

# THE DIASPORA

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**BI-WEEKLY**

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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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## Indian Consulate, FIA Honor 5 Women on International Women's Day



New York City - March 8th, the Federation of Indian Associations of NY NJ CT NE held its 5th annual International Women's Day celebrations in association with the Consulate General of India NY at the India House, the Indian Consulate in New York City. On the eve of the occasion, as it has been a tradition, five Distinguished and iconic women were honored for their unique contributions in their respective fields.

The distinguished awardees for IWD2023 honoree are:

Hon. Deputy Mayor of New York City Ms. Meera Joshi - An attorney by profession, Ms. Joshi has been in the present tenure since January 2022 and accomplished several significant achievements, including Transport Innovations, Equity Cabinet and played a key role in implementing New York City's Vision Zero program — a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing traffic fatalities and injuries.

Ms. Radha Subramanyam - President, Chief Research & Analytics Officer - CBS- TV Net Corp - a well-known Media Executive and who has won numerous awards and accolades for her contributions to the media industry, including being recognized as one of the "100 Leading Women in the North American Auto Industry" by Automotive News.

Ms. Hina Patel PE PMP MBA - TEDx Speaker, Executive Leader leading a 200 employee engineering firm in three states. She has served a Fortune 500 Global Engineering Company for over two decades. An advocate of women's rights in workplaces Ms. Patel has worked towards gender equity and she is among the 2% women in management role in her respective career field.

Dr. Padmini Murthy - Global Health Leader AMWA - A passionate advocate for women's health and has worked tirelessly to improve access

to healthcare services, particularly for underserved women. She has initiated several global health programs that focus on women's health, such as the Women's Eye Health Task Force and the Global Health Council's Maternal, New born, and Child Health Initiative. Also recipient of the Elizabeth Blackwell Award.

Ms. Falu Shah - Grammy Award Winner - renowned Indian-American singer and songwriter, who has accomplished several significant achievements in her music career. Ms. Falu Shah was unable to attend the function as she was to perform in India at the inauguration of the 4th Cricket Test Match (between India and Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad), which was attended by Indian PM Narendra Modi along with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese.



The program was formally opened by Dr. Abha Jaiswal. She addressed the importance of recognizing the position of women in society and customizing a place to suit the needs of our women of today who will in turn make a difference by effective contributions to society. Smita miki Patel, FIA Vice President and the IWD Chair in her speech expressed her gratitude to the entire Consulate team for their continued support and partnership which has made the IWD program very prestigious and well received by the community. Consul General of India, Mr. Randhir Jaiswal mentioned that women in India are progressing and outpacing international comp sets. He was proud to share that 12.5% of the pilots in Indian aviation are women. This ratio is significantly lower and below 5% when considering other developed countries of the world. He congratulated the 2023 recipients and encouraged the community to engage in more meaningful and community-impacting events. Deputy Mayor



Srishti Narula, Dhruvi Shah, Anu Singh, Rohi Singh, Shalakra Savant, Sheela Dubal, Vaishali Parikh, Tina Vaidya, Nirha Pandya, and Sangita Patankar.

Distinguished attendees included Karishma Vaidya and FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, Drs Sudha and Sudhir Parikh (Chairman ParikhWorldwide Media), FIA first lady Trupti Desai and FIA President Kenny Desai, and the executive team consisting of Dr. Avinash Gupta, Saurin Parikh, MaheshDubal, Alok Kumar and Srujal Parikh along with Board members Kanubhai Chauhan and Dr. Parveen Pandhi.

International Women's Day,

celebrated globally on March 8, is dedicated to the accomplishments and progress of women in all aspects of society and celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women who continue to impact our society. The day also serves as a call to action for the continued fight for gender equality. FIA remains dedicated to the cause of embracing gender equity.



Hon. Meera Joshi addressing the gathering at the IWD



Dr. Padmini Murthy addressing the gathering at the IWD



Falu Shah expresses her gratitude via video message



Hina Patel addressing the gathering at the IWD



At the IWD, Dr. Abha Jaiswal, CG Randhir Jaiswal, and Ankur Vaidya were captured conversing



Radha Subramanyam addressing the gathering at the IWD





CG Randhir Jaiswal honored Radha Subramanyam, Meera Joshi, Dr. Padmini Murthy, and Hina Patel on International Women's Day (L to R)



Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi addressing the gathering at the IWD

FIA women committee members with the esteemed guests at the IWD celebration



CG Randhir Jaiswal, FIA committee members along with esteemed guests at the IWD celebration





# FIA, IAFPE Organize International Women's Day, Holi with 125 Seniors in MA

**T**he Federation of Indian Associations - New England (FIA-NE) and the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) jointly celebrated International Women's Day as well as Holi, the Springtime Indian festival of colors, at the Northborough Senior Center, located at 119 Bearfoot Road in Northborough, Massachusetts, on March 8. IAFPE was represented by Gope Gidwani, Arun Malhotra and Dr. Monie Malhotra. FIA-NE's team led by Abhishek Singh and other members, including Sanjay Gokhale, Rakesh Kavsari, Anand Sharma, Nick Wadhwa, Ajay Pulaparthi, Girish Soni, Raj Uppalapati, Gautam Patel, Archana Soni, Mukta Munjal, Jyoti Singh, Anu Raghav and Meenu Sharma managed the event and welcomed all the guests, especially nearly 125 senior citizens

who joined.

The event started with the singing of the American National Anthem. Massachusetts Senator Mike Moore then addressed the audience and conveyed his appreciation of contributions by women in society and his best wishes on International Women's Day. Following Senator Moore's remarks, Mukta Munjal held a panel discussion, with the participation of several highly accomplished women, including Meghan Kilcoyne, Massachusetts State Representative; Dr. Monnie Malhotra, Harvard-trained Neurologist who held medical faculty positions at Tufts and Brown University, and owner of Malco Art Center; Sandra Fryc, Shrewsbury School Committee member; Kendra Faldetta, Director of Northborough Senior Center; Archana Soni, entrepreneur and social worker;

Sonali Doshi, founder of "Rahat" a charity engaged in pandemic relief; Pratima Penumarthy, founder of Volunteering for Seniors Inc.; and Michelle Guerrero at Citizens Bank.

IAFPE and FIA-NE sponsored a sumptuous lunch for all attendees at the Senior Center, before felicitating all women with fresh long-stem roses and tiaras. Many of the senior ladies stated that they felt like Princesses. The big smiles and joy on everyone's faces were priceless and deeply satisfying to the organizers and all the volunteers.

Since International Women's Day also coincided with Holi, the Indian festival of colors marking the beginning of Spring, the attendees also participated in the celebration of Holi to conclude this joyous and memorable event.



*FIA New England, executive team at the IWD and Holi celebration.*



*IAFPE and FIA felicitated women with roses and tiaras at the IWD celebration.*



# FIA Hosts Farewell Reception for Vijay Shankar Prasad Visa Counselor at Indian Consulate, New York

**V**ijay Shankar Prasad, Visa Counsellor with the Consulate General of India in New York, was given a warm farewell by FIA to honor his exemplary service during his tenure in New York. The reception was given at Akbar Restaurant in Edison, New Jersey, and present were prominent community leaders and members of the Indian American Diaspora.

Present at the occasion were FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, TV ASIA Chairman H.R. Shah, Past President of FIA and Chairman of the Bihar Association Alok Kumar, FIA's Executive Vice President Dr. Avinash Gupta, Jt. Vice President Smita Miki Patel, General Secretary Nishi Dharmi,

Past President and Member of the Board of Trustees Srujal Parikh, Bipin Patel, Jayesh Patel, Dipak Patel, and Kanubhai Chauhan.

Speaking at the occasion, Vaidya lauded the efforts by Vijay Shankar and his team during the COVID lockdown, when the Indian Consulate in New York was the only place in the USA where emergency visas were issued, and especially the role they played during *Vande Bharat*, the flagship initiative of the Government of India launched in May 2020 to repatriate Indian citizens stranded abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vijay Shankar, during the height of the pandemic, was available in person at the airport for granting visas to travelers while sacrificing and

risking his safety.

Alok Kumar said it is important to acknowledge the sacrifices and risks that the NY Consulate team, including Vijay Shankar, took during the pandemic to ensure that critical services to needy travelers continued.

In the past, FIA spearheaded the selfless initiative with support from the Indian Consulate of providing complimentary consular services and traveled on most weekends with his team to all ten states that the Indian Consulate in New York covers on the East Coast to ensure that the communities there got services at their doorstep.



FIA committee members felicitating Vijay Shankar to recognize his exemplary service during his tenure in New York.

# Modi Urges Unity at G20 Summit

**P**rime Minister Narendra Modi in his opening address of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting talked about acknowledging the "deep global divisions" and that "multilateralism is in crisis".

In his virtual address, the PM stated that the G20 has the capacity to deliver concrete results and to build consensus, adding that several developing nations, while ensuring food and energy security for their citizens, are struggling with unsustainable debt.

To ease the challenges of economic resilience, development, growth, disaster resilience, terrorism, food and energy security, financial stability, transnational crime, and corruption, all look at G20, he said.

The Prime Minister also urged the G20 countries to build consensus on important global challenges and not to allow geopolitical tensions to affect

overall cooperation.

In his speech, PM Modi also highlighted the development goals of the developing nations and underlined "food and energy security" as among the most important issues before the Global South. He also added, "No group can claim global leadership without listening to those most affected by its decisions."

"As you meet in the land of Gandhi and the Buddha, I pray that you



will draw inspiration from India's civilizational ethos - to focus not on what divides us, but on what unites us," Modi said.

"We should not allow issues that we cannot resolve together to come in the way of those we can," he said.

Modi further said that the G20 has the capacity to build consensus and deliver concrete results. He also said several developing countries are "struggling with unsustainable debt" while trying to ensure food and energy security for their citizens, and G20 needs to work to ease these challenges.

"After years of progress, we are at risk today of moving back on the Sustainable Development Goals. Many developing countries are struggling with unsustainable debt while trying to ensure food and energy security for their people. They are also the ones most affected by global warming caused by richer countries," he said.



# New Jersey Gov. Unveils \$53B Budget, Renews Property Tax Rebates

**G**ov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat from New Jersey, unveiled a \$53.1 billion budget for the fiscal year 2024, about 5% more than the spending plan he signed for the current year. The budget includes billions more for public pensions, transportation, and other projects in addition to more school aid and a renewed program for property tax rebates.

"First it was the pandemic and now it is inflation. You've been paying more for everything from gas to groceries and your paycheck hasn't kept up," he said. "This entire budget is purpose-built to help you find your place in

the Next New Jersey by securing your place in the New Jersey of right now."

The governor announced his plan during a speech in the Democrat-led Legislature's Assembly chamber, an annual tradition that halted during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak. New Jersey's constitutional deadline to enact a balanced budget is June 30.

For a third straight year, it proposes making a full payment to the state's public pension fund. That would be about \$7 billion, up \$250 million from last year. It finances K-12 education according to a formula approved by the state Supreme Court, increasing funding by about 8% to \$10.75 billion.

The governor also wants to hold New Jersey Transit fares flat and set aside about \$1 billion for universal pre-K, up \$110 million over the current year.

The proposal includes no tax increases.

The current budget plan aims to renew a property tax rebate program for a second year, part of Murphy's push to cast the state as more affordable. The program carries a \$2 billion price tag and promises families making up to \$150,000 a rebate check of \$1,500. Those earning from \$150,000 to \$250,000 get \$1,000 in rebates. Continuing last year's assistance for renters, those making up to \$150,000 would get \$450 in assistance. The program would help an estimated 1.5 million households.

New Jersey has among the highest property taxes in the nation, averaging about \$9,500 a year.

Murphy's proposal must first progress through the Legislature, which can alter it before the governor signs it into law. All 120 lawmakers in the Legislature are on the ballot this November.



# US New Policy on Work Permits May Benefit Many Indian Students

**T**he United States has announced the expansion of premium processing of work authorisation for certain categories of international students, which is likely to benefit a lot of Indian students who came to study in the US STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services' statement.

"US Citizenship and Immigration Services announced on March 6 the expansion of premium processing for certain F-1 students seeking Optional Practical Training (OPT) and F-1 students seeking science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) OPT extensions who have a pending Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, and wish to request a premium processing upgrade," the statement read.

As per the official statement, the premium processing begins on March 6 and for some other categories, it would start on April 3.

F-1 students in these categories can now submit Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service, online. The most recent paper version of this form is still acceptable for mailing to USCIS.

"The availability of premium processing for certain F-1 students, in addition to the ease of online filing, will streamline the immigration experience for a great many international students," said USCIS Director Ur M Jaddou.

"The ongoing expansion of online filing is a priority for USCIS as we continue to create operational efficiencies and increase access to the immigration system for stakeholders, applicants, petitioners, requestors, and those we serve," he added.

Students wanting premium processing shouldn't file before these dates since the expansion of premium processing for certain F-1 students will happen in stages.

"USCIS immigration requests throughout the adjudication process.

There is no cost to set up a USCIS online account, which offers a variety of features, including the ability to communicate with USCIS through a secure inbox and respond to Requests for Evidence online," the statement read.

"Applicants who previously filed a paper Form I-765 and wish to file Form I-907 online to request premium processing should reference the USCIS Account Access Notice they received for the Online Access Code and details on how to link their paper-filed cases to their online account, or there will not be able to file Form I-907 online and will need file a paper Form I-907 with the Chicago lockbox," the statement read.

"As previously announced, the expansion of premium processing is part of USCIS' efforts to increase efficiency and reduce burdens to the overall immigration system, and is being implemented in a phased approach," the statement added.



# THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

## US Consulate Mumbai Handles Rush of Visas

"Our incredible team of consular officers have temporarily left their regular duties around the world, from the State Department in Washington DC to the US Consulate in Naha (Japan), to help out with visa operations in Mumbai," the US Consulate in Mumbai tweeted on February 28.

The consular officers assigned to Mumbai, according to an accompanying video, are Jessica, from Washington DC, who has been tasked with reducing visa interview wait time; Justin, from the US Consulate office in Okinawa, to facilitate travel to the US; Brooke, from the US Consulate in Hong Kong, to boost India-US business opportunities and Dan, whose mission is to support family reunification.

Indians have complained about the long wait time for processing US visas – which touched a high of 848 days last year to get a visa appointment in Mumbai.

Currently, the wait time for a B1 or B2 visa appointment at the US Consulate in Mumbai is 694 days, according to the US Embassy and Consulates website.

The Consulate General Mumbai currently adjudicates the most visa applications in India and is one of the largest visa operations in the world, the embassy said.

"It was a pretty rough couple of years in India. We have had a huge demand historically, even without a pandemic, across many visa categories. So not only visitors, but immigrants and students and workers, tech workers in particular. We're processing all that now. So, at this point we've put India in a different category from some of the others," US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services, Julie Stuft, told travel news platform Skift.

## Ramaswamy: Will Ban US-China Business, If Elected

Entrepreneur of Indian descent Vivek Ramaswamy, who has declared his run for the 2024 US presidential election, has made some bold commitments to conservative Republicans.

He said if he wins the election, he will completely ban American companies that are currently doing business with China, news agency PTI reported.

"I think it is important, to be honest. If we want to declare independence from China, that means we got to be willing to ban most US businesses from doing business in China until the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) falls or until the CCP radically reforms itself. Because there is no easy way out other than taking that band-aid and ripping it right off," he said.

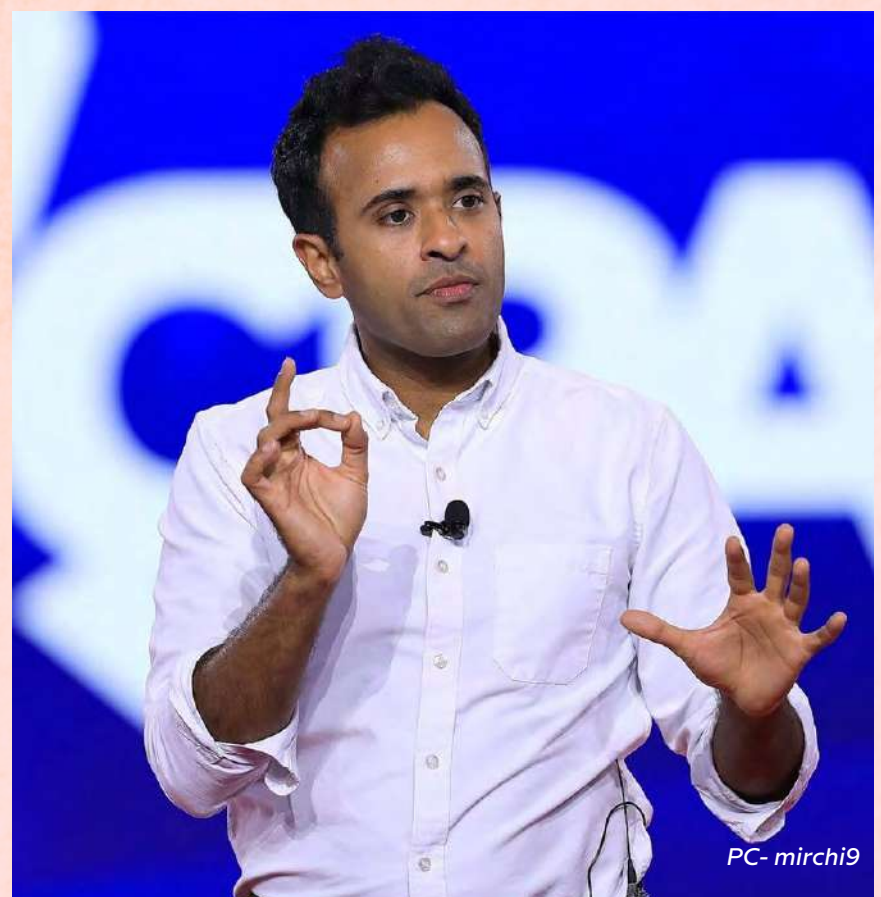
At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), the primary yearly gathering of the Republican Party, Ramaswamy made these statements.

Apart from that, the US Presidential candidate Ramaswamy also mentioned that "three secular religions" of race, biological sex, and climate "have put America in a chokehold".

He also advocated eliminating the Department of Education and the FBI if he is elected President of the United States in 2024.

"I have already said last week, the first agency we will shut down and need to shut down in the United States is the US Department of Education. It has no reason to exist. Never should have existed.

"And today, I am ready to announce the second government agency that I will shut down in this country we should have done this at least 60 years ago. It has hurt Republicans and Democrats alike. We are going to get it done as finally, it is time to shut down the FBI in America and create something new to take its place because we are done with the J Edgar Hoover legacy to let this be a self-governing nation again," he said.



PC- mirchi9



## Tragedy in New York: Indian-Origin Mom Dies, Daughter Critical

An Indian-origin woman has died while her daughter and the pilot instructor were injured in a small plane crash in the New York area when they were on a "demonstration flight", media reports said.

Roma Gupta, 63, and her daughter Reeva Gupta, 33, were on board the small plane on Sunday as its pilot reported smoke in the cockpit before crashing near Long Island homes, NBC New York TV channel reported.

Roma was killed when the four-seater single-engine Piper Cherokee plane crashed while returning to Long Island's Republic Airport, where it had also taken off.

Her daughter Reeva and the 23-year-old pilot instructor are in hospital with severe burns, according to the report.

"The two patients critically injured, severely burned, to my knowledge they were pulled from the plane from a civilian," North Lindenhurst Fire Dept. Chief Kenny Stallone said.

Oleh Dekaylo, the attorney for Danny Waizman Flight School said the pilot had all his ratings and certifications, and the plane involved in the crash had just passed two stringent inspections, the most recent last week.

"It was a demonstration flight, an introductory flight to see if people are interested" in flying lessons, Dekajlo, the lawyer for Danny Waizman Flight School, told the channel.

Suffolk County police say the pilot was on a tourist flight. The flight path shows the plane went over the South Shore beaches. Then the pilot reported smoke in the cabin, which he radioed into Republic Airport air traffic controllers, the News12 New Jersey website reported.

The National Transportation Safety Board will continue the investigation to determine the cause of the crash. The Federal Aviation Administration is also investigating the crash.

A GoFundMe created for the Gupta family has raised more than \$60,000.



## Community News

### BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Robbinsville, NJ Donates \$25,000 to Embrace Relief Foundation to Support Earthquake Relief Efforts in Türkiye

In response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Robbinsville, New Jersey organized a special prayer assembly on February 25, 2023, for those affected by the humanitarian crisis. The community members at BAPS offered support for the people of Türkiye through prayer and a generous donation of \$25,000 through its humanitarian relief arm, BAPS Charities, to the Embrace Relief Foundation.

As hundreds of thousands are fleeing the disaster zones and being displaced from their homes, Embrace Relief Foundation has been continuously responding to the essential needs of those affected. The donation will aid relief efforts in three key areas: food distribution, housing assistance, and emergency supply distribution. At the core of Embrace Relief's mission is delivering sustainable solutions to achieve immediate and lasting improvements in situations of humanitarian emergency.

The CEO of Embrace Relief Foundation, Osman Dulgeroglu, expressed gratitude towards BAPS for organizing the event and for their generous donation. "I am truly overwhelmed by your generosity and cannot express how I feel about your unwavering support during this difficult time. Thank you for your support. It will bring hope and comfort to many who have lost everything." Members from Turkish Cultural Center, New Jersey, and Central Jersey Community Center were also present to take part in the event.





## NEWSMAKERS

# US Senate Confirms Arun Subramanian as SDNY Judge

**U**S Senator Charles Schumer announced the confirmation of Arun Subramanian to serve as a District Judge on the prestigious United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. Schumer forwarded the name of Arun Subramanian for the Southern District of New York to the Biden-Harris administration and championed his nomination.

"Arun Subramanian is a first-rate legal mind and a steadfast consumer protection expert who has spent his legal career defending consumers and individuals injured by unfair and illegal practices. He has also protected whistle-blowers and defended victims of trafficking in child pornography. Moreover, his experience clerking for the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and two other federal judges, is an impressive addition to his broad and deep legal expertise," said US Senator Charles Schumer.

"Arun Subramanian is the epitome of the American Dream and a history maker: the child of hard-

working immigrants from India, he will become the first South Asian on the Southern District bench, in an area with a deep and diverse South Asian community. I was proud to recommend Subramanian to President Biden and I've worked to confirm him as soon as possible. I am confident he will bring remarkable legal talent and experience, integrity and professionalism to the federal

court. He will follow the law where it takes him, in the pursuit of fair and impartial justice," Schumer added.

Arun Subramanian was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1979. His parents immigrated to America from India in the early 1970s.

He was also appointed by Chief Justice John Roberts to serve on the court's Advisory Committee for the Federal Rules of Evidence.



# RISE Citizen Award Presented to Dr. Jag Sheth

**P**adma Bhushan Dr. Jag Sheth received the RISE Citizen Award at the RISE World Summit's closing plenary on February 3, 2023. The award acknowledges Dr. Sheth's significant contributions to social development.

The RISE Awards honour extraordinary individuals who have undertaken exceptional initiatives for their communities and the world.

Sheth is the Charles H. Kellstadt Professor of Business at Emory University's Goizueta Business School. He is well-known throughout the world for his scholarly contributions in consumer behaviour, relationship marketing, competitive strategy, and geopolitical analysis.

"I'm truly humbled to receive this award," Dr. Sheth told NRI Pulse.

"This award is meaningful to me for two reasons. First, the RISE World Summit is a collaborative effort between three institutions that can save human lives – the government, industry and society. Getting together collaboratively is the only way to sustain UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The second – if you take a grain of wheat and make it into a loaf of bread, the value add is only three times – agricultural commodity. If you take a rough diamond, polish it, a good diamond cutter will get 15-20 times the value. But if you take a human being and mentor, nurture, educate – the value add is infinite. And that is the whole business we are in. Our business is to make ordinary people extraordinary. I'm very passionate about that mission, which

is why I'm so grateful to receive this award."

He also added that his wife, Madhu Sheth has been a "great partner" and together they had contributed a lot to society. "Giving back is the only way to make life meaningful," he said.



PC-jagsheth



# Indian Americans Appointed to US President's Export Council

**U**S President Joe Biden has announced his intention to appoint two Indian Americans to his powerful Export Council, which serves as the primary national advisory committee on international trade.

According to a White House press release, the president announced a list of members he intends to appoint to the council.

Punit Renjen, former CEO of Deloitte Consulting, and Rajesh Subramaniam, CEO and president of FedEx, are among the names on the president's list of potential members for the influential President's Export Council.

The council will be headed by Mark Edin, chairman of Kastle Systems.

More than two dozen leaders from the corporate sector, labour, real

estate, national security and law, have been tapped into the President's Export Council.

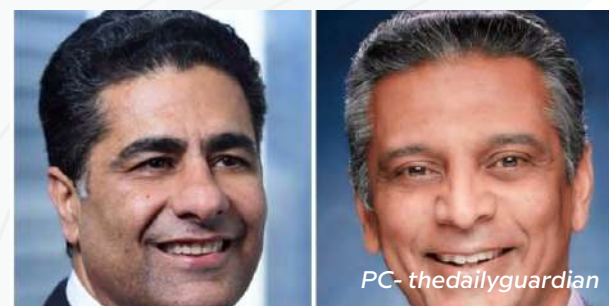
Prominent among them are Karen S. Lynch, president and CEO of CVS Health; John Lawler, the Chief Financial Officer of Ford; Gareth Joyce, CEO at Proterra; Brett Hart, President of United Airlines; Beth Ford, president and CEO of Land O'Lakes; and Qualcomm CEO Cristiano R. Amon.

"The Council advises the President on government policies and programmes that affect US trade performance; promotes export expansion; and provides a forum for discussing and resolving trade-related problems among the business, industrial, agricultural, labour, and government sectors," the White House said.

Under Renjen's leadership Deloitte

launched WorldClass, a global effort to prepare 100 million underprivileged people for a world of opportunity, based on the belief that when society thrives, business thrives, according to the White House release.

Subramaniam is a proud 2023 recipient of the *Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award*, the highest civilian award presented by the President of India to the Indian diaspora in recognition of outstanding achievements in India and abroad, the White House said.



PC- thedailyguardian

# US President Nominates Ajay Banga for World Bank Post

**F**ormer Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga has been nominated to lead the World Bank by US President Joe Biden after current CEO David Malpass indicated plans to stand down early.

Banga, is an Indian-American vice chairman with the equity firm General Atlantic. He was previously the CEO of Mastercard.

Banga has "critical experience

mobilizing public-private resources to tackle the most urgent challenges of our time, including climate change," said Biden in a statement.

Banga's nomination comes amid a push for development lenders to revamp and address global problems like environmental issues more effectively.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen earlier said that lenders' core models,



PC-swarajyamag

where countries borrow to make specific investments addressing developmental constraints, is "insufficient to meet the moment."

# Indian-Origin Judge Appointed Associate Justice of District Court In US

**A**n Indian-origin judge, Shama Hakim Mesiwala, has been unanimously confirmed as an associate justice of a district court of appeal in the US state of California.

Mesiwala's appointment as an associate justice of the Third District Court of Appeal in California's Sacramento city was confirmed on February 14 by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, Patricia Guerrero, according to a press release by the Judicial Council of California.

"Judge Mesiwala was confirmed by unanimous vote of the three-member commission, which included Chief Justice Guerrero (Chair); Attorney General Rob Bonta; and Acting Presiding Justice Ronald B. Robie," the press release said.

Mesiwala has been an adjunct professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law since 2013 and was a judicial attorney at the Third District Court of Appeal from 2004 to 2017, the press release said.

She also served as a staff attorney at the Central California Appellate Program from 1999 to 2004 and as an attorney at the Office of the Federal Public Defender, Eastern District of California in 1999.



PC-ndtv



# Tejal Mehta Appointed to Key Judicial Post in US District Court

**T**ejal Mehta, an Indian-American woman judge, took the oath of office as the first district court justice in the US state of Massachusetts. She pledged to have a significant positive impact on society and treat people with compassion.

She will hold the position of Ayer District Court's first justice.

"I'm confident that with her leadership ... that the best is yet to come for the Ayer District Court," said Fortes, chief justice of the District Court, who selected Mehta for the position and swore her in during the

ceremony.

"As a lawyer, you can help people, but you can only help them to a point," Mehta said, adding that "As a judge, you can do so much more and get to the root of issues and talk to people in such a way that really gets through to them." "I have seen the same hopes and despairs in every court I have sat in as a travelling judge," Mehta, who started her career in civil work, said.

"But when you are the first justice, then you can really get to know the community and make a real impact." Judge Margaret Guzman, who has served as the first justice of the

Ayer District Court for five years, praised the selection of Mehta as the court's first justice, describing her as someone "who will preserve the pattern of treating people fairly." "She makes very hard decisions that have to be made," Guzman said.

"She doesn't ridicule anybody, she's thoughtful, she tells people what her decisions are about. She's what you want a judge to be. To make the right decisions, but to do it in a way that when a person leaves, they don't have to like what happened, but at least they understand what happened," the report added.



India Giving Day

Powered by India Philanthropy Alliance



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philanthropists!**

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is back in 2023!

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CALM  
YOURSELF



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# 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

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## 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

[www.venkateswaratemple.org](http://www.venkateswaratemple.org)

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# Farzi

(Prime Video Series)

**Indulgent Length and Pace  
Takes the Sheen Off This  
Otherwise Engaging Thriller**

**Creators** Raj and Dk

**Cast** Shahid Kapoor, Bhuvan Arora, Vijay Sethupathi,  
Kay Kay Menon, Rashi Khanna, Amol Palekar, Zakir  
Hussain, Regina Cassandra, Kubbra Sait

prime video



Photo: Farzi

This crime thriller revolves around the high stakes and dark world of counterfeit currency, with an antihero who is desperate to make it big and a police officer who is hell-bent on busting this business.

It is mostly engaging and thrives on its dark humor and its star cast. But bringing in additional angles of emotional/relationship drama, rich-poor social commentary, etc unfortunately adds length and hinders the pace of what could otherwise have been a sharp and crisp drama.

The story, when it starts, felt a bit cliched and the first 3 episodes give a been-there-seen-that vibe. A broken hero who's desperate to make it big as an inherent talent, learns quickly, et al.

All these tropes are tried and tested which don't feel new at all.

The story picks pace after 3 episodes, gets better, and is more engrossing but the constant peeve remains the meandering narrative.

It's the signature treatment of Raj and Dk which comes to the rescue and ensures it

remains mostly engaging. The humor works like a charm. While Family man didn't have much of it, here it has been served in sizable portions. The beauty of it is that it works, even though it's frequently used.

The integration of dark humor into the character of Michael played by Vijay Sethupathi works partly due to the actor's timing and partly due to the effective writing and witty dialogues.

Shahid Kapoor is terrific as Sunny and gets meatier portions. The fact that even the cliched portions didn't bore me is due to his performance. He, I feel, is at his best when he plays such antihero-hero roles. It fits him like a glove. Sunny's character feels nothing new for him, but the way he goes on with his job is commendable. His interactions with Firoz played by Bhuvan Arora are so fun to watch.

Rashi Khanna plays the typical heroine role with some integration into the plot line of the show. But I wonder, when will makers stop adding marriage subplots to the female characters? It's age-old, stale,

and unimpressive.

Kay Kay Menon is super impressive and Bhuvan Arora is a pleasure to watch.

All said, the action is clunky and doesn't have that finesse of what was seen in Family man. Even if the protagonist is a common man, there's a lot of scope for better-designed choreography, but it feels lazy and more like an afterthought rather than having a properly choreographed action sequence.

The series feels extremely self-indulgent with 8 episodes of 1 hr each, making it a chore to watch. The content doesn't warrant a 1-hour runtime and prods along lazily. It would have been better with a run time of 40-45 min each episode or may have winded up in 6 episodes of an hour each. Some of the subplots could have been cut off and the series would have been sharper and more impactful.

Overall, it is engaging enough that you can't shun it but lengthier than it should have been.



Photo: Farzi



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★★★★★

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# The Romantics

(Netflix Series)

**More than a review, these are just gushing thoughts painstakingly condensed to a readable length.**

# THE ROMANTICS

Photo: The Romantics

## The Emotions

Being utterly romantic and a die-hard Yash Chopra fan, I decided to watch this series the day it dropped in, being Valentine's Day, a perfect watch for the day.

For a GenX, who spent their teen years completely enamoured by Yash Chopra's idea of romance and love, the first two episodes were pure emotions. The intense nostalgia was overwhelming, for it not only spoke about the films that we were smitten with but also brought back so many memories and emotions associated with each of them.

The Chandni obsession, which made my mom go crazy when we repeatedly watched it on VCRs, the obsession that included the songs that were a rage, the wardrobes that we drooled after and tried to ape to whatever extent possible, the dream like locations, the unparalleled and never seen before idea of wooing, doting, incorrigible love, the idea of ideal love that we were hopelessly in love with!

Love for Lamhe, which has only toned down to the extent of ardent admiration even after decades. I still find it to be Anil Kapoor's most subtle and underrated performance of that era.

Fondness for DDLJ, a film that took the world by storm. The film that struck a chord so bad that back then I couldn't watch it ever without shedding oodles of tears.

Tenderness for Silsila, a beautiful film with intense emotions, passionate love and the complex dynamics. Not to mention the superlative cast and outstanding

performances that have me floored no matter how many times I watch it.

## The Analysis

The series begins with how Yash Chopra, the Icon, made his beginning, a peep into his personal life, the man he was, his passion for film making and goes on to tell us the journey of Yash Raj Films and the legacy taken to heights by Aditya Chopra, the reclusive Movie Magnate.

There are tens of interviews by close family, friends and film stars including Pamela Chopra, Uday Chopra, Rani, Hrithik Roshan, Abhishek Bachchan, Ranveer Singh, Shahrukh, Kajol, Karan Johar, Jaideep Sahni, Rishi Kapoor (which happened to be his last interview) and many more, regaling adorable and interesting anecdotes. Actors, directors, writers, casting directors, film journalists give a wide ranging 180 degree view.

These are interspersed with old interviews, personal pics, videos, and many endearing behind the scene footage too.

It gives us a mind-blowing peek at how passionate & pragmatic Aditya Chopra was about films and figures and a hilarious one about how grumpy he was since childhood and probably still is (of course that's not mentioned in the series though).

We get to know engrossing trivia, umpteen back stories, and most importantly, an insightful view of how and what YRF has been able to accomplish and what more it aims for. It triggers an admiration for YRF's vision, the massive institutionalization of

filmmaking that it has been able to do, the number of actors that it has launched, and the army of young professionals that it is nurturing.

The sheer number of films that have come from the YRF banner is not only staggering but also the range of their genres, the varying scales (right from big-budget jazzy ones to small gems) is admirable.

I do have my unsubstantiated doubts about how institutionalization might have somewhere hampered or stunted the passion and soul that films earlier had. But from a different angle, it does seem something worth applauding. And for now, I would like to dwell on that.

The first two episodes trigger an intense nostalgia, an overwhelming urge to see films that have a soul like Yash Chopra's films, and a strange gloom that it wouldn't ever be the same again.

Kudos to acclaimed documentary filmmaker and director of the series, Smriti Mundhra for managing to trigger those emotions and being able to condense the stories into 4 episodes. But everyone knows that her most major feat is convincing Aditya Chopra to come in front of the camera.

Without his input, the story of Yash Raj films and the ode to Yash Chopra would have been incomplete.

I think the series is a must-watch for all those who love Hindi cinema. It makes you immensely proud, nostalgic and for a few hours takes you to an era gone by. Sigh!



# Actor Tom Sizemore, dies at 61

**A**ctor Tom Sizemore, known as much for his struggles with drug addiction and run-ins with the law as for his tough-guy roles in such films as "Saving Private Ryan" and "Black Hawk Down," died on Friday at age 61, said his manager, Charles Lago.

Sizemore, who was hospitalized in critical condition after suffering a brain aneurysm on Feb. 18, died in his sleep at a hospital in Burbank, California, Lago said.

Several of the tough guy roles that Tom Sizemore played in the beginning of his career featured a compelling intensity. Rugged and green-eyed, Sizemore starred in a number of movies that are now regarded as classics, with Saving Private Ryan from 1998 possibly enjoying the most fame.

Sizemore studied theater at Wayne State University and

Temple University. After a period of waiting tables in New York City while trying to carve out a career, he started getting cast in an impressive streak of celebrated

films.

Sizemore's brother Paul and his twin sons Jayden and Jagger, 17, were at his side when he died, according to his manager.



PC- Chris Polk/FilmMagic

# Courteney Cox, Michael B Jordan Honored with a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

**C**ourteney Cox, who played Monica Geller in the popular "Friends" sitcom was honored with a Hollywood Walk of Fame star. She was joined by cast members Jennifer Aniston and Lisa Kudrow.

"To be friends with Courteney is to be family with Courteney, and she is responsible for all of that from the beginning," Aniston said during the ceremony. "When we met her, she was immediately inclusive, warm, loving, interested in everything about you and you know I was really nervous to meet

her because I was a huge fan."

Kudrow said Cox's influence "really set us up to become one of the closest, most loving and supportive casts in, I'll say, the history of television."

Cox earlier told Variety, "'Friends' taught me the importance of camaraderie and sticking together."

"These friendships were at the most important time in my life, and we went through so many things together," she said. "And it just taught me about being there for each other — I know, that's the song: 'I'll be there for you.' But it's true."

Michael B. Jordan received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Ryan Coogler and Jonathan Majors, who have previously collaborated, sent congratulations to the Creed III movie's director and actor while considering Jordan's career trajectory.

"My emotions are actually all over the place, I'm seeing so many people that I want to kind of get to and hug and connect with and show my appreciation," Jordan said, beaming.

"I want to give the love right

back, you know? But then I'm also just taking a moment just to be like, 'Damn. OK, wow, that happened. I'm here!'"

"I didn't think it would hit me this much, but as it all started to come together and we start to see it and reality starts to set in, the importance (and) the weight of the moment... you really realize it," he added, saying that he couldn't imagine anything that would top the moment. Although he noted that only his upcoming box office opening "comes somewhere in the ballpark."



PC of Cox- Damian Dovarganes/AP



PC of Jordan - theprint



# RRR's 'Naatu Naatu', 'The Elephant Whisperers' for Oscar's Historic Win

**I**n the 95th Academy Awards, India shines as Naatu Naatu from RRR wins Best Original Music and The Elephant Whisperers wins Best Documentary Short Film.

While accepting the award, Song composer MM Keeravaani said, "I grew up listening to Oscars and here I am with the Oscars. In a musical speech, he said, "There was only one wish on my mind...RRR has to win ...the pride of every Indian...and it must put me on the top of the world."

PM Modi congratulates team RRR for Naatu Naatu's historic win at the Oscars. He said the popularity of Naatu Naatu is global. In a tweet, PM Modi wrote, "Exceptional! The popularity of 'Naatu Naatu' is global. It will be a song that will be remembered for years to come. Congratulations to @mmkeeravaani, @boselyricist and the entire team for this prestigious honour. India is elated and proud."

The Elephant Whisperers documentary directed by debutante Kartiki Gonsalves, reveals an enduring friendship between two abandoned elephants and their caregivers.

"I stand here today to speak for the sacred bond between us and



our natural world, for the respect of indigenous communities, and empathy towards other living beings we share space with and finally, for coexistence," Gonsalves said in her acceptance speech.

"Thank you to the Academy for recognising our film, highlighting indigenous people and animals.. To Netflix for believing in the power of this... To Bomman and Belli for sharing their sacred tribal wisdom to Guneet, my producer. "My mentor and my entire team and finally, to my mother, father and sister who are up there somewhere and you are the centre of my universe, to my motherland India," she added.



## Deepika Padukone Introduces 'Naatu Naatu' At Oscars 2023

**D**eepika Padukone's nomination to present at the Oscars in 2023 marks a proud milestone for India.

She graced the Oscars 2023 stage to announce the performance of RRR's 'Naatu Naatu' and even gave a special mention briefing the audience about the song amidst loud cheers.

She said, "An irresistibly catchy chorus, electrifying beats and killer dance moves to match have made this song a global sensation. It plays during a pivotal scene in 'RRR', a movie about the friendship between real-life Indian

revolutionaries Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem. In addition to being sung in Telugu and illustrating the film's anti-colonialist themes, it's also a total banger!"

She added, "It's earned millions of views on Youtube and Tik Tok. Has audiences dancing in movie theatres all around the world and is also the first song ever from Indian production to be nominated for an Oscar. Do you know Naatu? Because if you don't, you're about to. From the film RRR this is Naatu Naatu." The performance was followed by a standing ovation.



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