

# THE DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY

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BI-WEEKLY Issue: 70

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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## HATE CRIME-EXTREMISTS TARGET INDIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY TWICE IN THREE WEEKS

**Global Icon of Peace and Non-violence Mahatma Gandhi's statue violently vandalized**

In what is definitely being perceived as a hate crime, a group of six unidentified people destroyed a handcrafted statue of Mahatma Gandhi with a sledgehammer at a Hindu temple in New York after vandalizing it earlier in the month of August.

Indian authorities strongly condemned the "despicable action" and took up the matter with the US authorities to ensure those responsible for the act are held accountable.

The New York City Police Department(NYPD) in a statement to *PTI* said it was reported to police on August 16 that "a group of six unidentified male individuals" damaged and vandalized "a religious statue with a sledge hammer in front of *Tulsi Mandir* located at 103-26 111 Street". Video surveillance shows that a sledgehammer was used and 6 people can be seen stomping on the statue once it was thrown to the ground.

"The male individuals then fled toward Liberty Avenue and entered two vehicles, a white Mercedes Benz and a dark colour possibly a Toyota Camry with possible taxi/livery sticker on the back passenger window," it said, adding that the miscreants were approximately aged between 25 to 30 years.

The NYPD has asked for the public's assistance in ascertaining the whereabouts of

the miscreants and urged anyone with information related to the incident to call its Crime Stoppers Hotline or submit their tips at Crime Stoppers website.

New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar in a statement said, "In an act outraging the entire Queens community and peace-loving people worldwide, the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside *Shri Tulsi Mandir* was vandalised for a second time." "This time, the statue was totally destroyed and graffitied with obscene names. Vandals also graffitied the mandir grounds and 111th Street asphalt," the Indian-American lawmaker said.

Surveillance video shows

*cbsnews*.

"To see them coming after us like this is very painful," Lakhram Maharaj, the founder of *Shri Tulsi Mandir* situated in South Richmond Hill, was quoted as saying in the report. Maharaj discovered the Gandhi statue was reduced to rubble. The words "dog" and "Gandhi dog" were spray painted both in front of the temple and down the block. Maharaj says many in the community are now afraid to go to the temple.

Condemning the "cowardly act", Ankur Vaidya, Chairman of the diaspora organization Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), said, "We sincerely urge the mayor's office and the NYPD

have the will and intention to do more malice to create negative sensationalism." The incident is an act of hate and aggression and has repeated itself more times this year than in the history of the city previously, he said. In February, an 8-foot-high Gandhi statue, located in Manhattan's Union Square, was defaced by unknown people.

FIA President Mr. Kenny Desai said that along with the Indian American community, we at the Federation of Indian Associations condemn these extremist and cowardly act of violently vandalizing the statue of a global peace and non-violence icon Mahatma Gandhi. We urge the community to unite in registering a peaceful protest and appeal to the authorities to take due action.

Meanwhile, the Consulate General of India in New York, in a statement, said it "strongly condemns the vandalism of the Mahatma Gandhi statue outside a temple in Queens, New York. We have taken up the matter with US authorities, seeking a thorough investigation so that those responsible for such despicable action are held accountable."

Mr. Prem Bhandari, Chairman of Jaipur Foot USA, condemned the dastardly act and said that it was nothing short of a sacrilege and called upon the authorities to address the rising incidents which clearly target a peace-loving community.



a person thrashing a statue of Gandhi with a sledgehammer on Tuesday (16 August), before smashing the head off and toppling it over, according to

to investigate this malicious act as a hate crime and bring these criminals to justice. It is clear that the ones that perpetuate these sorts of vandalism will



# Indian-American Community to Commemorate 9/11 at Times Square

**S**unday, September 11, Times Square, NYC -11am-12pm - Indian American community organizations, in association with the Federation of Indian Associations, have organized a peaceful prayer gathering at Times Square. This is to pay respect to the men and

women who lost their lives and to those who made the ultimate sacrifice to keep us all safe and to serve our homeland, the USA. The gathering will also express the community's concerns with the recent attacks, including the vandalizing of the Mahatma Gandhi Statue and hate crimes against Indian Americans.

Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA) President Mr. Prem Bhandari, FIA Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya, FIA President Mr. Kenny Desai and FIA Past President and Chairman of Bihar Foundation Mr. Alok Kumar, collectively stated that the non-political and non-religious prayer gathering will include chanting of

Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and prayers, which are more relevant now than they were before.

The team is inviting and trying to compile a diverse group of community organizations, which will include inviting Mahatma Gandhi's grandson and Martin Luther King Jr. family members.

**INDIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**  
**GANDHI APOSTLE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE**

Join us for a peaceful gathering to protest the recent vandalism and violent hate crimes

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2022**

**11 AM to 12 PM**

**44<sup>TH</sup> STREET & BROADWAY, TIMES SQUARE, NYC**

**DRESS CODE: WHITE CLOTHING**

**THIS IS NON-RELIGIOUS, NON-POLITICAL EVENT**



# People, Organizations, Thoughts & Ideas behind FIA's Successful Attempts at Guinness Book of World Records

Guinness says a world record is not simply a fact but a way to measure ourselves. Knowing the biggest, the smallest, the fastest, the most and the least, it says, helps us understand our position in the world and how we fit in.

As India regains its rightful position among the top global leaders and as we reach the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence-the records were attempted to resemble cultural richness and inclusivity.

'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' which encompasses the celebration of Eternal Freedom. The first Record of Most number of Different Flags flown simultaneously is dedicated towards showcasing unity in diversity and towards 'Vasudev Kutumbakam' which means the world is one family. It shares a message to the global community of being together and joining hands to achieve something big and unique. The 2nd record for the Largest Ensemble of Damrus - the motherland's ancient musical instrument, the sound of which resembles spirituality and awareness.

The improvised idea and

the vision, which included the lessons learnt from our earlier shortcoming in 2014, required a dedicated and focused approach. Once the idea was conceived, there was no dearth of stimuli.

Great support came from the community and our sponsors. Organizations like BAPS, Vraj Temple, Bjana and the Brahma Kumaris offered their whole hearted and unconditional support.

FIA's historic achievement came with relentless research, planning and implementation - be it the designing of the app for registrations, manufacturing the equipment utilized, procuring permits, sourcing funding and reaching out to the diverse communities, managing rehearsals, coordinating free transportation of over 20 buses, complimentary refreshments, a comprehensive approval process for the attempts to meet the rigorous benchmark requirements by the Guinness Committee, methodical submissions to seek approval to allow 2 attempts at the same time (another historic milestone for the community and FIA), securing

the appropriate merchandise at the apt pricing, coordinating cost-effective shipping, broader promotions and cooperation of all the community media partners in promoting the GWR attempts including many other very minute planning details, all required over a year's timeframe and numerous meetings including international travel.

FIA sponsors, in particular, State Bank of India, Amneal, and Bombino Express, stepped up and made the event possible even when supply chains impacted budget fluctuation due to inflation.

FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, who conceptualized the GWR plan and compiled the team which included GWR lead Parveen Bansal along with Amit Ringasia, Rohit Korat, Sidharth Murali, Amar Chavda, Mahesh Dubal and Dipak Goel.

President Kenny Desai led the Executive team's efforts that support the entire GWR team and efforts including fundraising, seeking involvement of multiple organizations and monitoring the overall logistics. Anil Bansal - two term FIA President (2020 and

2021) provided complimentary logistical support with 6000 sf of office/storage space to accommodate the large four truck loads cargo that was required to achieve GWR.

Parveen Bansal assembled a team of dedicated volunteers from FIA, BAPS, Vraj Temple, Bjana, State Bank of India, and the Brahma Kumaris who methodically implemented, rehearsed, and coordinated all the on-ground efforts to set these two records.

Each of the mentioned essential components were strategically aligned and were so important and intrinsically interlinked with each other that a failure of even one would have led to the failure of the event in total.

This herculean task, executed by 100 per cent volunteers and in celebration of the motherland's 75th year anniversary, is a testament to the community's strength, which was displayed by being united and by joining hands and working to achieve selfless goals. Through FIA, the community achieved GWR records and made history.

## VISION & LEADERSHIP



KENNY DESAI & ANKUR VAIDYA

## TEAM LEAD



PARVEEN BANSAL & AMIT RINGASIA

## SPONSORS



**State Bank of India**  
New York



## SPECIAL MENTION



GIRISH PATEL



BAPS



DILIP RAM  
World Cargo



BHRAMA KUMARIS



VRAJ



JALLOSH TASHA

## GUINNESS ADJUDICATOR



MS. BRITANNY DUNN



SIDDHARTH MURALI



ROHIT KORAT



NIRALI KORAT

## APPLICATION, DESIGN & SOURCING



## GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS COORDINATION COUNCIL



Trupti Desai



Karishma Vaidya



Smita Miki Patel



Amar Chavda



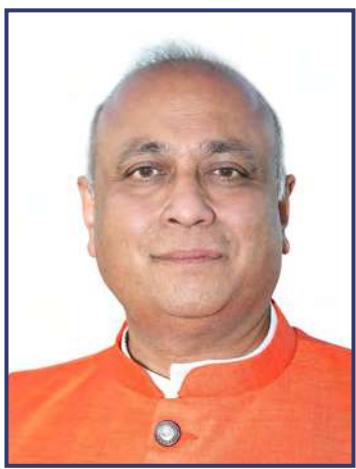
Amit Yadav



Anu Singh



Vaishali Parikh



Srujal Parikh



Himanshu Bhatia



Krina Parikh



Mahesh Dubal



Saurin Parikh



Srishti Narula

## BAPS COORDINATORS



Dr. Sanjay Shah



Gaurang Patel



Shyam Patel



Tejas Patel

# FIA-New England Hosts Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Mr. Om Birla

**The voice of the country reverberates around the world as its democracy is the most dynamic and vibrant. The world listens when India speaks**

**F**IA-New England, together with the Indian Consulate in New York, hosted an event where the visiting Lok Sabha (LS) Speaker Mr. Om Birla addressed the Indian Diaspora on Sunday (August 28). Also present, at the event, were the Hon. Indian Ambassador Mr. Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Hon. Consul General of India, New York Mr. Randhir Jaiswal.

The event was held in the evening after Mr. Birla visited Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Speaking at the event, the Lok Sabha speaker said that the voice of the country reverberates around the world as its democracy is the most dynamic and vibrant. The world listens when India speaks.

In his interaction with the Diaspora, including the students, he shared the country's growth story and said the Indian diaspora is held in high esteem across the world due to their work ethics and culture.

He also noted that members of the Indian diaspora have always come to the aid of their motherland, as well as their host countries, whenever called upon in times of need.

FIA-NE President Mr. Abhishek Singh thanked Mr. Om Birla and lauded the Indian Embassy and the Indian Consulates for their sensitivity towards the Indian Diaspora and their needs.

He said that FIA endeavors to be the bridge between the two vibrant democracies -- USA and India. In their own way, FIA has tried to keep India shining on US

soil and was happy to share that the First ever India Day Parade in Boston had 32 countries participating, which only sends a message of Global Inclusivity.

Commending the efforts of FIA-New England, the FIA Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya

remarked that these events go a long way in strengthening the ties between the two countries and are but a continuation of FIA's eight states' vision and mission of enhancing bi-lateral cultural ties between our homeland and our motherland.



Mr. Om Birla addressing the august gathering in Boston



# Raja Krishnamoorthi Urges to Prosecute Woman who Harassed Indian-Americans

**C**ongressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has urged the Dallas police to prosecute to the full extent of law a woman seen harassing and assaulting four Indian descent women in Texas last week.

"Such bigoted attacks motivated by racism, xenophobia, and other forms of hate victimise not only those directly targeted by them, but also broader communities through creating an atmosphere of fear and danger," Mr. Krishnamoorthi said.

Esmeralda Upton from Plano in Texas was arrested for the racially-motivated physical and verbal assault of the four women at a parking lot. The video has been going viral on social media and has shocked the Indian American community across

the country. Upton identifies herself in the video as a Mexican-American.

"I hate you Indian. All these Indians come to America because they want a better life," she is seen saying in the video. "You... people are ruining this country," she says in the video.

FIA Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya said that such deplorable acts should be strongly condemned

and the community must get united to address the rising wave of such crimes.

FIA President, Mr. Kenny Desai, denounced the attacks and stated that exemplary action needs to be taken by the authorities as the hate crimes and racist attacks against an essentially peace-loving community have been on the rise.

*Photo: republicworld*



# Over 130 Indian-Americans at Key Posts in Joe Biden Administration

**M**ore than 130 Indian-Americans have been appointed by US President Joe Biden to important positions in his administration so far, providing the community — which makes up around 1 per cent of the country's population — with the best representation.

In doing so he has not only fulfilled his promise to the community that he had made as a presidential candidate in 2020, but also shattered the record of his predecessor Donald Trump, who had appointed more than 80 Indian-Americans, and his previous boss Barack Obama, who had appointed over 60 Indian-Americans to key positions during his eight years

of presidency.

More than 40 Indian-Americans have been elected at various state and federal levels, including four in the US House of Representatives. Not to miss the more than 20 Indian-Americans leading top US companies.

"Indian-Americans have been imbued with the sense of *seva* (service) and this is reflected in their enthusiasm to pursue positions in public service instead of the private sector," Silicon Valley-based entrepreneur, philanthropist and venture capitalist Mr. Rangaswami told *Press Trust of India*.

"The Biden administration has now appointed or nominated the largest group to date and, needless to say, we are proud of our people and their accomplishments for

the United States," Rangaswami said. Rangaswami is founder and head of *Indiaspora*, a US-based global organization for Indian-origin leaders. *Indiaspora* keeps a track of Indian-origin leaders.



# Indian-American VP at Twitter Quits to Join Meta

**S**enior Indian American *Twitter* executive Mr. Sandeep Pandey, is leaving *Twitter* after more than a decade to join *Meta*.

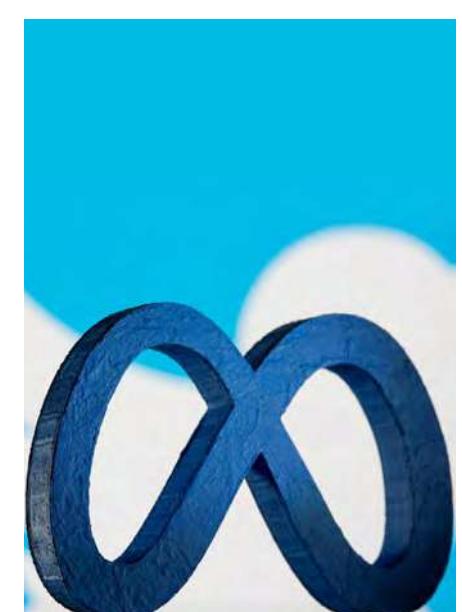
According to an *Insider* report, Pandey, who joined *Twitter* in 2012, will work on *Meta*'s artificial intelligence and machine learning teams.

*Twitter* has been seeing several high-profile exits after *Tesla* CEO Elon Musk announced a \$44 billion takeover, and then terminated it over the actual number of bots on the platform.

These are Katrina Lane, former VP of Twitter service; Ilya Brown, VP of Health; and Max Schmeiser, head of data science.

Mr. Parag Agrawal in May fired Consumer Product Leader Kayvon Beykpour and Head of Revenue Product Bruce Falck, saying there is a hiring freeze now and *Twitter* will also pause spending in most areas.

*Twitter* recently laid off 30 per cent of employees from its talent acquisition team. *Twitter* paused most hiring and backfilled, except for business-critical roles.



# Student Debt Relief by President Biden's Administration

**P**resident Biden announced a plan to erase thousands of dollars in student loans for borrowers, aiming to help more than 40 million Americans who owe a combined \$1.7 trillion in debt.

"The administration's actions will help ensure that pursuing a degree isn't a one-way ticket into poverty," Century Foundation president Mark Zuckerman and

director of higher education Robert Shireman said in an emailed statement.

The Biden administration said that it will cancel up to \$20,000 for people who received Pell Grants, which are available to low-income undergraduate students who have exceptional financial need.

The administration said that borrowers who didn't receive Pell Grants will get up to \$10,000

in forgiveness.

The chief criterion for eligibility is a person's income, as the Biden administration said it is limiting debt forgiveness to people who earn less than \$125,000. Married couples can earn up to \$250,000 and still qualify for the program.

The Department of Education is working on what the White House describes as "a simple application process for borrowers to claim relief."



## Mayor Eric Adams Vows to Clean up NYC's Outdoor-Dining Scene

**“**As long as I have something to say about it, this initiative will be here, but we're going to get it right,”

NY Mayor Eric Adams said at a Thursday August 18, 2022, press conference, in front of an abandoned dining shed in Manhattan. He called on the city's residents to report any unused or unsafe outdoor dining sheds, because they “can't be a safe haven for rats” or illegal behavior.

The city has dismantled at least two dozen sheds, as part of its new enforcement initiative, and is targeting at least 37 others with “egregious violations” for hygiene or safety, according to a press release.

The Open Restaurants program has been a lifeline for New York's restaurants throughout the pandemic, providing customers with alternatives to eating inside and sometimes increasing a restaurant's footprint. The City Council is envisioning a permanent program that would expand sidewalk dining and allow businesses that previously

participated to reapply for permits. More than 12,000 restaurants offer outdoor dining, according to city data.

But, while a boon for restaurants, some residents have complained about trash, vermin, noise and fewer parking spaces as a result of the program.

“Unfortunately, there's a minority who don't like outdoor dining at all,” Adams said. “Their lawsuit against the city is slowing the process of making the program permanent. I want to say very clearly: ‘As much as I can have a hand in it, outdoor dining is here to stay.’”



## 2 Indian-Americans in Key Body that Advises White House on Cyber Risks

*Photo: americanbazaaronline*



**U**S President Joe Biden has announced his intent to appoint Indian-Americans Manu Asthana and Madhu Beriwal to his National Infrastructure Advisory Council.

The President's National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC) advises the White House on how to reduce physical and cyber risks, and improve security and resilience of the nation's critical infrastructure sectors.

The 26 individuals announced Wednesday to the NIAC are leading senior executives with deep experience across a broad range of sectors, including banking and finance,

transportation, energy, water, dams, defence, communications, information technology, healthcare services, food and agriculture, government facilities, emergency services, and higher education.

Asthana oversees the largest power grid in North America and one of the largest electricity markets in the world as the CEO and president of PJM.

Madhu Beriwal founded Innovative Emergency Management, Inc. (IEM) in 1985 and continues to serve as its CEO and president. IEM is the largest woman-led homeland security and emergency management firm in the United States.

# Apple Launches iPhone 14, 14 Plus with eSIM & Emergency SOS

**Both the models take less than 15 seconds to send a message with a clear view of the sky, says Apple**



**A**pple has announced the iPhone 14 and 14 Plus, preserving much of the iPhone 13's design -- including the previous-gen A15 Bionic chipset. There's no Mini option this year, so your options are big or bigger. The US models of the iPhone 14 also do away with the physical SIM tray, going all in on eSIM. The standard iPhone 14 model starts at \$799, and the 14 Plus starts at \$899. Pre-orders will start September 9; the standard 14 ships on September 16, and the 14 Plus arrives later on October 7.

Both models support Emergency SOS, the much-rumored emergency messaging via communication satellites when you're out of range of a cell signal. The phone's antennas can connect to

satellite frequencies. Apple says it can take less than 15 seconds to send a message with a clear view of the sky, and the interface guides users to point their phone in the right direction and walks them through the steps to connect with emergency service providers. It's also possible to use the Find My App to share locations without sending a message. It's free for two years with iPhone 14 models.

The iPhone 14 sticks with a 6.1-inch screen, while the 14 Plus offers a big 6.7-inch screen. The 14 Plus model claims to offer the best battery life of any iPhone. Both models continue to offer last year's A15 Bionic chipset -- a major shift

for Apple, which has typically introduced a new processor to be used by its entire iPhone portfolio every year.





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## INDIA IN TRANSITION

**ESHA ZAVERI****August 29, 2022**

Rain, rivers, coasts and seas have shaped our societies from the earliest days. Tales from classical antiquity to the Abrahamic religions to ancient Mesopotamia speak of how water changed the course of history. In India, the "crucible of the monsoon," the annual drama of the moisture-carrying winds that bring 80 per cent of the country's rainfall between June and September, has long shaped everything from childhood to culture to commerce. Some of the first written accounts of managing rainfall variability date back to Kautilya's ancient treatise *Arthashastra*, written in the 4th century BCE, which discussed ways to predict and adapt to monsoon rains. While rainfall variability is not a new phenomenon, what is new is the intensity of change as a consequence of climate change.

It is often said that if climate change is the shark, then water is its teeth. Climate change is felt most deeply through water, with higher temperatures leading to droughts, floods and increasing rainfall variability. Every increase in the degree of global warming is likely to intensify water-related risks. As concerns about what a hotter climate will bring grow, this important issue of too much water and

too little water continues to occupy center stage in policy discussions. And even as uncertainties about the future fate of the monsoons remain and science evolves with new generations of climate models, scientists agree that changes in monsoon variability are underway and will continue.

India is already witnessing a collision of long dry spells interspersed with short spells of rainy days, sometimes within a span of a month. In June of this year, while Assam was reeling from drought, it was stricken by intense rainfall that unleashed devastating floods within a week. With climate change, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that the likelihood of such overlapping compounding risks will only become more frequent.

The increasing variability of water — too much or too little — can weigh heavily on communities and represents one of the most significant sources of risk facing Indian farms, firms, and families. Too much water in the form of deluges and rising waters are high-impact events that can destroy critical infrastructure, damage homes, and disrupt livelihoods for the millions of people living at water's edge. New data suggests 390 million Indians, or about three out of every ten people, live in areas directly exposed to 1-in-100 year floods. These floods can produce at least half a foot of water — an extreme inundation capable of causing severe damage. But not everyone is affected equally. A staggering 65 million people living in extreme poverty (i.e., on less than \$1.90 per day) with limited capacity to cope, recover, or move face high flood risk. The impact of floods on the lives, livelihoods, and well-being of the extremely poor is, therefore, the worst. While floods are catastrophic events, spatially diffused and slower-moving droughts are like misery in slow motion that can hamper firm and city productivity, accelerate the destruction of forests, and compromise people's health and agricultural systems.

Adapting to such rainfall variability

is often much more challenging than accommodating long-term trends because of the unpredictable duration and the uncertain magnitude. Not surprisingly, a majority of countries have listed water as the priority for adaptation in their climate change plans. The latest IPCC report also finds that the majority of these climate change adaptation strategies target the agriculture sector, which accounts for 80 to 90 per cent of global water consumption. One of the most ubiquitous adaptation strategies is irrigation, the strategic storage and application of water on crops. These efforts can play a crucial buffer role in shielding crops from some of the hardships and uncertainties arising from the increased variability of rainfall and increased heat. The clearest example of this in India is groundwater irrigation, which has surpassed surface irrigation and grown by an explosive 500 per cent over the past 55 years, making it one of the largest groundwater guzzlers in the world. The benefits to farms have been enormous. But to what extent and for how long?

Empirical and statistical analyses can shed light on the aggregate impacts. My co-authored research developed an econometric model of weather and irrigation effects to evaluate the impact of past irrigation trends on yields using forty years of data. We examined this for the case of water-intensive wheat, which is estimated to be the country's single main driver of increased consumptive irrigation demand. Indian wheat contributes 13 per cent of the global wheat supply and half of all domestic calories obtained from cereals. Results show that the rise in irrigation has been pivotal in wheat's rise as a major crop in India. Irrigation has moderated drought impacts and alleviated yield sensitivity to heat such that in the absence of irrigation over the past four decades, national yields would have been 13 per cent lower. However, it is questionable whether this benefit will continue in the future. In recent years, yield gains from irrigation expansion

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have slowed down while negative impacts of rising temperature and drought have continued to accrue, suggesting that strategies that have worked in the past may not work in the future. One of the reasons for this trend reversal is that the past's benefits have come at the cost of increased pressure on groundwater sources. Increased use of groundwater irrigation has led to widespread over-extraction of groundwater and drops in groundwater levels. When groundwater levels become deeper, rising pumping costs and costly well deepening can make extraction prohibitive. As reliance on groundwater grows, even as access to groundwater supplies dwindle, the impacts of drought and heat on water users in the future could be greater than today.

Groundwater depletion may reduce cropping intensity by up to 20 per cent across all of India, and by mid-century, when the impacts of climate change will be more pronounced, a loss in access to groundwater could reduce annual crop production by up to 28 per cent and dry season crop production by up to 51 per cent, compromising food security, farmer livelihoods, and welfare. Declining groundwater levels also means drying up of rivers in the dry season when water is most critically needed because the baseflows from aquifers feed perennial rivers. Paradoxically, the resource that has cushioned climatic variability in the past can also create the conditions that magnify and accentuate their adverse impacts in the future.

The reasons for this would have been familiar to Jean Baptiste Say, the 1900-century French economist who popularized the proposition that "supply creates its own demand." In this case, it implies that water made available cheaply will be used freely. In some arid areas, the supply of free or underpriced irrigation water creates an illusion of abundance, which increases the cultivation of water-intensive crops — such as rice, wheat, sugarcane, and cotton — that are ultimately unsuited to these regions. As a result, crop productivity suffers disproportionately in times of increases in temperature and rainfall variability due to extraordinary water needs that cannot be met, upsetting an already tenuous resource balance. This, in turn, fuels vulnerability to drought and heat.

Water investments can also inadvertently exacerbate inequities. In Maharashtra, the scale and pace of plastic-lined farm pond development in drought-prone areas has increased rapidly since 2015. While the intent was to drought-proof smallholder agriculture by promoting rainwater harvesting, primary research shows that

farmers were incentivized to extract groundwater and fill the ponds to support the intensification or expansion of higher-value, water-intensive crops. This, in turn, drove more groundwater extraction and increased competition amongst farmers. Moreover, many ponds lose water to evaporation due to high temperatures. About 81,247 cubic meters (about the volume of 32.5 Olympic-sized swimming pools) of water can evaporate in a single month, undermining other water needs for agriculture, drinking and domestic uses. Since richer farmers own farm ponds, these unintended effects directly hit the poor and marginal farmers by undercutting their access to groundwater, exacerbating overall water scarcity.

These responses are often magnified by incentives created by a complex web of subsidies. Both input and output subsidies — guaranteed procurement at set prices that feeds the country's Public Distribution System — influence cropping and investment decisions in agriculture. Subsidies for electricity — the key input used for groundwater extraction — amount to 85 per cent of the average cost of supply and play a critical role in enabling groundwater extraction. Free or flatly tariffed electricity provision has led to an increase in the value of irrigation-intensive crops and, hence, the area on which these crops are grown. Output subsidies such as minimum support prices (MSP) for rice and wheat can skew cropping decisions in favor of these crops, even in areas not conducive for their growth.

The prudent strategy is to encourage the production of crops more closely aligned with local agroecology rather than subsidizing crops that enhance vulnerability to climatic shocks. Moreover, investing in complementary solutions to buffer communities — for example, protecting watersheds and forests and using environmentally-sensitive land management practices — can increase water flows and produce greater benefits to crop productivity and incomes than investing in any single one of these solutions.

Change is often difficult. However, over time, well-intentioned investments that provide short-term relief can generate costly lock-in effects, and path dependence can set in, which renders corrective actions more difficult and costly. Confronted with intensifying levels of variability, greater policy attention needs to be given to examining the effectiveness of remedies with a long-term view. So far, solutions have remained piecemeal, in part because conventional approaches pay insufficient attention to the water cycle and the multiple attributes of water at each stage in its cycle of use — from its source in the watersheds to its eventual users across

farms, firms, cities and households; and its re-entry back to the source.

Successfully managing water requires aligning policy and practice that recognizes water's value throughout this entire chain of use while balancing three competing priorities: efficiency, equity and sustainability. But as with any chain, it is only as strong as its weakest link. And herein lies the challenge that plagues current water management practices. Different sectors and users consider their narrow constituencies and neglect the effects on the whole system. The new National Water Policy drafted by a committee of independent experts set up by the Ministry of Jal Shakti recognizes these gaps and offers a paradigm shift for managing and governing water resources. It provides a roadmap for developing solutions to safeguard water resources sustainably and to use water wisely and equitably in a way that eschews a "command-and-control" approach to one that recognizes the immense diversity of India when planning for water.

This is all the more important with climate change, which brings even greater uncertainty about the future. Such circumstances put a high premium on adaptable and flexible solutions that respond to new information and changing circumstances. In doing so, it will be critical for local and national governments, civil society, and water users from all sectors and backgrounds to engage in a sustained dialogue to identify priorities for water allocation and the processes that will build a consensus. We need to redouble our efforts for a sustainable water future for India. Every single drop of effort matters.

Esha Zaveri is an Affiliate Scholar at the Center on Food Security and the Environment at Stanford University.

This article is the third in a series of guest-edited IIT short series. The articles in this series seek to understand India's economic future and its prospects for structural transformation. The first article takes stock of the health of India's sovereign debt and gives an overview of the consequences and possibilities in the immediate future.

The next three articles focus on three major national endowments that have been neglected in the course of our development trajectory — the second article focuses on labor force participation of women, the third on water, and the fourth on land. The ability of the sovereign to spend on nation building, along with how we use our endowments, will be key in determining our future.

(Guest Editor: Shoumitro Chatterjee, Assistant Professor of International Economics, SAIS, JHU)

# THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

## Liz Truss Appointed as Britain's PM

Liz Truss took over as British prime minister on Tuesday 6th September.

Truss, the fourth Conservative prime minister in six years, flew to the royal family's Scottish home to be asked by Queen Elizabeth to form a government. She replaces Boris Johnson, who was forced out after three tumultuous years in power.

The symbolic ceremony took place at the sovereign's remote Balmoral retreat in the Scottish Highlands, as the queen was deemed unfit to return to London due to ill health.

"Ms Truss accepted Her Majesty's offer and kissed hands upon her appointment as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury," Buckingham Palace said.

Her plan to revive growth through tax cuts while also potentially providing around 100 billion pounds (\$116 billion) for energy has rattled financial markets, prompting investors to dump the pound and government bonds in recent weeks.



*Photo: moneycontrol*

## FDA Authorizes New COVID-19 Boosters Ahead of Fall Booster Campaign

New and updated COVID-19 booster shots were given emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday 31st August 2022, paving the way for shots in arms as soon as next week.

The booster shots were updated to target two different COVID strains in one shot -- the current omicron sub variants, BA.4 and BA.5, which make up 99 per cent of new cases in the US, and the original strain of COVID-19.

This is the first time current COVID-19 vaccines have had a major upgrade. In the future, experts expect the vaccines could be updated periodically to match current strains -- akin to the way the flu shot is slightly different each year.

## Ex-NYPD Cop who Assaulted DC Officer on January 6 Gets Record-setting 10-year Sentence

A retired New York City Police Department officer who was convicted of several felonies for attacking a D.C. cop with a flag pole on Jan. 6 and then tackling the officer to the ground and attempting to rip off his gas mask was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on Thursday 1st September.

Thomas Webster was sentenced by US District Judge Amit P. Mehta to the longest sentence yet in a case related to the riot at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Webster, 56, was convicted by a jury in May after they determined he was lying on the stand when he tried to convince them he was trying to help the officer he assaulted to "see my hands" when he grabbed the officer's gas mask after he tackled him to the ground.



*Photo: NBC News*



## Starbucks Appoints Laxman Narasimhan as its Next Chief Executive Officer

Narasimhan most recently served as CEO of health and hygiene company Reckitt, which owns brands such as Lysol, Durex and Mucinex. He announced earlier on Thursday, September 2nd, that he was stepping down from that role. He'll join Starbucks in October, learning about the company and its reinvention plan, before assuming the top job in April.

Until then, Howard Schultz will continue as interim CEO of the coffee chain he grew into a global giant. Schultz will remain on Starbucks' board after Narasimhan succeeds him.

Narasimhan previously worked at PepsiCo, serving as its global chief commercial officer, among other roles. Prior to working at the food and beverage giant, he was a senior partner at McKinsey.



Photo: indiaspora

## India's First Homegrown Aircraft Carrier Puts it Among World's Naval Elites

India joined an elite league of the world's naval powers, when it commissioned its first domestically built aircraft carrier, the INS Vikrant.

With the \$3 billion Vikrant, India will join only a small number of nations with more than one aircraft carrier or helicopter carrier in service and become only the third country, after the UK and China, to have commissioned a domestically built aircraft carrier in the past three years.

The carrier has filled the nation with "new confidence," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at a ceremony marked by fanfare at the Cochin Shipyard in India's southern Kerala state.



Photo: edition.cnn

## Portugal Health Minister Resigns Following Pregnant Indian Tourist's Death

Portugal's Health Minister Marta Temido resigned on Tuesday after widespread criticism of her decision to temporarily close emergency obstetric services and forcibly transfer an Indian pregnant woman between hospitals.

Temido in a sentence said that she "no longer has the conditions" to exercise the position, which the prime minister accepted.

Her resignation was announced five hours after the news of the death of a pregnant Indian woman in Lisbon who was being transferred from Hospital de Santa Maria to Hospital Sao Francisco Xavier, due to a lack of vacancies in the neonatology service.

During the trip, there was a cardiorespiratory arrest, and resuscitation work was carried out on the transport, reported RTP News.

According to Centro Hospitalar Universitario Lisboa Norte (CHULN), at the Sao Francisco Xavier Hospital, the pregnant woman was "submitted to an urgent cesarean section, with the newborn, weighing 722 grams, going to the neonatal intensive care unit for prematurity".

"The mother was hospitalized in intensive care, and died", indicated the CHULN, sending "the deepest condolences to the family".



## India Now World's Fifth Largest Economy, Overtakes UK

Britain has dropped behind India to become the world's sixth largest economy, delivering a further blow to the government in London as it grapples with a brutal cost-of-living shock.

India leaped past the UK in the final three months of 2021 to become the fifth-biggest economy. The calculation is based in US dollars, and India extended its lead in the first quarter, according to GDP figures from the International Monetary Fund.

The UK's decline down the international rankings is an unwelcome backdrop for the new prime minister. Conservative Party members chose Boris Johnson's, with Foreign Secretary Liz Truss expected to beat former Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak in the run-off.



## Cyrus Mistry, Tata Sons Ex Chairman, Dies In Accident

Cyrus Mistry, scion of one of India's most illustrious business families and who also formerly headed the nation's biggest business group- TATA, died in a road accident near Mumbai. He was 54.

The car, which Mistry was in, hit a divider on a bridge in Palghar at about 2:30 pm on Sunday, September 4. Local police confirmed this. Mistry and another passenger were killed, and two others were injured and taken to the hospital.

The news is the latest blow for the Mistry family, whose patriarch, Pallonji Mistry — Cyrus's father — died in June at the age of 93. Their Shaporji Pallonji Group was founded in 1865 and built luxury hotels, stadiums, palaces, and factories across Asia, including the tower wing of the iconic Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai. But the Mistry's were most recently known for a feud with the Tata Group.



Photo: cartoq

## Community News

### Janmashtami Celebrations Held at Radha Gopal Temple in Edison in New Jersey

The celebrations are held every year to commemorate the event. The Temple aims to bring the members of the Society together with one another and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, and thus develop the idea within the members and humanity at large that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Krishna).

It also aims to propagate consciousness of Krishna as it is revealed in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

The evening saw the Ms. Raagiinii and Mr. Sharat singing the *bhajans* in different languages including those of Saint Meera accompanied by percussionist Mr. Monty Lalan ji, which touched the hearts of the devotees gathered for the Darshan and celebrations. The celebrations were organised by Sarvalakshana Sas Prabhu ji.



### Vedant Patel, First Indian-American To Hold Daily US State Department Press Briefing

Vedant Patel, the Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State, has scripted history by becoming the first Indian-American to hold the daily State Department press briefing, earning plaudits from senior White House officials for his "utmost professionalism" and "amazing debut".

With State Department Spokesperson Ned Price on vacation, the 33-year-old Patel from California on Tuesday 6th September appeared at the briefing room in the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department to represent the country on foreign policy issues before the media.

During his briefing, Mr. Patel covered topics ranging from Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine, negotiations around the Iranian nuclear issue, and Liz Truss becoming Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.



### Sanjana Pulaparthi Wins NSF National Bee Competition

Sanjana Pulaparthi of Westborough High School in Massachusetts won the NSF National Bee Competition.

The Brain Bee is a nationwide program created to foster high school student interest in neuroscience, including careers in medicine or research.





## Community News

### Four Indian - Americans win NJ Healthcare Heroes Awards

Dr. Nisha Kotecha, Dr. Amit Borah, Dr. Tushar Patel and Mr. Ritesh Shah -- four Indian American healthcare professionals -- have been recognized as NJBIZ Healthcare Heroes.

They were among individuals and organizations, across 12 categories, celebrated as 2022 Healthcare Heroes at an event at The Palace at Somerset Park on August 19.

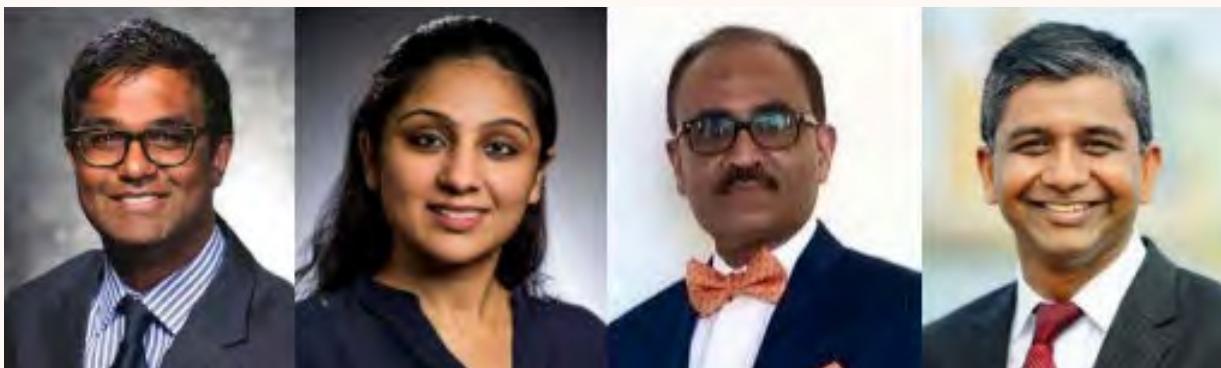
The HealthCare Heroes program was created to recognize excellence, promote innovation and honor the efforts of individuals and organizations making a significant impact on the quality of health care in New Jersey, according to a press release.

Dr. Nisha Kotecha, Chief of Critical Care at Overlook Medical Center received the award in Physician of the Year category. Dr. Kotecha is a pulmonologist in Summit, New Jersey and is affiliated with multiple hospitals in the area. She received her medical degree from Topiwala National Medical College and has been in practice for 20 years.

Dr. Amit Borah, AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center was honored in Innovation – Individual category. Borah is a medical pioneer – an interventional pulmonologist, one of the newest internal medicine subspecialties. He uses sophisticated technology to diagnose and treat problems in the lungs and airway.

Dr. Tushar Patel, Indian Health Camp of New Jersey and Ritesh Shah, Pharmacist/Founder of Ritesh Shah Charitable Pharmacy(RSCP) – NJ's first Charitable Pharmacy were honored in the Public Health category.

Since the inception of RSCP, it has provided more than \$100,000 worth of medications to needy people in New Jersey communities to start making a difference in better medication access.



(from L to R) Dr. Amit Borah, Dr. Nisha Kotecha, Dr. Tushar Patel and Mr. Ritesh Shah

## Religious Events

### Ved Mandir

1 Ved Mandir Dr, Milltown, NJ 08850 Ph: (732) 821-0404  
Open Every day -- 7:00 AM to 7:30 PM

#### AARTI TIMES

Morning Aarti -- 7:00 AM, Evening Aarti -- 7:00 PM  
Everyday Online Session by Mandir Priests

5:00 PM To 7:00 PM

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN LIVE SESSION via ZOOM](#)  
Upcoming Events

3 Sep - HANUMAN CHALISA- 5:00 PM onwards  
5 Sep - SHRI CHANDRA NAVMI- 5:00 PM onwards  
9 Sep - GANESH VISARJAN- 5:00 PM onwards  
10 Sep - MATA KI CHOWKI- 3:00 PM onwards  
11 Sep - SATYANARAYAN KATHA- 5:00 PM onwards  
[www.vedmandir.org](http://www.vedmandir.org)



## 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

[Click Here to Join on Zoom](#)

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

Meeting ID: 918 7178 8492, Passcode: 897402





# JAY SRINIVASAN

**January 14, 1950 - September 4, 2022**

India American community activist Jay Srinivasan, passed away Sunday morning at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Boston after a long illness. He was 72.

In his professional life, Mr. Srinivasan worked in sales, marketing, product management and SAP implementation.

Survived by his wife Prabha, three daughters—Priya, Vidya and Divya, son-in-law Geetika, and granddaughter Shefali, Mr. Srinivasan, a resident of Medway, MA, was suffering from diabetes and multiple organ failures.

**Om Shanti**

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31  
*Years*  
COMMUNITY SERVICE

Date : 08/30/2022

Dear Mayors Joshi and McCormac,

We are writing to offer our sincere apologies for certain aspects of our 2022 Indian Independence Day parade that reflected poorly on our organization and offended the Indian American minority groups, especially Muslims, from the local area and across the State and Country.

The parade should be and has always been about a celebration of our Indian heritage and inclusion and diversity among our many different cultures and religions.

Unfortunately there was a bulldozer among the floats in the parade which is a divisive image that did not reflect our mission. It was seen quite negatively by many who are deeply impacted and insulted by certain activities that have been happening in India. Many who participated in or watched the parade or heard about the activities from social media accounts were offended by this symbol and by comments made by our guest speakers and that was not our intention.

Our parade should never be about politics and should never include these blatant divisive symbols. Our parade should recognize us as South Asians living in two of the best towns in the country.

We hereby make the commitment that we will not allow these symbols in the future and that we will work with all different groups of South Asian heritage to make sure that our parade remains the best in the State of New Jersey.

We have enjoyed a long relationships with the elected officials of the Township of Edison where our parade begins and the Township of Woodbridge where our parade ends. We hope to continue these lasting and valuable relationships in the future.

Best regards,

Chandrakant Patel, President





Vallabhdham Temple Cordially invites all Garba & Raas enthusiasts to Grand Navratri

# BIGGEST NAVRATRI OPEN AIR GARBA GROUND GARBA

United Way of Connecticut

**Sunday, Sept. 11th, 2022**  
**Time : 4.00 pm**

**New Britain Football Stadium**  
230 John Karbonic Way, New Britain CT 06051

**Legendary Garba Singer**  
**Atul Purohit**

**Limited Time Special Tickets \$22**  
**Kids Under Age 7 FREE**

**Buy Tickets on line :**  
**Early Bird Tickets now available on**  
<https://sulekha.com/atulpurohitct>  
<https://www.facebook.com/navratrigarbact>

**General Admission \$25**  
**FREE PARKING**

Dharmic Organizations of the United States Present

**DARSHANA**  
A Glimpse into the **Hindu Civilization**  
Hindu Culture and Education Exhibition  
Great Opportunity to know and learn about HINDU Civilization

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

NEW ENGLAND FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS

TV ASIA

**Supported by**  
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**Chief Guest Governor of CT Ned Lamont**

**Remembering Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>**

Join us for a Rememberance and solidarity  
We will Never forget 9/11

**Supported by**  
CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA  
NEW YORK

**STREET FOODS STALLS**

**CLOTHING - JEWELLERY**

**Free KIDS ZONE**

Lots of kids activity  
Play area for Kids  
Activities for Kids

All proceeds from this biggest outdoor Raas-Garba will go to the Vallabhdham Temple, Newington, CT



# AAPI: THE GREAT AWAKENING

## 2022 NATIONAL CIVIC LEADERSHIP FORUM

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Kathy Ong Sisolak  
First Lady of Nevada



Sichan Siv  
Envoy U.S. Ambassador, U.N.  
Economic and Social Council



Maeley Tom  
Author



Champone Sinlapasal  
Multnomah County (Oregon)  
Circuit Judge



Aziz Haniffa  
Executive Editor  
India Abroad

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THE RED FLAG ENTERTAINMENT  
PRESENTS



## KUSH BANKER'S



### Story Outline

The story of one family, struggling to live a happy life but fighting and competing every single day!

They lost their everything due to internal jealousy and competition, and because of that now they don't even have a house of their own.

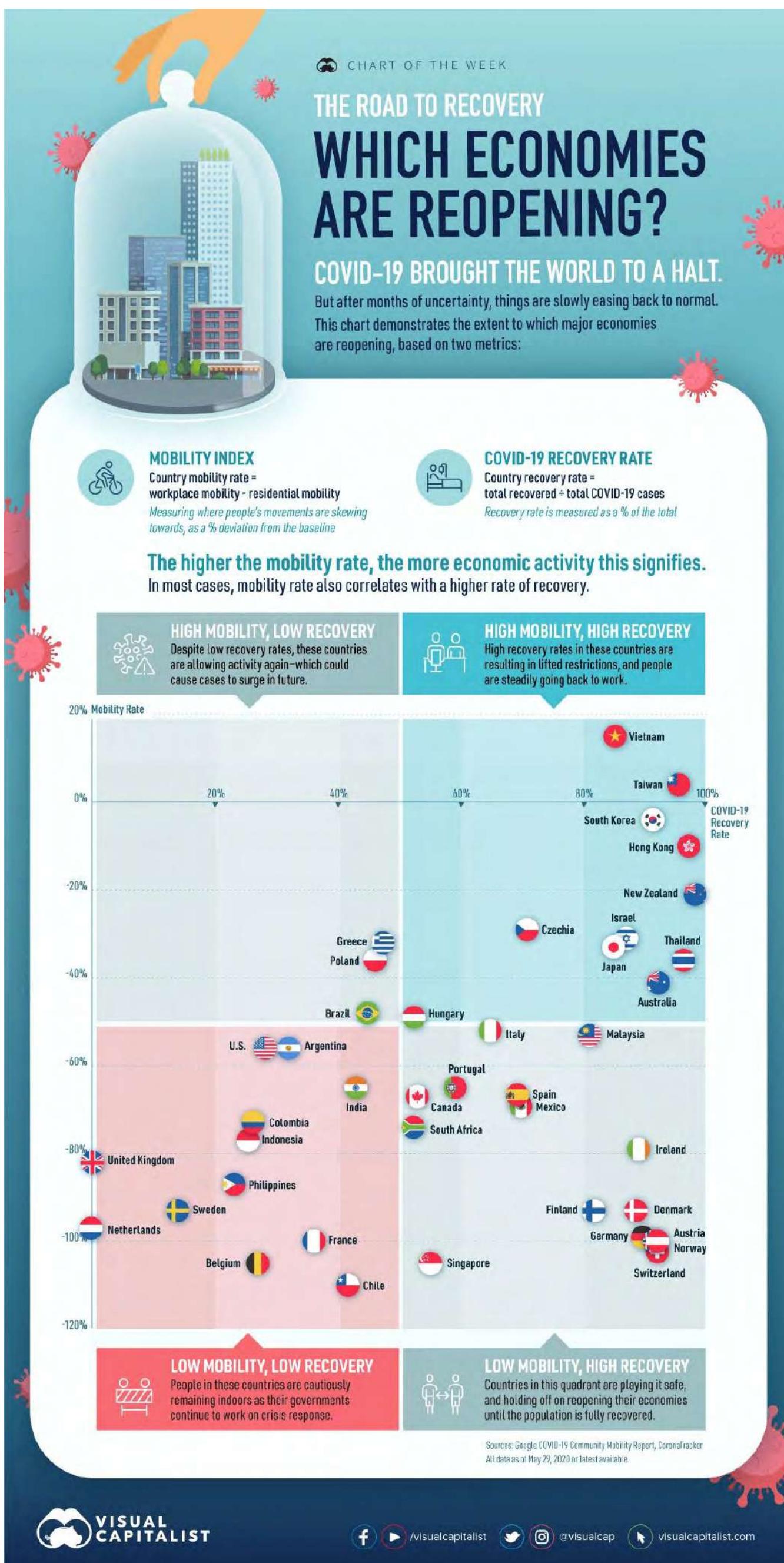
Meanwhile one fine day a girl from the USA planned to meet this family for a wedding proposal.

So, this family plans a fake set up to impress the girl. Finally, the girl arrives, and the government announces lockdown on the same day.

This is the fun-loving roller coaster story about what happens next?

A complete family entertainer with power-packed performances and a humorous storyline.





# SUBSCRIBERS' SECTION


**SONIA DATE**
**Shamshera on Amazon Prime**

The reviews of this film were scathing, to say the least. The fact that it was streaming on the OTT platform within a few weeks of its theatrical release laid to rest all my doubts about it. Yet, I did watch this movie. Why? For Ranbir Kapoor and YRF. Sadly, both didn't help.

If any of you have been a wide-eyed movie kid in the 80's, you'd know why I wanted to see the film. I had visions of watching a swashbuckling Ranbir, the Indian Robin Hood, robbing the rich to help the poor. None of this

happened.

I was subjected to a stark landscape, with barren deserts, swirling sands, towering mountains, a nondescript fort, and people in rags and chains. Here's the story. The Khamerans are a tribe wrongfully enslaved by the British in a fort. Their chieftain, Shamshera, was betrayed by the wily and nasty Shudd Singh, an officer of the British. They are shown languishing, and you have the usual melodramatic moments, of them being whipped, shoved, kicked, and whatnot. Hindi cinema is all about excess and exaggeration. The chieftain's son, Balli, makes it a mission to free his tribe with his band of sorry-looking cronies. That's it in a nutshell!

But dear readers, the viewer is subjected to below-average music, attempts to recreate some of Bahubali's magnificence (sadly, you need a Rajamouli), over-the-top dialogues of "keedas",

a murder of crows that murder the scene, a white stallion that clearly isn't real, and CGI that isn't effective.

Am I spewing my litany of criticism? Not really, as I asked for this punishment. Does the



movie make sense? After fast-forwarding and ending this exercise in patience, I was relieved that I had saved my money. A cinema outing would have cost me Rs 1,000. I can now reward myself by ordering something on Myntra or Nykaa. No, this is not a brand sponsorship.

Ranbir, you cannot disappoint your fans. Your previous choices

have proved your mettle as an actor. Do remember, "all that glitters is not gold." Vani Kapoor, well, to put it politely, was the same. Abs, a large mouth, lots of skin, and minimum acting. Sanjay Dutt hammered his

way as the baddie, and clearly enjoyed it. Iravati Harshe and Ronit Roy didn't add any value to their roles. I think both of them were bemused by it all. Karan Malhotra, do remember that a bundle of cloth doesn't make a baby. Viewers aren't stupid for God's sake!

Watch it at your own risk!

## Bilkis Bano Case

**PRASHANT**

The release of the accused in the famous Bilkis Bano case in India has stirred up the hornet's nest. Some have opposed the release of the 11 accused who were serving life sentences, while some, on the other hand, say that the law took its proper course and the release happened after the men spent 14 years in jail.

According to those who favor the judgement, legal consequences depend upon what punishment is pre-defined in that particular act under which the accused has been charged rather than on an emotional demand or outburst of a group. The court of law acts as per the prescribed statute & has to follow the well laid down legal procedures before it can convict anyone.

This is how a democratic country functions under the constitution & law of the land. At the end of the day charges levied under any specific legal act on the accused have to have merit in

order to be tested under the law by the petitioner (i.e., Govt) in a legal setup.

I agree that judgments should not be meted out based on emotional outbursts - Taliban style yet my argument is that even though the Law has a provision for release after 14 years, it's not a mandate that they have to be released. It is the court's discretion based on the gravity of the crimes, the behaviour of the accused during the jail term, and the risks of early release. If you believe that raping a 6-month pregnant woman, smashing the skull of her 3-year-old daughter, raping and killing her mother and sister and then killing 11 members of the family isn't a heinous crime - then that's worrisome.

I came across this on the internet

"I want you to close your eyes and take a moment to imagine this. I want you to picture a 21-year-old Hindu girl called Radha fleeing the communal

riots in her village along with her family. There are 16 in this group, including 4 children and 4 women, and they all fear for their lives. They hide in a truck to transport themselves to a safer spot away from the bloodlust around them. The truck doesn't make it far as a Muslim mob surrounds it. Armed with rods and swords, this mob starts killing everyone in the truck one by one. The women are last to die, not because of chivalry but because they have to be raped first. The older women are raped and disposed of. Everyone is beheaded so that their bodies can't be identified. A mob of 30 men gangrapes Radha.

Did I mention that Radha was 6 months pregnant at the time? Also, did I mention that Radha's three-year-old was also with her in the truck? Yes, Radha saw her daughter's head being smashed by the mob till there was nothing of the tiny skull left anymore. I want you to

picture Radha... Radha, whose only crime was to be Hindu in the wrong place at the wrong time. Radha who was gangraped while pregnant and who had to see her daughter being beaten to a pulp. Now open your eyes. I ask you today, what should happen to the perpetrators of this heinous crime? A crime so bestial and barbaric that the mere retelling of it makes one's wonder if the perpetrators were humans or animals?"

If this had happened, would you have shrugged your shoulders and said, 'the release was as per the law'? Or is this easy to say because it was Bilkis Bano and not Radha?

I don't want to bring the communal angle to it but then why a heroes' welcome to the release.





# LAAL SINGH CHADDHA

(2022 / Drama / Cinema)

**JUST LIKE LAAL, HIS STORY IS SIMPLE,  
OVERWHELMING & WITH A HEART OF GOLD!**

**Director**

Advait Chandan

**Cast**

Aamir Khan, Mona Singh, Kareena Kapoor, Manav Vij, Naga Chaitanya

**Writer**

Atul Kulkarni

Haven't seen so much buzz about a movie in the recent past. So many weird reasons to boycott it, so many strong emotions about it being a remake and so many tepid reactions to its trailer. I personally belonged to the third category. But being a true-blue cinema buff and an Aamir fan, I wasn't willing to write it off without seeing it, though I had toned down my expectations.

But I have never been more glad to surpass my own expectations. And my heart proved to my pragmatic self that it's difficult for an Aamir film to disappoint me and not move me to tears.

*Laal Singh Chaddha* is as simple a storytelling as its protagonist Laal, with a heart of gold and nothing but good intentions and love.

The film follows a simple graph of flashbacks, which takes not only Laal's co-passengers but also us, the audience, on a trip down the memory lane. Those who know of that era might be able to connect better. I might have been a child but have my own memories of many of the milestone events depicted. Very subtle, very unbiased, non-leaning narrative that barely touches

upon the events but your heart knows what to feel. I appreciate that the screenplay has been very careful but nevertheless doesn't miss the point.

As far as Laal's personal story is concerned, there's nothing new to boast about, no thrills to excite you, but there is a heart winning and extremely overwhelming quality about it. I have lost count of the number of times I was moist eyed or shedding tears, and most of the time, I had a warm-hearted smile.

Just the simple way Laal's



mom shares her pearls of wisdom and love with him, the fuzzy chemistry that Laal and Rupa shared as kids, their innocent moments, his naivete, his purity of soul, his good intent and silliness, the effect he has on people, everything is moving.

Speaking of performances, I'll be honest.

There's nothing new that

Aamir shows that he has not already done at least twice before. You'll see shades of his previous characters. At points you do wish that the actor in him pushes the envelope in terms of expressions. But you must admit that the way he puts his heart and soul in his stories and characters, he more than compensates.

He is extremely intelligent as a filmmaker. He diverts so much of our emotional energy that we can't help but overlook his repetitiveness. I admire the passion he puts into a project and it always reflects in the emotional hold his films have over the audience. He is a man who works on his strengths to overcome the weaknesses. I admire him for that too. But one grouse, he drives my tear glands bonkers.

Love Kareena for the ease with which she brightens up the frames and enlivens her characters. She is a natural who doesn't have to try too hard to get that sway over you.

Mona Singh was good. She plays her character convincingly with aplomb.

I know it's a little tough to convince the audience to go to theatres, least of all please them.

I know it sounds a tad

boring if I say the film is about inherent goodness and purity of soul.

I know it's difficult to sell a film that is low on excitement in a typical way.

But it has a beautiful message that it drives home well without being preachy.

If you are someone who loves Hindi cinema, if you are someone who can connect to a story despite its simplicity, if you think simple and innocent moments can overwhelm you and if you are someone who likes watching with a heart up the sleeve, then please do give this film a watch.

The team has taken a massive plunge with time, money and effort. The least they deserve is a chance.

What is most admirable about the film is the way it has been able to convey its heart-warming message about humanity and love without shouting from the rooftops, avoiding any unnecessary passion or rhetoric or agenda.

*Laal Singh Chaddha* is pure emotions with its heart in the right place. Try lending it your hearts for once.

**Score 3.5 on 5**



Photo: Laal Singh Chaddha Trailer

# DOBAARAA

(2022 / Hindi / Cinema Release)

## THIS MINDBENDER KEEPS YOU ENTWINED IN ITS MYSTERY, TIME WARPS & ATMOSPHERICS!

**Director** Anurag Kashyap

**Cast** Taapsee Pannu, Rahul Bhat, Pavail Gulati, Saswata Chatterjee

**Writer** Nihit Bhave

**Based On** Mirage (Spanish)



Photo: wall.alphacoders

### Plot

A terrible stormy night in 1996 turns too dark for a young boy named Anay. He witnessed something he shouldn't have had.

A similar stormy night in 2021 turns Antara's life topsy-turvy. She tries to save someone's life, not knowing she is about to lose her own.

Antara has to struggle and strive to get back to her past.

Anay has to struggle and strive to find closure and get past his past.

### Analysis

I have always found time zones, parallel worlds and space-time concepts complicated. Never liked them much in action flicks and pure sci-fi genres.

But the concept intrigues me when not too complicated or when accompanied by a mystery or thrill or slight drama involved.

And that is why *Dobaaraa* clicked perfectly for me. It is a great blend of mystery and space-time continuum. It begins with what looks like murder mystery and soon

transforms into something much more complicated. You are continually trying to run ahead of the screenplay trying to guess what to expect. But this one is not going to be that easy for the Sherlock in you. There are not just the characters at play but parallel timelines that continually try to derail your guessing skills. The mystery is relentless and delicious.

Joining the dots is going to as difficult for you as it were for Antara and Anay. At some

unanswered questions. But when the story proceeds, you get so entwined in its loop, so involved in your protagonists' lives, so desperate to find a closure for them, you would overlook it.

The film remains so engrossing throughout, that even at points where you are not wowed, it has your rapt attention. The holes fade out in the story's own warp and weft just like in an optical illusion; something successfully takes



point of time these characters gain an emotional hold too. You can feel the loneliness and mess in their lives.

Loved the well-timed, well worded and melodious song "Waqt Ke Jungle."

On the flip side, initially at some points, there did seem some loopholes or rather

your focus elsewhere.

Anurag uses atmospherics and his able cast well to add gravity to this mystery thriller. For a change, there is not his dark or offbeat touch here.

Taapsee's performance is the fulcrum of the film. She is so convincing as the baffled woman, an unhappy wife and

a doting mother desperate to get back her life and child. The emotional hold Antara had over me is all credit to her.

Loved Rahul Bhat. There is always something very appealing and honest about his performances, whether in *Ugly* or *Section 375* or this one. He adds heft irrespective of the length of his role.

Pavail Gulati holds the fort. Though his character didn't enjoy the arch and depth of his role in *Thappad*, where I found him fantastic, I liked him here. I will look forward to more of his meatier roles.

### Recommendation

The mystery thriller lover in me was thoroughly enraptured by the film. I loved the puzzle, the guessing game, re-arranging the events in the correct time lines and was quite happy with the emotional closure.

A must-watch for those who love this genre.

**Score 3.5 on 5**



# Jay Shetty Officiates Jennifer Lopez, Ben Affleck's Wedding

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck held a second marriage ceremony on Saturday, August 20, a month after tying the knot in an intimate wedding in Las Vegas. To officiate the special occasion the celebrity couple, popularly known as "Bennifer", hired life coach and one of the world's most renowned motivational speakers, Jay Shetty, a report in *Page Six* said.

Mr. Shetty also officiated

the wedding of Lily Collins and director Charlie McDowell in September last year.

Mr. Shetty and Jennifer Lopez have previously featured together in a few videos of YouTube series Coach Conversations. She also appeared in his podcast, *On Purpose*, in March 2021.

Ms. Lopez, 53, and Mr. Affleck, 50, got married during a three-day celebration for friends and family at the

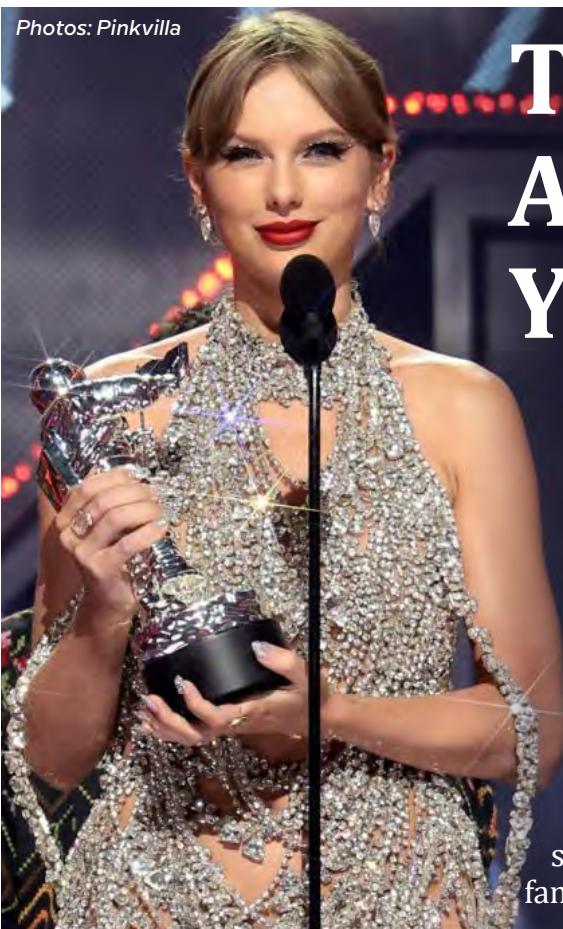
latter's sprawling riverfront estate near Savannah, Georgia.

The singer wore a couture Ralph Lauren dress made in Italy for the ceremony.

The dress code for the second wedding was white and the function was attended by Matt Damon and his wife Luciana, director Kevin Smith, and actor Jason Mewes, among others.


Photos: *Page six*

## Taylor Swift Announces New Album During Her Video of the Year Award Acceptance Speech



Taylor Swift had a great evening at the MTV Video Music Awards since she won the biggest honor of the night — the Video of the Year Award — for her song All Too Well. Swift also won awards for Best Longform Video and Best Direction for the same song.

The singer in her speech not only thanked her fans for voting for her to win

but also had another surprise for them which she revealed during her speech. After accepting the Video of the Year Award, Taylor said, "You guys, I'm just so proud of what we made, and I know that every second of this moment that we wouldn't have been able to make this short film if it weren't for you, the fans."

She further added, "You emboldened me to do that. And I had sort of made up my mind that if you were going to be

this generous and give us this, I thought it might be a fun moment to tell you that my brand-new album comes out Oct. 21. And I will tell you more at midnight."

Taylor also took to Instagram to announce her new album which has been titled *Midnights*. She also released the album art for the same. The new album consisting of 13 tracks showed the artwork consisting of titles simply mentioned as "Track one" and so on for now.

## 'House of the Dragon' Renewed for Second Season

**H**BO announced on Friday, August 26 that the "House of the Dragon" fantasy drama would return for a second season, after the "Game of Thrones" prequel debuted to nearly 10 million US viewers.

Set years earlier in the same universe of George RR Martin's book, "House of the Dragon" depicts the glory days of the ancestors of popular "Thrones"

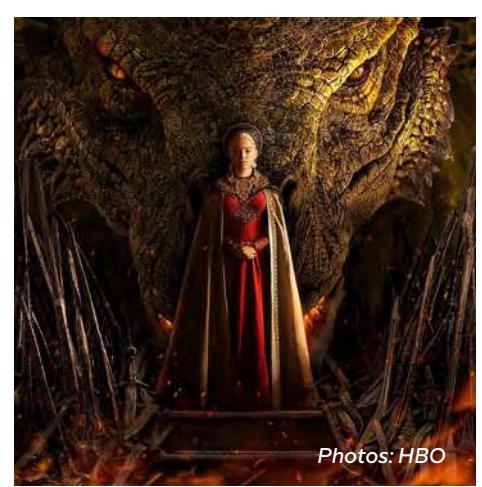
characters, such as Daenerys Targaryen. It is based on his book, "Fire and Blood."

HBO's return to Westeros, and its prequel show's addictive blend of scheming dynasties, gory violence and arguably gratuitous sex, has boasted solid numbers and drawn generally warm praise from critics.

The show's premiere drew 9.98 million viewers in the United States, making it "the largest

audience for any new original series in the history of HBO," the television network's owner, WarnerMedia, said in a statement earlier this week.

"House of the Dragon" premiere represents a success for newly merged Warner Bros Discovery, which is under intense scrutiny as it tries to navigate the rapidly changing entertainment landscape dominated by the so-called "streaming wars".



Photos: HBO

# Sonam Kapoor, Anand Ahuja Become Proud Parents to Baby Boy

**B**ollywood diva Sonam Kapoor Ahuja welcomed her first child with businessman-husband Anand Ahuja on Saturday (20th August). The couple has become proud parents to a baby boy.

In a statement shared on their respective Instagram accounts, the couple said that they were excited to begin this new journey of parenthood. They also thanked the doctors, nurses, friends and family for their love and support during this period.

"It's only the beginning but we know our lives are forever changed - Sonam and Anand," the statement concluded.

Anil Kapoor, who became a grandfather for the first time, also shared a statement on social media. He said that the Kapoors are elated to welcome the newest member of the family.

"We are delighted to announce, on the 20th of August 2022, the arrival of the newest member of our family. Sonam and Anand have been blessed with a

healthy baby boy and we couldn't be more elated. Our hearts are bursting with pride and love for the new parents and their beautiful angel," he said.

The statement was signed by his wife Sunita Kapoor, and Ahuja's parents Harish and Priya. The excited uncles and aunties - producer Rhea Kapoor along with her husband Karan Boolani, actor Harshvardhan Kapoor and Bhane founder's brother Anant - also signed their names at the end of the note.



# Vaani Kapoor Launches Trailer of Maali at Indian Film Festival of Melbourne

**T**he trailer of this Pragya Kapoor film was launched by Vaani Kapoor at the prestigious Indian Film Festival of Melbourne recently.

The trailer's provocative message regarding deforestation and mental health not only elicited a loud response from the audience, but also made everyone speechless.

*Maali* is a journey of a 16-year-old girl, Tulsi, from the calm mountains to the concrete jungle and her struggle when she witnesses the life of the city; greed, loneliness and depression. In the film, young Maali's journey from the serene mountains to the

concrete jungle examines the effects of deforestation on our wellbeing and mental health.

As interesting as the title, *Maali* brings alive this most pertinent global conversation issue.

Vaani says, "It has been an immense pleasure working with Pragya. Her films have always had an important message. Having worked with her on *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, which also had a social message, *Maali* too highlights alarming issues that we are facing around us, which need to be addressed and given more attention. The trailer of *Maali* looks incredible and we should all support and watch such meaningful content."

Producer Pragya Kapoor adds, "It's been an honor for us to showcase our film at the prestigious Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. We have received tremendous support from the industry for this little film of ours. Also, a huge thank you to my dear friend Vaani Kapoor for being gracious as always and launching our trailer to the world."

Director Shiv C. Shetty is making his directorial debut after working in the corporate sector for 13 years. He is now following his passion, and said, "It's my first film and it has been a beautiful journey working with Pragya, who is so deeply connected with nature."



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