

THE DIASPORA



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BI-WEEKLY

Issue: 76

Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE. 501(C)3. The Largest Non-Profit Grassroot Umbrella Organization in the Eight-state of NY-NJ-CT-NE

PAGE 06

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai Meets India PM Narendra Modi



PAGE 21

FIA AT A GLANCE IN 2022




The Diaspora Bi-Weekly wishes all of its readers happiness and good health.

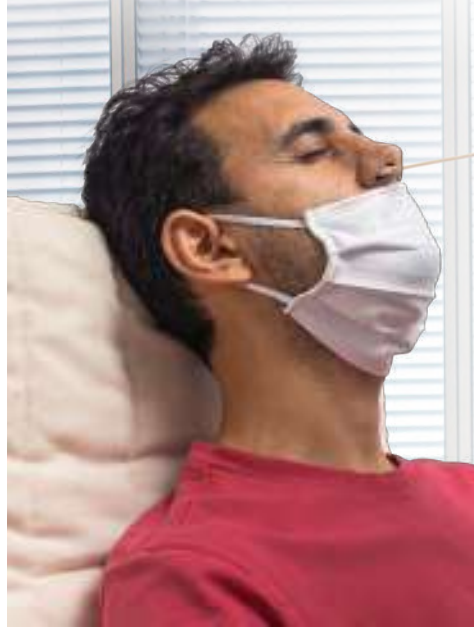


Thank you for being our valuable reader. Let's bring in the new year with same zeal.

India's Decision to Undertake Random RT-PCR Tests Unlikely to Conflict with Holidaymakers' Travel Plans

The move by India to undertake RT-PCR tests on a limited scale on passengers arriving from overseas has caused concerns among travellers, although it is unlikely to affect the travel plans of most vacationers, including those from the diaspora, according to community members on December 25, 2022.

The Indian government ramped up anti-COVID measures



in the wake of a surge in the number of cases in some countries and made the RT-PCR test mandatory for passengers arriving from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

Random coronavirus testing of international passengers began at airports -- including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Indore and Goa, in accordance with new standards that demand testing of 2% of all passengers arriving on each international flight.

US-based Dr. Sampat Shivangi, who is travelling to India on January 4 to attend the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)* in Indore and AAPI's (American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin) Global Health Care summit in Hyderabad, said that India is actively monitoring Covid situation as China has exploded in Covid incidents and deaths.

"Naturally, India being China's closest neighbour is watching very carefully. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi had a special meeting to evaluate the situation at the highest level," he noted.

"Indeed, we are appreciative of the Government of India who fought Covid successfully and do have plans to combat any such threats. As an invited speaker at the PBD event in Indore, I am looking forward to my participation," he said.

Ankur Vaidya, the Chairman of Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT & NE, said the proactive initiative by India to err on the side of caution is appreciated. However, the upcoming *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*, for which the Ministry of External Affairs has placed exhaustive efforts, also needs to be considered.

"Then, those who have taken the MEA's assurance and bought the premium fare tickets will be in a fix. For example, I called the airline I am to travel with to plan better. Currently, there are no covid cancellation policies, so the normal cancellation charges will apply," he said.

The hotel booking in Indore stated that the reservations are non-refundable, he added.

"A comprehensive, thoughtful, and inclusive review of the situation should be placed by the Indian government, considering all stakeholders," he said.

"An advance notification (at least 7 days before January 7 when the program starts), a final decision should be made on the course of action and the program's fate. It is a very unlikely and tough decision, but at least it will allow those travelling to make a balanced decision," he said. Bihar Foundation USA Chairman Alok Kumar said it is good that precaution has been started by the Indian government for Covid based on the situation in China but they must ensure people, who are travelling to India for PBD, get a special team to take care of all confusion.

"They must provide a phone number where people can get direct answers of any confusion," he added.

FIA-NE Organizes Meet & Greet with Newly Elected Indian-Origin US Congressman

Federation of Indian Associations - New England had organized a "meet & greet" reception with the newly elected US Congressman of Indian origin, Shri Thanedar, on Saturday, December 17, 2022.

FIA - NE President Abhishek Singh welcomed the US Congressman Thanedar, Deputy Consul General of India in NYC, Dr. Varun Jeph, and members of the Indian-American community in New England to the virtual reception. India's DCG in NYC, Dr. Varun Jeph congratulated Congressman Thanedar for being the fifth Indian-American in the US House of Representatives and wished him the best for his tenure

as US Congressman and bigger opportunities in the future.

Congressman Thanedar spoke with the community members

and briefly narrated his life's story and his plans for the future. Several members of the Indian-American community in New

England also spoke to congratulate Congressman Thanedar and wishing him all the best for his current and future plans.



Interfaith Harmony, Uplift of Under-Privileged Highlight Grand Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centennial Celebrations in India



HH Mahant Swami Maharaj interfaith leaders during the assembly

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centennial Celebrations in Ahmedabad, India continued this week with themes centered on Devotion to Guru; Health & Spirituality Day; De-Addiction Day; and Interfaith Harmony & Tribal Traditions. The last two key events highlighted Pramukh Swami Maharaj's spiritually driven vision of one world and one human family.

On December 20, 2022, religious leaders and representatives from around the world representing the Jain, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist faiths gathered to solidify interfaith bonds through collective dialogue recalling Pramukh Swami Maharaj's love and sacrifice, which saw no

race, religion, color, caste, creed, language or borders.

In his United Nations Address at the Millennium Peace Conference on August 29, 2000, Pramukh Swami Maharaj expressed, "We religious leaders should not dream of only one religion in the world but dream

of a world where all religions are one. Flourishing together is the secret of peace. We must not progress at the cost of others, but sacrifice a part of ourselves for the good of others. For true religion is that which inspires love for one another."

In recalling Pramukh Swami

Maharaj's commitment to interfaith harmony, HH Dalai Lama addressed the assembly by a letter, stating, "I send my greetings on the occasion of the centenary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He truly practiced the ancient Indian wisdom of

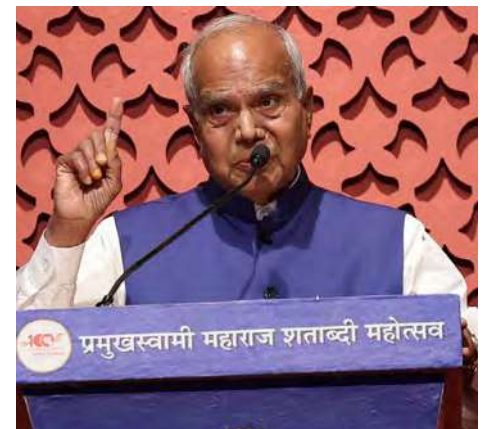
CONTINUE ON PAGE 04



HE Abdul Rahman Bu Ali of Bahrain addresses the assembly



Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni Ji, Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti, addresses the assembly



Mangu Patel, Governor of Madhya Pradesh addresses the assembly



Saadiqul-aidiz-zahabi Bhaishaheb Jamaluddin addresses the assembly



Puja Swami Parmatmananda Saraswatiji, Arsha Vidya Mandir, addresses the assembly



Padma Shri Agus Indra Udayana, Gandhi Puri Ashram, Indonesia, addresses the assembly



Archbishop Thomas Ignatius Macwan, Archdiocese of Gandhinagar, addresses the assembly

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 03

nonviolence and compassion. The leadership of individuals like him have made India a role model of religious harmony.”

HE Abdul Rahman Bu Ali, Thought Leader of Bahrain said, “The historic *BAPS Mandir* in Abu Dhabi is more than inspirational, it is civilizational — bringing countries and religions together. There will also be a BAPS temple in Bahrain. Leaders like Pramukh Swami Maharaj do not die but remain alive and continue to inspire, guide, and touch countless hearts across the world. Mahant Swami Maharaj is the best successor to the best predecessor.”

Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni Ji, Jain Muni, President, Ahimsa Vishwa Bharati said, “Rarely do luminaries like Pramukh Swami Maharaj take birth on this earth. He was a bridge to unite all different faiths together. When we face an environment of religious intolerance, the BAPS Swaminarayan tradition has been a torchbearer for religious tolerance.”

In closing, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj said, “I bow at the feet of all the religious leaders who have come to the interfaith conference today. Everyone is doing tremendous work in their own respective fields. We learned a lot through our dialogue, and everyone will leave with divine

memories.”

Touching on the common thread of humanity, the program on December 22, “Glorious Tribal Traditions: Celebrating Humanity” focused on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s relentless efforts to uplift tribal communities.

Despite advancing age and health issues, Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited over 250 tribal villages not yielding to sweltering heat or winter nights. He sanctified thousands of homes, personally met with individuals, listened to their challenges, introduced spiritual teachings and practices to help lead disciplined, addiction free, productive, purposeful lives while maintaining traditions. In addition to providing basic necessary resources, including medical care and educational institutions; he inspired BAPS swamis to travel the region extensively to elevate remote villagers from poverty, illiteracy and addictions. The impact is clear, tribal children graduating from BAPS have gone onto prestigious universities like IIT Mumbai and are now doctors, engineers and professionals.

Harsh Chouhan, Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, said, “Our community has a silent sorrow that no one understands us, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj was able to inspire others to do so. Because he did not employ the standards of others, rather

listened with his heart. For him, the tribal folk and city-dwellers were the same.”

Honorable Mangu Patel, Governor of Madhya Pradesh, said, “As a guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not just give blessings and preach; he believed himself to be the servant of God and, therefore, servant of all humanity. He worked relentlessly in tribal areas, going from hut to hut, promoting de-addiction and uplifting them socially and economically. By freeing 4 million people from addictions, he actually freed 20 million people from misery when counting all their family members. He has been there during the highs and lows for all of Gujarat and its people. He created over 110 mandirs in tribal areas. His life has become a glorious chapter in human history.”

In his concluding blessings, HH Mahant Swami Maharaj said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj provided a distinctive definition of Adivasis. He said, ‘The oldest, ‘adi’, is God, and those in whose hearts God resides ‘vasi’ are Adivasis.’ This was not just wordplay, he truly believed and lived this. He often said, ‘Although others may consider tribals backward, I see God in them.’ Considering them his family, he stayed at their homes and ate their food without distinction. Through his selfless love, he transformed the lives of thousands of tribals.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired numerous de-addiction campaigns including a few with over 25,000 children going door to door, bringing education, awareness of health consequences and realistic impact on families. Seeing the sacrifice of children in such mass efforts cannot help but move people to re-evaluate the power of addiction in their lives. These efforts were also a central focal point at the month-long festival at Pramukh Swami Nagar. Exhibitions and powerful theatrical performances capturing the devastating impact of vices on families, especially on future generations, struck a chord with attendees. Immediate response was voiced by many attendees inspired to break from the shackles of addiction and begin new lives with their families. The generational impact of such campaigns is clear in the statistics from the Adivasis to communities across Gujarat and India. Pramukh Swami’s vision and work for a better world through personal transformation continues with inspiration from HH Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The month-long celebration is Mahant Swami Maharaj’s vision to provide inspiration from the life, efforts, teachings, actions, and contributions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Festival grounds of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centennial Celebration



Light and Sound Show, a key attraction at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centennial Celebration



Bal Nagari, a key attraction at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centennial Celebration



Glow Garden, a thematic garden, one of the key attractions at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centennial Celebration



Audience at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centennial Celebration

Reform UN Security Council, Else Other Organizations Will Takeover: India

India has stressed that the UN Security Council should undergo quick change and has warned that the organization will be discredited if it is not done so.

India's permanent representative to the UN Ruchira Kamboj, speaking to the press at the UN headquarters, said, "The UN Security Council should be reformed immediately.

The number of permanent member states in the UN Security Council should be increased. If this does not happen, the UN will be discredited. G20 like International organizations will push the UN forward.

The United States, Russia, England, Britain, France, and China are the UN Security Council's only five permanent members.

These nations have veto authority. Other countries lack such power. Various countries are attempting to gain veto power as a result of developments in international politics. India, Japan, South Africa, and Brazil, in particular, are relentless in their efforts to become permanent members of the UN Security Council. However, due to the stance of nations with veto power, this change is hampered.



US to Provide \$1.85 Billion Military Aid to Ukraine



Photo: AP News

The Joe Biden administration has announced that it will provide Ukraine with a key Patriot missile defence system to aid in its struggle against Russia.

The Patriot missile system can protect against short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and oncoming fighter planes.

This will be the first time such a defence system has been handed over to Ukraine, strengthening its defence. The new systems are

intended to help Ukraine improve its air cover, since the nation has recently experienced a number of issues, including power outages caused by Russian missiles.

The White House stated that the Patriot missile system would be part of another \$1.85 billion in aid to Ukraine.

The package also includes military vehicles, mortars, ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and small arms.

Joe Biden Encourages Partnerships with Africa at Leadership Summit

The US president Joe Biden, unveils new trade agreements, investments, and infrastructure projects in Africa. During an address at an opening trade forum at the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington on Wednesday

(December 14), Biden said the talks were about "building connections" as well as a "shared future" for the US and Africa.

"We've known for a long time that Africa's success and prosperity is essential to ensuring a better future for all of us," Biden told the crowd of political and

business leaders.

He emphasised that partnerships should be on equal footing, "not to create political obligation or foster dependence but to spur shared success".

"When Africa succeeds, the United States succeeds. Quite frankly, the whole world succeeds,

as well," he said.

The 3-day summit in the US capital was attended by representatives from 49 African nations as well as the African Union; it was a follow-up to the first such event, which took place eight years ago under President Barack Obama.

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai Meets PM Narendra Modi

On December 19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google and Alphabet, and said it was a delight to discuss innovation, technology and more issues with him.

"Was a delight to meet you Sundar Pichai and discuss innovation, technology and more. It is important the world continues to work together to leverage tech for human prosperity and sustainable development," Modi tweeted.

Pichai expressed his thanks to the prime minister for the "great meeting" with him.

Sundar Pichai, who is visiting India, said the pace of technological change in the country has been extraordinary and Google is supporting

small businesses and startups, investing in cybersecurity, providing education and skills

training, and applying AI (Artificial Intelligence) in sectors like agriculture and healthcare.



"I'm here to see progress being made from our \$10 billion, 10-year India Digitization Fund (IDF), and share new ways. We're helping to advance India's digital future at our Google for India event.

Pichai said he was amazed at the ways people are already using technology to make their communities better.

"One of the local tech founders I met today has broken new ground by offering a radiation-free and non-invasive breast cancer screening tool; another developed a chatbot that helps people manage stress. I was glad to hear their stories and to share thoughts on how technology can expand opportunity during a conversation at Women Will," he said.

Reliance Industries to Acquire Metro AG's India Business

As the Mukesh Ambani-led conglomerate looks to solidify its dominant position in India's enormous retail market, Reliance Industries Ltd. will spend Rs 2,850 crores to acquire the wholesale business

of German company Metro AG in India.

"Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd., on December 22, 2022 signed definitive agreements to acquire a 100 per cent equity stake in Metro

Cash & Carry India for a total cash consideration of Rs. 2,850 crore, subject to closing adjustments," said a joint statement.

"The acquisition will further strengthen Reliance Retail's physical store footprint and ability to better serve consumers and small merchants by leveraging synergies and efficiencies across supply chain networks, technology platforms, and sourcing capabilities," it said.

The transaction is subject to certain regulatory and other customary closing conditions and is expected to complete by March 2023, it added.

RRVL Director Isha Ambani said, "The acquisition of Metro India aligns with our new commerce strategy of building a unique model of shared prosperity through active collaboration with small merchants and enterprises." Metro India is a key player in the

Indian B2B market and has built a solid multi-channel platform delivering a strong customer experience.

"We believe that Metro India's healthy assets combined with our deep understanding of the Indian merchant/kirana ecosystem will help offer a differentiated value proposition to small businesses in India," she added.

Metro AG CEO Steffen Greubel said, "With Metro India, we are selling a growing and profitable wholesale business in a very dynamic market at the right time. We are convinced that in Reliance we have found a suitable partner who is willing and able to successfully lead Metro India into the future in this market environment." Reliance is India's biggest brick-and-mortar retailer with over 16,600 stores, and a strong wholesale unit would further deepen its operations in India.



A Significant Court Victory for Sikh Marine Recruits in the US

A US court has ruled that the Marine Corps cannot refuse entry to Sikhs with beards and turbans, in a major victory for three community recruits, who can now join the elite unit's basic training without having to give up their religious beliefs.

The recruits -- Aekash Singh, Jaskirat Singh and Milaap Singh Chahal -- had requested an exemption from a Marines' grooming rule requiring them to shave their beards, claiming it was an expression of their

religious faith.

The Marine Corps informed three Sikh men that they could only serve if they shaved before beginning basic training.

They appealed to the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit in September after a lower-court judge denied their request for a preliminary injunction that would have allowed them to enter basic training with their articles of faith.

"They are now suffering and will continue to suffer grave, immediate, and ongoing injuries to the exercise of their faith,"

the three-judge bench of the US Court of Appeals here ruled on December 23.

"A federal court has just ruled that Sikhs can maintain their religious beards while serving their country in the US Marine Corps. Now, three Sikh recruits, who had previously been denied religious accommodations, can enter basic training," lawyer Eric Baxter, who represented the three men, tweeted.

"This is a major ruling for religious freedom — for years, the Marine Corps has barred Sikh recruits with religious beards

from entry into basic training. Today's ruling strikes down that rule as a "violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)," he said.

"No one should have to choose between serving God and country," he added in a series of tweets.

The Marines' ban on facial hair applies in basic training and "combat zones," a designation the plaintiffs said in court covers over three dozen countries where hazard pay is given, the *Washington Post* newspaper reported.

THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

Mahatma Gandhi's Bust Unveiled at UN Headquarters in New York

S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the United Nations' Headquarters in New York, US. The bust of Mahatma Gandhi, a gift from India, will be the first sculpture of Gandhi to be permanently set at the United Nations' North Lawn Gardens.

Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres, President of the 77th UN General Assembly Csaba Korosi and Permanent Representative Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj were also present during the unveiling.

Mahatma Gandhi's favourite bhajan 'Vaishnav jan to' was recited at the event and floral tribute was paid to the 'Father of the Nation'.

The event was also attended by the high-level representatives of the United Nations Security Council members, including the incoming members and senior UN officials, added the release.



US to Issue 64,716 Additional H-2B Visas in 2023

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) are issuing a temporary final rule that makes 64,716 additional H-2B visas available for fiscal year 2023.

These supplemental H-2B visas are for US employers seeking to petition for additional workers at certain periods of the fiscal year before September 15, 2023, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

"The Department is making supplemental H-2B visas available earlier than ever, ensuring that American businesses can plan for their peak season labor needs," Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, said in a statement.

"At a time of record job growth, these visas will also provide a safe and lawful pathway to the US for non-citizens prepared to take jobs that are not filled by American workers", the statement added.

The employer must obtain a DOL certification before the visa application can be initiated.

FIFA Finale 2022: Simply Breathtaking

A spectacular tournament came to a fitting climax with Argentina and France's FIFA World Cup title game, one of the best games in the sport's history. The memorable epic 3-3 tie that the South Americans won on penalties will live long in the memory.

The stars of the show on a remarkable night at the Lusail Stadium in Qatar were France's talented superstar Kylian Mbappe and his PSG teammate Lionel Messi, captain of Argentina.

When Angel Di Maria made it 2-0, joining Lionel Messi as the top three oldest scorers in World Cup finals history, it appeared as though Argentina would win easily.

After a quick comeback by France, Mbappe scored twice to tie the score and force extra time.

Finally, it was up to Argentina's goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to give them the advantage they would not surrender. Messi and Mbappe both scored early in the shootout, but Martinez saved Kingsley Coman's shot and Aurelien Tchouameni fired wide, leaving unheralded Gonzalo Montiel to convert the game-winning penalty kick.

Argentina's World Cup-winning team had to end their victory parade with a helicopter flyover because a huge crowd of people stopped their open-top bus from moving.

"The world champions are flying over the whole route on helicopters because it was impossible to continue by land due to the explosion of people's happiness," Gabriela Cerruti, the spokesperson for President Alberto Fernández, wrote on social media.



Photo: telanganatoday



Indian-origin Leo Varadkar is New PM of Ireland

Following a vote in the Irish Parliament's lower House, Indian-origin Leo Varadkar, former Irish Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Fine Gael party, has been elected as the country's new prime minister.

According to *Xinhua News Agency*, 87 members of the House voted in favour of his nomination as the new Prime Minister, while 62 voted against it.

Varadkar is the Irish Prime Minister for the second time. According to an agreement reached by the three parties in forming a coalition government, Fianna Fail Party Leader Micheal Martin will first serve as Irish prime minister until December 2022, and Fine Gael Party Leader Varadkar will replace Martin as PM until the current government's five-year term is up.

India Restarts Random Testing at Airports as Covid Cases Surge Worldwide

A report by ANI, stated, "Random sample testing will be done for international air passengers arriving from various countries including China from today (December 21)."

A sudden rise in COVID-19 cases in Japan, the US, China, Brazil and South Korea has prompted the Union Health Ministry in India to assess the pandemic scenario in the nation. As a precaution, starting off December 21, the Indian government has resumed randomly sampling foreign travellers at airports all throughout the nation for COVID-19.

The decision to resume the random COVID-19 tests was made following a meeting called by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to assess the Covid situation in the nation.

Dr.VK Paul, Member-Health, NITI Aayog, said that no new mandate for international flights has been declared in India as of yet.

"People should wear masks in crowded areas. Those with comorbidities and old should especially adhere to this," Paul said.

NEWSMAKERS

Indian-Origin Attorney Appointed 1st Non-White Treasurer of Missouri

Vivek Malek, a 45-year-old Indian-origin attorney has been appointed as the first non-white treasurer of the US state of Missouri, according to an announcement made by Governor Mike Parson.

"I am appointing Vivek Malek as the next State Treasurer of Missouri. Vivek's appointment will fill the vacancy created by the election of Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick to the Office of Missouri State Auditor," Parson said in a tweet.

Parson praised Vivek Malek's style of working.

"The people's money is in

good hands with Vivek. He understands the incredible responsibility and privilege

it is to serve the people of Missouri and appreciates the importance of true public service," Parson said in his tweet.

"It is my honour of life to be able to serve as the next State Treasurer of the state of Missouri, and I promise to give the job and the people of Missouri all and best," Malek was quoted as saying in the statement.

He will resign his position on the Board of Governors prior to being sworn as State Treasurer, the statement added.



Photo: GovParsonMO

Rajeev Badyal Joins National Space Council Advisory Group, Announces Kamala Harris

Rajeev Badyal, VP of Technology at Amazon Project Kuiper and an Indian American technocrat, is one of 30 individuals chosen to serve the National Space Council's revamped Users Advisory Group (UAG).

Vice President Kamala Harris, who chairs the National Space Council, revealed the new membership on December 16 with modifications reflecting a renewed focus on workforce and climate change challenges.

Pending official appointment by the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and

Space Administration (NASA), the selected members of the UAG will serve to enable the Biden-Harris Administration's effort to maintain a robust and responsible US space enterprise and preserve space for current and future generations, according to a White House announcement.

The candidates, the announcement said "represent a cross-section of companies and organizations that support the United States' large and highly skilled space workforce; users of space services, including climate

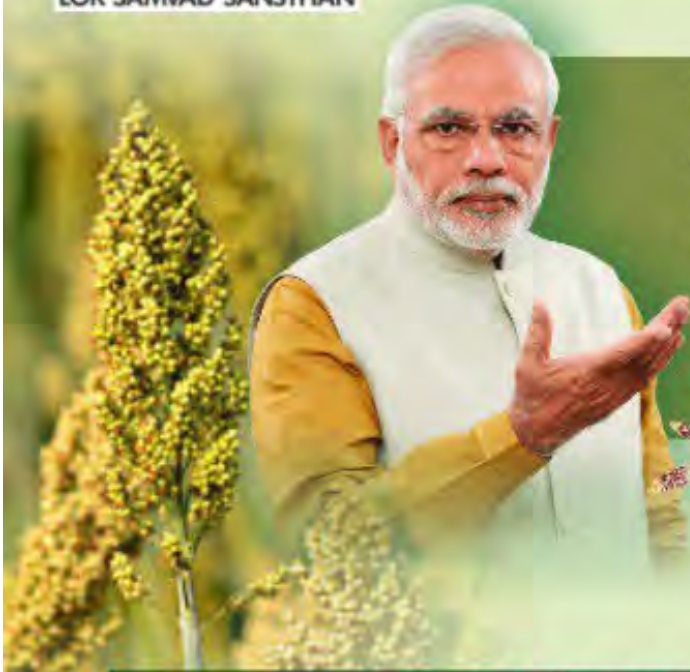
scientists and agriculture providers; individuals focused on developing the next generation of space professionals; and leading experts in space.

The UAG will provide the National Space Council advice and recommendations on

matters related to space policy and strategy, including but not limited to, government policies, laws, regulations, treaties, international instruments, programs, and practices across the civil, commercial, international, and national security space sectors.



Photo: Inside Amazon Videos



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ICONIC INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL



Randhir Jaiswal

Consul General
New York



V. Muraleedharan

Minister of State
for External Affairs and
Parliamentary, GOI



Prem Bhandari

Chairperson: Jaipur Foot, USA
President: Rajasthan Association of
North America (RANA), New York.



25th Sept - 2nd Oct, 2023, Jaipur

Launching Ceremony

Date: December 30, 2022

(US TIME-11.30 am and India Time:10.00 pm)

Place : New York



Kalyan Singh Kothari

Secretary General: MAGIC MILLET-2023
Secretary: Lok Samvad Sansthan, Jaipur



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

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Indian-American Richard Verma Nominated for Top Diplomatic Post in State Department

US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American lawyer diplomat Richard Verma, a former US ambassador to India, to a high diplomatic position at the State Department, a decision that has been

lauded as a "inspired choice" by the Indian diaspora in the United States.

The White House in a statement said that Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate 54-year-old Richard Verma to be Deputy

Secretary of State for Management and Resources. If confirmed by the US Senate, Richard Verma would be the highest ranking Indian-American in the State Department.

"In nominating Verma

to this very senior State Department role, President Biden and Secretary Antony Blinken have made an inspired choice," leading diaspora organisation 'Indiaspora' said in a statement.



सत्यमेव जयते
Consulate General of India
New York



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**1ST PRIZE: APPLE MAC BOOK AIR
2ND PRIZE: APPLE WATCH
3RD PRIZE: APPLE IPOD**

- A) AGE GROUP: UPTO 16 YEARS
- B) TIMELINE: BY 09 JANUARY 2023
- C) THERE IS NO RESTRICTION ON USAGE OF TYPE OF COLOUR & MATERIAL



CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS- MAHATMA GANDHI



In loving memory of

BHUPENDRA P. SHAH



October 14, 1934 – December 19, 2022

Born in Baroda, India in 1934, Bhupendra Shah (affectionately known to friends as B.P.) was the eldest of five children of Panalal and Sulaxana Shah. Since his youth, Bhupendra embraced the religious rituals and customs of both sides of his family. With a zest for life and adventure from his mother's side of the family, he traveled all over South India with his Masa and Masi's family and his Mamas introduced him to a life-long love affair with cinema – both Hindi films and American features. He loved listening to legendary film music program “Binaca Geetmala” on Radio Ceylon. He was a voracious



reader, a sharp mathematics student and had an astonishing memory that not only aided his studies but also gave him an outstanding advantage in remembering song lyrics, singer names and actor credits.

Bhupendra had an inquisitive nature and was the first in his family to pursue higher education. He received his B.S. degree in Engineering from M.S. University in Baroda and his M.S. degree from Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore in 1958. That August, with a loan from the Tata Foundation, he boldly traveled by steamship from Bombay to New York to pursue a doctoral degree at Syracuse University.

His long, enchanting letters to his fiancée, Devyani, coaxed her to join him in the United States in 1959. To further demonstrate his talents at persuasion, he convinced the Provost of Syracuse University to marry them at Hendrik Chapel.

Both Bhupendra and Devyani loved the adventure of the open road. The weekend after they bought their first car in 1963 a Rambler Classic, they hit the road out of Washington D.C. to Niagara Falls. They drove the car to the Badlands, Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. Over six decades, they have traveled the length and breadth of North America, their AAA maps marked by routes that took them to National Parks. They have ambled, hiked, photographed and car-camped across the United States and Canada.

In 1961, they moved to Washington D.C. when Bhupendra was appointed Professor of Electrical Engineering at Catholic University of America. They lived in an apartment in Washington D.C., and true to their knack for nurturing community, welcomed many Indian bachelor students and families to their home. During the Kennedy Administration, since the international community in Washington D.C. was so small, they were regularly invited to receptions at the White House where they met John and Bobby Kennedy as well as the young Indira Gandhi when she assumed the role of prime minister.

Their sons, Nayan and Shailan, were born in Washington D.C. In 1968, they moved to the home they have lived in ever since. They took out two mortgages to purchase a house in Silver Spring, Maryland, after racial and religious restrictions were lifted by the Fair Housing Act. Their neighbors in this welcoming, multi-ethnic community became life-long friends as they raised their children.

Bhupendra taught at Washington Technical Institute and University of District of Columbia from 1970 to 2004 in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. During his tenure at UDC, he established a chapter of Tau Alpha Phi, national honor society for Engineering Technology. As the first in his family to attend college, he had a particular empathy for first-generation students, aiding and supporting them in the classroom and mentoring them for work. They often invited students to their home for meals and helped them while they studied and established their careers.

Bhupendra was a visionary and believed strongly in moving the community forward. He had enormous reserves of energy, backed by inspiration to build and grow the Indian community in the U.S. His most significant contribution to creating community was founding and establishing India House of Worship.



Bhupendra's leadership of India House of Worship is widely known. For 40 years, he devotedly served as Secretary, always humbly encouraging others to gain leadership experience and to invest in their community by serving as President and Vice President. Under his guidance, India House of Worship organized and hosted countless events, including Hindu and Jain religious services and spiritual talks, music and dance performances, and cultural and holiday festivals. By giving a platform to local and world-renowned gurus, artists, and experts, Bhupendra helped enrich and strengthen the heart and spirit of the community.

Bhupendra also helped cultivate a network of Indian individuals and organizations in the Washington D.C. area, nationally, and internationally. For 30 years, he edited the *Samskar* newsletter. In 1984, he helped organize the National Convention of the National Federation of Indian Associations and, in 2006, he helped organize the World Gujarati Conference. He also was an active founder of the Association of Baroda University Alumni in North America. Epitomizing the principles of seva and dharma, Bhupendra and Devyani's work has provided generations of Indian immigrants and Indian Americans with a safe haven to embrace and practice their customs and beliefs.

In the 1990s, Bhupendra and Devyani resumed their travels to every continent and countries like Italy, Greece, Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Burma, Brazil, Kenya and Tanzania. He always carried at least two cameras to capture their adventures, just as he did when he first arrived in the United States. He sent postcards and letters to family and friends sharing their experiences and encouraging them to step out of their everyday lives and experience the majestic beauty of nature and the monuments of ancient civilizations.

On the auspicious morning of December 19, 2022, Bhupendra died peacefully, at home, at the age of 88. He is survived by his wife Devyani Shah, his sons, Nayan (and his spouse Ken) and Shailan (and his spouse Alpa), his two grandchildren, Nikhil and Sarina, and his sisters, Bhavna Desai and Mahendra Shah. He is also the beloved patriarch of an ever-growing extended family, who fondly refer to him as Fua, Masa, Mama, or Kaka.

Bhupendra is remembered by countless others as a pioneer in the community, devoted leader, inspiring teacher, supportive mentor, dear friend, and loyal fan of Washington D.C.'s football team. His indomitable spirit will live on in the hearts of all those he touched. He taught us how to serve thy neighbor and remain principled, while also making time to laugh and feast with loved ones. He also taught us that life is like ice cream, we should enjoy it before it melts.



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★★★★★

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VADH

(2022 / Thriller / Cinema Release)

A SLICE OF LIFE THRILLER WITH DRISHYAM-ESQUE TWIST AND SUPERB PERFORMANCES

Writer & Director Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Rajeev Barnwal

Cast Sanjay Mishra, Neena Gupta, Manav Vij, Saurabh Sachdeva



Plot

The film opens and we are introduced to retired Masterji Shambhunath Mishra (Sanjay Mishra) and his wife Manju (Neena Gupta).

Their simple life and adorable relationship is heartwarming and brings a smile.

Seeing them struggling to make ends meet and being rebuffed by their pig of a son who has settled abroad leaving them neck deep in debts is so heart-breaking, you feel like slapping him.

Yet Manjuji doesn't stop doting on her son or hoping that he'll help, and you sigh and shake your head "mothers will always be mothers".

When a heartless repugnant loan shark (Saurabh Sachdeva) makes their life hell, you hate him and wish him death. But when Masterji actually fulfils your wish, it sets your heart racing and worrying as to how

he will get away with it.

Analysis

The makers draw you deep into their world with a fantastic realistic touch. Their attention and hard work that has gone into it is noticeable and worth appreciation.

The locations, the art detailing, their well-used meagre abode, its interiors, kitchen, utensils, canisters, the "Pooja ka ala," right down to the grimy "thaila", her humble cotton sarees with rubia blouses, the chappals.

The two top-notch actors at helm had a lot to do with your connection to the film. Sanjay Mishra wins your heart in his various shades to the character; as the doting husband, the struggling poor man, the disappointed father whose self-respect is at loggerheads with hope for help from a son gone rogue, the cold resolve of a man who is a pushed against the wall

and needs to protect.

Neena Gupta wears her character as a homely woman with an easy charm and it often makes me go wow reminded of the fact what a sassy woman she is in her real life.

Saurabh Sachdeva is terrific as the terrifying and puke worthy Pandey.

Manav Vij as policeman Shakti Singh is good.

The film has a Drishyam-esque plot but in a vastly different world and style.

The first half is a slice of life drama with superb naturalism. It boasts of shining performances, appreciable art detailing and ensures you remain invested despite its luxurious pace. But there are aspects that could have been better. The first half, which goes entirely into setting up characters and premise, could have been paced up. As someone who loves slow burn and can soak in the details of the

frames, I understand this. But had the film brought about the twist a little early up, it could have appealed better to a wider audience.

Also, I personally felt the details of the crime and the aftermath, a little incredulous. That could be my personal opinion or the side effects of watching too many crime thrillers. I felt the script details were too convenient at places.

But keeping the flaws aside, the film deserves a watch for not only the performances but also the format of a slow burn thriller that blends a thriller twist with niche cinema treatment.

Must watch for Sanjay Mishra and Neena Gupta fans. A good watch for slow burn buffs.

Score 3 on 5



AN ACTION HERO

(2022 / Action Thriller / Cinema Release)

A TRUE-BLUE MASALA ACTION THRILLER! YOOHOOO!

Writer Anirudh Iyer, Neeraj Yadav
Director Anirudh Iyer
Cast Ayushmann Khurrana, Jaideep Ahlawat

AN ACTION HERO

Photo: An Action Hero trailer

“Thand Pae Gayi Kaleje wich”
...Sigh!

Is the phrase that echoed in my mind when I walked out of the theatre as a happy and satiated Bollywood Lover.

The promising trailer had risen my expectations but the past Bollywood records whispered to me to reign them in. But I am soooo glad the film surpassed those.

The first thing that needs to be appreciated is the story and screenplay (Anirudh Iyer and Neeraj Yadav). The script, that is the real hero in any film (which unfortunately had been floundering in many a high and mighty films in the past), is a clear winner in this case.

The story has a novelty factor and maintains a certain degree of intrigue. The dialogues are great with subtle humour. Jaideep Ahlawat's dialogues with pitch perfect Haryanvi accent (after all, a Jaat can never go wrong with his dialect) laced with unique Jaat humour are an entity in themselves that needs

a special mention. The pace is relentless. Not a single instance where you feel the story lagging. I didn't get a single opportunity to fiddle with my phone throughout. In my case this had become quite a rarity with the current crop of Bollywood fares (and this comes from someone who once upon a time considered fiddling with phone a sin during a film in cinema)

The background score by Sunny MR is jazzy and stylish. It enhanced the feel and effect.

Ayushmann Khurrana delivers a refreshingly different character with aplomb. It felt

great to hear him without any of those desi dialects for a change. He dons brawny, rugged, stylish and dapper avatars through the length of the film much to our pleasure.

To be honest, Jaideep Ahlawat was the biggest reason for me to be excited about this film. He has never failed to wow me whether in positive roles like *Raazi* or *Pataal Lok* or negative roles like *Commando* or *Khattha Meetha*. This time his character walks a tight rope between the two and he nails it totally. Most times terrorising, at times funny and at times you are grappling with

sympathy that his character doesn't deserve. I think it must have been a challenge to make the audience feel that plethora of emotions and he aces it.

The crackling chemistry between the protagonist and the antagonist is the highlight of the film and the two actors enliven it for you every time they spar with each other, whether with their action or dialogues.

Plenty of thrills, action, chuckling moments and even startling moments that left me with a thumping heart ...

An absolutely gripping crisp length of 2 course 10 min.

Anirudh Iyer delivers a complete winner in his directorial debut and I can't thank him enough for reviving my faith and hopes as far as masala genres go in Bollywood.

For those who love Bollywood Masala in all its glory, go for it. You can't miss this one.

Score 4 on 5



Photo: An Action Hero trailer



Angelina Jolie Steps Down as UNHCR Special Envoy

Angelina Jolie is moving on from her role as a United Nations special envoy for refugees, and will be engaging “on a broader set of humanitarian and human rights issues,” the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, and the actress said in a joint statement.

“I am grateful for the privilege and opportunity I have had to work with so many outstanding and dedicated UNHCR field officers and other colleagues doing lifesaving work globally, and to serve as Special Envoy,” said Jolie in the statement issued.

“I will continue to do everything in my power in the years to come to support refugees and other displaced people.”

“Over the past 21 years, Ms. Jolie has worked tirelessly, carrying out more than 60 field

missions to bear witness to stories of suffering as well as hope and resilience,” the statement said, highlighting her recent travels to Yemen and Burkina Faso to meet displaced people.

Jolie will continue to work to “build a more equal, just and inclusive international system,” the statement added.

“We are grateful for her decades of service, her commitment, and the difference she has made for refugees and people forced to flee,” the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, is quoted as saying.

“After a long and successful time with UNHCR, I appreciate her desire to shift her engagement and support her decision. I know the refugee cause will remain close to her heart, and I am certain she will bring the same passion and attention to a wider

humanitarian portfolio.”

A source close to Angelina Jolie said of her departure from the role as UN Special Envoy that “she will be more effective as an outsider.”

“She always has been like that

and more with the people than the system,” the source said.

“The UNHCR has no intention of appointing someone else in the special envoy role,” spokeswoman Kathryn Mahoney told *CNN*.



Tom Cruise Jumps Off a Plane while Thanking Fans for Top Gun Maverick Success

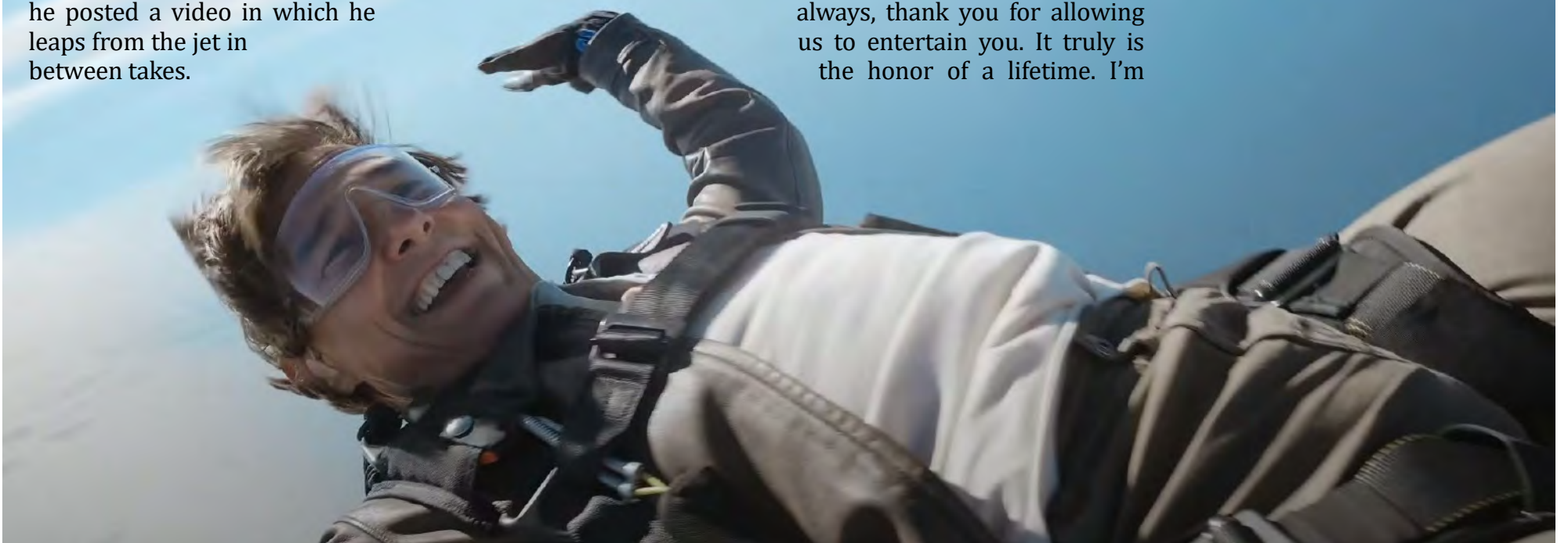
Hollywood actor Tom Cruise is presently filming in South Africa for *Mission Impossible - Dead Reckoning* Parts 1 and 2. In order to thank the public for their support of *Top Gun: Maverick*, one of the highest-grossing Hollywood movies of the year, he posted a video in which he leaps from the jet in between takes.

As he jumps off the plane, Cruise records the message, “Hey everyone, here we are over stunning South Africa, and we’re filming ‘Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning’ parts one and two. I didn’t want the year to end without thanking you all for coming out to the

theatres and thank you for supporting ‘Top Gun: Maverick.’ After this message, Christopher McQuarrie, who is directing the upcoming film and also co-wrote *Maverick*, is heard saying, “Hey, listen, we really have got to roll. We’ve got to get this shot.”

Cruise jumps off the plane and as he falls, he says, “As always, thank you for allowing us to entertain you. It truly is the honor of a lifetime. I’m

running out of altitude, so I’ve got to get back to work. We’ve got to get this shot. You have a very safe and happy holiday. We’ll see you at the movies.” *Top Gun: Maverick* grossed over \$1.4 billion, \$692 million coming from the USA alone.



Sonakshi Sinha: PETA Person of the Year 2022

Sonakshi Sinha has been awarded PETA India's 2022 Person of the Year title. Sonakshi's actions helped save the lives of many animals killed for fashion, but her ardent support for dog and cat rights earned her the title. As said in the PETA India's anti-leather campaign, "More

than 1.4 billion cows, sheep, goats, dogs, cats and other animals are killed each year for cruelty. For leather accessories that no one needs."

A PETA India press release about her award said, "We are actively encouraging shoppers to embrace animal and eco-friendly vegan leather made

from pineapple leaves, cork, fruit trimmings, mushrooms and more. There is demand in her story of speaking up for animals. In accordance with stricter animal welfare laws."

The actress uploaded a picture to her *Instagram*, which is a photo of the campaign. Also written on the bag were "Did

your bag bleed" and "Choose leather free". She wrote in her caption, "Fashion should be fun and not scary. I hope my new @petaindia campaign gets this message across. Choose animal-friendly fashion. Not just because it's humane, but because it's so cold!"

Deepika Padukone Unveils the FIFA Trophy at Lusail Iconic Stadium

Deepika Padukone escorted the official FIFA World Cup trophy inside the Lusail Stadium in Qatar with Iker Casillas, captain of the 2010 World Cup-winning Spanish team before the Argentina vs France final.

"From unveiling the FIFA World Cup Trophy to witnessing one of the greatest games in sporting history. I truly couldn't have asked for more," Deepika Padukone wrote after becoming the first Indian to unveil the

football World Cup trophy before a final. The trophy is made of gold of 18-carat and malachite and weighs 6.175 kg.

Deepika Padukone's presence during the pre-final ceremony was due to her role as a brand ambassador for Louis Vuitton, which is the official travel case manufacturer for the FIFA World Cup trophy.

Every year, a World Cup winner and a brand ambassador from Louis Vuitton carry the trophy to the field before the title game.



Photo: thequint

Kantara Sent for Oscar 2023 Nomination

Kantara has added another feather to its shining hat as it is also hoping to be nominated for an Academy Award at the 95th ceremony. The film has been sent for Oscars 2023 consideration as the makers have submitted their application in the 'For Your

Consideration' category.

Hombale Productions founder Vijay Kiragandur told India Today, "We have submitted our application for Oscars for *Kantara* and have our fingers crossed as the final nominations are yet to come. *Kantara* as a story is so rooted that we hope it can find a voice worldwide as well."

Talking about carrying forward its franchise, he said, "Rishab is away and once he is back, we will discuss what we want to do — a sequel or a prequel. We will have something in a couple of months. We definitely have plans for *Kantara 2* but there's no timeline."



Photo: IMDb

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A GLANCE AT 2022

FIA Honors 6 Trailblazing Women in the US on International Women's Day



FIA in Association with CGI, NY Celebrated Gujarat-Maharashtra Day



38th Edition of FIA's 'Dance Pe Chance 2022'



FIA Creates History, Enters Congressional Records



MEMBER OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Congressional Record

Recognizing the Federation of Indian Associations in Commemorating India's 75 Years of Independence and Honoring Asian Heritage Month

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: Madam Speaker, today I wish to recognize the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) as it commemorates India's 75 years of independence as well as Asian Heritage Month. Since FIA's establishment in 1970, its mission has been to serve the Indian-American community, promote Indian cultural heritage, and advance bilateral ties between the United States and India.

Over the course of five decades, FIA has organized numerous outreach events to provide community support and to celebrate Indian culture and heritage. FIA's efforts have included consular document service assistance for over 11,000 community members, cultural dance competitions that have engaged over 19,000 children in celebration of their heritage, and an annual Diwali Soup Kitchen which has successfully distributed thousands of meals throughout the Northeastern United States. Furthermore, FIA helped to distribute personal protective equipment and hot meals to first responders and community members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam Speaker, I honor the dedicated work of FIA to serve and uplift the Indian-American community, sustain the legacy of Indian heritage across generations, and foster cross-cultural cooperation and understanding. FIA's activities benefit all the communities in which its members reside, and for that, we are all grateful.

For Krishnamoorthi



Spiritual Guru Unveiled FIA's India Day Celebration Theme Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in USA



On the Occasion of Guru Purnima, Sant Shri Morari Bapu Blesses the Community



FIA Meet & Greet with Indian Lawmakers



FIA Organized Press Conference at Press Club of India, Delhi



FIA Commemorates Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Hoists Indian Tri-color Flag at Times Square



New York's Iconic Empire State Building Lit in India Tri-color to Celebrate India's Independence Day



FIA's Flagship Event 40th India Day Parade in New York City with Pan-India Superstar Allu Arjun as the Grand Marshal



Grand Reception Gala



FIA-New England Enlists for Adopt a Highway Volunteer Programme



Indian-American Community Commemorates 9/11 at Times Square



FIA Dedicates Guinness World Records to PM Narendra Modi



FIA-New England Hosts Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla



FIA in Association with Jaipur Foot Announces a Foot Camp in India



Subsidiary of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, Jaipur India



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in December 2022-23



Danny who comes on crutches, get the artificial limb the same day, runs, climbs a tree and rides a bicycle

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FIA Attends 3-Day Pravasi Gujarati Parv in India



FIA-New England Organizes '3-in-1' Grand Event Celebrations at Boston



Indian Community Organizes 'March For Unity'



Infinity Foundation Holds Book Launch of Snakes In The Ganga

