

# THE DIASPORA

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Federation of Indian Associations - New England. 501(C)3.

**BI-WEEKLY**

Issue: 61



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India's Foreign Minister attends Ambedkar anniversary at Indian Consulate, NY



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## Community News

# FIA NEW ENGLAND ORGANIZES A PATRIOTIC DAY CELEBRATION IN THE PRESENCE OF INDIA'S G7 ENVOY, SURESH PRABHU



FIA team with Mrinalini Darswal, Suresh Prabhu (Center sitting) Abhishek Singh, Kota, Sandeep Asija

**F**IA New England has celebrated Patriot's Day and organized a meet and greet with the parliamentarian and ex-railway minister, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, in Grafton-Boston, Massachusetts. A chartered accountant by profession, Mr. Suresh Prabhu has held several government and semi-government positions, which include the important ministries

as Union Cabinet Minister for Railways, Civil Aviation, and Commerce and Industry. He is also the founding Chancellor of the "Rishihood" university in India.

At the outset, Mr. Abhishek Singh, President of FIA-NE, along with the executive team, extended a warm welcome and thanked the guests and dignitaries for their presence during the celebration of Patriot Day, National Anthem

of America, followed by India National Anthem to mark the ceremonial start to the celebration. Both countries' flags were unfurled and an one minute of silence and remembrance were given to our patriots.

Also present were Dr. Ms. Mrinalini Darswal-IAS cadre, Mr. Himanshu Lal-IPS cadre, and Sahil Aggarwal-Vice Chancellor of Rishihood University.

The event was attended

by the community members including Ranjini & Anil Sehgal of Ekal (a Non-Profit Organization committed to free education in India and Nepal), Mr. Subbu Kota & Sandeep Asija-Philanthropist and Entrepreneur, Kaushik Patel (VHPA), Mohan Nannanpani (Team-Aid), Kumar Subramaniam (Seva International), Vikas Deshpande, prominent community leader,

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Abhigyan Satyam-Asst Professor at Harvard University.

Also in attendance were Ms. Shova Sharma and Mr. Sanjay Gokhale, Vice Presidents of FIA-NE, Dipak Rathore, Joint Secretary of FIA-NE, and Gaurav Dixit - Community Chair of FIA-NE, Pankaj Adaval, Dipak Sharma, Anand Sharma, Raj Gupta, Ashwani Virmani, Gautam Patel, and Raj Uppala.

Shri Suresh Prabhu gave a captivating speech and held the attention of the audience throughout the entire speech. He lauded the US education system for its versatility and dynamism and said it is linked to ground realities and has been an instrumental factor in making the USA the world's biggest economy and a superpower. He lamented the fact that education in India has mostly been regimented

and that this has manifested in universities as well.

He further went on to add that he has been in public service for 40 years now, of which 26 years have been in politics. He said he intends to retire from politics and devote time to serving the cause of education in India. It is with this thought that Rishihood University has been founded. The

idea is to amalgamate history with modern challenges and opportunities, which will go a long way towards imparting a good education system.

Dr. Mrinalini Darswal, who is also a gold medalist in medical and surgery and is currently pursuing a course at Harvard University, spoke briefly. She said that education for her and her

family has been a life-changing experience and said that she is here to learn and understand from the gathering.

At the conclusion of the event, the guests and dignitaries were felicitated by the community leaders Manil and Nipun Asija and FIA executive members Prashant Sharma, Kashish Khurana and Shunak Ketkar.



*Mrinalini Darswal ji honored by FIA Vice president Shova Sharma and FIA executive team*



*Suresh Prabhu ji honored by FIA Vice President Sanjay Gokhale and FIA executive team*

# Shradhanjali for Yash Paul Soi

**F**IA held a Shradhanjali honoring the memory of Late. Sh. Yash Paul Soi - Past President, Vice Chairman Emeritus and one of the founding members of FIA - on Sunday, April 24, 2022 at Royal Albert Palace, New Jersey.

People turned out to pay respects to the departed soul. FIA president, Mr. Kenny Desai, paid tribute and said that Mr. Soi, a friend, a selfless and devoted worker, has left a huge void which will be difficult to fill. He also mentioned that the late Mr. Soi was very happy with the way FIA had progressed and that his departure had been a great loss to the community.

Mr. Ankur Vaidya- Chairman of FIA, paid heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and said that he has the highest regard for his dedicated services, spoke about his enthusiastic approach towards work and fondly remembered his last meeting with him.

Padma Shri Mr. H.R. Shah said that his association with Mr. Soi was over 50 years old and it was indeed a sad day to pass by when he is no longer with us.

Mr. Chandrakant Trivedi of FIA said it's hard to believe that

Mr. Soi is no longer with us and sang a few lines from a famous Mohammad Rafi song, "Jeena Teri Gali Mein." Amongst those who paid tributes were Mr. Anurag Kumar of BAJANA, Mr. Nitin Vyas of the World Vegan Association, Mr. Sunil Hali of Divya Bhaskar, Chavi Dharayan - Ex Vice President FIA, Seema Jagtiani, Priti Patel of the Indo American Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Peter Kothari and Mr. Rajan Chugh.

Present, amongst others, were Mr. Srujal Parikh-Board of Trustee FIA, Mr. Alok Kumar-Ex President FIA, Mr. Himanshu- Vice President FIA, Mr. Parveen Bansal, Sec FIA, and other prominent members of the community.

Mr. Umesh Patel sang soulful bhajans during the event. Ms Sapna Patel was the officiant who carried her responsibilities with and poise.

It was an afternoon of shared fond memories, honoring the life and remembrance of the excellent community work done over the years by Late Sh. Yash Paul Soi.

*Photo: Vijay Shah*



*Kenny Desai and Padma Shri H.R. Shah addressing the gathering.*



*Parveen Bansal, Chandrakant Trivedi and Sapna Patel addressing the gathering.*

# THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS



Renowned philanthropist from Pakistan Bilquis Bano Edhi, the wife of renowned humanitarian and philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi, passed away on April 15, 2022, at the age of 74 after a brief hospitalisation. In 2015, she received the Mother Teresa Memorial International Award for Social Justice. She headed the Edhi Foundation, and together with her husband, their charity has saved over 16,000 unwanted babies. She also played a key role in the return of the Indian National Geeta to the homeland in 2015. In a tweet, Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi extended condolences and stated that she impacted the lives of people all across the world.



"Forty-one civilians, mainly women and children, were killed and 22 others were wounded in air strikes by Pakistani forces near the Durand Line in Khost province," Shabir Ahmad Osmani, director of information and culture in Khost, told AFP on April 17.



NASA used holoportation to virtually teleport a surgeon hundreds of kilometres into space. It's the first time in history that a Human on earth met an astronaut as if they were standing right next to them.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited US to attend the annual spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. During her visit, she also held a host of bilateral meetings and participated in multilateral meetings, and also interacted with several top officials of the Biden administration. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met Mary Schapiro, vice chairman of the Climate Finance Leadership Initiative on April 19 and spoke about her vision of developing GIFT City, India's First Operational Smart City. Schapiro, who is also the former chairman of the US Securities and Exchange Commission, concurred that it is an opportune time for India to play a leadership role in shaping global climate finance trends.

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Photo: India west



Eleven-year-old Indian American Madhvi Chittoor now appears in the Guinness World Records as the youngest music producer.

Photo: ndtv



Lt. General Manoj Pande will take over as the next Army chief from General M M Naravane on April 30, becoming the first-ever officer commissioned in the Corps of Engineers to head the 12-lakh strong force.

Photo: India west



Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth on April 21 offered prayers at Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath Temple. The Mauritius Prime Minister is on an eight-day visit to India to strengthen bilateral ties.



Photo: hindustantimes

UK PM Boris Johnson, was on a two-day official tour to India, visited Sabarmati Ashram, Akshardham Temple and some other places in Gujarat. He tried his hand at spinning the charkha and left a note in the visitors' book at Mahatma Gandhi ashram. He wrote, "It is an immense privilege to come to the ashram of this extraordinary man and to understand how he mobilised such simple principles of truth and non-violence to change the world for the better." Boris Johnson was accompanied by Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel and the UK High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis during his visit to Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar. Johnson was accorded a unique welcome at Gujarat Biotechnology University (GBU) as a *safa* (pagh) was wrapped around his head by a swami from Maninagar Swaminarayan Sansthan. He also inaugurated a JCB plant at Halol in Panchmahals district of Gujarat. On the second day of his visit, Boris Johnson was accorded a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi. Johnson was received by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Presidential palace. Later, both leaders held extensive talks at Hyderabad House in the capital with an aim to further expand cooperation in areas of defence, trade and clean energy.

# 'Russia Invades Ukraine - Aftermath'

**US President Joe Biden has said Russia's war in Ukraine amounted to "genocide," accusing President Vladimir Putin of trying to "wipe out the idea of even being a Ukrainian."**



Photo: indiatoday

**The US Treasury earlier this month blocked Russia from paying \$650 million due on two bonds using funds held at American banks. Russia has instead tried to pay in rubles, but credit rating agencies have said this would constitute a default. According to leading economists, Russia's debt default will be one of the hardest in history to resolve and could see the US seize the central bank's assets, Though Russia still has a grace period in which to make dollar payments on its foreign bonds, analysts say a default is more likely to happen.**

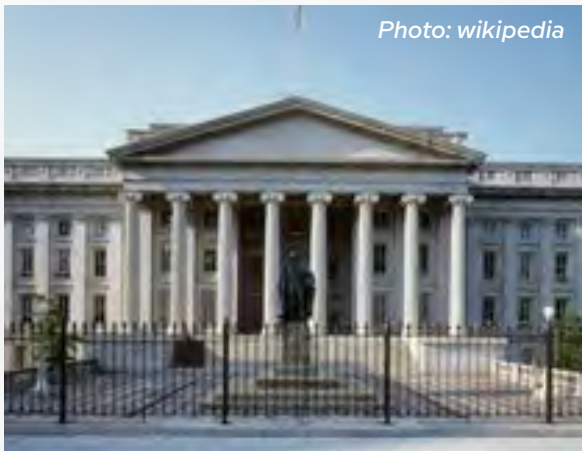


Photo: wikipedia



Photo: ndtv

**Russian state television has declared that World War - III has already started after the sinking of its naval vessel Moskva in the Ukraine war. Though Russia said this was damaged after a fire, Ukraine claimed the credit of destroying the flagship vessel of Moscow's Black Sea Fleet through its Neptune missile.**



**The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Wednesday, 20 April said that more than five million people have fled Ukraine since the start of the Russian invasion.**



Photo: reuters

**Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States have imposed outright bans on Russian oil purchases following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but 27 members of the European Union have been unable to agree on the embargo.**

# 2 Sikh Men Attacked in Alleged Hate Crime In New York

The attack on the two men, who were out on a stroll early in the morning, is said to have occurred at the same spot where a member of the community was attacked a few days back

**O**n Tuesday, April 12, two Sikh men were assaulted in an alleged hate crime in the Richmond Hills neighbourhood of New York, US.

The Consulate General of India in New York has condemned the assault, terming it "deplorable," and said they were in touch with the police who are investigating this incident. One person has been arrested in connection with the crime, it said.

According to local media reports, two suspects hit the men with a pole and removed their turbans.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, condemning

the attack, tweeted: "Another hateful attack against our Sikh community in Richmond Hill. Both individuals who were responsible must be brought to justice. Anyone with information about this should immediately

contact @NYPDnews."

NY State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, the first Punjabi American ever elected to New York State Office, said that there has been an "alarming 200per

*Photo: news.yahoo*



cent rise in hate crimes against the Sikh community in recent years".

"I spoke to the NYPD soon after both of this week's incidents against my Sikh American family. I am calling for both incidents to be investigated as hate crimes, and that the perpetrators be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Ms Rajkumar said in a statement.

"We will educate all on Sikh culture so that everyone knows as I do the generosity and kindness embedded in the Sikh American community," Ms Rajkumar, who is a former Director of Immigration for NY State, added.

## WHO Traditional Medicine Center opens in India

**T**he World Health Organization launched its Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India on Tuesday, which will aim to unlock its potential by blending ancient practices with modern science.

On Tuesday, April 19th, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar. The WHO chief, Tedros Ghebreyesus, and the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Shri Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, were present at the event.

The WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine is a recognition of India's contribution

and potential in this field. India's traditional medicine system is not limited only to treatment. It is a holistic science of life. India takes this partnership as a huge responsibility for serving humanity, PM Modi said. The GCTM has been set up by the Ministry of Ayush and the WHO.

"I am happy that by giving the slogan 'One Planet, Our Health', WHO has promoted the Indian vision of 'One Earth, One Health'. It is a matter of immense pride for India that 2023 has been chosen as the International Year of Millets by the United Nations," PM Modi also said.

Meanwhile, the WHO chief said, "Traditional medicine products are abound globally, and the center will go a long

way in bringing the promise of traditional medicine to fruition. The new center will focus on data, innovation and sustainability and will optimize the use of traditional medicine. He noted that the WHO global center for traditional medicine is a truly global project".

"Through this center, India will be able to take its knowledge of traditional medicine to the world, and similarly, the world will come to India. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his support in establishing this center in India."

*Photo: fastmailnews*



## US FDA Approves 1st Covid Breath Diagnostic Test

After two months of plummeting COVID cases across the US, the virus is on the rise again, with the Northeast accounting for many of the new cases.

Philadelphia became the first major city to bring back

the indoor mask mandate. Meanwhile, the FDA has granted emergency use authorization to the first Covid-19 test that can detect the coronavirus in a breath sample within minutes and with a high degree of accuracy.

As per the FDA on April 15,

the test may be done in venues where the patient samples are both gathered and processed, such as doctor's offices, hospitals, and mobile testing sites, utilizing an instrument roughly the size of a piece of carry-on baggage. The results are available in

approximately 3 minutes.

"Today's authorization is yet another example of the rapid innovation occurring with diagnostic tests for COVID-19," said Jeff Shuren, Director of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health.

# India's Foreign Minister attends Ambedkar anniversary at Indian Consulate, New York

Photo: newsindiatimes

**T**he Indian Consulate in New York commemorated DR. B.R. Ambedkar, the author of India's Constitution, on April 14, 2022, the 131st anniversary of his birth. The event was attended by India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, who is on a visit to the United States and participating in the 2+2 conference with top US counterparts in Washington, DC. Speaking at the ceremony, FM Jaishankar emphasized that Ambedkar's beliefs are even more pertinent now, as India

marks the 75th anniversary of its independence. And the greatest approach to achieve his ideas and objectives was to expand liberties. "The legacy that he gave us as the architect of India's Constitution, which he bequeathed to us, has actually become even more valuable with the passage of time," Jaishankar said, adding that Ambedkar's aspirations "are actually the blueprint to guide us ... and provide a compass for clarity," as the world is again debating the virtues of democracy.



# India a net provider of regional security, says US

**T**he two countries – the world's oldest and largest democracies – have agreed to launch defense supply chain cooperation to quickly meet each other's priority needs during conflict situations, as the two countries broadened the scope of their defense and security cooperation, with Washington recognizing India as a defense industry leader in the Indo-Pacific and a net provider of security in the region.

Unveiling several defense initiatives between India and the US at a news conference after the 2+2 meeting on Monday, he said, "Today we agreed to launch new supply chain cooperation measures that will let us more swiftly support each other's priority defense requirements".

"India continues to acquire key

US defense platforms, and that is forging important and new ties between our defense industrial bases", he said.

"Our defense trade and technology cooperation continue to grow. We recently concluded an agreement to work together on air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles through our Defense Technology and Trade Initiative", Austin said.

"We're doing all this because the United States supports India as a defense industry leader in the Indo-Pacific and a net provider of security in the region", he said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh mentioned that he has spoken to US companies to make India a leader in aerospace manufacturing and has been discussing co-development and co-production.

Photo: newsindiatimes



Laying out the rationale for Indo-US defense cooperation, Austin said, "As strategic threats converge, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is more important than ever that we stand together to defend our shared values and to preserve the international rules-based order".

He also spoke of the threat from China which "is seeking to refashion the region and the international system more broadly in ways that serve its interests", he said. India and the US were deepening cooperation in cyberspace, "including through training and exercises later this year" and "expanding our information-sharing partnership across all warfighting domains", he said.

US and India have committed to do more high-end exercises together, Austin said. "We're looking forward to more of this sort of cooperation as we expand the scope and the complexity of Tiger Triumph, which is our annual major tri-service exercise", he added.

He also welcomed the Indian Navy to join the Combined Maritime Forces, Bahrain, a US-led group of over 30 countries that works on counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling and suppressing piracy.

## Joe Biden Nominates Indian-American Diplomat Rachna Sachdeva as His Envoy for Mali

**U**S President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American diplomat Rachna Sachdeva Korhonen as his envoy to Mali, the White House has said, the third such nomination of an Indian-American in over a month.

A career member of the US Foreign Service, Ms. Korhonen currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Executive Director of the combined Executive Offices of the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

The White House stated in a statement on Friday that she previously served as the Consul General and Principal Officer of the US Consulate in Dharan, Saudi Arabia.

Photo: economictimes.indiatimes





# Indian-American Navy Veteran Shanti Sethi Appointed Kamala Harris' Defence Adviser

Photo: financialexpress



**S**hanti Sethi, the first Indian-American commander of a major US Navy combat ship, recently joined Vice President Harris' office, Politico quoted Vice President's senior adviser Herbie Ziskend as saying.

According to her LinkedIn page, Shanti Sethi coordinates National Security Adviser documentation across the Vice President's Office.

From December 2010 until May 2012, Shanti Sethi commanded the guided-missile destroyer USS

Decatur. In addition, she was the first female commander of a US military warship to visit India.

When she entered the Navy in 1993, the combat exclusion legislation was still in place, so her options were limited. However, when she was an officer, the Exclusion Act was lifted.

"I was able to move on to have a career path that was much more open to me because I was going into this very male-dominated environment," Shanti Sethi told *USA Today* in an interview last year.

# Bihar Foundation's East Coast Chapter launched in the Unites States to connect Bihari diaspora in the region

**T**he members of the Bihar Foundation East Coast Chapter elected Alok Kumar (former FIA president) as Chairman, Ranjeet Kumar as Vice-Chairman, Chandan Trivedi as Secretary, Gaurav Kumar as Joint Secretary, Alok Kashyap as Treasurer, and Anand Gupta as Joint Treasurer. The newly formed chapter also elected Santa Nand Mishra, Praveen Dwivedi, Rajnish Ojha, Manish Madhukar, Navneet Kumar, Manish Kumar, Sanjay Rai, and Sudhir Kumar as executive committee members.

The core committee of Bihar Foundation USA (East Coast Chapter) gathered at a popular community center in New Jersey for their first in-person meeting on April 17th, 2022. The event was attended by all executive committee members along with other office bearers of the Chapter.

Addressing the core committee, Chairman of the East Coast Chapter, Mr. Alok Kumar, said that the Bihar Foundation USA has evolved as a popular forum to facilitate continuous communication and interaction between Non-Resident Biharis (NRB) and the State of Bihar and

its various agencies. Mr. Alok Kumar also highlighted that the land-related "Zameeni Baatein"



initiative organized by Bihar Foundation USA in February 2022 has helped hundreds of NRBs in resolving their land-related disputes.

The foundation members discussed and identified various developmental and non-profit activities in Bihar, including building a cancer hospital near Patna.

The Foundation is soon starting a project to provide free mentorship to college students by US-based experts. This initiative would help students secure jobs in top IT companies and make excellent career choices.

The Foundation is also launching a state-wide campaign to raise awareness about the

"Ayushman Bharat" healthcare scheme. Under this initiative, the foundation is collaborating with Mukhiya and Sarpanch of each village to identify eligible people for "Ayushman Bharat" and help them enroll in the scheme. This initiative is expected to help 8 crore people from marginalized sections of society understand the scheme, enroll in it, and avail of its benefits.

Chairman Alok Kumar recently visited Bihar and met with the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Tarkishore

Prasad, and members of the Bihar Foundation. Mr. Kumar highlighted the opportunity and extended an invitation to the deputy chief minister to meet and greet the diaspora in the USA. This meeting will help, strengthen and encourage various USA-based organizations in accomplishing their Bihar-centric initiatives. Additionally, this maiden visit will help in improving the bonding, branding, and business objectives of the Bihar Foundation through Non-Resident Bihari of America.



## Community News

Indian community members celebrated Easter on April 17th, 2022, at the Telugu Church in Bay Area, California



### Indians Continue Their Hold On H-1B Visas

In 2021, Indians held roughly three-fourths of the H-1B visas given by the US to speciality foreign workers, extending their stronghold on this highly sought-after professional ticket to work, live, and, eventually, settle in America.

According to the latest data on this issue released recently by the Department of Homeland Security, the government department that handles immigration, the US accepted 407,071 H-1B petitions in 2021, with 301,616 of them – 74.1 per cent – for Indian employees.

In 2020, Indians accounted for 74.9 per cent of all authorized petitions.

The United States authorizes American firms to hire speciality foreign employees on H-1B visas for occupations that cannot be filled by local Americans. Top American corporations including Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Facebook, as well as US subsidiaries of Indian IT firms such as Infosys, TCS, and Wipro, are among the most active users of this visa program.

The Consul General visited Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar of Long Island, Hicksville on #Baisakhi Day & sought blessings of #Waheguru. Conveyed wishes for peace, prosperity & happiness for all.



### More Central NJ school districts add DIWALI to their holiday list

More Central Jersey school districts will be closed to students on October 24, the day of the Hindu festival of Diwali, the Festival of Lights.

In all, 10 districts are canceling classes for the religious holiday, continuing a trend started in recent years to recognize the area's growing diversity.

For the 2022–23 school year, students and staff in Hillsborough and Bridgewater-Raritan will have the day off for the first time.

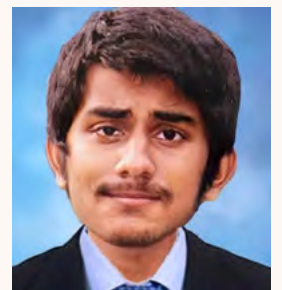
For many years, Edison has marked Diwali with a day off, as have South Brunswick, Piscataway, Sayreville and Bernards.

East Brunswick, Montgomery and Monroe will close schools for students, but staff members will participate in in-service sessions.

Rajan Zed, president of the Universal Society of Hinduism, said recognizing Diwali in a school calendar with school closures is a step in the "positive direction" because there are a "substantial number of Hindu students" in schools around the state. He added that it is "important to meet the religious and spiritual

In a tragic incident, an 18-year-old Indian high school student drowned in a pond in the US state of New Jersey after he went into the frigid water to retrieve a soccer ball for children playing nearby, according to media reports.

Clinton G Ajit, who hailed from Niranam in Kerala, went into Hardcastle Pond in New Milford on Friday around 7pm to retrieve the soccer ball and apparently drowned after he suddenly went underwater, northjersy.com, a digital news content provider, reported.



# Collection of Indian Books launched at Edison Library

**T**he Edison Library, in partnership with the Indian Consulate and the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin Edison NJ Chapter (GOPIO-Edison), hosted the "India Collection Launch" event to donate a large collection of Indian books to be made available through the public libraries in Middlesex County. More than 200 books were donated to the library during the initiative by the organizers and many supporting organizations like the Gujarati Literary Academy of North America, Gandhian Society, Indo American Cultural Society of USA, Assam Sahitya Sabha and Zakir Husain Circle. The grand sponsor of the program was Sabinsa Corporation, a food supplement company located in East Windsor with operations in India.



*Dignitaries, Library and GOPIO officials at the launch before lighting of the lamp*

The Indian Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal was the chief guest along with Consul for Community Affairs A.K. Vijaykrishnan. Many prominent Indian American community leaders, elected council members from Edison and nearby cities, media and a large number of community leaders and Indian American residents from Edison and nearby towns attended the event to show their support to this initiative by GOPIO-Edison.



*Chief Guest Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal delivering inaugural address*

After a prayer song by GOPIO-Edison President Pallavi Belwariar, a moment of silence was observed for the victims of Russia's war in Ukraine and for the passing away of GOPIO-Life Member and community

leader Yash Paul Soi earlier this month.

Library Director Allan Kleiman said he was very excited by this collection and told that these books can be issued to anyone in the Middlesex County. He then introduced Library President Patricia Massey, who welcomed the availability of classic India-related books and Indian language books from the library.

GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, who initiated this effort, said that New Jersey has one of the largest concentrations of Indian Americans and to serve our community members as well as to improve the understanding of India among the local population, GOPIO has joined hands with the Govt. of India through its Consulate in New York to launch the India Collection of Books at Edison Public Library with several hundred books, including several classics and Indian language books in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Assamese and other languages.

Speaking on the occasion, Consul General Randhir Jaiswal spoke about the vibrant library system in America that helps spread knowledge and makes it a developed country. He said that American Indian partnership is crucial for world peace and security and lauded the efforts of the Diaspora in getting this initiative to Edison. He said that the libraries in the USA are the best in the world and making Indian books available through this system will help the Diaspora with the availability of rare Indian books.

GOPIO Vice President Ram Gadhvi, who is also chairman of the Gujarati Literary Academy, contributed over 60 Gujarati books to this initiative, saying that the libraries would not be outdated in spite of digitalization and that many new Indian immigrants feel comfortable reading a hard copy of the book.

Newly reorganized GOPIO-Edison President Pallavi Belwariar spoke on the chapter's plans to organize many community service programs in Edison and nearby areas, including supporting and volunteering at soup kitchens, youth programs, and welcoming new Indian students to attend nearby Rutgers University.

Federation of Indian Associations President Kenny Desai said that there was nothing more pious than knowledge. He lauded the community for the initiative to donate a huge

collection of books and make them available to the Public in Edison and the East Coast.

Dr. Sudhir Parikh, a recipient of the Govt. of India's Padma Shri award, recognized the legends of the community. He said that education is the best charitable activity that one can give to anyone. He also said that he ensured that his newspaper is distributed across all libraries in NJ.



One of the main organizers of the event, Pradeep "Peter" Kothari, a veteran community leader recognized the work by many Indian American leaders and thanked the town council members for attending. He said someone should write a book on how the community evolved over the past 35 years and said he was happy to see the community at a comfort zone at present. Kothari then introduced members of Edison Council and nearby towns.

Edison Town Council Vice President Joyce Ship-Freeman complimented the Indian Consulate, GOPIO-Edison and the library for this new initiative. Retired as a literary coach, Councilwoman Ship-Freeman has said that library is her second home and that books are still an important medium of knowledge.

Edison Councilman Ajay Patil said that he had been wanting this for the last 4 years and thanked everyone involved in getting this initiative to its fruition. Piscataway Councilman Kapil Shah said that he had been doing community work for 31 years and said that he was the first to get a grant from NJ state for video and books for the local library a couple of years back. He said that books were still the authentic source of knowledge.





FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS NY-NJ-CT-NE  
&  
CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA, NEW YORK

# GUJARAT MAHARASHTRA DAY



Guest of Honor



**KAAJAL OZA VAIDYA**  
Author, Screenwriter,  
Radio Personality and Journalist

**SUNDAY, MAY 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**  
**11 AM to 1 PM Est.**

info@fianynjct.org | www.fianynjct.org

facebook **LIVE**

<https://www.facebook.com/indianinnewyork/>

Guest of Honor



**ARCHANA JOGLEKAR**  
Actress, Director,  
& Kathak Dancer

PARTNERS



SUPPORTERS

SUMA FOODS



RSVP by APRIL 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 info@fianynjct.org | www.fianynjct.org



AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV CELEBRATIONS  
38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DANCE PE CHANCE



# THE OLDEST DANCE COMPETITION DANCE PE CHANCE is BACK



19,000+  
PARTICIPANTS  
IN 38 YEARS



## CHIEF GUESTS 2022



**KUSH BANKER**  
CHOREOGRAPHER  
AND DIRECTOR



**MANYA**  
ACTRESS - TELUGU,  
KANNADA & MALAYALAM



**KATHAK GURU  
ARCHANA JOGLEKAR**  
ACTRESS, DIRECTOR

BOOK  
YOUR TICKETS  
NOW



**MAY.7.2022**

04:00 PM ONWARDS

**PATRIOTS THEATER  
AT THE WAR MEMORIAL**  
1 MEMORIAL DRIVE, TRENTON, NJ 08608

SIGN UP & COMPETE TO WIN  
BEST OF BEST PRIZE

**\$5,000**

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# BANNO DI SHAADI Part-1

**SONIA DATE**

"Ma, we've decided to get married in January." My younger daughter announced when she returned home after the lockdown. My husband and I looked at each other, stunned. Let me not confuse you. Until now, I was the female counterpart of the popular matrimonial agency advertisement, where the father would lap up any prospective groom. In this case, the groom was there in the wings; it just wasn't the "correct time."

And so, COVID made the couple realize that waiting would not help their cause. So, this, dear readers, is an introduction to my saga of organizing a wedding with the giant shadow of the virus looming large behind me.

Can buying wedding paraphernalia be complete without your obligatory visit to Chandni Chowk. Actually, just one trip did not suffice. Armed with sanitiser, extra masks, and strict instructions from everyone, the bride-to-be (let's call her Banno or B for the uninitiated) hired an Uber and set out on the mission possible task. Our goal: to get a lengha.

Did you know that Chandni Chowk should also be called the Lengha Market? The agents/touts assessed us immediately and started trailing behind us, promising us designer copies. This matronly woman was sorely tempted, all sizes were available. My young mind spurred me. After all, Sonia, it's the spirit that matters, not the size. Common sense prevailed, and I quashed those thoughts.

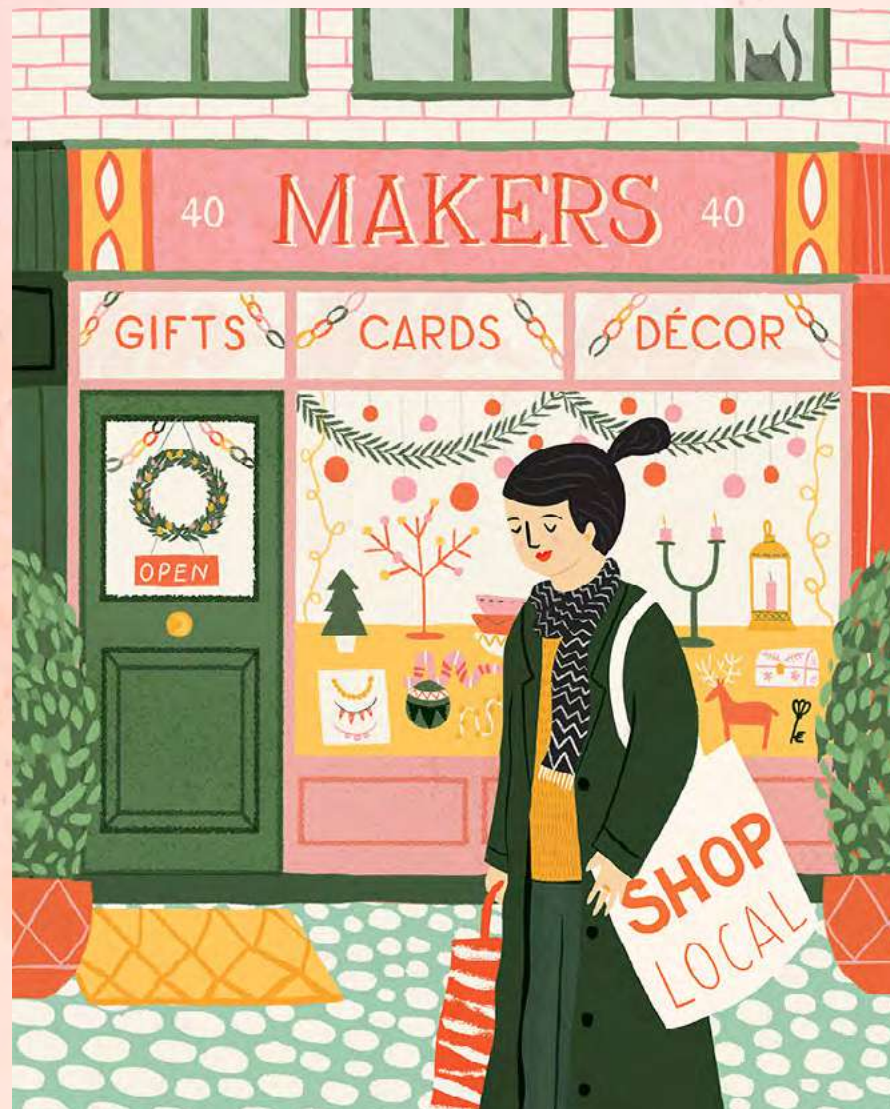
Thankfully, we had done

our homework and had a list ready. Unapologetically, I admit that Sabhya, Manish, and Anita were on that list.

Those of you who are unfamiliar with these names, please take a crash course in general knowledge about clothes. Instagram will help you.

frown, or irritable note, they went full guns ahead. We were fair game. They tried their luck on me. However, as a "sanskaari mom," I gave B my full attention. Actually, I was a bit apprehensive about my husband's expression and reaction. I did not want a treatise on 'going over-board.'

*Illustration: Ruby Taylor*



The salesman knew his job; in fact, he was a professional. Piece after piece of beautiful embroidered silks were displayed before us. Shimmering with artists' labours, glittering in jewel colours and pastel shades, each followed by a commentary on the designer they were copies of. Full marks to the patience of these salesmen. Not one

I had already been given one on expenses, and I knew that wasn't the last one!

Next on the list were envelopes. I asked the young shopowner if the envelope I was interested in buying, could hold X amount of money. He looked at me disdainfully, and said that it could hold Rs two lac, but not American dollars because of the bill size. Cheeky!

Banno looked at me with amusement, and I realized that I had been outnumbered by his comment, the 2lacs, and the dollars!

I decided to feed my bruised ego with chaat. Amidst admonishments from B, I threw caution to the winds. I mean, this was sacrilege. How could I return home without sampling Purani Dilli food? I hadn't even demanded to go to Karim.

Chandni Chowk is a wedding shopper's paradise. The quaint lanes, bylanes, despite digging with rubble around and the people swarming with their agenda is one of my favourite places. I can spend hours at Kinari Bazaar, Nai Sadak, Fatehpuri, marvelling at the abundance of variety. The prices make my purse feel heavy too. It demands patience and time, like any relationship. And you are hooked!

As for the food, I don't think this blog can do justice to describing it. From sweets to savouries, lip-smacking chaat to succulent mutton kebabs, aromatic biryani, ghee infused jalebi, creamy dahi bhallas, rich malai lassi, you can have it all. Sadly, I had to restrain myself. Although I wasn't wearing a lengha, I couldn't tempt B. How could I gorge on this with her looking at me? She was the bride. Again, the sanskaari Mom surfaced in her head. Sigh!

Next stop: South Delhi.

To be continued...



One summer afternoon,  
While walking in the Sun's wrath.  
I sighed seeing the shady path.  
Of a dusky old tree.

Quietly stepping on its shadow,  
I overheard and witnessed an argument; it was the tree's family.  
**Fruit**, the son born with a silver spoon,  
Was teasing the **leaf**, his sibling for not having looks as good as him,  
*"See how beautiful and useful I am".*



The fruit acted like a prince; eager to reign,  
Sibling **Leaf** tried hurting it, But it was all in vain.  
Irritated with the fight amongst the two,  
The brother **Branch** could not help himself but intrude.  
*"Stop it both of you, wait till I shed you."*  
But the younger ones would not listen  
Screaming, hurting each other with wordy prickles.



**Y** Me sitting on the ground below,  
Tired now with the "Show of the foes,"  
Stretched my arms around.  
Suddenly I heard a strange sound.  
I wondered who it could be now,  
Yelled Eldest of all, **the Trunk**,  
He asked me to resolve the tussle between the punks.  
Howled he and said, *"I carry them day and night; all they do is fight,  
Not letting anyone have my sight.  
They have covered me with themselves all;  
Though amongst us, I am the sole tall.  
Do make them know who the earner is.  
Autumn brings them fall,  
But dare it touch me with its aridity".*

Sitting on the ground, tired with their noise,  
I heard another 'ailing' voice.  
I turned my ears below at the feet of the Trunk,



It was the **Roots** wounded, in pain.  
I asked, *"Do you have anything to say?"*  
Softly the Root replied, *"I cover my face with shame,  
Seeing the kids fight makes me lame.  
I live here with worms, in mud.  
Forever I have kept myself in darkness and dirt.*

*Kindly make them understand" it begged.  
"I am the pillar that makes sure, they do not fall,  
What more can I do?  
Away from them; always laying low,  
I have buried myself just to make them grow!"*

Hearing it I found a similarity.  
Between a man and the tree.  
Each generation enjoys its triumph  
Failing to see the elders forfeit.  
The success they bear as a crown,  
Boasting as if it was their own deed.  
They let them sleep in grave,  
Who gave up for them; many of their needs!  
I apologized to the Root, being helpless in settling any truce.  
Got up and thanked it.  
For it had made me realize the truth.  
Reaching home, I called my parents.  
Thanked them for everything,  
Had they not been there, I was worthless and nothing!



## *Community Announcement*

God forbid anyone should deal with the passing away of a loved one, but the departed should be accorded the formal respect of an obituary or a memorial celebrating their lives.

Remembrance is an important part of grieving, and FIA endeavours to share the loss with the community.

In order to better serve the community, FIA is starting a new section where obituaries and memorials can be published without incurring any cost in our fortnightly issue.

The details can be sent to [editor@fianynjct.org](mailto:editor@fianynjct.org)

# NEW FEATURE ANNOUNCEMENT

**In a first-of-its-kind initiative we are excited to provide our readers with a platform to share their stories.**

**Our subscribers are invited to submit their short fiction, poetry, prose, musings on any topic. Submissions, not exceeding 500 words, can be done at [editor@fianynjct.org](mailto:editor@fianynjct.org) along with a passport size image in jpeg format.**

**Stories submitted will be reviewed and published accordingly along with photograph of the contributor.**

**Non subscribers can also submit by subscribing at <https://fianynjct.org/subscribe-newsletter/>**

# BRIDGERTON - Season 2

## OF POUTING LIPS AND LABORED BREATH



**SONIA DATE**

My first romance novel was the popular Georgette Heyer series, popular historical novels of the Georgian era. These were termed "safe" by our ever morally vigilant mothers. No steamy scenes that would corrupt an impressionable teenager. Thank God, this teenager had friends who introduced her to the dreamy world of Mills and Boon that spoiled her forever. Anyway, I'm digressing.

Bridgerton Season 1 belonged more to the Mills and Boon style, so one had to ensure that it was an adults-only viewing. Let's face it, Rege-Jean Page was pleasing to the eyes. Season 2 is as tepid as a Georgette Hayer romance. The story now focuses on Anthony, the eldest son, and his quest to find the perfect wife. This time, the love and hate interests are

the Sharma debutantes. So, there is courtship, with the chaperones walking behind the couples, a smattering of ungraceful dancers wooing each other at balls, terrible costumes and hideous hairdos, and the usual Jane Austen type central characters. Of course, they can never be as charismatic as Mr. Darcy and Ms. Bennet. Anthony and Kate hate each other but succumb to love and lust even though they try to fight it. Yawn! The path of true love never ran smooth. Now lust is another story. There was enough of it in Season 1. Season 2 relies on the characters, some new, others boring. It is like a bland porridge that lacks spices, and the correct balance to make it appetizing and appealing.

So, you have heaving bosoms, flared nostrils, quivering lips, and ghastly colors. Now, where did that last bit come into play? Apologies, but I just couldn't get over the uncomplimentary palette that is worn by the cast, especially Kate Sharma. I didn't know purple had so many shades. The actors fail to leave a dent. Kate and Eloise are annoying with their



feminist rantings. Anthony isn't bad-looking, I mean!

By the way, this season has topped the Netflix charts as the most popular show. All one can say is that people do

get enamored by historical romances, and happy endings, and some, like me, plough through the show because they have nothing better to do on a warm afternoon.



A - 359746



★★★★★

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# JERSEY

(2022 / Cinema Release / Drama / Sports)

## PERFORMANCES HOLD THE FILM UP BUT NOT YOUR MOOD IN THIS EMOTIONALLY HEAVY DRAMA!

An emotional story of a former cricketer, floundering husband and a doting father who makes a smashing comeback to the game!

**Cast** Shahid Kapoor, Mrunal Thakur, Pankaj Kapoor, Ronit Kamra

**Director/Writer** Gowtam Tinnanuri



Photo: Jersey Trailer

### Plot

The story runs in a back-and-forth narrative in three timelines. We get introduced to Arjun Talwar's life in the past and present. A dashing cricketer, his beautiful girlfriend, Vidya, their love and a promising future.

An ex-cricketer, a broken man, a failing husband, but a doting father to a 7-year-old Kittu.

The story goes on to join the dots in between and gives us glimpses of the aggressive, confident player, dashing lover that he was, his terrible current life in pieces and how he gathers up himself to boom back.

### Analysis

The star of the film literally and figuratively is Shahid Kapoor (Arjun) who carries the film on his shoulder. The actor who has set his benchmark with fantastic performances in the likes of *Jab We Met*, *Uda Punjab*, *Haider* and *Kabir Singh* has always boasted of intensity in

his portrayals.

As Arjun, he adds heft to the character with the varied range of emotions he displays. The stubborn streak, the aggression, seething anger, the quiet pain, the recklessness, the broken



Photo: Jersey Trailer

man, the loving father and husband.

You would pity him, be angry at him and at times feel like shaking him out of his madness.

His relationship with his son touches a chord. His track with Mrunal and the dire straits of their marital life breaks your heart.

The sports parts of the film

(the cricket matches), though over simplified, try to add euphoria in this otherwise emotionally heavy drama.

Mrunal Thakur makes Vidya look lovely, adorable, vulnerable and strong at the same time. She gives a good

range to her character and plays it well.

Rohit Kamra as Kittu is great.

Pankaj Kapoor is superb as coach and mentor Bali.

These actors leave no stone unturned and make sure we are emotionally invested in the film.

Direction wise, you can see the finesse and detailing is

great. The film definitely has its heart in the right place.

But just as life doesn't run on emotions alone, neither does a film.

The film despite the heavy dose of emotions (and I think that could also be a reason) remains banal for most parts. So much so that even the cricket portions fail to create magic. Too much melodrama, too less entertainment I would say.

The basic plot which seems far-fetched at times, Arjun's failings, his stubbornness gets on your nerves at times. There are too many "oh! Why the hell can't he do this" moments!

Seeing things go downhill most of the time takes a toll on you after all. By the time the story gives you moments to feel inspired and overwhelmed, it's too late and we felt kind of exhausted.

The music being very mediocre and forgettable, didn't help at all. The run time of 2 hr 50 min is overtly long and tiring.

**CONTINUE ON PAGE 21**

**CONTINUES FROM PAGE 17**

*slightly disappointed.*

*The film is a neat and clean family watch, offers a great set of performances, has its moments that overwhelm and inspire.*

*But considering that it was such a hyped remake and as someone who was looking forward to it, I was*

*Must watch for Shahid fans but others to decide as per their palate and the reviews.*

Score 2.5 on 5



Photo: Jersey Trailer

# COBALT BLUE

(2022 / Drama / Netflix)

## A PIECE OF ART THAT'S LIKE A BEAUTIFUL SYMPHONY

Based on a book – Cobalt Blue

**Cast** Prateik Babbar, Neelay Mehendale, Anjali Sivaraman, Geetanjali Kulkarni, Neil Bhoopalam, Shishir Sharma, Anant V Joshi, Poornima Indrajith

**Director/Writer** Sachin Kundalkar



Photo: Jersey Trailer

### Plot

Tanay (Neelay) is a young poetic college boy who aspires to be a writer and talks to his friend Pablo (a tortoise).

He has a staunchly traditional family, a domineering father and a tom-boyish, norm-defying hockey player sister.

Their serene life is about to change forever when a young, good-looking, mysterious painter and designer (Prateik) comes to stay with them as a paying guest.

### Analysis

The film, to me, seemed like a beautiful symphony or a piece of art.

With the picturesque setting of Kerala, the traditional household and setting, the small-town locations and life, the rich colourful canvases, the deeply meaningful frames, each with loads to convey and so much to infer from,

the captivating atmospheric, the languid pace with so much to convey, a sensitive and delicate portrayal of emotions, and ultimately, as the film progresses, so much turmoil amidst the serenity and quiet.

The sensitivity with which they have portrayed the same-sex relationships and the complex jumble of emotions is worth appreciating.

The admiring glances, hero worship like infatuation, lust, need, jealousy, hurt, loneliness, the complex tussle of emotions and the unsaid things are the

highlight of the film.

Cinematography by Vincenzo Condorelli deserves applause for all the beauty we get to relish throughout.

All the performances boasted realism and minimalism.

Neelay, with his innocence and charming good looks, wins the heart.

Prateik's intense, restrained, and mature performance reminded me of Raj Babbar's.

Neil Bhoopalam seemed like a surprise package to me. He is super good as the professor. His efforts to woo the loneliness and desperation were heart-wrenching.

Geetanjali Kulkarni, as always, is natural, fluid, and great in whatever she attempts.

Anjali as Anuja is good too.

**The film is a work of art, both visually and content wise.**

**It offers a lot to admire, absorb, and understand.**

**Not meant for everyone, but a gem for those who love niche cinema.**





# Jon Batiste boards 'THE COLOR PURPLE' cast for feature acting debut

**A**fter winning five Grammys this year, including album of the year, American musician Jon Batiste is about to start on a new journey: acting. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Batiste is set to make his feature acting debut as he has joined the cast of 'The Color Purple', directed by Blitz Bazawule. The story revolves around a woman named Celie Harris and follows her lifelong difficulties as an African American woman growing up in the South in the early 1900s. Batiste is set to portray Grady, Shug Avery's (played by Taraji P. Henson) husband, a sweet-talking piano man. The forthcoming Warner Bros. musical movie is an adaptation of Alice Walker's iconic American novel, as well as the Oscar-nominated 1985 film from Steven Spielberg and the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical that it inspired.

# Jennifer Lopez's documentary to Premiere at Tribeca Film festival

**J**ennifer Lopez's documentary, *Halftime* will make its international premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival this year. According to Variety, the Netflix feature will be the opening film at the film festival on June 8. Jennifer Lopez will be portrayed in the film as she reflects on her career as a global recording artist and actor. *Halftime* will be available for viewing on June 14th. According to reports, the documentary is directed by Amanda Micheli and will offer an intimate peek into the behind-the-scenes elements following Lopez as she preps for her Super Bowl Halftime show, as well as her performance at the recent presidential inauguration. Speaking about the opportunity to present her film at Tribeca, the director said, "To have the opportunity to share this film on the big screen with a New York audience is a dream come true."

**Bruce Willis' family has announced that the actor is retiring from the profession after being diagnosed with aphasia, a language disorder caused by brain damage that affects a person's ability to communicate. Willis' family members posted a joint statement on social media announcing the actor's retirement.**



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# Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor's Magical Wedding

**R**anbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt's wedding was the most anticipated wedding in recent times and they finally tied the knot on 14th April 2022. The wedding vows were exchanged at Ranbir's Vastu mansion in Mumbai's Pali Hill neighbourhood.

The intimate wedding was attended by relatives and close friends. The celebrity pair, who have been together for more than 5 years, tied the knot in a traditional Punjabi wedding ceremony. Guests dressed out in color-coordinated attire for the big day.

"Today, surrounded by our family and friends, at home ... in our favourite spot - the balcony we've spent the last 5 years of our relationship - we got married. With so much already behind us, we can't wait to build more memories together ... memories that are full of love, laughter, comfortable silences, movie nights, silly fights, wine delights and Chinese bites. Thank you for all the love and light during



this very momentous time in our lives. It has made this moment all the more special. Love, Ranbir and Alia": Bhatt posted on social media.

The Mehendi was like something out of a dream. It was a day full of love, family, our beautiful best friends, a LOT of French fries, a surprise performance by the ladkewalas, Ayan playing DJ, a BIG surprise organised by Mr. Kapoor (my favourite artist performed my favourite songs), all followed by some happy tears and quiet, blissful moments with the love of my life. There are days... and then there are days like these! Bhatt posted on social media.

# Huma Qureshi to Play Food Legend Tarla Dalal in Biopic

**A**ctress Huma Qureshi will be essaying the role of the best-selling cookbook author and home chef, Tarla Dalal, in the upcoming biopic 'Tarla' directed by Piyush Gupta, who was previously known for writing 'Dangal' and 'Chhichhore'.

Commenting on her character,

Huma said: "Tarla Dalal reminds me of my childhood. My mom had a copy of her book in the kitchen and would often try many of her recipes for my school tiffin."

The film has been produced jointly by Ronnie Screwvala, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and Nitesh Tiwari.

Explaining the thought behind

the film, which its director promised would be "a treat for all food lovers to gorge on," Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari said: "Tarla's story is about a working mother who single-handedly changed the face of vegetarian cooking in the country and also paved the way for home cooks and food startups to achieve their dreams."



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