, supporting the economic growth of the United States, and facilitating the development of sustainable infrastructure overseas using the best of what U.S. industry has to offer."

Thummalapally became the first Indian American ambassador in US history. Also he was executive director of SelectUSA from 2013 to 2017 and the United States Ambassador to Belize from 2009 to 2013.

Thummalapally has worked in private sector for more than 30 years. He recently worked as the executive chairman of Red Fort Strategies, a public affairs and government relations firm based

in Washington, D.C. Also, he was the president of MAM-A Inc., a U.S. manufacturer and distributor of archival recordable optical discs. Thummalapally earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from California State University, Northridge, California.

He has served as a board member of the Indian American Impact Project, a non-profit that encourages Indian Americans to run for public office, and as an advisor to the Asian American and Pacific Islanders Victory Fund. He has also served on the board of Cyient, a multinational digital engineering and technology firm. The US Trade and Development Agency assists businesses in cre-

ating jobs in the United States by exporting US goods and services to priority infrastructure projects in emerging countries.

Photo: India west



Former Indian American U.S. Ambassador to Belize Vinai Thummalapally (left) and Pedro Cuellar.

Two Indian Americans appointed to the 'California 100 Commission'

A 26-member expert and multigenerational California 100 Commission was recently unveiled by the California 100 executive team, including a handful of Indian American and South Asian Americans among those chosen.

As per a new release "The commission will draw on an extraordinary group of leaders who reflect diversity by region and industry, and the perspectives of

Photo: India west

communities who have been historically marginalized or excluded. Valuing the input of young Californians and the role they will play in shaping the future, half of the commission will be next generation leaders who have already demonstrated significant impact in their areas of expertise".

Nidhi Kalra the senior information scientist at RAND Corporation, was named among the commissioners in Advanced Technology and Basic Research and Common Cause executive di-

rector Jonathan Mehta Stein was chosen among the Governance, Media and Civil Society commissioners.

The California 100 commissioners will be active in all elements of the organization's activities, as well as in developing a vision and plan to prepare us for the challenges and possibilities that the next century will offer.

In particular, commissioners will review and provide feedback on California 100's 13 research reports and meet with each research team for a "deep dive" review of their findings. Part of the research work is examining potential scenarios for California's future. Commissioners will work with the research teams to assist in revising and refining their future scenarios' work to make them more useful for stakeholders and residents alike through deliberation and listening sessions in 2022. Throughout their two-year term, commissioners will also ensure that the work of California 100 remains true

to the interconnectedness of its 13 issue areas and through lines that inform its core values, the release said. Karthick Ramakrishnan, Indian American executive director of California 100, said in a statement that "We are thrilled to draw on the expertise of these transformative leaders who are making a difference in their respective fields and already leaving a mark on California,".

Each of the 26 commissioners was chosen for their extensive knowledge of the 13 subject areas for which California 100 is focusing. The open nomination procedure invited candidates to be submitted by elected officials, academics, community organizers, advocacy groups, and youth organisations.

The purpose of California 100 is to elevate and promote revolutionary ideas, people, and initiatives that accelerate progress, with a focus on inspiring an innovative, sustainable, and equitable vision and strategy for California's next century.



Nidhi Kalra

Jonathan Mehta Stein



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Kakkar Sibling Duo Light Up Iconic Times Square Billboard in New York

Photo: IANS

The twin singing duo Sukriti and Prakriti made it to the famed New York Times Square billboard. Sukriti and Prakriti posted on their Instagram that “YA GIRLS MADE IT TO A BILLBOARD IN Times Square???? This day will always be remembered. #SuPraIn-NY?? Thank you @spotify and @spotifyindia for making this possible! Big love to our @vyrlooriginals fam and @bandbaaja????”. The appearance is part of a global campaign to promote gender

parity in music. They were listed among names like Vladivojna La Chia and Maria Jose Llergo, making them the only Indians on the list, which is a great honour not just for both of them but also for the country and the Indian music community.

In an interview Sukriti said, “There are dreams that one always sets out with, especially at the start of our careers. The Times Square billboard was surely always a part of that dream for us and seeing it come to life, it is a surreal moment for us.” “Apart

from pinching ourselves, and actually seeing the image of us on the billboard, the fact that it is for a cause that is to encourage equity for women in music globally, makes it even more special”, she added. While Prakriti mentioned that “Representation of women in music, locally as well as globally has reached an all-new platform of equity. Women deserve to be paid as much as men, given the same treatment as male singers and this association was just to empower that.”



Singer duo Sukriti Kakkar and Prakriti Kakkar

Rajinikanth, Dhanush, Kangana Ranaut, and Manoj Bajpayee Receive Honors at the 67th National Film Awards

Photo: India west



Actress Kangana Ranaut receiving the Best Actress award from Vice President Venkaiah Naidu.



Rajinikanth receiving Dadasaheb Phalke Award

67th National Film Award ceremony was held on Oct 25 at Vigyan Bhawan, Delhi. Manoj Bajpayee received the Best Actor award for “Bhonsle” and Dhanush received the Best Actor award for “Asuran.” Kangana Ranaut was honored with the Best Actress award for her performance in “Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi” and “Panga.”

Rajinikanth, the superstar of Tamil film, has received the coveted Dadasaheb Phalke Award, marking yet another milestone in a 45-year long career span. The 51st Dadasa-

heb Phalke Award was presented to Rajinikanth. The Phalke Award is the most recent of various honours bestowed upon the actor during the course of his career. The award was presented to the veteran actor to a standing ovation. He is the second Tamil actor after Sivaji Ganesan to receive the prestigious film award.

Rajinikanth thanked the central government. “I am extremely happy to receive this most prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award. My thanks to the honorable central government. I dedicate this award to my mentor, my guru K. Balachander. This moment, I remember him with great gratitude, and my brother Satyanarayan Gaikwad who’s like my father who brought me up by teaching me great values, and spirituality. My friend in Karnataka, bus transport driver, and my colleague Rajbahadur.”

He recalled his days of struggle. “When I was the bus conductor, he identified the acting talent in me and encouraged me to join the cinema. All my producers, directors, co-artistes, technicians, distributors, exhibitors and the media, press and all my fans. Tamil people - without them I am no body. Jai Hind!” “Chhichore” won the Best Film Award and yhe director Nitesh Tiwari and producer Sajid Nadiadwala dedicated the Best Film Award to late Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput. Vijay Sethupathy was awarded the Best Supporting Actor for his performance in “Super Deluxe.” “Marakkar: Arabikadalinte Simham”, received the National Film Award for Best Feature Film. “The Tashkent Files” won awards for Best Supporting Actress, which went to Pallavi Joshi and for Best Dialogue Writer.

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