



# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 3

[www.iaccgh.com](http://www.iaccgh.com)

**Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston**  
1 Riverway, Suite 1700 Houston TX 77056 E: [info@iaccgh.com](mailto:info@iaccgh.com)

THE BEGINNING OF A YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION MARKING OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

JANUARY • 16 • AT 5 PM

**IACCGH ANNUAL RECEPTION**

Chief Guests:  
Mayor John Whitmire and Consul General D.C. Manjunath

VENUE: LEGACY ROOM, CITY HALL, HOUSTON

Refreshments catered by Daawat Catering

At the IACCGH Annual Reception, Mayor Whitmire and Consul General Manjunath emphasized unity and collaboration as catalysts for Houston's growth. Their remarks highlighted the importance of diversity and bilateral relations in driving economic progress. The event showcased the Chamber's commitment to fostering cooperation and strengthening ties between Houston and India. [Click here](#) for more on the evening's celebration of leadership and unity.

Thursday, February 15, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm

**IACCGH Small Business Series**  
Focus on EXPORTS

Presentation by:

Walls Bank  
3909, W Sam Houston Pk  
Houston TX 77043

Co-Host: CenterPoint Energy

The IACCGH Small Business Series at Wallis Bank spotlighted export opportunities, with speakers highlighting financing and Houston's global trade significance. Nasirullah Khan and Jason Wilson provided insights, while Lisa Philip shared her journey in international trade. Discussions covered market expansion and risk management, reaffirming a commitment to empowering entrepreneurs and fostering economic growth. [Click here](#) for key takeaways.

OPEN FORUM  
IACCGH BUSINESS HOUR

Saturday, February 17, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm on FM 109.3

Shammi & Mithu Malik  
Owners  
Musafer Restaurant

Co-Host: Open Forum Houston

Shammi and Mithu Malik's journey from Nigeria to Houston culminates in the renowned Musafer Restaurant, blending passion for Indian cuisine with culinary excellence. Their story, from Lagos to Dubai to Houston, epitomizes authenticity and cultural immersion, now recognized as one of the top restaurants in the USA. [Click here](#) to listen about their remarkable narrative and upcoming venture in New York.

Sunday, February 25, 2024 10:00am - 5:00 pm

**IACCGH Tax Seminar**

Topics Covered:  
• Individual Tax Updates  
• Corporate Transparency Act  
• Tax Audit and how to deal  
• FATCA, Foreign Bank Accounts and  
• Beneficial Ownership Information

Venue: GSH Center,  
9520 West Bellfort,  
Houston, TX 77044  
Registration recommended.  
Please email [info@iaccgh.com](mailto:info@iaccgh.com) to register.

The IACCGH hosted a tax seminar featuring speakers like Arlene Good from the IRS and CPAs Rimple Mashruwala and Mahesh Desai. They provided insights into IRS resources and handling audits. CPA and IACCGH Board member Swapan Dhairyawan moderated the event, emphasizing the importance of staying informed about evolving tax laws. The seminar empowered attendees with knowledge to navigate the complex tax landscape efficiently. [Click here](#) to read more insights from the event.

Monday, February 26, 2024, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

IACCGH Shell USA Inc. Distinguished Lecture  
Private Chat on "Transformational Leadership"

Dr. Renu Khator  
Professor  
University of Houston System

Malisha Patel  
Senior Vice President & CEO  
Shammi's Beauty Salon & Spa East Houston

Venue: The Ballroom at Tangwood  
5420 Westheimer Road Houston, TX 77056

Dr. Renu Khator and Malisha Patel headlined the IACCGH Shell USA Inc. Distinguished Lecture on "Transformational Leadership." Khator shared her journey of elevating UH, emphasizing resilience, while Patel discussed innovation in medical education. The event inspired attendees with insights into personal and professional leadership, highlighting the transformative power of resilience and innovation. [Click here](#) to learn more on the enlightening dialogue.

Thursday, MARCH 5, 2024, 4PM - 6PM  
Musafer, 5115 Westheimer Rd, Houston, TX 77056

A PREMIER EXPERIENCE FOR THE  
**IACCGH NOWGEN**  
PROFESSIONALS & BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER 45

Consulate General of India and IACCGH invite our young professionals and entrepreneurs to a private reception at Musafer.

Special Remarks by the Consul General of India, Houston, Hon. D.C. Manjunath  
Brief Remarks by Malisha Patel, Simran Kotak and Tarush Anand

Chief Guest: D.C. Manjunath  
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA, HOUSTON

Malisha Patel  
PHIL & CO, MEDICAL  
PHYSICIAN & SURGEON

Tarush Anand  
SINERIS PHARMACY, WELLSPRING  
PHARMACY, HOUSTON

Simran Kotak  
SINERIS PHARMACY, HOUSTON

The IACCGH NOWGEN Premier Experience at Musafer united young professionals and entrepreneurs to promote cultural connection and collaboration. Consul General D.C. Manjunath highlighted the importance of empowering the next generation of leaders. Speakers like Malisha Patel, Simran Kotak, and Tarush Anand discussed Indo-American relations and the role of young professionals. The event showcased IACCGH's commitment to fostering meaningful connections and inspiring future leaders. [Click here](#) for more highlights from the event.

IACCGH Small Business Series

From Start up to Success: Fueling  
Growth for your  
Entrepreneurial Journey

www.iaccgh.com • info@iaccgh.com • (713) 651-7100

03/26/24 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
Ethic Restaurant  
Ethic 2, Texas & Spring Road TX, Texas

Co-Host: CenterPoint Energy, WALLISBANK

Dr. Lalita Raman  
CONSULTANT  
SCOR

Ruchi Gupta  
CONSULTANT  
SCOR

As part of the ongoing IACCGH Small Business Series sponsored by Wallis Bank and Centre Point, the Chamber showcased the services provided by the SBA supported "SCORE". Previously called the service core of retired executives, the organization provides guidance and mentorship to prospective and existing small business owners. Dr. Lalita Raman and Ruchi Gupta provided an overview and answered attendees questions. [Click here](#) to know more about the event on the Chamber website.

## In this edition:

### Member Spotlight

Hamid Lakhani, Owner, Travel Guzs

Behind the scenes at the IACCGH Gala (Part I)

Hilton Americas

Electric Karma International

Touch of Elegance

## UPCOMING EVENTS

March 26 - Joint event with Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce "Belt Way Briefing" by Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher

March 27 - Joint event honoring Sanjay Ramabhadran for his service on the Houston METRO, with the last 2+ years as Chairman.

# DR. RENU KHATOR AND MALISHA PATEL SHARE INSIGHTS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AT IACCGH SHELL USA INC. DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) recently hosted an IACCGH Shell USA Inc. Distinguished Lecture on the topic "Transformational Leadership," with two distinguished speakers: Chancellor Renu Khator of the University of Houston (UH) and Malisha Patel, Senior Vice President and CEO of Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital and Memorial Hermann Sugar Land Hospital.

Jagdeep Ahluwalia, Executive Director of IACCGH, thanked Shell USA Inc. for their continued support and set the stage for what promised to be an enlightening dialogue. Rajiv Bhavsar, President of IACCGH, underscored the significance of women's contributions to the business world, noting the remarkable strides being made by female entrepreneurs across Texas.

Chancellor Khator, a beacon of transformation in academia, took the stage to share her remarkable journey of elevating the University of Houston to national prominence. "As an immigrant, I've always believed in the power of perseverance," Khator remarked. Emphasizing the importance of community support and local talent, Khator spoke passionately about her immigrant background, highlighting the resilience and determination that propelled her forward.

"Great universities are built by great communities," Dr. Khator affirmed, highlighting her belief in the power of collaboration and collective endeavor. She emphasized the need for clear goals and actionable objectives, a strategy that proved instrumental in her transformative leadership at UH.

Like any transformative endeavor, Dr. Khator's leadership journey has been marked by challenges and obstacles. Yet, it is her resilience in the face of adversity that sets her apart. From navigating internal resistance to overcoming external skepticism, Dr. Khator has never wavered in her conviction or determination. As she aptly notes, "Life is never easy, but adversity presents us with a choice: to succumb or to rise stronger." This sentiment encapsulates her determination in the face of challenges, a theme that resonated throughout her address.



Joining Dr. Khator on stage, Malisha Patel, a seasoned healthcare executive, shared insights into innovation in medical education and the importance of addressing evolving workforce needs. Her questions stirred the discussion on cutting-edge programs at UH, including initiatives in population health and data science, underscored the institution's commitment to excellence and forward-thinking. "We constantly strive to introduce cutting-edge programs that address the needs of the workforce and the future," Dr. Khator said. Adding,

"Our initiatives in population health and data science are just the beginning of what we envision for the future of education."

During the conversation, Dr. Khator reflected on her upbringing in India and the unique challenges faced by immigrant families in balancing cultural heritage with adapting to a new environment. Drawing from her own experiences, she emphasized the importance of understanding the perspectives of both parents and children in navigating cultural differences and fostering trust within families.

"I love life," Dr. Khator shared with a radiant smile, as she recounted moments spent with her family, especially her beloved granddaughters. These moments of joy, she noted, provide balance amidst the demands of leadership.

Addressing the audience's questions, Dr. Khator provided practical advice on managing stress, prioritizing personal and professional commitments, and finding balance in life. She highlighted the significance of mentorship in her own career and encouraged attendees to seek guidance from diverse sources, including books, colleagues, and formal mentorship programs.

Dr. Khator's narrative extended beyond professional achievements, delving into her upbringing in India and the values instilled in her from a young age. Her passion for lifelong learning, evident in her diverse hobbies such as yoga, language learning, gardening, and painting, reflects a continuous pursuit of personal growth. In the words of Chancellor Khator, "The journey to success is never easy, but it's always worth it."

The event created a sense of inspiration and admiration for the leadership exemplified by Chancellor Renu Khator and Malisha Patel. Their stories serve as a testament to the intersection of personal and professional journeys, demonstrating how resilience, innovation, and a commitment to community can shape impactful leaders. Consulate General of India in Houston D.C. Manjunath was the Chief Guest. Shell Representative Ana Knopf thanked the speakers and guests for their presence.

## BEHIND THE SCENES: THERESE COLE-HUBBS' JOURNEY WITH THE IACCGH GALA



The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) Gala, an annual celebration of tradition, business networking, and contemporary flair, is a testament to the meticulous planning and execution overseen by Therese Cole-Hubbs, the CEO of Electric Karma International. In an interview, Cole-Hubbs offers a glimpse into her journey with the gala, navigating challenges, seizing opportunities, and envisioning its future.

Therese takes pride in leading a team that has orchestrated over 800 South Asian weddings worldwide, earning them 40+ prestigious wedding production awards and establishing them as trendsetters within the industry.

Cole-Hubbs's association with the gala spans nearly a decade, a demonstration to her unwavering commitment and expertise. Drawing from her diverse background as a wedding planner and former supervisor for Houston Independent School District's special events, she brings a unique blend of creativity and cultural understanding to her role. "When I first came on board, I was recommended by one of the IACCGH members," Cole-Hubbs recalls. Adding, "My background in producing events for diverse audiences, coupled with my understanding of Indian culture, positioned me well for the role."

Throughout the years, Cole-Hubbs has been drawn back to the gala by the camaraderie among the Chamber's leadership, members and its mission of fostering business relationships. She commends leaders like IACCGH executive director, Jagdip Ahluwalia, for his visionary leadership and commitment to showcasing businesses, which form the cornerstone of the gala's success.

Discussing her approach to infusing Indian culture into the gala's ambiance, Cole-Hubbs emphasizes, drawing from Electric Karma's legacy of trendsetting within the industry, "I strive to ensure each element reflects the Chamber's identity while staying true to my signature style of timeliness and precision. At Electric Karma International, we have dedicated over 30 years to perfecting the art of wedding planning, infusing each event with our signature style and attention to detail, making us the first choice for global South Asian wedding planning and design."

As the IACCGH gala event planner, Cole-Hubbs navigates a myriad of challenges, from managing last-minute RSVPs to ensuring the program stays on schedule. However, she tackles each obstacle with innovation, implementing strategies like timed speaker cues to maintain order and efficiency. "The challenges are always associated with any gala event," she remarks.

Yet, amidst the challenges lie boundless opportunities for Cole-Hubbs to make a meaningful impact. "Giving back is super important," she emphasizes. "You can't just take from the community you serve; you have to give back," she says.

When it comes to infusing Indian culture into the gala, Cole-Hubbs approaches the task with meticulous attention to detail. Whether incorporating traditional dances or contemporary performances, she ensures each element reflects the Chamber's identity while staying true to her style. She notes. "But as far as infusing the Indian culture into programs at the events, that's really a preference of the President of the Chamber and his vision."

As the gala approaches its 25th year, Cole-Hubbs envisions an evolution guided by the chamber's leadership and the next generation of organizers. She anticipates a future where the gala continues to thrive, embracing new trends while remaining steadfast in its mission of fostering Indo American business relationships. "I'm hoping that more young people will get more involved in the gala," she says. "And I think that in itself will change the tone of the gala."

In Cole-Hubbs' capable hands, the IACCGH Gala transcends mere event status to become a symbol of excellence in the Houston community. Her unwavering dedication and commitment to the gala's success serves as a testament to her extraordinary talent and profound impact on IACCGH and its constituents. As the event planner of this grand event, Cole-Hubbs orchestrates a night to remember, leaving an indelible mark on all the members and guests.

## HILTON AMERICAS -HOUSTON AND IACCGH GALA: A SYNERGISTIC PARTNERSHIP

The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) Gala, amidst Houston's dynamic landscape, stands as a vibrant testament to celebration, networking, and business collaboration. For over a decade, this illustrious event has found its cherished home at the Hilton Americas - Houston, where the synergy of unparalleled hospitality and community ethos has blossomed under the leadership of Jacques D'Rovencourt, the General Manager of Hilton Americas.

Reflecting on the enduring partnership between the Hilton Americas and the IACCGH Gala, D'Rovencourt remarks, "The collaboration between our hotel and the Gala has been nothing short of exceptional. We share a common vision of promoting Indo-American business relations and fostering a sense of community, making each event a resounding success."

Since its inception, the Hilton Americas has played a pivotal role in shaping the Gala into the premier event it is today. From offering its luxurious facilities to delivering impeccable service, the hotel has consistently raised the bar, ensuring that guests experience nothing short of excellence. IACCGH thanks the team led by Rebecca Shindler who consistently meet and exceed the Chamber's expectations.

### THE HILTON AMERICAS GEARS UP FOR THE CHAMBER'S 25TH GALA

"As the host venue for the Gala, we encounter both challenges and opportunities," D'Rovencourt explains. "From meeting the high expectations of our esteemed guests to positioning ourselves as a hub for networking and collaboration, every aspect of event planning is carefully orchestrated to exceed expectations."

With the Chamber's 25th Gala on the horizon, anticipation is high as the Hilton Americas prepares to mark this milestone in style. "We are pulling out all the stops to make this year's Gala a truly unforgettable experience," D'Rovencourt shares. "From thematic décor to gourmet catering, every detail will be meticulously crafted to ensure guests leave with cherished memories."

Looking back on past Galas, D'Rovencourt recalls a standout moment in 2019 when the Hilton Americas-Houston was honored with the Business of the Year Award by IACCGH. "It was a proud moment for our team," he reflects. "Such recognition reaffirms our commitment to excellence and inspires us to continue pushing boundaries in service of our community."

As preparations for the Gala intensify, the Hilton Americas remains steadfast in its commitment to excellence. "Preparing to host an event of this magnitude requires meticulous planning and attention to detail," D'Rovencourt emphasizes.



Jacques D' Rovencourt and Rebecca Shindler were honored at the 20th IACCGH Gala



Inside the Hilton Americas - Houston Ballroom

Beyond serving as a venue, the Hilton Americas plays a vital role in advancing the Gala's mission of promoting Indo-American business relations and fostering a sense of community. "Our hotel serves as a bridge between cultures," D'Rovencourt asserts. "By providing a welcoming environment for networking and collaboration, we contribute to the strengthening of bilateral ties and the fostering of cross-cultural understanding."

As the countdown to the 25th Gala begins, the spirit of excitement and camaraderie permeates the halls of the Hilton Americas. "We are honored to be part of such a prestigious event," D'Rovencourt concludes. "Together with the IACCGH, we look forward to celebrating our shared successes and forging new partnerships that will shape the future of our community."

## CRAFTING ELEGANCE AT THE CHAMBER GALA: SUMEDHHA R. CHAND

### FUSING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

In the nuanced craft of event planning, Sumedhha R. Chand's expertise shines brightly as she navigates the complexities of tailoring decor to suit the grandeur of the IACCGH Gala year after year. With a keen eye for detail and an unwavering commitment to excellence, Sumedhha reveals the intricacies of her craft in an exclusive interview.

"Working with the Chamber Gala has always been a pleasure," Sumedhha, CEO and Founder of Touch of Elegance shares. She added, "The Chamber has been incredibly supportive, ensuring a collaborative environment where vendors and organizers alike thrive."



As the mind behind the Gala's aesthetic, Sumedhha sheds light on her process of tailoring items to suit the event's theme and ambiance. "I love matching the decor to the Gala's logos," she explains. "By incorporating a consistent color theme, we create a cohesive look that elevates the entire experience."

However, maintaining alignment with the Gala's mission and vision presents its own set of challenges. "Every year brings its unique focus," Sumedhha notes. "Whether it's a milestone anniversary or a special theme, we collaborate closely with the organizers to ensure our decor reflects the essence of the event."

#### Decoration at the VIP Reception in the IACCGH Gala

Yet, amidst the flurry of preparations, Sumedhha remains unfazed by the challenges that come her way. "Logistics management is key," she emphasizes. Pointing out, "From timely deliveries to creating memorable experiences, we tackle each obstacle head-on, ensuring the Gala's success."

Reflecting on past Galas, Touch of Elegance Founder/CEO recalls a standout moment that truly tested her dedication. "There was a situation where I had to go above and beyond," she recalls. "I stayed an extra day, making countless adjustments to fulfill the Chamber's vision. It was a testament to our commitment to excellence."

As preparations for the upcoming Gala intensify, Sumedhha remains undeterred by the demands of her craft. "Each year brings its own set of challenges and triumphs," she reflects. "But with a dedicated team by my side, I'm confident we'll deliver an experience that exceeds expectations."

In the intricate tapestry of event planning, Sumedhha's artistry shines brightly, weaving elegance and sophistication into every detail. As the IACCGH Gala approaches its 25th year, her passion and dedication serve as a beacon of inspiration, promising an evening of unforgettable splendor.

## Introducing IACCGH Travel Partner



### A JOURNEY OF COLLABORATION WITH THE IACCGH

# Hamid Lakhani

## Owner, Travel Guzs



In the realm of corporate travel management in Houston, Texas, few names command as much respect and admiration as Hamid Lakhani, the founder and CEO of Travel Guzs. With over three decades of experience in the industry, Hamid's journey is a testament to his unwavering commitment to excellence and personalized service. As a distinguished member of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH), Hamid has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of business travel within the Chamber community.

At the heart of Travel Guzs' ethos lies a dedication to providing unparalleled travel experiences tailored to the unique needs of corporate clients. In a recent interview, Hamid shed light on the company's approach, emphasizing their role as a trusted partner in managing small and medium-sized corporate travel. "By alleviating the burden of travel logistics, Travel Guzs allows companies to focus on their core objectives while ensuring seamless travel experiences for their employees," Hamid said.

His enduring partnership with the IACCGH spans over 25 years, deeply rooted in a shared commitment to fostering business growth and collaboration. From his formative years managing offices in Houston and Atlanta to his current leadership role at Travel Guzs, Hamid's affiliation with the Chamber has been instrumental in facilitating impactful connections within the business community. Through active involvement in Chamber events and initiatives, Hamid continues to champion cross-border trade and investment opportunities.

A hallmark of Travel Guzs' success lies in its specialization in corporate travel management. Hamid emphasizes the importance of staying abreast of evolving industry trends and airline policies to ensure a seamless travel experience for clients. By cultivating robust relationships with airlines and negotiating preferential pricing, Travel Guzs' consistently delivers exceptional value to businesses associated with the Chamber.

Hamid's astute observations regarding emerging travel trends among Chamber members reflect Travel Guzs' proactive approach to meeting evolving preferences within the travel industry. From the burgeoning demand for travel to destinations like India and Spain to the surge in tech-related travel, Travel Guzs remains at the forefront of catering to a diverse array of client needs.

Hamid Lakhani's journey with Travel Guzs epitomizes a steadfast commitment to excellence and innovation in corporate travel management. Through his unwavering dedication and active engagement with the Chamber, Hamid continues to elevate the travel experience for Chamber members and businesses alike. As Travel Guzs evolves to address the dynamic needs of its clientele, Hamid's visionary leadership ensures that the company remains a trusted ally for corporate travelers within the Chamber community.