

DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY

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FIA - BJANA to Host Panel Discussion on India's COVID-19 Responses



The Federation of Indian Association NY NJ CT and the Bihar Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA) are hosting a live panel on Sunday, May 17 at 11:30AM EDT / 9 PM IST, on how India is tackling the coronavirus pandemic. Minister of State for External affairs V Muraleedharan will participate in the virtual discussion along with RSS leader Krishna Gopal and Super 30 founder Anand Kumar. Others on the panel include P.P.Chaudhary, former Union Minister of State for the Law and Justice and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs; social activist Prem Bhandari, chairman of Jaipur Foot USA; FIA President Anil Bansal; and BAJNA President Dr. Avinash Gupta.

The aim of the discussion panel is to



<http://facebook.com/bjanaus/live>



SUNDAY, MAY 17TH
AT 11:30 AM EDT/9 PM IST



Donation Link:
<https://bjana.org/corona/>

www.bjana.org | www.fianyjnct.org

help Indian Americans better understand the various issues related to coronavirus and how the country is successfully addressing the challenges.



Air India Celebrates 60 Years of it's 1st Flight to the U.S.

By Ajay Ghosh
Six decades ago, Air India, India's national carrier, made history when its inaugural flight to the United States originating from Bombay, now Mumbai, arrived at the Idlewild Airport, now known as the JFK International Airport in New York on May 14, 1960. The flight had a brief layover in London.

FIA past president Andy Bhatia, a veteran of Air India's sales department in North America, a close link between the fast-growing Indian American

community and the national carrier of India, had served the Airline for 34 years in the U.S. For several decades he was the face of Air India at numerous community events, where the national carrier made its mark among the community members across the country.

Air India was not only a carrier to the small Indian community in the U.S., recalls FIA President Anil Bansal, It was link and a life line between India and the early settlers who had come to the U.S. pursuing

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Voluntary Editor
Bhargavi Kulkarni

Voluntary Graphic
Compilation
Gracia Marcom

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Anil Bansal
FIA President



Andy Bhatia
Trustee, Past President &
Air India sales veteran



greener pastures in this land of opportunities.

In a congratulatory note on this special occasion, Bansal said, "Congratulations to Air India for serving the Indian community in the U.S. for the past 60 years since their first flight arrived in New York on May 14, 1960. Those of us who came here as students in the 1960s or 1970s, remember how Air India brought news and entertainment from back home by making available a selection of new feature length Indian movies to be shown every weekend on the University Campuses and a special edition of the Hindustan Times with condensed weekly news from back home."

By organizing art and essay competitions, and by offering books, magazines, entertainment, unique posters and recipe books, which were always much sought after by all, Bansal said War India played a significant role in the life of the growing Indian community in the U.S.

"Best of all, Air India helped many Indian organizations in showcasing India's rich history and culture in the United States," he said, and added that FIA has been partners with Air India for 50 years, "virtually from Day 1 that FIA was founded. They have always supported us, it has been a great association, partnership and friendship."

Nancy Kuo, the first local employee hired in 1959 by Peter Mahta, the then country head of Air India, recalls the initial days, as it set forth on a new journey, adding a new feather to its long flying history around the world.

Kuo, a Columbia University graduate was 23 years old when she had joined the airline in New York and retired after 40 years of service. "I was interviewed by Peter Mahta, the U.S & Canada Regional Director at Air India, for a position as a reservation agent," she recalls. "I was the first local Reservation agent hired by Air India in the U.S. There was a total of eight employees, including Ashok Dutt, Sales Manager; Bill Shaw, Cargo Manager; Don Gazdar, Reservations Manager; and I."

Working in four small rooms within the offices of Tata Inc., on 425 Park Avenue in New York City, Air India's successful business operation began 60 years ago. Reservations, ticketing and teletype were in a one room with three desks. "As we were preparing

for the first transatlantic flight on May 14, 1960, we needed more staff and larger offices and moved to the 11th floor on 410 Park Avenue," Kuo says.

Dilip Dulai was hired for accounting and stayed with Air India until his retirement. Airport traffic was handled by British Airways and there weren't any Air India staff at JFK Airport. "I remained with Air India — through numerous personnel changes, in different positions and office locations in New York City — until my early retirement almost 40 years later. Now, in 2020, it has been 60 years since the inaugural flight. It is a bittersweet milestone as most of my colleagues from that time have passed on," says Kuo, who is now in her 80s, living in Queens, NY.

Headquartered in Bombay (Mumbai), Air India's first ever scheduled air service was inaugurated in 1932 by J.R.D. Tata, flying mail and passengers between Karāchi, Ahmadābād, Bombay, Bellary, and Madras. By 1939 routes had been extended to Trivandrum, Delhi, Colombo, Lahore, and intermediate points. After World War II, in 1946, Tata Airlines was converted into a public company and renamed Air-India Limited. Two years later, to inaugurate international services between Bombay (Mumbai) and Cairo, Geneva, and London, Air-India International Limited was formed.

In 1953 India nationalized all Indian airlines, creating two corporations—one for domestic service, called Indian Airlines Corporation (merging Air-India Limited with six lesser lines), and one for international service, Air-India International Corporation. The latter's name was abbreviated to Air-India in 1962. In the following decades as India's flag carrier, the airline extended its international routes to all continents except South America and Australia, and it expanded its cargo operations. To gain a competitive advantage in computerized reservation searches, the airline removed the hyphen from its name in 2005 to become Air India.

J. R. D. Tata founded Tata Airlines in 1932 as a division of Tata Sons Ltd. (now Tata Group). After World War II, regular commercial service in India went back to normal, Tata Airlines changing its name to Air India and becoming a public limited company on the 29th of July 1946.

On June 9th, 1948, Air India introduced a regular

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CAPTION: Nancy Kuo being congratulated and presented with a memento on 35 years of service by Shankar Ghose, Regional Director USA & Canada on her left and P.K. Sinha, Manager USA & Canada on her right.

service from Bombay to London, and two years later, Air India started regular flights to Nairobi. In 1993, Air India's first Boeing 747-400, named Konark, operated the first non-stop flight between New York City and Delhi. In 1996, Air India started using its second US gateway at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Services to Air India's third US gateway at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark were introduced in the year 2000.

In October 2016, the airlines changed the Delhi – San Francisco route previously operated over the Atlantic Ocean to flying over the Pacific Ocean, in order to take advantage of jet stream winds and use less fuel. With the total flown distance being over 15,200 kilometers (9,400 miles), Air India operated the world's longest non-stop regular scheduled commercial flight.

Air India has been an innovator of sorts, flying chef-on-board as early as 1987 when the four best restaurant chefs of the world flew on board AI flights serving delectable food to First and Business food on order. The meal sampling that followed from the myriad choice in the menu served onboard was a great experience. Not only was the taste very good, the health issue was attended by no visible oil or heavy spices. It was a gastronomical delight for all media participants.

Air India has many first in its glorious 60 years history of flying to the US. It marked the International Women's Day in 2019 by flying all-women-crews to various cities – Washington D.C., Newark, Chicago and San Francisco. The national carrier flew four flights to the US with women pilots as its commanders. Air India says it has become the first airline to fly around the world with an all-female crew, just ahead of International Women's Day. "Air India scripted history by flying an all-women crew flight around the world," the airline said in a statement on Facebook, after Flight AI 174 touched back down in New Delhi.

"Literally with high flying women. All 4 Air India

flights into US today, JFK, Newark, Chicago & SFO were commanded by women pilots. We were delighted to honor 8 women pilots at the Consulate on #Internationalwomensday. Big thanks to Vandana Sharma of @airindia and FIA," tweeted Consul General of India, New York, Sandeep Chakravorty.

In addition to the four flights to the U.S., the airline flew all-women-crew flights to destinations including Milan, Frankfurt, and Singapore. Air India reiterated that by flying all-women-crew in its flights it wants to stress on its constant efforts to encourage women by giving them an equal opportunity in the workplace.

Air India's Delhi-San Francisco non-stop service on August 15, India's 73rd Independence Day, created history – it became the first Indian commercial flight to fly over the Polar region, The flight did its bit to save the environment and also ensured that the journey between the two cities becomes shorter.

The opening of the Polar route will help Air India's operations to all the five cities in the US that it flies to – New York, Newark, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Potentially, the opening of the Polar route could lead to Air India no longer operating the 'around the world' flight that it currently plies to reach San Francisco. The Delhi-San Francisco route was launched in 2015.

The airline has been in the forefront when calamities struck Indians living abroad. The services rendered by Air India has continued to this day. "Right now, during this COVID pandemic, we salute Air India for the bravery and the service they are providing to evacuate stranded Indians from America and other countries. FIA and the Indian community will remain grateful," Bansal acknowledges.

With expansion and bigger competitions from other airlines, Air India began to borrow in order to maintain its operations around the world. In 2013, Air India cleared some of its debts by selling and leasing back the newly acquired Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Also, as a part of the financial restructuring, the airline sold five of its eight Boeing 777-200LR aircraft to Etihad Airways.

In 2018, the Indian government tried to privatize Air India by selling 76% of its stake in the national carrier but failed because no private-sector buyer expressed interest in the state-owned airline. In January 2020, the Indian government approved a new proposal to divest 100% stake in Air India, which will be followed by the Expression of Interest (EoI) document to be issued this month.

Not many are happy about the national carrier of India becoming privately owned business. "We wish Air India a bright future and hope things will improve, and they will continue as an independent airline," Bansal says.

DBCT Chairman Anil Monga Provides Over 2 Million Meals to Migrant Laborers in India During COVID-19 Pandemic

Anil K Monga, chairman of Dream and Beauty Charitable Trust (DBCT), has been taking care of needs for the most marginal sector of society in Punjab for the past 25 years. So far, along with Monga's support, teamwork, trust, dedication and courage, the trust has provided 2 million meals to the needy with the help of Punjab police protection during these testing times. The endeavor will continue through the lockdown, because the trust understands that as long as these humans' basic need of food is not met, coronavirus may likely not impact their already slim chances of survival. The trust is urging NRIs to join in their cause.

He established the Heavenly Palace, Senior Citizen Care by DBCT which is registered under the Societies Act. Heavenly Palace is a 400 room facility with a 5-star ambience nestled over 14 acres of lush green lawns and pollution-free environment.



Free App Connects Doctors and Patients During Pandemic



Get easy access to expert medical opinions

- Choose from thousands of top doctors
- Review doctor profiles, expert articles and videos
- Connect with specialists, around you or

In an effort to overcome the healthcare challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, a healthcare tech company is offering a free app that connects patients with doctors and hospitals online using telemedicine for free.

Mundaii is a web-based free-market platform that enables patients to access medical opinions from health care providers. Patients can search through participating providers such as family doctors, specialists and dentists, and reach out to them to ask medical questions.

Patients can use the platform on a computer, smartphone or tablet to email, text message and video conference with their doctors, and they can use it to invite their doctor to access Mundaii free if their doctor isn't already a user.

Several medical societies including American College of Surgery, Society for Vascular Surgeons and American Academy of Dermatology are offering Mundaii.com as a free resource to their members.

Dr. Shiv Nikam, a vascular surgeon who also holds a master's degree in business administration from Columbia Business School, said Mundaii had been in development for close to five years.

"We did not think (the need for it) was going to come up so rapidly. The board made it free for everybody because of the coronavirus situation and the need for social distancing," Nikam said.

Although the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has relaxed medical privacy rules during the pandemic and is allowing health care providers to use apps such as Skype and FaceTime to communicate with patients, Nikam said some physicians might not be comfortable using those apps because they are not compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which protects patient privacy.

Mundaii is already HIPAA-compliant to protect patient privacy. The platform can also be used for consultations across hospitals.

Patients can also upload and store their medical records, including their medical/surgical history, list of medications, CT scans, X-rays, MRIs and more, on a secure cloud and give their doctor access to whichever records they choose.

For more information, visit <https://mundaii.com/web/>

GHAR WAPSI

Consul General Chakravorty called the mission a “pan-U.S. operation” which was fine tuned over “several video conferences” across American missions.



Passengers check-in at the Air India counter Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey on May 10, for a flight to Mumbai and Ahmedabad. A similar flight took off from the Newark airport on May 14. The flights were part of the Vande Bharat Mission, Government of India's biggest ever repatriation exercise to bring back Indians from abroad who are unable to travel home due to COVID-19 related international travel restrictions.



Passengers check-in at the Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey for the May 10 flight to Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Consul General of India in New York and Deputy Consul General Shatrughna Sinha talk to passengers at the Newark airport.

Air India officials check the temperature of a passenger at the Newark airport.

Several Indian citizens who were stranded in the U.S. because of the COVID-19 pandemic left for India on Air India flights from Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey on May 10 and May 14. The flights were part of the Vande Bharat Mission, Government of India's biggest ever repatriation exercise to bring back Indians from abroad who are unable to travel home due to COVID-19 related international travel restrictions.

The first Air India flight out of the United States left San Francisco on May 9. Consul General Chakravorty said the project management as a “pan-U.S. operation” fine tuned over “several video conferences” across American missions.

“These are evacuation flights, these are commercial flights, we are working closely with Air India. These are being chartered by the Ministry (of External Affairs). We hope that this will cater to the needs of the people here,” Chakravorty said.

The May 10 flight left Newark Liberty International Airport to Mumbai and Ahmedabad, while the May 14 flight headed to New Delhi and Hyderabad. One of the

passengers on the May 14 flight was India's former ambassador to the UN Syed Akbaruddin, who retired on April 30.

“Home is where the heart is...Farewell to New York & @UN... Heading home, today, with deep gratitude to all who r enabling r return to the lap of Mother India,” Akbaruddin tweeted.

Indian nationals who lost their jobs, those who are pregnant, or have visa or medical issues, and students whose universities were closed were given top priority to leave the country.

Sandeep Chakravorty, Consul General of India in New York, who was at the Newark airport, greeted the passengers. The consulate worked closely with the Ministry of External Affairs for the evacuation flight.

Passengers on the flight expressed relief that they were headed to a country that is managing its COVID-19 crisis far better than the U.S. “It's incredible how India is handling the crisis”, a final year IT student from Northeastern University told the Indo-Asian News Service.

Act, Write, Shoot, Register to Win Big Cash & Other Prizes! – It's Next Level Home Auditions!

With a nation-wide lockdown and social distancing it has become increasingly difficult for talent to get auditions for work! But all it takes is your mobile phone, your creative thought and your home, to strike gold.

Suniel Shetty has planned a novel challenge to engage the youth and set their creative juices flowing, while simultaneously allowing talent to showcase their skills without hindrance or worry. And in a time when auditions are next to impossible – it provides job opportunities to thousands of talent worldwide.

His company, FTC Talent Media & Entertainment Pvt Ltd and its team – with newly appointed CEO Omar Qureshi – (the well known movie expert) have put together 'FTCShorts' – a Short film challenge that can be created at home using your mobile phone. The movie must be shot within your home and you can act in it as well. You can also use your family members, pets, props – all that's available at home – if needed.

Registered talent of FTC Talent Media & Entertainment company can participate. That's not so difficult if you're an actor, filmmaker or editor. Even a beginner. Simply log onto www.FTCTalent.com and register and you can send in as many entries as you like. Remember, the registration is absolutely Free.

The rules are simple. Some of the primary ones being –

1. You must register as talent (actor, director, writer, editor, etc) to participate. Registration is free.
2. You can send in as many entries as you like but the work must be an original creation and filmed at home.
3. You must only use a mobile to shoot though you can use editing and sound support from available resources.
4. All work must be original and not offensive to any caste, creed, religion, political outfit or any nationality or race.

FTC has lined up mega cash prizes and giveaways too for the best entries. With the biggest cash awards going to the top three films (makers) and separate super exciting prizes of hampers as well – going to the best director, best actor, best sound and best editing, etc.

The winning films will be showcased on television and/or on streaming platforms. And selected winners will be given opportunities to work on an upcoming film project! They will also get a chance to assist on an FTC Talent Media & Entertainment production under an able director.

Now audition at home and get a chance to work as actor or assistant director on one of the big films being produced by FTC Talent Media & Entertainment Pvt. Ltd.

What more can you ask for? Go register, aim and shoot. And win!

