

JULY 7, 2006

## WESTCOAST NEWSLINE

## IN BRIEF



## Punjabi Mela 2006 fails to draw crowd

■ **SAN JOSE, CALIF.:** About 3,500 people attended the San Jose Punjabi Mela 2006, a very late version of the annual Vaisakhi Mela by the same organizers. The event was held at Evergreen Community College grounds on June 11.

Though people came from as far as Sacramento and Central Valley, compared to previous years, this time the gathering was meagre. Although the grounds could hold 15,000 people, vast stretches of the fields between the main stage and vendors at the Mela were deserted. About 25 vendors and half-a-dozen food booths were present to cater to the attendees.

The main stage saw a surfeit of dance performances of all ages ranging from all woman Gidda teams to mixed children's Bhangra and all male adult version all-day long. Fremont siblings Ekvinder Singh (7) and sister Rajwinder Kaur (9), showed up in full Punjabi regalia for the occasion and performed on main stage to a medley of Bhangra music.

Punjabi folk performers Bhupinder Bubble and Ashu Chopra also performed later in the day. An added attraction, in a special fenced off portion of the field, were a couple of Desi Kabbadi matches.

Mohinder Mann, organizer of the event welcomed the attendees and guests as he surveyed the mela in a golf cart. Along with Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), San Jose City Councilmember Cindy Chavez was given a place of prominence at the Mela, in time for her upcoming run-off elections for Mayor of San Jose. Chavez is contesting against fellow Councilman Chuck Reed.

## Budding dance talent gets Yuva Bharati platform

■ **SANTA CLARA, CALIF.:** Yuva Bharati, Indian classical dance group promoted by Santa Dasu and Sumati Natesan, organized solo performances by Neela Moorthy and Rumya Sree Putcha, at the Mission City Center for Performing Arts (MCCPA) here on June 25.

Moorthy, a student of Guru Viji Prakash, Founder and Director of the Shakti School of Bharatnatyam in Los Angeles, presented a piece in Bharatnatyam, while Sree Putcha, a student of Guru Rathna Kumar, of the Anjali School of Performing Arts in Houston, gave a Kuchipudi performance on the occasion.

Dance teachers Indumati Ganesh and Viji Prakash were guests of honor for the event, along with SIFA founder, G.S. Satyanarayana, and several other dance teachers, including Jyothi Lakkaraju, Himabindu

Challa, Vidhya Subramanian, Suganda Iyer, Shreelata Suresh and Sangita Vasudevan. The function was also attended by Deputy Consul of India in San Francisco, P. P. Sarkar.

"The primary goal of Yuva Bharati is to encourage budding artists by giving them a solo opportunity, which is hard to come by since classical dance forms usually require a proper stage, adequate lighting, elaborate costumes, make-up and a live orchestra. All this becomes very expensive and tedious to undertake; as a result, many dancers settle for group performances after their first and only solo debut concerts," said the organizers of the event.

## ICC organizes talent show by students

■ **MILPITAS, CALIF.:** The India Community Center (ICC) organized performances by its students at a special gathering on June 10. The program drew around 350 people, including participants and parents.

Showcase included traditional Indian dance by students of Neena Dandiya, Aanan Contractor and Binal Kotak. Students of Mrunal Dharmadhikari performed light Indian vocal music, while Raka Gupta's Hindi Immersion students recited poetry in Hindi.

## Naach Dance Company organizes Naachmania



■ **SAN JOSE, CALIF.:** Naach Dance Company organized a two-day Bollywood dance fest, Naachmania, at Evergreen Valley College here on June 17-18. About a 1,000 people attended the fest, which included about 250 students and school instructors.

Founded by Mona Sampath and Aditya Patel, Naach Dance Company trains students across 5 cities in the Bay Area, including at the Indian Community Center (ICC), where students sign up for 10 weeks per quarter. The school is led by a series of instructors like Samson Koletkar and others.

# Two held for Fiji-Indian's murder on camping trip

SAM RAO

Pleasanton, Calif.

TWO men have been arrested for the murder of Fijian-Indian, Dipak Prasad (25), whose decomposed body was found in the Sunol Park area last month. The body, hands tied behind, had been lying in the Sunol river creek bed for almost two weeks, after the man was first reported missing.

On June 15, Alameda County Sheriff Lt Bill Gaudinier announced the indictment of Andrew Vance (22) and Kevin West (30) for first-degree murder. Residents of the East SF Bay Area, the two were acquaintances of the deceased. Both Vance and West have been charged separately at Alameda Superior Court in Pleasanton and sent to the Santa Rita Jail in Dublin.

Investigations reveal that the three men had gone 'camping' together to Sunol Park on June 1. The accused were seen in the victim's white car, some time after the trip. But Prasad failed to return after the getaway or contact his family, following which

his mother filed a missing person report on June 5.

Nearly two weeks later, acting on a tip-off, police found Prasad's body in a creek bed near mile marker 8.2 on Palomares Road in Sunol. Final results of the autopsy will be available after six weeks from the Alameda County Coroner's office. Meanwhile, Prasad's car, a White Lexus (Lic. No.3LRB135), is still reportedly missing.

The tipster, also a witness, informed the police on the location of the body and the circumstances of the murder. According to court documents and media reports, the witness has cooperated with the police and even recorded conversations with the alleged murderers about the crime.

Initial reports indicate that Vance suspected Prasad of having informed his girlfriend about his being unfaithful. He also suspected him of having 'made moves' on his girlfriend. This led to the weekend plot to lure Prasad to a remote wooded area in the Sunol Recreational Park area where Vance and West allegedly beat up Prasad and choked him to death.

**Vance suspected Prasad of having 'made moves' on his girlfriend. While on a camping trip to Sunol Park, Vance and West allegedly beat up Prasad and choked him to death**



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION

