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FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF TAMPA BAY

E-NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2011

Editors - Dr. Madhavi Sekharam, Ms. Anu Kotha & Ms. Ann Joseph

"FIA: BRINGING THE INDIAN-AMERICANS OF TAMPA BAY TOGETHER"

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT OF THE FIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dear Fellow Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the FIA of Tampa Bay, I am really delighted to present you the first issue of the newsletter 'Samachar' which we believe will go a long way in uniting the diverse Tampa Bay Indian-Americans, the first mission of the FIATB. Toward the second mission of FIATB, the Samachar will serve as a mirror of the Indian Americans in Tampa Bay and the associated regions and will reflect the upcoming events. I like to thank both Dr. Madhavi Sekharam and Ms. Ann Joseph, who will be spearheading the publication during the first year of this Newsletter and will serve as the co-editors of this journal.

My best wishes to the 'Samachar'.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Shyam Mohapatra
President (FIA-BoD)

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT OF THE FIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



~ With best wishes to the all the FIA member organizations.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. Bela Sharma
President (FIA-Executive Committee)

62ND INDIA REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION

By Ann Joseph, FIA Secretary

I found myself driving into the parking lot rather apprehensive about the weather that day. I let out a sigh of relief as I made my way to the lawn: we were blessed with a warm sunny day perfect for the outdoor sports that had been planned for weeks. I smiled when I looked up and saw the sun-kissed *Gopuram's* finial that seemed to have a slight orange hue, contrasted by the sapphire blue sky creased with white streaks from jetliners. I was reminded of the Aero India show that I never missed back home. The snake maneuver of the mighty Sukhoi was surpassed by the pride of the Indian Air Force and crowd favorite 'Suryakirans'. How I remember the applause and awe with their flawless formations with tricolor jet streaks! Distracted by the sound of a passing jet plane, I looked at the ongoing project – marking lines for kho-kho! The lawn was green as ever with no dew in sight, a good sign for all the running that's in store for the next couple of hours, I thought to myself. It was a rather decent turnout was the talk on the turf. The kids were busy devising strategies for the *nimboo-chamcho* race while I snickered - it wasn't going to be easy for the kids and adults alike with the tricky balancing act! I reckon the adults enjoyed the races as much as the kids if not more. The sports events concluded with lots of tired tots, happy faces and of course refreshments! The FIA Sports video may be viewed [here](#).



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Meanwhile, the kids coloring and rangoli competitions were going in full swing. As a kid I recall watching in delight as the most complicated *kolams* were drawn quickly and effortlessly at the entrance of my ancestral home. I didn't mind sitting by their side to make sure no one stepped on them. This time too it was quite the sight with the colors and intricate designs. It was past noon and not that the atmosphere wasn't energizing but I thought I could use a snack. To my relief, I was greeted by the popcorn and cotton candy stands. Just when I was relishing a fresh round of popcorn, I was reminded that it was time for the highlight of the day, the flag hoisting ceremony. The procession was led by the resounding *chenda melam* drums surrounded by glittering umbrellas. As I walked holding the FIA banner I couldn't help but notice the leading ladies who looked elegant in Benaras & Kanchivaram saris alike!



Generally, Independence day celebrations are noted with much pomp around the world, but the Republic Day carries a lot of significance as well. The value of freedom is only limited by the acts of independence. Freedom is realized when a people form a united nation and work together on the path of progress with proper governance based on a framework of defining fundamental principles. Indeed this day marked a milestone - the day that the Constitution of India came into force. And the fact the Constitution drafting committee members were learned and diverse personalities made it even more special. I take pride that our FIA committee and community reflect the same unity and diversity. The FIA EC President Elect, Dr. Madhavi Sekharam welcomed all the member organizations, VIP's and the community at large to the flag hoisting ceremony. The community also observed Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary. The chief guests included the Tampa Mayoral candidate Mr. Ed Turanchik and Dr. Kiran C Patel who presided over the flag hoisting ceremony. Both the anthems were beautifully sung and once again the *chenda melam* led the community procession and set the mood for the next highlight, an exciting lineup of cultural events.

FIA EC President Mrs. Bela Sharma welcomed all the member organization leaders to the event. Key note speeches were followed by an announcement from the FIA Board of Directors President Dr. Shyam Mohapatra that the Seniors Group will be given a check. The participants and winners of various competitions were then felicitated. The chaos backstage was exhilarating and I would peek now and then to catch a glimpse of the performances. One couldn't be backstage and ignore the ever present *kachoris* and *samosas*! I was overwhelmed by the talent especially that of the children. The audience applauded our young artists and their choreographers who have toiled many hours to put up such a grand show. By the end of the day, we found our AV technician talking in accented 'Hinglish' and grooving to *desi* tunes! The event concluded with vote of thanks from Mrs. Gopa Rautray, the Event Chair. The entire day was witness to events and activities attributed to various themes but all of them stood for one in particular, the central theme of FIA Tampa Bay being 'Unity in Diversity'.





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SENIOR'S CLUB INDIAN-AMERICANS TAMPA BAY

By Ram Jakhota, Seniors Club Coordinator

There is a growing population of aging elderly Indian Americans in Greater Tampa Bay. The Seniors Club monthly get-togethers have been coordinated by volunteer efforts led by our esteemed citizens, Mr. Jakhota and Mr. Adhia.

The Seniors Club has organized several activities for the benefit of the Senior community in Tampa Bay. The Club has served a noble cause of creating opportunities for socialization, invited musicians, developed games/groups, and presented knowledgeable speakers with information related to elderly needs e.g. finances, Medicare, health care issues such as Alzheimer's & dementias, family relationships, spirituality etc. Over time, the Club has gotten support from community volunteers to sponsor the above activities which members of the aging population benefit from. It has been proven to be an asset to the community.

FIA TAMPA BAY ANNOUNCEMENT

Seniors club had approached FIA for monetary help. Dr. Shyam Mohapatra, President, FIA BoD announced during the India Republic Day celebration that FIA of Tampa Bay will donate \$5000/- towards the ICC Seniors' Club.

FIA TAMPA BAY COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FIA has organized a community service group in the Tampa Bay area. As many of you know, Metropolitan Ministries in Tampa is doing a wonderful job in helping and feeding hungry and homeless people. They provide a variety of services for the people in need. They are always in need of volunteers to get the job done. FIA service groups from member organizations volunteer on the 1st Saturday of every month from 10am - 1pm at Metropolitan Ministries in the Food Serving and food bagging areas. We need eight volunteers in each group. Please sign up online on the [Google document](#) to register your organization for the community service group.

Mr. Sanjiv Jain coordinates FIA community service activities. Contact - (813) 971 - 3698 ; SJAIN33647@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS OF FIA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

HINDU TEMPLE NATYANJALI

The Hindu Temple of Florida is organizing 'Natyanjali', a dance program on Sunday March 6, at the Hindu Temple Community Hall.

TAMPA TAMIL ASSOCIATION OF USA (TAMAUSA)

The **Tampa Tamil Association of USA** will be conducting their **4th Annual Children's Day** on March 12, 2011 at Benito Middle School. Chess, Geography Bee and Spelling Bee (preliminary rounds) will be conducted on March 05, 2011 at the Hindu Temple of Florida Auditorium. Please register online: <http://tamausa.dyndns.org/ChildrensDayRegn.aspx> (Registration ends March 1st)

GURUKULAM OF TAMPA BAY Gurukulam is the brain child of Late Dr. A. N. V. Rao, an esteemed math professor at the University of South Florida, Tampa who envisioned many voluntary academic services. Gurukulam is a voluntary educational organization that benefits students from KG through 12th grade. For more information visit www.gurukulamtampa.com

Gurukulam of Tampa Bay is hosting the Tampa Regional Bee contests organized by the North South Foundation on March 26th and 27th, 2011, at USF Cooper Hall. The registration deadline is March 12 and 13, however contest entries may close earlier. For registration and more information, please visit www.northsouth.org.

KANNADA KOTA & TELUGU ASSOCIATION UGADI CELEBRATION

The Kannada Koota and Telugu Association of Florida will both be celebrating their "Ugadi" festival in April at Hindu temple of Florida community hall. Dates for both of these celebrations will be announced shortly.

PEHCHAAN

PEHCHAAN is a non profit organization based in the Tampa Bay area and stands for **Providing Educational Humanistic Cultural Hope and Support for the South Asian American Network.** PEHCHAAN will organize an **Elders Workshop on April 17, 2011 from 2 pm-4pm.** For more details & RSVP contact: pehchaantampabay@yahoo.com. PEHCHAAN's Domestic Violence Assistance **Hotline-813-749-8763.**

RATH YATRA ASSOCIATION OF TAMPA BAY is holding their 5th Annual Rath Yatra, on Sunday July 10th 2011.