

## Indian American Forum honors 5 women achievers



Honorees with New York State Senator Kevin Thomas, Gala chair Shammi Singh and IAF chair Indu Jaiswal

**New York:** Indian American Forum (IAF) led by Indu Jaiswal, on March 8 at Akbar's Ballroom in Garden City, celebrated 9th Outstanding Women's Achievements Gala, part of Women's History Month and International Women's Day Celebrations. This year well-known community leader Shammi Singh was the chairperson of the Gala.

Senator Kevin Thomas congratulated all honorees and acknowledged the efforts of IAF Team. Five distinguished women who had excelled in their profession and community services were presented with Outstanding Women's achievements Awards.

Dr. Saroj Shah, a board-certified Ob/Gyn, practicing in New York for over 35 years.

Dr. Prachi Dua, an ophthalmologist in

Northwell Health System, who works closely with the residents and sees patients at NorthShore Hospital Manhasset and LIJ.

Prof. Francesca Cassio, a professor of music at Hofstra University (NY) and since 2011 holds the Sardami Harbans Kaur Chair in Sikh Musicology.

With a multifaceted background in information science, political science and journalism, Aashmeeta Yogiraj brings digital literacy to a traditional broadcasting environment in her role as the Director of Marketing at Jus Broadcasting Corp.

Honoree and keynote speaker Dr. Isma H Chaudhry, Chair of Nassau County Asian American Council, serves on the board of the Nassau County Minority Affairs Council.

## Entrepreneur Raj Mehta NYS small business person of year

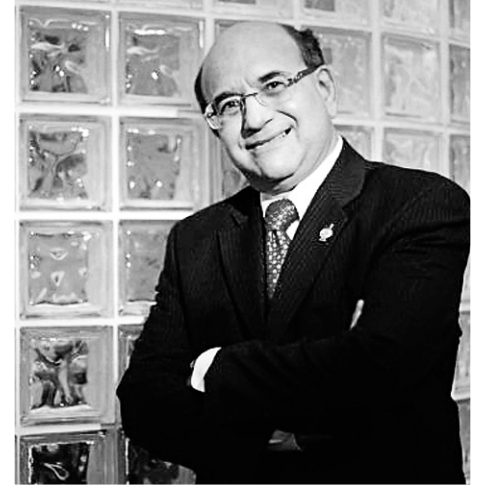
**New York:** A Plainview entrepreneur has been named New York State's small business person of the year by the federal Small Business Administration.

Raj Mehta, founder and CEO of Raj Technologies Inc., competed against entrepreneurs from upstate for the honor. He now will vie for the national title in Washington on May 4.

Mehta's company provides information technology services to businesses and government agencies, including the U.S. Department of Defence, Brookhaven National Laboratory, New York State and school districts.

The company was called Infosys International for decades until Mehta agreed to change the name last year as part of a settlement of a trademark dispute with Infosys Ltd., a multibillion-dollar business in India.

Beth Goldberg, director of SBA's New York District Office, which nominated Mehta for the award, said his company has worked with SBA "to expand revenue opportunities by selling to the U.S. government — the world's largest customer." Goldberg, in a statement, said Mehta has participated in SBA's 8(a) program, which helps businesses owned by U.S. citizens "who



Raj Mehta

are economically or socially disadvantaged" to win federal contracts. Mehta also used an SBA-backed loan to purchase the company's offices at 110 Terminal Dr., she said.

Mehta, 64, is the only Long Islander to win a statewide award in this year's SBA competition, which is part of a nationwide celebration of entrepreneurship, according to agency spokesman Matthew Coleman.

## Work from home for H-1B employees? Companies may need additional compliance

**Mumbai:** Under the prevalent circumstances the 'work from home' policy takes on a new dimension if you are on H-1B visa in the US. Companies are seeking clarifications from attorneys on how H-1B workers can be accommodated in their 'work from home' policy. It may require additional documentation to be filed with the concerned authorities and an additional expense.

There are other aspects that are worrying the Indian diaspora. As has been done across many countries, the US Consulate offices in India have canceled immigrant and non-immigrant visa appointments (which covers H-1B visas) from March 16, till further notice. Once operations resume, appointments can be rescheduled. Individuals have been asked to look up the embassy website to keep abreast of developments.

The number of Indians in the US on H-1B visas is significant and runs into several lakhs. Approximately, Indians are allotted 60% of the 85,000 H-1B cap visas that are issued annually.

A change in the work location, (say to the H-1B holder's place of residence) is a material change

under the immigration regulations. Speaking to TOI, New York-based immigration attorney, Cyrus D Mehta said, "If workers work from home, and within commuting distance of their workplace, there should be no need to file an amendment of their H-1B petition.

On the other hand, if the workers telecommute will be from a location outside the commuting distance from the workplace, and this was not contemplated in the original H-1B petition, then an amendment relating to the new work location should be filed." Even in case of work from home, H-1B workers must be paid the required wage and must be performing duties related to the H-1B position, he added.

Snehal Batra, managing attorney at NPZ Law Group dived into the legal technicalities, "A change in location of the H-1B employee's place of employment to a geographical area not covered in the original Labour Condition Application (LCA) is a material change affecting eligibility under H-1B. For example, if an H-1B employee is under 'self-quarantine' or working remotely from home, but his or her residence is outside the Metropolitan Statistical Area

(MSA) of employment, a new LCA would be required to be filed and posted. Further, a new or amendment H-1B petition would have to be filed, not to mention there may be a prevailing wage difference. Staying within the same geographical area means the area within normal commuting distance of the place of employment or within the same MSA."

"There is also a limited, but flexible 30-60 day short term placement option granted by the US Department of Labour, which allows H-1B employers to assign their employees to job sites not previously contemplated or listed in the LCA, subject to certain additional criteria," added Ashwin Sharma, an immigration attorney based in Jacksonville.

According to Sharma most employers are likely to file an H-1B amendment if the existing LCA doesn't already cover the H-1B worker's home as a job site, as the short-term placement option is fairly limited in scope.

"An H-1B amendment comes with costs attached — of \$460 plus legal fees. However, it can be filed very quickly, and upon filing the H-1B worker can commence work from home," Sharma stated.

(Source: timesofindia.com)

## COVID-19 impact: Social Security offices to offer only phone service

**New York:** All local Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020. This decision protects the population — older Americans and people with underlying medical conditions — and its employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the agency said in an official press release.

Secure and convenient online services remains available at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Local offices will also continue to provide critical services over the phone. "We are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local governments, and other experts to monitor COVID-19 and will let you know as soon as we can resume in-person service," it said.

If you need help from Social Security:

First, please use secure and convenient online services available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices). You can apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits online, check the status of an application or appeal, request a replacement Social Security card (in most areas), print a benefit verification letter, and much more — from anywhere and from any of your devices. The website also has a wealth of information to answer most of your Social Security questions online, without having to speak with a Social Security repre-

sentative in person or by phone. Visit online Frequently Asked Questions at [www.socialsecurity.gov/ask](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ask).

If you cannot conduct your Social Security business online, check its online field office locator for specific information about how to directly contact your local office. Your local office still will be able to provide critical services to help you apply for benefits, answer your questions, and provide other services over the phone.

If you already have an in-office appointment scheduled, they will call you to handle your appointment over the phone instead. If you have a hearing scheduled, they will call you to discuss alternatives for continuing with your hearing, including offering a telephonic hearing. "Our call may come from a PRIVATE number and not from a U.S. Government phone. Please remember that our employees will not threaten you or ask for any form of payment," the agency said in the press release.

If you cannot complete your Social Security business online, please call National 800 Number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). The National 800 Number has many automated service options you can use without waiting to speak with a telephone representative. A list of automated telephone services is available online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html).