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## NORTH AMERICAN Newsline

OCTOBER 17, 2008

# Singhs gather for a King's gala in New York

SUJEET RAJAN

New York

**T**HE Sikh Heritage Awards Gala held at Cipriani's Wall Street in Manhattan was attended by over 500 guests last Friday, with some of the top Sikh personalities in the country converging to mingle and celebrate into the wee hours of the morning.

It was a weekend to remember for the community as the day after the gala, a sold-out film festival showcasing works by Sikh filmmakers and revolving around Sikh issues was held at the Asia Society, where again an after-party ensured that



Clockwise from left: Ajay Banga, CEO, Citi Asia Pacific (left) with General (Retd) J.J. Singh (center) and entrepreneur Sant Singh Chatwal; J.J. Singh addresses the audience; Punjabi Sufi singer Rabbi Shergill; former baseball star Darryl Strawberry poses for a photograph with Sikh girls; actor Kathryn Winnick (right), Dr Chirinjeev Khaturia (chairman, Planet Space), and actor Navvi Rawat at the gala. Photos by Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

guests left after showcasing their Bhangra style too, after midnight.

The gala, which was memorable for some mellifluous renditions by the Sufi singer Rabbi Shergill, of the 'Bullah Ke Jaane fame,' with D J Rekha spinning later on, had entrepreneur Sant Singh Chatwal calling Dr. Manmohan Singh, the prime minister of India, the number 1 *Singh is King*, using a phrase taken from a film by the same name.

There was no dearth of celebrities at the gala, which mixed classy entertainment with a silent art auction of Sikh artwork. The Chief Guest of the evening was General (Ret.) J.J. Singh, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, with Thomas P. DiNapoli, the Comptroller of New York State as Special Guest. Guests included Donald and Shelly Rubin, the founders of the Rubin Museum of Art, and former Yankees and Mets baseball star Darrell Strawberry, who drew a string of admirers around him the entire night, and spoke too at the meet.

J.J. Singh in his speech praised the Sikh and Indian American commu-



Ajay Banga, CEO, Citi Asia Pacific, being honored by Governor of Arunachal Pradesh J.J. Singh at the Sikh Heritage Awards Gala

nity for projecting a positive image of India in the US.

"I am proud of you. India is proud of you... I commend the Punjabi community for its valor and hard work, and always helping the oppressed and the weak," he said, to loud applause.

Awards were presented to indi-

viduals who had contributed towards elevating the Sikh community in the US: Vision—Stuart Rabinowitz, President of Hofstra University; Leadership - Ajay Banga, Chief Executive Officer of Citi Asia Pacific; Creativity—Susan Stronge, Senior Curator of Asian Department of The Victoria & Albert Museum.

The gala was co-emceed by Hollywood star Kathryn Winnick and PlanetSpace founder Dr. Chirinjeev Khaturia.

Tejinder Singh Bindra, President of Sikh Art & Film Foundation said: "Year over year audience participation in the events has increased, giving us encouragement to make each year's event better than last. Our goal is to continue to increase awareness of Sikhs amongst our fellow citizens, and instill a sense of pride within our own community."

### Annual film festival

The Governor of New York, David Paterson had declared October 3-10 as "Sikh Heritage Week" to coincide with the Sikh Art & Film Foundation's Sikh Heritage Gala and annual Film Festival.

Held at the Asia Society, this year the Foundation presented a total of \$15,000 in prize money to films that

won in their respective genres. The audience voted Ekta Walia's Sikh, *Rattle and Roll* (UK) as the Best Children's Film with a prize of \$2,500. Judges Asem Chhabra, Carol Anne Riddell, Sabrina Dhawan and Navvi Rawat judged *Kabaddi Cops* (Canada) as the best short film with a prize of \$3,500.

Capping off the collection of 15 films was the New York Premiere of Dr. Sarab Singh Neelam's critically acclaimed *Ocean of Pearls*. The story of a young Sikh doctor struggling with the inequities of the American Health System and ultimately his own identity, went down well with the audience who could easily identify with the character's dilemma.

The festival presented a powerful and thought provoking lineup of films covering topics such as the post 9/11 racial profiling and hate crimes, the riots of 1984 in India, a contemporary look at the 1947 partition of India, and the proud traditions of the Sikhs in America for over 100 years.

## Illinois district court dismisses 2007 lawsuit against AAHOA

STAFF REPORTER

New York

**T**HE US District Court, Northern District of Illinois, presided over by Hon. Blanche M. Manning, has granted a motion to dismiss the pending Asian American Hotel Owners As-

later time.

Initiated by 53 members in the Chicago area, the lawsuit was filed against AAHOA, the then 2007 Chairman Dilipkumar (Danny) Patel, Vice Chairman Ashwin (Ash) Patel, and the Village of Rosemont. On November 21, 2007, AAHOA issued a letter advising the member-

This was a major victory as there were no compromises by AAHOA or Danny Patel in this judgment, said Patel in a statement.

"There is no compromise, they filed to have the lawsuit dropped and the judge gave them dismissal," said Patel. "If AAHOA and I did nothing wrong then why would we compro-

The lawsuit was a result of the board of directors of AAHOA making a decision to move the convention from Rosemont to San Antonio because of facility issues.

Danny Patel, in keeping with his responsibility hired a third party company to confirm the board decision to move the convention at the

were offset by the gains and pricing advantages given in San Antonio."

No comment was made by AAHOA or its officers with regards to the damage that has been caused. However, a past chairman, speculated that "there is the deductible that is paid by AAHOA, then there is the likely premium increases on the liability insur-