



Federation of Indian Associations of Chicago celebrates Holi, Festival of Colors



Asian Media USA

Chief Guest and other dignitaries with FIA Founder Chairman, Past and Present President and other key FIA Executive Directors and Board Members.

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The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) Chicago, a 501(c)(3) organization, hosted a colorful Holi celebration marked by a beautifully decorated stage and premises filled with music, dance, Thandai (a special India drink), delicious food, and singing that depicted glorious Indian culture at the Mall of India, Naperville, Illinois, on Sunday, April 21, 2024.

The grand event kicked off with an ensemble by Maharashtra Mandal called Dhol Tasha. This rhythm got the entire crowd, including the mall visitors, to join in the fun and dance together.

Naperville Mayor Scott Wehrli joined in the traditional dance and learned a few steps. This was followed by the emcees Nilabh Dubey (Secretary-General) and Sanskriti Sharma taking over the program by inviting FIA Chairman and Founder Sunil Shah, President Pratibha Jairath, and Past President Vinita Gulabani on the stage.

Chairman and Founder Sunil Shah welcomed on the stage the Chief Guest for the day, Consulate General of India, Somnath Ghosh.

This was followed by welcoming the Naperville mayor, state Rep. Michelle Mussman, Oak Brook Village President Larry Herman, and the Aurora Alderwoman Shweta Baid.

On the stage, the dignitaries were joined by Advisory Board members Pinky Thakkar, Sushma Bhanot, and Dr. Bhupinder Beri.

Wehrli spoke about why Naperville gets constantly ranked as the number one city to live in the USA and the contributions of the Indian diaspora in building Naperville into a great city. Herman talked about the fun involved in applying the colors to each, bringing us all together as part of one family.

Michelle Mussman, who was attending the Holi festivities with FIA for the eighth time, spoke about how FIA brings the west and east together and truly proves there is unity in diversity.

Shweta Baid spoke about the vibrant Indian community and the welcoming nature that ensures smooth integration, wherever they live. CG Somnath Ghosh spoke about how the Indian diaspora brings vibrancy and economic development to wherever they live. He also spoke about the world's great democracy, starting the election for the new government, where 1.4 billion people will decide their representatives. The transition of applying colors to the forehead was done by Chairman Sunil Shah and Pratibha Jairath to all the dignitaries. Specially made Holi T-shirts were gifted to all the dignitaries. Thanks to our sponsors, Ghoman Group (Mariott) and Naresh Shah (Rely Care Services).

This was followed by the cultural program. The mic was handed to Richa Chand, the emcee for the entertainment segment. Culturalists were kicked off by Jitendra Bulasara and Shaila Khedkar, signing patriotic and special Holi songs. We had great performances from many dance schools: Prerna, Kabita, Trusha (Pika Munshi), Bollywood Beatz (Anita Rotiwar), and Suhani Dance Academy (Falguni Rana). The surprise was an amazing dance performance by our very own FIA directors, Falguni Rana, Dolly Bansal, Sonika Khandelwal, Sanskriti Sharma, and Falguni Sukhadia. This was followed by amazing Garbha singing by Jigna Pathak and Jitendra Bulsara. All the dignitaries could not resist themselves from joining the dance when the Garbha team sang 'Dholida Pankhida' hit songs and hundreds of people from the audience jumped in. The culturalists were brought to an end by another surprise, when Richa Chand and Nilabh Dubey called on stage Chairman Sunil Shah and Executive Director Rita Shah to sing a foot-tapping duet. The dancing continued with greater fervor and full josh.

The last segment of the program was the actual playing of colors, which was done outside in the open. On the way, as we moved from indoors to outdoors, Vandana Jhingan, representing the press and media in the Chicago area, interviewed CG Somnath Ghosh and Founder/Chairman Sunil Shah for the TV News segment. CG Somnath Ghosh spoke eloquently to the press about how FIA is at the forefront of bringing Indian culture to the U.S.

The surprises did not end here. Anu Malhotra (executive vice president) prepared Thandai (a special milk and dry fruit-based drink) for all the folks who joined the Holi. Dinesh Kapoor, Anu Khetarpal, Smitesh Shah, and Hemendra Shah ensured everyone got the Indian snacks and a special Holi T-shirt before the folks went out to play Holi. The impeccable stage and the outside set-up were done by Neelam Jai. Suresh Bodiwala from Asian Media ensured each memory was well captured on his camera.

The color play of Holi kicked off with Sunil Shah, Pratibha Jairath, Vinita Gulabani, and Sudhir Agrawal blasting the colors 25 feet up in the air. DJ and the Dhol team revved up the spirits with their music, and thanks to Pratibha Jairath for sponsoring the colors, which were free for all the 600 people who joined the sweet celebrations. It was such a colorful moment; amid the chaos of colors, there were countless moments of joy and camaraderie. FIA thanks and truly appreciates all its attendees, esteemed guests, sponsors, supporters, and media partners for their unwavering support and trust in FIA.

The question remained in everyone's mind: 'What next from FIA, Chicago!'